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## Past and Present

# It's Just Like Coming Home

### Into The Unknown

Imagine how you would feel if, at the age of five, you left home to go to school in West Ham and by tea time you had arrived in Shipton-under-Wychwood.

This is what happened to Irene Whybrow and Jessie

Hunt. In late August 1939 the children of Upton Cross School had days of rehearsal for possible evacuation, without knowing when. On September 1<sup>st</sup>, Irene and Jessie were amongst the children, wearing nametags and carrying gas masks, food and clothing, who were taken to the local underground station. Accompanied by their teachers and helpers they now knew they were being evacuated but did not know their destination.

Arriving in Shipton they were 'allocated' to Mr and Mrs Tom Turner who lived at Springside in Chapel Lane.

Jessie recalls that the whole experience was very traumatic and Irene did not stop crying for days. Although they came from the same school they were in different classes and suddenly they were expected to live like sisters in a strange place with people they did not know.

### Settling in

School resumed at Shipton C.E. School every afternoon, while the local children attended in the mornings. They did make friends with some of the children and remember names like Dore, Pittaway and



Irene and Jessie with Mr and Mrs Turner

Tierney. Mr and Mrs Turner were very strict; but became known as Aunty and Uncle. "We had to do the washing up and cleaning every day. The winters seemed very cold, with heavy snow." The Turners had two

children, Philip, who was in the Army and Muriel, who married

John Wilkinson in 1940. Jessie and Irene were bridesmaids at their wedding; "During the day we would walk for miles in the fields and even cycled to Brize Norton with Muriel and John, who was in the RAF."

They remember the local shops; sprats from Arthur Rainbow in Chapel Lane, bread and lardy cake from Kethero's, sweets from the two Miss Tubbs and Wincarnis wine from Hathaways.

Their parents visited them but it was too upsetting when they left to go home. Mrs Turner became ill. Although she was strict with them they were very upset when she died. Irene moved to The School House and Jessie's mother came to live and work in Shipton.

### Back home

They returned to London in 1945, losing touch for a number of years but met up again at John and Muriel Wilkinson's Golden Wedding anniversary party.

"We now try to come every year and enjoy a few days reminiscing and visiting the places we remember. Shipton has changed but we love strolling around. It feels as if we are coming home."

## Embracing the Unknown

Mrs Doris Field, of Idbury, offered to care for two boys with her own young son Ollie. On the Thursday before war broke out the lady Welfare Officer arrived on her doorstep with three brothers from West Ham! Mrs. Field felt that she could not split them up so took in all three. They stayed with her for a year, until she felt that having four boys to care for was becoming too much, so she explained to them that one would have to go and stay nearby. John did not want to leave her but Ronnie was quite happy to go and stay with Mrs Harris. She thinks that they were the only children to stay for the whole of the evacuation period.

Mrs Field was paid 10/- per week for the older boys and 8/- for Lennie to feed and clothe the boys; not an easy job in the days of rationing. With the help of vegetables from the garden and a supply of eggs from their chickens the children were never hungry.

## Fun in the country

The three boys thought it was lovely to be in the country. Mrs Field remembers having fun with all the boys on winter evenings, playing games in front of the fire. She used to read stories to them before they went to bed.

The children went to school until 1 o'clock and were then sent home; they also went to Sunday school.



Collecting scrap for arms

The boys had two sisters who were evacuated to Berkshire with their mother. Mrs Field made sure that the boys wrote regularly to their parents, who sent back ration coupons so that their sons could have a few extra sweets. Ollie was very good about sharing his toys with the other lads. After the war the children came back for holidays, with their parents and sisters. John comes every year on Mrs. Field's birthday and takes her out to lunch. Mr. and Mrs Field went to all three weddings; "It was hard work looking after four lively, young lads but great fun too."

## Gordon & Christine Halliday

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### Life long friends

Pam Rainbow made a friend for life when Betty Window arrived from Essex, to live first with Mrs. Rathbone and later with Mrs Shephard. The evacuee children went to school in the Baptist Chapel in Milton. Pam often visited her when she returned to Barking and even went to her wedding. Betty returned to visit the village a few years ago and Pam arranged a coffee morning at the Hillborough for many people who remembered her.

### Read on

If you would like to read more about life during the war in the Wychwoods, the Local History Society have copies of their book 'That's How it Was'. Contact John Rawlins, 01993 830668 for further information.

*The story is continued in "Staying On" in a future issue of The Wychwood Magazine*