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To my grandson, Joe Blinman

11th November 2018

This is a story about the Second World War – when I was a small boy growing up in this village, Sutton Courtenay, where I live now.

I was only three when WW2 started – so, as children, wartime England was all we ever knew. We were perfectly used to things like food rationing and the ‘blackout’. The ‘blackout’ was the important job, every night, to cover up every window in the house with heavy curtains or screens to prevent any light escaping which could be seen by enemy bombers flying overhead! In fact, sometimes we would go out into the street to watch hundreds of German bombers passing over on their way to attack factories in Birmingham and Coventry. No jet engines in those days, so it seemed to take forever for these formations of heavy planes to drone their way across the night sky.

Anyway, this is my story. One sunny afternoon in 1944 we came home from school in Abingdon to find that the village had been invaded by soldiers! English soldiers, of course, because this was a practice (like a rehearsal) for a big battle they were going to fight at a place called Arnhem in Holland. Imagine my excitement – I was eight years old and my village was full of soldiers and guns – all engaged in a ‘pretend’ battle with lots of explosions, bangs and smoke. There was even a machine gun unit set up in my front garden – and my mum was bringing cups of tea out to the soldiers! Earlier in the day, all these soldiers with their weapons and jeeps had landed by parachute on Sutton Courtenay.....



– and this is a picture of all the aircraft flying overhead and the hundreds of different coloured parachutes floating down. My dad, who was an artist, had rushed out into the fields to see it all – and painted this picture.

It was very exciting for us kids, of course, to see all these young soldiers close up in action with their uniforms and guns and equipment. But sadly, when the real battle took place a few weeks later many of them died – and this is why we proudly remember them every year on November 11th

We so much hope that none of your generation will ever have to fight wars again.

Grandad