

BBC PEOPLE'S WAR INTERVIEWS

The BBC People's War website holds an archive of memories of World War two which were gathered across the country. The pages below give details of the interviews carried out by West Sussex Library Service as part of the project and are arranged by name.

Further stories can be found at:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/user/55/u767555.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Mrs Allam (nee Mills)	
Volunteer / Helper Name		
Date Story was recorded	25/05/2005	
Civilian <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	
Full Names of People in Story	
Where the Story took place	East Grinstead

I was born in Dixons (shop). I was 17 years old when I saw the bomber coming in and drop the bomb on the cinema. I grabbed my younger sister and brother and ran to a shelter under another shop (Dixons was a Chemist shop so it was particularly dangerous). The pilot then came and machine gunned the shops.

The Fire Lookout (a tower) just next door – you can still see the bullet marks.

I met my future husband who was in the Royal Tank Regiment when they were transferred here after Dunkirk. The whole town turned out when we left for Liverpool preparing to go to the Middle East.

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Aubrey Mills Arnell	
Volunteer / Helper Name		
Date Story was recorded	07/06/2005	
Civilian ✓	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	Memories of a Worthing Schoolboy
Full Names of People in Story	
Where the Story took place	Worthing, West Sussex

The last year of my schooling was at West Tarring Secondary Boys School, first year the building was opened, in 1941, I was 13 years old.

During this year our class were digging the playing fields up for Victory, and we were digging pretty close to one another, when I put my fork into my pal's foot, his name is Gerry Broxham, he forgave me.

In the same year on most Saturdays, I helped a Baker's roundsman (Charlie by name) deliver bread. The baker's were 'Knights' in Broadwater Street East.

Whilst delivering bread in Canterbury Road, West Worthing, the Air Raid Siren had sounded, I heard a German plane very close overhead, then the sound of a bomb dropping, so I emptied the bread out of the basket and laid as close to the fence as possible, then placed the basket over my head. The bomb landed in St. Andrew's Road approximately 200 yards away, the rubble from the bomb blast showered into Canterbury Road. I was hit on the back by something, so I picked myself up and the bread and carried on delivering same.

See Aubrey's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/03/a4262203.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Geoffrey Attwell	
Volunteer / Helper Name	Karen Aveyard	
Date Story was recorded	20/05/2004	
Civilian ✓	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	Something to do with Music "And The Band Played On"
Full Names of People in Story	Geoffrey Atwell
Where the Story took place	Normandy, France. Poland

I joined the Territorial Army in 1939. It was a CCS (Casualty Clearing Station for the RAMC). When war broke out I became a medic. In Jan 1940, I went to France and when the Germans invaded in 1940 I was in Belgium – Krombeke, about 20 miles from Dunkirk. We had so many wounded we had to stay with them in a church and a school, about 700 in all. On 30th May the Germans arrived and that was it – we were over run. Under the Geneva Convention I was supposed to be protected as a medic and handed back. But it didn't happen that way.

At Ypres, there were so many German wounded that we ended up being stretcher-bearers for them. That was why there was no invasion I think, because they had no reserve troops. The wounded were in a school.

We were then sent to Le Touquet by the sea but there were no wounded there. I think we were there in case there was an invasion – but it never happened that way. After a couple of weeks we marched east through north France, Belgium into Holland. About 250 miles to Rotterdam, then we were put on a coal barge down the Rhine to the German frontier, with no water – we were so thirsty. We were put on a train to our prison camp – Stalag VIII B (Lamsdorf in Silesia, Poland). And there we stayed until we were repatriated under the Geneva Convention in Oct. 1943.

I played viola in the orchestra formed in the camp (there were lots of Army Bandsmen who were stretcher bearers captured at Calais). In summer 1943, the dance band went up to Berlin – Stalag IIID, to give a holiday to the POW workers in the mines. We were sent to entertain them!

When I came home I was in hospital for quite a while because of malnutrition. In 1944 I was posted to Millbank Hospital behind the Tate Gallery in London. I got married in 1945 to Mickey and have 4 great grand children.

See Geoffrey's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/83/a2875683.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Mr L F Baker	
Volunteer / Helper Name	Simon Edwards	
Date Story was recorded	03/06/2004	
Civilian	Army	Royal Air Force ✓ RAF S Commando 45-46
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	Serving in the RAF S Commando 42-46
Full Names of People in Story	Lesley F Baker
Where the Story took place	Tangmere

During my service, I was stationed for a time at Tangmere Aerodrome. After one returning from France, one squadron returned with a goat that they had captured. The Goat had a swastika on it. They set about removing the swastika and replaced it with a 'V'. The goat was allowed to roam the aerodrome but was completely uncontrollable. You would be walking around and suddenly someone would yell out "watch out – goat" and you would just have to get out of the way. The goat would go for anyone. One day it got into the cookhouse and caused complete chaos. The goat was eventually put down as it was uncontrollable!

See Lesley's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/13/a2773613.shtml>

And see more of his story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/95/a2773695.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Beryl Bear (nee Newell) & Alan Newell	
Volunteer / Helper Name	Stella Lardent	
Date Story was recorded	25/05/2005	
Civilian ✓	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	The Families Different Experiences of the Whitehall Bombing
Full Names of People in Story	Beryl, Clive, Alan & May Newell, Captain & Mrs Greenwood
Where the Story took place	Whitehall Cinema, East Grinstead – 19/07/1943

We were evacuated to Dormans Park from Brockley Central School – Mum was Matron at Hillside, a hostel for evacuees.

Were at school at Baldwins Hill and had to catch the 428 bus then walk across the fields to home. That day was Mum's half day off – she went to the cinema – the only time in her life she felt it was a stupid film – so left early to catch the bus, otherwise she would have died.

She caught the bus and missed the bomb. Clive and I (brother) were on the bus when German planes machining road behind bus. Bus stopped and we dived into the ditch.

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Jean Bennett (Street)	
Volunteer / Helper Name		
Date Story was recorded	07/07/2005	
Civilian <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	A Child's War
Full Names of People in Story	Jean Bennett (Street)
Where the Story took place	Worthing and Leicester

March 1941 – evacuated from Lyndhurst Road School to Thurmaston nr Leicester.

Only school in West Sussex who went

School quite new – good head (Miss Wilson)

Sister Valerie & Jean's older sister, Marjorie went to High School – evacuated to Farndon, Newick, Notts.

All given forms to take home, you had to pay a weekly amount, so parents had to sigh Yes to go or No.

Jean and Valerie had one suitcase between them. At first the bus forgot their case so had to go back. Train was straight through, no stops. Jean had to look after a little one called Wendy Hougham (now in USA) – mother was a bus conductor.

When arrived, taken to Village Hall where prospective foster parents lined up. Jean's mum had said they were not to be separated & most wanted only one child. Mrs Gent, little old lady & her husband had no children of her own so said she would take them temporarily. Went to a house, she was very house proud – big garden kept the "fowl" and they "mashed" the tea not made it. Girls had to sleep in a larder with red tiles. Within a couple of days she told the girls they were well behaved & clean so she would keep them. They moved upstairs to a big double bed. Mrs Gent was so frightened one night when Jean accidentally kicked Valerie out of bed and Mrs Gent thought it was a bomb.

Went to school in the Village with a Blacksmiths next door, the children loved

to watch. Parents came to visit, the oldest sister came down from Nottingham to visit. The sister wrote letters and would attach 2 Rowntree Fruit Gums.

They have a reunion every March, at the Dolphin Hotel, of the Lyndhurst Road School Evacuation Group. About 30 people still meet.

In approx. 1942 in summer in Chester Avenue, a group of children were coming out of school for dinner, so just after 12.00, were strafed by a German fighter – no one was hurt as lady came out of a house and grabbed the children into safety. As a child, didn't realise the danger they were in.

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Keith Brown	
Volunteer / Helper Name	Stella Lardent	
Date Story was recorded	25/05/05	
Civilian <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	Aftermath of the Whitehall Cinema Bombing
Full Names of People in Story	Keith Brown
Where the Story took place	East Grinstead

All the bodies from the Whitehall Cinema were taken to the chapels in Brooklands Park (bodies were carried in anything with wheels: carts, wheelbarrows, prams). They were quickly full. Sargeant and Brookers Garage in London Road (where Rusdens is now) became the mortuary.

108 were killed, 235 were injured.

I had just had my tea and was preparing to go to the fair in West Hill Fields. The fair quietly packed up and went away.

See more of Keith's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/83/a4133783.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Keith Brown	
Volunteer / Helper Name	Matt Young	
Date Story was recorded	15/05/2005	
Civilian ✓	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	The Guinea Pigs
Full Names of People in Story	Archibald McIndoe
Where the Story took place	East Grinstead

Monday 4th September McIndoe arrived at Q.V.H (Queen Victoria Hospital). He was a great philanthropist. He encouraged the wounded to go into town. The airman had suffered terrible wounds.

The Burns Unit was opened in 1963 but McIndoe didn't live to see it. He was greatly loved by all his patients.

649 Guinea Pigs – a plaque in Q.V.H lists all their names in the Canadian Ward. Most were airman.

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Alf Burtman	
Volunteer / Helper Name	Karen Aveyard	
Date Story was recorded		
Civilian ✓	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	Teignmouth
Full Names of People in Story	Alf Burtman
Where the Story took place	Worthing and Teignmouth

(First Schoolboy letter)

The Summer term of 1940 was a very unusual one: air raids disturbed us at night; we were unable to have any bathing because Worthing was a Defence Area; Sports and cricket matches had to be postponed, but little did we know what lay ahead. About two weeks before we left the manor we began to think that something was afoot (This was through the school secret service). Why were the staff talking in hushed voices? Why was the headmaster spending so much time on the telephone? Soon all doubts were cleared up because we were told that there was a possibility of evacuation. In roughly twenty days we were told officially that we were off to Teignmouth in two days time (as if we didn't know already). What a rush in those two days more work (manual) was done than in any other two days of term. Desks and books disappeared and brown paper and string seemed to appear from nowhere to most peoples delight less text books were included in the parcels (but this did not mean less work far from it). My words can only describe the hustle that was going on but when the Dayboys had gone how pleasantly quiet and peaceful the last Wednesday evening. The same cannot be said of the night though. The sirens which sounded at 11.15 woke us up in our dormitory which was now in the Drawing Room and we all trooped down to the shelter with our eiderdowns around us, there we stayed for five hours.

We had to be up early to catch a train for Teignmouth the following morning, it took us the best part of a day to reach our destination but we were well rewarded by a hearty welcome from the Lendrick House staff. The Lendrick boys were pretty decent and we all settled down very quickly. The boarders had two days spare before the rest of the boys and staff arrived. We were

on the beach for the rest of those two days and certainly this proved a very fine place.

As the reader can imagine there were plenty of odd jobs to be done, our days seem to fly by for we found out about the town and district with our teachers help much of which we did by several walks.

Sunday July 7th was the Day of Disaster for at about 7pm there was a terrific explosion and a tinkle of broken glass. It was some time before we realised what had happened. The landing of two bombs nearby meant we would have to return home to Broadwater.

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Mrs A Cole	
Volunteer / Helper Name	Stella Lardent	
Date Story was recorded	25/05/05	
Civilian ✓	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	My Wartime Memories of East Grinstead
Full Names of People in Story	Angela Cole
Where the Story took place	East Grinstead

In 1941 I was a patient at the QVH (I was a child of 7). The Guinea Pigs used to bring us chocolates and sweets. Looking back they were interested in the nurses. After, I was transferred to a Sanatorium in Haslemere.

My father was working at Gatwick on autopilot 'George'. Sometimes planes in trouble landed at Gatwick. The Beehive at Gatwick was the control tower. Dad was in the Home guard at Gatwick.

Whitehall

My mother was in the cinema but when the warning was flashed on the screen, she left.

It was a horrible day, weather wise, which is why the cinema was so full. Where Rushdens is was a Greengrocers called Darnell, they had a raffle which my brother won, the prize was a lemon!

We used to get food parcels from Ireland, once a piece of pork was sent but it got delayed! It was boiled.

See Angela's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/19/a4133819.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	John Collins	
Volunteer / Helper Name	Audrey Rann	
Date Story was recorded	25/05/05	
Civilian ✓	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	My Memories of the Whitehall Cinema Bombing
Full Names of People in Story	John Collins
Where the Story took place	East Grinstead

John was 8 years old living at 153 West Street with the Evershed family. Saturday afternoon, John was in the house when he heard a very large explosion. After the bombing you were allowed to view the damage at the back. John remembers an enormous large hole then John remembers that the Queen at the time (The Queen Mum) was going to visit the scene. Then she expressed her sorrow.

Later on John remembers walking to school up Institute Walk and looking at a very large iron girder which spanned the outer walls of Whitehall Cinema.

It was said that the bodies were taken to Queen Road cemetery, there was a chapel were they had services, the other side was a building where they could lay people out.

See John's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/34/a4134034.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Roy Gautrey and Barbara Gautrey (nee Mutters)	
Volunteer / Helper Name		
Date Story was recorded		
Civilian ✓	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	Memories of D-Day in Worthing
Full Names of People in Story	Roy and Barbara Gautrey (nee Mutters)
Where the Story took place	Worthing

Roy was 14 and Barbara was 13

There was a great build up to D-Day in Worthing. Obviously at the time we did not know what was going to happen. The town was like one big barracks with a mass of different nationalities including Canadians, Americans and there were also Russian prisoners of war. It felt like the whole town had been taken over. There was very little civilian traffic and there were restrictions on travel. The roads were lined with tanks.

As D-Day approached then suddenly everyone left. There was talk of an invasion, but we didn't know what was going to happen.

During the night 5th/6th June, both were awoken by the sound of aircraft crossing the town. We couldn't see anything as everything was blacked out, but they were flying low at less than 10,000 feet. You knew that something was about to happen.

The following day at school it was announced that the invasion had begun. Soon after D-Day the Doodlebugs began to fall on Worthing. You could actually see them as they came in quite low. This was very frightening.

As teenagers other memories included it being quite an exciting time with opportunities to go to the local dances. The radio was an important medium as it kept you informed as did news reels at the cinema. Although rationing was austere and we had to go without our treats we never went hungry.

Other local memories include remembering a plane coming down in

Wartime West Sussex 1939-45 Project
West Sussex Library Service – BBC People's War interviews

Honeysuckle Lane (West Worthing) in 1940. In 1941 a Heinkel 111 crashed into Lyndhurst Road (East Worthing) killing the Canadians that lived there.

See Roy and Barbara's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/47/a4240847.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Jean Glynn (nee Cullen)	
Volunteer / Helper Name	Karen Aveyard	
Date Story was recorded		
Civilian	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force – QVH staff	

About the Story

Story Title	Four Years at The Queen Victoria Hospital
Full Names of People in Story	Jean Cullen
Where the Story took place	East Grinstead

Worked at QV 1944-1948 dealing with welfare on behalf of Guinea Pigs. They continued having treatment for years after. I left to get married in 1948. My husband was a patient but not a G.P.C. Two aspects of work, advice for patients who needed new careers and entertaining them.

See Jean's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/13/a4091113.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	John Grant	
Volunteer / Helper Name		
Date Story was recorded	13/06/05	
Civilian <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	The Second World War – Through A Child's Eyes
Full Names of People in Story	various
Where the Story took place	Littlehampton

The Second World War in Littlehampton – through a child's eyes

In September 1939, Mum, Dad and I were in the Regent Cinema at Littlehampton when the film was interrupted by a hand-written slide. All military reservists were to report immediately to their nearest barracks. In no time we'd gone home, Dad had packed a case and disappeared. He was working on the railway, but was still on reserve from the Royal Army Veterinary Corps, so away he went to Chichester barracks with hundreds of others. There they kicked their heels for a week or so until someone decided what to do with them.

The next morning the siren went off – the rising and falling wail indicating an imminent air attack – followed soon after by the "all clear", a single continuous note. No bombers came.

On that day I was a couple of months short of my 6th birthday, and in no time at all everything changed. Morrison shelters, table-like structures of steel plate and mesh, appeared in the corridors of Elm Grove School¹, followed by more substantial ones of concrete (outside the corridor) and brick (surrounding the playground). At much the same time the huge windows (classrooms were glazed almost from floor to ceiling, with ridiculously big panes) were either covered with criss-cross tape, or painted with gold-coloured plastic gelatine, in an attempt to reduce damage to young flesh.

¹ Now Littlehampton Community School

The seafront was mined and deeply barricaded with rolls of barbed wire. Artillery pieces pointing out to sea and sentries patrolled the promenade. Our only 'beach' was the West side of the Arun, but it was little used until later in the war.

Air-raid warnings were frequent. We would troop out to the concrete shelters just outside the classroom, sneaking a brief peep at the activity overhead. Mum, my young brother and I lived on a corner opposite Littlehampton railway station, with Hollands undertakers to the West and South of us. Occasionally we'd see a dripping blanket-covered stretcher brought in, but happily the only corpse I ever saw was that of an airman who'd been picked up from the sea, and left to drain off in Holland's yard.

Worse came as a result of "the day they did Ford". We cowered in neighbour's basement as the Luftwaffe hammered H.M.S. Peregrine. The many dead were brought to Holland's, who were temporarily overwhelmed. I lay awake to the sound of coffin making (the coffin shop was next to my bedroom). Days went by and our home filled with the stink of death, finally relieved when the "Sanitary Department" turfed us out and fumigated the flat.

In later years I learned the radar station at R.A.F. Poling similarly, happily without loss of life – this was the day when a diminutive W.A.A.F radar operator, Avis Hearn, stayed at her post while bombs rained down outside, and was awarded the Military Medal, only one of six won by female personnel in the entire war². Avis, only 4' 10 ½" (1.486m) tall, was soon promoted to Flight Sergeant, and sent to a top training establishment – not bad for a girl whose mother once scolded "you'll never amount to anything". The last I heard, Avis, now Mrs Parsons, was living in Rustington, and still in contact with friends in Poling Village.

After the Battle of Britain, the Luftwaffe continued with small scale raids. In Littlehampton, these were usually aimed at the railway goods-yard, ships in the river or at Butlins amusement park by the pier, rumoured to be full of munitions. These aircraft, often fighter-bombers, flew in low, under the radar screen, and were known as "tip and run" raiders, after a form of cricket, where if you even snicked the ball, you had to run.

Boat-Building at Littlehampton

The West Side of the river, mainly Hillyard's and Osborne's yards, produced motor-torpedo boats, air-sea rescue launches, and later in the war, landing-craft, typically "LCT's" (Landing Craft, Tank). My first and only experience of "arc-eye"³, came from watching Arc-welding across the river.

Air Raid (1)

One Sunday morning I was late for Sunday School – the siren sounded, so I didn't go, and took shelter with my mother. The Congregational Church

² The story of those raids, and of Avis Hearn's courage, is told in full in "The Radar Warriors", by Ron Hewlett.

³ This is the name welders use to describe damage to the retina as a result of exposure to ultra-violet light.

manse was flattened, the Rev. Hailstone and his wife were killed, and I am told several children were injured by flying glass. Stranded in Terminus Road, a Mr Richardson dragged his daughter Alma into one of the shallow doorways of the Regent cinema. She complained that daddy had hurt her – later she was found to have a bullet wound in the chest. She lived.

Air Raid (2)

A group of us were walking home from school when we heard one (or two?) loud explosions and the rattle of heavy machine guns, followed by the sound of a German fighter-bomber overhead. I flung my sweetheart to the ground and lay on top of her to protect her – on the exposed side of a wall! Soon afterward the air-raid warning sounded, but by then we were all quivering in fright in the end house in Cornwall Road. In later years I realised we'd been in little danger, as the aircraft was almost directly above us as he fired – but we didn't know that then!

Air Raid (3)

The Squires family were evacuated south to get away from Coventry, which had been virtually flattened. The two sons attended our school, and I was jealous of their Air Cub uniform, a "Sea Cub" of the 5th Littlehampton, wore a navy blue jumper. They attended our pack in their grey uniforms. One Saturday morning I awoke to a remote "thump" and my mother said "Oh, another dog's trodden on a land mine on West Beach". When I went to collect out meagre meat ration from the butchers on the corner of Pier Road and New Road I saw that two cottages opposite the timber yard were a pile of rubble, and a man (I later learned, Mr Squires) was tearing at it with his bare hands. Mrs Squires and her two sons had died.

Air Raid (4)

I recognised the sound of a V1 approaching, flying very low. Mrs Slicer, our teacher, was a martinet, and I was more terrified of her than of that V1. Seconds after it passed over us, the siren sounded, and as we trooped out to the shelter I took a quick peep – straight down the tail-pipe of the bomb as it headed towards Arundel.

The Canadian Black Watch

Over the war years, Littlehampton was host to numerous different units. Hare's Garage (now the Flea Market) was home to Canadian and American Units, virtually all of South Terrace was requisitioned, and in the run up to D-Day the common threatened to sing under the weight of military vehicles. One evening the Canadian Black Watch entertained us with a display of counter-marching, accompanied by their pipe band. Surrey Street was a small arena, and the fierce sound of their pipes and drums made it shake. Days later these huge, generous men were fighting their way ashore at Dieppe, and there was not a dark blue/green tartan kilt to be seen in Littlehampton.

Generous Americans

We kids were always on the scrounge, and were quite often rewarded by an "empty" 7lb tin of jam, with a good pound and a half left in the bottom. These men smoked several brands of cigarettes, but our favourite was

"Sweet Caporals", the back of whose packets always carried aircraft recognition pictures – a head on view, a plan view, side view and a perspective view. We vied with each other for the latest pictures, but I don't think any of us ever completed a set.

These men put on a fantastic Christmas Show for us at Christmas 1943 – conjurers, musicians, the lot, anything for the kids. Less than a year later, they would be dying in France, but memories of their warmth and generosity live on.

- and the sky filled with thunder

One Thursday morning at about 6.30 I was walking down River Road to collect my "Knock Out" comic from the paper shop. The roar of aircraft engines stopped me in my tracks, and my jaw fell as hundreds of aeroplanes, each towing a Horsa glider, flew overhead, no more than 200' above me. This was the first time I saw "D-Day Stripes"⁴. I've never checked whether the 6th June was a Thursday, so to this day I still don't know whether I was watching an early part of the invasion fleet or the first wave into Arnhem.

Peace at Last

All this time we'd been watching the (highly sanitised) reports in the newspapers, and the occasional (highly sanitised) newsreel. Then the Allies (the good guys, Tommies, Yanks, Anzacs and all) over-ran Bergen-Belsen. Shortly afterward the Odeon showed a documentary about the discovery, voiced by war correspondent Richard Dimbleby. I lied about my age to get in – and wished I hadn't.

In time my father and all my mother's brothers came home to "civvy-street" without a scratch. Like their fathers who'd fought in 1914-1918 they wanted to forget what they had seen and done, and it is only in recent years that the quiet and dedicated work of the ex-servicemen's associations has risen to public prominence, and we see old men proudly wearing medals in public in proud memory of their pals.

I bet there's a neighbour or two who's been astonished to learn that old Bert who delivered their milk for the last thirty years holds an M.M. and a D.S.M., or that Lily down the library was once a radar operator.

Random Memories

Walking round with a gas-mask case. Going to an A.R.P. (Air Raid Precautions) centre to have an additional filter taped onto my mask.

Seeing a sad child coming to school wearing a black diamond on his or her coat-sleeve, a mourning badge for a father or elder brother or sister who wouldn't be coming home.

Some boys boasted a "bit of German aeroplane", typically a piece of aluminium with green paint on it, preferably bearing a bullet hole. Others

⁴ Broad white stripes painted on the main planes and fuselages of all Allied aircraft as a guard against "friendly fire". Often they were still wet when the aircraft took off!

collected (scrounged!) cap-badges, and I remember one or two who wore their collections on a broad leather belt.

Most of us had at least a couple of empty 0.303 cartridge cases, usually ejected from the machine guns of British fighters.

David Langdon, a cartoonist, created several characters – his “Two Types”, jerseyed and moustachio'd army officers, popped up all over the place, but my favourite was “Billy Brown of London Town” a smart city gent with broolly and bowler.

Small posters showed Mr Brown dealing out trite snippets of advice. For example, for blast protection, the side-window glass on all London buses was covered with a fine fabric safety mesh, with a diamond shaped viewing panel in the middle. People often peeled back a corner to look out, which defeated the purpose of the mesh.

Billy Brown: “I hope you'll pardon my correction – that stuff is there for your protection”

Pencilled graffito: “I thank you for your information – but I am looking for my destination”

“Careless talk costs lives” was the thrust of other Landon posters. Typical was one in which two city gents chat enthusiastically, while Adolf Hitler eavesdrops with an oversized ear.

John Grant

See John's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/87/a4230587.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Rosemary Hook-Reens (nee Kenward)	
Volunteer / Helper Name		
Date Story was recorded	07/07/2005	
Civilian ✓	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	Tales from Smugglers Restaurant in Sompting
Full Names of People in Story	
Where the Story took place	Sompting

In May 1943 I moved to Sompting with my mother and took over The Old Sussex Guest House. It was owned by a German lady who was interned on the Isle of Man. My mother was a businesswoman and leased the restaurant, which began to take off. It was re-named The Smugglers.

One day all the ceilings of the restaurant came down when there was bombing in nearby fields, so these needed to be re-built.

In early 1944 we put out an advert for vacancies for rooms, at 30 bob a week. The rooms were filled frequently with families bombed out.

Opposite the restaurant huge camps were set up for German Prisoners of War. They were never really used for this purpose so instead were utilised by the ATS and WRAF. The facilities were fairly rotten. These women would make an appointment to have a bath at the restaurant for 9d. The restaurant had a copper attached to a gas pipe. It was my job to put this heated water in to the bath.

Soldiers also used to queue up outside, and asked for 2 buckets of tea, costing 2/6d. It was my job to toast the teacakes. These would be supplied every morning at 7am by horse and cart.

As we were an eating establishment we were allowed extra rations. We obtained our rations from Mr Attenbury who owned the shop opposite. One day I remember seeing a side of bacon being brought in through a side window by a soldier. My mother a very principled woman told him to take it back.

Evacuees from Guernsey also rented some of our rooms. Sergeant Traisell was based at the camp and he and his wife rented the front bedroom and two more bedrooms for 30 bob a week. While they were there they had a baby that they named Rosemary after me. Towards the end of the war we took in doodlebug victims. At the end of 1945 we took in returning Chindits. My story ends when in the summer of 1946 we moved from the restaurant to another house in Sompting.

See Rosemary's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/91/a4579491.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Gordon King	
Volunteer / Helper Name		
Date Story was recorded	06/05/2006	
Civilian <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	Childhood Memories
Full Names of People in Story	Gordon and Ada King
Where the Story took place	Worthing

Night after night with no sleep, I would not go down to the Anderson Shelter as I was so fed up with the shelter. I stayed upstairs and the windows got blown in, it was a bomb on the gas works in Ash Grove behind us. I managed to walk downstairs, after that I went back to the Anderson Shelter. I stayed in then afterwards.

We moved to Ham Road. I was the soldiers mascot for the Canadians stationed around us. They were ever so kind, I used to go up in the trucks on the downs (Fort Garry Horse – all killed in Dieppe). My mother was a Char for 6d. My dad was paralysed in the First World War, his pension was 2/6d a week. I used to do a paper round delivering the Worthing Herald for 2/- a week. As far as I can remember I used to give it to my Mum. I used to collect my mum every night after she had been charring because she was frightened during the blackout.

Looking back I don't know how my mum coped, she used to leave me and my sister in charge of my dad when she was working.

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Paul Trevor Leaney	
Volunteer / Helper Name	Kath Beach	
Date Story was recorded	05/01/05	
Civilian ✓	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	Horsham & Guildford Railway Train Bombed & Machine Gunned
Full Names of People in Story	M K Leaney
Where the Story took place	Horsham, West Sussex

Horsham and Guildford Railway, train bombed and machine gunned

Marguerite Kathleen Leaney, nee Bacon – a brave lady.

She was born at Lurgashall, West Sussex in 1915, the daughter of Mr & Mrs Bacon. Mr Bacon was a teacher and a few years later moved to Rudgwick on his appointment as headmaster.

She had an independent nature, and unusually for that time, chose to leave home at age 15 or 16 to learn the art of floristry in London, which she did under the expert tuition of Constance Spry. She worked at the Cavendish arranging and selling flowers to wealthy clients under the management of the lady who in more recent times was featured in the TV series 'Duchess of Duke Street'. She was frequently driven to Covent Garden by Daimler to buy the stock, and often returned on foot to exercise the pampered pooches of the rich and famous. She often returned to Rudgwick to visit her parents, and later when she moved back into the area chose to ride a motorbike and sidecar.

In 1940 she married Trevor Leaney, a teacher at Christ's Hospital and they moved to Horsham. When he was drafted into the army she moved back in with her parents at the schoolmaster's house at Bucks Green, where her son Paul was born in 1942. On December 16th 1942, she travelled by train to Farnborough, where her husband was on standby with the Tank Corps for embarkation to North Africa, and had not seen their 10 week old son. On her return journey from Guildford that afternoon, a lone Dornier 217 Bomber descended from the clouds looking for an opportunist target as the train was

approaching Bramley Station. It was bombed and strafed by machine guns, killing seven and injuring many more. The raider was shortly afterwards pursued by a Beaufighter over the coast and crashed into a gasometer at Bognor killing the four crewmembers.

Kathleen Leaney – Rita as she preferred to be called – was struck in the side of the face by a bullet, which shattered her jawbone and exited from the opposite temple taking out an eye. She also had deep penetration wounds from the glass from the shattered windows. Her son Paul also had glass wounds and she remembered passing him down from the wrecked carriage to a Canadian soldier who helped her on foot along to the station.

She was taken to Park Prewitt Hospital at Basingstoke, where she found herself laying in a dingy cell with a small barred window that was made to house 19th century lunatics.

She was later transferred to East Grinstead for operations by Alexander Macindoe, the celebrated plastic surgeon. This was followed by a long period of convalescence at Shoreham. Paul was looked after by grandparents for 2 years at Rudgwick. She was very philosophical about her fate and didn't blame anyone, considering herself lucky: the woman who had been next to her on the train was killed, and she remembered the other patients at East Grinstead mostly burnt airmen who had lost their faces and their eyesight and still kept a sense of humour. Before telling a joke the question would be asked 'are their any women about?'

In 1949 she opened 'The Flower Box' on Horsham Station and later kept a flower shop in Carfax until 1962. Her husband died in 1957. Later after moving to Billingshurst she opened a 'Flower Box' shop there.

She underwent operations on her face throughout her life as techniques improved, but also to remove pieces of glass as they made their presence felt.

See Paul's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/17/a3574217.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Doris Evelyn May	
Volunteer / Helper Name	Neil Spurgeon	
Date Story was recorded	20/05/04	
Civilian ✓	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	Balham to Bognor
Full Names of People in Story	Eva Grace Macer (mother) Doris Evelyn May
Where the Story took place	Bognor/Chichester

1st September 1939

Myself with my mother and younger brother and sister were evacuated from Balham SW London to Bognor. When we left we didn't know our destination. Left Balham station just put on a train complete with a gas mask and as much clothing as we could carry, 12 months before we had been due to go but it all blew over but we had been scheduled. Came with the school that my siblings attended and my mother as a helper, St Mary's C of E High School, Balham. I had already passed a scholarship and passed to Clapham County Secondary School. Quite excited when we headed to the south coast and as we passed Arundel we became excited at the thought that we might be on the coast.

We were marched through Bognor up the local William Fletcher School and the people en-route were all watching over their garden gates, and peering at us, quite embarrassing. At the school we were given our carrier bag of rations, the best thing was a large bar of Cadbury's Dairy Milk and we started eating that. The Billeting Officers then started to allocate us to suitable accommodation and as a family group, four of us, it took longer, eventually we were sent to an address in Kennilworth Road, quite near to the school and an elderly couple. He was head Gardener at the Royal Norfolk Hotel and she had been in service, I believe. There may well have been a glut of Herrings so we were fed on herrings in various forms but the bonus was that the host brought home some lovely fruit and vegetables from the Royal Norfolk Hotel gardens and I got a transfer to Chichester High School to continue my education. You chose the subjects that you wanted to take for School Certificate but one had to pass English, Maths, History and Geography and a

language. Not a large science presence in Chichester. In London I had studied Physics and Chemistry but here I had to study Biology.

I was not very happy as I had left my friends including boy friends in London or dispersed all around the country and my own school was evacuated elsewhere. I was very homesick and wanted to go home and very nearly did go home to my paternal Grandmother's and I visited them on a few occasions but then the bombing precluded these visits and I settled down, made new friends and settled into my new life. As it was so quiet in London many people went home.

I saw and heard the Battle of Britain and my uncle was based in Tangmere and came to see us occasionally. He was in the 'Millionaire' Squadron with people like Beaverbrook because they could fly. They were in 617 (or perhaps 601) City of London Squadron RAF and many of them could already fly before the war started. My uncle was on maintenance and he helped with the entertainments as he had been on the stage and he was there when Tangmere was bombed, and survived the war, never went overseas and lived to the grand old age of ninety.

I was studious and we had quite a lot of homework so I didn't have any life really to miss. Couldn't go to the beach but could go to the esplanade but the beach was closed. My siblings had their education much more disrupted than mine at first, there were no eleven plus scholarships as far as I know. Chichester High School for Girls, we were not meant to travel with the boys together, boys wore green uniforms but evacuees couldn't get these because of the clothing ration and despite some disruptions and lessons in the playing fields and in Bishop's Place grounds or sometimes in a school as we had to make room for Streatham School. It was easier than today to 'bunk off' for music or art at which I wasn't especially good but to sit in our Bishop's Place Garden to learn Latin or Shakespeare because the setting was so perfect. The mistresses were all elderly spinsters and we all respected them and worked hard for them, quite a lot of competition to maintain your form position. Nice tennis courts, I liked tennis.

We changed Billets often – I think we had five or six altogether for various reasons. One was a lady who had run a guest house and did very good catering and either side of us there were Canadian troops billeted and the landlady had them into supper sometimes, they were perfect gentlemen but they went to Dieppe so I think many of them must not have survived. They were very keen to go and if they didn't have enough to do they might have got into trouble. I remember their massive vehicles parked outside, some of them were married, probably married before they came over.

But finally we managed to rent a cottage at Felpham and I was able to cycle to school in the summer term and travel by train in the winter. In Lyon Street we had the cottage to ourselves. The landlady supplied food rations and I have memories of meat pies of a dubious date. We also lived in with the lady who ran the off licence in West Street, her husband was in the army so we had lots of space and she did the catering.

Later we had lots of East End children and families arrived and may well have been bombed out. My mother helped them to make and mend clothes as so often they had been donated clothes but these were not often suitable so they had to be adapted.

I was recruited by the school, there was no suggestion of further education although I did stay until I was just 16 and then started work and had to return to school to take my School Certificate, which I passed. Had I returned to my grandparents I would have had to have gone to a Secretarial College. One was placed with a job. Chichester High School supplied most of the staff for County Hall but myself and 1 other girl were found a job with the Inland Revenue in Chichester but much to everyone's disgust I didn't stay more than about six months, partly the discipline, partly the expense of travelling and I immediately found another job with a local builder and timber merchants company. The first job would have been good eventually but one had to move around the country and the job was boring, lots of copying. Once a woman married then a new one was required so there was always a need for new people.

I met my husband as we lived close to him in Lyon Street and he was in High Street and through his very local family that I became interested in local history.

My fiancé was in the RAF and he went to South Africa to train as a pilot but by the time he had qualified VE had come so he returned to UK and we got married on 19/11/1945.

After the war because my mother was here and we had this nice cottage so we all stayed. Still live in that same house today my husband's great grandfather had bought it in 1860.

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Dennis McCarthy	
Volunteer / Helper Name	Karen Aveyard	
Date Story was recorded	25/05/05	
Civilian ✓	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	My New Bike
Full Names of People in Story	Dennis McCarthy
Where the Story took place	East Grinstead

Dad coming down from London, on way to station (12-14 years old) Dad's train had been machine gunned. We set off to find Mum who had been blown through Tea Café window, badly cut.

Whole town was full of dust – most wounded taken clinic in Moat Road. The wounded were aware of others more badly hurt e.g. a little girl had both her arms blown off.

We went back to the Whitehall but no-one was recognisable – all and everyone covered in grey dust and blood. No sense of panic – everything seemed calm, everyone was walking round looking for relatives.

I remember saying afterwards "I was waiting for the bus in the High Street when I saw the bomber come over. He was so low that I thought, Silly man he's going to hit the roof"

As a boy I kept chickens so I used to trade fresh eggs for lucky strike cigarettes from the American forces, they had different airplanes on them to help identify enemy planes.

See Dennis's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/56/a4133756.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Ted Miles	
Volunteer / Helper Name	Stella Lardent	
Date Story was recorded	18/05/2005	
Civilian	Army ✓	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	Q.V.H.
Full Names of People in Story	Dr Jeyes, Dr McIndoe, Ted Miles
Where the Story took place	East Grinstead

Admitted to Q.V.H. in 1944 for bone grafts after a sniper broke my jaw at Monte Cassino. Dr Jeyes was my surgeon, Mappin and Webb ran the Physiotherapy Unit – I made leather photograph frames. As an outpatient I was given several tasks including polishing the floor of the Canadian Wing.

The Swan Hotel was a very friendly pub and the locals helped us get the Guinea Pigs up the 6 steps leading to the bars.

McIndoe insisted that patients wear what they wanted and they were encouraged to go into town.

I was invalided out in 1945. I met my wife through the hospital as her twin sister worked at the Q.V.H.

Patients were encouraged to watch the operations.

See more of Ted's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/27/a4143827.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	June Mills (Wickem)	
Volunteer / Helper Name		
Date Story was recorded	12/06/2005	
Civilian <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	
Full Names of People in Story	
Where the Story took place	East Grinstead, West Sussex

I am June Mills, when I was a child, I used to live at 110 London Road, East Grinstead, West Sussex, at that time it was 'Dixons' the chemist. I can remember the day the German plane came over the town and bombed the 'Whitehall' Cinema, it was 12 July 1944, I was eleven.

The time would have been about four o'clock as I had just got in from school. My sister was looking out of the window, as I too looked out, the German plane dropped his bombs, my sister grabbed me, we both ran down the stairs, as we got to the bottom people were coming in the gate from the street, as the plane was machining the town, people were laying on top of us.

Before the 'Whitehall' was bombed, we were bombed on 9 July 1943, where 'Bridglands' ironmongers, and the 'Warwick' public house was hit.

To this day, there is still a dent in the brickwork, where we were machine gunned, at a solicitors just down from 110.

See June's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/60/a4232260.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Mr D. B. Mitten	
Volunteer / Helper Name		
Date Story was recorded	07/07/2005	
Civilian ✓	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	
Full Names of People in Story	
Where the Story took place	Midhurst

A 9 year old boy in Midhurst, his father owned the local chemist shop – his family lived above the shop.

One dark day in 1941 they were about to sit down for their afternoon tea, when there was an almighty noise and a bomb exploded only 50 yards away. The bomb had passed through the doctor's house and straight into a flat occupied by a family (4 Londoners) who had come to Midhurst to get away from London. Unfortunately they were all killed – the only people in Midhurst. They are all buried in a family plot in Midhurst churchyard.

The main church window was totally destroyed by the vibration of the bomb and was replaced by a new stained glass window depicting all the services, soldiers, nurses etc. – it is still there today

When his granddad was looking outside later on he found a padlock on the floor and thought 'I want one like that for the shed' not realising it was his own padlock!

Midhurst has had the longest ever air raid – the siren went and in the explosion the handle fell off, they still haven't had the all clear!

Local Butcher thought he shot down the bomber with his 12 bore shot gun!!

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Geoffrey Post	
Volunteer / Helper Name	Audrey Rann	
Date Story was recorded	25/05/2005	
Civilian ✓	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	Lightning Strikes Twice
Full Names of People in Story	Geoffrey Post
Where the Story took place	East Grinstead

Mr Post was an evacuee to Lingfield with Brockley Central School from S.E. London. He arrived on 2 September 1939 the day before war broke out. He was 11 at the time.

In 1944 he remembers a Doodle Bug which fell on the same site as Bridglands, a shop in London Road (Rear)

He was riding his bike from Lingfield to East Grinstead to go to work when he saw the Doodle Bug go over, next was the explosion. It was virtually on the site of the Whitehall bombing.

See Geoffrey's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/73/a4133873.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Malcolm Powell	
Volunteer / Helper Name	C Clarke	
Date Story was recorded	25/05/2005	
Civilian ✓	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	Whitehall Cinema Bombing
Full Names of People in Story	Malcolm Powell, Roy Henn
Where the Story took place	East Grinstead

Friday afternoon 9th July 1943 lived in Park Road half a mile from the Whitehall. Heard the explosion and decided to go and have a look and walked down to what we know as Robert Dyas, it was roped off so was not able to pass through. He could see that a great deal of damage had been done to central Whitehall and Bridgeland next door and others.

Remembers a friend Roy Henn working as a projectionist trainee on the day of the bombing on 9th July, left the projection room for a tea break, he sensed something was about to happen, threw himself face down on the floor in the corridor, fortunately he was unhurt. The following year he was called up for National Service in the R.A.F. During training fire alarm practice the noise this created had the effect of trauma resulting in flashback.

See Malcolm's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/64/a4133864.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Cecilia Ralph	
Volunteer / Helper Name	Kathleen Lockett	
Date Story was recorded	03/06/2004	
Civilian ✓	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	
Full Names of People in Story	
Where the Story took place	

From May 1941 to December 1942, I used to work as a Red Cross nurse at the Base Hospital at Horsham. One night when there had been bombing locally, an injured German airman was brought in. I had to clean his single ward and give him meals, but I was forbidden to speak to him. This was a shame, because he was just like one of our soldiers over there. One day a Spitfire flew over the hospital. The airman gave a big smile and pointed his finger to the sky saying, "Ah, Spitfire!" At the same time, one of my sisters was working as an Assistant Nurse, as she had had some training. On my ward there was a young soldier who had TB in a toe, which had been amputated. One day my sister saw him and thought she rather liked him! She asked him to come to tea. My youngest sister saw him and instantly fell in love. Eventually she married him. Joan was left out in the cold. Unfortunately, the Canadians took over and that was when I went to the munitions factory.

At the end of 1941, I started working at the Crawley Aircraft and Precision Tool Company. There I met Ian Ralph and we fell in love. During 1942 Ian was moved to Tottenham to work and I was devastated. My home was in Horsham, so I travelled to work by train. I used to write to him every day on the journey. I was on night work at the time and at the end of a shift I would walk to the station. As there was time to spare before the train came I would wait on the Crawley Post Office step for the Post Office to open at 8.30 and then I would buy a stamp and post Ian's letter. One day in February 1943 it was pouring with rain, so I went straight to the station knowing I would pass a little corner shop on the way home in Horsham where I could buy a stamp. My friend Dora Etheridge, who was night nurse at the factory, was standing on the platform already so I joined her and

suddenly the rain stopped and a shaft of sunlight appeared. We looked up in to the sky and saw a plane caught in the sun's beam and lots of little bombs were falling. They looked so pretty and my stupid mind didn't know what they were – my tired mind I suppose. "Don't they look pretty!" I said. "They're bombs you fool!" she said. We threw ourselves down onto the platform and heard the bombs exploding. That evening when going to work I saw that the Post Office had been hit and realised God had been looking after me that morning. Ian and I were married a year later and had nine children. In 1983 Fred Gray from the University of Sussex edited a little book titled "Crawley Old Town, New Town" and my fifth son Philip wrote the last chapter about growing up in Crawley New Town. A woman whose house I used to pass daily when taking my youngest child to school read the book and stopped me one day. She told me that she was working at the Post Office at the time. Knowing that I was there in the morning, she told the rescue workers that I might have been there. They looked for me for a long time, but of course they didn't find me there.

Ian and I married in February 1944. Ian had been called up into the RAF and we had 12 day's notice to get married. After the ceremony and a small reception, we went up to London for the afternoon and evening (no honeymoon, alas). Before we went to a show, Junior Miss it was called, we went to the ABC cafeteria for a meal. I took one course and Ian took two. Whilst we were in the queue waiting to pay we heard a voice saying "One course please, Air Vice Marshall!" As Ian was wearing his RAF uniform, he spun round in dismay – only to find that he was the person referred to. Was his face red!

See more of Cecelia's story at
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/05/a2773505.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Ralph, Ian	
Volunteer / Helper Name	Charles Kay	
Date Story was recorded	03/06/2004	
Civilian	Army	Royal Air Force ✓
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	
Full Names of People in Story	
Where the Story took place	

I served with the RAF.

At the end of the European War I was sent to serve with the Fleet Air Arm.

One thing I remember is coming home on leave with an official pass. When I got to Victoria Station, I came up the steps from the underground and found they were having a general check on everybody's passes – I was in a bit of a spot as I hadn't got one! I had an identical twin who was serving in the army. I was challenged by an officer and two soldiers. The officer said, "What are you doing in that uniform Bert? When I last saw you, you were at Diss in Norfolk". I replied, "You're mistaking me for my twin brother!" I thought I was still in trouble, but I had a brainwave and said "my train goes in a few minutes and it's a long wait till the next" (I was living in Crawley then) "That's OK" he said. "Have a safe journey" "Give my regards to my brother when you see him" I replied and hurried off to catch my train.

When the war started, I was in a reserved occupation but something went wrong and the personnel officer was sacked. Further applications for exemption were not sent to the Ministry of Labour and eventually I was called up, in December 1943. The first thing I knew was when a letter caught up with me – it had gone to my home address in Staplefield, then to Tottenham where I had been working, but by then I'd been sent with two others to organise a factory in Bishops Stortford. I received the letter on the Friday and was told to report for a medical on Monday at Euston House which was the RAF Medical Centre. The company tried to contact the Ministry of Labour on the Saturday but of course they were closed, so I just turned up! I passed the medical and after a short while was told to report to Cardington for kitting out and initial training. My initial rank was AC1. From there I went

to Skegness for 6 weeks square bashing. Although I wanted to be a pilot or navigator, there were no training courses at the time, so I fell back on training as an Electrical Engineer and became responsible for electrical instruments on aircraft. This included altimeters, artificial horizon, undercarriage indicators and other electrical instrumentation. I did a six month course at Hereford and then served with Bomber Command at the training bases.

When the Arnhem raid took place, I was stationed at Husbands Bosworth in Leicestershire working on Wellingtons. In 1945 I was sent to join the Fleet Air Arm as the airfield was being closed down, as far as I understood – we were never told officially. Two or three went to the Army Reconnaissance Unit, others to the Tactical Air Force in Holland (so we were told).

I never served on aircraft carriers but went to HMS Gosling at Warrington and then to Abbotsinch Naval Air Station which later became Glasgow Airport. I was waiting to join a carrier when the atomic bomb was dropped, so stayed at Abbotsinch until I was demobbed in 1946.

One thing I always remember is that when I was at Skegness, marching along the seafront, the RAF Regiment Officer in charge suddenly shouted out, "Everyone with the exception of Ralph change step" Everyone did, and he said "right, we're all in step now" – much to the amusement of the local people watching! Strictly speaking, I was the one out of step but it was easier to get everybody else to change as I was in the front row!

I met Cecelia in the early part of the war when we were both working at the Crawley Aircraft and Precision Tools Company. We were married on the 12th February 1944. I had to get permission to get married and was given 72 hours compassionate leave so it didn't count on my leave record! I travelled from Skegness and had to change trains at Peterborough. As we drew into Peterborough the London train was about to leave and they shouted to hold the train. I was nearly pushed out of the train by the other passengers who were anxious to help a man in uniform and I found I'd left my holdall with my best uniform in it behind. I reported the loss at Kings Cross and on my return journey I asked at Kings Cross only to be told that it had gone back to Skegness and was waiting at the hotel where I was billeted. I spent the Friday evening brushing up and pressing my workday uniform! I was married in Horsham on the Saturday morning and we went to London for a theatre show and a buffet meal. All of a sudden, I heard somebody shout, "Only one helping, Air Vice Marshall!" I look round to see who this was and realised they meant me!

While I was still in the Fleet Air Arm, I had the chance to do a part time course at Paisley Technical College but hadn't finished it when I was demobbed. It was frankly a shambles when I was demobbed. The Ministry of Labour just told me to get on a course and it was the responsibility of the Ministry of Education to provide grants. I was accepted at Brighton Technical College and the Ministry of Education said it wasn't them, it was the Ministry of Labour who provided grants! I couldn't afford to live in hope of eventually getting a grant so I got a job. I was able to do a correspondence course

later but missed out on the chance of a proper full-time course. I did hear later that somebody did manage to get a course but I couldn't risk it, being married.

See more of Ian's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/51/a2773451.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Donald Ratley	
Volunteer / Helper Name		
Date Story was recorded	07/06/2005	
Civilian ✓	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	It wasn't all bad if you were young
Full Names of People in Story	Donald Ratley, Harry and Winifred (Mother & Father)
Where the Story took place	Worthing

Being only 6 at the start of the war, the years 1939-45 were not the horror that touched the lives of people actually fighting or who had relatives in the front line. My father had lost an eye in the First World War and was for 58 years a railwayman at Goring-By-Sea station. Thus for children like me, this was a thrilling and exciting time. We would watch the dogfights 10,000ft over head, collect cartridge cases as they came down and seek shrapnel from the very few bombs which fell in this area. When the siren went early in the morning, we would listen anxiously hoping not to hear the all clear! If it didn't sound before nine am – no school. There were many Canadian soldiers in this area, its fair to say nobody had a bad word for them, they were wonderful. One platoon manned a BOFOR gun in Limbrick Lane and would let you sit on and turn the gun when there was no alert. Unfortunately, many of these fine men died in the Dieppe Raid.

As to surviving the war, well it was a fact that most ordinary people enjoyed a better lifestyle than pre 1939. Food was fairly rationed, full employment, money in the pocket. My dad was in the Home Guard and he and the rest of the crack outfit (!) were set to defend their headquarters, to the last man – The Bull Inn!

Of course as one got a bit older, the rosy picture of the very young began to change, and as 12 year olds we celebrated the end of hostilities like everyone else. But looking back, I still think that nostalgia tells me that life was pretty pleasant for some youngsters in the war. [Back to top](#)

See Donald's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/91/a4243691.shtml>

WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Brian Sargent	
Volunteer / Helper Name		
Date Story was recorded	07/07/2005	
Civilian <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	Bombing of Leigh Road, Worthing
Full Names of People in Story	
Where the Story took place	Worthing 21/10/1940

Coming home from school through Manor Sports Ground, saw a German plane flying southwards and saw his bomb doors open, about ½ dozen bombs come down. Bombs landed in Leigh Road, he remembers seeing a big explosion and mushroom cloud. He saw a storage box on top of cloud, which must have been in loft of house which was hit.

17/12/1944, Plaza Cinema (now Gala Bingo) in Rowlands Road. In audience and heard the roar of aeroplane. Heard a very loud explosion, cinema lights went on, manager came onto stage and said nothing to worry about. Plane had gone into the sea. This led to people fainting in the aisles. Film then put back on again. (This was an English RAF Lancaster bomber that went into the sea close to Worthing Pier).

See more of Brian's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/98/a4578898.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Michael J Stacey	
Volunteer / Helper Name		
Date Story was recorded	2005	
Civilian <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	
Full Names of People in Story	
Where the Story took place	West Sussex & Brighton

At 7pm in summer of 1940 (aged7) I sat reading my new book "Britain's Wonderful Airforce" delivered just around 7pm by our wonderful Postal Service. I was sitting in the front room window of my home, high at the back of Brighton over looking Preston Barracks, and the sea on the horizon.

I spotted a ME 109 diving over the dust distributor chimney off Lewes Road and it released two bombs that struck the Southern Railway Engineering Works at Brighton Station.

Around this time, my mother was told to evacuate my young brother (born July 1939) and myself. My father being a Brighton Borough Policeman had to stay. So my mother took us to live with my uncle and aunt at Petworth, West Sussex. We stayed in their beautiful cottage. He was a gardener to the Vicar of Petworth and he tended a quite large estate.

We had not been at Petworth too long before a bomb went down the chimney of Petworth Boys School. 22 boys and staff were killed. I had been attending school at the local parish hall. Unfortunately, I saw and heard the bomb falling from the Minkel 111.

We moved to some friends of the family, would you believe it was Aldingbourne, at the end of the Tangmere Runway. We went to Chichester several times on the Southdown Bus. A curtain was run along the windows as we passed Tangmere, so that spies couldn't see! Unfortunately like all Battle of Britain Aerodromes, it was badly bombed, so off we went again to live at my Uncles' pub in Midhurst. We settled here and lived reasonably well at the Omnibus and Horses on Petersfield Cross Roads, opposite the Old

Tabernacle, the H.Q. of the local Home Guard. I went to Midhurst Primary School and was a member of the Midhurst Church Choir.

Sometime, probably in 1943, Midhurst was hit by two bombs at about 4.30pm/5.00pm. A Dornier 17 was being chased and jettisoned its bombs. I watched one bomb come down just behind the Tabernacle, flattening a row of cottages. The Tabernacle probably saved my life, because I was outside watching.

Another bomb went through a Doctors' house, near the church and wrecked another row of cottages. I believe 2/3 people were killed. Other bombs dropped in the fields near the Cowdray Ruins.

I ran into the pub to see how my uncle and aunt were, found them crawling out from under a large table. They had been doing the banking and the floor was carpeted with white fivers and the window was blown in, frame and all.

Apart from a Bren Gun Carrier coming through the Saloon Bar wall and the passing of several Doodlebugs not a lot more happened apart from the continuous noise of convoys and lorries and tanks moving to the coast for D-Day landings.

Oh, I also remember watching the planes of the 1st 1000 bomber raid going out and the sudden change to the black and white stripes under the aircraft of D-Day.

I went back to Brighton in September 1944 for my first term at Varndean School for Boys and a bit of peace.

See Michael's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/83/a4314683.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Violet Steadman	
Volunteer / Helper Name		
Date Story was recorded	07/07/2005	
Civilian ✓	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	Dog Fight Over Worthing
Full Names of People in Story	
Where the Story took place	Worthing

1940, came to Worthing shopping and heard the air raid siren.
Had come in with neighbour, down on seafront and needed to find somewhere to shelter.
Headed to Pier Hotel (Opposite Pier). Saw dog fight taking place above. One of the German planes came down, very frightening to see planes diving.

Back at home in Sompting, I could see the planes going over.
Often used to hide using table as shelter.
When daughter born (1941) took 5 days to get permit to see her.

See more of Violet's story at
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/48/a4579248.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Mr E. A. Street	
Volunteer / Helper Name		
Date Story was recorded	2005	
Civilian	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	
Full Names of People in Story	
Where the Story took place	

My name is Mr E A Street and during the war years I lived opposite St Andrews School in Clifton Road, Worthing. The youngest of six sons, I am positive that three of my brothers went to the school and feel that probably the two eldest attended the school, I attended from 1939 until the spring of 1942. The Headmaster was a Mr Parritt, he and the teachers were strict on discipline, but fair and took an interest in the welfare of their pupils. I recall when the lads came to the school with their shoes and socks wet through Mr Parritt made sure they had dry socks on while theirs were being dried.

The other teachers were a Mr Palmer, Mr Gilpin, Mr Elmore and Mr Dolman. A Mr Cressy and a Mr Miles had left prior to me joining the school, I believe to join the forces. There was also a Miss Ward and another lady teacher who joined staff a little later.

We only attended class mornings for one week and the afternoons for the next. The evacuees from London used the classrooms in the free periods. The periods out of the classrooms were spent in the Hall, walking, gardening etc. I do not recall picking peas at the nursery however. We were told to bring a garden tool to school, which seems to have been rakes, hoes and builders shovels, we were then marched in groups to the West Tarring school site and were set to clearing the ground there and making the area into allotments. The resulting produce was sold to us at a reasonable price. We could go to the allotments at out of school hours under the watchful eye of a master.

I would bring two incidents to your attention. Firstly, the school were given a

set on encyclopaedias, which were kept in a locked cupboard in the hall. They were available for use on request. As I lived opposite I would often go over to the school to peruse these books. On one occasion I left school to go home for dinner, as I did so, I heard the sound of aircraft. I looked down Clifton Road i.e. northwards and saw two aircraft coming towards me at rooftop level. The first a German, I believe it was a Heinkel, followed by a Spitfire. As the Heinkel flew in front of me, the person in the right hand seat of the cockpit slowly waved to me. The Spitfire pilot did the same. I watched them fly south and out of sight. Looking north and south I could not see anyone in the road, possibly because it was dinner time. I ran indoors and told my mother then went back outside into the road, I still saw no-one whatsoever. Before I had run into my home I thought I heard gunfire in the far distance but no-one else seemed to have witnessed the incident.

The second incident was when I was in the Odeon Cinema, it was packed, as usual. There was a tremendous bang and people started rushing to the aisles to get out. A soldier in the rear seat stood up and shouted "For Chr*** sake sit down I cannot see the bloody film" and people did just that. There then began an orderly exit. Montague Street was strewn with broken glass. Two policemen were keeping people moving away from broken shop windows. It transpired a Lancaster Bomber with a full bomb load had crashed off of Worthing. That soldier's action, in my view, prevented a major panic thereby saving people from injury or worse.

I have never heard these two incidents mentioned, and have only in the last few years mentioned them. Just two incidents in a long war, I am sure many people in their seventies have similar memories.

See Mr Street's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/19/a4591019.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Bernard William Streeter	
Volunteer / Helper Name	Audrey Rann	
Date Story was recorded	25/05/2005	
Civilian ✓	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	Trauma of the Whitehall Cinema Bombing
Full Names of People in Story	Bernard William Streeter
Where the Story took place	East Grinstead/Turners Hill

Bernard's family moved from Felbridge to Turners Hill in 1939. Lived next door to a policeman. Bernard was 8 years old and remembers the first air raid when the policeman was running up and down the road blowing his whistle.

The early evening of the bombing of East Grinstead Cinema, he was crossing the green in Turners Hill when he heard the bombs dropping. Bernard did not realise until the early hours of the next morning when he saw his father, who was a fireman at the time, what the bombs had hit and what damage they had done.

Bernard's father George was at the scene all night. Next morning he did not want to talk about it to Bernard, he was overwhelmed about it. Bernard's friends' mother was at the cinema at the time but she got out with all her clothes in tatters, but not hurt. Bernard remembers two days after the bombing a man asking the policeman in Turners Hill what had happened to his wife, it was the first time he had seen a grown man cry (he didn't think men cried)

As the early days of the war went on the Canadian soldiers moved into the village of Turners Hill, they were very good to the youngest. They organised baseball games and shared their candy. Some soldiers were taken to the Dieppe raid in France where they lost a great number of men.

The ones that came back went into The Crown at Turners Hill, when they came out of The Crown they dived into 25,000 gallon water tank that was on the green (this was there in case of fire) and went wild with their emotions

because they lost so many mates.

The Canadian Soldiers were fearless, he remembers them riding around the village on their Harley Davison motorcycles.

The Canadians practiced their weapons and firing at Rowfant Brick Yard. Bernard and his friend visited after they had finished, one of his friends picked up an unexploded mortar bomb, he threw it down a well and it exploded.

See Bernard's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/81/a4133981.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Arthur and Joan Townsend (nee Jones)	
Volunteer / Helper Name		
Date Story was recorded	25/05/2005	
Civilian <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	Our memories of the Whitehall Cinema bombing
Full Names of People in Story	Arthur and Joan Townsend
Where the Story took place	East Grinstead

Joan was 17 years old and worked in Ashurst Wood Post Office. During the late afternoon Joan took a phone call in the Post Office to tell a lady in the village that her daughter was alive and taken to Queen Victoria Hospital.

Joan was a member of the British Red Cross, but not qualified enough to help. During the evening went to the town on the bus to East Grinstead Cinema 'The Radio Centre'. The film was interrupted by messages on the screen asking if certain children were there (obviously missing)

Mr Arthur Townsend was training in Wales getting ready for D-Day working in the Army. His previous work mates were working in the garage opposite the Whitehall Cinema, 'Kings Garage'. The reason that they were not injured was because there was a steel body from a lorry on its side that protected them when the glass roof came down from the garage.

See Arthur and Joan's story at
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/18/a4133918.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Brenda Tuppen (nee King)	
Volunteer / Helper Name		
Date Story was recorded	07/07/2005	
Civilian	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	Snippets from Southwick
Full Names of People in Story	Brenda Tuppen
Where the Story took place	Southwick, Old Shoreham Road

My first memory, I would have been about 3 years old. I used to play with the children from the cottages on the other side of the Old Shoreham Road, and we used to run backwards and forward to each other's houses all the time. On this particular day, I heard the tanks coming along the road (they often went up and down this road) and I remember thinking I must get home. My kitten called 'Moo Cow' must have been in the front garden and ran out into the road and was run over by a tank! It must have been quite traumatic for me to have remembered it when I was so young.

My father made his own version of a Morrison Shelter in our dining room. My husband remembers this too as our families knew each other at this time!

My father was in the army and he was sent to York. We went up with him for a short while as all the houses around us were bombed, but ours was left standing! My mother decided to bring us back! On the journey home on the train, the soldiers put me up in the baggage racks above the seats. It wasn't very comfortable as it was that string affair!

My mother ran a milk shop in a dairy in Hurstpierpoint (with my husbands auntie). I went to boarding school in Burgess Hill, Dicker House School. I've been back to Burgess Hill to try and find it, but no luck. We used to have to go in the basement when the air raids were on. On Hitler's birthday the teachers and pupils used to sing 'Unhappy Birthday' to him.

My mother went to work at the dairy in Hollingbury, Brighton. I remember being woken up by the noise from a lot of planes going over. The terrific

noise made me cry. I can only think that these were part of the D-Day invasion force.

When the war finished, I remember asking my parents if there would be anymore newspapers as I associated newspapers with the war and, if there was no war there wouldn't be any news!!

See Brenda's story at

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/34/a4432934.shtml>

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WW2 Peoples War

About the Contributor

Name	Winifred Wolfe	
Volunteer / Helper Name	Ann Wolfe	
Date Story was recorded	05/01/2005	
Civilian ✓	Army	Royal Air Force
Royal Navy	Civilian Force -	

About the Story

Story Title	The Birchwood Bombing
Full Names of People in Story	Winifred Wolfe
Where the Story took place	Southwater, West Sussex

Married September 1939
Dark and wet October 17th 9pm 1940

Air raid warning 8.35pm, after 10 minutes the first bomb fell in Trawlers Wood, then a huge explosion, 2nd bomb fell by the duck pond which shattered all the milk bottles in the dairy by the back door, the third bomb fell on Colonel Shelley's croquet lawn, smashed all the French windows and huge piles of clay soil in every room in the Colonels house (only one German plane which was dropping its bombs to empty its load before returning back home). The 4th bomb, which was 1000lbs, fell half a mile from Southwater Station on the side of the railway in Great House Farm meadows. My husband John and I sorted out the cows in the cows stalls, the cows were in a state with fright, the milk churns were turned over and many cows injured.

I was eight months pregnant with Elizabeth my 1st child eventually having a family of eight children. My waters broke with the after shock and Elizabeth was born 1 month early in the Southwater Nursing Home, Abbotsleigh. Mrs Hart the matron delivered Elizabeth at 5am weighing 4½ lbs.

The next four days railway trucks were taking the masses of clay away to clear the area, our house had to be under pinned, as there were cracks in the brickwork. [Back to top](#)

See Winfred's story at
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/96/a3501596.shtml>