

## Landrake during World War II

The response to this project has been marvellous. Each person called upon had been very helpful. I think the suffering talked about by families living during the blitz area was a unique experience that they had, whilst the suffering of nearby surrounding district was not so intense but also of a genuine supportive role.

Although Landrake was a farming community there were many whose jobs were relied upon by Plymouth. For instance many from the village worked in the dockyard itself. There were men involved in the work of repairing and maintaining the naval ships. Also, of course, there were the fire watchers, the Home Guard, the firemen, ambulance drivers, nurses and many more.

It's interesting that there was a variety of jobs, people from all walks of life working together with one ambition - to beat the enemy which had dared to try and conquer their country. There were many hardships, families split up and not knowing when they would see one another again. Saying goodbye to your father, husband or brother was almost an every day occurrence, but with the resilience of human nature people took these situations in their stride.

Mrs Kath Morrish remembers watching the first bombing of Cornwall from Torpoint. She and her family were able to witness a German plane flying along the River Tamar, to the dockyard and searching out just where it would drop its bombs. It turned back and returned to the oil tanks in Torpoint and that was where the pilot decided the most damage would be done.

There was an anti-aircraft gun at Carkeel. Mike Stapleton's mother was one of the ladies whose job was to man this gun. Mrs Kath Morrish again was telling me her most astounding memory was of the same anti-aircraft gun. For some unknown reason the gun was reflected in the searchlight's beam in the sky. Two beams crossed each other and not only was the gun reflected but also the enemy plane. The gun reflected was the one who shot the plane down. This was just one of those particular sights that are not easily forgotten.

Mike Pengelly was saying how his father travelled to Plymouth to work as a fireman and yet kept his own job going at Looe whenever possible.

There are many stories of how people met. Some of the first that spring to mind are of Violetta who met Ron whilst he was in the army and serving in Italy. She came to Landrake not knowing anyone but her husband, and not speaking our language. Imagine how she must have felt? Now, although the opportunity to return to Italy has come about, she feels that Landrake is now her home. It is interesting that she can read English but is not confident enough to speak it a lot. But she is more than capable of coping with us ribbing her accent!

Kath and Eric Gee met whilst Eric was working as a mechanic at the Notter Bridge Garage. If you wanted to get married you had to be content with

whatever you could manage with your clothing allowance. Even your wedding cake was made with cardboard so that you could have the wedding photos!

In those days the back lane into the village was the main road and you can imagine the panic one could feel if the air raid sirens went off when you were at the bottom and all you wanted to do was to be with your family at this frightening time.

Mike Pengelly talked of how he watched Plymouth burning from Looe and indeed there are reports of this burning being seen from great distances. Evacuees were brought into the village from London and it must have been like being brought into another world after living in towns and coming to such a small village. Then to be in somewhere, so different: the sounds, the smells and no doubt the meals cooked were completely new to these children. People took the children into their homes, sharing what little they had. In fact most probably they were better off in some ways because there was a greater selection of vegetables and because of the farms people were able to help one another.

Many of these evacuees were from West Norwood, London. The headmaster of that school was a Mr Scales (not the later Landrake one) and other teachers from London were Miss Wendall, Miss Hanks and one more lady teacher. There was also children from Bristol and they had two teachers with them, one being a Miss Watson.

Mr Wickett was the headmaster of Landrake School until he joined the army and then there was Mr Tucker. Other teachers were Miss Churchward, Mr Bland and Joan Gillard. The children went to the village school until they were old enough to work.

These evacuee children arrived about June 1940. It was quite late in the evening because of a bomb on the railway line near Bristol so the train had been diverted. There were about forty to fifty children, tired, frightened and very upset at having to be uprooted from their families. Some children only had what they stood up in or a paper bag with some possessions.

They soon settled in and were happy.. Many of the evacuees have kept up there contact with their Landrake friends.

Some evacuee children went to the Chapel Sunday School where they were taught by Mr Barrett, Mr Arnold and Mrs Smale while those who went to the Church had Mr Edwin Menhinick, Mrs Walburg and Mrs Margery Ashton. The following places were used for their schooling - The Liberal Club ( next to the Chapel ), the Church vestry and the village hall. The children stayed until 1942.

Ration Books: Each family had their own ration book and you were not able to buy any food without passing over your coupon. Eggs, cheese, butter, meat and fruit were luxury items. Many people commented on the fact that what we take for granted now was considered luxuries. Barry Biddulph remembers the

first time he saw a banana. He was on the Hoe, in Plymouth, and an American soldier gave him a banana. He didn't know how to peel and eat it. But Landrake people were lucky in many ways because they could grow fresh vegetables and families helped each other as much as they could.

Mr Arnold used to travel to Plymouth to sell his fruit and vegetables at the Plymouth Pannier Market. One morning he went in and was met with complete devastation. There were no houses or market left where he sold his goods. But he still went daily and people would buy from the corner of the street where the market had been.

At this time there was a bakery in the village square in Landrake owned by Mr Menhinick. They were very busy during the war years because of the extra people and children who had been moved into the area. At one stage there were up to five men working in the bakery.

Coupons were used for clothing as well as food. People adapted to the situation and when some items were unavailable they managed to overcome this. Nylons were unheard of - unless you were in contact with any Americans! So ladies coloured their legs with many different lotions ( home made ). There was a Mainards leg lotion. For hair setting lotion, sugar and water mixed together did the trick. It worked well unless there was a day when the weather was really hot and the bees and wasps sometimes took a liking to the hair mixture!

Curtain material was not bought with coupons so was often used to make dresses.

Electric Lights: It is interesting that the first electric light in the village was put outside the Bullers Arms and the second was at the church gate in Tideford Road. These lights were in memory of the first two Landrake lads that had been killed. They were: Raymond James who was in the RAF. He lost his life on a plane that was shot down over Yugoslavia. He was only nineteen years old, the brother of Phyllis Sweet and her twin sister, Mrs Sparks, who lives at St Germans. The other lad was Charlie Barret who died on a battleship when it was hit by a U-boat.

Another person to lose their life was Ernie Everington. He was killed at Torpoint by a bomb. He had just come off duty from the Torpoint Ferry. He lived with his wife at Landrake Vicarage where she was the housekeeper to the Rev T A Walton.

There is one feeling that many will never forget . Everyone worked as a team during those war years, helping each other. The needs of friends and neighbours were met whenever possible, no one questioned why or how, but just acted whenever they could to ease one anothers suffering. The evacuees, for example, arriving with just what they were standing in - clothes were found, help given on all occasions. It is hoped that the knowledge of all this will be known to the youngsters of today, helping them to appreciate that

the suffering of some fifty years ago was to free the country for them. Giving them the democracy they often take for granted.