

VICTORY IN EUROPE

~ Hadlow Down Parish ~

A compilation of memories of the Second World War

£1.00

SPECIAL EDITION

SPECIAL EDITION **Eighth Army News** No. 117 Vol. C
TUESDAY, MAY 9, 1945

GERMANY OUT!

TODAY IS V-E DAY: OFFICIAL

...NDERED UNCONDITIONALLY. A REUTER
...ERS OF GENERAL



DAY: OFFICIAL

GERMANY HAS SURRENDERED UNCONDITIONALLY. A REUTER DISPATCH FROM RHEIMS, HEADQUARTERS OF GENERAL EISENHOWER, SAID THAT AT 0241 HOURS YESTERDAY (FRENCH TIME) COLONEL-GENERAL GUSTAV JOEL, THE NEW GERMAN ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF, SIGNED THE INSTRUMENT OF SURRENDER. It was officially announced in London that today will be treated as victory day in Europe. The Prime Minister, Mr. Winston Churchill, will broadcast at one o'clock. The King will broadcast to the peoples of the British Empire and Commonwealth at five o'clock this afternoon. Parliament will meet at the usual time.

UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER

...SAID THAT GEN. BEDELL SMITH, SUPREME ALLIED

UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER

UNCONDITIONAL SURRENDER

NEW YORK RADIO, DESCRIBING THE FINAL CEREMONY, SAID THAT GEN. BEDELL SMITH, GEN. EISENHOWER'S CHIEF OF STAFF, SIGNED FOR THE SUPREME ALLIED COMMANDER, GEN. IVAN SUSLOPAROV FOR RUSSIA, AND GEN. FRANCIS SEVEZ FOR FRANCE.

NEWS FIRST THE DELAY IN THE OFFICIAL JAPANESE ANNOUNCEMENT, WHICH IS EXPECTED TO-DAY, AND THEN THE GERMAN SURRENDER, THE PRAGUE RADIO ANNOUNCED THE

NO

[illegible]

Hahn said that these forces would continue the war until they had

Earlier yesterday, General Schwerdt von Krosigk, in the Dresden government, announced that the new Federalist government, composed of all German forces, German men and women, the High Command of the Federalist Republic, declared uncom-

Overwhelming Power

“Overwhelming Power”

“Overwhelming”

To realize the war would mean more work for the future of the Government, with a feeling of responsibility for the future of the country.

[illegible]

THE GREAT



Not a bit of us remember—but this was the scene
in London, not there. London must be a very
different place. And a robbery, though I think of it
having to do with the tops.

NORWAY HUNS HAD GIVEN IN

NEWS from the meeting
between German and
British officials was dramatic
and revealing.

...right up to the last moment of Germany's capitulation.

The news that the German forces in Norway had surrendered was broadcast over the Danish radio a few hours before the Germans had

25 (b) was informed that the
radio report a few hours before the
discovery that Germany had
surrendered. The information
arrived at 10:00 p.m. from the Army
headquarters in Berlin. The
surrender was a complete surprise.

A lieutenant from Panther Valley, in North Carolina, carried Admiral Dacott's name to the base and former head of the

The
to
had

Group 1 lives in Norway, Group 2 in Sweden. Their diet is the same as the diet of the other groups.

On the only other night
front of Eugene, Ore. Fair

ALLIANCE

ALLIANCE



THE GREAT ALLIANCE



ON OTHER PAGE

PAGE TWO: And How
Battle The Iron Is

PAGE THREE: Page of
Map of Eighth Avenue
and Sixth Street.

PAGE FOUR - (b)(6) - Two
and confidential

PAGE 518: Page 518
Topic: Law
Chapter: Chapter 518

When "Action Stations" is ordered, I must take with me :—

Arms and ammunition and Mkhov bomb carriers.
Full uniform and suitable underclothing.
Steel helmet and cap.
Haversack.
Respirator, eye shields and anti-gas ointment.

First field dressing.

Food for 24 hours.

Knife, fork and spoon.

Plate and drinking mug.

Water bottle.

Pipe, tobacco, cigarettes, matches.

Two handkerchiefs, towel, soap and razor.

Money.

Identity card.

Bicycle (with front and rear lamps) or any other means of transport ordered, in working condition.

Every Corporal should, if possible, have a butcher's cleaver and a tin opener.

All other equipment for service in the field when issued.

What a Home Guard must know and do.

What a Home Guard must know and do.

I must know :—

- The Home Guard alarm signal.
- Where I am to report when this alarm is given.
- The addresses and telephone numbers of my Section and Platoon Commanders.
- The location of the nearest troops.
- The identification marks of our own A.F.Vs.
- The location of all posts in the Platoon area and, if possible, in the neighbouring areas.
- The compass bearing from my post to conspicuous landmarks and the names of these.
- The exact task I shall have to perform when and if orders are issued to complete all defensive preparations.
- The rallying point to which I will make my way, with the comrade or comrades detailed to work with me, if it is necessary to scatter.

I must :—

- Become proficient in, and make a companion of, my firearm.
- Develop my powers of observation and use them at all times and in all places.
- Regard all strangers with suspicion.
- Give no information to strangers.
- Refrain from discussing Military or Home Guard matters in public places.
- Check subversive or defeatist talk and discourage all rumours.
- Detain any suspect and report to Police.
- Dig a slit-trench for my family in my garden, clear of house.
- Induce all relatives and neighbours to :—
Act in the same way.
Remain in their houses during operations and go to slit-trenches when blitz threatens.
Report to Home Guard anything or anybody suspicious.

~ HADLOW DOWN PARISH ~

VICTORY in EUROPE

1941
1991

50th ANNIVERSARY

~ Commemorative Booklet ~

INTRODUCTION

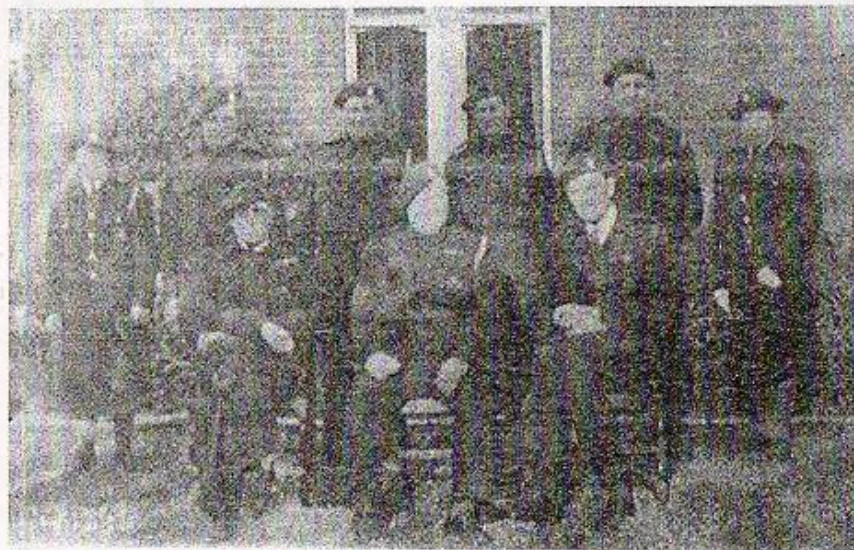
As a part of the fiftieth anniversary of Victory in Europe Day, this book documents the experiences of some villagers alive during the Second World War. I have contacted as many people as possible in order to obtain a widely varied set of memories, and have also been lucky enough to see for myself some fascinating ephemera from those times. However I would like to apologise to anyone who might feel they were missed. I would like to thank everyone who has offered me help in the form of information or objects, and also for the kind hospitality I encountered during the research.

As much as possible, the entries are recorded in the words of the individuals who experienced them, in order to retain authenticity in reproduction. Many of the entries are transcribed directly from tape recorded interview.

The entries are placed in no particular order, and readers will also find the occasional document reproduced.

Mostly, I hope that this booklet will be found interesting by both those who remember and those who must remember. All profits will be donated to the Royal British Legion.

John Boswell



Hadlow Down ARP Wardens 1940 (left-right Minnie Coates, Fred Sands, Sid Smith, Stan Henton, Jim Ashdown (centre front), unknown, Captain Davies, George Standen, Miss Hughes)

~ War Memories ~

I had a school where the children were evacuated for a time, and worked quite hard with the W.R.V.S. - we had bombs and things in Seaford. The worst part was the raid on Dieppe. It was frightful, they had found out that we were coming in some way, I don't know how, it was all kept very secret. I know that my sister made Irish Stew for the men, most of whom were Canadian, they used to love the W.R.V.S. Anyway the Germans knew they were coming and practically the whole lot were wiped out, but a few came back and we saw them walking about the town with their faces still black looking absolutely dazed - the ones that were left. Otherwise, we had our ceilings down, about three times I think and had quite a lot of bombing. Quite a few people were killed. Then the children gradually came back to the school, and I had quite a little group then. They used to go under the Morrison shelter if anything was coming, especially the buzz bombs.

Miss Elspeth Hardy

In 1938 I joined the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (F.A.N.Y.S. for short). At the beginning of the Second World War I was called up to join my company at Colchester, which was a mechanised company. After a few hours checking in and so forth, a party of us climbed into an ancient lorry and were driven to Norwich, where we said goodbye to other members, and proceeded on to Weybourne (next to the sea).

I was joined by a wonderful companion and took over one ambulance. We were attached to the camp hospital. We drove injured soldiers to hospital in Colchester, some 150 miles or so, collecting other injured soldiers stationed at various locations around Norfolk. We had difficulty in the dark when we returned from these expeditions due to only having pin head lights to show us the way, and of course no signposts. We lived in an unheated hut throughout the winter, sometimes with snow up to the doors. Then the evacuation started. We were sent to Colchester, and made daily runs to Harwich in a convoy of ambulances. There we waited for the ships to unload their wounded soldiers, including very young German Airmen who had been picked up out of the sea, and took them to the Colchester Military Hospital.

After quite a time there, I was sent to Cambridge to drive staff cars. Officers were then deciding where to place pill boxes and anti-tank concrete blocks in case of invasion. We drove all over East Anglia. After two years I was sent to Edinburgh O.C.T.U. After completing the course I went to Harpenden and then Dunstable.

Christina Green

VE Day didn't mean anything to us in the Japanese prisoner of war camp. I'd only been at war for a fortnight, weighing 12 stones, and a keen rugger player. When my war was over I came out weighing 7 stone, with a 14 inch waist I could get my own hands around. In the camp we used to boil up pine needles because they were supposed to be a source of vitamin C, and when we had a Red Cross parcel (very rarely) we used to plant tomato seeds and hope they would grow. The Japanese guards used to eat them before us if they could - they were almost starving too.

My job was to collect grass every day which we used to be burnt as fuel to boil our daily bowl of rice and spoonful of vegetables. On one occasion, a hut of men, 17 in all, were found with a radio. They were all taken out and beheaded, and we had to push them into a pit and bury them. There were so many hideous atrocities done. The atom bombs dropped by the Americans saved my life - I would have died if the war had continued any longer. A doctor in the camp made a survey and discovered that the married men seemed to survive longer than the batchelors, presumably because they had wives and families to go home to, and something to live for.

When the Japanese Emperor surrendered, the guards couldn't believe it, but the following day they realised it was true, and ran away and left us. After a fortnight by ourselves, the navy arrived, looking well fed, and expecting us to raise flags. We were as thin as the flag poles, very frail, and we just laughed. They didn't seem to be human beings as they looked so different from us.

Although we "won" the war, the Japanese and Germans have been helped by us and are wealthier. They have won the peace. *Harold Bidwell*

When asked about my memories of early 1945 I can help for two reasons:- Firstly I am possessed of a very good memory of the war years and secondly I have always led a rather unconventional way of life as readers will observe. I was at the time attending school at what later became the County Grammar School for Boys, Lewes. I had obtained my School Certificate in July 1944 and must confess to taking a very "laid back" attitude to work after that. I was even driving my father's car on Private Hire work during that period.

Of VE Day, there is very little to remember as nearly everyone of military age from this village was away and they were very widely spread around the globe. I do remember that all the schools had two days holiday. In the evening the pub was very busy as extensions were granted on a national basis. In the evening we also had a large but impromptu bonfire in the field behind the Chapel.

Let us now look at the months leading up to VE Day taking Christmas 1944 as a starting point. Christmas that year was among the grimmest of the war time Christmas'. Everyone hoped that that the war would be over by then but there

was the German breakthrough in the Ardennes (the Battle of the Bulge) which looked to be a very severe reversal. Rationing was tight and London was still under bombardment by the V2 Rockets.

In fact, I personally heard a V1 (Doodlebug) going by well to the south at about midnight on the 23rd. Several of these were launched by aircraft that night, mainly against Manchester and other provincial towns.

During the early months of 1945 on a clear night one could see the flash of the impact of the rocket around South London, the explosion would then be sensed or heard and finally the rumble of the descent through the atmosphere. At the same time one would hear the noise of the RAF bomber offensive either outward bound or returning from raids on Southern Germany.

Over that Christmas and New Year we had staying with us Major Carl Arnold who had commanded a company of the Cape Breton Highlanders when stationed at Hadlow House and who were then in Italy. He had made friends of my father and mother during that time in 1943 and so he stayed until his return to Canada in February.

One of the pleasures of that period was to meet soldiers and airmen from the village who were at last beginning to get leave from the continent, I believe Frank Barden even had a short leave from Italy. Stan Harrison (Fred's brother), an Air Gunner with the Pathfinder Force and John Rhodes (whose parents lived at Brook House, now Southern Aviaries) at that time a Night Fighter Pilot, were both frequent visitors.

One of my night time jobs was to turn round a Ford Army Truck and point it back towards Maresfield for an army officer who used to visit Hadlow Down for various reasons.

So the winter ground on with a gradual air of optimism and anticipation that the end of war in Europe was in the air. There were however, serious trepidations about the Far East and most people anticipated it's going on until 1947. The great joy of course from a selfish point of view was that the rocket attacks would finish, which they did in March and the rations would be increased. Another thing was that after January 1945 we could drive without headlight masks on motor vehicles.

Just one last story. Towards the end of April a South African corporal arrived and asked where Mrs. Sivvers (Phil Foster's grandmother) lived. We told him, my father took him to see the old lady, brought him back to tea and he stayed with us for about a month. He had met Mrs. Sivvers' son, an RSM in a POW Camp and made a death bed promise to find his mother as he (RSM Sivvers) had done a marvellous job for the other prisoners welfare.

This takes us back to the start and I only hope that these very wordy memoirs may prove of some interest from those far away days. *Gerald Standen*

RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL OF UCKFIELD.

Telephone: No. 466

*Council Offices,
Beacon Road,
Crownborough.*

17th January, 1939.

The Householder.

Dear Sir/Madam,

GOVERNMENT EVACUATION SCHEME, 1939.

The Council have been requested by the Government to co-operate in plans which are being made for the protection of civilian life in the event of war.

Recent experience in other countries has shown that under the conditions of modern warfare the greatest loss of life is caused by bombardment from the air. This danger is most acute in crowded cities. It is to lessen this danger in case our own country were involved in war that arrangements are being made now to enable children to leave the crowded cities and be received in homes elsewhere. This protection can only be given with the co-operation of those like ourselves who live in the less congested towns or villages. We shall all agree that it is necessary for all of us to help in this plan for saving human life, and for safeguarding the rising generation who will eventually have the management of our country in their hands.

I am aware that some arrangements were made last September as a matter of emergency. These had perforce to be improvised and sometimes gave rise to points of criticism. But I am sure that in the light of the experience gained we shall be able to improve on these. The plans for this, as for other branches of civil defence, must be made in time of peace. We hope that it will never be necessary to put them into operation. But we shall all be happier to know that the plans have been made and that if ever they do have to be put in operation, the work will be done in an ordered manner, and that all will know their parts.

The Government has asked each local authority in the country to find out what housing accommodation would be available in case of emergency, and what homes would be suitable for those children who would be given the means of leaving the great cities. It is particularly important to know in which houses homes could be provided for the children, where they could be lodged, boarded and cared for. Payment would be made by the Government at the rate of 10/6 a week where one child is taken, and 8/6 for each child where more than one is taken.

School children would be moved school by school, accompanied by their teachers, and arrangements would be made for the children to attend school in the districts to which they were taken.

A representative of the local authority will call upon you some time during the next week or two to find out how far you will be able to assist in this matter. The representative will produce to you a card showing that these inquiries are authorized.

This note is sent to you now in order that you may be aware, in advance, of this enquiry and why it is being made.

I give you my assurance that the information supplied by you will not be used for any other purpose than that which I have described, and that it will not involve you in any work or responsibility unless and until an emergency arises. I feel that I can rely on the people of the Uckfield rural district to offer all the help they possibly can in this important branch of civil defence. It needs no words of mine to convey to you what that help will mean to children of the big cities.

Yours faithfully,

Chairman, Uckfield Rural District Council.

This is an account of the Second World War as experienced by ex-gunner Stan Wells, Army number 922378 and late of 228 Battery, 113 Field Regiment Royal Artillery, 56th London Division. I must remark that I can still quote my army number more than fifty years on, as can most service people, it burns a groove in the brain-box which remains for ever. The story starts in the year 1938, when it became blatantly obvious that war was inevitable. Having some mates in the Territorial Army unit based in Marmin Rd. in Hove I decided to join as well. This was an artillery unit which appealed to me at the time, and as call up for the services was a dead cert in the very near future, this was the one for me. To cut a very long story short, at the outbreak of war in September 1939, I had been called up for active service some weeks before this date. In the meantime the territorial unit I had originally joined was made into two regiments, and the original unit put on immediate active duty, as it was fully equipped. The new regiment 113th Field was set up in Worthing and Shoreham. I became a member of 228 Battery based at Buckingham House in Shoreham. 227 Battery was based in Worthing. Needless to say at this stage in history, the country was totally unprepared for total war, and equipment either very short or non-existent. Being a newly formed unit this was very much a blight to us. We started hostilities with the oddest assortment of military hardware it is possible to imagine. All vehicles had been requisitioned from civilian sources, and guns, mainly French 75's, had been in service during the First World War.

In 1941 the regiment left Blighty for active service in the Middle East. Our first troop ship to Capetown, South Africa was the motor vessel Joanne Van Oldenbarneweld, a Dutch vessel which was one of many ships taken over by the British at the outbreak of war. Only those who have memories of troop ships in wartime can appreciate what it was like to travel long distance in them. One queued up for everything, not least the toilets, which were few and far between. Many a soldier reached near busting point before a vacancy became available. One even queued to get a place to sleep on the open deck which was allowed until 0600 hours each morning. All troop ships during wartime were grossly over crowded.

Apart from our main role, which was the protection of the main oil fields, we engaged in intensive training of the desert variety, ready as it transpired for active duty in 8th Army western desert. Skipping a none too happy experience at Iraq and its people, we came to the point where we soon discovered what warfare was all about. The western desert campaigns had been hits and misses for a long time, until eventually, General Montgomery took over as supreme controller. The Battle of Alamein was well under way when orders arrived for our prompt despatch to join the fray in the western desert. Two events stand out in my memory, apart from the general trials and tribulations of desert life. On the way to Tunisia I met my brother Les at Tripoli, he was at this time a Sergeant Major in the Royal Army Service Corps, and had been engaged on

salvage work reclaiming both German and British equipment. The second memory was the meeting up of the 57th Field Regiment and its personnel who were on active service next to my regiment at Enphideville. The 57th Regiment was the one which I had joined at Hove as a territorial in 1938, things had gone a full circle. And so, the end of hostilities by the capitulation of the German and Italian Armies. As Churchill said at the end of this campaign "Before Alamein not a victory, after Alamein, not a defeat". To see the thousands of enemy troops heading for prison camps was another experience I will never forget. The victory parade in Tunis is a blurred memory brought about by an over indulgence of the wines of the country.

To bring a long story short, this situation was finally resolved and for my division proved to be the end of hostilities in Europe as a whole, and so at long last the end of six long years as a soldier in war time. A few happy memories but very many sad ones, particularly the many mates lost in the field of battle. On discharge from the army it was great to get back to Blighty after several years away. I end this very much condensed version of events by saying that I fervently hope that no future generation will ever have to fight in a total war again.

Before leaving these ramblings of an old man who is trying his best to remember events that happened more than half a century ago there is something about the army which must be said, or to be more precise the 8th army, which is generally recognised to be the finest army ever raised in war time. It fought more battles and over a longer period of time than any other fighting force before, or after it. Sufficient for me to say that I was proud to serve in it at the time and remain proud to this day. The 8th army was raised in the sands and dust of the western desert in September 1941, and disbanded after the final battles in Italy on the 29th July 1945, after serving more than 4 years in continuous action. My regiment, the 113th Field was a part of the 13th Corps which remained in active service from the toe of Italy to its entire length and breadth, finally meeting up with the Yugoslav Army in Trieste.

Stanley Wells

I was a choirboy in the church choir at Withyam when the vicar announced that war had been declared. We eventually had lots of evacuees in the village and I remember the Queen Mother visiting them as she had been staying locally with her friends Lord and Lady Delaware. My father was in the 8th Army, fought in the battle of Alamein, and was one of the Dunkirk survivors, after swimming 3 miles to a minesweeper. He was in hospital convalescing for a long time, recovering from burns received whilst swimming through burning oil on the sea's surface.

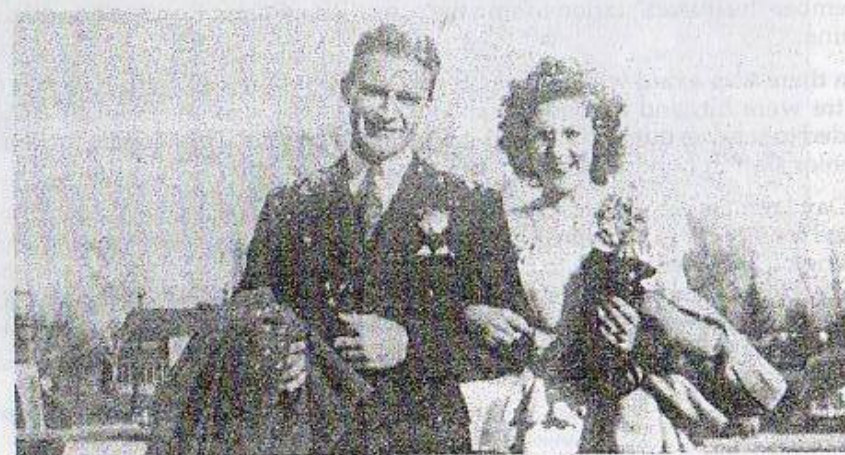
I can remember a Heinkel 111 crashing 100 yards in front of my house and a

Messerschmidt 109 coming down in front of the Assembly Hall in Tunbridge Wells. A Tempest fighter plane tipped one of the doodlebugs upside down, and when it exploded I was blown into our coalhole. The school children used to watch the doodlebugs coming over and heard the ack-ack guns firing at them. Father and I removed a machine gun from a crashed Heinkel 111 and hid it under the garden shed, but we had been spotted and the police came and took it away. Remnants of a crashed German fighter were excavated about three years ago, and I gave some of my illicit boyhood treasures to a museum in Sevenoaks.

Tony Scrase

Five Lambton County area men were honoured with Canada's 125th Anniversary medals. Lambton-Middlesex M.P. Hon. Ralph Ferguson at a special meeting of Lambton County Council on November 6th, medals were given for significant contributions to their community, fellow citizens and the country. Ken Gray received a medal for his contribution to Municipal work, School Board Trustee, five and a half years service in the army (1939-1945) with the R.C.R's, five of those years overseas. Presently a member of Burns Masonic Lodge, Wyoming Chapter O.E.S. and Royal Canadian Legion. A presiding Elder and Trustee of Wyoming United Church and former Sunday school teacher. The medals were commissioned by the Queen, through the Governor General of Canada. Mayor Patricia Davidson assisted with Ken's award presentation.

Some Hadlow Down parishioners may remember Ken Gray as he was one of many Canadian soldiers stationed in the Parish during the war.



Mr & Mrs Ken Gray, October 1945

Having been in Africa for three and a half years, I came back in 1938. I meant to go back, but as war was imminent I decided to train as a nurse. I went to St. Thomas's Hospital where I was trained from 1940-44 during which time we were severely bombed, so much so that the nurses had to be transferred to various hospitals in Surrey and Hampshire, but I came back to London in time for the rockets and doodlebugs. I remember one particular Saturday afternoon when I was on duty in casualty. We had a direct hit by a doodlebug on part of the building that had already been damaged. It was amazing what the blast did, especially in casualty - all the sterilisers were blown off the tables on to the floor, in spite of the windows all being boarded up. The blast hit me, causing my lungs to concertina, blowing my cap off - I looked like a fuzzy-wuzzy from Port Sudan! We nurses didn't recognise each other, but help was soon at hand.

The same bomb also blasted a little grocer's shop opposite the Hospital. The owner, a very old friend of the Hospital and a patient, was buried beneath masses of tinned food. We had just healed his leg ulcer before this and now it was all broken down again. We were warned we should get under the main part of the building, and not be in the outer rooms, but I couldn't get there in time, and that's when the blast went off - it was a most ghastly feeling - absolutely frightful. We had casualties being brought in with their clothes having been blown off them.

When the first bomb hit St. Thomas's it was the Waterloo Bridge end of the building, the Treasurer's house, but the nurses messes were above the Treasury department. I was sleeping in a basement, and as soon as the sirens went we had to go down to the basement and I remember the roll call going on all night to find out who was missing. We had to sleep on a mattress on the floor in the basement and as soon as the sirens went we had to scuttle into our beds. I remember the nurses started to sing the song "Run, Rabbit Run" as I scuttled to mine.

Then there was a raid when the main part of the building and the basement theatre were hit, and all our ration books were lost, and that's when they decided to send us out of London as it was too dangerous. They kept a nucleus of senior staff in London and only emergency wards open.

V.E. Day I remember we had to carry on as usual, but of course we were all too excited for anything. I was on duty all day until the evening, and then I had the evening off and went down to Blackheath with a student to his home, and on the way back all the boats blew off all their sirens, and on the train coming back to Waterloo there were bonfires in people's gardens and fireworks going off. It was so exciting that one couldn't contemplate going to sleep that night.

Brenda Bishop

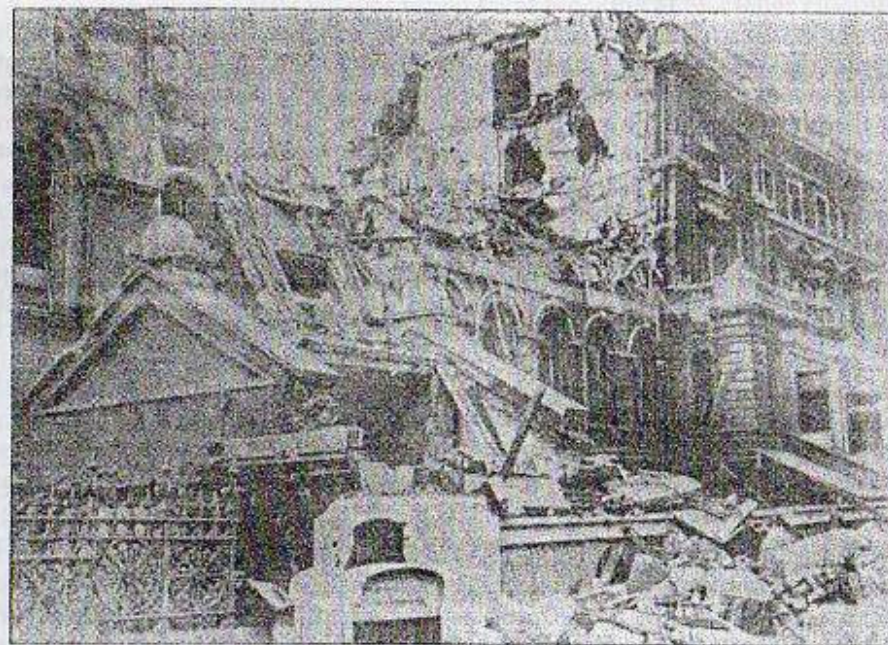
My most dramatic memory of the war is when I was working at St. Thomas's Hospital. The first bomb, of eleven direct hits, fell on the nurses home, on Westminster Bridge at 2.30 a.m. on September 9th, 1940.

After the explosion I managed to get out of bed and saw sky above. On hearing calls from the Bridge I struggled through debris. I managed to find a few oddments of clothes and eventually was rescued through a hole in the wall - walked round to casualty where we were all examined and sent to bed.

I was one of the lucky few to escape as one nurse on the same floor and four masseurs and a nurse on the floor above were all killed. One of the masseurs was trapped and still alive but quite unable to be rescued, after great efforts she died the following day at 3 p.m. when the sirens went again.

After three bombs in the same week, the whole hospital was evacuated to Hydestile, near Godalming where I spent the rest of the war - in Matron's office. I can't remember any special celebration on VE Day.

Betty Nelson



The Treasurer's House (St. Thomas's Hospital) seen from Westminster Bridge Road, showing the damage done after the first bomb on 9th September 1940.

I was in Glasgow from the beginning of the war until about 1942 when I came down here. That was at the time of the fire bomb blitz on London, then after that came the flying bombs and then after that the rockets. Where I was living, near Earls Court at that time, we were half bombed out - a flying bomb hit five doors away and the whole of the roof went.

I was playing in bands at this time as I was a musician and was a working pianist in places around the West End. One of the most extraordinary experiences I had was when I was playing at Freddie Mills' Les Ambassadeur Club, right in the heart of Mayfair. The sirens sounded and we heard the first of the usual set of three stick bombs drop. Then another nearer; when you heard that sound you knew another one was going to come very near to you. It did drop not too far away, and it moved the piano - I was playing in one key, and after it dropped I was playing in another! I was absolutely petrified. The first stick of those three hit the Cafe de Paris and killed Kenneth "Snakehips" Johnson and all his band - the whole lot went in that bomb.

Tom Dummer

My thoughts about V.E. Day really start six years before 1945, when I was still quite young, and got caught up in what they used to call the "phoney" war of '38 which was my first experience of being evacuated. I was living in London at the time and I joined the exodus from London and it was thought that when you were 30 or 40 miles away from London you were quite safe, so my first evacuation point was fairly local - in Etchingham. I went down there and stayed with these kind people who used to send me off every morning with a packed lunch to go to school, but I didn't get there very often because the country in that summer and autumn of '38 was very attractive. I used to have lots of other things that I wanted to do, but by the end of that "phoney" war it was thought that everybody should go back home. So I went back to London and there we stayed until about the beginning of 1940 when the London blitz started. I was sent off to Mevagissey in Cornwall, where the extramural attractions were even more demanding than Etchingham, as I was living in a fishing village and used to spend a lot of time fishing. For a small boy that was probably an ideal sort of existence, though I was without my family who were still in London.

After a couple of years things quietened down in London so I came back until the V1 flying bombs started. I went off again to a village in Devon and was back in London while the V2's were dropping on us. Just before the end of the war a V2 landed about 100 yards from where I was living and I woke up having heard this huge bang to find myself covered in plaster, glass, window frames and so on. We then decided that we would spend the rest of the war in the shelter.

On V.E. Day I took off with some friends and we went to London and spent the

night in Piccadilly and Trafalgar Square with about a million other people. I didn't appreciate quite what was going on because obviously the people there that were older were having a much better time than I was, but I didn't know what they were doing - but I know now what they were doing - and I wished I'd been older and I could have joined in!

Then we came back to Blackheath where we decided we would have our own celebration, and so from then on we had a series of bonfires that lasted about two weeks, mainly consisting of demolishing badly damaged houses, piling all the timber in the road outside and setting fire to it. As far as I can remember the whole of south-east London was covered in these huge bonfires, with enormous amounts of timber being burnt. This led to the destruction of the road surface in many places because up to then many roads had been mended with tarmac and so on and once they really got going all the tar burnt away leaving great holes in the roads everywhere you went. I would say that the enormous relief when the war ended, and the expression of joy we made must have been therapeutic.

Tom Bridges

My remembrance of VE Day was when I was working at St. Helier Hospital in Carshalton was that all the staff, domestic, nursing and doctors, had a party on the green in front of the hospital, and danced the "Conga". No doubt, some patients who were able joined in too.

Marion Nelson

Plenty of V1's passed over us in Hadlow Down, launched from the ramps outside Paris. Several came down around here. One of the V1's came down in Crowborough, killing, I don't know how many Canadians, and it went over my head about fifty foot up. My family were living opposite the Canadian camp, we used to collect their kitchen refuse at one time, the stuff they threw away, loaves of bread, tins of fruit and things. They must have had their own supplies network pretty well sorted out. Up at Possingworth we had almost every Canadian Division except the 5th. Those forage caps they had, a long thin thing worn on one side of the head, some of those buggers used to stitch a razor blade into the front; if the French Canadians got into a fight in Heathfield, you got well clear! Two chaps were killed here in 1940. They were milking and this German dumped his load right through here. About 150 bombs were dropped between Five Ashes and Cross in Hand, that was pretty exciting for a minute. They'd got intercepted, panicked and let loose. One field round here had got about nineteen in it.

There was a land mine in Blackboys that killed two women. It was swinging in some trees, they thought it was a parachutist until they got around the corner to see this mine swinging on a parachute. They disappeared quick because those things were lethal, exploding above ground, with about two thousand

pounds of explosive. There used to be a doodlebug in the middle of Waste Wood, it's probably still there somewhere. I have seen it since the war.

The Canadians used to put on some lovely shows, films and things, up in the old Village Hall. We used to see all the old Andy Hardy films, all sorts of things. They brought two shows with them, that was the first time we saw drag artists, with all these Canadians all dressed up; we didn't know they were men! Gradually it dawned on us, it was so well done! You didn't really see any British soldiers, they were all Canadian. They knew something awful could easily happen to them in the end I suppose, so they all had a lovely time while they were here.

Derek & Meg Rostron

The day before war broke out my family were in Guernsey. Father was all for leaving us there, but mother did something quite uncharacteristic; she dug her toes in, mostly what father said went, but she said no and fortunately we came home. Which under the circumstances was probably just as well. Then the school we went to in Essex, now in London really, was evacuated up to Shropshire to an incredibly tatty decrepid stately home, to the owners it was like manner from heaven - somebody wanted the dump! and we moved in. When it rained outside it was just the same inside. There wasn't enough room for us all, so some were billeted on the rectory, where the rector was completely away with the fairies, at least I think he was. Every night he used to wander into the dormitories where the girls were getting undressed and say "Oh dear, I quite forgot that there was anybody here" and go out sniggering to himself.

Then I went to college in Bedford, and we spent a blissful summer in 1940 in Shropshire, where it was considered quite correctly that no bombs would fall, there being not much other than cows. At college in Bedford one saw very little of it, and looking back now it rather horrifies me how totally unaware we were really, except of big events obviously. Then when I had finished college I got a job in Shropshire, and I can remember VE Day very clearly because we made an enormous bonfire in the playground of the school we were evacuated onto and all danced around it. One mother had cashed in all her coupons for goodness knows how long, and made the most wonderful lemon cake, the like of which we hadn't seen for years!

Mavis Farrar

VE Day I was in Portsmouth, having been on a destroyer, I spent a very happy day with a W.R.E.N. there. VJ Day I was based in Harwich, I was with the Polish Navy there, acting as a Liason Officer. I had joined the navy in 1943, been commissioned in 1944 and went out to the Mediterranean, where we were in places off Italy, patrolling. I made the great mistake of volunteering to go out into the far east, but in the end I never went there, I came back to Harwich, again on destroyers going on noisy anti E boat patrols. Then I left the Hud Class

destroyer, and for some extraordinary reason, joined the Polish Navy. Here I had a staff of about ten, and developed a great admiration for them, they were extremely able and pleasant people. On patrol in the bay of Biscay on one occasion, we saw what we thought was a large submarine, and after stalking this and dropping all our depth charges and wotnot up came this shoal of fish! I was with them when the Poles finished really as a nation. They wouldn't go back to Poland as it had been overrun by the Russians.

John Farrar

September 4th 1940 I was living in London, the first night I'd heard nothing, but at about two in the morning we had three bombs. At that time the bombs were small, one of these came each side of the house where I had a modern flat with a massive window. The bomb shattered the window, and luckily I had the radio next to my bed. I used to have it on in the morning and the evening, and luckily that took the impact of all the shattered glass. If that wasn't there, I wouldn't be here today. People didn't expect to be bombed, but at that time they were coming in droves, scattering their bombs everywhere. After that we were evacuated out of London into the country. Before the end of 1940 I think Hitler decided to bomb Coventry, and where we were in the country we could see the bombs falling there, like rain really.

In the war we were issued with clothes coupons, entitling you to buy clothes according to government specifications, which were cheap compared to the clothes you could otherwise buy. Soon after that they introduced what they called utility furniture; produced according to government specifications, and only available through coupons. The coupons were given to newly weds. If you were getting married you could be issued with coupons, just enough to give you a basic start. If you decided you wanted more furniture, it would cost about four times as much. We were really government controlled, but everything was just sufficient, but good value. We didn't suffer much really because whatever was short was made up by America, which started what they called release lend. Americas idea obviously then was that they would supply what you needed in return for the facilities in your country which allowed them bases all over the country. My own experiences were quite comfortable. We felt sorry for the people who had to remain in London, and stayed in the underground stations.

Once after we got married, towards the end of the war, we were sleeping in the house rather than the shelter when we heard a flying bomb coming. It was coming closer and closer and closer, and to protect me my wife picked up the pillow, put it on my head and held it down! to protect my head. After a couple of minutes I was struggling to get out, she said "What's the matter?" and I said "I'd rather die being bombed than being suffocated!"

Munir Abdelnoor

Four or five people each evening would have been on duty in the home guard each night. One had to be over in Old Boot ready for the telephone, another had to be awake which was sometimes difficult after a hard days work, especially during haymaking. Never really had to anything much though.

Once when I was coming from Crowborough with a pair of horses and a wagon, I was coming up to Gate House crossroads, when a Canadian Bren gun carrier came down there and one of his tracks came off just as he was passing me. He went off into the wood! managed to miss me luckily. I was down near Waste Wood milking cows one evening about half past six, and there was a screaming noise went right over here. I thought it was a bomb going down but nothing happened. About a week afterwards, a gang of us were out there looking for foxes, and we came across this big land mine, it hadn't gone off. We all cleared off quick. There must have been big bombs because of the size of the holes they made down Stocklands Farm, they reckoned you could put a double decker bus in them. Saw a few dogfights, I saw the fighter plane come down in Howbourne Lane. It was right up high before it was hit, then it came down full throttle all the way. One day in 1940 I went in a chicken shed to check on them, and coming out, I shut the door up and heard this huge bang inside, a bullet had exploded inside the shed. It must have come out of a dogfight up there, but whose it was I don't know. One Monday morning we had some pigs that had got to go to market. We managed somehow to steer them into the lorry, next to a manure heap and got going, and machine gun bullets came thudding into the manure lump!

Gordon Long

I joined the Royal Airforce as an Aircraft Fitter in 1941 at the age of 19. I was stationed at Biggin Hill on Hurricanes and Spitfires, from here I went on to Lympe R.A.F., which is now Ashford Airport, for the Battle of Britain with Number One Squadron. From here I went to Pocklington in Yorkshire in Bomber Command, working on the Halifax bombers of 102 Squadron. This is where I met my wife, a W.A.F. Pay Clerk, we married in 1944. VE Day was celebrated with a Victory Dance. My next move was to the Fleet Air Arm, H.M.S. Flycatcher Seafires and an old Walrus. I was demobbed in 1946.

Reg Hunt

When VE Day finally arrived I was a very young girl living in Mitchum in Surrey. I can remember a tableau set up on a bomb site, with a lot of school friends, including me, all dressed in white depicting "peace" and holding flags of various countries. Later on we had a fancy dress competition, and I was dressed as a Russian with big wellie boots, furry hat etc. We had a party in the middle of the street with lots of flags and a big bonfire. My father was an Air Raid Warden and used to go out at night with his torch and tin hat making sure

people had their blackouts done properly.

Gwen Vaughan

I can remember I had been off school ill, I was only about 12 or 13 and I was standing at the top of the stairs just about to go down. I heard my mother calling and then there was this almighty bang. Apparently it was a V2 coming down, it was a terrific noise really and I was extremely frightened. The sky was lit up like fire and the house shook.

Dawn Johnson

Mr and Mrs Bishop ran a dance every Saturday night in the Village Hall, for which we paid 6d to go in. They used to push the the old wind up gramophone on an old pram from the last house a mile up the Buxted road and pushed it back again at 12 o'clock after the dance!

The worst thing I can remember during the war was when a V1 came right over Beach Cottage at the height of the trees. We were lit up with the fire from the engine, it came down at Crowborough killing Canadian soldiers.

Another time a tank broke down outside the front of our house. It took them all day to get it right so we gave them drinks and food while they worked.

Kath Harrison

Almost the first bomb that fell around here actually dropped in Buxted one evening, and I think it killed someone who was in their shelter. It was a direct hit. After that there was a load that came down in a line from Jarvis Brook right through to Cross in Hand. Some dropped in Hadlow Farm; there was about 200 bombs. We were living at Broomfields at that time, which now is Little England, that was where we were farming at the time these bombs came through. To give you a real idea, we had to apply for a government subsidy for filling in the craters. There was about forty or fifty, not including the ones that dropped in the woods. None of them damaged much until they got to Scocus Farm, when there was a direct hit on the cow shed where the two Baker brothers were milking. Both were killed. One doodlebug came down in Waste Wood, another over in the wood at Mayfield Flat. Another came over head where we living then, next to the Harrisons at Beech Cottage. As it came over everything went red. We thought we'd had it but instead it just touched the big oak tree that used to be there and went over to land at Crowborough. One plane, a bomber, came down at Shepherds Hill, and another down somewhere in Howbourne; I saw that one come down, he was going at full throttle.

We had the ack-ack guns up at Mayfield but they did very little good. They had them stationed everywhere at the time. They were firing at bombers one time, and one chap that worked for us had a bullet land in his wife's pillow on the bed

and frightened her so much that she wouldn't stop there any longer.

When all's said and done, luckily there was really very little damage done around these parts.
Luther & Kitty Mitchell

I joined the WAF and was a member of Balloon Command. At VE Day time I was on a course in Cranbourne in Lincolnshire, where there was a station where most of the Spitfire pilots used to come after they had done their sorties for a resting period, I was there on a communications course. VE Day came and we celebrated, borrowing a car to go on a pub crawl for the day, and enjoyed ourselves immensely.
Joyce Ashdown

I got in to the Airforce in 1941 through a stroke of luck, having come from a reserved occupation as a farmer. I remember leaving home and walking in to the first train at Buxted early one summer morning. This was the early days, when they had a great number of aeroplanes, and required a great number of pilots. So when you got there you were crowded 14 or so into one little room. That went on until we went to Wolverhampton where we had our first flights. The first person that took me flying in a Tigermoth was Ernest Hillman, one of the Hillman brothers that started Hillman motor cars. He was my first instructor. You only did about six or seven hours, just to make sure you were able to fly, then it was a case of full training out in Canada, after two weeks under escort travelling to New York. You couldn't lay on your side on this ship because you were three high in your bunks and they were just close enough together so you could just lay on your back.

Once in Canada, Edmonton in the far west, the flying conditions were marvellous, I remember my first night flight, I flew in the bright light of the Aurora Borealis, quite an experience. After one years training we returned on the new Queen Elizabeth, which sped back to the Clyde, flat out all the time, in three days. I was on bunk in the bathroom, and there were 13 of us crammed into that bathroom.

The rest of my period in the Royal Airforce was spent flying Beaufighters, on which I did for well over one and a half periods - you could do eighteen months or a certain amount of hours, and not really wanting to become an instructor, I continued to fly as the Station Commanders personal pilot. I loved to fly, it had always been an ambition, so whenever the chance arose I'd also fly Airframe and Engine tests. These were necessary when the planes were repaired from active service. Once in Norfolk, I was just going to get into the plane one day and he said "A&E Test?" I said "Yes", "How long?" I said "20 minutes" he said "Oh couldn't you just pop up to the Shetlands? they've got no end of eggs and we've run out, you could fill up the plane with boxes and bring them back!" Although it was five or six hours flying, we ended up with eggs at the station.

You did silly things like that, as well of course as a lot of serious operations. I did 52 myself. Little things like that stick in your memory.

D-Day we were hurried down to Cornwall because they thought we would be above the mist level, and that we could probably operate where others could not. Again I was fortunate, I had to fly into Gosport to get some things prior to the occasion, and I flew alongside the fleet that was in between the mainland and the Isle of Wight, and was just moving as it was the day before D-Day. So I saw about 12 hundred of our craft just on the move, the majority of the fleet. It was the most incredible sight you have ever seen. There were three layers of our fighters above it and I'm amazed that the Germans didn't realise where it was based. Mine and another squadron in actual fact were there to stop anything coming into the channel, and later that evening went down almost as far as Bordeaux looking for the remnants of the German Navy that were heading for the channel. Although there were only 15 of us with rockets and torpedoes, we did sink virtually all of them. From then on we worked all the way through. We just slept near to the planes.

We followed wherever German shipping was, up the Norwegian coast from bases in Wick and Sunborough, so that we could be the nearest to submarines and boats. One had a lot of near misses and we did have tremendously heavy casualties. But in all that time, the most terrifying as far as I'm concerned was roughly in the middle of the night off Fair Isle. I hit a storm which was so savage that I shouldn't have come out of it. It was virtually a storm force 10. On arrival at Sunborough the first thing I saw on the runway was the wreck of a crashed plane. I managed to land and they said that two had taken off, but they'd heard nothing of them and that I could please myself as to whether to go. The purpose of the flight was to try and find one of our submarines which was disabled somewhere about 60 miles off the northern Norwegian coast. The others had gone so I thought I would. After about half an hour I ran into thick cloud, and there was enough static around to light up the props and suddenly I hit what must have been the vortex of the centre of the storm. I was flying at just over 2000 feet and in seconds I saw the most raging sea I had ever seen, it took me straight down. I just had time to say goodbye to my navigator, I don't think he really knew what was happening, I was fighting hard trying to keep the plane straight, and it took me up another 2000 feet just as fast as it took me down, and the plane stood it. It didn't break up. We never heard anything of the other two planes who had taken off. That was more terrifying than being shot at by German fighters.

The nearest I got to being shot down, I was waiting for a bullet in the back because they were all behind me shooting. I was close enough to the water for their cannons to cut up seaweed from it and deposit it in the engine. One of the fighters managed to put three clean holes in each of my starboard engine propellor blades. When we got back we had a few holes so we knew we had

been on operations. My navigator used to get out and have a look around to count them.
Jim Foster

VE Day I went to London with my two sisters, and we went right up the Mall and stood outside Buckingham Palace. It was the most amazing experience because people were just so happy, huge amounts and surges of people, and we saw the Royal family come out on the balcony until finally we went home, but it was the most incredible evening.

One of the funniest things I remember was when air raids were on, and if you had to travel by underground they used to put notices out so you knew you would be going up above into it. I came up at the Bank station once and got to the top of the steps just to see four city gents getting up off the road, brushing down their knees, finding their bowlers and umbrellas and walking away as if nothing had happened in the world. I hadn't heard the bomb or anything you see, but just saw these three men! It was quite an extraordinary time really, when you started out for the office you never quite knew if you would actually get there.

Of course the most frightening things were the V1's. Not having any idea where they could land was absolutely terrifying, just the noise of them was enough.

Where I was working at that time, all the men above the age of about 35 or 40 undertook Firewatch, taking it in turns to stay on top of the building watching and reporting on fires and their progress.

Myself and a friend of mine volunteered when London was being bombed, to take out vans on Saturdays and Sundays with tea and food for soldiers and workers clearing the bombsites. After that I went to help at a canteen on a Sunday, to help them out. But it was amazing how you could be sent to a street that you then couldn't recognise anymore. You knew where to go, but the places were just gone. You just did what was necessary as things went on.

Hazel Bickersteth

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A large, dark, serif capital letter 'V' is positioned in the lower center of the page. The years '194' and '199' are printed in a smaller serif font, stacked vertically to the left of the 'V', with the '194' partially overlapping the top of the 'V'.

All profits to be donated to the Royal British Legion