

David Hatchard (comments from Howard Ridgewell, near neighbour and childhood friend)

My sister and I were near neighbours. As I recall, I was a few years older than David while my sister was slightly younger.

Ironically, recalling this tragic event, it brought back happy memories for my sister and myself. We lived in Chartham Road, South Norwood, where our back garden almost backed on to David's back garden. These gardens were separated by an alleyway wide enough for pedestrians but not cars. This was put to good use as a playground by the local children. Unfortunately, we later moved to Upper Norwood where my parents took over a business. Things were never quite so happy subsequently.

David was an only child and was certainly loved to the point of indulgence by his parents and grandparent/s.

David had a love of life and never wanted the day to end. I recall vividly the sound of him screaming as he was forced to be washed in the bathroom on his way to being put to bed.

An indication of his indulgence was the state of their back garden. He was allowed to 'landscape' it on a miniature scale (i.e. dig it up) to create a battleground for battles with our (probably mostly his) dinky toys. Battles would be conducted involving cannons (which fired matchsticks), rockets (which could be launched), tanks and infantry. The garden probably also doubled as a racetrack racing our model cars (more dinky toys). I also conducted my simulation of the Le Mans 24 hour race with my own cars in my own garden.

I remember his train set, Hornby Dublo whereas I had a Trix train set. I seem to recall that he had a 'Duchess of Atholl' locomotive and possibly a 'Coronation Scot'.

To the annoyance of some of our older neighbours, we also organized long distance races on our scooters around the alleyways and streets. The alleyways were often not quite wide enough for a pedestrian and a scooter being ridden flat out.

I have a strange recollection of pots of strawberry yoghurt (no fruit visible, just flavoured) delivered by the milkman being eaten in his garden. This seemed a bit of a novelty (exotic even) in those still rather austere days in the 50's.

Other friends that I recall are Alby Pusey (a bit of a rascal) and his sister Dot. His mother often seemed to be referring to Alby saying 'boys will be boys' after some minor mischief or mishap. Then there was Kenneth Snowden who lived a few doors away from David. I remember going on bike rides with him. In between David and Kenneth was the house where the notorious twins lived. They had a sweet mother but were a couple of thugs (but not by today's standards). On my first meeting with them, they forced me to shake hands with them while they held holly leaves in their hands.

Unfortunately, David had his darker side occasionally. He once hit my younger sister over the head with a small branch. After that I went for him and a minor scuffle ensued; real 'child's play' by today's standards again.