

Wartime Dial Post cont.

Sorry about my rant last time; the nurse has been, I've had the injection and am calmer now!

As I mentioned, at the outbreak of war in 39, we were on the verge of starvation, but the War Agriculture Committee was formed. These were local groups made up of farmers, land owners, a vet, drainage officer and, I believe, only one Ministry adviser. I think they met weekly; our group met in Horsham Town Hall. They decided allocation of help to farmers, machinery, financial assistance, advice of all kinds to bring production up, restore fertility to the land with drainage, liming etc, in other words good husbandry which had been ignored by previous governments - sound familiar!!? In some extreme cases they took farms away from the owner or tenant, if it was decided they were not efficient enough, and gave them to a more progressive neighbour. I do not know of cases in this area, but it was done, and would you believe that in this wonderful 'Free Democracy' some families still do not have their land returned - after 60 years!

The War Ag. also allocated German POWs to work on the farms, and they did much sterling work, harvesting, clearing, ditching and so on. I remember these Fearsome Creatures arriving in a lorry in the morning, in the secure care of one Private Pike look-a-like, who probably would have had trouble with a difficult sheep, and they worked away without any trouble or attempted escapes, as far as I know, and went home again at night to the camp in Billingshurst. The most trustworthy were billeted on farms; we had a young man named Heinz, a farmer's son, who lived in his own well set-up hut. I remember he always had Sunday Dinner with us as part of the family. After the war he returned home, and wrote regularly to Mother, but as he was in the Russian Sector the letters stopped. I fear he probably had a bad end under the Eastern Regime, but he or his family may be still alive; I could bear to hear from them again.

By the time war was over farming was on the up, but it was many years before food was off ration - sugar and sweets were still rationed into the 1950s - that's hard to believe as well!!

Richard Verrall