

Knill Court, not very far away but on the Radnorshire border was our next home. We were again in wonderful surroundings – near Offa's Dyke – and the whole school duly moved in. Most of the staff had to sleep in little cottages in the grounds, and some of our classrooms were also in other buildings near the main house. We had to wear our overcoats and gloves to do our lessons during the winter as fuel was very short. We stayed here in the holidays also as there was still danger from the bombing and anti-aircraft fire anywhere near London. We used to ride ponies from the farm and fish in the little stream in the grounds. We also had to pick rose-hips for the Government – and these were used to make rose-hip syrup for the babies as it is very rich in vitamin C. We also picked foxglove seeds for them to be used to extract *digitalis* – a drug used in heart disease.

Then tragedy struck!

One afternoon, while most of us were playing hockey, a fire started in one of the upstairs rooms which was being used as a sick room. A coal fire was kept burning all the time to keep the patients warm, and a beam under the fireplace began to smoulder and very quickly the whole building was ablaze. It was awful, but no-one was hurt. Firemen came and took water from the stream to fight the fire. All our clothes and belongings were burnt except for our overcoats as the classroom escaped damage. For me, the worst part was that my beloved teddy, called Bruin, was lost in the blaze.

Fortunately the firemen had been able to rescue the documents etc. from the headmistresses' study and they then had all our home telephone numbers so that our parents were informed. We spent the night on the floors of various cottages and were duly sent back home by train the next day – still wearing our hockey clothes!

Once again Mrs Wilson and Madam decided to keep the school going and went to an agent in London to see if there was anywhere for us to go. Luckily, that very morning, Lord Iliffe had been in to offer his large country house for the use of a girls' school for the rest of the war. This time we were in real luxury for the house was Yattendon Court in Berkshire. Of course the school had no beds, chairs, desks, tables, etc. etc. but word was circulated for any offers – and help came from all directions and finally school started up, in new surroundings, yet again.

This house was sumptuous, with wood strip floors so we were not allowed to use ink! Each dormitory had its own marble bathroom in pink, green, blue or black. Unfortunately water was in very short supply so baths were few and far between and we were only allowed 4 inches of water! We also had a organ to use – there was one in the huge panelled entrance hall – and our music teacher used it for 'prayers' every morning. I took my School Certificate (O-levels) from Yattendon and left before the end of the war.

Winceby House School eventually returned to Bexhill after the war.

* See illustration