

Friday Is Tin Bath Night

This book has been produced, edited, typeset, and proof read by volunteers in Siegen, Germany, and as with most dual language editions, inevitably it contains some errors in spelling and grammar.

It is not however a book about English spellings and grammar, but is a collection of memories from a generation of wonderful unassuming people who lived their childhood years through some very remarkable times, and so, in an unassuming way, they themselves represent what is in my opinion a very remarkable generation.

The title reflects the cultural differences, German bath night was Saturday (Samstag) and in England it was of course Friday. The first part of the book tells in both languages the stories from Siegen, and then from page 120 onwards there is the Morley contribution.

Please accept in advance our apologies for any errors, and then sit back and enjoy a thoroughly interesting insight into the times when people lived respectful lives, community spirit was alive and flourishing, law and order was taken for granted and bath night was sharing a tin bath in the kitchen on a Friday night.

Neil Lennox September 2006

At the book launch in the Siegen Town Hall, Neil Lennox read the following extracts to the dignitaries and assembled audience of German hosts and English guests:-

Morley Resident Cyril Robinson was evacuated from London too. In company with his elder brother and other school classmates the six year old Cyril was sent to the flat rural countryside of Cambridgeshire. At first they were in more danger there, due to the proximity of air fields that could come under attack, than they were in London. Once the Blitz started though, all that changed. He remembers that the biggest worry as an evacuee in the safety of the countryside, was whether they would get bad news about deaths and casualties from the bombing, like some of the other children did from time to time. He would occasionally go home during holidays and the differences couldn't be more stark. In London they had to draw off water at night and fill baths and buckets in case the water mains got burst, whilst in Cambridgeshire they didn't have mains water and instead had a manual hand pump in the kitchen, and a dry toilet in a shed at the bottom of the garden. His family at home had a big garden where they grew vegetables and kept a few chickens and rabbits for food. In the countryside they also grew their own food and kept chickens, but they didn't keep rabbits. They kept ferrets instead, and used them to go hunting for rabbits. Cyril preferred rabbits caught by ferrets to those shot by double barrelled shotguns. You didn't hurt your teeth on buckshot when eating rabbits that had been caught by a ferret.

Mary Sykes now lives in Morley but was brought up close to the Salford docks near Manchester on the ship canal. It was an obvious bombing target and it wasn't long before she was evacuated to the west coast seaside resort of Cleveleys near Blackpool. She well remembers lining up with all the evacuees as would be hosts walked along the line making selections. She was amongst the last to be chosen and was feeling terribly left out. Finally a retired colonel from the Indian Army and his wife said that they could take three girls, and Mary was relieved to be one of them. It wasn't long though before one girl was found to have Tuberculosis and was taken away to a sanatorium, and the other girl was homesick and went away. Mary, who was an only child at home anyway, soon found herself being the only child at home in Cleveleys too.

Another Morley resident, Mary Eames, lived in Coventry in the industrial Midlands. Coventry twice came under very heavy air attack but Mary was already safely evacuated to relatives in Morley. At the bottom of her garden in Coventry she could see seven factories and a cinema. The seven factories were camouflaged and the cinema obviously didn't need to be. Unless there were some very accurate bomb aimers around at the time, it can only be a pure coincidence, but the only building out of the eight that got a direct hit was the cinema.

Morley Elderly Action Committee Member Jean White lived in London on one side of the North Circular Road and two of her cousins lived not far away, just at the other side of the road but nearer the city centre. Her cousins were evacuated to rural Cornwall, whilst she, who only lived a few hundred yards or so away from them, was not. It seems that the North Circular Road was taken as an arbitrary line on the map to decide who was in danger from falling bombs, and who was not.

Audrey Marshall 's mother had a friend in America who offered her the option of sending Audrey over to her to get her away from the war. At about that time a ship full of children being evacuated to Canada was sunk and so Audrey 's mum declined the offer. (The ship in question was probably the City of Benares, torpedoed 600 miles out in the Atlantic in stormy weather on September 17th 1940 with the loss of 256 people including 83 children. www.headlinehistory.co.uk)

Mollie Farrington remembers when evacuees from the industrial cities were squeezed into Morley 's Bridge Street School. It meant that there were two extra classes using the school hall and there was no room to move classes from room to room for different subjects like before. The evacuees got all the nature walks too, and the local children never seemed to get out and about any more. The overcrowding led to boys and girls sharing sporting activities such as hockey, and because the boys were naturally rougher than the girls, the girls had to quickly learn to look after themselves by going for the boys' ankles with the hockey sticks like they were doing to them.

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