

Albury Parish News

November 2008

Number 225



Serving the local communities of Albury,
Albury Heath, Brook, Farley Green,
Little London and Newlands Corner

We will remember them



ALBURY HONOURS THOSE WHO SERVED

PLAQUE UNVEILED IN VILLAGE HALL

WELCOME HOME DINNER AND GIFTS

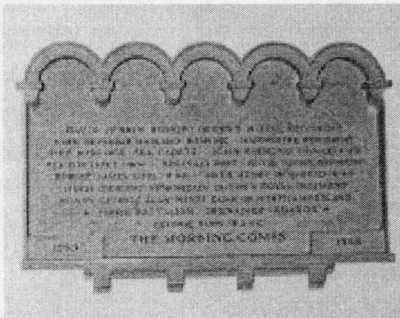
8th June, 1946

TO-DAY, AS WE CELEBRATE VICTORY, I send this personal message to you and all other boys and girls at school. For you have shared in the hardships and dangers of a total war and you have shared no less in the triumph of the Allied Nations.

I know you will always feel proud to belong to a country which was capable of such supreme effort; proud, too, of parents and elder brothers and sisters who by their courage, endurance and enterprise brought victory. May these qualities be yours as you grow up and join in the common effort to establish among the nations of the world unity and peace.

George R.I.

Memorial on Parish Church wall to commemorate those who died in the second world war.



An oak plaque, bearing the names of the men and women of Albury who served in the Forces during the recent war, was unveiled by Mr. R. G. Macindoe (chairman of the Parish Council) at a dinner at the Village Hall on Saturday, arranged by the Welcome Committee in honour of those who have returned to the village.

The plaque, made by Mr. V. Woods, matches that erected on the opposite wall of the hall after the first world war, and the names were inscribed by Mr. A. Wootton, of Shere, those of the fallen being in gilt lettering.

SOUVENIR SKETCH

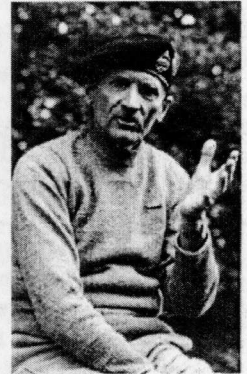
At the dinner, Mr. Macindoe, who presided, welcomed those who had returned, and said that those who remained at home wished them to know that they felt properly grateful for the part which those in the Forces played in bringing victory. There were about 155 who left the village, and mercifully few lost their lives. He regretted that not all those who had gone away were present that evening, and he suggested that the good wishes of the meeting should be sent to those who had not yet been demobilised, each of whom was to be sent a gift of cigarettes.

Mr. Macindoe especially welcomed Brigadier G. V. Palmer, who no longer lives in Albury, but whose distinguished military career, he said, they had followed with interest from his safe return with his men from Dunkirk until he became military governor of Vienna, his services having been since recognised by the award of the C.B.E.

In addition to the dinner, there was a general wish to give each Service man and woman who went from the village a souvenir, and each of them would receive a sketch by the well-known artist, Mr. E. H. Shepard, which Mr. Macindoe hoped they would hand down to successive generations to show what the people of Albury thought of them.

Monty's message at Albury Heath May 1944

South-Eastern Army Command headquarters was at Reigate and Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery was a regular visitor to the town where he often read the lesson in the parish church and inspected the troops in the area. In May 1944 he left his desk at Reigate and was driven to Albury Heath, where he spoke to more than 1,000 soldiers and told them that they would be under his command for the Second Front. It was the message that every soldier wanted to hear.



Among the men at Albury Heath that day was Walter Moir, serving with the Royal Canadian Engineers at Round Down, Gomshall. Walter, with 600 colleagues, marched from Gomshall via Silent Pool to meet the Field Marshal and attend the famous rally. He knew he would soon be going to France, but could only speculate on the date.

Suddenly there were rumours among civilians every-where that a great liberation army was being prepared. Troops were recalled from North Africa, Sicily and Italy to join with the Canadians. Armies came from the Empire and eastern Europe but all were confined to camps and communication with local residents was discouraged. Long lines of vehicles under camouflage netting appeared on the A3, A29, A286 and the A24 dual carriageway between Dorking and Leatherhead. There were tank movements everywhere. The countryside, particularly around Thursley, Milford, Elstead and Haslemere became a vast military camp.

The troops took part in exercises. How to wade in rough waters in full kit. How to assemble a folding bicycle in a few seconds. Many took part in the "invasion" of Littlehampton and Hayling Island while others helped to strengthen and widen road and rail bridges to help with the build-up of traffic. At Mickleham a new road and Bailey Bridge over the river was built by the Canadians and out in the villages stretching towards the south coast were tanks and ambulances while ammunition and petrol was stored in the woods.

As the elaborate plans for the invasion continued, factories increased their productivity. Among the most important were the Churchill tanks, rolling off the production line at Dennis Brothers works in Guildford and landing barges made by Gales of Kingston. Elsewhere engineers were perfecting the production of artificial harbours - code-named Mulberry - made up of floating, concrete units. It was planned to accommodate ships by enclosing sheltered water with a depth of at least nine metres and at least 18 metres high. Strategists had long appreciated the crucial importance of safe harbours for subsequent waves of troops and supplies.

The Mulberrys, described by Churchill as "majestic" needed to be defended and the Fourth Battalion of the Queen's Regiment - the Royal West Surreys - were chosen to provide the anti-aircraft defences on the harbours with two batteries - the 416th and the 440th. Another battery, the 439th was given instructions to man the light cruiser HMS *Despatch* as well as three old ships which were to be sunk to form the initial breakwater.

The *Despatch* was the control ship until the harbours were built and the Royal Navy

could supply a shore base. The 439th placed 16 Bofors on board with selected officers and men while the other batteries took part in invasion exercises at Portsmouth Dockyard and Dungeness. Meanwhile, the rest of the 439th installed guns on three tramp steamers and set sail from Oban in Scotland, down the Irish Channel for Normandy.

In this eventful hour of British history, the Royal West Surreys were the first troops to sail for Normandy. As they did so General Eisenhower, Supreme Commander, was postponing *Operation Overlord* for 24 hours because of the weather. It was on the morning of Monday June 5th that he made his famous decision "OK, Let's go".

Monty spoke to the men on Albury Heath and told them he was tired of war and it was time it was ended. Together, he said, we can win it this year.

Today, a plaque marks the spot where he addressed the men. It reads:

From this spot in May 1944

*Field-Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery ('Monty')
addressed Canadian Troops prior to the D-Day landing*

10,000 Canadians in Surrey

The soldiers of Surrey who were not following Rommel's retreating Afrika Corps, or preparing for the invasion of Sicily, or on the Burma Road, or languishing in PoW camps in Eastern Europe or Asia, or among the countless other fighting men all over the world were deployed in various parts of England on the many diverse military aspects of defence. Some were stationed in Surrey but generally the county was defended by the guests from another country. Canada looked after Surrey and Canadians remained until the Normandy landings on D-Day when the war was almost won.

The first contingent of the Canadian active service force arrived in 1939. Without a mishap or the loss of a man, this vast army was conveyed across the Atlantic and given tented accommodation in the Surrey countryside.

The whole span of Canada was represented - lumbermen from New Brunswick, wheat farmers from Alberta, trappers from the North-West, fruit growers from British Columbia, Canadians who spoke only French, coloured Canadians and Red Indians. There had been nothing like it in Surrey since the days of the Roman Occupation.

Among the Canadian Regiments who settled in quickly were the Nova Scotians and they saw themselves as settlers in the Roman tradition. They built camps, mapped long straight roads and courted the local girls.

The Novas were attached to the Canadian First Division and they arrived at a time when the war was ominously quiet. Life wasn't quiet. It was filled with parades, instruction squads, route marches over the Surrey hills, lectures, drills, tank demonstrations, rifle shoots at the ranges, gas training and so on.

But when British forces were making their desperate but successful escape from Dunkirk, leaving all guns and equipment in enemy hands, the Canadians remained the only troops in England fully equipped to meet the invader. During the summer of 1940 the Regiment was encamped near East Horsley in a position of readiness.

Here they had seats in the stalls during the Battle of Britain which was distracting as far as training was concerned, for the boys found it hard to put proper zest into sham fights with a real one going on overhead.

One German pilot who baled out found himself surrounded by several hundred armed Nova Scotians. He was the Regiment's first prisoner and the first German prisoner taken by the Canadians overseas.

The army from across the Atlantic. were encamped at Surrey Heath, Albury Heath, Abinger Forest. They were at Chatley Heath, Painshill Park and Epsom racecourse. Canadian Highlanders, complete with kilts and bagpipes, were stationed around Newdigate. The Royal Canadian Engineers and the Royal Canadian Artillery were billeted in Banstead Park. The 1st Battalion of the Hastings and Prince Edward Regiment, Ontario were in Reigate, Betchworth and Dorking. Cape Britain Islanders were in Farnham district where a unit occupied Willmer House, now the Museum of Farnham while others were encamped on the hockey field at Barfield School, Runfold.

The men moved around the county. They loved Woldingham but found an irritating drawback - the nearest pub was three miles away at Warlingham.

There were romances of course and, as with the American GIs, several Canadian soldiers married their English sweethearts and took them home. One of them, Walter Moir who was stationed at Round Down, Gomshall met Peggy at a local dance, married her and after the war, the couple made their home in New Brunswick. Walter was among the Canadian Troups that met Montgomery at Albury Heath.

From material supplied by the Shere Museum

11th November

90th anniversary of the end of the First World War

On the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month in 1918, the First World War ended. This November marks the 90th anniversary of the end of The Great War, and the Royal British Legion is honouring the memory of the War's heroes with a unique tribute. It is planting a Flanders' Field of Poppies in the ground where they fell.

The Royal British Legion is inviting people to join 'our salute' by sending a personal message, which will be written on a poppy. You are invited to participate either by ringing 0845 8451945, or by visiting the website <http://www.poppy.org/content/Flanders-Field-1114.shtml> for an online order service.

The poppies will be planted beside the **Menin Gate Memorial at Ypres** for Armistice Day on 11 November. The British Legion urges: "Help us to create this tribute, and our special Flanders' Field will be awash with scarlet."



*From the Parish Pump
Memorial in Albury Parish Church*