

WASC-2005

Ray Sears Memories

My memories from 1930 to the end of World War Two.

I was born in September 1930 in a small house in Sewardstone Street, Waltham Abbey. I lived there with my parents and older brother. The house, which was of the terraced type, had two rooms downstairs and two upstairs, with a small back yard but no garden. The front door opened directly onto the street. Most of these small terraced houses did not have a hallway inside, nor a front garden outside. At this time, bathrooms were not normally found in smaller houses and the toilets were outside in the back yard. It was often the case in these days to use cut or torn up squares of newspaper for toilet paper instead of the toilet roll in use today.

It was also the usual practice for babies to be born at home, as there was no National Health Service in those days. My sister was born in 1935, by which time we had moved round the corner into Woollard Street. This house had three bedrooms and a rear garden. Again this was a terraced type house with no hallway and the front door opening direct onto the street. In the outside wall beside front door there was a foot scraper, which was put in when the house was built. This was because at the time (during the 19th century), roads were still unmade and very muddy during inclement weather. Gravel and Tarmac were not used generally, until the 1890's. Both of these houses had stone doorsteps and windowsills, which were washed and whitened every day. The doorstep soon got dirty again, as the pavement was only 3 feet wide and people walking past or pushing a pram could hardly avoid soiling the step.

We still did not have an inside toilet or a bathroom. For bathing we had a portable galvanized metal bath, called a bungalow bath, which was brought indoors and filled with water heated in kettles and saucepans. For normal daily washing (and my father shaving), we used the kitchen sink. This was a shallow rough stone sink to start with but later we managed to get the landlord to install a deep "butler" sink. It was still made of stone but glazed white, similar to the wash basins and toilets of to-day.

On the floor we had linoleum and mats. It was not the fashion to have carpet wall to wall, mainly because we could not afford such a luxury. We did not have a carpet sweeper (the main brand was Ewbank), so to clean the mats, we took them out into the garden and hung them over the clothes line where we bashed the dust out of them with a cane carpet beater. A lot of the mats were home-made with old rags. A piece of hessian or sacking was used as the base and with the aid of a rug needle the pieces of rag were woven into the base. The rag bits were sorted into colour lots and either woven into a pattern or mottled effect.

In the 1930's the ground floor rooms were not called the same as they are to-day. What we now call the kitchen, was the scullery and the dining room of to-day we called the kitchen. The front room was called the parlour and we only used that room on Sundays or for parties. The walls were mainly decorated with wallpaper, except the scullery. This and the ceilings were painted with a substance called distemper. Emulsion paint which we use now, had

still to be invented. The doors and windows were painted with gloss paint but were usually dark brown or dark green. White was not used as it got dirty too quickly. If the doors had panels in them, this part would often be painted with a light stone colour, just to lighten up the dark brown and green.

The rooms were furnished with similar items to today except that most pieces were free standing and not fitted like today's kitchens and bedrooms. Although there were small fitted cupboards in the recesses each side of the chimney breasts downstairs, and a tall cupboard in the front bedroom recess. Most houses had a washstand in the bedroom, which was like a sideboard with a marble top. It had cupboards underneath, in which you stored towels, face flannels and toilet soap. There was also a mirror at the centre back with small shelves each side. A large china jug and basin, soap dish, toothbrush rack and glass tumbler were usually found on the top. At each end were rails for hanging a wet flannel or towel. This unit was mainly used when relatives or friends came to stay. The china jug would be filled with hot water from downstairs and carried upstairs, ready to be poured into the bowl, so your guests could wash themselves in the privacy of the bedroom. The used water would then be emptied into an enamel bucket and brought downstairs for disposal. The only times that we used the washstand was when we were ill in bed. Generally it was considered too much trouble to carry water upstairs, wash and then carry it back down again. It was much easier to wash in the sink downstairs. The other furniture was a chest of drawers, a wardrobe and a chair. The bedrooms were also fitted with a fireplace

Neither of these houses had electricity in them. For lighting we had gas and heating was by coal fires. The coalmen came round regularly every week with their horse and cart or lorry filled with 1cwt sacks of coal. Every household used coal or coke, so the coalman was always welcome. Most houses had the coal cellar or coal cupboard in the scullery but later owing to the dust from the coal, a coal bunker usually made of galvanized metal was kept outside the back door. My mother did have a gas cooker but a lot of the cooking was done on the coal fire. Most houses had what was called a kitchener in the fireplace. This was a combined coal fire with an oven at the side. It was made of cast iron and stood about two feet high, by three feet wide. The fire and oven were on legs about a foot above the hearth, with an ashbox under the fire. There was always a kettle on the hob ready if hot water was needed, as we did not have hot water taps. During the winter time most of the meals were cooked on the top of the kitchener or in the oven. There was also a thick cloth pad hanging beside the fireplace, to pick up the kettle or saucepan when required, as all the handles were metal and very hot. The gas cooker was used mainly in the summer months, when the fire was not needed for warmth.

Central heating was not found in most houses, only in those of rich people. For warming the beds in winter, we had hot water bottles. As a general rule these were made of stone but were

superseded by rubber ones. Another method for warming the bed was to place a housebrick in the oven to heat up and then wrap it in a blanket and pop it in the bed. The bedrooms had a small fireplace, which could be used to keep the room warm if someone was ill and confined to bed. As we grew older, it became one of our jobs to clean the fireplaces and the kitchener. For this we used a polish called blacklead, it was messy but it made the ironwork shine. The most popular brands were, Enameline, Zebo and Zebrite. The hearth itself was washed and cleaned with hearthstone, which was a lump of soft stone, that when rubbed on, left the hearth looking white. Around the hearth we had a fender, to prevent any fallen hot coals from doing any damage. The fender, which was made of steel, had to be cleaned as well, for this we used emery cloth and elbow grease. The fire irons, which consisted of poker, coal tongs and shovel, also made of steel, were cleaned in the same way.

Another job we had to do at the weekend was to clean the shoes and boots of all the family including our own. When we had finished, they were inspected by mother to see if they were clean enough, if not, we had to do them again.

With no electricity and television still a thing of the future, we had to rely on the battery operated radio or wireless set as we called it, for our entertainment. Unlike the battery operated sets of today with transistors, ours was powered by a large high tension battery, which was about 10 inches by 8 inches and 3 inches high. It also had to have a grid bias battery and an accumulator, which was like a small size car battery. The batteries lasted for about three months but the accumulator had to be recharged every week. This was taken to the local radio shop for recharging, which cost sixpence each time. (2½p). Many people had two accumulators which they used on a one in one out basis, or if not, the shop would possibly loan you one.

The lighting for the house was by gas. The lamps hung from the ceiling similar to todays electric ones. Instead of a bulb, each fitting had a gas mantle, which was very fragile and fitted over the gas jet to spread the light evenly. Normally lit with a match, you had to be very careful not to break the mantle as it would disintegrate at the slightest touch.

Other things we take for granted today, like refrigerators and freezers, were not to be seen. We had what was called a meat safe, hanging outside the back door. This was a wooden cabinet with metal gauze windows and a tight fitting door, which allowed good air circulation but sealed enough to keep flies out. During the summer time, for keeping milk and butter cool, we dug a hole in the back garden about 18 inch cube. Into this we placed a commercial metal biscuit tin with the milk and butter in, and covered the hole with a wooden cover. These tins could be purchased from a grocer for a shilling. This method would keep the food fresh for a couple of days. We went shopping for food items every day except Sunday (when all shops closed). Today we shop about once a week but in those days you only bought food for immediate use.

Many of the traders came round the streets with a horse and cart or handbarrow and called out the wares that they had for sale. The milkman had a churn of milk on his cart with pint and halfpint measures. The customer came out to the milkman with a jug, into which he poured the amount required. When he had sold out, he would return to the dairy for another full churn and tour the streets again. The baker would tour the streets selling his bread and cakes, and like the milkmen, when he had sold out, would return to the bakery and fill up his cart. He would then continue to tour the streets and was often out until late in the evening. These traders also had their regular customers to which they delivered daily. If you were out when they called, you made sure the front window was not locked and they would open the window and leave your bread, cakes or milk on a table that you had placed by the window, making sure they closed it again. These tradesmen were normally paid each day but if you were out you would pay him the next time you saw him or leave the money on the table in the window for him to help himself. Other salesmen came round with trays of muffins on their head. They had a hand bell, which they would ring so you knew that the "muffin man" was about. Fishmongers also came round, especially on a Sunday selling shellfish. I was often sent out to buy some cockles or winkles for my fathers tea. The knife sharpener was another regular caller, ready to sharpen your knives, scissors, shears or saw. Also the tinker, who would repair your pots and pans, the chairmender who repaired cane chairs and the umbrella man who would repair your umbrella or recover it while you waited. Other tradesmen included the toffee apple man with trays of delicious toffee apples for only 1d each and the rag and bone man, who would give you a goldfish or a few coppers for a bundle of rags or old bones.

Another tradesman with a horse and cart sold paraffin oil, various polishes for floors, woodwork and metals, as well as soaps, powders and all cleaning materials.

The butchery shops were mostly open fronted, with the meat hanging on rails outside. On Christmas Eve people waited outside for the butchers to reduce the price of their turkeys and chickens. Butchers did not have the freezer storage facilities that they have today, so in the end they had to reduce their prices to make sure they sold the stock. It is now considered very unhygienic to hang meat outside. Shortage of meat supplies in the war helped put paid to this practice. I had a friend living next door to a butchers shop and at the beginning of the war we used to help separate the cellophane paper used to wrap the meat. Cellophane paper was widely used before plastic wrapping became commonplace. The butchers wife made sure we scrubbed our hands and finger nails before we started. A basin of water was on hand if we needed to wet our fingers to help part the cellophane. On no account were we to lick our fingers. We were usually given sixpence each for our help and went off feeling happy with ourselves.

One of the most popular shops was Macklin and Frankhams, known locally as "Uncles". They were pawnbrokers and lots of people pawned various articles when they ran short of money and redeemed them again on pay day.

We did not have credit cards and you paid cash for anything that you purchased. The main exception was the gas cooker, which you paid for quarterly. A few department stores ran their own version of hire purchase. You selected the article of your choice and the store delivered it. The price was divided over a set number of weeks and the collector or "Tally man" came for your money every week. When the neighbours saw him coming regularly they knew you had something you could not afford. Another scheme run by the Enfield Highway Co-operative Society was their Mutuality Club, where members could have £1 vouchers, for which they repaid one shilling a week over a twenty week period. The vouchers could be exchanged for goods in any of the E.H.C.S. non-food shops as soon as you received them. £5 worth of vouchers would be repaid at the rate of 5 shillings a week.

Most of the streets in the town had their "back street shops". These were mostly private houses where the occupiers used their front room to sell goods. Some were greengrocers, some sweet shops, others would sell general groceries or cleaning materials and soap and powder.

Most of the goods sold in the shops was loose and not prepacked. You would ask for the quantity that you required and it would be weighed up for you. Goods like sugar, currants, sultanas, oatmeal, dried peas, lentils and soda, all came in sacks, either 56lb or 1cwt at a time. Butter was in a big slab and the grocer used wooden butter patts to cut and form the amount you required. The patts were usually carved, which left a decorative pattern on your finished portion. Bacon was cut for you to the thickness you had chosen, straight from a side of bacon. Some biscuits were sold ready packaged but in the main they were sold loose. They came in tins about 12 inch cube in size and were normally stacked in a row in front of the counter, the solid lid being replaced by one with a glass insert. This enabled you to see the varieties on offer. There were no supermarkets or self service stores and each customer was served individually. The shopkeeper would even deliver purchases free of charge. All shops employed an errand boy who rode a trade cycle with a large basket on the front ready to deliver your goods. Some grocery shops supplied you with an order book, in which you entered your requirements and the quantity. You took this into the shop where your order would be collated and delivered to your house later in the day. The bill would be totalled up and you paid the errand boy when he delivered the goods. Before the second world war some products had small gifts in them like lead farm animals or soldiers, which caused many fights between the children in families with more than one child.

Most of the scales in the shops were the type with brass weights and the goods were priced at so much per pound. If you asked for 2lb of apples for instance, you paid for 2lb even if they weighed slightly more than 2lb. With today's scales, if the apples weighed 2lb 1oz, you would pay for 2lb 1oz and not 2lb.

A lot of food, (mainly fruit and vegetables) was seasonal and only available at certain times of the year. The journey of foreign foods by ship took a long time but today, with air

transport, food is flown in quickly from other countries to enable year round supplies.

At mealtimes we were made to sit at the table and were not allowed to leave until everyone had finished eating. One thing mother would not allow us to do, was to take food and eat it outside. We also had to say grace either before a meal or after it. Even when we went on a picnic, we were made to sit and eat our food properly and not run about with food in our hands.

Monday was traditionally wash day. We did not have washing machines, so all the washing was done by hand. My father would get up early Monday morning and fill the copper up with water and light the firebox which was underneath. The fire was kept going by anything that would burn without using coal or coke. Mostly wood, paper or cardboard was used. Old newspapers were folded and twisted to make solid sticks that would burn longer. The copper was a large metal bowl set into a stone surround in the corner of the scullery and held about 8 gallons of water. The main purpose of the copper was to boil all the white clothes in and provide enough hot water for the rest of the wash. To swirl the washing round and lift it from the copper when it was ready to come out, my mother used what she called a copperstick. This was part of a thick broomhandle, about two feet long. We were often told if we did not behave ourselves, we would get a whack with the copperstick. With five to wash for, it was well into the afternoon before my mother was finished. Apart from the clothes in the copper, all the other washing was done in the sink with the aid of a scrubbing brush and washboard. The washboard would be made mainly of wood with the centre corrugated. Sometimes the centre would be made of metal or thick glass. A product called Reckitts blue bag was added to the rinsing water to help make the whites look whiter. Quite a lot of the washing had to be starched, mainly with Robin starch, to give body to the material. Before hanging the washing out to dry, it would be put through the mangle. This was a large cast iron contraption about five feet high and three feet wide, with two wooden rollers, about 30ins long by 6ins in diameter, in the centre. At the top was a handle, which enabled the pressure between the rollers to be adjusted. On the right hand side was a large wheel with a handle which turned the rollers and extracted the surplus water. Under the mangle you placed an oval galvanised bath to catch the water as it drained out. It was easier to operate if two people worked it, so, very often we kids were roped in to turn the handle while mother guided the washing through the rollers. At the back of the mangle was a wooden shelf to catch the washing, thus preventing it from dropping back into the bath of water underneath. The main washing powders were Persil, Oxydol, Rinso and Hudsons powder. These were about the right size for one day's washing. They were not made in the large size packets that we buy today. The soaps were Primrose, Sunlight or Fairy. We did not have the detergents that you can buy today, these were not available until after the war. The first to be introduced was Dreft, followed by Tide.

Before the war, often on washday you could watch aeroplanes skywriting the names of the soaps and powders in the sky. Skywriting is a practice that is not allowed today.

After the washing was finished and hung out to dry, the remaining water in the copper would be baled out. Some of it was kept to wash the scullery floor. Between all this, Mother had to get our dinner as well. This usually consisted of cold meat and vegetables left over from Sunday. Extra vegetables would be cooked on Sunday to save time on Monday, when they would be fried up in a large frying pan as "bubble and squeak". Left over suet pudding and yorkshire pudding would also be fried up.

When the clothes were dry they had to be checked for holes that needed repairing. One of the main items would be socks, which would be mended with darning wool. The local drapers sold cards of darning wool in various colours especially for the job. Jumpers, cardigans and blazers that wore out on the elbows were repaired with leather patches. Nothing was thrown out until it was beyond repair. Boots and shoes had leather soles and heels and were repaired by father. We were sent to the local saddlers shop to buy pieces of leather suitable for the purpose. With the aid of a hobbing foot, which was a metal shaped foot on a wooden shaft, the old sole was removed and a new one cut and nailed on. The edge of the shoe was smoothed off with heelball, which was in stick form like sealing wax and with the aid of a special tool was melted onto the edge to give the shoes a professional finish. The heels were often repaired with leather, although there were rubber heels available, as metal studs could be hammered into them as well as the soles. When the studs wore down, it was cheaper to replace them than buy more leather.

A lot of the boys of larger families had what was called a pudding basin haircut. Their parents could not afford to pay 5d to have their hair cut at the barbers, so they put a pudding basin on the child's head and cut off the hair that hung below it. This style was repeated towards the end of the 20th century.

Most of the bowls, buckets and large jugs etc., that were in general use were made of metal. Some were galvanised but most were enamel. Plastic bowls and buckets that we use today, had not been invented in the 1930's. If a hole appeared in any of the utensils, we did not throw them away and buy a new one, we repaired them with a pot mender, which ensured they did not leak. Pot menders were made in various sizes from half an inch to two inches in diameter. They consisted of two tin circles with a cork washer. The cork with one tin circle was placed inside the utensil and the other circle went on the outside. These were then held in place with a small nut and bolt through the centre. Another common sight was a teapot with a rubber spout. If you broke the end off the china spout, you did not throw the teapot away, you bought a rubber spout that fitted over the china one. Also, if you broke the lid, you bought a spare lid and provided it fitted the teapot it did not matter if it looked odd or was a different colour.

Later in the week the clothes had to be ironed but with no electricity this task was performed using sadd, or flat irons. Mother had three of these, which would be heated directly in front of the fire. As they were all metal, a cloth iron holder was a necessity. When the one in use cooled down, it was changed for another hot one. During the summer time, the irons would be heated on the gas ring.

When I was four and a half years old, I started school. My brother who was two years older was already going to school and I wanted to join him. I enjoyed my schooldays and was sorry when I had to leave when I was fourteen. Our school day was from 9am to 12 midday and 1-15pm to 4pm. As the school was not far away we came home for our dinner each day. During every morning break time we had a bottle of milk. It was a one third of a pint size bottle that was specially made for schools. For this, we paid a halfpenny a day. In winter time the teacher would warm our milk by placing the bottles in the corrugations of the radiators.

The classrooms were all set out the same. Rows of desks with two pupils to each desk, all facing the teacher at the front of the class. All the windows in each classroom were high so that we could not look out, this was designed for minimum distraction during lessons. If the windows were required to be opened, a winding mechanism on the wall solved this problem. Each morning started with assembly, which was held in a large classroom with the sliding doors pushed back. When the doors were shut, the room became three separate classrooms. Assembly consisted of a Hymn and Prayer and any special notices that concerned everyone. It was then back to your own room for the attendance register to be marked. The blackboard and easel were usually of the freestanding type, which the teacher wrote on with chalk. The boards were double sided, which meant that if something written on the board would be needed later, you just turned the board around. They were cleaned with a gadget that looked like a brush but had a cloth base instead of bristles. Each class had a blackboard monitor who was responsible for seeing that the board was cleaned each night in readiness for the following day.

We were not allowed to talk in class and if we did, we would be slapped by the teacher (not allowed today), or made to stop in after school and write (a specified number of times, usually in multiples of 100), "I must not talk in school". If we had been really naughty, we would be sent to the headmaster for the cane. For this, we had to extend our arm sideways with the palm of our hand uppermost and usually received six whacks from the cane, which was very painful. It made us think twice before we attempted to be naughty again.

We were also taught to respect our elders and were never allowed to refer to them by their christian name, even if we knew it. Most people were called Mr or Mrs ----, the only exception was close friends of our parents, which we did use their christian name but always with the prefix of auntie or uncle.

We did not have calculators or computers, we had to use our brains. Ball point pens had still to be invented. Our desks had inkwells in and we used pens that were dipped into the ink, which after writing a few words had to be dipped in again. Each class had an ink monitor, who was responsible for mixing the ink, made from powder and water, and topping up the inkwells each day. Our main lessons were, reading, writing, arithmetic, history, geography, art, religion and physical training. We also had exams every year, to plot our progress. In the junior school we kept a weather chart, where each child in turn recorded the days weather. Our teacher made a wall chart with the appropriate number of spaces for each month. We filled in the date and drew a small diagram of the weather. For the weekends, two pupils would make notes of the weather and fill the chart in on Monday. These would be kept until the following year, when a comparison with last year's weather could be made.

Many of the children came from poor families. They were sent to school practically in rags. Worn out shoes, holes in their socks, trousers and jumpers, often without a coat. Their hair had not been combed and they never had a handkerchief. When they had a cold, the sleeves of their jumper was used in place of a handkerchief, which earned them the nickname of "old silver sleeves". At regular intervals the school had a visit from the local clinic nurse, who looked at the heads of all the children to see if they had fleas. We used to call her "the nit nurse", although we all knew her name was Nurse Owen. She was the local district nurse for many years to come.

The school did not have its own tuck shop, but there was one just outside the school gate. A packet of crisps cost 1d and sweets were as little as 4d a pound. (That is the equivalent of 3 pounds of sweets for 5p in decimal coinage). One gimmick they had was a square board with about 60 holes in it, into which, paper plugs were inserted. It cost us a halfpenny a go, to push out the plugs by means of a small needle. If the paper was blank, you had lost and did not get any sweets but if you were lucky enough, you won whatever sweet was printed on the paper. This was nearly always much better value than the halfpenny you paid.

Throughout the year many tradesmen would give items away at the school gate. They waited for going home time and gave painting books that advertised goods that their employer wanted to sell. I remember the OXO company being one, who also gave cardboard spectacles, the "O's" were for your eyes and the "X" fitted over your nose. Other companies that sold soup or biscuits also gave the books away but at Christmas time it was mostly toy shops giving catalogues to the children so that they could pester their parents for the goodies found inside. The favourite one was the Meccano, Hornby train set and Dinky toy catalogue.

At Christmas, if we were given a train set or a small Meccano set, the next Christmas we would be given an accessory set to make a larger train set or Meccano. The most expensive piece we would be given, cost about ten shillings (50p). Other things in our Christmas stocking would be sweets, especially a sugar pig or mouse, oranges and apples, jig-saw puzzle, box of paints,

painting books and games like snakes and ladders or ludo.

When mother made the Christmas puddings, usually during December, everyone had a turn at stirring the ingredients. We always had two or three silver 3d pieces stirred in as well. When the pudding was served we all hoped that our piece had 3d in it, because we could keep it and in those days 3d was worth having. Mother usually made about half a dozen puddings, which were put into the copper and boiled for a long time. These would be used at Christmas time and throughout the year. If there were any left, they were kept until next Christmas. The cake was always made about the same time as the puddings, well in time for Christmas.

We often went out Carol singing, helping to raise funds for a local Church youth club. We went to likely houses and would sing a Carol right through before we knocked on the door, hoping that there was someone at home. If the door was opened we carried on singing to the end of the Carol, even if we had been given something we still finished the Carol and then thanked them. Unlike today where the children knock at the door first to see if anyone answers before they start singing, and then if given anything, stop, say thank you and walk away.

In our leisure time we played games. Many were make pretend games like Cowboys and Indians or Cops and Robbers, which we made up as we went along. Others were games with glass marbles, cigarette cards or five stones. With the marbles we played on a dirt surface. We scooped out a shallow hole in the ground and bowled any number up to ten marbles each towards the hole from a distance of ten feet. We took it in turns to bowl first and the one with the most marbles in the hole or the nearest to the hole commenced play. With the side of the index finger you flicked the marbles into the hole, if you missed, your opponent had a turn. The object was the first one to get all the marbles in the hole was the winner and he kept the marbles.

The most popular game with cigarette cards was to prop about half a dozen cards on the ground against a brick wall and flick our remaining cards at them to try and knock them flat on the ground. Each player flicked a card in turn and the one that knocked the last card down was the winner who then collected all the cards off the floor.

"Five stones" was played with five small blocks about half inch cube in size. Taking it in turns you started with the stones in the palm of your hand, tossed them into the air and tried to catch them on the back of your hand. If you caught any you then tossed them back into the air and caught them in the palm of your hand. The ones that fell to the ground were picked up as you threw another stone into the air and caught it. If you missed either stone, it was then your opponents turn. Various tasks were performed during the game including singles, doubles, jinks, no jinks, high jinks, low jinks, Nelson's column, jump the devils ditch and the first one to complete them all was the winner.

Nearly every child had a scooter, toy car or bicycle. We also played with whips and tops, which we kept spinning for quite a long time, or iron hoops and old car tyres which we bowled around the streets. The girls often played with dolls or skipping ropes. Another favourite was hop-scotch, usually played on the pavement flagstones.

Most of the other places where we played have now disappeared. Residential estates and industrial estates have now been built on most of the fields and old nursery sites, which were our haunts. We used the old stoke holes of the nurseries for a den, covered with tree branches and pieces of wood, there was plenty of room for six of us inside. We would play here all day, only coming home at meal times.

During the winter time when it was really cold we would go to the sewer farm and skate on the ice. This was very enjoyable until one unfortunate skater went through the ice. Then we all made a hasty retreat.

Fishing was another of our favourite pursuits. We did not seem to have all the licence restrictions that are here today, we used to fish where we wanted to. When we were younger it would be the Cornmill stream at Bakers Entry or various sections of Cobbins Brook but as we got older we went to the River Lea and often fished from off the moored barges. It was always thought that the bigger fish were the other side of the river, so the barges helped to narrow the gap. Another trick to try and catch a big fish, was to catch some minnows or other small fish and put them into a large sweet jar with a screw lid. We drilled some small holes in the lid, put the fish with some water and weed into the jar, and screwed the lid on. Round the neck of the jar we tied some string and lowered the jar into the river, making sure we secured the other end of the string to the bank. This would be left overnight with the hope that when we returned the following day, large fish would be swarming round our jar. It was now just a simple matter of casting our line near the jar and catching a big one, or so we hoped.

We also went out looking for birds nests to help swell our collection of eggs. It was not an illegal thing to do when I was young but it is today. When we found a nest we only took one egg if we hadn't got that particular one. If we already had a certain egg, we did not take any duplicates or tell anyone else where the nest was. I had a special kit of tools for removing the contents of the egg by boring a small hole but without breaking the shell. These could be purchased from any hobby shop.

For our annual holidays, we always went to an aunt who lived at Poole, nr. Bournemouth. If it had not been for my aunt, I doubt if we would have had a holiday each year. We were very lucky as many kids didn't get the chance to go to the seaside.

The only chance many had was a Sunday School outing, which was usually to a seaside resort. Some even went to one church in the morning and a different one in the afternoon, hoping to get the chance of two Sunday School outings. The churches got wise to

this move and all chose the same day for their outings. The adult fare by coach to Southend in 1936, was 3s 6d. (17½p). As the speed of the coaches was much slower then, usually about 20mph, it took at least 2½ hours to get there including a halfway stop.

On the bank holidays during the year, we often went to Chingford, which had the forest, a funfair on the plain and Connaught Waters boating lake. (The lake had a special meaning to us as Grandfather helped to dig it out). All the family went, taking a picnic with us and having a good day out. Extra buses were run to get the crowds home in the evening. The buses terminated in the car park of The Royal Forest Hotel with the crowds queueing in the forest opposite.

Another trip we enjoyed was going to Broxbourne aerodrome watching the planes taking off and landing. We would walk along the River Lea towpath to Broxbourne and have a picnic lunch, then walk down the road to the aerodrome, to watch the planes. When we were ready to return home, we either went to the station and came by train or caught a bus. Motor cars were only for the rich people, working class families could not afford such luxuries. The price of a Ford 8hp car was £100 and a Morris 8hp car was £142-10 shillings. Compared to today's prices these seem very cheap but as wages for a working class man were only between £2 and £3 a week in 1930, it would take a year's pay to buy a car. During the 1930's we were restricted for choice compared to today. For instance Cars ---- most cars were black, there was no bright yellows and greens. Soap Powders, only a few brands to choose from. Tins of dog and cat food, one tin had dog food in, the other had cat food, there was no choice of flavour like chicken, rabbit or liver. Kitchen utensils, like enamel ware were mainly white with a blue or red trim, or cream with a green trim.

During May 1935 was the Silver Jubilee of George 5th. I do not remember much about it as I was only 4 years old at the time. I know that there were street parties and celebrations as I have family photographs of a fancy dress parade, and decorated streets, also a New Testament that was given to all children.

Wednesday May 12th 1937 saw the Coronation of George 6th and Queen Elizabeth. I can remember more of this as I was two years older and have a copy of the official programme of events. The whole town was decorated with flags, bunting and shields. Parties were held with Coronation teas in nearly every street. Fancy dress competitions and races were organised. Barrel organs and piano's were out in the streets playing all the popular tunes with people singing at the top of their voices. A committee was formed to organise the town festivities, which consisted of church services, dances, whist drives, a torchlight procession and beacon fires. These festivities lasted all week, from 9th May to 16th May. A large sports meeting was held at Larsens Recreation Ground on 12th May. It included races of all types for all ages, cycling events, tennis, bowls, displays by the Fire Brigade and music by the Waltham Abbey Salvation Army Band. In the evening there was a dance at the Town Hall, the torchlight

procession and beacon fires followed by a special evensong at the Floodlit Abbey. All local children received a Coronation Souvenir Mug at a tea given in the canteen of Catalin's factory. Younger children and babies were all given a crested silver spoon.

A trip was arranged for the whole of our street to go by coach to London to tour round and see the decorations. As practically everyone in the street went, it left the way open for the burglars especially as houses were easy to get into. A lot of houses had the front door key hanging on a piece of string, which could be easily pulled out through the letter box to open the door. Sometimes the door lock catch just slid back to open the door, so the string in the letter box would slide the catch when pulled and the door opened. It was a good thing in those days that crime was not as bad as it is today and nothing happened while the trip was on.

The other main happening in the 1930's was the outbreak of World War Two in 1939 but I will deal with that period as a separate section at the end.

During the winter and in bad weather we played indoors. Board games like draughts, ludo and snakes and ladders were very popular. Most children had construction sets like meccano and building sets, which they would build various models from and then play with them. Other activities involved building jigsaw puzzles, painting pictures or pencil and paper games like noughts and crosses. We had a gramophone, on which we played records. This was worked by a clockwork motor, which had to be wound up again after each record had been played. The records were 10 or 12 inch diameter and were played at 78 revolutions per minute. The pick-up head had steel needles, which had to be discarded and replaced with a new one after every two or three records had been played. The records were heavier than today's and very fragile. If you dropped one it smashed very easily, so they were handled carefully. Most of the records featured the band and not the singer. Today we buy a record because a certain singer or group are the performers. Our records named the tune and the band that was playing it but if there was a singer, it just said "with vocal refrain". On odd occasions a well known singer like Gracie Fields would be mentioned on the label. Our house had a piano in it and my mother sent me to piano lessons. I went for about six years to a teacher who lived in the next street. The main drawback of this was having to stay in and practise for an hour each day before being allowed out to play. I wish now that I had taken it more seriously.

Every Tuesday was cattle market day and we often went there to watch the animals. We would also walk through the local farm and watch the cows being milked, or see the other animals and birds fed. This was all free, we did not have to pay to visit a farm, as is the case today. When I was young, it was not unusual to see a herd of cows or a flock of sheep being driven down the street. The fun started when one or two of them decided that they preferred a different direction to the one they were being taken on.

Another treat we looked forward to, was when the fair came to town in May and again in September. The fair did not come in until after the market had finished on Tuesday. It was open from Wednesday evening until late Saturday evening, when the dismantling process started. The fair had to be gone by Sunday morning as it was not allowed to be outside the church when the churchgoers arrived for the Sunday services. It was quite an occasion in those days with the main rides being in the Market Square, outside the church and the Romeland and the sideshows filling all the spaces in between. The usual big attraction in the Market Square was the Dodgems with the Carousel outside the Church and the Cakewalk in the Romeland. The other stalls were a coconut shy, Hoop-la, shooting gallery or bowl a penny stalls and of course a kiddies roundabout. These fairs came for over four hundred years but were discontinued in 1968 when the increase in traffic caused it to become a hazard. The coaches and caravans that the fair operators lived in were parked by the side of the road in the back streets, mainly Bakers Entry, Greenyard and Paradise Road.

One thing we were short of was swimming pools. Most people swam in the local rivers although there were a couple of pools. These were out in the open beside the River Lea. The water flowed in at one end and out at the other, the only plus was that you were safer in the pool than swimming in the river. The Victoria swimming pool was by Rammey Marsh Lock and the other near Cheshunt railway station. A changing hut was erected beside the Abbey River, which flowed through the Abbey Farm, to enable folk to swim in the river. The farmer did not like this idea as he said the children annoyed the cows.

We also enjoyed the carnival and various fetes that were held. Most of the local children were entered into the fancy dress parades, usually dressed up in a crepe paper outfit. The carnival and some of the fetes were in aid of hospitals. Others were church fetes in aid of one or other of the churches.

The Waltham Abbey Hospital Carnival started in 1900. It was run by the Waltham Cross, Cheshunt and Waltham Abbey Hospital Carnival Committee. Little is known about the period from 1900 to 1930. During the 1930's the Carnival Committee consisted of some 35 members.

From 1930, the proceeds from the collections were divided between Cheshunt and Waltham Abbey Hospitals, The Prince of Wales Hospital Tottenham and Herts Convalescent Home. It is not clear how the proceeds were divided percentage wise.

Until 1934 the carnival assembled in three groups. White rose group assembled in Farm Hill Road, Blue rose group in Monkswood Avenue and Yellow rose group in Crooked Mile. The carnival itself started from the eastern end of Sun Street and proceeded through Waltham Abbey, Waltham New Town (now Holdbrook), Waltham Cross and on to the end of Cheshunt Street. The parade halted here for a rest and refreshments before re-assembling and returning via the main road to Comrades Field for judging.

Before the war it appears that the judging took place at the end of proceedings and not before the start of the parade, as is the

practice today.

From 1935 the carnival programme states, assembly at the end of Sun Street. It does not mention the three groups as used in previous years.

The start times of the parade varied, some years it was at 2-30pm but others not until 4-00pm. The return journey from Cheshunt also varied, as some reports state the carnival proceeded along Swanfield Road to the field and other years, via Eleanor Cross Road to York Road where the judging took place. In 1936 the judging took place on the Lodge Estate opposite Abbey Road. It was also the practise to hold a fun fair in a field next to Waltham Cross Station, on carnival day.

The programme had the names of all entrants as well as the character that they represented, printed in the order that they were to appear in the parade, and on NO account was this order to be varied. The parade was always headed by a man on horseback. In the 1920's it was Francis Hale, who was later succeeded by Harry Townsend.

The parades often had more than 60 participants in them. Some of them were vehicular floats but the majority were either on horseback, bicycles, in wheelbarrows, prams or just walking. One old stalwart was a man named Dick Moss who never failed to enter the carnival. Another couple that entered each year was my wife and her mother. Carnival programmes that I donated to the Epping Forest District Museum will confirm the above facts about the carnival.

Alec Yardley was very much involved in the carnival organisation after the war, which restarted as Waltham Abbey Carnival and was not combined with Waltham Cross and Cheshunt.

The fetes were mostly held in the grounds of Joyce House in Farm Hill Road, kindly loaned by the owner, Mr. George Gray. There was also a lake in the grounds with a boat on it, named The Berea, which helped to swell the funds at sixpence a trip around the lake for adults and threepence for children.

The War Memorial Hospital in Farm Hill Road was one of the recipients of funds from the carnival and fetes. There was no National Health Service and the hospital had to be self supporting, relying on donations and organised events. Mr Gray was on the committee of this hospital and if anyone organised an event, he was only too willing to help. A lady named Mrs West came round the houses every week collecting for the Hospital Savings Association. Each house paid a penny a week, which helped pay the bill when you had to go into hospital. Local people would take fruit and vegetables to the hospital that they had grown and were excess to their requirements. Mr Larsen, a local nursery man would often send one of his workers round to check the coal bins and if they were nearly empty, would fill them up free of charge.

The Doctor also had to be paid when you visited him. I believe it was five shillings if you went to the surgery and seven shillings and sixpence for a house call. The medicine he gave you was in liquid form and not tablets as it is today. The taste was nearly always horrible and we did not look forward to taking it.

Quite a common practice in the early thirties if someone was ill, was to lay hay or straw in the road outside the house to deaden the sound of the iron bands on the wheels of carts.

The ambulance service was supplied by the Red Cross when needed. All ambulances in common with police vehicles and fire engines had warning bells fitted to them. This was the emergency system employed before the era of hooters and screeching sirens.

When there was a funeral, nearly every house in the street would close their curtains until the cortege had passed, on its way to the cemetery. If the funeral was of a notable or well respected person, (for example, John Parnell, Hans Larsen and Margaret Lee) local people would line the route to pay their last respects. All the local shops would close at the time the funeral was passing. Some of these funerals had as many as sixty vehicles in the procession. All the men would remove their hats as the funeral passed. In any case, if a funeral passed you while you were out, you removed your hat as a courtesy whether you knew whose funeral it was or not. The cost of the funeral from Undertakers invoices that I have from the thirties are, 22nd August 1930, £15-17-6d, the 28th August 1931, £16-2-6d, and 23rd January 1936, £17-12-6d.

My father worked for Larsen's nursery when I was young. He used to drive Larsen's lorry and took the produce of tomatoes and cucumbers to Covent Garden market in London. The lorry was an old Commer lorry that was used during World War One and had solid tyres on it. My mother, brother and I often went with dad in the lorry to Covent Garden but I do not remember much about it as the jolting of lorry soon sent me to sleep. After Mr Larsen died in 1934, my father went to work in the Royal Gunpowder Factory and stayed there until he retired.

The main places of employment were the Royal Gun Powder Factory, Nobel's ammunition Factory, Dunlops Tennis Racquet Factory, Pan Britannica Industries Fertilizer factory and the Nurseries. In 1945 there were as many as 86 nurseries in the Waltham Holy Cross area. Another nearby factory was the Royal Small Arms Factory at Enfield Lock. Folk in Waltham Abbey were quite used to hearing the guns being test fired there and took no notice of it.

Local transport was good if you wanted to go to Waltham Cross, Edmonton or London but in Waltham Abbey, the buses terminated at The Green Man, Farm Hill Road and then went back to Waltham Cross. There was no service to Chingford until 1934 and it was only during the summer weekends that buses ran as far as The Wake Arms, which enabled a connection to Epping or Loughton.

Trams were still running from Waltham Cross through Edmonton and Tottenham to London. These were later replaced by trolley buses in the late 1930's. Most of these services had a driver and conductor on each bus but on the service to Chingford the driver collected the fares as well as driving the bus.

One part of the journey between the Abbey and Cross that we enjoyed was the humped back Refinery bridge over the factory river. Sitting in the back seat of the bus was quite an experience when the bus went over the bridge at speed.

Waltham Abbey had its fair share of public houses, in the 1930's there were still in excess of thirty. This was in addition to the licensed grocery shops that sold bottled beers and spirits. Most of the public houses had an off licence section where you could buy beers, wines and spirits for consumption off the premises. Women folk were not seen drinking in the pubs to the extent that they are today. They would take a jug into the off licence where it would be filled for a few pence and it would be taken home to drink. Most of the off licence sections became known as the jug and bottle department. Before the onset of betting offices, betting was illegal but you could very often find a bookie's runner in most pubs. He would take your bets and place them with a bookie providing he knew you. If he was caught by the police in the act of taking a bet, he would be taken to court and fined. Also the landlord of the pub could be fined or possibly lose his licence. It is interesting to note that the majority of licensees were women. Possibly this was because their husband had another job, which prevented him from holding the licence.

Food prices during March 1937.

½lb butter	6d.	½lb Margarine	3d.
½lb Cheese	4½d.	½lb Bacon	8d.
¼lb Lyons Tea	6d.	1lb Demerara Sugar	3d.
2ozs Ham	4d.	1lb Granulated Sugar	2½d.
¼lb Lard	2½d.	¼lb Rowntrees Cocoa	5½d.
½lb Split Peas	1½d.	1lb McDougalls Flour	5d.
½lb Tapioca	2½d.	½lb Castor Sugar	1½d.
Tin Corned Beef	7½d.	3lb Piece Corner Bacon	1s 9d.
2ozs Brisket	5½d.	¼lb Luncheon Meat	2½d.
Tin Cream	4½d.	Tin Pineapple Chunks	5½d.
Tin Herrings	6½d.	Tin Lyons Coffee	6d.
¼lb Currants	2d.	Tin Sardines	5½d.
¼lb Sultanas	2d.	Small Tin Salmon	4½d.
½lb Prunes	4d.	Tall Tin Salmon	1s 0d.
Pkt Bisto	2½d.	Block Rough Salt	2d.
2ozs Mustard	4½d.	Atora Suet	2d.
1lb Rasp. Jam	7½d.	1lb Golden Syrup	5d.
1lb Mincemeat	7½d.	Pkt. Rover Biscuits	7d.
½lb Cookeen	3½d.	Pkt. Table Salt	2d.
2 Nutmegs	1½d.	1oz Ground Ginger	1½d.
½lb Sausages	6½d.	1 Pint Vinegar	3d.
2 Sausage Rolls	6d.	Tin Bicarbonate Soda	2d.
½lb Rice	2½d.	Foster Clarks Custard	4½d.
Tin Evap. Milk	3½d.	½lb Ginger Nut Biscuits	5½d.
Tomato Sauce	7½d.	Baking Powder	2d.
6 Fairy Cakes	6d.	½lb Slab Cake	6d.
6 Oxo's	6d.	Quart Ale	10d.
1oz Pepper	2d.	2 New Laid Eggs	3½d.

Other goods.

2lb Soda	2d.	2 Bundles Wood	1½d.
½lb Wax Tapers	2½d.	½dozen Candles	2½d.
3 Boxes Matches	2½d.	½bar Lifebuoy Soap	3d.
Eve Toilet Soap	2d.	Tin Enameline	3d.
Pkt Robin Starch	2½d.	Sml. Black Boot Polish	2½d.

Pkt Persil 3½d.	Pkt Hudsons Soap Powder 1½d.
Step Powder 3d.	Piece Hearthstone 1d.
Tin Brasso 3d.	½gall. Paraffin Oil 5½d.
3 Reckitts Blue 2½d.	Tin Keatings Flea Powder 6d.
2 Dolly Cream 3d.	Tin Mansion Floor Polish 3d.

Coinage of the 1930's.

Farthing. Smallest coin - ¼ of a penny.
 Halfpenny. ½ of a penny - 2 farthings.
 Penny. 2 halfpennies. - 4 farthings.
 Silver 3d piece. 3 pence - 12 farthings.
 12 sided 3d piece. Issued from 1937.
 Sixpence. 6pence - 24 farthings.
 Shilling. 12pence - 48 farthings.
 Florin. 2 shillings - 24pence - 96 farthings.
 Half Crown. 2 shillings and sixpence. 30 pence - 120 farthings.
 Crown. 5 shillings - 60 pence - 240 farthings.
 10 shilling note. 10 shillings - 120 pence - 480 farthings.
 £1 note. 20 shillings - 240 pence - 960 farthings.
 £5 note. 5 pounds - 100 shillings - 1200 pence. This note was uncommon in the 1930's unless you were wealthy.

Decimal coinage.	1930's coinage.
£1 or 100 pence.	£1 or 240 pence.
50 pence.	10 shillings.
20 pence.	4 shillings.
10 pence.	2 shillings.
5 pence.	1 shilling.
2 pence.	5 pence.
1 pence.	2½ pence.

My memories of the Second World War are a time of adventure and great excitement. Many people that were of a similar age as myself during the war have said exactly the same thing. We were too young to realise the seriousness of the situation and treated it as period of fun. Had we have been bombed out or members of our families killed, it may have altered our outlook.

At the outbreak of the war, on September 3rd 1939, I had just two weeks to go before my ninth birthday. Everyone knew that the possibility of war was imminent. During the preceding months, a civil defence service was formed, wardens posts were built, air raid shelters installed and gasmasks were issued to everyone, just in case the enemy decided to use gas warfare.

The Wardens posts were built at the following places,

- A.1. Lea Road.
- A.2. Highbridge Street.
- A.3. Beside the Abbey Church Vicarage.
- A.4. Abbey Filling Station, Sewardstone Road.
- A.5. Green Man Yard.
- A.6. Galley Hill.
- A.7. Pick Hill.
- A.8. Greenfield Street.
- A.9. Harold Estate, Crooked Mile.
- A.10. Denny Avenue.
- A.11. Tennyson Avenue.

- B.1. High Beech.
- C.1. Hawes Lane, Sewardstone.
- C.2. Daws Hill, Sewardstone.
- D.1. Woodgreen Road/Upshire Road.
- D.2. Woodgreen Road/Honey Lane.
- E.1. Wake Arms.
- F.1. Holyfield.
- G.1. Sewardstonebury.

Most houses were issued with an Anderson shelter and where possible the householders were asked to construct it themselves. We kids enjoyed helping to dig the hole, about 8 feet by 6 feet and 3 feet deep, into which the sheets of corrugated iron were placed and bolted together. When the shelter was finished, we completely covered it with the earth we had dug out of the hole, leaving only the entrance clear. We would then ask various neighbours if they needed any help with their shelter as we knew this would mean a little extra pocket money. Where it was not possible to put an Anderson shelter, an alternative was a Morrison indoor shelter. This could be used as a table during the day or shelter under and used to sleep under at night. Communal shelters were built all around the Town, so if there was an air raid while you were away from home, you could shelter in the nearest one.

Many bags were filled with sand, which were used to protect important buildings like the Church, Town Hall and Hospital. Most local children did not need to be asked to help fill the sandbags, they practically volunteered.

The civil defence were organising exercises in conjunction with the fire brigade and ambulance services. About 15 wardens posts had been built and each was manned by a team of wardens, to co-ordinate the rescue services, should the occasion arise. The next step was to put into practice these exercises, which consisted of rescuing people from derelict buildings that had supposedly been bombed. In some cases a small fire had been started to test the reaction of the fire service. The exercises were held in various areas of the town, to enable each team of wardens to get some practise in. I remember two of the old houses that were used were in Sewardstone Street. One was between the Salvation Army Hall and the entrance to the old slaughter house. The other was next to The Compasses public house on the corner of Orchard Gardens. After being used many times for practices, these buildings became unsafe and were demolished. On the site next to The Compasses an Emergency Water Supply tank was constructed. Another building that was used, was a pair of old cottages at the entrance to Lodge Lane. To a child this was exciting stuff and we eagerly anticipated when and where the next exercise would be. In fact we used to copy many of the things we saw. Most of the boys made themselves a soapbox trolley with a plank of wood, some old pram wheels and a wooden box. We would create our own incident with injured people, which we would bandage up, and using the trolley as a stretcher would cart the victims off to hospital. The shops sold tin helmets and arm bands with A.R.P., Stretcher Party or Warden on them so we were like the real thing. I think one reason for pulling the old

houses down, was that they were afraid children would play in them and possibly injure themselves.

We also liked watching the Fire Brigade practicing in the council yard. They used a tall practice tower pretending to rescue people from high buildings and lowering them to the ground. They also had fun with the auxiliary pumps. The extractor pipe with a filter on the end was lowered into the nearby brook and the water was squirted with considerable force over onto the town mead. From here it gradually filtered back into the brook.

Most of the men that were too old to be enlisted, joined the Local Volunteers, later to be called the Home Guard. A lot of women joined the Womens Land Army to help fill the gaps left by the men that joined the fighting services. Both men and women also formed street fire watching groups. This was worked on a rota system and certain houses had a stirrup pump. A notice in the window indicated which houses had them.

War was declared just before we were to return to school after the summer holidays. The radio and newspapers were all full of speculation as to what was going to happen. All windows had to have thick blackout curtains to make sure that at night, no light could be seen through them. If a glimmer of light could be seen, a warden or firewatcher would soon shout at you to put that light out. As the front door of a lot of the older houses opened directly on to the street, the room light had to be put out at night if someone knocked on the door. Most houses had brown sticky tape on the windows, to help prevent injury from flying glass. There were no street lights and all traffic had to have covers on their lights to make sure they shone downwards and could not be seen from above. Not that there was much traffic as petrol rationing prevented it. A lot of kerb stones and lamp posts were painted with white bands to help you to see them in the dark.

The biggest priority was organising the evacuation of children to country areas.

The place chosen for the evacuation of children from Waltham Abbey, was Halstead in Essex. Notices were quickly distributed to parents informing them of the arrangements for their children. Coaches had been booked and all children had to report to the school playgrounds with their suitcases packed as if they were going on holiday. Every child had to have labels on themselves and on their cases with their name and address on. They also had to make sure to take their gasmasks with them.

My Aunt living at Poole, wrote to my mother asking her to send my brother and myself to her, instead of with the local authority scheme. We were ready to go to the school playground with our school friends, when my Aunt's letter arrived. My mother informed the organisers that we would not be going as she now had other arrangements, preferring her sister to look after us instead of someone she did not know.

My sister, who was only 4 years old, was to stay at home with mum and dad. At the next weekend we were off to Poole by a private

car that my parents had hired.

My parents returned home the same day, knowing that we were in good hands. My brother and I were quite happy as this is where we usually came for our summer holidays before the war. The first job my Aunt had, was to get us into the local school. The school we went to was not far from where we were living but owing to the situation of war, many school buildings were taken over by the military, causing the remaining schools to bulge at the seams. The obvious solution to this was that one section of the children, including my brother and myself, went to morning classes and the remainder attended in the afternoon.

For me, the most unusual lesson we had was knitting. As the class was mixed, the boys had to join in with the girls when the knitting lesson came round. The only thing I remember knitting at school was squares of various colours, which were eventually sewn together to make a large blanket. The lesson came in handy later as during the evenings we spent in the air raid shelter, I was able to help knit dolls clothes for my younger sister.

We were quite happy during our spare time watching the take-off and landing's of the Sunderland flying boats of R.A.F. Coastal Command in Poole Harbour and the Army lorries with soldiers, guns and tanks as they moved to where ever they were needed. At this particular time there was no enemy action and apart from the various military activities it was difficult to realise that there was a war on. Life was the same as it had always been, going to school (albeit only half a day), and playing with the other children.

With nothing happening war wise, we came back to Waltham Abbey after about seven months, as did many of the children that went to Halstead. When we arrived home we found that the military had occupied Quaker Lane School, (which was the only school in the Abbey then), as well as local halls like the Parish Hall and Baptist Church Hall. The education authorities had asked parents if they had a room with a large table and enough chairs to seat 10 children plus a teacher, would they allow small classes to be held in their houses. My parents fitted this arrangement and we had schooling in our front room. It was worse than the school we had at Poole because we were down to two half days only and for the first time we were given homework to do. It did not seem too bad when we were at school but to have to do school work when we were not at school seemed to be taking a bit of a liberty. Before the war, we never had to do homework.

We did not have to wait long after we returned home for the war to really start. As soon as warning of an impending raid came through to the local control centre, they would make a phone call to the police station and a policeman would set off the air raid siren, which was situated on the police station roof. As a warning, it would wail up and down for a couple of minutes or so and for "raiders passed" or all clear, it sounded a continuous even note.

During January 1940 there was an explosion in the Royal Gunpowder

Factory when five men were killed. I was away at Poole when this happened but had returned when a second explosion in April killed a further five men. At the time this occurred we were in our front room having a school lesson. Everyone thought immediately of enemy action but no siren had sounded. A lot of windows were blown out and damage to houses and greenhouses was widespread. Word soon got round that it was an explosion in the factory, so we returned to our school work.

The first activity in our area was when a load of leaflets were dropped by the Germans at Upshire, on August 2nd 1940. These leaflets, entitled "A last appeal to reason, by Adolf Hitler" were collected and sold for about sixpence each, to help swell the funds of the Red Cross. I still have one in my collection of memorabilia.

Exactly one year from the day that war was declared, the first bombs were dropped on Waltham Abbey. These fell on the Abbey Filling Station at the junction with Farm Hill Road and Sewardstone Road and on the adjacent Pan Britannica Industries Factory at about 11pm. Big fires started, as the garage was flattened and the petrol pumps blazed. Chemicals in the P.B.I. also fuelled the fires in their factory. We were hurriedly taken down into the air raid shelter and for some time to come, spent every night there. The inside of the shelter had four bunk beds and my father fixed up a small light connected to batteries. For warmth during the winter, a small paraffin heater did the trick. Vacuum flasks full of tea or coffee were always on standby, ready to take into the shelter when there was a raid, which was very frequent during the blitz. With the air raids becoming a daily occurrence, it meant that there was a lot of shrapnel and other war waste to be collected. Nearly every child had a collection of bits and pieces. General shrapnel was commonplace but a shell nosecap was a real treasure. Also parachute cord or silk and the burnt out remains of an incendiary bomb were prized.

Waltham Abbey had its share of gunsites, which ensured a continuous supply of shrapnel. Most of them were situated on high ground, to give the maximum view around. The main sites were, Galley Hill, Monkams Hill, Colmans Lane, Hilly Dilly Fields Monkswood Avenue, The Mountain (as it was known locally) behind Beechfield Walk, Woodridden Hill, Powdermill Lane and Fishers Green. The gun on the Mountain was controlled from Quinton Hill House, which was occupied by the military during the war. There were also army camps at Avey Lane and Galley Hill. Many of these sites also had a searchlight attached to them, and in addition, there were mobile guns mounted on the back of lorries. There was a mobile barrage balloon on a lorry that was manned entirely by a female crew. This was often seen in the Romeland. Barrage balloons were tethered to a winch on the ground, or on the back of a lorry, and when necessary raised to a pre-set height. Hundreds of these balloons were used to form a curtain in and around London, which ensured that the enemy aircraft could not fly in low to drop their bombs or take photographs. One amusing incident happened when a balloon slipped its mooring and floated free. As it drifted towards open country

an R.A.F. fighter plane flew around it firing at it, hoping to deflate it so that it came back down to earth. Lots of children and adults watched the spectacle, it was fun.

In 1940 two aircraft crashed in the area. The first was on the 18th February when a Hawker Hurricane from North Weald airfield, crashed by Bolton's Drive in Honey Lane. The Pilot was Pilot Officer Harold Lovell (aged 19) who was killed instantly and is buried in St. Andrews Churchyard, North Weald.

The second crash was on 8th December when a German Junkers 88 was shot down and crashed in Epping Forest. The aircraft was hit by a burst of fire from the Chigwell Rise Battery, which damaged the tail unit. This caused the pilot to lose control and virtually go round in circles until it crashed in the forest near Lodge Road, Upshire. The noise it made as it descended was horrible, it seemed never ending, until the silence after it crashed. All the crew were killed.

An amusing incident occurred at the Royal Gunpowder Factory during the war. Enemy aircraft had dropped a load of incendiary bombs, which landed in the factory grounds and caused quite a big fire. The factory employed its own fire brigade but owing to the size of this fire outside help had to be summoned. The local fire brigade hastened to the factory, only to be stopped at the gates and searched, just in case they were carrying anything that might cause a fire.

With the onset of these daily raids, another evacuation scheme was put into operation. This time the children were sent to Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire. My parents decided not to send us away again, so we spent the rest of the wartime at home. One of our favourite pastimes was competing with each other to see who could count the most barrage balloons we could see over London or counting the formations of bomber aircraft that flew over. We used to make solid balsa wood models of most of the aircraft we saw. If you were naval minded it would be models of famous ships. For the army types it would be model tanks.

At night we loved to watch the searchlights sweeping the sky, trying to locate enemy aircraft, so the guns could see them and hopefully shoot them down. When the action got too close we would be bundled back into the shelter.

For just over a year the raids were every day and night. Many people were bombed out but no one was killed. The main places that were damaged during the blitz, were in Rounton Road and the Romeland. On the night of October 16th a 250 kilo high explosive bomb fell on 44-46 Rounton Road. It was a filthy night with rain pouring down but fortunately nobody was killed. A few people had to be rescued from the rubble but no serious injuries.

During the night of April 19th/20th 1941 the next damage was to the Romeland houses, some of the oldest in the area, were all destroyed when parachute mines fell in the watercress beds behind them. Most of the streets in the town had a fire watching team that worked on a rota basis. On this particular night my father was one of the watchers. I remember him coming to our anderson

shelter and telling my mother to keep us all in the shelter until he said otherwise. He told her that there was something on the end of a parachute caught in the searchlights. He thought it was coming down over by the Abbey Farm, which was next to the watercress beds. A few minutes later a terrific explosion indicated that it had landed. In fact two mines had landed. The following morning an old gentleman was seen searching through the rubble. When asked what he was doing, he said he was looking for his eggs, which he kept in the copper. When the copper was eventually located, sure enough the eggs were still inside and not one of them was even cracked. Considerable damage was done to a lot of places, The Church, Vicarage, Abbey Farmhouse, and dozens of nearby properties in Highbridge Street and Church Street had their windows blown out and minor damage.

The local fire brigade set up a stall outside the fire station selling bits off of the mines in aid of the local hospital. At this time the fire station was in part of the Town Hall but transferred to a new fire station in the Romeland after the rubble from the houses had been removed.

Another hazard was unexploded bombs. I remember Pick Hill being cordoned off while the Bomb Disposal Squad defused them. Pynest Green was also the recipient of a 1000kg Hermann bomb that failed to go off. There were also isolated incidents of German aircraft machine gunning folk seen on the ground. My mother-in-law had to dive into a ditch in Honey Lane one day as an aircraft fired off his guns.

A lot of incendiary bombs fell in the area. These were usually dropped from the aircraft in a container, which had a device that on the way down would fling the bombs out at intervals in order to obtain maximum coverage of the area.

There were often convoys of lorries and coaches full of troops on the move, passing through the town. People would come out and give the troops fruit they had picked from their trees or any food they could spare.

During the war, one problem was food rationing. One week's ration allowance for one person was one egg, 2oz Margarine, 2oz Cooking fat, 2oz Tea, 8oz Sugar, 1oz Cheese, 4oz Bacon and ham, and meat to the value of 1s 2d. Rabbits, poultry and offal were not rationed but were in very short supply. To a child, the thing that was very bad news was that sweets were to be rationed. In addition to the essential foods there was a points system where each person was allocated 20 points every four weeks. Foods like tins of fruit, tins of evaporated milk, tins of meat, currants, sultanas etc., were all given a points value and you could choose what to buy within your points allocation. Throughout the war these amounts varied slightly, according to the availability or shortage of supplies.

This system prevented rich people from hoarding tinned and dried food, which the poorer people could not afford to do. In July 1939 a public information leaflet was issued advising people to increase their stocks of food in view of the impending war situation. Shopkeepers were also asked to increase their stock

where possible. During the previous 18 months the Government had been importing extra food supplies in readiness and now wanted shops and the general public to buy extra to ease the Government warehousing problem. At the start of rationing, each person had to register with the grocer of their choice and deal only with him for the duration of that ration period. When new ration books were issued you were allowed to change to another grocer if you wished to. Some foods like vegetables and fish were not on ration and queues often formed when supplies were available. In fairness to all, the shopkeeper often put a limit on the amount he allowed each customer to buy. Babies were issued with a green coloured ration book, which helped shopkeepers know if you really had a baby. Toilet soap, such as Knights Castile was often only sold to green ration book holders. Soap flakes was another product often kept for those with a green book.

Owing to the shortage of wrapping paper, most people took their old newspapers into the shops to help out. The fish and chip shop had a permanent notice asking for any unwanted paper. As many people would say, "fish and chips doesn't taste the same if it is not in newspaper." Fish was one commodity that was not rationed. Our local fish shop was Mr and Mrs Chaplins at 43 Sun Street. During the explosion at the R.G.P.F. in 1940 this was one of the shops whose window was blown out. The usual practise during the war when repairing the window was to board it up apart from a small section in the centre which you could look through.

The main answer to the food shortage was an allotment, or any spare piece of ground to grow your own food. My father had two allotments, one the other side of Cobbin Brook beside Larsens Recreation Ground and the other to the south of Greenfield Street (now Harveyfields). My brother and I had to help cultivate these. As my brother was disabled, he used to help with the weeding and planting the seeds. I was often given the job of getting water from the nearby brook to water the crops. Dad used to do the digging but as I got older, I was taught to do this as well. We grew a lot of potatoes and when they were harvested, would be stored in barrels in the shed. Other root crops were stored in clamps built in the garden. Crops like beetroot, rhubarb and beans were preserved in jars. Onions, shallots and cabbage were also pickled and preserved. Various fruits from your garden or an orchard were also preserved in jars, or made into jam.

Where houses had a rear garden, most people had rabbits and chickens, which they kept for food. The chickens provided eggs, (which were difficult to get from the grocer), as well as making a tasty meal. While the hens were laying plenty of eggs, my mother would preserve some of them in buckets using a substance called waterglass. These were then used when the chickens went off laying. Like most foods, eggs went bad if kept too long without preserving them in some way. The chickens were kept in a wooden shed, which was draught proof and warm in the winter. Attached to the shed was a chicken run, which had a solid roof but the sides were constructed from wire netting. They were fed mainly on vegetable and fruit peelings, which were cooked in an old saucepan, then cut up and mixed with balancer meal,

(obtainable from a corn chandler), with the addition of some fresh greenery. At harvest time, after the farmer had cut and collected his corn, people were allowed to go gleaning. We were sent to the fields every day during harvest time with a sack, which we filled with gleaned corn to bring home. Father had a large barrel in the shed into which the corn was stored, after it had been winnowed, (the corn separated from the straw), ready to feed to the chickens as an alternative to the cooked peelings. The straw was used to line the nest boxes as well as given to the rabbits. For the rabbits, we would often go out and collect dandelion leaves, or pester the local greengrocer for waste cabbage and lettuce leaves. My father bought day old chicks, which were fattened up for Christmas time. There was no shortage of customers to buy them, the neighbours booked their bird months before, to ensure a Christmas dinner. They also saved their vegetable peelings and gave us to help feed their bird, making sure it was plump. When Christmas came, my father killed the chickens and my brother and I were roped in to help pluck them. What a messy job that was with feathers and fluff everywhere. My father would then prepare them by removing their insides, making them ready for cooking.

Freezers were not in common use yet, so as I mentioned, any spare fruit and vegetables were preserved in jars. The main type used were called Kilner Jars, which were sealed while still hot by means of a rubber sealing band. As the jars cooled they contracted and caused a vacuum, which kept the food until it was needed. Other methods were with Graham Farrish tops and clips which fitted 1lb or 2lb jamjars, again with a rubber sealing ring, or Porasan Skin, which was a flexible film that could be moulded on the top of any glass jar and formed an airtight seal.

Another good source of fruit was blackberries. These grew around many fields and in woods and were there for the picking. These could be made into jam or preserved in jars. A lot of people made wine from them. During the fruit season an extra allowance of sugar was available for making jams and preserves. Nuts were also a fruit of the countryside, which you could gather free of charge if you knew where the trees were. There were hazlenut trees in Galley Hill and walnut trees in the R.G.P.F. which overhung the fence in Town Mead. The small stream that ran between the field and the fence did not deter children from collecting the nuts, even if it did mean getting wet feet.

Most of the children went potato and pea picking at local farms during the school holidays. They would be picked up by the farmer from the Market Square or the Green Man by lorry or a trailer pulled by a tractor and taken to his farm. The children were paid 6d (2½p) for each sack they filled with potatoes but I cannot remember how much they were paid for picking peas and other crops.

No food was wasted, any left-overs were used to make another meal. The Ministry of food were often distributing leaflets with information of new recipes or recipes for left-over food. Any food that could not be used was put into bins that were placed

at various positions around the town by a farmer and used for feeding animals. The farmer would collect the full bins and replace them with empty ones at regular intervals.

Some people were taken to court and fined for wasting food. Their crime was they were caught throwing out bread to feed the birds on two or three occasions. Another illegal operation was the Black Market. This was trading food or coupons for heavily inflated prices. One did not enquire where the produce or coupons came from, you just paid the money and kept your mouth shut.

Most of the local farmers had lost their farm hands through being called up for military service and these were replaced by the Womens Land Army. These girls did the same jobs as the men they replaced. At harvest time, most of the local lads would help the Land Girls collect the stooks of corn and load them on the lorries or trailers behind tractors. The girls also drove the lorries and tractors. We also had a big stick with us to clobber any rabbits that might be hiding in the corn stooks and took them home for an off ration meal. Most times the local butcher would give you a shilling or two if you took them to him, they made a tasty treat for some of his customers. During the year we would also help with the hay making, as the animals had to be fed as well. The land girls gradually trusted us to use a pitchfork when helping them but woe betide you if they caught you playing about. Pitchforks were dangerous things and the girls were officially not allowed to let us use them.

As there was no television in wartime, mobile cinemas toured the streets showing propaganda films helping to boost morale. The van would stop about halfway down the street and start playing a loud speaker message to encourage people to come out and watch the show. You would very often see people bringing out a chair to sit on while they watched the films. Most of us kids just stood and watched, or sat in the road behind the van. The films varied in content, some would show aircraft involved in a dog fight, with the British shooting the enemy out of the skies. Others were showing how to grow food and recipes for how to use the food when you harvested it, and films encouraging saving for victory. One little ditty went like this, Saving, saving, helping to win the war, and when you think you've saved enough, go on and save some more.

National savings groups were organised for most streets and schools. A nominated collector would come round each week selling savings stamps. When you had 15 shillings worth (75p), you could exchange them for a savings certificate, which would be worth £1 and 6d, (102½p) in five years. In school we were given savings stamps as prizes after the annual exam results. Top of the class was awarded a 15 shilling savings certificate, second place had 7/6d (37½p) worth of savings stamps and third place received 5 shillings worth (25p). In my last school year exam, I came second. I was disappointed that I did not come top but I think I was more upset by the fact that being only half a point behind, the first boy got 15 shillings and I only received 7/6d. Special savings weeks were also organised, like War Weapons Week in 1941, Warship Week in 1942, Wings For Victory Week in 1943 and Salute the Soldier Week in 1944, where the town

would be encouraged to save the equivalent sum of the cost of an aircraft, boat, or tank. During these weeks, I remember a German aircraft being on show in the garden of the Midland Bank in Highbridge Street. It cost 6d (2½p) entrance fee with the proceeds going to the British Red Cross funds. With dozens of children wanting bits of it for souvenirs, there was less of the aeroplane when it left than there was when it arrived. There was also a bomb on show at 18 Sun Street, inviting anyone to buy a savings stamp and stick it on the bomb, which would then be dropped on the enemy.

We also had special weeks at school for salvage drives. At intervals during the year, one week would be for waste paper and later, another week would be waste metal. Someone from the military or a factory, came to the school and showed us the various items that could be made from the waste. We were told that our efforts were a great help to the winning the war and they encouraged us to collect as much as we could.

As the war progressed, the Military gradually vacated some of the halls in the Abbey and these were then used as schoolrooms. The boys went to the Parish Hall and later to the Victoria Hall. The senior girls used the Wesleyan Hall in Monkswood Avenue and the juniors and infants were taken by coach to the old school at Upshire. Six months later, the coaches were requisitioned for military use, so the children then used the old disused Leverton school in Paradise Road, the building at Joyce House in Farm Hill that is now a dentist surgery and the Salvation Army Hall. On fine days the children used the road outside their hall for physical training as most of the halls did not have space for such activity. Petrol rationing made sure that there were not many vehicles to disrupt the exercises. Needless to say we often had an audience of local people watching the spectacle. As most of these halls did not have an air raid shelter attached to them, we were allocated to shelters in nearby houses, or a communal surface shelter, so in the event of an air raid we knew exactly which shelter to go to. While we were in the Parish Hall, I remember the class being taken to the Council yard in Orchard Gardens where there was a gas chamber. We were then taken into the chamber to test our gasmasks.

When the Kings Royal Rifles troops moved out of the drill hall in Highbridge Street, they threw a party for local children. I was one of the lucky ones that went and we had a marvellous time. The goodies were devoured with glee as it had been a long time since we had seen so much fruit and cakes. Large dishes full of currants and raisins disappeared in record time. There was never a dull moment and we were kept entertained right up to the last minute.

During 1943 the military moved out of Quaker Lane School and classes gradually returned here when the classrooms were put in order. The desks had been damaged and needed repair, most of the pegs in the cloakrooms were missing and a coat of paint would make a vast difference. The older classes were the first to return and some pupils were used to help repair the desks and fix

the cloakroom pegs. To help brighten up the classrooms, those that were good at art painted large pictures, which were hung in the rooms. Surface air raid shelters had been built in the playgrounds, where we all went when the air raid siren sounded. The military had long dug out shelters in the school field but as these were always waterlogged, brick surface shelters were built. The headmaster's office had a telephone in it and had to be manned at all times when we were at school. The headmaster could not be by the telephone himself all day long, so a system was devised to overcome this. At this time the girls school and boys school were in separate buildings. The boys were banned from the girls section and the girls were banned from the boys section. Six of the boys and six of the girls from the top classes, were chosen to sit by the phone, myself included. The boys in the Headmaster's office and the girls in the headmistresses office. We had six work periods during each day so we each did one period a day. The local A.R.P. control centre, as soon as they had confirmation of an impending raid, would phone the boys school and just say "Air Raid Warning Red". There was an internal telephone extension from the boys' section to the girls' section, which was a box on the wall with a handle that we turned to phone the girls and give them the same message. We would then rush out into the playground blowing a whistle as hard as we could. As soon as the other five boys or girls heard the whistle, they would rush out without any instruction from their teachers and form up across the playground. The teachers would then implement the air raid drill and get all the pupils safely out. Each class would come out in single file and we would direct them into their respective shelters. We then followed with our teachers bringing up the rear. We were quite proud to have been chosen for this task but upon reflection, it was a very responsible job for a thirteen year old child. While in the shelters, it was difficult to carry on with lessons, so the teachers would give us a spelling test or mental arithmetic test. Occasionally one of the boys would bring in his ukelele and we would have a sing-song. During this period of our school life, we did not receive much training in sporting activities. There was no football or cricket, mainly because the young male teachers had been called up for military service and also because of the danger from air raids. We only had a few games that it was possible to play in the playground.

One lesson that we did have was gardening. The school had two or three allotments at Capershots where the class grew various vegetables. We would walk from school with each boy carrying a garden tool or pushing the wheelbarrow. We tended the plots with vigour, which were admired by some of the other allotment holders. As the crops were harvested, we piled them on the barrow and proudly pushed them back to school, where they were shared out among us. The master taught us to put all the small vegetables in the bottom of the barrow and the large ones on the top. He told us that this was for the benefit of passers by that might look at the barrow.

As the air raids subsided after the blitz, we were allowed to go

out more. At night, because of the blackout, there were no street lights. Most of the kerb stones, lamp posts and telegraph poles were painted with white bands to make it easier to see them. Owing to petrol rationing there was very little traffic about, so playing in the streets was not dangerous.

One game we played in the darkness was to tie string from someone's door knocker to another one across the road. We would then knock the door and when the occupier opened the door, they would automatically tighten the string, which lifted the knocker on the opposite door ensuring that when they shut their door the other knocker would operate. Sometimes we would link up half a dozen knockers, then hide and watch the consequences. As it was dark, we knew that we could not be seen.

The Salvation Army band was short of a lot men players owing to them being in the services, so the answer was to encourage the young lads to join the Salvation Army and they would teach them to play the instrument of their choice.

At the beginning of the war, I only had a small boys bicycle and as I was growing up wanted an adult bike. So, as toys were very hard to come by, I painted my toy cars and lorries to cover up the scratches, and sold them. I also got a job as a paper boy in the mornings and the errand boy at the International Stores in the evenings. These two jobs increased my pocket money by fifteen shillings a week, or so I thought. Now I was working, my parents thought that I should contribute towards my keep and decided that I should pay them seven shillings and sixpence and keep the other seven shillings and sixpence myself. This way I was soon able to buy a bigger bike. From then on much of my spare time was filled by watching the aircraft at North Weald. If there happened to be an air raid while we were there, any local householder would take us into their shelter. Later in the war we used to go to Matching Green airfield on our bikes to watch the bombers towing gliders, sometimes they were practising and sometimes they were off for real action.

If the weather was bad during the school holidays and at the weekends, we would use our air raid shelter as our "den" and play in there. This was with the approval of mum, as we were out of her way and she could get on with the housework.

Various fund raising events were held throughout the war, including fetes in Joyce House gardens. These were mainly held to raise funds for sending parcels to our prisoners of war through the Red Cross. In addition to the many stalls and side shows there was usually an auction sale of items donated by local people to help swell the kitty. It was surprising how generous local folk were. I remember a second hand electric train set that was auctioned for £10. The bidder then gave it back to be auctioned again and it made another £10. Again it was given back and made another £10. Given back again, at the fourth attempt it finally went for £9-10s.(£9-50p), making a total of £39-10s.(£39-50p). How I would have loved to have that train set.

As the war progressed, the army camps at Lippetts Hill, Galley Hill and Avey Lane were vacated and prisoners of war were

billeted in them. From here they were put to work on the farms and in the nurseries. A lot of them had worked in nurseries in their own countries and liked the work here, so they stayed here after the war. Eventually they managed to buy some of the nurseries for themselves and are still trading there.

During 1944 the Germans started sending over pilotless aircraft, which were a new form of bomb. They had a jet propelled motor on top of the fuselage, with a flame shooting out at the rear, similar to a blowlamp action. When the petrol ran out, the engine stopped and the whole thing fell to the ground and exploded. These bombs, designated as V.1's and later nicknamed "Doodlebugs", caused substantial damage throughout London and there was great loss of life. We would watch them as they flew over, hoping that the engine kept going. The first one to crash locally was by the Sewardstone Grange, it caused considerable damage to the Grange and nearby nurseries but no one was killed. If one crashed fairly near we would wait for the Fire Engine and chase it on our bicycles hoping that we might find a scrap of the bomb for our collection. The nearest one that crashed to where I lived, came down in Cobbin brook next to Larsens Recreation Ground, on September 20th 1944. It caused considerable damage to houses in Broomstick Hall Road, Eastbrook and Rounton Roads, Honey Lane, Patmore Road and Ruskin and Tennyson Avenues. In all, nearly 400 houses were affected, with Rochfords nursery losing a great amount of glass. My father never had great success in growing cauliflowers but this year they were quite good, only to be ruined by the blast from the V.1. that fell in the brook. The V.1's were followed a few months later by a more deadly form known as the V.2. rocket. You could hear and sometimes see the doodlebugs coming but the rocket was silent and the first you knew was when it exploded.

On Sunday November 12th 1944 a V.2. rocket fell at Nazeing and ten people were killed. It was not until the next day at school when the coach bringing the Nazeing children arrived, that we realised that one of our school friends was a victim.

A total of 14 doodlebugs and 16 rockets fell in the Waltham Abbey area. The worst of these being a V.2. rocket that fell in Highbridge Street on March 7th 1945, when five people were killed. After nearly five years of war this was the first time that any civilians were killed in Waltham Abbey. Three children, Audrey Clarke and her brother Norman, and James Strudwick. A lorry driver, Cyril Ellis and Mrs Kathrine Peck who died shortly after from her injuries. It caused major disruption as it fell smack in the middle of the road between Waltham Abbey and Waltham Cross. The only other roads between the two places meant about a ten mile detour either to the north or the south. I had left school at Christmas 1944, aged 14, and was now working in a hardware shop in Sun Street. The rocket fell at 5pm and severed the gas and electric supplies to the town, which meant that there was no light and heat for anyone. The shop was swamped with people wanting candles or nightlights so that they had some form of lighting. Paraffin oil was also in great demand. Needless to say, it was only a short time before we had sold out of both. The local mobile canteens from the Salvation Army and Womens

Voluntary Service were soon on the scene and touring the streets providing hot drinks and food. If you had a water tank in your house, you were lucky as you still had some water but if your water came straight from the mains supply you were unlucky as the water main had also been busted. The mobile canteens were soon asking the house holders with a tank to fill the canteen kettles, enabling them to continue to supply hot drinks.

The following day the repair gangs were out repairing the main services to get Waltham back to normal as soon as possible.

A van driver from Price's candles came into the shop and said he had a delivery of 24 gross of candles for us but as road was blocked he couldn't get any nearer than the refinery bridge. He had walked all the way to the shop as he could see we must be needing them. We took two porters trucks with us and carried the candles round the crater so that we could truck them back to the shop. When we arrived back, a queue had formed from the shop half way up Sun Street. The candles were limited to six per person, and in a very short while we had sold out, which meant that over 500 customers had been served. A few days later a temporary single track road had been constructed around the crater and things began to return to normal.

Two days later another V.2. fell on Andrews nursery at Sewardstone killing two more people, one of them, Mrs Ethel Turpin, the mother of one of our friends. She was working along side her husband who was badly shocked but uninjured. The Wardens were bandaging Mrs Turpin's wounds although they new it was too late, this was mainly for the benefit of her husband. The other person killed was Mr C Andrews. This brought the total of civilians killed in Waltham Abbey to seven.

Two months later the war in Europe was over and it was time to celebrate. The blackout had ended and the lights were on again. Flags and bunting appeared on every house and across the streets. Giant "V" for victory signs were to be seen all over the place. All the local children were collecting rubbish for a huge bonfire in their street. Most of these bonfires were actually in the middle of the road itself. There was also a large one in the middle of the Market Square. Street parties were organised and everyone enjoyed themselves. Piano's were taken out into the street and the pianists worked overtime. Fireworks, which had been missing for the last six years, seemed to appear from nowhere. Fancy dress competitions and races were organised for the children and the celebrations went on well into the night.

I, along with some of my mates tried making our own fireworks. At first it seemed to work alright until we started to make bigger ones. One in particular did not seem to be burning and we thought it had gone out, so we picked it up and blew into it. This was a big mistake, as blowing into it caused it to explode. I took the full force of the explosion in my face and my eyes were full of grit and debris. A local Red Cross man who lived near, came to my aid and tried to clean my eyes out. He soon realised that I needed a Doctor. I was then taken to the Doctor who sent me to the local hospital. After an hour of treatment, the hospital decided I would have to go to Moorfields Eye

Hospital, London. The Doctor at Moorfields spent about two hours clearing the grit from my eyes. I was then allowed home but both of my eyes were bandaged over and stayed like that for two weeks. I had to attend the hospital at regular intervals for the next six months. From personal experience I would not recommend making your own fireworks. I was lucky, I could have been blind for the rest of my life.

Three months later, the war in the far east was over as well and the celebrations began again.

Waltham Abbey did not suffer as much as some places but it had over 500 various types of bombs dropped on it, which demolished over seventy dwelling houses. Many people waiting for houses or to be re-housed decided to take over the huts in the disused army camps and were branded as Squatters. I have not included all the incidents in this document but I do have a collection of photographs, which cover most of them from the early training exercises through to the street parties held in celebration.

These memories may not be in the correct order of occurrence as I did not keep a diary. I have merely noted down my memories of early life and life during the war. It is difficult to remember everything that happened over 65 years ago.

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NOVEL SMOKING COMPETITION.

One Pipe of Tobacco Lasts for 2 Hours 7 Minutes.

A competition of a unique character, and one quite new to Waltham Abbey, was held at the Cock Hotel on Monday evening. The well-known manufacturers of "Bound to Win," Messrs Archer and Co., offered 10 valuable prizes to competitors smoking one eighth of an ounce of "Bound to Win" and under the chairmanship of Mr George Tuck, D.C., a number of residents met to try conclusions with their favourite briar or clay, the first prize being offered to the competitor making his pipe last the longest.

The Chairman called upon Mr W. Daw, F.C.I.S., of Messrs Archer and Co., acting as referee, to explain the few simple conditions, and the Chairman then gave the signal to light up.

At the end of the first hour more than half of the competitors were still "going strong," and great excitement prevailed as one by one the pipes refused to smoke any longer, and the last 10 (all prize winners) were left in. Opinions were freely and pleasantly exchanged as to who the ultimate winner would be, and as each competitor fell out, a lusty cheer was raised by those who had to retire earlier in the competition, and by other spectators present. Eventually the competition narrowed down to Mr Eaton and Mr Fishpool, and the interest was intense until Mr Fishpool succumbed after smoking for 1 hour and 30 minutes. Mr Eaton actually continued smoking for a further 37 minutes, putting up a winning time of 2 hours and 7 minutes. This did not constitute a record but ran the best time very close.

Mr Tuck thanked the organisers for providing a very pleasant evening and for giving the prizes. The competition was carried out in a highly creditable manner, and could only leave pleasant memories behind. Mr Tuck hoped that at some time in the future another competition would be arranged.