

In The Beginning

John Francis Loach of Boldmere Road, Erdington Birmingham, and Eleanor Lydia Lomas of Hall Court, Cannock married in 1920 at St Luke's after an 18 month romance during which John would often be travelling from Erdington to Cannock by bicycle, tram or train. John (after a spell at GEC during the first war) was a director of the metal pressings company Walker and Loach of Priory works in Erskine Street Birmingham. Finding it hard to locate an affordable house in which to live John set about building their own home, a wooden hut called The Shack, on Tyburn farm land beside the Stratford on Avon canal at Shirley.



The Shack

Their first child, Bernard, was born at 15 Wood Green, St Paul, Wednesbury 14th December 1922. In due course Bernard had a brother, Roderick, born 1926, and they spent their first few years at The Shack. When a more commodious early 1900s property came up for sale by auction John was successful in bidding for it without his wife's knowledge, and subsequently arranged for a surprise gift to her of the property. The deeds were drawn up in her name only in 1928.



The Laurels

This house known as The Laurels, in nearby Haslucks Green Road became their family home for the next 50 years. Bernard attended Primary school where he was taught by a Mrs Whewell and later secondary school at Camp Hill, Hall Green Birmingham.

Eleanor had family friend connections at Nevin in North Wales with whom they had holidayed during their engagement. Mrs Thomas later moved to the wonderful rural isolated cottage Wyddgrug, near Madryn Castle, which was without electricity, where the family would holiday in another 25 years time. Other connections drew the family to Aberdyfi during the early years, always staying at a large terraced house called Morvyn at Penhelig. A cousin of his mother, Hilda Lomas, married Maurice Lewis from Machynlleth and they farmed at Rhiwlas just above Derwenlas where Hilda's mother Elizabeth Hopwood lived in her cottage. This was a short trip down the railway line from the halt at Penhelig to Dovey Junction and many walks were had in the Llyfnant valley taking tea at Ty Mawr. Another favourite walk was to climb the hills behind Penhelig up to the Happy Valley and take tea at Bwlch farm, where the family picture album seems to suggest they spent much time!

In September 1939 Bernard was evacuated to Warwick for a short time to live with two old ladies, The William's. Probably his first time away from home, he exchanged letters with his parents every day for the first few months. He is known to have joined the Home Guard by 1943. Also after that some of the time spent in Aberdovey was under evacuee measures, and he attended Towyn school for a time.

Bernard left Warwick to attend Birmingham University earning a BSc(war) degree in Industrial Fermentation in 1944. Exactly why this subject, is unknown, but wartime conditions are believed to have played a part.

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