

A Village in WW2

Fordham Essex

Researched and written by
Wendy Shepherd

A Fordham Local History Project



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Dedication

Those known to FLHS who died in WW2

James Bugg (Graham)

Douglas Edward Cudmore

John Albert Hewitt

John Arthur Treby

Charles Henry Blackwell

Henry Albert Hoskins

Allan Charles Lewis

Leonard Samuel Johnson

George William Smith

Emma Dale

Foreword

A note from the Author

Family history is a passion of mine. Nothing fascinates me more than being given a name to research to see what can be unravelled about that person. But of course it is not just about the person, it is about their place of origin, their place of residence and a snapshot of social history of the time in which they lived. We end up documenting their life events and the experiences of the individuals and families.

Fordham Local History Society has been a very important part of my life since I moved to Fordham in 2012. FLHS has a very good archive containing over 2000 photographs. It is from the archive of WW2 information that this book has evolved. I have been helped along the way by members of the society offering other 'gems' of information.

Particular thanks go to Michael Hamilton-Macy for editing the book and to my former teaching colleague Nicky Gibbs and who has also supported me along the way with her research.

The book is a snap shot of some of the people who resided in our village at a time of fear and uncertainty. But it was also a time of hope and bravery, a time when a community would come together to support each other and where friendships would be forged and would last a lifetime.

If you do have any other information about Fordham and WW2, please contact me and the information can be published in our monthly FLHS Bulletin and I can add it to the publication for a later reprint.

The references for the content can be found at the end of each chapter.

I would like to acknowledge Hugh Beattie in allowing FLHS to use the beautiful landscape composition of Fordham on the front cover. It is a view of the 1939 defence line and the River Colne South of Fordham.

Sincere thanks to the Hervey Benham Charitable Trust for their generous grant towards the printing of the book.

I hope that you will enjoy the book; it has been a privilege to write about our village once again.

Wendy Shepherd 2025

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Thanks to all the families who have contacted me including: Cecil Beard, Colin Bonner, Walter Butler, Charles Blackwell, James Chamley, Ivy Chandler, Millicent Fairhall, John T. Firmin, Albert Garrod, Lewis Gunary, Ernest and Susannah Hay, Mary Hills, George E. Kettle, Charles Leach, Kelso Wheturere Mason, Roland Morgan and Ben Travis.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

'Historical memory is the key to self-identity, to seeing one's place in the stream of time, and one's connectedness with all of humankind.'

Following on from our WW1 book 'Fordham's Finest- Preserving the Memory', Fordham Local History Society (FLHS) researcher and author Wendy Shepherd decided to write another book about the people of Fordham to gain a snapshot of life in this rural community; but this time the focus would be WW2. As Britain went to war in 1939, the village of Fordham once again stepped up to the mark; but this time many more women actively participated.

Even before the 3rd of September 1939, the economic crisis of the Great Depression and political tensions left unresolved following the end of World War One, made politicians fearfully concerned of what might happen.

From 1935 there was concern about the skirmishes in Africa and Spain. Hitler was a growing threat with his resurgence and aggressive stance. There was a real threat of air assault and the use of poison gas against civilians. A Committee of Imperial Defence was set up as early as 1924 to examine how the United Kingdom could be protected from aerial attacks and this is how the Air Raid Precautions or ARP was formed. You can read more about the workings of the ARP in Chapter 9.

It was after the ARP Act of 1938 that other front line civil defence workers were galvanised into training including The Auxiliary Fire Service and Police Reserve, see Chapters 10 and 11.

The LDV, (Local Defence Volunteers, who later became the Home Guard), the WVS (Women's Voluntary Service) and ATS (Auxiliary Territorial Service) were all represented in Fordham and you can read about them in Chapters 8, 13 and 14.

So how do we know what occurred in Fordham? Apart from the oral histories that have been collected from Fordham folk, FLHS also has a wealth of photographic evidence which shows us what it was like living in Fordham during WW2.

But it was finding the death record of a Fordham civilian who had been killed in 1942 that was the catalyst for further research into Fordham and WW2.

It is the 1939 WW2 Register (Chapter 3) which was taken on the 29th of September 1939 that records those who were living in Fordham at the time. This information was used by Government to produce identity cards and, once rationing was introduced in January 1940, to issue ration books. Later in 1948, this data would also be used as a National Health Service register.

The 1939 Register also included the home defence rolls of Fordham men and women at the start of the war. For example:- Local Defence Volunteer (LDV), later the Home Guard, Women's Voluntary Service (WVS), Air Raid Precautions (ARP) which included the Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS), Rescue and Decontamination Squad, Special Constabulary, and Women's Land Army (WLA) who were not a fighting army (Chapter 16), but an army on the fields working hard to produce food for the nation.

This new book in Fordham's library is a collection of many things and has been compiled from many sources: research by FLHS members, photographs from our archive, data from the 1939 pre-war register, the 1921 census, interviews, recounts, biographies and documents. But perhaps the most important source was from the people of Fordham who have given their voice to this project.

FLHS is fortunate to have an archive of taped interviews from 2004 when Jess Jephcott, a former Fordham resident produced a compilation of interviews with Fordham residents. These interviews covered their

lives and included WW2 reminiscences and experiences. We acknowledge Jess's contribution to this book.

At the beginning of each chapter, you will read a diary entry written by Millicent Fairhall nee Partridge. FLHS was given a copy of excerpts from Millicent's WW2 diary many years ago for our use and it is fitting that we use her first hand insights telling us what it was like to live in Fordham and the surrounding area during those war years.

In this edition we commemorate the sacrifices of the men and women of Fordham who served in WW2; many fought and died, others returned, some were injured or imprisoned. Others who remained in the village worked tirelessly on the land providing food and forage. We were protected by the Home Guard and many villagers were ARP wardens, WVS workers and first aiders.

We must not forget the role of Fordham Parish Council, who like other parish councils across the country formed Invasion Committees to deal with many of the practicalities that Fordham might expect if invaded (Chapter 5.) When you read excerpts from their minutes, you begin to understand that invasion was a grave possibility and Fordham needed a plan.

There were also unsung volunteers who organised events on the Home Front; 'keeping the home fires burning!' Our little Parish Room was a regular venue for dances which kept morale high, raising money for the Welcome Home Fund and other vital war work. WW2 was not just a soldier's war; it would be a people's war.

We dedicate this book to the four men on our war memorial James Bugg (Graham), Douglas Cudmore, John Hewitt and John Treby. However, other 'Fordham' servicemen have recently been discovered in the research: - Charles Henry Blackwell, Henry Albert Hoskins, Leonard Samuel Johnson, Allan Charles Lewis and George William Smith. They also died serving our country but are not recorded on our war memorial (Chapter 20).

FLHS would also like to include in the dedication Emma Dale, a civilian from Fordham Heath (which was still part of Fordham in WW2). Emma was killed when Severalls Hospital was bombed in 1942 (Chapter 22.)

As with our WW1 book, the criteria for inclusion in this book is a connection to Fordham through birth or residence and this is why they are remembered in our story.

This book is just a snapshot of life in the village during those war years, using the information at hand at the time of publication. We apologise if we have omitted anyone you know from this edition who was part of Fordham during that time.

We have endeavoured to make as many contacts as possible. We will be able to add any omissions to our online publication and further reprints, but sadly not to this publication. We also hope that people can use this book to help them research and study family who used to live in our beautiful village of Fordham.

To visualise a village like Fordham locked in by barbed wire and road blocks, may be hard to imagine. So perhaps this book will enable people to connect the past with the present, to understand that their lives today were shaped by the events that happened here in our village of Fordham.

For our older villagers, this may be easier, as they can identify with many events of the time and make a connection. So many of them have shown a great interest in the project as it was a time when their families were actively involved in such a pivotal time in their community.



Georgina and Lindsay Ratcliffe - Tastes Through Time

Sources of Information

Page 1 Opening quote - Ref:phi.history.ucla.edu/nchs/preface/significance-history-educated-citizen

Pages 1, 2 www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/world-war-ii-history#leading-up-to-world-war

CHAPTER 2

Fordham

'Fordham looks calm and peaceful in the evening sun. Cornfields are nearly bare; hedgerows rich with colour, berries and fruit beginning to don their autumn hues. Nature seems to have reached maturity.' M.F.

Just 20 years on from the end of WW1; Britain found itself at war with Germany once again. One cannot imagine the disbelief of those who had experienced the horrors of WW1, that their country was about to embark on another war. It would have been beyond their understanding. All those lives lost and gone forever, all those injured physically and mentally, all those children orphaned and wives widowed.

If you read examples from the 1921 census which are now available on Find My Past and Ancestry websites, you will read the sense of anger and frustration of those who had previously served. A 'world fit for heroes' was a promise that never materialised and many ex-servicemen found themselves out of work.

The census documents record comments about the apprehension of another war. One census reads – *"I do not wish to produce for an overstocked labour market or for the purpose of cannon fodder."*

WW2 would be a very different war. The Royal Air Force was now a strong branch of the military this time and in turn the German Luftwaffe challenged our skies. Families had to deal with aerial onslaughts, so to protect their children from the large scale bombings; many parents evacuated their children to protect them from the bombings that threatened our major cities, coastal towns, industry and military installations. How would Fordham cope this time around?

For younger residents and those new to Fordham, it may be hard to imagine life in Fordham before the estates were built. It was these fields that were an important part of agricultural life in Fordham prior to and during WW2.

Imagine open fields where Church Road, Lucas Avenue, Hall Road, Partridge Avenue and Herrings Way are situated. Moat Fields is where the Vulcan pub stood and would have looked very different. At the top of Ponders Road and Church Road opposite the war memorial was an orchard. Other housing developments like Rams Farm and The Old Thrift mark the sites of long gone agricultural land. Even Weavers Green and the village green had been fields and then turned into a recreational field thanks to Mr Gunary.



**Fields that became the recreational field/village green.
The Vulcan and stables in the distance. FLHS Archive.**

We can get an insight into Fordham and Fordham Heath leading up to the war, during the war and after it from the History of the County Of Essex. Fordham Heath was part of the parish before the boundaries changed in 1949.

Taken from a 'History of the County of Essex Volume 10, Lexden Hundred pages 205 to 210'

- Population was 612 in 1931. After 1949 population at Fordham was recorded as 576 in 1951.
- There was mixed farming in the 20th century. Between the world wars wheat and sugar beet were grown at Fordham Hall. Cows, sheep, pigs and poultry were reared.
- Casual workers were employed for pea picking and market garden produce taken to Covent Garden.
- The council encouraged residents to find odd jobs for the unemployed in 1933, a time of economic depression.
- At Sutton's Farm crops rotated between 1929 and 1932 included wheat, beans, peas, barley, mangolds, straw crop, clover, sainfoin (forage for horses,) cabbages, oats, sugar beet, and various root crops.
- By 1935 Sutton's farm was seriously neglected and there were insufficient labourers; the farm had a dairy herd of 16.
- In 1935 there were two general stores, a building and undertaking business, and a bakery.
- An orchard in 1935 where Herrings Way was later built.
- Farm workers' cottages were sometimes provided by farmers, there were five cottages in two blocks in Plummers Road in 1922.
- A model cottage for farmworkers at Fordham Place farm was built in 1938, subsidized by the local authority.
- From 1935 electricity was supplied to the centre of the village and to outlying parts some years later.
- Water was obtained from shallow wells until 1937/8 when mains water was provided along Church Road, and the supply was gradually extended.
- Having been founded in 1894, Fordham Parish Council was responsible for allotments, footpaths, footbridges, and the administration of Love's Charity.
- From 1936 there were quarterly refuse disposal collections.
- An invasion sub-committee met during the Second World War concerned with the home guard, emergency food rations,

casualties, informing the public about anti-gas measures, and listing all tractors and motors.

- Military authorities requisitioned land on Fordham Heath during WW2. Pillboxes remain south of the Colne and at Fordham Bridge.
- After the formation of Eight Ash Green Parish Council in 1949 the number of Fordham Parish councillors was reduced to five, together with a rural district councillor.
- The Chapel - A succession of financial difficulties arose from poor administration of the bequests, and Houds Farm was sold in 1931. From the 1930s local Scots farmers gave some financial support. After the Second World War congregations dwindled and the chapel later sold.
- The School - In 1946 the school was reorganized for juniors and infants only, in 1950 renamed Fordham All Saints' Church of England school, and in 1952 awarded Voluntary Controlled status.
- In 1946 Fordham Place, a dairy farm included 66 acres of arable and pasture in Fordham and more than 20 acres of willows. The timber was used to make cricket bats for which Fordham had become renowned.
- A small council estate was developed from 1948 around Porters Lane west of Fordham Heath.



Stanley Playle and his brother Cecil Bertie Playle with the orchard behind their home and bakery in Ponders Road.
FLHS Archive

Fordham History Society is fortunate to have a very good historical archive. Since the society was formed in 1997, we have accumulated over 2000 photographs and countless documents which show and tell us about Fordham – back in the day!

Many years ago we were lucky to be given some WW2 diary entries covering the first few years of the war, written by Millicent Fairhall nee Partridge, with additional comments by her daughter Mary and then written up by another daughter Hazel Gooch. In sharing some of the descriptive entries from the diary, you will perhaps get a better feel and understanding of our village during World War Two and you get a real sense that Millicent loved the village of Fordham.

Millicent had returned to Fordham with her younger children and her mother as 'evacuees'. Therefore her diary entries are also useful for Chapter 17 on evacuation. At the time when war was imminent, Millicent's family was living in Clacton. With Clacton situated on the coast, the town was vulnerable to German invasion and also on the flight path to London. Millicent decided to look for a place to evacuate her family.

'Went to London today, but could not fix anything up with the boys and Grannie. I have resolved to go to Fordham. It has come to me like an inspiration, Fordham, Grannie's native village.'

'Been to Fordham and wonder of wonder, have arranged for Grannie to go there. How strange to go to Fordham on such an errand; a dream world where time seems to stand still.'

Millicent's family go to live at Barnabys in Ponders Road., Fordham. In September 1939, Barnabys was the residence of Alfred Burgoyne and Kate Burgoyne nee Keppell. Alfred born in 1860 was a retired miller. His wife Kate born in 1879 did household duties i.e. housewife. They had been married in Lewisham in 1926. Alfred died in 1946 in Colchester.

When Millicent came to visit Barnabys it was already vacant. Initially Fordham appeared unaltered to her. There was not much evidence of war except a gathering of local LDVs. She noticed the scarlet geraniums

blooming at the general store as they had always bloomed. Fordham looked the same as when she was four years old.



Barnabys, Ponders Road in the 1940's. FLHS Archive

Millicent's parents Benjamin Partridge and Frances Hannah Arnold were born in Fordham, Millicent was born in Stanway. There are many Partridges in the village and the Arnolds on her maternal side are well represented; both families have long connections with Fordham.

With time spent here and in Clacton, Millicent would cycle twenty two miles between her home in Wellesley Road Clacton and Fordham on a regular basis (her husband William Fairhall remained in Clacton). Millicent recorded in her diary how the war affected her home back in Clacton and the 'new' home in Fordham.

This 'new' home was really the old home of her father Benjamin Partridge and his parents Alderman Partridge 1839-1911 and Edith Partridge 1843-1922 nee Partridge (they were cousins hence the same surname!)



Millicent's grandmother Edith Partridge at the gate of Barnabys before 1922. FLHS Archive.

Edith and Alderman had lost a son Charles Wallace Partridge in WW1 and he is remembered on our war memorial. Brothers Benjamin and Charles Wallace Partridge were just two of Edith and Alderman's seventeen children. Our WW1 casualty Charles Wallace Partridge was married to Sarah Letitia Braybrooke and they had three children Edith, Evelyn and Charles. Private Partridge served with the Royal Army Ordnance Corps. Ironically Charles died on the 9th December 1918 from influenza in France after the Armistice; he was thirty.

Barnabys the bungalow no longer stands, but a house has been built on the site and retains the name. Millicent writes a beautiful description of the little cottage garden and its surroundings:

'Barnabys - The Darcy Spice apple has gone but a large walnut tree has taken its place. There is still a harvest apple and a number of new greengages now flourish there. Sanitary arrangements still primitive (an outside privy) but water comes from a tap instead of the old pump.'

The Darcy Spice Apple, that Millicent mentions was a dessert apple once found in the grounds of the Hall at Tolleshunt D'Arcy in 1785 and originally sold as 'Baddow Pippin.' In our Fordham Orchard 'Pres Field,'

which is just off Moat Road, we have many varieties of ancient fruits including a Darcy Spice variety.

As time went on, Millicent saw many changes in terms of military activity as she approached Fordham.

'The countryside showed signs of defence activity. Sandbags and sentries everywhere, concrete block houses are being erected, barbed wire and sentries guarding bridges. Those guarding the entries to the village wear tin hats and never move without gas marks; but by now everyone carries them.'

But from her diary entries you still get a sense of fondness too for the home of her father and grandparents in Fordham. Millicent writes:

'The view from the bungalow over the fields still delights me just as it did when I was a child. Fordham still looks calm and peaceful in the evening sun.'



The fields at Fordham W.Shepherd

Sources of Information

Pages 6, 10, 12 www.findmypast.co.uk/1921-census

Pages 8, 9 History of the County of Essex Volume 10, Lexden Hundred

Pages 6, 10, 12, 13 - Diary of Millicent Fairhall 1940

CHAPTER 3

The 1939 Register

'The 2nd of September the last day of peace, I biked down to the seafront to have a 'think' and to see what was going on. There was unusually heavy air activity. Several RAF squadrons closely following one another crossed the coastline and out towards the open sea. That was all - but it seemed ominous.' M.F.

On September 1st, 1939 Germany invaded Poland, putting the wheels in motion for Britain to declare war on the 3rd September 1939.

Using the 1939 pre-war register we know approximately how many people were living in Fordham. In December 1938 the government had announced that in the event of war, a National Register would be taken. This register, seen as a critical tool to help coordinate the war effort, would list details of every civilian in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The National Registration Act received royal assent on the 5th September and Registrar General Sir Sylvanus Vivian announced that National Registration Day would be the 29th of September. The enumerators issued forms to forty-one million people. The completed forms would be used to issue identity cards, organise rationing and more. The key details of every civilian - name, date of birth, address, occupation, would be registered; no place of birth was requested. Identity cards were issued on the spot. Members of the armed forces were not recorded (unless they were on leave). People were recorded as a household member. Some are classified as members of an institution and you will find these letters against their name:-

O – Officer; V- Visitor; S – Servant; P – Patient; I - Inmate

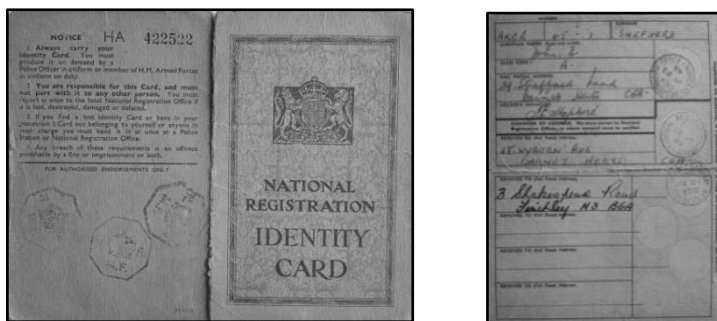
The 1939 register does not show records of people who were younger than one hundred years old, or those who have died after 1991. These

persons are shown by the redacted - blacked out sections. These are officially closed because of data protection. However, Ancestry and Find My Past have a system where they scan the records periodically opening up the records of individuals as their date of birth becomes longer than one hundred years ago.

As a researcher one can only speculate that these redacted entries are children of the families recorded above and therefore more research is required to confirm this speculation. The researcher will need to remember that some children had already been evacuated; thus they may not be recorded living with their own families.

My mother was evacuated to Sussex with her two younger brothers at the start of the war. However, there is an error on her 1939 listing, the brother who had passed away and should have been shown was not recorded and the brother who was alive was shown, errors do happen and information is always worth checking.

The essential identity cards were used up to 1952 when legal requirement to carry them ceased. Up till then every civilian on request by an official, had to present their identity card. They were given forty-eight hours to show them at a police station. The cards of children were looked after by their parents. It was essential that the population was tracked during the war years and included babies that were born and those who died.



**Original Identity Card of Gt. Grandfather J.E. Shepherd.
W.Shepherd**

The 1939 Register therefore represented one of the most important 20th century documents in Britain. The information helped the war effort and was later used in the founding of the National Health Service. It was used to help identify those for conscription and how the labour force could be directed. There needed to be a way of monitoring and controlling the movement of the population because of military mobilisation and mass evacuation.

As a researcher, I find the 1939 Register extremely useful. I have access to the records of forty-one million people in England and Wales. Having the full date of birth i.e. the day, month and year is very beneficial, although I have come across errors.

The redacted sections are frustrating, but with the use of other documents like the 1921 census and websites like BMD where you are able to use the mother's maiden name to check births from 1912, you can generally work out who these redacted records could be. The GRO website for birth and death indexes is also very useful as maiden names of mothers are recorded from 1837 on birth indexes and free to access.

The evacuation possibility might also stop you finding the children belonging to your ancestors. Fortunately for me I knew the places where my mother had been evacuated. Areas where evacuees were sent were called Reception Areas, the areas are listed below. The whole of the following counties and areas were designated Reception Areas:

- Bedfordshire
- Berkshire
- Buckinghamshire
- Cambridgeshire
- Cumberland

- Dorset
- Herefordshire
- Huntingdonshire
- Northamptonshire
- Oxfordshire
- Rutland
- Shropshire
- Suffolk
- Sussex
- Westmorland
- Wiltshire
- Isle of Wight
- Isle of Ely
- Soke of Peterborough
- Holland and Kesteven divisions of Lincolnshire

There were also many seasonal workers living away in 1939, so if you cannot find a working member of your family in their home area, try looking elsewhere.

You may find that above the names of some single women there is another name and a date, (usually in a different colour pen). This is a new married surname, which is a great help in the research you may be undertaking.

Military personnel were recorded elsewhere as this would have been very sensitive information to publicise.

A vital feature of the social history of the time is seeing the occupations that your family were involved in during 1939. Gone are many occupations that are no longer 'in fashion' as times had changed. But for women, there were more opportunities.

The instruction column on the far right of the 1939 document is a valuable source of information showing many WW2 civil defence roles for men and women.

It is also worth noting that the 1931 census was destroyed in a fire, not the result of an air raid. The 1941 census did not take place because we were at war. Therefore, the 1939 Register bridges a census gap that risked losing an entire generation on record. It is the only surviving overview of the civil population of England and Wales covering the period of 1921-1951. The 1939 Register is a valuable resource in understanding 20th century Britain.

Sources of Information

Pages 14 to 18 - www.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/1939-register

Pages 16 to 18 www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/1939-register

CHAPTER 4

Farming the Land

'How quiet! What a stretch of fields as I stood at the gates and looked over them. I realised they look just the same as in 1900. No new house or building has been added to the wide landscape, although a tractor is at work somewhere and the sound of it tells me that the century has moved on' M.F.

In 1939, the range of occupations was more extensive and diverse. The register for Fordham showed more job opportunities for women. There were still many jobs that had links to the land and there were some traditional crafts that had been more common in the 19th century. However, it was agricultural work that was still the main source of employment in Fordham.

Occupations had changed considerably since the WW1 Fordham publication – Fordham's Finest, Preserving the Memory (see page 18 in that edition). As Britain moved with the times of the 20th century, there were fewer farm workers; gone are many of the brick makers, blacksmiths and wheelwrights. There were also fewer women in domestic service. All the recorded occupations for Fordham from the 1939 register can be found at the back of the book in Chapter 25.

The breakdown of occupations shows that in Fordham in 1939, there were approximately: 20 Farmers, 122 farm/land workers, 11 clerical workers, 23 in retail, 8 in education, 7 in the medical profession, 25 in domestic service, 8 in dressmaking or tailoring, 185 housewives, 78 in trade or manual work, 3 in religious occupations and 35 retired persons.

Dates of birth are written aside those who have been registered. These dates can be inaccurate, so need to be checked. The dates of birth from the 1939 Register have been used in this chapter.

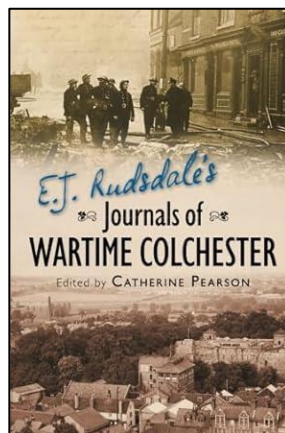
It is very hard to imagine today, that our country could have faced famine in WW2 with the continued onslaught of U boat attacks on merchant vessels bringing vital imports to us. We imported 70% of our food, but the dedication of our hard working Land Army women throughout the country would later match that amount which is a huge achievement. But it was not only food being imported, we were also losing raw materials such as timber for the war effort and this problem was to be addressed by the work of the Timber Corps (Chapter 16).

Without the contribution of Fordham farmers and their workers, male and female, our country would have been in difficulties. A series of rousing speeches by R. S. Hudson, Minister of Agriculture in 1942 about the need for volunteers to help feed the nation galvanized the country.

Many school children and adults made a major contribution to the food production drive by joining harvest camps. Absences from school were common in a rural school like Fordham. The school log book records pupils of Fordham School being excused from school to help with harvest even before the onset of war.

The War Agriculture Executive Committee

In the first and the second world wars there was a government backed organisation, 'The War Agriculture Executive Committee (WAEC).' Its purpose was to increase agricultural production. In WW2, the WAEC had been reformed, but they had more expansive powers over farmers and landowners targeting about 300,000 farms in the country. E.J. Rudsdale, who was the curator of Colchester Museum kept a diary during WW2 and his published book 'Journals



of Wartime Colchester,' gives a good account of some of the work of the WAEC in Essex. Eric Rudsdale was an ARP warden at Colchester Castle and as a pacifist, the war never sat well with him, but he was unable to avoid what went on in Colchester, a military town. His health was not good and when eventually called up, he was found to be unfit for service. His diary shares his anxieties and fears and as a social record of the time, it is fascinating. Sadly he died in 1951 aged forty-one.

The WAEC had great power within the farming communities. It was not always popular. Many women farmers felt that their hearings were unfair. Smaller farms were swallowed up and some of these had been bought by ex-servicemen from WW1 for a fresh start. Some farms that had been in families for generations were taken over. It was too much for some older farmers who symbolised old fashioned, small farmer attitudes.

Daniel McKerracher of Ewell Hall Farm in Kelvedon had threatened to kill himself if his farm was taken over. When WAEC went to make a record of the condition of the farm, Mr McKerracher had left a chalk written message in the garage saying: 'You will find me in the river.' Tragically, he had taken his own life; he was only sixty-five.



Ewell Farm Kelvedon 1902 Robert Edwards

Daniel McKerracher is recorded on the 1939 register with his wife Catherine McKerracher nee Maule whom he married in Scotland in 1907. The couple were still living in Scotland in 1921, but had moved to Kelvedon by 1939.

Daniel and Catherine's families had been in farming for generations. Daniel was one of many Scottish farmers who came down south and settled in Essex.

Mr McKerracher was not the only farmer to take his own life in trying to hold on to his farm. There is an interesting paper 'Death of a farmer: the fortunes of war and the strange case of Ray Walden.' This paper aims to demonstrate and evaluate the extreme measures facing the farming community during World War Two and the relations of power within agricultural communities.

It was not just farmland for food production that was required; airfields were also necessary. Rudsdale had a visit from the Air Ministry in July 1942. Enough land for three airfields in the area would be required, about 1500 acres of arable land for three airfields at Langham Woods (Boxted), Wormingford and Birch.

Rudsdale makes an ironic comment that the 1500 acres required for the aerodromes was just the amount of extra grassland that had been ploughed up in the summer for food production; so they were back to square one looking for more land which would support the people.

Kings Farm in Fordham was one of those farms targeted; neighbours supported the farmers with a protest. FLHS has been told that this was the farm run by the Playle sons Cecil, Stanley and Arthur, eldest son John (Jack) was a baker by trade.

King's Farm belonged to Mrs Playle, this would be Jane Playle who was now a widow, husband George had died in 1935. The youngest Playle, mentioned in a Rudsdale diary excerpt was Arthur who would have been

twenty-nine. The manner in which he was dealt with appears rather boorish.

Thursday 27th March 1942. *'A conference was held in the office to consider a protest from the neighbours against our taking of Kings Farm, from old Mrs Playle. J.C.Leslie Executive Officer of Essex War Agriculture Committee, attended, Captain Charles Round Chairman of Lexden and Winstree District EWAC (Essex War Agriculture Committee) presided. 'young' Playle was there and was given a thorough dressing down by Leslie and was told possession of King's Farm would not be relinquished!'*

The resentment of farmers towards the EWAC is evident in this disturbing diary entry in December 1944. Rudsdale writes that:

'whilst waiting for the Colchester train, I started chatting to a very pretty girl who said she was from Fletcher's Farm Fordham. He told her he was with the EWAC and she laughed and said 'My father waits for you chaps with a gun!'

In an article from the Ministry of Agriculture, the official rationale taken by government was recorded as such:

'One farmer may be called upon to plough up most of his farm or revolutionize his whole method of farming, with possible loss to himself, whilst his neighbour engaged in mixed arable farming continues relatively undisturbed with increased profits. These are the fortunes of war, which it's difficult and often impossible to avoid.'

This list below records the farmers and tenant farmers from the 1939 register. Also listed are those who worked on the land; many of these men were later conscripted or had civil defence roles. This list may help those researching their Fordham family history. The women land workers are listed in Chapter 16 on the Women's Land Army.

Fordham Farms and Farmers

Archendines. Frederick C. Doe, farmer and agricultural contractor. Frederick was born in Mount Bures in 1900 and came to live in Fordham after his marriage in 1928 to Lily Munson. Frederick lived at Well House Farm Mount Bures with parents, sister and three brothers then moved to Archendines where he farmed. Frederick was on the Parish Council and a member of the Invasion Committee.



Fred Doe ploughing at Archendines FLHS

Brookfield. Emma K. Mills born on the 10th May 1872 was a poultry farmer. In 1939 she was living with her daughter Lilian at Brookfield on the Halstead Road. Emma died in 1944 and is buried in All Saints Church.

Fletchers Farm. John Paterson a dairy farmer. John, born in 1875 in Ayrshire was living at Fletchers Farm in 1939 with his wife Lillas Paterson nee Woodburn who was also from Scotland. Their three daughters living with them in 1921 were all born in Ardleigh. Between 1911 and 1921 John moved from The Blue Barns Farm, Ardleigh to Fletcher's Farm, Fordham. It is likely it was one of Paterson's daughters who met E.J. Rudsdale at Colchester Station (page 23).

Before WW1 John had served with the Ayrshire Yeomanry for seven years and when he moved south to Ardleigh he attested at Colchester in 1907, where he served with the Essex Yeomanry. He spent time serving in South Africa. On his early service record it states he was a farmer on his own account. John died in 1941 and is buried with Liliias at the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion graveyard in Fordham.

Fordham Hall. Lewis George Gunary was a market farmer. The Gunary family have strong links with Fordham as landowners and farmers.



Fordham Hall. FLHS Archive.

Having recently researched Lewis and his brother Donald, we found an Ancestry tree and contacted the owner for more information about the Gunarys.



This photograph of Borough Market, Southwark provided by the Kay family shows the Gunary's fruit and vegetable stall. Samuel Gunary born in 1849 was a Market Gardener. Several of Samuel's sons including George, father of Lewis and Donald followed in his footsteps and had connections with

agriculture. With Samuel Gunary's name on this Borough Market photograph, you can see members of the family selling their fruit and vegetables. We have been told that at the end of market day, the nuns would often come to take the leftover food for the poor.

Information from family member Andrea Kay states that the family appeared to start in the Ilford Chadwell Heath area spreading out to Dagenham (part of what was the Ford car site) Rainham, Wennington, North Ockendon. Lewis and Donald ended up in Fordham.

Father George and brothers Cyril and Donald all farmers, can be found together on the 1921 census living at Primrose Farm, Barley Lane, Great Ilford, there were also two sisters Winifred and Olive.

In 1939, Lewis is living with his wife Maud Selina Gunary nee Killingback at Fordham Hall. They were married in 1929 at Great Ilford St. Clement. Lewis died in 1983 and his wife Maud Selina in 2000, they are buried in All Saints Churchyard.

Their gravestone is situated very close to the gate that leads straight onto Fordham Hall, their former residence.



This drawing by their nephew George shows the hall on the left and the church in the background. If you were to walk through the gate that you can see in the picture you would find their gravestone just on the left.



Moat Farm House. FLHS Archive

Moat Farm House. Donald Gunary farmer and market gardener was born on the 19th April 1901 and brother to Lewis Gunary of Fordham Hall. Donald, a market gardener married Mary Walker Gloag Wilson who was born on the 24th October 1901 in Scotland.

On the 16th December 1924 they were married at Great Ilford St. Clement Essex. They moved to Fordham after 1931. They can be found on the 1939 register living at Moat Farm Fordham.

Mary became a parish councillor in 1955 and was very active in her role; Donald was also a parish councillor during his time at Fordham. Mary was the author of a booklet about the village called The Story of Fordham. She died in Saxlingham Nethergate Nursing Home in Norfolk in 1984.

Descendants of Fordham folk often contact our FLHS website and supply us with fascinating information, documents and photographs relating to our village history. The beautiful illustration of Moat Farm House on the previous page and the one below are an example of our good fortune.

These were sent to us by Carole Child, daughter of Colin Bonner who has links to Rams Farm. These illustrations made into Christmas cards were drawn by George James Gunary, the son of Donald and Mary Gunary and sent to their farming neighbours Harry Bonner in the late 1940s and in the 1950s. The drawings beautifully capture some of our Fordham buildings.

Seeing these illustrations reminded me of the drawings in Mary (May) Gunary's book on Fordham' printed in 1954, thus it appears that her book illustrations were drawn by her son George.



The view of the back of Moat Hall. FLHS Archive

Fordham Place. John Kedar was another Scot from a farming background who lived in Fordham in 1939. His home was Fordham Place, right on the boundary of Fordham and West Bergholt.

Son of Andrew Kedar and Flora Kedar nee Grieg, John was born in Netherfield Dyke in the parish of Avondale in 1901. John married Agnes Hamilton Letham in 1927 at Carscallen Farm, Hamilton; her home in Scotland.



John Kedar and Fordham Place FLHS Archive

John gives his home address as Fordham Place, so he had already moved down to Fordham.

Houds Farm (below) Frederick Harry Blake was a dairy farmer. Originally belonging to Little Fordham Manor, Houds Farm when owned by Robert Spark, had a history connected to the Calvinistic Methodists as a meeting place. Robert Spark and others then established the chapel, manse and burial ground which stand on the corner of Plummers Road. The schoolhouse was added later.

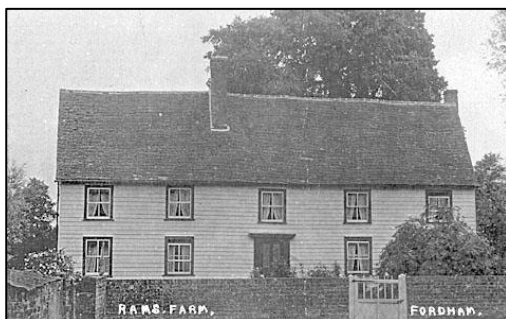


Frederick Harry Blake was born in on the 11th September in 1899, one of twelve children of George Blake and Agnes Blake nee Fairweather. His father George farmed Magazine Farm in Lexden. Frederick married Lillian Mercy Saxby Carter in 1929 and had three sons. Tragically Frederick took his own life in 1941, he was just forty-two. Frederick's wife Lillian died in 1998, she was ninety-four.



Houds Farm. FLHS Archive

Rams Farm (below) Harry Bonner was a well-respected member of the village, he is pictured below as a young man with his family. He was the son of Alfred Joseph Bonner and Emma Patten, Harry was born in 1888 in Kelvedon.



Harry married Eleanor Leedom in 1919 at All Saints Church Witham. Harry saw active service between 1914 and 1918, but was badly wounded.



Family Photographs. Permission of Carole Child

Harry's brother Alfred Herbert was living at Ram's Farm in 1921, FLHS has been unable to locate Harry in 1921. Harry and Eleanor's son Colin was born in 1923, they are living at Rams in 1926 and his brother Alfred has moved on elsewhere. Harry had been a seed grower prior to WW1 and resumed in 1919. He was a member of the parish council and one of the school managers at All Saints School. Harry was well known in farming circles and although he had been in poor health in his last two years of life; he continued his business. Harry died in 1945 aged fifty-seven; he is buried at Kelvedon Cemetery.

Moss Farm. In 1939 there was no farmer living at Moss Farm. The 1921 census shows three ploughmen at the property. It states they worked for Mr Howes of Sutton Farm. Nearly twenty years later William Brunning and his wife are living at Moss Farm; William is a farm labourer doing heavy work.

Suttons Farm. George R. Harris, a farmer. In both the 1911 and 1921 censuses it records that George Robert Harris was born in the U.S.A. Having married Dora Jessie Elmer in 1908, the couple and their first of seven children Nora, are living in Boxted and continue to live there at least to 1931. By 1939 George and his family including six children are living at Suttons. George is recorded as a timber carter in 1921, but a farmer in 1939 with two sons working on the farm as a tractor driver and another as a cowman. George's two daughters are recorded as tailors.



Suttons Farm FLHS Archive

Hammonds Farm Fordham/Mount Bures. We have included Fred Bradshaw here who farmed at Hammonds on the edge of Fordham in 1939. He later moved to Fletchers Farm and his last home was Brierside in Plummers Road. Fred married Dora Elizabeth Hayhurst in 1925; they were both from Lancashire and moved down to the area in 1937. Fred was a member of the Parish Council. The Bradshaw family have had a long farming association with Fordham right up to today through Fred's children and grandchildren.



Hammonds Farm. M.Boyle Collection

After 1945 Hammonds Farm became the home of the Rhodes family who were also from Lancashire. Jonas Rhodes and his wife Elizabeth worked on the land and brought up their young family. One of their children, Marlene, was born in 1944. Marlene is such an interesting character. She has been a very active member of FLHS and the village community, helping us with her knowledge of Fordham village and its people. Chapters of this book have included many snippets of information that Marlene has given FLHS. Recent research has revealed that before coming to Fordham, her father Jonas was in D Company, 5th County of Lancaster (Preston County) of the Home Guard.



**Jonas Rhodes with daughter Marlene and Ernie Lees.
M. Boyle Collection**

Wash Farm. Alexander Watt was a dairy farmer. FLHS has very little information about Alexander Watt and his wife Ella, apart from what we have from the 1939 Register where it states Alexander was born in 1899 and Ella in 1908. As previously mentioned there is no place of birth given on the 1939 register, but if you are going to guess, perhaps Alexander Watt might be another Scottish resident of Fordham. We do have a newspaper cutting about a fire at the farm in 1935 when Alexander was severely burned trying to rescue his stock.

Fordham Farm Workers

This next section is a list of the farm workers in Fordham in 1939.

Hemps Green

Robert Holmes Nuttall 6.6.1911. Hemps Green, general farm labourer. Robert was born in Lancashire and was married to Constance Seed whom he married in Lancashire in 1937. The 1939 register suggests they had two children. The Nuttalls leave Essex at some time and later reside in Nottinghamshire. It is possible that Robert was a seasonal farm worker.

Cyril Arthur Pilgrim 26.9.1908. Valley Cottages, horseman on farm. Cyril was born in Castle Hedingham. He married Dorothy Edith Ethel Bradshaw in 1935 at Earls Colne. Dorothy's family were from Kettering Northamptonshire, her father was killed in WW1 when she was just three years old. Cyril served with the Aldham Fire Service (Chapter 10.)

Charles Albert Peachey 12.5.1906. Chappel Road, heavy work, agricultural labourer. Charles was married to Margaret Lucy



Crawford; they married at All Saints Church in 1932. He later lived at 5, Sunnyside Fordham, but was living on Chappel Road in 1939. Records show that a Charles Albert Peachey served in WW1 with the Essex Regiment overseas; he enlisted in 1915 and was discharged in 1919 with a silver wound badge, (in photo page 42).

William David Brunning 24.11.1894. Moss Farm, heavy work, farm labourer. William served in WW1 starting with the Essex Regiment, but was transferred to other regiments during WW1. William was married to Ellen Jane Wright on the 3rd February 1914; this is all confirmed by William's service record on Ancestry. In 1921 the couple are living at Mistley where William is a groom/gardener for Mr G Webb, a farmer. The couple remain there at least until 1931, but are in Fordham by 1939.

Hermit Edward Lyons 11.12.1906. Sutton Cottages, horseman on farm. We thought his name was a typing error but it is not Herman, but Hermit as shown on other documents. He married Edith Stocks in 1925. Hermit was from Stratford St. Andrew Suffolk and kept his mother's maiden name as his surname. His children Albert (below), Kathleen and two others are living at the residence in 1939.

Albert Edward Maurice Lyons 27.6.1925. Sutton Cottages, farm worker. In 1947 Albert married Joyce Collings in Rochford Essex.

The following six farm workers were not from Fordham. They were likely to be seasonal workers.

Edward McAlindon 18.5.1884. Moat Barn, Plummers Road (Moat Road), agricultural labourer.

Frederick Hanks 27.5.1904. Moat Barn, Plummers Road (Moat Road), agricultural labourer.

Thomas Ryan 26.3.1883. Moat Barn, Plummers Road (Moat Road) agricultural labourer.

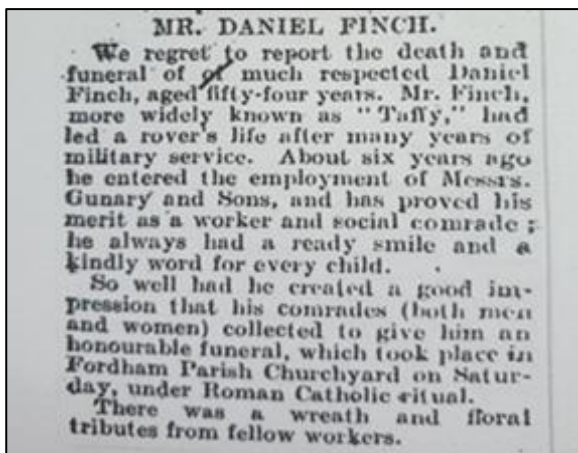
John Riley 25.12.1875. Moat Barn, Plummers Road (Moat Road)
agricultural labourer.

William Price 5.9.1874. Moat Barn, Plummers Road (Moat Road)
agricultural labourer.

Fordham Farm Workers



Daniel Finch 8.3.1888. Moat Barn, Plummers Road (Moat Road) agricultural labourer, former coal miner. Known as Taffy, Daniel can be seen photographs working with the Land Army girls on Mr Gunary's Farm. When Daniel died in 1944, the village organised his funeral as he had no family connections in Fordham.



William F. Claydon 19.11.1896. Plummers Road, Farm labourer.

Charles Sims 12.4.1879. Plummers Road, Farm labourer. Emily, one of his daughters joined the ATS (see chapter 15). His son Frank and family were evacuated from London to Fordham (see Chapter 17).

Albert Bailey 21.10.1885. Plummers Cottages, fruit farm worker.

George Howe 14.4.1885. Plummers Cottages, agricultural labourer.

Arthur W. Bird 30.12.1865. Homestead, Plummers Road, casual farm worker.

Walter Sparkes 4.12.1884. Renestan, Plummers Road, fruit farm worker.

Ponders Road

Isaac Woodward 26.2.1887. 10, Ponders Cottages, farm labourer.

Victor Woodward 17.6.1924. 10, Ponders Cottages, poultry farm worker.

James W. White 13.9.1862. 12, Ponders Cottages, farm labourer.

Arthur Woodward 13.3.1870. Rose Cottage, land worker.

William Woodward 26.2.1887. 10, Ponders Cottages, land worker.

Cecil Arthur Beard 26.4.1917. 3, Ponders Cottages, Cecil is one of our Home Guard men (Chapter 8).

Charles Beard 10.3.1864. 9, Ponders Cottage, farm labourer.

Norman Harry Beard 11.8.1918. 9, Ponders Cottage, cowman and labourer.

Leslie Beard 30.7.1923. 9 Ponders Cottage, farm labourer.

Cecil Bertie Playle 20.3.1906. 3 Ponders Road, farm manager and post office work. Member of Home Guard (Chapter 8).

Arthur William Playle 8.4.1912. Post Office, Ponders Road, horseman on farm. Arthur was a member of Aldham Fire Service (Chapter 10).

George Wright 25.12.1866. 1, Ponders Cottages, retired farm labourer.

Moat Road

Stanley Cant 27.4.1912. 4 Alexandra Cottages, agricultural labourer. Stanley was in the Home Guard (Chapter 8.)



Ernie Cant with Land Army Girls. FLHS Archive

James Ernest. G. Cant 20.4.1915. 4, Alexandra Cottages, agricultural labourer.

George Henry Cant 13.12.1857. 5, Alexandra Cottages, farm labourer.

Charles Cresswell 29.8.1881. 2, Alexandra Cottages, retired horseman on farm.

Quilters Green

David Taylor 18.3.1862. Quilters Green, retired farm labourer.

George Woodward 16.5.1911. Rose Cottage Quilters Green, horseman on farm heavy work.

Augustus Edward Fox 28.2.1867. Quilters Green, farm labourer heavy work.

William Bunton 17.5.1873. Quilters Green, stockman on farm.

Church Road

Sidney Bell 15.7.1900. Three Horseshoes, threshing machine operator. Sidney born in 1900 was son of the Three Horse Shoes Licensee Reginald Bell and his wife Mabel.

William Charles Davey M.M. 1.7.1870. Church Road, horseman heavy work. William had served in WW1; he was an experienced military member in the Home Guard (Chapter 8).

Charles William Davey 15.4.1909. Church Road, farm labourer (William's son).

Arthur Nice 9.7.1887. Church Road, farm labourer.

Thomas Southernwood 27.10.1868. Church Road, horseman on farm.

Cecil Powell 3.2.1920. Church Road, farm tractor driver.

Arthur Chaplin 22.11.1862. Church Road, retired horseman, heavy work.

Rowland Morris Warren 24.11.1875. Oak House, Church Road, retired farmer.

Ernest H. Bath 15.9.1871. Oak Cottages, Church Road, retired poultry.

Fossetts Lane

Charles William Nunn 21.3.1879. Fossetts Lane, agricultural labourer.

Walter Ratcliffe 17.8.1880. Fossetts lane, stockman on farm.

Albert Walter Ratcliffe 9.2.1906. Fossetts Lane, cowman.

Arthur Ratcliffe 6.9.1912. Fossetts Lane, cowman and land worker. Arthur was also in the Home Guard (Chapter 8).

Frank Ratcliffe 7.8.1918. Fossetts Lane, land worker.

Mitchell Ratcliffe 4.4.1921. Fossetts Lane, dairy lad.

Sydney Chandler 28.8.1923. Watercress Hall, cowman and labourer. Sydney went on to serve as a navy rating on HMS Valiant at Salerno (see Chapter 23).

Shadrach Norfolk 27.9.1871. Fossetts Lane, horseman and heavy farm worker.

Mill Road

Henry Cope 5.10.1899. Fordham Hall, foreman at Fordham Hall. Henry was in the Home Guard.

Thomas Leeks 7.11.1891. Mill Road, horseman on farm heavy work. Thomas was in the Home Guard.

Eric Leeks 13.6.1918. (In photo page 42 and 267.) Mill Road, horseman on farm, heavy work. Eric was in the Home Guard with his father Thomas.

Donald Leeks 3.11.1923. Mill Road, labourer on poultry farm. (In photo page 268.)

Edward George Cudmore 20.4.1890. Mill Road, farm labourer, heavy work.

Henry Green (In photo page 42) 26.10.1882. Mill Road, horseman on farm, heavy work, (Sue Green's father Land Army).

Stanley R .Green (In photo page 42) 12.5.1909. Snowdens Cottages Mill Road. Horseman on farm, heavy work. Brother of Sue Green Land Army.

Leslie Charles Cudmore 10.9.1909. Snowdens Cottage Mill Road, tractor driver, heavy work.



Workers from Fordham Hall. FLHS Archive.

The photograph above shows Fordham Hall Farm workers pre WW2, about 1938 and was published in the FLHS Photo Album. It pictures many of the men mentioned in this chapter.

It has been labelled: - Harry Green, Charlie Peachey, George Cudmore, Eric Leeks, Stan Green and Bill Long. The car at the back belongs to the milkman Frederick Blake who took the photograph.

Wash Corner

Frederick William Austin 23.8.1899. Wash Farm Cottages, horseman on farm.

Douglas Leonard Richardson 14.4.1909. Glen Isla, Wash Farm Cottages, cowman. Douglas was a member of Aldham Fire Service (Chapter 10).

George Cutting 6.3.1906. The Bungalow, Fordham Place, West Bergholt Road, cowman

Fordham Heath Farms and Farmers

Fiddlers Hill Farm. George Calley, farmer was born in 1873 in Bricett Suffolk, wife Emily Partner was from Stebbing Essex.

Gatehouse Farm. Howard James E. Bown was born in Somerset in 1877. He was unmarried and a partly retired farmer who had farmed in Somerset with his sister and uncle. In 1891 at the age of three, Howard was living with his parents Samuel and Agnes Bown farming Highcroft Farm in Frome. His father died in 1887, age forty-nine leaving his widow and seven children to care for as well as the farm.

Gobys Mathias Savill was born in Hertfordshire on the 19th February 1891, he was a market gardener. He married Ethel Firmin in 1917, daughter of John T. Firmin (2) and sister to John T. Firmin (3), lieutenant of our Home Guard. Matthias was in the Royal Navy Air Service in WW1 and transferred to the RAF Reserve in 1919.

Great Porters Farm. John W. Chamley Dairy Farmer was born on the 22th April 1898. John served in the First World War with the East Lancashire Regiment. He was from Lancashire and married Jane Bradshaw in 1920. The family with their four children moved to Fordham after 1930 and before 1939. John's son James was in the Home Guard in Fordham.



Great Porters Farm. W.Shepherd

Heathside Farm. George Frederick Salmon 6.10.1877 was born in Broomfield Essex and recorded as a farmer in 1939 at Heathside. He was a former restaurateur and caterer. George married Sarah Ann Coppen in 1908 in All Saints Church Fordham.

It was Sarah's father, Joseph Coppen who was the farmer and he had farmed Heathside as seen on the 1901, 1911 and 1921 censuses. Daughter Sarah, George and their son go to live at Heathside by 1921, when George is unemployed.

Porters Lane. Leonard A. Johnson 20.10.1911 is recorded as a poultry farmer on his own account. But we have no information of where he worked. He was living with Charles and Gertrude Morgan; Charles is a stockman.

The Oaks. Alfred James Turner 22.1.1888 was a small holder. He was living at The Oaks on Wood Lane with his wife Fannie, widower William Howie and Arthur Carter who is recorded as helper on a small holding.

Heathfields. Albert Edward Parmenter 25.2.1901 is recorded as a fruit farmer and market gardener in 1939. He was living with his wife Evelyn and children Robert and John. Albert and Evelyn were married in Copford. He was the son of Albert Charles Parmenter who had farmed in Langham and Ardleigh and then lived at Fordham Heath.

In 1921 Albert Junior is assisting his father. Albert Junior emigrated to Canada in 1924 on SS Ausonia as shown on an Ancestry emigration record. The document confirms the names and address of his parents living at Heathfields.

On the immigration document, Albert lists his occupation as farmer and his intention was to farm in Canada. However, Albert returns by 1929 and marries Evelyn and starts a family.



Half Moon Beer House pre 1911, Fordham Heath. FLHS Archive

Half Moon Farm situated on the corner of Huxtables Lane and Spring Lane. In 1939 Walter Bunting 6.4.1867 and his brother Arthur Bunting 20.8.1862 are recorded at the farm as retired farmers. The Half Moon Farm and Beer House had been run by the Buntings since 1891 with both brothers recorded as farmers and beer house keepers/publicans on the census documents 1891, 1901, 1911 and 1921.

Wheelers Farm, Wood Lane. William Henry Burland 16.7.1881 was a poultry and beekeeper. Research shows that William died in 1959 and his last address was Chesmond, Brook Road, Great Tey. John Hazlitt Burland was the administrator on the Probate document and this was William's older brother. William was single when he lived at Wheelers Farm.

Further research showed that William was born in Dublin in 1881 and his parents William Henry Burland and Jeannie Marion Hazlitt were both Irish and there was also an older sister Lizzie Madeleine. William was in the Merchant Navy and in 1921 is visiting his widowed mother and his sister in Willsden Middlesex. He served in WW1 and received his Mercantile Marine Medal and British War Medal.

White House Farm. Herbert Clifford Gray 26.4.1883, mixed farming. In an interview with Jim Scarlett in 2024, he recalls Mr Gray grazing his cows on Fordham Heath.

Salmons Farm. John Thomas Firmin (2) 24.8.1862 farmer.



Salmon's Farm in the background J.T. Firmin (4) behind the gate. Jim Scarlet on motorbike. J.Scarlett.

Fordham Heath Farm Workers

William A.N. Jones 27.9.1911. Choats Cottages, farm labourer.

James Honeyball 15.3.1880. Choats Cottages, heavy horseman on a farm.

Laurie Arthur G. Curtis 17.12.1921. Choats Cottages, horseman on farm.

Oliver Towns 26.12.1899. Choats Cottages, cowman on farm

Arthur Towns 9.9.1892. Choats Cottages, horseman on farm, Arthur was also a member of the Home Guard.

Walter A. Mills 30.1.1908. Brick Street, cowman on farm.

Albert Keeble 26.9.1874. Brick Street, horseman on farm and heavy farm work.



**Bertha Keeble wife of Albert, outside her cottage on Brick Street.
J.Scarlett**

Thomas Capell 2.10.1893. Cooks Mill Cottage, cowman and general farm labourer, heavy worker.

Ernest Philip Lappage 6.9.1902. Porters Lane, hay tying and thatcher.

Archibald V. Clarke 22.9.1894. Porters Lane, horseman, heavy farm work.

Charles Henry Thurlow 9.9.1929. Beehive Cottage, Porters Lane, agricultural tractor driver.

Donald Forrest 6.1.1914. West View, Porters Lane, threshing machine feeder.

Arthur Chaplin 6.4.1861. Porters Lane, retired agricultural labourer.

Charles William Morgan 23.9.1867. Porters Lane, retired stockman.

John E. Bramwell 25.6.1891. Little Porters Cottage, Porters Lane, farm foreman, heavy work.

James Lappage 1.1.1863. Fordham Heath although retired in 1939 had been a hay and straw binder.

Cecil Claude Ernest Huxtable 31.8.1879. Fordham Heath, agricultural labourer.

Allan Thomas Mullenger 20.7.1899. Fordham Heath, agricultural labourer.

Wilfred Webber 20.11.1921. Heathfield Cottage, horticultural labourer.

John Thomas Firmin (3) 14.4.1897 Heath Cottages, assisting father as horseman and general heavy farm work. John was a Lieutenant in Home Guard.

John Thomas Firmin (4) known as Jack, 30.9.1920. Salmons Farm, assisting grandfather on farm with heavy work.

The Firmins and Salmon's Farm



John (Jack) T. Firmin (4) with father John T. Firmin (3) working on his Salmon's Farm with Jim Horn.



Salmon's Farm
John T. Firmin (3) working on his father's farm. Jim Horn seated.
J. Scarlet Collection.



Sources of Information

Page 20 Fordham School Log Book. Essex Record Office.

Pages 20 to 23 E.J.Rudsdale Journals of Wartime Colchester 2010

Page 20 www.bahs.org.uk/AGHR/ARTICLES/56_204

Page 23 Notes on agricultural policy for those directing the food production campaign (Spring 1942), p.2

Page 24 www.daily.jstor.org/skipping-school-for-harvest-camp

Pages 26, 28 Drawing permission of C.Child

Page 29 This Barren Land 1997. Pat Lewis, p 22.

CHAPTER 5

Invasion Committee

'Alarm at 3.00 p.m. Drone of many planes overhead, anti-aircraft fire and a loud bang. Heavy gunfire as raid finished and later heard Germans attacking convoy'. M.F.

There was a real fear that Germany would invade Britain. This threat had been secretly discussed by government since October 1939, but it was not until defeat in the battle for France and subjugation of Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands that invasion was treated as a serious possibility. Intelligence showed that the Germans had already prepared an invasion plan which they named Operation Sea Lion. Winston Churchill became Prime Minister on 10th May 1940 and 'The invasion of Great Britain' was discussed at nineteen War Cabinet meetings during the first three weeks of his premiership.

The government, strongly encouraged by Churchill, responded with a large-scale military and civilian mobilisation. The Home Defence Executive (H.D.E.) was formed on 10th May 1940 under General Sir Edmund Ironside, Commander-in-chief Home Forces, to organise the defence of Britain from invasion which began with setting up the Home Guard (initially called Local Defence Volunteers or LDV) which was an armed citizen militia raised to support the British Army.

Regional Commissioners established Defence/Invasion committees which brought together civilian expertise designed to ensure that contingency plans were made and tested. Typically, the committees were chaired by military officers who acted as the liaison between rural parishes and central government. Members of the committee included local council representatives, the police, the fire service, air raid wardens, the Food Executive, a billeting officer, the Women's Voluntary Service and the Home Guard.

Prior to the formation of the Invasion Committee in August 1941, Fordham Parish Council was already discussing matters relating to war. Members of the Parish Council then were: Rev. W. Oddie, Rev. D. Bateman, H. Bonner, H.A. Partridge, H.J. Cope, F.C. Doe and the clerk Mrs E.L. Towle.

Items for Discussion taken from Fordham Parish Council Minutes 1940

Letter dated 15/8/1940 from Lexden & Winstree RDC re. The depositing of tins for the war effort; 'all tins must be separated from other waste and flattened.'

Letter dated 29/8/1940 from Lexden & Winstree RDC about 'The Spitfire Fund' and it was decided by the Parish Council to organise a house to house collection.

Letter dated 29/8/1940 from The Essex War Agricultural Executive Committee (EWAEC) Lexden & Winstree Advisory Committee about ownership of the allotment land at Fordham Heath (still part of the parish of Fordham at that time.) The clerk was instructed to reply 'declining responsibility for this land as ownership was repudiated in 1929.'

Letter dated 29/8/1940 from the Essex County Village Food Production Committee enquired about surplus garden produce. The clerk responded to Mr Gifford saying that 'owing to the drought, there would be no surplus produce.'

Meeting 6/9/1940. Communication from the Auxiliary Fire Service Authorities asking for volunteers re. Stirrup Hand-Pump. Mr H.A. Partridge (senior ARP warden) would make necessary arrangements.

Meeting 4/12/1940. A Letter from Dedham Parish Council re. Air Raid Casualties. This was 'considered' by the committee and a reply to be sent that '*sympathetic consideration and support is given.*'

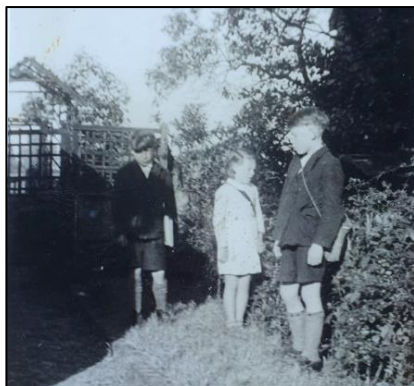
Meeting January 1941. Another letter and a notice received about the land at Fordham Heath from the Essex War Agricultural Executive Committee. The clerk was again instructed to reply with the same answer 'to decline responsibility for the land as ownership was repudiated.'

Meeting 13/6/1941. A report was read regarding the 'Dig for Victory' campaign. This was from a conference held at Writtle, the Essex Institute of Agriculture. The Chairman of the EWAEC was also the head at Writtle College.



WW2 Poster IWM Collection

Letter received re. The carrying of respirators. The council unanimously agreed to comply with the request.



A letter was received dated the 6th June 1941 from Rural District Council asking to consider a war weapons week. From 1940 and for every year of the war, there was a national drive to get the nation to save their money. There were opportunities to buy war bonds or put money into other savings schemes. The money would then be spent on the war effort by government. The focus changed each year and schemes were kept local. A public meeting was organised to make the necessary arrangements.

Requisition of Land on Fordham Heath

The question of the requisition of land on Fordham Heath was an interesting item for discussion for the Parish Council.

We know that land on the Heath was requisitioned for military use as we have a map and letters dated 1942 and 1943 about a gun site.

HQ/L/296

Part of Fordham Heath

Date of Initial Occupation:	10.12.43.	Area Requisitioned:
Date of Inspection:	15.12.43.	9 acres approx
Date of Requisition:	21.12.43.	

* Occupier: Clerk to the Fordham Parish Council,
West View, Fordham, Nr. Colchester.
(For the poor of the parish)

* Stewards for the Lord of the Manor: Beaumont & Son,
(Solicitors), 25 High Street, Colchester)

SCHEDULE of CONDITION

The requisitioned area comprises part of Fordham Heath.

The surface is covered with scrub grass, gorse and other bushes. The ground is generally uneven and there are some excavations.

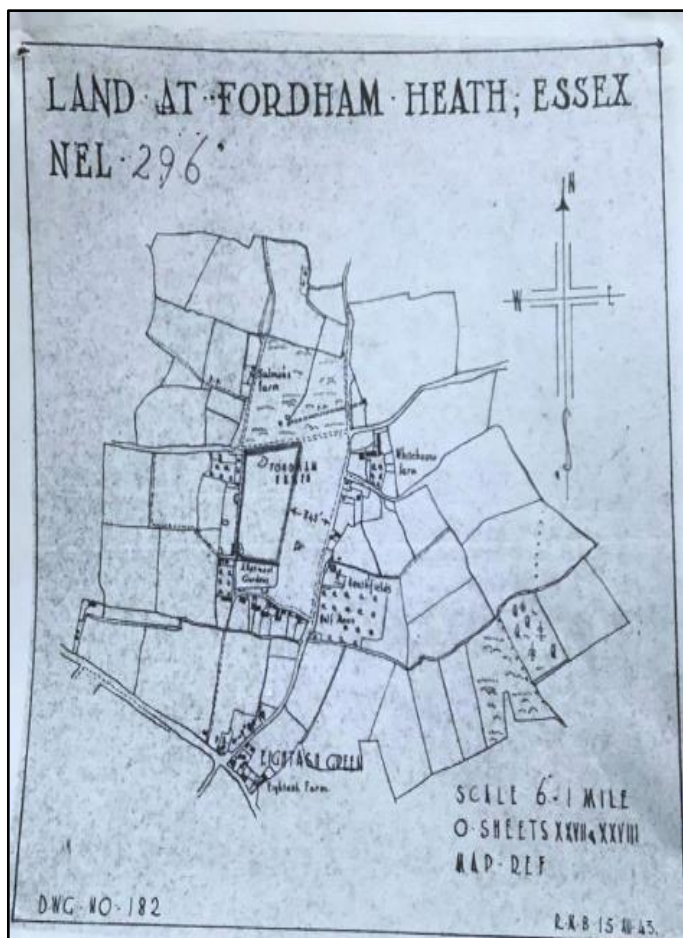
Boundaries: South - (against enclosure) - Rough, overgrown hedge - ditch silted.
Remaining boundaries unfenced.

It is hereby agreed that the foregoing is a fair description of the condition of the property as at the date of commencement of military occupation.

Stewards for
..... the Lord of
the Manor.

Letter of Acquisition of the Heath. FLHS Archive

We also have eye witness statements including an interview with Jim Scarlett who as a boy, lived at Ashton House opposite the Heath. His interview corroborates the guns on Fordham Heath. In a booklet by Eight Ash Green called 'Bitesize chunks' other residents provided information about their experiences living near the guns. More about the land requisition in the chapter called Defending the Countryside.



Map of the Heath showing Acquisition. FLHS Archive

Formation of the Invasion Committee

The minutes of Parish Council meeting dated Friday 8th August 1941 record that after a receiving correspondence from Essex County Council dated 23rd July 1941 regarding the formation of an Invasion Committee; it was decided unanimously to go ahead. A committee consisting of the Local Home Guard Commander, The Village Food Organiser, The Senior Air Raid Warden, The First Aid leader and all the members of the Parish Council with the local police officer in an advisory capacity. The first meeting of the Invasion Committee was arranged for Friday the 15th August 1941. In the early days the Parish Council had suggested that the Invasion Committee meet quarterly. These meetings became more frequent as events intensified in the war.

Here is information about those who participated on the Invasion Committee, some members later resigned and others were added.

Rev. W. Oddie Chairman (later resigned). William Oddie was vicar of All Saints Church for twenty-one years from 1936 until his death in 1957. William was from Lancashire and he was a cotton weaver. In 1921 he was unemployed. We have no date of when he took holy orders. He was married to Florence Ada Graham in 1925 and in 1939 William and Florence are recorded as living at the Rectory in Plummers Road. The rectory cellar was used as an air raid shelter and the building did suffer some bomb damage. The railings were requisitioned by the government for munitions. The Rectory was also a place of entertainment for summer fetes. In the wood at the Rectory, some escaped German prisoners were recaptured.



The Rectory. FLHS Archive

The position of the Rectory is close to Wormingford Airfield. On the 6th June D. Day, a spectacular sight was seen from the Rectory. From dawn the Airborne Liberating Forces could be seen from the windows; the planes covering the whole sky. The noise of the aircrafts made the windows shake!

Rev. D. Bateman was David Bateman, he lived opposite Reverend Oddie in the Manse at the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion Chapel. Born in 1866 in Cumberland, David is recorded as a Minister of Religion in 1939. He is living at the Manse with wife Catherine. A bootmaker by trade, David was heavily involved with the Salvation Army as seen on the 1891 and 1901 censuses. David was minister at the chapel from 1931 until 1945. We believe that this photograph is David Bateman and his wife Catherine.



The Manse. FLHS Archive

Rowland Warren had been a farmer at Fordham Hall. (In 1939, Lewis Gunary was the farmer at the Hall.) Rowland was born in 1875 in Purleigh near Maldon and died in 1953; he is buried in Fordham.

In 1939 Rowland and his wife are living at Oak House opposite the church. He was married at Great Ilford church in 1912 to Eleanor Greenham. In 1900, Rowland had served with the Imperial Yeomanry in South Africa for a year in 1900 before applying for discharge.



Fordham Hall, Mill Road. FLHS Archive

Harry Bonner who later resigned from the Parish Council due to ill health, lived at Rams Farm, Fordham. Harry was born in Kelvedon and was well known in the farming community. He was partner in a seed business at Witham with his brother Frank. Harry also served in WW1 and was badly wounded. Harry was active in the community, a member of the Parish Council and a manager at Fordham Church School. Harry lived at Rams Farm in 1939 with wife Eleanor, son Colin and one other person who is redacted. Harry died in 1945 age fifty-seven.

Frederick (Fred) Doe was another farming man following in his father's footsteps. Fred was born in Mount Bures in 1900. His father was a miller at Windmill House in Mount Bures. Fred was a farmer and agricultural contractor. Fred married Lily Munson in 1928. Fred and Lily were living at Archendines on Chappel Road in 1939. Lily is recorded as an unpaid domestic and heavy worker; she is also a poultry worker. The photo is of Fred Doe on the right with Fred Bradshaw another farmer who came to Fordham.



Major Ambrose John Rayner Waller was the officer in charge of Boxted Company in the summer of 1941 when the platoon was organised into 4 companies. In 1943 Major Waller became 8th Company Commander and Lieutenant Colonel. This followed age limit restrictions which took away experienced older officers to the war. Thus more changes were made to Boxted Company which had been under Major Waller. In another reorganisation, Boxted Company was divided into three companies.

C Company – Dedham under Major Watson

F Company – Aldham under Major R. A. Forrest M.C.

G Company – West Bergholt under Major R.F.T. Foljambe

For more insights into the many changes and reorganisations in the Essex Home Guard, read Peter Finch's book 'Warmen Courageous, The Story of Essex Home Guard.'

Major Waller served in WW1 and was Captain in The Essex Regiment and part of the 5th Company of Balloon. Born in Loughton Essex and educated at Marlborough and Oxford University. In 1912 he was with 2nd Battalion Essex Regiment and was on active service with them in 1914. He was wounded in October 1915. In 1916, Captain Waller was posted to Balloon Company in France where he remained until 1918. There is an interesting page online about the Balloon Companies of WW1, well worth a read.



Major Waller.
FLHS Archive

After WW1 Major Waller retired on account of his wounds. He was Hon. Secretary of the Essex and Suffolk Hunt 1924-1933 and a member of Essex County Council for 1930, he became a Justice of the Peace. He was also Chairman of the River Stour Catchment Board since its inception in 1931. In 1938 he was made Deputy Lieutenant of the County of Essex in recognition of his valuable public service. In 1939 Major Waller is living at the Red House Boxted with his wife Nina Joan du Boulay whom he married on the Isle of Wight in 1918. Major Waller died in 1972, Boxted Essex.

P.C. Sturgeon later replaced by P.C. Finch to represent police as PC Sturgeon had been invalided out of the force.

H.A. Partridge ARP Senior Warden (Herbert Arnold Partridge is featured in Chapter 9 on the ARP.

H.J. Cope Home Guard. Henry James Cope is featured in Chapter 8, the Home Guard.

J.T. Firmin Home Guard John Thomas Firmin (3) also featured in Chapter 8, The Home Guard.

Mrs W.W. Blair-Fish was Hilary Blair-Fish born in 1886 in Leamington, Warwickshire. She was First Aid Leader, but resigned. She is recorded as a State Registered Nurse on the 1939 Register; Hilary would have been an ideal candidate to be head of First Aid.

Mr W.W. Blair Fish was Wallace Wilfred Blair-Fish born in 1889 in Finsbury Park London, an author, journalist and editor. He lived at Mill House, Fordham with his wife Hilary.

Mrs L. White. First Aid Mrs Constance Lillian White nee Quarrell liked to be known as Lillian. She was living at School House in 1939 with husband Sidney and she is recorded as an ARP First Aider. But Mrs. L. White could also be sister, Alice White nee Quarrell. Sisters Constance and Alice Quarrell married brothers Sidney and Laurence White. In the 30s and 40s it was common practice to address women using their husband's initial, so Mrs L. White could be Mrs Laurence White. Lillian was already a first aider. Her sister Alice later became a school teacher at All Saints School. In 1944 married women were allowed to continue to teach. However, in 1939, Alice living at Valley Cottages with husband Laurence (see POW Chapter 21) and recorded as doing household duties, so she may have put herself forward for the Invasion Committee as her husband was on war service.



School House. FLHS Archive

Mr Savill is Matthias G. Savill who lived at Goby's, Porter's Lane/Wood Lane, Fordham with his wife Ethel. He is recorded as a market gardener.

Mr Tann of Aldham. Guy Tann lived at Grapes Farm, Aldham where he was a fruit farmer. Guy is also recorded as an ARP warden for Aldham and a Billeting Officer. Living with him is his wife Eileen and children John and Ruth. Guy resigned as food officer from Fordham Parish Council on 15.8.1941.

Mr O.G.C. Judd. No information found.

Mrs D. Gunary is likely to be Mary Gunary whose role was that of Water Steward, she lived at Moat Farm with her husband Donald Gunary in 1939. Both born in 1901, Donald is a farmer and market gardener.

Mrs Logan is Florence Jane nee Scarsbrook, wife of Edward Logan was a WVS representative. In 1939 Mr & Mrs Logan are living in North Hill Colchester. Florence had previously been married to William Briggs Seed who died in 1914.

Mr E.M. Logan. Edward Martin Logan born in Shropshire, married Florence Seed in 1922 in Camden. They had a daughter Jean born in 1926 in Wandsworth, she later lived at Ivy Cottage, Fordham.

Mr F. Clampin. In 1939, Frank Clampin (junior) lived at Stone Cottage next door to the Shoulder of Mutton. Living with him was his wife Helen with sons Derek and Raymond. Living at the same cottage but recorded separately are Frank's widowed mother Asenath Jane Clampin nee Broyd and Frank's siblings Eva and George Clampin. Stone Cottage was built by Frank's father Frank William Clampin; he also built our war memorial at the top of Ponders Road. Frank junior served in WW1 and there is a chapter about his exploits in our WW1 book. Frank's brother George was a member of the Aldham Fire Service. (See Chapter 10.)



Frank Clampin WW1 FLHS Archive

Thomas R.B. Towle was appointed clerk to the Invasion Committee, the role was changed to secretary. Thomas Robert Burton Towle had previously been senior warden in the village. He lived at West View, Church Road, Fordham with his wife Ellen Catherine Hopping nee Hume, (she later became clerk to the Parish Council.) They were married at All Saints Church in 1931. Thomas was a retired civil engineer at the Municipal Branch of H.M. Land Registry. He was also recorded as an Air Raid Warden on the 1939 Register and his wife Ellen recorded as First Aid Personnel A.R.P. Living with the couple in 1939 are Ellen's children from her first marriage to Henry Hopping who was killed in a cycling accident in 1926 age thirty-one. At the time of their father's death, their children were five and six.

Mr R.C. Goymer. No information found.

L. Gunary was later co-opted onto the committee. This is likely to be Lewis Gunary who was a farmer at Fordham Hall in 1939. He was married to Maud Selina Killingback. Both born in 1905, Lewis was originally from Romford and Maud from Braintree. They were buried at All Saints Church in 1973 and 2000 respectively.

Men of the Invasion Committee were generally older with local knowledge or were well known and respected in the community. One such example is David Bateman. He was born in 1866 so would have been seventy-three years old at the time of the outbreak of war. He had been a Minister of Religion and was a member of the Invasion Committee for Fordham.

In the event of the Parish of Fordham being cut off from higher authority, the Committee would assume full executive powers and had the duty of putting into force any measures which they deemed necessary to deal with the situation in co-operation with, and giving maximum support possible to, the Civil and Military Authorities.

Plans of these committees were kept in secret 'War Books' although few remain. Detailed inventories of anything useful were kept: vehicles,

animals and basic tools, and lists were made of contact details for key personnel. Plans were made for a wide range of emergencies, including improvised mortuaries and places to bury the dead. Instructions to the Invasion Committees stated: "...every citizen will regard it as his duty to hinder and frustrate the enemy and help our own forces by every means that ingenuity can devise and common sense suggest."

The principal matters to be dealt with by the committee under invasion conditions were:

1. Distribution of stocks of foods and, if necessary, imposition of emergency rationing
2. Provision of cooking facilities
3. Provision of emergency water supplies
4. Provision of emergency hospital facilities
5. Securing accommodation for those rendered homeless
6. Securing labour and equipment required for road repairs, trench digging, filling in craters etc. and for the general helping of the military authorities.
7. Distributing official news bulletins.

Steps taken by the committee included the provision of food dumps and field ovens, the identification of wells in the area to provide fresh water, a building available for the reception of casualties, houses identified that could receive the homeless, a list of tools that could be made available and the provision of official news bulletins at appointed locations.

Committees were required to practise their contingency plans to ensure they would be effective. They would also carry out invasion scenarios to test the effectiveness of their plans.

Here is a selection of the main points from minutes of the WW2 Invasion Committee. The original minutes are available to view at The Essex Archive Chelmsford.

First meeting of Invasion Committee 15th August 1941

Rev. Oddie was elected Chairman of the Invasion Committee.

J.T. Firmin (Home Guard) elected member of Invasion Committee.

Rev. D. Bateman (appointed as Food Officer) Rev. Bateman informed the committee of the arrangements he had made regarding the safe storage of the emergency food rations.

Mrs White explained details arranged for dealing with casualties in the event of it (possibly referring to Hammonds Bridge) being found impassable to evacuate them to the First Aid Post at Stanway.

Mr Herbert Partridge senior ARP Warden reported the ARP (Air Raid Precautions) arrangements.

Major Waller informed the committee of various matters concerning the Home Guard and gave advice on various points.

The committee discussed certain other proposals and considered that the warden's post should be put on the telephone. This was proposed and seconded and the clerk would write to the ARP Department of the RDC and make an application that the post be put on the phone stating that this had strongly recommended by Major Waller.

The clerk also made an application to ARP Department of the RDC (Rural District Council) asking for a lecture on the conditions of modern war as they affect civilians. The lecture would be held in the Parish Room.

Mrs White was given permission to obtain the names of volunteers to assist in the manning of the mobile first aid unit and for these names to be forwarded to the ARP Committee of the RDC as soon as possible.

Thomas B. Towle appointed clerk to the committee. He had previously been senior warden.

Meeting 5th December 1941

Letters dated 28/8/1941 and 9/10/1941 from the Chief Constable were read out and confirmed.

Letters were read from ECC (Essex County Council) and the ARP Department of the RDC and a memorandum from the Regional Commissioner.

The chairman had reported the result of his enquiries re. petrol for cars engaged on Civil Defence duties.

Mrs White also informed the committee that Miss A. Wright was no longer undertaking training for the mobile first aid unit.

Sergeant J.T. Firmin informed the committee that he is the official Military Representative for the village.

Rev. D. Bateman reported that supplies of emergency food had been distributed at various points in the parish.

5th December 1941. It was decided to co-opt two people living at Fordham Heath and these were **Mr O.G.C. Judd** of Brookside, and **Mr M Savill** of Gobys, Fordham Heath.

It was agreed that the committee meet quarterly.

Information from the letters above is not recorded. However, it does state that the letters and memorandum referred to the Exercise, Search and Duties of the Invasion Committee. These would be kept secret in the War Books mentioned earlier.

Meeting 13th February 1942

The chairman and Sergeant J.T. Firmin had been to a conference held at Colchester. Evidently the Rev. Oddie gave an 'exhaustive report' and this was 'amplified' Sergeant Firmin. Much useful information was given as to the duties that the members and the public would be expected to carry out in case of Invasion.

After a discussion, Mrs White, First Aid was asked to obtain names of persons willing to undertake duties of a manual nature.

Members of the Fire Service were to be asked to see that all wells* were clean and in good order. Senior Warden Mr Partridge was asked to bear in mind the inspection of respirators and that the public be instructed in anti-gas measures and those arrangements should be made for a visit by the gas van. Mr Partridge said that the District Chief Warden had this matter in hand and that arrangements would be made in due course.

The parish clerk reported that an official notice in the church and in the post office was out of date, with people on them who had now resigned. T.B. Towle was no longer Senior Warden and Mrs Blair-Fish was no longer First Aid leader. He would contact the responsible Authorities to get the lists updated.

The clerk had also written to the Regional Commissioner for particulars of the slit trenches which would be expected to be dug when invasion occurred and that a reply had been received that information would be forwarded as soon as it was available.

*At the end of the 19th century there were approximately 27 wells as located on Ordnance Survey Maps from 1878 – 1930. By 1920 many of these had been converted to hand pumps.

Meeting 6th March 1942

A letter was received from RDC re. Fire Parties. Messrs Savill and Partridge were asked to obtain the names and addresses of all personnel for registration for compensation in case of injury on duty, also to obtain numbers of stirrup pumps in the parish.

A letter from ECC re. Parish Invasion Committee expenditure was read and the clerk requested to apply for sanction to incur expenses of the hire of the Parish Room.

Mrs White had handed over her list of names of persons prepared to do certain manual work in case of invasion. The list remained in the hands of the chairman.

Mr Partridge reported that Fire Parties would attend to the wells.

Mr W.M. Savill was proposed and seconded as Deputy Chairman of the committee.

Mr Firmin suggested that notice boards be provided to post notices on when invasion occurs and was decided that two be provided. Mr Partridge and Mr Firmin agreed to provide the boards with Mr Savill assisting them to erect them at agreed places. Rev. Oddie and Mr Savill would be responsible for posting the notices when received.

Mr Partridge undertook to find a warden and runner to be at Home Guard Headquarters when required.

Meeting 11th May 1942

Letters were read from the Military Authorities – (no information recorded, secret War Diaries.)

Also from ECC and a memo to be read in conjunction with a circular V2/H2 dated 27/3/1942 (also secret).

It was decided to co-opt some more members to the committee. Mrs D. Gunary, Mrs Logan and Mr Clampin.

Mrs D. Gunary, her role was Water Steward and Mrs Logan was WVS (Women's Voluntary Service) Representative.

Sergeant Firmin gave a description of the combined Military & Civil Defence Scheme and particularly mentioned houses that would have to be evacuated in case of invasion.

It was decided to prepare a list of females not engaged in any special service and Mrs White was asked to prepare the list for Fordham and Mr Saville for Fordham Heath.

Sergeant Firmin undertook to ask Mr Savill to do this as Mr Savill was not at the meeting.

*The chairman undertook to inform the occupiers of the premises that their houses would have to be evacuated if invasion occurred.

The question of mortuaries and the burial of the dead were left till the next meeting.

*The clerk reported that he had received copies of the slit trenches.

*We do not know exactly which premises the parish council are referring to when the committee discuss 'evacuation if invasion occurs'. But one would presume those at key entry points of the village; those on the invasion line.

Mortuaries and the burial of the dead were never mentioned again in future public minutes.

*A slit trench was an important part of the war's anti-invasion defences. It was a narrow trench especially for shelter in battle from bomb and shell fragment, where a soldier or group of soldiers could shelter.

Meeting 5th June 1942

Major Waller attended this meeting along with Mrs Gunary. Mrs L. White, Mrs Logan, Rev. D. Bateman, Mr F. Doe, H. Cope, H.A. Partridge, M. Savill, J. Firmin.

Mrs D. Gunary was confirmed in her appointment as Water Steward. Mrs Gunary also gave details of the arrangements for water chlorination and proposed certain points of distribution of (a product we could not decipher) to Moat Farm, Suttons Farm, Clampins - Wash Corner, Blacks - Halstead Road, Mrs Phillips - Fossetts Lane, Mrs Gray - Fordham Heath, Mr Savill – Goby's, Porters Lane. These points were agreed. It was left to Mrs Gunary to consult Dr. Alderton and make all arrangements regarding details as he advised.

The next point of discussion at the meeting was the 'cleansing of wells.' The chairman will see Mr G. Fox re. Cleansing of wells and would ascertain if the Manual Pump Party could do the necessary wash.

A letter from RDC about Stirrup Pumps was read out. The clerk replied that the committee considered that there should be a Manual Pump Party and two more Stirrup Pump Parties formed for the Fordham Heath part of the parish.

It was left to Mr Savill to arrange the most suitable headquarters for the respective parties and fix up the personnel.

It was decided to ask Mr Partridge and Mr Firmin to erect the notice boards and display plans of slit trenches previously discussed in earlier meetings.

It was proposed that a public meeting be convened to inform the public of ARP arrangements. The meeting was to be held in the Parish Room. Mrs Logan undertook to have information distributed by means of the Women's Volunteer Service.

Meeting 29th June 1942

A meeting at the Parish Room on the 29th June 1942 began with Mr M. Savill deputy chairman taking the chair, as the Rev. W. Oddie had resigned; the letter was read later in the meeting.

Those present were Mrs Logan, Mrs L. White, and Rev. D. Bateman, Messrs. F. Doe, J. Firmin, H. A. Partridge, H. Bonner (had previously resigned) H.J. Cope, and a police sergeant from Gt. Horksley. The clerk Mr Towle was also in attendance.

Mrs Logan, W.V.S. representative reported she was unable to obtain leaflets to distribute publicly relating to information regarding Parish (Invasion) matters.

It was reported that Rev. W. Oddie had seen Mr G. Fox of the Manual Pump Party and he had agreed to pump out the wells but it would be necessary to obtain additional length of suction.

Mr Savill reported that he had obtained names of personnel for proposed Manual Stirrup Pump Parties for Fordham Heath.

Rev. Oddie's resignation from the chairmanship and membership of the Committee was read, proposed and seconded. After a discussion regarding the chairmanship of the committee, it was proposed by Rev. D Bateman and seconded by Mr H. Bonner that Mr E.M. Logan be co-opted a member of the committee and elected chairman. Royal Army Ordnance Corps lived at North Hill Colchester.

A letter from the ECC ARP Controller, (not disclosed) was read out.

It was proposed and seconded that Captain Cockaday be invited to attend a meeting of the committee.

The clerk wrote to the County ARP Sub Controller regarding the holding of a combined Military and Civil Defence Exercise.

Meeting 16th July 1942

With Mr E.M Logan as chairman a draft report and scheme relating to the work of Committee was presented to the committee and taken as read; every member had a copy.

Captain Cockaday, Liaison Officer to the County ARP Controller was introduced by the chairman and addressed the committee. He was asked questions on various points and responded accordingly. There was also another member of the County ARP team attending, Colonel Thorburn who was the ARP Sub-Controller. The purpose of their visit was to go through the draft report and scheme, make comments and

suggestions. The draft scheme was adopted and the chairman expressed thanks to the two officials for their attendance and advice, the committee gave full accord.

The 'Pink List' was mentioned and it was agreed that Mrs Logan, Mrs White and Mrs Gunary would be asked to prepare the same. All other business was adjourned to the next meeting.

Major Waller requested that the combined Military and Civil Defence Exercise proposed at a previous meeting be postponed owing to certain military plans not yet being complete.

Meeting 31st August 1942

The meeting started off by congratulating Lieutenant Firmin of the Home Guard on his promotion. The chairman suggested to the committee that the title of clerk be to the committee be altered to secretary, this was agreed.

Mr F. Clampin was elected member of the committee.

Mrs White informed the committee that she had been requested to arrange alternative accommodation for the emergency hospital in case of need. She suggested the Rectory as the most suitable building. Lt. Firmin agreed as to its suitability. All equipment would be moved when required by the wardens and Invasion Committee.

*The Green List. Rev. David Bateman and the secretary would revise the list.

*The Pink List. The Lady members of the Committee submitted the Pink List which they had been requested to prepare. It was agreed that both lists be revised and kept up to date every three months.

*These lists appear to be quite important perhaps offering up names of people willing to volunteer for necessary tasks in the village if invasion occurred.

The secretary undertook to do three copies of the Green and Pink lists.

The committee agreed they needed larger notice boards.

On the subject of tractors and motors, a list of all tractors and motors in the parish was prepared.

A list of Deputies to Heads of various Civil Defence Services and Home Guard was made. The following names were notified:

Home Guard - Corporal Race

Food officer - Mrs Logan

First Aid - Mrs W. Frost

Wardens - Warden Towle

Billeting and Homeless People - Mr Logan

Information Centre - Mrs Doe

Draft Scheme - Fire Guard and Fire Fighting Parties.

The chairman Mr E.M. Logan had been informed by the Parish Council Clerk that the Parish Council had authorised the Invasion Committee to act on their behalf in the matter of Fire Parties for the parish and had produced a Draft Scheme which was duly considered and approved. These arrangements were agreed.

A list of men volunteering to join should be prepared by Rev. D. Bateman, Mr Logan, Mr Towle, Mr Clampin, Mr Cope and Mr Savill.

Mr Savill, having prepared a list for Fordham Heath, it was agreed that the secretary and Mr Savill arrange the Parties and send the list to the clerk of the Rural District Council for registration. This was agreed and that the Fordham list be sent in when completed.

Captain Foljambe gave an explanation of military matters to the committee.

Meeting 14th September 1942

It was decided that the secretary write to the Rev. Oddie informing him that the Rectory had been decided upon as the most suitable alternative accommodation for an emergency hospital if it should be necessary to evacuate the school.

A letter about the Invasion Exercise on the 19th and 20th September 19th was read. Major Waller informed the committee of various military arrangements made and it was agreed that the Parish Invasion Committee should have their headquarters in The Parish Room with the Home Guard.

The Civil Defence Heads notified their arrangements for duty.



**Parish Room Headquarters of the Parish Council Invasion Committee
and Fordham Home Guard during WW2. FLHS Archive**

Lieutenant Firmin asked the First Aid leader to detail one of her personnel for duty with The Home Guard and Mrs White agreed to do so.

Meeting 15th January 1943

A letter from Rev. W. Oddie was read out concerning the use of the Rectory as alternative accommodation for casualties.

A discussion on procedure and general arrangements carried during the last exercise was held and information given. Certain points were stressed by Lt. Firmin and information given as to arrangements which would be made during actual invasion.

It was decided to have a Parish Invasion Committee notice board made; the secretary would obtain the necessary authority.

A letter was received for the clerk of the RDC, it was decided not to take any further action on it regarding the Fire Parties.

A progress report was gone through in detail and agreed upon and a copy sent to the County Controller.

It was decided to forward a copy of the Draft Scheme dated 4th July 1942 with the report.

Meeting 7th October 1943

P.C. Finch was elected to represent the police and to fill the vacancy caused by P.C. Sturgeon being invalided out of the force.

It was agreed that Mill House be earmarked as an emergency hospital and that the secretary communicate with Mr Blair- Fish informing him of this arrangement.

The combined Military and Civil Defence Scheme was considered and the following arrangements made:

As the village is a defended area it will be under the control of the Military Commander should an emergency occur.

The combined headquarters for military and civil defence to be at Mr H.A. Partridges.

According to Military plans alternative headquarters will be at Fiddlers Wood or Herrings Wood near the Rectory.

Deputies to the following services were notified:

Military Commander - Sergeant Cope

Chairman of the P.I.C. Mr Goymer subject to him agreeing and it was left to Rev. Bateman to approach him on the matter

Food Officer - Mrs Logan

Water Steward - Mr F. Clampin

First Aiders - Mrs W. Frost

Senior Warden - Mr T.B. Towle

Billeting Officer - Mrs Logan

WVS.- Mrs Williams

NFS (National Fire Service) to be nominated by Leading Fireman G. Clampin

It was arranged that the chairman and Lieutenant Firmin should meet and arrange any further details that might be necessary to complete the combined scheme.

Meeting 21st October 1943

Mr Goymer notified acceptance of membership of the committee and was appointed deputy chairman.

The chairman congratulated 2nd Lieutenant Cope on his promotion to commissioned rank.

Mr W.W. Blair–Fish had sent a letter to the committee asking some questions. The honorary secretary requested to send a reply stating the committee's answers to his questions. (Letter and answers not put into the minutes.)

The combined Military and Civil Defence Scheme was considered in detail and approved; copies to be circulated to all members of the committee.

Mr H. Bonner (Harry Bonner) wrote, resigning from the committee & the Honorary Secretary was requested to send him a letter of thanks for his past services.

Towards the end of the war the Parish Council dealt with many tasks cleaning up the village, setting it back to how it was.

14.7 1944 – There was a discussion about the damage the American personnel had caused in the village. The clerk was instructed to write to the Officer Commander stating that during the past 6 months a certain amount of damage has been done. The telephone kiosk, the only one we have in the village has been completely put out of action, which is a real inconvenience and glass broken in a shop door. The inhabitants have also been disturbed by the noise made by US personnel returning to camp after closing time and the council would be glad if he could put an end to it.

25.3.1945 - The clerk was instructed to display estimates for the removal of the barbed wire defences at the roadsides.

16.7.1945 – Removal of barbed wire.

12.9.1945 – The clerk was instructed to write a letter of thanks and farewell to the Officer Commander of the American Forces at Wormingford Airbase.

25.3.1946 – A letter from the War Department Land Agent enquired if any of the huts on Fordham Heath were required.

Sources of Information

Pages 50, 51 [www.military.wikia.org/wiki/British_anti-invasion preparations of the Second World War](http://www.military.wikia.org/wiki/British_anti-invasion_preparations_of_the_Second_World_War) Planned resistance

Pages 55, 56 Rectory Notes by Pat Lewis. 2009.

Page 58 www.westernfrontassociation.com/world-war-i-articles/balloonatics-during-the-first-world-war-1914-1918/

Page 58 Ref. Essex Chronicle 1938

Pages 63 to 75 Fordham Invasion Committee Minutes. Essex Archive Chelmsford Essex.

Page 67 Slit trenches Ref.<http://www.pillbox-study-group.org.uk/other-wwii-defensive-structures/earthworks-slit-trenches/>

Notes on Invasion Committees by Nicky Gibbs

CHAPTER 6

Defending the Countryside

'Sandbags and sentries everywhere. Countryside shows signs of defence activity. Concrete block houses being erected, barbed wire and sentries guard bridges.' M.F.

One of the great things about living in Fordham is our ability to go for walks around the village following paths on the Woodland Trust Estate. On these walks and further afield, you may come across evidence of WW2 defences that would have been constructed to defend our village in WW2.

The area by Fordham Bridge or Hammonds Bridge as it is also known was so important, as defences were grouped around it. There was the pillbox and another one very close, anti-tank rails, a road barrier, two spigot mortar emplacements and an ammunition store in Fiddlers Wood.

Pillbox – concrete strong point built in many types and variations to accommodate a section of infantrymen or an artillery piece. Loopholes were pre formed firing openings.

Anti-tank Obstacles – Rails or girders cut to length and positioned vertically in concrete to protect gun emplacements and pillboxes. Pyramid shaped obstacles of reinforced concrete sometimes nicknamed 'Dragon's Teeth.'

Road Barrier – There were many types of road barrier/ anti-tank barrier. These were made up from a range of items, often concrete blocks with scrap iron, buoys, cylinders, pimples, RSJ and barbed wire. Lengths of girder or railway line bent and inserted in a socket in the ground.

Ammunition shelter - small one roomed building, commonly rectangular of brick or Nissen type used to store small arms ammunition, spigot mortar bombs.

Spigot Mortar - invented by Lieutenant-Colonel Blacker after Dunkirk, rejected by regular army but used from 1941- 1944 by Home Guard. A high explosive mortar bomb fired from a spigot mortar emplacement. It was used in an anti-tank role at road blocks or to defend airfields, often hidden from site. www.northmymshistory.uk

The website of the pillbox study group has been used for referencing many of the military descriptions.

Pill Boxes



Pill Box north of Porter's Farm. M. Hamilton-Macy

For anyone who has visited any surviving pill boxes, you will have noticed that there are different types. In May 1940 the Department of Fortifications and Works was set up to provide specific pillbox designs. These were to be constructed throughout the countryside at defensive locations. You can still see remaining pill boxes along the River Colne. Seven basic designs were issued, but local construction companies would often modify these under area commands. The Command and Corps Chief Engineers often designed a 'one off,' built to War Office standard. The FW3 pillbox design could be constructed quickly. Features consisted or incorporated-

- Minimum of bullet/splinter proof protection
- No attempt was made to provide living accommodation
- Some designs were enhanced to shell proof standard
- Simple blast walls to protect open entrances
- External flat side walls with rectangular or polygonal shape

These common designs with standard sizes for doors, loopholes and flat sides made it easier to mass produce items for concrete shuttering and thus sped up construction. But with the general countryside lack of materials it was often necessary to use bricks as the shuttering.

This gave the impression that the whole structure was constructed of brick. What happened in reality in some instances is explained in Major Peter Finch's book about Essex and the Home Guard, he describes the building of some of these pill boxes.

'Soon pill boxes appeared, like slothful mushrooms, over the countryside. Those who had faith in the effectiveness of these essays in bricks and mortar were often infuriated by the slowness of the contractors. Colonel Sir F. Carne Rasch recalls that of the 88 pillboxes in Danbury Company area, only 17 were likely to be manned. Invasion was expected, and it was not likely that the remaining 71 would be ready. For every time an air raid warning sounded, the men completing the pillboxes stopped work. But nothing can compare with what happened at Clacton, where a contractor misread the plans and built pill boxes upside down.'

In Fordham it was the LDV (later re-named the Home Guard) who manned these pill boxes, as we have heard from Millicent Fairhall's description of entry to Fordham.

In her diary Millicent Fairhall gives us an insight into what we would have been greeted with:

‘Initially Fordham appeared unaltered. Not much evidence of war except a gathering of local LDVs. But the countryside shows signs of defence activity. Sandbags and sentries everywhere, concrete block houses have been erected, barbed wire and sentries guarding bridges. Those guarding the entries to the village wear tin hats and carry gas marks.’

Also in Major Finch’s book he writes:-

‘As to their value as defence works, pill boxes bring the following comment from Colonel J.O. Parker: “It is interesting to recall the atmosphere of confidence they (pillboxes) instilled into the Home Guard as regards to their ability to hold up the enemy. Today they are frequently regarded as death traps. Yet an order issued in July 1940, laid down that ‘no road block is to be without its pillbox.’

For this chapter we have used our own photographs taken by Michael Hamilton-Macy, a member of FLHS.

Defending Fordham

At the top of the village towards Wormingford there would have been road blocks. We also had the airfield at Wormingford to the north of the village, which would have been a target for bombers. The railways lines which ran parallel to Ponders Road going through Chappel on the viaduct were also at risk so heavily fortified.

On the bridge by the Shoulder of Mutton and on the other side of the bridge at Ford Street there was a road block, a pill box and anti-tank pimples, known as dragon’s teeth.

If we turn back the clock to early in the war and imagine coming down Fiddlers Hill towards Fordham Bridge, you would have been greeted by the LDV just as Millicent Fairhall describes and whose role it was to guard this pillboxes.

The most visible reminder of these defences is the one you see at the bottom of Fiddler's Hill It is **pill box MCC4874. SMR No:10970**. These reference numbers have been taken from two sources – 'The Colchester Heritage website ' and '2007 Project Report – A Survey of World War Two Defences in the Borough of Colchester.'

The Colchester Heritage website is a good tool for anyone interested in military installations of WW2. Colchester Heritage records many of the WW2 sites around our village. The pill boxes, anti-tank rails, road barriers and ammunition store around Fordham are well documented. Referring to the '2007 Project Report – A Survey of World War Two Defences in the Borough of Colchester' by military archaeologist Fred Nash, from that we can find out what was in place and what remains around our village. Fred Nash, a ww2 researcher, has provided research and photographs for many of these records. The original project was to locate and record the county's World War Two defence sites with the aim of providing an historical and archaeological database of the sites within the Essex Historic Environment Record. You can find the database online.

Pillbox MCC4874. SMR No:10970



This is immediately at the bottom of Fiddlers Hill on the left just before you go over the bridge and up Mill Road. Most villagers will be very familiar with it, sited just 50 yards away from Fordham Bridge

(previously known as Hammonds Bridge) in the meadow and faces northwards. It is hexagonal with a y shaped central pillar. There are loopholes (openings that soldiers should shoot through.) This pillbox is concreted up to half its height, which Fred Nash describes as unusual. This is likely to stop any flooding from the river. At the rear of the porch facing the entrance, the wall is serrated to prevent bullets ricocheting into the interior.

This pillbox lies close to the banks of the Colne in the Colne Valley. It is one of many strategically placed in case of invasion. The Colne was a natural barrier and although it may not have been big enough for boats to travel on, invading troops could have used the Colne as a navigational aid to advance their positions. The Colne was part of the Eastern Command Line that followed the river from Mersea Island around Colchester to Chappel Viaduct before heading northwards along the railway embankment to Bures, where it joined the River Stour.

Road Barrier (destroyed) MCC5008. SMR10969. There are records that state there was a road barrier at Fordham Bridge. It is probable that every river crossing bridge would be blocked by a concrete and steel road barrier; there were different types of barrier.

The photo below shows the remains of an ammunition shelter just inside the edge of Fiddlers Wood, 40 yards from the road. The concrete base with low side walling is still there; the entrance can be clearly seen on the east side. This shelter would have been primarily erected to house the bombs for the two spigot mortar positions on each side of the road for **SMRs 10967/10972.**



Spigot Mortar Emplacement MCC 5006. SMR 10967. About 70 yards east of Fordham Bridge is a Home Guard Spigot Mortar emplacement. The stainless steel pintle (upright pivot pin) can still be seen. Where the bank has eroded the side of one of the brick built ammunition alcoves has been revealed. The spigot mortar pedestal would usually stand in the centre of pit that purposely designed with ammunition alcoves around the sides.

Spigot Mortar Emplacement MCC 5010. SMR 10972. West of Fordham Bridge is another Spigot Mortar pedestal with its stainless steel pintle. The top of the concrete is damaged and is exposing the steel reinforcement rods and the side of the pedestal is cracked. The base of one of the ammunition coves is overhanging the riverbank and you can see a capping stone in the river. This example is less common and stands above the ground, this may be because the ground was susceptible to flooding.

Anti-tank rails MCC5007



SMR 10968



East of Fordham Bridge is a 30 yard concrete wall lining the south bank. Still visible in the concrete are cut off ends of the anti-tank rails, about 30 of them. These would have projected vertically and out over the river. They would have been cut from lengths of railway track or RSJs. Remains of these are very rare in Essex.

There are contemporary records that state that near an entrance to an arable field (part of Fordham Hall Farm), there was an Anderson Shelter for ammunition storage. This entrance was opposite the Post Office which was in Ponders Road, Fordham. 'Map ref. 377472. (Mil. Ed.) <1>' An aerial photograph taken in May 1946 shows what appears to be a small Nissen hut standing in the field 50 yards NW of the Post Office and although this matches the map reference, there is still some uncertainty if this concurs with the location in contemporary record.

There are a few pillboxes that do not survive for example the **Pillbox MCC5009/SMR10971** in the NW corner of Fiddler's Wood close to the bridge was destroyed. Being close to SMR10970 which was an infantry pillbox, this one may have been an artillery pillbox.

There were other pillboxes around Fordham along the Eastern Command Line. The six pillboxes on Great Porters Farm all survive and are in good condition.



Pill box Great Porters Farm MCC4778. SMR 10961

South of the Colne in a meadow this is a north facing hexagonal pillbox. It is a 19ft 6inch wide type with small loopholes on each face. The south loophole is covered by earth and grass and cannot be seen.

Pill box Great Porters Farm MCC4779. SMR 10962

This hexagonal concrete pillbox is high on the hillside looking north towards the Colne which flows 240 yards away. This pillbox has an anti-

aircraft well with concrete mounting plinth and steel fittings for a machine gun. There are remains of 1/2 half inch iron rods around the sides, purpose unknown although it is suggested they could have been for camouflage nets.

Pillbox Great Porters Farm MCC4780. SMR 10963



This hexagonal pillbox is just five yards away from the River Colne. It has six loopholes which were much smaller than earlier designed pillboxes, this one had a low porch type entrance. Earth and grass was put onto the roof for camouflage.

Pill box Great Porters Farm MCC4781 SMR.10964.

Positioned in a meadow 50 yards south of river Colne, this hexagonal pillbox has six small loop holes and a small entrance which is blocked with earth. The very lower entrance made this pillbox less vulnerable, it gave better defence.

Pillbox Great Porters Farm MCC4782. SMR10965



This hexagonal pillbox is situated high on the hill side commanding has an excellent view north of the river Colne; this was an anti-aircraft machine-gun type. It has an anti-aircraft well complete with a concrete plinth and steel fitting for a machine gun. It has six small loopholes.

Pillbox Great Porters Farm MCC4783 SMR10966. This is a fine surviving hexagonal pillbox with walls 3ft 6in thick. It is about twenty yards from a bend in the River Colne. Again on this pillbox there are remains of 1/2 inch steel rods, three per side and may have been used to disguise the pillbox or cover with camouflage netting. It has a low 'porch-type' entrance is on the south side and the pillbox is 19ft 6in wide, with small loopholes.

Other pillboxes and defences along the Eastern Defence Line

Pillbox MCC4785. SMR10973 Field junction south of Fordham Bridge. Almost completely hidden in trees and bushes is this hexagonal pillbox. It is positioned south of the River Colne where the hillside slopes upwards. The pillbox has an anti-aircraft machine gun well with a concrete centre pillar with steel mounting fittings on the top.

Pillbox MCC4776 SMR 10958 North of Argents Lane. This pillbox is half buried in the middle of a field. This pillbox has earth and grass on top, not a natural result, but an attempt to protect it from air attack. This is hexagon pillbox has a 6ft wide anti-aircraft machine gun well. It has an excellent position looking down to the river.

MCC4775 SMR10957 Pillbox, Argents Lane, This concrete hexagonal pillbox is situated on a high bank on the north side of Argents Lane. It has an anti-aircraft machine gun well measuring six feet wide with steel fittings on the mounting pillar. This would have held a WW1 Lewis Gun. This pillbox had commanding views down the valley looking to the north.

Pillbox MCC4777 SMR 10960. Cook's Mill. This pillbox was one of the smallest of pillbox designs FW3/22. It has fifteen inch thick walls and the intent was for it to be bulletproof, not shell-proof. This hexagonal concrete pillbox is just west of the bridge crossing the Colne. There are six loopholes, but no central pillar. In the fibre boarded ceiling, electric fittings were installed. The entrance has been sealed on the west side with a sheet of corrugated iron.

Road Barrier (destroyed) MCC5115 SMR 10959 at Cook's Mill. It is most likely there was a road barrier across the bridge. Contemporary records state 'pipe mines and road blocks thirty yards to the east of the Cooks Mill pillbox.'

On Fordstreet a road barrier and a pillbox faced the bridge on the opposite side to the Shoulder of Mutton. The road barrier **SMR 100977** was destroyed. On each side of the road there are anti-tank pimples, cones or pyramids. Three on the west side of the road and two on the east. Sited on the river bank was a spigot mortar which would be above to fire on armoured vehicles approaching the bridge.

Anti-tank Pimples Bridge House Fordstreet. MCC5122. SMR10983. Two of the pimples can still be seen outside Bridge House, these have been painted white, and they are conical in shape. There was also a pillbox there but it no longer exists. There were originally seventeen pimples, these were arranged in three rows blocking the wide Mill Race Bridge and some are still in situ. Although many anti-tank pimples were installed, they are now quite rare in Essex. So the ten remaining pimples are an impressive surviving concentration.

Anti-Tank Ditch Fordstreet. SMR10976. MCC5116. A photograph from 1946 clearly shows marks of an anti-tank ditch that has been filled in. The Eastern Command Line that followed the River Colne veered away from the river for a short distance. A high hill overlooks Fordstreet, the ditch followed the foot of the hill, it was dominated by pillboxes and

other defensive positions on the hillside above, so the anti-tank ditch made perfect sense. Anti-tank ditches were dug where no river or other natural obstacle was available.

A visit to Chappel viaduct is well worthwhile; I have included a few photographs of what defences remain. It will also give you a close view of the defences on the Eastern Command Line.



Chappel Viaduct. W. Shepherd

Fordham Heath Defences



Fordham Heath 1944. USAAF Photo. Historic England.

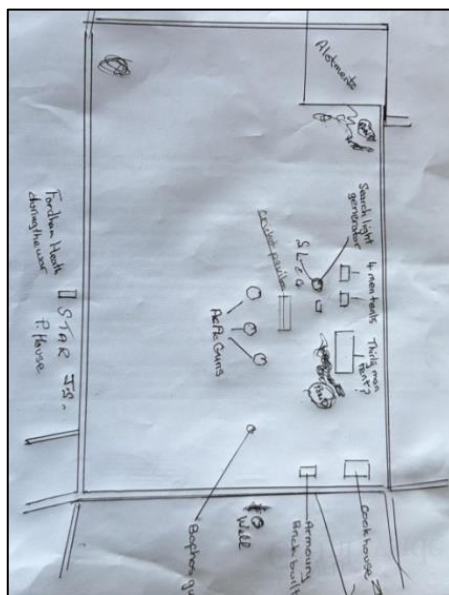
Oral History is a very important resource in historical research. However, some stories that have been passed down may have become altered with the passing of time. Stories that are told eighty or so years after the event cannot necessarily be taken as entirely accurate. But memories and stories are made credible when documentary evidence can confirm the information.

The photograph above was taken in 1944 and substantiates much of the information we have been given about the guns on Fordham Heath. On

the left of the photograph, half way down is The Star public house that was used as a mess for soldiers manning the guns.

To the top of the photograph is Huxtables Lane and in front of those houses to the left, the allotment is clearly marked out. On the right there are white long buildings that were accommodation huts for the soldiers. Towards the bottom of the photo, along Heath Road there appear to be circular markings showing the positions of gun emplacements and a search light. Also on the left of the photograph below The Star is a house called Ashtons, where Jim Scarlett lived with his parents Harry Scarlett and Beatrice (Mary) Ashton and Jim's siblings Patrick, Maurice and Louise. Jim was born in 1937.

In an interview with Jim in July 2024 he spoke about Fordham Heath during WW2. Jim also drew a map of the heath as he remembered it. His drawing closely matches the aerial photograph of 1944. Jim lived opposite the guns, he pointed out the guns that he described as being protected at the base by sandbags, there was also a Bofors gun which Jim said was responsible for setting light to a tree behind his house! Before the war the heath was used by Mr Gray to graze about thirty of his cows and some people lived off the heath catching rabbits and pheasants. Jim's brother bred rabbits at home



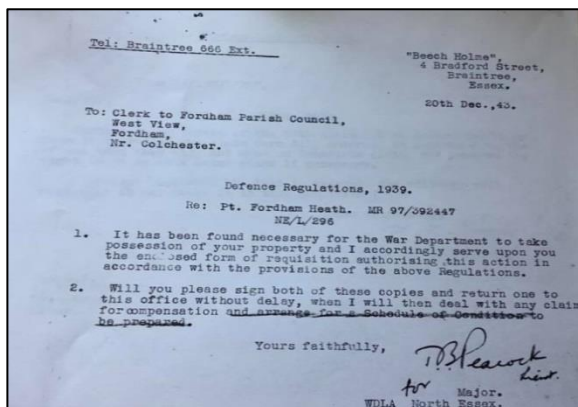
**Map of Fordham Heath.
Drawn by Jim Scarlett**

and if they couldn't catch any wild rabbits they would 'despatch' one of their own.

Jim described the brick built cook house and armoury, bottom right of the photo and the searchlight with its noisy generator which he believes was moved around. Although he could recall about half a dozen searchlights in a line, he thinks they were moved around the site. Jim remembers a big hole that was dug roughly in front of the cricket pavilion and rubbish was thrown in it. This pit was found when they did some work on the heath in the 1960s. The accommodation huts down the right hand side of the photo, Jim describes as tents, may have been a mix of tents and huts as mentioned in our information.

There is also primary documentary evidence from the Parish Council Invasion Committee which gives more validity to the photograph and oral histories. It is correspondence written to Fordham Parish Council in 1943 and 1944 about the requisition of the land, there is also a map (page 65) indicating which part of the land was requisitioned.

After the war a letter was received by Fordham Parish Council (FPC) from the War Department Land Agent asking the FPC if they required any of the huts on Fordham Heath. FPC did not take up the offer.



FLHS member Marlene Boyle, in conversation with her friend, gave the society a copy of 'Bite size Articles on the Civil Parish of Eight Ash Green.' There is section titled 'World War Two and the Locality.' There is a useful paragraph as to the actual position of the guns, it is recorded in the booklet that:

'Resident Reg Greenwold recalls that the 'ack ack' guns were on Fordham Heath along with searchlights. When invasion was feared in the early years, machine guns were positioned along the pillboxes in Argent's Lane.' (see chapter on pillboxes.)

'The soldiers who manned the guns would use the Star Inn (now called The Cricketers) as a mess. Another local resident recalls that there was a red light positioned in the bar and when it flashed, the soldiers immediately went into action (with the advent of radar, enemy planes could now be tracked from the coast.)'

'The guns, munitions and accommodation huts were just off Heath Road on the upper heath. The anti-aircraft guns were of the light battery type, easily mobile. The powerful searchlights powered by noisy generators were positioned at the other end of the heath near the allotments and just off Huxtables Lane. When the guns fired they shook the windows of the houses on the heath and the noise of the generators added to the cacophony. Resident Eric Huxtable commented that in the beginning the noise kept people awake, but most people got used to it over time.'

The EVAS history of Eight Ash Green records that a Bofors gun stationed on the heath hit a plane that came down in Clacton.

We know that the Star public house was hit by an incendiary bomb that set fire to the thatched roof. You can see the tarpaulin covering the damage in the photograph (page 92).

A doodlebug (V1 Rocket) landing at the end of Blind Lane, blowing out windows in the school and causing damage over a wide area.



Bomb Damage on the Star Inn. Jim Scarlett's brother on Motorbike. J. Scarlett Collection.

Sources of Information

Pages 76 to 78 www.pillbox-study-group.org.uk/uk-defence-locations/

Pages 78,79 *Warmen Courageous* by Peter Finch 1951

Pages 80 to 86 www.pillbox-study-group.org.uk

The Colchester Heritage website 'and '2007 Project Report – A Survey of World War Two Defences in the Borough of Colchester.'

Page 80 www.colchesterheritage.co.uk/Monument/MCC4784

Page 80 www.caguk.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2Vol-1-Text_p.1-65.pdf

Page 83 www.colchesterheritage.co.uk/Monument/MCC5501

Pages 88, 90 *Letter and Maps. Fordham Heath residents.*

Pages 91 *Bite size Articles on the Civil Parish of Eight Ash Green.*

CHAPTER 7

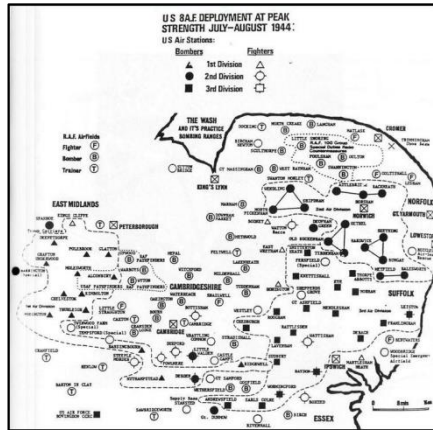
Wormingford Airfield

'A cloudless blue sky and in the afternoon we witnessed a thrilling air battle (Clacton.) To us it seemed like a gallant few were taking on the whole of Goering's Luftwaffe. In fact it was a Nazi army of 500 planes thundering high over the town on their way to London. As we watched RAF spitfires - possibly outnumbered- darted in and out the black monsters like silver fish. Then in the middle of it a nightmarish sound as a German plane screamed to earth in full throttle. Trix and I dived indoors for cover - huddled under the back room table and waited for the end. The scream of the plane seemed to go on for minutes, but it was only a few seconds, then a thud and quiet' M.F.

Fordham was surrounded by military defences, protected by a military garrison at Colchester and an USAAF airfield at Wormingford. Being close to military establishments in Colchester and the USAAF airfields of Wormingford and Boxted; the village was still quite a vulnerable place, a worthy target for German bombers.

For the first two years of the war, the USA had a policy of neutrality. However it was three days later after the attack on Pearl Harbour on 7th December, 1941; Germany, Italy and their ally Japan declared war on the United States. It was after this declaration that the priority for Britain and her Allies, including the USA, was to focus on the bombardment of Germany; thus the Americans came to Britain.

East Anglia was 'taken over' by the USAAF. Sixty-seven bomber stations and more than two hundred airfields across Britain were constructed; this caused much consternation among the locals particularly farmers who had to 'give up' land. Most of the sites were in the rural east of England: Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, and Cambridgeshire.



Essex and the surrounding counties became home to thousands of US service personnel in readiness for the allied invasion and liberation of occupied Europe. Land was commandeered by the USAAF from the War Agriculture Committee for American airbases all over Britain.

A pamphlet was issued by the United States War Department called 'Over There, Instructions for American Servicemen in Britain 1942.' The aim of this pamphlet was to prepare young GIs for life in a very different country. The pamphlet presents a snapshot of wartime Britain. The section 'Britain at War' described perfectly the state of our country when the Americans came to town!

'Every light in England is blacked out every night and all night. Every highway signpost has come down and barrage balloons have gone up. Grazing land is now ploughed for wheat and flower beds turned into vegetable gardens. Britain's peacetime army of a couple of hundred thousand has been expanded to over two million. Everything from the biggest factory to the smallest village workshop is turning out something for the war. Hundreds of thousands of women have gone to work in factories or joined the many military auxiliary forces.'

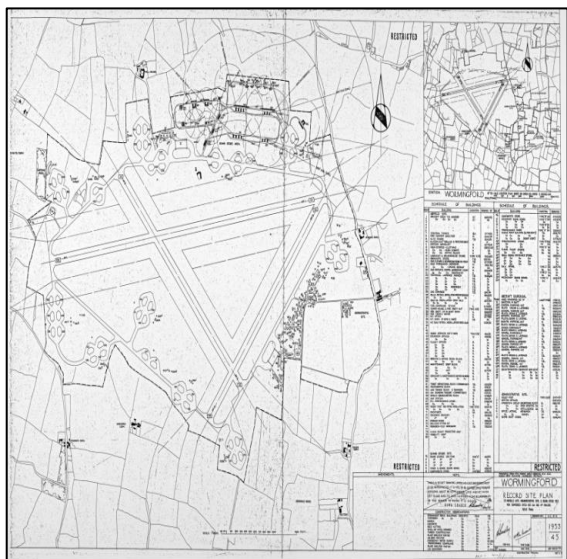
Eric Rudsdale (1910-1951) was the curator of Colchester Museum and he was seconded in 1941 to become secretary of the Lexden and

Winstree District Committee of the Essex War Agricultural Committee for the duration of the war.

For the EWAC in Essex, whose aim was to increase agricultural production, it was a double edged sword as they now had to give up farmland that they had requisitioned from disgruntled farmers to the Americans who had commandeered it; there was a lot of antagonism.

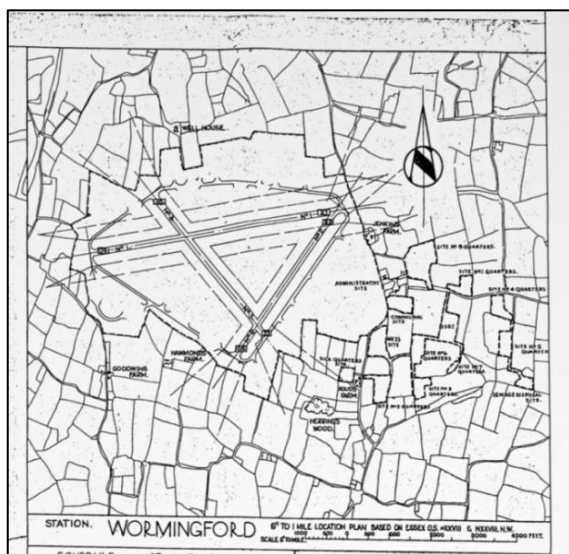
Rudsdale kept a daily diary which you can access online. His journal not only records life in Colchester and the surrounding areas during WW2, but also the impact of the arrival of the USAAF in Colchester and the nearby USAAF airfields of Boxted and Wormingford. He had valuable insight into the development of the American airfields.

Wormingford was originally earmarked for the Eighth Heavy Bomber Group. The American fighter and bomber base was constructed during 1942-1943 by Richard Costain. It was a huge site with three concrete and tarmac runways which were suitable hard standing for bombers.

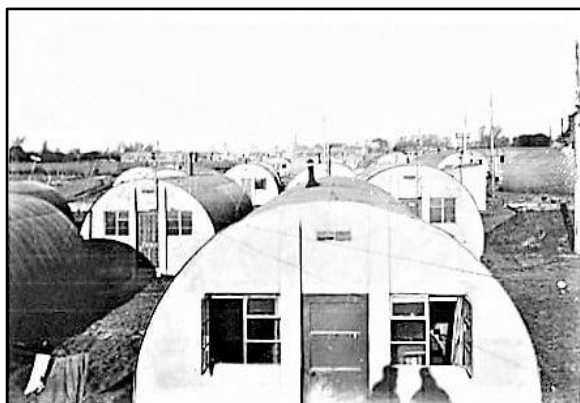


**Official Air Ministry Record Plan-Airfield Site 1945.
Wormingford www.americanairmuseum.com/archive**

The runway was 2,000 yards long on an east west axis and two intersecting runways of 1,400 yards. There were aircraft hangers and a bomb dump store on the northern side. The east side was the technical site. Further to the south east was the mess, barracks and other communal sites that accommodated 2,900 personnel; parts of the site were in Fordham.



Official Air Ministry Record Site Plan-Dispersed Sites 1945 Wormingford



**Official Air Ministry Record Plan-Airfield Site 1945.
Wormingford www.americanairmuseum.com/archive**



Official Air Ministry Record Plan-Airfield Site 1945. Wormingford
www.americanairmuseum.com/archive

The airfield site at Wormingford was a significant First World War landing ground for the 37th Home Defence Squadron and a Royal Aircraft Factory. Here they shot down Zeppelin number L.48 on 16th /17th June 1917.

When innocently commenting on how the Americans had altered Wormingford, a Major Miller snapped at him asking Rudsdale if he would prefer the Americans here or Germans at the airfield. He then went on to comment that they could *'not bother about the convenience of a few British farmers. What had been open farm land was now an amazing sight. To think that only two years ago this vast town was open farmland.'*

In his diary on 26th of October, 1943, Rudsdale records that the Air Ministry had decided to demolish Harvey's Farm to make way for expansion. Rudsdale tried to salvage some of the building's interior,

some historic timbers. Looking at the farm he writes *'how desolate the place looked, so recently prosperous farmlands, but now cow chains hanging rusty in milking shed.'*

The 362nd Fighter Group arrived at Wormingford from Mitchel Field, New York as part of the Ninth Air Force in November 1943 with Republic P-47 Thunderbolts. The Fighter Group (FG) was made up of 377th Fighter Squadron, 378th Fighter Squadron and the 379th Fighter Squadron. But just for the record, the US Air Force was not formed until 1947. Prior to that, it was a Branch of the Army, and was known as the US Army Air Corps.

The 362nd FG was active in attacking V-weapon launching sites near the Pas de Calais in 1944. In the April of that year they were engaged chiefly in escorting bombers that struck factories, railways, airfields and other targets on the Continent. They attacked communications in northern France and in Belgium during April and May, ready for the invasion of Normandy in 1944.

In his Colchester diary, Eric Rudsdale on the 6th of June 1944 writes: *'About 2am heard the sound of many 'planes warming up at Wormingford, but soon went to sleep. Woke soon after 3am to a tremendous roar, and looked out to see the whole sky filled with 'planes, all carrying their navigation lights, dropping red and green flares in every direction.'*

This is corroborated by the vicar William Oddie at the Rectory in Fordham who had reported that on the 6th of June, D. Day, *'a spectacular sight was seen from the Rectory. From dawn the Airborne Liberating Forces could be seen from the windows; the planes covering the whole sky. The noise of the crafts made the windows shake.'*

There was much interaction between the villagers and the Americans. Villager Les Beard tells a tale about his father Charles (Jim) Beard who was a family baker and living in Wormingford. His routine was to get up

very early in the morning to travel to Ford Street bakery. Whilst travelling to work with a family member, they were stopped by American soldiers and held in custody overnight as they were thought to be spies. This was at a time when the planes at Wormingford had been repainted.

All the military powers in World War II used camouflage paint schemes for their aircraft. The main purpose was to help hide them when they were most vulnerable – on the ground – though it was also useful in low-level tactical operations. In December 1943 the War Department announced the removal of paint from “almost all” of its aircraft, with exception of some “specialised planes overseas” like night fighters and transports. As of January 1944, almost all new warplanes coming off the assembly line would only have national insignia, squadron, and plane number markings.

Les remembers being told that when in custody, his family were well fed by the Americans and it was the best meal they had eaten for a long time! They were later released without charge.

Another villager Angela Church nee Langham, remembers Americans coming to Christmas dinner and bringing a turkey so huge it would not fit in the oven!

In an interview with Mary Hills who was evacuated here from Goodmayes, she remembered with fondness the wonderful parties the Americans organised for the evacuees.

The Americans had supplies that were out of reach for many of the Fordham villagers who were rationed. The Americans provided raffle prizes at the regular dances held at the village Parish room and attended fete days. They contributed to Welcome Home Fund dances and raised money towards the Merchant Navy Benevolent Fund as recorded in regular newspaper articles.

The Christmas dance at the village hall on the 15th of December, 1943 reported that Allied Forces were very prominent in the hall; it was packed to overcrowding. Once again money raised went towards the Welcome Home Fund.

The American Red Cross (ARC) provided every base, such as Wormingford Airfield with service personnel, an 'aero club'. This provided a location for events, recreation and relaxation. The ARC would also organise trips, accommodation and sporting events off base.



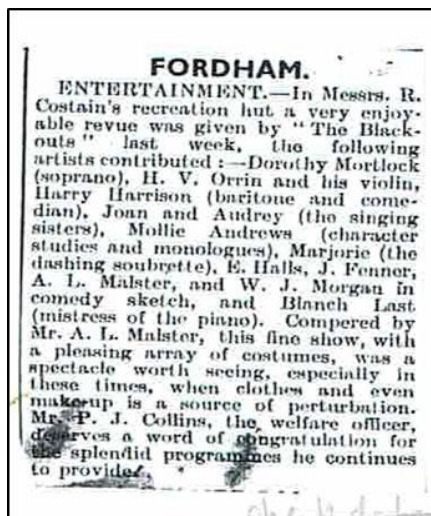
Land Girls at the Aero Club. FLHS Archive

The above photograph shows three of our Land Army girls posing in front of the Aero Club signpost: Sue Green, Vera Cant and Ivy Chandler.

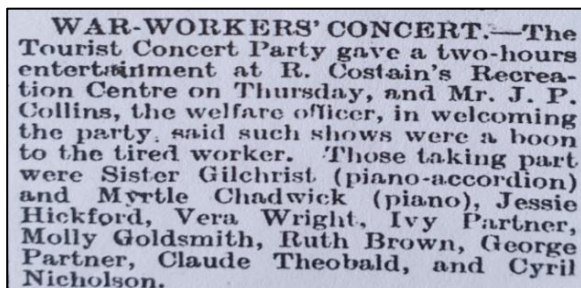
Newspaper cuttings record entertainment events for Fordham villagers during WW2. Some took place in Messrs. R. Costain's recreation hut at Wormingford Airfield which had been built by Costains in 1942/43 with the help of subcontractors.

There was a revue given by the aptly named 'Blackouts.' A particular comment gives a real sense of the time period:

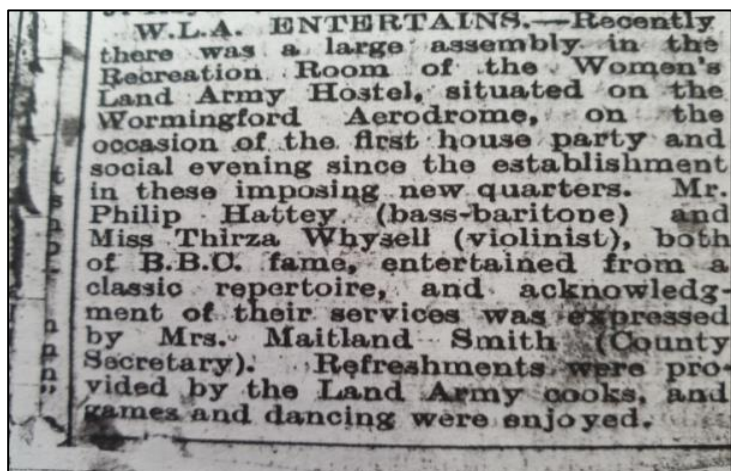
'This fine show with a pleasing array of costumes, was a spectacle worth seeing, especially in these times, when clothes and even makeup is a source of perturbation!'



Another newspaper cutting reports on the War Worker's Concert. This time there were two hours of entertainment in the Costain's Recreation Centre. The entertainers called The Tourist Concert Party included Sister Gilchrist on the piano accordion and Myrtle Chadwick on the piano with other performers.



FLHS had been told that Land Army girls were billeted at Wormingford airfield close to Houds and Arbour Farms. This has been confirmed by another newspaper article telling us that there was a *'large assembly in the Recreational Room of the Women's Land Army Hostel in Wormingford situated on Wormingford Aerodrome, on the occasion of the first house party and social evening since the establishment in these imposing new quarters.'*



The Parish Council Invasion minutes do record some disquiet and damage in the village during the duration that American soldiers were stationed at Wormingford. The clerk was instructed to communicate with the Officer Commander (OC) of the 8th American Air Force. The letter dated July 1944 was not to be sent until the chairman of the PC had had an interview with the OC and in the event of there being a continuance of the trouble.'

'That during the last 6 months a certain amount of damage has been done in the village. The telephone kiosk, the only one in the village has been completely put out of order, which has caused a great inconvenience with glass broken in a shop door. The inhabitants have also been disturbed by the noise made by USA personnel when returning

to camp after closing time and the council would be glad if he would take steps to put an end to it.'

On the 13th of September 1945, H.J. Cope the clerk of the Invasion Committee was asked to write a letter of thanks and farewell to the OC American Airforce at Wormingford Station.

After V-E Day, Wormingford airfield was turned over to RAF Technical Training Command and later to RAF Transport Command. It closed as a military airfield in 1947, had limited use as a civilian airfield in the 1950s. However, the Wormingford Nissen huts were used for accommodation after the war; some up until 1954. It was then transferred to other government departments until being sold off between 1960 and 1962. The land was subsequently sold for agriculture and partly used by the Essex and Sussex gliding club.

Opposite Jenkins Farm on the west side of Fordham Road, there is a memorial to commemorate the USAAF airmen that lost their lives in WWII.



Wormingford USAAF War Memorial. W. Shepherd

South east of the airfield in the woods near the old site of Thrift Farm, there are still some remnants of buildings blast shelters and air raid shelters. The map recording placement of the accommodation blocks shows the vastness of the site.



Remnants of Air Raid Shelter Thrift Farm. M.Hamilton-Macy



**Surviving Air Raid Shelter in Woods on Thrift Farm.
M.Hamilton-Macy**



Surviving Blast Shelter in Woods on Thrift Farm. M. Hamilton-Macy.

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CHAPTER 8

LDV- Home Guard

'Not much evidence of war except a gathering of local L.D.Vs (forerunners of the Home Guard.) They wear tin hats and never move without gas marks; everyone carries one now.'
M.F.

On the 3rd of September 1939, the outbreak of war, the Military Training Act was taken over by the National Services (Armed Forces) Act with conscription of all men eighteen to forty-one.

The thought of invasion was a serious threat to our country especially after our British troops were pushed back to the Channel ports in May 1940. The government decided they needed to recruit part time soldiers; those not already serving.

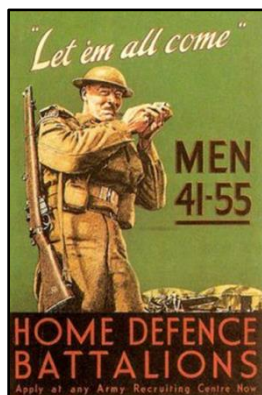
My grandfather John George Shepherd born in 1899 in London served in WW1 in the Royal Navy; as a stoker. I have my grandfather's LDV armband that was issued to him. He was forty-one in 1939. He was now a reservist in the fleet, but whilst waiting to be called upon, he joined the LDV.



Grandad's LDV Armband. W. Shepherd

So men like my grandfather joined the Local Defence Volunteers whose aim was to guard important installations and defend Britain against invasion. They were to watch out for paratroopers and invading commandos.

The response was overwhelming with some 250,000 men signing up on the first day. These included those too young to enlist and those too old, many of the older men having served in World War One or earlier conflicts. This is corroborated by some of the members of our Fordham Home Guard. These included men like John T. Firmin, William Davey and Walter Butler. Amongst our volunteers were those men who could not sign up as their jobs were classed as reserved occupations such as teachers, grocers, bank staff, bakers and railway workers.



IWM Collection

The questions for enrolment for the LDV included:

1. Name
2. Date of Birth
3. Address
4. Are you a British subject?
5. Nationality of parents
6. Name of next of kin and address
7. Have you served in British Forces?
8. An undertaking that by enlisting in LDV, you become subject to military law and will obey orders and that they will not have to live away from home.
9. An understanding that by enrolling in LDV, they will not get paid for their service.
10. An understanding that if they incur a disability attributed to their service in LDV any claim for compensation will be dealt with under the same regulations for the time being in force and the same terms will apply as to private soldiers and their families.
11. An understanding that they are enrolling for the time period not exceeding the duration of the present emergency, that your period of service is determined in accordance with the Army Council and they or the applicant can apply for 14 days' notice in writing.

Many nicknames prevailed as the mixture of young and old LDV came together in village halls. In July 1940 Winston Churchill changed the

name to the Home Guard. Eventually proper uniforms were issued and training began even though their initial weapons were often second hand and not fit for purpose. Gradually the farmer's guns and homemade weapons were replaced. At one time, Fordham Heath man James Robert Chamley who was in the LDV and later the Home Guard, was one of the only men who had a gun because he was a farmer.

There were some special units among the Home Guard too. The Essex Rivers Catchment Board, with valuable knowledge of the coastal marshes and inlets formed a company. Paxmans had their own group and the 13th Essex (35th GPO) formed a battalion to ensure the safety of vital centres and telecommunication and the London North Easter Railway (LNER) had their own unit too.

Another group were the Auxiliary Units set up in 1940. These were a bit special because although the public thought of them as support groups they were in fact top secret units. Many lived in secret bases in the countryside trained in sabotage, explosives and hand to hand combat. Their job would have been to sabotage anything that might have been of use to Nazi invaders. The father of Nancy Cannon, Robert Strathearn, was part of a Birch secret resistance group.



**Members of the Birch/Layer-de-la-Haye Auxiliary Unit,
part of the wartime British Resistance. Robert Strathearn top left.
www.merseamuseum.org.uk**

Local Home Guard units like Fordham knew their area and the people who lived there, so any strangers would be subject to checks. The Home Guard had a number of responsibilities, including taking down road signs and any local clues that might help the enemy, should they invade.

It made those in The Home Guard feel as if they were doing something constructive in the war effort. Their Handbook published in 1940 stated the main duties of the Home Guard. Duties included patrols, road blocks, and checking identity cards, guarding ammunition dumps or installations such as gas works. Aircraft that had been shot down had to be found and pilots captured; thus a basic German needed to be learned. They defended key communication points and factories against possible capture. They were to maintain control of the civilian population in the event of invasion, in order to prevent panic and ensure routes were not blocked.

At the bottom of Fiddler's Hill you will see one of the pill boxes that guarded Hammonds Bridge, a strategic entry point into the village; if you look on the opposite side of the road to the pill box you will see remnants of anti-tank traps. You will find more information about the defence of the area in the Chapter 6 'Defending the Countryside.'

In her diary entries Millicent Fairhall also describes what she saw as she entered the village on her bicycle *'Initially Fordham appeared unaltered. Not much evidence of war except a gathering of local LDVs. Sandbags and sentries everywhere, concrete block houses were being erected, barbed wire and sentries guarding bridges. Those guarding the entries to the village wore tin hats and never moved without gas marks; but by now everyone carried them'*.

In Colchester, Home Guard units amalgamated ARP training and many units responded to fire-fighting duties and manned their own stirrup pumps. As time went on, the role of the Home Guard evolved far from its early conception.

At anti-aircraft sites throughout Britain including the ones around Colchester, the Home Guard now manned 3.7" guns and multiple rocket launchers. They also manned the 4.7" and 6" guns of the coastal artillery batteries and undertook the highly specialised and dangerous work of bomb disposal around the country.

The organisation of Home Guard groups in Essex changed many times from its inception from starting out as the LDV. The changes to companies and platoons are difficult to explain with absolute clarity. To get a better understanding of how the Essex Home Guard was formed and amalgamated during the war, the book 'War Men Courageous' by Major Peter Finch is an essential read.

The 8th Battalion had nearly two thousand men of which six hundred and fifty were in the Colchester Company. The 8th, 9th, 17th & 18th Battalions made up the Colchester Company. It is not a simple task to explain the groups to which our Essex men belonged to as it is complex.

Finch's book endeavours to explain the complexities of the developing groups in Essex and there is a chapter on each group. There is a lot of detail about the roles played by the Essex Home Guard and there are photographs of different Home Guard groups. Below is some information regarding The 8th Essex Battalion Home Guard, Colchester Sector taken from the chapter with the same name.

In summer of 1941 – There were 4 companies:

Colchester Company was Platoon No1, No2, No3, No4, LNER and Paxmans.

Boxted Company was Dedham Platoon, Aldham Platoon, West Bergholt Platoon, Wakes Colne Platoon and Boxted Platoon.

Halstead Company was Bulmer Platoon, Lamarsh Platoon, Gosfield Platoon, Colnes Platoon. Halstead Platoon and Halstead Town Guard.

Yeldham Company was Ridgewell Platoon, Yeldham Platoon, Steeple Bumpstead Platoon and Foxearth Platoon.

By the end of May 1942 Colchester had over three thousand Home Guard members, although the top age range of conscription had increased to fifty-one and all females twenty to thirty were liable to be called up with exemptions. The Colchester Company did lose many senior officers because of the age extension to fifty-one. Some of the younger members now being called up had experienced some training. They had been trained to drill, use weapons and think like a soldier. Many units suffered as conscription eventually took away some of the younger men who had been trained.

In our Fordham photograph which was taken in 1944, there is no Laurence White as he was now on war service, he later became a prisoner of war. Initially, Laurence was a member of the Home Guard.

In 1943 there was further reorganisation which would have affected our men; Boxted Company was divided into three.

C Company - Dedham

F Company - Aldham,

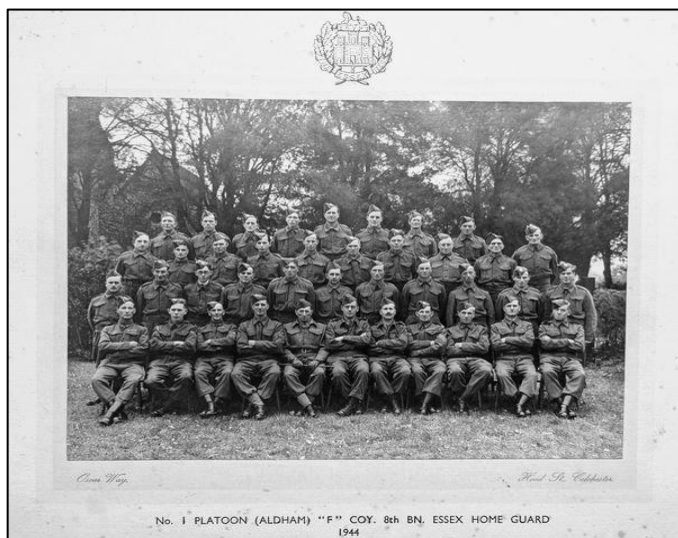
G Company- West Bergholt

The 1944 photograph showing 'Fordham Home Guard' taken outside the black barn close to All Saints Church, has been labelled as **No 2. Platoon F Company 8th Essex Home Guard**. So do we presume they were part of Aldham F Company originally Boxted Company?

James Chamley's documentation shows he was originally part of the Boxted Company LDV and on the 1st of September, 1943 he was transferred to F Company 8th Essex Home Guard. Therefore it is likely the men on our 'Fordham' photograph were originally Boxted Company LDV, but we have no other documentation to corroborate this assumption. It

is fair to say that members of the 8th Essex F Company units were based mainly around their villages and lived locally.

Our village has always referred to our group of men as Fordham Home Guard, but no official Fordham Home Guard is mentioned in Major Peter Finch's book.



Aldham Home Guard. C. Child.

To confound matters further, Carole Child recently sent FLHS photographs of her Bonner ancestors, including the following photograph - **No.1 Platoon Aldham F Company.**

Carole asked a simple question. Why is her father Colin Bonner from Rams Farm Fordham shown on the Aldham Home Guard photograph and not the Fordham one where he lived? Carole was also able to identify Frederick Doe another Fordham man and parish councillor on the same photograph. So you can understand the difficulties for family trying to identify exactly which group their Fordham ancestors belonged to.



Jim Scarlet and Kenny Connell outside Home Guard Headquarters Fordham Heath. J.Scarlett Collection.

We know that the 'Fordham Home Guard' met in the Parish Room Fordham for meetings and training, as recorded in the minutes of the Parish Invasion Committee.

We also have the photograph above from Jim Scarlett from Fordham Heath showing the headquarters of 8th (Colchester) Essex Home Guard Battalion C Company Headquarters.

The LDV enrolment document belonging to James Chamley, shows he 'stood down' on 31st December 1944 and was discharged when the Home Guard disbanded on the 31st of December 1945.

King George VI praised the Home Guard for being 'mighty in courage and determination,' even though he admitted that they were poorly equipped for war against the most powerful army of the world. 'I believe it is the voluntary spirit which has made the Home Guard so splendid and so powerful a comradeship of arms.'

The training was quite effective but in the end, the invasion never materialised. The Home Guard was never meant to stop an invasion, but

they could have been valuable in forming a resistance which would delay enemy troops from advancing.

Men of the Home Guard would qualify for the Defence Medal if they had completed three years' service during its existence (1940-44). If they had joined, for example, in 1942, allowing themselves to remain on the Home Guard 'reserve', awaiting further duties until the end of the War; they would not qualify for the War Medal. The medal was only for full-time servicemen who completed twenty-eight days' service (and those at sea with Merchant Navy). Firemen would be entitled to the Defence Medal under the same time conditions as the Home Guard.

Home Guard Badges

There are many variations of Home Guard badge including regional ones. There were also fabric badges. The two at the bottom of the page are from the Derbyshire and the Isle of Man.





Fabric Home Guard Badges. W. Shepherd.

Were there women in the Home Guard? Peter Finch mentions women members in his book, however their roles involved secretarial work, catering and driving. There was no official uniform, but they did have a badge; these are quite rare and difficult to acquire.



**Women's Home Guard Badge
W. Shepherd Collection.**

There was an interesting character in the Women's Home Defence (an unofficial organisation), Dr Edith Summerskill nicknamed 'Flossie Bang Bang.' She was a Labour MP for Fulham West, in December 1941. Their unit had no uniform but an enamel badge. Recruits underwent weapons training and many became Home Guard Auxiliaries when allowed to do

so. The organisation disbanded in December 1944, continuing as the Women's Rifle Association.

James (Jim) Robert Chamley

FLHS is grateful to Mary Chamley nee Carter and her daughter Carole who provided us with the LDV enrolment document and Jim's story in the LDV/Home Guard. According to his military records, Jim was officially enrolled in what became 2 Platoon F Company of the 8th Battalion of the Essex Home Guard by his sergeant, Jack Firmin on the 1st of September 1940, and accepted the day after by the divisional commander, Major Waller.

This LDV document gives us an insight into the formality of enrolling for the LDV. The applicant and the enrolling officer both sign the form and in this instance the enrolling officer was John T. Firmin who was the company commander.

Information on LDV or Home Guard personnel is limited unless you have an LDV application. Lists of personnel are sparse unless you were an officer or high ranking member, you can find information about Essex officers in Peter Finch's book *Warmen Courageous*.

James Robert Chamley, born in 1921 was the son of John and Jane Chamley nee Bradshaw. In 1939 James and his family were living at Great Porters Farm. Father John was a dairy farmer and all the family were involved on the farm in one way or another.

On the evening of the 14th of May 1940, nineteen year old Jim Chamley was at home with his family at Gt. Porters Farm, Fordham Heath, listening to an announcement on the radio by the new Secretary of State for War, Anthony Eden. Winston Churchill had become Prime Minister on the 10th of May, the same day that Germany invaded Belgium, the Netherlands and France, while the British Expeditionary Force was retreating towards Dunkirk.

Anthony Eden called on men between the ages of seventeen and sixty-five, not in military service, who wished to defend Britain against invasion, to go to their local police station to enrol in the Local Defence Volunteers.



Jim was a farmer, milking cows twice a day and helping to grow crops of wheat, barley and oats. As such, he was in a reserved occupation and was not called up for military service. When he heard the announcement asking for volunteers, he knew it was for him, and he joined Fordham Local Defence Volunteers straight away. Initially he was the only recruit to have his own rifle (he used to shoot rabbits and vermin on the farm), and the rest of the platoon were able to practise with it.

Eventually, the platoon was issued with Canadian Ross rifles which were five feet long, a rifle from the Boer War. They came in boxes and were cleaned up by pouring hot grease onto them. They could also be fitted with a bayonet. They had no uniforms to start with, but he trained with shotguns and his own rifle.

Jim was very proud of being in the Home Guard (which the LDV was known as from July 1940). He said that it was the time when he finally

stopped feeling like an outsider in the area, after moving to Gt Porters Farm with his family from Lancashire in 1931, when he was ten.

The men trained once a week and went out on patrol in the local area, including West Bergholt and Fordham Heath as well as Fordham.

Pill boxes were erected in the summer of 1940 along the River Colne, part of a stop line, designed to delay a Nazi invasion by providing observation posts and machine gun emplacements – six were put up on Gt. Porters Farm. According to Jim, wooden panels were constructed, concrete (of variable quality!) was poured in and the wooden panels then removed. Some were seeded with grass on the roof, and others had holes in the middle for gun emplacements.

Young's Transport transported the men and took them with saws and slashers to trim all hedges near the pillboxes to assist their field of vision for machine guns that were put inside. The pillboxes and dams were constructed in 1940 because of fear of invasion. There were three dams put in the River Colne on the farm (Great Porters) and one at Mill House. The ones on the farm were lifted out in 1946. There were gun emplacements built on the farm and on Fordham Heath. The men in the Home Guard were regularly transported to 'The Fields' at Weeley at weekends for training."

All six pill boxes survived the war, and are still there today, their entrances filled in to prevent sheep getting stuck (and to deter small children in the 1960s!)

Jim also remembered a visit from Lord Gort in his Humber car, who had come along to inspect the building of the pillboxes. He got stuck in a ditch and Jim helped pull him out. Lord Gort was Commander in chief at Dunkirk, then appointed Inspector of Training and General Officer commanding the Home Guard in late 1940, decorated with V.C. in WW1.

By September 1940, invasion was thought to be imminent, and Fordham Home Guard was well armed, with rifles and ammunition. The men had

learned how to set gelignite, and had set mines at Fordham and West Bergholt bridges, ready for them to be blown up if there was an invasion, to slow down the enemy advance. They had also practised throwing grenades.

In the next few years, training included exercises further afield, including at Weeley. There were also shooting competitions with the regular soldiers at Colchester garrison, with the Fordham men often bettering the regulars. John Firmin's granddaughter gave us the silver cup for shooting which proudly shows her grandfather's name.

The cup is engraved 'The Fordham Platoon Home Guard for 22 Rifle Competition 1942'. Monthly winners of the cup were: Private R. Harris, Private J. Cant and twice recorded Lieutenant Firmin.



**Home Guard Rifle Competition Cup. Donated to FLHS
by Lorna Edmonds.**

There is a Robert Harris born in 1918 working as a farm tractor driver in 1939 at Suttons Farm with his father George, a farmer, but no confirmation that he was in the Home Guard.

J. Cant could be James Cant who lived at Alexandra Cottages, he was an agricultural labourer, again no confirmation that he was in the Home Guard. But we know his brother Stanley Cant was in the Home Guard as we have identified Stanley in the Fordham Home Guard photograph.

Summer time from 1941 to 1945 meant long evenings for hay making as well as Home Guard training. On the 14th of July 1941, Jim remembers bombs were dropped on Cooks Hall West Bergholt. Jim was promoted from Private to Lance Corporal in December 1943.

As well as regular weekly training, the platoon regularly attended Church Parade at Fordham church on Sunday mornings. On one of these occasions, a platoon photograph was taken. However, Jim was not in the photograph. He was also often not at Church Parade, as he had cows that needed milking seven days a week.



Church Parade 16th November 1941. FLHS Archive

Members of the Home Guard who served for at least three years between 1940 and 1944 were entitled to claim the Defence Medal for their service, although Jim never claimed his. His family commented that he felt uneasy about claiming a medal for staying at home when so many fought and lost their lives abroad

After the D-Day landings in June 1944, the threat of invasion receded, and the Home Guard was stood down on the 31st of December 1944. The men of the Home Guard were officially discharged and the Home Guard disbanded on the 31st of December 1945.

Here are some of the men from the Fordham Home Guard No 2. Platoon F Company 8th Essex Home Guard.



Back Row: Robert (Bob) Green, George (Bill) Kettle, Arthur Ratcliffe, Cecil Beard, Leslie Taylor, Frederick Heathcote.

Middle Row: John (Jack) Playle, Thomas (Tom) Leeks, Roland Morgan, Alfred (Alf) Bugg, Stanley (Stan) Cant, Frederick (Fred) Norfolk, Arthur Towns, Roland Race and J. Cudmore.

Front Row: Eric Leek, Cecil Playle, Walter (Wally) Butler, Henry (Harry) Cope, John Thomas Firmin, Albert Dorrell, William Charles Davey, T. Frostick, Ben Travis and Albert (Bert) Garrod.

The photograph was taken outside the black barn next to All Saints Church. It appeared in the Colchester Gazette, in 1944, the men were named; but some incorrectly Rack, Codmore, Borrell, and Garrard should read as Race, Cudmore, Dorrell and Garrod.

Our 'Fordham Home Guard' photograph has always been a great discussion point. We have spoken to numerous people during the time researching this book and many have commented that they had family from Fordham in the Home Guard; but cannot understand why they are not on this photograph. For James Chamley, the simple reason was that he was a farmer; his farm duties came first and he told family that he missed many a church parade and photograph because he could not leave the farm.

FLHS has been able to cross reference names with the 1939 register and other documents including 1911 census, 1914/1915 occupants list, 1921 census, 1930 electoral rolls, baptism, marriage and burial records. We have been as rigorous as possible with our research and hope we have arrived at the correct information for each man.

1. Robert (Bob) Green
2. George Ernest (Bill) Kettle
3. Arthur Ratcliffe
4. Cecil Arthur Henry Beard
5. Leslie Taylor
6. Frederick Heathcote
7. John (Jack) Playle
8. Thomas (Tom) Leeks
9. Roland Morgan
10. Alfred (Alf) Bugg
11. Stanley (Stan) Cant
12. Frederick (Fred) Norfolk
13. Arthur Towns

14. Roland Race
15. J. Cudmore
16. Eric Leeks
17. Cecil Bertie Playle
18. Walter (Wally) Butler
19. Henry (Harry) Cope
20. John Thomas Firmin
21. Albert Dorrell
22. William Charles Davey
23. T. Frostick
24. Ben Travis
25. Albert (Bert) Garrod.

Our Fordham Home Guard

Robert Green

B. Green is Robert Green born on the 25th of June 1925, fondly known as Bob who was the son of Henry Green and Bertha Green nee Ratcliffe. In the early 1920s the family moved to Fordham Hall Farm, living first in Church Cottages and then Mill Road Cottages in the 1930s.

Robert is a brother of Land Army girl, Susannah Green, Sue features in our chapter on the Women's Land Army. Robert can also be seen in the 'boy's outing' photo in the late 1930s with others who were part of the Home Guard. An ancestry tree shows Robert marrying Joan in 1952. Robert died in 2008; his death is registered in Colchester.



George Ernest Kettle

The name Kettle is another familiar name in Fordham. To begin with we were unable to confirm the exact identity of this man labelled B. Kettle. This could be short for Albert and there have been men named Albert Kettle known to FLHS. We also have brothers Henry William Kettle and Albert Edward Kettle on our war memorial that both died in WW1.



There is the Colchester footballer Digger Kettle too. So it would seem an easy task to identify this man known as B. Kettle.

A later request to the community resulted with information being received from the Greenwold family. They suggested that B. Kettle is actually George Ernest Kettle fondly known as Uncle Bill. In 1939, 'Bill' Kettle was living at The Bungalow, Halsted Road. He was recorded as a brick and tile maker. Bill married Beatrice Layer in 1936. One daughter is recorded on BMD records.

George's father was John Thomas Kettle who served in the Royal Horse Artillery and the Royal Field Artillery in WW1. George and his siblings Sydney, Constance, Cyril and Elsie are recorded on John's service record 163568. Their mother was Kate Balls, Kate and George had four more daughters after the war. In 1939 brother Sidney William Kettle was working in Twickenham as a Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes (NAAFI) supplies manager.

Subsequent research has shown that George Ernest (Bill) is related to our men on the war memorial, they were his uncles and George is related to Digger Kettle too. Digger or Albert David Kettle is a cousin through his Uncle George and Aunt Ernestine Kettle nee Cooper.

Arthur Ratcliffe

Arthur was one of the younger LDV men. In 1939, his occupation is that of a cow man and land worker, so it is likely he would not have been called up because he was in a reserved occupation. However, there are many tribunals which show many agricultural workers were not exempt.



Arthur and his family were from Edwinstowe in Suffolk. The 1921 census shows the Ratcliffes living at Priory Green. Arthur's father Walter also from Edwinstowe Suffolk, was one of twelve children. One of these being Bertha Ratcliffe who was the mother of Susannah Green (one of our land army girls) and Robert Green also in the Home Guard with Arthur; they were cousins.

The Ratcliffes came to Fordham between 1921 and 1929. They are recorded on the 1929 Electoral Roll for Fordham.

Arthur's parents, Walter Ratcliffe and Annie Elizabeth Bowers, were married in 1905 in Suffolk. Arthur was born on the 6th of September 1912.

In 1939 Arthur was living in Fossetts Lane with his large family. They were very much involved in agricultural work. His father was a stockman on a farm, brothers Frank and Albert were cowmen and land workers. Florence, his sister was a Land worker, Mitchell the youngest Ratcliffe was a dairy lad.

Arthur married Ada Beard on the 30th of November 1940; she was the daughter of William Beard. Ada Beard also lived in Fossetts Lane with her family. In 1939 Ada was living with her widowed mother Mary Ann, her father having died in May 1928 aged sixty-two. William Beard was a farm worker at Fordham Hall and worked for Roland Warren. Arthur

Ratcliffe who later lived at Quilter's Green died in 1979 and was buried at All Saints Church on the 12th of April 1979.

Cecil Arthur Henry Beard

Thanks to the Marilyn Beard, we can confidently say that C. Beard is Cecil Arthur Henry Beard. He was the son of Frederick William Beard and Alice Sarah Bull, he was born in 1917.

The Beard family is a challenging family to research and we have Cecil's great grandparents John Beard and Sarah Woodward to thank for providing twelve children who in turn also had rather a lot of children, though sadly three of their children died as babies.



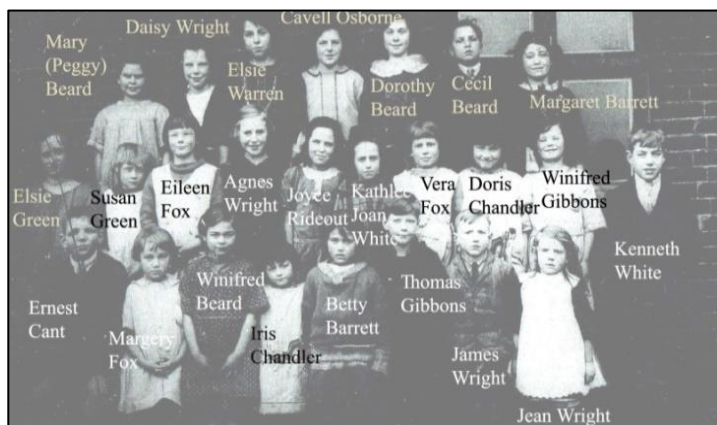
In 1939 Cecil, his parents and one other were living at 3, Ponders Road. Cecil was a horseman on a farm and his father is a bricklayer's labourer.

Cecil Beard married Rose Wendon in 1939, one of his sisters, Margaret (Peggy) Beard married the brother of Rose, also called Cecil. So researchers of this family have much to keep them busy sorting out the family connections. From the age of fourteen, Cecil had worked for three generations of the French family at Bullbanks.

Cecil loved gardening, tinkering around in his shed, making and repairing things. Cecil's family gave us permission to use the photograph of Cecil in his beloved garden taken in 1984.



We are fortunate to have a wonderful school photograph of All Saints School, Fordham with an estimated date given as 1927/28. Cecil was named in this photo with his three sisters Dorothy, Peggy and Winifred. Other school children have been identified by relations of their families. As adults these children will go on to support the village during the war.



All Saints School c.1927/28 FLHS Archive

Leslie Walter Taylor

Leslie was born in 1904 and baptised on the 29th of January 1905 at All Saints Church Fordham. Leslie's father David was married to Emily Carter.

In 1939 Leslie Taylor was living at Quilters Green with his father David. When Leslie was younger, he lived with his family at Archendines Farmhouse. His father David and eldest brother were farm labourers at Archendines. Leslie's mother was a sewing machinist. Leslie never married, he died in 1979. Records show Leslie was the youngest of seven children. Leslie's eldest brother was twenty years older than



him. His father David had also worked for J. Hawes at Suttons Farm. One of Leslie's sisters Elsie married George Frederick Fox and their daughter Vera was one of our Land Army girls.

Frederick John Heathcote

Frederick was born on the 4th of August 1874 and died in 1957 age eighty three. Frederick lived at Kyloe Cottage Penlan Hall Lane. He was a well-travelled man working in the tea industry. On the 1939 register, it gives his employment as Tea Planter's Superintendent.

He travelled to Sylhet in India, well known for its tea gardens and tropical forests; it is the largest city in Bangladesh and said to be the birthplace of the Bangladesh tea industry.



Frederick's wife was Emilie Turner born on the 8th of November 1870. In 1946 Frederick and Emilie sailed to Bombay India on the Empress of Scotland, it stated on the passenger list that Bombay was to be their permanent residence. However Frederick is buried at All Saints Church in Fordham.

John Charles Playle

John was born on the 11th of May, 1904 from his father's second marriage in 1901 to Jane Whitmore who was from Suffolk.

The Playles ran the village store, post office and bakery in Ponders Road. John, fondly known as Jack, was the second eldest of five brothers, the others being Percy, Cecil Bertie (also in the Home Guard), Stanley and youngest brother Arthur who was in the Aldham Fire Service (see Chapter 10.)



Recorded in the 1921 census, John is an assistant baker and living with his family. By 1939 he is recorded on the national register as a master baker and living with his wife Margaret Beard who he married on the 26th of December 1936 at All Saints Church Fordham. They had two children David and Diane.

As a baker, Jack was in competition with his brother-in-law Charles (Jim) Beard who was a baker just down the road to John and Margaret at the Ford Street Bakery. After John married Margaret (affectionately known as Girly Playle), he went to live at the family home in the cottage on Wash Corner with her father, Charles Beard, Charles was an invalided soldier from WW1. The cottage is where Margaret was born and she lived there for ninety nine years. John Charles Playle died 1971 age sixty-six and wife Margaret died in 2009 living to the grand old age of one hundred and one!

Thomas William Leeks

We have two members of the Leeks family on our Home Guard photograph, Thomas William Leeks and one of his sons Eric Leeks. Both men worked as horsemen on a farm doing heavy work. Another son, Donald, was a labourer on a poultry farm.

Father, Thomas Leeks was born in 1891 and was married to Margaret Alice Pilgrim, they had six children. Tragically Margaret died in 1932 as a result of giving birth to twins Emma and George.

In 1939, the family are living in Mill Road, although Emma and George are not recorded. Eldest son Eric Leeks was born in 1918 and he married Gwendoline Webb in 1948. We have a wintery photo showing Eric clearing snow with other villagers including Robert Green. Eric died in 1980 and his father earlier in 1951.



Roland Charles Morgan

Roland was born in Fordham in 1906 and baptised in All Saints Church. Roland's parents were Charles William Morgan and Gertrude Alice Cleary. Roland married Frances May Carter in 1938.

Roland was ninety-one when he died in 1997. In 1939 Roland and his family are living in Spring Lane Eight Ash Green. He is recorded as an ARP warden.



Alfred George Bugg

Alfred was born in 1885 and died in 1974, he married Emily Keeble in 1905 she passed away in 1951. They are both buried at All Saints Church Fordham. The couple had a son Alfred and two daughters Emily and Ruby. Emily worked at the Star public house as a barmaid and Ruby was a silk worker/throwster. There were many jobs in the silk industry. A silk twister spun the raw threads, a silk drawer drew threads from the silk waste for spinning, and a silk piecer joined the broken threads together. Ruby as a 'throwster', this meant she twisted the threads of silk together.



If our Home Guard photo is correctly dated at 1944, Alfred George Bugg would be fifty-nine. His son Alfred W. Bugg would be thirty-seven and lived in the village. The photo shows an older man; therefore we believe our Home Guard man was the licensee of the Star Inn.

If he was the licensee of the pub, he would have had a busy time during the war. Alfred Bugg and his wife Emily were living at the Star on Fordham Heath. Alfred is recorded as a licensed victualler and gardener. Wife Emily is recorded as doing 'household duties unpaid' which is of course meant she was a housewife.

The Star was used as a mess for soldiers manning the defences on Fordham Heath. The pub was bombed on the 13th of October 1940, setting fire to the thatched roof. The Star was later rebuilt in the 1950s. You can see Alf's name as Licensee written over the door. The roof was covered with tarpaulin after the bombing.



Licensee Alfred G. Bugg. The Star Inn. FLHS Archive.

Stanley Harold Cant

Stanley was born in 1912, the son of George Cant and Rose Emily May Wright. He had a brother James Ernest George, and a sister Vera Maisie.

Stanley married Catherine Clara Cope on the 23rd of March 1940 in All Saints Church, Fordham.



This was a real family affair with fathers and brothers bearing witness from both sides of the family. Less than three months after their wedding, Catherine's sister Ethel Ellen also married. Their father was Henry James Cope who was the foreman at Fordham Hall; he was also in the Home Guard with Stanley.

Catherine and Stanley were both witnesses to Stanley's uncle Cecil Stanley Wright marrying in 1936. Stanley's uncle Percy is remembered on the Fordham War Memorial. Stanley's father George also served in WW1 with the Middlesex Regiment.

In 1939, the family are living at 4, Alexandra cottages with George working for the council on roads. Stanley's mother worked on the land. Brother James was an agricultural worker like Stanley.

Frederick Norfolk

Frederick William Norfolk was baptised on the 8th of November 1914 at All Saints Church, Wakes Colne.

His parents were Ernest Frederick Norfolk and Lily Emily Davey she was the sister of Charles William Davey another member of our Home Guard.



Frederick's wife was Ellen Margaret Horne who was the daughter of William and Emily Horne from Fordham Heath. Her brother Charles Horne was killed in WW1; he is remembered on our war memorial.

In 1939 Frederick is living with his wife and one other at Heath Cottages, Fordham Heath, his occupation is recorded as an iron moulder. Frederick's death is recorded in 1989 Colchester.

Arthur Sidney Towns

Arthur was born in 1892 In West Bergholt; he was one of twelve children. His parents were Frederick Towns and Mary Ann Clarke. His father died in 1906 age just fifty-six when Arthur was fourteen leaving his mother with eight children to care for.



In 1911 Arthur and two of his brothers were living with their widowed mother at one of the Watercress Hall cottages. George Robert Towns, one of Arthur's older brothers, was killed in WW1 in 1916 aged thirty, leaving a wife and four young children under six. George was a corporal with the Bedfordshire regiment. He is remembered at Thiepval.

In 1916, The Essex Chronicle records that Sidney's employer Mr R. Heath appealed for conditional exemption. Arthur was single, a milker and ploughman. The appeal was stated as 'not strong and dismissed.' This is Mr Heath of Mantells Farm Foxes Lane, Eight Ash Green. Arthur continues to work for him as shown on the 1921 census.

In 1939 Arthur is living at Choats Cottages with his brother Oliver and his married sister Ellen, her husband Alfred Curtis and two children. Arthur is recorded as a horseman on farm and Oliver a Cowman.

Roland Featherstone Race

Roland was born in 1901. He was a farmer in 1939 living at Rochfords on Fordham Road, Wormingford with his wife Joan Hesketh Richardson who was born 1912. Roland and Joan were married at Ardleigh in 1937.

Roland was one of six children all born in Durham to Joseph Race and Jane Nixon. The family were from Durham and were farmers.



Roland's father Joseph was a sheep farmer, his eldest brother, John Percy, was a shepherd. Roland was a herdsman and one of his sisters Edna was a dairy maid as recorded in the 1921 census.

By 1924, the electoral registers record Roland with his parents and eldest brother, John Percy, having moved from Durham to Dilbridge Hall Parsons, Heath Essex.

Emigration records show that in 1952 Roland and his wife Joan travel to New Zealand, their address is given as Plummers Farm, which is stated as a permanent residence. Roland returned to England in 1956 with their address given as Vale Farm Ufford near Woodbridge, Suffolk; he died at Bawburgh Hospital, Suffolk on the 25th of April 1984.

J. Cudmore

In the FLHS archive we have quite a few copies of our Home Guard photograph. One copy, a newspaper cutting and it records the names of our men, which is fortuitous. However, we know some of the names were recorded incorrectly. One we believe to be incorrect is a J. Codmore. Searching the Ancestry records, we have no Codmores in or around Fordham at the time; but we had Cudmores living in Fordham in 1939.



There is a George Edward or Edward George Cudmore (baptised Edward, but buried as George) he was born 1890. He married Florence Polley in 1919, they were living on Mill Road. George was a farm labourer doing heavy work. It has been recorded by a distant family member on a Cudmore Facebook page that George was kicked by a horse and lost a leg because of the injury. Sadly it is George and Florence's son Douglas who was a WW2 casualty. There is more about Douglas in Chapter 20.

However, there is a Home Guard link to George Edward Cudmore of Mill Road by means of a newspaper cutting about his brother, Frederick

Percy Cudmore who was killed in a motor bike accident after returning from a Home Guard display. Frederick also worked at Fordham Hall for the Gunarys.

There is Leslie Charles Cudmore, born in 1909 and was living at Snowden Cottage in 1939, he was a tractor driver. Leslie Charles Cudmore was the son of Frederick Moses Cudmore.

A possibility is also a Joseph Barnard Cudmore born in 1893 to Barnard Cudmore and Agnes Potter of Wakes Colne. Joseph is living at Glen Isla, Wash Corner in Fordham. This information was discovered from a 1947 wedding notice of Joseph's daughter Jean Rosemary Cudmore to Peter George Watson (R.A.F.) the foster son of Mr & Mrs Beard of Wakes Colne.

Joseph and his wife Elsie Cudmore (Joseph's grandfather and Elsie's father were brothers!) are living at Boadicea Cottages, Mount Bures in 1939. Joseph is recorded as an air raid warden, so being in the Home Guard could be a possibility. By 1947, Joseph and Elsie have moved to Glen Isla, Wash Corner, Fordham.

Eric Leeks

Eric was the eldest son of Home Guard man Thomas William Leeks and Margaret Pilgrim. Eric was born in Suffolk in 1918 and he married Gwendoline Webb in 1948.

We have a wintery photo on page 42 showing Eric clearing snow with other villagers, including Robert Green.

Another photo on page 267, taken in the late 1930s, shows an outing of Fordham men. This includes Eric, second from the left in the second row; he died in 1980.



Cecil Bertie Playle

Cecil was born in 1906 in Fordham and was one of five brothers. When Cecil died in 1990, aged eighty-three, he was living at thirty, Church Road Fordham. He had lived in Fordham his whole life.

Cecil's parents were George Playle, who was a baker, and Jane Whitmore who ran the post office stores in Ponders Road.

By 1939, Cecil's father George and older brother Percy had both died.

Cecil is recorded as a farm manager, younger brother Arthur was a horseman on a farm and Stanley was a baker.



Walter William Butler

Walter was born on the 14th of September 1890 in Hammersmith and died on the 21st of February 1951 aged sixty-one. Before and after the war, Walter was a butcher.

Walter was a member of the Home Guard and is pictured in the front row of the photograph, taken outside the Barn.

Walter served in WW1 with the 6th City London Regiment, he was a lance corporal. His service record shows that he was married to Rosetta Emily Thatcher. They married on the 31st of May 1914 and had three children; Florence, Walter and William, sadly baby Walter died.



Walter joined up in 1916 and was sent to the Western Front. At Ypres, he was badly wounded in August 1917. A year later he was wounded again at Croisilles, he was demobilised in September 1919.



**WW1 Walter Butler (First Bed).
FLHS Archive**

Service records show, Walter's mother was caring for one of his children in the early years of the war as he states he was separated from Rosetta and his mother was his next of kin.

On the 1921 census the couple are recorded together. Walter recorded as a widower and Rosetta recorded as single. They have both crossed out their initial status which was a D for divorce. Rosetta is recorded as housekeeper and Walter is a butcher.



Watercress Hall 1936. FLHS Archive

In 1939 Walter was living at Watercress Hall in Fossetts Lane with his second wife Daisy Stedman. They were married in Hammersmith in 1930. The Chandler family were living in the other house also called Watercress Hall. This was before the houses were converted into one property.



**The Butler children outside Watercress Hall.
FLHS Archive.**

This charming photo below is from the FLHS Photo Album of the Butler family outside Watercress Hall.

Henry James Cope

As the foreman at Fordham Hall, Henry would have had great responsibility organising the work for the agricultural workers and the Land Army girls working on the hall land. He was also on the Parish Council Invasion Committee.

Henry was not originally from Fordham, He was born in Dagenham Essex. Henry is not recorded on the Fordham Electoral Roll before 1932. He came to Fordham between 1932 and 1939 where he is living at Fordham Hall. He continued to live there for another



twenty-six years until his death in 1967; Henry is buried in All Saints Churchyard.

The 1939 register shows Henry living at Fordham Hall with his wife Minnie Bowers and their nine children. Henry was one of fourteen children himself, so he was familiar with large families. He married Minnie in 1916 at Forest Gate, West Ham. In 1939, there is an extra child living with them, a Barbara Bowers who is just nine years old. I believe she had been evacuated from Minnie's home in West Ham as an evacuee. Barbara was Minnie's niece, daughter of her brother Harry and wife May Jessie Davies.

The Firmin Family

The Firmin family name is a name well known in Fordham and the surrounding villages. We can trace back to Thomas Firmin a farmer, who died in 1771 and is buried at All Saints, Fordham.

Family trees are often complicated, especially when four generations of men are all called John Thomas Firmin! One can easily get confused; fortunately, we have been given a great deal of information about the Firmins from Lorna Edmonds nee Firmin. She is the granddaughter of John Thomas Firmin born in 1897. This J.T.F. was the lieutenant in our Home Guard.

John was pivotal in the running of the group of men we like to call Fordham Home Guard. Not only was he the group's leader, he was also the military representative on the Invasion Committee.

John Thomas Firmin (1) 1824–1874. Fordham He was the third son of eight children and married to Rebecca Woodward. This poor man was killed when his horse and cart ran over him. The family always joked that he must have been drunk and fell off his cart when the tragedy happened. In the Fordham Parish burial register Rev. T.L. Lingham records: 'killed by being run over by the horse and cart which he was leading, in sight of his own home.'

John Thomas Firmin (2) 1862-1944 was married to Sarah Harriet Bailey. John and Sarah lived in Porters Lane; he was a self-employed hay & straw binder as shown in the 1901 census. In 1911 John is recorded as a publican, thatcher, and hay binder at The Star Inn, Fordham Heath. In the Kelly's Directory for 1912, he is listed as a beer retailer. His death is recorded as being at Salmons Farm, Fordham Heath.



About 1910 J.T. Firmin (2) Licensee of the Star with J.T. Firmin (3) with the dog by the horse. Lorna Edmonds Collection.

John Thomas Firmin (3) This is our Home Guard man. John was born in 1897 in Fordham and died from a heart attack in 1973 at Fordham Heath; John was the fifth child of 2nd JTF. John married twice, first to Annie Newman in 1920 at Aldham, they had a son called John Thomas Firmin, known as Jack and of course the 4th J.T.F. Sadly in 1922 his wife Annie died in childbirth having their second child.

John married Nellie May Bailey in 1925 at Lexden Registry Office. John and Nellie had two sons Sydney John Firmin and Benjamin Charles Firmin, both born on Salmons Farm. Sidney emigrated to Canada and Benjamin moved to Lincolnshire; Benjamin is Lorna's father.



Our Home Guard Lieutenant, John Thomas Firmin (3) served in WW1. He signed up when he was too young, as so many did. His mother got him back out, but he went back into the Army when he was legally able. There are three fixed events substantiated by postcards to and from him.

29.10.1916 aged nineteen (one month after conscription). John is Private 8757 in F Company, 27th Training Reserve, Dovercourt. This would mean he would have been present at the Battle of the Somme.



10.08.1917 aged twenty, Private 32598, medal record states that he was in the 13th Essex Regiment, 6th Trench Mortar Battery.

By January 1918, the 13th Essex had been disbanded having been decimated, John's new regiment is not known.

21.08.1918 aged twenty-one, he sends a postcard home with a heavily censored picture of battle torn Peronne, France. John did not return from France before his sister Sarah Harriet died in November 1919. He was heartbroken to learn that the sister who had been a Munitions Worker at Woolwich, supplying him with the trench mortars he had used, had died from the influenza. This was aggravated by



**Joseph and John Firmin. L.
Edmond's Collection**

the fact that she probably had breathing problems caused by the caudate they used. In the photo on the right you can see that John is wearing a black armband; perhaps in respect for his sister Sarah.

It is known that John was wounded and gassed, but not exactly what happened or when, he did have a wound stripe on his uniform. A soldier wore his wound stripe on his left hand sleeve; it was about two inches long. If you appeared on the casualty lists by the War Office which were produced daily until August 1917, you were entitled to wear a stripe. If wounded more than once you would be entitled to another. Wound stripes were awarded from campaigns since the 4th of August 1914.

Originally they were of gold Russian braid, but these soon tarnished and were replaced with brass ones.

Like so many soldiers he suffered from nightmares on his return. John's two brothers, Walter and Joseph, also fought in WW1 and survived, and a third brother Charles was too young for WW1 but fought in WW2.

In 1939 John is living with his 2nd wife and sons at Heath Cottages, Fordham Heath. He is listed as assisting his father as a horseman on the farm, and Air Raid Warden for Lexden & Winstree DC. His wife Nellie is an ARP First Aider for Lexden & Winstree DC.

John's time with the Home Guard was very active as he was heavily involved as military representative on the Invasion Committee. But there was also time for competition, in a rifle competition John was successful with other competitors who also had their names engraved on a silver cup.

John's granddaughter Lorna Edmonds has fond memories of him.

'My grandfather loved his family. Gardening was his passion, and he would spend all day outside working in his garden, collecting eggs from hens in his orchard, or talking to everyone who passed by. He was a proud, stubborn, but privately humble man, with a manner and presence

that could disarm anyone who didn't know him or crossed him! Animals adored him! He "talked" to horses, and they would follow him, and do whatever he wanted them to do. His control of animals was never brutal, he calmly had some sort of magnetism over them.

If dogs misbehaved, he only had to raise a finger, not even touch them, and they would look up at him and know they had done wrong. He could ride bare back, and was an experienced breeder of hunters. He told me how he had gone to war in France, on board ship taking soldiers and horses across the Channel, and stayed with the horses in the hold; all of them, including himself, dreadfully seasick! He was happier in the company of horses than his fellow man, and I suspect this stemmed from his war experiences.'

John's flatly refused to allow his sons to join the army in WW2; instead they joined the Royal Navy.

Albert Francis Dorrell

Albert was born in 1917 and was the son of Albert Ernest and Annie Dorrell. His father served in the Royal Navy in WW1.

The family were living at 2, Choats Cottages, Fordham Heath in 1939. Albert's occupation is given as a lorry driver's assistant and clerk engaged in the transport of heavy and diesel oils. He married Marie Josephine Cooper on the 1st of May 1948 at All Saints Church, Stanway, he was ten years older than Josephine.

At the time of their marriage, Albert is recorded as a company secretary and Josephine a telephone operator. BMD records show they had two sons.



William Charles Davey

Having served in WW1 and received the Military Medal, William Charles Davey was the ideal experienced man to be in the Home Guard.

William was born in Bradwell in 1887, his parents were William and Eliza Davey, his father was a gamekeeper. By 1901, the family had moved to Chappel Road in Wakes Colne where his future wife Sarah Warren lived.

William married Sarah Ann Warren on the 7th of August 1907 at Wakes Colne. William died in 1969 and is buried at All Saints Church, Fordham with Sarah, his wife of sixty-one years. Three children, William Charles, Ivy Elizabeth and Eliza Emily are recorded on William's WW1 service record. A fourth daughter Daisy Joan was born in 1919 and baptised at All Saints Church, Fordham.



In WW1 William served with the 1st Herts Infantry service number 32279 and later with the 4th Battalion Essex then transferred to the Bedfordshire Regiment. This transfer from units was common if regiments had been depleted.



In the school log book there is an entry about William's son Charles being admitted into school on the 16th of November 1914, age five years and eight months.

It records: *'Father at Front, staying with mother in village.'*

In 1939 William and his family are recorded living in Church Road, Fordham. He was a horseman on a farm.



**The home of William Davey Church Road
House Fordham. D. Beard. FLHS Archive**

We have many photos of William Davey and his family thanks to Doris Beard (his granddaughter) who is from the Tatham/ Warren family.

William's daughter Eliza Emily married Percy Harold Baker on the 21st January 1942 at All Saints Church, Fordham. Percy was a member of the civil defence Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS). Patrick Ambrose Donnelly was best man, Doris Beard nee Tatham was bridesmaid. In 1940 Patrick A. Donnelly had married Eliza's sister Daisy in Colchester.



**1942 Wedding Photo of Eliza Davey and Percy Baker
FLHS Archive.**

T. Frostick

There are no T. Frosticks in Fordham in 1939, but there is a Harry Charles Frostick living at 3, Alexandra Cottages, Moat Road with Harry and Lillian Beard. Harry is the son of Emma Britton and George Frostick who married in 1890. Harry was one of twelve children, all born in Harwich. His father died in 1917 leaving his widow and six children. His mother re-married Thomas Cassidy in 1918.



Ben Travis



Ben, an only child was born on the 15th of August 1909 in Oldham, Lancashire and baptised on the 29th at Hey Lees, John the Baptist Church, Manchester. He was named after his grandfather as confirmed by his parents' marriage certificate. Ben died in 1975 in Colchester.

His mother Edith Mary Henshall and his father Alfred Travis were married in 1909. Alfred was twenty-two years older than his wife. In the 1911 census Alfred is recorded as a retired master cotton spinner and they were living at 16, Malta Street, Oldham.

Although Ben's parents are located in 1921, Ben has not been found. His father died in 1927, it is not known when Ben came to Fordham. In 1931 he and his mother were living at Hull Farm in Ardleigh, but in 1939 they are living in Fordham at Friar's Farm; Ben is a poultry farmer. Ben's mother died in 1968. Ben Travis married June Sylvia Motts in 1948 in Colchester they had four children, all registered at Colchester.



**1948. Wedding of Ben
Travis & June Mott.
John Grimshaw.**

Albert Ellis Garrod

Albert has been one of our easier Home Guard men to research, this is because we have a wonderful story to tell about a WW1 medal found in the garden of Fred Waters; the medal belonged to Albert's father William Garrod. We would have included this story in our WW1 book had we known about it earlier but the medal was found after the book was published, so we will include it in this book.



Albert Ellis Garrod was born on the 21st of June 1902, he had three brothers William, Ernest and Jack, also four sisters Nellie, Bessie, Elsie Margaret and May. His father William was from Suffolk and his mother was Elizabeth Burrage from Norfolk. All the children were born in Essex except the eldest, William, who was born in Suffolk.

Albert married Ethel Florence Wright on the 10th of September 1927 (photograph on the right). Three children; Iris, Gertrude & Dennis are registered on FreeBMD. It is Ethel's brother Ernest who is recorded on our war memorial, he perished at the Battle of Thiepval Ridge on the 26th of September 1916; he has no known grave and is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial.



In 1939 Albert was living at 2, Ponders Cottages, Ponders Road, he was a brickyard labourer. He died in 1971 and is buried in All Saints churchyard. Albert's wife Ethel was working for a market gardener. Albert's sister Bessie never married but served as a Salvation Army Officer. Brother Ernest died in Postjna Cave Yugoslavia in 1966; his ashes are buried at Coggeshall. Albert's eldest brother William Bertie served in WW2.

In 1911 Albert is living with his family; father William, mother Elizabeth, William, Nellie, Ernest & Bessie. Their father served in WW1. They were living in Marks Tey on Coggeshall Road. Young Albert was a boy scout in his younger days.

FLHS has a great story regarding Albert's father William. When Fred Waters of 2, Ponders Cottages was gardening, he came across a WW1 medal. FLHS helped identify the owner of the medal; it belonged to Albert Garrod's father.

We reunited the medal with William's grandson Dennis; he said he can remember playing with it in the garden!



**Boy Scout Albert.
Permission of Garrod
Family**

On military medal records found on Ancestry, FLHS confirmed that William Garrod was entitled to the three war medals. That would mean that he was in at the beginning of the war. These records were index cards created by the Army Medal Office towards the end of the First World War. They record the medals that the men and women who served were entitled to claim.

On the 23rd of December 1918 Albert's father William Garrod was awarded the 1914-1915 Star, with his other medals awarded on the 20th of April 1919. By then the Army Service Corps (ASC), which he was attached to, was called the Royal Army Service Corps. William's Victory medal is T4/144215, the T part shows that William served in the Horse Transport. T1 to T4 means that the man was enlisted into the first to fourth New Army depending on the number after the T.

T4 was also used for men affected by the compulsory transfer in 1916 of men who were serving in ASC units of the Territorial Force onto regular army terms.

FLHS believes William Garrod kept his service number throughout the war, medal index states the date of entry was the 19th of November 1915 and that he served in France.

So does this medal belong to William Senior or William Junior? FLHS is going with the former as we have found photographic evidence that William Senior was in the ASC. We did question that William Junior was too young to have joined at the beginning of the war and be a driver in the Horse Transport Corps of the ASC. We believe, belongs to Dennis Garrod's grandfather William Garrod. It is possible that William's son William Bertie enlisted, but as yet we have found no evidence of this; but this does not mean it is not out there!

William Garrod senior was born in Great Ashfield Suffolk and Elizabeth Emma Burrage was born in Burgh Castle, Norfolk; they married in 1897 in Suffolk. Their eldest child, William Bertie, was born in Wyverstone, Suffolk in 1897. The family moved to West Ham where the next child Ellen (Nellie) was born in 1899.



1916/1917. William Garrod and his family, Albert top right
Permission of Garrod Family.

In 1901 the family were living at 56, Stock Street West Ham, William senior is a dock labourer. By 1911, the family had moved to Coggeshall Road, Marks Tey and they had three more children; Albert (Bert) Ellis born in 1902 (named after gt. gt. grandfather Ellis Garrod; Bert lived in

Fred Waters' house,) Ernest George in 1905 and Bessie May in 1908. The couple went on to have three more children; John Frederick, baptised at St. Andrews in 1912, Elsie Margaret in 1915 and May Phyllis in 1920. A family tree on Ancestry has many photographs of the Garrod family and this is where FLHS found a wonderful family group of William in his army uniform with wife Elizabeth, eldest daughter Ellen, second eldest son Bertie, Ernest, Bessie, John Frederick (Jack) and Elsie Margaret. If Elsie was born in 1915, this photo was taken in 1916/1917

Sources of Information

The government website enables former Home Guard members or family to apply for a DPA Subject Access Request (SAR) form. Information is very limited and with a few exceptions it normally consists of one double sided A4 sheet of paper (Army Form W3066) containing personal details on enlistment. There are no details held of the duties performed by an individual during his service. On Ancestry and Find my Past there are limited records, at the time of publishing this book. You can access Berkshire and Durham records respectively.

www.gov.uk/guidance/request-home-guard-service-records

The UK Home Guard Officer Lists, 1939-1945 available:

www.uk.forceswarrecords.com/publication/1211/uk-home-guard-officer-lists-1939-1945

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CHAPTER 9

CIVIL DEFENCE - ARP

'Fordham had its shares of air raids and bombs being dropped. October 13th Star Inn pub in Fordham is bombed. There are Air Raid Wardens at Fiddlers Hill and Fordham. Children hid in the hedge as bombs were dropped in the field opposite. Went with Mr Partridge to see a bomb crater opposite. Planes very active, Colchester sirens also heard twice that night.' M.F.

The ARP – Air Raid Precautions was part of the Civil Defence Services in World War Two; other elements of our civil defences were Fire Service, Gas Decontamination, Medical Services, Observer Corps, Police, Rescue Services and Women's Voluntary Service.

In September 1935, the British Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin, published a circular entitled Air Raid Precautions (ARP.) This circular invited local authorities to make plans to protect their people in event of a war. Some towns responded by arranging the building of public air raid shelters. However, some local authorities ignored the circular and in April 1937 the government decided to create an Air Raid Wardens' Service.

The task of co-ordinating all civil defence planning was then given to Sir John Anderson, a senior civil servant and the former Governor of Bengal. He formed the Anderson Committee in May 1938 with senior military personnel appointed to advise on keeping the country safe from aerial attacks. They outlined all military bases, industrial areas and cities that were likely to be attacked.

By September 1939 every man, woman and child had been issued with a gas mask to protect against bombs of poisonous gas; this equated to about 38 million people.

Anderson wrote a pamphlet, 'The Protection of Your Home Against Air Raids (1940)' where he gave advice on the services provided by the ARP. He instructed that windows, skylights, glazed doors or other openings in parts of the house where lights are used must be completely screened after dusk so that no light is visible from outside. All lights near an outside door must be screened. People should clear the loft, attic or top floor of all inflammable material – paper, litter, lumber, etc. – to lessen the danger of fire and prevent fire from spreading.

The job of the ARP warden was to patrol their 'patch' at night, ensuring the above recommendations were being upheld. If a bomb was dropped in their patch the ARP would take control of the situation and offer first aid if needed. The wardens would be responsible for getting people to a safe place if the sirens sounded or if whistles were blown.

After a raid the ARP would help with rescuing people from bomb damaged homes particularly those who had made a Morrison shelter inside the house. This was not an ideal shelter as many people could not escape them once a house was bombed and many died trapped inside. The Morrison shelter was a large metal table with mesh around the sides and was inside the house opposed to the Anderson shelter made of curved sheets of steel and set outside and covered with earth.

The government had made money available for materials for local authorities to build public outdoor shelters. In large cities such as London the Underground stations were used.

The advert showing John Booth and Sons in Bolton, was one of the steel industries kept busy in WW2. They manufactured not only shelters for the public, but other military equipment such as Bailey Bridges and radar towers.



This photo of William Davey's front garden in Church Road, Fordham, clearly shows what could probably be an Anderson shelter in the next garden. This was home of Thomas and Caroline Southernwood in 1939.

The ARP wardens did not always have the respect of local people. Some considered them to be bossy and officious. One only has to think of Chief ARP Warden Hodges, the fictional greengrocer and chief air raid warden portrayed by Bill Pertwee in the wonderful series *Dad's Army* as an example of this type of warden.



Fordham's ARPs

We had a number of men and women from Fordham who volunteered to become ARP wardens. Their experiences compared to that of an inner city warden would be quite different; however the Fordham ARP would still uphold their duty in protecting those around them from harm.

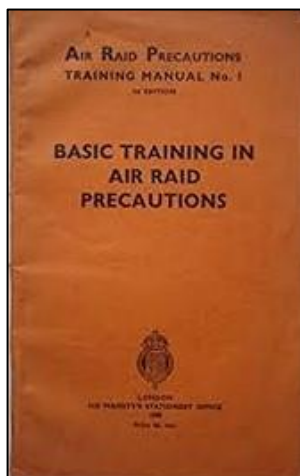
Although the danger to rural areas like Fordham was considered to be less of a risk; it was still important that parishes should organise themselves in the event of invasion. As Fordham was close to Colchester, there were risks. Colchester was a military garrison and industries around the area supported the war effort.

There was a risk of planes passing over on their way to London. There was also the close proximity to Wormingford Airfield and although the threat of a direct attack on the village was slight; the possibility of stray bombs being dropped had to be anticipated.

We do know of bombs being dropped in fields in Fordham and the Star Inn was hit on the 13th of October 1940. Records show bombs dropped on Colchester caused loss of life such as the bombing of Severalls Lane Hospital and The Old Heath Laundry.

Information on how Fordham could prepare for invasion is recorded in the Parish Council Invasion minutes. Guidance was issued for the treatment of casualties. It was assumed that local doctors and nurses would be trained to deal with the expected type of casualties including gas.

The St. John Ambulance and the British Red Cross Society were organized and trained to assist. All personnel were expected to know the location of the nearest First Aid Post, Casualty Clearing Station and base hospital. In the case of scattered hamlets it was realised that it would not be possible for people to reach First Aid posts. In the case of gas attacks, they should be taught how to decontaminate their own homes, by attending organized lectures.



The ambulance and fire services provided training to many. All Wardens' Posts were allocated a metal first aid box that contained the necessary supplies to deal with wounds until an ambulance was available. ARPs were issued with a first aid kit and many householders also had kits.



**Householders First Aid kit available to purchase from Boots.
Property of W. Shepherd.**



The recommendation was that each parish would include:-

- Parish ARP Representative (later combined with the duties of the senior warden).
- Air Raid Warden (to be recruited by the police).
- A First Aid Party of at least four trained workers. A First Aid post was required which had to be a suitable building with a good supply of hot water. The building should be made gas proof and in times of war a water supply in barrels kept at the post with a means of heating them.
- Stretcher bearers.
- Utility Squad – one or more squads of six men under one leader.
- Communication squad – three or four motor cyclists and cyclists, (telephone could not be relied upon in an emergency, messengers were required.)
- Available transport and drivers that could be used as an ambulance.

All these recommendations were discussed at Fordham's Invasion Committee meetings. It was comforting to read that the committee set about endorsing and organising all these recommendations.

Although the ARP services varied around the country, the uniform of a navy blue overall and a steel helmet was common, although in some rural areas the ARP operated without uniforms and training, but wore a steel helmet with ARP or R on it, plus an armband and of course all had gas masks.



There were separate silver badges for men and women designed by sculptor Eric Gill. The men's badge was a half-moon style buttonhole lapel fixing and the women's badge, available from April 1937, was a brooch pin design. Men received their badge in a red box whilst ladies received theirs in a blue box - boxes supplied by the Stationery Office.



Private Collection of W. Shepherd

These were our Fordham's ARP wardens as recorded in the 1939 Register; some villagers had more than one role.

Robert A Mills. ARP, Wheelers Farm Wood Lane, Fordham Heath.

John T. Firmin (3). ARP, Home Guard and military representative on Invasion Committee. Heath Cottages, Fordham Heath.

Nellie Firmin. ARP First Aider. Heath Cottages, Fordham Heath.

Frank Clampin. ARP, Aldham Fire Service, Fordham Invasion Committee. Stone Cottage, Halsted Road, Fordham.

Harry Beard. ARP, Alexandra Cottage, Church Road

Charles Broyd. ARP Reservist. Brook Hill Cottage, Fordham.

Mary Broyd. First Aid ARP. Brook Hill Cottage, Fordham.

Ethel Gurney. ARP and WVS. The Bungalow, Chancers Lane, Fordham.

Nora K. Phillips. ARP and First Aider. Cobbs Cottage/Farm Church Lane, Fordham.

Jack Spurgin. Air Raid Warden and Invasion Committee. New Bungalow, near the Grove,

Constance L White. ARP and First Aid. School House Mill Road, Fordham.

Rose E.A. Pertwee. ARP and First Aid Helper. The Willows, Fordham Heath.

Winifred Heaton. Ambulance driver and ARP Warden. Mill House, Fordham.

Lillian Beard. ARP First Aid. Alexandra Cottages, Church Road, Fordham.

Ellen Towle. ARP First Aider. West View, Church Road, Fordham.

Dorothy Mills. First Aider ARP. Wheelers Farm, Wood Lane, Fordham Heath.

Mary White. First Aid ARP. Highfield, Halstead Road, Forham.

Dorothy White. First Aid ARP. Windy Ridge, Halstead Road, Forham.

Fordham's Senior ARP Warden

Herbert Arnold Partridge was the senior ARP warden in Fordham and an important representative on the Invasion Committee. There is a good description of Herbert in the diary of Millicent Fairhall (nee Partridge) In Fordham. Our senior warden Herbert Partridge was a respected member

of the community and more cheerful than the fictitious Warden Hodges from Dad's Army!

'Herbert, a cousin few times removed ran the village store, post office, curing and slaughter house. Herbert was an ebullient character, a big character, full of enthusiasm and optimism. Big build, red face and drank at the Vulcan Inn. His tiny wife Alice (nee Bibby) was somewhat overshadowed, but on occasion could hold her own.'

There were many Partridges in Fordham which often makes family research quite complex as you will understand from the passage below. In the past using the same name within families was very extremely common. There were two men named Herbert Partridge born a year apart; they were cousins; so we had brothers naming both their sons Herbert!

Our Herbert Arnold Partridge, recorded on the 1939 register as being born on the 22nd of October 1877, was born in West Bergholt, the son of Benjamin Partridge and Frances Arnold. He came to live in Fordham and ran the Stores. The other Herbert lived in Fordham born on the 7th of June 1876 and was baptised at the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel Fordham on the 29th of July 1876, son of Alderman and Edith Partridge. These two Herbert's fathers Alderman and Benjamin were brothers!

Herbert Arnold Partridge of Fordham was one of twelve children born to Benjamin Partridge and Caroline Arnold. It is Benjamin's brother Alderman and his wife Edith Partridge who lived at Barnabys. This is the bungalow where Millicent Fairhall (nee Partridge, granddaughter of Alderman and Edith Partridge) was evacuated to with her children and her mother Frances Hannah Partridge nee Arnold (known as Anna) to escape the threat of bombing in Clacton. Barnabys was no longer owned by the family; it was vacant and to let.

Another of Millicent's diary entries records some of the bomb damage.

'Paid a visit to Herbert Partridge, who proudly displayed some incendiary bombs that had fallen , in the fields. As an

Air Raid Warden he is a VIP in the village. Trix came home with a story of an air raid yesterday afternoon at Fordham. Margie and David hid in the hedge at Germans dropped bombs in the fields. I rode with Mr Partridge to see a bomb crater in fields opposite Barnabys.'

Despite coming from a very large family, there are no records online showing that Herbert and Alice had any children. In his later life Herbert is living at Quaker Cottage, Great Horksley and still there when he died in 1957. His nephew Herbert Partridge of the King's Head, Higham, Colchester; was the informant.

Air Raid Wardens Deaths

The role of the Air Raid Warden did not come without danger and loss of life. In Colchester Charles Henry Leach of Butt Road Colchester died on the 29th of December 1945 and Thomas Henry Saunders of Clacton was injured on the 4th of August 1942 and sadly died later in the year on the 1st of November 1942. Thomas was the superintendent of the ARP Rescue Services in Clacton.

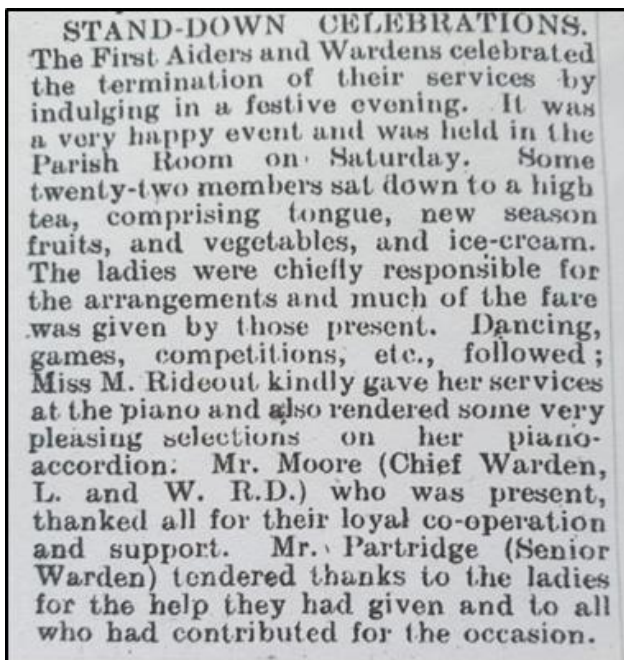
Charles Henry Leach had volunteered to be an ARP warden in Colchester. Research shows that Charles had volunteered to disarm unexploded bombs. He had a heart condition (which at that time was incurable).



**1931 Wedding of Charles Leach and Ethel Hibberd
Permission of Leach Family.**

He volunteered so that younger men would not have to do this dangerous job. Charles died on the 29th of December 1945 at home age forty-three from his heart condition. Charles was born in Wandsworth and was the husband of Ethel Grace Hibberd. In 1939, they were living at Butt Road, Colchester with son Alfred. FLHS would like to thank the family of Charles for allowing us to use their wedding photo.

At the end of the war, a Stand Down Celebration was organised to celebrate the termination of the services of the First Aiders and ARP Wardens. Twenty two Fordham members participated in a high tea and later danced in the Parish Room. Mr Moore, who was the Chief Warden of the Lexden and Winstree Rural District, thanked everyone for their service and support during the conflict. Our own Mr Arnold Partridge who was senior warden thanked those who organised the celebratory evening.



STAND-DOWN CELEBRATIONS.
The First Aiders and Wardens celebrated the termination of their services by indulging in a festive evening. It was a very happy event and was held in the Parish Room on Saturday. Some twenty-two members sat down to a high tea, comprising tongue, new season fruits, and vegetables, and ice-cream. The ladies were chiefly responsible for the arrangements and much of the fare was given by those present. Dancing, games, competitions, etc., followed; Miss M. Rideout kindly gave her services at the piano and also rendered some very pleasing selections on her piano-accordion. Mr. Moore (Chief Warden, L. and W. R.D.) who was present, thanked all for their loyal co-operation and support. Mr. Partridge (Senior Warden) tendered thanks to the ladies for the help they had given and to all who had contributed for the occasion.

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Pages 152 My War ARP Volunteer Stewart Ross. Hodder Wayland 2003.

Pages 154 to 156 Fordham Invasion Committee Minutes. Essex Archives Chelmsford.

Page 153 Journals of Wartime Colchester by E.J.Rudsdale.

Page 154 www.ww2civildefence.co.uk/first-aid

Pages 159, 160 Millicent Fairhall Diary. FLHS Archive.

Pages 160, 161 WWII Civilian Death Records. Ancestry.co.uk.

CHAPTER 10

Aldham Fire Service

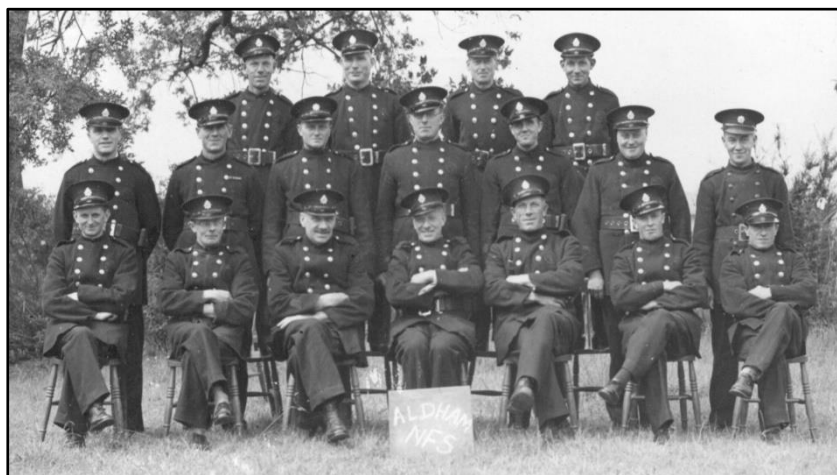
'13th October - biked to Fordham in two and a half hours. There is an alarm on the way and fighting in the sky. White streaks across a heavenly blue expanse and a bomber shows at one point. Fordham is beautiful in the autumn sun, a good night. But a pub (The Star Inn) on Fordham Heath is burnt down.' M.F.

I have included this chapter about Aldham Fire Service as there is a connection to some of our men in Fordham.

Research has been undertaken to identify the men in these photographs from the list accompanying a photograph in Angels Green's book on Aldham; we believe we have identified most correctly, but would appreciate any further information if anyone can assist.



The NFS was created in August 1941 during WW2; it brought together the wartime Auxiliary Fire Service and local fire services such as the Aldham one. The service was open to women who were encouraged to join through advertising media; they were mostly employed on administrative duties. Around 370,000 personnel, including 80,000 women were involved at the peak. Uniforms were a traditional dark blue double-breasted tunic, with a peaked cap which had been worn by the AFS.



Aldham AFS. FLHS Archive

Back row: Alfred Edward Honeyball, George Fox, Arthur Partridge, Herbert Webb

Middle row: Shadrach Basil Norfolk, James Golder, George Wilbey, Charlie Bullock, Roland Smith, Hollis Baker, William Drane

Front row: Arthur Playle, Edward Norfolk, Arnold Frost, George Clampin, Lewis Honeyball, Cyril Pilgrim, Doug Richardson

In 1939, Leading Fireman **George Clampin** born in 1899, was living in Stone Cottage, Ford Street, Fordham with his wife Eva and widowed mother Asenath Jane Clampin nee Broyd. The Clampin family have a long association with that cottage and village of Fordham. It was George's father Frank William Clampin who built the WW1 war memorial at the top of Ponders Road in Fordham.

Arthur Playle's family also had a good association with the village; his father George was the baker in Ponders Road and his mother Jane ran the Post Office. By 1939, Arthur's father had died and his brother Stanley was recorded as a baker. Arthur was born in 1912 and with his brothers farmed at Kings Farm.

There is an entry in Rudsdale's Journal of Colchester dated Thursday the 27th of March 1942. The neighbours from the village had protested against the Essex War Agriculture Committee taking Kings Farm from Mrs Playle who was a widow by that date. It records that 'Young Playle was given a thorough dressing down!' This is likely to have been Arthur.

Arthur's brothers Cecil Bertie and John Charles Playle (John was married and living at Wash Corner, he too was a baker) were both in the Home Guard. There was another Playle brother Percy, but he had died in 1937 aged just thirty-five.



Fireman Arthur Playle from Fordham. HS Archive

Cyril Arthur Pilgrim lived at Valley Cottages, Fordham in 1939. We were given some information and photographs of Cyril and his wife Dorothy from one of our History Society members.

Cyril Arthur Pilgrim was born in 1911 and died in 1999. He was the son of Barnard Pilgrim and Emily Elizabeth Farrant and known as Dick Pilgrim to members of his family.

Cyril married Dorothy (Dolly) Edith Ethel Bradshaw in 1935 at Earls Colne and they lived in Harlow in the 1960s. Dorothy's father was George Henry Bradshaw from Northamptonshire.

He was killed in action in WW1 serving with the Northamptonshire Regiment on the 11th of November 1914; he was buried at Polygon Wood.

Dolly and Dick's Silver wedding anniversary, thanks to the Wendon family for the use of family photographs.



Charlie Bullock was the grandson of Henry Bullock who ran the Vulcan public house in Fordham. His mother was (Florence) Lillian Bullock who later married William Thomas Gulley who lived at Rams Farm in 1915.

In 1939 Charles Henry Bullock and his wife Dorothy Mary Cresswell are living at Oak Cottage on Church Road, Fordham. Charlie was a farm worker at the time of his marriage in 1936 at All Saints Church.

After Charles Bullock died in 1969, Dorothy married Colchester footballer Albert 'Digger' Kettle.



1930. Charlie Bullock at work in Fordham. FLHS Archive.

Douglas Leonard Richardson, born in Danbury, Essex in 1909 was living at Glen Isla, one of the Wash Farm Cottages. In 1939 he is with his wife Phyllis Elliston; they had married at the beginning of that year.

Arthur Ralph Partridge. There had to be a member of the Partridge family in this photograph and we are not disappointed. Arthur was born on the 16th of January 1893 in Aldham, son of Arthur Edward Partridge & Laura Partridge nee Mason. Arthur's father was from Stratford St. Mary, Suffolk and his mother from Norwich. Arthur's father ran the post office and stores in Aldham. The Partridges are synonymous with our village, but these Partridges came from Suffolk.

When Arthur Ralph married Ellen Lavinia Law in 1917 up in Manchester, his occupation is given as an aeronautical engineer at Vickers. Therefore, one would presume he would not have been called up for military service. In 1921 Arthur is still working for Vickers in Manchester.

In 1939, Arthur Ralph Partridge was the sub postmaster and newsagent at the Post Office, Ford Street, Aldham. He had taken over from his parents, Arthur Edward and Laura Partridge who are recorded on the census documents in 1901 and 1911 as running the post office. They

retired in 1939, when Arthur Ralph died in 1980; he was living in Frinton-on-Sea.

The photograph below shows the Post Office and store in Aldham. The gentleman in the doorway might well be Arthur's father Arthur Edward and we know that the gentleman with the horse and wagon is the carrier Charles William Death.



Partridge's Post Office in Ford Street.

Hollis Royal Baker (Joe) was born on the 7th of July 1913 in Cosford, Suffolk. By 1939 Hollis, his parents George Royale Baker and Kate Baker nee Reynolds, his brother Francis and grandmother Elizabeth Reynolds are living at Church Road, Aldham. Hollis married Florence Elizabeth Norfolk in 1941. She was the sister of another fireman, Edward Norfolk. Hollis lived at Fiddlers Folly in his later life; he died in 1986 and is buried in All Saints Church yard, Fordham.

Arnold John Frost was living at Wash Corner in 1939 with his wife Sarah and son George, Arnold was working as an agricultural carpenter. Arnold was born in Honington, Suffolk in 1892 and was one of ten children. He followed his father's occupation, working with horses. His father had the name of True James Frost. Arnold was a farm worker at Elmstead in

1921, living with his wife Sarah (Beatrice nee Howard) and daughters Ada and Winifred.

In 1921 living at Gallows Green, Aldham is Shadrach Basil Norfolk and he was boarding at the home of George Theobald and his family. One of George's daughters, Ada Emily Theobald, was to become Shadrach's future wife. Shadrach was born in Marks Tey on the 25th of December 1893, the son of Ellen Balls and Arthur Shadrach Norfolk. In the 1939 register they were living at Gallows Grove, Aldham, Shadrach died in 1966.

George Wilbey born on the 9th of June 1907, was living with his parents George Wilbey and Lydia Ann nee Gallifant, they married in 1899. It is most likely this fireman is the younger of the two George Wilbeys.

Edward Norfolk was born on the 20th of December 1911. In 1939 Edward was living at 11, Oak Tree Cottages, Aldham with his sister Florence and widowed father Richard Norfolk. Edward's mother, Phoebe Elizabeth Knopp had died in 1918 aged forty. The Anglo-Saxon name Knopp comes from the family having resided in one of several places named Knapp in England. The word knapp comes from the Old English "cnoepp," meaning hilltop or summit.

James Matthew Golder was born in Sudbourne, Suffolk on the 29th of January 1900 and was one of eleven children born to Matthew James Golder and Eliza Pettitt were also born in Suffolk. In 1939, James was living at Spring Cottage, Fordham Road, Wormingford. He was married to Ruby Sheldrake. James had four older brothers George, Harry, Frederick and Edward, in WW1 they all served with the Royal Navy. On his eighteenth birthday, James signed up and also joined the navy. It would have been a worrying time for his parents with five of their sons at sea as stokers. Luckily, they all survived. Edward was captured off the coast of East Africa in 1915 but was later released by the Germans in 1916.

William Drane. This is possibly William Arthur Drane, born on the 23rd of December 1912 to Arthur William Drane and Rosina Aldgate. In 1939

William is living at Manor Farm, Great Tey with his parents and siblings May and Harry. The two brothers are both recorded as dairy farm labourers. There is a marriage record for a William Drane in Colchester 1945 to a Monica C.V. Brown from Linton, Cambridgeshire; but we are unable to confirm this is the Aldham fireman.

Herbert Webb was born on the 16th of January 1901 and living at Checkly Cottage, Great Tey Road, Aldham. Herbert was the son of Ernest Henry and Lily Beatrice Webb nee Everitt. In 1939 the family are living at Ford Street, Aldham with his wife Clara nee Kemp who he married in 1934. Herbert was a kiln setter. Living next door was his younger brother James with wife Gertrude Foxall. The Webb brothers had two other brothers Ernest Henry and Alfred Maurice.

George Frederick Fox was baptised, married and buried at All Saints Church, Fordham. George was born in 1892, son of Edgar Augustus Fox and Rhoda Maria Woodward. George married Elsie Rose Taylor on Christmas Day 1919.

In 1921 George is living at Quilters Green with Elsie's parents David and Emily Taylor, wife Elsie and new daughter Vera Georgina Fox. George was a ploughman working for Mr Bland on Great Porters Farm.

George and Elsie had three children Vera, Margery and Leonard. In 1939 George is living at 4, Ponders Cottages with wife Elsie and daughter Vera Georgina Fox. His occupation was a Golf Links labourer. George died in 1974 and was buried at All Saints Fordham with his wife Elsie who died in 1963.

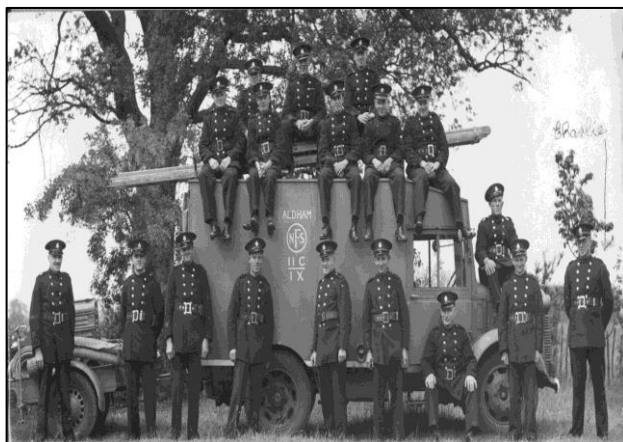
Roland Wilfred Smith (or Richard Smith).

On our photograph we have R. Smith. If we look to Aldham, Arthur and Louisa Smith have five sons and a daughter; Leonard, Cecil, Roland, Hatherley Verdun, Richard and Dorothy.

So our fireman could be either Roland or Richard Smith. Roland Wilfred was born in 1913 and Richard is younger, born in 1922. I think it is likely the fireman is Roland.

The family lived at 12 Oak Tree Cottage Aldham and father and sons also worked for Mr Bland on Great Porters Farm.

Mr Bland the farmer was John Cooper Bland who was from Hale in Lancashire was a farmer and in 1939 he lived at Cooks Mill.



Aldham NFS. FLHS Archive

Sources of Information

Pages 163, 164 www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Fire_Service

Page 163 ARP and Civil Defence in the Second World War. Peter Doyle Shire Library

Page 165 Journals of Wartime Colchester. E.J.Rudsdale.2010

Page 169 www.houseofnames.com/uk/knop

Page 169 Military Records Find My Past and Ancestry.co.uk

Chapter 10 Individual's Research from Ancestry.co.uk and Find my Past

CHAPTER 11

Special Constables

'Alarm at 1.00 a.m. It is a clear night, lots of activity overhead. All clear at 2.30 a.m. Daddy just gets back to the gate and the alarm goes again. He returns to the police station.' M.F.

In 1939, William Fairhall, the husband of our diarist Millicent Fairhall nee Partridge was a heavy transport driver. He was also a Special Reserve Police Officer. Living in Fordham during WW2, we had our own Special Constable, James Arthur Shepherd. James was a wood machinist born in 1916 in the Braintree district and baptised in Kelvedon. He married Edith Madge Caley at All Saints, Fordham on the 6th of March 1937. At the time of their marriage they were living at Fiddlers Hill Farm, Fordham. When the 1939 register was taken, James was working as a special constable; he was living at The Briars, Halstead Road, Fordham with wife Edith and twins Audrey and John.



The duties of the police increased because of the war. In addition to their usual tasks, they were faced with additional tasks such as combating the black market activity, enforcing the wartime blackout, assisting the rescue services during and after bombing raids, checking on enemy aliens in the country and pursuing army deserters.

These extra duties put a terrific strain on the existing workforce. As younger members of the police force volunteered to join up (despite the

government and local authorities trying to limit the number of men who volunteered,) veterans from earlier wars and others who were prevented to join up because of age or reserved occupation became involved. These new volunteers were known throughout the United Kingdom as the Special Constabulary. This was not the War Reserve Police that was introduced in 1939, where constables who were sworn in under the Special Constables Act 1923 had the full powers of a police officer.

Figures for 1944 show there were 43,000 regular police officers, 17,000 War Reserve Police and Special Constables, and 385 women police. During the war, officers were armed despite the tradition that our British Police were traditionally unarmed. They had to protect themselves from enemy action, sabotage and to assist the armed forces. With additional older members in the workforce, the new burdens of war work probably contributed to the growing sickness rate among the police.

Women's Auxiliary Police Corps (WAPC)

The WAPC was set up in 1939 and was similar to the War Reserve Constable (WRC), except only some of its members were attested as constables. At most, there were 5,000 full-time WAPCs, including 500 attested WAPC constables. This was the first step towards allowing women to join the UK's special constabularies that they had been unable to do up to 1939.



Part-time volunteer police officers in the UK who served during the war were awarded the WW2 Special Constable Medal.

It features an effigy of King George VI, on the obverse, with the words "FOR FAITHFUL SERVICE" inscribed on the reverse. The medal highlighted the dedication of special constables who maintained order during wartime.

The idea of Special Constables was not new. Special Constables who served during WW1 from 1914 to 1918 for a minimum of three years, and performed at least one hundred and fifty police duties, were also eligible to be awarded a war service medal. Recipients of the medal under these conditions were entitled to a clasp inscribed The Great War 1914 – 18.

From our FLHS Archive we have a list showing that in WW1, Fordham had a number of men who were in the special constabulary between 1914 and 1919. This list was not available to us when the Fordham WW1 book was written, so the list has been included in this chapter.

These three men were sergeants:

J. Crawford (John Crawford, farmer at Fordham Place)

C.A. Green (Charles Alfred Green, farmer at Fordham Hall)

C.F. Green (Cecil Frederick Green, farm worker at Fordham Hall, Fordham)

The following men were all constables:

F. Beard (Fred Beard, carpenter, Slate House, Fordham)

H.J. Beard (Harry Joseph Beard, carpenter, Church Road, Fordham)

W. Beard (Walter Beard, builder, Quilters Green, Fordham)

H. Bullock, (Henry Bullock, farmer, publican, Vulcan Inn, Fordham)

J. Coppen (Joseph Coppen, farmer, Fordham Heath)

W.T. Gully (William Thomas Gully, farmer, Wormingford)

H. Harvey (Harry Harvey, farmer, Houds Farm, Fordham)

J. Hawes (James Hawes, potato merchant, Ilford)

H. Lilley (Herbert Lilley, vicar, Fordham)

H.A. Partridge (Herbert Arnold Partridge, shopkeeper, Fordham)

W.N. Wear (William Noel Wear, farmer Rochfords, Wormingford)

E. W. Somner (Ernest William Somner, Head Teacher, Fordham). Ernest was a Conscientious Objector. He was a special constable, ran the Sunday School and joined the Friend's Ambulance Service during WW1. Ernest had taught at the school between 1913 and 1916. Yet, School managers stated that: 'they did not think Ernest to be of the correct character for a teacher; his position would not be available after the war finished.'

Sources of Information

Pages 172 to 174

www.open.ac.uk/Arts/historyfrompolicearchives/PolCit/polww2.

Pages 174, 175. FLHS Archive

CHAPTER 12

Rescue and Demolition Parties

'A German plane screamed to earth full throttle. We dived indoors for cover. The scream of the plane seemed to go on forever, but it was only a few seconds, then a thud and quiet. It had come down at St.Osyth taking the crew with it.' M.F.

Rescue and Demolition Parties with Gas Decontamination Teams were another two elements of the Civil Defence Services.

Rescue and Demolition Parties

Labourers from the building trade were ideal candidates for Rescue and Demolition Parties, as they would be physically fit men between the ages of twenty-five and fifty. These rescue parties were required to assess and then access buildings that had been damaged during air raids and retrieve injured or dead people. They would turn off gas, electricity and water supplies, repair or pull down unsteady buildings and generally clear up debris from an air raid.

Gas Decontamination Team

As part of a Gas Decontamination Team, the men would be kitted out with gas-tight and waterproof protective clothing; their role was to deal with any gas attacks. Training was undertaken in order for the teams to decontaminate buildings, roads, rail and other material that had been contaminated by liquid or jelly gases.

Three men from the village have been identified as belonging to these parties.

Walter W. Sawyer.

On the 1939 Register is recorded as a skilled worker as he was a Post Office engineer in the Telecommunications Department. Walter was

in the ARP and Decontamination Squad. He lived at a property called St. Margarets in Fordham Heath with his wife Gladys Marjorie Sawyer nee Wright and children Victor and Pamela.

William E. Revett.

William was a roadman working for Essex County Council in 1939; he was also an ARP warden and a member of the Rescue and Decontamination Squad. He lived on Brick Street, Fordham Heath with his wife Phyllis D. Revett nee Cant. They had married in June of 1939.

William Cant.

Also lived in Brick Street, Fordham Heath and was in the Rescue and Decontamination Squad. William was also a roadman working for Essex County Council. William Cant lived next door to the Revetts and he was a brother of Phyllis Revett.

Many villagers had more than one role during WW2; Stanley Playle was one of these people. According to the 1939 Register, Stanley Playle was a baker and lived at the Post Office in Ponders Road, Fordham with his mother Jane, the post mistress and shopkeeper. Older brother Cecil and younger brother Arthur lived with them too.

Stanley was one of five brothers: Percy George who had died in 1937, John Charles (Home Guard), Cecil Bertie (Home Guard), Stanley and Arthur William (Aldham National Fire Service.)

On the 20th of July 1943, Stanley Playle completed a Course of Anti-Gas Training. His certificate shows that his training was held under the auspices of the Chief Constable of Essex, and he acquired sufficient knowledge of Anti-Gas Measures to act as a Civil Defence Warden. He attended the full course under instruction of a Mrs E. S. Smellie Local Air Raid Precautions (L.A.R.P).



Essex County Constabulary.

Head Quarters,
CHELMSFORD.

20th July 19 43.

This is to certify that Mr Stanley Playle,

of Post Office, Fordham, Essex.

has completed a Course of Anti-Gas Training held under the auspices of the Chief Constable of Essex, and has acquired sufficient knowledge of Anti-Gas Measures to act as

a Civil Defence Warden.

Nature of course attended Full course.

Name and qualification of Instructor Mrs. E. S. Smellie. L.A.R.P.

Date 20th July 1943 Captain.

Chief Constable of Essex.

This certificate does NOT qualify the holder to act as an instructor under any circumstances.

**Stanley Playle's Certificate for his Gas Training Course
FLHS Archive**

Sources of Information

Page 176 ARP and Civil Defence in the Second World War. 2010 P.Doyle

Page 176 ARP Volunteer. Stewart Ross 2003

Page 178 Anti-Gas Training Certificate. FLHS Archive

CHAPTER 13

The Women's Voluntary Service

'Phone call from Mary disturbs us. The house opposite has been demolished. A dismal scene when I arrive home at Wellesley Road. Two houses opposite demolished, glass and clay everywhere. Our house boarded up, incendiaries everywhere. Morbid sightseers stroll along. Soldiers stop. Everyone is nervy.' M.F.

Ethel Gurney nee Davey aged sixty-one, lived at The Bungalow, Chancers Lane, Fordham, with husband Thomas Harry Gurney who was a retired bookkeeper. Ethel was born in 1882; she married Thomas in 1936 in Blythe, Suffolk. Ethel was a member of the Women's Voluntary Service for Air-Raid Precautions. She is the only woman recorded as a WVS member on the 1939 register in Fordham.

The WVS, founded in 1938 was initially formed to help recruit women into the Air Raid Precautions units. Following some training their role soon developed into a service aiding the Home Front.

Their role was to assist civilians during and after air raids and help at emergency rest centres in providing food and giving first aid. They also assisted with the evacuation and billeting of children.



They drove mobile canteens to dangerous areas to support fire and rescue services and fed those immediately affected after a bombing raid.

Some very good books have been written that demonstrate the role of the WVS and ARP. Author Lissa Evans has written three fiction books that follow the intertwined lives of Matilda Simpkin a suffragette, Vera

Sedge and evacuee Noel from about 1928 to the end of the war. The third book in the trilogy 'V for Victory' is very descriptive of how the WVS and ARP worked together in WW2. Another good book is Women at The Ready, the story of the W.V.S by Patricia and Robert Malcolmson.



WVS Hat made by M. Hamilton-Macy

Sources of Information

Page 179 ARP and Civil Defence in the Second World War. 2010 P.Doyle

Page 179 ARP Volunteer. Stewart Ross 2003

CHAPTER 14

The Auxiliary Territorial Service

'People are talking about the destruction on Saturday round the district, especially at Little Horkesley.' M.F.

On the 23rd of September 1940, the church at Little Horkesley was hit by a parachute mine, causing terrible damage; the surrounding area was also badly affected. The church bells were shattered into fragments. 13th century artefacts were badly damaged but salvaged and restored to the church when it was rebuilt in 1958.

The Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), initially a women's voluntary service, was formed in 1938. Like the Territorial Army, it was regionally organised. The ATS was the woman's branch of the army and existed until 1949.

In our archive we have information about two women who served in the ATS:- Emily Sims and Doris Chandler.

Women had served with the British Army during WW1 in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps that was founded in 1917 but disbanded in 1921. In the autumn of September 1938, when war seemed likely, the Women's Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) was established and organised on a regional basis in the same way as the Territorial Army.

It incorporated members of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY) that had served with distinction in WW1. Many former members of the Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps (QMAAC) who were volunteers, joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS). However, nurses joined Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMS). Medical and dental officers were commissioned directly into the army and held army ranks.

Full military status was given in 1941; although they were not allowed to undertake combat roles. Wages were two-thirds of a man's, for the same rank. Women were recruited from all over the world. At its peak, 210,308 women were serving with the ATS; 335 were killed.

As more men joined the war effort, the government passed the National Service Act in December 1941; this allowed women to be conscripted into war work or into the armed forces. On offer was the army (ATS), navy (WRNS) and air force (WAAF). Women between seventeen and forty-three were allowed to join alongside veteran Women's Army Auxiliary Corps members (WAAC).

At the start, there was no uniform and little training for women who joined the ATS. They found themselves working as cooks, clerks and storekeepers. When training improved, roles evolved. If, in civilian life a woman had learned key skills she was assigned duties that incorporated her experience. For example a shorthand typist would be assigned to clerical duties. As time went on, the duties of the ATS expanded. Women worked as telephonists, drivers, mess orderlies, butchers, bakers, postal workers, ammunition inspectors and military police.

Women from the ATS did serve in theatres of war, but they also contributed significantly to the Anti-Aircraft Command of the Royal Artillery. They took over roles that had been performed by crews of men working in mixed crews. Although officially never firing the 'ack-ack' guns they would find enemy aircraft, directed the guns and operated searchlights. Some women served at permanent anti-aircraft camps while others were on mobile units.

Our own Queen Elizabeth II served in the wartime ATS as 2nd Lieutenant Elizabeth Windsor, as did Mary Churchill, the youngest daughter of the Prime Minister. In 1949 the ATS was absorbed by the Women's Royal Army Corps, which was disbanded in 1992. The ATS served with distinction throughout WW2.

In our archive we have information about the two women serving with the ATS: Emily Sims and Doris Chandler.

Emily Sims. Emily was the daughter of Charles Sims and Louisa Cracknell. She was born in 1910. The birth records show that although she is documented as Emily throughout her life, she was named Margery in the birth registers; obviously she did not like her birth name!

Emily attended Fordham Village School with her sisters when her father brought them to live in Fordham in 1917.

This photograph shows Nora, Emily and Edith at school. We have quite a few pictures of the Sims girls in school photographs.

Emily's eldest sister Annie also attended All Saints School briefly, she left school on the 7th of January 1918, brother Frank was already working.



Sadly, their mother was away in care and Charles, their father, was exempted from being called up to WW1, brought up his son and four daughters with a housekeeper.

In 1921 Emily lived at Idols Cottage and later, as the family moved on, Emily lived at Plummers Cottage with her father. During the war they were joined by brother Frank and his wife Alice with two little girls when they were evacuated from London.

When it was announced that single women between the ages of seventeen and forty-three could be conscripted for war work. Emily had a choice of war work such a munitions factory or one of the armed forces;

she chose the ATS. It states in the Fordham Miscellany that Emily met her future husband when she enrolled on the 12th of December 1941. Later they had two daughters. Emily died in 2003 aged ninety-three.



Idols Cottage, Fordham. FLHS Archive.

Doris Catherine Chandler. Our other ATS member was Doris Catherine Chandler born in 1919. Our records show that she was in the ATS for four years. She was the eldest sister of naval serviceman Sydney Chandler whose exploits we have also written about in this book. Doris had three younger sisters Iris, Ivy and Lilian.

Her parents were Thomas Nelson Chandler born in 1893 in East Ham and Catherine Emily Machell born in 1888, in Lambeth, they married in 1917 at St. Bartholomew's Church, East Ham. Doris was born in 1919, and in 1921 the family are living in East Ham; Thomas is a printing compositor.

The family had moved to Fordham by 1927, they are firstly recorded at Quilter's Green and then Fossetts Lane in 1928.

In 1939, Doris, her mother and siblings were living at Watercress Hall in Fossetts Lane. The whereabouts of Doris's father is a bit of a mystery. Records show that he served in WW1 and it is possible he served in

WW2, but we cannot confirm this. There is a Merchant Navy medal card for a Thomas Nelson Chandler born in 1892 Upton Park which is possibly Doris's father. But confirmation that he served in WW1 as a Private in the 3rd City London Royal Fusiliers is recorded in a newspaper cutting of his marriage to Doris's mother Catherine Machell.

'Thomas signed up 10 months after the war started, he saw service in Egypt, was under orders for the Dardenelles when the evacuation order was given. He then went to France where he 'went over the top' several times. He was slightly wounded in the 'Great Push' and invalided to Epsom Military Hospital.'

In 1946, Doris married soldier Frederick Shettle at St. Nicholas Church, Tooting. Frederick was a soldier in the East Surrey Regiment; he served for eight years. He had been captured in Malaya and was a prisoner for over four years. This has been confirmed by a newspaper report of their wedding. The article also stated that Doris served in the ATS for four years.

Doris's sister Lilian and Frederick's niece Dorothy were bridesmaids. At the wedding reception the bride and groom received many congratulatory messages from the units in which they both served during the war. After their honeymoon, Doris and Frederick lived in Mitcham, Surrey.

A newspaper account describing the Experiences of Private Doris Chandler - date unknown

'Amazing coincidences occur at all times, but in a period of war, when so many millions of men and women are on the move, unexpected meetings seem more remarkable. Here is a double example. Private D. (Doris) Chandler is at present doing voluntary service at an airbase in England, meeting returned prisoners of war, helping them with their luggage (when they have any) and generally bidding them welcome home and looking after them at the reception base.'

'One of the first planes to arrive brought in a Lexden lad when Private Chandler was on duty. But for her friend, also in the ATS, there was a much greater surprise for an ATS friend who was working with Private Chandler; her friend found herself face to face with her own fiancé.'

'Private Chandler also tells how she saw a VAD or WVS (she is not sure which) looking rather lonely and forlorn, and went to talk to her. They conversed in very friendly fashion and sometime after they parted Private Chandler learned that the 'lonely' one was the Duchess of Northumberland. Private Chandler told her parents 'If I had known I would not have said half of what I did!'

This 'lonely' woman was in fact Lady Elizabeth Montagu Douglas Scott she was the eldest daughter of the 8th Duke of Buccleuch and in 1940 served with the Civil Nursing Reserve, working at a military hospital in Dumfries. She later joined the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) and saw action aboard the Mauretania before being posted to Australia. She was promoted to the rank of Acting Third Officer on the 13th of October 1944 and confirmed in the rank on the 19th of October 1945. In 1946, she married Hugh Percy, 10th Duke of Northumberland at Westminster Abbey and became the Duchess of Northumberland.

There were many comfort funds set up in WW2 to support men and women in the war effort. In 1939, The Duchess of Northumberland set up the 'Auxiliary Territorial Service' comforts fund workers badge.'



Sources of Information

Pages 181, 182, ARP and Civil Defence in the Second World War. Peter Doyle 2010

Pages 181, 182 Women at the Ready. Patricia and Robert Malcolmson 2014

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Page 186

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CHAPTER 15

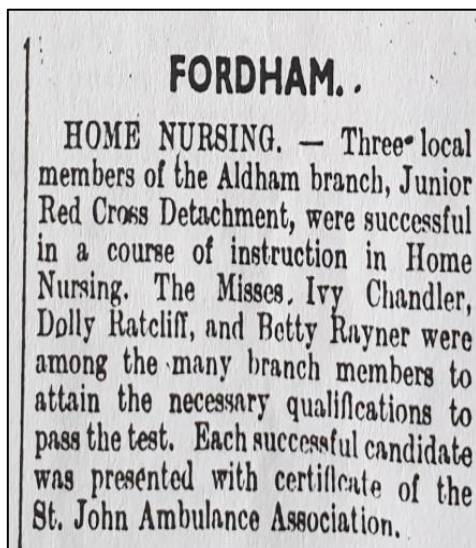
First Aiders

'A lovely night. Shame to be indoors. Planes appear at 9.45pm. - sound of distant bombs. The night heavy with scents - I wander in and out sniffing the air and watching the searchlights.' M.F.

The Invasion Committee minutes give us a real insight into first aid arrangements for our village in anticipation for war. It would appear that to begin with, All Saints School was chosen as the base for the hospital, but later minutes showed the need for an alternative hospital just in case the school had to be evacuated. The places suggested were the Rectory on Plummers Road and Mill House in Mill Lane.

With the expectation that local doctors and nurses would have the necessary training to deal with casualties including those involving gas, local first aiders would be required at a minute's notice. The St. John Ambulance and The British Red Cross Society would also be organised and train those who wished to assist.

Anyone involved in first aid would be aware of the location of the nearest first aid post, casualty clearing station and base hospital. An appropriate building would



Newspaper Cutting. FLHS Archive.

require a good supply of hot water, be made gas proof and in times of war, a water supply in barrels would be kept at the post with a means of heating them.

Mrs L. White was recorded as the First Aid Leader on the Parish Invasion Committee. It is possible that this could be Alice White, the wife of Laurence White one of our P.O.Ws. It was customary in those days to address married women using their husband's initial, hence Mrs L. White. But it could also be Mrs Constance Lillian White the sister of Alice married to Sidney White, he was Laurence's brother. Constance Lillian White lived at School House, perhaps more ideally placed in the village whereas Alice was living at Valley Cottages on Chappel Road.

At some time, it was recorded in the minutes that Mrs Blair-Fish had been First Aid Leader but she had resigned before the forming of the Invasion Committee. Also in the minutes Mrs W. Frost (this was Annie Sims) was recorded as first aid representative on the Civil Defence Service list.

Mrs L. White's role was an important one, trying to co-ordinate first aid volunteers and arranging suitable bases where casualties could be treated if the need arose. There are entries in the Invasion Committee minutes that show her tasks.

Friday 15th August 1941. *Mrs White explained details of the arrangements for dealing with casualties in the event of it being impossible to evacuate them to the First Aid Post at Stanway. She was asked to obtain a list of volunteers to assist in the manning of the mobile unit and hand the list to the clerk, who would in turn forward it on to the ARP Committee of the RDC (Rural District Council.) Mrs White informed committee that Miss A. Wright was no longer undertaking training in the mobile unit.*

This was possibly Agnes Wright who lived at 1, Alexander Cottages with her parents George and Ethel Wright. Agnes or Topsy Wright was

described as a land worker for market gardening, heavy work. Her sisters Daisy and Evelyn were also working on the land.

February 13th 1942. *Mrs White was asked to obtain the names of persons willing to undertake duties of a manual nature. At the meeting of the 6.3.42 it was confirmed that Mrs White had produced a list of volunteers prepared to do certain manual work in case of invasion and the list remains in the hands of the chairman.*

An entry on the **11th of May 1942** describes how certain houses would have to be evacuated if Fordham was invaded. Mrs White was again asked to draw up a list of females in Fordham, not engaged in special services. Mr Savill, now the Fordham Heath representative, would draw up a list of females in Fordham Heath.

The next entry states, that the discussion about mortuaries and the burial of the dead, would be discussed at the next meeting. Nothing reappears in the later minutes addressing this point.

In the entry for **16th July 1942**, Mrs Logan, Mrs Gunary and Mrs White were asked to prepare the Pink List. There was also a Green List prepared by Mr Gunary. These lists appear to be quite important, offering up names of people willing to volunteer for necessary tasks in the village if invasion occurred.

31st August 1942. *Mrs White informed the committee that she had been requested to arrange alternative accommodation for the emergency hospital in case of need and suggested The Rectory as the most suitable building. Lt. Firmin agreed to the suitability of the building. When required, all equipment to be moved will be done by the wardens and Invasion Committee.*

A later entry on the **14th of September 1942** stated that the Rev. Oddie should be informed that the Rectory was the most suitable, alternative

accommodation for an emergency hospital if it should be necessary to evacuate the school. Thus the school was obviously the building earmarked as the hospital in case of invasion. A reply from Rev. Oddie was read out at the next meeting.

However on the **3rd of October 1942**, it was decided that Mill House would be earmarked as the emergency hospital and that the honorary secretary would communicate with Mr Blair- Fish informing him of the arrangement. Mr Blair-Fish replied to the committee's request and in turn the committee sent Mr Blair-Fish a reply answering his questions. It is not clear in the minutes if The Rectory or Mill House were confirmed as emergency hospitals.

14th September 1942. *Mrs White, the first aid leader was asked to supply one of her first aid personnel for duty with the Home Guard and Mrs White agree to do so.*

We have four first aiders recorded on the 1939 register plus another seven who are recorded as first aiders and ARP wardens.

Dorothy Sarah Mills nee Jarman was born in 1906 in Copford. On the 1921 census, she was living with Arthur Chaplin and his wife Jane Annie in Porters Lane, Fordham. Dorothy was recorded as a niece. In 1930, Dorothy married Robert Alexander Mill; Robert was an ARP Warden in 1939. They lived at Wheelers Farm, Wood Lane, Fordham Heath. Dorothy was recorded as a First Aider for the Lexden & Winstree District.

Nellie May Firmin nee Bailey was born in 1901 and in 1911 she was recorded living with her parents and nine siblings near Aldham Church. Nellie married John Thomas Firmin (3) who was in the ARP and Home Guard. John was the military representative on the village Invasion Committee. The couple would have been very busy as Nellie was a First Aider for the Lexden & Winstree District. They lived at Heath Cottages on Fordham Heath.

Gertrude Mary Gray nee Smith was born in 1884 and married Herbert Clifford Gray in 1920; Herbert was a baker from St. Neots, Huntingdonshire. The couple lived at White House Farm, Fordham Heath, where Herbert was recorded as a mixed farmer. Gertrude was busy doing unpaid domestic duties; housewife was crossed out on the 1939 register. She was recorded as a First Aider (Major Crisis).

Agnes May Percival nee Taylor was born in 1910. Her eldest brother Arthur was killed in Turkey in WW1. Agnes, one of thirteen children grew up living at White Colne. Agnes married Francis George Percival in 1934. They lived at Badger Cottage, Halstead Road, Fordham in 1939. Agnes was a First Aid Reservist.

First Aider and ARP Wardens

Nora K. Phillips was born in 1902 in Colchester and baptised Kathleen Nora Phillips. The family lived in Old Heath Road, Colchester, she had an older sister Florence and younger brother Richard. Sadly, Nora lost her father Joseph in 1915, he was only forty-eight. By 1939, Nora had moved to Cobbs, Church Lane, Fordham with her widowed mother Florence Phillips nee Goodram. Nora was recorded as an ARP warden and first aider.

Constance L. White nee Quarrell was born in 1893, daughter of Charles Quarrell (a long serving soldier in the military) and Millicent Moore who died in 1907. Constance married Sidney W. White in 1930. They lived at School House, Mill Road, Fordham. Constance was a first aider and ARP Warden.

Ellen Catherine Towle nee Hume was born in 1898 she was an ARP and First Aid Personnel for Lexden & Winstree. She married Henry Wilfred Hopping in 1920 and had three children with Henry Wilfred. Another daughter Queenie was less than a year when she died in 1925 and is buried at All Saints Churchyard, Fordham. After Henry died in 1926 aged just thirty-one, Ellen later married Fordham Parish Clerk, Thomas Robert

Boulton Towle in 1931. Ellen can be found on the 1939 register living at West View, Church Road, Fordham.

Rose Elizabeth Ann Pertwee was born in 1864 and lived at The Willows, Fordham Heath. Rose was single and died in Hove, Sussex aged one hundred and three. Rose was recorded as a First Aid helper.

Mary Broyd nee Taylor was born in 1886 in White Colne, Essex. In 1911 she was working as a servant in Chesterton, Cambridgeshire where she met her first husband Ernest Carpenter whom she married in Cambridgeshire in 1912. After he died in 1927, Mary married Charles Broyd at St. Barnabus Church, Chappel in 1929; Charles was a widower. He was an ARP Reservist and they lived at Brook Hill Cottage, Halstead Road, Fordham.

Lillian Evelyn Beard (Laurence White's sister) was born in 1902. Lillian was in the ARP and a First Aider. She was married to Harry Beard, a carpenter and living at 3, Alexandra Cottage, Moat Road, Fordham.

Mary White was born in 1915 and lived at Highfield, Halstead Road; she was the daughter of Tom White and Kate White nee Roberts; Mary was in the ARP and a First Aider.

Dorothy Edith White nee Lester was born in 1899 in Fordham and living at Windyridge, Halstead Road with her future husband Thomas White, born 1911. Her first husband William White was the uncle of Thomas. Dorothy was an ARP and First Aider

Winifred Jeannie Heaton was born in 1903 at Kings Norton, Birmingham and was living at Mill House in 1939. Winifred was a single woman and had travelled to British Columbia in 1937 working as a secretary; she returned to England in 1938. Winifred died in 1990 age eighty seven in Chipping Campden, Gloucestershire. She was an ARP Warden and unpaid Ambulance Driver. As most male drivers from the Red Cross or St. John's Ambulance had been called up; there was a shortage of drivers in 1940.

Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service

In 1902, the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service (QAIMNS) was established by Royal Warrant, and was named after Queen Alexandra, who became its President. In 1949, the QAIMNS became a corps in the British Army and was renamed Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps.



During the Second World War, QAIMNS women were called upon again, serving from Iceland to the Pacific. In 1939, nurses were sent to France with the British Expeditionary Force. After Hitler's soldiers invaded Holland, Belgium and France in May 1940, British troops, including members of the QAIMNS, withdrew. Before leaving their area, the nurses helped destroy medical equipment, while the Royal Engineers demolished the field hospital so the enemy could not seize it. All of this was carried out under fire from German aircraft.

The QAIMNS rank structure was brought into line with the rest of the British Army in 1941. For the first time, nurses wore rank badges and could be promoted. In 1944, QAIMNS personnel were the first women to arrive at the Normandy beach head in order to set up a general hospital with capacity for 600 patients. By the end of the war, there were 12,000 nurses in the service.

Marguerite Francoise Ursule Mahuzies. In 1939 mother Yvonne and daughter Marguerite were living at Fletcher's Lodge in Fordham. She was a Red Cross nurse in WW2 and a sister in the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service Reserve (QAIMNS.)

Marguerite was born on the 28th of September 1912, she was the daughter of Roger Felix Amedee Mahuzies and Yvonne Avisa Herbert. Her parents were married in Pau, France in 1906. Marguerite and her widowed mother moved away from Fordham to live in Dorset after she trained to become a midwife in 1948.

A 1959 newspaper cutting records that Marguerite was awarded the Queen's Commendation for Bravery after rescuing an elderly woman from a burning bungalow. Marguerite died in Dorset in 1999 age eighty-six, her mother died in 1980 age ninety-five.

Dorothy E. Williams whose birth is recorded as the 28th of September 1902 on the 1939 register, was a single woman living at Ivy Cottage in Ponders Road, Fordham; her full time occupation was a District Nurse and midwife.

Sources of Information

Pages 188 to 191 Fordham Parish Council Invasion Minutes Essex Archive Chelmsford.

Page 194 www.museumstjohn.org.uk/behind-wheel-front-line-women-ambulance-drivers-wwii/

Page 194 www.nam.ac.uk/explore/queen-alexandras-royal-army-nursing-corps

CHAPTER 16

The Women's Land Army

'Harvest is well under way. I always associate Fordham with harvest time - great stretches of sun baked fields. The sky line looks just the same, but on closer investigation I find there is a change in the 'last ever' village. Many of the fields now belong to a market gardening firm and grow acres of onions, beans etc. No doubt this accounts for the increased prosperity. Women work in the fields and the produce is taken to London.' M.F.

In October 1940, the MP for Agriculture and Fisheries R.S. Hudson wrote a message in the Women's Land Army handbook. He said:

'The events of the past 6 months have made increased food production at home even more urgent. Total war is a war of endurance, and to ensure winning it we must make the most of all our resources, especially the land. Milking the cows, feeding the pigs and the poultry or driving a tractor, day after day, is unspectacular and at times may seem to you dull. But without the food you help to produce, the bravery of the fighting services would be of no avail and the machinery in our munitions factories would be silent and still. Famine could achieve what no bomb or blitzkrieg or invading force will ever bring about. It is your vital task to see that such a thing could in no conceivable circumstance arise, and is driven even further from the realms of possibilities.'

This speech demonstrates the importance of the Women's Land Army to the nation and to the war effort. It was Napoleon who said 'An army marches on its stomach.' And the thousands of women that joined the Land Army gave our nation a fighting chance by producing food and maintaining our forests.

The FLHS photographic archive has a collection of photographs of women from Fordham working on the land during WW2. Some are

wearing the uniform of the WLA; but can we presume they were members of the WLA? Online documentation of records for women who served in the Land Army is scarce, although in 2023 Land Army Indexes were put on the Ancestry family history website; but there are gaps. I have only found one index for a woman who lived in Fordham; Norah Martyr. She is recorded on the 1939 Register as a Land Army worker at Kemps Farm, Copford.



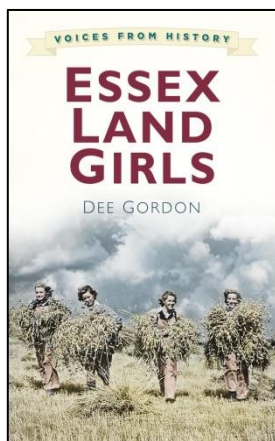
**Fordham Land Workers – Vera Cant, Doris Cope,
Susannah Green and Gwen Cudmore.**

This is where oral history as a historical source can be so important. Women who served may have spoken to their families, kept diaries, kept hold of personal documentation and even held on to their uniform and badges. Recording these WW2 experiences is so important. Sadly, we often find out about someone who served after they have passed away.

But for Fordham, we were very fortunate that Ernest Hay contacted us about his wife Susannah Green and sent us lots of photographs of Sue and her land working colleagues. It was from those photographs that I was inspired to write a presentation about the Women's Land Army and this talk is the most popular one that I give to other interested groups.

The photographs from our archive take us back to war time Britain, where you get a real sense and understanding of everyday life in Fordham and Britain. The photographs certainly reveal something of the character of those who lived in the village showing Fordham's response and involvement in the war effort.

Books like 'Voices from History: Essex Land Girls' by Dee Gordon is a really good record. It contains interviews with some of the last surviving land girls. The book contains a wealth of material unearthed in diaries, letters and the stories handed down from one generation to the next, about women in Essex.



The Government set up a Women's Land Army (WLA) which was not a fighting army, but a force working on the land helping to produce food and timber; it was a remarkable organisation. The WLA was first set up in 1917 during the First World War by Lady Gertrude Denman. It was the Ministry of Agriculture who approached Lady Denham to restore the W.L.A in 1938.

In June 1939, Lady Denman set up the WLA headquarters at her home in Balcombe Place, Sussex, where committees were delegated to organise county administration. In Essex Olive Tritton of Lyons Hall, Finchingfield was the 'chairman', and like the majority of people in that position, Miss Tritton was from a wealthy family.

Many of the committee chairmen were from upper class families. How were they going to interact with many of the lower class women who would be part of the WLA? In answer to



WW1 Poster IWM.

that it was concluded that these women, like the Countess of Althorp in charge of Northamptonshire, were women from farming and rural backgrounds. Therefore they were best equipped to pass on their expertise. By December 1939 there were 4,500 women in the Land Army.

Another important development in the Ministry of Agriculture came in the autumn of 1939 with the formation of local War Agricultural Executive Committee. It was their role to oversee the acquisition and management of farming land in order to produce food.

Maintaining food supplies was a government priority; they did not want a repeat of the difficulties experienced in WW1. Earlier in 1936, Sir William Beveridge drafted plans for food rationing which came into force in 1940. Farming and production of home grown food were key elements to surviving the war.

The emergency Powers Act 1939 enabled the Ministry of Agriculture to direct and control food production. Each county appointed a war agriculture committee to increase food production. In 1939, farmers were offered incentives to plough up land to grow wheat, oats, barley & potatoes (£2.00 an acre). Some farmers thought this cynical, that when the nation was in danger, the government was only then taking an interest in farming. By end of war eighteen million acres of land had been requisitioned. The WAEC had many discussions with farmers who saw their land not only turned over to national food production but also to concrete airfields.

In W.J. Rudsdale's diary, that is an account of his role as Curator for Colchester Museum and assistant to the WAEC for the area during WW2. We see many accounts of confrontations between the WAEC's requests and farmers. So if you think about Fordham with lots of land already being used for agriculture. How much of that was requisitioned?

It would make sense that women would work in the areas where they lived, but this was not always the case. City girls often ended up in the

countryside, a completely different way of life to what they were used to. Women of the WLA had to be prepared to be sent anywhere; to where the work was needed.

Checking the 1939 Register which was taken on the 29th of September, there are entries for many Fordham women where it states 'land worker.' Fordham was a very agricultural village surrounded by farms and fields; so it is not surprising that agricultural work for men and women would have been the main occupation in the village.

Whether 'land worker' means W.L.A. is unclear. There was no need for women already working as land workers to apply to join the WLA. Whereas, Norah Martyr of Threshers, Fordham was recorded as 'unpaid domestic duties' (housewife) and certainly applied. It clearly states 'enrolled in WLA Copford' on her index card. The record shows that Norah went to work for Lionel de Hocchepied Larpent of Moat Farm in Turkey Cock Lane, Copford. Her WLA index card also shows she was an official Land Army girl.



WW2 Poster IWM.

We know that in 2008, land worker Susannah Green had applied for a medal that recognised her WLA role. Sadly, her medal arrived six weeks after she died.

It also states in a newspaper cutting we have that there were twenty women working on the land in Fordham.

So why enrol? Women who had served in the WLA were later asked why they had joined the WLA.

These are their responses recorded in 'Voices from History: Essex Land Girls' by Dee Gordon, it states:

To avoid military service

To have a healthy country life

They did not want to work in munitions factories

Some wanted to get away from home

Others did not want a job 'in domestic service'

Some said they would do 'anything for a laugh!'

To enrol, there was a minimum age of seventeen years and six months, but many younger girls lied about their age and were only sixteen when they enrolled. They were given a medical to assess their health and fitness, then training could start.

At the beginning, training was done on designated 'training farms.' Some trained, on the job, at their place of work. Once better arrangements had been put in place, the committees organised six weeks of training at Cambridge and Writtle Agricultural Colleges.



Georgina Ratcliffe. Reenactor.

There was a range of training, including tractor driving (special tractor courses), animal care, milking, mowing, building hay stacks, pest control, hedge cutting and thatching. Proficiency certificates and badges were awarded for excellence. Seeing girls operating new and modern machinery was revolutionary and newsworthy. Women doing a man's job attracted many a photographer and newspaper.



These courses enabled the WLA to tackle a range of work: digging ditches, milking cows, feeding chickens, rounding up animals using sheep dogs, picking vegetables like Brussel sprouts, ploughing with tractors or with shire horses and of course, during harvest time, building haystacks. There was also delicate handwork in planting and gathering, working in nurseries and glasshouses. There was also work to be done on land reformation, so that it could be used for farming. Machinery was big and dangerous, accidents were common. In 1941, a Benevolent fund was started that offered financial assistance for land girls in difficulty. It also helped with illness, disability, education, training, convalescence and rest homes.

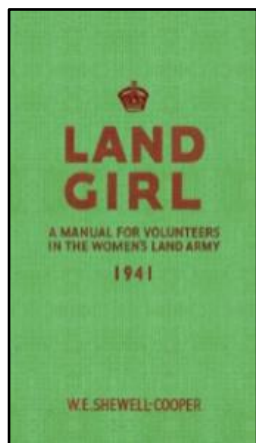
One of the key jobs for trained WLA women was pest control. £25,000,000 of food and animal feed was eaten or spoiled by rats; they were a major public health threat, rabbits also damaged crops.

Over 10,000 women worked on market gardens, growing fruit and vegetables, many Fordham women did just that.

Land girls were paid directly by the farmers who employed them. The land girls were paid a minimum wage of twenty-eight shillings for a forty hour week, although that was increased to a fifty hour week in the summer. Eventually the wage was raised by one pound in 1944. Those staying away from home would share digs with other WLA members, as they often worked as a team. Fourteen shillings was deducted for board and lodging.



For many girls, it meant leaving home for first time. Some had no idea about rural life. They found their living accommodation and working conditions were not always ideal. The buildings in which they stayed varied from castles, old houses, sports pavilions and even converted chicken houses; many stayed on farms, but many remote farms did not have the luxuries we have today such as running water, electricity and indoor toilets.



In Essex there were approximately 2,000 members of the Women's Land Army. There were WLA hostels at Lexden Road, Colchester, Layer Marney, Peldon and West Mersea. The War Agricultural Committee also had a hostel at Layer Marney. Many women were billeted on the farm where they worked but for our Fordham women; they lived at home. We know of accommodation at Wormingford from a newspaper article.

Members of the WLA were issued with a handy pocket sized manual that covered everything from application forms to recipes and dealing with pests, information about how many vegetables

would be produced from an ounce of seed, how to use certain tools and much more. Contact names for all county representatives were included.



There was an official Women's Land Army uniform; a green jumper, khaki overall coat, fawn cotton shirts, corduroy breeches, dungarees, three pairs of socks, a pair of brown shoes, great coat, a tie that cost 1s.9d, a hat and gilded brass badge, inlaid with green & red enamel. There were also working clothes: wellingtons (although these were in short supply as there was a wartime shortage of rubber), leggings, dungarees, overalls and oil skins. There was a scarf to keep the hair clean and out of the way of dangerous farm machinery. Clothing coupons were handed in as payment for the uniform. Official arm bands were worn for parades with a half diamond shaped cloth badge for each six months service. The hat started off in this uniform style, but soon became used and abused. They were often 'modified' to suit the personality of the wearer! In an attempt to prevent this abuse, a leaflet was issued on how to wear the hat!



When food rationing began in the January of 1940, home grown food production was vital. At the time we imported 70% of our food. As supply ships were becoming more vulnerable to attack, there was a likelihood that the British population would be short of food. The country also needed imports of oil and raw materials for industries.

By June 1940 there were 6,000 women in the WLA and by the end of 1941 the number had risen to 14,000. This continued to increase as a result of advertising and recruitment. By the following June, numbers had risen to 40,000.

Earlier in March 1942, The Timber Corps nicknamed 'The Lumberjills' was formed. They had a similar uniform to the WLA but a green beret with a badge which showed a tree; these are quite rare and are a collector's piece today.

Timber was critical to the war effort for aircraft, shipbuilding, communications and coal mining, the British timber trade was in trouble. Britain was almost completely dependent on imported timber and had only seven months of timber stockpiled.

The 4,000 Lumberjills were employed in forestry work. The work of the Timber Corps was very physical and dangerous. Felling big trees, hauling timber by horse and tractor, working in the sawmills to produce telegraph poles and pit props for mine shafts was challenging and hazardous. The Timber Corps was disbanded soon after the war was over.

By March 1943, there was a fuel and food shortage in all warring countries. Any vacant space was dug up and planted with vegetable and salad crops. Hospitals and military camps were 'digging for victory,' even places like Kew Gardens were growing food produce. The endeavours of the WLA now produced 70% of Britain's food. There were 65,000 women in the WLA in June 1943 which had increased to 80,000 by December 1943.

Recruitment ended in 1944, but it soon became clear to the government that the Land Army would still be needed after the war; so recruitment began again in 1944/45.

In 1946, the WLA marched in the Victory Parade. In August 1948, the WLA committees were dissolved and even though it was announced in 1949 that the WLA was to be disbanded, it did not happen until October 1950. By this time there were still 8,000 women in the Land Army. Women were issued with a release certificate that showed their length of service.

It was not until the year 2000 that the WLA were invited to the Remembrance Parade. In 2007 the first memorial in Scotland appeared for the Timber Corps in honour of their war time achievements. You can now see a memorial commemorating the WLA at Gressenhall Museum in Norfolk. Finally in 2008, after a campaign for recognition for their services to the war effort during WW2, the government issued medals to women of the Land Army including our Susannah Green of Fordham.

FLHS would like to thank re-enactor Georgina Ratcliffe, and photographers Pat Patrick, Andrew Peter Howe and WJM Photography, for the use of the photographs in this chapter.



Land Girls of Fordham

Focussing now on the Fordham women who worked on the land, you will soon realise that the notion of six degrees of social separation is well and truly upheld in this small community.

We have no official confirmation that all these girls were official Land Army girls, but we know Sue Green and Norah Martyr certainly were because of the documentation we have seen. For most women, they were just doing their normal jobs; working on the land.



The 'Fordham Fusiliers' E. Hay

It is really Sue Green and her husband Ernest Hay who inspired FLHS to look more at the Women's Land Army and the part they played in Fordham. They provided food to the nation, helping to boost the food supply. Sue was one of a group of girls who called themselves the 'Fordham Fusiliers.'

The eighty-seven year-old great-grandmother, Sue Hay nee Green who died on the 28th June 2009 was one of the women working on a Fordham farm. Sue's husband Ernest sent FLHS many photographs of her with fellow co-workers and told us about Sue's application in 2008

Mr Hay said: "She loved it as she had some very good friends working with her. But she used to work hard in muddy conditions.

They used to start early in the morning and work into the night. Sometimes she would say it was so dark she couldn't see what she was doing."

The former confectionery salesman said "it was important the land girls' contribution was not forgotten.

Women were doing all kinds of jobs in factories, on the railways and in the mines - and I think they deserve some recognition as without them we couldn't have carried on. A lot of women were making Spitfires and ammunition, and I don't think we would have won the war without them," he added.

"I don't think she expected to receive anything when we filled the form in. I was glad for Susannah though, as I'm sure she would have been pleased with it. She would feel proud and she would probably say 'you're not the only one who has a medal now. I'm just sorry she never saw it, but better late than never."

Susannah Bessie Green was the daughter of Henry Green who was from Mildenhall, Suffolk and Bertha May Ratcliffe who came from Edwardstone, Suffolk. Bertha's brother, Walter Ratcliffe and his family lived in Fossetts Lane in Fordham. Sue was baptised at Edwinstone on the 26th of June, 1921. Her older siblings Stanley Henry 1909, Violet Amy 1911 (Violet was married in All Saints Church, Fordham in 1930) and Elsie Agnes 1915 were also born in Edwinstowe. Two more brothers Robert 1925 and George 1927 were registered in the Lexden area, so the family were in Fordham by 1925. The family are recorded on the 1921 census in Assington, Suffolk. Father Henry was working on the land.



In 1939, Sue is recorded working for the Haycock family at a property called 'Coley' in Marks Tey. It is possible that she was influenced into joining the WLA because members of the family that she worked for at the time were heavily supportive of the war effort. William Haycock, retired Indian Civil Service, was a Food Executive Officer, Maude Haycock ran the canteen for Stanway ARP Clearing Station, (this clearing station at Stanway is mentioned in the Invasion Committee minutes). Elizabeth Haycock was a Clerk in the Food Control Office and Catherine Haycock also helped out at the canteen Food Clearing Station.

In an article from an old Fordham Times, Sue wrote that she lived with her family in the cottages below the school on Mill Road. This is confirmed by the 1939 Register showing her parents and brothers living in Mill Road. Sue says that her father Henry was a ploughman using horses and worked at Fordham Hall. Her friends Doris Cope, Gwen Cudmore and Vera Cant worked on the land, planting vegetables of all kinds and at harvest time they worked on the steam driven threshing machines. Her leisure time was spent swimming in the river by the mill or going to the cinema in Crouch Street, Colchester. Sue wrote that the local shop by the war memorial was run by Mrs Partridge and the Post Office run by Mr Playle, where there was a bakery and fresh bread could be delivered to the house at all times. Sue remembered that at The Three Horse Shoes the licensee was Reg Bell, their son Sid Bell was a threshing machine worker.

Sue Green and Ernest Hay were married in 1945 at All Saints Church, Fordham. Sue had met Ernest (Ernie) at a dance in Great Tey village hall.

After being on leave in 1942, Ernie then travelled with 15,000 other troops on board the Queen Mary heading for Egypt to join the 8th Army where he served in Tunisia, Sicily and Italy. Sue and Ernie kept in touch via



letters and post cards for the next three years until in 1945 they were married. They were the first couple married in the village church after the end of the Second World War.



Part of our archive includes this wonderful wedding photograph of Sue and Ernie's guests taken outside the Parish Room; it was kindly given to us by Ernest Hay. On this photo are three of Sue's friends who worked with her: Ivy Chandler, Vera Cant and Doris Cope.

Vera Maisie Cant married Frank William Arthur Britton on the 24th of August 1946 at the Countess of Huntingdon's Chapel by Pastor Mawby. Her parents were George Ernest Cant and Rose Emily May Wright; Vera was born in 1926. Her mother Rose lost her brother Ernest in WW1, he is remembered on our war memorial. Vera is a cousin to Daisy, Evelyn and Agnes Wright.

Vera lived at 4, Alexandra Cottages. Father George worked for Essex County Council on the roads. Vera had two older brothers James and



Stanley. Both brothers are recorded as agricultural labourers. Their mother is also recorded as a land worker. Vera had a younger sister, Muriel May, who was also married at the Chapel in 1946 to Donald Lardent Brown.

Doris Cope was one of ten children born to Henry James Cope and Minnie Bowers. Doris married Harold Grove in 1945. Other Cope sisters were also actively involved at Fordham Hall where their father Henry Cope was the farm foreman. Henry Cope was not originally from Fordham, the older children were born in Dagenham. Later the family came to Fordham, daughter Alice was born between 1933 and 1936. The last son David was born and registered in Lexden District.



Doris Cope and Sue Green FLHS Archive

Father Henry was on the Fordham Parish Council, the Invasion Committee and a member of the Fordham Home Guard. A daughter Carol Ann Cope was born to Doris in 1944 and baptised at All Saints Church. Doris's sister Catherine Cope was born in 1918 and married Stanley Harold Cant in March 1940 at All Saints Church, Stanley was one of our Home Guard photograph. Another sister Ellen Ethel Cope, born in 1919, married Sydney Colman in July 1940, Sidney was one of our Prisoners of War.

Ivy Chandler was born in 1926, she married Gordon Bugg in 1954 at Colchester. Ivy is also featured in Sue Green's wedding photograph and in the photograph standing by the Wormingford Red Cross signpost with Sue Green and Vera Cant.



Ivy can be found on the 1939 register with her mother Catherine and sisters Doris, Iris, Lilian and brother Sidney (who served in Royal Navy.)

They are living at one of the cottages called Watercress Hall. Gordon was living at 6, Heath Cottages, Fordham Heath with his parents Alfred and Kate and younger sister Olivia. FLHS believe that Gordon's grandfather Alfred George Bugg was the licensee of the Star Inn and member of the Home Guard.

Daisy May Wright is one of our girls in the photograph on page 207. She is also in the school photograph with two of her sisters Evelyn Jean and Agnes Ethel Wright. Both these girls were land workers.

The Wright girls lived at Alexander Cottages in Moat Road, Fordham with parents George and Ethel Wright nee Clampin. Their siblings were Cyril, Donald and Maisie. Another sibling Ernest James was named after their father's brother who was killed in WW1; he is remembered on the Fordham War Memorial.

Daisy was born on the 23rd of September 1918 and married Ernest Jack Pilgrim, a soldier, on 14th of September 1940 at All Saints Church, Fordham. Ernest's brother Cyril Pilgrim was a member of the Aldham Fire Service. In 1939 Daisy was working at 69, Shrub End Road, Colchester as a domestic servant to Cyril Charles Scott and his wife. The rest of her family were residing at Alexandra Cottages, Fordham.

Evelyn Jean Wright was born on the 1st of July 1922 and married Robert Jacobs in 1959.

Agnes Ethel Wright, born on the 23rd of April, 1917 married Christopher Charles Cudmore (from Mount Bures) in 1944. Agnes was fondly known as Topsy.



Jean Wright, Sue Green. & Agnes Wright. FLHS Archive.

Gwen Cudmore also worked on the land and is pictured in a newspaper article for the village magazine, she is on the right. Gwen married Edgar Victor Forrest who was a soldier. They married on the 9th of April 1942 at All Saints Church Fordham. Edgar was from Croydon. One of the witnesses to Gwen's wedding was her brother Douglas Cudmore.



Sadly, Douglas was killed on the 5th of March 1945. He served with the East Lancashire Regiment. There is more information about Douglas in the War Memorial chapter.

Norah Martyr was an official land army worker. In 2023, Ancestry UK added the indexes of Land Army personnel and Norah's is the only index card I can find for women in Fordham. Norah Christine Martyr nee Bainbridge was born on the 3rd August 1895, our research shows she was a very good sportswoman, an archer. She had also been a distinguished actress in New York and London for some twenty years; her stage name being Norah Balfour.

In 1918, Norah Christine Bainbridge married Joseph Weston Martyr in London; he had an interesting role during WW2, he was a writer and had a successful sailing career. There is more information about Joseph Weston Martyr in the chapter about the Home Front.

Three years later in 1921, Joseph Weston Martyr was in America. By 1939, we find the couple living at Threshers in Plummers Road, Fordham.

The WLA index for Norah Christine Martyr shows that she resigned on the 26th of February 1940. Her WLA number was 1278, her age was given as forty-three and her occupation as a housewife. Her qualification states she had 'some experience in vegetable growing.'

In 1939 Norah's was also busy taking part in the World Archery Championships in Oslo in 1939. She was in the women's team and scored 5,504 points coming second to Poland that scored 5,605.

There is an extra piece of information on the 1939 register. It states that Norah was working at Moat Farm, Copford and her employer was Mrs Larpent de Hochpied; this is confirmed by her WLA index card. The WLA index for Alice Larpent de Hochpied, the daughter of Norah's employer is also on the Ancestry website. Norah Christine Martyr died on the 26th of August 1942 at Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford.

Florence Ratcliffe. In 1939 Florence is recorded on the register as a land worker. She was born in 1908, her parents were Walter Ratcliffe and Annie Bowers who were originally from Suffolk. The family lived in Fossetts Lane, Fordham, there were nine members of the living in the house. Three of Florence's brothers were farm workers: Arthur is recorded as cowman and land worker, Albert was a cowman and Frank a land worker. Father Walter is recorded as a stockman, Walter is the brother of Bertha Ratcliffe, mother of Susannah Green our land army girl, therefore Florence and Sue Green are cousins. (Sue's parents are seated on the right of the wedding photograph, page 211). Florence remained single and went on to live at Sunnyside in Fordham. She died in 1984 and is buried at All Saints Church.

Rebecca Peacock was one of our older land workers. She is recorded as a land worker and market gardener on the 1939 register. She was born in 1886 and lived at Quilters Green, Fordham. Rebecca is living in the same house as retired major William Simpson, whom she married in 1954.

Jessie Elizabeth Peachey nee Crawford was born in 1913 in Fordham and worked for a market gardener, she is recorded as doing heavy work. Her parents were Andrew Crawford, born in Scotland and Rosa Carter. In 1921 Jessie was living on Plummers Road, Fordham with her mother Rosa, who was born in Worcestershire and siblings Agnes, William and

Margaret who were all born in Wormingford. Jessie also had another sister, Rose; she was the eldest. Her sister Margaret married Charles Peachey at All Saints Church, Fordham in 1932 and Jessie married his brother Lewis Obadiah Peachey also in 1932. Before Jessie was born all the family were living at Post Road, Wormingford. Her father, Andrew was a farmer's assistant. In 1921 and 1939 Jessie's father is recorded at Severalls Hospital in Colchester.

Sisters Mary and Ellen Chamley worked on their father's dairy farm, Great Porters Farm. They were daughters of John Chamley and Jane Bradshaw who were married in Preston in 1920. The family moved to Fordham in 1931. Mary Chamley was born 1923. She worked as a dairymaid and general heavy worker. Mary married James Baines in 1942.

Ellen Chamley, born in 1924 was a poultry worker and domestic helper. Their brother James Chamley was born in 1921, another brother John was born in 1930. James Chamley also worked on the farm milking cows twice a day and helping to grow crops of wheat, barley and oats. As such, he was in a reserved occupation and was not called up for military service. But he joined the Local Defence Volunteers and then became a member of the Home Guard. There is more information about James in the section about the Home Guard.

Lily Ada Doe nee Munson lived at Archendines, in Chappel Road, Fordham. She was a poultry and heavy worker, born in 1900. Lily was the wife of Frederick Doe, a farmer and agricultural contractor. Frederick was a member of Fordham Parish Council and the Invasion Committee.

Margery Freda Fox was born on 10th of May 1922 and baptised on the 4th of June at All Saints Church, Fordham. Her family lived at Ponders Cottages, Fordham in 1939. Margery had a son, Barry Leslie Fox baptised at All Saints Church, Fordham on the 1st of October 1944. Margery married Cleveland H. Harrelson in 1945. She later married Horace Byford in 1961.

Her sister Vera Georgina May Fox, born on the 6th of May 1920 was baptised on the 4th of July. Vera married Henry Edward Cope, a soldier on the 26th of July 1941 at All Saints Church, Fordham. Henry was the son of Henry James Cope a member of our Invasion Committee and Home Guard. Vera and Margery's parents were George Frederick Fox and Elsie Rose Taylor.

Ethel Florence Garrod nee Wright was born in 1903, daughter of Sarah Hammond and George Wright they also lived in Fordham. Ethel was the wife of one of our Home Guard men Albert Garrod and they lived at 2, Ponders Cottages, Fordham. Ethel worked for a market gardener.

On the 1939 register, living at Moat Barns was a group of farm workers not from the village, all single men. One of them was Daniel Finch. He was affectionately known as Taffy and can be seen in the photograph on the right working with Sue Green, Agnes (Topsy) Wright, and Jean Wright. He appears in another of Sue Green's Land Army photos.

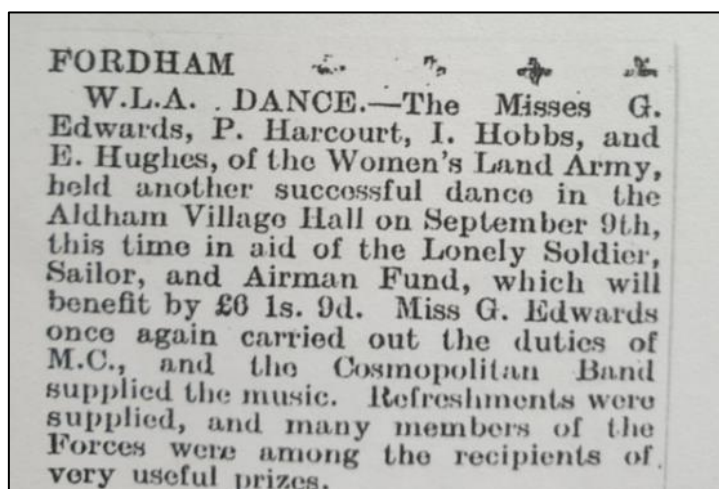


Daniel was not originally from Fordham, we do not know where he was born, although he gives a birth date of the 8th of March 1888. With the nickname of Taffy, would it be fair to say he may have been Welsh? The 1939 register states he was a coal miner, so perhaps he was Welsh. Although Daniel had worked for about six years for the Gunary family, information about Taffy's former life is a bit of a mystery.

His obituary provided us with some information. Daniel had been a rover for much of his life and served in the military. In 1944 Taffy sadly died at the age of fifty four. Although he was without family, the village had

great respect for their friend. A beautiful quote says that 'Taffy' had proved his merit as a worker and social comrade; he always had a ready smile and kindly word for every child. His friends collected for an honourable funeral which took place at All Saints Churchyard under Roman Catholic rituals.'

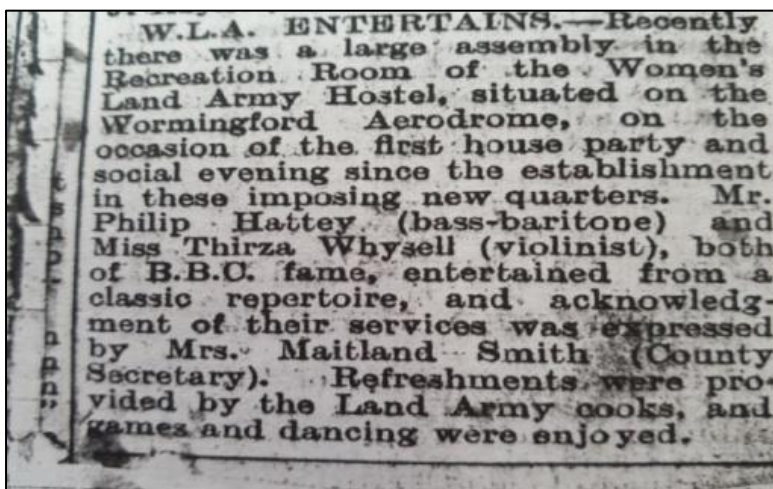
For the WLA, it was not all hard work, there was time to have fun and attend dances that were organised in and around Fordham.



The newspaper cutting above describes a WLA dance organised by Grace Edwards, Pearl Harcourt, Ivy Hobbs and Elsie Hughes members of WLA residing in Fordham. They held a very successful dance at Aldham and raised £11.11s.7d to swell the Army Comforts Fund, The Cosmopolitan Dance Band of the Queen's Regiment provided the music.

FLHS has located a Pearl Harcourt on the Land Army Index. Born in Dagenham in 1924, she was a hosiery repairer. She resigned from the Land Army in 1946.

We know that Land Army girls were billeted on Wormingford airfield, close to Houds and Arbour Farms as confirmed by a newspaper article.



‘WLA entertains. Recently there was a large assembly in the Recreational Room of the Women’s Land Army Hostel in Wormingford situated on Wormingford Aerodrome, on the occasion of the first house party and social evening since the establishment in these imposing new quarters. Mr Phillip Hattey (bass baritone) and Miss Thirza Whysell (violinist), both of BBC fame, entertained from a classic repertoire and acknowledgement of their services was expressed by Mrs Maitland Smith County Secretary. Refreshments were provided by the Land Army cook and games and dances were enjoyed.’

Sources of Information

Pages 196, 198, 199 & 203 Ref. W.E Shewell-Cooper Land Army Manual 1941.

Page 198 National Service Women's Land Army – God Speed the Plough and the Woman Who Drives It. © IWM (Art.IWM PST 5996)

Page 200 www.womenslandarmy.co.uk/world-war-two/recruitment-and-enrolment/propaganda-posters

Pages 201 to 206 www.womenslandarmy.co.uk/tag/essex/

Page 201 'Voices from History: Essex Land Girls. Dee Gordon 2015

Pages 208, 209 Newspaper article 2008

Pages 210 Fordham Times Article.

Pages 214, 215 The Chelmsford Chronicle 1939.

Pages 214, 215, 218 Land Army Index. Ancestry.co.uk and Find my Past

Chapter 16 – Individual's research from Ancestry.co.uk and Find my Past.

CHAPTER 17

Evacuees

'The government is urging people to leave Clacton and other at risk towns, sending round a loud speaker van with fire warnings; the effect was panic! Pets were being put to sleep. A few people had boarded up their houses, but some had just abandoned them.' M.F.



Evacuees. W. Shepherd Collection.

When recalling WW2, for many of us, the word evacuee conjures up pictures of children being shipped off to safer places by worried parents. There was great concern regarding their children's safety with the fear of invasion from Germany. It was an awful decision for parents to have to make. There are many reels of film and countless photographs of children being ushered onto trains carrying tiny suitcases and gas masks; distraught mothers weeping as they waved goodbye to their children, not knowing when they would return.

My own mother Iris Shepherd aged eleven was evacuated twice from London; first to Ruspur in Sussex and later on in the war down to Cornwall with her two younger brothers Fred and Charlie, aged seven and six. What a huge responsibility for an eleven year old child to undertake. It is difficult to understand how those children must have felt, leaving their homes and parents behind, unless you have experienced that trauma yourself. My mother told me she had strict instructions from my grandmother, not to be separated from her two little brothers and fortunately they were all kept together.



Subsequent studies about the trauma children experienced at the time and later in life, questions if evacuation was the ideal and logical solution.

It was not just children who were evacuated. There were four categories of evacuee, those consigned, were not suitable for essential war work: School children, the infirm, pregnant women, mothers with babies or pre-school children who would be evacuated together.

How was evacuation organised? Areas of the country were divided into three categories and listed according to risk: Evacuation, Neutral and Reception. Areas such as Greater London, Birmingham and Glasgow were areas that had to be evacuated.

These were evacuation priority areas because of the high risk of being bombed or becoming a battlefield if invasion took place. If you were in a neutral identified area, you would not send or receive evacuees. The Reception areas were rural areas such as Wales, Kent and East Anglia where they would be assessed as safe areas.

The evacuation process was given the apt name of Operation Pied Piper. On the 31st of August 1939, the evacuation order was given, then on the 1st of September, with children assembling in schools; it began.



W. Shepherd Collection

It was a logistical nightmare for the government and authorities. Thousands of volunteers, teachers, officials, railway staff and over 17,000 WVS members provided much needed practical assistance. But for those being evacuated, it was a deeply traumatic and emotional experience and one perhaps some young children would never forget.

A Ministry of Information leaflet had been issued and children who were evacuees were expected to have a bag or small suitcase that contained: gasmask, a change of underclothing, night clothes, shoes or plimsolls, spare socks or stockings, toothbrush, comb, towel, soap, face cloth, handkerchiefs and if possible a warm coat or mackintosh. For the day it was expected that they had a packet of food with them. Each child had a label attached to them with name, school, and evacuation authority written on it.

Some children saw evacuation as an adventure, whilst others had no idea what was going on, where and why they were leaving their loved ones; it must have been heart-breaking. Although it was not

compulsory, many parents in targeted areas agreed it was safer for their children to be elsewhere.

My grandmother could not bear to be without three of her children and sent my grandfather to Sussex to bring them back home. My mother said:

'We lived in Peckham, London and my parents were concerned for the safety of me and my brothers. I was told not to get separated from my brothers and we were very lucky to be billeted next door to each other. I stayed with a very pleasant young couple. We were enrolled in the school and used to walk there together on our own. I liked Rusper and didn't want to go back. But after we were there a year, our father who was a volunteer fire warden came to take my brothers back as the Blitz hadn't started; I had to go back with them. Later when London was being badly bombed we were evacuated again to Cornwall and were lucky to have another nice family.'

Finding somewhere for the children to go was a challenge too. Initially the idea of having the children in camps under supervision was suggested; but government decided on private billets. Homes were assigned children and paid ten shillings and sixpence for the first unaccompanied child and eight shillings and sixpence for subsequent children. The place where children were billeted was assessed but not the suitability of the host, sometimes it did not work out well.

In the beginning it was called the phoney war, as Hitler appeared not to be in a position to invade. Over half of the children were returned home against the wishes of the Ministry of Health. After France fell in 1940, Hitler set his sights on Britain. Evacuation became a reality with places like London, Sheffield, Coventry, Swansea and many more cities being bombarded. The south east that had been designated as a reception area for evacuees, now became an evacuation area and children had to be moved. Even after the Blitz, danger remained with the new threat of

V-1 and V-2 rockets. During July and September 1944 more than a million people moved out of danger zones.

Evacuation was a contentious issue. Some children were never evacuated as parents wanted to keep them close. Parents were worried as the government could not tell them where their children would be billeted. Studies by Anna Freud suggested that the children who stayed with their parents grew more than those sent off to the healthy countryside. Freud later proved that emotional wellbeing was important to a child's growth. This study changed the face of child warfare.

After the war the children returned, some having been away for four or five years. It was, for most, a happy reunion. However, for some parents, their children had changed. They had become somebody else's child, they looked different and in some cases even spoke differently because of dialects. They also had different preferences. It was a huge adjustment for all and evacuation definitely shaped a future generation.

Most analysts would agree that without Operation Pied Piper, the human losses in terms of civilians and in particular the loss of children would have been much higher. When one reflects on evacuation it is difficult to imagine how we would react today if a similar situation was repeated in this country. Could I put my children on a train to 'nowhere' not knowing where they were going? Could I send my children to strangers? The pain of not knowing when I would be with them again or even see them again would be unbearable.

Evacuated Families in Fordham

Trying to find the precise number of evacuee children from our area is difficult. The 1939 register will only show those children who have since died, the blacked out (redacted) entries could possibly be children of the families or evacuees.

We have already mentioned one family who chose to evacuate to rural Fordham. Their home in Clacton was situated in a very precarious

position on the coast. Their life in Fordham during the early years of the war is explained by diary snippets from Millicent Fairhall nee Partridge, with notes from her daughter Mary Fairhall and written up by her daughter Hazel Gooch nee Fairhall.

In the Fordham school log book there are entries that state children who were evacuees that had joined the school. These could be Millicent's children, but she never mentions in her diary where her children went to school. However, we have been able to identify some evacuees.

The Tuhill Family. Angela Church nee Langham who died in 2024 came to live permanently in Fordham in 1941 with her family; she lived in Oak House which was originally four cottages. Angela remembers a woman with her children who came to live with them at Oak House. The woman's husband was in the forces and they had been sent from the East End of London, but we did not know the family name.



Oak House Pre 1940 showing 4 cottages. FLHS Archive

During the final edit of this book, FLHS was contacted by Lynne Thorne who had recognised a photo of her father and grandfather on a Fordham football photo on our history society social media page. Lynne casually wrote on the page, that her father had been evacuated to Oak House.

Needless to say, we contacted Lynne straight away and now, with her permission, I can add some information about her family.

The Tuhill family who came to Fordham after 1939 were grandmother Rosetta Walford nee Herring born in 1891, mother Rosetta Emily Tuhill nee Walford born on the 30th of August 1912 and her children Ronald born in 1933, Edmonton, Irene born in 1937, Edmonton and David born in 1942, Colchester. David was baptised in All Saints Church Fordham on the 17th of May 1942. The record confirms his father, William David Tuhill born in 1908, in Edmonton, was a soldier.

Our attention was brought to a school photograph of Mrs White's class at Fordham School. The little boy in the front row leaning forward to stroke Mrs White's dog is Lynne's uncle, David Tuhill, his sister, Irene is second from the left in the middle row with Fred Waters standing next to her, Fred's brother Donald is also in the picture.



Ronald became friends with the Peachey family and the two families still keep in contact. After the war, the Tuhill family were housed at Shrub End, Colchester. Ronald joined the RAF and served in Egypt, on his return he married Lynne's mother in 1954.

Lynne speaks warmly of Angela Church whom she met just once and Angela's opening sentence was: 'Of course you know I knew Ronnie!'

Lynne says it took her breath away and she had tears at just the mention of her father's name. Only his immediate family called him Ronnie.

Angela then went on to tell Lynne the story of Ronald's evacuation. A few weeks later she sent Lynne a copy of the artist's pastel composition of Oak House (page 329). On the reverse, Angela had some written notes showing how much rent they paid and that Ronnie would deliver newspapers to them; some fond memories.



**Fordham Footballers. Ronnie Tuthill middle front row.
His father William standing on the left. FLHS Archive.**

Marie R.E. Gifford. Living with the Peachey family was eight year old Marie Gifford. She was the daughter of Walter Gifford, an iron foundry worker and Edith Wright from Stratford, Essex. Marie, born in 1931 was one of three siblings. I have been unable to trace where her siblings were sent. Marie went on to marry Edwin C.J. Rayner in 1950, West Ham. Edwin (brother of Gerald mentioned on page 230,) was the son of Bertie Rayner and Mary Rayner nee Fox who lived at Ponders Road, Fordham. It is likely that Marie and Edwin met during her time as an

evacuee, going to Edwin's school and their friendship carrying on after the war.

The Sims Family is mentioned earlier in the book. They were also affected by the war. Charles Sims who was originally from Hampshire moved to Fordham in 1917 with his children; his wife Louise was incapacitated and was not living at home. Charles did not go to war in 1914 as he was a single parent, with five children aged four to sixteen: Frank, Annie, Nora, Edith and Emily. A tribunal decided that he should do some form of war work.



Idols Cottage FLHS Archive.

Having settled in Fordham, the Sims family lived at Idols Cottage and later in Plummers Cottage. The girls joined All Saints School, Fordham in October 1917. Son Frank went back to London to live and became a car mechanic; he married and had a family. But WW2 would see changes for Frank and his wife Alice.

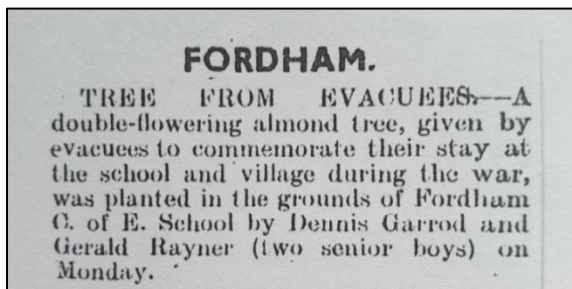
After their home was destroyed in the autumn of 1940, Frank came back to Fordham with his wife and their daughters Patricia and Frances. Whilst Frank continued to work in London throughout the war, his wife Alice, the two girls Patricia and Frances were formally evacuated to

Rickinghall, Suffolk where Frank and Alice had two more sons. The family eventually went back to London where their third son was born.



Alice and Frank Sims at Idols. FLHS Archive

In our archive we have a newspaper cutting that reports an almond tree was given to the school from evacuees.



'A double flowering almond tree, given by evacuees to commemorate their stay at the school and village during the war, was planted in the grounds of Fordham C. of E. School by Dennis Garrod and Gerald Rayner (two senior boys) on Monday.'

Dennis Garrod was the son of Albert Garrod (one of our Home Guard men) and Elsie Wright; they lived at number 2, Ponders Road, Fordham. Gerald Rayner lived at 5, Ponders Cottages, close to the Garrods. Gerald was the son of Bertie Rayner and Mary Fox. Bertie served in WW1 but sadly lost two brothers, John and Albert Rayner who are on our war memorial.

Studying the 1939 register in detail, one often comes across children living with families who appear unconnected. They are recorded as being 'at school.' It is worth checking these out when doing any research as they could be evacuees.

The evacuees at Eight Ash Green School were affecting school attendance of the village children who lived there. In 1940, at a Copford Parish Council meeting it was discussed that the evacuees should be allowed to use the church hall and thus allow the Eight Ash Green children to make full attendance.

Maud Louise Wiltshire. There is an evacuated child; Maud Louise Wiltshire aged twelve recorded on the 1939 register. She was living with Shadrach Norfolk and his wife Annie in Fossetts Lane, Fordham. Maud was the daughter of Ambrose Wiltshire and Hetty Wiltshire nee Noakes, they were from West Ham.

Research shows that Maud Wiltshire was one of eleven children born to her parents Ambrose Wiltshire and Hetty Noakes. Mother Hetty died in 1937, so that may be the reason why Maud was evacuated, but what happened to her three younger siblings Joseph, Winnie and Eileen; where did they go? We have been unable to answer that question. Maud Wiltshire went on to marry James Oats in 1948 in Braintree.

The Hills Family. Having decided to give the 1939 register a closer look, we came across a possible evacuated family living with George Henry Cant and his daughter Mabel Minna at 6, Alexandra Cottages, Plummers Road, Fordham.

There had been a great deal of sadness in George's family. His wife Emily Emma Cant nee Southernwood had died on the 7th of February 1893 aged thirty-four; she had Pulmonary Phthisis (Tuberculosis). Three days later, George's son Albert Daniel aged nine died from Rheumatic fever. The tragedy continued that year when his daughter Frances Emily died in July, she was twelve. The First World War added to George's misery when another of his sons Percy William, died on the 18th of May 1917 at Passchendaele; Percy was twenty-six. Another son, also called George, lived next door with his family.

Living with George senior, were his daughter Mabel Minna and lodger Sydney Colman. Also living with them are evacuees; Caroline Elizabeth Hills, born 1869 in Stepney, her daughter-in-law Gladys Hills nee Laver born 1898 in Ilford and granddaughters Mary Hills born in 1933 and Barbara born in 1938.

Caroline Hills was a widow, her daughter-in-law Gladys was married to her son Herbert Howard Hickmott Hills. In 1939 Herbert and his eldest son Peter had stayed in Ilford; they are working in a brass foundry. Herbert was a clerk and his son a brass foundry worker at W.A. Hudson Curtain Road Shoreditch. Mary remembers Peter later being sent to Dundery Bristol.



George Cant and Barbara Hills



Caroline Hills and Granddaughter Barbara Hills

Through Ancestry we were able to contact the son of Mary Hills and were told that she was still alive and would love to share her memories of Fordham. Below is a description of Mary's time in Fordham.

Mary, now ninety-one, recalled so many memories about her time in Fordham. When asked why she had been sent to Fordham, she said it was because her parents were friends with the Cant family; her grandmother, mother and sister had not been officially evacuated. She could not remember how they travelled to Fordham.

Her brother Roy was sent to Weston Super Mare with his school friends; research showed he stayed at a boarding house; he was thirteen. Mary's sister Joan who was eight years old was sent to Blyth in Suffolk. These siblings were officially evacuated. When he was older Roy served with the Grenadier Guards.

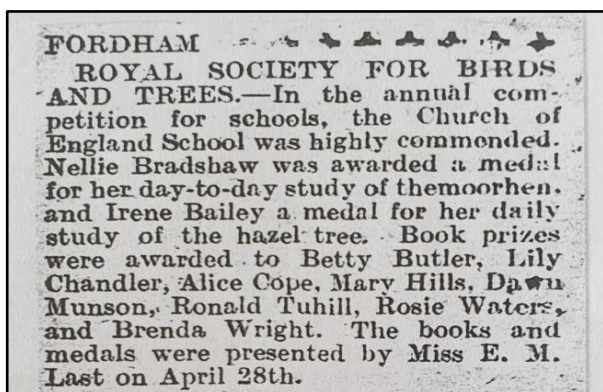


**Mother Gladys Hills with daughters Mary and Barbara.
George Cant holding Barbara Hills and his daughter Minna**

Mary and her sister Barbara spent all of WW2 in Fordham, her mother and grandmother had both returned to Goodmayes, Ilford by January 1941, due to ill health. Sadly Mary and Barbara's grandmother, Caroline Hills, died in 1946.

Mary was old enough to attend All Saint's School, Fordham and can remember her teacher Miss Last who later married and was replaced by Mrs Williams. Mary kept in contact with Mrs Williams and sometimes stayed with her, at the School House in Fordham.

We have found two newspaper articles that mention Mary at school along with other pupils: Nellie Bradshaw, Irene Bailey, Betty Butler, Lily Chandler, Alice Cope, Rosie Waters and Brenda Wright. Another evacuee is also mentioned Ronald Tuhill. Miss Last was still at the school when this competition took place. In 1939, Miss Edith May Last an Infant Schoolteacher, born on the 19th May 1907 in Suffolk, is living at Porters Lane, Fordham Heath with Archibald and Doris Clarke. Edith marries Ernest C. Taylor in 1944.



Mary was successful again in another competition; the annual Bird and Tree Competition covered the whole of Britain. Lillian Chandler did very well with her day to day study of the horse chestnut tree with Peter Byford with his observations of a kingfisher. They were awarded a Montagu Sharp medal and an illustrated copy of Young Britain.

Brian Peachey, Edgar Fox, Joyce Gifford and Mary Hills wrote essays on the wood pigeon, the cuckoo, the walnut tree and damson tree. They were highly commended and awarded book prizes.

FORDHAM

BIRD AND TREE COMPETITION.

Mrs. Williams, headmistress of Fordham C. of E. School, entered the school in the open class of the Bird and Tree Annual Competition, which is organised by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. This competition covers the whole of Britain, and the school on this occasion has been awarded a Certificate of Excellence. The best papers were those of Lillian Chandler on her day-to-day study of the horse chestnut tree, and Peter Byford on the kingfisher from his own observations. They each receive a Montagu Sharp prize medal, accompanied by an illustrated publication, *Young Britain*. The following, who have been highly commended in the report, have been awarded book prizes :—Brian Peachey, Edgar Fox, Mary Hills, and Joyce Gifford for essays on the wood pigeon, the cuckoo, the damson, and the walnut respectively.

We have been given the photographs on pages 232 and 233 of the family outside Alexandra Cottages by the Hills family for our archive. Mary Hills remembers there was no electricity in their house, although the other houses could afford to have electricity connected. Mary would carry an oil lamp up to bed at night.

Memories of the shop opposite with Mr Partridge and the Playles shop in Ponders Road came flooding back. A walk to the farm of Mr Paterson was always enjoyed, they watched the cows being milked then returned home with a can of fresh milk. Mary said that 'George Cant was a chapel man', so they would go with him on a Sunday.

But it was the Christmas parties up at the Wormingford aerodrome that the Americans organised for the village and the evacuees that were most memorable. All the lovely food and sweets, that were in short supply in Fordham, were available.

Mary recalled the names of Malcolm Honeyball, the Petticans who lived next door to George Cant and Alice Cope whose father was Fordham Farm manager.

Mary and her sister Barbara stayed in Fordham for the duration of the war and being very young, they missed their parents; so not always happy memories. After the war Minna Cant continued to keep in contact with the family, her father George died in 1945. After Mary had married and had her own family, Minna continued to visit Mary and her family.



Sisters Barbara and Mary Hills who were evacuated. Pictured with Minna Cant holding Mary's son.

Hilda Cochrane. Living with Ernest and Emily Hopping at Plummers Farm, Fordham was Hilda Cochrane, she was born in 1926, the daughter of Walter Cochrane and Hilda Long, they were from Stratford, Essex.

Henry A. Adams. Born in 1927 and was from the West Ham district. His mother was Alice Elizabeth Simmonds and his father was Henry Charles Adams. In 1939 young Henry is living at Brookfield, Halsted Road, Fordham with Emma and Lillian Mills. Henry senior and Alice remain at Morgan Street, West Ham and Henry is recorded as a munitions worker.

Stanley Oxley. Born in 1935 in West Ham and is described as being a 'friend's child from Stratford.' He was living with Frank and Beatrice Poole at Fordham Heath.

David and William Joyce. In our interviews with Jim Scarlett from Fordham Heath, he told us about David and William Joyce who were born in 1932 and 1935, respectively. They lived with Jim's aunt Edith Cooper and her husband Herbert at the White House on Halstead Road, Fordham Heath. David and William were from Poplar.

Mary Jean Buckley nee Pitt. Mary was another evacuee, but not from too far away. Her parents Charles Pitt and mother Esther Pitt nee Woodward lived at Crown Cottage, Harwich Road, Ardleigh. Her father was called up and so his wife took the two children Mary and her sister Muriel, to live with Esther's parents Isaac and Ethel Woodward who lived at Ponders Cottages, Fordham. We know all this from an interview that Jean (Mary Pitt) gave in 1999 when the school celebrated its 150th anniversary.

She writes that her grandmother Ethel Woodward had previously been the school caretaker, but sadly needed some support as she was ill. Moving in with Jean's grandparents satisfied her father's concerns as he did not want the family to be on their own once he had been called up. His wife could help her mother who was poorly. In her interview, Jean gives us some insights into school life at All Saints School, Fordham.

As I recall, you moved from the little classroom to the big one any time between the ages of seven and nine depending on your capabilities. Here you stayed until it was time to leave, no moving on at eleven then. In the big room was a round black stove which was not only kept the pupils warm, but on which the milk monitors heated our mid-morning milk. Those who didn't like milk neat, brought in a jar of cocoa and sugar to add to it.

Being war time and living in the country, we had two weeks school holiday in June to help with the pea picking. This meant not such a long summer holiday. At Christmas time there was great excitement as quite a lot of children were invited to a party by the American Forces at Wormingford Aerodrome. Everybody's name was put in a hat and each

time I was fortunate in having my name pulled drawn out. Off we used to go in the American trucks for such a feast and always came back home with what to us seemed such a lot of candy.

There were several evacuees in the village staying various lengths of time and when the war was over, Mrs Williams, the then head teacher, organised a collection so that an almond or cherry blossom tree could be bought and planted in their memory. I have always presumed that the beautiful tree that you have at the front of the school is that very tree. I always stop to have a look at it when visiting the grave of my grandparents at Fordham churchyard. I had the occasion to visit an acquaintance in Hornchurch and on chatting to another guest, I discovered to my great surprise that she was the sister of two evacuees who were in fact at the school at the same time as myself and who I could remember.

Another 'evacuee' was Isobel Waldrop (Waldron?) who was living with postman Ernest Bailey and his wife Violet. Initially we thought Isobel might be a visiting land army girl, but further research has shown she is likely to be related. Isobel was initially evacuated to Canvey Island with thirty-six other people of different ages and occupations, from London.

As recorded on the 1939 register, it states that the group had been evacuated from a public institution to a property called the Wonderbar Promenade on Canvey Island. Sadly Isobel died on the 17th January 1941, aged nineteen as a result of a health issue and she is buried in an unmarked grave at All Saints Church, Fordham. Other information about where she came from initially has not been discovered... yet!



**29, Wonderbar Promenade, Atherstone Road,
Canvey Island. Canvey Historical Group.**

Sources of Information

Pages 221, 225, 226 Millicent Fairhall's Diary

Pages 221 to 225 www.thehistorypress.co.uk/article/the-evacuation-of-children-during-the-second-world-war/

Pages 222, 224 Interview with Iris Shepherd 1997

Page 226 Interview with Angela Church from Oral Project interview.

Pages 226, to 228 Information from Lynne Thorne 2025

Pages 231 to 236 Interview with Mary Hills Evacuee February 2025

Page 229 Fordham Miscellany. J.Kay

Page 231 Copford Parish Council Minutes 1939

Pages 237 to 238 Ref. School booklet 1999

Notes on Evacuation. Nicky Gibbs

CHAPTER 18

Rationing

'Later, mother was to show me her 'war hoard.' All it amounted to was three small pieces of soap. She was almost shamefaced as she unwrapped them, but she said soap had been so awful in the last war just 21 years ago that she thought this time we would have three small bars wrapped in paper, they would be a small reminder of what soap should be like and they could use it on special occasions.' M.F.

Rationing

During both world wars, food shortages became a problem and hunger in the civilian population was common. German attacks on British supply ships were made in an effort to starve the country into submission. These naval blockades had a major impact on food imports and made supplies of foods from overseas scarce. Before the war, over 70% of foods such as cheese, sugar, fruit and cereals were imported and around 50% of meat was imported.

In addition, the war had a huge impact on agriculture. Both men and horses were sent overseas in large numbers to support the war effort. This meant that agricultural output dropped and as a result prices began to rise, and shortages occurred. The shortages encouraged people to hoard as they saw supplies dwindle and prices surge. The government responded by fixing the prices of staple food stuffs such as meat.

By 1943, almost every household item was either in short supply and had to be queued for or was not available at all. The work of the Women's Land Army was vital in supplying food to our nation.

During the Second World War, rationing began on the 8th of January 1940 when bacon, butter and sugar were rationed. By 1942 many other foodstuffs, including meat, milk, cheese, eggs and cooking fat were also 'on the ration'.

This is a typical weekly food ration for an adult:

Bacon & Ham	4 oz.
Other meat	value of 1 shilling and 2 pence (equivalent to 2 chops)
Butter	2 oz.
Cheese	2 oz.
Margarine	4 oz.
Cooking fat	4 oz.
Milk	3 pints
Sugar	8 oz.
Preserves	1lb every 2 months
Tea	2 oz.
Eggs	1 fresh egg
	Plus allowance of dried egg
Sweets	12 oz. every 4 weeks

Vegetarians were allowed to have extra fats, including butter and cheese, as a replacement for their meat ration.

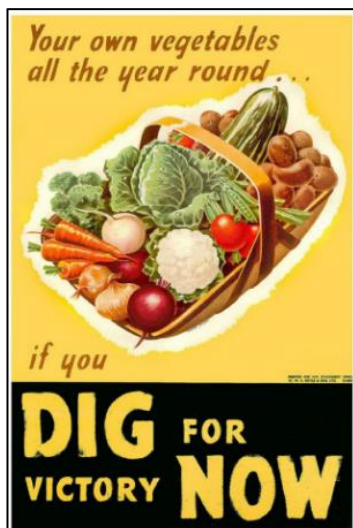
A number of other items, such as tinned goods, dried fruit, cereals and biscuits were rationed using a points system. The number of points allocated to a person changed according to availability and consumer demand.

Not all foods were rationed. Fruit and vegetables were never rationed but were often unavailable or in short supply, especially if they were imported products such as tomatoes or oranges.

Filler foods such as oatmeal, potatoes and bread were not rationed during the war and this was considered a decision which helped the public to accept rationing of other foods. At least people could fill their bellies. It was not uncommon to see long queues as products became difficult to obtain.

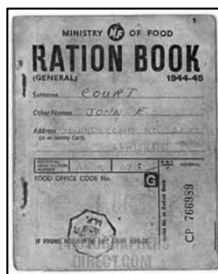
The Ministry of Food encouraged people to grow their own vegetables in a scheme commonly called Dig for Victory. People were asked to use every available space including public parks to grow food to eat.

The 1939 Register was used to ensure all the men, women and children who had been registered, were issued ration books that would enable them to receive their allowance of rationed food. They then registered in a shop of their choice. When someone made a purchase, the shopkeeper marked the goods off in the customer's book.



WW2. IWM Poster

Special exceptions were made allowing some people who required additional food, for example underground mine workers, members of the Women's Land Army and the Armed forces.



The retailer had to have a special licence provided by the Food Control Committee. They ensured that the licences were only given to establishments that sold food in the lead up to the war. This meant that food distribution could be controlled, and everyone got their fair share. There were measures put in place to ensure that the retailer could not hoard rationed food or products.

People who could afford it, could go to restaurants to supplement their rations up until May 1942, there were no restrictions on restaurant meals. Even after that date, eating out was still permitted. There were

limited restrictions on the amount of meat you could have, the times of day that the restaurants could be open and the price of the meals.

The Ministry of Food, set up in 1939, closed when rationing ended in 1958, coal being the last commodity de-rationed. Its aim was to regulate food production and usage. The Ministry of Food used numerous ways to help people make the most of their rations without wasting food, while at the same time giving those ideas to help make mealtimes more interesting. They introduced various campaigns, television and radio broadcasts as well as literature to educate the public.



Shoppers queue to use their ration books. IWM Archive

Of course, it was very tempting to try to get rationed goods by paying over the odds for them on the “black market”. The Ministry of Food brought cases to court in which they alleged that food or products that were rationed were being sold “under the counter.”

An example is the case of Jack Eccleston of Inskip who, in 1941, sold wheat and oats without coupons being exchanged to a Ben Trafford of Hebden Bridge. Both claimed that they did not know that they were doing wrong, but were fined £6.16 shillings. A Cheshire farmer, George

Holland, was fined £400 and sent to prison for providing meat on the “black market” also in 1941. He claimed that he was losing money when sending his cattle to be graded for sale by the Ministry. He was called unpatriotic by the Magistrates who felt that there was no defence for his actions.

Food was not the only commodity to be rationed. As early as 1939 petrol was rationed and later in 1941 clothes, later still in 1942 soap. The rationing continued even after the war, as Europe recovered. Supply chains were then restored and life returned to normal.

During the war, self-sufficiency was the key. Keeping hens and rabbits was very common. But the Ministry of Agriculture were keen to ensure that owners had the correct number of hens, were not selling eggs for profiteering etc. Doorstop checks were common.

Rabbits were bred for meat; rabbit stew was a very common meal. The skins could be sold to the Rag and Bone man.

As the Fairhall’s neighbour moved out of her home in Clacton, she offered her chickens to them. People who were leaving shared the contents of their larders with those staying behind. Observations recorded in the diary help us to visualise the changes for ordinary people leading up to and during WW2.

The hardships of WW1 were recalled by Millicent Fairhall in her diary remembering things her mother had said. The ghastly, black coarse stuff that was supposed to be bread and the equally repugnant bright yellow margarine that they were forced to buy.

There is an interesting comment too about poverty and the introduction of rationing. She wrote:

‘Although we did not realise it at the time, ironically it was the war that would bring relief to many people in Britain, at least from the constant fear of poverty. People did not grumble as of habit as today; most of us got every ounce of pleasure and interest through life but the poverty was there all the time. People worked long hours for low wages.’

It was not until the early 1950s that most commodities came 'off the ration'. Meat was the last food item that was de-rationed when food rationing ended completely in 1954.

My mother, Iris Shepherd, married in 1948. She told me that her older sister saved all her coupons for the wedding breakfast. The wedding reception took place in my grandmother's front room and the cake was a fine construction of three tiers. But the bottom two tiers were cardboard; only the top tier was a cake.



**Wedding celebration John and Iris Shepherd
1948**

Sources of Information

Pages 240 to 244 At Home in World War Two – Rationing Stewart Ross
Pages 240 to 244 www.findmypast.co.uk/1939register/rationing-in-britain-ww2
Page 242 Poster Imperial War Museum website, Wikipedia
Page 244 Millicent Fairhall Diary FLHS Archive
Page 245 Interview about Rationing with Iris Shepherd 1997
Notes on Rationing by Nicky Gibbs

CHAPTER 19

Home Front

'Shelters are being erected all over the town. I think some people sleep in the underground ones. We are getting used to the tea ration.'

For those at home during WW2, there were plenty of roles one could engage in to contribute to the war effort. The constant worry of loved ones away fighting, the threat of bombing and invasion would have caused constant distress to many of the villagers.

There was much to be done in protecting the home and those who lived there. People had been bombarded with information. 'Blackout' was enforced. Curtains, cardboard and paint were used to prevent light escaping from houses, nobody wanted to be fined for not complying. Windows were taped up, walls braced, buckets of sand kept handy, sandbags appeared everywhere. Anderson and Morrison shelters were considered.

Whilst still living in Clacton, Millicent Fairhall describes having to purchase special blackout material selling at one shilling (5p) a yard at a shop called Rattees; a drapers in Old Road. She comments that the drapers were doing a roaring trade. Millicent's husband was busy working out which windows needed to be blacked out.

As villagers listened to the radio, the forces sweetheart Vera Lynn, sang 'Keep the home fires burning;' a song made popular in WW1. Fordham did everything to maintain their routine and to support those serving the country.



Involvement in the Home Front activities would give the village opportunities not only to raise funds for groups; but to raise morale too.

In previous chapters we have read about our villager's involvement in many valuable organisations; the Home Guard, the Fire Service, the Land Army, the ARP, the WVS, and the Parish Council Invasion Committee. Whilst villagers patrolled and protected our village or worked on the land to supply vital food; those unable to participate, may have become part of the Welcome Home Committee.

The Welcome Home Fund

The Committee of the Fordham Welcome Home Fund was extremely busy during WW2 and although we have no official name list for them, we can recognise some names that appear on a regular basis in the newspaper write-ups.

Madeline Betty Rideout is one name, in particular, that appears regularly and she arranged many dances. Born in 1923 in Fordham, Madeline lived at Swiss Cottage, Ponders Road in 1939. Her parents were Charles Rideout and Phoebe Rideout nee Osborne, and she had a brother Major (name not military title!) Alfred Rideout and sister Joyce Grace. Major and his sister Joyce had a double wedding in Colchester in December 1939. Major, who was a sergeant with the Field Artillery, was wounded in Italy in 1944.

The Fordham Welcome Home Fund committee was registered under the War Charities Act of 1940. In other towns and villages up and down the country, similar groups were also working hard to organise events. As seen in T.V. dramas such as 'Home Fires,' it was the Women's Institute, a pacifist organisation, that often took control of many events, however it couldn't do work that was directly connected to the military aspect of the war effort. It could however work on food production and any other voluntary work that needed doing to keep the countryside ticking over like setting up markets, knitting, sewing and looking after

evacuees. Fordham's WI was not formed until the 26th of October 1954, so it was down to the committee to organise events.

Many of Fordham's events were recorded in the local paper and collected by Glen Jackson; they have been added to the FLHS archive; some are indated. We can appreciate the hard work put into the fund raising events by the committee and the support given by the villagers and the US Forces. Dances were very popular and most were held in the Parish Room.

The music was mainly supplied by Mr Beaumont's Radiogram Service; he was very popular and much in demand. Below are some of the reports. There was a Charles Beaumont living at the Queens Head in Wormingford. Perhaps this was the gentleman that supplied the music.

2nd March 1940. Dance

'A dance arranged by the Welcome Home Fund committee was held in the village hall on March 2nd. A very good gathering had a happy evening and the Fund benefits by £4.3s. Mr R. Downing was a capital M.C. and Mr Beaumont's radiogram supplied the music. Competition winners were Miss B. Saunders, Miss V. Cant and Mrs Chivers.'

15th June 1940. Dance

'The call of agricultural interests has naturally affected the attendance at the dances lately, but a very pleasant evening was spent on 15th June. Mr Beaumont's Radiogram Service supplied the music and Mr Downing officiated as M.C. The competitions were won by Miss C. Rayner, Mrs Truman and Mr Munson (U.S. Forces). There was a net profit of £1.13s. for the fund.'

10th November. Dance

'The committee of WHF was well supported at the dance in the village hall on 10th November. Mr Byford carried out the duties of M.C. and very suitable music was supplied by Beaumont's Radio Service. Mrs Towle

was once again successful with her partner, a member of the U.S.A. Forces, in securing the spot prize. Among the competition winners were Mrs Forrest (bottle of gin), John Rayner (grocery parcel) and Miss C. Rayner (teapot). The committee had the assistance of many ladies with the refreshments and the very satisfactory profit of £9 was realised for the fund.'

15th December. Christmas Dance

'The Christmas Dance in the Village Hall in aid of the WHF was held on 15th December. Allied Forces being very prominent in a hall packed to overflowing. The dance was soon in full swing to the music supplied by Mr C.G. Rushbrooke's amplifier equipment. Spot prizes were won by Mrs N. Colman and her U.S.A. partner. In the junior competition Michael Harman and C. Samson were successful. The total profit for the dance amounted to £7.7s.3d. The benefit realised by the other part of the entertainment will be announced later.'

6th July. Dance

'A very enjoyable dance was held at the village hall. Mr Beaumont's Radiogram Services provided the music and Mr Downing officiated as M.C. During the evening notification of a grand fete to be held on Saturday July 21st in the aid of the Fund. Mrs G. Forrest and Mrs C. Rideout and members of U.S. Forces were successful in the competitions. The profit of £2.2s.7d.'

17th November. Dance

'The inclement weather was evidently detrimental to the support of a dance held in the village hall on 17th November by the committee of the Welcome Home Fund, but the predetermined programme was carried out and a very enjoyable evening was spent. Beaumont's Radiogram Service once again supplied the music and also carried out the duties of the M.C. Spot prize was won by Miss June Garrod and partner, and other competitions by Mrs Cope, Miss June Garrod and members of the U.S.A. Forces. The profit for the fund amounted to £2.8s.'

Saturday (no date) Dance

'Miss Frost aids Local WHF. A very enjoyable dance organised by Miss Winnie Frost of Fordham was held in Aldham Village Hall on Saturday. National uniforms were very conspicuous in the gathering, besides the Army, Navy, Air Force and Allied Forces personnel; two uniformed Italians were present for a short period. The dance was well supported and to aid the Fordham Welcome Home Fund a total of £10.4s.8d was raised. Bob Meryl and his boys, an all American band supplied the music. Refreshments were provided and prizes were won by a member of the U.S. Army, Cpl Hopping (RAF) and a member of the R.A.'

There were other social events organised by the Welcome Home Committee.

20th March 1941. Whist Drive

'The committee of the Welcome Home Fund also organised a very successful whist drive on Tuesday. Mr Randall officiated as M.C. and a very pleasant evening was spent. Winners were Mesdames C. Peachey, C. Smith, W. Wickens, S. Cant and Bullock. Messrs, C. Wright, L. Taylor and Cole. Competitions winners were Mrs Powell, Mrs Towle, Mrs Pilgrim, Mr L. Taylor and Mrs Rideout. The total profit realised for the Welcome Home Fund amounted to £2.17s3d.'

'A whist Drive organised by the Committee of WHF was greatly enjoyed on Tuesday, although the attendance was rather disappointing. Mr S. Cant carried out the duties of M.C. and the prize winners were Mrs Chaplin, Mrs Towle, Mrs S. Cant, Mrs Powell, Mrs C. Peachey (acting as gentleman) Mr C. Wright, Mr H. Cope and Mr T. Chandler. Prizes were also given for other competitions, which added to the fund.'

Social

'The committee of the WHF organised a social in the village hall on Friday, when a very enjoyable evening was spent, and the younger folk joined enthusiastically in the numerous competitions and games. The

grand total of £8.12s was realised for the fund. Competition winners were Miss M. Rideout, Mrs P. Chaplin, Miss M. Donnelly and Miss I. Chandler.'

Rummage Sale

'A Rummage sale with side shows followed by a social, was held in the village hall on Saturday. There was an exceptional display at the sale, which found much support, realising £7.00. Darts and Bowling for the Pig were a big attraction in the sideshows; the pig kindly given by Mr Chamley was first won by Mr F. Doe, who returned it for further competition, when it was won by Mr J. Rayner. A very enjoyable social in the evening was also well attended. The receipts of the combined activity realise £25.'

Apart from dances organised by the Welcome Home Committee raising money, other worthy societies were also supported. Miss Madeline Rideout features as organiser in some of the other dances. Mr Beaumont's Radiogram Service was again much in demand, although the Rhythm Aces Band provides some competition for music.

April 20th 1945. The British Sailors' Society Dance

'The British Sailors' Society benefits by the sum of £5.14s 6d, which was realised at a dance held in the village hall on April 20th, organised by Miss M. Rideout and Mrs D. Pilgrim. Mr Beaumont's Radiogram Service provided the music, and Mr Downing carried out the duties of M.C. There were more prizes than usual and competition winners were Miss Saunders, Mr Byford, Miss K. Rayner, Miss D. Ratcliffe, Mr C. Harris, Mrs Chivers, Mr R. Downing and members of the U.S. Forces. The organisers wish to express thanks to the various donors of prizes.'

The Merchant Navy Dance

'The Merchant Navy Benevolent Fund will benefit by the profit of £1.4s.2d realised at a dance held in the Village Hall on Friday. Miss Madeline Rideout the organiser has decided to continue her series of

dances in aid of some worthy causes. Mr L. Fosker once again acted as M.C., while the Rhythm Aces Band provided the latest swing music. Competition winners were Miss D. Tatham, John Rayner and two members of the U.S.A. Forces.'

British Red Cross Dance.

'In the village Hall last Friday, a dance was arranged by Miss Madeline Rideout to aid the above fund, and the total profit of £4.1s.5d. was realised. Competitions were won by Mrs L. Peachey and members of the U.S. Forces. The Rhythm Aces Band supplied the latest dance tunes and Mr L. Fosker once again officiated as M.C. The hall was well filled, and a very happy evening was spent.'

Welcome Home Fund - A Grand Fete 21st July 1945

On the 6th July 1945, it had been announced that on the 21st July, a Grand Fete was to be held on the sports meadow with kind permission from Messrs Gunary and sons. The fete was to include music as usual from Mr Beaumont's Radiogram Service, a gymkhana where 16 ponies were to be supplied by Mr Lewis Gunary.

Clown Bertram would provide the entertainment with two shows throughout the day. There would also

be sideshows and refreshments. In the evening a dance would take place in the parish room. After the event, the fete was described in the newspaper as 'a fine programme which deserved greater support!'

FORDHAM
WELCOME HOME FUND
(Registered under the War Charities
Act, 1940).

A GRAND FETE
will be held on the
FOOTBALL FIELD,
SATURDAY, JULY 21st,
from 3 p.m. to 11.45 p.m.,
CHILDREN'S FANCY DRESS
PARADE, 3 p.m.
CLOWN BERTRAM, 4 p.m. and 8 p.m.
PONY GYMKHANA, 6 p.m.
SIDE SHOWS, DANCING, Etc.

TEAS SUPPLIED.

210|
ADMISSION: Adults 1/-; Children 6d.

The event of the day was the Gymkhana. The adult and junior riders in the gymkhana had given a good show of horsemanship. It was recorded that Mr R. Porter and Mr K. Lucas huntsmen of the East Essex Hounds were judges. Prizes were presented by Mrs L. Gunary to following competitors.

Jumping : 1. Miss P. Barson, 2. Mr Wisbey, 3. Miss Pamela Rodd.

Bending: 1. Miss P. Rodd, 2. Miss J. Everitt, 3. Miss J. Cubitt.

Potato Race: 1. Miss J. Gunary, 2. Miss Betty Butcher, 3. Miss J. Cubitt.

Musical chairs: 1. Mr Wisbey, 2. Mrs Cubitt, 3. Miss J. Gunary.

During the day, successful competitors in the side shows and competitions were:

Bowling for the pig - Mr G. Beard

Treasure Hunt - Mr A Wright

Competition winners - Mr King (Copford) Mrs Beard, Mrs Coleman, C. Rayner, E. Cant, J. Goodley, A. Ratcliffe, S. Green, Mrs Cummings, Mrs Garrod, Mr Duncombe, C. Bullock, Mrs H. Cope, Miss B. Rayner, Mrs Bartlett and Mrs S. Cant. The highest bid for the crate of ale £1.1s was won by Mr H. Cope.

Following the day activities, a dance in the village hall concluded the programme, Mr Beaumont of course provided the music and carried out the duties of M.C. Mr L. Gunary on behalf of the committee expressed his thanks for all the support of the gymkhana and all who had given so generously.

Mr H. Cope thanked all who had worked so well at the side shows. A fantastic £52 was raised for the Welcome Home Fund.

The 1944 fete day photograph celebrates the community spirit of Fordham village, the adults and children, the Americans and an ATC Band raised money for the Welcome Home Fund.



**A 1944 Fete Day with American Airman and an ATC Band.
FLHS Photo Album.**

We have endeavoured to name as many people on this photograph thanks to FLHS member, Marlene Boyle.

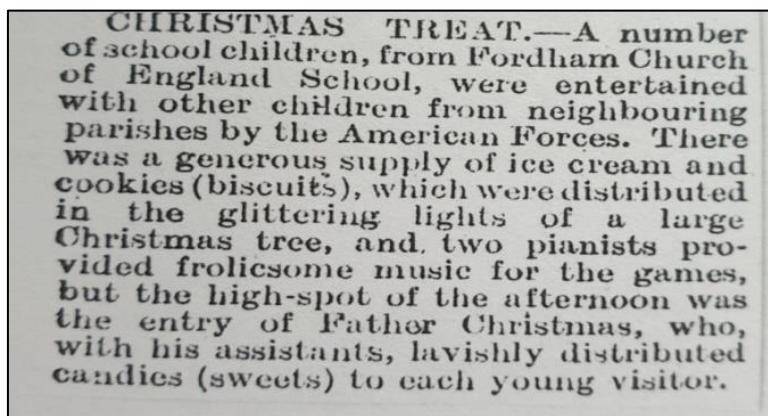
Doris Beard recognised her grandmother **Sarah Davey** on the far right of the photo; the lady with the flowery hat. Sarah was the wife of Home Guard member, William Davey.

The tall gentleman with the flat cap, on the right between the two ATC members is **Isaac Woodward** (Ike) of 10, Ponders Road, Fordham. **Thomas R.B. Towle** our parish clerk on the Invasion Committee has been identified as the gentleman with the trilby furthest right between the telegraph poles. Thomas lived at West View, Church Road, Fordham. **Herbert Partridge**, our Senior ARP Warden, is likely to be the gentleman immediately behind the American serviceman. Herbert lived at the Stores on Moat Road, Fordham.

The vicar of All Saints Church, Fordham, **William Oddie** is next to Herbert. His curly hair and clerical collar were clues to his identity.

The winner of the fancy dress competition was **Derek Harman** the son of Arthur and Edith Harman who lived at Quilters Green Fordham. Arthur is featured in Chapter 23.

Christmas Treat. American troops kept the children at the school happy with entertainment and would organise Christmas treats. They were able to supply many goods that villagers had difficulty acquiring due to rationing. There were generous supplies of ice cream and cookies provided for them with the usual large twinkling Christmas tree. Lots of music, always plenty of games and then the high spot of the afternoon was Father Christmas, lavishly bringing lots of candy to the excited children.



School Activities

The school was also actively involved in organising events to support the Welcome Home Fund. Mrs Williams, recorded as Headmistress, had co-ordinated a 'lengthy' programme organised by the Welcome Home Committee. The vicar Rev. William Oddie the rector was compere with the head teacher as stage manageress.

Alice Cope was singled out for the best acting by judge Private Ferguson USA Forces and awarded a 10 shillings prize. The concert was a huge success raising £15 18s and 9d for the Welcome Home Fund.

SCHOOL CHILDREN'S CONCERT.
The Welcome Home Fund Committee presented a lengthy programme at a concert, co-ordinated by Mrs. Williams (headmistress) in the C. of E. School on November 24th. The Rev. W. Oddie (Rector) was compere, and Mrs. Williams was stage manageress. The artists were well rehearsed school children in a varied programme, comprising solos, recitations, quartets, and short plays.
A special feature was a comedy entitled "The dear departed." To encourage an extra effort a prize of ten shillings (presented by Mrs. Williams) was given for the best acting. The Judge was Pte. Ferguson (U.S.A. Forces), and he found much difficulty in selecting Alice Cope (alias Mrs. Slater). Her emphasis and personal feeling certainly deserved some recognition, although the rest of the cast gave adequate support.
A very pleasing programme concluded with congratulations from the Rev. W. Oddie. Competitions added to the total raised and were won by Mrs. Bullock, Mrs. Ellis, Mrs. Cape, Miss J. Waters, and Janet Hobbs. The total profit realised for the Welcome Home Fund amounted to £15 18s. 9d.

Collecting Ship half-pennies sounded like a regular occurrence as reported in this cutting with Peter Ratcliffe once again topping the list. It was identified in the school log book that Peter was the best collector in the Lexden and Winstree area with a total of 643 coins.

FORDHAM.
SHIP HALF-PENNIES. — The school children deserve a compliment for their continuous support of the Merchant Navy Comforts Fund. Their latest subscriptions total £2 4s., Peter Ratcliffe once again topping the list with the grand amount of £1 14s. 5d.

During 1942/43 the school collected the coins for the Merchant Navy Comforts Fund. Peter Charles Ratcliffe lived in Fossetts Lane, Fordham.

The Welcome Home Committee had not finished with their community events. There were to be more celebrations to organise after the surrender of Germany and Japan. You can read about the Victory Celebrations in the last chapter. .

Life goes on in Fordham

There were twenty-eight baptisms during the war years and thirty-four burials. Weddings continued to take place up and down the country. Perhaps with the fear of war and military personnel going off to fight, couples felt they wanted to get married offering hope to both that they would resume married life after the war; however long it would last.

The online records for marriages at All Saints Church are only available online until 1943, we cannot access what went on from 1943 to the end of the war, although we do know that the first wedding after the war was that of Susannah Green and soldier husband Ernest Hay on the 18th of August 1945 (Chapter 16 on Land Girls.) FLHS also has newspaper articles with wedding announcements in our archive.



All Saints Church, Fordham. FLHS Archive.

The records below are taken from information in the Parish Records of All Saints Church Fordham.

War Time Marriages in Fordham

4th March 1939. George William Woodward of Rose Cottage, Quilters Green, was a tractor driver. He married Marjorie Alice Cant from Heathside, Fordham Heath.

1st April 1939. George Henry Stannard, a soldier from The Royal Citadel, Plymouth married Phyllis May Nice from Fordham Heath.

29th May 1939. Kenneth Major White, a motor fitter from Layer Road, Colchester married Phyllis Muriel Taylor from Grand View, Eight Ash Green.

26th August 1939. Eric George Cansdale, a cabinet maker from Homeleigh, London Road, Copford married Mary Beard of Fordham.

9th September 1939. John Powell, a soldier from H.M. Forces from Boveton Camp, Hampshire, married Rhoda Emma Cresswell of 2 Alexander Cottages, Fordham.

23rd September 1939. Arthur Frederick Schofield, a labourer from Beacons End Lane, Stanway, married Kathleen Joan White of Ponders Cottages, Fordham.

18th November 1939. Major (Christian name) Alfred Charles Rideout, a brewer's labourer of Swiss Cottages, Fordham married Mildred Stella Fisher of East Hill House School, Colchester.

9th December 1939. Albert William Wickens, a carpenter of the Carpenters Arms, Aldham married Joyce Grace Rideout of Swiss Cottage, Fordham.

26th December 1939. Alfred Jack Quinney, an engineer from Rose Green, Chappel married Eileen Maud Rhoda Fox of 5, Ponders Cottages, Fordham.

23rd March 1940. Stanley Harold Cant, a labourer from 4, Alexander Cottages, Fordham married Catherine Clara Cope of Fordham Hall.

6th July 1940. Sidney William Colman an engineer married Ellen Ethel Cope both from Fordham Hall.

14th September 1940. Ernest Jack Pilgrim, a soldier residing at Chappel, married Daisy May Wright of Fordham.

30th November 1940. Arthur Ratcliffe, a cowman married Ada Beard both from Fordham.

26th July 1941. Henry Edward Cope, a soldier residing at Fordham Hall married Vera Georgina May Fox of Ponders Cottages, Fordham.

4th August 1941. Stanley Arthur Cranfield a bricklayer of 25, Upton Street, St. Johns, Worcester married Joan Muriel Mortlock from Fordham.

16th August 1941. Edwin Thomas Kendall, a soldier from St. Andrews, Watford Heath married Peggy Barbara Etheridge from Fordham.

15th November 1941. Aubrey Ernest Letch, a motor coach proprietor of Sible Hedingham married Gwendoline Rose Goodley from Fordham.

15th August 1942. Harold Alfred Nelson Meadows, a tool maker from Myland, Colchester, married Betty Margaret Henson from Fordham.

24th December 1942. James Baines, a farmer from Chappel married Mary Chamley from Fordham.

21st January 1942. Percy Harold Baker, Civil Defence AFS from St. Botolphs, Colchester married Eliza Emily Davey from Fordham.

9th April 1942. Edgar Victor Forrest, a soldier from Croydon married Gwendoline Lily Cudmore from Fordham. Sadly her brother Douglas, who was a witness at the marriage, was killed later in the war.

1st May 1943. Dennis Walter Brown, a sailor from Colchester married Joan Mary Parker from Fordham.

Signalman Edward George Cope and Miriam Sellars A.T.S.

24th July 1943

FORDHAM.
KHAKI WEDDING. — A very interesting wedding was solemnised at Fordham Parish Church on Saturday, the Rev. W. Oddie officiating, between Signalman Edward George Cope, second son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry James Cope, of The Hall, Fordham, and Private Miriam Sellars, A.T.S., daughter of Mrs. Gladys Mary Challace, of 13, Earnest Villas, Crowle Street, Hedon Road, Hull, Yorks. Both bridegroom and bride wore their Service uniforms, and the bride was given away by Mr. H. J. Cope. The best man was Mr. Stanley Harold Cant. A reception was afterwards held at The Hall, Fordham. Many presents were received from relatives and friends, also from the bride's A.T.S. unit and Signalmen associated with the bridegroom. The honeymoon will be spent at Hull.

Charles Henry Thurlow and Dorothy Ellen Levine
14th October 1944

THURLOW—LEVINE.

A pretty wedding took place at Fordham Parish Church on Saturday, October 14th, between Mr. Charles Henry Thurlow, third son of Mr. and Mrs. E. Thurlow, Beehive Cottage, Porter's Lane, Fordham Heath, and Miss Dorothy Ellen Levine, third daughter of Mr. H. Levine, of London. The Rev. W. Oddie (Rector) officiated at the service. The bride, who was given away by her father, was very pleasingly attired in white satin with train, and carried a sheaf of beautiful chrysanthemums. There were three bridesmaids, charmingly dressed in green satin with lace, each carrying posies of delicately tinted chrysanthemums with fern; and a little nephew acted as page. There was a large attendance of relatives and friends at the church. Three brothers of the bridegroom are serving with the Forces overseas. Still, the Forces were well represented by the presence of Captain Bacon (Army), H. Cooper (Navy), and the bride's brother-in-law (R.A.F.).

The bridegroom, who is a motor-tiller and tractor driver, had the unfortunate experience of being tossed by a bull recently, and is still under treatment with a fractured arm. The bride, too, is associated with the land, as she is a member of the W.L.A. They were the recipients of quite a large array of useful presents, among them a cheque for £5 from the bride's father, a beautiful silver castor sugar stand and server from Capt. and Mrs. Bacon, ornaments, biscuit barrel, cake stand, and numerous other acceptable gifts. The reception was held in the Hall, Eight Ash Green.

Corporal William Bartlett and Peggy Margaret Leeks
19th May 1945

WEDDING.

BARTLETT—LEEKS.

There was quite a large gathering of friends and relatives at the wedding at Fordham Parish Church on May 19th, between Cpl. William Robert Henry Bartlett, A.C.C., son of Mr. Bartlett, of Winchelsea, Sussex, and Miss Peggy Margaret Leeks, only daughter of Mr. T. W. Leeks, of Mill Road, Fordham. The bride, who was given away by her father, was charmingly dressed in white satin with silver leaf coronet and veil, and carried a bouquet of red carnations. She was attended by two bridesmaids, Misses Daphne Leeks and Olive Pilgrim (cousins of the bride), who were attired in green with yellow head-dress and accessories, each carrying a bouquet of iris and foliage. The duties of best man were carried out by Pte. Percy Collins (friend of the bridegroom). The Rev. W. Oddie conducted the service, and the organist (Miss Audrey Oddie) rendered Mendelssohn's Wedding March and other suitable music. As Mr. and Mrs. Bartlett retired from the church they were presented with two silver horseshoes by Tony and Velda Leeks. The reception was held in the Parish Hall.

After the bride had shown deep respect to her departed mother by placing her bouquet on her grave, they proceeded on their honeymoon to Bourne-mouth and Wareham. The bride was dressed in pale blue and jigger coat. The couple were the recipients of a large array of useful gifts. The three-tier wedding cake was made and presented by Mrs. Brown (friend).

FORDHAM BRIDE.

Ceremony In London.

A pretty wedding took place at St. Nicholas Church, Tooting, on Saturday between Miss Doris Catherine Chandler (A.T.S.), eldest daughter of Mr. and Mrs. T. Chandler, of Watercress Hall, Fordham, and Mr. Frederick Shettle (East Surrey Regiment), second son of Mrs. and the late Mr. F. W. Shettle, of 16, Grove Road, Mitcham, London.

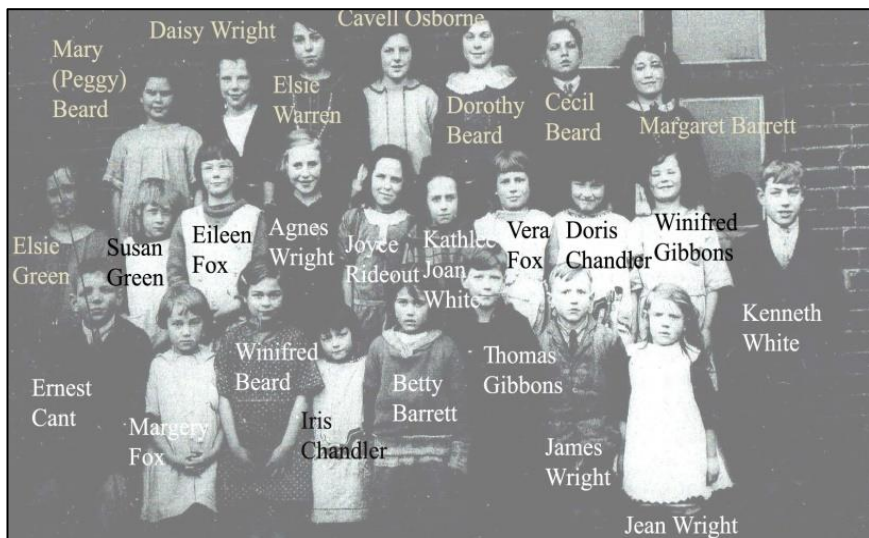
The bride, given away by her father, was prettily attired in white brocade, with train and orange blossom head-dress, and silver shoes. She carried a bouquet of red tulips, with trailing fern, and was attended by Miss Dorothy Shettle (niece of bridegroom) and Miss Lilian Beatrice Chandler (sister of bride). Both were neatly dressed in pale green brocade, with pink sashes and green and pink halo bonnets, and carried posies of violets and snowdrops. The Rev. Harry W. King officiated, and Mr. Jack Shettle (brother-in-law of bridegroom) was best man. The bridegroom gave each bridesmaid a gold brooch.

The service was attended by a choir and Miss Hill (organist) rendered "O perfect Love," "Lead us, heavenly Father, lead us," and the "Wedding March" (Mendelssohn), and as the happy couple left the church they were presented with a silver horseshoe by Baby Robin.

Over thirty guests attended the reception, which was held at 48, Blackshaw Road, Tooting, and Mr. F. Tankle, a professional piano accordionist, entertained. Mr. and Mrs. Shettle were the recipients of many congratulatory messages, among them those from the units in which they had both served. They also received many useful gifts, including six art framed stands from officers and staff, S.E., S.M.D., and a mosaic jam pot with servers and cloths from Mr. and Mrs. Pether (engineers' office).

Mrs. Shettle has served four years in the A.T.S. and Mr. F. Shettle eight years in the East Surrey Regiment. He was among those captured in Malaya and was a prisoner for over four years. After their honeymoon, which is being spent at Hastings, they will return to their new home in Grove Road, Mitcham.

Taken about 1927/1928, this photograph has already been included, in the book. As many of the people mentioned in this chapter can be found on this All Saints School photograph; we thought it appropriate to show it again. They say that every picture tells a story and this one has much to tell. Ten years later many would in one way or another be affected by the war.



London's Victory Parade

Once again Fordham comes to the fore by the selection of Miss Jean Logan of Ivy Cottage, one of the 8th (women's section) Royal Observer Corps (ROC) Colchester. She was asked to represent East Anglia in the contingent, of about eighty-six members from all parts of the country, in London's great Victory Parade.

It is interesting to note that whilst Jean Logan was participating in this great event, her father Mr Edward Martin Logan (Parish Council Invasion Committee) was actively carrying out his duties in an official capacity at Colchester's celebrations on the 8th of June 1945.

The Rectory in WW2

In her book about The Rectors of Fordham, former Fordham History Society President Pat Lewis writes:

'Between 1939 and 1945, the rectory cellar was used as an air raid shelter and the rectory suffered some bomb damage. The iron railings in front of the Rectory were requisitioned by the government for munitions, along with railings around family graves at the church. All Saints Church also suffered from a bomb blast, the window on the south side was badly damaged, Mrs. Beard, the cleaner, picked up a bomb fragment in the church.'



The Rectory WW2 Fordham Photo Album

During their time in the Parish many American Airmen, Chaplains and Red Cross Workers were entertained at the Rectory. Two escaped German prisoners were recaptured in the Rectory Wood by armed American guards.

On D-Day, the 6th of June 1944, beginning at dawn, the awe inspiring sight of the Airborne Liberating Forces was witnessed from the Rectory bedroom windows. The aircraft covered the whole sky on their journey to the continent.

Fordham Football Club.

This photo of Fordham Football Club dated late 1940 is in the Fordham Photo Album publication.



Standing: Ernie Lees, John Porter, Jack Hammond, Ben Herbert, Jimmy Cant, Fred McCauley, Harry Cope.

Sitting: Ronnie Cope, David Kettle, Rex Beard, Cyril Wright, Sid Chandler and John Rayner.

The gentleman standing on the right in the suit is Henry James Cope (Harry) who was in the Fordham Home Guard and member of the Invasion Committee.

An article in the local paper explains what happened with the football club during the war.

'The committee of the former Football Club, which was suspended during the war, was invited to attend a general meeting in the Parish Hall. The balance of cash in hand was passed over to the new club, and a decision to give every support. As a number of the old committee would be unable to serve, it was decided an election of officers should be held.'

With full unanimity the following were appointed: President Mr L. Gunary, Chairman Mr W.W. Blair-Fish, Vice president Mr E.M.Logan, Hon. Treasurer Mr H. Beard, Hon. Secretary Mr H. Cope. The remainder of the old committee was elected en-bloc to comprise of Messrs. W.W. Blair-Fish, H. Cope, H. Beard, H.A. Partridge and T.B. Towle. Playing members were elected Captain, J Hammond, Vice-captain C. Wright, selection committee Messrs. B Garrod, S. Cant and C. Peachey. It was proposed that a letter of thanks be sent to Messrs. G. Gunary and son for the use of the playing field, also the acknowledgment to Mr Logan for the promise of a new ball.'



All ready for an outing, the photo above is dated to around the late 1930s. Many members of the Home Guard are featured: Arthur Ratcliffe, Robert Green, Leslie Taylor, Eric Leeks, Stanley Cant and Albert Garrod. Other locals, many of them farm workers, Donald Leeks, Charles Cresswell, Thomas Bugg and Cyril Wright.

FLHS also has newspaper write-ups about billiards and darts matches taking place at the Three Horse Shoes, The Star and The Vulcan.

Unfortunately these articles are not dated. However, most of the names are very familiar to Fordham: J.Rayner, H.Cope, A.Ratcliffe, H.Warren, W.Butler, C.Peachey, R.Bell, T.Chandler and F.Ratcliffe.

Victory Vegetables – A Fordham Potato

As mentioned in the chapter on Rationing, the Dig for Victory campaign encouraged householders all around the country to grow their own fruit and vegetables. In Fordham, Mr George Cant certainly did his bit. Mr Cant produced an appropriate V shaped potato to celebrate Victory. The story was featured in the local newspaper.

‘The growing of vegetables on our farms and in our gardens has certainly helped to bring us nearer to victory, and each year of the war it has seemed that some curiously shaped specimen has endeavoured to tell us so. I have just received a potato which has grown into a perfectly formed V in the garden of Mr G.H. Cant of 5, Alexandra Cottages, Fordham.’

Sources of Information

Page 246 www.thehistorypress.co.uk/article/shelter-at-home-in-the-second-world-war/

Page 246 www.V-for-victory.com/2024/04/04/how-preparations-for-ww2-started-in-1935air-raid-precautions-pre-war/

Pages 257 to 260 Research All Saints Fordham Parish Registers

Page 265 The Rectory. This Barren Land. Pat Lewis 1997

Pages 248 to 256, 260 to 263, 266 to 268 Newspaper Cuttings FLHS Archive

CHAPTER 20

The War Memorial

'I cannot find the grandparents' graves in the burial yard (chapel.) Plenty of Partridges but not Alderman and Edith. But the stone to the memory of Jane Arnold (Grannie Partridge's mother) still stands upright and Granny is vexed to see how dirty it is - the untidy graveyard too. Well it is nearly half a century since her mother was buried there.'

As Millicent Fairhall searched for her grandparents' gravestone up at the Fordham chapel graveyard, there was a real sense of anxiety in wanting to find it. She wanted to see it, creating a memory that would help her remember her grandparents.



Our war memorial was built in 1919 by Frank W. Clampin. He lived at Stone Cottage next to the Shoulder of Mutton in Fordham. The memorial was built with subscriptions and donations from the villagers of Fordham so that their casualties from WW1 would be remembered.

The government had encouraged all local communities to form committees to raise funds for their own memorials.

The Parish Council sent letters to the villagers, asking for financial help towards the building of a small clock tower.

George Playle gave a piece of ground from Swiss Cottages at the top of Ponders Road as a site for the memorial and the final cost to build was £97.11s.7d.

Two designs were put forward by L. J. Watts Limited; FLHS has the original sketches in our archive. L. J. Watts of Colchester was responsible for many of the memorials around Essex; in Colchester, Kelvedon and Coggeshall. Our memorial was a combination of both designs. Frank W. Clampin began building the memorial on the 5th of August 1919. The memorial was unveiled at a ceremony on the 25th of October 1919.

In 2015, FLHS began a centenary project which resulted in an additional twelve men from Fordham, who also died in WW1, being added to the war memorial. The publication of a book 'Fordham's Finest – Preserving the Memory', a week-long exhibition and the writing of a Scheme of Work for All Saints Primary School concluded the project.

Would anyone have thought that there would be a second world war and that we would be adding more names to our memorial? Inscribed underneath our WW1 casualties are the names of four men who died as a result of serving their King and country in WW2.

James Bugg MM

Douglas Edward Cudmore

John Albert Hewitt

John Arthur Treby

Subsequent research has revealed more casualties linked to Fordham; these names are not on the war memorial.

George William Smith

Allan Charles Lewis

Charles Henry Blackwell

James Bugg MM

James was born in Aldham on the 6th of March 1915, he was the son of Harry Bugg and Maud Norfolk, he had one brother Harry.

Records show that after his brother Harry was born in 1920, his mother went into Severalls Hospital. She is later recorded there on the 1939 register. Harry Junior aged seven months is recorded as the adopted son to Arthur and Florence Clark on the 1921 register.

The information we have in the FLHS archive records is that James served with the 9th Lancers (two years) and 16th Lancers (seven years). He served in India for two and half years and toured America and Canada in 1941. He won his certificates at Fort Knox, Kentucky as Driving and Maintenance instructor of America's latest type of heavy tank at the time. He also passed out at Bovington Army College of Engineering as D. & M. instructor. Previously he was PT instructor at Colchester and Tidworth. His regimental number was 317628.



James was killed in action on the 24th of April 1943 at Djebel Kournine Tunisia, recorded as serving with the 16th/5th Royal Armoured Corps. James is buried at Massicault Military Cemetery Tunisia. The Regiment fought in the battles of Kasserine, Fondouk, Bordj, Djebel, Kournine with the final battle and capture of Tunis in 1943. After their hard-earned victory in North Africa, the Brigade was withdrawn to reorganise, re-equip and rest in preparation for the invasion of Italy.

James is not listed under Bugg on the Commonwealth War Grave records. On the 5th of April 1940 it was recorded in the London Gazette that James Bugg changed his name to James Graham; we do not know the circumstances or why he changed his name.

'I James Bugg of Church Street, Fordham Essex, a member of H.M. Forces hereby give notice that I intend after the expiration of 21 days from the date of publication of this notice to assume the surname of Graham in lieu of my present surname of Bugg.'

Two weeks before James was killed he performed an act of gallantry in the field of action, for which he was recommended for the Military Medal.

'On the 9th of April 1943 at Fondouk this sergeant drove his tank alongside his Troop Leaders which had been knocked out and set fire and burning fiercely. Although he knew he was only 300 yards from an A/Tk position he assisted his troop leader to the ground and then jumped onto the tank and succeeded in opening the driver's door and pulled the driver to safety that was unconscious and on fire. He then went back to the tank, in which the ammunition was now exploding and endeavoured to release the co-driver and only gave up when he discovered the door was locked on the inside. His example of courage was an inspiration to all.'

Military Medal

The Level Three Gallantry Medal was established during the First World War on the 25th of March 1916. This was back-dated to 1914 for personnel of the British Army, other services and personnel of Commonwealth countries who were below commissioned rank. It was the 'other ranks' equivalent to the Military Cross that was awarded to Commissioned Officers and rarely to Warrant Officers.

The military decoration was awarded to James Graham for acts of gallantry and devotion to duty under fire. The MM was also awarded to an individual or an associated act of bravery that was insufficient to merit the Distinguished Conduct Medal. Conferment of the medal was announced in the London Gazette on the 15th of June 1943 and James Graham would have earned the right to add the letters MM to his name.



Douglas Edward Cudmore

Douglas was a private in the East Lancashire Regiment 1st Battalion. He died on the 5th of March 1945 aged twenty, service number 14392163. Douglas is buried at Reichswald Forest War Cemetery in Germany. The inscription engraved on his gravestone is very moving.

*'Although God has you in his keeping.
We still have you in our hearts.'*

Douglas was the son of Edward George Cudmore and Florence Cudmore nee Polley. The family lived in Mill Road, Fordham next door to the Leeks and Green families. His father known as George Cudmore was a farm worker. His sister Gwen was a Land Army girl and when she married in 1942, Douglas was one of her witnesses.

Reichswald Forest War Cemetery was created after the Second World War when casualties were brought in from all over western Germany. It is the largest Commonwealth cemetery in the country. Some of the land forces who are buried there died during the advance through Reichswald Forest in February 1945. Others died crossing the Rhine, among these were members of the airborne forces. Their bodies were brought from Hamminkein, where landings were made by the 6th Airborne Division from bases in England.

Some of the airmen buried in the cemetery lost their lives supporting the advance into Germany, but most died earlier in the war in the intensive air attacks. They were reinterred from other cemeteries and isolated sites in the surrounding area. There are 7,579 Commonwealth service men from the Second World War buried or commemorated at Reichswald, one hundred and sixty-two unidentified burials and seventy-nine other nationals, mostly Polish servicemen also resting here.



John Albert Hewitt

John is our oldest war casualty. He was aged fifty-one when he died on the 27th of January 1945. John served with the Pioneer Corps, service number 10034752. He is buried at Poznan Old Garrison Cemetery in Poland.

In WW2, initial plans were to conscript single men between the ages of twenty and twenty-two. But on the day war broke out, on the 3rd of September 1939, changes were made under the National Service (Armed Forces) Act to conscript all men between the ages of eighteen and forty-one.



Later in December 1941, a second National Service Act was passed and widened the scope of conscription by making all unmarried women and childless widows between the ages of twenty and thirty liable for call up. Some form of National Service was now required for men up to the age of sixty which included military service for men up to fifty-one; this would have included John.

John had served in WW1 in the Royal Horse and Royal Field Artillery. Having been discharged as no longer needed, he attested again on the 19th of February 1919. John's first wife Gladys Bright is recorded on this record.

In 1939, John and his second wife Rose Hill, whom he married in 1928, were living at Coronet, Halstead Road, Fordham with children Donald and Audrey. John's occupation was a general labourer, pipe layer but unemployed, he was an air raid warden. Different stories came to us from various sources.

NA/2000/4 (Effect)

Effect Form 100

CERTIFICATE OF DEATH.

CERTIFIED that it appears from the Records of this Office that

No. 1034752 Private John Albert Hewitt
Pioneer Corps

died in Poland

on the twenty-seventh day of January 1945
while evading the enemy after escaping from captivity.

Dated this 24 day of October 1946

Signed *Emmittell*

The War Office.

10 10000 3450042001 3000 4046 M.V. 47 B.

This certificate of death states that John died in Poland while evading the enemy after escaping from captivity. Obituary notices from his family and POW records confirm he died in Poland as a P.O.W.

John died alongside two other prisoners. They were Private John Andrew Reith who was serving with the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders 1st Battalion and Private Charles Arthur William Duffield of the Lincolnshire Regiment. Private Reith was thirty-seven and Private Duffield was twenty-four years old.



Imprisoned at Torun Poland, they all escaped on the same day as confirmed on a POW record. They were buried together at Poznan. The majority of the two hundred and eighty-three Second World War burials in the cemetery are those of airmen, many of whom died in bombing operations on Stettin (now Szczecin).

Also buried here are the ashes of forty-eight men who were involved in the mass escape from Stalag Luft 3 on the 25th of March 1944. Hitler ordered that the

recaptured men be executed along with the commandant, the camp architect and those guards on duty on the night. Senior Nazi officials did not agree with this order, but subsequently those who were recaptured were shot.

John Arthur Treby

John, service number 1867730 was a Flight Engineer with the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve; he died on Thursday the 1st of June 1944 at the age of just nineteen.

John was the son of John Robert Frederick Treby, a poultry farmer and Ingeborg Hausine Berg and they lived at Homescroft, Hemps Green, Fordham. John's mother Ingeborg was Norwegian. In WW1 John Treby senior was in the Royal Army Medical Corps.



John is buried in Sleepyhill Cemetery, Montrose, Scotland. The cemetery contains service plots for both wars (the majority of which are 1939-1945). Most of these graves are of airmen and there is a special RAF plot in the south-eastern part of the cemetery.

There are nearly forty, WW1 and one hundred WW2 casualties commemorated at this site.

John was one of eight airmen aboard the Halifax LL414 aircraft which took off on the 31st of May 1944.

The plane had left Sandtoft in Lincolnshire for a night, cross country exercise and crashed in the early hours of the morning of the 1st of June 1944 in the Glen Isla area.



All eight men died; six were Canadian Airforce men.

RCAF Pilot Officer Leslie Llewellyn Williams

RAF Sidney William Doughty

RAF Sergeant John Arthur Treby

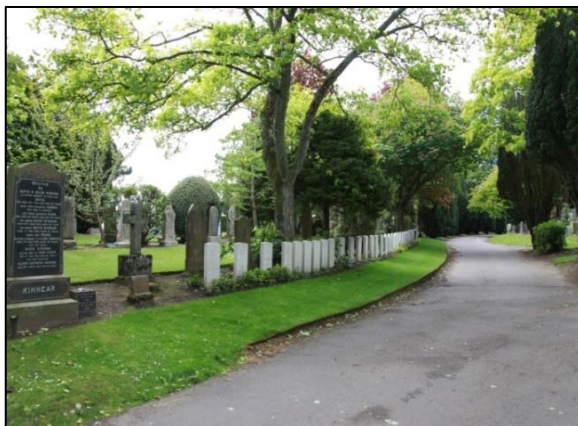
RCAF Flying Officer William Campbell

RCAF Flight Sergeant Robert Trevor Dean

RCAF Warrant Officer James Stewart MacDonald

RCAF Thomas Goldie

RCAF Sergeant Vernon Thomas Sherven



Sleepyhillock Cemetery, Montrose Scotland CWGC

The Proceedings of the Court of Enquiry/Investigation are available online. On the 7th of June, the investigation began to report on the circumstances connected with the accident and to determine responsibility if necessary. There were eight witnesses who reported to the panel of Squadron Leader Crich and Flight Lieutenant Cadman. The young pilot aged twenty-three had flown three types of aircraft the Halifax V, Wellington and the Oxford.

The findings suggested that engine failure was a likely cause; the court thought that bad weather was not the cause as ten other flights had safely returned, although the pilot may have had difficulty controlling the failing plane in the heavy cloud.



The Treby family, like many families had to deal with family deaths during WW2.

John's uncle Thomas Treby was also killed in WW2 in March 1945 with his South African pilot Robert Ogilvie Day. Having logged eighty-two operational sorties, Day was an experienced pilot and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

John's uncle, Thomas Treby (left) was also with the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve as a navigator. In March alone, Thomas had been on six bombing raids over Berlin with his pilot Day. Their plane,

a De Havilland Mosquito XXV, took off from RAF Upwood, Cambridgeshire. They failed to return, crashing at Heesch on the outskirts of Oss, Holland.

Far away in Plymouth, Devon, the city was being bombarded by the German Luftwaffe with the royal dockyards at Devonport being the main target. The dockyards were able to continue operating, but during fifty-nine bombing attacks 1,172 civilians were killed and 4,448 injured. In early 1941 there were five raids that reduced the city to rubble.

On the 29th of April 1941, John Treby lost his aunt, uncle, a niece and nephew. Doris Maud Penny aged thirty-eight was killed when her house was bombed. Her husband Robert John Penny was thirty-nine, their two children, six year old Robert John and little Molly Eileen aged only three, were all killed at Wisteria Terrace, Plymouth.

George William Smith

FLHS is adding another casualty for our village. Following his father's footsteps in WW1, George William Smith fought for his country in WW2. He served with the 4th Battalion Dorset Regiment; service number 6011808.

George died on the 7th of July 1942 aged thirty-five and is remembered at Banneville La Campagne in Normandy, east of Caen. Many of the soldiers who are buried here died when Caen was captured in the second week of July 1944.



George William Smith was baptised in Fordham Church on the 18th of July 1909. His two older sisters Florence Emma and Edith Emily were also baptised at All Saints. Their parents were George James Smith who was born in Greenwich and Ellen Cooper was from West Bergholt.

In 1911, the family were living close to the church at Church End, (the name used for the area around the church). Father George James Smith served in WW1 in the Essex Regiment but was discharged in 1916 as physically unfit.

Son George William Smith, married Evelyn Flora Chaplin in 1933 and they lived at Barnards, Halstead Road, Fordham. Evelyn Chaplin was the daughter of Ernest Chaplin and Hepzibah Partridge, very familiar surnames in Fordham. Hepzibah's parents were Jubal and Emma Partridge; Jubal was a blacksmith at the Shoulder of Mutton in 1901. The couple are buried at All Saints churchyard in Fordham.

In 1939, George, Evelyn and their three children Mary, George and Reginald had moved away from Fordham and were living at The Old Police Station, Rayne Road, Braintree, Essex. George is recorded as

serving with the 2nd Battalion, 5th Essex Regiment C Company which was the regiment he enlisted with then later transferred to the Dorset Regiment before his death.

Also living with them is Evelyn's widowed mother Hepzibah Fox who was married to Evelyn's father Ernest Chaplin. Hepzibah married Herbert Fox in 1916; a year after Ernest had died. All her children took the Fox surname as recorded in the 1921 census.

Allan Charles Lewis

Sometimes an unexpected name can trigger a memory of some distant research unconnected to this book and this happened with Allan Lewis.



Winifred and Allan Lewis. FLHS Archive

Back in November FLHS had posted information about casualties of WW1 and WW2 for Remembrance Day on the Eight Ash Green Facebook (EAGF) page. A member of EAGF contacted us about a different casualty who was linked to Fordham.

Searching for this new name on the website for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, we discovered that casualty, but was then surprised to see another EAG name; that of Allan Lewis.

I then remembered that in our archive we had a photograph of an Allan Lewis in uniform. It is a beautiful photograph of Allan and his sister Winifred; their parents must have been extremely proud of their children's commitment to the war effort; but it would be cost them dearly because Allan died whilst a prisoner of war.

Although we have no confirmation about the exact role that Winifred played in nursing during WW2, the badge on her uniform looks similar to that of the Nursing Auxiliary in the Civil Nursing Reserve.



Allan, with his parents Charles Lewis, Alice Lewis nee Beard and his sister Winifred lived at Alwyn, Eight Ash Green in 1939. Allan was born on the 1st of July 1920 and baptised at All Saints Church, Fordham. His two older sisters Winifred and Gwendoline were baptised in London where they were living at the time. In 1921, the family are living at Plummers Road, Fordham with Harry and Joseph Beard, brothers of Allan's mother Alice.

The circumstances of Allan's death are recorded in documents online. He died on the 22nd of August 1945 at a military base in Seletar, Singapore; one week after the Japanese capitulated on the 15th of August 1945. Allan is buried at Jakarta War Cemetery, Indonesia. He was a Leading Aircraftman working with a Radio Installation Maintenance Unit in the Far East. He had been captured on the 19th of March 1942 in Sumatra.



Notes on his records state that Allan died whilst working on the Sumatra Railway.

The construction of the Sumatran Railway from 1943 to 1945 lives in the shadow of its more notorious counterpart in Thailand and Burma. The railway line was built by Dutch, English and Australian prisoners of

war and by press-ganged Javanese slave labour (Romushas) through marshy forest of central Sumatra. The trauma of the 215km railway from Pakan Baru to Muara in the heart of tropical Sumatra, with its snakes, panthers, tigers and billions of malaria carrying mosquitoes, is sadly forgotten.

Charles Henry Blackwell

Charles served in The Queen's Royal Regiment West Surrey, service number 6011813. He was twenty-three when he was killed at El Alamein on the 25th of October 1942.

The battle, between the 23rd of October and the 4th of November, was the climax and turning point of the North African campaign. Italy and Germany were severely defeated by the 8th army led by Lieutenant-General Bernard Law Montgomery.

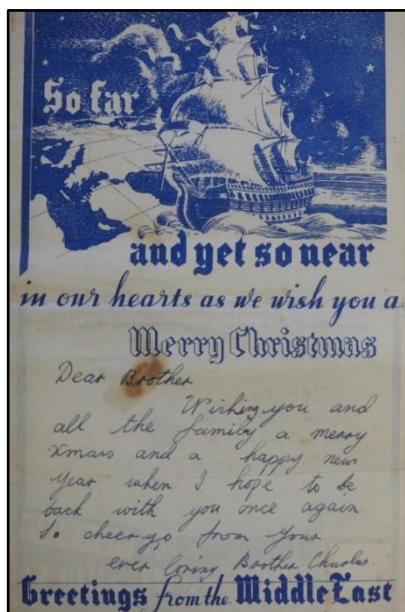
They were up against Field Marshal Rommel known as the Desert Fox who was a master of desert warfare, and famous for his leadership in France and North Africa. His defeat at El Alamein was a great boost to morale after many earlier setbacks.



Born in 1919, Charles and his siblings Albert, Beatrice Ellen Lily, William and John were all born in Fordham. In 1911 and 1921 his family are recorded as living at Hamps Green, Fordham. By 1939 they have moved to Black Cottages, West Bergholt. The three children in the photograph on page 282 are Beatrice, Lily and John; the siblings of Charles.

We have parish records of Charles' siblings Albert and Beatrice marrying in All Saints Church, Fordham in 1927 and 1930. Charles's parents Harris and Ellen nee Saunders were born in Great Tey and Earls Colne.

FLHS would like to thank Richard Blackwell, the nephew of Charles, for sending us the information and photos to use in the book, including the last Christmas card Charles sent to his brother Albert. Richard's father Albert Harris Blackwell (below) and his two other uncles all served in the Royal Army Medical Corps (RAMC).



Albert's last card from his brother Charles.

FLHS would like to remember Henry Albert Hoskins and Leonard Samuel Johnson from Eight Ash Green.

Henry Albert Hoskins died on the 26th of March 1942. He was an able seaman on board HMS Jaguar when it was hit by four torpedoes from U-boat, U-652 northeast of Sidi Barrani, Egypt. The ship was set on fire and sunk very quickly. The commander Lionel Rupert Knyvett Tyrwhitt DSO, DSC was killed along with two other officers and one hundred and ninety ratings including Henry.

MS Jaguar was escorting the Royal Fleet Auxiliary tanker Slavol from Alexandria to Tobruk, together with the Greek destroyer RHS Vasilissa Olga and HMS Klo. HMS Klo picked up eight officers and forty-five ratings. The tanker Slavol was sunk two hours later by the same U-boat.



HMS Jaguar sunk in 1942. U.Boat.net

Henry was the son of Henry Albert Hoskins and Florence Ethel Hoskins nee Buzzo. He had a brother and two sisters. In 1939, the family were living at Spring Lane, Eight Ash Green.

Leonard Samuel Johnson

Bombardier Johnson, service number 899322, served with the 118 Field Company Royal Artillery, he died on the 12th of September 1944 aged twenty-four. Leonard was the son of Samuel and Adelaide Johnson, of Eight Ash Green, Essex. Samuel was born in Mesnil-Le-Roi Seine et Oise France. Villagers have informed us that his mother Adelaide used to teach French.

Find My Past has many interesting documents on prisoners of war in WW2. There is a report stating that Leonard was reported missing on the 15th of February 1942 Malaya. He is then listed as 'missing on ship – dead.' We know he was being transported from Singapore to Japan.

On the 12th of September 1944, SS Kachidoki Maru with nine hundred and fifty-three British POWs onboard, was sunk by USS Pampanito. Four hundred and thirty-one of them were killed. SS Kachidoki Maru, was traveling in a convoy with SS Rakuyo Maru which was sunk the same day by USS Sealion.

Between the 12th and 18th of September 1944, Allied forces sank three Japanese steamships that were carrying supplies to support the Japanese war effort. But unknown to the Allies at the time, these ships were also carrying Allied POWs and Javanese slave labourers (romushas).

The Allies sank other POW transport ships during September 1944, but the sinking of the Kachidoki Maru and the Rakuyo Maru on the 12th September led to the first eyewitness accounts being given by former POWs to Allied administrations about conditions in camps on the Thailand-Burma railway. The sinking of the Junyo Maru on the 18th of September was one of the deadliest maritime disasters of the Second World War. The two sinkings, only six days apart, resulted in the deaths of over 7,000 men.

Leonard is remembered on the Singapore Memorial. The Memorial stands in Kranji War Cemetery bearing the names of over 24,000 casualties of the Commonwealth land and air forces who have no known

grave. Many of these men have no known date of death. In the records, their death date was given according to the time when they were known to be missing or captured.

The land forces commemorated on the memorial died during the campaigns in Malaya and Indonesia or in subsequent captivity. Many of them died during the construction of the Burma-Thailand railway, or at sea while being transported into imprisonment elsewhere



Kranj War Memorial Singapore. CWGC.

Sources of Information

Page 271 www.theroyallancers.org/16th5th-lancers/

Page 272 wikipedia.org/wiki/MilitaryMedal

Pages 273 to 277 www.CWGC.org

Pages 271, 282, 283 www.nam.ac.uk/explore/battle-alamein

Pages 274 to 276 www.findmypast.co.uk/prisoners-of-war-1715-1945

Pages 276 to 278 www.archieraf.co.uk/scs/halifaxII414.html

Page 278 www.theboxplymouth.com/storage/plymouth-from-destruction-to-construction

Page 278 UK, World War II Civilian Deaths, 1939-1945 Ancestry.co.uk

Pages 281, 282 www.cofepow.org.uk. Armed Forces List. Sumatra Death Railway. Jan 2024 vol45

Page 284 www.uboa.net/allies/warships/ship/4205.html

Pages 285, 286 www.iwm.org.uk/history/the-sinking-of-prisoner-of-war-transport-ships-in-east-asia

Pages 285, 286 www.roll-of-honour.org.uk/Hell_Ships/Kachidoki_Maru/

CHAPTER 21

Prisoners of War

'We went to Fordham, it was a lovely day. There is a faint mist over the sweep of fields. The snow is almost gone. Ponders Road is full of the noise of rushing water. The Colne was a raging muddy torrent, spreading into the meadows with swirling gulls flashing in the faint sunlight. The village seemed quite dormant.' M.F.

It is hard to imagine how our prisoners of war felt as they returned home, after fighting and being captured. The thoughts of home were perhaps a distant notion; had any of them considered the possibility that they might never return to their sleepy village.

On many occasions in her diary entries, Millicent Fairhall describes, so beautifully our village of Fordham. Perhaps those memories kept our POWs hopeful. But for those who had been captive, it would be a huge, challenging period of transition back to normality.

There are many books that tell us about prisoners of war in Britain. Two of these books tell us about the life of captured prisoners of war, they are Sophie Jackson's book called 'Churchill's uninvited guests,' and Ken Free's book 'Camp 186'.

Over 400,000 Germans and Italians were held in prison camps in Britain. Despite these prisoners being the enemy, they played a vital part in the life of war-torn Britain. They worked in the fields and repaired bomb-damaged homes.

We know of prisoners helping on the farms in Fordham and being invited to summer fetes. The photograph on this page is of Eric Krauss and a very young Marlene Boyle. Eric worked on the land at Hammonds

Farm. He enjoyed painting and produced the pretty card below for Marlene's mother on her birthday.



A website called 'beyondthepoint' has more information about buildings that have been left behind such as Mill Lane Camp at Hatfield Heath. This still has old farm buildings that were part of Prisoner of War Camp 'High Hall' 116. It once housed around 1,500 Italian, Austrian, and (from 1943) German soldiers captured in the European and North African theatres of the Second World War. These men were often put to work on nearby farms.

There were other camps such as Beacon Hill, Purfleet which was a Transit Camp that consisted of huts, a prisoners' compound and tented accommodation within a rectangular wire enclosure. Ashford Camp at Halstead was a depot with Nissen huts. There was also High Garret Camp at Braintree and the hutted camp at Bentley Farm Langdon Hills.

The largest camp in England was said to be the German Prisoner of War camp in Colchester from 1944 – 1947. There were up to 6,000 German military prisoners in the camp called Camp 186 at Berechurch. All physical traces of this significant development in the history of Colchester during WW2 appear to have been erased; but the book by Ken Free tells us all about it.



Camp 186. K.Free

Colchester resident Ken Free has researched the history of the camp. Ken Free who was only ten at the time of WW2, has produced a written and photographic record. Ken can remember his parents welcoming a couple of prisoners into their home for Sunday tea after the war had ended.

He later followed up contacts he had in Germany to develop his research. He sourced prisoners' original articles and letters that described the desolate field where captured prisoners arrived day and night and created their own community. How they lived in bell tents and experienced bitterly cold weather and muddy conditions. The camp even provided a hospital and a theatre for entertainment.

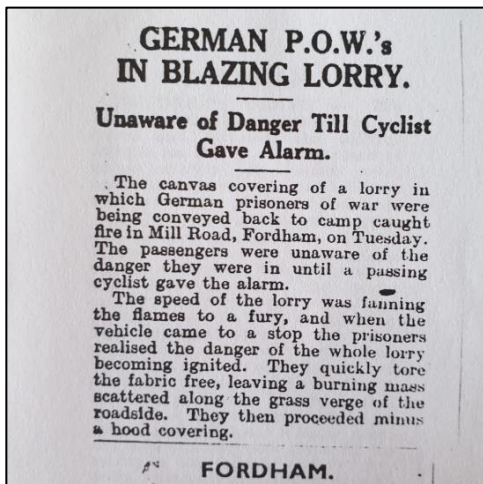


These two photographs show German airmen captured at Rectory Wood, Fordham and taken to Wormingford Airfield; the guards do look like American servicemen.



**Americans with Captured German POWs.
L.Adams 55th Fighter Group**

In the FLHS archive we have a newspaper report which is undated. Prisoners were being transported back to camp down Mill Road. Whether this was an attempt to escape or an accidental cigarette blaze we will never know.



Laurence Frederick White

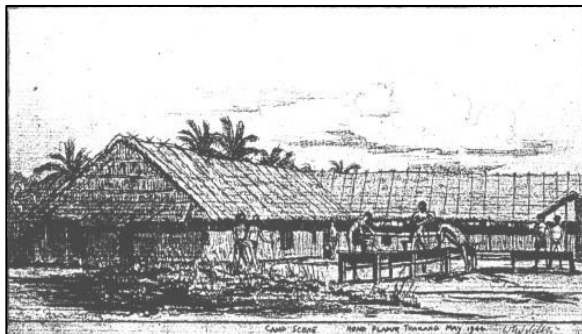
Laurence or Laurie as he was known locally, was the son of James William White and Mary Matilda Bugg. He was born on the 23rd of April, 1908 and baptised at All Saints Church on the 24th of May 1908.

In 1911, Laurie was living near Suttons Farm, Fordham with his parents and his older siblings Sidney, Lillian and Gladys; they were born in Middlesborough. His younger siblings, Kenneth and Kathleen were born in Fordham and in 1921 they can be found living in Penlan Lane with Laurie, his older brother Sidney and their parents.

On the 13th of September 1930, Laurie married Alice Caroline Quarrell at All Saints Church, Fordham. This was the second family wedding as Laurie's brother Sidney had married Alice's sister Constance Lillian Quarrell on the 19th of April 1930 at All Saints Church. In 1939 Laurie and Alice were living at Valley Cottage, Hems Green.

Before Laurie joined the 4th Battalion of the Norfolk regiment, service number 5782217, he was previously in the Home Guard.

A newspaper cutting reports that Laurie was captured in Singapore in 1942 and spent three and a half years in the hands of the Japanese. One of Laurie's POW documents is headed Kung Kaj Nong Pladuk



Drawings by William Carthew Wilder POW

Nong Pladuk was almost forty miles from Bangkok and one of the larger base and administration camps on the Thai-Burma railway. Situated at the junction of the lines from Singapore and Bangkok, it was initially built to house up to 2,000 prisoners but later that capacity increased almost four fold to around 8,000.

The camp was split into two units known as No.1 and No.2 camps. The No.1 camp contained British, Australian and American prisoners while prisoners from the Netherlands were billeted in No.2 camp. Both camps were about a mile away from the railway junction where there were supply depots, marshalling yards and the railway engineering and maintenance workshops known by the names of Hashimotos, Sachimotos and Kanimotos.

Nong Pladuk, situated just east of the transit camp at Ban Pong had been the starting point for the Thai end of the Thailand-Burma railway. It was built during the summer of 1942 by an advance party of POWs from

Singapore. It was located in former paddy fields and banana plantations alongside the Bangkok-Malaya Railway line, at the junction where the new line to Burma would be built. It functioned as the supply depot and marshalling yard for the railway and was also the site of the Hashimoto Engineering Workshops, a maintenance facility; all of which made it a prime strategic target for Allied bombing raids. As in other places, the Japanese had refused to do anything to identify the site as a POW camp that might protect it from these attacks.



Drawings by William Carthew Wilder POW

The drawings included in this chapter were produced by POW William Carthew Wilder. He was a British gunner and served with 135th Field Regiment Royal Artillery and 18th Infantry Division in Malaya until early 1942.

William was captured and became a prisoner of war in Changi and Sime Road Camps, Singapore, working on the Burma-Thailand Railway and at Ubon Camp in Thailand until August 1945.

He spent time in the same camp as Laurie White. In interviews found online, William recalls how he had to keep his drawings hidden in bamboo. Before and after the war, William was an illustrator and art tutor.

Welcome Home Laurie White POW

There was a very warm welcome waiting for Laurie White when he returned home to Fordham, below is a transcript of the newspaper cutting.

'There was a very good reason for the flags and bunting that decorated the valley and many of the houses in and nearby the village of Fordham. It was to welcome home warmly Private Laurie White who had been in the hands of the Japanese for three and a half years. He was among those who were captured in 1942 and suffered many the hardships and diseases of Thailand, to which so many succumbed. He was employed for some considerable time with the railways labour gangs which suffered so much. It was not until last February when he was removed to Saigon that conditions improved. Private Laurie White is known widely in the Lexden and Winstree area for he was engaged by the council on housing estates and served previously in the local Home Guard.'

Alfred Jack Curtis

Alfred was born on the 19th of September 1919 and lived at Choats Wood, Fordham; his death is recorded as March 2000. Alfred's parents were Alfred Curtis and Ellen Rebecca Towns, he also had a brother Laurie, born in 1921. The family can be found living together at 3, Choats Wood, Halstead Road, Fordham in the 1939 pre-war register.

Living with them are Alfred's uncles Oliver and Arthur Towns (A. Towns is in the photograph of the Home Guard). Alfred's father worked for the London North Eastern Railway, his mother a housewife, Alfred is recorded as a butcher, his brother Laurie and Uncle Arthur are horsemen on a farm and Uncle Oliver was a cowman.



Alfred served as a driver with the Royal Army Service Corps service number T/155602. Alfred was captured on the 21st of November 1943 during the Tunisian campaign which was known as the Battle of Tunisia.

This was a series of battles that took place during the North African campaign between Axis (Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy and the Empire of Japan) and Allied forces from the 17th of November 1942 to the 13th of May 1943.

Alfred was imprisoned at Oflag IXA/H Spangenberg, Hesse, POW number 1758. This German prisoner of war camp was located in Spangenberg Castle (pictured below) in the small town of Spangenberg in north eastern Hesse, Germany. (Oflag was an abbreviation for 'Offizierslager' - officer's camp)



Spangenberg Castle POW Prison. [wikipedia.org](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oflag_IXA/H_Spangenberg)

A newspaper article describes his parents' joy on his return. Alfred had been spared many hardships as a prisoner because he had been attached to the officer's quarters as a cobbler. He also wanted to thank the Red Cross for the many parcels that he received from home and hoped for the safe return of others he knew, who were still imprisoned.

Reflecting on her role as a mother, Mrs Curtis is reported to have said that the 'return of her son was the only gratuity a mother desired for the service a mother gives.'

A MOTHER'S GRATUITY.

HER SON'S RETURN.

Mr. and Mrs. Curtis, of Choats Cottages, are full of joy and thankfulness for the liberation of their son from captivity in the Germans hands at Oflag IXA/H near Canel. Driver A. J. Curtis, serving with the R.A.S.C., was made prisoner in Italy (after an epic experience in the Tunisian campaign) on November 8th, 1943. It appears Dvr. Curtis was spared many of the hardships of prison life, as he became attached as cobbler to the officers' quarters; nevertheless, he would wish to add his sincere thanks to the wonderful service of the Red Cross. Of the many parcels sent from home, only one was received, and although cigarettes were despatched every month, only two lots reached him.

Asked if he had any special message, he said that he remembers so many of his unit from local and surrounding districts, and hopes for their safe homecoming. Mrs. Curtis added that for all the service a mother gives, the return of her son is the only gratuity a mother desires.

Gunner Ronald Frank Mortlock

We have some information about Ronald Frank Mortlock who was another prisoner of war; his family lived in Eight Ash Green. Ronald was born in January 1921 in Battersea and died in 1999 at Canterbury. He was the son of Ernest William Mortlock and Edith Ellen Evans. His father Ernest had served in WW1 in the Army Service Corps, A/254413.

Ronald and his two siblings (first son Eric, born and died in 1911) and Joan were all born in Battersea. Their parents were from Suffolk, but the family moved to Eight Ash Green between 1921 and 1939. After the war Ronald married Peggy Cahill in 1950.

In 1921 Ronald was living at Lavender Hill Battersea with his parents and sister Joan. His father Ernest is recorded as a motor cab driver. The next record, the 1939 Register, shows the family living at the Garage, Eight Ash Green. Ronald's father Ernest is the garage proprietor, his mother Edith recorded as doing domestic duties and their daughter Joan is a shorthand typist.



Mortlock's Garage. History of EAG.

Mortlock's Garage was situated on the corner of Spring Lane opposite the Brick and Tile public house. In 'A History of Eight Ash Green' it states that Mortlock's Garage was formerly the school and school house. German Prisoners of war could be seen marching pass the Brick and Tile to work on the fields around Fordham, some worked on Fordham Heath.

We know from online records Ronald's army service number was 918089, he was with the Royal Artillery (Light Anti-Aircraft) and attested in 1939; his POW number was 21480 and he was held at Stalag VIII B - Gorlitz Saxony.

A document on Find My Past reports that on the 2nd of June 1941, it was reported that Ronald was previously on casualty list no. 562 as missing, but now known to be a prisoner of war. In a newspaper report dated the 3rd of October 1941, it reports that:

'Gunner Ronald F. Mortlock R.A., son of Mr and Mrs E.E. Mortlock, of Halstead Road, Colchester, reported missing in the Middle East, writes home that he is a prisoner of war in Germany, and is fit and well. Ronald writes "Whatever you do, don't worry about me."'

We have information in our archive from an unknown source stating that Ronald was a prisoner of war for four years; he had been captured in Crete. He had been attached to many working parties employed as a plate layer on the railways, as a blacksmith and for the last two years of his captivity as a fitter in a paper mill.



When the Russian armies advanced, he was forced to march with many hundreds for over 400 miles into Bavaria, foot sore and weak from exhaustion. Many were overcome and fell by the wayside.

Gunner Mortlock was freed on the 25th of April 1945 by the American Army. Gunner Mortlock said the Americans lavished every possible kindness on the prisoners; he also had high praise for the Red Cross parcels.

The unknown source also stated that Gunner Mortlake returned home in May 1945 on VE Day which added to the rejoicings of the celebrations. A document on Find my Past dated 1945, states that Ronald was 'Previously reported Prisoner of War in German hands 'now not Prisoner of War.'

Sydney William Colman

Sydney was born on the 29th of December 1913 in Norfolk, the son of Sydney William Colman and Ellen Maud Clarke. By 1939, Sydney had moved to Fordham and was boarding at 5, Alexandra Cottages, Fordham. On the 6th of July 1940 in All Saints Church, Fordham, Sydney married Ellen Ethel Cope. She was born in West Ham in 1919, the daughter of Henry James Cope and Minnie Maud Bowers.



By 1939 Ellen Cope had moved to Fordham and was living at Fordham Hall with her parents and siblings. Sydney was boarding with George Cant and his daughter Minna Cant and four members of the Hills family. This family were evacuees from Ilford: Grandmother Caroline, her daughter-in-law Gladys, and two granddaughters, Mary and Barbara.

Sydney served with the 4th Suffolk Regiment and was captured in Malaya in February 1942. The following transcription from a newspaper article describes some of the agonies that Sydney experienced and the excitement that his wife and her family felt on hearing that Private Colman had reached America and would soon be home.

Fordham Man Returns

FORDHAM
EX-PRISONER REACHES AMERICA.—Mrs. S. Colman, who is living with her mother at The Hall, Fordham, has had the good news that her husband, who has been a prisoner of war for about three years, is now free and has reached America.

'Great excitement reigns in the parish especially in Fordham Hall where Mrs Coleman who is living with her parents welcomed home her husband Private Sydney William Coleman, who for 3 years had suffered the hardships of the hell camps of Thailand.

Private Colman serving with the 4th Suffolk Regiment was among those captured at Singapore in February 1942. His experiences have been typical of the agonies and sufferings of many prisoners and the diseases to which many succumbed. He himself bears a large scar as the result of a septic ulceration similar to those which caused many a man to have a limb amputated.

Since his release he has gained 60 pounds in weight. He deeply appreciates the kindness and brotherhood of the American Allies; even in Manilla, American prisoners shared what little extra tit bits they managed to get, when the food ration was 2 meals a day, rice in the morning and rice and sardine oil later in the day.

As Private Colman had been a butcher in civilian life, he managed later to get attached to the cookhouse of the Japanese, which meant a few extra scraps, slices off bones etc. getting to the prisoners and although when shared out this meant very little extra, it was much appreciated.

Behind the horror of his past experiences in the hands of the Japanese glows the gladness of being free, and hardly believable being home.'

When Japan surrendered and the war was officially over, Fordham like many villages, towns and cities wanted to celebrate. Two days of celebrations were organised after a meeting in the Parish Room.

Sydney was chosen to be honorary secretary and treasurer for victory celebration events. It was said of Sydney that 'it would be difficult to find a more fitting secretary after his return from captivity in the hands of the Japanese.'

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CHAPTER 22

Civilian Deaths

'At Clacton a lone raider drops nine heavy ones around West Clacton two people are killed and a lot of damage.' M.F.

Millicent Fairhall records the first WW2 civilian deaths in mainland Britain. A Heinkel HE11E bomber was hit by anti-aircraft fire from Harwich. This plane was on coastal mine laying duties. The plane crashed in Victoria Road, Clacton and one of the mines it was carrying was detonated causing a huge explosion. Dorothy Gill aged forty-five and her husband Frederick Gill aged fifty-two were both killed. There were other civilian deaths in and around Colchester and you can find them 'Civilian deaths in WW2' on the Ancestry and Commonwealth War Graves Commission websites.

Early on Tuesday morning of the 11th of August 1942, Severalls Hospital which catered for a wide range of mental illnesses was hit by four bombs weighing 500lbs each. Three of the bombs landed on the west block and one fell near the nursing home; but this did not detonate. Two female wards were hit. Thirty-eight patients were killed and another twenty three injured; two nurses were also hurt; Emma Dale was one of the patients killed.

The patients who died were aged between thirty-eight and seventy-eight years of age; they are buried in marked graves at Colchester Cemetery. Berlin announced the next morning that Colchester and Hastings had been the targets and the attack was directed at military objectives.

The echelon design of the hospital makes it look like military barracks; but the hospital should have been identified in any prior attack plan.



Severalls Hospital. FLHS Archive

There were stories of bravery and how staff and ARP wardens went about their work calmly; there was no panic among the patients and the staff.

Muriel May Jackson, a twenty-one year-old married nurse, was commended for her actions. She would later be recommended for brave conduct in Civil Defence, as noted in the London Gazette on the 20th of November 1942. Armed with just a small torch, Muriel removed debris midst the chaos and tended the injured. Later she guided doctors safely through the debris to enable them to attend to the wounded.

Emma Dale from Fordham was one of those killed. She was the wife of William Dale and they lived in Porters Lane, Fordham. Emma was the daughter of William Horne and Ellen Arnold, she was born in Copford on the 28th of December 1881 and baptised on the 26th of March 1882 at Copford Parish Church. Emma Horne married William James Dale, who was from Hornchurch, Essex, in 1904 at the same church; they had no children.

Emma was an elder half-sister to Charles William Horne who is remembered on the Fordham War Memorial as a casualty of war in WW1. Emma's mother died in 1895 and her father then married Emily

Slyfield in 1897 and went on to have Charles William later that year; Charles was just nineteen when he died in 1916.

Emma is buried alongside twenty-two other patients from the hospital at Colchester Cemetery. The graves are in one long line and each one has 'Air Raid Casualty' engraved on the stone; but now the gravestones are seriously weathered and covered with lichen. Emma's name is just about visible.



**Severalls Hospital Casualties, Colchester Cemetery.
W. Shepherd Collection**

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CHAPTER 23

Memories - Voices from the Past

'Memories just flood back. The sharp little grandmother with her keen grey eyes and the silent little grandfather. His eyes were deep blue and always seemed to smile. She was very particular and scrupulously clean and orderly. I remember her homemade bread and the plain fare we used to eat as we sat beneath this same little window. She never seemed hurried, but went through her regular routine year after year; wore the third best black bodice in the afternoon and the best black frock on Sundays. She had a bonnet and black cape for the chapel and after a death in the family they were trimmed with a band or two of crepe. I am sure the only time the front door was open was to take a coffin out. But we have it open now. David and Lesley are in and out without wiping the dust from their shoes. How shocked she would have been. I think this war would have bewildered her.' M.F.

This chapter has been written with information gleaned from memories of Fordham people who lived in the village during the war. As the years pass, memories fade, but books and photographs help us remember those 'good old days'.

This is the purpose of a book like this; to remember those who went before us. To give them a voice so they can tell us what it was like living in those difficult war years.

Some of the information is from edited transcripts, taken from the recordings made by Jess Jephcott in his Oral Project. Other stories that have remained hidden in our FLHS archive for many years, have now been dusted off to be shared with you. Other inclusions are from further research by myself and Nicky Gibbs who has contributed to this book. Some additions have evolved as a result of recent contact with descendants of Fordham folk asking FLHS for information. They then shared their knowledge of family, which we have been allowed to include in this book.

Millicent Fairhall nee Partridge

FLHS hopes that the snippets from the diary of Millicent Fairhall have added a personal insight to the village of Fordham during the war; she truly loved this village. When Hazel and Mary Fairhall typed up their mother's diary, notes were added that sometimes made it difficult to work out if it was Millicent, Mary or Hazel writing. The few pages of diary that were given to the society only cover the first few years of the war.

We do know that Millicent was quite a remarkable woman. She would often cycle from Clacton to Fordham during her stay, her daughter comments in the diary:

'Mother writes so casually about 'rode to Fordham.' But what an achievement for a middle aged lady who had never ridden a bike until a month or two earlier. She was so proud of her bike, a rusty old sit up and beg. It cost a few shillings from a junk shop. Never mind the lack of road sense that would be natural to someone who had never ridden a bike before and that her legs were quite riddled with veins. She loved it and never complained about being tired. Whereas we lesser mortals, even if we had managed the journey there and back, would have dropped down with exhaustion on reaching home. Mother straight away put on her apron and set about preparing a meal and coping with the washing. I never in my youth cycled to Colchester from Clacton, let alone Fordham. Once mother had reached the town she would have to ride out to the Halstead Road and then the last and worst lap - the long, long climb up the hill from Ponder's Corner (Wash Corner). It was a cruel walk and we all moaned - but to cycle!'

'20th August. Went to Colchester with Mary (daughter) at 7.15 a.m. Mary then went on to work who was an ARP at the hospital. Visited Aunt Belinda and at 2.12 p.m. started for Clacton. A good ride with an Air Raid warning at Clinghoe Hill. Planes hover until Elmstead is passed. Dismounted ungracefully at Frating, cut face badly, but rode well and reached home at 5.00 p.m.'

In other extracts of the diary, Millicent describes the surrounding countryside on her pre-breakfast bike ride to Bures from Fordham, another to Chappel and then a ride back to Clacton. Millicent also records changes during the seasons in Fordham. It is evident that Millicent still held a real fondness for the family's home town of Clacton.

'27th July. Harvest is well under way. I always associate Fordham with harvest time - great stretches of sun baked fields. The sky line looks just the same, but on closer investigation I find there is a change in the 'last ever' village. Many of the fields now belong to a market gardening firm and grow acres of onions, beans etc. No doubt this accounts for the increased prosperity. Women work in the fields and the produce is taken to London.'

'11th August. I rode to Bures before breakfast, thrilled with the idea of finding the Stour. I know it must lay in the valley after the steep hill at Wormingford. Was charmed with the sleepy old world Bures where the Stour wanders through the middle of the town into the greenest of meadows.'

'Cornfields are rapidly being cleaved. The whole place breathes of August. The trees seem laden, the hedgerows, the birds; everything tells me it is August in Fordham. The view from the bungalow over the fields still delights me just as it did when I was a child. Fordham still looked calm and peaceful in the evening sun. Cornfields were nearly bare, hedgerows rich with colour, berries and fruits beginning to don their autumn hues. Nature seems to have reached maturity.'



'We went for a glorious walk with Margie and the children down an enchanting lane. We saw two men and a dog and field of scarlet runners all strung up in long aisles. Saw the spot where Fordham's bombs fell. In the evening the searchlights swept the fields for miles.

'September Fordham a little sad in the mellow sunlight but everything seems very beautiful. A faint mist tones down the great vistas.'

'The seafront still looked lovely; despite the barbed wire on the beach. The chalets are now boarded up and there is barbed wire everywhere. We are getting used to the tea ration!'

Arthur Harman

In his interview with Jess Jephcott, Arthur Harman said that he worked at Marconi on aircraft, having previously worked on buses; therefore he had a reserved occupation. When he joined Marconi he had no experience, but knew he wanted something of interest to do. Arthur had suggested to the foreman that he should be given a month's trial. The foreman warned him that if he was not up to the job they would have to let him go; which was rather a risk with Arthur having given up his other job. But after the two week trial the foreman told Arthur, he was going to be kept on.

At Chelmsford Arthur finished up as a charge hand and then went to Romford when Marconi took over the Green Line bus garage where they were able to employ a lot more people. Arthur had been made charge hand there as the former charge hand was one of seventeen people who had been killed in a local air raid.

Arthur worked on Hurricanes and Spitfires, making screening harnesses on the engines that stopped interference with the pilot's earphones. He worked twelve hour shifts and sometimes longer, on special work that was secret.

Arthur also recalled some memories of the Land Army girls in Fordham. Mrs Nellie Beard used to have them staying with her and one night she

came round and asked Arthur if he would take them to the station; he agreed. Mrs Beard said the taxi had let them down, so he took them to the station and it happened again the next Friday. Arthur only had his own fuel coupons, so he felt he was robbing himself. They wanted to pay him, but he could not take the money as he thought he would get into trouble.

Arthur was brought up in Wormingford by his aunt and uncle. He married Edith Cavell Osborne in 1936 and in 1939 they were living at Quilters Green, Fordham with their son Derek and Edith's parents Frank and Mary Osborne.

Margaret Playle

'Girly' Playle was a celebrated Fordham resident Margaret Playle nee Beard had lived in the same house at Wash Corner for ninety-nine years. She was born in 1908 to Charles Beard and Edith Broyd. Margaret died in 2009. Her father Charles had served in WW1.



In 1939 Margaret was living with her husband John Playle at Wash Corner with their son David, her brother Sidney Beard and father Charles Beard. Her husband John Playle was in the Home Guard.



Margaret Playle's Home, Wash Corner – FLHS Archive

In her interview with Jess Jephcott, Margaret paints a picture of life in Fordham during WW2. She describes search lights in Fordham and at Wash Farm, she remembers the guns on Fordham Heath and, of course, there were the Americans at the top of Fordham.

She describes planes coming over Fordham heading for London and German and Italian prisoners around the village cutting hedges and working on the farms. We know of other prisoners working in Fordham as they had been seen marching pass the Brick and Tile pub to work on the fields around Fordham and Fordham Heath.

Dorothy Kettle (Bullock)

In 1939 Dorothy Mary Bullock nee Cresswell (in blue) was living at Oak Cottage, Church Road, Fordham with Charlie Bullock, her first husband. Dorothy was born in 1913 and married Charlie on the 11th of January 1936 at All Saints Church.

It was Charlie's grandfather, Henry Bullock who was the publican of the Vulcan pub in Fordham. Charlie was a member of Aldham Fire Service.



In June 1940, Dorothy started work at the Colchester Manufacturing Clothing Company, making army uniforms. She can remember when Chapel Street Colchester was bombed. Her work was part time from 8.00 a.m. until 1.00 p.m. She would leave home at about 7.20 a.m. and get home by 1.30 p.m. She cycled the whole time. She stayed on until December 1945, so she could attend the party that the firm gave the staff in appreciation for their work.

Dorothy remembers mock air raids which were held occasionally at weekends and these operated from All Saints School, Fordham.

Dorothy gives an insight into how scared people could get whilst in the air raid shelters. She tells of how she would take her knitting with her to keep her occupied and calm during air raids, unlike one poor girl who became hysterical.

Dorothy also remembers the 'good times' in Fordham when they had celebrations and dances to support the war effort. She had fond memories of the Americans stationed at Wormingford airfield and other soldiers who were billeted at Penlan Hall; they would regularly attend the functions. The Americans were very good supporters, they came and joined in all the events, also supplying raffle prizes. They always had sweets for the children and would frequent the Three Horseshoes public house.



Dorothy joined the St. John's Ambulance Brigade and trained for her home nursing and first aid certificates which she passed. In 1940, she volunteered to be a collector for the 'War Saving Certificates' in the village. This she did on Friday evenings in the summer but in winter, she collected in the afternoon. People paid what they wanted or what they could afford.

Dorothy recalled that when they had fifteen shillings saved, they received a certificate. She got the stamps from the post office; this was also the general stores in Ponders Road owned by the Playle brothers. At the end of her tenure, she was presented with a certificate, for all the work she had done.

In 1940, a local committee was formed to raise money for the armed services to support the war effort. This is likely to be the Welcome Home Fund Committee.

Dorothy went on the committee and helped to organise functions, which were held in the village hall during the winter. In the summer, events were held on the playing field, next to the shop. Dorothy also helped with the various functions which were held at the end of the war to celebrate peace. Undated newspaper articles from the FLHS archive like this one below, reported many of the village events.



After Charlie Bullock died in 1969, Dorothy married Henry Albert Kettle in 1988. Known as Digger Kettle, he played for Colchester United. Digger served in the RAF in Rhodesia & Italy during the Second World War.

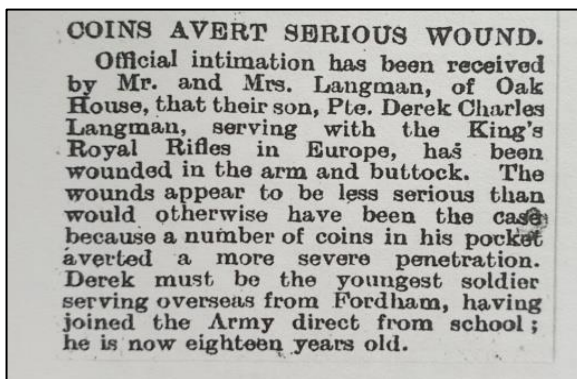
Alan Farrant

Alan Farrant was born in Walthamstow and came to Fordham after the war in 1968. Alan served with the RAF during the war as a wireless operator/aircraft gunner (WOP AG) mainly connected with Warwick aircraft on search and rescue duties. After the war he became an accountant.

Derek Langman

Derek was wounded whilst serving with the Kings Royal Rifles. Luckily the wounds were less serious than would otherwise have been because a number of coins in his pocket shielded him from a more serious injury. In a newspaper article it is reported that Derek Langman of Oak House,

Fordham 'must be the youngest soldier from Fordham serving overseas; having joined the army direct from boarding school.'



Derek Langman was the son of Stanley Langman and Gladys Langman, nee Webster. He had a sister Angela who can recall many childhood memories in Fordham. They came to Fordham in 1941 when their parents purchased Oak House opposite All Saints Church.



Angela Church nee Langman was born in 1930 in Epping. She lived in Oak House opposite the Three Horseshoes pub. Originally four cottages, this house was painted by our mystery artist.

In 1939 Angela was sent away briefly, from West Ham, to relations in Bath, then came to Fordham in March 1941 when her father bought Oak House. Angela and her brother Derek had been booked to be evacuated

to California for the duration of the war. Following the sinking of the SS City of Benares in 1940, with the loss of 258 out of a complement of 406, including the death of 77 evacuated children; Angela and Derek were packed off to boarding school instead, prior to arriving in Fordham. Later, Angela spent three months on a farm up in Worcestershire where she fell in love with the cows and country life.



**Outside Oak House, Three Horse Shoes opposite.
FLHS Archive**

Angela recalls a family from the East End of London living with them in the end part of Oak House. A woman, whose husband was in the forces had been evacuated to Fordham with her children. This was the Tuhill family.

Angela got to know many local farmers, like the Does at Archendines, she also made friends with the people at Cobbs at the top of Fossetts Lane. The licensee of the Three Horse Shoes, Reg Bell, had a Jersey cow that Angela used to care for and milk. He always called Angela - Missy!



Angela remembers the Americans arriving in Fordham and coming for Christmas lunch at their home in 1943. It was a memorable Christmas for Angela as on the 1st of January 1944, her brother Derek joined up. The Langmans invited six Americans, a doctor, a dentist and medical staff who used to drink in the pub.

Their visitors brought such a huge turkey; it had to be cooked in the oven at the bakers. The turkey was taken to Playles, they cooked it and it was finished off on a spit over the open fire. Their guests did not arrive empty handed, bringing boxes of candies and other different items that only the Americans could get.

Angela also remembers hearing doodle bugs coming over Fordham. Although her father disapproved of letting their dog go upstairs, he relented as the dog was so frightened by the noise.

Stan Parker

Stan was born in 1924 at Seven Star Green, Eight Ash Green, the son of Alfred Parker and Rose Cranfield, one of seven children. Stan moved to Fordham Heath and went to school at Eight Ash Green, leaving when he was fourteen.

His father Alfred served in WW1 and in 1939 Stan lived with his parents and siblings at 5, Heath Cottages, Fordham Heath.



Stan worked for a corn and seed merchant in Colchester as a lorry driver's mate. He was encouraged to drive and got his driving licence when he was seventeen. Stan was called up at eighteen, ending up in the Royal Corp of Signals with the 12th Construction Company. They laid telephone cables from England to Germany; a vital communication link for the military forces. He drove a landing craft on D day with the Americans on Utah Beach laying cables at Caen for General Montgomery. He described that time as 'hell on earth.' He was very

proud to be one of the Normandy Veterans. He then went through France, Belgium and Holland in the successful invasion and on to Germany with the British Army at the Rhine.

In 2015 Stan received a commemorative medal from the French government in recognition of his services as a cable layer with the British Army during the D-Day landings in Normandy in 1944. The Legion d'Honneur medal was accompanied by a letter from the French Ambassador, Sylvie Bermann. The French Government recognised all surviving veterans of the Normandy landings including support personnel.



Stan with his Legion D'Honneur Medal. FLHS Archive

Although Stan was extremely honoured to receive his medal, he thought it was thanks to the team.

He said: *'The medal is for the group effort. It is very humbling and I am honoured, I got a nice letter from the French ambassador too. The French had a rough time during the war and they were grateful we freed them from the Germans. "We lost a few men in the team and so this medal is also an honour to those who didn't come back.'*

One of Stan's most vivid memories was on Utah Beach in Normandy, where he joined five other men on a boat to lay an underwater cable.

In the Fordham Memories Project Stan said:

'We knew we were going to win but we naturally got frightened at times and I lost my best friend on the last day of the war, which I think about every day.'

His best friend was Jim Hutchinson, who drowned when his boat capsized whilst crossing a river to lay a cable. Stan said that it was the saddest memory of all. He visited Jim's family with some of the other men, taking Jim's possessions with them. He said it was very sad as Jim had sisters who were quite young. James Hutchinson who died on the 8th of May 1945 served with the Corps of Signals and is remembered at Grooesbeek Memorial Netherlands.

After Stan was demobbed, he had various jobs as a driver. He also worked as a milkman at one time in charge of twenty-five rounds. Stanley married Irene Mary Waller in 1948 and they were married for fifty years. Stan died on the 9th of July 2018.

Sydney Chandler

Sydney Chandler was born on the 28th of August 1923 in West Ham. In 1939 he was living at Watercress Hall, Fossetts Lane, Fordham with mother Catherine Chandler nee Machell and siblings: Doris, Iris, Ivy and Lilian. The three older sisters were also born in West Ham, Lillian was born in Fordham. Sydney's father was Thomas Chandler 1893-1967.

In 1939, Sydney is recorded as working on a farm as a cowman and labourer. Sydney then became a young navy rating and served on HMS Valiant.

We have photographs of his sister Ivy Chandler working on the land; we have yet to confirm she was an official member of the Women's Land Army. We have a newspaper cutting featuring Sydney.

FORDHAM

SALERNO.—The great naval action off Salerno, which has meant so much to the Fifth Army in their conquest of a precarious position, has also roused much interest in the village. Thoughts have gone out to one of its sons, for Sydney Chandler, a young naval rating has been through this great endurance test in H.M.S. *Valiant*, which, with her sister-ship the "Old Lady" veteran "*Warspite*, has done such good work in covering the beaches. The officers and men of these two great battleships, amid continuous bombing, kept at their post without sleep or rest for six days on end.

In Salerno, HMS Valiant emerged from her latest refit after the European War had already started. Her first combat mission took her to the coast of Norway in April 1940. In early 1941, she bombarded Tripoli, Libya along with HMS Barham and HMS Warspite. Shortly after, she participated in the attack on the French fleet at Mers-el-Kébir, French Algeria and at the Battle of Cape Matapan south of Greece. During the final stages of the Balkans Campaign, HMS Valliant was struck by two German aerial bombs off Crete, in May 1941.



HMS Valiant. 2ndww.blogspot.com

In November 1941, Valiant and Barham with an escort of eight destroyers departed Alexandria to cover the 7th and 15th Cruiser Squadrons as they hunted for Italian convoys in the Central Mediterranean. Barham which had participated at the Battle of Jutland was hit by torpedoes from German submarine U-331. The Barham quickly capsized to port and was lying on her side when a massive magazine explosion occurred about four minutes after she was torpedoed.

How close did Sydney Chandler come to losing his life on that day? It could have been his ship the Valiant that was hit. Due to the speed at which Barham sank, in just four minutes, 862 men were killed. The exploding ship was captured on film by a cameraman John Turner from Pathé News, aboard Valiant. HMS Barham was the only British battleship sunk by torpedo in WW2.

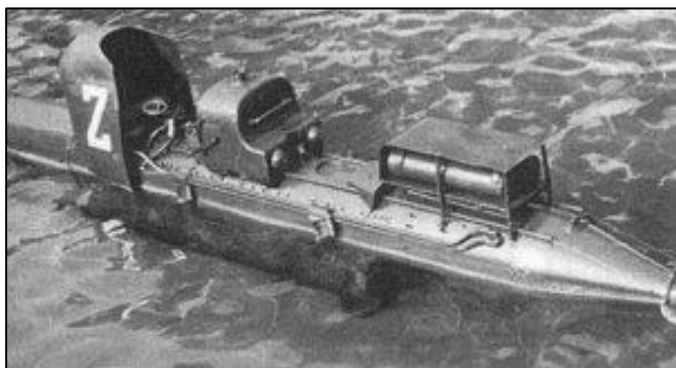


HMS Barham. J. Turner. Pathe News

In December 1941, Sydney's ship HMS Valiant was seriously damaged while in harbour at Alexandria, Egypt by Italian frogman Lieutenant Durand de la Penne. The Italians were the first to use human torpedoes in the Second World War, and were swiftly copied by the British, Germans and Japanese.

The Italian Maiale 'Pig' was 6.7 metres (22 ft.) long, with a detachable explosive nose. It had a two-man crew who sat astride the torpedo wearing rubber suits with oxygen cylinders and masks.

The Maiale was usually carried by another vessel and attacks done at night. After unsuccessful sorties in 1940, the Italians changed their tactics. In 1941, the Italian navy (Regia Marina) successfully entered the harbour of Alexandria and damaged the two British battleships HMS Queen Elizabeth and HMS Valiant.



The Maiale. Edencamp.co.uk

On the 19th of December 1941, two Italian frogmen were captured. Under interrogation they said that they had got into difficulties outside the harbour and had to abandon their equipment and swim. A few minutes later there was an explosion under the tanker Sagonia.

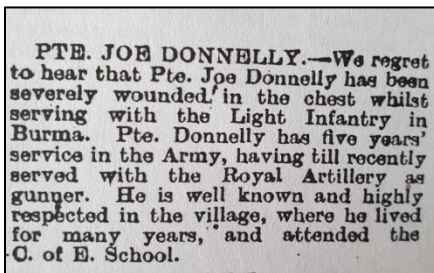
Although the Valliant sank in shallow water, she remained in place for some time, giving a false impression of her active participation in this theatre of war. She was ultimately repaired in Durban, South Africa, returning to service in time to provide naval gunfire support for the Allied invasion of Sicily and then Salerno in Italy in 1943.

When Italy signed the armistice with the Allies, HMS Valiant was one of the Allied warships that escorted the Italian fleet to Malta. In 1944, she was assigned to the Eastern Fleet, supporting raids against Japanese bases in the Dutch East Indies.

In August 1944, at Trincomalee, Ceylon, Valiant suffered some damage when the floating dry-dock in which she was docked suddenly collapsed; as the result of her damage, she was ordered to Alexandria, Egypt for repairs. Upon completion of repairs, she returned to Britain in 1945, and was decommissioned in July 1945 shortly before the end of the Pacific War.

Joe Donnelly

A newspaper entry records that Joe was a well-known and respected man in Fordham. Joe went to the village school. Private Joe Donnelly had been severely wounded in the chest whilst serving with the Light Infantry in Burma.



PTE. JOE DONNELLY.—We regret to hear that Pte. Joe Donnelly has been severely wounded in the chest whilst serving with the Light Infantry in Burma. Pte. Donnelly has five years' service in the Army, having till recently served with the Royal Artillery as gunner. He is well known and highly respected in the village, where he lived for many years, and attended the O. of E. School.

He had already served for five years in the Army and later transferred to the Royal Artillery as a gunner. In 1939 we have widowed Kathleen Donnelly and her four children Patrick Ambrose, Joseph Donnelly, Kathleen Mary and Doreen living at Stanway. We have more knowledge about Joe's siblings than we have of Joe.

Our research shows that his brother Patrick Ambrose Donnelly married Daisy Joan Davey in 1940. They are buried at All Saints Church, Fordham. Patrick was also witness at the wedding of sister in law Eliza Emily Davey and Percy Harold Baker in 1942 at All Saints Church. Later Patrick supported another wedding but this time it was his sister Kathleen Mary in 1947, he gave her away when she married Clifford Ottaway.

Major Alfred Charles Rideout

Major was not a military title, but his Christian name. He is mentioned in a newspaper article concerning an injury he received on the 16th of March 1944 whilst serving with the Expeditionary Force in Italy. He lived at Swiss Cottage in Ponders Road.



He was born in 1915 to Phoebe Osborne and Charles Rideout. In 1939 Major married Mildred Stella Fisher who was a school teacher. They were married at All Saints Church. A week later Major's sister Joyce Grace Rideout married Albert Wickens, they were also married at All Saints Church.

The Beard Family

Another familiar name in Fordham, Fordham Heath and Eight Ash Green belongs to the Beard family. Back in 2019, we interviewed Doris Beard nee Tatham who had married Edward Beard in 1950.

It is Doris who has supplied the FLHS archive with so many family photographs of the Beards, Tathams, Warrens and Daveys. Doris was keen to tell me the story of Edward's brothers who served in WW2.

The brothers were John (known as Jack), Alec, Rex, Edward and Dennis. There was a sister Margaret who looked after her young family in WW2. In 1939 some of the family are living at Seven Star Green, Eight Ash Green with parents who are John Beard and Hannah Beard nee Smith.



Eldest son John Walter or Jack was born 1911. A booklet written by the family states that Jack was with the army and served in Sicily where he suffered from shell shock. He married Elsie Warren and in 1939 the couple were living with Elsie's mother at Eight Ash Green.



Alec Robert was born in 1919, he married Mary Spark in Hampshire in 1938. Alec served in the army, a sergeant in the 40th Battalion Royal Tank Regiment, Royal Armoured Corps and was wounded in North Africa and discharged in April 1944.



Rex was born in 1923 and had a memorable 21st birthday in the navy, serving on board a Russian convoy which was hit by a Japanese suicide plane. Rex later served on HMS Victorious. He married Eileen Lacey in 1950. Rex is on the photo of Fordham footballers, page 266.

The youngest brother Dennis was born in 1927. Dennis worked for Britannia Works, Davy Paxman Company that had been completely turned over to war work. Dennis was apprentice to a diesel fitter.

As he was on war work, his conscription was deferred for a year. By the time Dennis was conscripted the war in Europe was over.



Dennis served with RAF Occupational Forces in Germany. Dennis saw much of the aftermath of the war after passing out in 1945 at Holton.

As part of 2777 squadron, an armoured car squadron, their role was to patrol the German and Russian borders and also Gatow airfield, villages and towns. The war criminals were sent to Gatow Airfield from the Nuremburg trials on their way to Spandau Jail.

At one time, Dennis was stationed near Belsen. Much of the concentration camp had been burned down and patients removed, although many still remained, too ill to be moved and continued to be treated medically.

Dennis was also involved in a serious accident with an RAF lorry full of personnel and ammunition. Dennis was lucky to escape with cuts and bruises; there were two fatalities and serious injuries to others.

On one occasion, Dennis and his friend were arrested on a bus going through a Russian checkpoint. They were imprisoned and at one stage marched out into a wood, where they thought they were to be shot. Eventually the Russians contacted the British authorities. But as Dennis and his friend had been absent for five days they were arrested for deserting and punished.



Doris married Edward Beard in 1950, he was born in 1925.

Edward had served with the Navy and one of his ships was HMS Warspite which had a most illustrious history in WW1 and WW2. The ship took part in the Battle of Jutland and in the Normandy landings. Damaged on many occasions in WW2 with loss of life, only to be refitted and sent out again, HMS Warspite earned the most battle honours of any Royal Navy ship.



HMS Cossack. D. Beard Collection.

We were given this photograph of Edward on HMS Cossack. The Cossack, had been involved in sinking the Bismarck. She had run down the Bismarck in Narvik fjord and was one of the first of a British flotilla that made contact with the German battleship. Torpedo Officer William

Garrard who is on this photo and sadly killed in a later incident, was responsible for laying and firing a torpedo which hit the Bismarck's rudder, thus severely impairing her steerage that allowed the heavy cruisers to sink the Bismarck.

On the 24th of October 1941, HMS Cossack was hit by a torpedo from U-563. There was a huge loss of life, 159 men died, including the captain, 29 were injured but 161 rescued. We have no information if Edward was on this ship at the time, when the ship was hit. But research has shown that in the photograph of crew on the previous page, this is the captain and one of the lieutenants who were killed and there at the back of the photo on the right hand side is Edward. The ship did not sink immediately as a result of the torpedo but was lost in bad weather when being towed back to Gibraltar.

In later life, Edward's bad health and polio were attributed to his visit to the stricken sites of Hiroshima and Nagasaki immediately after the atomic bombings.

Kelso Wheturere Mason

One of the aims of Fordham History Society is to share the village's heritage with others. It is therefore satisfying when descendants of people who lived in our village in the past, get in contact with us.



Kelso Mason receiving his Wings. Mason Family Collection

We can then add more information to our archive. The family of Kelso Wheturere Mason got in contact with us and Kelso's exploits as an RAF pilot have been added to this book.



When Kelso lived in the village with his wife Daphne and children, he ran the shop in Moat Road. As part of the community his children attended Sunday school at the Chapel. Kelso also took part in village events such as dressing up as Santa and arriving on a horse outside the village store.

Kelso's heritage is interesting; he was born in New Zealand and of Maori and Scottish descent, his name Kelso from his Scottish ancestry and Wheturere (meaning Meteor) from his Maori heritage.

Kelso went to Canada to train as a pilot in WW2 and eventually came to England. He was a pilot on Dakota DC9 transport planes having a vital role supporting the military in operations during WW2. Kelso's son has produced a very interesting YouTube video about Kelso, his heritage and RAF life; it is very interesting. I recommend you take a look.

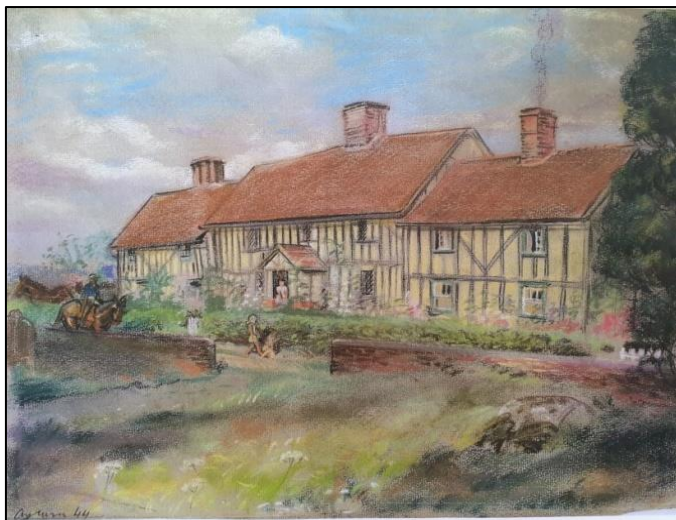
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Kelso died in 1961 aged just fifty-one; he is buried in the Chapel graveyard with his wife Daphne who died in 2017.



The Artist who lived in a 'caravan' in Fossetts Lane

One of the favourite Fordham stories is that of the artist who produced a colourful pastel composition of Oak House. It looks to be signed Autumn 1944 or possibly a signature Ayburn/Alwyn 1944.



We have a summer photograph of Oak House taken around 1944 with Hollyhocks outside, they usually bloom July through to September. Perhaps this was the time of year when the artist composed the picture.



The stories that have been told over time tell us that the artist lived alone in a caravan down Fossetts Lane near the farm. It is also said that he was possibly a conscientious objector coming from London. His name was Fitch and that his nickname was Bluebeard and he collected water from the well near to Watercress Hall. This was all the information we had at one time, from Betty Butler who was brought up in Watercress Hall cottages. Snippets of information have been added to embroider the artist's story, but we still have no definitive identification. Perhaps some more information will be forthcoming after the book is published!

Let us look at some more evidence. We have now been told it was not a caravan as we would have imagined in the 1940s, but a railway wagon and this information has been confirmed by villager Fred Waters, who used to play in it after the artist had left Fordham.

The artist purchased the land that the 'caravan' was sited on, close to Watercress Hall. He used to fetch water from the well, as described by the Butler family. He lived on his own, but evidently he did have a wife. It was thought he came from London, but we have now been told he was from Essex, possibly the Rochford area. This is where he returned to after he left Fordham, to live in a windmill. When the artist left, he sold the land to the Cannons and we know Nancy and David moved there in the early 1950s. So it is a bit of a shame we are unable to put the real name and back story to our artist; another of Fordham's mysteries.

Victor Woodward

The photograph of Victor was one of many in the FLHS archive sent in by the family of Isaac Woodward. They contacted us when they wanted to know more about the Woodward family in Fordham.

Victor, born in 1924 was one of the four children born to Isaac Woodward and Ethel May Hartley, who had married at St. Barnabus Church in Chappel Essex in 1911.



In 1939, Victor and one of his brothers Charles Edward are living at Ponders Road, Fordham with his parents. Another brother George was living at Rose Cottage, Quilters Green with his wife Marjorie. Esther who was Victor's sister married Charles Pitt in 1936 at All Saints Church and was living in Ipswich in 1939.

On the back of Victor's photograph it is written that he served on a U.K. aircraft carrier in WW2. There were many aircraft carriers in WW2. In fact in 1939, the Royal Navy had more than any other navy. Air power was a significant factor in WW2; the aircraft carrier dramatically changed armed combat. There were large models like the new Illustrious and other smaller versions. These included numerous Escort, Light and Merchant carriers such as the Audacity and Thane worked the Atlantic, Mediterranean, Europe and around the Far East. We do not know which aircraft carrier Victor served on during the war.

Sidney Herbert

Living at The Bungalow, Church Road, Fordham in 1939 were Sidney Herbert, his mother Edith Herbert nee Morgan and his aunt Lily Morgan. Sidney was a serving soldier. Usually the military are not shown on the 1939 register as they are accounted for elsewhere. However, some military personnel on leave because, of an injury, have been found on the register.



In Sidney's case this could be the reason. He served with the Royal Engineers but was discharged on the 28th of August 1941 under King's Regulations, 1940, paragraph 390 (xvi) as he was medically unfit. Sidney's service number was 1870841, he was a sapper and had enlisted on the 12th of June 1934. This information was confirmed on Sidney's

British Army Royal Engineer Records 1900 - 1949 on the Find my Past website.

His brother Edward was born in 1908 and Sidney was born in 1909, they were baptised together on the 7th of August 1910 at the parish church in Carshalton, Surrey. Their father was Edward Herbert born in Sevenoaks, Kent and is recorded as a musician. The family are together on the 1911 census. Sidney's father is recorded as a 'teacher of singing and piano.' Edward is forty-nine and Edith is twenty-eight. This census states the parents have been married for four years, but I am unable to locate a marriage for Edward and Edith.

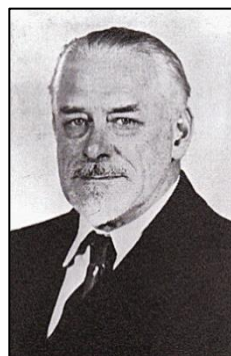
In 1901 an Edward Herbert age thirty-seven is recorded in Lancaster with Roberta Herbert aged twenty-three, status married, she is a singer. Edward's place of birth is Sevenoaks Kent and he was a musician. Roberta is also from Kent. No further information can be found of Edward's father. On the 1921 census Sidney's mother Edith is recorded as a widow and they are living with Edith's mother, sister and brother in Shoreditch. The 1921 census records that Sidney and Edward's father is dead. By 1931 Sidney and his mother are living in Fordham at Lewis Cottage, as confirmed on the 1931 electoral roll.

We have been unable to find a death record for Sidney's father; possibly he died in the war. Born in 1863, it made Edward fifty-one when war broke out, so this is unlikely.

Joseph Weston Martyr

Joseph Weston Martyr was a British writer and sportsman. In WW2, he had an important literary role and the 1939 register reveals that he lived at Threshers on Plummers Road with his wife Norah who was one of our Land Army women.

Notes beside Weston Martyr's name tell us he was an '*author on a list of Ministry of Information.*'



The Ministry of Information

Plans were hastily drawn up to meet the imminent threat of invasion; a Home Defence Executive was established, but one of the greatest difficulties facing the government was the need to explain the situation to the public. This was the responsibility of the Ministry of Information's 'Emergency Planning Committee'.

The committee was formed on the 22nd of May 1940, five days before the first troops left northern France; it called for swift action to counter public apprehension. The War Cabinet agreed, and invited the Ministry to prepare a publicity campaign. It was asked to include a series of instructions explaining the steps that should be taken in the event of an invasion. Based at Senate House in London, the Ministry of Information was responsible for publicity and propaganda; it could also censor news.



The Ministry of Information worked with the Home Defence Executive of the War Office and the Home Office led Ministry of Home Security in an effort to ensure a consistent message across government. The main outcome of their discussions was a leaflet with the unimaginative title 'If the Germans Invade Great Britain'. It included a mixture of practical instructions and generic advice. It was stressed, for instance, that 'In the event of an invasion ... you must remain where you are.' The order was "STAY PUT."

Joseph was born on the 7th of September 1885 in Freemantle, Southampton and died in Devon in 1966. He has a very interesting family background. Joseph had three brothers and a sister.

One brother, James Graham, was a scoutmaster in China before WW1. He was a Lieutenant in the Royal Irish Rifles during the war. After the war James lived in Japan for twenty-seven years and was a tutor to the

Japanese Royal children. In 1941 James was arrested for espionage in Japan, he was later released. Another brother, Leonard married Ella Bainbridge, the sister of Norah Bainbridge, wife of his brother Joseph. During WW1, Leonard was a lieutenant in the Royal Flying Corps.

Joseph's father was Joseph Walter Cook Martyr who was born in India and a master mariner. His mother was Ida Adelaide de Garlieb, her mother was German and her father was Danish.

Joseph's father, J.W.C. Martyr seems to be quite a character. At the age of eighty he established an aviation record when he became a pilot, gaining his flying licence after only three months training. There was an article published in the Times in 1931 – 'Skipper Becomes Flier at Age of 80'. Captain J.W.C. Martyr is quoted as saying that he 'found it easier to pilot an aeroplane than a ship.'

Joseph Weston Martyr of Fordham served in WW1 and was originally in the 13th Nott's/ Derbyshire Regiment. Joseph later became a Captain in the Royal Engineers and served in the Western European Theatre of war. In 1918 Joseph married Norah Christine Bainbridge at St. Martins, London. In 1938 Norah was a champion archer and joined the Women's Land Army working in Copford, Essex. She died in 1942 in Oxford aged forty-seven (see Land Army chapter).



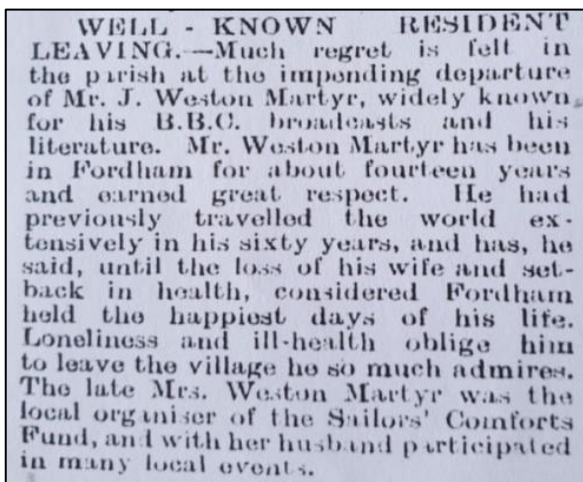
Joseph was a broadcaster and author. He wrote about sailing adventures including one called 'The Southsea Man: life story of a schooner' he also wrote many magazine articles.

After yacht racing in Bermuda in 1924 he became an advocate for a yacht race off the UK, in fact he was the inspiration behind the creation of the Fastnet Race.

In 1950 Joseph wrote an article entitled 'In Praise Of Archery.' It was a light hearted article about the ancient art of archery. He had become hooked on archery, dropping all his other sports. He said that he gained more satisfaction from archery than he ever got from being an expert ocean racing yachtsman.

Ironically, he noticed that his wife Norah was quietly practising archery and after only a month she was shooting a lot better than him. Within two months, Norah had entered the British National Championship and won. She went on to take part in the World Archery Championships in 1938 where she won a joint gold medal, sharing it with Louise Nettleton.

During WW2, Joseph and Norah were involved in the Fordham community. Joseph was writing for the Ministry of Information and Norah was a land army worker and organiser of the Sailor's Home Comforts Fund. In 1931 the couple were still living in Middlesex, but were in Fordham in 1939. After Norah died at the Radcliffe Hospital, Oxford in 1942, a newspaper article informs us of Joseph's departure from Fordham; it is quite poignant. It says that he had been in Fordham for fourteen years and because of his loneliness and health setbacks he had decided to leave Fordham.



WELL - KNOWN RESIDENT LEAVING.—Much regret is felt in the parish at the impending departure of Mr. J. Weston Martyr, widely known for his B.B.C. broadcasts and his literature. Mr. Weston Martyr has been in Fordham for about fourteen years and earned great respect. He had previously travelled the world extensively in his sixty years, and has, he said, until the loss of his wife and setback in health, considered Fordham held the happiest days of his life. Loneliness and ill-health oblige him to leave the village he so much admires. The late Mrs. Weston Martyr was the local organiser of the Sailors' Comforts Fund, and with her husband participated in many local events.

Annual summer visitors to Fordham

Recorded in the church baptism records are three children belonging to farm workers who travelled to Fordham in 1941 for pea and fruit picking. These were children of the Scamp and Lee family. William George and Phoebe were baptised on the 27th of April 1941, their parents were Oliver and Louisa Scamp. Also baptised on the same day was Lena Lee who parents' names are very hard to decipher. The occupation of the fathers is recorded as 'gypsy.'

Other families came to the village after the war for pea picking. We have this information via oral interviews with Louisa Bath. FLHS member Marlene Boyle found a very useful piece of paper stashed away at home with names of the Bath, Pullen, Doe, White, Fletcher, Hearn and Sines families written on it, plus Louisa's phone number. They all worked on Lewis Gunary's land hoeing, pea, bean and fruit picking. Accounts of these families connection to Fordham from the war will be recorded in our archives and written up in a later monthly bulletin.

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Page 336 Interview with Louisa Bath 2025

Chapter 24

VICTORY CELEBRATIONS

The 8th May, 1945 will always be known as Victory in Europe Day (VE Day). Germany officially surrendered on the 7th of May 1945 and after nearly six years of war, the conflict was over in Europe.

On the 6th and 9th of August 1945, atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima then Nagasaki. The Soviet Union declared war on Japan on the 8th of August and on the 10th of August; the Japanese government communicated its intention to surrender.

However, it was not until the weekend of the 15th and 16th of August 1945, after the Japanese capitulated, that the fighting in the Pacific ended. This finally brought WW2 to an end.

On board the USS Missouri in Tokyo Bay, the formal signing of the Japanese Instrument of Surrender of Japan took place on the 2nd of September 1945. General Douglas MacArthur, Commander in the Southwest Pacific and Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, accepted the surrender from representatives from the Empire of Japan.



On the 12th September 1945 at Singapore City Hall, the formal surrender was finalised when Admiral Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander of the South East Asia Command received the formal surrender of Japanese forces in South East Asia. He received the surrender from General Seishiro Itagaki on behalf of Field Marshal Hisaichi Terauchi, who had suffered a stroke earlier in the year. Terauchi died in 1946 and General Itagaki was convicted of war crimes and executed in 1948.



There are many photographs of this momentous day taken inside and outside the Municipal Buildings in Singapore with Admiral Mountbatten. My father had quite a few of these in his possession. I expect they had been sold to members of the forces as souvenirs.

John William Shepherd, was a Royal Marine, in the Landing Craft Division; 681 Landing Craft Mechanized (LCM) Flotilla.

He had many photographs of his time spent out in India, Ceylon, Burma and Malaysia.

My father also kept a little diary of his time abroad recording his daily duties, the conditions, the fear and hardship for the locals and military personnel.

In Britain we celebrate VJ Day on the 15th of August, whilst the Americans celebrate it on the 2nd of September.

In Fordham, there were many Victory events to celebrate the end of the war. The Welcome Home Committee once again started planning. On the 15th and 16th of August a celebration took place when the village sang heartily around a huge bonfire and watched fireworks near the Vulcan; there was also free beer!

The village eagerly awaited the arrival, back home, of our Prisoners of War. Now that Germany and Japan had signed their surrenders, Fordham and the rest of the world could begin to breathe again.

FORDHAM.

VICTORY CELEBRATION.

August 15th-16th will long be remembered by the parishioners for celebration following the capitulation of Japan. There was community singing, a huge bonfire near the Vulcan Inn, intermingled with the cracking of fireworks and the distribution of free beer (given by anonymous donors). Earlier in the evening the Rev. W. Oddie (Rector) held a short service in the Parish Church, which was well attended. On Thursday a public meeting was called in the Parish Room by Mr. H. Cope, Chairman of the Parish Council, to elect officers for further celebrations and to arrange a programme of events. Mr. Cope was elected chairman, and Mr. S. W. Colman hon. secretary and treasurer. It would be difficult to find a more fitting secretary, for Mr. Colman was freed from a Japanese hell camp a short while ago. Saturday, September 22nd, was the date fixed for the celebration, when the children and old folks will be given a tea, and there will be sports and amusements. It was decided to hold dances to raise funds for the occasion.

It was pleasing to read that Sydney Colman, safely back from a Japanese camp, had helped organise a celebration on Saturday the 22nd of September. An article in the local paper records:

VICTORY CELEBRATIONS.

With everyone in high spirits the victory celebration day, which was held on Saturday, had a full programme of events. The children's sports were the first on the list, and a happy time was spent to the accompaniment of the radiogram. The successful competitors share a sum of £3 15s. 6d. in prize money. This was followed by a children's and old folks' tea in the Parish Hall. While the old folks were having a high tea, with chicken, the children's fare consisted of every kind of delicacy they could wish for. Numerous competitions followed, and the monetary prizes amounted to £3 5s.

The Hall then became full to overflowing for the concert, everyone thoroughly enjoying the programme which included Vic Draper (yokel comedian), Bert Jarvis (tenor), and W. Hutchinson (conjurer). Mr. Cope expressed, on behalf of the committee, thanks for the assistance it had received, and acknowledged the sum of £43 11s. 11d. by subscriptions and other events. The use of the balance of £20 18s. will be decided at a further meeting.

A social and dance, which concluded the day, was well attended. Competition winners were A. J. Beard (Wormingford) goose, Mrs. Manning (Colchester) 100 cigarettes, Mr. Moss (Blue Boar) dozen eggs, Mrs. Smith (Colchester) two pillow cases, Mrs. Chaplin (Blue Boar) dozen eggs, H. Cope (Fordham) fifty cigarettes, Mrs. Young (Colchester) tongue, Mrs. L. Gunary, fifty cigarettes, Mr. S. Colman, bottle of wine, Clements (Colchester) chicken, D. Crafton (Seven Kings) dozen eggs, Mr. Brown (East Gates) 100 cigarettes, Mr. White, cake, and Mrs. Brown (Colchester) parcel grocery.

The children had enjoyed themselves in the celebrations, but another couple of Victory events were planned for them.

Victory Tea - All Saints School

'The Fordham Church of England School was gaily decorated with red roses, white carnations and blue cornflowers as well as bunting on Friday when the Rev. and Mrs Oddie, Mr & Mrs Doe, Mrs Partridge, Mr & Mrs Langham, Mr & Mrs Bradshaw, Mrs Bonner and the teachers collectively gave a sumptuous Victory tea to the school children. Ice creams were served and games followed by an hour's juggling, ventriloquism and a Punch & Judy Show. Each child received a card with an address from His Majesty the King.'

Children's Victory Fete

Can you imagine the excitement in the village and at school with the thought of a Children's Victory Fete? This is the write up in the local paper:

'It would be appropriate if this report were headed 'Betty's Children's Fete,' as Miss Betty Rayner is acknowledged as the sole organiser of a delightful programme of the sports and bounteous tea held on Saturday. There was a splendid response by the parishioners to her appeal, and besides gifts in kind, the sum of £8.10s was collected. The opening programme was a splendid tea with every kind of delicacy the children could wish, and with the tables richly decorated with red, white and blue flowers. There were many willing helpers. After tea there was a full programme of sports, and special mention must be made of the services of Mr Byford and Mr C. Harris, who took control of the events. Each successful competitor was given a cash prize, the total amounting to £3. Before the close, ice cream cornets were served.

To complete the day a very enjoyable and well patronised dance was held in the village hall. Mr C.G. Rush-Brookes amplifier equipment supplied the music. Mr C. Harris officiated as MC. Competitions were won by R. Cardy (grocery parcel and also half a pound of tea), Mrs Baker (dozen eggs), Mrs J. Pilgrim (cot eiderdown, presented by Mrs Quinney,

Braintree), Mrs Nunn (2lbs of tomatoes) and Mrs Beard (half a dozen light ales). A balance of £6. 10s. is being presented to the Welcome Home Fund. Before the close, Mr Byford spoke in high praise of the organisation, and called for three cheers for Miss Betty Rayner.'

Stand Down Celebrations – Parish Room

Finally, it was also good to see that the First Aiders and Air Raid Precaution Wardens came together and celebrated the end of their service by organising a festive evening with high tea, dancing, games and competitions. Miss Rideout played the piano and accordion. Mr Moore, chief Warden from the District thanked all for their loyal co-operation and support. Our Senior Warden Herbert Partridge thanked the ladies who contributed to the occasion.



**Celebrating VE Day on Cambridge Road, Colchester.
Credit: Local historian and author, Andrew Phillips.**

Two verses from a poem 'As I look Back' by Ken Hay

Kenneth Hay was not a Fordham man, but I would like to finish this book with two verses from a poem he wrote called 'As I look Back.' Ken was born in Barking Essex and was just fourteen when war broke out in 1939. When he turned seventeen, he volunteered for service in the same unit as his older brother William, having initially joined the Home Guard.

Ken was a Normandy war veteran. He fought in Normandy with the 43rd Essex Regiment for just a few days, having landed on Juno Beach. He was captured by the Nazis and taken to Poland to work in a coal mine.

Ken was involved in the Long March to Freedom, he was one of 80,000 prisoners from Nazi camps forced to walk over 1000 miles starting on the 23rd of January 1945. Marching in freezing temperatures, the men were eventually liberated south of Berlin by the Russians on 20th the April 1945.

In January 2025 at the age of ninety-nine, Ken was photographed for a special D Day Portrait Exhibition. Here are the verses:

***With memories I come each year, and often shed a tear
To understand, that I came home to live another year.
I still can see, each passing day, the friends I left behind
The price they paid, I nearly paid, is clearly brought to mind.***

***Stand with me and give your thanks for those who paid the price
For, had they not, the life we live would not be very nice.
They cannot make their voices heard as they lie 'neath the grass
Honour them for all they gave, brave soldiers to the last.***

Kenneth Hay

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Chapter 25

The 1939 occupations of Fordham villagers

'I go to Fordham. Autumn is spreading over the countryside. Fordham seems a little sad in the mellow sunlight, but everything seems very beautiful. A faint mist tones down the vista.' M.F.

AGRICULTURE

Agricultural carpenter
Agricultural labourer
Cowman on farm
Dairy farmer
Dairy maid
Farmer
Farm bailiff
Farm foreman
Farm labourer
Fruit farm labourer
General farm labourer
Hay tying and thatcher
Heavy worker on farm
Heavy worker on dairy farm
Horseman on farm
Horseman heavy farm duty
Horticultural labourer
Land worker on farm
Land worker female
Land worker for market gardener
Market gardener
Mixed farmer
Poultry farmer
Small holder
Stockman on farm

Tractor driver
Threshing machine worker
Threshing machine feeder
Wholesale potato merchant

CLERICAL/MANAGERIAL

Brewer's foreman
Clerk at building society
Engineer's bookkeeper
Insurance clerk
Postman
Shop manager
Tea planter's superintendent
Transport garage, lorry driver's assistant and clerk

DOMESTIC/ SERVICE

Bar maid
Domestic help
Domestic servant
House keeper
Housewife – domestic
Laundry work at home
Man servant
Paid domestic duties
Shop assistant in dyers shop

PROFESSIONALS

Author and journalist
District nurse midwife
Children's governess
Clerk in holy orders
Company secretary
Infant school teacher
Journalist/editor
Lay reader
Manager at haulage business
Medical practitioner
Mental nurse

Metropolitan police constable
Minister of religion
Red Cross nurse
Riding master
School mistress
School teacher
State registered nurse
Stores clerk at AN & AF institution

RETIRED

Retired army major
Retired butcher
Camera fitter retired
Civil engineer retired HM office land registry
Retired Civil servant
Retired clerk
Retired clerk shipping tea trade
Coopers mate retired
Retired domestic
Retired dressmaker
Retired decorator
Retired housekeeper
Retired labourer
Plate layer retired
Retired LNER porter
Retired metropolitan police
Police sergeant retired
Retired poultry farmer
Retired publican
Public company clerk (retired)
Retired shop assistant
Stockman retired
Retired teacher
Retired thatcher
Retired trouser machinist
Retired disabled war pensioner

TRADE

Builder
Butcher
Bread baker
Brewers drayman
Coopers mate
Carpenter, joiner
Chauffeur vans boy bakers
Coalman
Coal miner
Decorator
Dressmaker
Electrical instrument reassemble
Estate carpenter
Fishmonger and green grocer
Flour miller
Gardener/handyman
Golf links labourer
Gravel pit labourer
Greensward man
Heavy worker brickyard kiln worker
Homemade cake maker
House painter
Iron moulder
Ironmonger's warehouse
Labourer
Licensed victualler
Laundress
Lengthman railway LNER
Lorry driver
Market gardener worker
Master baker
Mat making (blind)
Motor mechanic
Motor engineer
Painter foreman
Printing works assistant photographer's assistant
Public works contractor

Retail wholesaler tobacconist
Roadman
Shopkeeper and post mistress
Shop keeper
Silk worker throwster
Skilled workman post office telecommunications
Storekeeper as AN and AF institution
Sign writer and decorator
Thatcher
Tailoress
Tailoress employed on khaki dress uniforms
Trouser machinist
Wood machinist

OTHER

Seeking work - Bricklayers labourer
Wife of mercantile sea captain
Evacuee
OAP
Incapacitated
Jobbing

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