

Wartime West Sussex 1939 – 1945

D-DAY

D-day preparations in and around Worthing

Extracts from *Despatches from the Home Front, The War Diaries of Joan Strange 1939-1945* (Monarch Publications, 1989)

1942

June 21st.....Now that the coast here is being fortified so much more and slipways made for embarkation of troops etc, we feel we're more of a military target.....It was all quiet at the Report Centre but it is expected that Worthing is in for it soon. We have hundreds of tanks here; the beach is being cleared, boats are camouflaged overnight, slipways are being made all along the coast, the Americans are nearby on the hills. A US tank General [Eisenhower] has come over to Britain - he is to command the US troops in *Europe*. Everyone wonders – when?

1943

February 1st...The Nazis are going from bad to worse everywhere. Everyone wonders about the invasion of Europe and speculation is varied. Anyhow Worthing is preparing for it as I counted ten new landing boats all finished and ready outside Wenban-Smith's wood yard today.

March 1st A terrific exodus of most of the soldiers, Canadians and British, from Worthing today. The pontoons have also gone. Traffic was diverted as the roads have been blocked by tanks. It seems the men have gone on three weeks of manoeuvres.

August 9th...We heard today that parts of the South Coast are to be banned again from next Saturday, It is to extend from Newhaven to Lancing and people travelling from Worthing into the banned area are to have permits. Cycling along to Lancing to the cinema will be prohibited. There are thousands of troops all along the coast – Canadian tank troops and British commandos. The continent is seething everywhere and occupied Europe awaits the call of liberation.

1944

March 17th...All the road signs (which disappeared in 1940 owing to possible German invasion) are up this week. It looks good to see them again. They will help all the American and other transport vehicles to find their way more easily.

April 23rd...Uncle Bert and I went for an all-day walk near Arundel – many scenes of military and air activity! The Downs near Worthing are almost all taken over by the military and are forbidden to the public.

...Some people think the invasion will take place tonight – tides and weather are good.

May 1st Everyone is keyed up to concert pitch over the invasion. The Germans say May 25th now! We've thousands of the troops and vehicles in the town. We've got some of the 'Desert Rat' lorries here in Langton Rd, very decent Eighth Army men in charge. All Allied Expeditionary Force vehicles carry a large white, five-pointed star.

June 6th Today has proved to be D-Day. We awoke at 5 am to hear peculiar sounding planes flying over – gliders apparently. On the 8 am news it was reported that the Germans had broadcast that we'd dropped paratroops in France. By midday everyone seemed to know *it* had happened at last. We'd had large convoys of troops in all sorts of vehicles passing through Worthing for the last two days and planes had been very active. We listened in at the Report Centre and heard that 4,000 ships had taken part and many thousands of small ones. Normandy was the chosen spot and Mr Churchill made a statement that the first landings had been successful. He wanted to go himself but was dissuaded. Funnily enough it's been quieter in the air over here today and there was 'nothing to report' on duty at the Report Centre.

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