

# The Second World War

In the Second World War fewer local men were killed than in 1914-1918, just twelve from the two villages, but the war made a greater immediate impact on the lives of the villagers.

First came the evacuees, mothers and babies from London who often did not like the village way of life; great tolerance was needed by their hosts. Unaccompanied children were regarded as being easier, but even so the host children had often to share their bedrooms with strangers and make room for them at home and school. If the little visitors were homesick it added to the distress. However, many London children enjoyed the country life and kept in touch with their hosts for many years afterwards.

Early invasion threats led to the formation of the Local Defence Volunteers, later called the Home Guard. All fit men, and some not so fit, served in either the Home Guard or Civil Defence; many did other war work, grew vegetables or served on agricultural committees, all in addition to their usual occupations. Mortimer Fire Brigade served locally and nationally. There was little leisure. Women also did Civil Defence work, and for them there was the Red Cross and the Women's Voluntary Service, much food preservation by the Women's Institute and looking after the evacuees. Many women worked on the land, and girls from afar came to the Women's Land Army hostel in West End Road.

There was a prisoner-of-war camp for Italians at Little Park; later, Germans, and then displaced persons came to this camp.

When the American troops came to Aldermaston they were frequent visitors at the St. John's Hall dances, and several married local girls.



A distinguished visitor later in the war was Queen Wilhelmina of the Netherlands, who came to live at Laneswood (now demolished) near the Turner's Arms. When Princess Juliana returned from Canada she stayed with her mother at Laneswood. Queen Wilhelmina was frequently seen in the village sketching.