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

The badly damaged *Royal Hippodrome* and adjacent buildings, looking up Snargate Street towards New Bridge.

small silver crosses glistening in the sunlight. The rattle of machine gun fire could be heard as the attacker zoomed down on the weaving plane below. It was difficult to tell which planes were which at a great height - they all left similar vapour trails crisscrossing the sky. I saw many planes spiralling down to earth. on fire and was always glad to see a parachute opening, although, unfortunately, this was not always the case. It was the thing to collect pieces if shrapnel in those early days of the war, but if fighting was overhead, one had to take great care, as shrapnel sometimes came down like rain rattling on rooftops and building and it was red hot. At night we used to watch the searchlights trying to locate enemy planes so that anti-aircraft guns could fire on the target. On clear days we could also see the French Coast and often watched activity in the Channel and over Dover Harbour.

Before about July 1940, according to my records, Dover only had about 40 air raid warnings (or alerts as they were commonly called) but as the Battle of Britain continued we were getting five or six warnings a day. On bad days six or seven hours could be spent in caves or shelters, although these were not widely used until September 11th, 1940, when a stick of bombs was dropped along the seafront area, killing at least ten people. Most of them were in a local pub which received a direct hit. This action brought an influx of civilians into the caves. they brought chairs, oil stoves and their valuables and they slept in the caves at night. Some elderly people stayed in the caves almost until the end of the war, getting their braver friends to do their shopping for them and attend to their needs.

Yes, the summer of 1940 was a tense time - but an exciting one! Despite all that had happened already no one believed that we could possibly lose the war. We knew that the Churchill bulldog would see us through.

Note: *the Hippodrome carried on entertaining the troops until 25th September, 1944, when it was badly damaged by an enemy shell. The very last shell to land in Dover was on the 26th September, just one day later. The theatre never reopened.*