

Growing up during the war years:

When one thinks of war the immediate images that spring to mind are not very good-but- as a teenager growing up in

Those years it was actually exciting, there was much fervour and patriotism around and life was seething.

When each intake went off to camp everyone around would go to the station to see them off and the band played very vigorously, I remember when my dad went off they played Sussex by the Sea and I have never forgotten it, whenever I hear that march I can see the soldiers marching on to the train going off to fight for God, King and Country as the words of the Maori Battalion say.

I lived at Westshore and we had an old well in our backyard AND THIS WAS CONVERTED INTO AN AIRRAID SHELTER fortunately it was never used. We held lovely little dance nights in the local hall, with maybe a concert to farewell the boys before they took off overseas to do their bit.

Rationing was a bit of a problem, very little petrol, but our car was up on blocks for the duration because Dad was away and Mum didn't drive, however we had 2 feet 2 wheels and if we were lucky the bus.

We used to walk along the waterfront at westshore gathering up coal that had come from the steam ships that were anchored in the roadstead and we would also collect the nobbly bits of native timber washed up from the floods and because they were all covered in salt from the sea they burned beautifully and kept us all warm. Coal & coke weren't readily available as they were needed for the foundries working for the war effort, Nivens had a big foundry in Raffle or Vautier sts somewhere round there before they shifted to the Port.

Fabric, Materials were of course rationed as was tea, sugar, butter and pretty well everything one needed in every day living I was a Ranger Guide at this time, and we were seconded to the home guard and we were so proud we were important we had a job to do for the war effort, we tore around the countryside on our bikes delivering messages between the Drill Hall in Coote rd. To the old aerodrome out on the embankment,(approximately opposite the mitre 10 building . If we weren't running messages we would pick up a shuttle and work on camouflage nets.

The gun emplacements had been put in place along the foreshore and the nets were to camouflage them from the Japanese! THE EMBLACEMENTS were all manned by the home guard, and we would often have to go to one of them with a message.

We went out and searched the ditches and drains along the side of the roads and gathered ergot, as it was needed to make penicillin, for the forces, I think! I looked up ergot on Mr. Google the other day and all it said was it was a toxic substance!!



But there were plenty of people worse off than us and we had reason to be thankful as we heard the news from the war front.

When I turned 18 I applied to join the army was accepted and away I went, proud as punch, we had a months physical training at Mirimar where there was a WAAC camp and we used to have daily route marches around wellington and we would sing with gusto, you are my sunshine, eperitaitai mere and Maori Battalion we never tired of those songs.

After my month was up I was drafted back to H.B. in the signals corp, because they were short of personnel who could do morse code, and I had perfected this while a girl guide and the seargant in charge was my Guide leader and so there I was.

The Army Camp was situated in McLean Park and we were stationed there for some time until the army acquired a property up on Napier Hill belonging to Lady McLean and we were transferred up there. This was really great we had a special listening room where we would sit for hours and listen in to our radios, with the morse key at the ready, this was still exciting we listened in to ships out at sea and to planes in the air, we wrote down the messages coming over the air waves, at times these were very fast and we had to keep our concentration, there were always two of us on duty at the same time just in case we had a problem with the speed I forget now what Rate we reached, however the messages were all in code and the code changed every day so everyone was kept on their toes. There was an aeradio station out beyond where the airport is now and what we heard on the air waves was secret and it remained secret. We learnt to climb power poles and fix broken lines and I actually learnt to drive there we had little morris miners that were used for taking messages around napier, the boys had motor bikes but we weren't allowed them.

As the boys returned from overseas we were gradually replaced by them and so – I grew up!>