



A Newton Abbot resident remembers World War II

Occupations

Men who were not in the armed forces were Special Constables, Air Raid Wardens or members of the Home Guard. The Home Guard wore khaki uniforms as of a soldier and they were briefed to defend King and Country from German invasion. They carried guns. The Air Raid Wardens kept watch from buildings or other strategic points. They were trained to deal with fire, bombs and practised using stirrup pumps and had buckets of sand and water handy.

The Special Constables patrolled the streets, particularly during air raids.

When I was sixteen I went to work in the Public Library in Newton Abbot. Here I saw many soldiers, sailors and airmen who were stationed in the area as they used to come to borrow books. The old Work House in East Street had been turned into a Naval Hospital and the Surgeon Commanders and nurses and sick bay attendants also came to borrow books.

My brother had now volunteered for service in the RAF. He had been a member of the Air Training Corp attached to the Grammar School. At 17 ½ years he was called to commence air crew training, as were many of his friends. This caused my mother a great deal of worry, but cards and letters came from him from far off places like Manchester, Lossiemouth and Anglesey. For a part of his training he was in Torquay and I remember going to dances at the NAFFI Club and attending sports day on the green. During this time Torquay was bombed and on several occasions my father went by bus to see that my brother was safe. One Sunday afternoon we watched Torquay being bombed from the top of Decoy Woods. Air raids were now taking lace nightly on Exeter and Plymouth and the sky would be lit up red in the distance.

People got out of their homes at night from those cities and went onto Dartmoor. We dreaded moonlight nights.

My brother left for training in Canada and nine months later returned as a Pilot Officer/Observer (navigator) in a crew flying a Lancaster Bomber. He was stationed at Mildenhall, Suffolk. He came home on leave at intervals; he was very quiet and tired. My mother worried a great deal about the loss of our bombers over Germany and she would listen to all the News items about the progress of the war. In particular there was a station that could be heard and which gave out news of missing airmen or raids over this country. The man who made the announcements was known as Lord Haw Haw. He always began "Germany calling, Germany calling", "Last night German bombers carried out raids on ..." and he would go on to name the cities in this country that had been bombed. He would also give out names and numbers of our airmen who had been shot down over Germany. We all hated him, and his voice in particular, but it was a way of getting up to date news.