

Some Context for Reading about Rudgwick in WW2

Europe was at war with Germany from 1 September 1939, with the German invasion of Poland, and Britain's entry into war on 3 September. The war ended on 2 September 1945, with the formal surrender by Japan, who ceased fighting on VJ Day, 15 August 1945. The war in Europe had ended on VE Day 8 May 1945.

The Women's Land Army was formed in June 1939. Yet they did not get formal recognition until 2004. Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) and Air Raid Protection (ARP) had both formed in 1938.

Evacuees (3.5 million all told) from cities, to Rudgwick and countless other places, began on 1 September 1939, having been in the planning for some time. The first arrivals in Rudgwick were on 4 September. School began on 14 September.

First fatality of a Rudgwick serviceman Able Seaman Peter Port, HMS Duchess, died at sea 12 December 1939.

Blackout for homes, vehicles and street lights was introduced on 1 September 1939. With exceptions, it was not fully lifted until the end of the war. Blackout caused numerous accidents, even fatalities, including in Rudgwick.

Petrol rationing began immediately on 3 September 1939 (mileage reduced in 1942). Food rationing began 8 January 1940. Scarcity was all pervasive, rationed or not: tea, oranges, sugar, bananas, grapes, chocolate, cocoa powder, coffee, tinned goods, butter, lard, sweets, cakes, flour, later meat & fish. Bread was not rationed until *after* the war, but the National (wholemeal) Loaf was part of rationing restrictions.

Rations: 3 pints milk a week + 1 pint for each child under 5. Butter, bacon, ham, and sugar rationed from the start; meat from March 1940; tea margarine & cooking fats from July 1940; cheese and preserves from 1941. From July 1940 no more fresh fruit or tinned fruit was to be imported, except oranges for children. Household registration was with a particular shop, separately with the butcher and a dairy. Sunday night radio announced any changes at 9.00pm

Clothing rationing was by points spent, depending on the garment. Each adult had 66 points to begin with, reducing to its lowest number *after* the end of the war. Extra points were given for children and workers. "Make do and mend!", was a slogan from 1943. Furniture was limited to newly-weds and those bombed out. Even backyard hens had their feed ration.

The final lifting of rationing was not until 4 July 1954. Meat was the last item.

The campaign for home-grown food was handled by County "WarAgs", with the power to force farmers to plough up land to grow food. The National Farm Survey of 1940-41 was a major landmark. There was also Dig for Victory in gardens, and encouragement of backyard animals, poultry and pigs. Naval convoy protection was provided for merchant shipping. American "lend-lease" tractors arrived from 1941.

Winston Churchill became Prime Minister 10 May 1940.

The end of the first phase of the war came in May 1940 with the evacuation of our forces from the continent, mainly at Dunkirk, 28 May to 4 June 1940. Paris fell to the Germans 14 May 1940.

The Home Guard was mobilised from 14 May 1940; 1.5 million volunteered. Rudgwick had its ARP wardens, WVS volunteers, and AFS (Auxiliary Fire Service) just like everywhere else. Fire watching after long wartime hours at work became mandatory for men in September 1940, and for women from 1942. So many young men and women were away from home on all manner of war work, as

well as in the Services. Few could avoid some kind of contribution, and of course Rudgwick's population also included many transient incomers escaping the bombing or even bombed out of their homes elsewhere.

For us in Sussex, it was very difficult to cross the South Downs to the heavily defended coast without a special permit.

River crossings were part of several "stop-lines" defending the routes to London. Bucks Green, Gibbons Mill, Roman Gate (and Horsham of course) were local defended points on the Arun. Operation Sealion, the German invasion plan, was a massive threat in September 1940. All road direction signs and station signs were removed.

The Battle of Britain, linked to this, raged in the skies from 10 July and 31 October 1940. Sussex and Surrey were in the front line then.

The Blitz began on 7 September 1940, and ended on 11 May 1941. 40,000 civilians were killed, Over 1 million homes were destroyed.

Hitler invaded USSR on 22 June 1941.

America entered the war 7 December 1941, four days after Pearl Harbour. Britain declared war on Japan 8 December.

Troops were constantly seen in Rudgwick, both on the roads, and in camps. Many of them were Canadians or other Commonwealth units. Some were in requisitioned houses (officers), and some were billeted, for example from Dunsfold Aerodrome.

Dunsfold Aerodrome was built by the 2nd Royal Canadian Engineers in 20 weeks starting on 11 May 1942, handed over to the Canadian Air Force in October 1942. Later there were RAF squadrons there.

Battle of El Alamein 23 October 1942. Axis armies surrender in N Africa 12 May 1943.

Italy surrenders 3 September 1943. Germany surrenders city of Rome 5 June 1944.

D Day 6 June 1944. Rudgwick empties of Canadian troops. Paris liberated 25 August.

V1 flying bombs over Sussex and Surrey heading for London (or falling short) from 13 June 1944. One landed in Cox Green 30 July 1944. The last one arrived 27 March 1945. From 8 September 1944 V2 flying bombs (rockets) also reached London.

Allies cross the Rhine March 1945, Russians enter Berlin April 1945, Hitler commits suicide 30 April 1945. Germany surrenders 7 May, VE Day 8 May.

Last Rudgwick fatality of the war, Gunner George Nickolay of Church Street, Royal Artillery, died 16 April 1945 whilst a prisoner of war working on the Burma-Siam Railway. There are 24 names on the memorial in Holy Trinity church, of which three are women.

6 and 9 August 1945 atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. 14 August Japan surrenders (unconditional surrender 2 September). 15 August VJ Day.

Roger Nash