Wartime Memories

of Radyr and Morganstown People

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Edited by Allan Cook

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with the support of The Big Lottery Fund

How the book happened

This booklet has been produced at the request of The Radyr & Morganstown Community Council/WWII 60th Anniversary Committee.

Mr Allan Cook, of the Radyr & Morganstown Local History Society, made the recordings and has produced this wonderful booklet to commemorate this Anniversary. We are indebted to him for all the time and effort he has spent in its compilation; also to Mr Cox and Class 6 of Bryn Deri Primary School who carried out the initial interviews.

It is a sensitive and thoughtful booklet which records the wartime memories, good and bad, of some current Radyr and Morganstown residents. It tells of their experiences and gives a personal insight of the war years to those who are too young to remember.

The Community Council and the Anniversary Committee also organised a Veterans' Service on 3rd July 2005 in Christ Church, Radyr. The Lord Lieutenant of South Glamorgan, Captain Norman Lloyd Edwards, GCStJ, RD, JP, read a moving speech by Winston Churchill. This was followed by an informal lunch in the Church Garden.

Mr Wyn Calvin, MBE, OStJ organised a Variety Concert in Morganstown Hall for veterans and families on 15th September 2005. A most successful and happy occasion.

The events during the year were supported by a Lottery Grant from the Home Front Recall and Big Lottery Fund, to whom we send our grateful thanks.

I would like to place on record my thanks to the hard working 60th Anniversary Committee,

Councillor David Suthers, ERD, TD
Chairman -WWII 60th Anniversary Committee

<u>WWII Anniversary Committee</u>
Mrs Lorna Clarke (Burma Star Association)
Mr Allan Cook (Local History Society)
Mr Nick Hawkins (Radyr & Morganstown Association and Church Warden)
Councillor Susan Philpott
Colonel Roy Scott, TD, DL
Councillor David Silver
Mrs Karen Whitecross, Clerk to the Radyr & Morganstown Community Council.

Editor’s Introduction

We celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the ending of the Second World War during 2005. The Government says that this is the last time that the event will be celebrated; it is therefore fitting that we should take this opportunity to record the memories of those who fought and lived throughout this traumatic period.

Radyr and Morganstown has grown out of all recognition during the years since the ending of the Second World War and in consequence a large number of the stories that follow in this volume are about areas of the United Kingdom a long way away. The one unifying feature being that those who contributed their memories of the war were living in Radyr and Morganstown during the 60th anniversary year. This in many ways makes the publication more interesting, in that we can see what life was like in our towns and cities as well as in the rural areas, on the front line as well as in the Anderson shelters.

This publication has two aims. Firstly, to provide a pool of information for those schoolchildren writing essays about the Second World War and secondly to provide a source of “primary” information to future local historians.

The project was set off by children from class 6 at Bryn Deri Primary School under the guidance of Mr. Cox. A number of the interviewees turned up at the school one sunny afternoon late in the summer term, when the children proceeded to interrogate them. Several avenues opened up during these preliminary interviews which I followed up by visiting the contributors in their homes during the autumn and winter of 2005.

The majority of what follows is based on recorded interviews.

In each case I spoke to the interviewee for some time before switching on the recorder. I always transcribed the tape within a few days of our meeting so that what was said on and off the tape was fresh in my memory. Sometimes the recorded interview left out important pieces of information which had emerged in the

preliminary interview; in these cases I have included that information.

Transcribing presented very special problems. Sentences were often left unfinished as the interviewee went on to new ideas. Quite often we would return to a subject several times. While trying to keep the original flavour of the discussion, I have brought together sections on a specific theme and I have also finished off sentences when the implication was clearly understood. In some places I have also added a few words to help make the meaning clearer. When the transcriptions were complete the interviewee was given a copy on which to make amendments or corrections.

Another problem of recorded interviews is proper names. I have tried to transcribe the names of people, places, aircraft, ships and equipment as accurately as possible. No doubt I have failed in some cases and the reader will be aware of errors and for these I apologise.

When I had finished the interviews I became aware that we did not have much information on Radyr and Morganstown in the war period. Luckily, the Local History Society has a collection of such memories. Some of these appear here for the first time, others have been seen in "Memories of Radyr and Morganstown" but as this volume is now out of print and is unlikely to be reprinted I think it is worthwhile reusing them here.

Finally I must thank all those who contributed to this volume. The Staff and Pupils of Bryn Deri School and the contributors who welcomed me into their homes. The Community Council who instigated the project, to David Suthers and his Committee and to Karen Whitecross and Nick Hawkins for their support and advice.

Allan Cook.
Radyr and Morganstown Local History Society.
January 2006

Section 1

Our Fighting Men And Women

The Post Office Engineer's Story

Aneurin Watkins was born and brought up in Ebbw Vale, he now lives in Radyr.

Before the war I was a young engineer in the Post Office engineering department in Ebbw Vale. I was in the Home Guard, well originally the LDV (Local Defence Volunteers), which they changed to the Home Guard. We were a little unit of Post Office engineers in Ebbw Vale, we were nothing to do with the big battalions in the town and the steel works.

Every Sunday a group of five of us travelled in a lorry from Ebbw Vale to Severn Tunnel Junction where we joined the Regular Army because we knew about communications. We'd go down there and amongst other things we were taught how to make Molotov cocktails. A Molotov cocktail was a glass bottle partly filled with petrol with a rag as a fuse. If a tank was coming towards you you'd throw the cocktail and the bottle would burst and catch fire and so you'd burn out the tank.

On top of Garn Lydan on the moors above Ebbw Vale, a room in a farm house had been commandeered as a radio interception station and if you went in there it was receivers all around the walls and men using Morse code.

The Government were very concerned about Ebbw Vale because the steel works had been built by German labour (as part of First World War reparations). Ebbw Vale was full of Germans, a hostel had been built to house them. We were involved with intercepting the calls when the Germans would be ringing back home. There was somebody from the Ministry with us listening to and translating the conversations.

When war broke out the Germans just disappeared, not only the ones in Ebbw Vale but also a group in Blaenavon. They were putting in a hydraulic press and before they went they'd reversed all the hydraulics. When people went to set up the press after the war was over, the hydraulics just spoilt the whole foundations.

After about two years I joined up and went into the Fleet Air Arm at Lee-on-Solent. I had to do an entrance trade test. They gave me a file and a chunk of metal. Looking back, it was utterly stupid because I was trying for an electrical course. I met a chap called George Lee from Devizes, he was a watchmaker and jeweller (he was my best man later on) and I was having great difficulty. I could see that George was chalking his file; it was a jeweller's trick because the chalk brought the metal up to shine like chrome. I passed my test over to George and he worked on mine. Two days after that it was an electrical test, it was easy for me but George didn't have a clue, so he passed his test over to me. I got him through and he got me through.

I entered the Fleet Air Arm on the electrical side and worked on the electrics of American and British aircraft. I trained in a college at Newcastle-under-Lyme on link trainers.

On my first posting I was due to go to the Pacific. I'd had all my whites and I was down at Chatham ready to board an aircraft carrier when there was a call, "Watkins report to the divisional office".

I went to the divisional office.

"Watkins you've got to meet a psychiatrist tomorrow."

My mates wanted to know,

"What's it about Taff?"

"I've got to meet a psychiatrist".

"We already knew that you were bloody daft".

I met the psychiatrist and she said,

"You're probably wondering why you're here but Lord Louis Mountbatten is very perturbed about the low technical standard of his communications branch and he's been to the army to ask where they are getting their men from. He's been told Post Office engineers. So he's purging the navy for all Post Office engineers. That's why you are here."

She had to give me an electrical theory test; it was a piece of cake for me.

Then she said,

"I've got to send you either to Chelsea or Walthamstow Polytechnic but first of all I've got to send you to the radar experimental place at Malvern."

I went back to my mates, and I didn't want to go. George said,

"You've got to forget about us. Go."

I went to Malvern and as blokes started to arrive you'd ask.

"Where are you from?"

"I'm a Post Office engineer from so-and-so"

We were all Post Office engineers, twenty four of us in a class. The next thing was,

"You blokes have got to go to Chelsea Polytechnic".

It wasn't very nice there because the bombings were going on. We went to Chelsea to do the theory of radio and from there it was a question of joining the Army, Navy or RAF communications.

I was drafted to pick up a ship in Wallsend-on-Tyne. I got to Wallsend and there was this big hulk, a cruiser called the HMS Superb. There was plenty of rust on it even though it was a brand new ship. I joined the petty officers mess. Shortly, she was all spruced and painted up. Before she could go into action we had to test her, torpedoes, gunnery and speed over a measured mile on the Clyde.

From there we went out into the North Sea and then into the Med. We joined the Med. Fleet led by H.M.S. Ocean the aircraft carrier. We were out doing manoeuvres with the fleet when I saw a Meteor jet for the first time. Our radar was too slow to pick it up. Geoffrey de Havilland, whose family built the Meteor, was doing a test flight.

The skipper said, "I'm going to take you out for a trip up to Corfu." We were going up through the gulf of Corfu when suddenly the Albanian batteries opened up on us. We had two destroyers with us and another cruiser; the Orion.

The Admiralty told us to get back to Malta. From there we went to Gibraltar for refuelling and then back to the UK. I was very well in with the navigating officer and as we were coming up the west coast of Wales I said to him,

"Will we be able to see Cymru today?"

"Sorry Taff," he said "I've got to keep right out, because that coast of Wales is very heavily mined, we did think that Hitler might have come through Wales." That was something I didn't know.

Coming into Greenock they signalled us "What's that dirty black mark all over your port side?"

We had a laundry on board and a couple of Chinese running it, they'd opened the sluices and let out soda water and it took all the

paint off the side.

"Paint ship again."

The next thing I remember was practice for "cheer ship". All the men dressed as seamen around the rails and it was "three cheers for Her Royal Highness Princess Elizabeth," and it had to be Hip Hip Hurrah, and not Hip Hip Hurray. Then the Captain addressed us to say that we were taking Princess Elizabeth to Northern Ireland to launch Eagle and that we were expecting her the following day. She came aboard with a couple of ladies in waiting. We started off and it was like a millpond. It was the first time that her ensign had flown from a man of war; it was so calm it was drooping. She mentioned this to the skipper and it was ding ding to the engine room, "Up knots" and off we went, so that her flag flew out. We got to Belfast quicker than expected.

I'd met a boy from Northern Ireland, Mick Moloy, on a Post Office course. I rang Mick because I knew that he worked in the telephone exchange in Belfast and he invited me to stay with his mother and I had a lovely couple of days in Belfast.

"Has you're little lady got any Irish Linen bedclothes?" said Mick's mother.

"No".

"Michael make sure that she has. Now how about sugar?"

"Very bad."

"Michael, he runs a black market you know, he'll get sugar for you."

She was a dear old lady. I had a wonderful few days in Belfast. I went to the theatre and so on. Then we had to bring Princess Elizabeth back to Greenock and from there we went to Chatham.

At Chatham they piped for me, "Go to the duty office. Watkins, your demob's due. Your group is forty. You're going to leave us because we're going out to the Indian Ocean. While you're waiting for demob, you've been drafted to a camp that teaches telegraphists in the south of England." I went down there and got well in with the Captain, I used to wind his clock and see that his car battery was all right.

The time came for me to be demobbed and, lo and behold, the Navy gave me a draft to H.M.S. Zambezi. I went to the Captain and told him about the draft. He rang Chatham, and he said "I've got a

young man here waiting for demob and you've sent him on a draft to a destroyer I know for a fact hasn't been built yet."

He said to me, "Anyone you know here willing to take this draft?"

"Yes" I said "there's a young apprentice he'd love it."

He was called in front of the Captain and said that he'd like the posting and that was that. That was me finishing with the Navy, got my demob suit and home. I think that was 1946.

I got married when I was at Newcastle-under-Lyme. All leave had been stopped. June the 6th 1944. Invasion. I went to the Padre. I was well in with him through rugby, he ran the rugby team and I played for him. I explained to him that everything had been arranged back in Ebbw Vale.

"Hold on" he said "let's go and have a word with the Skipper".

I went down with George, who was going to be my best man, to see the Skipper. The Padre spoke up for me. "This young man is planning to get married and so on."

"Well look" the Skipper said "word of honour that you won't divulge anything that you've seen."

The streets around the base were full of tanks, big marquees, American troops, British troops, all there.

"I'll give you five days". George came with me to Ebbw Vale as my best man.

You'll never believe it but after the war I was sitting on the beach at Saunderfoot, and guess who walked by; George and his wife Kathleen.

The Radio Operator's Story

Mr. Arthur Owen was brought up in Cardiff and had joined up before the war. He was mentioned in dispatches. He now lives in Dan-y-Bryn Avenue.

I'd joined the Air Force Reserve down at Cardiff docks, two years before war broke out; I was still working in a stock-brokers office. The Reserve took up weekends, Saturday afternoon and Sunday, with the occasional manoeuvre. Two years just went. We covered all the work there.

I had a letter to join up roughly a month before the war started. I went down to the docks where the RAF Reserve was based and I had to stay there. There were about sixty of us.

When war broke out we all went to the different stations that specialised in what we'd signed on for. I went to one that specialised in radio for about five or six months. It was like going to school really. An enormous amount of time was spent on Morse code, trying to build up my speed. It was easy to learn the alphabet but to get up to any pace took hours and hours of practice. You'd probably spend all the morning on Morse, recording and taking it down. Then in the afternoon you'd have lectures on how the different parts of the radio were made up or how to assemble it in the dark.

When I'd finished my training I had to decide whether I wanted to be a ground radio operator or aircrew; I volunteered as aircrew. You had to have quite a strict medical check-up and then I was sent to the Isle of Man on a gunnery course.

You'd go up in quite a small aircraft and you'd fire at a "drone" that was towed by some other aircraft. They would count the number of holes that you made in the drone. That was for about six weeks. The course was run mainly by Poles who'd got away from the Germans ready for the creation of the second front. They gave them a job flying us around.

After that I went to Norfolk on Blenheims, they were a bomber/fighter. We were a crew of three; pilot, navigator and wireless operator/gunner. I was half way back in a turret. The Blenheims were

neither a good bomber nor a good fighter, trying to do the two jobs. The Germans had good fighters and their bombers could carry more bombs. The war in the air was so intense we needed a good fighter and a good bomber. You couldn't have both. That is why we lost so many Blenheims.

There were seven Blenheims in our group and we were all going to another squadron the next day. All the wireless operators went out for a drink together and during that time they wanted our aircraft checked; there was something wrong with it. They were only going to do a circuit of the aerodrome so the navigator went up with the pilot. They came in at 180 miles an hour and crashed; so I no longer had a crew. I stayed where I was until another crew came along. I was told that six other Blenheim crews were lost that day. They were shot down in a daylight raid.

They had lost so many Blenheims at that time that they took them off temporarily and I went onto the full Bomber Command. I joined Four Group which was practically all Whitleys. They were a heavy bomber with a crew of five. Two pilots, the second pilot was a bomb aimer as well. This changed as time went on, later on we only had one pilot and a bomb aimer. It wasn't very much good having a second pilot who wasn't a very good bomb aimer, the trip would be a waste of time.

We carried four or five tons of bombs, it varied a lot. As they improved the engines so the tonnage increased. They weren't very good to start off with but they improved them a lot and they improved the bombs.

I think that my first trip was about eleven hours, it wasn't so much the range, the Whitley was so slow, it was the hours they took. Any flight well into Germany would be ten or eleven hours. If the wind was with you, you'd cover 150 miles an hour; if you were coming against the wind, maybe 90 mph ground speed. You would drift a lot. It wasn't a very fast trip.

I was the radio operator on the Whitley. Once you'd done six or seven trips as a gunner/radio operator then you were considered fit to be a full time radio operator.

I remember we were over Cologne. The Wing Commander was taking one of his rare trips. He went down, we just missed Cologne Cathedral. It was an important point for the bombers once you saw

the cathedral you knew where you were on the Rhine. The cathedral was well guarded, we were hit by ground guns. They probably had pretty big machine guns down there. It ripped open our radio cabin. I was lucky I was only injured in my arm and hand but the radio set and everything was smashed.

I was at York hospital and various other places and had a good rest before going back again. At first I worked at the squadron itself. When there were any raids I talked to the radio operators from the ground.

Then I went as a ground instructor with this navigator; he'd been in a nasty accident but he was an experienced chap. We used to explain to people what to do when you had accidents and emergencies, on a dummy aircraft. You had all the crews in this mock up and you'd explain how to react, they used to call it the "grope".

When the thousand bomber raids came I went on those. Then I instructed for about eighteen months. Mainly Canadians, flying four and five hour trips getting them used to our sort of weather and managing aircraft in the conditions over here, which were vastly different to Canada. In the early days we used to instruct them in the daylight but they had to get used to night flying because that was what they were going to do. We never went bombing in the daylight.

When we flew we always used Morse code. You also had an intercom between the crew and when you got about eight miles from your base you'd try and contact the base by RT - radio transmission. They'd tell you if anything was wrong with the runway, remember everything we did was at night.

After about eighteen months as an instructor I was sent back on a second tour of duty. You were supposed to have a break of nine months but because of injury I had eighteen months. I was sent to an aerodrome in Warwickshire. When you went back on a second tour you could choose your crew. You normally looked for a crew that were going back on a second tour who were minus whatever job you did.

I got fed up of waiting for a crew and there were a lot of Australians there. They asked me if I'd join them. I had a word with the CO and he said "it's a bit of a risk". I got on with them and I started my second tour with them. We were trained on Wellingtons but we had to transfer onto the four engined Halifax. When you changed aircraft you'd go to another aerodrome on a three or four month conversion unit. They thought that I was a bit barmy flying with the Australians. But I got on well with them and I was quite happy.

The average number of trips was seven. That was how it worked out. These chaps were just starting so I thought that I had a better chance. It was a bit of a gamble whatever you did.

I flew nearly two tours (fifty flights). That was why the head of the group said "this is your last one now, you won't have to do any more." It was my last flight.

We went to the target, bombed it and started on the way back. It was a full moon. It was four o'clock in the morning and it was like daylight at 20,000 feet. We saw a German aircraft go down, he hit the rear turret on our aircraft. The next thing we knew he'd got the outer engine. He came around again and he got the whole of the crew compartment, it all went up in flames.

So I thought "that's the end of that," so I took my oxygen off and I didn't know any more. With your oxygen turned off you soon became unconscious. I don't know what happened. I don't know why my chute was open. It must have caught on something. I didn't pull it, I was unconscious. I came to and I could hear aircraft around and I looked down and there, about fifteen hundred feet beneath me, was the moonlight on the canal. It was near the Dutch border. I landed beside the canal and three men came out. They'd seen this big battle, because we weren't the only ones to be shot down. They were in a little hall and they took me in there and got the local doctor. They wanted to keep me and not let the Germans get me but the doctor said that I was too badly injured. So I waited with them and the Germans came a few hours later and picked me up in a car. I could see bits of my aircraft; I could see the letters on it.

I was taken to a hospital next to a German air force base. I couldn't move much, I was just lying on a bed.

A few hours later a pilot walked in and he spoke perfect English. He had been to England; he said that he'd been to Oxford for six months. He asked me my name. He said "I'm the pilot that shot you down. When they told me that there was a survivor I didn't believe them. I flew around a few times but I didn't see any parachute come out. I had told them that there were no survivors."

He saw that I was in a bad way so he said "I'll get the station medical officer to come and see you," which he did. They were excellent what they did and they spoke good English. That pilot used to bring me some soft food every morning. I was in quite a state; some of my teeth had been knocked out. Then on the eighth or ninth

morning he said “I won’t be seeing you any more because I’m going to the east. At least you’ve seen the end of the war.” He was really good.

I was in hospital for about a fortnight and then I was sent to a centre and I finally ended up in Poland in a prisoner of war camp in Upper Silesia, the furthest east of any camp.

This was a year from the end of the war. It was July 1944. I was a prisoner of war for the rest of the war. I helped to run the camp. It was an NCO camp and the Germans picked three warrant officers and we ran the camp. They would tell us what to do. They were very good for a prisoner of war camp.

We were all right with the Germans but the Russians started coming nearer and nearer so they had to move us back into Germany in the winter of 1944/5. We were out on the road for about six weeks in the snow, walking at night. They were trying to get us as near as they could to the west. We finally got to a place not that far from Berlin, we had to get a train in the end. We had to go in these wagons which said forty cows or forty horses on them. We were in those for about a week.

We went to this new RAF camp, then the Russians came. The Germans had to leave us and the Russians took over. Then the Americans, who were the nearest troops to us, came to take us back. At first the Russians wouldn’t let us go but finally they agreed to it. They took us to a spot twenty miles away from the camp and we got out of the lorry. They exchanged one for one, one German for one British. The Americans flew us to The Hague and we spent about a fortnight there, they were building us up a bit. Then we were flown to different airports in the UK. They tidied you up so that you looked a bit better. I was demobbed about four months later.

The Sub- lieutenant's Story

Mr. Jim Chapman was born in the Manchester area but moved to north Wales with his parents. He joined Williams and Deacons Bank at 16 and was 18 when war broke out.

When war broke out I was in Colwyn Bay working for Williams and Deacons Bank I'd been there for two years. I expected to be called up fairly soon but nothing happened until I was actually 21. Suddenly I was sent for and instructed to report for Royal Naval service to H.M.S Collingwood at Fareham in Hampshire.

While I was still in Colwyn Bay I was a member of what was originally the LDV but they became of course, Dad's Famous Army. Behind Rhos-on-Sea there was a small hill called Bryn Eiryn, we had to go up there with our pikes or whatever equipment we had to repel the German army. All we really saw was the German bombers coming over to bomb Liverpool.

They dropped one bomb about a hundred yards from my home which didn't explode. The air raid wardens came around and said that everyone should either evacuate or sleep only in the bedrooms at the back of the house in case this unexploded bomb went off, which luckily, it didn't.

When the call came I was taken into the Royal Navy and did my joining up service. At the end of that about 80% of the intake was sent to battleships notably the Prince of Wales, which sadly was sunk within about three months. I was very disappointed at the time as I was sent off to what they called a port or war signal station, which is the equivalent of a coast guard station, which was situated on the cliff tops above Dartmouth. I was doing duties as an ordinary signalman using Morse code with signal lamps and semaphore with flags. We had to accept signals from vessels coming back into harbour.

My brother-in-law, from Old Colwyn, was a member of the crew on one of these boats. He would arrive back at four o'clock in the morning and the signal would come through "permission to enter harbour". We had to ring the Officer in Charge at the Royal Naval College for permission. Nine times out of ten the reply came "permission denied, the boom is still across, they can't get in." This was always a standing joke between Bill and me, that I was keeping

him waiting out there in the cold.

My first vessel after Dartmouth was a wooden minesweeper built in Dartmouth in 1941. We were based in Liverpool and we had to sweep the waters around Iceland clear for the convoys that were coming from America. There was still the danger of submarines. There wasn't much we could do about them although we did have depth charges if we thought that we could do some good.

It was while I was on these duties that I developed appendicitis. It started while I was on leave but it was still there when I got back to the ship. Because they described it as a grumbling appendix I returned to my ship. It got worse so they sent me ashore to South Queensferry hospital which is on the Firth of Forth. They got rid of the appendix and looked after me very well. I then went to a rehabilitation place, Bathgate (near Edinburgh) and from there I went home ostensibly to get married during my compassionate leave, after the operation. I sent a telegram to ask for my leave to be extended to fourteen days. I was told to return within seven days and to report to my ship in the Kyle of Lochalsh presumably because the ship was going off to do its Icelandic duties. We had to bring the wedding forward by one week.

We went from Lochalsh to Scapa Flow and then onto Iceland. The bow of the ship had sonar equipment which gave warning of something under the water. The gunnery people would fire off depth charges if we spotted a mine on the surface and the ones under the surface were picked up on the sonar.

I stayed there until my next appointment. I was told to go to Chatham barracks and to await further instructions. They said "we're sending you to a destroyer, H.M.S. Cotswold, as an ordinary signalman and you'll be given all your instructions when you report."

I duly reported there. There were about three signalmen, two like myself, one signalman who was a rank higher and a petty officer, a leading signalman. He gave us all our instructions the times of duties and so on. We eventually started duties patrolling up and down the east coast watching out for submarines, U-boats and the like. We patrolled from Harwich to Rosyth, we never actually encountered any enemy boats but I had a nasty shock one night.

About three or four in the morning I was off duty in a hammock down below and there was a great crash. Everybody shot up to see what was happening and I shot up to the bridge to discover that the Cotswold had been chopped completely into two pieces by one of our

fellow destroyers. The senior destroyer, which had obviously been in some confusion chasing a U-boat, had come straight across us in the confusion and cut us in two. These two halves were still watertight and an hour or two later some tug boats arrived and towed the two halves into Great Yarmouth where the ship had to remain for a considerable amount of time.

We were sent back to barracks while they decided what was to happen next. After a spell there I chose to go to officers' training to see how I got on. By then I'd been promoted one rank to signalman. I was sent to H.M.S. King Alfred which was land based on the sea-front at Hove. All the officers' training was carried out there. It lasted for about three months. You did seamanship and navigation around Shoreham harbour. It was a tough experience, very tough instructors.

At the end of the day I was fortunate enough to get my commission as sub-lieutenant SB (Special Branch) in the RNVR. The SB meant that on the sleeve I had a green ring underneath the sub-lieutenant's stripe. Once commissioned, I had to go and choose my uniform and my wife came down to Portsmouth and we celebrated.

I was allocated to a Royal Naval Party, NP 1501. I was told to go to London to a house in Rillington Road, Hampstead", this was probably the best road in Hampstead, very large houses. I was allocated to one of these houses and we did all our training on Hampstead Heath which sounds extraordinary. We weren't wearing naval uniform, we were wearing khaki and felt more like soldiers.

After a while we were told that we were not going over to France on invasion day June 6th, we would be going over on D+90 (ninety days after D day). We would leave Hampstead and go over to the Continent. D+90 came and we were sent off on trucks very late one evening and we had no idea where we were going. We got onto large tank landing craft at a place called Lepe not far from Southampton and we crossed.

When we were on board we were told that we were going to be the port party to look after Le Havre. "You'll open the port and it will be the supply base for the troops." We got over to Arromanches and went ashore through all the kafuffle there - most interesting. I think we went about four or five miles inland and set up an emergency camp, which wasn't my cup of tea but it was something that you were told that you were doing and that was it. Some very friendly farmers

nearby invited us in, gave us drinks and provisions and made us very welcome.

I think that we were there three days. The Germans were being very awkward, they wouldn't come out of Le Havre and the army couldn't get them out. We were quite near so that we could hear things going on. We were immediately behind the army which had started its advance.

We were told "we can't get into Le Havre so we're going to Antwerp; you're going to be in the port party to open Antwerp". We simply got into the trucks and followed the army across northern France for two or three days and eventually we got to the outskirts of Brussels. People were turning out along the roadsides waving and welcoming us, eventually we managed to get to Antwerp.

When we got there we were put into one of the best hotels in town, the Hotel de Londres. It was a huge place, five floors and hundreds of rooms. Two people shared a room with en-suite bathroom, which was very comfortable. The next day we were taken down to the actual port which was about two miles from the centre of town. When we got there, there were all these various machines, enigma machines and various types of ciphering machines which we had been trained to use. From then on we went down there every day.

It was very interesting, we got signals from Admiral Ramsey who was in charge of the Navy and we were sending signals to Montgomery and Alexander and all those people. I personally enjoyed the machinery, some of it was very difficult but we soon had the hang of it.

The Germans were very reluctant to leave Antwerp because it was an enormous base and the river Schelde was very easy for craft to come up and deliver supplies and it was a very important source of supplies. Then the Germans got wind of all this and they decided that they'd start concentrating V1s and V2s on Antwerp. It wasn't very nice, one of the worst things happened on a Saturday afternoon. Two or three hundred Royal Marines, who were off duty, went to the matinee at the cinema. I think it was a Wild West film. A rocket landed and killed ninety percent of them.

I've got an ENSA paper that details these rocket and bomb attacks and believe it or not Antwerp had more rockets and bombs than London. We were very lucky that we escaped, rockets landed on main roads and landed on trams, people were killed in large numbers.

Christmas came just about the time of the Battle of the Bulge. The Germans came mighty close to coming back to Antwerp, because they wanted to retake it. Somebody came up and said "you've got some leave due at Christmas do you want to go?" I said "not half". The first night we couldn't go because it was too foggy, ships couldn't get down the river Schelde; eventually we took off and got to Harwich two days before Christmas.

By then my wife and her parents had decided to go to Blackpool for Christmas. I caught a train from Harwich up to Blackpool and walked in. It was more or less Christmas Eve by the time I got there. I think we had three days and then back to Antwerp. The Battle of the Bulge was still going on. Fortunately we'd turned the corner by then and the Germans were trying to get back to the Rhine.

I was in Antwerp for about six months; I was actually there on V.E. day. At the same time my wife was walking on Colwyn Bay pier. They'd taken some of the planks up to stop (German) troops landing on the pier. They were walking along single struts enjoying themselves, celebrating VE day. I think we just had a drink or two in Antwerp.

I was in Antwerp another couple of months and I was thinking it won't be long before demob'll come up. The Japanese War was still going on. Just before Christmas 1945 a telegram arrived "report to C in C Far East Colombo. You will join the ship the New Amsterdam at Southampton". I joined the ship there and it was absolutely full of Dutch troops about fourteen WRENS and a dozen British officers. All the other people were Dutch. The New Amsterdam was a magnificent ship.

We took off for Colombo, down through the Suez Canal, the Red Sea, Port Said, all places new to me. We stopped at Aden and then went straight on to Ceylon. We had to go around Ceylon and disembarked on the east coast. I was then put on a train for Colombo which was an interesting trip, through the fields seeing elephants, all completely new stuff.

We got to Colombo about eight in the morning, transport was laid on to the camp where we were based and I reported to the officer in charge and he said "you'll be staying here and we'll find you something to do eventually." So for the time being I was unemployed. I got to know the other chaps and we used to go down to Galle Face Bay just outside Colombo which had a very famous hotel The Galle

Face Hotel. It was lovely for lime juice and soda, which was a very pleasant drink in the heat. Then we'd go down onto the beach and some friendly chap would shin up a tree and fling a coconut down. It wasn't a bad life at the time.

I thought that something was about to happen, a lot of people were being sent to Saigon. I thought I'd like to go to Saigon and I asked "can I go to Saigon?" They said "you'd better stay here we'll find someone else." I thought that was a rotten trick.

I was in Colombo for a couple of months and I was told "there's a hospital ship coming into Colombo and would you like to join that as its heading back to Europe? You'll be doing paymaster duties as there are no signalling duties as such. You'll be temporary paymaster." Temporary paymaster amounted to practically nothing. The ship was called the Cap St. Jacques.

There were a lot of Queen Alexandra's nurses on board and we used to spend an awful lot of time playing bridge accompanied by large brandy and sodas costing three pence a time. The drinks were put on the bill and at the end of the trip the bill was very minimal. Eventually we docked in Toulon and we didn't know whether the ship was going back to the UK or not. Eventually they said that it was not going back to the UK for a while, "but you're due to be demobbed, if you like you can catch a train home."

So several of us went off to Marseilles and caught a train from there to Paris. It was in Marseilles that I learnt that my wife had presented our first daughter. There was a telegram and all I could do was send a telegram back and proceeded to overdo the celebrations. I found myself the next day in my bunk fully clothed.

We arrived at Paris at nine o'clock at night and it was decided that we should go to one or other of the night clubs, next day we got an early train to Calais. We crossed from Calais to Dover and caught a train for London spending one night in London and home. I got home to find my wife with a month old baby. My wife had had to find some temporary accommodation in a rented property in Old Colwyn and we set up home there for a while.

I had to go to Nelson in Lancashire to be demobbed where I was presented with my demob suit and trilby hat. This was May or June 1946.

The Wren's Story

Mrs. Hazel Fison was away at boarding school when war broke out, she now lives in Graig Hir, Radyr.

I was home on holiday until the beginning of September when we went back to school, but not for long because the Ministry of Food took over our building and we were evacuated down to Torquay. When they evacuated all the troops from Dunkirk, my school thought that we were going to be invaded and I was sent back home. I did my London matric in the local college in Huddersfield where there were boys, instead of it being an all girls' school.

When I was nineteen I joined up, I joined the WRNS (Wrens) and we were sent to Mill Hill for two weeks training. I asked to become a boat crew Wren and they sent me down to Newhaven, where we spent our time taking barrage balloons out to minesweepers at 6 a.m. on bitter cold winter mornings and then retrieving them as they returned to harbour in the evenings. The skippers of the minesweepers didn't want the balloons because they thought that it made then a better target for German bombers.

I then moved to HMS Tormentor at Warsash on the river Hamble where a fleet of forty landing craft were moored up "on the trots" as it was called, waiting for D-day. Our job was to take maintenance men out to the different boats. We worked twenty four hours on and twenty four hours off. We also took supplies to ships in the Solent. Some American boats used to throw us nylons and cigarettes, a great luxury. We were also asked onboard ships and had many dates – it was a wonderful time.

One night a German aircraft came down our river Hamble and machine gunned us. It was very frightening, all you could hear was the rattle of the bullets. Luckily they didn't hit anyone. Very soon after that we started to hear the doodle-bugs come over with their strange drone. You couldn't mistake the noise; they usually went right over us as they were going to London. If you did hear them stop you had ten seconds to get yourself under something, before they landed and exploded. They didn't land on us near Portsmouth and Southampton but they did come over quite a lot. We were a bit

frightened of those because there was no air-raid warning or anything, you just had to sit and watch and wait and listen.

As D-day approached security became very tight – we were not allowed to make phone calls-and the narrow roads were packed with Polish, Canadian and British soldiers all ready to be transported in our landing craft to the Normandy beaches. D-day was postponed for 48 hours because of the dreadful weather. It was an anxious time. I lent a white petticoat, for luck, to one of the LC1 skippers to wear instead of his silk scarf. He came back safely. We watched the boats loaded with soldiers disappear down the river and wondered how many would return. Many did return and then repeated the journey. Life was never as exciting for us again and our social life dropped to nil.

Soon after I was transferred once more to HMS Dolphin, the submarine base at Gosport. Admiral George Creasey, a charming man, was coming back from the far-east and he wanted Wrens on his barge. Four of us Wrens looked after the Admiral's barge, a coxswain, a stoker and two deck hands. It was a lovely barge with teak decks and two brass dolphins. We, of course, had to polish the decks and the brass dolphins and the Admiral was very fussy about all the cleaning. We also had to learn how to pipe the Admiral on board.

We used to take him to Portsmouth and other places on the Solent. We also used to take many important people all over the harbour when they came down from London. The Editor of the Daily Mirror, MPs etc.

I remember when we were doing a boat drill; my friend fell into the water while we were coming alongside. I threw her a life belt. Unfortunately I forgot to hold onto the other end of the rope. She wasn't very pleased about that. The Admiral said "Give her a tot of rum, Peter" to his A.D.C.

We had a very nice time at Portsmouth and we stayed there until the end of the war when men came back from the far-east and wanted their jobs back. So we were demobbed.

The Flying Boat Engineer's Story

John Pearce now lives in Pentwyn, Radyr.

I was in Canton High School at the beginning of the war and I left there and went to work in Bristow Wadley in Mill Lane, Cardiff, as a clerk. I was a fire watcher there, we used to stay the night in Bristow Wadley and if anything caught fire we'd put it out. Then I was an aircraft spotter. When an air-raid sounded I had to go to the top of the lift shaft and spot for any aircraft coming over and if there were I'd press a button and all the staff would go to the shelter.

I was also an air raid warden in Grangetown. We used to tell people if their blackout wasn't total and, if anything happened, we'd be out on the streets helping to put the fires out, or to help out generally. Grangetown was hit but not our end.

I decided to join the R.A.F and went to Penarth and passed all my medicals there as a pilot/observer, in June 1942. But they didn't want any more pilot/observers so I was sent home on deferred leave.

I then decided to volunteer as an air-gunner and I was called up in April 1943.When I got to the recruiting centre in Hall Road, London it was found that I was unsuitable to be an air-gunner because of my eye-sight. They sent me to Eastchurch in Kent where they remustered me to a flight engineer. I was posted to I.T.W. at Torquay and stayed there for ten weeks. From there I was posted to R.A.F. St. Athan where I stayed for six months doing an engineer's course.

After passing out of the engineer's course I went to Pembrey No 1 Air-Gunnery School. I couldn't become an engineer on Catalina Flying Boats until I'd passed my air-gunner's course. As I was unfit for air-gunner I thought that this was stupid. I still passed out my air-gunner's course and I became a flight engineer/air gunner on Catalina Flying Boats.

I was posted to Northern Ireland where I crewed up with another eight lads and we did our training on Catalinas. It was used for everything, bombing, torpedo carrying, air-sea rescue, anti submarine patrols, mine laying and convoy escorts.

Once we'd finished training we had a home posting to the Shetland Isles. I served in Shetland until the war finished on anti-

submarine patrols and Russian convoys. We'd fly in "boxes". The submarines had to break surface with their "snorkel" for us to see them on the radar. We'd fly at about a thousand feet. When you were in that front turret you were out in the wind and you were cold in there, believe me. We had machine guns in the turret. To start off with we had a Vickers gas operated machine gun in the front turret and then we had a Browning 303. By the end we had two Browning 303s. Then we had 1.5s in each of the blisters. We used the turret to fight off other aircraft and to attack submarines and to drop depth charges. We also had a hatch that dropped down at the back for a camera.

One trip after the war in Europe had finished, we flew from Sullom Voe in the Shetland Isles to Bergen in Norway. When we first arrived in Norway the locals were spitting at us because we had an eagle on our shoulder. They soon realised that we were Royal Air Force and then they couldn't do enough for us. The Germans were still in charge there. There was a German sentry on the quayside marching up and down with his rifle keeping everything safe. We had no problem with them. The Gestapo were in the hills and they would come down at night and try to shoot up the locals. This was the 23rd of May 1945.

We stayed there for one night and picked up Major General Urquhart who was C in C. Airborne Division and his party with eleven Russian Generals who'd been prisoners of war in Norway. We flew them up to Tromso which is right up north in the Artic Circle; the generals were going home to Russia. They didn't sit on benches, they sat wherever they could.

The second pilot, myself and a radio operator stayed on board that night to look after the aircraft and we were moored opposite to where the Tirpitz had been sunk. This was normal procedure; three of you would stay on board, a pilot, a wireless operator and an engineer. It was called gale guard. If a gale blew up the pilot would start the engines up with the aid of the engineer and the wireless operator could send out messages if we were in trouble. Sometimes in the Shetlands you'd be on gale guard for days.

Next day we flew Major General Urquhart and his party down to Trondheim and had a look over the base there with all the Arados float planes, then back to Bergen where we stayed for two nights. The Major General gave us a bottle of champagne for looking after him

on the trip. He ate with us; he didn't eat his sandwiches with the others. He ate with us because we cooked on board.

We had a night out in Bergen, some kind lady took us into her home and we went down to the local chemist and bought 100% pure alcohol and laced it with orange juice. We left the next day. Another interesting trip was bringing a Christmas tree from Shetland to Bergen for King Haakon of Norway.

There were Norwegian Squadrons stationed in Shetland at Sullom Voe on Sunderland Flying Boats and at Woodhaven near Dundee on Catalinas. They would go home to Norway for their leave all through the war. They'd go home armed to the teeth with machine guns, skis, rations, everything.

When the war finished in Europe, I was transferred onto Liberator Aircraft of Transport Command, with three others of my crew. Liberators had a crew of four. On the Liberators they closed up the bomb bays and put planks along both sides, for eleven chaps to sit each side and four at the back. We flew from Scotland to Karachi in India, via Castle Benito in north Africa, Cairo West in Egypt or Lydda in Palestine and Shaibahor or Habbaniya in Iraq. We came back into R.A.F. Oakington in Cambridgeshire.

We used to fly twenty-six soldiers out to India for the Japanese War and bring twenty six troops home the same route back. We stopped every night at one of the stopping places, so it took four days to get to India. It used to take eight and a half hours from Oakington to Castle Benito. We'd get a day off in India, come back and then we'd get seven days leave.

The skipper and the officers would bring back carpets from India to Oakington and as soon as we landed the backdoor would be opened and the carpets would be slung out. A jeep would go along to collect them and deliver them to the officers' mess, so that when we went for de-briefing we had nothing.

After Liberators I went onto York aircraft. I went up to Yorkshire and did a course on Yorks. I went back to my squadron which was then in Homsley South in Hampshire near Bournemouth. I was told that unless I signed on as a regular I'd finished flying. So I said "right I've finished flying". I was transferred up to Yorkshire again. There were six of us ex-air-crew stoking a little boiler in the camp. We would come home for two days and stoke for one day. I was then sent

down to King's Lynn in Norfolk where they decided that because I'd been a clerk before the war I should become a clerk again and I was sent to Brize Norton in Oxfordshire. In Brize Norton I was NCO in charge of the Demob. Centre and I was there until I was demobbed in January 1947.

As far as I'm concerned I wouldn't have missed it for the world. I saw places that I would never have seen.

My crew were all brilliant except for my first pilot. My second pilot, a Squadron Leader, was a gem of a fellow. He was a British speed ice-skating champion. His name was Squadron Leader Johnny Rawlings. Our daily routine orders said, "No cooking in the billets at night." The first thing he'd do at night was to come around to our billet looking for his steak.

We cooked onboard in the air. We had two primus stoves on a canvas bunk. Stupid things to have inside an aircraft, primus stoves. .We would cook soup, bacon and eggs, everything once we were up. We took it in turns to cook. I used to do three-quarters of an hour in the front gun turret, three-quarters of an hour in the engineer's position, three quarters of an hour in the blisters where the guns where, three-quarters of an hour cooking. The only people who didn't cook were the two pilots and the navigator.

We'd have nine big steaks, we'd put two in the soup and we'd have seven to take back to the billets. The officers knew that's what we did, that's why our skipper came round to our billet for his meal.

The Special Constable's Story

Mr. Ron Trigg was born in Gloucester but moved to Cardiff at an early age. He died a few weeks after this interview was recorded aged 91.

Before the war I was living at home with my parents and I was an accounts clerk at Preston and Thomas who were fish range makers in Cathays. War was looming, it was clear that it would eventually come. The Government was calling for people to do civilian tasks, one of these tasks was Special Constable, part of the City Police Force. I decided to volunteer and was appointed.

We were issued with a "uniform" as they called it; a steel helmet, whistle, arm-band and a truncheon. You were particularly wanted for evening work to assist the City Police. The Special Constables were used from darkness onwards. Air raid precautions had come into force and they included, at that time, encouraging people to use the blackout.

There was a curtain over your existing curtains so that no light was visible from outside. In the same way cars and bicycles had to dim their lights. The Special Constables were patrolling the streets looking for light escaping from windows or motor-cars with full lights on and we had to stop those people and ask them to turn it down. This started about eighteen months before war broke out.

Once war broke out we were more important because the instruction on blackout was compulsory. If any light was visible we had to knock on the door or blow our whistle and demand that the lights be put out or the blackout curtain drawn properly.

When war broke out in '39, as I was obviously going to be called up and I really wanted to do a job of my choice. A friend from work (I was then employed by the Principality Building Society)and I decided to volunteer for the R.A.F.

We had a medical and we were then asked what trade we wanted, if they were available. I volunteered for general clerical duties, there were no vacancies in accountancy. I was enrolled and sent to Padgate in Lancashire for what they called initial training – square-bashing.

After Padgate I was sent to a place called Digby in Lincolnshire. I was very fortunate, the general clerical department was a very big unit but because of my accountancy experience and qualifications, I was asked if I'd like to take charge of the Sergeants' mess. I prepared all the bills, recorded all the meals taken in the mess and collecting the money. Digby was an operational bomber base and pilots and other staff were taking off, flying, coming home and wanted meals in the mess. I was there for a couple of years and thoroughly enjoyed my time at Digby because I was apart from all the other clerical duties and had an office to myself. I got to know all the pilots as they used to come in to pay their mess bills.

They finally caught up with me and said "you're going overseas". I was moved to Gloucestershire where we were prepared for overseas, mainly kitting out and overseas injections. After overseas leave I was posted to the Glasgow area where we embarked not knowing where we were going.

We sailed in a convoy which was attacked by bombers in daylight not very far out from the Clyde. When we regrouped we'd lost the rest of the convoy so we returned to the Clyde while the rest of the convoy went on to Egypt.

The next convoy was uneventful. We went around the Cape, the Mediterranean was closed. We arrived in Durban and stayed ten days or a fortnight. That was very interesting. Most of the families in Durban had two cars, the wives would come in the daytime and take us off for the day, showing us around the area. Eventually we sailed on up the Red Sea to Egypt.

When we arrived in Egypt we went to a disembarkation camp and were kitted out in khaki and pith helmets for the desert. I was posted to a place called Massara just off the Nile near Cairo. The unit was a maintenance unit stocking ammunition, bombs etc. These were stored in the caves. The local Arabs would unload the barges and take the ammunition to the caves where the staff would record and store it. When weapons were required in the desert, they would requisition whatever they wanted. We would take the ammunition from the caves back down to the Nile. Barges would take it up to Cairo where it would be entrained for the desert.

Cairo and the Arabs were very friendly, we got on well with them. We were able to get into Cairo most nights of the week and go for a

meal or go to the pictures. I remember that my first experience of an open air picture was in Cairo. You drove your car in, watched the picture, then drove your car out and went home again.

While I was in Egypt I applied for a commission because I'd missed the opportunity while I was in the U.K. I applied for a commission to the R.A.F headquarters in Cairo and that was passed back to England. A few months passed by, then I was called for a medical. After passing the medical I was soon called up to be posted to India.

In India I was a corporal instructor training Indian personnel in R.A.F procedures. After about a year I was called up to see the Commander, who informed me that my commission had been granted and that I could now regard myself as an officer.

I was moved to a unit in Calcutta, which was a radar repairing unit, as Assistant Adjutant. In Calcutta new concrete billets were being built as I arrived. It was a small unit a couple of hundred, some of course were Indian personnel.

Calcutta was very nice, a lovely cathedral. Every Sunday morning the Commanding Officer would pick me up in his car and take me to the cathedral.

You had to serve a tour of duty of a minimum of three years, there was no home leave during that period. At the end of three years you could anticipate being called for repatriation. When we had a hundred days left we chalked up on the wall 100, and then we counted it down. Eventually I was called to go home and sent to Bombay to catch a ship. We had to wait there weeks and weeks and weeks. Army officers got preference and when there was spare room, an R. A. F. officer got a space. The ship went up the Clyde and we arrived on V.E day. Everything was shut down, we couldn't get off. We were very disappointed and we weren't disembarked until the following day.

Section two

The Home Front

The Lancashire Lass' Story

Mrs. Elsie Wilson was born and brought up in St. Helens, Lancashire and now lives in Springfield Gardens, Morganstown.

I was in Wigan when war broke out. I'd gone for the weekend to stay with two girl friends. There had been so many frights about the war, newspaper boys shouting, "Special edition". Germany had done something and you'd be terrified and then it would all die away. So I didn't really think for a minute that there was going to be a war.

When the speech came I was terrified. I'm not a hysterical person; I'm a person as copes. My Mam died when I was eleven and I brought up my sister who was eight and my other sister who was three, we did everything ourselves other than the washing; cooking, cleaning the lot. We put each other to bed, the whole bit.

I was very, very upset; I thought that all traffic would stop. I thought that I'd never get home again. As a point of fact it was only eight miles; I could have walked it and later on in the war I did walk that far.

That particular night I thought that things would start immediately. The girl I was staying with's mother said that if I couldn't get back her son would take me home on his motor-bike. I didn't mind then so long as I could get home.

Nobody ever mentioned the First World War. My dad never mentioned it. He was daft at times and had a scar at the back of his neck and he used to say that it was caused by a German pushing a revolver into his neck. It wasn't true. Dorothy Vaughan, my best friend, her dad only had one leg, he never mentioned the war. Nobody ever mentioned the war.

My two grandfathers couldn't read or write, I don't think they went to school. If you look back in the records it says "scholar" but that's just a name it doesn't mean they went to school. My dad's generation left school at twelve.

People like him accepted authority as being the beginning and the end; they accepted their place in life which was very, very low. I think

that was why, in the First World War, the soldiers were willing to go over the top. They knew that the German guns hadn't been silenced; they knew that every wave of lads that went over were going to be killed.

That didn't happen in the Second World War. It seemed to be sheer luck whether you got killed or not. I know one boy who was in the R.A.F., he was in bomber command. He was coming home on leave and he was killed by a bomb waiting for his train to St Helens on Lime Street Station.

The war lasted five years, so it became a way of life. It became a normal thing. There were shortages; of course, they came gradually because they stopped making things like cups with handles. You could very rarely buy a dish. So what you had when war started was what you had, that was unbroken, at the end of the war. I was single and I wasn't bothered about rationing. I know some mothers bought pies and took the meat out and made scouse (cawl or broth). I myself used liquid paraffin as the fat to make jam tarts.

We lived twelve miles from Liverpool and about twenty-five miles from Manchester so most nights the air-raid siren went. We didn't take any notice because it didn't always come to us. There were nights when it did but mostly we carried on with our lives. We (girls) danced together in St. Helens and if we could get to any of the outlying towns where there was an R.A.F. camp we would go on the bus and walk it back for the sake of dancing with a man. It was weird really.

A lot of the time you were like ships that passed in the night, you'd meet someone it would seem important for a bit, you'd start writing, then you'd get fed up with writing and it would just fall through. As a single person you would never know what happened to them it was only the mothers and wives that knew.

One time, it was just before the fall of Hong Kong, they started to collect troops at Knowsley Park under canvas, ready for embarkation. These boys came into St. Helens and came to the church socials. They had tea and biscuits. You must have been able to get biscuits off the ration if you were a patron for something like that.

I met this boy, Patrick, and it seemed very important, we talked about the future. He was the son of an army captain who'd been a regular so he'd been brought up abroad, in India. He showed me

pictures of himself in a pith helmet and all this. He never mentioned that they were ready to go abroad. People didn't, you didn't ever pass information on unless you were daft. One night he just wasn't there. I had letters from him from the boat and I wrote back. He wrote of the future that we had together and all this. Then nothing.

You don't immediately think that they've got killed. I tried to listen to the news to see if any troop ship had gone down and there wasn't anything at that time. I was a bit hurt. I didn't have a lot of self-confidence, so I immediately thought that he'd got fed up. I never heard from him again.

After the war, I met a man when he was demobbed; he'd been in the Navy. He'd been in destroyers. He never mentioned anything about the war. He never once ever, ever mentioned the war.

I was getting prepared for my wedding, and I got a telegram one day and it said "Darling, arrived safely, I'm counting the hours till we meet again. I will always love you. Patrick". I thought "My God! What am I going to do?"

When I came to look there was a tiny piece of paper about two inch square, it said that they'd found a bag of these telegrams, that had never been sent, at the post office in Singapore. They'd sent them, they didn't know whether they'd be applicable any more but they felt that we would like to get them.

I wrote to the army and gave his number and his regiment, the Royal Norfolks. I said that I had no axe to grind, that I was now with another man about to get married, but that I couldn't bear not to know what had happened to him, did he survive? I got a letter from his mother, because obviously my letter had been sent on to her. She said that they had arrived in Singapore as it had fallen. Patrick had died on the railway and that he was buried under a tree. I never forgot him.

Later on I met a boy in the R.A.F. I met him in Blackpool. You could get cheap trips to Blackpool and you could go to the Tower and dance with men. I met this boy and we were in touch by letter for quite a while and he used to come to Liverpool and stay at the Y.M.C.A. I would meet him in Liverpool and we'd have the day together. He was telling me how terrified he was. He was aircrew, and when he came out of the plane he literally knelt because his legs wouldn't hold him. He said that he was going to train for

pathfinders; they dropped their flares before the bombers. “I know it’s more dangerous” he said, “but you do far less flights. When I finish training I’d like to come up and I’d like to meet your people”.

In my day if you took anybody home that was it, you were engaged. We had no room at our house, so I asked Nan if he could stay there. She said yes fine. So we’d made this arrangement to meet in Liverpool and I would bring him to St. Helens. I went to Liverpool and he didn’t turn up. Once again I was fairly flummoxed. It was nearly two months later that his mother wrote to me. She’d found my letters in his kit when it was returned. He was killed on his first flight. It was just the luck of the draw. He’d done a lot of bombing raids but this was his first day as a pathfinder. It said “missing presumed killed”. She kept in touch with me long after I was married so I know that he never turned up.

I started work in a plastics factory in the August before war broke out and I was made foreman. I was on quality control. We didn’t know what we were making. They were black and they’d have inserts in, but we didn’t know what they were. It was part of the war effort. You worked normally from eight until twelve, and from one o’clock until five. But during the war on a Wednesday, Thursday and Friday you worked until eight o’clock. You had your lunch hour but no coffee break until half past seven at night from eight o’clock in the morning, and Saturday from eight to twelve. It was a lot of hours but you just took it for granted, you didn’t think anything about it.

If there was a raid on and we were at work then we stopped and went into the shelters. It was a domed one with soil on the top with seats all along. It was fun. We used to sing all the songs so we really enjoyed it.

You had to stay to the end of your shift to get paid. Once your shift ended you didn’t have to stay and I always went home because of my two sisters. This particular night there was a girl went home with me, she lived about two hundred yards from where I lived. A landmine hit her house; we were lucky because it was a landmine. The landmine hit her house and ended up in the brook and because it was in water it stopped. That same night they hit the Girls’ Institute which was twenty yards away from our house and the bomb never went off. You could hear it come down but nothing happened. They dropped about four that night around our area.

We had a bomb shelter in the yard. It was only brick; it wouldn't have stopped a bomb. It was very thick, I would say that it was about eighteen inches thick and it was very small inside. It was slightly less than five foot by five foot and I was five foot four and half then. You couldn't lay full length and it was a pretty cramped place to be.

I'd an aunt that never married, probably because of the First World War, and she lived back to back with us and she didn't have a shelter. None of them in that street had a shelter, I don't know why. There was a street shelter but I don't think anyone used it. My aunt used to come and be in our shelter. She was a gibbering idiot, she was terrified. Our Joyce used to sleep all through it, our Rene used to say the Lord's Prayer over and over again and I just used to sit there and hope it would soon be over.

My father would be in bed or at work, whichever, he wouldn't come into the shelter. This particular night, when all the bombs were really coming down in our area, I went in and woke him up. He had a fit.

Shortly after war broke out the air raid siren went. Dorothy Vaughan and I had to be in for nine o'clock. As luck would have it we were nearer to Dorothy's house than mine when the siren went. So we went into her house and of course nobody'd got full instructions at that time. So her dad and mother were sitting on the stairs, not under the stairs and we sat on the stairs with them. They woke up her brother, who was twelve and he sat on the stairs too. He only had a shirt on. People didn't have pyjamas in those days; they just slept in a shirt. That boy was twelve but before the war ended he was killed; that will show you the length of time that the war lasted.

My Grandad, who lived back to back, would queue up and get tripe. Now if you bought tripe you could get fat. He bought tripe at least three times a week so that he had enough fat for the chip pan. So we ate tripe. We hated tripe. Three times a week we had tripe. Then after a while and when our Rene started to work, we both used to get our meal at work.

At one time I used to go home for lunch and one day the air raid siren went while I was walking back to work. It was about two miles but I mean you walked everywhere then. There was this child and when the air raid siren went off she was really frightened and she was crying. I couldn't stay with her because I had to go to work. So I

knocked on a door and handed her over to somebody. They said they would look after her. I mean I wouldn't do that now.

Before the war the men and boys joined the Engineers and the Volunteers for something to do. This was a volunteer Army that met and did exercises and stuff. The lads couldn't afford a scout uniform or anything like that, so they used to lie about their age to join the Territorials. When the war started a lot of these lads were only fifteen and sixteen but they couldn't argue; they had to go. So the whole neighbourhood seemed to be swept clear of boys, I don't suppose they sent them abroad immediately.

My brother-in-law was one of the lads that joined up. His dad was in the Territorials so he joined at fifteen. Two years later, when they were short in the R.A.F. he transferred and became bomber crew. He came down somewhere in the south of France and the people hid him and got him through to Switzerland. He never said how he got back from Switzerland but he did get back.

The Story of a Family Separated by War

Christine Curry now lives in Dan-y-Bryn Avenue, Radyr

When war broke out in 1939 my family happened to be "on leave" in Scotland. However, my father's job was in Malaya, where my brother, sister and I had all been born and which we felt to be our home, although the U.K. was "home" to our parents.

Early in 1940 we returned to Malaya, leaving my eight year old brother at school in Edinburgh. He was not to see his family again for four years. My father had returned first and my mother sister and I followed him. I believe we sailed in a convoy through the Bay of Biscay and that the convoy was bombed by German aircraft but I have no recollections of that. I was not yet five years old at the time.

Once back in Malaya, life went on as before. I remember seeing newsreels of bombing in far-off Europe and I must have had some perception of danger for I remember feeling glad that my father had a pistol and a sword with which he could defend us, but against what I don't know. My mother was worried about my brother in Scotland but his school had been evacuated to Perthshire and my father felt that he was safer there than in making an attempt to rejoin us in Malaya.

In September 1941, I was sent to a boarding school in the hills of northern Sumatra, then part of the Dutch East Indies. Halfway through the term, Dutch troops arrived and began erecting pointed poles on our playing fields. This was to deter Japanese paratroopers from landing on these open spaces in the jungle! I can recall the commander of the soldiers waltzing his horse through the poles, as if on a dressage exercise. We children found this very entertaining.

The next thing to happen was that we were moved out of out dormitory buildings, which were taken over by the troops. We were billeted on families in the neighbourhood. At the age of six, I was highly indignant at having to sleep in a cot but I enjoyed the Dutch celebration of Christmas, where we filled our slippers with grass for St. Nicholas's horse and woke up the next morning to find the grass replaced by sweets. Sadly I have no memory of the family that took me in.

As Christmas proper approached, we were told that we could not go home because of the danger from Japanese submarines in the Straits of Malacca. By this time my father had been posted to Singapore, which was being bombed. On Boxing Day my mother and three-year-old sister flew from Singapore to join me in Sumatra. As my mother had no time to prepare and as she fully expected to return when the "Japs" were defeated, she packed only one small suitcase, leaving behind most of her jewellery, which she had recently inherited from her mother.

With a friend whose daughter was at my school (and who also had another younger daughter), we went to stay in a bungalow where we had once spent a holiday. Here the two women listened anxiously to the wireless while we children played happily. Eventually the day came when they felt that they must leave. We went to Medan, the nearest large town, where we hired a car driven by an Indonesian, whom we knew as George. Without him, we could not have made that journey the length of Sumatra. I cannot be sure how many days the journey took but I can recall three nights spent en route, including one when there was an air raid. The roads were bad and once we had to cross a river on a ramshackle ferry. For my mother, the journey must have been a nightmare, as my small sister was car-sick all the time. One night she ran a temperature and my mother thought that we would have to stay behind but thankfully she was right as rain the next morning. My mother told me that if she and her friend, Joan Black, hadn't shared a sense of humour, she couldn't have gone on. Mrs. Black was fluent in Dutch, having grown up in Amsterdam, and that was also a great help on that journey. Nevertheless, it was "George" to whom we owed our freedom from capture from the Japanese.

On the ferry that took us across the Sunda Straits to Java, lightning flickered in the night sky, far more terrifying to me than Japanese air-raids. In the capital, then called Batavia, (now Jakarta), we stayed at the Imperial Hotel. I remember sitting in a shelter during an air raid one afternoon with a piece of rubber clenched between my teeth. This was something I wore on a string around my neck and I think it was issued at school. My mother and sister were not with me in the shelter because my sister was having her afternoon nap! On February 9th, my sister had her fourth birthday but, needless to say, there was no birthday cake or presents for her. In fact, my mother was running

out of money. She had to do a “sit-in” at the bank to get funds transferred from Malaya. When the money arrived, she booked passages for us on the Dutch liner, the Tegelberg”, paid her hotel bill, said goodbye to our friends and we were on our way to South Africa, we fervently hoped. I can recall the sight of British troops still in thick khaki uniforms unloading equipment as we arrived at the port.

We sailed on February 12th and, thankfully, the voyage was uneventful. On February 15th, however, Singapore fell and my father was taken prisoner. He was to spend three and a half years as a civilian internee, first at the notorious Changi Gaol and then at the Sime Road camp. We children were never told anything of his experiences during those years but we have two interesting mementos: his portable typewriter, with the number 1173 stamped on it, and a shield for a bridge tournament, carved from a piece of teak with dates inscribed on tin plaques. The dates end in 1942. My father was a very keen bridge player and he loved organised competitive events, No doubt he started a bridge tournament but after a time the internees must have lacked the will to go on playing.

We reached Durban safely but there were difficulties with the South African authorities about allowing all the passengers to land. Fortunately, we had relatives in South Africa, who were able to offer us a home. We spent almost exactly two years in South Africa and for me they were very happy years. Once again the war seemed far away and, although I must have missed my father and also our Chinese “amah” who had looked after us from birth, I accepted separation as part of our way of life. For my mother, it must have been very different. It was some time before we had word that my father was alive and, during the period of his internment we had only two postcards from him. She was anxious too about her son in Scotland, although he was safe at his school in Perthshire and well looked after during his school holidays with a family in Argyllshire. (Our own family had all left Scotland).

After Christmas 1943, I did not go back to my boarding school in Pietermaritzburg, Natal. Instead, my mother booked us into a hotel in Durban to await word of berths on a troop ship returning to the U.K. I had a wonderful time swimming every day and forging a close friendship with another girl in the hotel whose father was also a prisoner in Malaya. My mother told me that eggs were rationed in

Britain, so every morning I had water melon and a boiled egg for breakfast!

At the beginning of March 1944, we had 24 hours notice of embarkation on the "Empress of Scotland", formerly the "Empress of Japan". Once a luxury liner she had been converted to a troopship and painted battleship grey. Our bunks were in the former Palm Court lounge in long rows of three tiers. The voyage round the Cape of Good Hope was fine. I remember having a bath with the water sloshing all over the place as the ship rolled. It was my last bath until the ship reached Liverpool over two weeks later! When we docked in Cape Town, British troops that had been training in Rhodesia came on board. They were being brought back in preparation for D-Day, so my mother told me later. When we set sail again, the women and children on board were kept strictly confined to our quarters, where there were no bathrooms.

After this, the voyage became somewhat grim. Not only could we not have baths, our only washing facilities were the basins in what had been the ladies' cloakroom of that part of the ship, and there were bed bugs in the mattresses! There was nothing for us children to do. My mother had provided me with knitting needles and wool to knit some clothes for my doll but I decided instead to knit a scarf for the brother I had not seen for four years. If any child tried to climb on the railings of the deck, the mothers would chant "two feet on the deck". We were told that the ship would not stop for anyone who fell overboard. There were daily life-boat drills but no German U-boat was sighted, as far as I know. Each day, the weather grew greyer and colder as we left the sunshine of South Africa behind. When the ship sailed into the Mersey, it was raining. An RAF band was playing on the quayside but on the ship itself a Scottish soldier played the pipes as the ship docked. It was my ninth birthday! I had come "home" to wartime Britain, to rationing and the blackout, but also to a reunion with my brother.

In August 1945, we were on holiday in the Lake District with my Durban friend and her family when news came of the atom bomb being dropped, followed by the surrender of Japan. I vividly remember when the telegram came to say that my father was safe. He came home on a hospital ship. It was the "Tegelberg" that had carried us to safety in February 1942.

The Cardi's Story

The Rev. Dafydd Henry Edwards was brought up in rural Cardiganshire and served in the ministry in that area. He and his wife retired to Hillside, Radyr in the early 2000's to be near to their family.

I was quite young at the time but from what I remember we were fairly self sufficient as far as food is concerned. We had sheep and we would occasionally take a sheep from the fold because it was lame or whatever. We would share the meat around the locality because we had no way of preserving the meat so it was consumed in a short time. Every one of us kept a pig and during the war regulations came in on the slaughter of pigs. Many farms and small holdings would keep two pigs and only declare one.

When the pigs were slaughtered you had to have a license and the policeman had to be present to make sure that it was the same weight as we declared on our forms. We would post the application for the license in a post box that would not be collected regularly, slaughter would have happened before the notification arrived.

There are some horrific stories about the inspectors coming around to see the meat and the meat had to be hidden. You'd put an old man or an old lady in bed and pretend that they were very ill but they were also harbouring the side of bacon under the sheets.

We had relatives living in what we called "The south". Our area was an industrial area in that we had lead and silver mines. When there was a depression at the end of the 1920's the men moved down to the Rhondda and Aberdare valleys and many of them married and settled and most of us had close relatives living in those valleys.

There was a great shortage of meat and bacon especially in the valleys. There is the classical story, which is told of many areas. The best way to carry a pig to "the south" was to put it in a coffin and the coffin in a hearse and the hearse would drive down to the south.

I remember that you could see the glow of Swansea burning from the Preseli Mountains, which weren't very far from us.

We didn't have air raid shelters but we did have gas masks and we were given training in wearing them. We had to carry them to school in a cardboard box. It was fun. We couldn't envisage how a gas attack would affect us in any way out there on that windswept bleak mountain. I remember that the gas mask we had had to be "improved" and an extra bit put on the nose. It was even more difficult to breath in it and the smell of rubber inside comes distinctly to mind.

We were also told not to wear distinctive clothing as we walked home. Not that we wore very bright clothing in those days. Our outer garments would be dark or grey. If an aeroplane came over, an occasional aeroplane did come over, we were supposed to lie face down in the heather.

At the very end of the war, towards 1944, I was getting older now, the Americans came. They established an air-force base in our area and we learnt to say, "Any gum chum."

Of the children who came to stay amongst us for a while, some went back but some of them stayed on. Why and how I don't know. I assume that those who cared for them were willing to adopt them and that their parents had been lost in the war. They stayed on and are still there. They were of course thoroughly assimilated into our society and spoke our language and our dialect. After the war a lot of Poles came to that area of the Cardiganshire/Pembrokeshire border, they'd been prisoners of war.

The G.P's Daughter's Story

Mary Pearce was born in Taffs Well the daughter of the local G.P. She and her husband Bob live in Radyr and are the current editors of the Radyr Chain.

I was living in Taffs Well when war broke out, I must have been five and I remember being told that there was a war in Taffs Well School on a Monday morning by Miss Davies. It didn't mean a thing to me.

Every raid we used to go down beneath the stairs. We used to entertain ourselves as best we could; we were down there for several hours. I remember playing with the wax on the candles. Then in 1940 our house was bombed, it was a direct hit on the house. I was staying with my grandmother in Llandeilo at the time. My parents and brother with an evacuee and the maid were underneath the stairs. My father and brother were badly injured, my mother slightly. They were sheltering underneath the stairs otherwise they would have been killed. The house was completely destroyed. If it hadn't been for the mining community in the village they wouldn't have been rescued from the house as easily as they were.

They were then taken to Caerphilly Miners Hospital and I remember being brought down from Llandeilo to see them and being very impressed by the state of the house, which wasn't there. The evacuee left for Folkstone pretty soon after.

My father, Dr. D. G. Williams, had to work incredibly hard for the entire length of the war; he never had more than a half day off a week and did all his own night calls. Having been through the first war in the trenches I think he had a very hard life.

I've got memories of listening to the radio mainly of Lord Haw Haw. Down on the farm in Llandeilo my uncle used to come in of an evening and go into the front room, where he had his radio which used to hiss and crackle, to listen to Lord Haw Haw. All I can remember is this voice saying "Germany calling, Germany calling" the rest of what he said went over my head. My family used to think it was quite funny, they used to enjoy this. They considered that he was a bit of a crackpot.

They (the Government) brought an enormous amount of barbed wire. Every ditch around Llandeilo had a great supply of barbed wire, in case of invasion. I don't think they ever did anything with it; it was still there at the end of the war.

Convoys used to go along the A40 and we used to sit on the fence and watch them and when there were apples my grandmother used to put out baskets of apples and they'd stop and take apples. We children had an idea we'd charge them for the apples but that wasn't encouraged.

My Uncle Willie was a great character and he was in the Home Guard with my other Uncle Kenneth who worked on the farm. He used to give us demonstrations of his marching practice up and down on the flags in the kitchen. I don't think the Home Guard was ever taken very seriously; it was just a good night out in Llandeilo.

We had Italian prisoners of war working on the farm. They used to arrive in the morning. They wore a chocolate coloured uniform and I think they had a yellow circle on the back. My cousin was a baby and all they wanted was to "play with the Bambino". They all rushed up to the baby every day. On another farm there was a German who'd been there right through the war and he was quite part of the family; the most handsome blond German you could expect to see. He was called Hans; he stayed after the war, he didn't go back to Germany. They were very much at home, they were quite accepted, there was no ill feeling. They used to arrive on a lorry in the morning and they'd be picked up in the evening but I'm not sure where they went.

You could see across to the Swansea area from Llandeilo. I remember being taken out at night to see the sky. The sky was completely red and I was told that Swansea was being bombed. To this day I should be able to point exactly the direction of Swansea. It was quite dramatic.

To get to Carmarthen from Taffs Well must have taken several hours because the train stopped so often and they were completely jam packed with soldiers, either going on leave or going down to the West. So you always had to stand in the corridor all the way. When you got to Carmarthen there were only a couple of buses a day to Llandeilo so you stood around for ages.

I was very impressed by one of the bus drivers. He stopped on the way because his mother used to have a bowl of rice pudding ready

for him and everyone on the bus sat there quite happily while he ate his rice pudding, then on we'd go.

We had a holiday in Porthcawl during the war and to watch the Americans jitterbugging was the absolute peak. We used to sit in the balcony and watch them throw the local girls over their shoulders. They had amazing jitterbugging sessions, long legs and great uniforms. They used to give us all chewing gum. They were very kind in giving us chewing gum. They were stationed in the Seabank and the Esplanade Hotels. Shortly afterwards it was D-day and that's what they were waiting for. There were hundreds and hundreds of them.

There were lots of them in the Hospital in Rhydlafar, they used to walk down to Taffs Well because they were so bored. If you asked for any gum they'd stop and give us some.

We went on holiday to Tenby in 1945, it rained every single day and in those days we only had our school uniform to wear, we had no other clothes. I remember the men grouped around the radio waiting for the announcement of the end of the war, the Japanese surrender. That was the most important part of the holiday, the other most important part was going to the railway station because you could get a drink out of hours. That was the only place that had a license and you could buy cigarettes.

My mother played golf at Radyr Golf Club and after the war anybody who was able bodied was dragged along to pick up stones because it had been ploughed. I know that the thirteenth and fifteenth fairways were ploughed and you can still see the furrows in places.

The Schoolboy's Story

Bob Pearce was on the Isle of Wight at the beginning of the war and then moved to Hampshire

The Isle of Wight is between Southampton and Portsmouth and we used to get constant bombing raids. On a cloudy day they'd come in, drop a couple of bombs, and be gone again before the sirens went off.

I had a grandstand view as a child of one of the first daylight raids on Portsmouth. I was being dragged off by my father to have my hair cut. We got as far as the top of Union Street in Ryde, which looks across the water. The siren had gone but you didn't take a lot of notice because it was always going off. All of a sudden these dive bombers appeared and all hell was let loose. The navy ships in Portsmouth were firing; they made a tremendous noise. There was dive-bombing, puffs of smoke in the sky, planes going every which way. You could see the tracers and the fighters coming in to try and come down on the planes that were dive-bombing. Stukas, they made a tremendous noise when they went down. I think that they had a special noise-making contraption to make them sound fiercer than they were. The sky was full of planes and shells and bangs and crashes. For a child it was all very dramatic. I could have stayed there all day watching it but I was dragged off to the nearest air-raid shelter. It made a big impression; I can see it now.

We used to have a Blitz every night on Portsmouth or Southampton, one of the two, and they passed over us in the Isle of Wight. There were fixed batteries of guns going bang all the time. They also had mobile guns. These things used to go around and park here and there. Sometimes one would park outside the front gate and we didn't know it was there until all of a sudden there'd be a tremendous racket and everything shook and fell about.

Then we moved to Hampshire near Winchester at the end of 1941. It was much quieter up there. I was helping with the haymaking and went up to the field one summer's morning, dumped my bike and waited for the farmer to arrive. That's when I found all these leaflets which the Germans had dropped during the night. There were numbers of them about and everybody helped themselves. This was

following up on the Dieppe raid, which had been a bit of a disaster. The Germans were making the most of it for propaganda purposes. I don't think anybody took them very seriously!

Sometimes on a cloudy day an aircraft would come diving out of the clouds and drop a couple of bombs, machine gunning as they went. One of my school friends was coming home and had to dive into the hedge. All of a sudden this plane was coming along the road machine gunning as it came. My father found him and brought him home in a state of shock.

The days before D-day all along Southampton Water as far as Portsmouth, you could virtually walk across on the boats from one side to the other. There were landing craft and boats and barges of all descriptions. There was a little channel in the middle where boats came and went.

The night before D-day we were on a farm in Hampshire near Winchester and my aunt called me out onto the lawn. It was a dark night, there was no rain, it was quite clear but the sky was full of noise just pulsating, throbbing, you could almost feel it. There must have been hundreds and hundreds of planes going over. We realised that something was going to happen. Next day when they announced what was going on we realised what it was.

We used to go to school by train and about two days later the train was hours and hours late. It wasn't uncommon for it to be late but this was very, very late indeed. All of a sudden the first of a series of trains covered with red crosses, ambulance trains, went through taking the first of the casualties back from the D-day landings. It made a big impression on us as children. We thought that everything was fine, that we were beating the Germans. You realised then that it wasn't quite as easy as that.

In 1946 my school organised a trip, the first since the war, to Eindhoven, towards the south of Holland. We went by coach but every river we came to the bridges had all been bombed, we went across on Bailey bridges and pontoons. They organised various excursions for us, we went to Arnhem to see the airborne cemeteries, which made a big impression. Then we went down to Aachen in Germany. There was absolutely nothing to see, just a sea of rubble, the place was completely flattened. People were emerging out of the rubble and going about their business. There was one church tower

sticking up amid a couple of other buildings, it was like a great big scrap-yard, rubble everywhere. We'd seen bombing in Southampton, Plymouth and even bits of London but nothing compared with this complete devastation. It must have been the same in many other cities in Europe at the time.

The Nurse's Story

Mrs. Nina Thomas was born in the north of Scotland and at the outbreak of war she was a midwife at Guy's Hospital in London. She now lives in Dan-y-Bryn Avenue.

When war was declared in 1939 I was a qualified midwife at Guy's Hospital in London and for a few months I was accompanying medical students out "on district". Guy's district was parts of Southwark, Bermondsey, the Old Kent Road etc. The patients had been sent to the west country to have their babies in safety, but many returned "as they didn't like it there!" Most of those who returned had not prepared "blackout" which was absolutely essential everywhere. As husbands had probably been "called up" we had to hurriedly improvise something – probably a rug off the floor – before we could start our duties.

The midwives had been given Raleigh bicycles, the gift of a benefactor, and we also had to carry our tin hat, a large respirator as well as our bags – no mean task!

At night, husbands or a relative would accompany us to the house. One night, at about 2 a.m., I bumped into the husband, knocking him off his bicycle and there we were lying in the street with our paraphernalia scattered! Another night the wheel of my bicycle caught in the tramlines at the junction of Old Kent and Tower Bridge Road. I fell under a huge horse drawn dray, my bicycle was utterly crushed but I survived due to those wonderful horses, who refused to trample on me.

Guy's Hospital was the Centre for sector Ten, which included Orpington, Farnborough and Pembery. Casualty and limited outpatients remained at Guy's. The patients, after immediate treatment at Guy's, were sent by Green Line coaches to one of the "base" hospitals. Nurses from Guy's were sent to the base hospitals, which were former Poor Law Hospitals, and had to struggle with very basic accommodation for quite a long time, until huts were built.

In the spring of 1940, I went to Pembery as Guy's theatre sister, then as Guy's ward theatre night sister. It was a glorious summer – I

was off for the weekend and after a day walking in the country with a friend, very tired, I returned to the hospital at 8 p.m. to find a message asking me to go on duty immediately as convoys from Dunkirk were expected about 11 p.m. They came straight to us with only their field dressings. We had several operating tables going in the theatre all night. At that time all instruments had to be sterilized between cases and the dressings were sterilized in drums in the hospital.

Some of the injuries were extremely serious – one poor boy had lost both arms and legs, he did not survive very long; nor did some of the others who were very seriously wounded.

At one point there were four German airmen in the hospital. They had been captured after dropping by parachute into the neighbouring woods. They were in a separate room with their guards. They had lovely soft leather flying suits, unlike our men. They were very arrogant wishing to know where the nearest German encampment was, they had been brainwashed into thinking that the Germans had already invaded. After a few days they were taken elsewhere.

After that I went as night sister to the Hillingdon Country Club near Sevenoaks, Kent. The Club had been taken over by the Hollywood Branch of the "Bundles for Britain" as a gift to Guy's. The first set of American nurses were torpedoed on their way across the Atlantic, but fortunately rescued. Patients came to Hillingdon as they did to the other "base" hospitals from Guy's.

I was married in 1942. I was a member of St. Columba's Church of Scotland in Chelsea. The church had been bombed and only the vestry remained. We were married in the vestry at St. Columba's and then crossed to St. Saviour's Church of England, where our guests were waiting and were married again.

My mother had recently suffered a heart attack but my father came down from the north of Scotland. His train should have arrived at 7 a.m. but he arrived at 3.30 p.m. as there had been an attempt to bomb the train in the north of England. We had our reception at the Grovenor House, where we were allowed thirty guests; most London Hotels only allowed ten guests at this time.

We had coupons for clothes and my friends were very generous and gave me some of their coupons. My cake was made in the north of Scotland. We were fortunate we had farms around so that you could get the ingredients for cakes. It wasn't a big tiered wedding cake

or anything, it was nice with a bit of marzipan but no white icing.

My sister-in-law from Sheffield brought her cake which was an ordinary fruit cake with a white cardboard casing over it that looked like icing. That was the best that she could get in Sheffield.

We had a week's honeymoon in Torquay, after which I returned to Guy's, and my husband to the Army. Soon afterwards he went overseas for four years.

I returned to teach in the Nurse's Preliminary Training School which had been evacuated to the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Tunbridge Wells. From there in the evenings, you could see the bombers from Biggin Hill flying off to bomb the Continent and at dawn we would watch their, nearly always, depleted number returning.

Guy's Hospital was hit in all by (I think) eleven bombs and although there were some amazing escapes, no one was killed. The first hit was in 1941 during the hight of "The Great Fire". A bomb fell down the stairwell in the middle of the Medical Block. The stairs were completely destroyed but the wards on either side escaped. The patients were evacuated in the middle of the night in the blackout down the fire-escapes to the waiting Green Line Coaches. Quite a miracle!

I was back at Guy's when the flying bombs arrived. They sounded like juggernauts approaching but when they cut out one knew that they were about to fall. The V2's were different – there was no warning. By the time one heard the "swoosh" and the explosion it had passed.

It was quite amazing how trains and buses kept going throughout the war and the blackout. My sister who worked in the Foreign Office had a flat in Wimbledon. One evening I was returning to Guy's through a war-torn Waterloo Station. On leaving the tube at London Bridge Station, one had to walk around all the people settling down for the night to escape the bombing. All the deep underground stations were used as shelters.

People also had dugouts in their gardens and there were shelters all around and dugouts in the parks.

At the end of the war I was in the crowd outside the Houses of Parliament when victory in the east was announced – tremendous. We had booked, a long time in advance, to go to the ballet at Sadlers Wells and for that special performance all the ballet "stars" came on to perform.

The Bomb Maker's Story

Mrs. Sally Williams is from Northern Ireland. When the war broke out she was working in Liverpool at Littlewoods Pools. She now lives in Chapel Road Morganstown.

I worked in Littlewoods football pools. I was there for about two years. War was declared on a Sunday in September and when we went into work on the Monday morning we were told that our work had finished because there was no football on the following Saturday. Football had all stopped, so we were out of work. We cleared up for a couple of weeks then we were out of work.

I went back to Northern Ireland for a spell and I was unemployed while I was in Northern Ireland. I was sent to Birmingham to work in the Austin Motor Company at Longbridge. Not making cars, we were making shells, two pound shells they were. They were only made there, they weren't filled there. They had to go to the munitions factory for filling. There was no gunpowder on the premises.

Birmingham was like every other place, there were air raids in the night. In the morning when you'd get up you'd see the smoke. Places that had caught alight during the night. I didn't come across any trouble.

I had to walk down a dark country lane at night to get to the factory. It wasn't very nice, you just got on with it.

Then I moved here, to Morganstown, to Springfield Gardens with my in-laws, my husband's people. I worked in Treforest Trading Estate in the KLG factory; we made sparking plugs.

You could hear the sirens frequently in Birmingham, but it was very quiet here in Morganstown.

The Bomb Victim's Story

Mrs Peggy Isles is from Morganstown but at the outbreak of the war she was living in Caterham, Surrey with her husband and ten month old son. She now lives in Springfield Gardens.

I was up in Caterham, Surrey. I was married and living there and looking after my son who was just ten months old when war was declared. Caterham was not very nice, you had an awful lot of planes overhead all the time and they used to drop bombs. Where I lived was between the Guards Depot and the Kenley Aerodrome. They'd come over and bomb the Guards Depot and they'd drop their bombs on the way to Kenley Aerodrome.

Ten months into the war, I was bombed out. One bomb took the roof off our house but there was another bomb in the garden next door which didn't go off. We were evacuated from there. I went up to my sister, who lived the other end of Caterham. I sent my son home here to Morganstown, my mother came up and fetched him. My husband and I came down to Morganstown a week later after we got back into our house and put our furniture into storage.

It was fairly quiet around here. My husband worked on the railway and he joined the Home Guard, he'd been invalided out of the army. He didn't say much about the Home Guard, sometimes he'd stay out all night. There was always somebody out.

I went to work in Payntons, which was a bomb factory in Taffs Well. There were quite a lot of people working in it. They used to make cases for bombs, quite big ones, but they didn't used to fill them. They used to work twenty four hours a day there.

Some bombs fell in the field opposite here but fortunately nobody was hurt. Some bombs fell on Taffs Well, they fell on a house but nobody was hurt. You could hear Cardiff being bombed; we're only two or three miles away as the crow flies.

The Orphan's Story

Mrs. Althea Gough was living with her brother and grandmother in Roath, Cardiff when war broke out. She now lives in Park Road.

I was actually in church when war broke out and I walked all the way home to Talygarn Street. I was living with my grandmother at the time, my brother and I had been orphaned in 1938 when my mother had died. I sat my matric. a few weeks after my mother's death and passed it. By the time war broke out I was working as an invoice clerk at William Powell the wholesale grocers. They sold to all the little shops right down the south Wales coast and up into the valleys. We worked late on Friday night so that all these orders could go out first thing on Saturday morning.

I married in 1940, he had already a volunteered in the engineers and he went to France and was caught there and returned via Dunkirk. I hadn't heard of this dreadful tragedy and I was quite surprised when he phoned me in the office to say that he was home.

Before rationing came in we were given the chance of putting a small order in for ourselves, butter, tea, sugar and tins of corned beef; sensible things and not a lot because nobody could afford a lot.

The rations were tight, we celebrated on a Monday morning by having a buttered bun but after that the butter had to be scraped on to make it last as long as it could. Sugar was scarce. You could get an egg now and again to make pikelets or Welsh cakes. The fat was tight too. There was a tin of meat that came from America; it was a lovely tin of meat, the old Spam, but it was surrounded by fat so you could make a pie using the fat.

It was very difficult to get a joint but you did manage to get something to cook over the weekend and if you were lucky on Tuesday or Wednesday you might go to the butcher and get a little liver or offal and we stretched that way. Fish was still coming into Cardiff and there was a good fishmonger on Whitchurch Road where we got lovely cod and hake.

In 1941 a bomb dropped on Manor Street, it was at night of course and bombs seemed to be dropping all round but one dropped on

Manor Street. The women and children were in the shelter and were all right, but the men had stayed in one of the houses playing cards and fourteen died. Manor Street was at the back of Talygarn Street and the bomb fell a few houses up. All the windows in the back of our house were blown out. They filled the spaces with a thick hessian nailed to the window frames, it did its best to keep the draughts out but you couldn't see through it at all. All our ceilings also cracked but we had to wait until the end of the war to put them right.

When the bomb fell on Manor Street I was pregnant with my son and the health people suggested that I move down to where my husband was. He was on a bomber field, Nether Wallop near Andover in Hampshire. I went into rooms with some people, a Mr and Mrs Butcher. I didn't work after the boy was born, except casual work, I left when I was pregnant. The army wage for a Sapper's wife was twenty four shillings a week but he contributed another seven of his own pocket money. I used to present my army pay book at the Post Office. I didn't get evacuation money at first but people got to know about it and eventually I had eight shillings a week for being evacuated.

I had my baby in Anna Valley, Hampshire. If you wanted the district nurse, you sent a child on their way to school with a note. On the telegraph pole outside the Post Office was a box and the child would put the note in the box. The nurse would cycle along on her rounds and she would stop at the boxes at various places and take the notes out. That was how she knew where she had to call.

My husband was sent all over, the Shetland Isles, the Orkneys and eventually he was sent out East. He went on a long sea journey around the Cape of Good Hope and came back through north Africa, Sicily and eventually Italy. I didn't know where he was of course, not until he was in Sicily. He wrote something about an island and he gave a quote from the Bible, Romans something or other. I looked it up and it said, "and they set their faces towards Rome," and I knew then that he was in Italy.

The church had written to say that my grandmother needed looking after. Mrs. Butcher said you sit down and write that you will stay here until the baby's one.We had his first birthday party down there and the same week I came home to Cardiff. The windows still hadn't been repaired. I suppose they were done in 1946.

Because my husband was mature, he was twenty seven when he volunteered and being a married man, they sent him home quite quickly once the war had ended. He was home by the end of September 1945. I remember it because the boy started school that month. He went back to work and we lived together for a couple of months but it didn't work out after such a huge separation.

The Miner's Story

Ken Brown was working in a mine in the Dulais Valley, Neath, when war broke out. He went on to become Professor of Mining at Cardiff University and lives in Windsor Avenue, Radyr.

I was working in a mine at the age of sixteen having just left school. It was a mine owned by Messrs. Evans and Bevan, an anthracite drift mine in the Dulais Valley. I was working jointly on the surface and underground. It depended very much on what the management thought you could do and what they wanted you for. You couldn't get on the coal face until you'd had some experience and until there was room for you to work with another miner as an apprentice or trainee, call it what you will.

When war broke I registered, like all my friends at the age of eighteen, and volunteered for service in the Fleet Air Arm. I became a reservist because it was decided at that stage that coal was important to the war effort. You were a reservist on the condition that you were available for call up if they felt they needed you. So, for long periods, you never really knew where you were, indeed not until after the war was over. Everybody at my particular mine became a reservist.

We had no Bevin Boys* at the mine in which I worked as there was no shortage of regular miners. Coal was hewn and loaded by hand and the intention of the Bevin Boy scheme was to train them in more modern mining techniques. I met several Bevin Boys who had served in the mines and had long discussions with them. Their tales were quite interesting and quite varied. It really was a lottery. People who were called up were selected almost on a random basis for service in the mines or in the armed forces. If your name came up for selection as a Bevin Boy you were sent to a mine anywhere in the country without any experience of mining whatsoever in many, many cases. Some did extremely well, I know of a Bevin Boy who became a mine manager in south Wales.

Bevin Boys were an extra source of manpower although untrained manpower. Some of them took to it very well indeed and accepted the

fact that they were there in lieu of National Service on the front and had to pull their weight accordingly. Others seemed to resent the fact that they were working in mines and not part of the fighting forces. I met several who did resent that, especially if they had close friends, brothers or sisters who were in the forces.

Mining was always a three shift system. Unless there was an emergency or a real need, miners didn't work a lot of extra time. Try cutting and loading ten to fifteen tons of coal by hand every shift and you will appreciate the physical energy it takes. If it was needed I never knew a miner who didn't volunteer to work the extra time. We needed extra labour in the mines because we desperately needed more coal production, especially after Dunkirk. We lost so much equipment in France and factories were springing up everywhere at home and there was a desperate need for fuel. Mines were really working flat out to produce as much coal as they could get.

A lot of the miners were Communists. Dai Francis, the future south Wales miners leader, was very active in the Dulais Valley, at that time. When Hitler invaded Russia and Russia became an ally, Dai really preached the need for production "to aid our Comrades in Russia!" It was very effective propaganda. He didn't need to, miners are no fools and they could see that the country desperately needed the fuel and they were prepared to produce it.

The Mines Inspectorate in this country has always been a very efficient force and they made sure that no corners were cut where safety was in question in order to get the extra coal.

The canteens were very welcome during the war. There was no extra ration as such for miners but the canteens seemed to have a reasonably ample supply of cheese and Spam. Miners would have cheese and Spam sandwiches to take under ground or to eat in the canteen. It was understood that the sandwiches were for the consumption of the miners but some miners would eat some of them and take the rest home for their families. There was no free food. It was a cold service of tea and sandwiches. Very acceptable! I don't remember a canteen in the valley that produced hot food at that time, that came later.

*Bevin Boys were named after Ernest Bevin the wartime Minister of Labour. 10% of men who were "called up" were sent to work in the coal mines as opposed to the armed forces. Their work has been largely unrecognised.

Section 3

Evacuees

More than one million people were evacuated during World War Two, 200,000 of them to Wales.

The Evacuee's Story 1

David Suthers was living in Leeds with his mother and father at the beginning of the war. He now lives in Radyr.

I was eight at the time and we were evacuated three or four days before war broke out. We went from our school in Leeds about twenty miles by coach to a village called Burley in Wharfedale. I'm sure my mother knew several days before because they'd made me a leather haversack to take with me. I was told the night before that I was going. We didn't know where we were going nor did my mother. We were given two labels, one for our jacket and one for our coat. We were put on the coaches with our teachers and my mother didn't know where we were until two or three days after war was declared.

We, there were three evacuees, heard the speech about war breaking out with our evacuee mother and father in the café where we were living. We were very well looked after by our evacuee mother and father because they ran a café and there was a reasonable amount of food. We had the countryside to play in, which we weren't used to, being city children. It was a beautiful village, it still is, we went to the school every day but we were not made to feel very welcome. It wasn't too bad; at least I've got no bad memories.

I stayed in Wharfedale for four or five months and then it was felt that we'd be better off back home, back in our own schools. When we came back to Leeds the teaching had changed. All the teachers had gone to the war and they brought retired teachers back; who in hindsight were not very nice people and not very well tempered. Eventually I went to Leeds Grammar School where we had even older teachers.

My father was invalided out of the army through gas in the First World War, so he was an air-raid warden. It was particularly dark and people stayed in.

We had a large three storey terrace house made of stone and the Council put some girders in the cellar to make an air-raid shelter. We used to go down there when the sirens went, this worried my mother because whenever the sirens went my father wasn't with us, he was out checking the blackout curtains round about us.

One of the great memories I have was after Dunkirk. We lived in Victoria Road which is a very long road with trees on the other side. They brought all the Dunkirk soldiers straight back from Dover and lined them up on the other side of the road. The billeting officer from the Council made every house take two soldiers and they lived with us for nearly two years. They worked locally in Leeds. I don't really know where they worked but we did have munitions factories and big army bases in Leeds. I think they were doing some kind of clerical work; they might have been disabled because they didn't go back onto active service.

One of them became a great friend, he was a member of the Magic Circle and he was a bit of a magician. His mother and father were deaf and blind and they lived in Battersea in London. They were killed by a bomb. He went down to find there was nothing left, he was given three days leave to sort that out and when he came back he was very upset for quite a long time.

Rationing had quite an impact on our family because food was short and there didn't appear to be any extra food apart from the rations itself. Families had problems making ends meet. We were always short of tea in our house, so we swapped our cheese ration for extra tea with our charlady. She had a big family and needed cheese more than she needed tea. I've got no recollections of the black market. We had sweets up to the sweet ration. Obviously we didn't have any bananas or oranges and we couldn't remember bananas and oranges until the war finished.

In my home the wireless was very important, I don't remember many newspapers around but we listened to the radio all the time. The radio was the link for families such as us. I remember ITMA, we always listened to that, I also remember Lord Haw Haw. I had two or three spinster aunts and they always laughed but my mother never gave him much credence, he didn't have a negative impact on any part of my family.

In the summer holidays we had to go to Castleford which is about forty miles south of Leeds, to potato pick. It was organised by the Ministry of Food. We were all from our school, so school must have had a part to play. We had sandwiches at lunchtime brought out to us in the fields and breakfast and supper and early to bed. We lived in camps in what seemed like army huts at the time although I don't

remember much about it. We were allocated to farms; we weren't paid. We had quite a good time really.

The spinners used to go to and fro, up and down the rows and spin all the potatoes out onto the ground, then we had to pick them, which was a back-breaking job. If the tractor came around too quickly we used to put a potato in the exhaust pipe to stop it and they'd have to get down and find out what the trouble was. So we could have a bit of a rest.

We used to go to Chapel twice every Sunday, and when VE day came we had a special service. It's the only time that I can remember going from the Chapel to the chip shop.

We went to Scarborough on our holiday, I can't recollect going to the east coast during the war, presumably it was closed. We went on holiday just after the war. We stayed in a very big boarding house something like ten or twelve bedrooms, each family in the house had its own table. My mum used to go out and buy the food in the morning and give it to the landlady to cook for lunch and tea. We used our own ration books and provided our own sugar. The poor landlady had five or six meals to make per mealtime. The only thing that was provided, which the comics of the day used to talk about, was the use of the cruet, "sixpence a week".

Even when I went to do my national service in 1952 I had to hand in my ration book.

The Evacuees Story 2

Both Pat and Trevor Jones were evacuated from the Home Counties, but not in the way we normally think. They were both evacuated "privately". Trevor with his mother and sister to the Conway valley where they hired a cottage and later to the town of Conway. Pat was evacuated to Llanfairfechan on the north Wales coast, with a friend and the friend's mother. They now live in Brynhyfryd, Radyr.

Trevor.

I was ten at the time and I think it was a bit of an adventure. I'm saying we enjoyed it, my sister and I, but we were homesick we missed our toys and the things we had at home of course. Initially we were in Bettws y Coed, just outside the village, after a few months we moved from there to Trefriw and then onto Conway.

Conway was the first time I went to school in north Wales. I went to the primary school as a ten year old, a school called "the boys school" although it was mixed. The headmaster arranged for me to sit what was then called "the scholarship" in the London area, which was equivalent to the later 11+. I sat that in isolation and passed it and moved from the primary school to the grammar school in Llandudno which was a John Bright Grammar School.

I had no problem at school in north Wales, There were a number of English children who'd come down in similar circumstances. I recall that in the primary school in Conway we had a Welsh lesson. Us English were excused until I shot a paper pellet across the class room with an elastic band and after that I had to learn Welsh. I had no problem again at the grammar school. I suppose the north Wales coast is fairly cosmopolitan, they had a lot of visitors even during the war from Merseyside and Lancashire. I suppose I was there for about a year.

We went back to London (Surrey) at the end of the Blitz, but we still had air-raids, my father had dug a shelter below the floor of the garage, and we had bunk beds there, my sister and I. My mother and father sat on a bed which was made of a carpet actually, slung across between two planks. We used to go down there to sleep pretty well every night during the early part of the war; we didn't wait for the air-raid warning.

I remember the occasional air-raid and trooping down to the air raid shelter at school. Like every small boy we carried a little book of aircraft silhouettes so that we could spot aircraft, be they enemy or allied. One summer's evening, it must have been 1943, we were watching a thousand bomber raid moving off towards Germany. The sky was just filled for what seemed hours with Halifax and Lancaster bombers, hundreds and hundreds of them.

I remember that the trains ran on time. All my trips to school were by train, in north Wales, Surrey and south Wales

We stayed in Surrey, until the start of the V-bombs the V1 and the V2s. I had an uncle who was the general manager of a factory in Treforest living in Tonteg and he suggested that my mother, my sister and I move down to south Wales, which we did. My father was working in London, he had a job to do and he stayed at home. He came down to see us about every six weeks or so.

I transferred from the Grammar School in Woking in Surrey to the Grammar School in Pontypridd and sat what was then called the CWB (Central Welsh Board) which was the equivalent of school certificate in London. I didn't do particularly well. In south Wales it was done in four years as opposed to five years in the London area. I then went back after the attacks subsided and sat the general school certificate in Woking.

During school holidays in south Wales I used to work, it was unpaid mind, on the Williams' farm in Church Village. It wasn't very far from the house that we were renting. Mr. Williams used to do a milk round with a pony and trap, when his 1930's Austin 8 broke down, and I used to go with him. It was a case of two big churns on the back of the trap, measure the milk out and pour it into the customer's jug. The pony wasn't properly broken, you couldn't ride it, although we tried. He knew exactly where to stop, he stopped at every house, deliver the milk and off to the next one.

One of the jobs I used to do in the morning was to get up to the back of the farm and collect the horses. An awful lot of the work was done by horses, although they had a Fordson tractor. There were three possibles, two fairly hefty cart horses and one slightly lighter one. With one of the other lads we'd go up there with halters and halter the horses. Then we'd get onto their back and bring them back to the farm for the days work. I used to enjoy the haymaking and suchlike.

Pat.

I didn't like Llanfairfechan. I went there with a friend of the family and her little girl, who was about the same age as me. We didn't have very nice accommodation. We'd only been there a few weeks and my mother came and took us back to London and we stayed there for the rest of the war. So really my evacuation was quite short.

I wasn't a conventional evacuee. I certainly didn't stand on a station in London with a tag around my neck, with my name on and where I was going. I knew where I was going, it was done by word of mouth. This friend had a friend who lived in Llanfairfechan so we went there. I didn't like it, didn't like it at all. I was only five and I suppose I was away from the family, I had my brother with me but not my elder sister. We weren't treated all that well really, so we came back.

To a six or seven your old the Home Counties were very exciting I suppose, the war was going on. We had the shelter built in the garage and we were put to bed there every night. My mother did her best with what food we were allowed due to the rationing and that's how we survived. I went to the local school. I went to the local dancing school as well which I really took to.

Doing shows and things was difficult with costumes, we often had to make our costumes out of paper because material was in short supply. We managed, that's how we survived really.

We watched the planes come over every night and just thanked God that they didn't land on us. The V1s and V2s were the worst you'd wait for the engine to stop and wait for a few minutes for the bomb to come down. You'd think "that's somebody suffered but thank God it's not us."

I remember being in the shelter with the family, and a bomb coming very close to the house and all the windows coming out and the whole of the garage filling with dust and grit and everything, everyone choking and spluttering because we were finding it difficult to breath.

Then as the war finished we had this enormous street party we all improvised again and wore funny hats and had flags and all the rest of it.

The Schoolgirl's Story

Hazel Pinch was born in Taff Terrace and was living there with her mother and father when war broke out. Her father worked on the railway. She now lives in Lime Close, Radyr.

I was three and a bit when war broke out, I don't remember much until I was about four when the evacuees started coming. A lady and her daughter came to us, the daughter was about nine. The house next door in Taff Terrace had evacuees too. It depended on the number of rooms in the house. I was an only child then, so the front room was free, the evacuees had the front room. A lot of the evacuees where put in the big house on the main road, I think its called Heol Isaf House now. The house was packed with evacuees.

All the evacuees went to Radyr Primary School, like I did. The school was packed because I had to start school in the Church Rooms because of the crowd of evacuees. I started in the big room in the Church Rooms then we moved up to the main school. It was very old fashioned then, the toilets were up at the top of the yard. It was dreadful then when you think of what they've got now.

I don't think any teachers came down from London, they were all local people. The classrooms were packed. There were quite a few evacuees in Morganstown.

We had a communal shelter in Taff Terrace. When the sirens went everybody came out of their houses and went into the shelter. It was pitch black, no lights. Your windows had to be blacked out with a kind of curtain stuff and you drawing-pinned it all round. My father was one of the ARP wardens; he used to go out looking for light coming through. If there was a chink of light he'd knock on the door.

One night my father'd gone out and he knocked on one of the doors on the main road. He knocked on the door and he said "you've got a light showing". So the man said, "you're a fine one, come here and I'll show you something." he showed him our house, with a chink of light coming through our blackout. Of course my father wasn't very pleased.

Everybody remembers the rationing of course. Ice cream was a real treat. The word used to go around that there was ice cream in the shop. They were Lyons ice cream, little round ones, with a bit of paper round them. We used to go up with a basin and they'd give you so many. By the time you got back to the house there wasn't much ice cream left.

Bananas, you didn't see them. My brother, who was born during the war, didn't have an idea what a banana was. It was Wood's shop in the village then, they had a terrible time. They tried to give everybody fair shares.

I had a Mickey Mouse gas mask; it was a funny one for children. I hated it, horrible. They used to come around and show you how to put them on. We all had one and we had to take it to school in case there was an air raid when you were walking to school. The sirens would go and my mother had to come and fetch me. They could go at any time. When my brother was born he had a big gas mask, like a big box and you could put the baby right in it.

The German planes came up the River Taff and they were aiming for the Treforest Estate. I think that they camouflaged it all over with this green and it was never hit. You could hear the planes coming over and the doodlebugs. One fell in Rhydlafar by the hospital. The GI's took over Rhydlafar hospital. A lot of the older girls in the village used to meet these soldiers.

The Blitz eased a bit in London where our evacuees were from, they lived behind Selfridges in Oxford Street. They went back for a weekend to see her sister. That very weekend Cardiff was hit quite badly. My aunt and uncle and five daughters lived in Roath and the back of the house was taken right off. They were in an Andersen shelter in the garden so they were all safe. The next day, knock on the door and they all came up to my mother. So we were a full house when the lady and her daughter came back, so they had to be transferred to Heol Isaf House. She came around to see my mother quite a bit. I think she was fond of my mum.

Section 4

Everyday Life in Radyr and Morganstown

The Story of Ty Gwyn Farm

Mrs. Ethel Povey lived at Ty Gwyn Farm during the war. Her daughter Val Allen, took the following notes in 1998, two years before Mrs. Povey's death.

Although no bombs fell on the village quite a few fell on the surrounding farmland, at Goitre and Maes-y-Llech. I suppose the most famous was the one that fell on Rhydlafar bridge, which killed two young men. They had left their motorbike under the bridge and climbed onto the track to watch the bombing over Cardiff. Both of them were killed although there wasn't a scratch on the motor bike.

You had to get rid of your own rubbish; you either burned or buried it. The mounted Home Guard used to come around to check on lights and blackout curtains. They were mostly local farmers. The windows were taped to stop the glass splintering if there was a bomb blast. There was a pill box opposite the Westward Ho Garage on the Llantrisant Road. We always had to carry out gas mask and I.D. cards.

The law stated that all livestock had to live outside in case the building in which they were housed was hit by a bomb. Local farmers used to graze their animals on the Golf Course; Radyr Farm grazed their animals on the right side of the lane and Ty Gwyn on the left. Sports were stopped during the war years, all land was utilized for growing crops.

We used to have a sing song or play I-spy in the air raid shelter. Only ladies with young children were exempt from the war effort. All the others worked as nurses, land army, Wrens or in ammunition and bomb making factories.

There was a U.S. Army hospital and barracks at Rhydlafar. One night a U.S. Landrover got stuck in a ditch outside the house and my father managed to pull it out. The officer was so grateful that he asked my father what he would like. As sugar was rationed and my father had a sweet tooth he asked for sugar. The officer delivered a sack full, it was quickly hidden because we could have been summonsed by the police.

Caravans and tents were allowed on the land with some families staying in them every night. One family went home to Neville Street, Canton one morning to find their house bombed to the ground.

The army sent lorries to help haul the hay and Italian prisoners of war from the Barry camp used to come to work on the land.

The War Bride's Story

Olive Samuel married in September 1940. Olive was from Llandaff North but moved to live with her mother-in-law on Main Road, Morganstown. She now lives in Springfield Gardens.

Getting married in war time was the same, I would think, as getting married at any time. It was in a church, All Saints, in Llandaff North. It was a nice wedding ceremony, the flowers and everything were right. It was pretty hard to get everything for the wedding, we had to hire a hall and get food; beg, borrow and steal really.

My mum had had to borrow icing sugar from many friends, and gave it to a lovely lady, Mrs Church, who lived in Evansfield Road. She offered to make the cake and ice it. When she was icing the cake she found that some of the icing sugar was a greeny colour so we had a very pretty cake that was green and white.

Getting married was lovely and then we went off on honeymoon, on a bus, to Porthcawl; because that was the nearest place.

My husband Arthur, was an engineer in Founds Forge in Cardiff docks. He'd done his apprenticeship there. He was twenty eight then and he was there for quite a long while. Arthur had a motor bike and was a very good motor-cyclist. He was allotted the job of going down to Haverfordwest, without any road signs, with all different articles to do with the war effort.

Arthur had to get to the docks by half past seven in the morning, so he left quite early on his motor bike. There was no street lighting, and he only had a lamp with a narrow slit on the front. Going down through Radyr he hit a milk float without lights. He was left lying on the road and the post man found him unconscious. We never found out who the float belonged to although we had our suspicions. It was one of those things we could never take it to court. Arthur was unconscious in hospital for a month and when he came home he was paralysed and had to go to hospital practically every other day for a year until he recovered. You would have thought that he would have had some sort of light. Perhaps it was because the lighting on the

motor bike wasn't enough to pick it up. It was just one of those unfortunate accidents.

Arthur was in the Home Guard. He wouldn't tell me about it. All he said was that they were manning guns on the shore and I'm sure that it was in Sully, or down in that area. I don't know what they did nor if they ever shot anything. I've no idea.

Radyr and Morganstown went on almost as before, there was lots going on. The only time we had any problems was when the planes came over and people would rush to their shelters, under the table, under the stairs, wherever. As far as activities went we didn't stop anything, the tennis courts kept going and the table tennis; all these things kept going. The church kept active. I can't remember anything big happening to stop us doing anything.

The only problem we ever had was rationing, that was a real problem. There was a gentleman called Hedges and he worked on Bales (Gelynis) Farm. They grew absolutely beautiful tomatoes and cucumbers but you had to queue. You would go down and stand in a long queue sometimes back to the railway line. Those people who had allotments were all right, we didn't have one in those days and we had no garden in the house on Main Road. I was dependant on my father who had a big garden in Llandaff North and brought me stuff. He even brought his cheese and butter ration for my daughter Wendy, after she was born.

We used to have two ounces of cheese, two ounces of butter or margarine. Everything was in units of two ounces for each person, if you were two or three it would be more. The butcher from Tongwynlais would come around the houses, and if you were lucky you would have sausage. We weren't really hungry, we managed, boiling bones for instance to make soup. I remember when Duncan was tiny (Duncan is my second child, also born during the war) baked beans were very popular and you could get them and he nearly lived on them.

We also had to queue for bread, and oftentimes we had to go to Franklins in Cowbridge Road, walk from here down there and queue for bread.There was a little lady, Mrs. Ray, on the Main Road who had the Post Office and she had a bakery and made bread. But I remember walking to Canton for bread, perhaps it was only occasionally when we were really running out, bread was short.

Just after we were married the church where we were married was bombed to the ground. The other night I remember was when the planes came over and jettisoned their bombs. They were going after Rhydlafar Hospital where the Americans were. They started dropping the bombs on the way back. We were the last house on the Main Road, and all our ceilings came down. Luckily we were underneath the kitchen table which was very strong. Me, Gran and Wendy, it was before Duncan was born. Where Arthur was that night I don't know? He must have been on duty. We had it cleaned up, but we had to manage until after the war before we could get the ceilings put back up.

The Radyr Resident's Story

Mrs. Lorna Clarke lives in the same house on Heol Isaf as she did at the beginning of the war.

At the beginning of the war I was on my way home from Switzerland. We'd gone to Switzerland for a family holiday, my parents, my sister and her boyfriend, my brother and myself. We'd gone by train so we had quite a struggle to get home. We left Switzerland on the Saturday afternoon and managed to get into France, and came up to Paris. We were on the train when we got the announcement that war had actually been declared. We switched trains in Paris and got a boat from Boulogne to Folkestone.

In Paris I was aware of preparations for war. The station platforms were heaving with (French) soldiers and there was lots of weeping and wailing going on. Being young you don't seem to worry about that sort of thing, my mother and father were a bit anxious because they'd gone through the first war. I always remember the best omelette I ever had was outside the station in Paris.

We knew there was a war on because all the lifeboats were swung out, my poor mother got into rather a state. Anyway we landed and had to catch a train up to London because we'd left our car in London. Kenneth, my sister's boyfriend, was driving us home and of course we had to put tissue paper all over the headlights and the sidelights so we had a horrendous journey back from London at night. We didn't have any problems with petrol; I don't think that they started rationing petrol for six months or so.

We got back here and one of my other sisters had evacuated herself from Edinburgh and she was busy making blackout curtains. We arrived back on the Monday after war was declared. My boyfriend, Bill, had already been called up, because he was a T.A. officer and he was stationed in Llantrisant. He was a Royal Engineer. He was there for one or two months and then he was transferred to Monmouth. He was in Monmouth for the first winter of the war practising building bridges and all that sort of thing. I saw him quite a bit, we still had petrol. He had his little car in Monmouth and he used to pop down here, we were pretty laid-back at the beginning of the war.

For about six months before the war I'd been helping out at Mrs. Stanford's little private school up the road. I decided, when war was declared, that I should do something a little more useful so I went on a secretarial course. Eventually I got a job with the Great Western Railway in the docks and I was there for three or four years. I commuted from Radyr to the docks by train every day, it was quite an easy journey. Two nights a week we had to work until nine o'clock at night and it wasn't very nice having to walk up Bute Street to catch the train at Queen Street Station. There was a train down to the docks in the day time but I think that it must have stopped at six o'clock. The docks were very busy and hectic with lots going on. Our office was in West Bute Street, it was quite an impressive building. It's been converted into flats now.

I was on the goods side, it was a very busy office. We never knew what goods we carried or where they went but we did have a lot to do with the coal coming down. All I remember are the "bogey bolsters" and all the different kinds of trucks that we used.

I was never aware of the docks having been bombed when I got there in the morning, I don't think that the area around us got bombed very badly. Some of the houses in Bute Street were damaged, you just walked past them and thought "Oh well, that's just part of the war", we were very selfish.

Another two nights I used to work in the WVS canteens, one was outside the General Station and there was another one on one of the platforms. One night I was outside and the other I was on the platform serving soldiers passing through, chips, sausages, loads of sandwiches and tea.

I remember one group of the "Buffs" a Kentish regiment. Why they were coming through Cardiff I don't know. Of course we weren't allowed to ask questions.

I was caught up in the big raid on Cardiff when Llandaff Cathedral was bombed. I remember going from the canteen across to the station, absolutely oblivious to everything. I remember going up the steps onto the platform. I couldn't think what was happening, all these, what I thought were, fairy lights coming down. Then I realised that a raid had started. I rushed downstairs and I spent the whole of that night with a crowd of Canadian soldiers in the subway under the station. Loads of sandbags everywhere. Sandbags going up the steps

onto the platform and we sat behind them until the raid was over. Then I managed to get a train home at five o'clock in the morning. Mother was tearing her hair out.

Radyr was a busy sort of place and in fact it became a much friendlier place. If there was an air-raid warning in the night everyone would come out into the street and you'd start talking to your neighbours. We all did something, either air raid wardens or fire watchers. One of my sisters used to go up to the Church Rooms and spend the night there. The Church Rooms were the medical base, Walter Watkins was in charge there.

My elder sister, who lived along the road, had two evacuees, we had an evacuee here. She was a girl from Birmingham, I think she only stayed here about nine months. It must have been very lonely for them. Her parents came and took her home because nothing was happening. A lot of the evacuees decided to go home. We also had a cousin staying with us, her parents lived in London and Jean lived with us for a couple of years. She went to school in the Methodist Church, it was only the little original chapel then, they made that into a school for evacuees.

My father was an air-raid warden and my mother used to go knitting and sewing in the Church Rooms. Anything that used to happen in Radyr, happened in the Church Rooms.

The air raid wardens used to collect at Glyn Robert's house, which is number 46 Heol Isaf. Dad was well into his sixties by the time that war broke out. He was an accountant in Pontypridd and he used to travel up to Pontypridd by train every day. Mrs. Stanford was also an air raid warden. She was quite a character, a very good tennis player in her time. She always wore a blazer and sandals.

I was eighteen when war started and when you're eighteen things just seem to go over your head, you accept things. Rationing didn't seem to matter. Whether my mother scrimped and scraped so that we were well fed I don't know. We were very lucky in Radyr, we didn't suffer at all really. We didn't have any windows blown out we only had a nose-cap that came through the roof. We've still got it. We didn't realise it had happened until somebody went up to the top of the house and half the ceiling was down. After the war Guy was messing around in the roof space and found the nose cap. He reckons it's the nose cap from a friendly gun. That's the only damage we had.

The nearest bomb was on Maes Llech Farm and there was one near the railway bridge on the Llantrisant Road. Another of my brothers in law was sheltering under that bridge when the bombs were falling.

The social life in Radyr was quite good. The Golf Club was going strong, although there were only nine holes as they'd dug up the other nine as part of the "Dig for Victory" campaign. We used to have dances there in aid of the Red Cross. We also had dances at Dan y Bryn which was then a club, before it was taken over by the Meat Marketing Board to be used as offices.

Another big house, Ty Mynydd, was taken over by the Great Western Railway. I don't think that we actually ever had anybody working there but it was kept in case of invasion. In case of invasion or being blitzed out of our offices in the docks, we were to come up here to Ty Mynydd.

When I was working for the railway we were trained in coding and decoding messages. We had somebody teaching us. We didn't have code machines. It was interesting and I always hoped that I'd have to use it, but I didn't.

There were land-girls working at Radyr Farm and Maes Llech. Huw Templeton of Maes Llech was one of my brothers in law. Not only was he farming but he was also one of the mounted Home Guard that used to go around at night.

I kept in touch with Bill throughout the war, he used to write quite a lot. The post came in batches from the Far East and also from west Africa. He had two tours of duty in the Gold Coast. During one leave in 1943 we were married and spent out honeymoon in the Paddington Hotel! After our wedding he was sent to Burma where he rejoined the West African troops and eventually came home in 1946.

One of Dad's Army's Story

Hubert Jackson and his family came to Heol Isaf, Radyr in 1942 after a land mine destroyed their house in Roath. He joined the Radyr platoon of the Home Guard. He was a wholesale fruit and vegetable merchant and was one of a four man committee responsible for allocating cases of fresh fruit to all the retail shops in south Wales whenever the occasional cargo arrived from Spain, together with poultry from Eire and rabbits from Australia.

The civilian army, initially known as the Local Defence Volunteers, was formed in 1940. Uniform was a simple arm band and weapons, apart from a few pikes, were non-existent. The title was soon simplified to Home Guard, army uniforms were issued, officers appointed and .22 rifles distributed.

Radyr and Morganstown had its own Platoon, part of the 11th Battalion with headquarters in Whitchurch. Our local squad set up shop in the games room of Radyr Golf Club. Every night a guard of four men occupied this room, which was conveniently close to the bar.

We also had a mounted section, known as Henderson's Horse or Loveluck's Lancers, consisting of local farmers clad in First World War breeches, puttees, jackets and leather bandoliers. There was an outpost near the Lewis Arms in Pentyrch. Each night one of our mounted section was despatched, via Pantawel Lane, to find out from the solitary sentry there whether German parachutists had landed in the vicinity. I never discovered what action we would have taken if the report had been positive!

Initially we had no means of communication other than our horseback warriors but duly acquired Army telephones and some miles of cable. We collected hundreds of empty cotton reels to act as insulators and eventually linked up Radyr, Pentyrch, the Melingriffith Works and H.Q at Whitchurch.

At the final Victory Parade in Cardiff someone decided that the Radyr mounted section should lead, followed by the Radyr platoon. Unfortunately, the farm horses were not parade trained, much to the consternation of the soldiers marching behind them.

This appeared in Radyr Chain no 43, May 1986.

A Member of the Home Guard's Story

Peter Stuart was living in Radyr at the beginning of the war. He now lives in Windsor Road, Radyr.

September 3rd, 1939 saw the expected outbreak of war and I was away at school in Devon at the time. I joined the 4th Devon Home Guard and during the holidays, was seconded to the Radyr Home Guard. On leaving school, I joined the Radyr Home Guard.

The Radyr Home Guard, which was the 12th Glamorgan, had its guardroom in what became the bar of the Radyr Golf Club after the war. At that time, the unit was under the command of Lieutenant "Tich" Evans, with Sergeant Jefferies as his second-in-command. Both worked for Spillers, so in a way it was not unlike the B.B.C. series **Dad's Army.**

I was 17 years old at the time, as was another volunteer, Willie Smale, and as we were the youngest and considered to be the fittest we always had to carry out any demonstrations necessary, such as crawling on our bellies through soaking wet grass to demonstrate the value of dead ground.

When first formed, the Radyr Home Guard used to man a road block at the Westward Ho Garage (the garage just south of the junction with Llantrisant Road) but, as nothing of importance seemed to appear other than the early morning milk lorry, it was eventually decided to drop that particular operation. However, the guard room, which contained Mills grenades, pikes and .300 Ross rifles, plus a Blacker Bombard Spigot mortar, was manned every night and patrols were sent out during the night to make contact with the Pentyrch Home Guard at the railway bridge at Pantawel. That could be a lonely trip in the dark.

Radyr was somewhat unusual in that it also possessed a mounted section manned by local farmers such as Mr Loveluck, Mr Templeton and others. They used to gallop with gusto across the fields but always appeared to dismount to open the field gates in their path!

A parade was held every Sunday morning when manoeuvres, weapon training and other activities would be carried out. The Home Guard was as actively supported by Morganstown as by Radyr, if not

more so, and there were also 1914-18 veterans in our ranks, such as Teddy Wallace and Don Yorath. Also present just before I left to join the army were Ron Jermine and Hubert Jackson.

It was decided that Mr. Evans would lead us over the golf course one moonlit night to acquaint ourselves with the terrain but, on returning to the guard room, we found that Mr Evans was missing. We had to return to the golf course to find him, which we eventually did.

Another night a practice callout was arranged, unbeknown to us, so I threw on my uniform, grabbed my bicycle and rifle, allocated rifles having to be kept at home, and dashed to the Golf Club, where I was duly rebuked for not having brought my razor! I did, however, have my five rounds of ammunition.

The day eventually came when it was decided that we ought to try out our Blacker Bombard Spigot mortar, so we were taken to Caerphilly Mountain with the mortar and one bomb to fire. The mortar was an exceedingly heavy weapon to transport and as it had three heavy legs to be hammered into the ground it was also necessary to take along a sledge hammer for the purpose.

The crew needed to operate it numbered three or four and the most unenviable job fell to the person who had to load the bomb into the mortar, as it was necessary to lie on one's back under the barrel, lower the bomb into the barrel and then remove one's hand very quickly. This done, there was an almighty bang and in our case the Blacker Bombard leapt out of the ground and flew back about three or four feet, hitting the unlucky firer on his steel helmet. All we could see for our pains was a massive cloud of red dust in front but, when the firer removed his steel helmet, we saw that the impact had broken the screw holding together the inside of his steel helmet, which cascaded all over his face. The language he used was unrepeatable!

Sometimes we also used to visit the disused quarry in the side of the Lower Garth between Ynys Bridge and Pentyrch, which was used as a short range to fire our Ross .300 rifles. We had to be very careful with these as they had a straight action and, if the bolt was not rammed safely home, there was a danger of the bolt flying back and hitting you in the eye, with disastrous consequences.

We once held a weekend camp at St. Fagans, on the site of what is now St. Fagans Drive. In those days it was a sloping field on which

had been pitched tents for our use. One tent was allocated as the beer tent and while we were carrying out our exercises and manoeuvres Mr Evans ordered Mervyn Stephens, a tree feller from Morganstown and of massive strength and build, to guard our barrel of beer. Mervyn liked his beer and when we returned we found him in a very happy state indeed and all the beer gone! It was then a case of standing guard over Mervyn to protect him from the wrath of the rest of us.

The high spot of my time with the Home Guard was undoubtedly the combined exercise with the Civil Defence, Wardens, etc., held in 1942. The "Germans" in the shape of the Free Belgian Army, were supposed to have landed in the Swansea area and to be advancing down the Llantrisant Road to capture Cardiff! Our job was to stop them!

We took up concealed positions behind the hedge opposite the Westward Ho Garage and duly opened fire when the Belgians appeared. In the view of the umpires we knocked out one vehicle but the Belgians eventually managed to reach our position. Teddy Wallace had taken up what he thought was an excellent position in the garage but the Belgians hurled in about six thunder flashes, which exploded with tremendous force. Teddy reeled out of the garage, holding his head in his hands and engaged in some pretty close combat with the enemy, from which he had to be restrained with some difficulty.

Our despatch rider Paul Hatcher was deemed to have been killed by the enemy in the Golf Club lane just off Llantrisant Road. Instructions were that if one was considered killed one had to remain in that spot until released by the umpires. Paul duly lay in the hedge besides his machine for an hour and a half until he became thoroughly fed up, so he left a message in the hedge: "Bled to death, gone home!"

Mrs Stanford, who was a Warden, did not have a capital W on her helmet but felt that for this important exercise she should carry this form of identification. Being resourceful, she duly painted a large W in whitewash on her helmet. Later in the day it started to rain and I will never forget the sight of her face and hair streaked with whitewash.

Service with the Home Guard had its more serious moments. Whenever the raid sirens sounded it was our duty to put on steel

helmets and patrol the road beside our houses. I was doing this one night in Windsor Road when a German bomber was picked out by the cones of the searchlights. The German pilot promptly dived to escape and machine-gunned Heol Isaf from about the War memorial to Christ Church. Fortunately, there were no casualties but I wasted no time in hitting the ground!

In those days, Radyr possessed the largest railway marshalling yard west of Swindon but luckily it was never hit. The closest call was probably in January 1941, when the roof of Llandaff cathedral was destroyed. On that night the railway bridge at the bottom of Rhydlafar Hill on the Llantrisant Road was hit, resulting in the deaths of two men sheltering under the bridge. The remainder fell further along on the line near the American Hospital (Rhydlafar) and in the neighbouring woodland. Many incendiary bombs also fell in the fields between Pantawel railway bridge and Pentyrch, where they harmlessly burnt out.

My time in the Radyr and Morganstown Home Guard came to an end in March 1942, so I duly handed in my excess equipment at the Melingriffith Works, having walked along the ash path in the dark to do so. I then joined the army at Dering Lines, Brecon, but that is another story.

February 1993.

The Shopkeepers' Story

Miss Nell and Miss Marjorie Woods helped to keep their father's shop, R.C. Wood, in Station Road, Radyr. Nell had started in the family business in the late 1920's along with brothers Bill and Dick. When war broke out Bill went into he Air Force and Dick into the Army along with the shop assistants Ernest Blackmore and Donald Marchant and Mr. Woods and Nell were joined by Marjorie. It was extremely hard work and their memories of these years are not completely happy ones.

The major problem of the war years was, of course, the shortage of basic foodstuffs. Very soon after war started everyone was issued with a ration book (buff coloured for adults, green for young children). It was then necessary to register with your grocer and butcher, who would supply you with your weekly ration and mark off your book. Basic foods that were rationed were butter, margarine, cooking fats, cheese, bacon, tea, sugar and eggs (one each per person per month!). Also rationed were oranges, bananas, onions and sweets. Nearly everything was in short supply.

There was also a system of "points" for items that were not actually rationed but which were very scarce, such as tins of fruit, meat and sausages, jams and marmalades, and condensed milk. Everyone had so many "points" per month (A, B and C coupons) which could be exchanged for these rare treats. At the end of the month the grocer had to count up the coupons and send a return to the Food Ministry so as to obtain an authorisation to order more items from the wholesalers.

Some goods were scarce but not rationed; cigarettes, for example. These were often "under the counter" for regular customers only, who were then told to keep quiet about it! Home-grown produce was, of course, in good supply and no-one went hungry. A healthy diet was based on vegetables, especially potatoes, fruit, bread and porridge.

Woods Stores was on the telephone (Radyr 37) and many customers liked to phone in their weekly order. Deliveries were

undertaken by Nell in the van, making the best use of the weekly ration of two gallons of petrol. It made sense to free-wheel down the hill back to the shop's garage to save petrol! In her spare time, Nell also drove an ambulance for the W.V.S. and Marjorie did fire-watching.

Marjorie recalled the evacuees coming to Radyr. They were from inner London and enjoyed regular visits to the pub. Radyr was dry so they ventured forth to the Ty Nant Inn in Morganstown but, on returning to Radyr after a convivial evening, they were so worried about the drop down towards the Taff that they decided against going again.

When the war ended, things slowly returned to normal, although food rationing continued well into the 1950s. Bill and Dick returned from active service to help run the family business. Post-war shopping habits were initially very similar to pre-war, with a half day on Tuesday and no opening on Sunday.

Collected by Tony Middleton May 1993.

Nanette Ray's Story

I was very friendly with an evacuee called Patricia Armstrong. One day we went to Bale's farm for milk. On our way back, she had already crossed the stile but I was still on the farm side. Two trains were passing and one of them dragged Patricia down the line. I ran to get help but she was already dead. Later I had to give evidence at the inquest, which was held at Bethel Chapel. I often think of Patricia, she is buried in Radyr parish churchyard. She came to Morganstown to escape the bombing in London and was killed here.

Collected 1992.

The Firewatcher's Story

Mrs. Marian Bowden is the daughter of John Ray and she was born and brought up in Morganstown. Her memories were collected by the Radyr and Morganstown Local History Society.

I was working at Marshalls in Queens Street at the beginning of the war. The air raid warning went just as I was about to leave to catch my bus at the back of the New Theatre. We all trooped down to the air raid shelter in the basement until the all clear was given.

When I got to the New Theatre my bus had gone, so I decided to go on the Pontypridd bus and walk across the Iron Bridge. When we got to Maindy bridge the whole of Llandaff fields was lit up, it was the night that the cathedral was bombed.

I saw that I would be needed for war work, so rather than get put somewhere I didn't want to go I tried for a job at Danybryn in Radyr. There were 40 or 50 of us working at Danybryn, mostly girls, with men as the bosses. We used to have to firewatch at night, four of us at a time. There were two old steel beds there for us to sleep on. We should have been paid 18d a night for firewatching but I never remember being paid for it. At Danybryn we looked after the meat supplies, returns from slaughter houses, imports of corn beef, condemned meat etc.

One night I was going out courting, it was a bitterly cold night and my mother said she thought she'd go up the Church Rooms to see the evacuees arrive from London. I warned her not to have an evacuee but when I got home there were the tiniest little clothes you ever saw on the chair. My mother explained that these two sisters had been left with no one wanting them and she and Lotte Ray, who lived next door, had agreed to have one each. "I couldn't have left them there" she said. Two evacuees, the Rowe twins, became famous as table tennis champions.

I got married at the beginning of the war and there was an air raid as we waited to go on our honeymoon from Cardiff station. My husband was working at the Melin Griffith works at the time and

was moved to a steel works in Sheffield as part of the war effort. At first I lived with my mother-in-law but moved home to Morganstown when my husband moved to Sheffield. After a while I moved to Sheffield and found a job there.

Billy Samuel of Wern House won a DFM, when he returned home the village gave him a party at the Ty Nant. He was killed in the first air raid after his return, which was the 1,000 such bombing raid. Summer 1992.

Cover photograph:
Blenheim low level attack on Knapsack Power Station by "Jobson".
By kind permission of the National Archives.

Rear cover photograph:
A shell making factory at Treforest Industrial Estate.
By kind permission of the Pontypridd Museum.

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