

SLOWLY, SLOWLY GOING SENILE. FAINT MEMORIES OF CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH. DID HITLER TRY TO KILL ME? AM I BOVERED?

How did I get from Sussex to Farnham? It involves a convoluted journey via London, Scotland, London, Scotland, Middlesex, Littlehampton, Gosport, Portsmouth, London, Ghana, Liverpool and then this splendid Surrey town, living here and bringing up our children since 1972. I have just bought a GIRLS OWN PAPER volume (1887) for one granddaughter where it seems 'girls' go on to their mid-twenties. But I can remember reading as a boy more adult topics and getting 'educated'. Sadly not much remains in the memory except that, although there was a terrible war on, it did not seem to affect this child too much. Some parts were wonderful, others so-so with food rationing and periodic changing of schools before the age of eleven. FARNHAM appeared in my eyes, rapidly, as our car sped through the town in my teens and finally in my mid thirties when wife, Eve, came down from Liverpool to the area on Christmas Eve and in the nick of time bought a Victorian Semi, our next door neighbour being writer Monica Jones.

Born in the 'deep south' at Littlehampton, when war saw me end up for two periods in Scotland where I found myself with a Scottish accent. War drove my father to join up. Instead of learning how to fire artillery he was put into the RAMC and went away for four years in charge of field hospitals in North Africa, Italy and Germany where he may have been in contact with Belson although he spoke little of his experiences. He did get mentioned in dispatches after an air raid on his ship (in Naples?). I was told recently by a surviving elder cousin that her elder sister, nestling me in her lap, dropped me on the floor when she heard the Prime Minister on the wireless declare war on Germany so I suppose I heard it BUT could I understand? War involved moving up to West London near the **Virol** factory, starting school, moving up to a small village near Perth, learning how to look after silkworms, reading text books that my children also used 30 years later in Farnham. MoF porridge. Three classes were held in one large hall. Did it have partitions? Winning a fancy dress competition (and my first second-hand dinky toy, a metal Sunderland flying boat) dressed as a black hated Wizard representing 'Mr Black-Out' – windows had to be light proof at night and then boy things, going up streams with friends to find eels and look at the heather covered hills. Gave up smoking and heard death of Roosevelt on wireless.

Coming back to Ealing – bomb shelter in back room, jellies made with fizzy lemonade, told I heard first V2 explode in mother's birthplace, Acton (but can not remember). Big bag of nuts from America given to us by cousin. To Middlesex where father returned one day in demob suit and green hat. One Uncle killed at sea. Not good at long division. Moved to Littlehampton in old cottage, kept young chicks and saddened by a fox. Food shortages. Baths once a week in zinc coated metal tub. Learned to cycle. Had cardboard model of D-Day beaches given to me. Wish I had kept it. Prisoners of War in blue suits close by, working in fields. Great lack of chocolate. Even potatoes eventually rationed.

Moved to Gosport with an older girl admirer (?) giving me a glass locomotive as parting gift. Sad to see the last of my teacher young, gorgeous Miss Salmon. To Leesland Primary School one mile away, Head - Mr Rundle, assistant Mr Griggs and my teacher, martinet Miss Smith with wooden ruler, used on back of hands, who years later died when her car slowly ran down the stone embankment and she drowned in the sea. Uses imagination and uses beads as soldiers – 6d pocket money and little to buy large armies. Second hand toys but plenty of books but radio not really working. Wrote first and only play for school with friend. He forgot words and improvisations quickly required. Told at bath-time I was going in two days to take examination for Portsmouth Grammar. Passed 11 plus but still went to Portsmouth Grammar. No good at sport but still became Head of Cross Country and Rowing (off Southsea beach). Bottom at English one term but top in exams! TV (poor reception from Brighton) for Coronation in 1953. Saw Farnham occasionally on trips to see relatives in London. Only remember half timbered Gas Show room at end of Woolmead.. Left school to be a trainee at CEGB and lived around the south. Took up dingy sailing and then decided to do archaeological conservation at University of London. Met wife in Cirencester (at B & B and at cess pit where she was cleaning a Roman mosaic. My photo of her was in the Daily Telegraph three days later). Married in snowy January, out to Ghana by 1st class liner, hot and very humid, (not quite the white man's grave), good and interesting job, military revolution, Catherine born in Nottingham with a number of operations required. Changed our lives. Lucky to find job in Liverpool at short notice and to allow me six more months in Ghana. Five years of happy 'Scouse land', did not appreciate Beatles, sadly, as this was the mid sixties. A post in central London beckoned. Children educated in Farnham – Catherine eventually 'emigrating' to Art School in Bradford and Richard to Cambridge and life in finance. Two vigorous grand children to keep everyone busy. So Life goes on but memories fade. 50 years of Kodachrome

slides to catalogue. Can not really grumble but my one original book has expanded to thousands with piles of papers, papers, papers. Wife a little anxious over the speed. First Hip Op. 2010. 4 computers. Interested in Farnham (and Portsmouth) history and wonder what the grandchildren will eventually do.

+

at a fete as a Wizard with a tall black hat