



## STEEPLE ASTON VILLAGE ARCHIVE TRUST

In this year of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Britain, the Village History Centre was delighted to receive a visit from an evacuee from London's East End, who attended Dr. Radcliffe's School for much of the war. Patricia Dooley, as she was then, arrived in September 1939 at the age of 10, and was allocated along with her older brother and sister to so-called "guardians" in Middle Barton. They were part of a large group of children (and some teachers) who came from St. Anthony's RC school in West Ham.

Patricia was billeted with Mrs. Adams who lived in the house opposite the thatched terrace at the Turnpike, opposite the road up to Duns Tew. Patricia remembers Mrs Adams as a lovely lady, with no children of her own, her tiny house full of evacuees. She had a better time there than her siblings, who were at a local farm with guardians they didn't like. After a year at Middle Barton Primary, Patricia joined Shaun, her brother, at Dr. Radcliffe's in 1940. The photo below shows her (circled) in a school group in Middle Barton – these are all evacuees living in Middle Barton but attending school in Steeple Aston.

SAVA did some research in the archives before Patricia visited us in July; we found in the school admission book for 1939 and 1940 the details of the three Dooley children. But even more extraordinary was that amongst various papers tucked into the back of the book was a handwritten letter from their mother to the Headmaster, Mr. Pearson, which read as follows:

*"14<sup>th</sup> November 1939. Dear Mr. Pearson, My daughter Maureen is returning to her own home, if possible, this weekend. She will be fourteen next month, and we have been offered a post for her in the New Year, so in the meanwhile she can have a little tuition in shorthand etc. Would you kindly give her a report on her work and conduct during the time she has been under your charge. I remain, Yours sincerely, Mrs Jennie Dooley."*

So Maureen did not stay long, and would have arrived back in London just in time for the Blitz. Patricia, on the other hand, remembers her years in our villages with enormous affection, and was delighted to see the original paperwork about her family in the History Centre, as you can see in the photo below.



As always, SAVA would love to hear from you if you have memories, documents or photos about life in Steeple Aston, past or present. Indeed our next exhibition, on the weekend of November 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> is called "Life in Steeple Aston 1973-2015" – a pictorial survey of many stories about our village life from SAL, which started 42 years ago. Please put the date in your diaries!

Our website is [www.steepleastonarchive.org.uk](http://www.steepleastonarchive.org.uk) or contact 01869 347046 Martin Lipson