



Fiesler F1 103 (V1) ('Doodlebug') at RAF Museum, Hendon

Photograph: Robert Warner

Burgess Hill, Sussex

4th July, 1984

Dear Mr Newall,

Last Friday I was in Croydon for the first time for over a year and I purchased a *Croydon Advertiser*. I was very interested to read the memoirs of the Doodlebugs which fell around the Croydon area. Your article attracted my attention, especially the Doodlebug that landed near the printing works half way up Clifton Hill Caterham. As far as I can remember the bomb landed on the corner of Chaldon Rd and Heath Rd. I can remember this Doodlebug fairly clearly in my mind as it was the first one my family had seen. We lived at the bottom of Clifton Hill at No.15 Roffes Lane, and it was the first time during the war that I had experienced blast from a bomb going down hill. As far as I can remember this Doodlebug came down round about 7.45 a.m, we had just finished our breakfast and my Father had just come indoors from all night Home Guard duty at the Caterham Telephone Exchange. He said that they were pilotless planes. At that moment the sirens went and we heard one of these Doodlebugs approaching. We all trooped out to the back of the bungalow to see this plane. I remember that the clouds were low and heavy this particular morning and out of the clouds came this black object. I remember my father saying 'if the engine stops fall flat' and at that second the engine stopped. I remember getting into the bungalow, pushing my sister under the dining room breakfast table, and I managed to get only my head under when the Doodlebug exploded. All the windows came in and the ceilings down. My father was in the kitchen, my mother was still outside the back of the bungalow with her head against the wall and

shouting as the tiles slid off the roof, hitting her on the back. We eventually all came into the dining room with the breakfast things covered in glass and plaster. There was our half pound of butter, for the family of four for a month, which we had just had a scraping from, on the wall above the fire place with glass and ceiling powder covering it. I can still picture my mother sitting down at the table with a clean piece of paper in front of her and with a knife trying to salvage the butter, which she was more concerned about than the debris around her. We had no replacement butter for that month. There was one tragedy to this bomb that I remember and that was a man who lived in the Cottages in Roffes Lane. This man had twin daughters; he worked in the Guards' Barracks and that particular morning he had forgotten his pass and therefore was returning home to get his pass to get into the Barracks when he was killed by the blast.

I hope the memory of this particular Doodlebug is of interest to you.

Yours faithfully,

D. Howard

N.B. There is inconsistency as to the road passing the end of Heath Road. During WWII we referred to it as 'Clifton Hill'. Now it is invariably 'Chaldon Road'. GN

BOMBING OF ST LAWRENCE'S HOSPITAL

Again from Don Howard, Burgess Hill, West Sussex

Contributed by Derek Neal

I LIVED AT 15 Roffes Lane during the war – the road is off Chaldon Road at the bottom of Clifton Hill. Crossing the road going north is Green Lane, a cinder track made up I think from the coal fires at St Lawrence's Hospital. The lane went past the hospital farm behind the Guards' Depot and on to Caterham Common.

In the winter of 1940 we spent most nights in our air raid shelters. The shelter entrance faced towards St Lawrence's Hospital. On this particular night the bomb whistled down for about one minute, the hurricane lamp in our shelter went out before coming on again. The bomb hit the hospital coal dump between the west side of the hospital and Green Lane. It shifted 75 tons of coal, which an 'aerial torpedo' could not do.

After the explosion we had to get out of the shelter because we could not breathe. We managed to get into the bungalow and put the light on. All three of us looked like something out of the *Black and White Minstrel Show*, being covered from head to toe in coal dust. My mother was not happy, because it would take our whole month's soap ration to clean us.

Another bomb hit the hospital in the winter of 1942. I think the air raids had become less frequent because we were all sleeping indoors when it happened.

The air raid warning had only just sounded. I remember I did not have time to dress, before the stick of three bombs came down. It made the area seem like daylight when they exploded. If you turn into London Road from Chaldon Road near the *Clifton Arms* – the first bomb, if I remember correctly, hit houses half way down the street on the right-hand side. The second hit a house on the left side, just as London Road turns left towards Coulsdon Road. The third bomb fell on St Lawrence's Hospital building opposite the greengrocer's on the corner of Coulsdon Road and London Road. The vegetable shop was called Dullaway and Daughters.

The tragedy of the hospital bomb was that a female nurse was trapped in the rubble, and the rescue team could not get her out before the hot water tank above her emptied its contents over her and she was burnt to death.

That is how I remember these bombings, which adds more information to that on page 62 of *Bourne Society Village Histories 2: Caterham*, second paragraph from the bottom of the page, where it says 'One (bomb) – in some reports described as an 'aerial torpedo' – left a huge crater in the grounds of St Lawrence's Hospital. It uprooted two large trees, throwing one of them over 60 feet to land on the hospital roof. Fortunately there were no casualties and the hospital was not severely damaged, nor did it receive a direct hit at any time afterwards'.

WORKING FOR THE SURREY WAR AGRICULTURAL COMMITTEE IN POST-WAR 1940s

by Eric George and received by Eric Groves

AFTER I WAS demobilised in 1947 my first job was as an agricultural worker with the Surrey War Agricultural Executive Committee (SWAEC). Its function was to supply a service (mainly labour) to local farmers and others

who needed a particular task carried out. The work was done for a contract price which, I believe, was normally very reasonable as the SWAEC was subsidised.

I was based at the depot in Limpsfield Road, Sanderstead, where I should think there were about 30 workers. The depot was next to Relfs nursery opposite the Recreation Ground. There was a superintendent together with a deputy who, together, fixed the contract prices, supervised the payment of wages, allocated work etc. However, they also came out to help with the agricultural work on occasions.

Hours of Work—

We worked from 7.45 a.m.-12 noon and 1 pm-5.30 p.m. Monday to Friday, and 7.45 a.m.-12 noon on Saturday. In addition we were required to be at the depot at 7.15 a.m. to be transported by lorry to whichever job we were assigned. Lorries also picked us up at 5.30 p.m. to return us to the depot. To cover this enforced travelling time we were paid one hour per day at overtime rate. The normal hours (48) plus the overtime made a paid working week of 54 hours.

The lorries that took us from the depot in the morning were also used to ferry us to the depot from a central picking up point at the *Swan and Sugar Loaf* in South Croydon. We had to be there at 6.45 a.m. to catch the pickup lorry so that we could be sure of arriving at the depot at 7.15 a.m.

Pay—

The rate of pay was 1s.10½d per hour, a weekly wage of £4.10s.0d. for a flat week. With six hours compulsory overtime at 1¼ time the weekly wage was boosted to £5.4s.0d before stoppages. The longest week I worked was 66 hours, during harvesting, for which I was paid £6.12s.0d. (some of these hours may have been paid at time and a half). From time to time we also received a free issue of food (in addition to our normal rations). These were given to those workers in industries involving heavy manual work, amongst which agriculture was included. These rations consisted of nutritional foods e.g. cheese, butter, sugar and were of course very welcome. Extra allowances e.g. 'dirty' money were sometimes paid.

Labour—

There was a considerable mixture in the labour force employed. There were a number of women, most of whom had been Land Army girls. The men were more cosmopolitan and included pre-war German and Jewish refugees, post-war displaced persons and several Irishmen. The background