

used for mock battles. Firstly the Welsh Guards armoured regiment fought their way through. Then the Home Guard against regular forces and lastly the parachute regiment parachuting down, followed by their supplies then fighting their way through Martin to Rockbourne and Whitsbury Down. We were just coming out from school and we saw it all – it was quite a sight. They were practising for the drop on Arnhem September 1944. We were performing a pageant in the school playground as hundreds of planes of the 6<sup>th</sup> Airborne towing gliders were flying overhead. What a sight, a continual roar for some time.

The action around Martin during the War. Bombs were dropped at Damerham. I remember going down to see the army digging one out in the lane just over the bridge going to Rockbourne,. I believe they were dropped by a German VBomber. Also a British bomber crash landed in a field opposite Bolsbury Farm on the Cranborne road. We were kept back by the Home Guard. Two German Focker Wolf bombers passed over Martin on their way to Salisbury following the Blandford Road from Weymouth where they bombed the gas works. They were seen by a tractor driver who waved to the pilots as they were so low, not realising they had swastikas on them – they waved back! Then two evacuees, Harold Woodward and Don Bartlett, reported they had been fired at while walking on the downs. They were not believed! But it seems to fit in with the German planes on their mission. A light German aircraft came down in Knoll Wood. There was a machine gun on board and belts of ammunition. Two local Martin boys, Mervyn Ings and John Flemington got there before anyone else. They took some souvenirs plus a belt of ammunition which was turned over to the police. When we got there all we found was a torn parachute and little bits of fuselage. Another accident occurred when the Paras were carrying out their manoeuvres. A Dekota crashed near New Farm. The men at Farris's rushed over but they couldn't help anyone – very sad.

#### **SIGHTS AND SOUNDS AND STORIES OF MARTIN**

Martin in wartime which we were very lucky to have been sent to. As I have already said we were surrounded by a steadily building Military force who were preparing for DDay. 43 men and woman went from Martin to fight in the war. Men working on farms were exempt from military service unless they could be spared. In 1940 men volunteered for the LDV. When Churchill took over he changed the name to Home Guard. 42 men were enrolled – it became compulsory to join from 17 –70 years. Also those forming the AFS, ARP and NFS. Those who volunteered for the Red Cross were not affected by the rules of the others – girls between 17-18 had the choice in fact it

became compulsory of either joining the Womans' Services, ATS, WRENS, WAAFS or WIA, factories, hospitals, all sorts of work where men could be released for the forces. There was a WLA hostel at Woodyates. By 1944 there were two million Home Guardsmen very well trained. But in 1940 with very little equipment they were the first line of defence. You have heard of men parading with bean sticks, pieces of wood and shotguns on parade. One man was asked what he would do faced by a German parachutist. "Tickle his ear with my bean stick Sir" – much laughter!! All the people who left the village were replaced by the 50 evacuees and teachers coupled with the village children. There were 80 children and as you can imagine it was quite noisy at times but we helped the farmers, we went weed pulling, potato planting and picking; making hiles when corn is cut and thrown out in sheaves. I was leading a horse on Mr Main's farm harvesting. There was George Willis loading and Mr Wright and three German prisoners pitching the sheaves onto the cart. The sheaves were pitched up with the butt on the outside. One German wasn't playing by the rules and threw them anyhow. George got fed up and let them pile up, eventually they fell on that German. He said "You swinehound and threw his pitchfork at George. It fell on the horse which bolted forward with me hanging on. He never came back. In season we would pick wild fruits, blackberries, sloes, rosehips for baby's concentrated orange, etc.

#### PRANKS WE GOT UP TO

We would get bullets from the rifle range as there were usually plenty lying around, get home, take the bullet out with pliers, empty the cordite, put it in a heap and light it and it would flare up, put the casing in a gate post and with a hammer and nail strike the percussion cap causing a bang. During the early part of the war soldiers brought their rifles home with them. My step grandfather came home on leave, put his rifle in the sitting room. We were very inquisitive, my brother Ted put a bullet in the breach. I said "Don't fire it" The next thing he had. I was deafened and the room filled with smoke. My grandfather rushed in picking up his rifle. "Somebody has fired this" looking at the barrel, "there is a hole in that wall". Of course we denied it!

Another thing, somebody said you can buy carbide at Mrs Read's shop. They used to light lamps with it. We would get a lemonade bottle or a tin can with a lid, put the carbide in, put water in, shake the bottle, etc, put cap on and throw to a safe distance. It would go bang. You could say it was our first science lesson! Two boys were experimenting with carbide in a biscuit tin, set it off, there was a terrific bang bringing part of Mr Sheppard's ceiling down. He wasn't pleased. Anyway PC Stone

soon put a stop to it banning all sales of carbide. One of the older evacuees who had left and came back to visit from Portsmouth brought a 2-2 pistol which he had bought from a seaman. We were all having a go firing with this at a target on the door which happened to be the Manor door. Again PC Stone was quickly on the scene and confiscated it.

We were coming out of the youth club, it was pitch dark, no lights anywhere. A meeting was being held in the main hall. Mrs Road's car was parked outside. She came out to start her car by handle. Steve Poore said when she gets back in we will lift the rear of the car which was driven by the back axle. Just as she was about to pull away. "Lift" said Steve. We did and the wheels just flew around. We did this three times. The final time we just dropped the car and she flew down the road in a cloud of smoke. – Very naughty!!

In wartime you could see the most wonderful night skies. Stars looked as though you could touch them. Revd Skillbeck-Smith came along and we were singing Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition which was a wartime song. The vicar said "Come out you boys" and proceeded to give us a lesson about the star formations. Our first lesson on astronomy. He then went on his way.

My mother sent me to get some milk from Mr Baker's farm. I was then going on my way to see Mrs Williams at Bustard Cottages. I saw the vicar approaching. I thought quickly how should I address him. "Good morning Revd Smith". He said "You will call me Sir". I mumbled something and he chased me and hit me round the ear which hurt for quite a while.

When we stayed with Miss George, Edward was promised a pig. So when he was about 12 years old he rode his junior bike from Martin to Rockford near Ringwood to collect it. All he had was a little box and some string. As you can imagine it got out a few times with him trying to walk and control it. The pig got out twice by Ibsley aerodrome and RAF gunners helped catch it. It must have been a nightmare walk but eventually he got to Bennetts cottage with it. The next thing was to build a pen with a few nails and a hammer and a blunt saw which with limited materials was very difficult. It was like the house that Jack built. As the pig got bigger it kept escaping so it was ringed but it still persisted. So Mr Kent next door put it in a proper pig sty and it was eventually shared. There was a pig club in the village where meal was obtained to go with vegetable scraps, etc which was boiled up. Ted kept geese, hens, rabbits and bantams and ferrets. He would go out ferreting with George Willis and Bill Smith. They were very successful as rabbits were a real pest eating into crops. But in a stew

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with our weekly rations, plenty of bread and potatoes, suet dumplings, we survived pretty well.

Ted and George Willis had borrowed a shot gun. They were looking for rabbits and rats in the orchard at the back of Bennetts Cottage. They didn't know that Charles was using the thunderbox at the end of the garden. It was like a sentry box with about a third of an opening at the back. Ted fired, there was a big shout and the place rocked as hot pellets hit Charles in the backside. The air was blue!!

Ted was always doing deals with Jack Barter, a farmer's son. He had sold Ted some old hens as pullets. So Ted did another deal. We had an old bicycle with a broken frame so he forced a brush handle into it and camouflaged it over with paint and muck. Jack bought it and later came back and said "Remember that bicycle you sold me"!!?? Ted said "Remember those hens"!! They did lots of deals after.

One day we were told that a religious group was coming and as many children as possible should meet at the Cross. Pictures were taken of us as a group with a banner "Sunshine Corner" on it. This is the song that we learnt

Sunshine Corner, oh its jolly fine  
It's for children under 99  
All are welcome  
Seats are given free  
Martin Sunshine Corner  
Is the place for me.

Tony Budd, a friend of mine, who lived in St George's cottages where a lot of children had congregated said "I am going to ride my father's bicycle". I said "You will be in trouble with your father if he comes home". He was in the army and expected home at the weekend. So he mounted the bicycle and as he moved away he turned and waved. Turning back he was confronted by a cow coming out of the field. He hit the cow and catapulted over. The front wheel buckled and he looked chastened. Mr Willis came to the rescue thank goodness.

To earn extra money for my mother we would go beating for the shooters on a Saturday in season. We would walk for miles very often we were cold and wet. The pay was five shillings and sixpence (27.5p) and a bottle of pop per day. So we got to know the landscape between Martin and Damerham pretty well.

The end of the war was approaching. The evacuees were slowly going back to Portsmouth. If you were 14 years old you had to work. By the end there was only a

handful left but Martin was forever in their hearts. We had very good teachers who had started with nothing in the way of text books, ink, pens, etc. which they begged and borrowed from other schools. But looking back they produced excellent work. The people of Martin were very welcoming, tolerant and patient with us. A real village community. Discipline was very strict in school. The cane was used if you didn't behave yourself. I know I was punished twice and slapped once. People who were prominent in the village who helped were Mr and Mrs D Main, Mr John Baker, Mrs D Rhodes, Miss E Taylor, Mrs Hibbard, Fred and Winnie Hacker, Revd Skillbeck-Smith and Mrs A Kerly. During the war food production doubled. The farmers and workers should be praised for their efforts and with other duties they dealt with.

I remember part of Martin Down being ploughed up by War and Agg. The war certainly changed our lives forever. The church played a very big part in our education and well being of religious matters under Revd Skillbeck-Smith and later the Revd. Cork.

In conclusion the evacuation was a success as in Portsmouth there were 67 air raids and 930 civilians killed. We were very fortunate to have come to Martin which changed our lives forever. We made some everlasting friends.

#### INDEX

##### Rations – A week's supply

1s 2d (6p) worth of meat  
3ozs bacon or ham  
8 ozs sugar  
2-5 ozs tea  
2-5 pints of milk  
2ozs butter  
2 ozs cheese  
4 ozs margarine  
1 oz cooking fat  
1 egg per fortnight  
12oz sweets per month