

Wartime West Sussex 1939 – 1945

CANADIANS

Wittering girls marry Canadians

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(East Wittering Local History Group, 2004)

By Neil Theobald

A section of the Canadian Black Watch stationed in the village was billeted in The Shore Club, where the Shore pub car park is sited now. This afforded them living accommodation and cook house facilities and no doubt the Club's tennis courts, sited at the rear, made a useful parade ground. It was during this time that the building was gutted by fire and only the annexe to the right was saved, and still stands today. The remainder was later demolished.

It was at Shore Road Garage that Canadian soldier Corporal Carl Demerse worked. He met Joan, my sister, at the Post Office and they started going out together and attending the local dances at the Parish Hall. My sister would bring him home to eat with us. Mum liked Carl very much and it was only a matter of time before he and Joan were married.

One of the reasons why we kids liked him was that he would bring us candy and gum! And I suppose one of the reasons Mum liked him was that he would bring her Sweet Caporal cigarettes! Mum smoked rather a lot in those days, more than she should. Cigarettes were very difficult to buy during the war, so what she used to do was to keep all her 'dog ends'. When she had collected enough, she would break them all down to get the remaining tobacco out (this, of course, was before the days of filter cigarettes), and then with the aid of cigarette papers and a rolling machine, she would make a few extra cigarettes. Not very healthy, but it made Mum happy!

By Marcia Edney

One such person was my elder sister, Rosemary Robinson, a local girl who lived at Itchenor. She met a Canadian soldier, William Allison, who was stationed close by our home at Black Bungalow; they fell in love and married in 1942. Later that year, Rosemary gave birth to a baby boy, who they named Roger. When Roger was only eight months old, his father, William, was sent to Sicily where he was tragically killed in action on 10th July, 1943.

When the Canadian authorities (in 1944) offered Rosemary free passage to Canada to settle with her baby son and join her in-laws, she took the brave decision to go as a commitment to her late husband and to her son. Rosemary set off for a new life in Canada (London, Ontario) from Scotland in October, 1944.

For my sister, a twenty year old widow, it could not have been an easy decision to make. Rosemary came from a close and loving family of six sisters and a brother. For her, in Canada, the first few years must have been lonely ones. Later, when she had settled, things "came good" for Rosemary – BUT THAT IS ANOTHER STORY!!