

10 VICTORY

Everyone was getting excited the Russian army had reached Berlin and a battle was taking place. We all knew that the war with Germany would end any day now. We built the biggest bonfire ever on the marsh at the bottom of the Lane. It took days. We started to get ready to celebrate the end of the war. I hung a set of flashing coloured lights in the form of a V for victory from my bedroom window. They flashed the Morse Code letter V for victory **DOT---DOT---DOT---DASH**.

Then on the 8 MAY 1945 Mr Churchill made a speech on the wireless to say that the war with Germany was over. **VICTORY AT LAST**. We cheered, we cried thank God it was all over and we had survived. The siren sounded the all clear. All the ships and tugs on the river and factories sounded their sirens **DOT—DOT—DOT —DASH --V** for victory..

We had the biggest party there ever was. All the people from Castle Lane, Church Lane and part of Chalk Village turned up for the bonfire, homemade wine, cakes and beer. We roasted potatoes. There were plenty of sandwiches. Homemade fireworks and distress flares were set off. Everyone was so happy and relieved that it was all over. As the fire was dying down at midnight we all decided to go into Gravesend to the clock tower. When we got there were thousands all dancing round the clock tower. It went on all night long. All the boys kissing all the girls, everyone letting their hair down it had been a long six years of war. No more air raids and wondering when you went out if the house would still be standing when you came home and that everyone was alright. But there was still the war in the Far East against Japan to win. I can't remember much about the celebration at the clock tower but I didn't get home until late the following day and I don't think anyone cared.

Then it was back to the work at the Urilite. They had started to make prefabricated houses. These were house built in sections in the factory and then bolted together, fitted out and ready to live in within a five days. It was hard work and I didn't like it. My bike had just about given up. There were more patches on the inner tubes than days in the year. In the end I had to walk to work about four miles each way as I couldn't get any tyres.

Suddenly on August 14 1945 the war in the Far East was over. The Americans had dropped two Atom Bombs on Japan and the Japanese had surrendered. Once again there was cheers and tears for all those people who not lived to see the final victory. We built another big bonfire. Everybody came and we had a big party and when the fire died down we all went into town again and danced round the Clock Tower and all around town doing the conga. Kissing all the girls, everyone was relived all the lad and girls overseas in the forces would soon be coming home. No more wars?

Once again I can't remember getting home. I have a faint recollection of waking up at one of my mate's houses next day after a party. There were people all over the place and still the party was going on..

In the meantime one of the lad's father said he would be responsible for Chalk School and we had permission to start Chalk Youth Club. There was lot of work needed doing on the building. It needed a new floor and decorating throughout the building. We managed to beg borrow or steal what was needed. We had a full size billiard table, table tennis set and dart board given to the club. We soon had a lot of members. A lady came and started dancing lessons. We had a tea bar where you could buy a cup of tea and a homemade cake for two pence but no alcohol. Every Saturday we held a social evening and had some great times. Things were starting to get back to normal. All the men started coming home from the forces. Some of them had been abroad for four or five years or more especially those who had been prisoners of the of Germans. The Japanese who had treated them badly like slaves building the Burma railway, they looked like skeletons. I'll never forgive them. Certain things were still in very short supply and on ration but things that we hadn't seen since 1939 were appearing in shops. We managed to get some oranges and bananas but Pat and Terry wouldn't eat them as they had never seen them before. Now that the war was over Dad was out of work, so he bought more pigs and a 1928 Morris Cowley van for £11. I drove it home. The engine needed repairing and it wanted a new battery and carburettor but we were unable to get hold of any.

Les Dalton's Mum bought him a motor bike and he used to give me a lift now and again. He was mad. We had a lot of good times together. Peter and I were never in. I think everyone was out making up for good times they lost in the war. Peter was out dancing all the time, and I was out three nights a week helping to run

the youth club and going to the Park Dance Hall or to the pictures with Ivy and Jake and the rest of our mates.

By this time I was seventeen and a half and had to register for military service as they still wanted people for the Navy, Army and the Air Force or the Coal Mines. I didn't want to down the Coal Mines. I had all the tests and medical and passed them all A1. My first choice was for the Navy, second choice the Army and third choice the Air Force. I had to go home and wait until I was eighteen and see what my luck was.

Christmas came and we all helped to get the chickens and turkeys ready and I helped deliver them. Pat and Terry had a party and we all enjoyed ourselves. New Year came and I went to a party at one of Ivy friends houses whose father had just come home after three years in Italy.

I remember the weather was very cold. I had a pair of suede gloves for Christmas and with a navy blue over coat and white silk scarf I thought that I was King Dick. I go out all toffed up like a dog's dinner on New Years Day with Jake and the rest of our mates, and when I get back home I have lost my gloves and silk scarf. I think that I left them on the last bus home. I never got them back.

Then more sad news. A brand new tug, 'Stella' blew up near Shell Haven. All the crew were lost. They were all local men, two of them I had gone to school with. She was a replacement for one lost in the war.

My eighteenth birthday arrived and no call up papers. Chalk Youth Club was doing very well. We formed a football team and played other Youth Clubs. We nearly always got beat. We went to visit other clubs we were invited to Lamberhurst Youth Club for the weekend. It is about 16 miles from Chalk, a village near Tunbridge. It took us four hours to get there. We had a great time and there were plenty of girls. There was plenty of food and we slept in the club. We didn't want to go home. Arrangements were made for them to all have a weekend with us at Chalk later in the year but unfortunately I wasn't there. They gave them a good time.

'Bob here is a letter for you. It looks like your calling up papers. 'Thanks Dad.' I opened the envelope and took out the letter. I was to report to 28 Training Battalion Hadrian's Camp at Carlisle Cumberland. There was a postal order for £2, lot of money in those days, and a railway warrant from Gravesend via Euston to Carlisle and the time of the train 10 PM Sunday.

I told them at the youth club and on the Saturday they gave me a surprise party and collected £10 for me to buy myself a watch. I said my farewells to them all, Ivy said that she would write to me and went home.

On the Sunday when it was time to say goodbye Mum was upset. Dad didn't say a lot except do as you are told and keep your head down. Peter shook hands told me to take care of myself. Jean gave me a big hug. Pat and Terry gave me a big kiss and I walked out and didn't look back. If I had I would not have left. When I arrived at the station all my mates from the youth club were there and Ivy and her brothers. They had some beer they gave me a great send off.

I arrived at Euston Station and caught the train. There were no seats and I had to sit on my case in the corridor for thirteen hours that is how long the journey took to Carlisle. They met us and took us to the camp. Gave us a good meal and gave us our army number. That is how I became 190066 Private Paternoster R S.

How it was to change my life and the adventures I had is another story which I'll write about in part two of.....

Bob's Story; Boy of Chalk