

*Here is one account from Sheelagh O'Shaughnessy.*



My brothers and I lived in East London, an industrial area close to the docks. My father had died just before war and Mum was left to look after our newsagents business. She did not want to be parted from us, but a relative insisted that we children be evacuated with the rest of the school.

I remember the bus journey and the fact that parents weren't allowed to see us off. Lots of the children were sick on the travels. Neither children nor parents were told where we were being sent to.

We ended up in a hall in Albert Street, Oxford. We were all very tired, but were then dragged through the streets in groups whilst the billeting officers knocked on doors; we were almost the last to be picked as no one wanted 3 children together. I felt really unwanted.



Eventually, Alan (age 5) and I (7) were left at a small house in Nelson Street, and Ivor, (9) and another boy went on later to Walton Crescent where he was housed with a family of 7. They all slept top to toe, 4 in a bed.

Our foster parents told us plainly that they did not want us. Mum and others visited every month even though the authorities thought this wasn't good for parents and children! Mum sent money and parcels which we didn't see. Mrs. L treated me like slave, no affection at all, I felt she hated me. We had to see ourselves off to school and we weren't allowed in the house if she was out. She sent me out in the bitter cold weather to run her errands and do bits of shopping. My hands chilblained and I always felt hungry.



My mother survived the terrible East London Blitz; she had stayed to keep the business running, spending nights in the viaduct. The docks were the main targets of the German bombers, and our house and shop were burned down by incendiaries, and later looted, so she lost money, clothes, nearly everything she possessed. She

managed to get out of the area, and friends helped her to get to Oxford.

She managed to find another places for me and Alan with a farm labourer and his wife. They had no experience of bringing up children and were very strict, furniture always covered with dust sheets, but they fed us well.



It was my first experience of country life and animals. I saw hunts, picked wild flowers and went to a farm to see cows being milked straight into the jugs we took there.

Meanwhile my mother found a tiny old derelict condemned cottage near Longworth; been empty for 15 years, persuaded farmer to let her rent it.

One day my brothers and I were told we were being re billeted. I was upset to be shifted around again and not knowing where to and who to, but we were taken to this cottage by a fake billeting officer, and when he knocked on the door there was our MUM. So finally the family was together once again.