GRAYSHOTT'S WARTIME MEMORIES

Our People's Stories from WW2

Published by Grayshott Heritage www.grayshottheritage.com

INTRODUCTION

At the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, anyone who was an adult at the time will now have at least 98 years to their credit. It will soon pass beyond living memory. Events of the last few years are a reminder that the ideals our forebears fought for – freedom and democracy – are hard won, and that even in the 21st century Europe is not immune to battle and bloodshed on its soil.

Since the end of National Service in 1963 none of our citizens have been conscripted into the armed services. Those who volunteer to serve currently make up less than half of 1% of our population. A miniscule proportion of our civilians have ever heard shots fired in anger, let alone had bombs fall on their homes. We are the lucky generations.

Photographed on the eve of Britain's war, 2nd September 1939, Betty Simmonds aged 15 of Crossway House with a soldier friend.

Now seems like a good time to review Grayshott's experience of WW2, whilst we can still talk to some of our village's eyewitnesses to one of modern history's greatest events. This little book is to some extent a survey of Grayshott during the war, and we hope to convey at least a sense of how it was to live here. But we also record today's villagers' recollections of their war, wherever it was, as well as the stories and family legends of younger generations. Some of us baby–boomers were indelibly imprinted with war yarns by our parents or grandparents. Others may have no inkling, and have to winkle out dormant memories or rediscover them from family papers. Experiences which we find extra–ordinary were, to those of the time, so completely ordinary as to barely register, and have to be sought out. All of them contribute to the richness of Grayshott's memory bank.

For some people the war demanded acts of courage or sacrifice which to many of us are unimaginable. Others, whether in uniform, factories or fields, were small but cumulatively vital cogs in the big machine. For most perhaps it was just a case of enduring what came along and enjoying it when they could. There are stories of each in this little book.

Published by Grayshott Heritage to commemorate the 80th anniversary of VJ Day, 15th August 1945, and dedicated to the men and women of Grayshott who served.

SOURCES

Grayshott suffered no great calamity during WW2 to bring it to the attention of newspapers or history books (although it did have a close escape from one such, but wait until page 19 to read about it). Yet we are fortunate that, for a village, we have a generous and diverse range of information to draw upon.

Grayshott Heritage has accumulated numerous documents in our archive, some of the most illuminating being the diaries and photo albums of Betty Simmonds. Betty lived with her family in Crossway House and worked as an ironer in the laundry. She was a keen photographer and recorder of her everyday life, and her diaries contain some delicious titbits along with the regular fare of work, gardening and walking her dog, Paddy.

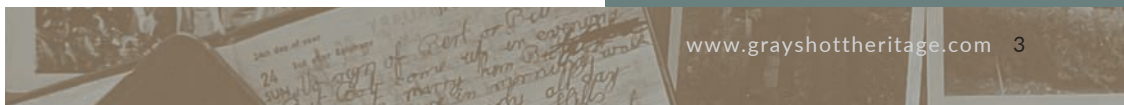
Whilst Grayshott never made national headlines, the local newspapers were diligent in their reporting of daily events, especially those which caused embarrassment to perpetrators of minor offences. The school logbook recorded interesting departures from the usual routine, such as Doodlebugs overhead, and the Women's Voluntary Service and Women's Institute reports reveal the immense contributions of their members.

In September 1939 the government compiled the National Register, a census-like document which recorded the civilian population in preparation for issuing identity cards, to manage labour and monitor movement. For Grayshott it records the name, address, age and occupation of residents, plus any wartime emergency service role.

The Germans didn't invade Grayshott but thousands of allied soldiers did, billeted in several camps in surrounding villages. Most notable, and most enduring in the local consciousness, were the Canadians. John Owen Smith's book 'All Tanked Up' describes the area's special relationship with those young men from far away.

Dates, dog walking and digging for victory – Betty's diaries and albums record a teenage girl's everyday life.

Most importantly, we have the personal stories. Several years ago our members recorded interviews with some village veterans. Gillian Rawlcliffe spoke with Betty, and Richard Peskett with four seniors who were boys at the time – Graham Maguire, Geoff Theobald, Derek Read and Harold Murphy. More recently we've been privileged



to spend time with several more eyewitnesses. Numerous other people have lent us photos from family albums, shown us mementoes, allowed us to photograph their property or written to us with their stories. We thank you all for trusting us with your memories. We hope we have managed to credit you all on the back page!

CIVIL DEFENCE

There is a popular view that Britain was ill–prepared for war, perhaps grown upon Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's announcement on his return from meeting Hitler in September 1938.

'I believe there will be peace for our time ....
Go home and get a nice quiet sleep.'

This had long been taken as an order by the Army, which having pioneered the method of combined arms assault at the Battle of Cambrai in 1917, and refined it throughout 1918, promptly forgot all about it during its inter–war role as colonial policeman. The effect was magnified by armament spending cuts driven by the public appetite to never repeat the horrors of WW1 – supposedly *The War to End All Wars*. Meanwhile, Germany's strategists had spent twenty years studying the cause of their defeat and working out how to turn the tables next time.

Fortunately the same was not true in the air. The Zeppelin and Gotha raids of WW1 created a degree of public fear out of all proportion to their military effect. In the Spanish Civil War the terror–bombing of Guernica by the German and Italian air forces captured global attention and showed how effectively air bombardment could shatter the will to resist. It was obvious to many that another European war was on its way, and through the 1930's British scientists and engineers resolved that our shores must be protected from bomber fleets. They developed a radar–based early warning system which gave the Luftwaffe a very nasty surprise.

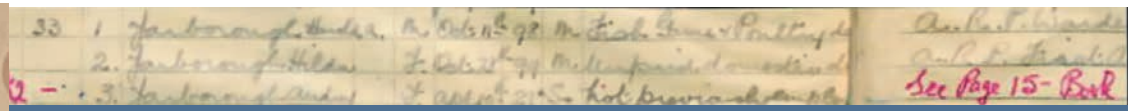
Poison gas was a real fear. 'We all carried gas masks. They gave you a very husky voice'

The civilian authorities were also being proactive. In 1935 the Home Office created the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) organisation. The ARP evolved to include wardens, messengers, ambulance drivers, rescue parties, demolition teams, firewatchers and the Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS). Every local authority was responsible for organising its ARP, in Grayshott's case this was the Alton Rural District Council.

'You never went anywhere without your gas mask in its little box.'
Mary Smith.

All gas masks were examined today and worn by the children. School Log, 4th Feb 1941.

Grayshott's ARP was led by Major Pedro Telesforo Wessel (retd), assisted by James Rideout as Deputy C/O and Vice Admiral Edward Lowther–Crofton (retd) and Edward Blomfield as Senior Wardens. They could call upon over forty volunteers to protect our village from the Luftwaffe. Many of them were veterans of WW1 who well knew the effect of high explosives and poison gas on the human body, yet they stepped forward to serve once more. The ARP was open to women and all eight of Grayshott's first–aiders were ladies, as were wardens Alice Blyth and Grace Leuchars and driver Jane Reoch.



From the Grayshott 1939 Register, a husband and wife ARP team, Harold and Hilda Yarborough.

To pick out a few other volunteers from our community:

Edward Wells, a building supervisor, Bertram Harris and William Askew, bricklayers – ARP Demolition squad. Their role, should a bomb hit, was to clear the debris and make the remains safe.
Charles Kendrick, chauffeur – ARP messenger.
Christopher Madgwick, chauffeur – ARP ambulance driver.
Reg Oakford, builder's lorry driver – ARP lorry driver.
At this stage the ARP didn't have its own motors, so public–minded employers would volunteer their vehicle and driver for service.
Roland Harris, grocer – stretcher bearer and ambulance driver.
Charles Balchin, William Hicks – St John's Ambulance.
Gerald Kidd, solicitor and Cecil Fritton, publican – Civil Air Guard.
Mary Wessel and Kathleen Turner, school matron – Voluntary Aid Detachment.

Grayshott's ARP centre was in the building now occupied by Peter Leete estate agency. It had an emergency switchboard and a supply of gas masks, stirrup pumps and fire extinguishers. It was the principal reporting centre for the Alton District, which may have been linked to the fact that Major Wessel was also the District's Chief ARP Officer and lived at Apley House just a hand–grenade's throw away. His wife Kathleen was one of the ARP first–aiders. There were three air raid sirens – one at the Fire Station, one outside the school and another where Phillip's House now is.

Now an estate agent, this little building was once the nerve centre of the Alton district ARP.

A few ARP roles were full–time jobs with a wage, but the majority were part–time volunteers. Theoretically they were issued with blue overalls, tin helmets, armbands to denote specialist roles and a more robust gas mask than the civilian version. In Grayshott they were still waiting for their uniforms over two years into the war.

Perhaps the ARP's most memorable role was patrolling the streets to enforce the blackout. After the war they were ridiculed in the form of Chief Warden Hodges in the Dad's Army TV series, a killjoy Rule–Book–Reggie character with his trademark bark of 'Put that light out!' In reality they, and their colleagues in the fire brigades and other emergency services, were the people who ran towards danger rather than away from it. Some 1.5 million men and women served in some form of Civil Defence role throughout the war, and around 7,000 of them were killed.

Protecting against air raids was drilled into the public consciousness. Official and unofficial advice proliferated, among them a set of Wills cigarette cards, which could be collected to make a comprehensive album. Here showing how a lady might tackle an incendiary bomb in her lounge.

* News Flash * Friday 10th January 1941

Visible For Two Miles

Francis Grace Hamerton, Green Fingers, School Road, Grayshott, wrote admitting showing a light at the house at 6:50 pm on Dec 16. PC Verey said the house is on high ground and the light was visible for two miles. Defendant was fined £1.

'My mother often related the story about the draining of Frensham Ponds in 1939. My uncle Levi Voller was foreman in charge of the roads in the district and also in charge of draining the ponds. One afternoon when my mother called in, the kitchen sink was full of fish from the drained pond!'

Richard Peskett

In September 1939 the ponds at Frensham were drained to prevent them being a landmark for bombers heading for Aldershot, a project which had welcome by–products for those nearby.

Of course, alongside the ARP were the firefighters. The Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) was formed in 1938 to supplement local brigades, and both were superseded in 1941 by the National Fire Service. We've so far identified nineteen firefighters in Grayshott, and we give their names here in recognition: Henry Burden, Kenneth Burden, William Levitt, Henry Darlington, George Cornish, William Hannant, Jack Puttick, Stanley Tickner, Edward Blomfield, Harry Buck, Henry Jackson, George Aldred, Walter Harris, Stanley Harris, William Read, Jack Read, Robert Petter, Ernest Hartwell and John Borron.

Some of the Grayshott and Hindhead firemen and the wartime engine. An air raid siren was fixed in the Fire Station's tower, seen behind.

'One morning in early 1941, about 8am, the open Grayshott fire engine returned from the blitz on Portsmouth. As the engine came along Crossways Road and turned up Headley Road the crew were covered in white frost and virtually frozen to the appliance.'

Derek Read

The ferocity of bombing was expected to overwhelm the fire brigades, so in 1937 the Civil Defence organisation created 'Supplementary Fire Parties'. These were trained volunteers equipped with stirrup pumps to tackle small fires and incendiary bombs. In our area even as early as May 1939 people were attending ARP demonstrations of how to put out incendiary bombs. During the war the system evolved into the Fire Guard organisation, and by 1942 every civilian not already engaged in other Civil Defence duties became eligible for compulsory recruitment into the Fire Guards.

Like almost every other Civil Defence group this was a part–time duty which people had to fit in to their daily life. Fire Guards were equipped with stirrup pumps, buckets, rakes and shovels, and issued with tin helmets, armbands and ID cards. During raids they patrolled the rooftops and streets in teams of three – one with the pump, another with a bucket of water, and the third being a runner with spare buckets. Their task, using whatever means came to a hand, was to neutralise incendiary bombs.


on the state of the fire. Water should be applied to the bomb as early as possible where there is any danger of its burning through the floor.
The fire should be tackled with the jet and it is essential that it should not be allowed to get out of control.

How to enter a Burning Room

The pump operator stays outside Room

Keep under cover as you attack Bomb

First check fire caused by fire bomb.

FIG. 5.—TACKLING AN INCENDIARY BOMB IN A ROOM.

From The Fire Guards Handbook. Showing how to tackle an incendiary bomb. Speaking in Petersfield on dealing with bombing in rural areas, Colonel AL Bonham–Carter DSO urged communities to form stirrup–pumpers' clubs to instruct citizens in the effective use of the pump.

bomb as early as possible where there is any danger of its
burning through the floor.
The fire should be tackled with the jet and it is essen-

> Received 1 stirrup pump and 2 buckets. *School Log, 1st December 1939.*
>
> The County Clerk of Works visited the school re danger from incendiary bombs. 12 sandbags were filled and placed 6 in each entrance. During the afternoon Std VIII, in charge of the Headmaster, attended a demonstration of how to extinguish incendiary bombs. *School Log, 12th February, 1941.*

The Fire Guard's equipment – tin hat, pump, bucket, armband and handbook. A dustbin lid was used as a shield. Really. Thus equipped the civilians of Britain took on the Luftwaffe.

Like some other civil defence measures, it does all perhaps sound a bit farcical, but it became highly effective. By December 1943 there were six million Fire Guards, which was about 20% of the adult population. They were integrated into the ARP and organised into a command structure with shifts and beat routes. Like the ARP, these were civilians who had to patrol outdoors during air raids.

'My mother Gwen Cole (née Copeland) worked at the BBC in London. She was secretary to Guy Burgess, later notorious as a communist spy among other things. During the war all interviews had to be sent to the War Office prior to broadcasting and read from approved scripts, nothing could be broadcast live, so she met many interesting people. She was a Fire Guard and patrolled the roof of the BBC building during raids. She also drove an ambulance during the blitz and made us

laugh by describing the noise that the wooden soled clogs she wore made on the stone staircase in Bush House. She didn't talk much about it after the war, but I'm very proud of her'.

Chris Vardy.

Through 1939 the threat of future air bombardment had taken root in the minds of Britain's people and government. Plans were made to evacuate children, women and the infirm from towns and cities. The first wave started on 1st September, two days before the British declaration of war. Evacuees soon started arriving in Grayshott, mostly from London and Portsmouth.

School was re-opened after the summer holiday. Owing to the declaration of war a large number of children evacuated from London and other areas have come to stay in the district. 29 new children were admitted, making a total on-roll of 150.
School Log, 11th September, 1939.

The roll peaked at 228 children, from 127 in August 1939. There was a prophetic intake of 23 children from Portsmouth during the week of 2nd – 8th July, 1940. The city's first air raid came on 11th July, and they continued until 1944, killing over 900 people.

Evacuees and their hosts were often a surprise to each other's lifestyles. The visible signs of urban poverty were sometimes misinterpreted by hosts as neglect, and city kids were often made miserable by homesickness and strange country ways.

Nurse Reynolds visited for a surprise inspection. Seven children (all from outside areas) were found to be verminous. *School Log, 25th September, 1939.*

Sometimes the differences were quite well received though.

'My mother, Eileen Peskett, worked as housekeeper to Lord and Lady Exmouth at High Coombe Edge, up in Hindhead. It's fair to say that they were generous hosts, their young guests were treated to slap-up meals beyond any previous experience. Of course, they all wrote home in glowing terms and the following weekends the hosts had to cater for numerous East-End parents who decided that they needed to make urgent parental visits.'

Richard Peskett.

Notwithstanding the culture shock, many evacuees came to love their new homes and chose to stay on after the war. On such was Sammy Cooling.

'Sammy came down from Vauxhall, age 6. He stayed with Mr Prior, a builder. After the war he didn't want to go back. His mum was killed in the bombing, his dad was away in the army, and the six children had to sleep head to toe in one bed. He was allowed to stay and Mr Prior brought him up. My dad did work for the building company Chapman, Lowry and Puttick and I suppose that's how I met Sammy. He didn't leave me alone! We were married in 1957.'

Janet Cooling.

BOMBS AND BULLETS

One of the most persistent images of the Blitz must be that of the dreaded air raid shelter. In 1938 Sir John Anderson was put in charge of Air Raid Precautions. He commissioned the engineer William Patterson to design a small, pre-fabricated air raid shelter suitable for gardens. It was a simple arch of corrugated iron, intended to be home-assembled then sunk into the soil and covered with earth, and came complete with a spanner – the original flat-pack. It was called the Anderson Shelter, which seems a bit unfair to the engineer who actually invented it. The first one was installed at Islington on 25th February 1939, and 3.5 million subsequently followed. After the war most were collected by the authorities. A few were sold to householders for re-use as sheds and workshops. The rare survivors are now collectors' items.

'We lived in Putney, by the Thames. There was a big railway behind. The Germans liked bombing the rails but they always did it at mealtime. We would just sit down and the siren would go, then it was off to the Anderson and a cold tea.'

Eileen Nolan

Those without a garden were offered a Morrison Shelter. This was another DIY kit, which was assembled indoors to make a sturdy table-like structure with a steel top, angle-iron legs and wire mesh sides. During a raid the family would hunker within. They were surprisingly effective, unless the floorboards beneath collapsed.

'We had a Morrison Shelter at our home in Wembley. Mother used to let us dance on the top, it was steel and our shoes clicked like tap dancing. We used to have picnics inside. I suppose it took our minds off things.'

Denise Rudland.

'Our Morrison had netting around the sides. I used to keep my dollies in there.'

Margaret Turner.

Following the German invasion of Belgium on 10th May, 1940, the government declared a National Emergency. The Whitsun school holiday was curtailed and children returned early, to ensure that education continued come what may. At Grayshott School there were immediate air raid and fire drills and gas masks were inspected. The windows of three rooms were painted over as protection against splinters (eventually they were reinforced with cotton netting), and during a raid the pupils would assemble in those rooms. Major Wessel visited to see a demonstration of air raid drill and announced himself satisfied. An ARP first aid kit was issued and, along with their stirrup pump and two buckets, the children of Grayshott were made ready for war. To begin with there were no shelters or trenches at the school. A local lad recalled:

'When the sirens sounded, it was under desks'.

We met earlier the ARP couple Harold and Hilda Yarborough. They came to Grayshott from Lancashire and had a fishmonger shop in Headley Road (now the Nepalese restaurant.) Their teenage son Graham recalled:

'Our business premises in Grayshott had a large cellar in which brick pillars supported RSJs under the floor. In the early 1940s local residents came down to this cellar before they became blasé about the raids. On one occasion my father went up to look about. What he saw encouraged everybody up. It was a huge circle of German bombers about four abreast with just five RAF fighters diving in and out of them and firing away. Suddenly there was a banging on the side wall of the premises, everyone dived for cover, it was a line of fired Browning machine gun bullets which had obviously missed their target.'

Such things became a regular part of life through the summer of 1940, during the period that became known as the Battle of Britain.

There were a number of children absent owing to the recent air battles that have taken place over the village. School Log, 19th August.

These kids were souvenir hunting, not casualties.

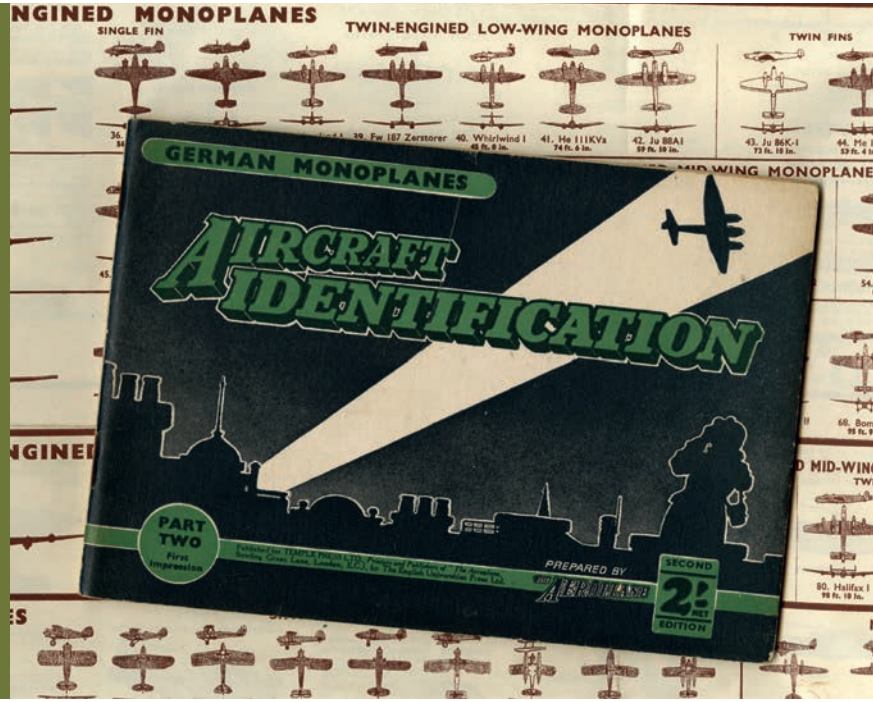
An air raid occurred during the afternoon and the children behaved well. 21st August.

An air battle occurred above the school this morning. 12th September.

An air raid warning occurred this afternoon and lasted 1/2 hour. 13th September.

On August 23rd the school's stirrup pump was reported broken, its replacement not arriving until 3rd September. Luckily Goering's Luftwaffe didn't find out that our children were left temporarily defenceless.

Plane spotting was a national hobby. Failure to know the difference between a Heinkel and a Hurricane could have had deadly consequences.



in a raid_ take cover!

The free-issue of Anderson and Morrison shelters was intended for city-dwellers in target areas, although they could be purchased privately. In country areas people made their own. James Hopcraft was an ARP warden, which might explain his deluxe shelter in Church Lane. Brick built, submerged under the lawn with a concrete roof, it has lantern niches and provision for a curtain over the door to deny enemy navigators even a glimmer of candlelight.

The author's grandfather Sid Willis was a builder in Hartley Wintney, also a keen gardener. Consequently the family shelter was the best up the road, and camouflaged with shrubs and flowers. Here seen with the author's mother, Doreen. They were never bombed so the camouflage must have worked.

This semi-deluxe invention in Headley Down is a one-up, one-down, consisting of an underground brick bunker with half an Anderson shelter on top. The bunker has a fireplace and air vent, and the Anderson has provision for a bunk bed. The householder, Kathleen Waddell, was a widow and she had two single, male lodgers. We surmise that for the sake of propriety Widow Waddell had the bunker and her gentlemen lodgers slept above. Each sheet of tin was consigned to 'RM O'Brien, Borden Station, Hants'. Reg O'B was the local coal merchant and it seems likely that by virtue of having a lorry and an established delivery round he also became the air raid shelter distributor.

Slightly further afield, this shelter in Headley Fields was refuge for the Estradie family, and must have been a comfort after the Canadians built a tank park at the end of their road. Like many survivors it has been restored by its current owners, and does good service as a garden store.

Despite the militarisation of the area Grayshott was never a target for the bombers. But stray bombs, overhead dogfights and passing bomber fleets were commonplace. Graham again:

'In February and March 1941 there were very few nights that German raiders were not over our area, too many to list from my diary. But between 10–14 March 1941, when Portsmouth was under awful bombing raids, one could see from upstairs changing red lights hitting the clouds and sometimes a very distant rumble – even with the South Downs in between.

On another occasion... my father having just set off up the Headley Road heard an unusual noise. He stopped the van, left the door open and dashed into the nearest shop. This happened to be his opposition Mr Burden and both of them being under the same slab led to a more friendly relationship. The noise was a German fighter who let go a burst of machine gun fire. My mother, whilst hanging out washing in the garden which backed on to the gardens of houses in Crossways Road, suffered the same indignity as some other women – a burst of aircraft fire.

There were of course many aerial combats and German planes came down both in Hindhead and the Golden Valley. A Spitfire or Hurricane shot one down on March 23rd 1941, right over Grayshott.'

And some memories from the four boys.

'Some nights vast numbers of planes would be going out on raids. Residents of St Anne's Lodge slept under the stairs.'

'During a dog–fight over Hindhead the enemy pilot bailed out and came down near the Bramshott Canadian–run hospital.'

'A Junkers 88 was shot down and came down at Windy Gap, the high ridge above Whitmore Bottom, opposite the golf course. This was inspected and souvenirs collected. When it came down the explosion broke windows in the Co–Op and ceilings in houses in The Avenue came down.'

'My mother and I lived on the edge of Ludshott Common, next to Grayshott Hall. One day we saw an aeroplane crash down on the common. Thinking it was a German we grabbed some garden rakes and ran over to take the crew prisoner. But it turned out to be a British plane, and there were no survivors.'

Jane Durham

'A Mustang came down in the Devils Punch Bowl. Buster Cornish arrived at the crash site before others and collected red–tipped tracer bullets, which were then distributed around the village. At home Buster tried to get them apart with a hammer, following which panic engulfed Headley Road as the store behind Cornish's shop was reduced to smouldering remains.'

Air battles, plane crashes and army camps made rich pickings for souvenir hunters, sometimes with tragic results. Army and Police officers visited the school to 'demonstrate bombs and dangerous objects dropped from the air' and 'PC Verey visited and gave a talk on road safety and anti-personnel bombs.' These useful talks provided our village boys with ready–made wish-lists.

A lone bomb fell in Flat Wood – its crater is still there, amidst the bracken – but the most significant damage to Grayshott's real-estate seems to have been self-inflicted by Buster's youthful sense of enquiry.

Many of Grayshott's present citizens grew up elsewhere. For those in or near industrial cities life was rather different than for their future village neighbours.

'Most of my wartime memories are of Hythe, opposite Southampton docks. If Southampton got a siren, so did we. I remember having to spend a lot of time in our Morrison shelter in the dining room. I sewed, did jigsaws and slept in it. If I was at my grandparents in Southampton, they had an Anderson shelter, dug into the ground and covered with turf. As you went down the steps it smelled earthy.

The object of young Master Cornish's experiment. If you find one of these relics in your shed, do not attempt to dismantle it with a hammer.

There was a lot of bombing in Southampton and Hythe. The last ones were when I was starting school in 1944. There was a bomb in our road. Two fell in my grandparents' road. We used to play in the bombsites, all over the place. Modern Health & Safety would have had a field day! Hythe must have been a target, British Power Boats were just over the road from our house, they made Motor Torpedo Boats.

I remember going to my first day of school with my gas mask in its cardboard box. It was a big school, we had three air raid shelters. We spent a lot of time having lessons in

there. Mostly we sat on oval rush mats. We had to practice every day – we were always trooping out to the shelter.

Rae Boxall.

'We lived in Cardiff city centre, just a stone's throw from the docks. It was quite an experience. There was a lot of bombing. I didn't like it at all. It was frightening, I didn't enjoy it, I'll never forget it.'

Tess Jones

'We didn't have a shelter at our house in Exeter. We had to hide under the stairs. There was lots of bombing on the big railway junction. It was rather noisy at times! At school a great big furniture lorry came to the playground. It was full of gas. We had to go in to it and take our masks off to get a taste of gas.'

Pamela Bleach.

'I lived in Luton, where the Vauxhall factory made army tanks and lorries, it was quite a target for air raids. There were two barrels of paraffin in the street, with tall chimneys. At dusk, men from the Civil Defence lit them to give off clouds of black smoke to hide the town.'

Mary Smith.

From June 1944 a new spectacle appeared in the skies over southern England – the V1 or Doodlebug. At their peak more than a hundred Doodlebugs every day were fired, launched from northern France upon London. Fortunately for Grayshott our village wasn't on their flightpath, but they were erratic devices and often went off course. Their pulsejet engine emitted a characteristic chatter, which cut out just before the bomb dived onto its target, giving a precious few seconds to take cover.

A flying bomb fell in the area at 9.10am. No damage was sustained to the school.
School Log, 30th June, 1944.

Legend has it that it fell in a potato field at the Land of Nod.

Many alerts were given today and flying bombs were heard to fall, some without warning. Owing to the strain of alerts and lack of protective measures for the children school was closed at 3pm. *School Log, 21st July, 1944.*

Overall Grayshott got off lightly, and more so than its people realised. At 4:16 am on Sunday 7th January 1945, V2 Battery 1/485 at Loosduinen in the Netherlands launched a rocket at London. As the V2 arched through its 50 mile high trajectory it veered off course and came our way. As it was descending vertically over Grayshott at a speed of over 1,500 mph the warhead detonated prematurely. Its debris was spread over a distance of 8 miles. There are probably still bits of it buried in local gardens and woods. If it hadn't gone off early it would have made a crater some 70 feet across and 20 feet deep – bigger than a Headley Road pothole – and caused considerable damage for 600 feet around. As it was, our villagers were used to the noise of nocturnal bomber fleets and many probably slept through a strange boom from the distant heights. Grayshott now forever holds the record for having the only V2 that entered Hampshire's airspace.

'One evening we were playing on the cricket field, in the corner where the nets are now. A Doodlebug came right over us, heading towards Farnham.'

Graham Maguire.

DAILY LIFE

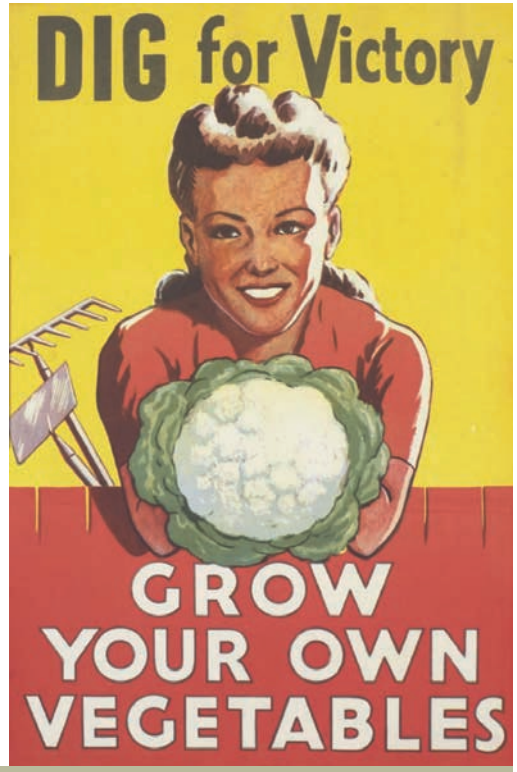
'I think most of them found the war was the best game for kids ever invented.'

Author Robert Westall, on childrens' wartime.

It may have been fun for some children, but for most civilian adults the war was several years of hard work and austerity, underscored by general background anxiety and punctuated with periods of intense worry or grief. For many who served, notwithstanding its horrors, the war was often looked back on as their greatest adventure, or the start point of life–long friendships, connected through shared ordeals. Those at home had to make do with ten–hour factory shifts six days a week, or labouring outdoors in all weather, the rationing of many types of food and goods,

Digging for victory, 1941. Here 17 year old Betty Simmonds has dug up her dad's lawn. 'Sunday 2nd May. Planted peas in garden.'

queuing for almost everything and struggling to stay warm and decently clothed. Many ordinary people ended up with three jobs – the one that paid the wages, their voluntary war work and overcoming the friction to simply keep fed, clothed and sheltered.



Those in the country generally fared better than those in towns or cities. If you had a garden, you could at least grow some food.

'We used to go out and pick stinging nettles and that sort of thing. We had a big garden so we grew a lot, and I took on two allotments, one down in Beech Hanger. I used to go on down there, take me fork and spade across the handlebars, I used to ride me bike to work of course. Course, double summer time you could stay out there till 11 o'clock at night, digging potatoes or whatever you were doing.'

Betty

Young Betty was keen on her potatoes, as revealed in her diary of 1942:

Tuesday 12th May. Put spuds in allotment, our second lot.

Wed 13th May. Put more spuds in.

Thursday 14th. Put more spuds in and raked. Hoed our first lot of spuds. 1st allotment is now FINISHED.

Friday 15th May. Went to 2nd allotment.

Wednesday 5th August. Dug up spuds and pulled turnips.

Monday 17th August. Churchill returned from Russia. Went to allotments, dug more potatoes, two sacks.

Monday 24th August. Went and dug more spuds.

Grayshott was fortunate to have two allotments, at Stoney Bottom and beside Beech Hanger. At that time the latter extended all across the back of the playing field.

The Beech Allotments, photographed shortly after the war. The darker rectangle to centre is the cricket pitch, the patchwork area above and extending left are the allotments.

'Allotments were situated at the Beeches end of the Cricket field. Vegetables were sometimes 'borrowed' from these allotments. One person, Mr Winchester, used to ride through the middle of a cricket match on his bicycle to gain access to them. He had a very large white beard.'

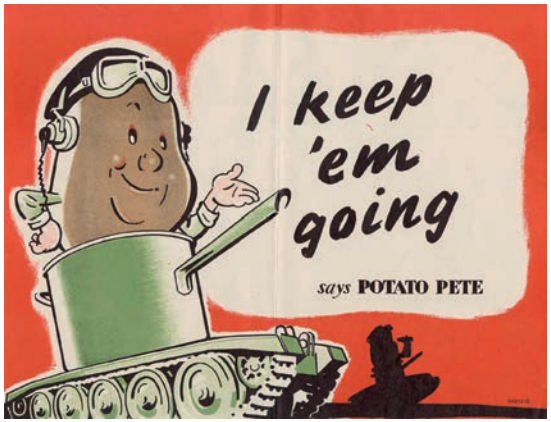
Betty wasn't Grayshott's only potatophile. From 1942 the school officially accommodated country children working on the land by instituting a fortnight's Potato Planting Holiday in early May and another fortnight in October for Potato Harvest. Nature didn't always agree with the school's timetable:

23 children (13 girls and 10 boys) over 12 years of age were excluded from school this afternoon on form 250E for potato picking at Land of Nod Farm. *School Log, 31st August, 1943.*

The school also had its own gardening project.

Commenced gardening classes in afternoon on a plot in the Vicarage grounds with 20 Senior boys. *School Log, April 3rd, 1940.*

Patriotic embroidery occupied the minds and hands of those who's loved ones were far away. From the collection of the late June Peskett.



By 1944 the pupils had ⅔ acre under cultivation on three sites. Seed and equipment were provided by the education authority, who in return took the cash proceeds from the sale of produce (which of course included potatoes, their preferred variety being Arran Pilot).

Foraging was another village hobby. Betty's diary:

Tuesday 4th August. Went to pick herts, usual place, got nearly a pound.

Thursday 6th August. Got herts, 1¼ lb.

Herts is the local name for wild bilberries or whortleberries. The little purple berries were common in our woods then and make a delicious jam.

Staying warm also required more effort than just switching on the central heating. The school was equipped with a coal–fired boiler but in the hard winter of 1940 it was challenged to cope.

Owing to very heavy snow fall only 20 children attended school this morning. The lavatories were frozen and choked with snow. *School Log, 30th January.*

Again in 1941, after a boiler breakdown:

Cold weather and no heat in the school caused adjustments to be made in the timetable as warming-up PT exercises were taken at frequent intervals. *9th April.*

Blatantly sawing down trees was frowned upon, but the pine woods around the village gave Betty a useful source of fir cones to burn:

Tuesday 7th July: Went got bag of fire cones.

Wednesday 8th July. Went to old copse, got a few herts and cones.

Thursday 9th July. Got fir cones, sackful.

All sorts of things were scavenged as part of the national drive for recycling.

'Collecting waste materials was popular and a source of income, aluminium, string, foil, paper etc. Collecting of bottles, especially after dances was a profitable activity, a refund of 2d a bottle at Butlin's off–licence in Crossways Road.'

Our boys.

'The amount of waste paper collected was in excess of the Ministry's stipulation. The result was achieved by enlisting the aid of schoolchildren who called regularly on households and then sorted the paper themselves.'

Mr RE King, parish salvage organiser.

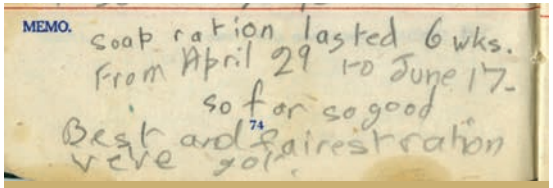
Got beer bottles from woods where soldiers threw them. Betty.

Grayshott probably had less litter in the war than it does now.

*** Newsflash * Saturday 23rd January 1943**

At the Chiddingfold Hunt Pony Club's competition for collecting old and unwanted keys, 3rd place was awarded to Helen Western of Windwhistle and Elizabeth Nixon of Kingswood Firs, and their ponies Princess Pearl and Billy. They collected 1,290 keys.

In January 1940 the government introduced food rationing, and the scheme quickly spread to other commodities, including clothes, coal and petrol. A coupon system was introduced and every man, woman and child was issued with a ration book to monitor their allowance. At its lowest level the weekly per–head food ration allowed butter at 4oz, bacon and ham 4oz, loose tea 4oz, sugar 8oz, cheese 1oz and meat 1 shilling–worth. Soap was rationed at 4oz hard soap or 3oz toilet soap per four weeks. It's interesting to lay these quantities out beside today's shopping list.



Betty was careful with her soap. Considering her day job in the laundry and her evenings digging spuds, she made a little go a long way.

Fined For Baking White Bread

Messrs. Buck, bakers, of Grayshott, Hants, were at Whitehill to-day fined £21 with £4 costs for baking white bread.

Frank Arthur Buck, partner in the firm, said that they had run out of wheatmeal flour and as there was no other way of supplying their customers they used some white flour which they had in stock. Actually, they made less profit on a white loaf than on a standard loaf.

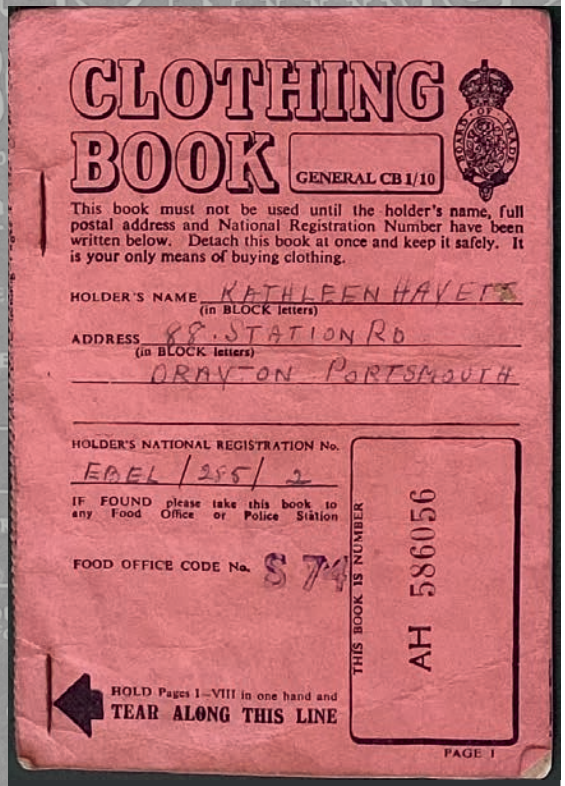
Mr Buck the Baker of Crossways Road seems to have come unstuck when endeavouring to be helpful. ...

'On a Thursday before going to school I had to go to queue up at the butcher's. That was the day they had the offal, which wasn't rationed. It amazed me how mothers always managed to feed their children.'

Margaret French.

Two prominent home–front organisations were the Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) and Women's Institute (WI). The WVS was set up in 1938, initially to train women to assist with ARP duties. It soon developed a broader scope – assisting with evacuation and billeting, running canteens, rest centres and first aid posts. Grayshott came under the Alton Urban & Rural group, and village ladies like Elizabeth Peskett helped with activities such as housing evacuees, clothing collections, knitting groups and cooking. From 1942 their delightfully named Rural Meat Pie Scheme delivered up to 3,000 pies each week to local countryside workers. Our Major Wessel was a great fan of the WVS Housewives' Service, which trained women in elementary first aid and ARP. Alton group had several Rest Centres, intended to provide short–term relief for people displaced by bombing, and one was in Grayshott. After a district exercise in November 1943 Grayshott's centre was singled out: 'Grayshott was outstanding, and Mrs Wessel deserves the highest praise for everything'. In the 1944 Book Collection Grayshott raised 10,000 volumes, despite complaints that Haslemere's group had already combed the area and stood accused of poaching!

The WI was formed in WW1, to revitalise rural communities and encourage women to become involved in food production. During WW2 the Grayshott branch had on average about 150 members – over 10% of the village's population – and was the largest


CLOTHING BOOK
GENERAL CB 1/10
This book must not be used until the holder's name, full postal address and National Registration Number have been written below. Detach this book at once and keep it safely. It is your only means of buying clothing.
HOLDER'S NAME KATHLEEN HAVERS (in BLOCK letters)
ADDRESS 88 STATION RD (in BLOCK letters)
ORAYTON PORTSMOUTH
HOLDER'S NATIONAL REGISTRATION No. EDEL 255 2
IF FOUND please take this book to any Food Office or Police Station
FOOD OFFICE CODE No. S 74
THIS BOOK IS NUMBER AH 586056
HOLD Pages I–VIII in one hand and TEAR ALONG THIS LINE
PAGE 1

The precious ration book. Supplies could only be drawn from a person's local shop. The WI helped evacuees such as this lady from Portsmouth to obtain emergency ration books after they arrived in Grayshott.

organisation of women in the district. On 3rd October, 1939 WI High Command issued an instruction to their members 'The main and most necessary work ahead of us is to maintain health, strength and good spirits in the villages'. The ladies of Grayshott immediately went in to action.

Their first priority was to help evacuated mothers and children, initially by making children's clothes and collecting furniture for evacuees' rooms. In due course they formed an Evacuees' Club, so people from afar could meet and maintain a sense of their original community. Another immediate task was the provision of comforts for the troops. Two work depots were opened, and during the course of the war 145 village women produced over 11,000 kitted and sewn items, including socks, overcoats, jumpers and gloves. They also took in washing and mending for Canadian soldiers at Bramshott Hospital, and washed and mended the socks of soldiers of the Army searchlight unit (located in a field west of the Recreation Ground, now Waggoners Estate). Letters of thanks were received, among others, from a club for Free Frenchmen in London saying how proud they were of the first pyjamas they had ever possessed.

Fundraising was a WI speciality. To address the deficit of spending on the war effort the government set up a War Savings Campaign. Numerous themed savings events were promoted, such as War Weapons Week, Spitfire Fund, Wings for Victory, Salute the Soldier, Warship Week and Tanks for Attack. Our ladies formed a War Savings Group to progress the appeals. During the 1941 War Weapons Week they saved enough to clothe and re–equip eight soldiers at £6–17s each. After that they set their sights upon raising £100 for a machine gun (for the Army, not the WI). The following year they fancied a light ambulance at £300, which they exceeded at £311–0–6d, on top of £86–0–6d for Tanks for Attack and £28–16–6d for Warship Week. The schoolchildren raised another £171–10s for Warship Week, both of which when added to the Alton District's pot earned Grayshott a share in sponsoring the destroyer HMS Eglinton.

Grayshott's Warship, HMS Eglinton. Our contribution only covered about 0.04% of its construction cost, but nonetheless made a connection between civilians and sailors. She bombarded Sword Beach on D–Day.

In 1940 Grayshott's schoolchildren collected £4 towards the Alton district's Spitfire Fund, which went towards Spitfire MkIIa serial number P8173. It was allocated to 266 Rhodesian Squadron at Wittering. On 3rd July 1941 it was shot down whilst escorting Blenheim bombers over France. The pilot, Sergeant Thoburn, was wounded but survived to be made a PoW. We hope he received some of Grayshott's Ladies' knitted comforts during his stay at Stalag 357. An advertisment for a subsequent savings drive read 'Avenge your Spitfire by lending for Lancasters'. Grayshott again contributed to Alton's kitty, which purchased six Lancaster bombers.

Meanwhile the collection boxes were rattled for numerous other good causes, such as the St John's Ambulance, Rural Red Cross, Poppy Appeal, Prisoners of War Fund, Malta's Hospitals, Queen Charlotte's Hospital, Aid to Russia Fund and United Aid to China. There cannot have been an ounce of small change left in Grayshott by war's end.

Perhaps the greatest combined success of Grayshott's WI and WVS was their collaboration in establishing and running a canteen for Canadian troops, in the Scout Hut (now the British Legion hut, which was itself partly built by Canadian soldiers just after WW1). It was open every morning and evening and two afternoons per week, staffed

almost entirely by WI and WVS volunteers. The record service was 670 meals in one day. Two unwelcome visitors were a pair of soldiers who escaped from the military prison in Headley Down, broke into the canteen, drank beer and ate, cut a hole through the office wall, extracted the safe, loaded it on to a wheelbarrow, carried it ¾ of a mile, left it unopened with its contents of £174 intact, then went back to their cell. They were bound over to keep the peace for 12 months, official warlike activities presumably excluded.

The WI's only notable failure was their Fruit Preservation Centre. Despite Mrs Western of Windwhistle House kindly lending her hut to use as a workshop, and a good supply of volunteers, the scheme failed due to actual fruit being almost entirely lacking.

All of this was in addition to the WI continuing their peace–time round of jumble sales, tea mornings, concerts, plays, talks, recitals and welfare work. Hundreds of Grayshott's people were of course living with the background strain of their loved ones off at war, and companiable busyness must have lifted many spirits.

'My father was in tanks, in the desert with Monty. He was injured and ended up in hospital in Jerusalem. Mum didn't hear from him for a year and thought he was dead.'

Monica Patten.

Other village recreations, aside from scavenging keys, planting potatoes or detonating tracers, were generally the simple pleasures. Walking and cycling were popular for those with surplus energy. Waggoners Wells was a favoured destination, as was the Sally Lunn, a cafe beside the A3 at Hindhead. The Rex cinema in Haslemere and the Regent in Farnham catered for filmgoers. Fish & chips were a favourite after-film treat and deemed so essential to civilian morale that they were never rationed, although often in short supply.

Life in Grayshott may have been fun for kids and generally wearying for adults, but even with the air battles overhead there was relatively little real menace or persistent danger. Paula Johnson (née Weimers) was a child in Amsterdam throughout, and she had a very different war.

'I was only seven when the war broke out, so it didn't mean that much to me at the time. It started to become serious when the blackout came, we weren't allowed to show any lights at all. One night there was BANG BANG BANG on the door because we had light coming from an upstairs window.

When the Germans came, at first I found it rather fun to have soldiers here, whether they were English or Dutch or German. But the Dutch were really treated as under–persons. There was a rule that if any German was killed in front of a house, a person in the house would be killed in revenge. One morning my mother opened the window and a dead man was in front of our house. But it was not an important man so it didn't matter.

There was a Jewish community in Amsterdam. We had in our street a family of Jews. We weren't close friends but the children were nice. One morning they weren't there any more. The father of a friend of mine had to wear the Jewish star. I always remember when he came in to the church he wore a big overcoat to cover it. The father of another friend of mine was Jewish, he worked high up in a bank. The Germans got him, he had to work as forced labour at Schipol Airport.

At the end there was no food in Amsterdam, The Hunger Winter. At the last Easter my sisters and I went on our bicycles to an egg farm. We came home with 59 eggs! People would go out on their bicycles to find food in the surrounding countryside. Then the Germans would stand at the entrance to Amsterdam and take their food. My brother, ten years older than me, was training to be a priest. He wore his white collar and the Germans didn't stop him. My parents were skeletons at the end of the war. There was no gas, no electricity. My mother said 'It doesn't matter, we have 56 candles!'

We were liberated on 5th May, 1945, I think. One awful, nasty thing was that we were not allowed to have radios, so we didn't know what was happening, only rumours. Some people had secret radios and they could let us know what was happening. My father said to my mother 'Don't go outside, it isn't clear yet.' There were still Germans around, there was still shooting.'

Amsterdam was liberated by 1st Canadian Corps, and the summer of 1945 is still known in the Netherlands as the 'Canadian Summer'. On 7th May a crowd gathered in Dam square to welcome the Canadians. Germans inside the Groote Club opened fire with machine guns, killing 32 civilians and wounding over 100 before they were suppressed. Paula's father had given good advice.

Soldiers were regular callers to the Simmonds' house on Crossways Road, and doubtless many others, as guests rather than occupiers or liberators. Various Bobs, Bills, Berts and Jims feature in Betty's diary, as house visitors as well as dates.

'Oh yeah. We went out with a lot of them.' *Betty*

17th January 1943. Scott and Judd came down for Molly and I and we all went to the Sally Lunn.

There are moments of melancholy too. The very next day:

12th January 1943. Bill came in. Brigade HQ going away on Friday or Saturday.

16th January 1943. Very quiet without our tankers around.

It wasn't all congenial though. Betty frequently wrote of the harassment that she and sister Midge, as young women, endured through unwanted soldierly attention. They bought military style clothing from the Army & Navy Store in Guildford to deflect unwelcome advances.

'Put on my officer's clobber and Flip, Midge and I went for a walk over Golden valley. Quite a relief not to have troops jawing to us'.

Although she could look after herself:

'Punched a Canadian for scaring Pad [her dog, a constant companion]. Carry knife in future'.

The offensive behaviour of even a tiny percentage of the thousands of troops in the area still amounted to frequent irritation, although Betty doesn't confess to actually stabbing any of them.

Crossway House, August 1941. 'Victor and Paddy in our back garden'. Soldiers and civilians alike enjoyed the semblance of normality generated by our villagers' hospitality.

Meanwhile, at the other end of the village, Grayshott Hall was owned by John Stanley Coombe Beard and his wife Amelia. Beard, an artillery officer in the previous war, was an architect; before the war he designed cinemas and theatres, during it he worked for the Air Ministry. In July 1940 he tried renting the Hall 'for the duration of the war plus six months', and unsurprisingly, despite its 'very good ARP shelter', with the German Army freshly installed across the Channel there were no takers. Remarkably it wasn't requisitioned for government use, even when southern England filled with men and machines in the run–up to D–Day.

FOUND SOLACE IN THE CELLAR!

FREDERICK THOMPSON was a good butler.

For three years he was with Mr. John S. C. Beard, of Grayshott Hall, Hampshire.

Thompson also had a taste for good wine.

Sherry, brandy, hock, port, champagne—he was a connoisseur of them all.

Unfortunately, his employer's cellar suffered . . . to the tune of £250

That was the figure Mr. Beard quoted when he told this story at Whitehill police court yesterday.

Thompson, who is 36 and is now in the Forces, was sentenced to six months' hard labour for stealing £73 worth of liquor.

He told the Bench he had the whole responsibility of the house, was run down and found solace in the cellar.

The only recorded war damage at the Hall was to its wine cellar, in 1941. The butler, claiming to feel run down, according to The Herald 'found solace in the cellar'. To buoy him up he pilfered sherry, brandy, hock, port and champagne to the value of £250 (about £11,000 in 2025), which earned him six months hard labour.

The booze was the Beard's lesser loss. On 18th April 1942 their son Richard, a Pilot Officer in the RAF, was killed in a crash. He was flying as co–pilot in a Boston bomber on a routine flight over Kent when his pilot, a more senior officer, decided to fly an aerobatic display over his girlfriend's home. He wasn't as good a pilot as he thought and crashed, killing all three on board.

The Americans didn't descend upon Grayshott, but to some of today's residents who then lived elsewhere they became a familiar sight.

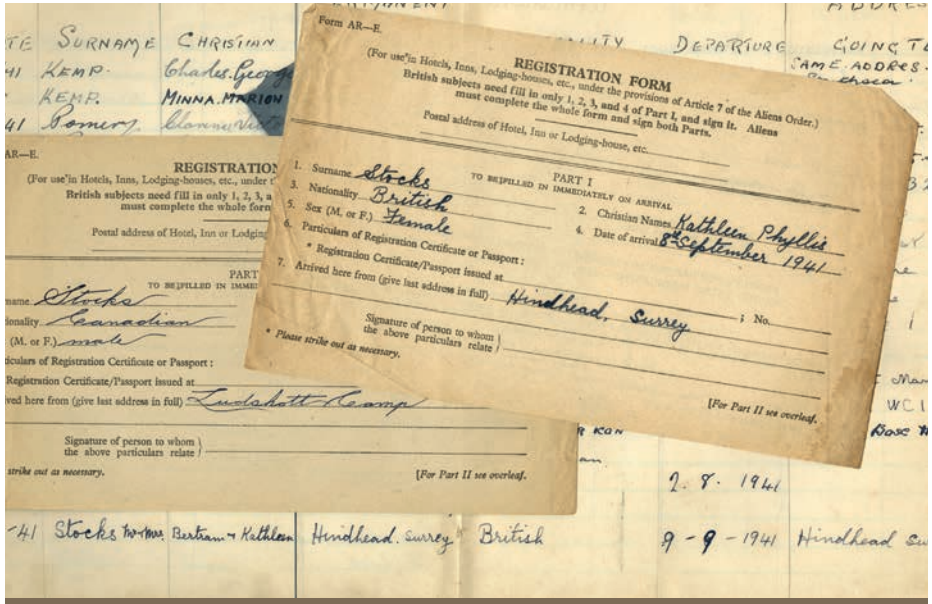
'Our area, Hythe, was swarming with Americans. We used to ask for things like 'Give us a gum, chum' and magazines. We saw things we'd never heard of before, like refrigerators. Mum got angry once because, with the coast being a high security zone, she had to ask an American for permission to travel to her parents in Poole!'

Rae Boxall.

'In Exeter we were mystified by strange new arrivals. There were thousands and thousands of them, their lorries and tanks filled the roads, all heading west. Of course, they were Americans.'

Pamela Bleach.

During pre–war decades Grayshott was a tourist village, with dozens of small hotels, B&Bs and rooms to let. With being in a militarised zone it might be thought that travel and holidays came to a halt, but not so. The visitors book from a guest house in Crossways Road shows a regular intake of lodgers, mostly single men – business travellers and servicemen in transit – British, Irish, American, Canadian, one Russian, and occasional couples.



Bertram Stocks, a Canadian Soldier from Ludshott Camp, had a one–night honeymoon in Grayshott with his new wife Kathleen. If their descendants read this, we'd love to know more of their story.

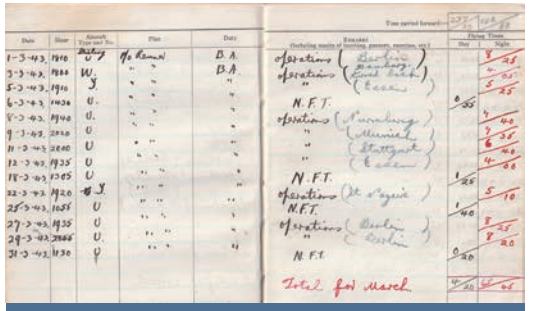
Also in Crossways Road, village GP Dr Arnold Lyndon entertained house guests. In May 1943 he was host to a relative, Sergeant Observer Ian McColl, and his companion Pilot Officer Bob Renner, both of the Royal New Zealand Air Force. Bob was the pilot of Stirling bomber 'Te Kooti' of 15 Squadron, based at RAF Mildenhall, Suffolk, and Ian

Ian McColl, standing in front of the door, with his crewmates beside Stirling BK611 'Te Kooti'. Bob Renner is on the far left.

was his front gunner and bomb aimer. Together they had just finished their tour of duty, consisting of thirty operational missions over enemy territory.

As well as being unimaginably brave, they were lucky. Only 25% of Bomber Command aircrew completed a tour unscathed. Half of them were killed.

On their final operation McColl and Renner were tasked to drop a special bomb which had been displayed in Trafalgar Square, plastered with savings stamps during the 'Wings for Victory' week. Renner wrote of the flight 'We took off in

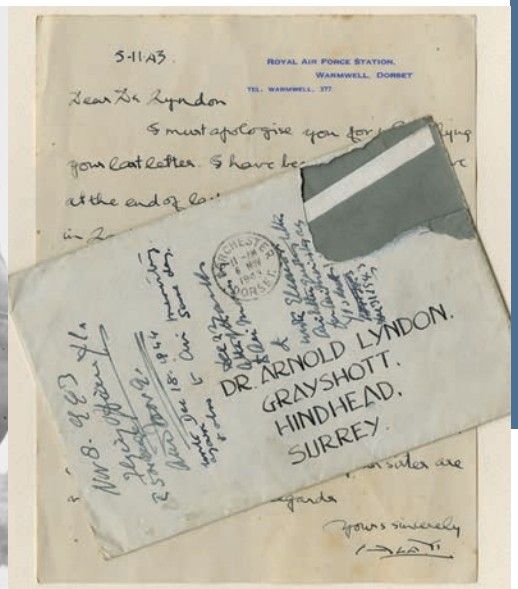


McColl's logbook for March 1943, during which he flew nine operational missions over enemy soil including three to the most heavily defended and feared target of all – Berlin.

a gale and had to cross the North Sea low because of icing conditions ... at one time ice was flying off the propeller blades, striking the aircraft with a noise like flak.'

For these young men, every day of life was a gift. For farmer's son Ian, a week–long visit to Uncle Arnold in the beautiful English countryside must have been a lifeline, an interlude of normality in unimaginable contrast to his nightly duties. The story of Te Kooti, its crew and their special bomb was published in newspapers during Ian and Bob's stay in Grayshott. We can imagine they didn't have to pay for their own beer that week. Both survived the war and returned home safely.

Another of Lyndon's guests was less fortunate. Burmese Flying Officer Maung Hla Yi, RAF, met McColl whilst training in New Zealand and an invitation was extended to visit Arnold upon his posting to England. This duly happened, whilst Yi was flying Typhoon fighters with 257 (Burma) Squadron. Shortly afterwards, on 31st December 1943, Yi went missing whilst escorting a bomber raid over the Channel. He chased two German fighters into cloud, one of which he shot down, and was never seen again. It took Lyndon a year to establish that the Air Ministry had presumed his death.



Flying Officer Yi at left, with three of his Burmese comrades and his last letter to Arnold Lyndon.

There was quite a lot of fear, I suppose. I think my first reading lessons were the signs – 'Walls Have Ears' – 'Don't Speak to Strangers' – that sort of thing. Living in a village, if you saw a stranger or a car go by you would always have a good look.'

Rae Boxall.

Civilians were drilled to be on the lookout for German spies, Fifth Columnists and parachutists dressed as nuns. No surplus nuns were reported in Grayshott but young Graham Yarborough had another exciting moment.

'My sister was down from Oxford University and we took a walk in the Golden Valley. We went over the top of what was then Lawrence's Farm and continued on, but got off the beaten track. I suddenly found the ground underneath me springy so we stopped and explored. Over the top of a perfectly cylindrical eight foot radius hole some six feet deep were removable boards disguised as the local terrain. Inside on cut shelves were matches and candles and signs that other equipment had been standing in there. We ran like the wind after replacing some of the boards we had removed from the hole. We reported it to the military and later our family heard that this was not the first such find. We later found out that it was one of several used by agents to shine signal lights to guide German aircraft to Aldershot.'

For most of our villagers the prospect of discovering an enemy spy pit was pretty remote, and we'll give the last word on wartime daily life to Betty:

Tuesday 4th May, 1943. Same as yesterday.

THE HOME GUARD

On 10th May 1940 Germany launched its attack on Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg and France, and within ten days had punched through to the English Channel. The speed and surprise of the Blitzkrieg – *Lightning War* – shocked the nation and on the evening of 14th May Antony Eden, Secretary of State for War, gave a radio broadcast announcing the formation of the Local Defence Volunteers. Open to men between the ages of 17 and 65 who were not in military service, the response was instant and overwhelming. By July there were 1.5 million volunteers, and the LDV was renamed the Home Guard.

Grayshott's men responded as quickly as the rest and in due course became Number 15 Platoon, D Company, 24th Hampshire Home Guard. Their commanding officer was Captain JW Slater DCM, and he had charge of around 40 of our citizen soldiers. He was always accompanied by his two whippets.

Grayshott's defenders in the early LDV days, drilling on the lawn of Grayshott Hall. Like the rest of their comrades they had to make do with a motley assortment of shotguns, wooden rifles, cardigans and cast–off oddments of uniforms. Here practising their anti–parachutist tactics.

The hapless 'Dad's Army' image as put forth in the 1960's TV series of the name has rather stuck but it belies the fact that many of these men were combat veterans of earlier wars. Captain Slater's DCM was the second highest award for gallantry, after the VC, and the group photo opposite shows that at least half are wearing medal ribbons as testimony to prior service.

After the war Captain Slater recalled a training exercise with the Royal Sussex Young Soldiers Regiment. These professionals had commented that Grayshott were using out of date methods. Notwithstanding, 'In a night exercise, using techniques and experience gained in WW1 and India the Home Guard captured the Sussex Headquarters in Kingswood Firs. There was a heck of a scrap. The umpire awarded the battle to the Grayshott Platoon!'

GRAYSHOTT HOME GUARD DURING WW II

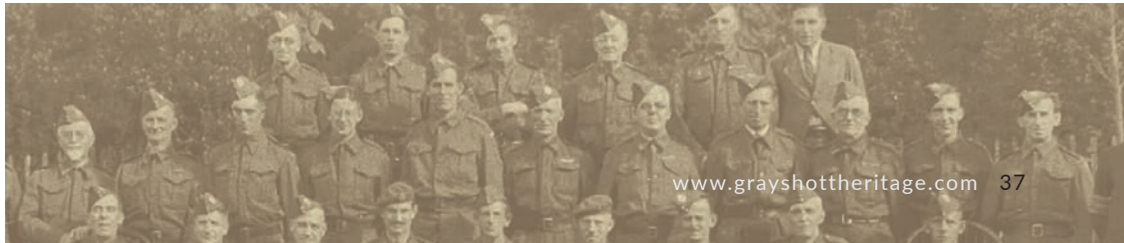
Commanding Officer: Capatain J. W. Slater, D.C.M.

The Grayshott Platoon. Captain Slater is in the second row, sitting, at centre between the two chaps in berets. In the same row at second from left is Will Simmonds, father of Betty. A baker and confectioner by trade, he was the platoon cook. The gentleman at centre front with goggles is Joe Johnson, the platoon's motorcycle messenger.

In time the Home Guard became equipped with proper uniforms and weapons, including machine guns, hand grenades and sniper rifles. They were trained in battle tactics derived from guerrilla warfare as well as those of regular infantry.

'Dad had joined up in WW1 whilst under age. I remember him bringing his Home Guard rifle home and leaning it up against the wall. It was as tall as I was at the time.'

Peter Bentley, speaking of his father, Frederick.



Private William Thomas Peskett, circa 1942. By now the Home Guard had given over their knitted cardies and flannel trousers to official army uniform. Here Private P models the double–breasted greatcoat, made of wool and specially designed to absorb a vast volume of rainwater, a forage cap, designed to keep off hardly any rain at all, his gas mask satchel and the dreaded 'ammunition boots' – carved from solid leather, hobnailed and the ruination of millions of feet and parquet floors the length and breadth of the country. 'Tom' as he was known to his family was a surveyor by trade, working for the local building firm Chapman, Lowry & Puttick. They were contracted on bomb damage repair work in Portsmouth, and billeted down there Monday–Friday in a requisitioned council house in Euston Road.

Grayshott had sufficient warriors to form a 'battle platoon', which was a largely independent unit charged with defending a defined local area. In the event of an invasion our gentlemen would have set up a local strongpoint, cleared it of civilians and defended it until their ammunition ran out. In concert with neighbouring platoons they would have created a system of defence in depth, supporting each other's fields of fire and capitalising on their intimate knowledge of the terrain to set up ambushes and sniper nests.

Fanciful? Not at all. Given the courage shown by resistance organisations on the continent, there is no real doubt that our Home Guard would have fought with equal commitment to protect their families and homeland if called. In fact, several wargame simulations of a German invasion run at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst in the 1970s resulted in the enemy being halted every time at the GHQ Line – a fortified defence line across southern England – the German army being ground down by tenacious resistance and starved of supplies by the Royal Navy blockading the Channel. Recent wars have shown that an attacker's overwhelming advantage of numbers is no guarantee of quick success against determined defenders on their own soil.

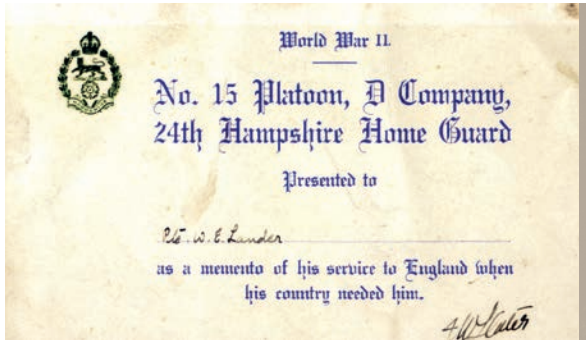
'A wooden post was erected in Crossways Road near the Post Office as a Bren Gun mount, facing the Portsmouth Road. Upon enquiring why it was facing that particular direction I was informed the Germans would come from Portsmouth.'

Hitler knew where we lived! By 1938 the German High Command had made their own copies of Ordnance Survey maps of the entire country. But could they have outwitted the Grayshott Home Guard?

The lone Bren gun may sound a bit hopeful, but Home Guard units were issued with copious training manuals which were completely frank about the situation's reality. Some typical instructions:

'Don't pursue any enemy who withdraw – shoot them' and
'Attack the enemy as soon as you can .... but at all costs kill'.

Luckily for the German military machine, with the exception of occasional crashed Luftwaffe aircrew their resolve against our Dad's Army was never tested. Hitler preferred to invade Russia instead, which went a bit wrong for him. The Home Guard was formally stood down on 3rd December 1944, following the successful D–Day landings and push towards Germany. At the time they cannot have been aware of the enduring legend they had created in the national memory of wartime Britain.


World War II

No. 15 Platoon, D Company,
24th Hampshire Home Guard

Presented to

Pte. W. E. Lander

as a memento of his service to England when his country needed him.

THE CANADIANS

By WW2 Grayshott was well used to the presence of soldiers. The Aldershot Command's training area had long encompassed Grayshott, Bramshott and Headley. Mass manoeuvres were held on Ludshott Common in the 1890s, for which schoolchildren were given days off to watch. The Fox & Pelican was a favourite destination of soldiers from Bordon Camp, and during WW1 thousands of Canadian Soldiers were billeted in huge camps around our villages.

In 1940 they came back, at first to Bordon, then in 1941 four camps were built more locally; Huron and Ontario Camps on Bramshott Common, Erie Camp at Headley Down (now the site of Heatherlands estate) and Superior Camp in the north–east corner of Ludshott Common.

Right: Ludshott Common, lower left, was a tank training area, scalped of vegetation. Grayshott Hall at centre looks pristine by comparison. The land opposite, now housing estates, was productive farmland. Superior Camp is at lower right.

Left: Just about in Grayshott – The tank bays opposite Ludshott, where Fairlands now is. Cyclists will be familiar with the 33 nut–crunching ruts across the road here. They are ghosts of expansion joints in the Canadians' concrete track beneath the modern tarmac.

Although the only camp in our parish was the tank park opposite Ludshott Common, inevitably the pub, canteen, cafes, shops and girls of Grayshott enticed the soldiers from Headley and Bramshott in our direction. The attraction was reciprocated. For a population already jaded by austerity and still waiting for any decisive upturn in the war situation, the influx of strong, fit young men with flashy accents, tales of far–off places and plenty of food and beer was irresistible.

School was closed at 12 o'clock today in order to allow the children to attend a party given by the Canadian military authorities. School Log, 23rd December, 1942.

'The place was full of Canadians, most were generous and friendly. Great Christmas parties were held at the Superior Camp, Father Christmas would be present in a Bren Gun carrier handing out sweets. Lorries would come round to take you. There were presents, a film show and food the like one had never seen before.'

Our boys

Inevitably with young men thousands of miles from home there were some frictions – drunkenness, theft and a few cases of assault – but by and large the Canadians were welcomed on arrival and fondly remembered long after they left. They rigged up a baseball pitch on the cricket field and a diving board at Waggoners Wells. The pubs of Headley and Bramshott were always rammed full so Canucks from the Ludshott end preferred to walk up to Grayshott for a quieter beer. Although not always that quiet...

*** Newsflash ***

Raymond Dugay, a Canadian, was fined £3 at Whitehill Magistrates' Court on Monday for assaulting William Roland Howden, Licensee of the Fox and Pelican Hotel, Grayshott .... when he was told to leave the premises at closing time.

Many families welcomed Canadian soldiers into their homes, making surrogate sons of them and perhaps hoping that by doing so fate would be kind to their own men in service. The author's family lived in Hartley Wintney, twenty miles north of Grayshott, and their garden backed on to a Canadian camp. They adopted several Canadians. Grandfather Sid was a keen poacher and gardener and grandmother Elsie was a cook at the NAAFI. Between them they'd trade fresh eggs and home–made game pies in return

for ciggies, tools and chocolate. They continued to exchange letters after the soldiers left for France, then well into the 1970s, until their generation passed.

'The Canadian showers were down the common, outside the WI hut. When the soldiers were in there we used to nip down and hoik up the canvas screens for a peek. My older sister liked the Canadians a bit too much. Several times dad had to lock her in her bedroom to keep her away from them. We had tanks right at the end of the garden, the Elgin Regiment. I was born on 6th June 1932. On my 12th birthday, 6th June 1944, I drew back my curtains and they'd all gone, pulled out overnight. Then we sat and listened to the wireless and found out why.'

Doreen Willis, the author's mum.

George of the South Saskatchewan Regiment with the author's mum.

The Canadians were popular with our boys as well as the girls:

'There was a gravel box at the end of School Road, a good viewing point for military activities. One day a dog was run over by a Bren Gun carrier, the crew were mortified and handed out sweets'

Graham Maguire.

The Sherbrookes bringing their Sherman tanks ashore on Juno Beach.

'Before D–Day, night after night tanks rumbled through, there were tanks everywhere. Ludshott Common was a sea of mud'.

Most of the Canadians left our area before D–Day, to concentrate at embarkation camps nearer to the ports. Grayshott's personal Canadian tankers were A Squadron of the Sherbrooke Fusilier Regiment, from the Ludshott tank park. They landed on Juno Beach on D–Day, part of the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade, and fought through Europe until VE–Day.

GETTING AROUND

In the 1930s Grayshott had four motor garages along Headley Road, plus Fred Harris's motorbike and cycle shop in Crossways. It was a remarkably motor–minded village. That came to an end in September 1939 with the advent of petrol rationing. For private users the allowance amounted to about 200 miles per month. The average private mileage was 600 miles per month, so the ration imposed an immediate difficulty for most motorists. In March 1942 petrol for private motoring was withdrawn altogether, after which it was available only to farmers, commercial users and key workers such as doctors. The nation's driveways and garages became home to cars raised up on blocks and covered by dustsheets, awaiting better times.

The motoring press was full of hints and tips to help motorists make their petrol ration go further.

In Grayshott, where most people still worked very locally, walking and cycling became the norm. People who weren't already fit and trim soon became so.

'Hodgkinson, the doctor, did his rounds on a bicycle.'

'Gould and Chapman, undertakers, had a motor–cycle and sidecar upon which a coffin was transported.'

'At Coxhead and Welch, the ironmonger's and electrical engineer's men only had bicycles to go out on.'

'Nurse Cuff at first did her rounds on a bicycle, later on a Norman autocycle.'

Our boys.

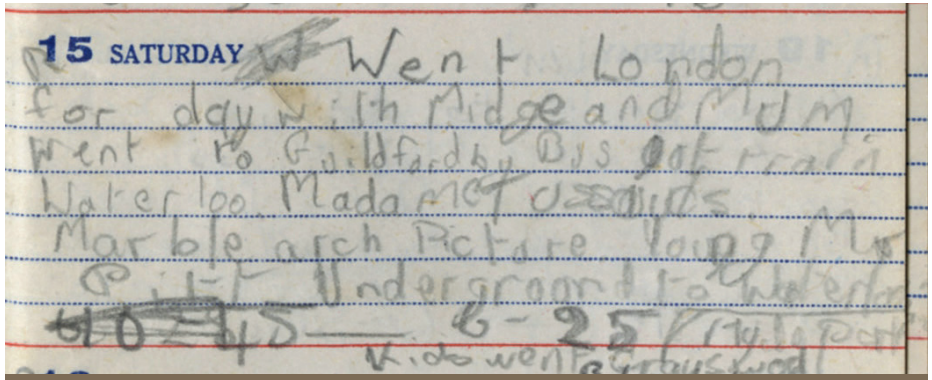
During the war's first winter the roads were more dangerous than the Germans. The blackout, along with dimmed headlamps (as an anti–aircraft precaution), caused a huge increase in accidents. Pedestrians were encourage to wear something white, but it didn't always work...

*** Newsflash * September 15 1939**

Motor–Cyclist Injured. In attempting to avoid some pedestrians on the Headley–Grayshott Road on Sunday night whilst returning to his home from Hindhead on his motor–cycle, Mr JW Marshall, a Headley bus driver, was thrown from his machine.

Despite poor Mr Marshall's mishap the buses maintained service throughout, the Haslemere to Grayshott ones becoming overcrowded even when running every 30 minutes. Trips to Guildford, Haslemere, Petersfield and Farnham could continue pretty much as normal.

The trains kept running too, although often disrupted by bombing and tediously slow. The London Blitz ended in May 1941, after which the capital was relatively bomb–free until spring of 1944, and days out became possible. The city lights may have been not so bright but still a treat for 18–year old Betty in August 1942.



'Went London for day with Midge and Mum. Went to Guildford by bus got train Waterloo Madame Tussaud's Marble Arch Picture 'Young Mr Pitt' Hyde Park Underground to Waterloo.'

Our local bus company, the Aldershot and District, was ordered to convert some of its fleet to ambulances, such as this Dennis Lancet, for transporting air raid casualties and wounded servicemen. Fortunately none of Grayshott's citizens needed a free ride in one.

With the roads all but empty of civilian traffic, the army had them almost to themselves. The tanks based in Headley used not only Ludshott for their training but also Thursley, Frensham and Hankley Commons. They had to drive there along our narrow lanes, with predictable effects. A Canadian CO ordered that any crew who damaged walls etc would be responsible for repairing them within 48 hours.

Most of our tank crews soon became very proficient as stone masons'

Harvey Theobald, tanker, Fort Garry Horse.

Churchill tanks on the Portsmouth road, waiting to embark for Normandy. Grayshott's contribution to Tanks For Attack week helped our WVS parent group of Alton to sponsor a Churchill of the Grenadier Guards. Its crew was sent monthly parcels of gifts, including jam and face flannels. WVS reported: 'The villagers are delighted with the idea. Our adopted tank, Alton III, is in France now, and writes the most delightful letters to us, their godmothers. They assure us that they NEVER take prisoners, and that they are known as 'Churchill's Butchers' by the Germans. A letter received today was signed 'One of your fighting godsons'. Their spirit is terrific'.

Civilian drivers had to adapt to encounters with tanks on the village roads.

'Learning to drive with my father in his van (I wasn't really old enough but times were different then) we were held up by army vehicles, this time tanks. Just by Lloyds Bank [now flats, next to Marlborough House] there was a mighty bang from the tank in front, its right side track had broken. The huge link somehow missed us and embedded itself in a large fir tree in the garden of Dr Hodgekinson's house opposite. Hazardous days!

One incident I heard of later from my parents when I was abroad in the Navy was that a Canadian tank had ripped away the side of my father's van above the wheels. Unfazed, my father jumped into his van and shakily caught up with the convoy to complain. The damage was repaired and I gather he occasionally had a box of Canadian cigarettes dropped in after that'.

Graham Yarborough.

The Canadian dispatch rider school was at Bordon, and they trained in off-road riding at the Devil's Punch Bowl.

There were occasional dramas as Canadian motorcyclists rode through Grayshott.

*** Newsflash * September 17th 1943**

After a Girl's Wave or Smile.

When John Cameron, a Canadian dispatch rider, was charged at Whitehill Magistrates' Court on Monday with careless driving, it was alleged that when a girl waved to him he swerved across the road in front of a milk van which was following. The van collided with Cameron, and then hit a telegraph post, which was broken in half by the force of the collision. The van was wrecked .... The driver of the van, Richard John Martin White of 1, The Avenue, Grayshott said that the girl waved to Cameron, but the girl, Kathleen Meek, of St Anne's Lodge, Headley Road, Grayshott, said that she did not wave but only smiled at Cameron and then walked on. The next thing she heard was a crash, but she did not see anything. Cameron, in evidence, denied that he intended to follow the girl, and said he raised his hand to adjust his goggles, when there was a bang and he was knocked unconscious. He said he might have swerved when he raised his hand from the handlebar. He was fined £5.

Luckily for the Canadians they only had Hitler's crack SS Panzer Division to distract their progress in Normandy, not Grayshott's girls.

THOSE WHO SERVED

Hundreds of our villagers' family members served in uniform. We can't possibly feature them all, so here follows a representative selection – RAF, RN, Army and WAAF. These few speak for the many.

Royal Air Force – Sergeant Frank Harris, Air Gunner

Frank was the youngest son of George and Emily Harris of Cosy Cottage down in Stoney Bottom. He joined the RAF and in 1943 trained to become an Air Gunner.

Frank at the passing out of his Air Gunnery course, the tall lad at rear, left of centre.

He was posted to 50 Squadron at RAF Station Skellingthorpe, which flew Lancasters. Frank was a tail gunner. His turret was right at the back of the aircraft, accessible only by crawling along the fuselage and through a tiny clam–shell door. His job was to use his turret's four Browning .303 machine guns to defend the aircraft against enemy night fighters, who would attempt to stalk their target from its blind spot behind and below. Frank sat on his own in the pitch dark, usually freezing cold as the temperature sank to a low as –40°C, twenty feet from his nearest crewmate, constantly scanning the sky for fighters. If his aircraft was struck his only ways out were to try crawling back through the fuselage to a hatch, or rotate his turret, open the door and roll out backwards into the night. Like all RAF aircrew, Frank was a volunteer – he did this of his own free will. The courage of these young men is breathtaking.

50 Squadron flew many night raids over Germany, each of 8–10 hours duration. At 8:26pm on 29th August, 1944, Frank's Lancaster LM222 took off from Skellingthorpe to raid Koenigsberg. They'd been there before, three nights previously, but this time failed to return to base. In 1949 it was reported from German documents that LM222 crashed on 30th August 1944, about 12 miles north–east of Neuhausen, near Koenigsberg. All seven crew members died. Political circumstances at the time made it impossible for British officials to visit the scene of the crash to obtain details of their burial place, and they are therefore recorded as having no known grave. Frank was 21 years old. He is commemorated on panel 231 at the Runnymede Air Forces Memorial.

Frank Harris, Air Gunner, killed in action 30th August 1944.

'He was on both Konigsberg raids but never returned. That broke my grandmother's heart, he was the baby of the family. He is the young man we all think about on Armistice Day.'

Andrew Harris, Frank's great–nephew.

Three of Frank's brothers also served – Chris as a despatch rider, and Philip and Fred as infantry soldiers. All returned, but we can only imagine the anxiety of parents with four sons on active service.

Royal Navy – Edward Garner, Telegraphist

Edward George Garner, known as Buster, was born in 1923 to Arthur and Maggie Garner of Beech Cottage in Crossways Road. Arthur was a plumber in the family building firm, Garner & Puttick, said to have been 'an artist in lead', and young Buster followed him into the trade as an apprentice. Buster's son Mike continues the story:

'At the outbreak of WW2 my father was too young to enlist. He tried though, and was signed up to the Army – when his mother stormed down to the recruiting office, gave then a hard time by all accounts, and he was released. After this he naturally joined the Grayshott Home Guard. As a 16 year old my dad must have skipped doing some duties and his commanding officer – a WW1 veteran – put him on a charge. As the family story went, the implication was that my Dads' prospects of enlisting would be affected. So my grandmother asked her neighbour, WW1 hero Commander Edward Unwin VC, for a reference to help Buster get in to the Navy, which he duly provided. Dad was always proud of that character reference!

Ultimately Dad joined the Navy and became a Telegraphist. His war service included a lot of time on board mine sweepers; as part of the war of the Atlantic, around Cherbourg during D–Day clearing mines, and subsequently at the Battle of the Scheldt, and the entrance to Antwerp Harbour, an important but largely forgotten event of late 1944. He often recalled how his minesweeper was moored in Antwerp docks, the deck level well below the dock, being a small craft. The population was starving, a deliberate Nazi policy. The crew were eating and looking up saw a crowd of hungry people, and gave them their rations.

After demob, coming home with a demob suit and the small cash sum they all got, there was no work or prospects. So Dad reenlisted and continued in the Navy until 1952'.

Buster's ship from 1943 was the Round Table class minesweeper HMT Sir Gareth. Based on a trawler design, Sir Gareth was 125 feet long, displaced 450 tons, had a complement of 35 and was lightly armed for self–defence. At the time of D–Day Sir Gareth was part of 131 Flotilla, itself part of Operation Neptune, which was the Navy component of the Overlord landings. Everyone is familiar with the images of troops storming the beaches

Buster's ship, HMT Sir Gareth. As the telegraphist Buster's station was close to the bridge, in the structure amidships.

and warships bombarding the German fortifications, but ahead of all that went the minesweepers. The sea approaches to Normandy were heavily mined, and overnight on 5/6th June 350 or so minesweepers cleared ten channels for the thousands of ships of the following invasion fleet. On D–Day, the minesweepers were the point of the spearhead. All of them survived the day.

Buster Garner RN, Telegraphist.

After D–Day, as the allies advanced, the minesweepers continued to clear the seas and estuaries off the coast of France, Belgium and Holland. This culminated in November 1944 with the clearing of the Scheldt estuary, to allow maritime access to the port of Antwerp. At 30 minutes past midnight on 4th November Sir Gareth along with 80 or so others left port in Deal, Kent and crossed the channel to commence sweeping. Some of the work was done under the gunfire from shore batteries. The first minesweepers reached Antwerp later that day, the first Allied ships to arrive there since 1940 – leading the way, again. Antwerp was found to be in chaos, owing to the enemy V1 and V2 rockets fired on it. Buster's memory of starving civilians was accurate. Fully clearing the estuary of mines continued for another month, and enabled the Allied armies to shorten their supply line for the subsequent push into Holland and Germany.

Army – Sergeant Stan Kendrick, Royal Corps of Signals

Stan Kendrick was a professional soldier. He enlisted in 1935 and became a motorcycle despatch rider with the Royal Corps of Signals. His tasks were varied and included carrying messages, escorting convoys and conducting reconnaissance ahead of advancing troops. It was dangerous work. As well as the risk of coming a cropper through accidents, DRs were popular targets for enemy snipers. They had to be resourceful, not just skilled riders and mechanics but also capable of working on their own initiative.

'My father, Stan Kendrick 2326603, was a despatch rider in the Royal Signals, and was posted to Italy in 1943. He was then 32, and a sergeant. Being a despatch rider he was often ahead of the British troops, and on one occasion arrived at a town which was still unexpectedly held by Germans, who were about to execute the town mayor. When the Germans realised the British were so near they left promptly and so my father was credited with saving the mayor's life!

I remember him sadly saying to me that on one route he'd lose a man a day. He said he preferred to have his men a bit older, as they wouldn't take the risks that the younger men did.'

Pat Kynaston

Stan, second from right, astride his BSA M20 motorbike with the members of his 121 Despatch Rider Section of Air Formation Signals, Italy, 1943.

Here's how Stan tells his story, which happened in September 1943 as his unit was escorting a convoy to the port of Bari in southern Italy:

'We were on our way to Bari when some Italians came running towards us, begging for help. By then Italy was negotiating its surrender with the Allies, which did not please the Germans, and the latter were being ruthless if they came across any similar situations. Four other dispatch riders and I dashed off to the village in question and as we arrived there, more Italians came running up to us, shouting that all the villagers had been rounded up and forced to go to the square to watch the execution of the mayor and his officials. The Italian police were powerless to do anything as they had been disarmed by the Germans and forced to watch too. The German firing squad soldiers were already lined up with their weapons over their shoulders so I immediately opened fire with my Tommy gun and the squad went down. A German officer saw what I had done but before he could shoot me, I gave him a 'figure of eight' burst and down he went too. The mayor of the village was fastened to a chair over at the other side of the square with a German soldier standing over him. As soon as the German realised what was happening, he reached for his gun, but he too received a 'figure of eight' from me. The villagers and the police all came up to me, saying, 'Molto bene'. Although readers of this story may think it was harsh to kill those enemy soldiers, I had no choice – they were about to kill innocent people and would have shot us too. Soon after, my British convoy arrived at the village and the Italians arranged for the officers to stay in the hotel overnight, while the other slept in the vehicles. The next day we continued on to the big port of Bari. The people of Bari were pleased to see the Allies and free accommodation was provided for both the officers and men in the local hotels. Three days later, my commanding officer sent for me and said, 'The Italians want to decorate you, but I'm not letting you go alone – I'm sending three Italian officers with you'. General Bellomo, Commander in Chief of the Italian Forces in Southern Italy performed the decoration ceremony and gave me the Merito Di Guerra.'

Stan right after his adventure. He's wearing the full DR gear – long boots, riding breeches, leather jerkin, gloves, pudding–basin helmet and revolver. His blue and white armband denotes a DR of the Royal Signals and was a go–anywhere passport.

It was fortunate that Stan was carrying his Thompson sub–machine gun. Despatch riders were only officially issued with a revolver, so Stan must have 'found' his Tommy gun unofficially. He survived the war and stayed in the army for many years afterwards. In later life he lived at the Royal Hospital – a 'Chelsea Pensioner' – where he passed away in 2005 at the age of 94.

Stan and Pat at The Royal Hospital. He's wearing his Italian Meriti Di Guerra on his right breast. On his left breast his medals read: 1939–1945 Star; Africa Star; Italy Star; Defence Medal; 1939–1945 War Medal with Oak Leaf for Mention in Despatches; General Service Medal; Elizabeth II Coronation Medal and Long Service & Good Conduct Medal. Stan was also given an award by Germany for intervening to prevent the mistreatment of German PoWs, which must make him quite unusual in receiving awards from his own country and both enemies that he fought.

The Womens' Services – Pam McNichol, WAAF

Under British law servicewomen were forbidden to carry weapons, but they performed countless other uniformed roles. In organisations such as the Auxiliary Territorial Service (Army), Women's Auxiliary Air Force, Women's Royal Naval Service, Air Transport Auxiliary and Queen Alexandra's Royal Amy Nursing Corps they served among other things as radar plotters, drivers, anti–aircraft gun crew, telegraphists, mechanics, mechanics, photo interpreters, cryptanalysts, searchlight operators, pilots and nurses. They also served as clerks, orderlies, cooks, storekeepers etc, as did many of their male counterparts.

From Grayshott – just a small sample – three sisters Kathleen, Evelyn and Betty Grout all served with the WAAF. The WRNS drew Viva Blomfield, Mary Groves, sisters Joan and Lillian Mustill, and Evelyn Duggan, daughter of the bank manager.

Women are often more reticent to discuss their service than men, perhaps a result of it being impressed upon them at the time of the dire consequences of breaching the secrecy surrounding many of their back–room roles. Luckily for us Pam McNichol (née Mills) felt able to record her war years. Pam joined the WAAF in 1941, and having survived the medical, flea inspection and initial square bashing was selected for training as a radar plotter.

Evelyn Duggan's sister Dorothea served with the Women's Land Army – a 'Land Girl' – one of over 200,000 who did so. Land Girls in southern England were issued with tin hats as protection from the shrapnel falling from anti–aircraft guns.

Pam was then posted to RAF Hope Cove in Devon, a radar station servicing the local night fighter and air/sea rescue squadrons. There she worked in the Ground Control Interception (GCI) caravan, part of a small team which tracked aircraft and vectored them onto their targets. It was highly technical and classified work, so engaging it caused her to refuse the offer of a commission to officer status, which would have taken her elsewhere. One of her comrades was Flight Sergeant Jack Nissenthal, whose adventures were later documented in the book Green Beach by James Leasor (a cracking good read).

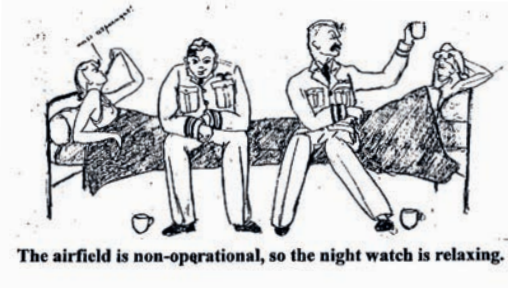
'Whilst serving in the Ops Room at RAF Exeter and billeted at Broadclyst, Exeter city was heavily bombed and I had my 21st birthday cowering in a cupboard under the stairs'.

'Such was the importance of the equipment that all personnel were sworn to secrecy. It was heavily guarded by the RAF Regiment, and high–ranking RAF and Army officers made frequent visits. I remember having to swear the Top Secret oath.

The aircraft were Spitfires and Typhoons for daytime flying, and

first Beaufighters and later the more sophisticated Mosquitos for night flying. 276 Squadron was used for air/sea rescue. It seemed incredible that in the beautiful coastline between Hope Cove and Salcombe were foregathered so many nationalities ... Canadians, Australians and New Zealanders. The expletives and venomous chatter used by the Czechs and Poles when engaged in combat was almost impossible to record as it echoed through the Ops Room.

If I were to pick out one incident which stands out as a nightmare, it would be the night when the airfield was totally non–operational in thick sea–mist. A squadron of Polish fighters returned from France; two were damaged and all were short of fuel. They asked us for help to land .... with none of the modern homing equipment we were helpless and tried to direct them to Exeter. They insisted they could get no further. The runways ran straight from the cliff edges, and in no time at all ten of the squadron had crashed into the cliffs. Two crashed on the runway and one pilot survived. The carnage on the sides of the cliff, found next morning, was appalling, and the words and cries of the pilots over the radio transmitter as they crashed were unforgettable.'



Pam sketched scenes of daily (and nightly) life at Hope Cove.

At Hope Cove, Pam (left) with Margaret Still and Anthony.

There were happier times too – the knowledge of doing an important job well, the companionship of comrades, sunbathing at Beacon Cove and friendships with locals. She acquired a black, curly–tailed mongrel puppy, Anthony, which became the squadron mascot and was on one occasion taken up for a flight in a Spitfire. Lucky dog....

'The friendship which I valued most was with the fisherman, Will Legassick. With no young fishermen to go to sea with him to help pull the pots I eventually persuaded him to take me out in his boat ... Clearly I proved my worth, for I went to sea with him whenever I was off duty and available early in the morning.'

After the war Pam and her husband Martin (the village GP) settled in Grayshott and like many who served she kept touch with wartime friends and places for the rest of her life.

'When I returned to Hope Cove after the war Will gave me my own lobster pot with my initials carved on the floating corks.'

One little aside here. Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery – 'Monty' – was commander of all Allied ground forces during Operation Overlord. Monty's son David attended Amesbury School, and in 1944 Monty used the school as his Rear HQ. It was where he made his final plans for D–Day, and he was frequently visited there by his staff and generals. He valued its seclusion as a place to think, and had used it similarly prior to the invasion of Sicily in 1943. His close neighbour on these occasions was Commander Edward Unwin VC RN (Retd), who lived just across the A3 at the end of Crossways. Unwin had pioneered the use of front–ramped lighters as troop landing craft for seaborne assault at Gallipoli in WW1, and commanded the landing from the bridge of the troopship which he'd had modified to his own design. The landing craft and troopships used on D–Day trace their roots back to Unwin's inventions. We wonder if these two old hands ever shared their thoughts during Monty's visits? Or even knew of each other's existence?

Monty ran a 'dry' HQ – his preferred drink was grapefruit juice – and visitors looked in vain for strong refreshment on site. We'd like to think they nipped in to The Fox & Pelican for a quick one. Six days after VE Day the children of Grayshott School were marched up to Amesbury to welcome Monty, and in return he presented them with a signed picture of himself.

AFTER THE BATTLES

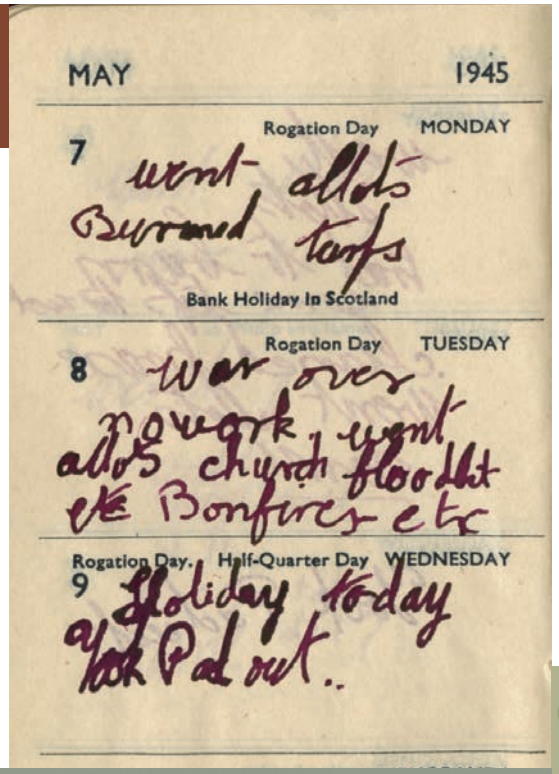
The end of the war seemed a long time coming. The Allies' rapid advance across France, Belgium and the Netherlands bogged down in the autumn of 1944, hindered by long supply lines, bitter weather and determined German defence of their homeland. The final six months were a relentless grind, fighting for every mile of territory.

The civilian population was weary too. Betty's diary became a recital of work, allotments and rain. Until Wednesday 2nd May....

'Hitler reported dead?'

Followed a few days later on Tuesday 8th May by...

War over No work. Went allots church floodlit etc Bonfires etc


MAY 1945

Rogation Day MONDAY

7 went allots Burrow turfs

Bank Holiday In Scotland

Rogation Day TUESDAY

8 War over no work went allots church floodlit VE Bonfires etc

Rogation Day. Half-Quarter Day WEDNESDAY

9 Holiday today at work Pd out..

The following Saturday Betty celebrated again with fish & chips and buying herself a silk vest and pants.

Owing to Victory in Europe being declared the school was closed for two days. School Log, 8th May, 1945.

Elsewhere the celebrations became the stuff of legend. In London the young Princess Elizabeth put on her ATS uniform and mingled incognito with the crowds outside Buckingham Palace so she could witness the feeling as one of the people.

Rae Boxall, age 6 at the time, recalls that at Hythe, on the Solent:

'In the evening hundreds of village adults and children went down to the shore, it was pitch dark and suddenly the searchlights, lights on the boats, in the docks across the water in Southampton, torches and lamps were switched on, ships' foghorns sounded. It was the most amazing sight – the most lights I'd ever seen!'

The war in Europe was over, but not in the Far East. The Americans, Australians and New Zealanders were fighting from one Pacific island to another, and the Allied 14th Army were slogging through Burma. A very long way from home and the British public consciousness, they called themselves the Forgotten Fourteenth. The VE Day celebrations over, Betty continued to record her daily life.

Tuesday 7th August. Went allots to dig spuds.

Wednesday 8th. Same. New bomb on Japs.

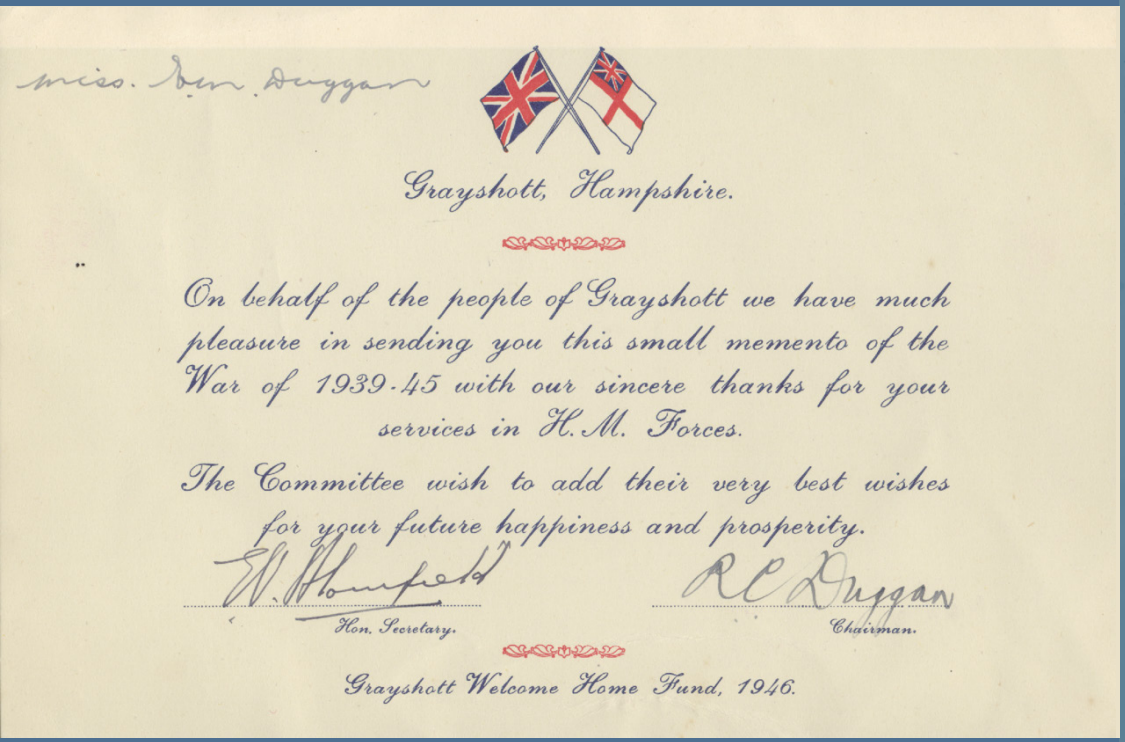
Thursday 9th. Went allots.

Friday 10th. Same.

Tuesday 14th. Went to dig spuds ... got sackful.

The dawn of the nuclear age was one thing, but Betty's spuds didn't dig themselves. VJ Day came on Wednesday 15th August, marking Japan's unconditional surrender. Being in the summer holidays it went unrecorded by the School Log, but Betty celebrated with another day off work and a game of football at the cricket field.

In Grayshott, a Welcome Home Fund was proposed, a whip-round to collect funds with which to acknowledge the village's gratitude to returning service men and women. Suggestions tabled included a loan fund towards housing costs, building a clubroom and a cash gift. In the event, interest was so lukewarm that the fund only ran to awarding each returner with a leather wallet and a certificate. The nation simply wanted to move on and get back to normal.



miss. Evelyn Duggan

Grayshott, Hampshire.

On behalf of the people of Grayshott we have much pleasure in sending you this small memento of the War of 1939-45 with our sincere thanks for your services in H.M. Forces.

The Committee wish to add their very best wishes for your future happiness and prosperity.

W. Stonefield
Hon. Secretary.

R C Duggan
Chairman.

Grayshott Welcome Home Fund, 1946.

The certificate presented to Evelyn Mary Duggan on returning from the Women's Royal Naval Service.

Meanwhile the old army camp on Ludshott Common was used to house young married couples on the council house waiting list, and the camp took on its second life, as Superior Estate. In December 1955 there were 146 families living there, who had become part of Grayshott's population. Through the late 1950s families started to be re–housed elsewhere, and the estate was eventually closed and demolished in 1962.

Reminders of the war are now few and far between in Grayshott. There's the bomb crater in Flat Wood, and gardeners and metal detectorists occasionally turn up bullet cases from the aerial dogfights. One day some lucky person might find a recognisable chunk of the V2. At Waggoners Bend there's the Canadian's concrete army camp track, and heaps of tank–stoppers beyond, each inscribed with its date of casting. Otherwise we have to rely on memories, which are fragile things and pass away with their owners. We hope this little book will help to make some of them as enduring as the Canadians' concrete.

ROLL OF HONOUR

The Names of the MEN and WOMEN of GRAYSHOTT who served KING & COUNTRY are here inscribed together with those who made the SUPREME SACRIFICE in the WAR 1939-1945

The Roll of Honour in St Luke's records 253 of Grayshott's citizens who served in the military.

GUIDE TO AIRCRAFT RECOGNITION

Introduction

Aircraft recognition is largely a matter of visual memory, but since we must be able to name the aircraft we see, a memory for names also enters into it. What governs or stimulates it is interest. We recognise what we are interested in. If we want to be good at aircraft recognition we must develop an interest in aeroplanes. Interest is already in the minds of those who hope to fly aircraft or those who want to build them. These are experts at aircraft recognition. But the many people who have their hearts in some other job and to whom aviation is only a side line must try to muster an interest in aircraft, the gunner by regarding them as interesting [illegible] the spotter [illegible] of [illegible] the [illegible] for [illegible] reas[illegible] stimu[illegible] healt[illegible] fused [illegible] failur[illegible] The c[illegible] will sh[illegible] man lo[illegible] the fac[illegible] finds le[illegible] by a de[illegible] process[illegible] comrade[illegible]

Storing

How a[illegible] impressio[illegible] aerodrom[illegible] remember[illegible] aircraft an[illegible] unconsciou[illegible] language. with aircra[illegible] receives on[illegible] pressions in[illegible] grams, and [illegible] like a man [illegible] and he can o[illegible] sions do the [illegible] pressions by f[illegible]

As the mind[illegible] beautiful bette[illegible] he will try to [illegible] duced drawing[illegible] written descrip[illegible] him for being u[illegible] walk around the aircraft and note its peculiarities. In detail he must adopt some method o[illegible] mentally "walking round" the photograph or drawing to note the distinctive features of the aircraft he is studying. The object of the chart is to present such a method.

Methodical Study of Detail

The A B C of aircraft recognition set out here has twenty letters. It starts with engines, goes on to wings, fuselage and landing gear. This is quite a good order, because people who know aeroplanes well usually classify them first by engines, then by wings, and so on. You will often come across such descriptions as "twin-engined high-wing cabin trainer." But if you don't like this order you can start somewhere else, just as you can if you wish, start learning an alphabet with the letter "d" or "z" instead of "a" and work round to "a" later.

A Few at a Time

The number of types introduced on this side has been kept as low as possible and you will find the same machines cropping up under two or three different headings. This repetition will help to impress them on your memory. On the other side over a hundred of the more commonly-known aircraft are classified by recognition figures. These drawings are for reference only. They are too small to make that vivid impression on your mind which must be made by any-[illegible] which is going there to stay. And

ENGINES

A Number of Engines

We soon learn to notice how many engines an aeroplane has, and in a general sense the number of engines gives us an idea of the size and power of the machine, although this is not always true, as some single-engined machines are larger and heavier than some twin-engined ones.

Our fastest and most manoeuvrable fighters have only one [illegible]

[illegible] tary [illegible]

B Position of Engines

In a single-engined aeroplane the engine is usually in the nose:

Three-engined aeroplanes usually have one engine in the nose and one on each wing:

S.M. 79

Occasionally the three engines are in alignment, as in the Do 24.

Four-engined machines have two engines on each wing as a rule:

Albatross

Engines may be mounted high, centrally or low on the wing. Here are examples:

HIGH MOUNTING

Do 26

CENTRE MOUNTING

Blenheim

LOW (OR UNDERSLUN MOUNTING

Boston

D Shapes of Engines

[illegible] engines, all [illegible] ion [illegible] wo [illegible] ard [illegible] ave [illegible] the [illegible] es" [illegible] have [illegible] hose

Buffalo

[illegible] ways use [illegible] l to note [illegible] larger [illegible] t various

WINGS

G Dihedral

Dihedral can be defined as the upward [illegible] pe of the wings from the fuselage. It is [illegible] sent in the wing illustrated below [illegible] to a greater degree in the tail:

Boston

[illegible] edral may start at the wing root, [illegible] own above.

Or at the end of the centre section of the wing:

Blenheim

Occasionally the wing tip alone may be turned up:

Skua

GULL WINGS

There are wings that start with [illegible] dihedral and then straighten ou[illegible] are called gull wings.

Do 26

INVERTED

Ju 87

H Aspect Ratio

It is difficult for most people [illegible] the outlines of wing shapes ex[illegible] most of us can learn to recog[illegible] defined shapes when we see t[illegible] until we do so we cannot hop[illegible] much progress in recognitio[illegible] are a few aids to classification[illegible]

If a wing is long and narro[illegible] to have a

HIGH ASPECT R[illegible]

Wellesley

[illegible] d fat it has a [illegible]

P BACK

[illegible] de from the fuselage, [illegible] e "swept back."

Walrus

Catalina

[illegible] d unclassifiable

Albatross Spitfire

Do 17 Anson

FUSELAGES

K Type of Fuselage

Engines give us a clue to power and size. Wings tell us something about the aerodynamic qualities of an aeroplane. Fuselages reveal the function of the machine. But fuselage shapes vary more widely than the functions of aeroplanes,

Flying-boat hulls are either deep with tall rudders or are broad and shallow with "cocked-up" tails. British boats are like the former, German usually like the latter, and America uses both.

L Shape of Nose

The shape of an aeroplane can be said to start from the leading edge of the wing. Noses, as can be easily seen, vary widely in length and breadth, and are a valuable point in identification. See also Engines "C."

M Turrets and Gun Positions

Turrets give individuality to fuselages in the side view.

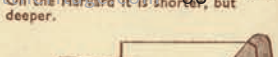
FRONT AND REAR TURRETS

[illegible] s and [illegible]

Some machines [illegible] ndows:

COCKPIT COVERS

These, on the smaller machines, form good distinguishing features. On the Battle the cover is long and straight. On the Harvard it is shorter, but deeper.



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For those interested in the local Canadians, John Owen Smith's book 'All Tanked Up' *is a good read.*

John Hill's book 'We Will Remember Them' *tells the stories behind the names on our war memorial.*

Front Cover: Betty's mum Vera in the garden of Crossway House, with Paddy the dog and Trooper HC 'Bert' Horton, M45003, HQ 2nd Canadian Armoured Corps. August 1943.

Nineteen of Grayshott's men didn't return. Their names are inscribed on the village war memorial.