

Wartime West Sussex 1939 – 1945

CANADIANS

Canadians remember West Sussex-2

From *Memories from a town that disappeared, Horsham during World War II* (Horsham Museum, 1989)

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I was with the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals, Second Division, attached to the 5th Field Regiment Royal Canadian Artillery, from Autumn 1940 to the spring of 1945.

At various times we were billeted at Aldershot, Crookham Crossroads, Guildford, Selsey Bill, Petworth, Rottingdean, and Glynleigh near Polegate – most of our time being spent in Sussex.

Our defence area covered both East and West Sussex, and as we laid field cable to our units, and took part in many communications and field exercises, we became familiar with the towns in the area - not to mention the pubs.

Mostly we identified towns by a specific hotel as a landmark. Particularly remembered are the Coach and Horses in Horsham, the Dun Horse at Mannings Heath, the Wheatsheaf at Midhurst, the Well Diggers, Petworth, The Swan, Arundel, the King's Beach at Bognor Regis and the Fisherman's Joy at Selsey, of which we have particularly fond memories.

A couple more of our favourites were Tommy Farr's Bar in Brighton, and the bar in Brighton's Marine Hotel. However, we didn't spend ALL our off-duty time in Pubs, as we also visited many places of historic interest such as Windsor Castle, Salisbury Cathedral, York Minster, Oxford and Cambridge. We also spent many leaves in the Midlands, Lake District, Scotland, etc as we were almost four years in England before D-day, and many of us had relatives in England.

Well, back to Sussex – our second home – I was struck by a car in the dark of Christmas Eve, 1941, on the road near Glynleigh, as another chap and I were returning from a day in Eastbourne, and I was on Signal Office duty that night.

I came to about three days later in the No. 1 Canadian General Hospital in Horsham, with a bad concussion, lacerated scalp and a variety of cuts and bruises.....I spent about 6 weeks there before being sent to Brixham to convalesce in what had been a Billy Butlin type camp.

Particularly remembered are the kind ladies who visited the hospital, with what goodies they could spare and sewing, darning and mending for us.

Our ward was known as Charlie Ward, as it was all casts, canes, crutches and concussions. Most of the patients were Canadian Despatch Riders, which should tell us something about motorcycles.....

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At a later time, when I was back with my unit, we were in the Horsham area.....Our RHQ was set up at a farm near Horsham, called Broomhall farm, and while I was in the back of a wireless vehicle, a lady appeared with a pot of steaming hot tea, and we had a good chat along with my pals, who had sixth sense of something going on.

We very much enjoyed the hot tea and the conversation, and she appreciated the chocolate, Canadian cigarettes and other goodies such as our Christmas cake and cookies we had received from home.

The kind lady was interested in our places of origin and our families, and I gave her the address of my wife, who was with her family, in Edmonton, Alberta. With my wife was our baby daughter, Heather, who was born nine months after I left for overseas in 1940.

The friendly lady wrote to my wife, and they corresponded for some time, but I suppose due to the erratic mail service and conditions in wartime England, their correspondence dwindled then ceased. My wife, Gwen, says she remembers this lady as Lady Lucas of Broomhall Manor.

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