

CHARING & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

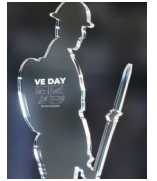
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CDLHS In Our Historic Times 3

VE day memorial edition

May 7th 2020



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**This is a 'bumper' edition of the newsletter,
there will be a shorter supplementary to follow, which will predominantly be local
WW2 Memories taken by the 1960s and 1980s Oral History groups.**

Hope you enjoy it!

Any feedback, corrections, or offers of information, photos always gratefully received!

A false start



It took us a long time to 'unearth' this family photo of my grandparents' house 'Beech Cottage', in Newenden.

I had wanted to find it for this edition. I remembered the photo had impressed me as a child, and I thought my dad had told me it showed the house especially decorated to celebrate VE day, (he was particularly proud of the floodlights, as he had helped his elder brother to rig up specially for the occasion).

on the back- "Beech Cottage specially dressed up to celebrate May 1935". I realised then, of course, that it was 10 years earlier than VE day. I couldn't think what the event could have been that was so important, for them to have to go to so much trouble.

I now know that it was the 25th anniversary of the coronation of George V. I have been amazed to find that it had been a massive event, in its time. It was made a public holiday, so London drew enormous celebratory crowds, 'and street parties with fêtes, pageants, sports events were held up and down the country'.



I knew nothing about George V, I had only heard of the

depression of the 1930s. Listening to a recording of George V's speech that day, I found he spoke of

his wishes for the young generation with the new Prince of Wales fund "to provide guidance and encourage skills and outdoor interests to make for mental and physical fitness". He urged that help and hope be given to help the suffering of the unemployed, and he also mentioned, "other anxieties may be in store, but he'd been persuaded would all be overcome." (alluding to the rise of fascism and thoughts of war.) He looked forward to the future with faith and hope. Sad to realise that he died the following January, that his son succeeded him, but abdicated just 10 months later.

He was right in that the effects of the depression had 'peaked'. Standards of living did improve for a few years, slum clearance had begun, more people became house owners, electricity was reaching more households and the cinema was popular. The 'other anxiety' he'd mentioned did not go away, though, and war took six horrific years to be overcome, albeit with the "confidence, courage and unity", he'd had faith in.

There are many similarities between VE day and the Silver Jubilee: the crowds, the lights, the celebration. so perhaps I could be forgiven for my superficial confusion. But the difference is the jubilee was a planned, managed, happy event, whereas the VE day celebrations were, a spontaneous rather riotous outpouring of relief. Ordinary people had not known exactly when the war would end. They knew it was coming, but they could only relax when the peace treaty was signed.

In 1935 *some important* buildings were lit up, but in 1945 the very important buildings were lit up, and there were fireworks and fountains.

VE day 1945

Newspaper headlines and accounts of the day

“Huge crowds everywhere doing nothing in particular. Going to Buck House. Chanting "We want the King" and he appeared. Giant conga lines forming up and then breaking up. Enormous crowd on Westminster Bridge and road totally blocked with people. Learnt later that my father went up on an impulse (hadn't occurred to us that he'd want to), got stuck in one of these huge immobile crowds and a bar of chocolate in his pocket was squashed flat. Saw a large cloud of smoke in St James' Park and hurried over to see what it was - just people smoking (different world then!).”

Bill Barratt

“I was just 6 years old when the war ended and my parents took my older brother and myself to London on the evening of VE Day. Until this time for most of my short life all lights had to be hidden at night but on this occasion there were lights everywhere. One of the places we visited was the lake in St.James' Park and all round were fountains which were lit up in all different colours. I had never seen anything like it and to me at the time it seemed as if I was in fairyland.”

Jill Mileham



“As we passed the Min. of Health it was all lit up with floodlights and looked lovely. Just as we got round the corner we heard such a shout go up so we rushed back and there was Winnie on the balcony making the “V” sign. The band of the Grenadier Guards was playing “Land of Hope and Glory”, everyone was singing, including Winnie, and Winnie was up there conducting with his hands. He lit his cigar up and blew a cloud of smoke from it just to show you he did really smoke it. Then he spoke — I expect you saw the speech in the paper, beginning “My dear friends, this is your Victory (cheers) not a victory of Party or Politics” wonderful and I wouldn’t have missed seeing him for worlds.”

Part of letter written by Mary Carlton to her parents



1936 to 1939

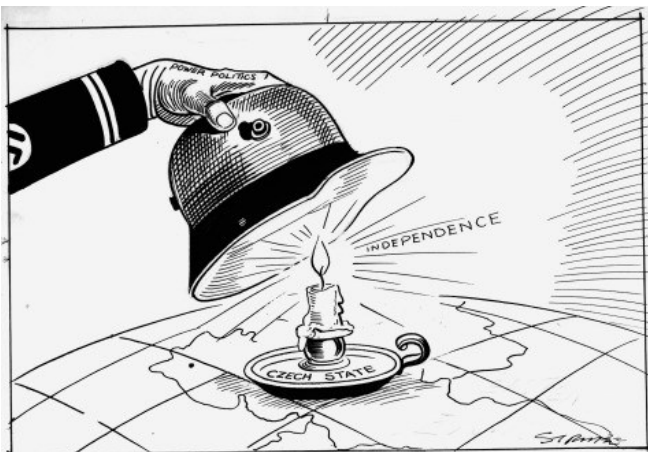
David Low's cartoons 'Spineless Leaders of Democracy' and 'Anything for a Quiet Life' ridiculed appeasement. These were controversial at the time. Hitler was said to have become deeply offended by Low's cartoons and the government was asked to bring influence to bear on him'. The Evening Standard, who published them, was uncomfortable as some felt Low's criticism meant he was a 'war monger', when the government policy was 'negotiation'.



Michael Cummings *Daily Chronicle* 17th April 1940

"But we thought if we gave you teeth you'd never chew us up."

Sidney George Strube *Juggernaut*
2nd Sept 1939 *Daily Express*, shows Hitler's relentless drive towards the precipice of world war, despite warnings and appeals from all leaders



May 1940

Winston Churchill became Prime Minister and formed a National Government



'All Behind You, Winston' Low

Low was pleased when Winston Churchill became prime minister and responded with this cartoon. The cartoon showed members of his coalition government marching behind Churchill. (This included Clement Attlee, Ernest Bevin, Herbert Morrison, Leo Amery, Neville Chamberlain, Arthur Greenwood, Lord Halifax, Duff Cooper and Anthony Eden).

Dunkirk

Over 9 days, 338,000 British and Allied troops were evacuated from Dunkirk.

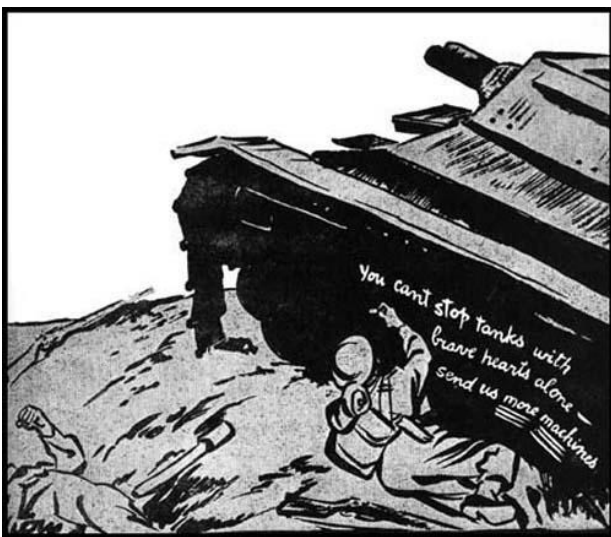
These two cartoons reflect two significant aspects of Dunkirk; that it needed to happen at all, – the strength of German force had been underestimated; and that together French, Canadian and British naval ships, along with about 600 small boats, rescued 10 times the number that had been thought at all possible.



"This way, chum!"

'This Way Chum' May 1940

Philip Zec



Low always took the side of the soldiers. In May, 1940, he produced a cartoon entitled, '**Message from Flanders,**' about the retreat from Dunkirk.

It shows a British soldier writing on a broken down tank: "You can't stop tanks with brave hearts alone - send us more machines".

Winston Churchill called this "a colossal military disaster", saying "the whole root and core and brain of the British Army" had been stranded at Dunkirk and seemed about to perish or be captured.

In his "We shall fight on the beaches," speech on 4 June. He hailed their rescue as a "miracle of deliverance."

1940

The escape captured the minds and hearts of the British people at a time when it seemed that they too would soon be invaded. What was actually a defeat, appeared like a victory when so many men were brought back safely.



Much too tough a nut! Daily Mirror 23rd May 1940

This Philip Zec cartoon depicts newly appointed Prime Minister Winston Churchill

In late May, against the backdrop of the Dunkirk evacuation and the unstoppable German advance, Churchill disregarded calls for peace talks with Hitler. Britain would fight on, he ordered. (Photo by Daily Mirror/Mirrorpix/Mirrorpix via Getty Images)

Much Too Tough a Nut!

A cartoon by David Low for the *Evening Standard*, dated 18th June 1940 (just after the fall of France). The British soldier shakes his fist at the *Luftwaffe* bombers and the caption reads: **'Very well, Alone!'** It sums up the official attitude of the British people to the events of the war at that time.

It strengthened resolve for the fierce air battles from July to October, that year, known as the Battle of Britain.



VERY WELL! ALONE!



'Is it all right now, Henry?' 'Yes, not even scratched.'

August 1940 *Daily Express* Strube

"Is it alright now, Henry?" "Yes, not even scratched."

This is Strube's most famous cartoon. Over two million Anderson shelters, named after the Home Secretary, Sir John Anderson, were erected. This cartoon also perhaps reflects the introduction of rationing and the success of the 'dig for victory' campaign.

Apparently, coincidentally an American journalist wrote during the Blitz, that 'there was a greater danger of being hit by a vegetable marrow falling off the roof of an air-raid shelter, than of being struck by a bomb'.

1941 –1943



Many Happy Returns!

Many Happy Returns! July 1941 Philip Zec

Winston Churchill stands in front of a German soldier holding a return ticket to Berlin (Photo by Daily Mirror/Mirrorpix/Mirrorpix via Getty Images)



Adolph the Lion Tamer

Illingworth Punch

The British lion prevents Hitler's plans to invade.

1942

David Low was one of the first cartoonists to publicize details of German extermination camps.

On 14th December, 1942, he published the cartoon,

I've Settled the Fate of Jews -and Germans.



Punch cartoon 1943 The Fates Decide.

(Hitler looks downcast as silhouettes of Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin decide the future of Europe in a large crystal ball)

1943

Hitler is defeated at Stalingrad.

This is his first major defeat.



Don't Cry Hitler, that's just the preliminary warming up

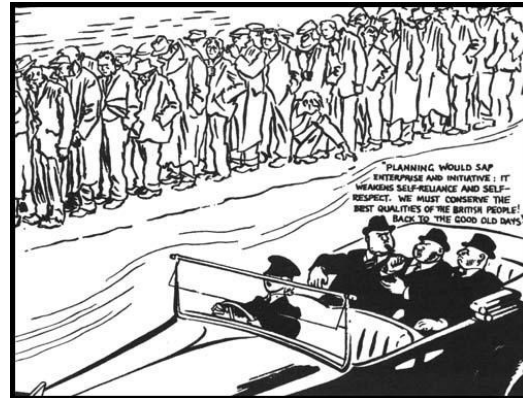
Illingworth Punch

1943—1945

1943

Britain began to think about after the war

David Low published a cartoon on 7th October, 1943, entitled 'The Good Old Days', in support of the Beveridge Report, which proposed widespread social welfare reforms. This was popular with the people, but the coalition national government was split. Low feared that as 'the peril' receded, unemployment and 'want' might be tolerated by the government instead.



1944

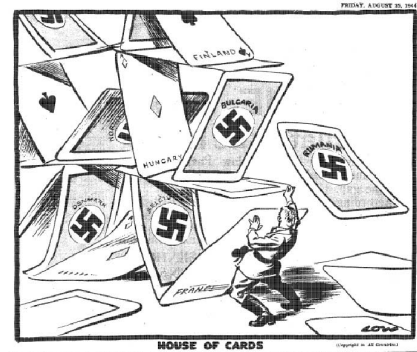
The tide turns

Allied invade France.
Paris is liberated.
Nazis are weakened in
Eastern Europe



'There is no weak link'

Philip Zec, *The Daily Mirror* 4th July, 1944)



'House of Cards' Low, August 1944
Hitler's ambitions in Europe collapse

1945

Hitler is defeated



"Be funny if the siren went now, wouldn't it?"

Giles Sunday Express 14th August

Charing C of E Primary School.

Extracts from The Headmaster's Log Book 1939-1945.



School was now held in the building specially built after the 1870 Education Act, which made education for children from 5 to 13 compulsory. The new school building was opened in January 1873.

1939 August 26th “ In accordance with instructions from KEC all the teachers were recalled to duty by telegram.”

August 29th “During the weekend the school has been transformed into an emergency food distribution depot for the 3000 children and adults evacuated from the metropolitan area.”

October 9th “27 children from Eltham C of E School were admitted.....The Headmaster of Eltham and Staff were in attendance too During the past week other children have been admitted.”



1940 May 14th. “As Germany invaded Holland and Belgium on Friday last all schools were reopened today (during Whitsun Holiday) to be ready for evacuation and reception of scholars.”

June 5th. “The first of a series of 4 lecture demonstrations on War Time Cookery and Feeding was given this afternoon.....to the senior girls and a number of housewives.”

July 9th. “Inspector discussed.... the use of the air-raid trenches which the parish has provided and which the scholars and teachers have been invited to use in case of need.”

July 10th. “Two air raid warnings were given today and the children went into the trenches for shelter.”

July 25th. Two air raid warnings today from 12.05. to 1.25. and from 2.55 to 8.23.pm necessitated a long sojourn by many scholars in the trenches. At 6.15. the majority were dispersed in charge of adults to their homes and our vigil ended.”



1941 January 6th. “At the time of writing, 2.15.pm, there have already been 5 air raid alerts given today. As far as possible, normal routine has been carried on.”



1944 July 12th. “A number of pilotless planes (German) dropped in the vicinity of the school during the day. About 3pm the blast from the explosion of one of them smashed several windows of the school and brought down a quantity of plaster from the ceilings in 3 of the rooms and the lobbies. As a measure of precaution the school will be closed tomorrow and Friday.”

July 17th. “School reopened. 48 scholars present out of 117 on roll. The anti-aircraft guns in the immediate vicinity of the school have gone and this has made the work in school infinitely less nerve-racking for all concerned.”

July 18th. “A number of scholarsare being kept away through fear of the flying bombs. These children are very few in number.”

August 26th. “Nineteen children voluntarily evacuated to Torquay today under the Government Evacuation Scheme – on account of the danger from flying bombs.”

1945. May 8th. To celebrate Victory in Europe the school is closed for today and tomorrow.”



Dorothy Burdick

World War 2 Pill Boxes



model

Pill Boxes derive their name as they are similar in shape to the boxes that were used to dispense pills in 1940.

During May 1940, the branch of the Directorate of Fortifications and Works (FW3) at the War Office was set up under Major-General GBO Taylor, to provide specific Pill Box designs to be constructed throughout the countryside at defensive & strategic locations e.g. road junctions & railway lines. Nearly 30000 were built, of which approx 20% still survive.

There were 7 basic designs, but 2 more were subsequently added to meet specific local conditions. The design concept was to provide a simple 'fieldwork standard' that could be constructed very quickly, & they quickly created a defence network across the UK.



From official records, 9 Pill Boxes were built in the Parish of Charing:

- one is in our garden & 2 more in Blackberry Lane (off Pluckley Road)
- 3 more were built at Coppins' Corner, along Charing Heath Road & also near the footpath which runs from Charing Heath Road, north towards the railway line
- & the last 3 were built near where the A20 crosses the Charing to Ashford railway line. So far, we have not been able to locate any of the last 6.



Although not in Charing Parish, there were a further 2 at Tutt Hill (Westwell Leacon), but were demolished during the building of the 'HS1' railway.

All the Pill Boxes were the 'Type 24' design, which have 6 sides, built from reinforced concrete and with 1 doorway. They have an internal 'brick baffle', which protects the doorway and divides the internal space. Besides the doorway, the other 5 sides each have a central window for all round visibility.

The Pill Boxes were part of the South East Command Stop Line, which ran from Oare (near Faversham) - Charing - Ashford - Warehorne (7 miles from Ashford & overlooking Romney Marsh). The section from Oare - Charing had forward defences and roadblocks, but from Charing to Warehorne, Pill Boxes were 'sited in depth and camouflaged'.

Besides Pill Boxes, there is also an Anti-Tank Block beneath a farm track near Hurst Lane, along with 2 Auxiliary Unit Operational Bases at Westwell Leacon and along the A20.

However, if anyone knows the location of 6 'elusive' Pill Boxes, please let me know (chairman@charinghistory.co.uk).

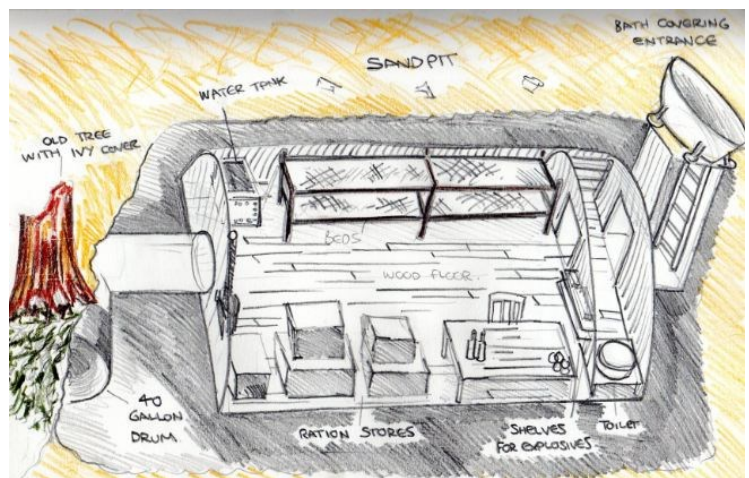
My thanks to Tim Bain Smith & Pete Burton for their help in compiling this article.

Keith Oram

Auxilliary Units

Charing Hill with clear views and its position in 'bomb alley,' meant that it was ideally placed to be used to observe enemy air raids. So, surreptitiously, a large hole was dug out just below the crest of the hill, existing rabbit holes were glazed to become windows, and a room about 6 feet long was created to make a two man observation post. The entrance was concealed underneath a feeding trough and opened with a secret catch. (see 'Thanks for the Memories' and David Lampe's book 'The Last Ditch'.) This was one of 5 secret places in this area, known as 'no. 5 group', led by Lt Alfred Chester Beatty and part of a series throughout Kent and Sussex used by the Auxilliary Units. This group comprised Charing, Challock, Molash, Biddenden and Westwell Leacon, or 'Onion'.

Unlike Charing, the Westwell 'hideout' was much bigger, but like Charing it was completely hidden. An Anderson shelter (15' x 7') had been rolled into an old sand pit and buried. Then farmyard rubbish and scrap metal was spread around to disguise it. "A manhole cover with a very heavy tin bath nailed to it, was the entrance. This would have been nigh on impossible for an inquisitive German to move. However, it was perfectly counterbalanced and -if you knew where to push, it would rise up. The escape tunnel led through a barrel covered with netting woven with foliage." (Stan Hayward).



Westwell 'Onion' Operations Base

This was 15x7 Nissan Hut type shelter. Trap door was an old bath nailed to a manhole cover which was counterweighted. The exit was a tunnel which left the back of the base and exited through a 50 gallon drum hidden under an old tree stump covered in Ivy.

The Auxilliary Units (AU) were just one of about 9 secret services whose purpose was to resist any eventual occupation and to enable sustained sabotage; create havoc and chaos to the German army, sometimes described as 'scallywagging'. The units consisted of 3,500 people throughout the country at any one time. Sometimes known as 'the silent army', or 'Churchill's secret army', and the 12th Corps Observation Unit. The AU were formed after the defeat of Dunkirk, when a German invasion was a very real threat.

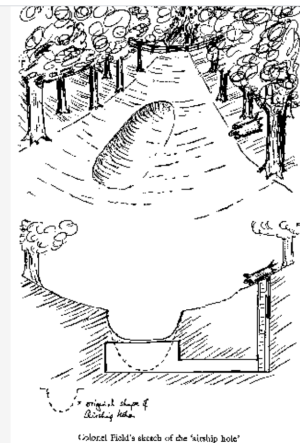


Aux weapons

This force was formed of civilian volunteers who were outside the ages for call-up, many ex-military men from WW1, or those who were in reserved occupations. They were very carefully chosen for their specific skills. They needed to be physically capable of fighting, able to live rough if necessary, and have a knowledge of their local area. This resulted in the possible unlikely mixture of poachers and gamekeepers, farm workers and farmers being recruited. Having been selected, the men were armed and trained in guerilla fighting, and the use of explosives.

Auxilliary Units contd

Secrecy was of paramount importance, these men had to sign the Official Secrets Act “and swear they would not tell anyone, not even wives and friends, for fifty years! “ Their bases needed to be so well concealed that anyone walking over them would not notice that the ground beneath their feet had been hollowed out, or that it was unusual in any way. And of course the hideouts had to be made impossible to detect from the air. ‘Hideouts’ was the term the officers decided to use to describe them, “hidey-holes” so that if those words were overheard they would sound more innocent. The OB or Operation Bases were ingenious, and often had secret mechanisms installed by the Royal Engineers and designed by Peter Fleming (older brother of Ian Fleming, writer of James Bond books). To gain admittance to one on the North Downs, first an (*actual?*) marble needed to be found hidden in undergrowth, and then inserted into what appeared to be just a mousehole,



An audacious hide-out was in Kingswood, it was designed to be a collecting point for stray Resistance men on the run. It was about 60 feet long and contained food, water and sleeping accommodation for about 120 people for a fortnight! It was made in a dug out depression, thought to have been made in WW1; the theory was that the last place the Germans would look for a secret hole, was underneath a well known one. The trapdoor for this entrance was a tree trunk nearly six feet high and weighing about half a ton. It was fixed into place so that when 'unlocked' it could be swung aside at the touch of a finger. The underground counterbalances that supported this lid were later duplicated in several other areas.

Whilst I have found out nothing of who manned the Charing unit, I found Westwell ‘Onion’ consisted of Stan Hayward a farm worker, Percy Pattenden (a businessman) Edward Strouts (a farmer) Charles Underwood (a former Policeman and then a gamekeeper) and George Mann and Jim Brown (both worked for Chester-Beatty as his chauffeur and gardener, respectively) and Gordon Hayward who owned a garage. Interestingly, two came from Benenden, and altogether three had a connection with Chester-Beatty.



Stan Hayward seated



Edward Strout

Originally men were trained at Coleshill, Oxfordshire, but later local men were trained by Peter Fleming, and then Norman Field, at ‘Bilting Wood’, known then as ‘The Garth’, below King Wood.



Westwell now

After the war the OBs were demolished by the Royal Engineers and made safe, so that no one could unwittingly stumble into one. No longer visible, they remain secret. The cells operated independently of each other, and did not know of the other’s whereabouts. Major RF Henry Hall (of the X11 Corps working in Kent, “We never had any holes in the ground like the Resistance Organisation had — simply because I’d never heard of them because they were so secret! “ Now, however a museum of The British Resistance is now open at Parham, and aims to “shed light on Britain’s best kept war secret”

In post war years of peace and plenty, light-hearted TV series like ‘allo ‘allo and Dad’s Army, belied the stark reality and the determined courage that these men had. The use of colloquial words like ‘hidey hole’, ‘hide-out’ and ‘scallywagging’, deliberately masked the dangerous reality.



Party for Charing children given by the army in the Village Hall - January 1st, 1945

So, not a VE day celebration, but a hopeful
beginning to the new year.

(The Village Hall was used as a canteen
during the war years.)

Barbara Lloyd, was a Land Girl working at Palace Farm for the Honewood family on VE day. In 1985 when talking of her memories for Oral Histories, she said, "I've got a photograph with me, the V E ribbons."

Unfortunately CDLHS does not have a copy, or in fact any photos of VE day celebrations of 1945, Charing. We would love to know more. We have recently been given some reel to reel tapes, which just may have some aural information on them –we're in the process of finding a suitable reel to reel tape recorder to play them.

However, we do have quite a few photos of the 1995 memorial celebrations here; some of you may recognise some faces, perhaps your own!

Thank you Steve and Sylvia for locating them and sending .





Thanks to the original
Photographic group

and Digitisation group's
hard work,



these photos have been saved
and categorised,

and now digitised to
keep for the future.



p2



At first glance the photo of the crowd on p2 looks reminiscent of modern day crowds at events where they hold mobile phones aloft. However, this photo shows many people with their backs to the main event, they seem to be holding a mirror on a stick, enabling them to see above others heads.

Noticeboard

<https://www.itv.com/news/anglia/2020-04-19/hundreds-sign-up-to-take-part-in-virtual-ve-day-commemoration/>

VE day remembrance 2020 11.00 am

Owing to Coronavirus restrictions, the plan is to post a video of hundreds of standard bearers edited together, a blessing from a local vicar and a performance of We'll Meet Again. "We want to show everybody that the sacrifices of those who gave their lives is still remembered and anyone who served who is still alive, we are honouring their memory as well".

Ashford Borough Council now have an online photographic exhibition to celebrate the 75th anniversary of VE Day : <https://www.ashford.gov.uk/ve-day-photo-exhibition>

To read the real experiences of WW2 by the people, from all walks of life, who were there, go to <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/>

If you were inspired by Kirsten's article on Family History last time, you might be interested to know that Ancestry is free until Sunday 10 May.

Visit <https://www.ancestry.co.uk/cs/veday75>

National Archives Kew are making digital records available on their website free of charge for as long as their Kew site is closed to visitors.

<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/news/digital-downloads/>

'Registered users will be able to order and download up to ten items at a time, to a maximum of 50 items over 30 days. The limits are there to try and help manage the demand for content and ensure the availability of our digital services for everyone.'



We hold contact information of members, and interested people, to send them society news and information on local history. We do not share the information with third parties.

If you would rather not receive emails from us in future, please email

Hon.Secretary@charinghistory.co.uk