

**RAF STONEY CROSS**  
**Memories of Life at Longbeech**

**Mr Peter Earley**

The hundreds of people who camp at Longbeech nowadays will be well aware that it is one of the most pleasant places in the country with its large, sunny clearings and the surrounding beech trees which give it the name. They are unlikely, however, to know that half a century ago the area was home to several hundred people, a small town.

Although the huts were demolished in the late fifty's the water tower shown on the front cover served as a monument to a previous life. This too has gone leaving only the network of concrete roads as a reminder of wartime.

I only lived there for a few months as a six-year-old. My memories are somewhat hazy and, unfortunately, my parents died before I thought that memories of this time should be recorded.

I was born in 1947 and for the first few years of my life I lived in Marsh House in Hythe and Dad worked at the garage next door. In the early fifties the house was declared uninhabitable by the Council and the family – Mum & Dad, two sisters and 3 brothers - went to live at Stoney Cross in 1953.

We lived in one of three Nissen huts that formed a sort of U shape. There were gates across the open end of the U to keep the ponies out. Together with my younger brother, Dave, we attended Bramshaw School. As I recall we went by bus, and I remember during the winter when the snow lay heavily on the ground the bus skidded off the road in Bramshaw and ended up in the ditch. We were all ferried back to the camp in Land Rovers, and I can clearly recall Dad opening the back of the Land Rover and saying, "Is there anyone called Earley in here." Dad walked Dave and I back to our hut where we emptied the snow from our boots.

I have always had in my mind that a young boy was killed whilst playing around the milk float. This is probably the incident referred to by Mr Blake.

Being only seven at the time my memories of the time are quite slight. I remember we had a cinema; it was the only building on the left as you went down into the camp.

I have often visited Stoney Cross. The spot where is hut used to be is easily identified by the junction of camp roads that were alongside. Although my memories are slight my younger brother and sister remember even less. This prompted me to start asking around and then I wrote to the local press asking for any who lived there to come forward.

These are their memories.

Peter Earley  
8 Radway Road,  
Southampton SO15 7PW.

023 8078 1139  
peter@earleys.net