



LOTTERY FUNDED

HYPER

Heritage, Young People, Elderly Residents



Evacuation Stories and Childhood Memories from World War Two



The time table will be slightly altered that labels and postcards shall be prepared for each child.

The teachers are preparing, too, bands to be worn by escorts.

150 children have registered to be evacuated.

July 18. A parents' meeting was held this evening about 100 parents attended.

Gas mask drill is being taken daily. Mr. Datta takes the junior school; H.T. the Infants.

Aug. 2. School closes for the Summer Holidays.

Sept. During the summer holidays war has been declared, the Government evacuation scheme has taken place and the school has been closed.

1940

Feb. 12 This morning the school has been reopened, with 122 children present. Miss Wood, T.C.A. and the Head Teacher are the only members of the permanent staff present.

The children are, many of them, still in the reception areas :- Chichester

“When I was asked to contribute to this project I was not aware that there was an interest in this side of the war.

I was, of course, too young to understand the scary things at the time and many of the incidents were told to me by my parents and grandparents. When it came to relating my experiences some of the memories were quite emotional to recall when I realised that various incidents showed how fatal they could have been to our family.”

Tim Mitchell



This book is dedicated to

Keith Allen, Len Baker, Bessie & Jim Bannister, Betty Emberson
Connie Huxtable, Ann & Ken Hyde, Bill Ives, Alan Massingham,
Raymond Mayhook, Cooe McDonald, Tim Mitchell, Reg Pilcher,
Julia Phillpot, Paul Read & the Lurgashall History Group,
Barbara Sasin, June Skinner, Barbara Taylor, Peggy Toomey
& Tony Townsend for sharing their stories

“The War remains the most memorable time of my life”



LOTTERY FUNDED

HYPER - Heritage, Young People, Elderly Residents
Evacuation Stories and Childhood Memories from World War Two

This project has been generously supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund

© Colliers Wood Residents Association.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted, or stored in a retrieval system, in any form, or by any means, without permission in writing from Colliers Wood Residents Association.

First published in 2018 by Colliers Wood Residents Association.

ISBN 978-1-5272-2471-1

Design by Sharon Smart, A. C. Cooper Ltd.

Printed in the European Union by Red Deer Studio

www.hyperheritage.org.uk

The HYPER Project

During the summer of 1939 the UK government started its preparation for war and estimated that as many as 1.2 million civilians would die from injuries due to German air attacks. The British government responded to the threat with the evacuation of nearly 3,000,000 people, mainly children, from towns and cities to the countryside. Children in danger of being bombed were evacuated to stay with families in safe places to protect them, with no idea of when they would return home. The official name for the evacuation plan was Operation Pied Piper.

Those evacuees are now in their 70s, 80s or 90s and their own first-hand accounts are in danger of being lost for ever. Colliers Wood is fortunate to have a buzzing diverse community including many active older people with plenty of stories to tell and a number of dedicated young people keen to listen.

In 2015 a group of local Colliers Wood residents wanted to make the connection and HYPER (History, Young People, Elderly Residents) was born. Made up of three community groups namely the Association for Polish Families, Wimbledon Woodcraft Folk and Sustainable Merton and under the lead of Colliers Wood Residents Association, a plan was hatched to record the stories. The group discovered that many children from Colliers Wood were evacuated in September 1939 to Lurgashall, West Sussex. Co-incidentally the village still has links with Colliers Wood today through Woodcraft Folk who regularly visit with groups of local children to camp in the countryside and experience all it has to offer.

In 2016 the group managed to secure funding from The Heritage Lottery Fund which allowed HYPER to get started with their project.

The main aim of the project was to preserve the oral history of those who were evacuated as children during World War II. Overall this book is concerned with real life experiences and the long-term effects that evacuation and bombing had on those young children. In the main the sessions were led by local children. Prior to the interviews the children were supervised to brainstorm as a group and compile a range of questions to serve as a starting point for each interview.

The majority of the interviews were held in Colliers Wood Community Centre, although we did visit interviewees in their own homes if they felt more comfortable or had difficulty travelling. In order to preserve their stories for future generations it was vital to digitally record the interviews and this was achieved using iPads. Each session was transcribed and checked for accuracy then the recordings, transcripts and other relevant data including photographs were labelled and archived.

We are very grateful to the elderly residents who opened up to reveal their stories of hardship and family separation. All the evacuees were sent to the countryside and most returned home to Colliers Wood and surrounding areas whilst war was still raging. As well as those sent to Lurgashall and neighbouring areas we also spoke to elderly residents who remained in London during the conflict. Some of the accounts are also from people who were born and grew up in the countryside during that period. It was fascinating to hear such a diverse range of childhood experiences during World War II, and as a group we felt the need to include a selection of them in our project.

For many child evacuees the displacement left emotional trauma, especially in those forced to leave home at a young age. Other families established strong bonds due to the suffering they collectively endured. Some felt the pull of the countryside and made the decision as adults to return to the area that treated them so well during those difficult war years. A number of these children returned to Colliers Wood and re-established roots in the area and raised families of their own. There were, however, a few residents who had very negative experiences of evacuation and didn't want to remember or recount them and we respect that.

Whilst our main focus was recording the oral accounts, we also decided to explore the lifestyle and pastimes of the 1940s in more detail. Fruit and vegetables were grown, tended and harvested by the children and their families on our very own HYPER allotment. The children also discovered the difficulties when cooking with tiny rations first hand. We also looked at the fashion and music of the 1940s. These activities opened up our project and allowed a much larger number of children from many cultures and backgrounds to become involved.

With just 12 months to deliver our project and produce a printed book, website and social media, our journey has moved along at an alarming rate. From our initial training day alongside local historian Diane Holmes, to learning how to master the art of interview techniques using the latest digital equipment, from sowing our community allotment, to cooking recipes direct from a 1940's cookery book, we are delighted how the project has brought people together and engaged children and families to explore local history in a fun way. HYPER has provided opportunities for inter-generational relationships to flourish and our work has influenced the wider community and established understanding between young and old.

YOUR COMMUNITY NEEDS YOU!

HYPER

Heritage, Young People, Elderly Residents

COMING SOON!

Colliers Wood Residents Association, Sustainable Merton, Wimbledon Woodcraft Folk and Polish Family Association introduce A calendar of creative events for young people exploring local history during WW2

GROW OUR OWN FOOD

COOKING & FASHION

PHOTOGRAPHY & DESIGN

JOURNALISM & STORYTELLING

Check our
E

HYPER

Heritage, Young People, Elderly Residents

Invitation!

Please join us on Thursday 31st August at Colliers Wood Community Centre for tea and cakes at 6pm, followed by a screening of "Goodnight Mister Tom" at 6.30pm



John Thaw stars as the widowed and cantankerous Tom Oakley in this charming film adaptation of the prize-winning children's novel by Michelle Magorian.

When the Second World War is declared, Tom finds that his quiet life in the village of Little Weirwood is set to change when nine year old Willie Beech (Nick Robinson) is evacuated from London and billeted to him. Willie is a quiet, sad child with a deprived and disturbing past, but he slowly begins to flourish under the care of 'Mister Tom' and enjoys an idyllic village life.

Gradually a strong bond of friendship develops between the two. Then, quite suddenly, Willie is summoned back to the terrors of Blitz-torn London by his mother (Annabelle Apsion). Tom is left feeling lonely and wondering if he will ever see his dear friend again...

After the screening there will be a Q&A session and answer session part



MINISTRY OF FOOD!

HYPER

Heritage, Young People, Elderly Residents

A calendar of creative events for young people exploring our local community during the 1940s

COOKING

with Wimbledon Woodcraft Folk using authentic recipes from the 1940s Enlisting 10 to 13 year olds!

Contact Tom Searle for more information tel: 020 8543 0835 email: tomo6491@yahoo.com

Selected Wednesdays between 6.30 - 8pm
24th May, 21st June, 19th July, 4th & 18th Oct, 15th & 29th Nov, 13th Dec 2017
at St John the Divine Church Hall, 139 High Path, SW19 2JY

Selected Thursdays between 6.30 - 8pm
18th May, 15th June, 13th July, 5th & 19th Oct, 16th & 30th Nov, 14th Dec 2017
at Colliers Wood Community Centre, 66-72 High Street, SW19 2BY



To keep up to date with all our events follow us on Facebook @HYPERheritage

ENROL TODAY!



DIG FOR VICTORY!

HYPER

Heritage, Young People, Elderly Residents

WE CAN DO IT!

A calendar of creative events for young people exploring our local community during the 1940s

SOW, GROW & HARVEST

with Sustainable Merton
every Saturday morning between 10am - 1pm
Phipps Bridge Allotment
New Close off Phipps Bridge Road

Do your bit for the war effort, learn practical skills, grow your own food and get your hands dirty!

Contact Tom Walsh to enlist!
tel: 07779 879091 email: tjwalsh56@hotmail.com

All ages welcome, but children under 10 must be accompanied by an adult

To keep up to date with all our events follow us on Facebook @HYPERheritage

ENROL TODAY!



HYPER

Heritage, Young People, Elderly Residents

Invitation!

Please join us for a get together & high tea on Saturday 20th January 2018 from 3 - 5pm at Colliers Wood Community Centre to celebrate our heritage project ... so far with food, entertainment & wartime songs provided by the children of Wimbledon Woodcraft Folk

RSVP by 13th January 2018
in person to Jacqui at the community centre, telephone: 020 8543 6470
or via email: hyper@hyperheritage.org.uk

We really hope you can make it, family & friends are all welcome & we look forward to seeing you there!



Training Day and Workshop May 2017

Local historian Diane Holmes gave a talk to a group of young people introducing them to 'Operation Pied Piper', the evacuation of children in September 1939. In particular her research had unearthed an account from a 7 year old child named William Ives who was evacuated from Colliers Wood to Lurgashall, West Sussex. Diane also showed film reels from British Pathe News to inspire the young people to think about what it must have been like to be a child in that position.

In small groups the children then came up with a list of interview questions to put to two residents who had volunteered to be guinea pigs for the day. Under the guidance of Andy Smart and the Association of Polish Families, the groups were then given a list of responsibilities and they had to each decide which role they wanted to play; videographer, photographer, interviewer or director. The groups took turns to implement their new skills and make a short film of their interviews.



Collectively the young people came up with a really good list of questions which formed the basis of the interviews going forward.



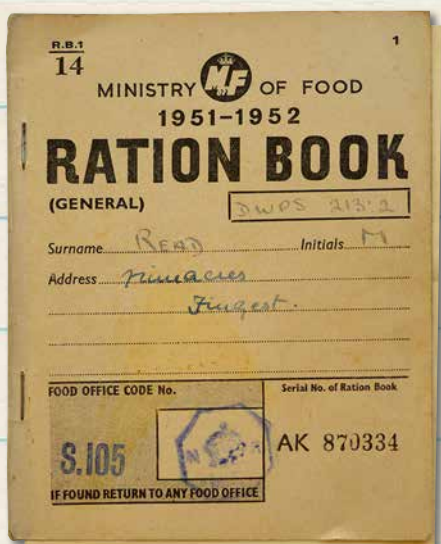


Lurgashall Weekend Camp September 2017

Tom Searle of Wimbledon Woodcraft Folk arranged a weekend away for the young people to Lurgashall incorporating an afternoon in conversation with the local history group. The venue of the village hall was the very place the children sent from Colliers Wood were billeted from and so was the perfect setting to hold the event. It was a lovely afternoon with tea and cake served and musical entertainment provided by the Woodcraft children. The Lurgashall History group showed the young people various artefacts and photographs relating to the evacuations from London.

Out of the blue, Paul Read, a member of the history group told us about a chance encounter he had had with William Ives a few years earlier in the village shop. This inspired the group to try and contact William and complete his part of the story.

Thanks to the school log books from that period, the connection between Singlegate and Fortescue Schools in Colliers Wood and Lurgashall School in West Sussex came alive. Here we were standing in the very space that these young children were billeted from and were educated in!



A ration book Paul Read brought along to show



Paul

My name is Paul Read. I live in Lurgashall and am part of the local history group.

Could you tell us more about William Henry Ives?

Yes, I met Bill Ives in the May of 1999 in the village shop. He came in and introduced himself and said he'd been evacuated to the village during the war. He had come back to have a look around and see if it was still like he remembered it. We had quite a long conversation and I wrote him a letter afterwards and sent him a copy of the village newsletter. He wrote back a very detailed letter of his time here during the war and how he got into farming. He described how he was very warmly received by the family who hosted him and he had thoroughly enjoyed life in the country. He was taught to fish by the boys there but he didn't like the geese! Geese make very good guard dogs ... or guard birds ... and they were used quite a lot at one time for that sort of thing. As you know Bill was 7 years old when he arrived here from Singlegate School and he stayed with a gamekeeper, Mr Coombes, and later on went to the Lillywhite family. Mr and Mrs Coombes had a son, Ted, who was very kind to what Bill Ives called the 'townies'.

How old was William when he came back to Lurgashall?

I don't know. I didn't ask him how old he was, but he was much about the same age as I am and I'm now 86. He told me a lot about the school and one of the Mistresses called Miss Marshall who was rather accident prone and rode to school on a little motorbike.

How did he feel about coming back?

I think he was pleased to come back because Lurgashall was the start of his ambition to be a farmer in which he succeeded outstandingly.

Do you know where he might live now?

I've no idea. After I had met him I looked in the various records I could find about people who he might have been at school with but was a little mystified as I could find plenty of information about the village children in the school registers, but there was nothing at all about the evacuee children. Perhaps they had a separate set of records, but I never found them.

He told a story about the Blenheim bomber which made a forced landing behind the barn where he lived and I heard a similar story from one of the villagers, Jim Boxhall, who was an ambulance driver. Jim remembers going to have a look at the bomber. They got it away, but whether they flew it away or dismantled it and took it away on a lorry I don't know.

How did you feel when you got the letter?

Oh I was very pleased to hear from him and I thought about how else I could proceed with my enquiries. I wrote a letter to the local paper in your part of London to see if anybody remembered anything or had any connection with the people who were evacuated to Lurgashall. I had two replies and some photographs which I've kept. I spent a lot of time on it and eventually discovered that all the main records had ended up at the Surrey History Centre in Woking. I'm sorry to say I don't know quite what happened, but I had to abandon my enquiries. I obviously had something else that I had to give more attention to.



Interview by Joel & Shoaib

What else did William Ives tell you?

He said he went down to Dorset with a scheme called British Boys for British Farms who had hostels around the country. In his letter he described life at Ham Green hostel near Bristol where he stayed for 6 weeks training. The boys used to get up at 5 o'clock in the morning and walk to the various farms. They did hand milking, cleaning out cow sheds, trimming sheep feet etc. Then they were placed onto farms for a more permanent job and Bill was very fortunate to be taken to Sands farm, Longbreedy in January 1947. That was a very, very cold winter. I was at school up in the Midlands and we were hired out to the local council to dig the snow drifts out of the roads. I've got a photograph and you can just see our head and shoulders above the snowdrift! Bill went to Longbreedy in 1947 to the home of Mr and Mrs Hallet, a small 40 acre dairy farm with 22 hand milked cows, pigs and chickens. In his letter he wrote "I lived and worked there for 4 years and learned how to make do with very little. A great lesson. I then worked for 2 other farmers and went to evening classes at the Dorset Farm Institute. I was active in the Young Farmers Club" and during this time his parents had followed him down to live in West Dorset. "By 1957 we were managing a small dairy farm and I had become engaged to a farmer's daughter." That's one of the main aims of Young Farmer's Clubs to find partners for farmers! "In 1958 we were fortunate to get the



tenancy of 117 acres at Park Farm, Herriard, Basingstoke, Hampshire. My father, wife and I started with 26 cows, chickens and pigs and together we have farmed there until five years ago (1995) when our two sons moved in and now run the business. At that time we moved 5 miles away to another lovely farm near Alton. I consider that I have been very, very fortunate to have had a marvellous wife for the past 41 years and two sons who work the farm with us. Also to be able to live and work in the Hampshire countryside. I loved my 11

years in Dorset where we made some very good friends, but will always be grateful for the time spent in Lurgashall at the beginning of the war and in particular to Ted Coombes" He then asked was Ted still around. As I say I did some more investigating and unfortunately had to give it up, but at least that will give you something more to work on.

Were you ever evacuated?

No. We lived right out in the country, about a mile and a half from the nearest village. We had much the same sort of time and I used to work on local farms during the school holidays to earn a bit of extra pocket money. We had quite an active village and I used to go down there with my aunt with whom we lived to do all the shopping for the rations. I bought a ration book with me today so you can see what it was like. It was from after the war but rationing went on for nearly 10 years after the war finished because there was such a shortage of food in Europe.

Did William Ives have any siblings?

I don't know. I never saw him again after meeting him in the village shop and I'm very sorry that I didn't pursue it more actively at the time.



A photograph of Mr and Mrs Coombes with their son Ted and daughter Kathleen, circa 1918

4/7/89

Dear Mr Read,

I was interested to see your letter in the local paper. I know Bill Ives as I was living in the flat under the one that he moved into as a baby in 1932 I think.

His parents were Bill and Gladys - her maiden name was Green - they moved out in about 1950. I feel that his mother's name was Gladys.

I cycled down in about 1940 to see 'Billy' Ives in his 'Lair' house. His real parents home

in bellins Wood pos 13th Mervin Road and I lived at 15 and also attended Lingfield school I left in 1936 to start work.

There was a man whose subject was cinema but the name of Taylor and he died about 1968 but he had a deal of interest in film.

My wife and I ~~may~~ may visit Lurgashall one day as she has been visiting St. John's at Lurgashall for some years and I do sometimes take her or bring her back to home.

Actually I was at Five Oaks whilst I was attached to B² Medium waiting to go to Normandy.

With every good wish
Yr truly R. M. Gifford

9/5/99

Dear Paul, Thank you for your letter & the Lurgashall News letter. My wife Peggy & I did enjoy our visit to your village again. It brought back good memories of 60 years ago & I realise life has been very kind to me since then.

I was 7 years 8 months old on the 1st day of the war when we arrived at Lurgashall village hall at the end of our journey which had started at Singlegate school Colliers Wood Merton S.W.19. I am not sure of the number, but I think there were about 30-40 children + teachers. Another boy Donald Leonard & myself were billeted with the gamekeeper Mr Coombes & his wife at Upper Barn, next door was the Lillywhite family, I think he was the shepherd & they had two sons. Mr & Mrs Coombes had a son Ted who was the carter on the farm & I remember he was very kind to us 'townies'. In their cottage the Coombes family also had a lodger who taught us to fish in the small pond at the top of the farm & also in the lake at the other end of the village.



Singlegate and Fortescue Schools

Singlegate School was designed by important local architect and illustrator H P Burke Downing. Built for infants in 1874, it was enlarged in 1897 and 1907 to provide a boys' school and a girls' school. In September 1939 war was declared and the government evacuation scheme took place and the school, then known as Singlegate Junior Mixed and Infants' School, was closed. On 12th February 1940, the school reopened with 122 children on the roll and two permanent teaching staff. Many children were still in the reception areas (Lurgashall, Chichester, Ashington, Amberley and Coldwaltham). The number of children continued to increase as many began to return to Colliers Wood. The school remained open for the rest of the duration of the war although teaching was interrupted,



One of Bill's old Singlegate school photos

most often during the Blitz (7th September 1940 - 11th May 1941) and again in 1944 when Germany began to launch V-1 rockets onto London. During the Blitz, night-time air raids meant that fewer children attended school in the mornings. Air raids during the school day meant that the children retreated, according to the drills that they practiced, to the air raid shelters under the school where classes resumed until the "all clear" was given. On 12th September 1940 bombs (time and explosive) fell in the playground of the School. The school remained open but the area of the playground was roped-off for the 2 days it took to clear.

14th July 1944

On 13th June 1944, the first V-1 was launched by Germany at London just one week after (and prompted by) the successful D-Day Landings in

Normandy on 6th June. Merton was hit by 35 V-1s during this "Doodlebug Summer" including a strike on Colliers Wood on 14th July 1944.

The School Log Book for this date records an enemy air raid:

09.45 and alert sounded. Children and staff in shelters (36 children only). Mothers very urgently desiring to register so I continued in my room.

10.00 danger signal given.

10.05 flying bomb fell by Christ Church. This school received a large amount of blast. Very many tiles blown off. The classrooms in the hall were very badly damaged, screen drawn inwards and smashed. Windows torn out. All classrooms received small damage, broken windows etc. In one room the hot water pipe was split and water poured down. The corridors were almost impassable owing to rubble and much furniture was blown about. Mr Blandford visited and offered to close the school but it was thought impractical as the children who were in attendance were those whose mothers were working. Tables and chairs were brought into the playground and work continued there. All the staff were admirable and we received much help from the staff of the Boys' school.



Lurgashall School

Taken from The Lurgashall W.I. 'scrapbook' of 1958 that summaries notable entries from the School Log Book during WW2:

September 1939

Many changes were brought about by the war and the arrival of evacuees. The school was used as a dispersal station where rations were given to the new arrivals. As soon as possible, the teachers who had come with the evacuees met the local Headmistress and arrangements were made for teaching to be carried on. Roundhurst School was reopened (having closed in 1923), the Village Hall was used and the local school filled to capacity.



Lurgashall School Sports Day on the village green, July 1940



Equipment was shared until more supplies could be obtained.

9th August 1940

The Evacuee School from the Village Hall was amalgamated with the local school.

7th January 1942

The evacuees from Roundhurst were sent to Lurgashall School. By this time most of the evacuees had returned to their homes and it was possible to accommodate those who remained.

Fortunately, no serious air raids took place during school hours, but various precautions were taken for the safety of the children, and an entry (in the

log-book) for 1st August 1940 reads; "Mr Evan T. Davis called to discuss staffing and air raid precautions. For the safety of the children, windows were erected, the porches were strengthened and each child was given a special place to which he or she adjourned during 'alerts'.

The headmistress was advised to distribute sweets during such periods, and some years later she was amused to be told by an old scholar, "I used to pray for an air raid warning so that I could have some sweets, and I thought how wicked I was, so I prayed that no-one should be hurt."



Bill with Ted Coombes at Upper Barn Farm in Lurgashall.

Bill Born 1931

I was born in December 1931 as William Henry Ives, but was known as Bill. I first lived in Birdhurst Road, Colliers Wood but then moved to an upstairs flat at 13 University Road when I was about 18 months old.

Do you remember when war broke out?

Yes, I was 7 years old and a pupil at Singlegate Infant school when we were evacuated. It wasn't frightening, it was more excitement that we felt. Getting on the coach it felt as though we were going away for a holiday while the bombs were raining on London. I can remember arriving at Wimbledon station where we got on



Bill with his close family members on a day out at the seaside.



Mr and Mrs Coombes with Damson the horse at Upper Barn Farm.

a train. I remember putting my head out of the window and my hat blowing off. It's probably still somewhere on the line down between Wimbledon and Haslemere! From Haslemere we were then taken by coach to Lurgashall village hall where we waited until the locals came in and picked us. They would say things like 'right I'll have you' and 'you'll lodge with me' etc. I don't really know why people were picked, but Donald Leonard and myself were lucky because we were chosen by Mr and Mrs Coombes, a gamekeeper and his wife who were very warm and welcoming. They lived in a small cottage at Upper Barn Farm with their son Ted and a lodger. Ted was the carter (driver of a light two wheeled horse-drawn vehicle for transporting goods) who had two horses and was very kind to us. I can't remember the lodger's name, but he was also very kind and he taught us how to fish with a rod made from a hazel branch, a line and a float made from a cork and a goose feather. There was a little pond at the top of the farm

where we used to fish for roach and perch.

I can't remember exactly when Donald went back to London, but he didn't stay long. Quite a lot of the evacuees left fairly early. I remember that people thought London was going to be bombed flat. They were desperate to save the younger generation by getting them clear of danger, but in fact there wasn't much bombing to start with so a lot of evacuees got fed up and returned home.

For the first few months we evacuees were schooled in Lurgashall village hall where we were taught by our teachers from Singlegate. I honestly can't remember much of the detail of going to school there, but once many of the evacuees returned to London the few of us left were absorbed into the village school and I really enjoyed that. There was a good teacher there called Miss Marshall. I got on well with her and learnt a lot. I must have been 8 years old by then.



Lurgashall Village Hall



Ted Coombes with his two heavy horses.

Did you have to leave any pets behind in London?

We had an old black and white sheep dog called Pat. I always liked animals but at 7 I don't think I worried too much about leaving my pet. We were going on a bit of an adventure and because it wasn't just me being sent away and I was part of a crowd of other boys it was fun. It's like the herd instinct with cows, you're in a group and so you don't worry too much.

Why didn't you go back to London when the other children did?

My parents were very good and left the decision up to me. They never owned a car, but they came down to visit me by train to Haslemere and then caught a lift with the small lorry that collected the milk churns. On one occasion my dad cycled all the way down with my mum's youngest sister who must have been about 19 at the time.

Did you miss your parents?

I can't think that I did apart from the first Christmas. I'd just had my 8th birthday a few days before, and on Christmas morning I was looking around expecting presents but there was nothing!

What were your parents doing while you were away?

They were still working in London. My father was a carpenter and together with my Uncle Albert got excused from going to war because they were needed in London. They helped to make repairs to buildings affected by bomb damage. My mother was a very good dress maker, and she made dresses for the younger aunties. They would see a dress that a film star like Rita Hayworth would have on, and would ask my mum to make one for them. Somehow she would. She was very clever, but she never charged

much for her work, probably a few shillings, and that was all.

What did you do for fun in Lurgashall?

I don't remember much except going fishing. If Ted Coombes was taking the horses to plough he would sometimes let us ride on the horses on our way to school. We loved doing that. I remember one time on the way home from school we met Ted coming out of one of the fields with one of the horses, Damson, pulling a small two wheeled truck. We asked for a ride, but Ted wouldn't let us because Damson was a bit frisky. As Ted shut the gate he frightened the horse who took off round the field then back through the gateway towards home where he hit the hub of the wheel causing the cart to tip. The horse ended up upside down, and if we'd been on there I dread to think what could have happened. I realise looking back that the mare was coming into season. She'd had a foal a few months previously and I remember Ted showing us the newborn foal one morning before school. It was wonderful to see.

It sounds such a contrast to how life would have been in Colliers Wood?

Yes, there was a wonderful freedom I felt there.

Can you remember much about Colliers Wood from before the war?

I was surrounded by good family. My mother's parents and sisters all lived near by. They were the Greers and they lived in Denison Road. There was always a great family atmosphere with the Greers, Christmas times and birthdays. We had a big family and sometimes two or three of the sisters would argue and fall out, but my mum

was always the peacemaker. We'd have family outings to Wimbledon Common and enjoy picnics up there. We'd walk across to Caesar's Well and dam up the little streams there. They are great memories.

Our flat in Colliers Wood had no electricity, but it had gas on a penny meter. A penny was a lot of money then and when my mum was short she would sit in the dark waiting for dad to come home with money to feed it. That's when things do feel tight and tough. We had a narrow, really grotty looking back garden, but it was where the Anderson shelter was built.

Were any of your family injured or killed in the war?

My second uncle Bill Clare was killed. He was in the navy and the last image I have of him was stood on top of an air raid shelter in the garden in his sailors uniform waving us goodbye. We never saw him again because he went down on the destroyer Harvester when it was sunk. He was reported as missing believed killed. His wife and their daughters Rose and Pat were bombed in London and I remember one of the cousins had a piece of glass embedded in her cheek from that explosion which was still there when she was an adult!

Did you see any signs of the war happening in Lurgashall?

In 1940, at the time Dunkirk was evacuated, we came home one day to find a Blenheim bomber on the farm. It had been on its way to Dunkirk but had suffered some engine trouble so the crew had landed it in the field at the back of the barn. The crew then man handled the plane into the barn and a group of airmen spent some time in there repairing it. They had



Mr Coombes (left) gamekeeper for Mr Tetley of Upper Barn Farm with his son Ted.





plenty of food including chocolates. We boys thought it was wonderful and we used to climb all over this aircraft. The crew were always friendly to us. Then one day we came home from school and it had gone. I do still wonder what happened to it, if it got shot down or got away. When I went back with my wife Peggy in 1999, we walked to the farm and found that barn had been turned into a house. The owner said there were some carvings on the barn walls made by those airmen all those years before..

Did you see many planes going overhead?

Yes I did and I thought it was exciting seeing these planes flying over, shooting each other down, but it was always in the distance really so we didn't need to shelter.

When did you go back to London?

I stayed with the Coombes' for 12 months but after that for whatever reason, they decided that they couldn't have an evacuee any longer. I was going to go back to London but Mr Lillywhite (a pig man who lived with his wife in a bungalow back towards the village) invited me to stay with them. I stayed there for 6 months, but it wasn't as good for various reasons. I wasn't abused or anything, but I didn't get enough food. When I came home from school I had various jobs to do. I was eight and a half years old and I cleaned all the shoes then, and I can smell it now, I had to stir all the potato peelings that were cooked up for the chickens. Mrs Lillywhite was never there when I got home and I was so hungry and I used to pinch things from the larder. She found out and made me write a letter to my mum and dad saying I'd been stealing food. Mum and dad were up in arms and came down the same day and took me home. We stopped by the village hall to tell Miss Marshall I was leaving and she told them I had potential and offered to find me somewhere else to

stay, but I'd had enough by then and went back home to London.

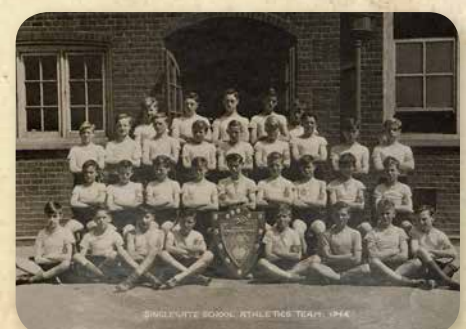
Can you remember what it was like going back to London?

Yes, I had lots of appointments with the doctor for a time because I was tall and so skinny. I hated it at the time, but all the boys used to call me 'hairpin'. I went to Fortescue School until the 11+ and then we went back to the senior part of Singlegate School.

We were lucky in Colliers Wood, because we weren't affected by much bombing. The nearest one I remember was down at the paper mill factory on the way to Merton. When the doodlebugs came I remember one landing in the sewage farm which was a very good place to land I thought! Up in Tooting they'd had lots of bomb damage while I was away. Prefabs had been built there but then they had a doodlebug land in the same area and I think a V2 as well. I remember watching the doodlebugs. We treated it as a bit of excitement when the air raid warning went off, but my parents had given up going down into the Anderson shelter by then because it was cold and nothing ever happened. Instead we went round to my grans and hid under the stairs. We'd hear these planes going overhead, and there was a mobile ack, ack thing that went round the streets firing at them (rapid-firing and automatic anti-aircraft gun). I'd started a paper round at about 10 or 11 years old at the local newsagents in the High Street and in the morning on our round we boys would find big chunks of shrapnel (fragments of a bomb, shell, or other object thrown out by an explosion). We'd pick these up and would swap them. I suppose it was dangerous, but when you're young you don't worry about these things.

The Greer family, the auntie, uncles and cousins were all very friendly. They enjoyed a visit to The Red Lion

pub (now the Co-op) on a Saturday night. I was the only grandson at the time and I'd sit outside and have a biscuit and a glass of lemonade while the rest of them had a drink. There was nothing drunken about it though because they didn't have enough money, but they just had a good time. None of them had much money but we'd all go round to granny and grandpa's (grandpa died in '38) and had regular sing songs. When we had a Christmas party, we'd all gather in grans small house at 42 Denison Road and they'd unscrew the front door and the kitchen door so we'd have more space to gather. Three of the aunties could play the piano and two could play the accordion so they would take turns to play and we'd all sing. It was really great fun and as more of my cousins were born they'd feed us children first and then the grown ups would sit down to eat and drink beer and I think the ladies might have had a glass of port, but that was about as wild as it got really. At the end of the party we'd sort of sleep anywhere and the men would play cards in the other room. On Boxing Day my dad and the uncles would always go to the greyhound racing at Wimbledon Stadium. They knew nothing about how good the particular dogs were, but my dad would always bet 4 and 2. I'm not sure he ever won any money. England had been starved of sport during the war, starved of food too and clothing was rationed, but shortly after the war they started up speedway down at the same dog track. When he came out of the army one of my uncles was the man who raked the track inbetween races. I can still smell the fumes now. We boys thought it was wonderful to go down there and get autographs from the speedway riders. One of the riders, I think it might have been a chap called Ron Johnson, won the National Championship and Jean Kent, the then film star, presented the prize. I remember that he drove around the track on his bike somehow sitting side saddle. We thought this was a great occasion.



Bill Ives as part of the Singlegate school athletics team in 1946

Just round the corner from us turning left into the High Street was an empty shop that during the war was used as a meeting place by the ARPs (air raid precaution wardens). My dad and uncle were ARPs and they met and played darts in there. I learned to play darts with them when I was about 11 or 12. There was also a big shop on the High Street called Genners, the left side of which sold cycles and the right side sold toys. They had wonderful toys in there, little lead soldiers, cowboys and that sort of thing.

Often we would arrange to meet my dad at Tooting Broadway station on his way home from work. At that time he worked in Nine Elms goods yard. He'd come out from work with his mac on and his case and we'd walk along to the Granada in Tooting. We'd stop at the little coffee stall and have a cup of tea and a small apple pie or similar before going to the pictures. I thought the Granada cinema was a beautiful building (now the Gala Bingo Hall.) One time before the war, Walt Disney held a party in the main foyer there. I can remember they had a big cake and everybody could go in and have a slice because it was Mickey Mouse's birthday or something. In those days they showed two films, a main film and then a shorter one. The only news you got, apart from the radio, was the Pathé Gazette News that was shown inbetween the films. Also, in the break, an organist came up out from the floor and played some tunes before the next film started. That was always a great night out.

Mum and dad never had much money but they loved going to Wimbledon Theatre too. They'd get the cheapest seats up in the Gods and I can remember seeing quite a few people there including Arthur Askey.

I also remember going to Latimer Road swimming baths with friends when it was hot in the summer. It cost 4 pence to get in and a penny on the tram each way so you'd have to find 6 pence from somewhere. I recall searching around indoors for comics to sell to make a few pennies and getting tuppence for returning bottles to the shop. On a really hot day we'd have a wonderful swim for a couple of hours then walk past the greengrocers on the way to the tram and, because we'd built up an appetite, buy one of their beautiful apples for a penny and have to walk home! That was the sort of thing we enjoyed doing.

I went to 8th Mitcham scouts in an old wooden little hut past the underground station towards the

park. I also went to cubs there before the war and the summer before the war started I went camping at Merrow near Guildford with the scouts. I was the only cub that went and I can remember we slept in Bell tents for a week. I loved doing that. The scouts was run then by Walter Cheshire and his younger brother Remmy. I re-joined the scouts when I came back from Lurgashall and my mum and dad got involved helping with the concerts the scouts put on in the hall.

The other thing I remember was the chap who sold baked potatoes outside Colliers Wood tube station. Food was short for many years after the war and there were no fast food outlets then. This old man with his moustache and trilby hat would push his great big heavy barrow into position everyday. There were red hot coals in the bottom of the truck and layers of potatoes cooking on top. He'd cut up chunks of newspaper and put into it a red hot potato cut into four. There was no butter because of rationing, but instead he put salt on them and they were lovely. He did a roaring trade. My cousin was born in Colliers Wood and he can also remember the man with his potatoes.

Did you keep in touch with the Coombes family?

No I didn't, which was a shame.

What's your strangest memory from wartime, good or bad?

Well I have good memories, because my experience in Lurgashall set me off on farming really and I've had the greatest life I could have ever had. I was the grateful evacuee. Living there in the country ... way down the line when I eventually moved to Dorset, I felt people were much friendlier than in London. I felt at home with the people there. I made some great, great friends when I was 15 years old that I've still got today.

How did you get into farming after leaving school?

I had two school masters at Singlegate school that had a positive influence on me, a Mr Turner and a Mr Taylor. Mr Taylor in particular knew I wanted to get into farming and he spent his holidays down in Dorset. He was very strict though and my first introduction to him was a clip around the ear! We would have to stand absolutely still when he blew his whistle and get into our lines when he blew it a second time. I obviously wasn't quick enough standing still and as I walked past him to go to my line he clipped me round the ear and said 'Boy, when I blow my first whistle you stop!' I remember the

factory girls used to call him Hitler as they walked past! He'd be had up today, but he turned out to be a great, great master. There was a YMCA scheme set up called British Boys for British Farms because after the war there was a shortage of labour. It was like the Bevin Boys for the pits. There were several hostels around the country and at 14 I left school and went to one in Bristol. I first had to go to Tottenham Court Road for an interview and once accepted had to go to Paddington Station to get a train. My friend Eric Stratton and I planned to go the same year when I was still 13, but I developed an abscess under my arm and wasn't fit to go so Eric went on ahead. I stayed on at school for a couple of months and because I loved cricket I decided that instead of going at Easter I'd leave it until the cricket season was over. I eventually left school and home in November 1946. I was put in a hostel with 30 to 40 boys. For the first week we just did the housework. New boys scrubbed the floors, peeled the spuds and prepared the food. The next week we started working on farms. Breakfast at 5.30 and then a walk in hobnail boots to a farm to hand milk cows, lift up and scratch out sheeps feet. For 8 weeks my job was to scrub out a slaughter house. I was a 14 year old boy, all this dried blood wasn't too clever, but that's how it was. After that I was taken to a 40 acre farm in Dorset and I stayed with a couple there for 4 years. I probably stayed there too long, but they were a great influence on my life. I loved the freedom there and although they didn't have much money and the farmer never owned a car, we were able to eat very well there compared to life in rationed London. We had cream and butter, they made cakes and killed their own pigs, we had chickens and eggs. On Sunday afternoons we would have tea of bread, jam and freshly made cream, which was beautiful!

Maybe without your evacuation experience, you may not have realised that you were a country person?

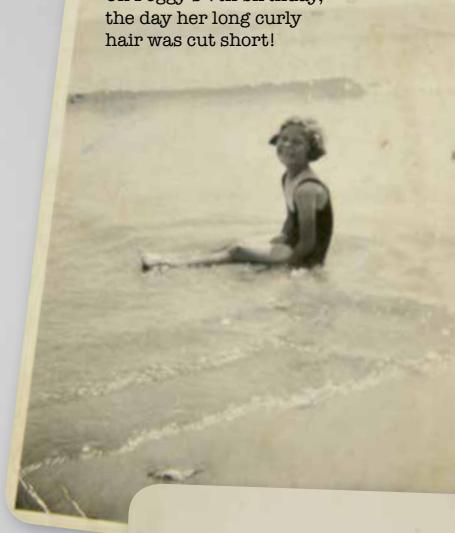
I don't think I would have, and I would never have moved out of London without that experience. I wouldn't have had any idea about becoming a farmer so that's why I am grateful. My parents moved down to Dorset in 1947 and my dad got work on a farm hand milking cows seven days a week, so it changed their lives too!

N.B. Bill still lives in the country and has 2 grown up sons who now run the family farm.

In the garden with Jocelyn and one of the girls.



On Peggy's 7th birthday, the day her long curly hair was cut short!



Peggy Born 1934

Can you remember how you felt at the time about being evacuated?

I didn't really think anything of it because I was together with children from my school, so we were with our pals. We were put on a blacked out bus so we couldn't see where we were going. When we got to the station they pinned labels on us with our names on and then we got on the train. It was like a day out.

Did you have your teachers with you?

Yes, but they left. When we arrived we all went into the local school and we all had to sit on our suitcases around the hall. The teachers left and then the people of the village came in and chose who they wanted. When they'd finished choosing there was just me left sitting there all on my own, and this man came in and said "Doesn't anybody want you?" He said I could go home with him. Mr Mayle lived just down the road in a bungalow and he had three children of his own, two daughters, Constance and June, and a son called Jocelyn. I found out the next day he was the headmaster of the school! Hmmm... But he was very, very nice. His wife was very strict and the girls didn't like me at all, but I got on very well with Jocelyn. We didn't fight or anything like that, it's just they made it known that I was an interloper.

That must have been very hard?

It would have been if it hadn't been for Jocelyn, because he used to stick up for me. He was a couple of years older than me, but the girls were much older. When it was cold they used to pinch the blankets off my bed and he

would give me one of his. I was an only child and it was like having a brother.

Did you have any contact with your parents while you were away?

Yes, my mum used to come down and sometimes she brought her sister with her and we'd have a day out.

What was school like?

All open plan. The walls came down and divided the space up. I can't remember much about the teachers, but we all enjoyed school. It wasn't as though you got up in the morning and said you didn't want to go. I couldn't say that anyway because I was living with the headmaster! But he was an absolutely wonderful man. He really was. It was his wife who was strict, but I think it was because she was forced to take me in, her husband made her.

Did she act differently to you when he was around?

Well I don't think the three of us were ever in a room together apart from when we sat down for meals. We didn't talk when we ate. We said prayers and then ate and then she would disappear. I could just tell she didn't appreciate having me there. But I

don't know why because I shared my sweets with them all.

I had long, curly hair and on my 7th birthday we went out for the day and she had it all cut off. So I wrote a letter to my mum asking her to come and get me because she had cut off my curls. My mum came straight down and walked in and said "Pack her clothes, I'm taking her home" and the woman got the suitcase and just threw everything in. My mum said "That was packed, don't throw it in!". Then Mr Mayle came in and took my mum outside and talked her into leaving me with them as it was too dangerous to take me back home. My mum also brought a bike down for my birthday and I was allowed to ride that once a day and the others all shared it as well. So I think it was just because she didn't want to take anybody in. It was an inconvenience to her. She didn't hit me, she just ignored me more often.

Did you enjoy living in the countryside?

Yes. I came back with an accent and nobody could understand me!



And what did you do for fun in the countryside?

We used roller-skates, because there was no traffic. No pavements either, it was all just roads. And other times we had a ball and a net that we fixed up ourselves and just had a bounce around, boys against girls. The rest of the time we were chasing the chickens and going scrumping. I had three friends that lived on farms and we took it in turns to go to their farms. (Scrumping is where you go where you're not supposed to and pinch all the fruit!)

How did it feel coming home?

It was very, very strange because in the countryside there are no tall buildings, no red buses, no pavements. It was freedom. You could go out walking and not very many people had cars. In London I lived in a block of flats, so I had friends and we'd sit in a shelter when it rained, but we weren't allowed to play ball games in the flats.

We had a washroom, and we used to go in there until the women all complained about us getting their sheets dirty. We weren't allowed to play big ball games and we weren't allowed to use our roller-skates.



Interview by Robyn and Dominic

Did you stay in contact with the family that was looking after you?

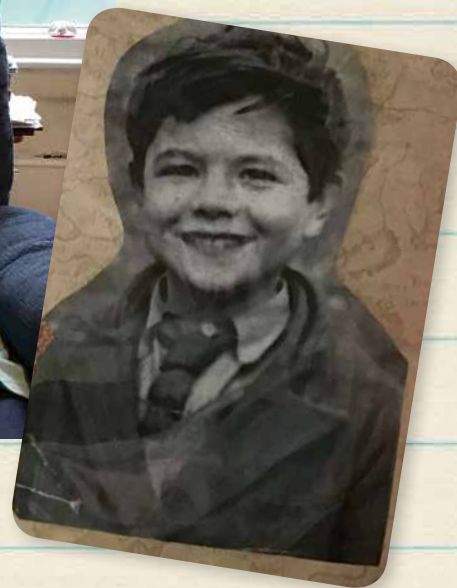
No. Never. I don't know why. Perhaps it was because my mum was a bit disappointed with the woman and what she'd done. I enjoyed all the time I was there because of Jocelyn and as I'm a loner anyway as an only child. I was used to making my own entertainment.

If you could sum up your experience in one word what would it be?

Enjoyable! I didn't really miss my parents because my mum always worked and my dad was in the navy so I didn't see much of him either. I was a bit disappointed I couldn't get in touch with other evacuees afterwards to find out how they'd got on. I tried to find out but couldn't find any information at all. It is one of my disappointments that I wasn't pushy enough to find out more about other evacuees.



Bessie's younger brother Sidy, who died when he was just 18.



Bessie

Born 1927

Bessie has dementia and so her husband Jim was on hand to help her answer questions and tell us about some of his own experiences.

How old were you when you were evacuated?

Jim - You were 12 when you were evacuated to Wales.

Bessie - Yeah.

Were there other London children there?

Oh yeah. Some of them used to be horrible to us. We used to come out of our place and they'd start kicking us. It was horrible.

Tell us what you remember.

Jim - You got a train with Sidy didn't you?

Bessie - My little brother. It was terrible. I got to hold my little brother and took him in, held him tight. My mum had to get my brother out.

Was it the London children or local children who were mean to you?

The local children. But once one got caught and he didn't half get into trouble. So it was alright then.

You looked after your brother?

Yeah, yeah, always. I liked it, I really liked it. There was only me and him. Me and my Sidy got away. It's awful but I can't remember it.

Jim - she remembers it, but ...

So the family was nice to you, but some of the local children weren't?

Yes, they were terrible and would want to hit us and not be with us. But then later they'd come up and try to play with us.

Did you stay with a family and did they have any children?

Yeah.

Did you go to school there?

Oh yeah, I loved it. It was lovely. She was a nice lady there. The local children were alright after a while to me and my little brother Sidy.

Did you feel welcome there?

I did.

Did you have any contact with your parents?

Not much, but my mum did come. Jim - Her older sister Mary used to go up and see her. She used to go up and visit them then go back to work in London.

Did your brother?

I don't know.

Jim - the brother you're both talking about died from pneumonia when he was 18, that's why she's thinking about him.

What did you do for fun?

Me and my little brother Sidy. The woman, she wanted to keep me, but not Sidy! So I got out.

Were you in the countryside?

Yes. We used to come out to get something to eat and they used to feel sorry for us, me and my Sidy, my little brother.

When did you come back to London?

Jim - You used to make ammunition boxes didn't you? She came back at about 16.

Jim

Born 1923

They used to make ammunition boxes in the mews just around the corner here. They've all been converted into flats now. Everything changed though hasn't it. I mean Colliers Wood is not Colliers Wood anymore. What is it ... Wimbledon East or something?!

What were you doing during the war Jim?

I was 16 when war broke out and was called up when I was 20. I joined the armoured corps which my brothers were in as well. The tank regiments. I did all my training in Blackpool and Morecambe then was sent to the Middle East. I didn't do any fighting by the way, no shooting or killing. I started off in Egypt doing lots of training. I was in the reconnaissance corps first, but then our regiment, the 1519 Hussars, moved to Palestine which is Israel now. They used to let 5000 Jews in a month as naturally they were all trying to escape from Europe. They used to let so many people in like we do here now. The worst thing they did in Palestine was give it all to the Jews. Instead of splitting it up and giving so much to the arabs and so much to the Jews, they gave most of it to the Jews. I was there for four and a half years and I hated it. There was so much poverty out there. It was terrible. Dubai was a desert when I was there, I don't know how they built that place in the desert.

I came back in 1947 and lived at 1A Bygrove Road. My brother lived around the corner at 18 University Road. When we lived there we had a toilet in the kitchen ... mad isn't it!

What was Colliers Wood like in 1947?

It was a village almost, which was much, much better. With shops everywhere. There were three butchers in Colliers Wood and a bakers round the corner next to where The Red Lion pub used to be. There was a Co-op on the other side where Burge and Gunson is now. Today all we have is the supermarkets and that's a different type of shopping. Bessie used to go out shopping every day and she could get everything she needed in the High Street. We used to know all the shop keepers and get a lot of stuff on tick (credit). My mum used to ask me to get a loaf of bread and tell them to put it on the book! Another thing you had to do was go to the pawn shop. I used to have to take me brother's suits to the one just over the bridge. I'd get a pound or whatever it was for the suit, then



Jim and Bessie's wedding day

have to go and get it out again Monday when the boys got paid. They used to take anything there, even sheets. It was a tough old life, but I don't think it did us any harm. I think children in those days had a better life. The main thing for me was that we could play out in the street. We would play cricket in the street, play football and ride our bikes. They can't do it now, it's impossible. You can't even send them round the park because you're afraid someone dodgy might be there. I'd go off to the park all day. My mum would give me a packet of sherbet and a bottle of water and we used to put the sherbet in the water, shake it up and make lemonade! We'd take bread and jam with us and make a tent with an old blanket. There used to be a swimming pool in Wandle Park behind The Royal Six Bells pub (now Istanbul Meze Mangal restaurant). I used to go in there, but when the war broke out they converted it into a communal air-raid shelter for anyone who lived nearby. We would use a shelter at the top of Bygrove Road. I'd be in there all night with my mother, uncle

and sisters. Then we'd get up in the morning and do a 12 hour shift at work. I used to work at Frys the smelting works. They call that area The Tandem now don't they? It used to be all factories around there.

I enjoyed going to Wimbledon Palais, which was the icon of Colliers Wood really. They had wrestling and boxing in there plus skating, dances and shows. The Beatles played there and the Rolling Stones. Then they pulled it down.

Me and Bessie met in the Kings Head by Merton bus station. There used to be a dance hall upstairs and she found me there. Saw me in my uniform ... and fell in love with me!

Do you have any happy memories of the war?

Well the happy thing for the women was the Yanks coming over and meeting them in the pubs! The women used to be mad on the Yankees.





Reg Born 1933

How old were you when you were evacuated?

I was just about 7 years old. I was evacuated several times. First I was sent to Rottingdean which they decided was a bit too near the coast so I was only down there for 2 or 3 months before I was back in London. Then they evacuated me to a farm in Sussex staying with the farm labourer. I was only on the farm for about 6 months when his wife became pregnant so I had to move back to London again! After that I got evacuated to Redruth in Cornwall where I stayed for a year or so. When my parents came to visit me they found that the people I was staying with were exploiting me. Everything was on coupons then, You couldn't buy anything without coupons, food, clothing, anything and my father discovered that they'd been using my ration books to clothe their own people. I was running around with holes in me shoes!

How did you feel about being evacuated?

I've got two brothers who were both evacuated with me, one stayed in the same place and the older one was with another family just down the street, and to us it was just an adventure. When my father found out about what was happening in Cornwall he brought us back to London before we were evacuated again, this time to

Wales. We then stayed down there until towards the end of the war, when my father came down again and found they were doing the same thing as the people in Cornwall! I think we were just unlucky.

Did you have any contact with your parents while you were away?

We wrote letters and received letters back probably one a month. They only visited twice, once to Cornwall and once to Wales. They were working in London so they didn't have time to come more than that.

What did you do for fun?

Oh I enjoyed it on the farm. That was great, we used to run around and collect the eggs and usher the cows around and all the rest of it. I was only young of course, about 7 years old.

What was it like at school?

Because of being disrupted and having to be enrolled in different schools and because of holidays and being taken back and forth to London I wasn't at school that much! Teachers were not readily available of course, and once I was back in London it was only a couple of years before I left school at 15. I was 12 when war finished.

What was your strongest memory from wartime - good or bad?

Being bombed out I should think, it was quite scary. My father brought us back from Wales right near the end of the war when doodlebugs were

coming over London. We were living in Peabody Avenue near Victoria and one dropped right on the block next to where we were living. My grandmother used to live in the next block to me and on that particular night she was staying in our place. I was sleeping on a mattress on the floor and she was sleeping in my bed. I was next to the wall, and there was a chair against the wall and when I woke up with the bomb going off, the back legs of the chair had slipped between the wall and the floor and were trapped. Obviously the wall had moved out and come back again! It ruined our property and all our possessions so we were put into temporary accommodation in a big hotel until they found another empty flat for us. We got furniture that was requisitioned from other bombed out buildings and we stayed in this new place in Winchester Street, Pimlico until long after the war ended, paying rent to the private owners. My parents were living upstairs and I was married and living downstairs in the same building until I bought me own place and moved out in 1969.

Was religion an important part of your life?

Not I'm not religious at all. My parents never went to church. I think they were atheists. The people we were evacuated to would occasionally go to church, but they weren't strict religious people.

Did you stay in contact with any of the families that looked after you?

No, my parents weren't very happy with them so there was no point in keeping in contact.



Interview by Robyn and Dominic

How do you think your evacuation experiences affected you?

Well I suppose they got me to accept life as it is really, to live day by day.

Other people have talked about London having a good atmosphere and people helping each other. Did you experience that?

Oh yeah, that was automatic. If anybody was in trouble you tried to help. That feeling has probably lasted me all my life really, I've never felt bad against anything you know.



Raymond

Born 1942

Were you evacuated?

No. my father was a warden and he loved to do his job ... and probably nobody wanted us, I don't know!

Do you have stories of strong memories from the war?

One afternoon when I was about 2½, I was sitting next to a big cupboard and I was dying for a call of nature. I toddled over to my potty and just at that moment a bomb went off somewhere and rubble all came down where I had been sitting by the cupboard! So really the potty saved my life ... it killed the cat, the cat got injured and we had to put it down.

Do you know is the house still there?

I still live in it. I've lived in the house all my life, over 70 years.



Len

Born 1933

How old were you when you were evacuated?

I was 10, and I was with my sister who was about 2 years older than me and my brother who was about the age of 2 or 3 and just about walking.

Were you all in the same house?

No when we got there we were all herded into the village hall. All the evacuees were standing around, and the people came in from the village to pick or select who they wanted to take. It was like a market! I didn't realise it at the time, but my mother and baby Ron went to one house, I was two houses down the road and my sister Amy was right down the other end of the village. So we were all split up, but all in the same area and all attending the same school. My mother was practically next door so we could see her everyday, but it was the first time I'd been living apart and I didn't know it was going to happen until they split us up in the hall and dished us all out to different people.

Do you remember how you felt about being evacuated?

I didn't really mind, I'd been evacuated before down to my aunt's place in High Wickham, but this was different because we went with the local community. I stayed with a Mrs Warriner, and she had a young boy

called Michael, who was about 5. It was very nice there but I don't know why we were picked. I suppose people looked at you, people from London, and they weren't sure who they were going to get, who we were. I suppose to a certain extent they were a little apprehensive about who they would have in their houses.

What was school like?

The school was in a hall that was divided down the middle with a curtain. Those aged 10 and 11 upwards had one side and the juniors and infants were on the other. You could hear what was going on next door. I think there was another 2 or 3 from Wimbledon who were there too, and on occasion when I came home I used to see this person I recognised as I was riding to work on my bike. I used to pass him time and time again coming down Plough Lane but I never knew exactly who he was.

Did you enjoy living in the countryside?

Yes, we had some good times. We used to go out on Saturday mornings round to one of the farms, well you know what boys are like, there were 8 to 10 of us that used to saddle up the poor horse and cart and move it around all day carrying lemonade and sandwiches for lunch. We had a damn good time quite frankly. The only thing about it was the way we used to flog that poor horse. It was terrible and it



died in the end. We didn't kill it, but we had some effect on it. It was a wonder we didn't turn that cart over. We were only 10 and 11 year olds, but boys will be boys. We had a lot of freedom really, but there wasn't all that much to do there. We used to go beating and I would put on long trousers and a hat because we would be walking through woods and kale taller than us and it was like walking through a jungle. We'd be driving all the partridges, pheasants and rabbits out, and ringing the whole area were the chaps with the guns. It was alright when the weather was bright, but when it was wet and you walked through a field of kale you'd get soaked something terrible!!

How old were you when you returned home?

We came home in 1945 so I was down there for about 18 months. I'll never forget coming back. We got out to Clapham Junction and ended up in the town hall in Lavender Hill and were dispersed from there to make our way home. As regards to a train journey, I can't remember that part of it.

Did you stay in contact with the family who looked after you?

I did for a couple of years, but I went down there years later on my 40th wedding anniversary, went round the village and I couldn't believe what I saw. To anyone who's been evacuated anywhere I would say remember the place as it was. We went into the local pub to get something to eat and drink and started asking questions then we walked round the village and we ended up in the church yard, in the cemetery. A lot of the people we knew from the village were buried there. It was very poignant, all these people

we used to know. In a village like that, everyone knew everything that happened and I'll never forget being told that a certain person called Don Chilvers from the village had been killed in the war. I didn't know the man but when I went back 40 or so years later on this visit I went round to the war memorial to see if this name was on there. That name had stuck with me all that time. It's very sad.

I used to be a bit of an artist in those days and I drew a lot of the village in this book with pastels. I brought it home with me but I'm damned if I could find it later. I had a lot of memories in there. We moved house so I don't think it'll ever turn up now. It's a pity, all those drawings I did of that village and it's all been lost. Terrific memories of that place.

How did it feel coming home?

Very strange because when we left there Michael the little boy was about 6. I broke down because I didn't want to leave him just like that. We used to get on very well and I knew I was coming home, but I didn't know what would happen to him.

What was it like back in London?

Well not many changes apart from all the bomb damage around our area. The flying bombs had gone all round Wimbledon station, Lyveden Road and Dennis Park Crescent. We were in the middle. We used to go down on the bomb sites and get plenty of wood to make trolleys. As kids we used to go all over the place with one of those. We used to knock anything up we wanted. You could often hear the anti-aircraft guns going off along the railway, you know they used to shove them down there at night, firing to make things look good I think ... to keep our morale up. But one afternoon I did watch a spitfire shoot down a flying bomb over Dundonald Rec. When the Blitz started my dad had two allotments in Dundonald Rec and I used to love them. It was how I learned a lot of gardening. I used to be out there digging the allotments and picking vegetables. One day I took some round to Granddad who lived nearby and when I came back along Dundonald Rec there were crowds of people all out in the road looking up at this dog fight going on in the sky. It must have been over Croydon way. I thought, what if there were any stray bullets flying about, you know, with all these crowds of people all standing and watching? It was entertainment though!



What was your strongest memory from wartime?

One of my biggest memories is D-Day, With all the gliders and aircraft going overhead taking the troops to the landing grounds in France. The sky was full of aircraft. They came right over the village and that was a real drone noise that sounded like the flying bombs. You'd see those flying bombs coming over and the problem was when the engine shut off, you'd then see them dive, they didn't go straight down they used to glide down. It was an experience and I used to see quite a few of them around.



Interview by Robyn

How do you think your evacuation experience affected you as an adult?

I don't think it did really. It was just an experience in life and we were only 10 and 11 year olds. I wouldn't like to see it again though, put it that way.

If you could sum up the war in one word what would it be?

I suppose it was a necessity, but when you think of all that wastage of life ... but I suppose it was a necessity because I don't know where we would have been today, I don't know, I don't know what would have happened.



Connie in
Abertridwr, 1939



Connie Born 1930

How old were you when you were evacuated?

I was just nine years old when the war started. I was on holiday with my grandparents in Abertridwr, South Wales at the time and we went to Bath to see other relatives. My mother was supposed to come to Bath to pick me up and bring me home in time for the new school year, but because the war started I went back to Wales with my grandparents. I was lucky really that I was with family and not with strangers. I stayed there for a year, and then I went to live with my other grandmother and aunt until I came home.

How often did you see your parents during this period?

Not very often. My father was full time in the ARP as he was too old to be called up at the beginning of the war. The ARP was a group of people who had to help when the air raids siren started. My father worked with a group of other men and they had their own truck and used to go and help people when the bombs fell. My mother worked in the big Co-op that used to be in Morden. She was in charge of all the rationing. We did write to each other. After she died I found a letter amongst old papers that I wrote to them while I was staying with my grandparents.

What was school like?

I changed schools quite often. I was at the first school in Wales for a year. It was right opposite where my grandparents lived, so I only had to cross the road to go to school. Then I had to go to another school when I went to stay with my aunt. I took the 11+ exams and passed, so then transferred to the local grammar school and when I came home in January 1943 I went to school in Wimbledon.

What's your strongest memory from wartime?

Being away from my parents I suppose. You miss your parents. Even though we lived in Wales we were only 20 miles from Cardiff so the German planes used to come over and sometimes they dropped their bombs when they were trying to escape from the British.

What is your happiest memory?

My happiest memory I think was coming home! And being able to go to school and make friends ... and keep them. When you move schools you have to leave behind all the friends you've made. I would make friends and not be able to keep them. When I went to the school in Wimbledon though I met Mary and Pam and we're still friends today!

Did you attend any clubs during the wartime era?

I went to Girl Guides and I actually went to church. My parents always made sure I went to Sunday school wherever I was. Eventually I became a Sunday school teacher.

Did you have any pets or animals that you had to leave behind?

Yes, I had a cat called Whisky. When I stayed with my grandmother I used to go up to the farms. My uncle was the local milkman, and he had a horse and cart that he used to bring the milk down with. I would often go up and help him.

What did you do for fun?

We used to play Hopscotch and that sort of thing, or go for walks. There was no television obviously. I also used to play darts with my mum and dad when I was back home. We always had a darts board in the kitchen.

Did you see your grandparents much after you came home?

Oh yes, I used to go and visit them, and my aunt used to come up and visit us. But my grandparents were quite old by then.



In London for Christmas, 1943



With Pam on Guide Camp
in Mickleham, 1945

43.5^a Kingston Road
 Raynes Park
 S.W. 20
 To my dear Daddy
 From your daughter
 Bonnie E. Bristow
 at 178 Thomas St
 Abertridwr
 Caerphilly
 South Wales
 Ten Aug 14 1940.
 Love from
 Bonnie XXXXX
 X

A photograph with message on the back sent to Connie's father, 1940



Are you still in contact with anyone you met while you were in Wales?

Not family because they've all gone now, but when the doodlebugs came over London I was sent back to Wales again. This time went to stay with an aunt and uncle who had a pub on top of the mountain. There was no water, no telephone, no electricity, nothing! Pamela came over to see me there because she had also been sent back to Wales.

Did you ever see or hear a doodlebug?

When I lived with my parents in Kingston Road one came over and landed in Dennis Park Crescent. I know somebody who knew the family whose house was damaged. The mother was upstairs and the children were downstairs and she couldn't get to them. They were twins actually. She told me this story some years ago. It was why I was sent back to Wales.

How did you feel when you found out that the war was over?

I was at Guide Camp. I joined the guides when I was about 14. I think it was August when the war finally finished. It never stopped raining on that camp from Saturday to the Wednesday when my parents came down. My mother brought me a pair of overshoes as I didn't have boots with me because it was August. The English weather! I was with my friend Pamela who I'm still friends with today and my parents came down to camp and we talked about it then. I was very pleased obviously, but I wasn't old enough to go up to London and join in the celebrations. My husband did, but I didn't know him then!



8th June, 1946

TO-DAY, AS WE CELEBRATE VICTORY, I send this personal message to you and all other boys and girls at school. For you have shared in the hardships and dangers of a total war and you have shared no less in the triumph of the Allied Nations.

I know you will always feel proud to belong to a country which was capable of such supreme effort; proud, too, of parents and elder brothers and sisters who by their courage, endurance and enterprise brought victory. May these qualities be yours as you grow up and join in the common effort to establish among the nations of the world unity and peace.

George R.I.



Interview by Maya, Sam and Dominic

Keith Born 1926

Where were you living when the war started?

I was born in London, but was living in Bournemouth by then and was 13 when war broke out. In 1940, I think in about May time, we were instructed to go to school on a Sunday night and were told that soldiers were coming to the school. The school had been commandeered for the British Army who were being evacuated from France. Lorries turned up with what we called palliases, which were mattresses made of straw, and it was our job to distribute them around the classrooms. Gas boilers were wired up with pipes from the gas mains and women volunteers started cooking food. The soldiers arrived in army lorries and we had about 8 or 9 soldiers to a classroom. They were in very poor shape - they'd been bombed and machine gunned and had lost everything off the beaches. They were filthy dirty, but were cheerful believe it or not. They were fed and watered and looked after for a fortnight by us school children. We were willing to do our bit and it felt good to be needed. We weren't old enough to go into the army but a lot of our brothers and sisters had been called up so it was nice to feel that we had a job to do. In the evenings the local ladies used to go round the tobacconists and get free cigarettes, they'd tip them all into a bath and bring them round

the classrooms to give away. The poor lads were quite shocked by the fact they had to be evacuated, they thought they were going to be fighting and some of them had never even fired a shot. The army gave them all new uniforms. They were from an assortment of regiments so being boys we collected all the cap badges and ended up with quite a collection! After they had left we had French soldiers who were brought in from a camp, but they were rather unfriendly. We also had Norwegian soldiers because the British army was evacuating there as well. They were very nice and they spoke English. After they had all gone the school had to be fumigated because with about 60 soldiers living rough, there was quite a problem with cleanliness. During that time we went to the local YMCA and the school ran debating clubs in every room.

Do you remember any of the subjects you debated?

Yes, one was 'What would we do about the U Boat menace in the Atlantic?' Very topical!

When I was 14 I left school, and put my name down to work on the railway. Unfortunately there weren't any jobs going at the time so my name went on a waiting list and I went back to school until Christmas when a job became available. So at 14 and 4 months I left school, and worked until I was 72. I only had one weeks unemployment in all that time.

How did you feel at the time of the war?

At that time all of us youngsters wanted to get into the services. In Bournemouth we had the air training corps (that I was in), the naval and army cadets. Those of us in the air cadets thought we would become pilots and fly a Spitfire, not realising what that entailed. At 14 you don't get those opportunities!

Between the buildings of our school was the cloakroom where we all had our numbered peg. They put a steel frame up inside the cloakroom with heavy girders and then put 6 feet of sandbags on the top. And that was our air-raid shelter.

Did you have to use it much?

We did. One particular day we were supposed to be in the air-raid shelter because the siren had gone off, but the whole school, children and teachers, were out in the playground watching open mouthed as German bombers flew overhead on their way to bomb Coventry. At the time we didn't know what they were going to do obviously, but we witnessed two or three hundred enemy aircraft flying over our school in beautiful formation.

The first bomb I ever heard was on a Friday night, the sirens sounded and we hid in our shelter in the cellar under the stairs. We thought there was nothing in Bournemouth to bomb but there was a loud swishing noise followed by a big bang. The bomb had dropped in a residential area and they reckoned that the bomber had come back from bombing London and had one bomb left so wanted to get rid of it before getting home. The bomb dropped in Glenferness Road and demolished a side of a house.

How old did you have to be to fight?

You were called up at 17 years and 9 months to be sent for a medical and then told whether you were in the Army, Navy or Airforce. Most went into the army. When I was called up I had the medical. They then told me I was more important to them staying at work on the footplate of locomotives than marching about with a rifle.

How did you feel about that?

Yeah, fine. When the war first started the Territorials were immediately called up and we also had a big regular army in those days plus hundreds of men volunteered, a lot of them railwaymen. This left the railways short of staff at a time they were getting busier and busier so they didn't want to lose anybody else. And I was actually reserved until I was 26.



Do you remember any evacuees coming to Bournemouth?

Yes, hundreds came to Bournemouth from the East End of London. A lot then returned quickly because there was a very quiet period until Christmas. Some came and caused problems because they came from difficult homes where cleanliness was not near to Godliness. A lot of the women who took them in burnt their clothes because they were rotten with lice. They cleaned them all up and the WVS got them fresh clothes. Many of them ended up staying in Bournemouth after the war and never returned to London.

Did you know any of them personally?

Yes. Two schools were evacuated entirely. One was evacuated to one of our Grammar schools and they divided the school day in half so that both sets of children had their education. The boys and their teachers were all put up locally. We used to play football with them and a lot came to our church. They mingled, and it was very nice. The living conditions in Bournemouth were generally a lot better than in the East End of London, which was very poor. It opened their eyes to another form of living.

I think a lot of them were quite out of their depth. Bournemouth was a very gentle town and suddenly you've got people who were used to back to back houses being billeted with people with big gardens back and front. It was a strange world, and they had to find school places for them. Our school were then bulging at the seams, we had 48 in our class which I imagine affected our education some what. We did maths, English, geography, history, science and music but no languages because they were frowned upon.

My family didn't take any evacuees in, but Bournemouth had a great many single ladies who'd lost their husbands in the Great War, some of whom were quite well off, and they would take in evacuees. They were paid per head and that was a success. An

organisation called the WVS were very much involved in getting evacuees settled.

I stayed working on the railway throughout the war. We had food rationing but us railwaymen got extra - extra cheese, extra soap (because we had a dirty job), and extra tea. Rations were quite tight, but if you had an event like a birthday party or wedding you could pay a visit to the local food office and get additional coupons. They were quite generous actually. In everyday life everyone learned how to make do with vegetables. Meat rations were tiny and you only got an ounce of butter that was patted into a little square. We would fill up on bread and milk because they weren't rationed. You could breed chickens in your back garden and anyone with space could also have pigs. When they grew to size the slaughter man would come round, kill them and give you all the joints. We didn't have one but one of our neighbours did. We got used to eating soya bean sausages. Fish wasn't rationed, but it was very hard to get and if the fishmonger got some in word would get out and all the mums would be queuing up by 6am! In 1938 the school decided they would take over some allotments and we got a big field that we were allowed to go to during school hours. We used shovels to dig all this ground over. It was decided that the ground needed fertilising so some of the local farmers dumped pig manure on them over one weekend, much to the disgust of all the houses that lived round it! On the Monday morning we got our boots on and dug it all in. The crop of potatoes that year was fantastic. That land is all built on now I might add.

Did you stay in Bournemouth throughout the war?

I lived with my parents until I was 18 and then I came to London in June 1944 and settled in Lambeth. At that time the doodlebugs were coming over regularly. They sounded like a moped, they had wings and the bomb sat in the middle, and when the engine ran out of fuel they would drop. They weren't guided, they just dropped anywhere. They were a nuisance weapon and very dangerous.

Your parents must have been reluctant for you to live in London?

My dad was an air-raid warden during the war and a London policeman for 25 years. He was a Londoner born so was quite pleased when I came back to London. We were a very close family and he used to come and visit me regularly.

What was the thing that you remember most about the war?

How friendly people were. If somebody got into trouble you helped them out. There was a great feeling of comradeship between everybody, I mean it's an amazing feeling.

I remember digging air-raid shelters in 1938 when we thought the war was coming. A lot of people with big gardens dug big trenches and put corrugated iron on the top as shelters. In London they got Anderson and Morrison shelters, but they never gave them to people on the coast.

Did that feeling of camaraderie stay for a long time after the war?

It did actually, because people were grateful that we'd come through. Many of us had lost friends and relatives and there was a great feeling of closeness. But after a few years people began to think more of money and the feeling disappeared. During the war people never worried much about money they just got on with life, but then, during the 50s and 60s I think people began to revert.

What did you do for fun during wartime?

We had great times when the American troops first came into Bournemouth. There were hundreds of them billeted, and they were a great thing, everybody remembers them. Most of them had never been outside the United States and wanted to explore our country and do things our way, so they joined our local country dancing teams and ran dances of their own. They'd send an army lorry to take hundreds of packets of fish and chips back to the camp in hot boxes. They brought a lot of prosperity to the shops! They were so generous. I got to know crews of 6 American coastguard ships quite well who were brought over to mine sweep off the Normandy beaches before the boys landed. They would give us gifts of large tins of syrup and dried fruit to take home to our families. They used to like our little tiny shunting engines, and get up on the footplate because they'd seen nothing like it in America.

Was religion an important part of daily life?

It was in mine as I was brought up in the church. Many of the evacuees also joined the church because they ran youth clubs, dance classes and lots of other social activities. Whether or not they would have done it at home I don't know.

Barbara

Born 1926

Can you remember when war broke out?

It was the 3rd September 1939 and I was playing in the back garden with my brother and making a lot of noise. My father came out and told us to be quiet as there was an important announcement about to be made on the radio. So we did as we were told and just stood still. After rabbiting on for ages I heard "This country is now at war with Germany." The air-raid sirens went off as soon as that announcement was made and everybody started screaming and yelling and running into the streets. It was a false alarm but it frightened people. I had no sense about what had been happening in Europe, I didn't even know who Neville Chamberlain was. Children weren't educated in those days about international situations like they are now.

How long was it before you were evacuated?

I was sent away the very next day! People thought we were going to be wiped out immediately but nothing happened. I was evacuated to a little village to stay with my grandparents.

Did you travel there with your parents?

No, my parents didn't come with us, they hired ... I don't know what you call them ... voluntary workers to escort children around and this lady, who I'd never seen before, took me and my brother on the train. It was just as well she was there though because

although we left Paddington about 11, we didn't get into Swindon, where we were going to get another train, until 3 in the morning! We all wanted to spend a penny and get something to eat. It was really dramatic. Our escort was a lovely lady and I wasn't frightened, but I didn't know my grandparents either. I think I'd only ever met them once.

Can you remember how you felt about being sent away?

I couldn't make out what was happening. There was a strange atmosphere, everyone was tense, screaming and yelling. Typical of English people, they didn't know what war meant. It went on and on for weeks and weeks and I was just sitting in a classroom with a load of 5 year olds. It's a wonder I got any education at all. In the end my parents decided I should return to London.

How long were you away for?

I came back in December, I can't remember the date, but I was away for nearly three months which was long enough! I then won a scholarship to attend a new school in Streatham, but of course everything changed because the school closed and I had to be evacuated again. My dad worked for the Crown Agents so couldn't get away and my mother wouldn't leave him. This time I was sent to a place called Chichester. I'd never heard of it! All the other children had already been housed. When I arrived I had to walk quite a distance and I was blooming exhausted by the time I got there. I ended up in a house right opposite the Royal West Sussex Army barracks. There was a lot of noise coming from there because they were all getting ready for war. I was very lucky though because the people I stayed with, Hopkins was their name, were really nice and kind. Mr Hopkins was managing director of Shippams, the meat and fish paste manufacturers. They spoilt me. I had my own bedroom and they had two little dogs, and I'd always wanted a dog. I wasn't allowed a dog in London, so yes it was a happy time there.

Did they have any of their own children?

They had a son who was in the navy, but the ship he was on was torpedoed, at Dunkirk I think, and he was stranded in the sea for four hours. When he was finally rescued he went bonkers. He came home to his mum, all he did was scream and yell. It was quite frightening to see a full grown man behaving like that. But he had shell shock you see.

I saw plenty of the wounded. When Dunkirk occurred they had to put most of the soldiers into hospitals because they had been in the water for days. I remember coming home from school one day, walking past the hospital and seeing all these men that had been wounded lying out on the grass in their sleeping bags. There wasn't any room for them in the hospital - hundreds and hundreds of men. It was an incredible sight, but no one's ever talked about it.

You were on the coast and near an army barracks, was that really a safe place to be?

Well this is the laugh about it, I don't think so when I look back on it. We had the army barracks and four miles away Tangmere Aerodrome where they had a spitfire station. But the Germans didn't bother to bomb us, they saved their bombs for London. I used to see them going over. When the Battle of Britain happened I remember standing out and watching them fight one another. Once I saw one of the planes get hit and I saw it spiralling down with the pilot hanging out screaming "meine mutter!" But I'm afraid he didn't get his mother because the plane crashed. We weren't allowed to go out until they'd picked all the bits up, but my dear little west highland terriers ran right out in this field fighting one another. When I went over to see what was happening, I saw that they were fighting over a jawbone ... they'd missed that bit of the pilot.

That must have been an horrific thing to see?

It was. The plane had come down and burst into flames. I tell you, war's a rotten thing. I saw everything, Chichester was a very important place because of the aerodrome and the barracks, but it didn't have one bomb land on it! It's strange isn't it.

So what was the experience of school like there?

At first the school was overcrowded and we used to have to sit out in the corridor to do our lessons. But then some of us were sent to have our lessons in the Bishop's Palace along with our teachers from the Streatham school. Apparently, Bishop Bell did a lot of work that was kept hush, hush, and he had decided that he needed to move to Brighton so he could get to London quickly. He kindly let the school use the Palace and it was a marvellous building, 12th century I think. We had the run of all these lovely rooms. There was a rota to pump the organ during morning prayers and every time it was my turn to pump the blooming thing they'd



have a hymn with loads of verses. I would be exhausted!

Another thing they had in this chapel was a great pile of bricks against the wall. Behind it, we were told, was a very rare medieval painting that they wanted to protect from possible damage during an air-raid. Years later when war was over I went back and saw this picture. It was nothing really, just a chalk drawing of the Virgin Mary holding the baby. A very amateurish picture and nothing much to look at. In my opinion it would have been a good job if it had been destroyed!

Metro Goldwyn Mayer, the film people, came in one day as they wanted to film the girls trooping into the palace in the morning, it was broadcast on the Pathe newsreel. "The children who go to school in a palace" it was called, it was quite a big story.

Did you have any contact with your parents while you were away?

Oh, yes, I used to write to them. My father had a job that was vital to the war organising convoys to Malta, only 9 times out of 10 they'd get torpedoed and they'd have to start all over again. He had a nervous breakdown in the end because it was so stressful.

My mother looked after him and he did recover in the end, but it wasn't over night.

Did you mix with the local children?

Oh yeah, we used to have a sports day and went to the cinema where special films would be put on for us. In fact we had a good time really. We weren't in the same classes with them, they kept their own teachers and we had ours.

How old were you when you returned to London?

When I was 16. I was still at school, but my mother was taken ill and I had to come home to see her. She needed to have someone with her all the time so my dad said I had to do it. He was out all day I'm pleased to say as he wasn't what I call a domesticated man, not like they are today. He never did anything, just sat there while everybody waited on him.

What was wrong with your mum?

She'd had a stillborn baby and it had damaged her spine. I didn't understand all that in those days, I didn't even know what being pregnant meant! She did recover, but she was very poorly for a long time. You couldn't get into hospitals then because they were all full up of wounded soldiers. Also by that time all the doodlebugs and rockets were



Interior and exterior photographs of The Bishop's Palace, where Barbara was schooled during the 1940s

regularly coming over London. It was a very frightening time. I got myself a job in Fleet Street and I'll always remember one day when I was in the office talking to the boss and suddenly everything went round and round and I went round and round with it. Couldn't think what was happening but apparently one of these rockets had landed on a school in Islington, which was not exactly round the corner. I forget how many children were killed, maybe as many as 200? It was terrible, those rockets were really wicked things. By the following year war was over, but we didn't know that at the time and just had to carry on.

Where did you shelter when the sirens sounded?

We didn't have a shelter in our garden as my mother wouldn't have her garden spoilt, so we used to go through the fence and go down into our next door neighbours shelter. It was horrible, specially at night. It was cold and I really don't think they were much protection, you just got pneumonia instead!

Where any of your family injured or killed during the war?

No, but I knew about other people because on a Saturday the local postman would come round with envelopes telling the women that their son or husband had been killed. I remember hearing the wail. Oh God, I used to hate hearing it. You don't hear any mention of it now, but that was the only way they could let people know I suppose.



What's your strongest memory from wartime?

Probably going to Chichester. I liked the town itself as it's an historical town and I'm interested in history.

How did you feel about being separated from your brothers?

Not a lot as we never got on. The older one was always teasing me. They got sent down to Torquay, but they didn't like it down there. I think they were always up to mischief and got slung out, sent packing! Oh dear, don't talk to me about brothers.

Did you eat well during the war?

I've never had a big appetite which was just as well! When the war first started it wasn't too bad, but as time went on the rations got less and less. I used to do the shopping on a Saturday for my hostess and you could put in the palm of your hand the tiny bit of butter and little tiny bit of sugar you could get. If it hadn't been for the fact my host worked in the factory and was able to get extra bits of meat and stuff...but no, it was pretty awful, I don't know how we existed.

Did you grow your own vegetables?

Oh yes, they started this big campaign "Grow your own." I think it was a Mr Middleton who used to broadcast on the radio to people and everybody started digging their front gardens up, to put their potatoes in. That was quite a thing, and it saved us in a way.

When your dad called you back to London, were you glad to go back?

I didn't want to go back, I would have stayed in Chichester for ever, I loved it there.

Can you remember what it was like when the war ended?

Yeah. It was quite frightening to see so many people, and most of them drunk, shouting and yelling. I was too frightened to be in a crowd like I saw on the news. And I don't know if they were genuinely just enjoying themselves. Those that were celebrating hadn't suffered and those that had suffered weren't out celebrating. They'd had a horrible life and they weren't about to celebrate it.

How do you think your evacuation experiences affected you?

It gave me a new outlook on life. London was pretty boring, but Chichester was another world. The schools were lovely and so was the countryside around it. You could go to Bosham and Bracklesham Bay and all those little places. It was just a lovely part of the world. I could have lived there quite happily. London hadn't got anything to offer, just houses. I was born in the East End so I'm a proper Londoner, but I didn't feel any loyalty to it.

If you hadn't had that evacuation experience you might never have moved out of London?

Oh no, I would still be stuck there. I wouldn't wish an evacuation onto anyone, lots of them couldn't cope with being taken away from their mothers, and I sound like I'm being disloyal, but I was taken to somewhere really special. I learned such a lot, Chichester is an interesting place and I was never bored. Mr and Mrs Hopkins were so kind to me, I wasn't used to being spoilt. And the main attraction was the dogs. These two little West Highland Terriers were my world. I didn't want or need anything else and I was heart broken when I had to leave them.



Barbara with her two younger brothers at the start of the war



Tim Born 1941

How old were you when you were evacuated?

I was about 2½ or 3 when I went with my mother, grandmother and grandfather to stay with a blacksmith and his wife in the country. My story is slightly different because I wasn't a child evacuee with a label around my neck and a suitcase, and I wasn't sent off to some meanies in the country who worked me as a slave, I was just there with family and some very nice people who wanted to protect us from the nastiness going on in London. We fled London when our house was bombed and the ceilings fell in. I was in my cot at the time and a wardrobe fell across it and wedged the door shut at the same time. My mum tells me that my grandfather was standing there and couldn't get in the door and was shouting "Are you alright Joan?" But we were fine because the wardrobe across the cot had protected me from the ceiling debris! After that my father looked for people for us to stay with near to his army camp so he could be close to his new wife and we could be away from danger. He managed to persuade the couple to take us in even though they lived in a very small cottage. My father then left and went off abroad into the desert.

Did you have any contact with him?

No, I think some letters came through and my mother said she used to show me photos, but nevertheless when he came back after 5 years he was a complete stranger and I didn't like having this strange interloper in the house. My grandfather had effectively been my father.

Can you remember your stay in the country?

The village we were evacuated to was near army training grounds and I remember Americans soldiers coming





through as an everyday occurrence. They would throw out old brass shells for us even though they were meant to hand them in because during wartime all the old metal was needed. They also threw out cigarette packets and we used to collect the shells in them as a sort of hobby. They threw us gum too and it was the first time I had ever seen stripped gum. It wasn't anything I liked at the time, but I think my mother used to gather it up. Sometimes they would chuck us cigarette packets with cigarettes still in them and I think my grandfather used to like that very much because everything was on ration during the war.

Can you remember what the blacksmith and his wife were like?

They were very welcoming. I was told that Mr Banning would enjoy his wife's wine .. a lot ... and went to the pub regularly too because there was still loads of hop fields and brewing going on during the war. Birds would always nest in the thatched cottage roof, particularly sparrows, and in the early morning if he was hung over and woken up by these birds twittering away he used to go out with his shotgun and fire into the thatch, which of course frightened my mother. She would call out "Bill, Bill stop it we're in here!" and he would go off having emptied two barrels, with his wife yelling at him. He was a massive man of about 17 stone, and I certainly remember he had these massive arm muscles whereas his wife was quite small. Apparently she did used to reach up and clip him around the ear with a broomstick!

Another story I was told years later when I went back for a visit was once when they were picking mushrooms, and conkers for us in a field, a German plane flew over saw them in the field and waved his wings, but my grandfather who had a shotgun on

him, shot up at him and shook his fist. Then apparently the pilot came back and tried to shoot at them. To which my grandmother said "John, you stupid man, what did you do that for?!!" because they had had to dive into a ditch to shelter. The German was obviously being friendly, but my grandfather had had a bad experience during the First World War so I can understand it really.

When we were evacuated one of the big things my grandfather was taught to do was trap rabbits. Rabbits were free range, there were plenty available and were a good source of protein as well. So from being urban people they went to being skilled country people.

How long did you stay with the Bannings?

I think we were down there for about 2½ years. By that time the German army were fighting a war in Europe and didn't have so much that they could send across, with all the expensive fuel and everything, so we came home.

Can you remember what it was like to be suddenly in London?

I just remember being in a much bigger house. My grandfather (from my father's side) came up from Southampton and he built loads and loads of houses as an extension to Hackney Marshes. We were in those days a sort of Nouveau Riche builders. We owned lots and lots of property and my mother (who married my father at 19 and had me at 21) was the rent collector. Sometimes she would go along a road to collect rent and the house had gone. Hitler had cleared it!

Were any of your family injured or killed during the war?

No. we were very, very lucky. There were people just up the road being wiped out. My grandma recoiled running down to the shelter because there was an air-raid warning and she threw us under her body because the engine had stopped, and when the doodlebug engine stops it glides, glides down. It went sadly into a block of flats.



Tim with his uncle and cousin Roger

When we went to school we used to just go through bomb sites and inevitably played in them, but a lot were flattened by bulldozers because there were too many rickety dangerous buildings still standing.

I remember loads of Anderson shelters in people's gardens, but a lot of people didn't bother to put them up. My grandfather did, and I remember the shelter, that was no bigger than 6 by 4 feet, being crammed full of people. One of the problems with the Anderson shelter was that the water would seep up from the ground, but we were always dry in ours because granddad constructed a board like the ones you have in showers to stop your feet getting wet. I do remember him leaning out of the shelter when German planes flew over and firing at them. I was later told that my grandfather never had a gun and he certainly wouldn't have done that, but that he had shaped us pieces of wood to look like rifles and he probably did it with them as a gesture to amuse us.

What are your strongest memories from war time good or bad?

My grandfather saw this German plane burning and he hated Germans so much he stoked it up and took the boots off the man. I'm not proud of it, it makes me sad.

Another memory is seeing all the planes going overhead, not necessarily German planes. There were just fleets of planes making this droning noise that started a good half an hour before you saw them. It went on and on, and I would stand outside and watch and watch and think WOW! That would be in the evenings when there was going to be a bombing that night somewhere over on the continent. I would see Spitfires and Hurricanes. They had their own particular sound with their Rolls Royce Merlin engines.



Julia Born 1933

How old were you when you were evacuated and do you remember that day?

It was 1939 and I was six. I'll tell you what happened, I went and saw the school doctor who said I was okay to be evacuated, but my mother did not like the look of me, so she popped me into our doctors. He immediately called an ambulance and rushed me to hospital - I had acute appendicitis! It must have burst because I was in hospital for 6 weeks. There weren't antibiotics in those days, so they used to give me castor oil which was horrible! I ended up missing the first lot of evacuations and didn't go for another 4 or 5 months.



A ward at Queen Mary's Hospital, Roehampton

Which hospital were you in?

St. Stephen's in Fulham. It's not there now. They ended up transferring me to Queen Mary's (Roehampton) because of the bombing and everything. They used to put our mattress underneath the bed if there was an air raid and we had to lie on it. What I used to like was they would bring around a big bowl of sweets every day after lunch and we were all allowed to take two.

So you were put under the bed if there was an air raid, but where did the staff go?

I don't know! I was really too young, I just have vague memories of certain things. I remember the sweets and I remember the hair ribbons, it used to be pink, blue, pink, blue all the way down the ward!

What was it like when you were finally evacuated?

I was so lucky because when we got down to the countryside the train stopped next to a field where there was a dairy farm and all the people came out with a bottle of milk for the children.

When we arrived we were taken to a hall and people came to take whoever they wanted. I was lucky because I was with a girl much older than me who lived in the same road in Southfields. All of a sudden this little



The building of an Anderson shelter



Many Londoners used tube station platforms as a shelter

old lady appeared and she decided she'd take the two of us. She was the 'lady of the village' called Mrs Small.

What do you mean by 'Lady of the Village'?

Well that's what they called her. I suppose in some ways it would be a bit like the mayor, she chose things for the village. She had a maid and we used to have meals in the kitchen with the maid, but Sundays we would have afternoon tea with Mrs Small. She must have been in her 70s then. It was rather sad because she'd had a son, and her husband and son had been killed in a motorcar accident. She had quite a sad life.

The house was right on the road, but it was a very old, big house. I shared a bedroom with this other girl, there was the maid's room and Mrs Small's room. Behind the house the gardens were all turned over for growing vegetables for the war. Opposite the house she had an area of lawn that she used for playing croquet. She also owned a cider factory and the farm. She was a wealthy lady.

She did treat us well. The maid would prepare vegetables, but Mrs Small would often do the actual cooking. I tried tripe for the first time there, but I did not like it and have never had it since!

Can you remember how you felt living there?

You just accepted it didn't you. Now when I look back, having had children of my own, I think how on earth did our mothers and fathers part with us?

The threat was so great I suppose?

Yes, it was on London wasn't it. My mum and dad actually got bombed out while I was evacuated. They were lucky as 6 houses were knocked down completely two doors away from my mother and fathers. There was a lot of damage done to their house though, all the ceilings were down. Luckily they were in their Anderson shelter, and my brother had just built a wall in front, a blast wall, and that saved them.

How long were you evacuated for?

I was away for two years. Mrs Small wanted to adopt me so my mother rushed down and took me home!

Had you had much contact with your family whilst you were away?

My parents came down at least once, probably twice. And my 18 year old brother actually cycled down to see me! I was the baby in the family, I had a sister 13 years older than me, and my brother was 11 years older.

Do you have any of the letters you sent home?

No, my mum never kept anything like that because they were bombed out. As they walked down the road the gas mains were on fire behind them so it was quite horrendous, they couldn't take anything really.

What were they doing during the war?

My sister was in the fire service and my brother was in the RAF.

Did you go to school while you were away?

Oh yes, I've been to so many different schools. It was quite a walk to get there. I used to have to go down the road, up some steps, across a playground area, then walk along a path by a field with cows, (I actually saw a calf being born one day!) then it was in a church hall where we went to school. The only thing I can really remember about it was in the afternoon they used to put mattresses on the floor and we had to lay down on the mattress and sleep!

Did you mix with the local children?

No. It was just me and this other girl, and she was more interested in boys! She was always trying to lose me!

What did you do for fun?

I remember going out to play, and I played croquet with Mrs Small. When I came home I remember playing in the road with a hoop and a stick, and I used to have the rings as well. And marbles, but I don't remember having toys when I was evacuated. When I was at home I had comics at the side of my bed and toys, but I can't remember having any when I was evacuated.

Did you take anything with you?

Not as far as I know, because you only had a little tiny case.

Were any of your family injured or killed during the war?

No. My father was injured in the first world war, but not the second. He couldn't go in the forces because of his injuries so he used to wear a little badge on his lapel to show why. My mother was a fire fighter. She used to go up on the roofs of buildings, with a bucket of water and a syphon. She was too old to go in the forces, so that's what they used to make you do instead.

Did you ever go back to visit?

Yes, I did go back once when I was about 17, just for a day. I took a friend and we saw the Lady of the Village, but I hardly recognised her because she'd aged so much.

Did you spend the rest of the war in London?

Yes, although my mum and myself went up to Leicester for 6 months when the air raids were heavy as my mum's nerves had been badly affected by being bombed out. Leicester had one bomb drop, and they couldn't stop talking about it. They should have come to London!

What are your strongest memories from wartime back in London?

The worst thing I can remember is sitting on the bread bin in the cupboard under the stairs with all the noise from the bombing outside!

Was that your shelter?

Yes, we also had an Anderson shelter, but it used to get a lot of water in it so wasn't really very good. I also spent about two weeks going to Tooting Bec Underground Station every night where we used to sleep on the platform. There were a lot of people crowded on the platform down there. We had to take something with us to lay on. My mother used to get annoyed with my sister because she would not come with us, she would eventually



Barrage Balloons over London

turn up when the bombing got too close, but she wouldn't come straight away.

Did you know we had a barrage balloon on Tooting Bec common? I also remember the anti-aircraft guns there that used to make a lot of noise when they were fired. And I lived in Fircroft Road and we used to watch the buzz bombs going overhead towards Battersea Power Station.

Can you remember when peace was declared?

Yes, because I went up to London with my mother. There were hoards and hoards of people everywhere! It was a wonderful atmosphere. I was about 12 and I saw the royal family come onto the balcony of Buckingham Palace.

How do you think your experiences affected you as an adult?

I don't think they did quite honestly because I was lucky - I was evacuated to a nice place and I was well looked after. I haven't got any nasty experiences - apart from being away from my mum and dad.

Alan

Born 1933

How old were you when you were evacuated?

I was 6 years old when I was evacuated. I was sent with my older brother and sister but I was put into accommodation with my brother while my sister was separated from us.

What was it like there?

One lady that we stayed with, Mrs Clark, lived in a cottage, but there was no gas, electricity or water and she was always saying to us chaps, (cause I was with my brother, and also another chap called something Smith), 'You lads, go out sticking', we'd have to go and pick up sticks for her to put on the fire to cook things on there. The water had to come from a well and then it was taken into this little room she called the larder, and the water was in a bucket, and she had a dog called Nick and the dog used to drink the water out the bucket the same as we did! She used to take in washing and there'd be a large bowl thing out in the garden and we had to go out there in the morning and wash outside in the open air, cause there was no room, no part of the house for washing in. It just wasn't there. There was a front room, but we weren't allowed in that room, we used to go up to bed and on the stairs to light the place up, there were tiny lantern things with a wick inside. With paraffin or something inside the actual light and that's all there was to light the place up. Funny, yeah, comical. I used to wet the bed sometimes and this other chap wet the bed and so we were both put in the same bed together. But anyway, it was all part of the fun really! I was in 4 different places overall. I don't know why we were shifted around so much but we were with four different people who looked after us.

Did you go to school?

We had no school because all the schools were filled up with their own people, so we were taken to the village hall. It was just divided up into four different areas, and that was our school.

Did you mix with the local children or did the London children stick together?

No, I can't remember mixing with the local children.

What did you do for fun?

I can't really remember .. I can't remember football or anything like that...

Interview by Erin and Kasey



Did you see your mother during this time?

My mother came and saw us, but at a certain time, half way through the war my mother took us home. She said if we're gonna get killed we might as well all get killed together. We didn't get killed!

How old were you when you returned home and how did you feel coming home?

I can't really remember to be honest. It was nice to be back with me mum again really. We moved to Hackney because we used to live near the docks and the docks were getting bombed a lot and so my dad took a different job. We used to sleep sometimes in the air raid shelter, but dad dug an air raid shelter in the garden, and we used to sleep in there with bombs going off everywhere. The air raid shelter was only made for four people, but there were five of us with my brother, sister, mother and father, and so I had a special little shelf that they put at the back of the air raid shelter but I managed to fall off, and I whacked my ear and it was very, very painful. We wouldn't always go to the air raid shelter, we'd stay in the hall and say "well that's close" and "oh that's getting nearer". We were frightened that we were gonna get hit, but we never did actually get hit.

One day when we were back in London we went to school and found out our school had been blown to pieces by a V1. We were all so pleased, thinking we didn't have to go to school anymore. But then they came out and put a big board up telling us we had to travel to this other school that was twice as far away as the first blinking school! So we didn't like it much really, but we had no choice, we had to make the longer journey all the time. Blinking doodlebugs!



We all had to carry our gas masks in a case everywhere we went, and make sure we didn't lose it because they were frightened about the gas bombs.

We used to go round collecting shrapnel, some bits of brass, the fuses I think, but otherwise it was just pieces of steel in a funny sort of shape. We really liked it, it was a playground for young boys.

Did you ever go back and visit the families you were evacuated to?

We did one time, a good few years back now. My brother and his friend had motorbikes and we went to visit some of the people we'd stayed at and made our way back at the end of the day.

How did it feel going back?

It was nice, in a way, yeah. I went back and saw the lady in the house with nothing in it. Still no gas, no electricity, no water, nothing.





Dorothy

Known as Cooe
Born 1926

How old were you when you were evacuated and can you remember how you felt at the time?

I was 13 and a half, nearly 14 when I had to leave my school and go with my younger sister. We were kept together and stayed with a very nice lady and gentleman. I enjoyed it, but my younger sister was broken hearted and we couldn't stay long. I was four years older so I was in charge of looking after her. She was really a cry baby and always nervous, so taking her away from home was the worst thing ever to happen to her. Me, I was different. As for being evacuated, I liked the people. I made myself really at home. I remember when I'd come home from school this lady used to put this kettle on the fire and I'd have a cup of tea that tasted of smoke!

I can't remember how long we stayed. I know when I came back I got myself a job in a munition factory so I must have been nearly 14. I knew girls working in there already, I had a cousin in the office, and I knew all the young girls on the factory floor so I was taken in.



What was it like back in London?

My sister wasn't at school because there was no school once the raids started. The first air shelter we went down to was Hartley's the jam factory which was just across the road. Crazy when we think about it, going into a great big factory to shelter. But then my dad made an Anderson shelter and we felt safer in that. I can remember the siren going off about 11 o'clock on a Sunday morning and we were evacuated again after that.

So I had to leave my job and go away with my sister. This time we stayed in a thatched cottage. the lady had two little boys, Ernie I think, was one. I used to do all the housework and she would give me a shilling. It used to be rotten, but I didn't care, I got a shilling to do dancing! I also played whist drive with all the old boys and ladies and I really enjoyed it. I would cycle up to where the search light was and they'd give me a cup of tea and a bit of cake and then I'd go round to the manor house to play. The lady in the manor house had two daughters so I was really in good company. I couldn't go to school though. I was working in the morning doing her housework then visiting all afternoon. I was well known with all the people.

I remember it was winter. The lady had a walnut tree outside and ducks and chickens that we used to feed and a river right at the bottom of the garden. I was occupied all the time. And this time Pammy was quite alright because she had friends there.

We came back to London again and I went back to work. I had to go into a job that would exempt me from the war this time. We were bombed out twice so ended up moving out to Sutton, but then the doodlebugs started coming over so we moved again to Worthing until the end of the war. I still travelled up to do my job in Borough though.

I can remember the first doodlebug I saw. It looked like an aeroplane with a flame coming out of it. I was running to the tube at the Elephant and Castle with my elder sister and it landed a few streets away.

Do you have any other memories from war time?

I remember that we used to shelter in Leadenhall Street in the banks. We would have to walk down about three or four floors underground so we felt quite safe. And it was great because we would be entertained every night down there by Patrick Barn (film star) and the Quakers. We also used to shelter down the tube.

I also remember running over London Bridge and guns going off when I was half way across. Wow, it was a terrible feeling. I couldn't get a bus because the buses had stopped.

After sheltering all night you would get up and go to work. It didn't matter what had happened, you still carried on. The atmosphere was beautiful though. Wherever you went everyone was smiling. If you were on the tube late at night there was always singing. Today everyone just sits there in silence. The atmosphere then was great. It carried on when everybody came back from the war for a few years before stopping. I can remember all the parties and the pubs and everyone coming back to what they used to be. So, you know, we survived.



Tony

Born 1932

How old were you when you were evacuated?

It was September '39 and I was 7 years of age and my younger brother was 5.

How did you feel when you found out you were going to be evacuated?

I honestly can't remember. I think a mixture of excitement and sadness. It was an adventure as it was something different and the whole school was going. I think it hurt our parents more than it did us. I think parents cried more.

Did you stay in touch with your parents while you were away?

Yes, they came to visit us after about a month or so. When we left we were all smartly dressed in our best clothes, but when they came to see us we were running around a farm in gum boots and our best clothes were covered in mud! Well you know what children are like, we don't take a lot of care of clothes really, just bung them in the corner!

Did you get on well with the local people or did you mix mostly with the children from London?

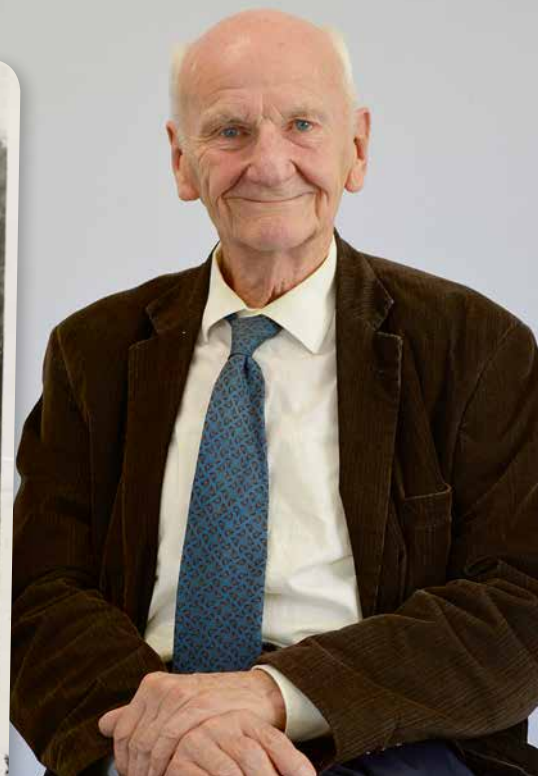
There were no children on the farm where we stayed. There was one child in a neighbouring cottage, but there were no children on the farm where we stayed. It sounds weird, but the children were in their 30s and they went out to work so we were a little bit isolated from other children.

What was school like?

School was interesting because the pressure on the school was such that we had the school in the afternoon and the local people had it in the morning. We did a timeshare on school and everybody was happy because we only did half day schooling!

Did you enjoy living in the countryside?

Yes, broadly, yes. It was fun, it was a different experience from living in London. We stayed on a dairy farm



Left, below and bottom left: Tony with his younger brother

with horses and sheep, and it was an eye opener too. You learn a lot just by watching, and you have lots of different smells too!

How old were you when you returned home?

I was about the same age actually, we didn't stay terribly long. We got a bit homesick and there appeared to be no bombing occurring in London, it seemed to be safe to come back so we asked our parents if we could come home.

What is your strongest memory from wartime, good or bad?

I think most of them are good, the bad bit was the separation. Once you got over the homesickness bit (you'd have a little tear at night sometimes), but generally speaking I didn't have any bad experiences.

In London the bombing was mainly at night and we were either in the air raid shelter or sleeping under the stairs before we were evacuated. It sounds weird sleeping under a staircase, but it was fairly safe. We had a divan bed under the stairs and we would sleep on it head to toe. There was an Anderson shelter in the garden but somehow we didn't get round to using it! We did notice the doodlebugs later on, these were the flightless bombs that came over and they had a funny sound and you were okay as long as you could hear the sound, but as soon as the engine cut out you knew that the plane was now going



to drop with it's load of explosives and hit something. It was only guided as far as London, it wasn't guided to individual houses. It just fell out the sky when the engine dropped.





Were you evacuated more than once?

Yes, once the Blitz started with a vengeance there was a lot of bombing so we were evacuated again. I don't know who made the decision. We were sent to a village where we stayed in two adjacent houses and went to the local school. I don't know how long we were there, but we were there for the fall of Singapore so that must be 1941. I remember that as it was quite a big topic at the time, and a big disaster for the British to lose Singapore - terrible and very embarrassing too. Then I came back and lived in Wandsworth for a time. I was a bit lazy at school and I think I failed my 11 plus, or never took it for some reason, but then I had the opportunity to go to Catford Central School which was evacuated to the country at the time. It was run on a holiday camp in the country by the National Camps Corporation and was set up for children who lived in deprived areas in the East End of London to introduce them to country life. That's probably not 100% true, but that's the way we observed it. I was there for the remainder of the war from 1944 to 45 and I was quite happy there.

How do you think your evacuation experience affected you as an adult?

It probably made me more self reliant. We had to fend for ourselves and I think it does help in later life when you go out to work or when you have to join the army. I had to do 2 years national service and I slipped into that quite easily.



Interview by Erin, Melody and Kasey

Images from Sayer's Croft where Tony had his third evacuation experience, this time as part of Catford Central School.



The boys would have outdoor lessons whenever possible, even for subjects like maths and English. Here a class is learning shorthand in one of the fields.

Sayer's Croft, Ewhurst, Surrey

The National Camps Corporation was set up in 1938. In May 1940 two hundred boys from two London schools were evacuated to the camps full time. There were five dormitories each housing forty boys in metal bunks with a house master in a room at each end. The camp was staffed mainly by local people and the teachers were responsible for the boys 24 hours a day, every day, and none of them had boarding school experience. There were no school holidays either although they agreed there would be two weeks a year without lessons. Meals were adequate and nourishing under the circumstances.

As well as formal lessons, the boys learned to repair their boots which was a very useful occupation during clothes rationing. They also tended a field of allotments as part of the 'Dig for Victory' campaign. The boys performed shows including songs of the moment 'The Last Time in Paris' and 'A Nightingale Sung in Berkeley Square' and so on. Whenever possible lessons were taken in the open air. The shortage of books and paper meant that other teaching methods were used.

There were three brick built air raid shelters in the adjoining field, that were half submerged into the ground. At every air raid whistles would blow and everybody lined up and were ushered into the shelters. This became disruptive as some alerts were very long. The Battle of Britain provided plenty of excitement with small groups of animated boys, in the middle of a field, gazing up at the dog fights in the sky, arguing furiously urging them to take cover from the spent cartridges and shrapnel. The sight that got the heart of every boy was the dreadful crimson glow in the sky when London was suffering the worst of the Blitz. The buildings were completely 'blacked out' so that no chinks or shafts of light could betray the presence of the buildings to overhead aircraft. The period of the V1 flying bombs and V2 Rockets meant frequent visits to the shelters and some flying bombs did land in the village and some damage was caused.

The parents came to see the boys on the last Sunday of each month. Single decker London Transport buses arrived in convoy, sometimes as many as ten or twelve of them.

extracts taken from 'From Brownhill to Pitch Hill - The wartime history of two Catford schools'



Above, Ann on her own, and right, with her friend Tony



Ann Born 1939

What was it like growing up in the 1940s for you?

It was pretty grim really. We had a couple of episodes of being evacuated, first of all to a house that belonged to Sir Ivison Macadam who my grandfather worked for. He was the minister for information during the war. The only trouble was there were already other people there, and my mother was a bit horrified by the way they treated the housekeeper, and the way they behaved while we were there so she decided to bring us home. Next we were sent to some obscure cousin of my mothers. I can't remember the exact place because I would have only been about 4, but that didn't work very well either and she brought us back from there too. My sister who was eight years older than me was already at boarding school at a convent in South Devon so they packed me off down there too.

How long were you away for the first evacuation?

I don't remember because I was so small, but I can vaguely remember being in the house, and can just about remember the housekeeper. I do remember the second place because it came to a head because of me. I was chronically asthmatic as a child and was a very picky eater. Everything went reasonably well to start with, we stayed in the shepherd's cottage with the very nice people living there. We had a thoroughly good time running around with the sheep. We used to go to my mother's cousin for meals, and on this particular night they served blackcurrants. Blackcurrants are very tart and you have to load them with sugar or something to make them palatable, but I didn't like them and I just refused to eat. This guy lost his temper and threatened to hit me.

That was about the only time in my life that my sister ever stood up for me! She threatened to call the police if they ever laid a hand on me! Later that night she wrote to my mother, who came storming down a couple of days later and there was one great big family row! We got hauled off back to London and it was after that when I got sent to the Notre Dame convent in Teignmouth, South Devon.

What was that experience like?

Being separated from my mother at a very young age wasn't a very pleasant experience, and my sister being that much older than me didn't really want to know about me. The nuns were very strict. You were up in the morning just after 6 o'clock, in chapel for mass at 6.30am, then after breakfast and tidying our rooms were sent off to lessons. It was a very strict routine.

Did you feel cared for?

Not especially, but then it wasn't unusual in those days. Nobody made a fuss of you when you were children. Even your parents didn't make that much of a fuss of you! I must say my parents were reasonably good in that respect, but there wasn't a lot of overt affection in the family.

Do you feel that those experiences impacted you at all growing up or as an adult?

Yes, I was still only about 4 or 5 when I was sent to the convent and what happens when you spend a lot of time away from your family... you ... it's hard to explain ... you have a kind of distance between you and your family. There isn't the sort of closeness of a family at all. They're there your mum and dad, but you can just as easily walk away. It makes you quite independent. The downside is that it makes you slightly unfeeling of other people in some respects. You get people going "Oh dear never mind" all

over the place these days, when my attitude is "Sharpen up a bit and get on with it!" I think I probably had that attitude with my own children, which is maybe not such a good thing.

Religion obviously played a big part in your life?

Oh yes, but it was because of my circumstances as my parents weren't particularly religious. If asked they would say CofE., but it was family Christenings, weddings and funerals rather than church every Sunday. At school it was church twice a day at least, mass in the morning and benediction after tea. I suppose it's always stayed with me really.

Do you remember the time spent in London in between those evacuations?

Yes, most of the time when I came back to London it wouldn't be very long before I was in bed because of my asthma. The air was absolutely appalling in those days. The coal fires and factories gushed out great loads of smoke, and there was no cure for asthma either. There wasn't even any relief, no puffers or anything like that then. I was given MB tablets which were useless because they were actually for TB. Which was why our eventual move to the Isle of Wight was a good idea. The sea has an antiseptic effect with the salt in the air and that really kick started me getting better. Antihistamine became available when I was about 14 which also helped enormously. These tiny white pills worked miracles!

Can you remember anything about the war going on around you?

Yes, we had quite a lot of bombing around where we lived. We had a Morrison shelter inside, the one like a great big steel table that you sheltered underneath. I can remember being in there with my sister and her getting



The Notre Dame Convent school
in Teignmouth

very nervous one night because of the heavy bombing. I was already in bed after having an attack of asthma, plus whooping cough, but was wrapped up and bundled into the shelter and apparently was very ill the next day. I don't remember too much, but I developed double pneumonia! The family doctor came and took one look at me and told my mother "Under no circumstances take her out of bed!"

What were your parents doing during the war?

My father had a small engineering firm and was on government contracts. Contracts were put out all over the place to different firms so the work was not concentrated in one area - if one got bombed there were still plenty of supplies. My mother carried out secretarial work for my father so actually they were doing quite well. There was a phrase you kept on hearing "For the Duration." After the war finished so did the contracts, and that was a bit of a disaster.

Why did you come to Colliers Wood?

My grandfather bought this house in 1931 for £900, 2 years after it was built. It was expensive for the time because it was one of only three with a solid built garage. He bought it because he was working for a Mr Wilson who was in the 1930s government who lived on Wimbledon Hill. My sister went to Singlegate School for a short time before my parents moved to Colindale just before war started and moved again to Willesden when the house suffered from bomb blast damage. Ken and I moved to Colliers Wood when we got married, but we were only in the upstairs half of it because this was two flats. The Council had moved the people in downstairs when they'd been bombed out in Kennington during the war. There was nothing we could do about them. The council shoved people in anywhere at the time.

Can you remember when the end of the war was declared?

I don't remember when the European war ended, but I do remember VJ Day when the Japanese war ended. I remember standing on the big breakwater at Teignmouth with a great load of other people. Everyone was cheering and there were quite a few American personnel there too. All the children were given a big box containing all sorts of chewing gum and sweets. We thought this was fantastic - I mean you didn't get sweets during the war! In fact sugar was rationed until the Queen's Coronation year in 1953. When you look at a ration card from the war it's horrifying how little you were actually allowed. It was just ounces per person, per week. Then there were international shortages of goods, you just couldn't get anything for a long time.



Ann with her mother
visiting from London

Ken

Born 1931

What was it like for you growing up in the 1940s?

I lived in Sandown on the Isle of Wight and was eight when the war started. I was still at junior school and a new lifestyle was pushed upon us by the war. Suddenly, we only had access to a small stretch of the beach, but not for long because the sea front ended up totally denied to us by rows of barbed wire and barricades made of scaffold poles with mines on the outside. It seemed the idea was that they were expecting Germans to come dashing up the beach at any moment!

It was very exciting of course because I saw stuff I had never seen before. We had tracked vehicles on our roads. I didn't actually see any real tanks on the Isle of Wight, but a vehicle called a Bren Gun Carrier which essentially looks like a tank with the turret cut off. A sort of fresh air tank! It was very exciting in that regard.



A Bren Gun Carrier

Did your parents tell you to stay away from the area?

They didn't need to! Living in the countryside you know the effects of barbed wire by the time you are eight!

Did you have any siblings?

Yes I had a brother older than me by just one year, a sister 5 years and 5 days younger than me and in 1940 another boy, the 4th and the last of the children, was born.

Were any children from London evacuated to the Isle of Wight?

Yes certainly, but we didn't have a great deal to do with them. Not out of any sort of snobbery or anything, but I don't recall anybody coming singly to stay with relatives. There was a group of half a dozen or so together with a sort of temporary mother in command. They seemed to fit in okay, but they didn't really mix with us that much. First of all we were quite foreign, being as they had to cross

some water to get to us! They had each other anyway.

Did they come to your school?

Oh yes and in the same classes depending on age and ability. I remember at one time we had two brothers from Malta. What that was all about I don't know! I found out later that Malta was the most bombed place during the war. I can just about remember the faces of those two. There were quite a few years between them, one would have been 14 and the other 7 or 8. I don't think they stayed on the Island. Went back to their own I suppose!

Did the children from London stay for a long time?

They didn't stay until the war ended, instead they went back to their own families before the war finished. I have no idea if it was when it was clear they weren't going to get bombed anymore.

What did you do for fun?

Well from age 12 any spare time I had I worked simply because there was very little money. We lived through the war in the wrong house. About 4 years before the war started we moved from a small house to a much bigger one to do 'the letting' for summer holiday guests. Most people thought we wouldn't have another war as by 1938 the last one was still fresh in most of the population's memory.



You moved into the big house and then nobody was coming to stay because of the war?

Yes, and nobody was allowed to either after a while.

Why was that?

I suppose because of the secret stuff that was going on there. Pluto it was called and it meant 'Pipeline under the ocean'. It was being set up for when we went into France - you could pump whatever you liked right across the channel. Brown's Golf Course next to Sandown canoe lake, was part of it and it would be less than half a mile from where I lived. But nobody knew at the time! I found out about it many years later by watching a documentary on the TV. Old footage came on the screen of where this pumping station was - it was where we bought the bloody ice creams! Brown's Golf Course. This was all part of the area that was out of bounds to us.



Bofors anti aircraft gun

Do you recall any air raids during the war?

Yes, certainly. Our area wasn't actually targeted as there had never been any real industry there apart from looking after visitors, but the major ports of Portsmouth and Southampton were targeted and they are just behind the Isle of Wight if you're coming from France. So we had accidental bombing. Planes shot up whilst attacking the ports disposed of their bombs whilst trying to get back to France. I watched part of The Battle of Britain from there too.

Were there anti aircraft guns?

Yeah, there were at least four separate gun sites around our quite small town. I did spend time at the sites because the troops there were just hanging around waiting for a message or looking at the sky and they were always glad to have somebody to talk to, even if it were just a kid! Most of these blokes warned me, "When you grow up son, try to keep out of the army!"

Did you see them in action?

Yeah, you could hear the guns, you didn't need to go and look! I remember an incident of a German bomber who dropped bombs in the field opposite us. And one also dropped right into the canoe lake on the sea road. That one exploded because of the lake's shallow concrete base. I was looking almost straight up and there's this German plane coming over way lower

than any of the others I'd seen. I saw the Swastika on the body and tail of the aircraft and the black crosses on the underside of the wings. I have a very clear memory of that and of mum shouting "Get in here!" I think it had probably been shot at and was now desperately trying to get back to Cherbourg or maybe just crash into the sea, which I hadn't thought of until now. The first bomb dropped in the field opposite our house and left an enormous hole. then three or four more next to it. They were declared 'unexploded bomb sites' and we were told to keep away until they were made safe. I don't remember how long that took but because they were far enough away from any buildings they were probably not a priority.



The Canoe Lake in Sandown where the German bomb exploded.

What was it like when the end of the war was declared?

It finished in 1945 and I was due to leave school at the end of that year after turning 14. That was difficult



because of the job situation. The job market was about to be flooded with all the people coming out of the forces and from the small companies who had been working on government contracts "for the duration" as it was called. And on top of that I was due to leave school during midwinter in a summer holiday resort! I ended up in the army because there was nothing else. There really wasn't and whoever I asked had no advice at all, they just told me to get a trade. I enrolled at Army Technical School and was unwittingly signed up for 11½ years!



Operation PLUTO



June

Born 1939

Were you evacuated?

No, I was too young. The evacuations happened in 1939 and the beginning of 1940, but I was still being nursed then.

What are your memories from London during the war?

I remember the Blitz was bad. I have a memory of the family sitting around and talking about it. There was an awful lot of dead and East London took a hell of a pounding. But we also took a pounding here in Battersea where I lived because being near Clapham Junction station and the train lines.



June with her aunt

I remember my granddad, who was an air raid warden, going up on to the roof of a house after an air raid and picking up all this red hot shrapnel and throwing it to the ground to keep for scrap metal. However he only had thin leather gloves on and in the morning we came out of the shelter to find him sitting on the front door step holding his injured hands in front of him. He had burnt them so badly that he couldn't even use his keys to open the door. My nan blew her top! She was deaf so couldn't listen to what he had to say, but she gave him a mouthful and told him to get his fat arse round to Battersea General Hospital because she wasn't going to deal with him.

How long had he been waiting on the doorstep?

I've no idea and he wouldn't say because he was a proud man.

What was the shelter like?

Four or five brick built shelters were constructed in our street (Latchmere Grove). The street got attacked and five houses on the opposite side to me got hit. I think they had been aiming for the rail line that ran right behind them, but missed and flattened these houses instead. Prefabs were put up there at the end of the war.

Was there a panic at that point to get out of London?

Well there was nowhere to go really. Although my grandad had come from the country as a child, his brother lived one side of us and his sister lived the other.

So you had quite a community then & lots of support?

Well ... erm .. yes, but on the other side of the road beyond the prefabs was a family, I won't tell you their name, cos they're quite well known, but they were all boys and they were horrors. One of them started on my cousin who lived with me. She was two years older than me but he started on her not me. I came out of the house and he was poking her and kicking her and so I just got hold of him, shoved him onto the floor and banged his head on the road. Then my nan appeared at the top of the road with her shopping and saw me doing this and screamed 'What are you doing? You'll kill him!' and I replied 'I hope so!' by that time cousin Pat had gone to hide indoors out of harms way.

I remember the blackouts because we didn't like them. There was one time we didn't hear the sirens and all of a sudden we heard the planes overhead so dived under the dining table and that's where we stayed all night. I can remember my nan looking and saying 'Get that bloody floor cleaned tomorrow!' because she could see muck round the edges of the table. Life goes on. It had to. My granddad grew fruit and veg in the back garden, and we were lucky in that sense because we had a very long garden right up to the railway line. I used to be very naughty when I got a bit older because I used to climb up and over to pick blackberries.

We had to make do and mend. That was the way in those days. It's stayed with me because I lived in a fairly strict household with my granddad.

Where was your dad during the war?

He was in the army, but unfortunately he died on the beaches at Dunkirk.

And can you remember hearing about that?

I can remember that somebody came to our house and handed a telegram to my mum. I was sitting in the front room, and she and my nan went down to the scullery (kitchen) and I could hear them both crying. I went and asked who'd hurt who and my mum told me to go and sit down. She then told me dad was dead. I was about four and it didn't really hit me because he didn't even know I was born. He'd been in the army when I was born and I didn't know him and he didn't know me.

So how did your mum cope?

She worked all the time. She had to because she had to pay my nan housekeeping for the both of us. I didn't know my fathers people until many years later when I found out I had a cousin, Mary French. We'd been to school together and she was courting her fiancé, and I was courting mine, and I went to her house and as I went up the stairs I saw that her dad was staring at me. He said I reminded him of someone, of a man who had died in Dunkirk and I nearly swallowed my tonsils in shock! I had always thought I looked like my mother.

Did you have photos of your dad?

No. Well I think me mum had one of him in uniform, that she used to keep in the side pocket of her handbag. But that disappeared. My mum might have cleared it out when she married again.

Was your grandfather like a father figure?

Oh yeah, and he clipped me round the ear more than once! When I used to answer the door to my friends I would suddenly get such a smack on my backside and it would be him, 'Shut that bloody door, there's a draught!'

Can you remember peace being declared?

Sort of. Everyone was out in the street making one hell of a bloody noise! And I remember that winter because war was over and we had a lot of snow. We built a snow wall on our side of the road and the boys built a snow wall on their side and we had snowball fights. I had gloves on that got absolutely soaked and they froze me fingers and I went indoors to get another pair of gloves and put them round the fireplace to dry and when I came out the boys had all got their dads to help as well which wasn't fair! So I got my uncles either side to come and help.

So you had your own little war in the street?

Yeah, and Uncle Fred didn't make snowballs, he had a spade and just picked up snow and flung it over!

Can you remember what you did for fun during the war?

I used to sit and draw a lot and there were plenty of children in our road to play with.

I was under the impression that most kids were evacuated but that doesn't seem to be the case at all?

No, not in our road. I don't know of any that were. A lot of the parents wouldn't let them go. When I started school I sat next to a girl who had been evacuated and I asked her what it was like, "Bloody horrible!" she said. She was made to scrub floors by the woman she was staying with. Just six years of age and she scrubbing floors! I'd do the washing up and peel potatoes indoors, but I didn't do any scrubbing. My mum did that!

What's your strongest memory from wartime, good or bad?

The strongest is the incident with my granddad's hands. But I also remember one time in the shelter when one of our neighbours from across the road wet the bed. Once you were in there you weren't allowed out until the all clear. This lady had her little boy in the bed with her and she blamed him. We all knew it was her.

Did you have a pan or potty in there?

Yeah, we had a bucket. There were ten bunks in the shelter, but I shared with my mum, that boy with his and Pat was in with her mum so there were a lot more than ten people squashed in there. Going to the toilet would have been embarrassing for the adults. It's alright for men, they can turn round and put their back to you, but women can't. And there wasn't much space in there either, only about a shoulders width between the bunks. The bucket lived under one of the bunks at the back of the shelter, but I only remember it being used a couple of times. I didn't use it, definitely not.

My favourite memory is from the end of the war. A train stopped right behind our house that was full of Yanks (Americans) and they called out to us and threw us chewing gum and sweets. They gave us coins too, but they were American ones so no good to us kids. My granddad readily took them off me though as I think he know somewhere to change them. That was a great memory that one.

Where were the trains going?

They were going down to the coast to the ships that would take them home to America. I think my granddad said there were 10 ships waiting to take the yanks home. I wanted to go too but he said, "No you bloody can't!"



June, second left, at a street party

Was there a feel good factor after the war?

Yeah it was neighbourly and everybody looked after everybody else. If someone was sick and they couldn't look after their kids, somebody else would go in a do it for them. Cook them breakfast, get them ready for school and all that. Well, it was like that down our end of the street anyway. We were a bit of a funny street. On bonfire night both ends of the street would have their own massive bonfire, and the bloody fire brigade would arrive and put them both out!

What was the difference between the ends of the street? Was there some kind of dispute?

Not really, it was just a them and us type of thing. Whichever end you lived was where your loyalty lay. We used to play knock down ginger at their end of the street. I got caught though and got my ear clipped!



ARP wardens

Air Raid Precautions (ARP) was an organisation in the United Kingdom set up in 1937 dedicated to the protection of civilians from the danger of air raids. It included the Raid Wardens' Service that was to report on bombing incidents. Every local council was responsible for organising ARP wardens, messengers, ambulance drivers, rescue parties, and liaison with police and fire brigades.

From 1 September 1939, ARP wardens enforced the "blackout". Heavy curtains and shutters were required on all private residences, commercial premises, and factories to prevent light escaping and so making them a possible target for enemy bombers to locate their targets.

With increased enemy bombing during the Blitz, the ARP services were central in reporting and dealing with bombing incidents. They managed the air raid sirens and ensured people were directed to shelters.





Barbara

Born 1939

Did you go to stay with family or friends?

Oh, no it was a stranger. His name was Taffy and we lived with him and his wife.

What are your memories from that time?

I can remember a day I was picking cob nuts in a field when a man appeared ... and it turned out it was my dad. He'd come home on leave, gone to our house in Hill Road and found out about the bombing and our evacuation. He came straight down to South Wales to find us. I remember thinking "Who's that man?". We had no idea he was coming, he didn't have compassionate leave of anything, he'd just come home on normal leave and hunted us down to that nut field in Wales!

I also remember walking along the railway line with my mother and seeing all the coal banked up along the sides.

I started school when there and had a friend called Marigold. I remember a young lad there who was allergic to broad beans and all of his body was covered with the shape of these board beans.

When did you return to London?

I came home when I was 5 and by then I was speaking Welsh fluently from my time at school. I remember coming back and the next thing I knew I was at Gorringer Park School. It was a shock coming back to another school and having to start again.

I had a very happy childhood.

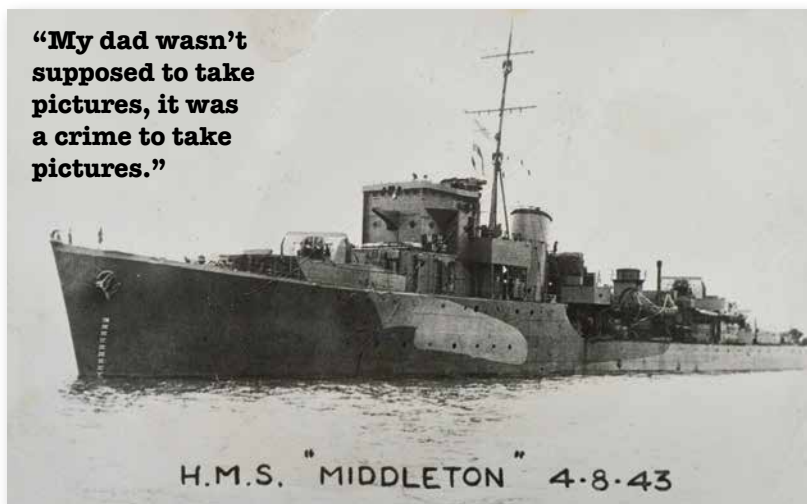
When were you evacuated?

I was born in Hill Road, Mitcham and was exactly three months old when war broke out. A railway ran along the back of our house and the Germans were continually bombing the railways. I must have been in my mother's arms, but outside the house a blast smashed glass everywhere and then the next thing I knew we were evacuated. We went to a little mining village in Wales. It was just me and my mum because dad was in the navy at the time. I spoke to someone much later on who had lived near us in London and apparently a lot of people were killed in Mitcham.



Barbara with her mother as a baby at the start of the war and again with her father as a little girl.





Italian torpedo bombers coming in to attack the convoy.



A bunch of the boys with stoke intervening.
No.3 Gun's crew and leading stoker Shepha



Survivors?



HMS Blankney making a smoke screen
around the convoy



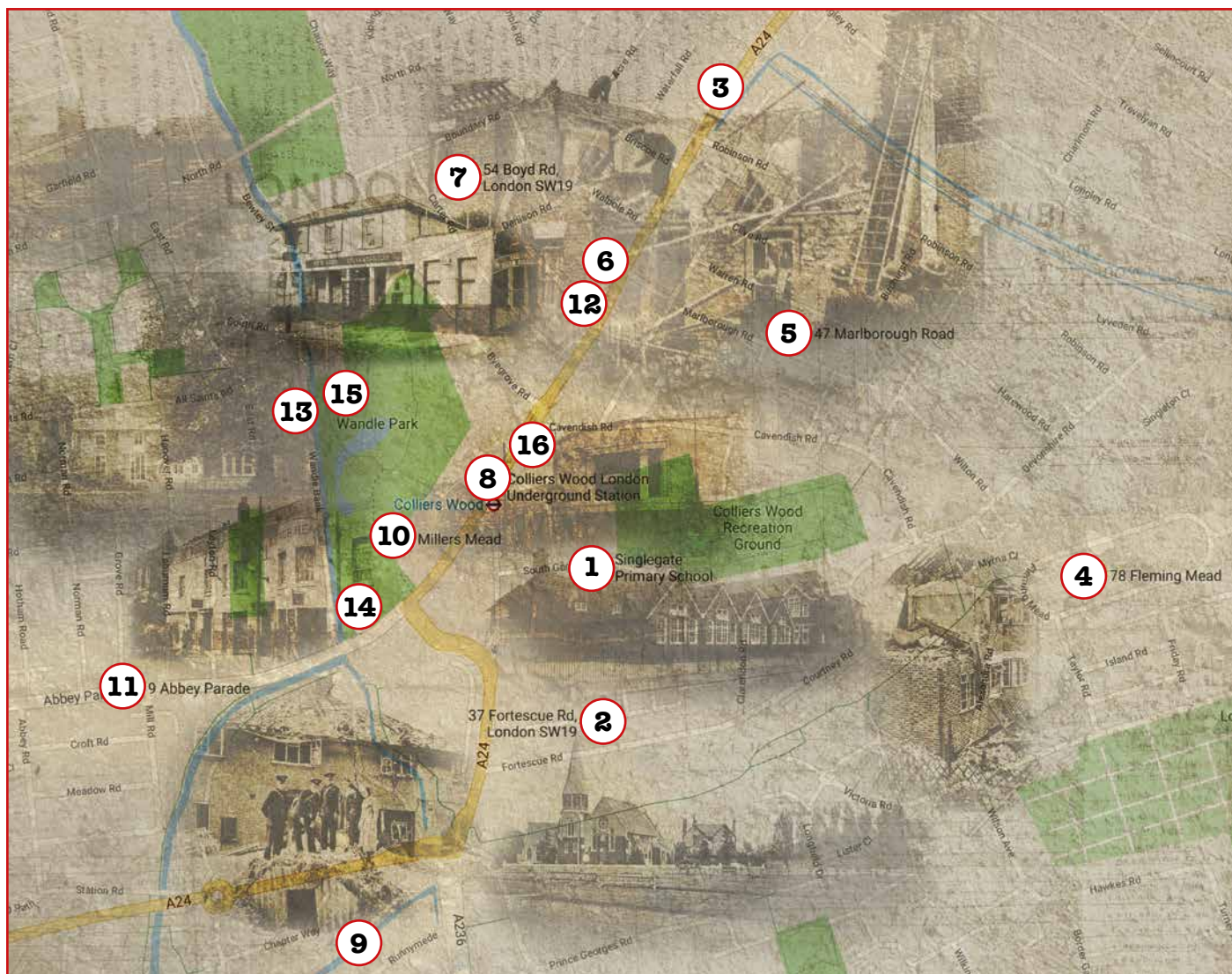
Another U Boat bites the dust
(we hope) Dropping depth
charges from the Middleton



A near miss!



"Steaming in line ahead" with Battle Fleet in background
(HMS Malaya with cruiser escort)



Colliers Wood

1. The “British Restaurant” Christchurch Road

Location: Singlegate School “Playing Sheds”

Between 1940 and 1947 there existed a network of 2,000 state-subsidised ‘British Restaurants’. Originally called Communal Feeding Centres but in a memo to Lord Woolton, the Minister of Food, the name was vetoed by Prime Minister Winston Churchill: **“I hope the term communal feeding centres is not going to be adopted. It is an odious expression, suggestive of communism and the workhouse. I suggest you call them British Restaurants. Everybody associates restaurants with a good meal, and they may as well have the name if they cannot get anything else.”**

Originating as an emergency system for people who had been bombed out, the British Restaurant provided unrationed food for war workers or

the general public. Anyone could use them. Local buildings were requisitioned for their use. Some kitchens offered takeaway meals, but most operated as cheap restaurants with long benches for diners. Customers queued for a ticket, which was exchanged for a wholesome hot meal costing a maximum of one shilling.

There were 6 British Restaurants or Communal Feeding Centres set up in this area during World War II. The sites of the restaurants were: Gladstone Road Mission Hall, St Olave’s Parish Hall, Prince George’s Road, Christchurch Road, Benedict Road and Sherwood Park Road. The Christchurch Road Restaurant opened in April 1941 and consisted of two field kitchens under the playing shed at Singlegate school, with one classroom being used as a store room. The room being used was blacked out. The staff of the school, along with that of Fortescue Road schools and some parents assisted to make

up the teams to run the restaurant. The children of the schools ate their lunches at the British Restaurant. The restaurant remained in operation until June 1944. Thereafter dinners were delivered to the school from a central British Restaurant kitchen at Sherwood Park Road. When in January 1946, Sherwood Park kitchen became “overburdened” the British Restaurant at Prince George’s Road took over.

2. 37 Fortescue Road “Doodlebug” Strike, 14th July 1944

Location: row of modern terraced houses between Oasis Church and no. 39 Fortescue Road. These houses replace those which were bombed during WW2.

V-1s, also known by the Allies as “Doodlebugs” or buzz bombs were guided missiles used by the Germans against Britain from 1944. The first V-1 was launched at London on 13th June 1944 and, at its peak, more than one hundred V-1s a day were fired

at South-East England. At around 9.48am on 14th July 1944, there was a V-1 strike on Fortescue Road. The air raid alarms were sounded and four fire engines rushed to the scene. The all clear was sounded at 10.15am but the damage was extensive.

The Dunning Family lived at no.37 Fortescue Road and Albert Dunning, aged around 8 years old at the time, has since recalled his experience: **"In June 1944 just after the D-Day landings in France the Germans launched an onslaught of flying bombs aimed at destroying London. I remember seeing these flying bombs in the sky, flames streaking from their engines. School was severely disrupted; we always seemed to be in the air raid shelters having our lessons. At one stage school was suspended because of the continual bombing. On July 14th 1944 one of these bombs destroyed our house (no.37 Fortescue Road), luckily we all managed to get in the Morrison shelter in the front room and this saved our lives. The ARP wardens got us out, the house was in ruins. No sooner were we out than another bomb came over and we had to run for cover. Surprisingly, only one person was killed, and that was a man working on his allotment behind our house. Our pet cat and rabbit survived the blast"**

The man who was killed was 64-year old Thomas Wright who lived at 4 Christchurch Close and who had been working outside in his garden. He died the following day, 15th July 1944, at St Helier Hospital. Thomas, a veteran of the Great War where he served as Corporal with the Royal Engineers, was survived by his wife Rose and children.

3. Operation Pied Piper

Location: High Street

Operation Pied Piper, which began on 1st September 1939, officially relocated almost 3.75 million people. In the first three days of official evacuation, 1.5 million people were moved: 827,000 children of school age; 524,000 mothers and young children (under 5); 13,000 pregnant women; 70,000 disabled people and over 103,000 teachers and other 'helpers'. Art treasures were sent to distant storage: The National Gallery collection spent the war in North Wales. The Bank of England moved to the small town of Overton, Hampshire and moved 2,154 tons of gold to vaults of the Bank of Canada. Some private companies moved head offices or their

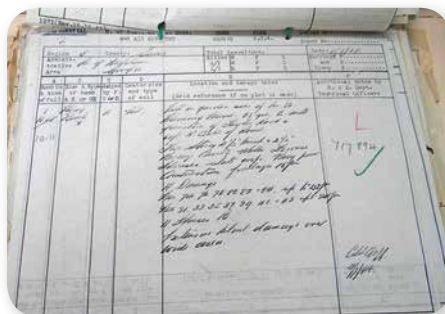
most vital records to comparative safety away from major cities.

To help people who wished to leave London as rapidly as possible, on 1st September 1939 from seven o'clock in the morning nine main road routes carrying London traffic were restricted to outward-bound vehicles. The routes were sign-posted by the Automobile Association. Route 7 (for Surrey and Sussex) was Clapham Road (A3); Clapham Common Southside; Balham Hill, Balham High Road, Upper Tooting Road; Tooting Broadway, Tooting High Street; High Street Colliers Wood; Merton High Street, South Wimbledon Station and Morden Road (A24); Morden Hall Road; St Helier Avenue; Sutton Bypass (A217); Reigate Road; Oldfields Road, St Dunstan's Hill and Belmont Rise to junction of Brighton Road.

4. V-1 Flying Bomb, Lillian and Beatrice Clark

Location: 78 Fleming Mead

On 11th July 1944, Mrs Lillian Louise Clark aged 45 and her daughter Beatrice Florence Clark aged 14 were killed in their own home, 78 Fleming Mead, when a flying bomb landed in garden at the rear of 80 Fleming Mead at 10.10am. They were survived by the husband and father William T Clark.



Official records describe the location and damage as follows: Fell in garden rear of no. 80 Fleming Mead. 67 yards E [east] of junction with Taylor Road and 60 ft. N centre of road. Two storey 4½" brick and 4½" breeze cavity walls terrace houses, slate roofs, very poor construction frontage 15ft. Damage: nos. 74, 76, 78, 80, 82 & 84 up to 150ft, nos. 31, 33, 35, 37, 39, 41 & 43 up to 200ft. 11 houses B. Extensive blast damage over wide area.

It was said that the bomb had caused "half the road", still a circular affair to this day, to disappear.

5. AA Shell Victim, Lydia Hele

Location: 47 Marlborough Road

On 17th January 1943, Mrs Lydia Emily Hele aged 73 was killed in her own home when Anti-Aircraft ("AA") Shell splinters pierced the window of her home. She was survived by her husband Andrew Charles Thomas Hele and children.

The Army used anti-aircraft guns and searchlights to detect the hostile aircraft (and later V-1 and V-2 rockets) in the hope of damaging them before they caused mass damage to London. The intense barrage from the AA fire would cause the mass falling of debris, splinters etc. One reason for getting civilians off the street and under at least some cover during air raids was to protect them from falling fragments of AA fire; whatever went up, had to come back down! There were HAA ("heavy anti-aircraft") gun positions across London; the nearest to Colliers Wood being Mitcham Common, Norbury, Clapham Common and Raynes Park.



6. AA Shell falls in garden of The Red Lion, 13th Feb 1944

Location: 62 High Street Colliers Wood, formerly the site of The Red Lion public house now a Co-Op store
Photo © London Borough of Merton

Customers were in the saloon bar at the Red Lion, High Street Colliers Wood when an AA shell fell in the garden outside the bar window. Splinters came through the window and struck the wall on the far side of the bar and ricocheted on to the floor. There were between 50 and 70 persons in the bar but no-one was injured. The landlady Mary Clements (who ran the pub with husband Frank) said **"We put out the lights and repaired the black-out curtain and then carried on. It did not interfere with business"**.

7. Ronald Albert George Gorton Killed in Action, HMS Mosquito Dunkirk

Location: 54 Boyd Road

Ronald Albert George Gorton, born on 21st February 1921 was the son of Albert George (a veteran of the Great War) and Charlotte Louisa Gorton (nee Dakin) lived at 54 Boyd Road, Colliers Wood.

The Dunkirk evacuation, or Operation Dynamo, was a British mission to rescue Allied soldiers from the beaches of Dunkirk, France in May 1940. On the 10th May 1940 Germany invaded the Low Countries, a precursor to the fall of France. British Expeditionary Force ("BEF") troops fell back to Dunkirk where they were pushed on to the beach awaiting rescue by the Royal Navy.

HMS Mosquito and HMS Locust were amongst the Royal Navy ships mobilised for the rescue. There were also around 700 "little ships" (private boats) which sailed to aid the evacuation. Ronald Gorton served as a Stoker 1st Class on HMS Mosquito and they had made three trips over to Dunkirk from Dover carrying back over 1,000 troops. On the way to Dunkirk on her fourth trip HMS Mosquito was attacked and damaged by a lone Junkers Ju 87 "Stuka" dive bomber but she carried on, arriving at Dunkirk on 1st June.

On hearing that the steamship HMS Scotia had been attacked, HMS Mosquito went to her aid but was attacked by six or seven aircraft from different directions out of a fleet of about twenty Stukas. Avoiding action was taken by HMS Mosquito, and the first three attacks missed, but the fourth was successful. One bomb exploded in front of the ship throwing up a large quantity of mud and water over her bridge and forecastle. And another direct hit put a hole in her boiler/engine room and her steering was put out of action. She listed heavily to port. With water pouring into the ship the order was given to abandon ship. The survivors escaped to rafts as Mosquito sank in shallow water off Dunkirk Mole. Up to 50 of the crew of HMS Mosquito were killed. Rapid 1, one of the "Little Ships" picked up a lot of men from the Mosquito, many badly injured, before it sank. Ronald could well have been one of them.

Ronald was brought back to Ramsgate Hospital to be treated for his injuries but he died the following day, 2nd June 1940; he was 19 years old. He

is buried in Ramsgate Cemetery. The inscription on his headstone includes the words: Without farewell he fell asleep, with only memories for us to keep.



8. Colliers Wood Tube Station

At the beginning of the war, officials rejected the idea of using the London Underground (Tube) system as a shelter. Though the Tube was dry and insulated from the noise of bombing its safety was sometimes illusory; high explosive bombs could penetrate deep into the ground. But there was public demand from the citizens of London to shelter in her Tube stations and they merely bought a platform ticket and began to escape the bombing by going down to the tube station to shelter for the night. Colliers Wood tube station was used by local residents as such as a shelter. There were a few bunk beds for those who arrived early, but you had to provide your own bedding. Most people ended up sleeping on the platforms. There was a little café at the end of the platform where you could get a cup of tea and maybe a bun. But there were hazards beyond the bombing to consider as well; alternate hot and cold blasts of wind raced through the tunnels and people walked into the tunnels to relieve themselves and so the stench could sometimes be overwhelming.



9. Bomb damage in Runnymede 16th August 1940

Photo © London Borough of Merton

It was vitally important that Anderson air raid shelters were correctly installed, with a thick layer of earth covering the metal structure. The people in this shelter were unharmed despite surrounding bomb damage.



10. Open Air Lido

Location: Wandle Park

Photo © London Borough of Merton

Youngsters enjoying an open-air swim at Wandle Park in Colliers Wood, which opened to the public in August 1913.

The children's swimming pool was constructed by the local council in an area to the rear of Millers Mead, off Merton High Street. This section of Wandle Park fell within the jurisdiction of the newly formed Mitcham Urban District Council.

The pool remained in use until 1933, when the new Public Baths were opened opposite Eagle House on London Road, Mitcham.



11. Wimbledon Palais

Location: Merton High Street

The building opened in 1909 as a roller-skating rink. During the First World War, it was converted for use as a balloon and airship factory.

Wimbledon Palais Opened in 1922 with the largest sprung floor in Europe, hosting guest live music entertainers, tea-dances, and competitions. The post-war Jazz era led to a dance craze and people were eager to learn the steps to the Foxtrot, the Charleston and the Blackbottom.

By the 1960s, the Palais was also attracting rock and roll acts, including an early performances by the Beatles. In later years, it was a venue for wrestling contests and also served as a Furnitureland store - this finally close c.2000 and the property has since been demolished.



12. Wooden houses

Location: 66-72 High Street Colliers Wood

Photo © London Borough of Merton

Before the Community Centre building was constructed in the early 1960s in its place stood a row of wooden cottages dating back to the 19th Century.



13. Wandle Bank House

Location: Wandle Park

Photo © London Borough of Merton

Alongside the river Wandle, was once the site of Wandlebank House, built in 1791 by James Perry and owned by him until 1821.

Perry owned the corn mill next door and was also editor of the 'Morning Chronicle', the most successful

London newspaper in Georgian times. Corn milling had been an important industry on the Wandle from medieval times.

Perry died in 1821 and is commemorated with a memorial at St Mary's Parish Church, Wimbledon.

Lord Nelson is thought to have visited Wandle Park House on a number of occasions, together with Emma and Sir William Hamilton. The house was demolished in 1962.



14. Mill Pond

Location: Wandle Park

Photo © London Borough of Merton

Corn milling was an important industry on the Wandle from medieval times. The corn mill was large and to ensure a constant supply of water Perry dug out an adjoining field to form the Mill Pond and a cut leading directly to the mill.



15. The Ashby Memorial

Location: Wandle Park

Photo © London Borough of Merton

This impressive fountain (now dry) was erected in 1911 as a result of a private subscription to the memory of Harry Pollard Ashby (1809-1892) and his son-in-law, Robert Broomfield Fenwick (1835-1897).

Both men lived in Wandle Park in the 19th century and were instrumental in establishing it as a public amenity. The two families were active in local affairs and also took an active part in the formation of All Saints' Parish in the latter part of the 1900s.

The former was a local artist who exhibited at the Royal Academy between 1835 and 1865 and was a friend of the artist John Constable. His son-in-law was an alderman of Surrey County Council and a justice of the peace.



16. Colliers Wood Library

Location: High Street Colliers Wood

Photos © London Borough of Merton

Colliers Wood Library opened in October 1946 and was situated next door to the underground station.



The Ministry of Food

The Ministry controlled the distribution of food during the war, and afterwards, and was responsible for giving out information on food rationing, and the wise use of food. Recipes and Food Fact leaflets were published by the Ministry of Food to enable people to make the best use of the rations available.

Cream of Parsnip soup

Cooking time: 25 - 30 minutes
Quantity: 6 helpings

2 pints stock or water
1 - 1½ lb parsnips
½ leek
3 teaspoons salt
Pepper
2 oz flour
¼ pint household milk
2 tablespoons chopped parsley

Scotch Eggs

Cooking time: 30 minutes
Quantity: 2 - 4 helpings

2 reconstituted dried eggs
8 oz sausage meat
Little flour
Crisp breadcrumbs

Potato Jane

Cooking time: 45 minutes to 1 hour
Quantity: 4 helpings

1½ lb potatoes
½ leek, chopped
2 oz breadcrumbs
3oz cheese, grated
Salt and pepper
½ - ¾ pint of milk

Caramel and Semolina mould

Cooking time: 15 minutes
Quantity: 4 helpings

2 oz sugar
4 tablespoons water
1 pint milk or milk and water
1 tablespoon apricot jam or marmalade
3 oz semolina





Lemon tart with wartime

Lemon Curd

Cooking time: 40 minutes

Quantity: 4 - 6 helpings

Shortcrust pastry

6 oz self-raising flour or plain flour with

1½ tablespoons baking powder

Pinch salt

1½ oz cooking fat or margarine

Water to mix

Wartime Lemon Curd

1 oz margarine

1 level tablespoon cornflour

2 lemons

¼ pint water

5 oz granulated sugar

1 egg

Oatmeal Sausages

Cooking time: 30 minutes

Quantity: 4 helpings

2 tablespoons chopped onion or leek

½ oz cooking fat or dripping

4 oz oatmeal

½ pint water

2 teaspoons salt

¼ teaspoon pepper

2 oz chopped meat or sausage or bacon

Browned breadcrumbs



Victoria Sandwich

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Quantity: makes 1 sponge cake

6 oz butter or margarine

6 oz caster sugar

3 eggs – size 1 or 2

6 oz self-raising flour or plain flour sifted

with 2 teaspoons baking powder.

For the filling and topping:

Jam

Caster sugar

Carrot Cookies

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Quantity: 12 -15 cakes

1 tablespoon margarine

2 tablespoons sugar and a little extra for

sprinkling on the tops of the cakes

A few drops vanilla, almond or orange

flavouring

4 tablespoons grated raw carrot

6 tablespoons self-raising flour or plain

flour and ½ teaspoon baking power

Bakewell Tart

Cooking time: 40 minutes

Quantity: 4 - 6 helpings

Shortcrust pastry

6 oz self-raising flour or plain flour with

1½ tablespoons baking powder

Pinch salt

1½ oz cooking fat or margarine

Water to mix

Filling:

2 tablespoons jam

2 oz margarine

2 oz sugar

1 teaspoon almond essence

1 egg or 1 reconstituted dried egg

2oz self-raising flour or plain flour with

½ tablespoon baking powder

2 oz soft breadcrumbs

2 oz soya flour

2 tablespoons milk

Corned Beef Risssoles

Cooking time: 20 minutes

Quantity: 2 - 3 helpings

4 oz corned beef

½ lb mashed potatoes

½ lb cook mixed vegetables

4 oz wheatmeal breadcrumbs

Seasoning

Pinch mixed herbs

4 tablespoons brown sauce or vegetable water



Dig For Victory



Sustainable Merton staff ran weekly hands-on gardening sessions on a plot of land within their community allotment garden, which was set aside for the project. Most of the children had never done any gardening before, but several became really keen and brought along their friends too and were disappointed when the sessions ended.

One evening Sustainable Merton ran a popular seed sowing activity with the Woodcraft group, several of whom attended the weekend gardening sessions. Thus the children were able to see the whole process from starting plants off indoors, preparing the ground for planting, sowing seeds outdoors, transplanting, weeding and general maintenance, through to harvesting.

The main crops the children grew were carrots, cucumbers, courgettes, chard, tomatoes, beans, sweetcorn, leeks and strawberries. The children also learnt to take softwood cuttings and successfully propagated some perennial herbs using this method. This would have been an important skill during the war years to save money and provide more flavour for food which

might otherwise have been very monotonous.

Some of the children's favourite activities were digging, using a wheelbarrow, picking the produce and unearthing unusual shaped



carrots and over-sized courgettes. Weighing and recording the produce then dividing it equally amongst the participants

was also popular. During warm spells there was a lot of watering to do.

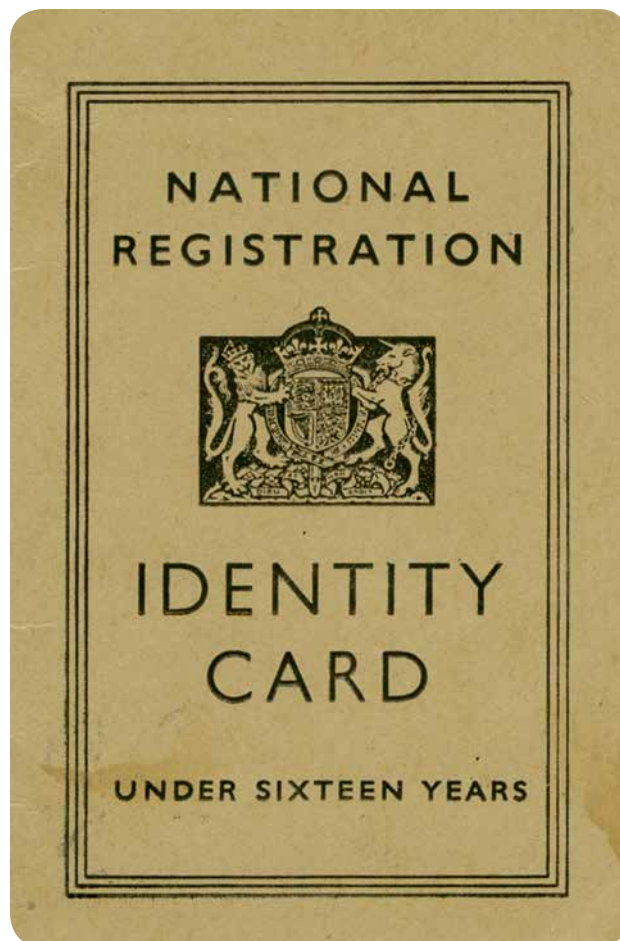
The continuing importance of vegetable growing skills was brought home to the children by a Czech/Slovakian family who enjoyed showing the children what they used to do every summer back home. A Polish family demonstrated their skills in pickling, saving some of the many cucumbers to be used later in the year. Another family made a leek and potato soup from the produce and shared it with their neighbours.











Acknowledgements

It is with gratitude that we would like to thank the following people for their invaluable contribution to the project:

Kevin Godding & Slawek Szczepanski for inspiring the formation of the idea that became HYPER
Slawek Szczepanski for preparing the funding application and making it happen
Thomas Searle, Peter Dauncey, Olivia Hendrie, Claire Weston-Shaw & Emma Dewhirst of Wimbledon Woodcraft Folk for providing research and cooking sessions for young people.
 The Young Roots committee: **Charlotte Boylan** (chairperson) **Robyn Smart, Kelsey-Jo Hurley, Zuzanna Chylarecka, William Ardley & Joel Winter.**
Tom Walsh and **Sustainable Merton** for providing the allotment and gardening sessions.
Andy Smart, Sharon Smart and the **Association for Polish Families** for providing technical training and for overseeing the interview sessions with elderly residents.
Kevin Godding and **Colliers Wood Residents Association** for their support throughout the project.
Diane Holmes for sharing her knowledge with the young people and for her research into Colliers Wood during WW2.
Sharon Smart of **A C Cooper Ltd** for transcribing each of the interviews, designing leaflets, posters advertising banners and this book.
Andy Smart of **A C Cooper Ltd** for photography, web management and social media.
Jacqui Lewis of **Colliers Wood Community Centre** for all her support & assistance.
Lurgashall History Group for sharing their knowledge and welcoming us to the village.
Coffee in the Wood for hosting regular meetings throughout the project.

We would also like to express gratitude and thanks to all the volunteers, colleagues, Colliers Wood residents and families for their support.

This project could not have been made possible without you.



Aug 29th

attended school to allay confusion over evacuation. Some teachers having accepted the London instructions as applicable to Surrey Schools had returned the previous week-end.

Aug 31st

Received Phone Message to attend school at 8 A.M. Friday Sept 1st. Attended meeting Sept 1st at Education Office to receive instructions from Mr. Beloe.

Sept 2nd

Notice of evacuation for Sept 3rd at 6-30 given about midday. Preparation made to contact with possible evacuees.

3rd

Departure postponed till afternoon. Buses used to take children to Wimbledon $90 + 100 + 46$ dispersed from Haslemere. The former going to Shottermill.

3.9.39 School evacuated. All teachers went with children.

4.10.39 Mr Johnson ill - nervous breakdown, followed by appendicitis

9.9.39 Mr Campbell ill. Synovitis

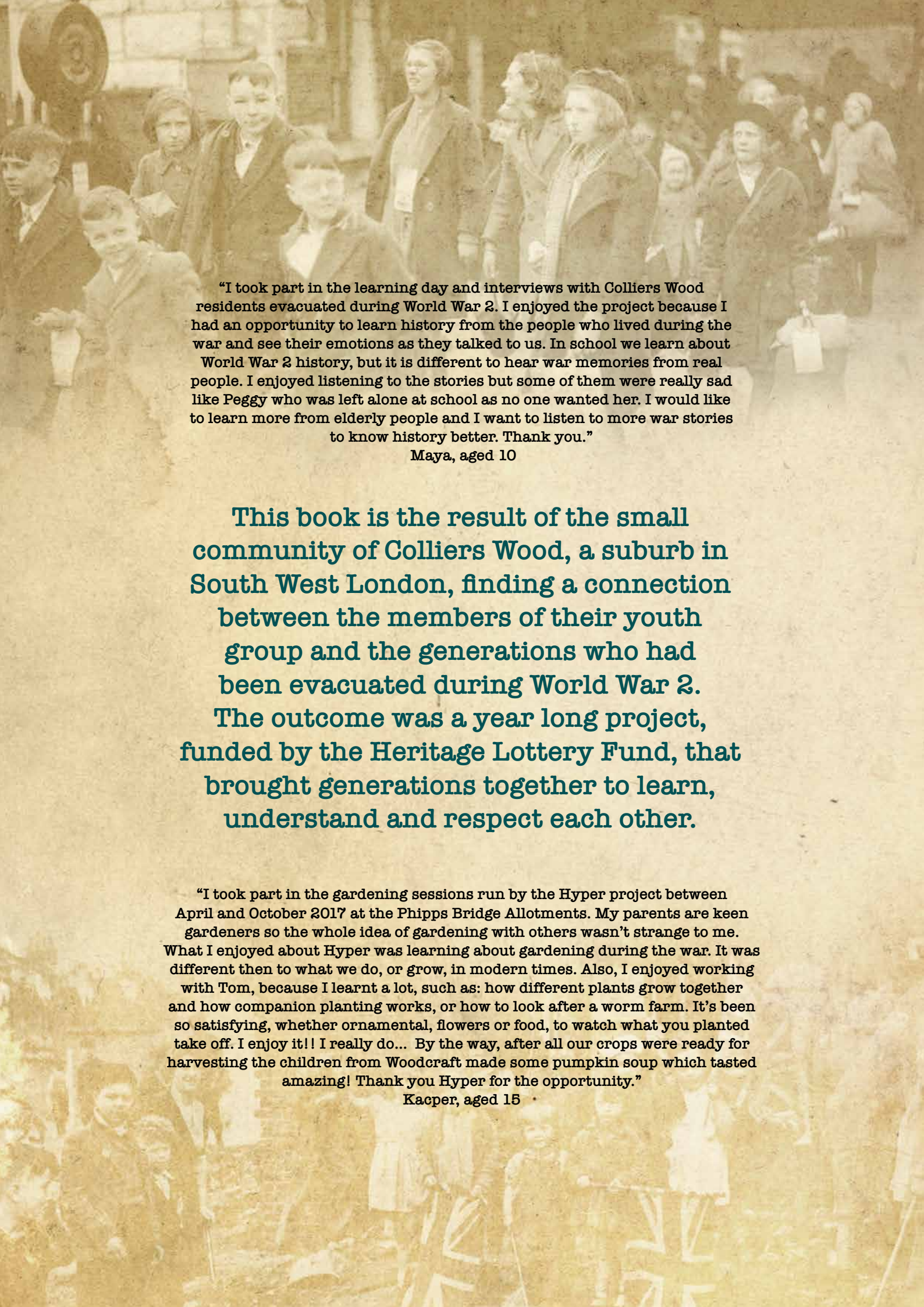
2.11.39 Tutorial Teaching commenced. by Mr Pearson

4.11.39 Mr Campbell resumed duties

4.12.39 Head Teacher returned from reception area & resumed duties here.

" .. P.M. H.T. attended meeting at Education Office

5.12.39



"I took part in the learning day and interviews with Colliers Wood residents evacuated during World War 2. I enjoyed the project because I had an opportunity to learn history from the people who lived during the war and see their emotions as they talked to us. In school we learn about World War 2 history, but it is different to hear war memories from real people. I enjoyed listening to the stories but some of them were really sad like Peggy who was left alone at school as no one wanted her. I would like to learn more from elderly people and I want to listen to more war stories to know history better. Thank you."

Maya, aged 10

This book is the result of the small community of Colliers Wood, a suburb in South West London, finding a connection between the members of their youth group and the generations who had been evacuated during World War 2. The outcome was a year long project, funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, that brought generations together to learn, understand and respect each other.

"I took part in the gardening sessions run by the Hyper project between April and October 2017 at the Phipps Bridge Allotments. My parents are keen gardeners so the whole idea of gardening with others wasn't strange to me. What I enjoyed about Hyper was learning about gardening during the war. It was different then to what we do, or grow, in modern times. Also, I enjoyed working with Tom, because I learnt a lot, such as: how different plants grow together and how companion planting works, or how to look after a worm farm. It's been so satisfying, whether ornamental, flowers or food, to watch what you planted take off. I enjoy it!! I really do... By the way, after all our crops were ready for harvesting the children from Woodcraft made some pumpkin soup which tasted amazing! Thank you Hyper for the opportunity."

Kacper, aged 15