

LECKHAMPTON IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR



Leckhampton Local History Society

LECKHAMPTON
in the
SECOND WORLD WAR

Edited by

Eric Miller
John Randall and
Amy Woolacott

ISBN 0 9524200 2 3

Printed by Top Flight Printing
Typesetting by Open Services

Published by Leckhampton Local History Society,
which claims the copyright to the contents,
except where otherwise stated

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the memory of Leckhampton's men and women who lost their lives in the Second World War

Bruce Stait (who was editor of the Leckhampton Local History Society's very successful first book) died suddenly during the early months of the compilation of this book, but a large proportion of its contents was already assembled and being edited by him, it is hoped by all who have taken up the threads that he would have approved of our efforts.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
Acknowledgments and Sources	iv
Introduction	v
Preamble	vi
Chapter 1	1
Chapter 2	11
Chapter 3	16
Chapter 4	21
Chapter 5	27
Chapter 6	32
Chapter 7	37
Chapter 8	41
Appendix A	43
Appendix B	44
Appendix C	45
Maps:	
Plots of reported bomb sites	Facing 20
Layout of POW Camp	Facing 21

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND SOURCES

The members of the Leckhampton Local History Society have once again collaborated in compiling a volume on life in Leckhampton, this time during the Second World War, following the precedent set by *1894 - the End of an Era*.

The local newspapers of the time have provided some detail, but because of censorship this was only in general terms. A number of photographs appeared in the *Echo* and the *Chronicle and Graphic*; some were lent to us by private individuals and others were made available by Cheltenham Library. These are reproduced by kind permission of the Editor of the *Gloucestershire Echo*. Much more information has come from personal contact with people who remember those days of more than fifty years ago, though it is impossible to claim that what follows is completely accurate, as memory is notoriously fickle.

The war brought many emergency regulations, touching on every aspect of people's lives, all contributing to many legends that have been repeated so often they are now accepted as fact; and nostalgia, which has played a great part in this endeavour, is no respecter of truth. We therefore apologise for any inaccuracies that may have crept into the narrative, while offering our thanks to everyone for their valuable contributions including loan of photographs. Each of them adds something to the picture of life in wartime Leckhampton, and - it should be noted - in the Cheltenham area as a whole.

Other material has been drawn from the following:

Naunton Park School Evacuees' Stories from the School Magazine

Leckhampton Primary School Log Book - 1939

The Cotswolds at War by June R Lewis

Cheltenham at War by Peter Gill

North Gloucestershire at War by Peter Gill

The Story of St Mary's College by Miss EB Challinor MA

ARP documents held in the Gloucester County Record Office and at Shire Hall were consulted but little of note was found.

Numerous Society members have spent many hours on newspaper research, and countless others have contributed with scraps of information, all to become part of a cohesive theme. Thanks are extended to those listed below:

Winnie Allen, Bernard Avery, Sheila (Hooper) Ball, David Ballinger, Arthur Bendall, Jean Bendall, Don & Veronica Biddle, June (Cuttel) Borsberry, Mr Bradbury, Derek Brown, Mrs Calcut, Geoff Capper, the late Olive Carruthers-Little, Everard Caudle, David Cox, Richard Deobald, Willard Drisner, Mrs H Errington, Nell Frewin, Michael Gibson, Alan Gill, Peter Gill, Jean (Williams) Girling, Herbert Greening, Anne Haussherr, Ian Harris, Tom Hewlett, Trevor Holt, Mrs Howard, Barbara Janes, Betty (Clarke) Jones, Rick Kedge, the late Barbara King, Archie Kirkham, the late Janet Kitson, Mr A Knott, Joan Launchbury, Michael Launchbury, Frederick & Elizabeth Lea, David Lyall, Vincent Manzelli, Maureen Mathias, the late Seaward Mees, Margaret & Eric Miller, John Milner, Megan Moir, Austin Nichols, Daphne (Hicks) Oliver, E Parsons, Norman Preece, John Randall, Alan Randell, Fred Read, Roger Richards, Cyril Richardson, Edna (Merman) Riley, Gwen Sheward, Beryl Shill, Rosemary Smart, the late Bruce Stait, Eve Stephens, Margaret (Summers) Storey, Edgar Townsend, Christopher Trye, Daphne Wheeler, Karl Wolf, Christine Woodward, Amy Woolacott, Eileen Yates.

Sharon Wheeler and Alison Merrett also provided assistance in typing the first draft.

Eric Miller, John Randall, Amy Woolacott.
Leckhampton, June 1998

INTRODUCTION

A dwindling number of people still look upon the Second World War years with some affection, mainly due to the spirit of optimism and 'we're-all-in-this-together' that was present throughout the length and breadth of the British Isles. The man we have to thank for this attitude was Winston Churchill, who replaced Mr Chamberlain as Prime Minister in May 1940 and, through our darkest days, his fighting speeches struck a chord of hope in us all. Local feeling had been aired in the *Echo* in early May by Lt-Col Jarrett-Kerr of Leckhampton, who urged that 'the men of Munich must go. Nothing but failure could be expected from the people who betrayed the Czechs.' A measure of the British morale is shown by the following:- the Ministry of Labour appealed for 'workers to be employed seven-days per week, 24-hours per day', but in a Midlands aircraft factory when one man grumbled, the whole shop downed tools, and 'within a couple of minutes he was outside, chucked into the drive'.

It is not for us to make a judgement on why the Second World War took place, suffice to say it did, and its effects are still felt today. In telling the story of Leckhampton and some of its inhabitants during the War it is necessary to give a brief background of world-wide happenings by way of an aide-memoire on some of the important dates through those years. (See Appendix A - War Diary.)

International relations had been deteriorating for many months before Great Britain became involved in the hostilities. Despite the attempts of the 'League of Nations' (predecessor of today's United Nations) to restrict the build-up of martial forces in Germany, that country had succeeded in creating a massive military establishment that had been tested in battle conditions in support of General Franco in the Spanish Civil War (1936-39). Germany's territorial ambitions became very clear with the annexation of Austria and Sudetenland in the same period.

Britain had adopted a policy of appeasement which included the fateful trip by Prime Minister Chamberlain to meet Adolf Hitler in 1938, from which he returned with the famous 'piece of paper' and 'peace in our time'. All too soon it became obvious that Hitler was not going to stop, and a non-aggression Treaty was signed by Poland, France and Britain, but when Poland was invaded on September 1 1939, it was only a matter of hours before war began for Britain.

Although the propaganda machine at the time made much of Britain's 'fight for freedom', it is now generally accepted that, possibly for the first time in history, a war was being fought on a clear-cut issue: the survival of the British nation and its people. Today, some people will no doubt consider this too melodramatic, but if so, it is well to recall the millions who suffered appalling agonies and death at the hands of their captors in slave labour and concentration camps all over Europe, as Hitler had decreed this was to be the fate for many in these islands if victory had been denied us.

To those of us who were youngsters then, the war seemed to go on forever, although we never thought of it ending in any other way but victory for the Allies - after all, we were the 'good guys', so it was inevitable that we would win! A lot of those same youngsters are today's senior citizens and time seems to have speeded up to such an extent that six years now goes by in little more than the blink of an eye.

PREAMBLE

If a resident of Leckhampton in 1939 revisited today he would see few major changes in Leckhampton Road, Church Road, Old Bath Road down as far as Pilley Lane, Shurdington Road or along Moorend Road. However, if he ventured off these thoroughfares he would immediately see some differences, most of which have taken place in the last thirty years or so. Housing developments like Collum End, Allenfield (including Arden Road and off-shoots), Southcourt and Treelands, Brizen, and the Merestones, and several smaller ones like Vineries Close, had not been thought of in 1939. In addition to these new developments, our 1939 visitor would notice that gaps between some older properties have been filled with single houses, and that some older buildings have been replaced by new ones.

Two notable buildings now absent from Leckhampton Road are Cheltenham South railway station (otherwise Leckhampton station) which closed in 1962 prior to the Beeching 'axe', and the Ladies' College Sanatorium, now replaced by Liddington Close. Leckhampton Police Station, today at 6-8 Leckhampton Road, is where it was in wartime, when it was manned by Sergeant HR Boucher, PCs Nelmes and Gwilliam, and a Special Constable from the Bath Road Section.

The Post Office was where it is today in Leckhampton Road, but at some time after the war it was moved to the corner of Pilley Lane and Pilley Crescent, and later returned to its present site. The Postmaster was Mr Leslie Clarke, who retired shortly before the end of the war. Moorend Post Office was run by Mr Arthur Walkley at 246 Bath Road; it later closed and is now further along the Bath Road. Another building still existing is the red brick one which is the first on the left in Moorend Road, when turning off Leckhampton Road by the old railway station site. Originally this was the Local Board Room and the Parish Reading Room, but was later taken over by Cheltenham Borough Council and in 1939 became a Corporation Highways Depot. Subsequently, the building was converted into an electricity sub-station, and the adjoining land used for an Ambulance Station.

Delancey Hospital in Charlton Lane, was in 1939 specifically described as a Fever Hospital. The Matron was Miss G Atkinson and the Medical Officer was Mr Donald Morley MD DPH. The Ladies' College Sanatorium, mentioned above, had been on the same site since before the turn of the century, and only closed in the early 1960s. During the war, the Matron was Miss DM Davison. At the top of Leckhampton Hill, Salterley Grange was in 1939 the City of Birmingham Sanatorium for TB cases. The Resident Medical Superintendent was Mr Alexander Reid, MB, ChB, supported by Miss EI Jones as Matron. Later the RMS was Mr Donald Waddy MB, ChB, with Miss M Rose as Matron.

Chapter 1

THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

Less than twenty years elapsed between the ending of the First World War and the preparations for the Second. In that short time Germany had become the most powerful nation in Europe and looked set to plunge the continent once more into a bloodbath. The men who had survived the earlier horror of war on the western front had returned home and brought up their families, only to find that many of their sons, and daughters too, were now being called upon to perform the same actions as an earlier generation.

The British Government introduced Civil Defence measures a year before the war began, and other emergency legislation quickly followed. This set out over 500 new laws, including conscription for males aged between 18 and 41 (raised to 51 in 1941, when women were also conscripted). In anticipation of what lay in store, official instructions in the form of Air Raid Precautions (ARP) were issued to the civilian population, telling them how to black-out their homes and what to do in the event of air raids, and how to protect themselves and their families.

On Sunday September 3 1939 at eleven o'clock, the Prime Minister came on the wireless to announce that Great Britain was at war with Germany. Everard Caudle remembers that "we all listened to Neville Chamberlain's broadcast, and then went out into the street and stood by the front gate; there was a tangible sense of solidarity and community; we did not know what was going to happen, but we were ready for it and would stick together." Alan Randell recalls, "I was four years old when war was declared, I remember quite clearly being ordered quiet as my parents listened to Chamberlain, and my father saying, 'That's it then.....' Our radio was one of those square polished-wood units, powered by an accumulator, and it crackled a lot."

EVACUEES

The evacuation (organised by the Ministry of Health) of more than one and a half million children, mothers and babies from large towns and cities all over Britain had begun on Friday September 1 1939, and over a four-day period they were transported by trains and buses to designated 'safe areas', where it was hoped to find willing foster-parents to take the strangers into their homes. The reward for this gesture was the sum of eight shillings-and-sixpence per week for each evacuee. Although the evacuation scheme was voluntary, in reality, unless there were exceptional circumstances, most householders were bound to take them in.

As early as March 1939 a survey had been made to determine how many evacuees could be accommodated in each area. Leckhampton was reported to have 1075 habitable rooms in private houses which could accommodate an extra 545 people. Rooms for 86 unaccompanied children, nine teachers or helpers, and 25 others could be taken on a voluntary basis; rather more if it were made compulsory. Rooms for another 87 had already been arranged on a private basis. According to the survey, the additional bedding required was calculated at eight double and 180 single mattresses, and 20 double and 545 single blankets. It is not known how these figures were derived.

In May 1939, plans had already been drawn up for the evacuation of Birmingham. Four hundred and eighty children were to detrain on the first day at Leckhampton station for onward distribution to villages around Cheltenham. The first three trainloads of 1200 arrived at Lansdown station on September 1, followed by another three trainloads of 650 mothers

and children the next day. The first trainload of 267 was welcomed by the Mayor of Cheltenham, then taken by bus to a reception centre at Naunton Park School and given rations of corned-beef, tinned milk, biscuits and chocolate by volunteer members of the YMCA Women's Auxiliary. From there they were ferried in private cars to the houses in the vicinity to which they had been allocated.

Mr R Board, the Billeting Officer, later said: "They were a pathetic sight; many were poorly clothed, some were dirty and difficult, they were the poorest of the poor". Everard Caudle recalls: "We soon had evacuees from Birmingham, several lots - boys and girls - but I remember two young boys because, in fooling around at the dinner-table, they managed to break one of our 'Utility' mark chairs. When they left us, we had a relation from the country who had been drafted into war work at Brockworth, and she stayed with us until peace came."

There was another Billeting Centre at the Parish Hall, Leckhampton, where the Billeting Officer was Mr TAD Clark of 183, Leckhampton Road. Most of the evacuated children attended temporary schools, but some went to Naunton Park and Leckhampton Schools. 500-600 returned home before Christmas 1939 amid much complaining - this was the period of the phoney war. Mr Board considered afterwards that it had been a great mistake to send Birmingham children here, it was too close to home, and they did not settle; but pupils from two Birmingham grammar schools, King Edward's and Moseley, were much less trouble. Most went home for Christmas and came back afterwards; those left here were treated to a party at the Town Hall on December 28. Some evacuees from further afield had less difficulty settling in; boys from Portsmouth and Southampton joined the Boy Scout troop at Bethesda Methodist Church. Others came from London, Plymouth and Eastbourne.

Later, after the V1 flying bomb and V2 rocket attacks on Southeast England began on June 12 and September 8, 1944 respectively, mothers and children were evacuated from towns in that area. About 7000 arrived in Cheltenham in the months following the first attacks and joined some of the few original evacuees from 1939 who were still here. In August 1944, 600 from Tunbridge Wells arrived at Leckhampton railway station and were provided with tea and cakes from mobile canteens on the platform by WVS before being taken by bus to billets in Charlton Kings, while others were taken to Moreton-in-Marsh and Northleach. Eastbourne evacuees in Gloucestershire held annual reunions in Cheltenham. In January 1944 the guest of honour was Alderman Rush, when over 600 attended, compared with 350 in 1943, and 250 in 1942.

There were also the more irksome provisions to be considered; the War Risks Insurance Act - 1939 came into force, and affected businesses like those run by Reginald Avery of Naunton Lane. By August 1940, the Government advised that some business premises might be requisitioned if storage space was deemed to be useful.

CIVIL DEFENCE AND AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS

Air Raid Precautions began to be organised from the end of 1937 when the ARP Act became law, as it had become clear by then that a war was likely. There was great concern about the expected use of poison gas, as a result of which plans were drawn up, as it happened, well before the outbreak of hostilities, to cope with this. The distribution of gas-masks (officially known as respirators) was begun in September 1938 in the Cheltenham area, but by August 1939 there was still a shortfall of 6000. 2852 were delivered in August 1939 for distribution in the Moorend area, and ARP wardens visited each house to hand them out. Receipts had to be signed by each head of household, as they remained Government property. The deficiency was eventually made up by September 4 when more were delivered to Corinth

House, Bath Road (the home of Mrs DL Lipson, the organiser of the Cheltenham WVS) for the Park, College and Pilley areas.

All over the country in 1939 Civil Defence workers were recruited to carry out a variety of duties, covering rescue, shelters, evacuation, fire-fighting, blackout patrolling, incident reports and a host of other activities. By the end of 1939 over a million and a half were involved, more than two-thirds of them volunteers. Full-time male defence workers received £3 a week, females £2, volunteers were unpaid.

Gloucestershire was one of the first counties to plan its Civil Defence and Air Raid Precautions. The county was organised into four divisions, each sub-divided into several areas. Each area had its own Emergency Committee, headed by a Sub-Controller; Area 2 of Division 2 covered Cheltenham Borough and Charlton Kings; Area 2R (R for rural) covered part of Cheltenham Rural District, including that part of Leckhampton which was outside the Borough. Area 2R Chief Warden was Captain HP Leschallas, and the Co-ordinating Officer was Mr WAG Acocks, who was the Clerk of the RDC. Leckhampton Parish had its own Civil Defence Committee, with Mr ST Walford as its Chairman. The authorised complement of wardens in Area 2R was 110 men and 67 women, with an extra 23 applied for. There were 41 Warden Posts on establishment but only two First Aid Posts, with 10 personnel.

The ARP organisation was responsible for distributing gas-masks, enforcing the blackout, air-raid warnings, evacuation, air-raid shelters, protection of buildings, patrolling and fire-watching, some fire-fighting, rescue from damaged buildings, first-aid, gas decontamination, emergency repairs to roads and restoration of communications.

The volunteer wardens came from the whole spectrum of life, for instance; Douglas Parker was a retired College master, Archie Ballinger ran a tobacconist and barber shop in the Bath Road. Wardens would take control of the situation during and after an air raid, informing the public what to do, most of the members were unpaid volunteers. Facilities in Leckhampton and its vicinity included a First Aid Depot at Delancey Hospital, a Rescue Party at Bendall's in Naunton Lane, a 'Clearing Facility' at Naunton Park School, Clothing Decontamination Centres at the Sunshine Laundry in Churchill Road and at Crook's Laundry in Croft Street, Food and Rest Centres at Bethesda Methodist Chapel (for 150 persons) and at Zion Baptist Church in Pilley Lane (for 75 persons).

Work on emergency air-raid shelters was also begun in September 1938 at the time of the Munich crisis. Many were dug in haste, including some at the Naunton Park Recreation Ground, for use by Naunton Park School. These were 118 yards long dug in the form of two rectangles linked together, and consisted of timber revetments, covered with corrugated iron with 2-ft of soil on top. They were to accommodate 300 people, but a survey in June 1939 recommended that many trenches be filled in again as they were waterlogged or otherwise unsatisfactory, although those at Naunton Park were considered suitable for retention. Early plans for air-raid shelters and trenches for school children in the area were sufficient for 4000, various sites were identified including one at The Exmouth Arms yard for 100. More shelters were dug in the playgrounds of Leckhampton Primary School, and St James's School in Great Norwood Street. Another, which was brick-built, is remembered in Ashford Road, between Painswick Road and Gratton Road, and more were planned for Pilley. One enterprising local, Mr W Gibbins of 25, Pilley Crescent, constructed his own shelter in the back garden. Made of timber and covered with earth, it would hold six people comfortably. Whether it would have been very effective in an emergency is open to some doubt. Others, like Mr Steele of Pilford Avenue, constructed bomb-shelters for family and friends.

It was announced that air-raid sirens would be tested on the first Monday of every month at 1pm, and there was a siren mounted on a pole outside Leckhampton Police Station near

the Norwood Arms. The Control Centre was located in the basement of Shirer and Lance's store in the Colonnade, and the air-raid sirens on the Municipal Offices and at Whaddon were sounded at midnight on July 8 1939. This test lasted until 4am the next day. It was envisaged that Cheltenham was being attacked by enemy bombers returning from a raid on Birmingham, in three waves. There were 'incidents' in various parts of the town, including Pilley Lane bridge - which foresaw the direct hit on it in December 1940. 116 houses in the town were reported to have visible lights, but it was claimed that valuable lessons had been learnt by the ARP volunteers.

During the hours of darkness there was a strictly enforced nightly blackout, all visible lights from buildings were banned. Windows were screened with heavy material or shuttering, and putting it up and taking it down the next morning could occupy quite a time. Everard Caudle remembers the blackout being a constant source of trouble. Eventually his family devised wooden frames covered with thick black curtain, which slotted into place quickly and easily. He says: "Mrs Hawker and my mother were in charge of the Parish Hall, with its two ancient 'tortoise' stoves. There was always trouble with the blackout for those long, high windows. The curtains were always being ripped and torn by over-energetic misuse, and the blackout was never really successful. The only good thing about the blackout was that the sky looked beautiful." Many have said they remember that the fried fish-and-chip shop in Norwood Road had a double set of blackout curtains inside the doorway to act as a 'light-lock'.

Blackout measures were strictly enforced and many people were prosecuted for failing to obscure lights, including some residents of Leckhampton. These incidents were chiefly the result of carelessness, and not of malicious intent. A resident of Naunton Way was fined ten shillings in September 1939, and another from Leckhampton Road was fined two shillings in July 1940. One infringement occurred because a cat had parted the curtains, but the magistrate said he could not fine the cat! Several others in Leckhampton received fines ranging between seven shillings and five shillings in 1940. So many offences were being reported by mid-1940, when there had not even been any air raids, that people were probably becoming a bit lax in their attitude to the blackout. The local magistrates issued a warning when fining another resident that, "the time is not very far away when it will be the rule for people to go to prison instead of being fined." In March 1941, a hostile crowd gathered outside a house in Bath Road, when a light was left showing through an unscreened window during an alert. As nobody was in the house at the time, the window was broken in order to draw the blackout curtains. The owner was later fined five shillings.

Outdoor lighting, such as it was, was shaded and dim. Front lamps of bicycles, and torches were supposed to be only pointed downwards, and covered with white or yellow paper (not red or green, at the request of the railway executive, as this had mistakenly started or stopped trains) to reduce the light. Jean Girling recalls an unfortunate encounter for Mrs Holmes, who lived in a cottage opposite Tower Lodge and went across the fields to church, sometimes in the blackout. She took care, having a torch, but bumped into a cow one night.

Vehicle headlights were fitted with a cover that had a 2-inch slit, considerably limiting the driver's visibility at night. There was, of course, no street lighting at all, which made movement after dark something of a hazard and obstructions such as lampposts, trees, the corners of buildings and the edges of steps and pavements were given a coat of white paint to make them more visible. Bus windows were painted over; the use of white paint on car bumpers and running boards was encouraged, and a 20-mph speed limit was imposed during darkness. Pedestrians were urged to wear something white at night, and a black dog

wearing a white jacket was commented on favourably. People were often prosecuted for cycling without lights, and in one instance a man was fined four shillings for leaving a car without lights in a dangerous position.

There were other motoring regulations, for instance, all cars fitted with radios and aerials had to have them removed by June 2 1940, and cars had to be immobilised when unattended during the hours of darkness. The Manager of the Sunshine Laundry in Churchill Road had a fine reduced from £1 to ten shillings, because although the vehicle had not been immobilised the battery was 'flat'.

White lines running down the middle of the roads, now so commonplace, were more widely introduced during the war to make driving a vehicle easier after dark, but despite all these precautions there were a great number of accidents, many of them fatal. In September 1939, a 72-year old man from Leckhampton Road was hit by a car, and later died at his home. The driver claimed he was travelling at 8-10 mph with his off-side wheel on the central white line. PC Horton said that the pedestrian should have seen the car's sidelights, and the coroner returned a verdict of Accidental Death due to the blackout. According to the records, an incredible 400 people nationwide were reported killed in accidents in the blackout during the first week of the war and over 3000 seriously injured. The following letter in the *Echo* dated October 10 1940 gives one aspect of the blackout:-

'After 28 successive day and night raids in SE London I have come to Cheltenham for a short rest, having been assured that down here I would not know there is a war on. I did not understand the significance of that assurance until I started up Leckhampton Road on the night of my arrival. Firstly, I was positively blinded by so-called masked headlights of cars, while many sidelights were completely undimmed. Secondly, the lights showing in the windows of some houses were worthy of the worst Fifth-Columnist activities. Where I live, the fine for such as I saw in the Leckhampton Road was £25.'

How much credence can be placed on this single letter is not certain but we can be reasonably sure that the local authorities were doing all in their power to ensure that householders were fully aware of the penalties for such indiscretions. ARP wardens, in uniform and with a white letter W painted on the front of their black helmets, patrolled the streets to make sure that no chink of light escaped, and reported householders for any violation. Wardens were often accused of being too officious, particularly over the question of the blackout.

Daylight saving plans were introduced, and in 1940 British Summer Time (BST) started on February 25. Later in the war, clocks were set to Summer Time all through the year, and in 1941 Double British Summer Time (DBST) was introduced, extending from May 3 to August 9. This meant that in the summer months it didn't get dark until almost midnight, presenting parents of young children with a dilemma as they were not keen on going to bed with the sun still blazing and the birds singing.

A correspondent in the *Echo* at the time wrote, 'Not everyone will benefit from this most original of wartime innovations, which delays the midday sun until two in the afternoon, but it should prove a godsend to enthusiastic gardeners engaged in home food production. In years to come we may well have happy memories of how we planted potatoes up to 11pm or watered our lettuces at midnight.'

Many public buildings were protected by sandbags, hospitals and first-aid posts having priority; but in April 1940 the Government issued a circular that sandbags could be dispensed with for buildings with walls more than 14 inches thick. A total of 2000 sandbags was allocated to Cheltenham before the war began, many more being provided later, and the General Hospital was one of the first buildings to be protected. Paper strips or netting were

stuck across windows to help prevent the glass shattering in the event of a bomb blast nearby. A local newspaper advertised Bence's anti-shatter varnish to paint on windows, priced at 16 shillings-and-sixpence per half-gallon - enough for all the windows of an average house.

Stirrup-pumps for pumping water from buckets on to a fire were delivered to wardens' posts in late 1939, their main purpose being against incendiary bombs. Demonstrations were held at the Corporation Highways Depot in Moorend Road, at Pilley, and Naunton Park School playground by ARP Staff Instructor Mr TH Read, to familiarise people with the handling of them. After the first bombs had dropped on Leckhampton in late 1940, local fire-watching groups were set up in all roads - at first mainly, it seems, as a result of local initiative. Everard Caudle recalls their fire-watching rotas for Pilley Crescent; the teams, which met in Pilley Chapel, consisted of three men, one to operate the stirrup-pump and two to carry the buckets of water from a large static water tank in the field, more or less opposite the chapel; luckily it was never needed.

By February 1941, the local newspapers were reporting that the Leckhampton district was well organised for fire-watching. In an area containing some 500 houses, each street had completed its plans and there were no fewer than 341 fire-watchers enrolled, 95 stirrup-pumps, and 55 ladders available. Some of the groups identified were:-

Church Road: 30 men, with four (working in pairs) on duty every night. William Townsend had lent premises for use as their HQ. A committee of five had been formed with Harold Townsend as secretary.

Leckhampton Road (Malvern Inn to the foot of the hill): A rota of three watchers per night, who were called out on the initial alert. Householders were to pay ten shillings each towards equipment.

Leckhampton Road (Short Street to Shurdington Road, and Fairfield Road to Langdon Road) had one stirrup-pump per five houses and was raising funds for steel helmets and ladders.

Old Bath Road (Pilley Lane to Southern Road): Fire-watchers were on duty in 4-hour shifts from 7pm to 7am from January 16 1941. Mrs Little of Old Bath Road placed a small furnished shed at their disposal, and Mr Wood was Section Leader. Householders were asked to contribute sixpence per month to defray equipment costs.

Old Bath Road (Pilley Lane to Pilley bridge): 35 volunteers in three teams. They had 12 stirrup-pumps and some ladders, and were using a laundry as a very comfortable post.

By September 1941, all men aged between 18 and 60, excluding members of the Forces, Home Guard, doctors, blind persons and mental patients were compulsorily enrolled for fire-watching duties in Cheltenham. The concern was that many business premises were not being adequately covered. By that time, over 300 fire-watching groups existed on a voluntary basis in Cheltenham.

The Pilley fire-watchers protested at being conscripted, claiming that they had fulfilled their duties without compulsion. Some of the members were AG Bradbury, W Caudle, R Clark, J Cook, R Cousins, J Hedley and HE Wood.

Fire-watchers performed a useful service in March 1941, when they spotted and extinguished a fire at a fish-and-chip shop in Bath Road before the arrival of the Fire Brigade. A stirrup-pump and sand were used. As no further bombs were dropped on

Leckhampton after December 1940, this may have been the only time they discovered and dealt with a real fire.

The first winter of the war was one of suspense, with all the boys being called up and evacuees going back home because all seemed quiet. Christmas was much as usual but January brought some severe weather, when birds froze to the telegraph wires, and transport ground to a halt.

Arthur Bendall of Pilford Avenue recalls: "After Munich 1938, the Royal Gloucestershire Hussars (RGH) re-formed as a regiment. In the following year One Squadron met weekly at Leckhampton School playground for drill, and Hall Road was regularly full of cars, as nowadays! But by August 1939, 2, College Lawn had been acquired, and our activities were transferred there.

"I enlisted on August 15 1939, and was later called-up when all the Reserve Forces were mobilised. We reported to College Lawn on the Friday night and were kitted with gas-masks. On the next day, about 90-100 members mustered, and needing some food, the whole of the meals at 'George's', the High Street caterers, were commandeered. We then went home to return at 9am on the Sunday morning for breakfast, which also was from 'George's'. At 11am we heard Mr Chamberlain's announcement that we were at war. Our lives immediately changed!

"Some of us were billeted in College Lawn, while I and many others went to Emmanuel Church Hall, which was in Naunton Crescent. Within a fortnight we set off for Somerset; at Minehead we mustered our regiment (2nd RGH) with two regiments of sharpshooters (3rd and 4th County of London Yeomanry) to form the 22nd Heavy Armoured Brigade, and a fortnight later we moved to Ilfracombe until Christmas 1939. During this period several of us hired taxis for a 'weekend pass' home for 30 shillings between eight or nine of us, who would wedge into the taxi. For our return we would meet at the Norwood Arms, and collect others on our way through Cheltenham; at this time it was a 'pleasant' war. The worst part of our return was the need to relieve ourselves of beer, necessitating frequent stops for our over-packed taxi!"

Early in 1939 an Anti-Aircraft Battery of the Royal Artillery was formed in Cheltenham, under the command of Lt-Col Williamson, who lived in Leckhampton Road next to the railway station. On September 2 1939, the battery moved to Bristol. On the same day, a unit of Women's Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) was formed in Cheltenham. The Territorial Army used to meet at North Street Drill Hall. 'C' Company, 5th Glosters, was also formed on September 2 1939 and its CO was Major JA Kitchling, who was a partner in Robert Young florists.

Alan Randell remembers (vaguely) his elder brother leaving for the 7th Armoured Brigade, 8th Army, and (more clearly) his return in 1945 as a total stranger. Brother number two, who went into the Royal Navy, used to come home sometimes with hand-built models of ships, which doubled as Christmas presents.

THE HOME GUARD

After the sudden collapse of France in June 1940, it was feared that Britain would soon be the next target of invasion.

Leckhampton had its own 'Dad's Army' (the Home Guard) originally called the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV - or 'Look, Duck and Vanish') who wore white handkerchiefs on their left arm as identification in case they were called out at night, and were armed in the beginning with a variety of odd weapons, although being a rural area, some had shot guns. Should the Germans have invaded, the signal was the ringing of church bells.

The Local Defence Volunteers had been hastily raised in May 1940. Lt-Col Norris of the 1st Battalion Gloucestershire Home Guard later said that when it was formed, its only arms were one rifle and three rounds for every ten men. Local Defence Committees (later called Invasion Committees) were set up to prepare for the possibility of an invasion, and in the event, to assume local civil control, and to secure action in the community to assist the defence forces. The Invasion Committee of each area compiled a 'War Book'. All relevant information that might be needed in the event of an invasion was listed, such as the likely scenario and possible defensive measures in that area, the warning system, population figures, details of Home Guard, Police, Special Constables, Civil Defence Wardens, Fire Guards and messengers, as well as the names and addresses of essential personnel, locations of fire stations, police stations, warden posts, shelters, hospitals and first-aid posts, doctors and nurses, rest centres, food centres, water supplies, emergency labour, and provisions for burial of the dead. Unfortunately, such a book for Leckhampton does not seem to have survived.

In Leckhampton, the Kingham railway line formed a natural defence and was protected at strategic points. There were concrete pill-boxes at the roadside, and the Shurdington Road bridge (now demolished) was protected by 'Dragon's Teeth'. These consisted of a number of inverted V-shaped girders normally stacked against the bridge parapet and capable of being lowered into sockets in the road, which had removable metal covers. The bridge over the line in the fields near Merestones Road had a large tree trunk pivoted at one end, and with a wheel at the other running on a quarter-circle of paving, so that it could be swung across the bridge and secured to form a barrier, thus delaying invaders who would come under fire from the pill-box. Many of the roads were guarded by 'tank-traps', many of which were installed by soldiers of the Alien Pioneer Corps, which consisted of such men as eminent scientists, writers and artists, and scions of aristocratic families who had escaped from their countries in occupied Europe. Eventually they were employed in more appropriate wartime activities.

Mr Walford, the local Civil Defence Committee Chairman, reported to the Co-ordinating Officer of the Area, Mr Acocks, on July 10 1940 that he had been round the parish of Leckhampton and interviewed the owners and tenants of all fields that were over 250 yards long (about six in the parish), and had been promised that obstacles would be placed in such fields, the object being to prevent or deter enemy aircraft landing.

A tear-gas test was held in Cheltenham in September 1941, and the busiest parts of the town were swept with tear-gas to the accompaniment of fireworks and wardens' rattles. Hundreds of people were caught without their gas-masks, and took refuge in shops - handkerchiefs clasped to their faces. Some pigs, being kept in pens in the Promenade to publicise kitchen waste salvage, 'seemed to regard the proceedings with blasé indifference. One retired to its sty, but others continued to root around in the sawdust and refused to be disturbed from their kitchen waste luncheon.'

Mock invasions of the area were staged in February and October 1942, to test the defending forces; the latter took place over the weekend of October 3-4, and covered the whole of Cheltenham and the neighbourhood of Leckhampton, Shurdington, The Reddings, Staverton, Boddington and Prestbury. Certain facilities were closed, including public houses, shops and places of entertainment. Church services were cancelled on the Sunday. Everyone was ordered to carry their gas-masks. A report of the 'invasions' in the Chronicle revealed that the defenders had won the day after fighting with grim determination and great spirit. The area had been subjected to mass 'attacks' by infantry, bombing, including dive-bombing, artillery fire, and gas. The attacking force consisted of regular troops and Home Guard personnel; the defenders were all Home Guard plus Civil Defence personnel. It was



Canteen for Evacuees arriving at Leckhampton Railway Station.
Published by kind permission of Cheltenham Museum



Leckhampton Junior School in 1935 - the youth of the village
seem unaware of any prospect of war.
via Bruce Stait



Scrap Metal Week June 22-29 - dump at Francis Street, one of the largest in Cheltenham.

Chronicle and Graphic - June 1940



Mr B C Enoch (in hat) of Southern Road, at the removal of iron railings for scrap, with 'mates' Harold Stubbs, Ted Hart, Ted Groome and 'lad' nick-named "Hedgehog".

Chronicle and Graphic - June 1940



Cheltenham Hurricane Fund - Peter Palmer, Naunton Park schoolboy with his home-made trolley and collecting box.

Chronicle and Graphic - August 1940



School-children issued with Gas-masks.

Chronicle and Graphic - June 1940



Fire-watchers under Instruction – ARP Instructor Mr TH Read (kneeling) demonstrates tackling an incendiary bomb for Naunton Park Fire-watchers.

Chronicle and Graphic – February 1942



ARP Wardens outside Naunton Park School.

Standing - (l to r) F Hall, H Surman, R Avery, J Ayliffe, G Ralph, J Cox, H Alcock,
E Kilbey, W Page, L Harpur, E Price, (-?-).

Seated - Mrs Hall, Mrs Owen, Reg Owen (ARP Chief Warden, Naunton Park), Rita Owen, Daisy Bowd.

Bernard Avery. Published by kind permission of Cheltenham Museum



Bath Road Special Constables - HR Boucher of Leckhampton Road Sub-Station is on the extreme right, seated.

Chronicle and Graphic - March 1941



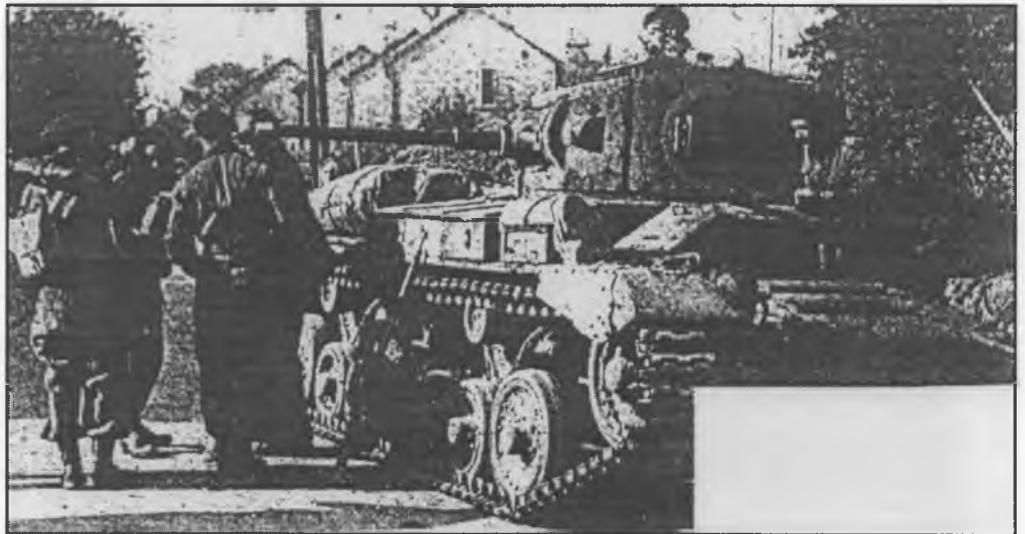
Leckhampton Home Guard in May 1942 under command of Lt G L Heawood (c. front), outside the Parish Hall. Others included: in middle row - Norman Preece (2nd l), Ian Harris (5th r), Fred Read (extreme r).

Fred Read via Bruce Stait



Defence Exercises - Home Guard on duty at a corner in Bath Road.

Chronicle and Graphic - February 1942



Cheltenham Invasion Test - ARP Warden taken 'prisoner' in Church Road.

Chronicle and Graphic - October 1942

Bomb-damaged bungalow in
Maida Vale,
where Les Stock, his father and
mother-in-law
are all said to have died.

Chronicle and Graphic-
December 1940



Damaged house in Suffolk Road,
where Mrs W Iles died.

Chronicle and Graphic-
December 1940

The ruins of Pilley Bridge,
after the raid on December 11 1940.

Ian Harris





January snow at The Crippetts bungalow, Leckhampton, where some of the windows had been broken by the exploding of a delayed-action bomb.

Chronicle and Graphic - February 1941



Cecil Smith (of T W Smith), in ARP Rescue Worker's uniform.
Mrs Maureen Mathias (nee Smith)

claimed that there had been outstanding liaison between the military and the Civil Defence. About 5.30pm on the Saturday, a number of the enemy's medium tanks broke through in the Leckhampton area and headed for Cheltenham, making easy progress along the Bath Road. A photograph shows an 'enemy' tank crew taking prisoner the local air-raid warden in Church Road. The objective of the defenders was to allow the enemy to advance to the inner defence ring, and not to hold the outer defences of the town. Some tanks reached the Promenade, but here their progress was halted and they retired.

After reinforcement overnight, the enemy launched another large-scale attack at 8am on the Sunday; they attacked from Prestbury, Shurdington, Leckhampton, Swindon Village, and Charlton Wood. At Leckhampton the enemy troops passed close to the Invasion Committee's HQ without realising it, so the post remained in action until the end of the mock invasion. The HQ's location is still not known. Swindon Village fell after being heavily machine-gunned; Westal Green was dive-bombed. There was heavy fighting near Holy Apostles Church, Charlton Kings.

Following further 'attacks', the Civil Defence organisation was ordered to abandon its civil defence duties and to take part with the military in the defence of the town. The enemy's plans did not succeed: the end of the battle came with the heart of the town intact, and the enemy withdrew under strong defensive fire.

During the enemy attack, cars and lorries, and Fire Brigade vehicles were used to block the Bath Road; a vast crowd peppered the enemy tanks with every sort of missile that could reasonably be assumed to represent a bomb, firemen played their hoses on the tanks, while smoke-bombs and fire-crackers burst to left and right. At last, the tanks had had enough and made off in the direction from whence they had come.

Of the Home Guard, Ian Harris recalls: "I was a 17-year old when I joined the Home Guard. I was living in Sandy Lane at the time and had a choice between being in Charlton Kings Platoon, in which there were a number of people that I knew, having lived in Lyfield Road West for most of my childhood, or the Leckhampton Platoon commanded by my last headmaster, in which there were a number of teachers and friends from the Grammar School. I chose the Leckhampton, greatly influenced by a close friend of mine.

"The platoon met in Leckhampton Parish Hall every week, and we reported there for other duties when our turn came. These consisted of field exercises, such as ambush practice or producing effective personal camouflage in the fields above Daisybank Road or Southfield Farm, and then awaiting discovery. There were also patrols and guard duties; some of these activities in winter were boring and miserable, but took a different feeling in spring and summer. The guard duties took place at various locations in Leckhampton and Charlton Kings, such as, Naunton Park School, Delancey Hospital and Leckhampton railway station.

"The military thinking was centred on invasion which would be preceded by spies, saboteurs, agents-provocateurs and small military invasion units dropped in by parachute. The Home Guard was to be on the alert for these landings and any acts of sabotage.

"I remember a 12-hour guard duty at Charlton Kings railway station; six or seven men and an NCO or two spent the night in a railway carriage shunted into a siding, duty was two hours on and four hours off. While on patrol, the trains rumbled through the night carrying essential supplies of food, fuel, raw materials and military essentials. Weak flickering oil lamps would appear out of the darkness on the front of the railway engine; maybe there would be a flash of fire while a firebox was opened as the engine thumped past and a long line of wagons rattled by. Finally the dim red light of the guard's van would disappear into the night.

"Then there were the morning patrols over Leckhampton Hill as dawn broke on a summer's morn. First there was the climb up Daisy Bank in the dark, then on up the hill

alongside the quarry to the top as light began to creep across the landscape, along the crest of the hill and then dropping down over Lilleybrook. We had no radio, so if we had seen a landing we would have had a long way to run to a telephone. Only two men went on patrol together. By the time the world woke up we were on our way home to breakfast, and then off to work.

"The alternative to a mobile patrol was a static watch from the top of St Mary's church tower in Charlton Kings; wonderful on a sunny spring or summer morning, awful in wind and rain.

"I also remember H Jarrett-Kerr; he was a retired regular army officer of field rank, but in the Home Guard he started as a private, though when I met him I think he was already a Lance-Corporal. He liked to give innocent raw recruits like myself advice from his long experience as a soldier. 'Do you know', he once said, 'one of the most useful items for a soldier to carry is a small supply of toilet paper.' When I became a soldier I never forgot that piece of advice, and remembered it for many years after I became a civilian again. As a soldier, much of what I learned in Leckhampton was useful when I ended up as a Chindit behind Japanese lines in north Burma."

In September 1944 the Home Guard was stood down and on December 3 a final parade of around 7,000 was held in Hyde Park, where King George VI took the salute. Cpl RT Gosney of 46, Leckhampton Road, was one of three from Gloucestershire chosen to attend the parade.

Chapter 2

RATIONING

One of the most enduring memories of life on the Home Front was the strict system of rationing. Petrol was the first commodity to be affected, and others followed soon afterwards: butter, sugar and bacon, and then meat, part of which had to be taken as corned beef. (Meat was to be the last food to come off ration.) In a short time almost every kind of foodstuff was involved; in fact, rationing was to last in some form or another until 1954, which sometimes comes as a surprise, even to those who were there at the time.

Ration books had been prepared by the Government in 1938 and, assisted by the WI and WVS, were issued to every household soon after the war began; buff-covered for general use and green for expectant mothers. As might be expected this vast undertaking was not accomplished without some difficulty and in Cheltenham there was something of an administrative problem keeping track of removals, these running at a rate of around 400-500 per week. The Food Office was reported to have issued 600 emergency ration cards to visitors to the town and people who were going away for Easter 1940.

In order to make sure that shops had enough stocks, but were not over-supplied, everyone had to register with a single grocer, butcher and dairy. There was plenty of choice of suppliers, not only the large shops like Liptons and the Home and Colonial in the Cheltenham High Street where many people shopped, but also those closer to the parish in the Bath Road. A good many local housewives chose the personal service of little corner shops in Leckhampton itself, of which there were many, sadly most of them now gone or changed. In the Leckhampton Road was the general store run by Mr Marmont, it's now a dress shop called Ancilla, and further up the hill were the Leckhampton Stores and the Co-op. The Pop-In, in Prospect Place just off the Leckhampton Road, functioned as a sweet shop, and Willie Culverwell's grocer's and Dick Wood's sweet-shop were both in Moorend Road.

In the numerous side roads off Leckhampton Road were other small shops; in Fairhaven Road was Miss Winifred Chambers, who sold the best-tasting fresh bread for miles around, according to Mrs Nell Frewin, and on the opposite corner was the grocery shop of Mrs Walters. In the Old Bath Road, there was William May's grocer's and another sweet-shop at Miss Pritchard's, 204, Leckhampton Road.

Butcher's shops, like Mr Morgan's in Leckhampton Road or Meadows & Hughes in Norwood Parade, sold not only various cuts of meat, but also offal, kidneys, tongue, meat pies and sausages, all of which were not rationed, and most of them were kept 'under the counter'. Jean Girling's family had relatives at Milton-under-Wychwood, Oxfordshire, who kept poultry and regularly sent slices of roast chicken wrapped in greaseproof paper. These were posted on Sundays and arrived the next morning!

Of course, in rural areas, many people kept rabbits or poultry, or went shooting for pigeons or rabbits. Mrs Olive Carruthers-Little kept rabbits, but never ate her own, instead exchanging them with someone else. If a pig was kept at the bottom of the garden, meat coupons had to be surrendered when the pig was slaughtered. The public was encouraged to rear pigs; a poster was put up at the Norwood Arms roundabout - 'To save your bacon, save your scraps.' In 1941, four pigs, the property of Mr F Townsend of Moorend Street, were penned in the Promenade for a fortnight and fed on kitchen scraps collected by the townspeople. At this time, waste food sufficient for fifty pigs was collected, and Queen Mary, living at nearby Badminton House, sent her good wishes for the success of the town's efforts

to reach a target of 100 tons of salvaged food per week.

Food rationing was welcomed in general, largely because it offered fair shares for all, ensuring that the poorer sections of the population were fed as well as the rich. As an added bonus it brought a dramatic increase in the overall health of the nation, due mainly to the basically higher nutritional value of rationed food, plus a reduction in sugar and fat intake. Almost everyone complained about rationing, but nobody starved.

The actual amount of food 'on the ration' varied throughout the war but the following list gives a typical weekly minimum and maximum that each person was to receive:-

Meat:	1 shilling to two shillings-and-a pennyworth
Bacon:	4oz - 8oz
Cheese:	1oz - 8oz
Fats:	1oz - 8oz
Eggs:	1/2 - 2
Tea:	2oz - 4oz
Sugar:	8oz - 16oz, plus 2lbs for jam-making in summer
Sweets:	3oz - 4oz (including chocolate)
Dried milk:	1/4 tin
Dried eggs:	1/8th packet

The last item, dried eggs, was one of the best-remembered food oddities of the war and British housewives were confronted with packets of yellow powder at an early stage. Intended as a substitute for fresh eggs in most recipes - quite a tasty omelette could be concocted with care - it soon became a standard joke for comedians. Indeed the very mention of powdered eggs can still bring a smile to most people who remember wartime rationing.

Extra milk for the over-fives was provided at schools, a third of a pint for each child, priced at a ha'penny, a practice which survived until the 1960s. Agricultural and heavy manual workers had extra cheese, vegetarians had extra cheese in place of meat, and invalids and members of religious sects had modified rations according to their needs. Pregnant women had a daily pint of milk costing tuppence, the right to go to the head of any queue and first allocation of oranges and bananas (when they were available).

As time went by there was very little that was not rationed. Exceptions were seasonal fruit and vegetables, and householders with gardens began to tune in to Mr Middleton, the Radio Gardener, to pick up tips on how to increase their production. The slogan 'Dig For Victory' was taken to heart, cherished flower beds and front lawns being dug up in order to plant potatoes and other crops. Mrs Clarke, a notable figure in Leckhampton for many years, wrote in her 1943 diary that, 'the flower beds in Sandford Park are full of leeks and lettuces, where lovely tulips and rockery plants used to grow'. Competitions were held and Mr W Caudle of Pilley Crescent won the Pate's Cup for the best garden and Alderman Trye was commended for his fine crop of onions. Everard Caudle remembers that "the field at the corner of Charlton Lane and Old Bath Road was made into allotments. It was hard work digging virgin soil, but the long-term results were well worth the effort; we grew masses of vegetables, keeping ourselves supplied throughout the year. We also grew soft fruit, or collected blackberries from the hedgerows. These went into a basin lined with slices of bread, sealed with more bread then baked in the oven - it seemed wonderful at the time!"

Leckhampton had many allotments (there were reputed to be over 1000 allotments, council and private, in the area) and these were used to their maximum capacity in wartime. Three demonstration plots, that were prepared in Cheltenham during the 1942 Dig For

Victory Week, came in for much attention. All over the country large areas of parkland were ploughed over for wheat production to replace that lost from overseas, one such being the 'outfield' of Cheltenham racecourse. Bread, though only rationed late in the war, was severely restricted in so far as choice was concerned, and we all became accustomed to the 'National' loaf, made with more of the grain, darker than normal white bread but not as dark as wholemeal. Where there was room in a garden people grew soft fruit; children went out and picked dandelions and cowslips for home-made wine. Some fruit like prunes were used instead of the usual dried fruit. Runner beans were sliced into storage jars with salt.

One important food that was never rationed throughout the war was fish, though supplies at fishmongers like Poole's in Norwood Road were often limited. Those living near to the sea had the opportunity to get fresh fish, but many boats were taken over for use by the Admiralty. Whale meat became available, but was never very popular because of its strong taste. Salt-dried cod was widely available, but most folk found it unpalatable, though with soaking for twenty-four hours it could be cooked in a little milk, covered with stuffing and made into a tasty meal. Herring, mackerel and sardines were very nutritious, and high in fats, and kippers sold for a shilling per pair. Liquid paraffin was used to supplement the fat ration, and neighbours could share the chip-pan over the garden fence. Mrs Betty Jones recalls that there were many fried fish-and-chip shops but particularly praised the ones owned by Frank Gillett in Suffolk Parade and Albert Hill's that stood in a row of terraced houses in Norwood Road, now demolished. At the one near the Daffodil cinema, which opened when supplies were available, Mrs Jones used to spend thruppence on chips to put in her bicycle-basket and eat while cycling home from work at 10pm.

Mrs Jones's father, Mr Clarke, was sub-postmaster at Leckhampton Post Office, on the corner of Church Road, and the family lived on the premises. Outside the shop, there was a horse-trough, which was later taken away for scrap metal. The PO counter was at the right of the door, and there was a wooden telephone-box which took up a great deal of space. The shop sold sweets, tobacco and stationery; there was a row of biscuit tins for loose biscuits (no packets in those days). They also sold haberdashery (cottons, shoelaces, etc) and some medical items (plasters, aspirin). Mr Clarke was once asked for Velveeta (actually a kind of soft cheese), and his reply was, "I've got 'Snowfire' " (a chilblain ointment). For the first few months of the war, stocks came in regularly, but PO business increased greatly as wives and mothers came to draw service allowances: Army on Mondays, RAF on Tuesdays, Navy on Wednesdays and Old-age pensions on Fridays. Each Saturday evening the books had to be balanced; a head office inspection could be made at any time.

Ministry of Food bulletins on 'good eating' began in June 1940, Food Offices advertised when cookery demonstrations would be given in the area, and the Radio Doctor, Dr Charles Hill, broadcast weekly on health and rationing. Diet essentials were 12oz of bread, 1lb of potatoes, 2oz of oatmeal, 1oz of fats, 6oz of vegetables, and six tenths of a pint of milk per day. Mothers had to continually rack their brains to find ways to feed a family on the rations allowed. Meat was often supplemented with dumplings or suet pastry. Some lamb and pork cuts could be stuffed, typically with - 6oz-breadcrumbs; 2 dried eggs; 4 tablespoons-chopped onions; 1 tablespoon-vinegar; chopped herbs, salt and bacon fat. Cheese, rationed to one ounce per week, was usually bought once per month and main meals were sometimes of vegetables au gratin. The Government urged housewives to make pickles, sauces and spreads to ease a monotonous diet.

By December 1941, other goods in short supply were put on a 'points' system which enabled housewives to please themselves whether or not to splash-out on 'luxury' items. These varied according to availability, and included such foods as tinned fish, tinned fruit,

and golden syrup, and coincided with the arrival in Britain of food from the USA, among them 'Spam' - SPiced hAM that you either liked or loathed.

The Minister responsible for food during the war (until 1943) was Lord Woolton and one of the Ministry of Food jingles was:-

*Those who have the will to win
Cook potatoes in their skin,
Knowing that the sight of peelings
Deeply hurts Lord Woolton's feelings.*

His MoF propaganda machine urged conserving meagre rations and other precious goods, and to ignore the evil 'squanderbug', a cartoon character, with Hitler's moustache and forelock, whispering in our ear to 'spend it now'. Paper was often in scarce supply so packaging became less and less as time went by. Shoppers responded by taking their own paper bags, which were reused several times over. Foods such as sugar, rice and dried fruit were packed by the grocer, and making the bags was a grocer's art.

The WI ran canning sessions in the Parish Hall, but some people bottled fruit in Kilner jars instead; vegetables like carrots and beetroot were stored in boxes of sand, and jams of all descriptions were made.

The ships of the Merchant Navy, battling both storms and perils from German U-Boat attacks on the wide ocean, were crammed with essential war supplies from overseas but sometimes there was space for scarce items in their holds, which might include tinned fish, bananas or oranges. On the rare occasions when these goods arrived in the shops the news would be quickly passed by word of mouth and an orderly queue would line up on the pavement outside, as happened one evening outside a Cheltenham greengrocer's after news that 20,000 crates of oranges had arrived in London from Spain, and in 1944 South African oranges sold out quickly at seven pence a pound - one pound per ration book.

The *Echo* also reported that a queue of 100 people formed for allocation of 2lbs of onions per person and one lady near the end of the line did not know what they were selling but hoped it was oranges! Quite often it was not until housewives got to the counter that the mystery of what was being sold was solved. Standing in a queue soon became a national pastime and no matter what it was for, many items were bought 'just in case'.

Everyday articles such as razor blades and cigarettes were practically unobtainable. Cigarettes were often delivered in large packs, then carefully counted out into fives, tens and twenties, wrapped in small pieces of newspaper and kept 'under the counter' for special customers. The newspapers contain a story of a Cheltenham tobacconist receiving a supply of cigarettes, and the inevitable queue quickly formed. A young man appeared and attempted to gain entrance to the shop only to be met by heated demands for him to get to the back of the queue. Order was only restored when he pointed out that he was in fact one of the shop assistants and was going in to serve the customers!

Shop window displays were severely restricted as the years dragged on; cardboard replicas of chocolate bars, and empty sweet tins, standing forlornly amidst ancient dust, became a common sight. Sweet rationing, which began in July 1942, did not end until February 1953, almost eight years after the war was over. Many ingenious recipes were concocted to overcome the lack of sweet coupons. Mrs Margaret Storey remembers that her mother sometimes made a topping for a birthday cake from condensed milk, icing sugar being of course on coupons. 'It used to stick to the roof of your mouth.'

If there were any complaints, they were usually met with the response, 'Don't you know there's a war on?' Another popular phrase, 'You've had it', usually meant that you hadn't had

it, as it was probably unobtainable.

'Real' eggs were in short supply, 'one egg per person, per week - perhaps' was the slogan, and to overcome their scarcity some people kept their own hens. Some sort of meal was available for them but one had to surrender one's egg coupons to be eligible. It had to be mixed with mashed potato peelings which gave off an awful smell while cooking. Any surplus eggs were preserved in a bucket of isinglass, kept in a cool place, and could be stored for several months.

In order to cater for special parties or big family occasions like weddings and Christmas, rations would be carefully put aside for several weeks or some items would be traded with neighbours; soap swapped for tea, or sugar for butter and so on. It became an offence to waste food; a fine of £2 was imposed on a local woman for discarding packages of food on a field path, and two others were fined £2 each for throwing bread out for the birds.

Austerity was something to which we all became accustomed over the years, indeed there was little else that ordinary folk could do unless one turned to the 'black market' which flourished wherever there were shortages. The prices charged by those who ran this enterprise - 'Spivs' as they were called - were generally far beyond the pockets of most of the population, except perhaps for clothing coupons which changed hands at about two shillings-and-sixpence each, and this was the one common 'crime' to which a lot of people succumbed.

Clothing had been rationed since June 1941 and was, naturally, a big problem for the female of the species. In the grand British tradition of making the best of things, women's magazines were full of ideas of how to give last year's frock a fresh look by adding a lace collar and cuffs, or trimming with braid or colourful buttons. Mrs Margaret Storey recalls how some folk were clever enough to make themselves a winter coat from a blanket - although these items were also in short supply. "The versatility of people was often quite surprising. Much use was made of blackout material, which was not on clothing coupons, and with a little embroidery could look quite smart. Mothers used to have weekly 'Make Do and Mend' sessions in the Parish Hall; I had a green-patterned dress made from curtains that used to hang in our sitting room. Many a jumper was unravelled and re-knitted, mats and rugs were made from pieces of cut-up rag, and some girls were lucky enough to obtain panels from silk parachutes which could be made into underclothes and night-dresses."

Chapter 3

AIR RAIDS

Air-raid warnings, both by day and night, were something to which everyone became accustomed as time went by. Of the four sirens in Cheltenham, the one mounted on the Auxiliary Fire Station (AFS) in Moorend Road, adjacent to the Corporation Depot, was the nearest to the village. The so-called *Red Alert* - Air Raid Warning – signalled 'Raiders Approaching' and its undulating wail, lasting for sixty seconds, struck a chill of fear in all who heard it. Indeed, many of us became so conditioned that the sound of a police or ambulance siren in the immediate post-war years often produced a similar response. The *Red Alert* warned the ARP wardens to prepare for action and the civilian population to take cover. A continuous siren note announced the All Clear - the *Green Alert* - 'Raiders Passed'. Other colours were used to denote states of readiness for the civil defence services. *Purple Warning* preceded Red as an initial alert.

To protect civilians, surface air-raid shelters were provided in Pilley Crescent and others were not far away on waste ground in Great Norwood Street, by the Norwood Arms, and another by Naunton Park. All the schools had their own, that for the Primary School in Hall Road being described by Alan Randell as "a dim, dark place, covered in turf, with duckboards on the floor and water beneath". It was located in the playground alongside the present building.

Most residents created their own 'safe place'; in the cupboard under the stairs or beneath the kitchen table. One exception was at 93 Church Road, where Don Biddle and his family lived, and Don's father and Joe Pollard, their next-door neighbour, dug out a combined air-raid shelter for the two families in the back garden. It was well equipped with benches, duckboards, spades, blankets, hurricane lamps and torches, and lined with rough pine boards. Don recalls one particular occasion when the shelter was most welcome: "On the night of November 14 1940, Coventry received a mass attack that lasted for eleven hours. I well remember standing outside the shelter and gazing into the night sky, listening to the distinctive throb of the enemy aeroplanes as the seemingly endless stream passed overhead."

Michael Gibson was living with his parents at 14 Chatsworth Drive from 1934 when the houses were built. There was an air-raid shelter in a neighbour's garden, which Michael says he went to in his pyjamas and was shown the searchlights in the night sky.

Although considered a 'safe haven', Cheltenham by no means escaped the attention of the Luftwaffe, and several bombs fell in Leckhampton parish, some killing civilians, though these incidents did not compare to the air raids suffered in larger towns and cities of Britain.

Unlike Cheltenham, which presented a number of legitimate targets, Leckhampton had no obvious military installations, and bombs that fell here were probably accidents, such errors being common on both sides during the war. Although some bombs fell close to railway lines, and indeed one 'lucky' hit put the line between Cheltenham and Andoversford out of action for a time, it seems unlikely that the Germans aimed at this feature. (It was reported in 1945 that they had maps of this area. One outlined Sunningend Works but omitted detail of nearby housing, implying the maps had been compiled some years before from Zeppelin reconnaissance.)

Inevitably, the bombing of Cheltenham so early in the war, and the resulting death and destruction it caused, left a lasting impression on all who lived through those nights. At the time the Press were making announcements of public meetings to give information regarding

protective measures.

On the night of October 19 1940 a stick of bombs fell on Leckhampton, most of them in open fields. Luckily the majority failed to go off, indeed the only two to explode were on Lilleybrook golf course. One bomb landed just behind the Primary School, another in the garden of 25 Church Road opposite the Parish Hall, and another two in Pilley Crescent, burrowing under the foundations and leaving a large hole. The Church Road occupants were unaware of their lucky escape until they awoke next morning, although the residents of Pilley Crescent were taken to spend the night in a school hall.

The Clarke family, living at the Post Office, were amongst those unaware of their close brush with death until it was daylight, when they were told they must evacuate. Betty (Clarke) Jones recalled how all the Post Office stock, stamps, postal orders and cash was taken to the shop on the corner of Hall Road - then owned by Mr & Mrs Culverwell - where her father paid out allowances and pensions until they were allowed to return.

Don Biddle was a pupil at Leckhampton Primary School and recalls a curious story from that night: "The next day, together with a group of village youngsters, I stood by an army lorry and watched sappers from the Royal Engineers' bomb disposal squad removing the detonator from an unexploded bomb. Inside was a piece of paper on which was typed 'Best wishes from Czechoslovakia'. Some brave soul, one of Hitler's slave workers, had interfered with the detonator, saving many of our lives. The bombs were taken to Linacre Field at the Crippetts and exploded in the stream bed opposite the present pig farm. After it was all over, the excited village lads gathered to examine the crater."

A shower of incendiaries fell on October 22, and more on November 19, accompanied by 18 delayed-action bombs, which fell on Pilley Crescent, Southfield Farm, Hall Road allotments and Burrows Sports Field.

Birmingham was the main target for a large force of German bombers on the night of December 11 1940 but Cheltenham also received attacks. Flares, followed by bombs, were dropped and fires were started at Sunningend Aircraft Works (HH Martyn's) and the Gasworks, the resulting blaze attracting the attention of other Luftwaffe crews. Between 7.40pm and 12pm, 2000 incendiaries as well as oil-bombs, and 155 high-explosive bombs (some of them 1000 pounders) were dropped. The attack was an unforgettable and terrifying spectacle, with AA guns blazing, shrapnel exploding in a starlit sky, and bombs crashing down. In Cheltenham's worst raid of the war there were 19 fatalities, 11 seriously injured and 64 minor casualties. The number of homeless was put at 600, ten houses were completely destroyed and 400 seriously damaged. The death toll is believed to have finally reached 23, the majority in the lower end of Cheltenham at Stoneville Street. In a report issued on December 16, criticism was levelled at the Cheltenham ARP organisation for a lack of co-ordination between the various rescue services and the military. It was also reported that some bombed houses had been looted.

On that night, Mr Cyril Richardson recalls that he and other members of his family, and his wife-to-be, Grace, were sheltering on the cellar steps of 3, Norwood Parade (now 21 Shurdington Road), when some incendiary bombs fell on the storage warehouse of the Birmingham Waste Paper Company in Francis Street, with illuminating results.

More bombs fell elsewhere in the town and Leckhampton, one hitting the North wing of the recently-built 'Fulwood', the Hall of Residence of St Mary's College, where the students had just returned from being evacuated to mid-Wales late in 1939.

The road bridge spanning the railway at Pilley was put out of action by a single bomb, an event that seems to have been witnessed by a good many, including Cyril Price. According to his account in the newspaper, when the bomb fell he was approaching Pilley Bridge and if

it had exploded on impact he, and a good deal of the surrounding area, would have been wiped out. Instead, the bomb went clean through the surface of the bridge and fell into the railway cutting below before exploding, causing little damage to the vicinity. Cyril was left standing on the edge of a chasm where moments before the bridge had been.

The late Seaward Mees, before his wartime service in the RAF, was a call boy at the Malvern Road Depot of the Great Western Railway. Shortly before his death he told Derek Brown that one of his duties had been to cycle round the town to knock up engine drivers and firemen in time for their duty turns. On the night when Pilley Bridge was hit and the Kingham line was blocked, the crew of the last train to Cheltenham decided to carry on as far as they could and draw up near the ruins of the bridge. A reason for the decision may have been that fireman George Webb lived in Old Bath Road.

Back at Malvern Road, young Mees was despatched to the homes of the driver Frederick Roberts, known as 'Frowsy Fred', in St George's Place, and of the Webbs. He told Mrs Roberts that her husband was safe but would be home late, and pedalled up to where the bridge had been. Confronting him was his own doctor in Home Guard uniform and guarding the wreckage. He was told that it would be against orders for him to clamber across the track.

So the messenger had to cycle down Mead Road and go round by Leckhampton Road, only to find that George Webb had scrambled up the bank and gone home. Mrs Webb already knew what had happened and George was back on the train. What the young boy noticed particularly was that there was no one about; he had the streets to himself. The train steamed off back to Kingham, returning to Cheltenham via Honeybourne. There was apparently only a handful of passengers, and no one seems to have asked them how they reached home.

Three people in nearby Maida Vale were killed when their bungalow received a direct hit the same night, though, according to the newspaper, six occupants survived. When a *Graphic* photographer, Norman Preece, visited the site next morning a canary in a cage was still singing away on the pile of debris.

On the night in question, Norman, only 17 years old, had been awakened by the sound of bombs falling nearby and ran outside to find that the house next-door-but-one in Suffolk Road had received a direct hit, and he helped rescuers move some heavy coping stones in order to release an injured man whose wife had died. Norman took many of the photographs showing bomb damage in the town, cycling to most of the incidents. Norman and his brother were actually running through Naunton Park to the shelters when the Pilley Bridge explosion occurred.

Austin Nichols, whose father owned a garage on the corner of Pilley Lane, was then a 15-year old schoolboy: "People were advised to lie down in the gutter if they were caught out in the open during an air raid, but on the night of December 11 1940 I remained standing in the doorway of the Post Office facing the glass-panelled door, and when the stick of bombs fell they sounded so loud and clear that they seemed right on top of me. I don't recall feeling afraid, merely curious as to where they might land, and I turned round to have a look. One of them landed in the railway bank opposite the station and I can still see, in my mind's eye, the huge column of debris rising high into the air, silhouetted against the blue-black sky."

Of that night, Geoff Capper, who was only eight years old, recently recalled that "for four hours we were blitzed over Leckhampton and right across Cheltenham. It was like all hell let loose that night as high-explosive bombs rained down. There were many night-time 'alerts', and the sky was criss-crossed with searchlights."

A surface air-raid shelter stood at the top end of Pilley Crescent, probably very close to

where the two unexploded bombs had landed on October 19. Everard Caudle recalls that families in the street were evacuated, first of all to the field that then existed at the bottom of the Crescent, where they stayed for several hours. Eventually, buses arrived to take them to Pate's Grammar School in the High Street, where they slept on the floor. They also used the shelters at Leckhampton School or the warmer and pleasanter cellar of Treelands. Later on, the Caudle family had a Morrison Shelter - a steel table for use at home, which had wire sides that could be fitted when the situation dictated. Everard later joined the ARP as a Messenger; he was given a special gas-mask and a tin hat with a white letter 'M' painted on it.

Mrs Jean Girling remembers that she and her family, together with two others, were moved into the basement of an empty house in the Old Bath Road for two or three days, the owners having gone to America.

Winnie Allen, living with her father and mother at Church Road, was in the Palace Cinema in the High Street (now the site of Marks & Spencer) that same night (December 11). When the siren sounded, the customary notice went up on the screen advising the audience that a raid was in progress, and everyone got up and left. As buses did not run during an alert she had to walk home, but at the Norwood Arms a member of the ARP turned her away because of unexploded bombs further up the road. She ignored the danger and got home via Moorend Park Road, to find that her family had not been evacuated, having merely taken cover under the table.

Mr A Knott, who lived in Moorend Crescent during the war, has given us some very interesting information about the night that the bridge was bombed. The daughter of a friend of his, who lived with her family in Little Herberts in Charlton Kings, had been taken very ill with diphtheria. The doctor decided that she should be taken immediately to Delancey Hospital, which was then the fever isolation hospital, and because of the heavy bombing he took her in his own car to save time. He arrived at Pilley Bridge very shortly after it had been bombed and therefore had to turn back and take her all the way round via Leckhampton Road, worrying all the time whether she was still breathing; but he got there in time.

However, there was a twist in the tail of this tale. The girl's father was in the Navy and at Chatham that night, ready to embark for Durban and then Colombo the next morning. When he arrived at the barracks, the official on duty recognised his name and told him that they had been trying to contact him to tell him that his daughter was so ill. He caught a train for London by the skin of his teeth and got back to Cheltenham later, where his daughter did recover. The twist in the tale was that the boat on which he would have embarked was torpedoed between Durban and Colombo and went down with the loss of nearly all hands.

A photograph taken the following day shows the bridge in ruins and a gang of men clearing the railway lines, though the house adjacent to the bridge appears to be undamaged - at least all the windows seem to be intact. Just a few yards from the bridge, a house in Old Bath Road was demolished by another bomb, and a plaque now gives details of the rebuilding.

Although a footway was laid for pedestrians soon after the incident, the bridge had the unenviable distinction of being the last war-damaged railway bridge to be repaired in the whole of the Britain, and road traffic had to go the long way round in the meantime. A long legal battle had to be settled before construction could begin.

Once again, as in the October raid, some bombs dropped on December 11 failed to explode. One landed in Churchill Road at the rear of the Sunshine Laundry and another in the front garden of 35 Leckhampton Road, the home of Mr Nunn, a local solicitor. It was not until the following morning that he and his family opened the door to be told by an ARP

warden that a 500 lb bomb had landed just outside his garage during the night and his family, and those living nearby, were given 10 minutes to evacuate the premises. Had it gone off on impact, there would have been extensive damage and loss of life in the area and Mr Nunn maintained that the soft earth into which the bomb fell was the reason for their lucky escape. A bomb disposal team exploded the device on Leckhampton Hill.

Three bombs landed at the Crippetts, the exact location is unknown, but anyone walking along the footpath to Crickley Hill will observe large depressions in the ground which are believed to be bomb craters.

An unknown number of incendiary bombs also fell on the town and in the village area; Jean Bendall recalls going out in her pyjamas to see one being dealt with behind her house in Church Road. The fins from these devices, like the bits of bomb and shell shrapnel, were a prized souvenir for many wartime schoolboys.

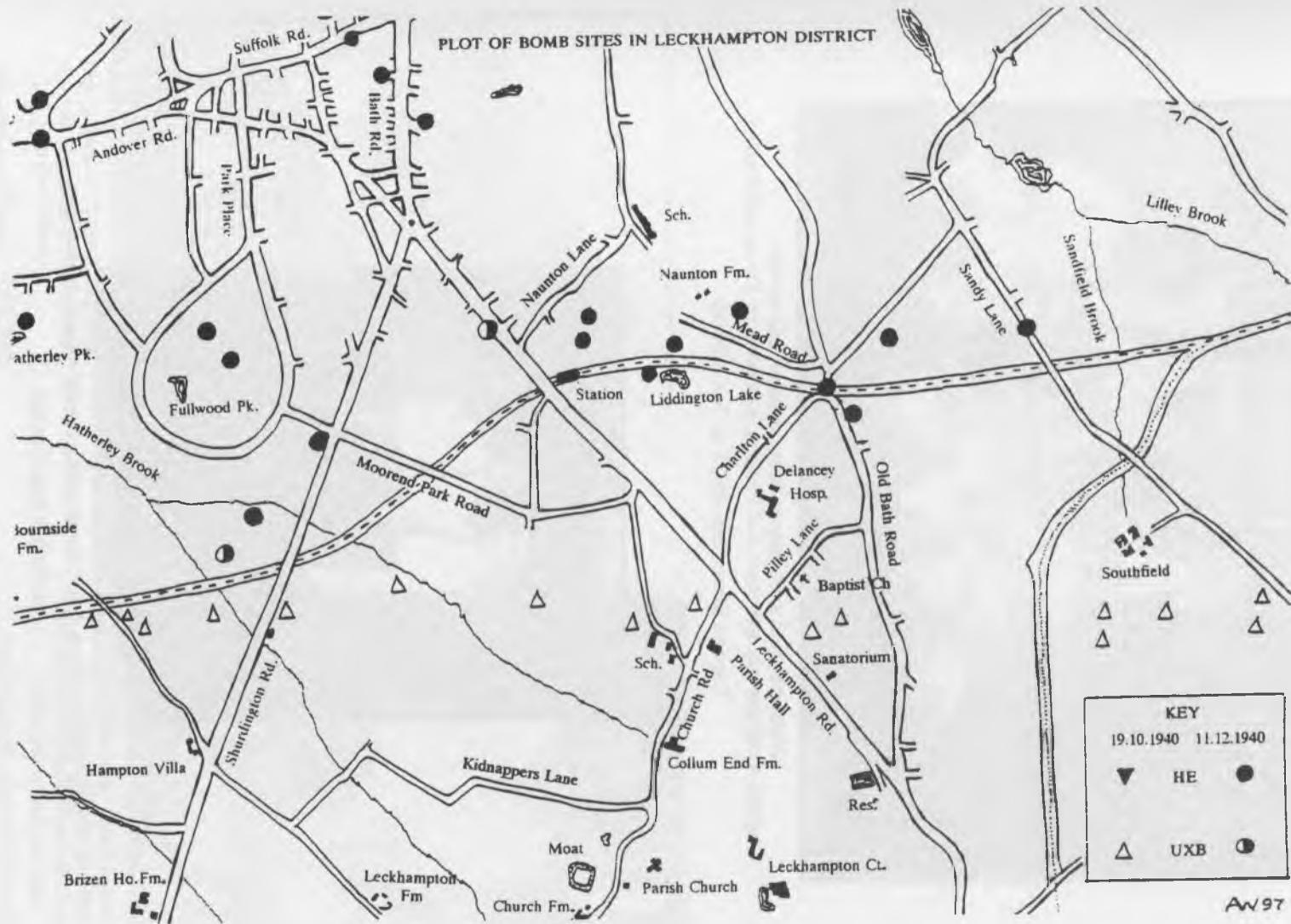
A map held in the Gloucester Record Office gives the location of some of the high-explosive bombs dropped within Cheltenham Borough boundary in seven wartime air raids. A great many fell on the south side of the town and those around the Leckhampton area are shown on an extract from this map. Unfortunately, it cannot be entirely relied upon as residents have told us of one unexploded bomb which fell in the back garden of the Leckhampton Post Office, and another is believed to have exploded in Moorend Road, near the present Ambulance Station, neither of which is shown on the map. As can be seen from the accounts already quoted, there may be others of which we are unaware, although the total number of air raids quoted (which presumably came from an official document) may be reasonably accurate.

Cheltenham was raided on July 27 1942, when a number of bombs fell in the Lower High Street area, and a letter to the *Echo* in 1989 gave details. One fell on the Ritz cinema, failing to explode, but others in Swindon Road and Brunswick Road went off, killing 11 and injuring 27. On the same occasion a Junkers 88 bomber is reputed to have machine-gunned a queue waiting for a Kersey's bus at Prestbury.



Commemorative Plaque on 204, Old Bath Road.

John Milner



Published by kind permission of Gloucestershire Record Office



Women's Land Army help at Leckhampton Farm in 1942.
Daphne Hicks (far left) with Rene and Philippa, supported by Ernest and Fred.
Daphne Oliver (nee Hicks) via Tom Hewlett



Girls Training Corps (l to r) Dorothy Bird, Sheila Hooper, Joan Ainge.
Sheila Ball (nee Hooper)



Kitchen-Scraps for Pig Food -
Collection bins near the Norwood Arms.

Mrs Calcutt (nee Carruthers-Little) via Tom Hewlett



Dig for Victory - Miss G E Linnett,
teacher at Naunton Park School,
on her allotment.

Chronicle and Graphic - April 1940



Fruit Canning - Doris Yeend
and Gwen Sheward (behind)
who still has the equipment which produced
2000 tins of fruit per year.

Mrs Gwen Sheward via Bruce Stait



YMCA Tea Car, presented by women of Boston USA to the Mayoress of Cheltenham.
Lady drivers and Mrs J H (Betty) Trye (holding a bouquet). April 1942.

Peter Gill



Home Guard Party at the Parish Hall - November 1942.

Mrs Maureen Mathias (nee Smith)



"Pretty Ankle" Competition - A Garden Fete at Lowmandale, 59 Leckhampton Road, home of Miss T Flower Mills, was held in aid of the Unitarian Church.

Chronicle and Graphic - July 1940



Signal Corps Logistics Team at Benhall planning the invasion of Normandy, Spring 1943. All were billeted at Leckhampton Court. (l to r) facing: Sergeants Secci, Klein, Drisner and (backview) Ziegler.

Willard Drisner via Bruce Stait



New Rector at Leckhampton - The Rev Eric Cordingly (right), with the Bishop of Gloucester, who conducted the institution ceremony at the Parish Church.

Chronicle and Graphic - March 1941



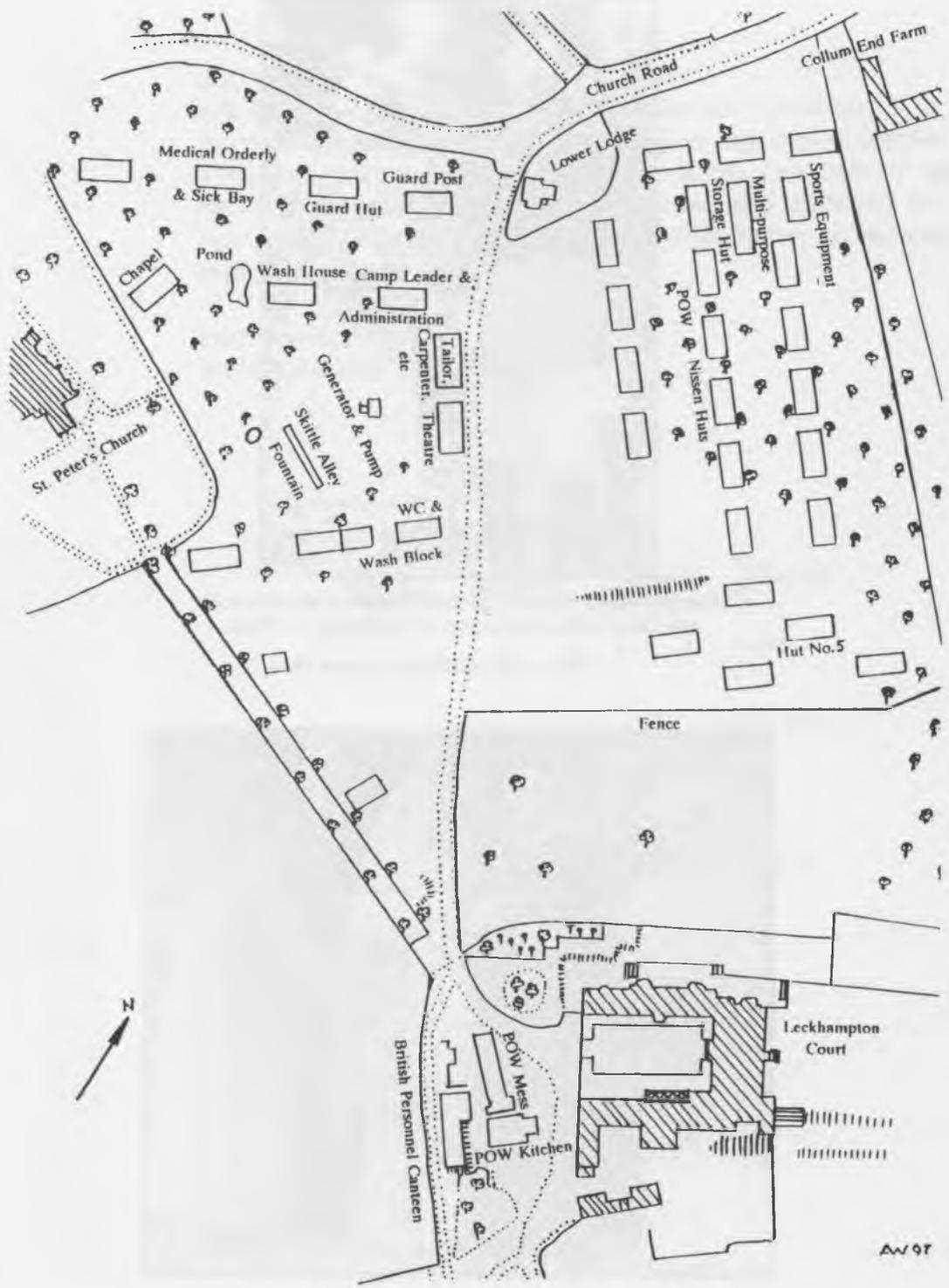
Wedding at the Parish Church of Captain Peter Reynolds
and Miss Hettie Jarrett-Kerr of Leckhampton Road.

Chronicle and Graphic - June 1940



Wedding of Frederick George Sandford and Miss Edith Mary Joyce Jones of 87, Church Road

Chronicle and Graphic - May 1940



LECKHAMPTON COURT POW CAMP 1945 - 1948

Based upon Ordnance Survey material with the permission of The Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office, © Crown Copyright Licence No 88203M

Chapter 4

LECKHAMPTON COURT

WAR OFFICE REQUISITION

Although much of the history of Leckhampton Court is well known, it is surprisingly sparsely documented in the 20th century. It appears that the Court was unoccupied and partly derelict between the Wars, its owners having taken up residence at Colesbourne Court. From 1939 to 1948 it was requisitioned by the War Office and used for a variety of purposes. The records give a date of August 9 1940 for occupation of part of the house, garage and garden at a rent of £75, and on September 20 a part of the orchard was also requisitioned. Daphne Oliver was, at that time, living at Leckhampton Farm and recalls that "the first troops at the Court were members of the Durham Light Infantry; they trained locally, and we soon became used to finding them in the most unexpected places - even in the garden (practising camouflage) amongst the vegetables!"

In the Court grounds a number of Nissen huts were erected (the concrete bases of some may still be seen at the time of writing) and a unit of the British Army took up residence soon afterwards. Durham Light Infantry (or some say they were the Ox & Bucks) officers occupied the manor house while the main body of troops used the huts. One large hut, used as the cookhouse, stood facing Church Meadow and was still to be seen in the 1950s.

THE U.S. ARMY CAMP

The American Army came to Leckhampton Court on July 16 1942, after a day-long train trip from Gourock in Scotland. Among their number was Master Sergeant Willard Drisner: "I am afraid that we didn't get off to a very good start when we arrived at the Court. A unit of the British Army, the Pioneer Corps, had prepared a hot meal, consisting of mutton stew and broad beans, neither of which were familiar to us at the time, and few of the GIs managed to eat any. As you can imagine, this did not endear us to the men who had cooked our meal. We were part of the HQ Services of Supply for the European Theatre of Operations under the command of Lt-Gen John CH Lee, who was Eisenhower's deputy. The GIs were mainly office staff of the Signal Corps, working in E Block at Benhall Farm, and we had our meals and slept in Nissen huts at the Court, scattered in the orchard between the manor and Church Road. A small contingent of cooks and guards were there through the day, commanded by Lt Krekman, all sleeping in the house itself. We had a dark-panelled day room on the north side of the house and the orderly room was also there. I seem to remember thinking that the house looked slightly derelict, as though it had lain empty for some time. For a brief time we had a celebrity with us, none other than the Hollywood film actor Mickey Rooney, who had been drafted into the Signal Corps. He disappeared after a couple of days and we assumed he had been transferred to London or somewhere, as the Signal Corps also had the job of making training films."

Willard tells an odd story of an occurrence soon after their arrival: "There was a radio left behind in one of the huts and we tuned in to listen to the German propaganda read out by the traitor 'Lord Haw-Haw'. We were astonished to hear him welcome the American Army to Cheltenham and promise them that soon they would be able to see the German war machine in action. The next day a bomber came over and dropped a load of bombs on Cheltenham, killing a number of civilians and putting an unexploded bomb on the cinema in the Lower High Street."

When the Americans moved into the huts the showers (cold water only) were outdoors

and the sanitary facilities were basic, but after a time these improved and living conditions became quite comfortable. Another ex-GI, Vincent Manzelli, writes: "The roof leaked and to dodge the rain I slept in a bath tub. One day we were sitting on the wall alongside Church Road when a troop of boy scouts marched past. One of us called out, 'And who do you think you are?' A little one at the rear replied, 'We're England's last hope!' One afternoon each week we clerks were bussed back to the Court to undergo several hours of training as infantry riflemen. We used the playground of the Primary School as our drill ground, which included unarmed combat and bayonet practice. I often wondered if the children found the sight of us 'pencil pushers' amusing, as we charged each other with bayonets fixed and letting out blood-curdling yells. Lt Krekman assured us that we would frighten the enemy, but I think they might have died laughing. Some afternoons we would perform extended order drill in the pasture beyond the churchyard, capturing imaginary enemy pillboxes. Although the herd of cows ignored our antics we had to take care to choose the right spot for taking up the prone shooting position!

"After spending a year at the Court, we Signal people were moved to the Bishops Cleeve camp to the north of the church, and then to Sandywell Park at Andoversford, which we nicknamed 'Pneumonia Hill'. Soon after, we went back to Leckhampton Court which had been occupied by other clerks from the SOS (Services of Supply).

In the build-up to D-Day we HQ staff were billeted with civilians in Leckhampton while the camp housed combat troops for some weeks. For the two years we were at Benhall we worked on the planning for Operation TORCH (North African invasion) and then OVERLORD (Normandy invasion). In the weeks prior to D-Day we wore full battlegear when at work and always had our rifles with us. Most of the HQ personnel were transferred to Paris in September 1944 and I was sent with a smaller group to London, just in time for the arrival of the V2 rockets which continued to rain down on Mayfair and other districts for the next four months. Leckhampton was my favourite camp by far, partly because of its superb location and the splendid manor house, but mainly because of the residents who were always unfailingly friendly and welcoming. We Americans were made to feel very much at home in Leckhampton."

At the end of the War, Willard married the girl he had met who worked for Burrows the publishers, and they now live in Cheltenham.

During 1943, when the American servicemen were stationed at Leckhampton Court, Mrs H Errington recalls that her husband had joined the Royal Navy in 1941 and, because his bedroom was no longer occupied, it was commandeered by a Billeting Officer for the accommodation of two American servicemen. This also happened to owners of property in Kidnappers Lane who had vacant rooms. The GIs only slept in private homes, having all their meals at Leckhampton Court.

The two Americans were very polite and friendly and one gave his home address in New York to Mrs Errington's in-laws to pass on to her husband, who was serving on the Queen Mary during 1943-44, when the ship was bringing American troops to Europe ready for D-Day. Mr Errington visited the family twice while in New York.

A rider to the above: during the early 1970s, when the Erringtons were still at the same address, Mr Errington's parents having died, they had an unexpected visit from the student son of one of the GIs, who was touring Europe. His father had asked him to come and see if Mr Errington's parents were still living. The Erringtons were able to take the young man to see where his father was billeted at Leckhampton Court and he spent an evening with the family.

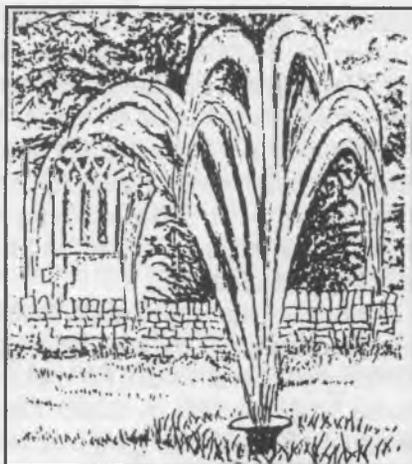
THE PRISONER-OF-WAR CAMP

Following the departure of the Americans, no use was made of the Court until the period between 1945 and 1948, when it was the Headquarters of 263 Working Camp, at which German POWs were held for screening and political re-education prior to repatriation. During the war many enemy POWs were shipped overseas to the USA and Canada, after the customary interrogation at special centres had taken place. The role of English camps for POWs received little publicity. When repatriation began in September 1946, 394,000 POWs were eligible.

The Camp CO was Lt-Col Lamprey and the population of the camp rose to a maximum of 1724 in February 1948, with 528 being the highest number held at the Court, the remainder being billeted in local farms or in the nine hostels in the area. At a later date a Major Harris took over; but there is no evidence there were ever any Italians at the POW Camp, despite their being in the district, mostly engaged in agricultural work.

The great majority of POWs were accommodated in Nissen huts in the grounds, to the left of the driveway going up from the Lower Lodge. The camp kitchen stood in front of the entrance gates of the Court, and below it was the motor transport pool. The huts to the right of the driveway housed, amongst other things, a tailor and carpenter's workshop, a theatre, the medical centre, the chapel, washrooms and toilets, and the administration and camp leader's hut, as well as a guard-post just inside the entrance. (See map of camp layout.) The bases of some of the huts can still be seen, but the majority of the accommodation hut bases now lie beneath Collum End Rise. The Court itself was largely used by the British Army, but the POW canteen and kitchens were on what is now the lawn to the front of the Court.

The camp was opened on September 6 1945. Fortunately, a former POW, Gerd Heide, has provided a record of his time at Leckhampton Camp. His diary shows that the first three months saw it transformed from an empty site to something of a showpiece. A delightful pond, fountain and garden were built in a corner by St Peter's Church, where POWs would congregate in their free time. The remains of the fountain are still visible, as are traces of the open-air skittle alley which was built in the same vicinity. In the recent past, the fountain has been renovated and a small area around it fenced off.



A POW's drawing of the Fountain which was built during their stay at the Camp.

Prisoners were screened by the British in a hut outside the Court, but generally the re-education programme was left in the hands of the POWs themselves. The majority of POWs worked an eight-hour day, usually on local farms, or on the roads or timber felling, for which they were paid the equivalent of a penny-ha'penny per hour in plastic tokens, which could be spent in the Court's canteen. Each POW was also allocated 25 cigarettes per week. Many of the men billeted on farms were allowed great latitude with their leisure time, officially being permitted to walk at will anywhere within one mile of their billet, although they were not supposed to enter into conversation with the locals or make purchases from any shops. In the summer of 1946, prisoners working no great distance from the camp were granted permission to travel independently on foot or by bicycle and there is an amusing story in Gerd Heide's diary of the camp 'boffin' fitting his bicycle with a small heater. The test ride saw him escape with only minor injuries as he leapt from the burning machine!

In the early days of the camp, fraternisation was very strongly discouraged although, according to Karl Wolf (a former camp leader now living in Charlton Kings) there was an unofficial two-way letterbox behind a loose stone in the wall of Collum End Farm. On one occasion Karl was asked by Mr Williams, who ran The Vineries market garden in Kidnappers Lane, if he would like to help out with cutting and planting lettuce. A price of two shillings per hour was agreed and Karl finished the job, for which he received seventeen shillings-and-sixpence. Placing it carefully in a tin, he buried it near the wall by the side of the church for safe keeping, but when he returned his treasure had vanished, - someone had obviously seen him.

Sgt Karl Wolf served with the German Army in an Infantry Regiment as an engineer, mainly in connection with the development of anti-tank warfare. He saw action on several fronts, including Russia, but was captured in the last few days of April 1945, literally days before the war ended. He was put on board a ship bound for Canada or America, but for some reason the ship returned to England, and Karl came to Leckhampton Court with practically nothing apart from his clothes; everything else had been 'liberated' from him by his American captors. At the Camp, it was part of Karl's duty to act as spokesman between the Camp guards and the German prisoners, where his command of English was indispensable. He also accompanied Colonel Lamprey to smaller POW camps such as Brockworth (where the POW bakery was located) and to other POW camps in this part of Gloucestershire, which appear to have been administered from Siddington, near Cirencester.

Within a few months, restrictions at the Camp were eased and in April 1947 a recital of organ and church music was given by POWs to a packed St Peter's Church, and in the summer a small group was taken to observe Cheltenham Town Council in session. Further visits were made to other places - the Museum and Art Gallery, Toc 'H', the Salvation Army, the Society of Friends and the Cheltenham Trades Council. A party of volunteers refurbished the Parish Hall, distempering and painting it over a period of several weeks, rearranging the lighting as well as rebuilding the stage. At a social evening held there in June 1947, the Rector thanked the prisoners for their magnificent efforts and the camp band provided music during the refreshments and dancing that followed.

On July 9 1947 the British Government agreed to allow British women to marry POWs, an event that Gerd Heide records in his diary for 10th July: 'Heinz Eckert from our camp became the first POW to marry his year-long girlfriend whom he met during his time in the Channel Islands. The bridegroom had to be back in camp by 22.00 hours sharp on his wedding day!' Altogether, five POWs from the camp married local girls and remained in England.

The POWs were given two hours recreation per day, during which they were allowed to go into town or do additional work locally to earn extra money. According to Karl Wolf, they

had in fact already devised ways and means of leaving and re-entering the camp virtually whenever they wanted. By then, the barbed-wire fence which surrounded the camp was more a means of keeping the cows out than restraining the prisoners. Many, however, chose to stay on site and made various things such as furniture, lamps, toys, canvas slippers and models, from any materials which were to hand (including their own beds) and which were purchased by local people. Others painted, sketched or enjoyed gardening, and many took part in plays or concerts. Some of the camp orchestra's instruments were home-made but Woodward, formerly of Cheltenham's Promenade, donated at least one instrument. Concerts were given regularly at the Parish Hall, with Karl Wolf usually acting as compere. On at least one occasion they also performed in Cheltenham Town Hall, with one of the POWs who had been a pre-war professional singer.

There was a camp football team which regularly played local sides on the Primary School playing field. Archie Kirkham was a resident of Leckhampton and he had a small plot of ground by the rifle range hut behind what is now 'Old Farthing', adjoining the POW camp. He struck up a friendship with one of the young POWs named Willi Smitke who was something of a footballer and obtained permission from the camp CO to take him out occasionally. Almost fifty years later they still maintained contact, indeed in 1991 Willi (a Wimbledon tennis fan) came over and stayed with Archie for a time. Winnie Allen recalls that when she lived at 68 Church Road, a POW named Willi used to collect from her the key to the field where they played football.

Some of the prisoners were active Christians and took great pride in their camp chapel, which was simply furnished with benches and a wooden altar, on which stood a home-made crucifix. There was a camp Padre but periodically the camp was visited by monks from Buckfast Abbey in Devon. The POWs also marched to normal services in St. Peter's, where they sat at the back of the church. The Parish Magazine records that on September 22 1946, 250 POWs held a harvest service in St. Peter's Church, "...their Padre stood in the pulpit with a white ensign behind him". A name well-known to many Cheltonians is Charles Foster, who is a Quaker. In 1947 he became a 'social visitor' at the POW camp, providing footballs, etc.

The German prisoners, like the rest of the population in Britain, suffered the severe winter of early 1947 and were often unable to work because of the deep snow. Clearing the snow became a major activity. Each hut was allowed a small coal ration per day but in the freezing conditions this supply was inadequate so, according to our diarist, a POW by the name of Kurt Schmidt came up with the ingenious idea of 'shortening the washing poles' to provide additional fuel for the stoves!

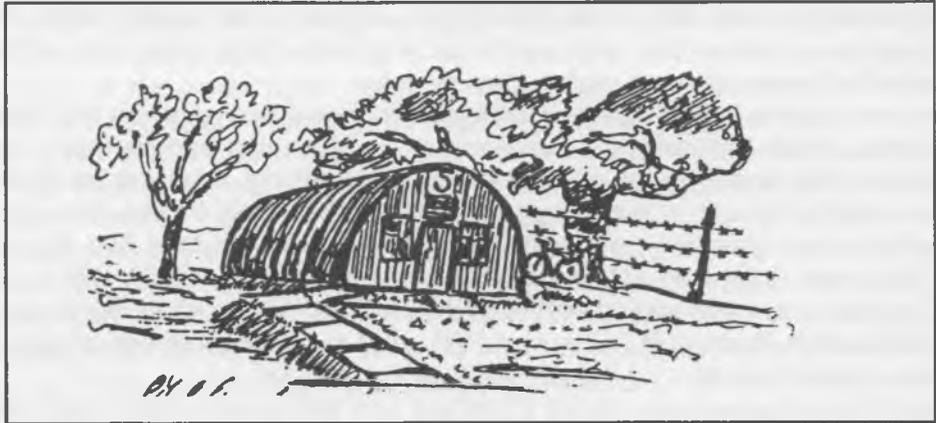
The time of inactivity was used by many prisoners to write home. A British clerk was employed full-time at the camp to deal with mail, mostly collecting and distributing it, but, if any POW did not receive a reply from his family in the western zones, procedures were set in motion to enquire into the reason. All prisoners were allowed to send two letters and four postcards per month, post free, to any country in the world except Japan.

Generally, the POWs were treated well at Leckhampton Camp and appreciated that things could have been far worse in the hands of the French or the Russians, though sadly one young German did commit suicide.

Although the maximum number of POWs passing through Leckhampton Camp was reached as late as February 1948, many had returned to Germany much earlier. The number of POWs still held decreased rapidly after that date and the camp closed on May 22 1948. Many former POWs were later to return permanently to England, particularly those whose homes now lay in Russian-occupied territory, and to this day a small number are still resident in the Cheltenham area. Karl Wolf's wife managed to escape from the Russian zone, using

her jewellery as barter, and eventually joined her husband in England.

Other former inmates have returned to revisit a place where, as young men barely out of their teens, they spent their formative years. One of them is Richard Deobald, a former driver with the SS, who was captured near Amiens. Now living in Darmstadt, he retains fond memories of his time at Leckhampton.



Hut 5 at the POW Camp.

Drawing by Herr Poppe

Chapter 5

SCHOOLS AND CHURCHES

SCHOOLS

LECKHAMPTON PRIMARY SCHOOL - Headmaster: Mr HG Poulton

In September 1939, re-opening of Leckhampton Primary School in Hall Road was delayed for a week owing to the outbreak of war and the digging of ARP trenches. The school closed each day by 3.45pm to ensure that all children reached home in daylight. (Nowadays school finishes at 3.15pm.)

In July 1940 when hostile aircraft appeared, anti-aircraft guns went into action and the children went to the trenches, these were used on very few occasions and were prone to flooding. More air raids occurred in 1940 and 1941. Evacuees arrived at various times; twenty-two came under private arrangements in 1939 and, in 1944, eight official evacuees were admitted from Hailsham in Sussex, making a total of twenty-seven in all. Many came as a result of the flying-bomb emergency, the majority from the London area. Some of them lived for a while in the Parish Hall.

The school had just six classes; two for infants run by Miss Hillman and Miss Isaacs, and the juniors' teachers were Miss Hancock, Mr Green and Miss Weaving, with the headmaster, who took the fourth year. None of the teachers seems to have been called up. When families from Pilley Crescent were billeted in the old Pate's Grammar School the teachers went there to take charge.

School meals were started for the first time during the war; the old infants' school was turned into a canteen, consisting of a first-class dining room, kitchen and airy larder, for, according to an *Echo* report, 'children of mothers engaged in work of national importance and for those of larger families whose mothers were finding difficulty with catering on rations', even though these were based on size of family. In February 1942 a new school canteen was opened. In the following summer the school remained open during the holidays to provide milk and hot dinners at four pence each to needy children, as well as provide activities for about fifty pupils. Prior to this it was used by troops billeted at Leckhampton Court, and used as a soldiers' club.

The school log book entry for VE-Day, May 8 1945, reads: 'School assembled at 9am, when a short thanksgiving service was held, conducted by the headmaster, Mr Poulton, after which the children were dismissed for the two-day national holiday. It is with thankful hearts that we celebrate the end of the war in Europe, and with reverence and humility express our profound gratitude to Almighty God that He granted us victory and preserved our land. Especially do we thank Him that the children in our school have been preserved from harm and suffering, and that we were allowed to help those evacuated children who came to us in times of great trouble.'

Despite wartime shortages, childhood games went on as usual, and many would congregate around the war memorial, especially in the evenings. Don Biddle recalls that hockey would be played on roller skates, and the Sports Field, now part of the school playing field, was used for ad hoc games of cricket or football. The school, much smaller than today, with its excellent staff provided an important and disciplined education throughout the war years. The children followed the progress of various battles that were taking place all over the globe, and with the aid of large maps provided by the newspapers, stuck in coloured flags to denote the combatants. All the school windows were taped to reduce the danger of

flying glass splinters, buckets of sand and water stood ready for use in the event of fire. The air-raid shelters were on the north side, and provided space for 160-plus pupils and staff. On one occasion, while being led to the shelter, we watched a German Heinkel 111 bomber release its load; we later learned that the Gloster Aircraft Company at Brockworth had been hit. Don's father was superintendent in the Tool Room there but had been called away a few minutes before the bombs fell; he was nevertheless still very shaken when he came home that night. Don also recalls seeing a train of ambulance coaches hauled by a GWR 'Castle' class locomotive passing under the railway bridge.

Another memory from wartime childhood comes from Alan Randell who recalls the excitement when a loose barrage balloon came over Leckhampton. Don Biddle was cycling home from Saturday morning at the Grammar School, and found he was getting ever closer to the barrage balloon; when he reached Church Road it was right overhead. Apparently it had broken free from the GAC factory, drifting towards Leckhampton, when it was spotted by 12-year old Daphne Eeles, who grabbed the trailing hawser and tied it to a corner post of the Sports Pavilion, where it was later collected by the Army. There was local consternation when grenades were found in the same field, which was used for some sort of military training.

NAUNTON PARK SCHOOL - Headmaster: Mr AG Dye

Naunton Park School canteen opened in late 1942 at Emmanuel Church Hall. One pupil of Naunton Park during this time was Geoff Capper, who says he can 'recall every teacher's name at the very happy, well disciplined school'. It had a good academic standard and there was 'keen, but friendly, inter-house rivalry in swimming and other sports'. The toilets were outside and across the playground. The first installation had been made in 1906 by Mr Charles Capper, who was a builder, based in Moorend Crescent. School morale was boosted by singing of the school song (reputedly written by one of the teachers, Dick Hayward, music master at Naunton Park School):

*The School ! The School !
We sing today of our well-loved Naunton Park.
We pledge ourselves to play the game,
Whether the days be bright or dark,
Through all the days and all the years
This pledge we now will make:
To stand by our school and our houses' names,
Raleigh! Rodney! Nelson! Drake!*

Former pupils at Naunton Park School, have talked of their reminiscences. Mr Ted Critchley, Mr Gerald Tyler and Mrs Jewell recalled that boys collected newspapers (for waste-paper collections), and did gardening and other jobs. The girls knitted balaclavas and socks for the troops. School leavers did fire-watching at Naunton Park.

Mrs Jewell remembers that as male teachers were called up, married women teachers were brought in for the first time. She has a copy of the 1939 Christmas magazine, which has these contributions from an evacuee and two Jewish refugees.

'Rosel Freund was born to Jewish parents in March 1927 in Berlin, and two years later her sister was born. Rosel and her sister were sent to England in 1938 and were just two of the thousands of Jewish children who were separated from their parents at that time. Edgar Bernstein had left Berlin in January 1939 and travelled alone to Harwich, 'in a big ship like a house with many hundred lights', then to London where an uncle met him. He eventually

came to Cheltenham.

Gene Gordon was evacuated from Birmingham; he found Cheltenham a very small place in comparison and the countryside very beautiful, not a bit like the noisy traffic of Birmingham. In the school magazine he wrote, 'I came to Naunton Park Senior School and I like it very much indeed. I went home a few weeks ago and you can see balloons everywhere; it gives a very frightening atmosphere, but I try not to think of it. All we have to do is keep smiling.'

School holidays were often helped along by voluntary effort from committed adults like Mr F Craven Broad and Mrs Fry (Naunton Park Seniors) who arranged, as part of 'Holidays at Home' programme, such activities as rambles on Leckhampton Hill, or taking groups potato picking. Meanwhile, the *Echo* reported that some London schoolchildren were to continue at school during the summer holidays, as it was felt they were safer under adult care, and for the teachers to have staggered holidays.

Margaret Storey's recollections of school Christmas parties are that everyone seemed to contribute with fish paste sandwiches and Kilner jars of bottled plums.

The County Education Committee agreed that juveniles aged fifteen-and-a-half could be released from school to work in local aircraft factories, where 1000 extra workers were needed. Those who wished would be allowed to return to their education after hostilities ceased.

CHURCHES

(The details below are based largely on the Parish Magazines of St Peter's church (*The Messenger*) and of St Philip and St James's up to 1940. After then, restrictions on the use of paper almost certainly prevented printing, though it is of interest that the Revd J ('Jock') Murray Ballard, who in June 1940 was due to depart for a parish near his birthplace in Edinburgh, looked forward to receiving news of St Philip's in the magazine, which he expected would be sent on to him.)

Letters and news items in the magazines during the months preceding the war show how aware people were of Churchill's 'gathering storm'. After the signing of the Munich Agreement, the Vicar of St Philip and St James's wrote of 'some people's doubts as to the justice, even the wisdom, of satisfying the demands of Germany, at the expense of the newly devised and never united Czech Republic', and he conceded 'a war may be right'. He expressed horror at violated treaties and oppression, and referred to the Campaign for Moral Rearmament as a spiritual means of countering the threat, though he made the interesting admission that he had no wireless set to hear the talks on the subject. The Rector of St Peter's, Canon Henry James Hensman, wrote in January 1939 of 'the world's troubled and troublous state' and urged parishioners to 'abstain from criticising other nations We must make our contribution to the scheme for voluntary National Service'.

Concern for the persecuted Jews was reflected in plans for a demonstration to be held in Cheltenham on behalf of the Refugees' Fund in January 1939, at which Mr D L Lipson, the local Independent MP 'whose knowledge of the treatment of his own race is obviously intimate' was to have spoken, and 'an unknown refugee, whose personal experiences cannot fail to be poignantly interesting'. In the event, however, this meeting was cancelled, for reasons unstated.

During the glorious summer that preceded the outbreak of war, many activities continued as usual, as people took their last chance of normal enjoyment. St Peter's Mothers' Union made outings by charabanc to Weymouth, a five-hour journey, with a 7am start, and to

Weston. St Peter's Sunday School had its treat at the pleasure grounds at Bishops Cleeve, travelling there and back by train from Leckhampton station.

By the end of August, Canon Hensman hoped that 'even at the eleventh hour common sense and common humanity will prevail, and that we shall not be plunged into the horrors of war to satisfy the power-lust of dictators. The whole Empire will support the Imperial Parliament in its decision.'

After the declaration of war in September, congregations at St Peter's remained 'consistently good ... the paramount importance of spiritual armament is recognised.'

For Remembrance Day 1939, with the observance of two minutes' silence, the stoppage in the streets was dispensed with 'for obvious reasons'. There was a short service at the village War Memorial. At a service on the following Sunday afternoon, uniforms, medals and decorations were to be worn.

At Christmas that year there were no bells at St Peter's, nor did they sound anywhere in the country until the war was over; they were to be rung only in the event of an invasion.

During the first months of the war all kinds of emergency measures were taken in the parish of St Philip and St James's, which would have been similar throughout the nation. The Bishop instructed the Vicar to take his share of the services at Cowley and to give help at St Peter's (still described as 'the mother church'). It was thought that the crypt could be used as 'an air-raid shelter for any who may be caught in the open streets', and that even the church itself 'might be required to shelter people in the event (we hope, most improbable) of neighbouring houses being damaged'. Nothing further came of these ideas, but they illustrate the worry and uncertainty in people's minds as they faced the prospect of total war.

People continued to enjoy the social side of life, but mention began to be made of the 'black-out'. Some churches were having difficulty with black-out and were holding evensong on Sunday afternoons until it was certain that the black-out was satisfactory. It was thought to be partly to blame for poor collections at St Philip and St James's, though the severe winter must also have played its part. Coke bills had already reached £14 by the end of February 1940, but it was felt that 'economy on that would have been perilous'.

The former day schools in Leckhampton Road, which were used by the Sunday Schools and various other church bodies, were requisitioned by Birmingham Education Authority, though 'owing to the non-arrival or unexpected return of many evacuees' the plan was abandoned. The St Philip and St James's Institute Club Room (which also occupied part of the schools) had its two billiard-tables removed for a short while, members were welcome to play at St Stephen's Institute. Later, the Club Room was reinstated. The rest of the building was requisitioned by the military authorities of Southern Command.

At Christmas 1939 the Red Cross Working Party that used to meet in the St Philip and St James's Institute received a letter from the captain of HMS *St Kenan*, c/o GPO London, thanking them all for the good things they were sending to his men. Since October the Working Party had made over 100 garments. In June 1940 a flag day was held locally for the Red Cross and the St John's War Organisation for the relief of suffering in war.

The Church's missionary work continued, at least for a time, unaffected by events during the 'phoney war'. The Church of England Zenana Mission was still active in early 1940, though it held a gift day instead of a sale of work. Collections were still taken for the Universities Mission to Central Africa and the South American Missionary Society. The Church Missionary Society held an All-day Bandage Party in May 1940 at the Parish Room, St James's Square, Cheltenham. The vicar considered that the need for medical missions and the provision of medical materials was as great as ever, and that the 'war must not interfere with missionary work.'

In February 1940 there was mention of 'the German broadcaster, with the evil voice' (possibly a reference to Lord Haw-Haw). The Revd JM Ballard considered that it was 'unwise to listen to him unless you are sure the subtle poison of his very clever style will not weaken or distress, or delude you'.

The Revd JM Ballard was succeeded in 1940 by the Revd Dr. Oswald D Parker. There were changes at St Peter's too; Canon Hensman was nominally succeeded in 1941 by the Revd Eric WB Cordingly, an Army padre who was still on active service. He was captured at the fall of Singapore and spent three years as a Japanese Prisoner of War before taking up his appointment as Rector in 1945. In 1942, the Revd PW Unwin was at St Peter's and wrote an article for the *Echo* on the "Danger of 'Time Enough Later' ".

Very early in the war, those serving overseas were regularly mentioned by name in prayers. At St Philip and St James's it was later proposed to display in the porch a rough preliminary list of those of the parish who were in the three services, 'titles and units being, for obvious reasons, omitted'. After Dunkirk, and with the threat of invasion, the King called for a National Day of Prayer, May 26 1940, when churches throughout the country were packed. The next year, churches in Cheltenham and the Cotswolds were again full for the Day of Prayer. At St Peter's, a contingent of troops joined the congregation, as well as the Leckhampton Platoon of the Home Guard, when the lessons were read by Captain J H Trye. Several young men were already said to be in the Territorials and the Gloucestershire Hussars. The first casualty of war recorded in either of the parish magazines was the death by drowning of Lt Malcolm Ferguson, formerly of Glentworth, when HMS *Gurkha* sank off Bergen in April 1940.



FUNERAL TRIBUTE TO THE LATE CANON H. J. HENSMAN

Funeral of Canon H J Hensman - The Bishop of Tewkesbury, St Peter's Churchwardens, (Mr T A D Clark and Ald. J H Trye) and the Bishop of Gloucester, who conducted the service.

Chronicle and Graphic - December 1940

Chapter 6

WORK AND CIVILIAN WAR EFFORT

Under the Conscription Act, every able-bodied person had to register for war service to 'do their bit' for the country, and men, unless they were already in an essential job, were directed into one of the armed services.

In 1941 women were also affected, although mothers with children under 14 were exempt. Many had already joined the women's branches of the armed services but thousands of others took the alternative, which was working for the war effort in a factory, undertaking a vast range of jobs that would have been considered far beyond their capabilities in peacetime. For some it was an experience that completely changed their lives.

No doubt there was some opposition, as it was a radical change from previous working practice, most people regarding a woman's place as in the home, but in the event the changes were accepted with little trouble. All over Britain women gradually took on more of the traditional 'men's work' and soon many factories were operating with a ratio of women to men as high as five to one. By 1943 some 80% of married women were engaged in some form of war work. Mrs Edna Riley recalls that many young Leckhampton women were drafted into munitions production.

Working hours were long, and often included overtime, as well as all day on Saturday. It was normal to work alternate day and night shifts, and many of the women found it extremely tiring, standing at their machine hour after hour. Take-home pay during the war for most of the workers was probably the highest they ever had in their lives but there was little on which they could spend their hard-earned reward.

Many Leckhampton women must have worked in the local factories of Rotol and Dowty, but there was another aircraft works much closer to home than either of those; that of Bresson's Aircraft Company, which was at the foot of Leckhampton Hill, and had been the Cheltenham Caravan Company before the war, turning out high-quality touring caravans. Now it had been transformed into an aircraft factory; one of their specialities being jettison petrol tanks for long-range fighters, notably Typhoons and Hurricanes. After the war they switched to making washing-machines under the name Bressons. Jean Girling, who worked in the offices of the Gloster Aircraft Company at Thirlestaine House, recalls that a number of local women worked for Bresson's and the pay was much higher than they had received previously. Later, in 1944, it was reported the canteen of Bresson's factory had been burnt out one Sunday night.

WOMEN'S LAND ARMY

Some 90,000 women between the ages of 18 and 40 eventually served in the Women's Land Army, which had been set up in June 1939. Their uniform consisted of a short cavalry coat, Aertex blouse, dark green pullover, brown corduroy breeches, long woollen socks and brogue shoes. Brown bib-and-brace dungarees and boots were worn for 'dirty' work. There was also a wide-brimmed hat, and most people thought they looked quite attractive, but not all girls themselves were enthusiastic, considering the uniform rather impractical. Many of the local farms employed these young women, few of whom had any previous experience on the land, but some so enjoyed the life that they stayed on long after the war was over. The Land Army worked a 72-hour week for £3-10 shillings, half of which was handed over for their 'keep'. The day's work began at 5am and finished at 6pm for seven days per week, which left very little time or energy for socialising; a visit to the cinema or the local village



Evacuees arrive in Leckhampton Station from Tunbridge Wells - They were later billeted in Charlton Kings.

Chronicle and Graphic - August 1944



EVAQUEES HELPERS.—Members of the W.V.S. at Leckhampton Station, where they supplied the whole train-load of evacuees with tea, cakes, and so on, on their arrival from the South-east. They used their mobile canteens which have done such fine service.

WVS at Leckhampton Station providing refreshments from a mobile canteen for evacuees.

Chronicle and Graphic - August 1944



Victory Celebrations - A Children's Party held near Pilley Bridge was attended by The Mayor of Cheltenham (Ald. Clara Winterbotham), Mrs D L Lipson and the Rev and Mrs E C Hanson.

Chronicle and Graphic - July 1940



Church Road Party at the Parish Hall in June 1945. Mrs P Green (middle of front row) beside Pte W Townsend whom she presented with a wallet on his return home from a German prison camp.

Edgar Townsend



VJ Celebrations for Southern Road neighbourhood adults and children.
Terry Enoch (far right) and his sister (wearing a Union flag) taking part in the games.
Terry Enoch



Fairfield District VE-Day Party: note the loudspeaker relaying news broadcasts.
Kathleen Ballinger



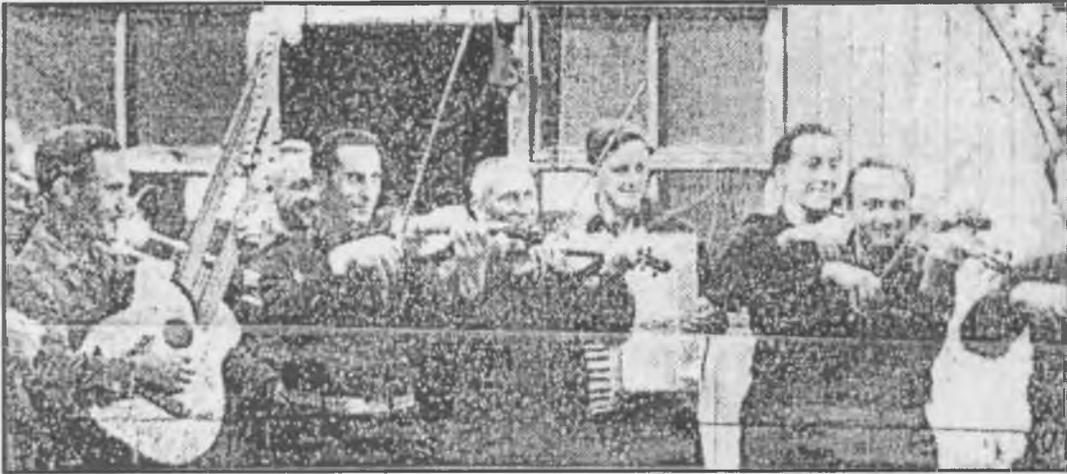
Effigy of Hitler, at T W Smith's yard which was used by the Army as a vehicle repair shop and by the Home Guard as a guns store. Albert Mustoe is in the centre wearing cap and overalls.

Mrs Maureen Mathias (nee Smith)



VE-Day Bonfire at 'Matey' Smith's ground in Mead Road. (Now Travis Perkins).

Mrs Maureen Mathias (nee Smith)



The Prisoners' Orchestra at Leckhampton Court Camp outside their little church.

Chronicle and Graphic - July 1940



A POW's Handicraft - A Sewing Box made for Mrs Nell Frewin.

Photo by Bruce Stait



Richard Deobald and fellow prisoner
at Leckhampton Court Camp.

Richard Deobald



Karl Wolf (ex-POW), who continues to live in the
Cheltenham area and photographed here in 1991.

Bruce Stait



POWs' Recreation Time - skittles on their self-made concrete alley at the Camp.

Chronicle and Graphic - August 1946



POWs' Recreation Time - football in a field near the village school.

Richard Deobald



POWs Homeward Bound - Around 334 prisoners from Camp 263 boarded a train at Leckhampton Station, joining others from Highnam Hostel at Gloucester.

Gloucestershire Echo - May 1948



Re-erection of a POW Camp Hut at the Parish Hall in 1948. Under directions from Rev Eric Cordingly, the team, led by Alf Bendall (out of view), included Pauline Rayner (centre), Leonard Morrison, Paul Moxey and Keith Lewis.

Mrs Howard

'hop' was the sum total of whoopee!

Daphne Oliver, then living at Leckhampton Farm, remembers that for the first few months of the war little changed, except for the need to comply with the blackout; hurricane lanterns were used in most of the farm buildings; there was no electricity or mains water in those days. She also recalls that the first Land Army girls joined them and mostly helped in the dairy, milking the cows (by hand) and delivering milk on the rounds, which were rationalised to minimise travelling. She also tells how a local 'War Ag' group (Agricultural Executive Committee) was formed; its members supervising the farmers and quotas for corn, potatoes and milk production. They also had the power to requisition land which was not being properly managed. In 1941, Leckhampton Farm grew its first corn since the First World War. One of Daphne's most vivid memories is that of the continuous drone of seemingly unending lines of planes towing gliders, the three white stripes on their wings clearly visible - on the day of the D-Day landings

June Borsberry recalls that in the Land Army she worked at Cherrington's market garden on Kidnappers Lane. Wanting to live nearby, she decided to rent a Romany caravan which she had transferred from Shurdington to a grassy field at the foot of Daisy Bank. She says: "With a borrowed pick-axe, I hacked out the limestone to create a level platform for the 'van, and on the day it arrived with creaking wooden wheels, the tractor towed it into place; I mounted the steps, unlocked the 'stable' door and took possession. I was 19 at the time but the isolation in those blackout days held no fears for me; the world was beset by worse horrors, though I recall waking one night to the sound of voices, only to realise that a pair of lovers had found a cosy nest beneath the van. On the summer nights I would hear the bombers growling overhead in preparation for invasion of occupied Europe; there was one night when the van rattled for hours as waves of bombers throbbed over the hill. I was intensely excited as I lay in my bunk; D-Day had arrived.

"I worked alongside a delightful man called Ted Savage who lived with his family in a converted corrugated-iron chapel off Church Road. Ted had a deformed spine, preventing him from being called up. As we worked, we often saw a low-flying aircraft which had no propellers, we soon learned it was a prototype jet fighter. The Gloster Aircraft Company were later visited by the King and Queen to inspect this 'Wonder Plane'. After the bombing of GAC, Brockworth, all aircraft companies were rationalised, and part of a sheet metal section moved to a small factory in Leckhampton Road; this pleased a boyfriend of mine, for it meant a short trip to work instead of going on the blue Kersey's bus to Brockworth.

"Some Italian POWs came daily to work at a market-garden across the lane, which brought some interesting diversions, especially when one brought me a note from one of his chums. It was a proposal of marriage. I was quite carried away with the romance, until I saw Franco at close quarters, he was the tiniest of men. My fluttering heart quickly steadied, but despite what we saw in newsreels about enemy prisoners, they were ordinary homely men who fitted happily into Leckhampton."

BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE

Many lives were saved because of the Transfusion service which had been started in 1921 by a London branch of the British Red Cross. By 1938, the Ministry of Health was arranging blood supply depots throughout the British Isles, and the Army Blood Transfusion Service collected 500,000 pints of blood. Cheltenham was leading other Gloucestershire towns with 600 blood donors to the Army Blood Transfusion Service in 1939. Bernard Avery recalls that his father Reginald, when living in Naunton Lane, was a keen supporter and in the later years of the war received a letter of thanks from the War Office.

WOMEN'S VOLUNTARY SERVICE

The WVS was created as a back-up to other services, the aim being for housewives and other women to provide First Aid, food and general assistance in emergencies, collection and distribution of books, etc to troops, knitting clothes for troops abroad, helping with evacuated children and so on. Mrs Clarke of Leckhampton Post Office was appointed Senior Housewife; one of her first tasks was to compile a list of all the householders in the parish, and their next-of-kin, so that these could be informed of any casualties. Mrs Norbury, the Rural Area Chief Housewife gave lectures in First Aid. In the early years of the war, local helpers managed to collect 3,500 books and magazines for troops on service or in hospital; and 15,000 cigarettes were sent to the 5th Battalion, Gloucester Regiment by the generosity of *Echo* readers. Advertisements often appeared in the press for items like, 'a dartboard, that off-duty troops could use while in France'.

ST JOHN AMBULANCE BRIGADE

The Superintendent of the central nursing division of the St John Ambulance Brigade was Mrs Olive Carruthers-Little (who died shortly after her 100th birthday in 1995). She lived during the war at Sunny Patch, Moorend Park Road. The Ambulance Brigade was located in the lower High Street, and the ambulances were run by volunteers from a depot opposite Gloucester Road School. Maternity cases were taken out to Postlip Hall, but Salterley Grange dealt with TB cases. Miss M Rose later became Matron and it was then a hospital for the elderly. Mrs Carruthers-Little recalls one occasion when a 20-stone lady was being taken there on a stretcher and complained that it was like lying on chicken-wire; and that is exactly what it was, a frame and netting, allowing easy disinfection.

CIVILIAN WAR EFFORT

There were numerous examples of the town's generosity when schemes were started to raise funds for one or other needy cause. One fund was led by Mrs Elizabeth Trye and Mrs P James for a mobile canteen, based at Lansdown railway station, for use by soldiers of the BEF. Prior to this, Cheltenham YMCA had remained open day and night, and TOC 'H' members had been meeting servicemen off night trains to guide them through the blackout to a 24-hour canteen in the Promenade, a service which lasted for the first six months of the war. Mrs Betty Jones remembers very clearly, "train-loads of soldiers passing through Leckhampton Station", and was very impressed when one of her colleagues at the Telephone Exchange received a message on a luggage-label from her boyfriend, telling her he was safe.

Leckhampton was setting an example to the rest of Cheltenham in salvage collection. According to the *Echo* in May 1940, it was reported that the people of Leckhampton had made a splendid drive in this direction, filling the old Infants School in Church Road with a "rare collection of junk - old iron, tin, waste paper, bottles, and even bones. Such an effort makes us wonder what Cheltenham could do if every household contributed to the communal dump". The week of June 10-16 1940 was declared National Scrap Metal Week. The Cheltenham Salvage Committee set up no less than 30 dumps where householders could deposit any metal objects no longer required. Old bedsteads, bicycles, tins, saucepans, fenders, tanks, baths and motor parts were particularly wanted. Householders with iron railings were urged to take them down and sell them for scrap (this became compulsory later). Dumps were situated in Leckhampton Road at St. Philip's Institute; in Norwood Road at Gothic Cottage; at the junction of Exmouth Street and Francis Street; in

Old Bath Road at Leopold's building site; and outside the Malvern Inn. At the same time an *Echo* correspondent was complaining that at least nine tons of scrap iron was rusting away at the Corporation Depot in Leckhampton and considered it disgusting that the Council should have allowed this to happen when it was so urgently needed.

National Savings were heavily promoted throughout the war. Street groups were set up and regular collections made by volunteers. There were special campaigns like the Hurricane Fund in September 1940. One of the first big savings drives was War Weapons Week in November 1940. Every Post Office was extra busy selling Savings Certificates and War Bonds. Michael Gibson and Geoff Capper both remember a comedian called Sid Waller, who used to sing the 'Rags, Bottles and Bones' song, visiting Leckhampton School in 1941 to talk about National Savings.

Local attractions were run to help raise funds; an aerial display of five Hurricanes diving low over St Matthew's church spire, a military parade and a church service. There was an exhibition of war trophies and part of a shot-down Messerschmitt in Montpellier Pavilion, a rugby match and a concert. The funds raised would purchase a destroyer for the Royal Navy, and in just four days £408,652 was collected; the final sum amounted to £654,396. There was a similar event in November 1941, when the target was £700,000, again for the purchase of a destroyer. Gloucester had the same target, so some rivalry existed. On this occasion, the Minister for Home Security performed the opening ceremony at a mass meeting on the Athletics Ground, where there was an aerial display of nine Spitfires, a parade of servicemen and a bridge-building demonstration. The total fund raised was £1,046,951 - the best in the town's history, and beating both Gloucester and Bristol. By 1942 war fund weeks were regular events, and in Wings for Victory Week, May 1943 a target of £1,000,000 was set for the purchase of twenty-five Lancaster bombers. There was a big military parade and on this occasion US troops were included. The total sum collected was £1,116,127, again beating Gloucester.

Schools encouraged their pupils to buy regular weekly savings stamps. Awards were made to the street groups with the highest proportion of savers. Chatsworth Drive, Leckhampton, was the first street in the town to win and had the honour of flying the National Savings Flag, made at the Cheltenham School of Art, in 1942. In 1943 Chatsworth Drive won again, together with Fairfield Avenue, and both were equally successful in 1944.

Many children played their part; Terence Enoch, 9-year old son of Mr BC Enoch in Southern Road, decided to help the 'Tank Fund'. He organised a fete in their garden, where children had free rides on the swing, while adults went round the 'sideshow'; in all £6 was raised.

Girl Guides and Brownies contributed to a national fund for an Air Ambulance by collecting ha'pennies which they earned doing weeding for neighbours, and from house-to-house collections in Leckhampton they raised £66 for the Red Cross. Fund-raising for the Red Cross was something that many folk, young and old alike, could do. Terry Enoch was one such a person, who selflessly gave a doe and seven young rabbits to be auctioned in 1943, raising almost £8. The previous year he sent a contribution to Mrs Churchill's 'Aid to Russia' fund, receiving in reply a personal letter thanking him for his effort.

Paper salvage was also a continuing effort with special salvage events being staged. January 1942 was declared Paper Salvage Month when the country was divided into 20 areas in each of which a £1000 prize was to be awarded to the town collecting the largest amount of waste paper. In Cheltenham two lorries toured the town collecting paper, assisted by 14 Grammar School boys. They collected 220 tons, much less than expected. (Newspapers were again reduced in size at the beginning of 1942; locally the *Graphic*

ceased publication altogether.) A Paper Drive was held in Leckhampton in June 1942. Originally scheduled to take place in May, it had to be postponed because the collectors failed to turn up on the opening evening. House-to-house collections were eventually made a few days later and 11 tons were amassed.



Fire-watching - Mrs Carruthers-Little is "Ready for Anything".
Mrs Calcutt (nee Carruthers-Little) via Tom Hewlett

Chapter 7

SOCIAL & COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

After a long day in the office or factory, the time off in the evenings was eagerly awaited and the choice of where to spend it was wide. There was almost no television at that time, so cinemas were a source of entertainment. Cheltenham had six cinemas during the war, most of them were packed out each night. The nearest, so far as Leckhampton people were concerned, was the Daffodil Picture House, with the added attraction of double seats at the back, for those couples not bothered about the film itself. Mrs Betty Jones recalls that they made at least one visit per week to the cinema, and because they advertised the films showing at The Gaumont in the Post Office, they had two free seats. The mighty Compton Organ always accompanied morale-boosting community singing for about 15 minutes before the performance.

There were six public houses; another great place to unwind, with beer at four pence a pint. In addition there were several off-licences, mostly near the Norwood Arms, that catered for the home drinker. Evenings at home were often spent playing cards or listening to the wireless. Mrs Margaret Storey remembers having to make your own entertainment too: "after church on a Sunday evening the next-door neighbours would come to our house (we had a piano) armed with their drinking-chocolate, and bread and dripping, then neighbour Mr (Jim) Headley played the piano - he could play almost anything by ear."

Wherever possible, life went on as before; for instance, the Cheese Rolling event at Cooper's Hill continued to take place, though in 1941, a round wooden crate shaped like the well-known Double Gloucester cheese was used, and it contained someone's cheese ration! This was the first time since the 1914-18 War that a real cheese had not been used. There was the usual good attendance, some of the participants were local lads serving in the Forces and there were the usual occurrences of bumps and bruises.

The Town Hall was a centre for cultural activities; many of the great performers of the period gave shows there during the war. Popular artistes like Ambrose and his Orchestra appeared, Vera Lynn came, and Myra Hess gave a piano recital. Tickets were typically priced at five shillings. Betty Jones recalls that at a Town Hall whist drive her father won first prize - two armchairs. The weekly dances at the Town Hall were well attended; the tea dances from 3 to 6pm were very popular; tickets were one shilling-and-sixpence, which included tea. At the evening dances, from 7 to 10pm, where tickets were two shillings-and-sixpence, evening dress or uniform was the expected attire.

Leckhampton Parish Hall was a favourite venue for many social activities that ranged from WI meetings to whist drives. Regular dances held there were always packed out. The Youth Club met at the Hall, but there was no official supervision; they used to cook baked potatoes on the two 'tortoise' stoves on winter evenings, or in summer go on a ramble to the Air Balloon and have a half pint of cider, but the girls were not allowed in. Mrs Cordingley, at the Rectory, used to allow use of the garden for tennis in the summer.

One major local attraction in April 1944 was a visit by Joe Louis, the World Heavyweight champion boxer, who came to entertain US troops in Britain. He gave an exhibition of his skills in Reeves Field off the Old Bath Road, where the audience included a group of Bethesda Boy Scouts and Wolf Cubs. Young Michael Gibson was an avid collector of autographs and his books bring back memories; he recalls that Joe Louis was 'a massive man'; there were lots of GIs in this area and on one occasion their lorries driven by black US troops drove in error along Chatsworth Drive where Michael lived.

Because of the war and call-up of many players, all county cricket matches were cancelled as from 1940, but Leckhampton Sports Club decided that year to try to run one cricket team.

Private motoring was restricted from the early years of the war due to petrol rationing, and was finally banned altogether in 1942, but there were exemptions for those on special business, doctors for example. All road signposts had to be removed, as they may have been helpful to any German invaders; instead, signs gave only directions; for example, north. The petrol restrictions also affected bus services; the latest out to Leckhampton from Cheltenham was at 10.30pm. Buses had been borrowed from other areas, at one time there were three from Oldham and fourteen from London, the latter having an outside staircase and protective netting attached to the windows. In 1943, 'austerity' buses appeared with grey livery instead of the traditional dark red and some with slatted wooden seats.

The winter of 1940 was one of the worst on record all over the country, and the Cotswolds were heavily affected. There was very heavy frost damage, and miles of telephone lines were brought down. Countrywide traffic chaos ensued, public services were interrupted in Cheltenham, and there were no buses to Leckhampton or Charlton Kings.

In the early part of the war, the press often had notices for outings such as a Sunday coach trip to Marlborough (five shillings return), or a GWR train trip to Oxford for 11 shillings-and-tuppence, which included a steamer trip to Abingdon for tea, alternatively a coach to Blenheim Palace and back to Oxford, then to the theatre, returning home at 11pm. Nell Frewin, who still lives in the house she had during the war, recalls : "Those of us who were newly-married with babies and young children, and a husband away in the army, didn't get out and about like the rest. On the few occasions when Kirry came home on leave we might get a baby-sitter and then we could go out to the pictures. One pleasure that I recall was taking the train from Leckhampton station to Charlton Kings - it only cost a few pence - and walking back home. It may not sound much, but the children always thought it a great treat."

Leckhampton boasted a railway station. The railway was begun in 1891 to link Cheltenham and Southampton, it later also connected to the line from Cheltenham Lansdown when a link to Banbury was built. During the war the station-master was Mr WE Etheridge, and there were six passenger trains daily (except Sundays) in each direction on the Cheltenham - Banbury line and four on the line to Southampton, including several through cross-country trains. Towards the end of the war, and especially in the build-up to D-Day, the lines to Southampton and the South Coast handled an ever increasing load of heavy goods trains carrying war materials of all kinds. The trains were often hauled by large 'Austerity' locomotives, many of which were built in the USA, and other heavy-goods engines from railway companies like the LMS. Shortly after D-Day, hospital trains brought American casualties to the station from where they were taken to the American Hospital at the top of Leckhampton Hill.

In March 1942, nine heavy Army vehicles went out of control on Birdlip Hill, and amazingly only one soldier was killed. It was stated at the inquest that the convoy should not have been using that hill (which is 1-in-6), and that the steepness probably caused the brakes of one vehicle to burn out.

The old Infants School at the corner of Hall Road and Church Road was taken over for use as a soldiers' club and canteen, for the troops billeted at Leckhampton Court, an arrangement that seems to have lasted until 1942.

Milk, from either Pearman's or Richings' dairies, and grocery deliveries were regularly made, either by three-wheeled van or horse-and-trap, which was a favourite with many children and adults. In those days there were several market gardens and a fruit-grower in

the locality. Mr Elliott, a greengrocer of Norwood Parade, would come round the streets with his horse and cart piled high with fruit and vegetables. There were also nine farms in the area, but nowadays, only Blackhedge Farm is worked or rented by the same family as then (the Jenners). Mr Weaver's Warden Hill Farm was at that time surrounded by fields, with only a network of tracks linking it to Shurdington Road, near Mr Townsend's Brizen House Farm. Only later did the estates of houses appear.

Relatively few Leckhampton court cases were reported in the newspapers; there were the usual instances of 'drunk and disorderly', but a case that stood out in this connection was a police raid on the Malvern Inn at 11pm, when some 30 persons were found to be drinking during restricted hours. These included the publican and his wife, three US Army Officers and five servicemen, and some women. Other infringements of the law concerned a man from Pilley Lane who was fined £10 for misuse of petrol, whilst a local farmer was fined £1 for causing some pigs to be slaughtered without a permit! Another farmer was sent to prison for one month with hard labour for receiving 17 gallons of milk (value £1) from a local dairy van-man. In another case a woman was sent to prison for two months for receiving US goods. But the case which overshadows all these, occurred in 1944, when two US soldiers were sentenced to death for the rape of a 16-year old Bishops Cleeve girl after a dance.

In October 1944 the US Army released the eight Cheltenham hotels, including the Lilleybrook, which had been used for officers' accommodation, but Thirlestaine Hall Hotel (now the Chelsea Building Society headquarters) continued, for the time being, to be a convalescent home for wounded US soldiers.

The newspapers continued to report on marriages, though the shortage of newsprint often meant the reports were shorter than pre-war. In May 1940 there was the wedding of Captain P Reynolds to Miss H Jarrett-Kerr, of 160, Leckhampton Road. The service was conducted by the bride's brother, the Revd WR Jarrett-Kerr, assisted by Canon HJ Hensman. An interesting feature of the ceremony was that owing to the shortness of the bridegroom's leave, an informal reception for the many friends who attended, was held at the lych-gate! Later, in 1942 another brother, Lt CE Jarrett-Kerr sent news that he was safe and well after escaping from Singapore.

Miss Betty Trye, daughter of Captain JH Trye, RN (Retd) was in the WRNS and married Captain J Atkinson, Royal Marines, of Broadway. Earlier Miss Trye had been presented at Court. Her father was an Alderman of Gloucestershire County Council, and had been Mayor of Cheltenham twice.

NEWS FROM ABROAD

News appearing in the papers was frequently of servicemen held as Prisoners of War, and Leckhampton had its share of them. One such story was that of Private JE Carr, aged 20, whose home was in Pilley Crescent. He was captured by the Germans while serving with the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders, but he managed to escape from the German POW camp in Italy after only six days there while working in the cookhouse. Some Italian farmers gave him food and civilian clothes, and somewhere to sleep, and he made his way back to his own lines where he was given two days' rest before returning to his unit.

Signalman D Pearman of Pilley Lane was taken prisoner at St Valery on the Somme in 1940, and remained in captivity until the end of the war, despite escaping three times only to be recaptured. In 1945, he returned to the prison camp at Bremen where he had spent a gruelling five years, so that he could re-enact, (alongside Michael Redgrave and Basil Radford) for British cinema audiences, the adventures which were a significant part of his life.

Arthur Newcombe left Naunton Park School at the age of 16, and joined the Army; in 1938 he married Eleanor Maisey of Fairview Road and at the outbreak of war he was in the Royal Artillery. In October 1944 he was awarded a certificate as a token of appreciation by Field-Marshal Montgomery, for his 'outstanding good service and devotion to duty in France'.

Aircraftsman James Eldridge, of Naunton Lane, was taken prisoner after a raid in April 1940 on German bases in Denmark. Also taken prisoner in 1940 and held by the Germans was F Dee of Church Road.

In March 1943, 863 POWs were exchanged with the Italians at Mersine in Turkey; amongst them was Commander Walter Leslie Mortimer Brown, DSC, of Leckhampton Road. He had won his DSC for 'daring, resource, and devotion to duty' in the second battle of Narvik, while serving on HMS *Warspite*, but while serving as an observer in the Fleet Air Arm, he was shot down over Libya in 1940, only the fourth British Officer to be captured by the Italians.

Guardsmen William Bailey (20) of Karoo Cottage, Church Road, had only been married a few days when he was posted to Italy with the 1st Scots Guards, where he had the misfortune to be killed in a road accident. His young wife and baby were later staying with his parents in Church Road.

Mr Herbie Greening, who now lives at 40, Church Road, joined the Navy in 1934, and when war broke out he was serving on the cruiser HMS *Birmingham* in the Dutch East Indies. He came home on leave in 1940, then went to Scapa Flow for a year, after which he was coxswain on motor-torpedo boats stationed at Fort William for four years. In 1944, he returned to general service on the frigate HMS *Fernie* as coxswain, and later served at the shore-station, HMS *Collingwood*, a total of 12 years service. Mr Greening's father was a verger from 1932-68, and during the war was an air-raid warden; his mother looked after two girls who lived at the Rectory while the Rector was away on war service. There is a rider to the wartime adventures of Mr Greening; nowadays he regularly fights to control the weeds which invade the area surrounding Leckhampton War Memorial in Church Road. He recently said, "I like to see it looking nice, it's my tribute to those who died."

Several Leckhampton servicemen became prisoners of the Japanese and were held in Java, two such were Flt Lt George Lewis of Moorend Road who reached Singapore late in 1945 after three years in captivity, and AC2 Sydney Mares of Old Bath Road. However, the Revd Eric Cordingly, who had become the Rector of St Peter's in January 1941, was captured when Singapore fell. He had been in the retreat from Dunkirk in 1940, but was serving as chaplain with the 18th Division of the Imperial Forces in the Far East, when he was captured and thereafter endured the rigours of captivity under the Japanese in Malaya until he was released in 1945. In 1944, the wife of Sgt SH Newcombe of Cotswold Cottages, Leckhampton Hill, received a postcard telling her he was safe and well as a POW in Thailand. He had been taken prisoner in Singapore and not heard of for nearly two years.

The names of Leckhampton personnel who lost their lives in the war appear in the Rolls of Honour, reproduced in Appendix B; these record sad events, but one in particular we cannot refrain from mentioning in more detail because of the cruel twist of fate that it shows. The newspaper reported 'the death on active service' of F/O Henry Alvis Little of Old Bath Road who died on his first operation over enemy territory as a bomb-aimer, when their plane crashed over Germany. He was buried in the US Military Cemetery at Epinal, France; the date of the report was May 8 1945 - VE Day.

Chapter 8

THE END OF THE WAR

As winter gave way to spring the Russian and Anglo-American armies tightened their grip on the enemy, gradually drawing closer to the frontiers of the Third Reich itself.

On Tuesday May 1 1945 the radio announced that Hitler was dead, having shot himself in Berlin on the previous day. The end of the European war was finally announced to the nation on Monday May 7.

German surrender took place at a wind-swept Lüneberg Heath, and the services of an interpreter were given to Field-Marshal Montgomery for his meeting with senior German officers. The translator was Second Lieutenant (later Captain) Derek Knee, serving in the Intelligence Department attached to the 2nd Army in Germany, whose home was in Ewlyn Road. Lieutenant Knee had formerly attended Naunton Park School, and studied languages at Cambridge, before joining the Dorset Regiment in 1942. At the negotiations, he escorted the German delegates back to their lines to obtain the reply to the British terms of surrender from Admiral Doenitz (then head of the German Forces). He was also the first Allied soldier to enter Hamburg, and later took part as an interpreter in the final surrender ceremony at Rheims.

VE-Day - Victory in Europe - was Tuesday May 8, the first of a two-day public holiday, and Churchill came on the wireless at three o'clock with a fine speech containing the words, '...we may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing...' and there followed much dancing and singing in Cheltenham's streets. There were bonfires in various parts of the town; a popular one was at 'Matey Smith's', Maida Vale, (on the spot where a bomb had previously fallen) where an effigy of the ex-Führer blazed away while cat-calls, cheers and rude noises rang out. The next day there was a party in Southern Road, and, while potatoes were baked in the bonfire ashes, there was community singing. On Sunday May 13 there was a Victory Parade in the Promenade, recalled by Michael Gibson, and a service where around 5,000 British and US troops took part. Numerous parties took place through the rest of the month; at Treelands (that house was demolished some time ago) where money was raised for the Red Cross, and in the Naunton Lane area where 80 children had a sit-down tea followed by fun and games, and a Punch & Judy show.

On Whit Monday, at 'Landscape', Daisybank Road, there was tea on the lawn, pony rides, dancing to the strains of a barrel-organ, and fireworks. Alan Randell recalls the Victory celebration party on the croquet lawn at Treelands. At the end of May a large party for children of the Charlton Lane and Old Bath Road areas took place at the northern approach to the bombed Pilley Bridge. Despite fitful rain over 100 youngsters enjoyed a splendid tea, at which the Mayor took an honoured place and cut the iced cake. All children were given a Victory beaker and an ice-cream. There was a tug-of-war for adults, which the women won! Then, because of more persistent rain, everyone adjourned to the Parish Hall where there were more games, and dancing to music provided by Mr EJ Fear.

The Japanese surrender was announced at midnight on Tuesday August 14 1945, with Wednesday and Thursday as public holidays; and, if possible, the celebrations were on an even larger scale. One of the first children's parties took place on the Wednesday afternoon, organised by Mrs Enoch in Southern Road; children wore fancy-dress, and later the King's Speech was relayed through speakers into the garden, then there was the 'ceremonial' burning of an effigy of the Emperor of Japan. Further parties took place later in the month; Moorend Street's was organised by Mrs Dyson, and there was dancing to music from Chris

Thompson's band. During Fairhaven Street's party, the son of Mrs Jordan (one of the organisers) came home to a hearty welcome. The children paraded in fancy dress, and were given toffee-apples, chocolate and a sixpence, then there was dancing until midnight.

By way of a change from street-parties, over 30 children and parents went by coach to the Cotswolds, and took tea at Cranham Woods. Another group, from Maida Vale area, took a coach ride with about 60 children and parents to Minchinhampton Common, and a party of 140 from Pilley Crescent had tea and games, each child receiving a silver coin, and there was music on the accordion provided by Mr Val Critchlow. The Church Road and Hall Road Victory party took place in September at the Parish Hall. The guests included (British) troops stationed at the Court, and those whose duties kept them in the camp were sent cigarettes and good wishes. A Victory cake was made by Mrs J White, and cut by Trooper Geoff Nicholls, on leave from the Far East.

Parishioners at Leckhampton gave a warm-hearted welcome to the Revd Eric Cordingly on his return in October 1945, after nearly four years as a POW. They even decorated the route to his home, while later in December the Revd PW Unwin received a presentation in recognition of his service to the parish during Eric Cordingly's absence.

The immediate post-war years were a time of further austerity, leading to a great deal of complaints from the exhausted British people, who were hoping for a period of relaxation after their six years of hardship, struggle, and privations. Rationing actually got worse during the final year of the war and in the first few months after it ended even bread was rationed for a while. According to the Food Minister at the time all this was necessary, 'in order to help to find food for the liberated countries', a noble sentiment that did not always satisfy those who heard it. If VE-Day altered the hopes of the nation, it had very little effect on the day-to-day feeding and clothing of the nation's families; what was not rationed by law, was rationed by scarcity.

Yet, there is no denying that despite the casualties of the bombing raids in the early years Cheltenham had an easy war, but the price of victory was high for Britain as a nation. After almost six years of total war, the country was not only exhausted but virtually bankrupt. Apart from our debt to the Commonwealth we owed the USA more than \$10,000 million, factories had to be switched from war-time to peace-time production, raw materials, machinery and ships (to replace our merchant fleet, many of which had been sunk by the Axis powers) had to be bought - with borrowed money - and five million men and women had to be repatriated, some from halfway across the world.

Today, many of those who lived through the Second World War look back on it as a time when people were much closer together. Despite enormous difficulties, they had seen it through to the end, maintaining at least an outward appearance of cheerful good humour, but when the last 'All Clear' sounded it heralded in a new era, and a way of life vanished forever.

APPENDIX A - WAR DIARY

1938	March 14	Germany annexes Austria
1939	March 15	Germany invades Czechoslovakia
	September 1	Germany invades Poland
	September 3	Britain declares war with Germany
	September 10	British Expeditionary Force departs for France
1940	September 17	Russia invades Poland
	May 27	Evacuation from Dunkirk begins
	July 10-Oct 31	Battle of Britain
	September 7	Blitz on London begins
1941	September 30	Night-bombing by Germany begins
	April	Germany launches African offensive
	April - December	British & Australian troops besieged in Tobruk
	June 22	Germany breaks Pact and invades Russia
	August 14	Churchill and Roosevelt sign Atlantic Charter
	December 7	Japan attacks US Fleet in Pearl Harbour
1942	November 19	First Allied attacks in Africa. US enters War
	December 10	Russia halts German advance on Moscow
1943	January 2	Japan enters Manila, capital of Philippines
	February 15	Singapore falls to Japan
	March 26	First long-range RAF raids over Germany
	June 21	Tobruk falls to Germans
	August 6	Montgomery takes command of 8th Army
	Oct 23 - Nov 4	Battle of El Alamein
	October 31	'Baedeker' air raids on English resorts
1943	January 31	German Army surrenders at Stalingrad
	May 12	German and Italian Forces surrender in N Africa
	July 10	Allies land in Sicily
	September 3	Allies land in Italy
	December 24	General Eisenhower appointed C-in-C Europe
1944	January	Red Army breaks siege of Leningrad
	June 4	US 5th Army captures Rome
	June 6	D-Day landings
	June 13	V1 (flying bomb) attacks on London begin
	September 8	V2 attacks begin
	September 17	Allied airborne landing at Arnhem
	December 16	Massive German attacks through Ardennes
1945	January 17	Warsaw falls to Russian and Polish Forces
	February 4	US troops penetrate Siegfried Line
	February 12	Churchill, Roosevelt & Stalin end Yalta talks
	March 20	France and Low Countries sign Economic Pact
	March 25	Allies cross the Rhine
	April 25	Germans in retreat; Russian and US troops meet at River Elbe
	April 25	United Nations meet at San Francisco
	April 30	Russians take Berlin; Hitler commits suicide
	May 7	Germany surrenders
	May 8	"VE-Day"
	May 26	United Nations Treaty signed
	August 2	Potsdam conference; Attlee, Truman & Stalin partition Germany
	August 6	US Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima
	August 8	US Atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki
August 14	Russia declares war on Japan Japan surrenders - "VJ-Day"	

APPENDIX B - 'LEST WE FORGET'

Leckhampton War Memorial *Second World War 1939-1945*

Arthur Bayley

Peter Brunson

Leslie Chandler

Maurice Collins

Eric Holder

Robert Hurley

Alvis Little

Frederick George Sandford

Harry James Spencer Stevenson

The Lady Chapel, St Philip and St James's Church

AG Daniels Sgt RAF

JHP Foster F/O RAFVR

GL Scudamore P/O RAF

HAL Vetch MC Capt RE

APPENDIX C - AWARDS for BRAVERY

There were numerous occasions when the press recorded details of deeds of bravery, these few stories are collected solely from the contemporary press, and consequently there may be omissions, which are regrettably inevitable.

In 1941, Lt Neville AF Cheesman, RN, was awarded a DFC. He was the son of Mr & Mrs Cheesman who had lived at Yetholm, Leckhampton Road; within a year Lt Cheesman died in a raid on an Italian Naval base.

James Manson of 54, Charlton Lane, received the OBE for long and continued service in the Royal Navy and Merchant Navy. He served as a Chief Engineer Officer, taking part in the second Battle of Narvik with the temporary rank of Lieutenant-Commander, but his ship was destroyed during the action and he managed to return to Britain in a captured German vessel. He returned to the Merchant Navy and saw service in the Atlantic, and in the Middle and Far East.

A DFM was awarded to Flt Sgt Malcolm Mitchem of Pilley Crescent after he took over the controls of a badly damaged aircraft during an attack on Turin in August 1943. He managed to fly the bomber to North Africa, and the whole episode was an extremely trying ordeal.

The OBE was awarded to Lt-Col Williamson RA of Leckhampton Road, who had been serving as Adjutant to the Cheltenham AA Battery.

Another member of the Royal Artillery was Driver Ernest Charles Pearce of Moorend Road, he was awarded the MM for his actions during the fighting at Anzio beach-head in 1944.

Major William Lewis Bell, 25, of Halland Road, was with the Gloucestershire Regiment when he was awarded the MBE in 1945 for gallant and distinguished service in North-West Europe.

F/O John James Townsend, 31, of the Crippetts House, was awarded the BEM in 1942 for saving the lives of his fellow crew-members after a plane crash in Scotland. Despite his injuries he had managed to extricate himself. The next year he was reported missing during air operations on board a Coastal Command aircraft, commanded by F/O Lloyd Alan Trigg VC, which was lost with all the crew while attacking U-boats in the Atlantic.

LECKHAMPTON in the SECOND WORLD WAR

From personal recollections and documentary sources, many of them not published before, the Leckhampton Local History Society has compiled this book describing life in the village during the war years.

Immediately after the declaration of war the first evacuees arrived and extensive civil defence and air-raid precautions were taken. Teams of fire watchers were organised, shelters were dug and the irksome blackout regulations were enforced. Reminiscences of members of the Home Guard enliven the narrative, and housewives and others recall the effects of rationing.

A number of the high-explosive bombs that fell in the Cheltenham area landed on Leckhampton, and Pilley Bridge was demolished (see illustration on front cover). Several present-day inhabitants have provided graphic eye-witness descriptions.

Leckhampton Court played an important role, housing US servicemen before the D-Day landings and, after VE-Day, German Prisoners-of-War. Several former inmates have provided their own fond memories.

We learn how local schools and churches responded to wartime conditions, and many details of the civilian war effort are recalled, as well as the way in which people contrived to maintain a social life.

The book ends with descriptions of the joyful celebrations of the ending of the war, while paying tribute to those who served during the conflict and to those who lost their lives.

There are nearly 50 rare photographs of life at the time, as well as maps showing where the bombs fell and the layout of the POW camp.

This book will appeal to anyone with an interest in the events of 1939-45 and in the history not only of Leckhampton but also of Cheltenham and further afield.

Earlier publications of the Leckhampton Local History Society are *1894 - the End of an Era* edited by Bruce Stait (1994) and *Leckhampton Yesteryear - Village Life 1888 - 1939* by Eric Miller (1996).

ISBN 0 9524200 2 3

Price £4.95

76 pages

Illustrated