

Wartime West Sussex 1939 - 1945: AIR RAIDS – ARP WARDENS

From the *West Wittering Women's Institute Village Scrapbook*.

By Dorothy Thomson

CIVIL DEFENCE IN WEST WITTERING,

Air Raid Precautions were a very real part of life in our village. Geographically our proximity to Portsmouth, many aerodromes, the Isle of Wight and being on the edge of our "ditch", oldest and most famous defence against all enemies - gave us some importance.

All through the war on the alert our wardens were on duty - the ambulance manned - the first aid station in readiness and, later on, our very representative and efficient fire guard were doing their part in guarding our homes.

On the first day of the war, when the sirens sounded their fortunately mistaken note of warning, our wardens, attired in full gas kit, reported to the post for the first time, - little guessing how often they would be doing so in the years to come.

Then came a lull until the day when our first bomb dropped, in the garden of the platoon commander of the Home Guard, several others fell in an adjacent field, but that first one had a special significance! One of our wardens achieved a record by being on the spot one minute after the incident and all our chiefs came down to examine the craters.

These bombs were dropped in daylight, by a plane that had been hit and eventually crashed.

After this, hardly a day went by without our seeing vast formations of Germans attacking Portsmouth. Their technique was to cross the coast at Selsey, wheel around over us for the attack and very often to retreat over us, dropping bombs as they went.

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