

LEST WE FORGET
CRANFIELD'S SECOND WORLD
WAR OF 1939-1945



2ND Edition Compiled by:
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“Lest we forget”

Cranfield’s Second World War

1939-1945

The book remembers the nine men named on the Village War Memorial who gave their lives in the Second World War. Their stories are told in the context of the War itself.

It also tells the stories behind the eleven airmen and two soldiers buried in the Churchyard of the Parish Church of St. Peter and St. Paul and follows the history of R.A.F. Cranfield.

Local residents who lived through the war years also share their memories.



Marjorie Stevens (formerly Cotton)
Summer 2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book could not have been written without the painstaking research by Lee Hall who found the stories of all of the servicemen and much more.

It is a privilege to be able to share the late Bernice Maynard's extensive research about the Airfield and Cranfield Court. Bernice sadly died in June 2022.

Peter Hinson, editor of the Cranfield Express, has generously allowed me to reprint material and photographs from the website. He has also kindly shared his research on the airman, William Sellars, who was killed in the crash at College Farm in September 1943.

"Teddy" O'Donnell had moved away but lived before, and throughout the war, in Cranfield. She painted a word picture of her father, a village legend, the Headmaster, Frank Wheeler, as well as giving a snapshot of life in Cranfield before and during the war. Sadly she has died since the first edition of the book.

Thanks are due to all those residents of the village who have shared their memories. All lived through the war years, and some had relatives who served and returned.

Finally, thanks to my dear husband, Terry, who has made corrections to the original text and taken on the task of creating this e book.

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INTRODUCTION

This e book is a revision and updated version of the hard back publication “Lest We Forget” (2019), which commemorates the nine men named on Cranfield War Memorial who died in the Second World War. It also tells the stories behind the eleven airmen and two soldiers buried in the Churchyard of the Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul and follows the history of RAF Cranfield. Local residents who lived through the war years also share their memories.

Many of those who contributed to the first edition, published in April 2019, have since died: Mabel O'Donnell (Peggy Wheeler), Maurice Langston, Joyce Shrubbs, Brenda Howe, Norman Sinfield, Roy Phillips, Joyce Fishlock and Mavis Mackrill. We remember them with affection.

Some relatives have a family member, who survived the war, but was not included in the first edition. They wished them to be remembered. The precious memories of Hugh Evans are shared. (page 347)

Gunner Lawrence Mansi, not named on the War Memorial but a resident of Cranfield, who died a Japanese P.O.W., is remembered on page .

The second half of Rebecca Cook's poem, “I Remember” was inadvertently omitted from the hard back edition. This is included in full. (page 376)

The history of the Cardington sheds and the R101 airship has been added. (page 249)

Part One gives a short history of the War Memorial and lists the nine names of our servicemen who fell in the Second World War. It introduces us to the eleven airmen and two soldiers buried in the Churchyard of St. Peter and St. Paul, who died while serving in the R.A.F. or the army, at the Airfield or elsewhere, with most buried far from home.

In telling the story of the War, I soon realised that it had its origins in the unfinished business of the First World War. To complete our understanding this needed to be addressed and the interwar years explored. **(Part Two)**

I have tried to condense the story of the War itself into snapshots, focussing on those campaigns where our servicemen gave their lives. Their stories are told, in context. **(Part Three)**

Two of our residents, Pearl Cartmill and Gwen Edwards, experienced London during the Blitz. I have included their stories in Part Three.

Two served in the War abroad: Maurice Langston and Fred Clarke. I have put their memories alongside the relevant chapters of the War in Part Three.

R.A.F. Cranfield had a huge impact on village life. We follow its history. We learn about the airmen buried in Cranfield, other tragic air accidents and a local hero. **(Part Four)**

Joyce Shrubbs, who served with the Royal Observer Corps. shared her memories at the end of the R.A.F. section in Part Four.

There are many others, still living in the village, who remember living in the years before and during the War. Many had relatives who fought in the War and returned.

While not intended to be a comprehensive history of our village, their memories paint a picture of Cranfield which comprises the final part of the book. It has been a privilege to share their stories. **(Part Five)**

An **Appendix** summarises the WWII roll of honour.

In our present time, as the war in Ukraine unfolds before our eyes, we realise how fragile our world peace is. It is important to reflect and learn from history so that the mistakes of the past aren't repeated.

Let us hope and pray for a brighter and peaceful future. As we honour those from our village who died for our liberty, let us remember them and the families they left behind.

The original book and its companion volume "Cranfield Remembers the Fallen of the Great War 1914 – 1918" are still available from the author and from Cranfield Newsagents. All proceeds go to the Royal British Legion.

"Lest we forget"

PART ONE

“LEST WE FORGET”

REMEMBERING THE FALLEN



We will remember them
THE CRANFIELD WAR MEMORIAL

When the War Memorial was unveiled and dedicated at a service in June 1920, no one there would have imagined that, just over twenty years later, another nine names would need to be added to the forty-three already commemorated.



At a Parish Council meeting on 4th September 1946, it was expressed that “The Council wished to know the full names of the men who lost their lives in the recent war in order that these names could be inscribed on the War Memorial.” *The Bedfordshire Times and Independent* of 13th September 1946 published the following notice: Will parents or guardians of any Cranfield Service Man or Woman who lost their lives in the last War send their full names to Mr W.G. White, Clerk to the Parish Council, Cranfield, so they can be inserted on the village War Memorial.

The Bedfordshire Times and Independent of 14th November reported: Villagers of Cranfield gathered round the War Memorial to which a robed choir of the Parish Church marched in procession, followed by the banners of the British Legion. The names of those who fell in the last war were unveiled by Miss Bliss (President of the Women's Section) and Mr L.F. Wheeler (President of the Men's Branch) and read by the Rector. The choir led the way back to church where an impressive ceremony closed with the laying of wreaths. At a parade service in the evening, the lessons were read by Capt. W. John Street and Lieut. C. Taylor (Chairman) of the British Legion.

The Roll of Honour hangs in the North Aisle of the Parish Church.



*AT THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN
AND IN THE MORNING
WE WILL REMEMBER THEM
ROLL OF HONOUR
1914-1918*

<i>R. Anstey</i>	<i>W.J. Green</i>	<i>J. Manyweathers</i>
<i>T. Billington</i>	<i>C. Hardy</i>	<i>T. Minards</i>
<i>F. Billington</i>	<i>L. Hardy</i>	<i>C. Parker</i>
<i>W. G. Bitchener</i>	<i>A. Harpur</i>	<i>G. Salisbury</i>
<i>E. Brown</i>	<i>C. Harpur</i>	<i>G. Savage</i>
<i>C. Cook</i>	<i>C. Hale</i>	<i>J. Seamark</i>
<i>F. Cook</i>	<i>H. Hewlett</i>	<i>E. Sparkes</i>
<i>W. Cook</i>	<i>F. Johnson</i>	<i>W. White</i>
<i>C. Cooper</i>	<i>A. Kinns</i>	<i>E. White</i>
<i>P. Evans</i>	<i>Thos. Lancaster</i>	<i>G. Wilson</i>
<i>J.H. Evans</i>	<i>T. Lancaster</i>	<i>A. J. Wilson</i>
<i>C. Ford</i>	<i>W. Lancaster</i>	<i>C. Young</i>
<i>F. Foster</i>	<i>V. Lineham</i>	<i>O. Young</i>
<i>J. Foster</i>	<i>J. Lovesey</i>	<i>W. Young</i>
	<i>H. Lovesey</i>	

1939-1945

<i>J.H. Anstee</i>	<i>P.S. Eaton</i>
<i>A.C. Barcock</i>	<i>J. Jackson</i>
<i>L. Boon</i>	<i>L. Shuker</i>
<i>J.P.J. Cave</i>	<i>E. Williams</i>
<i>E.E. Clark</i>	

So that we can follow “the nine” through the course of the Second World War, I have put them into chronological order of dates of death. Lawrence Mansi has been added.

THE FALLEN OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

1940

7th Oct **Arthur Charles Barcock** Royal Army Ordnance Corps. Killed in the Blitz in London, aged 24. Buried in Olney Cemetery.

1941

14th Jan **Emyr Williams** Royal Navy. Killed when S.S. Eumaeus was torpedoed off the coast of S. Africa, aged 23. Commemorated on Chatham Naval Memorial.

1943

14th April **Leslie Shuker** Queen’s Own Royal Kent Regiment. Killed in Tunisia aged 23. Buried in Medjez-el-Bab War Cemetery, Tunisia.

1944

24th Jan **John Harry Anstee** 2nd Battalion Suffolk Regiment. Killed in Burma aged 25. Buried in the Taukkyan War Cemetery, Burma.

11th April **John Jackson** 9th Battalion King’s Own Yorkshire Light Infantry. Killed at Anzio Beach Head, Italy, aged 25. Buried in the Beach Head War Cemetery, Anzio.

17th April **Leslie Walter Boon** 1st Battalion Royal East Kent Regiment. Killed at Anzio Beach Head, Italy, aged 29. Buried in the Beach Head War Cemetery, Anzio.

26th Aug **Edward Ernest Clark** 1st Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment. Killed in Italy, age 21. Buried in the Florence War Cemetery.

25th Oct **Peter Stanley Eaton** Royal Artillery. Killed in Ghent, Belgium, aged 19. Buried in the Ghent City Cemetery.

1945

1st Jan **Lawrence Mansi** Royal Artillery. Died in the Far East, aged 33. Commemorated on Singapore War Memorial.

10th May **Thomas Phillip John Cave** Royal Tank Regiment. Killed in Faenza, Italy, aged 24. Buried in Faenza War Cemetery.



Newly etched names (2021)

CHURCH OF ST. PETER & ST. PAUL



There are four soldiers from WWI buried in the Churchyard. Seven family graves commemorate nine sons who are buried or commemorated elsewhere. The stories behind the names are told in “Cranfield Remembers”.

All of these graves are in the old cemetery. The boundary is marked by two stone pillars.



The cemetery was extended to the south after the War to create the “new” cemetery.

None of the men on the War Memorial who died in WWII are buried in the Churchyard of the Parish Church of St. Peter and St. Paul.

Following the establishment of the R.A.F. station in 1937, Service burials took place at Cranfield until late 1940 when the R.A.F. established a new regional plot at Kempston Rural Cemetery. Eleven airmen are buried in Cranfield Churchyard along with two soldiers. One soldier served at the Airfield; the other was a Cranfield resident.



Cranfield Churchyard – WWII graves

WWII Airmen and Soldiers buried in Cranfield Churchyard in chronological order of date of death.

1939

22nd March **David Shine** Pilot Officer R.A.F. Accidental death when his Blenheim bomber crashed in a hailstorm near Kettering. Aged 19.

11th Aug **William Kinane** Royal Pilot Office Australian Air Force, attached to R.A.F. 218th Squadron. Accidental death when his Fairey Battle crashed into a pylon near Carlton. Aged 21.

28th Nov **Thomas R. Williams** Pilot Officer (Canada). Accidental death when Fairey Battle crashed at Bassingbourn, Cambridge. Aged 21.

1940

10th Jun **Robert S.C. Lawson** Sergeant. Pilot under training R.A.F. Accidental death when his Oxford was in a mid-air collision near Bozeat, Northants. Aged 20.

10th Jun **John M. Lefaux** Sergeant. Pilot under training. R.A.F. Accidental death when his Harvard was in the same mid-air collision near Bozeat. Aged 26.

9th Aug **Stanley T. Newcombe** Sergeant. R.A.F. Volunteer Reserve. Accidental death when Master crashed at night near Cranfield. Aged 23.

- 7th Oct **Jack H. Kissner** Leading Aircraftman. Pilot under training R.A.F. Accidental death when his Oxford crashed near Turvey. Aged 23.
- 23rd Oct **Thomas M.B. Newton** Flight Lieutenant. R.A.F. Volunteer Reserve. Took his own life. Aged 44.
- 27th Oct **Robert R. Tose** Private. Beds and Herts Regiment. Accidental death in the guardroom of Cranfield Airfield. Aged 26.
- 11th Nov **Victor W. Harris** Leading Aircraftman. Pilot under training R.A.F. Accidental death when his Oxford crashed near Ryhall, Rutland. Aged 21.
- 16th Dec **Frank G. Harrington** Leading Aircraftman. Pilot under training R.A.F. Accidental death when his Oxford crashed at night over Marston Thrift. Aged 19.
- 1942**
- 31st Dec **George J. Salt** Private. Beds and Herts Regiment. Died of head injuries in London. Aged 36.
- 1947**
- 2nd June **James Plummer.** Sergeant. R.A.F. Accidental death by drowning while swimming in the River Ouse at Bromham. Aged 27.

PART TWO

THE INTER-WAR YEARS 1918 – 1939



Nuremberg Rally 1934

We explore the interwar years. We consider the growing threat from Nazi Germany and how this led to the Second World War.

THE INTER-WAR YEARS

The “War to end all wars” had shaken the world. Total casualties were estimated at 37 million. As many as 13 million civilians died as result of the fighting. Those who survived were often physically and mentally scarred.

To understand how we were plunged into yet another catastrophic global conflict, just over two decades later, we need to go back to the end of the First World War.

The Armistice, signed on 11th November 1918 by the Germans, the British and the French, was an agreement that ended the fighting.

It took six months of Allied negotiations, at the Paris Peace Conference, to bring about the final document, which was signed, at the Palace of Versailles, between the Allies and Germany on 28th June 1919.

Rather than a conciliatory peace treaty, the **Treaty of Versailles**, devised mainly by Britain (Prime Minister David Lloyd George), France and the U.S.A., “The Big Three”, was a recipe for disaster, ensuring the political, financial, and military humiliation of Germany.

German speaking people, who found themselves in other countries, resented separation from the Fatherland.

This situation was described as a time-bomb waiting to explode.

The changing economic landscape at home

When our servicemen who had survived the Great War returned home, they had hoped to find the “fit land for heroes” promised by Lloyd George in 1918. What welcomed them was **mass unemployment** as the post war economic slump of the 1920's deepened into the **Great Depression** of the early 1930's.

Most of the village men had worked on the land but there was a decline in agricultural employment after the First World War.

William Evans, a Cranfield resident, reflected in the ***Bedfordshire Times*** in 1935: “When he was asked about the days that are gone, Mr Evans said that he never wished to see them again. He can remember when forty or fifty men would stand on the village green idle for lack of work. “And there was no dole in those days”, he remarked. People are a lot better off nowadays. Mrs Evans thought that the old age pension was one of the greatest blessings, and Mr Evans was optimistic enough to declare that it would soon be raised to £1 a week.” (See also page 265)

Cranfield's unemployment problem was relieved by the **brickyards** which were growing and provided work until brick making ceased in 2008. A short history is given in Part Five. (Page 245)

Levelling the hill in preparation for the **Airfield** also brought welcome work for local farmers. (Page 263)

The changing political landscape in Europe

In the rest of Europe there was also a shortage of food and little employment. There was growing resentment and unrest.

The success of the October **Russian Revolution** in 1917, in dispensing with the old order, inspired **Communist** revolutionary movements in most of the countries of Western Europe. It was the backlash response to these which gave birth to the extreme right-wing Fascist and Nationalist movements.

Fascism differs from **Communism** by protecting the class system. The regimes promised the public the strength that would rescue their nations from chaotic political and economic conditions.

The first Fascist movement was born in Italy In 1919.

Benito Mussolini was the first to jump on the Fascist bandwagon.

He was appointed Prime Minister at the head of the Fascist Party in 1922.

Six years later, in 1928, the **Fascist General Council** with Mussolini at its head held absolute power in Italy. He styled himself as **Il Duce** and abandoned any pretence of democracy.

During the Great Depression he embarked on a massive programme of modernising the country's infrastructure

which gave millions of people jobs and made him popular with the masses.

He clamped down on the Mafia to minimise corruption. He built up his military force, updating the air force and launching several new ships.

He had grandiose, nationalistic designs. His vision was of a “*spazio vitale*”. He believed that the size of a nation’s territory determined its potential for economic growth. His ideal was to create a state dominating the Mediterranean from North Africa throughout the Balkans and Southern Europe.

He had extreme racist views. He felt it right to empire build in Africa because he saw all black people as inferior to whites.

The rise of Fascism in Britain

Britain didn’t escape the changing ideologies which were sweeping Europe.

Sir Oswald Moseley served in the House of Commons from 1918 until 1931, although he kept changing parties. After a visit to Italy in **1932** he founded the **British Union of Fascists**. He distributed anti-Semitic propaganda and conducted hostile demonstrations in the Jewish sectors of eastern London. His followers, the **Blackshirts**, wore Nazi style uniforms.

On 4th October 1936 a march of his supporters in Cable Street, Whitechapel, in the East End of London, was met by a huge demonstration by those opposing him. The Metropolitan Police, who had been sent to protect the marchers, brutally beat demonstrators in what became known as the **Battle of Cable Street**.

The march became symbolic of community rejection of racism and fascism. British common sense won the day. We weren't going to have any of this fascist business here.

If only many of the countries of Europe had not been so easily led.

Moseley was imprisoned in May 1940 until 1943. His party was banned.

The threat from Nazi Germany

In **Germany** the new Weimar Republic was facing challenges from both right- and left-wing extremists.

The **Nationalist Socialist Party** was founded in 1919 as the German Workers' Party (D.A.P.). To increase its appeal the D.A.P. changed its name to Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (N.S.D.A.P.) shortened to **Nazi**. Hitler designed the party's banner of a **swastika** in a white circle on a red background.

In 1921 **Hitler** became **Party Chairman**.

Between 1922 and 1923 there was an **economic crisis in Germany**. The government simply printed more money. One dollar was equivalent to four billion marks in 1923.

In November 1923 Hitler was arrested for leading an unsuccessful insurrection in Munich. He only served eight months of a five-year prison sentence, during which time he wrote his autobiography, **“Mein Kampf”** – My Struggle. The book laid out Hitler’s plans for transforming Germans into one race of “Aryans” while promoting anti-Semitism, anticommunism, and extreme German Nationalism. It was a best seller, eventually selling over a million copies.

Hitler was so impressed by the strength and purposefulness of the Italian system that he modelled his party on the Fascist ideal. Like Mussolini, his vision was to expand his country, enabling it to become self-sufficient. Mussolini’s ***Spazio Vitale*** became Hitler’s ***Lebensraum*** – Living Space. To this end he developed an aggressive foreign policy which is considered to be the primary cause of the outbreak of WWII in Europe.

Hitler’s cause was helped by the **stock market crash** in the United States in 1929. From **1929 – 1933**, as **the Great Depression** swept across Europe, unemployment in Germany reached six million.

Hitler promised to overturn the Treaty of Versailles, strengthen the economy and provide jobs.

President Paul Von Hindenburg (of the WWI Hindenburg Line) was persuaded to appoint Hitler as **Chancellor** (equivalent to our Prime Minister) **in January 1933**.

In July 1933 the Nazi Party was declared the only legal political party in Germany.

When Hindenburg died on 2nd August 1934, Hitler proclaimed himself Führer – absolute leader of all Germany. He could not legally be removed from office.

As Head of State, he became supreme commander of the armed forces. Soldiers had to swear an oath of allegiance to him, personally.

He gave the appearance of democracy by holding elections but the Nazi's threatened anyone who didn't vote or dared to vote against them.

His first years in power resulted in rapid economic growth. Unemployment fell from six million in 1932 to one million in 1936. His government-built dams, autobahns, and railways. He had popular support as the saviour of Germany.

Anti-Semitism was spreading. Jewish businesses were vandalised, and Jews dismissed from positions of power.

In 1933 Germany withdrew from the League of Nations and the World Disarmament Conference.

Party rallies were held each September from 1923 until 1938. From 1933 these huge propaganda events were held in **Nuremberg**. (See photo on page 14)

Hitler's **contravention of the Treaty of Versailles** began with a **large-scale programme of rearmament**.

In 1935 he introduced **conscription** for young men of military age and announced an expansion of the German Army to 600,000 – six times the number permitted by the Treaty.

The German Air Force – the Luftwaffe – was unveiled.

The German Navy was increasing in size. In 1936 the Battle Cruiser “Scharn Horst” was launched.

Britain, France, Italy, and the League of Nations condemned the violations but did nothing.

In 1935 the French occupied Saarland voted to return to German rule.

In March 1936 Hitler occupied the Rhineland, despite it being declared a demilitarised zone by the Treaty of Versailles. Again, Britain and France did nothing.

In the **Spanish Civil War** in **July 1936**, General Franco led a Fascist uprising against the Republican government, supported by Italy and Germany. Spain approached Britain and France, but neither would commit.

In Oct 1936 Mussolini signed the **Berlin-Rome Axis** with Hitler. This set out a common policy for Germany and Italy in the field of foreign affairs.

In 1937 Italy joined the **Anti-Comintern Pact** against communism, previously signed by Germany and Japan.



Mussolini and Hitler in Oct 1936

The final build up to War

In 1938 Hitler annexed Austria to the Third Reich – the Anschluss. He was welcomed by the majority of people. Jews feared for their lives and escaped while they could.

In May 1939 Germany and Italy signed the Pact of Steel committing each country to support the other in the event of war.

The Munich Agreement

On 30th September 1938 our Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, flew to Munich where, with the leaders of France and Italy, he agreed to Hitler's request to give the German speaking part of Czechoslovakia – **the Sudetenland** – to Germany, along with valuable mineral resources. In return Hitler agreed not to attack Czechoslovakia.



Territory lost by Germany in 1919



Demilitarised in 1919



Territory gained in 1938

Our government was following a policy of **appeasement**, in order to keep the peace and avoid another war in Europe

at all costs. This was despite repeated warnings of the danger of another imminent war from Winston Churchill. Chamberlain returned from Munich believing he had negotiated a deal which would ensure **“Peace for our Time”**.

Six months later, in March 1939, **Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia**. Chamberlain spelt out to Parliament the British condemnation of Hitler’s aggression. **Any attack on Poland would not be tolerated. On 30th March 1939, Chamberlain drafted the British Guarantee of Poland’s independence.**

On 23rd August Hitler signed a **Non-Aggression Pact with Stalin** to ensure that Russia would not intervene if Germany attacked Poland. It included a secret agreement to partition Poland between the two countries.

On 25th August Britain and Poland signed the Anglo-Polish Alliance. On 1st September German tanks rolled into Poland. On 3rd September the British Ambassador in Berlin, Sir Neville Henderson, delivered an ultimatum that, unless Germany called off the attack by 11am, a state of war would exist between Britain and Germany. Hitler did not reply. **At 11.15am on 3rd September Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain announced to a hushed nation and an appalled world that Britain was at War with Germany.**

PART THREE

THE SECOND WORLD WAR



We shall follow a brief history of the War and weave into it the stories of those from Cranfield who gave their lives for their country. We also share the memories of two residents of Cranfield who served their country and two who experienced the War during the Blitz.

“The only thing to fear is fear itself”
Franklin D Roosevelt 1882-1945

1939 – AN OVERVIEW

1st Sept – Germany invaded Poland.

3rd Sept – Great Britain and France declared war on Germany.

The **British Expeditionary Force**, a professional army of 100,000, began to leave for France.

Winston Churchill was appointed First Lord of The Admiralty on 3rd September 1939. The First Sea Lord signalled to all ships in the Royal Navy, “Winston is back!”

27th Sept – The surrender of Poland.

13th Dec – The Battle of the River Plate

WAR IS DECLARED – 3rd September 1939

Many in our village remember huddling round the radio to hear the announcement by Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, declaring that Britain was at war with Germany. Brenda Howe of Hartwell Farm, who was nine when war was declared, told me, “It didn’t really sink in. We were too young to understand what it all meant and why everyone was so upset.” We can share some more of Brenda’s memories of living through the War on page 323. Brenda died in July 2019 at the age of 86.

Mabel O’Donnell, formerly Wheeler, the headmaster’s daughter, was fifteen when war was declared. She recalls: Listening to the wireless we heard Mr Chamberlain announce, “We are now at war with Germany.” I looked at

my father and tears were rolling down his face. I was astonished. I had never seen him cry before. Men didn't cry. He said: "Those poor boys, they will have to go through it all over again."



Mabel, who prefers to be known as “Teddy”, was ninety-three (in 2018) and lived in Norfolk. She was happy to share her memories of living in the School House and of her father, who will be remembered by many in the village. (Part Five) Since the publication of the hard back edition her son, Conal, passed on the news that his mum had died after a full and happy life

Conscription

Conscription had been reintroduced in May 1939 for men between the ages of 20 and 22. On 3rd September the National Service (Armed Forces Act) extended conscription for all men from 18 – 41 years old. Vital industries or occupations were **“reserved”**. Provision was made for **conscientious objectors** who were required to justify their position to a tribunal. They could be exempt, conditional upon performing specific civilian work, such as farming, or had to serve in specially created Non-Combatant rolls such as the Royal Army Medical Corps.

The Surrender of Poland

The invasion of Poland had triggered the declaration of war. The Allies were unprepared and could do nothing to save Poland. The German technique of Blitzkrieg, lightening war, was used to devastating effect. On 1st September Poland was invaded on three fronts: from East Germany, East Prussia and Slovakia.

The Polish Air Force, with only 400 battle-worthy aircraft fought heroically. By 15th September the capital, Warsaw, was surrounded, trapping tens of thousands of Polish Troops. Despite being heavily bombed, Warsaw refused to surrender until 27th September 1939.

The Russian Red Army moved into Poland from the east with virtually no resistance. On 4th October, Nikita Khrushchev, Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party, announced the communisation of Eastern Poland.

Most alarmingly, many thousands of Poles, who were considered genetically and intellectually inferior were rounded up by the S.S. and murdered. We were getting a fore-taste of the utter brutality of Hitler and the Nazis.

Hitler had his victory parade in Warsaw on 5th October. His losses had been considerable. Over 10,000 Germans had died fighting and over 30,000 wounded. The Poles had lost 50,000 with countless prisoners of war to both Germany and the U.S.S.R.

Hitler, in his mountain retreat in Berchtesgaden, had planned his first attack in the west, on Holland, Belgium and

Luxemburg, for October 1939. On the advice of his generals, he postponed the assault until the spring of 1940.

The first six months of the war was dubbed **“The Phoney War”** by the Americans, as nothing was happening in Europe – on land.

This was far from the case at sea where the Allies had considerable naval superiority over Germany. The German’s deadliest naval weapons were their U-boats.

On the first day of the war the liner *Athenia* was misidentified and sunk by a German U-boat. There were twenty-six Americans on board. On 14th September a German submarine, U-39, attacked and sank the British aircraft carrier, *HMS Ark Royal*. Three days later U-27 sank another carrier, *HMS Courageous*. On 14th October the Kriegsmarine (Germany Navy) scored a spectacular success when U-47 penetrated the Royal Navy’s “impregnable” anchorage at Scapa Flow, Orkney. This was the site of the scuttling of the remains of the entire German Fleet after the First World War.

The Battle of the River Plate – Dec 1939

Towards the end of August 1939, the *Admiral Graf Spee*, one of Germany's "pocket battleships", had set sail for the South Atlantic. Its mission was to destroy Allied shipping and supplies. The British force, under Commodore Harwood, consisted of the cruisers *Exeter*, *Ajax* and *Achilles* and the heavy cruiser, *Cumberland*. Anticipating that the *Graf Spee* would try to disrupt supplies from Argentina, Harwood positioned the three smaller vessels off the River Plate and held the larger one back in the Falklands. In the sea battle, on the morning of 13th December, the heavy guns of the *Graf Spee* put *Exeter* out of action. The *Graf Spee* was also damaged, and her fuel system was crippled. The two other cruisers shadowed her into the port of Montevideo, the capital of neutral Uruguay, where she needed urgent repairs. Fake radio messages gave the impression that there was a huge British Force in pursuit. The Captain believed he was trapped. He left harbour on 17th December and, after evacuating the crew, scuttled the ship and set her on fire. He committed suicide soon afterwards.



1940 – AN OVERVIEW

9th April – Invasion and surrender of Denmark and Norway

10th May – Invasion and surrender of Luxembourg and The Netherlands

3rd June – Evacuation from Dunkirk completed

11th June – Italy declared war on Great Britain

22nd June – France surrendered

8th August – The Battle of Britain

9th-11th Dec – Italian invasion of Egypt defeated at the battle of Sidi Barrani

Winston Churchill becomes Prime Minister on 10th May 1940

Winston Churchill (1874-1965) was elected to the House of Commons in 1900. He had gained a reputation as a soldier and journalist in various campaigns including the Boer War.

During the First World War, as First Lord of the Admiralty, he led the disastrous campaign at Gallipoli and was forced to resign this post. He remained as a back bencher.

In the years leading up to the Second World War his warnings of the threat from Nazi Germany were unheeded. When war was declared he was brought back onto the War

Cabinet as First Lord of the Admiralty. The Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, had followed a policy of appeasement, wanting to avoid a war at all costs. Ill health and pressure from opponents forced his resignation. Churchill became head of a Coalition Government of Conservatives and Labour.

His leadership, especially in 1940, but also throughout the War, shaped our determination not to give in to the enemy. (See two of his famous speeches on pages 34 and 50)

He was knighted in 1953.



Evacuation from Dunkirk

The German Army was sweeping through France and our troops were at real risk of being trapped at the coast.

Under the command of **Vice-Admiral Ramsay** preparations for operation **DYNAMO** began on **26th May**. The aim was to evacuate 45,000 British from the beachhead using small boats, pleasure steamers, fishing boats and yachts, to ferry soldiers across the shallows to the larger vessels. Despite unrelenting raids by the Luftwaffe, by **3rd June** more than 338,226 men had been rescued, although they had to abandon their equipment. Thirty Allied ships and a quarter of the small boats were sunk by the Luftwaffe.

Only Britain stood in the way of total German domination of Western Europe. Hitler offered Britain a generous peace settlement that would allow us to keep the Empire as long as he had a free rein in continental Europe.

On **4th June 1940** Churchill delivered one of his famous speeches to the nation: **“We shall go on to the end. We shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender.”**

Hitler responded by ordering the destruction of our country. He drew up **OPERATION SEA LION** – the invasion of southern England by twenty divisions using converted barges as landing craft.

The Home Guard

As Hitler was smashing resistance in Europe the prospect of a German invasion of the British Isles became alarmingly real. Calls for some form of home defence force soon began to be heard from the press and from private individuals.

On the evening of 14 May 1940, the Secretary of State for War, Anthony Eden, gave a radio broadcast announcing the formation of the Local Defence Volunteers (L.D.V.) and called for volunteers to join the force.

He called on men between the ages of 17 and 65 in Britain, who were not in military service but wished to defend their country against an invasion, to enrol in the L.D.V. at their local police station. The announcement was met with a great deal of enthusiasm on the part of the population, with 250,000 volunteers attempting to sign up in the first seven days; by July this number increased to 1.5 million.

Winston Churchill wrote to Eden stating that, in his opinion, one of the main causes of disciplinary and morale problems stemmed from the uninspiring title of the L.D.V. and suggesting that it be renamed as **“The Home Guard”**.

On 22 July the L.D.V. was officially renamed the Home Guard.

Members of this 'Dad's Army' were usually men above or below the age of conscription and those unfit or ineligible for front line military service. Many of the men who joined were those who could not join the regular army because their daytime jobs were necessary to keep the country running. They included farm workers, bakers, teachers, grocers, bank staff and railway workers.

On 22nd May 1940 a special meeting was held of the **Cranfield Parish Council** for the purpose of endeavouring (in conjunction with the British Legion) to form a Defence Corps for the Village. In addition to most of the members of the Parish Council about 70 –100 parishioners were present.

The minutes are as follows: “**Mr Wheeler**, Chairman of the British Legion, addressed the meeting. He instanced the urgency of the matter and stated that he had been in touch with the Organiser for the District who asked him to act in that capacity for the Parish of Cranfield. He informed the meeting that 4 rifles, 4 uniforms and 3 badges or armlets had been received, but these were not to be used until the Commander at the Aerodrome had been informed.

Questions were asked by many present, and considerable discussion took place, regarding the number required, the duties expected, and whether each man would be fully armed or not, after which names were given to Mr Wheeler of men willing to serve, up to about fifty volunteered. Captain Chapman from the Aerodrome then addressed the meeting and was pleased that the response had been so good. He spoke of the duties of the men, particularly patrol

work in connection with the possible landing of parachutists. To meet this situation a certain amount of training was absolutely necessary, and he hoped that those who had given their names would work together and make themselves as proficient as possible for the duties required of them.”

We are fortunate to have the memories of Mr Wheeler’s younger daughter, Mabel, who preferred to be known as “Teddy”. The following information is from a piece written by her, and transcribed by her son, Conal, for the **“BBC People’s War”** Archive in 2005. (See also page 302) “Teddy” was fifteen when war was declared. “My father was appointed Home Guard commander and he soon got all the village men organised. He was the local schoolmaster, and the school and playground became the **Home Guard headquarters.**”



The old School and School House

“We lived in the schoolhouse. It was quite large, and explosives and weapons were stored in the front hall under the stairs. We had Molotov Cocktails, hand grenades, guns, pikes, sandbags everything you could think of.

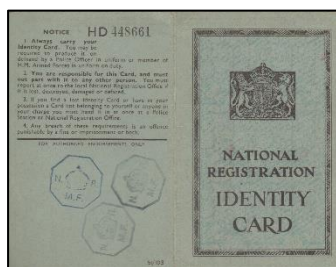
Drills started. Men came in every night and marched in the school playground. A black telephone was installed in our house. Cranfield 247! It was manned night and day. Rotas were arranged. Blackout curtains were put up.

My father had an official car and a Home Guard driver, C.Q.S.M. Jimmy Bettle. Quite often they would motor out to country pubs in the course of their Home Guard duties. But they took their jobs seriously and would have fought if it came to it. In my father's company there was an M.M., a D.C.M., an O.B.E and virtually all had seen active service in WWI including an ex-submariner and an R.F.C. pilot. They were a lot more professional than the TV show “Dad's Army” might lead you to believe.”

The issue of weapons to L.D.V. units was particularly problematic for the War Office, as it was recognised that the re-arming and re-equipping of the regular forces would have to take precedence over the L.D.V. Six weeks after Eden's broadcast, there was only one rifle to every six men in the Home Guard. When rifles did arrive, they were American P17's and P14's from World War One. Many L.D.V. units broke into museums and appropriated whatever weapons could be found or equipped themselves with private weapons such as shotguns.

The Home Guard evolved, with military style training, into a well-equipped and well-trained army of 1.7 million men. Men of the Home Guard were not only readied for invasion, but also performed other roles including bomb disposal and manning anti-aircraft and coastal artillery.

The Home Guard acted as sentries during the day and night and became extra ‘ears and eyes’ for the full-time military. They checked that people were carrying their Identity Cards. Those caught without one could be arrested and handed over to the police. Identity cards were introduced during the War under the National Registration Act 1939. Everyone, including children, had to carry an identity (ID) card at all times to show who they were and where they lived. People had to carry identity cards until 1952.



The Home Guard defended key targets like factories, explosive stores, beaches, and sea fronts. At night they patrolled fields in which the enemy gliders or Para troops might land. No one expected them to beat well-trained German soldiers. Their job was to slow them down until the army arrived.



Mavis Mackrill remembers her dad, **William Cooper**, in the Home Guard, going to guard the Ampthill railway tunnel. The photograph shows Mavis with her dad and her brother, John. For more of Mavis' memories see page 334.

The expected invasion by Germany never came. Instead, the main role of the Home Guard was capturing German airmen whose planes had been shot down over Britain. They also guarded munitions factories and aerodromes.

The Home Guard was also responsible for taking down road signs and any local clues that might help the enemy should they invade.

Following the successful landings in France and the drive towards Germany by the Allies, the Home Guard were formally stood down on 3 December 1944 and finally disbanded on 31 December 1945.



Officers of 14th Platoon, "E" Company, 3rd Beds. Battalion Home Guard in 1944 outside the Ritz Cinema, Cranfield

This photograph and that of the whole platoon on the next page, was given by Olive Wilson. She was also able to give the names of many of those on the second photograph.

On the back row, the two standing on the extreme right are Tom Phillips, Barrie Phillips' father, and William Cooper, Mavis Mackrill's father.

On the front row, seated on chairs, the group in the centre, from left to right are Miss Rosemary Perrin, later Rosemary Billington, late of Perry Hill Farm. Walter Wilson, Olive's father is sitting next to her. On his left is Lieutenant Ernest Willis. The lady on his left is Mrs. Audrey Cox, daughter of Walter Anstee who owned the bus company. She was married to Tom Cox, Mavis Mackrill's uncle, who was a founder member of the Cranfield Chrysanthemum and Dahlia Society. It had been running for 70 years when it finally folded in 2017. David Parker kept it going in its final years. Tom and Audrey emigrated to Australia in 1978 and both died there. Their ashes were returned to Cranfield for internment in the Churchyard. Sitting next to Mrs. Cox is Miss Peggy Wheeler, the Headmaster's eldest daughter. On the extreme right of this row is Jimmy Bettle, Mr. Wheeler's driver. Over the course of the war 1,206 men of the Home Guard were killed on duty or died of wounds.



14th PLATOON, "E" COMPANY, 3rd BEDFS. BATTN. HOME GUARD.
1944.

J. C. BROWN, GEORGETOWN

HOME GUARD - 1944

BACK ROW

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
J Riddy ?	B Ellis	E Thomas	E Billington	T Cox	V Marshall	C Salisbury	R Riddy	

10 11 12 13 14

G King B Payne ? T Phillips W Cooper

MIDDLE ROW

15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
R Nicholls ?	Salisbury ?	Hewitt	Shayler	W Woolgar	W Hunt ?	George	W Joyce ?				

27 28 29

Evans Wilson F Richardson

FRONT ROW

30	31	32	33	34	35	36	37
B Chandler	E Wilson	Parrot	White	J Cooper	Miss R Perrin	W Wilson	Ern Willis

38 39 40 41 42 43 44

Mrs A Cox Miss P Wheeler B Richardson ? W Fountain C Lineham J Bettie

SITTING

1 2 3

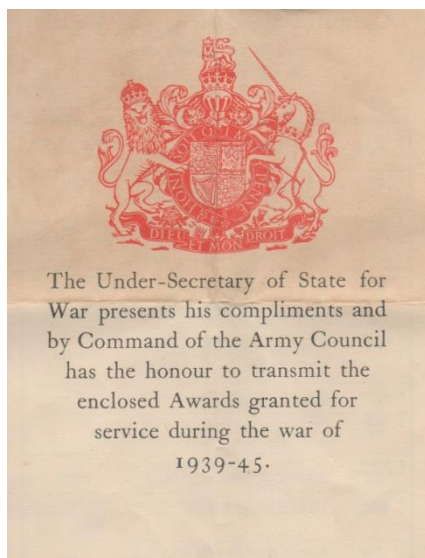
? Wells ?

4 5 6

? ? Franks

Male members were awarded the Defence Medal with the accompanying certificate.

This medal, and certificate, was awarded to Mr. Frederick Francis Phillips, Roy Phillips' father, a member of the Stewartby Works Home Guard.



BATTLE OF BRITAIN

Hitler was planning his invasion of southern England, Operation **SEA LION**, crossing the Channel by sea.

On 10th July 1940 the Luftwaffe began its campaign against shipping in the Channel, aiming to destroy our supply lines. The British countered with their two specialist fighters, the highly manoeuvrable and fast **Spitfire**, and the more rigid and robust **Hurricane**. The Spitfires targeted the Messerschmitt fighter escorts while the Hurricanes attacked the Dornier, Junker, and Heinkel bombers.



Supermarine MK1 Spitfire



Hawker Hurricane

By mid-July the R.A.F. had only 700 aircraft left and was outnumbered 3:1. Fighter Command seemed doomed to fail.

The one advantage that we had over the Luftwaffe was **RADAR**. This could only look outwards over the Channel. Once the radar had been overflowed, we had to rely on observer at **Observer Posts** linked to **Sector Stations**. Vital information could be relayed to Fighter Command where the threat could be assessed, and fighters dispatched. (See page 226 for Joyce Shrubbs' memories of **the Royal Observer Corps**)

Goering stepped up the campaign against shipping in the Channel to try to divert our aircraft.

On 1st August Hitler changed his plan. Goering turned his attention to R.A.F. bases, factories, and ground installations, especially targeting airfields in the southeast.

Our pilots flew seven sorties in one day and accounted for ninety-two German aircraft. They had to be constantly on the alert and were at risk of "blacking out" in a steep dive during a dog fight. The danger of fire was always present. They would have only a few seconds to bail out. The R.A.F. was almost at breaking point. Morale was also plummeting among Luftwaffe pilots as their losses continued to mount.

Later in August a squadron of German bombers lost their bearings and bombed London. The British retaliated by bombing Berlin. This enraged Hitler who shifted the focus of attack to London. This allowed the R.A.F. to regroup and

re-arm. Replacement pilots had six months of training reduced to two weeks. There was a high casualty rate among these totally unprepared novices.

On 15th September yet another enormous bombing raid was launched against London. More than 250 bombers with fighter escorts were on their way. The raids were on such a scale that the plotter tables couldn't cope.



Heinkel Bombers during the Battle of Britain

The R.A.F. managed to shoot down enough aircraft to convince Hitler that he could not secure the skies above Britain and the Channel. So decisive was this day, **15th September**, that it is commemorated as **“Battle of Britain Day”**.

Germany suffered 2500 dead or missing. 544 Allied airmen were killed.

Winston Churchill paid tribute to the victors in his famous words “**Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few.**” The tribute was also to those of the Commonwealth and Nazi occupied countries – Poland and Czechoslovakia – which had supplied huge numbers of pilots.

THE BLITZ

The invasion, Operation **SEA LION**, had been postponed three times but was called off indefinitely on 17th September.

Frustrated by his inability to invade Britain, Hitler was intent on destroying it.

By mid-October 1940 he ordered bombing raids to target Britain’s cities by night.

London was attacked almost every night for the next month and the centre of Coventry was levelled. Many in Cranfield remember the night that the sky glowed red when Coventry burned.

The relentless attacks on London and all of the major cities – Liverpool, Birmingham, Coventry, Sheffield, Portsmouth, Plymouth, Clydebank and Hull – continued until 1941.



Hitler, again realising that he couldn't break the British spirit, called off the raids in May 1941 and directed German resources towards Russia.

The Blitz caused enormous suffering to civilians. During the war over 60,000 British civilians were killed by enemy action. Of them nearly 8,000 were children. Another 86,000, including over 7,000 children were seriously injured. Many more had less serious wounds, typically caused by flying glass.

There was a tremendous sense of coming together as communities, and a resilient spirit, but the mental stress must have been enormous. Psychiatrists apparently reported that although, many suffered extreme shock, almost all recovered quickly without much more treatment than a kind

word, a blanket and a cup of tea. However, mental distress presented in other ways such as stomach complaints and chronic indigestion.

Buildings were damaged – everything from broken windows to houses being so badly wrecked that they had become uninhabitable until major repairs were complete. For every civilian killed, 35 were forced out of their homes by the Blitz. For those “bombed out” the end of the raid was only the start of their problems. They had not only to find shelter, clothing and food but also often had to replace documents – identity cards and ration books.

In March 1941 a compulsory insurance scheme – The War Damages Act – was introduced. The scheme eventually paid out £117 million in compensation (£4.5 billion in real terms today) and another £1,300 million over the next 20 years for damage to buildings.

There was an increase in overcrowding and deterioration in living conditions because of the Blitz. The provision of well-built accommodation for all was a fundamental part of the vision for a post war welfare state.

Our first soldier, **Arthur Barcock**, lost his life during the Blitz.

ARTHUR CHARLES BARCOCK.7630961 Private,
Royal Army Ordnance Corps. Died on Monday 7th
October, 1940 aged 24. Buried in Olney
Cemetery, Buckinghamshire. Son of Arthur and
Annie Barcock of Cranfield.
Husband of Myra Barcock of Olney



Arthur Charles Barcock was born in Cranfield on 9th April 1916, the only son of **Arthur Barcock and Annie** (nee Malsher). Their other five children were: **Winifred** S. Malsher born in 1900 before his parents married in 1904; Annie E. born in 1902, married William T. Lancaster (Tom) in 1922; **Violet** Rose born 1905, married John Geraghty in 1940; **Gertrude** Alice married John Poole and **Agnes** Ivy who was a land girl during the war.

Arthur didn't know his father for long. He was apparently visiting him when he dropped down dead of a heart attack by the side of the road. He was only 47 when he died.

Arthur **married Myra Haw** in Olney in March 1937. He was a haulage contractor and lorry driver working at the Marston Valley Brickworks, Olney Mill and for Northampton and Bedford firms. The couple had one child, **Brian**, born in 1938.

When war was declared, in September 1939, Arthur joined the Royal Army Ordnance Corps. He was stationed in London **during the Blitz** where he was caught up in a bombing raid. He was transferred to the casualty section but died of his wounds on 7th October 1940.

The Northampton Mercury of 18th October reported: "RAID VICTIM'S ADVICE IN LAST LETTER – OLNEY SOLDIER KILLED IN LONDON – "For God's sake do not run about in air raids, as you would never be

quick enough to miss the bombs and machine gun bullets; but cheer up and smile and look after our little boy.”

This was the concluding paragraph in a letter to his wife posted by Private A.C. Barcock of Olney shortly before he was killed in an air raid. The letter reached Mrs Barcock two days after his death, of which she had received earlier official information.

A native of Cranfield, Pte. Barcock had served four months. He had lived at Olney since his marriage, in March 1937, to Miss Myra Haw. The child is two years old.

The funeral was the first at Olney of a soldier brought home for burial in the present war.

The service at The Parish Church and the graveside was conducted by the Rev. E.J. Potter, priest-in-charge, who served as a private in the war of 1914-18. Eight members of Pte. Barcock's unit acted as bearers. They were in the charge of a corporal.”

The Bedfordshire Times of 18th October reported: “OLNEY SOLDIER KILLED Funeral of Private A.C. Barcock.

Pte. A.C. Barcock R.A.O.C. who was called to the colours four months ago, was killed on Monday whilst taking shelter in London in a building which received a direct hit.”

It goes on to give details of the funeral service as above.

Arthur is buried in Olney Cemetery. His widow, Myra, married Stephen Adam in 1942. Through a friend, since publication of the first edition, we have traced Arthur's son, Brian, and visited him and his wife in Olney.

John Poole, Arthur's nephew, lives in Cranfield with his wife, Sue. John and Sue had six children. Morris sadly died at the age of 5 and Rosemary died at 39 of cancer. Those still living are Winifred, Maureen, Valerie, and John.

John Poole has such good reputation as a sign writer that he has worked on the Lancaster of the Battle of Britain Memorial flight. This Lancaster was at Cranfield Airfield after the war.



Battle of Britain memorial Flight

He has worked on other WWII planes such as the Spitfire below.



John's father, John senior, served in the Second World War, starting in North Africa, and working his way to Sicily. He was lucky to escape at Anzio Beach Head. In Italy he met up with Bob Linnell (see page 280) from Cranfield who cried with relief when he saw someone he recognised. The war affected John. He was glad to be back home but was anxious about going out anywhere.

Two of Cranfield's residents: Pearl Cartmill and Gwen Edwards, remember living in London through the Blitz. Here we can share their memories.

Pearl Cartmill's Story

Pearl Cartmill remembers being evacuated from the East End of London as a child. She lived through the Battle of Britain and the Blitz.



Pearl was born in 1929 in Eastham in the East End of London. She came to Cranfield in 2003 and has made her home here. She was more than happy to share her memories. Since the publication of the hard back edition, Pearl sadly had a stroke and requires nursing home care.

Her father, Frederick William Godbold, served in the First World War with the East Kent Regiment in France. He was under-age when he volunteered. He survived the war but never talked about his experiences. One of his close colleagues had been killed – “such a good man”.

His brother, Albert, had also been killed by a German machine gun.



Frederick Godbold – Pearl's Father – in WWI

Living not far from the docks, in the east end of London, the area was a target for bombing raids especially during the Blitz in 1940/41. Her father had said to her mother, Kathleen, "We've got to get the kids away."

Nine-year-old Pearl and her four-year-old brother, Gordon, were sent to Banbury in Oxfordshire in a train packed with children. They each had a label attached and carried a small case and a gas mask. Her mother had wanted the children to be billeted together. They were allocated to a man and his daughter, who went out with American G.I.'s stationed there. The children were very poorly fed, mainly on rice. Their mother visited and insisted on a reallocation. They had to be separated but both were happily settled with families. Pearl went to a Catholic School run by the nuns. There was no bombing in Oxfordshire, but they were aware of the bombing elsewhere. They could see the red sky over

Coventry when the worst bombing of the city occurred on 14th November 1940.

Pearl can't remember exactly when they returned to London. She remembers the **Anderson shelter**, made of corrugated metal and buried in a dug-out in the garden. Anderson shelters were designed in 1938 and named after Sir John Anderson, Home Secretary during the Battle of Britain. They were designed to hold six people, were self-assembled, and covered with earth.

It was cold if you had to get out of bed during the night when the air raid siren sounded. Every house had one. Once she came out of the shelter and witnessed a dogfight between Messerschmitts and Spitfires. She recalls that she can hear the roar of the planes as though it was yesterday.

Pearl's father worked in the Tate and Lyle's sugar factory, by the docks, but was available to help the Fire Service if needed. Every house had a stirrup pump so that any fires could be put out quickly. This was especially useful when their kitchen had a direct hit by an incendiary bomb. Dad was able to put the fire out. After the War he used to have nightmares about fires and flames.

Pearl remembered an occasion when she was with a group of girls who were walking past some boys mending a roof. The boys whistled at them as they passed by. When the girls returned there had been a direct hit and all of the boys lay dead. This experience still upsets her. She thinks it was caused by a "doodle bug" (V1 rocket). Towards the end of the war the V2 rockets flew over on their own.

She remembers when everyone had an identity card. There was rationing with books and coupons to buy food and clothes. To make it more edible, margarine was mixed with butter. Living in the city they hadn't a big garden to grow vegetables. Meat was tripe, rabbit, whale meat and pigs' trotters.

Pearl met her future husband, Ronald, at a dance in East Ham. It was love at first sight! She and Ron made their home in Cranfield in 2003. They have a daughter, Linda. Sadly, Ron died in 2008.



Gwen Edwards' Story

Gwen Edwards remembers being “bombed out” in the Blitz.



Gwen, a Cranfield resident, was born on 8th August 1930, in Romford, Essex. Her parents were Alfred and Mabel Perry. She remembers when war was declared. She heard the loud tones of Neville Chamberlain ringing out across the local park. She ran home in tears and pleaded to be evacuated to safety. She was a small child of nine living with her parents and two-year-old brother, Ronald.

The family decided to move closer to other members of the family in West Hendon, North London. Her mother was a fatalist – if they were going to die, they could all go together.

At 8 o'clock in the evening on 13th February 1941 her aunt, Peggy Wheeler, was visiting their house in Ramsey Road. She decided to pay a call on her sister, Ivy Chambers, who lived in a nearby road. Her mother was seeing her to the door when they heard a deafening sound like the roaring of a train overhead. There was a red flash whooshing through the sky and a ball of fire as the bomb fell. There had been no air-raid warning. Although they didn't receive a direct hit, one of the walls of the house collapsed. It was the most terrifying experience imaginable. Sadly, Aunt Ivy was one of the casualties that night.

Gwen's father had just returned home. He took the family to her Gran's first floor flat in High Hendon. He made sure they were safe before returning to rescue people trapped in the debris.

It stands out as being one of the most devastating single bombings of the whole war. Three roads in West Hendon were laid waste.

It was an SC 2500kg maximum heavy explosive, equivalent to two V2 rockets and had been dropped by a Heinkel He111 bomber.

75 people were killed, there were 150 casualty cases, eight people missing, many more suffered minor injuries, and upwards of 1,500 people were rendered homeless. In some cases, whole families were wiped out.

A baby's cradle was found blown high up on top of a pile of debris. The baby was alive although orphaned by the explosion.

40 houses were destroyed outright, 160 needed pulling down and 170 were damaged and couldn't be repaired until after the war. 400 more suffered various degrees of damage.



Devastation after the Hendon Bombing

The target may have been factories on the nearby Edgware Road. There was a small reservoir near, the Welsh Harp, which may have been mistaken for another larger reservoir where the Germans may have been planning a raid. We shall never know.

There is a **memorial plaque** in Hendon to those who died on that fateful night in 1941. It was unveiled in 2014, 75 years after the event, beside a Union flag on a grassy space on the West Hendon estate, which was built in the late 1960s on the site where the smashed houses had stood.

The family stayed with Gran for a while, sleeping under the table in fear of the nightly bombing raids over London. They were given a council house and her father built an Anderson shelter in the garden. Gwen remembers the “stick bombs” where you would see five falling balls of fire. The sky over London glowed red with the bombing.

Gwen admits that she was too young to take it all in at the time. What she does remember is the community spirit and friendliness. Everyone really appreciated life as they lived with the daily threat of death or injury. There was true neighbourliness where everyone helped one another, and people were genuinely pleased to see each other.

Gwen married Alan Edwards in 1952. They made their home in Cranfield in 1971. Sadly, Alan died in 1999. They had no children. Gwen is now happily living in a residential home in Bedford.

1941 – AN OVERVIEW

6th April – The Germans swept through **Yugoslavia and Greece**. The Allies were ejected from **Crete**, falling back to Egypt.

12th April – 9th Dec – **Siege of Tobruk**

22nd June – Germany **invaded Russia** – despite a non aggression pact with Stalin.

18th Nov – **The British Offensive** was launched in the **Western Desert**.

7th Dec – **The Japanese invade Pearl Harbour**



8th Dec – **Great Britain and the United States** declare war on **Japan**.

The War in North Africa

When **Italy** joined the conflict, on Germany's side, in June 1940, Mussolini already had colonies and a vast army in North Africa.

In December 1940 the Italians had invaded Egypt but were defeated by the Allies at the **Battle of Sidi Barrani**.

The Italians in Libya were retreating before the British. The Germans began to reinforce the Axis forces in February 1941 under **General Erwin Rommel**.

The Germans needed the harbour at Tobruk to bring in supplies from Italy. **Tobruk was under siege from 12th April – 9th December 1941**. It was held by a garrison consisting mostly of Australians. The siege ended when Tobruk was relieved by the British Eighth Army which controlled British and Allied ground forces in the **Western Desert Campaign** from September 1941. (It was retaken by the Germans in June 1942 and re-retaken again five months later)

There was only one serviceman on the War Memorial, **Emyr Williams**, who was killed in 1941. He died at sea when his ship was torpedoed by an Italian U-Boat off the coast of West Africa. The ship was carrying troops to Egypt to fight in the Western Desert Campaign.

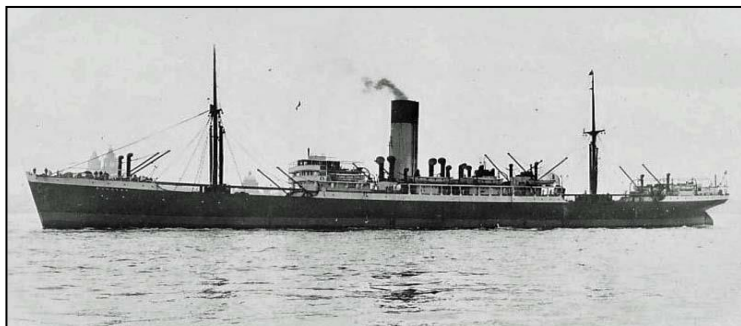
EMYR WILLIAMS. C/KX 107073
Stoker, 2nd Class Royal Navy H.M.S. Pembroke.
Died 14th January 1941, aged 23 on S.S. Eumaeus.
Commemorated on Chatham Naval Memorial.
Resident of 10 Court Road, Cranfield.

Emyr, known as “Mem”, was born on 23rd September 1917 at 51 Ebenezer Street. Tranmere, Rock Ferry, Birkenhead, Cheshire. His mother, Florence May, was unmarried. She was working as a servant to the Robert family of “Efworth” Villa. Llanfairfechan, Caernarvonshire and was 28 when Emyr was born.

At the time of his death, he was registered as living at 10 Court Road, Cranfield.

His training as a stoker was done at Chatham at the shore base, H.M.S. Pembroke.

He was serving on **S.S. Eumaeus**, a Blue Funnel liner.



The British auxiliary cruiser, a passenger/cargo ship, was built in 1921 by the Caledon Ship Building Company at

Dundee, with a tonnage of 7736, a length of 459ft 2in, a beam of 56ft 4in and a service speed of 14 knots. She had made several voyages to and from the Far East and Australia since the outbreak of war.

“Eumaeus” was named after the gallant swine herder who fought side by side with Odysseus and Telemachus in the battle against heavy odds, described by Homer, in the final scene of the Odyssey.

On 29th December 1941, she set sail from Liverpool in convoy for Colombo and Singapore via the Cape. She took a diversionary route far out into the Atlantic and, perhaps, because of the poor quality of the coal supplied at Birkenhead, she had to call at Freetown, Sierra Leone, to refuel. On 7th January she lost her escort and continued independently.

At about 6am on 14th January, she had reached a position some 150 miles west of Freetown. The Mate called the Captain, J.E. Watson, to tell him that a suspicious object, which might have been a surfaced submarine, was in sight on the port beam about 2000 yards away. The captain ordered maximum revolutions and altered course to put the enemy astern. Four shells hit the stern and the bridge knocking out most of the gun crew. After a fight of about three hours the Eumaeus was fully ablaze. The Italian U-boat, Cappellini, commanded by Capitano di Corvetta Salvatore Torado, fired two torpedoes which sank the ship.

The Captain of Eumaeus gave orders to abandon the ship. The boats, except for the dinghy, had been damaged by shell

fire and most of the survivors had therefore to collect wreckage to keep themselves afloat.

A Walrus flying boat from the carrier H.M.S. Albatross arrived at the scene. The pilot was Lt. V.B.G. Cheesman, then based in Freetown, Sierra Leone, as a Walrus flying-boat pilot covering convoys. He was sent out to search for the submarine. Having completed his search and possessing only sufficient fuel for the return, he spotted survivors in the water and with considerable skill landed his Walrus in a heavy swell close by. He and his crewman gave first aid to those they could help and then caught sight of two empty lifeboats about two miles away.

Cheesman closed on them, stopped his engine, and swam to one with a line, which he made fast. He clambered back into the Walrus, started the engine, and towed the boat back to the, now struggling, survivors. This courageous action saved the lives of a considerable number of men. The Walrus was towed back to Freetown by a trawler, H.M.S. Spaniard, having been away 21 hours, 18 of them on the water.

Lt. "Teddy" Cheesman was awarded the M.B.E. in 1981. He died in Worcestershire in June 1999.

The U-boat log noted that the decks of Eumaeus were "swarming with troops". Damaged, itself, with three dead, the Cappellini headed to the neutral port of Gran Canaria for repairs. Her Captain transferred later to a Mullet. It was strafed by a Spitfire on 14th December 1942, killing him instantly.

The records of Lloyds list 23 British dead and 63 Survivors of the Eumaeus. Emyr Williams is among the list of eleven

on a casualty list of the Royal Navy. Others may have been serving with the Merchant Navy. Casualties on a troop ship bound for Egypt would not be included in the Lloyds' list.

In 2014, Stella Hunt, the daughter of one of the survivors writes the following: "Regarding the sinking of S.S. Eumaeus, it was indeed a troop carrier as my father, Stanley Marcel Guttridge, was one of the survivors spending 12 hours in shark infested waters watching his friends being taken. He only survived because he returned to his bunk to retrieve a picture of my mum (very romantic) and put his jumper on which protected him from the sun as others ended up suffering terrible heatstroke. There is a letter in the Daily Mirror in the 1960's from a radio operator who first picked up the distress call. Apparently, he had been reading a 'penny dreadful' and had not shut his radio off at the correct time and although saving numerous lives was reprimanded. Dad is 92 and still going strong."

Emyr Williams is commemorated on the Chatham Naval Memorial, Kent.



Chatham Naval Memorial

An Admiralty committee recommended that the three manning ports in Great Britain – Chatham, Plymouth, and Portsmouth – should each have an identical memorial of unmistakable naval form, an obelisk, which would serve as a leading mark for shipping. The memorial was unveiled by The Prince of Wales, the future Edward VIII, on 26 April 1924.

1942 – AN OVERVIEW

January – Hitler attacked and drove the Allies back to Benghazi and Gazala. Much of **western Egypt** was ceded to the Axis forces. The position of the Allies in **North Africa** was on a knife edge.

15th February – **Singapore** fell. 90,000 Allied soldiers surrendered to the Japanese.

16th April – The George Cross was awarded to **Malta**. Malta was crucial to both sides. A British naval base, it provided airfields from which German convoys could be attacked. Malta endured months of ferocious attacks from the air. A first-hand account from one of our Cranfield residents, Fred Clark, is given on page 77.

Late June – Rommel, now a Field Marshall, attacked again, pushing the British back to a line running south from **El Alamein** – only 60 miles from Alexandria. The English Army, in full retreat was only saved from annihilation by the R.A.F. Desert Air Force.

July – First Battle of El Alamein. Rommel again tried to force his way through. Stalemate resulted.

August – Winston Churchill arrived in Egypt. General Alexander replaced Auchinleck as Commander in Chief. **General Bernard Montgomery (“Monty”)** was appointed Commander of the Eighth Army. Montgomery built up flagging troop morale by training and visiting them, inspiring them with his ability to plan in depth.

Bletchley Park. The enigma code had been broken. We were able to find the German convoys re-supplying Rommel as well as follow tank movements in the desert.

23rd October – Second Battle of El Alamein. 116,000 Germans and Italians were dug in behind millions of mines, thick entanglements of wire and were supported by guns, tanks, machine guns and mortars. Our engineers cleared paths through the minefields. Massive British firepower, backed by the R.A.F., forced Rommel's troops to retreat. By 4th November the Panzerarmee was on the run. **El Alamein was the first decisive land victory by the British against the German forces.**



Montgomery watches Allied tanks advancing in November 1942

Nov – British and American Forces landed in North Africa

Malta's Story – The Siege of Malta

The island of Malta lies in the Mediterranean, some 50 miles south of Sicily and 200 miles from Libya and the North African coast.



Valletta

For the British Empire it was a vital strategic base and a safe haven in the Mediterranean between Gibraltar and Alexandria, Egypt, en route to India and the Far East.

Following the declaration of war and the threat from potentially hostile Italy, the British moved the Royal Navy Mediterranean Fleet from Valletta to Alexandria in October 1939. They had to protect the Suez Canal. The monitor “H.M.S. Terror” and a few British submarines were left to defend the Malta from the sea.

Although the British increased the number of anti-aircraft guns, Malta was only lightly protected with six obsolete Gloster Sea Gladiator biplanes when on 10th June 1940,

Mussolini declared war on Great Britain and France. Within hours the first bombs dropped on Malta.

The opening of a new front in North Africa in the mid 1940's increased the threat of Malta to the Axis (Germany/Italy) supply lines from Europe. The Axis resolved to bomb or starve Malta into submission, by attacking ports, towns and cities and Allied shipping supplying the island.

From 1940 – 1942 there were seemingly endless air raids on the Island, which endured the heaviest and sustained aerial bombing in history. **A total of 3,000 bombing raids** were flown by the Regina Aeronautica (Italian Royal Air Force) and the Luftwaffe (German Air Force).

German intervention was the result of the Italian defeats in North Africa. Hitler had no choice other than to rescue his Italian ally or risk losing the chance of taking the Middle Eastern oil fields. In **February 1941** Germany sent Rommel to North Africa and two units of Junkers reached Sicily, from which they could attack Malta.

A steady stream of Allied reinforcements arrived. The arrival of squadrons of Spitfires in 1942, helped to swing the battle in the Allies favour. 716 fighter planes fought during the campaign of which 369 were lost in the air and 64 on the ground. Two aircraft carriers were lost, including the Ark Royal.

At the height of the siege the situation for civilians was desperate. Food and water were scarce. Clothing was hard

to come by. All livestock had been slaughtered. The threat of starvation was very real. Poor nutrition and sanitation led to the spread of disease. 1,300 civilians were killed. 2,301 airmen were killed or wounded.



Main Street in Valletta May 1942

The siege ended in November 1942 following the successful Allied campaign at El Alamein. On 20th November a convoy reached Malta from Alexandria, virtually unscathed.

On 16th April 1942 the Island of Malta received the **George Cross** for heroism and devotion, the first time this medal was conferred other than on an individual.

Fred Clark's Story

Fred Clark, a Cranfield resident, was living in Malta at the outbreak of the Second World War. He experienced the Siege of Malta and later went on to serve there.

He tells his story.



Fred was born on 23rd September 1926 in Lewisham.

His dad, **Walter “Nobby” Clark** was in the Navy, stationed in Malta. With his wife, Violet and their four children: Ken, Betty, Fred and Sunya, they made their home there. Walter was a physical training instructor. (He died, aged 82, in Malta.)



Fred's Dad – Walter

Fred describes how good life was in Malta before the War. His dad had his own gym. Every year they had a sports day. The family had made many good friends there who they will never forget, and who they have since visited many times.

Fred recalls: “In 1941, Ken, joined the R.N. Special Coastal Watch. I joined in 1942 (at the age of 16). During an air raid we were watching, I was hit by shrapnel on the head.

Mum and Sunya had a narrow escape when visiting friends. Bombs fell all around us. Sunya was hit by shrapnel in the left arm. We all had narrow escapes. Ken's signal station was

hit many times. I used to watch bombs coming down all around us when on duty at the Government Palace in Valletta. On one occasion when I was going down for a swim at Taxbiar, I found an unexploded bomb. I fiddled around with it and ran back and told Dad who rang the police. They got the bomb disposal personnel who defused it.” Fred felt that, if Mussolini had attacked in the beginning he could have walked through the Island.

When Hitler attacked with Stukas in 1941, “All hell broke loose”.



Junkers 88 shot down in 1942. The pilot's body is on the wing



Bombs dropping on the harbour in 1942

The Family – Dad (Walter), Mum (Violet), Ken, Fred, Betty and Sunya.

While the family were in Malta, **Ken** who was 5 years older than Fred, served as an apprentice jockey before the war and rode in Egypt. He returned to Malta during the war where he had a couple of racehorses.

Betty's boyfriend, who was a Sergeant Pilot in the Canadian Air Force, was killed on the way back to England. The plane, a U.S. Liberator overshot the runway at Gibraltar. Only 4 pilots managed to escape. "Screwball" Beurling, an Ace Pilot who shot down 31 planes was one of the lucky ones.

Fred tells how “Screwball” Beurling, wouldn’t obey orders from the UK. He was sent to Malta and was killed ferrying arms from Italy to Palestine. He was also known as the “Knight of Malta” as he shot down 27 Axis aircraft in just 14 days in the skies over Malta.

George Beurling



After the siege of Malta, although his dad stayed behind, Violet and the rest of the family came back to the UK. Fred left Malta with Betty in February 1943.

“I got a job at A.C. Sphinx who made components for aircraft, tanks, and motor vehicles. In 1944 I was called up in the army and saw service again in Malta, Sicily, and Italy.”

Fred tells of the thrill of being able to go back to Malta. He wasn’t involved in any fighting. He guarded prisoners of war and describes how they were “good lads – just like us. They would say “Tommy, Tommy – cigarettes”. He was in Malta when the Americans bombed Hiroshima and Nagasaki.



***Fred Clark 14890537 South Lancashire Regiment.
Enlisted 21.12.44***

“An exemplary, sober, honest, and conscientious worker, smart in appearance, polite and respectful, gifted with plenty of common sense and keen all-round sportsman. He can be trusted to carry out a task without supervision. Is keen on engineering.”

Fred never got round to filling in the necessary forms to be awarded any medals! The above citation is perhaps sufficient recognition for a distinguished gentleman who served his country with pride and dignity.

While Fred was serving abroad his mother and the family moved to Cranfield where they lived in the High Street.

In 1945 **Betty** joined the Land Army. She drove the milk van for Basil Baker. Betty later married and emigrated to Australia.

Ken enlisted in 1943 and served in Nigeria. He married Etty.

When **Sunya** came back to England, she joined the WRENS.



Sunya met Sid, who was in the Navy, while Sid was a patient in hospital. Sunya was a nurse and looked after him. They were married in Cranfield. They made their home in Langley near Slough. Sunya sadly died of cancer in 2015.

Fred met Florrie in 1944, before being called up. She was working across the line at AC Sphinx. They used to go to the cinema in Dunstable. She sent her Auntie to vet him! They became engaged. He was allowed a month's leave to get married - in February 1947.



Fred and Florrie lived in Cranfield from 1947, after he was demobilised. They moved from the High Street to one of the new houses in Bliss Avenue.

They had four children. Their daughters, Diane and Brenda, were born in 1948 and 1949 and their sons, Terence and Gerald, in 1951 and 1959.

The two girls shared the first double wedding at Cranfield Parish Church, Diane marrying Glen Enoch and Brenda marrying Graham Ayres.

Fred and Florrie were married for 63 years. Florrie sadly died in 2010.

“I worked at Cranfield University for 41 years and played football for the village and for the University in the late 40’s and early 50’s.”

His family all live in Cranfield. Fred is the proud of his 9 grandchildren and great grandchildren.

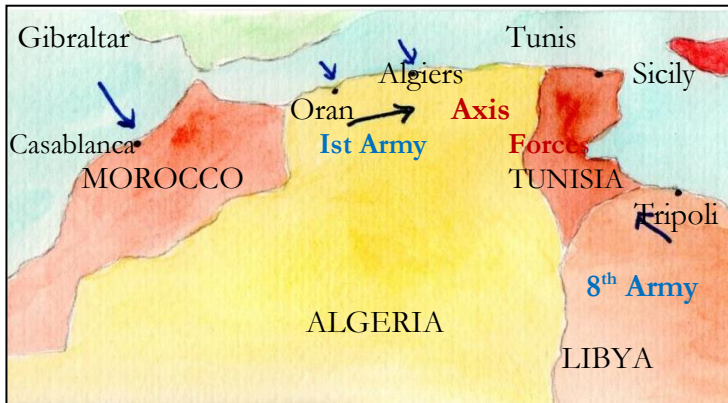
He treasures his memories, and it is a privilege to be able to share them. “Looking back, I wonder how the Island of Malta survived. The amount of bombing and shortage of food makes one proud to say we were there.”

Operation Torch 8th – 16th November 1942

On 8th November 1942 the **Americans**, under the command of **General Dwight D. Eisenhower**, and British and Commonwealth troops, landed in **Morocco** and **Algeria**.

On 9th November, **Hitler responded** to the landings by **rushing troops and supplies into Tunisia** so that Rommel could make his last stand. The local French Commander didn't protest, still acting on the orders of the Vichy (Pro – German French) government.

President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill, along with combined Chiefs of Staff, held a conference at **Casablanca** on 14th November. Although the Americans wanted to direct resources against Japan in the Pacific, they eventually agreed with the British position that the priority was to finish the war in North Africa before invading Sicily.



The combined American and British forces, from the west, advanced towards Tunis. After El Alamein, Rommel's forces were retreating along the coast through Libya towards Tunisia. The British Eighth Army, commanded by Montgomery, was pushing after them, pausing at Tripoli, which he entered on **23rd January 1943**.

1943 – AN OVERVIEW

11th Jan – German Army surrendered at **Stalingrad**

May – Final victory over the U-boats in the **Atlantic**

13th May – **Axis forces in Tunisia surrendered**

10th July – **Allies invaded Sicily**

3rd Sept – **Allies invaded Italy**

8th Sept – **Italy capitulated**

By mid-April 1943 the combined Axis force was hemmed into a small corner of north- eastern Tunisia and the Allies were grouped for their final offensive.

On 6th May the British took Tunis. **By 13th May** the Axis forces of nearly a quarter of a million troops had surrendered, including twelve generals. **The war in North Africa was over.** Our next soldier from Cranfield, **Leslie Shuker**, died in Tunisia.

LESLIE SHUKER.

6023228

Corporal, The Queen's Own Royal West Kent
Regiment.

Killed on 4th April 1943, aged 23, in Tunisia.

Buried in Medjez-el-Bab War Cemetery, Tunisia.

Born in Durham, son of Frank and Sarah, brother of
David. Husband of Maisie. Resident at 210 High
Street, Cranfield.



Leslie Shuker was born in 1920 in Durham, the eldest son of **Frank** and **Sarah** (nee Ward). His brother, **David**, was born in early 1922; **Nora** was born in 1928 but sadly died less than a year later.

By 1936 Frank and Sarah had moved to Bedfordshire. They lived in Potton for a few years before moving to 210 High Street, Cranfield. Frank was a lorry driver.

On 24th June Leslie married **Mary Miller Rice**, known as Maisie, in Glasgow.

In November 1942 Leslie was with the 6th Battalion, Royal West Kent Regiment, attached to the 36th Brigade, which was assigned to the 78th “Battle-axe” Infantry Division. The Division landed in North Africa during “**Operation Torch**”. Landings were in three main groups. Leslie landed with the Eastern Task Force in Algeria. There was some resistance, but Algiers surrendered to the Allies later the same day.

The Allied army advanced towards Tunisia, coming under attack from the Luftwaffe. On the northern road they made rapid progress until 17th November when they ran into 17 tanks, 400 Para troops and mobile artillery. The British, without tank support of their own, knocked out 11 of the German tanks but were held up for 9 days.

By late February the British Forces were under the control of General Harold Alexander. Rommel had been replaced by Colonel General Hans-Jurgen von Armin.

Leslie Shuker died on 14th April at Madjez-el-Bab which was the limit of the Allied advance in December 1942 and remained on the front line, until the decisive Allied victories of April and May.

He is buried at **Medjez-el-Bab War Cemetery**, 60 kilometres west of Tunis.



There are 2903 Commonwealth servicemen of the Second World War buried or commemorated in the cemetery.

The Medjez-el-Bab Memorial bears the names of almost 2000 men of the First Army who died during operations in Algeria and Tunisia between 20th February and 13th May 1943 and who have no known graves.

Leslie's brother, David, of 210 High Street, Cranfield, married Vera Gadsden in Salford on 6th December 1947.

They had two children: Christopher and Jackie. After Frank's death in 1958, Sarah moved in with David and Vera. The family lived in Prince Philip Avenue, Wharley End. They cared for Sarah until her death in 1966.

For many years Vera ran the 1st Wharley End Brownies. In her later years she lived in the Alms-houses near Budgens. She is remembered with much affection.



The alms-houses were built in 1887 and endowed by James Goodman, a native of Cranfield, for poor widows of the village.

Leslie's widow, Maisie, married John Conrad Michel in Glasgow in February 1946. They sailed to the U.S.A. in June 1946 and settled in Oregon where they had four children. Her granddaughter has kindly provided the wedding photograph of Leslie and Maisie, which Maisie took with her to America.

THE WAR IN THE FAR EAST

The war in the Far East hinged on the territorial ambitions of Japan. Japan was a blend of democracy, outdated but popular feudal traditions and an all-powerful Emperor who was considered a living god. Hirohito, born in 1901, reigned from 1926 until his death in 1989.

Japan's population was exploding but it lacked the natural resources to supply a growing industrial economy and support the population.

In the period before the Second World War Japan had invaded and occupied **Manchuria**, in **1931**, creating the puppet state of Manchukuo.

In **1936** Japan formed an alliance with Germany against Russia – **the Anti-Comintern Pact**, making a stand against the threat of communism.

Japan invaded China in July **1937**, the start of the **second Sino-Japanese war** which didn't end until September 1945. Japan also seized **Formosa (Taiwan) and Korea**.

On **7th December 1941** Japan attacked **Pearl Harbour** in Hawaii. The following day Great Britain and the United States declared war on Japan.

Undeterred, Japan swept through the western Pacific landing in **Malaya** on **8th December**, taking the **Philippines** and **Hong Kong**. In February 1942 **Singapore** surrendered. The islands of **Borneo, Sumatra, Java and Timor** also fell.



The British 17th Indian Division, under Major General Sir John Smyth, held the bridge at **Sittang** in the extreme south of Burma. His choice was to destroy the bridge, stranding more than half of his own troops on the wrong side, or let it stand and give the Japanese a clear march to Rangoon. He decided to blow the bridge. Survivors of the 17th Division later swam or ferried themselves across.

The remnants of the Division fell back to defend the capital, Rangoon. **General Sir Harold Alexander** arrived, realised that Rangoon couldn't be held, and ordered a retreat to the north.

A strategic objective was to prevent the Japanese gaining control of the **Yenangyaung oil field**. The oilfield fell in mid-April but, not before the Allies were able to sabotage the wells.

On 29th April the Chinese were driven back over the border into China and General Alexander was obliged to evacuate Mandalay and retreat to India.

Burma was important to the Japanese for its oil and natural resources. It also had the strategically vital "Burma Road" by which U.S. arms and supplies were reaching Chiang Kai-Shek's nationalistic Chinese army. In **December 1941** the Japanese armies marched through **Siam, now Thailand** with virtually no resistance and entered Burma on **20th January 1942**.

By mid-1942 Japan had achieved virtually all her initial objectives.

LAWRENCE MANSI 1563176
Gunner, Royal Artillery, 42 Bty. 2/Lt A.A. Regt
Presumed died while P.O.W. in Borneo.
Between Jan 1942 and Jan 1945, aged 33.
Commemorated on the Singapore War Memorial.
Born in Islington, son of Leonard and Ann.
Husband of Molly. Resident at 12 Harter Avenue,
Cranfield

Mike Chapman, a volunteer speaker and tour guide for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) kindly gave a talk to Hands Across Cranfield on 4th April, 2023. He cares for 50 war graves across 7 cemeteries between Bletchley and Buckingham. His research on the Cranfield fallen had led him to the Singapore War Memorial where he found a link to Cranfield. The following is the information he has discovered.

Gunner Lawrence Mansi was born in Islington but his wife, Ann, was from Cranfield. The 1939 census has them living in London but the Army Service records give his address as 12, Harter Avenue, Cranfield. Perhaps when he enlisted they moved back to Cranfield so that his wife could be with her family.

Lawrence's unit was sent to South East Asia. He was captured by the Japanese on the island of Java in January 1942. There are no more records of him and he was presumed to have died while a prisoner of war in Borneo.

His name is not on the Cranfield War Memorial. Perhaps his wife hoped he would still return home.



He is commemorated on the War Memorial (column 24) at the Kranji War Cemetery Singapore.

The Memorial stands on the highest point of the hillside cemetery. It bears the names of over 24,000 casualties from the Commonwealth land and air forces who have no known grave. The land forces commemorated died during the campaigns in Malaysia and Indonesia or in subsequent captivity, many of them during the construction of the Burma-Thailand railway, or at sea while being transported into imprisonment elsewhere.

Thanks to the CWGC for permission to print this photograph. (www.cwgc.org.uk)

THE BURMA CAMPAIGN

September 1942 – August 1945

Burma, now known as Myanmar, had been under British Colonial rule since the Anglo-Burmese wars (1824-1885).

The Japanese invasion ended in May 1942. The Allies retaliated later the same year. Their side was the most multiracial in the history of modern warfare: British, Indians, Ghurkhas, Africans, Australians, Canadians, Rhodesians, South Africans, Americans and Chinese. They were all fighting someone else's war in a strange land against a formidable enemy a very long way from home.

The Burma campaign was one of the longest of the war owing to the heavy monsoon rains which lasted for months.

The terrain varies from rugged mountains in the north up to the Chinese border and the foothills of the Himalayas, to the central lowlands with river valleys and small mountain ranges. The Arakan Mountains in the west run almost to the shores of the Bay of Bengal. The river Irrawaddy flows from north to south through central Burma and ending in a wide delta. Much of the landscape is dense jungle.

Apart from the fighting, the men had to contend with malaria and dysentery.

One of the main objectives was to restore the "Burma Road" – the main supply route to China. After this was closed in 1940, the United States had to fly supplies over "the hump" (the Himalayas).

There are two notable aspects of this convoluted campaign: the Chindits and the Battle for Kohima.

The Chindits

Brigadier-General Wingate, a rather eccentric character who used to strain his tea through his socks, came up with the idea of forming a long-range penetration group prepared to fight in the jungle, willing to accept the hazards of being supplied by air if necessary. This group became known as the Chindits. They were a force of highly trained, immensely fit, lightly equipped guerrillas who were dropped from the air behind Japanese lines to harass and disorientate the Japanese troops in the jungle. Wingate quoted “The impossible we do in a day. Miracles take a little longer.”

On 14th February 1943, 3000 Chindits embarked on their first operation and were able to cross the heavily defended River Chindwin. **On 25th August 1943 Lord Louis Mountbatten** was appointed Supreme Allied Commander with a change of command: **General Gifford** became Commander-in-Chief 11th Army Group; Lieutenant **General Slim** G.O.C. 14th Army; Lieutenant General Christison took over 15th Corps from Slim.

Battle for Kohima

In April 1944 a strong Japanese force was threatening Kohima, a small hill station in the Naga Highlands in the north of Burma. It had a white colonial bungalow and a Mission chapel with a red corrugated iron roof, set against a backdrop of forest and distant blue mountains.

On 6th April, when the Japanese Army arrived, Kohima was defended by only the 4th Royal West Kents.

The Deputy Commissioner's bungalow at Garrison Hill had a clay tennis court which became no-mans-land in the deadly battle which followed.

The British troops fought with renewed vengeance for the way the Japanese had bayoneted wounded prisoners in the Arakan. The Company Commander of the West Kents said, "They had removed any right to be regarded as human and we thought of them as vermin to be exterminated". They fought off the enemy with Bren guns, grenades and rifles.

Although the West Kents were relieved by the British 2nd Division, with tanks, the battle for Kohima continued for almost another four weeks.

On 13th May the Japanese stopped fighting and were so hated that they were slaughtered as they pulled out.

Lieutenant General Slim had made his stand. This defeat was a turning point and the beginning of the end for the Japanese in Burma.

The War Cemetery in Kohima, where 1,420 Allied soldiers are buried, lies on the slopes of Garrison Hill, where the tennis court once stood.

The Epitaph carved on the Memorial of the 2nd British Division has become world famous as the **Kohima Epitaph**.

**“When you go home, tell them of us and say
For your tomorrow, we gave our today.”**

The verse is attributed to John Maxwell Edmunds (1875-1958) and is thought to have been inspired by the epitaph written by Simonides to honour the Spartans who fell in the Battle of Thermopylae in 480BC.



The Burma Campaign was won in some of the bitterest fighting experienced by the Allies in the Second World War and against the toughest enemy they encountered.



It would not have been successful without the efforts of the Allied Navies - the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy, which carried supplies thousands of miles across the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, despite the grave losses to U-boats.

It wasn't until after the dropping of the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, on 6th and 9th August, that the **Japanese eventually surrendered on 14th August 1945.**

1944 – AN OVERVIEW

22nd Jan – Allied troops landed at Anzio, Italy

4th June – Rome capitulated

6th June – Allied landings in Normandy – **D-Day**

13th June – Flying bomb (V1) attacks on Britain started

25th Aug – Paris liberated

3rd Sept – **Brussels** liberated

8th Sept– First Rocket bomb (V2) fell on England

17-16th Sept – **The Battle of Arnhem**

2nd Oct – 8th Nov – **Battle of Scheldt**

15th Dec – **Glen Miller** flew out of Twinwoods

Our next soldier, **Private John Anstee**, was killed soon after the beginning of the Burma campaign.

JOHN HARRY ANSTEE. 5950365
Private, 2nd Battalion the Suffolk Regiment.
Died on Monday 24th January 1944, aged 25, in
Myanmar Burma.
Buried in the Taukkya War cemetery, Myanmar,
Burma.
Son of Harry and Kate Anstee, of Cranfield.



John Harry Anstee was born on 8th January 1919 in Cranfield, the sixth child and eldest son of **Harry John Anstee** and his wife, **Ruby Kate (nee Bedford)**. His father, like his father before him, was **the miller**.

A short history of the Cranfield Mill is given on page 275.

In the 1939 census Harry was working as a coal merchant and John was a coal assistant.

Kate's father, Harry Bedford was a draper and grocer.



John, Ben, Henry and Les Huckle, brother-in-law
(Note the taped windows to prevent shattering glass)

The family lived at 43 Broadgreen. John's brothers and sisters were: **Kathleen** Margery, born 9th January 1911, married Leslie Frederick James Huckle of North Crawley in 1951. They had no children. **Barbara** Jane, born 24th October 1912, married Henry Dix in 1936. They had two children, Catherine, and Richard. **Mamie** (Mame) Edith,

born 2nd November 1914, married Reginald A. Parrott in 1939, they had one daughter, Sandra. **Ida** Mary, born 23rd December 1916, married Frederick C. Ellaway in 1946. They had a daughter, Jeanette. **Ruby** born in 1921, married Pat Latta. They moved to Scotland and had several children. **Benjamin** William, born 3rd November 1921, married Dorothy Compston in 1944. They had two sons, David and Steven. (It is Steven, who still lives in Broad Green who has kindly provided the photographs.) **Henry** William, born 13th May 1930, married Gladys A. Wells in 1961. They had one daughter, Joy.

At the outset of the Second World War, John's Battalion, the 2nd Battalion Suffolk Regiment, was in India. In October 1943 it was in the Wazistan area of Pakistan, fighting tribesmen in the Tochi valley when it was transferred to the 123rd Indian Infantry Brigade, which became part of the 5th Indian Infantry Division known as the "Ball of Fire".

The Battalion fought in the Arakan province in Western Burma in late 1943. Because of the monsoon, there had been virtual stalemate throughout the year until the winter. Throughout the winter there was fierce fighting.

On 9th January the Suffolks were ordered to take a fortified Japanese bunker known as "Bamboo". This won them high praise from their commander.

It was in the Arakan province that John was killed in action.

John Anstee is buried in **Taukkyan War Cemetery** (Yangon Region) Burma. The cemetery was created in 1951 when the remains of servicemen from four cemeteries were brought together to be cared for by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.



Taukkyan War Cemetery

The cemetery contains the graves of 6,774 soldiers who died in the Second World War and 52 who died in Burma in the First World War. The memorial panels (Rangoon Memorial) commemorate the names of 27,000 Commonwealth soldiers who died in Burma during the Burma Campaign of the Second World War who have no known grave.

The War Cemetery is one of the most visited and highly rated war sites in all of Asia.

THE WAR IN ITALY – JULY 1943 – SEPT 1944

After the Allied victory in North Africa, Churchill persuaded the Allies to attack Italy rather than undertake a cross channel campaign.

The U.S. Seventh Army under General George Patton and the British Eighth Army under Montgomery **landed in Sicily on 10th July 1943**. They had overcome the Italian and German Forces **by 17th August**. This secured the shipping lanes in the Mediterranean.

On 24th July 1943 Mussolini and his Fascist government was ousted from power in Italy. The new Italian government started secret negotiations with the Allies. On 3rd September an Armistice was signed.

Hitler was able to rescue Mussolini but started to take out his revenge on the Italians. Italian troops which had been fighting alongside the Germans were taken prisoner. On 9th September a convoy of Italian warships, heading for Malta to surrender, was bombed by the Germans and the battleship “Roma” was sunk with the loss of 1500 lives.

In the 1930's Mussolini had drained the Pontine Marshes. This was the area around Anzio. Mosquitoes which had plagued the region were virtually eliminated. After the Italian surrender the Germans had the pumps turned off so that much of the area was flooded again. They then introduced malaria carrying mosquitoes and confiscated stocks of quinine. The Allies were up against a revengeful Germany.



On 3rd September 1944 the first Allied troops landed at the toe of Italy. Six days later the U.S. Fifth Army landed at Salerno and the British First Airborne Division at Taranto, on the heel of Italy. The Allied advance in October was helped by the winter rains.

MONTE CASSINO

On January 16th, 1944, General Clark's 5th Army attacked the German 10th Army positions in and around Monte Cassino, a German strongpoint which was holding up progress. The hill was topped by a beautiful 14th Century Benedictine Monastery filled with priceless art treasures.



US soldiers near Monte Cassino

On **15th February**, 224 Allied bombs dropped 453 tons of high explosives, reducing the building to total ruin. In fact, there were no Germans in the monastery. The only occupants were the Abbot and his monks. The damage had been done. The Germans moved into the ruins in force, using the vantage point to drive back the 4th Indian Division and the 2nd New Zealand Division as they attempted to storm the mountain top. On 15th March the Allied commanders attempted to dislodge the occupying Germans by dropping 1,250 tons of bombs. The losses in the attempt to take Cassino were high – 22,000 Americans and more than 22,000 British, almost 8,000 French and nearly 400

Italians were killed, wounded or missing for virtually no gain.

On 17th May the Poles finally made it to the ruined Monastery but found it deserted.



Monte Cassino in ruins

The Abbey was rebuilt after the war. Pope Paul VI consecrated it on 24th October 1964.



OPERATION SHINGLE - ANZIO

On 22nd January 1944, in **Operation Shingle**, the Allies landed on the beaches at **Anzio**. The objective was to draw German troops from the Gustav line, which needed to be taken before they could take Rome, 22 miles away. There were a series of defensive “lines” running across Italy consisting of concrete bunkers, turreted machine gun posts, gun emplacements, barbed wire and minefields.

It was also hoped that the invasion would draw Axis troops into Italy preparing the way for the “D-Day” landings of June 1944. It did.

The landings, bringing ashore 36,000 men, more than 3,000 vehicles and vast supplies of ammunition, had taken the Germans by surprise but, rather than take advantage and go for Rome, U.S. Army Major General John Lucas decided to consolidate his position and establish the Beach Head.

Field Marshall Albert Kesselring, at his H.Q. 30 miles north of Rome, learnt of the landings. He informed German High Command in Berlin. Hitler issued detailed orders to crush the Anzio Beach Head completely.

The Germans surrounded and hemmed in the Allied forces, relentlessly shelling the beach, the marshes and the harbour.

Anzio became a war of attrition as Allied forces were increased to almost 100,000 men.

Churchill made his famous remark: “We hoped to land a wildcat that would tear out the bowels of the Bosche. Instead, we have stranded a vast whale with its tail flopping about in the water.”

It was May before the Allies broke through the German Lines. Allied casualties at Anzio numbered 43,000.



May 1944 – soldiers occupying captured German trenches during the breakout at Anzio

The short stretch of coastline known as the Anzio Beach Head was one of the bloodiest battles of the Second World War. The Germans threw attack after attack against the Beach Head but, even though surrounded by a numerically superior force and hemmed in, they fought off each attack again and again. **It was at the Anzio Beach Head that our next two soldiers, John Jackson, and Leslie Boon, gave their lives.**

JOHN JACKSON. 4692659
 Sergeant, 9th Battalion (The Queen's Own
 Yorkshire Dragoons) Kings Own Yorkshire Light
 Infantry.
 Killed on 11th April 1944, aged 25, at the Anzio
 Beach-head.
 Buried in Beach Head War Cemetery, Anzio Part 1
 Son of Dixon and Isobel Jackson of Cumberland.
 Husband of Edna of 11 Bedford Road, Cranfield.

John Jackson, born in 1919, was the eldest son of **Dixon** and **Isobel** (nee Gates) Jackson of Ravenglass, Cumberland (now Cumbria). He had two younger brothers: **Thomas**, born in 1920 and **Maurice**, born in 1923.

He married Edna May Williamson, a Cranfield girl, on 5th September 1942 in Cranfield Parish Church.

The Bedford Times of 11th September 1942

“The wedding was solemnized at the Parish Church on Saturday of Sergeant John Jackson, eldest son of Mr and Mrs D. Jackson of Ravenglass, Cumberland, to Miss Edna M. Williamson, younger daughter of the late Mr Williamson of Thornhill, Cumberland and Mrs Williamson, Bedford Road, Cranfield.

The service was conducted by the Rev. F. Cottam, and Mr Wallace Lineham was at the organ.

The bride, who was given away by her eldest brother, wore a gown of white satin and lace, with floral head-dress and veil. She carried a bouquet of red carnations.

The attendants were the Misses Kathleen and Heather Williamson (nieces of the bride) who wore ankle length dresses of Nile-green satin, with matching head-dresses, and carried Victorian posies. Master Melvyn Williamson (nephew of the bride) wore a page-boy's suit of velvet and pink satin and presented the bride with a silver horseshoe. Mr Thomas Jackson (bridegroom's brother) was best man.

A reception was held at the Memorial Hall, where over sixty guests were entertained."

John was already serving in the army when he was married. He most probably proudly wore his uniform for the ceremony.

The 1939 census showed Edna's mother, who was already a widow, living at 11, Bedford Road with her sons, Harry, and Joseph, and two daughters, Hannah and Edna. Her married son, Harold was living with his wife Amy (nee Holman) and their son, Melvyn, two doors away. When Edna's mother died, in Cranfield, she was buried in Beckermeth, Cumberland.

The 9th Battalion Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry (K.O.Y.L.I.) – formerly the Queen's Own Yorkshire Dragoons, was a motorised infantry battalion. From 20th July 1943 it was assigned to the 18th Lorried Infantry Brigade, which was attached to the 1st Armoured Division.

The 1st Armoured Division was very active in North Africa taking part in the battles at Gazala, El Alamein and Tunis.

The 1st Armoured Division then “loaned” the 18th Brigade to the 1st Infantry Division which landed at Anzio in Italy. The Anzio invasion began on 22nd January 1944. The attritional battle at Anzio has been described in the previous section.

John was killed at Anzio on 11th April 1944.

John Jackson was buried in **Anzio Beach Head War Cemetery**, one of two Cemeteries at Anzio.



The site of the cemetery originally lay close to a casualty clearing station. Burials were made direct from the

battlefield after the landings at Anzio and later, after the Army had moved forward, many graves were brought in from the surrounding country. Beach Head War Cemetery contains 2,316 Commonwealth burials of the Second World War, 295 of them unidentified.

An entry in ***The Bedford Times*** of 5th May 1944
“JACKSON – Killed in action on the Anzio Beach-Head Front in April 1944.

Sergt. John Jackson, aged 25, dearly loved husband of Edna Jackson, 11 Bedford Road, Cranfield.

“The flowers of my remembrance,
On this grave I cannot keep.
To that unknown place
I cannot come to watch and weep.
But though in death
He sleeps beneath a strange unfriendly sky,
He lives on in my heart,
For love can never die.”

Memorial service 3.45pm Sunday 7th May at Cranfield Church.” His widow remarried early in 1948 to Alfred James Stapleton. They are both buried in Cranfield Churchyard.

His father died on 26th May 1966 in Whitehaven.

LESLIE WALTER BOON. 5833225

Lance Corporal, 1st Battalion the Royal East Kent Regiment. (Buffs)

Died on Friday 17th April 1944 aged 29, at Anzio Italy.

Buried in the Beach Head War cemetery, Anzio, Italy.

Son of Walter and Amy Boon.

Husband of Margaret Boon, of Wolverton.



Leslie Boon was born on 31st January 1914, the third child of **Walter Charles and Amy (nee Gilby) Boon**. Walter, from North Crawley, had served in the 2nd Battalion, Suffolk Regiment, and the 2/19th Battalion London Regiment in the First World War. The family settled in Red Lion Cottages, Cranfield. Their first child, **Francis Clifford**, known as Clifford, was born on 12th January 1911. He married Vera Wilson in 1932 at the Baptist Church in Cranfield. In 1939 they were living in "The Old Manse" on Bedford Road. Clifford was working at the brickworks. (see page 245) Their second child, born on 2nd March 1912, was **Sarah Ann (known as Sally)**, possibly named after her grandmother, Sarah Ann Garner. She married Eric Champkin in 1936. He died in 1946. Sally remarried in 1960, in Bedford, to a widower, Albert Hester. Their next child, **May**, was born on 19th April 1918. She married Sidney Harold Bartram in Wootton in June 1940. He was a driver with the Royal Army Service Corps.

After leaving school, Leslie worked at Stewartby Brickworks with his father and brother. He moved to Wolverton where he married Margaret Patty Gwendoline Osborne in 1939. He worked as a coal deliverer for Messrs. Tilley's Wood and Coal merchants. Their only child, Ann was born the following year.

Leslie joined the 1st Battalion, The Royal East Kent Regiment, known as the "Buffs". He signed up eighteen months before he was killed which would mean that he was serving from October 1942 when the Battalion were in North Africa before being part of the 18th Infantry Brigade, assigned to the 1st Infantry Division for the invasion of Italy.



He was killed at the Anzio Beach Head on 17th April 1944.

He is buried in the Anzio Beach Head War Cemetery, along with John Jackson. (See page 115/116)

A memorial tribute from his father, mother, Cliff, Sally and May reads:

“He never failed to do his best,
His heart was true and tender.
He bravely fought for those he loved,
And left us to remember.”

The photographs of Leslie have been kindly provided by Clare Walsh, his niece.

THE CONTINUING WAR IN ITALY

The American 88th Division entered **Rome** on 4th **June** 1944. Rome was taken without any bombardment or destruction of its ancient buildings.

The Landings at the Normandy Beaches on D-Day took place on 6th **June** and thus began the beginning of the end for the retreating German Army. However, the war in Italy was by no means over.

During the Second World War **Florence** experienced a year-long German occupation (1943–1944).



Florence in August 1944 after the liberation

Operation Olive began on 25th August 1944. This was an Allied attempt to close the last major German defensive line across northern Italy – the Gothic Line which ran just north of **Florence**. It was during this action that **Edward Clarke** was killed on 26th August 1944.

EDWARD ERNEST CLARKE. 5962218
Private, 1st Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire
Regiment.
Died on Saturday 26th August 1944, aged 21, in
Florence Italy.
Buried in the Florence War Cemetery, Italy.
Son of Arthur William Clarke and Catherine
Clarke, of Cranfield.



Edward Clarke, “Ted”, was born in Kamptee, India, in 1923, one of seven children of **Arthur William and Catherine (nee Coleman)**. Edward’s father, Arthur, was a Cranfield boy, the son of Jesse Clark and Annie (nee Caves). He had spent nearly all his life in the army, having joined the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment in 1904. He had seen service in France, India and Iraq before leaving the army in 1935 and settling in Harter Avenue with his wife and family. Edward’s brothers and sisters were: **Frederick** George, born in 1911 in Bow Brickhill, married in 1933 to Beatrice Rose Garner; **Violet**, born in 1913 in Luton, married in 1931 to Robert Wilkins – in 1939 they were living in Hampstead, London; **Grace** Millicent, born in 1920 in Madras, India, married Reginald Anstey in 1939; **Richard** John, born 1921, married Esme Burnett in 1941 and **Robert** Leonard, born in December 1932. In the 1939 census only Arthur, Catherine and Robert were living in Harter Avenue. At that time Arthur was a general labourer at the Brickworks. He died in 1942.

The Bedfordshire Times of 17th March 1944 reported: “Sergt. R.J. Clarke, son of Mrs Clark of Harter Avenue has been reported wounded in action.” This was his older brother, Richard John.

Edward, like his father, served with the 1st Battalion Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment. A short history of the Regiment is given after Edward’s story. (Page 125)

The Battalion was part of the 162nd Brigade which was attached to the 54th (East Anglian) Infantry Division. It was sent out to Gibraltar, arriving there on 22nd April 1943. They stayed there for roughly a year, with quite a lot of time spent in training. They were sent to Italy in July 1944 and joined the 66th Infantry Brigade which became part of the 1st Infantry Division. Edward went with his Battalion to the frontline on 19th August when it was relieving the 6/13th Frontier Force Rifles (part of the Indian Army) northeast of Florence. It was during the action, near Florence, that Edward was killed on 26th August.

The Bedfordshire Times of 22nd September reported:

“Pte. Edward Clarke has been officially reported as missing believed killed. His mother had since received a letter from his friend reporting his death. Pte. Clarke was formerly in Cranfield platoon of the Home Guard.”

The photograph of Edward, and original document, has kindly been supplied by his relatives, Keith, and Julie Roffe of New Zealand.

Edward Clarke is buried in the **Florence War Cemetery**. The Cemetery contains 1,632 Commonwealth burials of men who lost their lives fighting in the area from July to November 1944.



Florence War Cemetery

Cas/Bedfs & Herts/

Infantry Record Office,
St. John's House,
Warwick.

10 October, 1944.

Dear Madam,

5962218, Pte. CLARKE, E.E.
BEDFS & HERTS REGT.

With reference to this office previous notification to you dated the 5th September 1944, to the effect that your son was Missing, believed Killed in Italy on the 25th August 1944.

It is with great regret that I have to inform you that a further report has been received from overseas, stating that your son has now been ascertained Killed in Action on the 25th August 1944, in the Central Mediterranean Theatre of War. An official notification to this effect is enclosed for your retention please.

May I tender my sincere sympathy in your sad loss?

Yours faithfully,

Anthony Bagnall

Lt. Colonel.
Officer i/c Infantry Record Office.

Mrs. Clarke,
10, Harter Avenue,
Cranfield, Bucks.

DFJ.

THE BEDFORDSHIRE AND HERTFORDSHIRE REGIMENT

Originally the Bedfordshire Regiment, with a history going back to 1688, it was renamed the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment in 1919 in recognition of the Hertfordshire men who served with the Regiment during the First World War.



In 1958 the British Army was reduced in size and the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment was merged with the Essex Regiment to form the 3rd East Anglian Regiment. In 1964 it was further merged with the Royal Leicester Regiment, The Norfolk and Suffolk Regiments, The Duchess of Gloucester's Own Lincolnshire Regiment, and the Northampton Regiment to form the **Royal Anglian Regiment**. This is one of four regiments of the Queen's Division.

THE SPRING 1945 OFFENSIVE IN ITALY

This offensive in northern Italy, codenamed **Operation Grapeshot**, was the final Allied attack during the Italian Campaign.

Securing the **crossing at the River Senio** was one of the final tasks before capturing the Po Valley basin and ending the Italian campaign.

The German defenders were mainly elite Parachute units. There were 23 German divisions with 45 Tigers, 35 Panthers and about 40 Mark IV special tanks which outnumbered the Allies.

However the R.A.F. and the U.S.A.A.F. dominated the skies. The Germans were also low on fuel.

The crossing of the Senio took place at both sides of the town of Lugo, in the province of Ravenna. The town suffered heavy destruction and, although the crossing was successful, the British 8th Army took many casualties.

After the crossing the Germans were in retreat although there were two parachute divisions in their rear guard which put up a very strong resistance.

It was here that **Thomas Cave** was killed on 10th May 1945.

THOMAS PHILLIP JOHN CAVE. 7957617

Trooper, 51st The Royal Tank Regiment (Leeds Rifles).

Died on Thursday 10th May 1945, aged 24, in Faenza Italy.

Buried in the Faenza War cemetery, Italy.

Son of Frederick George Cave, and Harriett Elizabeth Cave. Husband of Gwendoline Cave, of Bletchley.



Thomas Cave was born in Emberton in 1920, the eldest of four children of **Frederick George Cave and Harriet Elizabeth (nee Lancaster)**. Frederick was a labourer from Emberton, who had served in the First World War, and Harriet was a Cranfield girl, the sister of Thomas Arthur Lancaster who was killed in France in the First World War. Thomas' siblings were: **Eric**, born in 1922; **Alwyn**, born in 1926 and **Frederick**, born in 1930.

Thomas married Gwendoline Dorothy Rawlings on 26th December 1942 in St. Mary's Church, Wootton.

The Bedfordshire Times of 1st January 1943 reported: "The wedding took place on Saturday at St. Mary's Church, the Rev. T. Quigley officiating, of Miss Gwendoline Dorothy Rawlings, of Cause End Road, Wootton, and Thomas Cave (Royal Tank Regiment) of Bedford Road, Cranfield.

The bride, who was given away by her father, wore a dress of white satin marocain, with orange blossom and veil. Her bouquet was of chrysanthemums and orchids.

She was attended by Mrs R. Allan, and Misses Elsie Kempster, Patricia Logue, Madeline Logue, Margaret Webb, and Ann Latton. The best man was Mr J. Harrison.

The bride was presented with a silver horseshoe on leaving the church by her niece, Valerie Rawlins.

A reception was held at the "Star" Inn.

Among the presents was a white tablecloth from the bride's fellow workmates."

In January 1943 the 51st Royal Tank Regiment (R.T.R) left with the 25th Tank Brigade for North Africa. Under the

command of the British Army, they went into action in Tunisia.



Churchill Tank used by the Royal Tank Regiment

On 16th April they left North Africa for service on the Italian Front. They landed at Naples equipped with Churchill tanks and the smaller Shermans and Stuarts.



The Brigade distinguished themselves supporting the 1st Canadian Division in an assault on the “Hitler Line” a fortified line across Italy, south of Anzio.

In late 1944, to help deal with the anticipated successive enemy defence lines, the 51 R.T.R. had specially converted Crab Mark II flail tanks used to detonate land mines. A and C Squadrons were given Churchill Crocodile Flame throwing tanks.

On 9th April 1945 the 51 R.T.R. attached to the 2nd New Zealand and the 8th Indian Divisions went forward with the 25th Armoured Assault Brigade to the crossing at the River Senio, one of the final tasks before capturing the Po Valley basin and ending the Italian campaign.

Thomas was killed on 10th May 1945. He is buried in the **Faenza War Cemetery**. This was formed in the winter of 1944 and contains 1,152 Commonwealth war burials.



His widow Gwendoline married his brother Eric in late 1948.

The photograph of Thomas was kindly given by his niece, Eileen Cave. He loved boxing and was a keen swimmer.

OPERATION OVERLORD AND THE D DAY LANDINGS

Just two days after the fall of Rome, on 6th June 1944, the Allies landed in Normandy.

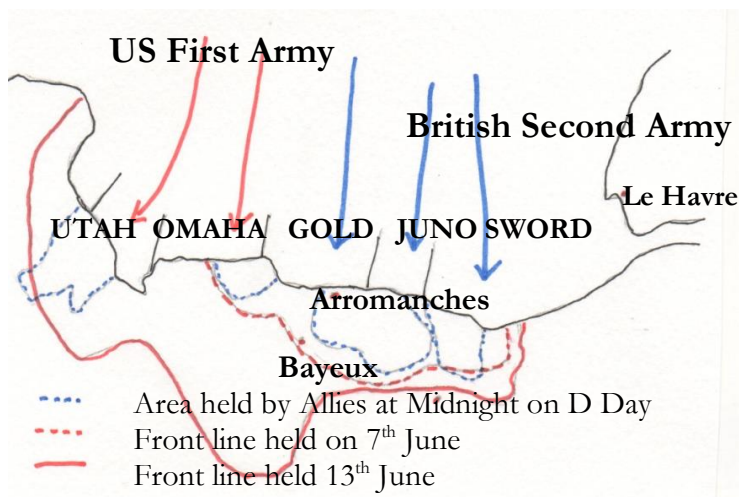
To defeat Hitler, an Allied invasion of France had to take place. The Germans anticipated this and had built a line of fortifications extending from Holland to the Bay of Biscay known as “The Atlantic Wall”. This was mainly gun emplacements.

Because of an elaborate plan of deception, the Germans were convinced that the landing place would be the Pas de Calais on the Straits of Dover. The defences there were more formidable.

The Normandy beaches were the chosen site for the landings and extensive preparations were made. By May 1944 nearly 3 million men were under arms. There were 20 American divisions, 14 British, three Canadian and one each from Poland and France. Nearly 8,000 aircraft, 4,000 landing craft and ships and nearly 300 fighting ships were in readiness.

The plan was for landings on a broad front. The western beaches, Utah and Omaha, were allocated to the Americans while the beaches to the east: Gold, Juno and Sword, were British and Canadian objectives.

Summer gales in the English Channel meant that the date for the invasion was postponed but, on the evening of 5th June, there was a break in the weather and the orders were given to go ahead.



The Normandy Landings D-Day 6th June 1944

In the first two hours, airborne troops landed by glider and parachute. However, many were blown off course and unable to secure the beachheads. At dawn on 6th June, a huge fleet of invading vessels approached the coast and the landings commenced.

At Utah beach resistance was minimal but on Omaha the air strike, intended to eliminate the German defences, had

missed its target, and left them virtually unscathed. The Americans suffered severe casualties. By the end of the day 3,881 were dead, missing or wounded on Omaha beach alone. The British, although under fire, successfully landed on Gold, Juno and Sword and were able to capture Bayeux, although they were held up outside Caen. Total British casualties were 3,000 men killed or wounded.

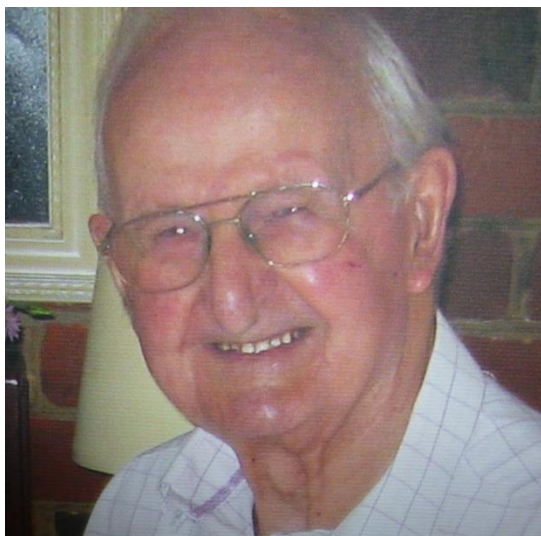


British Troops come ashore at Gold Beach

The slow response by the German tank divisions was partly due to the surprise of the attack in such terrible weather in an unexpected location, but the German High Command was slow to respond because, apparently, Hitler was asleep when the invasion started, and nobody dared to wake him! The tide of the war had turned. Allied Air Forces gave support and allowed ground forces to break out and attack German columns. Some 4,600 sorties were flown by Allied aircraft during that first day.

MAURICE LANGSTON'S STORY

Maurice Langston, formerly a Cranfield resident, remembered the Normandy Landings



This charming and much-loved gentleman celebrated his 100th Birthday on 22nd March 2017. It was a privilege to share his memories.

Maurice was born during WWI and served in WWII, experiencing the Normandy Beaches.

After a career ranging from sheet metal work to assessing car damage for insurance, he retired at the age of 67 and moved to Cranfield with his wife, Doris, in 1984. He served

on the Methodist Circuit as Lay Preacher. His life is defined by his faith and optimism.

Maurice George Langston was born in Chiswick on 22nd March 1917, during WWI. His father, Frank was in the Metropolitan Police. Frank and his mother, Florence, had five children. John William, the eldest was two years older than Maurice. His three younger sisters were Joan, Doris Muriel and Barbara Florence. They had a happy childhood in Chiswick.

It was at Acton Congregational Church that Maurice met Doris. He was in the Boys Brigade, she in the Girl's Brigade. They sat at opposite sides of the church, and he was obviously smitten. They were **married on Boxing Day 1938**, at Acton Green, in deep snow.



They were living in W. London in a flat in Chiswick when Maurice received his call up papers in 1941 on the day that his eldest daughter, Rita, was born in hospital.



He joined **92nd Company Royal Engineers**, formed especially for the War. He was a Sapper, Army service number 2137976. The Royal Engineers were the backbone of the British Army. The Company was based in Barton Stacey in Hampshire. Originally it was experimenting in different methods of using poison gas. In 1943 it became a “Field Company”. His service record shows him attending

various courses both for Physical Training and Engineering as a Sheet Metal Worker.

On 13th August 1941 he was promoted to Lance Corporal, in June 1942 to Corporal and in the September to Substantive Corporal.

In May/June 1944 the unit moved to Osterley Park, West London, and transferred to Kent as part of the build-up of forces there, to deceive German air reconnaissance.

Maurice's Company moved from Kent to Southampton and sailed to Normandy in an American troop carrier known as a Liberty ship. They landed on a beach near Le Havre and had to wade ashore. Their transport followed on another ship. They were not met by any resistance. Gangways had been placed on the beaches because of mines.

The weather was foul, pouring with rain, as they dug themselves in to shallow trenches.

The unit's first job was to ensure a safe water supply. They installed three inflatable tanks holding 1500 gallons each.

The water was pumped from the river and filtered with a coarse and fine filter.

Food and supplies were shipped over from England and their job was to keep the roads open for supplies to get through. They had to repair bomb damage.

The British had a medical unit at Bayeux, and it was important that the road be kept clear. This was the Unit's job.

Although there was much resistance the Germans were "on the run".

Maurice travelled with his unit into Belgium and through Holland into northern Germany, arriving at Lüneburg.

Hitler killed himself on 30th April 1945 and resistance ceased on 2nd May. On 3rd May a German delegation approached Montgomery's HQ at Lüneburg Heath. An unconditional surrender was demanded and the following day the document was signed. The war in Europe was over. Maurice's Unit's job was to build leave camps for the returning troops. He was a Sergeant by this time.

While they were stationed at Iserlohn there was time for recreation but, during a football match, they were called to donate blood for the local hospital.

After five and a half years serving in the army, in June 1946, Maurice was demobbed.

He went by train through Northern France and then sailed to Folkestone where he boarded a train for Aldershot before taking a train to Woking and then to Waterloo where Doris was waiting to meet him at the tube station, on the District Line.

Maurice is, justifiably, proud of his medals.



From left to right these are: **39-49 Star; France Germany Star; 39-43 Defence Medal; Victory Medal.**

Maurice was better off financially in the army than in “civvy street” as everything was supplied, and Doris received a small allowance.

He returned to the motor trade as a sheet metal worker and was in charge of a body shop in Golders Green. The family moved to Greenford, Middlesex in December 1949. Their daughter, Joanne, was born in 1955 when Rita was 14. He moved to estimating the cost of body repairs for insurance companies and when 67 started to think about retiring.

As his eldest daughter, Rita, lived in Luton at the time they decided to move to Bedfordshire. They fell in love with 79

High Street, in “Tea Pot Row” and moved to Cranfield in 1984. They made their final home in Orchard Way.

Sadly Doris died in December 2011 at the age of 95.

Maurice has had a full and contented life, surrounded by the love of family and friends. He says that he has not been “lucky” but rather “richly blessed”. He, in turn, has enriched the lives of so many.

In May 2017, when Maurice was in his 100th year, he received a letter from the French Ambassador in London telling him “I have the pleasure to inform you that the President of the Republic has appointed you to the rank of Chevalier in the Order National de la Legion D’Honneur, in recognition of your acknowledged military engagement and your steadfast involvement in the Liberation of France during the Second World War. As we contemplate the Europe of Peace we must never forget the heroes like you who served Britain and the Commonwealth to begin the liberation of Europe by liberating France. We owe our freedom to your dedication because you were ready to risk your life.”

The photographs, taken at the end of October 1917, show Maurice proudly holding his medal and the medal itself.



Maurice's long and fulfilled life ended on 26th May 2019. His ashes are buried with those of his dear Doris in Cranfield Cemetery. Their head stone reads "Together again Forever in the House of the Lord".

THE LIBERATION OF FRANCE

Paris was liberated by Allied and resistance troops on **25th August 1944**. It took longer for the rest of France to be liberated. In the north, town after town fell to the remorseless advance of the American, Canadian, and British troops. By September only the coastal towns of Boulogne, Calais and Dunkirk remained defended by German troops. Meanwhile the British and American troops had advanced into Belgium and Luxembourg.

OPERATION MARKET GARDEN – ARNHEM 17-25TH SEPTEMBER 1944

Two physical barriers held up the Allied advance into Germany. One was the **Seigfried Line or Western Wall**, stretching along the German border. The others were the **River Rhine** across Germany and the Netherlands to Rotterdam, and the **River Meuse** passing through Liege and Maastricht, running north to Nijmegen before turning west to the sea.

To secure the river crossings and sweep into Germany, **Operation Market Garden** was planned. This was a sad failure although it earned Britain lasting ties of friendship with that part of Holland.



The first airborne landing took place on Sunday 17th September, followed by two other waves. Montgomery had miscalculated the German resistance. **Two Panzer Divisions** were resting and refitting just north of Arnhem and soon moved into position on both sides of the river. Although **Colonel Frost** and the Paras held the bridge at Arnhem for 3 days, on the evening of 21st September, Colonel John Frost was seriously wounded and had only 100 men left. They were overrun and captured.

Over 3,700 American Airborne personnel and a total of around 11,000 men of all units were killed, wounded or posted missing at Arnhem.

The story is told in the 1977 epic war film “A Bridge Too Far”, based on the 1974 book by Cornelius Ryan.

BELGIUM –THE BATTLE OF SCHELDT 2ND OCTOBER – 8TH NOVEMBER 1944

The battle of Scheldt was fought just north of **Ghent**. The Allies were trying to clear the Germans from both banks of the Scheldt Estuary to open up the port of **Antwerp** for Allied shipping. The city itself had been taken relatively easily on 4th September but the estuary was still held. After Arnhem, the Germans had time to take up strong defensive positions. Fierce fighting lasted until November 3rd when the German commander, General Daser, was captured.

By Mid-November Antwerp was open and after the clearance of mines, it was in use to provide vital supplies for General Eisenhower’s 60 divisions in Europe.

It was near Ghent that the last of our Cranfield boys, Peter Eaton, was killed on 25th October 1944.

PETER STANLEY EATON. 14577148

Gunner, Royal Artillery.

Died on Wednesday 25th October 1944, aged 19,
in Ghent Belgium.

Buried in the Ghent City cemetery,

Son of Albert and Alice Eaton, of Cranfield.

Peter Eaton was born in 1925 in Woodford, Northamptonshire, the youngest of five children of **Albert James** Eaton and his wife **Alice Keziah (nee Dunford)**. Albert was from Woodford and his mother from Rutland.

His brothers and sisters were: **Ida** Francis, born in 1913, she never married and died in 2002; **Ethel** Betty, born in 1917, married Charles W. Laddington in 1940; **Gertrude** Fanny, born in 1919, married Allan Munn, who worked for the Air Ministry, in 1938; **Albert**, born in 1921, married Joyce R. Griggs in 1948.

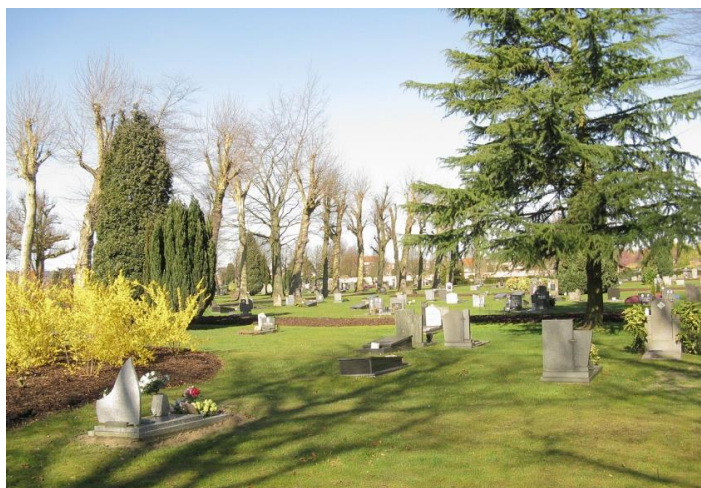
The 1939 census shows the family living at 212 High Street, Cranfield. His father was a labourer at the brickworks. His two sisters, Ida and Ethel were living in Leicester, working for a couple who owned a shop.

He was with the Royal Artillery and in a holding unit attached to the Head Quarters in Ghent. He was killed when the building was hit during a German bombing raid. He was only 19 and may not have seen active service before he was killed.

Lee contacted Woolwich Barracks for an interpretation of the code on his record of death: RA (XIV) List at HQ 102 RFT G Group. He was with the 4th group, but the X meant that he was not deployed.

The unit may have been fighting in the **Battle of Scheldt** (2nd October – 8th November 1944). The Allies were clearing the Germans from the banks of the Scheldt Estuary to open up the port of Antwerp for shipping.

Peter Stanley Eaton is buried in the Ghent **Westerbegraafplaats Cemetery**, Palinguizen, East Flanders, Belgium. This is a community cemetery. The military part contains the graves of 197 Commonwealth soldiers.



1945 – THE ROAD TO VICTORY

In **February 1945** the Allies entered Germany and pushed towards the Rhine.

After the liberation of Budapest, the German forces were in full retreat.

On **7th March** – the Americans beat the retreating forces to the bridge at Remagen.

On **23rd March** – the British crossed the Rhine, and, by early April, the whole east bank was in Allied hands.

By **25th April** – Berlin was surrounded.

On **30th April** – Adolf Hitler committed suicide.

On **2nd May** – German forces in Italy surrendered and all resistance in Europe had ceased.

On **4th May** – at Montgomery's Headquarters at Lüneberg Heath, near Reims, France, an unconditional surrender of German Forces in the Netherlands, northwest Germany and Denmark was accepted by Hitler's successor, Admiral Karl Donitz.

On **8th May** – the official document was signed in Berlin. This day became celebrated as **VE-Day**. The formal ending to the war in the Channel Islands was signed the following day.

THE HOLOCAUST – AUSCHWITZ

Although the war in Europe was over, the scenes discovered as the Allies liberated the camps at Dachau, Buchenwald, and Auschwitz, in Poland, revealed a depth of horror that outstripped anything imaginable.

Some six million Jews were systematically murdered by the Nazis in the genocide of WWII.

In 2008 Jean Sampson, a Cranfield resident, visited **Auschwitz – Birkenau**. Auschwitz I was the original concentration camp and Auschwitz II – Birkenau - was a combination of concentration and extermination camp. Jean shares her memories, feelings and photographs:

“The famous entry gate at Auschwitz with its message which translates as “work sets you free” and the railway line into Birkenau, so often seen in films, where the passengers alighted and walked to their huts, were two images one can never forget.”



“We went on a tour of Auschwitz with an English-speaking guide. She emphasised that when you entered certain

buildings YOU MUST NOT SPEAK in reverence for the dead. We walked into this building and there were casements with large glass fronts. Behind the glass there were piles of items. In each casement the items were different. There were cases – masses of cases: shoes of all sizes, clothes, coats, bags, teeth etc. – everything that the Jews were stripped of and never given back. BUT the worst was a huge pile of children's clothes. I broke down, but a foreign man put his arm around me and whispered "Don't cry. They will tell you to leave if you make a noise". We went from block to block and walked down into the place where Dr Joseph Mengele, the infamous Nazi doctor performed horrific medical "experiments" on many individuals. We saw the large empty brick buildings where people were crammed in and poisonous fumes emitted from above, killing them. Then the ovens where they were incinerated."

"The Kommandant and his wife and children would have lived in sight of these buildings of horror. We then went by shuttle bus to Birkenau where we walked along the famous railway line. The camps were all but gone. Only rows of chimneys to show where they had been. We saw inside one of the few left and it was hard to realise how many had been crammed inside and how difficult it must have been in Poland's severe winters. The one thing that I will never forget is being shown rows of holes in a long line of concrete which was a communal toilet."

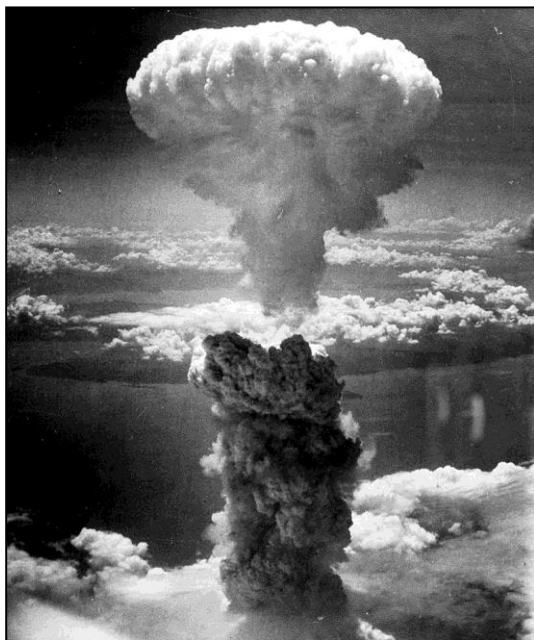


When I appealed for photographs relating to the War, a Polish gentleman called Sebastian, who now lives in the village, but who was born some 80 miles from Auschwitz, sent me these photographs.



On **6th August** the **first Atomic bomb** was dropped on Hiroshima in Japan. Deaths from injury and radiation were estimated at between 90,000 and 160,000.

On **9th August** a **second Atomic bomb** was dropped on Nagasaki, killing 35,000 civilians, and inflicting enormous industrial damage.



On **14th August** the Japanese surrendered.

Post War Europe

After the war, under the terms of the peace agreement, Austria was declared a neutral state while Germany was divided into zones of administration under British, American, Polish, French and Russian rule.

Europe was soon divided again. In the east the **Warsaw Pact**, a collective defence treaty, saw Poland, East Germany and the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) Czechoslovakia, Romania and Albania become Soviet Satellites with unpopular communist regimes. West Germany and West Berlin came under the protection of N.A.T.O. leading to tensions in central Europe and the “Cold War”.

The Pact began to unravel with the spread of revolutionary movements beginning with “Solidarity” In Poland in 1989. East Germany withdrew following reunification with West Germany in 1990. In 1991 the Pact was at an end and the USSR was dissolved. The seven Warsaw Pact countries – the Czech Republic and Slovakia, as separate countries, each joined N.A.T.O.

At the time of writing this new edition we are witnessing the horrendous war in Ukraine. Our thoughts are with the people of this battered country. We pray for lasting peace in our world. In the words of Winston Churchill, “Jaw, Jaw, not War, War.”

VICTORY CELEBRATIONS



Winston Churchill waving to crowds in Whitehall on VE- Day

In London there was dancing in the streets on VE-Day (8th May 1945) and Pearl Cartmill was there!

Pearl Cartmill remembers VE-Day

Pearl remembered that she must have been about fifteen at the time. She, with a girl who lived in the next street, went to London for the occasion and stayed until 4 o'clock in the morning!

She remembers dancing in the streets with the soldiers and sailors.

The crowds were calling for the King George VI and Queen Elizabeth to appear on the balcony of Buckingham Palace. Pearl saw them and remembered the whole occasion clearly.

She returned home on the “milk train” and was greeted by a very worried Mum and Dad!

She said there was no need to be worried. There was no drinking or disorderly behaviour, just innocent enjoyment.

In Cranfield, local residents still remember the knees-up on the village green.

From the **Cranfield Parish Council** records, we learn that on **16th April 1946** “It was decided to call a Parish Meeting to ascertain the feeling of public opinion on the matter.”

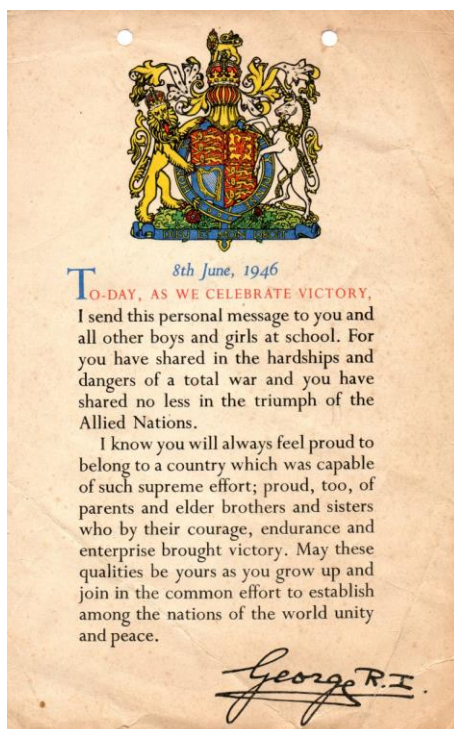
On **30th April 1946**, public opinion being positive, a meeting was called to consider Victory Celebrations. Suggestions were made and the following were accepted: children to be provided for in some form, up to school leaving age; a dance on the village green; a bonfire. It was agreed to hold a thanksgiving service on Saturday morning, 8th June.

On **7th May** it was reported that the Education Committee were to allow 2s.0d. per head for the benefit of the Elementary Schoolchildren. Mr Willis had been authorised by the Home Guard to be responsible for the arrangements for the dance, bonfire, and fireworks. A whist drive was to be held in the Memorial Hall. A tea was to be provided for all schoolchildren and a commemorative beaker or mug to be presented to each child. Mr F. Lovesey proposed a social for the older people.

Mr Willis reported that he couldn't get a firework display for under about £25. This was thought by some to be

prohibitive but eventually it was agreed that a display be provided. Mr Wheeler thanked all who had worked so hard to make the proceedings a success.

At the end of the Second World War every child in the country was given a certificate from King George VI.



PART FOUR

R.A.F. CRANFIELD



Some of the graves of the airmen in Cranfield Churchyard

We shall follow a brief history of the R.A.F. and R.A.F. Cranfield.

We shall also remember the airmen and soldiers, buried in the Churchyard of St. Peter and St. Paul, and their stories.

One of our residents, Joyce Shrubbs, joined the Royal Observer Corps, in Bedford, on her 17th birthday, in 1944. She shared her memories. She sadly died on 2nd July 2021.

THE ROYAL AIR FORCE – R.A.F.

1ST April 2018 was **the centenary of the formation of the R.A.F.** by combining the Royal Flying Corps, affiliated to the Army, and the Royal Navy Air Service. The R.A.F. was critical, not only to Britain's survival in the early years of the conflict but also to its ultimate victory.



The R.A.F. Badge and motto

“Per Adua Ad Astra” – Through Adversity to the Stars.

R.A.F. CRANFIELD before the declaration of war

The story of the coming of the Airfield to Cranfield is told on page 263. It became operational from June 1937, with a level grass surface, under the control of No.1 Bomber Group. The first planes to arrive were the **Hawker Hinds** of 108 Squadron from Farnborough. It soon became home to the newly re-formed Nos. 62 and 82 squadrons also flying **Hawker Hind biplanes**.

The First Fatal Crash

On 12th October 1937, the first fatal crash occurred just over three months after the opening, although the pilot was not buried at Cranfield. *The Bedfordshire Times and Independent* of 15th October reported the details under the heading: **“FIRST FATALITY AT NEW AERODROME – Cranfield Pilot Killed in Night Landing.”** “The first fatal accident at the newly established Cranfield Royal Air Force Station occurred on 12th October at the edge of the aerodrome. An aircraft of No.82 Bomber Squadron which was being flown by **Pilot Officer James Lawrence Wells**, aged twenty-one, of Edinburgh, struck a tree near the Moul Road and burst into flames. Efforts to save the pilot failed. Pilot Officer Wells who had been posted to Cranfield for navigation duties after passing a short navigation course, was taking part in night operations. His aeroplane hit one of the trees in a clump attached to Moulsoe Road Cottage occupied by Mr Sinfield. It crashed to the ground and almost immediately burst into flames. Pilot Officer Wells was the only occupant, and he had no chance of escaping. The aerodrome fire squad rushed to the scene, but when the flames had been extinguished the pilot was found to be dead. Squadron Leader N. C. Pleasance, Officer Commanding No.82 Squadron, said that Wells had been in the Air Force about two years. Wells had been up and made one landing. Witness asked him to make another landing, in accordance with the instructions. He went up at

once, made a circuit of the Aerodrome, and came round to land in the flare path. He came in at a very low altitude, wide of the flare path, and witness thought it was an error of judgement on his (Well's) part. He turned to his left, still at low altitude, and hit a tree about fifty feet high. The machine then fell to the ground and caught fire. The witness and other people rendered all the assistance they could.

The Coroner recorded a verdict of accidental death. The jury added a rider to the effect that any trees which impeded landing ought to be removed.”



Photo manipulation showing Hinds flying at Cranfield again.

How long it was before the trees came down is not known but, just a few weeks, later there was another dramatic accident involving Hinds. On 5th November, as three 82 Squadron Hinds were coming in to land, flying in a “V” formation the wing tips of the central and right hand aircraft touched and their wings locked together. Out of control

they crashed at the airfield boundary and were completely wrecked.

Thankfully, and rather incredibly, the accident summary cards record that there were no fatalities or injuries.



Hawker Hind Biplane

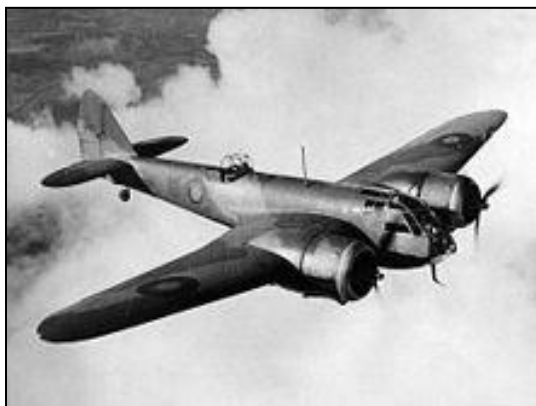
The Hawker Hind was to be the last light bomber biplane to operate with the R.A.F. Although the type had entered service just two years earlier, its small payload and lack of speed meant that it was rapidly becoming obsolete. By September 1938 No.108 Squadron had moved to Bassingbourn and the Hinds of the other two squadrons had been replaced by Blenheim Mk.1's. In August 1939 No. 62 Squadron was sent to the Far East and Singapore and No. 82 moved to Watton in Norfolk. Nos. 35 and 207 Squadrons then arrived from Cottesmore, with Fairey Battles, to take their place in the lead up to WWII.

Two other fatal crashes occurred before war was declared. Both of the pilots are buried in Cranfield Churchyard.

Pilot Officer David Shine, who died on 22nd March 1939 aged 19 years, was the first airman to be buried in Cranfield, following the establishment of the nearby R.A.F. station.

David Shine was born at Camas Park, Cashel, Tipperary, Ireland, to **Major David Ernest Shine and Helen Jane Sayers**. His father had served for many years in the Royal Garrison Artillery in Tipperary before serving in the First World War. His parents married in 1906 and David, their youngest child, was born in 1920. The eldest, **Ernest Frederick**, was born in 1907. He came to England, passed his training as an Air Auxiliary pilot in August 1945, in Hayes Middlesex, but died aged 42 years in the Sudan. The middle child was a girl, **Eileen** Florence, born in 1912. She also came to England during the war and trained as a nurse in Sheffield, entering the Queen Alexandra Royal Army Nursing Corps which she made her career. She reached the rank of Major and died, unmarried, in 2003 at the age of 90.

On the morning of 22nd **March 1939**, David was the pilot of a **Blenheim Bomber**, belonging to No. 62 Squadron based at Cranfield. The Bristol Blenheim was a three seated light bomber powered by two 800 h.p engines.



Bristol Blenheim Mk1

His crew were Sergeant John Randolph Wiles aged 36 and the wireless operator, Aircraftman Frederick George Lewis, aged 21.

The Squadron took off from Cranfield at 10.30 am, bound for Donibristle near Edinburgh. Six Blenheims were flying in formation with David flying to the right of the lead plane. Although it was reported that the weather was fine at take-off, they flew into a “three-minute storm of snow and hail of blinding intensity” in Northamptonshire. The Squadron flew into the storm, but the Squadron Leader noted that only five planes flew out of the clouds. He tried to contact the missing Blenheim via the radio operator but, getting no reply, wrongly presumed that the plane had returned to Cranfield. The five Blenheims continued to Edinburgh, turning back without landing and arrived back at Cranfield at 1.30pm when they learned that the missing plane had not returned.

There were many eyewitnesses to the crash when David's Blenheim came down close to Cranford, three miles from Kettering. After missing houses and a busy road the Blenheim came out of the clouds, flying low at full throttle. The plane looked as if it was trying to turn when it hit the ground. The impact was so great that it was heard over four miles away, and at such a speed that the wreckage burst into hundreds of pieces spread over five fields. Parts of the fuselage were recovered from bushes and hedges.

At the inquest the Cranfield R.A.F. doctor said that death was instantaneous for all three men. The impact was so great that all of their bones were fractured. All three men were still attached to their parachutes, showing they had no time to abandon the plane. It was noted that, despite his young age, David had 270 flying hours, 100 of them in Blenheims and 17 hours of Blind Flying. It was found that there was no negligence from the crew and all maintenance inspections had been carried out. Verdicts of Accidental Death were given.

His obituary in ***The Waterford Standard*** of 25th March 1939: "The late Pilot Officer Shine received his education at Bishop Foy School, Waterford, where he was a pupil from September 1931 until July 1937. After passing the Intermediate Examination, with honours, in 1936, he gained the Cambridge School Certificate in 1937, and was appointed later in the year in the Royal Air Force as a Pilot Officer. Here he displayed great keenness and promise, and only a few weeks ago a letter was received from his

Commanding Officer commending him as a most efficient young officer. To the staff and pupils of the Bishop Foy School the news came as a great shock, for it is such a short time since David was one of themselves, attending classes in the Mall and playing games at Grantstown. He was a school Prefect, a member of the 1st Hockey XI and, during his last few years, a prominent performer at the School Athletic Sports. He will be remembered by all for his cheerfulness, his independent spirit, and his affection for the school.”

David Shine was buried in Cranfield. His grave has a raised stone surround and is located at the front and to the left of the main group of WWII graves in the Churchyard.

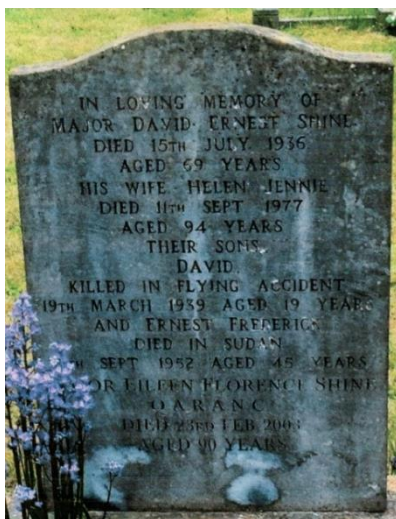
With his brother, Ernest, and sister, Eileen, David is commemorated on his parents’ headstone in the grounds of the Cathedral of St John the Baptist, Cashel. Camas Park is now a multimillion-pound stud farm.

Sergeant Wiles was returned home to Leeds and Aircraftman Lewis home to Woolwich.



IN MEMORY OF
PILOT OFFICER
DAVID SHINE
DIED
MARCH 22ND
1939

*The overgrown grave of
Pilot Officer David Shine
in Cranfield Churchyard*



*Commemorated on his
Parents' Headstone in Ireland*

Pilot Officer William Kinane Royal Australian Air Force, attached to R.A.F. 218th Squadron died on 11th August 1939, aged 21 years when his Fairey Battle, a light bomber, crashed into a pylon at Carlton, Bedfordshire. He was the second pilot to be buried at Cranfield.



Photograph of William Kinane from the front page of an Australian Newspaper "The Mirror" of 12th August 1939

The Photograph is alongside the headlines and story:
**"South Perth Boy's Death in R.A.F. Crash
KILLED WHEN BOMBER STRUCK HIGH
TENSION CABLE**

“When the Fairey Bomber he was piloting struck a high tension cable at Carlton (England) yesterday, William “Bill” Kinane was killed. He was the second of three young Western Australians, who joined the R.A.A.F. in 1936, to be killed. He would have celebrated his 22nd birthday less than a fortnight hence.

Champion athlete, keen scholar and good companion, “Bill” Kinane was one of the brightest lights to pass through our University in recent years. In three years of flying, he had a brilliant record of success and he hoped to return to Australia at the end of his five years’ service with the Royal Air Force.”

Bill Kinane was reared at the house where his parents still reside at 44 King Edward Street, South Perth. His father, Mr William Kinane, was a prominent official in the Taxation Department, until his retirement several years ago.

His parents, **William and Mary (nee Long)** had five children. William, known as Bill, was the youngest and the only boy. He went to Point Cook training school where he excelled in athletics, setting a new record for the long jump. *(Although the photo is of the high jump, this is definitely what was reported)*



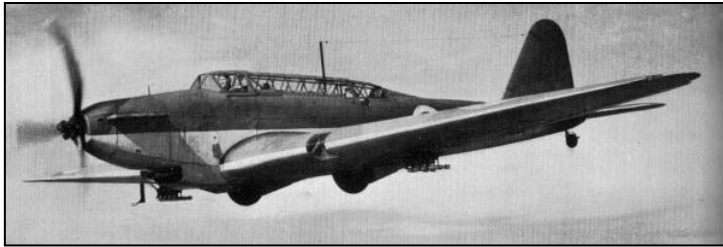
Photo of William Kinane supplied by the Perth Sunday Times

He was one of three young men selected from the hundreds who applied to join the R.A.A.F. for a period of five years. He was eighteen at the time and had every intention of returning to Australia after he had finished his service. When he crashed he had served exactly half of his five years.

Bill was with **218th Squadron** based at **Boscombe Down** between April 1938 and September 1939. R.A.F. Boscombe Down, in south Wiltshire, is still operational as a military aircraft testing site and home of the Empire Test Pilots' School.

With war on the horizon, he was taking part in a "Home Defence Exercise" flying in formation with instructions to fly low. He took off early on the morning of 11th August. With him, in his Fairey Battle bomber, were his observer, Sergeant Peter Aitken Allen, aged twenty-eight, married,

from Farnborough and his wireless operator Aircraftman Ivor Roberts of the Rhondda Valley.”



The Fairey Battle was introduced in 1936. By the outbreak of World War II more than 1,000 were in service. By the end of 1940 it had been withdrawn from front line service.

The Bedfordshire Times and Standard of Friday 18th August gives an account of the accident: Hitting the top of a fifty-foot electricity pylon near Carlton Training School on 11th August, a Royal Air Force medium bomber crashed in flames, tearing down a tree and landing upside down only a few yards from a farmhouse. Tree and aeroplane burned furiously while Mr J.A. Bevington, the farmer, Horace, his son and Mr Thomas Betts, a farm labourer made efforts to rescue the crew. They were able to find one man, A/C Ivor Roberts, of Rhondda Valley, whom they carried from the blazing wreckage still strapped to the rear cockpit seat. Although they saw the prone figure of another man in the blaze they could not reach him. The charred remains of the other two members of the crew, Flying Officer W. Kinane, of the Royal Australian Air Force, attached to the R.A.F., and Sergeant P.A. Allen were recovered.

The 'plane, a Fairey Battle machine from Boscombe Down, was one of the bombers taking part in the air exercises that were held throughout last week and was in the "attacking force". It flew over Carlton from a northerly direction, with another plane of the same type. The latter plane was flying slightly higher and missed the pylon. The one piloted by Flying Officer Kinane, however, caught the top of the electricity grid pylon, breaking off the topmost girder-work and pulling down two cables. There was a great flash of blue light as this happened and flames burst from underneath one wing. As the 'plane hurtled downwards pieces of the metal plating that had been ripped open by the crash into the pylon fell off and were buried in the grass of the Carlton Training School playing field in which the pylon stands. Coming lower, with flames streaming out behind, the 'plane collided with terrific force with an ash tree near the cricket pavilion. With a rending crash the tree was carried over, being split right down to its roots, and the 'plane somersaulted, the final impact with the ground, breaking it into a number of pieces.

The wreckage was in the field (next to the playing field) in which the farm stands and was within twenty feet of the door of the farmhouse. First on the spot where Mr Bevington and his son, and with commendable courage they pulled the injured man, complete with seat, straps, wireless apparatus and parachute from the fuselage in intense heat. Mr Thomas Betts, a farm labourer, also helped. Boys from the Carlton Training School also ran to the scene, but when they arrived another petrol tank had blown up and the flames were too fierce.

The Liverpool Daily Post of Saturday 12th August adds an eyewitness account of the farmer: Mr A. J. Bevington told a reporter; “As two planes came towards the farm I could see that, unless they flew higher, they would hit the pylon. One plane lifted slightly and missed the wires, but the other, after wobbling, hit the topmost point of the pylon, dragging wires with it and burst into flames”. “The plane was stopped from hitting a house by a tree, and it fell to pieces as it buried itself in the field. Soon the tree was alight, and the heat was intense when I and my son set forward to see if we could rescue the men. Shading my eyes, I crawled to the fuselage, and, when I saw something move in the wreckage, I found the wireless operator strapped to his seat with his head downwards. Helped by my son and Mr Thomas Betts, a farm labourer, I was able to pull him clear, and we cut him away from the seat. His clothing was still alight, and Mr Betts put it out by wrapping sacks around him. When I went into the flames I had seen another lying trapped in the framework of the fuselage but, although I beat at the flames with my hands, I could not get to him. We had only just got clear with the injured man when the petrol tank burst.”

Mr Bevington, his son, and Mr Betts were treated for burns on their hands and arms. When he regained consciousness, Roberts’ first words were, “Don’t worry about me. There are two other men in there. Get them out.”

The Inquest (reported in the *Bedfordshire Times and Standard* of 18th August):

It was revealed that an R.A.F. Officer at the inquest, which was opened by the County Coroner (Mr. R.G. Rose) at the Carlton Training School on Monday, said that the men had orders to fly low and that extremely bumpy air conditions

prevailed on Friday. On behalf of Mrs Allen, wife of one of the victims, a sergeant, paid tribute to the attempts made to rescue the men by Mr Bevington, his son and Mr Betts.

Ivor Roberts was taken to the hospital at R.A.F. Cranfield. Dr David Thomas a Flight-Lieutenant in charge of the hospital at the Cranfield R.A.F. Camp, said that Aircraftsman Roberts' condition until midnight on Saturday went on well. But after that he grew worse, and he died at 4.30am. He was semi-conscious for thirty-six hours before he died. A verdict of Accidental Death was given.

The Funeral of Pilot Officer William Kinane
From *Bedfordshire Times and Standard* of 18th August

Flying-Officer William Kinane was honoured with a full-dress military funeral at Cranfield on Wednesday afternoon and sympathisers lined the route from the R.A.F. Station to the Parish Church. The coffin, which was draped with the Union Jack and bore the Officer's cap, was conveyed on an R.A.F. tender escorted by four officers of his squadron and two officers from the Cranfield Station. The cortege was comprised of fellow-officers and a detachment from the Cranfield Station, which marched with reversed rifles.

The Rev. C. E. McMenemy acting chaplain at Cardington R.A.F. Station officiated. F/O Kinane was a Roman Catholic, and no service was held in the Church. The coffin was met at the graveside by Group-Captain W. H. Dunn D.S.C., Commander of the Cranfield Station and Wing-Commander Duggan, Commander of the 218th Squadron, to which F/O Kinane belonged. After the coffin had been

lowered and the Roman Catholic service conducted, the firing party fired three shots and the trumpeters sounded the Last Post. Among the wreaths sent were those from Air-Officer Commanding and Officers of Headquarters No.1 Group. Officers' Mess R.A.F. Station Cranfield, Officers' Mess R.A.F. Station Boscombe Down, Sergeants' Mess, Boscombe Down. Sergeant Allan was buried at Biggin Hill and Aircraftman Roberts at St. Athan Wales.

**IN MEMORY
OF
PILOT OFFICER
WILLIAM KINANE**

**DIED 11TH AUGUST
1939
AGED 21 YEARS**



Carlton Training School and Emmaus

The pylon was in the grounds of the Carlton Training School. The School opened in 1857 as the Bedford Reformatory and Approved School for Boys, accommodating seventy boys aged between thirteen and fifteen who were committed by the magistrates for a period of at least four years. It was primarily a farm school with agricultural work being the main training. By December 1924 the premises were certified to accommodate one hundred and fifteen boys. In 1933 Carlton became one of the first establishments to be redesignated as one of the new **Approved Schools**, introduced by the Young Persons' Act, to replace former Reformatories and Industrial Schools. In August a serious disturbance occurred when a group of boys rebelled and absconded. The subsequent inquiry found that some of their grievances, of illicit punishments and prolonged detentions, were justified. The Durand Report resulted in a number of changes to the Approved School system including the provision of secure units and rooms for more difficult boys, and improvement in the officers' salaries to attract better quality staff. In 1973 the School became a Community Home with Education under the control of Central Bedfordshire Council. The site is now the home of **Carlton Emmaus Village** offering accommodation, work, and support for formerly homeless people. The original chapel still survives. I urge you to support Emmaus by donating unwanted goods and visiting their fascinating shops and popular café at Carlton. This splendid organisation gives people hope and a feeling of self-worth.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

In the air the Luftwaffe had considerable superiority. Goering could put in the air no less than 4,700 aircraft including 552 Junkers, 52 three engined transporters, and 9 squadrons of Stuka bombers. The R.A.F. could only muster 3,600 aircraft of which a great number were obsolescent or even obsolete. The French had virtually no modern bombers or fighters.

On 3rd and 4th September, the R.A.F. flexed its muscles. 29 Blenheim and Wellington bombers attacked the German Fleet at Wilhelmshaven and the Kiel Canal.

Since the opening of the R.A.F. in Cranfield in June 1937, the village had got used to the airmen hopping over the boundary hedge, which came right up to the village, to visit Pam's Café or the Ritz Cinema.

Many in the village, as today, provided lodgings for those based at Wharley End, and even Twinwoods. Mavis Mackrill recalls that both her mother and grandmother took in lodgers. (More of Mavis's memories are on page 335.) As today, they were from different parts the world. She remembered airmen from India and Canada. Her grandmother kept in touch with the airman from Canada. He and his fiancée, later his wife, became great friends of the family. Now, as then, we are enriched by those who make Cranfield their temporary home.

November 1939 saw the accidental death of the third airman who lies in Cranfield Churchyard.

Pilot Officer Thomas Ross Williams No. 41512
R.A.F. 207 Squadron, died at Bassingbourn,
Cambridgeshire, 28th November 1939, aged 21 years.

He was a Canadian, born in 1918, in Ottawa, Ontario.
This photograph accompanies an obituary in the ***Ottawa
Journal of November 29^h, 1939.***



“Tom Williams Ottawa Pilot Killed Overseas

Son of Mr and Mrs R.R. Williams, member of the R.A.F.
One of many gallant young Canadians serving with the
Royal Air Force, Pilot Officer Thomas (Tom) Ross Williams
was killed on Tuesday in an aircraft accident, according to
word received here last night by his parents, Mr, and Mrs R.
Rowland Williams of 314 Driveway.

Though details of the accident, which cost the 21-year-old Ottawa's airman his life, were not immediately available, his parents received the following cable from the Air Ministry in London:

“Deeply regret to inform you that your son, Pilot Officer Thomas Ross Williams, is reported as having lost his life as a result of an aircraft accident on 28th November 1939. The Air Council express their sympathy. (Signed) Under Secretary of Air Ministry.”

The young pilot was born in Ottawa in 1918 and received his education at Hopewell Avenue Public School and Glebe Collegiate Institute. At Glebe he took a keen interest in sport and was equally active in sports, particularly basketball.

His family has long been connected with the lumbering industry in the Ottawa Valley and, following graduation from Glebe Collegiate, he worked for about a year with the W.C. Edwards and Company Limited.

While still at Glebe he enlisted with the 1st Battery, Royal Canadian Artillery, (Non-Permanent Active Militia) and was promoted to the rank of sergeant. He received the Coronation Medal in 1937 and while a gunner he won a number of trophies through his skill as a rifle shot.

There were few more popular gunners in the battery, and he never forgot his old comrades-in-arms. In a recent letter to his uncle, Lieut. Colonel T.A. Williams, who at one time commanded the 1st Field Brigade, he declared he was looking forward to the arrival of the 2nd and 31st Batteries to England.

In September 1938, he resigned from the Battery and was one of a group of young Canadians who joined the Royal Air Force. He completed his training in England last Spring and was then posted to a regular squadron.

The news of Pilot Officer Williams' death will come as a great shock to his many friends here, all of whom had taken the greatest interest in his career.

A member of Stewarton United Church, until he left for England, he took an active part in church affairs.

Surviving, in addition to his parents, are his grandfather, Franklin R. Jacques of Ottawa, a brother, Hugh, and three sisters: Ruth, Jacqueline and Elaine."

Thomas Ross Williams, known as Tom, was born in 1918 to parents: **Robert Rowland Williams and Gladys May Marjorie (nee Jacques)**. Both of his parents were born in Canada, but his grandfather, Hugh Mathias Williams was a Welshman from Pwllheli, North Wales. Tom was the eldest child. His eldest sister, **Gladys** "Ruth", was born in 1920. She qualified as a nurse. She married Edward Fitzgerald Spencer-Harty in the Bahamas in 1949. Edward was in the Police Force and became Commissioner of Police. The Bahamas became their home for the rest of their lives. Another sister, **Jacqueline** Enid, born 10th February 1924 in Ottawa, married a Naval Rating, Chester H. Rickett in Michigan USA on 7th May 1945. Her second marriage was to Samuel Eugene Wolf on 29th December 1947, also in Michigan. Her third marriage was in September 1971 to a Mr DiNunzio, in Michigan. His other sister, **Elaine**, is still alive, living in Ontario. She married Douglas Hugh Harmon in 1955. They had two daughters. His brother, Hugh, married Beverly Ann Robinson in Michigan in 1958.

His early life and career are in the above obituary. In addition, we know that he trained at Desford in Leicestershire where he earned his Wings on 27th April 1939.

Tom was assigned to 207 Squadron, which was a light bomber command. The Squadron was stationed in Cranfield from September until December 1939.

On 28th November, Tom left Cranfield in a Fairey Battle to fly to Bassingbourn in Cambridgeshire, arriving at dusk. It was his first night flight since 8th May 1939. The aircraft stalled, lost height, and crashed into the ground. He was killed instantly. He was 21 years old. He is buried in Cranfield Churchyard.

**PILOT OFFICER
T.R. WILLIAMS
(OF CANADA)
PILOT
ROYAL AIR FORCE
28TH NOVEMBER 1939
AGE 21
BELOVED SON
OF ROWLAND
AND GLADYS WILLIAMS
OF OTTAWA, CANADA**



R.A.F. CRANFIELD – 1940

Throughout the winter of 1939-40 work was carried out to replace the grass landing strip with three hard surface runways. Once the runways were completed, the Airspeed Oxford Trainers of No.14 Service Flying Training School (S.F.T.S.) moved in from Kinloss. Cranfield was transferred to No. 23 Group, Flying Training Command. The Oxford Trainers were later joined by the Harvards and, in June 1940, thirty Miles Master aircraft were delivered to replace the Harvards. No. 14 S.F.T.S. stayed at Cranfield until moving to Lyneham early in August 1941.

During June 1940, four brick pill boxes were constructed on the boundary of the aerodrome for defence of the station.



Pill box seen from the Cranfield / Salford road

Six of those buried in the Parish Churchyard, killed in 1940, were Pilots under training. One took his own life and a soldier guarding the airfield was tragically killed. We remember them in the next section.



Sergeant Robert Sutherland Carpenter Lawson

No. 754143 Pilot under Training. R.A.F. aged 20 years. Killed in a mid-air collision on 10th June 1940 near Bozeat, Northamptonshire.

Robert was the son of **William Low Lawson and Eva Moss (nee Carpenter)** was born in Barnet but, by 1940, was living in Harrow.

He was the pilot of an **Oxford** N4638 of 14 SFTS. His passenger Sergeant Kenneth Ashby aged 20 years was also killed.



Airspeed Oxford

Robert Lawson is buried in Cranfield Churchyard alongside the grave of John Lefaux, the pilot of the other plane involved in the collision.



**754143 SERGEANT
R.S.C. LAWSON
U/T PILOT
ROYAL AIR FORCE
10TH JUNE 1940
AGE 20
TREAD SOFTLY
FOR YOU TREAD ON OUR DREAMS**

Sergeant John Martin Lefaux

No. 754575 Pilot Under Training R.A.F. aged 26 years.
Killed on 10th June 1940 in mid-air collision near Bozeat,
Northants.

John was the son of **Ernest Lefaux and Alice Aimee Henrietta (nee Bathel – born in Germany)**. He was born near Gravesend and lived in Eltham, London. John was the pilot of a Harvard P5811 of 14 S.F.T.S.. His passenger was Sergeant George Follows. He was also killed.

He was in collision with the Oxford trainer flown by Robert Lawson.



Harvard Advanced Trainer

The Harvard was a North American advanced trainer.
Most were built in Canada.

A court of enquiry held at Cranfield on 13th June 1940 found
“The two aircraft were flying in formation although nothing
in the authorisation orders by either crew justified so doing.

The responsibility for the collision must rest with the crew of the Harvard aircraft for disobeying flying orders.

John Lefaux is buried in Cranfield Churchyard alongside Robert Lawson. The two passengers are buried elsewhere.



**754575 SERGEANT
J. M. LEFAUX
U/T PILOT
ROYAL AIR FORCE
10TH JUNE 1940
AGE 20**

**TO THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH PASSES ALL
UNDERSTANDING**

Sergeant Stanley Thomas Newcombe

No. 742084 R.A.F.V.R. aged 23 years. Killed on 9th August 1940 on a night flight 1m W of Cranfield.

Stanley was the eldest child of **John Thomas Newcombe and Ada Jessie (nee McDonald)**. He was born in the Leicester area but, when he joined up, his parents were living in Slough. His father was an Assistant Chief Instructor at a Government Training Centre and his mother, a housewife.

He was the pilot of Master 1, N7717, 14 S.F.T.S.. On a night flight from Cranfield, he crashed just after take-off one mile west of Cranfield.



Miles Master Aircraft

The Royal Air Force Volunteers Reserve (R.A.F.V.R.) was formed in July 1936 to provide individuals to supplement the Auxiliary Air Force (A.A.F) in the event of war. Men between the ages of 18 and 25 years were accepted for part-time training as pilots, observers, and wireless

operators. When war broke out the R.A.F.V.R. comprised 6,646 pilots and over a few months men went from part time to full time training.

Stanley Newcombe is buried in the Churchyard in Cranfield. His grave is of nonstandard pattern with a raised stone border around the plot. The inscription on his headstone reads:

**In Loving Memory of Stanley Thomas Newcombe
Pilot Sgt., R.A.F.V.R., Killed on Active service August
9th 1940, Aged 23.**



Leading Aircraftman Jack Henry Kissner

No. 938026 Pilot under Training R.A.F. aged 23 years.
Killed on 7th October 1940 when his plane crashed near Turvey.

Jack was born in Cambridge, the youngest of three children of **Christian Henry Kissner and Alice Rhoda (nee Ayres)**. His sister, **Vera** Gladys, was seventeen years older. She married Alfred F. Mims in 1939 and lived in Hendon. His brother, **Cyril** Christian left for Australia in 1923 and settled near Sydney. Cyril joined the Royal Australian Air Force and was attached to the R.A.F. in 1943. **On 29th April 1944** he had been a passenger in a Cantea Z 506 carrying medical supplies and code books. The plane exploded in mid-air and crashed into the sea close to Fredonia, Italy. All five Italian crew were killed along with Flight Lieutenant C.C. Kissner, whose body was recovered and buried in the Bari War Cemetery.

By the time the war started, Jack was living with his mother in Northampton. Alice was already a widow. Jack worked as a wedding photographer in Northampton for the Alto Photo Co.

The following information is taken from “War Torn Skies of Great Britain – Bedfordshire” by Paul Johnson:
“Jack was a pilot under training. At 3.30pm on the afternoon of 7th October 1940 he took to the air in an Airspeed Oxford N4729 with his instructor, Flying Officer James Frederick Bridge. Their task was to carry out a low flying practice flight around Cranfield. A few moments after leaving the ground the small twin engined aircraft struck a tree near the end of the runway and crashed between the road and former

railway line near Newton Park Farm, one mile south, southwest of the village of Turvey. The aircraft burst into flames on impact with the ground and the two crewmen died instantly.

A subsequent Court of Enquiry found that the pilot, Flying Officer Bridge, was flying less than 100 feet above the ground and had flown into bright sun, which hampered his vision. It was also stated that, although he had flown nearly 500 flying hours, he had not had much experience of flying an Oxford and this may have been a contributory factor. James Bridge, 26 years of age, left a wife, Masie, and young son, Noel. The family lived in Bedford, where he is buried.”

Jack Kissner is buried in St Peter and St Paul Churchyard, Cranfield.



**938026 LDG AIRCRAFTMAN
JH KISSNER
U/T PILOT
ROYAL AIR FORCE
7TH OCTOBER 1940
AGE 23
PRAISE GOD
FOR THEM THE
FALLEN FLOWERS
WILL RECEIVE
HIS BLESSING
MUM, VERA AND FREDDIE**

Flight Lieutenant Thomas Meade Bertram

Newton No.78557 R.A.F. aged 44 years. Took his own life on 23rd October 1940 at Cranfield Aerodrome.



Thomas Meade Bertram Newton in September 1915

Thomas was born on 8th May 1896 in Winchester, Hampshire, the youngest of four children of **Thomas Edwin, a land agent, and Gertrude (nee Eastman)**. The eldest was **Elsie** Meade, born in 1890. Their eldest son, **Alan** Herbert, was born in 1892. The youngest daughter, **Gertrude**, was born in 1894. The family were comfortably off and had a live in cook and a domestic servant. The parents were able to buy commissions in the army for their two sons.

During the First World War Alan served in the 2nd Battalion Middlesex Regiment. He was killed in the Somme on 7th April 1916 at the age of 24.

Thomas had a commission in the Royal Berkshire Regiment – which was also known as the Princess Charlotte of Wales Regiment.

On 9th September 1915 he was awarded a Royal Aero Club Aviators Certificate from the Military School at Farnborough, flying in a **Maurice Farman Biplane**.



This was a French aircraft used for reconnaissance and as a light bomber in WW1. It was later relegated to training duties. This was the aircraft in which “Biggles”, Capt. W.E. Johns’ fictional character, first took to the air.

Thomas transferred to the Royal Flying Corps, serving in France, and being wounded while in 112 Squadron, in February 1918. He continued to serve throughout the war. He married Edith Marjorie Folkard, the daughter of a bank

manager, on 4th September 1918. His rank is given as Captain R.A.F. His father had already died by the time of the wedding in St Andrews Parish Church.

Medal Index cards show that when he claimed his medals in 1920 he was stationed at the 2nd Portobello Barracks, Dublin. He gave his home address as Bank House, Farnham, Surrey, which was probably the home of his in-laws.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, he had the rank of Flying Officer (Honorary Flight Lieutenant) in the R.A.F. Volunteer Reserve. In April 1940 he relinquished his Commission to serve in the Administrative and Special Duties Branch as Flight Lieutenant for the duration of hostilities. He was posted to Cranfield.

His tragic death, on 23rd October 1940, was reported in the ***Bedfordshire Times and Independent of 1st November.*** “The story of how a flight-lieutenant at a Home Counties aerodrome shot himself was told to a Home Counties Coroner at an inquest at the aerodrome on Friday. The Coroner recorded that the dead man, Thomas Bertram Meade Newton, aged forty-four, committed suicide whilst the balance of his mind was disturbed.

Squadron-Leader J.S. Wilson, an R.A.F. medical officer, said that after receiving a message he went to the office and found the deceased sitting in a chair with his head forward on his chest. There was a bullet wound two inches in front and above the right ear and another one inch above and behind the left ear. Squadron-Leader R.P. Widdowson said that his office adjoined that of Flight- Lieut. Newton's. At

about 9am Newton opened the communicating door and said, "Good morning". Witness noticed nothing unusual in his manner. At about 9.45am witness heard the sound of a shot and, on going into the next room, saw what had happened.

P.C. Reid said that in the left hand of the dead man was a lanyard loop. The rest of the lanyard was hanging down and fixed to a revolver. There was a hole in a pane of glass which was in line and level with the wounds in the deceased's head."

His wife, Edith, never remarried and died in February 1975. They had lived at The Nines, Village Way, Little Chalfont, Buckinghamshire. His sister, Elsie also survived him.

This is pure conjecture on my part, but on the night before his death, the Operation Books for No. 14, Service Flying Training School recorded: "An enemy aircraft was seen circling this aerodrome at a height of 3000 ft. Light anti-aircraft guns opened fire. This was the first time that the ground defence at this unit have had a proper opportunity of offensive action; their fire seems to have been successful as the enemy aircraft made away swiftly, without having had a chance to bomb the station or apparently take photographs."

Thomas could have had flash backs to his WWI days and even to his brother's death. The close proximity of the enemy could have triggered deep emotions and, not irrational, fears.

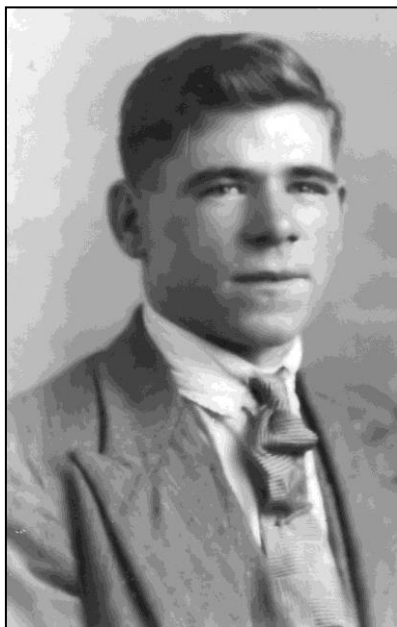
Thomas Bertram Meade Newton is buried in the Churchyard of St Peter and St Paul, Cranfield. His grave is of a non-standard pattern with a raised stone surround and a central horizontal crucifix.

The inscription reads – **FLIGHT LIEUTENANT
THOMAS MEADE BERTRAM NEWTON R.A.F.
PASSED OVER 23RD OCTOBER 1940 AGED 44.**



Private Robert William Tose

No. 5954998 Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment.
Accidentally killed while on duty on 27th October 1940, aged
26, at Cranfield Airfield.



Robert was born in Whitby, Yorkshire, on 25th September 1914, the eldest child of **William Robert Tose and his wife Teresa Maud (nee Waller)**.

His father served during WW1 in the Yorkshire Regiment. He was wounded in France and shipped home in 1917.

Robert was the eldest of eight children. They were: **Vera** Lille, born on 16th February 1916, married David Walters, a plumber, in Hemel Hempstead in 1939 and, in 1980, seven years after the death of her first husband, married Walter Bryant; **Theresa** Maud, born on 12th June 1919, married Alfred Jones in Whitby in June 1939 – they settled in Stockton-on-Tees just after the war; **James**, born on 17th March 1921, married Margaret Harrison in Whitby in 1948.



Arthur –above – was born on 12th July 1923 He joined the Merchant Navy as a cabin boy on S.S. Creemuir on Convoy EN23. He was missing, presumed dead, along with twenty-six other crew, when the ship was torpedoed from the air, ten miles from Aberdeen. He died 15 days after his brother, Robert.

Margaret Ann, born on 1st March 1925, married Leslie Middleton in Whitby in 1948. **Mary**, born in the latter part of 1928, sadly died in 1935 at the age of 6 years. The youngest child, **Ralph**, born in the early part of 1932, married Delia Nilan in 1955 and settled in Whitby.

Robert followed his sister, Vera, down to Hemel Hempstead where he worked as a builder's labourer. At the outbreak of war he joined the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment as an infantryman. He was sent to Cranfield for airfield defences. The Air Ministry had started a national project to have airfields defended by anti-aircraft posts, pillboxes, rifle pits and barbed wire, manned by the army.



Pillbox near the Airfield on the Salford Road

The tragic circumstances of Robert's death are reported in the *Bedfordshire Times of 1st November 1940*. (*my italics*)

SOLDIER SHOT AT AERODROME

LIFE LOST THROUGH SHEER CARELESSNESS

“After making all allowances it is clear that this life has been lost through sheer carelessness. I do not, however consider that this amounts to criminal negligence, and have recorded a verdict of accidental death – gunshot by misadventure.” In these words, a Home Counties Coroner concluded an inquest at a Home Counties aerodrome on the twenty-six-year-old member of the Beds. and Herts. Regiment, Pte. Robert William Tose.

Squadron-Leader J.S. Wilson, medical officer at the aerodrome, said that at 8.45am on Sunday he received information that a soldier had been shot. He went to the guard room where he saw the body. There were two wounds to the chest – one over the heart, and another wound in the right side of the back. Pte. H.G. Walker said that at 8.40am he was in the guard- room. He saw Pte. Tait standing by the door at ease holding his rifle in his right hand. The witness was trying on his respirator when he heard a shot. Then he saw Pte. Tait with his gun in both hands pointing on the ground. He turned and saw Pte. Tose lying on the floor. He did not know who fired the shot. Pte. R Ventham said that he was in the guard room. He was putting his equipment on ready to go off guard. He was standing behind the table and Pte. Tose who was standing on his right, was also putting on his equipment. Witness heard a shot and then saw Pte.

Tait with a rifle in his hand in the way they usually held their rifles to clean them. He did not know who fired the shot.

Lt/Cpl. F. Hooley said that he was in charge of the night guard reliefs. At 8.40 am he was in the guard room and was bending down to pick up some equipment off a chair at the end of the table when he heard a shot. He turned round and caught a fleeting glimpse of Pte. Tait who had a rifle. He turned again and saw Pte. Tose who was three-quarters doubled up.

Pte. Tait said that at about 8.30am he was in the guardroom. He picked up his rifle to inspect it to see if it was clean. He pulled the bolt back and closed it again. Then he pulled the trigger. The shot went off and he heard somebody shout, "Tose has been shot." Witness added that when he came off sentry at 6.30am he put his rifle in the stand. There were five rounds of ammunition in the magazine and the safety catch was "on". *(The rifle would be standard issue Lee Enfield 303. The procedure for cleaning is that all ammunition in the magazine is removed. The bolt is pulled back twice, and the gun is then fired into a safe area such as in the air or into the ground to make sure that there is no bullet remaining in the breach. In this case a bullet must have remained and, when fired, ricocheted, and unfortunately hit Robert, who must have died instantly.)*



The old Guardroom is now the security building of Cranfield University

Robert lies buried in Cranfield Churchyard.



**5954998 PRIVATE
R W TOSE
THE BEDFORDSHIRE
AND HERTFORDSHIRE
REGIMENT
27TH OCTOBER 1940
AGE 26
ALWAYS
REMEMBERED
BY THE ONES WHO
CAN'T FORGET**

Leading Aircraftman Victor Walter Harris

No. 921743 R.A.F Killed on 11th November 1940, aged 21, when Oxford crashed near Rutland.

Victor was born on 15th July 1919, the son of **George Thomas Walter Harris and Pauline Marie Louise Delmar** of South Ruislip. George was a taxi driver. The family lived in Fulham. Pauline was divorced from her first husband, Frederick Matthew Delmar. She had five children: **Frederick** born 1906, **Arthur** born 1908, **Dorothy** in 1910, **Victor** in 1919 and **Peter** in 1920. Peter sadly died in 1921. By 1929 Pauline was living with George Harris. George died in 1940, the same year as Victor. In the 1950's and 60's she was living alone.

Victor was killed when an Oxford (Mark 1) N6292 of 14 FTS spun into the ground on approach for a forced landing in bad weather, crashing half a mile north of Ryhall Rutland.



**921743 LDG. AIRCRAFTMAN
V.W. HARRIS
U/T PILOT
ROYAL AIR FORCE
11TH NOVEMBER 1940
AGE 21
GOOD NIGHT
MY DARLING SON
NOT FAREWELL
TILL
WE MEET AGAIN
SLEEP WELL**

Leading Aircraftman Frank Graham

Harrington No. 1163122 R.A.F.V.R. Pilot U/T Killed on 16th December 1940, aged 19 years, in Marston Thrift.

Frank was born in Tewksbury, Gloucester, on 20th December 1921, the son of **Charles Henry Harrington and his wife Lily (nee Smith)** of Bordesley Green, Birmingham. His father was a baker. He had at least two sisters and two brothers. The eldest sister, **Molly** Jeanette, was born in Birmingham on 28th July 1931. She married Jack Dickie in 1955. His second sister was **Barbara** Iris, born on 19th March 1934 in Birmingham. She married Arthur H. Holden. In the 1939 census the family were living at 70 Colonial Road Birmingham. Frank is recorded as a machine operator. He was also a member of the Birmingham Squad as Civil Defence Cadet. Molly and Barbara were also living at home.

On the evening of 16th December 1940, Frank, who was a pilot under training attached to 14 F.T.S., was killed when his plane crashed in Marston Thrift. He was piloting an Airspeed Oxford N4736. It was a very dark night with strong gusts of wind. There was little or no moon and with very little horizon and the blackout in place, spotting landmarks would have been difficult. The plane was sweeping around Cranfield climbing to 1000feet. He was turning left over Marston Thrift when he lost control and crashed.

His is buried in Cranfield Churchyard but also commemorated in the Birmingham Hall of Memory.



**1163122 LDG AIRCRAFTMAN
F. G. HARRINGTON
U/T PILOT ROYAL AIR FORCE
16TH DECEMBER 1940
AGE 19
BEFORE THE BEST OF LIFE
WAS KNOWN
OR LINE HAD MARKED THE BROW
HE WENT INTO THE DARK UNKNOWN**

There is another soldier and one other airman buried in the Churchyard. I shall include them here, as their deaths do not relate to chronological events of the war. The graves are all close together.

Private George James Salt No. 5954998 Beds and Herts Regiment died on 31st December 1942, aged 36.



George James Salt, known as Jim, was born on 9th December 1906, in Litchfield, Staffordshire, the son of **James Albert and Emma Louise (nee Fairbanks)**. His father was a journeying blacksmith. The couple had one other child, **Dorothy** Mary, born in 1909 but who sadly died a few months later. Later that same year, Jim's father died. Jim was placed with foster parents. In the 1911 census he is with William Higham and his wife, Annie, with another four-year-old foster child, on their farm in Daventry, Northamptonshire.

Jim married Ella Margaret Goodson in Hendon on 10th July 1937. They had two children. **Peter** was born in 1938 in Hendon and **David** was born in Cranfield in 1941.

We have no details of his military service but, while boarding an army truck, he was accidentally hit on the head. This led to severe complications from which he died in a London Hospital on 31st December 1942. His wife had his body brought back home to Cranfield for burial.

Ella remarried widower Arthur E Adams in 1944. The family lived for a while at 17 Coronation Road before moving on to a new life together.

Emma, Jim's mother died in Ampthill in 1949 aged 71.

His younger son, David, who now lives in New Zealand, has kindly supplied the photograph of his father. He was only one year old so, sadly, never knew him.



**5954998 PRIVATE
G J SALT
THE BEDFORDSHIRE
AND
HERTFORDSHIRE
REGIMENT
31ST DEC 1942 AGE 36
AMIDST LIFE'S CHANGES
WE SHALL NOT FORGET
HIS LOVING WIFE AND SONS**

Sergeant James Plummer No. 623235 R.A.F. died accidentally on 2nd June 1947, aged 27.

James was the son of **Ezra and Anna Plummer**. While he was training in Canada he married Janna Van Dyke (of Dutch descent) in North Battleford, Saskatchewan in December 1942.



Wedding of Janna (Sis) van Dyke to James
Plummer
29 December 1942

Their first son, **Arthur** James, was born in Canada in December 1943. **David** was born in Bedfordshire in 1946.

The Bedfordshire Times of 6th June 1947 reported:

SERGEANT DROWNED AT BROMHAM

Tragedy Witnessed by his Wife and Children

While sitting on the bank of the river at Bromham with her two young children, on Monday, the 25-year-old Canadian

wife saw her husband sink shortly after he had dived into the water.

The tragic story was told at an inquest at Kempston on Wednesday, on Sergeant James Plummer aged 27, of the R.A.F. Station, Cranfield, and whose home is in Colchester. His wife came from Saskatchewan, and the children were aged three years and seven months respectively.

During the inquest Mrs Plummer had to leave the court and the Coroner (Mr R. G. Rose) said he did not intend to call her as a witness. He recorded a verdict that death was due to suffocation as a result of swelling and obstruction of the windpipe.

Dr M.A. Keane, who conducted the post-mortem, stated that there was no water in the lungs and the blood was unusually fluid. Air had been cut off from the body. The swelling of the windpipe might have been due to an allergic reaction, for which no cause was apparent.

F/Sergeant F. Naylor describing what happened, said that Plummer swam strongly within three or four yards of the other bank. Suddenly all movement stopped, and Plummer sank without struggling or shouting. No bubbles came to the surface. The water was completely still. Witness's wife, another sergeant and an unknown man dived to try to rescue Plummer, but they failed.

Sergeant G.E. Barnes described Plummer as a very good average swimmer, very fit, and an all-round sportsman.

Soon after the accident on 16th August 1947, Janna sailed back to Canada with the two boys on the S.S. Aquitania bound for Halifax Nova Scotia. She remarried in October 1948 to Tom Cowell. David married Lorraine Scott.



**623235 SERGEANT
J. PLUMMER
ROYAL AIR FORCE
2ND JUNE 1947
AGE 27
IN LOVING MEMORY OF A DEAR HUSBAND
AND DADDY
JANNA, ARTHUR AND DAVID**

“Lest we Forget” the Army and Air Cadets place Poppy
Crosses on the graves each Remembrance Day

LOCAL HERO – VIVIAN HOLLOWDAY

Aircraftman Vivian Hollowday, known as Bob, was awarded the George Cross for risking his life on two occasions, on 2nd July and 7th August 1940, for trying to save men from blazing crashed aircraft. He was the first R.A.F. Non-Commissioned Officer to receive this honour.



The **George Cross**, instituted on 24 September 1940, during the height of the Blitz, by King George VI., is the second highest award of the United Kingdom honours system. It is awarded "for acts of the greatest heroism or for most conspicuous courage in circumstance of extreme danger", not in the presence of the enemy, to members of the British armed forces and to British civilians.



Vivian Hollowday in 1941

Vivian Hollowday was born in Ulceby, Lincolnshire, on 13th October 1916, the son of **Carl and Annie Hollowday**.

He joined the R.A.F. in September 1939 serving with No.14 S.F.T.S. at R.A.F. Cranfield.

Before and after the events of summer 1940 he served at a number of UK locations and in Algeria, Sicily, and Italy.

One version of the citation reads: "Planes taking off and landing at Cranfield Aerodrome in August 1940 were a common sight, for this was wartime. Aircraftman Vivian

Hollowday, off duty and strolling back to camp, was paying no particular attention to the evening's air traffic- until, suddenly a bomber crashed on the airfield! The plane burst into flames as Hollowday rushed to the rescue. He was first at the scene and though alone, he tried to get into the blazing bomber. But fierce heat and exploding ammunition forced him back. By this time an ambulance had arrived but there was still no equipment to stage a rescue attempt. Wrapping himself in some blankets from the ambulance and borrowing a gas mask, Hollowday returned to the inferno. With this slight protection, Hollowday managed to enter the plane and bring out one of the crew. Twice more he entered the blazing wreckage and brought out two more crew members. This was bravery of the highest order, but Vivian Hollowday had done it all before! By a strange coincidence he had figured in an almost identical rescue on the same airfield only a month previously. On that occasion he had entered the blazing cockpit of a crashed plane and, beating out the flames with his bare hands, had brought out the body of the trapped pilot."

Sadly, none of the crew of either aircraft were able to be saved. The first crash involved Sgt. Pilot Noel F.L. Davies from 14 F.T.S. flying solo in a Miles Master which hit the ground after a night take-off.

Vivian's second cousin, Derek, who lives in West Sussex, has been tracked down by Lee. Derek has amassed an

archive of photographs, documents and recordings relating to Vivian. He is now a very good friend of Rachel Carpenter who is the niece of Noel Davies, the victim of the first crash. She and Noel's younger brother, Glyn, were his guests at the VC and GC Association commemoration last year (2018). Rachel has kindly supplied this photograph of her uncle.



Sgt. Pilot Noel Davies

Vivian Hollowday had been injured during the first rescue attempt and had only just been released from hospital when the second incident occurred.

The second crash was that of a Blenheim P4902. It should not have been flying so close to Cranfield Aerodrome at the time of the crash, being off course. The aircraft belonged to

No. 17 O.T.U. based at R.A.F. Upwood. The crew members were: Flt. Lt. (Pilot) Edward Mortimer, Sgt. (Air Gnr.) Dennis Alves and Sgt.. (Obs.) David Gibbs.

When Derek's father, Barry, congratulated Vivian on his getting the George Cross, he described the decoration as "a lot of nonsense" as anyone would have done the same things in that situation.

Vivian Hollowday was demobbed in 1946. While in Cranfield he had been billeted with Eve Church. Her husband got him into Quenby Price Corn Merchants in Bedford after the War.

He married Beatrice on 6th September 1948. They had no children.

In 1971, while staying at a hotel in London, his medals were stolen, and duplicates were eventually issued.

He died in April 1977. His ashes were scattered on "Daffodil Hill" in Rawdon Cemetery near Leeds.

In 1986 his widow put his medals up for sale at Sotheby's. They were purchased by the Royal Air Force Museum. Sadly, they are not currently on display.



Vivian Hollowday at the Royal Hospital Chelsea, 1974

Derek regrets that he never met him. He was 24 when Vivian died. He lived on the Sussex Coast and Vivian in Bedford. “I think I only really came to appreciate his heroism and achievements when it was too late to discuss anything with him. There are many unanswered questions!”

Vivian Hollowday will be remembered in Cranfield. The road into the Water End Homes development, off the High Street, is named Hollowday Road.

R.A.F. CRANFIELD IN 1941

By August 1941, Cranfield had become the home of no.51 Night Fighter Operational Training Unit (O.T.U.). The Aerodrome became part of no. 81 Group, Fighter Command.

People in Cranfield still remember the bizarre sight of air crew wearing dark goggles, riding round the barracks square on Walls and Eldorado ice cream tricycles. The theory was that their night vision would be improved if they could wear these dark goggles for 20 minutes each day while manoeuvring their tricky tricycles!



51 OTU with De Havilland Mosquito

R.A.F. CRANFIELD 1942-1943

Guy Gibson, who had already distinguished himself destroying enemy aircraft and had been awarded the D.F.C. in December 1941, was given a rest from operational duties and posted to Cranfield as Chief Flying Instructor at the beginning of 1942. He soon yearned for operational service and asked to be transferred. After only 3 months, in March 1942, he became Commander of 106 Bomber Squadron. He was subsequently transferred to 617 Squadron which took part in the famous “Dam Busters” raid on 16th and 17th May 1943.

The R.A.F., with the U.S. Eighth Air Force, had stepped up the strategic bombing campaign against Germany. Bomber Command, under Air Chief Marshall Sir Arthur “Bomber” Harris, carried out a thousand bomber raid against Cologne on the night of 30th May 1942. We lost 43 aircraft. Damage on the ground was colossal with 45,000 Germans left homeless and 469 killed. Winston Churchill telegraphed President Roosevelt the next day; “I hope you are pleased with our mass attack – there is plenty more to come.”

In August 1942 the first Beaufighters arrived for 51 O.T.U.



Bristol Beaufighter

In March 1943 Nos. 181 and 183 Squadrons stayed here. During March/April 1943 seven Wellington bombers arrived to train 100 Group Mosquito crews. No. 3501 Servicing Unit was set up. No. 3501 Pilot Replacement unit was also here until September 1944 when it moved to Middle Wallop. In May/June the Americans came to learn how to operate American marked Beaufighters.

The crash at College Farm

In February 2001 fifteen-year-old Tom Miller contacted Cranfield Express looking for information about his great Uncle, William Henry Sellars. This inspired Peter Hinson, the editor, to investigate further. "I have put together a brief resume which offers some idea of the last moments of this young pilot's life. I have steered away from the tendency to itemise and quote boring facts in what is a very human story of people in a wartime situation." The following is an edited version of his account.

At the outbreak of war **William Sellars**, a solicitor's clerk and member of the T.A. from Sleaford Lincs, headed off to France with his regiment. Returning to the UK after the evacuation of Dunkirk he decided to try for the R.A.F. He went to Canada and the U.S.A. before being posted to 51 Operational Training Unit at Cranfield.

On the evening of **11th September 1943**, 26-year-old Sergeant Pilot William Henry Sellars climbed into the cockpit of his Mk 1F Bristol Beaufighter. The flight was routine training although it was to be his first night flight flying solo.

In the kitchen of College Farm at Bourne End, at around 9.10pm, 33-year-old Rachel Richardson was preparing an evening meal. Rachel and Cecil had been tenants of College Farm since 1936. The 60-acre site was owned by St John's College Cambridge. At the outbreak of war, like all other farms, they went onto full production for the Ministry of Supply. The barns were fully stocked from the harvest.

Rachel and Cecil had grown used to hearing aircraft coming in to land. The farm was situated just to the side of the "22 approach centre-line". Sgt/Pilot Sellars was flying over the farm, coming in to land. There was a thunderous roar as the Beaufighter slid through the rick yard, the barn, out buildings and the pigsty just behind the house. Outside, the yard and most of the buildings were burning. Within minutes the aerodrome fire crew turned up. Eventually the body of Sgt/Pilot Sellars was lifted from the wreckage. His body was sent home and he was buried in the churchyard of St. Boltophs at Quarrington, Lincs.

The official R.A.F. report ruled out engine failure and suggested that a badly misted Perspex canopy, restricting the pilot's view, could be the cause.

The M.O.D. replaced the barn and buildings.



College Farm, Bourne End, today

David Foster shares his memories of that night on page 363. Although he was between 3 and 4 years old at the time, he has clear memories of that foggy night.

Clive Evans, father, who served in the Auxiliary Fire Service, was called to the fire. (See page 342)

R.A.F. CRANFIELD – 1944

The following are extracts from an account written by Ralph Woodgate for Cranfield Express and reproduced with kind permission of the editor, Peter Hinson.

51 O.T.U. Cranfield – An Airman Remembers.



Ralph writes: “At Cranfield the maintenance and operation of the radar equipment was initially centred on a workshop in one of the hangars, but this was eventually moved to a large hut, well over a mile away. (*This was where the Lodge Road Millennium Park is today*) Bicycle was the normal mode of travel. It was only a few minutes’ walk from the workshop to the village of Cranfield and **Pam’s restaurant**, which somehow always managed to have eggs, chips and sausages in spite of rationing. Of course it was forbidden to climb the barbed wire perimeter fence, but Pam’s was always full of hungry airmen.”

“Cranfield was built as a permanent air base several years before the start of the war. A **modern cinema** had been built in the village specifically to cater for the needs of service people stationed there. It was the only cinema for miles around, and was always full, but tickets were expensive for the relatively low paid “Erks” (Newly recruited airmen and airwomen). The Commanding Officer of the base, Group Captain Fullergood, an ex-Indian Army officer, visited the cinema owner and suggested a reduction in ticket prices would assist morale, especially as the huge increase in personnel now provided full houses at every show. The owner declined and Fullergood immediately began constructing our own camp cinema. The result was a modern and very comfortable theatre holding around 600 people. Movies were shown twice each night, Mondays to Saturdays, with a stage show on Sundays. We had the choice of every film available, but the winner was “White Christmas” with Bing Crosby. One fascinating film was the original movie of Scott’s last expedition to the South Pole. It was a rare opportunity to view history (Scott actually died in 1912) and we had to treat the film with the greatest care. On stage we had whoever was sent to us. It didn’t matter; we always had a happy evening whether it was a well-known star or hard working amateurs. One memorable evening we had **Gertrude Lawrence**, and it was fascinating to watch her bring the entire audience under her spell. After Pearl Harbour we had the comradeship of our neighbouring American airbase, and their airmen were welcome at our shows. We were very excited when we learned that **Glen Miller** was to perform at their base, but I was not able to get to the show. The next day Glen Miller took off from our

little satellite field at Twinwoods Farms and was never heard of again.”

“**As D-Day approached** the work became harder and the hours longer. Eventually we worked a 24 hours on and 24 hours off schedule, and that spring and summer I frequently slept out in the field while waiting for returning aircraft.”

“Very early on the morning of D-Day, formations of planes began flying over the field. We stood in amazement as they filled the sky for hours stretching from one horizon to the other.”

“Cranfield was self-contained although rather overcrowded, with an excellent library, a good canteen and facilities for sports and hobbies. Food was excellent, the catering officer being in civilian life the chief chef from the Savoy Hotel. Much of the credit for all of this went to Group Captain Fullergood, a strict disciplinarian but a fair and effective leader. I experienced several camps during my time in the R.A.F. but I always found that one rule applied: the stricter the discipline the better the facilities and the happier the camp.”

Halifax Bomber crashes at Hulcote

At 18.59 hrs on Friday 24th March, Halifax bombers of 78 Squadron took off from R.A.F. Brighton, Yorkshire, on a mission to bomb Berlin.



Halifax Mark 3 Bomber

A powerful wind blew the bombers off course, and they became scattered.

On the return journey, four hours later, they encountered heavy flack with the loss of fifty aircraft.

On its return, Halifax III LW5 10 sent the message, "Returning to base, one engine u/s."

While approaching to land, on three engines, it came in too low and too slow and stalled. It crashed at **Holcotmoors**

Farm, just a mile from the Airfield, killing all seven crew members.

David Hughes, a resident in Cranfield, was so moved by this story that he has visited the graves of four of the crew buried at Cambridge City Cemetery. They are: The Pilot, Michael Wimberley, aged 21, of Rowlands Castle, Hampshire; the Navigator, William Shields, aged 21, of Cricklewood, Middlesex; Air Gunner, Dennis Brignell, 19, of Holborn, London; Air bomber, Reginald Kelly, R.A.A.F. 21, of Ermington NSW, Australia.



The Pilot F/O Michael Wimberley trained in Texas

The remaining three were two Liverpool boys: Flight Engineer Harold Neal and Air Gunner Horatio Nelson, both buried in Anfield Cemetery, Liverpool, and Air Gunner Leslie Edge, buried in St Mary Churchyard,

Westerham, Kent. All, except the Australian, served in the R.A.F.V.R. – The Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve.

David could imagine “those young lads thinking they had made it home from another mission, looking forward to finding a bed, some breakfast or a few W.A.A.F.’s to chat up suddenly being killed so near safety.”

I hope you agree that it was a sacrifice worth remembering.



Cambridge City Cemetery

Joyce Shrubbs, previously a Cranfield resident, joined the Royal Observer Corps (R.O.C.) of the R.A.F. on her 17th birthday in 1944.



Joyce photographed in 1984 after accepting the appointment of Midland Area Commandant R.O.C.

Joyce (nee Taylor) was born in April 1927 on a lonely farm near Lavendon, Bucks. The farm was near Three Shires Wood which was planted in three counties – Beds, Bucks and Northants.

She was the second youngest of six children. She remembers walking two miles to school and back each day, whatever the weather. It would have been out of the question to take any time off school. In 1935 they moved to Lower Farm at Swineshead, a village between Riseley and Kimbolton in North Bedfordshire.

She soon realised that life for a farmer's wife was tough in the 1930's and 40's and made up her mind that she would never marry a farmer. Her early ambition was to be a teacher. She used to take the Village Sunday School from the age of ten. She attended Luton Technical College where she excelled at book keeping in the commercial section. She would cycle to the station at Sharnbrook and get the train to Luton each day. During the War, schooling was frequently disrupted by air raids, as Luton was a target. To ensure that the pupils had sufficient protection, they attended school on alternate days, but a lot of homework was expected when they weren't at school.

She left school at fifteen and worked for two years for the Ministry of Supply, Leather Control, in Phoenix Chambers in Bedford. "You were given no choice but told where to work." Joyce would cycle the twelve miles to work and back each day and think nothing of it.

However, the War had changed everything. When Joyce was thirteen, her brother, **Reginald** James, had only been in the Navy for a short time, which had included being part of the evacuation of our troops from the beaches of Dunkirk. He was a stoker on a trawler – H.M.T. Brock. He had survived the terrible journeys across the Channel. A football match had been arranged on the cliffs of Dover between teams from the Navy and Army in order to lighten their spirits. They were mown down by German machine gun fire. Reginald survived for one day but died from his wounds. He was given a full military funeral in the village. It was

harvest time. Joyce recalls, "Farmers usually complain of wet weather at harvest time but in 1940 our harvest was wet with tears."

Joyce was determined and impatient to join something, to serve her country as soon as she could. She would have liked to join the Women's' Auxiliary Air Force but you had to be 18. "I could not wait to be old enough to get into uniform and play my part, but one had to be 18 for most services so, when I read of the Royal Observer Corps looking for volunteers aged 17 and upwards and I was not far from this age, I volunteered straight away." The recruiting officer was rather startled when this enthusiastic young girl insisted on being considered, but she was allowed to enrol on her 17th birthday in April 1944.

The Royal Observer Corps

"Forewarned is Forearmed" is the Corps Motto.

In 1925 the first of two Observation Areas were formed to report the movement of aircraft, covering Kent, Sussex and Surrey. Observers were enrolled as volunteers, as Special Constables. In 1926 the coverage extended to Hampshire, Suffolk, Bucks and Herts. In 1929 the control was handed over to the Air Ministry.

In 1939, in anticipation of the Second World War, the whole country was covered by a network of Observation Posts, and, on 29th August, the Corps was "called out" for duty. Those serving became members of the armed forces.

In the account of the Battle of Britain (page 47) we have learnt that Britain had RADAR but that this could only look outwards across the channel and, once this had been over flown, the R.A.F. had to rely on an observer at **Observer Posts**. The information would be relayed by telephone to **Sector Stations**.

In recognition of their sterling service during the Battle of Britain they were granted the title Royal in 1941

In the Royal British Legion's Golden Book of Remembrance, "A Tribute to Those who Served", by Henry Buckdon, published in 1995, Joyce gives her own account.

"Known as the "Eyes and Ears" of the Royal Air Force, the Corps maintained a constant watch of the sky, tracking all aircraft, both hostile and friendly, across the country, enabling fighter controllers to bring about interceptions and the destruction of enemy aircraft and to guide many pilots, limping home in distress from their operations over enemy territory to the nearest home base and in all kinds of weather. The Corps' advice of the approach of enemy aircraft enabled **Air Raid Warnings** to be sounded and thus gave some measure of protection to the civilian population too."

"The surrounding area was full of Airfields, and I recall plotting the vast number of Fortresses leaving their bases early in the morning and returning late afternoon to be followed by streams of Lancasters and Halifaxes leaving in late evening and returning in the early hours of the next morning. Some returned badly damaged, and some did not

return at all. I remember too, the skies filled with Dakotas and gliders and learned later of the Arnhem landings.”

Joyce was based at the Operations Room at Bedford. It was at Biddenham, on the Northampton Road, on the corner of Days Lane. It covered 3,000 square miles with Observation Posts being between 5 and 10 miles apart. She would do an 8-hour shift.



Overlooking the plotting table – Joyce is on the extreme left, broadcasting the information from the group display below to R.A.F. Fighter Command and surrounding R.O.C. Group H.Q.’s.



There would also be a more general pictorial representation, of a wider area, displayed in the operations room, above the plotting table.



Joyce was so devoted to the work of the R.O.C. that, on her days off from the plotting tables, she would visit the Observation Posts.



Joyce at an Observation Post – the young lady centre right

The position and exact height of the aircraft could be determined using the Post Instrument, with the Micklethwaite Attachment.

The Royal Observer Corps stood down when peace was declared in Europe in May 1945. It wasn't completely disbanded as it was considered an essential component of the defence system.

It was re-formed in January 1947 under the command of Air Commodore the Earl of Bandon. Previous members were invited to re-join as part-time volunteers. Joyce continued her devotion to the service and did a lot of tuition.

In 1955 the Corps was tasked to undertake the additional role of detecting, measuring, and reporting radioactive fall-out, in order to provide the National Warning Organisation with information on which warnings to Service and Civil Authorities could be based.

Joyce was honoured with an M.B.E. for services to the R.O.C. in 1975.

She had served in Uniform for 47 ½ years, between 1944 and 1992, as an Observer, Crew Supervisor and Duty Controller. In 1982 she was promoted to Observer Commander as Group Commander of the Bedford Group. She was promoted to Observer Captain in June 1984 and accepted the appointment of Midland Area Commandant. This covered an area from the Thames to the Tees, from the east coast to Birmingham.

Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and H.R.H. The Duke of Edinburgh came to the Bentley Priory H.Q. in October 1985. Joyce is standing behind Her Majesty.



In May 1989 Joyce was appointed Assistant Commandant of the Corps.

She was determined to change things. She didn't want to be seen simply as a figurehead. She wanted to maintain contact with the people who were serving by visiting the Observation Post sites so that when, for example, she presented them with their medals, she would know who they were and what they did.

The R.O.C. finally stood down in 1991, although Joyce's service didn't terminate until 1992. Until her death in 2021, Joyce was still Vice President of the National R.O.C. Association which has meetings in London.

Joyce has also given her help to the Royal British Legion (R.B.L.) since 1970, when she was invited to join the local Branch in Marston Moretaine. She has been Branch Chairman, Branch Treasurer and, until 2021, was Branch President. Additionally, Joyce was elected to serve as County Chairman of Bedford County in 1989 to 2002, when she was appointed Vice-President of the County, a position she held until 2021. In 2015 Joyce was awarded life membership of the R.B.L. In 2017 she was presented with a Certificate of Appreciation by The President and Board of Trustees “as a mark of respect for the exemplary service rendered on behalf of ex Service men and women and their dependants.”

For more about the work of the R.B.L. see page 382.

So, how did Joyce end up in Cranfield?

During the War she would get the bus to visit her brother, **Harry**, who farmed at Wood End, Cranfield. Her sister, Gwenn, was in the **Land Army** and worked on Brett’s farm on the corner of Lodge Road. She was a friend of Peggy Wheeler, the headmaster’s elder daughter.

When the War ended Joyce was taken on as Farm Secretary by Leonard Barnes of Roxhill Manor Farm. One of her roles was to help and encourage the young Anthony, who was 6 at the time, with his reading.

At the peak of her career, she also “kept the books” for fourteen farms as well as two builders, a garage and a home for the elderly.

Joyce joined the Young Farmers Club (Y.F.C). Despite her determination not to marry into farming, it was there that she met **George** who was the son of a Cambridgeshire farmer. He was the Organising Secretary of the Y.F.C. in Bedfordshire. They married in 1951 and lived at Wood End at Marston. Joyce added the role of housewife and mother as she brought up her two children, Peter and Wendy.

George worked at the University and, on his retirement, designed their retirement bungalow in Rectory Lane where they moved to in 1987. Sadly, George died in 1999.

She worked for the Barnes family until she had a fall, in 2016, at the age of 89, having worked for them for 73 years. Along with the family, and the village, she deeply mourned the loss of Anthony at his funeral, just before Christmas, in 2018.

Through her work with the R.O.C., which meant everything to her, Joyce had friends all over the country together with her many farming contacts.

It has been an honour and privilege to share her story.

Joyce sadly died on 2nd July 2021 at the age of 94. She is buried with her husband, George, in Cranfield Cemetery. Her funeral was a splendid occasion with Standard Bearers from the Royal British Legion and a Spitfire flypast.

Reference to **Ecclesiastes 3: 1-15** is on the headstone.

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

a time to be born and a time to die;

a time to plant and a time to pluck up what is planted. (v's 1,2)

a time for war and a time for peace (v8)

What gain have the workers from their toil? I have seen the business that God has given everyone to be busy with. He has made everything suitable for its time; moreover, he has put a sense of past and future into their minds, yet they cannot find out what God has done from beginning to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to be happy and enjoy themselves as long as they live; moreover, it is God's gift that all should eat and drink and take pleasure in their toil. I know that whatever God does endures for ever; nothing can be added to it, nor anything taken from it; God has done this, so that all should stand in awe before him. That which is, already has been; that which is to be, already is; and God seeks out what has gone by. (v's 9-15)

R.A.F. CRANFIELD – 1945 – AND THE FUTURE

No. 51 O.T.U. was disbanded in June 1945. During the last week of June, the remaining Mosquitoes, Beaufighters and Beauforts were flown away. Canadian and Australian airmen who were here were also starting for home. By the end of 1945 all of Cranfield's aircraft were gone.



This photograph, taken after hostilities had ended, shows Mosquitoes assembled for decommissioning at Cranfield.

The photo, a postcard, was found in a book shop in Canada and had been sent home by a Canadian serviceman.

The Empire Test Pilot School (E.T.P.S.) moved to Cranfield from Boscombe Down in November 1945. The first E.T.P.S. course opened at Cranfield in January 1946.

Post-war needs for test pilots in Britain, and many other parts of the world, were met by E.T.P.S. graduates.

Cranfield's future was assured in 1946 when the **College of Aeronautics**, a Government sponsored institution, was founded. In August 1947 the E.T.P.S. moved to Farnborough, but the College of Aeronautics remained.

This is just one of the many schools of Cranfield University which occupies the site today. The old R.A.F. buildings are used for administration and student residences.



Stafford Cripps Building – named after the Minister of Aircraft Production (between 22nd November 1942 and 25th May 1945), whose support for the formation of a College of Aeronautics was crucial.



Mitchell Hall – named after Reginald Joseph Mitchell (1895-1937) who was the chief designer of the Supermarine Spitfire.



Lancaster Hall – named after George Lancaster, an engineer.



Administration Building



Playing Fields

The College of Aeronautics helped to develop the Harrier Jump Jet and has serviced the Hurricanes and Spitfires of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight. The UK's sole remaining airworthy Avro Lancaster was based at Cranfield until 1964.

In 2016 the University proudly celebrated its 70th Anniversary with a “Festival of Flight” and a Heritage Exhibition, sharing its achievements and vision for the future with guests and the residents of the village.



English Electric Lightning at Festival of Flight

More developments are forthcoming. We look forward to growth and opportunities.



One of Cranfield's WWII Hangars



Cranfield Airport today

PART FIVE

CRANFIELD
PRE-WAR AND WAR-TIME
MEMORIES



The past is not dead but living in us
William Morris (1834-1896)

Cranfield Remembered

There are many still living in Cranfield who remember living in the years before and during the War. Many had relatives who fought in the War and returned.

I have had the privilege of sharing memories of some of our elderly residents who were children when war was declared. Thanks to all of those who have been cajoled!

Precious family albums, postcards and old photographs have been unearthed.

Pre-War Milestones

The first milestone was the establishment of the **brickyards. The London Brick Company (L.B.C.)** was vital to Cranfield and the neighbouring villages, providing employment during the Great Depression of the 1920's and 30's until its closure in 2008. Here is a brief history.



Stewartby Brickworks in 1929

The London Brick Company, founded in 1889 in Fletton, Huntingdonshire, began to acquire land in Bedfordshire, which provided the clay used for brick making. The clay, known as Lower Oxford or blue clay, was formed millions of years ago on the sea bed and contains oil from seaweed. It is known as “clay that burns”, enabling continuous, efficient production in the kilns. The fire was never allowed to go out.

The Wootton Pilling (later Stewartby) Brick Company was bought during the slump of the early 1920's. Members of the Stewart family were, successively, Chairmen of the company.

Work on the production line would be hot and dirty. The men worked eight-hour shifts, round the clock, and were paid piece work rates. However, the company was renowned for paying relatively high wages and one week's paid holiday was introduced in 1930.

Stewartby was the largest brickworks in the world employing over 2000 people and manufacturing 500 million bricks each year. At the height of production there were 167 brick chimneys in the valley of Marston Vale.

Sir Halley Stewart materially assisted the building of the company village at Wootton Pilling. **Started in 1926**, the model village of **Stewartby**, which included social and sports facilities, was built for the workers. **In 1936**, in his honour, after his death, the whole parish was renamed

Stewartby in his honour. The Village Hall and Stewartby Club remain vital social facilities.

During the Second World War production continued. Women were employed to make up the labour shortfall. The engineering works at L.B.C. assisted the war effort by manufacturing parts for machine guns. The pits were used to test tanks imported from America.

In the late 1960's there was a slump in the building industry and **Sir Ronald Stewart** saw the need to diversify. From September 1970 **London Brick Land Fill Ltd** commenced the controlled tipping of household and industrial waste into the old clay pits.

As well as Stewartby, there were brickyards at Ridgmont, Lidlington and Brogborough. In 1971 L.B.C. took over the Marston Valley Brick Company.

In March 1984, Hanson's successfully bid for control of the company. In the 1980s and 90s fortunes fluctuated.

Despite investing over £1 million between 2005 and 2007, Hanson, could not meet UK limits for sulphur dioxide emissions. In February 2008 brick production ceased at Stewartby

This ended a chapter of history which helped to define the area.



Stewartby Lake in 2018

Three of the seven chimneys were demolished. The four remaining chimneys were finally brought down on 26th September 2021. There is a proposal to rebuild one as a centrepiece in the planned new development.

The landfill sites, once an eyesore, are now full. The sites are planted with trees and the legacy of the brickworks is being transformed. We also have Stewartby and Brogborough Lakes which are used for water sports and the “Pilling” at Marston Forest Centre which provides a habitat for wintering wildfowl and breeding sand martins.

The Forest Centre itself is a wonderful amenity for families, cyclists, and walkers.

THE CARDINGTON SHEDS AND THE R101



This rather faded photograph of the R101 flying over Frank Lord's house in Bedford Road was the inspiration for a trip to Cardington and an exploration of the history of the R101 and the Cardington sheds.

There is a popular pub, the Kings Arms, at Cardington, a visit to which could round off a visit, if you feel inspired.

The Cardington sheds are a prominent landmark in the valley about ten miles east of Cranfield.



A brief history

During the First World War the Royal Navy operated a fleet of at least 211 airships. These powered balloons were a novel form of transport and were being developed in Germany (the Zeppelins) and the U.S.A.

The first Airship Shed was erected in 1917, at the cost of £10,000, to house the assembly of R31 and R32 airships.

In 1919 the R34, another wooden framed airship, made the first double crossing of the Atlantic.

After the R38 broke in half and crashed into the River Humber, in 1921, killing many of the best designers and crew members, production was put on hold until 1924,

In 1924 the Imperial Airship Scheme planned for a network of airship routes linking the U.K. with Canada, South Africa,

India and, eventually Australia. It took a liner sixteen weeks to reach India via Cape Town. It was estimated that an airship could make the journey in 5 days, with one refuelling stop.

At the time aeroplanes could only carry a few passengers over short distances and only in daylight.

New British airships were to be a symbol of prestige for Britain.

The Government authorised a competition between the Air Ministry, based at Cardington, and a private company, the Airship Guarantee Company, based in Howden, Yorkshire, to construct two airships – His Majesty's Airships R101 and R100 respectively. These were to be used on an Empire-wide travel service.

The Airship Hangar 1 was enlarged to accommodate the R101. **A second shed** was dismantled in Norfolk and brought to Cardington to be enlarged and rebuilt. Nelson's Column could easily stand inside these hangars!

Construction began in 1927.

The R100, designed by Barnes Wallis of Dam Buster fame, was a conventional, tested design, was a little smaller and therefore lighter. There was rivalry rather than cooperation between the teams. The R100 made a successful return flight to Canada without any major problems. The pressure was on for Cardington to do better.



R101 attached to its launching tower and passenger lift.

The R101 was built as a prototype. It was 731 ft (230m) long, the size of an ocean-going liner. It was ENORMOUS. It was powered by five diesel engines driving the 16ft diameter propellers. Its weight of 133.5 tons and its lift of 146.3 tons left very little leeway.

Both ships were inflated with inflammable Hydrogen, as Helium was not then available. The gas bags were constructed using membranes made from part of bullocks' intestines. More than one million oxen were needed for the R101. They were glued inside cotton bags to form cells. The wires containing them were cut to allow them to accommodate more gas. The cells would rub against the ship's framework causing leakage of gas.

The outer cover was 27,000 square yards (over 4 acres!) of cotton fabric. This was prone to wear and tear and to become heavy in the rain.

Passenger accommodation was located inside the hull and included a passenger lounge (160 ft x 30ft) with imitation palm trees, wicker chairs and tables giving the impression of elegance and luxury compared to aircraft interiors.

The R101 had its maiden voyage on 14th October 1929.

In order to increase the lifting capacity, a new middle section was inserted. This increased the length to 777ft. and increased the gas capacity by 10.2%.

There was serious deterioration in the outer cover but not all of it could be replaced in time for the final fateful flight. There was only one test flight, after this significant adjustment, before it was put on its lift tower on 1st October 1930 for the flight to Karachi (then India – now Pakistan) via Ismailia in Egypt, a distance of 5,000 miles.

The fact that it was still an experimental airship got overtaken by the ambition of the Air Minister, who had taken the title of Lord Thompson of Cardington. He wanted a major propaganda coup – possibly with ambitions of becoming Viceroy of India.

The six passengers and 48 crew arrived to board. The baggage allowance was 30lb, and for crew 15lb. Lord Thomson arrived with a carpet weighing 129lb as a gift for his hosts, along with crates of champagne, barrels of beer, twenty varieties of cheese, beautifully engraved silver, and glassware. His baggage weighed 254lb out of a total for the passengers of 394lb.

No matches were allowed. Cigarette lighters were chained to tables!

At 19.36 on 4th October 1930 the airship took off sluggishly. It nosedived and 4 tons of water ballast had to be released at it strained to gain altitude.

It was raining heavily as the R101 made a farewell circle round Bedford before setting off for France. Storm warnings were ignored.

Early the following morning of **5th October**, flying in bad weather with strong headwinds and in heavy rain the air ship lost altitude, grounded, and caught fire on a hillside at Allonne near Beauvais, in northern France. It was the inferno which **killed 46 passengers and crew outright, including Lord Thomson. Two additional crew members survived but died of their injuries soon after.** There were only 6 survivors.

The victims were brought back to London and lay in state in Westminster Hall.

On 11th October, following a funeral procession through London, witnessed by up to a million people, the coffins were brought by special train to Bedford and then by road to Cardington where they were buried in a mass grave.



The official enquiry blamed the disaster on failure of the airship's outer cover, leading to the collapse of one or more of the forward gasbags.

The crash itself could have been survived. It is believed that the fire, described as a searing sheet of white flame, was caused by the ignition of an open box of 5 calcium flares, in the control car, exposed to water. (These were dropped into the sea and were self-igniting to give drift readings.)

It was a flight that should never have taken off. The R101's sister ship the R100 never flew again and was subsequently scrapped.

The Memorial was erected in 1931 and bears the names of the 48 victims. It was paid for by public subscription and was designed by Professor (later Sir) Albert Richardson. The brick and concrete construction is faced with Portland Stone. It is impressive and well worth a visit.



The Memorial to the victims of R101

It is situated in the “new” cemetery to the north west of the Church, along Bedford Road.

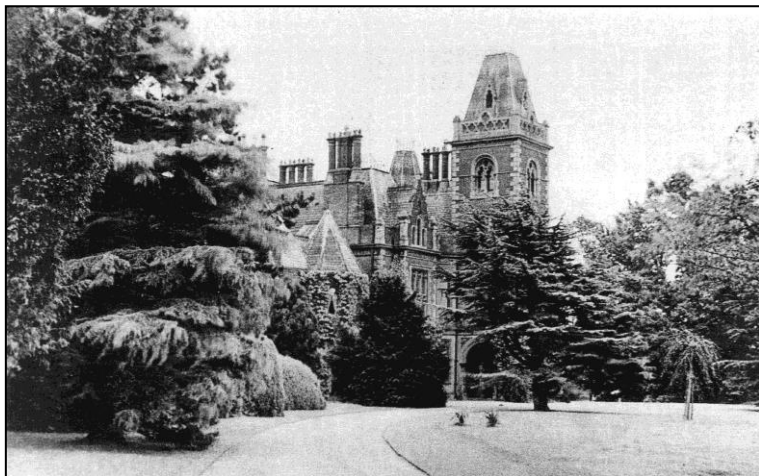
In the lovely old Parish Church of St. Mary there is a display in the south aisle, where the remains of the RAF ensign, which flew on the tail of the R101, are exhibited. The church, like the church in Cranfield, is open during the day, by the south porch.



St Mary's Church, Cardington from the "new" cemetery

The role of RAF Cardington changed to the RAF Balloon Unit during WWII followed by a recruiting and transit camp during the period of National Service Conscription (1949 – 1960). It then became a cryogenic and gas filling production unit until its closure in March 2000.

The third pre-war milestone saw the end an era.
The demolition of Cranfield Court



Cranfield Court was built between 1851 and 1860 and demolished in 1934

The following edited newspaper article tells the story.

The Bedfordshire Times of 7th December 1934

“THE PASSING OF A STATELY HOME

Cranfield Court Being demolished – A Few Memories

Cranfield Court, one of the largest and most handsome country mansions in Bedfordshire, is at the present in the hands of the housebreakers, and the large part of it will shortly be razed to the ground. In its place will appear an estate of small houses, built to meet the needs of the working-class folk in the Cranfield area.

The History of the House

Cranfield Court was built by the Rev. George Gardner Harter, M.A., Rector of Cranfield, at a cost, it is said, of £80,000. When he came to Cranfield, as Rector, the family lived at the Rectory, until its limited accommodation was outgrown, and it was then that the Court was built. (*The old Rectory was demolished in the 1960's replaced by Easthills.*) The Rev. G.G. Harter died in 1872 and was succeeded by his eldest son, Mr James Francis Hatfeild Harter J.P. D.L., who lived there until his death in 1910. (*The Village Hall, known as the Memorial Hall, was given in his memory in 1912*). After this the house was occupied for a short time by a gentleman from Northamptonshire, and then rather more than ten years ago, the estate was bought by Mr R. E. Campbell J.P. The house stood empty after Mr Campbell's death and was for a period used as a school. Its upkeep however proved extremely costly and for some years past it has been standing derelict and falling slowly into decay.

The whole property has now been acquired for development purposes by Messrs Ward & Son of Bedford. Part of the house is to be restored and converted into a small mansion with modern conveniences, and with this will go two acres of woods and shrubbery. (*The present Cranfield Court*) Six million bricks are expected to be obtained when the demolition work is complete."

Recollections of the old days were called to mind by Mr Harry Lincham, who began work there as a stable boy, rose to groom, and finally spent ten years or more as a coachman,

driving as smart a four-in-hand as you could find anywhere in the county. Nowadays he looks after the doctor's motor car. He said that in the time of the old Squire the domestic staff at the house, including the gardens and stables, numbered about forty. Mr Hatfeild Harter was an enthusiastic follower of hounds and would always have anything up to fourteen or fifteen hunters in the stables.

Other notable occasions at the Court were the flower shows and sports that were held in the grounds on August Bank Holidays, when big crowds would assemble from Bedford and from all the neighbouring villages.

But times change. Country gentlemen can no longer maintain these magnificent establishments. The villa with garage and "all modern conveniences" is the symbol of the age, and the stately homes of England fall one by one into the hands of the auctioneer and the demolition contractor. And so there passes from our midst, with all its memories of splendour, that fine old house, Cranfield Court."

The demolition saw the ultimate in recycling, as the bricks were used to build Harter Avenue.

The following advert appeared in *The Bedfordshire Times* of 22nd November 1935: **Cranfield Court Estate**
Houses for sale from £365 to £550. Easy terms. Deposit £25, repayments from 9/6 weekly. Electric light and Power and Water laid on. No road or legal charges. We built on one of the highest points in Bedfordshire, excellent view

over Marston Valley. Apply: WARD & SON, Elstow House, Ampthill Road, Bedford.

From the 1930's, rather than the majority renting, families were encouraged to buy their own houses.

When it was demolished, leaving the servants' quarters as the present Cranfield Court, the remainder of the site with a workshop had various incarnations!

In 1935 the workshop concrete floor was replaced with a wooden block floor and converted into the **"Cranfield Court Social Club"**. The Cranfield Court Social Club **dance hall** was opened in April 1936. "About one hundred people were present and an enjoyable evening was spent." The hall was also used for **"Talkie Pictures"** – admission 1s. Children under 12, 6d.

The Bedfordshire Times of 6th August 1937 reports: "Rapid changes have been taking place at Cranfield Court Estate and where the stately home of the Squire used to stand Cranfield Lido is now in existence. It was opened on Saturday. In officially declaring the bath and pleasure grounds open, the Rev. F. Cottam, Rector, hoped that this new venture would not only justify itself as a commercial enterprise but also bring a great deal of pleasure. The open-air swimming pool adjoined the open air dance floor. The roomy old cellars below the dance floor are being transformed into amusement arcades. Additional attractions in the grounds include a monkey house and an aviary."

Lil Gewitzke was never allowed to go to the dance hall as she had to be in by 9 o'clock. She remembers a monkey escaping from the Zoo and getting into the Lodge House on Lodge Road!

After the Leisure Park and Zoo, there was a mushroom farm, Engineering Plant and finally an Electrical Company, Dagnall Electronics, which provided work, especially for the women, in the village. When this closed down many, including Lil, went to work at the Cryselco factory in Kempston.

This important chapter of Cranfield's history reflects the changing times.



We were sad to learn that Bernice Maynard, who had done so much research on the history of Cranfield Court, died in Wales on 11th June 2022.

Our next milestone still defines our village today.

The Coming of the Airfield to Cranfield



View from the Church Tower along Merchant Lane in 1901 before the coming of the Airfield

The airfield was built on around 400 acres of farmland acquired by Compulsory Purchase, by the Air Ministry, in 1935.

As Britain re-armed to face the growing threats from Nazi Germany, the new R.A.F. station was intended to be part of a chain of air defences in the eastern counties from the Wash to the lower Thames. **It was formally opened on 1st June 1937.**

Many in the village today have relatives who worked to clear the hedgerows and level the land: Evelyn Foster's grandfather at Folly Farm and Jennifer Sinfield's father and grandfather, the land behind Townsend Farm.

Opening of the Ritz Cinema – July 1937

Another landmark was the opening of the Ritz Cinema in July 1937. It was built to coincide with the coming of the Airfield and R.A.F. to Cranfield in June 1937. It stood next to the Chemist where Millfield Close is now.

Seating was provided for 396 in the stalls and 60 in the circle. There were daily shows. The admission cost was then 6d. It apparently went up later to 9d but you could get an ice cream for 3d which was a real treat.

The Ritz Cinema was closed on 3rd September 1939 when World War II was declared, and didn't re-open until the late 1940's. It was equipped with Cinema Scope in 1955. It finally closed on 9th August 1960.



Lil Gewitzke has fond memories of The Ritz as this was where she met her future husband, Bert, just after the War.

Joyce Fishlock also remembers the Ritz. "People came from all the other villages around. It caught fire sometime later. The seats which didn't get burnt went to the cinema at Newport Pagnell."

“Granny and Grampy Evans” remember

Barrie Phillips of Mill Road is the nephew of one of the young men who were killed in WWI, Philip Evans. He has given me this photograph of Philip’s parents, **William George, and Annie Elizabeth**, along with a cutting from the *Bedfordshire Times* on the occasion of **their Golden Wedding in 1935**.



“Mr William George Evans was married to Annie Elizabeth Ross at Astwood Parish Church on 22nd September 1885.”

William Evans remembers Cranfield’s pre-war milestones.

He has fond memories of Squire Harter.

“It was Mr Evans’ proud boast that for twenty-five winters he went rabbiting with Squire Harter’s game keeper. He spoke with considerable affection for Mr Harter who, he said was a fine gentleman and a real friend to the village. “Times are different now that he has gone,” he added sadly.”

William and Annie both looked forward to the coming of the Airfield.

“Mr Evans is engaged on the preparatory work for the new aerodrome that is rapidly taking shape a few hundred yards away. He dug the first trial holes to discover what the clay was like. He thinks the new R.A.F. Station will continue to give work to the villagers when it is finished and considers that no one should be out of work in Cranfield in the future. Mrs Evans is not quite so cheerful about the project. “It will never be peaceful Cranfield again”, she said.”

“Mr and Mrs Evans had thirteen children, of whom eleven are now living and are married. All but two of them live within a stone’s throw of their parents. There are forty grandchildren and thirteen great grandchildren.” Four of our contributors are descended from George and Annie!

Some general memories of village life

Our contributors' memories shared common themes, so, to avoid repetition, I have tried to amalgamate and condense these, before sharing their more personal stories.

"Cranfield in 1939 was a small rural village of little over 200 houses." Clive Evans recalls life in Cranfield Village during the war years 1939 to 1945 as seen through the eyes of a small boy. "It was a long sprawling village made up of "ends": East End, West End, Bourne End, Wharley End and Wood End."

Clive recalls that families weren't as large as during WW1. The **average family** would be 5 or 6 children. Most families lived in **rented accommodation**. The rent would be collected weekly. "There were **two main occupations**, farming, or brickyard work. A farm worker earned £2 a week, a brick worker a little more".

"Nearly all houses had large gardens, which enabled villagers to be self-sufficient for vegetables and fruit. Half of the villagers also **kept chickens and a pig**. The pig was very important. It was fed on any household or garden waste – nothing was wasted. Each family would butcher one pig per year because they were allowed to keep one half of the pig, the other half had to enter the food chain.

The pig had to be grown as big as possible. The pork had to be salted to preserve the meat. The salting process was carried out in a shallow lead lined tray; and called a "lead". As there were only a few leads in the village, the villagers had to synchronise the slaughtering so that a lead was available. The brine used to salt the pork was comprised of

salt, water, and a small amount of saltpetre; an explosive (potassium nitrate), purchased from the local chemist shop.”

Clive described how the pig had to be driven through the village to Dick Whittington, the butcher, at the corner of Merchant Lane. *(It's a good job there was very little traffic on the road!)* The pig would be bled so that the blood could be used to make black pudding. It was salted and hung on hooks in the kitchen. There were no refrigerators, and any unsalted meat would be kept in a meat safe.

Families would keep hens and a cockerel so that they could raise their own chickens. Chickens only laid for two years and then would be eaten by the family.

Olive Wilson helped Grampy on the smallholding with the pigs, geese, calves, ducks, and chickens. There was always plenty to do and they never went short of food.

Frank Lord shared similar memories in his “Chronicles of Cranfield”. “We kept pigs and poultry and had many fruit trees and we also had allotments in Crawley Road and in the field behind the Co-op. We seemed to grow enough potatoes to feed the village and I remember the care taken to store them. They were put in a pit covered with straw and earth and a trench dug around the pit so that water drained off easily. It was important because this was the basic food for the winter. Many people grew wheat on allotments and the flour would be sold to the baker.”

Clive recalls, "During the War years, as Cranfield was a small, fairly isolated village, this encouraged the villagers to unite and help one another. Shop bought provisions were rationed and in short supply. If one ran out of sugar or tea, one popped next door and borrowed a cupful, returning the borrowed item later. The villagers were only too happy to support and help each another. Any home-grown surpluses of vegetables and fruit would be shared out."

"**The countryside** has changed so fundamentally since 1939 that only octogenarians like me can remember what it was like. Cranfield was surrounded by a dozen or so small mixed farms, made up of small fields, leafy hedgerows, ditches, and ponds. The cover ensured that there was a plentiful supply of rabbits, birds and the occasional deer that could be hunted."

He recalls that rabbits would be trapped. The eyes were removed but the skinned rabbit would be cooked whole with its head on. The tongue, cheeks and brain were the best bits!

"Another valuable part of our lives was the **freedom to roam**. There was not the intensive agriculture as now. There was a great deal of pasture land and the fields were filled with buttercups and daisies. Most farms were mixed and were not the small prairies they have become now. We knew the birds, flowers and trees, the rabbit burrows, the crab apples and where to find the boughs with the best hazel nuts. Some farmers were kind and allowed us to play football in their fields."

Olive Wilson remembers a “lovely” childhood, spending a lot of time in the open air. “We were free to go down the field and pick all the wild flowers and try to get moorhen’s eggs and often fell in the pond. We tied a spoon on a long stick to reach them.” The moorhen’s eggs had to be freshly laid and were fried.

Cranfield still has lovely countryside today – but for how long?



Mains electricity came to the village in 1921 – but many houses were still not connected to the mains by 1939.

Clive’s grandmother’s house in Tea Pot Row had no electricity. She would have to light the fire each morning and always had the kettle on the hob. “If you were lucky enough to have electricity it would be on a shilling meter. This was emptied every three months. There was usually a surplus in the meter, after the electricity had been paid for, which

would be returned to the householder. As money was in short supply this was a welcome bonus.”

Olive had **no mains electricity** in the early days. She remembers taking the accumulator **battery from the radio to be charged** at Allon White’s. **Paraffin lamps** were used for lighting and **calor gas** for cooking. They had a large black kitchen range.



This lovely paraffin lamp stood on Norman Sinfield’s family table during the War.

Street lighting came even later – in 1948.



The High Street before and after street lights



Olive remembers **bath night**, once a week in an old tin bath in front of the fire. The children would be first, followed by the adults. The water was heated in a **copper boiler** over a

fire of coal and wood. This was how the water was also heated for washing day.

Before **mains water** reached the village in **1936** families would have used wells or the village pump.



Even after mains water was connected, Clive Evans remembers: “Few of the properties in Cranfield had an indoor tap. It was mostly a single tap outside for several properties to use.”

The village was not connected to **main sewerage** until 1962. Bourne End still uses “septic tanks”.

Older residents remember the **primitive toilet arrangements**. An outside wooden or brick structure would have a wooden seat, with a hole, over a bucket, with a handle, which would be emptied regularly.

“Teddy” O’Donnell told me that the School and School House had a unique arrangement. There was a smaller hole for the children. A lever could be pulled which would release ash to cover up the waste. You had to be careful that you didn’t get covered in ash! This would later be dug into the garden.

Olive remembers the toilet was half way down the garden and would be emptied and the waste dug into the soil. The waste collection service which visited the village didn’t reach them.

Evelyn Foster remembers scrubbing the buckets. She remembers being told about a horse vehicle driven by an old fellow from North Crawley. He would collect the waste. He sat on a plank in the front with of a half-covered tank behind. The mind boggles!

The horse drawn vehicle was later replaced by a lorry. Clive remembers it being known as “Violet”.

Toilet paper was squares of newspaper attached by string. A luxury was the wrapping paper from Jaffa oranges which were themselves a luxury! Early toilet paper was “Izal” or “Bronco” which bore no resemblance to the cushioned varieties of today!

“Elson” chemical toilets and septic tanks were the latest before mains sewage.

We look next at general memories of buildings and businesses and some of the people connected with them.

Cranfield Mill

Harry Anstee, the father of one of our soldiers, John Anstee, (see page 103) commemorated on the War Memorial, was the Miller, like his father before him. Steve Anstee, John's nephew, has provided some interesting information about the old mill.



The Mill stood off Broad Green near the junction with Mill Road. It was built in the late 1840's by James Young, the grandfather of one of our First World War soldiers, Owen Young.

Hugh Howes in "Bedfordshire Mills" recorded that it worked until 1935 when a sail was wrecked in a tail wind. Ben Anstee (one of John's younger brothers) recalled, "I was working there as a boy on that day in 1935 when the

mill got out of control in a storm. It has never worked since.”

Cranfield Mill was demolished in 1966. The owners felt that its condition had become too dangerous. During the previous two years the roof had shifted considerably, and the owners felt local children would be tempted to explore it. It was so soundly built that it resisted demolition to the last.

Ben Anstee recalled “I think they had to charge it about 12 times before they could move it; the top was unsafe, that’s all.”



Mavis Mackrill remembered the old mill on the corner of Broad Green. It was already derelict in the 1930’s. Her brother and cousins would climb up and play in it while she stayed down below.

There was another mill at Gossards Green, on the Bourne End Road. This old mill burnt down.

Village Shops

All of the elderly residents have fond memories of the different shops in the village.

Lil Gewitzke wrote down a list of those she could remember. They were: 4 Butchers: Sam Ford, Co-op (Where the post office section is now), Andrew's (Just before Howe's Farm) and Whittington's (Where the Barber's is now).

4 Food shops: Co-op, Jones', Lineham's on the High Street, and Salisbury's on Crane Way. (Also, Hoden's)

3 Baker's: Tom Hillson's, Cecil Pulley's (Jan Butcher's Dad – where the Marshal's D.I.Y. shop was) and Partridge's.

Pam's Café on the corner of Plough Close. "Widow Twankey's" sold home-made pies and pasties. Run by actors from the theatre business.

2 Drapers: Bells, Ambridge (half of the shop was shoe repairs)

2 Fish and Chip shops (Sold in newspaper): Farrer's (where newsagent is), and Mayling's.

2 Bike Shops: Allon White, Coopers (Evelyn Foster's Dad) on the High Street.

2 Newsagents and sweet shops: Linnell's (Old house in Court Road) and Anstee's.

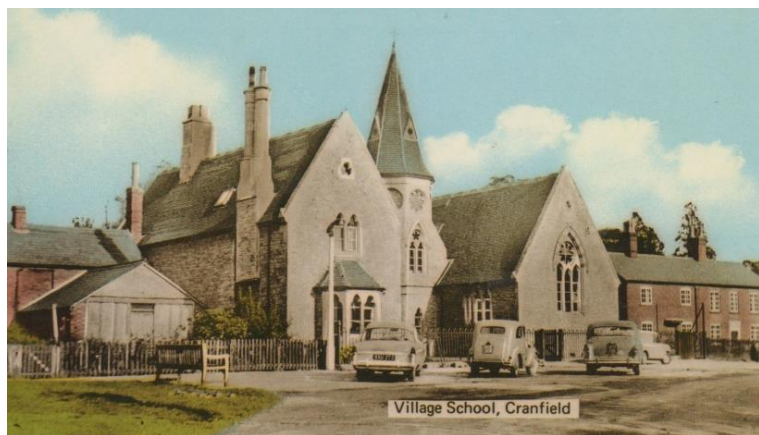
2 Undertakers: Willy White and Manning (on land behind the newsagent)

1 Wet fish and Veg: Farrer's (Collected fresh fish brought by train to Woburn Sands)

1 Hairdresser – Win Matthews (nee Anstee)

1 Post Office and 1 Chemist

Olive Wilson remembers **Mrs Groom's shop**, to the left of the School House, where sweets were sold in a cone of newspaper for ½d.



Mrs Groom's shop to the left of the School House

"Teddy" O'Donnell remembered Mrs Groom's, which sold "everything", but "Teddy" especially remembers the sweets. She also remembered a brand-new green bicycle which stood by the counter and never seemed to be ridden.

Another shop she remembered which sold "everything" was **Mr Jones' Village Stores** next to the Carpenters Arms.

"Mr Jones was a kind man and wore a brown overall." He used to give her sweets. He was helped by his brother. His daughter, Barbara was one of her best friends. She was saddened to learn that "the Carps" was no longer a public house.



Jones' Store and the Carpenter's Arms

Mavis Mackrill remembered **Bob Linnell's Newsagents shop** opposite Hartwell Farm on Court Road. The shop sold newspapers and sweets. Mr Linnell would deliver the papers on his bicycle. He had quite a reputation for his temper. If his bike fell over he would kick the bike!

Evelyn Foster also remembers **Bob Linnell**, the Newsagent. He had a car which required a starting handle to crank the engine. He had such a temper that he would “thrash” the car with the handle if it wouldn't start. He was a village character!

Clive Evans also has a memory of Bob Linnell. One day the driver of the toilet waste lorry refused to empty his bucket because the handle was broken. Bob chased after him with the bucket – not sure where the contents ended up!

Brenda Howe thought it closed in the 1960's.



Burntwood House (Linnell's Newsagents)

John Poole told me that his father, John, while serving in Italy had met Bob Linnell. Bob had cried with relief when he met a familiar face from Cranfield. His war experiences may account for his later anger.

Mavis Mackrill remembered **Hillson's Bakery** where Bakery Close now stands. She has a receipt for her parents' wedding reception in 1932, complete with cake and sandwiches, for £1.16s. 4d. How much would a wedding cake cost today?

Palmer's the Solicitor's office was **Puryer's** which was a boot makers. Opposite was **Mr Ford the butcher** who played the organ in the church.

Henry Farrer's House, once the "Old George" public house, on the corner of Court Road and the High Street, sold fish and chips from the shop attached to the side of the house – now the Newsagents. A horse and cart would collect the fish from Woburn Sands station. It would be kept fresh with ice. The front room of the house was a green grocery.



Olive remembered two spinsters, Adelaide and Ede White who were dressmakers. They had been responsible for the Christening robe from the silk her father had brought back from India. She had a new dress, often velvet, made for each Easter Sunday. Olive would go after school for a fitting.

The ladies would sit in the window with a treddle sewing machine. The cottage is opposite the Newsagent, then Farrer's Fish and Chip Shop.



Adelaide and Ede's house opposite the Newsagents

Olive remembered **Pam's Café** on the corner of Plough Close. The airmen would come and enjoy a hearty meal. Pam Howe was the late Dick Howe's sister. She became engaged to an airman who was sadly killed during the war. A few of the girls in the village married airmen.



Site of Pam's Cafe

Olive would go to **Lineham's** the grocers to get her Granddad's peppermints. She would take them out of their wrappers and put them in a jar by his bed.

Brenda Howe remembered **two Lineham's**. One was opposite the doctor's surgery and sold groceries and sweets. The other was a saddlery and leather shop opposite the Cross Keys.



The site of Lineham's on the High Street today

Studman's sold clothes and haberdashery and made-to-measure suits.



Brenda Howe remembered **Mrs Whitmee's**, known as **Widow Twankey's** as the owners had been on the stage. They were famous for their pasties.

The old forge was near the new Co-op on the High Street. Mr Ben Cox was the blacksmith and Registrar of births and deaths for Woburn sub-district.



The Post Office has moved more than a couple of times. The original was to the right of Allon White's Morgan garage on the High Street. It moved next door, to the right, to premises that had been a milliners cum drapers early in the twentieth century. At the time of writing this is now the home of Bordeauxs Letting agency.



The Old Post Office

To the left is Mr Allon White Snr, the lady in the foreground centre is his wife, with their two daughters Mabel and Ada, standing by the door. The two lads by Mr White are their sons. Note the dog on the postman's bike.

The postman at the time would cycle to and from Woburn Sands station twice a day and catch the mail train for Bletchley where the main sorting office was for this area.

The postal address for Cranfield would have been Bletchley, which was in Bucks.

In May 2002 the Post Office moved to the old Co-op in Mill Road. In December 2021 it reopened in the new Co-op on the old Budgens site on the High Street.

The late Joyce Fishlock was told by the first owners of **the Chemist**, Mr and Mrs Robinson, that she was the first baby to be weighed there after it opened in 1938.



The Pubs

There were **five pubs** – (there had been about twelve in the 18th Century!) They were: **The Fox and Hounds** – demolished mid 1980's – where Washingleys is today.



The Leathern Bottle - Mavis Mackrill's maternal great grandparents, Henry and Elizabeth Cox, and their family, lived in a house next to the Leathern Bottle public house on Crawley Road. The old pub burnt down and was rebuilt on the same site.



The Leathern Bottle closed in 2003 and, along with the neighbouring house, was demolished to make way for Birch Close in 2006.



The Carpenters Arms –known as “the Carps” was the next to go. A consortium from the village tried, unsuccessfully, to raise enough money to save it. It first opened as a beer house and is now a private house.



The Swan – was demolished and rebuilt in 1937,



The Swan – still standing and trading today



The Cross Keys was rebuilt in 1923 after the old building burnt down. It was saved for the village by Pauline Kinns and is now a Free House and popular community pub.

Cranfield School

There was only one school in Cranfield during war time and afterwards, until the Holywell School was founded in 1973. This is now the St. Peter's site of the Cranfield Church of England Academy, opposite the Parish Church.

The school and adjoining house was built, at the same time as Cranfield Court, between 1851 and 1860. It was given to the village by the Rector, Rev. George Gardner Harter, in 1865, in memory of his father. It has always been a Church School, adhering to Christian values. Its motto today is "Enjoying, Achieving and Learning." Because of our growing population it has expanded to a second site, St. Paul's, in Braeburn Way, which incorporates the pre-school "Little Cranes".



The School and School House

All born in Cranfield remember their school days. I have left individuals to tell their own stories when they share their precious individual memories.

School leaving age was fourteen. There were some scholarships to the fee paying, higher education establishments in Bedford and elsewhere.

Reading Frank Lord's "Chronicles of Cranfield" and talking to those in the village who remember the years before and during the war, a name which keeps cropping up is that of **Mr L.F. Wheeler, Head of Cranfield School.**

He was held in respect but also considerable fear as he would wield his cane for any misdemeanours.

He was the leader of the Home Guard, Chairman of the Cranfield Branch of the British Legion and generally was there when anything needed to be done.

His younger daughter, the late Mabel Vaughan O'Donnell, who preferred to be known as "Teddy", was 15 at the outbreak of war. She fondly remembered her Daddy. These memories are added to by some research done by her son, Conal. As we pay our respects to Mr Wheeler we are grateful that he chose to come to our school and village for his whole career.

Mr Frank Wheeler

Frank Wheeler was Headmaster of Cranfield School from the mid 1920's until he retired in the 1950's.

Leonard Frank Wheeler, bizarrely known as "Bob", "a wonderful man", chose a career of teaching as four generations of his family had done before him. He completed his training at Cheltenham.

At the outbreak of the First World War, he volunteered and enlisted in the 24th Battalion, (The Queens) London Regiment, as a private. He served in France from early 1915, qualifying him for the "Mons Star". He was wounded in the leg, by a splinter from a shell, in the Battle of Loos (end Sept – beg Oct 1915). He was also blinded by mustard gas for six months. He was commissioned in 1917 and by 1918 had attained the rank of Captain.



After the war the remnants of the army were desperate for work. Mr Wheeler was one of 70 applicants for the post of **Headmaster** at Cranfield in the mid 1920's. He was the preferred candidate. He believed his ability to play the church organ swung the choice in his favour. Cranfield was, as now, a Church School. Teddy remembers a boy in the village having to pump the organ by hand. The old organ was then at the rear of the church, high up.

He spent his entire career at Cranfield School.

He was good looking, in fact, "very handsome".

He became quite senior in the Freemason branch at Ampthill. This put him on friendly terms with such luminaries as the Duke of Bedford, the politician Alan Lennox-Boyd, and the architect Prof. Albert Richardson, among others.



He was a JP, a member of Bedfordshire County Council, Cranfield Parish Council and The British Legion as well as being heavily involved with the National Union of Teachers (NUT) at national and local level.

“Daddy got the village going.”

He taught Gilbert and Sullivan Operas to the children who attended school up to the age of 14 years.

He was a kindly man and greatly looked up to generally in the village, not least because he never charged a fee for his signature on official documents, unlike the local doctor, Dr Street, who charged a shilling.

Mr Wheeler encouraged promising students. He would give them extra tuition after school and never charged. Two such students were Sylvia Gadsden, who became one of the first female doctors, and Bill Lancaster who qualified as a veterinary surgeon. He went to practice in the Malay states and was trapped by the Japanese at the onset of the Second World War. He survived the war and, like many other expupils “came back to see Daddy”.

Mr Wheeler tried to employ the daughters of men killed in the Great War as housemaids. He would always help in some way where he could.

During WWII he commanded the **Local Home Guard Unit** as Captain. By all accounts he loved it and took on a new lease of life. “Teddy” believed the middle-aged men enjoyed being on manoeuvres “in a weird sort of way”. Conal says that clearly there was a certain element of Captain Mainwaring and Dad’s Army about it but equally his grandfather and others of the unit had seen a lot of active service in WWI and, he thinks, would have given a decent

account of themselves in any invasion although German troops would have overwhelmed them in time.

At the start of the war, they were responsible for guarding Cranfield aerodrome until the R.A.F. Regiment got itself organised. His unit managed to shoot dead a cow which they mistook for night time German attackers.

There are a great many tales of that period. One of Conal's favourites was the return of a really troublesome, hopeless ex-pupil who walked into the Swan one night resplendent in Sergeant's stripes and campaign ribbons on his breast pocket. After being stood many drinks, one from his grandfather, who couldn't understand why this dolt had done so well, the pub door suddenly burst open and a party of military police arrested him as a deserter, as well as an imposter, wearing N.C.O. stripes and medal insignia which he'd stolen!

After retiring, Mr Wheeler and his wife, Lilly, moved to a bungalow he had built on Mill Road. "Teddy" took her two sons to visit and was concerned that they were annoying him. He replied, "They are not annoying me, rather keeping me alive".

He died in 1955. The family are convinced that his gassing in the war left him with lung complications which shortened his life.

During his funeral the police had to stop the traffic as the cortege made its way through the village. Three old men, who he had helped, doffed their caps as the cortege passed. The church was packed for the funeral service.

He was content that he had “fulfilled his mission in life”

He is buried with his wife, Lily, in Cranfield Churchyard. Also buried in the family grave are the ashes of his eldest daughter, Peggy.



The Wheeler Family Grave

War-time Memories

Air raid shelters had already been built for public use. By April 1941 a letter had been received from the County Surveyor in respect of the unsanitary conditions of these shelters.

The late Joyce Fishlock remembered a particular air raid shelter in Cranfield. "The nearest air raid shelter to us was on the road outside Hillson's Bakery; hence the name Bakery Close. When the sirens began to sound, we all went to that one. I can still remember it, as it still remained for a while after the War. To tell the truth my memory is of cold, damp and dog pee – couldn't leave your pet alone during an air raid, could you? Mr Tom Hillson always came but would never come inside. He just stood outside looking at the sky and listening, and when we could hear a plane approaching, we waited. Tom would say "It's all right, it's one of ours". He was never known to be wrong, so we would sigh with relief. If he didn't say anything, as it was above us, we just prayed."

Many people had their own shelters. Mavis Mackrill remembered an air raid shelter being built in the garden. It started off as an Anderson shelter which filled up with water. It was partially buried in the ground, made of tin and the roof was grassed over. It was never used except to play in! Olive Wilson remembered that her Dad and brother, Raymond, built their own air raid shelter in the orchard.

David Foster remembered the crash gates on each side of the road from Cranfield to Salford. These would be opened to allow planes to be towed or to taxi across to the

temporary Airfield extension off Lodge Road. You can still see the bricks which formed the hard standing, to the left of the path from the Lodge, and the remains of the air raid shelter to the right.



The other remaining shelter is in the park at the High Street end of Lodge Road. It is very overgrown.

Bomb Damage in Cranfield

During the late summer of 1940, at the time of the Battle of Britain, the Airfield and Cranfield village became the target for enemy action with mines, bombs, and incendiaries. The first bombing came on the night of 27th August when incendiary and high explosive bombs were dropped to the north and south of the Airfield. Decoy service units ensured that bombs largely missed the Airfield.

The following month a parachute mine exploded in a nearby field, damaging houses, and shops in the High Street.

On 13th October a mine, complete with parachute was found dangling from a tree in **Hulcote Wood**. Mavis Mackrill remembers wondering what this was when she was out picking blackberries. It was successfully detonated but the resulting explosion brought down the ceiling at the home of the station armaments officer!

A bomb fell in **the Thrift**, leaving a crater which is now a shallow pond.

The School and School House



The School and house were damaged on 24th September 1940. There was damage to the roof and windows of the school and house. As well as all of the necessary repairs, the recommendations were to “clear up the debris and clean the school and furniture”.

Mavis Mackrill remembers that, when the school was closed after the bombing, the parents went in to reclaim the “emergency rations” which were kept at the school.

The late “Teddy” O'Donnell lived through the war in the school house. She was fifteen when war broke out. She wrote a piece for the **B.B.C. “People’s War”**, in 2005. Her son Conal transcribed this and is happy for excerpts from it to be shared. Here we shall share her memories of living in

the School House during the war, and the bomb damage in Cranfield.



Mabel "Teddy" Wheeler in front of the school house

"The cellar was turned into an **air raid shelter**. We had a Mohammedan prayer rug on the stone floor, a small table, four chairs, a primus stove, kettle, cups and saucers for tea and tins of biscuits. It was quite cosy.

We all sat and listened to the nine o'clock news from London every night. A German plane, flying very high would drone over at this time. We got quite used to it. But one night – CRASH -huge explosions and blue lights flashed. Our windows were blown out. Wallpaper was stripped from the walls, tiles clattered to the ground.

Three **parachute mines** were aimed at R.A.F. Cranfield, an O.T.U. airfield only a few hundred yards away. One badly

damaged our house. The village Church opposite was badly damaged. The windows were broken and the roof, with its beautifully carved medieval angels, was shattered.

The Howe's farm nearby was damaged. Mr Bates field of cows were blown to pieces. Peter Bates, the schoolboy son, out on his bike, had seen a parachute silently swinging down and thought it was a German parachutist.

A third fell in open fields further down. Deep craters were discovered the next day. My father and his men were out all night helping people to settle down. All the villagers were afraid, but no one had been killed. The damage to shops and houses was repaired.

Some weeks later a farmer from about two miles away asked to see Captain Wheeler. "Yes – what is it about?" "There is a German camping out in my woods, Sir" reported the farmer. "Oh – we'll come and see". It was yet another parachute mine caught in a tree, the silk canopy spread out on top of the branches and swaying in the wind. Portsmouth and the Navy were alerted, and a squad came up. The mine was exploded on the spot and devastation happened all over again as the blast spread out. Windows, roofs and doors all had to be replaced for the second time.

Meanwhile a large **deep shelter** had been dug on the village green, and I went down there one night. It was awful – all the men women and children huddled down there with no ventilation and no room to move let alone sleep. One night was enough for me. I went back to our cellar.

A new baby girl was born to the baker's wife. My mother gave them my dolls cradle to sleep the little mite in while they were down in the shelter.

The **blackout** was extensive and long dark winter nights were difficult. The tedium, the boredom! One farmer insisted on having lamps for his chickens in their sheds at night. He said his hens liked the light even though he was constantly being fined for breaching the blackout.

Our house was quite often briefly lit up by the Cranfield flare path as aircraft made their final approach. My mother was always ringing up the C.O. claiming it was making our house an easy target for hostile aircraft.

"There's a war on Madam!" he'd patiently reply after each complaint."

The Parish Church East Window

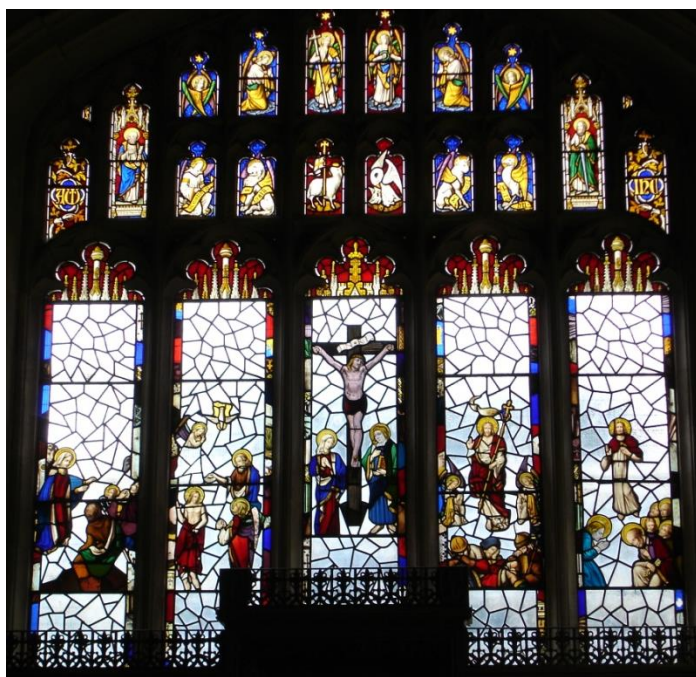
In October or September 1940, the **Parish Church** was damaged.

Mavis Mackrill remembered that the blast from a bomb, which fell near Rectory Farm, blew out the east window of the church. She remembers picking up the pieces of shattered coloured glass and putting them in a box.

It was more than seven years before it was finally repaired. A quotation of £180 was received from W.H. Constable and Co. of Cambridge "for the existing figures that remain in the lights to be leaded up with crazy background with the

exception of the centre light this being the only one we are allowing for the repairing of the missing figure of our Lord on the Cross.”

The original window was the gift of John Collier Harter, father of the Rector, George Gardner Harter. It depicted events from the life of Christ: the Nativity, Baptism, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension.



A TREASURY OF MEMORIES

These are the personal memories of Cranfield residents who tell their stories of living before and during the War. They also share memories of their families. Many had relatives who served in the War and returned.

Cranfield is fortunate to have had its own chronicler, **Frank Lord**. He recorded Parish Council minutes, up to the 1960's, as well as newspaper articles, and his own memories. The book was snapped up and is no longer in print. It was published just before Frank sadly died, of prostate cancer, in 2005, at the age of 83.

Diana, his widow, tells us a little of Frank's life **during and after the Second World War**. She and Ian Lord, her nephew, have kindly shared some family photographs and memories.



Frank, on the left, with his Father and Cecil, one of his older brothers

Frank Leslie Lord was born on **10th November 1921**, the youngest of five children of **Alfred and Annie (nee Wooding)**. His siblings were, Lily, Bill, Amy, and Cecil.



LAC Frank Lord in 1944

Frank was living with the family at 15 Bedford Road and working as a clerk when he joined the R.A.F. in September 1941. As he was colour-blind he wasn't allowed to fly. His role was to block German radio signals. He served on ten different bases throughout the war.

After the war he returned to Cranfield to pursue a career in teaching.

He taught at Fulbrook School, Woburn Sands. He spent a year teaching in Florida in the 1950's. He became a trouble-

shooter being on permanent supply until he ended his career as the much respected Head of Wymington School.

He married Diana, in April 1966, at St. Mary Magdalene Church Little Brickhill. They had two children; Rosamund Fern was born in 1967 and Jonathan Frank in 1968. He was a pillar of our local community He served as a **Parish Councillor and Justice of the Peace**.

He died in 2005 at the age of 83 after a long battle with prostate cancer.

Frank Lord's ashes are buried in his parent's grave in the graveyard behind the Baptist Chapel in Bedford Road. His sister, Lil's ashes are in the same grave along with those of Ian Lord's parents.



The family – Frank was the youngest of five children: Lily, Bill, Amy, Cecil, and Frank.

Lily (Miss Lord) was the eldest. She taught at Cranfield Lower School as well as serving the village in many ways. She died in 1999 at the age of 91.



Miss Lord sitting on the left of the front row to the right of Mr Wheeler. Peggy Wheeler, his eldest daughter is sitting on his left.

William Alfred (Bill), the eldest brother, was Ian Lord's Father. Bill served in South Africa with the Middlesex Regiment during the Second World War. He was a Warrant Officer, training the Africans in warfare.



In peacetime Bill worked as a bricklayer at the London Brick Company.



His sister **Amy** married a local Baptist preacher, John Gilbert, at Kempston.

His brother **Cecil** was born in 1919. He also served in the Second World War and was in Burma when victory was declared. He served in the 11th (East Africa) Division.

In 1944 the Division, together with the 5th(Indian) Division, opened the road to Rangoon, advancing down the Kabaw valley, establishing the first bridgehead over the Chindwin from which other Divisions of the Fourth Army carried on the advance culminating in the conquest of Burma. The Division was due to return to active operations. In September 1945 when the Japanese nation collapsed, they returned to East Africa. The Divisional sign “The Rhino” is symbolic of the fighting reputation and toughness of the Division. The two horned African rhino lives in foul climates and when provoked is one of the most pugnacious and toughest of the wild animals on the African continent.



Cecil never married. He worked as an accountant for an electricity company in Bedford. He shared a house in Mill Road with his sister, Lily. He died in 2003.

Frank’s memory, and those of his loved ones, lives on.

“Teddy” O’Donnell (nee Wheeler) remembered living in the School House before and during the War. She was fifteen when War was declared.



“Teddy” Wheeler as a young girl

Mabel Vaughan O’Donnell, younger daughter of Mr **Frank Wheeler**, Headmaster of Cranfield School, preferred to be known as **“Teddy”**. She hated the name Mabel and was told she looked like a teddy bear, so adopted the name.

I was able to contact her son, Conal, who told me that his mother was then very much alive at the age of 93 (in 1918)

and living in Norfolk. I had the privilege of being able to have a long telephone conversation with her.

Her memories of her father are shared on page 293.

Her memories of living during the war and the bomb damage in Cranfield are told on page 301.



She remembered the house itself. Her bedroom was above the porch, and it was always “so cold”.

The heating was provided by hot coals in a black leaded grate in the main lounge. There was no bathroom and baths were taken in a tin bath in front of the fire.

She moved on from the village school to Bedford Girl's School, travelling each day on the bus. There was no school bus, and she has to get the service bus, a big green double decker, which made two morning journeys a day, leaving Cranfield at 8am and 11am. If you missed the early bus you would be late for school.



“Teddy” (centre) with her Mother, Lilly

The bus company also organised trips. “Teddy” remembered a trip to London when a crowd of friends visited London Zoo. Her friend, Pam Howe, was determined to ride an elephant. She insisted and got her own way in the end. Pam, from Hartwell Farm, was the late Dick Howe’s sister. She ran a very successful café during the war and became engaged to an airman. Like so many young girls, her heart was broken when he was killed during the war.

“Old” Dr Street used to make his house visits in a pony and trap before he had a chauffeur driven car. **His son, John** went to Bedford School. Dr Street served in the Second World War and was taken prisoner by the Japanese. When he came back from the War he lived at Hulcote Manor and succeeded his father at the Cranfield Surgery.

The following is taken from “Teddy’s” account written for the BBC “People’s War”. (See also page 302)

“We had very little food. Ours was an open house to all servicemen. People came in with their own contributions. One came with a string of onions his father had grown. Later in the war the Americans were very generous arriving with cartons of Phillip Morris cigarettes. (Mother smoked like a chimney!), tins of salted peanuts, sweets, chewing gum and all sorts of goodies.

Others, popped in to play cards, play the piano or simply get away from service life for a few hours.”

There were so many more questions I could have asked “Teddy” about her memories of Cranfield before and during the war. The overall impression was of happy times although there were none of the amenities or utilities we take for granted today.

Frank Seamark – the village chimney sweep remembered by Jill Hickman, his granddaughter.



Frank Seamark with his horse, Billy

Lizzie, the fourth eldest daughter of **William and Annie Evans**, married Frederick Shayler in 1915. She already had a child, Bob. The couple went on to have a daughter, Doll.

Sadly, Lizzie's husband, Fred, died and she married **Frank Charles Seamark**, a member of another Cranfield family. Frank was the brother of **Joseph Seamark** who died of his wounds, in France, in the First World War, in June 1917. They had three children, **Bill, Leslie and Betty**. Leslie was Jill and John's father. John is currently Chairman of the Cranfield Branch of the Royal British Legion.

When Frank was five years old he got a thorn in his right leg. This became infected and, as there were no antibiotics, he had to have his leg amputated above the knee. This meant that he was unfit to serve his country.

It is perhaps interesting that William Evans, Lizzie's father, was a chimney sweep in the 1911 census. He may have passed on his gear to Frank, as he became a chimney sweep for Cranfield and the surrounding villages.

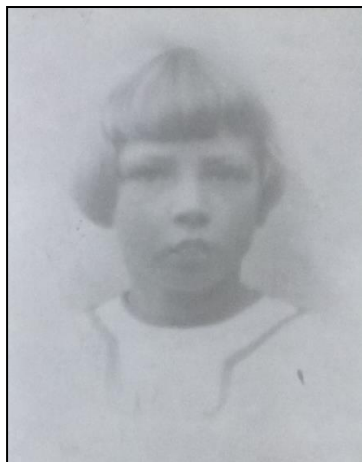
After their marriage, Frank and Lizzie lived in a converted bus for a while before moving into their "two up, two down" house in the High Street near to where R.G.R. garages stand now. The three small cottages have since been converted into one house. He kept his horse, Billy, in the field behind the house.

The house was shared by the family as well as Auntie Cynthia, who was Doll's daughter. More Cranfield convolutions!

Jill commented that in those days people didn't have much but they appreciated what little they had.

Frank died in the 1960's at the age of 70, a much loved figure.

Lilian Gewitzke remembers growing up in Cranfield and life during and after the War.



Lil was born in Cranfield in November 1928, one of four children of **Jesse Parker and Dorothy (Doll) (nee Lovesey): Lil, David, Sheila, and Eric.** The family lived in a cottage on the High Street near to R.G.R. Garage.

She remembered a happy childhood. Twice a day she would collect the milk from Townsend Farm, opposite, in an enamel can with a lid. At Christmas the children were given an orange, by the farmer, as a treat.

She attended Cranfield School and remembered the Headmaster, Mr Wheeler, with tears in his eyes as he read out the names of those from the village who had lost their lives in the First World War.

Her Dad worked at Brogborough Brickyards and would set rabbit traps on the way to work. He would empty these on the way home and sell the rabbits for a shilling. He would be covered with orange brick dust when he got home.

She remembered the rag and bone man with his horse and cart. He would give windmills to the children. A van came from Northampton selling shoes.

She especially remembered the late (and loved) Theodore Salisbury's mum's shop on Crane Way, selling groceries and milk. She remembers Jones' General Store next to the Carpenter's Arms, which later became a bread shop and café. She remembers Linnell's Newsagents.

She was approaching her ninth birthday when War was declared.

She left school at fourteen and went to work for Andrews the butchers on Court Road, doing cleaning. She earned 10s (50p) a week and had half a day off. She helped out at Pam's Café with her cousin, Alice. During the War this was packed out with airmen. Her pay went up to 16s a week when she went to work at Cryselco in Bedford, making light bulbs.

Everything changed when she was seventeen and met Bert at **the Ritz Cinema**. This was popular with the soldiers stationed at Marston. Two or three of the village girls married soldiers.

Bert had been taken prisoner in Africa and had been held for five and a half years. After the war he and others were brought to the camp in Marston to be demobbed.



He was a London boy. The house that Bert had lived in, with his mother and brother, had been bombed out in the Blitz.



Lil and Bert were married and left Cranfield to make their new life together in London. They had three children: Bert,

Dennis, and Janet. Sadly, Bert died of a heart attack, at the age of 62, in 1981. She misses him more and more.

Lil eventually returned to her roots in Cranfield and is regularly visited by her family. Sadly, Eric died after her return, but she has been grateful for the help of Sheila and her husband Roland, and David and his wife Brenda. Her sons and daughter and grandchildren visit regularly. She has two great grandchildren. Sadly, Sheila died suddenly in 2021.

Like all of our older residents, Lil has seen a lot of changes to what was once a small village. However, it is still full of a spirit of neighbourliness and long may that continue.



The late **Brenda Howe** remembered wartime childhood. She sadly died on 5th July 2019, aged 86.



Hartwell Farm - Court Road

Brenda lived in the family farm on Court Road, where she has lived for fifty six years, since marrying Dick Howe in 1961. When they first moved in the house was owned by the Quakers who also had Alms-houses in Cranfield.

The bricked up windows were due to the **window tax**, a law imposed in 1697. Originally the tax was for houses with six or more windows. It was increased six times between 1747 and 1808 and was repealed in 1851.

It was a privilege to share Brenda's memories of "the old days" over a cup of tea in the lovely farmhouse kitchen.

Brenda was nine when war was declared. The gravity of the situation didn't sink in, and she was largely unaffected by the War, although she experienced the hardships shared by all.

She lived at Marston on Charity Farm but **went to school in Cranfield**. She remembers Mr Wheeler being a wonderful pianist. He would tell stories using the piano. She remembered him being a strict disciplinarian.

She remembered **rationing**. There was a shortage of meat. Families registered with a butcher. Corned beef was available on Tuesdays. There was no meat during the week – only at weekends. As her father kept a pig in the garden they never went short. There was no refrigeration, and she remembers a big meat safe. Her brother, born in 1944, had the condensed milk, her father had the cheese, her sister had the butter and the others had margarine. In 1951 there was still rationing. Her sister took the ration book on honeymoon.

She remembered the **Ritz Cinema**. She went once a month on a Sunday and would come over the fields with many others, all riding their bicycles.

She remembered her late husband's parents: **Algernon and Elsie**. Algernon was a butcher at The Limes on the High Street. They opened a café next door – known as **“Pam's café”** for their daughter, Pam. This was hugely popular with the airmen. It was always plentifully supplied with food as they had “contacts”. Her own granddad had a horse and trap and used to deliver food to the Airfield.

Olive Wilson remembers growing up in the 1930's and during the War.

Olive was born at Bourne End, Cranfield, on 18th March 1931, the youngest of four children of **Walter and Annie Elizabeth Wilson (nee Garner)**.

Her father was one of seven children born in The White House on Marston Hill. Daphne Britton's mother, Vera, who married Francis Clifford Boon (known as Cliff), was the youngest. The cousins, Olive and Daphne used to play and run across the fields together as children.

The whole family of seven lived with Olive's **Grandfather, George Garner**, who sadly lost his wife in childbirth while giving birth to her Uncle Bert. Uncle Bert had served in the First World War but died of a ruptured appendix soon after returning home.



Grampy in his Sunday best

The family home was a smallholding, Greens Close, on the Astwood Road, past Boxhedge Farm, on the right.

Her father, Walter, served in the First World War, in India, and brought back lovely brass souvenirs which still adorn Olive's lounge. He also brought back silk which was made into a Christening robe used by all four children.



“For Liberty and Justice in the Great War 1914-1918”

After the war he worked in the brickyards at Stewartby.

In WWII her father was too old to be called up and joined the **Home Guard**.

Olive's sister, **Kathleen**, who was ten years her senior, worked in the Chemist which had opened in 1938.

During the War Kathleen served as an auxiliary nurse at Stoke Mandeville Hospital. She later married George Rawle whose children are Ann and David.

Olive's brothers were **Ralph and Raymond**.

Her eldest brother, **Ralph**, joined the Fleet Air Arm in Scotland but was later sent to Ceylon. After the War he married Brenda and had two daughters, Marian, and Jane.



Ralph with his father in Home Guard uniform

Raymond was too young to be called up during the War but did his National Service later. He went to Aldershot and then was based in Germany.



Raymond

Cranfield knew how to “live it up”. Raymond played in a band which played for dances in the Village Hall in Cranfield and in other villages around. The band, known at the **Accordion Hotspots** consisted of Eric, Glenda and Mr White with Raymond on piano accordions, while Bernard Perrin played the drums.

Olive remembers being dosed with **syrup of figs**. She remembers the **cloth rugs** made with strips of cloth woven onto hessian.

She remembers helping Grampy on the land, thinning out “mangle wurzles”. These were large root vegetables as big

as a football. They were made into chips by a machine, mixed with chaff and fed to the calves. She recalls “picking up potatoes; turning hay with a wooden rake; having a huge bonfire on November 5th with the potato tops; fetching milk from the next farm in an enamel can and my brother making me swing the can round and I got into trouble for spilling the milk..”



Dad and Raymond

They borrowed the horse and cart from Eyreswood Farm to collect the “mangle wurzles”. In exchange Grampy would help out on the farm.

Olive attended the village school, cycling three miles to school and falling off many times if the roads were icy.

Olive was eight when war was declared. She attended the village school during the War and left at the age of fourteen.



School days – Mr Wheeler (Head) and Miss Lord (Form teacher) Olive is 4th from the left on the back row. Freda, Daphne Britton's late sister, is second from the left on the same row. Dennis, Clive Evans' brother, is standing in front of Olive. Jean Parker's late husband, Ken, is fourth from the left in the front row. Monica Joyce's sister, Vida Rust is at the extreme right end of second row. She now lives in Canada.

Olive remembers, at the start of each day, all of the children and staff sang "Jerusalem", accompanied by Mr Wheeler on the piano. She remembers her teachers: Miss Dodderidge who "wobbled" to school on her bike, Miss Bailey, and Miss Lord. A large room downstairs was divided by a curtain into two classrooms. There was another classroom upstairs.

Olive remembers the classes being joined by **evacuees** during the war.

Olive remembers **piano lessons** with Mrs Richardson at College Farm, Bourne End. Her husband would come home for tea and chocolate cake, but Olive was never offered any!

Olive remembers cycling three miles to the Baptist Chapel to Sunday School twice – morning and afternoon - as well as a service as night. Auntie Vera was caretaker of the Baptist Chapel and Uncle Ernest was Superintendent.



Olive and brother Raymond in their Sunday best

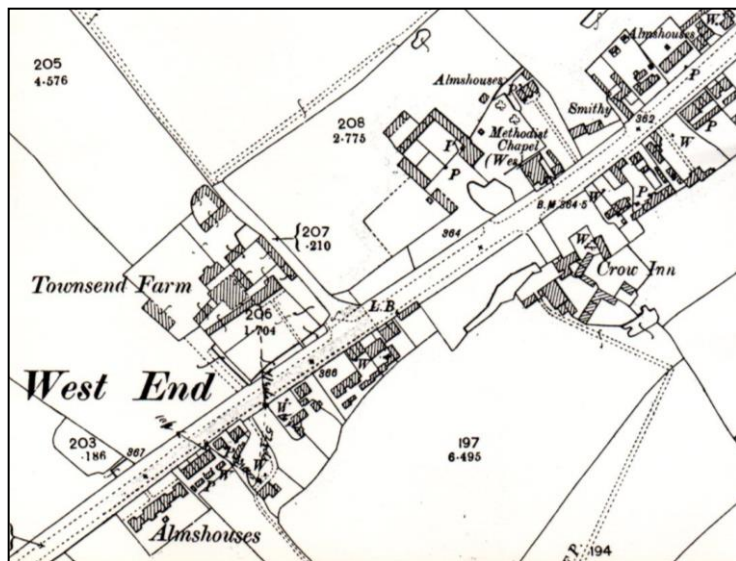


Rose Queen procession and ceremony

Mrs Wheeler, the Headmaster's wife, crowning Joan Wooding. Olive's sister, Kathleen, is standing on the left in the line of attendants. The superintendent's daughter, Brenda, is standing just behind Mrs Wheeler's left shoulder.

Olive remembers **the fair** in Crow Field. She was given half a crown (2s/6d) by her Grampy to spend on the swing boats.

Crow Field was behind the High Street where R.G.R. Garages stands now. It was presumably named after the Crow Inn which burned down in 1915. All of the fields were given names.





Mum, Annie, (right) Kathleen and Olive (left) relaxing with the geese

She remembers **German Prisoners of War** working in the fields. She remembers “a few” **bombs** dropping. One fell near Astwood, at the top of the hill, at Green Valley Farm. This blew the roof off a small cottage in their garden.

She remembers **the plane crash at College Farm** when, not only the pilot was killed, but the pigs were also burnt (page 217).

She remembers the **victory celebrations** in the village – simply having a good time.

Nearly everyone knew everyone else. Families tended to be much larger, and many were interrelated. Although there was hardship during the war, compared to other areas of the country, Cranfield got off lightly and people got on with their lives, making the best of things.

Mavis Mackrill also remembers living in the 1930's and during the War.



Mavis was born in Cranfield on 30th May 1933. She is a descendent of **William and Annie Evans**. Florence, their second daughter, married William Cooper. They had four children: George (Evelyn Foster's dad), William (Mavis's Dad), Catherine and Ivy. Mavis was the eldest of three children of **William Joseph Cooper and Florence Elizabeth (nee Cox)**. She had a brother, **John William** and a sister, **Honor**, who is nine years her junior.

The family album is full of priceless old photographs of the family and the village.

She is happy to share her memories of growing up before the War and during it.



Great Granddad Henry Cox ploughing



Granddad Herbert Cox sowing seed



Henry Cox's pony and trap

Henry would drive to Woburn Sands station and buy vegetables and fish. He would sell it on the way home.



Four generations – Mavis, her mother, Florence, Grandma, Ethel and Great Grandma Elizabeth Jemima Woodin

Mavis was the first grandchild of **William Charles and Florence Cooper.**



Grandfather – William Charles Cooper

William had a steam engine and threshing machine. He and his machine would be hired by the local farms at harvest time. He sadly died of a heart attack while at work. He passed the threshing machine and steam engine on to his son, George Cooper, Evelyn Foster's father, who used the engine to help to clear the ground for the Airfield in 1935.





*Threshing machine and steam engine at Bedfordshire
Steam and Country Fayre, Shuttleworth 2018*



William Joseph Cooper – Mavis's father

Mavis's father, a bricklayer, built the family home, a bungalow, in Crane Way. It had no bathroom and a brick built outside toilet, from which the waste was taken and dug into the garden.

Mavis remembers living during the War although she was only seven when War was declared.

Both her mother and grandmother took in lodgers. One was from Twinwoods serving with the Canadian R.A.F. Another had a fiancé who was a nurse at Stoke Mandeville. They kept in touch after the war.

The family were never short of food. A pig would be killed and would be shared. They kept rabbits which were sold to the butcher. Everyone grew vegetables.

Mavis' Dad was in the Home Guard, and she can remember him being out all night guarding the Ampthill tunnel. (See page 41)

Mavis married Ted on 30th May 1970. Ted was from Hungerford. He worked for Brooke Bond Tea and prided himself on making a good cuppa! It was a privilege to share a cuppa with them and to share Mavis's memories.

Ted died in October 2022. Following a fall at home Mavis sadly died in hospital on 20th January 2023. They are united again.

Clive Evans remembers life in Cranfield Village during the War years.



Clive and Barbara in their lovely garden

Clive was born in Cranfield in April 1935, in a cottage, without electricity, next to the Methodist Chapel. His mother was Caretaker of the Chapel.

He married Barbara in 1957. They have two children, Colin – like his mum, and Zena – like her dad.

Clive's parents were **Hugh and Martha (nee Burtin)**. Hugh was the fourth child of **William and Annie Evans**. They had seven children, **Ernest, Hugh, Nancy, Walter, Dennis, Clive and Alwyn**.

After their cottage was demolished, to make way for the kitchen extension at the Methodist Chapel, they moved to

83 Bedford Road, a house with electricity and half an acre of land, where they kept geese. He remembers one year when a goose made a bid for freedom but sadly flew into overhead power lines. They had their Christmas dinner after all!

During the Second World War his father, Hugh, was in charge of the Fire Station which was situated at the far end of the High Street, opposite R.G.R. Garage. The Auxiliary Fire Service was manned by volunteers and was on call day and night. Hugh was called out to deal with the fire following the crash at College Farm on the night of 11th September 1943. (Page 217)





Hugh's Cap badge from WWII

“For the majority, money was always short. My father ran a savings scheme for villagers. During the winter months, due to short working days, wages were poor, and savings couldn’t be made. As the days lengthened, more hours could be worked, and a little cash paid into the saving scheme. During July, August and September, harvest time, long days were worked, and more money saved. The aim was to have at least one week’s money in the scheme, and hopefully, a little more, paid out at the beginning of December to enable the saver to have a little extra for Christmas. If my father, as well as his normal salary, had one large white five pound note he was well pleased.”

Clive attended the village school, walking to school every day, carrying his gas mask in its cardboard box. “This was our constant companion. Occasionally one would see bombers returning to Cranfield Aerodrome, sometimes with quite large chunks missing from the aeroplanes due to enemy fire.”

Clive's father, Hugh, died at the age of 49, when Clive was 14. Clive believes that his work during the war, with the fire service, wore him out. "For a young boy living in Cranfield it was at the same time exciting but also very frightening. For everyone in the village VE-Day (Victory in Europe) was a huge relief, a miracle."

Clive had three brothers. The eldest, **Ernest** was the biological son of Philip Evans who was sadly killed in the First World War. Hugh married Philip's fiancé, Martha.



Ernest served in the Second World War and was wounded at Monte Cassino. His wounds were not serious. He sadly died of leukaemia at Northampton Hospital aged 64. Clive had the unenviable task of having to tell his mother that Ernest would not get better. It is the hardest thing he has ever had to do. Ernest had two children.

Walter served in the Merchant Navy. He would sail from Newcastle to Russia. They were at risk from the threat of U-Boats. He was paid every three months when he got back to shore. He would be on leave for two weeks and would spend the lot as he never knew if he would return from his next voyage.



On one occasion the family had no news for six months. His mother never knew where he was. Happily, a neighbour spotted him on a bus. The news soon reached home. “Walter’s on the bus!”

Walter had brought back a tin of peaches – without a label. They all sat down to enjoy a sweet treat only to find that it was a tin of tomatoes!

His brother **Hugh** was a Tank Commander and was said to look like Errol Flynn!



Hugh's daughters, Myra, and Jeannie contacted me after the publication of the hard back edition to ask if their dad could be remembered in future versions. They have written their memories of him, which are in the next section, followed by an essay written by Myra's granddaughter about her great granddad which she would also like to share.

HUGH KENNETH EVANS - remembered by his daughters, Myra, and Jeannie

Our father, Hugh Kenneth Evans, the third son of Martha and Hugh Evans, served in The Kings Own Royal regiment during the Second World War a Churchill tank. Most of his time was spent fighting in Germany and Holland. Our uncles, Ern, and Walt were also soldiers in the Second World War. We are very proud of our dad and two uncles, and so lucky that they survived the war.

There were five men in the Churchill tank that our dad was in, and they were so fortunate that they went through the war and stayed together most of the time, surviving the horrors of war. There were many of the Kings Own Royal regiment who did not survive.

Dad was the Gun Operator in the tank. He was injured during the war. He was shot in the hand as he put up his hand up to shield his eyes, and he said how lucky he was as the bullet only grazed his eyebrow. He was sent to the field hospital for a little while to recover before rejoining his unit again.

After the war we believe he was a member of the British Legion.

He also helped to run the 'Tote' in Cranfield village, which was like a lottery, where people bought 2 numbers each

week, and part of the collection went to a prize draw and the rest went to enable the elderly folk to go on a mystery tour in the Summer and a Christmas dinner at the end of the year. Later, he helped run a regular Bingo night in the village, again we think this was for the elderly people. So, he was actively involved in village life.



Hugh's medals from left to right:

France Germany Star; 39-49 Star; Victoria Medal; 39-43
Defence Medal

The Kings Own Royal Regiment blazer badge

Myra's granddaughter Shelley wrote a very touching essay

for school about our dad during and after the war. Shelley was dad's great granddaughter but unfortunately, he died 3 months after Shelley was born, but he did get to hold and see her on many occasions before he died.

We think the essay that Shelley did for school, sourced from our family's memories, is so interesting that we thought that a lot of the elderly villagers would like to read it, as our father was a well-known figure in the village.

**Written by Shelley Johns, aged 12, as part of her
School essay for Holywell School in 2005**

Grandma told me that my great-grandfather (who is not alive now) and his two brothers were in the second world war. My great-grandfather was the gunner in a 'Churchill Tank'. My uncle Kenny let me borrow a copy of this tank, which my great-grandfather made from wood during the war in the odd moments when they were not fighting.

The young men in the tank had a very hard life and were very brave. Their tank was one of the very few tanks from their unit 'The Kings Own Royal Regiment' that survived the fight against the Germans; they lost many friends during the war. My great-grandfather didn't talk much about the horrors of the war, he said it is something that not many men wanted to talk about, but he told how one day, their tank was going down a street in Holland and a huge German tank appeared, and the driver of great grandfathers tank had to get out of the way quickly as their tank was not as good as the German tank, so the driver turned the tank and went through a house. The men were so lucky as this was about the only house in the street that

didn't have a cellar; if it had, they would all have died.

My great-grandfather was injured during the war; he was shot in the hand which he had put up to shield his eyes, he said he was very lucky, and the bullet only grazed his eyebrow, so he was sent to a field hospital for a little while to recover before joining his unit again. One day a reporter from one of the English National Papers took a photo of my great-grandfather and the other men in the tank reading their letters from their loved ones at home, and this was printed in the English newspapers, so I can imagine how proud great grandma must have been, but sad too. The letters often took a long time to reach the men, but it meant a lot for them to have those letters.

The young men had to look after themselves, and although they had ration packs of dried food, they became very good at making sure they had enough to drink and fresh food to eat. The friendly local people used to give them food to supplement the rations, but the men often shot wild birds and rabbits, and took vegetables from the fields and birds and hens eggs if they could find them. They used metal containers which they put on the 2 big exhausts on the side of the tanks to cook food. They always made sure they had boiling water, so they could make soup and tea when they were able to stop and eat. The nicest thing they ate was stew made with deer meat and vegetables they were able to pick from the fields they passed!

It was during the war in Holland that a lovely family made friends with my great-grandfather. My great-grandfather was only 21 years old (like so many of the other men that served during the wars, many of whom lost their lives to give us the freedom that we have today), and the Dutch people were very kind to them. The husband and wife had a little girl named Annie, and although she was only 10/11 years old when she knew my great-grandfather, she never forgot the dashing young man who was so kind to them. After the war, Annie married a nice man called Peter, and they had a daughter named Christine.

Many years later, Annie decided that she wanted to find this young man who had been so kind to her and her parents during the war. After many years of searching, Annie was finally put in touch with one of the men that had served in the same tank as my great grandfather (a man called Nobby). More years went by, and after many months of advertising in many local papers up and down the country, my great-grandfather saw a small piece in the Citizen asking if anyone knew that whereabouts of Ken Evans, and it gave his army number, and a phone number to contact. My great-grandfather recognised the army number first (his real name was Hugh Kenneth – but his mates during the war always called him Ken). We think this was the reason that it took Annie so long to find my great-grandfather. My great-grandfather rang the number

and was reunited first with one of the men in the tank, and then another two, which left one more to find. My grandma found this other person by searching hundreds of people with the same surname, through records of names and addresses in the library where she worked. Grandma said that she was very lucky, as after about 4 phone calls, she found the fifth man, who still lived in Lancashire where he lived before the war. Soon a reunion was arranged, and great-grandfather was able to meet the men whom he spent so much of the wartime with, it was wonderful that they all survived the war, and were able to meet again. It was during this reunion that it was discovered that Nobby's daughter, Sue, worked at the Open University where my grandma worked – and the strange thing was, Sue and my grandma both worked in the Science Department and had rooms next door to each other! It was unbelievable in such a big world, that two people could work side by side, not knowing of the bond between their fathers.

After Annie in Holland spoke to great-grandfather, he flew out to Holland to meet Annie and her family, which was really nice. Great-grandfather saw the houses where they lived during the war, the house where Annie and her parents lived and the roads where the tanks used to rumble down. Annie and Peter took him to the places where he had fought the Germans during his time there, and into Belgium and Germany. He said the feeling was wonderful, to see the villages free from war and the people so happy.

He visited the graves in Brunssen where so many of the young men that were killed in the war were buried. The people of Brunssen take great pride in that Cemetery, all the Headstones are kept clean, and each grave has a rose bush set by it. My grandma and grampy took my mummy, her sister and myself to Holland last year, and we were able to see the same places and stay with this lovely family. (Unfortunately, great grandfather had died so he couldn't come with us.) We also visited the War Cemetery, and I was sad to see all the graves of such young men from all over the world that had died during that war. I am so glad that I have been able to go to see where my great grandfather fought against the Germans during the war.



My Great grandfather, and the other 4 men reading their

letters from home. From left to right: Great-grandfather (Gun operator), Alan (co driver), Jonesie (driver), Harry (Officer in command), Nobby (wireless operator)



Annie and Peter and great grandfather outside the Town Hall in Brunssen.

Evelyn Foster remembers living through the War as a child.



Evelyn Foster, nee Cooper, was another descendent of **William and Annie Evans**. Their second child, Florence Mary married William Cooper in 1904. They had four children, the eldest, William born in 1905, was Mavis Mackrill's father. The eldest daughter, Catherine (Auntie Kit) was born in 1909. She was Maureen Clare's mum. **George**, born in 1913, was Evelyn's father. Ivy, the youngest was born in 1914. She married Ronald Picton who was in the Catering Corps during the war. The late Aileen Bacon was their daughter. The Picton Family and Bacon families all lived at 88 High Street. **George married Elsie May Dunkley**. Evelyn was their only child.



***Aunty Ivy on the left with Evelyn's mum, Elsie,
standing by the War Memorial before the War***

The iron railings were removed during the War. You can see Jones' General Store in the background.



Mother Elsie, Evelyn, and Father George Cooper

Evelyn was born in January 1937 at 100 High Street, opposite Ben Cox, the blacksmith's.

Her grandfather had helped to clear the trees and hedges from Gadsden's Folly Farm, for the coming of the airfield, using his steam engine. He used to do threshing round the villages. He also had a cycle repair shop on the High Street.



Evelyn was only two years old when war broke out. Her father was called up in 1940. He served in the Royal Artillery in North Africa. He wasn't in the front line but was on "the big guns". Like most of his fellow soldiers, he never talked about the War. Evelyn has no service records but has these photographs of her dad taken during the war.



George Cooper - Gunner Royal Artillery

When her father went to war in 1940, Evelyn and her mum went back to her mum's home in Irchester. They stayed with her Nan and her mother's sister, Aunt Mabel, and Mabel's husband, Uncle Den. Uncle Den, was called up late during the War and was stationed at Peterborough, working in munitions, as he was not fit enough to join the army because of some problems with his legs.

The house had only two bedrooms so there was a lot of bed sharing and squeezing in.

There was an **American Camp** there. The "Yanks" were very friendly, especially towards the children, giving them sweets.

Evelyn remembers a **bomb dropping** in the High Street. Their house was at the end of a terrace and took the effect of the blast. Ceilings came down and windows were broken. They had to leave the house temporarily until the rubble was cleared. Evelyn remembers her mother telling her that she had lost a pair of Evelyn's socks in the rubble. Little, seemingly trivial, incidents linger in our memories.

There were no air raid shelters so they had to sleep under the table or under the stairs, for safety.

While they were there Evelyn can remember the night when Aunt Mabel gave birth to a daughter, **Wendy**. There were complications and Mabel was taken to hospital. The doctor warned the family that he may have to make a choice between saving the mother or the baby. Happily, both survived. Evelyn and Wendy grew up together like sisters,

living together for the first four years of Wendy's life. **Wendy married Vic Garner.** Sadly Vic died in 2021.

She remembers going **fire watching** with her mother, wearing **a tin hat**, and carrying a gas mask in a black tube. They had to make sure the blackout was kept and that there was no light visible from fires.

Evelyn remembers **rationing**. Everything was rationed. She remembers queuing for fresh suet. Mum and Aunt Mabel grew vegetables throughout and after the War. They never went hungry.

Evelyn remembers waiting for a bus to take them to the cinema. They had decided to get whichever bus came first. They went to Rushden. If the Wellingborough bus had come first they would have got caught up in the bombing of the cinema there. Evelyn said that she was not old enough to be afraid.

The second time she had a "lucky" escape was when, coming home from school, a jeep narrowly missed her on a sharp bend.

She remembers seeing the red sky over Irchester on the night of 14th November 1940 when Coventry had its worst bombing attack. They would see and hear the planes going over and, what they described as "strings of onions", as incendiary bombs dropped from the planes.

At the age of seven, they returned to Cranfield. The War was still raging. She attended Cranfield School and was in Miss Newman's class.

She remembers the **Doodlebugs** – flying bombs like rockets which fell and exploded once the noise stopped.

Evelyn remembers the **Fire Station** where Townsend Close is. There would be drills and practices with stretchers round the moat where Townsend Farm was. Hugh Evans, Clive Evans' father, was in charge of this Auxiliary Fire Station, manned by volunteers.

After his last leave her father returned to France on the day after D-Day. He moved through France and Holland, until the end of the War. He didn't talk about his time in the War. He and his wife refused to look at his medals which included the African Star.

Evelyn was ten when the War ended. She had to leave Stewartby School, a term early, to care for her mum who sadly died when she was fourteen.

She remembers her dad poaching rabbits. He used ferrets which would chase the rabbits into a net on the end of a pole. The rabbits' back legs would be tied together and slung onto a handle. He would sell them for 2/6 – half a crown – on the way home from work.

Evelyn married David Foster on 6th September 1958. Congratulations to them both as they celebrated their Diamond Wedding in 1918.



Evelyn and David with Jean and Paul

David Foster also remembers living through the War as a child.



David was born on 22nd November 1937. He was the only child of **Eneas William** and **Ethel Annie**. He was born and brought up in the second cottage on the Astwood Road, just past the junction where the road turns to Bourne End.



He wasn't yet two years old when war was declared.

His father, Eneas, was a **conscientious objector** and worked on Eyreswood Farm. He is the one balancing on the cart.



David walked to Cranfield, two miles each way, to school and back. His mum would walk with him to Gossards Green and then John Howard would walk the rest of the way. Can you imagine any child walking that distance every day today?!

He used to wear shoes fitted with "Blackkeys". These were studs which helped the shoes to grip but made a lot of noise and sometimes sparks would fly.

His home was very near the approach to the Airfield. David remembers the droning of Lancaster and Wellington bombers going to and coming back from bombing missions. His enduring memory of the War was on the night of

Saturday 11th September 1943. He can remember it as though it was yesterday. Around 9.30pm the family were woken by the sound of a crash. David came down the stairs of the cottage, clutching his teddy bear. His Dad rushed over to College Farm to see if he could help. The pilot of the Beaufighter had been killed instantly when his plane, which had taken off in fog, had crashed into a ditch in front of the farmhouse. All he could do was to pull out burnt pigs and cattle.

We are fortunate that Peter Hinson researched this incident. His full account is given on page 217.

They hadn't an air raid shelter and, when the sirens went they would get under a table. Fortunately, there wasn't much actual bombing around. A member of the R.A.F. staff, Tommy Baybutt from Bury, lived with them and they became great friends.

German prisoners of war worked on the farm with David's Dad. They would come to the house, and they befriended two or three of them. They were skilled at making toys and ornaments from reclaimed objects. He remembers a steam engine and a chicken feeder!

He remembers that, during the blackout, car headlights had a black hood stuck on. Torches had frosted glass. Houses had blackout curtains.

Jennifer and Norman Sinfield remember life during the War.

Jennifer was born in 1938 just before the start of the War. Her father, George Wells, helped to clear the 400 acres for the new airfield, along with her grandfather, William, who lived and worked at Townsend Farm. She remembers the names of a lot of the farms – Grove Farm, Stilliters Farm, Wharley Farm. Jennifer's home was Ivy Hall Farm, Bourne End.

Jennifer is related to **Thomas Cave** who is commemorated on the War Memorial and died in Italy in 1945. His mother was Harriet Elizabeth Lancaster, the sister of Thomas Arthur Lancaster, killed in WWI in 1917, in France. Harriet and Jennifer's grandmother, Agnes, were sisters. He was, therefore, Jennifer's great uncle. Two of his nephews live in Cranfield.

Jennifer went to **school** in Cranfield. She remembers the teachers: Peggy Wheeler; Miss Lord and Mr Wooding. Her enduring memory is of the **school milk** – a third of a pint delivered each day in bottles. When it was really cold the milk would freeze, and the tops would be lifted from the bottles. They would be placed round the big coke boiler – there was one in the middle of each classroom. It tasted vile and has put her off milk for life!

When it was hot, milk would be kept cool in a bucket of cold water.

As they lived so near to the **Airfield**, airmen would come to the house to get water.

If a plane crashed it had to be guarded before it was removed. Some of the wounded airmen would be taken to Perry Hill Farm.

She remembers a Lancaster bomber crashing behind the house, and a Wellington bomber coming down where Flitt Leys is now.

Each gateway to the Airfield was guarded. At night there would be courting couples in every gateway!

Sharpe's Wood End Farm at Moulsoe had a shed full of ducks for Christmas. They were all killed when the farm was bombed as the German's thought it was a military establishment.

She remembers the land mine dropping at Hulcote Wood. The blast of one of these bombs blew her off her sofa!

One night, in thick fog, the airfield was pretty tightly packed with aeroplanes. Those coming in to land were talked down by a W.A.A.F on her radio. Apparently 150 planes landed safely.

One day a glider came down and Bourne End Road was closed. Jennifer was only allowed through as she lived there.

Prisoners of War

There was a P.o.W camp at Elstow Depot. Prisoners would be brought in each day to work on the farms. Two P.o.W.'s worked for her father on the farm. Her grandparents at

Townsend Farm also had a P.o.W who lived in but couldn't speak a word of English except "Hello".

They liked to take the "mangle wurzles" back to the camp. These were used as cattle food but the German P.o.W.'s liked to cook them.

The P.o.W.'s liked to make things. They would make rings and brooches out of fragments of brass and shrapnel. Jennifer remembers being given a wooden cockerel on wheels, which flapped its wings as it was pushed along. Another wooden toy was a Winston Churchill, on wheels, with a cigar in his mouth. He raised his hat when pulled along.

Land girls were available to any farmers who wanted them. Some were based at Hulcote.

At **harvest** time everyone, including the children, would help as it was hard manual work without the combine harvesters we have today. Norman remembers riding home on the back of a carthorse after a hard day's work.

Most families kept a pig, which was fed on pig swill. The pig would be professionally butchered and cured in brine. There were hooks to hang the legs of gammon from the ceiling. A pig could last a family for a year. In the countryside no-one needed to be hungry during the war. As well as pigs, families kept hens and ducks. There was often a goose for Christmas. Rabbits were plentiful. There were no poachers as all of the young men were at war!

Norman

Norman, her future husband, was born in 1930.(He has sadly died since the hard back version of this book was published.) His mother had three lodgers from the Airfield when they lived at Tickford Farm, Moulsoe. He remembered them liking to play darts. Norman's father served in WWI and was an **air raid warden** in WWII. They would take it in turns to patrol the villages, looking for anyone who was breaking the blackout. The family moved to Bourne End where he met Jennifer.

More memories of the War

Jennifer's father was in the **Home Guard**, the main duty being to guard Amptill Tunnel.

They both remember the night when **Coventry** was bombed. Thousands of planes were going over. There were flashes in the sky and booming in the distance. They heard the news on the radio next day.

They learned to tell the difference between the noise of planes. The German's made a "coughing" sound. Doodle bugs fell to the ground a couple of minutes after the noise stopped. They would dive for cover.

Joyce Fishlock remembered war time.

The late Joyce came from a long line of Cranfield families which go back six generations. The family came from Bourne End.

Joyce Fishlock (nee Wilson) was born on 28th March 1938 and was only eighteen months old when war broke out. She would have been at school, at the age of seven, when it ended. Her father was in the army. She was an only child.

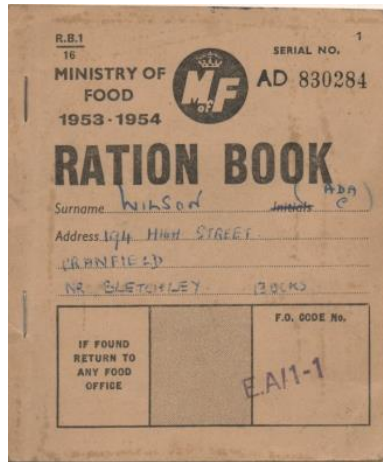
Her family shared their memories of the War with her. Joyce had a Mickey Mouse gas mask and apparently screamed her head off, as her mum told her later. Her mum decided she wouldn't put hers on either and if we they got gassed they would go together.

Their home in Bedford Road had **no electricity**. They used a glass paraffin lamp with two wicks.

She remembers being bathed in the **tin bath** in front of the fire.

On a Sunday, her father took the Sunday dinner to **Tom Hillson's Bakery** to be cooked in his oven. Her Dad would stay talking and she would be sent by her Mum to get the dinner back. "The War was over by then, but only just."

She remembered the shops. Where the dentist is now there was a **grocery shop, Mr. and Mrs. Anstee's**. Her Dad used to help out there. **Rationing** lasted quite a while after the war and Mr Anstee would slip them the odd tin of corned beef.



The previous D.I.Y. shop was **Pulley's bakery** where Janice Butcher lived.

She remembered **Farrer's Fish and Chip shop** where the newsagent's is now.

Down Merchant Lane she remembered **Mrs Whitmee's** shop selling homemade delicious pies and pasties from her open window on a Saturday. She loved these and would get a portion of chips to complete the meal. "I can taste it now!"

She remembered **the allotments** behind **the Co-op** which was originally three shops. A haberdashery was on the left, a grocery store in the middle and a butcher's on the right.

She remembers **the Cranfield Surgery**. The entrance was by a side door. There was an outside toilet which was locked but the key was available on request! There was a thick

curtain separating the doctor's surgery from the waiting area and you could hear everything that was being said!

Miss Street, the doctor's sister, lived upstairs. She was also **the Guide mistress**. Meetings were held in a wooden hut next to **the Village Hall**. The Hall was known as the Memorial Hall, in memory of the Squire, James Francis Hatfeild Harter, who had died in 1910.

The **old rectory** was twice as big as the one today, standing in its own grounds. It was demolished in 1966 to make way for East Hills. "We used to have the village fete there."



The Old Rectory

There was a **plane crash** in the village in the fields between the dentist and Plough Close. "My Dad and others ran to see if they could help the pilot but, alas, all my Dad found was a boot with a foot still in it."

She remembered “guys riding round the College at night on tricycles.”

Families **were expected to take workers from the airfield and children evacuated from the towns.** Joyce even remembers the name of a man they took in – Ralph Weeks. He managed to get her mum and her friend a parachute. She dyed her half yellow and made blouses, as the clothes coupons didn't go far. He would give Joyce pocket money if she would sing to him.

“I bet that our children now going to **Lower School** would have loved the swing that came out of the ceiling on wet days when we couldn't go out to play. This was in the original building you pass as you walk into school. We all sat, with arms folded and quiet as mice, as only the good ones got picked for a ride, and we were pushed by a teacher. The one big room was separated by a curtain into two classes. That was the only time they were pulled back.

Mrs Picton's (the late Aileen Bacon's mum) dessert – chocolate semolina and mock cream at dinner time was wonderful.

My Mum told me of the bell being rung five minutes before the start of afternoon lessons, in the tower which stands between the school house and the school.”

Rebecca Cook remembers the War in verse.

Rebecca has lived at Hillgreen Farm, Bourne End for most of her life, since her marriage to Frank Cook.



Hillgreen Farmhouse

She was born at Preston, near Hitchin and was a schoolgirl throughout the War. She was one of 12 children of **Bruce and Phylis Brown (nee Peck)**.

Her father was a farmer. He served in the Beds and Herts Yeomanry during WWI and was a **Firewatcher** in WWII. Groups of three or four local residents would undertake duties from 8pm until 8am. This involved watching for fires caused by incendiary bombs in their own area. They used water supplied by a stirrup pump or sand to cover the bomb itself. They would liaise with the Air Raid Wardens and the Fire Service.

Rebecca's mother, Phyllis (nee Peck) had her photograph in the "Farmer and Stockbreeder" in 1916. She was "the first woman to go to plough" when she helped her Father run his farm as most of the men had gone to war.



Rebecca's mother, Phyllis the forerunner of the Land Girls

Rebecca has loved writing poetry for as long as she can remember. She loves to share her poems. An inspiring, witty, and, often, challenging poem with a Christian theme was published each month in the Cranfield Express. More poems may be found on her website: www.rebeccacookpoetry.com

The following poem was written for the 50 year commemoration of VE-Day in 1995.

I Remember

I remember, I remember, when the country went to war
When the threat of Nazi Germany was shadowing our shore
When the voice of Neville Chamberlain came on the air to
say
“The British Isles in now at war” upon that warm
September day.

I remember, I remember how little, lost evacuees
Came, invading our school playground, gasmasks banging
round their knees
Cheery, sad, some poorly clad, we eyed the strangers up and
down
Country children out of danger, Cockney kids from Canning
town.

I remember, I remember – was it fifty years ago?
How everybody pulled together then against the common
foe
“Save- not spend” “Make do and mend” and “Dig for
victory” they said
How little waste there was in those days, how valuable a loaf
of bread.

I remember, I remember, signs of war everywhere
Army lorries on manoeuvres, Blenheim bombers in the air.
“Right men! Left men!” R.A.F. men. Someone’s husband,
brother, son
Off to fight for king and country in the war against the Hun.

I remember, I remember when it wasn't really strange
To see air-raid wardens call and hastily to rearrange
The blackout curtains, just in case the man could see a chink
of light
Giving signals to a German overhead at dead of night.

I was just a schoolgirl then and – well to be confessed
I didn't mind, when in the middle of a horrid history test
The air raid warning went and caused an interruption in the
class
As we hurried to a safer place for fear of falling glass.

I remember, I remember how the village was bereft
Of all the able bodied men as one by one they upped and
left
Ken and George and Dick and William. Cousin James and
brother Jack
All received their call up papers. Many never did come back.

I remember, I remember just before we went to bed
Standing on the lawn and watching as the distant sky turned
red.
Not alas the evening sunset; this was London in the Blitz.
Only thirty miles from us were people being blown to bits.
I remember, I remember how the chiming of Big Ben
Reverberated round the room as dad turned on the news
again.
Parents' thoughtful sombre faces as they heard how planes
were lost
Ships torpedoed, soldiers missing. Freedom's terrifying cost

And again I can remember being frightened as I saw

A doodlebug come chugging past as I stood rooted to the floor

Watching, waiting at the window. "Please dear God don't let it stop"

For when the engine coughed and cut out, then the dreadful thing would drop.

O and then I can remember when the darkest days were there

How the British people gathered for a national day of prayer.

Backs were up against the wall and situations such as these
Brings a nation back to God and brings it down upon its knees

Was the apple blossom blooming sweetly on the orchard bough?

Were the Willow and Chestnut lovely then as they are now?
Did the bright Clematis gambol gaily round the cottage door-

And did the Blackbird sing its heart out just as though we weren't at war?

Yes, from what I can remember, as I look back and reflect
Heartbreak, death and devastation on these things have no effect.

God has set the world in motion. Man alone is given choice
Nature follows His instructions, Man can just ignore his voice

I remember, I remember that Tuesday on the 8th of May
And how the world was given tidings. Peace at last. 'Twas Victory day

Church bells rang, bonfires were lighted. There was dancing
in the square
“Now thank we all our God” we sang – and many people
left Him there.

Once again we need to gather, crying out, “What have we
done,
What has happened to our nation since the war was fought
and won?
Then we turned to God to save us in our time of desperate
need.
Now men worship other gods and follow in another creed.

The lesson seems to be forgotten, That is why the memory
Must be preserved if only as the guardian of our liberty;
But the words our dear King gave us, that first Christmas of
the war
Still apply to all of us today as ever did before.

“I said to him who I saw standing at the gateway of the year
Give me a light so I tread safely in this unknown path I fear”
And he replied “Go in the darkness. Place your hand in that
of God.
It shall be a better light. Safer than any path you’ve trod.”



The last word - as a war-time baby, here is my little contribution!

I was born in North Shields in 1944. I was too young to remember the War but remember growing up in the aftermath. I was brought up on “Waste not, want not” and “Make do and mend.”



This is me with my Mam, Jenny. Note all the signs of the times: the tin bath, the clothes horse, the fireguard and the antimacassar! (The chair back cover) The word means literally anti-oil. These protective chair backs were used as men used to plaster their hair with oils and “Brylcreem”!

Whenever I made a mistake my Dad used to say, “profit from your experience”. I am not sure that, as we get older, we get any wiser. We can only appreciate our lives more and reach out to the love which surrounds us. We can be thankful for what we have today while wondering what the future has in store.

THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

“Service not self”

The Royal British Legion (R.B.L.) is one of the British Charities providing financial, social and emotional support to members and veterans of the British Armed Forces, their families and dependants. It was founded in 1921 after the First World War. A Royal Charter was granted in 1925. H.M. The Queen is Patron.

The poppy is the trademark of the R.B.L. The Poppy Appeal, the main thrust of which coincides with the anniversary of Armistice Day, raises money to support those described above.

Many of those sharing their memories are members of the Cranfield Branch. The late Joyce Shrubbs was President of the Marston Branch and Vice President of the County.

The Cranfield Branch welcomes new members. You don't have to have a personal or family connection with the armed forces. Currently the Branch meets monthly at the Community Centre. It also holds regular special social events and occasional outings as well as organising the Remembrance Parade and Poppy Appeal collection.



Poppies knitted by ladies of the Cranfield Branch of the Royal British Legion for the Centenary of the Armistice, November 2018

The Exhortation

The fourth verse of the poem, For the Fallen, by Laurence Binyon, written in 1914, is used as the Exhortation by the R.B.L.

They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

APPENDICES

CRANFIELD'S ROLL OF HONOUR WORLD WAR II – 1939 – 1945:

JOHN HARRY ANSTEE. (5950365)

Private, 2nd Battalion the Suffolk Regiment.

Died on Monday 24th January 1944 aged 25, in
Myanmar Burma.

Buried in the Taukkyan War cemetery, Myanmar,
Burma.

Son of Harry and Kate Anstee, of Cranfield.

ARTHUR CHARLES BARCOCK . (7630961)

Private, Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

Died on Monday 7th October 1940 aged 24.

Buried in Olney Cemetery, Buckinghamshire.

Son of Arthur and Annie Barcock of Cranfield.

Husband of Myra Barcock, of Olney.

LESLIE WALTER BOON. (5833225)

Lance Corporal, 1st Battalion the Royal East Kent
Regiment.

Died on Friday 17th April 1944 aged 29, at Anzio Italy.

Buried in the Beach Head War cemetery, Anzio, Italy.

Son of Walter and Amy Boon.

Husband of Margaret Boon, of Wolverton.

THOMAS PHILLIP JOHN CAVE. (7957617)

Trooper, 51st The Royal Tank Regiment (Leeds Rifles).

Died on Thursday 10th May 1945 aged 24, in Faenza Italy.

Buried in the Faenza War cemetery, Italy.

Son of Frederick George Cave, and Harriett Elizabeth Cave.

Husband of Gwendoline Cave, of Bletchley.

EDWARD ERNEST CLARKE. (5962218)

Private, 1st Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Regiment.

Died on Saturday 26th August 1944 aged 21, in Florence Italy.

Buried in the Florence War cemetery, Italy.

Son of Arthur William Clarke and Catherine Clarke, of Cranfield.

PETER STANLEY EATON. (14577148)

Gunner, Royal Artillery.

Died on Wednesday 25th October 1944 aged 19, in Gent Belgium.

Buried in the Ghent City cemetery,

Son of Albert and Alice Eaton, of Cranfield.

JOHN JACKSON. (4692659)

Sergeant, 9th Battalion (The Queen's Own Yorkshire Dragoons)

Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry.

Killed on 11th April 1944, aged 25, at the Anzio Beach-head.

Buried in Beach Head War Cemetery, Anzio Part 1

Son of Dixon and Isobel Jackson of Cumberland.

Husband of Edna of 11 Bedford Road, Cranfield.

LESLIE SHUKER. (6023228)

Corporal, The Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment.

Killed on 4th April 1943, aged 23, in Tunisia.

Buried in Medjez-el-Bab War Cemetery, Tunisia.

Born in Durham, son of Frank and Sarah,

brother of David. Husband of Maisie.

Resident at 210 High Street, Cranfield.

EMYR WILLIAMS. (C/KX 107073)

Stoker, 2nd Class Royal Navy H.M.S. Pembroke.

Died 14th January 1941, aged 23 on S.S. Eumaeus

Commemorated on Chatham Naval Memorial.

Resident of 10 Court Road, Cranfield.

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