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VE Day.

Written on the 02-05-1995.

At this moment in time everyone is talking about the end of the War in Europe, against Germany, for it has been 50 years this coming weekend the 08-05-1995 since the hostilities ceased.

The news papers are asking what people were doing and how they celebrated VE Day, along with their memories of the day.

All I remember was that I could not get or make any sense of my elders, I know now that they were all very drunk and very happy that it was all over, part from the ongoing hostilities with Japan.

I can remember all us children being marched up to a large fire that was on the top of Bugbrooke Downs; on the top of this fire was an effigy of Adolf Hitler that was soon burnt when it was lit.

I remember seeing several barrels of beer, under the circle of trees, for the folk to drink, I still have today one of the taps from the barrels.

Some of the really nice memories were that we did not have to carry our gas masks about with us anymore, especially to school as I used to hate having gas mask practice, or having to sit and wear it right through a lesson, as the lenses would often all steam up with moisture if we had not rubbed it enough with an half of a potato, along with not being able to see a thing, the sweat would run down inside as well as out, and down our necks some times leaving tide marks where it had run.

I was to be constantly in trouble over the thing, either through taking it off to clear the lenses without permission, or smashing or crushing the box that contained it, not counting the times when trying to play a tune on its nosepiece that stuck out like a ducks beak.

I was forever going home troubled over the thing, even as a child I was so glad the war was over, as it meant no more wearing of the thing.

One day when worrying about it, father got me to listen to the radio to Sir Bernard Miles.

He spoke about his gas mask that he was given while serving in the Home Guard.

Whereby he had cut a hole in it so that he could smoke his pipe! The Officer in charge tried to tell him off for doing such a thing to his gas mask.

Sir Bernard replied, that before the Germans could drop a gas bomb on him, they had got to find England, if and when they find England, they had got to find Ayno, the village he lived in, if and when they found Ayno they have to find my house, but ten to one I shall be in the Rose and Crown, so they would miss me anyway!.

I never did have to wear it after any way.

(On a note of Caution both sides of the Charcoal within the Gas Mask, it has a Asbestos layer! to stop the Charcoal from catching on fire, such from the heat from a Bomb Blast, it is well known now that it can give one Asbestosis).

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Other nice things were, that it would be the first time in our lives we would see the street lights on in the village, lighting up everywhere during the dark winter nights, as well as light pouring from out of house windows, gone were the nights of Blackout and complete darkness.

We could see all the lights coming from the train's windows as they passed through Bugbrooke that was another novelty.

Not only were the street lights back on, they were going around and putting all the Road Sign Posts back up, that had been taken down in the war years, not as though being local that we needed them.

We no longer had to worry, or listen for German Aeroplanes as in the past, for during the war years several were to come over in daylight, as we were to find out one day in 1944 whilst out in the fields gleaning, as one was to shoot at, us amongst other folk from the village that day, it had a go at men working on the railway, and shot at one of Heygate's lorries travelling along the Heyford road.

Late one evening during the war when the air over Bugbrooke, was full of German Planes going back and forth to Bomb Coventry, Father took all of us in the family up Smiths Lane away from the village, we spent the night on and under a tarpaulin sheet draped over a barbed wire fence, although he had dug a Air Raid Shelter out, he did not trust it holding out, if they were to Bomb the village, so he told me years later.

The other thing that was exciting, we were to hear the Church Bells ringing again, for during the war years they were silent, and only to be rung if an Invasion was taking place to warn the Home Guard, and all the folk around to go to their stations or whatever. Bell practice resumed every Monday night as it did before the war years, one German prisoner used to say that he always knew when it was Monday, as they rung out wash day, he thought that it had some connection or ritual with wash day.

We were to have a Street party up Camp Hill, with lots of sandwiches jellies and custards and such likes, Brother Malcolm would not eat any jelly that was made in one of the baths that was normal used on bath nights, so I ate his share.

The next party that was held up Camp Hill, was when Frank Curtis came back home from being a Prisoner of War in Germany, for all were invited at the time.

We were to experience our first Guy Fawkes in our lives, on November the 5th 1945, with Bonfires, Rockets, Catherin-wheels, sparklers, Jumping jacks, Roman Candles, and Bangers, we stank for days from the smoke from the fires, it was such an exciting time in our lives.

3.

It seemed ages before our elders stopped celebrating, for before many months were out it was VJ Day, the end of the war in the Far East, All the Public Houses within the village did well from out of these celebrations, every night, and especially weekends, they were jam packed full with lots of folk getting drunk, along with singing their heads off.

After the war food stayed on Ration, along with Clothes, and Petrol, I remember mother going to London in a protest group in the early 1950s, over food rationing, it was soon after that things came off ration.

From then on we were able have our first lots of sweets when we liked, if we had the money.

We would have to wait until the Queen's Coronation before we had another Street Party.

Stanley Joseph Clark.