

Chapter 32

Silverstone

Once more Betty and John travelled to Chatham. She found someone who was letting a furnished Council House so we took it. This was 137, Palmerston Road where a classic conversation between two small boys was heard: 1st small boy: "Your Dad is a Hofficer", John: "No he's not, he's a Hairman". I was driven to Silverstone and asked to take over as Technical Adjutant reporting directly to the Wing Commander who was excellent and with whom I got on fine. Working with me was a LAC whose father owned a garage in London so I was able to get a little extra petrol for the Morris. I once again took up hockey which worked out well as the Squadron Leader who ran it lived in a cottage almost on the airfield. When he was posted overseas, his wife agreed to take us as lodgers if I would scrounge scraps from the Mess kitchen every day for her dog. This I was able to do and so we moved into "The Old Kennels", Whittlebury. By now VE day had come and gone and work was more relaxed, although, with Japan still fighting, training went on. Not for long however, 15 August 1945 arrived and with it, VJ day. The war was over.



**137 Palmerston Road,
Chatham**

For the short time that I was there, Silverstone was a good place to be and we had lots of fun in the Mess. Two people in particular entertained us. They were Horace Finch, a well-known organist and Ken Frith, a pianist. Both had played on BBC Radio and were real professionals. One would drift into the Mess, buy a drink and then would play, say, a popular classic; the other, in opposition would play another. Likewise with Jazz tunes and love songs etc. By this time, a real party was going which was enjoyed by all.

It was about this time that Betty and John came up. The local town was Towcester. I still had the Morris 12 and we met one or two friends. One was Jim Smith who taught me logarithms all those years ago at Halton. We met his wife and socialised generally with them. There was also the husband of a friend of Betty's from Chatham. He was actually a clergyman who had volunteered as an Air Gunner. Fortunately he had survived. We went dancing with him and his wife in Chatham where both girls wore roses in their hair and looked very attractive. The time had come to think about the future. I, along with

others, had applied for a permanent commission but could not get any sort of answer. Betty had gone through a lot during the war, what with the constant moves, V1s, V2s and bombing, so my thoughts turned to starting a new career as a civilian. Among other firms, AV Roe at Yeadon was advertising for people so I arranged an interview. Before I went, I had a talk with the Adjutant who, in civilian life, was a businessman who coincidentally owned Clacton Pier which had been cut in half to stop the Germans from using it as an entry point. I asked him what minimum wage I should accept. He told me £7 was the absolute minimum. AV Roe offered me a job at £5 a week as a Progress Chaser which I turned down. Meanwhile, I had told the Wing Commander what I was doing. I also wrote to AV Roe pointing out my qualifications and asked for a job in a design/drawing office. I got another interview and was offered a job in the Jig and Tool design office at £7/3/6d. While this was going on, the Wing Commander and a Group Captain from Command HQ were putting pressure on me to withdraw my application to leave. As they could not give me any assurances, I refused. On 3rd December 1945 we trailed down to Uxbridge for me to be officially released.

On our return to Silverstone, I turned up in the Mess wearing my new suit to say cheerio and have a last drink with the sort of people who, until then, had been my life. It was sad but, as it turned out in the end, it was for the best. Fate is a funny thing.

Just before I was released, my Dad, seriously ill, was taken into the hospital in Canterbury and we were able to visit him. I think that he was proud to see me in uniform and he admired Betty's new lambs-wool coat.

Odd memories

- At Silverstone, Being fined 10/- for wrongful parking in Northampton.
- At Silverstone, collecting three WAAFs and three Airmen on the way back from a social evening with Betty and somehow getting them all in the back of the Morris 12. Much laughter.
- Whilst at Husbands Bosworth, trying to be friendly with the butler with whom we were living by calling him by his Christian Name, George; I found out that this was *infra dig*. One called boot boys by their Christian Names, not butlers!
- Waiting in the Market Harborough bus at the end of Lord Paget's temporary house in the village for their Rolls Royce to drive up to the gate and discharge Lady Paget so that she could get on the bus!