

## V.E. DAY. VICTORY IN EUROPE 8TH MAY 1945.

A celebration to mark the end of hostilities which began when the second world war was declared on the 3rd September 1939.

At the end of the summer of 1939 the communities of St Margaret's-at-Cliffe and St Margaret's Bay suddenly found themselves at the forefront of the defense of the realm. Britain as a whole was setting up A.R.P and Civil Defense units and mobilizing military forces. Locally in St Margaret's the Air Raid Precautions H.Q. was in the Cliffe Hotel, in the center of the village opposite the church, owner Charles Groves and his wife Eva had been running the Cliffe as a very successful hotel business which was very popular with visitors and locals alike .

Almost overnight the holiday makers were replaced by military personnel in the shape of the Royal Marine Siege Regiment and others skilled in gun warfare and the Cross Channel guns Winnie, Pooh, Jane and Clem were constructed on the Golf Course between St Margaret's and Westcliffe , on land at Wanstone Farm and land behind Kingsdown Road. Later another gun, Bruce was built at Bockhill, so with those and the South Foreland and other gun batteries, our small village on the East Kent coast became a vital link in the chain of defense of the United Kingdom.

Charles Groves was appointed Head ARP Warden with other able and or willing locals being outwards. A telephone network was set up within the village and regular patrols were begun once hostilities really got going and bombs were dropping from hostile aircraft or shells from the guns on the coast of France. ARP wardens went out on incendiary patrols in the area, or to plot where bombs had fallen and report on casualties, human, farm animal or property. The majority of civilians were evacuated inland leaving a core of essential workers and the military.



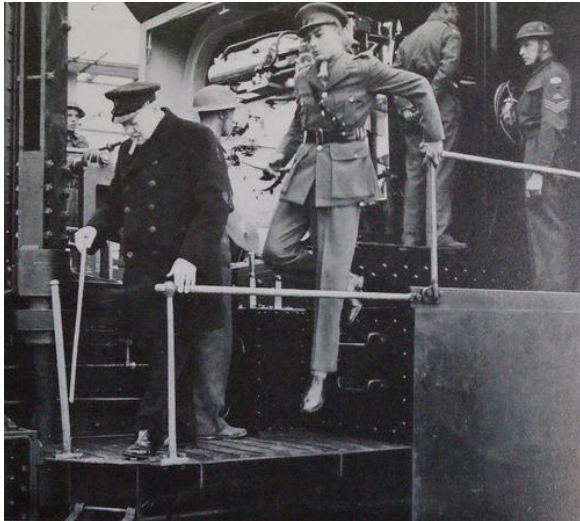
Tommie, Ian (and Rip) sit with Mr and Mrs Carr on the remains of the concrete platform on which the ironwork defences were built.

Thus, St Margaret's became a very different place to live and work. The then Parish Hall became a canteen for troops and construction workers. Street Farm, which had only converted from working farm into working Garage in July 1937 by two Finnis brothers became the First Aid Party depot for the local ambulance ( a converted lorry ) and another lorry used to clear any debris from bombed buildings. The Fire Brigade ,which later became part of a National body, was housed in a hut between the Hope Inn and Mayfield Cottage .

On the top of Bay Hill the Repeater Station , boosting the telegraph signal from the undersea cables, became the H.Q of the Home Guard. The Coastguard Station at end of Granville Road at Leathercote Point remained working for the duration. The High Light at South Foreland was under military control and the light shut down. Holly Lodge, in Cripps Lane, became a canteen

run by the W.V.S. Portal House was under military control and used as a hospital as were tunnels behind Townsend Farm and also under Dover Castle. Royal Marines headquartered in Townsend Farm (Mr. Burton the farmer at the time was evacuated) and that and other farms in the district were run by Mr. Gilbert Mitchell from Reach Farm. Other large houses in the village were also used by military personnel. Lennox House, South Sand House to name two. Loxley became a NAAFI.

American troops were quartered here prior to D-Day and the village on the beach was used as training ground for Commando troops practicing beach assaults and house to house fighting - that delightful haven of peace and tranquility The Bay so beloved of summer visitors became a derelict ruin. A fine opportunity for a film crew after the end of the war to make a film called School For Secrets, starring Ralph Richardson and Peter Ustinov, the latter having been stationed here for part of the war and maybe had even suggested the location for that particular scene which near the end shows landing craft storming into the Bay and troops scrambling ashore fighting in and among those holiday villas so beloved of visitors and shows vividly just how derelict the "village on the beach" had become, with the Adcock Villas, the Bay Hotel cottages and the Green Man public house stark and derelict. Enough to make one weep.



Meanwhile at the other end of the village just four months to the day before V.E Day on 8th January 1945 the drama of an American B17 bomber landing safely at Nelson Park and creating a once in a lifetime memory for a few children lucky enough to see it and creating a lifetime of friendship for the village into the 21st century.

Think back those of you who remember living through those difficult times and welcome to those of you not then born - a few words from those times.

Morrison - no not the supermarket but an indoor air raid shelter steel topped, and table shaped.

Anderson - the air raid shelter dug into the garden, damp cold and a lifesaver. Mock duck, mock cream, mock almost everything - when one could not get the true ingredients one made a "mock" (nowadays it would be "faux") and carrots made a marvelous substitute for so many ingredients. Boogie Woogie, Jive, Jitterbug and brown pencil seams drawn up the backs of legs to suggest stockings and then - nylons!. Wilton pie; blackout, air raid sirens, dog fights BBC radio programmes Tommy Handley and his cleaner Mrs Mop "can I do you now sir?" -shells - blitz -doodlebugs- barrage balloons; identity cards and gas masks always to be carried; evacuation; Workers Playtime, Rationing, rations books and 'points'. Spam - lend lease.

Each new era suggests its own language when new words are quickly adopted and speedily enter usage -then as now- as ever.

Good times, bad times - all times pass by.

Rejoice on the 8th May 2020, 75 years on and a time to remember those gone so we can be here.