

# Our War Memories

*By Len Hall*

As you are aware, my wife and I live in Perth in Western Australia.

This week I had a call from one of my grandsons named James Hall aged 10 who lives in Hassocks which is in West Sussex.

He told me that he has a school assignment this week and the task is to ask your grandparents for their wartime experiences, I wonder how many of our members have been asked for something like that.

And so I have written down here what my wife and I sent to him yesterday.

I must say that I have heard my wife's story many times but it was only when I put it into writing that I realized just how close our 'Hall dynasty' came to being non-existent.

## **Pam Hall's story:**

This story is about an experience in the life of Pamela Hall during the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war period.

I am now almost 74 years of age and time has made my memory fade a little bit, How ever this following incident is one that I shall never forget.

My most vivid recollection of the war is as follows, and this would have occurred when I was about seven years of age in the year 1945:

My sister Maureen who is a bit older than me and my aunt Doreen and I were walking to the local cemetery to take a bunch of flowers to a relative's grave. At this time we lived in a town called Cheshunt in Hertfordshire. That is where the cemetery is located.

We were all walking along the road and directly behind us was a couple who were a man and a woman, and running along just in front of our group was a small boy aged about 4 years old who was with the couple behind us.

What happened next was that a V1 rocket (commonly called a Doodlebug) dropped to the ground directly behind us, and we never heard or saw it coming as the motor had evidently stopped going several minutes earlier.

We must have all blacked out or lost consciousness due to the blast, because I recovered after a while and saw that my sister Maureen and my aunt Doreen were both laying upon the ground face down.

Immediately behind us all was this enormous bomb crater had appeared, the little boy came running back to us and he asked us where his mummy and daddy were.

They had been directly hit and killed by the bomb and they had just disappeared for ever.

We took the little boy by his hand and we walked to the end of the road and we spoke to a lady whose house had been blasted by the bomb, and all of the windows in her house had been broken. She had badly cut hands from the broken glass.

In a short time an ambulance arrived and they took the little boy away in it, and we never saw him again.

After that we went home and we were met by my mother who had heard about the bomb on the radio news, and she was very pleased to see that we had survived the bomb blast.

We often used to see huge silver coloured barrage balloons that that were tethered to the ground. The object of these balloons was that the heavy cables they were attached to would cut off the wings of the enemy aircraft when they came down low to drop their bombs.

In Cheshunt there were lots of glasshouse where the owners would grow vegetables and at that time the Cheshunt area and the Lea Valley had a lot of Italian prisoners of war (POW's) and they were allowed to walk around the area and they were often employed in the local nurseries so that they could help to produce food.

Many of these Italians actually stayed in the area after the war and married local girls.

### **Len Hall's story:**

Actually because James would not be looking at the Walthamstow Memories site I have also included Bill Bayliss's story about airships as it was just too good to let it go without a mention and I am sure Bill will not object to having his work publicised in West Sussex.

### **Airships**

This first item is all about the First World War which was started in the year 1914 and in those days they used a huge device known as an airship and they were full of helium gas and that is what kept them in the air.

Here is a link to an attack that took place over an area known as Walthamstow which is close to where this years Olympic games are being held.

<http://www.walthamstowmemories.net/pdfs/Bill%20Bayliss%20-%20Walthamstow%20Airship%20Article.pdf>

### **Len Hall**

Now I was born in the year 1937 which was just before the Second World War began so I was just a baby when it started.

However there are a few things I do remember because this war went on for many years between Great Britain and Germany and later America joined in as an ally to Great Britain and Japan joined in as an Ally to Germany.

Because Germany could not get their army across the English Channel they had to resort to the use of aircraft to carry bombs which they would drop upon known factories in Britain that were producing guns and ammunition.

They also dropped bombs upon townships so that they would break the spirit of the British people.

They never did this of course and the ordinary people who were not in the army would have to go to an air raid shelter which was usually far under the ground so that they were safe from bombs.

Sometimes they would take their blankets and go and sleep in an underground railway station so that the bombs could not kill them.

When they returned home after the air raid it was often to find their homes had been destroyed by a bomb.

Many homes had their own air raid shelters in the back garden and these would be made of concrete and iron and the family would spend the night there usually in safety but if a bomb fell directly onto the shelter they would all be killed.

These garden shelters were known as 'Anderson Shelters' and another type of shelter was used inside the house and they were called 'Morrison shelters' they were about the size of a huge dining table and they were made out of steel and around the outside there was steel mesh so that pieces of the house could not bounce into the family if they were taking shelter from an air raid.

Towards the end of the war the Germans developed two types of Rocket powered bomb known as V1 and V2 rockets. The V1 was commonly known as a 'Doodlebug' but I don't know why that was.

The V1 was black and it had wings and it did not have a pilot but it was aimed at a destination in Britain where it would do the most damage.

The only good thing about these rockets was that if you could hear the motor going then you knew it was going past your house and it would kill some other poor family. When the motor stopped it just glided on its small wings for a short time and then fell to earth and exploded on impact.

The other rocket known as the V2 was a much bigger device and it did not have wings but it was launched from somewhere in Germany and it went up and over the English channel and then exploded on impact when it reached it's destination.

From Len Hall

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