

A Tribute to David John Hatchard

The Lanfranc Boys

My family moved to Chartham Road in Croydon when I was a young girl. David Hatchard lived at 5 Hambrook Road and his house backed on to our garden with an alleyway between the gardens. This alleyway was where my friendship with David Hatchard began in the mid 1950's.

The children whose gardens backed onto this communal alleyway were always out playing in it together but nearly always ended up in David's back garden, mainly because his parents Mary and John Hatchard let David dig up most of the lawned area into baked up mud camps and forts for his toy soldiers, which used to come to life with tremendous battles acted out by all the local kids, especially my brother Howard and Albie Puzey who lived next door to David. I was usually to be found there in David's garden. I remember David's Mother, Mary, being in the kitchen with the door open and I was often in there with her chatting away. The back dining room door was also open with us kids running in and out. He was given quite a loose rein by his parents, being an only child he was probably quite indulged. He had a little white Scottie dog named Sally, who was always around David in the garden. His Mother was always very happy for us children to be playing with David as she was probably grateful that David had childhood companions. He always wore that huge smile of his when playing out. I was always amazed at Easter time as David had so many chocolate eggs from doting relations. There were times when David could be over zealous and a little heavy handed which could cause a childish fight but the rift always ended after a couple of days and we were back into the alley playing on our old bikes or homemade wooden trolleys that they used to make with planks of old wood found in our parents sheds and wheels from old dolls prams with rope used to steer the front wheels. We often used to go off with David looking for frogspawn and newts at the end of Hambrook Road where David lived, as there was an open piece of ground with a small rain filled pond. We spent many hours with David at this little nature spot and bring home jam jars full of frogspawn and newts. I suppose those days were magic.

When we eventually moved from our home in Chartham Road, because my parents had bought an old shop in Crystal Palace, we obviously left lots of our childhood behind, especially David. So I was so happy when after about a year of moving away, David turned up in our shop, after cycling all the way from his home in Hambrook Road, South Norwood to find us. There he was with that huge smile and so happy to have found us. I suppose it was the last time I saw David as he was killed shortly after in the tragic air crash.

I went to see his coffin at Lanfranc School in the hall which was made into a chapel for the boys coffins. The funeral was so daunting and seeing his little dog Sally's posy of flowers sent with love was painfully sad. My Mother kept in touch with Mary Hatchard for a while after this but eventually lost touch with her. They must have been heartbroken forever.

I shall always remember David with his huge smile and how he loved to be with us.

Andrea Hillyer (known as Andrea Ridgewell to David)

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