

# Wartime West Sussex 1939 - 1945 ON THE HOME FRONT - DAILY LIFE

## Remembering wartime in South Harting

From *Wartime Memories 1939-45, By the Residents of South Harting, East Harting, West Harting, and Nyewood* (One Tree Books, 1995)

By Laura Barnard

Much of the war seemed to pass us by in Harting and village activities went on as usual. I joined the Tennis Club in South Gardens where there was also a beautiful bowling green. There was a Youth Club in the British Legion Hall and we enjoyed playing table tennis and put on several shows for the village. Later the Youth Club moved to Shaxson Hall. With a Youth Club in nearly every village it was great fun being ferried around by the much pestered Area Youth Leader to all the social events in each club.

Inevitably, as time wore on, the war became more intense and we began to see troops in our area. Searchlights appeared on Torberry and soldiers were based in huts along the Foxcombe Road. There was an Air Force Radar Station up on Harting Hill and airmen were billeted in homes in and around the village. As children, we particularly liked the French Canadian soldiers because they gave us chocolate and chewing gum. My brother joined the Air Force Cadets and cycled into Petersfield each week for meetings. He used to buy model aeroplane kits, assemble them and hang them from his bedroom ceiling. My younger brother joined the Army Cadets in Harting and often went off camping. I joined the West Sussex Youth Squad and enjoyed fire practice, when we formed a chain from the stream at the rear of Jenny Lake Row, out into the Street passing green canvas buckets full of water along. Although there were a few incendiary fires in East Harting, there were none in South Harting.

In the evenings when there was little action, the forces lads would walk to the village for a few drinks in the pub. This was usually followed by a sing-song which everyone enjoyed although some of the songs were a little of the 'bawdy rugby' type.

As part of the war effort, all citizens were asked to collect scrap metal for production of ammunition and many iron railings, such as those in front of the Malthouse, disappeared. Waste paper was also collected and stored in the barn, which is now a house, opposite Harting Stores. I remember spending many an hour in there rummaging through the paper looking for comics and stamps for our collection.

I left school when I was fourteen and started work in the Government Education Department based in the old college in Petersfield. I felt very grown up and as time went by I was allowed to attend evening shindigs at the Coach and Horses. With all the forces lads in the village, no girl had any trouble finding a boyfriend and I was no exception.

© One Tree Books E300165102