

Michael Blakstad, former owner of The Tudor House, writes about the Woodfields

We first met the Woodfields in 1981, not long after we had moved into the Tudor House. Answering a knock on the door, we met a youngish couple who asked if they could show her parents around the house. The couple were Margaret & Tom Shepherd, and it emerged that her parents Ralph & Ruth Woodfield had lodged there, with their seven children, during World War II and afterwards. (The house then belonged to Hilda Seabridge, who lived in Tunbridge Wells. The shop, now a general provisions store, was run by Mr Hobbs, who lived in Cross House. He was later succeeded by Mr Brennan.)

Mr Woodfield had taken up a teaching job at Churchers College. The parents had first been evacuated from Dulwich to Guildford – although the boys, who went to Alleyns School, had been separately evacuated to the North of England. They were given the all-clear to return to Dulwich, when one night the flats opposite had received a direct hit and suffered fatalities, and their own house had lost its roof, windows and doors. They moved to East Meon in 1943. Olivia (now Tottle) was eighteen months old. They stayed until Ralph's retirement in 1960.

The boys were Philip, Alan, who lives in London, Gilbert, who was killed in the War, Owen, who now lives in Rochester, and Peter, now in California,.

The main entrance was a front door on Workhouse Lane, where the kitchen window now is. There was a door to the house next to the shop, at which people sometimes knocked when the shop was closed. The 'loft' was not easily accessible, up a steep spiral staircase. The stairs to the first floor were off to the right in the hallway entrance.

There was only an outside WC. It was cleared twice a week by the night soil man ... known only as 'them'. "Have they been?"

They kept chickens and pigs (the latter, one at a time – Dick 1, Dick 2, then Sue.) The piglets were provided by Wyatt, the butcher, and then disposed of by Wyatt. Olivia remembers coming out of church one Sunday to hear the screams of Sue She thinks they were only allowed to keep part of each pig, the rest going as other people's rations.

The Institute

Olivia remembers going to the Institute for magic lantern shows. The vicar, Dr Budden, often gave these shows. She thinks she remembers that there were films which we know were shown by 'The New Forest Film Company'. There were whist drives which the children did not attend.

Village shops

Olivia has a remarkable memory and took us on a 'tour' of the shops she could remember. Bill the Baker was then operating in the Square, next to the Institute. In what is now Corner Cottage, Mr Pink ran his sweet shop. (Left, below; later, Jenny Wheeler's dad Mr Whitt ran a butcher's shop from here.) Mr Smith ran the Post Office and General Stores, opposite The George. (Below, centre) In what is now Bell Cottage there was a cobbler. Next to the White House, Parsons was still another main general store, half of which was a wine shop

The Forge was functioning at Frogmore Lane, and Mr Wyatt ran his butcher's shop at Riverside, from a flap which opened to form his counter. Herbie Goddard then ran his garage from the courtyard next to Glenthorne House – there was no shop in the house at this point though the battery for the radio was charged there. She remembers a fishmonger, Mr. Roberts, on the corner of The Cross, opposite Vicarage Lodge. The fishmonger would deliver twice a week. The police house,

then occupied by Dennis Thorne, was further down Church Street. P.C. Thorne had a part of the garden of the Tudor House as his allotment, and it was always kept in very good order.

Footnote

Olivia Woodfield, as she then was, was very friendly with Hazel Goddard, now Pamplin. They are both in the photo of 'PC 1949' coaching the schoolchildren in crossing the road ([click here](#)). Olivia was the first pupil at East Meon National School to pass the eleven plus.