

trousers were tight under the arms! Another's coat came down to his knees, but eventually everyone was fitted.

We had this dress for quite a while until we were fitted up with army battledress and everyone had a rifle. I was given three stripes and was in charge of munitions etc. I had a Tommy gun, a Sten gun, Repeater rifle, 303 rifle plus a box of hand grenades to look after at one time or another.

We had drill and exercise one night a week plus rifle practice once a week. We also did four hours guard duty one night a week, 10p.m. to 2a.m. or 2a.m. to 6a.m.

We could see the effect of the bombing of Exeter, the Welsh ports and Plymouth by the fires lighting up the sky.

Working in the timber yard one afternoon during the war we heard machine gun fire overhead and saw a German plane being chased by a Spitfire. The German plane was badly hit and crashed at Beaford about three miles away killing all the crew.

The Spitfire was also damaged and had to make a forced landing on a bit of rough moor land about a mile and a half away. Luckily the pilot was uninjured and walked to High Bickington, where he went straight to the Golden Lion Pub, the landlord Mr Gill promptly gave him a bottle of whiskey.

We searched the crash site for souvenirs but we weren't allowed into the field, however as the plane had hit a tree we found some bits and pieces. I found a nut I made into a ring for Greta.

There were no airdromes near us until they built Chivenor 15 miles away, then towards the end of the war they built Winkleigh 8 miles away. There had been an airfield at Chivenor for several years used by the North Devon Flying Club before the war.

When they started building the airdromes they opened up all the old quarries to obtain the stones for the runways etc. Every lorry and truck was put in to use no M.O.T. in those days civilians were not allowed on the sites really but I got to know the drivers of the lorries and got a lift occasionally. I was appalled to see the waste on the sites, there would be cement, bricks, tools etc lying on the ground and a lorry would come and tip its contents and bury it. Then the bulldozer would come along and spread the lorry load over it, what a waste.

War time rationing didn't affect us too badly really, we could often go out and shoot a rabbit and rabbit pie was lovely. Working on a farm sometimes we could charm our way into having a bit of cream, we were all friends together when the chips were down. Most of us had a garden, or a bit of ground and grew our own vegetables. We could get a few eggs and we always managed to get our full rations, times were a bit tight but we managed.

We had about 80 children evacuated to the village school, some with their mothers, most came from the Sydenham and Catford areas. They had to use the Church hall, as they had brought their own teachers with them. Some did not stay to the end of the war, but most did, but very few ever came back after the war.

During the war any bad news affected us, as we had lads from the locality in each of the forces, some were my schoolmates. I lost my brother in Norway.