

The Fighting Sullivans 1942

Ansty Family's Fine Record



At Ansty, a charming old-world Wiltshire village, a family has made history by having the largest number of young women in one branch of H.M. Forces. Mr and Mrs George Henry Sullivan, of 73 Ansty, have given all their six daughters as members of the ATS, as well as their three sons for the Army. Their father and grandfather before them fought and bled for England and freedom.

"The fighting spirit must run in their blood," said Mrs Sullivan on Tuesday to a representative of the Western Gazette. "Grandfather John Sullivan served for 21 years in 5th Dragoon Guards and fought in the Crimea and the Indian Mutiny, dying at the age of 74 years. My husband, George Henry Sullivan, did 19½ years in the Army. He fought in the Boer War with the East Yorkshires, and at the outbreak of the 1914-1918 conflict, he returned to the Colours, this time with the Wiltshire Regiment. He served in France, was twice wounded, and for seven months was a prisoner of war in Germany."

We have a family of three sons and six daughters, and they are all serving" added Mrs Sullivan, with justifiable pride. All the sons are serving in the Regular Army. Albert John, the eldest (33) is a Corporal in the Dorset Regiment (transferred from the Wiltshires) and he has 11 years service. His brother, John Albert, three years younger, has 12 years service and is a Captain in the Wilts Regiment. Before the outbreak of war he had served seven years in India and was home in civilian life when the present war broke out. One son, Reginald Walter, 25, is a Staff Sergeant in the Indian Army Corps of Clerks."

All their daughters have been in domestic service and joined the ATS in pairs, Ivy, aged 22 and Mollie, aged 21, were the first to volunteer. They joined the Gloucester Company and have 19 months's service to their credit. Three months later Dorothy (32) and Phyllis (24) followed them into the ATS. They are serving in Wales and are awaiting posting to an AA Battery. As soon as Millicent became of age, she too volunteered, but Edna Ruth, who is only 17, could not be left at home. Father was quite willing for her to go, but mother naturally felt a pang at parting. She bravely faced up to the situation, signed the consent form, and Edna Ruth beat the existing record of five sisters in the ATS by making a family of six.

"My husband was an Old Contemptible" added Mrs Sullivan, "but when the LDV was formed, he again joined up to help his country."

When the Western Gazette representative called upon Mrs Sullivan, two of her daughters were home on leave, and both said it was a grand life in the ATS and they would not like to go back in domestic service. They had excellent billets, plenty of entertainment and good food. In fact, there was plenty of everything in the Army and they had no regrets at all at having joined up. Their advice to other girls was "Join the ATS, broaden your mind a bit." One of the girls said she had had eight stations in 15 months and had travelled over practically the whole of England and Wales.

Asked if she was not proud of her family, Mrs Sullivan said "I leave that to others, but father is proud of his girls." She added that all the family were born at Sutton Mandeville except Dorothy, who was born at Tisbury. They all attended the Council school at Sutton Mandeville or Swallowcliffe.

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