

John Steerwood:

School Life in Trinity, Wood Green and Hatfield Peverel, Garfield Primary School, Training to be an Architect, and Health Recovery in Papworth Everard

John Steerwood - Early Family Life

Dad was born in Islington in 1889. Mum was born in Muswell Hill in 1875. They married in St James Church, Muswell Hill in 1921. Sister Wendy was born in 1924 in Wood Green. John was born in 1927 in Wood Green. In July 1937 we moved to a flat above a shop opposite the Post Office in Colney Hatch Lane, Muswell Hill. Dad could not pay the rent so he found a haystack for us at the top of this road crossing the North Circular Road. After a few nights sleeping there, a policeman called up to us - "What are you doing up there? Come down!" We were taken to the Ridgeway in Enfield. Then Dad had to go to the workhouse. Wendy was taken to the girls' home in Muswell Hill and John was taken to a Friern Barnet boys' home.

When the war started in 1939 Wendy was evacuated with Trinity students to Hatfield Peverel. I had just passed the examination to go to Trinity just like my sister, winning the scholarship to go there. I was told to go to Minchenden Grammar School on the Wednesday, and I had school there once a week and given books to learn at home. This happened for a few months just on a Wednesday. The Army had taken over the Trinity building but after a few months I was able to start there.

I was still in the boys' home in 33, Parkhurst Road. When I was 14 it was time to leave the home. Then I was told by the authority that we are sending you to Hatfield Peverel, and there is was that I saw my sister Wendy for the first time since she went to the girls' home. A year later, she left and went to Torquay to train as a teacher. Later the 29 students still in Hatfield Peverel had to leave and return to Trinity, including me. So, it must be the North Circular Road that was the dividing line when splitting pupils into separate groups.

School Life- from John Steerwood, born 1927

In June 1938 when I was 11 and a half it was recommended that I should take the entrance examination to a grammar school. I was at Garfield Road Junior School in Friern Barnet, New Southgate, N11. Unfortunately a child in the North Middlesex Children's Home where I was living had developed chicken pox and we 14 boys were set in quarantine. So I went to Holly Park Senior School nearby instead. After retiring I started my personal biography of my life in England 1927-1957. After 70 pages I lost 6 pages somehow, which put me off doing more. After 70 pages I lost 6 of them somehow, which put me off doing more. I did it mostly for my son John, daughter Caroline and my grandchildren, Brian 22, Sheena 21 and Robin 14 as all speak English very well. All were born here in Switzerland. Now since there is still interest in England you all have inspired me to finish it.

My first North Middlesex Children's Home (NMCH) was at this address, 12 Woodhouse Road, North Finchley N12, from about September to December 1936. I was taken from Muswell Hill to NMCH, Chase Farm, The Ridgeway, Enfield and then to this boys home the same day. I went to Summerside School nearby in Crossway Road. The address of the new home was 33, Parkhurst Road and I stayed there from January 1937 to September 1941. Harry Snowdon also went there and he married a former Trinity School girl, Elaine Dullely.

I started at Garfield in the fifth form from January to July 1937, the teacher was Mr Saddington, and finished in the sixth form 1A in 1938, teacher was Mr Lucas. I still have my report book from Garfield. I think I played a few football matches for the school. I can remember playing against the newly-built De Bohun School in Old Southgate. I believe we lost 7-0. In that match as defender I cleared the goal with a mighty kick and damaged my right ankle, which I still feel today, to remind me.

My way to school from Parkhurst Road was over Friern Barnet Road, along the Colney Hatch low wall section into the Station Approach cul-de-sac and over the railway footbridge, where I often saw two schoolboys patiently taking train numbers. Across Station Road was the very convenient tuck shop. Leaving it, one saw over the railway wall the distant Alexandra Palace, my hunting ground when I lived in Muswell Hill and went to the Tin Pot School!

On returning to Parkhurst Road from school I always went up Station Road, and, being an ardent cigarette-card collector, I often asked passing gentlemen "Please Sir, have you got any cigarette cards?" I was overjoyed when they had. They were mostly kept in their top pocket. Perhaps Garfield football boys of my day also bought in the sweet shop wrapped-up bonbons, each with one name of 30 to 40 British football clubs to collect for a prize. We swapped doubles at school. None of us had a complete set, unforgettable, no one ever had Cowdenbeath. So we bought sherbets or toffee-apples instead. I passed the Railway Pub on the corner on my way back.

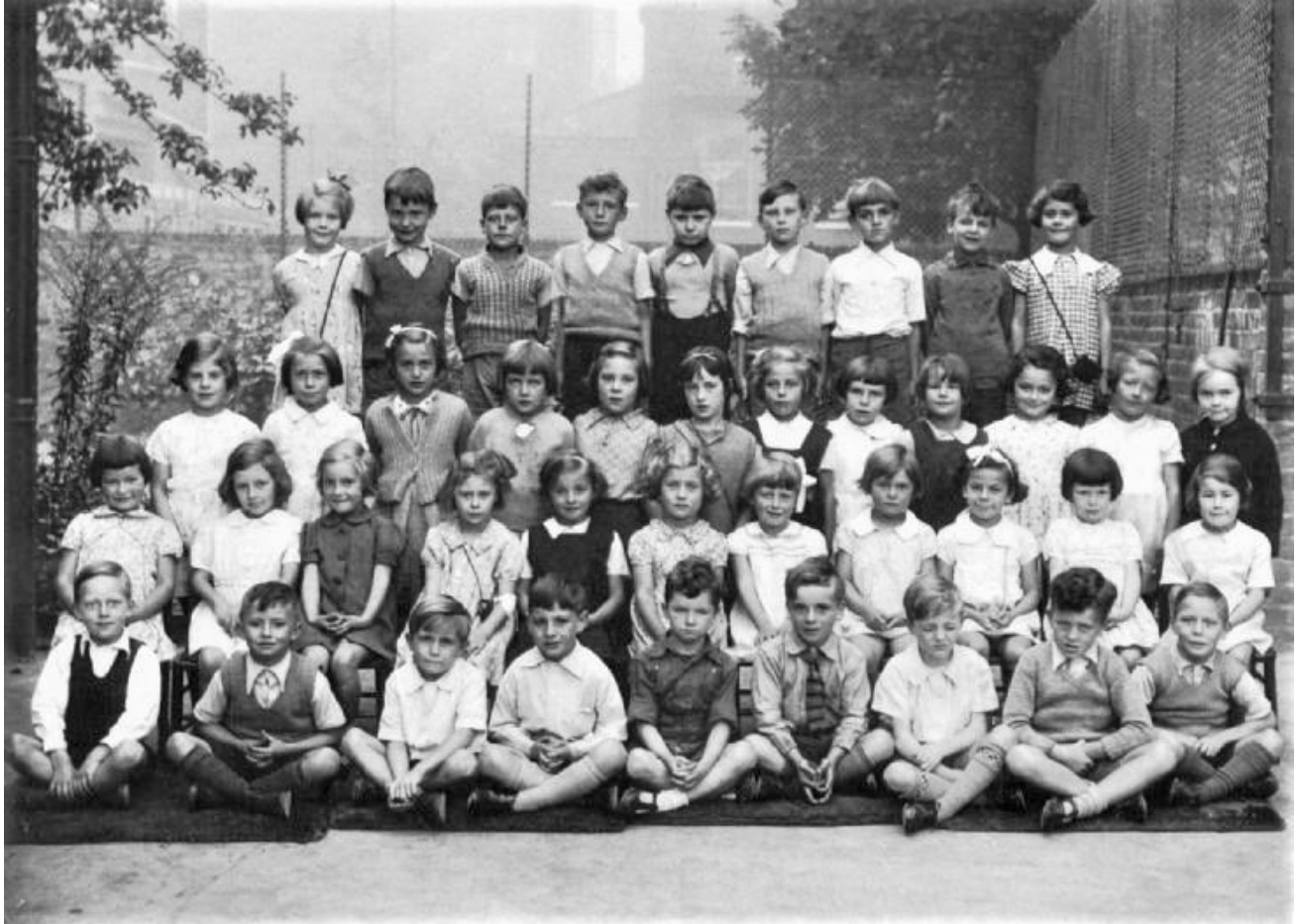
NAME	DATE	MARKS
<i>J. Steerwood</i>	<i>July 1937</i>	
SUBJECTS		
SCRIPTURE		<i>50 One to date</i>
ENGLISH - READING		<i>80</i>
COMPOSITION		<i>80</i>
HANDWRITING		<i>80</i>
ARITHMETIC		<i>80</i>
MATHS		<i>80</i>
HANDWORK		<i>80</i>
DRAWING		<i>80</i>
AMERICAN		<i>80</i>
OTHER SUBJECTS		<i>80</i>
CONDUCT		<i>80</i>
PROGRESS		<i>80</i>
ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY		<i>80</i>
CLASS AND POSITION		<i>80</i>
Class Teacher's Signature		
Parent's Signature		
Head Teacher		

Excellent. Shows great promise. V. Good. Excellent work. V. Good. One to date. V. Good.

Class Teacher's Signature: W. J. Saddington
Parent's Signature: J. Steerwood
Head Teacher's Signature: J. Steerwood

John Steerwood School Report 1937

Garfield Road School Class Photo 1937-1938



Holly Park Senior (Sept 1938-July 1939)

At the reunion last September I enjoyed meeting two Holly Park Senior School Ladies. We remembered our English teacher in the first year Mr Owen D.W. Berry, who was very hot on elocution which I always thank him for his diligence. The houses were Arnos, Bethune, Broomfield and Priory. I was in Bethune house. We had in the second year a well-built athletic black boy, the only one I had ever seen who, at the Annual North Middlesex Schools Athletics meeting in Broomfield Park won the 100 yards and if I remember rightly also the 200 yards in his category. I was there. It was thrilling, and he was a great credit to the school.

Trinity Memories

Trinity County (First Time). (Sept.1939-Jan 1941) *

For Trinity later I played football and cricket in the second teams and especially remember playing cricket against Woodhouse Grammar school at North Finchley.

Hatfield Peverel Evacuation of Trinity (July1941-Jan.1943)*

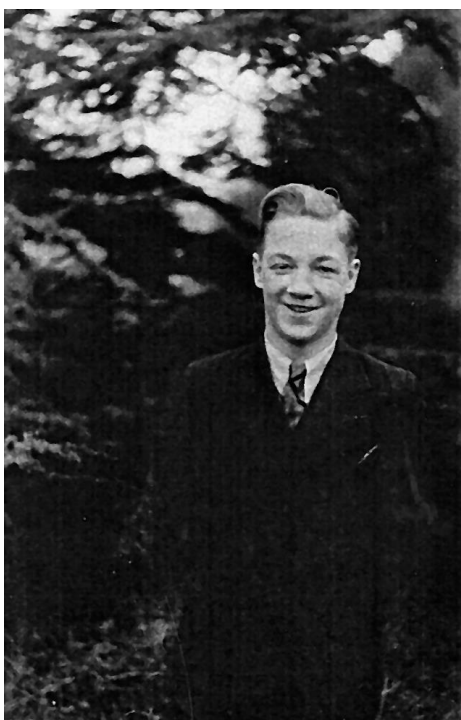
Phil Tripp, President of Trinity Country Club was there when I was evacuated to HP in July 1941 to a Mr and Mrs Watson. The house was very small and we two had to sleep in the same double bed on the first floor above the "front room" (which in those days was nicely furnished but never used only on Christmas Day). I saw it twice. Those were the days of small incomes. We had a large bowl to wash ourselves in the mornings and a big jug of cold water on a plain dressing table with a marble top and a large hinged mirror. Phil Tripp returned to Wood Green soon after. He was in a higher year than me.



"The Priory." Trinity County School here 1939-Jan 1943



The Priory - Franciscan monks



John Christmas 1942



John and Girl 1942 Christmas



Pea-picking, Hatfield Peverel. John's class TCS. Where is he?

John is immediately behind the farmer's boy's cap with a tin mug!

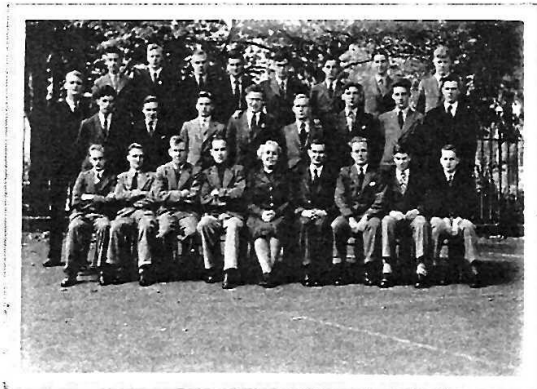


early July 1942

Daphne Dinmore John
 Margaret Dinmore was in Wendy's year, and their father, science teacher, was my



TCS School Choir... Messiah, Carols & songs. Spot John.



TCS 5th year boys. Spot Max, Wendy! Our sport-master and cricketer Alexander Park

James "Jimmy" Grout
 Stage (Shakespeare Stratford
 Company) and TV (Dr Herriot).
 We were in the same class
 at Garfield Road Junior Sch.
 New Southgate/Friern Barnet
 1937-38. He was always
 "acting" and quoting Shakespeare.
 He's on my right side, next
 to me.

Trinity County School - Second Time (January 1943 to July 1944)

I still have my Trinity County School Report Book and some blue Trinity School magazines of the early 1950's.

Trinity Farmers 1944

After Matriculation, 21 fifth year boys took the opportunity to have a 2 week holiday helping the war-effort with harvesting in Gloucestershire, at the Duke of Beaufort's estate, Badminton House Park. Five teachers came also, including Mr Shave and Mr Penney (photos were sent to Beryl Skinner showing me sitting second from left next to Mr Ellison). We lived in tents at Didmarton village. We played a game of cricket against the local Chipping Sodbury Grammar School in the park before the House. Standing watching at a safe distance was old Queen Mary who lived at Badminton House during the war.

Trinity County School 1939-1944

In June 1938 when I was 11½ it was recommended that I should take the entrance examination to a grammar school. I was at Garfield Road Junior School in Friern Barnet /New Southgate N11 area. Unfortunately, a child in the North Middlesex Children's Home where I was living had developed chicken pox and we 14 boys were set in quarantine. So I had to go to Holly Park Senior School nearby. After a year, being twice top of the class of 40 it was again recommended that I should do the entrance examination. After I had passed the exam the House Mother took me to the Trinity County School Shop in Wood Green to buy the school uniform and cap.

I started at Trinity, though not in the morning after the Sunday the Second World War began, but on the Wednesday. I had been told that I must go to Minchenden Grammar School in a large park at Old Southgate N14. Of course I found out later that the Trinity County School building had been taken over by I believe the Army. The Wednesdays were just for Trinity scholars, and from then on I enjoyed walking there – no buses and no traffic – like in the country, past Arnos Park, up Waterfall Road to the Green, Old Southgate, with its ancient stocks and the Old Southgate cricket ground, for months, and we were given a lot of homework to learn ourselves.

One day we were told to go to Glendale County School, a quarter of a mile away from Trinity. I went by trolley bus. From then on we had to share school with Glendale scholars. We were going alternately mornings one week and afternoons the next week. Sometime later, we could at last start at our own school building.

The School Assembly early every morning was obligatory for everyone with the Head Master Dr Emrys E. Jones MA, PhD, with a reading from the Bible, and we all sung a hymn from the Trinity County School Hymn Book, and he read any notices, and on Mondays results of sport games. On the polished board on the wall behind him were the names of Head Prefects. I remember reading "1924 Jack Hawkins" in gold lettering, who was later a well known actor for British Films. I often wonder where that board is today.

In summer we played cricket in the boys' playground, with a mini wicket chalked on the school wall. One of us had carved a wooden cricket bat 6" high and we bowled with marbles. In winter, of course we played football with tennis balls or slid on the ice. I never knew what girls played in their playground on the other side of the school. We had 30 gills of milk in bottles for the morning break and I had the school lunch at mid-day. This went on for me till the end of the summer term 1941. I had become 14 and that was the normal age to have to leave the boys' home. The authorities in charge decided to send me to Hatfield Peverel.

My sister Wendy had been in a North Middlesex Girls' Home in Muswell Hill since I was in Friern Barnet. We had no girls' home near us and Muswell Hill had no boys' home. But there were homes for both boys and girls at Brownlow Road, Bounds Green. Perhaps they were both full up. Our Dad had told me that Wendy was in Muswell Hill, but in those days there never were any communication. Later we were told Wendy and I had been the first North Middlesex Children's Home children to gain a scholarship for a higher education.

So in Hatfield Peverel, Mr. Swinden, Head of School, introduced me to my future billet, Mr and Mrs Watson at "Glenside" in Maldon Road. Phil Tripp of Trinity was still living there. Our hosts had two sons, Thomas worked on a fruit farm at Boreham, and Oscar was a butcher's apprentice. Their oldest son was at the war front. Mr Swinden told me that Wendy was billeted at Colonel and Mrs Collen at the other end of the village, the local gentry, at "Brakeyes", a large house with staff, and a park with a tennis court. From then on, my sister and I saw each other for the first time since about 1936.

Wendy, born in 1924, went to Coldfall Junior School in Muswell Hill, and passed the entry examination for Trinity, and, since she was 14, had always said she wanted to be a teacher. She was evacuated to Hatfield Peverel with the school in 1939 as war began. Since then I had often wondered why half of the school was evacuated and half not. I believe that the North Circular Road between Friern Barnet and Muswell Hill was the dividing line. Joan, a cousin of ours, who lived on the north side of the North Circular Road, in Palmers Green, and who was going to Minchenden Grammar School, was not evacuated. At the summer term of 1942 Wendy left Hatfield Peverel, having passed her matriculation and went on to study at a teacher's training school at Babbacombe, near Torquay.

Back in Hatfield Peverel, Phil Tripp had finished matriculation and left Hatfield Peverel, and I was alone at Mrs Watson's. There were no more replacements. Bombing was getting less and less, and steadily more children were leaving Hatfield Peverel, with the always convenient, "good old Empire's Best" coach stationed right near Trinity County School, to go back to their mothers. Classes got smaller and smaller. In January 1943 it was announced that there were only 29 pupils left in Hatfield Peverel and teachers were needed in Wood Green. So we left Hatfield Peverel for good.

I personally had enjoyed it thoroughly: the country side, the village, going to school in the Priory, my billet with a family, the village cricket and football matches, learning ballroom dancing, with Wendy teaching me in the Village Hall, and seeing my sister.

I had earned some pocket money by doing a local grocer's round on Saturday mornings and Thursdays after school. The village policeman living in the High Street, the Roman Ermine Street, had two beautiful young daughters dressed alike elegantly in Sunday best, light grey, two pieced with red accoutrements. The village greeting was "Woopah", and five penny bread, "Pats", were sold at the bakers. We boys used to cycle down to swim in the River Blackwater at Ulting Wick, just south of Hatfield Peverel. Some of the local village names were fascinating like Tolleshunt d'Arcy, Tolleshunt Knights and Wickham Bishops. Ralph Peverel was a Norman knight. In the ancient parish church laid a stone effigy of a woman on a window sill, believed to be Inglerica, his Saxon wife.

Now back in London, in January 1943, I was sent to live with foster parents in Winchmore Hill N21 and travelled to Trinity by trolleybus. It was quiet in London with practically no raids. That summer a large group of our year went to Hatfield Peverel pea-picking (see photos). I liked singing and joined the school choir, and at Christmas we sung a Carol Service at St Michael's Church near Trinity County School on Sunday December 12th, and the following Saturday, at the same church, we sung from Handel's Messiah five choruses, up to and including the Hallelujah Chorus and four airs were sung by professional soloists.

In 1944 air raids continued intermittently day and night but didn't disturb school. Football matches were played against local schools as usual, and cricket too. Gradually matriculation exams were approaching and we increased our studying. The first exam date was for June 23rd. Exactly one week before, on the June 16th it was announced by the BBC that the first V-1 had exploded on British soil. From then on school was held in the corridors, which had been reinforced with sturdy tree trunk columns and beams at the outbreak of the war. The first day we huddled into the corridor and played mini chess and playing cards sitting on benches. But, by matriculation exam time, the class desks and chairs had been placed in the corridor, and we heard the V-1 flying bombes coming over Wood Green. As like everything else, we got used to it.

Matriculation was over, summer was here and we fifth formers were invited to help harvesting with farmers for the war effort for two weeks on the Duke of Beaufort's estate in Badminton in Gloucestershire. We slept in tents at Didmarton. We boys played a game of cricket against the local Chipping Sodbury Grammar school boys. It took place in the large park behind Badminton House, with one special spectator at a respectable distance.... old Queen Mary who was living with the Duke and Duchess during the war.

My special hobby had been, since 1939, visiting and making sketches of ancient churches. In that time in Badminton I visited four local Cotswold village churches and Gloucester Cathedral. When I left Trinity at 17½, with matriculation in my pocket, I knew I wanted to be an architect.

Photos: see around these pages. Also in the website Galleries – Hatfield Peverel

- 34 HP Church and Priory building (woodcut)
- 35 HP Priory, Duke of Wellington pub facing down Maldon Road from the High Street, Wendy and I Christmas 1942.
- 36 HP Pea-picking. July 1942. We on the cart – I am behind the Farmer boy, holding a white enamelled mug. Daphne Dinmore and me with school cap.
- 37 HP Trinity School drawing by M.P.Jobson our art mistress. TCS School Choir. I am in back row 3rd from R. Jimmy Grout on my right. We were in the same class at Garfield Road Junior School. The last time I was there in 1998 it had been pulled down and a new brick estate is there- TCS 5c boy's class. Front row sitting L to R, Dixon?, me, Mr Ellison ?, ?, M.P. Jobson ?, Mr Shave, Max Penney.
- 1 HP Pea-picking. Daily Chart.
- 2 HP Pea-picking Cart and Ulting Wick. I'm in the centre.
- 3 HP River Blackwater.

Miscellaneous Items – probably with Beryl Skinner

- 4 1938 Holly Park Senior School. Form Master Owen D.W. Berry
- 5 1944 TCS Matric two test days-first and last
- 6 1944 TCS Testimonial
- 7 1944 TCS Matric results
- 8 Carol Service Programme 12.12.1943
- 9 Handel's Messiah Programme 18.12.1943
- 10 Handel's Messiah Programme 16.12.1944
- 11 Bonnie Prince Charlie Boat Song / Die Lorelei
- 12 The Lass with the delicate air.

Form Teacher's Terms

- 1 D.M. White
- 1a M.P. Jobson
- 2a J. Ellison 2x
- 3 S.S. Dinmore 2x
- 4
- 5 L.A. Swindon
- 4c J. Bonney 2x
- 5c J. Bonney 1x
- Mr Swinden - Maths

Other Teacher's names I remember

- Mr R.A. Jones - History
- Mr Chick - Woodwork
- Mr Penney - Art
- Mr Saunders – Music
- Mr Shave - Geography
- Mr Edmonds - English
- Mr Dinmore - Science

Other class mates names that I remember: **Boys:** John Hulford, Derek Augood, Roddy McDowell, ? Bishop ?, Saxon ?, Bygraves. **Girls** – we had two unrelated Pamela Browns in our class.

TOSA Newsletter 28 April 2013 - John's Memories of Teachers and Pupils

To **Bernard Lacombe** (1939), Ontario. I started at Trinity in the same year but first went to the Grammar Schools at Minchenden in Southgate, and then at Glendale in Wood Green, both for some months with other non-evacuee Trinitarians before we could use the home school. I was evacuated to Hatfield Peverel in summer 1941 until the last 29 pupils left Hatfield Peverel in January 1943. Should I know you Bernard? Sorry, I think we must have been in different classes. You lived at 22, Palace Gates Road and I was born in North Middlesex Hospital but lived at 5 Victoria Road, both two stone throws from our Trinity.

You went to the Tin Pot Primary School in Muswell Hill. So did I, but only in the fifth and sixth years when we lived above a shop in Muswell Hill Broadway, entrance Queens Lane from Queen's Avenue. We must have been in the same year. Were you the boy that I gave a halfpenny to ride your bike at lunchtime in the school playground? I straightaway crashed into the railings and landed in hospital to have my bitten through lower lip stitched! That would be a coincidence.

To **Jackie Wood**, 1944, (Rooke). Thank you for your list of teachers and your memory is much better than mine although thank goodness I remember at least some of them. Of course, no one could ever forget Head Master Dr Emrys J. Jones of the red ink "Should get Matriculation" fame. Bless him. We learnt all the hymns by heart in no time at school - assembly every morning.

I remember well the history master, **R.A. Jones** and his bright green Harris Tweed suit; of course we called him RAJ. Of the long list of names of Trinity Old Scholars there are four of my year, 1939, of which **Yvonne Horn** and **Grace Brown** were in my class. My sister, **Wendy Steerwood** (Trinity 1937-1942) was in the same year as **Don Grammer**.

James (Jimmy) Grout passed away last year. I remember him very well. He was in my class both in Garfield and Trinity, although I cannot remember if all the time. I admired his amazingly pleasant demeanour, and a subtle humour talent for many things, but above all for quoting Shakespeare all the time, sometimes standing on his seat at the back of the class, as long as the teacher wasn't around, of course, and I shall never forget his "Friends, Romans, Countrymen, lend me your handkerchiefs". How we laughed.

I admired his friendliness too. James was also a member of the 43 girl and 22 boy strong school choir for two Christmases, 1942 and 1943, at nearby St Michael's church. He is standing next to me in the back row of the photo in the boy's playground. James was pre-destined to become a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company at Stratford-on-Avon and later on the London stages and TV, for example the Morse series.

Life in Papworth Village Settlement, September 1945 to February 1949

At my Army call-up in January 1945 it was found that I had a shadow on my lung. After being in Colindale Hospital and convalescing in Kelling Sanatorium in Norfolk, I could go home cured, but had no home to go to. As I wanted to be an architect, I was told I could go to Papworth Industries in Cambridgeshire where there was a building department with a drawing office, and would be under medical observation at the same time. As, at the call up I had to stop my evening studies in architecture at the Northern Polytechnic in London, and had had no chance of entering an architect's office because of the war, I jumped at the chance.

I arrived in Papworth on September 7th 1945. I reported myself to the office of the Chief Medical Director, Doctor Trail, located up the drive in Papworth Hall, and was allotted one of the wooden revolving chalets in South Park (see photo). I had already lived in a similar hut for six months in Kelling. There were about sixty of them in three long rows on a slope just south of the Hall. These chalets were roughly 6 x 6 feet inside with room for a bed, a chest of drawers, a small table and chair, and a narrow clothes cupboard.

The windows were shutters on all sides and there was no heating. Fresh air was the slogan and fortunately English winters are mild. A short walk took us to the washroom, a games room and lounge, and the dining room in the annexe near the hall. I was fond of classical music but had no radio. I mentioned this to an uncle of mine and he sent me his old crystal set that he had made himself when young. So in the idle hours, ear close to the contraption and often losing all contact and trying again (the slightest movement caused disturbances) I could more or less listen to concerts, the Brains Trust or Family Favourites, and once I remember a thrilling talk about 6 marshland churches. Years later, while on holiday in Hunstanton, I visited them and the thrill of finding that station in the chalet returned.

I soon fitted into the life. We were all good companions and held together, with most of them in the same boat, still convalescing, some of them with APs (artificial-pneumo-thorax treatment). I had had gold-injection at Kelling. Most or some were working in a factory or office of one of the industries, part-time or full time according to doctor's orders. There was always good room for a lark and a joke to keep us going. During my life, I have noticed it's amazing how many can retain the humour in adversity. It can even engender it. Of course there had to be a certain discipline, especially for those under treatment, but I cannot recall any really serious pranks that had to be reprimanded by Dr Trail. If I remember rightly, for those under treatment and part time work, Caxton Gibbet was out of bounds!

At least I could work for the very first time in a drawing office, half days to begin with, and then full time. Frank Jordan was the chief and there was also Joe Eaton, Will Street and Gordon Chapman. Through the door was the building accounts office with Henry Willis and the junior, Jim Tully. The building department chief was Mr Sheppard who had mostly to do with the builders on site and costing. He was greatly incapacitated in the back and leg and had great difficulty every time to climb the stairs up to us on the first floor, and always had his stick with him.

Many houses along Ermine Street and the estates nearby had already been built for the settlement, so at that time drawing was confined to building repairs, alterations and small extensions, and chicken runs for nationwide use and other small wooden constructions made by the carpentry department. Later I did working drawings for the sanatorium extension.

Internationally known architects worked for the settlement. Walter Gropius and Maxwell Fry had designed an ultra modern school on the lines of the famous Impington Village College in Cambridgeshire, but unfortunately it was never built. While I was there the South African Amyas Connell came into the office to show us his design for a group of three houses and they were built. Years later, after qualifying, I worked for Maxwell Fry in London for a year.

Among the younger colleagues in South Park, we were mostly young, were two that were known for their outstanding ability at table tennis. They had been in the RAF and they sounded like they were ex-undergraduates. Freddie Creber, small and erudite, was practically never seen without a cigarette in his right hand! The other was tall and reserved and they were always together and great fun. Another was a cockney from Bethnal Green; we called him Bet'nal of course, complete with typical spontaneous humour. Two others were Jackie Pape from Yorkshire and Ken, and another two were pet lovers. One looked after and fed a stray cat, and **Cyril Pomfret "Pom" even had a dog, and therefore always wore turned down wellingtons** to take his dog for runs in adjacent fields, come what weather (see photos with my second-hand box camera I had bought in Huntingdon expressly for photographing buildings).



Papworth chalet scene with John on left with Cyril Pomfret on right in his turned down wellington boots

Somehow some of us managed to pick up an old bicycle or bought one for a song from a leaver. Another colleague of ours, very handsome and reserved, was told he was cured and could go home. He came from Houghton, a well known beauty spot on the River Ouse six miles away. So one day four of us with bikes decided we would go and visit him and met him as arranged at the village pump.

Word got round that I was interested not only in new buildings but old ones, especially medieval churches. Harry Barnes, who was a middle aged Papworth bricklayer and a keen motor cyclist and also interested in old buildings, offered to show me around his native Northamptonshire that he knew so very well. So, warmly packed up and armed with camera and note book in a canvas bag slung over my shoulder and me on the back, off we went. I was so thankful to Harry to this day. In those days there was practically no traffic at all. We were roving around the countryside with not a car in sight, just an occasional bus or van. It was exhilarating. We saw so many fine old buildings that I would never have seen otherwise: thirty seven ancient churches and other ancient buildings like Kirby Hall, Burghley House and the Triangular Lodge at Rushton, in five trips. Then he started courting a nurse, of his own age, and eventually married her, so that was that.



John Steerwood, 1946

The printed caption reads: This photo was taken at Papworth Everard village in Cambridgeshire on 8 December 1946. I had started to work in the Building Industries firm. For the first time I could work in a drawing office with an architect. Later I would buy for £10 an old motor bike (350cc BSA 1929 Model) to go to Cambridge School of Art and Technology – 10 miles – at evening classes three times a week. Weekends I could continue my hobby visiting ancient churches from Cambridgeshire and surrounding shires. I returned to London in 1950.

In the meantime I had been transferred to a more comfortable and heated St Peter's Hostile across Ermine Street. Again we were a good crowd including the "Bootle Boy", a leading light from Liverpool, who organised a photo in front of the hostel on Cup Final Day with a transparent "Blackpool for t' Cup". Also there was Paddy Finan the Irishman, always good humoured, and his red headed, quiet Northern Ireland counterpart Paddy McBride. They got on famously with each other and with us. Chris Brinklow was also there and when I insisted in crawling into an empty chicken hutch to have my photo taken, wearing my newly acquired second hand wartime pilot's fur lined leather cap (see photo) which came in good stead (see later).

As I had no family, I had to rely on the welfare authority of my last residence in Haringey (thanks to them for everything) for a little pocket money (at the beginning) and clothes and shoes. Once I needed a suit. I was lucky to be sent a very well cut dry cleaned second hand, (these were hard times) tweed herring-bone suit. The only thing was that it had a worn out hole in the lining, exactly where its last owner, presumably a right handed gangster, would have carried his holstered gun! Perhaps that was part of the joke, see later. Still, it was very comfortable (see photos).

Each summer there was a flower show organised in the beautiful well kept grounds of the hall, and one year the principal guest was the King's sister, Mary the Princess Royal. At the show there were some sports competitions for children and art and handicraft competitions. I entered some of my pen and ink sketches from in and around Papworth with some success. Another time and excursion to Clacton was organised by the building department. It had something to do with Mr Sheppard, if I remember rightly, his birthday or retirement.

My 21st birthday was a memorable day. The whole office, bless their hearts, conjured up some surprises for me. I still possess Jaggard and Drury's standard book for aspiring architects titled "Architectural Building Construction", which the whole office presented me with all their signatures, including Mr Sheppard's and Frank's at the top. Somebody sent up to me, from outside, a sprat! A gun! This is written, nearly illegible in my diary, the connections are now obscure). It must have been a joke about some happening before. To crown it, the wives of Mr Sheppard, Frank Jordan and Joe Eaton had made a birthday cake and other goodies for afternoon tea. The day before, somebody had told me that a patient called Geoff Williams in Baron Hospital in the grounds, on the other side of the ornamental (Capability Brown?) lake wanted to see me, so after that birthday party I went to see him in the evening. He was a furniture designer, a bit older than me, and was interested in everything to do with modern design, especially architecture, so much so that he set me a programme and theoretical site for a 4 bedroomed house, which I designed and drew in 1/8 inch to 1ft scale on my imperial drawing-board propped up on my bed.

All along I had desperately wanted to continue my studies. I needed transport and eventually I was lucky to buy from Billy Gray in St John's hostel his 1929 350 cc BSA motor bike for £12 10s just before he left, and Harry Barnes put it into running order for me. I then started in an evening class Building Course at Cambridge Technical College and School of Art, 14 miles away, three nights a week. After four months I realised I wasn't getting any further with my studies at this school. So, with much regrets to the office, I left Papworth in February, 1949.

(John Steerwood, dipl.Arch. Steinach, Switzerland, 12 March 2001)