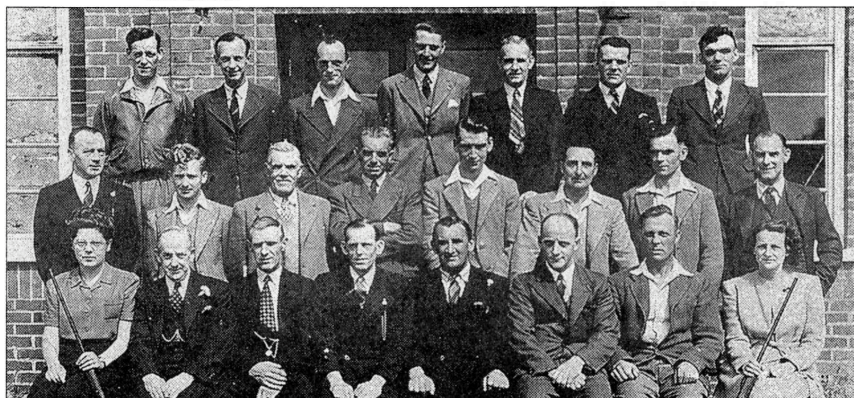
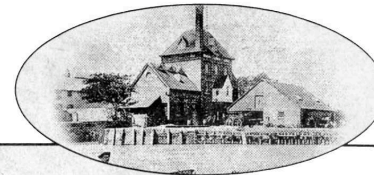
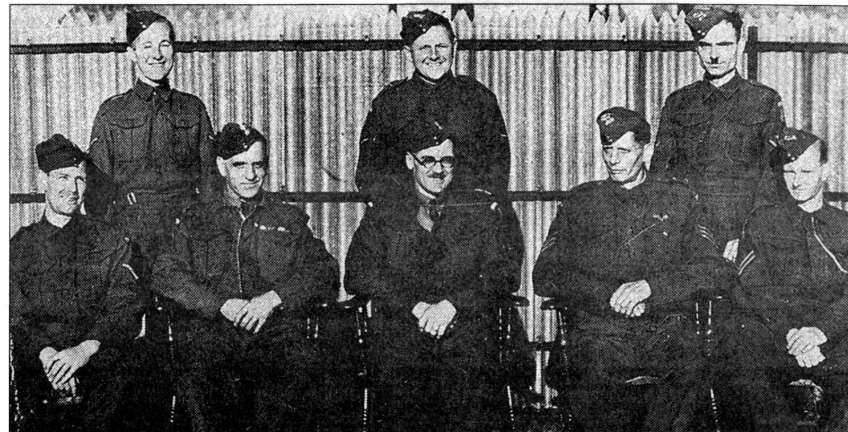




# THOSE WERE THE DAYS



Middle Deal Home Guard Rifle Club outside the old Middle Deal Road Drill Hall in 1946. Members were (back row, from left) W.R. Glinn; J. Shotbolt; G. Robinson; E. Young; G.H. Winfrow; E. Coleman; J.W. Brett (middle row) J. Redsull, E. Parkin; A. Maxted; F. Rubins; J. Oliver; A.F. Webb; J.H. Ovenden; T. Morgan; (front row) Mrs R. Robinson; J.J. Parkin (treasurer); L. Regley (Vice Capt); J.A. Rook (Capt); R. White (Chairman); D.J. Collins (secretary); R. Wiles and Miss D. Wilton. (Photo via Deal Rifle Club)



From May 1940, members of local Home Guard units, such as the Deal Gas Works Platoon, were trained in the use of firearms by members the Deal Rifle Club, including my late uncle Leslie Collyer (far right in back row), who gained his Marksman Badge at his first attempt. (Photo Jill Watson)

## Rifle Club training aided soldiers

**W**ith a military presence in Deal over the past centuries and the proximity of both the marshes and woodland nearby, expertise in the use of firearms would have nurtured among both high and low of the population. On the 1872 O.S. Map a rifle range is shown between Sandown Castle and the clubhouse of the Royal Cinque

by David G. Collyer

Ports Golf Club, but this could have been for the use of the local Territorial Army unit (The Cinque Ports Volunteers).

On March 29, 1902 the Mayor of Deal Cllr J.W. Solomon JP, called a meeting to encourage the formation of a Rifle Club in response to inadequacies in marksmanship of the British Army that had shown-up during the Boer War.

The club had enrolled 63 members and 10 honorary

members by April 29, when an appeal for funds brought in £60.

The first small bore shoot was held at the Coastguard Station on May 10. On May 29 the first shot on the Kingsdown Ranges was fired by Colonel Dowding, Royal Marines C.O., when 30 members shot watched by H.W. The Mayor, the Town Sergeant and a large crowd.

Mr W.L. Brook arranged for a charabanc to be hired for club members to travel to and from the Kingsdown ranges for the return fare of one shilling.

Provisionally, the closure of Messrs Hills' brewery in the High Street had provided the opportunity to convert one of the former malthouses off George Alley into an indoor miniature shooting range.

This was opened on June 6, 1903 by Col. J.F. Dunsbombe Bridge ADO, having passed its inspection by the Military Inspector, Major Lloyd, who declared that: "The Government does not possess a better one in the country."

The miniature range was open weekdays between 11am and 1pm, and 2pm to 10pm, but Mondays between 6pm and 10pm was reserved for members only.

Ammunition was available at one shilling for 50 shots or three for 1d. Non-members were charged 1d at the door in June, and 2d during July, August and September in

order to raise funds.

The outbreak of the First World War enabled many members to put their newly acquired skill to good use throughout the conflict and in the Deal Guide of 1925, due credit is given to the Rifle Club's work prior to the conflict, in which many a youngster who subsequently carried a rifle in the Great War, had his first lesson in marksmanship.

Those who remained behind would have joined the Deal Volunteer Training Corps which was formed in December 1914, and who were also granted the use of the ranges at Kingsdown.

is researching a book for publication to mark the club's centenary, which it will celebrate next year. Any readers who have photographs of the club's

activities or personnel are

■ Pet visitors were encouraged to use the range during summer months and leaflets were distributed around hotels and boarding houses. Advertisements for the club appeared on hoardings, billboards and even on the safety curtain at the Theatre Royal in King Street.

During the summer a Sandwich-board man patrolled the High Street, and lads were employed to hand out leaflets at the end of George Alley, where a flagpole had been erected.

In 1914 this was refurbished, repainted and had two new halyards fitted - all this work being completed at a cost of £1!