

**OUR HISTORY****PARTRIDGE GREEN AT WAR (*the story continues from the autumn issue*)
SOME MEMORIES OF GROWING UP IN THE WAR-TORN YEARS 1939 – 1945**

As kids, we were always on the lookout for spies. Any stranger in the village was a potential spy and it was our job to keep an eye on them. I recall a true story of a farmer who cycled from Partridge Green to somewhere in East Sussex with a spare wireless set for his mother. He was stopped and searched and then questioned at some length before being allowed to continue his journey. Sadly, we never had such good fortune in Partridge Green as to find a stranger with a wireless.

We were in the war proper after the collapse of the British Army in France and the Dunkirk evacuation. The first we knew about it was when dirty, tired and seemingly broken soldiers came into homes in the village to have baths. As children we didn't begin to understand anything that was going on nor the significance of it but even we were uplifted when Winston Churchill came on the scene with his wonderful morale-boosting speeches.

All food was rationed and every individual had a ration book giving an entitlement to no more than a few ounces of butter, sugar, cheese etc. B.U's (bread Units) rationed the bread, we had an allocation of clothing coupons and coal and paraffin were rationed. Our great suffering as children was when sweets were rationed and I can recall visiting Mrs Paris's Sweet and Newsagent Shop with my first coupons, overlooking the fact that I still had to pay for the sweets. Eventually, we developed a taste for Victory V's, which were cough lozenges, and not on ration. I think I am right in saying that sweets were the last items to come off rationing in about 1951. Alcohol, cigarettes and tobacco were never rationed but were often in short supply. Rationing was a way of life and somehow everyone coped. Shopkeepers were clever managers and sometimes found regular customers a little extra but the real managers were the mothers and housewives who had to make do and mend and somehow keep their families fed. I think it is accepted that we were a fitter, healthier nation at that time than we have ever been since.

PARTRIDGE GREEN AT WAR *continued*

What was the day-to-day evidence in the village that we were in the middle of a world war? All windows in houses, shops and the School, were crisscrossed with strips of brown paper to reduce flying glass; everyone bought special blackout material and made curtains which hung in every window; the siren would send out a two-tone wail to warn of an air raid and then a single tone to signal all clear; church bells did not ring throughout the war as these would have signalled an invasion; there were soldiers everywhere of course, with large convoys moving through as well as our "residents" at Shermanbury Grange and West Grinstead Park. Many large houses with grounds were requisitioned.

The first troops into Shermanbury Grange were, I think, a Welsh Regiment and there was certainly a New Zealand force there early in the war, no doubt en route for France but for most of the war our "residents" were Canadians; another familiar sight in the late afternoon were the groups of German P.O.W.'s who were brought out by lorry each day to work on the farms and in other businesses and would collect together to be picked up for return to camp at Shipley. I never heard of any of them ever trying to escape – perhaps a bit pointless on an island – and I can't recall ever having any fear of them. For them the war was over and they all seemed to want a quiet life; after all, escape to Germany to then be posted to the Russian Front was not a good prospect.

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