



EVACUATED TO CHIDEOCK

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On a recent holiday, I stayed in Chideock and visited the Catholic Church Museum. I noticed there was not any reference to the Second World War and I thought you might be interested in my experiences 1940-42 as an evacuee from Woolston, Southampton. I was only seven years old when this happened, so as I am now nearly seventy-five, you must forgive any memory mistakes.

Sheila Hinchliffe nee Nash

At the beginning on 1940, Miss O'Mara and fourteen schoolchildren were evacuated from St. Patrick's School, Woolston, Southampton to Chideock, Dorset. We travelled by train and then coach to our destination. When we stopped outside Mannings grocery store, there was a group of villagers waiting for us. They knew the names of their expected evacuees and soon had us sorted. My sister and I (Sheila and Eileen Nash) were claimed by Phylis Bartlett and we were to live at No. 1 Gate Cottage with her and her husband George for the next couple of years.

It was a big culture shock for us 'Townies' to live in a thatched cottage with no bathroom and a 'dry privvy' at the end of the garden but we soon got used to our new home and received nothing but kindness from everyone. It is only as one becomes an adult that we realized what a big change this must have made to all of our lives.

The room that now houses the Museum next to the Catholic Church of Our Lady, Queen of Martyrs and St. Ignatius was to be our school and we called it 'The Cloister School'. We were of mixed ages and ability but we all seemed to get on with one another, having no contact that I can remember with the local children.

We wrote our letters home weekly and had the occasional visit from a relative but travelling was very difficult and the Blitz was in full flow. About 1941, my mother came to Chideock to stay and became a housekeeper to Mr. Fooks who lived in a bungalow on the left handside going up the hill to Morecombelake and it was then called 'Hill and Dale' but I think it now has a different name. It was about 50 yds up from the Village Hall.

While we settled well into village life, I remember gathering sheeps wool from the hedges near Quarr for a competition run by a resident of North Chideock. She used to weave garments and gave a prize to the child who collected the most wool. My sister won and received a wooden jigsaw in a lovely woven 'dolly bag'. We had that for many years.

One of our friends, Brian Burgess, stepped on an unexploded shell near Seatown and lost most of his foot.

We would hear the German planes going to bomb Yeovil and I think there were a couple of bombs dropped in Bridport. We saw a plane come down into the sea near Golden Cap and also a parachute but we did not hear any more about this incident. The beach was barbed-wired right through, so we didn't go swimming but we certainly walked plenty.

There was a family living in North Chideock on a farm – Tom Spurle was the name and they had children. Also Phylis' parents lived at Whitchurch Canonicorum and we used to go to their lovely cottage next to the church. It still looks very beautiful!

At this time, the Post Office was next to the bakery, almost opposite 'The Castle' public house and I remember the milk bar in Duck Street and the long low sweet shop by the bridge on the main road but of course the chief shop was Mannings and two of 'our girls' were billeted there named Violet and Norma Barrett and their brother Donald was on the corner of Duck Street.

Three Burgess boys were with another family called Manning in the cottage by the lane that leads to the Recreation Ground in the main street. Two boys, Terence and Brian Manley, lived in 'Fisherman's Cottage' down the lane to Seatown on the right – its still there but has a different name now.

Kathleen Baker stayed in the Manor House. Walter Smith stayed with the Bartletts at 'Sea View, now 'Hill View' lived in by Bernadette and Bernard Waterman (grand-daughter). Walter's sisters lived up the hill in the first house on the right by Doghouse Lane and they were Rene and Sheila Smith.

I have very fond memories of gathering daffodils in the fields and finding wild strawberries in the hedges and watching the sheep shearing done by hand held shears at Park Farm next to our new home. 'Uncle George' kept pigs in the orchard and had horses and 'Haywain' type cars as he was a waggoner. There was a large apple store near the stables and I remember cider being made in there.

It all seems so idyllic now that we have moved on over sixty years but I love to revisit old haunts when I can. Chideock will always hold a special place in my heart and I hope these few memories of mine will be of interest.



Museum which was 'The Cloister school'