

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

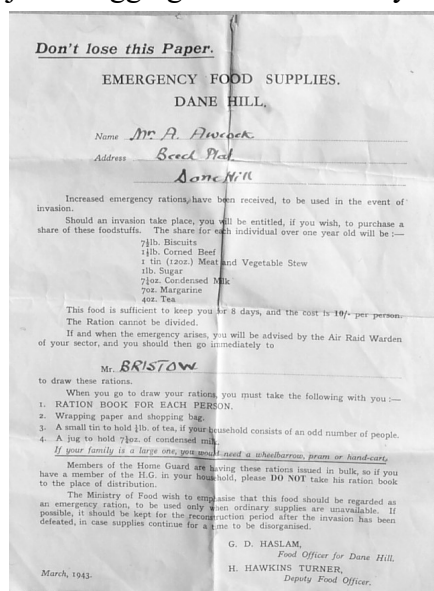
by Alberta James

When the war began there was great sadness and anger amongst the older people, we youngsters were quite excited! A fellowship began because it didn't matter whether your house was large or small, you could still be "hit". As the boys of the village left, boys from towns and villages all over the world came in, some very briefly. Irish, Welsh, Scots, Canadians, Australians, New Zealanders, New Foundlanders and some very handsome Maoris, the best dancers we had. Mr. Haslam⁽¹⁾ had asked us to make them all welcome in our homes - **sitting rooms** only of course!

The evacuees arrived and people who had offered to take them into their homes were asked to pick them up from the vicarage. We started off with two very pale thin little boys. They were thrilled to see the apples growing on the trees and started to pick them. Our Dad said they could have any found on the ground - so they crawled through the hedge and started on our neighbour's apples. In a fortnight they were just getting used to us when their mother came to visit them, they had a little weep and she took them home to Peckham.

The first mistake our Parish made was being in a direct line between the coast and London. Many enemy planes never faced the London Barrage, just circled around, used up their fuel, dropped their bombs and went home. Thankfully near misses seemed to be the order of the day. Blackout had begun and people used all sorts of materials to keep their windows dark. We didn't notice the darkness - we were used to it, and still are for that matter.

Dances were held in the hall every Wednesday and Saturday, a welcome break for the soldiers and the girls of the village. In spite of the rough floor and the soldiers' boots, some energetic "jitter-bugging" went on. Very occasionally fights broke out, they were quickly dealt with



especially by a very large Canadian M.P, we called "Gestapo". He rode a Harley Davidson motor bike and was quite able to carry off the offender across it. The last waltz was always "Who's taking you home tonight". Some of us had already left in order to have a slower walk home and still be in by eleven o'clock. The blackout had its uses!

The village ladies went to Shotover⁽²⁾, by the church, to knit and sew, our mother made a pair of hospital pyjamas every week. Some of our efforts couldn't be called "comforts" - more like "discomforts". Socks decreased the wrong way round and scarves that stretched to Kingdom come. Still there was great friendship, some gossip and fun.

One topic of conversation was food rationing. It began in 1940. Fat and sugar 8 oz per person. Tea, cheese and bacon 4 oz. Extra cheese was allowed for farm-workers.

FOOD RATIONING NOTICE ISSUED TO ALBERTA'S. MOTHER

Rationing for meat, eggs, milk , sweets, etc, followed

Dried eggs came in with lend lease*- 1 tablespoon of egg powder to 2 ozs of water = one egg. You could make omelettes with it. Lovely Spam also arrived.

Lord Woolton urged us all to use more potatoes raw, this to lighten batters. Potato water to make soup and gravy. The magazine,"Modern Woman" (1940), said "so much starch was making the young ladies let out their buttons", - there were other reasons too!

A scheme was set up by the Women's Institute for extra meat to be allowed to Mr. Newnham, the local baker, to make pies, some ladies helped in this. There was a black market, mostly from the

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Army cook-houses via the pubs, but of course around here there were plenty of “bunnies” and some had feathers on!

Fuel was rationed, baths were supposed to have five inches of water only. It was never made clear, if all the family got in together, whether they would each be allowed the five inches. People were told to use slack coal, tea leaves, hedge or grass cuttings and potato peelings for their fires. Not much fun to sit by on cold winter evenings, but there was the wireless to listen to, I.T.M.A Brains Trust, “Workers Playtime” and “Music While You Work”. Clothes rationing began in June 1941: 66 coupons a year, cut to 60 in 1942. Manual workers got an extra ten. There were utility wedding rings made of 9 carat gold, 30s 9d each. Mine is still going strong. People used all kinds of schemes to eke out clothing coupons - elderly aunts and uncles became very popular. Blankets became dressing-gowns and winter skirts and children appeared in all sorts of recycled garments. If you could get hold of a parachute you were made, nighties and camionickers were yours for the asking. Nearly everything ended up on the floor as rag rugs.

Lots of the girls of the village went away to join the forces, nursing or the land-army. Most farms had girls and when summer double time came in, it was a long hard day.

And so the war went on and people became very tired with worry over loved ones and making "ends meet", and the wretched "doodle bugs". When it ended it was a strange anti-climax, but it was a relief to go to bed expecting to still be there in the morning.

* The **Lend-Lease** policy was a programme under which the United States supplied the [United Kingdom](#) (and [British Commonwealth](#)), [Free France](#), the [Republic of China](#), and later the [Soviet Union](#) and other [Allied nations](#) with food, oil, and [materiel](#) between 1941 and August 1945.

- (1) Mr. G. D. Haslam, of Danehurst (now St. Raphaels) Chairman of Danehill Parish Council.
- (2) "Shotover", now named "Church Hill House".