

row over mis-use of army equipment. Perhaps we should not have experimented by sending music over the army wavebands!

One football match we attended was when Caterham played a Dutch team. Various local dignitaries attended, plus a contingent from Holland. The pipe and drum band from the Guard's depot were there to play the National Anthem, but the band did not have the music of the Dutch anthem – we rescued them by softly playing a record of it in our tent to the musicians who very quickly picked it up and were able to greet the Dutch officials with their own anthem.

It was at one of these charity fetes, either at 'Harestone' or 'Santa Tecla', that I first met Bill Newman, later to be one of the founders of the Bourne Society. We not only performed in Caterham, I can also remember operating in the Rotary Field in Purley, Parsons Pightle in Old Coulsdon, in Warlingham Village Hall and as far away as Epsom. I can remember helping the infant Caterham Players with sound effects at the Stafford Hall before they moved to my old school, now the Miller Centre. A regular evening was as a disc jockey for the Caterham Gramophone Circle which met at Court Lodge, Caterham. As well as monthly meetings they presented a Gilbert and Sullivan evening each year, which I never saw as I was shut in another room with just the turntable and records, watching for the cue light. All this was before the days of long playing records – a 10 inch record played for about 2½ minutes and a 12 inch for about 4 minutes so one had to be nifty in changing records.

### **Memories of the early 1950s**

*by Norman W T Skinner*

During the first half of that decade I was an indentured apprentice compositor learning the craft of setting lead type by hand at the Hillside Press in Godstone Road, Whyteleafe. I lived with my widowed mother at Caterham on the Hill. My daily journey to work on an ancient 'Hercules' pedal cycle and later a 1936 150cc 'Coventry Eagle' motor cycle must have nearly worn a groove in Whyteleafe Hill.

I recall my daily passing of the main gate of Kenley aerodrome with its guard room on the left and sick quarters on the right. The road into the camp past the parade ground was called Victor Beamish Avenue, if I remember correctly. On fine summer mornings I was aware of a lovely perfume wafting upon the air. I was to become only too familiar with it during my National Service in the RAF. It was the regulation lavender floor polish applied to the regulation brown linoleum in the countless gleaming billet floors.

Whyteleafe level crossing had four separate gates all having to be opened independently. There were, over the years, a variety of crossing keepers/ticket collectors, but one that sticks in my mind was a large and friendly Canadian with a natural speaking voice that could only be described as 'very loud'. Returning commuters were treated to a 'Welcome to Whyteleafe' and comments on the weather and anything else of interest as their tickets were examined. The sound of the outgoing train accelerating away never stood a chance against the stentorian transatlantic accent of this cheerful man.

At lunch times some of us printers would cross the A22 to 'Curley's Caff'. This establishment was run by an ex army cook. He offered a variety of dishes, though I seem to remember that when asked what we would like, the reply was often 'Egg-sausage-chips-and-beans-apple-pie-and-custard-and-a-cup-of-tea-please' – all in one breath. It cost 1s.4d.

One of the regulars in 'Curley's' was a coalman known as 'Yorky'. His accent and nickname left one in no doubt as to his county of birth. One day he was complaining over the decision of his employer to abandon the horse and cart deliveries of coal in favour of a Bedford lorry. As 'Yorky' pointed out to all, 'The horse knows the round, and whilst I deal with the money he will move up a couple of houses to the next customer on his own. This beats clambering in and out of the Bedford'. In common with many manual workers of the time 'Yorky' wore his old army battledress blouse to work. I remember his regimental curved shoulder flash with 'Sherwood Foresters' on it. This practice of wearing odd items of service clothing seemed to be permitted provided that

badges of rank were removed. There were still shortages in certain areas and work clothing was one of them.

In 1951 I joined the 'London Society of Compositors' – apprentices' section. There were several thousand members but my union number was 948. This was due to the practice of re-cycling the numbers of members who had passed on. If one spoke at one of the general meetings in London it was customary to give one's name, number, chapel and company in which you were employed. I well remember a very well spoken man, a Mr Kipling, a frequent speaker, who would commence with 'Kipling, number one, Father of the Chapel, Composing, Waterlows, Park Royal, gentlemen....' I wonder how many before him had been 'number one'.

My home in Roffes Lane, Caterham, was built in 1881 and had no electricity until the 1960s. There was no question of us having a television. We did have a battery operated radio and a battery operated record player. It was a world of gas-light in the house and an oil lamp or candle in the outside toilet with a large copper in the kitchen for the Monday washing. I was a member of 450 Squadron Air Training Corps at RAF Kenley. At one time I was in the squadron rifle shooting team and took part in a competition shoot at Bisley on the National Rifle Association's ranges there. One Thursday after our evening parade at Kenley I was given a .303 calibre Enfield No. 4 rifle and cycled home with it slung across my back. It had no canvas cover and stood in the corner of the front room until Saturday morning when I met the other team members in their uniforms with their rifles slung over their shoulders at Caterham station to set off for Bisley. No one batted an eyelid. Our team of four came home with 'runners up' bronze medals.

I visited the Festival of Britain twice and was captivated by it, in particular the great 'Dome of Discovery'. I seem to remember that an angry political wrangle surrounded the Festival. 49 years later – another dome with the same parties trading acrimonious exchanges. Perhaps anything with a dome involved in it brings out the worst in our politicians.

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## **Memories of 1956**

*by Peter Skuse*

**IT WAS USUALLY** myself and Clifford, or me and Norm, and occasionally Bruce would come too; sometimes Ian and Donald would be with us, and once Harry came too, but he was keener on Crystal Palace Park, with its lakes and ponds and children's playgrounds. We walked down the road to the bus stop and got a penny ride on a 137 to Streatham Hill, where a walk along the Parade and the High Road to St Leonard's church got us to the 115 route, for a bus to Kenley. Or we might go to Clapham Common and get a 118 direct to Streatham Common and pick up the 115 from there. But it was the 115 that ran into the country, that held the magic, that took us away from suburbia.

We never took the box-cart up on Riddlesdown – it was a trek up the side of the scarp from the Eastbourne road at Kenley, to get to the top! So we used shanks's pony, all of us, as we never shirked walking, and ten miles held no fears of exhaustion for a 12 year-old. Did our parents warn us off going out for the day with our sixpenn'orth of broken biscuits from the grocer and our banana, apple, and sandwiches? Yes – but only not to take sweets from strangers, and that was the literal warning, never explained, and equally never understood by us. Indeed, once on a train with my Mum & Dad, nearing Exeter, a lady to whom Mum had been talking offered round a bag of sweets and I politely refused, only to be met with Mum's astonishment at this unique response. I was probably in my 30s before I realised what Mum was trying to warn me of.

We never patronised the shops in Kenley at the start of our walking exploration: they were on the other side of the road from where we alighted, and besides, we were anxious to get up on the slopes and play cowboys, or explorers, or nature-watchers. But on the return, they always got our custom, for a cold drink (shopkeepers would dispense orange squash diluted with water for threepence, or for fourpence we might treat ourselves to a blackcurrant!). We'd say hallo jauntily to anyone we might meet, but we rarely saw other people; this was partly because we spent some time stalking in the wooded areas, each other or imagined rabbits, and partly because I had insisted that some areas

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