however, as our troops (Canadians, I seem to remember) neared the Calais area shelling became almost continuous, in the last day starting at two a.m. with seven in the first hour. More shells were fired in the sea around ten o'clock and at midday the all clear sounded. Before long another shell heralded the beginning of three hours continuous bombardment, the very last shell falling on the opposite side of the Market Square (on Hubbard's Umbrella Shop, where the TSB is now) at quarter past seven in the evening of Tuesday, 26th September 1944. And when it was announced by the Mayor, through the loudspeakers that had been put on lampposts throughout the main street, that all the gun sites had been captured music was played for the rest of the day. One certain tune – 'Once aboard the lugger, and the girl is mine' – seemed most popular, being played many times throughout the day!

Before then, however, the doodlebug raids had started and while not many fell in Dover, some hitting the cliffs as they came in flying too low to clear, others were shot down by RAF fighters or by the ack-ack guns that had been set up around the coast, some even on our Sea Front. I can still remember being woken one night by a loud harsh vibrating noise and looking through my bedroom window in Markland Road seeing this strange light crossing the sky just above Plum Pudding Hill. When daylight came and we could see these little pilotless planes heading inland we realised what was going on but it was some time before early one morning we saw many other planes heading in the opposite direction above the same hill, plane after plane, mostly Dakotas and other planes pulling gliders, on their way, we learned later, for Arnhem and Nijmegen.

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Dover Boyhood Blitz

A contribution from S.S.G. Hale, who lives in Temple Ewell

I was eight years of age on the 15th of August 1940 and my only birthday gift was a wrist watch. The overwound watch was returned within a week to the Biggin Street watchmaker and I was not to see that watch again for many years.

At the beginning of June the WVS made mountains of sandwiches and brewed gallons of tea which was distributed in huge brown teapots by Cubs and Scouts to the carpet of soldiers lying on the Marine Station platforms. Tea was poured into helmets, mess tins, tobacco tins, any container because the Cubs were too small to carry cups and the soldiers seemed to have left everything at Dunkirk. Southern Railway cleared all the soldiers and the following Sunday all the school children too. But there were still plenty of people to watch the skies.

In July the Stuka dive-bombers concentrated on the harbour but they were vulnerable and even the anti-aircraft gunners managed to down a few and the RAF fighters sorted out the rest. But then the Navy scarpered to Portsmouth leaving only a few MTBs and air-sea rescue launches with Dutch and Norwegian crews which sheltered in the East Cliff submarine pens.

In August a BBC commentator was criticised for reporting the dog-fights in the style of a sports engagement – but that is exactly what it was like. Every downed plane was one of theirs and every victor was one of ours. The after-match scores in 1945 indicated a draw rather than the home win originally claimed. But a Jerry away win was necessary for a successful invasion because the home team still had

the Royal Navy in the pavilion at Portsmouth and Scapa Flow. There were playing cards with black silhouettes of friend and foe aircraft and even smaller cigarette cards with coloured pictures to turn everyone into plane recognition experts. If it was diving and had bent wings with its wheels down it was probably a Stuka and if it had two engines it was a Heinkel. At 20,000 feet you could see the contrails, hear the chatter of machine guns, the crump of the anti-aircraft shell explosions (at night the ack-ack shells cracked evilly rather than the day-time crump – something to do with atmospherics). But recognize planes – never! When the Hurricane mistakenly shot down all the barrage balloons along the Folkestone Road it was generally agreed that it was probably a Messerschmitt 109 after all, since it had black crosses all over it. We soon learned to wait for the ack-ack shrapnel which clattered off the roofs to cool before adding it to WWII collection.

The Royal Navy presence was minimal but I suspect the sailors never got past Snargate Street, which provided all the necessary comforts to war-weary seamen. HMS Lynx, staffed by WRENs was located at Dover College but wisely moved to the Dover County (now Grammar) School for Boys. The hillside behind the school is still honeycombed with their air-raid shelters. There were lots of RAF and WAAF personnel who ran the radar station at Swingate. There were surprisingly few soldiers who were scattered in penny packets around the perimeter of Dover.

Canadian troops were living in the eight unfinished semi-detached houses at the end of Markland Road. Field kitchens in the gardens provided food. Later the Elms Vale Recreation Ground's changing rooms were the soldiers' dining room. The sloping floor indicated that previously the shed had been a milking shed. The soldiers converted the dairy into a kitchen and dilapidated buildings were repaired and converted into storerooms. The catering staff and service corps personnel remained more or less permanent. The infantry living in civilian homes changed constantly. The *Green Howards* were here. At the end of Bluebell Wood was a company position overlooking the Hougham road. Anti-tank dragon teeth covered by gun positions on both sides of the road were located at the end of the recreation ground (then the municipal dump).

Halfway up Whinless Down behind the Old Barn were two anti-aircraft gun emplacements – but whether there were guns in place depended on what army unit was in residence. The concrete and steel girder air-raid shelter behind the Old Barn is still in place. Behind Plum Pudding Hill was an emergency air strip complete with a tiny brick control tower and camouflaged parking spaces for aircraft. Councillor Law's double garage in Queens Avenue was an AFS fire station but since the firemen were not allowed to use the Law's telephone, communications to HQ were via the Elms Vale public telephone. Occasionally I passed vital messages like "We're running out of sugar" or "When are the spare parts arriving?" But with such communications the station soon closed.

On the 22nd August 1940 everything changed – the first cross-Channel shell arrived. Dover emptied – but fast. The pre-war population was 41,281. The mid-war official guestimate was 14,000. In Bull's description he suggests 7,000. Another suggested figure for late 1940 was 2,000 which is probably too low but I find it believable. I walked street after street of vacant houses seeing nobody. In Queens Avenue only three families remained, headed by Mr Pelham, power station electrician, Royal Navy Seaman Fidler and coal miner Richard Hale. Everyone with any sense and not vital for defence went. Shops closed, streets were vacated, and schools became Rest Shelters. The Battle of Britain was almost over – the Bombardment of Dover had just begun. I didn't see my watch until 1945 when the watch repairer opened again!