

## **WWII PG INVADED**

by Baryl Bazen (nee Powell)

When Hitler got serious about bombing the London docks, my father decided it was time to move his young family (myself 3 years, my brothers 8 years and mum) to safer ground. "We'll go to Partridge Green" he said, "Hitler will never find it – it's not even on the map!"

My father, who termed himself a 'Pioneer of the Electrical Age', had visited PG whilst cable-laying, to bring the first supply of electricity, around the UK.

Public transport was out of the question, London Bridge station was overwhelmed, so father found one of his contractors who was able to take us part of the way (Redhill) in an open lorry. This was my first recollection, probably picking up vibes from a very emotionally charged atmosphere. My baby cousin, Derek, was being carried, as his big sister was in his pram having just had her appendix out. The hospital had been bombed, so her stitches were taken out by the family doctor working under a bed-sheet canopy held over the patient by my aunt and uncle to stop pieces of plaster falling onto the wound.

I have no recollection of the ongoing train journey, but I seem to recall being in the village hall sleeping on the floor, with many other families. My mother was ever in admiration for Mrs Langton and her mother of 'Copyhold' Lock Lane, who walked the floor all night, comforting and filling needs. I believe a Mrs Darrington was the area "Billeting Officer". Her role was to tell unsuspecting householders that they had room to take in a given number of strangers, whether they wanted to or not.

We, and 5 other families, were placed in a condemned thatched cottage two doors from the Windmill Public House in Littleworth (*could this be the cottage depicted on the front cover?*).

The men folk having returned to work in the capital, the city mothers enquired about the shops. A bicycle was produced to carry their errands from PG which at the time consisted of the High St and South St. Primus stoves, oil lamps, bucket toilets and bicycles were unknown quantities. My aunt, the only cyclist, set off to a chorus of cheers.

## **WWII The Retreat**

It seems all but a few if the 'invaders' from London returned or moved on and the rest of us settled down into village life. We moved to Mrs Dory's house, 1 Maple Cottages, in the High St by the then Post Office. My father brought electricity into the house, and joy of joys, down the garden was a flush toilet. Next door to us lived the amazing 'Ducky Burdfield'. The village was dominated by Sayers and Burdfields, mostly related. We had bread delivered by Lou Burdfield, our milk by "Nim", Jack sang bass in the church choir and "Ducky" did everything else! He was the builder, undertaker, school transport (a lorry), church organist and choir master. My brother and I sang in the church choir, whilst my mother kept chickens and cooked for the British Restaurant in Horsham.

My lovely Grandmother was also with us and was fondly known by the whole village as 'Gran Green' as she always had a few pence or a sweet to give away to the children. Family and friends descended at every opportunity to get a good night's sleep away from the Blitz and my aunt (the late Rose Brown) was billeted with us whilst stationed as a WAAF at Faygate Air Force Base. Goodness knows where we all slept!

Dad was away for long periods (travel was not encouraged or so easy then), but when home for weekends he ran Saturday night dances in the village hall. At Christmas there was a huge party open to all, also in the village hall, and everyone who could get away attended, including Canadian soldiers stationed at the Grange. These young men away from family and friends made wooden toys and threw a lovely party for all us Jolesfield school children.

Post war, having no London home and my father working wherever a new power station required his engineering skills, my parents decided to settle in PG and bought Huffs Wood. My father and uncle envisaged two bungalows, but the "powers that be" envisaged an egg-packing station. By this time I was 11 and my brother 16 and we were still in two rooms at Mrs Dory's house.

To compensate a little for the 'Compulsory Purchase Order' which put a stop to our dream home, we were allocated a newly built Council-owned house in Blanches Close to rent. Now, 1948 and we had a bathroom and two flush toilets!

My father, the complete towny, loved the countryside but sadly died early; my mother stayed in the village and died aged 85 in 1993 whilst happily residing in Peacocks sheltered housing complex.

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