

Ring the Bell, Record like 'ell!

AS I WRITE THIS PIECE, THE UNMISTAKEABLE DRONES of Merlin-engined Spitfires and Hurricanes are filling the skies above Sarratt. This flyby is of course to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the beginning of the "Battle of Britain" on July 10th 1940.

Scanning the archives, it would fortunately appear that none of these iconic aircraft was shot down in our parish. That does not however mean that Sarratt was not affected by arguably the greatest military threat to our island since the Norman Conquest. For instance, losses of an Airspeed Oxford training plane in Chipperfield (25th July) and a Hawker Hurricane in Bovingdon (8th October) demonstrate Sarratt's proximity to the frontline. Furthermore, Sarratt appears to have been struck on a number of occasions by Luftwaffe bombing raids during the battle.

Records suggest numerous high explosive and incendiary bombs fell in our area of natural beauty. Indications are of hits from near Micklefield Hall in the south, Church Lane and The Green more centrally, and up to Rose Hall Farm in the north. It is known that no fewer than 35 bombs riddled this landscape without a single injury or fatality. This forms a fascinating but somewhat scary statistic for the budding metal detectorist writing this...

There is however a more serious note to my article. Having stood proudly alongside our local history society at the commemoration of the centenary of WW1 last November, I was struck by the shortage of wartime anecdotes from those living in Sarratt during the 1914-18 conflict. I am however aware of stories surrounding the Second World War that have occurred within the lifetimes of some of our current residents. Therefore with the benefit of advancing technology, it seems an opportune time to think about recording audio and visual archives of such tales, just as the Imperial War Museum and National Archives have started to do. It seems nothing but apt to introduce a new form of data collection to the village as Rector Edward Ryley did in 1859.

I AM THEREFORE VERY KEEN TO VIDEO RECORD ANY WAR STORIES THAT READERS WOULD BE WILLING TO SHARE WITH ME FOR FUTURE POSTERITY. PLEASE CONTACT EITHER MYSELF OR OTHER MEMBERS OF THE LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY TO DO SO.

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