

# Memories Of Bidford, 1950 onwards.

By Bob Marshall

## My Earliest days

I was born on Thursday, May 25, 1950 May at 7 Steppes Piece, Bidford on Avon. As I was told later, it rained all of that day. My parents were Walter and Doris Marshall. My father was a ganger on the railway and he worked between Broome Junction and Harvington, and Broome Junction and Alcester. My mother was a housewife and I had two older sisters, Doreen and Muriel. My grandparents, William and Agnes Marshall lived at house called Copernic in Victoria Road. My grandfather had been a regular soldier in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. He had fought in the Boer war and the first world war, reaching the rank of company Sergeant Major.

After the war he became publican of the Kings Arms in Beoley Road Redditch and then in 1932 at the Golden Cross, at Ardens Grafton. My grandmother had worked Masons Arms in the high Street, Bidford. My mother's parents were Albert and Florence Reeves and they lived in Victorian cottages at the bottom of Alcester Road now called Waterloo Road. That side of the family originated from county Cork in Ireland.

Steppes Piece where I was born was built in the 1930s and consists of 30 houses. Many are now privately owned but in those days they all belonged to the rural district Council. During my early years, the houses were occupied by the following families;

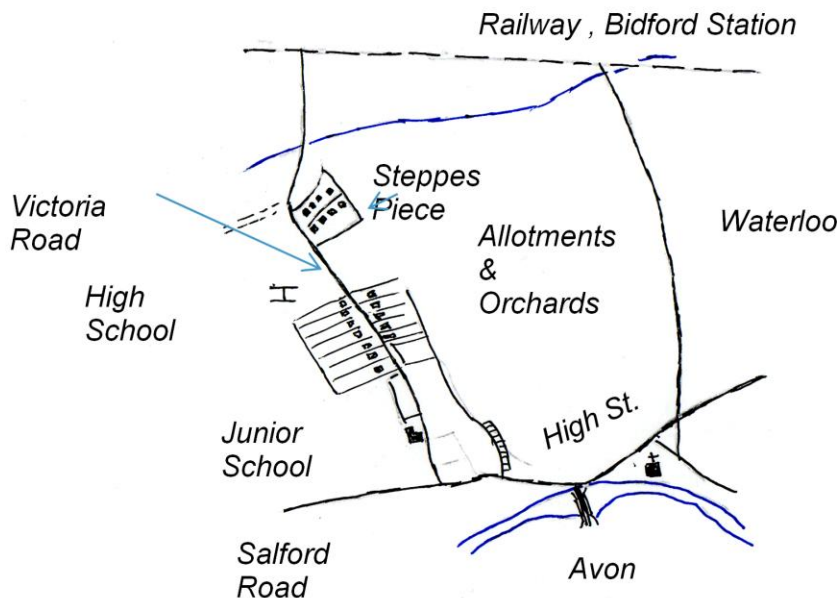
1. Bert and Renne Horne
2. Sid and Mrs Reade.
3. Mr and Mrs Nicholls.
4. Mr and Mrs Wright
5. Harold and Hilda Moore, Daughters; Jean and Joan
6. Mr and Mrs Higley.
7. The Marshall family.
8. Den and Joe Liddell, daughter Ann, son Raymond.
9. Paddy and Dolly Vernon and old Mrs Vernon.
10. Sid and Millie Bennett, sons John and Colin.
11. Charlie and Elsie Stevens, son Paul.
12. Dennis and Mary Lamb, daughter Leslie, Sons Ian and Tim.
13. Ernest and Mrs Hale
14. Harry and Millie Vernon, daughter Pat, son Keith
15. Mr and Mrs Wilson.
16. Frank and Mrs Bott, son Dennis.
17. Reuben and Mabel Allen, daughter Margaret, son John.
18. Harold and Mrs Norris, daughters Catherine and Pat, son Tony.
19. Bill and Maude Oliver.
20. Bill and Mrs Winnie Churchley, daughter June, sons Peter and Barry.
21. Vicky, Stan and Jack Careless and their mother.
22. Ben and Mrs Easthope, son David, daughters PaM and Wendy.
23. Mrs Day.
24. Mr and Mrs Bubb.
25. Mr and Mrs Bryan.
26. Mr and Mrs Butcher with 16 children
27. Mr and Mrs Bennet.
- 28.
29. Mr and Mrs Shorey, son Michael.
30. Mr and Mrs Wilson, son Garth.

The top of the Steppes Piece was the circle which was where Paddy Vernon used to park his lorry. The only people in the early 50s I remember with their own cars were Bert Horne, Sid Read, John Allen, and Bill Churchley. I'm not sure about numbers 20 to 30. Ernest Hale, who worked for Moore

brothers as an agricultural labourer had use of their blue van. At the bottom of the road was a green area with gas lamp on it. Facing you was the home of local builder Sam and Mrs Slaughter; their children I remember where Brian, Sid, Bob and Mary but I think they had other daughters. They had a black Labrador call dog called Gyp who often came to our house and would lie under the table when we had tea.

At the bottom of our garden was the farm owned by Bill and Mrs Paddock. I knew their four sons, Tom, John, Michael and Martin. I know they had daughters but I never knew any of these, I believe there was a Jean and a Molly. The entrance to the farm was on Victoria Road and as you went in the pigsties were to your left. We used to climb on the wall to see the baby piglets. I remember a large boar escaping one day and Mr Paddock chasing it up Steppes Piece. To the right of the entrance was the house and then the chicken houses. I remember going with my mum to buy eggs from Mrs Paddock. The yard with the office, barns and sheds were to the left. Then you had the land stretching nearly as far as Alcester Road on the right, but only one field on the left, after that the land was owned by the Moores. The boundary was and still is a footpath running from Westholm Road to Broom Road.

Preschool, my memories are mainly lost in the mists of time although certain things I still recall. As a child I could look out of the front bedroom window and just about see the goods train as it steamed up or down, between Stratford and Broom Junction. I can also remember going pea picking at paddocks with my mum and a lot of the ladies from Steppes Piece. I can still remember the smell of the oil and grease of the tractor and its trailer which was used to pick up the nets of peas, to take to the yard and to be loaded on the lorry for market. I remember going to see a circus which was held in the field on the opposite side of the road to the Big Meadow. I remember the lions couldn't perform as they were too angry that night; the clowns kept everyone amused though.



**Schematic Plan of Bidford  
1955**

## Early Days at School

I started school in September 1955 and my first two years were spent at the High School. The infants School wasn't big enough for all the children at that time. My teacher in the first year was Miss Wilson. She was a lovely lady and lived in a cottage in Kings Lane, Broome. I remember mostly learning our times tables and the alphabet, parrot fashion.

My second year was in one of the wooden classrooms. (By the time I went back as a high school pupil it had become the art room). My teacher in the second year was Mrs Creswick who later became Mrs Johnson. My final year at infant school was in the school at the bottom of Victoria Road. My teacher then was Mrs Noise. She and her husband, who was headmaster at the junior school, lived in the schoolhouse which was attached to the school. I used to go home to my lunch but can still remember the awful taste of school milk and I have never been able to drink milk on its own since. In the last year I had my only ever acting role in the nativity play. At first I was one of the wise men, but was elevated to an Angel by Mrs Creswick for forgetting my lines. Then, during the live show in front of the parents, my wings fell off! I was destined never to be Richard Burton.

An incident, not school-related at that time, took place at my grandparents in Victoria Road. At the back of the house, they had an orchard. Next to them lived Jack Salisbury whose land ran parallel. One day in the summer months, Jack had a bonfire close to the wire fence. Myself and Chris Hunt, the son of Roland Hunt the butcher, started shoveling hot ash into my grandfathers orchard. The result was we set the orchard on fire. One of the fireman who attended was Jack Salisbury himself as he was a retained fireman at Bidford. Later in life I would also become a fireman.

Having survived this, I started life at the junior school. As previously mentioned, Mr Noise was the headmaster. My teacher in year one was Miss Fox who had 50 of us in her class. She came from Great Alne and used to run the guides and brownies in Bidford. Year two was Mrs Wheeler, year 3 was Mrs Jay and her daughter Catherine was in the class as well. In year four we had Mrs Allcock. The fourth year was split and some of the children were taught by Mr Masterson (known as Molly). He also did music and took us boys for games.

Before writing about what I remember of junior school I will see how many of my class I can recall.

- |                       |                                      |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Myself.            | 11. Tim Manders                      |
| 2. Chris Hunt.        | 12. Roger Bateman.                   |
| 3. Dennis Richardson. | 13. Peter Mills                      |
| 4. Ian Lamb.          | 14. Colin Baylis                     |
| 5. Brian Cooper       | 15. Roy Nash                         |
| 6. Mick Bradford.     | 16. Terry Raybon                     |
| 7. Mick Wakefield.    | 17. Mick Stanley                     |
| 8. John Bennett.      | 18. Malcolm Roberts                  |
| 9. Graham Hunter.     | 19. Richard Moxon                    |
| 10. Ian Munford.      | 20. Alan Ballard                     |
| 21. Jonathan Heath    | 32. Christine Bennett                |
| 22. Jayne Holton      | 33. Trudy Moor                       |
| 23. Jennifer Jones    | 34. Jackie Manders                   |
| 24. Eileen Simmons    | 35. Ann ? (parents owned White Lion) |
| 25. June Macalease    | 36. Fay Arrowsmith                   |
| 26. Catherine Jay     | 37. Jenny Hampton                    |
| 27. Ruth Bacon        | 38. Patsy Fagan                      |
| 28. Pam Condry        | 39. David Manders                    |
| 29. Melvin Pulham     | 40. Richard Higley                   |
| 30. Mick Blackborough | 41. Jenny Jones                      |
| 31. Gordon Richards   | 42. John Talbot                      |

## **Junior school life.**

I remember going on four school outings. They were to Bourton on the Water, Chedworth Roman villa, Whipsnade zoo, and Windsor Castle. Many of the boys were in the church choir, myself included ;the choirmaster was John Masterson and his wife used to play the organ. Choir practice was on Friday night and we used to do two services on Sundays plus weddings on Saturdays. I also remember Remembrance Sunday when the first and second War veterans came in with all their medals on.

We also had a school choir when I was in year four. We sang in a contest at Stratford Hippodrome. The two songs we sang were Jerusalem and the Bonnie Banks of Loch Lomond. I can't remember if we won, or not. I do remember that we went and returned on the Stratford Blue bus. We also had a jam and cream tea followed by a walk along the river before going to sing.

One incident I also remember was one winter when we were told not to play on the ice. A pool used to form at the corner of the playing field and would ice over. This one time I couldn't resist and ended up falling through the ice and getting soaked. Rather than own up and get into trouble I sat and shivered for the next two lessons in wet trousers and wellies and I got home at lunchtime. Never again did I venture on the ice. I also remember sitting in the classroom in year four listening on the radio as America launched its first man into space. Most of the memories at infants and junior school were very happy. Apart from the milk the only other blot on those days was the annual visit of the school dentist. It was many years after leaving school before I was ever brave enough to visit another one!

## **Home life.**

As for Home life at this time, it always seemed to be full of things to do. As kids our main play area at Steppes Piece was the circle at the top of the road. Here was played many a test match and cup final. That was until the ball went into Charlie Stevens Garden, more than once. What a collection he must have had. He had a lovely garden and worked for Sir Raymond Brookes who was head of GKN and lived in Grange Road. Our other playing areas were the brook, Moore's orchard, the BRS garage and sometimes the railway. One of the dares we used to do was to walk along the parapet of the railway bridge.

I also helped my father in the garden as in those days most of the food and vegetables were grown at home. We had apple and plum trees, strawberry plants, raspberry canes, and a gooseberry bush together with all the usual vegetables. My father grafted mistletoe onto the trees and used to send some to market with the Paddocks. We also used to send boxes of Lily of the Valley when it was in season. We eventually had our own cockerels and chickens and I can remember many a pet becoming a Sunday meal.

As a child I remember the Vernons having first television up the road. My father and I used to go on a Saturday evening and watch the Range Rider, Hopalong Cassidy and the Lone Ranger. Then my father would stay for Dixon of Dock Green. When my grandad Marshall died about 1959 he left some money so we then had our first TV at home

After-school my Mum used to meet me sometimes and we would go to my grandparents at Alcester Road. They didn't have the electric and I remember my grandad lighting the gas with a taper from the fire. There was no hot water and the toilet was up the garden and the toilet paper was newspaper on string. However the toilet did flush unlike my other grandparents one in Victoria Road. Like Rodney Crompton, I also remember the smell from the lorry which collected the buckets. However my grandparents in Victoria Road did have electricity. I am pleased to say that at Steppes Piece we had both gas and electric, bathroom and a flush toilet. We also had a coal heated copper which was where my mum would do the washing on a Monday morning. My job when I was able, was to turn the handle on the mangle to squeeze the water out and help hang the washing on the line.

Holidays were down to Brighton by steam train or days to London. We would go from Broom Junction to Evesham to catch the main line express to Paddington. In those days everything was very much Family orientated especially at Christmas. This was the one time of the year when we

used the front room for a whole week. I can still feel the heat from the roaring coal and log fires. However my bedroom was not the same. We didn't have central heating in those days and the ice would be on the inside of the windows during the winters. A hot water bath was your only luxury.

## **Shops and Deliveries**

What of the shops in the village? Firstly, on Mondays a van would call up Steppes Piece and parked outside our house. It was an old NFS hose laying lorry that had been converted into a mobile household shop. You can buy anything from soap to vinegar, scouring pads to brass, and the list went on. It came from the Littletons and on the front was painted ON-WARDS and the man who owned and drove it was Les Ward. He used to wear a satchel for collecting the money and giving the change. Other home deliveries were the Co-op bread van and the Co-op Coalman. The coal was delivered by Fred Salisbury and Gerry Fagan, an Irishman. The milk was delivered by Reg Parnham and I seem to remember by Fred and Nelly Wilkes. On Saturdays we had bread delivered from Dunnington by Cyril Addy who worked for Stanfords. The other caller, also every Saturday night, was Turner's fish and chip van. I believe they came from Badsey.

If I wanted sweets or we were short of something then I would be sent to George Trafford's shop which was located where Queensway now stands. I remember well the Smith's crisp with the little wrapped blue bag containing the salt in every package. Also the tins of biscuits and rows of sweet jars. A home delivery I nearly forgot was on a Thursday when Darville and Baker used to deliver bottles of pop and certain bottled beers.

For the main shopping we used the co-op. Bill Ballard was the manager. I remember Albert Higley on the meat counter and Peggy Wilks working in the shop. Next door was the drapery department with offices upstairs. Then came the butchers which was run by Les Ward from Broom, who took it over when the co-op closed. We got other bits and pieces from Noakes and Crafts, Ray Selby was manager here, also working there were Nancy Weston, May Pricket and Dennis Malin. Our fish we got from Whiting's Fish shop and Alec was also a special police sergeant. As much knitting was done in those days, my mother got her wool from Mrs Hutchings wool and needlework shop.

If I was at my grandparents in Alcester Road I would sometimes be sent to Wrights radio and TV shop to take or fetch accumulators, which when charged ran our radio I was given 3d for going and used to spend this at Frouds shop in the High street. Our newspapers and my comics were delivered by Sweetzers and I remember the Alvin twins from Salford were the paper boys. On Saturday night I used to go and get the Sports Argus for my father which I remember was pink. Sunday papers were brought around by a chap called Wally Gill. The other shops I remember were the two butchers shops. One was owned by Roland Hunt and the other by Fred Pricket. There was Freda Houghtons vegetable shop and Mr and Mrs Davis at the chemist, Miss Jones at the paper shop and Morgan's newsagents.

There were three garages at that time, Moores at the bottom of high street and on the opposite side was Cromptons. Then at the top of the high street was that Co-op garage where Tom Houghton worked and he was also the officer in charge at Bidford fire station.

The pubs were the Plough, the Bull, the Fishermans Rest, the White Lion, the Masons Arms and the Pleasure Boat. Sunday evenings I used to go to the Fishermans Rest for a Vimto and a packet of crisps with my parents.

To get to the village we would use the path at the top of Steppes Piece that led into Westholme Road where we would pass Vaudins garage as it became. Then halfway down you would cut through Wilkes field. In the right of the field was the council tip and near to it was the scout hut.. John Masterson ran the scouts in the village. In the rest of the field were the Wilkes cows. Then you cut down into Chapel Alley and came out into the High Street opposite the pleasure boat pub. On the corner on the left side was Fred Pricket's butchers shop. Also down chapel alley was the Methodist hall and I remember it being badly damaged by fire in the late 50s. Another incident involving the Fire Brigade was the rescue of Alan Mumford who got stuck in the middle of the river. One always knew if the fire engine was out, as the siren would sound both day or night.

The doctors I remember in my early days are Drs. Murray, Doherty and Gillbride. Eventually they were joined by Dr Cavanagh and then Dr Cox. The surgery was part of Dr Murray's house in Victoria Road.

## Moving to the High School

So in 1961 it was time to move to the High School. I remember the first day when having been top dogs at Junior School we were then nervous newbies at the big school. We huddled as a group in the playground as did kids from Welford, Salford and Quinton. As first years we were lined up and split into three classes, 1A, 1B, and 1C. I was in 1A and my form teacher was Miss Kilvert the English teacher. We christened her Killer Kilvert but she was okay if you did your work and your handwriting was good. She would certainly kill me now for the state of mine. So I will now give a list of the staff as I remember them during my days at Bidford high.

Archibald Savage,	Headmaster
Mrs Perry,	Deputy Head, English literature
Miss Laura Kilvert,	English
Mr Bob Wright,	History
Walter "Danny" Crow,	Maths
Miss Moira Alison,	Geography, girls PE
Mr D Rooney,	French
Mr Doug Partridge,	Sports and games (Later John Neil)
Trevor Gallagher	Woodwork
Peter Cooper,	Science
David "Nodge" Gardener,	Rural science
Mr Jones,	Geography, Arts, Rugby
Miss Cybil Free,	Current affairs
Mrs Davies,	Music and arts
Mr Carter,	Metalwork (later Alex" juke box" Jeary)
Mrs Carter,	Needlework
Mrs Gardener,	Domestic science
Ms Sheila Wilds,	General subject
Miss Webb,	General subjects (Later married Mr Cooper)

I remember in the first year the school was turned into a building site. A new science block, two classrooms and a new hall/gym were built. The corridor outside our classroom was shut off so the only way in or out was through a window. Wooden steps were placed outside and inside. Not good when it was raining. In today's health and safety obsession and sue everything culture this would never have been allowed. In the early 1960s Bidford had a reputation as being one of the best schools in Warwickshire. This was due in no small way to Archie Savage and his dedicated staff. House competitions were keenly fought during the year. House points could be gained for academic work as well as sports achievements. Monday morning assembly one would see the four shields with the points next to them. The four houses when I was a pupil were: Scott (My house) the colour yellow, Shakespeare– Blue, Dugdale – red and Drayton– green. I will say without too much bias that Scott was certainly the better house on the sports field. We had a massive sports field and well-equipped gymnasium. Sports played were football, cricket, rounders, netball, basketball, rugby, tennis and athletics.

I feel a wide range of subjects caters for everyone, whether academic or practical. I must say woodwork and other practical subjects were not from me. History all day would have been just fine! We didn't have many trips out from school though. I remember we went to the GKN factory as part of the geography course. I knew then that a factory would never be for me. We cycled, again with the geography course, to Oversley Wood about 6 miles. About 30 of us; again can you imagine today's health and safety rules. The other highlight was a trip to Twickenham for the England versus Wales schoolboys Rugby game. Very little else of note happened during my time at the school. The one possible exception was the awful winter of 1963. Several pupils were injured sliding in the ice and a couple having broken arms. However we were not stopped from doing it.

Class included the following pupils and where they came from.

Myself – Bidford	Sandra Fisher– Welford
Graham Hunter– Bidford	Susanne Wright – Welford
Richard Higley – Bidford	Alan Rimmel– Welford
John Talbot– Hillborough	Pete Mills– Bidford
Wendy Marshall– Welford	Francis Gajny– Quinton
Carlo Sanseverino– Quinton	Janet Sabin – Welford
Jenny Jones– Grafton	Colin Baylis – Bidford
Jennifer Fay Jones– Alcester	Jeannette Hamer – Long Marston
Mick Burdon – Kings Coughton	Sandra Morrison– Quinton
Steve Higginson– Admington	Roy Gould– Binton
Barbara Hall– Quinton	Keith Ward– Salford Priors
Malcolm Roberts– Bidford	Joy Hackling – Salford Priors
Alan Ballard– Bidford	Olive Smith – Dunnington
Ted Foat– Salford Priors	Carol Meir – Ragley
Chris Hunt– Bidford	Linda Newman– Long Marston

Will be noted that out of the class of 30, only 8 of us came from Bidford. I also remember my last year at junior school. I came 13th in class and the previous 12 are all went to grammar school; they were split between Alcester, Shotton and Prince Henry's in Evesham.

### **First Jobs**

When I left school I really had no idea of what I wanted to do. I worked at Goodhalls garage in Evesham for two weeks. By the time I had paid bus fair it was hardly worth me going. So I left and started at Bidford garages on £3-6-00 a week. The big money in those days was to be found at Broom Mill so several of the lads went to work their. Others worked for Langstons on the land or local builders Coleman and Tyas.

The main highlight of our life was youth club on Friday evening at the Crawford hall. This was run by Jesse Moore a very dedicated youth worker. Besides the usual club night we went on trips and took part in County organised sports events. We had a good football side and athletics team. Other highlights were dances at the Crawford Hall, which are also used to have wrestling matches once or twice a year.

In 1969 I worked at Cottons Timber yard in Salford Road. This was run and owned by Cyril Warwick whose son Peter also helped with the running of the yard and workshop. In the same year I got my first taste at being a fireman by joining the station at Bidford. The OIC was Jack Moore and his "No.2" were Freddie Smith and Hugh Vaudin. I will remember one Sunday lunch time being called to a chimney fire at Salford Priors. A crew of six with Jack in charge sat waiting to move when suddenly Jack's wife, Mabel, came hurrying down the road with Jack's dinner on a plate. As we set off sirens and bells going Jack munched through his lunch. Happy days. So here we are arrived in 1970 and I think time for someone else to carry on Bidfords story. As for me I ended up doing 33 years as a prison officer at Long Lartin. That is another history in itself.

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