

BEACONSFIELD & the CZECHS

The **Czechs** were based at Beaconsfield during the 1939-45 War. There is a photo showing them raising their flag outside “their new Air Base” in “**World War II**” Magazine No: 66 (1973)

The people who were based in Birchington were politicians, academics and members of the government as well as ordinary citizens. A local resident who was here at the time (Bernard Beadle) commented that he cannot recall ever seeing any women among the personnel.

He remembered seeing them march down to Minnis Bay in military formation on several occasions – sometimes carrying a cauldron, for some strange reason. They occasionally came to church at All Saints (in the Square), but especially on Remembrance Sunday in 1939. At this service their national flag was laid up on the altar, along with the Union flag.

On one occasion they provided the entertainment at a parish party, singing their national songs. One of the songs they sang was very similar to our “Roll Out the Barrel”, though the tune was just slightly different. At the chorus, everyone joined in, using either Czech or English as they chose – and made a really lusty sound.

In April 1940 the men left Birchington to join a Corps of the Czechoslovakian Army in France, leaving behind some very happy memories of friends made in Birchington. They again laid their flag on All saints altar at a special service held just before their departure. They asked the editor of the Isle Of Thanet Gazette to publish a letter of thanks to their hosts, which was printed on the 19th April 1940. A copy of this was passed to the Museum by Alan Kay in c. 2003.

Two or three of the children of the men who found a haven here 1939-40 have since visited Birchington and come to see ‘Beaconsfield’, Heinz Vogel among them.

