

4 EVACUATION

Every child under 14 and mothers with young babies if they wished, could be evacuated. So on Sunday 3 September 1939 Peter and I were up before 6 washed, bags, haversacks and case packed, gas mask round our necks, fed and ready to go before 8 am. Tears in our eyes. 'Goodbye Scamp, goodbye Gyp be good dogs. See you when we come back.' The dogs knew that something was going on. They were howling.

Then we were off to catch the bus at the top of the lane. As we walked up the lane everyone came out to say goodbye. The bus came along full of other evacuees. We had to report to the Gordon School. There we were labelled like parcels, counted, formed up into columns and marched down West Street to Victoria Pier where all the paddle steamers docked. Their waiting was The Royal Daffodil. It was time to say good bye. 'Peter look after Bob.' 'Bob look after Peter.' 'Don't let them part you.' 'Yes Mum.' 'Stick together, don't let anyone bully you.' 'Yes Dad.' Tears in their eyes. 'Goodbye Jean.' 'Goodbye Bob and Peter.' 'Goodbye Mum. I love you, look after Jean and Dad.' 'Goodbye Dad. Look after Jean and Mum.' 'Goodbye Bob and Peter. Don't forget to write. Don't forget we all love you.'

Then we boarded The Royal Daffodil. There were hundreds of us on board. We went up on the top deck and waved to Mum, Dad and Jean, The gang plank was pulled aboard, the ship sounded its whistle and we pulled away. Everyone was waving, cheering and crying at the same time. As we sailed down the river we looked out over the marshes. We could see our house. As we got further down the river we met up with other paddle steamers, 'Golden Eagle', 'Queen of the Channel', 'Royal Sovereign' and 'Medway Queen'. As the convoy reached Southend warships appeared to escort the convoy to Great Yarmouth. Great Britain had declared war on Germany.

When the ships arrived at Great Yarmouth there were hundreds of people to greet and help us. They were very kind. It was a hot day so we all went down on the sands. All the children from the Gordon School stayed together so we were with all our friends. After an hour or so we called together and our names were checked to see if anyone was missing. They told us that we were being taken to a school where we would spend the night. We marched off to this school where a meal was waiting for us. Then we went into this large hall. There were mattresses and blankets laid out for us. We went outside to sit and talk with our friends until it was dark. Then it was time for bed. 'Good Night Bob' 'Good Night Peter.' 'I Wish Mum was here.' 'Don't worry Bob, I'll look after you.'

We were all fast asleep when suddenly the air raid siren sounded. Panic. We had to get dressed, take our gas mask and go to the shelters that had been dug. After a while the All Clear sounded it was a false alarm. Back to bed.

The next day, Monday, we had a good breakfast and they told us that we were all going to East Dereham, a town 30 miles away. We said goodbye to the kind people who had been looking after us and we marched to the railway station and boarded the train to East Dereham. When we arrived again there were hundreds of kind people waiting to welcome us into their homes.

We went into a school hall. There were a lot of people waiting there. As our names were called we stepped forward and we were introduced to the family who we were to be billeted with Mr and Mrs Kent, a very nice couple who were about 60 years old. They lived at 13a Neatheard Road, East, Dereham Norfolk, They lived on the outskirts of the town in a row of cottages opposite a large open common which was called the Neatheard. The house was like Castle Lane except it only had two bedrooms, Peter and I had to share a large double bed, and the bathroom was in the outhouse at the back. You had to heat the water for a bath in a copper. There was no hot running water so you had to wash in cold water or boil a kettle.

Their family had grown up and left home. They made us very welcome and did their best to make us feel at home, but we missed our Mum and wrote a letter and told her. We soon made friends with the local children at school, as there was so many children we only had half a day lessons. The rest of the day was sport or going on walks. We would watch the soldiers training on the Neatheard. The local lads had shown us how to make acorn guns out of elder. You had to hollow out the elder, fit a bit of wood in the hollowed out wood to make a piston, push an acorn in the open end, give the piston a bang and out would fly the acorn. We used to have gun fights with them all good fun.

Good news Mum is coming to visit us. Mr and Mrs Woods are bringing her in their car. They lived near the orchard in the new houses that had just been built. They were coming to see their children Glyn and Shirley who had been evacuated with us.

The day arrives. Hugs and kisses all round. She had a long talk with Mr & Mrs Kent and the school teachers, I told her that I wanted to come home. She said I could but Peter wanted to stay. I said goodbye to Mr & Mrs Kent and thanked them for looking after me. 'Goodbye Peter see you when you come home.' The car arrives with Mr & Mrs Woods. Glyn and Shirley they had decided to go home as well.