

Interview with Lionel Hemsley, at the Museum of Childhood, Saturday 18th August 2012

Lionel Hemsley has donated a collection of plays, books and letters written by him and his friends during his school years, approx. 1939 – 1949. He agreed to do an oral history interview to give some background and support the documents.

[Square brackets indicate later additions or corrections after Lionel Hemsley read the first draft. Dates are based on references in his childhood diaries]

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My name is Lionel Hemsley, and I was born on the 2nd of September 1932.

Well, the first main event in my life probably was at the age of seven when in fact I went to boarding school. So on the 2nd September 1939 War broke out. We were on holiday on the East Coast near Great Yarmouth, a place called Scratby. Because of the war breaking out, we didn't go back to Croydon where I had been in a kindergarten school with Miss Miles in her private home, two classes, one up, one downstairs!

So our neighbours in Scratby who came from Birmingham, had sent their daughter to a boarding school in the Cotswolds called Chipping Campden Grammar School, where the boarding houses were boys and girls separate, and were run by the headmaster.

And we arrived there on November 5th. We arrived there after heavy snow and my father's car went off the road and punctured the petrol tank, so I had his company in the local hotel for 2 or 3 days before they departed. But I think I had some humbugs in a paper bag which I kept in my pocket for probably months and months afterwards without eating them, as a reminder that my parents had disappeared or gone. I hated this first term in school. I felt all the emotion being drained out of me.

Every time, I remember, each Sunday, we sat down in the school dining hall, to write letters home. And of course the first letter I wrote 'I want to come home' and the prefects who looked at the letters said 'No, you can't put that'. However, I enclosed a large number of drawings, and hidden in the drawings were the words 'I want to come home' several times. Unfortunately for me they had no effect. So there I was.

At the end of the first term I got chicken pox and I was the only boy to get it, just the day of the final term party so I missed that, and had two weeks on my own in the boarding house. However, by then my father was in charge of the Ack-Ack signals in London and they had a flat in Egerton Gardens Mews, and I went up there after Christmas and had an extra two weeks off the next term to make up for the fact that I hadn't had a holiday at home.

I'm not quite sure what I did at school. Chipping Campden Grammar School was mostly day pupils, but as I said, with the outbreak of War the headmaster set up these two boarding houses, one of which was the old Victorian headmaster's house and the old Victorian school right in the High Street

of Chipping Campden. The girls' was in the building which subsequently became the Seymour House Hotel. So Seymour House was for girls, and there were a few girls in the dormitories in the headmaster's part of the Old School, that's where my sister started off actually in the same building as me. Now I was in the same dormitory for the whole of my stay there, until I left when I was I suppose about 11. Although I changed places in the dormitory.

But going back to the school proper, as I say, most of the children came from local farming area villages, particularly Morton in the Marsh. Subsequently Chipping Campden Grammar School became a comprehensive and then became a self-governing Chipping Campden school. But in my time of course it was grammar school. So I got to grammar school at the age of seven and one month, which rather surprised people who had only heard about the eleven plus!

The school itself was in a late nineteen-twenties brick building, but there were two wooden huts, large huts, and I started off in one of those. There was a turtle stove with coke heating in the hut, and I can remember tipping mercury out of broken thermometers onto the window sill so obviously no one was very worried about mercury as a hazard in those days. And of course, we used to use magnifying glasses to burn our names and so on into the wood of the hut outside. Subsequently, I had a classroom in the building itself, with boys on one side of the classroom and girls on the other. We had Miss Hill as our form mistress, I particularly remember she took us for everything including French, but her French accent wasn't terribly good, and 'La Montag-nay' became the mountain, but she stayed the rest of her life in Chipping Campden eventually becoming head mistress. I met her after I'd left university, and I had one of those long school photos, and she was able to give some names which I've forgotten and tell me about some of the boys I'd been with.

Anyway, going back to those years in Chipping Campden. Each morning, each weekday morning in the boarding house we'd all walk through the passage out of the door onto the High Street. The door would be open and we'd shout insults at any ailing citizen who passed the door I remember - of course I didn't - and then we went in a long queue, a long crocodile, with the two prefects in front, with the smallest boys followed by the bigger boys and the biggest boys at the back. I don't know how many there were in the boarding house, there must have been thirty or forty I should think. But though we went in formal procession to school, we just came back more or less in individuals or small groups, and we didn't come back along the High Street, there was a lane behind the boarding house and we used to come down that to get back.

We we always used to go back for lunch in the early stages. Later on, they built a pre-fab dining hall where all the school ate lunch at the school. I think I probably spent all my time in that classroom until I left that school. I can't recall moving to another classroom, but we used the gym, it had a stage. I remember singing on that stage, and the headmaster saying my voice was a double bass. I can remember we also, in the early stages before the temporary dining hall was built, we actually had lunch in there, so Stage One lunch was in the boarding house, and Stage Two was in the big gym. We had those pressed-glass glasses to drink from, and I remember shoving them on a tray and one hitting the other, and the note being such that the whole thing shattered, the glass shattered.

By the time I was about eleven the headmaster told my parents that my sister and I were, not going to have enough competition to do well academically and that we better to move to a more demanding academic type school. And because my father's general, General Tremlett, had family associations with Kings School in Bruton, where a relative had been a headmaster at some stage, I

was sent to Kings School Bruton, which was a safe distance from the Germans who were still bombing England. Well, a V1 landed on our house in Croydon, while I was still in Chipping Campden and demolished it. Anyway, so my sister went to the girls' school, Sunny Hill. It's now called Bruton School for Girls in Bruton, and I went to the Kings School Junior School. Their official Junior School was in a building called Plox, so they were called Plox, but of course it was full.

[Started school 22/9/1944]

I was put into Eddington House, which was a Prep school evacuated from Herne Bay, where it had been the official junior school for Herne Bay College, which had been emptied out during the War. Towards the end it was occupied by the Americans. Anyway, by the time I arrived at Bruton, the school was in Sexey's Hospital, which was one of these medieval almshouses founded in, I think, the 1600s and there were still old ladies living there. But the headmaster and the school occupied the headmaster's house, or perhaps I should say the hospital warden's house.

There was a chapel there where we had services and I can remember reading the bible once [11/2/1945] with the old ladies paying full attention. And their dining hall became our dining hall and a sort of day room, while the kitchen underneath, which was very large, was used for cooking our food which we had in the hall upstairs. Most of the non-time school was not spent there, but spent down in the Bruton Parish school halls, which were down by Packhorse Bridge in Bruton. There were two very large classrooms with a wooden sliding door and this had a stage in it where the headmaster or teacher, usually sat when giving lessons. By now, I must add, the National Schools weren't involved. It had been taken over or bought by Kings School Bruton.

So the Hippodrome was the concert party that I set up [mentioned 23/5/1945], and goodness knows why the other boys joined in, but anyway, we used to use the stage and we'd sing songs and read poems. I can't remember what the singing was like! And I think there was probably humorous sketches. But the BBC had a programme, with Enoch, Ramsbottom and Lovejoy, who were comedians, and I called myself John Henry, which was the name of my father's favourite pre-war comedian, who had a sidekick called Buttercup. So the group of boys, Ian Luetchford was Buttercup, Tilman was Ramsbottom, Hudson was Enoch, and Dallas was Lovejoy, performed in all these things.

Now, we didn't do anything more dramatic than that at Bruton, though I did notice that we did say that some performance would not be held in the Abbey playing field pavilion, so perhaps at one time we actually did it in the pavilion on the playing field. But anyway, at the end, the War ended, and we, the whole school moved back to Herne Bay. Now the boys that were supposed to be going to King's School, some of those stayed behind, but some didn't like Plox House, in particular didn't like the Housemaster and his wife - particularly his wife who was an old battle-axe. So we had no desire to stay so about half the final lot who started the next term at Eddington House were from Bruton. But the other half had actually been, and I didn't recall it, but speaking to some people recently, apparently there had been a smaller prep school still going on in Herne Bay College and also we still did carpentry there, but I'd forgotten that. Anyway, going back to Herne Bay, the Hippodrome got a bit more ambitious, and though I don't quite recall where we did our performances, one of the huts at the school, a big hut, had a stage in it, so we might have used that. But we certainly used that for the pantomimes. Amongst my written stuff I've still kept, what 67 years from then, is Billy Bunter, Robin Hood, who rescued the Babes in the Wood, and Cinderella, and I guess we also carried on with

the songs and things, because I've got a book of songs, about half of which were written in Bruton, and the other half at Herne Bay.

Eddington House was in Eddington village which was about, I don't know, 2 or 3 miles out of Herne Bay itself, and we used to go to church in the Eddington parish church. We were allowed to go for walks on our own, I guess that would be on a Sunday afternoon, and I can remember snow at one time on the fields. My best friend was a boy about the same age as me called Bargman, who didn't actually for some reason join in with the Hippodrome stuff, but I usually went for walk with him, as we were supposed to go in pairs. Actually, if I might hark back to Chipping Campden, we also did the same thing on Saturdays. We were given four pence pocket money, of which one penny we weren't allowed to spend, it had to go into the church collection. So that was a 25% tithe, which always caused me indignation. We'd buy a raw carrot for a penny, and we'd buy a burnt rock bun for another penny. I don't know what the other penny was spent on. We didn't buy any sweets because they were all under the counter prior to sweet rationing, all under the counter for the local children and not for what was known locally as 'the boarders'.

Anyway, I just went on an aside there about always going in pairs. In the case of Chipping Campden, I usually went with a boy called Thieman, who I kept in touch with over the years and eventually went to the same school as him when I was sixteen, the Whitgift in Croydon, er, but going back to our walks there, we mostly went up to some woods just up the hill from the town of Chipping Campden, where we'd dam a brook and divert the water flow, and that was the main activity. But once I went on my own up to Dover Hill which was above Chipping Campden, and I had a fascinating morning of exploration, and I found a secret valley, I always remembered that, and when I get back to school, obviously it must have been Saturday morning, because when I got back to school it was after lunch. The headmaster was quite distracted, that a, I was late, and b, had gone on my own, so that was certainly the last time that I went on my own. He didn't punish me in any way, he just showed that he was worried.

I'm not quite sure I'm jumping back a bit here, if I go back to Chipping Campden, the headmaster was called Mr Bright, who'd become one of the youngest headmasters of a school in England, just after the First World War when he was in his late twenties, and he remained headmaster right up to the time when we were there. For many years it was grant aided by the local council, but it still was an independent school run by trustees, but eventually the council decided it wouldn't spend any money keeping the school, that's the old part of school, up and maintain it, and so the trustees agreed to finish their association and hand over the buildings to the county who sold them, and converted into flats.

I had a look when the flats were up for sale, including the dormitory that I had slept in. That had been divided into a passage and a kitchen, and there was an antique dealer on the ground floor. In recent years I suppose there's the same antique dealer on the ground floor, but he's given up the main room, which was the dining room, for us, and also our day room. That was the original, Elizabethan or earlier, school hall, with a big bust of one of the founders over the fireplace. The window sills were stone in which we carved our initials. I notice when it was an antique shop they covered everything in boarding so you couldn't see that any more. I also noticed how the enormously high fireplace and statue and windows, looked really quite small when I went back, but of course I was twice the height anyway. Erm, we used to eat off big oak dining tables that the

headmaster had had made, really solid ones a bit like monastic ones, with the school badge mounted on the side on a shield. During the bombing raids, particularly on Coventry, the planes overflowed Chipping Campden, and at night we slept under these tables with blankets hanging down all round to keep any flying glass from hitting us. Of course, the windows were also covered in sticking tape to stop the glass. I don't know how many nights we had done that, it couldn't have been for all that long, we certainly didn't have any trouble sleeping, although, whether, I suppose we must have put mattresses under the table, I really have no recollection. Or maybe we slept on the floor at that age.

What else can I recall? Well thinking of the dining hall, one of the boys stole cutlery from the school dining hall and sold it to I think it was Mrs Greenslade, or a similar name, who had a second hand shop just up the High Street. She'd obviously let the headmaster know about this, so he lined us all up standing by the dining tables and stared each one of us in the eyes and said, 'Did you steal cutlery from the school?' and we'd all give a 'no', and finally one boy broke down in tears and admitted he was the culprit. Obviously the headmaster must have known that he was the culprit to start with but he wanted to make a show of it. The other thing I can recall is that boys, if they had a weekend at home, they'd bring extra eggs back for the kitchen to boil up for them. The headmaster came in and reported one of the eggs had a chick in it!

Now what else can I think of? Up in the dormitory one of the boys was quite small, he was only about five, and his brother had a pot on which was written 'this was so-and-so's pot'. That went under the bed of course. I can't recall any trouble with bedwetting as far as I was concerned, but I certainly had a nervous habit of, before I went to sleep and when I was still unconscious in a manner of speaking, I'd roll my head on the pillow, and presumably going 'a ga gaga'. But whatever it was, my companions very quickly made comments to each other about my behaviour, although they didn't say anything to me, which I found so embarrassing that after, for years after, I slept with my head on my arm, to stop that, which was very effective. We had, in this dormitory, we had a very large chest of drawers, and on Sundays in the summer we wore straw boaters, most of which lost their tops, because they were put in the chest of drawers, and when the drawers were pulled out, the hat hadn't been put in carefully and the top was knocked off. Otherwise, we wore caps, blue caps, with a shield with three - I was going to say chickens, but symbolic birds of some sort which related to the founders.

On Sundays we'd go to the local parish church where the man in charge, I think his name - no I won't venture his name, I think he was Irish though. He gave very long and boring sermons to, I suppose 60 or 80 young children and 12 old ladies, with no bending to make it more attractive! I sat usually in the same bench, right in front of the headmaster I remember, so I had to behave, looking up at the stained glass windows that were over the chancel. And of course when the hymn came round with the collection purse we had to put our penny in. I think on the whole my exposure to the Christian religion was not very good. For a start, there were these long boring sermons, and secondly I had to give away 25% of my pocket money. However, my sister, she actually got confirmed in Chipping Campden church before she left school [28/3/1944]; I was too young to be involved with confirmation in Chipping Campden.

Anyway, skipping to Bruton [corrected to Herne Bay], and Eddington House. I had all my lessons in the one room which was next to the dining hall, and one of the events I particularly associate with

the dining hall, I had a stomach ache during the day and was sitting on the radiators so I obviously had a temperature, and when dinner was served up it was rabbit stew, which completely turned me up and I burst into tears. I was whipped off to hospital where they removed my appendix, took them about 2 hours, and apparently it had an abscess about to burst, so that was just as well [8/2/1946 to 27/2/1946 "19 days could include sick bay on return"]. So there I was in Herne Bay hospital, in those days it was quite a long time, I was there about 10 days, and it was during that time another boy was in hospital. He had an abscess behind his eye which was the result of a bike accident he'd had much earlier, and a fragment of bone must have been left behind loose which was causing these abscesses. Anyway, in this big ward with perhaps a dozen adult men, we composed this book Devonshire Holiday, and, which is added to the collection here. Ian did the writing, and I think you could say that I created the sentences which he would then amend and then wrote everything down, and then I obviously made a good copy of what he had written in the book that is in the museum.

What other events happened at Eddington House? I think I might jump from leaving Eddington House to go to Bruton. Although I started at Eddington House at the beginning of the school year in September, that was in the senior school in Bruton, I actually went there in April, Easter time [30/4/1946]. I missed out one summer term in Eddington House. I might just make a comment on sporting. At Chipping Campden, I was friends with a boy in the same dormitory and slightly younger than me called Franklin, David Franklin, who had a big influence on me, because he said, 'We don't want to get involved in these boring games of cricket or whatever, lets lay in the grass and read books'! So with that bad example I didn't get much involved that I can recall, though I do recall that the headmaster told me to bowl, and I hurled the ball and hit a boy in the middle of the forehead, not the batsman I might add but somebody else, some distance from the batsman, and knocked him out. I think after that was the last time I bowled. One day in the prep school, Eddington House prep school at Bruton, I succeeded in catching out the Plox headmaster's son out, now he fancied himself as a cricketer, and I just put my hands up and the ball came into them. He was furious to be caught out by a dud player like me, and there he was, the school's best cricket player, so after that I was always made to be long stop so there was no risk of my influencing results. In senior school of course, I never had any chance to bowl because all the good bowlers did that, and I never got any chance to bat because by the time the game had finished, the batting order had only just allowed the best batsmen to bat, and anybody else didn't get a go, so you might say I didn't get much practice.

However, at Eddington House in Herne Bay, I came to my sporting glory in the first 15 rugby team, where I was on one side of the hooker, and I particularly remember the hooker, Dyer-Lynch, who was younger and smaller than me. Because at one stage he criticised some of the older boys, and of course you're not allowed to answer back older boys so they, I don't think they physically abused him, but they certainly humiliated him and made him very unhappy, and he cried his way to sleep that night. He was in the same dormitory as me, and the next day, it happened the next day I'd been invited to spend the afternoon at his home [14/10/1945], and he came up to me and said I didn't have to. That being exposed to him might bring me into trouble, but of course I said, 'it's nothing to do with me, doesn't make any difference to me, no, no', so I went to his place. He was a kindly sort of boy at that stage, I remember he gave me some German stamps and badges because his father was in the British army on the Rhine. Now of course the war had ended about the time we left Bruton so there were no hostilities then, VJ day was over as well. The other memorable thing was the speed

of sound was broken by the planes flying down the edge of the beach. As a school we were taken down there to see the planes during their high speed breaking-the-sound-barrier performance.

So, rugby. [At Bruton] I was always at the back of the field and hardly got involved unless the ball came my way and I was usually sworn at for not being agile, so you might say that I was, instead of being dyslexic academically, I was dyslexic sportingly! A lot of attention is given, I'm thinking of all this business about the Olympics now, a lot of attention is given to the good players, but absolutely nothing is done to help the bad players, but with a bit of encouragement like I got from Dyer-Lynch I would probably be quite keen, but, but because of the fact that the poorer players were never allowed to be involved in anything exciting, it was very dull. Whereas at Eddington House we didn't criticise anyone else and we thought it was a great giggle when we lost. In fact I think we lost most of our games including one about 80 points against us, because the other side had a boy who was about three times the size of any of ours [1/12/1945 Milner Court 0-59], and the master in charge kept saying 'get him by the legs, the taller they are the harder they fall', but nobody was going to tackle a boy about the size of the tank! And then afterwards, we'd have a terrific tea. The boys in teams, whether they were visiting or away, they all sat together for a special tea at the school, so that made it very attractive, and it was really a jolly occasion with no criticism of anybody for not doing well in rugby. I don't know what the teacher in charge thought.

But cricket of course I didn't have very much to do there because I missed a term. Hockey, I didn't do much in hockey, because after Christmas was the hockey term, but my job at the hockey matches was to hand out the slices of lemons. I remember we had the Herne Bay ladies hockey team come once, I remember handing out the lemon [9/3 & 20/3/1946]. I think the headmaster's idea was not to reduce my confidence or self-appreciation by putting me down. He wouldn't let me play but he would let me hand out the slices of lemon! It was the same in Herne Bay with the prefect system. I was the same age as the other prefects, but I obviously wasn't going to rule with a rod of iron so I was given the job of librarian and also editor of the Eddingtonian magazine, a copy of which is donated to the museum although there's not much in it. And the library was a large glass fronted bookcase in the room which was a classroom and also a day room.

Anyway, let's go back to senior school at Bruton. Bruton had three houses. The original school, the medieval school, was called Old House; a new house had been built at the beginning of the 1900s; and then Priory House was in some old buildings in Bruton High Street, not far away from the Sexey's hospital buildings. That had been taken over and was called Priory House because the main part had been called Priory House. And next to it was another place called Berkeley House. The Berkeleys were the rich family who had been the local landlords. Subsequently the local landlords became the Hoare banking family who built big National Trust House a few miles away while the old house was demolished but the cellars were still there. No activity was taken on the field where the cellars were, but Abbot Field, which was one of the sports fields there at Bruton, was adjacent, and there were tennis courts adjacent.

I seem to be in association with demolished old buildings, because in Chipping Campden the original stately home was put to the flame in the Civil War so the puritans couldn't use it, but the cellars were still there. It was right near the Parish church, and one of the boys, Patrick Young, who was a couple of years younger than me - I might add I wasn't involved - he actually went down into the

cellars to explore them and burnt his hands when he slid down the rope. So he wasn't very happy after that.

Back to the senior school at Bruton. The class I started in was the old art room. Many years later it was white-washed over but it had terrific paintings on the wall. The masters were largely elderly who presumably would have been retired if it had not been for the war. In particular my favourite master I suppose was Mr Ely, who was reputed to have a metal lung. I think the answer was he was gassed during the war. But when somebody let off a smoke bomb he was quite distressed because he couldn't breathe in that atmosphere and he had to leave the room. I think the bomb went off before he was in the room. I did say when he came in one day 'Can I do you now sir?' which is Tommy Handley's stock line, and I was made to write a thousand lines, 'I must not make music hall jokes in school, I must not make music hall jokes in hall'. We had two masters who came back from the war. They both had yellowish complexions which I think might have been something to do with anti-malarial treatment or perhaps fading suntan. One of them subsequently many years later became headmaster of a school in Perth, Western Australia where I ended up many years later. I met him partly because his wife went in a bird watching group I joined, but the other one called Tyndall, he stayed at Bruton as deputy headmaster for the rest of his career and retired there as well. So he was quite active in keeping in touch with old boys.

Now, senior school, what did we have? I mentioned about religion, we'd go to church twice on Sundays, in the morning it was the usual boring sermon with the old ladies and the schoolboys. And in the afternoon, Sunday afternoon was the school service which was great, and the preachers were selected to give suitable sermons. We had a little blue card at the beginning of each term on which was put down fixed events like school preachers. And Bargman, my best friend and I would time these sermons and record them. I've still got those cards. One of the most remarkable ones was a monk from an Anglican monastery at Cerne Abbas I think it is, who spoke for 20 minutes and you could have heard a pin drop [23/3/1947 A brother of the society of St Francis Cerne Abbas 27 Minutes]. So it's quite possible to give a long sermon and be appreciated! However, most of us found the morning service terribly dreary. And we could go to Shepton Montague, which was about half an hour's walk. We had to go past the girls' school, and curiously, Montague, or was it Pitcombe? I forget which, anyway, the girls' school went to that church as well, and they sat downstairs and we sat in the balcony above. And this enabled us to avoid the terribly boring sermons in Bruton, because the parish priest at this church also taught us scripture and also taught the girls scripture, and he believed the maximum length of a sermon should be ten minutes, so that went down well with us. So it was well worth the walk. And the fact that the girls were there might have had some influence.

My sister being at the school I was allowed to go and visit her once a week. And I would go up to the entrance of Sunny Hill School which was a big porch with a bench seat each side, or maybe it was seats, anyway there were seats each side where I would sit and wait and she would come and fetch me. Once a young man in air force uniform came into visit one of the girls [13/6/1948] and was told that he wouldn't be allowed to and he was sent packing. However I was given free access, and we'd usually go and sit in the pantry and chat, not just me and my sister but some other girls as well. We went up there to visit the girls' school for debates, and we went up there when they did a concert like Iolanthe [26/5/1945]. They obviously had quite a high standard of presentation.

Sunny Hill School was quite near a railway station called Cole which was closed by the Beeching reforms, but I would go, on my early days in Bruton, I would go home by Great Western Railway from Bruton station, which had a special stop for the school, it wasn't a slow train. And when I went to Herne Bay, then I'd go up to London where I'd be met by a Universal Aunt [18/12/1945], in my case a very large, elderly large woman who explained to me that universal aunts would do all sort so jobs like finding anything from a pin to an elephant for a client and she'd take me across to Victoria station where I'd go down to, let me think, I forget which station I ended up with, but my parents by then were down at Portsmouth, so I would go that way to Portsmouth. But otherwise I would go to Cole, and I'd have a trunk which would go luggage in advance, and I would have to walk to Cole. Bruton station was near the school so there wasn't much involved there. The trunks were stored in a upstairs in an old coach house behind Berkeley House. It must have been behind Berkeley house on the edge of the lane around there, and I wrote a poem about the condition of the trunks in this place, for the school magazine which was published. I also wrote a poem about the swimming pool which I was very pleased with, because the first line was seven syllables and the last line was one syllable, gradually working down so you had a triangle of words, 'Oh come see our swimming pool, do,' ending in 'greenish hue', so there were about three critical verses about the swimming pool. While I was at Eddington House I learnt to swim there; I had to learn to do my width [19/6/1945] and then my length [6/7/1945], but my swimming after that didn't improve until I was past retirement. The pool I believe is finally going to be removed.

The other thing at Bruton, we mentioned about religion and the church services. They had confirmation classes but I didn't want to join in that. I think I regarded them as indoctrination. Then certainly, when we would say the creed in church, I would never say it, because it starts off 'I believe' and I was never sure if I did believe. Maybe I did believe, but I wasn't going to say that I did believe until somebody had explained it all to me, so perhaps if I had gone to the confirmation class I would have, but I didn't. I also managed to miss out being in the choir, which meant I didn't have at the most inconvenient times to have to give up my spare time, because having arrived at the school at an odd time of the year, no tests were held for that income of that group coming in. Otherwise the music master would sort of, you know, press a key on the piano and you'd have to sound the note. I have a feeling that in fact I wouldn't have got in the choir anyway because many years later when I went to Emmanuel College in Cambridge, and I tried to join the choir, it was pointed out that I couldn't sing in tune. So I obviously didn't inherit my father's musical ability because he actually sang semi-professionally. Apart from his job he used to earn pin-money singing as a bass baritone as a duet, and he even performed on 2LO which was the precursor of the BBC. My sister learnt to play the piano, but I think I could do chopsticks perhaps but that was about it.

So we're back to senior school at Bruton. There was a library there with shelves, shelving around with tables, where I spent quite a lot of time writing my novels, because I wrote two more novels when I was in senior school, involving the same people as the earlier book, and I also sorted out my stamp collection there. I don't know when I started collecting stamps, certainly at Eddington House. at the early stage in Bruton, I can remember in Sexey's hospital, lying in bed when we were supposed to be after what you might call lights out. Except of course it was broad daylight because we were in double British summer time during the war; there was very bright light right until late on, and I'd have my stamp collection under my pillow, and I'd sort them out. And my bed was right by the window anyway so I'd have good light in the dormitory overlooking the High Street. Which reminds me of a slight amusing thing, that the house master in the senior school in Priory House was

believed to drink rather a lot, and one day somebody painted some dodderly footsteps across to the pub over the road across the road, which was perhaps rather naughty.

We had to go and see the house master to get our pocket money. We had ten shillings a term, which I suppose meant drawing a shilling a week, something like that. We were allowed to go and shop in the Bruton township, which isn't very big. We were allowed to go and shop there on a Saturday, they had Amor's which sold stationary and comics and things like that. And then there were one or two teashops. There was the Tower Tearooms where parents took us for afternoon tea. And there was also a man who had white hair believed to having had a shock in the Spanish civil war allegedly, but anyway he cooked bangers and mash so we'd also go there sometimes and have that.

The school itself I think was about something like 140 boys so I knew everyone by name. At the beginning of every term when new boys arrived I'd ask them their name repeatedly until I remembered it, and of course being small and at the bottom of the pecking order they couldn't object to me asking their names. In Priory House there wasn't very much in the way of bullying. I think because the head of the house didn't approve of it. And I think it's only if you get one very determined bully that the rest follow that line, but there were one or two boys who sort of bullied others, but actually in the house I didn't get involved with that. Of course, we also wore striped Lyncyette [Winceyette] pyjamas in those days, and the tradition in Priory House was leave the top button undone - or so the older boys claimed. So I always did mine up until I was told to undo it, and as soon as their backs were turned I did it up again. That was my little bit of passive resistance to authority!

I went into various dormitories when I was there. There was one in the High Street which was under the attic. I could look up under the skylight; it was very cold I remember. And one night I dreamt there was a tiger on me, and when I woke up there was a purring cat, a mangy thing with only a half a tail, that had got in through one of the gaps in the roof, so I showed it the door. We were there for one very cold, not that same dormitory, very cold winter, and my mother sent me an eiderdown which I found most embarrassing as I suppose we were all supposed to be tough, but I know our flannels froze in the dormitory so it certainly went below freezing. Anyway, I put the eiderdown underneath me which was probably a good idea because a. it couldn't be seen, and b. it was jolly good insulation [Probably top of Berekeley House 19/9/1947 start of term ie winter 1947. Eiderdown perhaps 14/2/1947 'two extra blankets']. Right the way through from Chipping Campden through to Bruton we always had our own rug which was an individual difference. I've still got that rug, and then underneath that would be the school blankets.

The dormitories were just the same, and it didn't matter which school I was in, they were always these black enamel painted single beds with a wire mesh and horse hair mattresses which occasionally had to be rolled up like a sausage roll, no that's the wrong word, like Swiss roll, to make sure the horse hair was evenly distributed. I don't know how often we changed sheets at Bruton, but I remember at Chipping Campden I managed to get out of church quite often by volunteering to sort out the linen, because each Sunday morning the headmaster's wife organised the laundry, which was sent away I suppose, but it was top to tail on one sheet and then the next week one sheet would be removed and a clean sheet would be added. And I was involved in sorted the linen and bagging it off I think, it went off in big sort of bags.

The dormitory in [senior] school there, that very cold year, it was a small room in the house on the High Street. There was only three of us in there, there was one boy called Cook, he was very religious. He was in the same class as me, perhaps a year older, he may not have been very bright, but he had trouble getting into theological college. But he eventually got into one in Scotland and I met him many years later in South Africa, where he was a parish priest in a largely black area and worried about having his phone tapped and so on. He was a very very pleasant, unaggressive sort of person, who didn't approve of bullying either. But he and another boy in my dorm, the other boy obviously had one of those teenage conversions and they did a lot of praying together. And the boy who had the teenage conversion later on joined the army and I suspect that was a transient thing, and not a permanent conversion! I certainly was not involved in the praying. I mean, I didn't think any worse of them for doing it.

That boy actually, on the day that the present Queen Elizabeth got married we got a day off, and I borrowed this boy's bike so I could cycle to Wells Cathedral [20/11/1947]. I was interested in parish church architecture which was one of the subjects in the school certificate, but going towards Wells there's a high hill there, and coming down I didn't brake, or I didn't brake enough, I put the brakes on and it didn't seem to do anything so I took them off, hit a hair-pin bend or at least a bend, and went into the hedge, and I've still got a scar from where the twig hit me under the nose. A vicar came up with his car full of concern but I was alright otherwise. But unfortunately I bent the front forks of the bike so I had to walk back to the school which was about 3 miles I suppose. I took it to the local bike shop and paid 10 shillings to get the spokes put right. I think the boy who lent me the bike was never very happy with the fact that I'd damaged it.

So in that senior school I went from that, from one to another room in the houses in the High Street. They were called 38 and 40. And then I went into Berkeley House, a big ground floor dormitory. From there I went up to another year I suppose, to the Sanatorium which had been built between the wars but which had been turned into a dormitory block. It had a small dorm for prefects and two large rooms. And the original nurse's house had become just the sanatorium part. The sanatorium was on another playing field called Hyde. I remember walking up there, it was like a slope from the railway station, with Bargman, my best friend so this must have been in Eddington House, and I must have upset him in some way because I felt quite distressed about that, but he said he'd tell his big brother John, but of course nothing came of that, that was just an idle threat, but I always thought... He died a couple of years ago, but I used to visit him every year in Dorking when I was in England but he lived on his own in a house with two storeys and he fell down the stairs and was found in a coma and died, so that was rather sad. But he had two brothers at the school. John the older, who was an architect, and Peter the younger who followed me at Eddington House, I don't think we actually overlapped but he was at Eddington House at the same time as other members of the Hippodrome who were a bit younger than me. And he was going to come to meet all of us last Tuesday which would have been, well today is Saturday the 18th August 2012, but obviously he had an accident and couldn't come. But I saw him a couple of years ago because I kept in touch with him too. There wasn't any hippodrome going by the time he went there. The hippodrome was run by myself, followed by John Tilman, and I think after Tilman left it died out.

That's really just an aside because I'm really talking about senior school aren't I? Well, up in the sanatorium, I was there to take the school certificate. The science at Bruton, at Kings School Bruton at that time was very weak. In fact there was one rather doddering school teacher called DDR who

wasn't all that good at it. I remember one of the chemistry classes we idled away dissolving a mouse in acid, so that only bones were left, and I was convinced that I wasn't going to do well, so I opted to do art instead because there was a limit to the number of subjects you could do. But DDR told the headmaster to take me off art and put me on science without consulting me; I was very indignant when I found this out just two weeks before the exam, and the headmaster agreed to get it changed which he did. But there was a last minute cram because one of the art things, one of the things in art, we had to study *The Parish Churches of England* by Cox and Ford, including being able to comment on some of the, four photos, so I had to memorise the information on all the photos in the book. Well, the only time I could do that was after lights out, so I'd sit in the loo up in the sanatorium [11 pm 8/7/1948 exam 9/7/1948!], memorising *The Parish Churches of England* by Cox and Ford, which gave me a teenage hobby for some years afterwards of visiting churches which went on for many years, and I cycled around visiting almost all the parish churches in Somerset and the Cotswolds as well during my holidays.

Anyway I can pass the school certificate, but I was still at Bruton where the science as I say was very weak, but my friend going all the way back to Chipping Campden, Peter Thieman, he said that his school, the Whitgift - his home was at Kingswood which was near Whitgift in Croydon - he said that they'd got three science streams and more than one science master and so on, so I took it up with my father, who got the headmaster of Whitgift and the headmaster of Bruton to discuss the matter. They knew each other, they were on the same committee for the Independent Schools, so I actually changed places from one school to the other during the Christmas holidays, this would be 1948, and started at the Whitgift in January 1949. Well, my last thing at Bruton that term, I'd seen Hellzapoppin in London [28/4/1948] which was an American zany - to use an American word - show, and I wrote a zany series of skits which were performed on the school stage in Bruton, with myself as producer and compere. Because nobody had written parts, they just memorised them and if they went astray then I had to sort of, you know, give them a reminder. At one point the boy came on at the wrong moment so I directed him to go to the toilet which caused a great deal of amusement, nobody realising it was an adlib line. But of course a lot of the skits involved the masters, reflections on the masters [15/12/1948]. The next morning at the school assembly, we had a school assembly first thing every morning, the headmaster commented somewhat adversely on the previous night's performance, so when I didn't return to school the next term, it was assumed I'd been expelled! However, I did go back to pick up my stuff and was able to remove this impression [22/1 - 23/1/1949], so I only had one or two nights there and then went back to Croydon.

I of course joined the Old Boys at Bruton and I used to go back fairly regularly when they used to have informal gatherings if I could call it that. The annual speech day was on Corpus Christi; for quite some years Old Boys were quite welcome to go back but as the school grew of course it became impractical, and then they had old boys' dinners at Bruton, and you were allowed to sleep in the dormitory for a free bed and break - well anyway, a modestly priced bed and breakfast I should say, and an annual dinner, but then that became an annual event but that's after childhood anyway because of course by then I'd obviously finished school and gone to university. I don't have much in the way of relics from my time at Whitgift because I was only there 2 terms. I didn't realise I'd be able to get into university so early, because the minimum age for getting into Bristol university was 17, and I was accepted when I was 17 years and one month, but the two terms at Whitgift I really enjoyed. I suppose of all my time at school, maybe because I was older or maybe of course it was day school, I'm not sure, but obviously if you're in a day school situation that cuts out a lot of

possibilities for bullying, and if you're older it cuts them out too. But I certainly quite enjoyed myself there, they had a bird watching society, and a natural history society which I remember I gave a lecture on lizards and newts [13/6/1949]. We had some sand lizards in our garden, the house that was bombed was rebuilt after the war, and these lizards had survived from before the war in the bottom of the garden, so I took one of those along as a specimen.

The Whitgift was quite advanced in its attitude to education, although I was doing physics, chemistry and biology as the requirement of course to get into veterinary school, there was compulsory weekly appreciation in music lessons, and another one on stage, Shakespeare and the stage, taken by the headmaster. And we also had to do maths which I could never understand, because statistics were built in by a new master called Smith, and because the symbol in statistics was shriek, he became nicknamed Shriek Smith, and he retained that name for many years, well the rest of his life I suppose as a school master. As I said, going back to the school certificate, I got into Bristol without a science, I got, I'm not sure why I, they had something like 700 applicants for something like 24 places, so why I got in I'm not sure. Bristol of course was West Country and Professor Tyndall who was one of the senior people there, he was a governor at Kings School, or at least he had the Tyndall association with the Kings School. General, sorry Mr Tyndall was one of the masters there. The Bishop of Bath and Wells was also a governor I remember. But the lady registrar who was on the selection committee at Bristol, perhaps because she was a lady, she took some pity on me. But anyway I wasn't offered a place in the first round, but then later on towards the end of the school holidays in fact, they must have had somebody drop out, so I was offered a place quite late on.

I did some farm work, because wanting to be a vet, I lived on a farm for a few weeks for the last period of time I was at Horsham [17/8 – 2/9/1949]. The man who ran it was the [nephew of my father's deputy telephone manager], so he did his best to introduce me to various things to do with agriculture, and also I went on the scout camp, this was obviously before I knew I was getting into Bristol, we had a scout camp down in Cornwall [28/7 – 10/8/1949] where, I was a senior scout by then, we had a three day tramp. I had a three day tramp with another scout camping, he must have been pretty fed up with me because I got blisters and probably didn't talk much. I was lent a rucksack that had a bend in the frame so that was quite painful. Can't say I enjoyed that bit. Most of the time I was there it rained, so we moved out of tents into a barn and slept on straw which was much more comfortable, and we played solo and I became the solo champion, so we must have played hundreds of games to keep out of the rain. We had a day trip to Plymouth, which I went on. Most of the boys who went were the juniors, and to my surprise as one of them came up to me and said 'I'm your cousin', so I wasn't sure what this was, but it turned out that he is [1/8/1949]. His surname was Cousins, and Philip Cousins was my uncle's nephew I suppose. And, so, in other words it's a slightly complicated relationship. My cousin Christopher was his cousin. Anyway, he was at the school and we kept in touch, and still do, I still keep in touch with him, he became a clergyman and eventually at the present time retired to York Minster where he acts as a volunteer when needed but that was just an aside there. There was a bit of, a bit of bullying at scout camp, nothing involving any of the seniors. But the head - no it did involve some of the seniors, because the leader of the, that's to say, the boy who was the scout troupe leader for the younger group came and complained that the seniors were not to bully his young scouts. I don't know whether he went to the teachers to complain, I think he came up himself which gave me a great deal of respect for him. But now, so I had that two terms at Whitgift and I suppose you might say they were the best two terms of my school life because that was the first time I enjoyed myself.

Because I had arrived at short notice I didn't have school cap and the headmaster told me to wear my Kings School Bruton cap which was blue with KSB embroidered on it so I got the most weird looks when I went to school in that, so I hurriedly unpicked the KSB and just had a black blue cap, but I thought it was a bit thoughtless of the headmaster to suggest it; ok I needed a cap, but it was a bit thoughtless to suggest I kept the cap with the wrong insignia on it. I didn't go in for school meals, I couldn't stand the noise, so I never never, perhaps because I turned up at an odd time nobody ever asked me about that. But I actually used to take more or less sandwiches well in fact it was a pot of cheese mix that my mother made up and I'd buy a fresh roll on the way, and I must have had tomato or an apple or something, and I'd go to a local garden and sit in quiet tranquillity in a summer house there, a gazebo, enjoying my lunch and then back to school. I never, I always, I was told to hang my stuff up in a room by the reception because they hadn't got a locker for me, and I never had a locker, so for the whole of my two terms there I went to this room which had a toilet off it, and for the whole of the two terms I never knew where the main toilets were! So when I left Bruton I had a reference from the headmaster which I suppose was for Whitgift though I forget, saying that I was self-sufficient and well-liked by my fellows[actual wording "gentle disposition and though distinctly self-sufficient got on well with contemporaries"], and I suppose that was because I wasn't aggressive and self-sufficient I suppose dated back to my time at Chipping Campden where I more or less cut off any extreme emotions, and I wasn't at all put out by the fact that I could be self-sufficient at Whitgift by having to go into the main dining hall or use the main loos. But I certainly was involved in lots of other activities there, lots of out of school activities, including the scouts. I wouldn't join the CCF, the head, my housemaster wrote to my father from the Whitgift saying I would be a useful addition because I'd got the Cert A part one from Bruton CCF, but I had a very poor view of the army cadets. I mean I always did everything I was supposed to, but there was no way I was going to join it voluntarily; at Bruton of course it was compulsory. The scouts I'd always regarded as a different thing, at Bruton there wasn't a scout group officially, but one of the older boys organised a scout troupe. The clergyman I mentioned at Shepton Montague er, Pitcombe, he agreed, because if you had something like that you had to have a teacher involved, he was the teacher involved. And we'd do things like, well, like boy scouts did, and that was only in my last term I suppose and it was all on the initiative of this one boy. But I regarded the scouts as being there to help people, and the cadets to shoot them! and so although my father was terribly keen on the army, having been a territorial from very early on, he told me, when he joined the territorial he thought he was abysmally bad but was made Cadet of the Year, and I think that probably gave him a boost that kept him going, and then of course the First World War came and so, so he got involved then. I was actually named for his best friend that was actually killed in the First World War in the battle of the Somme, Lionel Bowden Russell. He was killed in 1917.

TAPE IS STOPPED

AS: So can you tell me what Solo is? Can you remember?

LH: Not very well! You had five cards, as I recall it, and there must have been some, there must, I don't think it was laid down in pairs, I think it was in a pile, I'm not sure. It might be called something like 5 card poker or something like that perhaps, I'm not sure. No, I forget um, it certainly had trumps, erm, did you, I think perhaps you drew out of the, I'm trying to think, perhaps you drew out of the pile to get as strong a hand as possible, but I'm afraid I don't have a very strong idea of how we played it.

AS: But it was a card game

LH: Yeah, yes, yes

AS: Do you remember when you went to Chipping Campden, do you remember being told that you were going to go to boarding school? Because it was a shock when you got there, do you remember?

LH: Well, I would have known, because Myfanwy, who was the girl from next door, she was, perhaps, she may have even started there, I'm not too sure, but it was certainly because she knew about it, that's why we went there. I think, I would imagine that I sort of took it in, I think I probably didn't know what it involved. I mean I obviously knew about it because I've still got the school trunk with a list of clothing. That's in Perth, you say these documents seem to survive well they would have been stored in that for fifty or sixty years, so I must have known about the clothing being put in the trunk.

AS: Did your parents visit you?

LH: no, I don't think, I have no recollection of them visiting me at any of the schools except at Bruton they came down once at least for the school speech day. No I don't have any recollection of them coming, of course my mother came down to Chipping Campden to live, but we still boarded because the headmaster said that if we stopped boarding he couldn't guarantee a place. So even though my mother had a cottage there we carried on boarding, but we'd go up there on weekends. I don't think we stayed the night because we certainly, I'd take another boy up there usually. I remember we dug potatoes amongst other things. And I remember one speech day at Bruton they didn't come, but neighbours of theirs in Portsmouth, at least their son was an Old Brutonian in the air force [20/6/1946, 5/6/1947 'Peggy Nicols lift'?), he came and took me back home for the weekend and I went the other way by train. I remember a particular time when my parents came [probably 27/5/1948] because there was a - I don't know whether you want to record this because some of the other things that went on. One of the nasty things they did was put Epsom salts in your sugar, in your sugar ration. Each week was put out, you put out an empty jam jar and your sugar ration was put in that by the matron, and they were put on a big tray, you know, on the trays, for you to collect your own. We must have had our name written on a label I suppose, and they'd put Enos in which of course ruined the sugar [ENO salts, brand name laxative].

AS: who did that?

LH: oh, other boys, bullies, I suppose, more or less. I don't think the decent boys would have done that, I think it was the boys who were, it was a tranquil kind of bullying I think. And I remember being depressed by it and how my spirit was bucked up no end when my parents arrived and probably the problem sort of disappeared.

What we had with the rationing was, I was a vegetarian, and when I was about three or four, I found it not possible to eat meat or fish, and whether that was psychological and unconscious or whether I had... I certainly had nausea anyway, and so my mother didn't force the issue. At Eddington House they tried to force the issue when I started at Bruton at Eddington House, and I remember sitting for over an over after lunch eating this fish a morsel at the time, until eventually the assistant matron Miss Toser said I needn't bother. And they never tried to force me after that. But under the rationing system I had a large chunk of cheese in lieu of meat coupons, in fact I had coupons for nuts as well,

and I'd keep this large chunk of cheese in my locker and cut a bit of every meal, and I had cashew nuts which were very tasty. Under the rationing system if you were a vegetarian you had a presumable equal amount of protein in extra cheese and nuts instead of the meat coupons. It must have been a bit inconvenient for the boarding schools but it didn't seem to worry them. I know at Chipping Campden, and I'm not sure how, I don't recall whether there was a rationing system in there, I just wouldn't eat the meat. I'd eat the gravy, but at Eddington House the arrival of rabbit stew, just the smell of it, made me burst into tears when I had appendicitis. So obviously I must have had meat put on a plate in front of me and just not eaten it. So it was only really at Bruton that I first started having my own lump of cheese. And I didn't start eating meat until many years later when I was in digs and they had good quality lamb and I tried it and I found it delicious. But I still get nausea if I try and eat fish.

In fact meals being fairly important we can go back on that. At Chipping Campden, the headmaster's wife was in charge of the catering, and we had exactly the same menu for the same day of the week. We always knew on Thursdays there wouldn't be a dessert at lunch there'd be an apple and cheese. And on another day there'd be tapioca, which was regarded as frogspawn and not very popular. And marg, I don't think we saw much of butter. The margarine was put on a plate and you sort of helped yourself to margarine. The jam was always plum, so I can no longer eat, well I can eat plum jam but I wouldn't by choice. Put me off plum jam for life. Of course, Chipping Campden is in the middle of an orchard area so there were plenty of plums around there. As an aside, we'd go off in the harvesting of plums, the whole school would go and pick plums, we were allowed to eat them but we were told not to eat too many. We weren't paid or anything, it was sort of voluntary labour in the war. We also dug, picked potatoes. I don't know how much voluntary labour there was in picking potatoes, that was really hard work. Another thing we did was, not at school, but in the school holidays, when living in my mother's cottage, we'd pick sprouts and we'd get paid so much for a string bag full of sprouts, so we did that for the money. We also went up to a dairy farm at the top of the hill, but that again would be voluntary, and we'd help, not so much with the milking but with the cleaning up after milking, cleaning the pans and stuff. And I remember they used steam there and I touched my arm on the steam pipe and burnt it and the girl there put Vaseline or something on it, which is the wrong thing to do with a burn so my mother was a bit annoyed about that. And the farm is still there and they're still using the cow shed. For many years they carried the manure out of the cow shed on a trolley with an overhead metal support and that was still there some years later, at Hayne's Farm.

My mother's cottage was called St Anthony's, it had a garden much of which was turned over for things like potatoes. And I went back there many years later too, and spoke to the lady who was living there. Sorry I was on meals wasn't I? As I say, at Chipping Campden, it was probably only in the first year or two we ate in the headmaster's part of the school and his wife did the catering although that's the most memorable. Subsequently we had the lunch, we much have had the evening meal in the house, but we had lunch in the school gym and then they built this main dining room for lunch. I remember the lettuce used to have slugs and things on it so it wasn't very popular. In Eddington House we ate in the dining room of the Sexey's hospital, and [at Herne Bay] there was an adjoining room which was only used for dining room as well, which was next to our classroom.

Going back to the dining room at Bruton, we initially ate in the dining room in Priory House; all the houses ate in their own dining rooms, and no, I think, I must change that, I think we started off eating in the New House dining room, I don't know if that was just lunch or all meals, and then

perhaps there was too many boys for New House so we dined in Priory, and subsequently they built a pre-fabricated series of dining halls although I'm not quite sure if that was, I think that built after I left, because I remember going there for the Old Boys dinners but I don't remember going there as a pupil. But I certainly remember as a pupil eating in the new house dining hall which was quite large, and in the Priory dining room. I think in each case, the slabs of white bread, slices of white bread rather, were placed on plates and margarine was placed, a block of that would be placed on a plate, and the plum jam would be in some sort of dish.

AS: was the bread all given out or did you have to go and get it?

LH: No, that was put on the table in advance. The only individual things we had were the sugar, and I have a feeling at some stage, I wonder whether we would have - no I don't think we were given our own butter allocation, I'm a bit vague about that. I certainly remember having the sugar and I don't remember carrying two things in. But what I did add to my food was marmite. I was very keen on marmite, and I popped the pot, this was at Chipping Campden, I popped a bottle in the pocket of my grey suit and carried it around all day, so that's why my sister said I smelt always like marmite, so I would have had my own pot of marmite all the way through my time in Bruton as well, because it really turned even the most horrible margarine into well, I don't know if I put margarine on the bread or just put marmite on it.

AS: so did you share and swap between boys or did you just keep to your own marmite?

LH: I can't recall anybody wanting to use my marmite, I don't know if I would have allowed them or not. I can't think of anybody producing their own jam or anything like that, I think it was just put out, as I say apart from the sugar ration. No I can't remember that. I don't think there's much more I can say about the dining. Dormitories, I've run through those.

AS: when you said when you were doing cricket, and you would lie in the grass and read books, can you remember what you used to read, where they came from the books?

LH: Yes, yes, well the first thing I can say is that I couldn't read until I was about 8, though I can remember in the kindergarten C – a – t cat on the mat with the pictures. My real first realisation I could read properly was when one boy kept showing me in a comic the balloons, the words in the balloons, and saying look it's this, this this and suddenly it clicked just like that. And after that I could read quite avidly. Now what I read at Chipping Campden, I don't know. We used to collect the Rupert books which were published with yellow covers, and my sister was quite keen on those too. Certainly at Chipping Campden I asked for my birthday present an Enid Blyton book of characters of a somewhat juvenile character because my mother said I was too old for it, but I insisted on having it for my birthday present so we certainly had Enid Blyton books. The comics were certainly Beano and Dandy, assuming they were both published then. Later on I subscribed to Champion, a comic called Champion, which didn't have many illustrations but had good stories. And I kept them for many years and in fact I would have given them away after I started university to my father's deputy telephone manager had a grandson who was keen on them so I gave them to him. But my books, I can remember in particular were Swallows and Amazons and Peter Duck [read 21/2/1944 aged 11.6]. Peter Duck was a bit too advanced, I couldn't understand some of it I remember. That's what I would have read.

Also, while I was Chipping Camden and we were staying with parents in London, so it would be during the war so it could be at the house, I bought Midshipman Ready second hand which I kept for many years. I've still got some of my early childhood books, one about prairie dogs, another one is about a West Indian boy, and another one is about an old grizzly bear, so all those would be from quite early on. None of them were obviously school reading books, the only school reading book I could recall so clearly was Charles Kingsley's water babies, which I really enjoyed to start with but once it became some sort of image in the water it completely lost me. I lost complete interest then, but while it was a boy going up chimneys I found it good reading. The classroom at that particular time was actually in the old town hall in Chipping Campden; Chipping Campden had been a very rich wool town and had its own mayor and so on and the mayoral robes were still there in a glass case in the town hall room. I've got fixed memories of reading water babies and being disgusted when it became unreal, but when I became older at Bruton in the senior school, I had three books on the go all the time [Read 'The Lonely Skier' 16/1/48 age 15.4]. I had one in my desk, one under my pillow and one in the library, so, I suppose while other boys were out hitting balls in mock cricket games, I was in the library reading books, or doing my stamp collection or writing books. Obviously sports were compulsory as we know from Mr Gove's recent announcement that they should be in England in all state schools, but at that time they were just part of the curriculum, but I didn't do too much in that way outside of that. I certainly went for walks, we were allowed to go for walks. At weekends I don't think I ever went on my own; I think I always went with Bargman or somebody else. And I learnt to ride whilst staying with a friend from Chipping Campden, a young boy Walter Jakeman who was a year or two younger than me who went into hospital. And I obviously had some sympathy for him because I bought a book, The Ginger Cat and sent this to him. And this must have impressed his mother because they invited me and my mother to stay with them for one of the school holidays, because we couldn't live in London because of the bombing, and it was on his bike that I learnt to ride. But I had very poor coordination so it took me some time to manage it, but I didn't really get to riding until, I suppose, maybe the last year or so of my school life. My father bought a made-up bike because bikes were difficult to buy towards the end of the war, and I used to call it an A.B.P. or All Bits and Pieces A.B.P. It was an all-black bike which eventually was stolen from outside Croydon library, and that would have been my first year at Bruton, sorry at Bristol University, but that's post childhood.

But I remember borrowing a bike one winter. We had a holiday down in Bournemouth, Boscombe, friends of my parents owned a boarding house which was obviously not open in the winter but we went down there one Christmas and I borrowed his bike and cycled there over to Wareham and the Purbeck island and there was snow I remember around, but yes, and that holiday I was cycling alright by then.

[Actually, I cycled to Lulworth 27/12/1950 when already at University. Obviously, I could cycle (almost) to Wells at the time of bike accident 20/11/1947]