COLLECTED MEMORIES OF A CENTURY

Some more extracts from the writings of Budge Adams

The last Newsletter included an extract which described Budge's early days in 37 Castle Street in 1909. He lived there for most of his childhood, except for a gap between 1912 and 1915 when the family moved to Millais Road, where they were during the first year of WW I. This episode recalls a vivid memory of the early days of the war in December 1914 when Budge was only five years old.

Editor

On Christmas Eve 1914 a German airman, Lieut. von Prodzynsk, demonstrated the destructive potential of bomber aircraft and achieved, from an Englishman's point of view, the unenviable distinction of being the first man to drop a bomb on Britain - a bomb so small that it was stowed in the cockpit of the aircraft and simply dropped over the side by the pilot. It fell 75 metres due north of St. James's Rectory (now the site of a new doctors' surgery) on land held by the Terson family, who lived at 25 Castle Street, just five doors from our business premises. The story was that a bomb had fallen in Terson's garden. This was ambiguous because the Tersons had two gardens and in the story they were not differentiated.

My father decided to ' go down to 37' to see the extent of the damage, if, as I think he believed, the bomb had fallen only five doors away. And I went with him. We soon found that as far as our property was concerned all was well. Later we learned that a cabbage or two had been destroyed and a hole had been made in Terson's garden and that Mr. Banks, whom my father knew, 'was surprised and rather frightened'.

We began to walk back to Buckland along Maison Dieu Road and near to the Five Ways - a name not used until very much later - we heard the noise of aircraft engines overhead. Whilst we searched the sky for the aeroplanes we heard a shout or possibly a scream from our right in Godwyne Road. A bassinet, entirely uncontrolled, was careering down the hill and a dark heap that lay on the ground at the junction with Harold Street, turned out to be the nursemaid in charge. A man who was walking up the hill tried to intercept the baby carriage but missed it. Possibly it was his shout that I heard. My father quickly summed up the situation, ran into and a little way up Godwyne Road and managed to grab the pram and stop it. My admiration knew no bounds. My father was a hero! The nursemaid was attended to by people living near. She had only fainted, I suppose, through fear of the aeroplanes. She soon recovered and took charge of the pram and its unconcerned cargo. We never knew who she was, nor whose child it was, but I can remember her thanking my father.

Castle Street in 1914. 'Riverside House' at left covered with a red-leafed creeper.

We then walked on and almost immediately,

when we were just beyond the site of the present-day Baptist Church, we saw the Taube, aircraft whose bulbous backward-pointing wing tips clearly identified them, being shelled by anti-aircraft guns, whose bursts always seemed to be a long way from the target. The guns, as I now know, were not specifically built as anti-aircraft guns, but, the war being just less than five months old, they were modified field artillery remounted to fire at a high elevation - good examples of the uncanny British ability to improvise when faced with the unexpected.

I was frightened by the black and white bursts - why some black and some white? My father attempted to reassure me, but in spite of that I was, I regret to say, so frightened that I soiled my pants. My father's cool reaction was to tell me in no uncertain terms that under no circumstances should a son of his (and an Adams to boot!) do such a thing and he hurried me home to be cleaned up. He did not lead me by the hand but drove me on ahead of him with strong promptings to hurry. When we arrived my mother, who wore a long black skirt that almost swept the ground and a blouse with a white lace collar supported by strips of whalebone at the side, was sitting on a chair in the breakfast room and kneeling there, with her head buried in my mother's lap, was our little 'tweeny', sobbing her heart out and wondering where all this awful activity would lead us. My mother prised the 'tweeny' out of her lap and took me off to the scullery for a clean-up operation. The next picture I have is of my mother pouring a cup of tea for the distracted girl, who was by that time less tearful and showing signs that she would survive.

THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Memories of Summer 1940 by Dick Whittamore

The summer of 1940 was blessed with beautiful fine weather, clear blue skies, warm days and sweaty nights. But with the enemy forces only 21 miles away in France it is no wonder that Dover suffered its fair share of activity during those decisive months now known as the 'Battle of Britain' when two fighting forces battled for air supremacy over Kent.

I was a 15 year old page-boy at the Dover Hippodrome in those dark days. The 'dripping bone' as it was sometimes affectionately called, was an old music hall type theatre presenting variety and revue and, at Christmas, the traditional pantomime. Members of the forces from all parts of the commonwealth relaxed in the 580 seat playhouse each evening despite dogfights overhead in the sky, the occasional bomb and, later in the war, enemy shelling. Nearly every week a strip-tease act topped the bill to remind the soldiers of their loved ones and home. It was difficult to get artistes to come to Dover during those Battle of Britain days because they realised that, with the enemy so near, an invasion might take place at any time. Still the theatre bravely carried on playing its part in entertaining the troops and the few local civilians who braved the journey to Snargate Street in Dover's dockland. I am particularly reminded at this time of the community singing sessions we had, the sound of a full house singing old favourites is a sound which cannot be described on paper - the atmosphere was electric! The theatre boasted five bars so there was plenty of opportunity for the soldiers to get 'tanked up' beforehand - if they could afford it.

Those 1940 days bring to mind the dogfights overhead which I stood watching for hours. On clear days the fighting took place very high up and the planes were like