



STONEY STANTON AT WAR 1939-1945

THE INTERWAR PERIOD AND THE PHONEY WAR

Inter War: Changing Borders

The end of the Great War saw the decline of 4 major empires. The Russian Empire collapsed in 1917 leading to the independence of Estonia, Finland, Latvia and Ukraine.

In 1919 the Treaty of Versailles and the Treaty of Saint-Germain-en-Laye brought an end to the German and Austro-Hungarian empires, as with the collapse of the Russian Empire many new nations gained independence including Czechoslovakia, Poland, Lithuania and Yugoslavia, to add to the humiliation Germany would also lose territory to Belgium, Denmark and France. These rapid changes in national borders caused many internal conflicts in these fledgling nations.

There would also be a major change in borders closer to home, in 1919 the Irish Republican Army rose up and after 2 years of bitter fighting the British Government signed the Anglo-Irish Treaty which implemented the partition of Ireland, creating the Irish Free State.

Inter War: Political Upheaval

The rise of Communism during the Russian Civil War was a real concern for the powerful and wealthy in the rest of Europe. The Soviet forces led by Vladimir Lenin had genuine ambitions to link his Bolshevik forces up with Communist revolutionaries in the West, particularly Germany and France. A war erupted between the Bolsheviks and Polish in 1919 with the Bolsheviks making it as far as the outskirts of Warsaw, although they were ultimately defeated.

From 1918 to 1919 there was open Communist Revolution in Germany, the revolution failed to take control of the Weimar Republic but it resulted in political polarisation. This polarisation was the perfect environment for the growth of the National Socialism movement. The Nazi's were an evolution of the nationalist anti-communist Freikorps militia's. Through the late 1920's and early 1930's the Nazi's would gain support and eventually Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany in 1933, the Nazi's would go on to re-occupy the Rhineland, in flagrant violation of the Versailles treaty, they would then annex Austria and the Sudetenland before the Invasion of Poland in 1939, causing the outbreak of WW2.

The Build-up To The Outbreak Of War

The British and French governments had been trying to avoid war by negotiating with the Nazi's for years prior to the outbreak of the Second World War. A policy of appeasement had been carried out for many years which allowed the Nazi's to make serious territorial gains without consequence from the Western Allies. This in turn emboldened the Nazi's to keep pushing for more and more territory that had been lost at the end of the 1st World War. After the annexation of the Sudetenland Germany turned its attention to Poland. The Nazi's managed to negotiate a treaty with the Soviet Union in which they agreed to divide Eastern Europe between themselves, Germany would get Western Poland, the Free City of Danzig and Lithuania whilst the Soviet Union would get Eastern Poland, Estonia, Finland, Latvia and the region of Bessarabia which belonged to Romania.

Negotiations continued unsuccessfully until the 1st of September 1939 when Nazi Germany invaded Poland. Even though Britain and France were allies of Poland neither declared war initially giving Germany one last chance to withdraw, the offer was ignored and war was declared on Nazi Germany by the Western Allies.

The Phoney War: A Myth?

The "Phoney war" was a phrase coined by an American journalist in France just after the outbreak of war due to the lack of action on the ground in France. Whilst it's true that the fighting between the Western Allies and Germany was not particularly heavy on the ground, the Royal Navy, Royal Air Force and their French counterparts were already involved in heavy action.

Within hours of the declaration of war the British liner SS Athenia, which was carrying refugees from Glasgow to Montreal was sunk by the German submarine U-30. This was the beginning of the crucial Battle of the Atlantic which would rage on for the rest of the war.

The Royal Navy would lose several military vessels in 1939 including the Aircraft Carrier HMS Courageous and the Battleship HMS Royal Oak. The Kriegsmarine would also lose eight submarines.

On the ground the Polish were fighting the Germans and Soviets, The Finnish were fighting the Soviet Red Army and the French Army probed into Germany during the Saar Offensive.

The RAF and Luftwaffe also began trading blows, with both sides bombing naval yards with varying degrees of success.



STONEY STANTON AT WAR 1939-1945

The 1939 Register

The 1939 Register is the only nationwide resource available to those researching national, local or family history for the decades between 1921 and 1951.

This is for various reasons; the census returns are kept under the 100 year rule and therefore the next census to be released will be the 1921 census, due for release in 2021. The 1931 census was destroyed in a fire during World War 2 and there was no census taken in 1941 because of World War 2.

The 1939 Register was taken on September 29th 1939 and was used by the government for several reasons. Identity cards were made and later ration cards in January of 1940. It was also used to administer conscription, direct labour and to control the movement of the

population at large, caused by military mobilization and mass evacuation whenever and wherever required.

Women who married long after 1939 had their married names added to the register as it was used until 1952 whilst National Registration was still in force. The register was also utilized as a resource when the National Health Service was formed; from 1948 the N.H.S continued to update records until paper records were finally discontinued in 1991.

The 100 year rule applies to this resource and some records are still closed due to this rule.

| Name | Surname | War Work | Address | Additional info |
|-----------|-------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| John | Middleton | Special Constable | 85, Hinckley Road | |
| Norman | Stevens | Auxiliary Fire Service | 75, Hinckley Road | |
| Albert | Hunt | Special Constable | 67, Hinckley Road | |
| William | Haywood | Auxiliary Fire Service | New Road | |
| Frank | Stevens | Auxiliary Fire Service | New Road | |
| Joseph | Clarke | A.R.P warden | 26, Long Street | siren duty |
| George | Vernon | Special Constable | The Bungalow, Long Street | |
| Leonard | Walker | Auxiliary Fire Service | Highfield Street | |
| Tom | Hill | A.R.P warden | Highfield Street | first aid St. Johns |
| Walter | Kirkland | A.R.P warden | Highfield Street | at factory |
| Fred | Corns | Auxiliary Fire Service | 13, Highfields Street | Stoney Stanton |
| Reg | Chapman | Auxiliary Fire Service | Highfields farm | Stoney Stanton |
| Claud | Emuss | A.R.P warden | 36, Huncote Road | L.C.C |
| John | Middleton | Special Constable | 32, Huncote Road | |
| Alfred | Corns | A.R.P warden | 6, James Street | Hinckley Police D? |
| Harry | Lucas | A.R.P warden | 8, James Street | first aid |
| George | Timms | St. Johns Ambulance | 12, James Street | |
| Horatio | Neale | decontamination for works | 4, James Street | Empire Stone, Narborough |
| Joseph | Fairgrieve | works ambulance | 19, Huncote Road | |
| David | McKail | voluntary nightwatchman | 27, Huncote Road | 2 nights per week |
| Evelyn | Simpson | A.R.P warden | 29, Huncote Road | |
| Davis | Webb Harris | A.R.P warden | 39, Huncote Road | |
| Willie | Newbold | A.R.P warden | 43, Huncote Road | part time |
| John | Pye | Training for first aid | Stanton House? | +ARP? + Homeguard? |
| Alfred | Rowley | Auxiliary Fire Service | 1, Elmhurst Rd | Blaby Rural District Council |
| George | Hill | National Pigeon Service | 10, Elmhurst Rd | |
| Francis | Hunt | Auxiliary Fire Service | 16, Elmhurst Rd | Blaby Rural District Council |
| Raymond | Worth | special constable | 122, Hinckley Road | |
| Frederick | Pearce | R.A.F reserve | 116, Hinckley Road | No 119348 |
| James | Chesterton | A.R.P warden | 96, Hinckley Road | Blaby Rural District Council |
| William | Walker | Auxiliary Fire Service | 94, Hinckley Road | |
| Nun | Walker | A.R.P warden | 92, Hinckley Road | |
| David | Simpson | Special Constable | 86, Hinckley Road | |
| Elsie | Baum | ARP service | 82, Hinckley Road | |
| Margery | Baum | ARP service | 82, Hinckley Road | |
| William | Peters | group organiser | 68, Hinckley Road | |
| Thomas | Watts | A.R.P warden | 62, Hinckley Road | Blaby Rural District Council |
| Ernest | Trawford | A.R.P warden | 12, Hinckley Road | Blaby Rural District Council |
| James | Bennett | volunteer watchman 2 nights a week | Broughton Road | at factory |
| Walter | Ellis | volunteer watchman 2 nights a week | Broughton Road | at factory |
| Clarence | Briggs | A.R.P warden | Ashleigh, Broughton Rd | Blaby Rural District Council |
| George | Webb | voluntary watchman 1 night per week | 10, Sapcote Road | |
| Frederick | Jones | Special Constable | 14, Sapcote Road | L.C.C |
| Arthur | Grocock | certified by L.C.C for A.R.P I? | Walkers Farm | |
| Frances | Middleton | Emergency Midwifery Service | 34, Sapcote Road | Central Midwifery Board |
| Samuel | Hilditch | A.R.P warden | | Blaby Rural District Council |
| James | Underwood | A.R.P warden | Spring Gardens | Stoney Stanton |

STONEY STANTON AT WAR 1939-1945

EVACUEES AND SCHOOL AWARDS

Evacuees

The British government had a real fear of the aerial bombing and gas attacks of cities due to the known capabilities at the close of World War I and the recent attack on the civilian population of Guernica, Spain.

On April 26th 1937, the Luftwaffe and Italian air force, at the behest of General Franco, obliterated the town. There are disputed casualty figures but around 1,650 is often quoted.

It was said to be an experiment to test the Nazi theory of 'Blitzkrieg' or 'terror bombing.' The idea of which was to target a civilian population in order to break any ideas of resistance, which would therefore hasten the defeat of an enemy.

With this in mind, Operation Pied Piper was planned. There were several periods of mass evacuation. The first, showing how very real the government took the threat, was September 1st 1939, before war had even been declared on Germany.

Over the following three days, 1.5 million vulnerable citizens; children, pregnant mothers, disabled and elderly were evacuated.

According to the school admissions book, Stoney Stanton received its first evacuee on September 7th 1939; Alma Dalton, 8 years old from Fosehill school in Coventry.

The 1939 Register states the address on Carey Hill Road where she was staying was the home of Mrs Evelyn Smith. Alma only appeared to stay for a short time, returning to Coventry only 15 days later on September 22nd 1939.

On October 17th 1939, Celia Brewster aged 10, was registered as an evacuee, staying on Huncote Road with Joseph and Elsie Norton. Celia came from Wykin school in Coventry, although Celia stayed a little longer, she returned home to Coventry just before Christmas, on 21st December 1939.

The 1939 School Awards

On the evening of Wednesday 12th July 1939, the 2nd Annual Stoney Stanton School Awards were presented in the Working Men's Club Hall.

Mr Oldham, headmaster of Hinckley Grammar School was presenting.

Mr Pye was headmaster of the village school at the time and other staff members listed on the programme were; Miss J Tansey, Miss V Gardner and a supply teacher Mr West.

Looking at the first two awards presented, some eyebrows will be raised but they were of their time.

Elocution was obviously not a priority in Stoney Stanton at that time!

Stoney Stanton C. E. School

2nd. Annual Presentation of Awards

F. Oldham Esq. M.A., B.Sc., A. Inst. P.

Head-master Hinckley Grammar School

Wednesday 12th., July at 7-30 p.m.

at the Working Mens' Club Hall

(By East Promont)

BOARD OF MANAGERS

Chairman - THE REV. J. W. HURFORD
 J. ATTLEBOROUGH, A. FARDON,
 C. C. HOWE, A. LANE & W. MIDDLETON

STAFF

Headmaster - J. H. PYE, Esq., A.C.P., M.B.E., F.R.S., M.I.P.S.H.
 Assistants - MISS J. E. TANSEY,
 MISS V. GARDNER,
 MR. H. G. WEST (Supply)

LIST OF AWARDS

Presented by - DEAN WOOTTON
 Awarded by - ARTHUR BURROWS
 Religious Knowledge - DEAN WOOTTON
 Nature Study - DEAN FARMER
 General Knowledge - PAUL MIDDLETON
 Art - JUNE BARTON & DONALD DUNN
 Elocution - FRANK BROWN

CASE PRIZES

(1) DEAN FARMER (2) DONNA CHAPMAN
 (3) DEAN KNIGHT (4) DONNA CHAPMAN
 (5) DONNA CHAPMAN (6) DONNA CHAPMAN

Awards of Commendation & Special End of House Prizes

Read from & to, by Charles - CHARLES SHEFFIELD
 1st Y. Commendation - I. FARMER, P. BROWN, I. CLARKE,
 I. CORNWALL, E. FISHER, E. MIDDLETON, A. BURNING,
 J. THOMPSON, A. BURNING, A. LANE, A. GREEN, G. BALL
 2nd Y. Commendation - R. KNIGHT, H. TAYLOR, E. MIDDLETON,
 R. BURNING, M. HALL, J. WOOTTON, H. HILL

House Prizes

Orators - YELLOWS House - BLUE
 Scholars - BLUE Poets - YELLOW & GREENS
 Verse Read - BLUE & GREEN

Opening Hymn

Lord, behold us with Thy blessing,
 Once again assembled here;
 Ourselves to our brethren praying,
 In Thy love and truth and peace.
 Thy presence we
 By Thy presence ever near.

For Thy mercy we thank Thee,
 For Thy love and truth and peace;
 Lord, again we bow before Thee,
 Thy love and truth and peace;
 Thy love and truth and peace;
 With Thy blessing ever near.

Let Thy blessing be with us,
 All who here shall meet to pray;
 May Thy love and truth and peace
 Be with us all, Thy love and truth and peace.

School Song

(Written by J. H. PYE)
 (Music by J. H. PYE)

Here's a song for all, for they share it all
 Sing together and sing to love,
 With a love song, all the colors sing,
 For the school is the heart of the colors.

Then (Repeat) (Repeat) for (Repeat) (Repeat)
 And the love of our changing world,
 With love, love, love, in a golden ring,
 And a love song, all the colors sing,
 And the school is the heart of the colors.

Though all things must come to an end,
 Our hearts are still singing on;
 For we give love, love, love, love,
 For the school that shall live for ever.

WE BEAT 'EM BE

STONEY STANTON AT WAR 1939-1945

THE MEMORIAL WINDOW THAT NEVER WAS

The Reverend Anthony Denny Disney was from Tralee, County Kerry, Ireland. He arrived as rector of St. Michael's in 1885 aged 26. He married Katherine Watson, daughter of the rector of St Helen's church Sharnford and they had four daughters, Norah, Eleanor, Stella and Evelyn.

The family as a whole were very popular in the village and the Rev. Disney was always busy with his parish work and joined many committees. After the Great War he was awarded the MBE for his work. In 1910, after 25 years as rector, parishioners raised the money for the south porch in his honour.

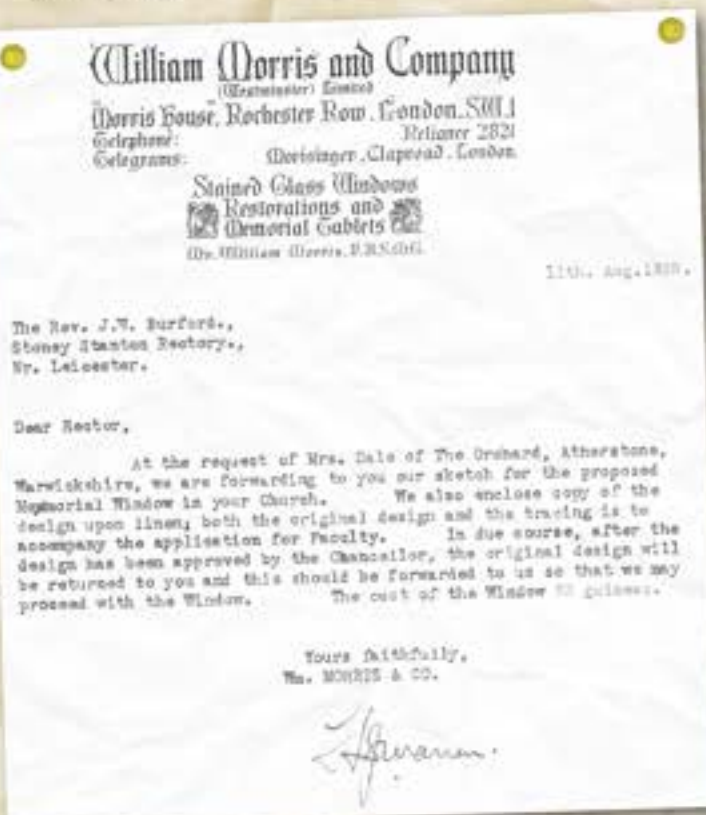
In 1923, after suffering a serious illness Reverend Disney decided retirement was the right course of action. During 38 years service, he had joined more than 350 couples in wedlock and Christened over 1,300 babies. He retired with his wife to Newbury, Hampshire.

After his death in 1936 aged 77, his daughters decided a memorial to mark his time in the parish of Stoney Stanton was appropriate. The family decided on a stained glass window. Letters from one of his daughters Norah Sale (nee Disney) survived, along with the sketch drawing for the planned memorial window.

They had approached various firms for the job; Jones & Willis, James Powell and sons and the Warham Guild but William Morris & Co were preferred.

The sisters also decided not to ask for donations from the parishioners as they were aware of the Spire fund and other causes. They decided to raise the money within the family with the addition of a few friends.

Sadly, a letter from William Morris and Co dated 11th August 1939 is the final mention in St. Michael's archives of the 'window that never was.'



Alas, due to the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, the window was never completed. A smaller marble memorial can be found in the quire of the church.





STONEY STANTON AT WAR 1939-1945

WAR IN THE WEST PART I

War In The West: Denmark & Norway

The first theatre of war in the west was in fact Scandinavia, the Germans had decided that they needed to invade Denmark and Norway in 1939. This was to counter allied plans to station troops in Norway as well as help prevent the mining of the North and Baltic Seas, prevent the supply of iron ore and other materials from Sweden being interrupted by the Allies and to provide a safe staging area for U-boat operations.

On the 16th of February a major incident occurred known as the Altmark Incident, the Royal Navy trapped and boarded the German oil tanker in neutral Norwegian waters. The Altmark was transporting British POW's picked up by the German cruiser Graf Spee in the South Atlantic to Germany. The Norwegians had boarded the Altmark at the request of the Royal Navy but had not thoroughly checked for POW's which the Altmark claimed to have no knowledge of. Because of this the Royal Navy took matters into its own hands and boarded the ship and took it by force, killing 8 Germans and wounding another 10 in the process, 300 British POW's were rescued but the inaction of the Norwegians to prevent an act of aggression by the British against the Germans infuriated Hitler who decided to intensify preparations for the invasion of Norway and Denmark.



HMS Cossack returning the 300 British POW's rescued from the Altmark. The rescue was a major propaganda victory for the government and the Royal Navy

The German invasion of Denmark and Norway under the name of Operation Weserubung began on the 3rd of April. The German navy launched covert supply ships ahead of the main invasion force which was scheduled to land on the 9th. On the 8th one of these covert ships was discovered and sunk by the Polish submarine Orzel, German personnel in uniform were pulled from the water but the gravity of the situation was not understood by the Royal Navy or the Norwegians.

On the 9th the main phase of Operation Weserubung commenced with German forces performing a swift assault on key Danish positions, most of these attacks were unopposed. The Danish army was not prepared or realistically equipped to repulse the invasion, the Danish King Christian X decided the best cause of action was to capitulate rather than resist preventing civilian casualties.

The Germans invasion of Denmark lasted less than 6 hours in total making it the shortest campaign of the war.



Danish soldiers pictured just before the German invasion, some of the men pictured would be some of the few Danish Soldiers killed during the 6 hour conflict.

At the same time the Germans were beginning their invasion of Norway, it started with disaster for the Germans. The German cruiser Blucher was carrying troops up the Oslofjord to capture Oslo and the Norwegian royal family, however it was spotted and destroyed by an ageing coastal fortress in the fjord. After being hit by torpedoes and shells from the fortress the Blucher sank with the loss of 850 killed and wounded and 1000 captured.

This also allowed the Norwegian royal family to escape to Britain with the Norwegian gold reserves. However Oslo and several other southern and eastern Norwegian population centres fell soon after. The Allies sent forces to help defend Norway, particularly around Narvik, and the Royal Navy caused heavy damage to the German Navy during 2 engagements at Narvik, sinking most of the German Navies destroyers. Narvik would also be the first time the Germans suffered a major land based tactical defeat at the hands of Norwegian general Carl Gustav Fleischer leading a combined force of Norwegian, British, French and Polish troops. The allies position in Norway became untenable after the German invasion of the low countries in May and sealing the fate of Norway. By June 9th all of Norway was in German control, however many Norwegian troops were evacuated to Britain and would fight on for the rest of the war.



British, French, Norwegian and Polish soldiers gathered around a French tank near Narvik. The defence of Norway was truly a multinational effort.

War In The West: France & the Low Countries

The first months of 1940 saw the stalemate known as the "phoney war" continue, however by May that was all going to change with the German operation Fall Gelb (Case Yellow). The plan called for the majority of German forces to attack through the lightly defended Ardennes forest against weaker French divisions whilst a smaller German force attacked through the Low Countries to bait the western allies into sending the majority of their forces into Belgium.

The Allied defence of France and the Low Countries was almost doomed to fail from the beginning, both the British and French militaries suffered from critical deficiencies. The BEF (British Expeditionary Force) suffered from chronic underinvestment since the end of the First World War, because of this they lacked quality equipment in key areas such as armour with only the small quantity of brand new Matilda II tank being of any significant value.



A Matilda I tank, an example of the inadequate Tanks the BEF had to fight the German Army's Panzers, The Matilda I only had a machine gun so was helpless if engaged by enemy Armour.

These issues paled into insignificance compared to what the French army had to deal with, France had lacked direction due to political instability caused by the rise of revolutionary politics in the wake of the carnage of WWI. The French were also hampered by their general staff being comprised of WWI veterans who mostly believed another world war would be fought in the fashion of the First World War, they mostly refused to listen to younger officers who had newer ideas and often had a mistrust of newer technology. This is summed up in the French defensive strategy of focusing around the Maginot Line of defences and using the Low Countries as buffer states, believing that the Germans would attack similarly to the First World War.

When the Germans attacked in the early hours of the 10th of May they achieved a high level of surprise, Luxembourg fell almost unopposed, the Luftwaffe managed to achieve early air superiority over both Belgium and the Netherlands with most of the Belgian and Dutch air forces aircraft destroyed on the ground. German paratroopers managed to secure strategically important areas in Belgium but were largely unsuccessful in the Netherlands with casualties reaching almost 50%.

The Dutch army was mostly still intact by the 14th but the Luftwaffe bombing and destruction of Rotterdam caused the Dutch government to surrender to the Germans on the evening of the 14th, the Allies sent the bulk of their forces into Belgium and managed to halt the German advance for a short time. However the main German advance through the Ardennes had begun and even with the brave resistance of Belgian and French troops in the area the Germans had reached the river Meuse by the 12th.



German Panzer's lined up ready to advance, pictured are captured Czech 38T tanks as well as the modern and advanced Panzer IV tanks that outclassed most of their allied counterparts.

At this point allied co-ordination almost completely broke down, this was caused by the French leaderships morale almost completely disintegrating and their refusal to use radio communication due to fear of messages being intercepted. This meant that by the time messages arrived the Germans had often already advanced and the orders were meaningless. Both the French Army and BEF now had to retreat from Belgium for fear of being encircled, they managed to achieve local victories but because of poor co-ordination couldn't capitalise on any advantage. The Germans were now advancing at a rate that even they struggled to believe, by the 17th the main German advance had reached the English Channel, successfully cutting off the majority of British, French and Belgian forces. At this stage British high command realised the situation was hopeless and decided evacuation was the best way forwards and began the Dunkirk evacuations (Operation Dynamo) to get as many Allied personnel out of the encirclement and back to Britain.



German troops inspecting abandoned French Somua S35 tanks, many French troops mistakenly abandoned and even destroyed their own vehicles after receiving false reports of being imminently overrun.

STONEY STANTON AT WAR 1939-1945

WAR IN THE WEST PART 2



War In The West: Dunkirk Evacuations

On the 26th May 1940 the Dunkirk Evacuations (Operation Dynamo) began, the initial plan was to evacuate 45,000 men over 2 days from the harbour at Dunkirk, the allies believed that after 2 days the Germans would have overran the defensive perimeter around Dunkirk and that the remaining troops would be captured.



Soldiers of the BEF waiting to be evacuated on the beach at Dunkirk.

On the first day the allies only had about 35 ships available, they managed to evacuate 7,669 men despite the Luftwaffe launching the first in a series of concerted efforts to annihilate the troops trying to evacuate from Dunkirk, the RAF was immediately assigned with protecting the evacuations, the 16 RAF squadrons involved engaged around 300 Luftwaffe bombers and 550 fighters on the 27th alone, the Luftwaffe bombers that got through dropped over 45,000 bombs which destroyed much of the town and the harbour. The biggest issue for the Navy was that they could only dock their destroyers and cruisers in the harbour and later on the east and west mole's, with this in mind the government put out an appeal for any help and also requisitioned many ships from the Thames, in all about 400 small civilian ships were used which could sail straight up to the beaches and ferry troops to the bigger ships waiting in the harbour, this massively sped up evacuation efforts.



An allied destroyer packed with hundreds of allied troops, this would have been a regular sight in Dover over the period of the evacuations.

The first of these "little ships" arrived on the 28th, whilst this was good news for the Navy the Army was desperately trying to plug the gap in the defensive perimeter left by the Belgian Army who had surrendered the same day.

By the end of the 28th a further 17,800 men had managed to escape, on the 29th another 47,310 men were evacuated but naval losses were starting to mount including several destroyers and steamers. By the 30th most BEF forces were behind the defensive perimeter and heading for the beaches, another 53,823 men were saved including the first French troops. 68,014 men including Lord Gort, the commander of the BEF were evacuated on the 31st. The 1st of June saw another 64,429 allied soldiers evacuated, however the Luftwaffe was about to step up its air attacks meaning that all day time evacuations had to cease, it would also be the day that Anthony Hugh Manwaring, the grandson of Reverend Disney, would be killed in action aboard the HMS Mosquito which was hit by bombs and machine gun fire from several Stuka dive bombers, he was mentioned in dispatches for his actions that day. Over the nights of the 2nd to the 4th 75,000 French and 4,000 British troops were evacuated before the evacuations ended.



Soldiers of the BEF firing their rifles at Luftwaffe aircraft.

In total 338,226 soldiers were evacuated from Dunkirk, vastly more than initial estimates thought would be possible, in total 861 allied ships of all sizes took part in the evacuation with 243 being lost. The operation would not have been possible without the immense sacrifice of both the RAF who lost 145 aircraft defending the beaches and the French Army who fought countless defensive actions to buy time for the troops being evacuated, there were 40,000 French troops still in the defensive perimeter when they surrendered as well as 35,000 French troops who had held up 160,000 German troops at Lille for 3 days before running out of ammunition.



French soldiers preparing defensive positions around Lille, the sacrifice of French soldiers allowed almost the entire BEF as well as thousands of French and Belgian troops to escape.

War In The West: The Battle of Britain and The Blitz

After the fall of France and the Low Countries Britain was left as the last free nation directly opposing Nazi Germany and Italy, on the 10th of July 1940 the Battle of Britain began, The Luftwaffe needed to secure air superiority for the German invasion of Britain (Operation Sea Lion) to go ahead, it was also thought that if the Luftwaffe could defeat the RAF the British government may sue for peace, allowing the Germans to fully concentrate their efforts on the upcoming invasion of the Soviet Union.



A flight of Spitfires, the Battle of Britain cemented the Spitfire as a British icon.

The RAF was in a precarious position; it had lost a lot of its experienced pilots in operations over France and it wasn't able to give new pilots the amount of flying hours it would have liked before having to send them to operational squadrons, however the RAF did have a secret weapon, all along the south and east coast were brand new radar installations, these would give the RAF early warning of incoming enemy aircraft and allow them to pick their fights.



British soldiers posing with a downed BF-109.

Whilst Britain was the last free nation in Europe standing against Germany that didn't mean others didn't answer the call to fight, 20% of RAF pilots during the Battle of Britain came from outside Britain including 145 Poles, 127 New Zealanders, 112 Canadians, 88 Czechoslovakians, 31 Australians, 28 Belgians, 25 South Africans, 13 Frenchmen, 10 Irishmen, 9 Americans and 3 Rhodesians. These foreign pilots were key to victory during the Battle of Britain, for instance 303 Squadron which was made up of Polish pilots achieved the highest kill to loss ratio of any RAF squadron during the Battle of Britain. Some of these also risked their future lives in their homelands by coming to fight, Americans could be imprisoned and have their

Citizenship revoked by fighting for foreign nations under the neutrality act whilst Irish citizens risked being shunned for life back at home, members of the Irish armed forces who deserted to join the British armed forces during the war were even denied their state pensions on returning and were banned from working for the state for years after the war finished.

During the opening weeks of the Battle of Britain the Luftwaffe experienced many successes targeting RAF airbases, the RAF was under significant strain and was struggling to replace lost pilots and aircraft, however the Luftwaffe suddenly changed targets from airfields to industrial areas after thinking that the RAF were beaten, this period would become known as the Blitz, giving the RAF time to regain its strength. By early September the Luftwaffe was becoming stretched thin trying to attack cities and the RAF, at this stage they were also struggling to replace the pilots they were losing and the ones they still had were generally suffering from combat fatigue.



Firemen fighting a fire in London during the early days of the Blitz.

By the end of the Battle of Britain the RAF had lost 1,542 killed and 1,744 aircraft destroyed, the Luftwaffe had lost 2,585 killed and 1,977 aircraft destroyed. The Blitz would continue until 1941 and would see many cities devastated including Coventry which was bombed heavily on the evening of the 14th of November 1940, as a result many evacuees would leave Coventry and end up in the surrounding countryside including Stoney Stanton which received several families. By the end of the Blitz some 40,000 civilians had died with another 140,000 injured.



The remains of Coventry cathedral, the remains have been left standing as a memorial to the Coventry Blitz.

STONEY STANTON AT WAR 1939-1945

CIVIL DEFENCE UNITS



Air Raid Precautions Wardens.

Air Raid Precautions Wardens, or the A.R.P was a nationally organised but locally delivered scheme. It was established in response to the concern that any future war would involve heavy aerial bombing. Also, after the horror of gas attacks in the trenches of World War 1, that aerial gas attacks too could be used as a strategy against a civilian population.



An ARP Warden wearing his helmet and gas mask, ARP Wardens were issued better quality gas masks than the regular populace.

The A.R.P was established in April of 1937 and by the middle of 1938, there were 200,000 involved. There was yet another increase as a result of the Munich Crisis of September 1938. At the outbreak of war in September 1939, there were 1.5 million members of the A.R.P or Civil Defence as it was later renamed.

A.R.P posts were initially the wardens own home or a nearby shop or office, later, purpose built structures were built. In a built up area, it was recommended that there be 10 wardens per square mile. Due to the so called 'Phony War' from 1939 to May 1940, with the lack of aerial bombardment, wardens were required to register everyone in their area and to enforce the 'blackout'. This meant ensuring no light was visible outside for the enemy to use in order to locate bombing targets.

When bombing did eventually begin, the warden's job was a high risk one. They were expected to escort people to shelters and check their sector.

After an air-raid they would often be the first on scene, helping with first aid and fire fighting if required. They also needed to report on bomb damage and often coordinate with other Civil Defence units. At the outset, wardens would have worn their own clothes with the addition of a steel helmet and wellington or work boots, with an arm band. By 1941, a blue serge uniform was supplied to full time or regular part time wardens. One in six wardens were women and many of the male wardens were veterans of World War 1.

Special Constables.

There were 130,000 Special Constables in Britain in World War 2. Stoney Stanton had at least seven Special Constables; although there may well have been more. Due to the lack of archive material other than the 1939 Register, it is hard to be sure.

Their ranks were supplemented by retired officers recalled to service, with 7,000 being full-time paid officers and the rest part-time and voluntary. Working their usual job and then assuming police duties afterwards. Whichever they were, they all had at their disposal the full powers of a policeman.

Their uniform was the same as a regular constable, other than the epaulettes, which had the initials WRC standing for War Reserve Constable, they also wore steel 'Brodie' helmets rather than the regulation police helmet.



A brodie helmet as worn by Special Constables, painted in Police markings and colours.



A Stirrup Pump like the type issued to ARP Wardens to aid in fighting fires.



An ARP Wardens Rattle, these were used in addition to sirens to warn of incoming bombing raids.

The Auxiliary Fire Service.

This service was formed in 1938, as part of the emerging civil defence of Britain, in order to support the regular fire brigade. Many worked part time, going on-duty every 4th night. The name was changed to National Fire Service in 1941. Sadly, there don't seem to be any archives relating to the A.F.S or N.F.S. We do, however have a photograph taken in 1940 and some names from the 1939 Register for Stoney Stanton.



Stoney Stanton Auxiliary Fire Service in 1940.

Back Row L-R: Norman Stevens, Francis Hunt, Fred Corns, Albert Corns, Alf Rowley, Jack Everton

Middle Row L-R: Len Walker, Bob Walker, Bill Haywood, Reg Chapman, Harry Briggs, Frank Stevens

Front Row L-R: Eric Clarke, Len Simpson, Jack Robertson

Home Guard or Local Defence Volunteers.

The Home Guard operated between 1940 and 1944 with 1.5 million volunteers. They ranged from the age of 17-65; although the upper age limit was not always regulated!

The force comprised of those either too young or too old for service, those in a reserved occupation or men deemed unfit for service in the regular forces.

Their primary role was to act as a secondary line of defence should an invasion occur by Germany or other Axis powers. They were to slow down or otherwise impede the enemy, allowing regular forces the time to act. They also defended factory sites and key communication points against capture by enemy forces or fifth columnists. Keeping communication routes clear in order to allow the regular forces to engage the invaders. Stoney Stanton came under the umbrella of the Market Bosworth Battalion who's headquarters were at the Drill Hall in Hinckley, Stoney Stanton's contribution to the Home Guard was part of A5 Platoon alongside Sapcote, Sharnford and Potters Marston under the command of a G.W.H. Moore.



Men of the Stoney Stanton and Sapcote home guard pictured early in the war.

There is no mention of any members of the Home Guard in the Stoney Stanton 1939 Register. So any information on men of the village who were known to have been a part of the Civil Defence service would be gratefully received.



STONEY STANTON AT WAR 1939-1945

THE CIVIL DEFENCE FORCES

Civil Defence Forces - Special Constables

Frederick Jones was born on July 4th 1883 in Croft, but by the age of 8, he and his family were living in Stoney Stanton.

In 1891, Frederick lived with his family on Highfield Street, his father William was 35 and like so many, a quarry worker. Alice was 33, John at 12 was working as a stocking knitter, Robert 10 and Frederick 8 were both schoolboys, Samuel was just a year old.

The family still lived on Highfield Street in 1901, by now John was a quarry foreman; John 22 was an engine guard in the quarry as was his brother Robert, now 20. Frederick was 17 and a quarry man, Samuel 11, Annie 6 and Alice just 3. A decade later in 1911, the family lived at 22, Mountsorrel Cottages, Frederick was 27 and still a quarry man, Annie was 16 and Alice 13.

On August 4th 1913 Frederick Jones married Agnes Mary White, daughter of David White, a village shoe maker. The couple would have at least one child, a daughter Margaret, baptised on April 30th 1922.

Frederick Jones decided to join up at the age of 32 on December 11th 1915 in Hinckley. He joined the Royal Garrison Artillery, Anti Aircraft Reserve; Frederick was mobilized on June 1st 1916. He served until being demobbed on June 17th 1919, when he returned to Stoney Stanton and continued to work as a quarryman.

He and his wife had a daughter Margaret in 1922.

By 1939, when the country called for volunteers to create a new Civil Defence Force, Frederick answered. He joined as a Special Constable.

The job was voluntary and part time, fitted in around his work in the quarries. He would have undertaken the normal duties of a policeman and new ones like looking out for black market goods and those who sold them.

If Frederick had owned a car, he might have been given a small petrol allowance because his car would have become an official police vehicle whilst he was on duty. A small white card with the word Police was also issued to put inside the car to show it was on official police business.

Frederick died in 1950, aged 67 years old and was buried in Stoney Stanton cemetery.

Other Special Constables in Stoney Stanton during World War II were; John Middleton, Albert Hunt, George Vernon, John Middleton, Raymond Worth and David Simpson.

Civil Defence Forces - ARP wardens

Clarence Samuel Briggs lived at Ashleigh, Broughton Road. According to the 1939 Register, he was an ARP warden. This was as well as his full time job as a hosiery factory manager.

Clarence was born in 1896 and was the son of Samuel and Mary, in 1901 the family, including sister Annie, lived on Sapcote Road in the house called Oakleigh.

By 1911, Clarence was 14 and had become A clerk at a local hosiery factory, rather than follow his father into the quarries.

At some point during World War 1, Clarence decided to join up. According to his medal card, he was in the Leicestershire Regiment and the Royal Sussex Regiment.

He survived the war and returned to his job in the hosiery trade. In 1922, Clarence married Ivy Amelia Gurney in Broughton Astley, the couple had one daughter, Mabel Cynthia.

Clarence must have worked hard as by 1939 he was recorded as being a factory manager, no mean feat for the son of a quarryman.

As and ARP warden, his duties were many, to see a full and original copy of the Air Raid Precaution Warden's handbook dated 1938, see the link as follows

<https://brownhillsbob.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/air-raid-handbook.pdf>

Clarence lived in Stoney Stanton for his whole life, and died at Ashleigh on March 3rd 1977 aged 81.

Other ARP wardens in Stoney Stanton during World War II were; James Underwood, Samuel Hilditch, Thomas Watts, Ernest Trawford, Elsie and Marjory Baum, Nun Walker, Willie Newbold, Davis Webb-Harris, Evelyn Simpson, Harry Lucas, Alfred Corns, Claude Emuss, Walter Kirkland, Tom Hill and Joseph Clarke.



ARP recruitment poster, these would have been distributed by local authorities.

Civil Defence Forces - Auxiliary Fire Service

The Auxiliary Fire Service was the third of the civil defence services, Reg Chapman was one of those firemen; he was born in Stoney Stanton on April 28th 1905, the son of William and Emma Chapman of Coronation Cottages.

His older brother Billy Chapman and uncle Frederick Chapman had both died serving in World War I.

In 1911, the Reg was 5 years old and living with 7 brothers and sisters; Linda, Harry, Billy, Annie, Julia, Avis and Myra. His father was a sett maker but by the time Reg began working he'd chosen a job within the hosiery trade.



Reg Chapman pictured in his Auxiliary Fire Service Uniform.

Reg married Emily Padbury in April 1928 the couple had 1 daughter, Norma.

In 1939, Reg and Emily were living on Huncote Road, Reg was recorded as a hosiery machinist and a member of the Auxiliary Fire Service, his nephew can remember that as well as duties here in Stoney Stanton, he and probably others had also served in the fire service in London. This was probably because he owned a motorbike and could therefore travel.

Reg died at a relatively young age of 66 on September 2nd 1971.

Other Auxiliary Fire Men were Frank Stevens, Len Walker, Fred Corns, Alfred Rowley, Frank Hunt and William Walker.



Civil Defence Forces - National Pigeon Service

This was one of the lesser known services during the war. George Hill was a member of the National Pigeon Service, and was already registered by September 29th 1939 when the 1939 Register or census was taken. The service was established in February of 1939. It was split into 7 military areas; western, eastern, southern, south eastern, Scottish, northern and Northern Ireland. To qualify, a member must have a minimum of 20 trained homing pigeons in their loft and meet the standards set by the committee.

The first operation was in November 1939, in all 200,000 pigeons were operational throughout the war, in both military and civilian services. Every reconnaissance and bomber aircraft carried 2 homing pigeons on board, in special water tight baskets. This was because below 5,000 ft any radio or distress transmissions could not be guaranteed to get through. If required, the location of the aircraft could be written on a piece of paper and put in a canister attached to the bird's leg. When the bird returned home to its loft, an urgent telegram could be sent to the Air Ministry.

The average speed of a pigeon in flight is 50 mph, with a range of around 300 miles. They were impossible to shoot down by ground troops and so the only weapon the Germans could use to help were birds of prey. In all 32 pigeons were awarded the Dickin Medal during World War II and there are 3 memorials to the service these birds gave during the war at Beach House, Worthing, Park Lane, London and Eastriggs, Scotland.



George Hill pictured in his Home Guard Uniform during the war.

George Hill, was born in Stoney Stanton and lived here all his life. He was born in 1910 and his family were living on Broughton Lane in 1911, his father Tom was a coal merchant. In 1939, George was married to Hilda and they were living at number 10 Elmesthorpe Lane. George was employed as a diesel crane driver, a member of the National Pigeon Service and a member of Stoney Stanton Home Guard.

He became a prominent member of the community serving on the parish council for many years, being co-author of a book on the history of the village with Norman Stevens and helping raise the money and establishing a trust to buy the ground which became the War Memorial Playing Fields. This park is dedicated to those who gave their lives in order that we can enjoy our many freedoms today.

STONEY STANTON AT WAR 1939-1945

2020 REMEMBRANCE DISPLAY



Nursing and Midwifery

In the build up and preparations for war in 1939, the government needed a strategy to ensure there were resources to care for war casualties as well as cover existing medical demand.

The establishment of the Emergency Medical Service and within it, the Emergency Maternity Service was the result. Maternity homes, hospitals and large properties in rural areas were commandeered to create a network of emergency maternity hospitals and later, hostels. Women in their final four weeks of pregnancy were strongly advised to evacuate from high-risk cities to temporary accommodation near to these hospitals and await the arrival of their baby.



Nurses arrive at the front, many of these were pre war professional nurses.

On September 2, 1939, more than 12,000 pregnant women left their city homes to wait out the final weeks of their pregnancy in the countryside. With 75% of midwives from hospitals in London being transferred to work with casualties of war, there was a severe shortage of maternity care. Most women at the time would have delivered at home; this became much more difficult due to the lack of midwives.

In Stoney Stanton, there was Frances Middleton, (nee Williams). On the 1939 Register she and her husband Thomas lived at 34, Sapcote Road, Stoney Stanton. Frances was registered as an emergency midwife with the Emergency Midwifery Service.

Frances was first registered as a midwife in 1919 after gaining her qualifications from Leeds Infirmary between 1915-1918.

Frances was originally from Holyhead in Anglesey, Wales. She lived with her widowed mother, Mary Ann and a younger sister Margaret Ellen.

Frances married Thomas King Middleton in Holyhead in October 1925 and the couple had a son, Thomas P Middleton in 1929.

Frances was registered on the Midwives Roll and Nursing Register in Stoney Stanton throughout the war years, indeed from 1928 until at least 1959.

Frances lived a long life; she died in 1994 at the grand old age of 100.



Emergency Medical Service recruitment poster looking for nurses and midwives.



Emergency Medical Service recruitment poster looking for new ambulance drivers, there were shortages of medical professionals in all fields due to many being recruited into the Royal Army Medical Corps.

Anthony Hugh Manwaring 1917-1940

Anthony Hugh Manwaring was born in Stoney Stanton on August 28th 1917.

He was the first child of Evelyn and Hugh Manwaring and grandson of Reverend Anthony Edward Denny Disney and his wife Katherine Gertrude Disney. Evelyn was the second of four daughters born to the rector and his wife.

In the 1911 census Evelyn is 19 and single, still living at home with all of her sisters. An image of her aged around 16 in 1908, shows her as part of a ladies cricket team in Stoney Stanton. Her older sister Morah is also in the picture holding the cricket bat.



The reverend Disney stood outside St. Michaels church in Stoney Stanton in the early 1900's.



Evelyn Disney pictured with her older sister in a Stoney Stanton womens cricket team in 1903.

Evelyn married Hugh Manwaring on November 28th 1916, with Anthony's arrival the following August, 1917.

A sister for Anthony arrived in 1921, called Diana. Later on April 1st 1921 the three of them left the rectory and boarded the ship 'Malwa', bound for Colombo, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). Anthony was 3 and Diana just 3 months old.



The liner SS Malwa on which Evelyn, Anthony and Diana left England for Ceylon aboard.

Anthony's father Hugh was a foreign exchange banker, possibly with the Eastern Bank which established premises in Ceylon in around 1920. On November 23rd 1923, the three returned, disembarking from the ship 'Oxfordshire', their destination, the Rectory, Stoney Stanton.

The next documentary evidence of Anthony is in 1937, when he arrives aged 20 as a Naval Officer at Plymouth from Colombo, Ceylon. Whether he had been visiting family or had been living there isn't known but he did return to the family home in Newbury, Berkshire.



The HMS Sussex (L) and HMS Forrester (R), ships Anthony served on before the Mosquito

His first ship in the Royal Navy was HMS Enterprise, an Emerald class light cruiser, he served as on her as a Midshipman. He was then transferred to HMS Forrester, an F class destroyer and promoted to Sub-Lieutenant, after that he was transferred to HMS Sussex, a County Class heavy cruiser where he achieved the rank of Lieutenant. He was mentioned in dispatches on the 1st of January 1940 for actions against the enemy. His final transfer was to the river gunboat HMS Mosquito on its maiden voyage.



The river gun boat HMS Mosquito that Anthony served upon.

On the 28th of May 1940 the Mosquito set sail for Dunkirk, as a river gun boat the Mosquito could get much closer to the beaches to pick up men. For the next few days the Mosquito would make the treacherous trip back and forth from Dover to Dunkirk and back until on the 1st of June 1940 the Mosquito's luck ran out, at midday while taking on Belgian troops the Mosquito was struck by a bomb dropped by a Stuka dive bomber. Several crew members including Anthony were killed instantly, the crew abandoned the Mosquito as it was beyond repair and sinking quickly, the survivors were picked up by other ships and returned to the UK. For the second time in the war Anthony Hugh Manwaring was mentioned in dispatches, this time for services in the withdrawal of troops from Dunkirk.

On the anniversary of his death in 1941, a small notice was placed in the newspaper, His sister Diana married Major Ian Joseph Steel on July 9th 1947 in St. John's church, Calcutta.

Anthony is buried in the military section of Ramsgate Cemetery and is remembered on a plaque inside St. Michaels church.



STONEY STANTON AT WAR 1939-1945

RATIONING DURING THE WAR

Why Was Rationing Needed?

In 1939 the United Kingdom was heavily dependant on imports for food and other materials, on average 20,000,000 tonnes of food was imported every year including around two thirds of sugar and cheese, over three quarters of fruit, and two thirds of cereal. Britain also imported over half its meat requirements and was heavily reliant on imports of feed to support its own production. Nazi Germany had identified Britain's reliance on imports and devised a strategy that if war came the Kriegsmarine and Luftwaffe would attack shipping to try to starve Britain's population into submission.

The Scale Of The Task

In the first months of the war the Germans sunk millions of tonnes of shipping, this meant certain food supplies dried up. In response, the British Government set up the Ministry of Food in April 1940 and appointed Lord Walton to the post of Minister for Food. Walton had the task of not only making sure all 50 million people didn't starve, but also making sure that the populace were as fit and healthy as possible. There was also the added responsibility of educating the populace on cooking with the restrictions of rationing, to do this the Ministry Of Food produced many posters, books and films.



Cheese became rationed in 1941, a weekly ration for an adult was 50g (2oz)



Margarine was also rationed in 1940, a weekly ration for an adult was a 100g (4oz) week



Sweets and Chocolate were rationed in 1942, a monthly ration for an adult was 350g (12oz)



Eggs were rationed in 1941, a weekly ration for an adult was 1 fresh egg



Tea began to be rationed in 1940, a weekly ration for an adult was 50g (2oz)



Lard was also rationed in 1940, a weekly ration for an adult was 57g (2oz)



Butter began to be rationed in 1940, a weekly ration for an adult was 50g (2oz)



Dried eggs appeared as a substitute for the lack of fresh eggs, an adult was entitled to 1 packet per month



Ham and Bacon were rationed in 1940, a weekly ration for an adult was 100g (4oz)



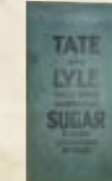
Preserves were also rationed in 1941, a two monthly ration for an adult was 450g (1lb)



A weekly Milk ration for an adult could be as low as 1200ml (2 Pints)



Meat was rationed in 1940, a weekly ration for an adult was to the value of 1s.2d (1 Shilling and Sixpence), the equivalent of 6p today



Sugar was one of the first food stuffs to be rationed, a weekly ration for an adult was 225g (8oz)

How Was Rationing Implemented?

The Ministry of Food used the 1939 register to issue out ration books, once citizens had their ration cards they then had to register with a local shop who would supply their rations, the details of that shop were stamped in the book so as to stop people going to other outlets. Each book contained coupons which had to be signed or collected by shop keepers to prevent people getting more than their allocation. There were 3 types of ration books, buff, which was the standard book issued to most adults. Green books were issued to pregnant women, nursing mothers and children under 5, green books allowed first choice of fruit, a daily pint of milk and double supply of eggs. Finally there were blue books, which were issued to children between 5 and 16, these allowed a daily ration of fruit, meat and milk. Outside of rationing people were encouraged to grow their own vegetables and fruit, keep animals like chickens and if you lived in the countryside you were allowed to hunt wild animals such as rabbits and pheasants without it counting against your ration.

How Successful Was Rationing?

The population of Great Britain really bought in to rationing during the war, one of the major factors that helped with that attitude was the fact that the elite of the country visibly took part too, even the Royal Family had rationing books. That said there was some contempt from the population of cities towards wealthy restaurants and the people who lived in the countryside, who had easier access to non rationed food. There was also a black market, especially in food and fuel, however it was far less prevalent than in other countries who had rationing policies. Rationing in the UK during WW2 is widely considered to be one of the greatest examples civil management ever. The Ministry of Food managed to make sure nobody went dangerously without during the whole war, in fact during the period of rationing it is widely thought that the population of Britain became more healthy due to a lowered consumption of sugar and meat, a higher consumption of fresh organic fruit and vegetables and less reliance on canned preserved food.



STONEY STANTON AT WAR 1939-1945

THE WORLD AT WAR

War In The Desert: The Tug Of War

The beginning of 1941 was a mixed bag for the Allies, the Germans had invaded Yugoslavia achieving victory in less than 2 weeks, removing the pro-allied government from power. Dividing Yugoslavia up into ethnic regions and installing puppet governments in Croatia and Serbia.

However the Italians were having far less success, an invasion of Allied aligned Greece had been disastrous, the Greeks had even managed to counter attack into Italian occupied Albania. The Italians were also struggling in North Africa with the British Army sweeping through Italian Libya, capturing over 100,000 Italian soldiers in the process. This caused the Germans to intervene in both Greece and North Africa in aid of their Axis allies. The Germans invaded Greece through Bulgaria opening a second front, within a month Greece had fallen. In North Africa the German Afrika Korps (DAK) landed in Tripoli under the command of Erwin Rommel, the Germans achieved success almost immediately winning battles at El Agheila and Mersa el Brega, within a fortnight the British were back on the border between Libya and Egypt with the strategic port of Tobruk inside Libya the last allied holdout. At least one man from Stoney Stanton, John Mansfield Stevens was wounded and evacuated from Tobruk on the last hospital ship to leave before the Afrika Korps completed their encirclement.

Tobruk would prove a thorn in the Afrika Korps side for 8 months, the garrison consisted mainly of Australians although there were also British, Czech, Indian and



Allied soldiers in foxholes around Tobruk.

Polish troops. Their dogged defence deprived the Afrika Korps of a port close to the Egyptian border, meaning supplies had to be driven for hundreds of miles across the Libyan desert; this in turn prevented the Axis from advancing beyond the Libyan Egyptian border. In the late spring of 1941 the Allies would try to counter attack into Libya to relieve Tobruk, the first offensive named Brevity ended in stalemate. Around a month later Operation Battleaxe would end in near disaster with the Allies nearly being encircled by the Afrika Korps.

In November 1941 the Allies launched Operation Crusader, the third and final offensive aimed at relieving the defenders of Tobruk, although it got off to a rocky start Crusader achieved its goal and by the end of November Tobruk was back within Allied lines.

War in the Mediterranean: Britannia Rules The Waves

The Axis knew that if they could destroy or capture one or more of Malta, Alexandria or Gibraltar the Royal Navy would be vastly less effective in the Mediterranean. Whilst the Italian Army and Afrika Korps had the ultimate goal of seizing the oil fields of Arabia the port of Alexandria and the Suez canal were important secondary objectives, on the other hand the Italian Navy (Regia Marina), Airforce (Regia Aeronautica) and Luftwaffe decided to put pressure on Malta due to its ability to host Royal Navy vessels and RAF fighters which could attack Axis supply shipping heading for North Africa.

As with the land campaign in North Africa, during 1941 the Italians were struggling to make progress with the bombing of Malta. So the Luftwaffe stepped in, beginning in January 1941 the Germans gained near total air superiority, allowing Axis shipping to reach North Africa freely. The British realised the severity of the situation and began to launch regular supply runs to the island. The first of these in 1941 was Operation Excess, followed by Operation Substance in July and Halberd in September. Supply convoys would continue to be sent until the end of the Siege in late 1942, in total the Axis would fly over 3,000 bombing raids against Malta, dropping over 6000 tonnes of bombs on the harbour.

Whilst the Regia Aeronautica and Luftwaffe were having reasonable success in attacking Malta and related Royal Navy shipping, the Regia Marina were having much less effect. Due to their inability to replace ships and their lack of radar, the Italian leadership was hesitant to commit their fleet in a major engagement; this was compounded by their loss of several battleships in the surprise attack on Toronto by the Fleet Air Arm of the Royal Navy. One of the only times the Regia Marina did send a large fleet out ended in disaster, the British code breakers at Bletchley Park intercepted messages, these allowed the Royal Navy to know that a force was heading to intercept supply convoys heading for Greece. The Royal Navy sent a force to engage the Italian fleet, the two forces met near Cape Matapan at night, meaning the Royal Navy had a large advantage due to radar assisted gunnery, the Italian fleet of 26 ships was devastated, losing 5 ships and over 2000 men lost, the Royal Navy lost only 3 men in return.



HMS Warspite, the Royal Navy flagship at Cape Matapan.

War In The East: The Soviet Struggle

Once the Germans had defeated France and Britain in the summer of 1940, they felt ready to turn their attention to the Soviets. Their success in the west had given the Germans a elevated sense of their own superiority, so when warnings came from lower level officers about problems with the Barbarossa plan they fell on deaf ears. In early Summer 1941, the Germans and their Axis allies launched Operation Barbarossa, over 3.5 million men from Germany, Romania and Finland swept into the Soviet Union.

The initial advance was devastating, with the Soviets losing all control of the situation. Tens of thousands of Soviet troops were killed or captured, often entire divisions were encircled and surrendered. There were a few holdouts such as at Brest Fortress in Belarus or Odessa in Ukraine, but these were simply bypassed and destroyed later on. By the end of August the Axis had taken Kiev and Smolensk, at Smolensk the Soviets suffered nearly one million killed, captured or wounded. Kiev was barely better, with seven hundred thousand casualties. By early autumn the Axis were at the gates of Leningrad and Moscow in northern and central Russia. However, the Soviets would counter attack and prevent any further advances at great cost. In the south the Axis had reached Sevastapol and surrounded the city. The beginning of winter 1941 signalled the end of Barbarossa and an end to the general Axis advance.



German armour advancing across the Russian steppe.

Beginning in August 1941, the British would start sending supply convoys through the Arctic ocean to Arkhangelsk, in total 9 convoys would arrive in Russia in 1941.

The Soviets had suffered massive casualties throughout 1941 due to the purges of the 1930's. This deprived them of experienced commanders as well as causing poor Soviet moral amongst the rank and file. In fact many who surrendered actually defected to the German side and fought against the Soviets.

Although Barbarossa seemed like a massive success, the Axis had actually failed to reach their objectives of Arkhangelsk in the north of Russia and Astrakhan in the south. This would go on to have massive repercussions for the Axis and ultimately be a decisive moment in the war.

War In The East: Japan Awakens The Sleeping Giant

On December 7th 1941 the Japanese Empire launched surprise attacks upon the US port of Pearl Harbour as well as the Philippines, Guam and Wake Island and the British territories of Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaya.

At 7:48am the 1st Mobile Fleet of the Imperial Japanese Navy (known as the Kido Butai) launched a surprise aerial attack on the US fleet in the port of Pearl Harbour. The aim of the attack was to sink the US Pacific Fleet, specifically the aircraft carriers, before they could interfere in future Japanese offensive operations in the Pacific.



An aerial photograph taken by the Japanese during the attack on Pearl Harbour.

The first attack wave of 183 planes achieved total surprise, attacking ships in the docks and planes on the airfields of Oahu. The second wave of 171 planes followed up causing even more damage. In total the US suffered 4 battleships sunk with 4 more damaged, 3 cruisers and 3 destroyers damaged, around 350 aircraft destroyed or damaged and over 2,300 killed with another 1,100 wounded. In contrast, the Japanese suffered the loss of 5 midget submarines, 29 aircraft lost with 64 men killed and 1 captured.

The Japanese caused devastation to the US Pacific Fleet but ultimately failed to cause enough damage to prevent the US from being an effective force. Critical to this was the fact that the Pacific Fleets aircraft carriers were at sea during the attack. Soon after, many in the Japanese leadership realised they had made a critical mistake but had no other choice but to continue with the war.

In the US the attack on Pearl Harbour caused outrage, within 24 hours the US declared war on Japan and soon after Germany and Italy. American public opinion on joining the war swung massively and soon the US economy and industrial might was being used to help defeat the Axis.



US battleships burning after being hit by bombs and torpedoes.



STONEY STANTON AT WAR 1939-1945 THOSE WHO FELL IN 1941

Arthur William Grocock 1916-1941

Arthur was born in 1916 to parents Arthur and Edith Grocock, he also had a brother named Harry. Prior to the war he was living at Walkers farm and was working as an electricians mate, he had also married Beryl Grocock.

Arthur served in the 7th Battalion, North Staffordshire Regiment, the 7th were part of the 176th Brigade, 59th (Staffordshire) Infantry Division. After the fall of France in the summer of 1940 the division moved to North-East England, alternating between coastal defence of the Humber Estuary, home service duties and training.

Because the division was stationed in the North it had lower priority in terms of equipment issue; thus they had to requisition civilian vehicles for transport and most heavy weaponry was of First World War vintage. However as 1940 passed into 1941 the situation began to stabilise and improve.

On the 28th of April 1941, Arthur and two other soldiers were accidentally hit by a bus as they were marching during a patrol. The other 2 soldiers, Private Phillip James Moore and Private Victor Bragg were killed instantly while Arthur passed away sometime later as a result of his injuries, he was 24 years old. Arthur is buried in Broughton Astley churchyard and is remembered on the Stoney Stanton War Memorial.



Men of the 59th Division training in 1941.

Unfortunately we don't have any photographs of Arthur, if you know somebody who may have one please get in touch with Generations Genealogy.

Kenneth Abbott 1922-1941

Kenneth Abbott was born in 1922 to parents George and Mary Abbott (nee Evatt), George Abbott ran the drapery shop at the front of Stanton House.

Kenneth served in No.30 Squadron, RAF. In the inter-war period 30 Squadron had been stationed in Iraq, however with the outbreak of war it was moved to Ismailia in Egypt to help guard the Suez Canal. When the Italians declared war in June 1940 the squadron converted its Bristol Blenheims to Mk 1F (fighter) standard. This meant their role changed from bomber to bomber escort. 30 Squadron would escort other Blenheim bombers to attack targets in the Western Desert.



On the 3rd of November 1940 the Squadron were sent to Eleusis, just outside of Athens, Greece, as part of the British contribution to the Greek defence against the invading Italians. The combined Greek and British force enjoyed a high level of success fighting the Italians; counter attacking into Italian controlled Albania. However, the Germans stepped in and invaded Greece on the 6th of April 1941 and by the 17th 30 Squadron had evacuated to Crete. Less than 10 days later Athens fell into German hands. The Squadron started to move to Amriya in Alexandria, Egypt on the 16th of May, 1941. By the 19th nearly all the remaining aircraft and pilots had left the airfield at Maleme in Crete.

On the morning of the 20th the Germans launched Operation Mercury, an airborne invasion of the island of Crete. At around 8am around 10,000 German paratroopers (Fallschirmjäger) were delivered by parachute and glider to key areas of the island. The airfield Ken Abbott was stationed at was one of the main targets. In the initial landing, the Germans casualties were disastrous, particularly around Maleme, one company lost 112 out of 126 men. Whilst the commander of the troops attacking Maleme, Eugen Meindl, was shot and severely wounded soon after landing. This was partially due to a daylight drop on top of Allied positions, meaning many were shot dead before they even touched the ground. If the paratroopers managed to survive the descent they still had problems, the German paratroopers didn't drop with their larger weapons which were dropped separately in canisters, so many landed only carrying pistols on their person, this made them easy prey for Allied soldiers.

Of particular note during the landings was the reaction of the Cretan civilians, many joined the battle with whatever weapons were at hand. There were incidents of German paratroopers being beaten or stabbed to death by even elderly Cretans, whilst they were entangled in their parachutes. Many civilians formed mobs that helped the British and Greek defenders attack pockets of German resistance.



German paratroopers parachuting onto Crete, a transport aircraft burns and plummets towards the ground after being hit by anti-aircraft fire.

The men of 30 Squadron still on Crete were led by Pilot Officer Crowther, his account tells that a portion of the men retreated to the rear of the New Zealand Army troops stationed on the hill above the airfield. There they helped the New Zealanders mop up groups of Germans who had gained a foothold on the slopes of the hill. Having unsuccessfully tried to get into contact with the 30 Squadron men still at the airfield, the account reads that the Germans "Drove our men who had been taken prisoner out in front of them, using them as a protective screen. Any sign of faltering on their part was rewarded with a shot in the back. Our men were very reluctant to open fire and gradually gave ground. A small party of RAF men led by Corporal Harrison, succeeded in outflanking them on one side, sniping the Germans in the rear and succeeded thereby in releasing at least 14 prisoners". By the end of the day the squadron had suffered heavy casualties and was incapable of helping the New Zealanders perform any more offensive actions. Soon after communications broke down and the New Zealand forces retreated, believing their position untenable. In reality they allowed the Germans time and space to reinforce, probably leading to the eventual fall of Crete a few days later.

By the time the Squadron was evacuated from Crete the war diary reads that 3 men were confirmed killed, 4 were missing believed killed, 8 missing believed prisoners and 55 were listed as missing. Ken Abbott was one of those listed as missing. It was later discovered he died on the first day of fighting, almost certainly around the airfield at Maleme. Kenneth Abbott is remembered in the military graveyard in Alamein in Egypt, not far from Amriya where the remnants of 30 Squadron would be stationed until mid June 1941.

Centenary Of The War Memorial Unveiling At St. Michaels

2.30pm, Friday 7th January, 1921

Stoney Stanton War Memorial

On a cold and dreary January day in 1921, Stoney Stanton War memorial was unveiled. The man there to unveil the memorial to the 43 men of Stoney Stanton, who gave their lives in World War 1 was Lt. Col. Sir R.E Martin. He was born in 1874, and was educated at Eton and Kings College, Cambridge.

His father had established the Mountsorrel Granite Company and Robert was by then, the managing director. He served in the Leicestershire Regiment Territorial Forces and also suffered bereavement, when his younger brother Major William Francis Martin was killed in 1915.

The memorial was dedicated by the Archdeacon of Leicester, the Venerable Frederick MacNutt, who had served as a temporary padre of the forces from 1915-1918.

The base of memorial was provided by Mountsorrel Granite Co. In October 1921 a bronze wreath was placed by Lieutenant J Blakemore and dedicated by the Rector Anthony Disney, the wreath was paid for by ex servicemen of the village.



Colonel R E Martin in later life. Portrait commissioned by Leicestershire County Council



The Venerable Frederick MacNutt.



The Reverend A E D Disney.





STONEY STANTON AT WAR 1939-1945

THE WORLD AT WAR

War In The Desert: Outfoxing Rommel

The Allies had managed to push Axis forces back roughly half the way along the Libyan coast and relieved the Tobruk garrison by the end of 1941. Unfortunately, Rommel had managed to regroup and launch a fresh counter offensive in the first half of 1942, by the Summer, the Axis had reached the Gazala defensive line near Tobruk. Despite the heroic actions of the Free French forces at Bir Hakiem, the Allies were decisively beaten and forced back to the El Alamein line, losing Tobruk in the process.

The Axis advance reached El Alamein in early July 1942, it was imperative the Allies held this line, or else the Axis could take the strategic port of Alexandria. The battle raged for around 20 days before the Axis were forced to withdraw; both sides had suffered heavy casualties, and neither had the strength to commit to a final push to finish the other off. The British commander Claude Auchinleck was somewhat harshly relieved of command by Winston Churchill in a visit to Cairo in August.

Disaster struck for the allies when Auchinlecks replacement, William Gott was killed when his plane was shot down on its way to Cairo. The British 8th Army now needed a second new commander in a week, the Chief of Staff decided the man for the job was Bernard Montgomery, who took up the job on the 13th of August.



Men of the 8th Army escorting an injured German POW after the 2nd Battle of El Alamein.

Montgomery rejuvenated a dispirited 8th Army, leading them to a significant victory over Rommels Afrika Korps in the second battle of El Alamein. Subsequently, they pushed the Axis forces back along the Libyan coast throughout the rest of 1942.

The defeat at El Alamein was the first of two hammer blows for the Axis in November 1942. The Allies launched Operation Torch; the amphibious landings in Vichy French ruled Morocco and Algeria. While the Vichy French initially resisted all initial objectives were captured quickly, with many French units changing sides and joining Allied Forces. The Allies spent the rest of the year pushing towards Tunis from both West and East.

War Over Europe: Reaping The Whirlwind

In February 1942, the Air Ministry issued the Area Bombing Directive to Bomber Command. This directive instructed Bomber Command to target German industrial areas, especially in the Ruhr, controversially the directive also targeted the "morale of the enemy civil population".

At the start of the area bombing campaign, Air Marshall Arthur Harris was quoted as saying "The Nazis entered this war under the rather childish delusion that they were going to bomb everyone else, and nobody was going to bomb them. At Rotterdam, London, Warsaw and half a hundred other places, they put their rather naive theory into operation. They sowed the wind, and now they are going to reap the whirlwind."



The city of Cologne after the area bombing campaign.

The bombing of German and occupied French industrial areas began almost immediately. Arthur Harris wanted a big propaganda victory, so he devised the idea of a 1000 bomber raid to show the world the might of the RAF. The first 1000 bomber raid was conducted in March 1942, against the German city of Cologne. In total 1,046 bombers dropped over 2,000 tons of high explosive and incendiaries, causing 36 factories to be destroyed and a further 270 damaged. The civilian cost was even higher, with over 3000 homes destroyed and 10,000 damaged with 45,000 people left homeless. Surprisingly only 469 German civilians and soldiers are thought to have died during the raid, in return the RAF lost 40 aircraft.

The RAF launched 2 more 1000 bomber raids during 1942, against Essen and Bremen with varying degrees of success. The concept was later scrapped due to the increased availability of heavy bombers, reducing the number of aircraft needed to deliver the same amount of bombs.

To make matters worse for the Germans, the US Army Air Force's VIII Bomber Command had been established in the UK in the early summer. The first raids by American air crews were carried out in July, with regular operations beginning in August.

War In The East: The Beginning Of The End

With the failure of Operation Barbarossa to fulfill its primary objectives, the Axis were forced to deal with spring counter attacks. These failed to achieve much apart from buying time for the Soviets, who lost hundreds of thousands of men in the process.

The Axis were desperate to begin new offensive operations, a myriad of issues however, meant they only had enough fuel and supplies to support one of the 3 army groups in a push. It was decided to support Army Group South who were given the task of pushing to the oil fields of the Caucasus. This would relieve the fuel deficit the Germans had struggled with since the beginning of hostilities.



Posed photograph of Soviet soldiers hiding in the ruins of Stalingrad.

The Axis offensive began in June 1942, Army Group South was split into two forces, with group A tasked with capturing the oil fields, while group B protected their flank and pushed towards the city of Stalingrad. After a long and attritional push, group B finally reached Stalingrad. The city bearing Stalins name had become the focal point of the Soviets defense; with those in charge told not to let the city fall at any cost.

The Battle for Stalingrad turned into an apocalyptic struggle, with both sides committing hundreds of thousands of men to the fight. After months of fighting the situation was becoming desperate for the Axis, who could ill afford this kind of attritional battle. By years end the Axis had lost tens of thousands of men, while the Soviet dead numbered in the hundreds of thousands.

While Axis forces were trying to push east, rearline troops were helping the Holocaust move into its next phase. In Poland countless concentration camps were built to systematically wipe out those the Nazis deemed undesirable. Other Axis rearline troops rounded up undesriables, and either shipped them off to the camps or murdered them there and then.

War In The East: The Tide Begins To Turn

The beginning of 1942 saw the Japanese tide crash over much of south east Asia. Thailand, Malaya, Hong Kong, Guam and Wake Island fell in quick succession. The last remaining stronghold for the British Empire in south east Asia was Singapore; which the Japanese surrounded in February 1942. The battle for the fortified city would only last a few days, before the commander Arthur Percival surrendered. The city and the defending force of 80,000 capitulated to the Japanese smaller force of 36,000. The Japanese committed countless atrocities in Singapore after the surrender. Also subjugating those who survived the initial barbarity to subhuman conditions in captivity.



Arthur Percival and his staff surrendering to the Japanese at Singapore.

The Japanese also invaded the Philippines, Dutch East Indies, New Guinea and Burma. The Philippines and Dutch East Indies were quickly overrun, while resistance in Burma and New Guinea would continue throughout the rest of 1942.

After the attack on Pearl Harbour and the loss of the Philippines, the Americans felt they needed a quick victory to help morale. Lieutenant Colonel James H. Doolittle proposed modifying land based B-25 bombers to take off from an aircraft carrier to strike Tokyo. The aircraft were duly stripped out so they could take off and the raid went ahead. The Doolittle raid caught the Japanese by surprise. Although it did little in terms of real damage, it lifted Allied spirits, whilst denting the Japanese aura of invincibility.

The Americans wouldn't have to wait long for a genuine strategic victory over the Japanese. An American fleet led by Admiral Chester Nimitz surprised the Japanese, led by Isoroku Yamamoto at Midway. It was one of the largest naval battles in history. In total the Japanese lost 4 fleet aircraft carriers that they couldn't replace, crippling the Japanese ability to fight at sea.

As well as Midway, the US Marine Corps landed at Guadalcanal. They inflicted the first major land based defeat upon the Japanese by the Americans, in the Pacific Campaign.

STONEY STANTON AT WAR 1939-1945

THOSE WHO FELL IN 1942



Fred Hinton 1916-1942

The name Fred Hinton appears on the front face of Stoney Stanton War Memorial. He was killed in 1942, but nobody, including his family knew exactly how and where he died. This is the story of what we discovered about him. Fred Hinton was one of at least seven children; he was born on March 17th 1916 in Burbage, Leicestershire to



Fred Hinton in his RAF uniform.

His father, Charles Hinton had joined the Royal Artillery in WW1. At that time the family lived at 31, Windsor Street, Burbage. Charles was a hosiery dyer at A.E. Hawley & Co, Sketchley Dye Works before he joined-up. By 1921, the family had returned to Enderby, another village not far from Stoney Stanton.

It isn't clear when exactly Fred joined the RAF, but he joined 458 squadron, they were based at Holme-on-Spalding Moor, Yorkshire. He was an air gunner in a Wellington IV bomber, the most vulnerable position in the plane.



Fred Hinton and his wife Jean at their wedding.

Fred was 25 when he married Jean Warner, the 19 year old daughter of Cyril and Rose Warner of 31, Huncote Road Stoney Stanton in the autumn of 1941. Jean was recorded as a Co-Op grocery assistant on the 1939 Register. Tragically, their marriage was almost over before it began as Fred was killed on January 8th 1942 just a few short weeks later.

parents Charles and Jane Hinton. He had an older sister, Margaret Ida Hinton who was born three years earlier in 1913 in Enderby and baptised on May 17th. He had four younger brothers- Walter 1919, Albert 1922, John 1929 and Charles 1931 as well as a younger sister Joyce 1927.

It was whilst researching Fred that we came upon the 458 Squadron website, unbelievably the story of what happened to Fred and his crew mates was there in black and white. With permission from all concerned here is Fred's story, concerning people in 4 countries, taking place over 65 years.

At 0435 hours on the 9th January, deep in the winter of 1942, Wellington R1785 of 458 Squadron, RAAF took off from the Holme-on-Spalding Moor air base in East Yorkshire. Their mission was to join with 30 other bombers to bomb the port of Cherbourg in occupied France, to mount a diversion for a larger group of 131 RAF bombers that were assembled and dispatched to the French harbour of Brest to find and destroy the German pocket battleships, the Scharnhorst and Gneisenau.

On board Wellington R1785 were flying officer Bernard (Peter) Hickey, a 28 year old from Brisbane; his 24 year old co-pilot, Vic Johnstone from Lockington, Victoria; front gunner, William Wallace (Wally) Forgan, a 22 year old from Crystal Brook in South Australia; and, Robert (Bob) Birnie, 24, bomb aimer and observer from Auckland, New Zealand. In addition to these flying ANZACS were 2 RAF airmen, Fred Hinton, a 21 year old rear gunner from Leicester, and Albert Austin, wireless operator from Birmingham in the UK.



R1785 Crew L-R: Fred Hinton, Bob Birnie, Peter Hickey, Albert Austin, Vic Johnstone and Wally Forgan

Weather conditions over the Normandy peninsula that January morning were appalling, snow was falling, visibility was negligible and to make matters worse the German flak was particularly active. Only three of the 31 aircraft were able to drop their bombs and many were forced to turn back. Of the three Wellingtons from 458 Squadron that left Yorkshire, only one returned home to base. Wellington Z1312 was hit by flak but managed to reach England with its load of bombs intact but crashed in Dorset after hitting high tension lines, killing 4 of its Australian crew with only the pilot and co-pilot surviving.

Wellington R1785 disappeared completely. The log books of the crew were signed off in red ink with the notation

"OPERATIONS AS ORDERED, BUT FAILED TO RETURN".

The fate of R1785 remained a mystery to relatives for over 66 years until Georges Dennebouy, an Air France captain, began researching a war time incident on his family's farm at Colomby in Normandy. In time, Georges teamed up with three other researchers, Mickael Simon, Claire and Claude Letallier who had started to unravel the mystery a decade earlier by interviewing and recording the accounts of eye witnesses of hundreds of pre D-Day aircraft crashes over Cotentin in the department of La Manche.



The research team of: L-R Georges, Claire, Mickael and Claude.

It was in the winter of 1942 that Georges' grandmother, along with other locals, saw a plane in flames flying at low altitude before it crashed into a snow covered orchard before dawn. Together with other inhabitants they were on the scene before the Germans, but were powerless to do anything as the aircraft was on fire, except for the tail section, and were not helped when German soldiers roughly made them leave the scene.

Two days later the Germans requisitioned 2 local farmers, a teenager, Joseph Anquetil and Mr. Auguste Mulot, a veteran of The Great War, to recover the bodies, and place them in coffins provided by the occupiers. The bodies were awfully calcined except for the young blond haired tail gunner who remained trapped in his turret, the floor strewn with lolly wrappers, testament to the loneliness of a rear gunner's station. Joseph Anquetil remembered very well the military honours given to the victims by the German soldiers who presented arms and who also filmed the scene.

A few days later, a group of Germans began to salvage parts of the plane, but to their horror they discovered that the plane still carried its 8 250lbs bombs. Bomb disposal experts were called to detonate the bombs and the enormous explosion destroyed the Wellington with one of its engines leaping well over 100 metres.

The Germans then made a macabre discovery when they found a sixth body under a wing and ordered yet another inhabitant, a youthful Roger Blestel, to remove the seriously mutilated body and place it in a coffin. This proved to be the body of Wally Forgan, the front gunner, who is presumed to have attempted a parachute jump, as he was hung on the wing at the end of his suspending rods, that somehow snagged the wing as the plane made its fiery descent.

In 2005, the group of amateur aviation historians undertook a ground search of the Breul farm crash site to confirm that the wreck was indeed a Wellington, and to match the crash to the graves of 6 allied airmen buried in the old Cherbourg cemetery. Using a metal detector Claude Letallier recovered various fragments of aircraft and located a part of the airframe's distinctive geodetic design bearing a serial number which was sent to the British Aviation Archaeology Council. The BAAC confirmed that it was from a Vickers Armstrong Wellington.



A Wellington MK IV bomber, the same type as R1785

Their search took a new twist when amongst the innumerable boils of recovered twisted metal there was a silver ring. It was clearly not a French ring but a Sterling silver ring of the Commonwealth, bearing what appeared to be the initials of one of the unfortunate crew. But the initials in flowing script LMM did not match those of R1785 crew members; maybe it bore the initials of a girlfriend or fiancé?

For three months emails and letters flowed between France, Australia and the UK trying to solve the riddle, when one day Mickael Simon reversed the piece of contorted metal and saw the initials of "WWF". Overcome with adrenaline and emotion, they had found the proof they were looking for. The ring once worn on the right hand of William Wallace Forgan confirmed that this was the crash site of the 6 airmen whose remains lay in Cherbourg.



STONEY STANTON AT WAR 1939-1945 THOSE WHO FELL IN 1942

Fred Hinton Continued

Emotions ran high on the other side of the world when the Forgan family was contacted in Mount Gambier, South Australia and were sent photographs of the ring. Georges and his colleagues in turn, were also surprised to learn that David Johnstone, a nephew of Vic Johnstone and Nick Hayes, a great nephew of Wally Forgan had flown together in skies far less hostile for an aviation company in the Northern Territory, completely unaware that 60 years earlier, their relatives had also forged friendship in the skies over Europe.

In March 2006 Georges Dennebrouy and his wife Liliane flew to Australia with the express purpose of visiting the Hickey family in Brisbane, the Forgan family in Mount Gambier and Adelaide and the Johnstone family in Lockington, Victoria. At an emotional gathering in Adelaide, Georges returned the ring back home to the Forgan family and it was here that yet another coincidence occurred. Fred Hinton's (the RAF air gunner) late sister had migrated to Adelaide after WWII, and a nephew and a niece of Fred from Leicester were also very much a part of the occasion.



Georges meeting the relatives of the aircrew in Australia.

The dedicated work of Georges, Mickael, Claire and Claude gave closure to a number of families in Australia, NZ and the UK. It rekindled contact between the families of the air crew and brought back the times when the parents of the lost crew corresponded together in hope, refusing to believe that their sons were lost until they failed to return home to Australia after hostilities ceased. This correspondence continued until this grieving generation died out.

In Adelaide, Georges said that their work was unfinished. "It is out of respect and gratitude to these young people who came from far away lands we carried out this research. We hope that a memorial to the crew of R1785 and for the many pilots and crews who perished in the air, and on the ground of Cotentin, will be raised to honour those who died to return our freedom to us."

In early October 2008, a magnificent granite stele was erected in the heart of the tiny village of Golleville (population 160). Relatives of the Australian airmen and Fred Hinton (RAF) made the pilgrimage to France to attend the unveiling of the stunning memorial in the shape of the Wellington's tail plane. On a Saturday afternoon, what appeared to be the entire village, local school children and visitors from neighbouring towns and villages attended a moving ceremony that drew Members of the French National Assembly, Squadron Leader Tramter, RAF, Mayors past and present and other dignitaries to pay their respects to those young men who gave their lives for freedom.

Some of us who listen to the Australia All Over program, on a Sunday morning with Ian McNamara, may have heard members of the Australian contingent ring in with their emotional account of the day. Tribute was paid to the persistence of the amateur research team, the genuine gratitude of the French, their overwhelming hospitality and organizational skills that would equal or surpass the International Olympic Organizing Committee.

The memorial has received other relatives since its dedication and as Georges Dennebrouy stated, "This memorial will serve to remind following generations of the enormous sacrifices made by those who came to our aid so far from their own homes, family and country"

We would like to thank Rob and Roland for allowing us to pass this incredible story on. To Georges, Mickael, Claire and Claude for their dedication and determination to discover the crew's fate and mark their sacrifice with a permanent memorial. Also, to Linda Clay, daughter of Jean Warner for the story and photos. Jean and her family would often attend the Remembrance Service here in memory of Fred.



458 Squadron Insignia.



The unveiling of the memorial to the crew of R1785.



The unveiling of the memorial to the crew of R1785.



Fred's nephew Allan Hinton at the unveiling of the memorial.

STONE STANTON AT WAR 1939-1945

IN MEMORY OF THOSE WHO FELL



Name: Arthur Grocock
Age: 24
Service: Army, North Staffordshire Regiment
Rank: Private
KIA: UK, 28/04/41



Name: James Smith
Age: 30
Service: Army, Royal Artillery
Rank: Gunner
KIA: Netherlands, 18/09/44



Name: Peter Beasley
Age: 19
Service: Army, Somerset Light Infantry
Rank: Private
KIA: Netherlands, 19/11/44



Name: Harry Chapman
Age: 21
Service: RAF, 625 Squadron
Rank: Flight Lieutenant
KIA: Verse Talsperre, 07/03/45



Name: William Howkins
Age: 29
Service: Army, West Riding Regiment
Rank: Private
KIA: Anzio, Italy, 12/02/44



Name: Anthony Manwaring
Age: 22
Service: Navy, HMS Mosquito
Rank: Lieutenant
KIA: Dunkirk, 01/06/40



Name: William Burrows
Age: 38
Service: Army, North Staffordshire Regiment
Rank: Sergeant
KIA: Anzio, Italy, 08/02/44



Name: Frederick Hinton
Age: 26
Service: RAF, 458 (Australian)
Rank: Sergeant
KIA: Cherbourg, 09/01/42



Name: Kenneth Stevens
Age: 31
Service: Army Service Corps
Rank: Mechanist Quartermaster Sergeant
KIA: Greece, 03/07/1945



Name: Anthony Chesterton
Age: 22
Service: RN, HMS Eskimo
Rank: Ordnance Artificer 4th class
KIA: Sicilian Coast, 20/05/43



Name: Frederick Johnson
Age: 26
Service: Army, Lincolnshire Regiment
Rank: Private
KIA: Burma, 07/04/44



Name: Albert Farmer
Age: 21
Service: Army, Leicestershire Regiment
Rank: Private
KIA: Tunisia, 11/02/43



Name: Jack Middleton
Age: 21
Service: RAF, 18 Squadron
Rank: Flying Officer
KIA: Malta, 31/12/44



Name: David Simpson
Age: 20
Service: RAF Volunteer Reserve
Rank: Pilot Officer
KIA: South Africa, 08/06/45



Name: Samuel Batchelor
Age: 26
Service: Army, Leicestershire Regiment
Rank: Private
KIA: Salerno, Italy, 14/09/43



Name: Kenneth Abbott
Age: 19
Service: RAF, 30 Squadron
Rank: Aircraftman 1st class
KIA: Crete, 20/05/41