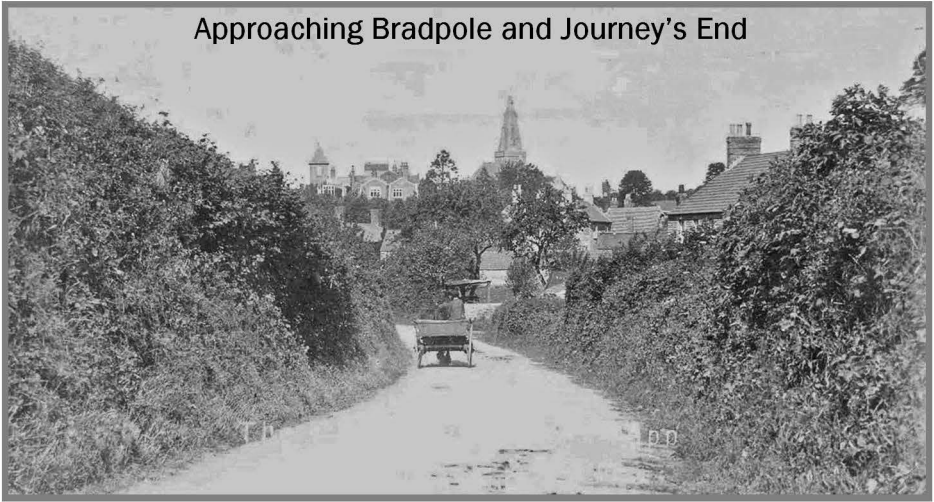


## Approaching Bradpole and Journey's End



Having travelled the length of Loders through Uploders, Yondover and Lower Loders we reach Hole House Farm (above right) and the sight of the Bradpole Church spire. Just around the corner is the Mangerton River and Bradpole. The carrier in this picture, c1905, would have shared the same journey many, many times on his trips to Bridport and around.



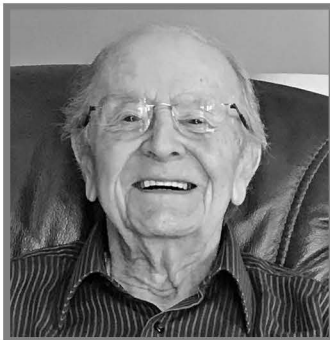
This bridge carries the road from Loders over the Mangerton River to Bradpole and places beyond. The parish boundary follows the centre of the river. Bradpole is on the left, Loders on the right. To the inhabitants of Loders it's Bradpole Bridge but John Giles-Townsend, a resident of Bradpole for over 80 years, told me that to the people of Bradpole it's Loders Bridge. Depending on which side of the river you live either name makes sense but to me and the people of Loders it's Bradpole Bridge; final word and no argument, and its where our journey ends.

## Addendum

### The Memories of Lionel Roberts, a Wartime Evacuee



When the first printing of this book was listed on eBay, the first online purchaser was Will Roberts whose father, Lionel had spent two years as a wartime evacuee living in Loders. Will put me in touch with Lionel, then aged 92. We had a number of lively and interesting



telephone conversations. He had vivid memories of his time spent in the village and recounted a number of fascinating and amusing stories, some of which are repeated here. I hope you enjoy them as much as I have! (Above left) Lionel in his Bridport Grammar School uniform and (right) in his 90s.

During the Second World War, Operation Pied Piper moved more than three million children away from cities in the UK and the threat of bombing and invasion. They were not forced to go, they had the choice. Twelve year old Lionel Roberts from Southampton, encouraged by Laurie Carter, his 14 year old friend, accepted the offer on the understanding that they would stick together. On the 28 June 1940 they, with other Southampton evacuees, joined the train at Southampton Central on a journey to West Dorset. At Dorchester South station they transferred to a coach which took them towards Bridport and in the late afternoon it arrived at Askers Roadhouse. (below). The evacuees were given the option of Loders or Whitchurch Canonichorum. Those destined for Loders, including Lionel and Laurie, got off the coach carrying their belongings and filed into the Roadhouse. They had no idea where they were going, with whom or for

Askers Roadhouse



how long. Once inside they were confronted by a crowd of strangers. One by one the children were allocated to a family. They then set off on foot with their hosts to their new homes. It was a daunting experience, walking away with complete

strangers to a place very different from the city they had left earlier that day. Laurie, being two years older and more street-wise than Lionel, whispered, "Wait, don't be too eager." so they moved towards the back of the queue.

This proved to be a good move. They got out and walked inside, "Right, go for it!" instructed Laurie. They did and, as a result, found themselves in the back of an Austin 12, being driven by Mr Adrian Lesser towards Matravers Farm House in Uploders, their new home. Mrs Joan Lesser welcomed them, introduced them to the servants and showed them around the house. She explained that they would live and eat in the servants' area and use the outside lavatory (the bucket variety) and not the flush toilet indoors. The next day she took them around the farm,



pointing out fields that were mentioned in the Domesday Book and a whirlpool in the river where a woman had drowned - a warning to the boys, no doubt!

Sidney Brown (left) was the dairyman at Matravers. Lionel remembered the TT (tuberculin-tested) milk from the Short-horn cattle as being creamy and wonderful, like no other he had ever tasted! Thomas Hyde was the gardener and Ada and Iranja, two Jewish girls from Czechoslovakia, were the cook and domestic servant. The girls spoke no English but were always laughing and smiling. The boys firmly believed that the influence and connections of Mr Lesser, also Jewish, had enabled the girls to slip out of Czecho-slovakia to escape the fate suffered by millions of Jews in Europe at that time.



With the threat of a German invasion, persons of 'alien nationality' were moved away from the southern strip of England. At 6.30 one morning there was a knock at the front door and Ada and Iranja were taken away to an internment camp, probably on the Isle of Man. Those at Matravers were sad to see them go but knew that they would be in safe hands.

(Right) Beatrice Roberts, Lionel's mother, with Dora, (Mr Lesser's sister's maid from London) Ada, Iranja and the dog, Toby. Each week Lionel's mother sent him a 1/- postal order (one shilling = 5 pence) which he cashed at Mrs Budden's Post Office in Lodors. Sweet rationing started on 26 July 1942, so for most of his time in Lodors he was able to spend some of his money on sweets in Granny Hyde's shop, just down the road in Uploders.







After Ada and Irana were taken away, they were replaced by local girls (from the left) Lizzie Rogers and Phyllis Thomas (Bunnell) who became cook and housemaid, respectively. On the right is Rosemary Hyde (Head), daughter of the gardener, Thomas Hyde, and pupil at Bridport Grammar School.

Lionel's mother visited him several times, making day trips in a charabanc laid on especially to visit evacuees in West Dorset. This was always on a Sunday as the parents worked on all other days. The charabanc stopped at Vinney Cross which was handy for Mrs Roberts as it was just a short walk to and from Matravers.

On 1 July 1940 Lionel started at Lodgers School, on 4 October 1940 he transferred to Bridport Grammar School. At holiday

times he returned to Southampton on a Royal Blue Coach. Once, when at home, he received a letter from Mrs Lesser saying that one of the servants had an infectious disease so, on his return, he would go to Herbert Bartlett at Croads Farm. This he did then four days later, infection over, he returned to Matravers.

Important and 'posh' guests were entertained at Matravers. One person remembered by Lionel was Leslie Hore-Belisha, the Minister of Transport who, in 1934, was responsible for adding beacons to pedestrian crossings. They were immediately referred to as 'Belisha beacons', as they still are today.

Occasionally, there were reminders that the Country was at war. Soon after they arrived at Matravers, the boys and Rosemary Hyde were having a picnic on Shipton Hill. Suddenly they heard a siren and the sky was filled with British and German planes dog-fighting overhead. It was the beginning of the Battle of Britain.

One night, the peace was disturbed by a series of loud bangs! A German aircraft fleeing from pursuing British fighters had dumped its bombs around Lower Lodgers and Yondover. Luckily, over the fields so thankfully, there were no casualties or damage other than a few craters in the fields but it was a reminder of what was happening elsewhere.

There were too few men employed at Matravers to cope with the haymaking, so casual labour was employed and in June of 1941 the boys helped too. The hay was gathered and brought from the fields in horse-drawn wagons and pitchforked on to the stack. Pitchforks flew in all directions! The boys' task was to stamp around on the loose hay on the growing rick to compact it and to remove as much air as possible. Sinking up to their thighs, it was hard work so, after a while feeling weary, they slipped away to rest in the shade under a nearby wagon. By a happy coincidence, a flagon of cider, refreshment for the workers, was stored under the

wagon. The temptation was too great. They took a sip, then a swig, then another and became just that bit merry! There was a shout from one of the men, "Look at they lads. They be drunk!" The men laughed. The boys crept out sheepishly and then, slightly unsteadily, made their way back to their work, grinning all the way!

Behind the farm, a small field sloped down to the sheep-dip on the River Asker. After the Dunkirk evacuation this was taken over by the Army - an officer, a sergeant and about 40 other ranks. They manned two searchlights and two Lewis guns which, the boys thought, would have been of little or no use against enemy aircraft. As well as carrying out their duties, the soldiers were keen to help out whenever they could, which was handy. The farm extended southwards as far as the A35. In a field alongside the A35 the cows had created a boggy area around a leaky water-trough where a cart-horse became stuck in the mud, the more he struggled, the deeper in he went. Mr Lesser spoke to the officer and a dozen or more soldiers marched up the hill with ropes. After much shouting, huffing and puffing, the poor animal was extracted but was too exhausted to stand. The vet was called and put the horse out of his misery. Transport was ordered to remove the animal, it arrived about two hours later. Mr Lesser commented that, before the war, the body would have been left lying in the field for a week or more before being taken to the knacker's yard. With war time rationing it was very likely this one ended up on local dinner plates with folk probably not knowing, or maybe not caring, what the meat was!

Prior to this unfortunate incident the horse, a docile creature, spent most of its time in the same field and was used only occasionally to pull a wagon of hay. One day Mr Lesser asked the boys to go and fetch it. They caught the horse with no problem, and were leading it along the road when Laurie suggested that Lionel rode it back to the farm. Laurie gave him a leg-up, it seemed a long way down and the horse's bare back was so wide that Lionel felt he was doing the splits! Laurie, who was a bit of a rascal, gave the horse a whack and off it went with Lionel clinging to its mane and bouncing up and down on its hard backbone. Luckily the animal was old and quickly came to a halt. Lionel slid down and, as he described it, had a 'serious altercation' with his mate over his stupid and not funny prank!

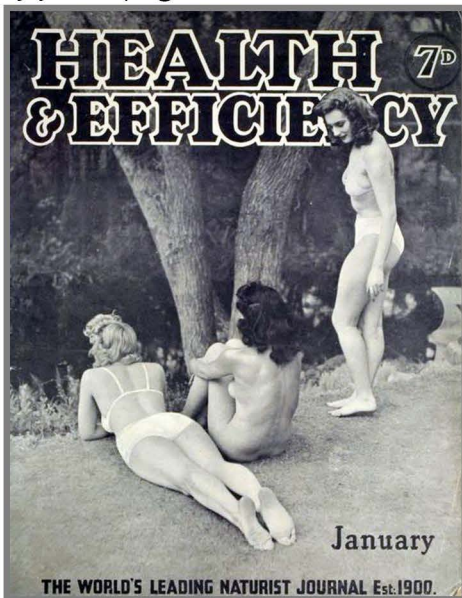
(Right) Joan Lesser with Lionel and Laurie. One week-end, she asked the boys if they would like to see the





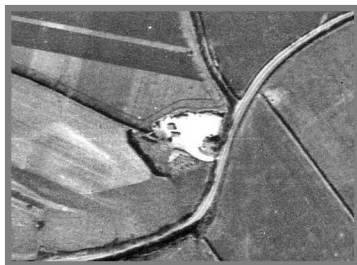
film starring Deanna Durbin, which was showing at the Palace Cinema in South Street which was much more up-market than the Lyric in Barrack Street! "Yes, Please!" they responded. They very much enjoyed the singing and dancing of the pretty young American (left) and she wasn't much older than them. Mrs Lesser was not impressed. "Wooden singing and wooden voice" was her verdict. The boys silently disagreed but did not dare argue!

Lionel and Laurie enjoyed helping Mrs Lesser collect waste paper for the War Effort. The paper was taken to the Parish Room, next to the Crown Inn, for collection by the Council. Sound familiar? On one collection, Mrs Lesser got grease on her fingers and asked Laurie for a sheet of paper to wipe it off. The boys kept an eye open for any interesting magazines to read later. At that moment, a copy of the naturist's magazine, *Health & Efficiency*, (right) was in Laurie's hand. With some trepidation he ripped out a page and handed it to Mrs Lesser. To their relief she didn't seem to notice what it was, or maybe she did and chose to ignore it. The boys wondered who in the village had bought the magazine and, no doubt, kept a look-out for more copies on future collections!



After about a year, Laurie returned to Southampton, leaving Lionel as the only evacuee at Matravers. He was very well looked after and enjoyed his life-style, finding Mr and Mrs Lesser the kindest of people.

He became good friends with Philip Baker who lived at Lockshill (now Holly Cottage). The Stoney Head quarry, at the south end of Knowl Lane (the white area on the 1947 aerial photograph, right), was like a magnet to young boys, including Philip and Lionel. Visits were made when the quarrymen were not working. Access was easy; open the gate off the A35 and walk in which they did. On one occasion they found a badger lying on the ground. They gave it a couple of prods, it didn't move. They assumed it was dead but 'to make sure' took it home to Philip's father, Harry Baker. He confirmed that it was indeed dead and added that a badger's hide was worth 4/6 (four shillings and sixpence = 22.5 pence). He hung it up by its back legs, slit it open and skinned it. A few days later the lads were delighted to be handed two shillings and threepence each by Mr Baker.





Lionel attended Bridport Grammar School. He recalls some of the teachers, Mr Maggs, Mrs Tighe and Mr Telford. (They were still there in 1955 when I was a pupil.) Also fellow pupils Phil Eveleigh, Dick Spiller, Judy Parfit, Joyce Cary, Gloria Stewart, Anne Gillham, Rex Williams and Pamela and Liz Gluning.

Rather than taking a packed-lunch to school, Mrs Lesser gave him 2/3 (two shillings and threepence = 11 pence) to buy a meal in a café in the town. This he did but felt very uncomfortable and out of place being the only schoolboy dining with the local business and professional men. He mentioned this to his schoolmates and they invited him to join them at the fish-bar. He did, beans on toast for 10d (=4 pence) or fish and chips but he became concerned that his health would suffer for not eating properly so he bought cod-liver oil and vitamins to supplement his diet.

(Right) Lionel and Rosemary Hyde (Head) who were both pupils at Bridport Grammar School. In this picture, taken by Lionel's mother, they are in their school clothes but have exchanged their school hat and cap.



The Lesser's niece visited Matravers occasionally. If she happened to be there on a Sunday, when the servants had the day off, she and Mrs Lesser would join Lionel at the kitchen table to play cards. It was also an opportunity to compare the general knowledge of the young lady from a well known public school with that of the boy from Bridport Grammar School. Lionel was confident there was not much to choose between them! Interestingly, when the Lessers were away, the servants invited members of their families to Matravers and entertained them - but only in the kitchen!

In 1942, because of Mr Lesser's ill-health, Lionel moved in with Harry and Olive Legg (right) at 41 Loders (see next page) Harry and his brother Felix were thatchers, two of the few in the area. They were always busy and worked long hours, including at the Pitt-Rivers Estate in Burton Bradstock. They cycled around with their tools on the bikes and a straw 'nammet' bag on their backs. Lionel was equally well looked after by Mr and Mrs Legg, even without the luxury of servants!





41 Lodgers where Lionel lived with Olive and Harry Legg. This side of 41 is The Lodgers Arms.

One hot summer day in 1942, Lionel and Philip Baker cycled to West Bay. The beach was fenced-off with barbed wire and mined. On West Cliff soldiers sunbathed beside an anti-aircraft gun. The boys sat on the promenade, their legs dangling over the edge, gazing out to sea. Two dots appeared on the horizon. Spitfires they thought but no, as the low-flying silver planes approached, the swastika and black cross markings and the pilots became clearly visible. The lads ducked as one Focke-Wulf Fw190 roared overhead while the other flew over the piers. The planes zoomed towards Bridport. Each dropped its single bomb on the town causing damage to buildings, turned and flew back over the fields, firing haphazardly at grazing cattle before heading out to sea towards France. Lionel believes this was one of the first sorties made by this high performance aircraft. There was no mention of the Bridport raid in the papers or on the wireless but several months later, attacks on Brighton by similar aircraft were reported.

By this time the threat of a German invasion had receded so, just a few weeks after the West Bay incident, Lionel left Olive and Harry Legg to return home to Southampton. In Lodgers, he had experienced a totally different way of life from that in Southampton. At Matravers, he crossed the divide between the servants and masters with, it seems, some success. He learned things he would not otherwise have known; how cows disappear to a quiet corner to calve as if they prefer to be private; that the rabbits on the slopes of Eggardon were black; that each year rooks were culled to end up eaten in a pie by the village people but probably not at Matravers House and that cider went down well with haymaking!

He looks back on his time in Lodgers with fond memories and great affection. He says, "They were some of the best days of my life; an experience I would not wish to have missed." This is a tribute to the village and the people who, for about ten-bob (50p) a week, willingly took in other people's children and the problems that surely went with them. It is also a tribute to Lionel for appreciating what was done for him and adapting so readily to the country way of life.



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