

## Part Four 1946 - 1964

### Childhood and Families

#### Jean Faulds

When my dad returned from being a prisoner of War he opened a wet-fish shop in one of the empty shops by the chapel and he also became caretaker of the Drill Hall in which he organised dances for the villagers.

Some of the commandos returned to Titchfield after the War finished and married some of the village girls and I was one of those girls. I married Peter who had been billeted in our house. When the War finished, I left home in Titchfield with my new husband and moved to Birmingham to find work and to set up a home. However, even today, 65 years later, I continue to return to the village twice a year to holiday with my sisters and their families.

#### Andrew Mills

I was born in Titchfield Common in 1947 in a cottage next to the Sir Joseph Paxton public house. There were eight railway cottages there in Sydney Terrace. They were truly condemned when we moved into them and they were knocked down about eight years later. At the back of the cottages there was a path, and a shed and the outside toilets. My father used to have to bury the contents of the toilet bucket each week at the top of the garden and we grew the most incredible rhubarb!



*Titchfield Common, Sir Joseph Paxton pub*

It was pretty primitive and I think we only had one standpipe tap and a black cooking range. Next to the houses there was a laundry and next to that there was an air raid shelter for about 25 people. I used to play in there. When the cottages were knocked down they found there was a lake underneath them. We moved to the top of Hunts Pond Road.

There were seven other families in the cottages and some of the families were distantly related to me. One family was the Wheatears (pronounced 'Whitcher'). The reason we had so many relatives was because my great grandmother, Mrs Wheatear, had ten children. They lived in a small house on

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West Street, Titchfield (one of the end-on ones, not the ones facing the road). Clary, the only boy, stayed at home and the rest of the siblings got married, including my grandmother. When they had grown up, my great grandmother left her husband and Clary for a couple of years and joined the circus. There was no animosity as she returned later. Many of the family lived on Bellfield; they weren't rich people.

I remember the horrible smell of tobacco and ale in the Joseph Paxton pub. I was sent there to get cigarettes. Oh it was a horrible place then!

At the end of our street there was the recreation ground and they had local fetes there. Our neighbour, who was a cousin of mine, Betty Wheatear (later Brind), was in the egg and spoon race. She was running backwards and forwards when she fainted during the race. It sticks in my memory.



*The Brewery Tap*

There was also a brewery in the village in Bridge Street and a pub called the Brewery Tap. That's where my father got caught by a policeman. There were no cars about so he would cycle down Coach Hill with his hands off the handlebars and swing round the corner at the bottom. One day a policeman jumped out and caught him.

On the corner of Abshot Road there was a gypsy caravan camp and a lot of the kids would come to my school from there. Just down the road, on the way to Hook on the right hand side, there was a house that looked like it was built from an Anderson shelter. The people who lived there were called Randall and their son David used to come to our school. This house fascinated me. It was a really nice house, I don't know if it's still there.

If you carry on along the Hook road there are gravel pits and you can continue to Warsash. There were stories of kids firing air rifles and throwing stones at the gravel trucks and getting chased by the workmen. A couple of my friends used to make pipe bombs and were always blowing things up. The best trick was burying a pipe bomb in the beach and watching the shingle fly up. There were reports on the radio and in the newspapers about explosions and things. They never thought the reports were about them until one day they suddenly realised that they had been scaring the local community and didn't know it.

### Bessie Traves

My elder brothers Jim and Steve Harris started their own business farming and market gardening at Meon. At times I helped Steve's wife look after their growing family.

Although we couldn't afford to have the bells rung for our wedding, on the occasion of our Diamond Wedding anniversary, our family arranged for a peal of bells to celebrate our 60 years together. I have two children, four grandchildren and five great grandchildren.

I had a stroke ten years ago, which unfortunately left me with a speech difficulty. Up until then I had served on a number of community committees, which I had to give up. I am still a member of Titchfield WI and usually attend the monthly meeting. I was one of the original cooks for the Day Centre Lunch Club for a number of years.



*The bells rang for Bessie and Cyrils' diamond wedding*

During my life in Titchfield, I have seen the area undergo great change from a mainly rural, agricultural and strawberry growing area, to semi-suburbia.

### John Ekins

In the '40s and '50s when I was a child, Catisfield was much more of a discrete settlement than it now appears as it was separated from Fareham by farms and open fields. Catisfield itself was a collection of a few mainly large houses with a number of terraced cottages. It had a post office and a church, St Columba. In the early '50s there was only a very sparse bus service to Fareham run by Glider coaches. Our address then was just Elm Cottage, Catisfield. Highlands Road connected to what is now Catisfield Lane and then to the A27 opposite Ranvilles Lane. This was the starting point of the Titchfield bypass, constructed in the early '30s.

Our connection with Catisfield and with Titchfield began in 1916 when my grandfather Arthur Ekins moved to Elm Cottage, renting it from the Catisfield House estate. He had returned from India, where he had been building railways, to join the Royal Engineers and then served in France.

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My parents were married in St Peter's Church in Titchfield in August 1940 on my mother's 21st birthday. Her parents evidently did not approve of the match. Three years later I was baptised there and in 1965 St Peter's is where Judy and I were married.

Past times are quite difficult to recall and in looking back over 70 years it is apparent how much change there has been. When my recollections start, the experience of the War loomed large and we still had food rationing, power shortages and it was the dawn of the modern welfare state. There was much hope of better times, but fear of the atomic bomb and the spread of communism.

### June Pellatt

Greenwoods was an ex-army camp, just below Harris' farm on Posbrook Lane. People who had been bombed out or made homeless lived there.

People only had two hundredweight (2 cwt, or 101 kg) of coal and there were only two buses a week to Fareham.

### Mary Parrett

*The article below was first published in St Peter's Church magazine in October 2014, entitled 'Hitler Youth to Church of England Priest'. Mary Parrett, who grew up on Meon-Bye Farm, Titchfield, had her memories stirred by George Gebauer's autobiography (available through Amazon) as she recalls German prisoners of war working on the farm in the immediate post-War years.*



*Mary and Sheila with the POWs*

I have just read the autobiography of the Rev. George Gebauer entitled 'Hitler Youth to Church of England Priest'. The very title suggests an extremely interesting story. His story tells of his early years in Berlin and indoctrination into the Hitler Youth movement, conscription into the German Army and fighting Allied troops.

He was captured by the Americans after D-Day and eventually came to a POW camp near Romsey. While working on a farm at Botley he met his future



wife. He later became a British subject and was ordained into the Church of England in 1973. Reading George's story brought back so many memories of my growing up at Meon Bye Farm.

In 1946/47 we had a number of German POWs living and working on the farm; they apparently integrated well. I remember them as being very kind and courteous. The photo shows a group at the end of their stay. Standing next to dad (Steve Harris) is Erwin Schroeder, a POW who married Jean, a local girl, and worked on the farm until he retired. He died in 2007 and because Rev. Bill Day was on holiday, George Gebauer took a very fitting and moving funeral service. The tall chap at the back, Herbert Bartsch, became a friend of the family and visited us almost every year. He lived in Titchfield and calls it his second home.

### **Mike Ferris**

**"PC Lockyer would quite literally give you a clip round the ear"**

Bellfield houses, phase 3, were all painted white at the time - rather unusual for council houses. They were built largely by ex-servicemen returning to civilian life and I spent many happy hours helping the bricklayers who used to give me a pay packet with one shilling (5p) in it each week.

We were fortunate to possess a proper bathroom but many people only had a tin bath. Whichever method of bathing you had, it still required a supply of hot water and I knew of no one who possessed that on tap. Our own particular method required heating a large copper boiler, which was in the corner of the kitchen, and then carrying the hot water in a bucket to the bathroom. This, of course, used some of our coal allowance and was obviously not a daily occurrence! Few people had wash hand basins, so generally washing and shaving was done in the kitchen sink using hot water from a kettle.

The principal village coalman was Bill Pitman who lived on Coach Hill. I don't think I ever saw him when his face wasn't black with coal dust, even after washing. Coal was severely rationed and most people would save up their ration allowance, which I think was something like about ten



*Bill Pitman delivering coal*

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bags a year, until the autumn and hope that they could make it last through the winter. This was only made remotely possible if some other form of fuel such as logs could be found to supplement it.

The coal merchants collected coal from the wharf in Fareham Creek where coastal colliers delivered it. Alternatively there was a depot at Fareham railway station. The merchants used to carry a set of scales on their wagons and weigh the coal in to one hundred weight (1 cwt, or 50.8 kg) bags. They then carried it on their shoulders to the coal cellar in the house - hence Bill Pitman's colour. At Fareham Creek, beneath the viaduct arches, there was a pub called The Coal Exchange. This was one of the pubs owned by Fielders Brewery in Bridge Street, Titchfield. Fielders owned about nine pubs in the area including the Queen's Head and the Sir Joseph Paxton at Locksheath.

During wartime, and for a period afterwards, much of the farm work still involved horses and there were many around the area. My grandfather owned a working horse and, from about the age of ten onwards, I was allowed to collect the horse from the blacksmith's shop after re-shoeing, and lead him on foot back to Brownwich Lane. The last two working horses in the village were owned by an old ploughman named George Watts who lived in West



*Shoeing a horse*

Street. He used to be hired by the smallholders, who didn't have any horses of their own, to carry out the annual heavy ploughing.

The showing of horses in competition was very popular until well after the War and to see them being taken in their full finery and gleaming brasses was a fine sight.

Almost every boy went scrumping for apples at one time or another. The secret was not to be caught by the owners, or if you were, to give a false name and run. Anyone who was caught would be handed to PC Lockyer, who would, quite literally, give a clip round the ear and a lecture. The worst part however was that he invariably told your parents and that was the real punishment because, certainly in our house, dad's leather belt would come in

to play. The favourite apple to scrump was called a Russet. They were delicious, and finding this particular type was quite rare so if you did find such a tree it was kept a secret.

Johner Jones was one of the returning servicemen involved in the VJ Day celebrations and eventually the Bonfire Boys; he lived in number 1 Great Posbrook Farm Cottages and his wife worked on the farm, and eventually for my grandfather.



*Austin Atlantic*

model Austin Atlantic if I remember correctly, and certainly was the first white car in the area.

During the War, our vicar was Rev Spurgen; our policeman PC Lockyer and our doctor Dr Windermer. When Dr Ellis appeared in the village in 1947 to take over he was the first of the new people to arrive. I clearly remember his arrival as he was in, not only the first new car I had ever seen, but also a car which wasn't painted black. It was a rare

Greenwoods was a woodland on Triangle Lane, now known as Thatcher's Copse. During the War this housed a large Royal Artillery army camp and the concrete gun emplacements were close to the seaward side of this wood. They housed heavy guns for coastal protection as well as anti-aircraft. When this camp was abandoned after the War, parts of it were taken over by homeless squatters until the council took it over to provide temporary accommodation whilst Bellfield phase 3 was constructed. There was even a public bus service to it along the Posbrook Lane.

### **Paul Catcheside**

My dad was demobbed on 31st December 1945 and was billeted at Hollam House on the Titchfield Road, with his wife, two boys and me as a baby. He got his pre-war job back immediately as Finance Officer at Knowle Hospital and carried on from there.



*1947 Hawker P.1040 prototype*

My mother was part of a family of ten and every year most of her family would come down for a seaside holiday. All of my aunts and uncles were down one year. I would

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have been 18 months old then so it was about 1947. We were sitting down to tea and a jet fighter flew over. Everyone got up because they were all interested and they all went out to have a look at it. Tomatoes were quite unusual at that time and there had been a half a tomato on every plate. When they came back in I was found under the table steadily polishing off all the tomatoes.

Eventually a council house was built at Hammond Road (off Gudge Heath Lane) and we moved in there, where my youngest brother was born. I would have been about two.

After my dad died, I found his release book among his papers. In this he was recommended for a commission. It said he was: 'A loyal and intelligent airman with good personality and a pleasing disposition. He has a good concept of supervising work of others and a sound knowledge of office administration. A superior type in every way.' He never did become an officer; he was a self-effacing kind of guy.

### Rita Prior

#### "Our heating was by paraffin stoves"

Notable events were the whirlwind, which hit Titchfield blowing down the tall chimney at the tannery and damaging many houses. I think that was in 1946 but it may have been the year before. One of the plate glass windows was also broken. A chimney collapsed through the roof of number two South Street, the home of our manager Mr Ralph Bates.



*Titchfield including the tannery chimney*

In 1947 we had a very cold winter with snow and slippery roads. The shop where I worked was often closed early. When the thaw came, we had baths and buckets in the shop to collect the water coming through the roof along a beam. Our heating was by paraffin stoves, how different from today.

Miss Read, who lived in Church Street, came across to tell us of the death of King George VI. Shop windows were blacked out as a mark of respect.





*Pudge with dad Rod*



*Lorna, Jim and Pudge*

### **Pudge Moore**

Bet and Rod Veck, my mum and dad, lived at Greenwoods. I was born there on 16th September 1952. Dad rode his bike to fetch the midwife, Nurse Gardner, who lived next to the Fisherman's Rest in Mill Lane, Titchfield. Then rode back to Greenwoods where mum was left with my sister Lorna. Soon I was born.

It's worth mentioning that they had no running water and an outside loo, but both my parents loved living there.

### **Tony Dugan**

I have memories of playing in a disused wartime shelter in Portsmouth. One time I was woken up in the night to walk from Hilsea to North End/Kingston Cross with mum, uncle and aunt for what I now know was VJ Day celebrations. There was a mass of bonfires in the streets with people singing and using anything to make a noise.

In the winter of 1947, the worst winter on record, snow seemed to be continuous and my school was closed for a week or two. Shortly afterwards I was informed by my aunt that mum and myself would be going to the 'sticks' to live. My father was serving in the Middle East and was about to come home. I was puzzled by the word 'sticks' - this turned out to mean countryside and a little village, Titchfield. I had lived in Titchfield Common/Locks Heath area before being taken to Portsmouth.

My father was about to retire from a career in the RAF after 28 years, being a boy entrant straight from school aged 14 or 15. He arrived from the Middle East with, for my benefit so he told me, several small jars containing the dead carcasses of strange insects including large spiders (today's Customs and Excise!!). This would lead to an interest in butterflies of which there were many at the time. My interest extended to collecting them. The trick was to catch them with a net, put them in a

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jam jar layered at the bottom with crushed laurel leaves. This provides a cyanide K.O. blow, which enabled the abdomen to be laid into a special professional strip of wood with the wings pinned out. I had quite a collection at one time.

School friends would encourage me into egg collecting from bird nests. Here again birds were in huge numbers and varieties at the time. For my sins I can say only one egg of a particular bird was kept - no need for duplicates. The egg taken would have the customary pin hole made each end and now what seemed a breath-taking skill to blow the yolk out. Most annoying when this went wrong. I also had quite a collection at the time.

Thankfully both the above would be out of the question, perhaps illegal today and rightfully so. But in the '40s a much different time. Today I encourage both birds and butterflies in the garden by planting the right type of plants and hedging.

*Note: Tony is right to warn us off these hobbies that were common at the time. It is now illegal to possess the egg of any wild bird, and many butterflies have direct legal protection. Tony's time was different, get out your digital camera and no-one gets hurt.*

My early days in Titchfield had all the ingredients of the television series *The Darling Buds of May*. Dear old dad had arrived in the countryside along with an appetite to belong. He set out in the 'Good Life' way before the television series became popular. Planting the garden with trees: apple, pear, plum, peach, cherry, greengage. "Greengage, what's that?" I asked. Answer, a green plum. "What's the point!!" I replied. So we had a mini orchard only that in a year or two's time the birds would eat all the soft fruit while we were waiting for ripening to our taste.

Of course like everyone in the village, it was almost compulsory to keep chickens for the egg production and, come Christmas, a guaranteed meal. Therefore pens were put up with six brown chickens. Now I thought all chickens were brown, but dad had purchased an additional six coloured a sort of speckled grey. They must have been the aristocracy of the poultry world. Like everyone, as Christmas got closer, the question was, who was going to



*The Darling Buds of May*

throttle one (break its neck) - my granddad came to the rescue. We also kept two rabbits. A vegetable plot was made but the white cabbage butterfly would soon lay its eggs and the resulting caterpillars would decimate the plants leaving nothing for the kitchen table.

I remember some older boys tied a dead adder from a tree branch to give younger children a fright. Another time there was a haystack in the field at the back of Bellfield, which was being taken apart. Now I had heard the story of the 'Pied Piper of Hamelin' but I had never seen so many rats. The older boys were swinging them around by their tails and throwing them to anyone daft enough to get too close.

So the countryside was going to be the new place to settle. Titchfield was pure countryside compared with today. We don't need to worry about the loss of adders and lizards but I miss the array of birds and butterflies we used to see.

### **Mary Burner and her brother Robert Chase, The Chase Family**

My father used to play hockey for Fareham and Gosport. He was also a member of Fareham Round Table and supported the Bonfire Boys. The business regularly used to put a float in the Titchfield Carnival procession.



*David (centre front) in the hockey team*

My mother Joey settled down in Titchfield, and then father was called up to War in 1945, rather late but he had not been called up earlier as he was in a reserved occupation. The army sent him to Yorkshire for training with the Royal Engineers and he ended up in Egypt with the rank of Staff Sergeant. Allegedly he drew the plans and designs for a theatre where plays and shows were to be put on for the troops. He also designed and built, with his team, the prisoner of war area. We have a cigarette case, which was made by POWs for him from their melted down metal mugs. It is a beautiful design with a scene of camels, trees and the sphinx, with leather inlay and his name etched into the metal. He seems to have been a nice chap and was liked. We still have many letters my parents wrote to each other during his time away from the village, all his in his minute, neat handwriting.

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My mother tried to keep the building business going when most of the men in the village went to War. The women needed to make money to pay rents and buy food by working where they could locally. However, rents were not being paid which had a knock-on effect on the building business. Mother was really struggling to pay the men and trying to get money in. She didn't like it and we have some letters she wrote to father declaring her dislike of the War, him being away and she running a business she knew nothing about - her fears and worries. She busied herself and, as she wasn't working during the War, she trained and ran the local Red Cross and did first aid training for the ARP. There is a photo of her in 1941 in the green Titchfield History book. See page 84.



*David and Joey*

We always knew mother as a busy lady and she was on many committees, a governor at the local primary school, and chair of the local NSPCC. Our mother was a caring and loving person, but could have a temper. She was honest, hard working and seemed a popular lady. During the time of her State Registered Nursing exams, she had caught rheumatic fever, which damaged her heart. Very sadly she had a stroke in her early forties, due to this heart damage, and this really affected the rest of her life - and obviously ours. She was determined and she was not going to give in once she got over the awful shock of it all. Life changed for all of us. My father was her main carer as she lost the use of her left arm. He had to cope with trying to run the business, look after two young people and his wife. He did this in his calm, gentle and loving way.

Very sadly, also at that time, the building firm collapsed as many building businesses did. But father was able to retain quite a few of the properties, which we still have. David, my father, became an NHBC building inspector in south Hampshire.

My grandfather, my father and my brother (Robert David Chase) and I were all born in the house at 31 East Street and our son, Robert William Burner, has known the house since his birth but has lived here since he was four years old. All the grandchildren have some memories of their grandparents and this house at various ages, but Damien Chase, who is the eldest of Robert's children, has many fond memories of spending time with his grandma and granddad in the garden or having meals or trips out with them.

We have a walnut tree in the garden, which was planted by my great grandfather. Because squirrels love walnuts they have become planted all



over the place. We dug some walnut saplings up recently and gave one to the owners of the Old Lodge and planted another in a secret location in the village. In Old Lodge they have a beautiful piece written and framed in their hall, about the connection of the Chases and Old Lodge, so the walnut tree has brought that connection up to date! Charles Aitkenhead who owned Old Lodge at one time, framed the plans father did for him, he was so impressed.

Attached to 31 East Street is a cottage, No. 29. Here, as recorded in the 1911 census, the Richards family was living - Mrs. Richards and her children, two daughters and a son, plus a lodger. When we were growing up the Misses Richards, Elsie and Gertie, played a large part in our memories. They were two little ladies who were seamstresses and made dresses for many people in the village. They were churchgoers and had their own place in the pews; they cleaned the church and delivered the parish magazines. They enjoyed card games and used to have their friend, Mrs Sandy from Mill Street, to join in. Sometimes I would join them, which I am sure they loved! We have many of their belongings still but their treadle Singer sewing machine was stolen from the courtyard after their deaths.

Growing up in the '50s, we had electricity and a telephone (our number was Titchfield 2166, although we have printed business papers from earlier with 166 on). Our toilet was indoors and we had a bath, which was heated by a wall immersion heater. We had an electric cooker and fridge. However, at the same time, Elsie and Gertie next door had an outside toilet, they cooked on a range with an oven and top plate that was blacked (cleaned) every day and the fire laid every morning. As well as the range they had a paraffin cooker. They had a cold tap so had to boil their water for washing. They had commodes in their bedrooms, which were emptied every morning. They had an electric light but mainly used candles. The abiding image I have is of the two sisters in their chairs sitting either side of the range with a roaring fire going, their faces lit by the fire while they listened to *Mrs. Dale's Diary* on the radio and then *The Archers*.

Their cottage is now part of No.31 East Street where I live.

Over the years the Chase family have been deeply involved in village life, they have looked after paperwork and wills, countersigned official documents, been a character witness in a court case and been treasurer of the Foresters Friendly Society in the village. The men have been held in high esteem.

The Chase family have been here for years and we're not going anywhere just yet!

## School

### Andrew Mills

After War began, Mr Farthing, the head teacher at school, recruited several 'senior' boys aged ten years to form the school fire brigade. A stirrup pump and umpteen buckets of water appeared and duties were allocated. Several boys had to carry water from the playground standpipe. Several were needed to do the pumping, because it demanded energy output too great for one boy. Some had to lay the hose out, and finally, the most sought after job, the 'squirter'. On being given a warning, boys ran around looking for evidence of the fire's location, revealed by smoke pouring out. The most favourite place for the inferno was the anthracite store where Mr Farthing had already ignited his smouldering smoke bomb.

Most of the children from Titchfield went to Sarisbury Secondary Modern School or Fareham Grammar School. I met many of my cousins at Sarisbury and I was probably related to about a third of the kids in the class. We had a reunion recently, which was nice because a few of us still keep in touch.

One thing we did at Sarisbury School was to doctor all of the hammers in the hall piano with drawing pins. Someone kept watch at the door while the rest of us did it. Nothing was said and we all gathered for assembly the next day. We had a maths teacher, Laurel Green, he was a nice old boy so we had a soft spot for him. He was also the piano teacher and, because he was so familiar with the instrument, he didn't even think to touch the keys, he just launched straight into playing it. What came out was a perfect honky-tonk and the whole school, as one, burst out laughing - even the other teachers. All except Laurel, who was most indignant. We were dragged into the head's office but he was laughing while he was telling us off. "You'll pay for any damage to the piano of course," he said.

Another trick was to wait 'til everyone was in assembly and quiet, then roll a marble along the parquet floor down to the front where it would go 'dank' onto the front of the stage.

### Sheila Hignell

I went to Titchfield Primary School in 1946. The school was very overcrowded. I look back and I can think how terrible the punishment was particularly of naughty boys. The headmaster caned them in front of the whole class. Teachers in Titchfield did their best in very difficult times with 50 to a class.

We then changed schools when we were nine and were far behind the other children at our new school. For us it was very exciting because people just didn't leave Titchfield. I expect there were some people who had never left the village.

## **Celebrations and Leisure**

### **Paula Weaver**

I joined anything to get a uniform. I joined the Red Cross when I was old enough, probably 18. I joined the TA and got my own uniform and I was so proud of it. I used to love walking down to catch the bus to Fort Fareham to train. I had a great time during the four years I was in the TA.



*Paula Weaver*

### **Andrew Mills**

I spent most of my summers at Brownwich. I would spend all of my time in the water and the family would pick cockles and winkles. There was nothing there except the gravel beach and cliffs and the WW2 buildings. There was a pillbox in the cliff and a look out on top of the cliff. My family would ride our bikes down there past a tree, which had been hit by lightning. My father would take an old army tent and we would stay there all day.

The big thing for me was the house on the cliff because I was delivered by a midwife called Nurse Gardner who lived there. When she delivered me, my father had cycled all the way there to fetch her at two o'clock in the morning. I was born at 5.30 a.m.



*Brownwich shore*

### **Ben Waterfall**

I can remember the first carnival after the War because I was in it with my brother Mick. Mothers used to get National Dried Milk. It came in a

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big tin and you mixed up the feed for babies. We also had little bottles of concentrated orange juice in flat type medicine bottles. In Fareham there was a place called the Food Office, a Government place, up towards Westbury Manor in West Street. Mother used to go there to get National Dried Milk so she got some posters from them. Dad tidied up an old pram a bit. It was one of the Marmet prams, so you could get two children in it. I was quite chubby and my brother Mick was quite skinny - my dad said he was like a matchstick with the wood scraped off. I was coming up to six and Mick was two or three. We sat in the pram and we both had bottles and were sucking on dummies. We had the posters all round the pram saying 'Get National Dried Milk' and we had labels on us. Mick was the 'before' and I was the 'after'. My cousin Beryl was dressed up as a nurse and pushed us round the carnival route.



*The post-war carnival*

The carnival was always on the first Monday in November. In those days once the carnival was over they would start raising money for the next one - they had whist drives, beetle drives, all sorts of things going on to raise a little bit of money. They used to have rings (hoopla) competitions and make

money that way and there were dances all the year round at the Drill Hall (now the Community Centre).

On carnival day they used to have huge bonfires and some fireworks and a good time was had by all. In the carnival there was always plenty of music, sometimes five or six military bands. They used to play all of the time - coming down Coach Hill. As soon as one was out of earshot the next one would come along. Dad did that pram up to use through the late '40s to the early '50s. One year they tarted it up and I wore a sea scout's uniform and I pushed the pram myself as HMS Amethyst in the Yangtse incident.

*Note: HMS Amethyst was caught up in the Chinese Civil War in April 1949 on her way up the Yangtse River to defend the British Embassy in Nanking. She came under fire from the communist army losing 22 of the crew. It was ten weeks before Amethyst managed its dramatic escape under the cover of darkness.*

There is a bungalow at the bottom of Coach Hill and they had an effigy of Hitler standing on the pavement and that went on the bonfire. Everybody



# TITCHFIELD BONFIRE SOCIETY, 1946

THERE WILL ALWAYS BE AN ENGLAND AND THERE WILL ALWAYS BE ENGLISH CUSTOMS.

COME AND SEE ONE ON

## MONDAY, NOV. 4TH

when the above Society revive their Old November Custom,

commencing in the Square at 2.45 with the Crowning of a CARNIVAL QUEEN who will lead

## THE CARNIVAL PROCESSION

from the BREWERY MEADOW, (kindly lent by J. R. Fielder & Son,) led by the

SOUTHAMPTON ALBION PRIZE BAND.

Supported by the Band of Prices School, by kind permission of Major Hilton, and the Fareham Red Cross Cadets 2560 Unit Band.

The Procession will take the following Route, Bridge Street, South Street, West Street down Coach Hill to the Square where a halt will be made for public inspection. Off again via East Street, Mill Street, Soton Road down Soton Hill to the Meadow.

To be followed in the Evening at 7 p.m. over the same route by a

## GRAND TORCHLIGHT PROCESSION

A HUGE BONFIRE will be lit in the Recreation Ground.

If available a Fun Fair will be in attendance.

A Dance will be held at the Drill Hall and a Whist Drive in the Parish Room to end the day

A Cash Prize of £5 will be drawn for by the Carnival Queen at the Dance on Nov. 4th. Tickets 6d. each can be had from the Committee.

The following CLASSES & PRIZES will be open to all comers. The Prizes being given by the Society and Various Donors.

	1st	2nd	3rd	
TABLEAU CARS	£2	25/-	15/-	Presented by Mr. R. S. Mortimer
TRADE CARS	"	"	"	£2 presented by Mr. F. Ingram
SIDE SHOWS	"	"	"	£2 presented by Mr. A. H. Frewing
HEAVY HORSE TURNOUT	"	"	"	Presented by Mr. F. Dyke
LIGHT HORSE	"	"	"	Messrs. N. & S. Harris
LIGHT TRAP, BROUGHAM or WAGGONETTE	25/-	15/-		
MOUNTED COSTUME	£1	15/-	10/-	£1 presented by Mr. G. Pink
WALKING COSTUME	"	"	"	Mr. R. B. Wicks
" (Ladies)	"	"	"	"
" (Gents)	"	"	"	by Mr. F. Ingram
" (Girls)	"	"	"	"
" (Boys)	"	"	"	"
DECORATED CYCLES	15/-	10/-	25/-	by Mr. & Mrs. J. Bailey
DECORATED FRAMS	15/-	10/-	25/-	by Mr. S. Flowers
Best DECORATED HOUSE	£1			Presented by Mr. A. H. Frewing
Ditto BUSINESS PREMISES	£1			"
Ditto COTTAGE	£1			by Mr. F. Dyke

N.B.—Will anyone requiring a vehicle, book one before Oct. 26th. If unable to obtain same communicate with Sec., 17 South Street.

Additional Reserve Prizes will be awarded at Judges discretion.

Judging of Vehicles, Cycles and Mounted Entries to take place in the Brewery Meadow before 3 p.m. Officials and competitors only admitted; Walking Costumes and Frams to be judged in the Square.

SPECIAL REQUEST.—To Prevent Accidents with Horses or Burning of Decorations and Clothing we respectfully ask that all Fireworks be let off in the Recreation Ground, not in the Streets. The Co-operation of the Police is sought in this matter. Thank You!

NOTICE.—The Three Objects of the Society are:—

- To provide Music and Fun for the People of Titchfield and District.
- To give Prizes for the best efforts of all interested in making a Good Procession.
- Any Surplus after paying all Expenses and keeping small balance in hand to be devoted to such Charities, decided by the Committee.

TOPICAL TITCHFIELD TITBITS by our TACTLESS TITTLE TATTLER who says that:

Mingled with the Procession will be found Rookies, Bookies, Publicans and Sinners, Gamblers, Ramblers, Losers and Winners.

The Knock-out Match between Bowlers and Fielders ended in a Draw.

The Bowlers drawing towards their Woods. The Fielders Drawing out of their Woods. Top Score of the Match was by "Charlie" who Tapped a 36 on to the Stand with one stroke of his mallet.

The United Services Club with "Our Jimmy" as 'Coach' have taken their PLAYERS off the Shelf, sorted out their STARS, added a few new ones from the SENIOR SERVICE and will Challenge all comers in the Smokers' Handicap. ALL HOLDERS barred. ALL PLAYERS WEIGHTS to be equal. All members are asked if they WOOD BINE themselves to the Club for two Seasons.

The Ringers Contest is to be held in the West End. This has brought up the Old and Bitter argument "Is Thirteen Unlucky"? ALF says no cos if you hang one on, two more are bound to follow. We've heard of Boxing Rings, Ear Rings, Wedding Rings and Rings round the Moon, but we still don't get it. Give us a 41 to take away ARTHUR and we'll go home and work it out

The Sunshine Opera Coy. will render that Pathetic Ballad "Say it with Flowers." Opening at 12 with One Blast from the Bugle, and two from SIDNEY as he drops a Case on his Pet Corn. The music is set to 4 Beats in the Bar and Two in the Lounge. NOTICE. If any member of the Coal Club is short of supplies, see Harry and George Sunday dinner time when they can have a few 'TONS' of "Large Blacks" in exchange for a few "Small Browns."

A Nasty Accident took place at Head Quarters. We hear that our Worthy Host decided to murder a few of his Pals one night. With a BIG WOODEN Sword

BUCKLED to his Side, Three Arrows in his hand, he shook his Feathers and put the first one 'Over the Bar' up them Stairs, into his own Bed. This nearly caused a riot, but HUTCH calmed the crowd with a fine rendering of "That's why DARKIES Were Born." A.L.A. B.B.C.

Fred how believes in that Old Saying 'Crime Never Pays,' its better to let your Customers do it.

A Visit to the Wheatsheaf Cinema should not be missed.

This Week's Programme includes some fine Desert Scenes. With your Back to the Bar you have a lovely view of the Pyramids. After taking four Eints of "Coopers Special" you begin to understand why a Camel can go for Days without Water, and a Man only a few Hours without Beer. After mopping Nine Pints one of the Regulars swears he saw a Camel Slip through the Knee of an Idol, Trip over the Last Straw and break his neck.

Now Ladies and Gents, as the Sands of 'Time Please' are running low we must say Good Night Everybody.

"GOD SAVE THE KING."

Chairman, Mr. W. BURGESS. Vice-Chairman, Mr. H. E. St. JOHN.

Committee - Messrs. S. Harris, R. Powell, W. Brown, T. Hill, F. Ingram, T. Bennett, E. Bowman, E. G. Watts, A. Kirby, H. Hart, E. Smith (Sec.) D. Mortimer, P. Titt, A. Hebditch, C. Traves.

Hon. Treas. Mr. F. BURN. Hon. Sec. Mr. E. H. MATTHEWS.

A supplementary list of prize givers and donations will be published later, and additional Committee.

## Village Voices

looked forward to the big carnival posters going up as they would include a skit on what had happened through the year. Everyone would stand around and read it and although no names were mentioned we could tell who it was.

### Bessie Traves

In 1946 my husband Cyril was one of the founding members of the re-formed Titchfield Bonfire Boys Society and he went on to be their secretary for a good many years. As the society progressed, members' wives became involved in organising the children's tea parties but at this stage the wives were not members themselves. The tea parties were the children's reward for taking part in the carnival. The cakes were provided through St John's bakery. We, the wives, also cooked a meal as a treat for the over '70s of the village and they were also given an evening's entertainment and community singing. One member's wife made the dresses for the carnival queen and her attendants for a great number of years.



*The post-war carnival*

### John Ekins

**"The carnival was the high point of the autumn calendar"**

I moved to Catisfield in 1946 when I was three but my earliest recollection of Titchfield was being taken to the VJ Day celebrations the year before. All I can remember is a happy jostling crowd and flags in the Square.

As a child I would spend many happy hours playing around the river and water meadows between Fishers Hill and the bypass. I had a friend whose uncle ran the mill, then still used for milling. With little regard for health or safety we delighted in scampering around the grain silos at the top of the building.

My friend's mum made a delicious fruit dough cake made with dough from St John's bakery in the Square. Titchfield village is where our doctors were, where we shopped, worshipped and each autumn enjoyed the carnival.

The carnival was a high point in the autumn calendar. It was a source of great delight and was an unmissable event. It attracted large crowds from around the area not only to the carnival but also to the fair, fireworks and bonfire. We would walk down to the afternoon procession and marvel at the military bands and the floats and wait eagerly for it to pass on each of its

circuits. In the evening things could be quite rowdy with fireworks being thrown amongst the crowd. On carnival evening the village would be packed and even in Catisfield we felt the effect. Throngs would pass through on their way to Titchfield. Our streets would be full of parked cars and late into the night we would hear the sound of the fair.

### **John Williams**

**"There was not much entertainment so we made our own"**

We played cricket and football on the recreation ground with piles of coats for goal posts or wickets. We organised our own cricket team and called ourselves Titchfield Colts and played against Warsash and Locksheath. On Saturdays we watched Titchfield Wanderers play football. Later on when we were a bit bigger, I used to go to watch Pompey with my cousin, Alan, on the bus. After the War Pompey was a very good team.

There was not much in the way of entertainment so we just made our own. Radio was about the only thing we had. They did have film shows in the Drill Hall later on with westerns and silly films.

### **John Rousell and his sister, Margaret Mugford**

We lived in Gosport while my father served out his 25 years in the RAF at Titchfield where he worked on Vampire jets. It would have been about 1950 when, at primary school age, we both went to the Christmas parties held on the RAF station, travelling there on a small military coach, which was either blue or khaki brown. Most of the children came from married quarters on the camp and knew each other very well so we were really outsiders. I remember a long table set out with many treats to eat and lots of paper chain decorations. Father Christmas came and gave presents to each child. My sister was quite shy and seemed a bit overawed. It now feels so long ago.

### **Louis Stamp**

The picture is of Titchfield Amateur Boxing Club (TABC) boys. I think it was taken about 1956/7. There's Dereck Hoile, Danny Sawyer, Tommy and Bobby Elliot, our first national champion, a young Micky Elmes and a few others.



*Titchfield Amateur Boxing Club boys*



## Village Voices

### June Pellatt

We had funfairs near the gasworks on East Street. To raise money for the carnival, we had smoking concerts (so called because of the cigarette smoke that filled the air) when we went round pubs and anyone who could sing or play an instrument provided the entertainment.

### Mike Ferris

The large barrage balloon hangars were used for a variety of activities after the War. One of these was hosting Titchfield Carnival Dance where the carnival queen was chosen. This was a very large and keenly fought competition and was decided during a series of eliminating dances attended by many hundreds of people. Titchfield carnival's revival after the War was triggered by the VJ Day celebrations.

### Paula Weaver

There were three dances before carnival day, then one on the night of the carnival at the Community Centre. We had to get permission from school to stay off to see the carnival.

The Bonfire Boys who were the group who raised funds for the carnival were good at making money. They went off to other carnivals to see what they could be doing. Pam Fullick's dad was a Bonfire Boy.

I remember there used to be up to 48 carnival floats. Uncle Jon made a helicopter once; it was fantastic. People made their own costumes and dresses. It was great, the carnival! You couldn't move until the carnival had finished - the police were in charge. All the floats used to have writing on to say what the floats were about - you could get a laugh from those. The carnival was always on a Monday so you had Saturday and Sunday to work on your float ready for Monday. No one knew what you were doing. It was a closely guarded secret.



*The carnival in West Street*

When the travellers (we used to call them gypsies) came with the fair



we used to go into their caravans and clean their brass. They gave us money for doing this. We had a funfair at Frog Lane. We wore 'kiss me quick' hats for carnival day. We didn't have time to change so went to the dance as we were.

### Sheila Hignell

Carnival was the biggest day of the year to us. Every year the Bonfire Boys did a dinner with entertainment for the elderly people in Titchfield after the carnival.

### Alan Brind

**"He wasn't accepted in the village until he married a Titchfield girl"**

The photo shows the 1957-1958 Football League Champions. Teachers (left) Mr Wilkins (right) Mr Wilkie. (Top row from left to right) Derek Kettle, Dave Wort, Ted Richards, John Waterfall, Ian Ord, Roddie Frampton. (Bottom row left to right) John Collins, Keith Bowers, John Armon, Dave Greenland and Ron Grey. Best team Titchfield Junior School ever had. Goal record for season: 79 for and 9 against.



*Junior School football champions*

My dad lived in Stubbington, but played in the Titchfield Warriors Football team. He had to be collected and taken home by car on match days because the Titchfield lads would beat him up. He wasn't accepted in the village until he married a Titchfield girl!

### Kevin Ford

I think my dad would have played against this team [Titchfield] back then. He played for Sarisbury I can remember him telling me about playing against Titchfield, it was the local derby. He told me the old Titchfield women on the touchline would trip you up and give you a clout if you got too close to them - happy days.

## Food and Farming

### Andrew Mills

We were strawberry growers with about an acre of land called Earl's Charity - it's what is now the Hunts Pond Road Recreation Ground. Strawberry picking was backbreaking work, but the fruit tasted great. You can't get a good strawberry now unless they have been grown in the traditional way. The varieties, the method of growing, and being bred for transport and shelf life, mean that they don't taste right. Ray Colverson picked up our strawberries in his lorry and took them to Swanwick station. From there they were taken to Bournemouth mostly, or London, and sold in the markets.



*Alf Pannell loading strawberries*

Some of the strawberries were grown under cloches and were available in April. The first week they could fetch a price of one pound a pound (£2.20/kilo), which was a lot of money in 1955. They went down a lot after that, to less than threepence (1.2p) a punnet by the end of the season. This wasn't my father's main occupation, as you needed to be a big grower to make any money out of it. An acre of strawberries gave us a little bit extra and meant that we could go on holidays or have some other little niceties that we wouldn't have had otherwise.

### Sheila Hignell

My mother was always there. German prisoners of war came to live on the farm in 1946. They were good workers and courteous. They had first been stationed on Portsdown Hill. Dad got extra petrol allowance to collect them. He then made accommodation for them on the farm in a converted barn. Their rations were meagre so mum used to cook them a big pot of potatoes. One of them still comes back to village to this day. He was the first POW to learn to drive a car. They all went back to Germany in 1947 except the three who married English women.

We were lucky we always had food, hens and geese. There was lots of bartering.

### Lesley Downs

I have worked on the Harris family farm since I was 15. I am now 88. I still go to 'work' every morning and get the tractor out and check the place. My son Eric is our farm manager. He was born on the farm and he has never worked anywhere else.



*Lesley Downs and Steve Harris*

### Linda Felton

My father Ronald Tunbridge came to Titchfield in 1950 with his mate John Austin. They were army friends and John invited Ron to stay with his family when they were on leave. Ron met John's sister Joy and they married in Titchfield Church in October 1950. I was born in 1951. My father was a Londoner and as an 'outsider' was nicknamed 'London' for a while.

### Sister Valeria

**"Mr Roberts would harangue us about doing our bit for Britain"**

"It's August 1946 (and '47), and Talbot Heath School, Bournemouth, has organised a harvest camp for about twenty girls who would enjoy some hard work for Britain's post-War effort as well as enjoy all the fun of camping." This was an advertisement I saw at school. I went on both these occasions, to the farm owned by Mr Roberts, near Titchfield, Hampshire.

We arrived, plus cycles, at Fareham station and then were transported to our campsite on a sloping field near the farm. The school staff that accompanied us cooked wonderful meals, which were served in a kind of Nissen hut. Both staff and girls slept in canvas tents so there was all the excitement of settling down in all weathers. I seem to remember that those two Augusts were mostly fine, bar one very wet and windy night when we thought the tent would collapse on top of us. The efficient loos, also under canvas, were at the bottom of the field, and the journey had to be negotiated carefully in the dark.

Every morning, we would assemble round the Union Jack in the farmyard, and Mr Roberts would harangue us about doing our bit

## Village Voices

for Britain, which was still suffering quite badly the effects of war, rationing and the like. Then we would be given our work, which varied from lifting potatoes, a rather back-breaking and muddy job, to weeding - again back-breaking, to layering strawberry plants, even more back-breaking and exceedingly fiddly. The best of all was picking raspberries. No we were not supposed to eat them! We would each have six punnets on a string, which we tied round the waist, and we'd pick like mad until all six were full. Then we would go back for more. I really enjoyed the challenge and competition of this lighter job!

Meals in the Nissen hut were a combination of a picnic and a feast, and we were assigned our turn in clearing and washing-up. After supper we would sit round a blazing campfire and join in Guide songs (I wasn't a Guide) and rounds and there would be a lot of laughter. As we had only torches in our tents, we went to bed early and rose early, as was befitting for our 'War work'.

Sometimes we had a free afternoon on a Saturday, so we would joyfully cycle into the village of Titchfield, to spend some pocket money. I regret to say I never went into the church, but we would look at some of those lovely old cottages, and I am sure we bought postcards and stamps, so perhaps the post office was then open on Saturday afternoons. Our main objective was a tearoom where we would have a very un-camp-like tea, which was a highlight for all of us. On a Sunday (we were in camp for a fortnight) we could have visitors, so my parents drove from Bournemouth on both occasions, once bringing my birthday cake, which would be big enough to share.

Our staff members were very efficient at dealing with injuries, which were mostly minor. One morning I had a wasp on my bread, which was the same colour as the marmalade, so, once in the frightening 'cavern' of my mouth, it retaliated by stinging me inside my mouth, which swelled alarmingly and made my face very lop-sided. I don't remember what the treatment was, but it was successful and I returned home with a normal face!

I shall always be grateful for this glimpse of hard work in the countryside, and for the companionship and enjoyment of our camps. Thank you farmer Roberts of Titchfield!



## Strawberry Growing - Debbie West

*Debbie and Nick are the 3rd generation West family strawberry growers and Debbie has put together a short history of the industry.*

In and around the Titchfield, Locks Heath, Swanwick, Sarisbury and Warsash area there is a long strawberry growing history. In the 1880s what was once known as Titchfield Common was divided up into small plots of about three acres or less where families were encouraged to make some kind of living. Thanks to the mild climate and gravelly soil, conditions were excellent for drainage thus making the land warm up quickly, which was ideal for growing strawberries. It was not long before strawberry growing became a thriving industry in the area.



*Bob and Janet West  
2nd generation*

Most plots of land locally had strawberries planted on them. Families would spend hours out in the fields, hoeing, weeding and bedding down plants with straw just before the strawberries were ready to pick. Rain or shine, every day they would be looking after their crops so that they would produce perfect fruit for everyone to enjoy. When the strawberry season was at its peak in the summertime growers would employ casual labour, men, woman, young school leavers and travelling families who used to come to the area to help pick the strawberries ready for market.

At the end of the season any fruit that was left on the fields would be picked for making jam. Some would go to a local jam factory that was built in Hunts Pond Road (in the 1880s) which did not prove to be a success for long. Later on, around the mid-1900s, Robertson's



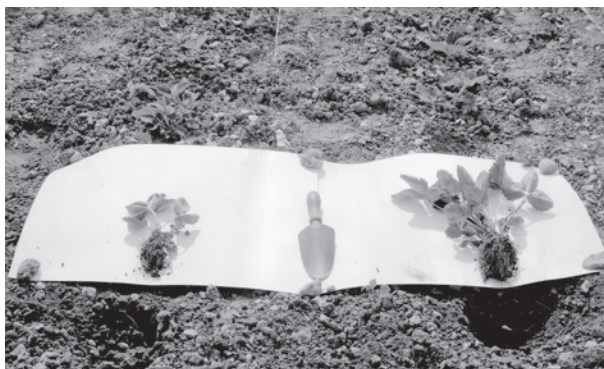
*Strawberry picking*

Jam Company would take them to make strawberry jam, which meant we could all enjoy the taste of strawberries all year round. Many local people also loved picking the fruit from the fields so that they could make their own jam, teaching their children and grandchildren

## Village Voices

the tricks of making it set perfectly. At the end of the season all casual labour would cease. The growers would then set light to their fields to be sure that there were no pests or disease left in the soil, preparing the land to start all over again. You could tell when it was the end of the season as there would be grey clouds of smoke in the area and a very sweet burning smell.

The strawberry industry became very competitive as Hampshire and Kent would compete to get their fruit to the London Covent Garden Market. Hampshire usually won, as the weather conditions were generally warmer.



*Soil testing*

This would govern the price as the market paid top prices for early fruit as it was in great demand. Hampshire could be as much as a fortnight in front, which gave them a head start on the high prices. As the season progressed and the market became flooded with fruit, prices would soon fall. It was every man for himself, as growers would strive to pick every last strawberry to enable them to make a living for their families. The most common varieties of strawberries grown were Cambridge Favourite and Red Gauntlet. In this area there are two public houses named after strawberries 'The Sir Joseph Paxton' in Hunts Pond Road and 'The Talisman' at Park Gate.

The transportation of strawberries was all important, as they are perishable items. The fruit looks at its best when it is freshly picked so it was essential to get it to the markets as quickly and safely as possible. In the late



*Pickers relax on the beach 1960*

1860s some growers would take their fruit by horse and cart to markets in Southampton and Portsmouth. They would have to leave in the early hours of the morning, to arrive at the markets on time ready for the day's selling. Fareham and Botley were the nearest train stations in the area at the time where a few growers would send the fruit by train.

It was when they constructed a new railway station in Swanwick in 1888 that the strawberry industry began to reach an all time high. In the early 1900s the railway station played a very important part in the transportation of strawberries by laying on a train which could have up to 20 carriages, which later became known as the 'Strawberry Specials.' It would leave Swanwick every evening during the season, full to overflowing with freshly picked strawberries. Their destination would be Covent Garden in London, also Leeds, Liverpool, Scotland and in time many other cities across the country.



*The Strawberry Special*

In the evenings, roads around Swanwick station came to a standstill with horses and carts filled with fruit waiting to be carefully loaded onto the train. This was fitted with special slatted shelves to ensure minimum movement in transit so as not to damage the fruit. In one evening alone there could be as many as 100,000 baskets loaded. It was rumoured that some of the older growers had said that on a hot summer's evening during the peak of the season all you could smell around the district was sweet strawberries. In the year 1913 it was estimated that over 3,000 tons of strawberries passed through Swanwick station.

At the turn of the century growers came together and formed what was known as the Swanwick Fruit Growers Association. In 1913 the Swanwick & District Basket Factory was also founded by local growers of the Association, who became shareholders of the company. The factory was set up to manufacture baskets and punnets. Punnets in those days were commonly nicknamed 'chips' as they were made of thin shaven pieces of poplar tree that were shaped into punnets. Later on the factory also sold many other sundries connected with the growing industry.



*Pick your own, PYO*



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In the 1950s the 'chip' punnet was replaced by cardboard as this was a cheaper material. These were being produced by other companies. They themselves were later replaced by white plastic punnets in the early 1970s and by around the late 1990s you could also get clear plastic punnets with lids. As more competition evolved it saw the decline of the Swanwick & District Basket Factory, which sadly closed its doors in 1990.

Very little changed apart from the horse and cart being replaced over the years by steam engines, small petrol vans and lorries. Up to the late 1960s many thousands of tonnes of fruit had passed through Swanwick station, then it was announced that the 'Strawberry Special' trains were to be axed! Once again



*Growing under polythene tunnels*

about 40 of the area's growers united to form the Growers Fruit Freight (backed by the National Farmers Union) which organised transportation facilities for fruit. Strawberries were then picked into punnets that were in wooden Dutch trays. This made it quicker and easier to load. The fruit would then be loaded onto large container lorries on land at Swanwick station, (and in later years fields in Fleet End Road, Warsash), these would then be delivered by road to London where they would be distributed all around the country.

In the early days there was never a shortage of pickers but by the late 1980s many people had full-time jobs, which meant casual labour was less readily available and growers had started to sell off plots of land for building. Sadly this led to a decline in the industry. So therefore it wasn't long before the Growers Fruit Freight ceased running. Slowly there became fewer and fewer growers.



*Grow bag cultivation under glass*

A lot of things changed, a few growers carried on growing traditionally in the ground, as P.Y.O. (Pick Your Own) was very popular, others grew in polythene tunnels or glasshouses, with the plants in peat bags at shoulder



height, still to this day trying to produce early fruit to ensure better prices. Markets around the country now see strawberries arriving from all over the world. Very few of our local strawberries are sent to the markets these days as most of them grown in this area are now sold directly to the loyal local customers and those who travel far and wide for the 'perfick' famously-known Titchfield strawberry. In and around the surrounding area there were once 80 producers. That diminished to just a handful by the millennium. Thankfully that handful still produce in Titchfield to this day.



*Titchfield strawberries*

## Work

### Andrew Mills

I remember the smell of the tannery - it must have still been going when I was a kid, but I think it must have closed shortly after that.

After the War, when my father came out of the army, he wanted to become a carpenter but could not afford the bus fares to get to the training on the other side of town. He took work as a clay digger at Funtley brickworks and, together with his mate, dug 20 tons of clay a week. He got £4 per week for that. The strawberries he grew supplemented this until he eventually got a job in the Gibbons Foundry in Fareham. They were very good to their workers and they had a good social club and everything. Sadly, Mr Gibbons died but his wife carried on the business. They paid a wage that was always above average so from that point on my father earned reasonable money.



*Workers at Funtley  
brick works*

## Village Voices

My grandfather and grandmother were school caretakers at Sarisbury Secondary School, and my mother was chief cook supervisor for four schools in the area.

I have never actually lived in the village of Titchfield, but I remember some of the people who were there including Mrs Macfarlane who lived on the East Street side of Everett's in the Square.



*Lyons Maid ice cream van*

the cold air would come out and condense and spread across the yard like mist and it would swirl if you walked through it. At three o'clock in the morning it would give them the jitters.

It was quite dangerous work as everything was rock hard and you could only be in the fridge for half an hour at a time. There were alarms at floor level so if you fell over and banged yourself you could set one off. The warm air entering the fridge from the door would form into icicles of snow on the ceiling and one day one of these fell onto this chap. He thought someone had tapped him on the shoulder and there was no one there. He ran out of the cold store and across the yard at full pelt and out of the gate and was never heard of again. We knew what had happened to him because he was shouting at the top of his voice as he went but actually it happened to everyone.

Lyons Maid Ice Creams had a depot in East Street opposite the Wheatsheaf pub. An old coaching yard was turned into a massive refrigerator cold store at  $-18^{\circ}\text{C}$  and the yard was always full of vans. These were loaded at night ready for delivery the following day. I worked there evenings and weekends during my college days in Southampton. There were stories about a ghostly horse and carriage coming through the gateway. I have always been an atheist and didn't believe this stuff but some of them did. This fascinated me, but it scared the hell out of these guys. When you opened the big fridge door

## Annette DeVoil

*Annette sent us this account of her father's, Lieutenant D.J. DeVoil, bomb disposal work in 1946 written by Major A.B. Hartley MBE*

An interesting bomb we had to deal with at this period was near Bursledon, in Hampshire. It was one that had been abandoned earlier but it was later reviewed by the Home Office, who now requested its removal. For the subaltern in charge of the job, Lieutenant D. J. DeVoil, it was his first bomb, and naturally he gave it a great deal of personal attention.



*Lt. D.J. DeVoil*

The bomb was accurately located and the sub-soil strata checked. It was about thirty feet down, but at sixteen feet there was a layer of running sand. This had to be sealed off; otherwise the unstable sand would cause the shaft to collapse. DeVoil decided to drive Larssen interlocking-piles to 22 feet for a shaft 16 feet by 16. Having excavated that, a smaller shaft could be driven inside the larger down to the bomb.

The platoon sergeant, Sergeant John, had been working on steel piling-shafts almost continuously since his release from prison in Germany and the duty of setting out and driving the piles was delegated to him. He had had no wartime experience of Bomb Direction Indicator (B.D.I.) work.



*Bomb locating*

Another unit was anxious to get some of its non-commissioned officers (N.C.Os) trained in the use of steel piling and had asked me to let a Corporal Thom attend at this site so he could learn from the sergeant. Unlike John, this corporal was an experienced bomb disposal N.C.O. A good many of the men on the site were Germans - working now under a recently released prisoner from Germany. The whole situation was a little paradoxical.

The piling and excavation went ahead quite successfully. We knew the bomb was a 1,000kg. S.C. (Sprengbombe Cylindrisch 1000, nicknamed a Hermann after Hermann Goering the Luftwaff commander) because of bits of fin found as the digging progressed, and I was not particularly worried because this type



## Village Voices

almost invariably had a 25- or 28- fuse fitted. Both were impact-fuses. DeVoil knew the immunization drill and unless he asked for advice I did not intend to be around when the thing was uncovered. It is much better for a young officer to sort things out for himself, and I was pleased at the idea that he would get a fine big bomb with a fairly simple fuse for his first.



*Shuttering in place*

About eleven o'clock one morning I had a telephone call from DeVoil. "We've uncovered part of the nose, sir. It's a Hermann but it's ticking." I was sceptical. A clockwork fuse in a Hermann was very, very, unusual. Again a bomb stethoscope is very sensitive to sounds of all kinds and false alarms often occur because of water dripping in the shaft or some other extraneous reason. So I told him I thought he must be mistaken. He said "Corporal Thom has heard clockwork fuses before, and he says it's ticking." I told him to get everybody off site, keep a stethoscope watch at 400 yards, and wait for me to join them. The bomb had fallen on open ground sheltered by trees on three sides. On the fourth, about three hundred yards away,

was a secondary road. When I arrived this road had been closed and Don DeVoil was at the road junction, about eight hundred yards from the bomb. "It's stopped now, sir," he said. "It ticked for forty-five minutes altogether."

My scepticism returned. I thought - well, it's his first after all, and he's doing the right thing and sticking to safety precautions. He probably feels uncertain. There seemed no point in delaying matters. I said to him: "Come on, we'll go down and look at the fuse. That'll settle it." We climbed down



*1,000 kg Bursledon bomb*

the shaft. There was another stethoscope besides the one at the watch point and DeVoil carried it. The bomb was lying nose up, at about forty-five degrees to the vertical, and the fuse-pocket - which in this type comes about halfway along the length of the case - was still well underground. I picked up a spade and carefully started to dig along the side of the nose but I had only made three or four spade cuts when DeVoil remarked abruptly: "It's ticking!!" I reached for the earphones. It was. I have never climbed out



of a thirty feet shaft so quickly, before or since. Across the open track we were neck and neck. At the watch position four hundred yards away we both listened to the stethoscope, expecting the bomb to go up any moment.

After about ten minutes the ticking stopped again. The only thing to be done was to blow the thing up where it lay. The nearest house was five hundred yards off and with so large a bomb some windows and tiles might be damaged, but the possibility would have to be accepted. There was nothing to justify risking anyone's life. I asked what explosives there were available at the site and found DeVoil had two pounds of guncotton. This is not really enough applied to the nose of such a bomb, where the metal is thick, but I decided to have a try. The police who were on the spot went round warning householders of the coming bang and closed some more roads for fear of falling debris. Then DeVoil and I went back and placed the charge in position.

It was a bad move. The guncotton was insufficient to detonate the bomb and since the microphone had been removed when the charge was laid we were considerably worse off than before. I decided the best thing now would be to wait until morning, as this would give the fuse-clock a chance to run out its spring and detonate the bomb. If it did not, then it would be reasonably safe to approach it again. To our knowledge the fuse had started and stopped twice. It was therefore in a very sensitive condition and the shock it had been given by the guncotton would almost certainly have started it off or else jolted it in to a safer state.

However, this inference also proved of doubtful value. The bomb did not go off during the night and the next morning DeVoil and I returned and laid an adequate charge. Then just as we were tamping the new charge into position the fuse, to our horror, started ticking. Since it was only a matter of a minute's work we finished the job before bolting.

I can hardly recall a moment of greater satisfaction than when we sent up that Hermann. It would never tick again! Steel piles shot hundreds of feet into the air, but because of the depth of the shaft the explosion was contained within a chimney and the debris not widely scattered. Don DeVoil certainly had a stirring first bomb.



*After*

## Village Voices

### **Nurse Gardner** by Ken Groves (son-in-law)

The community of Titchfield had never been short of proficient nurses but in 1930 the 27-year-old nurse Dorothy Lawson descended on the village, having qualified as a State Registered Nurse and State Certified Midwife in Bromley, Kent.

Nurse Dorothy subsequently married a local man, Richard Gardner and became the indomitable Nurse Gardner. Records indicate that, during her time in Titchfield she delivered over 4,000 babies and, it was her claim, she never lost a mother. To describe her as formidable is an understatement. She steadfastly refused to allow the father to be present at the birth but she was worshipped by most of the mothers, largely due to her competence, dedication and diligence.

She is particularly remembered by the adult 'lads of the village', as the person they feared most, if she appeared on the scene when they were up to no good.

Eccentricity was, also, one of her traits and she had a tendency to drive down the middle of the road in her rush to reach a patient. This was OK during the War when she had one of the few cars in the village - a pre-war Morris 8 but this caused consternation later in her life. She officially retired in 1963 and Wilfred Pickles brought his radio show *'Have A Go'* down to celebrate the event, during which the Carnival Queen of the day presented her with a cheque from the people of Titchfield for £146, equivalent to about £3,500 to-day. Also, Gardner Road was named in commemoration of her efforts on behalf of the Parish.

In typical fashion, despite being warned not to, she continued to practice her skills when asked and finally died, aged 79, in 1982 having been blind for the previous five years due to diabetes.

### **Ben Waterfall**

I had a Saturday morning job when I was about nine or ten. We had an old pram, which I used to wheel down to the Square because there was a gas showroom (where the Co-op is now). You could buy a gas stove there, but if you wanted some coke you would pay for it and they would give you a ticket. Then you would go down South Street and into Frog Lane and into the old gasworks and wait in the queue.

Ernie Privet would take your ticket and fill up a hessian sack. He was from Titchfield and knew all the Titchfield people. He'd say to me, "Who's this one for son?" "Oh that's for Uncle Jack." So he'd put an extra shovelful in. When he asked who it was for, if it was someone he liked, they'd get a bit extra. I used to make a little bit of pocket money on a Saturday morning for that, but you couldn't spend it on sweets because they were rationed.