

Wartime West Sussex 1939 – 1945 INVASION

Coastal defences in Bracklesham

From the book *Wittering's War, Reminiscences of village life during World War II* (East Wittering Local History Group, 2004)

Anti-invasion defences - early 1940, by Ian Coombes

As war commenced, things began to change slowly at first. All house building was stopped and young men were called up for service. White lines were painted on the roads to assist in the blackout, gas masks were issued.

After Dunkirk in 1940 the pace changed. Troops arrived at Bracklesham in a long line of red London buses and sometime later more arrived to set up a tent camp in Coney Road and Oakfield – in those days an open field. Work on defences began all along the sea front and inland. First the troops made reusable wooden boxes to fill with concrete made with stones from the beach, mixing and loading it by hand. There was a very long line of these blocks, each being about 4ft square. On the sand they set up lines of scaffolding angled to face seawards, below high water mark and then put mines and barbed wire in place. Inland, poles were set up in all the open fields to stop gliders landing.

At the top end of Bracklesham Lane, where it turns to Earnley, an ambush was concealed in the hedge and banks, where large oil drums were made ready to be exploded. At the seafront, two concrete positions were built for large guns, and a pillbox in brick and concrete for a machine gun was constructed to the right of Shore Road. On the left hand side of the road, trenches were dug in the Tamarisk banks of a bowling green. A sandbag Bren gun position was also made and at the end of the water course another was built for the same type of gun.

© East Wittering Local History Group XX00073448