



# TRENTHAM IN WORLD WAR II

Local memories from the 1940s

Have you ever wondered what it was like for young people growing up during wartime in this area?

These two accounts might give you some insights.



Trentham Heritage Project

# Trentham in the 1940s from an anonymous writer

## The War Years

There were some beautiful historical black and white half-timbered houses lining the driveway into the school house. At the outset of the war, a company of Newfoundland Pioneers were billeted there. Later, a NAAFI Nissen hut was erected next to the school to serve soldiers. With some pennies we were able to buy some of their biscuits.

A large partially submerged air raid shelter was dug in on an upper level overlooking the girl's playground. We were all treated to a few visits during fly overs by Goering's "finest." It was a dank, dark tube, the only light was emitted from a blue curtain at the end of the shelter which served as a lavatory. Fortunately, we spent little time there.

Soldiers dug in machine gun emplacements below the railings next to the mausoleum facing the park entrance. And, on the road to Stone, on a hill belonging to the Trentham Golf Course, a round white pillbox appeared one day - a standout target.

Wenger's field abutting Longton Road and Stuart Avenue were dotted with long poles to thwart glider landings. Trentham Lake was festooned with booms just below the surface of the water, designed to wreck any seaplane landings.

Village kids used to race through a copse from Stone Road into Wenger's field next to Brook Road, fearful that the enemy was chasing them. Little is left of the copse. The old chicken house was demolished.

POWs were seen in the village tightening barbed wire on barricades next to the Barlaston Old Road, where the signposts had been removed. We had an active Civil Defence and Home Guard presence - always on guard, always practicing.

Village constables marched in front of their Longton Road HQ in steel helmets and sloped arms during the opening days of the war.

## The Gardens and School

Trentham Gardens was paradise when I young. So was the park. We didn't have much of anything. But compared to today's standards we had more. How can I forget Trentham Parochial School? There was a narrow pathway just below Wenger's driveway, which we took. The main entrance was further down opposite an old rambling post office building-with bars on the windows-and two entrances.

The school had three playgrounds. One for the girls on the left and the other two for boys. There was a lower playground, and a brick slope connecting it to the top playground. On the left of the upper playground Wenger's apple and pears were lodged

behind a brick wall topped with some wire. It failed to keep us out. Wenger's apples were the best.

Between the rough and tumble of Trentham kids versus Hanford kids, we also faced canings by Miss Blakemore for crimes committed against humanity - snowballing, not learning poems, and, lateness. Usually, four slashes across the hand. A Mr. Mellor was the headmaster and dwelled in an abutting house in the girl's playground. Later, Mr Goldstone, who drove and maintained the Garden's trains, resided there with his family.

The school consisted of a kindergarten on the right of the Main Entrance, a single classroom on the left of a hallway, which led to the largest classroom boasting a concertina-style folding wall. At a school concert-Christmas, I believe- I recall one young singer bringing the house down with her rendition of a song - "...nice people with nice manners, but, got no money at all." I believe her name was Miss Darling.

The Mausoleum always scared us at night and it was a dare to walk by it. There was a cold stone house next to the upper playground fronting on Wenger's driveway once used by the schoolmaster. It was cold - like the Arctic. We briefly held the first Trentham Scout Troop meetings there.

One noon time, my sister and I took a bag of potato chips and sat at a table in the Monica Cafe crunching the chips between margarine sandwiches. Naturally, we were politely asked to leave, unless we wanted tea. We couldn't afford tea, so we left.

### **Anonymous**

**From Roots Chat Free Online Family History Forum c2008**

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## **Trentham WW2 memories from Gwen Paget**

I've been thinking about WW2 but of course I was very young (born 1936) to have known very much about it.

I do remember often seeing the American convoys rolling through Trentham while we were on our way to school. We used to shout "Got any gum, chum?" and were thrilled when they threw out sweets to us.

There was an " air raid" shelter in the school playground but it was just a long brick flat - roofed building which really wouldn't have provided much shelter if needed. At home several homes around us had shelters (Anderson) in their gardens and I remember that

we went to our neighbours, the Scotts, usually during the night. There was lots of mud in there and a few planks on the ground and some for seats. Eventually we had our own indoor shelter (Morrison) which took up most of our front room.

Some children had siren suits to keep them warm in the shelter - an all - in -one dark blue suit with a hood.

The air raid siren was on the flat roofed part of the police station opposite the top of Brinsley Avenue.

Most houses had their windows criss - crossed with sticky brown tape to prevent the glass from splintering and blackout curtains made sure that no light showed. Mr Grimes, the vicar, (on air raid patrol) used to get very cross if any light showed. We all had gas masks which we always had to carry to school in a brown square box over our shoulders.

There were a few evacuees in Trentham; the Jarvis boys lived in Brough Lane and I think there were a few fights with the local boys.

Our father was in the ARP which met in the room next door to the Methodist chapel.

Other Trentham men were in the Home Guard and met in the Parish Hall.

Food was rationed and each family had Ration Books. I was always happy when it was time to spend the sweet ration.

As you know the London Clearing Banks moved to the ballroom in Trentham Gardens during WW2. My aunt and uncle had two bank clerks living in their home for the duration of the war - Violet was the one I knew best. The parents of a friend of mine also had two people living with them - Mr and Mrs Bolingbroke. Mr Bolingbroke worked in the Gardens. I kept in touch with Mrs Bolingbroke for many years afterwards, she lived in Thornton Heath, Surrey. We had the opportunity to visit the Bank, upstairs in the ballroom and I remembered being amazed at all the rubber bands and paper clips that covered the floor.

PS The Thorley family ran the garage at the top of New Inn Lane until about the late 1950's. There were three daughters, Kathleen who was my age and died recently, Margaret and Christine. They lived in the cottage behind the garage.

There was a Howson family in New Inn Lane (c 431) with one son, Alan who was my age and died about twelve years ago. The aunt of a friend of mine was married to a Howson, same family, and lived in a lovely bungalow overlooking fields and a wood in Hanchurch.

**Gwen Paget**