

SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY by Ray Pearce

I seem to have stopped going out because of the covid virus but on a sunny day last week I decided to take a sentimental journey to Brixworth 6 miles north of Northampton. In another life I would have driven there but not anymore. It was the X12 bus from Arden Hall to Birmingham International railway station then a train to Northampton and a taxi to Brixworth. At this point let me explain why I chose to visit Brixworth. It was where my father's parents were living in 1941 and to where my brother and I were sent to avoid the Manchester blitz. In those dark days we were living in Stamford Park, Stalybridge where my father was outside foreman. There were no air raid shelters in the park so when the sirens sounded we all huddled under the kitchen table whilst dad was out fire watching. He had a stirrup pump and wore a tin hat with ARP on the front. Eventually a shelter of sorts was dug into the side of a large mound of earth for the three families living in the park.

I left the taxi near to where we lived with granny and grandad and went round the back of the house and our bedroom window from the 1940s was still there. A lady then appeared and asked if she could help me and I explained my purpose of being there. She said she would take my photo and asked how things had changed. I said the gardens at the backs of the house were much smaller and the row of houses were not there then. Instead there were iron ore workings with large iron buckets on wires going to a railway siding where the ore was tipped into wagons where they were taken to the steel works of Stewarts and Lloyds at nearby Corby. This had been opened in 1910 and there were more Scotsmen in Corby than many a small town in Scotland.

I next went into the village shop which was next door to our grandparent's house and purchased some postcards of the village church. This is a Saxon church built in AD 680 by monks from nearby Peterborough. It is said to be the second oldest church in use in England. Nikolaus Pevsner, architectural historian, said that, arguably Brixworth church is the finest 7th century building north of the Alps.



Proceeding through the village I looked, in vain, for the village where our grandad was the village postman. In retirement he was the village cobbler. He was in his 60s then and used to a mouth full of tacks as he repaired the shoes. He received his leather from a dealer from Burton Latimer who called from time to time with further supplies which grandad placed in a pail of cold water. By this time I was feeling hungry so moved on to the Coach and Horses



for an excellent lunch .The building has a thatched roof and dates back to the 1700s. My final visit was to the red building which acted as a school for all the evacuees in the village. Apart from my brother Don and I all the other children were from London. I don't think we were encouraged to mix with the other children and had to go straight home after school.

The Pytchley hunt were kennelled in the village and I used to feel frightened if we came across them being exercised. One final thought, the pear tree outside our bedroom did not appeared to be there now, the pears were very hard. Considering all this took place 80 years ago I am not surprised the tree had gone. A taxi then back to Northampton station and the train home at the end of a sentimental journey.

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