

## MEMORIES OF HATCHLANDS, EAST CLANDON 1939 - 1945

By Sr. Mary Jude - Margaret Parkinson

Nobody knew how long we had come for. On Friday, September 1<sup>st</sup>, my friend Muriel McDermott and I travelled down in her father's car with our mattresses, a day's ration of food, a case with our belongings and a sense of adventure. War was declared on Sunday, 3<sup>rd</sup> September.

When we arrived on that sunny day we found many of the nuns and teachers already there. During the day pupils of all ages kept arriving. We were put into bedrooms according to our ages. The younger ones had one of the nuns sleeping with them.

Hatchlands is a large country house in extensive grounds with its own farm run by Mr. White, and a lake and a kitchen garden, looked after by Mr. Tremlett. There was a pheasant wood -



out of bounds, and a dell with a dangerous unguarded opening - also forbidden territory, together with smaller woods and fields in which we played cricket and rounders. The main drive to the Golden Gates was a mile long. This was a favourite walk on a Saturday to the local village of West Horsley, supervised by one of the lay staff.

We soon settled down to an orderly routine. Meals were eaten in the servants' hall and butler's pantry near to the kitchen, but we soon had to move to the main hall and entrance when our numbers increased. Off this hall was a study used by the Community and another room used for a classroom / study, which still bears the ink stains.

The owner, Mr. Goodhart-Rendel, a retired army officer, preferred to lease Hatchlands to schoolgirls rather than the army. His furniture was stored in one of the main downstairs rooms - again out of bounds and locked. The music room became the chapel with kneeler / chairs. A watchful eye was kept on everyone and everything by Mr. Brewster, who lived with his family in apartments backing onto the courtyard which we used for recreation. Round the courtyard was a coach house, used for country dancing, stables, offices used as a laboratory, a house and a flat.

In 1940, after the bombing of Forest Hill where three nuns were killed, including Sr. Francis who cooked for us, the Noviciate came to join us in Hatchlands. This was an interesting addition to our school life as some postulants and novices taught us. They also took over our washing-up after our meals, having to carry hot water from the butler's pantry.

Because of the shortage of water only five inches were allowed for your weekly bath, which the younger ones shared with as friend. There was also a dynamo in the upper courtyard for our own electricity.

When there was heavy bombing around Croydon, because of the three airports, some of our families came and lived in the house and flat. These included my mother and sister, aged 19 months. We were joined by the Jenkins, and in the house the Collins and MacLoughlin families.

Because of our numbers (and ration books), about 70 pupils, nuns, staff and day pupils, we were never really hungry and had a good variety of food with fresh vegetables from the kitchen garden, milk and eggs from the farm.

In 1941 / 42 two girls contracted polio - one senior and one junior. Because of this we were placed in quarantine with no visitors from the outside. Following straight on from the polio, two others contracted scarlet fever and had to go to the Isolation Hospital. After this the Health Authorities inspected and said that we were too cramped and would have to look for more space.

High Clandon House, on the other side of the road, was acquired for use as classrooms for the senior pupils. This entailed a half-hour walk twice a day back to Hatchlands for lunch and then tea. We also had to collect milk from the farm for mid-morning break. On Saturdays some of us helped the Sisters clean High Clandon. During the Summer of 1944 three families shared the house for the holidays so that it wouldn't be taken over by squatters.

The lay staff organised various activities for us in the evenings: country dancing, dramatics, knitting, encouraged by listening to the radio, concerts, entry to local poster competitions, Guides and camping and walks on Saturday and Sunday afternoons.

To begin with the Josephite Fathers came over from Weybridge each morning to celebrate Mass. Later we had our own chaplain, Fr. Benker, a Dutch missionary.

Exams were taken each Summer and we had a yearly religious examination.

As our needs and numbers altered it wasn't surprising to find bedrooms changed during the holidays. At one time when there was a lot of bombing over Weybridge due to the aircraft factories, we ended up sleeping down in the cellars. I can remember my father and Uncle John spending the Sunday afternoon getting rid of the gnats by candle flame before we slept down there. Before that we only went down there when the siren sounded. The nuns and staff took it in turns to firewatch. We did have five bombs explode in the grounds and doodlebugs where we went camping.

Various other outstanding memories are:

- The cold Winter of 1940/41 when the lake was safe to skate on. Our snowmen lasted long after the snow had melted on the ground.

- Going to collect two balancing benches from West Clandon Station and walking back with them along the main road. Most of our PE was gym / drill, musical movement, balancing, netball, tennis, rounders and cricket.
- The fun when we had mumps or measles. About 12 of us in one room with one gramophone record.
- Being allowed to attend the Clothing and Profession Ceremonies of the Novices.
- Going by pony and trap to give Catechism lessons at Send.
- A sad day when cows contracted Foot and Mouth disease and all had to be destroyed.
- On a happier note after homework was finished going to help pick fruit and vegetables.
- Weeding in the fields and helping with the harvest.
- Waiting in Spring for the arrival of calves, lambs and foals.
- Buying baked potatoes from Mr. Tremlett who cooked them in the greenhouse furnace for us. Taking home snowdrops, sweet peas, cucumbers, tomatoes and lettuce all in season. We even created our own bus-stop outside Mr. Tremlett's . . . fare to Croydon one shilling.
- The annual dance on leaving with the Grenadier Guards when you reached the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> forms.
- May processions and celebrations of Church feasts, and the final celebrations for Peace with two extra day's holiday, which included picnics with the nuns, a large bonfire and hot drinks.



The year the war ended we broke up earlier to enable the move back to Sanderstead and on to Merrow. The Archbishop asked for a Catholic Grammar School to be established in the area so Merrow Grange came into existence, with the Noviciate and Preparatory school moving to Rydes Hill, the other side of Guildford.

*Sr. Mary Jude 2007*