

The Friendly Invasion

Between 1942 and 1945 there were at any one time around 50,000 USAAF personnel stationed within a 30 mile radius of Norwich. The impact of this “Friendly Invasion” on the people of East Anglia was considerable, particularly in villages where American servicemen (and women) vastly outnumbered the local population.

In 1942 many local people would have never seen, much less met, an American. Their knowledge of America came mostly from films, and the young airmen would have appeared similar to film stars – of course some of them were film stars !

Initial suspicion and prejudice towards the GIs rapidly disappeared among those who got to know them. Enduring friendships were forged between the Americans and the local population, which still endure today.



Colonel James Stewart, serving with the 445th Bomb Group at Tibenham, discussing a mission with his adjutant.

(Photographer - Charles Nigrelli, 389th Bomb Group)