

29 January 2008

Thank you very much for the Website. It has brought back wonderful memories.

I lived at 75 Chester Road between (about) 1937 and September 1946. My sister, 3 years younger than me, was born there on April 6th 1939. We had moved there from Seller Street, Chester, where I was born.

I have vivid memories of going, during the war, into the air raid shelter that was built on 'The green' where there is now the 'time capsule'. On one occasion, as the air raid warden guided us there, we could see the sky lit up with the flames of Liverpool burning.

Behind our house were cornfields belonging to 'Stalkers Farm'. My childhood was spent roaming those fields. It was a marvellous place for a child. I went to Aldford School at age 4 and later to Cherry Grove where I encounter an imperious Miss Connor. 'Gaffer Hall' was the Headmaster.

I remember the Italian prisoners of war who would walk into Chester from Saughton Camp (in prisoner uniforms). Later there were American soldiers who would offer us chewing gum.

One year, while ill with the mumps (I had every childhood illness, including diphtheria), I transcribed bits of 'Alice in Wonderland' into play form and had it performed in the Mission Hall – and later at the Odeon Cinema on a Saturday morning. Naturally, I was the Mad Hatter – my sister always complained that I only did it to pour water from the teapot onto her, the Doormouse

I was part of a group of kids who would often enjoy an adventurous afternoon in the 'Camp Commando Training Ground' and on the firing ground – where we would often be able to pick up live round... (I think we all survived!).

The war ended on my ninth birthday and on May 12th 1945 there was a big party for all village children in the grounds of the Mission Hall. It did feel like the world had changed. A couple of months later I was on a bus travelling into town when I heard a grown up talk about a bomb that the Americans had dropped on Japan. He was telling someone that it had destroyed an area more than a mile across. From where I was I think I could see the top of Chester Cathedral – I remember feeling shocked to think that that was perhaps a mile away...

The gang that I led (!) decided when the war ended that we had to have a bonfire for 'Guy Fawkes' – a celebration that we had heard about but had never experienced. We cut down a tree in some woods just beyond the 'Rake and Pikel', chopped it up and brought it into the village. We built a fire on a patch of ground opposite the 'Mission Hall' in Chester Road. 'Bobby Hall' – I think that was the village policeman's name – never caught us at any of the mischief we got up to. The November 5th bonfire was a great success – and it all initiated by the children.

I have to mention by childhood sweethearts – Beth Morris (sister of Alan) from Butterbache Road and Janet Foweather, Huntington Road, just by the shops. Colin

Newton was my best friend. I wonder if any of those names are still around... What a wonderful thing memory is!

I am immensely grateful for my wartime childhood life in Huntington village. I learned about adventure, taking risks, exploring, independence – and also about camaraderie and living in a community. If I ever think of heaven – well it must be like that!

What did I do next? Well after Chester City Grammar School I spent my life in more adventure, and deeper explorations, becoming a Physicist in the Universities of Manchester, Glasgow, Paris (30 years adventure there!) and finally Cambridge where, retired, I now live. Village kid did well! I was very lucky. Thank you Huntington Village.

Gordon Rhead

Two photographs kindly supplied by Gordon can be seen in the Photo Gallery on the website.