

THE CHRONICLE

Editorial



We commemorate 75 years since the end of the Second World War in Europe and remember the personal stories of people who witnessed nearly six years of suffering and hardships; saw families and their homes and cities destroyed and cost the lives of millions.

Lost Keys!!

Some years after the war, when I was little, 2 policemen came to the door and asked to speak to my father alone. My mother and I were mystified as to what it could possibly be about and couldn't wait to ask when they had left. Apparently there had been a break in at a stationer's in Epsom where we lived and the police had found a set of keys on the floor with my father's WW2 RAF dog tag being used as a keyring - my mother had lost these keys a few days earlier but had not known where she dropped them. A silly story I know but which made a great impression on me at the time!

Margaret

My memories

My father was called up in 1942 from his protected profession of teaching to the RNVF and after a spell at King Alfred in Shoreham to learn the ropes, he was posted to HMS Ferret, formerly the Burwell, one of the ships donated by the USA to Britain at the start of the war.

He was sent with the rest of the crew to Boston to pick up the ship and bring her to the UK, then was posted to Scotland before going to Dover as a gunnery officer. Then, after hospitalisation, back to Queensferry in Scotland on clerical duties. He came home to my mother and me in Sheffield with (on the first leave) a clan McGregor tartan kilt and Glengarry, which I still have, though they don't fit any more!

On his second leave from Queensferry he brought us a cocker spaniel puppy which I christened Jimmy. One day later on, Jimmy got out of the garden, went up the road and

(cont. overleaf)

(My Memories....Cont. from previous page)

discovered Mrs. Swallow's washing on the line, so he chased and caught the sheets flapping in the wind. Mrs. S. was not happy - tokens were scarce during rationing. So Jimmy had to go to a gamekeeper, where he probably had a better time out on the moors.

I remember being carried across the road in the dark, wrapped in my eiderdown, to the neighbours air-raid shelter during raids. I found it cramped with at least 3 families using it and not a lot to do but listen for the planes.. I also remember being very afraid of all aeroplanes and running indoors if one came over. Sheffield had a lot of bombing - the Germans were going for the steel works in the city, so some nights could be very noisy with planes, sirens and bangs. I remember seeing the bomb damage on the way into the city on a few occasions for shopping and seeing the broken buildings.

Eggs were hard to find, so my mother who loved cooking had to make do with dried eggs and also with Pom - dried potato. The children had rations of rose hip syrup for the vitamin C, Vimaltol, with I liked a lot, for minerals and if you were lucky, extra fruit from neighbours' gardens.

My father was demobbed in 1944 having developed MS (known as disseminated sclerosis in those days) which was attributed to shock from the gunnery days in Dover. Diagnosis wasn't so thorough then as nowadays!

Catherine

Did you know?

Monopoly, a board game many of us love to play, had a significant role during WWII. It aided Allied POWs to escape from the German camps they were put in. German authorities allowed the Red Cross to send care packages to the prisoners at the height of war. One of the permitted item in these packages was a board game. So Monopoly was utilized - foreign money was hidden within the board, a small compass among the play pieces and the hotel pieces had the most important feature of all, the silk map of the prison.

Deepest Sussex

I remember well walking halfway across a field at Mountfield with my mother and having to lie in a ditch whilst a Spitfire and a German plane fought it out overhead! I don't remember much about VE Day - no TV, living in deepest Sussex, so no village celebrations (at least not for 10 year olds).

Janet



Bomb blasts

I have no real memories to share, only miserable ones due to my parents and grandmother being in mourning having suddenly lost my maternal grandfather. I remember that we kept loosing all our windows in our house so many times from bomb blasts, that in the end my father said ...!!! to the Nazis we are boarding all windows up until it's all over.

Valerie

Death in the Family

There were over 383,000 military deaths in WW2. So many wives, mothers and fathers who lost loved ones. Each one would have had a tale to tell, or may be not as many didn't want to speak about the horrors they saw at places like Dunkirk, Burma and concentration camps. How many of those deaths were after peace had been declared.

What I am about to relate refers to a tragically young death at the end of WW1 and this was probably a similar situation to many people in WW2 as well.

Please forgive the seemingly irrelevant beginning.

A friend who no longer lives in U.K was having great difficulty with one particular stem of her family, each side having relatively uncommon names, and many shared first names, but soooo many of both families in 3 adjoining Counties and quite a few in a 4th!. Having lived in all four areas, seemed I should try and help, as 3 of those counties had countless small hamlets and villages, all with boundaries blending in with each other, and a number of both families in so many possible locations.

Hearsay told of a young woman, allegedly born in the early C20, and who had possibly married at a very early age. Her name appeared late in the tree, thus leaving a big gap to fill.. So not so much a brick wall, as a wall with a quite a few bricks missing. I was very recently able to find her. Born in 1901, Maud had a large family with scattered birthplaces. She was married in June 1918 to James, born in 1894, and a serving Private in a local Regiment. Very sadly he returned home from France, and died in their local hospital in December 2018. In the records he left to his Widow £5, 8 shillings and 7pence. The Army later awarded her a payment of £16 on January 1st, 1919, and then in May 1919, James was posthumously awarded a pension of 13 shillings and 9 pence. He was awarded the British War Medal, and the Victory medal. He was buried in the local cemetery, and there is a picture of his headstone online. A footnote on later records shows 2 occasions, both in this Century, on which flowers were left at the Grave.

He is remembered.

Ann

Ration Cards

The colour of your ration book was important to ensure you got the right amount and types of food needed for health.

Blue - Children between 5 and 16 years of age.

Green - Pregnant women, nursing mothers and children under 5

Buff - Most adults had this colour



Did you know?

WWII cost Russia approximately 80% of their male population born in 1923

London, 1940

*After fourteen hours clearing they came to him
Under the twisted girders and the rubble.
They would not let me see his face.
Now I sit shiftlessly on the tube platforms
Or huddle, a little tipsy, in brick-built shelters.
I can see with an indifferent eye
The red glare over by the docks and hear
Impassively the bomb-thuds in the distance.
For me, a man with not many interests
And no pretensions to fame, that was my world,
My son of fifteen, my only concrete achievement,
Whom they could not protect. Stepping aside
From the Great Crusade, I will play the idiot's part.
You, if you like, may wave your fists and crash
On the wrong doorsteps brash retaliation.
20 Oct 1940*

Frank Thompson

Eccentric Englishman Frank Thompson, poet, made an unlikely soldier. He was an intellectual idealist. Frank wrote prodigiously; letters, diaries and poetry. Aged twenty-three, Frank was captured, tortured and executed in Bulgaria in 1944. A soldier of principle and integrity, he fought a poet's war; a very English hero from a very different era.

My parents

Mum and Dad went to the same village school in Robertsbridge and sang in Salehurst Parish Church choir.

Dad was living at home with his foster parents in Salehurst and was an estate agent's clerk when he joined the RAF in 1940. Within a month he had contracted meningitis and was admitted to an isolation hospital. In 1941 he embarked for South Africa and he told me that on board ship they had to wear soft soled plimsolls on deck so the deck didn't get damaged. He served in an administrative capacity on several bases, including Pretoria and whilst there he sang at the funeral of General Smutts. He came back to the UK in 1944 where he served at Pitreavie Castle in Scotland and eventually landed up at Central Signals Centre, RAF Watton prior to demob in March 1946. He loved South Africa and always wanted to go back and planned to go on their 25th wedding anniversary, but they never did.

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Mum was living at home with Nan and Grandad within a few yards of Robertsbridge railway station and as employed as a clerk in the local flour mill and joined the WRAF in 1943, aged 21. She welcomed the chance to get away from village life.

On VE Day she was a teleprinter operator at Rudlow Manor, Box, Wiltshire and was demobbed in 1946, 6 weeks after their marriage in early July.

My Grandad had his own coal yard at the station and was a Special Constable and observer during WW2.

Liz

On VE Day

The streets of the capital were thronged with people who were dancing, cheering and waving flags of red, white and blue.

Ten consecutive services were held at St Paul's Cathedral in thanks for peace, and crowds massed in Trafalgar Square and up the Mall to Buckingham Palace.



"I shall celebrate Victory-day by switching over to asparagus."

A Chailey memory

My Dad was 19 years old when he was sent to France to demolish bridges. He once told me that on one occasion they had used too much explosive and almost blew themselves up. He said the noise was terrifying and rendered him temporarily deaf. My father was a shy, sensitive gentle man and the horrors of war and seeing his comrades killed would have weighed heavily on him but he rarely mentioned those times. It affected so many men.

He was one of the last wave to be rescued from Dunkirk and had to wade out to sea, up to his neck, three times before he was rescued and he couldn't swim. Knowing what my father had been through made the film Dunkirk even more powerful and emotional.

My father served in the Home Guard after the war and went off for training days. I remember the uniform vividly and my Dad marching down the lane. In the evening my sister and I would wait at the door, watching the lane, and as soon as we saw him we would run down to meet him. Although he was not at any risk there was something about it that obviously worried us slightly. For a short while a German prisoner of war had worked and lived on the farm. My mother took him 'under her wing' and apparently he made a wooden toy for my sister.

I remember going to the local village shop to buy some sweets with our ration books- the tickets were yellow.



This is a photograph of an old air-raid shelter I took last year, which is on the farm at Chailey/Plumpton, where I was born. During the war the farm was used as an airfield where Polish pilots were billeted. My brother still runs the farm. In 2004 there was a commemoration day and old

world war planes landed once again in the fields.

Mary

The Year War Broke Out

- 27 April** - Conscription introduced; British armed forces increase in number by more than 1.5 million by end of 1939
 - June** - Women's Land Army re-founded
 - 28 June** - Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) created
 - 1 September** - Hitler invades Poland
 - 1 September** - Evacuation of children from cities begins in case of air raids
 - 3 Sept** - Britain and France declare war on Germany
 - 10 September** - Canada declares war on Germany
 - 10 September** - Battle of the Atlantic begins October - Government launch "Dig for Victory" campaign
 - 28 September** - Meat rationing introduced
 - September to May 1940** - Phoney War; no air raids or invasion
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Doodlebugs

The first reported Doodlebug to fall in England, crashed at Mizbrooks Farm near Cuckfield, in the early hours of 13 June 1944, Twenty-three flying bombs came down in the Cuckfield Rural District. Former schoolboys at Ardingly College. remember the school being ringed by A-A guns trying to bring down the V1s.

Tales from Yorkshire

My Nan told me stories about rationing and how food was much better than it is today. She said it was "More tasty". She was never hungry because everyone knew how to stretch the food further, through two houses, so they would consolidate their rations and collect fruit from the hedges and tree's - eggs from the Woods and Road Kill. Sometimes they would go fishing or lay traps for Rabbits.

There was no Pasta but they had something similar - and cooked on an old Aga that worked on Wood and Coal. - She said that was the weekend job, to go out and collect Wood. (There wasn't much Coal around until much later but occasionally someone would bring a barrow around from the Pits or they would go on a family outing to a slag and stuff their pockets).

My Grandma was born in 1914, and then married in 1936. She had her 1st child (my Mum) in August 1936, and lived in Hemsworth Yorkshire through the War. She was a very strong intelligent woman. She was always thought of as the Headmaster's wife but apparently she did a lot of Grandads' work for him.

My Maternal Grandfather was a School Master and later on, a Headmaster of Dalton Parva Primary School. I was told that My Grandma did most of the work, and then passed the work off as Grandad's so that it looked like he was busy and important. They always said they used to do the minimum in the last ten years until he retired because there was only about 12 - 15 in the village school, but when the village had been more populated it was always full having 60 to 80 children. He was bored of working in the school after he was about age 55 but they needed the Pension. I remember the school being open when I visited in about 1969 - 1975, but soon after, the school closed and was turned into a Private House. My Grandparents lived in the House opposite until my Grandma died in 1997.

My Dad was born in 1935. He was brought up on a Farm. They were not really short on Food. In Fact, the Farm mostly fed the village. My Dad was too young to go to War,
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and he missed National Service by a whisker. He used to look after the Pigs and had to guard them because they were always being poached. He gave them all names and was very upset when his father killed them for meat. There was plenty of fruit around the farm and general veg but not a lot of dairy foods so they used to do 'Swapsie's' at the markets.

My parents both have stories about Leeds market and how it developed during the War; people just arriving and setting up stalls when they had stock. There were no pitches, you just threw down your tablecloth and sold what you had until it was gone! My Dad had a barrow that his Mum would send him off with and give him a list of things that she wanted him to come home with. 'She didn't much care whether he sold things or swapped them or stole them - as long as he came back with what she wanted!!' (All his words!)

Michelle

Did you know?

Police records show that the first high explosive bomb to fall in West Sussex was dropped on Cowfold at 3 am on 29 May 1940.