

Sounds of Dial Post 1939

There is another side to living in Dial Post in wartime, namely Sounds.

Thistleworth was in the direct flight path from Ford & Tangmere from which many raids were flown into Germany. Early in the campaign fully loaded Flying Fortresses flew directly over us every evening. We did not know the destruction they were wreaking on places such as Dresden, Köln, Wuppertal and so many more places, but that was the way things were. Then, later, with D. Day approaching, Dakotas full of paratroops, towing a glider each, also full of para's, went over. One sound was ever present: the V.2 or 'Doodlebug' as it was called. We would watch these going over, urging them heartlessly to go on just a bit further, because we knew that when the engine stopped they would rapidly fall on us, as some did. To go with the Doodlebug was of course the air raid siren, which after the war was used to summon the Fire Brigade, somewhat eerily. We used to make model Doodlebugs and fly them round the playground at school! I believe there was a dance at the time called the 'Jitterbug' which was probably a parody on Doodlebug? Probably the most emotive sound was, and is, the Rolls Royce Merlin engine in a Spitfire at full throttle. I only have to hear anyone of these five sounds, either for real or on a soundtrack somewhere, to be right back to those days!

I cannot leave this theme of sounds without mentioning, of course, BELLS. When war was over the countryside was a haven of quiet. All one heard was the steam trains, the rare lorry (one could actually track them from Ashington to Southwater!!) and Bells.

From Thistleworth, on its hill, depending on wind direction, one could hear bells from every direction. I have heard Thakeham, Shipley, West Grinstead, Cowfold and, on one cold frosty evening the glorious heavy 8 at Horsham! (I know there are 10 at Horsham now but at the time there were 8!). But the bell that used to speak to me and still does, is the Bourdon bell at Cowfold Monastery, about a ton in E flat. The last time I heard this bell with any clarity I was standing about 100 yards from it, such is the noise intrusion today. How sad that in this day of constant noise, people complain about the sound of BELLS!!

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