
My War Years.

Pat Talbot Feb 2010

I remember the day clearly, I was 6 years old on 3rd September 1939, the weather was a perfect late Summer's day, I was sitting on the front garden wall of 11 Rosslyn Ave, Coundon, Coventry, the boys of a similar age were playing, running round with arms out-stretched pretending to be fighter pilots and making aircraft noises and we girls were sitting chatting and watching them. There were large silvery balloons in the sky which appeared to be attached to the ground by ropes these were quite awe inspiring to us, I later discovered that they were an anti-aircraft protection for the City of Coventry

It was the end of an idyllic Summer when I played happily with the local children, we lived virtually on a building site a new housing development on farmland, we had recently moved into one of the newly built semi-detached houses, around us building work continued and we played in and around the half built properties. At the back of the occupied houses beyond the boundary of the building site there were fields and a wonderful area of unspoilt countryside through which ran a brook, I loved those fields and had pretend picnics under the trees beside the brook, a wonderful place for children to play without interference from grown-ups. That was the happiest Summer of my childhood, I and sister Janice lived temporarily with 'Auntie' Mary a friend of our Mother's together with Mary's husband and son John who was about 7 yrs old, Mum had problems of her own and was living with her Mother but often visited us as she only lived the other side of the City. Auntie Mary didn't seem to worry much about what I got up to and let me play out all day, I don't remember Janice being with me, she was only 3 years old and stayed in the garden. It was probably about a week after the war started that this wonderful period came to an end and Janice and I were taken on a car journey to the village of Wolvey 7 miles to the east of Coventry to live with Miss Mary Rowley who was to be our foster mother, I think it was Uncle Harry who drove us there. I was not particularly worried about going away as it was only another move among several that we had since arriving in Britain from New Zealand only about 18 months earlier.

Miss Rowley was a tall grey haired lady about 60 years old who seemed at first to be rather severe but was actually very friendly, she had a black and white mongrel called Tony, I remember him well as he greeted me by weeing down my leg wetting my nice clean sock, I was horrified but said nothing but my Mother will never forget the look on my face. Miss Rowley's home was a small bungalow built probably about the 1920's on a piece of ground which was part of the farmland belonging to the farmer next door who was our nearest neighbour. The bungalow consisted of one living room with a black cooking range and fire place and two small bedrooms, there was a room built of timber attached to the side which was mainly used as a shed and behind it the toilet which could only be accessed from the outside pathway. The toilet was a box like structure with a hole under which was a bucket, there was no sewage system so the bucket had to be emptied periodically, this didn't bother me I just took it in my stride as the seat was clean and well scrubbed but I had never seen one before as I had always been used to flush toilets. The bungalow had a kitchen garden at the front with a small unkempt lawn and at the back was a smaller garden where flowering shrubs were grown the whole property was surrounded by chestnut fencing

and was situated at the end of a country lane which petered out into a footpath as it passed the bungalow and an orchard and led to a field. Nearby were clustered several old thatched cottages the whole area being known as Wolvey Heath the bungalow named 'Charnwood'. There was electricity but only in the living room there was no water laid on as was the same for the whole of the village of Wolvey and as mentioned before no sewerage system. It was all a bit of a culture shock at first especially when I discovered that the water was drawn from a well in a bucket. I found this well fascinating, when I bent over the low brick wall that surrounded it I could see tiny bright green ferns and moss growing between the top few rows of the brick work and I liked the mysterious dark dank depths of the well and remember the clanking noise that the bucket made as it was lowered into the water which I could not see from the top, this well was used by all the people living on Wolvey Heath.

After Mum had seen us settled in she returned home to Coventry. Janice and I soon discovered that there were 2 little girls living at the farmhouse next door, Olwen and Sheila Malins, they seemed friendly and we chatted through the fence for a short time until Miss Rowley told us not to talk to them, this puzzled me, why not? there was no explanation, it was impossible not to talk to them as they lived next door and the bungalow was built on their father's property. I discovered many years later that Miss Rowley was related to the Malins family.

The next day being Monday I started School, arrangements had already been made for two older girls to take me to village school, they were probably about 12 years old but seemed nearly grown up to me, both were sturdy farmer's daughters and I don't think that they enjoyed their responsibilities and were not particularly friendly to me. No parents ever took their children to School that was left to older children, in fact I don't ever remember any parent being seen within the School grounds. These two girls usually ignored me and I walked behind them or sometimes they decided they would run to school, each girl would hold one of my hands and they would run as fast as they could with my little legs trying to keep up with them until I was virtually being dragged along with my feet barely touching the ground, one day after a few weeks I had had enough and I lost my temper I stamped my foot and told them that I was never going to School with them again, they just looked at me and then turned round without a word and continued their journey while I walked some way behind them, from then on I took myself to School and the girls never bothered me again. The Village School was built in 1837 originally used as a Sunday school and then a day school from 1840. It was composed of two classrooms, a small cloakroom and outside lavatories across the playground but there was a modern class room built to one side of the school which was used for the infants class, a bright cheerful room, I joined this class and was welcomed by a wonderful young teacher, Mrs Crompton. I settled down quite well and do not remember any problems, in fact I felt a little superior, the school that I had attended in Coventry must have been a bit ahead of Wolvey School as I was further advanced in reading and writing as the other children and to my surprise they didn't wear school uniform, I still wore my School blazer at Wolvey. Mrs Crompton was an excellent imaginative teacher there were very colourful educational posters on the walls which were changed every week which fascinated me, one in particular was a picture of a Squirrel which I stood and looked at in every detail including the name of the animal, during that week Mrs Crompton asked who could spell Squirrel, I was the only one to put up my hand and I had to stand up and spell it which I did with much self-confidence, she said "Good girl", I felt very clever indeed and will never forget the feeling of pride. I was still the quiet thoughtful self-confident little girl that I felt in 1939 after my wonderful Summer in

Coventry. I was in that class for a year and then went into the junior class when I was 7 years old, it was a dark gloomy Victorian room. From then on my confidence was beginning to suffer as I did not have any particular friends due to the fact that I was the only evacuee at that time, I was not bullied physically but I was called 'matchstick legs' as I was slightly built compared to the sturdy village children and the adults said that I was too thin and it didn't help when Miss Rowley didn't like us to speak to the other children so I was becoming socially isolated, some of the girls were friendly at School but I was not one of them. Away from School I was reasonably happy I had Janice to play with but she was only 3 yrs old. I learnt to cope with the rural life, Miss Rowley often took us 'sticking' this activity was picking up sticks that had fallen from the trees which she used as kindling to light the living room fire. My Mother had arranged for my doll's pram to be brought from Coventry to Wolvey it was fairly new and clean but Miss Rowley saw it as an ideal receptacle for the sticks we collected as we could collect and carry more, I felt a little upset as the pram soon became battered and dirty but I didn't complain. I did enjoy the country lanes which were very quiet, there were lots of wild flowers many species not seen now. My legs used to get very tired after all the walking especially when she took us to the next village of Copston to tend her Mother's grave. I did develop a love of the countryside at that time.

I didn't think much at all about the war during those first 6 months of the so called 'phoney' war except when we were issued with gas masks and identity cards The gas masks were a novelty at first but they were uncomfortable to wear and smelled rubbery, mine didn't fit very well there were gaps at each side of my thin face through which gas would have penetrated, after a few minutes of wearing them the eye pieces would mist up, it was fortunate that we never had to use them in a gas attack. We were told by the authorities to carry our gas masks at all times, they were in cardboard boxes with a cord attached so that we children could carry them on our backs like our modern back packs but they were an encumbrance for small children, mine hung low over my lumbar spine so that when I ran it bumped against my back continuously, later my Mother bought me a specially made canvas gas mask bag with a proper strap but it still bumped about in the same way. Although I always carried it to and from School I don't remember that we took them with us when we were out in the country lanes sticking. Some farmers set up obstacles in their fields in the form of lengths of boughs from trees set up in wigwam fashion, they were supposedly meant to stop enemy aircraft from landing in the fields in the event of an invasion but there were so few fields protected in this way, they would have been useless. I do remember trenches being dug especially in the field behind the School that were to be used during air raids, I only ever remember them being used once and I am not sure but that may have been a practice run.

The routine during the first 6 months was mostly uneventful, I enjoyed going to School and Janice stayed at home with Miss Rowley who must have found that having a 3 year old child around all day rather tiresome at her age. I seemed to remember that the good Summer weather lead to a warm and dry Autumn. All children went home for dinner at mid-day, we were allowed about one and a half hours to walk home and back including eating our dinner which in my case was a lengthy procedure as I was a 'picky' eater and I didn't like Miss Rowley's cooking especially her home grown artichokes, I had to eat up everything on my plate before being allowed to return to School which at times made me late. She occasionally boiled stinging nettles for a green vegetable which were quite acceptable I even liked them.

Mum came to see us every fortnight on a Sunday afternoon travelling on the Midland Red bus and getting off at the bottom of the lane, Janice and I were very excited to see her again and we ran down the lane to meet and throw our arms around her. One of those Sunday afternoons Miss Rowley planned a picnic in the fields, we took the food, cups saucers and plates and a tablecloth to spread on the ground, only minutes after getting ourselves settled she sensed that there was a bull among the herd of cows which were near by and became frightened, we had to quickly gather up the picnic items and move to another field without farm animals, I don't know whether there was actually a bull in the herd but she was sure that there was, Miss Rowley was rather a nervous lady and easily frightened. She was very afraid of thunder-storms, she would open all the windows and doors to let out the 'thunderball' that she was sure would fall on her bungalow and she made Janice and myself crouch down behind the living room door and she covered us with the thick chenille tablecloth which she put over our heads to hide from the storm. She instilled in me a fear of thunderstorms which lasted for many years afterwards in fact I was more afraid of my Mother being killed in a thunderstorm than in an air raid as I had no concept at the time of the dangers of bombing.

As Autumn changed to Winter I do remember some incidents regarding the weather. During a very wet period, the main road along which I walked to School was flooded across the width of the road, the older boys from School were asked to give piggy backs to us smaller children as the water would have been knee deep, there were no excuses for not going to School. At the time of the flooding some older boys teased us younger children that there was a dead body in the brook who had drowned in the floods and I believed them, it was weeks before I dared to look over the parapet of the bridge into the water. I also remember deep snow, the main road was cleared as soon as possible wide enough to take one line of vehicles, the cleared snow each side of the road being as high as I was tall it was like walking through a long corridor of packed snow, I could not see over the 'walls'.

Christmas arrived, we firmly believed in Father Christmas and we were not disappointed, Janice had a lovely fluffy Panda which she loved for years afterwards, I don't remember what I had but among the presents was a yo-yo, I do remember playing with it outside in the garden, the weather was particularly mild on Christmas day but I am not sure whether that was 1939 or 1940, I was disappointed that there was no snow on that special day. The Christmases following the one of 1938 never again quite came up to my expectations, I was then staying with my Dawson relations in London when I had a whole pillowcase of presents from then onwards we just hung up our 'stockings' socks in reality. One Christmas, it may have been in 1938 I had a toy grand piano which really played music, it had about 8 keys on which I tried to play 'Three blind mice'. On the day that we broke up for the Christmas holidays at Wolvey School the Headmaster Mr Beck would arrange a film show for all the children in the School, Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton silent films, they were very exciting and we all screamed with laughter, they were very happy times but they only happened once a year, our Christmas treat.

1940.

During the early part of 1940 life for Janice and myself carried on as already described, the war news must have been very worrying for the adults but did not

affect us until some time during the Summer when fighter planes were seen overhead at times circling round and leaving vapour trails in the sky. One particular time the air raid siren had sounded when we were at School on a lovely Summer afternoon and we were sent home early, there was a great deal of aircraft activity overhead and it was very noisy. I had picked up some items of news from the radio that people were being shot at from dive bombing planes, on my way home from School that afternoon when passing Mrs Galliford's cottage I suddenly became terrified that I was going to be shot so I pressed myself very close to the wall trying to hide from the diving and weaving of the fighter planes and when I thought it was safe to move I ran back home like the wind. The aeroplanes were probably British attacking in coming enemy aircraft but I didn't know that at the time.

Another experience I had was when the King was visiting Bramcote Aerodrome which was only 2 miles away, two large aircraft passed overhead low and sounding very loud, I was on my way back to School after dinner, I was again very frightened as the planes were so low as they came into land I had irrational fears that one was going to crash land on me so I dived into a nearby ditch to hide from it, fortunately the ditch was dry. I suppose I picked up snippets of items from the news bulletins sub-consciously without actually listening to the radio which was always on and not really understanding what was going on, bad thoughts did build up in my mind, I never asked questions and the adults did not talk about the war in our presence so my imagination went into over-drive. As the year passed and Autumn approached the air raid siren was heard more often mainly at night, there was little danger of being attacked in the village as the enemy planes were on their way to the cities especially Coventry only 7 miles away but there was the danger of bombs being dumped in the countryside as the bomber planes returned home or a damaged plane crashing.

There was a period during November and December when the adults were sufficiently concerned about night air raids that we were taken into Mr Malins air raid shelter which was an underground dug-out very well made and furnished with bunk beds for the children, I remember sharing a bunk with Sheila on a couple of occasions, I think the adults, four of them were sitting on benches. One particularly noisy night of aircraft noise and gunfire Janice and I were grabbed from our bed where we were sleeping peacefully in spite of the noise and hurriedly carried into the shelter, Mr Malins was carrying me I became panicky and started screaming, he told me quite firmly to "Shut up", I don't think that we slept much for the rest of the night. The mornings after the bad nights Miss Rowley decided that I should not go to School the following mornings because I would be tired, I returned to School in the afternoon, the teacher was annoyed as all the other children attended during the morning although they were excused if they were late due to over sleeping, I felt very embarrassed as I wanted to go to School in the morning as usual and told the teacher that Miss Rowley kept me away, she must have understood as I was not punished. I remember an illustrated poster being pinned up on the notice-board in the Senior classroom warning all children not to touch various coloured strange objects which were designed to attract curious children as they were anti-personnel bombs, I never heard of any being found in and around the village. One afternoon Miss Rowley had taken us to the village to collect our grocery rations from Cox's the grocery cum Post Office, it was a typical gloomy damp cold day in November when we saw several lorries pass through the village along the main road filled with people huddled together under blankets in the backs of those lorries being taken to a place of safety from Coventry, I have never forgotten the dejected appearance of those people, I suddenly realised the horrors of war but strangely enough I don't remember worrying

about my Mother living in Coventry I had faith that she would be O.K. Many years later she did tell me of a narrow escape when she was handing over a bucket of water to an air-raid warden to put out a small fire when a piece of shrapnel fell between the warden and herself into the bucket, the warden in his agitation shouted at her to "Put her bloody tin hat on" when venturing outside during an air-raid. I remember the adults talking about the destruction of Coventry Cathedral which particularly appalled them. There was a paranoia about spies, we were warned not to give strangers any information about our area and give no directions to anybody, all printed names of the village were obliterated and all sign posts removed. One lady, Mrs Johnson, a friend of Miss Rowley became very worried about signs that someone had been sleeping rough in a ditch close to her home she was a widow living alone and was sure that it was a spy.

1941.

As 1940 came to an end we became used to the noise of gun-fire and aircraft in fact I was able to tell the difference between the noise of enemy aircraft and our own the noise of the engines was different As far as I know there was no bomb damage to any building in the village. I knew very little about the young men who had joined the services but I do remember a list of those that had been killed during active service that was pinned up in the Church porch, this list grew slowly during the duration of the war, some of the family names were familiar to me. I often saw the Home Guard soldiers practising training exercises during the weekends in and around the village and on one occasion I was a little alarmed to see a soldier hiding in a hedge with his gun pointing in our direction. There were several changes during 1941, in February Janice started School I was responsible for taking her and introducing her to the Headmaster and teacher, I remember after arriving with her that we had to stand in class lines in the playground before proceeding into School, by this time I was in the Juniors I put Janice in the line of Infant children and to my acute embarrassment she followed me crying loudly "I want Pat", there was little I could do except push her back again into her own line, after which her teacher took charge, I didn't see her again until dinner time. I don't know at what stage Janice was officially registered for School, I did not give any details about her, perhaps Miss Rowley had done so at an earlier date or even Mum may have written to the School. It seems strange to me that parents and guardians had so little contact with the Staff, children started School the week of their Birthdays. Janice must have settled down as I do not remember any further incidents.

I did not enjoy School when I was in the Junior class, there was difficulty finding a teacher for what seemed a long time, it may have been only months that we were taught by Mrs Galliford who I'm told was not a trained teacher and it was obvious she was a strict disciplinarian and I was frightened of her, I don't remember learning anything of significance during that time the only incident that I remember was when she didn't like my sewing and rapped me across the knuckles with the edge of her ruler, I wasn't the only one she walked up and down the aisles between the desks doing the same to other girls, the bruises lasted for several days. Eventually there was a fully trained teacher, Mrs Pullen, who stayed for a while but she lived at Kenilworth, it was a long journey for her each day as travelling conditions were dreadful, she had to catch a 2 buses changing at Coventry and was often late arriving at School she could not keep up the travelling for a longer period and we lost her, she was a lovely lady and a good teacher. The numbers of children attending the School

rose sharply as we had a sudden influx of evacuees from Coventry during the worst of the bombing raids, I never got to know any of them as they were in my opinion scruffy and rude and I heard from listening to peoples conversations who had children billeted with them that had many difficulties caring for them such as wet beds etc., they didn't stay in Wolvey long when the heavy raids eased they went back home. My memory of time spent in the Junior class are sketchy as events were changing away from School which had a profound change in our comparative happiness, Miss Rowley was taken ill and could not keep Janice and myself any longer. Miss Rowley spoke to her friend Mrs Johnson about the problem but meanwhile she offered to have us for breakfast only and see us off to School but she could not accommodate us to sleep in her home so we had to get up early from bed in Miss Rowley's home and walk across a field to Mrs Johnson's house for breakfast and then walk to School, I can't remember who cooked our midday meal during that week as this was a time of upheaval and I have probably tried to blot it out. A place was soon found for us to move to live with Mr and Mrs Rampton who were officially foster parents for evacuees, a few of these children were still resident when we arrived but didn't stay long so I did not get to know them. I don't remember the day that we moved in, it must have been in the early Summer of 1941 but I do remember that our toys were dumped in an old chicken coop in the back garden which were left out there exposed in all weathers including my lovely toy piano which was ruined, this deeply saddened me, somehow Janice's Panda survived as it was kept indoors.

The Rampton Family.

The Ramptons had a large bungalow of about four bedrooms on the road to Hinckley leading away from the village, there was one other house next door where the Elson family lived and we were surrounded by fields. Mr Rampton was a pig farmer, the farm buildings situated away from the bungalow across a field, I don't remember ever seeing the pigs or even hearing them and I never got to know Mr Rampton, he was a remote figure who always seemed in the background when in the home but otherwise working. I can't say that I ever really knew Mrs Rampton who ran her home efficiently as far as discipline was concerned, I never remember her inflicting physical punishment on any of the numerous children that she cared for she had other ways of showing her displeasure which was psychological.

The Ramptons had three children that I know of; one I believed to be adopted, the eldest was a married daughter living away from home who was a tailoress, then Betty who was probably a couple of years older than I was whom I liked, and Margaret who was about my age, the adopted daughter, she always seemed subdued and unhappy. I never remember seeing her smile. There were children next door the two Elson girls there may have been boys but I don't remember them, my memories of that time are sketchy. Betty was obviously the favoured daughter but she was friendly to me, she was learning to play the piano and spent a lot of time practising her piano scales, she would like to have taught me to play as well but her Mother objected and told me not to touch the piano. I had a nervous habit of twiddling my fingers when under stress, Mrs Rampton shouted at me to stop doing it, I'm sure that she thought that I was 'itching' to get my hands on the piano keys which wasn't true although I would have liked to have had a go but accepted that I had been forbidden to have that pleasure, she seemed to jealously guard Betty's musical abilities and none of the other children were allowed to touch the keys either.

Janice and I shared a bed in our own room, I dreaded the nights as there was a constant light tapping noise from somewhere in the room I did not know what caused it as there were no trees outside the bedroom window, I thought it was ghosts: my imagination ran wild, I hid my head under the bed clothes to try and block out the noise and often fell asleep in a state of tension. I never mentioned it to Janice as she did not appear to notice it and I certainly did not tell anyone else fearing ridicule. Janice was very unhappy there, on one occasion that I remember she had a tantrum and was shut in the dark scullery by herself until she had calmed down, I was too frightened to say anything in her defence.

Mrs Rampton was always keen to get us all out of her way whenever possible which meant on Sundays we were sent to Sunday School and then Church arriving back home for Sunday dinner and then outside to play. Religion was not the main reason for going to Sunday School it was an ideal child minding service in my opinion while

the Mothers did the cooking. The School was supervised by teenage girls who were nominally Sunday School teachers and we spent most of our time drawing and colouring biblical subjects it did not prepare us in any way to understand the Church service which followed, I understood nothing of what was going on and the sermon was long and dreary and as far as I was concerned incomprehensible. Some good did come out of it, I joined the Brownies. More of that story later.

We stayed at the Ramptons for about 6 months during the Autumn and Winter and it seemed to me to be a very long cold Season, especially when sent outside to play in some of the coldest weather and expected to run around and keep warm it snowed quite a lot but I didn't appreciate it and it covered my poor toy piano still in the old chicken coop. We did not go home for dinner at mid-day on School days. We took sandwiches instead, stale jam sandwiches, there was so little butter on the bread that the cheap runny strawberry jam soaked into the dry bread, they were horrible and put me off jam sandwiches for the rest of my life. I did enjoy our breakfasts which consisted mainly of fried bread and brown sauce either H.P. or 'Daddies' sauce, sometimes there was a tiny piece of bacon and or part of a large goose egg which must have filled the frying pan as it was cooked, it was divided up into portions one for each of us. I don't remember much about dinners which must have been only at weekends and Christmas Mrs Rampton did not cook dinner in the evenings which was normal practice in those days, nobody did and I don't remember what we ate for the evening meal, on the whole there was not much nutrition in our diet.

My Mother did continue to visit every month and brought her sweet and chocolate ration which Mrs Rampton stored away and doled out one sweet at a time or one square of chocolate, that wasn't very often. Janice and I did not receive our full ration it was shared out between the family. We saw little of our Mum during her visits as she was taken into another room to talk with Mrs Rampton while we were sent to play in another room, there was no opportunity to talk to her in private. In later years she did confirm that she had taken her sweet ration for us and expected that I would share it with Janice alone. In fact we hardly ever spoke about those 6 months I'm sure that Mum must have realised that we were unhappy, Janice and I wanted to forget them.

We had not been forgotten by the caring ladies of the village. On our way back and forth to School we met a lady on several occasions who looked kindly at us but did not speak as I remember, she would have been walking to visit her friend Mrs Johnson, that lady I have mentioned before also a friend of Miss Rowley, she seems to have played a pivotal role in our lives at Wolvey, there must have been a lot of conversation going on about us as the next thing we knew was that we were going to live with that lady and her name was Mrs Moore who lived with her husband in the Village Square. We must have moved about Spring time around the time of my 9th Birthday in 1942. I do not remember the day that we moved, that time is very hazy, I have clear memories of living with Miss Rowley and later with Mr and Mrs Moore but much less about the Ramptons but I do remember that we were very pleased to be leaving.

Living at 'Rosemere' the Square, Wolvey.

Life at the above address with Mr and Mrs Moore had a profound affect on my life and I have many memories which need putting into some order, firstly a description of our home and environment and our activities then people and the progress of the war which I followed in the newspaper reports and how it affected us all.

I was a very quiet child, I did not talk much except to Janice which endeared me to the middle aged and elderly ladies who were Mrs Moore's friends. These ladies were brought up in the late Victorian period when children were expected to be seen and not heard so I fitted in to their vision of a good child. Janice was also very good when taken visiting but did not listen with so much interest to their conversations as I did and does not have so many memories, it must have been rather boring for her but I don't ever remember her complaining. She enjoyed following Mr Moore around the garden 'helping' him while he worked whereas I did not enjoy it so much I preferred indoor activities, she had pet names and was often called 'little Janie' or 'little lambie' I was always just called Pat. If there was a preference between the two of us it was Janice but we were always treated the same, it was because she loved the garden more than I did. We always called our elders by their full titles there were no euphemisms used such as 'Auntie or Uncle' and certainly no Christian names, that applied to all children

'Rosemere' was situated in the centre of the village in 'The Square' it was a house, I was told, that was a conversion from stables built probably about the beginning of the 20th century, a fairly plain appearance with tiled roof and grey stucco walls with small cottage style windows, the side of the house faced the road the public pavement being immediately outside our living room window, access to the front door was through the garden gate then turn right into a wide gravel pathway and further round to the back door into the scullery which was built onto the main part of the house which was rectangular. The house itself comprised of two rooms downstairs the living room and a front room which was only used on high days and holidays. The scullery was a single story construction built onto the back of the living room with a connecting door. The staircase was enclosed from the living room by walls of tongue and grooved timber painted a rather dull brown, access was gained through a door at the bottom of the stairs which then lead to a tiny landing and two bedrooms, Janice and I shared a bedroom facing the village square through which we had a clear view of village activities such as the Home Guard's weekly parades. Mr and Mrs Moore had the other room which over looked the Church and the countryside beyond it, we were situated on a high point of the village and had a clear view to the fields towards the east of Wolvey. The toilet was the same box type design similar to the one at Miss Rowley's but this one had its seat polished regularly. It was situated outside but adjacent to the scullery, we had to go out through the back door and round the corner to use it, the only light was from a small diamond shaped window in the door which was plain glass which as I grew older found a little disconcerting as it faced the pathway along which customers would come to buy fruit and vegetables from the

scullery door. Beyond that were a series of out houses built lean to against a tall dividing wall from the next door neighbours property the first was a corrugated shed painted green where the bicycles and galvanised tin bath was kept among other household items next a small greenhouse where seedlings were raised then a wooden shed where the pig meal and chicken foods were stored and slated shelves for storing apples for Winter use finally the hen house where about 6 – 8 chickens were kept for eggs and killed later to eat when their egg laying days were over. Opposite to the hen house was the pig sty where two pigs were originally kept and later only one as time went by. The sty was made of strong timbers which were reinforced by old metal advertisements saved from demolished shops which gave it a ramshackle appearance but withstood the bashing of the pigs as they moved around in the confined space. Opposite the green corrugated shed and only a few yards from the house was the air-raid shelter a well constructed dug out well camouflaged with grass and flowers growing on top of its roof. Access was gained by going down two steps and turning left into the shelter, itself there was no door, it was built of timbers and lined with cardboard and pages cut from magazines and furnished with a bench I doubt that Mr Moore bought any of the construction materials. He used what was available at the time which gave it a patchy appearance as was evident in the construction of the hen house and pig sty. He was a WW1 soldier and had a lot of experience of digging trenches and constructing dug outs as did many men of his generation of ex-soldiers. The rest of the property consisted of a large garden which was used only for growing fruit, vegetables and flowers for sale and secondly for home use, not a square inch of soil was not used to produce something saleable and no single weed was allowed to grow. About 10 yards from the house within the garden was the private hand pump for domestic uses and suitable for drinking, I describe it as private because the village pump for general use was within the village square and only a few steps from our home but the Moores jealously guarded their own water supply and never used the communal pump. There were two water butts which were large wooden barrels, these collected rain water from the house and the other from the guttering on the corrugated shed, the water was mainly used for watering plants and sometimes washing clothes as the country people believed that rain water was softer for washing. At times of very dry Summer weather, when there was a fear of drought this water was used to wash ourselves. It was rather alarming to wash our faces in green water in which tiny worms wriggled, the water stagnated as the levels sank in the butts but there was such a fear of the pump running dry that we were not allowed to use that water for personal use. Every drop of water used was saved and poured into buckets for watering the plants. In the middle of the garden was a large greenhouse for growing tomatoes and cucumbers, there was a vine but the grapes never matured. It was heated by a coke burning stove situated just outside the door, hot water was circulated through pipes along each side of it during the early cold Spring weeks after which Mr Moore relied on the sun to warm it. He begrudged having to buy fuel for the stove and supplemented it by burning any rubbish he could lay his hands on. In the garden were many fruit trees apples pears and plums. There was a long row of raspberry canes, large beds of strawberry plants in rows, a long hedge of red and white currant bushes, many blackcurrant bushes and gooseberry bushes, long wide vegetable plots and masses of flowers both perennials and annuals plus beautiful Roses. Janice and I spent a great deal of time in the garden and out houses as we were not allowed to play outside the property and no other children were ever invited to play with us so we did not mix with our peers apart from at School, we were happy together but were becoming socially isolated from them.

Mr and Mrs Moore were a middle aged couple in their 50's, they had no children but Mrs Moore did care for her two nieces a few years earlier and felt that she was sufficiently experienced to care for another two little girls, they were kind people but their attitudes to life were rather old-fashioned having been born and brought up in the late Victorian period.

Mrs Moore was the dominant character, quietly determined and 'she ruled the roost' in the home but she never raised her voice or became angry, Mr Moore's domain was the garden. She was very much a feminist in the modern sense of the word and believed that women should be equal to men, she objected to being called Mrs Charles Moore and signed her name Elsie Moore as being a woman in her own right and belonged to no one. I feel that she must have been a secret admirer of the Suffragettes when she was younger, she even appeared different to other women of her generation having her grey hair cut very short almost like the Eton crop fashionable in the 1920's when most other women in the village wore their hair long and pinned up in a bun. She was full of self confidence and felt herself to be a lady being in status above the working class people and chose her friends from the lower middle class including farmers. She was also a good business woman responsible for selling the garden produce and she made jam, chutneys and pork pies according to the seasons and sold them at the scullery door, Janice and I were also expected to help around the house and garden which we didn't resent but took it as a part of life living with them. We were almost self-sufficient apart from buying our basic wartime rations and never went short of anything, she was an expert in make do and mend and could turn her hand to anything, nothing was beyond her capabilities.

She had been a farmer's daughter one of eleven children mostly boys with only one older sister. Two of her brothers lived in the next parish of Witherbrook they were both farmers who supplied us with milk and meat, I think that we may have had more than our ration of meat. There was also a brother who was a greengrocer/flowerist who lived in Hinckley only 4 miles away from Wolvey who sold some of our garden produce mostly flowers which could be more easily transported, Mrs Moore would ride her 'sit up and beg' bicycle in the Spring time with daffodils tied onto the framework of her cycle on every conceivable place within safety limits and take them for sale to her brother's shop, a remarkable sight. I think her farming brothers had horse and cart transport when they came visiting but I do not remember the other brother having any conveyance.

I know a lot about Mrs Moore and her background but much less about Mr Moore as there was few opportunities to talk to him. At times he started to tell us about his World War 1 experiences in France but was soon silenced by Mrs Moore who disapproved of him talking about the subject, we only ever heard the amusing stories and he even tried to teach us a few words of French that he had picked up. He did tell us that he had been honoured for saving the life of an officer who was lying injured in no man's land so I am presuming that he was a stretcher bearer as there was a well thumbed St.Johns Ambulance instruction book on the book shelves in which he had written notes. He would have been 32 years old in 1914, getting on a bit for the infantry. He did mention the Somme and Ypres among other familiar names and he was apparently unscathed by the end of the war. He was a mild mannered man and deeply religious and would openly criticize anybody who worked in their gardens on Sundays. He could get angry occasionally when the man who owned a neglected field next to his garden allowed the weeds to grow and the seeds blew over the hedge. A couple of times we heard raised voices as they had a row about the problem.

Mr Moore had only one hand which he lost due to a minor gardening accident, he scratched his hand when pruning Roses a few years earlier and it became infected and gangrenous which necessitated amputation to mid-forearm of his right hand. He wore a harness and a prosthesis onto which he could screw a hook for general use and a wooden artificial hand which was covered by a glove and looked quite good when he was dressed up for Church on Sundays. He could use that hook for all manner of gardening work, nothing was beyond his capabilities. It seems ironic that he survived the war years unscathed and then lost his hand due to a simple scratch from a Rose bush some years later. Besides working in his own garden he also worked as a jobbing gardener, mainly heavier digging and pruning fruit trees for other people, for a short time he worked for the Hinckley Parks Department digging the flower borders which had been neglected or used for growing vegetables for the war effort, these jobs were usually undertaken in the late Autumn and Winter when there was less to do at home.

Although he had no relations in the village that he acknowledged there were several families named Moore and these went back generations in that part of Warwickshire, I know that his father was named Thomas Moore and that they lived in Wolvey which I discovered from studying the 1901 census only recently. Besides owning the house and garden he also had two others properties about half an acre each. One was situated along the Coventry Rd, on which there were the foundations of demolished cottages with only the wash house and lavatory still standing used for when he worked on that land and the other was at Wolvey Heath on the site of the last windmill that had stood there until only a few years earlier, that land was sold shortly after Janice and I joined them, it was further away from the village centre and gardening tools had to be carried a longer distance. These two pieces of land were used mainly for growing potatoes and other vegetables. He had a home made hand truck on old pram wheels which he used to convey his garden tools and sometimes he put Janice and myself in it when we accompanied him 'up the other garden' I felt a bit embarrassed by our ride and used to crouch down low in the bottom of it so as not to be seen by other children as the sides of it were quite high. I do not know how he came into possession of these two pieces of land, did he buy them or were they inherited? The piece on the Coventry Rd., was still being used until after we left in November 1945.

The timbers that he used for building his pig sty and air raid shelter may have come from cottages which were demolished as being unfit for habitation.

I hope to find out more about the local history of Wolvey and the Moores eventually, at that time the village was changing from its ancient past mainly due to the two world wars, it was mentioned in the Doomsday book, some people believed the name came from the Anglo-Saxon name of the place where wolves lived.

The three years that we lived with the Moores I look back on with some nostalgia. I was not as entirely happy as Janice was but I am glad that I experienced that time, the unhappiness was mainly due to the fact that I had no close friends At School I did play with other children if invited to do so as the girls were friendly but many times in the play-ground I stood by the wall and watched the other children, I must have looked very pathetic, at home with Janice I was fairly contented.

My biggest worry was my clothes which had a huge impact on my self-esteem, Mrs Moore did not buy new clothes if she could avoid it. Most of her clothes were home made and so were ours and she discouraged my Mother from buying any. Admittedly new clothes were in short supply as coupons were needed to buy them which did not go far. As I became older I out grew the clothes that came with us and in which I felt

comfortable, they would have been passed on to Janice and that is when Mrs Moore started making my clothes, her idea of style was straight up and down with no allowance for shaping and fitting at the waist-line, I hated them. In her own opinion she was very good at make do and mend which was commendable during the war years. She had a friend named Mrs Green who had a lot of good quality clothes which she passed on to Mrs Moore to make something wearable for us. I remember particularly a lady's dress made of a silky crepe material patterned with large royal blue spots on a white background of a 1930's style, it would have looked good on a grown woman but not on a small girl of 9 or 10 years old. It hung like a sack on me, the hem was cut short but little else was done to alter the shape, the collar was out of proportion and the 'short sleeves' came down to my elbows I felt dreadful in it. One warm Summer's afternoon I dared to play truant from Sunday School and hid in the currant bushes with Janice during the time that we should have been there, the weather was too warm to cover it with a coat, I was too embarrassed to be seen in that awful dress, our absence was never discovered. I also had a dress made out of a brown tweedy material made from some item of clothing which I think Mr Moore may have worn, it was collarless with long sleeves and shapeless but she did ask my Mother to add some embroidery to brighten it up which didn't help very much, Mum went along with Mrs Moore's requests as she didn't want to upset her. Any self esteem that I had left, plummeted I became more shy and introverted, my shoulders drooped which gave me a round shouldered appearance and I was always being told to stand up straight at home and School which did not help my confidence. Mum did buy our shoes but Mrs Moore would not let us wear them for School during the first year but just for best on Sundays then as they were just becoming a little too small for us they could then be worn for general use consequently they pinched my toes and when the soles wore out Mr Moore would mend them himself with bicycle tyre rubber or even motor car rubber which made them wobbly when walking and sometimes the points of the nails would stick through to the inner soles. Looking back I don't know how we put up with it, we didn't like complaining. Mr and Mrs Moore did not seem to have any imagination as to how we felt in those uncomfortable shoes and shapeless clothes but they meant well, children did not complain so much in those days.

At home with Janice I felt happier when we were kept occupied with helping in the house and the garden and we were taken out visiting Mrs Moore's friends and out into the countryside, we did have plenty of time to play together.

Our routine was governed by the seasons. When we first arrived in 1942 it must have been late Spring or early Summer as the strawberries were beginning to ripen, I remember that we were asked to help pick them which was a novelty at first but I soon found that bending over made my back ache and it wasn't much fun as we were forbidden to eat any of them, they were all for sale. We did have strawberries every day for that short season for tea but they were those that had been pecked by the birds or dry and shrivelled any other unsalable fruits were made into jam for household use and to sell. Janice and I were asked to deliver baskets of the best strawberries to larger houses such as the Vicarage and we were often given pennies as tips which we saved, no other children ever tried to steal those luscious fruits while on our journeys through the village.

Next came the raspberry season, we had to be very careful not to squash them as they were picked but at least we didn't have to bend down. The only time that Mrs Moore ever became stressed was when rain threatened and she feared that the raspberries would be ruined, they had to be picked every day. Gooseberries were the next crop to

ripen and we helped with those which could be a bit hazardous as they had nasty prickles but we soon learnt to pick up a leaf on a branch and lifted it up with one hand and picked the fruit with the other hand. There were also the blackcurrants and the red and white varieties to be harvested at the same time. Fruit not sold was made into jam. It was a very busy season, housework, washing and cooking had to be done as well, Janice and I had to scrape new potatoes before we went to School in the morning some of them were no bigger than peas or beans which was a fiddly job, we also had to shell peas and broad beans but not cut up runner beans as more skill was needed to slice them thinly.

There was time to play, Mr Moore set up a swing for us which was potentially dangerous to use but none of us considered that it could fall down, he did his best with the materials available. It consisted of two upright posts set into the ground without any supports and was not concreted in, consequently after a short while the whole framework waved backwards and forwards as we used the swing.

The swing itself was a bent piece of galvanised cable hooked over the wooden cross beam and the 'seat' a piece of old folded sacking which was rather uncomfortable for sitting. We were totally oblivious to any danger and I would swing as high as I could and jump off at its highest point sometimes while customers were at the scullery door buying produce and would watch me with some consternation, it was a rare moment of showing off. Gradually the wooden beam became worn, I presume Mr Moore may have changed it at sometime which I don't remember but we did have many happy hours on that makeshift swing. He also set up a seesaw which was composed of part of a tree trunk as the base and a plank placed over it for Janice and I to sit each end. As we played on it the plank it would sway from side to side as well as up and down due to the uneven surface of the tree trunk which wasn't very satisfactory but we did enjoy playing on it.

There were times at intervals during the year when Mrs Moore took us into the countryside for a specific reason, we picked elderberry flowers in the Spring and the ripened elderberries in the early Autumn for wine making, picked Dandelions to make beer also in the Spring and collected bits of sheep's wool from the hedges and barbed wire fencing which was then carefully washed and used for stuffing cushions. I still have a small cushion for keeping my sewing needles rust free made from that same wool. During the last year of the war I joined other children to pick rosehips for the school to be collected and made into rosehip syrup to supplement the Nation's children's diet, between us we stripped every wild dog rose bush in the surrounding countryside.

Time did drag during the latter part of the long Summer holiday after the soft fruit picking season was over. I had other amusements, I collected seed packets which were quite pretty and colourful and I knitted dolls clothes with scraps of wool, Janice made mud pies as pretend cooking and followed Mr Moore around the garden while he worked. She enjoyed climbing the fruit trees and was able to help him harvest the apples, pears and plums. We both enjoyed eating the wonderful greengage plums which were not forbidden fruits, neither of us have ever found such marvellous tasting plums since those days. I did invent an imaginary family using our dolls and soft toys as our children, Janice shared my stories about them when we went to bed, it puzzled Mrs Moore who wondered what we found to talk about when we should have been going to sleep, I even drew pictures of the imaginary house in which we all lived happily.

I did look forward to going back to School after the Summer break when I moved into the senior class. There were new interesting text books to read and new exercise books to cover in pieces of wallpaper I enjoyed reading the history and geography

books through to the end before the lessons relating to the stories and I particularly liked the books containing extracts from the classical works from books such as 'Lorna Doone' and 'The Mill on the Floss' I had very little reading material of my own at home apart from a few books given to me by my Mother as Christmas presents. Towards the last year of the War Mum did buy for us Enid Blyton's 'Sunny Stories' a monthly magazine which she brought with her when she came visiting, these were eagerly awaited, I read the stories to Janice as she was having difficulty learning to read.

Mrs Moore's yearly routine continued throughout the year, the jam making season carried on into the Autumn and then it was time for the pig to be killed which provided many more jobs for her. The pig was taken to the slaughterhouse during a weekday when we were at school, I don't know how it was transported, the next thing Janice and I discovered was one whole side of the pig laid out on the scullery floor ready to be salted and cured and all its innards in a large bowl. The other side was left with the local butcher who also owned the slaughterhouse, there were probably government rules concerning pig keeping which I knew nothing about. She spent several weeks preparing the meat with saltpetre and had to turn the carcase over at intervals to cure both sides. Meanwhile she made meals of pig's fry which included liver, heart, kidney sweetbread (?the pancreas) and something called lights which I believe were parts of the lungs, Janice and I enjoyed those meals which made a change to the usual fare. She also made pork pies many of which she sold to her customers. Then there was a huge amount of fat to be rendered down to make lard enough to fill a large enamel bowl which she stored away for the coming year and used for cooking. Another meal which I didn't appreciate so much was chitterlings, these were the pig's intestines which had been thoroughly washed and boiled, they were eatable if one didn't think too much about where they came from. Nothing was wasted, the pig's head was cooked and the trotters which needed a lot of scrubbing before being boiled and eaten for another meal and of course there was roast pork for dinner for several days while the unsalted meat was fresh. The pig's stomach lining was carefully prepared and used as tripe which I didn't like. After the side of the pig had been fully cured it was cut into hams covered in stockinette and hung on stout hooks on the living room walls for several months into the next Summer season. The ham which we had for breakfast every morning was very nice much better than any ham I have tasted in my subsequent life time. Although Mrs Moore was not usually a good cook her meals made from the pig were excellent.

As Christmas approached there were other jobs to be done. Several weeks before the event there were Christmas puddings and mincemeat to be made and Janice and I were expected to help by stoning the raisins and removing small stalks from the currants while Mrs Moore prepared the apples which had to be cut into very small pieces mainly for the mincemeat which was laborious work taking up nearly all day to complete. The puddings would then be mixed with the other ingredients put into basins, covered in muslin and tied with string then I think that they were boiled for several hours in the scullery copper wash boiler. I am sure that they would not have been boiled on the kitchen fire as were vegetables, as it would have been impractical for hours at a time and there was no other means of cooking them.

Christmas time at the Moore's was not very exciting except for the fact that Mum was invited for the day, I presume the buses were still running on Christmas day as she could not have been accommodated overnight at the Moore's home and I only ever remember her being with us on that day apart from her monthly Sunday visits.

Mum was the only person who gave us any presents, Mrs Moore never bought presents for anyone, for Janice and myself she gave items of her own which were given to us, usually something useful .

The Christmas dinner was disappointing especially for Mum as she was expecting a beautifully roasted chicken. We did have chicken but it was an old hen past its egg laying days and Mrs Moore cooked it in a small quantity of water in a shallow dish in the oven after cutting it into joints, there was no flavouring to improve the taste and the vegetables were usually over cooked. We did enjoy the Christmas pudding and mince pies. I don't remember a Christmas cake, there may have been one, an undecorated fruit cake. The highlight of one particular Christmas Day was when snow lay on the ground, Janice and I went for a walk with Mum over the fields and I still remember the pleasure of being with her and walking over the pristine crunchy frozen snow in the bright sunshine. Even then snow was unusual on Christmas Day. There was always the attendance for the Carol Service at Church in the afternoon which I did enjoy, I loved singing carols which we practised at School during the weeks leading up to Christmas.

There was one 'treat' from Mrs Moore, she lit a fire in the best room where we sat instead of the living room, that room was hardly ever heated so the only time that it was generally used was during the Summer months. She only ever allowed one electric light to be used in the house so during the dark evening the other downstairs rooms were lit only by a very dim night light which was even less than a candle. Going to the outside toilet after dark was rather hazardous so for night time, chamber pots in the bedrooms were used. During the Winter months we lived in the dark and it was dreary and cold, we didn't even have a candle for bedtime. That may have been due to blackout rules as there was no thick curtains or boards at the windows to obscure any light from indoors, in fact we did not draw the curtains as we relied on the moon and the stars to see our way to bed. The only comfort that I remember was when we had our bed warmed by stone hot water bottles on very cold nights. We suffered from chilblains on fingers and toes every Winter.

During the Winter months there was less to do but Mrs Moore was never idle, she knitted socks for all of us and was an expert in the art of shaping the heels, toes and making them fit perfectly round the calf, they were always knee length and were knitted on four fine gauge needles. She never used a pattern, it was a skill she must have learnt as a child and was the legacy of the stocking trade of the 19th century centred around that part of N. Warwickshire and Leicestershire. I also did quite a lot of knitting which was taught in the Infants class at School. When I was 10 and 11 years old I knitted dolls clothes from odd bits of wool, I could not obtain patterns for those clothes so the shapings had to come out of my head with some strange results at times. I did find a pattern for a baby's matinee coat and decided to divide all the rows and numbers of stitches by 4 to fit my doll Elizabeth, it fitted very well and impressed Mrs Moore who told my Mother on her next visit. It was rare for me to receive praise from Mrs Moore. For the war effort we were all encouraged to make do and mend, there was hardly any wool for sale so it was common to unpick knitted garments, wash the wool and then re-knit it into something else. I unpicked an adult woolly and reknitted it into a cardigan for myself following verbal instructions from Mrs Moore about shaping and size. It fitted O.K. but I never liked it.

The only new wool available was given to us at School to knit articles for Service men in the armed forces such as scarves, mittens and Balaclava helmets. All us girls in the Junior class did some of this knitting, the beginners did scarves ranging to the older girls knitting socks. I knitted a scarf and a Balaclava helmet. It was suggested that we enclosed with our knitted items our names and addresses and we all hoped

that we might get a reply from the recipient, one girl did from a soldier, a nice thank you letter.

Another occupation for the Winter months was making rag rugs for the living room floor. These were made from strips of thick fabric and sewn onto sacking. The strips of cloth were taken from old Winter clothes and it was rather a tedious job cutting up the short strips of fabric about half an inch wide and several inches long (I can't remember how long) Mrs Moore did the sewing. Some people used a tool for 'pegging' the strips through the sacking but she had a quicker way of sewing them on the sewing machine. Nearly everyone had a pegged rug in front of the fire in their living rooms, ready made rugs were kept for the sitting room and bedrooms.

As the Winter came to an end and Spring was in the air, it was Spring cleaning time. That was a major operation and took several weeks. Every room was thoroughly cleaned, every drawer and cupboard turned out, clothes checked for moth holes and furniture checked for woodworm, any new worm holes were treated with creosote which seemed to be quite effective. Mrs Moore made her own polish, a mixture of beeswax and turpentine, a lovely smell. She started with the bedrooms and worked her way through every room taking about a week for each one, Janice and I quite enjoyed that time as we were able to sort through the stored articles that were not usually seen during the rest of the year. In one of the drawers Mrs Moore had a collection of Victorian underwear which she had worn when a young girl, a pair of divided 'drawers' these were knickers with legs to the knees and an unstitched opening at the back for toilet purposes, another pair had a flap which had to be unbuttoned and let down for the same purposes. These knickers did not need to be taken down they were tied round the waist with tape and were trimmed with Broderie Anglaise lace. These amused us and Mrs Moore shared our amusement, she did have a sense of humour at times.

Another item of interest were her gold sovereigns, hidden among the underwear. No nook or cranny was left untouched and the house smelled wonderfully clean when it was finished. All this frenzy of Spring cleaning had to be completed before the soft fruits began to ripen as there was no time later.

Easter was the next festival in the calendar. During Lent the whole School went to Church every Wednesday morning starting on Ash Wednesday. We all trooped over School Lane and through the Churchyard in a long crocodile for a service in the very cold Church, it was not thought to be necessary to heat the Church for a short service just for School children. The Church was normally only heated on Sundays and at Christmas time.

I don't think any of us understood what the Vicar was talking about although we did know why we were there, he didn't seem to make any allowances for the fact that we were children and talked way over our heads, those services were particularly boring and dreary, we were glad to be back in our comparatively warm classrooms.

Janice and I helped Mrs Moore and the other ladies of the village to decorate the Church for Easter with daffodils and other Spring flowers, pieces of string were tied round the stone pillars and it was our job to push single flowers behind the string. In my opinion, even then I thought it looked a bit amateurish, not at all artistic.

Most of the girls in the village had new Easter bonnets and Mrs Moore insisted that Janice and I should have them as well, she instructed Mum to buy new ones each year which Mum thought were a waste of money. The bonnets were made of straw and trimmed with small artificial flowers in pastel colours and tied under the chin with ribbons. They were fashionable in the 1930's when the Royal princesses wore them

but the fashion had died out in towns during the 1940's, girls living in rural societies still wore them. They were pretty when first worn for Church on Easter morning but as the weather was usually rather chilly they didn't quite go with Winter coats, it was too cold for Summer dresses. Those bonnets were then worn during the rest of the Summer season when dressed up for Sunday Church.

There was one occasion when we were taken by Mum to her home in Coventry for the weekend and she took us to Leamington Spa. She tried diplomatically to get us to leave our bonnets at home as she was embarrassed to take us out in them to a fashionable place in Jephson Gardens. I asked innocently 'Why?' not understanding that they were old fashioned and not worn those days. Anyway we didn't argue and left them at home. Poor Mum had another embarrassing moment when we were sitting on the grass in the Park with our legs out-stretched showing the soles of our shoes to every passer by that they were mended with pieces of car tyres, she tried to get us to tuck our feet away out of sight. She never complained to Mrs Moore about our appearance as she didn't want to quarrel with her and cause friction between us all, being that she has the full care of Janice and myself and as I have mentioned before Mrs Moore had a very strong dominating character.

Social Occasions.

Although Mrs Moore felt herself to be socially above the average village people she did join in the activities and festivals as all levels of society took part especially if they were to do with fund raising for the war effort, it would have been seen as unpatriotic not to do so. I'm not sure that she always enjoyed them except the religious festivals. During the second half of the war, in the Summer months, a garden fete was held in the garden of the Squire. This was the culmination of a week of fund raising activities for each of the Services, 'Salute the Soldier Week', 'Wings for Victory' and 'Warship Week'.

We gave money for the National Savings. During the special weeks a big effort was encouraged to give much more money. There was competition between the local villages as to who could save the most. A timber door was placed in the village square painted white and an image of a large thermometer painted on it which showed the total amount saved in Wolvey. The target amount seemed always to have been achieved. We enjoyed the Garden fetes and the weather was usually dry and sunny as far as I can remember. There was a fancy dress parade for the children, we all took part, the theme was red white and blue. Some people were very imaginative but not Mrs Moore, she did find enough items of our normal everyday clothes to dress Janice and myself in patriotic colours. One little girl was dressed as a 'Squander bug' which was a comic character in the shape of a bug with a tail and ears looking a little like a small devil. This character was designed to discourage people from wasting their money on unnecessary items. The girl's mother made a very good job of making the costume and it won the prize.

There were plenty of side shows one in particular amused me, it was a mock coffin supposedly containing the body of Hitler and contestants were invited to knock a nail in it, the person who knocked in a nail closest to the heart was the winner.

There were refreshments, tea and home made cakes etc. It was amazing what people could do with their rations.

Throughout the war years we were encouraged to buy National Savings stamps. Every Monday morning at School we took our pennies to buy stamps and stuck them in our stamp books. When a book was full, a National Savings certificate was issued,

I think the amount was about 15 shillings. These certificates were our savings and were cashed in some time after the war ended.

The other social activities were mainly religious festivals. I have mentioned Easter, the next one was the Flower service usually held in June or July. I particularly enjoyed that Sunday and Mr and Mrs Moore made quite a lot of money from the sale of their flowers. The garden was stripped of Roses and any other showy flowers, there was a steady stream of people coming to the back door to buy them on that Sunday morning. Janice and I were left with the less interesting flowers, I would have loved to have carried a bunch of Roses. On that Sunday afternoon all the children paraded in their best Summer clothes the girls wearing dresses and bonnets and took their flowers to Church where they were placed near the altar while the congregation sang some very cheerful hymns especially written for the occasion celebrating the beauties of the earth.

A similar routine was followed in September for the Harvest festival except that the gifts were fruit and vegetables, again the Moores sold a lot of their produce. The following Monday evening there was an auction of the items collected which took place in our Schoolroom. We were taken to watch the proceedings which was quite a novelty for us as we did not normally go out after dark, it was still daylight when we set out, the auction started about 7-0pm but it was dark by the time we left so we had to walk back in the blackout. Before the day of the festival Janice and I helped Mrs Moore to decorate the Church with Autumn flowers.

During December there was the Sunday School Party held in the Village Hall which was situated only a 'stones throw' from our home in the Village Square. We sat at a long trestle table which was covered in goodies, the party food was very good considering rationing, there was jelly, blancmange, bread and butter, cakes and lemonade. After the meal prizes were given for regular attendance at Sunday School throughout the year. In 1944 I was presented with a prayer book which contained all the hymns, I still have it.. I used it thereafter for every Church service until I left Wolvey the next year. The only disappointment of that prize giving was the fact that the Church official did not write inside the cover of the book my correct Christian name, he called me Mary instead of Pat. I felt annoyed that he didn't know my name. I had been attending Sunday School and Church for four years and I expected that person to know who I was

There was one mildly disturbing incident that happened during that Party, a man who was helping with the tea party came round each child feeling our stomachs to see if we had enough to eat, I didn't like it but said nothing as at the time, it was a perfectly innocent thing to do. I don't think that would be acceptable behaviour these days.

. During the last two years of the war in the Autumn /Winter months there were occasional amateur concert parties who came to the Village Hall to entertain us and we really enjoyed them. I presume there was a dance school somewhere in our area as included in the programme were girls tap dancing and ballet. I liked the ballet particularly it caught my imagination which later developed and I became a ballet fan in my early teenage years back in Coventry

The Village Hall was a community facility which was also used for other groups of people such as the Women's Institute and the Mothers Union Once a month during an evening the sound of the members singing 'Jerusalem' at their meetings drifted over the village square from those who belonged to the Women's Institute, Mrs Moore was a member, during those meetings she learnt about canning fruit and vegetables and how to make do and mend old clothes to help the war effort, Although she was a 'dab hand' at re-cycling clothes she did learn a little more to make her

efforts look smarter. She could not belong to the Mothers Union as she did not have children of her own, being a foster mother was nor acceptable. The annual medical inspections for all School children were held in the village hall as were the baby clinics.

I remember particularly the arrival of new evacuees from London around 1944 when the enemy used V1 and V2 unmanned rockets to bomb the City. Most children had returned home by that year as it was considered to be safe, so there was a need to arrange another emergency mass evacuation as there was even more danger. There was no warning of where or when the rockets would strike, no chance of sheltering. This must have happened during the Summer holidays as Janice and I spent all day looking out of our bedroom window waiting for their arrival at the village hall where they were met by volunteer foster parents and divided out between them. This did not happen until the evening. I took a particular interest in that event, I no longer felt like an evacuee and belonged to the village so I was interested to see what these alien children looked like. I don't remember any of them at School, they must have attended at some time or were they educated separately? I don't think that they stayed very long. After seeing them arrive in the village square I have forgotten about them.

I mentioned earlier when relating the account about living with the Ramptons that I had joined the Brownies. For the first few months especially during the Winter, I only attended the Church parades which happened occasionally. During the long Summer evenings, I was by then living with the Moores, we did have weekly meetings in the garden of the Girl Guide leader. She had a large detached house just out of the village but we never met in her house, I don't remember what happened during wet weather when we didn't go to Brownies, there was probably no meeting at all. I did acquire a uniform, I do not know who supplied it. I was never properly enrolled before the whole Brownie group was disbanded due to Brown Owl's family commitments. I did enjoy belonging to the Brownies, we played team games, went tracking through the fields which was great fun, and learnt to be responsible little girls. . Every meeting we would each tell Brown Owl how we had helped our Mothers with the housework. One Summer evening myself and another girl of my age collected waste paper for the War effort, we pushed an old pram from house to house including some of the farm houses out of the village. We must have walked several miles, the sun was setting by the time we had finished. As the light was fading we imagined that we were being watched by a man who looked over the hedge some way behind us, 'he' quickly withdrew his head but this vision frightened us and we started to run home as quickly as possible there was nobody else about and no traffic passing even though it was a main road. During the summer months the evenings were very long as the clocks were forwarded 2 hours, we were told it was to help the farmers with the hay making etc. in June it stayed light until 11.0 pm. One very memorable evening we had a camp fire with the Girl Guides in a field next to the Guide leaders home, it was a beautiful balmy Summer evening. We Brownies were sent to collect sticks from the hedges so that the Guides could make the fire and then fry our supper. We had the most wonderful eggs and bacon eaten while sitting around the camp fire, the eggs would have been fresh from the local farm and the bacon home cured. That was followed, I seem to remember, by a sing song then we dispersed as the light faded. I was very sorry that the Brownies were disbanded, I missed those evenings out and I enjoyed the company of the other girls. Janice was not old enough to be a Brownie, I think the starting age was 7 years old.

Mrs Moore did have her special friends, middle class ladies. Janice and I always accompanied her when we were not at School. We were expected to sit quietly while they chatted about people, family and ailments. I did not find this tedious as I learned quite a lot about village life and people's problems, I don't remember Janice complaining either she just sat quietly, in fact we were complimented on our behaviour by a particularly nice lady, named Mrs Gately. She lived in an imposing double fronted house in the Square with her husband a retired farmer. They were probably in their 70's at the time. Their life style was very Edwardian, Mrs Gately wore long black skirts, her sitting room was packed with furniture, nick nacks and plants, typically Victorian. Mr Gately had a wonderful collection of exotic plants in his conservatory including a miniature orange tree which I found fascinating and a very nice walled garden beautifully kept. Mrs Gately complained bitterly when her front iron railings were taken away for the war effort as scrap metal and the local children used the low brick wall which was left as a place to congregate, she was always chasing them away. Many homes and public parks lost their iron railings as the authorities wanted all the metal that they could find to re-cycle for war weapons which caused a lot of resentment.

Another lady that we often visited was Mrs Johnson who I have mentioned before as being the lady who was responsible for finding foster parents for us She had a niece who was a neighbour and friend of Mum's, it was through her that we came to be living in Wolvey. Mrs Johnson lived alone in a large detached house out of the village, she was a widow and probably in her 60's at the time. This poor lady had a partial obstruction of her oesophagus which was not malignant but prevented much of her food passing it and she was losing weight quite rapidly, I was told that she was once a big lady and had lost so much weight that she was almost skeletal when we knew her. This did not prevent her from caring for her brother and sister at different times who died in her home from cancer. Listening to these stories gave me an insight into the lack of health and welfare facilities before the National Health Service and modern medicine and surgery I have never forgotten the quiet fortitude with their suffering. Mrs Johnson had money enough to pay for treatment and surgery but the medical knowledge was lacking and families were expected to care for their sick relatives. Poorer people had to put up with their health problems some of which were horrendous. Mrs Moore did feel sorry for some people who she decided were deserving of her help. She visited people who had heart conditions and were confined to sitting in their arm chairs day after day with huge oedematous legs greatly swollen and leaking fluid which stank. She would take old cotton sheets which she tore into bandages to bind up those horrible wet ulcers. There was one man who had suffered a stroke and was paralysed down one side and unable to speak, he was confined to bed and was cared for by his relatives who lived nearby and visits from the District Nurse. In those days there was no rehab. so stroke victims just lay there until they died. I learned a lot from visiting those people and I became more determined to be a Nurse. I was in awe of the District Nurse who worked alone and never seemed to have any time off, she was always available for the sick and to deliver babies being the sole Nurse midwife for the village.

There was one other person Mrs Moore occasionally visited, a single lady who had a daughter about my own age. This young woman lived in a small home close to the centre of the village, I don't remember whether it was a caravan or a converted railway carriage and she received some of our garden produce. I was curious as to why this lady did not have the title of Mrs when she had a child and I enquired as to why? but I was met with a stony silence and a stern face, obviously the woman must

have been involved in a scandal but Mrs Moore felt sorry for her so I presume no blame was attached to her.

There was one other incident that I remember. There was a single elderly lady living in a cottage in School Lane. This lady was normally quite independent but she was taken ill and Mrs Moore got to know about her problem, this woman could not get out to the village pump to get any water due to her illness and did not have a water supply of her own on the property so she was without water, a very serious problem. Mrs Moore asked Janice and myself to take a bucket of water from our pump to her home. There was a walk of about 100 yards. round the corner from our home and between us we could not carry more than half a bucket of water so the lady had only enough for drinking and cooking purposes but it was better than nothing. This went on for a few days when the School Headmaster noticed what was going on and thereafter shamed the older boys into taking over from us. No one else seems to have noticed her predicament.

The health and welfare of children was well covered from birth to School leaving age as far as general health was concerned. The State organised Health visitors and annual School medical inspections, especially for those of us who were evacuees. Although Janice and I were privately evacuated we were registered the same all the other evacuees. We had visits from a Health visitor while we were at Miss Rowley's, her visits were resented by all of us as being intrusive, she was critical of Miss Rowley's lack of a fire guard which was reasonable but somehow I knew that neither of us would touch the fire and we managed very well without that protection and no accidents. This 'busy body' of a woman suggested that I give some of my toys to poor children which I deeply resented, my precious toys given to me by my London aunties, the Christmas of 1938, including my beautiful piano.

Every year all School children were examined by the School Doctor and we had visits from a mobile dental service. The dentists were young women whose main job was to extract teeth which were supposed to be decayed, I'm sure that they must have been paid by the number of teeth extracted, our good milk teeth. I never suffered from toothache and I dreaded their visits, the experience put me off dentistry for many years. I am not sure that those women were completely trained, they did not do fillings or any other treatments. The last year of the war the School medical services singled out evacuees for special inspection as there were scandals in the newspapers about the ill treatment and abuse of a few evacuees living in remote farm houses with foster parents who treated them as slaves. The Doctor and Nurse commented on my small slim stature and the fact that I was nervous and asked me questions in Mrs Moore's presence, if I was happy living with her, I obviously answered yes, but they looked doubtful, no more was said.

If we were ill visits to a Doctor were not free so they were avoided unless absolutely necessary the only 'free' treatment was for working men who were the breadwinners of families and they contributed regular sums of money to a Sick Club to cover illness or injuries, it was called being 'on the panel' Mr Moore belonged to a Club and visited the Doctor in the next village, he suffered from recurrent bouts of bronchitis in the Winter months. That Doctor did hold a Surgery in Wolvey renting a room in a cottage about twice a week but Mrs Moore did not approve of the woman who lived there and never visited it, preferring her own remedies. Fortunately neither Janice or myself were ever ill enough to need seeing a Doctor during the 6 years that we lived in Wolvey.. Mrs Moore's remedies consisted of Beecham's powders for colds and fevers , a herbal preparation called Higginson's ointment for wounds clean or infected. and Senna pods boiled to make into a drink for constipation.

Mr Moore's Doctor recommended a 'pneumonia jacket' to keep his chest warm during the Winter months so she made a garment shaped like a tabard made of a medicated wadding called 'Thermogene' it seems to have been effective.

Both of us had the usual childhood infections, Measles, Chicken pox and Mumps without any complications. There was a great fear among parents of Diphtheria which was often fatal in those days but fortunately it did not arise in Wolvey although we did hear about it in neighbouring villages. There was one child a little girl of 7 years old who died of meningitis in the Leicester Infirmary. I heard that she was given Penicillin in an attempt to save her but to no avail, that was the first time many of us had ever heard of Penicillin considered a wonder drug..

When I was about 6 and 7 years old I was often falling down causing abrasions on my knees, these were always bandaged over a cotton dressing and it was thought necessary to bathe them every day, the dressings and bandages often slipped causing them to aggravate the wounds and they often took much longer to heal than if left alone. I still have a scar on my left knee from a deep abrasion.

Progress of the War.

From the age of 10 I took a much deeper interest in the progress of the war, especially from D Day, June 1944. Before that time there was very little activity which affected us children after the worst of the bombing raids were over. There were still sporadic raids over Coventry but my Mother thought it safe enough to have us at home with her for the occasional weekend after the time that we moved to live with the Moores. One night while staying with Mum there was a raid, not a bad one. Janice and I slept under the dining room table, Grandma slept in that room as well, permanently as she was bed-ridden. Mum must have slept in a chair all night. We found it quite exciting listening to the sound of gunfire, there were no bombs dropped anywhere near us. In a field within easy walking distance from Mum's home in Wyke Rd there was a battery of anti-aircraft guns, it must have been those that we heard that night.

While still living with Miss Rowley I sometimes saw long convoys of army vehicles travelling along the main road through the village. When coming and going from School at lunch time I had to be careful to cross the road before the convoy came close, if I didn't I could have been held up for at least 15 minutes, it seemed longer to me, fortunately the convoy could be heard rumbling in the distance before it actually appeared so I took advantage of those few minutes to cross the road

The months before D Day there was added activity with the arrival of the American army, they had even longer convoys. The children of the village were very excited by the 'Yanks' as the soldiers threw out sweets and chewing gum to the crowds of children who gathered when they heard the rumble of the approach of a large convoy. When I was alone they never threw anything for me, I think they liked a crowd and to watch the children scramble for the goodies.

One day during playtime when we were at School we heard the familiar sound of a convoy and most of the children, mainly boys rushed out of the playground through the Churchyard to reach the main road just as the convoy was passing. I didn't join them as I knew I had no chance of getting anything in that rough scramble. The headmaster was very angry with everyone that left the School premises and punished all of them with a stroke of the cane on their hands while the rest of us watched. It was probably about two thirds of our class, he lined them up around the senior classroom caning everyone of them, I was very glad that I was not involved. I never had the cane during all of my School days.

Every day, prior to D Day, during the late afternoons bomber planes flew very low over our garden having taken off from nearby Bramcote aerodrome to fly to Germany to bomb the arranged targets, often the big cities. They flew so low that we could see the pilots sitting in the cockpits and waved to them. There would have been about ten to twenty of them at a time, I never actually counted them. I seem to remember that those flights carried on almost to the end of the war.

During the build up of forces ready for D Day was when I started to read the newspapers, usually the 'Daily Mail'. Mrs Moore's brother used to pass on to us magazines 'The Picture Post' and the 'Illustrated' which had many excellent photos of the war both of military activity and home affairs. I learnt a lot from the pictures and accompanying stories. We did not listen to the radio as Mrs Moore did not like it, if Mr Moore wanted to listen to an important announcement he had to have the sound on very low and put his ear to the speaker so that only he could hear it. From D Day onwards maps of France were published daily on the front page of the newspaper to show the progress of advancement of the allies, I was quite disappointed if the line stalled at a particular time as it did during the Battle of the Bulge when there was heavy enemy resistance, it seemed to go backwards in one area. I was excited when they reached the German border and then to Berlin and the end of the war.

As we lived in the centre of Wolvey in the Square we had a good vantage point to see everything that was going on. The last year of the war we saw groups of Italian prisoners being dropped off a lorry accompanied by one guard in the Square to work on the local farms and picked up at the end of the working day by the same transport and taken back to their camp. They wore their brown uniforms with large coloured patches on their backs to make them more visible as prisoners, they all seemed very casual, smoking and talking among themselves and the guard appeared unconcerned that any of them might abscond, he was generally smoking as well and appeared relaxed.

Towards the end of the war there were also German prisoners used for farm work and they also seemed very casual but looked a bit different as they had grey uniforms not a bit like the German soldiers as seen in 'Picture Post' I think I expected them to appear aggressive but they were behaving in the same casual manner as the Italian prisoners.

There was a very nice surprise for us evacuees during the last months of the war, a smartly dressed man came to our door bringing us presents from the American people. In the bag were the most wonderful boxes of sweets that we had ever seen and thick colouring books and coloured pencils. The colouring books were more than 4 times thicker than any that I had seen in Britain even before the war. I spent many hours colouring the pictures..

During the months in 1945 leading up to the end of the war in May, life was becoming easier.. Mrs Moore actually allowed me to play out with other children after a snowfall. I joined in sledging down a lane within the village which had a slight incline and thoroughly enjoyed myself. I don't remember Janice being with me at the time. We had our bicycles which Mum had bought second hand from people in Coventry who placed advertisements in the local paper. We had to manage with one bike for a few months and share it between us until another could be found. I had learnt to ride it within our garden not being allowed out until I could ride safely.

I soon became very proficient, it was a wonderful feeling to ride along the country lanes, no traffic, I was even able to ride without holding onto the handlebars along those deserted lanes. We were never out un-accompanied by Mrs Moore, she rode her 'sit up and beg' bicycle sedately behind us.

The bikes were also very useful when we visited Mrs Moore's brother in Hinckley, four miles away. While we had only the one bike, Janice and I had to take turns to ride it that distance, which meant that one of us had to run behind Mrs Moore who was on her bicycle and for me in turn to run behind Janice as she rode ours., fortunately that did not last very long before the second bike arrived.

Mum continued to visit us once a month and brought with her our children's magazine, Enid Blyton's 'Sunny Stories' I looked forward with anticipation to the next issue. I loved the stories and read her books well into my early teens

I developed a friendship with a girl called Marjorie Howe who was a farmer's daughter. She was also rather quiet and studious, about my own age. I was invited to her Birthday tea. There was the usual jelly and blancmange etc. and then she showed me round the farm. She and her young sister seemed subdued, apparently they had to work very hard helping on the farm as there were no labourers. Marjorie had to help with the milking before coming to School, there was no time for her to play. I did have one pleasure during my visit I fed a new lamb with a bottle and was surprised at the strength of the way it sucked at the teat I had to pull back the bottle otherwise it would have slipped out of my hands.

Her parents were not satisfied with the standard of education at Wolvey School, they managed to get a place for her in Nuneaton Grammar School . I missed her very much as there was little opportunity to see each other again and I was very jealous of her being able to go there. I was aware of the limitations of education in Wolvey and realising that I would not advance any further than that which was taught by Mr Beck our teacher/Headmaster. Fortunately it was during the last year of living in Wolvey.

During April of that Year when the allies were moving rapidly through Germany there were some very disturbing photographs on the front pages of the newspapers with horrific stories of a German concentration camp. The pictures showed people behind barbed wire looking like living skeletons in striped clothing, these were the first pictures taken as British soldiers reached the Belsen camp to release them. There were also pictures of dead people clearly visible. When Mrs Moore looked at the pictures and read the story her re-action shocked me. I can 'see her now' standing close to the window to catch the bright sunlight holding the newspaper and peering at them, she then said "And it's a good job, there are too many people in this world" I was profoundly shocked by what she said but said nothing but in my mind I thought of her as a hypocrite. She professed to be a good Christian woman and never missed going to Church, I also believed that she was a good person but that remark changed my mind and I even had doubts about religion itself. How could she say such a thing? In hindsight I don't think she actually took in what she was looking at and didn't have any idea about the situation as a whole. I was barely 12 years old and understood more than she did. Mr Moore was not in the room at the time, he would also have been shocked as well but would not have remonstrated with her as one didn't contradict Mrs Moore, he would have known very well what can happen during wartime having served during WW1. Her attitude to the plight of those prisoners affected my beliefs in Christianity. After leaving Wolvey I stopped going to Church, anyway Mum was not a regular Church goer.

Prior to the end of the war some of our Prisoners of war were repatriated for health reasons. There was great excitement about the return of 2 local men from camps in Germany. Flags and bunting were brought out of storage to decorate the route into the village to welcome them back home. We were not present on their return so did not share in the general feeling of happiness. I did not know the two men, not even their names.

On the day the war ended May 8th, we did not realise it until the evening as we never had the radio on. It happened on that warm evening when I was idly standing on the cross bar of the garden gate when a lady who lived across the road from us was putting up bunting on the outside of her father in law's house, opposite to ours and I heard her tell a passer by that the war was over. I immediately went indoors to tell Mr and Mrs Moore. It was all a bit of an anti-climax for me, there was no excitement shown by them but they were pleased. I think they had a Union jack and some bunting to decorate the house, I don't really remember anything out of the ordinary that happened for the next few days and weeks, I missed the general excitement of the local population.

I think that there was a Victory Parade after VE day. One weekend Mr Moore was all dressed up wearing his World War 1 medals and he was away for the afternoon. Mrs Moore did not attend it so Janice and I missed a memorable occasion.

There were plans being made. In June there was a day of celebration. On a lovely Summer's day all the village children had a Victory party which was held in a field adjacent to our School grounds. We all sat at the usual trestle tables which were laden with goodies, cakes, lemonade, jelly, blancmange and bread and butter. It was only then that I felt the war was really over and that we might be going home to Coventry. After the tea party there were games and competitions, egg and spoon races, sack races etc. One particular competition that I do remember was mainly for the adults and older boys. A piglet was let loose to run away chased by everyone competing, the person who caught it was the winner and kept the piglet as a prize. I was vaguely concerned about the poor little piglet, it must have been very frightened, it ran very quickly through hedges and ditches which added to the excitement of the crowd. I was generally hardened to the treatment of farm animals not caring much about hearing the squealing of pigs slaughtered at our local Butcher's slaughterhouse and happily ate the meat products of our own pig. I suppose living in the country for 6 years I became used to the way animals were treated which was normal in a farming community, no one was deliberately cruel they were just not sentimental about them. My attitudes have changed since those days.

Village life was gradually returning to a pre-war routine which was new to me. There was a Sunday School outing to Billing Aquadrome in Northamptonshire when the old bus was taken out of 'mothballs' and used to take us there. I found that outing particularly wonderful, I had never seen a swimming pool before and did not possess a swimming costume but I enjoyed watching everyone else and the journey there and back.

Our return to Coventry was delayed until early November the same year. Mum had lodgers in her home, a married, couple, refugees from Jersey and our Grandmother was still at home bed-ridden in the dining room. During the intervening months Grandma was admitted to Hospital and the lodgers returned to Jersey which was not liberated until right at the end of the war. Before they went home they convinced Mum that Grandma would not be coming out of Hospital ever again which proved to be right as she died the following February in 1946. Mum then had room for us to return home and I was old enough to be left at home with Janice during the daytime

when she was at work. She worked 5 days a week and Saturday mornings. I was then 12 years old.

The month of October prior to our return I had a wonderful time. Due to the shortage of labour on local farms all children aged 12 and over in rural areas were allowed time off School to help with the potato harvest. That was a Government initiative. As I had my bicycle I was able to join my fellow class mates and go potato picking for about 3 weeks, cycling between the local farms that needed help. Mostly the weather was fairly benign, there were early morning frosts and misty mornings but I do not remember any really bad weather. I loved setting out early in the mornings with the other children, about 12 of us. I appreciated the freedom and enjoyed their company, I was part of a team and I loved it and was sorry when it was all over and the potatoes safely gathered in. They were stored in the fields under straw and a layer of soil to protect them from frost. The work was not hard, we were all given a bucket in which to put the potatoes and asked to pick them up as they were uncovered by the machine which was drawn by a tractor and dug them up onto the surface. When the bucket was full we would take it to the potato 'camp' the name given to the store in the field to be covered up by the farm labourers.

We just worked steadily, were not rushed and we behaved ourselves. At dinner time we took our packed lunches and either sat under a hedge to eat them or were allowed to sit in the barn on bales of hay. At one farm, the farmer's wife made us a wonderful jug of strong cocoa, the best cocoa I have ever tasted. The toilet facilities were an eye opener for me, some of the farms had cess pits and box structures were built over the edges, they were very draughty when sitting on them. We mostly kept to School hours for working but obviously needed to set out earlier than usual for School to arrive for 9.0am. While working on the farms we had the opportunity to see the farm animals, I especially liked the young calves, not being aware at that time that they were taken from their mothers and probably being reared for veal, they were housed in an enclosure within a large barn. I thought they were very pretty and rather sweet, I am glad that I did not know what would happen to them later.

We were paid a small amount of money for our work, I don't remember how much, anyway Mrs Moore said that I should give it all to her so that she could pass it on to Mum

After that wonderful 3 weeks we were back at School but Janice and I had only 2 or 3 weeks left before returning to Coventry.

During the weekends of the weeks prior to returning to Coventry, Janice and I rode our bicycles to Mum's home, taking with us some of our belongings, mainly toys etc., in baskets which were attached to the front of the handle bars. The distance travelled was about 7 miles. Although we rode along the main road there was still very little traffic only the Midland Red bus which ran between Coventry and Leicester, it ran about every hour. I was very nervous about the bus passing us while we were riding our bikes and hoped that we could complete the journey between the times that it ran, mostly we managed it. I don't remember whether we stayed for the rest of the weekend or returned the same afternoon.

Meanwhile Mum had written to the Headmaster informing him that we would be leaving at the beginning of November.

A few days before we left he actually spoke to me about life living with Mr and Mrs Moore and said that we would be happier living with our own Mother again in Coventry.

He had once been a lodger with the Moores before his marriage and knew what it was like to live there.

The day came when we finally moved back to Coventry travelling in the usual way on our bikes, it was about November 8th. 1945.

It took a long time to adjust to a new School life and the children who were very different from those living in Wolvey. I did pass a 13+ examination in 1947 to attend a Technical School to study Commercial subjects for two years, that pleased me but it was not a Grammar School for which I still yearned and I still envied those girls who attended it.