



DUNCHURCH VILLAGE MAGAZINE

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ISSUE 27

Special Edition!

Commemorating the 80th anniversary
of the end of WWII



PRODUCED BY FRIENDS OF DUNCHURCH SOCIETY

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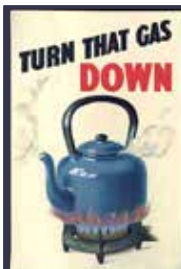
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Special Edition

Commemorating the 80th anniversary of the end of WWII



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Dunchurch, the WWII Years

Welcome to this very special edition of the Dunchurch Village Magazine which forms part of the village commemorations to mark the 80th Anniversary of the end of World War II. With the exception of a few current and date sensitive items, it is almost solely about village experiences during that turbulent time.

However, some of our regular contributors have looked back at how their organisation or particular interest fared during the war. Paul Sanders from the Allotment Association talks about how the Dig for Victory campaign impacted on food provision, Sue Turner gives us a perspective on how the village band's music may have lifted spirits and there is another interesting article from Leanne Warren about wartime foraging. To use Leanne's words, 'there is much to learn from the foraging efforts of World War II. The resourcefulness and deep connection to the land that once sustained a nation in crisis are skills rapidly being lost in the modern world. However, unlike wartime when survival often took



Bomb damaged cottage, Southam Road. Cottage owned by Mr J Elkington, 1940

precedence, we must also recognise our responsibility to the ecosystems we rely upon.' Wise words.

We are most grateful to everyone who has contributed and made this 'bumper' special edition possible. We would particularly like to thank our advertisers without whose support we would not be able to publish. We are indebted to them.

Finally, from the unearthing of new information or the use of previously reported articles, we dedicate this magazine to those ordinary but remarkable people who walked our streets before us and endured unimaginable loss and uncertainty about the future.

Let us look to the past and hope we can learn from it and provide a better future for all.

While the war raged on, it was business as usual in Dunchurch. We've included a few snippets of information that were found in the Rugby Advertiser from that time.

Dunchurch in Wartime

Recalled by the late Mrs Phyllis Edmondson (1900–1996)

The first intimation that war might come to Dunchurch was on Saturday September 2nd 1939, with the arrival of a large party of children together with their teachers from Willesdon, a village North of London, to be billeted in the village. Arrangements to put them up had already been made with different families and the village school set up a shift system of lessons using the village hall.

The next morning, at 11 am, war was declared and almost immediately an air raid warning sounded which, fortunately, turned out to be a false alarm. During the first week of the war blackouts came into force from dusk till dawn so that all windows and doors had to be covered with heavy curtains, cardboard or paint and all street lighting was extinguished. Supplies of black curtain material, drawing pins, tacks and black paper in Rugby soon ran out and people had to forage in Leamington, Coventry or Northampton for supplies. Air raid wardens were appointed and Messrs Howard, Peabody and Miller-Smith interpreted their duties strictly.



*A Morrison
Indoor Shelter*

Outdoors, Anderson air raid shelters had already been supplied by the authorities but, because Dunchurch was considered 'a safe area', no Morrison indoor (mouse trap) shelters were issued to the village. This remained the case even after the bombing in 1940!

From the time of the Munich Crisis to the outbreak of war, arrangements had been put in place to supply gas masks and these were now given out. Many people carried them wherever they went and special Mickey Mouse or Donald Duck versions were given to children so that they were less frightening. Luckily they never had to be used.

As the weeks went by Dunchurch shared the experience common to most villages during wartime in that many young men began to disappear on war service. A committee headed by Mrs Shears was formed to raise money to send parcels to them at the front. At the same time people were asked to give up and collect together their pots and pans



*Mrs Edmondson in her
later years, probably
taken at her home in
Vicarage Lane*

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to help with the national shortage of aluminium used for aeroplanes and, as an additional gesture, many ladies volunteered to receive instruction in camouflage net making.

A Home Guard Regiment, as part of the Second Battalion The Warwickshire Regiment, was put together under the leadership of Mr C.H.Cooke of Dunchurch Hall and my husband was appointed Major and Medical Officer. Also, in order to prepare boys too young yet to join the RAF, a local branch of the Air Training Corps was established under the leadership of Mr Rex Machin, Headmaster of Bilton Grange School, and Mr Miller-Smith.

In January, four months into the war, the worst restriction came into being which was the rationing of nearly all goods. Every man, woman and child was given a booklet containing coupons of different type and value. A number of these had to be cut out and presented whenever goods were bought. Different items required different numbers of coupons and only a certain number could be used each month. If you ran out you had to do without until the next month's allocation became due. For basic foodstuffs such as sugar, meat, fats, bacon, milk and eggs you had to register with a

particular shop and could only use your coupons there. In Dunchurch, Tomlins General Stores at the side of the village green received most of the trade.

As shortages increased, queueing became almost universal and phrases such as 'you might be able to get it under the counter' or 'on the black market' or from 'spivs', were common. Also, an almost mythical period became fixed in people's minds, and increased with time, when something was described as 'Pre-war', meaning that it was so much better than what was currently available.

Alongside food, clothes were soon added to coupons, then soap and then petrol.

Petrol was supplied from two different pumps, one dispensing normal coloured fuel, the other red coloured. Essential services such as doctors, farmers and others were given extra allocations of red petrol whereas everyone else filled up with the ordinary. Samples for testing were sometimes taken from your car's tank by the police and if you were found to have red petrol that you were not entitled to you could

be fined and even lose your licence. It was rumoured that in some disputes between neighbours the aggrieved party had been known to pour red ink into the others tank in retaliation.



Propaganda poster issued by the Ministry of Information

Soon spy stories began to circulate through the village. Mysterious noises – probably from a typewriter but suspected to be morse-code signals – were heard coming from the old Estate House occupied by a foreign Belgian man. Messages abroad were thought to have been sent concealed under the icing of a birthday cake and Lord Haw Haw, in his traitorous broadcasts from Germany, was supposed to have mentioned Dunchurch as an indication of an impending bomb attack. We, also, might have come under suspicion since my great friend, and Philip's godmother, Baroness Gertrude von Richtofen, the cousin of the famous Red Baron air ace of the First World War, had stayed with us eighteen months earlier.

The only genuine mystery story of this time was that a number of local men had been taken away on highly secret work.

Subsequently and much later, this turned out to be the construction of the Mulberry harbours used in the Normandy landings. (Mulberry harbours were floating artificial harbours designed and constructed by British military engineers.)

One incident occasioned some amusement one Sunday afternoon. A barrage balloon released itself from the Coventry

aircraft defences and came floating across the village, its steel hawser knocking off chimney pots from houses on both sides of the street. It then picked up Mrs Adams's washing on its line and disappeared with it in the direction of Daventry where it was eventually shot down.

The Coventry Blitz

On Thursday night, November 14th 1940, as the glow of the setting sun merged into the light of the full moon the great raid on Coventry began. For eleven hours, from seven in the evening until six the next morning, 500 enemy planes droned overhead and the sky was lit up by Coventry burning. Many evacuees from Coventry poured into Dunchurch but only a few stayed, the rest moving on to other villages around the county. I had made a bomb shelter in the centre of the house down three steps

in a solid stone walled pantry that had once been used as a meat and wine store in the days when the house had been The Bell coaching inn. I had the roof of this shored up with

timber and the single pane window covered with cellophane. The wooden door was very thick with heavy bolts and inside I had a bunk made up for my small son Philip with a mattress on the raised part of the floor for his nurse. There was also a good supply of emergency

The regular dance in the Village Hall on Friday night was supported by the New Swingers Dance Band.

food and drink plus a pickaxe. I had also plastered up all the other windows in the house with cellophane, stuck on with egg preserving liquid, to reduce the glass splintering. The villagers thought I was completely crazy as 'there would never be any danger in Dunchurch', however it made me feel a lot safer that night.

The Bomb

In the days following the Blitz there were further air raids on Coventry, Birmingham and Liverpool and nightly at seven o'clock, with unfailing regularity, the first planes were heard droning overhead. Knots of people gathered in the darkened village street to gaze overhead and speculate as to their destination.

On the evening of November 19th, five days after the massive blitz, I was in bed with a temperature. My husband, Reggie, came up from the surgery to say that he thought I should get up as things were getting very noisy. I put on a dressing gown and went down to the drawing room to eat dinner by the fire. Reggie went to see the last remaining patient and then came up again, putting on his tin hat. Nurse appeared from Philip's nursery saying how frightened she was by the aircraft noise and all the ak ak fire from Coventry. She and my husband put a large guard over the fire to prevent it blowing out, as it had done on a previous night when a land mine had been



dropped on Lane End a mile away.

The noise of planes circling and recircling soon reached a crescendo and we all ran down the stairs to the shelter where Philip was sleeping. Reggie had gone out into the hall to see what was happening when the horrible shriek of the bomb came. It sounded as if it was coming straight through the tiny boarded up window of our shelter. Reggie was blown down by the blast underneath a door, the glass of which I had reinforced with cellophane the day before and which remained intact. Rocks, concrete and timber came crashing through the kitchen roof just in front of me. Nurse screamed in fright and I had to hold her from collapsing. I was convinced Reggie was dead and he thought we were. An eternity seemed to pass before I heard his voice just as a second huge explosion rent the house from a bomb dropped on the other side of The Green.

There then followed the really horrible part which was the sound and vibration



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of masonry falling down all around. It was an unearthly feeling as though you were completely doomed and about to be buried alive. Philip woke up and said "Big bass drum! I like big bass drum." We laughed in relief. When the dust finally settled it was apparent that the whole front of the house had been blown out and there was a huge crater in the road being filled from a burst water and gas main. The second bomb had demolished a building opposite on The Green where two men, the local drayman and a friend only recently evacuated from Coventry, were buried under the debris. Reggie went over to help and to administer morphia but they were both dead. We spent the rest of the night huddled in the shelter.

As dawn broke an unusual silence had settled over the village. The main road was completely closed to traffic. Pumps were brought out to control the burst water main. A bed was seen to be hanging at a precarious angle from our upper floor with a red dressing gown fluttering in the breeze near to it and a light bulb still shining on a length of bare flex. Groups of people assembled to see the damage. At 9am a patient arrived to ask at what time the surgery would be held as he needed a certificate!

In the days that followed we tried to dig

out and retrieve as much furniture and belongings as we could from the debris and put them into store. Philip and his nurse were sent to live with my brother-in-law, a doctor in Leamington, and Reggie and I were billeted in the attics of Bilton Grange school. Surgeries were held, and maintained for the rest of the war, in the front parlour of Sam Howard's butcher's shop. Eventually Bilton Grange offered us a small house called Rose Ash in the school grounds and there we remained until my husband was forced to retire because he had developed Parkinson's Disease.

After May 1941 there were no more bombings but occasionally, lone, low flying raiders came searching for special targets such as the (dummy) aerodrome at Kytes Hardwick.

An air drop by men of The Royal Welsh Fusiliers on either side of the Coventry Road, early one Sunday morning was a wonderful sight. It turned out to be a mock manoeuvre to capture the Long Lawford aerodrome and caused great excitement.



A week before D-Day troops of all kinds, including the Free French, came moving through Dunchurch day and night and

Phyllis Edmondson with a young Philip

the roads became scarred by the tracks of heavy vehicles. Groups of men rested solemnly by the roadside clearly conscious of some tremendous task that lay ahead.

The end of the war came quietly in May 1945. There was no 'Mafeking night', for Dunchurch. Small groups of people stood in the village square uncertain what to do. A few small fireworks were let off by Mr Nutt and by the school children in the evening but the general feeling was

one of utter relief that, at last, it was all over. A week or two later, Winston Churchill came through the village on a victory tour and was greeted by crowds. His open top car paused outside The Dun Cow Hotel where the head waiter brought out a bottle of champagne. Unfortunately, on trying to open it, the cork broke in the neck of the bottle and could not be extracted so after an embarrassing pause Churchill moved on to Rugby. A new era awaited.

A Close Call for Dr Edmondson

In 1940, Dr Edmondson held morning surgeries in a room at his home, Dunsmore House in Dunchurch. This had originally been The Bell, a former Georgian coaching inn on The Green.

On the evening of 19th November 1940, at the height of the Coventry bombing raids, Dr Edmondson stood at the front door watching formations of German planes sweeping towards the blazing city. The sky was bright with parachute flares and puffs of smoke from anti-aircraft salvos. Suddenly he heard the unmistakable whine of a bomb coming down and threw himself flat in the passage. The bomb hit the house and the blast went over his head and demolished two thirds of the building behind. He was rescued from the wreckage but emerged smiling

and immediately went to help rescue men buried in the working-men's club opposite his own shattered house. His wife and two-year-old son, Philip, and a nurse were in a reinforced old stone meat store

at the back which resisted the explosion and were thankfully unscathed. His wife recalled that rather than the blast of the bomb, the worst experience was the subsequent sound of crumbling and collapsing masonry all around. The next morning with the house in ruins and the front door hanging half from its frame, a patient raised the knocker and politely enquired at what time the surgery would be held that day!



Despite the bombing of his home, there was no respite for Dr Edmondson's professional responsibilities. Daily surgeries were soon reinstated and for most of the war years, were perhaps appropriately held in Howards Butchers in Dunchurch where patients could observe some first-rate surgical scalpel techniques while waiting to be seen!

From Bowling Club to Bomb Shelter to Doctors' Surgery

Situated at the back of the Dun Cow, at the site of the present-day Thatching's on Rugby Road, was a building which was originally the clubhouse for the Dunchurch Bowling Club. This was reinforced during the war and used as the village bomb shelter. When it became redundant, The Dun Cow offered it to Dr Edmondson to use as his surgery.

These were hard times. There were the returning war wounded and veterans to care for, many bereaved families, shortages and rationing and limited supplies.

Dr Edmondson died in 1964 – a sad loss for the village and his patients who held him in high regard. The authorities recognised his great contribution to the village by naming Edmondson Close after him.



This building was reinforced during the war and used as the village bomb shelter and later, used as Dr Edmondson's surgery

The BTH Apprentices Rag Dance was held at the village hall in aid of Rugby Hospital. Les Smith's Rhythm Aces provided the music and firm favourites were the Palais Glide and La Conga, both were encored. Joan and Ross Hammond were winners of the spot prize. Much in evidence were members of the forces and two ATS girls helped to sell competition tickets.

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Memories of Growing up in Dunchurch 1

By June Williams

This is June Williams, a lovely lady who is 94 years young and as bright and as cheery as the glimmer in her eyes suggests. June was the first baby delivered by Dr Edmondson and is also the little girl who survived the direct hit when the Dunchurch and Thurlaston Working Men's Club was bombed in November 1940. 'I feel like a cat with nine lives. The bomb dropped at 8pm directly onto my bedroom. Thankfully, I was still downstairs so survived unlike the two poor gentlemen who lost their lives. Each Remembrance Day, I take two poppies and place them by the plaque outside the social club in their memory.'

Here, June shares a few memories of living in Dunchurch during the war years.

'After the bombing, I and an evacuee who was staying with my family slept at the cottage of Burt Holden on Southam

Road whilst my dad stayed to help remove rubble and recover the bodies of the two men who were sadly killed. Dad also needed to be close to my mum who was also injured with a broken leg and buried under the rubble for two hours. Mum kept singing so dad knew she

was alive. After that, we moved to a small cottage owned by the Arkwright's on Coventry Road before getting a council house.

Burt Holden was the village ARP (Air Raid Precautions) representative and in his role as Warden, walked the village streets making sure that house lights were not visible and knocking on doors to reprimand people if they were.

We (Dunchurch) had a Home Guard and they would parade and do their square bashing outside on the street where Wanda's is now. Harry Bark lived in School Street and was a member of

the Home Guard. I also remember there was an air raid siren on the Coventry Road near George Curry's garage and an office close by for firemen.

Despite the war, school days were fairly normal for the time. Every school day, I would walk to school in School Street carrying my packed lunch and gas mask. I had been shown how to put it on and



June at home in 2024 with her copy of the Dunchurch Village Magazine in which her story first featured

The whist club was still going strong and we are happy to report that Mrs Bark from Table 4 won a box of onions in February.

always kept it nearby. The cane was frequently used by Headmaster Mr Miller-Smith or a ruler across the knuckles would be given to those who were in trouble – but not me!

The school had its own allotment at the side of the building and the boys would work on it and the girls did cooking and needlework. We did seem to have enough food although we did have ration books and not many sweets.



Every year, we would have a May Queen and our teacher, Mrs Penrose, would move her piano out onto

the playground where we would dance around the maypole. If the weather was cold, you didn't have a day off, you just wore your coat and hats in school and we still went if it snowed.

The local 'bobby' was Police Constable Richards (we nicknamed him Streaky because he was so tall) and although I didn't get into trouble, he fined my friend ten bob for riding crossbar on a bike. He was always visible and very good at his job. A cuff around the ear for being



naughty was nothing in those days and no one complained, (unless you were the one who had the cuff!)

Sometimes, we saw military vehicles coming through the village with soldiers in and there was a base where the prison is now. They would come into the village to the dances. We often saw the Italian prisoners of war in their brown uniforms. They were friendly to us and we spoke to them. They lived in a hut on Southam Road and I don't think they wanted to fight.

The adults protected us from a lot of the bad news and I had a very happy childhood. I would play in Grays Orchard in Thurlaston that my grandad owned. There was a big pond and we would catch newts and tadpoles and there were violets in the spring. On Sundays, I would attend Sunday School at St Peter's Church.

I don't watch the news anymore. Why are they always fighting? Why can't everyone be happy and just get along? I don't understand it and I just take one day at a time now.'

An unfortunate accident happened to the village special constable, when he broke his thumb in an accident with a Midland Red Bus. Thankfully, he was treated by the local doctor.

Memories of Growing up in Dunchurch 2

As told by Maureen James

Before I married, my name was Sims and during the war I lived at 46 Daventry Road. We were a family of ten plus three evacuees in a four-bedroom house. We had no bathroom but would bring in a tin bath from outside for bath time. There was a well between our house and number 48 and we had an outside toilet. We did have running water though.

Dad had an allotment opposite our house and he grew lots of veg so we didn't go without food. Mum always seemed to make something out of nothing. We had our ration books and mum would shop at the Co-op on Daventry Road.

When the air raid siren went, we would all go and sit on the cellar steps and wait for the all clear. The siren was in the village on the left of Coventry Road.

Sadly, my brother Jack was killed during the war and is buried in Ireland. I think he was injured when they were being picked up from the beaches in France and he died later. His real name was William but for some reason, we always called him Jack. Mum and dad were informed by telegram that he had died and I don't think mum ever got over it. Jack's name is on the monument in the village

and is read out every year on Remembrance Sunday. Another brother had TB so couldn't go to war.

I went to school in School Street. You stayed at the same school until you left.

They were good days and there was an allotment at the side and the boys would do the gardening and the girls would cook. We used to chuck cakes out of the windows to the boys and the boys would throw peas at us that they shouldn't really have picked. We were quite naughty but it was just for fun though. We also had a maypole to dance around. We all had our gas masks and knew how to use them. We were shown in class.

After school, we would play in the fields or in the street playing hopscotch and despite the war, I had a happy childhood.

We had a Home Guard in Dunchurch and they were on the corner of Daventry Road where the Tudor Café used to be. Mr Back was an air raid warden. He also employed my dad as a builder.

We regularly saw prisoners of war. They were friendly and always spoke kindly to us.



Maureen at home and with a smile to light up any room





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I seem to remember two air raid shelters in the village. One of them was in the playing field by The Heath. It was made of concrete with grass on top and after the war, we played in it until it was knocked down. It didn't smell very nice. The other was where the old doctors surgery used to be on the Rugby Road.

We did have some bombs dropped in Dunchurch which caused damage and I remember another being dropped in Mr Butlins field when the Germans were flying back after bombing Coventry.

There were lots of military lorries passing through the village and in bad weather, the drivers would knock and collect ashes from the houses



to put on the road because of the ice and snow. This would enable them to come up the hill on Davenport Road.

At the end of the war, there was great relief and we all felt safer. My mum made me a red and blue dress with V's on it and we celebrated in the centre of the village. Everyone was pleased to be together again. We had a few fireworks as well.

I don't understand the world today. I find the news very sad so don't like to watch it.'

The pushbike is outside 46 Davenport Road where Maureen spent her war years; next door is number 48 which shared a well

Memories of Growing up in Dunchurch 3

As told by Bryan Male

My father was Batman and chauffeur to Brigadier RC Matthews at Toft House. My mother was in service to them. We lived in Toft House cottage which overlooked the fields now covered by Draycote Water. I went to the school in School Street and I carried a gas mask every day in a cardboard box. We had gas mask training in school. The masks were horrible and smelt of rubber.

Although I wasn't really aware of the war, I was aware that my dad wasn't there. He was away serving with the Brigadier and I felt it very badly when he went away. He would come back for a few days on leave and I was always



Bryan Male telling his story

very sad when he left.

At Toft, at Mrs Darlington's house, we had a communal dug out and when the siren went which it did regularly, we would assemble with other neighbours and go down there for the night. It was corrugated, like an Anderson Shelter. We took stone hot water bottles and came out at daylight. The war became the norm and going to the shelter was a regular occurrence.

At the same time, as we lived on the south part of Toft Hill, right at the top, I remember sometimes clearly seeing the German planes coming over and they were almost at what appeared to be eye level and heading for Coventry. You could just see the pilots' heads as they came over just north of Kites Hardwick. At Kites Hardwick, they frequently lit a bonfire at night. The lighting of straw bales was supposed to disorientate the pilots heading for Coventry. It was like a mock factory fire. The Germans would often drop spare bombs on their way back to Germany.

We did see prisoners of war in the village because there were prisoner of war camps around here. There was one at Birdingbury, one at Boddington and I believe at Byfield. On the Southam Road,



An Anderson shelter

the depot that is now the council yard was the WARAG* and towards the end of the war, America and Canada loaned us tractors on a lease lend scheme which meant that farmers could use them because at the time, we were still operating a lot with horses. Prisoners of war were billeted there which was part of the

Ivans Timber Yard which was at the back of the cottages on Southam Road. When my father was invalided out of the war, he would drive the bus with the prisoners of war in, to the farms where they would work. Sometimes, I would go with him on an old Bedford bus. My father would drop the prisoners of war off and collect them later. They were much happier on farms than fighting in the war. They were friendly and they even made me wooden toys.

When I was walking to school, I would take a cut through by George Worral's Motor Garage and by what we called Nutt's Corner, there was a gun emplacement on the corner of Daventry and Southam Road on a raised area. The gun was something like a Bren gun or anti-tank gun of some description that, if needed, would be operated by the Home Guard. We saw the Home Guard regularly. They did have uniforms, denim type material but of course their arma-

ments were sweeping brushes and some rifles. I see Dad's Army as being almost accurate.

Dunchurch crossroads was very, very important because it was the main road from London to Birmingham and north to south and I clearly remember there were American lorries parked in Southam Road which I assumed were parked as part of the build-up for D Day. There was a whole column of vehicles with lots of American soldiers on the pavement and they gave us chewing gum. I had never had it before.

We took in evacuees after the big night of the bombing in Coventry. The bombing was devastating and all of these people were displaced and the next day, columns of people filed out of the city and walked along the A45. There was no choice as to whether we had them. If you had a spare bedroom, you had to take them. We had Mr and Mrs Hazelwood with us for nine months and we became very good friends.

Food was rationed but as a population, I think we were in better health then because we were on controlled eating. Sugar and sweets were rationed, so was meat but we could get offal, heart, kidneys and sometimes sausages. We were lucky because we had a pig and a pig sty and so dad was in the pig

club. This meant you could have 28lbs of pig meal a month but we had to give up a ration book of bacon to get the pig meal to feed it. But we had a big garden and dad grew vegetables and the pig ate anything we had left like cabbages leaves. The pig had to go every year and we had what we used to call flitches and we would have half of the pig hanging either side of the fire all wrapped in muslin coated in whitewash to keep the flies off. After the pig had been slaughtered, it would be soaked in brine for two weeks to cure it with saltpetre rubbed into it. Every time we had some, it would have to be soaked overnight to remove the salt. It would last almost a year. The pig would eat everything, a way of recycling if you like, but of course nowadays you couldn't do it. Everything a pig eats today is controlled. We also had chickens.

When the war ended, we had VE Day but also later on, VJ Day. When it came on the radio the war was over, (of

course, we had no television in those days), we all went to the village centre on The Square. I cycled on my bike. VE Day meant we could have lights on again. Imagine a football crowd celebrating in The Square. That was what it was like when we all celebrated together. Mr Nutt let off some fireworks.



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George Nutt was a great businessman in Dunchurch and they were a great family. After the bombings in Coventry, Mr Nutt would travel to Coventry and buy up all the tinned food that had been fire damaged, a lot of which had no labels on. There was no use by date on tinned food then. You could then buy these tins in the shops in the village and Mr Nutt did us all a great favour. You never knew exactly what you would get until you opened

it but George Nutt served Dunchurch very well as we could have these as well as our rationed items. Mr Nutt made a great impression on me and I modelled my own working ethics on him.'

*WARAG – War Agricultural Executive Committee was set up and known colloquially as the 'WARAG'. The purpose of this committee was to oversee food production in Great Britain against the spectre of U boats cutting us off from our vast empire.

Dunchurch and Thurlaston Working Men's Club

Taking a direct hit from a bomb on the 19th of November 1940, the building was completely demolished. Dr Edmondson who witnessed the incident from his own home opposite, rushed to help despite his own house suffering damage from the blast. Sadly, two men, Victor Edward Eley and Arthur Mason who were playing billiards at the time, were both killed. Ironically, they had travelled to Dunchurch to avoid the Coventry blitz.

The stewardess of the club, Kathleen Wilson who was serving in the bar was buried under the rubble and rescued hours later requiring plaster from knee to hip. Her husband, also the club steward, was collecting wood outside and had seen the bomb falling and warned



his daughter and an evacuee to dive under a table. Fortunately, they all survived.

Like a 'Phoenix from the flames', the club was rebuilt at a cost of £3,000 and re-opened in 1951 by the Mayor of Coventry Cllr Harry Weston who also drew the first pint of beer. This was subsequently auctioned for the club's benefit for £1.



Drawing the first pint in the rebuilt Working Men's Club

Dunchurch Parish Council Minutes 1938–1946

These are held at Warwickshire County Council Records Office where they were sent after the war. It is interesting to note, the war features much less in them than you might have thought. However, some extracts pertinent to WWII include the following:

21st May 1940 – Air Raid Shelters

War had clearly been anticipated and work on an air raid shelter on the Arkwright Playing Field began in 1938. However, at the meeting on the 27th of August 1940, it was decided to abandon this shelter which was taking too long to finish and provide a surface shelter at the rear of the Dun Cow instead. It wasn't until 1945 that a letter from County Surveyors confirmed the Arkwright shelter would be 'filled in and the ground levelled as soon as the necessary labour is available.'

14th December 1940 – Air Raids

These minutes alluded to a suggestion that the brilliancy of vehicle or traffic lights could have contributed to the bombings of the village.

'The Chairman reported that he had received information that the traffic lights

The Chairman reported that he had received information that the traffic lights had been damaged at an altitude of over 1000 ft.

had been reduced in volume and that signals could not be seen at any altitude over 1,000 ft.'

'The Chairman then referred to the wanton destruction caused in the Parish by the indiscriminate bombing by the enemy air force on September 2nd, November 14th and the night of November 19th. On the first occasion one house was burnt by an incendiary bomb, on the second one house was destroyed and a number damaged and some people injured and on the third occasion two people killed and two injured while seven houses were wrecked and about thirty damaged. The Chairman expressed great indignation at these random attacks.'

22nd July 1941 – Siren for Dunchurch

'The Emergency Committee of Rugby Town Council has recommended the Warwickshire County Council to remove the siren from the old water tower Rugby to a site in Dunchurch.' A new home was found for it on Coventry Road.

6th January 1942 – War Ships Week for Rugby and the Rural District

A meeting was held 'in the school room of the chapel on The Heath' to



HMS Keppel

discuss fundraising to which the 'Home Guard, WI, Women's Voluntary Service and other village groups' were invited. It was later recorded, 'Dunchurch and Thurlaston Warships week which was held from Feb 28th – March 7th raised £40,000 16s, an average of £20 per head of the population.'



The Lords Commissioner of the Admiralty later confirmed the adoption of HMS Keppel during Warships Week.

The ship was brought forward from Reserve in 1939 and remained in service until June 1945 when she was placed on

the Disposal List. During WW2 the ship was adopted by the civil community of Rugby, Warwickshire after a successful National Savings WARSHIP WEEK campaign in March 1942. She served with significant distinction in the defence of convoys in the Atlantic and also during escort of convoys to Russia.

Another campaign, Wings for Victory Week with a target of £15,000, actually realised £20,054.

20th August 1945 – Peace Celebrations

The council was informed that arrangements were being made for giving a tea to the children of the village and that this would be followed by an outing to Wicksteed Park.

A 'tea' event was also planned for the 'old age pensioners' of the village with members of the Parish Council agreeing to fund it themselves.

At
Thursdays meeting of
the WI, Miss Dunbar spoke on
methods of saving wool from discarded
garments. This talk was followed by social
half hour which consisted of competitions.
The tomato competition was won by Mrs
Macfarlane. The candle competition won
by Mrs Metcalfe and the articles on
the tray competition by Mrs
Adams.

Dunchurch and Thurlaston WI

The following are brief notes taken from the AGM reports during the years of WWII, giving us some idea of that period of history in Dunchurch.

For context, it is worth mentioning that the gloving industry was an important, well-organised local industry. Dunchurch gloves were recognised to be of such good quality that the gloves won prizes at prestigious shows and were purchased by the great and good around the world. There was a shop in Dunchurch to sell these and other goods, some from other local WIs. Therefore the lack of leathers during the war was important to this industry.

1939 – 21st Annual Report

Lecture: Youth Movements in Germany by Lady Napier.

February Meeting: It was unanimously agreed that in the event of this country going to war, the WI hall would be offered for use to the WCC if they so desired it.

The hall is now a First Aid Post.

Classes and demonstrations on glove-making have been cancelled due to the outbreak of war.

1940 – 22nd Annual Report

Lectures & Demonstrations: Civilians part in defence, blackout, toy & rug making,

jam making.

Owing to the international situation the party arranged for May had to be cancelled.

Industry Report (Glove making):

Owing to the war, skins have been more difficult to obtain but up to the present 65 pairs of gloves have been sold. No Shows have been held, therefore no prizes have been taken.

One interesting item is that a pair of silk linings for gloves are being made for a young Flying Officer who brought silk from one of England's parachute fire bombs.

1941– 23rd Annual Report

Lectures: War at Sea (Ministry of Information)

Escape from France (Miss Carey)

A box of seeds was received from America & proved very satisfactory.

Evacuees: For most of the year the hall has been occupied by evacuees, and several gas meters have been installed, also a gas cooker.

Industries Report: The gloving industry has once again had a successful year, in spite of the difficulties obtaining skins. 121 pairs of gloves have been sold.



1942 – 24th Annual Report

Jam Centre: Bilton WI have joined with Dunchurch & Thurlaston WI in the making of jam, the WI hall being used for the occasion. 914 lbs of jam have been made.

Camouflage nets: Members and helpers are busy making camouflage nets for the military, 18 nets 24x14 ft and 4 nets 14x14 ft have been made.

Evacuees: Moved from the hall last February leaving the hall for other purposes.

Bilton WI: Invitations have been received from Bilton WI to attend meeting for lectures from the Ministry of Information.

March, Warships Week: Was well patronised, the sum of £50 being taken in Savings & Certificates and stamps.

In September £2 each was given to Dunchurch Comforts Fund and Thurlaston Comforts Fund.

Glove Industry Report: It is now very difficult to obtain skins, especially the warm skins, as the Government have commandeered them for military purposes. 188 pairs of gloves have been sold, an increase on the previous year. We have a large stock of skins

which has enabled us to carry on.

The stock of sheepskins is now exhausted and many orders have had to be turned down. Reindeer and good leathers are now unobtainable and up to the present we have been able to substitute this line of skin. Demonstrations have been given at Alvecote & Shuttington, Arley and Long Itchington.



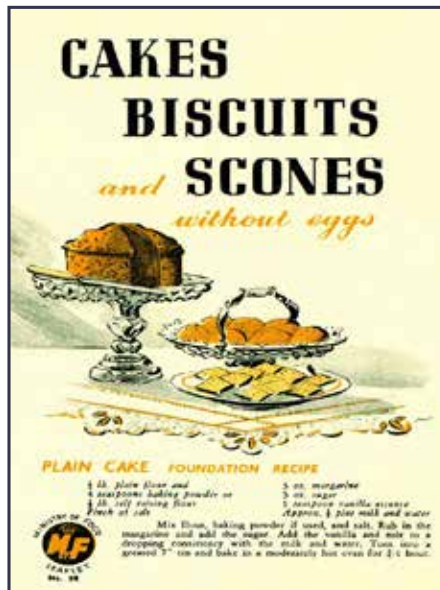
1943 – 25th Annual Report

The Ministry of Food had granted the WI a licence for the sale of pies each week. These are in great demand.

Camouflage nets: are now being made by interested members of the village.

Whist Drives: A series of whist drives have been held and cheques have been

sent to The Midland Societies of the Blind Nursing Association for the benefit of Nurse Ridout Red Cross Prisoner of War Fund, Dunchurch Comforts Fund and Thurlaston Comfort Fund. A whist drive was held for 'Wings for Victory Week' combined with an auction sale and



**** 11th June – don't miss it! ****



Dunchurch and Thurlaston WI



Summer Fashion Show
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raised £2,123.12.

Electricity: Was installed in the WI hall by the kindness of Mr. Cooke allowing us to plug in on his premises!

1944 – 26th Annual Report

Lecture: Mrs. Constable, BBC Broadcasting in War Time.

Cheques have been sent to Mrs. Adams (who lost her home by fire), Dunchurch Comforts & Thurlaston Comforts Fund.

Salute the Soldier Week: A whist drive and mock auction was held in the WI hall. The WI invested £70.

Milk Cocoa has been distributed once to farmers & tradespeople who employ adolescents under 18 years.

Camouflage Nets: As these were no longer required by the Government, the equipment is for sale, members gave in their names to help as canteen workers if required.

Pies: The sale of pies continues and are found very beneficial in the village.

1945 – 27th Annual Report

Lectures: Mr. Lusty, Rehabilitation Centre

Demonstrations: Soya Flour

Flag Whist Drive: Was held on 24th January in aid of Local Comforts Fund. £7.10 was sent to Dunchurch Comforts Fund & £2.10 to Thurlaston Comforts Fund.

Basket Whist Drive: Was held on February 14th for 'Aid to Russia Week'.

Glove Industry: This year has been a particularly good year for orders, but owing to difficulty in buying leathers orders have not been able to be fulfilled as we should have liked. It is impossible to keep any stock of leather gloves.

Flag Day: Was held on May 26th for the S.S.A.F.A. (Soldiers, Sailors & Airmens Families Association).

1946 – 28th Annual Report

Preservation Centre: The Preservation Centre has now officially closed.

Gloving Industry: Owing to difficulty in obtaining leathers, the gloving industry has disbanded as an industry. A balance of £25.17.1 was left and it has been decided to purchase a clock for the WI Hall.

Flag Day: May, S.S.A.F.A, just under £10.

Glove making by the WI began in the 1920s and gloves were even sold to Royalty and others of note.

1922: Princess Mary, six pairs of chamois gloves, presented in a brocade box.

1926: Queen of Spain, Victoria Eugenie, purchased 12 pairs of elbow length suede gloves.

1927: Emir Abdullah, ruler of Trans Jordan, purchased two pairs.

1929: The City of Leeds purchased a pair of chamois button gloves for the Lord Mayor.

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The Thatched Bus Shelter

Four years after the second world war ended, the Dunchurch thatched bus shelter was erected as a WWII memorial. First proposed in 1945 by the WI, a telegraph pole and a telephone kiosk had to be relocated to accommodate it. Its positioning seems apt, so close to the site of the original Working Men's Club which was bombed on the night of 19th November 1940 when two men Arthur Mason and Victor Eley so sadly lost their lives.

Donated to the village by the then Chairman of the Parish Council, Alderman Arthur Adkinson, the structure was built to the rustic design of Mr R G Castle and officially opened on the 14th December 1949 and has provided welcome shelter for travellers ever since. However, at the time, there was criticism directed at the Parish Council with suggestions that they were building

'something for courting couples' to which the Chairman responded, 'I hope we are!' It is said, much laughter ensued.

More recently, following the disappearance of its original plaque, the local branch of the British Legion considered its reinstatement a worthy project and with the support of the Parish Council, a rededication took place on Sunday 13th December 2009 to mark its 60th anniversary. The current plaque is set into the pavement, just to the right of the bus shelter.

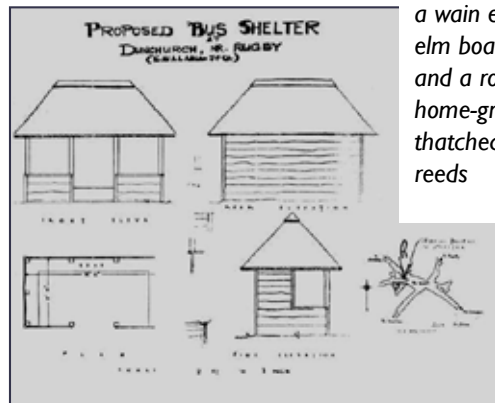
Widely considered unique in its form, the bus shelter was given Grade 2 listed status (1392305) in November 2007 and was most recently renovated mid 2022.

*Original design by Mr. Castle, Rural Industries
Organiser for Warwickshire Rural Community
Council. Constructed of rustic ash poles with*

*a wain edge elm board
and a roof of
home-grown fir
thatched with
reeds*



Now with nighttime illumination
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Newspaper Articles from 1945

These articles give a real flavour of the relief that the whole country must have felt as the war drew to an end. It seems, even then, local folk were not averse to decorating our Lord Scott monument!

Dunchurch Revels with a Fire on Bombed Site

Rugby Advertiser, Friday May 18th, 1945

'Dunchurch residents spent Monday evening last week in a variety of ways, while awaiting news of victory in Europe. Householders were busy arranging displays of flags, and in the band room the silver band was earnestly rehearsing, for forthcoming programmes.

In the early hours of VE-Day, the Lord John monument in the village square was clad with a tin helmet, respirator, khaki great coat, with other accessories and LDV (Local Defence Volunteer) weapon. The day passed very quietly. Community singing was to have taken place in the village square but owing to rain this was transferred to the Methodist Chapel. Later, in the chapel a service of thanksgiving was held. The organist was Mr. Frank Webb, and the lesson was read by Miss I. Guinness. Mr. A. L. Adkinson presided and the speakers were Messrs. W.W. Baker, A.A. Skinfild and Pte. Goichard. At the parish church there was a packed congregation. The Vicar (Rev. F. H. Roberts) conducted the service, with Mr. D. Malpass

on the organ.

At dusk, as the lights went up, the west end of the church and tower, with its newly painted clock face, was floodlit. The

church bells

were rung in the early evening and again at dusk. The celebrations reached a climax when, on the bombed site of the Working Men's Club, a bonfire was lit and a display of fireworks was given. Major C. H. Cooke called for cheers for Mr. O. H. Nutt, who provided the fireworks. By midnight there was a large gathering at the village hall, where a dance was in progress, following a whist drive, which was won by Miss Manning, Mrs. Hirons, Mr. E. Comer, Mrs. White, Mr. J. Fell, Mrs. Williams, Mrs. Newbery, and Mrs. F. Williamson. Miss E. Pearce was MC. Dancing music from Mr. J. Hairs' radiogram continued until midnight. £30 was raised.'



Premier's Triumphant Tour of the Midlands

Birmingham Post, Tuesday June 26th, 1945

Huge crowd greets Nation's leader (Winston Churchill)

'Accompanied by his daughter Sarah, he arrived at Rugby an hour late, explaining that he had been obliged to stop at many places where he had not intended because so many people were determined to hear him speak. Such a place was Dunchurch, where a statue of Lord Douglas Montagu Douglas Scott, a Lord of the Manor in the early part of the last century, had been



bedecked with a raincoat and a yachting cap. At its foot sat a small girl with a cigar and holding a bulldog decorated with red, white and blue favours.'



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Second World War Memorial Book

In St Peter's Church is a memorial book for men from the Parish of Dunchurch & Thurlaston who were killed in WW2. It was presented by Mrs Mary Miller in memory of her husband, Colonel Alexander Miller, Royal Artillery & RAOC, who lived from 1912 to 1992.

It opens with bible verses from John, Chapter 15:12,13, "This is my commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends."

Along with the dates on which they died, there are photographs of the following men who gave the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom.

Rest in Peace: Albert Packer, Alfred Matthews, Arthur Bernard Commons, Denis Roy Miles, Desmond Mitchell,

Donald Price, Edward Henry Colledge, Joseph John Hiron, Peter Joseph Gray, Rowland James Borton, Stanley Brett, Thomas Sullivan, William George Walden.

However, also named in the book are Donald Bell, Clifford Fulsher, William Sims and John Henry Warren. Sadly, there are no photographs of them. We know Donald served in the Royal Engineers and died on 29th September 1947 and John in the RAF, dying on 19th September 1939.

If anyone could supply photographs of these four men or dates of death for Clifford and William, please email fodnews1@gmail.com. St Peter's Church would be most grateful to receive them so that the memorial can be more complete.

The book is available to view any day between 10am and 4pm and is displayed in a glass case in the North Nave.

Here is just a small selection of photographs of those who gave their lives



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Halifax Bomber Tragedy

On the evening of Saturday 14 October 1944, Halifax BIII, MZ920 (WL-C), belonging to the Royal Canadian Air Force 434 Squadron, took off from RAF Croft in North Yorkshire for the second time that day to fly to Duisburg in Germany via Northamptonshire, where it was to join with many other squadrons to again attack the same target, the ports of Duisburg. The aircraft carries a load of seven 1,000lb and six 500lb bombs.

Flying at 20,000ft over the border of Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire, the starboard outer engine catches fire and despite the pilot's attempt to extinguish the fire it rages on. It is obvious that the pilot has to abort the mission and land somewhere for the crew to escape. The RAF and USAAF airfields in the area are launching their bombers and do not want a burning aircraft to block their runways. The aircraft is diverted to RAF Church Lawford southwest of Rugby. Now the lubricating oil is escaping and is being ignited by the fire as is the boosted mixture. The starboard inner engine is



A Halifax bomber

now burning also and the integrity of the wing is threatened and the cockpit is filling up with smoke. The fire is taking hold along the length of the starboard wing. The Halifax is approaching the airfield at Church Lawford but has to fly over Dunchurch first in order to reach safety. The situation is so bad that two of the crew members, F/O Sterling, the bomb aimer and F/Sgt Stamatis, the wireless operator decide to open the escape hatch and bail out. Stamatis lands safely and is uninjured, Sterling however, lands on electric light cabling and shorts out all the village lights and is injured in the process.

Back in the aircraft, F/L Wood makes a final attempt to extinguish the fire by diving but the starboard wing breaks off and the aerodynamic load on the port wing causes it to break off too. Despite desperate attempts to open the escape hatch, it appears jammed and the five remaining crew members lose their lives as the remains of the aircraft falls to earth. It is 23.50. The map shows a red cross where the aircraft came down near Dunchurch Railway Station

alongside the A45 road to Coventry which was closed because of the unexploded bombs. It was reopened at 15:45hrs on Friday 27th October, almost two weeks after the crash.

The Uncovering of the Halifax Bomber Tragedy

Up until 1997, the tragedy remained hidden until then local resident David George (now sadly deceased) uncovered the story on an old postcard of Dunchurch village in the local library. The card, which had been written by two villagers to friends said: "A Halifax came down in flames just on the road by the station on Saturday... two bailed out, one landed on an electric cable and fused all the lights!... you never heard such a row."



David deserves full credit for investigating the story and organising the erecting of a commemorative stone along with Roger Higginson who assisted. It resulted in the unveiling of the Rugby Road



The unveiling of the Rugby Road memorial on the 6th June 2004 by Major John Tassé of the Royal Canadian Air Force

memorial on the 6th June 2004 by Major John Tassé of the Royal Canadian Air Force, a representative of the Canadian High Commission and in the presence of family members, dignitaries and the local community.

Re-Dedication of the Halifax Memorial – 13th October 2019

Theo Claassen of the Rugby Aviation Group and current custodian of the memorial organised the 75th year re-commemoration of the memorial. It



Relatives of the 'fallen' and Major Durno and his wife Colleen at the 2019 re-dedication ceremony

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was at this event that the full human cost of the tragedy unfolded. Relatives told stories of stark telegrams received informing of the tragic loss of a much-loved family member and the ripples it had sent through their families right up to the current generation. It is clear our Canadian friends are pleased and totally overwhelmed by the warm reception they receive in Dunchurch and are comforted that their loved ones are still remembered many years later and so many miles away from their homeland.

The Canadian crew members were taken to Chester's Blacon Cemetery where

RIP

Pilot Flight Lieutenant Donald Zachary Taylor Wood, RCAF, 26
 Navigator Flying Officer William Robert Ewing, RCAF, 24
 Middle upper gunner Sergeant Owen Parsons, RCAF, 24
 Rear gunner Sergeant Donald McLeod Ward, RCAF, 21
 Flight Engineer Sergeant Geoffrey Davies Grant, RAFVR, 21

they were laid to rest and Sgt Grant's remains were returned to his hometown in Wales.

In August 2023, Theo Classen arranged for artist Graham Henderson to repaint the fading 434 Squadron badge and the image of the

Halifax on the memorial stone.



Repainting the artwork on the memorial

The Bluenose Skyranger

Life After Death is the title of an article recently featured in the *Microlight Flying* magazine, published by the British Microlight Aircraft Association (BMAA). It tells of the Bluenose Skyranger, built by Air Cadets to honour the memory of men not much older, who gave their all.

The article begins by telling the tragic story of the Canadian Halifax bomber crash on the outskirts of Dunchurch and is written by Fl Lt Howard Jones,

the Commanding Office of the RAF Air Cadets No 29F (Rugby) Squadron. The following is an edited version of the article and the story behind The Bluenose Skyranger, G-WEPW.

The British Microlight Aircraft Association has a long running initiative to get young people involved in flying and aerospace engineering. The 'New Horizons' build-a-plane project delivers a Skyranger kit to schools and youth organisations. The aircraft is built by enthusiastic

teenagers, under the supervision of staff, BMAA members and a qualified inspector. The completed aircraft would then be sold on the open market, recovering the cost of the initial kit and other project costs, thereby funding the next project. 29F (Rugby) Squadron, RAF Air Cadets, received their Skyranger kit in March 2018. Since then, well over one hundred young people from the Squadron (from over twelve different schools in and around Rugby) have contributed to the aircraft build.

Covid hits

The aircraft slowly began to take shape, with the pile of tubes and components gradually reducing. Then, as cadets turned up for their Monday parade evening on 23rd March 2021, Prime Minister Boris Johnson announced the national lockdown due to COVID-19. Cadets were sent home. 29F Squadron did not meet face-to-face for another eighteen months.

Work continued post lockdown, with new cadets getting experience of basic engineering skills. They take great care, looking after their own health and safety and knowing that others' lives may depend on the care they take with their particular build task. There are a lot of engineering skills required in the project such as riveting, composites, metal cutting, pipework, electrics, etc, all carried

out using appropriate tools, which for most is a new experience for them.

The project was started by the Squadron OC, Flt Lt Howard Jones, RAFAC, who is a former microlight pilot. 'This has been an excellent project for the Air Cadets, and I cannot thank the BMAA enough for providing this opportunity for our young people. If anything, it has proved to be a little ambitious, but one nut and bolt at a time, the cadets have completed each section of the aircraft until we now finally have the end in sight. It has been a lesson in perseverance! Whilst it may not have been the fastest aircraft build project, it has certainly engaged the greatest number of potential pilots and engineers.'

And it hasn't just been used as an aircraft build project. Sgt Antony Webb is an engineer on the Squadron staff, who also looks after training for new cadets: 'We teach all of our new cadets about principles of flight as part of their initial cadet training. It is great to be able to flick the PowerPoint off and walk them over to a real aircraft. They can sit in the aircraft and actually see the control surfaces move in response to their inputs.'

We have had many visitors. The local cub scouts have used our plane to get their aircraft badges. And we have had a succession of VIPs who have been shown the project by our cadets – a



Theo Claassen visited the Air Cadets and placed three rivets in one of the aircraft's doors on behalf of himself as the custodian of the Halifax war memorial and the Ewing and Wood families

great experience for both parties. Notable visitors who have been invited to put a rivet in the aircraft include the CEO of the British Microlight Aircraft Association, the Mayor of Rugby, the RAFAC Regional Commandant (Wales & West), the local Member of Parliament and the OC Warwickshire and Birmingham Wing.

We took the aircraft to the RAF Cosford Airshow in 2023 and 2024, adding to our list of VIP riveters: the Commandant RAF Air Cadets, the Royal Canadian Air Force's UK Air Attaché, the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff and Les Escadrilles Air Jeunesse (the French Air Cadets!). All great publicity for 29F Squadron, the RAF Air Cadets and the BMAA.

It was during lockdown, as the cadets 'met' over Teams, that they started thinking about an appropriate registration for the aircraft. They frequently took part in Remembrance ceremonies throughout the year, including one at the memorial stone in Dunchurch. This included the seventy-fifth anniversary of the 434 Squadron Halifax crash, which was attended by descendants of the crew who flew over from Canada to take part. It was the cadets themselves who came up with the idea of using the initial letters of the aircrew's surnames, and with the help of Rob Mott, BMAA Chief Inspector, the CAA allocated the registration G-WEPW.

The custodian of the memorial to the bomber crew, Mr Theo Claassen, has kept contact with the family members of pilot Donald Wood and navigator Bill Ewing. They are extremely proud of what the Air Cadets have achieved and honoured that they have chosen to

dedicate it to the Halifax crew 434 Squadron recruited from Nova Scotia, where the 'Bluenose' sailing ship is a provincial emblem. The vessel is incorporated into the 434 Squadron crest, which forms part

The plaque created and mounted inside the aircraft





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of G-WEPW's aircraft's livery. There is a plaque on the instrument panel recording the names of the aircrew members to whose memory this aircraft is dedicated. The 434 Squadron crest sits alongside the aircraft's G-WEPW registration letters on the side of the

aircraft. G-WEPW has a 'lucky penny' – a Canadian dime, which features the Bluenose on the reverse, minted in 1944 – the year of the crash. And, as a final tribute, the cadets have painted the prop spinner bright blue – The Bluenose.

A Message of Thanks from Canada 1

by Stuart Wood, nephew of pilot Flight Lieutenant Donald Zachary Taylor Wood, RCAF, 26

As young kids growing up, we always played with a leather flight helmet at my grandmother's house. I was curious and my parents explained that it belonged to my uncle Donald and he had passed away during the second World War. Other than that, I knew nothing else about my uncle, how he entered the war, what he did and how he ultimately perished. Then I was contacted by David George through our local newspaper and then I learned in detail, the history of my uncle and his crew.

From the very beginning, I was amazed that this group of people had chosen to honour this particular air crew. Why would they be even remotely interested in this air crew when so many British air crews could, and should be honoured? WWII was a horrible event

and the British people suffered terribly. But to pick out this specific air crew is truly unique.

I have been very honoured to attend these events but feel bad because I'm being treated so well... yet I have done nothing. I felt very proud to be a Canadian when we travelled the streets of Dunchurch and I saw all the Union Jack and Canadian flags. On a side note, my

good friend, Al Charron, was inducted into the Rugby Hall of Fame. I asked Al, 'Did they line the streets with Canadian flags for you', Al replied 'No' ... I said 'too bad, they did for me'!

Recently, the local Air Cadets decided to memorialise this air crew by building a micro-

FODS decorated the village with Canadian flags



light aircraft. What a wonderful idea! This air crew will now be celebrated everywhere this plane goes... what a wonderful legacy!

My entire family has been touched by the generosity and hard work of the people

of Dunchurch. Special thanks goes out to the late David George who started this whole adventure! I would also like to thank Theo Claassen for all his hard work and also Roger Higginson for all his contributions throughout the years.

A Message of Thanks from Canada 2

by John Ewing, Nephew of Navigator Flying Officer William Robert Ewing, RCAF, 24

My uncle, my dad's only brother and only sibling, William died in a Halifax bomber on that terrible night in October 1944. As I grew up in Canada in the 1950s and 60s I only knew about him from stories dad would tell about how his big brother Billy was a bit tough on him as the little brother, but how through high school, and later graduating from the University of Manitoba, he was the smartest guy he knew... always at the top of his class. Later through training in the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan (BCATP, in Regina, Saskatchewan), his work accuracy and record keeping was held up in high regard, as model work for others in the BCATP to aspire to... so dad told us!

Dad and William decided at the kitchen table they needed to join the war effort and that it would be in the Airforce. At that time, William had taken a job as an accountant at a local Winnipeg

firm and was recently married. Both trained as navigators, William completed training as a navigator and bomb aimer. Both completed training and departed for England within days of each other. William assigned to Croft, dad to Eastmoor. We don't know much about the time William spent in Croft, but seven missions over Germany proved to be all that he would make.

The history and story of the crash and the research done by our late friend David George, has brought us together with a wonderful family of friends in Dunchurch who remember and honour the men of a Halifax bomber that crashed in the Parish, now just over 80 years ago.

On the 75th anniversary of that night in October, my wife and I were fortunate to be able to visit Dunchurch, to participate in the commemoration of the loss, and were fortunate to meet the Wood family (of the pilot), Theo Claassen, who

has been a driving force in the remembrance, David George and family and the whole community of Dunchurch! As my wife Carol and I travelled through Dunchurch we felt incredibly welcomed, seeing the Canadian flags and street ornamentation. The remembrance at the church service and the chit chat with the folks afterwards was such a strong reminder of the value of community spirit and caring (something the world needs



My dad George Ewing, his mother, William's new bride Dorothy, and William (married just before departure to England)

to draw more on these days). In recent years we have also been kept up to date on the incredible dedication of the Air Cadets, who have built and dedicated an ultralight aircraft to the Halifax crew.

This year marks the 80 anniversary of the VE-Day celebrations in Europe, and we are planning to return to Dunchurch to participate with the community.

Commonwealth War Graves

In 2021, a new signboard setting out the locations of the eight Commonwealth War Graves, (four from each World War) was added to St Peter's Churchyard. Located on the right side of the main path, it is placed in such a position that the two groups of four graves are visible from the board. It is also angled at 45 degrees to enable wheelchair users to position themselves under the front edge of the board to view the names and locations.

The sign was designed and created by Phil Taylor, a traditional signwriter from Leamington Spa. Hand-painted and with



the names gilded, it is made of Tricoya for extreme durability and it should last 50 years.

Half the cost was met by three private donations and St Peter's met the remaining half from its Legacy Fund. Those commemorated on this signboard are:



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- Private James Amos Hughes of the Ox & Bucks Light Infantry. Died 11th November 1918 aged 22. Son of Mrs Harriet Hughes of Daventry Road.
- Private Leonard John Hopkins of the Devonshire Regiment. Died 30th October 1918 aged 18. Son of Mr and Mrs E. Hopkins of The Green.
- Company Sergeant Major Jonathan Mulcaster of the Manchester Regiment. Died 13th June 1917 aged 50. Husband of Elizabeth Mulcaster of Daventry Road, and veteran of the Boer Wars in S Africa.
- Lance Corporal Harry Evans of the King's Royal Rifle Corps. Died 6th November 1918 aged 23. Son of William and Annie Evans of Thurlaston. Wounded three times.
- Sapper Donald Bell of the Royal Engineers. Died 29th September 1947 aged 35. Son of Robert and Julia Bell, husband of Sarah.
- Flying Officer John Henry Warren of 605 Squadron RAF. Died 19th September 1939.
- Marine Dennis Roy Miles of the Royal Marines. Died 1st June 1943 aged 19. Son of Donald and Amelia Miles.
- Flying Officer Desmond George Mitchell of 15 Squadron RAF Volunteer Reserve. Died 24th August 1943 aged 20. Son of Leslie and Mabel Mitchell, and possibly a musician.

Repatriation

There was an official policy of non-repatriation so that only those who died in military hospitals in the UK as a result of their war service or killed in action in the air over the UK or in coastal waters were buried in their homeland cemeteries.

Casualties of War

Although this magazine commemorates the 80th anniversary of the end of WWII, for context and indeed to honour them, we have also included the casualties from WWI. The impact these deaths would have had upon the village community must have been immense. We can say with some certainty, everyone would have known

at least one of those killed and would have experienced the pain and grief of that time. However, you will see from the following, not all died during combat but their loss would equally have been felt.

*'They shall not grow old
as we that are left grow old.
Age shall not weary them,
nor the years condemn.'*

Roll Of Honour			
World War One		World War Two	
Adams, William H	Knight, Fred	Bell, Donald	
Barratt, Rupert	Mulcaster, Jonathan	Borton, Roland J	
Boote, Sydney	Neville, Frank S	Brett, Stanley G	
Brown, William J	Neville, Harry	Colledge, Edward H	
Brain, George W	Noon, Harry	Commons, Arthur B	
Chater, William H	Norman, Roland S	Fulsher, Clifford	
Doyle, Arthur	Parker, Edward J	Gray, Peter J	
Dunbar, Leslie	Pearce, Benjamin	Hirons, Joseph J	
Dyke, Othello	Pearce, Walter H	Matthews, Alfred	
Fox, Arthur A	Pearce, Harold C	Miles, Dennis R	
Gillings, Walter E	Powell, Richard P	Mitchell, Desmond	
Grant, Wilfred	Redmayne, Giles	Packer, Albert J	
Harbord, Frank R	Richardson, John W	Price, Donald W S	
Hirons, George	Richardson, Leonard S	Sims, William	
Hirons, William	Ridout, William	Sullivan, Thomas	
Hopkins, Leonard J	Russell, Walter	Walden, William G	
Houldsworth, Harold J	Seeney, William	Warren, John H	
Hughes, James A	Shaw, John		
Iliff, Edwin	Shaw, Jonathan P		
Izzard, Clifford	Sparkes, Frederic		
Izzard, Thomas	Spiggis, Leonard		
	White, William		

*'At the going down of the sun
and in the morning,
we will remember them.'*

Hawker Hurricane (no memorial site in the village)

John McEwan Wright, 21, Pilot Sergeant, Royal Air Force Voluntary Reserve 32 squadron Died on 27th November 1940 when his Hawker Hurricane crashed on the sloping fields between Dunchurch Lodge and the now Aspen House on Daventry Road. Laid to rest at Chevington Cemetery, Broomhill, Northumberland.

Halifax Bomber (remembered on The Heath memorial stone)

Pilot Flight Lieutenant Donald Zachary Taylor Wood, RCAF, 26

Navigator Flying Officer William Robert Ewing, RCAF, 24

Middle upper gunner Sergeant Owen

Parsons, RCAF, 24

Rear gunner Sergeant Donald McLeod Ward, RCAF, 21

Flight Engineer Sergeant Geoffrey Davies Grant, RAFVR, 21

All died on 14th October 1944 when their plane crashed just outside Dunchurch.

Dunchurch and Thurlaston Working Men's Club (no memorial site in the village)

Victor Edward Eley aged 43

Arthur Mason aged 57

Died on 19th November 1940 when the club took a direct hit from a stray bomb.

Both laid to rest in St Peter's churchyard.

Lance Corporal Harry Evans

Although from Thurlaston and despite being listed as one of the Commonwealth War Graves, Harry Evans is not recorded on the village memorial and only the initial H is recorded on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website. His name is however read out at the war memorial service in Thurlaston.

The reason for the absence of his name on the war memorial and on the Roll of Honour is so far unknown, but being investigated.

Dig for Victory: The Homefront's Battle to Grow Food During WWII



By Paul Sanders, Secretary of Dunchurch Allotments Association

*Dig! Dig! Dig!
And your muscles will grow big,
Keep on pushing the spade,
Don't mind the worms,
Just ignore their squirms,
And when your back aches, laugh
with glee,
And keep on diggin',
Till we give our foes a Wiggin',
Dig! Dig! Dig! to Victory!*



prompted the government to launch the 'Dig for Victory' campaign. In response, open spaces were transformed into allotments, including the area around the Albert Memorial in London. Leaflets and starter kits were distributed to households across the country, helping people convert their gardens into vegetable plots.

During World War II, this catchy and energetic anthem, 'Dig for Victory', would have echoed through radios and cinemas across Britain, rallying people to grow their own food in an effort to withstand the hardships of rationing and limited imports. At the time, Britain relied heavily on food imports, with around 75% of its supplies coming from overseas. For example, 90% of the onions sold in shops were sourced from France and Spain, and much of the nation's dairy and fresh fruit came from Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.

The fear of a German blockade, which could starve the British people,

The Royal Horticultural Society played a key role in this national effort, offering detailed advice on starting a plot and organising public exhibitions and model gardens. A booklet titled *The Vegetable Garden Displayed* provided step-by-step

instructions for digging beds and trenches, while a weekly column in the *Rugby Advertiser* offered gardening tips. One common question back then, still asked by gardeners today, was: 'What's the best way to get rid of slugs?'

Brassicas – vegetables like cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower – became



essential crops, helping to provide the vitamins lost due to a shortage of citrus fruits and bananas. The campaign to eat more carrots, promoted with the idea that they would improve night vision during blackouts, was so successful that carrot consumption skyrocketed, leading to a short-lived glut of carrots in 1940 and 1941 as gardeners grew more than ever.

In communities all over the country, the 'Dig for Victory' campaign was met with enthusiasm. In Bilton, for example, the playing fields were converted into allotments. A 1941 edition of the Rugby Advertiser celebrated the achievements of local gardeners: 'The head gardener and his staff are to be congratulated on the wonderful bed of onions and carrots and the fine display of tomatoes under



glass in Caldecott Park.' Even schools got involved, with competitions to grow the heaviest crops. At Rugby School, fifty plots were dedicated to growing



The Mayor Alderman Myers turns the first sod on a new allotment at Hillmorton Paddock (Courtesy of Rugby Library (T635.11 img 6343), Warwickshire County Council)

food, with monetary prizes for the best harvest.

By 1945, Britain had successfully increased domestic food production to 75%, and the number of allotments had surged from 815,000 to 1.4 million. While it's unclear exactly how much Dunchurch contributed to the campaign, it's easy to imagine that with the ample land available in the village, residents were likely very involved – though, perhaps, not always at the expense of the popular weekly whist drives and dances, which were frequently reported in the Rugby Advertiser!

The 'Dig for Victory' campaign was more than just a matter of survival—it was a demonstration of British ingenuity and unity in the face of adversity. And in villages like ours, it brought communities together to ensure that food could continue to be grown, even in the most challenging of times.

Dunchurch Band

By Sue Turner, Band Member (taken from 'Brass Bands of Warwickshire')



Many band activities were curtailed during the Second World War but Dunchurch Silver Band (as it was then known) seems to have coped better than most.

The band's AGM in March 1940 was well attended and the band had already been booked for several engagements including the British Legion Memorial Service on Whit Sunday and the Oddfellows Anniversary Service held at Jubilee Corner on Wake Sunday.

The only report for 1942 was for a massed band concert in the Temple Speech Room, Rugby on 1st August in aid of the BTH Apprentices Hospital Effort. Bands taking part were Dunchurch, Bilton, BTH, Long Lawford and Rugby Town.

The village band room was the scene of a happy reunion on Friday 29th October 1943 when Mr W Spooner, one of the repatriated prisoners of war and a solo cornet player of the band, was given a hearty reception by the small number of senior bandsmen who were still keeping the band going until better days. Mr. Spooner expressed his delight at seeing the strong enlistment of junior players and the interest they were taking in instrumentation due to the untiring efforts of the conductor and other members.

Members of the public and organisations assembled at Jubilee Corner on 14th May 1944 and took part in the combined church parade headed by the band as part of the 'Salute the Soldier' week. A Red Cross Fete was held in the grounds of Toft House on Saturday 1st July when the band played a variety of music in the early evening, and on Wake Sunday 16th July villagers and visitors enjoyed a musical programme given by the band.

Another fete in aid of the Red Cross was organised by Rugby High School on Saturday 22nd July when the band played on the tennis courts during the afternoon. 1944 ended with bands from Dunchurch, Bilton and Long Lawford playing at the Home Guards Parade in Dunchurch on 3rd December when the Home Guard was stood down from active service.

The final year of the war saw the band hold a slow melody contest for boys in February; this was the first time such an event had been held in the village.

With the war over, the band played a selection of music on the village green for Wake Sunday 15th July to a good gathering of listeners, and at the villages' Peace Celebrations on 24th September it headed the fancy dress parade from The Square to the Sports Ground.

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Foraging 2: Foraging in WWII

By Leanne Warren, RGN and assistant lecturer at Coventry University

VE day marks the end of the second world war where resilience and ingenuity were key to survival, and a great example of this is the home front foraging campaign.

In 1939, 20 million tons of food was imported to the UK including 70% of our cheese, sugar, cereals and fat, and 80% of fruit. Between 1939 and 1945 the Nazis continued a relentless attack bombing allied merchant ships, The Battle of the Atlantic. The principle aim of the Germans was to prevent ships containing imported food and goods reaching Britain in order to try and starve the nation into submission.

Essential food items very quickly became short in supply. In order to deal with these extreme shortages the Government's Ministry of food department instituted a system of rationing. Each person had to register at chosen shops and was provided with a ration book containing coupons. The Shopkeeper was provided with enough supplies for the registered customers. These items were paid for as usual but price was strictly controlled by the Government and even subsidised – trying to make available

to everyone an adequate and affordable supply of goods. The rationing system remained in place until 1958.

The dig for victory campaign was soon initiated along with 'Hedgerow Harvest' and 'Food for free' guides in a drive for self-sufficiency. Foraging soon became an essential skill helping people supplement their meagre rations. People were encouraged to turn to 'nature's larder'.

Women's Institute, Boy Scout and Girl Guide groups became pivotal parts in local organisation of these campaigns setting up preserving centres where people could bring foraged fruits to be turned into jams and syrups.

The huge volunteer effort meant that wild foods fortified the rations with essential minerals and vitamins as well as protein, playing a vital role on the home front and saving us from mass malnutrition. Women, children and older people all had their role to play in gathering food.

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Dandelions could be used in salads and the root can be made into a substitute for coffee. Blackberries and hedgerow fruits became a vital source of sugar and chestnuts and acorns were ground and made into alternative flours to bake with.

Interrupted supply chains also meant that essential medicines were in short supply. A team at Kew Royal Botanical Gardens led county herb committees whose members collected medicinal plants. They provided specific instructions of what to collect, and how to dry, bundle and deliver the plants.

Tons of deadly nightshade leaves were collected to extract atropine, used for eye surgery and serious cardiac arrhythmias. Foxgloves were harvested for digitalis, a powerful drug used to treat heart conditions such as atrial fibrillation and heart failure. Peat sphagnum moss was collected and used as an absorbent sterile wound dressing.



As citrus fruits were no longer readily available, rosehips were famously collected on mass and made into a syrup in vast quantities. This was manufactured into Delrosa syrup and given to children for free in an effort to avoid vitamin deficiency and scurvy. Rosehips are extremely high in vitamin C containing 20 times more by weight than oranges.

VE celebrations honour not just the victory on the battle fronts but also the ingenuity and determination of those who lived through the war on the home front.

Nettle soup

Don't worry! heat will neutralise any stingers making nettles completely safe to eat. They have a delicious fresh earthy spinach-like taste.

With care (gloves advised!) pick the top four leaves of nettle tips. These are best collected before the nettle

flowers in spring and early summer. Wash them carefully in water which removes the majority of stingers and then remove any bigger stalks.

Sauté an onion and garlic, add the nettles allowing them to wilt for a minute or two then add a chopped



potato and vegetable stock. Cook for 15 minutes and season. Blend if you wish for a smoother finish. Enjoy!

Bilton Grange in World War II

By Jayne Brumpton

Bilton Grange Prep School was set up in 1873 by the Reverend Walter Earle. Its initial site was in Yartlet in Staffordshire, but in 1887, Walter Earle bought the Bilton Grange estate in Dunchurch and moved his school. It was a boys' school and nearly all the pupils were boarders.

By the time World War II broke out in 1939, the Headmaster of Bilton Grange was Rex Machin, appointed in 1936. The previous Headmaster, John Fawcus, was by then the Bursar, and lived at North Lodge. Fawcus's cousin, Leslie Fawcus, was Headmaster of Winton House Prep School in Winchester. Their school building was requisitioned by the Government, so they were evacuated to Bilton Grange – I suspect the Fawcus connection had something to do with that. The 39 boys and all the teaching staff of Winton House duly turned up in Dunchurch. The Winton House boys had their own dormitories on 'top landing' and their own tables in the Dining Room, but classes and sports teams were mixed. Winton House stayed at BG for a year, after which they moved down the drive, to merge with Dunchurch Hall, where they remained until the amalgamated Dunchurch-Winton Hall closed in 1993.



Homefield

Homefield Kindergarten School (now the Bilton Grange Pre-Prep) had been set up in 1938. As war loomed, it was expanded to be a Junior School for girls, with boarding facilities, and for younger boys who would go to Bilton Grange at the age of eight. By the end of 1939, Homefield had ten boarders and rather more day pupils, and by 1942, it boasted 60 pupils. Although a self-contained school, the girls of Homefield did use the carpenters' shop (DT Department) and gym at Bilton Grange.

Bilton Grange at War

As war was declared in September 1939, Rex Machin opened up the school early, so that fathers who were being called up could leave their children and 'get on with the business of war', rather than wait for the start of term on 22nd September. Twelve boys availed themselves of this facility, and had the run of the grounds before the rest of the

pupils turned up.

War brought many changes for the school. Younger masters were called up to fight, although the arrival of the Winton House staff did help to alleviate that problem, and throughout the conflict, there was quite a high staff turnover, as various members of the teaching and support staff were drafted into, or volunteered for, the armed forces and auxiliary services. A vast amount of black-out curtains had to be made, and the cellars were set up as air-raid shelters. When the bombing started, the children's beds were moved into the long Gallery, which was deemed the safest space. As rationing was introduced, and coupons were required for clothing, frequent requests went out to past pupils for hand-me-down uniforms and sports kit.

The War Effort

With food supplies hit by U-boat activity, and rationing introduced in 1940, Bilton Grange made a big effort to ensure a good food supply for its pupils. The old tennis court was planted with potatoes and lots of fruit and vegetables were grown in the walled gardens (now the astro pitch). The lawns, and the grass on either side of the Gallery and Carpenter Shop Walks, were left to grow for hay, and a huge haystack was built at the end of the Old San (now the Bursary). In the summer of 1941, the school ran

a Harvesting Camp, inviting past pupils to come and help local farmers with the harvest.

During the war, John Fawcus was in charge of the Dunchurch Home Guard and Rex Machin was involved with RAF recruitment. A land-mine destroyed Lane End. The school doctor's house in Dunchurch was hit by a bomb in an air raid, so Reggie and Phyllis Edmondson came to live in Rose Ash.

Many Old Biltonians fought in the Armed Services and news of their exploits regularly filtered back to the school. Sadly, 73 of them were killed.

HMS Vanquisher

In 1939, the school 'adopted' HMS Vanquisher, a Royal Navy destroyer. Throughout the war, members of the school knitted blankets and mittens for the sailors' comfort, and sent books, cards, magazines and cigarettes to the crew. In return, the Captain sent the school a Battle Ensign which was hung in Chapel.

Individual stories

From PG Hurst:

Right in the middle of the Second World War in 1943, we were all tucked up in our beds in the Gallery at about 9 o'clock at night. We were all comfortably asleep, when at about midnight, there was a deafening explosion; the whole

building, including the floor, walls and windows of the Gallery shook; my bed was covered in small pieces of coloured glass from the decorated windows on the west side.

The following day, we were allowed along the drive and across the road to view the damage done by the land mine. I can clearly remember looking down and down into the huge crater which the parachuted bomb had caused; it had been a direct hit on a small house. The only thing remaining was one wall, mainly the one supporting the chimney flue. I can clearly see a lonely chair still balancing on a few feet of the first floor, just alongside the Victorian cast-iron fireplace. Everything was in 'tatters', paintings askew and the wallpaper hanging off the wall.

From G Anderson, evacuated to Bilton Grange with Winton House:

Now on the side of the school opposite the swimming pool (which didn't exist in those days), there is a series of arches giving access to a sort of cellar half above ground where I think the gardeners kept their machines. The latter had been cleared out and the arches filled with sand bags. Evidently they had run out of sandbags, so what they did have did not reach the top, leaving a kind of semi-circular opening. Inside, the floor was marked out in squares – one for each class. Mine was right next to the

sand bags. This meant we could climb the sand bags (what else would you expect a bunch of 10-year-olds to do?) and you could see the German bombers having let their bombs fall on some important target. They were flying very low over the school. It is very difficult to hit a low-flying plane.

I especially recall the Heinkel III, the nose of which was largely plexiglass. You could actually see the forward gunner and bomb aimer. You could see the black crosses on the underside of the wings and the swastika on the tail... Bilton from the air must have looked like some country estate.

VE Celebrations

The summer term of 1945 started on Monday May 7th, just in time to hear the Prime Minister's broadcast announcing the end of hostilities in Europe. A Thanksgiving Service was held in Chapel and a large bonfire was made in the grounds. Suitable effigies were made and the disposal of them caused 'considerable amusement'. For some of the boys, it was their first experience of the fun of celebrating.

Later in the term, the boys were able to show their gratitude to the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, himself, as he drove slowly past the school gates, giving his famous 'V' sign, at the beginning of his election tour.

Dunchurch Village Fete – Sunday 22nd June 2025

By **Fiona Stevenson**

We have recently celebrated VE Day and it seems incredible that only 30 years after the end of WW2, the Dunchurch Festival Group was formed.

For 50 years, members from numerous organisations in Dunchurch, together with so many wonderful individuals and families, have come together to raise money for a variety of village projects. Over the years these have included help with the WI Hall roof, tents for the Scouts, the refurbishment of St Peter's tower clock, instruments for the Dunchurch Training Band, books for the Infant School library, plus a safe surface for playground equipment at the Junior School.

The Fete is our biggest fundraiser and this year's theme is 'One Hundred Years of Television', as 2025 marks one hundred years since the first television image was transmitted by Scottish inventor, John Logie Baird. Please come dressed as your favourite TV character and join us in the procession, which will move from the village centre to the village hall, where the Fete will be opened by our incoming Dunchurch Youth Ambassador, Rory Nuss, who is in Year 5 at Dunchurch Junior School.

See the poster on page 70 for more information.

Rory will be having a stall at the Fete to support St Cross Hospital. He is asking for people to bring along a toy which can be donated to them, as the hospital is in need of more toys.

We have included an envelope with this magazine, containing a letter about forthcoming DFG events, plus some raffle tickets, the prizes for which will be drawn at the Fete.



Wolly the clown at last year's fete

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Art in Dunchurch

By Julia Sanders

Dates for your diary! Art in Dunchurch will be back for its 8th glorious year in June 2025.

Now recognised as one of the major venues of the Warwickshire Open Studios Summer Arts weeks, Art in Dunchurch will again be showing the work of 18 talented artists at Inglenook, right in the centre of Dunchurch village. With the beautiful gardens and lovely courtyard café offering refreshments throughout the day, there's a lot to look forward to including meeting new artists and watching artists at work. We are delighted



to also be showing the work of young artists from Dunchurch Junior School and local musicians will be playing during the week.

Please take note our opening times this year will be six days from Saturday 21st June to Sunday 29th June, 10.30am – 4.30pm (weekends, Wednesday and Friday) with our popular music and drinks night featuring 'After Dark Jazz' on Wednesday 25th June until 8pm.

We look forward to welcoming you.

Jane Archer

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Find me at
Art in Dunchurch
21st – 29th June



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www.janearcherart.co.uk

Studio visits welcome
by appointment at
Toft Place, Toft Lane

Dunchurch Parish Council

A Tale of Two Trees: Change and Renewal on Stocks Green



Last autumn, a routine concern about overhanging branches on the iconic Red Oak tree at Stocks Green grew into something much more serious. A closer inspection by contractors revealed signs of *Meripilus giganteus*, a fungal pathogen known for attacking the root systems of mature trees. The diagnosis was later confirmed by a qualified arboriculturalist. What began as a simple maintenance job swiftly became a matter of public safety.

At a Parish Council meeting on 11th November, members made the difficult – and emotional – decision to fell the Red Oak. Located in a conservation area, the felling required a Section 211 notice, which was duly applied for and approved by Rugby Borough Council. Quotes were sought from three contractors, and a company was selected to carry out the work in March.

However, during the tree works, an unfortunate misstep occurred: a second tree – a Swedish whitebeam – was also cut back, despite not being scheduled for removal. The Parish Council moved quickly to clarify the circumstances. This particular whitebeam had already shown signs of concern. In October 2024, a

Picus tomograph – an advanced internal imaging scan – indicated significant and transitional decay around the tree's stem. While the risk of failure was deemed low at the time, arborists warned that this risk would likely increase in the coming years. The Parish Council had chosen to monitor the whitebeam, not remove it.

Beechwood, the contractors, have accepted full responsibility for the mistake,



The drastically pruned whitebeam will be replaced in the autumn

which resulted from misreading the works order, and is conducting a full internal investigation.

Dunchurch Parish Council understands how much our trees and green spaces mean to the community, and we share in the disappointment this has caused. Please be assured that we are committed to restoring what has been lost and will continue to protect and enhance our local environment.

Looking forward, the Council is working closely with Rugby Borough Council's Tree Officer to mitigate the loss and improve the area. The recommendation? Remove the remaining whitebeam stump and plant two replacement trees. The new additions will include a *Sorbus aucuparia* (rowan), known for its up-right growth, attractive spring blooms, and bird-friendly berries, and a *Prunus 'Umineko'*, a compact flowering cherry with delicate white blossoms. Both trees are low-maintenance and will stand two to three metres tall at planting, supported by double stakes and surrounded by mulch to encourage healthy growth.

Beechwood has agreed to remove what remains of the Swedish whitebeam and undertake the replanting at no cost to the Parish Council. The work is planned for autumn 2025, pending final confirmation that the replanting can take place within a 12-month window.

While the village may have lost two mature trees, plans are well underway to ensure that Stocks Green remains a beautiful, safe, and tree-filled space for generations to come. What was once a setback is now an opportunity for thoughtful renewal – and a testament to the Council's ongoing commitment to preserving our green heritage.

VE Day Anniversary in the Village

On 10th May (just too late to be included in this issue of the magazine) Dunchurch Parish Council organised an afternoon of musical entertainment and history, with a variety of food and drink available



throughout the event. Look out for photos in the September issue.



The Dunchurch Elves have been busy again, giving Lord John another makeover, ready for the VE day anniversary

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bookings@dunchurchsportsandvhall.co.uk
for availability.

Dunchurch Health Walks

By Jane Weeks

A warm welcome awaits would-be walkers from Dunchurch and surrounding areas. All that's required is suitable footwear and a desire to meet new friends and enjoy the beautiful scenery on our doorstep. Most of our members are retirees, but not all – you just need a reasonable level of fitness. After our Friday walk some members adjourn to the local hostelry for refreshments. Walks last up to 90 minutes, usually come rain



or shine! Due to the areas we walk, dogs are not allowed to join their owners!

We meet at the War Memorial just near the church gates on Tuesdays at 2.00pm and Fridays at 10.30am. Do come along and give us a try.





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See www.friendsofdunchurchsociety.org for more news

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Live Music Memories – the monthly lunchtime club at the Dunchurch Social Club – celebrated VE Day on Friday 9th May by inviting Duopoly (well-known local musicians Barry Nicholls and Martyn Taylor) to encourage singing, dancing, laughter and tears by playing well known musical numbers from the 1940s. Barry and Martin have been performing since 1972 and have been enthusiastic supporters of the Live Music Memories club since it opened last August. 9th May was their fourth appearance at the club. The versatile duo play keyboard and bass guitar and are able to cover any event requiring live music, so please do consider booking them if you are in need of musical entertainment.

Playing reminiscence numbers has been shown to improve the lives of those living with dementia and their carers, family and friends who have been regularly visiting the club since it opened. Listening to music that is personally meaningful has many benefits. It can reduce

anxiety, improve your mood and bring back memories that can help families and carers connect. Here are some of the songs you would have heard in May, including a selection of Glenn Miller instrumental favourites like *In the Mood* and *Moonlight Serenade*. Do these song titles bring back memories for you?

White Cliffs of Dover, We'll Meet Again, A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square, Lilli Marlene, You Are My Sunshine, Bless 'Em All, Underneath the Arches, Side by Side, I'm Looking Over a Four Leaf Clover, I'd Like to Get You on a Slow Boat to China.

We meet on the second Friday each month from 12noon until 2.00pm with a variety of different musicians donating their time. Sarah at the Dunchurch Social Club opens up early especially for us. So come along and share the enjoyment on 13th June, 11th July, and 8th August.

For any further information contact the Live Music Memories organiser by email: ann@annchristinacoomber.co.uk

Acknowledgements

We thank those already named for their present-day articles and the following for their historical contributions in compiling this special edition magazine:

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War graves in St Peter's Churchyard with the flag of Ukraine flying in the distance



Dunchurch Fete

22nd June

June 22nd | 11.45-4pm

Dunchurch Village Hall and Sports Field

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Parking £5

Theme for procession:

100 Years of Television

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and end at the Village Hall led by the

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To donate to the Dunchurch Festival Group
scan the QR code. This money is given back to
local organisations and charities

For more info or to book a stall visit our website or Facebook page
www.dunchurchevents.org

Meditation Group

By Jackie Hesketh



The Knowing Stillness meditation group meets in the library at 9.45am on Wednesdays. Our regular practices promote peace, harmony, loving kindness and compassion, with the hope that these qualities spread out like ripples on a pond to Dunchurch and beyond, leading eventually to the ending of hatred, evil, conflict and war. We can each play our part and 'all big things come from small beginnings'.

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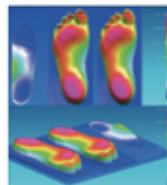
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