

In 2014 the Astons were part of National Heritage nationwide project to commemorate the centenary of the start of the First World War.

A series of booklets were produced to mark the lives of the 16 Astons soldiers who lost their lives in that conflict, and also the impact of the war in the Astons.

In 2025 a similar project researched the lives of the 10 Astons soldiers who died during the Second World War, and again a series of booklets were produced for the exhibition held to mark the 80th anniversary of the end of Second World War.

This booklet reproduces the various boards that were created to accompany the soldiers' banners, and a selection of photos taken at the exhibition.

List of Boards:

1. The World at War

- How we chose which subjects to cover
- Dunkirk
- Bob Danvers-Walker: The Voice behind WW2 Pathe News
- North Africa and Italy
- North Africa: The Mystery of Alice
- The Holocaust
- US Air Force aerial photography 1944

2. The Home Front

- The Astons WI Goes to War – Again!
- Food Rationing and the Women's Land Army
- Air Raid Precautions (ARP)
- The Bachelor family
- Bell Ringing During WW2
- Village Sources

3. Exhibition Photos

How did we choose what to cover during World War II?

World War II was a far more complex war to cover than the First World War. There were numerous areas of warfare across the globe. We could not cover them all. We have chosen to be led by the timeline of events dictated by the villagers affected from 1939 – 1945.

The Astons lost 10 men in this conflict. Shown below in date order.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date of death</u>	<u>Place of death</u>	<u>Major war event</u>
ALDRIDGE, James Peter	24 May 1940	France	Dunkirk evacuation
LILLINGTON, Ivor Leonard	31 May 1940	English Channel	Dunkirk evacuation
LANGMORE, David Erskine	18 December 1941	Malta	Air Support, Tripoli
WIGLEY, Henry Thomas	5 March 1943	Denmark	Air Support, Denmark
WALDRON, Frank	22 April 1943	Scotland	Air Training Accident.
HORN, Joseph Kenneth	28 June 1944	Over Suffolk	Bomber. Shot down.
RAY, Frederick Ernest	12 September 1944	China Sea, Far East	POW boat torpedoed
FURLONG, Frank	13 September 1944	Salisbury Plain	Spitfire Air Accident
CROSS, Timothy O.K.	15 November 1944	Mierlo, Netherlands	Post D Day battle
BACHELOR, Ernest Oliver	19 July 1947	Abingdon	Taken ill during WW2

We have therefore followed the main war-time events which affected the villagers:

1940. The evacuation of Dunkirk.

1940. The evacuees who arrived in Aston escaping the Blitz in London in 1940.

1941 – 1945. The North Africa and Italy conflicts.

1942. The fall of Singapore and the POWs captured there and the war in Burma 1942-1944

1942 – 1944. The air support to countries who were trying to resist the Germans in Denmark (SOE operations) and the loss of life from those who took part in the numerous air sorties to find and destroy battleships and U boats. The development of the Supermarine Spitfire to protect our shores, and the subsequent accidents that happened to those in training and flying.

1944. The D Day landings and the ensuing battles to recapture France, Belgium and the Netherlands. The post D Day bombing raids over Europe and their casualties.

1944-1945 The recapture of Europe, including the liberation of Belsen-Bergen in April 1945.

Other theatres of war:

We cannot ignore the ghastliness of what took place on the Eastern Front, including the Baltic states, with the enormous loss of life sustained there by European, Russian and German troops. Or the horrors taking place in Greece and the Balkans. Estimated losses in those areas of conflicts are around 50 million military personnel killed, injured or missing. Nor the war taking place in the Pacific between Japan and the USA accounting for around 1.7 million Japanese and 110,000 USA casualties. But as none of our men or women featured in those areas of conflict listed above, we haven't featured them.

We have also tried to follow our men and women who served in the forces, and survived the war. This has included those in the Home Guard, the Air Raid Precaution (ARP) and Fire Wardens on the home front, and women in the armed services, nursing and voluntary services.

World War II was vastly more deadly in sheer numbers of those killed and injured.

World War I was confined to a more limited geographic area with total numbers of dead, injured or missing estimated at 16-20 million with very few civilian casualties.

World War II had a far greater impact on civilians, killing around 50 -70 million, with serving military personnel, numbers of dead, injured or missing estimated at around 85 million.

Lastly, we have tried to feature what life was like here in the Astons for those left behind, using local source material and family stories and photos wherever we could find them.

A team of dedicated villagers have visited **EVERY LAST KNOWN RESTING PLACE OR MEMORIAL** of our 10 World War II dead, in Denmark, Netherlands, France, Singapore and in the UK.

Thank you to Anna Dillon, Janey Dillon, Guy Liverton, Jancis and Steve Smith and Mike and Judy Barradell-Smith. A plaque commemorating their life and a poppy was left at every site.

We hope you will learn much about the Astons during World War II.

DUNKIRK

May 26th to June 4th 1940

After Britain declared itself at war with Germany on the 3rd September 1939, British and other allied troops were dispatched into France. The USA had not yet entered the war. There was a hope that these troops alongside the French could stop the German advance but France, including Paris, fell to Nazi Germany during the Battle of France in May and June 1940. German forces entered Paris on the 14th June 1940. France signed an armistice with Germany on the 22nd June, formally ending hostilities and resulting in German occupation of northern France and the Atlantic coastline. The remaining Allied troops including Belgian, French and British troops were driven back as German troops occupied strategic western ports and land leaving the entire British Army and allied forces surrounded and isolated at Dunkirk.

Operation Dynamo

The Dunkirk evacuation, also known as Operation Dynamo.

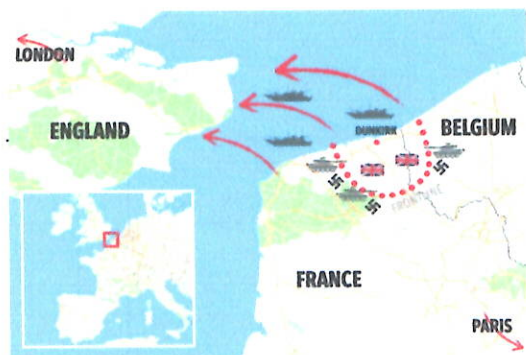
The German blitzkrieg tactics had overwhelmed Allied defences, pushing them towards the English Channel. With their backs to the sea and the port of Dunkirk as the last viable evacuation point, the decision was made to evacuate as many troops as possible to Britain. This was a desperate measure to save troops and preserve a fighting force for the future. The British Army had to abandon all its equipment as it fled towards the sea.

Casualties

68,000 British troops were killed, wounded or captured. In addition, around 40,000 French troops were captured.

Rescued

338,000 troops were evacuated. 215,000 British and 123,000 French and Belgian. The call-out to rescue Operation Dynamo, stands out as one of the most significant, heroic rescue missions in history. Military and private boats of every description and size who answered the call, made the perilous crossing. Some did numerous crossings under enemy fire over several days. It is estimated that 850 civilian operated boats including yachts, paddle boats, fishing boats, commercial ferries and lifeboats took part. Many of their crew were to be injured or lose their lives in the attempt. These vessels sailed from Ramsgate, Dover and smaller east coast ports in England to Dunkirk.



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The lost or injured village men at Dunkirk

The Astons lost two of their men who were killed in the days leading up to and following the evacuation from Dunkirk. One man was seriously injured at Dunkirk and was invalided out of the army.

Please read more about them below:



Private Herbert Arthur Bachelor
4th Battalion.
Royal Berkshire Regiment.
He had been serving in the army before the outbreak of the war.
Wounded at Dunkirk May 1940.



Private James Peter Aldridge
1st Battalion.
Royal Berkshire Regiment.
He had been serving in the army in France from September 1939.
Killed during the retreat of Dunkirk.
Died 25th May 1940
Buried at Haverskerke, France
Commonwealth War Graves
Commission cemetery.



Sergeant Major Ivor Leonard Lillington
18th Regiment
Royal Field Artillery.
He joined the army in 1924 and was dispatched to France in September 1939.
Killed during the retreat of Dunkirk.
Died on 31st May/1st June 1940.
Buried at St James Cemetery,
Dover Row F Grave 14.



WE WILL REMEMBER THEM
REMEMBERING THE ASTONS DURING WW2

BOB DANVERS-WALKER

The Voice behind World War II, Pathe News

During World War II, nearly everyone went regularly to the cinema throughout the war. It was a distraction and a comfort. Every film shown was accompanied by an up-to-date, newsreel about progress in the war, made by Pathe News. The commentator for those newsreels from 1940 throughout the war was a man who later came to live in Aston Tirrold. Bob Danvers-Walker.

The Pathe News was for many the best way of finding out what was going on in the war. It was heavily censored of course but was deliberately aimed at showing the "upbeat" face of the war to its population worn down by rationing, shortages, losses, anxiety and all the pressures of war.

Cyril Frederick Danvers-Walker 'Bob' - 1906 - 1990

His parents were William Charles Walker and Lillian (nee Danvers) who married in 1901 in Chertsey. William was an accountant. They had two children who were both given the surname Danvers-Walker. Aubrey Charles was born on the 9th December 1904 and Cyril Frederick (Bob) was born on the 11th October 1906.

1926 - 1931: between the wars, the family were living in Oakleigh in the State of Victoria in Australia. Bob began his career in 1927 as a station announcer in Australia. Other than his most famous role in Pathé News, Bob was also an actor. Parts he was known for were Armchair Theatre (1956), Mrs. Thursday (1966) and Resurrected (1989).

World War II: Bob and his wife Vera were living at North Common, Ealing close by the Ealing Film Studios. He was a Senior Radio Announcer. He worked for the BBC from 1943. Bob was also one of the presenters of the very popular Housewives Choice radio programme which ran right the way through the war. He is most famous for the distinctively stentorian voice on British Pathé News from 1940 to 1970. In the late 1960's, Bob and Vera were living at No 8, Rotherick Hill, Ealing.

Aston Tirrold: Encouraged by his daughter Sue and her partner John, who bought The Old School House in Aston Street, the Danvers-Walkers bought Chalkdown Cottage just opposite the School from the Wilcox family in 1978. It was later renamed Abbey Thorn Cottage by them, after they had planted a thorn tree thought to be a cutting from The Glastonbury Thorn at Glastonbury Abbey.



Bob and Vera Danvers-Walker



Bob and his famous car number plates



Chalkdown Cottage

Bob and his wife Vera, had two children, Michael and Sue.

Bob died on the 17th May 1990 in Aston Tirrold. His wife Vera died in 1992.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM
REMEMBERING THE ASTONS DURING WW2

NORTH AFRICA AND ITALY

This part of the war is told through the eyes of some of our past villagers, including Steven Whitwell and Mike Page, (our village archive room is named in their memory) who went on to live their lives in the Astons.

North African Campaign

The North African Campaign of World War II was fought from 1940 to 1943, and was a series of battles for control of North Africa, fought between Italy, Germany and the Allies, who were primarily Britain and later the United States. The campaign was strategically due to its impact on the Suez Canal in Egypt and access to Middle oil. Ultimately, the Allies achieved victory, pushing the Axis forces out of North Africa and opening a new front in the war.



Captain Stephen Whitwell

Born 31st July 1921

Captain Stephen Whitwell served with the 2nd Battalion, Coldstream Guards, part of the 1st Guards Brigade, in the 6th Armoured Division during the North Africa campaign of World War II.

He served from November 1942 to May 1945. His service included deployments to both North Africa and Italy. During WW2, at the battle of Monte Ornito (part of the strategic battle of Monte Cassino) in mountainous conditions, he was awarded the Military Cross when his platoon, which he was leading, bore the brunt of a double attack. During which he played a leading part armed with a Thompson sub-machine gun and grenades. He later led his platoon into the assault with complete disregard for his personal safety and was largely responsible for clearing the enemy from the hill and taking twenty prisoners.

He moved to Aston Tirrold in 1971 into Jervis Cottage, Aston Street, and played an important role in local history including the renovation of Wallingford Museum and was a member of the Oxfordshire Historic Churches Trust. He researched, mapped and recorded village history and wrote Astons first "Walkabout" history.



Captain Mike Page

Born 16th November 1916

John Michael Page (Mike) joined the Honourable Artillery Company (HAC), in 1939 as 2nd Lieutenant. After his training he was sent overseas to the Western Desert where he fought at Knightsbridge, Alamein and in Tunisia, Sicily and Italy.

He was awarded the Military Cross in the breakthrough of the German's line (the Gothic line) in North Italy; and despite being blown up in a tank on a bridge in Tunisia when the driver was killed and his Commanding Officer, whose tank it was, was badly injured, Mike Page walked away unharmed.

In June 1971 he and his wife Faith moved to Chestnuts, Aston Street. Mike was also involved in local history as well as serving on the Parish Council. He helped found ARGA (now ARC) and initiated the closer working collaboration of the two separate Parish Councils.

The similarities between Stephen Whitwell and Mike Page are quite marked. They both attended Oxbridge (Christchurch, Oxford for Stephen and Trinity Hall, Cambridge for Mike). Both served in North Africa and Italy. Both were awarded a Military Cross for bravery in Italy in 1944. Both moved to Aston Tirrold the same year 1971. They lived as next-door neighbours on Aston Street. Both shared an interest in village life and local history. Both died the same year 2010.



Faith Kathleen Rawlence

Born 18th November 1917

Faith Rawlence trained as a physiotherapist and nurse at St Thomas' Hospital, London. She served during the war and was attached to Queen Alexandra's Nursing Corps. She was sent to serve in Algiers, North Africa in early 1943 where she met her future husband, Captain Mike Page.

In Algiers she was based at the main casualty hospital and treated many of the "Desert Rats", the name given to soldiers who served in the 7th Armoured Division in North Africa. In 1943 she followed the troops to Sicily and Italy and was stationed in Naples and then later in Rome. She nursed hundreds of badly injured and dying troops during the Monte Casino battle which took place on the 17th January 1944 to 18 May 1944. After the war she married Mike Page on the 16th March 1946.

She and her husband Mike moved to Aston Tirrold in 1971. They lived in Chestnuts, Aston Street, next door to Stephen Whitwell. Her granddaughter Anna Dillon still lives in Aston Tirrold.



Sidney George Edward Hessey

Born 22nd November 1921

Known as Ted, during the North African war, he was working with the Tank Recovery Crew as well as aiding those working as Grave Registration Units (GRU). These were recovery crews who worked to retrieve functional equipment and ammunition and clear vehicles.

The GRUs were a specialised unit who handled the identification and burial of fallen soldiers, from their own side as well as from other forces, including those found in tanks. Ted would work with his unit, operating on a battlefield shortly after a major conflict where he had to deal with the unrecognisable remains of war casualties.

Other villagers who fought in Africa or Italy were **David Langmore**, who lost his life, **Wilfred Bachelor**, and his brother **Ernest Bachelor**, who also lost his life.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM
REMEMBERING THE ASTONS DURING WW2

THE MYSTERY OF ALICE IN ALGIERS NORTH AFRICA

When Faith Rawlence (Aston Tirrold resident 1971 - 1994), a qualified physiotherapist, knew she was being sent overseas in early 1943, she could only guess at her destination. Everyone was sworn to secrecy, and you only found out where you were going after setting sail.

With Europe being occupied by the Germans and the Far East being occupied by the Japanese, the only large-scale British overseas theatre of war in 1943 where Faith might be sent to was in North Africa.

But where was she going? Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria or Morocco? Faith agreed with her mother that at the first opportunity she would send a **“coded”** message back in a letter (all correspondence was opened, scrutinised and censored),

The “code” would be that Faith would say:
“I have met XXXX”

The first two or three letters of the person’s name being the same as the country she was in.

For example, “I met Libby” would mean I’m in Libya.

After arriving in Algiers, she decided that saying “I have met Algie or Algernon” was a bit too obvious, so she wrote back to her mother saying **“I have met Alice”**.

Three weeks later Faith received a tin of anti-lice powder from her mother with no explanation! Faith was mystified!

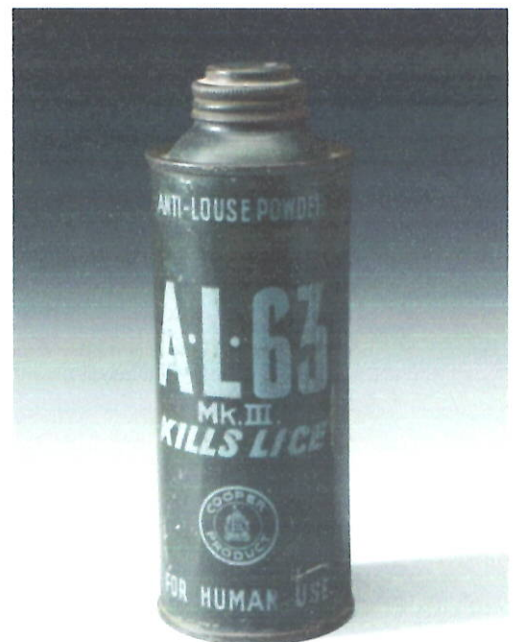
Only after she returned to England at the end of the war did she get her explanation. Her mother thought Faith was jokingly saying she had “met” in other words, contracted, body lice, which had been evident amongst the troops in epidemic proportions during World War One.

She read **“I have met Alice”** as **I have met A LICE**.
And duly sent a tin of anti-lice powder to Faith.

Mystery solved and much laughter followed!!



Faith in Algiers (2nd from right)



Anti-lice powder



Algeria in 1943



WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

THE HOLOCAUST

What is the true definition of The Holocaust?

The Holocaust is the term for the genocide of around six million Jews by the Nazi regime and their collaborators during World War II. The Holocaust is also sometimes referred to as the Shoah, the Hebrew word for catastrophe. Between 1933 and 1945, the Nazis sought to eliminate the entire Jewish community of Europe. Jews were murdered by death squads called Einsatzgruppen or transported to extermination camps. Six million of the eleven million European Jews in Europe perished. The Holocaust mainly occurred in Eastern Europe, in places such as occupied Poland and Ukraine.

The most infamous camps being Auschwitz-Birkenau, Treblinka, Dachau, Mauthausen and Bergen-Belsen.

The Nazis created at least 44,000 camps, including ghettos and other sites of incarceration. The camps served various functions, from imprisoning "enemies of the state" to serving as holding centres in larger deportation schemes. These included Josef Mengele who carried out medical experimentation on adults and children. When he was finished, with them, they were given lethal injections of phenol into their hearts. The most notorious of their crimes was the murder of hundreds of thousands of people in the gas chambers.

Other groups were also targeted by the Nazi regime. People with disabilities, Soviet Prisoners of War and Soviet and Polish civilians were persecuted and targeted for death in the camps because of their perceived racial inferiority. Gay people, socialists, communists and trades unionists, Freemasons and Jehovah's Witnesses were oppressed and imprisoned in concentration camps, where many died from starvation and disease.

We are displaying a copy of a letter, written by Helen Margaret Oglethorpe who was the Godmother of Judy Barradell-Smith, and best friend of Faith Page (former residents of the Astons). The letter was sent to Faith in May 1945, after the liberation of the Bergen - Belsen Concentration Camp. The letter has headed writing paper with a swastika emblem on the paper.



Helen Margaret Oglethorpe

Born 27th August 1918, Norfolk
Nurse and Physiotherapist

Helen trained as a physiotherapist with Faith Rawlence in London and was sent overseas during World War II. She started her work in a hospital ship attached to the British 9th Field Hospital which was moored off Juno Beach on D Day on the 6th June 1944.

She then followed the British troops into France, Belgium and the Netherlands with the British 9th Field Hospital. In early 1945, she travelled, with her unit, into North Germany. She was part of the first group of doctors and nurses, which included 95 students and newly qualified medical staff from King's College, Guys and St Thomas' Hospitals that, arrived in Bergen-Belsen in April 1945.

Belsen was 'liberated' on 15 April 1945

Helen died on the 8th October 2019, Hove, aged 100.

An extract from the transcription of a letter dated 28th May 1945, written by Miss Helen Oglethorpe, a Physiotherapist attached to the 9th British General Hospital written from Belsen Concentration Camp.

Dear Faith,

Thank you very much for your letter. I had been wondering what had happened to you and how you were? I am glad to hear you are getting better, but it has taken a long time. I am very thrilled at the good news of your engagement to Michael.

We left Holland on April 29th and came up to the Belsen Concentration Camp. It has been truly terrible, and I never really believed what the newspapers told us, but it was even worse than that. The first few weeks we spent clearing out all the SS and Hungarian troops' barracks and turning them into hospitals and cleaning out the actual Concentration Camp. There were 52,000 living and 10,000 unburied dead in an area of about 1 sq. mile. One can't imagine it unless one has seen it. A further 13,000 died on our hands in the next three or four weeks. We had medical students from all the London hospitals working in the Concentration Camp and picking out the people who might live and trying to clean up a bit. They did a marvellous job and are leaving to go back soon. Each internee on leaving the Concentration Camp went through the Human Laundry where they were scrubbed from head to foot and de-loused and all clothes burnt. The result was that we had thousands of naked people and in the warm weather, the place was an absolute nudist colony, only one hardly thought of the people as human as they are such scraps of humanity. It must have been a bit of a shock for our nursing orderlies as a lot of them were in charge of women's wards!

It has been an awful job, but we are more or less organised. There have been a lot of units here, RA's, RE's and RAOC and also 32nd CCS (first here), 11th FDS, then us, and then the 163 Field Ambulance and the 35th CCS. Not very many medical units when you think that we have 15,000 patients and about 10 to 15,000 people who are considered convalescent and more or less able to look after themselves.

We are commandeering German MO's and nurses and nursing orderlies now to do all the work under our supervision. Typhus is going down rapidly and also the death rate now is negligible. I shan't ever forget this nightmare. But those other units working with us have had some of the nicest people we've met which has been some compensation. There is no Physiotherapy, of course as two of us couldn't possibly contemplate 15,000 patients!! We were, after a day or two put into the Hospital Office, as when we arrived our Registrar, our CO, our Company Officer, our Chief Clerk and hordes of others, nearly all our administrative staff were on UK leave, so Joan (Rudman CSP) became the Registrar and I the Chief Clerk, and we really, literally the two of us, plus one corporal organised the whole show. But now they are all back we are slipping out gradually. The 29th BGH (1800-2000 beds) has arrived and we very much hope they will eventually take over, and then what!! I'm afraid we'll be sent to the Far East.

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM
REMEMBERING THE ASTONS DURING WW2

ENGLISH HERITAGE. USAAF aerial photography 1944.



Aerial photo of the Astons, 1944.

For the USAAF's strategic bombing of Nazi Europe to be effective, intelligence on targets was needed. Aerial reconnaissance units were created to photograph sites in occupied countries and Germany. These photographs and their interpretation would provide much of the necessary intelligence.

Early in the war, the RAF realised that fast, high-flying aircraft were better suited to photo reconnaissance than slower, larger aircraft. The USAAF followed the RAF's lead and modified existing fighter aircraft. Some had their weapons removed to make room for cameras and additional fuel tanks so that long-range reconnaissance missions could be made over enemy territory. USAAF PR aircraft were given numbers with an 'F' for 'foto' prefix.

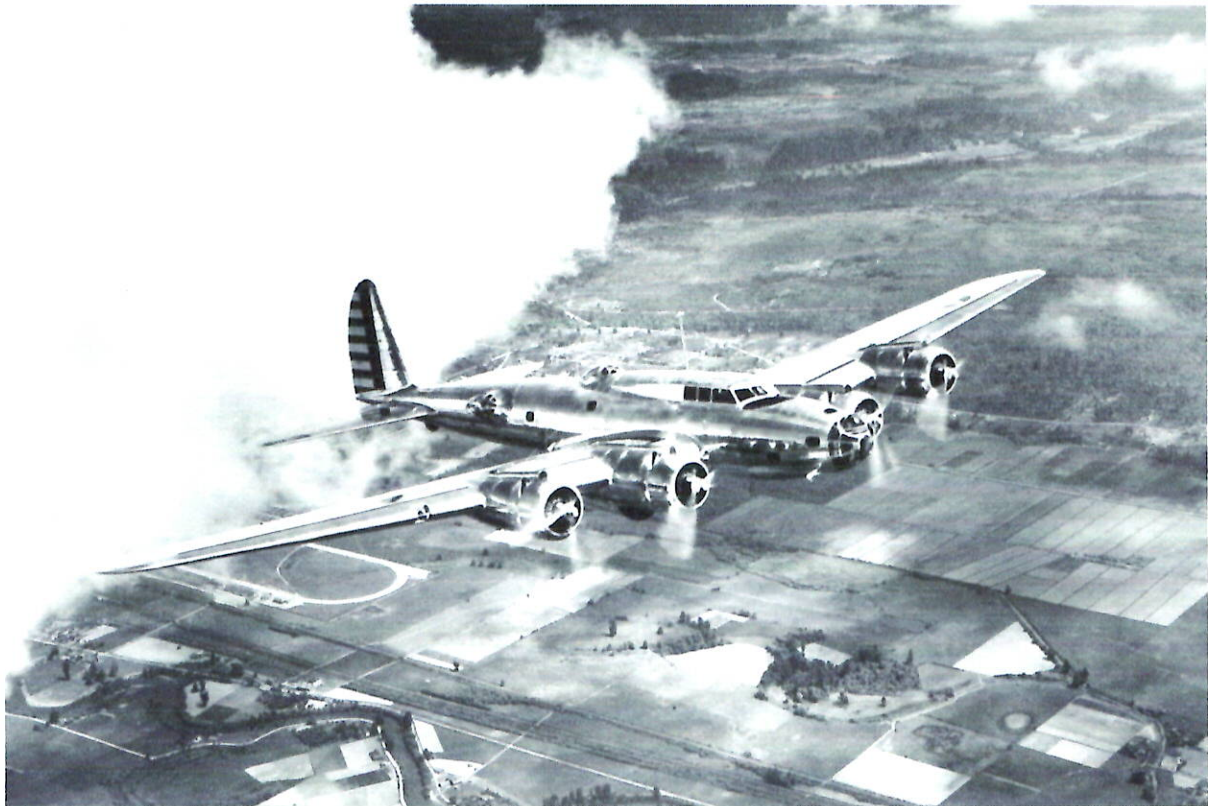
The USAAF established PR units at airfields in England. Many of the photographs in the collection were taken by aircraft of two PR Groups, the Eighth Air Force's 7th PR Group and the Ninth Air Force's 10th PR Group.

RAF Mount Farm in Oxfordshire was the principal airbase for USAAF PR. It was assigned to the USAAF and designated USAAF Station 234. By the end of 1943, four PR squadrons were based there, forming part of the 7th Photographic Reconnaissance Group.

Mount Farm was a satellite airfield for the RAF Photographic Reconnaissance Unit at nearby RAF Benson. It was also close to RAF Medmenham, the home of the Central Interpretation Unit, and the Eighth Air Force headquarters at High Wycombe.

The 7th PR Group took over 3 million photographs during an estimated 5,693 operational sorties during the war (other sources state 4,247). Notable missions included photographing invasion beaches ahead of D-Day. Twenty-nine sorties were flown on D-Day itself, recording the invasion beaches, and targets inland to monitor supply routes and troop movements.

After D-Day, the Group's missions provided valuable information for the Normandy campaign, Operation Market Garden, the Battle of the Bulge, and the location and identification of enemy rocket launch sites. The Group also undertook a survey of military installations in the UK.



Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress, used for aerial reconnaissance flights.

THE ASTONS WI GOES TO WAR - AGAIN!

The National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI) was set up in the early days of WW1 and played a major part in boosting food production. This meant that as war loomed in the 1930s they knew well what would be expected of them, and that the Government would soon come knocking on their door. Their contributions were various:

- Members in reception areas were active in receiving and billeting evacuees and helping to settle them in.. In 1939 at the government 's request the WI had carried out a survey of rural institutes able to receive evacuees, and in 1941 the NFWI published an influential report on their experiences of evacuation.
- In 1940 the WI was asked to help raise the profile of the National Savings Campaign by displaying posters and distributing leaflets, and for individual institutes to set up their own National Savings Scheme.
- WI markets sold surplus produce – mainly fruit and vegetables – and the Ministry of Information declared they were 'business-like and practical examples of cooperative rural enterprise'.
- WI members knitted for service personnel - civil defence workers, evacuees and hospital patients. In September 1944, during a three-month campaign to knit for Europe, more than 150,000 items were produced.

ASTON TIRROLD AND UPTHORPE WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

The original Astons WI had closed in 1931, but responding to a 'call to arms' they had reformed in 1939 and readied themselves for action. Below is a selection of notes from their Record Books for the years 1939-45, researched in 1999 by WI members Woody Lord and Shirley Wilson.

- at their September meeting (1939) it is recorded that 'tea & entertainment were given to several women & children who had been evacuated from London'.
- in July the Institute was asked to organize a Penny house-to-house collection for the Duke of Gloucester's Prisoner of War Fund, and were asked if they would be willing to cook for the Home Guard in the event of invasion.
- one of their first actions was the establishment of a WI allotment (probably on Chalk Hill opposite the recreation ground – the site of an earlier parish council managed allotment).



Over 60's Christmas party in the Nissen hut

- Miss Gordon mentioned that honey for the Submarine Branch of the Navy was very earnestly requested and that all Institutes were asked if they could spare a little even one or two lbs, for this very deserving course.
- during the winter months three camouflage nets were completed (not just jam and Jerusalem!)
- at the December meeting the members were asked to let the secretary know as soon as possible if they wanted free wool for making knitted goods for men overseas, and if they wished for Suttons 2/6 seed collection. It was suggested that when sugar became rationed each member should supply her own for her 'cup of tea.'
- the Institute had received an official notice from Headquarters saying we were now registered as a Civil Defence knitting party and she begged more members to come along and make as many garments as possible for the Civil Defence Services.
- a demonstration followed on the art of wartime cooking, and how to make vegetable pies which were not only satisfying but appetising as well. Miss Cumming (the demonstrator) made two pies and a vegetable roll and also showed a vegetable galantine she had brought with her. She was besieged by her audience afterwards with notebooks in hand!
- but on a more solemn note, as late as the 1945 March meeting Mrs Langmore announced a request for Kettles, Saucepans etc. for bombed out areas...

RECONSTRUCTION AFTER THE WAR

But most importantly, and following a talk in 1943 on 'Reconstruction after the War,' the Astons WI passed a Special Resolution calling on the parish council to call a Village Meeting to discuss ways and means for the erecting of a Village Hall after the War. (Parish council meetings were at that time held either in 'the School Room' or in 'the Play Barn' – the village name for what is now Manor Barn). A public meeting was held on May 19th 1944, the motion carried, and a Joint Committee set up to progress the enterprise.

Their report (below on the table) stated:

"We owe an incalculable debt to the boys who have fought or are fighting the battle for our liberties. We shall owe a much greater debt to them before this war is over. Some of these will come to us no more. We know we will be creating a worthy Memorial ... and ended... Thus our village hall will be Of ALL, By ALL, and For ALL."

A 'Temporary Hall' - a Nissen hut rented for £13 a year - opened for business in May 1949 while fundraising continued (see Contributions Book extracts below). Sadly the Astons had to wait for the 'Permanent Hall' until September 1964!



WE WILL REMEMBER THEM
REMEMBERING THE ASTONS DURING WW2

FOOD RATIONING AND WOMEN'S LAND ARMY

On the 29th September 1939 a National Register was taken capturing the details of every member of the civilian population - a total of around 40 million people. It was to be the basis for the government's wartime National Registration Identity and Food Ration Card schemes - aimed to ensure fair shares for all at times of national shortage.

In January 1940 every man, woman and child was given a ration book with coupons - presentation of which was required before rationed goods could be purchased - and housewives had to register with particular retailers (unlike today, shopping involved visiting individual shops - the butcher, greengrocer or baker).

Basic foodstuffs such as sugar, meat, fats, bacon and cheese were rationed by coupons. Other items - such as tinned goods, dried fruit, cereals and biscuits - were rationed using a points system and allocated according to availability. Priority allowances of milk and eggs were given to those most in need, including children and expectant mothers.

Fruit and vegetables were never rationed but were often in short supply, especially those shipped from overseas. The government encouraged people to grow vegetables in their own gardens and allotments, and many public parks were also dug up for this purpose, even Kensington Gardens (photo on right)! The scheme became known as 'Dig For Victory'.

The end of the war in May 1945 did not mean an end to rationing. Shortages persisted, and bread - which had been freely available during the war - was rationed for two years from July 1946. Animal products such as cheese, bacon, ham, meat and fats as well as sugar also remained scarce. It took until mid-1954 before rationing finally ended.

MAXIMISING FOOD PRODUCTION

The Emergency Powers (Defence) act, passed on the 1st September 1939 gave Ministry of Agriculture drastic powers to intervene in the countryside. By the end of that month 12,000 farmers had applied for the £2 per acre for grassland ploughed up for food production. Maximum prices were fixed for many agricultural products, and county officials were empowered to enter land and proscribe what needed to be done, what crops should be grown, in which fields and when to be planted. It was a tough regime, and farmers who did not co-operate could be removed from their land.

On a more positive note, the government was keen to increase the use of machinery in food production and introduced a loan scheme for equipment that farmers might not otherwise have access to.

THE WOMEN'S LAND ARMY

The Women's Land Army (WLA) was a civilian organisation created during the First World War to bring women into the agriculture workforce, to replace men called up to the military.

As war approached the government again wanted to increase food production, but in April 1939 introduced a peacetime conscription which had led to shortages of workers on farms, so in July of that year the government restarted the Women's Land Army, using both volunteers and conscription - by 1944 it had over 80,000 members.



Coming from all walks of life, Land Girls were critical to increasing the country's food production, and despite having little to no agricultural experience, they ploughed, grew produce, milked cows, caught rats, drove tractors - and much more.

From the Ministry of Food's Service Records for the Women's Land Army Judy Barradell Smith has identified three Land Girls based in the Astons, (although their records are sadly brief):

Enid Patricia Brown (nee Burge)

She was born in Hungerford on the 27th February 1919 and by 1939 she was working in the household of John H Gibbon, a retired Brigadier, as a housemaid at Ampney Crucis House, Ampney Crucis, near Cirencester. She married Eric Bruce Brown, a Constable based in Wallingford, in 1941. Maybe she wasn't a 'live in' agricultural worker but came daily to work at Sheepecote Farm?

Renee Anderson

Born 5 Sept 1923. She started her Land Army employment aged 18 in May 1942 and continued until January 12th 1946. Her record gives her working as a domestic servant at Avery's Cottage, Aston Tirrold (we're not sure where this is, although Avery appears as a family name in the Astons Slade family records, so it might be a cottage owned by that family at some time).

Rosemarie Dobereimer

Born on 14 December 1923 in Canada, the family coming to England in 1925. In 1939 she was a student at a boarding school for girls in Leatherhead, Surrey. Her record gives her address as Churn Farm, Blewbury.



WE WILL REMEMBER THEM
REMEMBERING THE ASTONS DURING WW2

AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS (ARP)

Astons ARPs

All of these came under the Wallingford sector

NAME	ADDRESS	OCCUPATION	DUTIES
Stanley Adams	Croft Cottage	Gardener	ARP Warden
Frederick Blake	2, The Croft	Gardener	ARP Warden
Mary M. Daniel	Croft House	Private Means	ARP First Aid
Victor Henderson	Forge Cottage	Retired Master Builder	ARP First Aid
George Lovelock	Moreton Rd	Retired Publican	ARP Warden
Herbert Lugg	Stockwell's	Theatrical Producer	ARP Warden
Jack Scotter	Baker St	Gamekeeper	ARP Warden
John Thorp	Moreton Rd	Clerk of Works	ARP Warden
Archibald Venwell	Rose Cottage	General Labourer RAOS	ARP Warden
Richard Wooton	Aston St	Agricultural Labourer	ARP Warden

In addition, more villagers were doing other valuable war related duties.

A.F.S = Auxiliary Fire Service

Each person enrolled into the AFS was given a unique service number. They were made to wear a metal tag on duty. Regrettably many of these men and women were killed on duty and these tags helped identify them.

NAME	ADDRESS	OCCUPATION	DUTIES
Fred G Blake	London Rd	Pigman/Ag Worker	AFS W/ford
William R Brown	Moreton Rd	Tractor Driver	AFS 105786
Eric J F Curtis	Chalk Hill	Chauffeur/Gardener	AFS 103789
Alice Lewington	Carrimers Farm	Housewife	AFS 103787
Ida L Wadsworth	Carrimers Farm	Housewife	AFS 103791

Astons AFS. All came under the Wallingford sector

Women's Auxiliary Territorial Service + Women's Voluntary Service

During World War II, the Women's Auxiliary Territorial Service (W.A.T.S, the women's branch of the A.T.S) and the Women's Volunteer Service (W.V.S) filled crucial support roles for the British Army, performing tasks that were traditionally done by men. The differences between the two branches were that the WATS was classified as a military organization where women served in a formal capacity, usually with pay, and performed a variety of roles in support of the war effort. The W.V.S was a volunteer service. Both sectors worked in various areas, including as clerks, cooks, storekeepers, and in positions requiring specialized skills like radar operation, anti-aircraft gun crews, and military police. The W.A.T also drove trucks, repaired aircraft, and even flew military aircraft.

NAME	ADDRESS	OCCUPATION	DUTIES
Barbara Bachelor	Not Known	Domestic Service	ATS
Edith Wolrise-Gordon	Herberts Cott	Private Means	WVS

Post-War Credits

These were a type of war bond bought by individuals as an I Owe You and were reimbursed after the war. They were essentially a way for the government to temporarily save money from income tax during World War II. The plan was for them to be repaid after the war ended, but the actual repayment process was gradual and had specific eligibility conditions and were often not paid out until someone reached age 60 or 65. Those holding these PWC from the Astons are listed, top right.

PWC = Post War Credits.

NAME	ADDRESS	OCCUPATION	PWC NO.
Myra Bachelor	Aston Street	Housewife	D93/397316
Francis J K Cross	The Manor	Farmer	593/5276
Florence Evans	School House	Head Teacher	183/38635
Thomas Savegar	Chalk Hill	Gardener	543/24735

Civil Air Guard

During World War II, the Civil Air Guard - later became the Civil Air Patrol (CAP), played a crucial role in the war effort by providing civilian air support. Their duties included coastal and border patrols, anti-submarine patrols, search and rescue, courier services, and military training. The CAP also assisted in border patrols, freeing up military personnel to focus on other tasks.

NAME	ADDRESS	OCCUPATION	DUTIES
Francis Furlong	Herberts Farm	Racehorse Trainer	Civil Air Guard

Wartime Relief Efforts

Red Cross ambulances played a key role in wartime relief efforts, particularly in providing aid to civilian victims of the war and supporting families of military personnel.

NAME	ADDRESS	OCCUPATION	DUTIES
Denis Grinling	Orchard House	Independent	Red X Dm No 13 W/ford

Dm = Detachment

These Aston residents were assigned or were working in a variety of other roles.

NAME	ADDRESS	OCCUPATION	DUTIES
Francis Cundell	Acacia Cott'	Racehorse Trainer	Secretary
George Hoof	5 Hagbourne Rd	Stud Groom	Secretary
Arthur Ireson	8 Thorpe St	Stablehand	Vet Corps
Henry Silver	9 Thorpe St	Handyman	Vet Corps
William Tappins	Aston Street	Chauffeur	SC
Frank Waldron	Moreton Rd	Chauffeur	SC
Harold Wheeler	Moreton Rd	Gardener	SC

SC = Special Constable

Other roles are detailed below

Red Cross Ambulance / Transportation of wounded and sick.

Homefront Support / Ambulances were also used on the home front to transport Red Cross staff and supplies.

Volunteer Involvement / Red Cross volunteers, including women, played a crucial role in driving ambulances and providing medical assistance, often filling in for a shortage of medical personnel.

Training and Aid / Red Cross volunteers trained individuals in first aid, ran blood donor clinics, and provided medical assistance as needed.

Supplying Hospitals / The Red Cross provided essential medical supplies and support to local hospitals, ensuring they were equipped to handle the large influx of casualties.



WE WILL REMEMBER THEM
REMEMBERING THE ASTONS DURING WW2

BELL RINGING IN WW2

The United Kingdom declared war on Germany on the 3rd September 1939. Under the Defence Regulations 1939, the Government had the power to issue orders which had the same force of law as Acts of Parliament. They were intended to control public and private actions that might jeopardise the war effort or make the country vulnerable to attack.

One of these orders was *The Control Of Noise Order 1939*, banning 'the sounding of sirens, hooters, whistles, rattles, bells, horns, gongs or similar instruments, unless used for the purpose of air-raid or gas warnings.'

The Times paper went on to write about the order as follows: 'The Order does not affect the use of instruments, of the kind mentioned, by railwaymen and by members of a ship's crew, nor does it prevent police officers from sounding whistles...It does not apply also, to church bells or to the normal use of bicycle bells and motor horns'.

The Order created confusion, as the order exempted church and chapel bells being rung 'in such a manner as to be customary' but what did this mean? Whatever the meaning of the order, the effect was that almost all church bells stopped being rung immediately around the country. Vicars and churchwardens feared that bells would prevent people hearing air raid sirens. On the 13th June 1940, the Government brought forward a new order as follows:

'No person shall, in any area in Great Britain, sound any church bell or cause or permit any church bell to be sounded except for the purpose of making a signal, in accordance with directions given by a commissioned officer of His Majesty's forces or the church or the chief officer of police for the area, to indicate that members of an enemy force are landing or attempting to land or have landed from the air.'

Thus church bell ringing became illegal from the 26th June 1940, or so everyone thought. Amidst the confusion, the military authorities in Lincolnshire issued their own order around the subject: 'In the event of an attempted invasion a general alarm will be rung by the sounding of every church bell throughout the county - perhaps throughout England — as a tocsin. The bells will be rung loudly and confidently as a call to battle, the peal continuing for five minutes.'



St. Michaels bell ringers plaque, 1937.

As the country was preparing for a ground invasion by Hitler's army the Military, the Church and the Government were still trying to clarify the orders around the use of church bells until well into 1940. What started to come through was a message that bells 'could' be used as a warning of an incoming, full-on invasion.

There was an idea that ringing the bells backwards (6, 5, 4, 3/2, 1 instead of the normal 'ROUNDS — 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) could be used as a signal alerting communities of an invasion, although we don't have records to say if this method of ringing was ever used locally.

There were some circumstances however where church bells were rung between 1939 and 1942, for example in November 1942 bells were rung to celebrate the victory of North Africa. Winston Churchill issued this statement:

'The Prime Minister thought that arrangements should be made for the church bells to be rung on the morning of the 15th November in celebration of the victory in North Africa.'

This was said to be the greatest ringing event of all time.

On the 18th November the King himself wanted the ban on ringing church bells lifted, and finally, in March of 1943 the ban was lifted, and bells were able to ring as normal again across the county.

On VE Day 8th May 1945 the sound of church bells rang across the country - not to mark invasion but the end of the war in Europe. A spontaneous joy, a sense of relief and communal spirit erupted across the land as people heard church bells ringing out. For many people, the sound of the bells, which had been silent for so many years, was an emotional and profound symbol of the return of normal life. Instead of the sound of air raid sirens and aircraft overhead, church bells were a welcome sound of freedom that people had waited years to hear again.

THE BACHELOR FAMILY

The newspaper clipping (right) was printed in a local paper. The Bachelor family has an old, grainy version, which they have kindly lent to us. Using this, we have produced a Bachelor family story of them during World War II.



The Bachelor family archive

Listed in birth date order with military details, where known:



George Norman Bachelor
Born: 17th March 1907

Place of Birth: Army Barracks, Colchester, Essex
Service Number: 11259754
Served: Royal Artillery. Joined in 1941
Regiment: Royal Regiment of Artillery (R.A.)
Rank: Possibly a Sergeant
Role: Gunner
Location: Probably UK based
Transferred to: HAA Heavy Anti-Aircraft Artillery
Discharge Date: 28th September 1942.
Died: 5th May 1979, Earley, Reading.



Wilfred Henry Bachelor
Born: 13th April 1921

Place of Birth: Aston Tirrold, Berkshire
Service Number: 5337529
Served: Wiltshire Regiment
2nd Battalion
Rank: Private
Location: North Africa and Italy
Medals awarded: Defence + War
Stars awarded: 1939-1945, Italy
Died: 1990



William Charles Bachelor
Born: 20th January 1913

Place of Birth: Hyderabad, India
Service Number: 1437911
Served: Royal Artillery. Joined in 1933
Regiment: Served in 80th AA (Anti-Aircraft)
Rank: Bombardier
Role: Gunner; Anti-Aircraft Unit
Location: France and Burma until 1945
Transferred to: HAA Heavy Anti-Aircraft Unit, Royal Artillery
Discharge Date: 1958 (reached max age of 45)
Medals awarded: Defence + War
Died: 1982 Horsham, Sussex



Eric Terence Bachelor
Born: 9th March 1924

Place of Birth: Aston Tirrold, Berkshire
Service Number: Not known
Served: Royal Berkshire Regiment,
Private
Location: Possibly France, post D Day
Transferred to: Worcestershire Regiment
British Liberation Army
Other notes: Married Barbara G Bye on 4th January 1945
Lived: East Hagbourne and Didcot
Died: 18th January 2003



Herbert Arthur Bachelor
Born: 14th March 1915

Place of Birth: Aston Tirrold, Berkshire
Service Number: 5339057
Served: Royal Berkshire Regiment. 1939
Rank: Private
Role: Foot soldier
Location: Remained in France until the evacuation of Dunkirk.
Wounded: Wounded 10 May - 8 June 1940
Medals awarded: Defence + War
Died: 1977 Blewbury, Berkshire.



Barbara Gertrude Bye
Born: 22nd February 1922

Place of Birth: Ruscombe, Berkshire
Joined: Auxiliary Territorial Service
Ranks: Corporal
Other notes: Married to Eric Bachelor on 4th January 1945
Died: 8th November 2007



Ernest Oliver Bachelor
Born: 26th October 1918

Place of Birth: Aston Tirrold, Berkshire
Service Number: 5342301
Served: Royal Berkshire Regiment & Sherwood Foresters
Rank: Lance Corporal
Role: Gunner
Location: Italy and North Africa
Ernest contracted Tuberculosis
Died: 19th July 1947



Myra Ellen Bachelor (nee Jarvis)
Born: 20th November 1881

Place of Birth: Lower End, Aston Tirrold
Married: George Herbert Bachelor on 24th December 1901
Children: Had eight children
War years: In 1940 Myra took in two evacuees from London
Died: 1974, aged 93 and is buried in the village

Remembered on the Aston Tirrold & Upthorpe War Memorial.



WE WILL REMEMBER THEM
REMEMBERING THE ASTONS DURING WW2

WAR ON THE HOME FRONT - VILLAGE SOURCES:

As new legislation and regulations proliferated civil defence and food production came under newly created County Defence and County Agriculture Committees, and communication with parish councils became fundamental in keeping communities informed.

PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES:

In October 1937 the Aston Tirrold Parish Council minute book records the following:

'The clerk reported the receipt of a letter from Col. A Cornish, Chairman of the Wallingford and District ARP Committee regarding the appointment of two air raid wardens for the parish and calling attention to a series of lectures to be held in Wallingford on anti-gas measures' and in June 1938: 'Area Air Raid Precaution (ARP) Committees were visiting parish councils in their area to explain the new services'.

March 1942: Stone at Chapel Lane Corner. Attention was drawn to the need for the stone at the corner near the cottage occupied by Mr. Hatts to be whitened owing to danger to persons during blackout, and the clerk was instructed to write to the County Sub Surveyor on the matter'.

August 1942. Temporary diversion of footpath. The clerk reported the receipt of a letter and plan from the Berks War Agricultural Committee whether the Council would raise any objection to the temporary diversion of the footpath running from Aston Tirrold near the Manor garage to Cholsey where the path crossed fields numbered 15, 42 and 49 (Ordnance).

It was stated that the Committee intended to issue formal direction for the ploughing up of these fields and the path and that the new temporary line of the path would be along the boundary hedge of the fields so as not to interfere with the cultivation of the fields.

April 1944. Post War Housing. The clerk reported the receipt of a letter from the Rural District Council ... enquiring if in the opinion of the Parish Council there was an urgent need for new houses of a permanent construction, if so the suggestion of sites was required.... it was resolved that sites opposite the Chequers Inn, along the Moreton Road near the Ham Road, and between Mr. Griffiths' shop and the cottage occupied by Bachelor be suggested for consideration by the District Council.



Astons School photo 1938

ASTON TIRROLD SCHOOL RECORDS:

Governors Minutes Book: October 1939. Circular no. 486 (regarding creating a 'safe' room') 'The only possible room would be the main classroom. They thought that would cause an outlay more heavy than was justified...It was decided to take no action...'

Air raid advice was offered to schools at an early stage of the war, but the Astons Governors were not initially too bothered by the risk, saying:

'We shall be glad to receive the advice of your representatives in regard to the Air Raid precautions, but we do not think that in this scattered country the matter can be very urgent'.

However in November 1939 curtains were requested for the school windows, and in early 1940 '2 buckets of sand and 2 spades with long handles were sent to the school by the Hon Mrs FJK Cross'.

I think they will have taken the risks more seriously after there was a direct attack on the village, as recalled by Jean Castellano (nee Huntingdon) who lived in the village as a child.

"I believe I mentioned to you about being shot at by a Germ

an plane flying very low over Aston Tirrold when I was in the orchard at Four Elms (now Skirmers) collecting the chickens' eggs. I was told later that the same plane had killed a shepherd on the Downs... he was found in a field by his wife...".

Attendance records: These gave the names and address of children evacuated from London (written in red ink – see table below).

School log book: This daily record of school life is always fascinating, and much more detailed than more formal records. June 17th 1940: 10 Evacuees were admitted today. The children are clean and happy. They are not up to the Standard of the children in this school. Two children aged 10 and 9 years of age cannot read at all.

ROBERT MOON DIARIES:



Our WW1 exhibition made much use of the diaries of the local doctor, Robert Moon, who saw active service in that war. During WW2 he continued to keep a keen eye on the progress of the war. On the table below you will see one of the diaries (note his incredibly small writing!) plus his WW2 comments in full.

1939: September 3rd While in church at 11:15 it was announced by the Bishop in his sermon that we were at war with Germany. An ultimatum had been sent at 9:00 am. which expired at 11:00 am. The King broadcast to the Empire at 6:00 am.

1945: May 8th. V Day. Beautiful day and very warm. Great rejoicing all day in the streets of London. (May 9th. Still much excitement in Trafalgar Square).

August 15th. Official news came of the surrender of Japan – general excitement. It was a day of public holiday.

VILLAGE MEMORIES:

John Lightfoot remembers:

Italian prisoners of war lifting sugar beet which were taken by tractor and trailer to Upton Station.. I remember them having fights throwing frozen sugar beets at each other. ..

tanks coming down from Didcot Depot along the London Road (the A417) going up into the Downs towards Sheepcote and being tested on the chalk pit opposite.

Victory Day: I remember the piano being outside the Boot for 2 or 3 nights. Also the straw ricks near where Sue and Clive Newman live now being set on fire in celebration..

Mike Wheeler remembers:

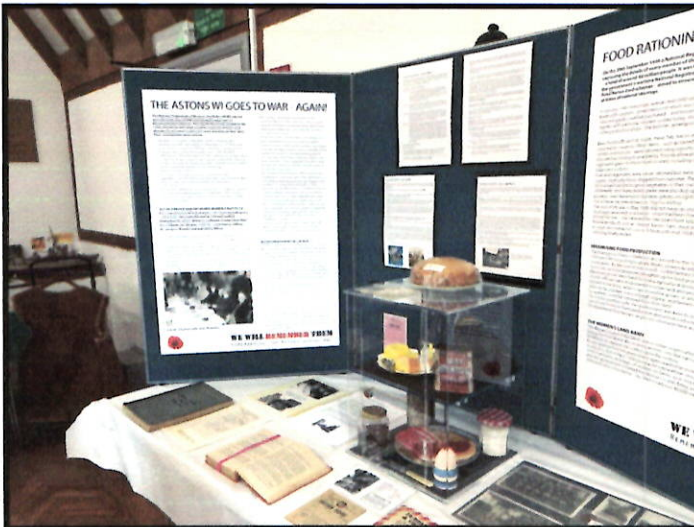
being told by a village shepherd, Bob Woobury, that there was a German prisoner working at Wades Farm down the Moreton Road.. his sister Peggy recalled five Italian prisoners living down Lollingdon - one of them made bicycle baskets and children's slippers with hazelwood to sell locally.

He also writes in his family history, The Wheelers of Aston, that his brother Ron 'one day just got on a train to Reading without telling anyone and joining the army...he had joined the Duke of Cornwall Regiment, and it was not long before he was in France and was involved with the Battle of Hill 112 (an extremely fierce battle near Caen in July 1944)'.



VE Day in the Astons 1945

Our Second World War Exhibition: 8 - 9 November 2025



Judy Barradell-Smith
Yesterday at 07:01

I hope those of you who came to the exhibition yesterday enjoyed the Red Line Home Guard re-enactment group. They were great fun. The WW2 commemorative exhibition is open again today after the Service of Remembrance which starts at 10.45 at the war memorial. Still lots of delicious cake to be enjoyed. Come and discover what life was like for these villages from 1938-1945.



24 2 comments