

MEMORIES OF A SHERFIELD LAD



D-DAY AND BEYOND

FROM BOYHOOD TO RETIREMENT

BY

RAY CROSSMAN







SHERFIELD FC WERE THE VICTORS



Back row left to right:
Herbert Mundy
(Headmaster), Arthur Kew,
?, Sid Crossman,
Reg Ruffell, Gordon
Cooper, ?, ?, Bill Palmer
(Wheelers Court)

Front Row left to right:
Bob Bulpitt, Percy Taplin,
Fred Friend, Ted Ham,
Jack Friend.

The ?s could be Tom Donavan and Clive McKenny

A WARTIME FAMILY

& A WARTIME HOME

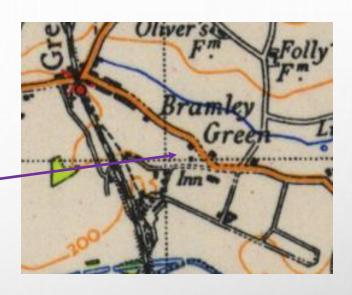
BRAMLEY STATION - LATE 1939

I was only six, but clearly remember the soldiers going off to France.

My dad was one of them!

Soldiers were lying on Bramley Common by the Pigeons pub waiting for the trains

Women crying and very upset.









BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Having been a regular in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps (RAOC), between 1928 and 1935 and based at Bramley (where he met my mother), Dad, was one of the first to be called back to the Army (serving from September 1939 until December 1945).

Sid Crossman was a member of the British Expeditionary Force, the Army contingent sent to France in 1939 (with later reinforcements) after Britain and France declared war on Nazi Germany on 3rd September 1939.



Sid Crossman (middle) with friends

British and French troops were evacuated in Operation Dynamo (*Dunkirk*) (26th May – 4th June 1940) to England, after the capitulation of the Belgian army.

A SHERFIELD FAMILY

Back home were Sidney's wife Iris, and three boys, Ray, Rob and Ron, followed by Shirley in 1940.



Ray (9), Shirley (2), Ron (5) & Rob(7) in 1942





Ray 11 & 13

FAMILY WAS IMPORTANT

Dad came from Plymouth, but Mum was local, so we had some strong family support.

Gran Claridge lived in Adams Cottage near the Camp (No 1 on earlier slide).

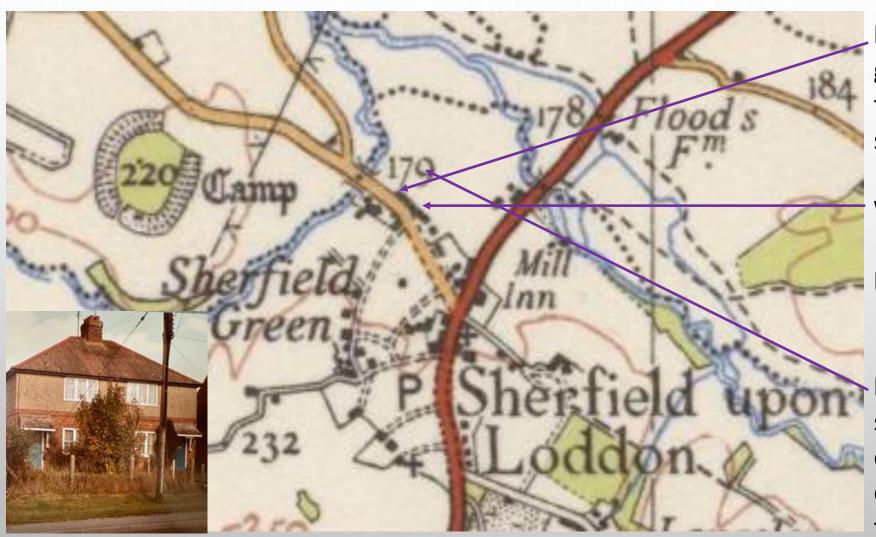
She did a lot of washing for the troops.

My Aunt, Lena Warrilow, and two cousins lived in Jubilee Cottage near the Globe.





WE LIVED AT 2, WEST VIEW, BRAMLEY ROAD



1&2, West View, 1985

Northfield Road – then a gravel track across a field, with two pairs of semis; good for football.

West View

Neighbours: Ruffell, Ham, Mulford, Hale

Mrs Jackson's Land: old shepherd's hut, big chicken shed, and small caravan (let to soldiers' families). Became the caravan park.

FEW HOME COMFORTS

A very small kitchen with a Belfast sink and a pump for water. A kitchen range with a small fire box and an oven on the side. A Morrison shelter. Lino on the floor.

The front room was always freezing cold.

Bedrooms were very cold.

We all slept in the front bedroom in a double bed, Mum with two of us at the top and two at the bottom.

Mother used to put house bricks in the oven to heat them up, cover them and put them in the to bed to warm it up.

Mum spent a lot of the time at the window listening for bombers.







It wasn't quite like this



NO MAIN DRAINAGE, WATER, ELECTRICITY OR GAS

There was no main drainage in those days, you dug a hole in the garden and buried it.

Around about the 60's the Hants Council sent a lorry to take it away.

There was also a man who came round the village with a water carrier on wheels, and emptied people's buckets. He used to put it on the allotments for people.

Allotments were the thing in those days. We didn't have an allotment as we had a large garden.





1&2, West View: shared wash house

LIFE IN THE DARK

Homes "Blacked out" at night

Continual traffic to and from Bramley Camp

Car headlights had deflectors to direct the beam to the ground.

So too, the Carbide lamps used on many bikes, although they were so weak that probably there was no danger of them being seen.

Pedestrians directed their torches directly downwards.

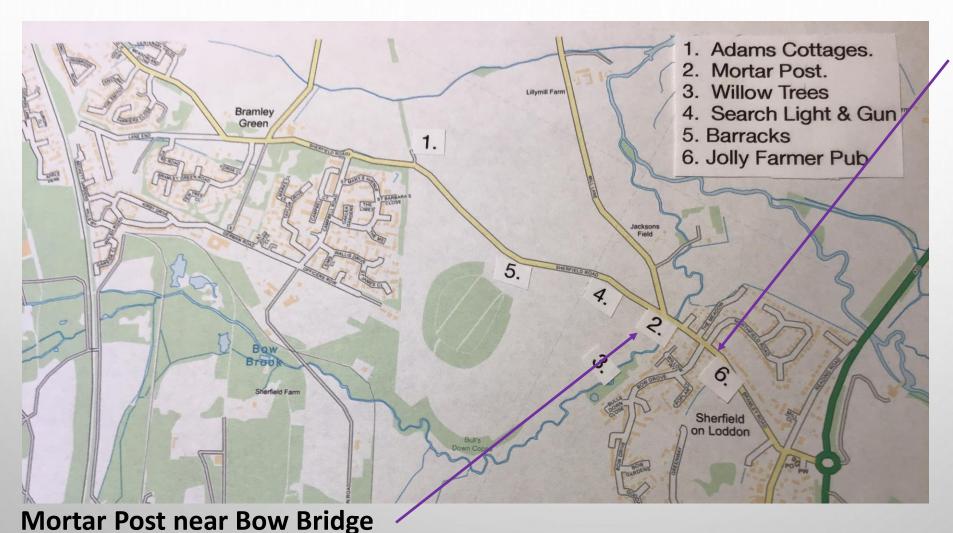








WELL DEFENDED



Street Map 2023

West View, within the Explosive Range of Bramley Camp Windows and Doors protected by Wooden Boxes 3' wide, filled with soil.



A Morrison shelter took up most, of the kitchen.

"Soldiers came now and again and fired mortars into old willow trees 800 yds away, eventually destroying them."

SOME LOCAL PEOPLE

Dorothy and Elsie Mulford, spinsters next door. Dorothy ran a nursery school at the Willows on the common, then moved it next door. Elsie taught at Stratfield Saye school: then at Bramley school. Their brother was my mother's brother-in-law.

Reg Ruffle, two doors away: a fireman in Basingstoke. Every time the siren sounded he went off on his motor cycle. With its lights having a special fitting to direct the beam to the ground it must have been very difficult to see. After the war he drove coaches for Lovegroves of Silchester.

Mr Gibbons, in the Jolly Farmer opposite, had a small market garden, selling all sorts of vegetable plants, apples, plums and pears: a good market with those cycling to Bramley every day.

Ron Keep and his father in Stratfield Saye were cobblers. They were the cousin and uncle of **Arthur Ham**, who would take me to watch them repairing soldier's boots. Fascinating!

Mr Woods in a semi-detached house in what is now Northfield Road was a War Department Policeman in Bramley. I clearly recall him polishing the carbide lamp on his bike.

Gypsies were always coming round selling clothes pegs, heather and firewood, and there were many **tramps**.







BRAMLEY CAMP

Bramley Ordnance Depot

incorporating the School of Ammunition

BRAMLEY CAMP - MANY SOLDIERS

Trained soldiers as ammunition inspectors and in bomb disposal

Always on manoeuvres

One group would go towards Bramley, the other to Sherfield and attack on Hilly Dilly

Blank 303s, smoke bombs, thunder flashes

Throw anything left over into hedges and ditches

We collected what was left

Kept it in our gang hut at Lilly Mill Farm.

Ron Butler, the farmer's son, was one of us.















AFTER THE WAR

After the war about 5,000 civilians worked at the camp. They came from from miles around and all the villages.

At 4:30pm hundreds would cycle along Bramley Road and pass our house. Quite a sight!

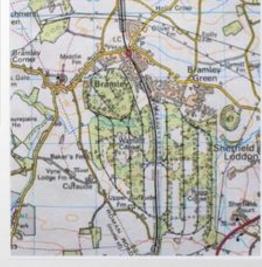
The main camp was extensive and there were Sub-depots for storing ammunition:

Hampstead Norris near Newbury

Wellington Monument – in the woods

Nissen huts stretched from the Wellington Monument to Broadford Bridge









THE CAMP LIVED ON

Conference Room Map

There was a big map with pins showing where each bomb had dropped around the camp and a tag with type and date

Not one had hit the camp, possibly because of the dummy camp at Wildmoor





Demonstrations

In the 1980s, when there were demonstrations at Aldermaston against Cruise missiles, big American lorries with long trailers went past our house in the early hours taking them into Bramley Camp.

HOW DID BOYS SPEND THEIR TIME?

THE GANG

The Gang: Ron Butler, Ray Crossman, Eric Percy, Don Rickwood, Brian & John Wright (Scout Master's sons), Bernard Therrien, Roy Bulpitt, Jim Strong, Maurice Sycklemoore, John Barraclough, Russell & Roland Brown, Reggie Woods, Nigel Dewey, John Dodd

The Gang Hut, a Barn at Lilly Mill Farm

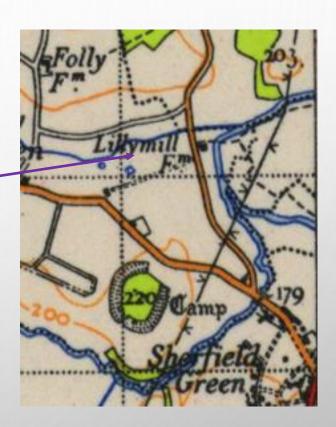
Equipped with table tennis, darts, board games...

We would let off a few smoke bombs and thunder flashes on Hilly Dilly

Then run and hide in case PC Heal came.

He lived up the road and knew all of us.

Favourite place for swimming in the river – Lilly Mill!



PLENTY OF SPORT

We spent a lot of time in the summer playing football and cricket on the Common. The pitches were by Bramley Road. Cricket had its own Pavilion.

The rest of the Common was rough, with gorse bushes and small trees.

Most summers the kids would set light to it.

One year my cousin Desmond Warrilow was trapped and badly burnt.

"When they built the new cricket pitch opposite the Globe, I thought about all the rubbish tipped there by the Americans from the Aldermaston camp! No wonder that the Pavilion is sinking!"

In the winter we went to the Village hall to play table tennis, billiards, snooker and darts.



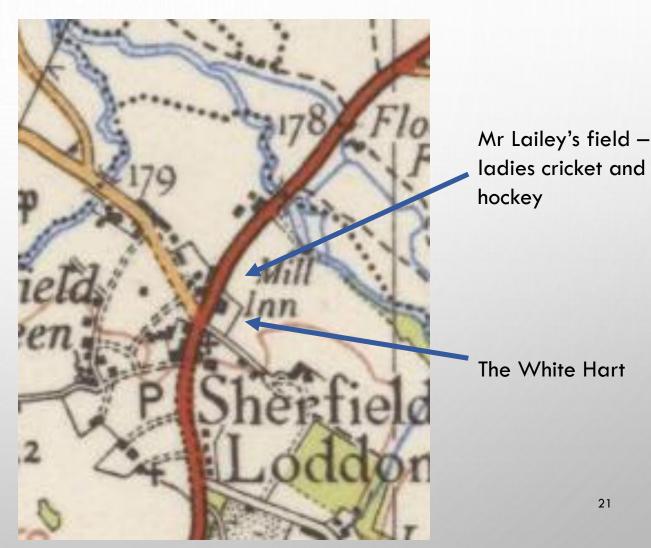


EVEN MORE SPORT

Sherfield had very good ladies cricket and hockey teams.

They used a cricket and hockey pitch in the field to the left of the White Hart that belonged to Mr Lailey of the Mill.

There was a pavilion as well.



LIFE ON THE FARM

Potato Picking

Farmers would come to the school and ask for so many children.

On to the trailer and away we would go.

A card would be marked as we were allowed to go only so many times.

Lilly Mill Farm

We had two uncles working there.

During harvest we would lead the horses from the fields to the rickyards.

No combines, but in winter a threshing machine driven by a big traction engine.







FOR GOODNESS SAKE - LISTEN FOR THE SIREN

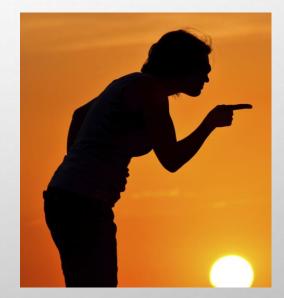
I remember walking across the Common from my aunt's near the Globe not realising that the siren had gone.

There was a dog-fight going on above me. One of the Germans came down and machine gunned along the Reading Road.

Mr Ham who lived at Hams Corner got off his bike and lay in the ditch.

Mother was on the front lawn yelling at me because I hadn't heard the siren.









ONE MORNING ON THE COMMON - MAY 1944



Covered with lorries, tanks and guns. Bren-Gun carriers were new to me.

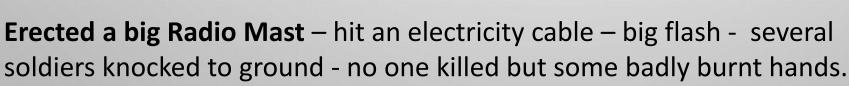




Excuse me sir: "Why are there three white stripes on the vehicles; never seen them before?"

Soldier: "So we know friend from foe."

They disappeared as fast as they arrived; on D Day they had gone.





D-DAY - 6TH JUNE 1944

NORMANDIE

Constant stream of lorries from the Camp, full of ammunition

Bombers going over

Gliders towed by planes

All with three white stripes





Lots of German bombers, V1 (Doodle Bugs) and V2 Rockets flying towards London







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You could always tell a German plane – a different engine noise

A NIGHT AT THE CINEMA – 22ND JUNE 1944

Bramley Camp had a small cinema

Sometimes the guard would let us in.

At other times they would say "? off".

Walking home one night we saw a plane trying to get back to Aldermaston, but on fire.

The crew bailed out and it crashed in Silchester Some boys got on their bikes to find it, but my mother wouldn't let me at that time of night.







NEXT MORNING



Charlie Hale and I cycled over

It was an American Liberator Bomber

Wreckage everywhere. One engine had gone straight through a barn.

We picked up some cannon lying about and other pieces of the plane and brought them home.

Charlie trod on a glove and picked it up. There was a hand inside.

An American Military Police Officer came over and said it was the pilot's, who had been shot over Germany.



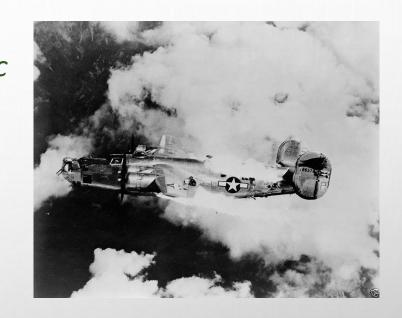
PC WILLIAM PERFECT

NORMANDIE

The Silchester policeman - received a gallantry award in December 1944, for his handling of the crash

"Having regard to the nature of his task of keeping the public away, he is to be commended for his utter disregard for his own safety in continually moving amongst dangerous and burning wreckage in carrying out his duties, as there was ammunition continually exploding, and it was suggested there were unexploded bombs in the wreckage"

T. R. Bonser, Farmer



"All the time P C Perfect was searching for survivors, ammunition was exploding. I saw him go to a different parts of the blazing wreckage, which was spread over about an acre of ground. He searched every part very closely, within two or three yards. There was no other person near at the time." David Ford, Timber Merchant

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PROTECTING THE REALM

CIVIL DEFENCE

The Home Guard, the WWII armed citizen militia of local volunteers otherwise ineligible for military service, too young, too old, in reserved occupations etc, trained on the Common.

They built a frame at the top end of the football pitch and had sacks of straw which they charged with rifles and bayonets. Ted Lyons, who lived opposite Browns, was Captain Mainwaring!









The Observer Corps post in Turgis undertook visual detection, identification, tracking and reporting of aircraft. Composed mainly of civilian spare time volunteers.

Harold Lailey was involved and possibly one of the Poulters

THE PIONEER CORPS



For some time the Pioneer Corps was based at Church End.

They was used for mine clearance, guarding bases, laying prefabricated track on beaches, as well as building airfields, roads, bridges, Mulberry Harbours, and pipe-lines under the sea.

It was the only British military unit in which enemy aliens could serve.

Thousands of German and Austrian nationals joined the Pioneer Corps. They typically were Jews and political opponents of the Nazi Regime.

PRISONERS OF WAR

Italian prisoners were at Church End

Brown uniforms with coloured patches

Worked on farms

Free to roam about the village

We would sit and talk to them

After they had left the Royal Pioneer Corps took over the camp

German prisoners were at Mortimer

Also worked on farms

Their guards always had rifles





THE WAR WAS NEARLY OVER

AFTER D-DAY

Park Prewett Hospital, Basingstoke

Prepared for injured soldiers coming back from the landings.

1,400 mental patients moved to various hospitals in Surrey

Two plastic surgeons, cousins, from New Zealand, who gained great fame:

Major Sir Harold Gillies (1882-1960)

- the pioneer of plastic surgery

Professor Sir Archibald McIndoe (1900-1960) the innovator — Guinea Pig Club etc

We saw terrible injuries when we walked round the village and Basingstoke.





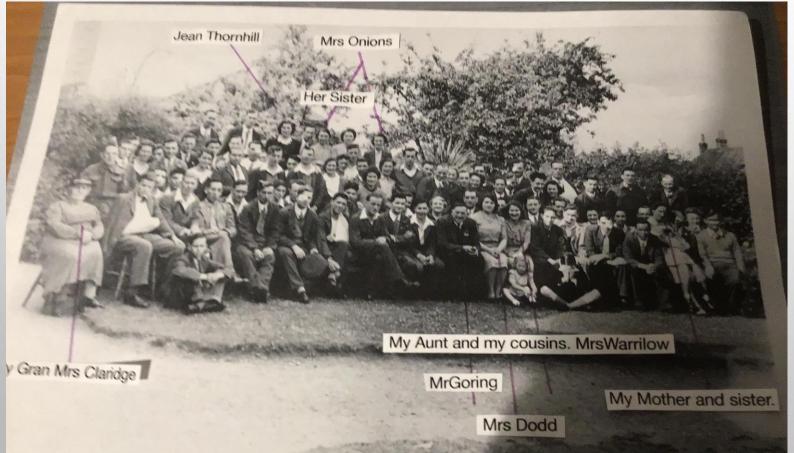


BUCKFIELD HOUSE AND SANQUILLO MANOR

NOW SHERFIELD SCHOOL AND LODDON SCHOOL

Convalescent Homes for injured service men

Villagers arranged concerts and parties, especially Mrs Dodd and Mrs Barraclough



Wounded soldiers outside the village hall

ONE OF MRS DODD'S CONCERTS



DANCES

During the war there were regular dances in the village hall. They were very popular with service men stationed nearby, not least from the American camps.

The Sherfield Dance Orchestra

Trumpet – Doug Woods

Saxophone & Clarinet – Emile Thierrin (Civil Servant)

Accordion - Lionel Dodd (Motor and Cycle Mechanic)

Drums – Harold Lailey (Miller)

They performed at several village halls

Later, in the 1950s, a Saturday night coach went round the villages taking people to dances at Sherfield, Rotherwick, Old Basing, Stratfield Saye, Bramley, Silchester, and further afield. It was at one of these that I met Jean.

ENTERTAINMENT

The only time we saw the news was at the cinema. The Gaumont British News or the Pathe News was always played before the main film.

Radio reception in those days was very poor.

Accumulators were recharged by Mr Dodd at the Garage.

After the war, Dad, brother Ron and I got up in the middle of the night to listen to a Test Match in Australia. It was difficult to hear, there was much crackling, and it kept fading in and out.









CELEBRATIONS

At the end of the war several bonfires were built on the Common

Ours was near the Laurels

Stiff competition to see who could build the biggest

Parties around the bonfires

HOW DID BOYS THEN SPEND THEIR TIME?

A BOYS' HOLIDAY

Troops from the camp used to take slightly damaged bell tents to Broadford Bridge in Stratfield Saye and burn them.

We got one with a small tear; patched it up; and had a week's holiday in Hayling Island.

Nobby Clarke's dad took us down and picked us up.

He had bought the butcher's shop from Mrs Rutter who lived in Hartley Wintney.

She also owned the four pairs of semis in Bramley Road, where we lived, and the Garage next to the shop.

Lionel Dodd who worked for Mrs Rutter bought the garage from her.

Otherwise we never had holidays, just Sunday School outings to Frensham Pond and, on rare occasions, a day trip to Southsea, Bognor, Brighton or the like.





THE SCOUTS

I remember the Scout Troop pulling a big trailer to Broadford Bridge in Stratfield Saye where we had a weekend away, led by the Scout Master, Mr Frank Wright.

Every Year a troop from Acton, including some very senior scouts, would come to Lilly Mill. We would sit round a camp fire and sing songs. One was unforgettable:



Have you ever thought as the hearse goes by, that some day you are going to die, The worms crawl in and the worms crawl out, They go in thin and come out fat, Ooooh!



Visit https://youtu.be/v0KbQe63xkM for some fun

THE YOUTH CLUB CHRISTMAS TREE



The Youth Club promised that it would provide the Village Hall with a Christmas Tree.

Herbie Allen and I went to the *Roundabouts*^a near Bowden's Farm, and into the woods. It was dark and pouring with rain. Herbie went up the tree and cut out the top. It crashed down. In his haste to get down Herbie cut a big gash in his gabardine raincoat. So we hid for a while in case someone came out.

The tree was far too big so we cut it down to size.

We dragged it across a freshly ploughed field, got it to the Post Office with all its lights on, quickly across the road, and up to the back of the Village Hall.

Mr Woolford the caretaker came out to see the tree all covered with mud and gave us a hosepipe and brush to clean it up.

When it dried it was put into the Village Hall.

AN EVERLASTING LOVE - SPORT

SCHOOL AND CRICKET

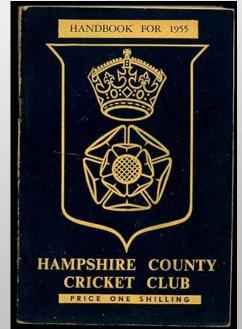
I attended Fairfields School with Nigel Dewey, Charlie Hale and Bob Welch.

While there I was chosen to play cricket for Hampshire Colts. Most of the other team were from Public Schools – four went on to play for Hampshire.

I took a bus from Sherfield to Basingstoke, another to Winchester. Then joined a coach to Pagham. The man in charge wanted 7/6p for the bus and tea. But I didn't have any money! He told me to take it to the Head Master!

Can't remember how I paid.





BASINGSTOKE CRICKET CLUB AND TURGIS GREEN CC

I was asked to play for the Basingstoke CC 2nd eleven.

Although I couldn't afford to play, a member, Captain Drew, paid for me until I was 18.

When I reached that age I still couldn't afford to play. So with my brother Ron, played for Turgis Green: it had a very good team.

Later, when we could afford it, we did play for Basingstoke.

Guy Daly and Bob Smith both played for Basingstoke. Guy still holds the record of 216 not out, and Bob is one of only two players to have taken all ten wickets in an innings.





SPORT, MORE SPORT, EVEN MORE SPORT



A kickabout with Ray Maltby,
Ray Crossman, and Nigel Dewey
(Itor) showing the two pairs of
semi-detached houses in the
field in what is now Northfield
Road.



Golf as well!



I played for Sherfield FC a few times and then Basingstoke FC, but gave up football when I started working for myself.



Turgis Green CC Tour of Holland and Germany 1961



eter Watters, John Perrott, Malcolm Geater, Charlie Smith, Fred Smith, David Fryer. Ray Crossman, Michael Dance, Ron Crossman, Alan Jeffery, Norman Marlow.

WORK

A MILK ROUND BOY

Aged 12, in the afternoons, I worked for John Wright of the Red Lion at Turgis Green (now Jekyll and Hyde), delivering milk, which came from Lilly Mill Farm. I arranged the bottles for filling, sealed them with waxed cardboard tops, put them in crates and delivered to Sherfield, Church End, Wildmoor, Turgis Green, Bramley and Stratfield Saye - 2½d (=1p) a pint.





Mr Maynard from Carpenters Farm was the other milkman. He had two churns on his bike, a pint ladle and a half pint ladle. He would put the milk into whatever container was offered.

BRAMLEY CAMP

Soon after I left school I worked in the Planning and Labour Office of the Camp where my job was to allocate Pioneers to various sheds.

I liaised with seven store Superintendents about their daily labour requirements (usually between 250 and 300 men) and with the Sergeant Major at the Pioneer Camp about availability, and then allocated the men to the sheds. This was not always to the Superintendents' satisfaction if there was not enough labour to meet demand.

As this was achieved over the telephone, they had no idea that I was a 16 year old lad earning 19/6d a week!

After three months they found they had too many staff and I was made redundant!



THE ARMY



Ray in full military dress

On 9th March 1949 I joined the Army, signing on for 12 years.

However, after nine months I was medically discharged with a bad ankle and a pension of 9s/week. After a medical two years later that was taken away as I was deemed fit for work. I went back to the Camp but the pay was poor.

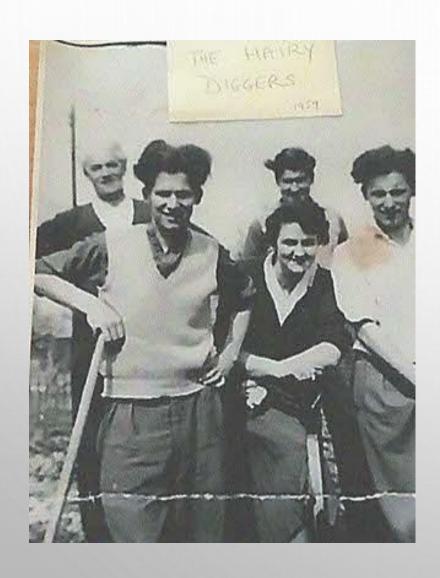
Most of my friends were doing five year building apprenticeships, but a local firm found me a three year apprenticeship, so I was able to make up for the two years at Bramley Camp and in the Army.

When we had finished our training, aged 21, Herbie Allen and I started out on our own, and never worked for anyone after that.



Ray (on the right) with friends

THE HAIRY DIGGERS - 1959



Herbie Allen and I set up Allen and Crossman Ltd. In 1959, we were building three bungalows at Chineham.

When we had finished work and our evening meal, we went down and worked on our bungalow at Bow Brook. We started on 2nd May 1959.

It took us about three years to get over that, even though we were young and fit.

Jean and I married on 2nd April 1960 and moved in. We brought up three wonderful. Children and now have six grandchildren and four great grandchildren!

From left to right

Back row: Dad and Rob

Front row: Rob, Jean & Ray

BUSY BUILDERS

Along with many other projects, we built our two bungalows at Bow Bridge. Then built the two houses opposite and moved over.

We also built a bungalow for Mr & Mrs Jackson, where Laurie Morse lived, and a house in Bow Grove for John & Jenny Dodd.

Then we built a house in Bramley and moved there.

Herbie built a house in Heckfield, moved there, then built another in Old Basing and moved there.





NOT JUST HOUSES

Although we had built about 75 houses in the area, a holiday in our caravan prompted me to look into how much money the caravan park was taking.

On my return home I contacted agents for details of caravan parks which they were selling and then went to Mrs Jackson who owned the Meadows Caravan Park for advice.

Shortly afterwards she phoned me suggesting a chat, during which she revealed that she was considering retiring.

Herbie and I bought the park and completely redeveloped it. It is now owned by Herbie's sons, Chris & Stephen.



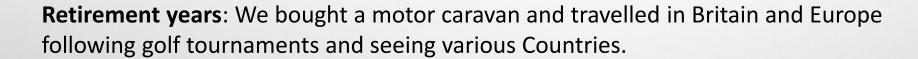


Close friends and business partners: Ray & Jean Crossman and Edna & Herbie Allen

AN ENTREPRENEUR WITH A LOVE OF HOLIDAYS

Caravan paks: When the London overspill was announced we decided to get out of building as land was getting difficult to find and expensive, and stick to caravan parks.

I sold my share of Meadow Caravan Park to Herbie and bought another in Yeovil and moved to Somerset in 1977, redeveloped it, sold it in 1985, then bought a holiday park in Lyme Regis and sold it in 1992.



We went to Poland with Bill and Mollie Thompson, and John Dodd in their motor caravans, just after the wall came down.

Jean's cousin lived in South Africa and for our 25th Wedding anniversary we went out to see them and sailed from Cape Town back to Southampton.

That's when we got the cruising bug. We have done a lot of cruising since then.







SURPRISING EVENTS

I met many interesting people and recall some extraordinary events during my time as a builder.

Roger Goad, stationed at Bramley Camp, bought one of a pair of semis we had built next to brother Ron's. He joined the Metropolitan Police when he retired from the Army - a very quiet man.

Metropolitan Police

Following a telephone tip-off, police officers found a suspicious package placed in a shop doorway in Kensington Church Street in London. Captain Roger Goad was the senior bomb disposal expert on the scene. A bomb, fitted with an anti-handling device had been placed by Provisional Irish Republican Army members. Goad attempted to defuse the bomb but it exploded, killing him instantly.

Captain Roger Philip Goad GC. BEM (Gallery) 29th August 1975 40 years old



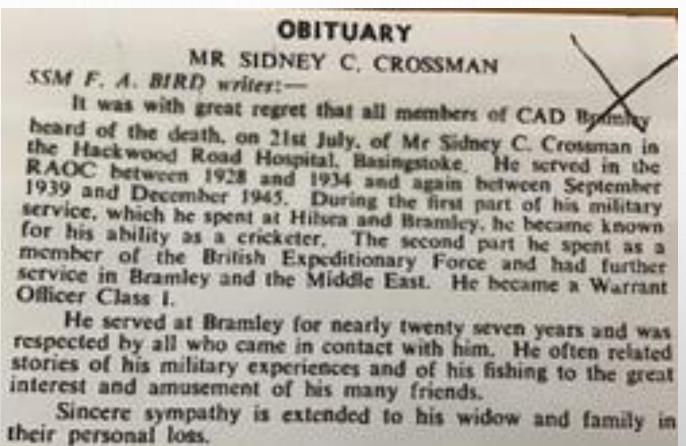


THE FAMILY

MUM AND DAD









Sidney Charles Crossman 1909-1969 Iris Annie Crossman (neé Claridge) 1914-2000

A FAMILY TOGETHER





Ray, Shirley and Ron Crossman

Brother Rob died in 2018

Ray & Jean outside Swallowfield Church where they were married on 2nd April 1960

SHERFIELD HISTORY GROUP

This presentation, *Memories of a Sherfield Lad: D-Day and beyond*, is available at: https://www.managementreality.com/Sherfield/Ray_Crossman_Memories.pdf

Another set of childhood memories of Sherfield in WWII,

The Youthful Memories of Donald & Ursula Rickwood,

is available at: https://www.managementreality.com/Sherfield/Donald_Memories_WWII.pdf

And yet other childhood memories of WWII (but not of Sherfield), at https://www.managementreality.com/Sherfield/Joan_Memories_slide_show.pdf

If you would like to share your memories of WWII, the 1940s, 1950s or 1960s, then please contact the Sherfield History Group, either through Facebook *Sherfield on Loddon Remembered*, or the Convenor, Jan Holden, directly.

DO YOU REMEMBER ANY OF THE FAMILIES MENTIONED BY RAY?

ALLEN

BARACLOUGH

BROWN

BULPIT

BUTLER

CLARIDGE

CLARKE

COOPER

CROSSMAN

DEWEY

DODD

DONAVAN

FRIEND

GIBBONS

GORING

HALE

HAM

JACKSON

KEEP

KEW

LAILEY

LYONS

MAYNARD

MCKENNY

MULFORD

MUNDY

ONIONS

PALMER

PERCY

POULTER

RICKWOOD

RUFFELL

STRONG

SYKLEMOORE

TAPLIN

THORNHILL

THIERRIN

WARRILOW

WELCH

WOODS

WOOLFORD

WRIGHT

