

An Exhibition

On 3rd September 1939 the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, announced to the British nation that: 'This country is at war with Germany. May God bless us all. May he defend the right, for it is evil things that we shall be fighting against, brute force, bad faith, injustice, oppression and persecution; and against that I am certain that right will prevail.'

With those words the people of Britain and Enfield were at war.

This exhibition is dedicated to and tells some of the stories of the people who served in the forces from or lived on the Home Front in the three former districts of Edmonton, Enfield and Southgate which, since 1965, have made up the London Borough of Enfield.

As 2005 marks the 60th anniversary of VE Day and the end of the Second World War, Enfield Museum Service decided to take this opportunity to ask local people for their stories. Many local residents have generously donated or loaned their reminiscences, photos, objects, letters and documents and many of them are used or displayed here in this exhibition. The Museum Service would like to thank everyone who took the time to contact us.

This exhibition would not have been possible without help from Designer Nigel Kellaway, Graham Dalling and Kate Godfrey in the Local History Unit, Geoffrey Gillam, Ian Jones and others from Enfield Archaeological Society, Ray Tuthill of the RSAF Apprentices Association, Bernard Eastwood and colleagues at Forty Hall.

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Saucepans to Spitfires

During the Second World War waste recycling was a necessity - not to save the Earth's resources but to help with the War effort. Most of Britain's raw materials were imported by ship from abroad and by the end of 1940 almost everything was in short supply. Waste paper, old pots and pans, rags and even bones were collected and recycled. All of industries' stockpiles had been used up; in particular there was a shortage of aluminium used in the production of aircraft.



Enfield's Aluminium 'Bumper Dump' at the western end of Church Street near St Paul's Church, 1940. Picture courtesy of Local History Unit.

A national salvage drive got underway, promoted by the government, to encourage everyone to hand over all their aluminium utensils to be melted down and re-used. Posters, information leaflets and slogans were produced and 'bumper dumps' were created where residents could hand over their saucepans. Hundreds of thousands of aluminium milk bottle tops were collected by schools and many youth organisations, including Scouts, Girl Guides and the Boys Brigade became involved in the push to collect waste for the war effort.

It wasn't just aluminium either - in 1941 the public were asked to donate any form of scrap metal and all kinds, from old razor blades to iron garden railings, were handed over. Unfortunately when this scrap metal came to be used much of it was found to be unsuitable and so a great deal of ironwork had been unnecessarily destroyed. One of the dumps where these railings were collected was in Croyland Road, Edmonton. One night a bomb fell on it and local residents woke to find their roofs and gardens impaled with railings.



A wartime poster showing 'The Squanderbug' a German agent insect that encouraged people to waste money.

National Savings

During the First World War the government needed to raise money to fund the building of ships and planes and so the National Savings Movement was born. The Second World War gave this fresh impetus and once again the government encouraged people to buy Savings Bonds, Stamps and Certificates. The scheme worked, for by the end of 1945 the Enfield Savings Committee had raised £1,391,425 and nationally the total stood at £1,754million.



An advertisement from the local paper for Southgate's Warship Week held 21-28 March 1942. As a result of the money raised the Borough was able to 'adopt' HMS Farndale.

Early on in the war Lord Beaverbrook had come up with the idea of 'presentation' aircraft where local towns and communities could organise events to help raise money towards the cost of purchasing an aircraft, which would then be named after their town. Local communities were encouraged to compete against their neighbours to see who could raise the most money.

In July 1940 Edmonton, Enfield and Southgate joined in the scheme to raise enough money to 'buy a Spitfire' and by October had reached the target figure of £5000. Throughout the war different campaign weeks were organised such as Edmonton's 'War Weapons Week' in 1941 & 'Wings for Victory Week' in 1943; Southgate's 'Warship Week' in 1942, and Enfield's 'Salute the Soldier Week' in 1944. By the end of the war the amount invested by the three Boroughs in these special weeks came to over £15m and presentation aircraft logbooks and plaques were given 'in recognition' of these large public donations.



Ambulances and their crews in Wilmer Way at the start of a procession for 'War Weapons Week' in Southgate, May 1941. Picture courtesy of Mrs J. Banks.

Sand Bags and Tin Helmets

When Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933, the British government began to get nervous about what was happening in mainland Europe and in 1935 the Home Office asked local authorities to take precautions to protect their residents in the event of air attacks and war.

Despite some local opposition, Enfield and Southgate Councils agreed and they began consultations on the setting up of Air Raid Precaution (ARP) services. Edmonton Council however was distinctly unwilling to make any arrangements. The council minutes record "...that this Council having considered the circular issued by the Home Office on Air Raids is of the opinion that it is not the duty of local government authorities to provide for any...defence against air raids at the expense of rate-payers, but that it is the duty of HM Government...."

However in 1937 the Air Raid Precautions Act was passed and it became compulsory for local authorities to prepare for war. Edmonton finally setup an ARP committee and all three councils appointed a full-time ARP Officer.

Appeals were made for volunteers to take on jobs such as air raid wardens, ambulance drivers and first aiders, auxiliary firemen, motorcycle messengers and heavy rescue teams. Recruitment was slow at first but by the end of 1938 over 4000 people in the 3 districts had volunteered to perform ARP duties. Apart from full time officers these people were unpaid volunteers who trained in their spare time, provided their own uniforms and lacked the most basic equipment.



Wardens outside their post on the corner of Westpole Avenue and Kent Drive, Cockfosters. Picture courtesy of Miss. I. Bowman.

The recruitment of volunteers came just in time as, at 11.30am on Saturday, 24 September 1938 the Home Office ordered the mobilisation of the ARP services. They gave instructions that gas masks should be fitted, trenches dug in case of air attacks and the hospitals and first-aid posts should be prepared. Local Wardens, firemen and others reported for duty although when the Edmonton wardens tried to get into their assembly point at 99, Church Street they discovered that the key "which should have been in the General Foreman's department" could not be found!

One of the first jobs of the wardens was to issue respirators or gas masks to all residents. Notices were read out in places like cinemas and churches about where and when people should go to collect them. Local schools and halls were used and although there were delays and protests that respirators were not available for pets or invalids, almost half the residents of all three districts had been fitted within two days.



Enfield Wardens in Action. Picture courtesy of Local History Unit.



Air Raid Wardens post No.E39 in Bush Hill Park nicknamed 'The Better Ole' by the occupants. Picture courtesy of Mr. J. Kerridge.



Bombs, Mines and Doodlebugs

In the autumn of 1940 Hitler decided on a new strategy to try and defeat Britain by sending large formations of bombers to attack major towns and cities. The idea of this Blitzkrieg (lightening war) was to destroy industry and communications and undermine civilian morale. The Blitz as it became known started in London on 7 September 1940 and lasted until May 1941 with, at one point, raids on 57 consecutive nights.



Damage in De Bohun Road, Southgate, February 1941. Picture courtesy of Local History Unit.



Inspecting the damage at the Alcazar cinema and dance hall, Fore Street, Edmonton the morning after the raid on 23 August 1940. Picture courtesy of Local History Unit.

As part of Greater London and home to important industries, water supplies and lines of communication, Enfield and particularly eastern Enfield became a target. The first enemy bomb fell in Enfield at Sломans farm, Whitewebbs Road in July 1940. It was an isolated incident and little damage was done but from that autumn onwards Enfield suffered considerable damage and many casualties. Perhaps the worst night was that of the 15th-16th November when 34 separate incidents took place. On this night four ARP wardens lost their lives and three were seriously injured.

In May 1941 Hitler turned his attention to invading Russia and there was a 3-year lull in enemy raids. In the spring of 1944 came a new form of attack from Germany's V-1 and V-2 *Vergeltungswaffe* or vengeance weapons. Enfield was one of the first districts to be hit and incidents occurred both by day and night.

The V-1 bomb was a pilotless aircraft that was commonly known as the 'doodlebug' or 'buzz bomb' because of the noise made by its jet engine. A total of 35 of these fell in the 3 districts: 7 in Edmonton, 22 in Enfield and 6 in Southgate. The first one is recorded as crashing near Ferney Hill farm causing little damage but subsequent V-1s fell on schools, factories, houses and hospitals.

On 8 September 1944 the V-1 was superseded by the V-2 rocket, a 14m long rocket bomb with a one ton warhead, which bombarded the district for over 6 months. It traveled faster than the speed of sound and would explode with devastating force. No warning could be given that one was on its way and private domestic shelters, used so extensively during the blitz, were useless against this weapon. Major damage from a V-2 was caused just north of Palmers Green station when one fell onto the tracks in front of a stationary train. Astonishingly non-one on the train were hurt and the 60x30foot crater was filled in, the track re-laid and services resumed 2 days later!

In the official programme published by Enfield Council for the Victory Celebrations in June 1946 the number of bombs of all types which fell on the area from 1940-1945 was given as 5692. Casualties, both fatal and injured, were 797 and houses destroyed or seriously damaged totaled 33,410. This was only Enfield; Southgate had over 400 casualties and 256 houses destroyed; Edmonton 500+ casualties and 433 house destroyed. Many more people were 'slightly' injured or had 'slight' damage to their homes.



The penultimate V2 of the war fell on Mapleton Road, Enfield Highway in March 1945. Fireman Raymond Critchell from Edmonton firestation was called out to the incident, only to discover that his own house was one of those completely destroyed with his mother and sister still inside. Amazingly they survived but 7 others were killed and over 100 injured. Picture courtesy of Local History Unit.



Bomb damage in Ponders End High Street near the junction with Queensway, 1940. Picture courtesy of Local History Unit.

Taking cover

The provision of air-raid shelters was an important part of Britain's civil defence policy. The Government envisaged that once the air-raid sirens sounded people would make their way to communal shelters or take refuge in shelters erected at home.



Entrance to public shelter in Bush Hill Park recreation ground. Picture courtesy of Mr. J.Kerridge

Initially what they feared most were gas attacks like those in the trenches during the First World War so their early precautions concentrated on this threat. Gas masks were issued to all and instructions were given on how to construct a gas-proof refuge room at home. This included sealing windows and doors and even plugging the keyhole and the cracks between the floorboards. At first people did heed this advice but as the war progressed and gas attacks did not materialise they turned to other methods of shelter.

were issued free to households who earned less than £250 a year and the Government hoped that people would sleep in them every night. Some did at first but they were cold, dark, cramped and liable to flood and many preferred to risk sleeping in the house.

For those who had no garden where an Anderson shelter could be erected the alternative was a Morrison shelter inside the house. This was a rectangular steel frame with a solid steel top and wire mesh sides and was assembled from 359 individual parts. The idea was it could be used as an enclosed bed at night and during the day the mesh sides could be removed to allow it to be used as a table. 500,000 were given out by November 1941 and another 100,000 in 1943.

For those without domestic shelters or for air raids during the working day local councils constructed public shelters. Sometimes they were in requisitioned cellars and basements; others were surface shelters made of brick walls with a reinforced concrete roof. These accommodated around 50 people and had bunks and chemical toilets. However, as they were dark and squalid and many were unsafe, people preferred not to use them. Trench shelters - large underground trenches lined with reinforced concrete and covered in earth - were dug in parks and on school playing fields but were not particularly popular either.

People became quite ingenious at finding places to shelter - underneath railway arches, in warehouses, caves and in the London Underground. But, despite Government advice a shelter census of central London in November 1940 found that 60% of people still preferred to risk staying in their own homes, sheltering in cupboards and under the stairs.



Children leaving the underground shelters at Oakwood school, Chase Road, 1940. Picture courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Dean

There were several different kinds of shelter available, both public communal shelters and domestic ones. The Anderson Shelter was a relatively cheap, mass-produced shelter made up of curved sheets of corrugated steel, partially sunk into the ground and covered with earth. These



Surface shelter and air-raid siren outside The Goat public house, Forty Hill. Picture courtesy of Local History Unit.



Anderson shelters still standing after a bomb fell on Cuckoo Hall Lane, Edmonton, 20th March 1941. Picture courtesy of Local History Unit.



'Dad's Army'

Most of us have enjoyed the BBC Television series 'Dad's Army' with its lighthearted look at the Second World War Home Guard. Despite this portrayal the Home Guard was a formidable force of volunteers doing varied and dangerous jobs and ready to give up their lives to protect Britain from German invasion.

It came into being in May 1940 after the Secretary of State for War, Mr. Anthony Eden, broadcast an appeal for older men to train in a new organisation, the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV). By the end of the month around 750,000 men of all ages and from all walks of life had volunteered. Initially there was a shortage of uniforms and weapons and the LDV trained in their own clothes with old rifles and other improvised weapons.

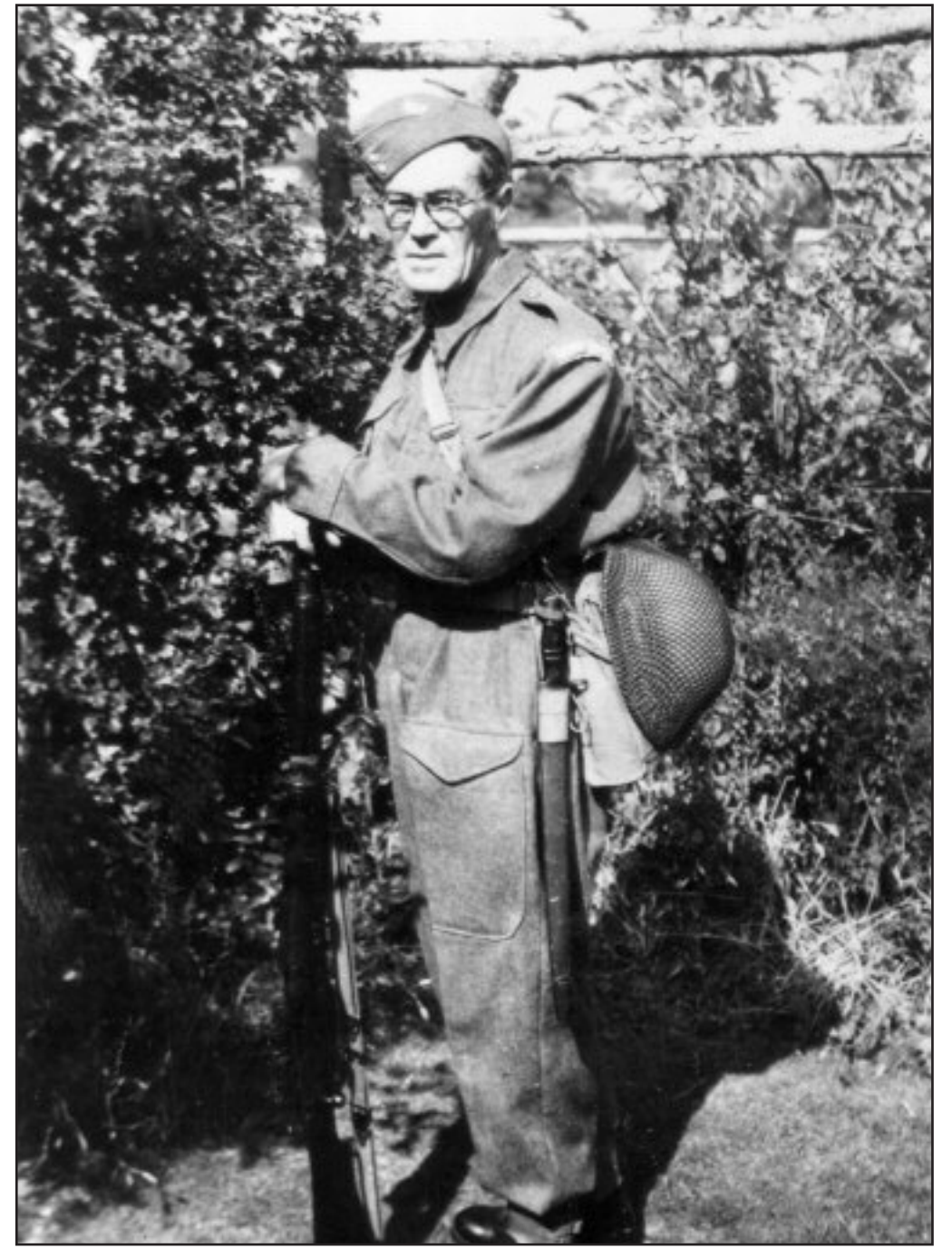
By 1943 there were 2 million members with proper uniforms and real weapons. They also had a new name the 'Home Guard' said to have been given to them by the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. They manned anti-aircraft guns and search light batteries, trained in bomb disposal, patrolled waterways and aerodromes, assisted ARP wardens in searching for survivors and clearing debris following air raids alongside their normal military training. It was also proved useful in providing preliminary training for those who were then recruited into the regular Forces.



Home Guard recruits. Picture courtesy of Local History Unit.

The Home Guard in Enfield was associated with the Middlesex Regiment and became known as the Middlesex Home Guard. There were 6 Battalions - the 25th, 27th and 30th Middlesex Battalions raised in Enfield and the 26th, 28th and 29th that formed Y sector and also had its headquarters in Enfield. Apart from guarding important factories, public utility installations and assisting the ARP and Police, they were allotted an important operational task as part of the general scheme for the defence of London.

With invasion looking less and less likely, the Home Guard was officially disbanded on 1 November 1944. On 3rd December there was a stand down parade of 7000 men in London and in Enfield final parades were held in Enfield Stadium when the men marched in review past their commanding officers for the last time.



Mr. C. Patman in his Home Guard uniform, 1939. Picture courtesy of Local History Unit.



Group photograph of the 25th Middlesex Battalion of the Home Guard at Elmstott, Bush Hill Park, 1945. Picture courtesy of Local History Unit.



29th Middlesex Battalion of the Home Guard. Picture courtesy of Mr. & Mrs. A.J. Dean



Women in the War - The Women's Land Army

In the Second World War, there were plenty of opportunities for women to leave home and gain some independence. Joining the Women's Land Army was one option likely to take young women away from home without going to the front.

Founded in haste in 1917, the WLA came about due to desperate food shortages caused by the Great War. The new organisation gained praise from farmers and politicians alike, and the women who volunteered were recognised for staving off starvation in the UK.



Peggy Atkin with the farmer's son and a lamb. C.1944. Picture courtesy of Miss P. Atkin.

The second formation of the WLA was set up before war was declared, as part of Britain's preparation for inevitable war. At first the scheme was badly organised, and this problem was exacerbated by the hostility of many farmers and the lack of support from politicians. By December 1939, however, 4,500 Land girls had been trained and found posts, and the farmers' attitudes began to change. The winter of 1939-40 was one of the harshest on record, and this gave the Land Girls a chance to prove themselves – and they did. Farmers also realised that to reach the government's ploughing targets, with men away on conscription, the Land Girls were a vital force on the land. The government started actively recruiting from Autumn 1940, when the food shortages became serious.

By the end of the war, 80,000 women had been recruited to "Fight in the Fields" as members of the WLA. After a brief training, girls were billeted all over the UK and set to do a whole array of farming tasks including milking, ploughing, hedging, haymaking, harvesting, thatching, land-reclamation, fruit picking, forestry, shepherding and pest control.

The hard physical labour, though tough, must have helped women feel strong, independent and ready to deal with anything. After the war, the WLA waged another war – against the government – for equal benefit rights to other armed and auxiliary forces. They never got it, despite public support. Although many former land girls were pleased to return home to marry and bring up children, some 5000 stayed on the land.



Many WLA recruitment posters were criticised by Land Girls for glamourising what was in reality a tough and gruelling job.



Peggy Atkin, land girl 1943-45 on the farm with other workers. Picture courtesy of Miss P. Atkin.

The Children's War- Evacuation and Education

Pre-war plans to evacuate the vulnerable in society were put into action very swiftly after the outbreak, so that in the first four days of the war, 1.5 million children were evacuated from the cities, usually with their entire schools and teachers, to areas deemed safer. In Enfield, children were only evacuated from Edmonton and Palmer's Green, and those from Southgate and the more rural parts of the borough were viewed as safe to stay put.

The so-called "Phoney War", when the predicted air raids failed to materialise, led to many evacuees returning home by Christmas 1940. The scheme was purely voluntary anyway, and some children stayed behind. However, there were further waves of evacuation when the Blitz began in the summer of 1940, and again later in the war when the V1 and V2 rockets began falling on Britain.



Comics remained popular throughout the war and some continued production even with the paper shortages. War issues were tackled by the writers by incorporating political figures or special wartime characters.

with repaired old ones, or made their own. Comics also kept youngsters entertained and informed, with new wartime characters developed as anti German propaganda for children.

Many children adapted surprisingly well to the war, as local woman, Angela Watts recalls: "All my early memories are coloured by the war; the air raid warning and the all-clear; the drone of aeroplanes...the sound of guns being tested in the small arms factory...the world map on our dining room wall...all these things seemed like normal life to me." However for most, it was a time of mixed emotions - a great adventure and a frightening and confusing time.



Edmonton County School Evacuates, September 1939. Picture courtesy of Miss P. Atkin

The war seriously disrupted the education of most children, but in a variety of ways. The evacuees and Reception areas suffered overcrowding and schools being set up in temporary accommodation, as Olive Short recalls: "there were more evacuees than locals, so all the girls were crammed into one room...it was distracting...with 3 teachers teaching 3 age levels." But problems were worse for those who stayed put or returned. Many city schools had become rest and re-housing centres, ambulance and fire stations. Some did reopen, but even then, children spent a considerable amount of school time in the shelters under the school.

100,000 London children had to be educated at home in small groups but there was a serious shortage of teachers. Added to this, all schools lacked basic equipment and suffered from paper shortages. Exams were frequently disrupted. Connie Benton remembers taking her maths exam at Minchenden School in Southgate; "An announcement was made before the start of the exam, it concerned the possibility of a bomb being dropped...as the exam proceeded there were several times we had to take cover." As a result of all this disruption, many children received minimal education, and left school with few or no qualifications.

Outside of school, children in cities found new hobbies: playing on bombsites and in shelters and collecting shrapnel. Toys were in short supply, so many children made do



During the war, children were encouraged to "do their bit" for the war effort. The Guides and Scouts were crucial organisations in organising children to collect salvage, knit and sew, run errands for ARP wardens and raise money for the Red Cross. Guides parading in Enfield, 1943. Picture courtesy of Local History Unit.

The Persecution of the Jews



Peter aged 3, with his nanny outside their Berlin apartment.

Hitler and the Nazis came to power in Germany in 1933. They believed the German people were a 'master race' and that Jews, amongst others, were inferior.

The events of 1938, especially the Kristallnacht or 'Night of Broken Glass', drove more Jews and opponents of the Nazis to try and leave Nazi Germany.

One way in which Jewish children were helped to escape was the Kindertransports. These were trains which, between December 1938 and the outbreak of war in September 1939, evacuated 9,432 children to Britain. They ranged in age from toddlers to teenagers and arrived unaccompanied by their families. Most of them never saw their families again.

Local resident, **Peter Sinclair**, was one of these children.

Peter Heinz Jacob, later Peter Henry Sinclair, was born into a Jewish family in Berlin in 1926. As a young boy growing up in Germany he witnessed the increasing persecution of the Jews. At the age of 12, he was put on a train in Berlin by his mother and fled from Germany.

He ended up in North London, where he went to school and then worked as an apprentice until he could join the British Army at the age of 17.

After basic training Peter was stationed in Kent. He later volunteered as a German speaker and was transferred to a German P.O.W. camp in Essex, where he acted as an interpreter for several thousand German prisoners.



Photograph of the blue plaque placed on Charlie's house 133, Chichester Road, Edmonton in 2003.

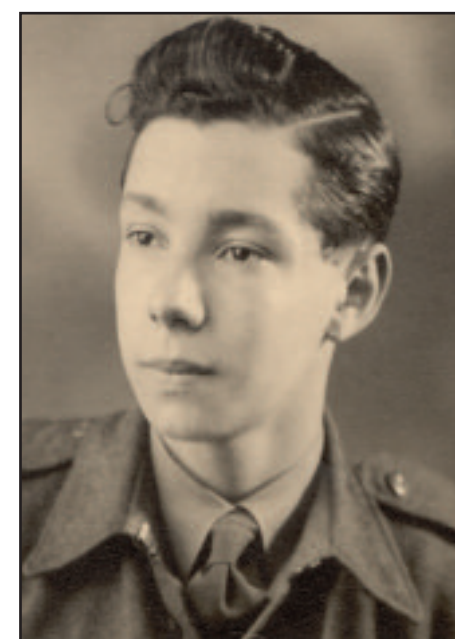
He has lived in Enfield since his demobilisation in 1947 and continues to be very active in the local community.

Adolf Hitler set up his first concentration camp soon after coming to power in Germany in 1933. He used it to keep his opponents locked away, without trial. Soon many more were built, usually in remote areas. They were run by Hitler's personal armed force, the SS (Schutz Staffel). Concentration camps were soon being used much more to imprison Jews and other victims of Nazi racist policies. When the "final solution" - Hitler's plan to kill all the Jews in Europe - was put into effect in 1941, gas chambers were built at several death-camps, of which Auschwitz is the most famous.

In 1940 Charles Coward, a Sergeant Major in the Royal Artillery was captured in Calais and taken to a German Prisoner of War Camp. This camp, Stalag 8B, was close to Auschwitz from where he was able to help rescue 400 people from the gas chambers with the help of fellow POWs. In 1945 Charles returned to Edmonton where he had lived since he was three years old. He died in 1976.



Peter's permit to travel on the Kindertransport to Britain in 1939.



Peter in the uniform of the Royal Fusiliers in 1945.



Photograph of Charles Coward with Dirk Bogarde who starred in the film, based on the book of Charlie's life 'The Password is Courage'.

Together

Exact statistics of the number of men and women from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups who served in the British Forces or worked for the war effort during the Second World War is difficult to determine. Ethnicity was not automatically recorded and no official records were kept.

People from BME groups living in Britain, before the war broke out would have automatically been called up.

But it is the contribution of those from the Colonial Empire which is not often acknowledged not only in terms of personnel but also money raised for tanks, aeroplanes, ambulances and mobile canteens.



Royal West African Frontier Force near Accra, Gold Coast. These soldiers are part of an infantry reconnaissance company. Picture courtesy the Imperial War Museum.



Indian muleteers and a mule, all wearing gas masks, in northern France, February 1940. Picture courtesy the Imperial War Museum.

By October 1943 £23.3 million had been donated and a further £10.7 in the form of interest-free loans. Huge quantities of raw materials and food stuffs were produced in Africa and the West Indies to be exported to Britain.

Approximately 372,000 Africans fought for Britain in the Second World War. 119,000 were under South-East Asian Command (SEAC), 47,500 served in the Middle East and a further 206,000 served in Home commands in Africa. The two main forces were the Kings African Rifles (KAR) and the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAAF). The RWAAF and East African Division were front-line troops in the Burma campaign who were renowned for their bravery and discipline.

2,500,000 people were fighting in the Indian Army in 1945 of whom no more than 100,000 were from Britain. Indian regiments served in huge numbers on battle fronts there were no fewer than forty Gurkha battalions in British service, as well as parachute, garrison and training units totalling some 112,000 men.

Several thousand West Indians were recruited the most significant contribution being in the RAF but many served in the Merchant Navy and in civilian war work in the UK.

Adam Palmas was born in Cyprus in 1923, he came to the UK when he was 15 with his two brothers **Andrew** and **Basil**. When war broke out Basil volunteered for the RAF and Andrew the British Army Rifle Brigade, he was then commissioned as a Captain into the Cyprus Regiment serving in Italy near Monte Casino. In 1942 Adam was called up in the East Surrey Infantry as a batman (Officer's servant). By coincidence Adam's Lieutenant met his brother and Adam was allowed to transfer to the Cyprus Regiment where he was largely involved with transport of arms and foods to the troops. Adam has lived in Palmers Green since 1965.



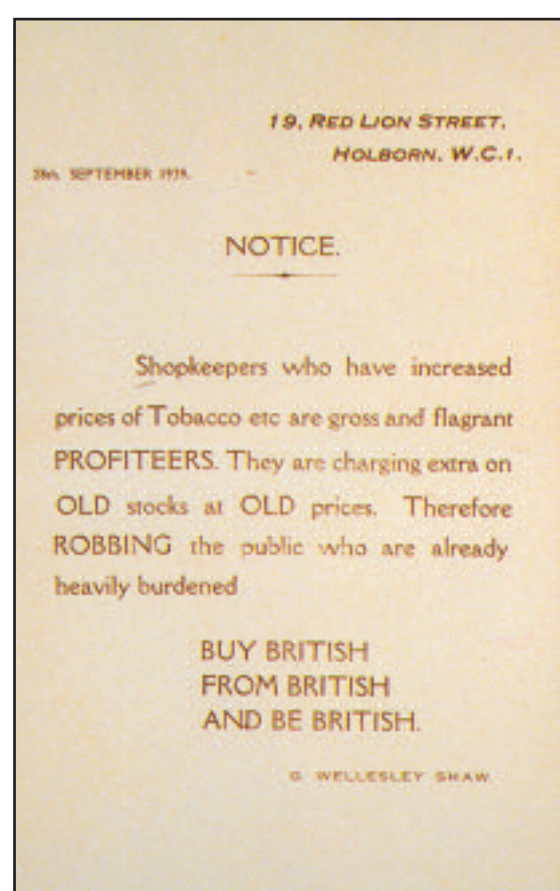
Adam, Andrew & Basil Palmas.



West Indian ATS recruits (Auxiliary Territorial Service), 1943. Picture courtesy the Imperial War Museum.

Crime and Conscience

During the war the government introduced many regulations that were designed to protect citizens and distribute scarce resources 'fairly'. However, a brief trawl through the local newspapers from the beginning of 1942 finds that breaking these regulations was a fairly frequent event.



Propaganda notice, 1938

One type of offence concerned the pricing and content of food. Marmalade was sold at 1/11d instead of 1/8d and cans of beans in gravy were not only sold at 7 1/2d instead of 7d but were sold at a time when they were prohibited. More serious cases involved retailers using false documents to obtain greater quantities of goods. The policing of these of these regulations fell to local Food Control Committees and Enforcement Officers.

Petrol was also a rationed commodity and there are cases of the wrongful use of documents to obtain more than the authorised amount. One case however, illustrates at least a degree of fairness by Enfield Police Court. A case was dismissed where a totally inexperienced employee had been left in charge of the distribution of petrol and had inadvertently returned too many coupons to the purchaser.

Another form of regulation breaking concerned lights. Several motorists had incorrectly shielded headlights and some householders had left lights showing during black out periods. Most of the defendants were apologetic about their 'crimes' and most appear to have broken the law through carelessness or ignorance.

A few cases are reported of using false documents and of people having more than one identity card. A rather sad local case concerned a resident alien with a German surname who used an assumed British surname in order to get work.

By far the most press coverage was given to cases where people failed to carry out the war-time duties allocated to them. These range from the failure to carry out duties such as fire watching to stealing in order to be sent to prison and thus avoid military service.

A second category involved registered Conscientious Objectors (COs). Two local cases involved men who through religious conviction felt unable to carry out the non-combatant war work allocated to them. These cases merited front-page headlines in local newspapers and generated considerable debate in their correspondence columns. Unfortunately, the correspondents often exhibited complete and vitriolic disapproval of all COs.

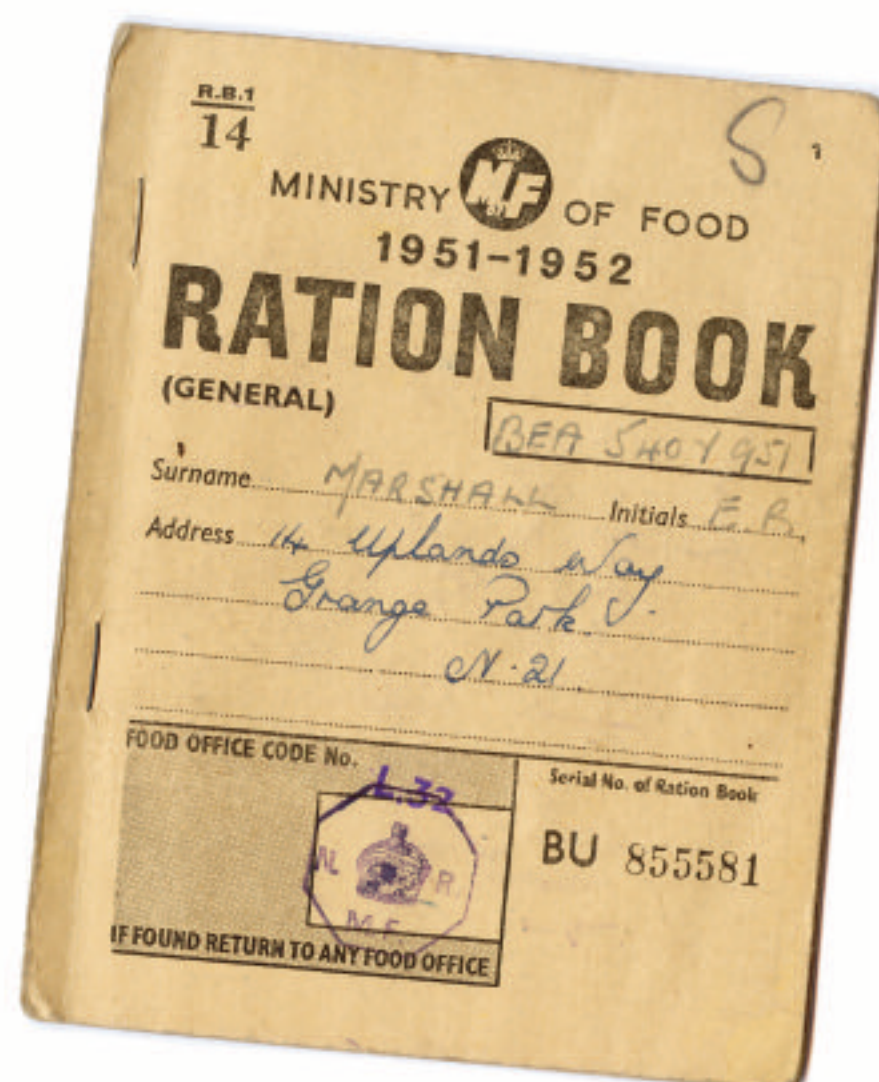
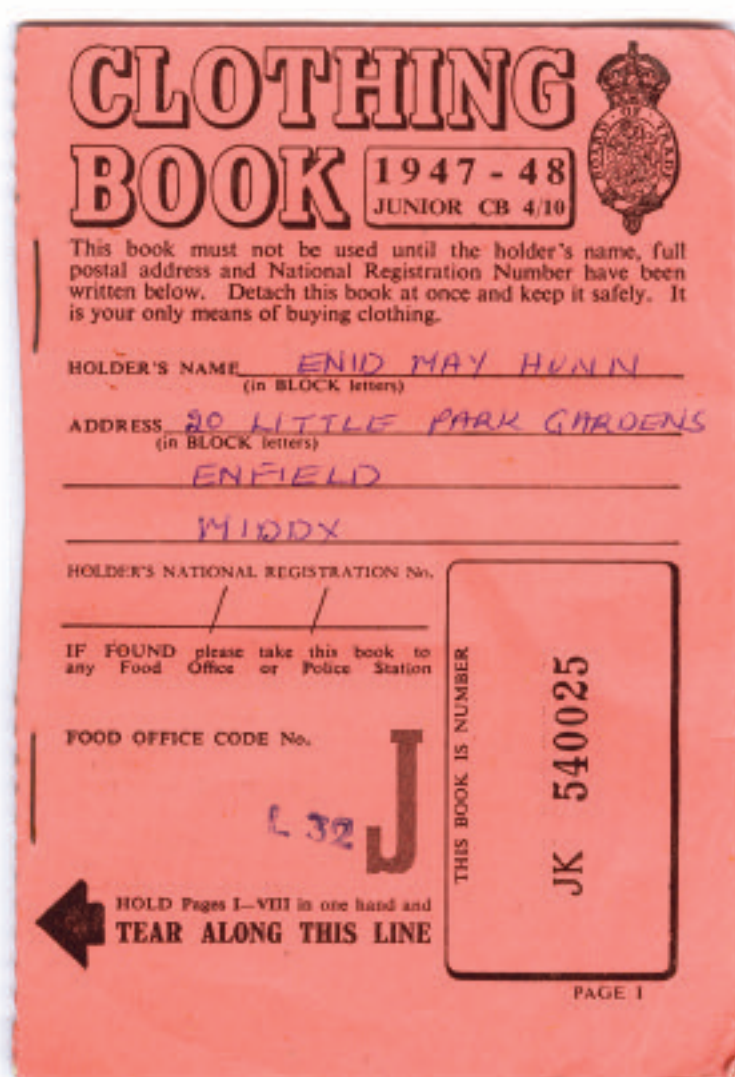
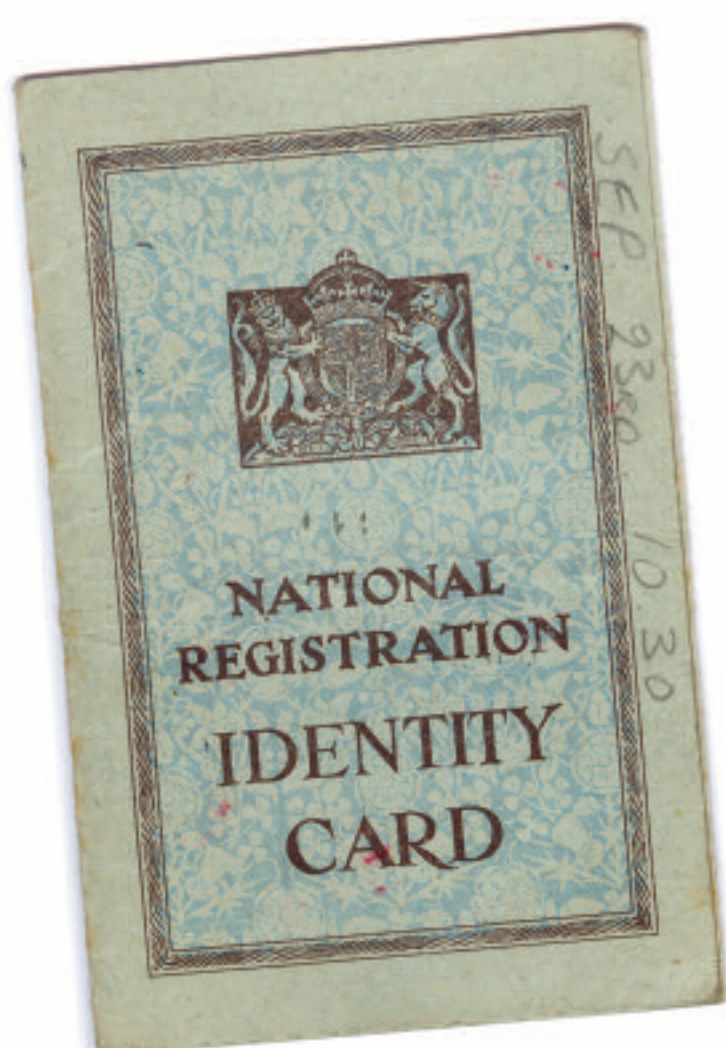
One local resident, daughter of CO parents, remembers one of her sisters being taunted in the school playground by a fellow pupil over the issue of the war effort with the words "you didn't help at all did you?" However the family were proud of their parents and felt the world was a better place for their pacifism.



Propaganda poster warning people to always carry their gas masks, 1939



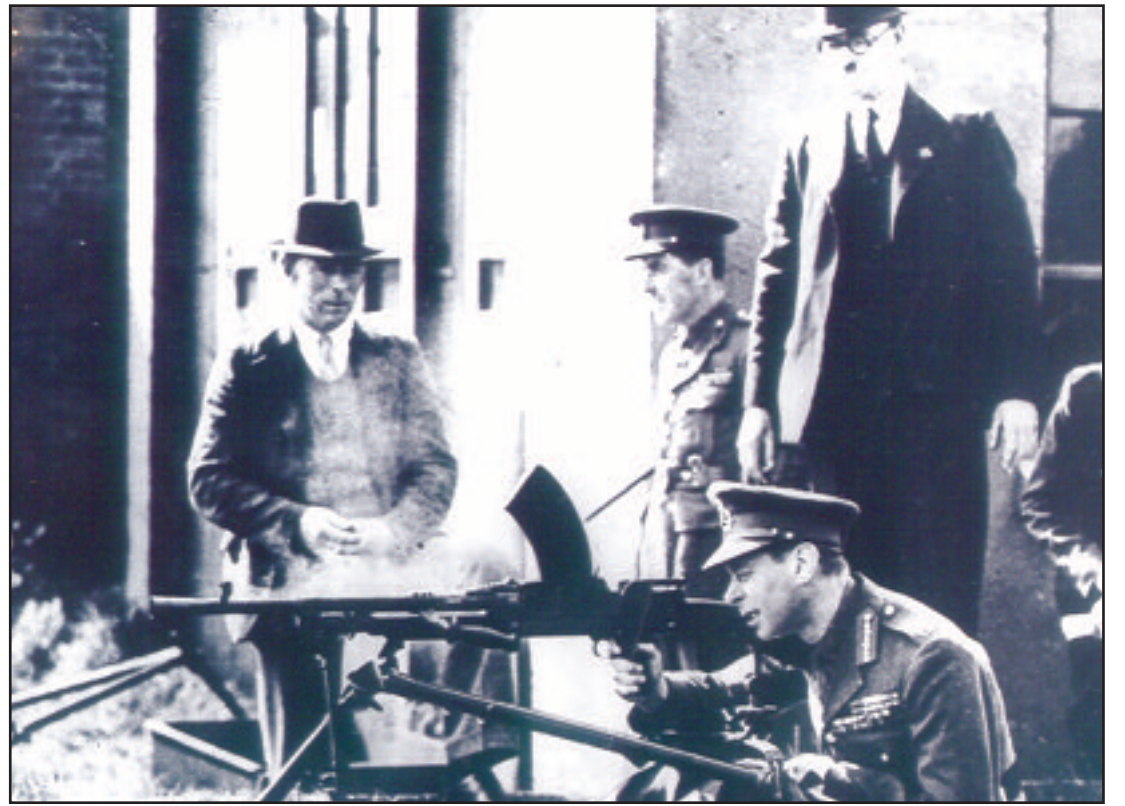
Advertising put humour into Home Front campaigns.



Ration books and Identity cards belonging to local residents. Clothing book courtesy of Mrs E. Smith.

Industries

In the build up to the Second World War, Enfield's world famous industries made a major contribution and concentrated their work towards the war effort.



King George VI firing the Bren, .303 light machine gun, with tripod attached, on a visit to the RSAF factory in 1940. 'The finest light machine gun ever made' it was produced through a joint collaboration between Brno, Czechoslovakia and RSAF, Enfield.



Short, Magazine Lee-Enfield Rifle Mark III made by RSAF Enfield Lock, 1916. The Lee-Enfield rifle served as the principal service rifle, for Great Britain, and the commonwealth through two world wars. It takes its name from RSAF Enfield, (where it was developed) and James Parris Lee, its designer, not from the river Lee as is often mistakenly thought. Loaned by Geoff Organ. Photograph Mark Winter.

During World War 2 although the famous Lee-Enfield rifle was not made at the **Royal Small Arms Factory, RSAF, Enfield Lock**, key technical staff from RSAF Enfield helped set up their manufacture at Royal Ordnance Factories, ROFs, in Fazakerley (Liverpool) and Maltby (near Doncaster).

Meanwhile RSAF, Enfield ran a major repair programme of Lee-Enfield's together with the development and manufacture of the Sten submachine, Bren light machine guns and the Enfield .38 revolver. Many of the Lee-Enfield, No 4 rifles, the standard British service rifle, which were made elsewhere, were brought to Enfield for correction and final inspection.

In the 2 years up to January 1939 the number employed at the RSAF rose from 900 to 3400. Although workers at RSAF were in a reserved occupation the need for workers resulted in advertisements for girls appearing in the local press who played a key role as skilled examiners.

In 1939 on the outbreak of WW2 production of TV picture tubes which had been produced at the Brimsdown, Cosmos works of **Edison Swan** ceased and factory facilities were concentrated on production of radar components. In 1940, Brimsdown became the world sole source for a special purpose industrial valve known as the Trigatron, which switched on the Magnetron microwave generator

for short periods. This produced the short pulses of radio energy necessary for radar at high power. In addition Mazda valves (one of the Edison Swan brand names) were used in the TR9 HF transmitter/receiver, which was carried by all RAF fighters and contributed to the winning of the air Battle of Britain.

In 1939 the **Belling and Co, Southbury Rd Factory** was making a wide range of products including: low powered glim lights for railway carriages and air raid shelters; hand and rifle grenades; 3" mortar bombs; trench mortar sights; Sten gun parts; airfield landing lights; ducts for amphibian tanks and fuel jettison tanks for the US Air Force; anti vibration trays for bombers and loudspeaker horns for the Navy! This was together with its more traditional products such as hot food cupboards for use on destroyers and aircraft and the **Champion heaters** widely used in air raid shelters. In 1945 the factory started producing 'Vee' cookers many of which were installed in the temporary housing erected after the war known as pre-fabs.



A Belling and Company Champion heater circa 1940. Designed by Mr C.R. Belling in 1939. It proved to be a very effective convector heater and in the first year of production over 60,000 were sold. It was used extensively in air raid shelters. Donor: Mr Luxton - EMS Reg. No: 2005.5.1 Photograph Mark Winter.



Members of "Circuits and Measurements Dept." Cosmo Manufacturing Co. (Part of Edison Swan Electric Co. Circa 1944). Photograph courtesy of Mr Bernard Eastwood, who was part of the team.

The Belling-Lee Factory, 540, Great Cambridge Road, which had been producing fuses and fuse holders and radio aerials, switched much of the production during the Second World War to radar components and VHF aerials for use on aircraft. They produced fuse holders and valve holders including holders for the famous EF50 valve, and fuses and detonator parts for hand grenades. The south factory site was developed during the war in order to accommodate manufacture of high frequency aerials.

Picture of the Edison Swan, Brimsdown Cosmos works circa 1930 where developmental work took place on valves for use in radar. Picture courtesy of Mr Bernard Eastwood.

Industries

Furniture factories in Enfield and Edmonton were pressed into service making parts for the Mosquito fighter bomber - which since it was made almost entirely of wood had the benefit of being largely invisible to German Radar.



Picture of a Mosquito fighter bomber.



Tottenham and District Gas Company Gas, Emergency booster plant at Ponders End. The building is covered in sand bags for protection. The Enfield Gas company had been taken over by the Tottenham and District gas company (based on the Tottenham / Edmonton border in Willoughby Lane) in 1914. An unusual use of their town Gas was a co-operation between RAF balloon command laying pipes to top up barrage balloons. Tottenham and District Gas Company. Experiences during War Period. Photograph courtesy of Local History Unit.

Mosquito aircraft were also made at the former **Co-op factory in Lincoln Road** and tail sections of Halifax bombers were assembled in the **Express Motors building** formerly on the corner of **Southbury Road** and the Great Cambridge Road.

Saunders-Roe the famous aircraft manufacturer set up a shipyard/factory on the River Lea, at **Angel Road, Edmonton** where they built Bailey pontoon bridges and invasion barges. Georgina Morley who lived in Marsden Road, Edmonton remembers having to drink a pint of milk a day to counteract the effects of the lead paint used on the barges!

British Oxygen at Angel Rd Edmonton was involved in a project to use ether for cold starting petrol and diesel engines, which was to be used for vehicles on the **Russian Front**. Unfortunately the technique was perfected just as the war ended.

The density of Factory buildings in the Lea Valley and other areas of the London Borough of Enfield made it inevitable that the area would be a target for German bombers and some would be hit by bombs. In fact a German wartime aerial photograph used by German command shows the RSA factory. On Sunday 21st November 1940 during the Blitz a land mine fell on the site causing extensive damage and throughout the Autumn of 1940 air raid warnings sounded almost every night causing considerable disruption to work.

Many Home Guard units were work based, one such being the 56th Essex Home Guard which consisted entirely of RSA Factory workers. Needless to say this unit was the envy of other units locally, not so well provisioned with arms!

In 1942 a factory air raid warning system was inaugurated by the Enfield District Manufacturers Association, which was then taken over by the government.

But despite these precautions and STC's comprehensive concrete shelters with steel doors, unfortunately a hit by a flying bomb on 23rd August 1944 killed 33 people and injured 220. Many of the factories in Enfield set up 'shadow factories' which, if the main factory was hit by enemy bombing, meant production could carry on. In 1940 Edison Swan set up a shadow in Baldock, as an insurance against enemy bombing, which was closed in 1946, whilst Belling-Lee had one in Princes Risborough. The RSAF pattern room was moved to Broxbourne. From there patterns were issued as guides for mass production and co-ordinated the work of hundreds of small engineering companies. The pattern room returned to Enfield in 1948.



The Standard Telephone and Cable factory, New Southgate. Companies were obliged to provide bomb shelters for their workers. Sir John Anderson, Minister of Defence visiting the company on 7th July 1939 said it was 'the best prepared factory in London'. Photograph courtesy of Local History Unit.



Ripaults located on the Southbury Road were manufacturers of electric cables, automobile equipment and accessories. Photograph courtesy of Local History Unit.

Local Heroes

During the Second World War, both men and women could be conscripted either for service in the Armed Forces, or for war work as a civilian. In September 1939, as war broke out, Military conscription was introduced for men between the ages of 18 and 41 (later extended to 51). By December 1941 conscription was introduced for the first time for women between the ages of 19 and 30 (later extended to 50).

Under the Control of Employment Orders, the British Government could send men and women to undertake essential war work anywhere in the country. Britain mobilised a greater proportion of its population for the war effort than any other country with 16.5 million in civilian war work and 5 million in the forces.

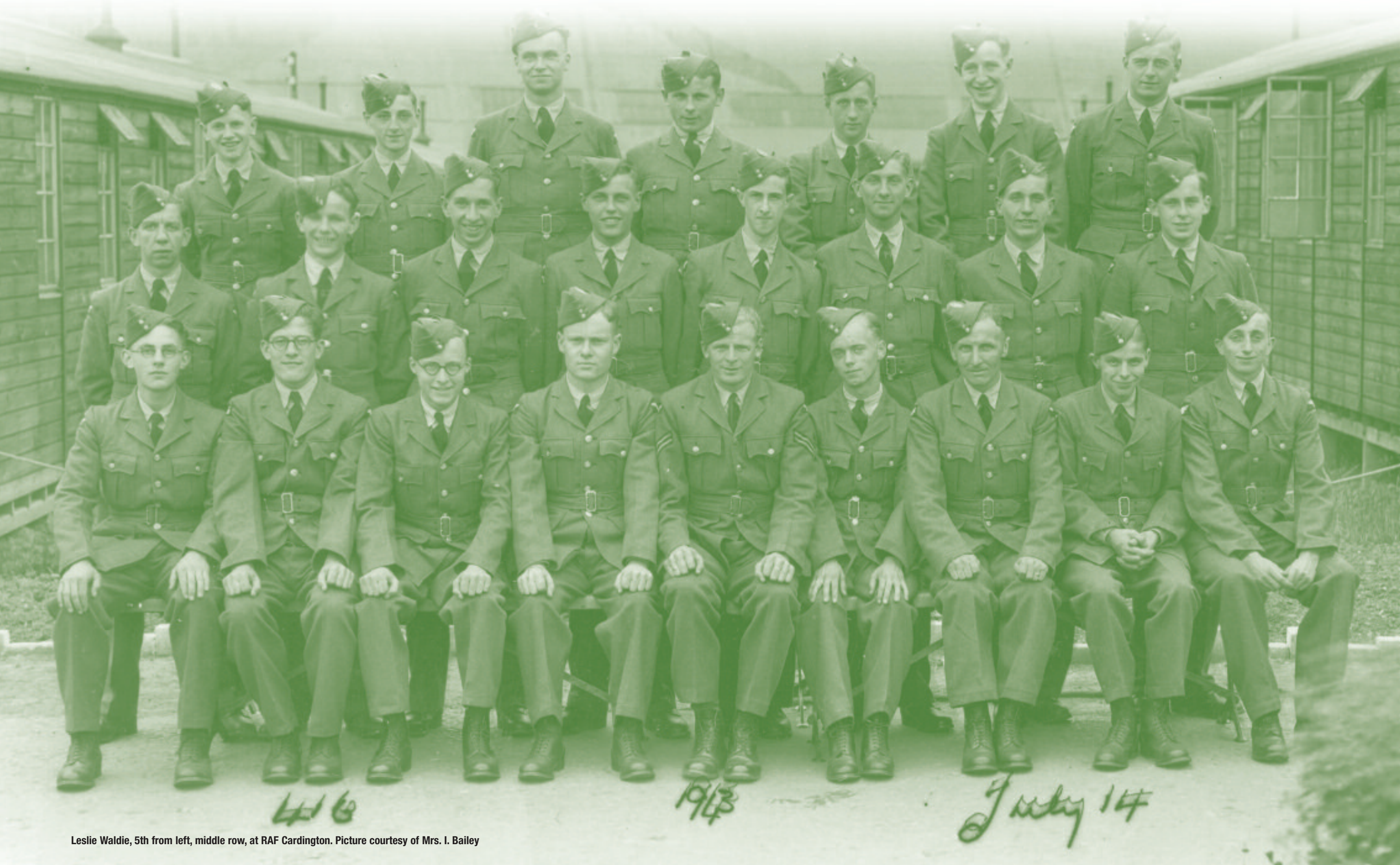
Many Enfield, Edmonton and Southgate men and women served in the forces and on the Home Front. Here are a small selection of residents who did a variety of jobs during the war years and immediately afterwards.

One local family that became involved in the war effort was the **Waldies** of Hazelbury Road, Edmonton. Eldest son **Horace** was initially in a reserved occupation but took his turn firewatching before volunteering to join the Home Guard and manning anti-aircraft guns at Bullsmoor Lane. He later joined the regular army first in the Royal Army Service Corps and later the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers.

Younger brother **Leslie** was called up in 1943 and joined the RAF, being posted to India in 1944. At the same time their father William was also called up and joined the Royal Army Medical Corps. He too was stationed in India.



Horace Waldie in the uniform of the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, 1944. Picture courtesy of Mrs. I. Bailey.



Leslie Waldie, 5th from left, middle row, at RAF Cardington. Picture courtesy of Mrs. I. Bailey

Local Heroes

Another local family deeply involved in the war was the Maskens of Ulleswater Road, Southgate. Vincent, the eldest of four, had emigrated to Australia in 1939 but despite being in a reserved occupation was finally released to join the Royal Australian Navy in 1941. He saw service on a Corvette in the Battle of the Atlantic and on minesweepers along the coast of India. He was finally demobbed and returned to the UK in 1946.



2nd Lieutenant Vincent Maskens of the Royal Australian Navy. Picture courtesy of Miss G. Maskens



17 year old John Maskens on first joining the Army. Picture courtesy of Miss. G. Maskens

Younger brother John joined the Army aged 17 and trained as a gunner before being sent to Palestine. He then spent a large part of his war with the 8th Army in Italy, ending up as a wireless operator at the Battle of Monte Cassino. After censorship regulations were lifted he wrote to his brother about his hard and dangerous experiences in Italy and ended by saying

"...I don't want you to think I was any sort of dare-devil, because I was as scared as anybody at times but....when I wrote and said I was at the front, I WAS there."

Their father, Alfred, was unfortunately killed doing his bit for the war effort whilst firewatching at his business premises in Islington when it received a direct hit during the Blitz in March 1941.

Leslie Crook of Brigadier Avenue, Enfield joined the Territorial Army in 1937. By 1939 he was in the regular army and served in the Middlesex regiment for the rest of the war. After initial training in Aldershot his machine gun company were sent to

Northern France where they fought the Germans until they were forced to try and escape from Dunkirk. They finally managed to get away in a rowing boat and, despite a heavy fog, were spotted by the minesweeper 'Salamander' and brought back to Dover.

During the rest of the war Sergeant Major Crook was stationed all over the country from Ballater in the Highlands of Scotland to Colchester in Essex. His wife and baby son were fortunately visiting him in Glasgow and so were not in when a V2 dropped on their house in North London and demolished it.

Before he joined up, Leslie had been the Assistant Manager at Sainsbury's in Winchmore Hill. He went back there after he was demobbed but found it was difficult "...I had been a Sergeant Major in charge of a lot of men and suddenly was back serving bacon from behind the counter"



Leslie Crook in 1939. Picture courtesy of Mrs. C. Letchford

Local Heroes

Another victim of Dunkirk was Lance Corporal Sidney Reed of Winchmore Hill who, along with fellow members of the 51st Highland Division, was captured by the Germans at St Valery en Caux. He and thousands of other men were marched across Northern France and Belgium to the Rhine where they were put on coal barges and shipped down the river to a camp at Schildberg.

The march took 3 weeks and many men were shot at the side of the road if they could not keep up with the rest. Lance Corporal Reed spent the next 5 years as a Prisoner of War in a variety of prison camps in Germany and Poland, quarrying and cutting marble, straightening canals and rivers and demolishing buildings.

In the spring of 1945 the Germans took all the POW's out of the camp and started marching them westwards. Whilst in Czechoslovakia, Sidney and 5 others managed to escape and lived rough in the woods before being picked up by the Russians. It was their knowledge of British cap badges and impeccable English that convinced the Russians that they were not Germans in disguise.

He finally made it back to England in May 1954 via Prague, Regensburg and Brussels.



Lance Corporal Victor Andrews, December 1945. Picture courtesy of Mrs. J. Andrews



Portrait of merchant seaman John Buckland. The letters 'HMS' on his cap, have been added in by the photographer after printing. Picture courtesy of Ms. J. Buckland.

Hitler was well aware of Britain's dependence on supplies from abroad. Under the command of Admiral Donitz, Germany's fleet of U-boat submarines were instructed to sink allied shipping and close Britain's vital supply lines from America. The large, slow-moving convoys of ships moving across the Atlantic were easy prey for the packs of fast U-boats. In the first year of the war 114 allied ships were sunk and by 1942, six million tonnes of shipping had been destroyed, with the loss of over 30,00 merchant seamen. Local man **John Buckland** was a young merchant seaman who served throughout the war. Although he came home at the end of hostilities he was part of the huge Atlantic convoys and saw many of his friends and colleagues go down with their ships.

Local man, **Victor Andrews** of Unity Road, Freezywater was a Lance Corporal in the Royal Army Medical Corps stationed in Singapore when he was captured by the Japanese in 1943.

He was finally released in late 1945 and, although he was profoundly affected by his treatment as a prisoner of the Japanese, he would never talk about his experiences. Three of his four brothers were in the forces and a younger brother Albert, was captured by the Italians and also kept as a Prisoner of War, returning home at about the same time.



Sidney Reed (second from left) and Russian soldiers, 10 May 1945. The picture was taken by a Czech civilian who promised to send it on to Sidney's address in England. Much to Mr. Reed's surprise it arrived in Enfield 3 months later. Picture courtesy of Mr. S. Reed

Local Heroes

In November 1943, Ernest Bevin Minister of Labour and National Service announced that due to the importance of coal to the UK's industry and the lack of miners in the pits, compulsory conscription to the mines would begin.

Men were chosen by ballot - their National Insurance numbers were put into a hat and those ending with a particular digit were sent down the mines. This method of selection ignored experience, education and physical ability to do the job. Edmonton man **John Dearn** was one of the men who became known as a 'Bevin Boy'. He was sent to Chatterley Whitfield colliery in Staffordshire and spent nearly 4 years down the mine. Writing about his first week he said "It was hot work and hard ...how I got through my first week I'll never know. I lost a stone in weight." Years later he wrote that "...I had a bed in a dormitory which held 28 men. The occupations of these men were, to say the least, a mixture that was unbelievable - a trawler deckhand, an ex-RASF pilot, a heavyweight boxer, a slate quarryman, university students, a pianist, agricultural workers, cooks and engineers..."

Many local people were not abroad in the Forces but nevertheless served their country on the Home Front. Many adults were in the Police, Fire and Ambulance services. Others signed up for some kind of voluntary war work in the various branches of Civil Defence such as Firewatching, ARP, St John's Ambulance Brigade, Red Cross and the Women's Voluntary Service (WVS).



'Bevin Boy' John Dearn, 1948. Picture courtesy of Dr. M. Dearn



Tom Dempster (second from the left) and his fellow volunteers in the Grange Park Auxilliary Fire Service crew, 1940. Picture courtesy of Mr. I. Dempster

One of these was **Tom Dempster** who was an Auxilliary fireman based at the Rosa Garage on the corner of Vera Avenue and Landra Gardens near Grange Park Station. Like many of the volunteers Tom used to go on duty after he had come home from a full day's work. The 'fire engine' consisted of a saloon car pulling a pump and hoses with the ladders lashed to the roof rack.

After a day's work in London County School clinics as a dental nurse, **Joy Barnes** spent her evenings as a volunteer ambulance woman based at Depot 1 on the corner of Bowes Road and Russell Road. It was whilst she was here that she met her husband Ted Banks, also a volunteer ambulance driver, whom she married in 1945.



All the staff of Ambulance Depot 1. Joy is on the left-hand end of the front row. Picture courtesy of Mrs. J. Banks

Victory!

On 7 May 1945 Germany surrendered and the war in Europe was over. The following day, 8th May was declared Victory in Europe (VE) Day and there were huge celebrations all over Britain. In London, Winston Churchill waved to enormous crowds who had gathered to celebrate in the streets and parks. Impromptu parties and bonfires went on long into the night as nearly six years of hardship and conflict came to an end.

In Enfield there were services of thanksgiving in many of the churches. Extra seats had to be set up in the churchyard of St Andrew's parish church for those who could not get inside.

One of the most popular forms of celebration was street parties and these happened all over the three districts. The Enfield Gazette reported that "a very pleasant Victory tea party was held on May 26th at Putney Road, Enfield." Tea was followed by games and races for the children and "a large bonfire with an effigy of Hitler was lighted at 9.30pm and a display of all kinds of fireworks lasting two hours gave the children and adults cause for excitement".



The Borough of Edmonton Peace Flag with the Mayor, Alderman William Preye and Mrs. Webb of Cuckoo Hall Lane who worked the flag. August 1945. Picture courtesy of Local History Unit.

In Beatrice Road, Edmonton several Morrison shelters were dismantled and re-erected in the road to provide a stage for an evening of dancing and musical acts and a fancy dress competition. Here, some large metal drums were used as braziers and were kept well under control. However, the fire brigades were kept busy during this season of parties and celebrations bringing bonfires under control.

On the 6th and 9th of August the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were destroyed when the allies took the decision to drop the newly invented atomic bomb on them. Five days later on the 15th August the Second World War was finally over.

Servicemen were gradually demobilised from the forces and were able to return home. They found many towns in ruins, industries destroyed, a shortage of housing and clothes and food rationing still in place. The task of rebuilding was enormous and life was slow to return to normal.



VE Day party in Raleigh Road, Enfield. Photograph courtesy of Mr. Harness.

A thanksgiving service in Pymmes park on VJ (Victory over Japan) Day, 15th August 1945. Picture courtesy of Local History Unit.

