

RAF STONEY CROSS
Memories of Life at Longbeech

David Earley

Thanks for the email about our time at Stoney Cross. I found it all very interesting.

I am afraid I have few really strong memories of this time, as I was a year & a half younger than you. It is a shame that Jean & Mike have not sent you anything, as they were old enough for it to make more of an impression. To me at the time it was a little adventure. Like any 5-year-old child, I gave no thought to my mother's problems or life's hardships. At 5 years old, especially in the 1950's, we just got on with life as it was, with no thoughts of how it might be.

The photos especially brought back a few memories – I had forgotten about the snow.

My only strong memory is of Jean taking us through the forest to the Sir Walter Tyrell pub and seeing the monkeys in the cage. This must have been in the late spring just before we left as I have tried to walk through there recently, and it always seems very wet.

Another memory is just before we left. Several families had left, and a lot of the Nissan huts were empty. I remember the postman arriving and delivering letters to one of the empty homes. After he had gone, one of the xxxxxx boys, who must have been a few years older than me, said that he was going to see what was in the letter that the postman had put through the letter box. He climbed over the fence around this hut and broke in through a window. The letter did not contain anything of value and young Mr. xxxxxx threw it away with contempt. I was horrified that anyone could do something so naughty – our parents had obviously installed a strong sense of morality into us! (This family were rehoused at Langdown council estate in Hythe. I recall that they continued to get into trouble even in their nice new council house.

I can remember going by bus along the road towards Emery Down and Lyndhurst; the houses in the woods on the eastern side of the road always looked like mansions. They were when compared to what we were living in.

Do you remember how Mum's finger got broken? I cannot personally recall the incident, itself although Mum did tell us about it. Sue (who must have been 7 or 8 months old) was in the pram taking in the autumn sunshine, and some ponies started to sniff around her. Mum came out to chase the ponies off, and one of them kicked out and hit her on the hand. Mum had broken one of her fingers (I cannot recall which one). Whether or not she went to hospital I have no idea; nor

why the finger was not properly set and put in a splint. Her finger set itself so that it was permanently bent and was always a source of fascination later.

I also remember leaving Stoney Cross and going to Fairfield. This would have been Easter 1954, I guess. I went with Mike to stay with Granny Richards near Basingstoke. While I was there, I went down with Mumps, so I had to stay on a bit longer. The next-door neighbour's son gave me a red pedal car which I kept for years. Granny and Uncle Jack brought me back to Hythe and I can especially remember the old Winchester by-pass. This super-highway made a particular impression on a five-year-old boy!