

## MEMORIES OF A CARBROOKE WAR BRIDE

I don't know exactly what you would be interested in but as a World War II bride I can tell you a little about growing up in that era.

As you probably know war broke out for Gt Britain on 3 Sept. 1939. The USA joined the Allies in 1942 after being attacked at Pearl Harbor Dec. 7 1941.

Gt Britain declared war on Germany after they marched into Czechoslovakia. Neville Chamberlain (our Prime Minister) gave a speech that we were going to declare war on Germany. I remember it was Sunny morning and we sat around the dining table and listened to the radio.

I remember we as teenagers expected the Germans to come over and bomb right away, but nothing happened and this continued for 2 or 3 months.

I should preface this by saying that we only lived 1 ½ miles from RAF (Royal Air Force) Base. Eventually the Americans came and took over that Air Base.

An American Pilot said I guess if you just switch off and glide you would be more likely to have gotten on an Air Field more than any other place! There were 37 Air Fields in my county (Norfolk).

After War was declared we were all issued gas masks, they really thought gas would be used (luckily it was not!)

Also, Identity Cards, Books for food, clothing and gasoline! Gasoline was only given to Drs, Priests, Farmers for Farm implements.

This is approx. what we were given- Butter 2 oz., Cheese 2 oz., Sugar 8 oz., Tea 2 oz., 1 egg per week, 4 oz Ham or Bacon.

At 18 years all boys were called up for the Armed Services, Women had to take men's jobs. My father was a Post Master so I was able to get a job as Mail Carrier. My sister took a job in a factory making parts for planes. My younger sister opted to teach school. Geoffrey my brother helped the War Effort by working on a farm. His job was very essential so he was exempted from joining the Forces. All our imports were geared to the War effort- Not food. They worked long hours in the Summer. Brian (my youngest brother) helped the War effort by picking up papers, tins etc. The children enjoyed this to get a break from studying!

All lights had to be blacked out with Black Blinds and taped in Black Tape so no light could be seen from the air. It was a complete Black out. Bicycles lights were taped so the light could not be seen by the Germans.

Also, we had to take classes on Red Cross and Home Nursing in case we were needed in the Medicine Field to assist Drs.



Even older men had to help with the War effort. My Father was a Home Guard and had to go out and check to make sure no lights were shining. Children collected paper, aluminum tins etc.

My Mother took a family in of evacuees from London. Our Priest took in so many children from London so they could get away from the Blitz.

Most towns and villages had an Air Raid Shelter where people had to go when the siren went off! Our family had a private one. I must say we got a little complacent and didn't always go in. We got so many false alarms.

Eventually the Air Base near us got taken over by the American 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force. The Americans flew the Big Bombers Liberators and Flying Fortresses etc as Germany had started to concentrate on the Air Bases and Big Cities.



A Land mine was dropped not too far from us apparently the Germans thought they were Nissan Huts which housed soldiers but they were Chicken Houses.

They had started to concentrate on Big Cities London, Coventry & Norwich. They thought they could break down the will of the people. I remember when they bombed Norwich. It was only 20 miles from our village. It was a sea of fire, that was very close. Many lives were lost!

The Americans joined the Allies in early 1942 after Pearl Harbor. They did the daylight bombing and the English did the night! We were only 1 ½ miles from the base! We could see the planes leaving in perfect formation for Germany but coming back was a different story. They came back usually one at a time Hedge hopping and you tell by the sound of the engine they could hardly get to base.

All Americans were so kind to the children, they gave them candy & gum. The English people opened up their Homes and invited them over for meals & conversation. My Mom & Dad always welcomed them and our priest always invited them to Church activities and English Country Dance Classes.

They did enjoy the Family Life and did enjoy the interaction with the Village People especially talking about their homes in the U.S.

A few things which I remember happening was when we were in the garden a plane flew really low over us. It was a German Plane and you could tell it was in trouble by the sound of its engine. Dad ran in and got his gun and they had already crashed about a 100 yds from us. By the time my Dad got there a farm worker was holding them hostage with a pitch fork. Everyone said we were lucky we didn't get shot at, but they knew they were in serious trouble and were going to crash!

I met my husband at a Dance in 1942- we got married in 1945 just before the War was over. Our means of transportation was bicycles. We used to bike to Theatre and Movies and spent a lot of time playing cards at home. They loved the home life and you can understand that being so far from their home! We did a lot of Dancing English Folk Dancing and Ballroom Dancing too.



My husband went back to the States in the Fall of 1945. After all the troops had returned, then they took the War Brides- the girls who had children went 1<sup>st</sup>. I didn't have any children so went later in 1946. My husband met me in New York. It was August a scorching hot day.

He had found a place to live. So my 1<sup>st</sup> home was in Gray's Bay Wayzata. My oldest child was born the next year and when she was 9 months old I took her back to England for a visit. I had to get back before she was a year otherwise I would have to pay full fare for her. I went back on the "Queen Mary"- it was a beautiful ship.

After a while my husband decided to take advantage of the schooling offered for veterans, he decided to go into creamery management. We also took advantage of the G.I. Loan for a new house. We had two more girls and they were all born in Fairmont, MN, USA. Karen, Cheryl & Lori.

## MEMORIES

I was amazed at the shops, cloths, food etc. How full of things they were. The first thing I did was to send a package of food to Grandma. It arrived at Christmas and what she did was she shared it with all her neighbors.

Another memory I have of the USA was all the cars on the road after coming from a country where virtually NO cars (or very few) only Army Trucks on the roads.

I found American People to be very kind and there were many showers given to me, which I did appreciate!

I did go back to England again when my youngest child was 5 years old, I stayed the entire summer! The girls really enjoyed 3 months with relatives.

Another memory I have is when I went back to England with my daughter at 9 months. Our boat pulled into LeHavre France to let French passengers off. I couldn't help but think when the Allies crossed the Channel all thousands of lives lost there. It looked so bleak with all the Bunkers etc.! To think of the lives which were lost there. I had the same experience when we went to Pearl Harbor. It really makes you think about what those boys did for our country!

I remember one incident which happened in the village. Father George our Priest came up to ask Dad if he had his Belfry key. Dad looked and he did- then he noticed his key was gone! Actually, the bells never rang for services any more during the War as when & if the Germans invaded the Church bells would ring to let people know we were being invaded! To cut a long story short Dad went up the Tower to see who was there. Little figures were walking up there. Everyone thought it was to do with the War but as it turned out Barbara (Father George's daughter) had taken some friends up! It really caused a stir with the villagers. She was really called on the carpet and when my Dad went up to confront her She said I am so glad it is you Mr. Smith and NOT my Dad!!

This is basically what I remember of my years of growing up during World War II.