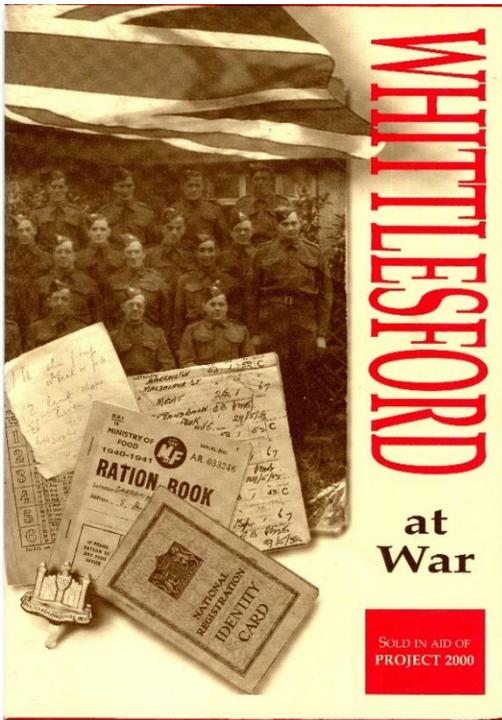


The Whittlesford Society VE Day celebrations.



What a change the current, deserted streets here, this year, from 8th June 1995 - the **50th Anniversary** of VE Day and a special celebration time for Whit Soc too - **our 20th anniversary** and the launch of our latest book, *Whittlesford at War*, documenting life in the village in WW2. It was sold (making £800!) in aid of 'Project 2000' to rebuild and renovate the Memorial Hall.

Whither Whittlesford no. 76 captured the atmosphere in a detailed account + several pages of photographs of the fantastic day with the biggest ever fancy dress parade and procession of decorated floats

and vintage vehicles, through the village and up to the Lawn for loads more fun & activity! Countless little Evacuees, Land Army girls, Servicemen (wounded & combatant), '40's icons and fabulous fancy dressers crowded the specially memorable School and Playgroup floats or danced along behind the float bearing the Dixie Noodles Jazz Band, who provided musical accompaniment to the festivities. The floats, bedecked with flags & bunting were all loaned by Ciba Agrichemicals and drawn by local farmers' tractors.

At the Lawn, there were loads of brightly coloured stands and stalls, a huge bouncy castle and all sorts of attractions, while the Memorial Hall housed a packed exhibition of WW2 memorabilia – and cream teas!

Once the Fly-Past of historic planes from Duxford was over, scores of red, white & blue balloons, which people had queued all afternoon to have helium filled, were released to mark the launch of Project 2000. The yellow balloon-labels were eventually returned from as far afield as

Belgium, Holland and Germany - marvellous symbol of reconciliation, the winner was some 60 miles from the German/Czech border.

Rounding off the afternoon, a musical interlude was staged and everyone joined in lusty singing of nostalgic numbers to re-charge energies ready for the evening's excitement – bonfire, firework display, & BBQ cooked by the scouts for more than 400 folk in the garden & ground behind The Bees.

VE Day 1945. 'Bonfire & fireworks' may sound quite reminiscent of the more impromptu celebrations on the original VE Day - described in hilarious & hair-raising - detail in *Whittlesford at War*. "There was a dance at the Memorial Hall... a lively event as most people had prepared themselves at the various pubs beforehand. When the dance ended, everyone linked arms and marched through the village singing well-known songs from both world wars...and proceeded in various groups down North Road to Eric Arnold's field." That had been main training ground for the Home Guard since 1940, with its ammunition shelter packed with what was left of the 'flame fougasse', Molotov cocktails & phosphorus bombs that featured in an earlier anecdote. Suffice it to say, late on that unforgettable 8 May the whole village was lit up by an enormous fireball filling the skies!

The sequel to 8 May 1995 – and fruition of Project 2000 -came just 4 years later with publication of Whit Soc's next book – focussed on the Memorial Hall - from dream in 1918 (of using the Guildhall) - to its initial construction and opening on 21 September 1921 + highlights of its history thereafter, through war and peace, until in early 1990 the need to renovate became dire. -With Millennium Lottery Funding and immense hard work by a small team, it was indeed transformed, ceremonially opened and ready to greet the new millennium!

Both books are well worth reading again- by the same pair of fine local authors entertainingly drawing on local research and personal experience. Contact Infowhitsoc@gmail.com

