

RAF STONEY CROSS
Memories of Life at Longbeech

Mr. Harold Redman

Thanks for your most interesting letter. I hope to be able to inform you what you want to know about the aerodrome at Stoney Cross and Longbeech.

I spent approximately 4 years at Longbeech, 1 year down the bottom end and 3 years at the top. I am sorry I have no photos of the camp but if you can get in touch with Colbury Hall at Hounslow you will be shown quite a lot of pictures dealing with Longbeech and Holmsley South (*Another airfield site on the west of the New Forest that housed families after the war*)

The Nissen huts were all the same. We had one sink and cold water supplied and the heating consisted of one combustion stove, we had a tin bath to bathe in and to get enough hot water took ages. It was very tough in the winter, and we always had heavy snowstorms. It was OK in summer but too hot.

In summer New Forest ponies used to roam around the huts and at night used to rub themselves against the hut sides waking one up. My hut was under an oak tree and when the acorns started to fall, they used to wake you up, we often have a laugh about that.

I knew most of the people living there, most of them ex-servicemen and we all got on well together. Weekends we used to gather wood for the stoves and in the evenings on a Sunday we used to walk through the woods to the Sir Walter Tyrell for a pint or sometimes to the Royal Oak at Fritham.

We had a grocery shop, library and Doctors surgery. The Doctor was Dr. Danby who also had a surgery at Minstead Hut.

I visited Longbeech with some of my family last year and pin-pointed exactly where our Nissen hut stood, I found some brick foundations where my hut stood and we planted a cross there, it is still there. I think it would be a great idea to have a reunion in the spring, let me know if you do. I am eighty-three now. I still get around but I am a bit slower these days.

The water tank is still there on the left at the entrance. When I went there the control tower and hangars were there and the guardhouse. I remember them well. During the war I often used to visit the 'drome as I had friends there, most of the personnel were American. The main guardhouse was at Castle Malwood on the main road to Ringwood, the other was by the Rufus Stone near the Sir Walter Tyrell.

As regards the Holmsley 'drome, that was further down the road, at the back of Holmsley Station. As far as I know, no one lived there after the war. During the war I travelled by road and just before you got to Holmsley Station the heavy bombers were parked nose to tail on the verges alongside the road.

During the war the Canadians were stationed across the road from Stoney Cross and if you travel by car going from Castle Malwood from the old guardhouse, take the first turning left to Lyndhurst and on the left after about a mile you will see a memorial made by the Canadian soldiers. To this day a service is held, and poppies and cards laid by the people who worked at the camp site. I often visit the monument when passing that way with my family.

By the way, my son Ray who was born in the camp is very interested in your letter and he always takes me out in his car as I don't drive anymore, and he said that if you want to get in touch about anything you can e-mail him a message.

I think I must close now, there is still much to say so maybe we can keep in touch.