

BLACKMINSTER SCHOOL
THE MEMORIES OF
JOAN GOULD (NEE SALTER)

as told to Maureen Spinks on 18th June 2009



Joan in 1940 at Blackminster



Joan in 2009 at home in the Forest of Dean

BLACKMINSTER SCHOOL

THE MEMORIES OF JOAN GOULD (NEE SALTER)

Joan Salter was born at Badsey in 1927, the eldest of five children of Edgar and Violet Salter. Joan attended Badsey Council School from 1933 to 1939. At the age of 11, she was amongst the first cohort of pupils to join the newly-opened Blackminster School in September 1939.

It seemed to Joan that they had not finished building the school. But it was an absolutely wonderful experience after having spent six years at a much smaller Victorian village school. It seemed so big and spacious with so many children. Some of the teachers were familiar as Mr Page and Mr McKanan Jones had taught at Badsey, and also a woodwork teacher. There were a number of men teachers on the staff at the beginning but, as time went on, they were all called up. Mr Wilkes, who took Maths, went into the Navy. The female teachers were all quite young as they had just come out of college.

There were a number of rules. There was no running in the corridors. But, in many ways, the rules were not so strict as at Badsey; they had all been terrified of Mr Amos, the Headmaster of Badsey. Mr George, the first Headmaster of Blackminster, was very easy-going; he left in 1941. Perhaps unusually for those days, there was no corporal punishment, so no more hitting on the knuckles with a ruler, but there was a lot of writing of lines as punishment.

In the early days, they had regular air drill. A certain bell went off, whereupon they walked to a designated place and hid under trees. Joan's group went to a plum plantation and sat there with their gas-masks on. They also went up into the roof of the school in case there were incendiary bombs and were shown how to put out fires with sand. By the time Joan's younger sister started at the school two years later, these drills had ceased.

There was a lot more going on at Blackminster. Each class had to move to another room, so it was different to Badsey. It always seemed to be warm and nice at Blackminster. There were very large playing-fields. The girls did netball as well as PE and country dancing. They also went to the open-air swimming baths in Evesham. There was a gymnasium with ropes and bars; the girls all had to wear black gym knickers (gym clothes were provided). The senior girls used to spend a whole day in the Domestic Science room where there was a flat at the end. Each week, two different girls spent their time there tidying up and cooking a meal. Another impressive feature of Blackminster School in the early days was its shows.

Joan's first class was Class 1A; a fellow Badsey girl, Joan Collett, was a class-mate. When Joan moved up to Class 2A, their classroom was behind the curtain on the stage. Mrs George was their teacher (the wife of Mr George, the Headmaster). Joan missed Class 3A as she jumped into 4A, otherwise she would never have got into the top class. The teacher was Mrs Marshall. They studied *The Merchant of Venice*. At the end of August 1941, they went to Stratford to see it being performed; it was the

last production of the war. This was the first theatre which Joan had been to and it was wonderful. The cost of the coach and seat was half a crown. This school visit instilled a love of Shakespeare and the theatre in Joan and she has been hundreds of times since then.

For pupils who lived more than three miles away, there was a bike allowance. As Joan lived at the far end of Badsey Fields Lane, she was entitled to the allowance, but she often used to walk as it was more fun. On days when she did cycle, if it was cold and wet, she remembers not being able to hold a pen for about an hour.

There was no uniform as such, but the rule was that no shoes were allowed inside; the pupils had to change straight away into plimsolls. Joan's mother always made her wear a red beret to school. All the boys used to pull it off and throw it in the trees.

When the pupils first started at Blackminster, they had to take sandwiches for their midday meal if they lived too far away to go home but, very soon, a cooked meal was provided. At lunch-times, pupils were allowed outside the school premises. A favourite pastime was to walk along to an unmanned level crossing and lean on a gate and watch the trains. No one had a watch, but they always seemed to get back on time.

At the outbreak of war, a wave of evacuees had come to the Vale of Evesham. The older evacuees could not initially be accommodated at Blackminster and were taught in a classroom at Badsey. In the "phoney war" period, many of the evacuees went home at Christmas-time and did not return. There were so few left by early 1940 that Blackminster was then able to accommodate them.

During Joan's time at Blackminster, she caught scarlet fever, along with two others. The three of them had to spend a month at a hospital on Kings Road, Evesham, and her home at Badsey Fields had to be fumigated.

Until the Education Act of 1944 raised the school-leaving age to 15, pupils left school at the end of the term in which they were 14. As Joan's birthday was 23rd December, she left at Christmas-time 1941.

Joan married David Gould in 1948 and had two sons, Richard and Roger. Joan and David now live in Blakeney in the Forest of Dean.

BLACKMINSTER SCHOOL

50-YEAR REUNION - 1989

In 1989, a reunion of former pupils of Blackminster was held to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the school. Joan Gould attended, along with a number of her friends.



Blackminster Reunion 1989 - Alec Edwards, Audrey Sandalls, Denis & Betty Jackson



Blackminster Reunion 1989 - Avis Bell, Joan Gould, Mary Dore (did not herself go to Blackminster)



Blackminster Reunion 1989 - Bob Harrison, Barbara Ingles, Ruby Stallard



Blackminster Reunion 1989 - Rully Stallard, Dorothy Morton, one of the Bailey twins, Marcus Tidmarsh, Jimmy Dore



Left: Blackminster Reunion 1989 – Jean Jordan

Overleaf: 13-year-old Joan Salter's report of Badsey's first plane crash in 1941

BADSEYS FIRST PLANE CRASH.

On Thursday, August 14th 1941 there was a plane crash at 1-5.

We had just finished our dinner, ^{and} dad had gone out to weigh some beans, when we heard a terrible crash. We rushed outside to see, thick, black smoke pouring into the sky. Dad and another man was out there watching it. Dad said he had seen the plane circling round then it hit something, turned over and crashed to the ground. Dad got out his bike and went down to help, (as he is a Special Constable) a little after he had gone we heard a big explosion (a petrol tank). Mum Maeha said I could go down so I jumped on my bicycle and went down.

As I was down people were
at their doors and children were
cycling as hard as they could
to the spot. It was in the middle
of an apple and plum plantation.

The people were out on the
road close to the hedge. When
I got there it was in flames
some of them were white hot.

The fire engine was there but
was not putting it out. At last
they fitted the pipes together
and they started putting
out the flames. The one part
they got out but the other took
longer as it was the petrol and
oil cans. It kept sending showers
of white hot sparks up as the
water swished down upon it.
When it was out there was



nothing to see except different things the constables found and were putting in a heap (hear about that later) all at once the crowd pushed to the gate at the end of the field. The police were just going to lift the dead man on the lorry. It was covered up but I saw one of his hands from underneath the cover. It was terrible. It was like five claws blocked from the fire. After that I went home with dad. Here are the facts which I heard from dad.

Facts

The plane was from Rivington. They think it was trying to land when its tail got caught in an elm tree.

It would have landed safely
only it landed in the plantation
as it went along its wings got
tore off then it burst into flames
It was a Hammond bomber there
should have been five men
in it but there was only 4 there
The one only had a his ankle
twisted right round and a
few cuts and bruises The other
was alive but unconscious. He was
terribly knocked about and Dad
thinks he would be dead before
they got him to Evesham.
The dead one was found in
different places. his body was
found in one with the head half
off Dad found his bag by
a tree, they were gone one
arm is still missing. His shoe
was 20 yds away still on up