

## “EVACUATED, WHO ME?”

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It all began in September 1941, remember, we had a difference of opinion with Herr Hitler, he wanted Poland, and the rest of the world, and we refused, however, in September of 1941, I came to Fovant, and sat in a Hut, waiting for someone to collect me, I was not a new boy, at this evacuee game, I had been evacuated twice before, so was an old sweat at the game, and so I waited and waited, but no one seemed to want me, not surprising, I suppose, as I was a scruffy Herbert, when everyone else had been collected, I was left, when I had decided, that I would have to spend the rest of the war in this hut, a rather imposing Lady came through the door, her first words were, “is this all you’ve got left”, I didn’t realise then how fortunate I was.

I went with Mrs Alma Target, to the Butchers shop, were I would remain for the war, and return after the war, when I needed the Targets help, my war was one of happiness and love, I lived well, when I now look back on that time, I realise, just how lucky I was. I and my friend, who was a lad called Micheal Golding, would catch Rabbits on Fovant downs, and with the local knowledge, of Frank Target, of the best spots, to catch them, we probably poached Bertie Walters land, of quite a few bunnies, some we sold to Mr Target, and ate the rest, in fact one day, when I came home from school, I had a complete Rabbit on my plate, haws that for kindness.

I learnt how to tickle trout, I joined the Army Cadets and I joined the Church choir, in fact Fovant was a Childs dream of heaven, I didn’t realise it then of course, but when I look back, I now know how lucky I was, I remember when some American Soldiers, were camping, in the lane, near the firs, we would go there after school, and be given tinned peaches, play soldiers, with real guns, but as suddenly as they came, so they went, to Normandy I suppose, after the war, I had an argument with my Father, who had been a prisoner of war, when I was evacuated, and I caught a train from Cardiff to Salisbury, from there a bus to Fovant, at that time the Targets lived in Brook Street, I knocked on their door, don’t forget, they didn’t know I was coming, and Mrs Target took me in, she told me that I would have to go home, if my Father came for me, however that didn’t happen, so I was back with those I loved, at one time I worked on the Fovant badges, when I say worked, I carried buckets of chalk, I could go on and on about the Targets and Fovant, but I would like to say, that the Targets are close to my heart, when I think of them, I weep sometimes, when I think of their kindness to me, and with that kindness are the people of Fovant, who gave me a place of sanctuary, and made me feel one of them, thank you Fovant, I am Seventy-nine now, but those days are still fresh to me, I’m pretty sure this will need, re-working, so be my guest, I hope to get to the village in May this year.

### *The story*

Memory plays tricks upon us, well it does to me, some of the things I am about to relate to you, may have happened to someone else, I don’t think so, but be prepared.

1939, a year to remember, I told you, some my reminiscences, may have happened to some one else, but not this date, shortly, into our punch up with old Adolf, my Dad was recalled to the British Army, he being an ex regular Soldier, and soon after this, whilst in France, the Germans gave him free board and lodgings for the rest of the war, wasn’t that nice of them, well it wasn’t really free, because, the British Army took money for his food, to pay to the Germans, but because he was a naughty prisoner, they sent him to Poland, to work in the Salt mines, I saw him again in 1946.

I suppose, my Mum, having got shot of Dad, thought that it would be good to do the same to me, and so, in due course, I was evacuated, I’m not sure, of my first billet, that old memory again, however I seem to remember, that I didn’t get on very well with the Son of the house, in fact I seem to think, that my end came, when I locked him in the chicken shed, but of that I’m not sure, but it sounds like me, my next venture in the evacuation game, was a move to Sway, near Southampton, I was billeted, with a Farmer and his Wife, they had two sons, both older than me, I seem to remember, that I was happy there, but, one day, and I don’t remember how long I had been there, but on this particular day, I was out with the Farmer and his two boys, what we were doing I can’t recall, but one of the farm workers, came up to the field, and spoke to the Farmer, he told us, to stay in the field, and he would call us back the house, later, which he did, I can’t remember, exactly, what happened next, but the upshot was, that the Farmers wife, had been ironing, with the iron plugged into the light bulb socket, and she received a fatal electric shock, I remember being sad about it, but it meant, that I was moved again, it wasn’t about being moved again, it was where I was going to, that was important, I suppose I have been fairly lucky in my life, how lucky I didn’t know, until my next move.

In September 1941, I travelled from Portsmouth, to Salisbury, then by bus to Fovant, oh! by the way, I didn’t tell you where I lived, prior to my evacuation, so I’ll put that right now, I lived in Cosham, pronounced, Cosam, I can even remember the road, it was Hythe Road, there that’s put that right, back to the story, I eventually, found myself siffing on a chair, in a Hut, I think was the Women’s Institute Hut, I can’t remember how many there were of us, but at intervals, La-

dies came in, and made off with the evacuees, sometimes one sometimes more, however it didn't happen to me, eventually, I was the only one left, I don't think I smelt, or had a disfiguring complaint, but later in the day a, rather tall imposing Lady came in, and said to one of the Women, in charge, "is this all you have got left", and the next minute I was being shepherded, across the road. Into, as I found out later, the Butchers home, and this the beginning of, (do you remember seeing on Television, a play called "Mister Tom" in the play, Mr Tom said to Officials, who wished to put his evacuee, in to Children's Home, "all the boy needs is love") a lot of love, I don't suppose Mr & Mrs Target, thought of it in that way, neither did I, at the time, but now I know, just how much love I had, as I write this, memories come flooding back, tears spring, unbidden, to my eyes, am I just a silly old man, getting sentimental, over something which probably wasn't seen as anything special by Mr & Mrs Target, I don't know, but now I know, just how lucky I was, an idyllic childhood awaited me.

I don't remember about my first awakening, at the Targets, apprehension, I expect, nevertheless, here I was, and here I would Stay, until peace broke out again, as you can imagine, it was all so new to me, first I had to go to School, I must admit, to not being a great scholar, I wanted to be, but as my Wife used to tell me, a disturbed childhood, doesn't make for high academics, and so I plodded on, one break to our school day, was, camouflage netting, every afternoon, as far as I can remember, we would insert and tie, into the netting, short strips of coloured hessian, the colours of these strips, were brown, green and a reddish colour, how we were told to mix the colours I forget, but it was a change from the normal lessons, I don't remember, ever being bullied, maybe country children didn't go in for this kind of thing, apart from not being to bright, I think I enjoyed my time at School, I believe, the Headmistresses name was Hanham, she lived in the School house, with her Mother, there were also a couple more youngish women teachers,

I remember writing stories, about, Town and Country Mice, submitting them to a Teacher, to read, she said they were nice, I expect I plagiarised part of them, we had a third of a pint of milk every morning, usually at playtime, one very frosty winter morning, the milk was frozen, I, in my haste to drink it, tapped the bottle against my front, that's how I got two teeth chipped.

One evening, after we had tea, it was never called posh dinner, always tea, Mrs Target told me I could go with her to the Whist Drive, in the British Legion hut, no longer in existence, I'm afraid, so at the appropriate time, off we set, that's where I learnt Whist, and in the end, we made a formidable pair, Frank Target, was a real countryman, with him I learnt to pick up Ferrets, carry them to where we caught Rabbits, in the Warren, we would net all the rabbit holes, except one, this would allow some Rabbits to get out, where he waited with his 12 bore shotgun, not many escaped, then, the Ferret or Ferrets, he had two, were put in their bag, and of home we went, but not before, cleaning the rabbits, he always said that the foxes would clean up after us, in the shop next day there would be rabbits for sale, it was Targ, as I called him, who told me about snaring rabbits, in wires, he taught me how make the wires and how to set them up, a friend, of mine called Michael Golding, and I would catch Rabbits this way, we would go to our wires, before school, and at first, found ours wires rabbit less, Targ said this was because, Bertie Walters gamekeeper, had got there before us, the answer to this problem, was simple, get there before the gamekeeper, then we could take his rabbits, which we did, always, resetting his wires of course, I remember when we had caught about four rabbits, we sold two to Targ, kept the other two for ourselves, on coming home from school, Mrs Target said she had cooked the rabbit for tea, I expected to share it with them, but, to my surprise, she put the complete rabbit on my plate, still with it's head on, "there we are" she said, "eat it up", Targ came, a few minutes later, and showed me how eat the brains and a rather green tongue, he said "the tongues green, because the rabbit eats grass" remember this is a man, who when I was dumped on him, was nearly sixty, what a wonderful man he was, he always found time for me, and explained country ways, I always felt, that inside, he knew what boys made boys tick, inside he was still a young boy, he read the Daily Mirror, and once a week, he got the Dandy, a comic, he read it first, then I got it to read, he delighted to read about Desperate Dan, and Lord Snooty, and would laugh out loud, at their antics, maybe some people would think that childish, I never thought that then and I don't think it now, he was an uncomplicated man, he believed in working and enjoying life, I, as a child thought that he made me work to hard, I would turn the grindstone, when he sharpened the butchers knives, once a week, on a Saturday, I would clean the chopping block, with a large wire brush, that took me a couple of hours, it would have been shorter, but Jim, made me do it properly, Jim, by the way, worked in the shop, with Targ, my other little chore, was to help cuffing the grass, by pulling a rope, attached to the front of mower, while Targ steered, I did feel hard done by, but that is how I brought my Children up, if you want the good things in life, work is the way you pay for them.

So life went on, and eventually I joined the Church choir, why I don't know, we had choir practice in the rectory, (a funny thing happened to me, when I visited the Village, in 1988, I visited the Church, and on my way out, I met the Vicar, in our conversation, I mentioned, about my being in the choir, and how we had choir practice, in the rectory, "oh no" he said "that is not the rectory, that belongs to, and is Sir Peter? family home, the old rectory is in the Village, next to the Butchers shop" as I understand it, the house, next to Butchers shop, during the War, belonged to an oldish lady, but maybe I am wrong, it won't be the first time)

the choir master, was a blind man, I can't remember his name, one evening he asked me to sing, Ye Holy Angels Bright, which I did, he gave me sixpence, and said I had a good alto voice, I didn't have clue what he was talking about, but much later in life I joined the Shaftesbury choir, but by this time my voice was baritone..

By the way, getting back to my school years, do you remember, the school toilets, what a pong, when the night soil men came round, to do what night soil men do, we were not allowed out in the playground, one day, in school we all heard an aeroplane, it was one of the new Mosquitoes, we heard it explode, it had crashed, the next day, one of the boys said he had been up to the crash, there were soldiers guarding the site, but he said he had seen the head of one of the crew in a tree, what vivid imaginations small boys have.

Once, when Michael Golding and I, were on Fovant Downs, I noticed, what I thought was a piece of sacking, however when I went to see what it was, I found a army tunic, it had a crown on the shoulder, which I now know, was a Majors tunic, I looked through the pockets, I found a small pocket book, and a wallet, I took to the local policeman's house, and handed it in, some time later, when I came home from school one afternoon, Jim came to the house, and told me, that someone wanted to see me, in the shop, in the shop was an Army Officer, he thanked me for giving his tunic, and said that he would have been in serious trouble, if it had remained lost, and with that gave me, a white five pound note, and that was a lot of money, during the War, mind you I didn't have it long, Mrs Target took it, and said,"I'll put that in the post office savings bank for you, which she did, it came in handy, at a later date.

During my time at the Targets, I met their Son, Dick, I suppose the Ladies would have said that he was tall, dark, and handsome, he was a flight sergeant, in the RAF, the first thing he did, when he was on leave, he altered the way Mr Target boiled his pig swill, turning a wood burning copper, into an oil burning copper, thereby, saving wood, garages had old oil to get rid of, and Mr Target could get it,

I liked Dick Target, he had stories to tell, plus one Christmas, he gave me, his air pistol, as a present, during the war, he was sent to America, to learn about, American bombers, which they sent across to us, during this time, he sent home, to the Targets, photos, that were taken, of him, in America, most of them, showed him, with glamorous film stars, including, Carmen Miranda, Claudette Colbert, and others, I only met Dick, about three times, as he didn't get a lot of leave, but I had the air pistol for years.

I remember the Cress beds, in Fovant, in the summer months, when I came home from School, Mrs Target, would tell me to pick up some Cress, for our Weekend Tea, when I see the amount you get in a Supermarket, for a £1, and the amount we got for sixpence, its daylight robbery.

Some of the things, that happened, during the War, especially to do with food, don't bear thinking about, but we had to live, people in the country, had swaps, eggs, chicken, and pigs, I know there was a price to pay, such as losing some of your rations, to pay for the pig, but in other ways, they had their methods.

After a little while, I decided to join the Army Cadet Force, it seemed a good idea at the time, we could use Rifles, and have schemes, when we could use blank ammunition, and shoot at each other, however, this resulted in a Cadet losing his eye, when whoever fired at him, got to close, and the wadding, in the cartridge, went in his eye, this meant, that we could not use Blanks any more, whilst I was in the Cadet force, we had rifle drill and marching, during the course of this drill, I made a mistake, and the Sergeant, another youth, said as a punishment, I would have to run round field, in full pack, with my rifle held above my head, this I did, but when I had completed this task, the Sergeant said, as he felt I had not done it properly, I would have to do it again, as I didn't think that was fair, I threw down my rifle, and said I was going home, he said I was on a charge, I replied, that it wasn't the real Army, and he knew what he could do with his charge, I got on my Bike, and rode home, the next week I didn't got to Cadets, and Captain Davies, he was our commanding Officer, called to house, to ask why I had not turned up to Cadet training, I told him that I had decided that I leave would the Cadet force, because of unfair treatment, he said that the discipline would be good for me, if I joined the Army, I said I wasn't going to join the Army, but join the Navy, which, in due course I did, it was much better than the Army, we didn't have to do any marching.

There were other events which occurred, one of which I am ashamed to this day, vandalism, you don't know the half, I don't really want to bore you to much, but I left Fovant, after the war, but I came back, but, that, as they say, is another story,

There was one reason I loved the Targets and Fovant so much, throughout the war, my Mother, neither wrote to or visited me, maybe it wasn't her fault, but remember what Mister Tom said."