

Month & Year of Topic

Topic

***Written & Spoken
Presenters***

August 1996

The War Years in Oatley

Oatley Red Cross

As seen through the eyes of a child

Lil Leach

Alec Leach

Margaret Forbes

Russell Gibbs

Marie Freudenstein

MEETING OF THE OATLEY HERITAGE GROUP
HELD 23rd AUGUST , 1996
in
BAND HALL

TOPIC." OATLEY IN THE WAR YEARS"

OATLEY IN THE WAR YEARS . 1939/45

Presidents opening remarks August 1996

The topic of " Oatley in the War Years" is one which may bring back many memories, not all of them happy. However, it is hoped that in bringing to mind some of the events of those days we may be able to pass on to the next generation, something of the affairs which took place in Oatley in those days.

The main object of this discussion is to relate those events which are in our mind and share them with those present. Where possible it would be good if we can identify personalities with various events. Who were the leaders of such and such. Where were the headquarters of the services. Who was the person responsible, and so on.

It is not the object to relate who in your family served in the forces. We are not interested in any front line war time activity. BUT we do want to know what happened in Oatley, and how we coped as a small community. Many of the activities in Oatley were the same as in other suburbs. However, the men and women involved in these activities are different and that is what we want to know.

I am going to give quick run down of some of the things which did happen in Oatley, most of them from what I have been told. Perhaps then you will remember some aspects and will tell us more about it.

The Emergency Services and War Time Services included such things as:-

- A.R.P. Services
- N.E.S.
- Red Cross
- Ambulance
- Army and Air Force Sites
- Restricted Areas
- Warning Sounds.

I am not sure about Air Raid Shelters, I do know that the men of the area spent time digging slit trenches in the school grounds. Miss Milsopp of the school shop gave them free ice blocks as a reward (not sure about a cool beer)

There were plenty of shortages. Perhaps you can recall your method of dealing with them, and if you could rely on any particular person who was of help. Remember the shortages of Food and potatoes, Tobacco ; Liquor ; Clothing; Petrol - recall the Gas bags on the Cars, and buses.

Many of the ladies in the district took on work which they had never done before. So many had boyfriends and husbands in the services. Who were the women employed in this way in Oatley ?

Power shortages were a problem and also the need to restrict seen lights, there was the "Brown Out" lighting where street lights were dimmed. Black out blinds in the home ; Black out curtains in public Halls. Car lights -if you were lucky enough to have one- were fitted with a dimming device.

There were many social activity organisations. Dances, Concerts etc were arranged to support the various wartime needs. Who did this ?

Special Activities included :- Collection of Scrap Metal, Fire and Emergency Drill ; All Small craft was removed from the river and taken away, A Camouflage Netting Factory was situated in Oatley; Troops were encamped in Oatley Park.

If some of these activities have been brought to you mind, now, tell us what you know and if possible who was involved. If you don't have time to-day please write it down, or ask me to assist in getting it done.

Presented by RUSSELL GIBBS

DURING THE WAR YEARS OF 1939/45 THE SMALL SUBURB OF OATLEY PARTICIPATED IN THE WAR EFFORT IN THE SAME FASHION AS DID SO MANY OTHER SIMILAR SUBURBS. THE MEMBERS OF THE HERITAGE GROUP HAVE RECALLED SO MANY MEMORIES AND HAVE THEM RECORDED IN THIS BRIEF LIST OF RECOLLECTIONS

APART FROM THE FACT THAT SO MANY YOUNG MEN OF THE DISTRICT WERE ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN MILITARY OF SOME KIND, POSSIBLY THE GREATEST IMPACT ON THE CITIZENS OF OATLEY WAS THE STATIONING OF TROOPS AT VARIOUS STRATEGIC POINTS, OR AREAS WHICH COULD ACCOMMODATE TROOPS IN TRAINING. ONE SUCH TRAINING AREA WAS IN THE OATLEY PARK RESERVE ON THE WESTERN SIDE OF OATLEY. HERE SOME 250 MEN OF THE ENGINEERS WERE ENCAMPED. THE MAJORITY OF THESE MEN CAME FROM TASMANIA, AND THEY WERE ACCEPTED INTO THE COMMUNITY IN A TRUE SPIRIT OF FRIENDSHIP. THEY ATTENDED THE LOCAL CHURCHES, AND THE DANCES WHICH WERE REGULARLY HELD. MANY HOMES INVITED YOUNG MEN TO PARTICIPATE IN FAMILY LIFE AND DINNERS.. MRS KEATING AND MRS MITCHELL REGULARLY HAD SUCH VISITORS INTO THE HOME.

AS WELL AS THE ENGINEERS, THERE WERE ALSO DETACHMENTS OF SEARCHLIGHTS AT STRATEGIC POINTS, AND MANY COULD REMEMBER THE SITES AT BAKER STREET AND LANSDOWNE CRES ALSO AT GUNBAH BAY ROAD AND ROBERTS AVENUE. ANOTHER GROUP OF SOLDIERS GUARDED THE COMO BRIDGE APPROACHES AND THIS GROUP WAS AUGMENTED AT WEEKENDS BY THE LOCAL VOLUNTEER DEFENCE CORPS MEN, (V.D.C.). THESE MEN WERE THOSE WHO WERE IN PROTECTED INDUSTRY BUT STILL VOLUNTEERING FOR SERVICE IF NECESSARY, AND THERE WERE ALSO THOSE WHO WERE OVER AGE FOR MILITARY SERVICE.

AIR RAID PRECAUTION WAS OF HIGH PRIORITY , AND MANY MEN WERE ENGAGED AS AIR RAID WARDENS, WHOSE DUTY IT WAS TO PATROL THE STREETS AT NIGHT , TO ENSURE THAT PROPER PRECAUTIONS WERE TAKEN , SUCH AS THE TOTAL BLACKOUT AFTER DARK AND ALSO TO BE ON GUARD AGAINST ANY SUBVERSIVE ACTION. AIR RAID SIRENS WERE SITUATED AT VARIOUS POINTS AND MANY CAN REMEMBER THOSE IN FREDERICK STREET, ROSA STREET AND MULGA ROAD. AT CERTAIN DESIGNATED TIME, USUALLY MIDDAY SUNDAY, THESE ALARMS WERE GIVEN TEST RUNS.

ALL THE SMALL CRAFT WHICH WAS IN OATLEY WERE TAKEN AWAY AND STORED IN THE UPPER REACHES OF THE GEORGES RIVER. THIS WAS DONE TO PREVENT UNAUTHORISED USE EITHER BY ENEMY OR BY SUBVERSIVE ACTION. IN MOST CASES THE BOATS WERE RETURNED AFTER THE WAR

-2-

-/ Oatley in the war Years.

APART FROM THE COMMUNITY EFFORTS IN AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS, MANY HOMES AND BUSINESSES HAD THERE OWN METHODS OF SAFETY AND THESE INCLUDED THE DIGGING OF SLIT TRENCHES, IN THE YARD. NORMA STRANEY RECALL THE DIGGING OF SUCH A TRENCH TO THE AGREED UPON SIZE OF TEN FEET BY EIGHT FEET. MRS SCOTT ALSO RECALLS HAVING SUCH A TRENCH IN HER YARD. THE OATLEY PUBLIC SCHOOL HAD A NUMBER OF THESE SLIT TRENCHES FOR THE USE OF SCHOOL CHILDREN AND ALSO ADULTS SHOULD SUCH BE NECESSARY. THE 10x8 TRENCHES WERE IN MOST CASES TO BE USED AS UNDERGROUND SHELTERS WITH A SECURE COVERING.

FIRST AID WAS ANOTHER PRIORITY AND CLASSES ON FIRST AID WERE REGULARLY HELD IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOL. THE SCHOOL WAS ALSO THE CENTRE AS A CASUALTY CLEARING STATION AND TEMPORARY HOSPITAL. BLOOD DONORS WERE CALLED FOR AND A LIST WAS KEPT OF BLOOD GROUPS MRS LEACH. WENMAN, STRANEY, PEASLY ARE SOME NAMES WHICH PARTICIPATED LOCAL INDUSTRY SUPPORTED THE WAR EFFORT. THERE WAS A NETTING ACTIVITY NEXT TO THE HOTEL WHERE THE NETTING WAS MADE WHICH WAS LATER USED I N THE MAKING OF CMOUFLAGE NETTING. THIS CAMOUFLAGE NETTING WAS MADE IN A FACTORY IN ADA STREET NEAR HURSTVILLE ROAD. MADE OF THE LADIES OF THE DISTRICT WORKED FULL TIME IN THIS SPHERE. THE COLLECTION OF SCRAP METAL WAS ANOTHER ACTIVITY USUALLY UNDERTAKEN BY THE YOUNG MEN AND BOYS OF THE SUBURB. THE COLLECTION POINT WAS SITUATED IN LETITIA STREET, NUMBER 18, NOW THE SITE OF THE VIDEO SHOP.

MRS NORMA STRANEY RECALLS THE COLLECTION OF MONEY FOR WAR SAVINGS CERTIFICATES. MANY INVOLVED IN THIS WAY, WHEREBY CERTIFICATES WERE GIVEN FOR SAVINGS TO HELP THE WAR EFFORT. IF A WHOLE STREET WAS PARTICIPATING THEN A NOTICE TO THIS EFFECT WAS PLACED IN A PROMINENT POSITION IN THE STREET.

OF COURSE THERE WAS FOOD RATIONING AND CLOTHING RATIONING AS WELL AS OTHER COMMODITIES SUCH AS PETROL. MANY OF THE LOCAL STORKEEPERS RECOGNISED CASES OF HARDSHIP AND WERE ALWAYS WILLING TO GIVE ASSISTANCE WHERE POSSIBLE. LOCAL BUSES, TAXIS AND OTHER VEHICLES WERE FITTED WITH A GAS BAG ON THE ROOF WHICH WAS FILLED WITH GAS TO BE USED AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO PETROL. CHARCOAL BURNERS WERE F ITTED TO MANY COMMERCIAL VEHICLES.

-/ Oatley in the War Years

COMMUNITY LEADERS WERE WELL TO THE FORE ON SO MANY OCCASIONS. LOCAL DANCES WERE ORGANISED FOR THE TROOPS WHO WERE EITHER ON LEAVE OR WERE STATIONED IN OATLEY. THIS WAS A GREAT MORALE BOOSTER NOT ONLY FOR THE MEN BUT ALSO FOR THE LADIES OF THE DISTRICT WHO PERHAPS HAD LOVED ONES AWAY IN SOME OTHER PART OF THE WORLD. MRS AITKEN WAS PROMINENT IN THE ORGANISING OF THESE DANCE EVENINGS.

THE LOCAL POST MASTER, MR ERNEST LAWSON WAS ALSO ONE TO WHOM THE CITIZENS OWE A DEBT OF GRATITUDE. HE ALWAYS MADE A POINT OF PERSONALLY DELIVERING A TELEGRAM WHICH MAY HAVE PERHAPS CONTAINED BAD NEWS. HE DID HIS BEST TO GIVE COMFORT IN SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES.

LOCAL CHURCHES AND CHURCH LEADERS CO-OPERATED IN SO MANY WAYS, AND CHURCH HALLS WERE ALWAYS AVAILABLE FOR WHATEVER PURPOSE. MANY LOCALS GROUPS WERE FORMED TO SUPPLY FOOD PARCELS. THESE WERE SENT TO OUR OWN TROOPS AND ALSO TO GREAT BRITAIN TO ALLEVIATE THE SHORTAGES DUE TO WARTIME CONDITIONS.

LIKE SO MANY OTHER COMMUNITIES, OATLEY HAD MANY MEN AND WOMEN SERVING IN FRONT LINE POSITIONS. WE CHERISH THE MEMORY OF THOSE WHO DID NOT RETURN. THOSE WHO ARE NOW CITIZENS OF OATLEY GIVE THANKS TO THE EFFORTS OF THE PEOPLE OF OATLEY IN THE WAR YEARS.

NATIONAL EMERGENCY SERVICE.

The N.E.S. (National Emergency Service) divided Oatley (East) into four sectors. Mr. Charles Chiswell - Annette Street - was the Chief Warden and under him, four Senior Wardens - Sector A - Mr. Arthur Bowden - Ada Street
Sector B - Mr. Hugh Morrison - Kitchener Street
Sector C - Mr. Ahern - Letitia Street
Sector D - Mr. Ted Sandiland - Letitia Street

Each of these men had an operational "Control Post" at their home - usually a garage surrounded with sand bags and fully equipped for all emergencies. Men from each of these sectors, complete with tin hat and gas mask, patrolled their streets at night on rosters to ensure blackout regulations were complied with. Each night a "made up" report was phoned through to Kogarah Central Control as a practice report of damage and injury caused in an "Air Raid".

Local men and women attended First Aid and Home nursing classes and manned the "Hospital" set up in a wing of Oatley Public School. Matron Megson was in-Charge and this was manned night and day.

As children at the time, we went out at weekends and were dropped off on street corners, as victims, labelled with different injuries "acquired in an air raid". Here we were treated, bandaged and stretchered in the back of a "Derwent" truck to the "hospital" where the work of the First Aider's was checked by an expert.

On the night of the Jap subs entry into Sydney Harbour, all these preparations and practises swung into action.

These men and women were very dedicated and took there duties very seriously. Functions were held to raise money and friendships formed.

Submitted by Mrs Margaret Forbes

Presented by MARIE FREUDENSTEIN

I lived in Oatley for most of the period 1939-49; it was a very quiet haven with a village atmosphere but, as with the rest of Australia, the war touched its citizens deeply in many ways.

I worked in the Systems Operation Branch of the Sydney County Council, now Sydney Electricity, and we occupied most of the Q.V.B. Our section was the area now occupied by the A.B.C. shop. I was appointed with fourteen other girls to replace men who had enlisted for war service and we worked shifts 7.30 am - 2.30 pm and 2.30 pm - 10.30 pm. I would catch a train at Town Hall Station and had to change trains at Central and would arrive at Oatley station about 11.15pm and thought nothing of walking to my Aunt's home at 12 Neville St. I never once felt nervous on the train or walking home alone, despite hooded street lights and blackout curtains on windows, and no-one expected I would. Oatley was a very safe place then.

In the early days of the war, food and clothing were readily available but soon coupons were issued to purchase tea, sugar, meat, butter and petrol. The latter was very scarce and soon most private cars were off the roads and public transport was the order of the day. The train timetables were important elements in our lives. A private bus ran several times a day from the station to Oatley Point via Frederick, Letitia and Rosa Streets. It had a large rubberised bag covering its entire top which contained town gas for fuel. The owner-driver was a quiet gentleman who co-operated fully with passengers and their problems.

Most families in Oatley purchased all their food in the suburb. There was one butcher's shop in Letitia St, Buttel's, a newsagent, a chemist, Dunsmore's and a wonderful drapery and haberdashery shop owned by Mrs Seymour. People knitted furiously during the war, socks and balaclavas for servicemen and clothes for the family, and Mrs Seymour had shelves stocked high with wool. Fashions were frozen for the whole of the war and one wore the same clothes year in and year out. Clothing in particular became hard to buy and bed linen and towels and blankets were highly treasured. All manufacturing was directed towards the war effort. The Post Office in Oatley occupied a shop on the western side of Frederick St and the Postman, Mr Lawson, delivered the mail on horseback. He was a cheery, friendly man with always a kind word. Next door to the Post Office an empty shop was made available to the Red Cross volunteers to make camouflage nets. No bottled or canned beer was available and beer, if it could be obtained at all, came in quart bottles, filled at the Oatley Hotel, which were exchanged for further supply.

Food coupons were not issued to service men so people were careful to save coupons to share with their men when they came on leave. Butter was very scarce and people became very watchful of the way it was used.

It was official policy to keep the population almost uninformed about war developments and the only way we could have knowledge of a son or husband's whereabouts in the services was when some-one came on leave; word spread quickly in quiet Oatley.

Because of very strict censorship the seriousness of our situation in Australia was only partly comprehended by the civilian population at that time, and it has only been understood recently, with the release of formerly censored information. We knew ships were being sunk off our shores and after the awful disaster of Pearl Harbour in December 1941 and the Fall of Singapore in January 1942 and the bombing of Darwin we knew we were entering perilous times indeed. The extent of the bombing of Darwin was never fully disclosed for many years and it came as a shock to me to know that more bombs were dropped there than at Pearl Harbour. Also the Brisbane Line, to be defended in the event of a Japanese occupation of the

country, was the coastal strip from Brisbane to Melbourne. I often wonder now, if our lives in Oatley would have altered, if we had known more about our danger. It was at this time that Prime Minister, Mr John Curtin, appealed to the U.S.A. for help to defend us.

It was in such dark days as this we made the decision to marry. Similar decisions were being made by many young couples at this time: One Friday evening in late May Jack phoned to say he was coming on Final Leave and could we be married the following Saturday week. It was the week clothing rationing was introduced and confusion reigned. Shops were unwilling to sell their stock until the situation became clearer. Fortunately my aunt prevailed upon a sympathetic shopkeeper in the City and I purchased a pretty pink wool-de-chine dress. Good friends and relatives rallied and I was lent brown gloves and various other items to complete the ensemble.

Many sacrificed coupons and made cakes and cut sandwiches using precious butter, an Uncle used some scarce petrol to drive me to the Church and guests to the Station. At 4pm on Saturday 6th June 1942 we were married in the old Methodist Church in Frederick St. About twenty guests helped to celebrate the occasion and at 7pm Jack and I caught a train to the Blue Mountains and stayed at the Hydro Majestic Hotel at Medlow Bath. Because of the Sydney County Council policy, not to employ married women, my marriage was veiled in secrecy from my work mates.

Our wedding night coincided with the shelling of Bondi from Japanese submarines. Plans were quickly altered by the Prime Minister Mr Curtin and the decision made not to send further troops to the Middle East so when Jack returned from Final Leave and rejoined the Armoured Division they were sent, in due course, to Western Australia, before service in the Islands to the North.

When U.S.A. troops arrived in Sydney later in 1942 the war took on a new aspect but I cannot say life altered much for Oatley people until the war ended. They were days of great sadness for many and days of worry and uncertainty and much hard work, and the reality is we were in much greater danger than we knew at the time.

I commenced my married life in Oatley living after the war in a rented house in Oatley Park Rd, and as my two children were born while we lived there until 1949 they are indeed part of the baby boomer generation.

Oatley will always have dear memories for me of kindness and great affection from friends and family.

Marie Freudenstein
September 1996.

THE WAR YEARS OF OATLEY

OATLEY RED CROSS

BY

LIL LEACH

AUGUST 1996

Oatley Red Cross members were a very busy band of workers during the war years, who worked under the banner of head office, from going and cleaning Convalescent Homes, due to their regular cleaners on war duties in other fields. We were asked by headquarters if we would consider joining a Miss Gillan from Allawah and forming a section of Red Aids. A few of us did and we met in St. Giles rooms at Hurstville. We were required to buy our own uniforms, scheming a little to get the clothing coupons, but never the less managed somehow. We had a plain khaki coloured overall type of dress, with red buttons, a red cardigan, khaki type overcoat, brown felt hat, brown gloves and shoes together with light coloured lyle stockings which we all hated.

We seemed to live in this outfit as we served in so many different locations. We helped Junior Red Cross when functions were held in Sydney Town Hall, by checking all doors as to people trying to get inside without tickets, which is an eye opener. Helped run a Cafe in George Street where only the cook was paid. We had to sort through reject bags of vegetables, given us from the markets. Wait on tables and last but not least - wash up- no machines in those days. Bring home the tea towels to wash and see the next batch of girls get them back to the Cafe. Other girls went to headquarters for book binding.

We all had our streets in Oatley to go and collect each week for Prisoner of War fund and that is where you found the generosity of Oatley people. I found I had another helping hand job by doing that. One of my contributors I discovered was house bound, as her elderly mother was bed ridden, so I used to go after my collection and this dear lady could go up the street and I baby sat-all Red Cross work. We were very lucky to be able to use the School of Arts and the as it was called then - the Methodist Church, gave us the use of their Vestry at all times.

We had an appeal from Hurstville C.W.A. to say, they could not keep up the supply of camouflage nets demanded from them, so once again Oatley to the rescue. We approached the Oatley Hotel to see if we could use the empty shop next door to the hotel. He was most apologetic having to charge rent - 10/- (ten shillings (\$1.00)) per week, but the room had to use the electricity - or we had, to light the room. We soon had it set up by our respective supportive husbands, putting the hooks all around and helping us clean it up and we were in business. WE had a lot of outside help and somehow managed to raise that 10/- per week. We were very surprised, after our appeal for more helpers to find quite a number of Oatley's retired gentlemen come and we taught them, they came daily and were a great help. We even charged them for the cups of tea and had a raffle to help with the rent. Hurstville supplied the twine and cartage, of course we members always had a net being made at home, if any spare time. WE held button days twice per year, June and December. Arriving at Oatley ticket office at the station by 6.a.m. and it was amusing to see people who didn't want to see you engaged in deep conversation as they passed you by. This is when you valued uniforms. We also used the School of Arts each Monday afternoon for a card afternoon, 5/- per table - 1-3d each. (one shilling and three pence) I had a tin of biscuits and made tea and served, sometimes a tin of fruit or a sponge cake as a prize. You all know Rosie Dickinsin, well as soon as I was cleaning and washing up, Rosie would appear to see I left all clean. I almost forgot to mention the biggest duty we did, was go to St. George Hospital as Red Cross Aids. At first it was terrifying. We had to go before Matron Pritchard, she questioned us, what qualifications we had. We had all got our ambulance badges and she looked at our finger nails, I had a bit of lip stick on and she said to me, you can go and get that muck off your face and leaned over and pushed the bit of hair that had escaped from the tiny veil we had to wear, so off I trundled and came back and passed muster. We were not accepted by a couple of the sisters, so I had a little talk to them and told them Matron appealed to Red Cross as the nurses were in short supply and we had come as Aids - not trying to pass as nurses and that soon had that all settled. I think we did a good job, as we washed patients, took temps, as we had all had good tuition by Mrs. Sadie Westfallen in bandaging, we could follow on the nurses and bandage the patients. It was very busy hard work, the days you did down there, but you felt you were doing good war work. I was allowed to see a tonsil removal and these people, as I had, need a strong stomach, I could go on and on and tell you lots of things happened to us, but you must have had enough of me.

Thank you for listening

Presented by Lil Leach of 111 Rosa Street Oatley to the Oatley Heritage Meeting Friday 23rd August 1996.

THE WAR YEARS IN OATLEY

BY

ALEC LEACH

THROUGH THE EYES OF A CHILD

AUGUST 1996

I was only about two and a half years old when World War Two was declared, so trying to specifically recall my earliest memories of the war would be difficult. Routinely, our nightly prayers were to ask God to watch over our men at war, especially Uncle Bert (Bert Bryant) Mary (Aunty Mary) was my God Mother, Uncle Jack (Mary's brother), Mr Rawlings (Jack and Sid), we were friends with Ron and Laurie, Jack's sons and so the list went on. Occasionally we would see one of them when they were home on leave and always knew where they were fighting when in the battle field.

Every Sunday at 1.00p.m. the Air Raid sirens would be activated to test them. They would sound on the continuous high pitched sound level, known as the all clear sound. The alert to action had the same high pitched sound, this time the note level wavered similar to a siren of some emergency vehicles. I believe it was the shelling of Bondi when we were awoken one evening and huddled in a predetermined position in the house. In our case it was in our hallway. The only other sound that would make me scurry home was to hear my mother call in her high pitched soprano voice I--O--R--N (Ian) A---L--E--C. It would carry further than Mrs. Carroll's bugle (later to be given to me).

I started school in 1942 at Oatley Public, where the school in an emergency, would be used as a make shift hospital. Mum was in the National Emergency Services (N.E.S.) and would assist in anything along the nursing line. The Scouts were used as practice patients on Sunday afternoons to give the would be nurses practice in bandaging. Dad was an Air Raid Warden rostered on to patrol the streets of Oatley at night, to ensure everyone had their screens fixed to their windows. The Japanese wouldn't know where Sydney was if they couldn't see it. (They found Bondi and Kuttubull moored at Garden Island).

Along with her Red Cross duty, making camouflage nets at home and training the retired men of Oatley to make nets in the shop belonging to the Oatley Hotel, Mum was awarded a certificate of thanks for contributing to the War effort and the coming of peace. This was received from the Federal Government to commemorate in 1995 the 50th Anniversary of the end of World War Two.

Jack Mc Dowell an Air Force Pilot who lived in Oatley, was our local hero. I believe he used to fly in to Oatley and drop a note by a home made parachute to his mother in Neville Street and invariably it would be when we kids were just coming home from school. On one occasion I was on my way from school to get my hair cut at Mr. Prescott's, walking with some friends along Lettia Street, when we sighted his plane. He flew at a very low altitude with his wings pointing vertically and we could see him quite plainly waving to us. We were saddened and mourned Jack's death in the Coral Sea Battle.

A regular stunt by some pilots was to fly under bridges. I have been told as the years have gone by that it was the Americans who had a phobia to fly under bridges, Como was not an exception. One Sunday morning we heard a plane whilst we were out in the yard. Our block ran from Rosa to Herbert Streets, between Charles and where Herbert Street crosses Rosa Street. We could see Como Bridge from the back. The plane dived down, we could not actually see it fly under the bridge but nearly at water level, the next we heard the roar of the engine and it climbing up into the sky. It was the talk at school for the next few days.

Chewing Gum was difficult to buy. The armed forces chewed every piece that would usually be available to little boys. If on the rare occasion a shop keeper would obtain some, the word would soon spread around and that shopkeeper would be bombarded. A packet of gum was tuppence for four pieces. The practice of the shopkeeper was to split the packets up and sell one piece at hapenny each. The little shop as we knew it at number 33 Annette Street and Russell Marsh, the Fruit Shop practised that procedure. We would trudge any where for our piece and sometimes a whole packet. I can understand why there were always pieces of gum stuck behind kids ears and under school desks. It was the accepted practice to stick your chewing gum behind your ear when it was not temporarily required. One piece lasted for weeks.

Rationing was the order of the day. Coupons were issued to buy essential commodities, which included sugar, clothing, meat and petrol for which we were entitled to one gallon a month for our boat. Later in the war our little "Pinto Pete" along with all of the other small craft on the river were confiscated and towed up the river to Liverpool. The one item of rationing I will never forget was butter. Mum always threatened me that she would put my allowance of butter on a plate and when it was finished there would be no more until next month. I think it may have been something like a quarter of a pound per person. I still enjoy more than my share of butter even if it is margarine these days.

To me, the fifteenth of August 1945 will never be forgotten. Yes the day peace was declared. I was away from school with a broken arm when we heard the news on the wireless. Mum and I had to go to the shops in Oatley when passing Saint Pauls Church we noticed somebody had attached a rope to the then bell which was in Neville Street and had tied it off so that anyone passing could give it a ring. Did I give that bell a ring, at the same time we heard the horns of the electric trains sounding from Mortdale sheds. The schools were given the day off. my brother along with his friends was walking home beside the train sheds when they were invited to make whoopee on the train horns.

The local parents around the vicinity of the vacant blocks beside the little shop in Annette Street, organised the building of a magnificent bonfire. These blocks had been cleared and still had the fallen bushes there. Along with everything imaginable the bonfire was huge and a wonderful night of rejoicing was held.

If only it had been the war to end all wars.