

## Sarratt Local History Society

"Look, duck and vanish!" was, apparently, one of the "cleaner" nick-names for the Local Defence Volunteers, those brave men who were determined to defend our country should invasion happen soon after the outbreak of the Second World War. So said renowned military historian Col John Sainsbury at our meeting on 30 September. He gave us a comprehensive and often amusing history of the Home Guard and its predecessors.

In the early days of the War, defence groups were set up locally, often using any weapons such as shot-guns or old bayonets which the locals could provide, and volunteers were issued with an arm band to wear over civilian clothes. These groups were organised nationally in June 1940. On Winston Churchill's instructions to regularise the situation, the Local Defence Volunteers were renamed the Home Guard, and were eventually issued with uniforms and a variety of official weapons. In September 1940, the 8th Battalion of the Hertfordshire Home Guard was formed, including the 6th Platoon - Sarratt. We were privileged to have with us one of the original recruits to that Platoon - Doug Biggerstaff, who brought along some old photographs of that time, and named all the members of the Sarratt Home Guard for us. The meeting saluted Doug and all his compatriots from the village of that time.

Col Sainsbury showed us slides of various "home-made" armoured cars and gun carriages made from bicycle wheels which other groups in Hertfordshire put together before such rather dangerous contraptions were banned. Echoes of Dad's Army!

There were also some official photographs of the Chorleywood Platoon on manoeuvres which were impressive, and are now in The Imperial War Museum.

Many thanks also to other local people who brought photographs and mementos of that time, adding much to a very interesting and informative evening.

*Our next meeting is on Tuesday 23 November, in Sarratt School, when archaeologist Rob Masefield will tell us of the amazing Anglo-Saxon articles found during the construction of the Aston Clinton Bypass on the A41. All welcome. refreshments served between 7.30 - 8pm. followed by the talk.*

**Dawn Pitts**