

Our people

By Lorraine Wyse (Leader of the Party)

In 1941 we formed a group called Victory Seven to sing in harmony and entertain at all service camps around Canterbury (Burnham, Addington, Weedons, Wigram, Harewood, Godley Head). Victory Seven consisted of six young girls and one boy. Later we expanded into a concert party with the addition of a tap dancer, a violinist, a musical saw player, an accordion band, a skipping rope dancer, comedy recitations, female impersonators and other singers.

We also travelled to Hamner Hospital and Burwood Hospital Burns unit, where servicemen were recuperating and hospital ships went as far as Westerfield Army Camp. It was at Westerfield when we were performing Whispering Grass in flimsy see through green dresses, we asked for the lights to be very low. After applauding and lots of whistles from the soldiers, the soldier on the lights turned them on full, much to the embarrassment of the girls and appreciation of the men.

The army would send an army truck to wait outside the Regent Theatre in the square and we would pile in for our journey. The worst trips were to Godley Head as there was no proper road back then. However, there was much laughter and lots of singing - we did most of our practice in the back of a truck. We did meet on Sunday mornings in a hall to work out the choreography for our full stage presentations which consisted of a group of songs of similar character, the full company with stage settings, borrowed mostly from Ballantynes window dressers. Costumes etc were made by the girls themselves, or their mothers.

We used to arrange Sunday night fund raising charities with concerts at the Civic Theatre and sold bonus bonds from the back of a truck in Cathedral Square, where a microphone was rigged up for us to perform.

No cars to speak of in those days so we all rode bicycles into town, parked our bikes for three pence and biked home often late at night in the cold and wet weather. But we enjoyed the companionship, and the few of us who are still alive have retained the friendship to this day.

We all kept in contact after the war, even to the extent of catering for our children's weddings, 21st etc. No drinking, no drugs but we had the best of all times growing up and making wonderful lifetime friends.