

John T. - Quirky treasure

There was a Lancaster Bomber that belonged to the Polish airmen. It crashed in a field which is now part of the Thurnby Lodge estate, in the valley between Scrattoft and Thurnby, just on the Scrattoft side of the old railway line and Thurnby Railway Station. We used to call that line the Skeggy line, because that was the line that everybody in Leicester used to board, from Belgrave Road station, to go to Skegness for their holidays. But the plane crashed there, and myself and one of my school pals, Colin, decided that we would have a look at what happened. We walked up through Scrattoft and down to where it was, and we tried to get in to look at what was left of the plane. But of course, the Royal Air Force had slapped a guard on the crash site, so we could not go in. But we were not to be put off by this. So we went up beyond the railway line, along the embankment, and went into the field another way. We found a lot of tracer bullets lying about in the long belts of bullets. And both Colin and I picked up a string of these and hung them around our neck. When I got home, Father said 'where have you got those from?', so I had to explain what we'd been up to. He then went around the corner and brought Sergeant Clemence around. He was the local policeman. He sat one side of me and my father sat on the other, and I had to explain where I'd been, where I'd got the bullets from, how I'd got them, how I'd got in, who I'd been with. So I told the story. And of course, that sent the policeman down to my pal's house. And his father wasn't very pleased when a policeman turned up!

I remember on VE Day, we had a big party on Scrattoft Lane. I was 10 in 1945. We had a huge bonfire in the middle of the road. It was still a lane then, with grass verges on either side. This great big bonfire melted the telephone wires above, and they came down! Of course, there was still food rationing, and yet we had a blooming great party. There were all sorts of things there. I remember my dad coming out of the house with a chef's hat on, and one of my mother's big wooden trays. He'd taken over the oven at home, filled it with potatoes and roasted them. He came up the road ringing a little bell, saying 'Hot potatoes! Hot potatoes!' And they went like hot cakes!

