

Memories of the War

Christine Brown

I was born in Tottenham, London so when war broke out and the government urged parents to send their children somewhere safe my parents took me to live with my mother's sister and her husband living in Sandy Bedfordshire. A few months later, when my aunt became pregnant, I moved to her sister in law living in the next hamlet Seddington. By this time I was five and started school in Sandy. This involved a two mile walk by myself morning and early afternoon. There were just 3 very good female teachers at this school and at lunchtime we marched about a mile to the next, larger church school for our dinner which I think were very good and I always enjoyed. We also had a bottle of milk in the morning, concentrated orange juice, rose hip syrup and, of course the dreaded castor oil so I feel that I had a very healthy start in life because even though food rations were small my foster parents ran a small market garden so there was always plenty of brassicas!

Once a month my parents would come down on a Sunday, braving the railway journey which was always unreliable, and walking the three miles from Sandy station for a Sunday lunch. We had a few hours together before my parents started the journey home again but before they left I presume they gave my foster parents money and left me with my dinner money and two shillings and sixpence to buy a savings stamp at school - They went back to London, both worked long hours in factories both air raid wardens so up firewatching on roofs at night and when they had a night off sleeping in a communal air raid shelter in the nearby park. One night because it was raining, they decided to go to another one and their usual one received a direct hit!

I had a very happy childhood. a good education and a healthy start in life. Although it must have been hard parting with a four year old, my parents did what was best for me. When I returned to London I went to another good school (I think the teacher was a Jewish immigrant) and he coached us so that most of his class passed the 11 plus which was very new so I was one of the very first children to go to a grammar school where again I received an excellent education so, now at 87 I feel that the war years, although hard in many ways were good for me and afterwards even with food rationing and clothing coupons for clothes and furniture I was the generation of The New Look, Festival of Britain, The Design Centre and then The Swinging Sixties. After the war years nobody moaned about what they hadn't got because it was the same for everyone and we all felt that things were difficult to get but getting better all the time. None of my family were killed and I just feel grateful and lucky.

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