

## Mike Robinson's Memories of Eckington

I was born in the house, then called, Eckington Manor in 1946, which has now become part of a renowned cookery school and restaurant. I think my parents moved there during WW 2, renting not buying. We lived there till 1953 when we moved to Switzerland for a year, my mother was Swiss.



These are some of the memories of the people and events in my life during my time in Eckington, up to the age of seven. I wonder if any of the following resonates with anybody either still living in Eckington or who might have moved elsewhere like myself.

The Rev Mallam was the Eckington Vicar when we lived there, and his family were frequent visitors to our house. I still remember as vicar they used to have these fancy dress parties at the vicarage. In later years when I was living in Malvern and then in Pershore I used to give his daughter Anne lifts to London where I was an apprentice and she at drama school. Their one son, Marcus, I seem to remember was Officer Cadet of the year at Sandhurst, I was very impressed, as a kid, with the sword that was presented to him by the Queen which used to sit in the entrance hall of the vicarage. I hope I have my facts right about that.



Mr Bullford used to have a little grocery shop just up the road, from Eckington Manor where Drakes Bridge Road and Hammock Road meet.

I remember my Mum having to use coupons if we wanted sweets, as rationing was still in effect a longtime after the war, I suppose. I also remember going to the 'signal box', actually it was a big building, now demolished, at the railway crossing and helping the "station man" to pull the huge lever for the signals so the train could come through.

There used to be a carpentry shop (belonging to Perks Bros, Builders) just by the church. I remember my Dad had a toboggan made for me by them and when there was snow the one year he would put me on it and tie our dog to it and I would get pulled home.

Where the cookery school and restaurant is now, used to be a farm. I used to throw rotten apples at their cows when they were in the yard waiting to be milked, from the apple loft, which I think might be a flat now.

The other side of the house where I was born in was Mrs Violets, I think, thatched cottage, I cannot remember exactly, anyway she did not like me as I threw stones into her pond, she would shout at me and wave her arms, I was only 5 or 6. I remember the Kilminsters who lived in a cottage just down the road as he had this huge black Jaguar which was used, I think, as a taxi and funeral car in Eckington. Mrs Kilminster always had a cake for me when I popped in, I certainly did not throw anything at her, I knew where my jam was spread.

I remember the Webb family who had a house just down from the vicarage, they had a daughter called Lucinda, who got me into so much trouble because we used to smoke cigarettes in the chicken coop, my sister ratted on me and my mother beat me with the carpet beater, served me right.

I clearly remember having to gather at the war memorial with my Dad with all his medals on from WW 1 with many other ex-servicemen and villagers. Probably on Remembrance Day. I still have his medals.

Sometimes a nice old lady called Miss Tovey would come and look after my sister and I me, if my parents had to go out. She lived in a beautiful old house just off New Road, and later moved to an annexe of the vicarage.

I also remember going to watch TV at, I think, the Grey's thatched cottage (Wayside Cottage). They would let me watch "Andy Pandy", very few people had TV in those days.

On our return from Switzerland in 1954 my parents rented the cottage in Drakes Bridge Road for a couple of months overlooking the railway line prior to finding a house in Malvern. I remember very clearly there was very heavy snow that Christmas and I had great fun throwing snowballs at the fireman in the steam engine as the train went past.

I left England in 1970 for South Africa where I have lived ever since, presently in Cape Town, where I have my own photographic studio.

*Posted 3 March 2016*

---

## ECKINGTON EVACUEES by DOREEN JONES

Hi David,

I recently came across your excellent website for the village of Eckington during my search for an evacuee by the name of Muriel White and thought you might be interested in the attached photograph which was the batch of evacuees that I and my Brother were part of. We are not absolutely sure of the names but they are as follows.

Back row – Ken Tisley – unknown, unknown.

Middle row – Rosie Lee, unknown, unknown, Isobel Christie, unknown, Agnes.

Front Row – Muriel White, unknown, Laura Mulholland, Me Doreen Womersley, Bobby Miller, George Womersley.



I have also been trying to trace Doris Evans who was born in the village and was a close friend. Unfortunately I do not know their married surnames and I would be very grateful if anyone can enlighten me in this respect. I have been back to the village on several occasions but not for many years and the last time found it to be so completely changed I had difficulty in tracing my origins. I cannot remember the name of the road where I lived except that it led down to the river where the lock is. I was 6 years old and my Brother 4 years old when we came and I have happy memories of the 5 or so years that I lived in the village with a lady by the name of Mrs. Goode who unfortunately died at the time my first Son was born and my Mother

didn't tell me until some time after. Mrs. Nicklin (not sure of correct spelling) was the Teacher that helped me a great deal to pass the 11+ and I went to Tewkesbury Girls High School, for which I have been very grateful.

If anyone can be of help to me I would be pleased to correspond with them either by email doreendj@studioeveryone.co.uk - telephone: 01268-774931 – or my address is Doreen Jones, 120 Warwick Road, Rayleigh, Essex. SS6 8TF.

*Posted 1 March 2016*

---

## MEMORIES AND POEM FROM NICK MORGAN

Just looking at your excellent website. I grew up on Station Road in Eckington but left in 1979 to go to university and have lived in Yorkshire ever since but still think of Eckington as 'home' in many ways. It was a marvellous place to grow up, as children we used to spend all day along the river or down the Hammock or Pieceing. Miss Green at the village school was a birdwatcher and encouraged many of the children to take it up and remarkably nearly 50 years on I'm still an enthusiast so if anyone is still in contact please pass on my thanks! I wrote the poem below inspired by my time in the village.

<b>TWO RIVERS by Nick Morgan</b>	
<p>Now I live a (long) stone's throw from a river clear and swift where even the half-glimpsed slick, silver meteors of fish must find their own disguise.</p> <p>But I grew up on a slower stream whose waters, dark and deep, flowed seeming lifeless but for the ripples of Bleak or the muscular Chub, tugged to sit in bow-fronted cases. Nosing forever through the dry water weed of a waterless stream towards the dartboard and the bar.</p> <p>And that river's moated curve the limit of our young existence. From Nafford to Strensham, Clennage to Crensham, Tib Withies, Latchmore, Pike. All those lost-named meadows unkempt under summer plovers or pewtered by winter floods.</p>	<p>And on the farther bank, where a tumble of rank grass and meadowsweet met the shadow of the bridge, England's last Marsh Warblers babbled and scraped all the sounds of summer from their wide, frenetic gapes.....</p> <p>But recalling it now I hear only a regretful, slow lament. For a river has its course and water once past cannot return this way. Yet what it carried seems to gleam the brighter the further it drifts away</p>

*Posted 1 May 2014*

---

## EILEEN FINCHER AND THE DAY WAR BROKE OUT

The little wooden bungalow on the Defford/Strensham border was bought by my Grandfather David Yates, approximately in the late 1920s, so he could escape from Birmingham to go fishing. We all had many happy holidays there and my mother, brother and I were there the day war broke out on the 3rd of September 1939. Eileen's mother contacted her husband asking to be taken back to Birmingham. When he came, he told them they would be a lot safer in the bungalow than in Birmingham.

The bungalow is still in the family.



Posted 20 January 2014

---

## JUDITH'S ACCOUNT OF HER FATHER'S EARLY MEMORIES

I've been reading extracts from recent editions of the Eckington Village News, to my father Harold Checketts, until this June of Vala, Pass St who, now 93, lives in a residential home near me on the edge of the Peak District. He was fascinated by the letters from Madeleine Baines in the USA on behalf of her now deceased cousin Shelagh Farrell who arrived in Eckington during the war to escape the London bombing, and George Andrews now of New Zealand, which recounted their memories of Eckington during WWII.

My father was reminded that, between the ages of four and ten (1924 -1930), and at the time living in Drakes Broughton on his parents' farm at Walcot, he was taken on visits to his relatives the Welchs at Days Farm, Upper End. His uncle Arch(ibald) Welch at Days Farm had a three-wheeler Belsize Bradshaw car with two wheels in front and a two-stroke engine, in which he took his family (still well remembered in the village) and the young Harold off to Weston-super-Mare for trips. This was how dad first got to know Eckington, after the War settling there permanently.

In those early days Dad would also spend time at the other Welch family farm that Shelagh Farrell recalled over the road in the centre of the village, from where the family fetched their milk. He remembers his own mother making butter at Walcot and using the two butter pats described by Shelagh (we still have one of them), and also stamping the name of the farm actually onto the butter. He remembers that his "Aunt Rachel", one of the daughters at the Welchs abovementioned dairy farm across the main road from the church, had a beautiful raven-haired sister called Katherine who sadly died aged just fifteen. He remembers the Farrells, and the cider-making equipment in the barn at what eventually became Rachel's own farm. Dad also remembers the old Post Office in Eckington being a pub, and that The Bell used to be thatched.

Regarding George's enquiry about the pillbox on the Pershore side of the river, my father thinks it fell into ruin and was eventually taken down by the Council, mindful of the danger it could present to adventurous boys. But if anyone out there knows any different.....

Posted 15 September 2013

---

## UPDATE FROM GEORGE ANDREWS

Hello Lorraine, 31/05/2013

Thank you for your email.....yes, it's been a while but life goes on apace with the usual ups and downs, the trick at our age is to ensure we are more up than down. I am pleased to tell you that it seems to be working at this end and I hope that it is the same for you.

I hadn't visited the village website for some little while and I really have to say what a very fine job you have made of it. I spent a couple of very delightful hours poking around in it and having my memory jogged about all sorts of places and events. Good on you.

Oh, and I have to make a special mention of David's photographs. They are so evocative of the place that I remember. The one of the bridge in the morning mist immediately rolled back sixty odd years for me, it caught my breath and made me realise how little the river and the other natural features have changed. The floods

were a marvellous time for us boys, we were into it with anything that would float and in fact it was those early experiences on the river that eventually sent me to sea. Wonderful pictures, he has an excellent eye.

There used to be a World War Two concrete pillbox on the Pershore side of the river, tucked into the trees about ten yards back from the bridge, with a field of fire down toward the railway line. This was our command post and from there we despatched hundreds of Germans who were trying to infiltrate the countryside by boat. Our part in the winning of the war is little known and unsung but we have the quiet satisfaction of knowing that we did our bit. Do you know if our pillbox is still there, I can't see it on any of the pictures.



*David* - the pillbox George remembers (now in a sad state, unfortunately)

A lady called Maddie has been in touch with me from the States. I am aware of her family but only very vaguely however I will be pleased to give her whatever information I can muster. She is bound to make mention of people and events that will stir the old grey matter and one thing leads to another.

*Note: George's main story of life as an evacuee in Eckington is set out later on this page.*

Posted 15 September 2013

## MADELEINE'S STORY - AN EVACUEE IN ECKINGTON

Prompted by the death of my cousin Shelagh Farrell, I have been browsing your website of the village. Of interest to me is the house that backs onto the churchyard visible in a couple of your published photographs. It is where my cousin and her family lived at that time. I spent a year in Eckington as a refugee from the bombing in London. I was eight/nine years old enjoying my first real taste of village life. The village school had two classrooms and a playground. There was a dairy farm across the street from the church where my aunt got her milk and butter, fresh from the cow. I remember watching the farmer's wife busily using her wooden paddles to pat the butter and then carefully carrying a big white jug of milk with a bead weighted cover atop it back across the street.

From time to time American convoys came through the village from where to where I had no idea – the American soldiers looked smart in their uniforms and never minded tossing sticks of gum to us screaming kids calling out “Gotanygumchum?” .

The house at that time had a shop that fronted the street – my aunt sold china ware – similar to modern Fiesta ware. I later learned from my cousin that it was a former bakery and there was a trap door in the ceiling through which flour was let down for the baker to use. There was a stone wall along the street, still there I see, fragrant with wallflowers then. Behind the wall was the orchard and behind that a pigsty and a somewhat dilapidated barn. In those days, the sun always shone, the flowers were scented, the meadows going towards Defford were full of springtime primroses and violets. That's childhood for you – in the midst of the terrors of war, Eckington was a delightful oasis, at least that's how it seemed to this child at that time.

Madeleine Baines, Washington, USA

If anyone has any memories of that time or knows anything of the evacuees, send us an email to [davidbainbridge@idnet.com](mailto:davidbainbridge@idnet.com) and we will forward the information to Madeleine.

Posted 29 May 2013

---

## PETER MARKS seeks information about a distant relative

As part of my family history research I am trying to find details of a **SARAH FOWLER** who was born in Eckington about 1817 (the census records vary on the actual year of birth). Sarah Fowler remained unmarried and seems to have spent most of her working life as a cook in a large country house in Hampshire. If anybody is able to provide a more specific birth date and details such as her parents/siblings, I would be extremely grateful.



If anyone has any information to help Peter in his search please send him an email at: [pkmarks@hotmail.com](mailto:pkmarks@hotmail.com)

Posted 1 February 2013

---

## GEORGE ANDREWS' EXPERIENCES AS AN EVACUEE IN ECKINGTON

(originally posted on the previous version of this website around 2005/6)

It's a small world, which has become even smaller since the Internet. I am very pleased to have made contact with you folk in the village, my first since 1949.

I was an evacuee living in the hostel in Jarvis Street with about 20 other children and have some very fond memories of Eckington and the people who lived there.

I have been in contact with Liz and we've come up with several people that I remember who still live in Eckington and I would be very pleased to hear from anyone who might remember the hostel or me. I live in New Zealand now and have recently taken up email – [blunderbuss@xtra.co.nz](mailto:blunderbuss@xtra.co.nz)

I hope you will enjoy reading some of my memories of that time in your village.

### **An echo of 1947.**

Although it is almost sixty years ago, he remains firmly in my mind for two reasons. The first was his invitation to have tea, as it was then called, with his mother and himself, his father being away at work. As we sat at the table and talked, his mother popped out into the kitchen on some errand and he passed me a plate on which sat a very small piece of cheese. Now, I had never tasted cheese but with one quick bite I ravenously consumed, as I later discovered to my dismay, the entire weekly cheese ration for three people. I still feel guilty about that.

The second reason, and most important is because of a Christmas carol. But before I begin, let me tell you about him. Let's call him John. He was a small boy, at that time under four feet, age about seven, very quiet and rather timid. He was new to the village and had been sat next to me in class (we had two seater desks in those days). His parents had recently been appointed caretakers at Woollas Hall, a house at the base of Bredon Hill some three to four miles east of the village. Daily, he would walk to school and back. On rainy days he was sometimes a little late, and if the weather was really inclement he sometimes would not appear at all. This was pretty much accepted practice as some children walked relatively long distances from the more out lying areas.

He had joined the school just as we were about to put on the annual school play, an event in which the teachers liked to involve everyone. This was an activity in which

the girls took delight but was much less well regarded by the boys. However, things were soon sorted out, with the older children taking the main roles such as kings and queens, dukes and magicians etc. The younger kids played fairies and other minor roles and the inevitable reluctant boys of the remainder, probably not best suited to perform in school plays, were cast as a band of Goblins. As I had a loud voice, I was made leader of this band, and John took up his hesitant place beside me. During certain parts of the play, our job as goblins was to frighten away the good fairies. Poor John wouldn't have frightened a rabbit let alone our robust village fairies, and as we sang our song "Goblins bold are we, a lawless band and free, and just for spite we hate what's right, we are bad as bad can be", he hung his head in shame and embarrassment and no doubt wished that the earth would open and swallow him up. He found it torture. Mercifully, it was soon over. There was only one performance and as that was played to mainly the village parents, it received a rousing reception and declared a great success.

The school play over, then came Christmas and the holidays. December of 1946 was wet but not particularly cold and this continued over into January 1947. As the month progressed however it gradually became colder and colder then, toward the end of the month, it started to snow. This wasn't the pretty Christmas card snow, it was serious stuff. It snowed and snowed and snowed for 26 consecutive days. The temperature fell and continued to fall. All this was accompanied by severe gales and caused deep snow drifting. Drifts of twenty feet were recorded in the west midlands and Wales. Most minor roads were impassable with many communities isolated. It had become an unremitting and harsh winter and many people died. On top of this much of the wartime rationing was still in place (we were only two years away from the war) and there was a coal shortage. For good measure, the railway people went on strike. Well, people are resilient and try to get on with life. From memory food and fuel were shared, pathways through the snow were dug along streets with everyone mucking in to help. I remember that we kids enjoyed the disruption to routine, but then we did not have the responsibility of dealing with the consequences. I am not sure if the school closed completely, but I remember for a time the role was much reduced and we were encouraged to group around the stove (coke and coal fired in those days). Children from the main part of the village ie, Hacketts Lane, Pass st., Jarvis St., Church and Bunn Street could reach school relatively easily but for those further out, it was much more difficult and quite a few were neither seen or expected until the weather broke.

As I said, it is almost sixty years since this episode and memory can play tricks, but what is not in doubt is that around the fifth or sixth day of that great storm, with a blizzard howling outside, a knock came at the school door, and there, covered in snow stood John's father with a very, very cold and bedraggled John beside him. Well, everyone was absolutely amazed. To walk down from Woollas Hall in that weather was a very fine feat and the whole school broke into spontaneous applause. The pair were warmed with hot drinks and a seat by the stove and I believe that arrangements were made for John to stay with a family in the village until the worst was over. Well winter ended, as of course it always does, time passes, life resumes its routines and incidents like this vanish into time. But this Christmas, as you sing that beautiful old carol "Good King Wenceslas", read the words of the third verse carefully and spare a thought for John and his father. Perhaps you don't have the words to hand, here they are. "Sire, the night is darker now and the wind grows

stronger, fails my heart I know not how, I can go no longer. Mark my footsteps good  
my page, tread thou in them boldly, thou shalt find the winter's rage freeze thy blood  
less coldly".

That's the second reason that I remember John.

GEORGE ANDREWS

RE-POSTED 15 September 2013

---