



**BLACKOUT:** Who put out the lights for the ARP warden?

Surprisingly, it didn't make headline news – but on a wild, windy night at the back end of last year murder, mystery and mayhem were afoot in the small and, usually peaceful, seaside village of Overstrand. Terror stalked the dark streets – or rather the Edwardian Sea Marge Hotel in the High Street, which was holding its first murder mystery dinner.

Presented by Dreamstone Productions, the setting for the night was 1941.

Captain Michael Wyndham and Sergeant Alf Stupper, part of an RAOC Bomb Disposal squad, had just returned home to Norfolk on compassionate leave from their unit stationed in the midst of the London Blitz. A few days before while deactivating a German bomb in Oxford Street, another bomb about 100 yards away had exploded killing two of their colleagues, who were literally blown to pieces.

At Sea Marge, the two men had been met for a night out by Michael's fiancée Alice Meystone and Alf's daughter Maisie.

Also in the hotel were the Rev Canon Peter Coleville, a well-known anti-war campaigner, his new secretary Marcus Bentley, Cromer businessman and ARP warden Arthur Morrison and his attractive secretary Clarice Wells.

However, all was not quite what it seemed as each one of them appeared to have something hidden in their past lives.

During a superb three-course dinner in the Winston Room, named after Sir Winston Churchill who was a frequent visitor to Sea Marge when it was a private house, it was up to the innocent diners, including my husband and yours truly, to find out exactly why the protagonists were at the hotel, what secrets they were hiding and what was actually



**TRUTH OR LIES:** Are they serving up red herrings to the diners?

# Murder... *she wrote*

**Linda Barrington-Smith** experiences a night of murder, mystery and mayhem in the normally peaceful village of Overstrand.

PICTURES: SUBMITTED

going on. And when, believe it not, two of them were shot and murdered, unmask the murderer!

We were helped in our task by the characters who circulated among us, chatting, dropping clues, red herrings and answering questions.

The plot was as devious as the characters and we all had our work cut out trying to decide whether the disclosure that the two war-weary soldiers

were actually trying to unmask a spy, who was signalling to German submarines from the hotel's cliff-top grounds, was true or not. Then, following the double murder even harder work guessing whodunnit. And no, we ourselves sadly didn't manage to rumble the culprit.

It was certainly a fun-filled evening which, cleverly, Dreamstone Productions loosely based on events from Sea Marge's past history.

Built in 1908 as a country retreat for Sir Edgar Speyer, a London banker born in New York of German parentage, the house was abandoned after Speyer, a friend of the Kaiser, became the victim of many unfounded rumours during the first world war, which eventually caused him to leave Britain for good in 1916.

■ The next murder mystery dinner is on March 17 (£39pp). So, if you think you could solve the case make sure not to miss it. But remember – look and listen to all that happens around you!

■ For details of this and other events at the hotel, telephone 01263 579579 or view [www.seamargehotel.co.uk](http://www.seamargehotel.co.uk)

### WIN a murder mystery dinner

Marc and Liz Mackenzie, owners of the Sea Marge Hotel, are offering readers the chance to win a complimentary murder mystery dinner for two on the night of March 17. Drinks are not included.

**To win, answer the following question. Which famous figure from British history was a regular visitor to the Sea Marge Hotel when it was a private house?**

Send your entry on a postcard to: Let's Talk Sea Marge competition, Prospect House, Rouen Road, Norwich, Norfolk NR1 1RE before January 27, 2012. Normal Archant competition rules apply.