

Glensford Station 1943-1951



A Child's-Eye View

Less happy times

Of course, life wasn't all fun. There were many times, mainly in the summer, when the track-side would catch fire, set alight by sparks from the engines. Then everyone, myself included, would have to run down the line and beat out the flames – a hot, dusty job. On one occasion a fire threatened the flax field above our house and I had to be part of a chain passing buckets of water along to put on the flames. Not being very big, it took a lot of effort for me to hold the full bucket long enough to pass it to the next person. It was a serious fire and we all thought we would be unable to stop it spreading, but eventually a barrier was made between the bank and the field and the fire slowly came under control. It frightened the adults though, something I was not accustomed to seeing.

Fear of invasion?

However, there was another time when my mother and myself were terrified. We heard the sound of marching outside our house. We looked out from behind the curtains and saw a continuous stream of soldiers coming down the lane. We rushed into the next room, which had windows overlooking the station, and saw that they had not gone onto the platform but were passing by the side of the house towards the goods yard. There seemed to be hundreds of them. Their uniforms were different from British ones and this made my mother panic. She rushed around bolting windows and doors and kept me from going near the windows. We kept very quiet and waited. We knew that my father was on the station with the other staff, but not exactly where they were or what was happening to them.

We waited a long time before my father called to us through the back door. He said that everything was all right and that the soldiers were Polish and couldn't travel until

the next day and would camp overnight in the goods yard. This did not reassure my mother at all, but there was no choice but to accept the situation. I was puzzled at the depth of my mother's fear because the soldiers did not look threatening to me. And the next morning my father brought three of them to the back door and they gave me chocolate (very dark and very bitter) and a Polish badge, which I wore for several years (see photograph).

I felt very sorry for those soldiers who had had to sleep on the hard flints of the goods yard.

Winter Storms

More frightening for me was trying to get down the hill on my way home from school in the blizzard that started the excessive snowfall of 1947. As I turned the corner at the top of the hill the full force of the blizzard hit me and flung me backwards. I held on to the hedge and tried to creep down slowly. I had to stop often and turn my back to the snow in order to be able to breathe. I was determined to keep going, but I was making hardly any progress at all. Then I saw my father in front of me. He told me to hold on to the back of his coat and shelter from the wind as we went down. We slipped and slid and slowly got to the bottom – and to my mother who was thinking we'd both been buried in the snow.

Next morning the snow was six feet deep and the hill was blocked, so no school. However, in the middle of the morning we heard a knock on the door and there were my friends Joan and Keith from the village. They had found a way of coming down through the fields. We were astounded that they didn't fall into a deep drift!

And floods

After the snow came the floods and my father and brother had to rescue people who had underestimated the depth of the water between the two bridges on the other side of the station. It all looked quite comical to me although it wasn't for those who were thoroughly wet and cold.

And now?

My childhood years at the station were very special because at no time since have I felt as safe as I did then in the middle of a railway community or as free, with the space to roam while still on railway property. I've never fully adjusted to urban living, always feeling hemmed in by too many buildings and missing the wildlife that abounded around us.



*from left to right: Charles Turner, Stationmaster; Mary Turner - Celia's mother; Celia Hall (née Turner)
- our author; Peter Turner, brother and "Olympian"*

Celia Hall (formerly Turner)