

LIFE IN CATERHAM IN THE 1940s AND 1950s

By Bryan R Lawson

I WAS BORN in Georges Terrace, Caterham in 1935 – the third child of the late Nellie Lawson. After we moved to 3 Wellington Road, my sister Mary was born in 1939. My late father Jock Lawson worked as a nurse in St Lawrence's hospital before and after World War II when he served as a Flight Sergeant in the RAF, mostly in Egypt fighting Rommel.

My mother was also a nurse in St Lawrence's, and met my father at a dance at Kenley Aerodrome. After the war my mother died at the early age of 53 years, and I am the only survivor of my family of six people. My eldest brother Peter died at 53 of cancer, Kenneth 48 walking Hadrian's Wall, Mary my sister at 62 of Huntingtons chorea and my father of Huntingtons in Kent aged 70 years.



Peter (holding Bryan) and Kenneth
at Georges Terrace, Caterham 1936



Bryan, Mary and their parents
Brighton 1947

I went to Caterham Hill Secondary School where I was Head Boy. Mr Richardson was Headmaster and a name I well remember was teacher Mr Masani. Mrs Basson was Deputy Head.

My vivid memories of the war were the small air-raid shelters in our gardens, and the larger communal one main road end of Wellington Road. It often flooded and we had to file into them climbing along the wooden seats. The doodlebugs were a scary feature, and as these unmanned flying bombs whined overhead, we waited for them to stop

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and hopefully not come down right on top of us. You mentioned a German aeroplane crashing at Town End in an article, and a vivid memory was us kids racing there to see the dead Luftwaffe Pilot hanging high up in a tree with his parachute still attached to him.

What memories your recent article on 'George Bunce of G & H Bunce, Photographers. Westway. Caterham' brought back to me. I knew them well, as I attended Caterham Hill Methodist Chapel as a lad during their time there. They were all very respected in Caterham and at the Chapel, and your picture of the wonderful late Lily Welch – she was my Sunday School Teacher – brought tears to my eyes. She was a loyal servant of Jesus Christ, and her work for, and devotion to, the Bunce Brothers was most commendable.

When I left school I worked for Batchelor & Son, Estate Agents in Caterham Valley and one of my duties was to cycle all round Caterham, Whyteleafe, Warlingham & an occasional trip to Woldingham collecting rents for Batchelor properties.

My bedroom in Wellington Road overlooked the Guards' Depot Parade Ground, and I was frequently woken up by the Guards parading to an army band or following instructions from the late well-known RSM Brittain.

I was a paperboy in the Depot for many years, and often enjoyed extra tips and treats from the soldiers.

One other vivid memory were the dances in the hall next to the school (opposite the garage on the corner) and I often went dancing two or three times a week there.

At the age of 19 I went into Social Work and am now retired after a long career in it. I married a teacher Patricia in 1960 in Buckinghamshire and now live in Stamford Bridge (1066 and all that) near York. It's a lovely part of the UK with the North York Moors, the Yorkshire Wolds and the East Coast very handy. We have five married children, three girls and two boys, and 12 grandchildren, and all live in the York area.

I still have many fond memories of wonderful Caterham and the beautiful Surrey Hills and hope to visit many more times if my health permits.

Bryan Lawson is Anglican Reader/York Diocese

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

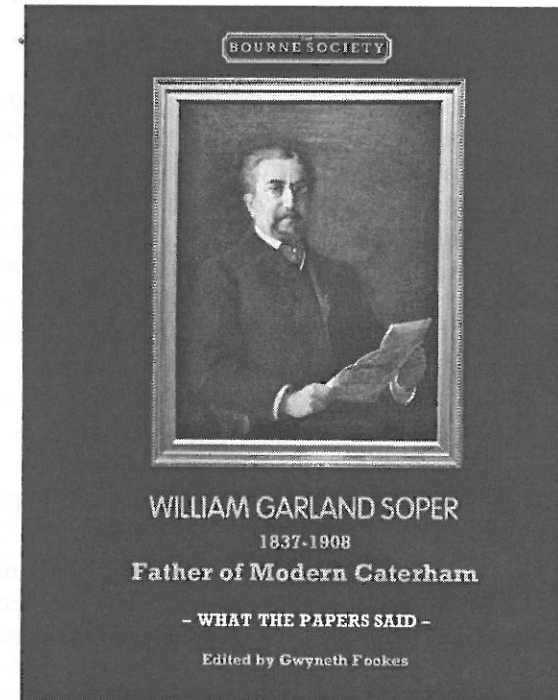
IN THIS MY FIRST contribution to 'Chairman's Corner' I should like to share with members news of new initiatives in the Society, but first of all commend all the hard work put in by members in our various special interest groups and at public events.

Our recent run of appearances at local summer Fairs went very well, in favourable weather for a change, and sales of our publications were excellent, thanks to our team of volunteers. We always welcome members to come forward and take a part in helping to run our activities. Although we have nearly 2000 members, it would be nice if we could expand our core of 'active members', though we do appreciate the support every member gives through subscriptions and the purchase of publications, not to mention suggestions for new activities with a local history flavour. One way that the Bourne Society Council can encourage members to contribute their talents is to be more proactive in following up declared interests on applying for membership. Members should not get the impression that the Society's special interest groups are the personal fiefdom of particular individuals, e.g. the Pub history Group!

I am keen to revive the **Photographic Group**, which for a number of years has not met as a group. However, members with photographic skills have participated in project teams such as those assembled for *Village Histories* and for postcard scanning. With the recent purchase of an Apple MacBook computer for photographic use, we now have additional tools to repurpose our digital photographic assets for the benefit of members, through illustrated audio-visual talks using iMovie, our website, and photo search facilities at events such as the forthcoming new members' and distributors' evening. We still have much material requiring scanning, including photos on the collection of display boards for the Pub History Group that I built up over the years. There is much interest in a 'Then & Now' approach to our local history photography, and I am keen to use the 'Places' facility on the Mac to locate our photographs on maps. New 'Then & Now' photography using GPS-enabled cameras is a major project that I would like to launch this year. I look forward to hearing from members who would like to be involved in these new ventures. Finally, I am starting an **appeal for local photographs**, other than postcards, found in family collections showing events, wartime themes, etc. Please get in touch if you would be willing to share your material with members and a wider audience of local historians.

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NEW BOURNE SOCIETY PUBLICATION



This 105 page, fully illustrated book, edited by the Bourne Society's Vice-President Gwyneth Fookes, details the life of William Garland Soper, an extraordinary man, widely regarded as the father of modern Caterham. It also covers the restoration of his grave and celebration of his life in 2008, and his family home, 'Harestone' in Harestone Valley Road, now under threat of redevelopment. Available for £7.00 + £2.00 p.p. from Derek Neal, Publications Co-ordinator, 21 Park Road, CATERHAM, CR3 5TB. [Tel: 01883 348100].

BOURNE SOCIETY WEBSITE

The Bourne Society's website may be visited at—

www.bourne-society.org.uk

Emails may be sent to the Society at bournesociety@inbox.com