

specially in the summer. When you were in bed you used to dread hearing the siren. Once the siren went you knew the Germans were coming. First of all you would hear the siren going down in Portchester, then Fareham and then in Titchfield blaring out. Then you would hear the anti-aircraft coming out but sometimes they went the other way. That was in the '40s. I remember 1941 one of the German bombers dropped three bombs, down by the meadows, where the bird sanctuary is down by the river. We heard them in the night, in the dark and you could see the craters the next day. I think they dropped them to get back to France, as it would be faster without the bombs.

Early on in the War they put four 3.7 anti-aircraft guns in the Meon Road, past Steve Harris' Farm at Thatcher's Copse. It was a proper site with an army crew to defend it. They had what they called a 'predictor' - a range finder. It wasn't electronic and wasn't very accurate but it was all part of the equipment. The troops built a lot of Nissen huts and after the War a lot of people lived in them as temporary housing while they waited for a pre-fab house. The site was called *Greenwoods* after the army moved out.

When the guns were firing you could hear the shrapnel coming down on the roofs of houses from all different sizes of explosive shells. Of course if anyone was out in it they would be in trouble but it was very rare that they got hit. We picked up some shrapnel near our garage when I was young.

Kitty Potter

I was ordered to do War work and went in St Margaret's Lane making parts for the Royal Air Force. My sister Lily, who had a hole in her heart, worked in the office there.

Victor Chase

When I was 14, I went to work repairing Spitfires at the Hamble. I met Douglas Bader. I mended the seat harness in his plane and I was the only one that didn't get his autograph. By the time I finished working on his plane security said, "No more autographs". The Mark 1 and 2 Spitfires had a tail that was bolted on. They had a little hatchway and because I was small, I was only a nipper, I had to get up inside and put the bolts through and my mate could put his hand through and tighten



Douglas Bader

them up. Fifty-four bolts there were, round the tail. We also repaired the outside of the Spitfires with metal plates when they were damaged, and we worked in the cockpit to change the seats and repair the canopy.

Paula Weaver

When War began dad was called up and posted to Blandford in Dorset in the Royal Artillery where he worked on the ack-ack guns. He was discharged in 1948.

Mum was a great one for moving her bedroom furniture around. When dad came home on leave, sometimes it could be late at night or early hours of the morning, so as not to wake us up he used to creep in and never put the lights on. He often stubbed his toe on the wardrobe and could never find the bed! You can imagine then we were all awake! Poor dad, he took it all as a big joke.

We saw a German plane shot down and saw the German running away. They dropped a land mine in Triangle Lane in Mr Harris' field. There was a big hole - a crater - opposite the rec. by the school. We always called it the rec. But it was really the recreation ground.

I can remember being in our shelter in the garden and watching the Spitfires flying above us after the German planes. The next day when we came out of the shelter we used to pick up the bits of shrapnel from the shells.

There used to be an artillery gun in the field at the back of the estate and there was also one in Brownwich Lane in the fields and soldiers in tents. When mum and some of the other women on the Bellfield Road went to work on the land they had to pass the soldiers' camp. The soldiers would tell our mums to send the children over at dinnertime and they would give us a meal. It was great, they used to give us sauce for the chips and whatever else they had, I think it was egg, chips and beans. They had these big bottles of sauce and big tins of jam I'd never seen before. It was like a banquet.

We always knew when Portsmouth or Southampton was bombed. The sky over both cities used to be all lit up with a big red glow in the sky. We could see it from our garden. It would be Portsmouth and Gosport one night and then it would be Southampton. The planes came right overhead then. Eventually the beach was barbed wired

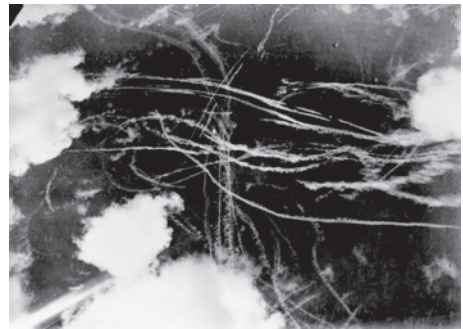
off in case of invasion. They built Nissen huts at Greenwoods for the army and ATS and they had heavy ack-ack guns all in the fields and lanes around our houses.

There was a big Canadian Army camp on the Titchfield to Stubbington road, which the children were drawn to because the soldiers gave us chocolate and chewing gum because our sweets were on ration. They had huge tanks and on D-Day we all went down to the village streets to wave them off.

We had a few bomb craters around the area, one opposite the village school, one in Triangle Lane. One was caused by a doodlebug which came down on Bay Tree cottage in Meon Road while my dad was picking peas in the field opposite. It was 11 o'clock at night but there was visibility because it was double summer time. *(This lasted 1941 -1945)*. We saw a German plane shot down. The pilot baled out in the field next to our estate and was arrested. We used to go out after a night raid and pick up shrapnel for souvenirs. We can remember seeing the dog fights above our heads in the Battle of Britain and thought it was one big adventure.

Pam Fullick

We did see the dog fights above us in the Battle of Britain and we did line the village to wave goodbye to the Canadian soldiers in their big tanks as they left to go to the D-Day invasion.



Trails left after a 'dog fight'

My mum wouldn't go down the shelter so she sat indoors doing her needlework.

We got all the stories when we were down the shelter.

Leslie Downs

I was 14 when War broke out and registered at 17 but because I was working on the farm I didn't do national service. I was in the Home Guard. The tunic they gave me was too big. It was laughable. We were based and trained in the Drill Hall, which was owned by the TA. Later it became Titchfield Community Centre. We did a bit of exercise in the night. There were Bofors guns up the road. In 1940,

Steve, who owned the farm, and I were delivering vegetables in Portsmouth when they started to bomb. We just got out in time along the old A27.

When there was a warning we told everyone to get into their air raid shelters. I was living in Bellfield during the War. It wasn't too bad. We thought it was exciting. We were between Portsmouth and Southampton, so Titchfield missed most of the War. War was a bit of excitement for us. There was a lot of camaraderie and people helped each other.

Margaret Noyce

We had neighbours who had relatives in Canada. When the War was on it was decided I should be evacuated to Canada. I went on a ship called the SS Volendam, which was torpedoed just after we left Liverpool harbour. We were eventually rescued. I came back home and just got on with life.

Quite recently I met up with other Volendam survivors and now we meet regularly.



The torpedoed SS Volendam

Douglas Elkins

One day when I was walking back to school along the field footpath to Rome Farm Cottages an air raid began without the warning siren. This was high level bombing unlike the much lower flying we were familiar with. Afterwards people said this was an Italian aircraft. As the bombs blew up I decided to run back home to our Anderson shelter. Once it was clear that no airplanes and no bomb or shell explosions could be heard I set off to school again. When I reached Marks Road, I met all of the schoolchildren streaming out from school. Apparently two of the bombs had landed in the Tips copse at the bottom of the playground. The explosions had blown out all of the school windows. Our joy at not being at school was short-lived however because all of the windows were replaced over the weekend, so it was classes as usual on the following Monday.

Later in the War, my brother Frederick, together with two other boys, Frank Hobbs and Robert Fullick, joined the Home Guard. Robert Fullick was



Fairey Swordfish

killed by an accidental discharge of a rifle when he was on duty with his uncle at the church tower. His grave is marked by a War Graves Commission headstone in the Crofton Old Church cemetery.

The Home Guard had a peculiar way of awarding rank. Someone who was, for example, a works foreman,

a transport supervisor or an overseer would be ranked non-commissioned officer (NCO). People such as bank managers and businessmen held commissions. Alfred Munday, who was a grocer, tobacco wholesaler and a retailer with several shops was therefore deemed officer quality and rejoiced in the rank of Captain.

As the War went on, the facilities at HMS Daedalus expanded and became a target for Luftwaffe bombers, often at low level in daylight. Aircraft were parked around the perimeter and serviced by Royal Navy (RN) mechanics. When an aircraft carrier came into Portsmouth harbour its aircraft were flown to Lee-on-the-Solent for servicing. This was while the ship was serviced in the docks. The aircraft were flown back on board once the ship was back out of the harbour. Many types of plane came to Lee-on-the-Solent including the famous Fairey Swordfish torpedo bomber biplane that outlived several of its replacements. The successful American Grumman Avenger torpedo bomber also came and remained in service up until the 1960s, as well as the Grumman Wildcat carrier-based fighter which was also used by the Royal Navy where it was known as the Martlet. The RN mechanics gave us the cartridges used to fire up the aircraft engines. We tipped the cordite from these onto newspaper and ignited it for fun. Not being in a confined space it did not explode but just burned slowly and brightly.

HMS Collingwood had been built before the War and a balloon barrage was installed in the field opposite the main gate. The army brought a searchlight to a field roughly where the Peel Common sewage treatment plant main entrance now stands. This came at dusk and left each morning. The generator for the light stood beside the road a distance of 100 yards from the beam source.

A Free French battleship was anchored off the slipway in Portsmouth. During air raids the anti-aircraft armament on it would immediately fire on

enemy aircraft. Once the battle of Normandy began, landing craft returning to the Hardway slipway sometimes brought back German prisoners of war (POW). The POWs walked in an orderly column up towards the road. Some had been severely shell-shocked and were seen tottering about as if they were drunk.

Margaret Groves

I would go out with my father, on his ARP duties, kitted out with my own tin helmet. We would sit on a gate opposite the house and watch for bombing. One night there was an incendiary bomb dropped in the field by the river. There was a whoosh and then the explosion, which frightened me so much that from that time onwards I never went out as an ARP warden again. Much later there was a doodlebug that flew over the cottage. We could hear it droning and leant out of the bedroom window watching it. It landed on Bay Tree Cottage, Meon, demolishing half of the cottage. There was an old couple living there but they escaped uninjured.



*Peter Trott as ARP Warden
Titchfield Spirit 2014*

We used to play in the Abbey a lot and during the air raids would hide in there. One day we were playing in the field opposite the cottage. I was with Tommy Wolfe and Alan Abrahams. A German plane flew over and was firing at us. The boys rushed me into the hedge and we could hear my father calling me, but the boys kept me in the hedge until the plane flew over. The scarf I had on at the time, a red and white check, had holes in it from that day onwards, I kept it for a long time.



HMS Petard 1943

Bessie Traves

In early 1942, after my husband Cyril was promoted to Chief Petty Officer, he joined the destroyer HMS Petard, which was being built in Newcastle. In June 1942 HMS Petard was deployed to the Mediterranean (via South Africa).

Douglas Elkins

My father worked in HMS Vernon, Portsmouth, now Gunwharf shopping complex. HMS Vernon was the base for the Admiralty Mine Design Department (MDD) headed by Professor Haldane. Once hostilities began, enemy mines, which had been swept, were brought to MDD for examination. The focus of interest was the fuse mechanisms and the booby trap devices. There were explosions, occasionally causing considerable damage. A 60 feet high static seawater tank was at ground level beside the quay and this was used to test mines. One night during a heavy raid on Portsmouth the tank was peppered with shrapnel causing a huge number of holes out of which the water spurted like a huge watering can. The next day when my father returned from work, he said that tomorrow the whole MDD would be loaded onto a train and taken to Loch Long, Scotland and their work would continue there. He didn't return until hostilities had diminished towards the end of the War.

Dorothy Francis

I was born in Yorkshire and volunteered for the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) on the 16th October 1941. I went to Gloucester for two days to get my uniform, then to Morecombe for two weeks 'square bashing' - that means drill. I then went to Titchfield Balloon Centre where they made lots of barrage balloons. I was a batwoman there, looking after an officer. Five months later I was posted to RAF Madley in Herefordshire where I was a



Dorothy and husband Den

waitress in the officers' mess. While there I was given seven days leave to go home to Castleford to get married.

In 1944 I was posted to West Camp, RAF Cranwell, Lincolnshire, as a waitress in the officers' mess. I was discharged on the 18th October 1945.

John Maginnis

My father John (Mac) Maginnis served with the Royal Ulster Regiment (RUR) in Belfast and then joined the Commandos along with many other men. They trained in Scotland in harsh conditions and were then posted across the country. Mac was in No. 12 Commando and when the troop numbers got low due to losses he went to No. 6 Commando. They took part in many operations such as Operation Archery, Operation Myrmidon and Operation Overlord.



Lord Mountbatten with No. 6 Commando

Whilst being stationed in Titchfield, Mac and two other Commandos, Sam Brodison and Billy Eager from Ireland, met three sisters from the village Rose, Trixie and Molly Laxton (my mum). They all married and created a large Irish/Titchfield family.

Mac and the others were billeted in the junior school prior to D-Day and left from Warsash.

Antony Norris

On Saturdays my mother used to take me to visit her mother for the day and we'd go shopping in Commercial Road or in Southsea. On Saturday 24th August 1940, having had lunch, we walked out early in bright, warm sunshine. I particularly remember seeing young children playing on the pavement in Buckingham Street, just around the corner from my grandparent's house.

Later, we were in Lyons café having a mid-afternoon snack when the air raid sirens sounded. On leaving Lyons, we were directed to the Landport Drapery Bazaar at the junction of Commercial Road and Arundel Street. Here we were told to take shelter in the carpet department in the basement. Later in the afternoon there were sounds of heavy gunfire, bombs falling and the sound of a succession of loud explosions. The raid was brief but seemingly violent. It was the first time that I had been close to where bombs were landing and exploding.

It was not until sometime later that the crowd was allowed out onto the street. There was a lot of smoke outside and there were police in helmets and fire and emergency services. It was also clear that there were no buses running. My mother enquired about the extent of bomb damage and was told that Lake Road had been badly hit. We tried to walk to Hertford Street by several routes but were prevented from going further by the police. Finally we managed to find that the route via Church Street was open. We got to the house mid-evening. Some of the windows on the ground floor had been blown in. The Spickernell's factory close by and the houses around the corner in Buckingham Street had been destroyed. Some of the children I had seen playing in Buckingham Street that afternoon had been killed.

June Pellatt

Lady Jackson was tall and elegant and lived just outside the village at Posbrook House on Posbrook Lane. We went to deliver some paper and tins there for the War effort. I went with a neighbour to see where a doodlebug had dropped on a house past the Harris' farm, further down Posbrook Lane. I had my cousin in a pushchair, when a German plane came over. Two British ones were chasing it and I could see the markings on the planes and it frightened me to death. My cousin was screaming and the pushchair was folding up. Panic stations! Mr Love, who was Lady Jackson's gardener, came out and pushed me and my cousin to the ground to save us. I can still taste the dirt in my mouth. Mr Love walked us to the copse and then my mum came up to find us.

My dad was in the Home Guard with his friend Mr Gregory. They were on patrol when they got panicky and shouted "Halt! Who goes there?" It was only a cow! The top man in the Home Guard was Mr Phillips who had been in WW1. He had four daughters who were in the WAAFs and Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS).

Tony Traves

My dad Cyril Traves was Senior Petty Officer on HMS Petard, one of the three destroyers sent to find a U boat in the Mediterranean Sea. It was a dark and rough sea and there are differing accounts as to what happened. HMS Petard hit the submarine with a depth charge and Traves was sent to the wheelhouse, as he was coxswain, to helm the ship. The most important thing was to get all the Germans out of the water as they had abandoned the submarine.

Usually there would be a nominated boarding party but Gordon Cannal took some men to salvage what they could from the sinking submarine. The water started to rush in to the sub and Gordon called to the remaining two British sailors to get out. They did not make it and were awarded posthumous medals. One was a 1st lieutenant and one a naval seaman. Tommy Brown, who was only 16, was also awarded a medal.

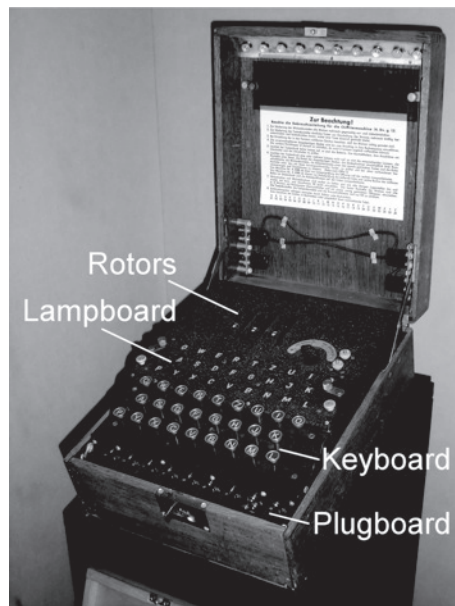
Some of the material they salvaged from the sinking submarine was of huge importance. It was a codebook, which was sent to Bletchley Park and used to help crack the Enigma Code used by the Nazis to encode their messages so that the Allies could not anticipate their moves.

Jennie Hill (1906-1981)

Jennie's account is a transcript from her diary for a month in winter 1940/41 when she worked as a WAAF at RAF Titchfield, courtesy the Hampshire Records Office.

29/12/40 - Feeling very dull and gloomy after Bill's departure yesterday morning. The old-days have gone forever. Did not go home as I was on night duty.

30/12/40 - Fetched Group Captain Curtis from Hill Head as usual at 08.50. Nothing doing, got coffee etc. ready to take with me to see Bob. Had a nice chat. Strange to eat my supper alone at the old place.



Enigma code machine



Corporal Jennie Hill

31/12/40 - A quiet day. Cannot get over Bill's family. No-one now to do anything for me any more. Took C.O home at normal time 6.10 and was on night duty.

1/1/1941 - Met Bill this evening on his way back from Bournemouth, had coffee and cakes and he produced a meat pie. We went out on a side lane in the car to eat it together. Then as late, drove him to Portsmouth to spend the night with his mother.

2/1 - Bill due up at Woking at 12.00. Wonder when if ever I shall see him again. A quiet day - feeling sad and lonely and fed up with little to do.

3/1 - Only fetched the C.O. in a.m. and took him back at night when he told me he would not want the car until Monday 6/1. Told flight, who advised me to take 24 hours leave, so I will do so in a.m.

4/1 - Pass OK so I left at 1.00 and went into Fareham to see 'Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex' a very good picture in colour. Bought some kippers to take home with my milk. They all v. surprised to see me. Saw Mrs Rassain. Enjoyed my evening. Talked over the doings of the week. Mother v. sympathetic over Bill's going and knows how I must miss him and his thoughtfulness and kindness to me always

5/1 - All went to church. Had our New Year celebration with roast lamb, potatoes and Brussel sprouts, Xmas pudding and sauce v.g.i. Then packed up my stores to bring back for the week. Did not want to return.

6/1 - Fetched the C.O. No work all day. Wrote Bill a long letter. Very cold. Feeling fed up and wonder if I'd do better service in civvy life again.

7/1 - A fall of snow in the night, made the roads slippery V. cold. No work. Everyone advised me not to take the Sniper [car] out tonight, so rung up Jock to say wasn't coming.

8/1 - Still cold, but road conditions improved. No work again, on duty tonight.



Battle of Britain 75th anniversary

Cooked my supper as usual, coffee for the duty driver.

9/1 - Was very annoyed, as had been promised the Fareham run and somebody else did it, so not able to get Bill's fountain pen. Went to see Jock this evening and had a nice talk by his coke fire.

10/1 - Jane Winton posted this a.m. Am very sorry she's gone. Siren sounded 18.05 and C.O. said he'd stay on as reason to believe there was trouble.

Portsmouth had the Blitz, first bomb put out all the electricity so no light or heating for us.

11/1 - P'mouth had a bad time. Candles to dress by for me and cold water. No heat, perishing cold. Had a very busy day, driving Gilder and C.O. Latimer at different times. 932 Squadron moving to Portchester D flight HQ because of DA Bombs. Asked Latimer's permission to make up some hot coffee in the old kitchen, so in evening did so and C.O. went home later. Also filled up my hot water bottle. Longing to get home tomorrow for bath and warmth.

12/1 - Fetched C.O. and drove him to Portsmouth to see to his business and the damage to 932 HQ. Hit a Jowett car in Merton Rd. not much damage but furious, got home late and enjoyed a bath.

13/1 - Fetched C.O. No work, but wrote Bill a letter of 15 pages - No light again, still very cold - cooked my supper on a small spirit stove given to me by mother.

14/1 - At midday the lights came on and such a cheer went up from everyone, by night the heating was on - it was bliss to be warm again.

15/1 - My cold still bad and everyone suffering from the same complaint.

16/1 - Couldn't go to Winchester as battery dead flat - Sparshott and Capt. Warren saw to it and Cpl. Wolven is getting me a new battery.

17/1 - Had long letter from Bill. In p.m. - drove the C.O. to Portchester to



RAF Titchfield, No 12 Balloon Command, WAAF's

the old castle grounds to have the awards of bravery presented by the S.O.S. Quite impressive.

18/1 - Had a photo of himself from Bill, not a v.g. one, also one from Jock. Had 24 hour leave granted me, as staff car going into dock today and tomorrow. Gave Ted Charlton a lift to Fareham and did some shopping for mother. Back to camp to make the promised gingerbread for the officers' mess. Ted returned before it was done - He might be called up - It was strange being in the kitchen again. Went home and they v. glad.

19/1 - Packed up the fountain pen to send to Bill from us all. It was lovely being home. Got up at 8.0 and got breakfast, then went to church; had remains of Xmas pudding for dinner v.g. - 2 p.m. packed and got foodstuff together. Raid in the evening. Bombs dropped and S'oton down in flames.

20/1 - Fetched the C.O, Wrote a long letter to Bill. No job for today. Took C.O. home, on night duty so cooked my supper on my little electric stove as usual.

21/1 - Fetched C.O. - no job in a.m. but fetched a Major Jackson to the camp and took him back after. Got leave to go to Winchester. C.O. returned late, so rushed off but alas never saw Jock, he'd gone.

22/1 - Wrote a letter to Jock explaining things. No job today except to take him home. On night duty.

23/1 - Took F/L Latimer to Middle Wallop H.Q. and to a battery HQ. Stopped at F/L Halfords house as he had gastric flu. Had lunch there in the nursery with 3 small children. Coffee in drawing room.

24/1 - Did not have to fetch the C.O. as he spent the afternoon in camp owing to the practice invasion stunt. Washed the staff car with a bucket and sponge and now trying to stand by for any emergency.

Kate Scott

There was a raid on Dieppe. The Canadian commando troops were camped at the back of Barry's Meadow. Some were billeted in West Street. It was a suicide mission, something to do with dogs.

There were 5,000 troops at West Hill Park School. George Fairbanks was there and he used to walk down to the Bugle as it was a hotel. Gran said it was the place for officers and was the 'place to go' as they had a back room for dancing. You used to have to go through two blackout curtains so you did not let out the light. You could get nylons there too. There was the Coach and Horses pub, they had a room too, and the Wheatsheaf pub.

Flo Rogers was gran's bridesmaid and her mum was a dressmaker. She used to save scraps from the dresses she made



Canadian



Gerald Catcheside

and put them on their clothes so they always looked 'posh' as they went to the dances at the bases.

Paul Catcheside

I never got much out of my father, Gerald Joseph Catcheside, about his War experience until I asked him whether he had ever brought down a German plane. He said that he hadn't but he had brought down an English one. Years after he had died I thought, "Let's see if we can find anything in the National Archive". So I got hold of the regimental squadron diaries together with my father's service record and found the following: 'Mark Hood's grandfather was flying high in an RAF Whitley Bomber which collided with a cable from a balloon of the Gosport Barrage. His plane was damaged but he managed to fly to HMS Raven in Eastleigh and crash land.'

The entry in the squadron diary refers to an incident on the following day but as they were working at night that may account for the discrepancy about the date. I think this was the



Armstrong Whitworth Whitley Bomber

incident, which my father spoke of.

My dad, a Yorkshire man, worked at Hampshire County Insane Asylum, Knowle, and lived in Fontley cottages. He enlisted on 13th Feb 1939, which struck me as interesting because the War didn't start until

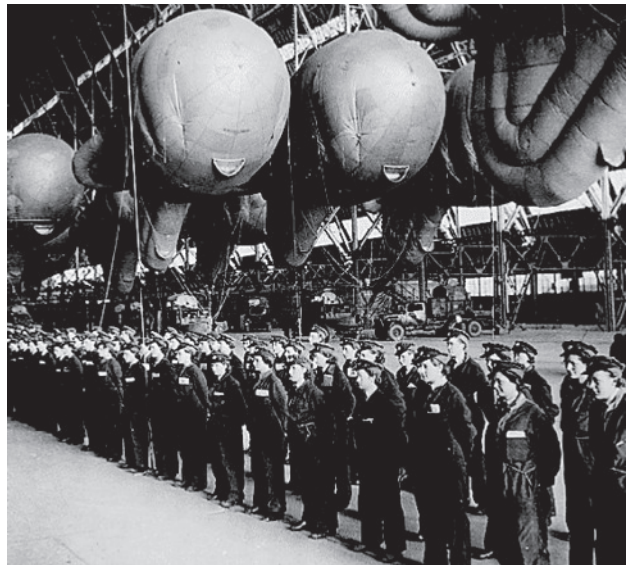
September 1939. Five weeks after signing up, the Portsmouth HQ was opened for drill and training and dad cycled into Portsmouth two evenings per week for basic military drill. Two months later, Titchfield Balloon Command was opened and this meant a shorter journey of about two miles. He was then moved from Titchfield to near St Vincent's in Gosport (probably in San Diego Road). In the meantime mum moved back to her mother's in Worcester with her young son Robin and she stayed there until after dad's demob in December 1945.

The Balloon Squadron around here was divided into three units Portsmouth, Gosport and north of Portsmouth. They began training at Portsmouth then they very quickly equipped the field at Titchfield and they would do drill and things there. The Balloon Squadron headquarters was Cardington, Bedfordshire, a place originally built for the big German airships, (Zeppelins) which flew between Germany and the UK before the War.

There was a phoney War at first and the balloonists used that to get the knowledge of what they were dealing with. It was a case of 'learn as you go'. Part of the learning was not to fly balloons in winds in excess of 35 mph and the squadron diaries contain lots of details of storms. A lot of the negotiations with the Army were to get lost balloons back. In the Squadron diary you can see that No 33 Balloon was lost and later recovered wrecked at Haslar bridge.

There was an attack at Gosport, I think by mistake, because they were trying to get in low for Portsmouth. A balloon team contained a dozen men. One team was wiped out plus a couple of other casualties.

The main blitz in Portsmouth was after my father left. He went to Cardiff and I think they were stiffening the units there with the experience my father had gained in this area. When the Africa front was developing and becoming successful they tried to continue using barrage balloons in the same way. Women took over the balloon barrages here and men were shipped overseas. My dad was in Port Said and later in Israel. In 1944 my dad came back to the UK and things got quite nasty with the V1 bombs starting in June of that year, and the V2s in



WAAF balloon crews, RAF Cardington

September, being aimed at the local population. After the War in Europe ended, my dad was involved in shutting down balloon stations and moving equipment where it was needed and accounting for it generally.

Donald Upshall

I went into the RAF, in February 1942, as an apprentice. I wasn't quite 16. My father took me up to London to Marylebone via Waterloo Station. We did two years training and got home about six times a year. When I was coming home through Waterloo 75% to 85% of the people were in uniform, people from all over the Commonwealth. When I was training near Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire, we didn't see much action apart from the blackout but we weren't bombed there. All the cities were bombed, London, Portsmouth and Southampton.

At the end of the training I volunteered for aircrew training and was posted to a fighter squadron. I was only 18. I packed more into 1944 than I did in the rest of my life! Our entry passed out in 1944 and I went to various airfields and had to go on a driving course. I remember, we went to North Wales driving old Austin 10 cars and we also had a week driving RAF Bedford lorries. The reason for that was when we were being driven out of Dunkirk, France, in 1940 a lot of vehicles were disabled as no one could drive them. So what they did was make sure we could all drive. They would say, "Jump into that and drive," but of course unless you had been taught, you couldn't drive.



de Havilland Mosquito

We knew that D-Day was coming, as the country was so full of Americans, Australians and people from all over the Commonwealth. Travelling was restricted. I'd just got back from a week's leave and my father's funeral. I was on a night

fighter squadron. They were called Mosquitoes, a well-known wartime plane fitted with radar to spot the enemy planes. Their

job was to protect ships. A plane came in from night patrol over France, and the pilot said, "It's on". They had seen, as dawn broke, a mass of ships going to France. Imagine the wake in the water as they all moved towards France.

Joseph Waldron (aged 9) a pupil at Titchfield Primary School

I am proud of my great granddad, Edward Joseph Beech because, in 1939 at the outbreak of WW2, he was already a regular soldier in the Royal Artillery. He fought in all the major campaigns such as Dunkirk, El Alamein, Libya and the Battle of El Agheila, Tripoli, Tunisia and the Battle of Mareth, Salerno, Naples, D-Day, Caen and the push into Germany. During the North African campaign he fought under the leadership of Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery (Monty) as a Desert Rat. We have many interesting items from my great granddad, such as his diaries, photographs and medals.



Edward Beech in the desert

I am also very proud of my great grandma, Marjorie Beech, who worked in the munitions factory in Gosport throughout the War.

Andrew Mills

During the War, when she was in her thirties, Auntie Vi found a pilot in the fields off Posbrook Lane. She saw him in the field gathering up his parachute. She went over to him and could see he was only about 18 or so, and he was in tears. He had had enough. She brought him back to her house in Bellfield, sat him down, gave him a cup of tea and probably took his parachute away for the silk! They sent someone to get the policeman, who arrived to find them sitting drinking tea and showing each other pictures of their families.

I did think a lot about my parents losing six years of their lives to the War. I feel very sorry that they had to do that.

Douglas Elkins

Leading up to D-Day, I saw thousands of troops assembled along the coast together with equipment of every conceivable kind. Lee-on-the-Solent High Street had Sherman tanks nose to tail as the number increased. When the tanks were loaded with ammunition the shells were delivered in a triangular wooden pack containing three shells each. The soldiers needed to rid themselves of the wooden packing and we were able to take as much as we possibly could. This brand new timber was put to many good uses lasting many years to come.

George Watts

My mother worked in the Parish Rooms, which was the First Aid Centre for the village. She joked that the only first aid she had to carry out was minor injuries caused when people were rushing to get to shelters and slipped or scraped their knees as



First Aid Post 1941

they dodged shrapnel. The only real emergency she had to deal with was a man who had the unfortunate experience of being the only person whose house in Titchfield was bombed. He lived in a bungalow below the Harris' farm in Posbrook Lane when a V1 bomb or 'doodlebug' ran out of fuel and dropped just outside his house. He was 'patched up' at the First Aid post and taken away to hospital in an ambulance.

I remember three German planes being shot down in the area. The Heinkel bomber had three airmen: pilot, navigator and gunner and the Home Guard caught them. The bomber that came down in the area was thought to be trying to return home as they jettisoned bombs but was hit by the ack-ack guns. Much to the local boys' disappointment, the RAF guarded the area below Posbrook Farm and cleared the site in three days, so opportunities to collect shrapnel trophies were denied to them.



Heinkel bombers

Southampton was an important port and it was blitzed and set alight. The glow as it burned could be seen from the top of Coach Hill. RAF Titchfield was the Balloon Command Centre for Southampton and Portsmouth and housed many Women's Auxiliary Air Force personnel (WAAFs). I remember the trouble that always occurred at the dances that were held there; an explosive mix of alcohol and young people during a vicious war.

The young men from Bellfield were renowned for being tough and fighting so the RAF sent for a Southern Champion boxer who challenged a local man with the time-honoured phrase, "Come outside." A short time later the local man came in rolling up his sleeves with a big grin on his face.

West Hill Park School was requisitioned as a sports centre for RAF Titchfield. The Americans in the area were better equipped. They organised competitions between the two forces including a steeplechase or cross-country race. The Americans sent their favourite man, smartly kitted and confident and a RAF fellow came in his blue shorts and RAF shirt. They set off, followed by George and all his friends on their bikes. At first the American pulled away and, as they emerged out of the copse on Hunts Pond Road, the RAF man was in the lead but the American caught up. This happened again at Common Lane and then St Margaret's Lane. Eventually the American man staggered and collapsed as the RAF man ran past and won, much to the jubilation of the boys. The worried Americans put their man in a car and drove him back to base.

My grandfather had served in the military and was employed as a storeman at RAF Titchfield. Unfortunately he hit his head at work. He managed to walk back to West Street where he told his wife, "I've hit my head on one of those bloody boxes." He was put to bed but died a week later. I think that he may have had a stroke, which caused him to fall.

Gerald Read

I knew the balloon was going up 'cos there were American troops all around, belting through the village with their tanks! They chipped the kerbstones in the Square with their metal tracks. And there



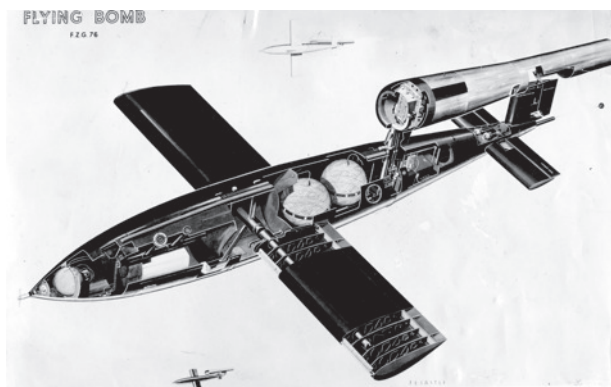
Canadian D-Day landings Juno beach

were troops and guns an' everything all up in Bere Forest. You know, over by Wickham. And them Americans brought over all them strange boats, like boxes. They could take a platoon of men over to France. They didn't look as if they could cross the Channel.

After they sank that other ship, SS City of Benares, with all them kids on who were being evacuated, mum said we had to stay in Titchfield. She didn't let me and my brother go on the ship to Canada, to her sister's.

John Williams

When the V1 (doodlebugs) started attacking it was rather frightening listening for the noise of their Ramjet engines and when it stopped you knew there would soon be a large explosion. One night my father saw a doodlebug, in fact he thought there were lots of them, but it was just one being chased by a fighter firing tracer bullets. He grabbed me out of bed and carried me down the stairs, my head hitting some of the banisters, to our indoor shelter.



Cutaway of V1 bomb



Spitfire 'tipping' a V1

In the living room we had a Morrison shelter, which was of steel construction the top of which acted as a large table. During bad air raids I slept in it often hitting my head on the very hard edges! In the early part of the War, we had an Anderson

shelter in the garden, which was made from curved, corrugated iron covered in earth. I don't think we used it much because it filled up with water but the frogs loved it! At odd times when we didn't have a shelter we went down the road to the primary school shelters. In front of the shelters was a long ditch. I remember that Margaret, the girl next door, fell in this ditch and ruined her new siren suit. Siren suits were like the tracksuits of today. They were made popular by Winston Churchill - easy to slip on in an emergency. These were one-piece suits so they were warm and cosy, with no draughts. They were usually made from old clothes especially coats.

Southampton and Portsmouth were both badly bombed during the War. My father quite often had to go to Southampton on business on a Wednesday, and on occasions took me with him, so I saw some of the devastation caused by the bombing, whole streets in ruins.

The garage just down the road was Priory Garage and to help the War effort it was used to assemble Spitfire tail planes. I believe there was also some Spitfire assembly work in St Margaret's Lane. There were not many private cars around so not much petrol was sold. The glass domes on top of the petrol pumps advertising Shell, Esso etc were taken down and Mr Maltby, the garage owner, stored them near his house. Whilst playing hide and seek with the Maltby girls I somehow managed to tread into one of the globes, badly cutting into my shin. My mother took me to the local doctor, Dr Windermere, who put three stitches in my leg. Nowadays there would have been many more stitches and so as it is, I have been quite badly scarred for life.

I used to call in to Sisman and Goatcher's garage at the bottom of Southampton Hill and watch them at work and my father used to take his vans there. Because of petrol rationing there were some rather unusual lorries using the roads. Some of the old steam-engined brewery lorries were used and some other lorries had a trailer behind producing some sort of gas to use instead of petrol.



*Sisman and Goatchers' garage (on left)
Southampton Hill*

I was quite keen on aircraft spotting and of course it is a very good time and place for that. Being wartime of course it was mainly English and German military aircraft flying above Portsmouth, Southampton and along the Solent.

A German bomber crashed in the fields by the River Meon towards Meon shore. Quite a few children clambered round it although it was guarded by the army; one of the attractions was the Perspex windscreens because there was quite a craze for making Perspex finger rings.

When I got a bike later on I used to ride to Lee-on-the-Solent to watch the Fleet Air Arm planes at HMS Daedalus, also the Walruses and Sea



Insert from RAF Diary 1940

Otters taking off and landing in the sea.

The Balloon Barrage later became Plessey's, not sure what it is now. This was the maintenance station for balloons along the south coast. The balloons were large and gas-filled. They were held by cable to special lorries. They flew at about 5,000 feet. They were positioned around vital towns and ports where they were very effective against low flying aircraft and parachutists. Many were positioned around London and proved effective against the doodlebugs. We lived just down the road from the Balloon Barrage and the odd balloon escaped from its mooring and floated past our house trailing its steel cable. The Navy had slightly smaller balloons mounted on their ships to protect them and we could see them from our house flying above Portsmouth together with the normal balloons.

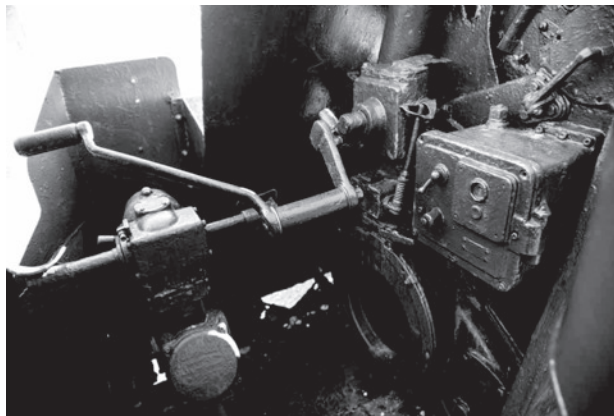
We had one or two RAF personnel billeted with us during the War.

Titchfield had its own unit of Home Guard, 14th Hampshire Regiment, mostly older men, some of whom had served in WW 1 and others that were on essential duties. They met in the Drill Hall. At first they didn't have uniforms or weapons just armbands with LDV - for Local Defence Volunteers. The only weapons they had were old pikes (long spears). Thus equipped they set up in vantage sites on the lookout from water towers

on local farmers' land along the Meon Shore Road. There was a scare on one occasion when some bodies were washed up on the shore, which turned out to be from some ship sunk in the Channel. The Home Guard were on the lookout for German invaders landing on Meon shore. When they had their exercises, we boys hid in the trees at the top of Southampton Hill watching the Home Guard come up the hill. They couldn't see us, so if we had been snipers we could just have popped them off. My dad was a Quarter Master Sergeant so I was quite proud of him.

Titchfield had quite an active fire service of volunteers, one of which was my uncle Alf. He had been in WW1. He told me tales of when the village had a horse-drawn appliance. The horse was kept in a field down by the river behind the church, so they had to catch the horse first, take it back to the fire station and connect it up! It was always exciting, when the siren went, to see all the local firemen dash up the road on bikes and jump on lorries. By now, of course, they had a proper fire engine and they had very good response times.

My uncle Will was in business with my dad but he also had to work on the railway during the War, which was considered an essential job. In the build up to D-Day, Titchfield and the surrounding area was very important and busy. Military vehicles, lorries, tanks, DUKWs were all along the sides of the roads especially along the A27, parked up ready to go to various departure points along the south coast. More gun battery stations were set up at various places. I



Control handles on Bofors gun

I remember one in the woods on the road to Meon shore that had quite a number of anti-aircraft guns. Down the road from us in Mr Hills' strawberry field was a Bofors gun and searchlight. The soldiers let us wind the handle of the Bofors gun to rotate it round

and up and down. The Solent was an amazing sight full of all sorts of shipping, so that it almost looked as if you could walk across to Ryde, on the Isle of Wight. There were so many ships, some 5,000 or so. Meon shore and all along that area was out of bounds to most people, but my father had special dispensation to deliver essential goods for cooking and lighting, namely paraffin, to the beach huts.

There were various campaigns during the War for which they put out posters like: 'Careless Talk Costs Lives', 'Dig for Victory', 'Look Out in the Blackout'. I got involved in 'Save Paper' and won a gold medal for collecting 100 books. Actually the gold medal was a cardboard replica. Thinking back, amongst the 100 books there were probably some quite valuable ones because my grandfather used to go to house sales in old houses and buy up books.

I did wear a uniform towards the end of the War because, after the boy scouts, I joined the Army Cadet Force at Prices School in Fareham. Maybe I was lucky in that none of my immediate family had to go and fight abroad.

Kate Scott

"Gran's sister had small hands and had to pick out human remains when they were repairing the Spitfires"

At Brownwich and Chilling beaches they loaded the tanks for the D-Day invasion.

Gran and the other girls worked in the Spitfire factory - now BA Systems. They were picked up from the ferry. Gran's sister had

small hands and had to pick out human remains when they were repairing the Spitfires. Bob Chase had a garage on Titchfield Hill on the A27. He used to make bits for the Spitfires. In the late '40s the doodlebugs started to come over. Gran used to will them over when they were making a noise. One landed behind West Hill Park School.



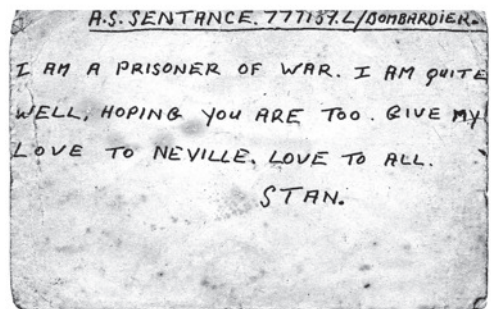
Tank crews parked at Titchfield

My grandfather, Stan Sentance, was a reservist and he left Southampton on a ferry to Le Harve and drove to Dunkirk. He was told to drain all the oil out of his lorry and leave the engine running so the Germans could not use it.

He was in the Bedfords, assigned to Oakhampton. They left in 1941 and sailed to Canada on the old Arcadia, a Greek ship. After Halifax, Canada, they refuelled at Cape Town and then sailed to

Columbo, Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Then on to India and to Singapore, which fell just after they got there, 15th February 1942. He was taken to Changi prisoner of war camp. He didn't go on the railway in Burma but he would never talk about his life.

I have all the surviving letters between my grandparents. My grandfather's regiment had never seen live fire. They were put into a large house with so many men crammed into it that my grandfather had to sit on a plate rack. My granny did not get notification that he was alive until 23rd July 1943. She wrote to him every week and described what was going on in Titchfield. At first she was only allowed so many words. My dad wanted to write but his handwriting was so bad he wasn't allowed to. In later letters she wrote, "I long to hear from you to know that you are alive".



Stan's postcard after 17 months

He was liberated in August 1945 and he was sent to Japan where the Red Cross assigned ladies to help. He was only five stone. He could have flown home but he didn't want to as he wanted to put on some weight before he got home. When the ship got to Gibraltar there was a party with some girl singers. He did not know what they were singing as in Singapore he had had a perforated eardrum, which left him deaf in that ear. He had very bad dreams and wrote that he wasn't the man he used to be, as he got angry sometimes.

He asked my granny to put out his civilian clothes for him but he told her not to come and meet him. He caught a taxi back. When he got back he ripped the banner down the family had put up. Granny used to give him a tot of brandy for his 'shakes'. May Watts, who used to work at Knowle hospital, was worried about him. Today I think it would be called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. All the family, who lived in Ivy Cottage, West Street, came to see him. He went to work at Fort Grange and then at HMS Daedalus.

Margaret Groves

When I was six I had a tricycle with a truck on the back. I was going along Atkins Lane, which had a farm at the top. The little truck broke and there were Canadian soldiers in camouflage along the hedge with their vehicles and tanks. They had a fire going and came over and mended my truck and gave me a large piece of fruitcake. I appreciated this, as we never had cakes or sweets. I always remember one of them said to the other, "You're not going to give her that f.....ing cake." I said "I know what that means!!" They moved off the next day, I think this would have been in 1941.

We used to sleep on the floor in the lounge to keep warm and also when the air raids became more frequent. The Anderson shelter in the garden flooded all the time so we had a Morrison shelter indoors, but before we had the Morrison we used to go next door into No. 2 to use their shelter, which was the only one in the terrace.

Linda Felton

During WW2 the family had to use the air raid shelter in the neighbour's garden. They would all huddle together, terrified when the doodlebugs went over in case they dropped on them. One night whilst hurrying to the shelter grandmother tripped over the wire fence. The children thought this was very funny. My mother remembered playing on the bank when a German plane went over and showered them in bullets.

My uncle, Frank Albert Biddle, was named after his two uncles Frank and Albert who were killed in WW1. He was a gunner in the Royal Artillery during WW2. Soldier No. 5498756. He was captured in Boulogne along with others from Titchfield when they were hiding in a house after their gun was blown up. There were only a few survivors after the attack. They were all forced to march to Thorn Podgorz in Poland, a prisoner of war camp. Frank was POW No. 6841. During the journey he had amoebic dysentery and frostbite. His two

friends, one called Johnny Mann, saved his life by carrying him. They stopped at Belsen and were fed there.



The band that never was

The photo is a German propaganda image of Frank Biddle (bottom right) and mates dressed in uniforms that were not their own, playing instruments for a fictitious

band. This was to show that the allied POW's were being well treated.

Frank worked on a local farm and often sneaked out of camp at night to meet his Polish girlfriend, but the romance didn't last. German doctors had operated on him to remove his appendix. Two Polish children visited him in secret at the hospital, which was run by Polish nuns. Prisoners often swapped food for cigarettes, so that they could use the lighted cigarette end to kill lice on their skin and clothes. The camp was liberated by the Russians who stole their Red Cross food parcels from them.

Frank came home from the War with TB and was sent to a sanatorium in Aldershot where his new love and fiancée Betty visited him. They were later married in Titchfield Church and Frank gave her a brooch in the shape of an ear of corn, which he had found in the camp and brought home. Their daughter Sandra was born in 1946 and son Roy in 1959. He still lives in Bellfield.

Paul Cousins

Paul also has vivid recollections of the preparations for D-Day in May and June 1944. The Congregational chapel, which was next to his family's garden, had a schoolroom, which was used as a canteen for the troops. It was organised by the Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS), with Lady Chalmers in charge. She and her husband (who later became Admiral Chalmers) lived in Guessens, the large house on Coach Hill, where Paul's mother worked as a maid. The main entrance to the canteen was along the passage that now leads to Paul's current home. The troops were English, Irish, Scottish, American and Canadian. Paul used to make a point of playing in the garden to ensure a good supply of candies from the Americans.

In the final days before D-Day the No. 12 Commandos, who were to spearhead the attack, were billeted in the old school - now Gaylords Antiques. They were called 'the famous 12ths'. There were other camps nearby - at Greenwoods on land now called Chillings and the Royal Artillery took over Hollam House. Some of the 12ths came back after the War and married local girls. Paul remembers that they included Billy Eagar, Mac Maginnis, George Templeman and Ted Gosling but he thinks that they have no surviving relatives still living in Titchfield.

Rita Prior

Cousin Sylvia could always get some gum or chocolate from the Americans and Canadians. I can see aunt Amy with tears in her eyes watching the tanks and army trucks and lorries full of troops passing our house. One plucked a rose and tucked it in his cap. She was wondering how many would return.

Sheila Hignell

There was a big army camp in Thatcher's Copse. We were lucky because if there was going to be an attack someone ran up from the camp and told us to get into the air raid shelter.

I remember a doodlebug falling on Bay Tree cottage. Mum walked over with us in the evening to see the terrible damage to what was a lovely house. Luckily no one was killed.

Mike Ferris

There were at least two aircraft crashes in Titchfield. One of these was in the field opposite Road Copse on House's Farm on Posbrook Road. I believe this was a bomber but the area was quickly sealed off and I only saw it from a distance. The other was a Bristol Beaufighter, which crashed in Brownwich Lane on Charlie West's nursery. Charlie had a worked out sandpit on his land and this night fighter had crash-landed and finished up teetering over the edge of the pit.

My grandfather had a nursery on the opposite side of Brownwich Lane from Charlie West's nursery and he had anti-aircraft guns there. The soldiers manning these used to help out by working on the land.



Bristol Beaufighter

The only actual bombs I remember landing in

Titchfield were, in fact, parachute land mines, which were probably jettisoned from the planes. These were more powerful than most bombs and one landed on Chant's nursery, next to Hewitt's Farm at Meon. I remember seeing the shattered conifer trees, which were little more than matchwood, and the greenhouses which were destroyed by the blast.

My aunt had moved from Gosport to live in a wooden bungalow in Brownwich Lane because it was thought to be safer away from the bombing. However a parachute mine landed within feet of her 'safe' bungalow, blowing a large crater in the lane and flattening her bungalow. There were no casualties from this incident.

A doodlebug exploded, landing on the house of nurse Bailey, in the Meon Road. Again I believe no one was injured but what I remember is seeing her bed hanging from the part of her house, which was still standing. Rosie Bennett, who lived on the Posbrook Road, was riding her bike nearby and was blown off by the blast. She was found lying in the road completely unhurt with her bike wheels still spinning screaming, "I'm dead! I'm dead."

It seems incredible that the massive American tanks ever managed to drive through the village without destroying some of the houses. The only damage I ever saw was to the granite kerbs immediately next to the Coach & Horses pub where the tank tracks chipped them. Those damaged kerbs were still visible until the Mews houses were built. We used to run alongside the American trucks crying out, "Any gum chum?" and the American soldiers were very generous. Besides gum they threw all sorts of unheard of goodies like chocolate bars and tinned food such as spam.

During this build-up period, the army billeting officers used to come around armed with a list detailing how many rooms you had in your house and how many lived there. If you had any spare capacity at all, you were asked to provide accommodation for soldiers for a number of days prior to D-Day. We had two soldiers sleeping on the floor in our house.



In the troop build up before D-Day, the field on Heath Lane was filled with troops and included amongst their equipment were Bren gun carriers. These were like a mini tank mounted with a single Bren machine gun. The soldiers used to give us rides on them around that field.

Bren gun carrier in use in France

Leslie Ellis



The D Day landings in Normandy, on the Channel coast of France

In 1940 Leslie was called up and joined the Royal Army Medical Corp as a medical officer. Early in 1941 he was stationed at the British Military Hospital in Sialkot. He then went to Northern India which, following partition in 1947, became Pakistan. Leslie then went as the medical officer to the Worcestershire Regiment as they were doing field exercises near Jhelum in the Pabbi Hills.

Leslie's unit moved on to Singapore and was captured in February 1942 when the Japanese invaded. Conditions were atrocious but, on Easter Sunday, Leslie was among the first party to leave Singapore. He went by boat to Saigon, where most of the men worked in the docks as slave labour. He, however, was sent on to Hanoi until 1943. The next move was as M.O. to the people working on the Burma-Siam railway which was being built. The conditions were grim; there was starvation, illness and brutality.

Leslie remained there until the atomic bombs were dropped on Japan in August 1945. Leslie said he is still uncertain about the morality of the atomic bomb but within days after they were dropped, the War was over. He returned to India and had three and a half years of a major's back pay waiting for him.

Sylvie Whittaker

I rode to work by bicycle, up hill and down dale, taking all the back roads from Blackpool where I was billeted in a semi-detached house out of town. The high hedges were green and fresh and the birds were flying down the lanes.

I worked for the Ministry of Pensions, Norcross. The girls in our office were sitting about in summer dresses drinking tea or coffee from flasks, and were bored. We seldom mentioned family members being away, we kept the chat light where possible, talking about weekend plans and rationing difficulties of getting butter or getting a decent piece of meat to roast.

The whole place was made up of large offices where hundreds of typists waited for incoming data from towns which had been bombed, ship's crew lost at sea, together with soldiers and airmen lost. Pension slips were dispatched against appropriate data for dependents of those men injured or killed. The slips were only about six inches by four inches, listing name, number, which unit they were in, and what had happened to them - killed - wounded - missing, believed killed. Whilst in one sense we were pleased to be reasonably quiet, we sometimes truly wondered whether it was worth being there at all - nothing much ever happened for us. We seemed to be so numerous - a whole office doing practically nothing. So there was a war on - we weren't informed or asked about anything, we felt we were practically redundant.

The news on the sixth of June 1944 was a revelation - our troops had landed in France and the Americans had joined them - at last things were on the move. 'D' Day was under way and its legacy became very obvious to us. After a day or so, the slips of paper began to be more than just a trickle. On the bottom of each slip was another set of details - next of kin - National Insurance number, dependent relatives. One of these slips had an address I hadn't come across before. It said 'Hants' for county so I queried this from the head typist.

She had to go to another office and found out that this meant



Sylvie Whittaker

Hampshire. We were northerners so hadn't recognised the abbreviation. The address was 'Titchfield', and the soldier was in the Hampshire Rifles. His relative was listed as 'dependent: wife plus two children'. Just cold details.

My job was to copy this scrappy bit of information down and list it so that the wife could get her widow's pension. The arrival of this news to her would have been by hand - a telegram boy. We tried not to think further than typing the details - she would never know of our despair and sympathy for her. Skimpy bits of cheap paper detailing the loss of a good man who would be badly missed.

From being practically unemployed, the little scraps of paper came faster and piled up in the in-tray, overwhelming us all. We felt guilty going home. If we didn't have children to care for we worked overtime. The head typist was a hard-faced woman, dressed mostly in dark colours. She stalked between the rows of girls but her dedication to office procedure was surely more valuable to the families receiving this devastating information than any amount of weeping by the workforce of young girls. We cried lots. "I see you are in tears again. There is no help given in a shower of tears. Much better to get the forms filled as quickly as possible. Put in extra hours if you feel so bad!"

Donald Upshall

After D-Day, the RAF squadrons moved down to Middle Wallop, near Salisbury, and you gradually worked your way down to Southampton dock. We ended up in a transit camp, just outside Salisbury. And there were Americans and you were all together. We went down to Southampton docks and when we got down there we

boarded a Liberty ship. The Americans built them - they were all welded and they produced so many a week as we needed them to get the supplies across the Atlantic. They were mass-produced and you did not launch them like the liners, stern first, but sideways. They were especially built to bring



Typhoon rearming

stuff across for the War effort. We boarded this ship in Southampton dock and we sailed out and anchored just off Calshot as we were in a queue because there were so many ships going across. We were on the ship for a few days and I was talking to these Americans. One came from Seattle, but I could almost see Lee-on-the-Solent. I said "I live just over there" and he said, "Well I live 6,000 miles away!" It was amazing really.

I always remember that these ships were manned by American Merchant Navy and we had to do sentry duty. I remember this man tapping me on the shoulder, he must have been about 50 and he must have thought I was only a youngster. He gave me this beef sandwich because they made their own bread. I think it was the best meal I ever tasted in my life because the other rations we had were wartime rations, which you had to carry with you. They were horrible things - you just existed. I often wonder what his name was. Little things like that you do remember. After that we were queuing up to get unloaded.

When we were in the Southampton docks it did cross my mind to pop home to see my mother but it was just as well I didn't as you never knew when you would suddenly sail and then you would be in serious trouble. There were even some Australians and they were 12,000 miles away from home. There were so many people from all over the world.

Then we were all moved to various airfields and we were reposted to a Typhoon squadron. It was one of the fastest aircraft in the world, at that time. We went over to France in September '44, pushing up to Germany. We landed at Omaha beach but of course there was nothing going on, you could certainly notice all the wrecked tanks. I remember we were in this RAF convoy, we'd landed, and we went through Caen and it was completely flattened. The Americans bombed in the day and we bombed it in the night. We were told to keep inside the lorries, as



*MkIV Stirlings, Operation
Market Garden*

some of the French men did not like it because they thought we over-did the bombing. It was just one of those things during the War. Then I was sent back to England. After that I was I was on a Stirling bomber squadron, they did some bombing raids and gradually the War came to an end with all the victory parades.

I remember being on a train from Waterloo, to Southampton, I was standing next to a chap and he said, "I know you. You're Don Upshall aren't you? I'm Fred Pack." This chap was a sergeant. It was a family who lived at Bellfield. In those days he had just come back from the Isle of Man. He had been training as an air gunner in a bomber squadron. He was killed in a flying accident and his name is on the War Memorial in Titchfield.

Judy Stokes

Judy Stokes had a fascinating career during and just after the War, helping to mend the minds and bodies of men who had sustained disfiguring injuries. 'What an honour to work with Sir Harold Gillies', Judy Stokes' talk, was given in September 2014 in St Peter's Chapter Rooms to the Women's Breakfast Group.

I was at school in 1939 when War broke out. My older sister had joined the Red Cross and once a month we had a practice. They needed people to use as 'patients' so I was taken along. I learnt a lot from this, for example don't have the knots too tight, talk to the patient. Our stretchers were made of a wire mesh and when you got up you looked like a waffle, they later padded them.



Judy Stokes

Then the age for joining the Red Cross was brought down to 16 so I joined up and became a member, taking my turn at day duty. When it was night duty we slept under the stage of the Parish Rooms. I made the tea and enjoyed the fellowship and was learning all the time.

When I was 18 my call-up papers came through and I was sent to a factory making drill braces. The bits had been made and we just had to assemble them; it was like an egg whisk. I kept asking to become a Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) worker but every time the answer was "No".

Eventually we realised something important was happening as there were troops everywhere along the south coast and large lorries that needed the trees cutting back to get through. I was given a temporary release for a week to find a post. If I didn't find one, I had to go back to the factory. Three days later I was in an auxiliary hospital at Liphook. The men were either recovering or waiting for discharge as unable to return to the front. There were men with such injuries as being deafened by an explosion but one man had an unexplained rash. Then it was realised that it was scarlet fever, which he had caught from his children when he was home on leave. Needless to say he was quickly put into isolation.

I was sent to Winchester for reassessment and then subjected to the 'chamber of horrors'. These were photographs of men who had been terribly injured and scarred. Some girls fainted and some had to leave the room. I was one of two girls who were interested and unaffected so I went to Park Prewett hospital in Basingstoke. There were 800 beds in villas, which were better than Nissen huts. The main house had been taken over by a London hospital, St Mary's, Paddington. I carried out all the usual routine such as blanket baths, feeding and shaving the men as many did not have hands. These were men from the Tank Corps and if they had to get out of a burning tank it meant putting their hands on the top of the open turret to haul themselves out. By the time a man had done that the rest of the crew would be dead and his hands were burnt so badly they became claws and it was necessary to amputate them.

The doctor in charge of plastic surgery was Sir Harold Gillies who was a pioneering surgeon. He was keen that as well as having to mend the men's bodies they should try to build up the men's minds. He encouraged the staff to fraternise with the patients to keep up their spirits. He wasn't like the other doctors, as he would come round the wards and talk, socially, to the patients. I even saw him open a door for a ward maid, "After you my dear." he said. He was a New Zealander and my pin-up boy.



A nurse Park Prewett Hospital 1941

He pioneered new procedures such as a pedicle. It was difficult to get skin to graft, especially onto the face and jaw. Sir Harold would cut round three sides of a rectangle on the man's forearm to form a flap, and then sew it to the jaw with the circulation intact keeping the skin alive. The poor man had to stay with his arm against his face for a very long time and had to be plastered in place to stop it from moving. We had to do everything such as feeding and washing because he could not move.

We also had a man from Fareham, who had lost all his toes to frostbite so Sir Harold took body tissue and sewed it into a bag of skin and sewed this onto the man's feet. I remember this man being in a wheelchair and then standing up, saying, "Look Nurse, I can stand." Another man had lost his eyelids so Sir Harold took a little flap of skin from behind his ear and sewed it onto the eye, the hair became his eyelashes. It is very difficult to sleep without eye lids. When the Allies went into Europe we saw terrible atrocities such as men from the concentration camps with noses and ears cut off.

Sir Harold said that one nurse would be assigned to a man; she would prep him and stay with him in the operation and then, when he was back on the ward, she was to build a special relationship with him. When they came round from the operation men would ask, "I didn't talk did I?" It was just as well I had worked in a factory and I had learnt how the other half lived as I had learnt some new words there! The staff had to be so careful in those days as there was not any penicillin or surgical gloves to keep infection down. Sir Harold was a great artist and he hung his pictures on the walls of the wards, as it could get very boring staring at walls day after day.

The people of Basingstoke were so good; they invited the men for lunch or tea to get them used to being looked at. The Canadians donated a pavilion for entertainments. There were things like the Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA), the forces entertainment group. Again it got the men used to being with other people. Sadly some people could not get used to them and we saw men whose marriages and engagements had broken up.

The nurses and VADs lived in the old admission block with only curtains between a bed, little dressing table and a long wooden box which we called our 'coffin'. There was not a wardrobe so everything had to go in there. It had been a hospital for people with mental illness so they had three baths with only curtains between them. The tap was a mobile one so we had to ask the other girl to pass it through the curtains. The dining room was enormous but it was not open at night so we had to cook the food ourselves. It fell to the lowest of the low, in this case me, to cook.

Everyone just joined in, we all took our turn although I felt I was a little cog in a very big machine but I felt it was worthwhile. I didn't see the disfigurement but the personality of the man. I respected the courage of the men.



Judy's Badge of Honour

a lorry or tractor and trailer for us to join in. His daughter Joan was one of the cadets.

I have continued with my Red Cross work and I have a badge for 70 years service.

When I was able to return home, I became a dental nurse. I was able to undertake Red Cross duties, first aid, Darby and Joan Club, assist at foot clinics and blood donor sessions, For five years I was a cadet officer for the Titchfield girls unit. We met at the Parish Rooms at first but when an adult group was started we were joined by the boys' group who had their meetings elsewhere. Red Cross HQ took over the old school on West Hill (now Gaylords) and we were able to share lectures and demonstrations and work together at sports events and wherever first aid might be needed including, of course, the carnival. Steve Harris very kindly provided us with

War's End

Paul Cousin

I remember the celebrations at the end of the War, when Lady Chalmers and Miss Parry, the chief ARP warden, headed the parade.

Gerald Read

We had a bonfire, yes, in the Square to celebrate VE-Day. No more 'lights out!' No more listening for the air raid siren and the bombs falling on Portsmouth Naval Dockyard, or watching the glow as Southampton burned!

Donald Upshall

VE-day was in 1945 and everybody celebrated. Rationing still went on for years after that but at least you knew you wouldn't get bombed! There was petrol rationing and we had clothing coupons. After that my career in the RAF ended because my father had died and I had to take over the running of the garage. I was going to make the RAF my lifetime career. There were some good opportunities because after that there was the Cold War and they were building up the RAF squadrons again.

Kate Scott

On 15th August 1945, VJ-Day, my great grandfather, John Thomas Carse, who lived at 29 West Street, put his favourite armchair out on the road and set fire to it. He had heard the news on the radio of the Japanese surrender. His son-in-law, Arthur Stanley Sentance, of 31 West Street was a POW in Changi, Singapore. There was also another POW in Japan who came from further up West Street.



Liberation of Changi POW's 1945

Everyone came out of their houses to celebrate and they lit a bonfire on the street opposite the pub, the Old House at Home.

John (also known as Jock) had survived WW1 on the minesweepers, but was too old to serve in WW2 and he later died in 1959. My great aunt Marleen (John Thomas Carse's youngest daughter) was there. She now lives in Coach Hill.

Mike Ferris

The main event for VJ-Day celebrations was organised by returning servicemen. It involved a large bonfire right in the centre of Titchfield Square, unbelievable as it now sounds. Prominent amongst these men were Albert Godbehere from middle Bellfield, who also started a boxing club, Johnner Jones from Posbrook Farm, Tosh Bartley and Stan Sentance from West Street. We kids collected any material we could and this was stored until VJ-Day, in the corner against the wall of the then Lankester & Crook butcher's shop. The sight of the bonfire in the centre of the Square was very exciting although I don't recall there being any fireworks.

What made it memorable in particular though was when a bunch of the men from the Bugle pub decided to make it more exciting by adding a barrel of tar to the flames. During those times, road repairs were carried out by rolling stone chippings in hot tar and someone had spotted that the council had placed some barrels of tar on the corner of Ranvilles Lane at the top of Titchfield Hill ready for road repairs. A gang of them, including Ern Privett who worked at the gasworks, nicked a barrel and rolled it down the hill to the Square. The ultimate result was that rivulets of molten tar were running over the road and everyone had to step back to avoid them.

World War Two terms explained

Ack Ack guns	Nickname for anti-aircraft guns
Air Raid Patrol, Allied Powers	During Blackout, checking no lights showing Britain, France, USA and Soviet Union opposing Germany and the Axis Powers
Anschluss	Hitler's desire for political union with Austria which led to its annexation
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
Appeasement	Efforts of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain to avoid war with Germany
Axis Powers	Germany, Italy, and Japan opposing Britain and the Allied Powers
Battle of Britain	Britain's RAF resistance against the German Luftwaffe attempts to destroy it in 1940
Beadle	Person who checked up if your child was at school
Black market	Selling things unavailable due to rationing or scarcity
Blackout	Cover on windows so enemy planes didn't see lights
Blitzkrieg	Hitler's invasion strategy, sudden with overwhelming force, literally 'lightening war'
Blitz	Shortened from above, a term used for the major bombing of British cities in late 1940 and early 1941
Bombed out	City or building destroyed by bombs
British Restaurant	Somewhere bombed out families could get a meal
Called-up	Notice that you are to join the military services
Chindits	British and Gurkha troops who worked behind Japanese lines in Burma
Civvies	Non-uniform clothes
Concentration camp	Prison where people were held without trial, like the Jews in Germany
Conchy	Conscientious objector, someone who wouldn't fight on ethical grounds
Convoy	Naval escorted merchant ships supplying food and armaments, often attacked by German submarines

D-Day	1944 invasion of German-occupied France, beginning of the push which ended the War in Europe
Demob	Demobilisation, release from the armed services
Doodlebug	German rocket fired at British cities
Dried egg	Method of preserving /transporting eggs
Dripping	Fat saved from cooked meat, used instead of butter
Dunkirk	Evacuation of the British Army from northern France following German invasion of Belgium
El-Alamein	Britain's decisive victory over German forces leading to securing of North Africa
Evacuee	Child moved from town to 'safety' of countryside
Faggots	Internal organs of pig rolled up with bread crumbs and herbs, and eaten hot
Final Solution	German plans to systematically exterminate the Jewish population of occupied lands
Gerry	British nickname for a German
Gestapo	Feared German secret police
GI's	American service personnel
Gurkhas	Soldiers from Nepal
Holocaust	Genocide of Jewish people in concentration camps
Home Guard	Volunteer force who defended 5,000 miles of British coastline against German invasion
Hiroshima	Also Nagasaki were the two Japanese cities where the Allies dropped atomic bombs forcing surrender
D-Day beach	Five invasion beaches between Cherbourg and Le Havre: Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword
Lebensraum	'Living space' Hitler's justification for invasion of Germany's neighbours
Luftwaffe	German air force under Hermann Goring
Liberty ships	American ships built at great speed
Little Ships	700 private boats used for Dunkirk evacuation, which rescued 338,000 British and French soldiers
Maginot Line	French eastern defensive line
Manhattan Project	American programme to develop the atomic bomb
Marshall Plan	Post-war strategy to redevelop Germany
Mein Kampf	Hitler's autobiographical political manifesto
Molotov cocktail	Petrol bomb - home-made incendiary device
Mulberry Harbour	Dock in kit-form, towed to France for D-Day
Operation Overlord	Code name for the British invasion of France June 1944

Oslo Meal	Quick nutritious meal, a bit like a 'Ploughmans'
POW	Prisoner of war, someone surrendered or taken during wartime, frequently put to work by captors
Reserv'd Occupation Job	considered too important for the person to be called up into military service
Shrapnel	Pieces of metal from exploded bomb
Siren	Audible warning of imminent attack
S.S.	German elite paramilitary unit
U-Boats	German submarines
VE Day	Victory in Europe day, 8 May 1945
Vichy France	Southern France governed in collaboration with Germany
VJ Day	Victory in Japan day, 15 August 1945
Whale meat	Eaten when other meats in short supply
WRNS	Women's Royal Naval Service
WVS	Women's Voluntary Service

Part Three Bonus Pictures



Balloon ready for deployment in Gosport



British Commandos, Operation Plunder



Landing Craft Infantry, D-Day crossing



Mk 1 Spitfire K9795



Supermarine factory, Woolston



D Day preparations, Southampton

Significant Dates

- 1938 - German Chancellor Adolf Hitler annexes Austria
 - British and French allow Hitler to annex part of Czechoslovakia
 - British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain negotiates with Hitler over Czechoslovakia and declares "Peace for our time"
 - Kristelnacht, Hitler arrests 30,000 Jews and 7,000 Jewish businesses are destroyed
- 1939 - Hitler invades the rest of Czechoslovakia
 - Spanish Civil War ends with dictator General Franco in charge
 - Hitler invades Poland - Britain and France declare war on Germany
- 1940 - Germany blockades British waters with U Boat submarines and begins bombing raids on Britain
 - Ration Books introduced in Britain
 - German Blitzkrieg overwhelms Belgium, Holland and France. Allies retreat through Dunkirk
 - Neville Chamberlain resigns and Winston Churchill becomes prime minister
 - Battle of Britain, Germans fail to gain air superiority over England
 - Germany invades the Channel Islands (British territory)
- 1941 - The Blitz, German terror bombing of British cities
 - Japan attacks Pearl Harbour so the Americans join the Allies
- 1942 - Singapore falls to the Japanese
- 1943 - Germany's first defeat at Stalingrad by the Russians
 - Allied success in north Africa leads to attack through Italy
- 1944 - D-Day, Allies invade northern France and liberate Paris
- 1945 - Auschwitz liberated. It, with other German concentration camps, had murdered six million Jews
 - Russians push westwards and reach Berlin first. Hitler commits suicide
 - Germany surrenders - Victory in Europe Day, VE Day
 - America drops two atomic bombs on Japan forcing it to surrender
 - Victory in Japan Day, VJ Day - the War is over
 - The War has killed 60 million people: 22 million combatants and 38 million civilians