

Memories from Dinton Evacuee 1940 - 1945 By Joan McFaul (nee Hutton)



I read on the Dinton Info (www.dinton.info) website with great interest Gordon Weedon's recollections of life in Dinton 1940 - 1950 and the part that really rang a bell with me were his memories of the war years and the arrival of the evacuees because I was part of that era. My sister and I were fortunate enough to be billeted in Dinton at that time. When war broke out in September 1939 most parents wanted their children to be safe so they allowed them to be evacuated to somewhere away from London. My family at that time were living in Homerton (Hackney). We had just moved there from Stepney.

My name is Joan Hutton and my sister is Dorothy (Doll). Along with other children we were taken to Northampton. We didn't like it there at all and after a few weeks, throughout which there was no disruption to life back in London, Mum and Dad brought us home again.

Soon after my Dad met up with Mr Wingham. He was the Headmaster of the school we had attended in Stepney and he explained that most of the children from that school had been evacuated to a village called Dinton in Aylesbury and so it was arranged that we would be able to join them there. Eventually permission was given so in January 1940 both myself and Doll arrived in Dinton. We were billeted with a young married couple called Chris and Bob Miller who had a 4 month old baby daughter Maureen. They lived at the other end of the village from Gordon but as it is a small village that wasn't very far. The Millars lived in the middle cottage of a 3 house terrace. It was very small and like Gordon's it had no running water or electricity. Water came from a well and the toilet was a bucket and plank of wood in a hut at the end of the garden.

Mr and Mrs Holliman were neighbours, and relations of theirs, also Holliman lived in the detached cottage next door. That is where Mary and Alan Laslet were billeted. I remember it was terribly sad when Alan died from meningitis.

Rose Cottage and Village life



I can remember perfectly the four shops that Gordon talks about in his memoirs. Mrs May had the only proper shop and she also had the post office. Just over the road near the top of Boot Lane was Mrs Pratt's, then further down the village Mrs Woodfords was by the Whitehorse Pub. Just a little further along was Mrs Walkers. These three ladies really just had a room in their house with groceries etc and you just had to knock the door and request what you wanted.

Just past Mrs walkers cottage was an entrance and gate which you passed through to get to 'Rose Cottage' where we lived. This part of the village was called 'Green End' and is now 'Wootton Lane'. I remember Mr Darton lived in one of the nearby cottages and recall the sadness when his son was killed in the war.

Our cottage (Rose Cottage) had a room downstairs and a tiny space called the scullery, but it had no sink or facilities so looking back now I can't imagine how they managed. Our only light was a paraffin lamp. There was a door that opened to stairs leading to two small bedrooms. Doll and I were delighted with Dinton. At this stage Doll was nearly 11 and I was 7 ½.

Doll and I settled down and went to school. At first the evacuees had to use the village Hall but eventually we were able to attend the Village school that was not far from the church.

Our social life was centered around the village Hall and looking back now I suppose everybody's was. We had sports, entertainment and country dancing which we loved. There was 'Ruffy Tufty' and 'Pleasures of the town' which I can still do, well at a pinch. We got to know the village girls and boys well. Gordon was one of them obviously though he was younger than me. Mrs Walker's daughter Pamela Hopgood was a special friend. One of my London friends was Sheila. She belonged to the family next door to the Weedon family. They were the ones with the 'disappearing wood'.

Then one day in October that year Doll and I got a lovely surprise. Our Mum arrived with our new baby brother Arthur. The London bombing raids had started and Dad thought Mum and baby would be safer away from it all so they came to live with us. The cottage was therefore quite overcrowded so Chris, Bob and baby Maureen left their and went to live in one of the cottages near Bob's Mum. The lovely flower named cottages were in the middle of the village just near New Road. I must say that while we lived with Chris and Bob we were very content as they showed great kindness towards us.

Bobs parents were quite prominent in the town. They had a small dairy and were staunch chapel goers. Every Sunday morning we attended church and then in the afternoon we went to the Baptist Chapel. The chapel was next door to the bakery and over the road to Mrs Weedon's cottage. Chris made sure every week that we wrote a letter home and sure enough every week we got a letter back with maybe a comic book

Life was good!!

Life was moving on

By now it was 1943. Doll had missed taking her scholarship exam in 1940 as it wasn't possible to do it at that stage. She left school therefore at age 14 and started work in an office in Aylesbury. Also at this time my Mum had another baby boy Kenny but had to stay in hospital for 8 weeks due to thrombosis. Because of this Doll and I went to stay with Mr and Mrs Giles who had a lovely cottage near Mrs Weedon facing New Road. They were also very good to us other than maybe the breakfast porridge! It was so thick you could have used it to play frisbee!!, shouldn't complain though. Someone else looked after Arthur at this time. Mum soon came home and we all got back to 'Rose Cottage', and I'm sure Mrs Giles was delighted to get her house back. By this stage Dad was coming to Dinton every weekend to stay with us. Life in the village was just lovely. We explored everywhere, picking blackberries and scrumping apples. Many a time the farmer yelled at me to keep away from the fruit trees.

Later on that year I sat the scholarship exam but started at 'Queens Park School' in September along with everybody before getting the results of the exam. In October though I was told I had to move to Aylesbury Grammar which I didn't want to do. Eight weeks after the start of the term I was taken by Mary Laslett to see my new headmaster 'Mr Furneaux' who introduced me to the new system. It was daunting on the first day being the new girl and I remember it well. Suddenly I was sitting in class doing subjects that hadn't been taught at the other school and obviously having missed the first eight weeks I was never going to catch up. Nevertheless I did enjoy my time at AGS and at the big grown up age of 12 I developed my first crush on a boy there named John Scrivener. I got on well with all the pupils and all the teachers except one!!. The needlework teacher too much for me and I stopped going on needlework days, which is so ironic as when I left school I went into dressmaking

April 1945 and heading home

By now the war was more or less over. London was free of the constant bombing and everyone was waiting for the official news to come through. Mum and Dad decided it was time to go home. We left Dinton with very mixed emotions, glad to be going home to our own house in some respects but very sad to leave this lovely village where we had spent 5 great years. It seemed quite a novelty at home being able to put lights on with a switch and flush a toilet in a bathroom.

In 1948 when the film 'Daughter of Darkness' was made we couldn't wait to see Dinton in it but were so disappointed as the part filmed in Dinton only lasted a few minutes but at least it brought back fond memories. Unfortunately we didn't see 'Rose Cottage' in the film.

I got married in 1955 and as soon as we got our first car I wanted to come and visit Dinton. I'm happy to say we did this many times over the years. In 1962 we took Mum back which she really enjoyed although there was some sadness with this trip as Dad had died without getting back to visit. My husband Sam thought Dinton was a great place and enjoyed the countryside there and the Seven Stars Pub. Many years ago when we visited we called into Mr and Mrs Giles and talked about old times and also saw Mr Halliman. I didn't see any of my friends but presume they have married and most probably moved on.

Well I am 83 now and still look back with great fondness. I haven't been there for a number of years now but plan to visit this year. Unfortunately I imagine there is no-one now in Dinton who remembers the evacuees let alone me.

But there you are, that's life.

Joan Mcfaul (nee Hutton)
2015

P.S. – Please see below

AUGUST 2015 - I have just come back from holiday and am delighted to say I visited Dinton and had the loveliest time. I showed my daughter all around the village and she thought it was just beautiful. Then of course we went to Rose cottage where I was billeted. While admiring it from the outside the owner came out, introduced himself and kindly offered us a look inside. He and his wife were so warm and welcoming and showed us around their home. We even had tea in the garden. Thank you so much to Valma and Mike – you really made my day!!

Thank you also to Carol and Barry Lynch who arranged a meeting for me and Gordon Weedon who came and met me along with his wife Dorothy at Pine Hill. I was quite overwhelmed with all the memories we shared there. It turns out his brother Frank remembered me and my sister Dorothy which was lovely to know. The welcome we received was second to none and we are still going over all the detail and all the photos.

Thanks again
Joan



L-R Dorothy Weedon, Joan McFaul, Sharon McWhirter (daughter) Gordon Weedon