

A SUFFOLK MAWTHER'S CHILDHOOD 1929-1945

Viv Mason's wartime childhood recollections continue in this chapter, entitled

THE 'HOOM GUARD', AND A DOWNED JERRY

Our whole life-pattern changed with the outbreak of hostilities. Our house was chosen to be an A.R.P. Post as we had THE telephone. Mother and I were drilled on how to take messages relating to Air Raid Warnings. A message tersely announcing "Air Raid Warning YELLOW" meant enemy approaching the coast. Air Raid Warning RED meant they were just about overhead (so we discovered) and Air Raid Warning WHITE was all clear. Quite what we were supposed to do with these warnings we never found out. We could hear the distant sirens from market-towns that were equipped for the job, but in a hamlet, who cared? If anyone happened to be passing, my mother would shout out of a window (now stuck over with sticky tape in criss-crosses), "Air raid warning yellow". The local would say, "Roight yew are" and carry on plodding past. A carton of rubber things arrived. Ear plugs for blast protection, they were installed in the Bible Bin in the hall, along with books on First Aid, triangular bandages, splints and "What to do in the event of an Air Raid".

The L.D.V. (Local Defence Volunteers) was formed, later to become the Hoom Guard, and a Pill Box built right opposite our house, partially in a ditch, and manned either by very old men or farmers who could not go to war. One night there was a big alert on, a message came through to our post: All men to stay on duty. Out went mother to advise the men. There was uproar. "What about my moi cows? Thass milkin toime" .."B.....r Hitler, Primrose is more important." They finally agreed to stay on duty and I was sent out to tell the wives why their husbands were not going to be able to milk that morning.

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It was a scare all right and rumours abounded. We were supposed to be in a prohibited area being so near the east coast and visitors had to have permits to get in. After the night of the alert we were told a Hoom Guard had been pinched off the cliff at Dunwich and was on his way to a P.O.W. camp, and that burning oil had been poured on the Channel when the Germans had tried an invasion!! I enjoyed the high drama of it all.

Next week two Hoom Guards were on duty at the Swan cross-roads and a bullet was accidentally fired into the air. Our lot had advanced from the early days of pitchforks and muzzle-loaders, and all had guns and ammo - the latter strictly rationed. The other guard swore and said "Yew duzy fule yew - we hed 48 rounds and now we only got 47". There was agitation for weeks about this mishap.

Which reminds me of "Oney". On his bicycle rounds of his vast rural beat, father had met the local road man, called "Oney" for an obvious reason: he only had one hand. Father stopped one afternoon and asked how he came to lose his other hand.

"Well thass loike this Bor!" he said.

"Jist afor Christmas Oi allus swep moi chimbley" - pause for effect. "A cuppla year ago Oi went to sweep it and Cor Blarst Bor - suthin happened tew moi gun an' Oi lost moi hand".

"GUN?" queried father.

"Yis" said Oney, "Oi got moi owd gund owt, Oi poked the barrel up the chimbley an' Oi pulled the trigger, an' thet duzy thing 'sploded an' blew moi hand roight off".

"Have you always cleared the soot this way?" asked father.

"Yis" beamed Oney, "Int niver bin no trobble afore".

When my father related all this to us that night we were amazed. From then on mother knitted a mitten for spring and summer, and a glove for winter for Oney, who was "whully pleased". "Bless yew ma'am" he'd say on presentation days.

In Framlingham a static water tank was erected. One night my father, on duty, heard a lot of noise coming

from the market square, and found a Pole swimming in the tank. He had no English and my father no Polish, but he managed to get the message over that swimming in a British static water tank in mid-winter was Not On. The Pole scrambled out, starkers, and muttered, "Cigarette, cigarette?" When my father handed him a packet he grabbed the lot, rammed them into his mouth, and started to chew. Seeing some clothing on the ground, father grabbed Pole and clothing and marched him the few yards to the Police Station, where the Pole slept it all off in a cell. Next morning, quite recovered, he went on his way to fight the foe for Britain.

Framlingham was the scene of a warmer incident when some "incenderaries" rained down and set fire to a building. The fire-fighters were sent for and whilst their arrival was eagerly awaited a spectator saw some buckets in a corner and chucked the contents onto the inferno. It was paraffin, and as my father commented later it "kept the fire in 'til the fire-fighters got there".

More and more people were called up, we lost two drivers, and with only my mother and one driver to carry on the business had to be sold. We did not say goodbye to haulage contracting without a bit of excitement. Mother and driver were returning from Ipswich market via Brandeston and Creetingham when they heard shots just above their heads. Mother opened her window and craned her neck out to see, just above the lorry, a Dornier coming down at an alarming angle with a fighter plane close on its tail. The Dornier glided down into the Deben Valley at Creetingham and landed in a field where muck-spreading was going on, all the neat muck-heaps lined up on the field and the muck-spreaders busy with their forks. The Dornier crew climbed out of their aircraft with their hands above their heads and were in such a hurry to get clear, the muck-spreaders suspected an explosive device had been left in the plane. They were right. They'd hardly prodded the crew on their first steps to captivity when the tail of the plane blew up. Meantime the fighter plane landed alongside the river on a flat meadow and out stepped a pilot about five feet tall. My mother approached him to see if he was all right and he said "Fine, run out of fuel chasing

this from Dover". He was given a lift to the local Police Station and next day the plane was refueled and he actually managed to take off from the meadow. That was practically the last business trip the Jones's made and the driver went off to join the army and my mother concentrated on her War Effort.

I arrived home that afternoon and, hearing about the exciting goings on, shot off to Cretingham where I persuaded the policeman guarding the wreck to let me have a look. I managed to nick a Jubilee clip off a hose. It was clearly marked "Made in England".

POP 400

Well, another Pop 400 season has drawn to a finish and I would like to say thank you to all the people who have given up their evenings to help steward it.

I have enjoyed running the club this year, despite various teething troubles, and would like to thank all the members for making my job easier by their co-operation and help.

We hope to begin a new season in September and will let everybody know well in advance the date of the first disco.

If any member has suggestions for improving the Pop 400's please let me know.

Legs Knowland
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Deadline for May issue is Sunday April 9th. Thank you to all contributors especially the new ones this month.
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