

## Some of Selsdon's Wartime Welfare, 1940/45.

*(Photos taken Nov 2018)*

Most of us will be familiar with the New Testament story of the feeding of the 5000. I do not know if there were 5000 war babies in Selsdon, but however many there were, we have Selsdon Baptist Church to thank for keeping us safe and well fed!



My earliest memories of going shopping included regular visits to this church where the war time children's Welfare Centre was set up. Pre-school children got free bottles of cod liver oil and concentrated orange juice, supplied by the Ministry of Food. Also tins of National Dried Milk (full cream milk powder). Although there was strict rationing and food shortages, we were better fed with nutritious food, than today's children fed on junk food. A case of quality, not quantity!

Every day I would get a delicious glass of cold orange juice in summer and hot orange juice in winter. And every night before going to bed, it was a very nasty tea spoon of cod liver oil. The only way mums could get us to swallow this horrible fishy oil was the promise of a large spoonful of Virol – a wonderful, bone marrow, malt flavoured syrup. Very Yummy!

The church as we see it today did not exist. The original church was a small bare hall which I believe still exists at the top of the slope behind the modern church. Where this new church now stands there was a public, underground bomb shelter buried in the chalk bank. This became very important for shoppers and workers in this central part of Selsdon.

In June 1944 our troops landed on the Normandy beaches, and within days the Germans launched the first V1 flying bombs at London. At its peak over 100 V1 s a day were fired at south east England, more than 9,500 in total. More doodle bugs fell on Croydon than any other borough of London. So a lot flew over Selsdon and I know of one which fell in Ingham

Rd which runs up alongside Selsdon School. So when out shopping and the air raid warning went off, as it often did in this phase of the war, we ran for the nearest bomb shelter!

There was another public bomb shelter, buried underground at the Triangle by the cross roads of Addington Rd and Old Farleigh Rd, so shoppers and others were well catered for in the village centre. Something else which is now sorely missed - the underground public toilets which were next to this air raid shelter and kept spotlessly clean by the full time lady attendant. With both toilets and air raid shelter, you never got caught out in Selsdon!



There was another bit of war time infrastructure in Selsdon, if that is the right word, and that was on the opposite side of the road from the Baptist Church. This was in an space between where S.G Flooring and Barclays Bank now stand, see below. This whole area was then a piece of waste ground, upon which had been built a sand bag protected, Air Raid Wardens Post and a very large concrete water tank to tackle any incendiary bomb or other fires.



How our high street has changed since the late 1940s. The main danger now, is crossing the very busy main road!

A few years later I had a school friend, Cyril Fisher, who lived in Elm Park Gardens. Cyril was a member of the Life Boys at Selsdon Baptist Church. He got me to join the Life Boys but I found it not so interesting as being in the Wolf Cubs. Life Boys and the Boys Brigade for older boys, were a bit too militaristic. Too much marching around the church hall and I never got picked to learn how to blow the bugle!

Mention of Cyril reminds me of something else, now long gone. Cyril's Dad (and Cyril) were keen supporters of Fulham Football Club. Cyril's Dad was a bus conductor and so got free travel on the buses. They took me to watch Fulham play at their home ground, and to get there we took a trolley bus from West Croydon to Putney.



Electric trolley buses – do you remember them?  
Scrapped 50 years ago, now electric road  
vehicles are all the rage!