

BOB STERRY PREFAB MEMORIES

I lived in a Prefab from 1948 to 1955. The address was 19, Barnfield Road, St. Mary Cray. There were about twenty four prefabs on the road.

1. Number 19 had a small entry hall, two bedrooms, a bathroom with toilet, sink and bath, a fitted kitchen. There was a front door and a kitchen side door. Council workers repainted the front door at least once while I lived there. I loved the smell of burning paint and their paraffin torches.
2. The site of the prefabs in Barnfield Road might have been an old orchard. There were a few apple trees around
3. The kitchen had of all things a working refrigerator, which my mother dearly missed when we moved out in 1955.
4. The plot seemed huge but actually was only as wide as the prefab plus a few feet wither side and maybe a hundred feet deep.
5. There was a sense of community about the street, but I sensed also a border between our prefabs and older developments in the area.
6. My father turned almost the entire back yard into a vegetable garden apart from a small patch of grass.
7. Each prefab had an Anderson shelter as a shed for tools and overflow belongings. Not that many had any of those!
8. Number 19 faced more or less East. The rear facing West bordered onto a school playing field. I don't remember which school.
9. All of the children in the prefabs went to Kevington Primary School on Sweeps Lane
10. Milk came by horse drawn dairy cart, bread was delivered but I am not sure if there were any horses involved!
11. The nearest grocer and butcher shops were in St. Mary Cray, about a mile and half away
12. There was red phone box on the corner of Barnfield Road and Hearn's Rise, with a button you could push to call the fire or police or ambulance services.
13. The prefab had a stove in the living room which I think would burn either coal or coke. I believe it heated the water although there may have been an electric immersion heater. If so it would have been turned on infrequently, probably on Saturdays for bath night!
14. I remember my Father laying linoleum in the sitting room. He layered old copies of John Bull magazine over the boards as some insulation before cutting and laying the 'lino'.

If I think of any more details I'll be sure and let you know. Somewhere I do have some photos of the prefab. I write about my English memories (I live in Oregon on the US West Coast) from time to time in my blog at www.bobsterry.wordpress.com

Thank you for your work in preserving an important part of post war history. I almost laughed out loud with pleasure when I found your website. It is not that all my days in prefabs were happy, but I have known for a while that they had a huge impact on my life.