

IRIS MILLS Remembers.....

EVACUATION TO BRIXHAM

Many evacuees from the London Blitz arrived at Brixham during 1940 and 1941; among them were Iris, Norma, Ernie and Colin Wickenden from Deptford.

'We travelled from London with Rosie and Tommy Dodd, who also lived in Deptford, and Albert Williams from Rotherhithe. As I was the eldest, I was put in charge of them during the journey. Joyce Pither was another girl who was evacuated with us. We were friends.

After arriving at Churston Railway Station, we were taken to Brixham Town Hall, where we were chosen by householders who would provide a home for us. Joyce went to live with a family above a greengrocer's shop on the corner of Mount Pleasant Road. Ernie, Colin and I were taken to live nearby in Anzac House, which had been used for the convalescence of soldiers from Australia and New Zealand during the First World War and later became the Cottage Hotel. We lived with Mr and Mrs Perrett, their son, Reg and daughters, Maud and Doris. Reg was a milkman and he was very well liked.

I went to the National School and remember a boy in my class, Johnny Braddick, although they used to call him 'Snowy', as he had very fair hair. He was a friend of Bill Hickey, an older boy at the Orphan Boys' Home, who used to march the boys to All Saints' Church.

I can remember the bombing raids on Brixham. On one occasion, the coal hulk was sunk. Another time, Norma and I were walking at the Harbour, while a boat was launched from Upham's Yard. We were machine-gunned by a German plane and a Belgian fisherman jumped off a trawler and pushed us to the ground, saving our lives, as the bullets landed next to us on the ground.

We all returned to Deptford after three years. I joined the Women's Land Army and later married, and moved to Kent. Some years after the evacuation, I was in Canterbury and saw a picture of a young marine with his wife and baby in a photographer's shop window. It was the same boy from the Orphan Boys' Home – Bill Hickey. I later saw him come into the Co-op in Canterbury, where I worked for many years, but we never spoke. Thirty years later, my daughter, Marion, married and went to live in Australia. Before she left, we went out for a meal in a pub, where we saw Bill Hickey again and Marion spoke to him. It turned out that he worked for her father-in-law, who was a butcher and she drove him round to deliver the meat! Bill now lives in the village next to mine in Kent.'

Iris has two daughters and remains living in Kent. She has travelled extensively in 35 countries, but still visits Brixham several times each year.