

Wartime West Sussex 1939 - 1945: AIR RAIDS – ARP WARDENS

*Reminiscences of 1938 – 1945 by a Head Warden, T.P. Peters
(T. P. Peters, 1946)*

REMINISCENCES OF 1938 - 1945 BY A HEAD WARDEN

DEDICATED TO "THE GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE" EAST COURT
EAST GRINSTEAD

To which all profits resulting from the Sale of this Booklet will be devoted

T. P. PETERS

When Mr. Chamberlain announced the Declaration of War on Germany on Sunday morning, 3rd September, 1939, the country was well prepared with its A.R.P. Organisation. A good number of A.R.P. badges were to be seen proudly worn. We had received a good training under the Local Council, but my mind went back to the last war, when we had only to deal with 25, 50 or 100 lb. bombs. I was at Chatham Naval Station with two hundred Metropolitan Police sent there to police it during the war.

I was not far away when two 100-lb. bombs fell on the Drill Shed at Chatham Naval Barracks, killing over one hundred Sailors, and what a mess that was. Now what will happen when these one-ton and two-ton bombs we are being told about are dropping!

I actually saw the Battleship *Bulwark* blow up in the River Medway ; all that was left was a column of cordite smoke like a huge mushroom ascending to the sky. Six hundred men had gone in a second. Had we to go through all that again? Yes, sure enough we did. So I think my training went back to the last war.

My Sector was fairly strong—we had as Wardens the late Mr. K. Johnson, Mr. M. Burnett, Mr. G. Wheatland, Mr. C. Baugh, Mr. R. Rice, Mr. H. Piddlesden, Mr. T. Goodchild (Senior Warden), Mr. A. King, Mr. Hollingham, Mr. J. Woodrow, Mrs. T. Peters and Mr. G. Seyfang—my deputy. Respirators had been issued to the Public. I remember when fitting respirators at the Institution, one poor old gentleman asked me: " Well, Sir, how am I to eat my dinner with this thing on ? "

We continued with our training under Col. Eaton, Chief Warden. Larches Post was built and it was known as " the hole in the wall." Wardens' Posts were now being built in various parts of the town:—

Headquarters Post was at Norton House with Colonel Eaton, Chief Warden. Head Wardens were: Mr. E. C. Jenks, Mr. H. Charlton, Mr. B. Batchelor and Mr. C. P. Towler. Senior Wardens were Mr. Leslie Wood, Mr. F. H. Blundell and Mr. T. Coates. Other Posts were at Halsford—Senior Wardens Mr. C. Allsopp and Mr. Slatter ; Millfields—Senior Warden Mr. R. King ; Ashurst Wood—Senior Warden Mr. H. Connold ; Cantelupe Road—Senior Warden Mr. H. Sears ; West Hill—Senior Wardens Mr. J. H. Mitchell and Mr. Jackson ; where we could meet and carry out exercises.

I rather specialised in improvised first aid and we trained on those lines, as in wartime I thought it was necessary and, indeed, it proved so later on. I myself hold the

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L.C.C. Certificate, St. John's and Red Cross Medallions. Every week we would have an exercise. Mr. J. Woodrow, known as our 'Johnny,' would be the patient. Always ready for a bit of humour, Johnny would tuck himself away as a badly injured case—once well under the Home Guard barbed wire!

Several more Wardens were passing their exams. We had Mrs. G. Bashford, Mrs. L. Gudgin, Miss R. Hawkins and Mr. A. Durrant. We co-operated well with the W.V.S., which did so much in this war. One member I must mention—Mrs. L. R. Bennett—who typed me a booklet containing all names, addresses and where they sheltered in case of Air Raids, for the whole of my Sector. What a great help this was! We also received great help from Mr. G. Haines, who was ready at any hour of any night with his car.

We were still standing by, wondering if we could carry out our training as Wardens if anything happened on our Sector. Again my mind went back to the time when I left my country village in Cambridgeshire to join the Metropolitan Police. My employer, a Clergyman, gave me a Bible as a parting gift. In it he put these words: *Matthew*, Chapter XXVI, verse 41, "For the Spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." I wondered would that text be reversed?

Well, we had not long to wait. At 10 p.m. on Saturday, 26th October, 1940, "Stanney," Holtye Road, was demolished. Mrs. T. Peters, Mr. G. Wheatland, Mr. M. Burnett and myself were standing at the Larches Post door, only eighty yards away, when the debris went flying over. Well, we thought, it has come at last. We could hear cries coming from what little was left of the house. Warden G. Wheatland sent off this message: "H.E. Bombs. 'Stanney,' Holtye Road, house demolished, casualties, people trapped." The most extraordinary thing about this incident was the luck of the three ladies, who were trapped and escaped with minor injuries, but a nurse from Queen Victoria Hospital, who was having a bath at the time, was blown right out with the roof of the house and with the shattered bath. We found her lying on her back on the debris, terribly injured, and quite nude. She must have been in her bath at the time. We covered her with a coat and she actually asked me what had happened. Warden Burnett and I concentrated all our first aid knowledge to save her life. We got her into the Larches Nursing Home, where Dr. Somerville, Mrs. Froggatt and Staff did their best, but she died the next day. Warden M. Burnett remarked afterwards: "When I shone my torch on her I thought it was a statue blown over in the garden."

Meanwhile, the other ladies had been rescued. Here I must mention Mr. G. Packer, who was then Chairman of the Council and who lived quite near, and with the help of a soldier did good work. Afterwards we were congratulated by the M.O. through Col. Eaton on our good work.

Next came the Hoskyns Farm bomb, where a one-ton unexploded bomb fell only ten feet from the house. This appeared a mystery at first. When I arrived on the scene tiles had been broken on the roof of the house and gutters were full of earth. Quite a good size hole was made in the ground. In my report to Control I stated probably a 25-lb. bomb had burst, of unusual type. Still we were not satisfied. The Police and Mr. W. H. Dunham (the Deputy Sub-controller) arrived. We dug Well down the hole and found a large piece of fin one inch thick. This could not belong to a 25-lb. bomb, so

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Headquarters decided it was a very large unexploded bomb and to evacuate an area of 300 yards at once. The Bomb Disposal Squad arrived and confirmed this and stated no one must go near for ninety-six hours.

The strangest part of all was the pony. Mr. Coomber came to me and said: " My pony is on the farm somewhere." I replied: " No, I have searched everywhere. He was not there." The pony had evacuated himself. Nobody to this day knows where he went but three days afterwards he returned looking very distressed. I led him away to a field at Copse Close. There was a horse at the other end of the field and he neighed. The pony neighed back, some language passed between them ; the pony just came to life and like a Derby winner he went to join his friend. But strange to relate, on the last day when the bomb was made safe he returned home.

The time soon passed by and the ninety-six hours were up. The B.D.S. arrived and made it safe. It was afterwards on show at the Radio Centre and realised £85 for the Hospital.

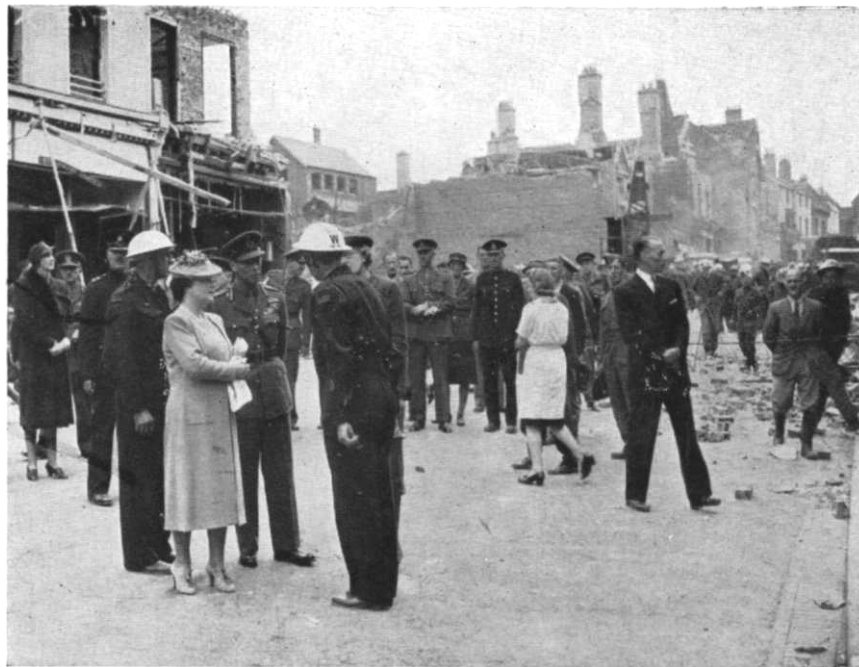
Now back to the Post ; more exercises, training, alerts, etc. I remember returning home to bed, at midnight, after attending three alerts, when a ring came from a lady near Pump House Farm, saying : " Can you come, I think some incendiaries are going off near my house, there is a lot of popping going on." I went along on my cycle and found it was a motor pump working on Mr. Dewar's estate.

The time came when I was transferred to Norton House Post, to take the place of Mr. H. Charlton, Head Warden, now Lieutenant-Commander, R.N. He was greatly missed, especially for his fun and humour—this does help to run a Post.

One evening Mr. Menzies, then Australian Premier, visited the Post and signed the Post Book and had a cup of tea. He told Mr. C. P. Towler, Head Warden, he must get back to the House and tell Winston all about it. It appeared he was passing through the town when his car broke down close to the Post.

I remember once we had given a demonstration of A.R.P. Equipment, Gas Masks, etc., for which I borrowed a full size model of a lady from Wilsons Ltd. to demonstrate a Gas Suit. Before returning her we put her to bed at Norton House Post. This caused quite a lot of fun—she looked so real, but strange to relate : in walked the Controller from Headquarters to inspect books, etc. As he turned, I turned, but I could not hide the lady from his gaze for long. I gave him a short explanation and he joined in the joke.

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The King and Queen visit the Flying Bomb Incident
Photograph by permission of "The Sussex Daily News "

Mr. E. C. Jenks was now our Chief Warden, with Mr. R. Wood as Deputy Chief. I also had Mr. Bill Leppard, M.M. (ex-Sergeant R.E.), Mr. Tom Coates, Senior Warden (ex-Army), Mr. A. Burnett (ex-Army), Mr. Charley Finter (ex-R.F.C). He was known as 'our Charley.' Why I do not quite know. 'Our Charley' was always ready for a bit of fun. At one time he had to go to Hospital for an operation and I think it was quite a coincidence, he planted the small flower bed in front of the Warden's Post, with Forget-me-nots ; but he returned recovered. These were all tried soldiers of the last war.

Then we had our old friend Mr. W. Lambert (ex-manager of Hall & Co.) a well respected English gentleman. I think he was more at home driving a pen than fitting a charming blonde with a respirator.

To complete our Post we had our lady telephonists : Miss Pont, Miss E. Marsh, Miss Bishop, Miss J. Huggett, Mrs. Burberry, Miss R. Styles, Mrs. M. Scott, Mrs. B. Batchelor and Mrs. A. Tomsett—our oldest Warden and a great worker in the British Legion, always a top-liner for duty. Then Mrs. K. Sherlock, Senior Warden and a fine telephonist.

We were now busy training the Women Fire Guard. I remember once when we were giving a demonstration at a fire, our old friend Mr. H. Charlton, Head Warden, said : "We might as well give the Chief Warden a warm up," and put some old motor sump oil in the fire. What a fire ! Mrs. T. Peters, who was to be the first to attack the fire, had her hair well singed, but we managed to get it under with the stirrup pump.

We now come to the next incident: the bombing of West Hill and Brooklands Way Housing Estate areas. What a miraculous deliverance that was ! Considerable damage to property was caused but no serious casualties. It seemed the impossible had happened. Wardens were on the scene in a few minutes. Tom Coates, myself, the Chief Warden, Mr. E. C. Jenks, and his Deputy, Mr. R. Wood, seemed to pop up from nowhere. We were even asked by some of the people : "Do you know where they are going to drop ?"—still that was a bit of luck. The first house I entered was the residence of Mrs. Daws, in Brooklands Way, who had a small arrow-shaped piece of glass sticking in her neck. Her daughter, Mrs. Payne, was nursing her baby ; blood was on the

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baby's head, but on examination we found it was from a wound on the mother's arm—the baby was not even scratched. Miss I. Wallis took over, and dressed the wounds, which were not serious, while I went to other houses.

Well, back to our training exercises, respirator fitting, etc. Then things began to ease up. Full-time Wardens were discharged, leaving the Chief Warden and me to carry on. We were getting frequent reports of unexploded cannon shells, and occasionally unexploded bombs. These little 1-lb. cannon shells from our own aircraft were dangerous little fellows. We were instructed to handle them with the greatest care, taking them to the Police Station suspended in our handkerchiefs. The unexploded German bombs were very dangerous. The Chief Warden and I would go and inspect the holes armed with rods, to enable him to fill up the necessary forms, etc., for the Bomb Disposal Squad. We were almost afraid to breathe. Once when going to Gullidge Farm to inspect an unexploded bomb, we were informed it had just gone off.

We now pass on to the saddest and worst disaster—one of the outstanding disasters in the country—when Whitehall Cinema was bombed, over one hundred people were killed and two hundred and thirty-five were injured. So many we knew so well. Business premises in High Street and London Road were demolished. I, like many more, had a wonderful escape. I was in Norton House Post when the alert went, just having a cup of tea. On the arrival of Mr. C. P. Towler, Head Warden, I said to him : " I will just check up on the shelters." Not stopping to finish my cup of tea I think saved my life, for I had just left the back of the Scotch Wool Shop and got to Bridgland's when the bombs dropped. I was apparently blown across the road into the building opposite not knowing to this day how I got there or having heard any noise. But my mind soon cleared. I looked around—the sight was almost indescribable. People were lying all round me terribly injured, blown from I do not know where. The extraordinary thing was : How did I escape ? Other than a small bump on my head caused by my helmet, I was the only uninjured person present. Bullets were flying round as the raider had returned and was machine-gunning the town. Mr. B. G. Gutsell, Sergeant in the Special Police, was proceeding to the incident and had just reached the Maypole Dairy when a bullet cut through his clothing, taking a button off his waistcoat and cutting a small gash across his abdomen. What a wonderful escape !

Always having my first aid kit with me I soon got busy. Here I was joined by a very fine First Aider, young Perry, son of Councillor and Mrs. Perry, who did a fine job of work. I well remember a lady in Rice's shop asking me to get her a taxi, of course not knowing what she was saying. I replied : " I'll get you an ambulance." She had a broken collar bone and terrible cuts on the head and neck. She looked like a Red Indian where she had tried to wipe the blood from her face. This lady came to see me some months afterwards, completely cured. Mr. T. Tullett was treating Mr. C. Baker, the manager, for a nasty cut on the neck. The top of the building was then on fire. Ambulances were arriving and departing as quickly as they could be loaded under the supervision of Mr. M. Stripp (Red Cross) and his Deputy, Mrs. R. Wood, with the following ambulance drivers and attendants : Miss J. Allen, Mrs. B. Carter, Mrs. Crighton, Miss H. Weekes, Miss K. Varndell, Mrs. E. C. Jenks and Miss M. Rutter. The people were just wonderful; never once did I hear or see any panic. Mrs. Dempster was soon on the scene with her car, carrying round flasks of tea, which were most acceptable.

Now the Cinema : hardly a body could be seen—all covered by rubble. What a task ! I went with the General Manager, Mr. F. C. Maplesden, into the basement towards the stage as far as we could get, but rescue work from this point was impossible. We received great help from the Army Units, who soon arrived. The roof was still dangerous, or what was left of it, but nobody took any notice of that. This is where our training came in. All departments worked wonders, even makers of tea knew their stuff. I never drank so much tea in all my life. I think at this stage

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our thoughts must go to our Queen Victoria Hospital—Matron C. Hall and Staff; and to The First Aid Post, Moat Road—Mrs. Blount, O.B.E. (Commandant), Miss M. Blount, M.B.E., Miss D. Martin, Miss Card, Mrs. E. Draper, Miss Kirkpatrick, Miss Payne, Miss I. Wallis (Nursing Shift Leader) and Dr. Walks, for the great work they did.

There were wonderful escapes. One well known resident did not like the film so had just left the Cinema. Another decided to stay and see it through again, and lost his life, and two Nurses, Miss N. Whelan and Miss Johnson, owe their lives to a pound of gooseberries. They decided not to go in their usual seats in the centre but to get the back seats of all to eat the fruit. They were just in time to get into the corridor and thus escaped serious injury, one losing her shoe in the melee.

Our next sad task was at the temporary mortuary (Foster's Garage) where over one hundred bodies were laid out for identification purposes. Here I must mention Mr. L. R. Bennett, Deputy Clerk, now Clerk to the Council, and his staff, for the great work they did under his guidance. Has anyone just thought for a while what he had to do : Identifications, burials, compensations, private effects, etc., etc. Here Mrs. L. R. Bennett (W.V.S.) worked by his side. Mrs. Blount, O.B.E. (Commandant), Miss H. Beale, O.B.E., Miss M. Spalding, Miss Hazell, Miss Woollard, Miss I. Wallis, Miss M. Blount, M.B.E., Mrs. E. Draper (Red Cross), Mrs. T. Peters Warden) and others were there from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. with tea and sandwiches, sandwiches and tea, until the day of the funeral. Dr. Golding-Bird (Vicar) and the Right Rev. G. Bell (Lord Bishop of Chichester) also paid several visits.

At this point I must mention the Mortuary Staff (Surveyor's Department), Mr. G. F. Brett in charge, with the following assistants : Mr. F. Carter, Mr. A. J. Keeley, Mr. F. Burningham, Mr. J. Brinkhurst, Mr. E. C. Coomber, Mr. G. T. Simmons, Mr. P. C. Jennings, Mr. H. T. Parsons, Mr. J. Holcombe and Mr. C. Howell; they did good work behind the scenes. Each body arrived beautifully clean as far as humanly possible. The funeral at Mount Noddy Cemetery was a wonderful piece of organisation, attended by hundreds of people.

On another occasion a single raider machine-gunned the town. Luckily there were no casualties. One cannon shell just missed the Gas Works and struck Holmden's shop. Here I think I can mention the reply I made to the Council to a letter I received from them congratulating me on receiving the Bronze Medal and parchment from the R.S.P.C.A. for the Hoskyns Farm incident. The reply was : " I am sure the Wardens' Service which you have trained, if ever put to the test, will never let you down." I think we must agree this has come true.

Not many planes crashed in our area. The first one, a German Bomber, crashed on Mr. Simpson's bungalow at North End, and I think all the town heard the next German Bomber which crashed in a wood at Hammerwood : everyone thought it was going to crash in their back garden—it made such a noise in falling. One member of the crew who baled out surrendered to Miss Starks in Holtye Road. A Lancaster crashed early one morning near Old Surrey Hall. On my arrival I found parts of the plane spread over an area of two hundred yards and on fire. I and an Army Officer searched what was left of the plane—machine gun bullets were going off in the flames and we had to make a hurried get-away after satisfying ourselves that no one was in the plane. We heard afterwards the crew had baled out.

One morning we received an urgent message from the forest: a Flying Fortress had crashed. Mrs. E. C. Jenks, Senior Ambulance Driver, and I went there with the ambulance. I shall well remember that road through the forest—only fit for a tank—but these ambulance drivers know their stuff.

Invasion scare ! Here I must tell for the first time how well the authorities were catering for them in case of invasion. At the time it was a top hole secret. You all remember the perimeter

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surrounding the town. This would have been closed had the invasion taken place. The area outside this was split up into four sections, each area having a Civil Representative : Mr. E. Blount, O.B.E., Mr. F. E. Richards, Mr. W. V. Wray, and myself ; Mr. G. Packer was the head of the four areas. I will quote here from the official paper some of the preparations necessary for each sector. " To maintain service, water and sanitation, shelter for casualties, rest centres, billeting, infectious disease, pregnant women, supplies of paraffin, labour, solid fuel cookers, oil stoves, hurricane lamps, supplies of food and clothing." My garage contained the clothing. Food was in a secret dump, worked out at so much per head, per day. My Committee consisted of Police, Mr. W. Cramp, Mr. E. Dakin ; (W.V.S.) Mrs. L. R. Bennett, Miss J. Sharp; (Wardens) Mr. G. Seyfang, my deputy, and Mrs. T. Peters. The scheme could be brought into operation at very short notice. A code word had been arranged : on receiving the word " May " it meant—Stand by; and " June " meant—Action. My other helpers would have been : Police, Mr. R. Mephram, S/S Ascroft, S/C Dunstall and S/C Willmer. Sisters from the Convent. Nurses—Mrs. Froggatt and Mrs. Pritchard ; Midwives—Mrs. Steel and Miss Mason ; W.V.S.—Housewives' Service, Mrs. Packer, with other helpers for feeding and gas cleansing, amongst whom were The Misses Truby, Mrs. Oliver, Mrs. Bailey, Mrs. Hounsell, Mrs. Mephram, Mrs. Potter, Mrs. Seyfang, Miss Shepherd, Mrs. Streatfield, Mrs. Sorrell, Mrs. Loveridge, Mrs. D. Rice, Mrs. Cooper, Mrs. Hounsome, Mrs. Stanham. Mr. E. Heasman in charge of Rescue Party. Mr. P. Oliver, animal care. An emergency burial ground was chosen beside the nursery gardens, Mr. W. Iggulden in charge. Should this scheme have had to be brought into operation it would have meant catering for 2,000 people in my area alone, including the Queen Victoria Hospital.

GAS SCARE.— We received an order to check up on gas respirators, and people were coming to the Wardens' Post with respirators for testing, changing, repairing and replacements. We dealt with about 4,000. We visited Waddon Senior School, Moat Hall; Waddon Senior School, St. Mary's ; North End School; Aston House, Cantelupe Road ; Clapham College, Windmill Lane ; East Grinstead Senior School ; East Grinstead Junior School ; East Grinstead County School; Imberhorne Roman Catholic School ; Stildon Convalescent Home ; Highfields Convalescent Home ; The Institute, Queen's Road ; East Grinstead Institution, Railway Approach ; Baldwin's Hill School ; Blind Babies' Home ; Frampost; High Grove Sanatorium ; East Grinstead Hospital ; Nurses' Home, Warrenside, and The Stream, Felbridge. Here we dealt with 1,959 respirators. On these visits we found Mrs. T. P. Peters and Mrs. C. Allsopp (Wardens) of great help. All children were found to have a good knowledge of donning the respirator, the School Teachers having kept up a good standard of procedure much ahead of the general public, the children wearing respirators frequently for short periods.

The Ministry was asking for these returns every six months, which I had to submit through Mr. E. C. Jenks, Chief Warden, and the local Council :

1. Estimated number of respirators on issue to public throughout each local Authority's Area.
2. Number inspected in last six-monthly period.
3. Number found in good condition.
4. Number found damaged but repairable locally.
5. Number found damaged beyond local repair and replaced.
6. Number lost and fresh issues made. Cash received for same.
7. Number found unserviceable and returned to Regional Store.
8. General remarks—Comments on the position in each District.

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East Grinstead Wardens

Photograph by permission of Harold Connold

These were very busy times and here Nature stepped in and told me when to stop. Dr. Newman ordered me three weeks' break. His words to me were : " Three weeks now, or six weeks' compulsory later." I was due to sit for an Incident Officer's Exam. He advised me not to take it. I went against his advice and failed. I could not concentrate. He was right and I was wrong. What we can learn from Nature ! My previously mentioned Text, after 30 years' service had indeed come true, but the benefit I received from the three weeks' rest put me right in time for the Flying Bombs.

Things were again beginning to warm up. The Flying Bomb was on us, Ack-Ack and Balloon Barrage. We could count two hundred-and-fifty balloons from the Larches corner. Flying Bombs were passing over day and night—we were in Bomb Alley all right. I think this was one of the most trying times. An average of 5,000 people a month were sleeping in the Shelters. We had some very near misses. Two fell near the Larches, one in the corner of East Court Woods, near Ash Platts, the other, nearly taking the chimney pots off Shovel-strode Beacon, fell in the woods just opposite. The only casualty was Mrs. Tatchell who sustained a broken rib, minor damage being done to the row of houses there. These were two lucky escapes. One fell in a field on Mr. Blount's Estate, causing slight damage to property. Another fell on Brock-hurst Estate, causing considerable damage. Another fell at Ashurst Wood—casualties were light but damage to property was considerable.

Mr. A. Durrant and I were watching a Flying Bomb from the Larches Corner. It was flying higher than usual when it started to career about. First it went to the right, then to the left, nearly looped the loop, circled near the town, then exploded in an oak tree in Dorman's Park. We were wondering where this ton of explosives was going to drop.

Then a Flying Bomb was shot down in London Road. Fortunately the casualties were not very heavy—three killed, thirty-eight injured, as it occurred about 7.30 a.m. Had it been later in the day no doubt the list would have been much heavier. As it was, great damage was done although it fell on the rubble of the previous bombing. It was at this time we were honoured by the visit of their Majesties the King and Queen. I was asked by His Majesty's Equerry to show the King and Queen round. The King shook my hand and said : " I see you have been a London Policeman." I replied : " Yes, Sir, just a Warden now." The Queen said : " I think you people are just wonderful." I replied : " We don't let these things get us down Madam, just look round— the

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people still have a smile." Her Majesty was quite concerned about the exposed wool in the Scotch Wool shop, but I assured her it would be salvaged safely. They then visited the Refreshment Van run by the W.V.S., then the Incident Post—Police Sergeants Armstrong and W. Simpson in Charge and chatted with the Sub-Controller, Mr. G. Coldwell, and the Chief Warden, Mr. E. C. Jenks. On leaving they both shook hands, the Queen wishing me " Good Luck." Their interest and sympathy was a great tonic to the town.

We had a few Ack-Ack unexploded shells to deal with— one just missed the Wardens' Post at Halsford and buried itself in a garden opposite, another played a queer trick at " Kent water," Holtye Road—it tunnelled its way under the drive leading to the back of the house, ascended and struck the eaves, passed over the house and fell on the lawn at " Northstoke " next door, with the base of the shell sticking out. Another exploded and badly damaged an upstairs room in Portland Road. Yet another struck the road in the High Street and finished up in the roof of the Tailor's Shop belonging to Mr. A. H. Johnson.

Then back to routine again.

In September Mrs. T. Peters had the honour of representing the Civil Defence Service of East Grinstead in the Battle of Britain march in London. I accompanied her unofficially, and when we got to the Rest Centre, where the procession was to muster, the Marshal told us one of the Wardens had been taken ill and asked me to take his place, which, of course, I was very pleased to do. There were Green Line buses to take us to Buckingham Gate, and there we formed into our Sections. Lord Mountevans, who of course is "Evans of the Broke," and was Regional Officer for London, spoke to us all through loud speakers before we started. He said we were going to march past the King and Queen, which incidentally was the first time we knew the King would be there, and that when passing Their Majesties, we were to "chuck-a-chest" and "swank," as we were entitled to do. It was a most impressive sight, marching past the crowds to the band of the Grenadier Guards, and we arrived home tired, but happy to think we had taken part in such a memorable occasion. ' Things gradually improved. There were several small incidents, until a Fly Bomb fell in North End district. Casualties were light but damage to property was heavy ; but this was the last we saw of the Flying Bombs, and I believe this Fly Bomb was the last to fall in this country.

The following is the Christmas message we have received from the Minister of Home Security to the Civil Defence Services and the Fire Guard Service :—

"To all of you in Civil Defence and Fire Guard, my colleagues, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Minister of Health and I, send sincere good wishes for Christmas and the New Year. We thank you on the country's behalf for another year of devoted service.

The last round of the fight against Nazi aggression approaches. The country can take just pride in the record of Civil Defence and the conduct of its citizens in the battle on the Home front. Whatever the future may bring we feel confident that the high standards which have been set will be maintained, and that the skill and daring of a brave people will still be matched against the cunning of the enemy, however it may manifest itself.

For those whose year has been one of monotonous watchfulness, with little incident, I would remind them that this lack of incident is in itself a measure of the victory we have won, for, without the constant vigilance of the Fighting and Civil Defence Services, the enemy would certainly have ventured more to destroy our towns and all we hold dear.

We, in Civil Defence, must be on the alert and maintain our efficiency and zeal for the country's safety until the last vestige of German opposition has been crushed in defeat, as it certainly will be.

The best of luck to you all in the New Year."

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Now, in conclusion, I must touch on a few important points. These British Women we hear so much about ; just where should we be without them ? They never strike against their eighty-hour week, and the queuing, the nerve-racking job of trying to feed their families on the inadequate rations. They have never let us go hungry. I have always said : "Give *them* all the medals, they have earned them." **Then**, my wife : at the funeral of the Cinema Tragedy victims, the late Mrs. M. Munn, that great voluntary welfare worker and Councillor, said to me : "Mr. Peters, your wife is just a tower of strength on a day like this." Yes, no truer words were ever spoken ; she has been a tower of strength to me for over the thirty years of our happy married life. Also a great help to me as a Warden, and always ready to help anyone.

I feel I cannot conclude without telling you a little about our "Sector 7 Women"—all housewives—who formed a little group about 1940 to meet once a week at "Rest-a-While," the residence of Mr. and Mrs. P. Oliver, to enjoy a small Whist Drive. The house was right opposite the Wardens' Post and so all could be immediately on duty in their various occupations when the siren went. We Wardens used to hear their laughter and chatter as they enjoyed a cup of tea during the evening. We used to say : "Gossip-a-While," but "no gossip" was one of their rules. The Whist Drives are still going strong. Sometimes at each other's houses ; and the little group of women have given well over £100 to different charities.

Now this is the part which makes me feel sad : the wonderful spirit of co-operation in those days—and the world of to-day ! We are drifting back to the two causes of war, in my mind—greed and jealousy. Until we overcome these we shall not have the world we want.

I would have liked to have touched on the great work done in the other departments. I was at Norton House Post for three years and saw a bit of the inner workings. These were : Control Centre, with cheery Mrs. F. W. Watts, always with a pleasant smile ; Red Cross ; Canteen Workers ; Citizens' Advice Bureau (Miss Eardley Wilmott and Cr. St. J. Payne) ; not forgetting my old friend, Mr. B. Batchelor, of Dawson & Steer, for the great help he gave me in keeping records ; Mr. E. C. Jenks, Chief Warden ; and Mr. G. E. Coldwell, then Clerk to the Council (I appreciated the trust they placed in me as Senior Post Warden) ; and Mrs. Perry and her band of W.V.S. helpers in their various ways—Gas Masks, etc., etc.

Now back on the shelf again, I hope for good.

I have only touched on the main incidents. Perhaps some more able pen than mine will give us the whole show — or do we want to forget it ? I wonder !

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HEAD WARDEN,

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Printed by Calient, Canleupe Road, East Grinstead ; and Published by T. P. Peters, 190 Holtye Road, East Grinstead