

Wartime West Sussex 1939 - 1945: HOME GUARD AND OTHER VOLUNTEER UNITS

Priest defends right to join Home Guard

Bognor Observer, Saturday June 1 1940

WHY HE JOINED THE DEFENCE VOLUNTEERS THE REV G. WELLS GIVES HIS REASONS

Before addressing the congregation at the Cathedral on Sunday morning the Rev. Godfrey Wells made a short statement attacking those who criticised his action in joining the local Defence Volunteers.

He said: "It had come to my knowledge that there has been a certain amount of criticism in connection with my joining the Local Defence Volunteers. We have got to realise that we are engaged in total war against an enemy who has no regard for any law of God or man, and that the war may be brought very close to us here.

"I am only exercising the elementary right of any man to defend his own hearth and home and those of his neighbours. Also I consider it not only right, but the bounden duty of every man who has been trained to use a rifle to put himself at the disposal of his country in this hour of crisis. This is a purely defensive force, and I considered it my duty to join it. My own conscience is quite clear on this matter. Opinions of course, do differ, but I consider this a matter that rests entirely with me, and I have made my decision. I ask for your support and prayers".

© Bognor Regis Observer

Bognor Observer, Saturday June 8 1940

PARASHOTS AND RELIGION

We welcome the firm reply given to his critics by the Rev. Godfrey Wells over his action in joining the Local Defence Volunteers. Such an action is in no way incompatible with his religion. He finds himself, as do many fathers, fighting the same battles over again. Why should his attitude change this time? The foe is every bit as fearsome and ungodly as before. He threatens an invasion of this country. Are we then to preserve the niceties of an orthodox religious attitude at the cost of losing a valuable man for defence?

Mr. Wells has given us clearly his answer. It is not only his right to defend his hearth – it is his duty! Because at the same time he is defending his country. It is also consistent with his religion for he has every faith and belief that the enemy must be beaten physically if the spirit of Christianity is to survive. As Mr. Arthur Greenwood has said, "to your prayers, add performance".

© Bognor Regis Observer