

US75-2 Renee McAllister

SPEAKERS

Susan Kelly, Renee McAllister

Renee McAllister 00:01

Well what I can remember I'll tell you, when the war started I was living on the Crumlin Road in Belfast, a street off the Crumlin Road and went to school in, what was known as Mitchell's old School in Tennent Street, a church school.

Renee McAllister 00:13

In 1939, they said that the following year they'd probably be evacuating the children if there was any danger from the war and in 1940 we got word that we were going to be evacuated if we wanted to, and my mother decided to take six of us, and let them evacuate us.

Renee McAllister 00:37

We travelled to a place called Irvinestown in County Fermanagh, I don't remember a lot about the travelling because it was a long tiring from early morning, and we didn't reach there 'til late afternoon.

Renee McAllister 00:50

But, a lady came who was doing voluntary work, the WVS or something they called them and she was allocating the children and the people to local farmers, well they were going out in twos, the children were going out in twos and ones all over the place, but my mother was sitting with six of us huddled round her like a wee hen (coughs). Pardon me.

Renee McAllister 01:13

She, we were near the end and there was very few left, and this lady came in and she said, "Can I separate you?" and my mother said "No, no. I'm not separating from the children and I don't want them broke up".

Renee McAllister 01:28

So, she says "Right", so she took us out in this big car, and we drove to the next village which was Kesh and she took us to this farmhouse, and we were allocated rooms in the farmhouse.

Renee McAllister 01:43

And it was more exciting time of our lives and we grew to love Fermanagh. And to this day, the family and the great grandchildren or even going now to Fermanagh.

Renee McAllister 01:54

But the farmer couldn't have been better. He never had been married. No children served in the First World War. But he took us under his wing.

Renee McAllister 02:04

And he told us what we could and couldn't do about the farm buildings and among the animals and guided us every way could talk them on how to use a big open turf fire and she done all the baking, she baked nearly every day.

Renee McAllister 02:21

Then, shortly after that the RAF were stationed in an old derelict place attached to the local Church of Ireland church called 'charter-house' and it had been a boys home at one time and had been lying derelict for years but the RAF were put into it as billets.

Renee McAllister 02:44

There was nowhere or nothing for them, there was no cinema and there was nothing in the village but one little pub. So, they used to come along the road at night, looking just for company and of course as children we loved the strangers coming and the English voices and we chatted to them.

Renee McAllister 03:00

Then we started bringing them in for a cup of tea on the cold nights and it finished up, every night, the whole time we were there, the house had RAF boys in it and my mother used to have wee birthday parties and they came and entered in to the fun of things at all the simple parties.

Susan Kelly 03:19

Would you have got to know them well? Would the same ones have come for a long time?

Renee McAllister 03:22

The same ones came, there were three in particular who were there nearly every night and one of them we kept in touch with up 'til about eight years ago and he was a Yorkshire chap and him and his wife came over to see us after the war years and then the two of them came every year on holiday to us.

Renee McAllister 03:46

She died very suddenly about fifteen, twenty years ago maybe, he lived on 'til about nine years ago maybe and we still kept in contact right up until the end, but we loved the visits and the fun.