

WASC 2276

Account of Service
at Westcot

1946 - 1980

N. Carter

1980

The Personal Memories of Nick Carter's time at
Westcott Rocket Propulsion Establishment
1946-1980.

The trouble with a scrap-book like this that goes back to 1946 and deals with the early days at Westcott, is that when it is written by the last of the Mohicans there aren't any Mohicans left who'd want to look at it. But perhaps there are a few who started in the early fifties, if not the forties, who'd manage to see the funny side of some of this.

RASC
Christmas 1980

(Nick Carter)

(I scanned the original type written pages and have made a few grammer and spelling corrections that were picked up by the spell checker. I have since discovered that some of these so called miss-spellings were in fact supposed to be spelt the way they were. I have not at this time gone back through all the text to correct them. The original end word of each page is showed red.

[After Nick Carter retired the DO was headed by Dave Rolls until his retirement in 19xx then Bill Brown until 19xx then by xxxxxx until 1999.

Westcott DO transferred to Summerfield in 1999. Some of those who didn't transfer went to work for the Liquid Engine Division in building 47. They were Andy Godber and Jeff Hammond.]

VERY MUCH STAFF IN CONFIDENCE

I first came to Westcott, on a preliminary visit, on Grand National Day in April 1946. The RAF were still in control officially, and there was still the odd Lancaster being broken up and carted away for scrap. By a large pond, situated somewhere near what is now the Projection Room, huge quantities of gear were being hit with a fourteen pound hammer and sunk without trace. In this same pond were sunk reel upon reel of lead-covered cable, which in a few years was to become almost unobtainable.

The Quarter Master Sergeant of the Station welcomed the prospective Ministry staff who turned up on that day, and immediately organized a ten-shilling Grand National Sweep. He wore a greasy brown storeman, brown overall over his uniform, and had a piece of rope round his waist from which hung hundreds of keys. Since we didn't see him again after he'd collected our sweep money, we were convinced that the draw never took place.

It was glorious weather, I remember, and in the afternoon we sat in the long grass outside Hanger 4 and concluded that it wasn't a bad place to come and work at. I was with Fred Lupton, and we had come up from the Fort in a Ministry car driven by the Hon. Pamella -----, in her green Ministry driver's uniform; and on the way back she kept throwing out hints about stopping at a swell pub she knew in Faversham, and getting tanked up with pink gin. She was a great pal of McGregor-McGreer, (MG2), whose main contribution to the recent war effort had been a dossier of every pub on every route to every destination. But Fred wasn't the type, and we went straight home to South London and our own beds.

Some few weeks previously we had been given a very serious interview at Shell Mex, by a panel chaired by Stubby. (Now Sir St John de Holt Elstub Kt CBE). The object was to choose members most suitable for the new Guided Projectiles Establishment to be headed by Bill Cook. (Now Sir William Cook Kt KCB).

The interview was quite fierce, as though the new management at Westcott resolved to have only the best. In the event it turned out that there was a lot of fuss about pay and conditions, and in the end quite a few who were offered posts at Westcott turned them down. Strangely enough Westcott started its life badly understaffed, and in the end the original idea that it would be manned by people from other establishments in the Ministries was given up, and staff had to be recruited from the industrial area.

But on that day in April it all looked very good. The sun was warm enough to bask in, and the grass dry enough to sit in; Aylesbury seemed a nice, quiet, rural country town, almost a haven of peace after the havoc of years of bombing in London.

We reported on the 13th of May 1946: Fred Lupton, myself, and three quite young lads, Pantell, Goss, and Tucker, from Fort Halstead, to form the nucleus of a drawing office. There wasn't much going on when we arrived, and we were told to report to the Workshop Manager, Ray Corry. He didn't want to know about us, and told us to get lost. Get around the place and size it up, he said. When we did we found that another draughtsman had already put in an appearance, but finding no drawing office accommodation, no equipment, and no staff but himself, he had gone to work for a maths section run by Howard Williams. In the beginning things happened like that; you just made yourself useful wherever you could according to where you thought you fitted in. The draughtsman was a lad called Fethney, and he never came to the drawing office. Instead he stayed where he was and became a scientist. There ought to be a moral in that somewhere, but I'm not certain what it is exactly.

We messed about for a few days, and eventually somebody came along and said that we had been allocated certain rooms in Building 80. The first thing we had to do was to clean out the rubbish and sweep up, it was that filthy. This took quite some time but eventually we got the place looking reasonably clean. When we had finished we found a few chairs and put them in the centre of the room on the very well worn ginger lino; then we sat on them and talked amongst ourselves and waited for something to happen. The first thing that happened occurred on about the third day, when Ingolseby walked in and demanded a quick drawing. Ingolseby was the brother of Mona Ingolseby the ballet dancer, and was something clever in mathematics. But right now he wanted some action that involved hanging a wooden replica of a rocket in a wind tunnel on a cable. The job was extremely urgent he said, despite the fact that the wind tunnel hadn't been designed yet, let alone made. We told him that it just couldn't be done; we hadn't got any boards, and the only stationery that we had was that which we had brought ourselves from the Fort. But

Ingolseby was very persistent, and came back quite a few times to complain; in fact he would have complained to our boss, if only he'd known who our boss was. In the long run I placated him by doing his bloody drawing on the floor; sticking some spare paper we had brought with us onto the floor and using squared paper underneath as a square ness guide. Having got his drawing, which I remember included - at his insistence - a lot of holes tapped 8 BA in a piece of wood, he proceeded over to the workshops to get the item made. Here he was treated less kindly, and left in a huff, never again, I was told, to put his foot in the workshops again. Ingolseby was very sensitive, and his stay at Westcott was rather short.

Lunch in those early clays was taken in the old Red Shield Club, which was eventually converted by the MOW for their own use some years later. At that time the mess was organised by a Miss Chote, who had great difficulty in procuring decent plates and things, and seemed to produce an endless supply of pink blancmanges in very badly chipped enamel bowls. Food was still rationed in 1946, and to many it was the worst time, even worse than the war years. But there seemed to be a plentiful supply of local milk, and doubtless this in turn resulted in the production of all those pink blancmanges. Many girls existed solely on pink blancmange for some weeks. The Red Shield Club was reasonably tidy, and the worn white table-clothes were always white and clean, but the roof of the building was filthy. There seemed to be an undue amount of condensation about from the steam from the kitchens, and I can remember how on colder days one had great trouble keeping great blobs of dirty water dropping from the ceiling into one's bowl of pink blancmange.

In the first two or three weeks one got to know the people who were supposed to be working at the station. It must be remembered that there was no fence then, and traffic came in off the main road without really knowing where it was going. I met a man once in an old Series E Morris, somewhere in the region of the Control Tower, who leaned out of his window and said: "I seem to be lost. Can you put me on the road to Oxford?" But when you met someone two or three times in a week, you guessed he or she worked there, and wasn't just a local who had wandered in to see what it was all about. Besides Bill Cook, there were three Superintendents, Stubby, Rae, and a man who was so polite and well behaved that no one seems capable of remembering his name. Stubby was all for a night out, anywhere, anytime, with anyone invited, just so long as they bought a round. He was my Superintendent, and the one I remember most. Rae, I had little to do with, and can only remember him as being slightly more mad than the rest, since he insisted on travelling around the site in a Navy van, with his behind on the driver's seat back, his feet on the driver's seat, and with his long walking stick on the accelerator. Then there was Stubby's friend, Chuck Bailey, the only man who could stand up straight and keep his cigarette holder clamped securely in his teeth after a whole bottle of whisky. Howard Williams and Stan Green, Ray Corry, Keith Stewartson, Hutcheon, the Saw sisters. Eve and Avis, Esme Cooper from the farm over the road, were all people who were here when I arrived. The Administration was headed by a man called Stacey, supported by that character Chalky White. The Stores side was with a man called Gilllian, and the Instrumentation with Tim Bicker.

Those who had come from other establishments were housed in the Rodney House Hostel in Bicester, with the exception of Eve Saw and her husband, who managed to get themselves set up, howbeit temporarily, in Church Farm. Most of the men had left homes and families to come out to Westcott, believing that it was a good post-war prospect. It also put them on a long rein, and the stories that emanated from this fact are best forgotten.

During that first month quite a few people arrived, including Jack Laurillard from the Fort. Vacancies were advertised in the press, and for the rest of 1946 large numbers of people were recruited. Equipment was scrounged or bought, and gradually the place began to take shape. The Drawling Office rose from the original five to over forty; the machine shop recruited both machines and men; scientific staff came from all parts of the country. Some of the girls who went into the Internal Ballistics Section came straight from a technical section of the ATS, like Ruth Skinner, Jean Steel, and Enid France. MacCloughlan ran the Library, although, Marie Goyer must have been around somewhere at the time, since she was at Rodney House very early on. Eric Smith and the girl he married, Lelia Hewitt, came about then. Dr Noble came for a while before he went to New Zealand. Then, some time later, the Germans arrived.

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The situation at Rodney house in Bicester was pretty grim. Food was still a problem and rationing was at its height, but there was no excuse for the way the kitchens at the hostel just murdered every meal. It is not difficult to remember the dining room after every one had left it at night, with every table still carrying

plates of uneaten food. There was a piggery at the back of the Bicester Road, and it was suggested that Mrs Haste, the manageress, had shares in it. The pigs were certainly very fat pigs.

The accommodation was very Spartan, and there was no luxuries for the married couples, like double beds for instance. Nuptial bliss had to be achieved by pushing the two single beds in the room as close together as was possible, which was one of the many little things that Mrs Haste had reason to complain about. Mrs Haste was always very angry about something or other, and was frequently giving someone notice to leave, only to withdraw it when the person threatened rang someone in Headquarters. With a view to establishing some sort of communication with the inmates, she eventually set up a procedure for the airing of complaints, and the inmates elected me as their spokesman at the first and only meeting. It was the only meeting because of what happened.

I was seated in her office, I remember, with that smelly dog of hers growling at my every movement, and she was lecturing me on the bad behaviour of the Ministry staff who were there. They were a different kettle of fish to the officers from the Bicester camps, she said. They were gentlemen. This new lot that had come to work at Westcott were louts and hooligans, she said. "Look out there," she said, pointing through her window to the green in the middle of the quadrangle, where our lot were playing cricket with an old bat and a composition ball. "Look at that tall Welsh hooligan." Howard Williams was preparing to bat and was making a lot of very fierce sweeps with his bat. "He" she said to me very confidentially, "is trouble in any language." And at that precise moment there was an almighty crash and her window flew into pieces and the cricket ball landed right on her table in front of her and sent her cup of tea all over her papers. She stood up and started screaming and the dog started barking, and I just fled. And I never went back for another meeting.

Sometimes it is difficult to get a benchmark in terms of time on things that happened a long time ago; but I can always relate my short stay at Rodney House in terms of the start, the snow of '47, and the firework night incident. Just before firework night we had our usual evening supper of ducks eggs and toast, which we ate to supplement the terrible food that the hostel supplied. Ducks eggs were not on ration, (and in fact hens eggs were not either, once you got to know the local farmers), and Parry used to go out on that old black bike of his, and tour the countryside buying up eggs. And in his bottom draw, amongst his pants and vests, in the small chest of drawers that the hostel provided, was a regular cache of over a hundred ducks eggs. And so we used to meet in his room late at night, about a round dozen of us, and someone would make the toast on an old toaster, and Reg Horner would be in charge of the egg boiling, boiling them up in a big black saucepan on another electric cooker, and calling out from his stop-watch: "Three at four minutes twenty seconds coming up." All the current was taken from a mass of wires in the ceiling where the rose had been temporarily removed, despite a notice in every room, which read: "Cooking in the bedrooms strictly forbidden by order". Food was so difficult that to be in a position to say to a female resident: "What about coming to my room tonight for ducks eggs and toast?" just about set you up for the rest of the week.

But about this firework night: on the night in question, just before firework night, we were gathered in some numbers in one bedroom, cooking eggs and toasting bread, and suddenly Reg Horner said: "Look what I've got." And he produced the biggest Brocks banger that I had ever seen. It was about a foot long and at least two inches in diameter, and coloured a bright vermilion and cost over five shillings, which was a lot of money in those days, perhaps ten per cent of Reg's wages. "What's that for?" someone asked, and a strange smile came over Reg's full moon face and he said simply: "Mrs Haste of course." It turned out that he had plans for getting into her bedroom, which was on the end of the hostel block, and putting it under her bed. It was going to be done that very night, and we were going to draw straws to see who would actually put it there. When Parry drew the short straw Reg said: "Christ. You're bound to make a mess of it. Give it to me. I'll do it myself."

And so about two o'clock in the morning, we assembled in the dark hostel corridor. Parry having fused all the lights in the place by taking a bulb out and putting a halfpenny in its place. And Reg set off, with nothing on but a very short shift - his standard nightwear - and armed with his banger and a box of matches. And we waited by the hostel side-door while he disappeared in the general direction of Mrs Haste. We seemed to wait a long time, and then suddenly he appeared out of the darkness at a fast trot and said: "Back to your beds, for Christ's sake." And as I skidded down the corridor to my room I heard a most colossal crack somewhere.

We only ever had Reg's word for it that he did put the banger under her bed, but after that incident she was considerably more amenable. Reg left Westcott while we were still at Rodney House, to take a university course somewhere. When he'd taken his degree he took over his father's paper shop business in

Southport. There was some story about him rescuing a girl from a lift-shaft in Blackpool, and finishing up by marrying her; all very romantic, but we'll never know for sure.

There were quite a few people at Rodney House who never stayed at Westcott long enough to see the staff establish themselves domestically in the new housing estates of Aylesbury. Pete Phillips was one, and he could play Chopin as well as any amateur. What amazed me was the way he knew so many pieces off by heart. Unfortunately he was very ill, and in fact died still quite a young man. And little Pantell played the piano too, popular stuff, all by ear. And Ray Corry had a special song and dance act all of his own.

I don't know where Stubby and Chuck were staying at this time, but often they would organize a pub crawl for the evening and would go around site during the day recruiting for the night's activities. I once heard a rather grade-conscious member say to Stubby one day, when a very junior member of the staff was being invited out: "You realize sir, that he is only a And he mentioned his grade. And Stubby said: 'I don't give a hoot what his grade is, just so long as he buys a f.....g round.'"

And so we would get into Stubby's Alvis, or Chuck's Lagonda, or in a car with a character called Major Budge, and we would tour all the village pubs. Round about the Christmas period of 1946, there were an awful lot of de-mob parties on the Bicester Camp, and since the Hostel was on Camp ground, the inmates were always invited. The attraction was the food, a sergeant's mess party being particularly good, with the other ranks and officers coming a bad second. But that was only relative; to us, it was all out of this world, and included ham sandwiches, I remember; something many of us had not seen for five years. The de-mobbing came fast and furious at that stage, and I can remember the famous 'Twenty-five nights' before Christmas.

It started at the beginning of December with a succession of invitations from various messes on the Camp, that completely filled in our week. The parties were wild and uninhibited, and went on until three or four in the morning. The first one was not too bad, but after a week of it people began to feel tired. Chuck Bailey, I remember, was the only one who seemed unaffected; and I can still see him now, leaning up against a bar in some remote Bicester mess, with his amber cigarette holder clamped in his face, looking as though he might have just got up refreshed and relaxed, and addressing a crowd of listeners whose eyes were glazing over with fatigue. It went on for twenty-five consecutive nights, and one by one the contestants took a couple of days leave from work and retired to their beds to recover. But some of us saw it through to very nearly the end. I know that Horner and Lidster and Williams went through with it, but lesser mortals like myself and Jack Bligh gave it up halfway through. I find it difficult to remember much detail of those times, but if anything is engraved in my memory it is the journeys home at four o'clock in the morning, sitting in the back of Chuck Bailey's Lagonda with about seven or eight others. We were never drunk enough to believe that Chuck was; he was so composed and apparently as sober as a judge - until he let the clutch in. Then came the most hair-raising moonlight ride I can remember - through villages at seventy miles an hour, and round corners flanked by high stone walls on the wrong side of the road, and on one occasion, right through the gate of a gated road. Which reminds me of the level crossing at Bicester.

On one such a night someone played the conga, and the party formed the usual long line and went out of the mess doors and down the hill to the main road, with everyone singing in place of the music left behind; and they went through Rodney house, by which time the line had doubled its length, and along to the level crossing. It was a very long conga, which wouldn't have mattered much if the last train into Bicester hadn't been due. The one available bobby was called in, and he threatened a few arrests, but nothing much happened, and the train just had to arrive late,

Round about this time someone found a couple of ATS in one camp, whose names were Bonny and Pat, and they used to visit us at the hostel quite a bit; but suddenly they seemed to disappear, and the story was that they had been seen in the hostel, which was forbidden, and had been confined to barracks. And so one night, with nothing better to do, it was decided to go up to the ATS camp and find out. And so a posse was formed, Lidster, Horner, Maddock, Williams and myself, and we drove up to the camp involved. Well, Williams did most of the talking, which he was, and still is, good at; and he told the female squaddie at the gate that he was Bonny's brother just back from abroad, and that he was due to be sent away abroad again in a few days, and could he see her please. And the female said that it was past eleven, and everyone was in bed. And Williams said he'd like to speak to the duty sergeant. And the duty sergeant, who was built like a tank, came out and did a lot of snarling, and told Howard Williams to get lost. But Howard persisted, in his inimitable way, and eventually the sergeant went away and came back with an officer. She was very sweet, and I don't think she believed a word of what was being said, but there was something about Howard's persistence that made her wonder. I don't know whether or not anyone ever

asked themselves how could a tall dark man with a Welsh accent possibly be a brother of a short fair girl from Aberdeen, but at that time of night perhaps it wasn't noticed. The upshot was, after much talking and appealing and cajoling, that the officer gave an order and we could hear the camp tannoy calling for the lady in question. Eventually she turned up at the gate with a dressing gown over her pyjamas with a greeting, within the earshot of the sergeant: "Hallo, Brother." And when she was near us, and much quieter: "I might have known it was you bloody lot." I can't remember what happened then; not much I feel sure. It's just the moral- that you can fool most of the people most of the time, particularly if you are Welsh.

There were quite a few affairs going on at the hostel. Some were remarkably frank and open; some were a little more under cover. It was the under cover ones that intrigued us most, since often the most unlikely people were involved.

The men's block and the women's block ran parallel to each other, being separated by about ten yards of very long grass. The common room connected the two blocks at one end, such that a look from the common room windows commanded a view of both blocks, and what was most significant, both sets of bedroom windows. For often, when in the common room late at night, up to no good oneself, a window would fly open on the men's side, and a dark form would drop out on to ground and disappear in the long grass. And the grass would bend and wave as the man would crawl to the other side, where a window would be thrown conveniently open suddenly, and he would rise from the grass and disappear. Inside so quickly that it would be difficult to say who he was exactly. But the windows would be remembered, and later we would get the hostel plans out and work it out. Fifteen, fourteen, thirteen, twelve, ten, nine, eight. Christ. That's old Taffey Evans. Didn't think he'd recovered. He came home so drunk that when he entered his room he fell over and his wardrobe fell on top of him. He was still asleep there at twelve, still with the wardrobe on top of him. Then at three o'clock in the morning he's crawling into the woman's block. And who was the lady? When we worked it out it was an older Westcott type, a spinster science grade. I forget her name now, which is just as well.

The winter of 1947 was the worst I have ever seen. It went cold sometime after Christmas and kept it up well into March. At the height of the snowstorms the drifts in the Bicester Road were ten foot high and a journey to Westcott completely out of the question. But we did manage to cut our way through to the 'George', the young lads doing all the hard work and Chalky White and Gillian supervising. Once in residence there was no point in leaving at closing time and coming back when they opened again, and so we just stayed put. Ray Corry didn't even bother to go back at night, and just slept on the floor in the lounge. The publican was very understanding, and kept his bar open for twenty-four hours a day. After all - who was around to check on him? The police were all doing the same thing.

But the one conscientious member who did not fall into these bad habits, and who resolved to get to work at all costs, was Marie Goyer. She had her ski gear all packed and sent to her at the hostel when the snow first started, and now she decided to put them to use and to get to Westcott at all costs. She set out with the best of intentions on that very bad day, but sometime in the afternoon an Otmoor farmer looking for lost sheep found her floundering in a very deep snowdrift, but still resolving to press on regardless. He phoned the police, and the police phoned the army at Bicester, and some time in the late afternoon a tracked vehicle, set out from Ambrosian to look for her. Somehow she managed to arrive back at the hostel in the evening, and the story went around that she had been rescued by a light tank from Bicester. But it was never confirmed.

When the snows thawed the problem changed to floods, and the rather broken-down Taylors coach that ferried us from the hostel to Westcott seemed unable to cope with the wet. The water seemed to get everywhere, and often on the way home all the lights would fuse. Our standard way out of this dilemma was to sit Bobbie on the coach bonnet with a torch. I never knew who Bobbie was exactly, except that he was about sixteen and worked somewhere in Westcott. But he was very willing. That old Taylors coach was always breaking down, often with clouds of steam due to a loss of cooling water, and someone would have to climb out into a ditch and fill up their Wellington boot with water and fill up the radiator. Which reminds me, Wellington boots were standard issue from stores in those days.

Going back to the Christmas period, before the snows came, a committee was started at Westcott to form a club. It was called the V100 club, which was obvious enough at the time, and I have always felt it wrong to have changed it. I personally proposed 'The Bluebottle Club', because the area round there is built on what the old field names maps is said to be 'Bluebottle Ground'. The first event that the club organized was a fancy dress ball, and people who remember still talk about it. The committee was pretty strong, and had people like Stubby sitting on it, so it was capable of pulling the right sort of strings. For instance, the

iced fruit cakes that Miss Chote produced on the night hadn't been seen in the flesh for quite a few years, and weren't seen again either for a few years to come; so somebody was doing something somewhere. The fancy dress was a wild success, too, and everyone seemed to fall into the post-war spirit that had suddenly invaded the place. Stubby had a dinner suit on, but with greyed hair and a red nose and a large white notice on his back, which read: "I don't mind if I do." (For those too young to know, it is a cliché from ITMA). The DO did a wedding group, Lidster as the groom, Horner as the bride, Parry as the parson, and myself as the mother-in-law. Ruth Skinner was in Victorian costume, and little Alice from the DO was a hula-hula girl. The boys put a lot of effort in on Alice that night, painting her all over a nice dark tan and practically dressing her from scratch, and it was a piece of sheer robbery when, she was awarded only second prize. Gillian came as a ski-man, dressing up in Marie Goyer's Swiss gear, and Marie herself was in an original Austrian folk dress. Chalky White was a clown, which didn't seem to change him much, and MacCloughlan came in a Bonny Prince Charlie get-up; but what was worse, brought his bag-pipes as well, and what was even more annoying, insisting on playing them. All in all there was quite a big turn out in fancy dress, and most of the efforts are now forgotten. There were a lot of photographs taken at the time, but gradually as the years have gone by they have disappeared. The following year another fancy dress was held, and then a May Dance where everyone was supposed to go as fairies, but it was only half-heartedly supported, and gradually in time the 'Westcott Spirit', which Stubby used to love to refer to, on the grounds that 'those who played hard worked hard', was eroded by the Civil Service mandarins who felt that some of the goings on at Westcott needed looking at, and some of the procedures needed bringing in to line. In retrospect, perhaps their attitude was justified.

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In the beginning the working environment was pretty weird. Gradually some equipment began to arrive, and after a few weeks there were some drawing boards in the office and some decent desks and chairs to put in the main offices on top of the old Air Force ginger lino. The tannoy still worked, and it clicked and spluttered into action at regular intervals, calling for someone who couldn't be located. Every other call seemed to be for 'Flying Officer Blythe', and so what he was up to all day we'll never know. An announcement in the first week, made by Bill Cook, said that the last Air Force officer had finally left, and had now officially handed the site over to the Ministry. He had cleared up as best he could, but had had to leave one and a half large barrels of best bitter in the Officers Mess. (This was to eventually be converted into the V100 Club.) The Superintendent proposed that the staff come over at lunchtime and see the beer off, before it went stale. Well, there was not a lot of staff around at that time, and there was a lot of beer to be consumed, and by about half-past two there were no signs of anyone wanting to go back to their offices. By four o'clock everyone seemed to think it was Saturday afternoon in Aylesbury market, and in the end the hostel transport had to be brought to the Mess in order to collect everyone up.

But all the same everyone seemed to be working quite hard at normal times. The old LOP/GAP, as it was known by its originator, the Asiatic Petroleum Company, had come up from the Fort, and that was on the go, being manufactured by Rubery Owen at Coventry. Old Hutcheon worked at the Lizzie hut, and when he fired whatever it was he was playing with, you could feel your backbone rattle up in Building 100. Hutcheon lived on the site in a small caravan with a married lady transport driver called Margaret, and made up his own hooch from distilled fermented blackcurrant juice, with a dash of pure alcohol from the LOP/GAP project. When he was well tanked up with this stuff he was so gone from this world that he used to frighten me rigid; I was convinced that he was on the way out. Later on of course old Hutcheon was moved on by the security people. I still have an old original draft report by him, where he states that the pressure drop in a motor is impossible to calculate, and is best guessed by someone with experience. More of an Art than a Science he says.

Bert Coliver and Wally Long seemed to be the lads who did things on the sites those days. The LOP/GAP was fired from what was nothing much more than a hole in the ground and the voyeurs crouched behind a single brick wall about four feet high. At some point - It was extremely fine weather so it must have been 1947 - there was a big show put on, and the site was alive with high-ranking service and civilian staff. It was supposed to impress them all, and get money for the sites that were required. (In the event. most of the people who came seemed to remember only the strawberries and cream that were served in very generous quantities in the mess. This was real luxury for the times.) But out on the site Stubby and Colliver had a LOP/GAP firing organized, and although I will never be able to prove it, and am probably wrong in even suggesting it; I am nevertheless convinced that it was all a put-up job to promote a big bang to impress the brass that proper sites were required. I was acting as a sort of guide at the time and had in tow half a dozen very old and very hot scrambled eggs from the Navy, and a few staff officers from the

Army, all of whom seemed half asleep and wanted nothing more than a place to sit clown. So I led them over to the small brick wall behind the LOP/GAP site, and asked them to get down behind it, which they did at full length and with some relief. Then Stubby came along and gave his spiel about what it was all about, and Bert Colliver did some fiddling behind some sandbags somewhere and called 'Fire', and there was a click and nothing happened. The drill was to wait a bit, and by that time the brass had begun to nod a bit, what with the soft long grass and the warm sun and the wine and strawberries inside them all. Bert went out and fiddled with the motor and then came back and went through his firing drill again. By now some of the brass were sound asleep. But this time, when Bert said 'Fire', things happened. First there was a rushing noise, then immediately afterwards a blinding sheet of bright red flame, and the motor took off and whistled just over the top of the brick wall. It went about a hundred yards, almost horizontal, and finished up in a lot of tall dry grass which immediately caught fire, and caused the one fire engine and three staff to spring into action. Needless to say, it brought the brass back to life, and when I led them back to the runway and the waiting transport they were still shaking. Later on Stubby said: "Nice works chaps. We've got our sites." And that is how the ABCD etc sites got their original approval in 1947.

At that time a lot of stuff was being flown in from Germany to Westcott on behalf of an operation to get information into this country, and a lot of crated hardware arrived on site. It was supposed to house equipment that was of use to the rocket business, but some seemed to contain camera equipment and a few brand new BMW motor car engines, which were useful if you were an amateur photographer, or if you had a large car that needed a new engine, like a Lagonda or an Alvis for instance. I have often said, in respect to that immediate post-war period, that had I possessed a donkey and cart, and knew then what I know now, I would have retired at thirty-five.

Once the LOP/GAP was in some sort of production, various stability trials were held down at Aperporth. Fred Lupton and I were asked to go down to Aberporth to help with things, and one Monday we set off from Westcott in one of those old square-shaped Humber brakes, driven by old Nixey from Kingswood, who is still working here at the time of writing. And half way across the country, up in the border hills, on the remotest road imaginable, we came across another square green Humber brake, stationary in the road, with clouds of steam coming out of the bonnet, and with Stubby and Bailey and Budge and MacPherson all standing around looking cold and miserable. There was a fine spray of snow coming clown at the time, horizontal in a rather fierce east wind, and it wasn't the time to break down. But when our brake approached, the party broke into a great cheer and waved us clown. "A broken water hose," Stubby announced. "And the silly bugger doesn't carry a spare." But our vehicle didn't carry a spare either, and in the end Stubby turfed Fred and I out of our car, and left us with instructions to get the broken car mended. Whereupon his party set off in our vehicle. "See you in the Cliff," he said, referring to the hotel where we were all staying, "either tonight or tomorrow." As it turned out, the hose was repairable via some strong black tape that we carried, and we eventually managed to get to Gwbert, although very late at night. The rest of the party were not available, and were supposed to be somewhere in Cardigan. On the following day three rounds were assembled on the range; but their weight was wrong and their CG was wrong too. What was to be done? Fred and I did some quick slide rule calculations and reckoned that by adding in a bit of junk of a certain weight at a certain place we could get by; but it needed some work, if we could get the material that was. "Good," said Stubby. "The workshop's all yours. We're all going into Cardigan for the day. I hope everything will be fit for tomorrow morning."

Fred and I worked all day and all night on that problem, along with some lads in the shops. At about eleven I went back to report progress, eleven at night that was, but no one had come back from Cardigan yet, so I went back to the shops. When we had the whole thing finished at about five in the morning, Fred and I dragged ourselves back to the hotel, to find the bar still open and Stubby and Chuck and Mac taking Colonel Todd through the rigours of 'Cardinal Proof'. (Was it Colonel or Major Todd? I forget. And I wonder what happened to his daughter Avril who wanted to become a ballet dancer, amongst other things?) Budge was asleep under a table nearby. When that had finished they introduced Todd to the 'get through the hatch routine', which anyone who has had to go to Aberporth must know about; and when he was stuck fast they put a pint of ale down the front of his trousers. Then they played skittles backwards; this was simple bar skittles with the skittles down to start with; then the ball on the string was swung in a large circle and you had to stand the skittles up before the ball fell and hit you a large crack in the car. This took some time, and the morning light came and somewhere there was the smell of toast. I said: "We have something to report." And MacPherson said: "No. I have something to report." And he stood on a table and started to give a speech. It took some time, and he was heartily applauded. "Extremely good verbal diarrhoea," Stubby said. And at that moment I managed to get a word in and told them that all three rounds were now OK and ready for firing at nine o'clock. "Rounds?" said Stubby. "What rounds?" And Chuck said: "What's the bloody boy talking about?" But slowly it dawned on them what I was on about. They picked up Budge up from under the table and woke him up and they all trooped off upstairs.

When those rounds were fired at about ten o'clock that morning, Stubby said to me: "Were they stable?" I said that I thought they were. Stubby said: "There ought to be a photographic record made, but that photographic character over there in the flying boots is as pissed as a newt still." He pointed up-range to where a photographer was trying to follow the action with a cine-camera, without a lot of success. Stubby wrote something in his book and said: "I'll take your, word for it. I can't ace a bloody thing this morning."

When Harold Young came to Westcott over twenty-five years later, and he knew I had been at the Cliff Hotel in those days, he said: "And did they put you through the hatch; and get you to play bar billiards backwards; and give you the Cardinal Proof routine?" It seems that this was all traditional behaviour at the Cliff. I wonder if its still got the old tablecloth which had the original ink sketch on it of the design of the anti-aircraft Z batteries, supposed to have been sketched by Sir Alwyn Crow and company in the early forties?

5

In the beginning Westcott was divided into three sections, projects and engineering under Stubby, Gas Dynamics under Rae, and the Athodyd by the man whose name I couldn't remember, but who someone tells me was Wood. In the Engineering Division we had of course MacPherson and Corry, and people like Jack Bligh and Lidster and Horner; and Cunliffe, who knew more dirty jokes than Max Miller; and poor old Jack Press, who had an operation for something he didn't believe he had, an operation which he never came out of. Then there was Les Rawlings, and Johnson and Hamilton, the two Scots, who went back to Scotland, once Westcott had failed to give them what they thought it had promised. And Bill Ffoulkes, back from Burma; and Len Shaw and Frank Osbourne, recently back from prison camp in Germany; and RA Smith, who did all those illustrations for the Interplanetary Society. On the scientific side there were people like Ward, who married Helen Hunt. "Go to Helen Hunt for it," Stubby used to say. And Keith Stewartson, who went on to a University chair somewhere. And Dr Somebody - who was only interested in the stars, and was just filling in time at Westcott before he went on to higher things at Greenwich. And then there was Geoff Tongue, who came here from RAE in response to a request for a 'valve man', and who hung about for weeks, waiting for someone to give him a job; until he at last kicked up a fuss and someone had to admit there wasn't any work here for a valve man, - at least not his type of valves, which were thermonic. There seemed to be an awful lot of people at Westcott, in those days 'in transit'. One girl in the Bicester Hostel, who had a flat grey face like an Eskimo's, said she was just filling in time prior to getting married. While she was at the hostel she also got a lot of practice in, too. Then there was a chap direct from the Navy, who was recruited at ten in the morning and resigned at four in the afternoon; his name, I remember, was M'Clymont. But for every casual employee there was one who had come to put his roots down, and get himself something he could not get any other way except by working at Westcott - a house for his family. And so the family men tended to stay, just for the house. Very early on, and stemming from the agreement between the Ministry and the local council, the steel houses that were erected in Prebendal Avenue and Thrasher Road on the Southcourt Estate in Aylesbury were allocated to Westcott employees, and it was not exactly surprising when the locals objected. It was even said that some locals moved to Westcott to work just to be allocated a house, and once they'd got it, they just moved back to their old job; for what ever advantages there were to be had in working for the Ministry - and there were a lot of them - pay was never one of them. And so in a very short period of time married men in the Bicester Hostel moved out and into a new steel house; and some of them had to give up their fancy women and whistle up the missus and kids from whatever part of the country they had been left. To many it was a mixed blessing, this sudden acquisition of a brand new house. But in some places, notably Prebendal Avenue, large blocks of houses were allocated and Westcott employees often lived side by side in the same road. Along Prebendal I can remember Corry, Colliver, Green, Williams, Long, Lupton, Bicker, all within a stone's throw of each other, and intermingled was a large element of workshop types whose names I don't remember. They were there for a long time, until it was possible to get a house of their own on the new estates; but Corry stayed there until he retired to Scarborough and Lupton is still there at the time of writing, working, I am told, for the Cheshire Homes. And over the other side of the estate, in the Taylor Road area, a second batch of Westcott employees took over some new houses; the two Smiths and Ateyo from Sheerness, Laurillard, Bligh, MacKenney, Shaw and many others. Osbourne, I remember, refused one on the grounds that it wasn't his scene. He had only recently recovered from the long North European prisoner-of-war march behind the advancing Soviet armies, on which so many died. He was not so much conditioned to self-sufficiency as obsessed by it, and he preferred to live with his new wife in a small caravan in one of Adam's fields, and never actually do any shopping for food, but to grow potatoes and shoot rabbits with his huge double-barrelled shot-gun.

The young single lads like myself, who still suffered in Bicester Hostel, often came to Aylesbury on a Saturday. Sometimes we would go to the rep in the Old Assembly Hall, where the Birmingham Rep put on a few plays, including 'White Cargo', which we were all so taken with because of Tondolao, who came and sat with us one day in the flesh - and very good flesh it was too - in the Old Beams Restaurant opposite the theatre. On occasions we got ourselves invited out to Saturday tea by some sympathetic colleagues wife, who lived in one of the new steel houses. And the joy of a bit of decent food, and the bustle of Aylesbury compared with the dullness of Bicester, made us decide to move. When the Germans came to Westcott our opportunity came.

6

I think I first heard about the Germans coming to Westcott at the Engineering Dinner run by Stubby at the Bulls Head. This party was notorious for two things: firstly for the Westcott Song Book, and secondly for the Bulls Head's manager's decision never to allow Westcott people to have a party at his hotel ever again. The songbook was a collection of Air Force Mess songs, like 'An Airman told me before he died,' and 'Craven A'. They were typed by a well-known lady typist of the times, and printed and distributed along with the dinner menu. Perhaps in this day and age it would be acceptable as being within the law, but in 1947 there was no doubt that it wasn't. MacPherson I remember, mislaid his copy, and he nearly had kittens wondering where he had lost it. One incident that I remember was the saying of Grace. There was a mutter of surprise when someone in a penguin suit banged the table and said: "Pray silence for Grace by Mr Elstub." Somehow it didn't seem like Stubby at all. Ingolesy, who was sitting opposite me, and who had gone a deep shade of pink when he saw what was in the Westcott Song Book next to his menu, looked pleasantly surprised, and closed his eyes and clasped his hands together very passionately. When Stubby stood up he said to a silent hall: "For Christ's sake let's eat." And when Ingolesy had recovered from the shock he stood up and went out and didn't come back. He left shortly afterwards.

It was a rather wild party, and was best remembered for Flying Officer Blythe's stunts on the roof beams of the old dining room. He not only looked like a monkey - he climbed like one. In fact his favourite trick at the V100 Club, once he had enough alcohol inside him, was to set up a ramp of tables in the main hall over about ten yards, rising from nothing to about six feet, and to drive that oily motor bike of his off the end. The point about mentioning this very wild party was to say that sometime at it someone said something about some Germans coming to Westcott. Some time later it was headlines in the 'Daily Express'. Old Chapman Pincher had a long ear in those days.

When they arrived they were put in the converted sick bay flats, opposite the Club entrance at Gypsy Bottom, and for the first week they were under an armed guard. But that soon went, and shortly afterwards they were allowed to go into Aylesbury in groups. I was asked to accompany one lot, and I was very embarrassed when they spent a large quantity of their money on ladies STs, and carried them over to the post office in big bundles, and posted them back to their women folk in Germany. This was indeed a luxury in those days for the struggling German people.

After some time the Administrative Officer, Stacey made a suggestion to a group of single men who were complaining about the conditions at Rodney House. Why not move in with the Germans at their hostel? The rate would be reasonable and the advantage to the Germans would be that they might pick up a bit of English from us. It was eventually agreed, and Lister, Horner, Maddock, Saunt and myself moved into the German Hostel one Saturday afternoon.

I had two immediate impressions. The first was how much they quarrelled amongst themselves, which might have been understandable when one considers the conditions under which they came; the second was how their leader Schmitt kept them all under control. Indeed, they were shattered to a man when he was killed in the site accident of the 14th of November. The date is not written down anywhere as far as I can see, but Elsie Comber says it is engraved on her mind as the day when they left her husband for dead, but came back when he moved. She was working in the Typing Pool at the time. Poor old Joe Salmon died that day. Joe, who lived somewhere near me in South East London and who use to come up with me to Aylesbury early on Monday mornings, and sleep in the slow dirty puffing billy trains of the Metropolitan. Then there was poor Rowlands as well, who I never knew.

I suppose the Germans must have arrived in late summer, for we had moved in only a short time before the accident occurred. Besides Schmitt there was Trolly and D, the most popular, Jessen, the most

English, Walder, the youngest, Fraunberger, the quietest, Reidle, the most Germanic, Reichart, the most drunk, Kretchmer, the most arrogant, Scheinhart, the smallest, Kalterman, the most practical, Fiedler, the politest, Meier, the angriest, Muller, the tallest and Zumpe, who never wore a tie. There was a young and old POW. The old one played the bassoon in the Berlin Philharmonic before the war. Because of this fact, I was given to understand he was released early. But they were the two batmen.

They were a queer lot, and we had quite a lot of fun with the language. We had Ruth and Jean and Alice as frequent visitors, since by then the canteen had moved from the Red Shield Club, which was turned by the AO Stacey into a girl's hostel. Round about Christmas time, these girls came in on a very foggy night complaining about the fog, and they were listened to with much patience by Walder, who eventually exploded into violent criticism of the manners of the English Youth. When asked to explain himself he said: "I can understand. I am, not zee dunz. I know what zee Engleesh Tommies say - zee bad words. To 'ear zee pretty Engleesh girls say zee same - it, it..... Obviously it disgusted him - but what exactly? After a while we got him in a corner and got it out of him. "All these foggy words," he said.

On another occasion Jean Steel was showing him a photograph of her boy friend. He held it at arms length, and said in his now improving English. "Tell me Jean. What dimension is your boyfriend?" And Fraunberger said: "No Hans, that it the wrong word. You should ask: 'what extension is your boy-friend?'"

(Jean Steel was the girl who they chased into the photographers Xmas 1946, then took her knickers off and stamped SECRET on her behind).

The younger ones were quite adaptable, but there was a lot of trouble amongst some, particularly between Willie Kretchmer and Reichart. They could never decide who would have what programme on the wireless. Kretchmer would find a programme to listen to at lunchtime, perhaps a Beethoven Symphony, and Reichart would come in to his herrings and mash and immediately turn it over to some light pop on Radio Luxemburg. Kretchmer would jump to his feet and shower everyone with fish, and storm over and turn it back; then Reichart would get up and turn it back again; and eventually they would have a big flaming row in German, which sounds much more aggressive than a row in English - to the English that is. Schmitt would never have allowed it, but when he died they seemed to be all at sixes and sevens.

Reichart was a great drinker, and he was a great visitor to the bar at the V100 Club. It was only just opposite the German Hostel, but unfortunately the way was beside that running stream; and when they started to build the fence the only way home was on the slippery slope of the ditch, hanging on to the fence wire. On more than one occasion Reichart couldn't make it and finished up lying in the water at the bottom. On one occasion I remember someone came in and said: "Hugo's in the bottom of the ditch again." And a couple of us went out and had to drag him up the bank and practically drag him home. And the quickest way to get him clean was to fill a bath and lift him in, clothes and all. When we had cleaned him up a bit, we undressed him in the bath, and put his clothes in another bath. Then we transferred him into a third bath, and dug the mud out of the first. Eventually, after a lot of rinsing, he came clean, and we put him to bed. But in the morning he couldn't remember a dam thing.

The man who ran the food side of the German Hostel was an Irish rogue called MacMahon. I didn't see him as a rogue at first, but Horner was very suspicious about Joe Striemer's black market butter. Joe Striemer was a local German POW who worked on the farms around, and he lived in that little brick hut next to the greenhouse in Mrs Cripp's garden at Victoria House in the main Westcott road. On our way home, Joe would often put his big head out of that little top window and say: "Hallo boys. You want some good butter? Cheap? Good quality. Plenty to sell." And we would go in and buy some very dear black market butter to supplement our small ration at breakfast. But Horner felt that our ration in the hostel was a bit light. "Wouldn't it be funny," he said. "If that MacMahon was flogging our own butter ration to that cheapskate Striemer, and he was selling it back to us?" And working on that assumption we searched the hostel from top to bottom after MacMahon had gone home, for surplus butter, but although we went through the kitchen with a fine toothcomb we found nothing. And then one day Maddock, with that strange inquisitiveness of his, decided to put a long arm right to the bottom of the Quaker oats barrel, which was about four feet deep, and down at the bottom he found about twenty packs of butter.

There wasn't much that we could do, short of just reporting the incident. and MacMahon was the sort that would probably have a reason for anything. So instead Maddock took MacMahon's best trilby hat off its peg behind the door, and with a razor blade cut a nice round hole in the top and then slit the brim into strips about an Inch wide. I didn't know anything about this, and in fact I don't think anyone else did, except Maddock. Not until the next morning, when we were all summoned to the AO'S office, did I ever the see the dam trilby hat. Stacey had gone by then, and there was a new man in his place, by name of Pare, who

was another one filling in time before moving on and making room for H B Young. Pare seemed somewhat bewildered by all the hassle of Westcott, and had obviously been used to quieter waters. He told all five of us that Mr MacMahon was quite certain that it was we who had ruined his best trilby hat, but that he was willing to drop the whole matter if we were prepared to cough up thirty shillings for a new one. Horner said it was not worth five bob that hat, even when new. What was more, none of us - at that time - knew anything about the cutting up of the hat; except Maddock of course, and he stayed quiet, which wasn't unusual for him: so no one noticed at the time. There was a lot of argument, and old Pare looked very angry, and told us that if we didn't pay up he would he would have to put in a report to HQ. What he didn't know at the time was that there were a lot of irregularities in the trading side of the German Hostel anyway, and shortly afterwards an investigation showed that MacMahon was up to quite a few fiddles as well as the butter one. And so he got the chop anyway, and the matter of the trilby hat died.

But some time afterwards, when H B Young was head of Administration, old Pare paid him a visit in his office on the end of Building 100, and on that particular day Lidster and I happened to pass by the office window. And old Pare came running out to greet us like long lost friends and when the preliminaries were over he said: "I must ask you this. It's been intriguing me for months. Who did cut up that twisting bugger's trilby hat?" And when we told him he laughed like a drain.

Round about that time there were a few goings and comings at the German Hostel. Reichart went off somewhere and Baske suddenly appeared. He had come over with the original group but had been off somewhere else for a time. I don't know how it all came about, but perhaps because they just couldn't get on with one another, everyone suddenly decided to find their own hut. Old Fielder went up the hill to 6 site and turned a small picket post into a one room flat with all mod cons. This was what the Germans called the 'Picture Post', and any picket post was called a picture post for a long time afterwards. Anywhere where there was a spare building left over by the Air Force people just moved in and fended for themselves. At about this time Maddock decided to move into the Morgue. The Morgue was next to the Sick Bay, which was in the process of being turned into flats. It had all the usual gruesome equipment, like metal stretchers that slid into a niche in the wall, on runners. And the stretchers had drains in them and a plughole at the lowest point. And everything ran onto the hard concrete floor, and ran in a series of drains to a gutter that in turn led to the centre of the room, where there was a large drain. Running down one side of the room was a large pipe, about six inches diameter, and leading off it in one corner was a large tap. The only pad, Maddock said, with running water.

He won some furniture from somewhere and laid a bit of carpeting, and made the three stretchers in the wall into beds. When he got in at night, he just slid himself into the niche for a small course of death. He said he slept very well there, with nothing much in the way to disturb him. He even bought an expensive lock and key, and bolted the place up when he was away, just in case someone else fancied it and moved in. Then suddenly the water got cut off, and he had to go elsewhere with his kettle. He made a lot of enquiries with a view to getting it put on again, but the story was that the branch main had been disconnected permanently. Later on he made a lot more improvements, and bought a lot of new furniture, and because it all got a bit crowded, he borrowed a hacksaw and got rid of the redundant six-inch pipe that cluttered up one wall.

Well, for some reason we didn't see much of him shortly after that. But there were a lot of strange people around the site, with listening tubes and divining rods, looking for water. Someone from the MOW told me they were looking for so many thousand gallons per week water loss, which in that dry hot year of 1947 must have been serious. Soon afterwards Maddock appeared again, suddenly, and he came up to me and said: "I'd like your advice. I want to show you something."

He took me over to his Morgue, and he unlocked his Yale lock with his big key, and opened the door. The room floor was about three feet down from the outside, level, and about two feet of it was filled with a swirling mass of water, going round and round in circles from the pressure of the water that was gushing out of a now no longer redundant six-inch water main. The water was disappearing down the centre drain and forming a large whirlpool, and round it floated furniture and books and clothing and bedding. Maddock said: "What can I do? Someone must have switched the water on again after I'd cut the pipe out. I've been sleeping in the garage at the back and getting a bite to eat in the Canteen." In fact he looked as though he had.

We locked up the Morgue and went to see the others. Someone knew someone in the Stores, and managed to scrounge a six-inch screw-on valve and some tube thread cutters. That same night we donned bathing trunks and found all the torches we could and went to work after dark. It took a long time, and it wasn't until the early hours of the morning that we got the valve on the pipe and very slowly managed

to turn the water off. Maddock got all his bits and pieces out in the sun drying, and in the evening he moved back in again. By now the place smelled like Dracula's tomb.

But the following day there was an Administrative blitz, and H B Young and company came around the site getting rid of all the do-it-yourself homes. Old Hutcheon and Margaret were turfed off the main site, and a lot of people were winkled out of their holes. For some reason the Germans were allowed to stay on in the places they had fixed up for themselves, and old Fiedler lived In the Picture Post for years. When H B Young came to Maddock's place, he went in and said: "Phew. What a dump. You'll get chronic rheumatism in here." And he had the place locked up and the key thrown away. I forget where Maddock went to from there. I think that with the others, he moved into the Sick Bay Flats.

It was when we were living in that area that Horner and myself went to some sort of do at the club as fairies. The euphoria of the first successful fancy dress ball resulted in the Club running a second, and a photograph of that event is still around. The third attempt was a bit of a flop, and Horner and I went in short pants and skirts and wings and wands, and won the prize since we were the only ones who had bothered. Already the post-war spirit had slipped away. But the night of the fairies is particularly memorable because it was a freezing cold night, and Horner and I had a problem on how to get to the Club in our light costumes without getting frozen extremities. So we decided to make a quick dash for it, just as we were. And so we came out of the Hostel, and down the road at a fast run, just at the same time as a chap in a car came down that dark road from Westcott in an Ashendon direction. I don't know where he'd been; maybe he'd had a skin-full in the White Swan or the Five Arrows; but the fact was that when he picked Horner and I up in his head lamps, and saw real fairies, with sparkling wings and frilly skirts and what-have-you, he went on a bit further and then suddenly went past us on locked brakes and finished up in the ditch. He still lives up on Ashendon Hill, and in the right mood will tell you how he was so pissed one night in 1948 that he saw fairies in the woods at Gypsy Bottom.

All this rather high life following on the war years seemed to do me no good at all, and I had a rotten spring as far as health was concerned in 1948. At the Whit sun I became ill, and went home to London. The upshot was eighteen months off, which included a six-month stay at Benenden, the Civil Service Sanatorium, the best holiday camp in the South. By the time I returned, in late 1949, everything had changed.

7

As long ago as June 1947 it was decided that RAE would take over Westcott, and we lost the title of The Guided Projectiles Establishment. But it was some time before the effects were felt. Bill Cook and Stubby went off, and Rae disappeared too. Wood went to Farnborough and took over amongst other things the old LOP/GAP. A/C Dann was Chief Superintendent. GO Jones and Dr Maxwell eventually took over the two Divisions of Projects and Research. When RAE first took over they didn't know a lot about what we were up to, and the result was that the Westcott staff had to do a lot of spadework. I myself was seconded to Farnborough for quite some time and spent my working middle week at Bramshot, and the beginning and ending of the week trying to fiddle my way to Farnborough and Westcott respectively. The official way was on official air transport, and that meant filling in about six forms in duplicate. Sometimes one could fiddle a ride, on an old Dominie, with broken wires and a lot of oil coming out of unexpected places; or perhaps an old Anson, which old Lou, the ex-RAF pilot use to dive-bomb at the Westcott Control Tower where he had a blonde lined up. One day at Farnborough the Anson left without me, and the chap in charge suggested I went up to the pilot's rest hut and make myself known. Someone might take pity on me he said. I eventually found a chap who was running an old Dominie to Bedford, and he offered to take we into Westcott on the way back. I gave him my forms in duplicate, all signed and stamped in the proper manner, and he put them straight on the rest hut boiler. The place he had to go to in Bedford was a small hut in the corner of a ploughed field, and the landing was a little hairy. When he came to take off again, the Dominie was pushed into a corner of the field, just to get maximum take-off distance, and a character in dirty overalls put chocks under the wheels and pulled them away once the engines were revved up. We bumped across the field towards a distant row of high elms and somehow I thought we'd never make it. And just at the last moment the man pulled the stick back and we roared off the ground and into the tops of the trees. We seemed to go through them, and when I looked back I could see all the leaves floating down to earth. Travel in those days was not very sophisticated. And then when we got to Westcott, it never seemed to inspire a lot of confidence seeing Jerry Leader and his fire engine hanging about hoping that this was going to prove his day for heroics, or Nancy sitting knitting next to her ambulance, waiting for custom. And the plane would fly up and down waiting too, for Tim Bicker and Joe Chamberlain to get all

the bloody silly sheep off the run-way. There wasn't anything very scientific about their methods. They just rode up and down in a Ministry van calling out 'Shoo, Shoo.

For some special reason there always seemed to be a thick layer of cloud over Westcott. Sometimes one could see as far as the east and west coasts, and it would be crystal clear; and there in the middle would be a round patch of cloud, right over Westcott. And sometimes it would be very low cloud, more like fog. And that meant negotiating the HTP tanks. Very early on someone managed to get hold of quite a few aluminium tanks, big ones, about fifteen feet diameter and even more in height. And these were situated right down either side of the runway, like a row of skittles, perhaps because they looked nice like that; but on a misty day the pilots used to curse them. "Full of hydrogen peroxide," old Lou used to tell me. "If we hit one we'll all be spread over Waddesdon Hill like strawberry jam." I never knew if this was true - that the tanks were full as Lou said, but negotiating them empty was hair-raising enough; coming down in the mist and then suddenly seeing these tanks flashing by either side of you.

But perhaps one of the best stories about the air travel concerned Colin Sykes. He was a poor nervous type who came to us from a Government training centre and just never made it. He seemed rather slow, and just couldn't get things into perspective. He was very much under a cloud already when he asked how he could get to Farnborough one night very quickly; and someone told him that if he was lucky and the air ferry was working he could get a seat; but he would have to ring up first and see if it was running, and then, whether there was room. Colin hadn't seen his Mum for some weeks, and she lived in Surrey somewhere, not far from Farnborough, and on a bus route. So Colin rang up the RAE, and they said the ferry wasn't running; it would only run if there was an urgent need. So Colin said there was an urgent need, he had to see his Mum. She was in hospital, he said, having had some treatment for the cauterization of her sinus vents. But the phone was a bad line, and the man the other end at RAE was convinced - he said afterwards - that Colin Sykes had said that he had the authorization of his superintendent. It came to light when Tim Bicker rang Jack Laurillard and said: "I think you ought to know - there's a bloody great Hudson on the way over from Farnborough with a crew of four, to pick up that silly bugger Sykes who wants to get back tonight to see his Mum. They had run out of small craft, so owing to the urgency of the situation they sent a Hudson." He added that they'd never had a plane as big as a Hudson in before, and they weren't even certain that they could bring it in. The sheep were quite a problem. And so Laurillard rang up the RAE, and the upshot was that there was suddenly some very urgent drawings that required immediate delivery to RAE. And the Hudson managed to land, after a few run-ins, and Colin Sykes got to see his Mum in hospital.

I hadn't been back off sick leave very long when A/C Dann left and Tom Hughes took over. At about that time the family tree of Westcott started to take shape, say about the early fifties. I can't remember a family tree prior to that date.

8

The Projects and Development Division was under GO Jones. I remember him best for the great effort he put in on me when I decided to leave. For a reason I couldn't make out I just couldn't get even an interview for promotion; it was either to do with my recent illness or the fact that I wasn't good enough. And I needed to know the truth, and no one would tell me, and so I got a job in Luton. GO James called me up to see him, since my prospective employer had written to RAE about the matter. He gave me a long talk about the advantages of being in the Civil Service, and convinced me that he might have been better employed in the Public Relations Department. He also lectured me on the ills and misfortunes of those whose lot it was to be associated with outside industry. I tried to argue with him, but he took the line of don't present me with the facts my mind is made up. As it turned out, and for reasons I have never understood, everything went right for me shortly afterwards. I got full establishment in a week, having been medically unestablished for some time; I got an interview for a job that I had applied for nearly a year ago and which I thought was dead, at Farnborough, in the second week; and very quickly I was told that I had got the job but that I would be staying at Westcott and not going to Farnborough. And shortly after all that GO Jones jacked it all in and went into industry.

Under him at the time was Les Broughton in charge of Projects, who seemed to leave ages ago, but who I still see often in Aylesbury Library on Saturdays looking remarkably fit despite his serious past illness. One project was with Freddie Ward, who married Reichart's wife after they divorced; Jack Wheeler, who has just retired and who lives at Berkhamstead; Karl Meier and J Fraunberger and Cotterill, who in those days was known as the fat boy from Peckham. A second project was with Bill Ollett, who at the time of writing is

just retiring as AD of Engineering, and a chap called Welsh. Another was under Kretchmer, Jessen and Bert Colliver and Andy Jeffs. Bert is still working, up in London somewhere; and Andy is of course still with us, although a little greyer. Hans Walder headed another group, and he was here on a visit from German only a few weeks ago. And with him was Les Purchase, who married Ruth Skinner, and Gerald Tucker, and a serving officer from the RAF. The serving officers were always a good bet for the cricket team.

Development was with Dr Merrington, who was injured severely in the site accident. One section was with Bob Hagerty, who I had many bridge sessions with, and who managed to eventually get himself a nice number in Paris; and John Humphries, and poor old Jim Maloney, who died in service; and Saunt, who is still here; and Bradfield and Percival and Simmons, all gone to greener grass. Another section was under Dave Saunders, who I met a few years ago in Woolworths in Weston-super-Mare, and who told me he had his own consultancy business; and with him was Fieldler and Muller, both of who died recently; and John Orton, who retired this year; and Dennis Ripp, who is about to; and Bill Bond and dour Arthur Hallet, who 'came up 'ard way', and Obertelli and Squibb. Then Dr Baske was with this group, as Consultant; but the only thing I ever knew him for was that house he had built in the village.

The actual Motors were looked after by Doc Errington, who always reminded me of the cartoonist Strube in looks, and who could talk a lot. He is no longer with us so shall we just say he had the gift of the gab. He had people like Dickinson, and Ken Morris, who was a good cricketer, and Laurie Livemore, who was a good footballer, and Odgers and Papa Riedel and Eric Spalding and Field Marshall Hardaker, who was i/c the Factory. Thomson was on the sites, and he is about to retire; John Taylor is still here; but Alan Shoulders, the Australian, died only a week ago as I was writing this, somewhere in Sydney. Then last but not least there was little Meg Bellingham. ("I must ask Robin first.")

Another section on motors was headed by Dr Crook, now retired, and had members like Ray Heron and Nev Morris, who have reached higher things since; and Beeson, now with Safety; and ETB Smith, who married Joan in the DO printing department; and Thomas and Atkinson; and JR Smith who went to Boscombe. I think, as another Safety man; and poor old Les Rawlings, another who died in service; and Eric Harrison, now retired.

Engineering was attached as a sort of appendage to Projects in those days, and the whole section was run by MacPherson and Laurillard and Corry. The main lights in the DO were Lupton, Stacey (SM not CM), and RA Smith, although Bill Ffoulkes was promoted at about this time to take over the new solid work. In the workshops old Len Percival took over about this time from Mick Davies, who went to Aldermaston. I remember Mick for two things: first, his mother ran the Bull and Butcher in Aylesbury, and it was a good place to eat; secondly, he had a thing about turning the old Le Blonde lathe in the shops into a copying lathe, and we worked on it and just about got all the bits made when someone went outside and bought a new one. When Len took over he had Tea Weightman and Bob Saunders with him.

In the Research Division, ran by Dr Maxwell, (or the Science Fiction Section run by Old Max), were a lot of funny people, both funny peculiar and funny ha-ha. Take MacClaughlan for instance, or Hayes-Goodsir, or Howard Williams, or poor old Maddock. The Library was in this Division, and had Marie Goyer and that man of the cough, Elphinstone. (Was he really related to the King?). Materials was with Drs Bunting and Maggs, with Doug Saw, (we had three Saws in the beginning, Rip, Band, and Tenon), and John McLean, both of whom are still here; and Mick Avery and Stribling and Bennet, and Esme Cooper from the farm opposite, who married Frank Delaney later on. Then there was another section with Geof Ramsden on the verge of retirement just now, and Graham Waite, who eventually finished up as the X-ray king before he left. Then there was another group under Drs Hull and Hall with Dr D. (Diedrichsen), and Maddock; and another with Harold Williams, and Alec Kerridge, who married Nancy the Skin and Blister from the Surgery; and then Colin Stratful, who one still sees around Aylesbury, now as bald as an egg. Perhaps the Science Fiction Group that had the most remembered staff was the lot under Glyn Forbister. Glyn smoked a pipe; some say he smoked more matches than tobacco; in fact it was quite a tradition at Christmas that his staff gave him a box of Swan Vestas in fancy wrapping. He was also known for the beard he grew, and the week that he shaved it off a large hairy mass appeared pinned to the main notice board in Building 100, with the note: "Found in the vicinity of this building. Will the owner please report to Mr HB Young." Old HB kicked up quite a fuss about it. Under Forbister was MacClaughlan; his wife Julie retired from the Grammar School only recently and they will doubtless both settle in their farm in the Dordogne in France; then there was Wally Long, who left shortly after this time and joined Aldermaston, and spent the next two years swanning around the Pacific; and Dicky Wilkins; still here, and Lamborne and Beynon, and Bill Whitehead, who was good at cricket, and Goodsir, who was good at everything. Then there was the Figures Section under Trolley (Treutler), with Howard William's and Stan Green, and Enid and Alice and Helen; then there was a small group run by Dave Clemmow and Pork Pie Huttington, supported by an

Australian, Tom Richards; and lastly, Zumpe and poor old Tom Bourdillon, of Everest fame, who died in the Alps later on.

The Administration had just been taken over by HB Young, supported by Vic Fletcher. Sections were headed by Old Mac and Young Mac (MacDonald); and Fred James and Eric Ostler and Emma Doney, and Murial Evans, who still lives in the village, and Jean Paraloe i/c Typing, who died some time ago at an early age. Then there was Colonel Pullen on Security and Dick Hull as Technical Assistant and Alec Webster on Safety. Only Alec of those three is alive today, in retirement in Dinton.

That is as the staff lined up in the early fifties, but it was probably only correct for about one week, since there was so much toing and froing. People were always off to better jobs; they always have been and always will be, since the Civil Service is no place for an ambitious type. Things just don't move quickly enough. The staff were well supported by the Germans, who on the face of it couldn't really move, but who in practice did, going to better jobs in Germany and the States and Canada. Then there were the Australians who were seconded to us for a time: Clouston and Richards and Shoulders, and Weldon, who took Doreen Ploughman back with him, and Jeff Lee, who took Mary Latham back home. Mary was Stubby's original PA. At this time in the early fifties there were just three PAs, Audrey Witchell and Monica Thompson (now Day) and Mrs Jenkins, Alice's mother in law.

And because there were a fair number, and because they were not obsessed with television as are the community today, they well and truly supported the activities of the V100 Club.

9

If one started to argue who started the cricket at Westcott there would never be an answer. The cricket club, in my opinion, provided some of the best entertainment that the Club ever gave. We were never good at cricket, but the facilities of the club bar, with billiards and table tennis to go with it, and comfortable chairs to rest in, made it a good fixture for clubs much better than ourselves. When we played Hendon, an all day match starting at eleven, they used to bring a coach load, sometimes two coach loads, of people. The matches were always good, even if we seemed to lose them all.

I always think, of the early Westcott cricket teams as the only activity at Westcott that wasn't hampered by the Industrial/Non-Industrial division. If the two words could be eliminated from the dictionary industrial relations would go as smoothly as our cricket, went in those days. I suppose the people I remember being involved in cricket at the start was John Orton, and Arthur Sainsbury, the mechanic on John's site. Later Stan Green became Chairman, and that lasted for some years. Mind you, Stan wasn't interested in cricket, and had never had a bat or ball in his hand in his life; but he would have been interested in the Ladies Sewing Circle, just so long as he could be Chairman. The stalwarts over the years were Cheshire and Morris from the Workshops, and later young Morris; and old Ron Bunyan from Administration, who one day lost 12 balls in the corn at Dinton. And John Orton and Doug Lidster and Maddock, who always seemed to turn up an hour late with a bat over his shoulder and the inevitable query: "Have you started then?" And Ken Morris and all the service chaps, all of whom seemed quite handy at the game; and Schnieder and Bill Whitehead; and all the Australians played; Clouston, who made the first hundred at Rowsham, and got blind drunk afterwards with Howard Williams, and both of them went home to William's house an Southcourt and fell in Howard's wife's prize chrysants, which were due for exhibition the following day; and Tom Richards, who only ever appeared to be awake when he had a bat in his hand; and Bob Weldon. And the memory of those days seems to be backed by eternal sunshine.

In the beginning we played on a strip rolled out up by the Bicester Gate, next to the main Aylesbury/Bicester Road. But later on when the communal site was developed a proper table was laid, professionally, together with the tennis courts. I was secretary of the cricket club at the time and I can well remember the April First joke that MacClaughlan pulled on me that year. The table had been laid in the spring and had just had its first cut; and a man came on to me from the MOW. He said he was sorry, but his tractor had got stuck in the dirt on the cricket field. Where? Well - sort of in the middle he said. Where the grass had been cut. The wheels were well down, perhaps a foot, and he was frightened to try any more in case he did some serious damage. Could I help him out? In solid panic I got onto Transport, and old MacDonald got an emergency gang out, and two tractors, and a van, and a lot of towropes. And of course when we got there, there wasn't anything at all, and we suddenly remembered the date.

Mac was good at jokes at other people's expense. It could be said that one of his April First jokes finished up in the Registry Office. Bob Weldon, seconded from the Australian Government, was pretty thick with Doreen Ploughman; and when someone got on the phone to him, supposing to be someone up in London in Australia House, Bob didn't remember the date. This man, in a very good Aussie accent, (Mac always got somebody to do his dirty work for him), said that Bob's return to Aussie-land had been put forward three months, and in fact he was due back in a week's time. The upshot was that Doreen went out and got a special licence; and when she found out that it was all a big joke, she didn't seem quite as annoyed as Bob did. In fact she couldn't see any point in losing all that money and so she got him up to the Registry Office just the same.

Then, another year, there was the piano. There was quite a good music group at that time I remember: Kretchmer on the piano, Merrington and McLean and another chap from Administration on violins, and Zumpe on the cello. And Kretcher had a big grand piano somewhere in Germany, and he was having it shipped back to England round about April First time. And on that day a man got on the phone to him and said: "Are you Mr Kretchmer?" and "Are you the Mr Kretchmer that has a grand piano at Portsmouth Docks?" and then: "I'm afraid there's been an accident. The piano was crated up and was being transferred from the hold to the quayside by crane. Well, everything was going all right when something slipped somewhere." Kretchmer said in a high voice, I was told, and getting higher: "Slipped? Somewhere? Slipped where exactly?" "Well," the man said. "You know that space between the boat and the dockside? It's usually small. But today we had to tie up standing off, and it was just big enough to take your piano. When it came away from the crane that was." Well, Kretchmer didn't wait to hear any more, but got straight m to BR Headquarters. They promised to investigate, but never rang back, doubtless thinking that they were talking to a nut case. Kretchmer was extremely angry, for some weeks.

Going back to cricket, I don't think that the Club was ever as full for a casual event as it was for some of those cricket matches. Cricket over the years attracted a lot of nice people, and the wives use to say that it was the one event at Westcott that was worthwhile. One watched the families grow up as each summer produced more games. There was a time when the Waller boys started to play for the team as teenagers; now they have their own brood. Harry Morris's boy John, who was an apprentice here, played too. And Alcock, who became a helicopter pilot, and Thomson, who became a Major in the REME. And gradually the old Brigade got too old and Orton and Williams and Bligh and Company disappeared from the scene. It all struggled a bit for some years, then died, and the square became full of weeds. There was an attempt to start it up again, but there are no longer any people left who were prepared to cut and roll, cut and roll, water and roll, all in their spare time. People are different today, ruled by The Box.

10

It must be remembered that not many people had a car to travel around in, in the fifties. The last bus from the Club left sharp at five to eleven at night, and reached Aylesbury about twenty past. There was always a walk home from the bus square in Kingsbury, and one seldom got into bed until well after midnight. Taken this all into account it is even more remarkable that there was so much interest in Amateur Dramatics. The interest was fostered initially by HB Young and Pee (GJ Peebles), who had the facilities of Technical Services at his disposal, along with people like Bicker, Chamberlain, Dean, Waller, Young, Wilson, Blythe and Lines. The fact was that the stage got put up, and all the lighting arranged and any requirement like more lights or fountains on the stage seemed no problem at all.

There was a lot of support from old Tom Hughes, the Superintendent, who insisted that he and his wife Barbara joined in with the staff on as many social events as was possible. If we were ever one short for cricket, Old Tom could always be relied upon to turn out for us if he was at home. Someone would go up to Church Farm and hammer on the door, and Barbara would say: "I'll send him out to you. It will do his figure good." Old Tom was a little bit round. And in similar vein he would insist that his wife took part in the Dramatics.

The first play was produced by HB Young, and I never saw it, so I don't remember anything about it. The second was "While the Sun Shine", which has a war setting, and was very popular in the early fifties. The story was about a young lady (The Superintendent's wife), who is love with a sailor (Staff), but who is not certain, and tries it out with an American (Staff), a Frenchman (Staff), and God knows who else, (Other Staff). I remember old Tom Hughes drifting into the hall one night, with a pint in his hand, to watch the rehearsals. And when he'd watched his wife in a clinch with first one of his staff and then the other, be

said: "Bloody Hell." and went out. Barbara Hughes was a real brick, and it was a shock to all of us when we learned that she had died early, shortly after leaving Westcott.

There were quite a few productions over the years. "The Magic Box", "The White Sheep of the Family," "Thunder Rock", "Monserrat", "To Dorothy a Son," which are only a few. Then there was a Pantomime, where there were more players than there were audience, and they packed the hall. Some of the players were outside the Club, waiting to come on, there were so many of them. I think everyone who was employed at Westcott had a part in that year's production. That was the play where Kath Peebles was the Fairy Godmother, and when she waved her magic, her skirt dropped down. It didn't matter in pantomime of course, but in some plays accidents were more serious; like finding that Goodsir didn't come on when he ought for instance. Then there was enormous fun to be had from putting a production on at the open prison at Grendon, or at the Hospital at Stone. In both places the audience seemed to see jokes where we didn't think they existed, for different reasons. In 'The White Sheep of the Family' the satire was completely lost on the audience at the prison, and the sympathy was all with the black sheep. And at Stone, people laughed at all sorts of odd remarks, and we used to spend hours afterwards working out why. In the Stone dressing rooms there was a small toilet in a cubicle in a corner, and regularly the same old lady used to knock on our door and ask to use the phone. And she would go to the toilet, and lock herself in, and make a long complicated phone call to her sister in Brighton.

There were a lot of people interested in dramatics. There was not much television about, and few cars, and as had been said it involved catching the last bus out most rehearsal nights, at five to eleven. HB Young was interested as a start, and Rex Peebles and Kathleen were there at every production. Then there was Murial Evans and Emma Doney and Cis Stewart and Joyce Carter; and Betty Straker and Laura Hayward and Mavis King; and John and Joan Hammond; and Barbara Hughes of course; and Peggy Hughes. The men were MacDonald Junior and Lambourne and Mike Baggs (Hamlet) and Ivor Cox and John Askew and an RN type called Mike who I forget, and who played the fop in 'Monserrat'; and Ray Heron who did the only-part-on-stage-all-the-time-part in 'For Dorothy a Son'. And lots of others like Harry Morris and David and Alice Jenkins, and that shocker of delicate young men - Ann Tatum. Then there were back-stage helpers like Jock Blythe, and Alec Jenkins and Nora, and many others. I remember all the Mexican uniforms in 'Monserrat', where the epaulettes were made from brass turnings, and we had to get a brass job put on the shops in a hurry because we ran out of turnings. And then there were a host of people who joined in just occasionally, like Lidster and Maddock and Ann-Marie, and Harry from MOW, and many others whose names I forget. And Julie Casmore, who, as a child almost sung in the Pantomime, and who died at an early age only this year. And of course, the inevitable Goody - Hayes-Goodsir, who was always in about six plays at once in different towns in the county, and always seemed to have his lines worked out when it was all over. In a way it was all good fun, and the parties that were held at the end of a production were always very wild and very successful. The nervous relief of having it all finished saw to that.

It was all good fun. Ray Heron once said to me that he thought that there was something ugly about amateur dramatics - that if we all looked inside ourselves we would see that we were really all living out our fantasies. That was probably true, but on the credit side there was a great sense of responsibility created by working together; similar to cricket, but much more intense. Somehow the desire to create entertainment seems to have left us, with the onset of television, and a lot of the social responsibility that went with it has gone too.

11

Pat Dunning came in 1955 and his immediate impact on the social life of Westcott is best remembered by his banning of dances in Lent. At a Club meeting Ivor Cox stood up and queried the matter. "I understand," he said, "that you have banned club dances in Lent because you are a Christian." When he was told that that was true he said: "What a pity you're not a Mohammedan - then we could all have four wives."

New superintendents were judged by the way they handled Ivory Cox. To be able to put him down at the first open meeting was a good thing, in the eyes of the staff, and brought the new man a lot of kudos. In those days bosses were old-fashioned enough to want to see the staff and be seen by them. Nowadays they come and go and most of the staff don't even know what they look like.

Somehow from this date the social life at Westcott started to decline. Cricket and football and tennis still

flourished; dramatics still went with a swing; but television and cars were coming in at a fast rate, and it was the beginning of the end for many activities. Even the characters seemed to disappear. Only a few cases turned up at Westcott at about this time. One was Fitzgerald, who rode a horse into work one morning, much to the consternation of the police at the gate, who were not certain what sort of transport category the horse came under, or how it ought to be checked in, or where it ought to be parked. Fitz sat on the grass by the gate and dozed, while the horse grazed, and the police went up to Building 100 to see HB Young for a ruling. The answer came back a bit late, and Fitz had to go home, on his horse of course.

He appeared again suddenly (Fitz, not the horse), only a few weeks ago in fact, at Westcott, looking much greyer but sounding just as scatter-brained. He came on a visit with Dermot Cummings, to see Alan Hall off on retirement.

In 1958 Westcott came away from RAE and there were no more air trips to Hampshire. The set-up at Westcott changed to roughly what it is still today, with the new Combustion and Materials Division under Dr Parker, and Solids Projects under Old Erry, and Liquids under Les Broughton. A lot of new types like Fitz and Southern and Moloney and Straker and Landon and Thomas and Ramsden and Lewis appeared in the newly created division. And Beakley and Wilson and Harris (just made AD Engineering in 1980) came into Instrumentation; and on the project side people like Henderson, Paul, Tucker, Solon, Needs, RH Williams, ETB Smith, Rickertson, Askew, 'Hamlet' Baggs, Rolfe, White, and a lot more, first made an appearance. At this time Bob Hagerty joined, best remembered for the 'P' Site flap about the noise levels on the A41, where passing motorists were supposed to be crashing into one another with blood pouring from their nose and ears. For a short while there was a chap called Robinson in charge of Liquids, before Broughton took over that was, and he had kittens over this report. There was a great surge of activity trying to solve this problem, (which in fact never existed), and there were suggestions being thrown around like confetti; one was to fill the site up with water, and a great argument arose as to what would happen to the water when a large rocket exhaust was pointed at it. Would it reduce the noise, or would it deposit all the water over Westcott Village? There were a lot of theories, and a lot of experiments, most of them conducted at home in the bath on bath-nights Treutler I remember was in terrible trouble for getting water all over the bathroom floor. Then there were other brilliant suggestions for coping with this noise level, one of them being the hanging of rubberized fibre mats in the young poplar trees that lined the site at its meeting with the main road. It was taken seriously, and we had to do pictures of what it might have looked like.

One of the recruits about this time was Jill Ruston, on the Assessment Group, and she fancied herself as a sailor. There was a great thing about Broads holidays about this time, and every spring holiday quite a few groups from Westcott went up to Wroxham or Horning. One year I went up there with a crowd and ran into three boats (one quite literally), all full of Westcott staff, and no one knew that the others were going. One I remember was Eve the Telephone. Well, at this particular time Jill Ruston asked me join a crew of six on a Leading Lady she had hired, and having had some experience of these matters; I said it depended on who the skipper was. She said she was, that she had done it before, and wanted a few strong arms to do a bit of quanting if the need arose. And so I agreed.

I don't think she'd ever handled a boat before in her life. Coming out of Horning she decided to tack down river against the wind. Now a Leading Lady is a big boat and the river at that point was pretty narrow, and she missed the first tack by about six yards. The bank that we hit was the back garden of a rather posh reed-thatched house, and at the time a rather military-looking gent in a panama hat was having tea on the lawn with some visitors. His garden, where it touched the river, was held up by vertical railway sleepers and the steel hawser under the bowsprit on the Leading Lady went into these sleepers like a wire going through cheese. The man in the Panama hat was very angry, and started jumping up and down and getting very red, but luckily Jill had her brother with her. I forget his name, but he was a curate and very persuasive. While I was digging the hawser out of the wooden sleepers with a hammer and chisel, he managed to convince the red-faced man that it was really all his own fault for having a wooden end to his garden, and in the end the man was full of apologies.

I think it was on the Broads that I had one of my biggest lessons on human behavior. At the end of that week we had a lot of money in the kitty and it was suggested that we spent the last day on an expensive slap-up lunch at the 'Swan' in Horning. So I started to turn out something respectable to wear and even started shaving, which I hadn't attempted for a week. And Jill's brother, the curate, looked at me in horror. He was dark, and a week's growth on him looked horrible. He had on a pair of dirty khaki shorts, no socks, and a pair of white plimsols that had been dredged through the mud for a week. He wore a once-white singlet and a blue air-force battle-dress top. He was over six feet and had the most impeccable

accent, having been educated at a public school. But he looked horrible. He viewed my titivations with amusement, and suggested that to titivate for a working lunch at the 'Swan' was very working class.

And so six of us, looking as scruffy and as dirty as I have described, presented ourselves in the dining room of the 'Swan' for lunch. If you know the place, you will also know that it is not exactly Joe's Cafe. The waiters in their penguin suits rushed up to escort us out, but stopped in their tracks when the Curate held up a hand of restraint and said: "A table for six my good fellow." And the good fellow took us to the table by the window, and the rest of them fussed round us all like a flock of hens. It was a great lesson for me.

By coincidence, while we were eating lunch, a small craft came by and tied up just down the river from where we were, and we recognized three characters from Solids. When they got out the last one found himself with his feet in the boat and his hands on the banks, and things looking decidedly bleak. When he eventually slipped into the water the other two fell about laughing. It turned out that they had both fallen in twice, and this third character had been crowing about it, right up to the last moment, which was when we saw him fall in too. I suppose it was all not very surprising; after all, they did work in Solids.

Round about this time Morgan Thomas worked in Solids, and he was married to the sister of Richard Burton, the actor. Actually I think Richard Burton was adopted, so his sister was not blood-related. We were always agitating to have Richard Burton down to Westcott for the day, and Morgan was always promising us, and Mrs. Thomas was always looking sideways at the suggestion. Then suddenly there were big things happening one night at the 'Dirty Duck' ('Swan') in Westcott Village; and there was a lot of noise, and a lot of things got thrown about, and a lot of other things got broken, and they said that Richard Burton was in the Village the night before. A week later Morgan Thomas left Westcott and I never managed to find out for sure. One of the locals said that there was a man in the pub with Morgan. "Shouldn't think he was a film actor," he said. "He was pig ugly. Covered all over with pock marks."

I wonder what happened to ETB Smith? He had a big thing going with Joan the Print, who worked in the Drawing Office, and old Doc Errington followed the affair with an unusual amount of interest that bordered on intrusion of privacy. He banged his pint pot on the bar of the Club one night, and said to the company "And if ETB doesn't marry that nice girl - by jingo he won't work for me any more." They were eventually married, and I think Doc Errington claimed the credit. I wonder, when I think about it, how many of the many affairs at Westcott finished up for life?

Casual affairs were many, and the most activity seemed to occur between transport drivers and canteen workers. There was a French girl working in the canteen about this time, who only had a little English, but was good at a lot of other things. And one day she presented herself to the Westcott Welfare Committee and announced: "I am with zee child." And the Welfare fussed round her, and got her leave, and her child adopted, and her job back after her confinement. And after a few months she came again, and said: "I am with zee child again." And again she got the full treatment, and her job back; but this time there was a big lecture, and a lot of threats. And in a few months after being back at work she reported: "I am giving zee notice as I am with zee child again. But you Engleesh are so kind."

There were quite a few serious romances that ended up in marriage, and forgetting (with my tongue in my cheek) the one or two that ended up in disaster, the remainder provides quite a formidable list. In fact we have now reached a state today where the sons and daughters of original staff are being employed; and the new apprentices who come into the DO for training are often introduced by someone in the know as 'he's the son of old so—and—so in the stores.' In fact today Westcott begins to look like Farnborough at some levels - a family concern.

12

At the end of the 50s decade the social life at Westcott began to decline. Staff were no longer stuck away from home with nowhere to go; the younger ones got married and bought houses. Those who had been housed in the Aylesbury Council Houses moved into their own homes, except a large number who lived on the estate at Stoke Mandeville, which was a cut above the normal council house environment. A large number stayed on and some at a much later date bought the house they occupied from the council at a very low rate. Many stayed put in the temporary aluminum bungalows that had built on Westcott Green, and these houses were pretty good for what they were. In number one lived Lionel Arthur Parry.

Parry entered the Ministry at Fort Halstead during the war in 1945, when there were so many idiots about

that one more wasn't noticed. How for instance, could someone like Parry be appreciated when there were people like Ginger Bone about? I first saw Ginger Bone on Knockholt station, waiting with the rest for a train to come in. He was surrounded by a bevy of females so it took some time to see him properly. He had immaculate ginger hair under his bowler hat; immaculate knotted tie and pin on his spotless shirt; a yellow waistcoat; well-creased trousers; a shiny brief-case in one hand together with the 'Times'; and a rolled umbrella in the other; only when one glanced at the bottom of this immaculate picture did you see that he had bare feet. No shoes or socks. Something, it was explained to me later, to do with athlete's foot. How could Parry be possible noticed with this sort of competition? But when he came to Westcott in 1946 he stuck out like a sore thumb.

Just before he left the Fort he was having a thing with his local GP about his going bald. The GP said that he wasn't going bald; that he had a slight receding hair-line; no, there was no cure - but there was a personal view, the GP said, and that was to shave the lot off. It always grew back much stronger. The GP said all this assuming that shaving it all off was out of the question; but he didn't know Parry, who went home and did just that. The next problem was that it did not grow back fast enough, and Parry read somewhere that the treatment to encourage growth was gentian violet, and so he smothered his scalp in it. His hair grew at the back quite well, but not in the front, so the next move was to allow it to grow at the back, but to shave it in the front to about half way, and to cover that front part with gentian violet: Present days punks had nothing on Parry in the 40s. With this sort of reputation, and looking slightly bald and blue, Parry turned up at Westcott.

He got married shortly afterwards, and a lot of us went up his wedding outside Manchester, and we all drunk a lot of beer at the 'Cemetery Inn', and all slept on the floor at Horner's House at Lytham St Annes.

He very quickly got himself an aluminum bungalow at Westcott, number one in fact, and very quickly got himself the reputation for being quite mad. He never had any carpets laid, because they wore out, compared with the floorboards, which lasted a long time. One room was set-aside for his Library, and this was racked all round and filled up with books. He was a bit of a bibliomaniac and collected hundreds of books, mostly technical, although I doubt if he read many. I was looking at them one day and found six quite expensive books, all about four inches thick, on the subject of AC current theory.

He went into anything in great detail. An analysis of the soil in his garden suggested a need for more humus, and somebody somewhere had said that the cheapest form of humus was old newspapers, and that the chemical in the paper was particularly good for growing legumes. And so he started to collect old newspapers, and to dig them into his garden. But after a while he left all the digging in to his wife, who couldn't keep pace with the rate that the old newspapers came in, and they accumulated. In fact they accumulated in the spare bedroom, and at one stage one couldn't get into the room at all for newspapers.

But what was dug in produced a fine crop of peas. The first year he grew about fifty rows of peas, right across his garden; and when he'd cropped them he bought about five gross of Kilner jars and bottled them all. The problem was, he told everyone, that he had the technique of growing peas worked out to a fine art, but unfortunately he now had enough bottled peas in his larder and in the coal-bin and upstairs in the bedrooms to keep him going for the rest of his life. I believe that when he eventually moved in 1972, Westcott had to supplement his moving van with a couple of local vehicles, some bottles of peas went with him.

Much of his working day was spent writing up his diary, and anyone who is reading this now had better not assume that he or she is not in Parry's Diary somewhere. The most insignificant detail relating to almost complete strangers was religiously recorded; and often an argument would ensue as to when exactly a certain event took place; Parry could always look it up and say, not only the date and place, but the exact time.

I think that Parry used to enjoy the image that he made of himself of the mad scientist. The fact that he was a draughtsman and not a scientist never seemed to stick with a lot of people. Scientists were slightly mad, dressed in a rather unusual way, and had long untidy beards - and this was Parry to a T. His first attempt at unusual dress was in the hot summer of '47, when he turned up to work in a white shirt, white tennis shorts, white plimsoles, and long white socks. It was all very logical, but it didn't conform, and the Management had quite a bit of trouble bringing him into line.

In conversation he used to bring about an impression that he was something quite unusual, and for a reason I never understood he was always asked to become involved in the Quiz Nights. These used to be set up by MacLaughlan and Hagerty, and various teams were organized, and Parry was always in them

somewhere. Unfortunately these very pleasant evenings came to an abrupt end when a row broke out on stage about the answers to the questions. Mind you, sometimes MaClaughlan and Hagerty got the questions all wrong, let alone the answers; but it was all taken in good part, and no one really worried much which team won the book tokens. But one night a big row erupted between, or with, I can't remember now, Dunning and Treutler, about the number of weeks between Easter and Whitsun, or between Easter and the beginning of Lent. I can't remember that either. All I can remember is that a lot of argument broke out and MaClaughlan and Hagerty laid down the law and said that their decision was final. Following this decision there was another question, on which was the fastest plane in the world at that time, and once again a big argument broke out. It all got smoothed over on the night, but the Quiz Night was never held again.

In fact round about this time the social life of Westcott, which was so strong in the 40s and 50a, started to die. The Dramatics almost folded up when Roger Straker was killed in an accident on the site. We were doing a review at the time, and because he was in it got cancelled. Someone had written a song, in fact a few songs, and had pinched the airs from 'Czerny's 101 Finger Exercises'; and to one of them Roger, dressed up as a girl was supposed to sing a song that - I still remember - started:

"Good little short-hand typists are we.
We always spell propellent with an 'e'

But things drifted from then onwards, and not a lot was done from then on. The weeds grew up out of the red dust of the tennis courts, after Clemow and Shoulders and Company had gone. Even the Bridge Club died, and all those inquests which nearly ended in blows were never seen again; no more nights out to two o'clock in the morning at the Conservative Club; no more white-washes by the sixth form Grammar School boys; no more lost matches to the Waddesdon Men's Club, where all the opponents called three no trumps on every-hand irrespective of, what was in it, and still managed to win the match. But the cricket still struggled on, and despite a weakening of the talent I still rate it as one of the nicest times in the Cricket Club history. A lot of new young lads played, like Thompson and Alcock and young Harvey, the son of the Police Inspector. Young Harvey suffered with asthma, and went to Switzerland eventually, but died out there. Then there was Nick Baker, from Admin, whose wife Sadie used to write children's books, and poor old Don Thomas, married to Pat Cooper. It's was a sad time, about then, since a lot of staff died young. Don and young Harvey from the cricket team, and first Phil Noakes and then Roger Straker in site accidents. Then there was a service sergeant who was killed on the perimeter crossroads, called Smith; and young Mokery who was in an overturned van running up to the canteen. And only a little while before Jack Press and Peter Phillips, and the three lad's in the big site accident. There were others, I am sure, who are not known or remembered.

Then there is the sadness of all those who one worked with, who made it up to retirement nearly, but not quite. Perhaps the first one to go like this was poor old Chalky White, who went out like a light walking down the slope from Building 100. That must have been in the middle 50s. Then there was Alec Jenkins, who did so much off-stage for the Amateur Dramatics, and who died on his allotment; and literally dozens when this subject crops up.

Fergy came up from Langhurst, and he was pretty quiet and undemonstrative, except when he'd had a couple. He only needed a couple, and he was away. Most of the year was pretty uneventful, just the odd day here and there when he had a visitor and went up to the local and came back a bit lively. But Christmas always gave us the horrors where Fergy was concerned.

I remember one particular Christmas Eve when he was impossible. He just couldn't stand up straight. And as was the custom in the days of Pat Dunning, the Director was due any moment to visit us all and wish us all the best of the season.

And so we had someone posted on the floor below, and when the Director started out on his tour, two of us more a less carried Fergy along so that he was always a room or two in front of the Director, who came up the stairs, past Fergy's office, right along the top deck, down at the end to the lower deck, and back to where he had started. And two of us took Fergy all the length of the building, down the stairs, back along to the end where we started, and up again, all the time just in front of the Director. And Fergy was shouting: "I don't want to walk down here. And why must I keep quiet? Who the f...k is going to hear me down here." And when the Director had said his piece and gone, we took Fergy back to his office and laid him on the floor and locked his door on him. And we were just congratulating ourselves when the Director appeared again suddenly and said: "I knew I'd missed someone. Old Fergy Milroy. So I went back to his office and it was locked. I hope he's all right. He's shouting something on the other side of the door."

Someone said something, like: "I think he's ill", and the Director said: "Ill or not, I must wish him a Merry Christmas." And we had to go back to Fergy's office and unlock the door. And when we opened the door Fergy had managed to stand up for a bit; he just fell round the Director's neck and said: "I'm ash pished ash a newt." And the Director said: "I do believe you are." And he sat him down and wished him a Merry Christmas and then went. Poor old Fergy he was always doing complicated calculations on his pension; but he never made it.

Still on a sad note there was Jim Woodward in Solids, who died suddenly; and Holder, who you liked or hated, who died, after following MacPherson's retirement; and Bainbridge, a relatively young man, who died on the golf course at Halton; and Ted Lyons, from Instrumentation, who drowned while on holiday in Brittany. And, looking at the artisans, like Sid Smith and Dick Hanniford and Bob Nash and Maurice Carter, some of us older ones wonder how we have managed to survive as long as we have.

13

Sometimes, on a Saturday morning in Aylesbury, you might see a very bent figure in a British warm coat, usually talking hard at someone who is trying hard to get away. This is William Hayes-Goodsir, and as a rough guess he must be now knocking on for eighty years of age. His frame may be a bit bent, but his mind, is as active as ever, and if you want to get home in time for lunch it were better if you see him before he sees you.

Goody always lived in a world of his own, and it might account for his intense interest in amateur dramatics, even if most of the time he never knew his lines. When I first knew Goody I made the usual mistake of concluding from his conversation that he had been something big in flying during the Battle of Britain. In fact he used to talk about Douglas Bader as though he knew him personally. Once I ran into Goody on top of a bus on the way home from Oxford, and when he eventually got out at Thame, one of the passengers who had listened to Goody's story of himself during the war, which he had distributed in a loud voice that could be heard all over the bus, said to me: "And what were you yourself in? Fighters or bombers?" It took me a long time to discover that Goody was in the Observer Corps.

But he was like that. Everything was larger than life. Only recently I was told about the taxi driver who claimed an acquaintanceship with Goody. "You mean the space man from Westcott," he said. "The man who knows Buzz Aldrin in the States." And he went on to tell us - not knowing that we knew Goody personally how one night in a pub in Aylesbury, Goody had showed him a silver pen with a transparent top. And in the top was a lot of dirt. And engraved on the pen was the signature of Buzz Aldrin and some other space man, with the words 'This pen contains guaranteed genuine moon dust'. And the taxi driver was convinced that Buzz Aldrin had sent the pen personally to W Hayes-Goodsir Esq., care of Westcott. The pen was probably something given away free with a copy of some kids comic.

Goody never did things by halves. It has already been shown how he seemed to love amateur dramatics, and how he was in a play at Westcott, and one at Aylesbury, and another in Long Crendon, all at the same time. The joy of belonging was only surpassed by the joy of talking about it all. Many the time has been that he had enjoyed talking about it all so much, that he would be talking about it all in the bar when he should have been on stage, and someone had to strut about making up lines, while someone else went in search of him.

In the 60s, when the dramatics more or less packed up, Goody took up roller skating. There was quite a fad about roller skating then, usually held in the old Assembly Hall in the Market Square, where in earlier days we used to admire Tondalao in the Birmingham Rep. And suddenly there was a big roller skating session, where they were going to roller skate for a long time, like fifty hours, without stopping, and get in the Guinness Book of Records. And Goody decided to train a young girl he had met up with, and get her into the record book.

The session started at six o'clock on a Friday night, and Goody was there in the stalls for moral support, with buckets of water and sponges and glucose and all the works. And round about three o'clock in the morning Mrs. Goodsir got onto the police and said her husband was missing. It seemed that he hadn't remembered to say he wouldn't be home; or perhaps he only decide to stay at the last moment. And on Saturday morning the police were still running around Aylesbury looking for him; and at four o'clock in the afternoon an alert went out over the whole of the country. And it all went into Sunday, and Mrs. Goodsir was beside herself, and the police were looking pretty pessimistic, and still there was no sign, of him. And

late on Sunday the police started stopping people in the Market Square, and asking them if they had seen a man who resembled the photograph that they carried, and suddenly some said that it looked like the man who had been in the Assembly Hall all over the weekend. And when the police went in, there was the young girl in the last stage of collapse, skating around in a dream, and occasionally falling over. And there was Goody, jumping up and down and saying: "Stand up. Skate. For the love of Mary – keep skating. Only another half an hour and you've broken the record."

And when he was approached he said: "I'm sorry. I got carried away. Is it really Sunday evening? The time goes so fast when you're involved."

I don't know what Goody did at Westcott exactly. His lab resembled something that Frankenstein might have had; lots of bits and pieces all over the place, with no spare space to put down even a cup of tea. And he was always pouring over something with a lens hood over his forehead, and fiddling with something very small in a very small container with a very small probe. And after you'd conducted your business, you might say: "What are you working on then?" And he would say, tapping his nose in a pointed way: "Secret. Very secret."

But he had an immaculate speaking voice, and it must be remembered that many of the early working films of Westcott activities had Goody's voice for the commentary.

Amateur dramatics attracted some of the best characters from Westcott, and there's probably a reason for that. Uninhibited, weird, kinky; any adjective would fit someone somewhere. 'Hamlet' Baggs fell in love with every lady who played opposite him; whether they were sixty or sixteen, married or single. The reality forced him into a brown mood and an excess of alcohol and a lot of artificial soliloquy. He was just impossible, until the next play was under way. And there was Edie Burley, who lived in Lower Green, and who was sixty, and who had lived in India [Egypt], and who had an eighty-year old mother who she brought to all the play readings. Edie was as blind as a bat, and was known as 'Mrs. MacGoo', and her mother was as deaf as a post. It didn't matter much, except that when the play reading was under way, and we were all in the middle of a most dramatic or romantic situation, Edie's mum would suddenly stand up and say: "You should see how much Edie paid for my haddock today. Prices are getting quite ridiculous."

I think Edie's mother is dead now, but Edie is still around, and if you see a mini coming towards you in Westcott High Street on the wrong side of the road you can bet your boots that it's Edie driving it. Her best story is about the day she took a couple out for a picnic, and drove into a field off the main road, and ran into a hay-stack.

Then there were the dramatic policemen, McKee and Shaw, who were always getting parts on the stage as policemen; and Doreen, a policeman's wife, who was always running herself up a new dress for the next play-reading session, with less and less material involved as the time went by; even old Doc Errington got involved in dramatics once, thinking that it was the thing to do, but after attending all the rehearsals he farked it at the last moment and when it came to the performance he suddenly had an urgent meeting (at seven o'clock at night? someone asked) at Shell Mex, and I had to take his place at the last minute and read everything from the script. Everyone in the dramatic group was, by nature of the activity, rather colourful to say the least. And also very unpredictable. I can still see Annie Tatum, who seemed to be an expert on bitter beer, reading her lines over the top of a pint pot. Rather surprisingly she married an albino chap in Aylesbury who sold wallpaper, and they went to live up north in some place near Pontypool.

Some of the parties that were held by the dramatic group, after a production, were real wild, and on one occasion I can remember being visited by the police at three o'clock in the morning over the matter of the noise. The dramatic group seemed to get a reputation as the right place to be if one was frustrated, or perhaps fed up with your partner; and because of this many suspicious husbands refused unequivocally to allow their wives to join. Perhaps having Ivor Cox around went a long way to foster this reputation. Besides his wife and children who lived a long way off, and the succession of 'housekeepers' who he recruited, mainly from the Westcott canteen staff, he turned up regularly with a different and more colourful partner. Viewing one of them one evening, Rhoda Grey said to her in her Welsh way: "Well now, you 'af to earn a li-ving now, don't you?" But later on Ivor settled down and married a girl who they said danced in the front row of the chorus at the 'Windmill' during the war. ("We never closed") She soon had him straightened out, and shortly afterwards he left Westcott and took up his side-line seriously, which was taking parties in an eight-seater coach on trips to the Continent.

Perhaps the dramatics was an outlet for all the frustrated and colourful people who worked at Westcott. Certainly by the time they had folded up, in the early 60s, most of the colourful people had either left or

gone a pale shade of grey. Perhaps they had just got older.

14.

It is difficult to understand why the 40s and 50s should seem so much more colourful than the 60s and 70s. As one gets older one unfortunately acquires position and dignity, and life is so much duller for it. It is difficult to imagine Ray Heron, as DD, wanting to rush about all over the stage again; or Nev Morris, as Superintendent, bowling his donkey drops that were gleefully dispatched over the canteen roof. Maybe it was their age or maybe the times, but those who came in the 60s seemed more sober, or more mature, or more dignified. Thinking of Burnett and Holder, Cooke, Paul, Bainbridge, Wright, Webster from Engineering, one is not exactly inspired by memories of social activities; not unless you were keen on golf, that was. Similarly the influx of people like Silman, Woodward, Harrison, Midgley, Whitcome, James, Mathews, Wood, Lacey, Baines, Blower, Pearson, Parmee, Thackray, Sherwood, Sayer, Donovan, Gould, Buswell, etc, etc, did nothing for the social side. Some took part in outside activities; Midgley played a lot of cricket, and a few of them turned up for intersection sports, having had their arms twisted. But on the whole they were a different breed in a different time. It can be seen in many ways as being a function of the Television age, or the age of the Car; it may in a way be related to the war which to many of the 60s entrants was a just a childhood memory.

One certainty is that Westcott like the rest of Society has polarized into the nearest thing to classes, i.e. into grades. In the early days people were not so grade conscious and socially they mixed much better. It was said during the war that many barriers had been broken down and that our Post-war society was going to be better for it. For a brief time it was; but many opportunities were lost, notably the post-war proposals to eliminate the words 'industrial' and 'non-industrial' from our language; the perpetuation of these terms has contributed to our present day 'them and us' attitudes. Yet strangely enough in a set-up like Westcott's the industrial 'them and us' attitude is being challenged strongly by a new interface - the interface between senior mess and other staff.

I am resolved to go as quietly as I can. No collections and presentations. Being closer to the coalface than most I have had to listen to a lot of beefing about too many collections for too many faceless people. There have been times when no one has been prepared to go round with a list and I have had to do it myself. Most people feel obliged to contribute and somehow to me it all seems all wrong.

Only a few months back something happened which put this matter right into perspective as far as I was concerned. I wandered over to Building 330 looking for Derek Sutton. I wandered down the top passage, looking through the glass at the cobwebs without seeing any sign of life. It was all very quiet and still, and it was difficult to remember that this was where the DO came to work from Building 80 in the 50s, and where Parry threw a brass door-knob at Bligh and nearly brained him, just missing him but shattering a window in the process. Now it looked like a tomb. After wandering up and down a bit a small girl appeared suddenly from nowhere with a cup of tea in one hand and a bath bun in the other, and said: "Can I help you? You're wandering about as though you are new to the place."

End.

BIG JOHN

In the early days the site works were organized mainly by Chivers (through MOW), and the notorious Chivers Camp was set up somewhere on the south side of the Westcott High Street, West of Lower Green, and near to the old gas holder site that originally fed Waddesdon Manor. Chivers Camp was a horror; everyone was supposed to sleep with their boots on and with a knife under their pillow. In fact there was a case of a stabbing one day, and the civil police were involved.

The characters from Chivers used to come to the V100 Club and make a nuisance of themselves by getting blind drunk; on one occasion there was a quiet dance going on and Jack Press and I were drinking quietly in a corner and talking, when a character came up to Jack and said "I don't like the looks of you" and threw a pint of beer over him. They were pretty rough characters.

One pretty rough character was about seven foot high and as wide as a door and he always wore a brown trilby hat with a big wide brim. Always. Inside or out. He used to come into the club and order a pint of Guinness and take his coat off and then his jacket and then his tie, to make himself comfortable. But he never took his hat off. Often the bar would be crowded with people, and there in the middle would be this big brown hat looming above all else. After some time old Tom Hughes got a bit annoyed.

"Ignorant bugger," he said. "He's always in here using our facilities and he never takes his hat off." "Why don't you choke him off?" someone asked. And Tom Hughes said: "I'll do just that."

And he took his rather round five foot six up to this big fellow, and looked up at him, and said: "Excuse me - but why do you have to lounge around in my club with your hat on? Haven't you got any manners?" And the big man said: "I'm sorry. I'm just sensitive about my head." And he had a high squeaky voice like a woman's. When he took his hat off he was as bald as a coot. Torn Hughes looked a bit embarrassed and said: "Oh - that's different. Perhaps you'd better put it back on again."

The man's name was Big John and some year's later I was told he committed suicide because he was so sensitive about his baldness. If only he'd waited thirty years the women would have been queuing up to get at him.

CHAPMAN PINCHER

Chapman Pincher worked at Fort Haistead during the war,' although I don't remember him like all the other now notorious types who worked there, like for instance Lord Beecham, and Barney Hayhoe.

Just after the war Chapman Pincher went on to the 'Daily Express', and as soon as Westcott started up it received a lot of attention. The arrival of the Germans was headline news; as was the time when the Bicester Hunt broke through the half-completed fence and finished up in 'a very secret firing site.' When Hutcheon and Spalding got moved on they too made the 'Express' headlines; it was considered at the time that someone somewhere inside the camp was making a pretty penny on a hot line to London.

One source of information was of course the 'Venturi'. This was a monthly magazine edited by MaClaughlan, which caused a lot of fuss. I remember I drew the headpiece for the front page and there was a lot of trouble about that for a start. From a copy you will see that it involved some initials, just chosen at random, and as it turned out there were about a dozen local people who had those exact initials or something like them, and they were convinced that the 'Venturi' was getting at them. Some of the stuff inside was pretty lethal and the crunch came when Chapman Pincher started to quote from it in the 'Daily Express'.

Perhaps his best effort was the Bicester Hunt story. I remember it was a front page column, divided into sections with horns and the words 'Tally-ho'. It was very rude about our security.

Some time later the 'Venturi' got stopped. I never found out how it all came about. MaClaughlan was very quiet about it all.

The publication, which took its place, was a couple of pages in the 'RAE News'. This was granted to us when RAE took over in '47. It was pretty dull compared with the 'Venturi' but the main interest was on the monthly personality. Some wag managed to scrounge pass photographs and get the low-down on someone every month. When my turn came I was surprised to learn that I was most renowned for the sausages and chips I used to provide on Home Guard duty during the war. (I had a friend in Smithfield Market who provided the dripping). The surprise was how any one ever found out.

JOKES, GERMAN, OFTEN DIRTY

At some early stage at Westcott, when the Germans had only just arrived, we were visited by some high-up government official. It was decided that the Germans would present their own exhibition of work in their own quarters. The man in charge of them at the time was a New Zealand Major, and he thought it more appropriate to the new spirit of German co-operation if he discarded his khaki uniform and presented himself on the day in mufti.

This he did, and took the visitor and his entourage around, introducing them all to the Germans and explaining the work that was being done. When he left the important visitor said to him: "Thank you so much for showing us the work of your colleagues and explaining it to us so comprehensively. And by the way - I must complement you personally on your command of the English Language."

x x x x x

When asked about his job at work by his boss, a certain German referred to the fact that it had all gone wrong by saying: " We are up the River Schieser and I want to piddle. "Rather glassy-eyed the boss said something suitable and walked off in a hurry.

When we heard about it we went into the matter rather thoroughly. It turned out that learning English from the boys wasn't as simple as it appeared, and that he was repeating one of Lidster's favourite expletives without really understanding the idiom, but knowing by context that it meant to convey a sense of being in trouble. "We are up Shit Creek without a paddle."

x x x x x

Hugo Reichert was very full of dirty jokes, all in German of course, but as soon as he had a smattering of English he quickly translated a few for our benefit. Unfortunately the simplest to translate were also the least funny, and often had connotations that were not always understood by the more unsophisticated and younger English audience: although perhaps 'unsophisticated' is the wrong word; there was something about Hugo that reminded me of the queer Germany of the 20s written about by Christopher Isherwood. Hugo's joke, which, once mastered, was told to everyone, was: "Two girls went into a greengrocer's shop with tuppence and asked for two bananas marked up at a penny each. The man said 'They are three for tuppence' and one girl said to the other: 'What fun Lottie. There'll be one to eat.'

x x x x x

Walder, being the youngest, appeared to pick up English quickest. He was particularly fond of 'What is the difference?' jokes, and one he cottoned on to very early on, and which he tried out on his colleagues, was: "What's the difference between a constituted owl and a bad hunter"

It got them all reaching for their dictionaries, the first time upon hearing the question, and for the second time when they heard the answer.

CONNIE ARCULUS

Connie Arculus came to Westcott as a tracer in late 1950 straight from the ATS. On her first day she went up to one of the draughtsmen and said: "I'm skint. Give us a fag you mean bastard." That gave a fair idea as to what to expect once she had settled in.

She wasn't paid a lot (Who is?) and obviously found it hard trying to get by, living as she was on her own without any family support. In those days increments were given out half-yearly on a weekly wage, like two-and-six for instance; or if you were lucky, three-and-six. Connie hadn't been here long enough to qualify for a farthing, and when the rises were announced and she wasn't on the list she was annoyed. She went into Laurillard's office and took his paper knife off his desk and said: "If I don't get a rise I'm going to cut your f.....g throat." Jack hadn't got an answer for that. He had only been in the Home Guard.

He spelled it all out for her and finished up by placating the situation by saying that he realized her financial predicament but couldn't do much about it. However, all this talk about wear and tear of clothes in the office, he said, might be helped by getting as much as one could from stores, like an overall, for instance. And in the end Connie put the paper knife back on the table and settled for some overalls for use in the office.

But alas, the Stores Admin came back in their usual uncompromising way and said that they were sorry, but overalls weren't issued to Tracers. The rules were quite clear. Tracers had to supply their own. Jack of course was upset, and not a little frightened, wondering how he was going to tell her.

Eventually he broke the news to her, and said that she might have almost anything, like pencils and rubbers and gold-plated board stands and best linen board covers and silver-plated instruments - but alas - no overalls. Connie was surprising calm, and after some thought said: "OK. I'll have a couple of board covers in best linen." And so Jack wrote up the necessary paper, glad to get rid of the problem, and Connie got her two board covers. She took them home that night and cut them up to a pattern and run them up on a sewing machine and came back the following morning with a couple of overalls. I told Jack that that's what was called initiative in some circles, but he wasn't laughing. He was thinking of the day they had to go back.

Connie left shortly afterwards and when her stuff went back to Stores the men said: "What the has happened to those dust covers? They're not supposed to be expendable, you know." In the end we put down 'damaged by acid' and from that day onwards overalls - if you qualify for them that is - have always been considered as an expendable item.

SOHO HAYNES

Old Ron Haynes was a cripple and walked with a stick with a big rubber end. He was below average height and rather bent and peered up at you through rather thick glasses rather like some old gnarled gnome. But for a reason I never understood he was a bit of a wow with the Women.

He was in charge of printing and photostats and dye-line and the dark room, and there always seemed to be a stream of female visitors who had some printing that wanted attention. He was extremely forthcoming over his own conquests and although everyone took it all with a pinch of salt they had to admit that he was seen out with some rather striking birds, even if they were a foot and a half taller than him.

Through the early fifties he seemed to spend an unusual amount of time in his dark room, and it was suspected that he was up to no good; perhaps developing a bit of film that wasn't official. Round about that time he was known as Soho Haynes, and I never really knew why until the time he died.

He was sick for some time and then died, and I was approached shortly afterwards by the chap who took over the printing offices. He had turned out a lot of negatives from rather secretive places and had knocked off a few prints to see what it was all about. Most of it was pretty ripe, and even today they would have got the hottest Soho book-seller about five years. The problem that intrigued us was that most of it looked, pretty local; it didn't seem like copied stuff at all. When we had stopped looking at the antics and had started looking at the faces, someone said: "I know her. She's the girl behind the desk in the ----- Bank in the Market Square."

And, so for the next few weeks the girl behind the desk in the Bank in the Market Square had a succession of inspections from quite a number of people; particularly on Saturday mornings. And some said it was her and some said it wasn't. And if it was her she didn't bat an eyelid and didn't blush; and if it wasn't she must have wondered what all the interest was about.

We hid all old Haynes property for some time; not daring to even take it over to the bonfire in case we got caught with it. If old Pinfold had found out he would have had us all shot; despite the fact that we'd caught him in a compromising position in the dark room with old. Soho Hayne's assistant, Soho-Brenda, whose husband had been in Burma for the past six years.

When we were issued with shredding machines we looked old Haynes' material out and lost it forever, bank cleric and all, if it was she.

PLESIOSAURUS

While digging some foundations on the site for some new firing bays, the contractors unearthed a lot of strange roundish stones. These were used as missiles, and some were used for a lunchtime game of cricket. Somebody told Goody, and he with no more to do went up to the site to investigate. I don't know how it went from there on but a man from the Natural History Museum came, and they did a bit more careful digging, and even held the works up for a week. And when they had the fossil out the man from the Museum declared that it was a Plesiosaurus.

That week the 'Bucks Herald carried a column that went something like this:

"Mr William Hayes-Goodsir, a prominent scientist at the Rocket Propulsion Establishment at Westcott, and a keen amateur archaeologist, has discovered the fossilized skeleton of a Plesiosaurus " It went on to say how the remains were being removed to London, and quoted Goody as saying: " as soon as I clapped eyes on that fossil, I said to myself that it was without doubt the remains of a Plesiosaurus

STATION BICYCLES

When we first came here there wasn't much in the way of transport available, and getting around the site took up quite a bit of time. Someone suggested that what we wanted was bikes, and AO Stacey reckoned there ought to be thousands of government bikes available off the old aerodromes that were being run down.

And so after a time he managed to get his hands on a load from an aerodrome somewhere in East Anglia, and a couple of big lorries went out there and picked up a lot and brought them back to Westcott. They were deposited somewhere local to the transport yard.

When the transport boys saw them they shook their heads. Wasn't much there, they said; a lot of the frames were twisted and some of the spokes in the wheels were damaged. But it was a bloody great heap of bikes all the same, all painted air force blue.

So they stripped them and took them to pieces, and put all the frames in one heap, and all the wheels in another, and so on. And they reconditioned all the parts, and shot blasted them, and painted them Ministry green. And then they assembled the bikes again, and gave them a couple of yellow stripes and a number, and lined them up in the yard. AO Stacey was quite impressed; but there wasn't a lot of bikes in the final analysis, he said. Not when one considered the bloody great heap of blue bikes that had existed in the beginning.

Well, Transport were sorry, but there had been a lot of scrap. A lot of the bike frames were bent, and had had to be scrapped. And the spokes on the wheels were damaged. They hadn't traveled well, not in that heaped-up way in the lorries. In some ways it was remarkable that there were as many as there were.

And so we had to do with less than we had expected, and they were issued rather frugally, and I remember in the DO we had just two amongst forty. But if you wanted a nice bike for your own purposes, there was by coincidence a lot being sold round about that time on the Aylesbury Market Square, at a fair price. They very very like our station bikes, but painted black, not green.

THE LAMBOURNE COUNT AND THE TREUTLER NUMBER

One evening - I can't remember when or where - a group of men, young Ray Lambourne and Treutler amongst them, were discussing the attributes of women.

Trolly couldn't understand the modern English preference for skinny women, and some of the popular models of the time, like The Shrimp were quoted as example. Trolly obviously preferred a lot of meat on the bone, and at that particular meeting he invented the Treutler number, which was simply a numerical award from one to ten, which related to the amount of meat on the bone. The Shrimp, whose picture was in a current magazine article, was rated as low as two. (There were skinnier women we were told). But ladies of more ample proportions, or as Treutler put it, of more comfortable proportions, were rated higher up the scale. One or two large ladies under consideration were given Treutler numbers like seven or eight, and since these females were pretty enormous, we dreaded to think what a Treutler number of ten would come up with.

At the same discussion that male chauvenist pig of the 1950s, Ray Lambourne, promoted a theory that a female's most desirable charms were in indirect relationship to her use in the home; such that if X represented her charm, (remember it was 1950 odd and 'sex' was still a forbidden word), and Y represented her usefulness in the house in respect of cooking and general chores, then most females were organized in such a way as to make X plus Y a constant. And if this constant was considered as ten, then Ray proposed that all females could be rated a 8/2 type for instance, better in bed than with the saucepans; or perhaps a 3/7 type, so much a home-lover that she viewed a romp with horror because it made such a dust. 5/5 women were popular, because they were capable of producing a family and looking after them with the most reasonable amount of efficiency, without making an issue of the fact.

Various available females of the times were analysed and given what was known as LT ratings. Thus a 5/5-8 was a pretty average female but a bit on the plump side for an Englishman, even if it was comforting for a German. But an 8/2-3 type was one of those skinny oversexed women who couldn't boil an egg without burning it; and a 1/9-7 was a plump home-spun type who was always reading 'Homes and Gardens', even if she did have an eternal headache.

One by one the females at Westcott were analysed and given their LT rating, and Ray Lambourne kept it all written up in a little black book. I am sure that many ladies of those times would love to know how they made out, if only for a laugh, but unfortunately when Ray Lambourne left Westcott his little black book went with him.

THE SACKING OF ARTHUR PARRY

I don't know why or how the management suddenly decided to try to sack Parry. Rumour at the time suggested that the then Director saw the Parry family at the end of the Westcott Road, all trying to hitch a lift up north on the A41. It seemed to let the side down, and since it was just one in a number of similar 'let-the-side-down' incidents, it did appear to be the last straw. Instructions were issued through the then Superintendent down to Jack Laurillard.

If someone had got up and said: "This idiot is a bloody nut-case and he's driving us all balmy", it might not have got anywhere but at least it would have been true. Instead a case was made out against his efficiency, which is always difficult at the best of times. It's bloody difficult in the best of cases. In Parry's case it was even more difficult, because as a drawer of lines and a printer of letters he was pretty good. The fact that the lines and the letters never expressed the basic requirement was more to the point; but it was going to be difficult to explain all that to a Board composed of managers who believed that draughtsmen were just drawers of lines anyway. (Let's face it - most of them did; most of them still do.)

And so a case was made and a Board was convened in London. Parry had only some five years to go and HQ were pretty critical about it all. If we had put up with him for twenty-five years another five wouldn't hurt, was their angle. In my little report that I was asked to compile I said what I thought, which was that Parry wasn't popular because he didn't conform, not because he didn't do any work. There were plenty of people around who did as little as Parry but who were accepted because they were conventional. And besides, proving that he was inefficient when he had all those pretty drawings to show, even if they were meaningless, wasn't going to be easy. At the time both Burnett and the Secretary accused me of siding with Parry and not working with them.

Long before the Board had finished the IPCS representative who was with Parry packed up and went home. I saw him a week later and he was still in a daze. "Parry not only argued against the Management," he said. "He argued against me" One of the Board members who was not too impressed with the case was old Fairfoul, who was MDO at RAE. He took the opportunity to say how bad the RPE Management had been, and how good the RAF Management would have been had they been in charge of Parry. Clutching at straws, the Board recommended that Parry be transferred to RAE. After a couple of months, old Fairfoul rang Laurillard up. He was almost in tears. He said: "Why didn't you tell me that this idiot was really as bad as he is?"

The upshot was that Parry went from office to office at RAE, and hung out to 60. When he left he got a good job as a 'contracted consultant' to a well known group who specialized on fuel systems. They were prime contractor to a certain project which was at one time supposed to be coming to Westcott, and someone with a warped sense of humour started the rumour that Parry would be in charge.

We know that he was still working at this place in early 81. He was roughly the same age as me, and when I think about it, when I go in 81, I won't be able to get a job like that.

RODNEY HOUSE

It was a strange way to begin the post-war period. But it was better than living with mum, which was the alternative for many young marrieds. Jack and Ruth Bligh lived at Rodney House for part of their married life, before they got a place at Cuddington, and eventually Dinton. Tim and Betty Bicker, before they moved, to Southcourt; Geoff Tongue and wife, before they found out that they were in the wrong place and went back to Farnborough; then there was Ken and Pat Fanthom; and other young couples who had a double room to themselves, like Arthur and Eileen Parry after they married.

In the hostel were ROAC and REME staff, both service and civilian. There was a handsome girl called Ray, who Williams fancied. But Williams wasn't available, being married, with two kids, so Ray finished up by marrying Howard's friend Peter Fethney.

The two groups didn't mix very well, the Bicester and Westcott groups, despite the odd link up like Ray and Peter. The Bicester mob were headed by Majors and Captains, who sat down to dinner in uniformed splendour and looked down their noses at the civilians from Westcott. They were always complaining about our behaviour, and the noise that we made; and I suppose if you were over forty and the war had just ended and you were looking for a quiet life some of the goings on were a bit much.

Mrs Haste doted on the uniformed Bicester staff and simply hated the Westcott hooligans, as she always called them. I think we all fell over laughing when half a dozen of the uniformed ranks were put on a charge for stealing the rations that they were supposed to dole out to the prisoners-of-war who worked in their area.

Alan Hall (Dr) lived at this hostel for ages, and I believe only moved out when he had to, when they closed the place down in the 70s.

THE WESTCOTT CAMP VERSUS WESTCOTT VILLAGE

In cricket the Camp versus the Village, as it was known locally, was always full of needle. For some reason, the village would go to almost any lengths to ensure victory, while the camp was full of people who still lived by the adage that it was honour enough to have competed. Not surprisingly, the village nearly always won. It was a great occasion, and all sorts of things happened. Pitches got rolled all night if it might have done any good; or flooded in the driest of droughts, to off-set the opposing fast bowler.

On one occasion I remember a match played on the village field, when the camp bowled out the village for 18. Catches were held and stumps up-rooted; the camp had a couple of good bowlers that year. It was almost a formality, but the village umpire was heard saying to all the locals: "Here's half-a-crown that says we'll still win." He had a lot of takers.

They had a lad on the village side who bowled left-hand round the wicket, coming into your legs well outside the wicket. At the first contact with ball on legs the entire team screamed; "Ows-that?" and the umpire said "Out." By the time we had lost six wickets for about six runs, all byes, the batsmen were merely trying to avoid contact with the ball. One lad took his guard about a foot out side the leg stump and didn't move a toe, and when the ball hit his leg he was given out. We were all out for twelve. Towards the end all the spectators were appealing at every ball, just for the fun of it.

When the umpire was collecting his half-crowns someone said: "It's worth half-a-crown just to see those bastards humiliated."

The following match, at Westcott itself, later in the season, saw the village all out for something like 25. Dennis Cheshire said: "I'll handle those buggers." And he went in first and hit five sixes in the first over. The village bowler was not very popular, and a fight broke out in the dressing rooms afterwards amongst the village players.

It was all taken terribly seriously.

The Intersection Cricket Cup provoked a lot of high feeling, and I am still feeling the vibrations from the day when, as umpire, I gave the last batsman not out from the penultimate ball of the innings, and off the last ball the batting side snicked a lucky four and won the Cup. The fielding side was the MOW, and they never forgave me. They were pretty fierce, and played pretty hard, and had old Miles pounding up to bowl at you, glaring at you with his one eye; or old Casemore, Julie's father, tweeking them a bit and trying to diddle you out.

The photograph is of the 1960 winners, the Workshops, who were able to field at least ten apprentices.

Back row: Arthur Sainsbury; Harry Morris, now retired; Geoff Curtis, who now works in RME; Peter Rose, who went to Industry; Johnnie Morris, now with BAe; Bill Parish, who works in Industry in Aylesbury; Terry Tanner, who is still at Westcott; RAS Carter. Front row: Mike Alcock, now a helicopter pilot in the Army; Ray Pittuck, whereabouts not known; Ginger Richardson, a Chief Draughtman in Industry; Ian Freeman, now at Westcott in QA; Jim Burt, a Works Manger now a Works Manager at Molins.

PICTURE

BLADEN

Bladen used to be a nice quiet ground, in the shadow of Blenheim, long before Winston was buried there and turned the place into a tourist centre. The cricket was run by a Welshman, and he and Howard Williams didn't enjoy the cricket overmuch. It was just a means of wacking up a good thirst and then quenching it and breaking into song.

One year we found that when we got to the pub after the match someone had removed the piano. "No piano?" our Welshman said. "No piano?" their Welshman echoed. "It's bloody criminal." So their Welshman took our Welshman back to where he lived, and despite the objections of the wife turned the front room upside down and wheeled the piano out and into the street and up the hill to the pub. I don't think anyone ever bothered to take it back because the same piano was in the same place next year. I think they sung 'Saucepan Bach' twenty times that year; and Howard and Ray Corry did a duet called 'Ukulele Lady' with a soft shoe shuffle, as Ray put it. The locals were very impressed, and always made a firm fixture for the following year before we left.

HENDON

This was the fixture for the cricket purist. They had a strong side, and included a few players who went on to better things, including Ron Hooker who played for Middlesex for some years. We never won, but we never let ourselves down. Someone on the other side always made a hundred, and someone like Bob Weldon, who couldn't bowl for toffee, usually got him out. I can see one glorious summers day, and this character on about a hundred and twenty, and in desperation someone asking Bob to bowl; and the first ball was a shocking long hop that the batsman despatched right out to deep mid wicket where the chestnut tree grew. And suddenly, out from the shadow of the chestnut tree where he had been dreaming away the last half hour came the figure of Williams, and the ball went right down his throat. All you need," Bob Weldon told us, "is a little bit of Australian intelligence."

The way home from Hendon was always via the 'Old Grey Mare' at Northchurch, which seemed to have never heard the words 'closing time',

THE LEE

I remember the Lee for two things. Dave Rolls as a seventeen-year-old taking eight wickets; and much later on, a young coloured lad taking eight wickets with some of the fastest bowling I'd seen at that level. He came from the West Indies, had a degree of sorts, and was working at the MOW as a labourer. He played for us a few times and then left for a job at Joe Lyons. We said good luck and hoped he'd get a better job. What was he going to do? He said the boss wasn't certain. Something would be worked out, he was told, just so long as he turned up for the Joe Lyons cricket team

DINTON

Sir James Curry, Dr Gardiner, and some well-known BBC man who was popular at the time seemed to run the cricket at Dinton. One afternoon Ron Bunyan lost twelve cricket balls in the corn in the next field. The ground was lent to the club by old Curry for a pepper-corn rent, but at the time of writing his son is asking for two thousand pounds an acre to keep the club going. Another sign of the times.

VERNEY JUNCTION

One of the strangest cricket matches that I have ever played in was the one against Verney Junction. The ground was next to the old junction station, which had a train through at six in the morning and another round about ten at night. Not surprisingly the station master had little to do; but he made up for it by producing a station that looked like something from Disney-land. All the flower beds were a mass of blooms, and at the end of the platforms the sails of six-foot high silver wind-mills went round in the breeze. Stone cats glared at you from dark corners with bright green glass eyes. In the station name support there were silver webs, eight or ten foot across, and big fat spiders as large as cushions trembled in the web centre and shone in the sun-shine. Old Buckwell from MOW was skipper that day, and he just looked at it all and twitched his nose and said: "Christ. I had a dream like this only last week,"

We changed in the waiting room on the station, and came down to look at the pitch. The cows had been taken away, but their pan-cakes were still there, hidden in the long grass. Just the square had been cut, and a wicket of sorts rolled out. The rest of the ground was just long grass and pan-cakes. They batted first, and it's the only match I've ever played in - and I've played in a lot - where I've seen 'Lost Ball' called. The grass was that long, and one was so busy trying to avoid the pan-cakes that if one took one's eye off the ball it just disappeared. The lost ball was eventually found down a rabbit-hole. We didn't do too well, and didn't take any of it seriously, and they made quite a few runs. But not enough, we concluded.

Actually a ground like this needed a special technique, which we thoroughly understood by the time we'd lost the match. The home side just stood about a yard inside the table, just in the long grass, and allowed it to do the fielding for them. By the time we'd worked out that you had to lift the ball as high as you could to get any runs, it was all too late.

But the home-made tea, in someones back-room, and the beer in the pub afterwards were superb.

SAUNDERTON

The match against Saunderton was up in the hills on a square flanked by 'The Pheasant' on one side, then the main road, then a cherry orchard, then the house of Ann Crawford the film star, who died later on of leukemia. The matches were always pretty good, particularly in late August, when everyone finished up with terrible innards after too much beer on top of too many cherries. The final problem was always getting Howard Williams out of the pub and into the coach. The easiest way was to wait until he fell over, then carry him.

FARNBOROUGH

For a few years there was an annual fixture against Torn Hughes' old section, which we used to win with embarrassing ease. But the Australian lot played it hard, and the embarrassment became intense when Tom Richards proceeded to thrash the bowling to all parts. "Retire," we suggested. "Retire how?" he asked. "Just give yourself up," we said. "Give them a catch." So he hit the next ball in the air. It went out of the ground, over the road outside, over the next field, over the adjacent railway line, and into a cornfield. No one bothered to go and look for the ball, except Tom Hughes, and he nearly got himself electrocuted on the railway. It was all very embarrassing.

FOOTBALL

I was never particularly interested in soccer, but I had played a bit and often got roped in when the team was short. I can't remember much about the matches, but two in particular stand out.

The first was the first football match here, the DO versus the rest, and must have been played in the autumn of 1946. It was played on Quainton's ground, which was as hard as iron and full of cracks. I can remember some of those who played: Lidster, Bligh, Lanbourne, Homer, Richardson, for the DO and on the other side were people like Billy Baker and Tug Wilson and Darkie Elmore. Some hadn't played football since 1939 and there were a lot of sore bones that week.

The second match was played somewhere on top of a hill (Brill?) in a biting east wind. It was so cold that Ivor Cox fainted. We took him into the coach and laid him beside the heater and got the engine going and after a bit he came to. I don't think I'd ever seen anyone pass out with cold before. Nor since. The match wasn't taken too seriously, not at first. The other side did everything but score and the spectators got more and more frustrated. Then in the last minutes the referee gave a penalty to Westcott from which they scored and won the match. The crowd were so incensed that I myself was quite scared. The referee must have been even more scared though, because they caught him and put him in the local pond, having broken the ice first.

Much later on football at Westcott proved a success, when Jack Bligh's boy John and his generation was playing. But this year there is nothing doing. It has faded just like everything else.

CINDERELLA

Perhaps this production gave the most pleasure. It was originally put on for the Children's Party. (In 1980 the Children's Party has been cancelled, after a large number of years. Another sign of the times.) But in the early fifties it was put on for the kids and then repeated later for the grown-ups. Anyone who could do anything had a part, and although the hall was packed at both performances there were often more people on stage and behind it who were taking part. Singers, actors, the Westcott Brass Band, all the little girls from Miss Chase's Dancing Academy, in fact a cast of thousands. Lots of things went wrong, but being pantomime, it didn't matter too much. The Fairy Godmother waved her magic wand and her skirt fell off. Cheshire and Morris did a Tweedledum and Tweedledee act, involving custard pie throwing. (Custard pies were made up very correctly with shaving soap). The floor was covered with a large tarpaulin for this turn, but unfortunately a bit of soap crept underneath, with disaster for one of Miss Chase's dancing girls who came on next. She just finished up on her behind, tu-tu and all. Then Cyril Darton's trombone broke in two while in the middle of a solo. There was a 'Nursery Rhyme Quartet' made up of Lidster, Cooper, Smith, and Hammond, which gave about ten encores and deserved a better fate. Julie Casemore sung songs from 'Snow White'. Lots of people dressed up and stood about on the stage during the Ball scene, just looking decorative.

I had three little girls, all about seventeen, who wanted to dress up and stand about. I had a programme of a pantomime showing a principle boy on the front, with short pants and very long legs, and a blouse that fitted where it touched. "Something like this," I said, showing them the picture. "But for Christ's sake speak to your mother's about it. Let them decide." Well - two of the girls turned up in something suitable, with little knicker-bockers cut down to just below the knee, and tied with a bow; and a blouse tied up to the chin with a nice brooch. But the third took the picture on the pantomime programme quite seriously. She had, her knickers cut tight into her groin to show off her long legs, and her blouse cut tight and low, nearly down to her navel. And when we saw her we put her in the front, up against the rose trellis. (Old Pee complained. "With her there", he said, "no one will look at his fountain", which he had been at great pains to build on stage.) At the end of the show I had a succession of chaps lining up saying to me: "Who was the bird by the trellis?" And I said: "You see her every week. She works in the Typing Pool." And they said they'd not noticed her before. Quite half a dozen there were. Bill Bond, John Orton, Andy Jeffs, I remember. And the next Monday they were all in the Typing Pool, getting unnecessary letters typed.

And one of them made a thorough job of it, and married her eventually, and raised a family, and lived happily ever after.

WESTCOTT REVIEW

Westcott did at one time aim to put on a review, but it had to be cancelled owing to bereavement. I remembered this and mentioned it on page xx, but some time afterwards I was turning out some old cupboards, with retirement in mind, and came across an old notebook which had the original words for the proposed songs written down. The music was not original, as has been said, but was adapted from Czerny's 101 finger exercises, which were quite attractive in a way, and which no one was likely to recognize in a hurry. The one about the typists, who were quite numerous in those days, went like this. The aim, I remember, was to concentrate rather heavily on two ladies who were heavily involved with two male members of the staff, and some of the points don't mean much today. The thing might have sounded better if one considers that the two typists on stage were men in drag.

Two very good typists are we,
We type the daily blurb you see,
When. . . things are in a rush
We. . . . dont promote a fuss,
We just knock it out and catch the daily post you see.
We never have a gasper lit,
We havn't time to slack a bit,
We never never never knit.
We just type
The reams and reams of tripe
You write.

We dont get any fun
When our work is done,
Men are never keen on girls who're always typing
. . . Dear. . . . Sir. . .
. . . Dear. . . . Sir. . .
With reference to yours of twenty-fifth
We can only say when
We will write again, then
We will tell you what you want to know.
Yours faithfully, et cetera.

Two very good typists are we,
We spell propellent with an e
But. . . never with an a
Des. . . pite what others say.
Sometimes though we spell diaphragn without a g.
No glamour ever comes our way
Things just go on the same each day
We fear we're here to stay.
Won't some kind
Gentleman mind
Look what he'll find. (Action with bra straps)

We dont get any fun
When our work is done,
Sometimes we would like to type a letter saying
. . . Dear. . . . Love
. . . Dear. . . . love
With reference to yours of the twenty-fifth
We can only say when
When we meet again, then
We will tell you what you ought to know
Yours lovingly, etcetera. . .

Again, we proposed a sketch that was based on the 1950 craze for sailing up the Broads in Norfolk, which so many of the staff indulged in. It was suggested that we had a tarpaulin on stage and the singers, who were all dressed in oilskins behind a prop front boat, were showered with water on the appropriate line. Gerry Leader was dead keen on this part, and was all for bringing his tenders and hoses up and making a real job of it, but common sense prevailed. I doubt if we'd have even had the buckets of water, because Pee was concerned about all the electrical equipment.

We went one year for a week on a boat.
BLIMEY HOW THE WIND DID BLOW.
We thought we would like a holiday afloat
So off to the agent at the Broad's we wrote,
To book, . . .
A boat. . . .
BLIMEY HOW THE WIND DID BLOW.

We went up the Bure and we went down the Yare.
BLIMEY HOW THE WIND DID BLOW.
We didn't intend, to go very far,
But sometimes it's funny how wrong you are
Without. . . .
A star. . . .
BLIMEY HOW THE WIND DID BLOW.

Jack's in charge and he's starting to tack
BLIMEY HOW THE WIND DID BLOW.
Watch the boom in the middle of your back,
There goes someone in an oilskin mac,
Alack, . . .
It's Jack. . . .
BLIMEY HOW THE WIND DID BLOW.

Boiled pork and beans for lunch,
BLIMEY HOW THE WIND DID BLOW
A spot of biscuits and cheese to munch,
A little bit of chocolate at the end to crunch,
Annie. . . .
Punch. . . .
BLIMEY HOW THE WIND DID BLOW.

Unfinished?

Inevitably, the liaison between transport drivers and canteen girls was given the treatment. Once again it was men in drag, dressed up as canteen girls, singing a duet called THE CANTEEN GIRLS' LAMENT. It would be better understood if it is said that at the working level at that time 'Hot Dinners' was a euphemism for the same old subject, supplied - only in a few instances of course - by the Canteen for the Transport Department. In those days there was a morning and afternoon canteen service to all parts.

Now when we both were younger,
And, worked at RPE,
We boiled the eggs and peeled the spuds
And made the bloody tea.
We cut up all the cheese rolls
And emptied all the pails.
And all the thanks we ever got
Were groans and moans and wails:

"Hot dinners please. Hot dinners please.
Hot dinners for the rest of your life."

And all the time we're working,
We're thinking of ourself.
And wondering if in twenty years
We'll still be on the shelf.
We'd put four lumps in all the tea,
Leave cakes upon the tray,
But all we'd get were glares and frowns,
And they could only say:

"Hot

We tried it up in eighty,
We tried it on the sites,
We tried it in the darkroom and
We tried it under lights.
We dressed up in the summer
To make ourselves look gay,
We stripped off in the heat-wave (Action)
But the only thing they'd say:

"Hot

We went to all the parties,
And joined the Station Club,
We filled ourselves with rum and gin,
While searching in the pub.
And then one day I met our Bette,
Who smiled a smile at me,
And said now have you ever tried,
The R P E M T ?

"Hot. . . .

Now everything is very good,
The future golden bright,
The only thing that we can say
To females in our plight
Is go down to the petrol pump
One bright and sunny day,
And stand around and wait, and then
You'll hear the voices say:

"Hot. . . .

FOREIGNERS

'Foreigners', for those who do not know, is the expression for work in progress that is not official. It might mean someone doing something for his own private car, which is of course strictly illegal; on the other hand it might refer to quasi-official work that bears some relation to the well-being of the Establishment as a whole. In this day of cuts and cash limits, even quasi-official work is right out. But I wonder sometimes what the loss is in the long term when one considers the loss of moral. It was Stubby's maxim that those who play hard work hard, and it was certainly true in his day, even if at the present time it may not be so true.

When one considers the quasi-official work done in the past the list is formidable. There was no better job than the cricket field heavy roller, a fabricated affair of 10 gauge steel that was wrapped and welded by old Wally Pitcher. Once it had the pulling gear fitted it was taken up to MOW and filled with 22 cwt of concrete. It was a very heavy roller and took about six big men on a tug-a-war rope to pull it.

Then we had the sight-screens made; large portable sight-screens that had hinged panels that folded back to avoid damage in a high wind. There are some county cricket grounds today that would give their back teeth for a couple of screens like the old Westcott screens, instead of the bits of cloth that they have to erect and which flutter in the breeze. Yet during the decline of the social side, when no one seemed interested enough to look after the stuff, the screens were never maintained, and they blew over and were damaged, and one day someone came and towed them away and probably chopped them up for scrap.

Then there were score-boards and marking out frames and templates and flags; and the marking out machine and the mowers, all of which had to be maintained; it was a compromise between those interested who were willing to devote part of their spare time, and unofficial work on the shops. Today neither would be contemplated.

Then there were football goal-posts, and all that work on the Club stage; the lighting set-up that HB Young and Pee first put in; and as has been said, when we wanted fountains on the stage for 'Cinderella', we got them somehow.

It is so different today. Not so much is given away by either the official side in terms of un-official effort, or by the staff in terms of effort outside working hours. And the country all round is poorer for the change.

Perhaps the earliest Foreigner was associated with Flying Officer Blythe's car, which in the early days, perhaps the late 40s, he was building up himself. It had a sparkling new body, all fabricated in sheet aluminium, and Blythe was working on this in strict secrecy at home in a locked garage. And on the Stock Panel someone queried the need for Stores to keep domed chromium nuts, which were very elegant but scarcely the sort of thing required for work on site. Someone tried to find out what job they were going on; they kept on coming and getting drawn out; but no one seemed to be able to check on them. But when old Blythe turned up at work with his hand-made car and its gleaming 'studded' bodywork, we all knew.

HISTORY OF THE WESTCOTT DISTRICT

As soon as the new people arrived at Westcott in 1946, those who had an interest in history immediately set about finding out something historical about the place where they found themselves. This interest was alive for some considerable time and involved various people associated with various aspects of the subject.

One of the first interests was about the Manor at Waddesdon as built by the Rothschild's. It is of course fairly new, but there was a lot of interest in its construction, and at that time the old gas holder that was built to supply the manor and which rusted away down by the corner of the village cricket field could still be seen. It was taken away later because the well was full of water and by then the local houses were being built and a lot of small children were in danger. There was also a lot of local interest in the old Brill Railway that originally ran through the Establishment. Ken Jones, a photographer, did a lot of research on this subject and unearthed a lot of photographs, and he published a book, which can still be had from Smiths or Weatherheads.

The earliest map, perhaps, of the district, is an old seventeenth century map painted on wood that still hangs in Doddershall House, and which shows everything as it was in Queen Elizabeth's time. Much of what was Westcott then existed west of the A41, for the very simple reason that in the seventeenth century the main road to London was the Shipton Lee Road that runs out of Kingswood-In-Grendon Underwood and comes out at Berryfields near to Aylesbury. On this old map the main houses in Westcott are shown in the vicinity of Lower Green, which was the main road running through from the Shipton Lee Road. The present road from the A41 through to the 'Swan' up to lower Green is relatively new. On the map is also shown 'Rosamund's Lane', the road from the Kingswood crossroads running up to Brill, which reminds one that Henry II had his palace at Brill and his bower at Kingswood where he kept the Fair Rosamund, now buried at Godstow Monastery near the 'Trout' in Oxford.

Some were interested in the old Roman road running from Aylesbury to Waddesdon, and old Bob Hagerty spent much time travelling at the side of the existing road with a long steel probe, and plotting the actual places where the Roman road existed and where the existing road deviated. Then there were those who were interested in the project for turning Brill into a Spa that Queen Victoria had in mind. She built the pump house, which is now a farm, but I am told that the machinery is still all there. In fact at that time Cheltenham became fashionable and the scheme to use Brill fell into the waste-paper basket. But there are still a few old plates around, labelled 'A present from Brill', that were made at the time, and when I first came here I bought one for a shilling at Bicester Market. Then there is some water equipment still in the Woodham ponds, huge pieces of engineering archaeology, all oak and steel that has been submerged since the middle 1800s, and one lunch-time Scott and Cooper and myself went all over the works. Actually you need to fly over Westcott to see how big 'the Woodham ponds really are.

Some of us spent a lot of time with the old records looking up the history of Westcott itself. Before the Conquest Westcott was in the Manor of Waddesdon, and belonged to Queen Edith, wife of the Confessor who was born at Islip; the manor was tenanted to a vassal called Bricic.

After the Conquest the Manor was given to Milo Crispin, and that is how it is owned in Domesday. At the death of Crispin the land was split up, the Waddesdon part going to Henry D'Oily (there are a lot of people in Kent with that name, some of who work for the Ministries and Dockyards); then in 1190 to Reginald de Courtney, and it was in his family for 350 years. Then in 1539 it was seized by Henry VIII, and granted to Edward Lamburn; then to Thomas Palmer and John Dormer; in 1622 it was purchased by Sir John Sedley for trust for Oxford University, Natural Philosophy; then it was granted to Sir John Goodwin whose name appears on the Elizabethan map; then it went to someone called Wharton; then to Marlborough; and eventually was bought by de Rothschild in the nineteenth century.

The Manors that were derived from Waddesdon at the death of Crispin were Eythrope in 1190, Warmstone in 1235, and Westcott: in 1193. Westcott Lands were themselves later divided into three. Shortly after 1193 Reginald de Courtney settled certain lands in Westcott as a dowry on his daughter Egeline's marriage to a Gilbert Basset. Gilbert went to the Holy Wars with Richard I, and when his two sons left at home both contracted leprosy, Egetine entered a convent in Normandy and gave their lands in Westcott to the Priory in Bicester. This land was referred to as a manor and was retained by the Priory until the Dissolution. (Note a field name in Westcott called Priors Close).

In 1230 Reginald's half-brother Robert de Courtney granted a small estate in Westcott to his daughter Hawise on her marriage to a John Nevil. Afterwards this estate passed to the Bohms and then to the Duke of Lancaster. It was later held by the crown from 1374 to 1544.

A small property called a manor was held in the 13th and 14th centuries by the le Mount family. In 1292 the records say that the fifth of a knights fee at Westcott was held by Richard le Mount. Later on in 1499 the land came to Richard and Thomas Nash held 80 acres at Westcott and Waddesdon.

In 1540 a John Goodwin, undoubtedly some forefather of the Sir John Goodwin who owned most the land roundabout in the seventeenth century, purchased 'Blackenhall Close' and 'Newe Close' also 'fields at Westcott in tenure of John Lathan.'

In the Waddesdon parish register for 1665 It is stated that on October 21st 'Richard Adams of Westcott feared to have died of ye sickness and buryed there'. Without doubt it was the plague and the deseased was not taken to Waddesdon for fear of it spreading. Many here remember old Farmer Adams from New House Parm in Westcott, who used to tell how he as a boy used to drive the sheep to market along a deserted A41 towards Aylesbury. Perhaps he was related.

In the time of Edward III there was a Chapel of the Holy Trinity in Weatcott somewhere. In the Episcopal Registers there is an entry in Latin that says: "Chapel of Wotesdon: Indulgence: 4 ides May 1366: Grant of Indulgence of 40 days to all who give for the maintenance of the Holy Chapel of Westcott in the parish of Wotesdon or for the sake of devotion come to it or make offerings to it."

Where this church was no one knows. Perhaps it was destroyed during the dissolution. But it is interesting to note that in a map of 1824 a note 'Chapel' is made In the field In Westcott called 'Church Ground'. One is reminded of St Peters at Quarrendon, which in our time in this district has practically disappeared, although it was very much of a ruin in 1946 when we first came here.

The local field names are Interesting and a map is atatched here. The nineteenth century historians must have had a better chance to see what was left of a village that might have been bigger and more prosperous a few centuries ago. (Note the population in 1921 was 270 but a century before it ~ almost the same, 261 in 1821, the time of the first census). The field 'Whitchurch Close' originally had a moat and fishponds and buildings. The 'Great Bury' moat enclosed half an acre. 'Farm Close' too had a moat. according to the records, but there is no sign of that name today.

In 1867 there were two cottages on the village green. They were pulled down to make way for the present church, which is relatively new. Some time before then there was a toll gate at Westcott Turn, doubtless to collect from those who wanted to get to the market at Aylesbury.

In 1765 1,100 acres of land were enclosed. The Westcott enclosure award of 1766 mentions an old Bridle Road from the Water Gate in Westcott North Field to Binwell Lane Farm and to the north west of Colwick. The Bridle Path is shown on the old Elizabethan map In Doddershall House. The main road did not run straight to Waddesdon as it does now, but on leaving Priors Close, took a bend to the north. The Bridle Road on the old map is marked 'Road to London'. It crossed the Shipton Lee road, skirted Westcott North Field, passed through Oving Hill Farm, Binwell Lane and Lower Farm, joined the main road at the Water Gate, which In the old days must have stood by the brook which divides Saltridge Field from Leys Field. Today it is represented by an old field path which starts from the same point but finds its way out to the main road at the corner of Six Acres Field, near Lyttleton Manor Farm.

Some of the old field names that are mentioned in old deeds do not appear today on any field name map, but some of them are so unusual that they are worth mentioning:

Stidall Field	Yeard in Hades	Saltwell
The VaileNeblor Furlonge	Fakes	
The Lytle Stowe	Kouchway Bushes	Gesthill
Hades in Breach	Hades Bett	Bakers Piece

Some of the old names of people also reflect the names of present Westcott inhabitants, some of whom have worked at the Establishment. Cooper is mentioned 1370, and Aubrey Cooper, a 'neighbour farmer', had both his girls Esme and Pat working here at one time. Both married Westcott employees. Frankleyne Is mentioned in 1346, and most people know the Franklins. The shop and Waddesdon; and then Oliver still plays cricket and he's over sixty. Adams, another neighbour farmer, has his name mentioned in 1292.

Lambourne in 1370, Saunders in 1342 (and even the Establishment is lousy with Sanders), Allen in 1342, and Newman in 1327. The most common name in the deeds is Delafield. William de la Field came over from Fieldstone in Ireland and settled in Westcott in 1374 where he practised law. There is another Willam in 1544, who is buried at Waddesdon, but they seemed to disappear when the property was sold up at the early part of the 17th century. There don't seem to be any Delafields left, not that we know of. But are there any still about? The family seemed to die out in 1651 when Thamas Delafield had six daughters the eldest of who married John Beck and started up the Becks, who lived at Westcott in 11/2 acres of ground bwm as Bates Field or Bakers Close. It is also interesting to note that as recently as 1725 the common fields in Westcott were called 'Delafields Land'.

In 1646 some Westcott land was conveyed from John Cripps to John Beck, and one thinks of old Farmer Cripps from Oving Hill Farm (which is just over the road and nowhere near Oving) who is still around at the time of writing, knocking it back in the 'Plough' at Kingswood, and his sister who lives in Victoria House on the main Westcott Road.

I think I first started getting interested in local history in this way when I lived for fourteen years in a seventeenth century thatched cottage in Kingswood. Kingswood was on the edge of the old Royal Forest of Berwold, and the Keeper of the Forest was housed at Borstal, where there still remains what is supposed to be his symbol of office, an old silver hunting horn. The district seems full of history, related as it was to the early kings of England. I dug up an awful lot of stuff that went to the local museum, old pots and bottles, and an old candelabrum that I found just sticking up out of the ground in Ham Woods, which was supposed to be four centuries old. The cottage had a rather bad path of slab stone round it, and when I dug them all up in order to lay them in concrete properly, I found that they were all broken grave-stones put face downwards, I never found which church they came from but on one with a 1666 date was the name 'John Major'. In Ham Woods, which was the old pheasantry of the Waddesdon Estate, there were huge holes in the ground filled up with water, like huge bomb holes. It took me some time to discover that these were the sites of large oak trees that were dug up by old Rothschild and planted on the Manor Hill, which, before he came, was just a plain grassed-over natural hill. It took a special cart pulled by eight horses to get the trees from Ham through Westcott and up to Waddesdon Hill.

In the days when each district made its own bricks the local bricks were made at Kingswood. The buildings that Farmer Terry Fowler keeps his cows in was once a thriving brick-works for Westcott and Waddesdon. The next nearest to Westcott was of course Brill, where the diggings have left all that interesting landscape near the mill. That was long before the London Brick Company started up at Woodham and Calvert.

In 1940 there still wasn't much in the way of water or sewerage and old Maurice Baylisa who worked for the MOW in the old days and who lived in Woodside Cottages at Ham Green said that it was only the local activity due to the war that brought him a tap to his cottage. Up till then he still used a dew pond in No Mans Hook for washing and even drinking, although then it had to be boiled. The local wells usually failed in a dry summer. But 1940 saw changes, and the airfield was built at Westcott. Edie Smith can remember her father taking her on a tour from outside Oxford, firstly to Oakley, and then to Westcott. There were Blenheims already at Oakley in 1940. but at Westcott they were just laying the concrete.

Then from 1940 to 1946. and then to 1980, when there is every sign that sooner or later, from the way we are going, the whole place will revert to what it was like before the war.

Doddershall House
Oscar Morton 'Waddesdon and Winchenden'
Town Records
Oxford Records

GPE WESTCOTT DRAWING OFFICE IN 1946

The size of the office at the beginning can be judged from the numbers that were recruited between May and December in 1946. A few were off in the same year but the majority stayed to make a section of over forty Staff.

	Left
Bligh J	1980
Carter RAS	1981
Cunliffe A	1947
Dobie A	1948
Fethney P	1946
Foster R	1949
Goss AG	1947
Hamilton JD	1950
Harris W	1947
Hensel E	1948
Horner RM	1948
Howse FM	1947
Johnson AW	1950
Jones RH	1947
Kilvert Alice	1948
Laurillard JF	1981
Lambourne DR	1950
Lewin IH	1948
Lidster DL (last of the Mohicans)	
Lupine Patricia	1947
Lupton FG	1972
Marsh Jeanette	1947
M'Clymont J	1940
McKenney RJ	1980
McKim	1954
Mason FJJ	1947
Northern J	1947
Palmer CA	1948
Pantall AR	1947
Phillips PJ	1948
Press JR	1948
Rawlings L	1947
Richardson RC	1947
Shaw HL	1949
Smith LJ	1947
Stacey SM	1968
Sykes CN	1948
Tanner RW	1967
Tucker WC	1947

It could be said that only eight of this number stayed on to make their career at Westcott. Most of them had a quick look and went off in a hurry. Obviously civil servants weren't as feather-bedded as today's critics care to make out.

Plus printroom and clerical staff.

WESTCOTT RECRUITMENT TO THE DO SINCE 1947

		Left	
	1947 Arculus Connie		1947
	Ateyo JR	ROF Birtley	
	Adams RJ	1948	
	Childs F	1969	
	Caves J	1947	
	Fantom KM	1949	
	Fantom Patricia		1949
	Foulkes W	1977 (Langhurst)	
	Hammond SJ	1958	
	Haines Soho	1955	
	Harding W	1948	
	Howarth MS	1948	
	Jenkins Alice	1955	
	Osbourne F	1950	
	Payne A	1947	
	Payne B		
	Payne CN	1947	
	Sawney G	1948	
	Smith JR	Aldermaston	
	Smith TA	Risley	
	Smith RA	1955	
1948	Chambers PG	London	
1950	Last C	1955	
	Milroy FA	1975	
1952	Stranks P	1953	
1953	Manning DV	1977 (Wycombe SC)	
1954	Cooper N	1973	
	Smout P	1954	
	Cooper Patricia		1957
1955	Scott NC		
	Shaw C		1960
	Williams A	Burfield	
	Wilton F	1959	
1956	Hayward M	1958	
	Sanders K	1957	
	Seaford J	1957	
1957	Warner PAG	1968	
1958	Horton JJ	Bosconbe Down	
1959	Fagg B		1961
	Fagg TK	1965	
	Harvey J	1965	
	Jarvis RE	London	
	Metcalf I	1960	
	Norman DR		
	Pearce A	1986?	
	Rolls DW		
1960	Brown N	1965	
	Burt J	1964	
	Edgerton D	1964	

Peters G	1960	
1978 Brown WA		
Chorlton C	1963	
	Easton D	1964
	Grey G	1964
	Hare RA	1965
	Keedle RW	1965
	Latter RB	1965
	Lloyds JA	
	Mc Turk ARM	1968
	Rolfe DH	1964
1979 Atkins BA		
Alcock MR	1964	
Poole HR		
	Walker C	1963
1963	Green C	1963
	Perret C	1964
1964	Baldwin RW	1968
	Fantham R	1965
	Javes IB	1966
	Page FJ	1977
	Ridley R	1965
	Robinson DJD	1965
1978 Dennis JE		
Saunders CT		
	Shackshaft K	
	Horder K	
1966	Orchard JL	1967
	Treganna KJ	1971
1967	Edwards WF	1967
	Henley Maggy	1975
	Hopkins J	
	Ibbotson PT	1968
	King BEH	1977
	Marsh SD	
	Martin BL	
	Peer Phyllis	1968
1968	Copcutt P	1969
	Peverill G	1969
1969	Bradshaw GP	Technical Cost
	Bunce P	
	Curtis DS	1970
	Javes DF	1974
	Marsh Anne	1977
	Rowles GB	
	Sanderman MT	1970
	Stabler BI	
1978 Brewster G		
Alexander PL	1973	
1979 Fairbrother CJ		
Hartnell GP	1977	
Berryman Kathy	1971	

	1974	Grabowski BS Richards AE Hurst PN Taylor MS	Shrivenham- Waltham Abbey 1978 1978
1978		Anderson L	
		Baker	1978
	1979	Bryant C	
		Rickarts NH	1976
	1976	Saggers B Bosher PJ	1978 QA/PERME
	1977	Noone MP Baker AJ	1978 1979
1978		Saville I	
		Hunt A	1980
	1978	Pendry S	
1979		Perman MHJ	
		Hopcroft KL:	1979
1980		Gentry MTH	
		Godber A	
		Hammond JC	
	1989	Way MJ	Transferred to Site Services
	1981	?	

[To the end of 1980] There have been 52 Westcott trained apprentices recruited into the Westcott Design Office since 1958. On average they have stayed about 4 years. If you take away Rolls (22 years), Brown (20), Poole (19), and Saunders (16) the remaining 48 stayed on average 3 years. 21 stayed less than 1 year, and 9 between 2 and 1 years. So much for the feather beds.

The ones who stay on are the old soldiers who had their brains addled in the last war. Carter, Laurillard, Lupton, Foulkes, Bligh, Lidster, and Scott have serice at Westcott only that averages out at over 30 years each.

THE DRAMA SET AND SOME OF THEIR PRODUCTIONS

Those involved at various times:

John	Askew
Sylvia	Atkins
Hamlet	Baggs
Jock	Blyth
Nick	Carter
Joyce	Carter
Julie	Casemore
Dennis	Cheshire
Norman	Cooper
Ivor	Cox
Emma	Doney
Doc	Errington
Murial	Evans
Enid	France
Bill	Goodsir
John	Hammond
Joan	Hammond
Laura	Hayward
Ray	Heron
Barbara	Hughes
Peggy	Hughes
Alec	Jenkins
Nora	Jenkins
Dave	Jenkins
Alice	Jenkins
Mick	Jones RN
Mavis	King
Ray	Lambourne
Peggy	Laurillard
Doug	Lidster
Wally	Long
Ken	MacDonald
Pete	Maddock
Margrit	Maddock
John	McKee
Doris	Middleton
Harry	Mitchel
Harry	Morris
Arthur	Parry
Jean	Parsloe
Rex	Peebles
Kathleen	Peebles
John	Peebles
Cuddles	Scott
Alan	Shaw
Cis	Stewart
Roger	Straker
Betty	Straker
Ann	Tatum
H B	Young

Plays Produced

The First Mrs Smith
 White The Sun Shines
 The Magic Box
 Cinderella
 The Public Convenience
 Monserrat
 Bonadventure
 Thunder Rock
 Anastasia
 The White Sheep Of The Family
 Arsenic And Old Lace
 To Dorothy A Son
 Time And The Conways
 Goodnight And Goodbye
 There's No Problem