

6 THE BLITZ

The Battle of Britain was over but all the Luftwaffe had done was to change targets. They had failed to destroy the RAF and seize control of the sky, to make way for his invasion forces.

The Luftwaffe started to bomb London and the docks day and night, day in day out. You could set the clock to the time the siren would sound, We lived in the shelter the air raids would get heavy at night and last until dawn, then at breakfast time they would start again.

The war news was bad. German U boats (submarines) were sinking all our ships. Their aircraft were dropping mines in the river trying to sink our ships, they attacked all the Lightships and Lighthouses around the south coast shot up all the tugs and sailing barges on the river, trains on the railway nothing was safe from air attack.

We went back to School on the 1st October but not to the Gordon School, but to North Court School on the Dickens Estate only for three hours a day it wasn't a bad school, There was a gang of bullies who made our live miserable, always s picking on someone smaller than them how to teach them a lesson and to stop them from bullying us?

To get to school from Chalk Village we used to take a short cut down the alley behind the houses in the village, across the field and over a ditch with a plank of wood as a bridge, We loosened the plank, hid some long poles and waited until school was over we made them chase us over the plank. As soon as they charged along the plank it gave way and they fell into the water, we attacked them with the poles and wouldn't let them get out of the ditch, They never bullied us again.

One day Leslie Dalton and I were at the Lion Garage on our way home from school when the air raid warning sounded, We were ordered to take cover in the air raid shelter near the shops, Just as we got to the shops a dog fight between a RAF Hurricanes and the German Luftwaffe took place above our heads. We sheltered in the (Mascot) shop doorway it was too dangerous to try and get to the shelter, The planes were fighting it out a hundred feet above our heads, and Suddenly one was on fire and diving towards us. It was a Hurricane it swooped low over the Lion Garage and managed to avoid all the houses It crashed on Bartons Timber Yard on Gravesend Prom, The pilot was killed (there is a memorial stone to the pilot in Gordon Gardens). Then another plane was shot down into the river the pilot bailed out and landed in the river I think he was Polish, The raid went on for about an hour then we went home., There were empty cartridge and cannon shell cases all over the road, not a lot of damage done to the house and no civilian casualties,

One evening in October there was a very bad air raid going on we were all in the shelter except for Dad he slept in the house when he wasn't on duty with the ARP. He had a bed under the stairs. It was about ten thirty when suddenly there was a big explosion which shook the shelter. It wasn't a bomb as we hadn't heard the whistle of a bomb. We rushed out of the shelter find out what had happened. Dad met us and told us not to go into the house as the ceilings were down and the windows were smashed. There was glass all over the place, tiles falling off the roof and we should wait for daylight to see what damage had been done. Mum was alright. He went off to see if there were any casualties in Castle Lane, No one was injured how lucky can you be?

What had happened was that a parachute mine had exploded in the air just across the road from our house. The Lisle Castle Pub was destroyed and nearly every house was damaged. I went looking for a souvenir and found part of casing with a fuse that hadn't exploded fifty yards from our front door, I left it alone the army came and took it away.

When Mr and Mrs Cooper found out about the damage they came and helped clear up, They said we could go and stay with them until the damage was repaired but we preferred to stay at home and look after the animals, It was very nice of Mrs Cooper to offer to put us up. .

The Lisle Castle pub had just closed at Ten Thirty when the mine exploded. Only the landlord and landlady were in the pub at the time so everyone was very lucky. On November 11th a bomb scored a direct hit on the Star Pub at Swancombe killing twenty seven and injuring another six

One off the lads was walking home from The White Hart pub when he saw this German airman come down by parachute. He pulled out his pipe and disarmed the German airman. Good old Tiny,

The German Blitz carried on day in day out, night after night. One day Jean went for an evening out with her friends. There was a very bad air raid and they missed the last bus home. They had to spend the night in the air raid shelter at the town hall. Mum was out of her mind with worry until Jean turned up safe and sound next morning. The German Luftwaffe had set London on fire and in the City Centre they ran out of water. We could see the flames and the red glow in the sky from the fires.

Christmas was coming. It was cold but as the air raids were still heavy of a night we still had to sleep in the air raid shelter. We hung our stockings up in the shelter on Christmas Eve. But before that there was a lot to do. People had ordered chickens and eggs for Christmas dinners. All the chickens had to be killed and plucked and cleaned ready for the oven and delivered in time for cooking for Christmas dinner. I had to deliver a lot of them. Because there were no refrigerators in those days we didn't kill the chickens until the 23 December so they would be nice and fresh, Everyone had to do their bit. I would start delivering them on Christmas Eve and carry on until late in the Black Out and Christmas Day I was glad when it was all over.