

22nd January, 2004

I would like to tell you about my stay at Lynwood Hall, which was at that time a home for orphans, children from broken home & unwanted children(my stay was an all girls school). My name was at that time Elizabeth (Betty) Rawson.

I went there around 1942 till late 1945 or early 1946.

Contrary to the residents of later years (from reading the letters in Clan magazine), we had it good.

We had a headmistress called Miss Horner , strict but fair, sportsmistress Miss Willis, teacher Miss Thegison who was Danish & lovely, cooking & sewing teacher mrs Bull, housekeeper & cook Mrs Hubbard & the matron whose name escapes me.

Yes we got punished when naughty, & put in clink when bad & believe me I did my fair share of punishment & clink.

No-one to my knowledge ever got a beating – punishment was scrubbing the dining room floor & polishing the main hall, we didn't have carpet & sometimes we had to stand in the hall barefooted in the winter & it was very cold. So you see, it was very different to the later years. What was really missing was a homely atmosphere, cuddles when upset & very little if any TLC. We had to do our own laundry & ironing.

We were taken to Guildford shopping about once a month, given money to spend, we were also taken to Auburn & Granville swimming pool in the summer.

I remember when the war ended, the gardens (we had 2) the gardeners built us a huge bonfire & we were allowed to raid the kitchen for pots & pans to belt together to make a loud noise to celebrate & no-one got into trouble. We also had fire works. So you see things were different to what a lot of the residents of later years had to put up with, some of the letters I read really were upsetting & I'm certainly glad I wasn't there then.

It is such a shame that Lynwood has been allowed to run down as it was such a beautiful building with lovely well kept gardens. I've been back a couple of times but get upset when I see it so neglected.

I have put the past behind me & have been happily married for 44years (tomorrow in fact) to a wonderful, loving & considerate husband (who knows all about my background & he says as we should all believe it is what You have made of your life & who you are that counts).

We have 2 children, son & daughter with whom we have a great relationship, we openly discuss from time to time my early years. We also have a very nice circle of friends.

I have tried to put my past to bed & to think of the future & the good times.

When I left Lynwood I had trouble with accommodation & I was allowed to live back there & go to work, I had to give my wages in & received pocket money each week. When I did find a decent place to live I was given all my wages back to start me off on the right foot.

I felt it necessary to write about the better times so as to give some of you the courage to look forward instead of backwards.

Thank you Leonie from Clan for all of the help that you have given to me.

Kindest regards

E. Norris

Elizabeth Norris

P.S. I realized that there is a possibility that my file of my early days with the Welfare Dept may have been destroyed, but I can't understand why my file from Lynwood Hall is not available

I went into Foster Care at 4 years of age & went to L. H. at 12 yrs. I felt thoroughly rejected by the Foster Mother & the Dept. everybody

I went into foster care at approximately 4 years of age with my younger sister, we stayed with the same foster mother for a number of years (what we want to know are the circumstances under which we were taken from our mother – we have had several different reason & we don't know which one is the truth. That is the main reason that we want our files). My foster mother was a hard woman. She had several children (they were not from welfare, but from families who paid her to care for them). I was what you would call the black sheep, (my sister was the pet). I got many a hiding (with a cane), sometimes for things I didn't do but wasn't believed, so I rebelled, I think that is why at the age of 12 years I was sent to "Lynwood Hall" to make me a better person. I was sent back to my foster home at the age of 16 but felt so dejected & out of place I couldn't settle & eventually sent back to "Lynwood Hall" as a boarder & went to work from there. Eventually I found good accommodation & settled down. I am still very friendly with these people & their families.

Even though it may be possible that the early files on us may have been destroyed, (I find this very hard to believe as there are a few words about me which I acquired from FOI on request for which I was charged \$15.00. I find it more difficult to believe that my time at "Lynwood" cannot be found, which makes me sick to my stomach when I think about it, as I feel I grew up a no name nobody.

Thankfully with the help of my family (husband & 2 children) & great friends I've been almost able to lead a pretty normal life, having no guidance, love etc growing up. I hope I have been able to give my children love & support, they both have a good education & have good jobs & seem to be happy & settled in their lives.

I would like to know if the senate could look into the lost file situation as knowing our backgrounds will put a few ghosts & doubts to rest.

Thank you for all of you help
Kindest regards
Elizabeth Norris

Received
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JS