

The wartime memories of Mr Raymond Fry are set out below. His family lived at Kingswood and the events depicted are typical of any part of the local area of the Borough of Reigate and Banstead. His personal account gives a refreshing and detailed insight into conditions during the years of World War Two.

Wartime Schooldays in Surrey

Written and Illustrated by Raymond Fry

Searchable index

[Aerodromes \(Kenley, Croydon, Biggin Hill\)](#)

[ARP \(Air Raid Precautions\)](#)

[Air raid shelter at home](#)

[Air raid shelter at school \(1\)](#)

[Air raid shelter at school \(2\)](#)

[Air raid shelter Waterhouse Lane](#)

[Barrage balloons](#)

[Battle of Britain](#)

[Blackout](#)

[Blitz](#)

[Canadian soldiers arrive](#)

[..... on guard](#)

[..... at Epsom](#)

['Dig for victory' and other slogans](#)

[Doodlebugs and rockets](#)

[Food and clothes rationing](#)

[French resistance](#)

[Dunkirk evacuation of troops](#)

[Gas masks](#)

[Invasion](#)

[Messerschmitt down near Kingswood Church](#)

[Radar, a secret weapon](#)

[..... or sound detectors?](#)

[..... in American ships](#)

[..... in fighter aircraft](#)

[Rationing](#)

[Tanks and devices for Normandy invasion](#)

www.fredhill-reigate-history.co.uk/fry.htm

War Threatens

My first recollection of impending war must have been late one afternoon in August 1938 when Hitler demanded the transfer of Sudetenland from Czech territory to Germany. After hearing the six o'clock news my mother, my brother Trevor and I all rushed into the garden, grabbed spades and forks and began digging an enormous hole for an air raid shelter. A few weeks later we were returning from our summer holiday in Torquay and Tintagel and as my father drove the Wolseley down West Street, Dorking, we could see the placards of the evening newspapers, saying: 'No War, Chamberlain signs deal with Hitler. Peace in our time.' We let out a colossal sigh of relief. We didn't need to do any more digging for the shelter, at least for the time being.

.....But peace was not destined to last long: six months later Chamberlain's agreement was effectively tossed contemptuously into the bin by Hitler as he marched into Prague, taking the whole of Czechoslovakia. At school we began collecting the cards found inside cigarette packets. 'My Dad got a Spitfire yesterday' someone would say, and that would be worth a lot. He would be a hero.

.....My father was an ARP (Air Raid Precautions) post warden and had to undertake basic first aid training and learn how to use stretchers. His duties included delivering and fitting gas masks to everyone in his area - post 48 - based on an air raid shelter in Waterhouse Lane, Kingswood. Most people were grateful, but our neighbour Freddie Street gave Dad a cool reception and shut the door in his face: he would have nothing to do with another war, he had had enough of that in the last one (he had lost a leg, poor fellow). Gas masks were kept carefully in their cardboard boxes until such time as they might be needed. The air raid shelter in our garden was duly completed by builders. We were unable to dig down deep enough in the clay.

War Begins

Then it all began. Hitler demanded the Polish Corridor and Danzig (Gdansk) from Poland, who refused. He made a pact of non-aggression with his arch-enemy, the communist Soviet Union, with a secret protocol permitting Stalin to occupy the eastern part of Poland and much of Eastern Europe. This would keep Stalin friendly while Germany occupied its part of Poland.

.....At 4am on 1st September 1939, Hitler attacked Poland. The Polish air force and army, still reliant on cavalry, were quickly overwhelmed. Chamberlain asked Hitler to halt the attack and give a firm promise by 11am on 3rd September. No reply was ever received. So Chamberlain made his famous radio broadcast in which he announced that Great Britain was now at war. Within minutes the air raid sirens sounded and everyone rushed to the shelter thinking "This is it. It's going to be like this all the time." But after a few minutes the 'all clear' sounded. The sirens had been sounded due to a French airliner on its way from Paris to Croydon. Never mind, it was good practice. After this it all went quiet for months.

.....The day after Poland was invaded my mother and father drove us to Reigate to buy a good supply of school clothes to keep us going in case of shortage. When term started everything was as normal as possible except that at prayers everyone had to have their gas mask slung over the shoulder to make sure that it had not been forgotten. I did forget one day and was sent straight home to fetch it (an excellent way to miss your first lesson if you hated it). We also had shelter practice to measure the time it took to travel from classroom to shelter. Each class had its own route so as not to clash with another class and cause delay. This was quite fun.

.....Warsaw was shelled, bombed and captured and in three weeks the Polish army ceased to exist, after putting up a gallant struggle. I could not understand why the British and French did not attack across the Rhine from the west and bomb Berlin.

✦The Blackout

.....After that nothing seemed to happen except that night after night the RAF was out over Germany dropping leaflets, not bombs. At home my mother had found the thickest curtains for the blackout and these were lined with very thick material so that no light could penetrate outside. This was another duty of the ARP wardens - a nightly patrol of the roads to make sure no lights were visible. All street lights were permanently turned off, traffic had their lights hooded and dimmed so that only a small patch of road in front could be seen, trains had their windows covered with blinds so that lighting was just sufficient to read by, but at the approach to a station the main light was extinguished leaving just a faint blue light to see the step to the platform. Everyone was told to eat more carrots: it helped you see in the dark.

✦Rationing

Food rationing started on 1st January 1940 and was applied at first only to butter, sugar and bacon and every week coupons were torn out by the grocer. Within a year more and more items began to be rationed, including clothes. Children had a larger allowance than adults as they were growing and obviously last year's shirt and shorts would not fit for much longer. As I had to cycle to school my shorts always developed massive holes against the saddle and my mother used to sew in a patch from another old pair or from an old blanket. Every housewife was encouraged to do this and the slogan 'make do and mend' appeared almost everywhere. ✦ Another slogan was 'dig for victory'. Every bit of garden space, vacant plots of land and even areas of parks and heath were dug or ploughed for vegetables and cereals. The only foods not rationed throughout the duration were vegetables, apples, plums and pears in season, milk, bread and fish, when available. Many people kept poultry for fresh eggs but powdered egg was available on the ration. Strangely enough, bread was rationed as the war ended. I am sure I never saw a banana for five years.

.....As scouts, on Saturday afternoons we would go round nearby roads collecting newspapers for recycling. Paper became very scarce and I think later papers went down to just two sheets, that is, eight pages when folded. Advertisements were rare and if there were any, would have been about 2 inches x 2 inches. Cigarettes were advertised - Woodbines, Craven A, Players and Wills, the ones with the cigarette cards. New books became rare and school books were nearly always second hand or older with loose pages. I remember once I got a new book, so this became my favourite subject. The aroma of fresh glue and paper was a rare delight in an austere world where even envelopes were used over and over again and resealed with a sticky label. Coal was rationed: almost all heating and hot water was from coal fires and boilers so bathwater shouldn't be more than 2 inches deep and re-used by another member of the family.

.....My form master, Mr Rimmer, who was in the Territorial Army, was sent to France with the British Expeditionary Force. I never saw him again. He must have been killed at Dunkirk nine months later. We were never told. He would always explain a point in maths so that it made sense and for the first time ever I enjoyed doing maths homework.

.....✦Lots of troops went to France and Canadians arrived here and were billeted in the larger houses. They

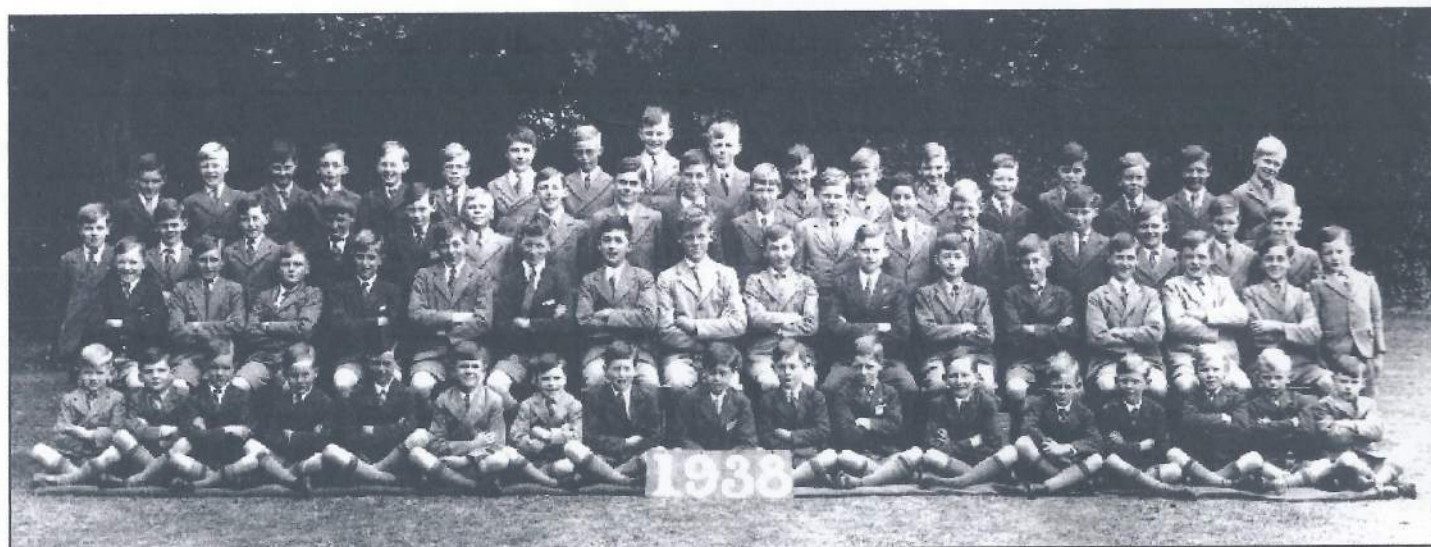
always seemed to be jolly and I think they thought the blackout was a joke. If my father on patrol, ever told them off, they would ask him in for a drink and outnumbered, he must have had a job to get away.

.....After Poland was conquered we all expected France to be invaded; but all was quiet on the Western Front. There were no air raids. No excitement except the pocket battleship Graf Spee was caught by HMS Exeter, Ajax and Achilles in the South Atlantic, severely damaged and then scuttled itself. It had been sinking merchant ships. Churchill, as First Sea Lord of the Admiralty, made a great drama out of this to rouse the nation, as everyone seemed to be slipping back into normal peacetime life. What could we do to free Poland anyway?

.....The first Christmas of the war came and I recall there being a mad scramble to buy the last toys and books. Snow came on Boxing Day and lasted for two months - the coldest winter of the century, so far. We were due to go to the pantomime, so my father put chains on the car wheels and carried a shovel in the boot of the car, just in case. When term started I was cycling to school through at least one foot of snow coming up to my knees, getting stuck, and pushing my bike through the deepest drifts and singing hopelessly out of tune "It's a hap-hap-happy day, the world's all white..." which was my version of a popular tune of the day.

.....After the persistent snow of the winter some warm sunshine came early in the Easter holidays and Trevor and I were out walking with Suzy our dog (a schnauzer) along a road called 'The Glade' near Kingswood Station. I was looking out for a house, perhaps fourth or fifth along, where I thought a girl lived with whom I used to walk home from the bus stop in the afternoon. My school, Aberdour, which was then in Banstead, was for boys only, and she went to a girls' school in Sutton and came home on the same bus. She said "It's a pity to walk down the road (Waterhouse Lane) every afternoon after school without talking." I soon realised I agreed with her and looked forward to a quarter to five every afternoon. She always had some interesting bits from school to tell me about. "We had tapioca again for pudding and it was so sticky my friend couldn't get it off her spoon. The teacher asked why she had left it all on her plate, so she explained and showed her just how sticky it was and everybody laughed and so did the teacher." I had never had a conversation with a girl before. The boys at my school said girls were silly. I didn't think so but I didn't say so to anyone. It was my private delight.

.....But there was no sign of her living in the Glade now: she must have been evacuated, or her whole school must have been evacuated as soon as the war started the previous September. I never found out.



My school, Aberdour in Banstead, before the war.

.....When Trevor, Suzy and I got back home, my mother was standing by the open French doors brushing the carpets; her face was crimson and she was shaking. "It's happened. They're coming. Those horrible Germans have landed in all the Norwegian ports. I thought "good", then the navy will sink all their ships. But in fact it was rather a forlorn hope. The navy arrived some time later when all the ports and airfields had been captured and it was difficult to land our troops to help the Norwegians. We did eventually recapture Narvik and sank a lot of their destroyers. The Norwegians crippled a cruiser, the Blucher, as it entered Oslo Fjord and Fleet Air Arm Skuas sank the Koenigsberg, but it was impossible to halt the German invasion. Strangely enough Churchill's Admiralty had been warned by a Blenheim reconnaissance plane that German ports were unusually busy, but this was apparently never investigated further. Had immediate action been taken, the German shipping might have been intercepted before the landings were made. This disastrous oversight was not made public and it is strange that Neville Chamberlain took full responsibility for the Norwegian fiasco,

and the boss of the Admiralty became Prime Minister within a few weeks. Such is politics!

▲Dunkirk

Then came the next surprise. Before dawn on 10th May, parachutists were dropping onto airfields and defence points along canals in Holland and Belgium, strictly neutral countries, before they knew what was happening. French and British troops moved in to assist but were overwhelmed and cut off by fast moving Panzer armies using tanks and Junkers 87 dive bombers which in a few days reached the Channel coast at Boulogne, isolating the French and British rushing to the aid of the Belgians. Preparations for the mass evacuation from the beaches at Dunkirk were made, the whole operation going under the British codename 'Dynamo'.

.....Hundreds of boats, large and small, crossed the Channel and were under severe dive bombing attacks as the soldiers left and waded out from the beaches. I vividly recall the distant thud and vibration of the ground and our house, which started every morning at dawn. Going into the garden in my pyjamas the air was warm, the sun bright, day after day, and the birds kept on singing. I was puzzled why they could not understand what was happening. On the news on the wireless Bruce Belfrage, Joseph McLoud and John Snagge remained cheerful saying our troops were withdrawing 'according to plan' towards Dunkirk inflicting severe casualties on the enemy. We did not know whether or not to believe them. Alvar Lidell sounded serious enough but Frank Phillips could barely make it to the end of the news. "Our troops are withdrawing from Abbeville, Arras, St Omer, the roads are blocked with thousands of French civilians chugging along inch by inch in cars, on bicycles, pushing babies, children and belongings, food, even chickens, in prams. Then the Messerschmitt 109s would come over and strafe the column with machine gun fire and the screaming would become unbearable". On the spot reports were being radioed in from Edward Ward and Richard Dimbleby. Perhaps I should mention here that the BBC had just adopted the idea of every news item being read by an announcer who gave his name so that his voice was quickly recognised by the public. With the invasion of Holland the Germans used radio to give false news to deceive an invaded country. Deception became a major weapon used by the Germans. Paratroops landing in Holland were dressed in Dutch uniform and it was said that some were dressed as nuns!

.....As the troops landed in Ramsgate, Dover and Folkestone the wounded were attended to and taken off. Those that could walk were led into waiting trains which were routed through Redhill and Reigate and onwards to Reading and the Midlands. Redhill station was closed to normal traffic for two weeks while this took place. As a train arrived in Redhill Station the Women's Voluntary Services were waiting to provide sandwiches and tea, as well as to wash wounds and try to console those suffering from trauma. Many were young men barely twenty years old.

.....Many ships and boats were sunk but 'Dunkirk' was regarded as a miracle purely because it was never expected so many troops could be brought back, and the response from the small boats was so enormous and the sea remained calm throughout the evacuation. But there was no stopping the Germans who now occupied Paris and most of the rest of France.

.....Back at school I remember one boy gleefully shouting to the French teacher "So now that France has gone we don't have to learn French any more." To this the teacher could only reply "France will rise again one day." But when? There was a general feeling that it was impossible to oppose Hitler. Germany will always win. Lord Halifax wanted to make peace with the Germans before it was too late. Churchill made some stirring speeches: "We will never surrender to that guttersnipe Hitler." "We will fight." "Blood, sweat and tears" was all he could offer. "We will fight on the beaches....." The King and Queen backed Churchill and the peacemakers were outnumbered.

.....The French signed an armistice and the old man, Marshall Pétain, did everything the Germans asked him to do and the French fleet refused to join the British. We opened fire on them in their North African ports. What a war: shooting our former allies! How could we ever win?

▲The Battle of Britain

Things quietened down once more, but only for a few weeks. The summer holidays started, but most of the raids seemed to be on shipping in the English Channel until August, when late one afternoon, cycling back from my grandmother and aunt in Woodland Way, Kingswood, I heard a plane approaching. No siren had sounded but there were big puffs of smoke coming up all around it. It was clearly a German plane and our anti-aircraft guns were shooting at it, but just missing, unfortunately. It was all rather exciting but by the time I reached home to take shelter it had gone.

.....✦ This was the beginning of the big show! By the middle of August the fighter aerodromes at Croydon, Kenley and Biggin Hill were under heavy attack several times each day and each time there was tremendous noise, masses of black smoke (it must have been Kenley, which was the nearest) and the whine of planes in dogfights, or being shot down. Each time the siren sounded Trevor, my mother and I ran to the shelter area to watch the excitement and run under cover as soon as it got too near. The siren would sometimes sound soon after breakfast and probably again before lunch and before tea. What we had never seen before were the white trails in the sky, from aircraft flying at very high levels. As they zigzagged in and out in dogfights they left amazing patterns. Sometimes a black pattern or line was left, obviously a plane, shot at and burning. I think we once saw a parachute open up.

.....Once, a spluttering, coughing noise came at us as a plane came near with smoke coming out of the tail. Then my mother saw it, almost bursting into tears and with that red face again, she just managed to say "It's one of ours....." She must have seen the round marking of the RAF: no swastika and crosses of the German planes. "Poor pilot, I hope he's not wounded....." was all she could manage to say before she choked. This must have brought back all the pain of saying goodbye to my father going to France in 1917. He had joined up at the age of 18, become a second lieutenant in the Royal Artillery and was sent to the Arras region.

.....Every day the raiders went back to France well before dark and there were no raids at night until 7th September when Hitler and Goering made a crucial mistake. On this day the docks of London were attacked and set alight and bombed all night, the fires acting as a beacon to successive waves of bombers. Immediately the fighter aerodromes gained some relief as the main attack went against London day and night and Fighter Command began to regain control of the air during the day.

.....The climax came on Sunday 15th September. The sirens seemed to be sounding incessantly. At midday the 'all clear' went. The weather was very hot and my father said he was going to have a 'squirt'. This was something he always enjoyed in hot weather. With him totally nude on the lawn we would take hold of the end of the hose and send jets of cold water all over him. Then the obvious happened - the siren went again. "I told you so", said Edith, my mother. "They are not going to give us any peace today. Here's your tunic, whistle and tin hat." The tin hat was like an army helmet but marked 'ARP' for air raid wardens. So, pulling his socks over soaking wet feet covered in grass clippings, grabbing pants and trousers, he was off on his bike again to the ARP shelter/control in Waterhouse Lane.

✦ The Blitz

.....As regular as clockwork the raiders would come every night from 7th September half an hour or so after sunset. For the first few days no guns fired at them: arriving in twos and threes they were seemingly unopposed. My father kept saying to himself, "Why the ----- don't they shoot at them?"

.....Then it must have been the third or fourth night, all the searchlights went on and the guns opened up with a tremendous roar. My father stood at the top of the shelter steps with his tin hat on, mumbling with great satisfaction, "That's right, give the ----- Hun ----- ." He probably thought we couldn't hear at the bottom of the steps in the shelter proper, which was made of reinforced concrete and was about six feet below ground level. It gave us a good laugh as well as sharing his deep satisfaction. Beds were set up and we retreated there every evening at dusk and emerged about seven o'clock in the morning. Electric light was brought across from the sitting room on a flex, giving just about enough light to read or to try to finish off homework.



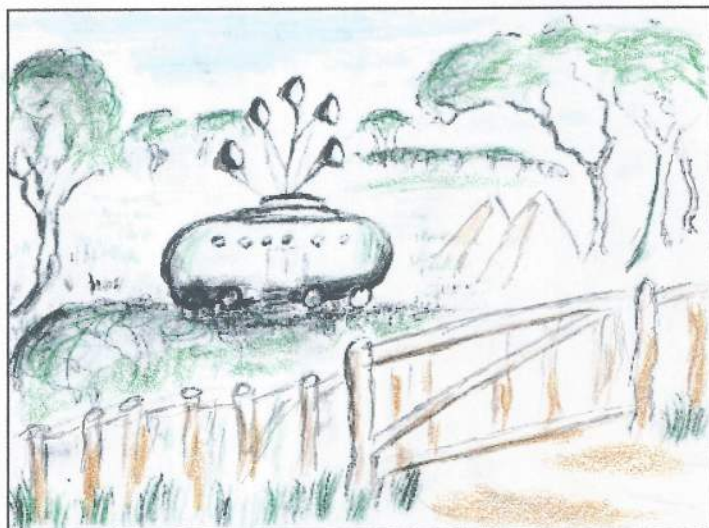
Patterns in the sky.

Aerial battles were taking place over Surrey, Kent and Sussex from early in August. What had not been seen before were the white trails left by aircraft at very high altitudes. At first we thought they were smoke trails from burning planes until we were told they were vapour trails due to the formation of ice at the very high altitudes that planes were now flying at. Extraordinary patterns were formed as each plane dived and turned to get his enemy in his gun sites.

.....We did not know why the guns had been silent for the first few nights but I remember there was talk about a secret weapon; radiolocation, later known as radar. It is possible that fighters were trying airborne radar to locate the bombers but this was not working yet, so the gunners were given a free hand. For some time Mr Ballantyne's field next to Hill lane had a strange object in it which clearly deployed a series of round discs rather like eggshells neatly cut in half and tilted up towards the sky. There were two or three men in uniform who did not like us to peer over the gate to satisfy our curiosity. They were very polite and one came round and asked my mother if they could all have a bath, to which she readily agreed. She did not ask what they were doing: he seemed to imply the object was a sound detector but she said he winked and did not say any more except that it was good to hear a bit of classical music on the Home Service instead of the endless jazz on the forces program, which you get in the army.

.....My mother said he was a very, very nice man, partly because she liked the officers' uniform and also because he put his hand in his bag and pulled out some butter saying the army ration was much bigger, you know.

.....We never discovered whether the objects were sound detectors or secret radar. The Germans were aware we were using radar but they had no idea it had such a long range and that information was being sent instantaneously to Fighter Command Group HQ in Uxbridge who then gave immediate instructions by radio to sector stations and then on to the squadrons in the air to enable them visually find the attacking planes. However the final interception was still dependant on a sighting, which of course by night was a matter of luck even in bright moonlight.



This strange vehicle looking a bit like a caravan was in Mr Ballantyne's field (now Ballantyne Drive). Were the discs sound detectors or the very secret radar? We never found out.

.....So the night raids continued, with a German plane shot down only very occasionally. Every evening, except one very windy one I think, they came just after dusk. I remember my mother got more and more daring and once, after supper, she was trying to finish a chapter of David Copperfield and she kept saying "I hope Mr Hitler is late tonight: tell him to wait until I've finished this chapter." Barely a page to go and the siren sounded and less than five minutes before the first plane approached and was greeted with a colossal roar from the guns which shook all the windows and floorboards. I was already on my way across the lawn to the shelter, but she stuck it out and followed soon afterwards. We nearly always knew before a raid was due because my father always had the wireless on, and as soon as a raid was perceived the tone was varied up and down and distorted so that raiders could not use radio beams for navigation. This played havoc with music.

.....London seemed to be the sole target night after night and I remember my father saying "There's talk in the East End that we should make peace with the Germans. I don't know how much longer we can hold out." The small chain of shops run by my father and grandfather called Povey Fry Ltd was suffering. No 20 Red Lion Street, between Holborn and Theobalds Road was burnt down but the safe was recovered from the rubble. The Barbican shop was demolished. Most Londoners were filing down to the tube stations and setting up for the night on the platforms, escalators and even between the lines: they brought mattresses, flasks of soup and drink and sandwiches. There were babies and toddlers too. Most of the schoolchildren had been evacuated to the countryside.

.....It was bearable for a few nights, perhaps even a bit of fun! However, how long could they go on like this and work by day? "It's all right up West. Hardly a building down in Piccadilly Circus, Regents Street...." Then the Cockney George Blake from the Billingsgate branch told my father; "Another miracle has happened. A young girl, very pretty, a wonderful voice, came down and started singing, stepping over people, over mattresses, around deckchairs on the platform, all the popular tunes, smiling. Everybody joined in. It was electric." It must have been Vera Lynn, who was soon on the wireless every day as the 'Forces Sweetheart' and hundreds of records (78s) were produced and she toured the battlefronts in Egypt, raising morale everywhere. It would be interesting to know which tube stations she visited and whether there are any plaques recording her visits and the dates.

.....As the autumn got colder and wetter water started to seep into the shelter and by November we had to retreat into the house and my bed area was the floor under the stairs, which would have possibly been the strongest part of the house, even if it was right beside the electricity and gas meters. My mother and father

slept in the hall, which was reinforced with some very thick old timbers, and the the windows had been sandbagged since the start of the war. This was common practice to provide some protection and consisted of a wall of filled sandbags covering a window or entrance area.

.....The raids continued every night until 14th November when something unusual happened. The sirens sounded and the planes did not seem to be going into London but avoiding it. The guns didn't fire at them and they passed over or nearby and disappeared all within perhaps less than half an hour: the all clear sounded and all was quiet for the rest of the night. We learned afterwards Coventry had been attacked and severely damaged. It did give London some relief as after Coventry other cities were attacked.

.....Meanwhile the daylight raids were becoming more and more feeble as it became apparent the 'Battle of Britain' had become a victory. One of the later events of this battle that I can remember took place towards the end of September. The siren sounded and the duty teacher blew the whistle, which meant that we had to take cover immediately in the school shelter. We were down in a minute or two, there was the usual noise, and we were singing our usual songs, 'Ten green bottles My eyes are dim I cannot see, I have not brought my specs with me Why are we waiting?' etc. etc. Mr Grange, the headmaster, used to lead the singing. It was rather like a scout camp sing song with no camp fire. He never attempted any lessons. We were obviously too difficult to control. Around the corner in the next passageway we would sing a slightly different schoolboy version to cause a giggle!

.....Then the 'all clear' sounded. Just as we were walking up the steps into the open air there came that spluttering, coughing noise of an engine, then in seconds we could see a plane through the trees with smoke pouring out of the engine, losing height rapidly. It looked like a Messerschmitt 109, "yes, definitely, I can see the crosses, we've got him all right." It disappeared towards Kingswood. We couldn't wait for the end of the day to find out where it had fallen. We cycled two miles to Burgh Heath but still no sign, so we asked the policeman on duty outside the Sugar Bowl swimming pool and restaurant and he said it flew on another mile and came down by Kingswood Church. It landed, severely burned, singed a wide area of trees around and was now guarded by some soldiers and there were some aeronautical types collecting pieces and examining them, obviously to seek out any innovations in design,. We were not allowed to get near. A good story to relate back at school next day.

.....When we returned to school in early September all the talk was about the aerial battles we had seen over the summer. Invasion was expected towards early or late September; it was all a question of defeating Fighter Command, favourable moon and tides and waiting for calm weather. As soon as invasion started everyone was to be warned by the ringing of church bells, which had been banned for some months. The Home Guard had been formed from old soldiers and young men not yet called up. Tank traps and pillboxes were appearing everywhere, especially near main roads. A deep ditch was cut as a defence line, crossed the main road between Burgh Heath and Banstead, and seemed to be filled with poles and spikes.

.....As September went on it was clear the RAF was still fighting hard and the last weekend of the month we took advantage of the fine autumn weather and went for a picnic. I well remember my mother pouring tea, saying, "If invasion doesn't come in the next few days Hitler will call it off." So we all went to bed listening for the sound of church bells, which never came. What I learned later was that my mother had plans to 'gas oven' Trevor and myself if the Germans arrived, rather than be transported as slave labourers. Just how she intended to hold us in the oven long enough for this job I do not know!

.....The daylight raids faded to nothing in November so it was now clear that the RAF had defeated the Luftwaffe and the Battle of Britain was a victory. The night 'blitz' went on, but as mentioned already after Coventry other major cities were attacked by night giving London some relief for perhaps a week or so at a time.

.....Christmas Day came. No snow, no air raid. After Christmas my father decided to risk a journey to Alton to see relatives. I am not sure how he found the petrol: Povey Fry Ltd's business allowance? Better say no more! Off we went in the car, had a good dinner with Grandpa Fry as head, (he had left North London since the beginning of the blitz), his unmarried sister Aunt Bess, another sister Aunt Chris (Cox), her grandson Robin (aged about two), my father's sisters Kathleen and Marjorie and their respective sons Keith, Howard and Graham: it was quiet a family reunion!

.....By 4pm my mother was pressing my father to get away quickly as she felt in her bones there would be a raid that night. After further persuasion we all managed to get away, my father insisting, "There will be no raid tonight, there has not been one for weeks." "That's exactly what I'm worried about," continued my mother. "We will never get home before dark." And sure enough as we approached Tadworth Court Children's Hospital the sirens were wailing and there were already pockets of incandescent light coming up from Garden Farm. You could see the silhouettes of the cattle against the igniting incendiary bombs scattered across the fields. We rushed into our house: no fire here. In we went, my father rushing off with his stirrup pump to the



neighbours' houses. Dr French, I think, had a few to put out. My mother telephoned to see if they were O.K. in Woodland Way where her father William (Bill) and sister Winifred lived. Luckily they were.

.....In retrospect it is obvious that this raid was the famous 29th December mass raid on the City of London, when most of the area from St Pauls Cathedral to Aldersgate was flattened but miraculously the cathedral was saved. The Germans were using a new technique of concentrating on a small area in a short space of time marked out before by pathfinder crews. In a matter of minutes the area was a furnace and the fire service was out of water and furiously pumping from the Thames, with the tide rapidly ebbing and firemen wading out through mud and slush to find something that resembled water.

.....The following summer I came to London and saw those areas of devastation expecting to see gaunt shapes and ruins, but I was amazed to see how neat and tidy everything had become. All the pavements beside the streets had been bricked up with dwarf walls about four feet high to keep children out, and below these were the remains of basement walls being colonized by an amazing variety of flowers, grasses and bushes, including buddleia, birch and pine already a foot or two high.

.....But why were the cows on Garden Farm attacked that night? My father's theory was that the bombers met the barrage of guns on Streatham and Mitcham Commons and taking evasive action got separated from the mainstream of bombers, failed to regain the direction for London, possibly saw the railway line glistening in the moonlight, thought that was a useful target and missed. In actual fact, during the whole of the night blitz we received very few bombs and I think only a few tiles on our roof were cracked or slipped. It was very different four years later when the Doodlebugs arrived!

.....It was now 1941 and the blitz continued. At last we were hearing on the news that one, two, three or even four enemy bombers were shot down the previous night. Apparently the airborne radar in the night fighters was beginning to work. I distinctly recall one April morning when the ground was covered by a myriad of specs of black paper floating down from the sky. Obviously a London paper mill had been hit. The raids continued until 11th May when London was the target and the Houses of Parliament were hit and the Queen's Hall was destroyed just hours after Malcolm Sargent had been conducting a concert. Henry Wood was seen scrambling over the smoking ruins hoping against all reason that the Promenade Concerts could return there one day. But, of course, they had to move to the Albert Hall, where they resumed in 1942.

The Soviet Union is Attacked

After this vicious attack on London everything went eerily quiet. On 22nd June we found out why. Once again before dawn a violent attack was unleashed, this time on Germany's 'ally' the Soviet Union. Airfields and frontier defences were smashed before Stalin knew what had happened. A Soviet supply train was still in transit for Germany at that very moment. Churchill made a speech that Sunday evening promising to do all he could to help the Soviets, but the Germans tore their way through to the outskirts of Moscow by December, until they were overwhelmed by snow, frostbite and frozen diesel.

A World War Now

On 7th December 1941 the Japanese attacked the Americans at Pearl Harbour. At last we were not alone. But for the next six months it was retreat, retreat and retreat.

.....In April 1942 Britain got a taste of air raids again, briefly in the 'Baedeker' raids on the most historical cities. The Baedeker raids were conducted by the German Luftwaffe in two periods between April and June 1942. They targeted strategically relatively unimportant but picturesque cities in England. The cities were reputedly selected from the German Baedeker Tourist Guide to Britain, meeting the criterion of having been awarded three stars, hence the English name for the raids. My cousin, Howard, had been evacuated to Bath, which received two heavy raids at the beginning of May, so he stayed with us for a while. Other cities which received attention were York, Norwich, Exeter, which was very heavily damaged, and finally Canterbury, also severely damaged. Then once again the Luftwaffe turned east for the summer offensive against Russia to capture Stalingrad and the oilfields near Baku and Maikop.

.....The summer term of 1942 was my last at Aberdour School before going on to St John's School, Leatherhead. My football and cricket had been a complete failure and I was hoping that I might achieve something in the school sports to be held in the final weeks of term. Austin, a superb runner, had left the previous year so I was hoping I might have a chance and yes, I managed to break the school record for the 440 yards. My friend Simon's parents Ralph and Gerry Smith joined my father and mother for a picnic tea at the side of the field after the events. This was the first time we all met up.

8

.....I was feeling full of hope for the new school but the tide of war was now approaching its limits. My mother was extremely anxious that the Russians were going to collapse, and as more and more Russian towns fell to the Germans she was clasping her hands in despair as the news came each day, shouting, "Come on Timoshenko, kill them all, blow up their tanks, shoot them." Timoshenko was a high ranking Marshall who had played a large part six or seven months before in halting the Germans before Moscow and in bringing about their retreat in the snow. As to whether Timoshenko was in this new battle or not I do not know, but he was my mum's hero, partly because of his name I think, which she seemed to manage to pronounce, and it sounded so very Russian.

.....In Egypt and Libya, the German and Italian army under Rommel had advanced eastwards to El Alamein, nearer than ever to the Suez Canal. I should say here that the battle on this front had gone back and forth some 600 miles several times since December 1940 when Marshall Graziani's invasion of Egypt was routed and sent back to Agedabia, about halfway to Tripoli. In fact the 8th Army's standing joke was 'It's Tobruk and Benghazi for Christmas, Agedabia for the new year and back to Egypt for Easter.' But this time we were pushed back some 200 miles back inside Egypt.

.....In Southeast Asia the Japanese had taken Singapore and Malaysia, with more prisoners than at Dunkirk, and were now threatening Australia from New Guinea. Three years of war and the situation now seemed more desperate than ever. Our only hope seemed to be the bombing of German cities, the devastation of which was now beginning with a one thousand bomber raid on Cologne in May, which would surely reduce their production of war weapons. This was followed by the American success in the Pacific at the Battle of Midway. In this battle of aircraft carriers the Japanese suffered heavy losses thanks partly to British radar with which American ships had been installed. The Japanese conquest was now virtually halted.

A New School

At the beginning of September 1942 my mother went to the Royal Northern Hospital in Holloway for an operation and I went to visit her, taking a trolleybus from Finsbury Circus on my own. This was a real experience for me and the acceleration of this type of bus nearly threw me down the stairs.

.....Time to start the new school in Leatherhead and I felt very grand dressed in long trousers, new and creased in a press, grey herringbone jacket, shirt with starched white collar and black tie. The walk across to the spanking new classrooms was a delight on the crunchy shingle path. The work seemed easy, except for French. Mr Gettins made each one of us read a line or two and then, after a dead silence, we were perhaps expecting him to say, "Bon mes enfants," or perhaps just the word 'good'. Instead the silence continued, his face went redder and redder and then he said, "I don't know who the Blue Hades has been teaching you but we are going to have to start all over again, and this time we are going to learn French." He paced up and down between the desks holding a sort of short wooden baton with which he flicked the back of your head if he thought you were not paying attention. Even the ringleaders and bullies in the class were silenced and lived in total fear of him. I never heard that expression 'Blue Hades' again once I left his class. It was obvious that the teacher wanted to impress and obtain our full attention by using an expletive but it would be improper to use a recognised swear word, especially in a church school. So he invented his own, which I must admit was quite effective. I regarded him as a very good teacher.

.....The other fear was of 'Tough Tom', a retired army sergeant who looked like a gorilla and sounded and behaved like a sub-human. He was the school's physical training teacher. "You, you and you, get the 'orse out." We had to jump from a springboard over the box horse. You had to get your feet together in the right position for the jump in order to clear the horse, which I never managed to achieve. As I came to the front of the queue for the run-in he used to shout, " 'Ere comes anuvver dying duck." I used to long for an air raid but never got one when I really needed it. In any case, St John's never had a purpose built shelter like my last school. I think the boarders used the basement for night raids. Another urgent request from Bockett's Farm for potato lifting would be just right. Down to Bridge Street, over the River Mole and up Hawks Hill standing in the trailer drawn by a tractor. That would have been just fine.

..... In early November 1942 there was thick fog and frost, and one Sunday we took a walk across Walton Heath where the grass and bracken were stiff with frost. Back at school the next day Tough Tom was signing out rifles in the armoury for training. These were used unloaded for drill training by us fourteen year-olds and also for target practice, when ammunition would be handed out. The rifles were later the heavy Lee Enfield 303s, which when fired were very loud and had a considerable kick. Initially we had to make do with old Boer War carbines. This preliminary military training was called JTC (Junior Traing Corps).

The Tide Turns

..... The grim, grey life seemed to go on. However, something was happening; news seemed to be coming through that Rommel was in trouble, abandoning tanks that had run out of fuel. We were back in Tobruk, Benghazi for Christmas, and yes, Agedabia for the New Year. I still thought that this was a third or fourth repeat performance, but no, in January our tanks rolled on towards Tripoli. The Americans and British had landed in Algeria and the German Afrika Korps was withdrawing towards Tunis. German reinforcements were streaming in from Sicily but this was too little too late. The Afrika Korps surrendered in May 1943 with over a quarter of a million prisoners, including many Germans.

..... In Russia the Germans failed to capture Stalingrad and the oilfields, suffering probably a worse defeat, losing perhaps even more as prisoners and to frostbite, many of them Italians and Rumanians.

..... Spring came early in March and while mowing the grass amongst the daffodils and apple blossom it was difficult to believe the war was not almost over. It was like walking on air. Church bells rang again for the first time in three years, sounding like sweet music. Many records of the war say that church bells were not heard again until the end of the war, but certainly in our neighbourhood peals of bells were heard again on Christmas Day 1943.

My Turn to Do Something for the War Effort

When the summer holidays arrived I worked half days on Wingfield Farm, Walton-on-the-Hill, for the summer harvest. For the last week of July we were harvesting oats. The farmer, Mr Shaw, possessed a tractor which towed a cutter and binder throwing out sheaves on the ground which we had to set together to form stooks to be left for three weeks or so to dry out. The oats would be used largely on the farm to be used as cattle feed. Then came the wheat harvest: again we had to form stooks. Weeks later they would be collected, a corn stack erected by the farmer until a threshing machine came round, and the final seed bagged and sold. Combine harvesters, of course, now perform all of this in one operation. When we were not working on wheat and oats there was always hoeing to be done up and down the rows of kale and cabbage to root out the weeds.



Father, Mother and self c1943, two or three years into clothes rationing??

Wartime Holiday

At the end of September, Trevor, a friend of his and I took a week's holiday in Tintagel, Cornwall. We hired bicycles and cycled to Port Quin, Port Isaac, Wadebridge, Trebarwith and Boscastle. Going to Cornwall in a steam train with a corridor was an experience for me: I felt like a real explorer travelling around the world. My world had been so small for four years, the longest journey having been the 45 miles to Alton after Christmas 1940. I had once ventured on my bike the full 10 miles to Charlwood, but I must have crossed over into the protected south coast zone, for I was abruptly stopped by a Canadian soldier with a bayonet shouting, "Halt. Who goes there?" Luckily I remembered my drill and replied, shaking and with my heart nearly jumping out of my chest, "Friend." His reply, "Advance friend and be recognised. Still with the bayonet pointed at me I managed to pull my identity card out of my pocket for examination. "Proceed friend and have a nice day."

..... While the south coast of England was completely inaccessible on the beaches, which were defended by barbed wire, metal spikes, concrete blocks and mines, the north coast of Cornwall was free of such defences and it seemed a new experience to walk on a beach., to see the sea and hear the gulls, the memory of which from 1938 had faded almost to nothing. We sped through Devon's rich red fields, then the green fields of Cornwall: there were no fields of wheat, just rye and cattle everywhere. There was butter and cream in the hotel. There were a lot of Italians working on the land, nominally perhaps prisoners of war, but now apparently using their prison camps for bed and breakfast and working by day on the farms.

Back to School

Back at school my friend Simon had joined St John's from Aberdour, and being a bit of a brain was in the class above me. So now I would have someone to cycle home with, which from November would be in the dark all the way, all seven miles. The classrooms were used in the afternoons by St Martin's Girls' School until 4pm, so we did not finish until 6pm. They had been bombed out of Ealing and came in by bus every day. Cycling all the way on my own was sometimes frightening under blackout conditions, especially if it was damp and foggy with no moon, just a small patch of light from the bicycle torch a yard or two in front. The worst night was when I was followed by a strange rustling noise like a cranky old bicycle. I stopped to look behind. There was nothing there but a swirling mist. I shouted, "Who's there?" No reply. By then I was really scared, trying to convince myself there was no such things as ghosts. Eventually the noise grew so loud and seemed to come from above. Then I realised what it was: a line of electricity pylons where the cables touch the metal arms making this eerie noise I had never noticed before. Panic over, but I found myself shaking uncontrollably. Then an uphill ride to the Epsom grandstand and the safety of the Canadian soldiers billeted there.

.....This event must have been when Simon was off school bandaged up, and I wondered if he had fallen foul of Tough Tom's box horse. Later on I found this to be the case. He had caught his foot on the horse and crash landed on the floor.

.....On the first day of the Christmas holidays I started work at Tadworth Post Office delivering Christmas mail. I had to start really early; I think it was 7 o'clock. Quite a shock to the system! Deliveries were finished well before midday, so there was a long break for lunch until about 2.30pm and then it was time to start emptying letter boxes.

.....There were a few night raids in February and March 1944 only lasting a few minutes; obviously our radar interception was now highly effective. The main excitement now came from Italy. Sicily was occupied in July 1943. Badoglio ousted Mussolini as Italian leader, Italy joining the Allied cause. The Germans quickly occupied mainland Italy, putting up a strong resistance, the allies not reaching Rome until June 1944.

D Day Landings

Cycling to school across Epsom Downs I had noticed more and more tents arriving right across the racecourse and far beyond. More and more soldiers were arriving. On the new dual carriageway from Leatherhead to Mickleham there were hundreds and hundreds of tanks parked as well as other vehicles that did not resemble tanks, some perhaps looking more like boats with protruding arms and something like rakes on the end.

.....About the end of the first week of June as I cycled past the grandstand I noticed it was empty and all the tents on the racecourse had vanished: there was not a soldier in sight. A day or two later I found out why: on the 8a.m. news a solemn but buoyant voice announced. "Since the early hours of this morning allied troops have been going ashore at various points along the Channel coast of France." This was the day we had been waiting for. Later I noticed that all the strange vehicles had disappeared from the dual carriageway. As we found out later these were the various devices fabricated to deal with the forest of defences erected by the Germans from below low tide level to above high water.

.....Details of these defences had been provided by the French Resistance, many of whose members had been set to work constructing them. Detailed notes were passed on at night by fishermen at great risk to Cornish



Strange vehicles were parked along the dual carriageway from Leatherhead to Mickleham. Some were tanks with mechanical devices to deal with German beach defences, details of which had been supplied by the French Resistance. Others, not shown here, were amphibious with floats to drive in from the landing craft off-shore, and then onto the beaches.

trawlers meeting part way across the Channel. General Montgomery, in charge of Allied D-Day landings on the beaches, scrutinised all this information and ordered his engineers to design devices that would quickly neutralise each type of defence the Germans had contrived.

....."Monty's' headquarters from December 1941 to August 1942, when he took command of the 8th army in El Alamein, had been at based at Reigate at the foot of Colley Hill. This was the Southern Command HQ which consisted of caves dug into the soft chalk to house a communications centre intended to counter a German invasion on the south coast. Now the invasion was being launched in the other direction on the beaches of Normandy.

♣Doodlebugs and Rockets

Now we thought the war was moving rapidly into its final stage. There was a feeling that things were almost over. Then the next surprise came. We were just going to bed as the siren sounded and, as the familiar sound died away, there came a sound we had never heard before; unlike a normal aeroplane, louder, rougher, pulsating. We looked at each other. Hitler's secret weapon? The newspapers had been saying that Hitler was promising various secret weapons with which to finally destroy us. We immediately decided it was one of these, probably a pilotless aircraft. Trevor said people thought one of these passed over Canterbury a few days ago. My father went out to observe and cycle down to post 48 warden's HQ. Minute by minute the situation became clear as more and more came over; we were definitely under attack by pilotless aircraft. They were coming one at a time and we could see a flame coming from the rear of each, certainly no ordinary aircraft engine. It was, of course, a very crude form of jet engine and these were flying bombs nicknamed 'doodlebugs' or 'buzz bombs'.

.....My brother Trevor was on a few days holiday from Canterbury where he had been drafted down the coalmines. He had volunteered for the RAF, but when his call-up papers had arrived he was, much to his surprise, directed to Chislet colliery near Canterbury as a 'Bevin Boy'. These were young men selected at random to work in the mines instead of going into the armed forces. A shortage of coal was becoming critical and would have affected the production of war weapons. The Minister of Labour, Mr Bevin, therefore devised the scheme to direct part of the call-up of young men to work in the coal mines.

.....Flying bombs launched from France were pointed towards London and had a mechanism which cut out the fuel supply which made the bomb dive downwards after a set distance. They were not very accurate but London was a big target. The defence was to shoot them down before they reached the built up area.

... ..♣In the light of this all the barrage balloons that had flown over London for the past five years were moved in the space of two or three days to a long line from Redhill to beyond Sevenoaks. We could see the beginning of the line from Kingswood. The balloons suspended metal cables into which the bombs flew.

.... Generally speaking this did not explode the bomb, it did some damage like cutting a wing or damaging the flight mechanism, so the bomb did not reach London but fell underneath the balloons or travelled onwards damaged, possibly with engine failing. This would have accounted for the ones we called 'gliders', which we suffered from so much.

.....An undamaged bomb would cut out its engine about fifteen seconds before diving and hitting its target. Provided you could hear its approach this might give you time to dive under a table, get into a cupboard or something to give you a degree of safety from flying glass. Those that glided in almost silently, just like a light wind, gave you no time and made you more jumpy: you started hearing 'swishes all the time when it really was the wind in the trees.



It was obvious that this was no ordinary aircraft. There was an orange flame coming from the rear, clearly some sort of jet engine. It was Hitler's V1 weapon.

.... Many Doodlebugs were shot down before reaching the line of balloons. London's anti-aircraft guns were moved to the coast between Dover and Hastings and many were shot down into the sea and countryside, and unfortunately into villages as well. Where there were no guns or balloons fighters chased the bombs, and as they closed in from behind, getting nearer and nearer, gave a short burst of machine gun fire then quickly rolled and turned to avoid bits of the wreckage. I never actually saw a bomb explode in mid-air, they all seemed to continue on, damaged. In fact, I believe that all the flying bombs that landed in our locality were damaged, if not they would have flown on to London. In a few weeks I remember three houses were destroyed within half a mile of where we lived. One was in Bears Den, one was a house called Pinehurst in Waterhouse Lane near the junction with the Chase, and the nearest was only about 300 yards away in Furze Grove. This last house was sliced in half, with the bath exposed and bits of plumbing hanging from the bathroom floor.

... We had finished supper one evening, raspberries (from the garden) and custard, when I heard the unmistakable throb of a Doodlebug over and above the sound of the promenade concert on the radio. I

think they might have been playing Beethoven's or Bruch's violin concerto. I shouted, "There's one coming now." My father shot out through the French doors onto the lawn, peering into the sky. "I can't see the" he shouted back. We turned the radio down a bit and realised then that the Doodlebug was over the Albert Hall - not over us. Turning the radio up again we got back the sound of the blighter passing on into the distance. At that moment I got the full meaning and strength of the music, which gave an immense power over the evil of the flying bomb, a feeling I have never lost.

... Immediately a decision was taken to suspend the Proms in the Albert Hall and continue broadcasting from Bedford. Poor Henry Wood had already attended his last concert. It was also decided to close our school early except for those sitting the school certificate exam in July.

... My mother and I caught the Atlantic Coast Express from Waterloo and remained in Tintagel until things quietened down. My friend Simon went to stay with relations in Earsden near Newcastle. Later on Trevor came over from his mine near Canterbury, bringing with him a friend, fellow Bevin Boy, Derek Lowndes. Trevor had broken his wrist and had his forearm in plaster. That didn't stop him taking a dip in Tintagel Cove, holding his arm up as he went under. After Trevor and Derek went back my father came down for a week or so. By then the Americans had broken out of Normandy towards Brittany; Caen had fallen after being destroyed by bombing. By the middle of August the Germans were in full retreat and we thought the days of the Doodlebug were numbered. Eventually we decided to return, catching the train from Camelford mid-morning and arriving in London before 5pm. As we drew near Clapham Junction, the familiar sound I had not heard for six weeks came in above the clickety-clack of the train on the rails and the hiss and puff of the steam engine. Yes, the sirens were wailing, sending a shiver through your body. All this before we had arrived at Waterloo.

.....The incredible defiance of London and Londoners seemed to come inside the train. Through the grubby windows you could see buildings with tarpaulins on their roofs, houses with no roofs and windows blown in, some boarded up. As we drew into Waterloo the sirens were dying down and the dreadful throb of the Doodlebug was just audible above all the noises in the station. What a welcome back!

.....Although it was scary it gave a wonderful sort of thrill of defiance right through your body. London can take it!

.....The 'all clear' sounded and I can't remember any further disturbances that evening. We looked at our house, which was still there, and amazingly still with only a few slipped tiles. It all seemed to be getting quieter now, with the launching sites in France being captured. August 25th and Paris was liberated after four and a half years of occupation. 'Surely the war will be over before Christmas' were the words on everyone's lips.



The house in Furze Grove was barely 300 yards from our house. Its front wall was sliced off leaving the dining room, kitchen and bedrooms completely exposed. The bath hung over the edge of the floor and was held up only by its plumbing.

... At the beginning of September 1944 yet another surprise came. There was a massive explosion in Chiswick, West London, clearly audible in Kingswood late one afternoon. The newspapers reported it as a gas mains explosion. Very few people believed it however. There were more explosions over the next few days. They were saying that whatever it was there was no warning, no noise of its approach, nor anything to see. The newspapers remained silent for weeks. The gas mains explanation was clearly nonsense: it was obviously another of Hitler's secret weapons, this time a rocket travelling through the stratosphere and descending at supersonic speed, hence giving no warning of sound before its arrival. There was absolutely no form of defence against these rockets. We were fortunate none fell near our house, the nearest being just under two miles away, falling in a field, narrowly missing some houses near the railway viaduct over Outwood Lane. It made a very deep crater, probably over twenty feet deep and more than thirty in diameter. Many fell in London, including one at New Cross at the end of November, killing more than one hundred people. . . Meanwhile, Doodlebugs were now being carried by Heinkel bombers and launched from the Thames Estuary area. The numbers were few but strangely enough one of these, which must have been off course, came over towards the end of October 1944 and did more damage than we had suffered throughout the main attack of the summer, and indeed throughout the war. It was dark; we were all at home, we must have heard it coming for perhaps half a minute; we rushed downstairs to the hall, which was the only room that had its only window protected by a sandbag wall. Then there was an almighty bang followed by the roar of tiles sliding down the roof and plaster falling off the upstairs ceilings. The back door blew in across the kitchen floor. However, we were all safe; not a scratch!

Hitler's Final Offensive

Before I close this account of war experiences I must just record the prank we played at school about this time. The last lesson was in blackout time, the tall ceiling height windows being blacked out by wooden stud and plywood screens held in position with wedges. There was a gale blowing outside and a group of us decided to leave the top vents slightly open before placing the screens in position, all of this being done before the teacher came in. During the lesson we watched the screens being sucked in and out by the force of the wind through the vents. We then decided it was time to pull out the wedges while the teacher paused to look at his notes. Then came the exciting moment: the six foot tall screens wobbled and keeled right over one after the other nearly halfway across the classroom, sending light across the lawn outside. The teacher made a dive for the light switches. "It must have been the wind, sir." Simon, always assiduously correct in the classroom, thought the planning of the event so masterful that he gave it his wholehearted support.

... Christmas came, foggy and frosty, the sixth Christmas of the war. I worked at the Post Office again. There were no more Doodlebugs or rockets for us - although they were still falling on London - and no ordinary bombs. The Germans broke through the Ardennes Mountains the week before, strangely enough where they had broken out four and a half years earlier in 1940. It was well into the New year before they were overwhelmed at Bastogne. That was Hitler's final offensive.

.... Judy, a friend from Oxford, came to stay with us. Trevor fancied her and so did I but I never got far in that direction. We all walked in the fog to Simon's party on Boxing Day.

.... In February 1945 Trevor came home from Canterbury with measles and I caught it from him. The distant sound of rockets continued while I was recuperating in bed in March but I cannot remember which was the last one. Records show that this was on 27th March in Orpington. This killed Ivy Mildred Millichamp aged 34. Sadly enough, just over two months earlier, she and her husband had survived a Doodlebug explosion in Court Road, Orpington involving the move to Kynaston Road where the final rocket fell.

..... London certainly was a brave city, under violent attack from 7th September 1940 until 27th March 1945 - over four and a half years, with a few short intervals. Dover and Folkstone did not get any relief at all, with shelling constant from June 1940 until September 26th 1944 as well as Doodlebugs and ordinary bombs. Many people lived in the caves for safety, even to the extent that some women gave birth down there.

THE END

This account of wartime schooldays in Surrey was written and Illustrated by Raymond

www.redkillewreigate-history.co.uk/f7y.htm