

OUR HISTORY

**PARTRIDGE GREEN AT WAR
SOME MEMORIES OF GROWING UP IN THE WAR-TORN-YEARS
1939 - 1945**

War was declared at 11am on Sunday September 3rd 1939. For years I was convinced I was in St Michael's on that fateful day and the Vicar made the announcement; I am now not too sure because in my mind it all bears a striking similarity to the scene in the film "Mrs Miniver" which may have influenced me when I saw it during the war. The effects of the coming war were apparent in Partridge Green a week earlier with the arrival of the evacuees from Brixton. As children it was all different and exciting and the fact that I had to move into a single bed in my parents' room while my brothers shared a room to allow two strangers to have the third bedroom did not bother me at all. Londoners were strange to us; they understood so little about the country and had so much to tell us about city life. What also remains vivid in my mind is that most of them (certainly our two) had about one month's pocket money which meant for a short while they were all stocked up with sweets and chocolate bars; it paid to be their friends.

I understood little of what was involved but I recall Mrs Darrington (WVS) working non stop to house children and then, quite often, having to re-house those that were found to be unacceptable by some families.

Their arrival, naturally, brought chaos to Jolesfield School C of E School, which was not equipped for a sudden doubling of its intake. Initially, a scheme was devised where we, the locals, used the School in the mornings under our Headmaster, Mr Garton and the evacuees used it in the afternoon under their headmaster, Mr Greenwood. The following week the timing was reversed. I remember how difficult it was to return home from a morning's play in time to get to School for the afternoon. After a time the Village Hall and the Methodist Chapel Hall were brought into use and I recall we would have one week at the School and the following week in the Halls.

An early wartime action was the need for air raid protection and the fathers set to work to dig a shelter on the land immediately to the south of the School with the entrance opposite the doors from the cloakroom. I remember having a practice visit into the shelter but come the winter rains my recollection is that it was thereafter knee deep in water. I wonder how many projects like that were worked on in haste with huge enthusiasm but were not well thought out.

We were all fitted out with gas masks and were instructed on wearing them. I always felt I would suffocate in one and am so thankful we never had to wear them. Small children were given 'Micky Mouse' style masks; they may have looked all right but must have been terrifying to wear. Gas masks had to be carried at all times and we would be

