

Brian Thomas (b. 11.7.1922) – Log – September 1939

Saturday 2nd September

7.45 a.m. Left school in 154 bus (No. JJ.4353) after short address by Mr. Icough. Bright but cloudy weather. Slight wait of about 9 minutes before finally departing at 7.55 a.m. Numerous card games in progress.

8.6 a.m. Arrive Stanley Street Institute. Slight wait of 9 minutes. Left buses & proceeded to New Cross station on foot. Longhurst saw friend of his. Arrived on platform at 8.27½ a.m. Waited 33½ mins and boarded train at 9.00 a.m. after party had been split into groups of 7. I went with Peter (Longhurst). Train departed at 9.2 a.m. Our party consisted of Peter, myself, Deeks, Tiley, Blake, Dove L.C. & Dove R.A.. 8 coaches.

9.5	Passed through St. John's
9.9	Passed through Hither Green
9.12½	Grove Park
9.16	Elmstead Woods (armed guard)
9.17½	Chislehurst (soldiers)
9.21	Petts Wood
9.25	Orpington (every house we passed in which there were people they waved to the train)
9.30	Chelsfield
9.34	Knockholt
9.40½	Dunton Green
9.45	Sevenoaks
9.55	Hildenborough
9.59	stopped at Tonbridge
10.5	restarted
10.13	High Brooms
10.16½	Tunbridge Wells
10.21½	Frant
10.25	Wadhurst
10.30	Ticehurst Road
10.35	Etchingham
10.38	Roberts Bridge - Disembarked – assembled in station yard in houses Proceeded to coaches. Very crowded
11.9	Left village. After rather uncomfortable bus ride (KR1746)
11.35	Arrived village of Ticehurst
	Very hot now. Seems a pretty decent place. 3 others Houses here – Grenville & Raleigh (& Drake).
11.50	Went for medical exam in Ticehurst Institute Building. Had mug of lemonade & couple of biscuits
1230	Then left with White & Bradgate for billets

Peter & I managed to keep together & landed in a small cottage where they were expecting two little girls. Didn't exactly receive us with open arms. Bloke seems to be a sort of Communist. Got sort of settled in when Mr. Atkins, local A.R.P. Warden & sort of squire, came along & told the bloke off very roundly indeed!!! Took us home to his place. How can I describe it? Marvellous? Grand? His two sons, John aged 14 & Michael 11, are awfully decent chaps. The house – well its about 600 years old and they own a pretty extensive (Dale Hill) farm, have two dogs, & two cats. Looked over farm – looks good to us. We're fabulously lucky. The house has a glorious dining room and lovely old furniture as has the living rooms. Saw John's guns, his golf-clubs, his two bows and arrows (the real thing) etc etc. bathroom too.

Spent couple of hours digging A.R.P. trench and wandered about. Went to village itself after tea. Saw most all the fellows & they seemed to be pretty well O.K. Got official evacuation cards from Post Office & sent them off. Incidentally the Office has two rather good "prospects". Davies says the "Chequers" sells good cider. Saw Mr. Ashworth & went over church. V.G. signed names in visitors' book. Came home and did some archery. Grand but Peter & I each broke an arrow! Carried beer over to men after trying it of course & its quite nice but mild. Came home & had bath each, lovely being able to bath! Had good supper & went to bed at 9.0'clock & slept till 8.30 a.m.

Sunday 3rd. Sept.

Got up 8.40. Shaved etc. Bradgate called & had breakfast with us at 8.30 a.m. Played snooker. Bad for a Sunday of course but - . Stopped to help paste up windows against broke glass (A.R.P. "Love & Kisses") WAR WAS DECLARED at 11.0 a.m. Heard Prime Minister at 11.15 – Very good calm, simple & straightforward. Heard sirens at 12 o'clock & took cover in cellar. Everybody quite cheerful. All clear sounded quite soon. Went out and dug more of trench. Lunch at 1.18. Afterwards we went to meadow and turned the hay. Did a great deal of work 75% of field. Went home to a well-deserved tea very pleased with ourselves. Couldn't help thinking that it was a queer way of spending the first day of the war. How utterly futile it all is.

After tea we entertained Bradgate & White & Smith to Darts & Table-tennis. Hope they don't come too often because it makes such a crowd & a lot of trouble. After tea we went round village & saw Kempton & lot of other fellows quite a decent little village. Saw Mr. Gilbert.

War seems the remotest thing on earth. It's been a glorious day, hot & lovely. Farming (that is while we were turning hay) everything seems so peaceful & useful. The air raid was a false alarm. We wrote home today. Some talk of us going away. That would be awful. Everything & everybody (the Atkins) are so awfully decent. Mrs. Atkins short circuited the whole house this evening & it is now truly rural. The beauty of the room & its table was very much enhanced by the candles. Intend finishing the turning tomorrow & retired at 9.15.

Monday 4th Sept.

Got up 8.15. Breakfasted at 9. Cycled to village to see some of the fellows. None about. Perhaps we're too early for them. Came back & finished the hay-turning. Grand work & we did it well I think. Mr. Atkins was quite pleased. That just filled up the morning. In the afternoon we raked hay behind the wagon for an hour and a half. Too hot for much more. Had glass of ale. Very refreshing. Then we took it easy till tea. Peter wrote some letters & I played darts or read. After tea John & I brought the cows in. (Peter hadn't quite finished). I was O.K. The I helped tether the cows in the milking shed & groomed them. Quite good but hot & I spoiled my best shirt. Nevertheless I was quite useful & it was very interesting. Meanwhile Peter was doing some archery. Then I went with John to collect the eggs and took the gun & two cartridges. Saw one rabbit but it went too quickly. Quite exciting being behind a loaded gun for the first time. Did spot of archery with Michael while John & Peter went Shooting. (We had tossed up who should go). He had no luck. No sign of war here yet. Indeed nothing seems more remote.

Tuesday 5th Sept.

Got up about 7.45. Marked time till 11.0 when we strolled to the Institute where the School assembled. (Got letter each from home, very nice to hear). Letters were distributed from home & we were told we have to meet at 9.30 a.m. every morning for news etc. Don't know whether we're moving yet. Had lunch at 12.45 & afterwards went to Tunbridge Wells in the car with John & Michael. Sampled the water there & to John's surprise enjoyed it. Quite a decent town. Came home to tea & afterwards went to play a Ticehurst X1 at football. Only our side turned up. Had a muck about. Played all-in Rugger & Soccer etc. Good fun but hot! Had my singlet torn but it was good to feel a football again. Got home O.K. & had a bath. (Peter, the slacker, didn't play "football"). The Atkins improve on acquaintance.

Wednesday 6th Sept.

Rose about usual time. Went to the Institute at 9.30. Mr. Durling was arranging work parties to help local farmers. Just like him. Mr. Atkins had asked us for a party to beat thistles so Aggett, Carter, Ducker and some others came. Hot work but we pretty well cleared the field. We were then at a loose end after lunch so after playing four grand games of table tennis (we won 2 each) we went into the village & met the three chaps mentioned above. Went into a shop we knew & were messing about when Peter accidentally caught Harry Carter a beautiful one on the bean with a Salmon tin (I don't know what make). Anyway he got a nasty cut so that put an end to the afternoon messing about. Peter was rather worried all rest of day. Took a horse back to the Hebditches with John & Michael. Took turns riding the horse. Good fun. Had a grand bathe (more of a "dip") in the bathing pool at the Hebditches. Frightfully small, one dive & you reached the other side, but it was grand fun. It was good to swim again. Walked home through the village. Saw Kempton & Pemberton. Popped in the Cherry Tree & had a game of darts. Mr. Durling came in but don't think he saw us. Not that it matters much. Rather tired so retired directly after supper.

Thursday 7th Sept.

Overslept a little this morning., didn't get up till 8.30. Very bad. Mrs. A. offered to give us some strong coffee but we didn't need it & were O.K. really. Went to 9.30 meeting. Nothing doing. Harry seems O.K. but may have to have some stitches in. Peter had letter from Joan & it cheered him up no end. He let me read it later & I realised why. Despite Mr. Durling's efforts to prevent it we took it easy during the morning. Peter reads the letter at intervals of about 15 mins & I wrote home. After lunch we called for Aggett but saw Harry who said he'd gone (we were going to Kempgee's for a bathe) so we walked on. As it was very warm we made him turn back because of his head. Nearly there when we met Norris etc. who said that because of a few cases of chickenpox in the village the bath was closed. We could have swum but of course we didn't. Peter & I sing a fearfully good duet but none of the animals we passed on the way home seemed to think so! We washed up the tea things as Mrs A & Mrs M had to go out. Messed around the rest of the evening shooting with the air-gun.

Friday 8th Sept.

Felt rather tired when we got up this morning. Went to 9.30 assembly. Not much doing. Took home a few fellows for thistle banging. Very hot work indeed. Packed up at 12 noon after 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ hrs. Not bad for us. Peter had a parcel of clothes from home. After lunch we washed up, then putting on our oldest clothes went to bring cows in. The (with John, the others had gone to Tunbridge Wells) we groomed them. Peter isn't at all good at it. Of course I'm a veteran having done it twice now. It's very interesting but hot. As we're feeling hot & sweaty I washed my face & feet & Peter washed his gym trousers 'cause they were very muddy & had a cold bath. Had tea early at 4.15. Only John, Peter & I as the others had gone to Tunbridge Wells. Wrote letters afterwards. I to Peddie & Peter to guess who! – Joan. After messing about in garden, Peter & I cycled to the post. Saw Wheeler on the way. Awfully nice to see him but didn't have chance so say much to him. Had early supper and they found a chess-set for us so we had a game. Peter won – of course. I get so fed up after the 20th move. Retired rather later than usual.

Saturday 9th Sept.

The first day of our second week here. Went to 9.30 assembly as usual nothing much doing. Peter & I played table-tennis & took it easy during the morning. After lunch John & I were playing hockey with a polo-ball & I got a smack over ht eye with it. Nothing much but it made me dizzy a bit. Got the cows in & tethered them; Peter did some of his own accord – positively amazing! I played football against a Ticehurst X1 after tea and Peter refereed. We lost, scoring 4 goals against 5. Too hot really for football but it was fun. We had a pretty rotten team 4 or 5 of our players didn't turn up. It was a tough game and quite enjoyable except for the heat. Of course both Peter & I were absolutely done in but we each had a grand bath as soon as we got home. Listened in to the Polish Ambassador's speech. Very good indeed. Went to bed about 9.30 after a very tiring day. Wheeler is back from Canada just saw him for a bit this morning.

Sunday 10th Sept.

We have now been at war for a week but to us it seems as if we're on a summer vacation. A more peaceful place than Ticehurst, except for the football match of course, could hardly be imagined. Went to the parade at 10. Mr. Parker also has returned from his travels. Went to church at 11 with the School; we filled one side of it! I do not like Church of England services but the sermon wasn't bad. Peter & I are both extremely tired and not a little stiff. Took it very easily all the afternoon reading etc. On reading back we seem to be taking it easy most all the time but don't be deceived – we work hard & of course have to recuperate our strength. Have just discovered that Messrs. Ashworth & Mander have left. The former has just gone back to London but Mr. Mander has left the school for something or other up north. Should have thought they'd have said good-bye to us. Had latish tea & afterwards Peter buzzed off with Michael as it was my turn to shoot. I helped wash up & changed into old trousers. Went off with John about 7 rabbit-hunting. Saw several but too far off. Did some stalking. Not a good rabbiting evening, rather cold and windy. Had my first shot to kill and – missed! The target was sitting & as I was the other side of a clump of nettles I didn't like to move for fear of scaring it. Anyhow better luck next time! Did a bit more stalking after John took the dog home. When I stopped for a moment I took stock of my surroundings I realised how quiet nature can be. Barely a sound except the wind – no wonder the rabbits could hear me. Went home &, with John, gave the gun a rare cleaning; he took the barrel and I sand-papered, oiled & polished the butt. It looks absolutely grand now. All things considered it was a very entertaining & interesting evening. I'm awfully pleased with the gun. Peter seems fed-up with the war & says he hopes it's over by Christmas. Personally I can't appreciate the fact that there is a war.

Monday 11th Sept. + Tuesday 12th Sept.

Felt rather tired when we got up this morning. Went to the 9.30 assembly. Took few fellows home to do some log shifting. Spent morning in this way – rather better than thistle banging. Volunteered (at the parade) to do some duty on the telephone tonight. As it will mean that we shall have to sit up all night we took the afternoon & evening very easy. Just popped out to get some chocolate. Peter went shooting but had no luck.

Left the farm at 9.15 for Ticehurst Institute. Everything was absolutely black. The walk was quite exciting. Arrived about 9.25. Went into the office and started our duty. We have to wait for the phone to ring & thus receive an air raid warning which we have to pass on. I have a bet with Harry that there will be a raid (only 2nd). It is quite an experience as our duty is from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. The place is quite eerie though our office is quite cosy. I'm writing this at 12.15 on the morning of Tuesday. 2.5 a.m. This is supposed to be about the time when human vitality is at its lowest ebb. Well I don't know about that. Of course we feel a bit tired but it has not been at all difficult to keep awake. I lit the fire at 12.30 & put the kettle on. Tea things & some bread & butter had been provided. It cheers the room up a lot though we're not exactly cold. It was good indeed to have a cup of tea! Contrary to our expectations tempus seems to go quite quickly. There are books & magazines littering the desk & chairs. Everything is dead quiet; the clock in the office seems to have a very relentless tick. It looks as if I'm going to lose my tuppence after all. 3.25 a.m. Still no sign of life anywhere. It's really too snug here; Peter & I have both felt most tired during the last 45 mins or so. We had a quiet little sing song. The time is beginning to drag a little now; there's so little to do – if we had a dart-board - . Our magazines are pretty well exhausted but we've only got 2½ more hours to go & I don't expect they'll be very long. 4.35 a.m. Only another hour & 25 mins to go & we are not sorry. Not a darn thing has happened all the time and apart from the lack of excitement – bang goes tuppence. We're both feeling pretty tired now & Peter has decided to walk about a bit to provide some action. We can keep awake alright, but we're suffering rather, from an overdose of ennui. 5.40 a.m. Twenty minutes to go & we're not sorry. I think though we're just getting used to it. I can read without blinking & nodding my head though I've got a slight headache. It's surprising how dirty how hands & faces have got, we haven't been doing anything to get them so. We've tidied up the office & are eagerly waiting our relief. The windows are covered over so that we can't see what it's like outside. Six o'clock at last but no sign of our relief yet. Not until 6.15 were we relieved. Of course we were awfully glad to be out.

Tuesday 12th Sept.

The morning was cold & very windy with more than a promise of rain. The walk home refreshed us no end. Peter was determined to go to bed but I didn't feel much like it. Anyway I went & was fast asleep by 7 o'clock fully determined to wake up at 9. I didn't realise how tired I was and I was awoken by John telling Peter that his people had come to see him. On looking at my watch I saw the time was 11.15! We felt quite refreshed so we dressed & went downstairs. Peter was glad to see his parents & they brought him some more clothes. I got a letter from Douglas & he out "sealed with a kiss" on the back of the envelope, the silly fathead.; I had quite a job to convince people of the propriety of the epistle. However – revenge is sweet – I feel an urge to write to D.W. Peddie Esq. The fellows have told us that all the pubs are out of bounds – that's too bad; but we're becoming hardened milk drinkers now & it isn't hurting us. We messed about at table-tennis & billiards in the afternoon. In the evening we walked to Flimwell to play football. Not very far & we had to wait for the other team. It wasn't a bad game but they weren't much good & we won 3-1. I scored one. It wasn't nearly as hot as Saturday & we didn't get so hot ourselves. After a chat with Mrs. Dalzell we walked home. We sang all the way & we think we're pretty good – good harmony & everything. Got home about 8.15 & had a good supper. We were very glad as you can imagine to go to bed at the usual time.

Wednesday 13th Sept.

Overslept a little this morning and didn't go down for breakfast till about 9. Rolled up to morning assembly rather late. Wheeler, the swat, marked us late, which he really needn't have done. However - . Took a few fellows back to do some potato-collecting. Did a very good morning's work. In the afternoon we played a game in the woods. Two sides had a flag each & they had to capture the opponent's flag & take it to their camp. It may seem rather childish but it was awfully good fun although the brambles & nettles were rather a nuisance. The trouble was that neither side knew where the other camp was & the woods were almost impenetrable & very extensive, also the carpet of dead leaves & the innumerable brambles & branches made one hell of a row at the slightest movement. Neither side won but it was good fun. Mrs. A gave the fellows a cup of tea etc. & afterwards we saw them home. Met Mr. Holt who asked us to play cricket on Saturday. On receiving our apologies he indulged in one of his not infrequent periods of rottenness & treated us to the words "Alright, go away; I don't want you". The fellow makes me sick. However such things are best forgotten. Incidentally, we should have, normally, gone back to school today. It's an ill wind.....! Peter is horribly engrossed in crossword puzzles and the bug has infected Mrs. A & Mrs Martin. Really its terrible you can't do a thing with him; if you speak to him he looks right through you with glassy eyes & murmurs "7 across 5 letters – Indian word but not an Indian" or something to the same effect. Didn't go to bed till about 10 because of thesepuzzles.

Thursday 14th Sept.

Got up usual time and after breakfast made our way to the 9.30 assembly – really it is more than annoying this parade. Took a few chaps back to the potatoes and just about cleared the furrows that had been made. Knocked off at 12; the sky clouded right over & it started to rain just a little. Was nursing the cat just before dinner and I couldn't help thinking about ours at home. At least he was – but mother had had to get rid of him. It's funny how vividly I remember all his ways. I shall miss him when I get home, if I ever do. The puzzle-bug is still biting and how! Mrs A comes in at 1.45 & says "just ten minutes at that puzzle" and after saying at intervals "I really must go up and clean" finally leaves at 2.15. Which just goes to show.....! Mrs. Martin enquires "Do you get anything for doing this?" and is greeted with ribald remarks – you know what I mean; which again goes to show....! Played Michael at billiards; he won & I'm afraid I'm awfully dumb at it. Then I watched Peter play him for a bet of 6d. Played a few games of table-tennis after tea. Blowed if I didn't have to teach Michael how to do a cross-word puzzle – Well -! The I sunk even lower & even indulged in an actual puzzle personally. Retired about usual time. Rained for first time.

Friday 15th Sept.

Got up 8.15 & went to morning assembly. Got usual gang arranged to meet them outside the Institute grounds after they'd gone home to change & we had to see a Mr. West about tomes football fixtures. Also asked him about the pianos & he agreed to let us have them (2) at 6d a hour. Started to play & before we knew the time we looked & saw it was 11 o'clock & raining so we decided to stay. Peter & I had a violent but friendly argument. He says I'm good, & I say I'm not but he is. Neither of us believes the other so the subject is taboo for ever & ever (of course Peter really is marvellous & far superior to me). Of course we'd forgotten the gang & we met them coming home after doing 1½ hours work before the rain. They were only moderately sore & as they passed us they spat but the fact that our laughter was convulsing them too, it was rather a difficult manoeuvre & its full effect was spoiled. Everybody except us went to Tunbridge Wells in the p.m. so we went & brought the cows in & helped Mrs. A move a gate. Had tea more or less on our own but Michael had returned early by bus. Read books most of evening & had an early supper. Wrote to Mum & Dad & went to bed about 9.5

Saturday 16th Sept.

The first day of our 3rd week here. Went to usual morning do. Took morning off as it was Saturday. Were just meandering round village when who should I see but mother! It was good to see her. Wilfred had brought her down with Jessie & Auntie Clara & some of my things. Wilf gave us a lift to the farm in the car & after lunch we went into Tunbridge Wells where I bought some trousers, gloves, hair-cream etc. Had tea at the Cadena & then I came home by bus about 6. About our argument referred to yesterday – Peter of course, reads & endorses this log every day & he complains about the statement so I'm afraid that owing to great external pressure I'm forced to withdraw it – against my will – mind because he really is much – sorry Peter. Nuff said. Had bath each & listened to Band Waggon after supper. It's good to hear it again after so long. Retired about usual time. Incidentally Peter lent me a pair of his trousers today as mine are getting a bit frayed.

Sunday 17th Sept.

Mr. Parker's son is staying with us now. We saw him first at breakfast & he seems quite a decent chap. Paraded at 10.30 & proceeded to Church. Not a bad service. Got off with the organist (a man) who offered to let us play the organ anytime we liked. He's an awfully decent chap. When I got home I sent a card to mother for some of my music. Wrote a few letters in afternoon & whiled away the time reading etc. For a change Peter & I went to Evensong. Another very nice service. Had supper early & went for a short stroll till 9. I had a slight sore-throat & Mrs. A kindly got me a hot lemon & I went straight to bed.

Monday 18th Sept.

My throat is pretty well better. Had rather a rushed breakfast but managed to get to the so and so Assembly. Took a few blokes back to do some dock-picking in the ploughed field. Not exactly an inspiring job. Mr. Parker jnr. was working with us. Went to the Institute after lunch with Michael. Meet Aggett & we played the piano till 4.0 clock. I don't say so of course but Peter re*ll* is te*r*c, much b*tte* than I *m of course. Came back & on my way met Mr. Durling who remarked upon our diligent work this morning; he said he came along just as we were busy bombarding Aggett with earth. Anyhow we had been working & blow him! Messed about with the bows & arrows after tea with Michael & Mr. Parker jnr. He's quite decent. We're frightfully busy teasing Michael to death about a (probably) imaginary girl-friend. We passed a little girl in the village & after remarking upon her dog, a lovely red-setter, he began to blush furiously so now his life is almost unbearable. He's getting over it now though. Went to bed directly after supper.

Tuesday 19th Sept.

Were a little late getting up this morning but managed to get to Assembly in time. It was with very great regret that we were told we would be moving in about a fortnight's time to Bexhill on Rye. There isn't really much to say except that now we will have two homes to get homesick for. We must make the best of our time. In the morning we, with some of the gang (Aggett & Ducker), went log carrying in the woods and did quite a lot of good work before we were stopped by rain. We sheltered under the trees till it slackened & ran for home. We didn't get very wet. In the afternoon everybody went out except Peter, myself & Mr. Parker jnr. So we played some table-tennis & billiards & then had tea. After tea we went across to the field opposite the Coronation Cottages whose inhabitants have been an untold nuisance to Mrs A. After standing at the end of the lane for a little while we turned to go home & a few of the "toughs" collected behind us & began to be abusive. There were all the prospects of a good scrap but as it was the kids who were the real nuisance we couldn't do much; so making up our minds to return later we went home. After supper Peter & I went down there but all was unfortunately quite quiet so we came back & went to bed.

Wednesday 20th Sept.

We were almost late again this morning & Peter & I seem to have caught colds. Nevertheless we took a few chaps back & did some good work carting logs with Mr.A & some of the men. Had a ride in the wagon which was almost exciting, because of the narrowness of the lane & the overhanging trees. Work without a stop till 12 & were very pleased with ourselves. Played a few games of table-tennis and lazed about generally in the afternoon & did the same in the evening in between writing a few letters.

Thursday 21st Sept.

The blow has fallen! We heard at this morning assembly that we are moving to Bexhill on Saturday. Of course the news more or less spoilt the day for us but we decided to make the best of it. After the assembly we went to some friends of Michael's to play tennis. The boy, about Michael's age, showed us over the oast-house while it was in action. Most interesting. We saw them using the hop press & how tightly they pack the bags. Had a look in the drying chamber & saw the fires, the brimstone pans & the fans. The after being regaled by a few apples we played tennis. Apart from the fact that there were no lines it was a good game. On the way home we got caught in the rain but sheltered under the hedge & did not get wet but were late for lunch. In the afternoon we went to the church & played the organ & were enjoying ourselves when we were interrupted by a young lady who wanted to practice for the next Sunday. She wasn't good enough to waste time on so we went to the Institute & played the pianos. After tea we wandered over the farm for a sort of farewell look-see & after supper we each bathed & shaved & went to bed.

Friday 22nd Sept.

Our last day. Went to assembly as usual. The junior school are going to Rye & we had a trial separation. Assembly at 9 to-morrow morning. As it was raining we couldn't do any work so we proceeded to pack. To-day John goes to Tonbridge for his first term, & his father was telling him all about the etiquette there & its very amusing. For instance John was told that in the old days a "fag" would have to sit on the lavatory seat to warm it for his "Pre" in winter. Mrs. Martin was very shocked. Peter's people came down and took us into Tunbridge Wells where we bought some glasses & a jug for Mrs. Atkins. My music came down to-day & so did Peter's so we went to the Institute & messed about till 7.30. Had supper as soon as we came home and went straight to bed. It did seem queer without John at supper.

Saturday 23rd Sept.

The first day of our 4th week here & the last. After roll call, parties were detailed off to coaches & we left Ticehurst at 9.32 a.m. Mrs A was very pleased with the present I think & Michael was very sorry to see us go. He & Mrs A rode past us on bikes just before we went. Passed through Roberts Bridge (of happy memory) at 9.45. Among others in our coach were Wheeler, Aggett, Mr. James, Peter & of course myself. Passed thru' Johns Cross at 9.48 & came on to the main road to the coast. Passed through Battle at 9.56. Had a glimpse of Battle Abbey & Senlac Hill. Took the left fork to Bexhill. Very difficult writing in this bus. Passed Mr. Mrs. Melvin & gave them a "Woof". Passed thru' Ninfield at 10.8. Sighted the sea at 10.10 also Beachy Head. Passed thru' Lunsford Cross at 10.12. Got into Bexhill & disembarked at the Park Pavilion at about 10.20.

Waited in the dance hall till 12.53. Meanwhile lemonade & biscuits were distributed. Got the address of our billet & joined another group & were led to the street. After two attempts the billeting officer (ess – but not good) found that the address was wrong on something & so we waited on a corner while the rest of the party was disposed of. Decided to go back to the Pavilion. Frightfully tiring carrying all our luggage about. Just sat around till 2.45.

It was terrible & we were all thinking about going back to London when Mr. & Mrs. Daltry said they were taking a party of 15. So we (Aggett, Carter, Ducker, White, Lane, Stow, Lusted, Andrews, Barr & a few others all piled in a coach & we were taken to the Romanoff School. It's a private school & the first 5 of those named before are luckily sharing a room. We got settled in O.K. & went down stairs to high-tea at about 6.15 p.m. or so. We had pie & it didn't taste too good & altogether the place seems to have a rotten smell or something. We were all pretty tired & were very glad to get to bed. The bedroom was O.K., the sheets & everything were quite clean. Aggett is always funny but after "lights out" his funniest remark was "These sheets feel a bit heavy" & later "no wonder – I'm sleeping between the mattresses!" Of course it loses a lot in print but he kept us all in fits of laughter.

After their Arcadian idyll Brian & Peter found their accommodation at the Romanoff School in Bexhill less to their liking and met their nemesis in the fearsome Housekeeper - Miss Nurse - who found their log – and its explicit comments on her personal and professional qualities - and confiscated it. School started - free time was severely curtailed – they visited the cinema (Ritz & Gaiety) frequently - met some local girls – it rained a lot - and continued to "mess around". On October 12th Brian received a letter inviting him to join the Civil Service. He was successful in the medical on October 24th and left Bexhill at half-term on Friday 27th October – driven home by Peter's father together with Lane & Aggett. Peter was offered an interview with Barclay's Bank on November 7th – had a successful interview on November 10th and started work a fortnight later. His last – emotional - entry was on Saturday 18th November. Both Brian & Peter were pleased to leave Bexhill to start work - but very sorry to leave their friends behind.

Brian joined the Navy in 1941 – was torpedoed in the Mediterranean – demobbed in 1946 with the rank of Lieutenant – returned to the Ministry of Supply – spent two years working in Washington DC on an exchange with the U.K. Atomic Energy Authority – lived with his family in South London – became a mainstay of the Old Roan Dramatic Society – edited the ORA magazine – became President of the ORA + Master of the John Roan Lodge – and in the view of all who knew him was an "awfully decent chap". Brian died in April 2008 aged 85.

Peter is now aged 86 and lives near Winchester. His aim in 1939 was to follow his father into the RAF but as an intermediary joined Barclays Bank. He joined the RAF in 1941 working as a flight instructor – leaving in 1947 with the rank of Flight Lieutenant. He rejoined Barclays and retired in 1983 as manager of their Winchester Branch. He continued to play the piano – forming a 5 piece band in his own name – and notes that he was regarded as the first proficient saxophonist at Roan.

Miss Nurse returned the confiscated log

Dale Hill Farm is now the Dale Hill Hotel & Golf Club in Ticehurst

Excerpt – Saturday 14th October.

In the afternoon, Jack Aggett, Barr, Roberts and myself went to the Gaiety and saw “Jesse James”. It wasn’t at all bad either. Mr. Witten came to spend the evening with us. Did we have fun? We played about with the band a bit & he joined in. He’s a wonderful natural pianist. I caught him with our fake beer glass. I brought it in and gave it to him. He didn’t see the deception till he tried to drink it. He took it damn well. Had a few games of nap with him & had a darts competition. Altogether a most enjoyable evening was had by all.