

RAF STONEY CROSS
Memories of Life at Longbeech

Mr. David Richardson

On a visit to my Mum in Marchwood yesterday, I saw your letter about Longbeech on the 16th of January edition of the New Forest Post. Mums' recollection of some detail is patchy, but I hope from what we spoke about yesterday after seeing your letter, and from what I recall her telling me at various times, the following is helpful to your research.

Shortly after I arrived at the World on 16th January 1953, the Council offered Mum and Dad accommodation at Long Beach. They paid ten shillings a week rent for a two room Nissen hut. I understand some homes were divided into three to provide an extra bedroom.

Heating was via an upright cylindrical stove (wood or coal burning I suppose), and this had a hotplate on top for cooking and warming food. Other cooking was done on a primus stove. There was no gas supply to the huts, only electricity. One of the huts was used as a local shop, although Mum says that she and other housewives used to catch a bus that went to Totton via Minstead and Lyndhurst. Their bus ride to Totton was regarded as a highlight of the week, enabling them to do other shopping and visit parents etc.

Some of the tenants erected garden fences, however, our hut had no such luxury, and so the inevitable happened. As a lively toddler I one day made my escape and was next spotted running around beneath the legs of some New Forest ponies!

I think that when my sister was born, we were re-housed in a brick built semi in Players Crescent, Hounslow, just outside Totton near to the top of Spicers Hill. But that was not the last we saw of our old Nissen hut. The corrugated iron structure was at some point dismantled, rebuilt as a groundsman's hut at Eling Recreation Ground, Totton and continued to see useful service for a number of years thereafter.

As for the Stoney Cross airfield, I recall that because a large part of the area was surfaced with concrete, it was a favoured venue for learner car drivers to practice without the hassle of being on the public road.

Very many thanks for your response, and in particular for the diagram of the camp layout and photographs. I will print them off and run them past my Mum in case anything strikes a chord. I guess I could also check with her and possibly with aunts and uncles to see if any family photos exist from the time.

As I said previously, it was the arrival of my sister (also called Susan), in September 1954 that prompted our move to a pucker council house. I think it is a shame and indeed a missed opportunity, that the book you refer to confined itself to the military role of the Stoney Cross airfield, with only

passing reference to what would have been an important social housing resource and issue of its day, playing a vital part in the lives of many local families.