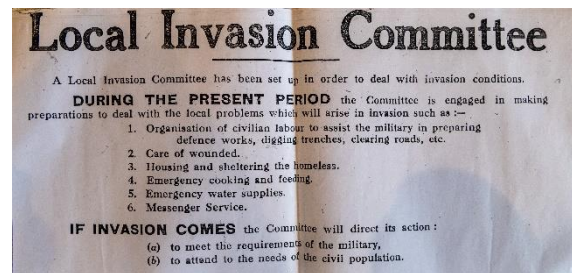


## Discover History – Home Front and Rationing

Following on from Paul's talk on preparation for war on Remembrance Sunday he continued with a talk on the country's preparation for invasion and



over 90 people turned up to listen to him. So Britain, as we always do, formed



Committees to prepare, including Local Invasion Committees. People were told to immobilise their vehicles when not being used and people were told to remember bus timetables as they were removed from bus stops so the spy's and invaders could not find out information.

Worcester was an important area, the Royal Family and Government were due to move to Worcestershire, Madresfield Court and Hanbury Hall were to be used. Worcester is also surrounded by water through the rivers and canals so if the bridges were blown then it would become an island with all approaches difficult for tanks. Worcester also had the secret work being undertaken at Malvern.

Unlike Dad's Army programme people like LCpl Jones and Fraser were weeded out when they volunteered so the core members of the Home Guard, which was initially called the Local Defence Force (LDV), were fit men. Their early roles were checking Identity Cards at checkpoints where they looked for 5<sup>th</sup> Columnists and spies. The LDV units often met in local pubs and the St Johns' force met in the The Bell.



By late 1940 Winston Churchill felt that the reporting role of the LDV was not appropriate and that he wanted them to be prepared to stand and fight any invasion and they were renamed the Home Guard. They were given a uniform and they became part of the defensive force of the country, as the Germans had stated that any civilians found with weapons would be shot on sight. By giving them uniforms they could then be taken prisoner instead of being shot. The Home Guard were also given rifles instead of the mish-mash of homemade weapons, including broom handles with knives attached. They created homemade bombs in tins (grenades) and bottles (Molotov cocktails) and these created more casualties of Home Guard personal than any other cause.

The refreshments for the day included recipes from the war and included Corned Beef Hash, Rabbit Stew and Wootton Pie, which was vegetables covered in mashed potatoes. The cakes were also made using recipes from the war. Just about everything was cleared and everyone appeared to enjoy the food as the plates were all clean coming back at the end.



Part 2 of the talk was about rationing, which based on the experiences of the Great War, started very soon after the start of the war. By the start of the war the Government had stockpiled tea and that was not rationed initially as they felt the country ran on tea and therefore morale would drop, but after a while that had to be rationed as well. We grew much of the meat we needed but most of the grain we used came from abroad. Lots of the tinned food we used also came from abroad. The Germans concentrated on cutting off Great Britain from its food supplies and the U-Boats targeted Shipping. The war in the Atlantic was the longest campaign of the war and huge amounts of shipping and supplies were lost to the U-Boats.

The government issued Ration Books and the coupons had to be cut out by the shops, it was illegal to have loose coupons. Paul showed us a week's rations for one person for a week in Oct 1940, 3 pints milk, 1 fresh egg, 1lb sugar, 1 small jar of jam (about the size of a jar given with a scone these days), 3ozs of sweets, 2ozs butter, 4ozs margarine, 2ozs lard, 4ozs bacon, meat to the value of 1s 2d (so people bought cheaper cuts of meat), tea was limited to about the equivalent of 8 modern tea bags, they could also get powdered milk, powdered egg and spam, all of which came from America. Red ink was in very short supply and many labels of foods changed their colours, such as KitKats were wrapped in blue paper. Leaflets were produced to help people cook with these products.

Bread and vegetables were never rationed during the war but after the war bread was rationed and this was due to the fact that we gave food to the defeated nations.



Margaret Miller's display of memorabilia and information about the people on the War Memorial had been left out from Remembrance Sunday and it attracted a lot of interest again. She would like to thank all those that donated items or helped with information on the display.

Colin Nash