

# Wartime West Sussex 1939 – 1945 CANADIANS

## Remembering the Canadians in Horsham

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

By Mr A. Smith, Horsham

I myself enlisted in the Royal Sussex Regiment in 1940, and was discharged on medical grounds in May, 1941. From then on I was to be a conductor on the Southdown motor Service until 1946. This meant that I travelled to places on the coast such as Brighton, Worthing and Bognor Regis, and as far as Petersfield, and thus had contact with different troops – Canadian, American, Polish etc. A good many of the camps were situated around Horsham, in such places as Denne Park, Monks Common, Elmhurst Place on Five Oaks Road, Buckmans Corner on the Barns Green Road, Stroud Green, and Billingshurst at Hawkhurst Court to name a few.

Most of the soldiers were of conscription age, one, Bud O'Neill, was only just over 18 years old when he came to us. He was a delightful fellow, always full of fun and always the perfect gentleman, drunk or sober. He is the one who stands out most, we were great pals – what fun we had. As you probably know the billeted soldiers had two highlights in their lives – letters and parcels from home, and pay night, which was once a month. After being paid they would chase all the girls, and drink in all the pubs in Horsham. Then, when money was scarce, they would sell army issue socks, boots, shirts, pants – anything that could be sold, including thousands of cigarettes, which they could buy quite cheaply, and of which I smoked my share.

They all had their ration cards, which my mother used to get their rations, and they had food parcels from home. Mostly these would be shared by all, those receiving always giving in their turn.

As to funny incidents – there were a good many. The best, I think, concerns Bud O'Neill. If I was not on late duty, on pay night I would go into Horsham and try all the pubs until I found him, which was usually 10.30pm – midnight, and nine times out of ten blind drunk, and very very merry. The task was to get him home, quite a task through the blackout, before the Military Police picked him up. The next job was to get him into bed – having many times to sit on him to get him undressed and into bed. But drunk or sober he was always the gentleman where mum was concerned.

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