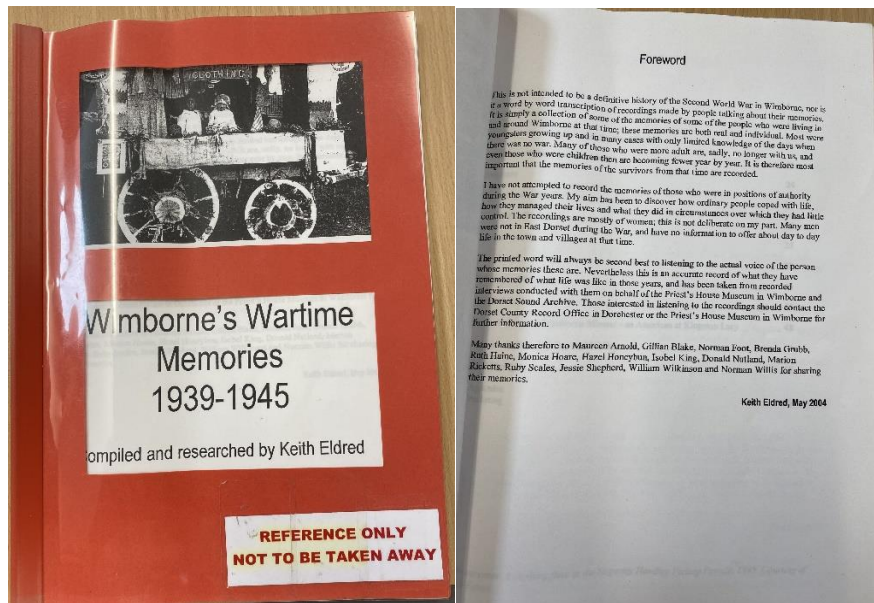


Wimborne's Wartime Memories 1939-1945



Transcripts of interviews conducted by the Museum of East Dorset; the above booklet can be seen in the Wimborne Library.

Home Guard, Norman Foot (page 9/10/11)

While attending QE school was in the Cadet Corp and was affiliated to the Home Guard as a runner, using their bicycles. Joined in 1942 aged 16 after leaving school as part of the "Battle Platoon".

One evening we heard that the Local Defence Volunteers were having an exercise at Walford by the bridge at the Crown and Anchor, so we rushed up there on our pedal cycles ready to have a good laugh. What they did, they had portable barricades which were nailed crosswise and planks lengthwise, scaffolding planks, then barbed wire run round them, and these could be lifted by four men and they had about three sets of these so they staggered them along in the road and set up a roadblock. We were still laughing until we realised that two of their members were our schoolteachers, we took it a bit more seriously than. They were armed with broomsticks and they had no rifles then but a couple did have shotguns.

Training consisted of field exercise and firing of rifles near to Cowgrove Farm, grenade practice took place in the chalk pit behind Lodge Farm.

The "Battle Platoon" undertook to patrol all around Wimborne towards Cole Hill, Gaunts Common and Holt. One patrol recorded a circuit of the area.

"From what I remember we assembled at the Crown and Anchor, we moved off to the Stocks Inn, some of us were on bikes, some were marching, we then moved to the Old Inn, then back to the Barley Mow, then to the Horns Inn, then back to the Stocks and then back to the Crown and Anchor. Anybody who stayed sober after that was a clever man! That was a very good exercise!"

"Another episode we had was we, the Battle Platoon, had to use our initiative and to attempt to infiltrate the defences of the town one Saturday night, and of course there was black-out in those days, so we were trying to creep through the town with blacken faces, the target was the

Post Office Telephone Exchange.” “They were all incepted excepting one, who got into the river at Walford by the Crown and Anchor” after wading under the bridge past the Cricket grounds and under Eastbrook Bridge was able to mark the door with chalk. The umpire disqualified him for cheating, but a few days later the army installed barbed wire under all the bridges.

Bombs at Horns Inn, Monica Hoare (page 11)

“We had a few bombs here mind, but that was quite a sensation. We had incendiary bombs in the Wimborne area, and we had two high explosive bombs by the Horns Inn pub at Colehill. That was a very odd thing, they both fell in the same crater.”

Pig Oak Explosion, Mannington and Holt, Ruby Scales (page 19)

“My mother was very protective. There were five children and if there was an air raid siren, then she would get up but she wouldn't wake the children. There are no shelters at the school. I think the siren sounded usually in the evenings, but I don't remember. Is very quiet out at Holt during the war, the only shelter I remember was the Morrison shelter in the house next door.

Well, I remember hearing an explosion at Pig Oak just before you get to Holt, there is a lane going down to Gaunts common, it's called Petersham lane, and the bomb fell in a field there, back of the policeman's house. Also, my aunt lived in Mannington and the bomb fell in the field near there and it knocked the end of her house out but other than that I don't remember any more bombs around.

Where my auntie lived in Mannington, my grandmother lived there as well. In those days there were hardly any cars, we all had bikes and we used to cycle to see our grain on a Sunday. And you could see all these silver strips along the side of the road and on the common, over at Row Common, and we used to wonder what it was. But somebody did say it was something to do with the radar.

In those days there was a British Legion Hut in Holt. It came down years ago but in there they used to have social evenings and the school used to put on plays. And there was also a church Hut which is opposite the church at Holt, and there was always like jumble sales and odd things going on in there like whist drives. The people used to go to whist drives and things but other than that there wasn't an awful lot to do, but there weren't the restrictions in those days.

We used to go with our mum down to the local copse and drag wood home for the fire, and things like this. In the evenings there was no television, but we used to have the radio, and you used to have to go across to Gaunts Common, to a garage at the top, at Lodge Hill, and they used to do accumulator's for your radio and you used to have to go over there every so often and get a new accumulator or battery.

To be truthful, for years I didn't know there was anywhere else but Holt and if anybody said that been to Bournemouth, I didn't even know where that was! we were a very close, closed village.

The Americans at Uddens? We lived at the bottom of the hill, which went up to the pub and they would drive past, and we stand on this farm gate and we'd shout out” got any gum chum?”, give us bars of chocolate but I can remember seeing them drive up the road but I don't remember the chewing gum.

I remember mum had some 10th Hussars billeted next door, in the little end of the cottage, I've got a fancy might've been about four. I remember her saying about the 10th Hussars, how good they were to her.

Colehill, D-Day Tanks, Uddens and Tarrant Rushton, Norman Willis (page 43)

There were British units about, the ones I would have known about would have been on Colehill, tucked in amongst the trees. What units they were I wouldn't know, nobody was going to tell small boys anything, who they were, what they were, why they were there and where they were going. We got on with them all right if we got there at the right time they even fed us. They were possibly infantry, because apart from lorries there were no other vehicles about.

They started cutting the timber on Colehill from Cannonhill, the south side and the top of the hill was stripped for timber. The area known as Jenny Down on Colehill that's behind the church, was stripped out leaving only a strip of trees from the church going down towards Wimborne. They left the triangle complete, that's from the church, War Memorial, Post Office and the set opposite from the another triangle, those were where the troops were, and once the troops were all gone all those trees were all stripped and there was nothing at all at the top of the Colehill.

The tanks were hidden in among the trees, as were all the troops, the American troops anyway, and this was all part of the build up to D-Day.

There was a large property called Uddens House, it no longer exists. Apparently the Americans were billeted there as well.

Badbury rings was always a popular place, and you could sit up there and watch all those gliders, and their tugs, down on Tarrant Rushton airfield. They were mainly the big ones Hamilcars and Horsas, that carried troops and jeeps, and things like that. Then one night on Colehill it must have been around D-Day, suddenly there was these flights of gliders with their tugs going out and then two or three hours later the tugs coming back again, some with the tow ropes some without and that's the only real clear memory I have.

About time all the Americans had disappeared from Colehill, that's when they took all the trees down.

Tanks at Colehill, Norman Foot

There were lots of troops based in the town, occasionally one would move in and the other lot move out. I remember the Berkshires, the Lancers, the Black Watch and at one time I believe there was a unit of the Coldstream Guards. They were mainly tank units because Parkwood Road was ideal for parking tanks and Canford Drive, prior to D-Day from Canford school to the bottom of Oakley hill, was solid with vehicles parked under all the trees and camouflaged. The same with Colehill with American tank units they were all parked in under the fir trees. We were supplying all these with rations including the airborne units at Tarrant Rushton airfield where they had various types of gliders.

US Troops at Kingston Lacy, Ruth Haine

The American troops were at Kingston Lacy, most of them, or at Hurn I believe there were quite a lot. But I was quite young, I know my sister went out with one or two of them but I thought it was awful to go out with Americans.

Occasionally there was trouble. I remember my father saying that they took all the gates of the houses in Poole Rd and put them in other people's gates, so they had to go and look for their gates the next day.

Kingston Lacy, Monica Hoare (page 47/48)

I was a mascot for the Dorset 48 Red Cross, we used to meet the troop trains. We had two big hospitals here, the 106th was at Kingston Lacy and the 104th was at St. Leonards. All the troops came in straight from France, into Wimborne station. The roads were like marble from Kingston Lacy on the routes for the ambulances right down to the Avenue and where they pulled it in at Wimborne station.

It was a busy time then for the hospital, the ambulances used to hold four at a time and we used to help load them in and talk to them. It was fun and they used to have funny names like Chuck and Lee, and names that we had never heard of. But I had the sad fact of seeing one die in on the platform at Wimbledon station and I was only 14 years old and then you really realised what the war was about. They were quite reverent, the Americans they thought a lot of their men and he was covered by a blanket and we put him in the waiting room and that was sad I didn't forget that for a long time.

I had a cut down Red Cross uniform and we used to hand out magazines for the troops I'm a non-smoker night but the amount of camel cigarettes are lit for the Woodrow troops it's a wonder I'm not a chain smoker actually.

The Americans used to come in to Wimborne on their crutches, they were lovely people. We had very little or no trouble with them we had no trouble with the troops it was quite safe to walk the streets and they were very happy times really.

They used to come into the town and they used to wear dressing gowns, they didn't dress to come to time, they wore the royal blue dressing gowns and the blue and white striped pyjamas. They were brought in by a truck and they would sit in the recreation round or they used to listen to music on for them in the various places, the liberal whole in Park Lane on various people play music and records and Glenn Miller records which they enjoyed.

Kingston Lacy, Isobel King (page 48)

The hospital trains picked up the wounded from Southampton docks to bring them back into Bournemouth, they were met there by ambulances, and brought back to Kingston Lacy and St. Leonards. I can remember seeing the ambulances going through Wimborne, fleets of ambulances taking the wounded. Some hospital trains came into Wimborne station and Sturminster Marshall station.