

# WW2 MEMORIES FROM HOWDEN-LE-WEAR HISTORY SOCIETY'S ARCHIVES

Although times were hard in the 1940's, our older residents do still have happy memories of childhood and the way people pulled together and supported each other.

## Memories collected for the 60<sup>th</sup> VE Celebration Exhibition 2005

### The Day War was Declared

#### Florrie Quinn

The Vicar, Rev. Dennis, and the church warden, George French, came from Church to my parents' house to listen to the news. Neville Chamberlain was announcing Britain was at war with France.

#### Derrick Wood (12years old)

I heard the news on my way home from the Chapel Sunday School.

#### Nancy Mallaby (7 years old)

We had gone on a family holiday to Blackpool on the Saturday and, despite the declaration of war, father decided we would stay for the week as planned.

#### Jonty Raine

No immediate impact just went on playing football.

### Air Raid Practice

Betty Cooper - At school we had Air Raid Practice. We were issued with gas masks and taken into the shelters at the bottom of the yard and each given a barley sugar sweet.

### A.R.P Wardens

Eileen McCleod -The ARP Warden, Mr Winter used to parade up and down the sixty houses at Victoria to check if there were any chinks of light showing through the blackout curtains. I am not sure whether he was official or self-appointed, and Walter Gittins who was in the Home Guard did the same. Mr Gittins and Mr Cruddace were the only two men in the street who built air raid shelters. I suppose most of our parents thought we were safe and only towns on the coast, like Jarrow, Sunderland and Hartlepool would be bombed. Aeroplanes were not supposed to come as far inland as Crook and Bishop Auckland.

**But they did.**

### Food and Rationing

Florrie Quinn- Travel was quite limited, and every house had blackout curtains. Butter, tea, sugar, meat, and sweets were all rationed and we often had to queue for food. Clothing coupons were highly prized. Mothers mended clothes in those days and worn shoes were always repaired. Children wore hand me down clothes, but we were no worse off financially during the war because we did not have much before it started. We had a healthy diet because our fathers grew vegetables, kept some poultry and there was always the odd rabbit to supplement the meat supply.

Robert Tinkler - No Bananas and ice cream. "Pom", potato substitute used instead of mashed potatoes. The Co operative Store Field dug up for allotments.

Derrick Wood- Dried egg was a powdered substitute for fresh eggs. This was used for baking and made quite good omelettes. Petrol was in short supply.

### Soldiers came to our Village

Soldiers were billeted In The Green Tree Assembly Rooms, High Street Sunday School, Rear Rooms of Bridge Street Chapel, St Mary's Church Hall, The Surtees Inn and in many private family homes. The WI Hall had kitchens and was the Mess where the were troops fed. Dances were also held for the soldiers and local people - many a romance and lasting marriage started from these dances.

## John Brown and Matty Smith - Howden-le Wear Home Guard WW2

The Home Guard met to train 3 times a week, Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. There were between 30 and 40 men involved from Howden, Wear Valley Junction, The Flats, North Bitchburn and High Grange. Mr Walter Gittens, a WW1 veteran was the 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant. The rifle range was between two waste heaps between Valley Terrace and Victoria. We did not carry live ammunition only a bayonet.. The ammunition was kept in a stone building beside the Park, only Officers were allowed access to it



### A day in the Life of an Aycliffe Angel

As an Aycliffe Angel, I worked in the munition factory at Aycliffe. I worked shifts and travelled by steam train to and from the factory. On arrival at the factory we were searched for cigarettes and matches – smoking was not allowed for obvious reasons. We had to clock in and change into our overalls, head scarf and plimsolls which were supplied. My job was to clean between the detonator caps. I did have a screen between myself and the detonator, but work was extremely dangerous as were all the jobs at Aycliffe.

### V for Victory and Victoria – Eileen Mc Cleod

'Here is the news and this Alvar Liddell reading it' was a regular sound in our kitchen at Victoria Cottage, Howden-le-Wear, as was the voices of Wilfred Pickles and Valentine Dyell. But best of all was Dick Barton, Special Agent and we listened to Dick Barton's adventures every Saturday morning. It was wartime and the radio as well as giving us the news, provided us with an escape from the hardships of war.

### Victory

#### A message from the King to all schoolchildren.

Joan Potts - When Victory was declared my family lived at Whitworth, near Spennymoor. Every child attending school was presented with a certificate from King George V1. Several years ago, I found mine, my mother having placed it in the Family Bible for safe keeping.

#### Does anyone else still have their certificate?



