Evacuee Mildred’s story

As the train pulled out of Birmingham station in July 1942, loaded with evacuees, three children waved goodbye to their parents who were left standing on the platform. They could not know that they would never meet each other again.

The children were sent to the countryside for their protection from the bombing that was taking place over Britain’s cities.

Mildred Bird was taken to Gorsley and billeted with Andrew and Elsie Taylor at Pound Farm, next to Goffs School. Six year old Mildred was used to mod-cons at home in Birmingham and she was shocked by the conditions of her new home. In Gorsley there was no electricity and no running water. No flush toilet – the loo was out of doors in a little shed. No bathroom - she was given a hot bath once a week – in a tin bath that was set before the fire on Saturday night. The water was taken from the well and heated in a furnace with a wood fire.

Mildred was admitted to Goffs School on 6th July 1942. When the other evacuees returned to Birmingham Mildred remained with Mr and Mrs Taylor, for her parents had died. She called them Uncle and Aunty. As she grew up Mildred had to help with all the jobs in the home and on the small farm, carrying water for the animals and cleaning out the sheds.

One of Mildred’s jobs was to keep the horse walking around the cider mill as it pulled the heavy millstone that crushed the apples. The smashed apples were put into hairs and after ten or so hairs were stacked up, the press screw was tightened and the juice ran out into stone troughs. Then it was stored in oak barrels. Andrew Taylor sold cider and perry to the locals – a useful income from his orchard, until the 1950’s. The cider mill, press and all the equipment used in cider making was eventually sold to the Bulmers Museum in Hereford.

During dry summers the water level fell in the well and sometimes it became dry. Then water was carried in buckets from a spring in the quarry opposite the farm. The Addis family and the people from the pub also used the same spring. Mr Taylor made a big underground tank and collected rain-water – especially useful for feeding stock.

Mildred saw the construction of the Motorway as its route went right through the quarry. There were two limekilns in the quarry.

In 1962 Mildred married a Dymock farmer, Trevor Goulding, and they are living in Dymock today.

Mildred’s ‘uncle’ Andrew Taylor left school in July 1913 aged 14. He started work as a stone breaker in Ross-on-Wye. He walked with his two brothers to work, and then walked home after work. He saved up his wages and was the first member of his family to have his own bicycle, so that he could cycle to work . Andrew lived in the lane near the chapel. His father, Joseph, was a quarryman.

Apart from the bay windows the Pound farmhouse looks as it did seventy years ago.