

BLITZ MEMORIES by Dinah Towns

I enjoyed as always the Parish Newsletter sent to me here in the USA, which encouraged me to write the following:

Last week on the front page of my local newspaper (California Contra Costa Times) was a picture of St. Paul's Cathedral during the blitz. What a memory jog that was. I remember clearly standing outside my home at Vine Cottage, Dinton watching from afar this happening. Gathered were also neighbours and other Dinton children. When the flashing and noise of the bombs got louder and brighter to us children it was like a fire-works display and our roars would get louder too. Did we realise what the people in London were going through no we did not, to us it was so far away in another world.

I also remember on one occasion an air-raid warden came around and knocked on the window to tell us a crack of light was showing and to pull the blackout curtains tighter or that someone on a bicycle had a flashlight too bright. We were told to listen to the air-raid sirens and know the difference of the air-raid warning and the all clear siren. We were sent off to school with a gas-mask and an identification tag around our neck. There was an air-raid drill in the school and if there was an air-raid on the way to school or going home we were told to jump in a ditch and do not move until the all clear sounded.

There were many new children arriving in the village, evacuees from London. They came in on buses and were dropped off at Dinton village hall. Looking back it was very sad to see children so young being placed in different homes, sometimes brothers and sisters were being separated, it became a totally different life-style from city life to country life. The children were amazed by all the birds and wanted to know where they came from! Joan was evacuated from the east end, of London, she was 8 or 9 years old, had a bag with very few clothes and a gas mask. I remember my mother asking her if anyone had taken her yet, very sadly she said "not yet". Later that evening the school master (Mr. Bingham or maybe it was Wingham) came knocking on our door to see if we could take two more girls temporarily as no-one wanted them, how awful for the children to hear this.

Finally D-Day came and a great celebration on the village Green. I remember seeing my first orange and Joe Giles falling off his horse!! Joe Giles and his wife were proprietors of the White Horse public house in Westington. Everyone celebrated to the hilt - much drinking and happiness. Someone got a horse and put Joe up on it and they were leading him around the green, when they almost got to the front door of the pub he slipped off with a crash onto the gravel.

After the celebrations Dinton once again became the peaceful lovely village it always was.