

Christine Field

Christine, maiden name Beadle, was born in 1939. She lived in Pipers Lane Wheathampstead. She was the only child of Vera and David. Her mother had suffered 4 miscarriages before Christine was born.

Her father worked on a nearby farm looking after the chickens.

They moved to Tudor Road in 1940 when her father was called up and went into the RAF. He was stationed in Plymouth and then went to Burma.

The house was semi-detached, two reception rooms, three bedrooms, toilet downstairs and large garden with an air raid shelter.

They lived there for 10 years. The local fishmonger lived next door.

One day there was a fire in her bedroom next to the airing cupboard. She wasn't hurt and a fireman came and put it out.

There was a building in High Ash Road, owned by Helmets, which became the nursery school. There were canvass beds for the local children. Her mother was a teacher there. Christine would go there.

Her mother made fret wood animals for the children to play with.

Christine went to St Helens school when she was five, until she was seven.

She had long plaits and a boy in her class used to dump her plaits into the ink wells.

She remembers huge explosions which blew her grandparents windows out. Another bomb landed on Conqueror's Hill which left a massive hole. Bits of aeroplane landed on Marford Road.

She remembers the postman coming to deliver a yellow telegram saying that Eddie her mother's cousin who was in the army had died.

Her grandparents lived in a cottage at the bottom of Bury Green by the river. Her grandmother's name was Amelia and she died in 1970, aged 84. Her grandfather, George Beadle, died in 1956 aged 69. He used to take her to Bury farm when he was cutting the crops. When they took a break they would have cold tea and sugar sandwiches.

Land Girls

Her aunt was a land girl at Bury farm. There was also a land girl called Kath Finnegan. She was charged with looking after the cows and bringing them in to milk. She would take Christine with her. She would hitch a pony and trap, put the churns of milk on it and deliver milk to the outskirts of the village. The villagers came with jugs to collect the milk. People in the village had their milk delivered in bottles.

She learned how to make pompoms out of the tops of the bottles. Then she would sew them on the manes of the shire horses if they went to anywhere special.

Christine sometimes slept with Kath overnight, in a bed with a mattress filled with straw. Kath was going to marry Christine's uncle, Bob Beadle, but he died in 1952, aged 42.

Her uncle Bob was a very good handyman and made nativity sets for the church. He was a blacksmith working at the back of the Swan. He was exempt from going to fight because he did the shoeing of horses. He also helped Mr Westwood to make the gates at Broomfield Hall.

They took a refugee in, a young girl.

Her aunt and uncle came to live with them and then moved into a Swedish house in Marford Rd. She remembers her aunt taking her to a hall in Welwyn Garden City to see Shirley Temple. They had to wear gas masks.

Christmas Time

They had local troops in for Christmas dinner and they would bring a Christmas tree with them, which they had cut down from Marford Road. Bell ringers from the church would come and sit down in Tudor Road with miners' lamps and hand bells and sing carols on Christmas Eve. Troops brought wooden toys made by prisoners of war. The prisoner of war camp was at Beech Hyde farm.

When she was four or five years old Christine got scarlet fever from the water under the cowshed. An ambulance came and took her to St Albans hospital. The house was fumigated and all the toys were thrown out. She had been given a teddy bear by her aunt when she was 2 years old, stuffed with straw, named Bruno. And she has still got it. Her mother hid it in the shed when the other toys were thrown out.

When her father came home from Burma, he gave her two bars of chocolate, a parasol made from paper and a selection of butterflies which were dead and had pins stuck in them and a ring made from Indian gold.

[notes taken by Nancy Hale, from a conversation with Christine Field, in May 2025]