On 17 November 1976 Alvena and I became landlord and landlady of the East Kent Hotel, a public house in Whitstable.

Just after I had taken over I was talking to Douglas West, the famous Whitstable photographer, who produced the book, *Memories of a Seaside Town*. I asked him if he had any old photos of the pub. He showed me a photo of a carnival lorry outside of the East Kent. Strung above it across the street was a line of knickers and bras! He explained to me that the council had refused to fund bunting to come as far as the East Kent so the customers had taken matters into their own hands.

We stayed at the East Kent for 17 years, and we really enjoyed our time there.

I have never regretted moving from Croydon to Whitstable, and even today there is nowhere else that I would rather live. I love the people and the place.

by Donald (Dickie) Bird

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FOOD & DRINK
Memories of a Pub Landlord

Where to find information about eating out

If you want to find out more about places to eat and drink in Whitstable log in to the websites below.

Alternatively walk down our wonderful High Street, which retains much of its historic fishing town charm, and wander into one of the vast range of pubs, cafes and restaurants.

The people of Whitstable have fought hard to retain the individual nature of their town and many lovely independent shops wait to be discovered.

www.seewhitstable.com
www.canterbury.co.uk/food-and-drink
www.whitstableoysterfestival.com
www.restaurant-guide.com
www.visitkent.co.uk
Opening time

One of my earliest memories is of the Battle of Britain. It was the very first day that I was allowed out. It was Thursday, 15 August 1940. I was five years old and had been allowed to ride my trike up and down the unmade road across from Croydon Aerodrome. I saw between nine and twelve black planes, with white crosses painted on their wings, flying over. I saw black things dropping out of them. I didn’t know what bombs were, but I soon found out!

My mother and aunt were working in a factory nearby. I went home to find my Gran, who was looking after me, hanging over the garden gate crying, “Where are my daughters?” We then saw them coming down the road with a little man between them. My Gran thanked him for bringing home her daughters. My mother said “Don’t you recognize him? Its??????

My mum had been working at her bench making components for the planes when the bombs hit. The girl at the next bench to her was never found.

Until the day she died my mother had little bits of brass coming to the surface of her skin, caused from the debris of the factory when the bombs hit.

Live entertainment!

During the blitz we were staying with my grandmother. The adults were sitting listening to the radio and I was put under the dining room table to sleep. This is the first time I think I realized that I have a sense of humour. There was an air raid going on and I made a whistling sound like a bomb falling and all four adults dived under the table with their bottoms sticking out into the room. It’s the only time I ever heard my uncle swear.

When my brother was born in 1943 I was woken and taken to mum’s bedroom to meet my new baby brother. At the time rationing was in place, so I asked my mum, “How many coupons did you have to give for him?”

Donald, 1945, in the car his brother Gerald

My mum had her final baby during a doodlebug raid. Not a great deal was happening in the living room, on top of the Morrison Shelter, where mum was to give birth to another brother for me. Nurse Smith had gone to the front door for a cigarette, she was counting the doodlebugs as they passed overhead. She started counting, ‘One, two, three’ and when she got to six she stopped counting. Poor old dad was in the back garden and had overheard her. When the baby was born he was invited in to meet his new son. He looked puzzled and asked the midwife, “Where are the other five?” The midwife explained that she had been outside counting doodlebugs!

A landlord in the making

I have always enjoyed a good laugh, and I like to be around people. Alvena and I became involved in the Phoenix Theatre Group when we moved to Whitstable, and although I did perform on stage I got really involved in the committee and in the organizational side of the group.

I got very involved in the Whitstable carnival. Each year there was a selection dance to choose the carnival queens and princesses. In 1973 the young lady that became the princess was living with us. The picture below is of Alvena dressed in the princess’ sash pretending she had won. What a pair of posers!

Donald and Alvena in the princess’ sash

1975 and 1976 I was the Chairman of Whitstable Carnival. For 27 years I did the commentary for the carnival as it came through town.

During the Whitstable Regatta I could be found standing on top of the ladies toilets on Tankerton slopes, commentating.

I gave my last commentary in 2003 as I had a stroke in 2004.