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# Children and wartime bombing

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That previously mentioned school "lobby" was now our assembly point for air raids, and in the event of the siren sounding some ten miles away in Aylesbury we would take up our positions in great haste, and sitting on the floor would practice singing "Waltzing Matilda" and "Run Rabbit Run" - always these two songs, easy to learn, and sing possibly, also they were the "in" tunes of the time.

We had a "vantage point" on the opposite side of the road to the blacksmith's shop, from where we could see for miles to the East and South. This consisted of a low stone wall under a large elm tree - we would sit there for hours, particularly when we had measles or some other good reason for not attending school, just talking or more accurately arguing, and generally "messaging" about, while keeping a wary eye open for military vehicles to come into view or something to take our attention.

On one occasion from here after school we watched two large high explosive and two oil bombs explode on the outskirts of the village about a mile away at "Chearsley Furze". The oil bombs were fitted with organ pipes or "screamers" of some kind which made a considerable noise, and after due consideration we decided to head for the "shelter", it was of course locked. The weather was very overcast, and so we didn't actually see the aircraft, but judging by the running time of the "screamers", I would think he was very low at the time - it wasn't until the bombs actually exploded that we realised what all the noise was really about. This was probably in November nineteen forty. No damage was done, only two very large craters, and two small burnt areas to show as proof that we had actually been bombed. Children being children, many visits to the site were made but no conclusions as to why Hitler had a particular grudge against us were ever reached.

Quite early on in the war a large parachute mine was dropped in a nearby village, (Winchendon), I was always led to believe that it landed in the proverbial "dung heap" - it failed to go off and was later brought to Pollicot Ford, which is on the outskirts of Ashendon, until it was collected by its new owners, most probably the Royal Navy. It was transported to this site on the local Council lorry, dumped in a field, and guarded night and day.

During this time I managed to persuade my Uncle (the local special constable) to take me in to see it.

If I remember correctly there really wasn't much to see, just a long grey cylinder domed at one end with "handles" sticking out of the sides, but I suppose it satisfied my curiosity. It was finally removed by the Royal Navy, and was reputed to have blown up when being dismantled, but like with most happenings of the time there was never a shortage of rumours.

In November nineteen-forty some bombs were dropped on the outskirts of Ashendon at Watbridge Farm, to Wotton area, this was at about eight thirty in the evening, then about midnight that same area was again saturated with hundreds more bombs.

Most of these were incendiaries, with a few small high explosive ones. The total sum of the damage done was one horse hit by shrapnel (not serious), and a barn set on fire, also not serious. Rumours were that the incendiaries came from the so called "breadbaskets", but they could clearly be seen passing over Ashendon, having been released on the West side, and landing to the East. We didn't find any carcasses or frames to support this theory, but someone always had a new theory or rumour on the go. The high explosive ones were much smaller than the two mentioned previously, and scattered in a line covering about half a mile distance, mostly being close together in pairs. The incendiaries were scattered over the same basic area, although from two separate attacks on that same day, or rather night. A further odd thing that came out was that, although they landed on both sides of the road we only found one that actually landed on it, again not doing any damage, but just burning the tarred surface.

The great thing about it for us was that we could go round searching for the fins and heads of the incendiaries, and if one had fallen in a boggy area then it would nearly be intact - in fact one was in mint condition. It was kept hidden for some days before the Police found out, and came to collect it.

The "new owner" was told to produce it, and so he reluctantly fetched it from its hiding place, but instead of handing it over, slammed it down on to the blue bricks with which the girls' playground was paved. This was probably one time when no one wanted to be in the wrong playground, but in the event nothing untoward happened. Several rumours went round as to why this area was hit twice in the same night, one being that the site was being surveyed for an airfield that day - strange - one actually opened for business just under two years later!

The area bombed was on the outskirts of where the airfield would be built, but if it had happened two years later then certainly the R.A.F. dispersed living quarters would have been totally wiped out. A second story was that "Lord Haw-Haw" had hunted with the local foxhounds and therefore knew the area well. You takes your choice!

At some time we also had a leaflet raid. This was mostly in the Pollicot area, but there certainly was a lot of them. As they were printed in German, and the photographs showed dead German soldiers on the Russian front we could only assume that some allied aircraft had dropped them somewhat wide of the intended target. Oh why didn't I keep some?!