

Crudwell Families at War

A YOUNG LAD REMEMBERS

On 3rd September, 1939 at 12 noon we heard that England had declared war with Germany. I thought it was great fun to go to war with another country, not realising the implications. In October we had evacuees arrive at Malmesbury Station, and ferried round to the local villages - everyone who had a spare bedroom was obliged to take one or two children. They soon settled into the ways of country people.

We had a slight upheaval of trying to sort out the schooling for all these children, eventually the girls of all ages and boys up to 11 years old were based at the Village School. The remainder of the boys were split up into two sections and they did their schooling at the Village Hall and the Club Room at The Wheatsheaf. Our recreation ground was the courtyard at The Wheatsheaf.

On Tuesdays we used to march from the top of the village down to the football ground which was at the back of the school. On Friday afternoon everyone had a plot of land in the Paddock down Eastcourt Lane, where a bungalow, "Longridge", is now.

During the years of the war we had several lots of bombs fall around us, and I think they were either trying to bomb Kemble Aerodrome or Hullavington. We had a Searchlight Unit at Quelfurlong.

During the period of 1941-45 the majority of young boys from 15 upwards joined the Army Cadets, which was attached to the Home Guard, where we learned to shoot a rifle and Sten Guns, which was great fun. All the young boys missed these activities when they disbanded the Home Guard.

Food was reasonably scarce and we lived on a lot of rice pudding.

On VE day we had the Church bells ringing in Crudwell, and we all had extra rations and a bit of a beano at the School and on the Village Green.

Gradually food came off ration, and as far as I remember meat was the last to come off in June, 1954.

LES CARPENTER



THE WOMEN'S LAND ARMY

Crudwell farmers worked ceaselessly to cultivate crops and livestock so that as much food as possible came from local resources. They worked long, hard hours, but did have some help from prisoners of war, who lived in. Help also came from girls of the Women's Land Army, and one young lady, Joan Hinder (now Dring) worked for Capt. Hart.

A typical day began for her by rising early to cycle to Eastcourt Farm by 6 am for morning milking, but first the cows had to be got into the dairy and be washed and groomed. Milking was done by hand, and 10 gallon churns filled, and with the help of the cowman taken to the collecting platform, so that a lorry could call for the churns and take them to Malmesbury Station. She then cycled home for breakfast.

Then back to the farm again to clean the cowsheds and sterilise the dairy, when it was on her bike again, and home for dinner.

It was then time to go back to the farm again to get in the cows for afternoon milking, with time to swill the dairy and home again about 5 pm.

There were always extra jobs to be done - haymaking, harvest, potato picking, cutting up sugar beet, etc.

The working week was long and hard with only Sunday afternoons off, and in spite of the cold during the winter, Joan thoroughly enjoyed being "down on the farm".

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