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SUBJECT

Haddon Hall

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FAREWELL TO HADDON HALL

HAVE you ever watched the house you have lived in for fifteen years pulled down before your eyes? It gives you a strange feeling.

I know, because they have just started demolishing the building in which I had the only flat, a roof-top penthouse, with an unrivalled view of the entire New Docks at Southampton. That lounge window view was invaluable to a reporter much of whose work lies in Dockland.

Comfortable room, that lounge, with one inward wall slanted like the wall of an old-time sailing ship.

And what a wonderful name for my penthouse building — Haddon Hall! It sounded so

a hundred years ago, stood up to the air raids was a tribute to its builders. Near misses had made the roof like a sieve, and for years the ceiling paper fascinated me with its damp-stain pictures, some of which looked just like caricatures.

It was eerie being alone in that great building at nights when the sirens had gone, particularly when on two sides of the outside of the building they installed artificial fog machines for "smogging" out the whole of Southampton Docks.

To watch and smell that "smog" creeping inch by inch upwards until it covered the windows before you was like going down into an evil-smelling pit.

Now, Haddon Hall is coming down to straighten out a kink in Southampton's new Inner Ring Road. A whole row of picturesque but ageing houses, two small shops and a small cafe have gone already.

Yesterday I had my last view of my penthouse, its windows torn out, its roof already open to the sky.

It was a shabby flat, 51 stairs up, but it was my own for a quarter of my lifetime.

As I take the front door key off my key-ring, the words of an old song "Envoi," come to my mind:

"I have taken your picture out of its frame.

And out of my life I have taken your name.

Yet, still in my heart you are there just the same."

BOB DICKER

grand that once I received a letter from a firm of estate valuers in Eastern England, inviting me to sell them any timber I could spare and offering to send a specialist all the way to Southampton to value the trees either growing or felled!

I hadn't the heart to explain that the only possible timber in Haddon Hall was the front door, which was in very bad shape.

Even then, it didn't belong to me. The rest of the Hall's grounds consisted of a forecourt large enough to hold, perhaps, four cars, and a well yard, which housed the communal dustbin for my flat and the three storeys of offices.

How the old, slate-hung building—it was built well over