

A CANLEY KID

**By
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So I claim to be a Canley kid even though I was born in Larch Tree Ave, Tile Hill in the same year that Hitler took power in Germany...1933.

And the fact that I have lived on the other side of the world in Australia for the past 35 years(now 44yrs)

Why....cos I spent 15 years in Gerard Ave, Canley from the ages of 10 to 25, learning all about the mysteries of life, mateship, Wolf Cubs, soccer, table tennis, fighting, girls, dancing, bikes, motorbikes, cars, school, work, Highfield Rd., boozing, smoking, Di Di Mascio, music, libraries, fairs and a million other things you've all done...but I did it mostly in Canley.

Interested? Read on

In the course of this discourse I will be mentioning various people with whom I associated during my Coventry days. I will use first names mostly to avoid any embarrassment to them or their heirs cos at times it did get a bit 'hairy'. Those whom I feel would never be offended I will give their full names.

So if you recognise yourself in these pages, don't tell a soul...or write to my solicitor who has instructions to delay all actions till I depart this world which won't be very long the way I get thru red wine these days.

Firstly, a little background stuff

It all started at 3 Larch Tree Ave on Christmas day 1933 at approx.4pm. About 10 miles away in Nuneaton the famous Olympic athlete Basil Heatley entered the world at about the same time on this very same day. This fact alone has destroyed any faith I may have had about astrology and your fortunes of life being dependent on when & where you were born!

Larch Tree Ave was a blur of wet shitty nappies....I remember nothing. We lived in Fir Grove briefly, and Holly Grove and later moved nearer to town on the Stoney Stanton Rd., then to Leicester Causeway, and then to Harnall Lane West...all this was prior to the war. My father was a mover & a shaker.....he moved often and shook me a fair bit cos I was not a good little boy.

Memories started in Stoney Stanton Rd/Leics.causeway. We used to go to town on the tram which we caught just on the City side of Red Lane bridge. There I attended John Gulson School as a junior which was in Leicester Causeway. A favourite excursion was to the Swanswell where we would hire a row boat & paddle around the lake, even going on to the island to see the ducks. It was a popular place with many boats on the lake, swings & roundabouts, model boats, & even people trying to fish. My gran lived in Leics.Causeway too and kept chickens in the yard which I loved to feed. The houses by todays standards were

very poor & everyone seemed to have large families so there was always loads of uncles, aunts & cousins around to amuse us. We often slept on the floor in makeshift beds with half a dozen other kids giggling & laughing while the adults did whatever adults do downstairs. No TV of course in those days so folks made their own fun. A sad memory was that there was always someone dying...usually of consumption, but that's how it was then.

The canal was at the end of gran's garden and was the recipient of all sorts of junk together with an amazing number of poor people whose "balance of mind was disturbed"

We moved to Harnall Lane West into a house about 4 doors up from the brook. The brook was a very smelly brook but of endless fascination for small boys who made paper boats to see how far they would go.

It was while we were there that an insane cretin in Germany decided that Coventry would look better if it was bombed to bits.

You've all read the books & history of Coventry's ordeals of 1940 & 41 when we suffered many raids, 2 of which were extremely severe. Very many solid citizens suffered far worse than us.

It was normal to sleep downstairs under the kitchen table or under the stairs in the mistaken hope that they would save us from certain death. Often fully clothed & ready to evacuate at a moment's notice. The sirens would scream that weird unforgettable wail that stays with me 50 yrs on. Shouts of "put that light out" echoed round the streets as we adjusted the blackout curtains & prepared for another sleepless night. Dad would often disappear to carry out his fire watch duties, buckets of sand & water were at the ready to douse incendiaries as we waited for the enemy. I still remember the very distinctive pulse like throb of the German aircraft above us.

The area we lived in really copped a fair bit of attention, that is, between Foleshill Rd and Stoney Stanton. Many homes were destroyed or damaged, funnily enough, often on corners. Those pathetic bomb sites remained there for many years after the war....you could clearly see the tiled floors of hallways & wonder who had lived & maybe died there, or the ragged remains of a wallpapered wall, a picture rail, the outline of a stairway against a still standing wall.

The bangs & crashes were terrifying yet exhilarating in a way as we wondered who had just copped that last one. We were not far from the Cov. & Warcs. Hospital and I remember my father saying after one loud crash "That sounds like the hospital going".....it was.

The next day we wondered the smoking streets to see what was left and to collect shrapnel! Little boys traded it & boasted that their pieces were bigger than yours. If you found a piece with German writing on it that was definitely a valuable piece!

The "All clear" was sounded, a long continuous siren which brought relief and the chance of a sleep before school next day. We all had our gas masks which we had to carry everywhere in cardboard boxes strung over our shoulders. It is an easy effort of mind to recall the feel & smell of those masks even now. The sight of barrage balloons was commonplace too and we boys delighted in identifying the many aircraft which flew around.....to see a Spitfire streaking over town at 400mph was really a thrill.

During one of the raids our luck ran out to a degree when a nearby bomb blasted our windows out & half the tiles from the roof. Flying glass ripped some of the curtains which mum was able to repair & use again....we had those bomb

damaged curtains until well after the war. That was it as far as dad was concerned and arrangements were made to get us out of Coventry quickly to the country.

Before we left, my father & I went for a short walk one day to see where an unexploded bomb had dropped at the corner of Harnall Lane & Foleshill Rd, right in the middle of the road. A policeman warned us away & we saw 2 men working in the crater to defuse the bomb. We walked away & in less than 3 or 4 mins the bomb exploded with a huge roar which sent debris flying high into the air dropping all around us as we raced to shelter in a covered passageway. I believe they were killed & the policeman too. A close shave!

Life in the village of Kingsbury nr. Tamworth was not as quiet as we imagined it would be. One night a stray German bomber dropped his load on the village destroying several homes and killing about 6 people. They held a mass funeral for the victims & we all paraded past the row of coffins in the lovely old churchyard...the whole village attended...and cried.

After some months there we moved on to the village of Baxterley nr. Atherstone where we lived in a quaint old farm cottage at Kiddles farm. The farmer was Mr. Butler and I became good friends of one of his sons...Geoff. We went a long way to school...to the village of Bentley...in all weathers across fields & thru a spinney getting up to lots of mischief. I visited the school in 1999...its now a woodworking firm. Geoff Butler remembered me too after an absence of almost 60 yrs....incredible!. At Bentley we saw many Italian POW's working cutting down timber.

I learnt a lot at Baxterley about country life and a little more about human life as the local girls were rather curious about the anatomy of this city boy!

Life on the farm was always exciting and interesting as we helped to round up the cows, feed the chucks, help with the harvest taking care to keep out of the way of Mr. Butlers shotgun as he reduced the rabbit population, collected birds eggs, made traps, climbed trees, pilfered fruit and watched the poor screaming pigs as they were taken for killing. In the farmyard was a huge pile of cow dung probably kept as fertilizer...when we misbehaved we were threatened to be thrown into it!

The war entered its 5th year & it was time to move yet again. In early 1944 dad acquired a council house for us at Canley so it was time to leave the delights of farm life & return to Coventry where he worked in a reserved occupation.

And so begins my life as a Canley kid.

I was 10, felt like I was 20, and was not at all happy about moving to a rather drab Gerard Ave. No. 26 was the end one of a block of 4 so we had an entry up the side & a back gate. In those days it was a poor area of large families, missing dads....at war/in prison/gone bush....and it was a "tough" area where a boy had to fight to prove his acceptability in the local mafia. Our reception was not the best. Dad had a row with some one the first day who was just a bit too nosy and I was not far behind him. Enrolled at the school....which nowadays is I think named Henry Parkes Junr. school...in those days it was just a collection of wooden huts set around a rough playground. On my first day a local tough

decided to challenge me by calling me names & doing the usual bully boy stuff but he came very unstuck.

On the way home we were at the corner of Gerard & Queen Margarets & he decided he wanted to fight me. A crowd of curious 10/11 yr olds gathered around egging him on,so away we go. In less than 5 mins he had a bloody nose & was crying and the crowd fell strangely silent. Moments such as these are moments to treasure & remember so I suppose I must be grateful to him for giving me the opportunity to "prove myself" in this new area.

It was quite a while before anyone else spoke to me but eventually a real nice kid named Wally Wookey made friends....he lived at No.50. I had the pleasure of meeting up with Wally again in 1987 when we explored our old haunts together,and in fact the Coventry Standard printed an article about our meeting again after 40 yrs. He still lives in Coventry as far as I know & I hope he is well. At this time I also had a brother Irving,3 yrs my junior and a sister was on the way. Christine arrived in mid 1944 and today lives in a rather posh house in Cannon Park with hubby Dave. Irving was unfortunately to die at the youngish age of 55...they say the good die young...well he was a good kid. On my record I think I'm here for quite a while yet.

Also in our street were 2 cousins of mine, Brian & Pat Dewey whose dad was my dad's half brother. Pat was about my age & we used to get up to all sorts of things in those old air-raid shelters!

Wally & I were soon inseparable as we made our own fun in the exciting environs of Canley circa 1944. Other characters in the street were the Scotts,the Jacksons,Parkers,Deweys,Deans,Wixens,Plumbers,the Ells,the Morgans,the Perrys,the Hollands,the Houghtons,the Horners and many others whose names have gone. The ones I particularly remember would be: John Parker,Jimmy & Sylvia Jackson,Thelma Scott & brothers, Frank Wixen,Derek Bird,the Morgan boys,Peter Horner,also Sylvia Dean & her brother. Around in Queen Margarets was Ken Hancox (who still lives there)...a lifelong friend; Alan Strong,Mike & Betty Sheridan & many others.

Opposite the shops was the remains of a military establishment,a few deserted huts,probably a former anti-aircraft or barrage balloon sight which provided fun for little boys (and girls) to play in. The war had by then bypassed Coventry and if my memory is correct,we had no further air raids after about 1943. Wally & I made our fun exploring the Canley Brook in both directions,building secret hideouts along its banks,climbing trees,playing football and swapping comics like "The Beano", "The Dandy" & "Hotspur". The marvellous adventures of Desparate Dan in the Dandy held us spellbound. One of our best hideouts was under the wooden hut in D'Aubney Close on the site of the present church. We found a way in under the floorboards among all the spider webs and came home filthy of course.The hut was used by many groups including the Brownies....our favourite trick was to knock on the floor from underneath when the Brownies were there.....it terrified them & left us piddling ourselves with laughter. I joined the Wolf Cubs there but only lasted a few weeks....misbehaviour was not too well tolerated.

In winter all the kids in our street made these fantastic slides on the icy pavements...we would all queue up to take our turn,running as fast as possible to get a good slide. The more they were used,the longer they became and ruined many a pair of shoes which did not impress parents. Better still was to go to the embankment near the railway bridge on the Fletch.Hwy...there we would slide

down on bits of cardboard at amazing speeds on the packed snow. At a later stage roller skates became a new craze and we would skate 'round the block' along Gerard & Queen Margarets at supersonic speeds often coming to grief on the corners with badly scraped knees & elbows. Mum often sent me on errands round to the shops and I queued impatiently many times at Pearks grocers, Dewhurst the butchers or Clews the newsagents. Food was very much rationed of course so you never saw fat kids in those days. Chocolate & sweets were a rarity as was cake. The only cake we could buy was what my father called "sawdust" cake, but it was cake. Egg powder was a popular food too. With clothing rationed too you had to wear what you had until it virtually fell to pieces. My wardrobe of today would be more than 10 families had in those days but we knew no other way. The radio was our only source of entertainment with the odd visit to the Standard cinema on Tile Hill Lane... walking there & back of course with mum. The house had no hot water and we had the old fashioned black iron grate in the kitchen. Great excitement on Feb. 6th 1952 as we had a new modern tiled fireplace fitted.....and the king died!. Upstairs the bathwater was heated by a very temperamental gas fired system which on good days returned you about 3 gallons of tepid water. The toilet was outside and the pipes had to be lagged in winter to prevent freezing up...toilet roll was 6" squares of the Cov. Ev. Tel...you didn't linger long there in those awful winter days. Dad kept a paraffin lamp burning there on the worst days which gave it a sort of cozy feel. Off the kitchen also was the "coal hole"...a small cupboard size room connected to the outside by a hatch door about 2ft. wide. Through this hatch was delivered the coal with a thunderous roar virtually right into the kitchen, covering everything with coal dust. My job was to count the bags delivered to ensure we were not cheated by the black faced coalmen all of whom seemed to have a hacking cough!

Other exciting things were the arrival of the chimney sweep and the 'rag & bone man'. The sweep was filthy black from head to toe & the first job was to cover everything in the house to prevent the soot getting to it. I watched fascinated as he screwed the rods together & pushed them up the chimney...then I had to go outside & yell when the brush came out thru the chimney. Then with a great 'whoosh' the soot came down & he attempted to collect it all in a bag but invariably missed some which mum had to clean up later. If a chimney was not swept it could set fire and this happened regularly in our street...the whole street would come out to watch the fun.

The rag & bone man was a collector of old clothes or any old junk you wanted to get rid of. In return for your cast offs you may get a celluloid windmill on a stick or sometimes even a goldfish! Gypsies too often came around the area selling clothes pegs & things or telling your fortune but we were very wary of them as they did not have the best of reputations.

Another visitor was the knife man...he had a portable hand operated grindstone which sharpened the knives, scissors or shears for a few pence.

In those days there was not one car owner in Gerard Ave...when I visited in 1999 I was amazed to see the street packed with cars. Of course Coventry in the 1940's was a city of bicycles...everyone had one. At the factories there would be rows & rows of bike racks, usually with the "bikeclips" on the handlebars & the obligatory bag for carrying lunch & wet weather gear. It was wise to take your tyre pump off in case it disappeared but I think folks were more honest in those days...more trusting. Of course us 10/11 yr olds had no such luxuries as a bike &

I think I must have been about 13 when Mrs Arnold next door kindly gave me a rusted out old wreck of a bike which was the biggest thrill of my life to date. I stripped it down, cleaned it, painted it & scrounged some better tyres but had to buy new brake blocks. I was mobile!! Very soon I was off exploring the big wide world going as far afield as Canley Milk Bar and the Kenpas swimming pool. It meant that you had to be an instant mechanic too as the chain was always coming off, the guards catching on the tyre and the worst of all...a puncture. But the war was still with us & so were the Yanks. Wally & I used to stand on the Highway watching the huge convoys of military vehicles going past, probably down to the coast for the invasion. We would yell out "Got any gum chum?" & the US troops would often throw us some...and other things too! It was not unusual to see US Jeeps in Gerard Ave with coloured servicemen calling on our local female talent. Dad used to say they were "overpaid, oversexed & over here". Wally & I were also connoisseurs of the council tip which was where the soccer fields now are in Prior Deram Walk. We would spend hours wading thru the most awful rubbish to see what we could find...it's a wonder we didn't get some dreadful disease.

In the latter stages of the war we often saw German POW's working...for instance, they built the first all concrete road in Freeburn Causeway opposite the "Dolphin". They were under guard but allowed to talk to us....they actually made & sold lovely wooden toys which were very very good. They also worked on Hearsall Common clearing away the old air-raid shelters. We sort of made friends with some of them & as they were paid a little, we would run over to the 'Kudos' shop at the top of Hearsall Lane to buy them things. They were a friendly bunch & not at all like the monsters we imagined they would be, but I suppose they were the low risk types. From these meetings I developed a fascination for Germany and in later life visited quite often & became reasonably fluent in the language.

Time moved on & so did I. The so called 11plus exams gave me results good enough to get into John Gulson Sec. Modern school rather than Whoberley where most boys went....trouble was, it was across town...2 bus trips away. Two other boys from the area also went...Peter Horner and Reg Farndon. The next portion of life was to be quite different.

Going to John Gulson School meant that my parents had to find money for quite a few books and school uniform...it wasn't easy. In my bookcase here in Australia is a very battered tatty copy of "Chambers Etymological Dictionary" with my name written inside & dated July 1944....no way would I ever let it go. Also lurking in the house somewhere is an old school cap with "JG" on it, yet another relic.

It wasn't quite as posh as Bablake or King Henry but it was considered a good school and our school motto was "Upright & Thorough"....took me years to work out what that meant! The boys (no girls) were divided into 4 houses, Godiva, Hereward, Leofric & Mercia and I was in Mercia which I didn't like much cos its colour was yellow. Inter house rivalry was the order of the day & in the hall was a board with the house shields in current order of merit.

Mercia was often bottom. The headmaster was the famous "Pip" LeQuesne known to hundreds of Coventry boys. He was quite strict and an expert in giving 6 of the best to us delinquents.

Getting to & fro school was quite a task. We had to catch the bus from Canley shops to the Gas Showrooms (where it terminated in those days), walk to the Hippodrome to catch another bus up the St. Stanton Rd to Eagle St, then walk about quarter of a mile to school. The buses in those wartime days were hilarious, so slow. They towed a sort of trailer behind which generated the power to drive it (some sort of gas I think). If you just missed a bus you could chase it & catch it quite easily! The windows still had the blueish paint on them for blackout purposes. We were quick to cotton on to the fact that if we walked from town up to school we could save the bus fare and buy cakes at L R Gee's cakeshop on the Stoney Stanton Rd. So we walked up thru the Cook St. gate, past the hospital & on to school revelling in our new found wealth. I keep a pic. of the Cook St gate by my computer as a reminder of those days.

As I had always been fascinated by all things foreign the fact that we were to learn French was very exciting. My twisted little mind thought that it should be dead easy....all you had to do was to know the French alphabet...you know, we have a,b,c,d,e etc they perhaps had o,p,n,l,a etc or something....a simple matter of decoding! Hmmm...not quite like that! And we had that awful thing called homework designed by some evil person intent on depriving us of fun time. The school had been badly damaged in the war. The top story had been removed & the roof levelled & laid out as a large area for school activities. The walls of the school were buttressed with huge pieces of timber to prevent them falling on our precious little heads. This original school has long gone but I believe there is still a school there.

As we had no canteen we were marched every lunchtime up Leics. Causeway, over the canal bridge on St. St. Rd & on to Red Lane school to be served the most atrocious school dinners...all the time being heckled by the rough nut kids of Red Lane. This was the scene of another punch up for me & again I came away victor.

Also the school had no playing fields...so we actually marched all the way up to Radford common once a week, via Foleshill Rd, Cashes Lane then over the railway past the Daimler. The school game was rugby football...I hated it because I loved soccer so I schemed to get out of it by fair means or foul. There used to be a public toilet at the bottom of Cashes Lane...it didn't take me long to work out that if I slipped into the toilet as the huge group of boys passed it, waited a good 5 mins until they were well gone, I could quietly slip off home to get some soccer in with Wally at Canley. I think I would have fitted in well at Colditz with my escapology skills.

The war was in its final stages...we followed the daily progress in the papers & on the radio with keen interest and then all of a sudden it was over. I remember asking my mum...what on earth will they have on the news now? Vera Lynn and her song "When the lights go on again...." had come true and the boys were returning from the forces, from POW camps, from far off places to huge 'Welcome Home' banners across their home streets. Every street had its own street party & Gerard Ave was no exception. Can you imagine folks doing that today? The ladies brought out tables chairs & crockery to the street, all lined up for about 100yds We all had a jolly good party which went on well into the night. Wally & I were beginning to get slightly interested in girls....never to the extent of interfering with our football mind you...so we tried our luck in this direction after dark....result...no luck!

We followed the Nuremberg war crimes trials with great interest as the savagery of Nazism was revealed. Years later I was to stand in that same courtroom in Nuremberg & reflect on history

To earn extra money I took on a paper round from Clews newsagents...the end shop on the corner of D'Aubney. Half a dozen boys would gather in the semi darkness at the crack of dawn,freezing cold of course,to receive our delivery bag. On the big table were piled up all the popular dailies,magazines & comics and Mr.Clews with amazing speed and memory would collate & number the items for each round,then off we would go. I covered most parts of Canley in due course with both morning & evening deliveries incl.delivering to the old house in Moat House Lane...birthplace of Sir Henry Parkes. A year or so back I was fined about \$150 for speeding thru Parkes,a NSW country town!My former association with Sir Henry was not accepted as a claim for leniency!

Time moved on as I passed 12 then 13 with all the usual boyhood dramas,friends,foes,cuts,bruises and a gradual increase in our standard of living...we went from very poor to just plain poor. School was OK ...I found that I excelled at French (always top),geography and sports but was hopeless at science ,algebra & maths. As the school had nowhere for technical stuff we used to have our woodworking class at Wheatley St. schoolwhich, horror of horrors..was a girls school. We had a special room just for JG kids with strict instructions not to fraternise with the girls. Another weekly march! No wonder I later enjoyed marathon running with all the marching we did from school. School sports were great but best of all I loved boxing...a sport which I think today should be banned.

We had inter house competitions and I almost always won at my weight...in fact I retain an ancient copy of "The Pink" which carries my name as "White,M" the 'M' being for Mercia,my school house name. The school boxing guru was Mr. Clemson whom I believe eventually emigrated to Australia. Other teachers I remember

were,Mr.'Joe'Short,Mr.Guest,Mr.Mallett,Mr.Knight,Mr.Holland,Mr.Young,Mr. Weale(known as 'Piggy') , Mr.Whitehead & Mr.Cooke

I have a school photo taken in 1948 of the whole school assembled in the yard with all the staff which is remarkably clear. Wonder what happened to them all?

We also had a very good school choir of which I was a member..it was run by Mr.Wisdom who sometimes conducted the Hippodrome orchestra for the Cov.Operatic Soc. We used to sing "Jerusalem","Old Father Thames" and others with great gusto & the school won a few choir awards. At Christmas we sang carols at the Warwick Rd.Cong.church to a large audience. As a pupil I was just sort of average in academic stuff but quite good at the arts,French,geog,drawing,writing.

Somewhere amongst all these exciting things we managed to fit in Sat. mornings at the Plaza cinema down near the 'Arches' at Spon End. 2 or 300 yelling snotty nosed kids queued up for about 6d to see wild adventure films & cartoons. Near the Arches was Bunty's coaches too...dad worked for them for a time.

As we get older our associations change & I gradually lost touch with Wally moving on to other friends. I knew that our school hosted the Coventry Sea Cadets on Sunday mornings & I was keen to join,so I did. Loved every minute of it too. The cadets moved to a 3 storey house in Queens Rd & we proudly wore our uniforms & marched behind our band of drums & bugles, learnt all about

knots,the Morse code,drill,semaphore & all that Navy stuff which I really enjoyed.

We had 'camps' away from home at naval stations in Portsmouth & up in Scotland where we lived on board ship in hammocks like real sailors. At Whale Island Portsmouth I was awarded my Gunners badge after a course at the Navy Gunnery school...fantastic stuff for a boy. The highlight of those days was 2 weeks as a crew member on a real ship carrying general cargo from London to Amsterdam, backwards & forwards across the North Sea. It was the good ship "Greenfinch" berthed at Butler's wharf right by the south side of Tower Bridge....today the site of million dollar luxury apartments. That experience really fired me up to explore the world as I listened to the tales of the regular seamen who had travelled all over the world. I was later to travel extensively too.

At around the age of 14 I joined Canley Youth Club in Queen Margarets Rd under the guidance of the wonderful Mr.Weaver...a great bloke. It was basically just an old farmhouse with a new gym attached. All the kids from Canley & many from Tile Hill came to this club....boys & girls. I got to know many kids from Tile Hill...one of whom was to be another lifelong friend...Roy Huckvale from Middlecotes,now unfortunately dead. Other Tile Hill kids were Alan Loundes, & Albert Freeman both of whom were later to join the Merchant Navy as I did. But where are they now?

Note:2010... Alan lives in New Zealand and Albert has passed on
The youth club had a phys.ed.instructor named Mr.Nanson who was one of the strongest men I ever met. He ran the boys keep fit class which I joined with Roy & Ken and we loved it. It was hard exercise using apparatus,climbing ropes,wall beams etc and finishing off with a rough tough game of basketball which had only one rule....get the ball in the net anyway you can. The star was Johnny Flanagan who was magic on the horiz.bars & rings. We were so successful that we put on displays at various fetes around town and of course being in the group was good for our image with the fairer sex.

The club had dancing classes so we eagerly learnt the "Moonlight Saunter" and the "Palais Glide"....just a tad different from today's hard metal rap stuff. Even the waltz & foxtrot to the strains of Victor Sylvester. A tune fondly remembered from those days is Russ Morgan's "So Tired"...another was "Put another nickel in the nickleodeon".

After club we would leave sometimes a bit too noisily...the local copper was there to cuff us round the head if we gave cheek or disturbed the peace.....should be more of it now I think .

It was around this time that I started my first diary ,a habit continued all my life.

Typical early entries were:

Jan.23 1949...Got up at 11am

Mar.29 1949...P.T.display at club,hurt my leg

Jul.28 1949...Went to Nth Wales on coach tour,super

Not exactly deep meaningful jottings of a future historian!!!

I loved music. Ever since I first saw an old fashioned pedal organ at my grandparents house I pestered my parents to get a piano. They eventually did when I was about 17 and the love of piano has never left me. In later life I became a part time pro.jazz musician & music teacher...at 67 can still belt out a swingy blues!

Whilst in the Sea cadets I was awarded my first ever medal with great pomp & ceremony. It was for winning the zone boxing championship. I was sitting on the top deck of a Corporation bus when our Cadet C.O. joined me. During the short conversation he said "By the way, heres your medal" I still have it.

So, schooldays were busy days of sport, cadets, youth club, school choir, boxing, good mates, girls (oh yes but very innocent) and like all things they eventually came to an end.

I've probably missed out some other points of interest but we can't remember everything. As with all of us there are a few things we don't want to remember.

Work...that awful 4 letter word now loomed close. Endless discussions at home on a choice of career. I really only had one ambition....that was to retire, but I had to wait a further 50 plus years for that! No, seriously...I wanted very much to see the world & the only way I knew how to & get paid for it was to join the Merchant Marine service. Snag. Had to be 16 to join. Dad wanted me to be an apprentice anything....get a trade he said...so he got me a job with Lee Beesley the electrical firm then situated at the bottom of Hertford St. (it really was a street in those days). My career as an electrician lasted all of 10 days! Dad was not amused but I was after bigger fish....or rather money. Some of my friends secured jobs at the Standard or Fisher & Ludlows at Tile Hill where the money was good with plenty of overtime...that's for me I thought. If you now own a 1948/49 Vanguard car you will find 2 rubber bump stops under the bonnet... please take care of them because I probably put them there using great skill. It was a tricky job...you smeared a little adhesive on the bottom, placed them over the metal cup which held them, then wacked them in with your fist.

Cycling up Sherriff and Charter Ave up to Tile Hill every morning in all weathers was one hell of a drag despite the technical skills I was acquiring so I found a job closer to home.

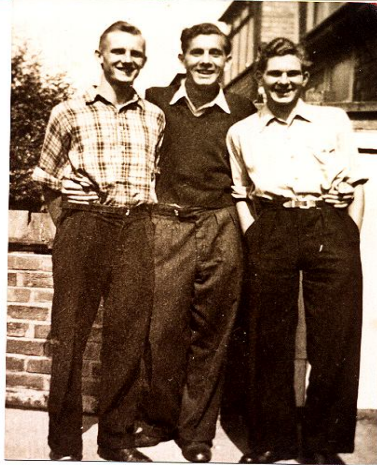
In those days the traffic went along Prior Deram, over the Highway and then into Burnsall Rd. & that's where Burbidges the woodworking firm was...maybe still is. It was good there. The smell of freshly cut timber is delightful and I soon learnt to recognise lots of different grains. We had plenty of variety too...one week I was operating a bandsaw, the next working on wood turning lathe, then a router....all sorts of machinery. Most of the long term employees had fingers missing...the sign of a good wood machinist they told me. Ugh!! No thanks..but I suppose in those days safety regs were not like today's. I enjoyed the wood turning very much & the guys & gals there were a great bunch. I think the foreman's name was Charlie Knowles...a nice bloke.

Going 'up the city' on Sat afternoons meant Highfield Rd...the home of the Bantams as they were then known. With Alf Wood in goal, and Mason, Barratt, Lowry, Snape, Roberts up front we enjoyed every minute of the excitement. Alf Wood lived in Mitchell Ave near us & travelled to the club on the bus like everyone else....none of your superstar wealthy sports car heroes in the 1940's

For other kicks we were now going to dancing lessons at the Keith Jones studio in town. One of the senior lady tutors..or maybe his wife...insisted that we danced hip to hip to maintain proper control during the dance. Phew!! For healthy 15/16 yr old boys it was sometimes quite embarrassing! But we were soon expert at the modern waltz, the foxtrot and the quickstep...with a little bit

of rhumba & samba too...only too ready to try our skills at the Matrix ballroom on The Fletch Hwy. In those days my best mates were Roy Huckvale & Ken Hancox (Hank). They called us the 3 musketeers as we were always together and we remained close for 50 yrs even after I left Coventry.

Here are those 3 musketeers in 1952, me on left



It was around this time that I joined Earlsdon Library and have been a keen reader ever since. It was still there when I last visited Cov.in 1999.

There were escapades with various girls as we slowly learnt about life...things most of you must have experienced too. They mystified me then & still mystify me today! Of course the only girls to be seen with were the girls from Barrs Hill or Wheatley St but I must say some of the Whoberley girls were quite acceptable too. Now the owner of a new Hercules 3 speed bike it was time to venture further afield so Roy and I cycled off to Dovedale in Derbyshire for a camping holiday. I also joined the Godiva cycling club and remember old Mr.Stokes who owned the best bike shop in town. He must have been about 65 or 70 then but still rode his old upright heavy roadster with us on rides around the Warwickshire countryside. Cycling was delightful then as cars were a rarity and there was no such things as motorways.

But my ambitions were beckoning.

I was 16 at last and ready to see the world. My father reluctantly signed the necessary papers and it was off to sea school for 2 months training. Boy...it was tough there...the hard boys of England had all come together in one place but I was ready and capable of holding my own in such company.

A good mate from there was Jimmy Cass from Liverpool...where are you now Jim lad?

Anyway I graduated,joined an oil tanker at Swansea docks and left on my great adventure. And what an adventure it was. We had covered about 50,000 sea miles before I saw old England again,visiting Egypt,the Persian Gulf(Abadan),East Africa,Ceylon,Singapore,Borneo and Australia. The work

was hard, the food was terrific and the pay quite good. I came home with an all over golden tan and plenty of money...an incredible 58 pounds in my pocket... more than I'd ever seen before. One day I will tell the story of the trip but this story is about Canley so it will have to wait for another time.

Now I was a real man...or so I thought.....a smoker, a drinker & a bloke who didn't mind the odd punch up so I was ready for the next phase in life with plenty of cocky confidence.

I wanted to go back to sea but intense pressure from my parents persuaded me to stay put. I returned to Burbidges woodworking firm again which seemed incredibly dull after my past excitements. Now I had a racing bike & we used to go down to the Butts track to train and see the great stars in action like Reg Harris & Van Vliet of Holland. Road racing was also great fun with the Godiva club...Sun.morning time trials at Baginton fondly remembered.

Dancing at the Matrix was now a regular Sat. evening date, also dancing at the Standard Club on Tile Hill Lane. It was there that I met my first long term girl friend Vi...we had an on/off relationship spread over several years with other liaisons inbetween.

The Matrix featured the Jack Owens orchestra...a full band dressed neatly in tuxedos. They were good too. All the boys wore suits & ties and the girls wore dresses...it was a no nonsense place with rarely any trouble. When I see today's teenagers & hear their music I shudder & thank God I lived my teenage yrs in the 40's & 50's.

For those who were there, who could ever forget when the lights dimmed, the glitter ball turned with the coloured spotlights playing on it and Jack Owens said: "Please take your partners for the last waltz". The orchestra played "Who's taking you home tonight?" as you manoevered yourself to ask your favourite girl for this last dance...the girl you had been working on all evening. You take a deep breath and ask her.. "can I walk you home?"....then she shatters your little scheme by saying... 'sorry, my fiance is picking me up'!! That's life !

They were the years of the big bands. Sun.nights at the Hippodrome hosted all the big British bands like Ted Heath, Sid Phillips, Geraldo, Joe Loss and we saw them all. I remember well Graeme Bell's Australian Jazz Band playing there. I met Graham about 10 yrs ago at a local jazz festival & reminded him of that date, pointing out that I was in the 6th row in a blue shirt....he didn't remember me! In recent times I have played with some of his former band members at Melbourne jazz gigs...a great honour indeed. A former member of the Ted Heath orchestra now lives near Coffs Harbour and we have enjoyed many interesting chats.

Moving right along...facing us boys was yet another big challenge in life...

National Service. I was sure that I would get into the Navy easy with my background in the Sea Cadets and my Merchant Navy experience. My mate Roy had gone into the REME so I was prepared for what was to come as he told me all the lurks & perks of Army life.

Wrong again

We will take a look at my military career in the next episode

The dreaded letter arrived ordering me to report to the selection board with dire warnings of the consequences if I did not. So I fronted up confidently and told them of my heroic exploits on the seven seas fully expecting them to give me at least a Captains job in the Royal Navy...if not a Vice Admiral would do fine.

Dream on McDuff.

"No sonny, the Navy quota is full and you can choose between the RAF or the RAMC(medical corps)"

I said..."OK what about the REME?"(Elect.& Mech.Engineers)

They said...."are you deaf boy ? RAF or RAMC"

Not wanting to be seen as a Brylcream boy(RAF),the RAMC got the nod. Look...I couldn't even bandage a cut finger so how the hell was I going to carry out major brain surgery under fire?

Hmmm.....

There I was in blood stained white coat, stethoscope around my neck,scalpel in hand. The building shook as shells burst all around us but we had a job to do. I hadn't slept for 3 days and the casualties were piling up at this front line post. I was only a medic but all the doctors had been killed...they were relying on me to save their lives and I knew I could do it. Amputating shattered limbs,opening chests to pull out shell fragments,extracting bullets from gaping wounds.....it was all in a days work as the big busted nurse with lovely brown eyes gazed at me with obvious admiration. I wanted her bad and she knew it but the job came first . The lights flickered,the building shook and a man screamed as another shell tore into the building. I didn't flinch. It would mean a Victoria Cross at least but there was no time to think of that now.....bring in the next patient nurse.....

"Will I have to buy my own stethoscope?"

"Don't you worry about that sunshine....you will be a stretcher bearer or a clerk."

And that's how I was to spend the next 2 yrs...payclerk at a RAMC depot

The soldier



It wasn't too bad...I was used to being away from home but most boys were not and it showed. We had all sorts from every part of the UK at our boot camp near Aldershot. Discipline was tough but nothing like the sea school of earlier years so it was a breeze for me. Its said that you make the best mates in the services & that is true. Jimmy Osborne from Mansfield....stick your hand up old pal so I can see you .

After boot camp we were all posted to working units and I ended up at Woolwich in S.E.London at.....would you believe...the Army V.D.hospital!
The Royal Herbert Hospital was full to overflowing with soldiers with everything from crabs to advanced syphilis,shipped in from Aden,Malaysia, Korea,Germany and all points east.

They were all awarded that well known military decoration of 'VD and scar'
I worked there in the Pay Office in what was really like a civvy job...fairly easy going...48hr pass most weekends & 3 free travel warrants a year to anywhere in the UK.

One of my jobs was to keep a record of soldiers leave pay and ration allowances and to look after the rail warrants

Well....wide open to bribery & corruption wasn't it?
Say no more, nudge nudge,wink wink

I managed to get back to Cov.most weekends leaving camp Fri. & catching the tube connections up to Mill Hill,Nth London where it joined the Barnet bypass.

From there it was simply a hitch hike ride home to be dropped off on the Fletch.Hwy only a few hundred yards from home. In those days motorists were encouraged to give the troops a lift & I cannot ever remember being left stranded. Had lifts in everything from Rolls Royces to spluttering motorbikes.

But whats all this got to do with Canley.....nothing really
So perhaps we will skip my not very illustrious military career & return to dear old Coventry.

Weekends at home meant catching up with the boys for mammoth boozing sessions out of our 25/- a week pay....half a shandy each!

We went to the Matrix of course,now in uniform,thinking ourselves irresistible to the girls...trouble was, nearly all the boys were in uniform so it was back to square one type competition.

One aspect of service life which relieved the pressure was to receive letters from a girl at home. I wrote to lovely Daphne who soon began to complain that I was spending most of my leave with the boys going swimming at the Kenpas,kicking a ball around in the Memorial Park or guzzling our half shandies in the Phantom Coach.

Really! When will women learn that sport & boozing comes first!

One thing I did learn in the Army was how to play blues & boogie woogie on the NAAFI (canteen) piano which remains a lifetime love to this day. Being in London too meant that I could visit the many jazz clubs. At one club they introduced a new young jazz pianist named ...Dudley Moore. It was the days of Harry Gold & his pieces of 8,Humphrey Lyttleton,Ronnie Scott and many other top musos of that era. I will never forget those smoke filled cellars.

The calendar ticked over.

Civilian life was heaven to Nasho's who had spent 2 yrs ticking the dates off calendars. Employers were obliged to take back former employees but after the idol life of an office boy I had no desire for manual work any more. So I opted for office work ending up at Armstrong Siddeley, Parkside in 1954 as an accounts clerk. I had visions of being the M.D. after a few years but again was sadly disillusioned.

For 6 pounds a week I had to process stores issues/receipts which was not the most exciting thing I've ever done. It did however put me on the path of my future career in Computers as we grappled with the complexities of the Hollerith punched card system on a huge but not very powerful computer.

For the occasion I purchased a new suit from Weaver To Wearer for 7 pds 19 and 6 pence! I also took a girl to the Empire cinema which cost me 2/8. A new pair of casual gaberdine pants were 5pds 15 shillings and the Ambrose orchestra was playing at the Hippodrome.

Our good friend Hank, who somehow missed Natl. service, was now the proud owner of a 1938 Morris 8 which raised our prospects no end in our pursuit of the ladies.

Hank in those days was quite wealthy as he worked on the track at Massey Fergusons in Banner Lane. I think he paid all of 65 pounds for car.

Trouble was that there were 3 of us & we all wanted to drive it...it wasn't his car...it was our car. I didn't even have a license but that did not deter...if I could ride a bike then driving a car would be child's play!

Roy had been in the REME so was fully clued up on vehicle maintenance. The first thing we did was to take his car to bits & polish everything. I think we de-cocked the thing about 6 times in the first couple of months just for the fun of it. After one Sunday morning session on the car, followed by the obligatory drink at the Phantom Coach, the damn thing would only engage reverse gear! We had to drive Roy back to Cheylesmore and ourselves back to Canley in reverse gear!

Try it if you dare....it ain't easy!

I have a photo of the 3 of us taken in 1953 alongside one of us taken in 1987...the deterioration is amazing. I often ask people to match the 3 pairs for a bit of fun. Now in 2001 Roy has long passed on & Hank & I are just clapped old wrecks. He still lives in the same house in Canley.

Did you ever go to work on a Corporation bus early mornings? Upstairs would be full of miserable coughing men drawing on their Woodbines, the smoke so thick you could hardly see the length of the bus. With their cloth caps and haversacks they hacked their way to work rubbing their hands and staring gloomily out of the windows at the bleak dawn. Men with no future, little or no hope of improving their lot and doomed to years of boring repetitive work in the car factories. Conversation centred around football, the Daily Mirror, last night's dart match or picking the draws for next Sat.'s Littlewoods pools.

It was truly horrible.

Anyway I decided I wanted a motorbike. As funds were a bit low I thought it wise to start with something small.

You couldn't get much smaller than a "Power Pack" attached to my bike from Frettons in town. It was a petrol driven motor which turned a small wheel which in turn engaged the rear tyre and moved you along. On hills you had to assist by pedalling like mad hoping that the plug wouldn't oil up before you got to the top.

This agonizing heap of junk cost 19 guineas and caused me to become very proficient in the vast repertoire of British obscenities.

It did not last long. Astons in Far Gosford St (are they still there?) persuaded me to buy a war surplus 125 c.c. Royal Enfield, (only one old lady owner, honest) with solid front forks & hand gear change which looked like it had been thru every campaign from Dunkirk to the Normandy beaches. This next heap of junk cost me 18 pounds 10 shillings and lasted 6 weeks until I traded it on a 250 cc BSA priced at 69 pounds. Now we were into the big time stuff!

Showing at the Astoria cinema that year was "The Glen Miller Story". The Jack Parnell band played at the Hippodrome and Chipperfields circus came to town. At the Gaumont was "The Caine Mutiny" and the Ted Heath band played for a dance at Banner Lane (cost 6/6). In Oct. the new Owen & Owen store opened.

For the summer hols

Roy, Hank, myself & another bloke named Eddy piled into Hank's Morris 8 and headed off for a holiday at Great Yarmouth .

We arrived there in mid July and guess what....it was cold & raining...but we had a lot of laughs on our very meagre resources.

In Coventry I was having piano lessons and enjoying it immensley. We had our Sat.night dances at the Matrix or the GEC, Tues nights at the Casino in Radford, cinema almost every week with a girl, drinkies with the boys on Fri. nights, and sport at weekends. Often on Fri. nights we would go either to the Co-op dance at Nuneaton or the George at Hinckley, get nicely drunk and drive home singing our heads off, hoping that the petrol pump wouldn't conk out on us as it was prone to do. In those days it was not unusual to breakdown in Corporation St or somewhere else embarrassing as cars were very unreliable. They were nearly all black too....no-one had ever thought of coloured paint. Morris 8's, Rover 10's & 12's, Standard 12's, Rileys, Austin 7's, Vauxhall Wyvern's, Ford Prefects and the very posh Vanguards or Jaguars.

Dec.1954 was my 21st. Well I'm almost too ashamed to tell you what happened. We all had tickets for the Christmas Eve dance at the Matrix but decided on a few drinkies first. Hank had to pick up his Doreen at her home in Cedar Ave,

Roy & I were meeting our dates inside(cunning eh!). We started off at the Phantom Coach as usual, pub crawled thru' who knows any many others and ended up at "The Cedars". Things were not too good. Hank was hallucinating and giggling like a schoolgirl, they tell me I was talking gibberish non-stop, and Roy was the only one still able to stand up....just. We dropped Hank off at his Doreens place & her parents were not very amused. The last we saw of him he was sliding quietly down the wall in their hallway. On to the Matrix jabbering like maniacs we parked the car & tried to get out....impossible! After a great struggle Roy made it and he left my ticket in the car as he went inside.

About three hrs later I heard a voice shouting "Whitey, wake up you drunken sod" and recognized Roy thru' the blurry haze with his date. I pulled myself upright feeling as I did a sticky mess on the seat and all over my nice suit. The smell was indescribable. I swear blind I hadn't eaten carrots that day! My date

had refused to come out to the car so there went another great romance down the drain.

They made me clean it up but traces remained for months after.

1955 started with another trip to the Hippodrome to hear the Ken Macintosh band followed a week later by "The Squadronaires"

"Journey into Space" was being serialised on the radio Mon.evenings.

I had started going to Coventry Tech.College in the Butts to night school realising, a bit late, how much I had abused & neglected my education. It was to continue for many years on & off as I took various courses to improve myself.

Languages interested me,always had since school, so I tackled at various times Spanish,Russian and German. On the day of the final German exam I fronted up with my boots blacked ready for the test.

"Yessir, what can I do for you?"

"I've come for the German GCE exam"

"That was yesterday sir"

SH....T!!!

The College Theatre put on some really good plays and I went there quite often. Thousands of Coventry kids must have passed thru' those portals over the years sweating over all sorts of subjects....it was and maybe still is...the birthplace of many of Coventry's skills. I was proud to have been a student there.

A favourite watering hole for us students was the "Hen & Chickens" pub almost opposite the Tech where many a sorrow was drowned.

With my trusty BSA I was now able to go further afield. Trips were made to the lovely Cotswolds,the Lickey Hills, Dasset Hills, Malvern,up to Dovedale and many other delightful English country areas. No doubt about it ...us Cov.kids in foreign parts have found nothing to beat the quaint old village pubs of England. One of our favourites was "The Bear" at Berkswell and another would have to be the "Queen & Castle" at Kenilworth.

Now theres a place.....Kenilworth. Lovely. The castle held a strange fascination for me. Over the years I explored every inch of it even climbing high up into the old Keep and on to the high walls of the Great Hall. In my lounge room now hangs a black ink sketch I made of the Great Hall which reminds me daily of those happy times at Kenilworth. To avoid paying to enter we used to scale the walls around the back, each week trying out more difficult climbs to test ourselves. I probably owe them a few quid but please don't tell!

The drive along the Kenilworth Road over Gibbet Hill is without doubt one of the loveliest approaches to any city in Britain,continuing on over the Fletch Hwy and past the Memorial Park....a favourite place to walk your girl,watch the tennis or have a game of mini golf. The gardens then were always immaculate,graffitti unheard of and vandalism rare. No one had blaring portable CD's nor mobile phones.....has progress lost something on its way? I can still see the queue for ice creams at the café in the park.

How did we communicate in those days?no-one I knew had a telephone but somehow we kept our appointments.

Meeting on the Bank steps in town was a favourite place.Every night of the week there would be a dozen or more boys and girls looking anxiously at their watches wondering if he/she would turn up.

Another spot was under the 'Elephant' at the top of the Precinct Coventry was changing. Smithford St. was disappearing as the Precinct took shape. The old white tiled Arcade was doomed to go along with many bomb damaged buildings. Many buildings carried the scars of war for 20 yrs or more but on my last visit to Coventry I couldn't find any.

Bigger and better motorbikes followed by not necessarily bigger but better girl friends as we enjoyed our early 20's to the full. Trips to Europe on the bike were often made and I managed to see most of Western Europe several times, camping in the excellent Continental camping sites

Work was improving as I grappled with early forms of computer coding. I changed jobs fairly often but improved my status each time, being employed at such places as Humber, Stoke & Ryton; Bristol Siddeley at Ansty; and Massey Ferguson Research at Baginton.

Lets take a look at 1955.

Roy bought his first car, a Standard 8 for less than 400 pounds. Churchill retired in April. A tooth extraction cost me 7/6 at Dr. Powell's. Bed & breakfast in

Nottingham cost 13/6, in Southport 10/6. A haircut was 2/-.

A 2 week holiday in Ostend booked thru' Frames cost 39 pds. all up.. but we were shocked to have to pay 15/- for 3 teas and 6 cakes in Belgium.. but I purchased a new watch there for 2 pounds.

Playing piano for the "Sherbourne Jazzmen" earned me 7/6 for 3 hrs work

I was paid 1 pound for playing the drums at Canley Club.

At Whitsun I went to Paris via Newhaven/Dieppe on the motorbike and done it for under 20 pounds. Whilst in France I also visited Abbeville, finding the WW1 grave of my paternal grandfather in the huge war cemetery.

In June our band, on the back of a lorry, played in the Coventry Carnival.

I was courting Doreen S. quite heavily.

Keith Unwin & I climbed Mt. Snowdon in Wales.

Tony Hancox appeared at the Hippodrome.

On Oct. 1st, City beat Swindon 6-0

In Dec. I proposed to Doreen...she said yes.....but it was not to be

1956 was a year of travel all over Europe...France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Austria.

My brand new Norton Dominator 500cc had cost 260 pounds and was the envy of many as I roared up Gerard Ave at supersonic speeds probably annoying everyone. Doreen's dad had said....."no way is my daughter going on that thing" so yet another redskin bit the dust.

Plenty of other fish in the sea as there was Beryl from Nuneaton then Margaret from Hinckley and even Vi again, a blast from my past.

It was the year of the Suez crisis and petrol rationing when long queues formed at garages if you could find one open. It went up to a staggering 6/- a gallon.

Tommy Steele was an up & coming star whose "Singing the Blues" soon had us all singing it too.

Do you remember also...The Banana Boat song: Tammy: Gonna get along without you now: Around the world.

A puncture cost me 5/-

In 1958 the hit songs included "All the way"; "April Love"; "Magic Moments"

**"Lollipop"; "Catch a falling star"; "Swinging shepherd blues"
A brand new Vauxhall Victor cost 750 pounds**

**I bought my first car, a 1948 Vauxhall 14 which I had to park in the street.
Winter starting using the crank handle was a nightmare. Warm water had to
poured on the windscreen and the doorlock, antifreeze in the motor. Driving to
work looking thru about 4 sq.inches of clear windscreen, slipping & sliding on
the ice. What torments...but we all suffered the same.**

I think I would die if I had to face a Coventry winter again.

**Bedroom windows with ice on the inside
Waterbottles in the bed
Frozen pipes and icy pavements
Go to work in the dark, come home in the dark
Washing on the line stiff as boards
Paraffin space heaters
Overcoats, scarves, gloves
Starting coal fires with sticks & paper
Waiting ages in freezing bus stops
Freezing fogs and black ice
Howling cold winds, rain & snow
Endless colds & sore throats**

**Here in Coffs Harbour I wear shorts for 9 or 10 months of the year. We have
never had frost, ice snow or fog and the car starts first time every time.**

I do not own an overcoat, nor scarf, nor gloves

I have a heater but rarely use it

The washing dries quickly almost always

But

**We have all sorts of creepy crawlies, huge spiders, snakes at times, sharks, stinging
jelly fish, strange flies, huge crickets, cockroaches big enough to shear, ants that
bite (must be 10 million on my block at least!) and when it rains, boy, it rains. Not
unusual to get 6 to 8 inches in a day. I think the record is 12"**

But I love it.

**Canley was changing too. Cars appeared in the street, people moved on, girls I
had played hide & seek with were getting married to my utter amazement.
Coventry had won a prize as the most modern city centre in Europe and we were
all proud to be Coventrians.**

**Suddenly I found myself surrounded by space as one by one friends were lured
into the tender trap or serious courting....drinking partners were hard to find as
I too was constantly asked when was I going to "settle down".**

**Like a man facing the guillotine I looked around to see who was left. One night at
the Casino in 1958 I chatted up a nurse named Josie and that was that.**

**About 18 months later my Canley days were over as the blade fell, cutting me
off from my former lifestyle with frightening suddenness.**

We got married and lived unhappily ever after

**I bought a house in Beacon Rd Holbrooks for a mind blowing 1200 pounds on
100 pounds deposit and 10 quid a month for life.**

A honeymoon at Blackpool for 3 days left us with 5 quid in the bank

It didn't last....but that's another very very long story. Now, more than 40 years later I find it enormously satisfying to tell of those early days in Canley.

These days I am reasonably content with life after many trials & tribulations,much travel all over the world, lots of mistakes,wrong paths taken,but a fairly successful working life.

**I love my home high above Coffs Harbour,a place of sunshine and warmth, of tropical plants, exotic birds and close to some of the best beaches in Oz.
I owe no-one a cent and thank God that I have arrived at this stage in life still reasonably healthy in body and mind.**

Canley and Coventry are never far from my mind as I thank all those good people who crossed my path for the wonderful memories they gave me and hope that perhaps I too am part of their memories.

Thank you for reading my little story.

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FOOTNOTE FEB.2010

Two years ago I had the urge to ride a m'bike again. Started off with a small scooter, then a bigger scooter and then a Honda 680cc bike which I love.

Its like being 25 again!

After 2 busted marriages plus numerous affairs I live alone but have a local lady friend whom I see 3/4 times a week

I can still play good blues on piano, am a good table tennis player and teach computers to Seniors.

I made my last visit to Coventry about 2 yrs ago

