

PICKWICK CLUB MEMORIES

Irene van der Kooi-Sindaal May 2009

As a War-Bride I arrived in a devastated Holland to join my husband, an escaped Resistance -Fighter (Englandvaarder) - (Soldaat van Orange)-, to find Rotterdam Centre bombed flat, the only buildings left were the Town Hall, Post Office, Atlantic Hotel, Hotel Central in the Coolsingel area. The scene is still imprinted on my mind. Then living with "in-laws" in the Statenkwartier in The Hague, due to the Housing Shortage 'Woningtekort' The shops in the Frederick Hendrik Laan boarded up, as previously part of The Atlantic Wall (Spergebied). Then 7 years of isolation in Schiebroek, bringing up a family and no good reception of the B.B.C.

Then a "Life - Line" came my way. I heard about 'The Pickwick Club', which helped me to come into contact again with the English language - conversation and helpful friends and to keep my own identity !

The club members met in the beginning in each other's homes and then later found a venue, in amongst others a hotel near the Doelen, When later the manager wanted the room we moved to Heineken Hoek, Stadhuisplein, which was later taken over by a newspaper office. Then a Tea Room near the Hoogstraat. Via a member we found a " Home - from - Home " in Hotel Centraal, with a very sympathetic and Pro - British owner. Due to modernization we had to move again and found temporary sanctuary in The Scots Church Hall. The present venue is very pleasant with a view over the lake and the occasional boat trip.

In the past we have enjoyed some very pleasant and educational trips, to introduce us to the Dutch scene. Among others, De Gruyter and Van Nellie factories, Vucht Concentration Camp, Newspaper offices, Cote d'Or factory Belgium, lunch with the Rotterdam Police in the H.Q. afterwards the Mounted Police Stables etc. The archives can give more info. i.e. "The Pickwick Papers" !! I was thrown in " the deep end " to do my bit for the club in various functions, as a Secretary, then President, which I did with pleasure.

May Pickwick continue to do the " Good Work " in friendship and National Pride.

Yours Sincerely,

Irene van der Kooi - Sindall

Rotterdam just after the war



Hotel Centraal



The Scots Church



Lommerijk



