

POST-WAR CELEBRATIONS AT STOTFOLD, BEDS, 1945 POEM WRITTEN BY HENRY KING

In '38 we had a scare
When Chamberlain went "over there"
Old Hitler and Old Ribbentrop
Were talking then of "opening shop."

We waited anxiously for news,
While Neville tried by many a ruse
To stop the War which he saw must come,
But he counted the victory before it was won.

When at long last he did come back,
He stuffed his umbrella well down in the rack,
Sat down at his desk and penned the great line:
"There'll be no War friends, no, not in our time."

No doubt he thought that he had done right
By allowing the "wolf" just to have a small bite,
And although he said that he wanted no more,
It soon proved the means of "opening the door."

For a time we were eased and got back to work
And into our labours we did put a "jerk,"
Only to find that before very long
The rogue Hitler marching with men fit and strong.

On towards Poland away to the east
The villain was marching with the stride of a beast.
A nation he knew could not hold him long,
How vicious and cruel, the conquerors' song.

To England they cried in their sad time of need.
We immediately said that we'd come to her aid;
So over to France we sent our best men
To try to defeat the hound in his den.

Many lads of the village were soon called to the colours.
We wondered how soon it would affect our own brothers.
Our Ron was the first in the circle to go
To "somewhere in England" which none of us knew.

'Twas a sad winter's morn when he went from his home
For aught that we knew the wide world to roam.
Tho' little was said, no pen can portray
What father and mother were thinking that day.

From pillar to post he was shifted around
Staying in city, and village, and town,
Sleeping in hedges and tents, or a barn,
Sitting on roadside, his socks for to darn.

His letters were always refreshing to read,
We watched for the post to know how he fared,
And when home on leave he kept us amused
By the tales that he told and the gadgets they used.

For three-weary years he went to and fro'
With many a sad heart, tho' it never did show.
Then one day there came a change in his life
He pulled up his socks and he married a wife.

A very enjoyable day then was spent,
To have a good time each one was intent,
And altho' they've been parted for more than a year
Their love to each other is still just as dear.

For four months he stayed in this favoured old isle
Then they told him to pack up his traps, what a pile!
For a ride on a ship that was going due east,
To try out his knowledge and bring out his best.

Old Musso' was missing when their ship touched the quay
He'd packed his traps too, and was ready to flee.
So after all this they gave Ron a stripe
A bob a day extra, which much pleased his wife.

So much - for the first now we come to the second,
Our Len, was the next with whom they now reckoned.
They called him up on the 19th of November,
A day which he doubtless will always remember.

So away went the second to accomplish his bit,
And into the Army - they soon made him fit;
They pushed him around in just the same way,
And he went thro' the mill with very small pay.

We waited, for news as did many more,
And soon made a dive when it came in the door.
His training was hard as he drilled with his pack
with all sorts of gadgets strapped on to his back.

His role was to go in the Infantry lot,
The men who go first and get it "right hot."
His training was short and he soon had to go
To the land of old Musso', the despicable foe.

But before he embarked he too tied the knot
And, By jove! on that day it was terribly hot.
A very enjoyable day did we spend,
With every good wish from each of their friends.

Well- Away! He pushed off from we knew not where,
Our hearts sank to zero and o'erflowed with care.
Some weeks had elapsed before we received
The news of his landing which greatly relieved.

In Africa first they put him ashore,
That was sufficient without any more.
He was soon down in bed on account of the heat,
Which according to him the toughest would beat.

For a while lie he remained in the hospital tent,
But to push him in front, on this they were bent,
So after a while he sailed o'er the blue
To see what in Sicily the poor boy could do.

'Twas a terrible ride in a flat-bottomed boat
As it dogged through the minefields when it got well afloat,
He said he was sick many times on the way,
As it swayed side to side on that terrible day.

This invasion was o'er when they arrived at the quay,
But to fight was his lot as we shortly shall see.
To the north of the island he soon had to go.
At grips with old Jerry, a real knock-out blow.

How sad was his heart as he pushed off that day
No writer can pen, No- nor can he say.
They knew not the place for which they were bound
Till their boat touched the bottom and they were aground.

Over to Italy, battered and scarred,
Only to find his health to be marred.
Down with jaundice he soon was to go,
How much he suffered we none of us know.

He kept us informed of how he progressed,
Always was cheerful and wrote of the best.
For some weeks he remained in this state of health
But we know that he gained a measure of wealth!

When at long last they said he was fit
They dusted his rifle and gave him his kit.
Into the line he now had to go,
To fight for his life, and our lives too.

The Anzio beach-head tattered and torn
Was what they espied when they moved up that morn,
They'd come to relieve those war-weary men,
Who'd fought there for months with Mortar and Sten.

'Twas on his birthday that he went up the line
Carrying rations with pals about nine;
Riding, walking, crawling, pitch black,
Wondering if ever they'd get safely back.

They arrived at their post all covered in slosh,
Not a shot had been fired across by the Boche.
So they turned to go back by the way they had come
Stealthily, quickly, all keeping "mum."

But alas! Jerry knew that they were there
So he sent up a star-shell to see where they were
Then he fixed just one shell, which, had it come right
Would have killed the whole lot on that terrible night.

He cried out for help when he found he was hit,
So along came his pals to each do their bit.
They helped him along in the dark to the base,
How glad he must feel to know he is safe.

Way down the line he was sent to be nursed,
Suffering intensely, fearing the worst,
Anxiously longing to send us a line
Knowing we'd not heard for quite a long time.

How sad were our hearts when we had the dread news
The records of others did we fully peruse,
Crying and praying his life might be spared
Longing to know what had really occurred.

We waited for weeks, then at long last
Came news in his writing of all that had passed,
Telling us how he was snatched from the grave,
Of the fighting with men who really were brave.

To Naples they sent him, in bed, there to lie,
Where many around him were doomed to die.
The nurses were kind and for him they cared,
How thankful we were to know he was spared.

He lay there awhile, then to his surprise
He heard others saying that new men had arrived
From Ayreshire in Scotland, a name that was well-known
Could he be among them? One of his own.

He soon asked the question - "Was Snuggs in this batch?"
And for him the others soon sent out a watch.
They soon found him out, to Hospital did beat
Full steam ahead, the brothers did meet!

They talked and they talked, as men sometimes can,
Of the things that had passed since they both left their home.
How glad were we here, to know they had met
A feeling which none of us ever forget.

Well! At long last they sent him away
In a Wellington aircraft, to old Sicily,
Then back to Naples and on a Dutch boat
Over to England, then a place so remote.

Meanwhile old Ron had pushed off to the fray
And in Italy proper he six months did stay.
We never did know what his job was out there,
A Military Secret which none of us share.

He told us one day while driving around,
That the sky became dark and stuff fell to the ground.
Vesuvius was belching out great lumps of rock
Which tumbled around and were almost red-hot.

After a while he came back to the bay
And arrived just in time to see anchor weigh
Of the ship that was bringing Len back to his home
While Ron left behind in lti to roam.

Len was home in five days, a marvellous trip,
We know he enjoyed it on account of his script *
He wrote of the things that occurred on the way,
A concise epistle, come for to stay.

Well, a month from that time Ron packed up his trunk
And from Italy also, he did a bunk.
A month on the water, seven days without power,
Then home to the land of the plough and the mower.

They kept Len in dock for some little while,
In the meantime old Ron had arrived on the isle.
To Ilkley in Yorkshire Len had to go
While Ron went to Scotland, the place he well knew.

Well after a while they let them away
Both on the same train and on the same day,
Arriving at home within hours of each other
Another grand meeting, these two soldier brothers.

Not much more can be said of these two gallant men
Who never refused the call of the King.
To fight and defend the land of the free
When defeat and despair seemed the solemn decree.

They fought and they conquered, destroying the Hun
With sweat and with toil the War they have won.
Now back to their homes to start up afresh,
Our thanks to them each and every good wish.

Our thanks to them **ALL** as they start up once more
In a world that seems strange, freedom from War.
God Bless them and help them to do the right thing
Long live the Empire! God Save the King!