

THE STORY OF THE HOME FRONT IN WEST SUSSEX 1939 – 1945



Gun emplacement at Splash Point, Worthing (PP/WSL/WGP000025)
www.westsussexpast.org.uk/pictures

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February 2012

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INTRODUCTION

This is a story of a front-line county at war; of a people who endured the dangers and deprivations of wartime, who prepared to face the invader, who opened their doors to evacuees and billeted service men, and who played their part in a multitude of ways in the wider war effort.

It is, in other words, the story of a people whose contribution on the Home Front was a vital, if immeasurable, factor on the road to ultimate victory.

WAR CLOUDS GATHER

The clouds of war had been gathering for some time when, on 29 September 1938, the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, flew to Munich for a four-power conference on the latest crisis, over Czechoslovakia.

The rise of the National Socialist (Nazi) Party in Germany had culminated in the proclamation of its leader, Adolf Hitler, as Führer of the German Reich in August 1934. Re-arming at home, his re-militarisation of the Rhineland in March 1936 and occupation of Austria in March 1938, had given notice of his expansionist foreign policy, which now turned its sights on the German-speaking Sudetenland, assigned to the Czechs at the end of the Great War.

Chamberlain believed that he could satisfy German demands by direct negotiations with Hitler.

“How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is”, he told the British people on 27 September 1938, “that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas masks here because of a quarrel in a faraway country between people of whom we know nothing”.

Three days later, after signing an agreement to transfer the Sudetenland, to Germany, he returned from Munich to offer re-assuring words to a relieved and cheering crowd at Heston aerodrome.

“There has come back from Germany to Downing Street peace with honour”, he told them, “I believe it is peace for our time”.

For Winston Churchill, out in the political wilderness, Munich was another fatal compromise, a sacrifice of honour, along the road to inevitable war. For Chamberlain, himself, his policy of appeasement, and fervent hopes for peace, would only be abandoned on the Nazi occupation of Prague six months later, in March 1939.

It may be argued that even if Munich did not give “peace for our time”, it did give this country a vital year in which to improve its armaments and to introduce defensive measures of a civil nature.

In West Sussex, as the armed services stepped up their preparations, local people were introduced to gas masks, air raid shelters, civil defence exercises, and evacuation schemes. The hope remained for peace, but should war come, they would at least be better prepared.

It was fully expected that such a war would involve the bombing of towns and cities by enemy aircraft. German air power had contributed substantially to General Franco's victory in the Spanish Civil War in 1936-39.

One of the first precautions to be introduced was the issue of respirators in the event of gas attacks or fractured mains.

In the late summer of 1938 centres were set up in towns and villages for the issue of gas masks and their cardboard carrying cases. Times were designated for fitting sessions, and local authorities were quick to publish leaflets on their fitting and use. Adults quickly learned the knack of "thrusting their chin forward into the mask".

Parents encouraged their children to practise wearing their masks – "Mickey Mouse" designs, in different colours, were supplied to toddlers, and babies had more elaborate, all-enclosing devices. The Bognor war photographer, Frank L'Alouette, photographed his wife and two daughters trying out their masks during a family picnic in the summer of 1939. School log-books show that classroom exercises were by now a feature of school life – one photograph shows the girls at Rosemead School, Littlehampton, wearing their gas masks during an outdoor PE lesson.

"Carry your gas mask with you at all times" urged the posters, and people in all walks of life carried the familiar little cardboard boxes on shoulder-straps as they went about their daily business. Amongst the extensive archive of Petworth photographer, George Garland, are pictures of two rustic Sussex shepherds at Findon Sheep Fair in September 1939, doubtless debating the impracticalities of wearing a mask on top of their luxuriant beards.



Sussex shepherds with gas mask at Findon Sheep Fair, September 1939. Photographed by George Garland.

Sometimes conformity was more apparent than real. One spot-check in the county (in November 1939) revealed that only two thirds of the boxes carried actually held masks – the remainder served as handy containers for packed lunches and the like.

Another measure with which local people were made familiar in anticipation of war was the blackout. Householders had to make sure that no thread of light emitted from their windows or doors. Crawley soon ran out of heavy blackout material and forays had to be made to Horsham. Vehicle headlights had to be shaded, reducing the beam to a small slit, barely extending a foot or two beyond the front tyres.

Local authorities carried out exercises to test the effectiveness of the blackout, and local newspapers emphasised the need for strict adherence to lighting restrictions, and the fines which would ensue for non-observance.

In prophetic expectation of accidents on the roads, motorists were urged to paint the bumpers and running boards of their cars white, whilst council workmen painted black-

and-white stripes on kerbs, lampposts and other protuberances that might surprise an unwitting motorist in the blackout.

As the international crisis worsened in the summer of 1939, Emergency Committees of local authorities in the county stepped up their preparations for war. On the beach at Bognor, Frank L'Alouette photographed local children and holiday-makers helping workmen fill sandbags to protect key buildings and strategic sites.

Reservists were recalled to the Colours on 24 August 1939, and the Territorials were mobilised. The Steyning section of 209th Field Company, Royal Engineers, was ordered to report to the Town Hall in the High Street; picture postcards show them being waved off by local children as they left the town.

On Friday 1 September 1939, Hitler's storm troops invaded Poland, and Britain and France invoked their pledge to support the Poles. In his diary, written at Tillington, William Slade Mitford spoke of the unbearable tension of that weekend, as everyone anxiously awaited the latest news bulletins.

On Sunday 3 September 1939 the congregation arrived early for morning service in the parish church of St Peter in the little Wealden parish of Linchmere. The Vicar, the Reverend Geoffrey Tibbs, had placed the vicarage wireless set on a table in front of the organ screen, and just before 11am, as the choir filed into their stalls, the set was switched on so that the congregation might listen to the broadcast from Downing Street by Neville Chamberlain.

His now historic words, announcing the declaration of war with Germany, were heard by countless millions throughout the land, sharing in his personal grief at the failure of his long struggle to maintain peace, and fearful of what the future might hold.

Anxieties were soon fuelled, for barely had the broadcast ended and the strains of the National Anthem died away, when the newly installed sirens in the towns and villages of the county wailed forth their first warning of an approaching air raid.

In Crawley, a solitary policeman cycled up London Road, blowing his alarm whistle, and shouting for everyone to stay indoors. When all remained quiet, curiosity overcame nerves, and people came out, searching the skies for the expected bombers.

For hundreds enjoying the late summer sunshine on Lancing beach, the sirens went unheard – the wind was blowing the warning sound in the wrong direction! Fortunately it was a false alarm.

EVACUATION

Even before the Prime Minister's announcement, the weekend had been a traumatic experience for many people in West Sussex. For the county had been chosen as a reception area for a proportion of the 3 million mothers and children to be evacuated from London to the supposed safety of the countryside.

It had been planned for months. Evacuation exercises had been carried out during the pre-Munich crisis in 1938. East Grinstead had taken 350 children and adults from London. In January 1939 the government circulated a new scheme to local authorities which now had to compile surveys of accommodation for evacuees. Leaflets were printed to explain the scheme – foster parents would receive 10s 6d per week to upkeep the first child, and 8s 6d per week for each additional child.

The evacuees would enter the county at one of the eleven rail-heads, and would then be taken in convoys of coaches and Southdown buses to reception and billeting centres, from which they would be taken to their new homes.

The government decided to activate the scheme on Friday 1 September 1939, and the mass exodus was to take place over a period of three days. After all the arguments that it could not, or should not be done, it was now to happen.



Peckham evacuees arrive at Billingshurst railway station, September 1939. Photographed by George Garland.

Billingshurst was one of the rail-heads in West Sussex. George Garland photographed the scene as children from Oliver Goldsmith School in Peckham arrived in the town.

Photographs always put a brave face on the evacuation programme, but one evacuee from Peckham, who arrived at Billingshurst, remembers the day as being "long, exhausting and emotive".

The thought of separation from parents, and the uncertainty over the future, brought apprehension and tears to many by the end of the day.

Individually labelled like so many human packages, they clutched a variety of belongings in an assortment of bags. At Chichester 13,000 evacuees were received – children, mothers of babies and teachers; at Worthing 12,000. The *West Sussex Gazette* reported pathetic scenes at Chichester of "forlorn little folk, with their poor little emergency bundles of clothing and gas masks.... There were many wet eyes". At Worthing they were each given a carrier bag with two day's food – chocolate, corned beef, condensed milk and biscuits.

At Middleton-on-Sea the Church Hall was used as a Reception Centre, and the WVS, under Lady Gregory of Manor House, took charge of the billeting arrangements.

Most were received with open arms. George Garland shows a foster mother kissing her three young charges as they went off to school at Damers Bridge, Petworth. Mrs Bridge of Birdham, with seven children of her own, took in eleven evacuees. Meeting the Queen on her West Sussex visit in December 1939 she said she coped by getting up at 5 and being organised.

A Bognor lady, Mrs Helen Bowles, of 36 Orchard Way, was nominated England's "No. 1 Evacuee Auntie". She had as many as nine evacuees at a time. Her recipe was to have them all in bed by 7pm.

At Parham Park, Mrs Clive Pearson welcomed 30 boys, aged 4-10 from Peckham. Some came with elder sisters, burdened with their mothers' advice, such as not to eat vegetables that had not come out of a tin. Such was her kindness to these uprooted children that she received a citation from the Queen.

There were some real problems, however, as children found it hard to settle, and were ill at ease with their new families. One family arrived home to find that their evacuee had plucked their pet parrot. Billeting Tribunals were set up to deal with the problems, and sometimes new billets had to be found.

A particular concern was education. By the end of September 1939 nearly 42,000 evacuees had come to West Sussex. Even though this was only half the numbers originally expected, it more or less doubled the school population. A double shift system was adopted with local and evacuated children using school buildings at different times of the day. Schools overflowed into nearby accommodation – at Amberley they used the Houghton Bridge Tea Rooms. George Garland's photographs show evacuees and their teachers making use of the Iron Room Congregational Chapel at Petworth.

For many evacuees from London, the countryside of West Sussex offered a new experience. Garland showed them bathing in the river at Pulborough and picking blackberries at the Virgin Mary Spring, Petworth. On the coast, there were other novelties – "Where's the sea, mister?" said one evacuee as he arrived in Bognor.

Ignoring government advice, many parents took their children home for Christmas, and some did not return. At Ferring, where 140 evacuees were taught in the Village Hall, the "Phoney War" persuaded parents to remove 78% of them by February 1940. After Dunkirk the vulnerability of the south coast, saw some London evacuees being transferred inland. In 1941 bombing raids led to the evacuation of West Sussex school children, from coastal towns (Worthing children to Newark; Shoreham and Southwick children to Wakefield and Doncaster).

The people of West Sussex were congratulated on their kindness and forbearance in taking in evacuees, and for many children these were happy days. The Fishbourne artist, Vivienne Corby, whose child's-eye views of the war were published in the *Daily Mail*, hinted, though, in her poems and drawings at the ever-present dichotomy between town and countryside.

CIVIL DEFENCE

When war broke out, the Civil Defence organisation came into its own, a co-ordinated network of men and women, many volunteers, trained to perform specific tasks when called to an "incident".

Ambulance drivers, first aiders, rescue workers, fire watchers, and fire fighters were all part of a carefully organised structure.

Each local authority had its Civil Defence Controller to direct this civilian army in its distinctive blue battledress. The nerve centre for West Sussex operated from the basement of County Hall in Chichester under County Controller, Tom Hayward, Clerk of the County Council. Other principal officers were Captain Harry Sadler, County ARP Officer, and William Hutson, Chief Clerk, Clerk's Department, the Assistant Controller.

For the city of Chichester, the local Report and Control Centre, and also ARP HQ, was at Greyfriars in North Street, a building that was heavily protected by sand bags.

The first priority was defence against air raids by enemy bombers, and pivotal to the Civil Defence system was Air Raid Precautions (ARP). Mostly part-time volunteers, the Wardens, with black steel helmets embossed with a white "W", did much of the organisational work, in issuing gas masks and checking the black-out, and also, from their Wardens' Post, dealt with incidents when they arose.



County Hall Operations Room. Captain Harry Sadler, County ARP Officer, at map board and Tom Hayward, County Controller on right.



ARP Wardens Post. From the Crawley & Three Bridges ARP journal.

The Crawley and Three Bridges ARP magazine gives a good pen picture of a typical Wardens Post, with its sector map, camp bed, tea-making apparatus, and miscellany of equipment (rattles for gas warning, whistles, hand bells for gas all-clear, gas-proof clothing, First Aid box etc).

In anticipation of air raids, advertisements in the local press had begun appearing well before the war, offering the services of builders to construct air raid shelters. Later, local councils were to provide communal concrete and brick-built shelters, on street corners, for those caught outside in daytime raids. For home-use, on the outbreak of war, over 2½m corrugated iron shelters, or tunnels, were distributed free to householders. Erected in the garden, they were known as Anderson shelters, after Sir John Anderson, the Home Secretary.

Many who could not face the hardships of the Anderson shelters – cold, damp, chamber pots – slept under the stairs, but later, in 1941, a new indoor shelter became available. Named after Herbert Morrison, the Minister of Home Security, it consisted of a steel “table”, with wire mesh sides, under which several people could take refuge. The shelters were to prove their worth time and time again.

Women’s organisations played a vital part on the Home Front. The Women’s Voluntary Service helped with the reception of evacuees, set up emergency canteens in public halls and mobile vans, and went to the aid of air raid victims. Women were recruited to the fire and ambulance services. Volunteers queued up to join the newly formed Auxiliary Territorial Service which offered women a wide range of jobs.

Exercises were held to test the effectiveness of the civil defence organisation. One of the largest was held just before war broke out, on the night of 9 August 1939, with ARP wardens, ambulance drivers, demolition squads, and the Auxiliary Fire Service working in black-out conditions, attending imaginary fires and, in Chichester, rescuing people trapped in a “demolished” Wren House.

The photographer, Frank L’Alouette, took a number of pictures of such exercises in Bognor, including a gas attack in the High Street and air raid “incidents” elsewhere in the town.

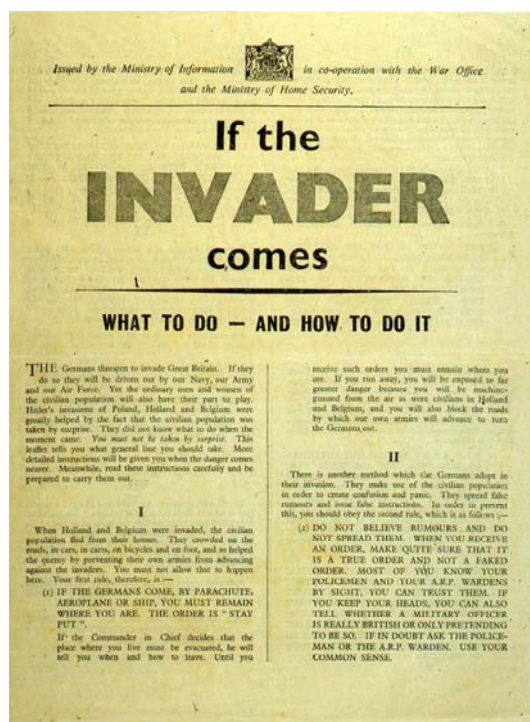
On the 7 December 1939 voluntary war workers assembled in County Hall to hear the Queen praise their efforts. Great as their efforts had been so far, the services of the civil defence were to prove even more vital in the dark days to come.

A COUNTRY ALONE

During the first few months of the war, people came to terms with wartime measures, impositions and restriction, and waited for something to happen. Nothing dramatic occurred – no legions of enemy bombers appeared in the skies and the nickname “Phoney War” was coined.

Any complacency was destroyed by the evacuation from Dunkirk in May 1940 and fall of France a month later.

One of the most outstanding events in the county during the war was the help given by Sussex fishermen and boat owners at the evacuation of the British Army from Dunkirk. All boats capable of crossing the Channel were immediately offered for service in response to an appeal from the government. Fishing boats, pleasure boats, vessels from the Arun and Adur, from Chichester Basin and the Selsey peninsula, all played their part. Many of the owners manned their “small boats”. Over 850 vessels took part, rescuing over 200,000 British troops, turning a military reversal into a morale-boosting triumph.



Ministry Of Information instructions issued during the invasion crisis of 1940

Winston Churchill had warned that wars were not won by evacuations, and when France fell, on 17 June, the British people stood alone. Stirred by their new Prime Minister, they braced themselves for the expected invasion.

The flat coastline of West Sussex was ideal for landing troops and tanks from invasion barges, and under Hitler's Operation Sea Lion, planned for September 1940, would have been part of the bridgehead of the German 9th Army.

The civilian population was now inundated with leaflets, issued by central and local government urging people to stand firm “if the invasion comes”.

As the first air raids began, and the Battle of Britain raged overhead in the glorious summer of 1940, anti-invasion measures were stepped up, and local men, young and old, flocked to join the Home Guard.

HOME GUARD

The landing of German troops by parachute into Holland and Belgium stood as a dire warning of what might happen in Britain.

Today, mention of the Home Guard conjures up images of "Dad's Army", but at the time in West Sussex there would have been little amusing in the need for such a force to defend so vulnerable a coastline. The response of the county to the call by the Minister of War, Anthony Eden, was immediate. In Worthing, within three days, well over a thousand men, aged 17-55, joined up, to form the home defence organisation known initially as the Local Defence Volunteers.

Some 26 battalions of the Home Guard were formed in Sussex. Some of the volunteers were veterans of the Great War, others were teenagers gaining valuable military experience.

They had to wait for their uniforms and their weapons, but once trained, their comradeship, discipline and commitment were never in doubt.

The Chichester battalion practised shooting on the ranges at East Dean and Kithurst. Its 'A' Platoon was commanded by Leslie Evershed-Martin, later to found the city's Festival Theatre.

George Garland photographed the Midhurst Home Guard at camp in 1942. It had platoons at Easebourne and Bepton, and was trained by officers of the Canadian Army stationed in the area.

Their role was a crucial one – patrolling the countryside and coastline, guarding vulnerable points and strategic sites, attending at aircraft crashes and bombing incidents, and holding themselves in readiness to meet invasion in any form.

An unqualified sense of duty was required for service implied unpaid hours of unglamorous night guards and weekend exercises.

Frank L'Alouette photographed the Bognor Home Guard during a mock attack on the Town Hall in Belmont Street. His print shows the anti-blast walls protecting the entrance to the building and the "S" sign identifying the site of the public air raid shelter.

Petworth Park was the home of the three Army Camps, accommodating up to 3,700 troops, but the photographer, George Garland, also captured it hosting Home Guard exercises in May 1943.

The ability of the West Sussex Home Guard to resist the advance of an invading army was not to be tested, but their worth in the dark days of 1940-41 cannot be questioned, and their value, as back-up to the military and the police, was to be confirmed throughout the war.

ANTI-INVASION DEFENCES

After Dunkirk, work was accelerated on implementing a range of anti-invasion measures in West Sussex.

Some of the early ideas were of doubtful value – wooden beach huts filled with shingle blocked roads at Worthing, for example, and upturned farm wagons obstructed areas of open fields – but gradually more effective defences were installed.

As the summer progressed, coastal batteries were sited, seven miles apart, at Bognor, Angmering, Littlehampton, Worthing, Shoreham and Brighton. Most were armed with two 6" calibre breech-loading guns, often ex-naval of First World War vintage, although this one at Bognor, opposite Aldwick Avenue, had two 5.5" guns. Their control HQ was inland at Washington, and, manned by gunners of the Territorials, they had a range out to sea of 7 miles.



Frank L'Alouette photographs a gun emplacement on the esplanade at Bognor with the pier in the background.

Smaller artillery sites and defence batteries were set up. An anti-aircraft battery was located on the greensward near the end of Broad Mark Lane, Rustington, where it protected a flight path to Tangmere. At Tinsley Green, near Crawley, a Bofors Gun tower still survives on farmland, one of four set up to protect airfields in the area.

Air defences were enhanced by the 70th (Sussex) Searchlight Regiment, RA, formed only a year before the outbreak of war. The regiment consisted of three batteries. Of these, 461 Battery was based at Worthing, using the old Connaught Theatre as its drill hall, and comprised four troops, each troop manning six searchlights. The six sites initially manned by "A" troop were 6000 yards apart at Bognor, Littlehampton, Walberton, Madehurst, Burpham and Tortington.

At the beginning of the war, radar was in its infancy, but the chain home early warning radar stations at Poling and Truleigh Hill (near Shoreham), came to provide vital information on the approach paths of enemy aircraft. Mobile Ground Controlled Interception Stations were used to guide RAF fighters onto night raiders, and from 1941 the GCI at Durrington became an important defence against night bombers. Equally so was the Fighter Interception Unit based at Shoreham and then at Ford, which developed operational techniques for radar-equipped night fighters to do combat with enemy aircraft.

The Royal Observer Corps also had an important role to play. The Operations Room, and HQ of No.2 Group, was at Denne Road in Horsham. From here, movements of all aircraft across Sussex were plotted, and information passed on to Fighter Command.

Anti-invasion measures were put in place all along the West Sussex coastline. Indeed, the whole coast from Hastings to Dorset, plus an area 20 miles inland, was declared a defence area, completely barred to visitors.

In a number of Press photographs, Frank L'Alouette pictured his daughters, Pamela and Jeannette, being shooed away by soldiers of the Bedfordshire & Hertfordshire Light Infantry, from the promenade at Bognor. The beach, scene of so much innocent pleasure in more peaceful times, was now sown with mines, fenced off by barbed wire, and protected by high iron scaffolding.

Barriers of 6' high concrete anti-tank blocks, dragons' teeth as they were called, became familiar sites in coastal resorts. A photograph of the promenade East of the Pier at Worthing was taken before the Canadians mined and wired the beach. Tenders for their demolition, in 1945, show that, incredibly, there were no fewer than 391 of these blocks, on the promenade and beach, between the East side of the Pier and the end of Ham Lane.

At Bognor, too, council workmen toiled for hours laying these tank traps along the exits from the beach. Frank L'Alouette's photographs show them being inspected by the Duke of Gloucester and military VIP's.

Square or hexagonal machine-gun pill-boxes in concrete were erected along sea fronts, at road junctions, and at other strategic points.

From the coast, the network of pill-boxes followed strategic lines of communications up the Arun and Adur valley, and, with the dragons' teeth, formed "stop lines" to prevent an inland advance by the enemy.

After Dunkirk, the defence of the county was in the hands of the 3rd British Infantry Division, under General Bernard Montgomery, based at Wiston. He was ruthless in ramming home the gravity of the emergency on local residents. At Shoreham, Bungalow Town disappeared. Residents were given 48 hours to leave before the wholesale destruction; only the Church (of the Good Shepherd) remaining, a beacon amidst the barbed wire, pill-boxes, and devastation. An extraordinary example of the extent of the anti-invasion measures in the county.

Even after the Battle of Britain had spiked Hitler's plans for 1940, the threat of invasion could not be discounted. In 1941-42 Invasion Committees or Triumvirates were set up in town and villages in the county. Nodal Points were established, one in each parish and several in the larger communities, as defended localities, ready for occupation on receipt of "Action Stations".

GARRISON COUNTY

For the civilian population of the county, a feature of the war was the descent on their towns and villages of the military, both troops and equipment, for West Sussex was both a bastion of defence in the dark days of 1940-41, and a springboard for attack once the balance of the war had shifted in the allies favour.

Billeting arrangements meant that soldiers could be housed with local families, or in the many empty houses and hotels vacated along the coast, whilst in rural areas HQ's were set up in country mansions and greens, parks and woods sprouted tented and hutted encampments.

A Frank L'Alouette photograph shows the Royal Ulster Rifles arrival in Bognor, their Pipe Band providing an attraction for local children, accompanying them along a promenade as yet un-wired.

The 3rd British Infantry Division, under General Montgomery, descended, in the words of its Commander, "like an avalanche", on the resorts of the county. It was at Lancing College, on 2 July 1940, that he first met Winston Churchill, impressing the PM with an exercise led by the Royal Ulster Rifles, then billeted at the College.

Local people now shared their places of relaxation and entertainment with service men. The Petworth photographer, George Garland, showed locals and soldiers drinking beer together from jam jars at a public house in Kirdford.



Local residents share a drink with billeted soldiers at Kirdford. From the Garland Collection.

By the end of July 1940, Montgomery's 3rd Division had moved on, their role ultimately to be taken, largely, by units of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division, which arrived in September 1940,

to be deployed along the coast from Chichester to Eastbourne. Many famous Canadian Regiments were based in the county between 1940-44, and the association, for example, between Petworth and the Toronto Scottish, was perpetuated long after the war in reunions and visits.

One poignant photograph in the county archives shows Canadians, with their bren gun carriers, parading at Stocks Lane, East Wittering, prior to embarkation for Operation Jubilee, the Anglo-Canadian raid on Dieppe on 19 August 1942. Designed to test German readiness for an allied invasion, it was a disaster, although lessons were learned for D-Day. All but one of the soldiers in the picture were killed. In all, 3350 failed to return, and the great sense of loss which fell on the West Sussex towns and villages in which they had been billeted, is testimony to the affection in which they were held.

This too is reflected in the romances which blossomed between local girls and the Canadians, as it did later when the GI's arrived, and the marriage registers of many

West Sussex parishes confirm that some 6-7000 Sussex girls found their husbands among the visiting Canadians. On the face of it, a remarkable number, but not so when one considers that a village the size of Selsey could, at one time, have as many as 1,000 Canadians stationed within it.

George Garland photographed a typical wartime wedding scene, civvy suits and uniforms, outside the Well Diggers Arms, Low Heath, Petworth, on 6 November 1943.

Together with British troops, the Canadians engaged in a series of major exercises in the county, and the screech and clatter of tanks, and the pounding of heavy artillery, regularly shattered the tranquillity of the rural countryside. Much of the South Downs was requisitioned as an intensive training area – properties were vacated, farming operations curtailed, and training gallops taken over – and as the months went by these became less concerned with defence and more with preparation for the invasion of occupied Europe.

In one Imperial War Museum photograph, bren gun carriers are seen exercising on the South Downs near Arundel, where vast areas of the Duke of Norfolk's estate had been requisitioned by the War Office.

Holiday beaches too were used for training purposes; Frank L'Alouette took a series of photographs of newly enlisted National Servicemen training on the beach at Bognor.

Ordnance depots were set up, on remote downland farms, in woods, and alongside roads leading out of coastal towns. The railway tunnels at Cocking and Singleton, on the Midhurst branch line, were used to store wagons containing naval ammunitions. Singleton, 747 yards long, could hold 98 wagons. Shrouded in secrecy, this practise went on from 1940 to 1944.

The military occupation of West Sussex intensified from the end of 1943 as the county began to play its part in the build-up to D-Day.

Lieutenant-General Miles Christopher Dempsey commanded the British Second Army in the Normandy campaign and was subsequently knighted for his services. A Crawley man, he lived in Goffs Park Road, and was a keen local cricketer.

Military camps and billets were located in over 100 places in the county. The 27th Armoured Brigade moved into Petworth Park in April 1944 with their "swimming" Shermans which were to play a crucial role supporting the infantry on Sword Beach. They were inspected by the King, at Petworth, on 22 May 1944. The HQ of the 79th Division, with "Hobarts Funnies", the specially adapted tanks of Major General Sir Percy Hobart, was at Barns Green, near Horsham. The whole county was a vast armed camp, with white starred invasion vehicles awaiting the order to move, and the beaches at Climping and Bracklesham were the setting for "Exercise Fabius", the final invasion rehearsal.

At his home at Rats Castle, Hammer, in the parish of Linchmere, Lieutenant-Commander Robert Lochner, RNVR, devised, in his bath and in his garden pond, the ideas which were fundamental to the development of the artificial harbours, Mulberries, that were towed over from Selsey to Arromanches to supply the invasion forces in Normandy.

Shoreham was an embarkation port when D-Day finally came on 6 June 1944; Littlehampton an ammunition supply port.

On the night of 5/6 June the people of Bognor, Littlehampton and Worthing lay awake, listening to the drone of the paratroop transporters and glider-towing tugs, as they were directly under the flight path of the 6th Airborne Division en route to the landing beaches.

AIRFIELDS

West Sussex airfields played a crucial role in the air defence of Southern England in the early years of the war, and subsequently in the air-operations in the build-up to D-Day and the Normandy Landings.

RAF Tangmere was the controlling station of Sector "A", in No 11 Group, Fighter Command, and as such covered an area from Brighton to Bournemouth. It is probably the most well-known Sussex airfield because of its Battle of Britain role, and links with the legendary Douglas Bader.

Airfields were a prime target for the Luftwaffe, and at lunchtime on Friday 16 August 1940, Tangmere was attacked by Stuka dive-bombers, causing great damage and leaving 13 killed.

After the raid, the Operations Room was switched to St James Road School, Chichester, and then, in February 1944, to Bishop Otter College, from which it controlled 56 Squadrons on D-Day.

Through Tangmere flew French Resistance agents, trained at nearby Bignor, and using Tangmere Cottage as their secret operations centre. Many moonlit missions inside enemy-held territory were flown by the Lysanders of 161 (Special Duties) Squadron at Tangmere.

Two days after the raid on Tangmere, on Sunday 18 August 1940, the Fleet Air Arm Station at Ford was also dive-bombed by Stukas, with 39 killed, many in a crowded canteen. A granite memorial was erected in Climping churchyard, Frank L'Alouette's dramatic photographs show the blazing ruins casting a dark shroud over the summer sky.

Ford, like Tangmere a former First World War airfield, was re-commissioned by the government in 1938, originally as naval air station, but after the raid it became part of No 11 Group, Fighter Command.

Ford had a varied role, flying in the wounded from France after D-Day, commanding the Air Sea Rescue Station at Littlehampton, and hosting the radar-equipped Fighter Interceptor Unit.

On the outbreak of war, West Sussex had a third military airfield, commissioned in 1938 at Thorney Island, but this number was soon to rise, first with the Tangmere satellite stations at Merston and Westhampnett, and by 1944 Chichester was to be surrounded by one of the highest concentration of airfields in the country.

Westhampnett was the first of the additional wartime bases to be commissioned in West Sussex. It had a vital role in the Battle of Britain, and later played host to Wing Commander Douglas Bader, who led the Tangmere Wing in 1941.

In 1942, RAF Westhampnett became the home of 31st Fighter Group, US Army Air Force, equipped with Spitfires. A picture in the county archives shows American pilots at their Mess in Shopwyke House. Their evening jaunts into Chichester are well remembered, and for posterity there is a memorial stone on what is now Goodwood Airfield (erected in 1987).

The airfields in the county were augmented in the build-up to D-Day by Advanced Landing Grounds commissioned by the Air Ministry in 1942 and completed a year later. There were five in the county – Apuldram, Bognor, Coolham, Funtington and Selsey. They carried out raids on enemy communications targets and V-1 launch sites, and protected the invasion forces during the landings, before being abandoned in favour of airfields in France. Tented accommodation was the norm. On D-Day the Czech-manned Spitfires of RAF Apuldram flew more sorties than any other RAF station.

Airfields in the Chichester area were inspected in April 1944 by the Supreme Allied Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, staying at the Ship Hotel in North Street, and he is pictured in a historic photograph of a dinner held at RAF Tangmere. Also shown in the photo is the famous Wing Commander Johnnie Johnson, the highest scoring allied fighter ace (38), then leading a Wing of Canadian Spitfires at RAF Funtington.

There were other airfields, too. Cowdray Park was a Royal Navy Air Station, a satellite of Lee-on-Solent, testing and checking damaged aircraft. A photograph shows cadets housing an Albacore aeroplane in a pair of Dutch Barns at Cowdray.

At Shoreham in December 1941 a new unit, 277 Squadron Air Sea Rescue, was set up, originally equipped with Lysanders and the amphibious Walrus, subsequently, in 1944, with the more effective Supermarine Sea Otter. When the Squadron left Shoreham in December 1944 it had completed 598 rescues.

Shoreham's D-Day Aviation Museum, its airfield, surviving pill-boxes, gun positions, and gunnery training dome are vivid reminders of the air war along the coast.

BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Through the hot summer days, and into early autumn, of 1940, people in West Sussex were eye-witnesses of the drama of the Battle of Britain, watching the dog-fights in the clear blue skies as the gallant "Few" beat off the attempts of the Luftwaffe to clear the way for the invasion of Britain.

The enemy raids intensified from the middle of August. For his courage in a dog-fight on 16 August Flight Lieutenant James Brindley Nicholson, a Hurricane Pilot whose parents lived in Shoreham, became the first fighter pilot to win a Victoria Cross.

Not all came out of these encounters so successfully. Sergeant Cyril Babbage of 602 Squadron, Westhampnett, had to bail out of his crippled Spitfire on 26 August, and was rescued by fishermen at Bognor. During the Battle of Britain he was to shoot down six BF 109's and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal. A photograph by Frank L'Alouette of his rescue from the sea was published in a national newspaper. According to the photographer, it was titled "One of our pilots is safe", the first time this iconic caption was used apparently.



Sergeant Cyril Babbage of 602 Squadron, Westhampnett, rescued from the sea following a Battle of Britain dog-fight over Bognor, August 1940. (L'Alouette).

After the raid on Tangmere on 16 August, eleven Stukas were shot down, one photographed by L'Alouette. He also took a series of pictures of a crashed Junkers 88, in the sea off Pagham, early in September. One published in the national Press was captioned "Paws for Thought". It featured a dog standing on the wing of a downed aircraft. Others show servicemen extracting a souvenir swastika from a tail fin (with a tin opener).

As increasing number of enemy aircraft were brought down, it became a familiar sight in Chichester to see captured Luftwaffe pilots and aircrew escorted to the railway station, en route to POW camps.

The courage of the "Few", and the high casualty rate, is well documented. The Queen Victoria Hospital at East Grinstead where Sir Archibald McIndoe, the renowned plastic surgeon, operated his burns unit for wounded airman, is owed its own chapter in any story of wartime Sussex.

The churchyard at Tangmere, where British and German airmen lay side by side, is a poignant reminder of the air war. Enemy airmen were buried with full military honours, far away from home. At least 107 German airmen are known to be buried in West Sussex.

BLITZ OVER WEST SUSSEX

Nothing was to bring home the true nature of the war in a more terrifying way than attack from the skies.

Police records show that the first high explosive bomb to fall on the county was dropped on Cowfold at 3 am on 29 May 1940.

The number of air raids intensified during the Battle of Britain, and for the people of the county, tip-and-run or hit-and-run raids became a feature of life. Bombs were dropped over the maritime county by enemy aircraft aborting their missions inland.

Coastal towns, such as Bognor and Littlehampton, suffered particularly. Almost 3000 bombs fell on Littlehampton, damaging over 1000 houses, and killing or injuring 92 people.

Frank L'Alouette's records show that 238 High Explosive bombs fell on Bognor during the war, damaging 3,000 houses, killing 21 people and injuring 160. He has left us a remarkable photographic record of the devastation caused by air raids. In one photograph, a road sweeper ponders the task ahead, after a raid on 11 April 1941. Twenty-three HE bombs fell in the vicinity of the Railway Station, just before midnight. Fifty houses were damaged, 3 people killed and 8 injured.

In another two children check the damage to a doll's house, perhaps a Christmas gift, after another raid on Bognor on 27 December 1940. Fifteen bombs were dropped on the Hawthorn Road-Chichester Road area.

The worst raid on Bognor occurred at 3 pm on 14 August 1942, when a tip-and-run Heinkel caused 9 deaths, 13 injuries and damage to 250 properties. A string of bombs fell on Sudley Road, and on the Burnham Avenue-Sturgess Road area.

Elsewhere in the county, away from the coast, there were some appalling tragedies. At 10.50 am on Tuesday 29 September 1942 the Boys' School at Petworth was bombed by a low-flying Junkers 88, killing 28 boys aged 7-12, two teachers, and two other civilians. Photographs by George Garland show the harrowing rescue operations, and the funeral procession the following Saturday as army trucks of the Toronto Scottish Regiment bore the tiny coffins to their communal grave in the Billingshurst Road Cemetery. To such a small town it was a devastating blow. Afterwards on the anniversary of the tragedy, boys from the school would lay wreaths on the graves of their friends.

An early morning raid caused spectacular damage to the centre of Crawley on 4 February 1943. A lone German aircraft dropped three clusters of bombs, the second run destroying the PO and Willets the Printers, in the High Street. The C of E Infants School, at West Green, was shattered in the same raid, but because of the time of day there were no casualties.

There was no such good fortune at East Grinstead on Friday 9 July 1943, when, just after 5 pm, the Whitehall Cinema and many business premises in London Road and High Street, were demolished by a string of bombs dropped by a Dornier 217, brought down minutes later by A-A fire near Bletchingley in Surrey.

In the cinema at the time was an audience of 184. About a third was children, a third women, and most of the rest Canadian soldiers. Many were trapped as the dome fell into the auditorium. In this county's worst tragedy, a total of 108 were killed, and 235 injured. The victims were laid to rest in a communal grave at the Mount Noddy Cemetery. Many hundreds of mourners attended a service conducted by the Bishop of Chichester.

A year later, with our armies in Normandy, Hitler launched the first of his secret weapons, the pilotless flying-bomb, or "doodlebug". The first reported to fall in England, crashed at Mizbrooks Farm near Cuckfield, in the early hours of 13 June 1944, although some claim it was preceded, by a matter of minutes, by one which fell on the village of Swanscombe, between Dartford and Gravesend.

Twenty-three flying bombs came down in the Cuckfield Rural District. Former schoolboys at Ardingly College remember the school being ringed by A-A guns trying to bring down the V1s.

Almost 900 flying bombs fell on Sussex between 13 June and 31 August 1944, mostly in the East, in the corridor known as "Bomb Alley" en route to London, and so great was the danger that, for a time, children from East Grinstead, Forest Row, West Hoathly and Worth were evacuated to safer areas.

On 12 July 1944 a flying bomb fell on London Road, East Grinstead, killing 3, injuring 38, and damaging over 400 properties. The incident occurred just after 7.30 am – had it been later the casualties would have been far greater. Within hours, the scene was visited by the King and Queen, who inspected the damage and talked to Civil Defence workers.

The danger remained, even after Paris had been liberated, for on 27 August 1944, a V1 crashed on the Shelley Road-Tennyson Road area of Bognor leaving 66 casualties.

Frank L'Alouette photographed a bomb disposal expert at work on Bognor Beach. One was killed at Aldwick, dismantling a mine, and a plaque remains today on a wall in Dark Lane.

George Bell, the much-loved Bishop of Chichester, expressed strong disapproval of saturation bombing and this, it is said, so annoyed Winston Churchill that it jeopardised his prospects of becoming Archbishop of Canterbury.

Of all the towns and villages in West Sussex, Selsey suffered the worst battering from air raids, its position at the tip of the Manhood Peninsular offering a tempting target for enemy pilots. For Selsey people the dread of the approaching night came to an end, after four long years, in October 1944. Then a local diarist could write: "No sirens for two months, it doesn't seem possible, but it is lovely to go to bed in peace".

WAR EFFORT

People on the Home Front not only stoically endured the dangers and deprivations of wartime, but also contributed their all to the "war effort".

Vast increases in industrial production were required, particularly armaments, and many factories and workshops turned over to munitions work. With so many men away in the forces, women came to play a greater role in the factory. George Garland's pictures of shell production at Harwood's Garage in Pulborough in July 1942, and Frank L'Alouette's of the female labour force making tracer bullets and shell caps, at Jane's Garage in Belmont Street, Bognor, reflect this wartime trend. A few miles away, at Royal Parade, North Bersted, Charles Purley opened a factory for war work which became the origins of the famous Lec Refrigeration Company.

At Crawley James Longley & Co took women on the payroll for the first time in August 1942. One picture shows them building pontoons for bailey bridges in the joinery works. Two of their major government contracts were for building Poling radar station and Merston airfield, but they undertook defence work throughout the South of England, building factories, camps, aerodromes, air raid shelters, pillboxes, and the like.

A most unusual and successful scheme was inspired in Horsham by a broadcast by Sir Stafford Cripps in February 1942. A machine workshop was set up in a garage showroom in Springfield Road, and with a regular workforce of 150 volunteers, the Patriot Engineers turned out millions of parts for armaments, aircraft, and radio communications. In the evening volunteers were encouraged to drop in for an hour or so after their normal day's work.

Women also played their part in the fields, through the Women's Land Army, their green sweaters and corduroy breeches becoming a familiar sight in the countryside. It was formed in June 1939, and its Honorary Director, Lady Denman, turned her home at Balcombe Place into its national HQ. Within four years there were 1300 Land Girls in West Sussex, and on Sunday 9 May 1943, 700 attended a rally at Arundel castle, some receiving awards from Lady Denman.

They cleared ditches and laid hedges, spread dung and milked cows, drove tractors and, as Garland showed at Cowdray, worked horse teams. "Our life was haunted by leaking wellies, damp socks, hunger and fatigue", wrote one land girl who, for 45s a week, worked a 1000 acre farm near Chichester.

Land Girls did their bit in the cause of increased food production, but food supply remained a problem. Winston Churchill promoted the campaign to encourage people to increase their food supply through their own efforts. "Grow your own" became the watch-word as gardens were dug up, and allotments rented, inspired by the slogan "Dig for Victory".

Women's Institutes encouraged the scheme, setting up co-operative market stalls and



Land Girls planting potatoes at Kirdford, photographed by George Garland, May 1943.

fruit preservation centres, for which Crawley Down achieved national recognition from the Minister of Food, Lord Woolton.

Farmers were urged to plough more, and the arable acreage of Sussex more than doubled during the war.

People responded in many other ways to the needs of the war effort. Frank L'Alouette showed workers in West Street, Bognor, collecting in response to the salvage drive for paper. Iron railings and wrought iron gates were sacrificed to build ships, and metal toys and aluminium pots were handed in to make war planes.

Perhaps even more remarkable was the response to the periodic fund-raising appeals to support the ever increasing war budget. The government ran a campaign to urge people not to be "squander bugs", but to invest in National Savings. Every so often, though, there were special appeals, and towns and villages raised quite astonishing sums of money.

The people of the City and Rural District of Chichester were set a target of £250,000 for War Weapons Week in May 1941. Throughout the area concerts, dances, whist drives, and competitions were held, and incredibly a total of £621,000 was raised.

Frank L'Alouette photographed the scene in the High Street, Bognor, as troops marched past the saluting base in front of the Arcade, during a War Weapons Week parade, in March 1941. Behind stood a huge target board.

George Garland pictured the Home Guard in the town square at Petworth during Warships Week in February 1942. A parade, a dance in the Iron Room, lectures in the Regal Cinema, and a tour of the district by a propaganda cinema van were all included in the programme to raise £70,000 for a Motor Torpedo Boat.

Horsham, which had exceeded its target of £300,000 by £100,000 in War Weapons Week, had also raised sufficient to buy a Spitfire, before in Warships Week generating enough to adopt its own submarine, HMS *Una*.

Another outpouring of patriotic generosity occurred in "Wings for Victory Week" in May 1943. Chichester and District was set the target of £360,000, to provide 6 bombers and 24 fighters, but as the target board outside the Post Office in West Street would show, the final total was little short of £½million.

The "Salute the Soldier Week" campaign in June 1944 set a target of £350,000 for Horsham, Crawley and District, and a major effort in the final two days ensured that this was exceeded by over £80,000. All staggering amounts by the standards of the day.

Of course, the wartime spirit of "pulling together" was reflected in many other ways. Rationing was a universal experience. Ration books, so too identity cards, were issued in September 1939, and food rationing began tentatively in January 1940, with bacon, sugar and butter. People had to register with named shops for each category of goods. Clothing rationing followed in May 1941, and most other things were controlled.

Even so, shortages ensued, queuing became a way of life, ingenuity and improvisation watchwords in the kitchen. Egg powder, margarine instead of butter, wartime recipes broadcast by Freddie Grisewood, campaigns to "Save Waste", "Save Fuel", and "Make do

and Mend", and buying utility goods, are memories of all who lived through the war years.

Morale was boosted by entertainers such as Vera Lynn, Ann Shelton Arthur Askey, Tommy Handley, and Jack Warner, with their wireless shows, theatre appearances and troop concerts. Cinemas, closed on the outbreak of war but reopened in December 1939, were full, with weekly audiences averaging 25-30 million (½ the population) by 1944. Wartime films such as Noel Coward's "In which we Serve", pictured by George Garland playing at the Village Hall in Pulborough, made a great impact.

For those on the Home Front, life had assumed a character far removed from that of peacetime. Through long days of war work and chilly nights of fire-watching, they endured the dangers and deprivations of wartime, and in their determination to "see it through with a smile", theirs was a vital contribution to the war effort.

VICTORY CELEBRATIONS

As the armies of liberation progressed through occupied Europe en route to Berlin, at home the coastal defences were gradually removed, tenders being invited for the demolition of the dragons teeth and pill boxes which had been so feverishly constructed in 1940.

At Bognor, the barbed wire was cleared away from the promenade, giving some small children their first glimpse of an unobstructed seafront, though the beaches still had to be cleared of mines.

The formal German surrender was taken by General Montgomery at his Luneberg Heath HQ, near Hamburg, on 4 May 1945. In Britain Tuesday 8 May was declared a public holiday, VE (Victory in Europe) Day.

In West Sussex the day dawned with dull skies and slight drizzle, but spirits were not to be dampened by the weather.

One Barnham Land Girl, Daphne Byrne, recalls unfurling a moth-eaten Union Jack on top of a water tower, and watching as all her neighbours began stringing up flags, bunting and streamers.

In Bognor she said everyone was "going mad with joy". Frank L'Alouette captured the scene as crowds gathered in the High Street, some dancing to relayed music and the Legion Band, whilst others just watched and wondered how to feel now that war was over.

The celebrations took many forms, but one of the most popular was street parties. In Lyon Street, in Bognor, against the background of the Sudley Road bombsite (and St John's Church), nearly a hundred children sat down for tea. "Bring your own cup and plate" they were told as rationing was forgotten for the day.

Bonfires blazed along the top of the Downs. One was built outside the Norfolk Hotel in Arundel, Daphne Byrne remembers people dancing around it on VE-Day, singing "Good old Sussex by the Sea". Frank L'Alouette photographed the crowd that assembled in the evening around the bonfire in the West End Car Park in Bognor to watch the burning of an effigy of Hitler.

The *Chichester Post* reported that the city was bedecked with flags and banners on the afternoon of VE-Day as the Prime Minister's 3 pm speech was broadcast from the Cross. In the evening the City Band played at the Cross and the celebrations continued until the early hours. Next day there would be Sports at the Recreation Ground and a Dance in the Assembly Rooms.

At Petworth flags and bunting decorated the Town Square and crowds gathered on VE-Day to hear Winston Churchill's broadcast, and later on in the afternoon special teas were put on for the children, George Garland photographing one at Hampers Green.

Such was the unaccustomed fare on offer that one little boy in Horsham, surveying his lemonade, cake and ice cream, was heard to ask "Is peace like this everyday?" On the following day over 1000 people turned up for a Service of Thanksgiving at Horsham Park for which the Borough Silver Band provided the music.

Sunday 13 May was declared a National Day of Thanksgiving, at the wish of the King, and in Chichester, and towns throughout the county, was celebrated with parades and church services. Frank L'Alouette showed the Victory Parade in Bognor moving past the saluting base in the High Street watched by large crowds. The Thanksgiving Service in Bognor was held in the Pavilion at the north end of Waterloo Square.

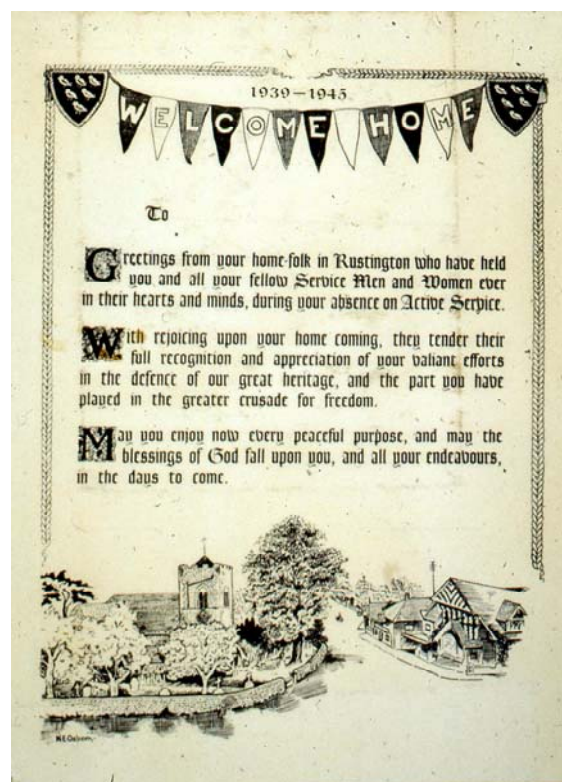
"We may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing" Winston Churchill had said in his broadcast before reminding people of the continuing war with Japan. It was in fact to be three more months before Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the formal surrender of Emperor Hirohito. In Britain, when the news was broadcast at midnight on 14/15 August 1945, bonfires were lit all over the country, as people at last felt themselves freed from the nightmare of war.

The new Prime Minister, Clement Atlee, proclaimed Wednesday 15 August 1945 as VJ (Victory in Japan) Day. The spirit of celebrations returned as victory bells rang out, shops and houses displayed their flags and bunting, and parades were quickly organised. In Horsham a carnival procession wended its way through the streets, and an open-air service was held at the Park Bandstand.

Elsewhere, amidst the frenzy, thousands knelt quietly in churches and chapels, giving thanks, seeking comfort, or praying for missing loved ones.

The peace celebrations were prolonged as the soldiers began to return. At Ebernoe, a cricket match and bonfire marked the village's celebrations on 27 August. At Slindon people came together for a victory tea on 6 September. At Petworth Park there was a Fancy Dress Parade on 19 September. Peace had come at last!

After six years of war, the politicians set out to build a peace, while the people of West Sussex began the task of renewing relationships, rebuilding lives, and restoring homes.



Welcome Home. Commemorative scroll for returning service men & women at Rustington.