

Keeping in Touch.....Easter 6

Thank you again to all those who have sent contributions: last week's sharings prompted several other articles recalling wartime and victory. Please keep the articles coming about anything you wish. Send anything to c.a.curtis@ntlworld.com by lunchtime on a Wednesday. Please note the change of deadline to a Wednesday. This is so we can try and distribute to those without email. Thanks, Chris.

VE Day—75 years on... More memories.....

VE DAY 1945 IN ST IVES

Hello people,

Happy VE Day!

Perhaps you might be interested how, as a six-year-old, I helped St Ives celebrate VE Day on Tuesday, 8th May 1945. The town's spirits seemed to rocket. As soon as it was announced on the wireless, the blackouts came down and the flags and bunting went up. I joined a party of chums which paraded with Union Jacks in Market Square, Broadway and Bridge Street shouting "We won the war! We won the war!" (Great fun until folk kept reminding us that we still had Japan to deal with.) But no matter; soon most of our daddies would be coming home, sweets would be off the ration, the streets would be gaslit at night, no more sirens and the evacuated children could return home. Sadly so would the Yanks and their delightful chewing gum!

Later there was a massive street party for the town's children. We feasted on jelly, fish-paste sandwiches, biscuits, jam scones, and very diluted orange squash. Then every child was given a brightly coloured ball which we were told was an orange. (Bananas arrived a few weeks later and I recall that newsreels in the Regal Cinema advised people to peel them first. Ditto later for pineapples and coconuts.)

Elsewhere, while we in bed, the grown-ups celebrated in the pubs, the Corn Exchange, at a bonfire off Station Road, and dancing in the streets. Even Oliver Cromwell was dressed up for the occasion.

Yes indeed, VE Day 1945 was truly a day to remember. Let us hope that future anniversaries of the current pandemic won't have to be.

Philip Simpson(former Member of the Church and long-time friend— now living in France).

From Freda

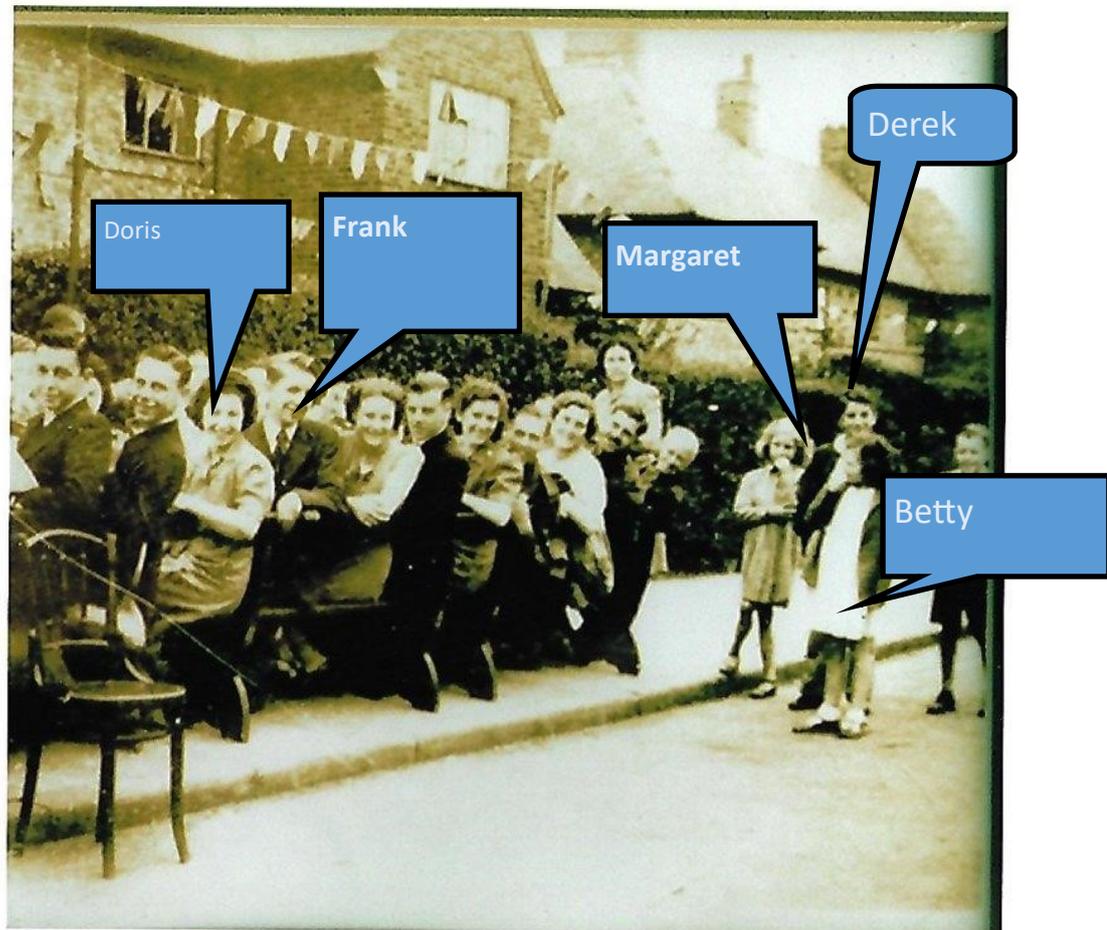
May 1945 I was just over 2yrs3mths old so I personally have no actual memories of the war or VE day, but I can remember when a teenager talking to my Dad about how he coped in the war. Some of you know but probably many don't but my father was German. He came to England in 1932 with 6 friends and they all had jobs to go to working for a friend who had come over many years previously. He was a Grduater of Scientific Glass (Mm... do I hear you say what is that, well he made thermometers etc; with graduated lines on and in those days drew the very accurate lines on the instruments freehand – machines came later).

He was a Pacifist which is why when Hitler entered Germany from Austria my Dad and his friends came to England. It was not easy for him during the war and he did his duty by Fire-Watching. He told me it had been a very difficult time for him, not only knowing that his adoptive country was at war with his Heimatland (Homeland) but many people made it difficult for him calling him names and saying he should have been interned, because although he became a British Citizen in 1935 we still had our German surname which I was born with, this did not get changed until 1946 – what to call ourselves? He greatly admired Winston Churchill so took the name Spencer as our surname. I am proud of my Father and my heritage.

He told me that VE day for him was low-key but all the same very emotional because of our personal situation and knowing that both his surviving brothers and other relatives had all been in the army. I think his parents were also pacifists because they had 7 children and my Grandmother was awarded a medal from Hitler for this reason – she knew what it was so never opened it until all my family went over in 1958 (for which we had to get Visas as it was behind the Iron Curtain) to celebrate their Diamond Wedding Anniversary. When my Grandmother died – it was never found.

Freda (Schrickel / Spencer / Barnard)

Who managed to spot Derek correctly?



Derek writes.....

“The photograph appeared first on V.E. day 1945 and then it was chosen from all Nottingham and district to be the photograph to appear again on the front page of the Nottingham Evening post at the 50th. anniversary. My sister Betty sent it to me and we got it processed in sepia on Bridge street when we moved here. In the photo my oldest sister, Doris is 3rd from the left and next to her my older brother ,Frank. To the right my younger sister Margaret and middle sister Betty form part of that group of children with me being the one behind them. The boy furthest right is nothing to do with our family.. Doris died just a few years ago and her son now lives in Cambridge ,which is good for us as we can meet up two or three times a year. Frank became the youngest Deacon in our Congregational Church at the age of 18, and later was ordained a Minister serving in Nottingham and Birmingham. Unfortunately he died aged 40years of a melanoma cancer. My young sister Margaret, also a deacon in the same church, died of the same disease 3 years later. Betty is a year older than me and now lives alone in Attenborough, Nottingham. I thought i'd share this short family history to add to the photograph.

Every blessing in Jesus, Derek

From Alex Wedderburn....

Glasgow Evacuee

I was a 14 year old schoolboy living in Glasgow at the end of WW11 but I don't recollect any Victory Celebrations in our street of red stone tenements. However I do remember the start of the war. I would be 8 at the time. Glasgow being an industrial city, would likely be a prime target for the Luftwaffe so families were advised to evacuate to the country to escape being bombed.

My parents decided that mother and the 4 children would be evacuated while father would remain at home working as a power station engineer and looking after himself at home.

The evacuation process began with us meeting at our local school on a sunny morning 2 days before the start of the war on 1 September 1945 and being briefed by the teachers on travel arrangements. We were each issued with a gas mask in a cardboard box with a string attached for slinging over one's shoulder, a tin of Carnation condensed milk and a bar of Aero chocolate- iron rations for the journey into, at this stage, the unknown.

Our family consisted of mother, myself aged 8, brother Bill 6, sister Isabel 5 and baby Margaret aged 1. For my mother to manage this brood, along with lots of luggage, must have been a daunting experience.

From the school it was a short coach ride to the local Crosshill railway station to board a special train for an exciting journey to Ardrossan on the Firth of Clyde. For us children it was like going on holiday, "going doon the watter" as they say in Glasgow. From Ardrossan we sailed across the Firth to Brodick on a paddle steamer. It might even have been the "Waverley" which still sails today. I remember looking in awe at the engine which turned the paddles, picturing my father who had been a marine engineer. He had had an interesting career: Chief Petty Officer on the battleship "HMS Marlborough" which was torpedoed in the Battle of Jutland in the Great War. engineer on a sailing schooner which got iced-in, in Baffin Bay in the Arctic and then one of 3 engineers, in a crew, which sailed a Clyde-built harbour ferry to Sydney, Australia, a voyage lasting 6 months. But I digress!

On arrival at Brodick we were welcomed by the local residents. Where one was to be billeted partly depended on family size. Being 5 in our family we needed a 3 -bedroom house so were allocated a summer home in the scattered village of Kildonan in the SE of the island, reached from the main road by walking 500 metres down a farm-track. The cottage had no heating or lighting other than by paraffin. Its lavatorial facility was rather unusual. The privy was a sentry-like wooden box perched on the fork of a fuchsia tree, directly over the burn. To reach it one walked along a wooden plank. I well remember the purple-red flowers festooning the branches. With the sea being only 50 metres away it was very eco-friendly but I wonder what the trout thought of it!

Last year when visiting sister Isabel in a Glasgow care-home and reminiscing about our upbringing, she said Bill and I on the 2 mile walk to the village school, walked too fast for her wee legs!

We stayed there only 5 months before returning home because my father, who was left behind in Glasgow, had to look after himself and had no idea how to cook. He tended to have a fry-up every evening which resulted in him being hospitalized with a stomach ulcer.

Father did recover but we didn't evacuate as a family again. Only brother Bill and I to Mochrum in Wigtownshire, in March 1940, when the bombing started. Raids on John Brown's Shipyard and Singer Sewing Machine Factory caused over 2000 deaths. Our second evacuation is another story!

A cook up from childhood.....

As a child growing up post-war in very rural Gloucestershire in the early 50, one of my favourite meals was "savoury rice". I tried to find mum's recipe for it recently as the cupboard in week 2 of lockdown was somewhat bare! Her old purple "Glasgow Cookbook" yielded a stove top recipe but I remember mum making hers in the oven, always in the same oval clear pyrex dish. My mind boggles now at where she found long grained rice when rice was pretty much universally used for rice puddings! And we lived in a very tiny village with no shop! Also where did she source the mushrooms?? I reproduced the recipe pretty successfully a couple of weeks ago. Basically two cups of rice to one of stock plus fried onions and mushroom all cooked slowly in the oven. Towards the end I added the tomatoes that I recall and—the special treat— two boiled and sliced eggs! A real treat in those days but we lived near a farm where they were readily available. In the last few minutes a tiny amount of grated cheese was added as a topping! I can still taste it now!

Chris

Childhood memories from Shirley Kirkwood

We had lived in Scotland for two years before war was declared in 1939. We had made our home in one of the six newly built bungalows in open countryside on the outskirts of Drumchapel village. Our address was Great Western Road, a dual carriage way with a wide open expanse of grass and trees separating the two roads. It was also the main road from Glasgow to Clydebank.

When the sirens started wailing every night our thoughts turned to safety. With no shelters anywhere near us a Morrison shelter (resembling a large animal cage with a solid metal top) was installed, much to poor Mum's distress, in her beautiful decorated lounge. To me and my best friend Audrey it was a marvellous place to play "house" or tap dance on the roof! Every night dressed in my siren suit (remember those?) Mum and I took up residence. Dad was in a reserved occupation but had become an ARP Warden on outside duty every night. All reasonably quiet until 1941.

13th March – 200 German planes filled the sky with their thunderous noise and ominous intention to destroy the shipbuilding industry and naval munitions in Clydebank. Apart from a rogue bomb which landed near us rattling the house foundations we were O.K. Next night again brought another 200 planes overhead. I was gently woken by Dad who wrapped me tightly in a blanket and carried me outside. "Look" he said. "This is an historical night. Look and Remember". An enormous ball of fire lit up the whole sky, bright as day and quite terrifying. We stood there transfixed for many seconds.

Next day our expanse of grass separating the two roads under a suffocating smell of smoke was a mass of slow moving men, women and children. Exhausted, dirty and cold clutching their meagre possessions, prams loaded with bits of furniture all fleeing from the rubble of their demolished homes in Clydebank. Our neighbours were concerned. What could we do? Immediately they began pooling their rations making tea and sandwiches. I was despatched to the local shop for bread, milk etc and gradually it all came together. I was only 6 years old and scared of all these strange sounding and looking people but Mum encouraged me to circulate with plates of sandwiches. As the day progressed it became easier to mix and talk to everybody and they were full of praise for the "wee lassie" handing out sandwiches and biscuits!

Do I vividly remember those dates 13/14 March 1941? The honest answer is NO. I was only 6 years old so my memory is vague. I do remember for several months liking my parents to stay close, and some nights suffering from horrendous nightmares waking up screaming and calling out in fright for no apparent reason.

The Clydebank Blitz severely damaged shipbuilding, timber yards, Singers factory and oil depots. The inferno blazed for 4 weeks. Out of 12,000 tenement houses only 8 remained undamaged leaving approximately 35,000 homeless. 1,200 died. Over 1,000 seriously injured.



Best friend Audrey, faithful Rex and me getting ready to transfer Rex to stretcher (deckchair) for the village pageant

DO THE OKEY COKEY

Put your right hand in
Glove your left hand too,
Shake your anti-bac
'Till you're cross and blue
Do the Okey Cokey
As you clean, clean, clean
That's what it's all about!

Chorus

Oh! Lock down is depressing
Oh! Lock down is distressing
Oh! Lock down with God's blessing
COVID 19 OUT! OUT! OUT!

As you can tell, I have a little too much
time on my hands. Love to you all,

Irene Carter

Towards the end of his life Alans' Dad took to writing poetry. It was all deeply rooted in his love of the countryside and his deep faith. He was a Methodist lay preacher for over 60 years. I think the reference to Christmas is relevant whatever the time of year! Chris

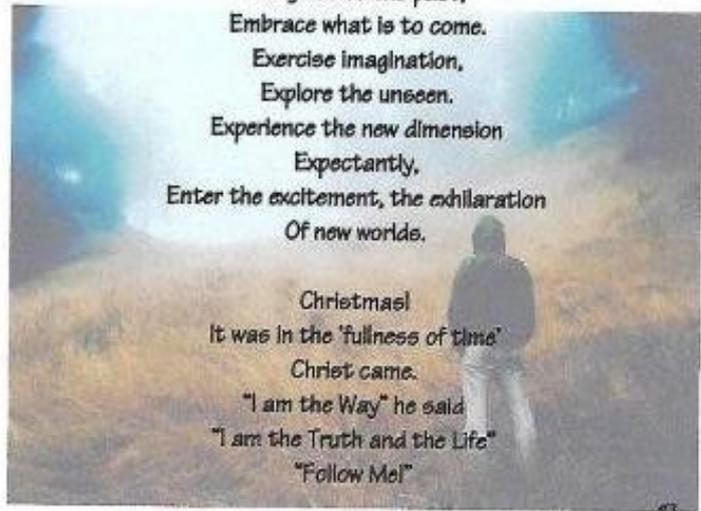
MOVE ON.

That quiet intuitive urge
That says "It's time to go"
Is quite insistent.

But change is threatening!
What to do? Where to go? And Why?
To walk unknown paths,
To go out on a limb,
Leaving! Letting go!
Off loading accumulated clutter.

Rouse yourself!
Look up! Look out!" Move on!
And travel light.
Cling not to the past,
Embrace what is to come.
Exercise imagination,
Explore the unseen.
Experience the new dimension
Expectantly,
Enter the excitement, the exhilaration
Of new worlds.

Christmas!
It was in the 'fulness of time'
Christ came.
"I am the Way" he said
"I am the Truth and the Life"
"Follow Me!"



Don't forget!!

***This is Christian Aid
Week.—may we share
some of what we have
with those less
fortunate around the
World!***

For next week.....

Please can we have any other
memories, poems, prayers, funnies,
anything and everything to help us all
feel more connected.

What's the oddest thing you've heard
anybody say about the Free Church?