

KEITH LAWSON'S MEMORIES OF WORLD WAR 2.

We lived in a house which was on the edge of a village near to Maidstone in Kent. I was born in 1937 and the second world war started in 1939. Soon after in 1940 the "flying battles" started over Kent. One day I was playing in our garden when one of these battles started right above me - which I found very exciting because when the machine guns fired between the 2 planes the "used" bullets landed around me. I grabbed a few but found that they were very hot. They cooled down very quickly and I proudly showed them to my friends - I was 4 years old.

One day in 1943 I was getting dressed to go to school when I saw a very strange looking plane flying not far from our house. I shouted to my Dad (he was shaving prior going to work at Chatham Dockyards where he had been recruited as the Fire Officer) to come and see it. He rushed into my bedroom and said "Oh my god" - we did not see him again for several months. What I had seen was one of the first of the so-called "doodle bugs" coming in from Germany. They were programmed by Germans, but were very unreliable.

One morning when I was 6 or 7 years old, I was woken up at about 6am by a huge explosion. I called for help, saying that I could not move. My parents rushed to see what had happened and switched on the electric light. This revealed that the entire ceiling had come down on to me and that was what was "holding me down" - so they pulled the ceiling off me. We had very thick curtains on the windows just in case a bomb came down close to our house and when my parents opened the curtains they saw that although all the window glass had been blown in, the curtains had kept the glass off my face - thank goodness! Opening the window showed that the bomb had come down just beyond the end of our garden and there was a large crater where it had landed.

Later that day an RAF pilot came to our house and apologised for the damage. He told us that he had seen the "doodle bug" flying low above a straight main road with lots of houses along the road. He realised that if it came down on the road, then many people would be killed or badly injured and so he flew beside the "doodle bug" and using his wing tip to tilt the "doodle bug" a little so that it would follow a curving path and land in one of the nearby fields. This is exactly what had happened.