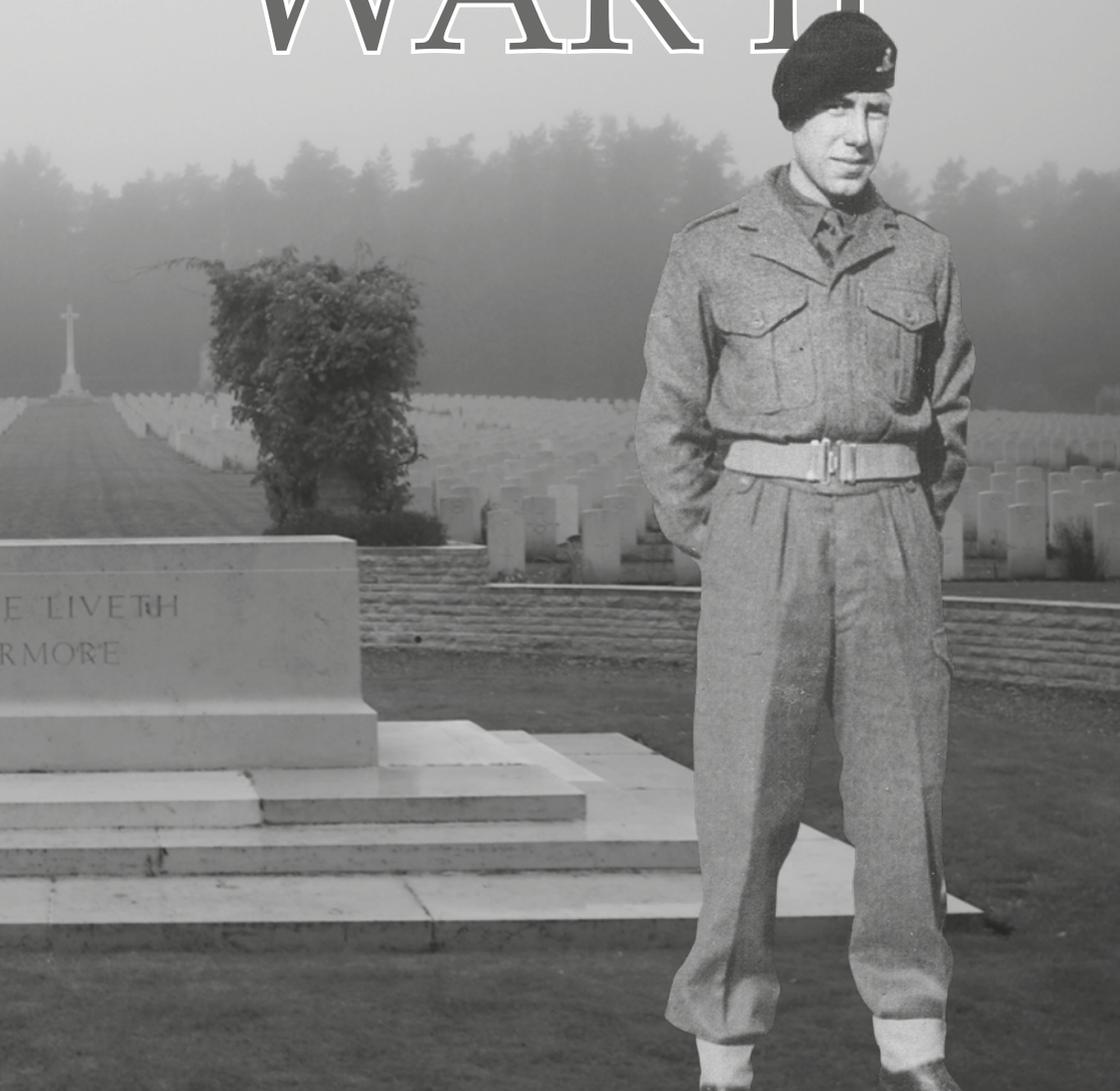


THE ERA OF WORLD WAR II

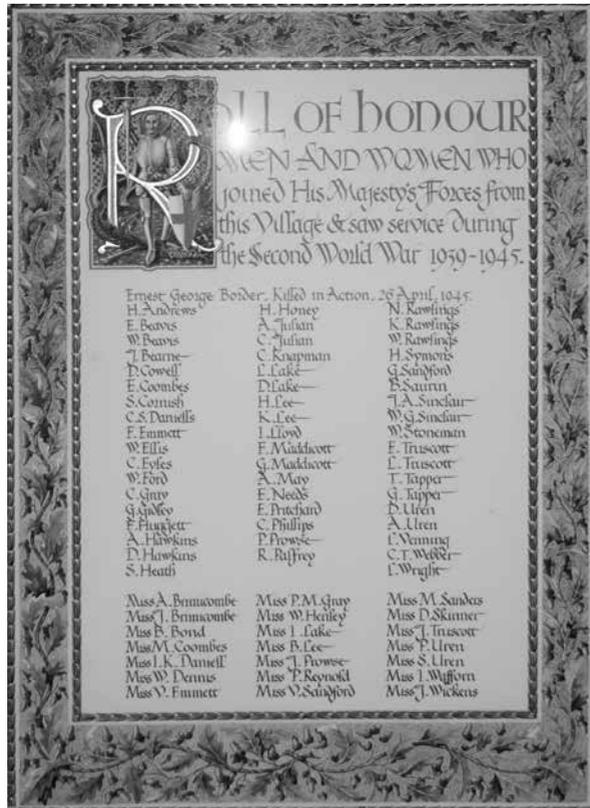


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Introduction

It has been an absolute pleasure, dare I say an honour, to have researched and written this fifth volume in our *Abbotskerswell Village History Series*. The help, encouragement and support from so many Abbotskerswell connected people, has been quite brilliant; it came from those still living in the village, and those related to the men and women whose story we tell. Many of them do not live here, and are scattered far and wide, and they have all given unstinting help, providing documents, pictures, artefacts, reminiscences and huge amounts of time. For this volume I felt I wanted to thank many by name, which I do at the back of the publication, I hope I have not missed anybody; if I have then I am sorry. I must make special mention to Tony Bowhay and Ann Wild who provided us with so many contacts, thank you.

When we completed our World War 1 'Roll of Honour Project' in 2014 we were often asked if we were going on to World War 2, but at that time the one book was all we had planned. Since then, of course, we have undertaken the four publications that at present make up the *Abbotskerswell Village History Series*, and now seems to be the right time to tell the story of the period from 1939 – 1959. We have named this volume *The Era of World War 2*, since it tells the story of both the war and its impact on the next decade. If, like me, you happen to be a former History teacher, you will appreciate that this title is lifted from the original National Curriculum History Programme of Study from 1989, when it was used to hide the fact that the academics who designed it couldn't decide what should be taught in the 20th Century!



We chose the title as we wanted to show the impact of the 1939 - 1945 period on Abbotskerswell and its people, and also the changes in the village during the 1950s. Much of what you will read came from the recollections of those who were in the village at the time, or from their children, who also provided the photographs and documents that have allowed the story to be written. I was particularly keen to tell the story of the men who completed National Service in the post war period, to talk to those involved, and to record an often forgotten piece of history that risks being lost.

Abbotskerswell and the people who lived here experienced huge changes in this period. In 1939 they lived in a village little changed from 1918, when another war had seemed unthinkable, but by 1959 the trappings

of the world we now live in were evident; this is shown not only with the houses, employment and consumer products available, but also with the beginnings of the social mobility that made it so hard to tell the story of those involved in the war.

It would appear that the names were collected orally as there are a number of misspellings on the Roll of Honour. The spellings we use in our text are what we believe to be the correct ones. We also found the names of other villagers who were in the armed forces and seemed to have been 'forgotten' when the Roll of Honour was created; we have told their story anyway. In Chapter 4 any person who served in the Armed Forces, whether on the Roll of Honour or not, who is referred to in the text, has their name shown in **bold**. A large number of stories from the war period have been collected, but others will have inevitably been missed, if we missed a story from your family we would still like to hear it, as going to print is never the end of the research.

We have been given great support once again by the Heritage Lottery Fund, who for the third time, have allocated us a grant. This means we can complete the last volumes in the series, create a digital photographic archive and provide several physical reminders of the village's story.

Newton Abbot Museum provided us with two stunning finds which will help us tell our stories; the first is used in this volume, the Village Scout Log. Thank you Felicity Cole and Tess Walker for your support.

Our *Abbotskerswell Village History Series* publications are very much a team collaboration, and I have to thank the AbbPast research team members for all they have contributed. To Nick for his knowledge and patience with me, as I struggled through military matters, and his company on the trips that we made to unearth the story of Ernest Border. To Felicity, who never quibbled when I asked for more detail on village families who had spread across the world, and quietly improved my historical story telling. To Irish who has the unenviable task of sorting out my grammar and keeping control of my spending. Our series would not be the same without Kingfisher Print & Design's team; thanks Galane and Tessa for sorting out our printing needs, and to Kim who yet again has produced a wonderful interpretation of our words and pictures. We could not do it without you.

Peter Wade

Chapter 1

The Inter War Years

The years covered in this volume were ones of great change in Abbotskerswell, when men went back to war, the British Empire all but disappeared, austerity came and went, and many of the village's young men completed their National Service.



There are few objects obviously connected with World War II left in the parish, the addition to the War Memorial is one; it was made in the same style as the

WW1 plaque, and the Church Faculty for it was agreed in May 1946. Another is the air raid shelter at Marystowe, shown on page 77.



Just outside the parish there are two reminders of the war. In the main Newton Abbot cemetery there is a row of war graves, provided by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in their distinctive design.

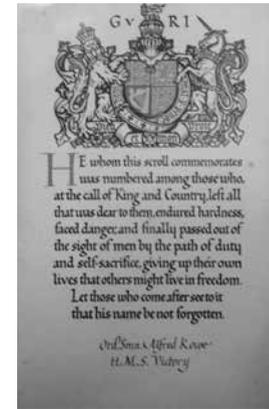
Designed in WW1, each headstone is made of Portland stone and contains the national emblem or regimental badge, rank, name, unit, date of death and age of each casualty, and often carries a personal dedication chosen by relatives. The example shown is one from the WW1 period, which is in Abbotskerswell Churchyard.

On the Old Coach Road, is a distinctive WW2 construction, a pillbox. It is made from concrete and was a guard post, equipped with loopholes through which to fire weapons.

The name was originally a joke because of the cylindrical and hexagonal boxes in which medical pills were once sold.



Inside was a trench firing step, which gave protection against small-arms fire and grenades, and raised to improve the field of fire. This one was to protect the road, and was situated on a corner to cover both directions.



In our publication *Abbotskerswell During WW1* the early years after the war were described, complete with the story of the creation of the War Memorial in the church. Although life would have settled back into its usual patterns, the impact on the families of the dead servicemen, and the trauma suffered by the survivors would have lived on. Every year in October the war memorial was decorated with white chrysanthemums on the anniversary of the death of Alfred Rowe who had died aged 18. Other memorials were added in these years as the parents of the soldiers died.

An interesting memorial in the village churchyard is that of the Miseman family who lived in Prospect Place. Walter and Ellen moved into the village in the 1930s from Bridgetown, Totnes. They had lost their only son, Walter, at the Somme in 1916. He is commemorated on the family grave, but is not on Abbotskerswell's War Memorial. He is on the Totnes War Memorial, where the family home was when he died.



The impact of the war, and being in the Services continued to be felt in the village after 1918. Edith Coombe who had lived in Prospect Place with her family, went into service with a doctor in Kingsteignton. She married George Brimecombe in 1915, and gave birth to their son, Fred, in 1918. George was in the Royal Navy, and served as a stoker on the battleship *HMS Collingwood*, which was involved in the Battle of Jutland during

WW1. However, in 1919 he was invalided out of the service suffering from 'tubercle of the lungs', he died later that year. Edith returned to the village to live with her sister Philippa Lomax, who was widowed during WW1, and their children at Park View.



The only Commonwealth War Grave in the village churchyard was added after the war ended, when in 1920 Fred Lee, shown left, of 2 Town Cottages died. His headstone is shown on page 6. He was in the Royal Navy but died through illness. His daughter Olive, better known as Bet, would marry a sailor and become the landlady of the Tradesman's Arms. The stories of both Lee and Miseman are told in our WW1 book.

There were reminders of the war everywhere, including a tank and a captured German field gun on plinths in Baker's Park; but there was a general desire to forget the war and improve life. Housing in particular was targeted for improvement and Abbotskerswell saw old thatched houses demolished to be replaced by Council Houses, such as Barnfield shown right.



Generally life changed little in these years, with agriculture, quarrying and the Cyder Works, still being the main sources of employment. The picture on the right shows Henleys in the 1930s, with Jerry Julyan at work, second from the left.



The village institutions, such as the Scouts, Village Club and the Cricket Club were re-established. Whist drives and dances were always popular, and new activities like the Cottage Garden Show began.



The Village School was 50 years old in 1926, and this lovely picture of the junior children taken in 1930, gives a real impression of village life.

Modern ways were coming to this rural world, electricity, mains sewers and street lighting all arrived. In 1924 the Post Office was equipped with a telephone booth. Cars were becoming more common place; the old bakery in Model Cottages had become the garage of Percy Warren, who also ran a taxi firm. This was useful as the Devon General bus service, begun in 1924, still only ran along the main road. The farms were acquiring tractors and mechanical harvesting machinery.



After WW1 Henry and Lavinia Sutton had opened a grocery shop (now Staging Post) in The Square, shown left, and in 1929 the Co-operative Society opened a shop in the village, bringing town shopping to Abbotskerswell. In 1936 all houses were required to have a number or name fixed on the house, it was no longer enough to put Rose Cottages or Prospect as the address, and expect the postman to know the name on a letter.

At the same time old ways were disappearing. In 1929 the Court Grange estate was broken up when Rev. Dence gave the house to the National Institute for the Blind; this story was told in *2. Houses & Families*. Although the Carr family, the descendants of the Creeds, remained as large landowners in the parish, they lived elsewhere, meaning Whiddon House and The Manor House were rented out; the days of the influential landowning families in the village was fading away. In 1903 Whiddon House became the home of Commander Robert Jukes-Hughes, a retired Royal Navy officer, and his wife Ellen, who were the next central figures in village life, supporting the school, war memorial committee, and the village 'Unionist' Association. When they died in the late 1920s their son Edward, with his wife Dorothy and their three children, took over the house. Edward was also involved in the Unionist cause and the Cottage Garden Show. He and his brother Evan were Royal Navy officers during WW1, in which Evan won the OBE for his services in battleships. In 1935 Edward and family moved to Dorset; at the annual village show they were presented with a handsome coffee pot on behalf of the church people of the parish. Rev. Bassett Pike commented that: "they hoped that the day would come when they would return to reside in Abbotskerswell."¹

Both brothers returned to the navy's colours during WW2. Evan was recalled in 1939 and served at Falmouth and Plymouth as a drafting officer. Edward was also recalled in the same year and acted as a Sea Transport Officer-in-Charge; his work at Dover during the Dunkirk evacuation, won him a CBE in 1940. From 1941 until the end of the war he was a Principal Sea Transport Officer in Scotland.

As the 1930s came to a close it was the Henleys from Mallands and the Palks from Odle Hill House who had taken over the responsibility of village leadership in committees and activities. The once important landowner/occupiers of the larger houses had passed their properties on to tenants, or as in the case of Court Grange, to a Headmaster, Mr Blake. At Whiddon House was a retired Army Major, Frank Brown, and at The Manor House were Frank and Mary Williams, with their daughters Jessica and Vera, who ran a kennels there.

In 1937 the once thriving village Wesleyan Chapel closed, becoming Mark Rowe's builder's yard, and around that time Fey & Elliott's shop in The Square closed when Mrs Fey took over at the Post Office. Gerald Saurin from Park View was the village electrician. He had two large advertising

boards; one was in Manor Road and the other opposite the bus shelter on the main road. One of his jobs was collecting and charging the accumulators (batteries) that people who did not have electricity used to attach to their radios to make them work. He used his BSA motor bike and sidecar to collect them, which had acetylene gas lamps for lights. The three village pubs were the centre of social life for many men, as they belonged to clubs and teams associated with them.

However, the dark clouds of war were looming, and as early as August 1936 a meeting was held in the village to discuss the issue of air raids. Rev. Bassett Pike's resolution that: "This meeting urges upon the Government the supreme importance of a meeting of the great powers to reach agreement for an air pact to avoid the immeasurable disaster to all mankind of modern aerial warfare"², was unanimously carried. It was also noted that preparations were underway for attacks, and the advice if an attack occurred was for the people "to scatter on the hills until the raid was over"³. The Vicar's references to the need for gas masks, water stand pipes and air raid warnings was an indication of what was to come.



This photograph of the village Scout Troop in 1920s reflects this period of village life.

Chapter 2

Abbotskerswell in 1939

Despite the events happening on mainland Europe, life continued as normal in Abbotskerswell. There were the usual whist drives and dances held for good causes, such as the Brownies, and the Choir and Bell Ringers' outings. The smell of the village stream continued to be an issue; it was blamed on Whiteways who always denied it, but still sent men to clear it out and spread lime to suppress the smell. The building of more bungalows at Two Mile Oak and Council Houses at Laburnum Terrace had been agreed by the Rural District Council.

The Summer of 1939

By the summer of '39 it was evident locally that the country was preparing for war, as the local press had carried stories on air raids and evacuation. At Denbury a large army camp, the Rawlinson Barracks, was being constructed, which the Devonshire Regiment's 50th Battalion would soon move into. This is shown on page 13.

In the village there had been a drive to appoint ARP Volunteers, of whom Guy Henley was in charge; although in January it was announced that he was leaving the district and Gordon Warne, who lived at Two Mile Oak, was taking over.



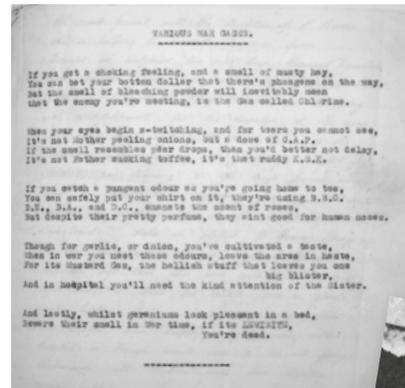
Air Raid Precautions (ARP) was an organisation set up in 1937 dedicated to the protection of civilians from the danger of air raids. It included the Raid Wardens' Service that was to report on bombing incidents. Every local council was responsible for organising ARP wardens, messengers, ambulance drivers, rescue parties and liaison with police and fire brigades. The Register of 1939, lists twelve men and women in the village who would undertake this work; in fact it was noted in the press that no more wardens were needed. In February it was also noted that the ARP sirens in Newton Abbot could not yet be heard in Abbotskerswell.



The two main fears for the protection of the civilian population in an impending war were aerial bombardment and gas attacks; hence the ARPs and gas masks. Every person was issued with a mask in a carrying case which they were to keep with them at all times. The gas masks had a filter near the mouth which, when the wearer breathed in, stopped the gas from coming inside. The masks covered the whole of the face to protect the eyes and nose as well.

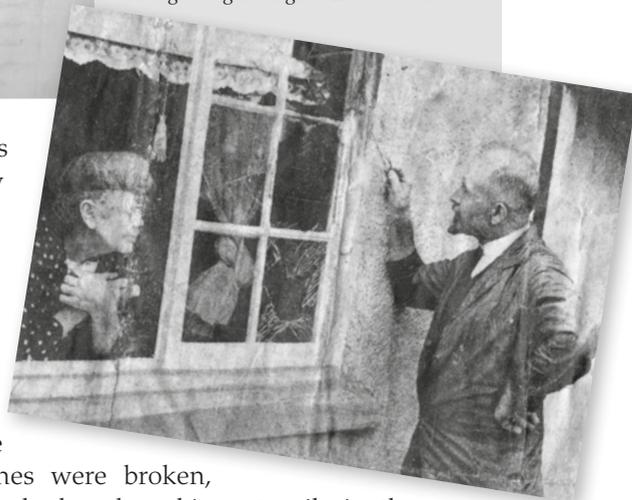
Children's masks were brightly coloured and known as "Mickey Mouse" masks, because they looked like the famous Disney character. Babies had a large mask which covered the whole of their body. Tony's original child's mask is shown on the left.

In April the Government finally agreed to a form of conscription, with the Military Training Act. This meant that single men aged 20 and 21 years old were liable to be called up, and were to be known as “militiamen”, to distinguish them from the regular army. They were to undergo six months of basic training before being discharged into an active reserve. In July 32 000 civilian gas respirators arrived at Newton Abbot Goods Yard. Villagers Tony Bowhay and Laurie Saurin can both remember George Stoneman coming to their houses to fit them for their gas masks.



This song of the time was sung by the local scouts in their shows to highlight the issue of gas poisoning and to encourage everybody to keep their masks with them at all times. ARP wardens could fine people for not having them with them. This is an original copy from one of the scouts' programmes.

Below: Mr and Mrs Wilton examine the lightning damage to Laburnum Farm.



As the world held its breath while Germany threatened the peace, village life carried on. On 20 August a terrific storm broke over the village and Laburnum Farm was struck by lightning with a blinding flash of light shaking the building; 20 window panes were broken, a window frame was scorched and cooking utensils in the scullery were scattered around. George Wilton described the event: “I was sitting, when suddenly what seemed to be a ball of flame struck the scullery floor only a few feet away. The accompanying explosion was terrific. The stonework around the kitchen tap was torn out, and pots and pans flew everywhere.”¹

Women's Land Army



As the prospect of war became increasingly likely, the government wanted to increase the amount of food grown in Britain. In order to achieve this, more help was needed on the farms, and so, in June 1939 the government re-launched the Women's Land Army, which had been so successful during WW1. At first its members were volunteers, but later it became part of conscription, so that by 1944 it had over 80,000 members. 'Land Girls' soon became a familiar sight within the area, based at a large camp at Stover.

An early Abbotskerswell volunteer for the Land Army was Jessica Williams, who lived with her parents and sister at The Manor House; her employment was given as 'dog breeder'. She ran The Fitzdown Kennels at The Manor House, where she bred elkhounds; she was also sometimes referred to as Jessica Fitzwilliams.



The Land Girls wore the uniform shown on the right, with a green jumper and brown breeches, and were employed on many farms in the area. Average pay was £1 2s. 6d a week for a 48 hour week. At Harry Eales Maitland Nursery at Wrigwell, where Brian Ford worked, the Land Girls were driven over each day from the Stover camp by lorry, with the driver sitting in his cab all day, ready to take them home. By the end of the war Brian was in charge of the girls and remembers them weeding in cut down tops in summer, making certain that they turned round to get an even tan.

War is Declared

Germany had been taking an aggressive stance on claiming the land where ethnic Germans were living in the 1930s. In 1938 Austria and the Sudetenland area of Czechoslovakia had been occupied by the German army, and despite Hitler promising Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain that he wanted no more territory, the rest of Czechoslovakia was occupied in March 1939. On 1 September Germany invaded Poland, whose neutrality Britain had promised; two days of frantic negotiations ended on 3 September at 11.00am, when war against Germany was declared.

In 1939 the Newton Abbot area was well served by local newspapers, there were three weekly papers. The front page of the *Mid-Devon & Newton Times* proclaimed itself as “THE LEADING NEWSPAPER WITH THE

LARGEST CIRCULATION IN THE DIVISION"², and was a mix of mainly local material but with some national stories. The *Newton Abbot Western Guardian* on the other hand was the same mix, but the other way round, whilst the *Mid-Devon Advertiser* tended to only look at local events. This is reflected on how these papers dealt with the outbreak of war, although since all three were published at the end of the week, and the declaration of war was on Sunday 3 September, the story was a little old!



The *Newton Abbot Western Guardian* of 7 September, with its more national outlook, led with the description of the Sunday declaration of war, quoting from the moving radio broadcast given King George VI.

On 9 September the *Mid-Devon & Newton Times* front page story, shown above, described in detail the events of the day of 3 September. The British Ambassador in Berlin had delivered a letter to the German Foreign Secretary at 9 a.m. stating that “I have therefore to inform you that unless no later than 11 a.m. British Summer Time today September 3rd satisfactory assurances to the above effect have been given by the

German Government, and have reached his Majesty's Government in London, a state of war would exist between the two countries from that hour”.³ With no reply coming from the German Government, Churchill told the House of Commons that “From 11 a.m. on Sunday, September 3rd, Great Britain is at war with Germany.”⁴

The *Mid-Devon Advertiser* however, did not cover the declaration of war, but instead its front page carried a story on the impact of the war on schools meaning that most of them would stay shut after the summer holiday until air raid trenches could be dug. It was noted in the article that at Abbotskerswell the School Managers had decided to open their school. The main story was headed “DEVON GUESTS” which was about evacuation and how the billeting staff were coping with the sudden influx of children. Inside the paper were references to rationing beginning soon for petrol, coal, gas and electricity.

On the 16 September local MP, Ralph Rayner, wrote a letter in the *MDA* to his constituents, which he did quite often, which began in sombre fashion: “By the time that you get this letter I shall have been at the Front for several days, and I am afraid that it may be the last letter that I shall be able to write to you for some considerable time.”⁵ He noted that he felt that there was little that could be done for Poland, and although he seemed to feel that there was no bitterness between the British and German people, he regretted that the Germans “should have been so be-fooled by one of those monomaniacs which the German race seem to produce from time to time . . .”⁶ His view was that the war was not about honour and glory, but duty. Ralph Rayner had left the army in 1933 as major, after serving for 17 years, to become an MP; he had now re-joined and would eventually become a brigadier.

Once again Abbotskerswell was at war, and men and women would be called to do their duty to stop German, Italian and eventually Japanese aggression. This volume of the *Abbotskerswell Village History Series* will endeavour to explain what life was like for those in the armed forces, as well as how the life in the village was affected.



A view over the cyder works showing the orchards

Chapter 3

Abbotskerswell During The War Years

In the period from September 1939 until the war was officially declared over in September 1945, Abbotskerswell went about its business as best it could. The many farms, Whiteways Cyder Works, and Stoneycombe Quarry all carried on business as normal or as normally as was possible with the threat of bombing, invasion, and men and women being conscripted into the armed forces. This chapter tells the story of village life during that time; the happenings relating to the events of the war are featured in Chapter 5, 'The Home Front'.

1939

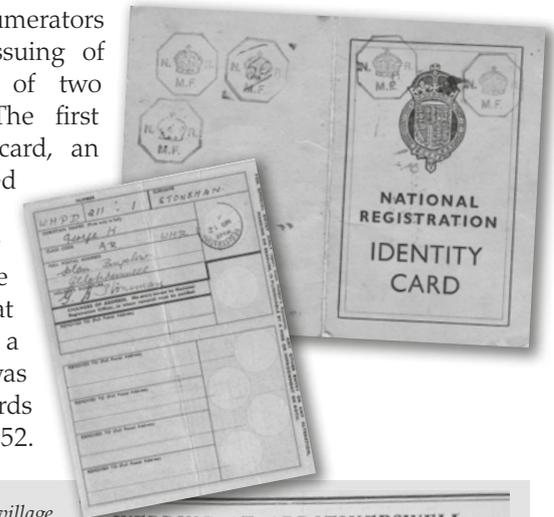
Once war had been declared, the first major fear of modern warfare was aerial bombardment, and like all communities Abbotskerswell braced itself for this. Many local schools were shut until trenches could be dug. However, the village School Managers followed Local Education Authority advice and opened the school for the new term, although they did protest that trenches were needed. During what became known as 'The Phoney War', life carried on as normal, with the harvest being gathered as usual. The news did reflect some changes, with coal and petrol rationing beginning, and the first casualties in the area being reported, with the sinking of HMS *Courageous*. Sadly 41 year old sailor Frederick Langler from Ipplepen was one of the crew of 511 lost when the cruiser was torpedoed by a U-Boat on 17 September. Road signs were taken down in case of invasion, and the blackout began.

Oystercatch	56	1. Helen Grace A.	M 18/10/1899	unemployed
	2	" " Amy B.	F 14/02/01/19	unpaid domestic
	3	" " Mely A.	F 2/04/11/19	"
High Langford	57	1. Clayton Fred	M 19/01/76/19	incapacitated
	2	" " Clara Ann C.	F 23/04/78/19	Small child
Gwiton	58	1. William John A.	M 11/04/79/19	in factory work
	2	" " Mabel M.	F 2/02/79/19	unpaid domestic
Oaklands	59	1. Chad William	M 19/01/11/19	unpaid domestic
	2	" " Edna Mary J.	F 16/01/11/19	unpaid domestic
Whitewade Cye	60	1. Beattie Elizabeth	M 25/01/07/19	Small Mixed
	2	" " James John	F 26/01/07/19	unpaid domestic
	61	1. Ann Marie Mabel	F 19/01/06/19	"

29 September became a very important day in the village as this was the date when the National Register was to be created. On this date householders were

required to complete a registration form and then on the following two days enumerators arrived to collect the forms and draw up the village register showing the names, addresses, marital status and other key details of every villager. The example from the Register shows the entries for part of Abbotskerswell. Married women, who were not employed, were described as completing "unpaid domestic duties".

Another task that the enumerators carried out was the issuing of Identity Cards, those of two villagers are shown. The first is Ann Low's child's card, an original buff coloured one, and the second is George Stoneman's later blue adult version. The carrying of these cards at all times by adults, and a gas mask by everyone, was compulsory; the ID cards continued in use until 1952.

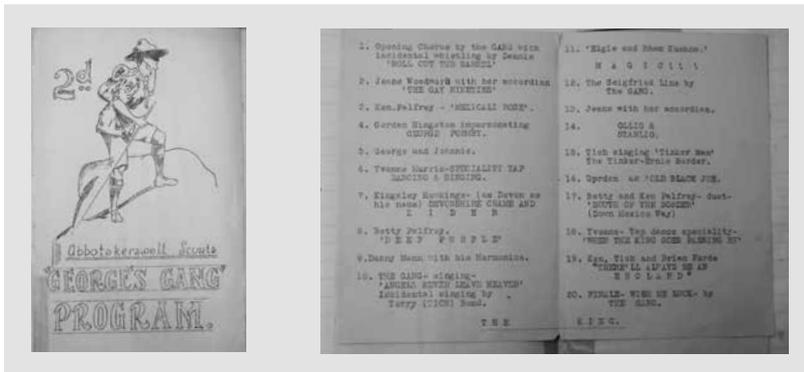


The first war wedding in the village occurred on 25 September with marriage of William Morris, a shopkeeper from Dartmouth, and Mary Reed who lived at Oaklands on Totnes Road. It was noted in the paper that "... the intended cruise had been cancelled owing to the war."



The weddings of villagers Albert Bovey, Rosemary Roche, Arthur Mortimore to Ethel Bearne and Frank Huggett to Nancy Crocker, also occurred towards the end of 1939. The year ended with the traditional Sunday School Christmas Treat, when after church, there was tea, Christmas tree presents and games; there were sweets and an orange to go home with.

A popular Abbotskerswell based group of entertainers were 'George's Gang'; they were actually the village Scout Troop with an average age of 13, and named after the Scoutmaster, George Bailey. The angelic voice of Terry Bond, from Pamval (Henley's Lodge), meant the troop were much in demand for concerts. In December they played two nights at St Mary's Hall in Newton Abbot, raising funds for the YMCA and War Services Fund: "Accordeon [sic] and harmonica solos, popular songs, dances and choruses, ventriloquism, magic and impersonation, are all confidently put over, to make up a pleasurable evening's entertainment."² The programme of this show can be seen below and their full story is told in Chapter 5.



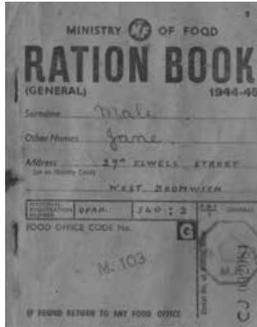
The song 'Run Rabbit' had its words re-written to include this optimistic chorus:

*Run Adolf, run Adolf, run run run
 Now that the fun has begun gun gun,
 Perhaps your'll just allow us to explain
 What we did once we can do again,
 We're making shells by the ton ton ton,
 We've got the men and the mon mon mon
 Poor old Soul, you'll need a rabbit hole,
 So run Adolf, run Adolf, run run run.*

The war meant great changes for everybody, this also included the nuns at The Priory. Their brightly illuminated church tower, with its Monstrance at the top, had to have its floodlights extinguished, and their midnight mass had to be brought forward as there were just too many windows to black out effectively. The nuns were equipped with gas masks and planned to shelter in the crypt, where the walls were massive, during air raids. At St Mary's Church the Evensong was brought forward to 3 30pm for the winter.

1940

It would be wrong to say life continued as before, because the village men were being called up into the armed forces and sent to the far corners of the Empire, and rationing was beginning to have its effect. On 8 January bacon, butter and sugar were rationed. This was followed by successive rationing schemes for meat, tea, jam, biscuits, breakfast cereals, cheese, eggs, lard, milk, and canned and dried fruit.



Brian Ford recalls that although rationing was hard there were some alternatives, for instance he was allowed 8oz of cheese a week because he worked on the land. He also had a ferret and a dog, which were used to catch rabbits, and the black market could also be used; Miss Gribble at Ipplepen Shop always managed to keep him 40 cigarettes under the counter. The need to grow as much as food as possible also meant that when he had been in his last year at Highweek Boys School he mainly worked in the school gardens growing vegetables for the canteen; the only subject he went to was English, because his teacher would not let him out of the lessons.



One of the effects of the war was to encourage farmers to use tractors more since this reduced the need for man power. At Manor Farm Fred Coombe saw himself as a horseman, and did not want to drive a tractor, but when the Purkis's took over at Court Farm they immediately used them. Ted Seymour of Rosebank was a market gardener, and one of his side lines was 'making' tractors from cars. He took the body off, to leave the chassis with a seat and rigged up a hook to pull equipment; the brilliant picture taken in 1944 shows Ted ploughing in the village with one of his tractors. House building continued with more council houses on Laburnum Terrace, and bungalows at Two Mile Oak.



Everyday life had to continue for those at home, with birthdays for little girls, like Ann Low, whose birthday card is shown, and of course weddings. There was now often a war theme to them; Edith Bulley from Carsevella married Edwin Pritchard, who would soon be called up into the Royal Navy. April saw the marriage of William Cassells of the RAF, and Betty Tapper.

The impact of the war was, of course, everywhere; the MDA reminded villagers to "please see that your respirator is inspected by your local Air Raid Warden".³ It was on 8 August that the air raid sirens first sounded in Newton Abbot, at 11 30 at night. "The air-raid sirens often sound in Newton Abbot and District and we have become familiar to the sounds of German aircraft and it is usually easy to distinguish between our planes and theirs."⁴



On 20 August the war must have suddenly have seemed very close, when three German planes attacked Newton Abbot Railway Station. At 6.44 on a fine summer's evening two bombers dropped ten 250kg bombs and their fighter escort strafed the area with cannon fire. 14 people were killed and 15 seriously injured as the bombs hit the railway station, locomotive sheds and yard, and also houses nearby. With newspaper censorship in place, all that was reported was that there were "Casualties in NAZI Raid on a S.W. town".⁵ It did not mention that the railway yard had been hit, and also



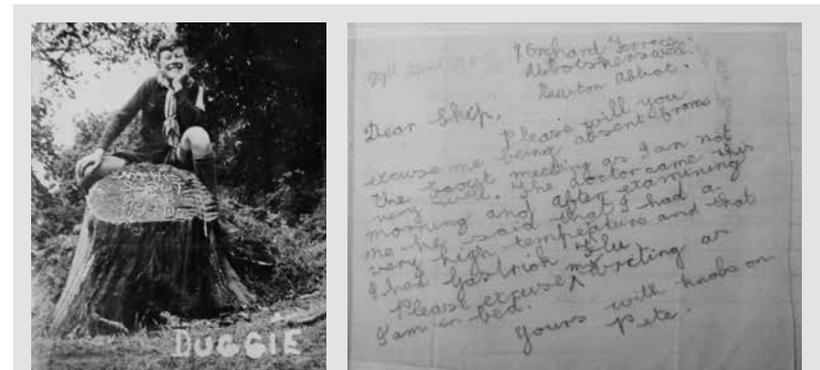
claimed that the two bombers were shot down. Since no aid raid warning had been given and the planes were seen heading for Torbay, being seen by Brian Ford on their way, it is clear that this was propaganda. The two photographs show just how serious the damage was.

The Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) was active in the village with Miss Louisa Hannaford from Home Cottage, being the WVS Rep. Their

Working Party was busy making garments for the armed forces: by April they had made 11 pairs of socks, 4 scarves, 20 helmets, 10 pullovers and many other items, using 25 pounds of wool. Also in April they held a fund raising concert featuring the Newton Abbot Accordion Band, with songs and dances. Next was the aluminium collection, people were told the metal was needed to build Spitfires, and in addition Rev. Bassett-Pike was also collecting for the Spitfire Fund.

In October there was a National Flag Day, and the Abbotskerswell collection raised £5.18s. for the Red Cross & St John Ambulance Fund. Miss Beavis was the organiser, and the collectors were Misses Wafforn, Davies, Bond, Phillips & Mrs Bowhay. 'George's Gang' continued to impress the local fund raising groups with a turn at Forde Hall, and a concert in aid of the G.W.R. Comforts Fund for the Troops.

Serious children's illnesses were still an issue at this time. Scout Ernest Ward suffered from rheumatic fever. However, the village was shocked when on 13 May Peter Sutton died. He was a patrol leader in the Scouts and at his funeral his coffin was carried on the Scout trek cart, draped in a Union Jack and with his Scout hat on top. "Under Scoutmaster L. Bailey the members of the Troop acted as bearers, and after the coffin had been lowered into the grave they gave the Scout salute."⁶

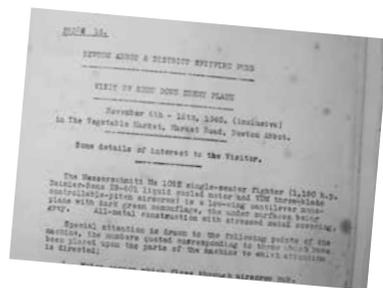


The second Troop Scout Camp was in August 1940, with Duggie Riddler.

Peter wrote to the Scoutmaster to explain his illness, which sadly was much more serious than believed, in fact he had meningitis.

To raise both money for the war effort and the morale of those at home, captured German planes would visit Newton Abbot and be put on display.

It was noted that this one on show had shell damage to its tail fin and had been brought down by a Spitfire in Kent.



1941

When the Germans invaded the Low Countries and France the threat of invasion suddenly became very real: “we did not realise that it is possible to be invaded, but the newspapers assure us that it is, and to see our barricades and Home Guards around certainly seems that an attempt is to be made.”⁷ The Government responded by issuing a leaflet advising the public what to do in the event of an invasion. This is some of the advice given to villagers:

- Stay in your district and carry on. Go to work, do your shopping and send your children to school.
- Do not try to go and live somewhere else.
- If fighting breaks out in your area, ‘Stand Firm’ – keep indoors or in your shelter until the battle is over.
- Take orders from the Police, ARP Wardens, Military or Home Guard.
- Church bells will ring to warn the local garrison that troops have been seen landing in your neighbourhood.
- When informed, disable your car, lorry, motor bike and bicycle. Destroy maps.
- Give all the help you can to our troops, do not tell the enemy anything.

Fund raising of all kinds continued; in February a concert in aid of the Red Cross was organised at The Mote which raised £5 17s. 6d., April’s Long Night Dance in Church House was in aid of the Royal Navy Hospital Comforts Fund, and in November an ‘Aid to Russia Fund’ Whist Drive was held. The Abbotskerswell National Savings Group had a membership of 160 and had invested £735 in its first year; between August and October it raised an additional £175. The organisers, Misses Beavis & Bond, gave examples of costs in the war: a machine gun cost £100, a parachute £40 and a rubber dinghy £35. December was ‘Adopt a Destroyer Week’.

In August village school pupil Isabel Mills of Manor Farm at Aller, secured a place at Newton Abbot Grammar School. This was a feat that was always well received in a small community.

1942

Conscription to the armed forces was widened to include all male British subjects between 18 and 51 years old, and all females 20 to 30 years old. Married women were exempt, as were most agricultural workers, this obviously affected many villagers. These were dark days for Britain and the Ministry of Information was working hard to keep up the spirits of the civilian population; in November their film ‘Into Battle’ was shown at Church House. Even the church was affected, as it had to organise a Whist Drive to pay for the ‘War Damage Insurance Premium’. Once again the war must have seemed more real when German prisoners of war were seen in the village collecting apples in Henley’s orchards; one such prisoner, Klaus Hans Sinn, kept in touch with villagers after he went home, describing it as “a very nice time for me”.⁸ £40 was collected in the village for the ‘POW’ Fund, to help the British service personnel captured by the enemy around the world; the Red Cross sent them food parcels.

Most village weddings now had a war involvement in them, with grooms being noted as a munitions worker, a Corporal in RASC, an ACI in RAF and brides being in the WAAF and WRENS. When Esther Beardon, a relation of the Partridge’s of Mount Pleasant, married Henry Lewis, as they left the church an “archway of splints was formed by members of the Newton Abbot ARP”, and the hand bells were rung. Although brides being able to look as nice as they wanted was getting difficult, as Lillian Sutton later noted, “with rationing in, we’d colour our legs with tea and pencil seams at the back to imitate stockings.”⁹

1943

Maintaining morale at home was seen as very important by the Government and keeping the cinemas going was one way of achieving this. Newton Abbot had three during the war; the Alexandra, which still exists, the Imperial, which was on Queen Street and today contains Complete Estate Agents, and the Odeon (shown on page 26), which stood near where the ASDA car park is today. The films on show in June are shown in the posters from the MDA.

With demands of all kinds for fundraising, all manner of methods were used. The national ‘Wings for Victory’ appeal in April once again saw Miss Beavis active in leading the appeal; the village target was £140, but they actually raised £848. The parish total was £2390, which included £75 from the Home Guard and £75 from the village school. In July it was the



turn of Misses Bonham, Drury and Baker to organise an Abbotskerswell Girls Club Concert at Court Grange, in aid of the Russian Red Cross Fund. There were songs, dances and sketches, with Cynthia Hine a great success; £9 was raised for the fund.

Not everybody was as keen on the wartime labour arrangements, as a court case in August showed. Moses Boon of Stoneyhill was charged with “failing to comply with the direction of the National Service Officer”.¹⁰ Boon was instructed to take on work of an agricultural nature at Torrington, but twice failed to turn up. He claimed to be a market gardener and that he needed a green card to show the employer, which he was not given, so he did not go to the job. He had also refused work in Abbotskerswell, claiming he was not needed there. He was found guilty by the Bench, and when they learned that he had been fined £2 for a similar charge in April and promised to obey any future orders, he was sent to prison for a month’s hard labour.

Court Grange Blind School continued its good work, despite the war, when it showed off its work at their annual sports day and concert; the children took part in various sports, showed their skills with handicrafts and cooking, and gave a vocal and instrumental concert.

An interesting feature of the village weddings now was that women who had joined the forces were marrying men also in the forces that whom they had met whilst on service. Beryl Bond, who was in the WAAF, married Harry Almond of 10th Buffs from Deal; she was the daughter of Capt Bond from the village’s Home Guard. Rose Cottage’s Joyce Wickens, who was in the WRENS, married Pte Fred Austen, who was from Sheerness.

1944

With better news of the war’s progress villagers must have been feeling rather more hopeful. One major change in village life came in January with the departure of the vicar, Rev. Bassett-Pike after eleven years as the Incumbent. The MDA printed a farewell photograph of the Vicar, with his wife, the Churchwardens, Church Council, Organist and Choir. This lovely photograph that follows is great piece of village history which was re-discovered recently, and with the help of many people has been labelled with the names.



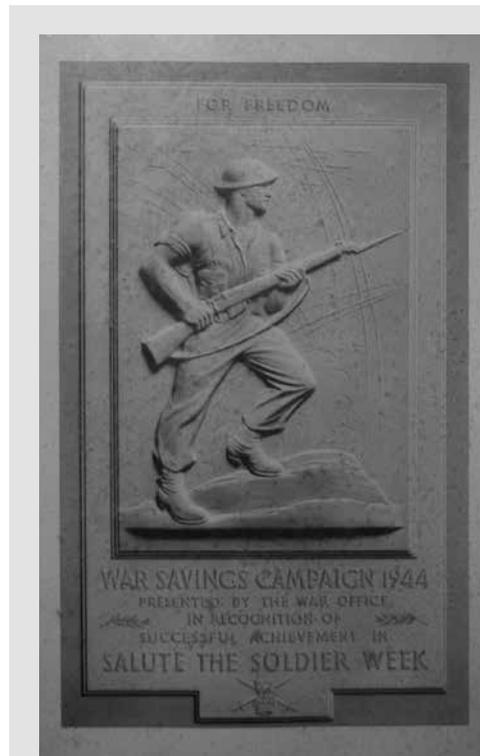
*Back Row: Valerie Emmett, Winnie Cleave, Doreen Maddicott, Marjorie Coombe, Elsie Norton, Cynthia Hine, Barbara Tubb, Sybil Dennis
Middle Row: Alfie Fey, Maurice Blake, Mark Rowe, Court, Grange, Children, Bruce Sanders, George Chudleigh, Fred Birley, Charlie Tubb
Seated Row: Reginald Thorpe-Tracey, Bill Elliott, Rev. Bassett-Pike, Mrs Bassett-Pike, William Rowe, Olive Fey, George Stoneman, Mabel Chudleigh*

His replacement, Rev. A H Harries, was inducted in April, this was described as “a service, devout, dramatic, and very beautiful. The music at the service was splendidly rendered by the Abbotskerswell choir, under the able direction of Mrs. Fey.”¹¹ One of his early tasks was to open the annual Church Fete at the Vicarage, and in his address he took the theme of ‘the unity and fellowship of the parishioners of Abbotskerswell’.

The most noteworthy feature of Abbotskerswell, he said, lay behind this annual contribution to its life, the unity of purpose. He personally had never seen so intense a life in any parish, and it was to a very high degree centred around the church which was very near their hearts.¹²

A notable guest was Mrs Dence, who was still held in great esteem within the village following her, and Rev. Dence's, time at Court Grange. Her daughter Joan was married to a Plymouth vicar, consequently Joan's children stayed with their grandmother at the Lower Lodge. There were many well-laden stalls, amusements and competitions. There was folk dancing, a baby show (won by Cynthia Bond), guess the weight variously of the Vicar, a pig and a cake, bowling for a pig, skeeball and a treasure hunt.

Many weddings have been mentioned but there were notable funerals in these years as well, and in February one such event that occurred was the sudden death of Percy Buckpitt from Manor Farm. Percy, who had taken over the farm from his grandfather, died at the age of 41, leaving his wife and son to run the farm. There was a large attendance at the funeral as Percy was well liked in the village.



On 11 December 1944 William Sinclair, Chairman of the Kerswells Parish Council (Abbotskerswell and Kingskerswell had a joint Council at that time), accepted the certificate shown on the left, for fund raising during the 'Salute the Soldier Week'; it is still on show in the Parish Rooms. It was noted at the presentation that the parish had invested twice as much that year as in the whole of the earlier war years. Miss Hull accepted the School's certificate, with congratulations for their loyal hard work.

1945

With the failure of the German offensive in the Ardennes in January, the allied armies were able to press on into Germany by February. Heavy winter snow at home in February caused disruption, but by March the end of the war was in sight as the invasion of Germany from the south and east gathered momentum. In April the village began its planning to create a Welcome Home Fund for the service men and women, and in May a committee was formed, with George Stoneman as Honorary Secretary; they aimed to ensure that the end of the war was properly celebrated. In February the Home Guard (although now stood down) organised a dance for the Red Cross Prisoners of War Fund.

Sadly, so close to the end of the war, the village's only armed forces fatality occurred on 26 April when Ernest Border from Orchard Terrace was killed whilst serving with the Devonshire Regiment in Germany. Just eleven days later, on Monday 7 May, it was reported that the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, would give a radio broadcast at 3 pm the next day to announce the unconditional surrender of Germany, and it would be the official V E Day (Victory in Europe). Tuesday and Wednesday were declared as national holidays. At 9 pm on 8 May the King, delivered a speech on radio in which he commented:

Let us remember those who will not come back: their constancy and courage in battle, their sacrifice and endurance in the face of a merciless enemy; let us remember the men in all the services, and the women in all the services, who have laid down their lives... Then let us salute in proud gratitude the great host of the living who have brought us to victory... Armed or unarmed, men and women, you have fought and striven and endured to your utmost. No-one knows that better than I do, and as your King, I thank with a full heart those who bore arms so valiantly on land and sea, or in the air, and all civilians who, shouldering their many burdens, have carried them unflinchingly without complaint.

The following two days would see a great deal of celebration and many spontaneous events to welcome the end of the war in Europe. The celebrations of VE Day, VJ Day and The Welcome Home are covered in Chapter 6.

As with World War 1 life would slowly get back to normal, although shortages of all kinds would continue for many years, but life would

change too. On 28 July Brigadier Ralph Rayner was re-elected as the village's MP, but Winston Churchill's Conservative Party lost the election. The working people wanted to see changes after the war and Clement Attlee's Labour Party offered the changes that had been enshrined in the Beveridge Report of 1942 and led to the Welfare State. The National Health Service, better housing and education, a Social Security system to protect the working man were all introduced, and poor villages like Abbotskerswell would soon see that change.



In October the village lost one of its great characters, George Wilton; he is still remembered today in two village road names. His story is told in 2. Houses & Families. The church was filled to capacity for his funeral as he was "universally liked and respected ... and the leader in all parish activities".¹⁵ He acted as a Parish Councillor, School Manager and Churchwarden for many years and was still active on the Welcome Home Fund committee when he died. He is shown in the picture seated second from the right, complete with his distinctive 'General Smuts' style beard. The front row shows George Stoneman seated next to Claude Howard in his scout uniform.

Chapter 4

The Abbotskerswell Service Men & Women

Even before war was declared men were being 'called up' to the armed forces, but at the outbreak of war, on 3 September 1939, the Military Training Act was replaced by the National Service (Armed Forces) Act. The Act meant that all men 18 to 41 years old could be called up for service; but there were exceptions. These were: for medical reasons, for those engaged in vital industries or jobs known as 'reserved occupations', and for conscientious objectors. The latter were required to justify their position to a tribunal, which had the power to allocate the applicant to one of three categories: unconditional exemption; exemption conditional upon performing specified civilian work (such as farming, forestry or hospital work); exemption from only combatant service, meaning that the objector had to serve in the specially created Non-Combatant Corps or in some other non-combatant unit such as the Royal Army Medical Corps. By 1942 the age range had become between 18 and 51 years of age.



In December 1941, Parliament passed the National Service Act (No 2), which called up unmarried women between 20 and 30 years of age to join one of the auxiliary services. Their roles included working in munitions factories, or joining one of the auxiliary services: the Women's Auxiliary Fire Service, the Women's Auxiliary Police Corps and the ARP, which supplemented the emergency services at home, also the Women's Land Army, and the Women's Voluntary Service (WVS). However, they could also volunteer for the women's armed services, although no woman was assigned to combat roles unless

she volunteered. These services were the army's Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRENS), the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and the Women's Transport Service.



Women performed a wide range of jobs in support of the Army, RAF and Royal Navy both overseas and at home. These jobs ranged from roles such as a cook, clerk, and telephonist, to more traditional masculine duties such as mechanic, armourer,

radar operator, searchlight and anti-aircraft instrument operator and Military Police. British women were not drafted into combat units, but could volunteer for combat duty in anti-aircraft (ack-ack) units, which shot down German planes and V-1 missiles. Since a royal proclamation forbade women from operating deadly weapons, they were used as spotters and finders in the team. The photograph shows the passing out of Abbotskerswell's **Winifred Uren** in the ATS.

The women, older men, and children leaving school were mainly the ones who had to keep the economy going, with many companies moving over to a war footing; WaterMota, at Two Mile Oak, changed from making marine engines to making bombs.

Men under 41 not called up were therefore either in a reserved occupation or unfit for duty. When Hubert Wickens married Mavis Sutton, in 1941 at the age of 21, he was described as a 'munitions worker', whereas the 1939 Register showed him to be a 'textile worker and card winder'. Reg Wakeham of Cross View owned a wholesale greengrocers but he had contracted scarlet fever as a child, which which meant he was unfit for active duty. Consequently in addition to his business, he drove lorries at Devonport Docks. Skilled men such as **Cyril Hawkins**, an electrician, **Charlie Knapman**, a lorry driver and mechanical wagon driver, and **Kenneth Lee**, a motor mechanic, were called up but Fred Olver, a bus driver and garage proprietor, quarry worker Albert Quintrell, motor mechanic Thomas Bulley, butcher Francis Ford, mixed farmer Stanley Caunter and Ernie Pelling a cowman, must all have been in reserved occupations for the duration as they were not.

Appendix 2 provides the basic details for all the men and women, we know of, who lived in the village during the war and served in the armed forces. We cannot tell the story of all of them, but what follows are the fascinating experiences of a number of villagers. Probably the first to join up were **Alfred Julyan** and **Leonard Lake**, who as ex Royal Navy men were immediately recalled, despite their ages. However, very soon the young men were joining the armed forces.

VILLAGERS IN THE ARMED SERVICES

The Julyan Family

The material for the account that follows was researched and provided by Jerry's family.



Alfred and Jerry were an Abbotskerswell father and son who served in the war at the same time. The photograph on the left is a remarkable one, as it shows them standing side by side ready to fight for their country. Jerry would sacrifice a great deal during his service, his is a story that is hard to imagine living through.



Alfred was born in Truro in 1887, and joined the Royal Navy in 1903 as a 16 year old; his first ship was HMS *Russell*, which was a pre-Dreadnought battleship. Whilst aboard the cruiser *HMS Warrior* he earned the Naval General Service Medal with the clasp 'Persian Gulf 1909 - 1914'. This was awarded for operations against pirates, gun-runners and slavers.



He saw active service in 1914-15 aboard the cruiser *HMS Pelorus*, in the British Channel. However he spent most of the war aboard *HMS Dido* which was a Depot ship for the 10th Destroyer Flotilla at Harwich. He had risen to become a Leading Seaman. In 1919 he was demobbed, and married Lily Symons whose parents lived at 1 Bridge

Cottage, although she was in service in Newton Abbot. Alfred re-joined the Navy in 1919, remaining until 1927. Their son, Cyril, was born in 1920 and the family lived at 3 South View, before moving into the new Council Houses in 1930, at 1 Orchard Terrace. Alfred continued in the Royal Fleet Reserve until 1937.

In August 1939 he was recalled to service at the age of 52, as shown in the picture left. After a month's training he joined HMS Asturias as a Leading Seaman. HMS Asturias was a 22 000 ton armed merchant cruiser; she had been a passenger liner for Royal Mail Lines until requisitioned by the Admiralty in 1939. She was quickly converted by adding ten guns; 8 x 152mm and 2 x 76mm. Her task was to escort the convoys of Allied ships carrying food and weapons for the war effort.

Under Capt. John Robert Sutherland Haines, Alfred found himself on the Atlantic convoys as part of the Halifax Escort Force, the Northern Patrol and the North Atlantic Escort Force. In October 1940 Capt. Hubert Ardill took over the command and they moved to the South Atlantic Station. It was during this period that they had their most prestigious moment, when on 18 January 1941 *Asturias*, while patrolling north-east of Puerto Rico, intercepted and captured the Vichy-French freighter *Mendoza*. After Alfred had left *Asturias*, she was torpedoed by an Italian submarine and badly damaged in 1943, but she managed to limp on to Freetown.

On 17 September 1943 Alfred was finally demobbed at the age of 56. For his WW2 service he received the following medals: the 1939-45 Star, Atlantic Star, 1939-45 Defence Medal, Navy Long Service and Good Conduct Medals.

Cyril, who was always known as **Jerry**, even by his mother, was born on 20 February 1920 and was raised in Abbotskerswell. In 1939 he was living at home with parents at 1 Orchard Terrace and working as a general labourer, when he was called up. He became 5627965 Private Julyan in the South Wales Borderers.

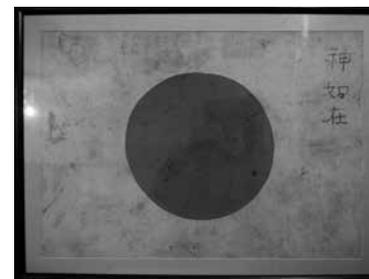
Like many men after the war Jerry did not talk about the war when he returned home, but over many years his family gleaned stories, which together with documents that they have gathered tells his story. He used to joke that he celebrated his 21st birthday in the Burmese jungle in 1941, and that he and a mate broke into the stores to obtain some alcohol with which to celebrate. The 6th Battalion of the Borderers had joined the Burma



Campaign and Jerry must have fought in some difficult situations. He did reveal that he fought hand to hand combat with the Japanese when his platoon came across a group having breakfast; the final outcome of this saw all the Japanese soldiers killed.

In 1944, now part of 72nd Infantry Brigade in the 36th British Infantry Division, they became part of a new offensive on the Southern front in the Mayu peninsula. Early in July 1944, they were flown in to Myitkyina airfield in North Burma, and shortly after the Division started advancing down the "Railway Valley" from Mogaung towards Indaw. On 12 November his platoon was on patrol when it triggered a land mine, and Jerry was seriously wounded; he lay undiscovered for days, but hearing Japanese voices all around him he stayed 'dead'. He was eventually found when the allies pushed forward again, but Jerry had been blinded by the blast, with shrapnel in his right eye.

In December 1944 Lily received the letter shown, informing her that he had been wounded. He was brought home to Exeter Eye Infirmary and in his notes it states he had 'penetrating wounds to eyes'. After treatment for over two years the sight eventually returned to his left eye, and he was eventually fitted with a glass eye in his right eye, although he sometimes wore an eye patch instead. Although Jerry had no facial disfigurement he was conscious of his false eye, and when he first met his future wife, Lilian, he feared she would be put off by it – she wasn't!



As with many of the men who fought in WW2, Jerry showed the effects of his experiences and suffered from bouts of what we now call post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD); after coming home he refused to eat rice, cried when 'Abide with Me' was played, as it reminded him of his fallen Welsh comrades, and rarely talked

about his experiences. When he was found injured he had a Japanese flag under his tunic, which his family have mounted in memory of him; this is shown on page 35. After the war he was awarded four medals, these are the 1939 – 1945 Star, Burma Star, Defence Medal 1939 – 1945 and the War Medal 1939 – 1945. Jerry did not claim them, preferring to forget the war. However, after his death his family did apply for them in recognition of his experiences; these are the medals shown on the front cover.

Leonard Lake was born in 1887 in Torquay and joined the Royal Marine Artillery as a gunner in 1906. He served throughout WW1, on the battleships *HMS New Zealandia* and *HMS Thunderer*. He served in the Mediterranean and China Seas, and was involved in the evacuation of troops from the Dardanelles in 1915.

He left the navy in 1927. He later described these days:

We were always on big ships, either battleships or flag ships. They were all run on coal in those days and when we took coal on board it was a big job. It was no good walking when you were on that job. You had to do everything at the double. If you walked somebody was likely to ask you if you were out for a constitutional.¹

Having lived at 2 *South View* he and his wife Mabel settled in the newly-built 3 Orchard Terrace in 1930. In 1939 he was recalled to the navy, despite being 52 years of age, and this time he served on armed merchant ships, like *Alfred Julyan*. His station was at a 4-inch gun lashed to the deck of the ship. His ships were usually in convoys, journeying to Alexandria, Batavia, Cape Town, West Africa and Singapore. He explained that convoys travelled at the speed of the slowest ship: "it was no use having a speed of 15 knots if one of the ships had a speed of only five knots. Then our speed was five knots."²

Fortunately none of Leonard's ships were sunk under him, although he saw many ships go down nearby. In 1944 he left the navy again and settled into village life, working at Whiteways Cyder Works until retiring in 1953. His son **Donald Lake**, served as a Royal Marine during WWII, having been a grocer's apprentice in 1939.

There were also a number of villagers who were already in the services when the war began, it was their career. One of these was **Sidney Cornish**, whose story is a very interesting one, being unique as a villager

whose father was killed during WW1. The story of Albert Cornish is told in *Abbotskerswell During WW1*; he had married local girl Jessie Hellyer, nee Manning.



Sidney was born on 12 June 1912 on Jersey, where his father Albert was a Company Quartermaster Sergeant in 1st Devons, who were in the garrison on the island. After Albert's death Jessie brought her three children back to Abbotskerswell and married Albert Stoneman in 1924. In 1928 Sidney was living at 4 Rose Cottages with his parents and was employed as a concrete worker, when he followed his father's lead, by joining the Devon Regiment as a regular boy soldier, service no. 561530; the picture left shows him as a young bandsman.



His first ten years were served in bases at home but in 1938 the 2nd Devon's became the garrison in Malta, where he remained until March 1943. Malta was repeatedly bombed during the years he was there, but in July 1943 the Invasion of Sicily began the Allies attack on Europe, and the 2nd Devon's took part in this, as well as the Invasion of Italy in September. Sidney is pictured outside Rose Cottages.

In late 1943 Sidney returned home with his unit in preparation for D-Day. On 11 June he was fighting in Normandy, and fought all the way up through France, Belgium, Holland and western Germany. In April 1945 the 2nd Devons, then part of the 7th Armoured Group, finally took Hamburg and Sidney's fighting finished there. However, as a regular soldier, Sidney stayed in Germany, based at Wolfenbüttel in Lower Saxony, until April 1947: he was promoted to sergeant during this period. He spent some time in Singapore and Hong Kong before leaving the army in 1951 after over 23 years of service, having reached the rank of Colour Sergeant, just like his father Albert.

His impressive service is shown by his medal awards for WW2: 1939-45 Star, Africa, Italy, France & Germany Stars, Defence Medal, 1939-45 War Medal and a Long Service & Good Conduct Medal. In his leaving testimonial he was described as "a really first class soldier. Honest, sober and very trustworthy and well able to handle any difficult job. Most



methodical and conscientious in everything he undertakes." In 1948, he and his new wife Gerda, were registered at his parent's house, 2 Prospect Cottage, before leaving to live in East Devon. The picture on the left shows Sidney in his new role as School Sergeant Instructor at Allhallows School at Rousdon; this was a Public School with a large Combined Cadet Force, which he ran until his death in 1969. His son Michael, who we are very grateful to for providing so much material, commented, that "the army was my father's life".



Henry & Lavinia

Lillian Hilda Sutton was born in 1920, around the time her parents, Henry and Lavinia, came to Abbotskerswell to open a shop, which was situated in what is now The Staging Post in The Square, and is shown on page 9. At that time the Suttons lived at 1 Model Cottage, although by 1935 they had moved to 9 Orchard Terrace (21 Manor Road). They had five children: Mavis,

Lillian, Arthur, Kenneth and Peter. In 1939 Lillian worked at John Vicary & Son, a woollen mill on Bradley Lane, as a wages clerk. The early 1940s were a difficult time for Lillian as her brother Peter died in May 1940 of meningitis, and her mother died in 1942.



In January 1943 Lillian joined the ATS, and went to Wrexham for a month's basic training of drills and examinations. Unlike most women, who were given domestic duties, Lillian saw active duty: "those who failed these exams would be sent to the cookhouse whilst those, like me, who were successful were sent to the 76th Light Ack-Ack regiment in East Allington, South Devon."* This was an anti-aircraft unit. She was stationed at the ATS

headquarters and whilst there earned her Special Proficiency stripes and badge, shown on her photograph. * www.bbc.co.uk WW2 People's War

In July 1944 the HQ was moved to Ince Castle near Saltash and then on to Sandford House in Dorset. The next move in December was to Cleethorpes, then in January to a camp in Derby and on to Coventry. Lillian eventually moved to The War Office in Whitehall, where she was

part of Combined Operations until the end of the war. She remained in the ATS until July 1946, returning to Abbotskerswell to marry Arthur Ackerley, a member of the Royal Artillery who had served in coastal defence. Lillian's father had left Abbotskerswell by this time and she moved to Cheshire, which may explain why she does not feature on the village Roll of Honour.



William Sinclair lived at Abbotsvale and was a butcher who had three sons. William **George** and John **Alex Sinclair** were in the forces, which is shown on Alex's wedding photograph to Marjorie Trendall in 1944. He is shown wearing his RAF uniform; he was a rear gunner in

heavy bombers. George appears to be wearing a Royal Artillery uniform.

After the war the three brothers set up Sinclair's Garage next to Emmett's Cottage, where their father's butchers' business was.

The Uren Family

The material that the following account is based on, was largely provided by Winifred's grandson, Barry McCarty in Canada; we are very grateful to him.

In 1939 Leonard and Winifred Uren lived at 6 Stoneyhill. They had 14 children, who are listed below, and not surprisingly were the family who had the most men and women in the armed services from the village. Four of them appear on the Roll of Honour, although at least two more served in the forces during the war

Leonard F b.1916	Arthur b.1918	Joe b.1919	Donald b.1921
Phyllis b.1923	Stella b.1924	Winifred b.1926	Betty b.1927
Michael b.1930	Patsy b.1931	John b.1933	Clifford b.1935
Raymond b.1937	Dorothy b.1940		

Leonard senior worked at Stoneycombe Quarry as a mechanic, and served as an ARP Warden during the war. The oldest son, **Leonard** served in the army and is pictured at Odense in Denmark in 1945. **Joe** began working at Stoneycombe Quarry



as a 14 year old 'pulling up boy' and eventually became a driver; he lived at Stoneyhill with his parents. Later he lived at 11 Laburnum Close, and set the explosives at the quarry.

Arthur and **Donald** were in the army, and are shown in their uniforms below. Donald, is photographed in June 1944, in what appears to be Italy, and is photographed with a Royal Army Service Corps officer. **Stella** and her older sister **Phyllis** were also in the forces; Stella is shown below wearing a battledress tunic, but which service she was in is unclear. Neither Leonard nor their younger sister, **Winifred**, appear on the Roll of Honour. It seems likely that Leonard had left the village by the start of the war, and perhaps because Winifred had married and moved away during the war, this explains her absence. However, Winifred's is an interesting story.



Donald (left)

Stella (right)

Arthur (right)

Winifred was born on 2 April 1926, the seventh child in the family. She attended the village school before going onto Highweek Girls School, what is now Coombeshead Academy. She left school at 14 and went to work as a housemaid at a large private house, where she was well liked. She moved on to a hotel where she was a receptionist, which involved housework, book keeping and telephone work, and eventually became a nursemaid to a three year old child. She continued her education with courses in Morse Code, map reading and drill at the Torquay Girls Training Corps.



The Training Corps gave girls the opportunity to have a taste of military life and prepare them for a life in the forces and the hardship of war. She completed her evening courses and appeared to have helped out with the younger girls at the

TGTC, as she is shown in a photograph with them, wearing a dress, at the left hand end of the back row. Her ATS Service Record notes of this period "1½ years, well liked".



On 23 February 1944 she was enrolled in the Auxiliary Territorial Service in Plymouth, as w/295823, was embodied (enrolled) in March, before being posted to Dorking as soon as she was 18. Her training was with the ATS 'C' Company No1 Dorking; in her application she gave as her work preferences, driver and ack-ack. However, in her assessment they did not agree and commented that she was "... unsuitable for A/Air or driving - please try to employ in a job which will not keep her entirely indoors."³ She was classified for General Duties, which inevitably meant housekeeping work. She was posted to 'G' Company in Dorking and began work as a mess orderly, and then became an assistant cook; this at least meant a 2d pay rise.

However, one benefit of working in Dorking was that she met Clifford McCarty, a 25 year old Canadian soldier posted to the Canadian Ordnance and Mechanical Engineer Reinforcement Unit (COMERU). As with many wartime relationships they were married quite quickly, with her service record showing she was married in the Parish Church of Little Bookham in Surrey on 24 Feb 1945; she was granted three days unpaid leave for the occasion. Clifford lived on a farm near Webb, a small town in Saskatchewan near to the border with USA, and must have been very different to the young men she was used to from Abbotskerswell. In May 1945 Winifred was released from the ATS and transferred to the Eastern Command and London Wireless Telegraphy School, before being demobbed on 1 August. Her leaving report spoke positively of Winifred: "has a bright and cheerful personality. An extremely hard and thorough worker, utterly reliable and trustworthy. A good plain cook for small numbers. Is used to household duties."⁴



With the war over Clifford returned to Canada in September 1945; in February 1946 Winifred left Southampton for Canada, and on 2 March Winifred's visa was stamped. She sailed under the Free Passage Scheme of the Canadian Government

for the wives, widows and children of members of the Canadian Forces Overseas. They were reunited at Swift Current, Saskatchewan.

There were other families who had a number of members in the armed services; the **Truscotts** of 4 Orchard Terrace had three people serving. Father Fred features on the village WW1 Roll of Duty being a sapper in the Royal Engineers and his two sons **Leonard** and **Ted** followed him into the army; daughter **Jeannie** was also involved. Similarly James **Rowlings** of 7 Stoneyhill had three of his seven children in the forces; **Kenneth**, **Norman** and **Wilfred**, who were lorry drivers before the war; Wilfred, 5440294, was in the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, and while an acting sergeant was wounded in July 1944 whilst serving in Europe.

William and Sarah **Beavis** had built Braeside on Manor Road and two of their children were in the army. Before the war **Ted** was a motor mechanic and older brother **Bill** was carpenter and decorator, like his father. Edith **Brimecombe** of 2 Hillside Cottages had two daughters who had been called up, **Joan**, and **Alice** who lived and worked at Manor Farm. There were also brother and sister **Francis** and **Violet Emmett** who lived at Odle Hill Cottage.



An important role for women during the war was working in the NAAFI; this was the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes which provided canteen services for service personnel. **Marjorie Coombe**, shown left, was in this role, as no doubt were a number of the other women.

The freedom that the war gave to women meant that a number of the servicewomen met and married men away from the village which would have been quite a new social aspect to life. The stories of Lillian Sutton and Winifred Uren have already shown this, but there were others. WAAF **Beryl Bond** of Pamval married Harry Almond, a lance corporal in the 10th Buffs, who was from Deal. **Joyce Wickens** married Pte Fred Austen of Sheerness, although they did settle in the village after the war, living in Rose Cottages.

Marriage also worked the other way round with village women marrying men who came to live in Abbotskerswell. Betty Tapper of 3 Barnfield married serviceman Bill Cassells and they settled in the village, living with



her parents at first. **Bet Lee** from Model Cottages, who was in the WRENS, married Harold Hancock in 1942. Before being called up she worked at WaterMota making munitions, where the pay was very good. Harold, better known as 'Digger', was also in the Royal Navy and served on destroyers, as a leading stoker, on the convoys in the North Atlantic, and to Russia. In 1940 his ship *HMS Hardy* was sunk during attacks on Narvik, in Norway. Harold was one of 140 survivors who swam 400 yards to the shore from their stricken ship, where they were looked after by friendly villagers in Ballengen for several days. Eventually they were taken on board the battleship *HMS Warspite*; Captain Warburton-Lee of the *Hardy* was later awarded a posthumous VC. When Digger arrived back in Plymouth he was given a stick of bananas by dockers as a reward for his suffering; he must have been quite a sight when he arrived back in Abbotskerswell carrying them!

Harold joined another destroyer, *HMS Venus*, and served in the Pacific. After the war he and Bet lived at 5 South View, before becoming the publicans at the Tradesman's Arms in 1952. In 1987 Digger was awarded 'The Jubilee Medal - Forty Years of Victory in the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945' by the Russian Government for his involvement on the Arctic Convoys, he is shown above with his medal.

Bet's stepbrother **Clarence 'Sonny' Webber** was also in the Royal Navy, serving on destroyers in the North Atlantic, where he was twice torpedoed. He was also awarded the Jubilee Medal, receiving it at the same ceremony as Digger. Later in the war, whilst serving on a destroyer on the Malta convoys, his ship was sunk. Bet's brother, **Harold**, was in the RAF.

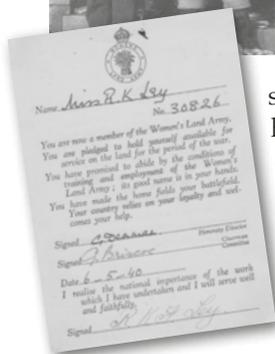


During the war George and Gertrude Skinner moved into 2 Rose Cottages; their son **Herman** married Olive Morey in 1940 and they set home at 5 Rose Cottages. Herman served in the RAF, training at Newquay as aircrew, and is shown in the photograph at the front right, with his RAF chums. Although like many servicemen he did not talk about his war experiences, it is known that he served in Belgium and seems to be photographed there in the picture on page 44, on the left.



Herman's sister, **Dulcie**, served in the WRENS during the war, and married Ronald Buckingham in the village church in 1944. After the war they went to live in the USA. Oddly Dulcie is on the Roll of Honour, but not Herman!

Vera Sandford was 23 when she joined the Land Army in 1939; she was living at 1 Barnfield with her parents, brother George and sister Edith, who worked at the Post Office with Mrs Fey. She joined a farm at Drewsteignton, and would work for the same family for the rest of her life. Vera would have had a pledge card such as this one that was recently discovered at a village Cricket Club Car Boot Sale.



Eventually the farmer moved to a market garden in Kennford, and when he and his wife retired to Alphington she also moved there to look after them. When they died she was left the house to live in for the rest of her life. At the end of the war

she was invited to Buckingham Palace to meet the King and Queen as a representative of the Women's Land Army.



Before the war started **Herbert Honey**, who lived at 10 Orchard Terrace, was a mechanical engineer and lorry driver at Stoneycombe Quarry. He was born on 28 September 1906 and was married to an Abbotskerswell girl, Gladys Lee; they had four children, Patricia (Midge), Patrick, Janet and Karen. Bert was called up in 1939, and joined the Royal Army Service Corps, working on their mechanical side. In 1944 he was serving in Holland as an ambulance driver, but he was flown

home when Midge was struck down with double pneumonia, and it was feared she would die. After the war he worked for British Railways, and then Bulpin's Garage and Eggbeer's Transport as a motor mechanic.

Dennis Cowell

The remarkable story that follows was researched by Dennis' daughter, Jacqueline. Following his death Jacqueline decided to look further into the family stories that she had heard over the years and from talking



to her mother. She gathered some amazing primary source material as well as making contact with Michael Le Blanc from Toronto who added further material.

Dennis Cowell was born on 11 April 1923, the oldest child of Harry and Florence. At the outbreak of war they were living at 4 Laburnum Terrace with Dennis employed as a wages clerk. He joined the Home Guard Mobile Section, and also became a corporal in the Air Training Corps (ATC). Consequently it was not surprising that when he was called up, on 13 March 1941, he joined the RAF, as 1315850 Cowell; he had worked hard on his maths, having extra lessons, to ensure he passed for the RAF.

His training began at London's Aircrew Registration Centre, where he underwent assessments to decide on what he should be trained for. He moved on to RAF Hemswell for basic training before another spell in London finally led to him being sent to Newquay for his ground training, known as the Initial Training Wing. Next was No 21 Elementary Flying Training School at RAF Booker, where he was selected for a place on the Arnold Scheme. This had been established to train British RAF pilots in the USA during the war; it was named after General Henry H. Arnold, Chief of the US Army Air Forces, the instigator of the scheme. In February 1942 Dennis sailed to Moncton in Canada before training at four USAF bases, one being Moody Field in Georgia.



Dennis was one of around 4 500 pilots who were trained on the scheme: rather unusually for the time the MDA recorded the fact that he had passed out as a sergeant pilot, having spent 8 months in North America training to get his 'Wings'. On his return to England he gained training in bombers at Advanced Training Schools at various RAF bases. By June 1943 he was at RAF Marston Moor's Heavy Conversion Unit for training on heavy bombers such the Lancaster. His training saw him log 411 hours flying time. Finally on 9 July he was posted to 78 Squadron as a 2nd pilot (co-pilot).

78 Squadron was based at RAF Brighton in the East Riding of Yorkshire. This was part of Bomber Command and was a heavy-bomber squadron which was flying the new Handley Page Halifax B Mk IIIs. The Halifax, shown left, had a crew of eight and carried a bomb load of 14 500 lbs.



The Aachen Raid: Dennis's first mission was as 2nd Pilot on Halifax JD108, which was part of a mission to bomb the city of Aachen in western Germany, close to the border with Belgium. On the 13/14 July 1943, 374 aircraft took off from airfields all over Britain.

Dennis had been drafted in as the 2nd pilot on JD108, meaning this was not his usual plane or crew; they took off from Brighton airfield at 23.49 on 13 July. The official figures show that 20 aircraft did not return, with 95 men killed, 37 being captured, and six evaded capture.

The crew of JD108 that fateful day was:

Pilot – Warrant Officer Kenneth Alan Toon, a 21 year old New Zealander,

2nd Pilot – Dennis, 20 years old

Navigator – Sergeant Royston Falcus, a 21 year old from Newcastle

Flight Engineer – Sergeant Lawrence G. Donaldson

Wireless Operator – Pilot Officer James McDonald

Bomber Aimer – Pilot Officer Harry J. Burridge

Rear Gunner – Flight Sergeant John Douglas Nesbitt, a 31 year old from East Herrington, County Durham

Mid Upper Gunner – Sergeant G.M. Campbell who was Scottish.

The mission was successful, as they dropped their bombs on Aachen; however, on the return flight at 02 36, 45 minutes after leaving the target and flying at 13 000 feet over Rance, they came under attack from a German night-fighter piloted by Oberleutnant Rudolf Altendorf. The Halifax caught fire and Pilot Toon ordered the crew to bale out; in another stricken Halifax, HR819, Ron Wissons was also baling out, he later described what happened:

Ted gave the order to bail out, it was obvious that there was nothing the crew could do about the fire. I moved forward to the navigator's position, where Ernie had the floor escape hatch

open, and was putting his parachute on. He shouted to me to get out which I did, feet first through the hatch. I had to push myself away from the aircraft. Shortly afterwards my parachute opened, though I do not remember pulling the release handle. I was swinging backwards and forwards, but this stopped after a few minutes and I was able to look around. I had expected to see the aircraft above me as I am sure that Ted would have held it straight and level while the crew got out. His chances would have been much less as he would have been the last to leave the aircraft. I think that the aircraft must have gone into a spin or exploded killing all the crew instantly. I hit the ground with a tremendous thump, I was in the middle of a cornfield and could hear dogs barking and people shouting in the distance.⁵

Ron was the only survivor from HR819, and as Dennis jumped from his burning Halifax he was equally uncertain of what was happening around him. JD108 crashed near Froid-Chapelle (Hainaut), 11 km SE of Beaumont, Belgium. Later he described these moments in an official report:

I came down in the garden of a house on the outskirts of Rance. A man and woman came out of the house and I was embraced by both and taken indoors. The man took charge of my parachute, Mae West and harness, and I was given a bed. Next morning German troops who were on an exercise actually entered the house, but I remained hidden in the barn and was not discovered.⁶

Dennis was now an 'evader', trying to avoid capture and get home to his base, rather than spend the rest of the war as a prisoner of war. It should be understood that when a local person helped him, they were guilty of breaking German law, which was punishable by death. Later on the 14th he was taken to another house where he found fellow crew member Royston Falcus, who had landed nearby and had been hidden in a wood by local people. They were both taken to a farm, where they stayed until 19 July, being visited by an English speaking man who explained he was making arrangements to pass them onto an organisation who would help them. This was Marcel Grimee, and he took them to his house, at 13 Rue de Commerce in Rance; they became the first two British airmen taken into an escape line known as the Felix Line, which organised the movement of allied evaders to Spain. Spain was a neutral country, and servicemen who arrived there were repatriated.

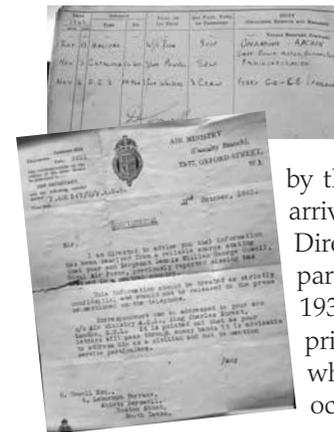
On 25 July Monsieur Grimee brought a British agent, known as 'Felix', to the house and after test questions to one another to check they were bona fide, he set about organising a plan for them to escape to Spain. 'Felix' was actually Charles Gueulette, who with Maurice Kiek, had been parachuted into France to replace members of the escape lines who had been captured by the Germans. Monsieur Grimee provided them with civilian clothes and identity cards, and 7 August they were taken to Mons, and then Tournai by Monsieur Grimee and 'Felix'. Next two men from Ghent took them to Leebis, where they crossed into France, and were taken to Wattlelos, where they stayed with Monsieur Parent, a lift manufacturer. On 17 August they moved to Tourcoing, as Monsieur Parent thought the Gestapo were on to him. On 26 August they were moved to Monsieur Vurramaux's house, he was a policeman in Tourcoing. The next move came on 14 September when Marie Madeline Davy, a Professor of Philosophy at The Sorbonne, took them to an apartment in Paris where they met a man known as 'Georges'. The apartment belonged to Madame Vassias who often hid evaders; sadly she was betrayed in 1944 and died in a German concentration camp. They were moved to an ex-girl's dormitory, next to Paris' execution prison, until 23 September, and then onto Montmartre.

On 27 September they were taken to Georges' headquarters, where they were joined by Sgt Michael Darcy, another RAF man, and were issued with papers. The next day they were all taken to Toulouse and on to Lourdes, travelling on a train with papers stating that they were deaf and dumb mutes. At one point a German soldier came to check their papers, and took Dennis's forged papers, tucking them into his cuff. A terrified Dennis was wondering whether he could jump through the window before the German turned and shot him, when he heard a voice further up the train tell the soldier that Dennis was deaf and dumb and was on a pilgrimage to Lourdes; the papers were returned and the soldier went on his way through the train. Dennis had not been aware that there were Resistance helpers on the train. At Lourdes they joined two more British, two Dutch and five Frenchmen, staying in the Hotel Regent until 2 October.

The next move was to Bagnères-de-Bigorre, however, Georges was warned that the Germans had raided Lourdes, and were on their way to Bagnères; therefore they moved on to a barn in the mountains. On 3 October they were met by French guides, known as *passeeurs*, with whom they walked over the Pyrenees into Spain, arriving at Bielsa on 8 October.



Flying Log, showing his adventures, is shown below.



The *passeeurs* were paid by the evaders' escorts, and returned to France; the party were soon met by the Spanish army and arrested. He was imprisoned at Barbastro, shown left, until 27 October, when they were taken to Madrid in a British Embassy car, and then onto Gibraltar two days later. They eventually arrived back in England on 4 November, flying into Plymouth. Dennis'

On their return to England Dennis and Royston were immediately taken to London to be de-briefed by MI9; this was really an interrogation to ensure that they had not been recruited as spies by the Germans. They were separated when they arrived and never met again. MI9 was the British Directorate of Military Intelligence Section 9, part of a department of the War Office between 1939 and 1945. It dealt with helping British prisoners of war to escape and the return of those who succeeded in evading capture in enemy occupied territory.

When Dennis's plane went down he would have been posted as missing and his parents informed of this by letter. However, once he arrived in Spain the British were notified and the letter shown was sent to Harry and Florence; how pleased they must have been to receive it. He was instructed to go straight to London and not tell anybody he was alive, but he hopped off the train at Newton Abbot, gave a letter addressed to his parents to Alex Sinclair, a taxi driver from Abbotskerswell, before getting back on the train.

What Dennis would learn after his return, was what had happened to the rest of the crew of Halifax JD108. The pilot Alan Toon, bomb aimer Harry Burrige, and gunner John Nesbitt were all killed when the plane crashed; they were eventually buried in Gosselies Communal Cemetery at Hainaut in Belgium. Sgt Campbell was captured when he bailed out and spent the rest of the war as a POW. Lawrence Donaldson initially evaded capture, only to be caught in Perpignan on 30 September trying to



cross into Spain and also became a POW. James McDonald also became an evader and was fed through the Chauny escape line, organised by Capt. Etienne Dromas, to where he was placed with Monsieur Felix. On 7 September 'Georges' took him to Paris but whilst staying at a safe house, a neighbour spotted him and, thinking him to be a thief, called the police, meaning he also became a POW.

When his debriefing was over Dennis was sent to RAF Uxbridge, where he worked in the RAF's Meteorological Office. He later moved to North Yorkshire for more Heavy Conversion Unit training.



In April 1944 he spent a month at Loughborough Medical Rehabilitation Unit, shown left with Dennis far right. Whilst there he fell in love with Kathleen Fisher; it was love at first sight, as he proposed on the day he met her! They were married in January 1945, by which time

Dennis had transferred to the ATA (Air Transport Auxiliary) at White Waltham. In May 1945 he was promoted to warrant officer rank.

After the war he returned to Abbotskerswell with his wife and worked at Jackson's fish shop, and as a baker, before following a career on the railway. He became a prominent figure in the village, being a Parish Councillor and School Manager.

The effect of Dennis' time in France was felt for the rest of his life. He revisited Belgium and Spain to show his family where his journey had happened and to thank those involved. Monsieur Gobert, one of those who had sheltered him, wrote of the time: "the young woman of the small farm where Dennis fell, is not well suffering from neurosis we are glad that the war is over



Dennis, left and an RAF pal on Torquay sea front

– our country is recovering slowly. We had some fearful times during the war." Of the Grimee family, the mother was imprisoned in Germany but survived, Monsieur Gobert said "Our friend Monsieur Grimee is quite well ... that family of great patriots who, at one time, had completely disappeared."

Wendy Henley was a member of the WVS, in which it is believed that she was a driver. After the war she made South Africa her home. Her father, Guy Henley, was a member of the Home Guard and his granddaughter, Penny, can recall him venturing outside and looking skywards when aircraft were heard overhead. "I do remember being ushered under the hall table when aircraft were approaching!"⁷

Henry Symons (or Henry Pete as he was known by the Dence family) managed to 'cheat' his way into the Royal Navy. His brother Charles had served with the 2/5 Devons in Egypt in WW1, and died of dysentery in 1915. Although his parents lived at 1 Bridge Cottage, by 1930 he was living with his sister, Lily Julian, and her husband at 1 Orchard Terrace. Henry married Vi Norton in 1934, her father Frank had been killed in WW1.

Perhaps it was Alfred Julian's stories about life in the Navy that prompted Henry to apply to the Royal Navy as stoker in 1935, service no.65836. He was too small really, but managed to stand on tiptoe to be taken into the service. At the beginning of the war he was serving as a Petty Officer on board the heavy cruiser *HMS Dorsetshire*, which was soon in the North Atlantic searching for the German heavy ships, the *Admiral Graf Spee* and *Bismarck*. In May 1941 the British Fleet finally caught the *Bismarck* off Norway and crippled her with gunfire from the battleships *HMS Prince of Wales*, *HMS King George V* and *HMS Rodney*, and aircraft attacks from *HMS Ark Royal*. With no sign of surrender from the crippled *Bismarck* the *Dorsetshire* launched three torpedoes at comparatively short range; the *Bismarck* sank at 10:39 on 27 May.

He saw remarkable service around the world, serving on HMS Rockrose, a Flower-class corvette, on the Russian convoys. He achieved the rank of Stoker Chief Petty Officer. After the war he and Vi worked for the Dence family in various capacities. Another member of the Royal Navy was **Edwin Pritchard** who lodged at Carsevilla and worked as a roadstone quarrier before being called up. In 1940 he married Edith Bulley who also lived at Carsevilla.



William (Bill) Ford lived at 4 Hillside Cottages, and like many young villagers worked on the land; his brother was Brian. Being born in 1922 he was called up in 1940 and joined the RAF as a Leading Aircraftman (LAC), service no. 1701039. He was trained as a driver with the ground crews, hauling the planes out of their hangers onto the runways ready for flight. He saw service in Burma, India and Malaya. When he was demobbed he returned to working on the land before joining the clay company Watts, Blake and Bearne as a lorry driver. Bill, on the right, and a friend had their photograph taken in Blackpool in December 1942.



Cecil Eyles, who would later become a village legend as 'Bungy' Eyles, the landlord at the Butchers Arms, was born in the village in 1914 and lived at 5 Orchard Terrace. At the beginning of the war he was working at Whiteways Cyder Works and was immediately



drafted into the Royal Army Service Corps as a driver. He was shipped to West Africa and led a team of local African drivers, establishing a supply line to North Africa. He later explained to his family that there were two main problems: firstly they couldn't drive, so Bungy would put the lorry in second gear and leave them to it, and secondly, in the evenings the men from the different tribes would fight each other, appearing the next day with all manner of cuts and bruises. The stamps above were brought home by Bungy. Eventually he ended up in North Africa, reaching Tobruk, before being brought home. He spent the rest of the war as a driver for officers in England, and being very frustrated that he was not where the action was. He ended the war as a sergeant instructor in the RASC.

A number of Abbotskerswell men were members of the Armed Forces before the war, like Sidney Cornish and

Laurence Vening. Laurence was born in 1911 in Willesden, but father George was an Abbotskerswell man, and by 1929 he had brought his family home to Park View Cottages. In 1927 Laurence joined the Royal Navy and soon joined *HMS Benbow*, a battleship in the Atlantic Fleet, for his initial training. In 1928 he moved onto the battlecruiser *HMS Repulse*, which was also in the Atlantic Fleet. By 1930 he was serving on another battleship, *HMS Ramillies*, but this time in the Mediterranean Fleet. Laurence was a gunner, hence his training on battleships (a consequence of this was that by the time he left the navy after 20 years' service his hearing was badly impaired.)

His training continued in 1931 with a move to a gunnery training ship, the old Monitor gun platform *HMS Erebus*. Between 1932–34 he had moved on to a destroyer, *HMS Cygnet*, which was stationed with the Home Fleet; next was *HMS Glorious*, an old battleship that had been transformed into an aircraft carrier. His time aboard between 1936–38 was spent with the Mediterranean Fleet. In 1938 he was back with destroyers on *HMS Beagle*, which was the 'plane guard' for the aircraft carrier *HMS Furious*. With war looming new ships were being built and old ones modernised and Laurence spent much of 1938–39 working trials on these ships: *HMS Effingham*, a heavy cruiser, had been modernised; *HMS Walker*, a destroyer, was recommissioned from the reserve; *HMS Cairo*, a light cruiser was rebuilt into an anti-aircraft cruiser.

However, when war was declared the 28 year old Laurence was on board *HMS Escapade*, a 1400 ton E-class destroyer which was mounted with 4 x 4.7 inch guns, 20 depth charges and two torpedo tubes and which could steam at 35 knots. Laurence served on her until 1942, seeing action in the Norway Campaign and on the Arctic Convoys; he later recalled the numbing cold and the fact that the ratings' toilets were a row of seats at the prow of the ship, so you soon learnt to take a seat up wind or everything blew back up!

In 1942 Laurence transferred to the newly built destroyer *HMS Bramham*, and therefore took part in two hugely important naval events. She was a Hunt class fast escort destroyer, weighing 1430 tons with 6 x 4 inch guns, 110 depth charges, and could steam at 27 knots. The class were designed to escort convoys of merchant ships and one of her early escorts, in August 1942, was 'Operation Pedestal'. This was a convoy of 14 merchant ships carrying vital supplies to Malta; they were supported by 91 warships during the 13 day convoy. On 11 August the Axis powers



began their attacks on the convoy, which carried on day and night for the next three days, using U-boats, aeroplanes and surface ships. The most important merchant vessel in the convoy was the *Ohio*, an American oil tanker carrying the vital fuel to keep Malta fighting; she was

hit several times and eventually two destroyers, *Bramham* and *Penn* were lashed either side of her to keep her afloat and moving. This is shown in the famous photograph above, with *Bramham* on the right.

On 14 and 15 August just five of the merchant ships made it into Valetta Harbour, Malta, but vitally *Ohio* was one of them, and as she was towed into port the band played 'Rule Britannia'. The Allies had lost 13 vessels sunk, including nine merchantmen, one aircraft carrier, two cruisers and a destroyer but the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy had saved Malta; around 640 allied sailors lost their lives. It is staggering to try to imagine what Laurence must have endured and seen in those two weeks, and helps to explain why we wanted to write this volume.

In October 1942 *Bramham* was involved in a controversial incident when *RMS Queen Mary*, an ocean liner acting as a troopship, rammed and sank one of her escort ships off Ireland. *HMS Curacoa*, a light cruiser, was cut in two by *Queen Mary* but she and her escort steamed on for fear of being caught by U-boats. Several hours later *Bramham* and another escort returned and saved 101 of *Curacoa's* crew, but 337 officers and men were lost. The incident was not reported during the war, but in a letter to the Daily Telegraph Laurence recalled those men who were recovered had 'oil-filled lungs'.

In 1943 *Bramham* was transferred to the Greek Navy and Laurence moved onto *HMS Bligh*, an American built frigate, which was brand new when he joined her. However, he did manage a trip home between ships and married Joy Phillips of Rockstone in June 1943.



HMS Bligh

Bligh was allocated to the 5th Escort Group in the Eastern Atlantic, and also working in the English Channel and off Normandy. Her role was in escorting convoys in and out of Britain, and part of that involved ant-submarine warfare. She was involved in two U-boat sinkings: in May 1944 with a number of ships and aircraft they sank U765 off NW Ireland and in January 1945 *Bligh*, with two ships, sank U1172 in the seas between Ireland and Wales. A rather more unfortunate incident occurred in November 1944 in Liverpool docks, when an anti-aircraft gun was accidentally fired and hit a nearby troopship, killing and wounding some men on board.

At the end of the war Laurence left the Royal Navy to settle in the village at Rockstone, and worked on local farms. Eventually he had a bungalow built, Tamberly, on Nunnery Lane, living in a caravan on the site whilst construction went on.

Inevitably there quite a few of the service men and women who we know little about, as their families have left the area, but what we do know about some of them is described below.

RAF

As Chapter 5 will explain **Edward (Ted) Needs** was in the Civil Air Guard; his CAG number being 11152. He was a teacher who lived at 21 Stoneyhill and became a War Substantive Flying Officer. **Percy Prowse** from 3 Bridge Cottages was a Warrant Officer, service number 241624. In January 1945 the MDA revealed that he had been "Mentioned in Despatches for 'outstanding work & devotion to duty', also awarded Oak Leaves Badge".⁸



The M.I.D. was not an award of a medal, but a commendation for an act of gallantry; Percy's name would have appeared in the official report written by a Superior Officer. At the time this meant he could wear the noted Oak Leaf shown on his dress uniform, later it was a bronze emblem worn on the ribbon of the 1939-45 War Medal.

Percy's sister **Joan Prowse** was in the WAAF, as was **Winnie Dennis** from Model Cottages, it is believed. **Iris and Cyril Daniel** from 7



Laburnum Terrace served in the WAAF and Royal Navy respectively. Iris had been a nanny in Torquay, but was bombed out of her house.

Another RAF member was **Ronald Palfrey** who lived at 1 Mount Pleasant, (December Cottage). He was an Aircraftman 2nd Class, with a role in the Driver Mechanical Transport; his service number was 508118. **Thomas Tapper** from 19 Orchard Terrace had a similar role, at the 2nd Base Recovery Unit, his service number was 864859.

ARMY

Name	Service Details	Information
Harold Andrews	Royal Army Service Corps; a corporal when married in 1940	Before the war was a Steam Roller Driver
Walter Ellis	Army	Permanent wayman on the railway
Alan Hawkins	A signaller in 14 th Army	Served in Burma for 4 years
George Sandford	Royal Artillery	A butcher who worked for Cecil Ford at Odlehill House
Leslie Wright	Army	A plasterer
Alfred May	Army	A butcher
Charles Phillips	Army	Served in India

Table 1

There are 53 men listed on the village Roll of Honour and there is only one, **S Heath**, who we have not been able to trace, and two others we are uncertain about. These were **J Bearne** who we believe to be John Bearne and **George Tapper**.

We are also uncertain about which service a number of the men were in; any help with these uncertainties would be greatly appreciated. *Table 2* includes all that we know about these men, where it has not been mentioned elsewhere in the chapter.

Joe Coombe	General labourer	Kenneth Lee	Motor mechanic
Ivor Lloyd	A fellmongery manager	Joe Coombe	General labourer
Gerry Gidley	Army	Frank Huggett	Army

Table 2

The Roll of Honour includes the names of 21 women who joined the services, sadly little is known about what many of them did during the war.

Pamela Gray was the sister of **Charles Gray**, who was a lieutenant in the Royal Navy during the war; they lived at The Cherries at Two Mile Oak.

Ivy Lake was the daughter of Jack Lake, who was the landlord of the Tradesman's Arms.

Phyllis Reynolds and her sister **Gwen** lived in Church Cottages. We believe they both served. Their father, Harry, worked for the Purkis's at Court Farm; in June 1944 Harry fell off a hay rick that he was constructing, injuring his chest and being concussed. The ever useful George Stoneman administered first aid and Harry was described as "mending in hospital."⁹

The roles of **Margaret Sanders** of 8 Stoneyhill and **Ivy Wafforn** of Arcadia at Two Mile Oak are also unknown.

Ernest George Border 1926 – 1945



The story of the village's only member of the armed services to die during WW2 has been left until last, both as a mark of respect, but also because it happened so close to the end of the war.

Harry and Gertrude Border moved into Abbotskerswell in 1930, the first tenants of the newly built 12 Orchard Terrace (now 15 Manor Road). Harry was a general labourer and would be a member of the Abbotskerswell Home Guard, as was his oldest son Fred. They had nine children, these were:

Dorothy b1920	Freda b1922	Frederick b1923	Ernest b1926	Mavis b1928
Sylvia b1931	Daphne b1934	Ivy b1942	Geoffrey b1937	

Ernest attended Abbotskerswell Village School and then Highweek Boys' School. In 1939 he was one of the founder members of the new village Scout Troop, with his good friend Brian Ford. The pictures of the first Scout Camp in 1939, on page 58, show a young Ernest right and looking over the back of the young man having an early morning cold



shower, left. When both he and Brian left school in 1940 they went to work at Harry Eales's Maitland Nursery at Wrigwell, near Ipplepen.

Ernest was a keen member of George's Gang, the Scout Troops Concert Party. In one show he was The Tinker in the song 'Tinkerman' sung by Tich Bond, whilst in another he was a member of 'The Boyfriends', who were the scouts who began the show with its opening chorus.



Brian remembers Ernest well from when they worked at the nursery, where they grew vegetables and plants, and took them to market every Wednesday: "he didn't want to join up, didn't want to hurt anybody".¹⁰ Ernest was a little older than Brian, consequently in summer 1944 he was called up for the army, whilst Brian was the last left at the nursery, with his job becoming a reserved occupation. Ernest became a private in 2nd Devons, his Service number being 14792178; the 2nd Battalion were part of the 7th Armoured Division.



By late 1944 the Devons had pushed on from Normandy into Holland, and in one village Ernest's platoon were billeted on a farm, where he helped the farmer milk the cows. The photograph on page 57 shows him at his sister Dorothy's wedding, before he left for Europe. During the spring of 1945 the 7th Armoured Division was part of the Western Allied invasion of Germany and was pressing on towards Hamburg. He is shown with his Devons comrades in the picture on the left; Ernest is on the right on the back row.

The Battle of Hamburg, 18 April – 3 May 1945: the Division began the battle by attacking the recently fortified village of Harburg, planning to cross the River Elbe into Hamburg. On the 20th the Devons took the village of Vahrendorf, 2 miles south of Hamburg. On the same day

further west Daerstorf was captured, with the Division reaching the Elbe, where they began artillery fire upon the German troops and trains on the opposite bank. The Division halted the advance at these positions for five days; it set up a perimeter and prepared for their assault on the city. During these five days the Devons patrolled the neighbouring villages of Sottorf and Sieversen.

In Vahrendorf the Devons set up an HQ in the Gasthaus Erhorns (Cordes), shown below as it is today. The owner was told to bring 'ham and eggs', but he did not understand much English, so brought a hammer and an axe; luckily the surprised troops did not shoot him!

To the north of the village is a wooded ridge, where the Germans had dug defensive positions. There were around 120 troops from the 12th SS Training Regiment of the Hitler Jugend (Youth) Division, with troops from the 20 Panzerjäger Battalion, sailors and policemen. They were instructed to attack and re-take Vahrendorf, and although their commander, Heinz Früh, knew this was hopeless, he had to attack. Consequently on 26 April the German counter-attack began at 2 30am, supported by 88mm guns and two 75mm self-propelled guns. The Germans crept into the village by slipping through the gaps between two platoons in the thickly wooded and hilly ground and surprised the sleeping soldiers. They managed to position an SP gun within 20 yards of the Devons HQ, however, the Devons fought back ferociously with small arms, machine guns, mortar and anti-tank fire. It appears that Ernest's platoon were caught in this initial attack, and it was later reported that he was killed at the HQ whilst collecting ammunition, he was 18 years old.



One British platoon was over-run and was forced to withdraw to higher ground; Pte Dennis from Newton Abbot held his position to provide covering fire with his Bren gun, and despite his being wounded, his actions allowed his platoon to withdraw successfully. Elsewhere Pte Prior faced an attack, which he halted with Sten gun fire and grenades, before firing his Piat anti-tank weapon at a house occupied by the Germans, forcing them to surrender. The Germans were successful in re-taking most of Vahendorf, but as Heinz Früh feared, once the British regrouped and called up their tanks, his position was impossible. The engagement continued all day, but eventually Früh ordered a withdrawal; but in the wooded terrain many troops failed to receive the order. Wolfgang Buchwald, who survived the day, recalled that "it was carnage" as the isolated pockets were attacked.

On April 26, 1945, hell breaks in over them. The 'forgotten' soldiers spend hours fiercely fighting with the British. One by one loses his life in a hail of bullets and artillery fire.¹¹

The beleaguered HQ building was eventually relieved when two troop carriers arrived to attack the enemy; led by Sgt. Dawe the men captured the German positions and relieved the HQ. Ptes Dennis and Prior, Cpl. Sigall and Sgt. Dawe were all awarded the Military Medal for their actions that day. In Cpl. Sigall's citation it noted that "throughout the battle, which lasted some eight hours, this NCO had no thought whatever for his own safety. His actions were quite unsurpassed."¹² Of Pte. Dennis it was stated that "this soldier's coolness and complete disregard for danger were a magnificent example to the men of his platoon."¹³ Major Clarke was awarded a Bar to his existing Military Cross, his company killed 30 enemy and captured 50. Major Anderson won the Military Cross; and his actions were credited with bringing the attack to a standstill and forcing the enemy back, "the threat had so diminished that mopping up of the remnants was all that remained to be done."¹⁴ In one of the medal citations for an NCO, it was noted that having repelled an attack "accompanied by one man, left his position to search for more trouble around the corner. He immediately came across another party of enemy and set about them with his Sten and more grenades.... He then went in search of more enemies ..."¹⁵

The chaotic nature of the battle helped to create a legend, fostered by an ex SS comrades organisation (HIAG), saying that the young troops had actually surrendered, but were shot in the neck in cold blood on the

orders of a crazed, blood-thirsty British NCO from the British Army's 'Desert Rats'. It was claimed that as the noise of battle died away and the villagers emerged from their cellars they found the bodies of 42 German soldiers lying in a shell hole. However, no witnesses have ever been found, and when the bodies were reinterred no neck wounds were found. The exact truth of what happened, will of course never be known.

When Vahendorf was retaken, and order re-established, the Germans had lost 60 dead and 70 men taken as prisoners, and the British in excess of 40. The engagement at Vahendorf was the 2nd Devons last action of the war, with Alwin Wolz, the Hamburg Combat Commander, justifying the pointless attack as a tactical manoeuvre so that Hamburg's non-combatant transfer could begin. On 28 April the attack on Hamburg began, and on 3 May Hamburg surrendered.



Harry and Gertrude learnt of Ernest's death from the family of George Hellier who lived in Ipplepen, as he was serving with Ernest. He wrote home and told his family that Ernest had been killed, but the official notification took longer to arrive, the telegram was brought by a boy on a bicycle. Ernest and five of his Devonshire Regiment colleagues, were buried at Becklingen War Cemetery south of Soltau in Lower Saxony, Germany. On his gravestone, shown left, the family added the inscription: "He shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away"

Above Vahendorf the villagers created a cemetery, shown below, where the bodies of 48 young German soldiers were reburied in 1946. It is tended by the villagers who remember the sacrifice made by the young men, many of whom were only 16 years old.



In November 2017 two AbbPast members visited Ernest's grave, shown above, and left a wreath of poppies on behalf of the village.

Chapter 5

The Home Front

The daily life in Abbotskerswell during the war years was described in Chapter 3; using newspapers and personal reminiscences to describe what it was like. This chapter covers specific stories of the war at home, what is often called the 'Home Front', and although the two chapters are obviously inextricably linked we have tried to separate them. The war certainly united the village:

In season we children and any spare adults all picked apples for cider making in Henley's orchards. We boys climbed the trees and shook them to get all the apples on to the ground for bagging. I have fond memories of helping with hay making in Buckpitt's fields near our house. I used to look after the horse which walked backwards and forwards grabbing the hay and lifting it to the top of the rick being built. Everyone mucked in.¹

The Black-Out

"The black-out is the biggest nuisance and is depressing."²

On 1 September 1939, before the declaration of war, the Government imposed 'Black-out' regulations. These required that all windows and doors should be covered at night with suitable material such as heavy curtains, cardboard or paint, to prevent the escape of any glimmer of light that might aid enemy aircraft. External lights such as street lights were switched off, or dimmed and shielded to deflect light downward. Essential lights such as traffic lights and vehicle headlights were fitted with slotted covers to deflect their beams downwards to the ground.

Abbotskerswell Scout Troop

The remarkable account of the history of the Abbotskerswell Scouts was created by the Scout Master Leslie George Bailey, pictured on page 63. His Log begins on 8 June 1939 when the troop was founded, and ends on 29 June 1941 when lack of numbers meant their meetings were suspended. It gives a personal view of the war.



Scoutmaster Bailey and the village Vicar, Rev. Bassett-Pike, held a meeting for interested boys and 10 attended; *Appendix 3* shows a list of all known scouts in the Troop. The first meeting held was held on 17 June when one patrol, called Badgers, was created; the Patrol Leader was Peter Sutton,

with his second being Kingsley Hawkins. The original scout flag, last used in 1927, was provided by a villager who had saved it. On 17 & 18 July the Troop held its first Scout Camp at Chercombe Bridge, they were taken there in a Stoneycombe Quarry lorry. They are pictured below.



L to R: Bond, George Bailey, Border, Hawkins, Ware, Ford & Palfrey

The Troop Investiture was held at Church House on 29 June and is pictured in the *AbbPast* publication 4. *Pubs, Clubs & Governance*. The importance of the Scout movement can be seen by their involvement in the evacuation process, and the edict of 9 September 1939 that all adult Scouts should wear their uniform at all times during the war.

In November Scoutmaster Bailey decided to use the troop to support the war effort by fund raising, so he created a concert party; this became known as 'George's Gang' (George was his middle name). They practiced hard, brought in musicians and sisters of the Scouts and were soon hugely popular in the area, topping the bill at variety concerts.

The Gang featured George with his ventriloquist dummies, Johnnie the sailor boy and Peter, shown right. Then there was



Gordon Hingsdon as 'Hingie - the Clever Boy Impersonator', Ken Palfrey as a Yodeller and Tich Bond who became known as 'the silver voiced boy singer'. There was dancing, community singing, Dennis Cowell whistling and Brian Ford and friends signing 'There'll Always Be an England'.



George's Gang L to R: On floor: Danny Mann, Kingsley Hawkins, John Maddicott, Bill Wyburn Standing: Claude Andrews, Terry Bond, Ernest Ward, Brian Ford, Peter Sutton, Douglas Riddler (drummer), Kenneth Palfrey, Ernest Border, Mervyn Aggett, Patrick Ware, Gordon Hingsdon

Many concerts were held, with the poster showing just how popular they had become. In April 1941 Tich Bond appeared in a show at Paignton Pavilion, singing with one of the country's leading dance bands.

By September 1940 there were 15 in the Troop and Brian Ford became Patrol Leader of the new Owl Patrol. The arrival of London evacuees meant that the Troop became bigger, but it also meant they had to move to the Cyder Works for their meetings because of the new demands made on Church House. Tich Bond's father, the works foreman, arranged for them to use the Works' Games Room.

By June 1941, with the evacuees returning home and the village Scouts getting older, the numbers dwindled, with only Bond, Ford and Cooper attending. Consequently, and reluctantly, Scoutmaster Bailey suspended the Troop meetings. Tich Bond joined 2nd Newton Abbot Scouts and became a Patrol Leader. SM Bailey also moved to the 2nd and also the Air Scouts; 'George's Gang' was reborn in 1943 as part of Newton Abbot Air Scouts.

Evacuation

In 1938 the Government Evacuation Scheme was created, with certain areas designated for reception of evacuees. These areas would take evacuees from the major urban centres; they were to be billeted in private housing in rural areas. During 1939 Devon was selected as an area for the evacuation of children, and detailed plans were revealed in the *MDA* on 2 September, 1939. The plans were to prepare local people for Operation Pied Piper, which was a plan to relocate more than 3.5 million people.

- **Billets** - these were the houses where the children were to live, with householders encouraged to take as many children as possible. The householder was to be "in loco parentis", responsible for the children as if they were their parents. This covered legal liability, discipline and control; it was noted that teachers and welfare committees would be there to help.
- **Payment** – householders received 10s. 6d a week for one child, or 8s. 6d per child if more than one was taken. This was to cover all food costs, but not clothing or medical bills.
- **Clothing** – children were expected to bring clothes, but not bedding, and of course their gas mask. An interesting comment was that it was anticipated that some children would not be provided with all they needed. It was hoped that volunteers would help with washing and mending of clothes.
- **Education** – the Local Education Authority was to organise schooling, although in many cases teachers would come with the children. The payment of 5 shillings a week was made for billeting teachers.
- **Training** – it was hoped that there would be training for volunteers to help householders, but only where possible.

However, the first evacuees did not arrive in Abbotskerswell until June 1940, after the fall of France, when areas in the south and east were cleared for the expected seaborne invasion. This was part of a plan which would involve "organised parties of school children unaccompanied by their mothers"³, and was often known as the 'trickle' evacuation. 160 000 London children were evacuated at this time.

On 22 June the *MDA* noted that 68 evacuees had arrived in the village, conveyed by Devon General buses. The local Scouts were used to help group them according to their destinations, using the tags that each had attached to them; Scouts Ford, Hingston, Gibbs and Bond were selected for the task. Brian Ford remembers this task, and that quite a few had wet themselves because of the long day and the uncertainty of what was happening. They arrived at 9 30pm, and with the help of the local ARP, Rev. Bassett-Pike and his wife, and many willing helpers, they were soon taken to their new homes. It was noted, hopefully, that "the kiddies seem to have settled down well with the children of the parish".⁴

When the evacuees came the village children were told to instruct them on what they could eat in the wild because life in the countryside was so new to them: "I felt sorry for these people, so far from their families yet I never remember any of them upset at all, they seemed content with their new surroundings."⁵ The evacuees wouldn't drink the milk that they saw come from cows, they believed milk came in bottles: "The villagers collected clothes for the evacuees who were tired, cold and hungry and did their best to ensure brothers and sisters stayed together."⁶ In truth it was probably very difficult for London children taken away from their parents and put into rural Devon. Not all locals were in favour of the process; Miss Gytha Swayne, the housekeeper at Ashley Priors, wrote to the local press to state that "A more monstrous or unjust piece of unnecessary legislation ... was never proposed."⁷

The children were billeted throughout the village with anybody who had space for them. The Bowhays had two stay with them: George Snowden and George Puddle, both about eight years old. There was no real problem, although Tony remembered that they seemed a bit loud and 'Cockney'. Their parents used to send a postal order each week, one for 6d and one for 3d, they also sent one for Tony. When Tony's mother was taken ill they went to live with the Coombes at 6 Rose Cottages. The children generally seemed quite poor, and brought few clothes with them. There didn't seem to be any real problem between the village children and the evacuees, and Tony remembers that they used to meet up in the field that is now the playground and paddle in the stream and sing Cockney songs, and that they always seemed to have an answer for everything!

Mrs Honey of 10 Orchard Terrace took in three children from one family, Janet, Joan and Pat (who was known as Doodie); in the photograph Janet is back row on the left, with Joan next to her and Pat in front of her.



They were nice girls from Battersea, although they were suffering from having fleas in their clothes when they first arrived. All five girls shared one bedroom in the house. Later a boy from Kent, Rodney, arrived who wasn't so nice, as he kicked the girls. Aunt Pat and her three children also moved in, to escape the bombing of Plymouth. The Seymours at Rosebank took in John and Frank Faulkner, whilst across the road at Carsevilla, Mrs Bulley's lad became friends with Mr Palk at Ashley Priors, doing jobs

there. Wally Talbot went to the Phillips at Rockstone and became friends with village girl Betty Vincent, they became pen pals when he went home and were later married. Laurie Saurin became friendly with Gordon Arthur who stayed at The Beacon with William & Edith Mortimore. Gordon wanted to be a farmer and was always at Whiddon Farm with Jack Brooks, he even got some leggings so he looked like a farmer. *Appendix 4* lists the names of evacuees who we found had lived in the village; many names came from the school punishment book!

There were also evacuee families who came to the village. The Fowell children came with their mother and rented in a house in South View, as did May Alda Coombe whose husband was in the army. Sadly in January 1944 their baby died, and the coroner hoped that her husband would be informed kindly by an officer. South View also had Mrs Jones with her children. Scoutmaster Bailey noted that "the Town and surrounding villages are loaded with evacuees, and refugees from the bombed areas pouring in. The people carry on just as usual and to see them walking around the town whistling and singing it is difficult to realise that a war is on."⁸

The evacuated children were from Battersea and the first problem was that the plan had been to send only the older children to Abbotskerswell, with younger ones going to Ipplepen, Broadhempston and Ideford. Not surprisingly the children did not want to be separated from their siblings, therefore mixed ages arrived in the village which immediately created problems with their schooling. Mrs Vesey, a social worker who came with the children, had the task of organising the education of the evacuees,

and while this was done they were entertained by Court Grange Blind School. The evacuated children were apparently very interested in the Braille reading, with a Blind School pupil, Lewis Pelham, reading from any book given to him.

At first the village children were taught in the School in the morning and then Church House in the afternoon, with the Battersea children accommodated in reverse. They then swapped over on alternate weeks. However by 5 July it was decided by the County Inspector that the older children should go to school in Newton Abbot and that the junior evacuees should be combined with the village children. This meant that there were 32 evacuees and 53 village children in the School, which had seating for 70 children! Mr S G Elliott was a teacher from the children's Battersea School, who was sent with them to assist at the School; unfortunately there is no record of which school they came from. The London teachers were housed in Beechcroft (Croft Cottage) for their time in the village. However, the children's numbers kept rising, especially as 'unofficial' evacuees arrived, as *Table 3* shows. London County Council sent six dual desks to help the seating problem, although one was broken.

Date	Village & Unofficial Evacuees	Government Scheme Evacuees	School Total
30 October 1940	52	41	93
6 January 1941	54	46	100
22 April 1941	51 + 6	49	106

Table 3

Two of these 'unofficial' evacuees were Eileen and Geoffrey Vening who were related to the Venings and Saurins at Park View and The Thatches, and came to stay there. They were from Hayes in Middlesex; their father was in the forces and their mother worked in Hayes. The evacuation scheme payments did not apply to those making private arrangements like this. Another was Ann Cooper whose parents moved to 2 Town Cottage from Babbacombe after their house was bombed; the blast blew Ben and Mary out of bed, and Ben feared for his family's safety.

Before serious schooling could begin a number of practical issues had to be resolved. One was to allow the evacuees to be able to use the public toilets when they were at Church House. Another was revealed in the *MDA* on 3 August 1940 with a description and picture of the digging of

shallow trenches for use in air raids; the diggers were shown at work. John Westbury Palk allowed them to use his land next to the school for the trenches, with School Manager Charles Tubb starting the work and other villagers joining in.



The ladies facing the camera are, from right to left, Mrs E Webber, Edith Sandford and Rene Miller.

A second picture, which appears to have taken at the same time, shows the children at work, posed rather than real it can assumed. Laurie Saurin is on the back row, with his cousin Eileen Vening on his left. Other evacuees are also shown.

Other safety measures at the school were necessary, particularly against the effects of flying glass. This was resolved by painting the glass with a solution and putting on two thicknesses of wire netting; this was largely paid for by Devon Education Committee.

By May 1941 it was clear that something had to be done to improve things, and County Inspector Edgar Fowles came up with a plan:

I have provisionally approved the classification of Juniors in two classes - Boys and Girls separately - after consultation with the Staff. The large number of backward old children justifies this apparently uneducational classification. It has the advantage of avoiding the changing of classes for needlework and P.T.⁹

Fowles' plan was quickly implemented, with the junior girls moving to Church House straight away, but as the numbers increased the junior boys had moved there as well by June 1941. The next issue to be resolved at the school was the provision of school dinners, consequently in February 1942 Devon County had sent equipment to the School, and in July dinners were provided for 30 pupils. In July 1941 Mr Elliott returned to London, no doubt a relief to Tony Bowhay who received the cane

from him in Church House! His replacement was Mr G Cocks who was accompanied by his wife; she taught Laurie, and he did not like her.

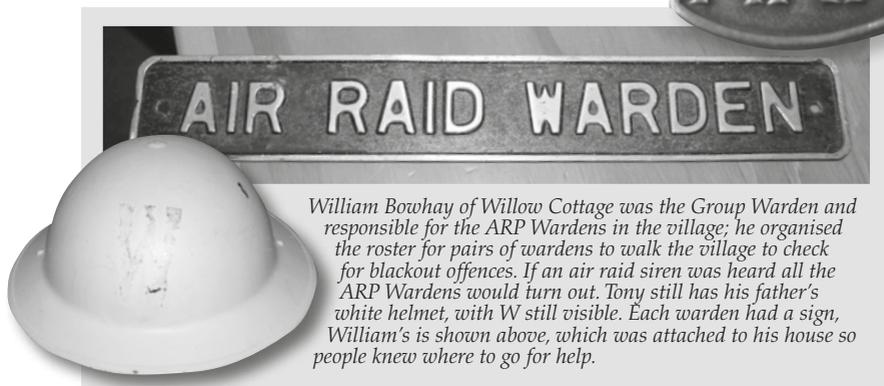
By January 1943 many of the evacuees had returned home, as the worst of the Blitz appeared to be over. Mr Cocks had left in December 1942, with no replacement deemed necessary. The numbers for the Spring Term had fallen to a more usual 53 with only a few evacuees remaining, with one excluded from school for personal uncleanliness. There were a few reminders of evacuation, such as the regular arrangements for trainee teachers to be on teaching practice at the village school. They were from St Katharine's Training College in Tottenham, which had been evacuated to Babbacombe for the war. Another was the need for the junior children from London to take their Grammar School entrance tests.

Civil Defence

In Chapter 2 the introduction of ARP Wardens was referred to, but as the war developed the need for good, coordinated civil defence was shown to be vital. In Abbotskerswell this meant the need for volunteers, both men and women, to undertake a variety of roles. As soon as war was declared road sign posts were taken away, car, bicycle and street lights were extinguished, and windows had to be blacked out.

ARP Wardens

The 1939 Register listed 12 ARP Wardens living in the parish, not all were active in the parish as *Table 4* shows. It is not clear what definitions were used to arrive at the role, as different enumerators collected the data. Leonard Uren's ARP badge is shown.



William Bowhay of Willow Cottage was the Group Warden and responsible for the ARP Wardens in the village; he organised the roster for pairs of wardens to walk the village to check for blackout offences. If an air raid siren was heard all the ARP Wardens would turn out. Tony still has his father's white helmet, with W still visible. Each warden had a sign, William's is shown above, which was attached to his house so people knew where to go for help.

Name	Address	Role
Reginald Locke	Whiddon Cottages	ARP Warden
Leonard Uren	6 Stoneyhill	ARP Warden
Blanche Webber	6 Orchard Terrace	ARP Warden
Harry Border	12 Orchard Terrace	ARP Warden
George Rowe	Hillborough	ARP Volunteer Warden
Frederick Coombe	1 Elm Cottages	ARP Warden, Newton Abbot
Henry Cummings	2 Elm Cottages	ARP Warden
Charles Kester	Laburnum Farm	ARP Warden – Croydon Borough Council
William Bowhay	Willow Grove	ARP Warden
William Brooks	2 Sunnybank	ARP Part –time Warden
Rev. Sidney Pike	Vicarage	ARP Volunteer Warden
Eva Pike	Vicarage	ARP Volunteer Warden
George Stoneman	Salem Bungalow	ARP Warden
Gordon Warne	Berrington, Two Mile Oak	ARP Warden (Not listed on Register)

Table 4

ARP Wardens wore a dark blue uniform and their distinctive white helmets, and had many roles in the village. They fitted and checked gas masks, and were also responsible for local reconnaissance and reporting, and leadership, organisation, guidance and control of the general public. Wardens would also advise people of the locations of rest and food centres, and other welfare facilities.

In October 1940 it was reported that the village black-out was generally good, although some windows and doors still needed work on them. However the ARP Wardens had been instructed to start reporting offenders. By 1941 'black-out offences' were being reported in the village, and a heavy fine was given to those who were caught. This did not make them popular with everybody; Laurie Saurin's father thought George Stoneman went too far in his duties, which he put down to enjoying the power of reporting blackout misdemeanours. In February 1941 Nurse Elizabeth Hill was fined £1, with 2s. 6d costs, for allowing a light to show at a bedroom window at Court Grange School, and Dr William Bromilow, 23 Stoneyhill, was prosecuted for "failing to obscure a light

at his home"¹⁰; he explained that he had forgotten to pull the curtains. Since the consequence could have been to attract a German bomber, he was fined £1, with 3s. 6d costs. He did not learn the lesson as he was fined again in April 1943 for a Blackout Offence; this time he had to pay £3.

In May 1941 Mrs Kathleen Williams at The Manor House, was fined £3 for a similar offence. It was Special Constable George Stoneman who noticed that the black-out material had not been drawn across a window. Mrs Williams' explanation was that the light had been switched on during the day and then not extinguished before nightfall. Once again the Williams' did not learn the lesson, as in November their daughter, Jessica, was also fined heavily, £3 and £1 3s. 2d costs. In the same month Mrs Edith Mortimore, at The Beacon, had the misfortune to have a chimney fire at night. Special Constable William Sinclair called the fire brigade, but she was fined 10 shillings for allowing her chimney to catch fire at night. In June 1943 it was Mrs MacKay, of Whiddon House, who was fined for a blackout offence; her explanation was that she was new in the house and had not done the blackouts properly.

"However, we all carry on, keep smiling and hoping that a good peace will come soon."¹¹

At Court Grange School for the Blind they needed their own methods to deal with air raids. They trained the youngsters for night raids by always putting clothes and gas masks in exactly the same place so they could exit the building as quickly as possible; it was noted that it being dark at night did not matter to the children.

Fire Watchers



Another aspect of civil defence was 'fire watching'. The fear of the impact of air raids led to the creation of 'fire watchers' who looked out for fires after air raids. They wore the distinctive lightweight helmets shown left; this one was used in Abbotskerswell.

In February 1941 the issue of fire fighting was addressed at a village meeting. Gordon Warne, the honorary organiser for Abbotskerswell, explained how to create fire fighting watches, and four watches were created in the parish. Sand was to be made available to all householders, which they could collect from Mr Chudleigh's orchard. Fire Watchers soon began, with lists posted in the Post Office & the Co-op. There were 43 designated fire watchers to cover the village. Regular gas mask inspections were also carried out by the ARP wardens

The issue of what to do if fires were spotted was addressed by the acquisition of stirrup pumps, which Mr Warne explained had recently been satisfactorily tested. The two pictures below show one of the original Abbotskerswell stirrup pumps, and a group of Torquay fire watchers in August 1942; the lady on the left is my mother, Winifred. Notice the rectangular buckets that were used.



Gordon Saurin, worked for the GPO in Newton Abbot and was a fire warden there. When there was an air raid warning he would cycle to the Post Office to do his duty, and then cycle home to check on his family. He lived at Park View and his family used Thatches as their air raid shelter; Margaret Hawkes remembers being carried there in a blanket until the all clear siren was heard.

First Aid and Shelter Stations

Another aspect of Civil Defence was to set up stations around the village to provide first aid, food and shelter that could be used if an air raid occurred. In Abbotskerswell the first aid point



was at Willow Grove, where William Bowhay was the First Aid Warden. He was quarry manager at Devon & Courtenay Clay Pits at Decoy, and was used to giving first aid, therefore he was trained up, and also went round other villages training people in first aid techniques. The Willow Grove ARP sign, which was attached to the house gate, together with the Air Raid Warden sign, have been shown earlier in the chapter.

Special Constables

These were unpaid volunteers who, in their free time, aided the regular force Police Force. They often took the place of regular policemen who had been called up, and performed many roles. The Specials often considered themselves of more use to the war effort than the Home Guard, who would take anybody into their service! The 1939 Register listed six Specials, shown in *Table 5*, and interestingly they were all people of some significance in the village, who often performed other roles, and who are mentioned in various places in the story of Abbotskerswell in World War II.

Name	Address	Name	Address
Bernard Mills	Pencombe, Stoneyhill	William H Bond	Pamval
William Sinclair	Abbotsvale	George Stoneman	Salem Bungalow
John Partridge	Mount Pleasant	William Henley	Mallands

Table 5



This lovely photograph of Newton Abbot's Special Constables, features George Stoneman. The trees suggest it may have been taken at Forde House. In 1941 George was commended by the Newton Abbot Magistrates for helping to apprehend a shop lifter when off duty.

Civil Air Guard

This was a government scheme to subsidize training fees for members of flying clubs, in return for future military call-up commitments. In 1938 the Air Ministry offered a grant of £25 to pilot members of flying clubs who obtained an 'A' type licence and if they volunteered for the Civil Air Guard the grant increased. With the cessation of civil flying as the war approached, many of the Civil Air Guard enlisted in either the Royal Air Force or the Fleet Air Arm. The 1939 Register lists two members of the Guard: Henry Blackburn aged 38, and Ted Needs aged 28. The age is significant as any flier under 30 might become a service pilot, which Ted Needs did; if over 30 they would probably become an instructor.

The War Close To Home

At first the war must have seemed very distant, but steadily the reality began, with air raid sirens and service personnel in uniform becoming common place. An ack-ack battery was stationed on Denbury Lane, manned by men from the Royal Artillery. They had a search light and two Bofors guns, and Mrs Honey did their laundry, with her children taking it back in a trolley. Local girl Betty Beaumont, who worked at WaterMota, married one of the soldiers. WaterMota, a company from Hampton Wick near Kingston upon Thames, had arrived at Two Mile Oak in 1938; they made marine engines and gear boxes. During the war they changed over to making munitions and bullets in the machine shop:

I went to work in 1943 when I was 14 and cycled to WaterMota at 7am each day, six days a week for £2 0 0 a week. Mr Wade was the manager and Mr Fair from Kingskerswell was the boss ... they were making incendiary bombs.¹²

WaterMota employed around 30 people and extended the existing garage that was on the site, adding a prefab at the back and a second floor to the main building; the Head Office was in a caravan on the grass forecourt. Laurie remembers the people by their cars; Henry Green at Rosary Nook, next to WaterMota, had a brand new Morris 8, Mr Fair an impressive Rover and Mr Wade a Jowett Javelin, followed by a new shape Morris 8.

German Aeroplanes

Throughout the war, in the skies above the village, war planes could be seen, Spitfires, Hurricanes and Typhoons from the RAF on coastal patrols, and German bombers with their fighter escorts. Tony remembers watching a dogfight over Stoneycombe woods, and when it was finished

all the village lads raced down there to try to find the bullet cases. The children also liked to collect the CHAFF, which were silver strips that were dropped to confuse radar. Laurie recalls a Heinkel III being chased across the village by a Spitfire, which shot it down over the sea: "I saw a Dornier 'Flying Pencil' flying over Abbotskerswell to bomb Newton Abbot Railway Station at 6.30 in the evening."¹³ Brian also remembers seeing the bombers being attacked by Spitfires and also the Newton raids, as the planes would fly low across the Wrigwell Nursery, where he worked, heading for France after dropping their bombs; they were so low you could clearly see the swastikas on the wings. Eileen Tett's father was taking milk from his farm on Canada Hill when the attack happened. The ARP Wardens emptied the milk churns from his van and instructed him to take the wounded to hospital.



Midge Honey was out in the fields above Court Grange Copse with her mother, sister and other children when a German fighter swooped in and buzzed the field, flying very low, on its way to attack Newton Abbot. If a German plane was shot down it would be put on display in the market to help raise funds for the war effort. In 1943 'Wings for Victory Week' was held across the country, which followed successful fundraising weeks for warships and weapons. A Spitfire cost £5 000 and Newton Abbot set itself the target of funding 50 new ones. Laurie painted a mural at school to advertise the week, and it was put up on the front of St Leonard's Church Tower. Both the Parish Council and the village school received certificates for their successful fund raising.

Laurie liked to sit at Langford Bridge and watch the trains go by, and remembers seeing the famous locomotive 6000 King George V, with its brass bell on the front. One day he watched a Spitfire land on the fields at Milber, it had run low on fuel. The local garage provided some fuel and "he then taxied down the field and belted up to take off in a short uphill space"¹⁴

Although air raid warnings were common, no bombs actually fell in the parish; the closest were the two that fell just above the cemetery at Ogwel Cross, one landing in the gateway just below the road junction on Firestone Hill on 16 October 1940. Brian recalls the bombs falling at Ogwel because of the plane's odd behaviour, "it seemed to circle all afternoon and seemed lost, it then dropped a stick of 5 bombs harmlessly and straddled the cemetery"¹⁵ He also remembers the whistle of doodlebugs, which was fine as long as their whistle didn't stop, if it did it would then fall out of the sky.

During WW2 there were around 65 air raids on the Newton Abbot area, which was hit by some 50 high explosive bombs and many incendiary devices. Nearly 90 people were severely injured and the death toll was 22.

In April 1942 Fred Pearce, a Special Constable, was killed in a raid; he was the father of Dougie, a school friend of Tony's at Newton Abbot Grammar School. In the same attack Thomas Monaghan was killed with his stepson as they crossed Courtenay Park, hurrying to get home. Newton Abbot UDC gave each family a certificate to honour their memory; Thomas's is shown.



Derek Daniell recalls the air raids because they always seemed to happen at 6 pm and of course were mainly aimed at Plymouth. His Dad was a clay miner so he dug an air raid shelter in the field across the road for all of Hillside Cottages' residents. It was underground and lined with timber, it had a wall in front of the door to protect it from any blast, and could take a dozen people. Tony's house had a similar shelter in the garden, made by his father, who also worked at the clay mines; it had wooden boards and beams in the roof, the trouble was it flooded in the winter. Before that they sheltered under a big table in the dining



room which had a wooden beam over it to protect them. The Sinclairs also had a shelter at Abbotsvale as did Toby Mears at Marystowe, this one was brick with a thick concrete roof, shown left. Pat Honey clearly remembers standing at his back door one dark night and watching a red sky, which was Plymouth burning.

At The Priory the nuns were regularly disturbed by the incoming German bombers, and their Chronicle records a number of incidents. They recount seeing the planes that had bombed the station, pursued by Spitfires, and in 1940 the buildings were strafed by the Germans. Their many trips to the church crypt after the “‘alert’ moaned” are described, with their fear described. One night in May 1942 they had gone to the crypt and could hear the drone of the planes going when “there was a terrific explosion followed by three more – our windows rattled. We were very frightened, and went on with our rosary for the dying and ourselves.” Next morning they found 14 broken panes of glass in the green house and a few in the convent; the bombs had fallen on Newton Abbot. However, in true British spirit, their 24 hour a day perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was maintained, even during the air raids and fire watching duties.



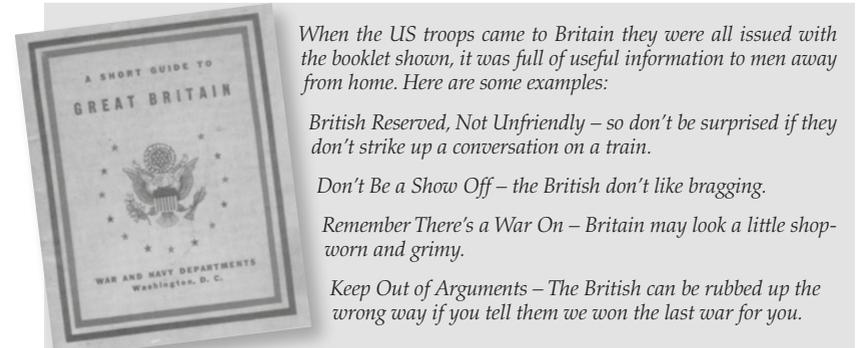
The Americans

When the preparations for D-Day began the Americans took over the Denbury Army Camp. The American soldiers were known as ‘G.I.s’, which originally stood for ‘galvanized iron’, but later seemed to mean

‘Government Issue’ or ‘General Issue’. The G.I.s were often seen in the village, coming to drink in the pubs, as well walking into Newton Abbot. They are remembered as being friendly and always willing to give the children candy and chocolates, something rarely seen in Britain then. The picture above was taken in the South Hams, and shows a typical scene of the time.

The American Army took over the two petrol pumps at the old Two Mile Oak Garage; one vehicle that was eye-catching was a Harley Davidson motor cycle with a foxtail hanging from the end of each handle bar. Amazingly Sherman tanks would also roll up to fill up. The tanks would rumble around the lanes on exercises, and convoys of U. S. lorries would pass along Totnes Road on their way to Slapton Sands where the Americans were practicing for the D-Days landings.

On one occasion my grandmother, who was completely deaf, was walking into Newton up Stoneman’s Hill when just past Crystalwood an American officer overtook her and ushered her into a gateway. She had been walking up the middle of the lane and hadn’t realized that six Sherman tanks were behind her trying to pass.¹⁶



The best part is entitled ‘English versus American Language’, which begins “At first you may not understand what they are talking about and they may not understand what you say ... many of the words will be strange, or apparently wrongly used.”¹⁷ Under the heading of ‘Some Important Do’s and Don’ts’ are these suggestions:

- You are higher paid than the British “Tommy”. Don’t rub it in. Play fair with him. He can be a pal in need.
- If you are invited to eat with a family don’t eat too much. Otherwise you may eat up their weekly rations.
- Don’t make fun of British speech or accents.
- NEVER criticize the King or Queen.
- Let your slogan be: *It is always impolite to criticize your hosts: it is militarily stupid to criticize your allies.*

The local women no doubt also took an interest in these exciting young men, very different to the men they knew from the village. One story remembered by a number of villagers involved an American soldier who had parked his jeep in the village, when he returned a group of village boys were stood admiring it. They begged him to give them a

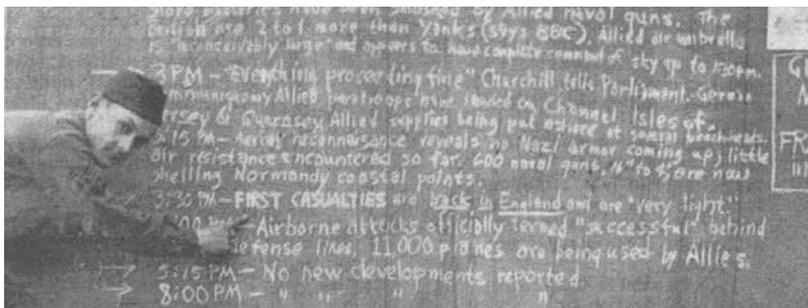
ride and eventually he agreed and took off along Manor Road, past Old Barn, across the main road and up the unmade road towards Denbury. Unfortunately near the top he turned the Jeep over tipping out the four boys: these were Mervyn Aggett, Russell 'Buster' Andrews, his brother Claude and John Thorning. John was seriously injured and was rushed to the US Hospital at Stover where they were able to save his life; it was touch and go apparently.

Generally the GIs were well liked and are remembered as being kind, giving the children chocolate and chewing gum. At Christmas they held a party for the village children at Denbury Camp:

The food, the presents, the care they took of us that dark evening in the middle of the war is something I have never forgotten. They treated us as their own, a generous nation and people. It must have been February 1944 with Midge and I having a birthday on the 12th. A knock on the door and there were two Americans with a huge square birthday cake for us. I will always remember them with fondness.¹⁸

Not everybody was so thoughtful; Jack Brooks at Whiddon Farm upset the villagers by refusing to allow a group of soldiers space in one of his barns to complete a map reading exercise, this was not considered patriotic. In May 1944 some boys out exploring climbed through a hedge to find "the Yanks were parked nose to tail around the field, tanks lorries etc all under nets. Of course we didn't know about D Day but again they loved seeing us and gave us K rations, gum etc."¹⁹

After D-Day the majority of American troops left for Europe, although some remained at Denbury Camp. The picture below was taken on D-Day showing the progress of the attacks on the Normandy beaches.



Chapter 6

The Abbotskerswell Home Guard

On 13 June 1940 Abbotskerswell No 26 Platoon of the Home Guard was formed. This was in response to the call from Secretary of State for War for volunteers to defend their homeland against the threat of a German invasion.

The Home Guard was initially called the 'Local Defence Volunteers' or LDV and was a defence organisation of the British Army. It was operational from 1940 until 1944, and was made up of 1.5 million local volunteers otherwise ineligible for military service; those too young or too old to join the services, and those in reserved occupations. The age of many of the volunteers explains why the Home Guard acquired the nickname 'Dad's Army'. Their role was to act as a secondary defence force, in case of invasion by the forces of Nazi Germany and their allies. It was hoped they might slow down the advance of the enemy, even by a few hours in order to give the regular troops time to regroup. The Home Guard continued to guard the coastal areas of the United Kingdom and other important places such as airfields, factories and explosives stores until late 1944.

In the early part of the war the press was calling for such a force but the Government did not believe it was needed. However by 1940 private defence forces began to be formed, such as the 'Legion of Frontiersmen' in Essex. Concerned by this development the Secretary of State for War, Anthony Eden, gave a radio broadcast in May 1940, announcing the formation of the LDV. He called on men between the ages of 17 and 65 in Britain, who were not in military service but wished to defend their country against an invasion, to enrol in the LDV at their local police station. It was under the control of the regular army and the volunteers were divided into sections, companies and platoons but would not be paid. The leaders of units would not hold commissions or have the power to command regular forces. In August 1940, at Winston Churchill's suggestion, the LDV was renamed The Home Guard.

Across Devon Home Guard Battalions were formed; the 9th (Newton Abbot) Battalion of the Devon Home Guard was the full name of the local battalion. The 9th would be formed of five Companies: A to D, and the Great Western Railway (GWR) Company. The areas of each are shown in *Table 6*.

Company	Headquarters	Districts in Each Company
A	Newton Abbot	Newton Abbot, Kingsteignton
B	Dawlish	Starcross, Dawlish Warren, Ashcombe, Holcombe, Kenton
C	Teignmouth	Teignmouth, Shaldon, Stokeinteignhead, Bishopsteignton
D	Kingskerswell	Kingskerswell, Abbotskerswell, Ogwell, Ipplepen, Denbury, Coombeinteignhead
GWR	Newton Abbot Railway Station	GWR men

Table 6

Home Guard Uniform

At first the LDV/Home Guard wore civilian clothing with an LDV armband, but eventually they were issued with denim overalls, as shown on the left. They wore field service caps, worn at all sorts of angles and their own boots. There was little marking on the uniform, although corporal and sergeant chevrons were used.

Later in the war the Home Guardsmen were issued with regular army battledress, as shown on the right. This was a serge khaki tunic and trousers, with leather anklets and boots.



D Company, No. 26 Platoon

The Abbotskerswell platoon was formed as soon as the LDV began. Inevitably the old soldiers from WW1 quickly volunteered, with men such as George Stoneman, a former sergeant in the Royal Field Artillery, to the fore. Walter Ford who lived in Hillside Cottages also joined straight away; he had fought in France with the Devonshire and the Dorset Regiments, as his 'dogtag' shows.



In this early period the LDV stood ready for anything, and held the fort during the tragic days of Dunkirk in June 1940. The fears of an invasion must have been very real when, in September 1940, a 'Stand To' was declared; this meant the Home Guardsmen were on full alert. It lasted for ten days before the 'Stand Down' order arrived. Stanley Morris joined straight away. Telling his story many years later Stanley explained "I would have been about 30 at the time. I spent the whole of the war in the Home Guard ... had an invasion come, we would have been involved heavily down here. We were a bit scared".¹

At first the Home Guard was poorly equipped; No.26 Platoon only having sticks, pitchforks and one gun, a 12-bore shot gun belonging to Walter Ford. Later they did receive army issue rifles which they were taught how to handle, clean and load; they practiced shooting in the quarry at Court Grange. Once a year they had a practice weekend at the Fleet Air Arm base at Maidencombe, but as Stanley commented "We didn't know very much ... I don't think we could have done anything".²

The Platoon met each night at Whiteway's Cyder Works on Manor Road and were on training duty from 6pm to 10pm. Many of the men were working, being in reserved occupations which meant their work was so important that they could not be spared for the armed forces. Walter was a miner at the clay pits, whilst Stanley was an advisory officer with the Ministry of Agriculture. Although they had little contact with the regular army, they worked hard with parades, route marches, drills, gun cleaning and with weekends under canvas. They trained with live ammunition and grenades when they became available. At their guard duty posts they dug trenches and put up barbed wire; there were also Battalion exercises at 'Action Stations'.

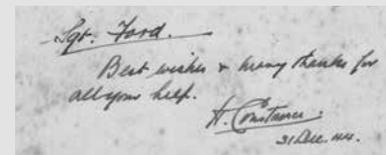
Platoon No. 26's main duty was guarding important local resources such as the water reservoir and Dainton Railway Tunnel. At Dainton Farm the Platoon had sleeping quarters for the nocturnal guard duty, where they were to report on bomb damage to the tunnel: "After the outbreak of war, Bernard Mills [Quarry Manager], who had joined the Home Guard, was instructed by the War Office to 'blow' the main Plymouth rail line if the Germans invaded."³ However, the Platoon never had any contact with the enemy and one of the few tasks they performed was to apprehend an annoying drunk!

It is difficult to appreciate now the adverse conditions which existed in those days. The volunteers were called upon to do one whole night in six from dusk until dawn, plus of course, their training. He was expected to be at his post by at least 19.00 hours, be on duty until about 5.00 hours the following morning, and then go home and prepare for a day's hard work. There were no facilities for sleeping except sometimes an old cow shed or some shelter as could be borrowed from local farmers.⁴

Home Guardsmen were volunteers although from October 1940 they were paid a Subsistence Allowance; 1. 6d for 5 hours or 3s. for 8 hours. Men provided their own haversack rations, with tea and soup provided by the Company, when possible. The officer in charge of No.26 Platoon was not from the village, he was Lieutenant Herbert Constance from Kingskerswell; he was supported by various corporals and sergeants, one of whom was Walter Ford. *Appendix 5* lists all that is known about the 30 men who we know served in No.26 Platoon.



*Back Row: Toby Mears, Fred Border, Ted Miller, Henry 'Joe' Davis
Middle Row: Albert Quintrell, Harry Border, Stan Caunter, Bert Stoneman, William Beavis, Walt Gove, Arthur Bearne
Seated Row: ? Crosby, Jack Cleave, Sgt. Walter Ford, Lt. Herbert Constance, Sgt. Stanley Morris, Fred Bulley, Jim Franks*



This photograph was probably taken when the Home Guard were disbanded in December 1944, as on the back is written the platoon officer's appreciation to one of his men, Walter Ford.

The picture left shows the Platoon, with their names; they are wearing their regular army battle dress, with field service caps, leather anklets and military boots. Four of the men are wearing medal bars, reflecting their previous military service. The oldest Guardsmen in the photograph appear to have been William Beavis (59) and Harry Border (58).

By 1941 the civilian population had become used to the Home Guard and even began to accept its authority. Wives must have become rather more understanding as husbands went off on duty, or to weekend parades and marches. In May 1941 King George wrote to the Home Guard to congratulate them on their keenness:

They have already earned the gratitude of their fellow citizens for the prompt and unstinted assistance which they are constantly giving to the Civil Defence services. The Home Guard stands in the direct line of the various bodies of militia, trained bands, fencibles and volunteers, the record of whose fine spirit and military aptitude adorn many a page of our history.⁵

Being a Home Guardsman was not without danger, with men wounded during live weapon training; in Exeter nine of them were killed in an air raid on 5 May 1942.

At its beginning the LDV had very few weapons, but as time went by equipment emerged. At first it was the American P17 rifle, but later the standard Short Lee Enfield of the regular army was distributed. Training was organised, with villager William Bond being the Company Training Officer, and Platoon No. 26 would have become proficient with their rifles. Later heavy equipment such as the Northover Project, which was used for firing Molotov Cocktails, AW Bombs and Mills Grenades arrived; these were intended to set fire to tanks. Next it was the Spigot Mortar and Bren guns. Guns were kept at home by the Home Guardsmen.

A few stories have been preserved about the Platoon. One of the members is remembered by several villagers because they used to taunt him; this was Fred Border, and it seems that he was a rather volatile character. However, if the taunting went too far he would threaten to get his gun, and on at least one occasion he went home and came back with a Bren Gun! How the annoying children ran then. At the 1944 Battle Innoculation course at Maidencombe 'D' Company won The Battle Cup, with No.26 Platoon's Pte Crosby winning the best shot award.

In January 1943 the Platoon held a social evening in aid of 'Mrs Churchill's Aid to Russia Fund'. The local Civil Defence members were invited to a whist drive, concert and community singing. Mark Rowe, who had played in the whist drive as a lady, won first ladies prize, but gave the prize back to be sold for the fund. Privates Jack Cleave and Albert Stoneman were the MCs for the evening, with a number of the Platoon singing songs. One sad duty occurred in July 1943 when Home Guard regular Albert Bovey, known in the village as 'Captain', died suddenly at the age of 41. At his funeral the Home Guard, under Capt. Bond and Lt. Constance, formed a guard of honour and six of them acted as bearers at his funeral; he was described as a 'keen' Home Guardsman. His coffin was draped with the Union Jack.

As the threat of invasion finally disappeared, it was announced in October 1944 that the Home Guard would 'stand down' by 31st December; this was met by many guardsmen with disappointment. To mark the occasion all of the Companies held final 'stand-down' parades on Sunday 3rd December. The Under-Secretary of War described the Home Guard as "the salt of the earth"⁶, whilst the King delivered a radio broadcast to thank the men who had served. His thanks were fulsome:

From fields and hills, from shops and offices, men of every age and every calling, came forward to train themselves for battle. Almost overnight a new force came into being, a force which had little equipment, but was mighty in courage and determination. ... But you have gained something yourselves. You have discovered in yourselves new capabilities. You have found how men from all kinds of homes and many different occupations can work together in a great cause and how happy they can be with each other.⁷

The King attended the parade in Hyde Park, which took 42 minutes to pass, amongst a cheering crowd. His final evaluation was "I know that your country will not forget that service".⁸

The stand-down parade for 'D' Company was held in Kingskerswell, marching from Priory Avenue to a field on the Torquay Road. The Company's six Platoons were represented, with the Company Commander, Major Hiskens, present. The parade was led by the band of the Torquay 200 Squadron Air Training Corps, and on arrival there was a roll of drums and the Union Jack was run up a flag pole and saluted. The officers were presented to Mr Ewan Harris, the Chairman of Newton Abbot Rural District Council, who gave a short address to thank the men: he commented that "after you have completed your duty you may feel a certain amount of satisfaction at doing something to help your country."⁹ Mr Harris also inspected the Company. He was followed by Major The Rev. Denham who gave his thanks and led prayers, and Lt-Colonel James Mason, the officer commanding the 9th (Newton Abbot) Battalion of the Home Guard. 'D' Company then marched past Col. Mason, who took the salute. Finally Major Hiskens gave his thanks, noting that of the Company's strength of 337, 155 were original LDVs and that 105 members had been discharged into H. M. Forces. His concluding remark was: "As to my feelings I just can't hardly express them. You are just the most wonderful set of men that a Company Commander had the honour to

command. Farewell, and good luck and God-speed to you all."¹⁰ He then shook hands with the officers and platoon sergeants. As the parade ended every Home Guard saluted and then broke away with a cry of hurra.



The members of No. 26 Platoon are immortalised in the earlier photograph, and whilst they do look like the BBC's 'Dad's Army' Platoon, it should not be forgotten that they joined fully expecting to have to fight invaders. The oldest known members were Fred Sydenham

who was born in 1879 and Bill Brooks, shown standing on the right with the village Tug of War Team, who was born in 1884.



At the end of the war those who had served in the Home Guard received a certificate; Walter Ford's shows he served throughout the life of the Home Guard. The last line is significant as it should be noted that nationally the Home Guard lost a total of 1,206 members whilst on duty during the war, this was mainly owing to air and rocket attacks.



Anybody who had served for three years was eligible for the award of the Defence Medal; Walter Ford's is shown. We leave the words of the Commanding Officer of the Exeter Battalion of the Home Guard as our tribute to the Abbotskerswell Home Guard:

They joined for a specific purpose of guarding their homes, their families and the Old Country against the Hun. They had joined knowing that they were unclothed, unarmed and untrained, but without a thought for themselves they were ready to answer the call by Mr Anthony Eden. There is no shadow of a doubt that they would have given a good account of themselves if the Hun had landed in this country.¹¹

Chapter 7

The End of the War

On 30 April 1945 Adolf Hitler committed suicide in his bunker in Berlin, and was succeeded by Grand Admiral Karl Dönitz, who Hitler had previously nominated as President of Germany. On 1 May Dönitz announced Hitler's death, and on 2 May, the new German Government fled to Flensburg-Mürwik.

In the evening Dönitz made a nationwide radio address, and although he said the war would continue in the east, to save Germany's destruction by Russia, he knew Germany's position was impossible. His main hope was to ensure that the German troops could surrender to the British or Americans, and not the Soviets, as he feared vengeful Soviet reprisals. On 4 May, German forces in the Netherlands, Denmark, and north-western Germany under Dönitz's command, surrendered to Field Marshal Montgomery at Lüneburg Heath. After failing to obtain agreement that all German troops would surrender to the Western powers, on the morning of 7 May Dönitz authorised Colonel-General Jodl to sign the instrument of unconditional surrender. The surrender documents stated that "All forces under German control to cease active operations at 23:01 hours Central European Time on 8 May 1945."

VE Day

The arrangements for VE Day in Abbotskerswell had been planned for several weeks before the German surrender, with Rev. Harries stating that there would be a church service at 7pm when the great day happened. On Monday there had been an air of expectancy as unofficial and then official notification arrived to say that Germany had surrendered, with VE Day announced for Tuesday. In the evening flags and bunting appeared all over, and at midnight locomotives whistled at the railway station. The Prime Minister's announcement of the peace on Tuesday was met with more locomotive whistling and peals of church bell were rung at 5pm in St Marys.



This bonfire was at Stoneyhill and shows Bob Sanders and Ted White either side of a guy of Adolf Hitler ready to be burnt as part of the celebrations. Bruce Sanders is shown looking after the lads of Stoneyhill, with Basil Cleverdon wearing a rosette; the others are probably some of the Uren boys.



This painting by Fred Kerr in 1892 shows the site of the bonfire, which was in the meadow behind the two figures.

All over the district bonfires were lit and people gathered to celebrate: "public houses were kept busy and there was an hour's extension for all licensed premises", there was singing and dancing in the streets outside the Union Hotel. Austin's and Bulpin's Garage lit up their windows with red, white and blue light bulbs.

In Abbotskerswell the short church service was packed, with the congregation spilling out of the doors. After the King's speech villagers went to Purkis's field at the bottom of the village for a bonfire and fireworks. There was community singing and dancing, with a Furry Dance to the Butchers Arms.

With more time to prepare, Wednesday was a day of great celebration, with the children in fancy dress and Tom Webber leading the singing, as they paraded through the village collecting £4 4sh. for the Welcome Home Fund:

"Mr Webber had two rabbits given to him for a competition, which was won by Mr C Tubb. He gave it back to the funds and was auctioned, and bought by Mr Sinclair, who also gave it back, and was bought again, all the money given to the funds."² At 7 30pm there was a parade to the top of the village led by the hand-bell ringers; there they were met by John Cleave who provided the music for the Furry Dance through the village to Church House, where a social was held. There were games and songs accompanied by the hand-bells, rung by Messrs Stoneman, Tubb, Bovey and Rowe. There were songs from Phyllis Stoneman, Elsie Norton, and George Stoneman, piano pieces from Mrs Fey, Miss Tubb, Miss Bonham and Albert Quintrell. However, amongst the jubilation there was still time to stop for a vote of sympathy for Mr & Mrs Border, followed by

a minute's silence in memory of Ernest. Then off they went again on a Furry Dance in the street, with more singing and cheers for the King, Prime Minister and the Forces: "The National Anthem brought to a close two most enjoyable days ever had in the village".³



In Dorking, villagers Winifred Uren, in the centre, and husband Clifford celebrated the peace. Scenes such as this one must have occurred all over the country involving Abbotskerswellians.

The rest of May was mainly taken up with events run by the Welcome Home Fund. The village children were not forgotten in the VE Day celebrations, as a tea was held in Church House, with 100 children sitting down for a feast. They followed this with the customary Furry Dance to the bottom of the village, and then games and songs by children from

Court Grange Blind School; "The King' brought a very happy week to a close".⁴ The Fund held various fund raising events, with competitions, and a very successful dance being held by the village Home Guard, which raised £18. The music was provided by John Cleave from Court Grange Lodge, whose Dance Band, 'Johnny's Music Makers', consisted of village musicians Miss Bonham, C Lake, Terry Bond on accordions and John on drums. The collection for the Band raised £1 5s. 3d, which they gave to the Fund.

However, not all Welcome Home Fund activities were as well received. One 'Serviceman' wrote to the MDA to complain about a conversation that he had heard in the pub: "a proposal to stage a village Fete, so as to enable a few £'s to be raised for the W.H.Fund for the lads and girls when they have finished 'doing their bit' and come home for good, was turned down by one man with the remark 'that wouldn't do at all'".⁵ He felt that those few who had left the village to defend the rest deserved better. The Fund continued its work with a public meeting on 28 May and a Welcome Home Concert, again organised by the Home Guard, on 31 May at Church House. The Newton Abbot Repertory Company provided the entertainment, which was given for free for the Fund.

VJ Day

The war was not yet over, as the Japanese were still fighting furiously in the Far East, with British troops winning back the previous losses of the Empire, and the Americans capturing back many Pacific islands. By July the US Air Force had bombed most Japanese cities, the Chinese had driven Japanese forces back, and the USSR had declared war on Japan. However, Japan still refused to surrender, and consequently on 6 and 9 August, the United States dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki rather than launch an invasion of Japan. Finally Emperor Hirohito agreed to Japan's surrender and World War II was over.

On Tuesday 14 August the country had been awaiting news all day, but when the 9pm news passed with no announcement many people went to bed. However, at midnight people were awoken "by the syren [sic] of the Electricity Works sounding the 'all clear' and engines near the station joined in a shrill chorus."⁶ This was followed by fireworks, music and dancing in the streets. In Abbotskerswell when the midnight news was heard "... the whole village turned out and there were boisterous scenes."⁷ The church bells were rung until 2am, villagers led by accordion players paraded through the village singing and dancing.

"Victory Over Japan" Celebrated in a Care-Free Manner in Mid-Devon

At 11am on Wednesday 15 August the Chairman of Newton Abbot UDC made a formal announcement at the Town Hall that "Japan has surrendered. To-day is the first day of peace since the declaration of war on 3rd September, 1939. Let us all give thanks to God for this great day."⁸



In Abbotskerswell preparations for a bonfire went on all day, with the village lads, led by Larry Daniell using Mr Purkis' horse Violet, shown in the picture, and a cart, to collect anything that would burn. The evening began with a church service, with a large congregation, at which Rev. Harries gave an

appropriate address. Next the accordion players came out in force, to lead a Furry Dance that went from one end of the village to the other, through the Butchers Arms and onto the bonfire site. The dancing and singing at the bonfire lasted until 10pm and then moved on to Church House until midnight.

King George VI made a speech to the nation Thursday 16 August:

Our sense of deliverance is overpowering, and with it all, we have a right to feel that we have done our duty... The war is over. You know, I think, that those four words have for The Queen and myself the same significance, simple yet immense, that they have for you. Our hearts are full to overflowing, as are your own... from the bottom of my heart I thank my Peoples for all they have done, not only for themselves but for mankind.

On Manor Road the tenants of the council houses arranged their own celebration, with a piano brought outside for the singing and dancing, and there were plenty of refreshments. At 7.30pm a large crowd gathered at the top of the village for yet another Furry Dance led by Mrs Harries and Mr Henley; they were accompanied by peals rung by the hand-bell ringers. At Church House they gathered for a fine social evening of dancing, games and songs with John Cleave's music once again provided, together with Miss Eileen Stoneman on piano and Mrs Dora Tarr on trumpet. £9 10s.6d was raised to pay for a children's tea and the significance of the event was appreciated when "tribute was paid to the fallen, when everybody stood in silence. The National Anthem brought a most enjoyable time to a close. Well done, Abbotskerswell."⁹

The celebrations continued on the Saturday, with the children and old people's tea in Church House as the weather did not allow for the planned outdoor event to occur. However, there were sports in the street and another social event running late into the evening, with games, dancing and a "happy time spent by all". George Stoneman and his willing band of ladies were responsible for the arrangements once again, but the profit of £6 0s. 6d was possible because the church allowed the use of Church House for free; George Wilton and Melva Purkis also supplied free milk and John Cleave and his musical band continued to play.

It was left to Kerswell's Parish Council Chairman, William Sinclair of Abbotsvale, to express his thanks in the *MDA*, when he wrote "to express sincere thanks to George Stoneman for the way he organised the

whole of the celebrations and so inspired others to help that the village did a splendid job, and the youngsters will long remember the end of the war."¹⁰

The Welcome Home

Although the war was over, many men were still in the forces, with Cecil 'Bungy' Eyles being promoted to Sergeant Instructor in the RASC and Signaller Alan Hawkins, son of Mr & Mrs W Hawkins of 1 Sunnybank, arriving home from Burma, where he had served for four years with the 14th Army. The Welcome Home Fund continued its work, when in September a Carnival and Grand Sports Festival was organised. The venue was Court Grange. The main features were:

- Maypole Dancing by the village children, under the direction of Miss Hancock and Mrs Tapper. This was very well received and the collection for the children was £3 12s., which provided each child with three shillings, a veritable fortune for a child in those days.
- Crowning the Maypole Queen, who was Margaret Owen. Margaret led her five attendants, Margaret Ellis, Maureen Coombes, Esther Stoneman, Hope Norrish and Jean Purkis, in a parade.
- A gymnastic display by the cadets from the Farringdon House School in Newton Abbot. This received much applause and great acclaim, especially when their collection of £2 12s. 8d was donated to the Fund.
- The sideshows provided great entertainment, with blindfold boxing, chariot fights and a tug-of-war for the 'Purkis Challenge Cup'. The Home Guard defeated the Civil Defence to win the cup, and as usual gave their winnings to the Fund. All the usual competitions were held; hoop-la, darts, a treasure hunt, bowling for a pig, guess the weight of the pig, pony rides and Miss Beavis and Mr Lake won the Skee-Ball competition. This popular game of the time was played on an inclined lane with fist-sized balls which the player aimed to get to fall into holes. The object of the game was to collect as many points as possible by rolling balls up the incline and into the designated point value holes. It was invented in USA in 1908 and was played on an alley 14 feet long

- The Sports events attracted great interest, but as the list of winners in *Table 7* shows, there were some unusual races!

Event	Winner	Event	Winner
Girls 50 yards	Thelma Stoneman	Girls 80 yards	Janet Honey
Boys 50 yards	Brian Saville	Boys 80 yards	Pat Honey
Mens 100 yards	W H Corns	Ladies' catch the train race	Mrs Bearne
Hat trimming for men	P O Kinnear	Mixed slow cycle race	Miss Crang
Ladies' slow cycle race	Miss Crang		

Table 7

- An evening social event featured a repeat of the children's Maypole Dancing, yet more dancing, and the 'Gibson Challenge Cup' darts competition. This annual match saw The Tradesman's Arms, captained by Fred Bulley, defeat The Butchers Arms under J Eyles.

At a Fund committee meeting it was decided that the Welcome Home event would be a Christmas Party to be held on New Year's Eve, when it was hoped most of the service personnel would be home or on leave. The MDA carried a request from the committee for "... all those serving in H.M. Forces and Merchant Navy, Land Army, both demobbed and those on leave, please attend at the Church House on December 31st, at 9 p.m."¹¹ The Fund also decided to add a memorial to the existing War Memorial in the church, in remembrance of Ernest Border.

The Welcome Home Fund's presentation and thanks to those who served their country took place, as planned, on 31 December when Rev Harries, Chairman of the Fund Committee, presented each of the 33 men and women present with a wallet, which held a £1 note.

The Vicar gave a very touching and splendid address thanking all for their services for their King and Country and asked all to be silent for one minute to one who will never come back. Respects were then paid to the late Pte. Ernest Border, the only one from the village who will not return.¹²

The Vicar received each of the 33, and had a few words with them; they were given a rousing reception in turn. Lt. C E Gray, R.N., thanked the

Committee on behalf of those who had received gifts. Then it was the turn of the accordion, piano and drum band of John Cleave, featuring Harold Lake, Ivy Lake, Winnie Cleave and Peggy Webber, to provide music for the dancing until midnight, when 'Auld Lang Syne' was sung. Further presentations occurred as other members of the forces came home.



As promised by the Committee a memorial to Ernest Border, shown left, was added in the church. The Faculty was applied for in May 1946, with the plaque added that year.



1946

The New Year brought a desire for normality. January saw the first bananas arrive, they were reserved for under 16s, and in April it was announced that two more blocks of council houses were to be built at the cost of £9198. These would become 9-16 Laburnum Terrace. Betty and Winifred Uren reflect the changes in fashion, with Winifred, right, now out of uniform.

On 8 June a National Victory Day Celebration was held, in London; this mainly consisted of a military parade through the city and a night time fireworks display. Although "Newton Abbot showed little or no enthusiasm for celebrating Victory Day"¹³, in Abbotskerswell there was a busy day as usual. Sadly it was too wet to use farmer Purkis's Berry Meadow, so consequently the activities took place in The Square. The day began with a fancy dress parade with 37 entrants; Geraldine Gidley's 'Queen of Hearts' won the girl's under 8s, with Raymond Truscott's 'Sambo' in the boys. In the under 10s it was an 'Old Mother Hubbard' from Sylvia Thompson and 'Farmer Giles' by George Quintrell that were successful, although all entrants won a prize. There were sports events for children and adults, including races for the blind children from Court Grange, and also service personnel races. The horse and jockey, collar and tie and three-legged races must have been tricky on a wet road! At 6 30pm it was a Furry Dance from 'Bartlett's Lane to Cross Tree', then a Whist Drive, open air dancing and the day concluded with a huge bonfire and fireworks donated by the vice-chairman of the Kerswell's Parish Council. On 15 June there was a four coach children's outing to Goodrington, the first since 1939.

The Village Club, meeting in Church House, re-opened in September, the same month in which the Welcome Home Fund was wound up; with the cups being donated to St Mary's Social Club for billiards and darts, a donation made to the Exeter Cathedral Memorial Fund, and the creation of a Roll of Honour, with any balance going to the Children's Summer Outing Fund. By 1948 Claude Howard had produced his stunning illuminated calligraphic Roll of Honour, shown on page 4, which was hung in Church House.

One of the impacts of the war was that a number of the young people who had been in the forces moved away. Many had met their wives and husbands whilst posted away, some like Winifred Uren went to live abroad: Winifred and Clifford are shown right in Saskatchewan

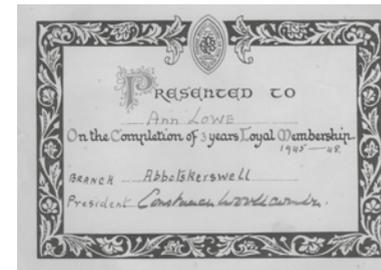


The Late 1940s

The effect of WW2, both on village life and the villagers, would be felt for many years. Rationing did not stop with the end of the war; post-war rationing lasted until 1954, and in fact some aspects of rationing became stricter for some years after the war. With many men still in the armed forces, an austere economic climate, and a centrally-planned economy under the post-war Labour government, resources were not available to expand food production and food imports. Frequent strikes by some workers, most critically dock workers, made things worse. A common ration book fraud at the time was to use the ration books of the dead. In 1946 continual rain ruined Britain's wheat crop, and bread rationing was introduced as a result. The terrible winter of 1947-48 meant that frost destroyed a huge amount of stored potatoes, and potato rationing also began.

However, things did begin to improve by 1948 when bread came off ration, and in May 1949 clothes rationing ended. It was not until 1950 that petrol rationing finally ended, 1953 saw confectionery and sugar rationing ending, and at long last on 4 July 1954 meat and all other food rationing ended in Britain.

For some village men wartime military service, and later National Service, carried on; but life did begin to return to its old ways, although it would never be the same. The role of women during the war made them want a permanent change and this was reflected in a small way by the recognition that the male-only Village Club had to change. Consequently when the Club was re-launched in September 1945 women were allowed to join, and it was renamed St Mary's Social Club. The arrival at Mote House of retired Admiral Woolcombe and his wife had an interesting impact, with Constance Woolcombe forming a branch of the Girl's Friendly Society. The GFS was intended to empower girls and young women, and had grown into a support organisation for unmarried girls and young women who wished to better themselves. In 1945 it was introduced into every diocese with an experienced full-time organising worker. Mrs Woolcombe was President, with the Vicar's wife, Mrs Harries, as Branch Secretary. Mrs Fey, who already ran a large church choir that included many of the village's young women, was also involved, playing the piano



at the Friday evening meetings. Valerie White, nee Emmett, was the 'Candidates Associate' for the group and remembers the activities that were designed to help the girls make more of themselves. However, when Mrs Harries left the village in 1950 the village branch appeared to close.

However, by June 1950 a new women's group, St Mary's Guild, had been created with the last GFS President, Mrs Roche of Monks Thatch, at the helm: "Monday nights was St Mary's Guild in Church House, with an hour's knitting and an hour's Canasta".¹⁴

By 1947 social events were returning with the Cricket Club reforming, a Grand New Year's Dance, Children's and Church Outings happening and Fancy Dress Competitions, shown right.





1949 saw the arrival of a new vicar, 56 year old Rev. Harold Ainscow, who took over from Rev. Harries. In May the Parish Magazine commented that Rev. Harries was “too ill to write to you at the moment ... though he remains very weak indeed and will probably be so for several weeks he wishes to say that his thoughts are constantly with the Parish”.¹⁵ However, he died not long after.

Rev. Ainscow arrived from Bourton in Berkshire, having been a chaplain to the Tank Corps in WW2; he had been an officer in WW1, who was wounded and taken prisoner of war. His story was told in his obituary in *AbbTalk* in 1988, which explained that he was badly wounded when taken prisoner and that the Germans did not realise that he was an officer. His parents were informed he had been killed and even posted an obituary and held a memorial service! Whilst imprisoned in the notorious Holz Minden Camp he was shot by a guard who thought he was laughing at him; the consequence of this was that he was repatriated in exchange for a German prisoner. It said a great deal about the man that he carried 40 pieces of shrapnel in his body for the rest of his life, yet returned to Germany after WW1 to thank the hospital for saving his life. Ruth Peacock’s obituary commented that “he has left a small legacy to the German Red Cross in gratitude and forgiveness”, this, and the view over Manor Farm at the time, seems an apt way to end our study of WW2.



Chapter 8

The 1950s

In this chapter the intention is to give an idea of what life was like at the beginning of the decade in Abbotskerswell, and how things changed during the next ten years; it is left to the reader to decide whether any change was for the better.

Events in 1950

The new decade began with a flurry of village social activity....



The first wedding involved a long established village family; Elsie Norton was the only daughter of Mr & Mrs Stanley Norton of Plumtree Cottage and she married Clifford Shears. She was described as “attractively attired in figured satin, with a net veil embroidered with true lovers’ knots, and an orange blossom head-dress”.¹ In 2014 Elsie was a great help to the *AbbPast* WW1 research team in telling the story of the Nortons’ experiences.

In April the first annual fancy dress dance of the decade was described in the *MDA*, giving a real sense of its occasion in the village. Pictured below is the children’s parade, with prizes for



children up to 7 years old and 7 to 14 years. There was also an adult competition, followed by dancing until midnight in Church House, to the music of the Penguin Band. Quite a few villagers today may recognise themselves. The winners are shown in *Table 8* below.

Children up to 7	Children 7 to 14	Adults
Karen Honey <i>Posy</i>	Sylvia Thomson <i>Cottage to Let</i>	1 st Miss G Davies <i>Eliza</i>
Rosemary Wright <i>Rations</i>	David Wakeham <i>Chef</i>	2 nd Mrs Bowhay <i>Robertson's Preserves</i>
Rosemary Owen <i>Rose</i>	John Billett <i>Jack in the Box</i>	3 rd Mrs Coombe <i>Departed Spirits</i>
Ann Cowell <i>Christmas Tree</i>	Reg Quintrell <i>Golliwog</i>	4 th Miss P Honey <i>Absent Minded</i>
Rosemary Bovey <i>Penquin</i>	Margaret Owen <i>Mary, Mary</i>	Highly Commended <i>Miss Pugh</i>
Tony Tarr <i>Follow Father's Footsteps</i>	Raymond Truscott <i>Capt. Scarlett</i>	Fortune Teller
Yvonne Andrews <i>Dutch Girl</i>	Bernard Pugh <i>Injured Footballer</i>	
Tony Truscott <i>Minstrel</i>	Eileen Cassells <i>Boat Race Blue</i>	

Table 8



In June the Cricket Club defeated Broadhempston by scoring 58, with Len Truscott scoring 27 not out. Their opponents could only muster 30 in reply. The team, many of whom are shown in the 1951 side, was: W Cassell, T Bowhay, W Stoneman, C Howard, T Brenton, L Truscott, J Eyles, M Buckpitt, C Shears, J Pugh and J Maddicott.



As this picture shows the Village Carnival was once again underway, with the Carnival Queen and her hand maidens on view at Court Grange.

L to R are June Mills, Teresa Cann, Hilary Rowe, and Ann Cooper

Village outings were something villagers looked forward to, as these were one of the few ways that workers and young people could see places away from the village; holidays were things that were very rare. 15 June was the Choir outing to Weymouth, whilst the St Mary's Guild Outing, was a 'Mystery Trip', which turned out to be to Buckland Beacon, a picnic at Hexworthy and a married v singles cricket match; both outings were organised by Mrs Fey. The Sunday School Excursion was on 22 June to Goodrington Sands.

Education

At the village school things had settled back into their usual routine after the excitement of the evacuees and the 1944 Education Act. Newton Abbot had a clear structure of age 5 – 11 primary schools, like our own, and the Grammar School (now Newton Abbot College) for those passing the 11+ test, with the parallel boys and girls Secondary Moderns for those who did not. It was important for a village that their



Miss Blackmore, Gillian Needs, Esther Stoneman, Margaret Saurin, Margaret Ellis, Ronald Trebble, Hilary Rowe, Teresa Cann, Geraldine Gidley, Sheila Morris, Pauline Needs, Margaret Hine, Rosemary Owens, Tony Vincent, Gwen Morris, Robin Pugh, Tony Hollamby, Barry Knapman, Peter Cassells, David Wakeham, Maurice Hine, Reg Quintrell, David Cleverdon, Raymond Truscott, John Billett, Chris Wakeham, Tony Tarr

best children could go to the Grammar School, and in February the MDA and the Parish Magazine noted that Gillian Needs from Stoneyhill had "won a place". A new Headmistress had arrived at Abbotskerswell School in 1949, Miss Blackmore, who would remain for the whole decade. The lovely 1950 school photograph left, shows the 31 children in the Junior section of the school. Free school milk and compulsory school dinners were also introduced; the cost of 2 shillings a week per child was hard to find for many families.



In the early years of the 1950s this was the staff of the school, L to R: Miss Menhennett, Mrs Rowe (Caretaker), Miss Blackmore and Miss Dicker (Cook).

Note the orchard and the end of Sinclairs Garage behind them before houses were built there.

Miss Menhennett was the infant teacher and is remembered for being very strict: "I remember some of us being rapped over the knuckles with the edge of her ruler for some misdemeanour – perhaps for talking or not knowing our tables."² A day's schooling began with prayers and a hymn, with Miss Blackmore on the piano. Eileen Tett carries the story on:

Each morning, in class the first thing we did was to say our 'times tables' in unison; then real lessons would begin. Every day seemed to start with arithmetic, mostly counting, adding and subtracting.

Sums would be chalked on the blackboard, and we raised our hands if we knew the answers. This lesson was then followed by reading and writing. We repeated the alphabet, learned the sounds of letters and spelling of new words, and simple reading - sometimes we had to read aloud. We were also taught how to write, using lined paper, and copying from the blackboard.

Halfway through the mornings, at about 11 o'clock, perhaps between these two lessons, we had a break for a bottle of milk. Each child was given a 1/3rd pint bottle of milk. The milk was delivered each morning in crates, which were left at the school entrance. Our ginger cat, called Nelson because he was blind in one eye, discovered the milk supply, and used to break open the cardboard milk tops, dip his paws into the cream and lick them clean! Clever cat! The afternoons brought a more relaxed routine in the infants' class. We used to have a scripture class, with bible stories. We also had PT (physical training) in the playground, and painting and drawing.³

Miss Blackmore's class was different:

When I was about eight years old, I was moved into the 'big class', and was taught by Miss Blackmore, the headmistress. She was a tall, attractive and quite smart lady, and a very good teacher. Here, we children now sat at double desks, instead of the tables and chairs in the infants' room. These desks were each made for two children to sit side by side. They had a bench seat, and two sloping, lidded desk compartments, with two inkwells and a groove along the top for holding pens and pencils. Our workbooks were kept in our desks, along with rulers, rubbers, set-squares, and all the other paraphernalia children collect. The desks were set in rows, with the older children sitting towards the back, and the younger ones at the front of the class.

Morning routines were much the same, but we now did multiplication and long division, read "real" books, and learned poetry. We had history and geography lessons, and sometimes listened to BBC school broadcasts on the wireless. We had regular spelling and arithmetic tests, in addition to end-of-term exams. Afternoon lessons also became more interesting; we drew and painted, did sewing and embroidery (girls only, I think) and cane work, making trays and baskets. Sometimes, in the spring and

summer months, we would be taken on nature walks, along Vicarage Lane. We would collect wild flowers and bugs, and take them back to school for identification and display on the specimen table in discarded fish paste pots. I knew the names of all the wild flowers. We also practised country dancing, in readiness for a display at the village fete. We danced to records that Miss Blackmore played on an old gramophone - and learned the routines of Flowers of Edinburgh, Haste to the Wedding, and Durham Reel, to name but a few.⁴



Eileen, second on the left on the front row, with the 1955 school leavers. Eileen had passed her 11+ to go Newton Abbot Grammar School.

The school was embroiled in controversy in 1956 when Devon County Council decided to spend £851 on building a staff cloakroom. It was seen as extravagant at a time when the Government wanted to curb spending, however School Manager Dennis Cowell explained that the five members of staff had to use the same toilets as the children, and had nowhere to hang coats or have private meetings. It was noted at a Kerswell's PC meeting that the school toilets had been condemned during the war by the Medical Officer of Health, and the school kitchen had been created in one of the children's cloakrooms.

The Church

With a new Vicar there is always change, and judging by the Parish Magazine Rev. Ainscow was very active. In 1953 a project begun by Mrs Hare in 1884 was finally completed, when the Church Tower was renovated. Another project associated with Mrs Hare was continued in 1956 with a second extension to the churchyard. The photograph left, shows Bishop Key of Sherborne dedicating the gates into the new extension; Bishop Key was Rev. Dence's son-in-law.





At the end of the decade Rev. Ainscow retired, and such was his popularity 200 people attended his farewell buffet. In the picture left, Alf Fey, the People's Churchwarden, shown presenting a £200 cheque, and Mrs Fey a bouquet

of flowers to Mrs Ainscow. In his thanks he commented that: "all the time I have been here I have never met one who has not been friendly and kind towards me. We shall take away many beautiful memories of Abbotskerswell and the people living in it."⁵

The 'Great Stink'

For decades there was a terrible smell in the summer from the stream that ran down through the village, when a thick black sludge polluted it. Since the stream passed the Cyder Works it was generally assumed to be their effluent. As far back as 1913 there were complaints but Henleys and then Whiteways denied it was them, even though they always 'volunteered' to clean the stream or put lime in it to reduce the smell. By the 1950s the local councils were taking a stronger line on such things, and village Parish Councillor Ben Cooper vowed to get the problem solved when it was particularly bad in 1957; ironically his daughter Ann's first job was at Whiteways!. There were meetings and inspections and denials from Whiteways, whose manager, Ronald Henley, cryptically claimed it wasn't them, but that the council knew the real reason. The issue eventually reached local MP Raymond Mawby, who declined to tell the Health Minister as swab tests had shown that the black liquid was 99% cider effluent. However, as Phyllis Ford put it "the villagers were also told that if they continued to complain the Cider Factory would close and men would lose their livelihood When the Cider Factory finally closed [in 1965] it proved once and for all who was responsible for the smell".⁶

Children at Play

It is hard to imagine how different children's play was in the 1950s, when they roamed the countryside from morning till dusk unsupervised, and apparently perfectly safely: "Our parents did not seem to worry too much about us, so long as we were happy, and not getting up to mischief or causing trouble."⁷

A popular spot for the village children to play was the stream, and also the pond in the copse beyond Ladywell. This had originally been a fish pond and water supply for Court Grange, the remains of a water wheel driven water pump could still be seen at that time by the sluice gate. The children made dens, swam and made rafts from tractor tyre inner tubes.

There was no park, so to play on the swings it meant walking to Baker's Park:

When we were a bit older, about ten or eleven, Nita Mary and I would walk down to this park, and then on past Bradley Manor, across the meadow and the bridge into Bradley Woods. We would stroll along the riverbank, where the wood anemones grew, and up to the tunnel and the worshipping pit.⁸

A very different world to today; with little traffic, children spent much of their time outdoors, with boys making trolleys from boxes and pram wheels and racing them down Buckpitt's Hill.

Houses

Although the housing in the village was improving, with 42 Council Houses having been built to replace the worst of the old houses, many working people still lived in cottages such as Rose Cottages and Town Cottages. These still had outdoor toilets, no way of heating water except over a fire or on a range, and some even had no water



inside the houses. In the picture the 'privies' at Rose Cottages can be seen with the door on the right leading into a wash house; these were in use until 1970. At Cross View, where Pam Wakeham lived, " ... they had electricity and a cooking range that provided hot water, but washing was done out the back where a copper sink with a fire underneath provided the hot water, clothes were rubbed and washed out and run through the mangle."⁹ This was typical of most houses, even the Council Houses were constructed with this washing method. But change was on its way, with the electricity companies promoting the new and efficient boiler with an immersion heater, that could provide hot water in all houses.

The old social order of men working and women doing the domestic chores was still very much in place, although increasingly women were obtaining better paid work and becoming more independent. Eileen Tett's mum's week is beautifully described in her account of village life; the full text is available on the AbbPast website.

- Monday was wash day, using the washing water later to wash floors and toilets.
- Tuesday meant ironing; many people still used the old flat-iron which was heated on the range. Mrs Tett had an electric iron that was plugged into a light fitting as there were no power points.
- It was market day on Wednesday, so she would walk to Newton Abbot to buy the food for the week. The bus still only went along the main road and was expensive.
- Thursday and Friday were for cleaning, with linoleum floors to wash, red Cardinal polish to put on floor tiles, dusting and polishing to be done. In the summer jams, chutneys and pickles would be made.
- Saturday was market day again.
- Sunday was not a rest day for Mrs Tett because Sunday Dinner had to be prepared.

Many houses had a large garden where the men grew vegetables, and kept chickens and pigs, which supplemented the food that was bought. Mr Tett was a keen gardener, although his pigs apparently created quite a smell!

Health

Life improved dramatically after 1948 when the National Health Service was created, since before then most working people could not afford a doctor; although methods of paying using eggs and clotted cream, as Mrs Tett did during the war, were also used. Childhood illnesses were still common and often with serious consequences. Outbreaks of tuberculosis (Hawkmoor Isolation Hospital near Lustleigh was where people were sent), polio (the picture of June Mills on page 100 shows her wearing a leg brace as a result of contracting polio), measles and many others occurred regularly; as we have seen, sadly some died. Thankfully a programme of vaccination/immunisation for children, by the NHS, to prevent these illnesses, proved hugely successful. Improving diet and housing conditions also made a major difference.



Social Life

In *4. Pubs, Clubs & Governance* we told the story of the village pubs, St Mary's Club, the Whist Drives, dances, and clubs. In the 1950s all of these continued and attracted many villagers, but life was changing, particularly with the development of television. After the war the BBC began broadcasting again, but it was the introduction of Independent Television, later ITV, with adverts and a much more modern approach that made this form of entertainment so popular in the late 1950s.

Newton Abbot still boasted three cinemas the 1950s and the older teenagers also went to dances at Denbury Camp, which was by then a training centre for Young Leaders; on a Saturday night the army sent a lorry around the villages to collect girls. This made Ann Cooper feel she was the 'bees knees' for being able to go, and she recalled that Wendy Skinner married a Young Leader.

Village Events

The annual carnival was held throughout the 1950s, with fund raising focused on building a Village Hall; In 1952 Melva Purkis from Court Farm had offered land between the churchyard and the Co-operative Shop for its building. Again the story is told in *4. Pubs, Clubs & Governance*. The carnival featured fancy dress events, the crowning of the 'Queen' and a procession through the village. In the 1950s the Queens included Joyce Rowe, Ann Cowell, Teresa Cann, Marilyn Hide and Geraldine Gidley, who is shown below with Mrs Purkis. The 1955 procession was led by the Village Queen and her attendants in an open van, this was followed by three decorated lorries with dozens of children in fancy dress. One lorry "carried at least 15 children all dressed as minstrels complete with banjos and a 'coal-black mama' holding the baby"¹⁰, at the back was a van occupied by the hand bell ringers, who rang peals throughout the tour which visited Stoneyhill, Kingskerswell, Denbury, Ipplepen and Highweek. There was usually a whist drive and a dance in Carnival Week, and also sports events and a fete in Mr Purkis's Berry Meadow.

The photographs below give a brilliant reflection of the events.



Far Left:
Geraldine Gidley
Left:
Miss Abbotskerswell,
Joyce Rowe, in the 1955
procession, with Yvonne
Andrews and Geraldine
Ellis

The village had always supported the Blind School at Court Grange and the house was used for the crowning of the Queen as shown above.

The Cricket Club continued to be a focus of village life, its story is told in *Book 4*.

[Villagers] had little money to spare for entertainment so much of their leisure time was spent at home, or within the village. The village had a very good cricket team, so many of the men were involved with this. Even if they did not play, there were plenty who helped out, preparing the pitch, scoring, etc., and women helped by preparing the teas. The team had a good following, and there were always a lot of youngsters and children watching the matches. I think the small children just went along to enjoy the teas and the sunshine, and the older girls went along to get to know the lads!¹¹

In June 1959 the MDA recorded a 'Test' series with Ipplepen was underway, and when Abbotskerswell triumphed at home by making 118 in reply to Ipplepen's 59, this tied the series at 1-1.



Events such as the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 were enthusiastically celebrated in the village. Barnfield is shown here with its bunting out. The annual Church Fete held at the Vicarage (now Glebe House) was something most villagers were involved with. Rev. Ainscow is shown opening the fete in the picture left



In 1951 the Conservative Party won the General Election; local MP Ralph Rayner campaigned in the village and is pictured in the village, presumably with Abbotskerswell Conservative Association members. (Tony Bowhay called in lots of local help to try to name those in the picture.)

The Cold War

Chapter 9 covers the villagers who were involved in the Armed Forces during the 1950s, but the threat to the post-WW2 peace moved from Germany to the USSR, and their Eastern European allies. From the mid-1950s there was an increasing concern about nuclear weapons, and the number of our National Servicemen spending time in Germany is a reflection of that. In 1956 the MDA carried an article entitled "What Happens when 'H' Bombs Drop" which graphically described the sequence of events following a nuclear attack on Plymouth. A Civil Defence Corps exercise on Dartmoor was being planned to come up with evacuation plans for the fallout zones, although very gloomily it was commented that if the UK was saturated with bombs there would be no reception areas to go to. Abbotskerswell had a Civil Defence Corps, with Mrs Woolcombe the village organiser; Ann Cooper joined in 1958 mainly because her mother thought it would be a good idea, and it was a nice uniform! Its role was to provide wardens to organise first aid, welfare and help with evacuation, if a nuclear attack occurred. Those who lived through the period will remember the very real fear that this threat produced.

The Women's Voluntary Services performed many vital roles during the war, and as described in Chapter 4 Abbotskerswell's branch did great work. However, it did not stop at the end of the war, and during the '50s,

now with Royal patronage, the WRVS was affiliated to the Civil Defence Corps and it was expected that it would again have an important role if a conflict with the USSR ever occurred. The picture above shows Mrs Gladys Honey, on the right, training ladies to cook on an outdoor range.

The Future begins to arrive - 1959

An interesting sign of the changing times was the alteration to some of the products that were tracked in the Retail Price Index. The number of foods in the Index was reduced and a number of items removed: such as candles, lump sugar, rabbits and turnips. These were replaced with nylons, washing machines, camera film, telephone rentals and second hand cars.



Youth culture was certainly changing; during the year Elvis Presley was at No.1 in the chart of popular music, there were other No.1s in the year from Adam Faith, Buddy Holly, Cliff Richard and the Shadows, and the year ended with Emile Ford and The Checkmates song 'What do you want to make those eyes at me for'. In March the MDA reported vandalism in the village, with street light bulbs being broken; it was blamed on village 'Teddy Girls'. The adverts in the MDA showed that a new world was emerging, reflecting Prime Minister Harold MacMillan's view that English people had "never had it so good"; these included fridges, televisions, a launderette, beds, electric cookers (see the brilliant cartoon), Madge Mellors Cafe, the Hoovermatic Twin Tub washing machine, holidays, radios, Hoovers, bicycles, TV Rentals, Kenwood Mixers, spin driers, and stereograms. These were unheard of and unimaginable at the beginning of the decade. The advert below seems to sum up the change.

As the economy improved so did wages, and by the late 1950s people had spare money at last, and fashion clothes appeared. Eileen remembers that the dour clothes of their parents were being replaced:

Young men had suits, and were beginning to buy casual clothes too. Their trousers had narrower legs. Their hairstyles were changing – they grew their hair a bit longer and styled it into a 'DA' at the back, and a quiff at the front, held in place or smoothed down with Brylcreem. They no longer wore hats as their fathers had done.¹²

Many women and children had been used to homemade and handed down clothes; women were adept at adding frills and minor changes to get more life out of clothes, but at last women's fashions were also changing. For the young women, now often earning money from good jobs, fashion became important:

As fabric became more widely available, the slim fashions were being left behind. Dresses now had fuller skirts, puff sleeves and fitted waists, often belted, or tied with a bow. Full petticoats, made of paper nylon, were stiffened with sugar syrup to add fullness to the wider skirts. Shoes were much daintier, with the new fashion Louis heels. Hair was now being subjected to the permanent wave, and the home perm was popular, but perhaps not always successful!¹³



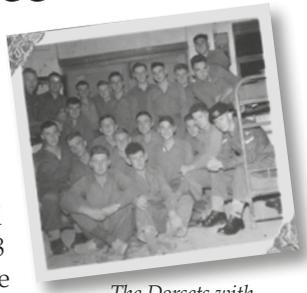
By 1959 the signs of change included a planning application for a public house at Court Farm, it was rejected as the entry to it was to be past Church House, but planning was approved for the old

Public Baths building being turned into a store for a grocery store. The signs of changing times for women were showing as well with an Abbotskerswell Women's Institute Branch being formed, and the St Mary's Guild now having 25 members, shown here on an outing.

Chapter 9

National Service

When WW2 ended many men were kept in the army to act as peacekeepers around the world, and to maintain a presence in the countries of the British Empire. Once peace had been established it became clear that a large armed forces would be needed in the foreseeable future. Consequently in 1948 the National Service Act, creating peacetime conscription, was passed.



The Dorsets with villager Maurice Rowe

From 1 January 1949, healthy males between 17 to 21 years old expected to serve in the armed forces for 18 months; this was later extended to two years. National Servicemen who showed promise could be commissioned as officers. National Service was phased out gradually from 1957, and in November 1960 the last men entered service, with the last ones leaving in May 1963.

National Service personnel were used in a wide variety of roles, including combat operations. These included the Malayan Emergency, the Cyprus Emergency, the Mau Mau Uprising in Kenya, the Korean War and in the Suez Crisis of 1956.

The Call-up

This began with a letter summoning all 18 year old men to register at their nearest Ministry of Labour Centre; failure to register led to prosecution. This was followed by a health examination and an interview, to check suitability and military intentions. Some men were exempt from National Service if they worked in one of the three "essential services": coal mining, farming and the Merchant Navy. There was also exemption for conscientious objectors; men could appeal to a local tribunal for a hearing. The tribunal, presided over by a judge or barrister, had four possible outcomes: granting release (which was rare), a military role in a non-combatant unit such as the Medical Corps, being required to work outside the armed forces in valuable work (which lasted two

months longer), and denying the appeal. Men who were completing an apprenticeship or going to university could defer their service until the completion of their studies.

At the preliminary examination a doctor, or a sergeant tester, would undertake a health check to decide on the suitability of a young man for service. The PULHEEMS test was conducted, with a score of 1 to 8 being given for each aspect, and an overall grade of I to IV awarded.

The test covered:

- P – physical capacity
- U – upper limb function
- L – locomotion
- H – hearing
- EE – eyesight, one for each eye
- M – mental capacity; this was a written exam to test their ability to take orders
- S – stability, this decided on their emotional and mental state

Remarkably few people were deemed unfit, and it was not unusual for men with genuine problems, such as poor eyesight, to not be rejected until undertaking basic training. At the same time as the health check, they were interviewed by a 'Military Interviewing Officer', usually a retired officer. He asked which service they wanted to enter, and if they had any interest in a specific unit or trade; however, the reality was that the chances of achieving what you wanted were limited.

The Royal Navy took the fewest men, and these were usually from the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve or were the sons of naval men. Similarly the RAF, which was perceived as less severe than the army, mainly wanted educated men, to be technicians. The army in particular was often poor at matching men's skills and requests with a suitable role. Although National Service only lasted two years, men were encouraged to join for three years to 'guarantee' that their request for a trade was met; as will be seen this was an option often taken up.

Basic Training

Eventually a letter arrived informing the conscript where and when to report; this was usually, and deliberately, some distance from home, and a rail warrant was provided. For an 18 year old from Abbotskerswell, who would probably have rarely travelled far, this would have been both



exciting and daunting. On arrival at their destination station they were met and usually herded into a lorry, with other conscripts, and taken to their base. They were equipped with their uniform, their civilian clothes were sent home, and the lesson in army life began with the issue of 'eating irons' (a knife, fork and spoon) and 'housewives' (a sewing kit). Basic training lasted between six and ten weeks before they were sent to their unit or for further specific training. There was no leave for the first two weeks as they 'learned the ropes', and their first 48 hour pass was something longed for!

The Abbotskerswell Stories

There are no definitive lists of the men from the village who completed National Service, and a number chose to become regulars to get the service or regiment they wanted, but our extensive research has produced a list of 35 men; *Appendix 6* shows the list. What follow are the stories of some of them, mainly told by the men themselves.

Mervyn Aggett Royal Air Force

Mervyn was born in 1927 and was too young to be called up during the war, however, although some wartime conscripts were demobbed quite quickly, men were still conscripted until 1949. Mervyn lived at 1 Model Cottage and had begun an apprenticeship at Bulpin's Garage on Wolborough Street after he left school, which meant he could have deferred his entry into the armed forces. However, like many young men, he wanted to go in, so left Bulpin's to join the RAF. After his service he did not return to Bulpin's, but worked as a lorry driver for Melva Purkis at Court Farm.

Derek Daniell Royal Artillery

Derek (Dick) Daniell lived at 7 Laburnum Terrace with his mother in 1956, when he was called for his medical at Exeter; he knew what to expect as his brother Lawrence was in the Royal Navy at that time. Dick had left Highweek Secondary School for Boys to work for Melva Purkis at Court Farm, where he learned to lead Deutsch, the farm horse, as well as to drive tractors, collect the pig swill from Melva's father's hotels and

boil it up. At the medical he was examined by a team of eight doctors and passed fit for duty, although his pal Brian Cose was rejected, which was an unusual occurrence. Dick could have avoided National Service as he was employed in a reserved industry; but like all the villagers we spoke to, he was keen to join up and see the world. Consequently on 18 April 1956 he took the train to Oswestry to begin his training in the Royal Artillery; he had chosen this regiment as his father had been in the R.A.

He joined other new recruits in the barracks and soon learned to muck in, and be part of the platoon. His two week basic training was hard, but as a farm lad he was strong and managed fine. He got on well with Geordies, Brummies and Scots lads, although found the Scousers harder; "you had to look after yourself, but there was no real bullying and I was strong anyway".¹ The discipline did not bother him, although there were always the cocky ones, known as 'the ticket', who rebelled, and he remembers one lad who had already been in for two years and still had a year to go, as he refused to take orders and kept running away; the time he was AWOL or in the cells did not count towards his two years.

The first two weeks also contained educational assessments, in which Dick did well and he was allocated to an eight week signallers course rather than being 'gun numbers'; these were the lads who manned the guns. He described exactly how all his kit had to be maintained, with webbing 'blanco'd' and buckles taken off and cleaned with pieces of cardboard. Kit had to be stored on the top of your locker in a precise order, and if it was wrong the NCO would swing his swagger stick and knock it on the floor.

When he left Oswestry he moved to Woolwich Arsenal and was then posted to Germany, where he did join a gun crew, as they had too many signallers. He was part of a battery of four guns and his role was to drive the officers and signaller to the site for the guns, and then pass details on to the battery. This was the time of the Hungarian Revolution and he recalls that the lads wanted to have a go at the Russians. His battery was sited quite close to the Russian sector from where they could see their soldiers. When the Suez War began his battery began to sand blast the guns ready for desert war, but again they did not get the chance to test their skills. At one time he was the liaison with the US Army and was amazed at how good their food was compared to the British Army. There was cereal for breakfast and chicken Maryland for lunch; his normal meal was a tin that seemed to contain bacon rind in some kind of sauce!

Eventually they were brought back to Woolwich from where he was sent to Exeter to 'sign off', although he was put on the Z-Reservist List for three years. This was to keep men trained in case they were ever needed. It is clear that Dick enjoyed his time and was a villager who would not have missed the experience, and remembering his two years' service with great affection, although he was glad when it was over. There were odd moments of difficulty as he related:

We had been on a ten mile march and my heels were terribly blistered. The next day I was with an NCO laying telephone cables, but when they were tested the phones wouldn't work, so he ordered me to check them. Now you were supposed to do this at 'the double' but as I was limping he sent me to the officer for refusing to 'double.' The officer was kind and let me sit down.²

Later in Germany a 'barrack room lawyer' told him he should not have served as his mother was on her own at home and was his dependent; so he told an officer, who put him in his place for asking, with the earlier incident also recalled!

He left the army with his boots, two gaiters and a belt. He returned home grown-up and confident, and re-joined Court Farm where he worked with Pam Wakeham, who had joined the farm in his absence. He left the village when he married and eventually joined the GPO telephone division, where he worked for the rest of his career.



Laurie Saurin The Coldstream Guards

With a brother and an uncle in the armed forces during the war Laurie was interested in all things military. He was a member of Newton Abbot Air Cadets, as well as Abbotskerswell Army Cadets. The village cadets met at the Cyder Works, where the Home Guard Training Officer William Bond instructed the ten teenagers. Having worked at WaterMota after leaving school Laurie volunteered to join the Coldstream Guards in 1947; his mother was dismayed at this, hoping he would defer until later. However, as Laurie pointed out to her he would get called up eventually and this way he got to go where he wanted. Consequently on 10 April 1947 he signed up for a five year stay.

He went to Caterham for his basic training, and with a brother already in the Guards understood the severe nature of the training. After his training he joined his brother Bernard at the Wellington Barracks in London where the DSM gave him a hard time as a consequence of arriving late because his brother was showing him the ropes. Although the DSM was a "brute" and made the training "hard and brutal" Laurie survived and was soon on royal duties, which he chose rather than going to Palestine. He was on duty for the wedding of Princess Elizabeth.



Laurie is shown on guard duty (second from the left), still wearing the wartime khaki; the move back to the formal red was just happening by 1948. He was on duty in the stores when he was told to put on the new full uniform and report to Buckingham Palace. On arriving he was escorted inside for King George VI to inspect and approve the uniform.

Laurie clearly remembers the conversation that followed:

King: Are you looking forward to the Trooping of the Colour
 Laurie: Yes Sir
 King: Perhaps you should be on the front gate of The Palace tomorrow morning.³

The next day at 06 00 hours Laurie was on duty at the front gate of Buckingham Palace, becoming the first sentry to wear the new full dress uniform after the war. In the following years he was on duty for the State Visits of President Eisenhower, the Shah of Persia and General Montgomery. Laurie is on the front row, third from the right, as the future Queen inspects the Guard.

Being in the Coldstream Guards in London had other benefits as well. Army singers were needed for the backing vocals when Vera Lynn was recording 'The White Cliffs of Dover', so Laurie and 25 Guardsmen were paid five shillings each to sing. He was also in the Film "Who Goes There!" featuring Nigel Patrick.





However, in September 1948 The Guards were sent to Malaya, and he was involved in the Malayan Emergency, which was a guerrilla war fought between Commonwealth armed forces and the communist Malayan National Liberation Army who were seeking independence from British rule. Laurie remembers

that it was not pleasant, as it was hot when they conducted sorties; also because of the guerilla nature of the war, it was dangerous to leave their barracks. He was there for two years, before returning to the Wellington Barracks and his royal duties. One of formal duties was as a night guard for Hitler's Deputy, Rudolf Hess; he was also on duty at the funeral of King George VI, Laurie is pictured above, standing on the left hand side.

After six years he left the Guards and moved to South Wales, as he had married Mary Beel, whom he had met at the Abbotskerswell VE Day celebration. She had been visiting her sister, who had married Wilf Stoneman from the village. In Wales joined the police, and later had a long career as postman.

Morris Coombes Royal Army Medical Corps

Although little is known about Morris, his story was featured in the MDA in 1949. He and his wife were living at Priory Farm at the time of his service; he was stationed in Malaya and was described as "one of the luckiest members of the Security Forces at present fighting the bandit menace in Malaya."⁴ That was putting it mildly as it turned into a really unpleasant jungle war against communist separatists. He was stationed at a Military Hospital in the Cameron Highlands which was once a convent, and was set in an area active with bandits. Its main role was in convalescence, taking patients from other hospitals and using the beauties of the valley, its swimming pool below a waterfall, tennis and badminton courts, golf course and cinema to help them recover. He commented that "he likes his work and realises its importance, equal to that of the frontline troops themselves."⁵

Tony Bowhay Royal Air Force

In December 1950 18 year old Tony Bowhay began his National Service, having had his call up and interview in Exeter. After leaving school he had begun an apprenticeship but he saw National Service



as a positive thing, an advantage, and opted to go in as soon as he was 18.

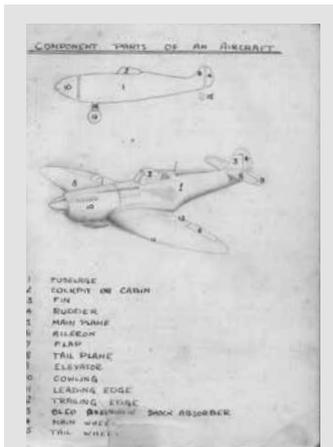
Tony had always been mad about planes, making models and reading about them. So his request was to join the RAF, and being an ex-Newton Abbot Grammar School boy, he was accepted. At every turn he was encouraged to sign up for three years, with threats of not being able to get his first choice if he refused, but an old hand had advised him to stick to his guns and hold out for two years. Tony did, and was sent to RAF Padgate in Lancashire to complete his eight week basic training as 2496975 A/C Bowhay. 67 years later the impact of that time is clear as he used words such as "a nightmare" and "horrendous discipline". They spent two weeks being kitted out and then taught how to look after it, and then having NCOs deliberately dirty it so they had to do it all again. His boots had to be spotless and shine like new; this was done by 'spit and polish'. As soon as this was done they were sent on a task that got them dirty, with only two hours to go before a parade when they had to shine again. His week of fatigues was delivering coal in leaky sacks, so imagine what his boots were like!

He is in no doubt at all that it was deliberate bullying. When you arrived you were given cutlery and crockery that you had to keep and use each mealtime; you were required to wash them afterwards in a sink full of dirty water; Tony called it a 'soup'. So he took his back to the barracks to wash, however, this was against the rules and when caught by an NCO his cup was taken and smashed on the floor. For the next two weeks, with no replacement available, he had to borrow a cup to drink from every mealtime. They were not allowed to leave the base for three weeks until they knew how to dress, walk and behave as airmen, only then could he buy a new cup. This sort of treatment was apparently intended to instil discipline.

Anybody with a rebellious streak was dealt with severely until they learned the correct ways. One example was in the boxing ring; two gloves were thrown in and two people picked to each wear one glove and thump each other. Trouble makers always found themselves in with somebody much bigger than them. Then there were 'jankers', the punishments for having failed a task or having dirty kit. You had to report to the Guardroom three times an evening in full kit, the NCO would then mess it up and send you off to set it right again.

However, Tony did see positives. People helped one another to sort themselves out and you certainly learned how to behave as a member of the RAF. At the Passing Out Parade, attended by family where possible, you were smart, organised and confident, and then those “bastard” NCO Drill Instructors were full of compliments and praise!

He was sent to RAF St Athan in South Wales, a huge RAF base which was the centre for the airframe and engine trades. He spent a much happier 32 weeks there, completing his trade training. It was like “Butlins”, much more easy going with workshops and classrooms where the officers and NCOs treated people fairly.



Tony's notes for his 'Flight Mechanic (Airframes) Course', the first page is shown on the below; in neat and precise handwriting, charting his progress to becoming qualified



Tony and his colleagues dismantle a Halifax bomber which was moved to Hednesford in Staffordshire.

Next he was sent to a Maintenance Unit at RAF Honington in Suffolk, where he spent a thoroughly enjoyable year as part of a salvage and repair on site team. Their job was to take planes apart and return them to the base where the parts could be renovated for re-use.

Part of the work involved recovery of crashed planes and this could be very harrowing, when aircrew had been killed. On his first such mission he was told to watch from the cab of the lorry and only join in the work when he felt able. With so many new planes being tested these crashes were quite common.

The team travelled throughout East Anglia and the Midlands, dismantling aircraft, which were often flying test beds, at De Havillands at Hatfield and Armstrong Siddeley at Betteswell. One obsolete Lancaster had been fitted with two jet engines that needed to be tested; it was eventually rebuilt at Shoeburyness, and then blown up by the Royal Artillery testing their new explosives.

Tony was involved with taking the new Meteors and Vampires to exhibitions, such as at Preston Guild and Lifeguard's Parade, as part of the RAF recruitment drive at the time. The planes were erected on site for show and then dismantled afterwards, and taken back to base on low-loaders; needless to say the planes never flew again!



The picture above shows the stricken B-29 bomber being stripped of its parts. In the other picture Tony is on the left, working with Ray Carroll to remove the tail section.

In October 1951 his team were sent to Amiens in France to recover a B-29 bomber that had crashed on landing, when its undercarriage had collapsed. They stripped it down, loaded it onto the heavy lorries they used and brought it home. Next they were sent to the Essex coast as a WW2 Stirling bomber had been washed up, and its ammunition was coming ashore. The team, with a Flight Sergeant Engineer and armourers, spent three months on the job. Whilst away from the base they were paid a generous allowance, and put up in guest houses. Having been paid very poorly for his first 18 months, he now he was now earned 39 shillings a week plus 3sh.10d a day ration money; he always managed to take his motor bike with him, hidden away in the back of the three ton lorry they used, so he could go far and wide when time allowed.

When his two years were up, and with an exemplary record, he was encouraged to stay on, but the kind of maintenance work he would have been doing did not appeal, as it would have been on an RAF base. He would dearly have liked to have been in an aircrew, but he suffered from migraines so this was not possible. Tony's view of National Service is a very positive one, he wanted to go and he “made the best of it”. It was a real experience for a young man from a small Devon village, and he would not have missed it.

Geoffrey Border Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers

Geoffrey came from an army family; his father Harry served in WW1 as well as in the Home Guard; his brother Fred also served in the Home Guard. Another brother, Ernest, was killed fighting with the Devons in 1945.



Geoffrey stands by his kit, laid out as required. Failure to do this correctly meant it was swept on to the floor by an NCO.



Born at Orchard Terrace in 1937 and educated at the village school and Highweek Boys Secondary School, he went to work in local nurseries. First at West End, near Bakers Park and then at Eales Nursery at Wrigwell, where Ernest had worked. Like a number of Abbotskerswell's young men he opted to join the army at 17½ rather than wait for National Service; in this way he was granted his choice of the Corps of Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers. His brother Fred worked at Sinclairs Garage and Geoffrey spent plenty of time there and knew how to rebuild an engine, hence his choice.

He reported to R.E.M.E. at Blandford, but being younger than the other National Servicemen he was sent to Dovercourt in Essex for his basic training. His return to Blandford coincided with the Queen's Birthday Parade, however, when he explained he had never taken part in a parade he was allowed home on leave instead. Next he was sent to Barton Stacey to complete a driver's course, which he passed by driving around Southampton. Geoffrey's first posting was to Southend, where he spent a year driving 7½ ton trucks pulling

guns for 3/7 Heavy Ack-Ack Battery. From there it was off to Malta for a pleasant and easygoing year, where he was trained as a vehicle sprayer, although he did admit that the training was minimal.

He described his time in Malta as "having enjoyed yourself while you were away." He also spent three months in North Africa, in the desert south of Tripoli.

By the time he returned to England his three years of service were up, and he chose not to sign on for any longer. One advantage of having been a regular was that he was in the Emergency Reserve, which meant he did not have to do the camp each year that the National Servicemen had to. Although Geoffrey spoke of his experiences with a sense of pleasure and

pride; he recognised that it was something you had to do, but probably hindered young men's career planning. However, the benefit was that the army introduced men to lots of trades that they had no idea existed. Not having a job to return to, he first became a vehicle paint sprayer, but eventually settled as a driver for Mother's Pride, delivering bread door to door.



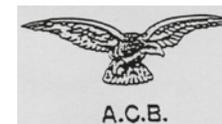
Graham Tett The Devonshire Regiment

In 1950 Graham's father, Ernest, bought Rose Cottages and moved the family into No 3. Graham attended Newton Abbot Grammar School and when he left he first joined International Stores, before living and working on May's farm in the Teign Valley until he was called up.

It was on snowy day in February 1955 when Graham joined the Devonshire Regiment, reporting to the Topsham Barracks for his basic training to become 23115793 Tett.

He spent much of his two years in Germany with the Army of the Rhine; this had been formed from the British Army of Liberation and at first was an occupation force, but later became part of the NATO forces, protecting Germany during the Cold War. Graham was part of the Bergen-Hohne Garrison based at Celle.

During his service Graham was promoted to corporal, his stripes are shown in the photographs, and he qualified as a driving instructor whilst in the army. After his two year service he signed up to stay in the army, but after another year he decided to leave to come home to marry Phyllis, who worked at Court Grange. He returned to his job at May's farm, before joining Bibby's as a lorry driver delivering animal feed.



Pat Honey Royal Air Force

Pat was another who chose to join up early. He was 17½ and a projectionist at the Odeon Cinema in Newton Abbot and thought he might as well

get on with his National Service. Being a Grammar School boy he was attractive to the RAF and his mother signed for him to join before the age of 18. He served from 1952 until 1964. Very soon he was in Germany, joining on 1 September 1952, with a service number of 4109595.



Pat wanted to be radar plotter, and after his eight weeks of square bashing at RAF Hednesford he was assigned to RAF Middle Wallop for his training. On 1 January he was posted to RAF Oldenburg, being in 300 Signals Unit which covered all the NATO flights in the two air corridors into Berlin. However, being indoors did not suit him, so he transferred to the Airfield Construction Branch. While waiting for the transfer, he spent the summer of 1953 in Torquay in the company of singer Vince Hill, whom he had met on a train, and his showbiz friends. Pat spent the remainder of his RAF career dealing with heavy machinery, both working and instructing in its use. In the late 1950s he was posted to Cyprus during the EOKA troubles, working with both military and civilian personnel at RAF Nicosia. On one occasion, he was given permission to cross the runway in a ten ton road roller, when a squadron of Hawker Hunters was scrambled, they managed to fly right over him. On another occasion a Hunter crash landed when its undercarriage failed and he used his bulldozer to push it off the runway.



Pat, 2nd from right on back row, and the 5003 Squadron crusher crew at the Arrington Arms at Royston in 1960.

Next he transferred to the RAF Postal Service, with his last posting being at the USAF early warning station at Fylingdales, where he set up a post office for the Americans: "I was the only postal clerk with the high status of security clearance that the USAF would accept ... My daily run to the Royal Mail depot with the outgoing bags was always with an RAF Police armed escort."⁶ He was the only RAF member on the base.

In 1964 he left the RAF to work in children's homes and later became a Country Park Ranger in Staffordshire, where he still lives.

Maurice Rowe Dorsetshire Regiment

Maurice comes from an Abbotskerswell family with a long history; his great grandfather, Robert Chudleigh being born in the village in 1844. His father, William, lost two brothers in WW1; these were Bert and Alfred who are on the war memorial in the church. When his 18th birthday arrived he was working as nurseryman and living with his parents and two sisters at 1 Elm Cottage. His Enlistment Notice, shown on page 114, began a two year experience that he "wouldn't have missed".



Maurice, shown in the centre, began his National Service on 17 September 1953, when he reported to the 1st Battalion of the Dorsets at the Depot Barracks in Dorchester, to become a rifleman; service no. 22920415. He was nervous, like most of the young men joining up, unsure of what was going to happen. He remembers that the basic training was hard but not unfair, and he did not witness any of the bullying that happened in some army units. The older NCOs were the worst and hardest taskmasters, although their having fought in WW2 gained them respect from the recruits.



Once basic training was over he was sent to Hong Kong on a leisurely troop ship. The political upheaval in China meant that this had become a volatile area, consequently the army presence was important in what was then known as the New Territories.



Maurice spent a year in the area, as shown in the photographs, before moving on to Korea in 1954. The war had ended by then, but the uneasy armistice meant it was still an unstable area, and there was a good deal of tidying up to be done by the United Nations forces. As the pictures show the conditions could be very harsh, and a newspaper article showed the tents of C Company, 1st Dorset Regiment, in a bivouac area of the 'Nightmare Field Firing Range', Maurice is on the right. Major-General Wood commented "the Battalion is in good form. We hope that we have weathered the worst of the winter and now

Chapter 10

The End of an Era

At the end of the 1950s, let us consider the changes that occurred during the 'Era of WW2', which had continued the trend of replacing the old with the new. On Priory Road two new houses had been added, Falonside, and Tamberley, which looked over to Court Grange, now with the Headmaster's House and a swimming pool. On Vicarage Road the old ruined Vulcan Cottage, behind the Post Office, had gone. At Barnfield six more Council Houses had been added, which explained why two of the old Well Cottages next to School House had been demolished.



There were signs of the modern world, Sinclairs Garage, with its petrol pump on the raised forecourt in front of the newly constructed buildings. Near Mallands Cimarron, Alveston and Beechcroft had been built. On Manor Road, the Beavis family have added a second house with a Scottish theme, SunnyBrae, with a new road, Laburnum Terrace, added with 15 more Council Houses.



anticipate the muddy horrors of the Korean thaw.”⁷⁷ When his service was coming to an end he was flown home, although engine problems in their plane meant that they had to land in Bahrain for a time. Maurice described his National Service as a “real experience for a village lad, going places that he would never have done if the system had not existed”. He does now

regret that when offered a Korea medal or £10, like most soldiers, he took the money! Following a man's service his employer was required to re-employ him, and Maurice went back to the nursery, with this glowing report from his 'Discharge from the Whole-Time of a National Service Soldier' form:

He has been employed as a rifleman throughout his service in this battalion and as such has performed his duties cheerfully and well.... I am quite sure that he will give any future employer the same cheerful, hard and conscientious service he has given as a soldier.



Although there was no official National Service Medal, National Servicemen were eligible for the General Service Medal; one for the army and RAF, and a naval one. These medals had a clasp for campaigns such as the Canal Zone, Cyprus, and Arabian Peninsula. Laurie Saurin's GSM Medal, with the Malaya clasp, is pictured left. National Servicemen were also involved in the Korean War, with the medal of John



Vowles, whose story is told in *Appendix 8*, shown right; this was issued by the United Nations, since the war was fought in their name.

At the National Memorial Arboretum at Alrewas, near Lichfield, there are a number of memorials that honour the fallen, and recognise the service and the sacrifice in many different organisations. One of these is the National Service (1939–1960) Memorial.



Out towards Two Mile Oak were two new bungalows, Springfield and Nutbush (now Fir Trees), and at Two Mile Oak there were now 25 houses, and a caravan at Moorland Caravans. *Appendix 7* lists all the houses added from those shown in *Appendix 1*. On the Totnes road was the new Abbotshill Filling Station; it had been built in a modern square design by Fred Walker. There was also a Caravan Park, with a bungalow, at the top of the hill.

Abbotskerswell was changing, leaving behind its working past and becoming one of the new 'dormitory villages'. Wealth was spreading and working people were beginning to earn decent wages, this would mean that they would soon be buying houses in the developments that the 1960s brought, and whose story was told in *2. Houses & Families*. The 1950s saw an end to the old ways and the beginning of the village we live in today.

Appendix 1: The Village in 1939

Village	Village	Parish
The Beacon	Salem Bungalow	Stoneyhill
Rockstone	Orchard Cottage	Pencombe
Ashfield	Elm Cottages, 1-2	The Bungalow
Pencerrig	Beechcroft	Stoneyhill, 3-24
Coombe Cottage	School House	
Park View, 1-2	All's Well Cottage	Two Mile Oak
Hillborough	Model Cottages, 1-4	Marigold
Manor Farm	Sunnybank, 1-3	Berrington
Rose Cottages, 1-6	Ivy Cottage	Rosery Nook
Home Cottage	Well Cottages, 1-2	Two Mile Oak Inn
Heathcot	Emmett's Place, 1-2	Windyridge
Venton	Abbotsford	Moorland Caravans 1-2
Elm Cottages, 3-4	Monks Thatch	Moorland View
Vulcan Place, 1-2	Ruby Cottage	St Teresa
Cross View	Prospect Cottages 1-2	The Cherries
Vicarage	Rosebank	Benoch
Fairfield	Carsevilla	The Glen
Fairview	Rock Cottage	The Nook
Town Cottages, 1 - 3	Odle Hill Cottage	Baroda
Town Farm	Odle Hill House	Arcadia
Town Cottages, 4	By-The-Way	
Abbotsvale	Mount Pleasant, 1-2	Court Grange
Tradesman's Arms	Sconhoe	Higher Lodge
South View, 1-6	Mount Pleasant	Court Grange Blind School
Grange View, 1-3	Westbury House	Headmaster's House
Willow Cottages, 1-2	The Bungalow	
Willow Grove	Mallands	Stoneman's Hill
Laburnum Farm	Ashley Priors	Crystal Wood
The Mote, 1-2	Hillside Cottages, 1-7	
Mote House	Oaklands	Langford Bridge
Barnfield, 1-4	Conitor	Old Turnpike Cottage
Bridge Cottages, 1-3	Pamval	Langford Bridge Farm
Butchers Arms	Higher Langford	
South Town Cottages, 1-2	Braeside	Whiddon
Lower Lodge	Laburnum Terrace 1-8	Whiddon House
Plum Tree Cottage	Orchard Terrace, 1-14	Whiddon Lodge
Church House Cottage	Manor House	Whiddon Farm
Church Cottages, 1-3	Leaholm	Whiddon Cottages, 1-2
Court Farm	Abbotskerswell Cottages, 1-4	Maddacombe Terrace, 1-4

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Appendix 2 The Roll of Honour

Christian Name	Surname	DOB	Address
Harold Francis Henry	Andrews	1914	11 Orchard Terrace
Edward John (Ted)	Beavis	29.07.1917	Braeside, Manor Road
William Samuel (Bill)	Beavis	30.06.1908	Braeside, Manor Road
John Robert	Bearne	8.05.1921	Langford Bridge Farm
Denis William George	Cowell	1923	12 Laburnum Terrace
Joseph E (Joe)	Coombe	9.07.1912	6 Rose Cottages
Sidney Arthur	Cornish	12.06.1912	4 Rose Cottages
Cyril S	Daniell	1912	7 Laburnum Terrace
Francis C	Emmett	1918	Odlehill Cottage
Walter S	Ellis	2.08.1913	4 Town Cottages
Henry Cecil Frank (Bungy)	Eyles	4.10.1914	5 Orchard Terrace
William W Howard (Bill)	Ford	3.09.1922	4 Hillside Cottages
Charles E	Gray		The Cherries, Two Mile Oak
Gerald Frederick (Gerry)	Gidley	1910	3 Abbotskerswell Cottages
Frank Charles	Huggett	4.12.1912	8 Orchard Terrace
Alan	Hawkins	1920	1 Sunnybank
Cyril Dennis Roy	Hawkins	1921	3 Hillside Cottages
S	Heath		
Herbert Charles (Bert)	Honey	28.09.1906	10 Orchard Terrace
Alfred	Julyan	22.03.1887	1 Orchard Terrace
Cyril A (Gerry)	Julyan	20.02.1920	1 Orchard Terrace
Charles Davies (Charlie)	Knapman	26.09.1902	Prospect Place
Leonard Cuthbert	Lake	1887	3 Orchard Terrace
Donald L	Lake	14.01.1924	3 Orchard Terrace
Kenneth Henry	Lee	30.08.1914	Two Mile Oak Inn
Harold	Lee	1914	2 Model Cottages
Ivor	Lloyd	13.05.1905	St Teresa, Two Mile Oak
Frederick John (Fred)	Maddicott	8.05.1916	Butchers Arms
George Henry	Maddicott	26.09.1886	2 Orchard Terrace
Alfred James	May	29.07.1916	3 Hillside Cottages
Edward (Ted)	Needs	5.10.1911	21 Stoneyhill
Edwin	Pritchard	13.08.1913	Carsevilla
Charles	Phillips	24.04.1917	Rockstone
Percy Maurice	Prowse	31.12.1899	3 Bridge Cottages
Ronald	Palfrey	1920	1 Mount Pleasant
Norman	Rowlings	1920	7 Stoneyhill

Kenneth L	Rowlings	8.06.1923	7 Stoneyhill
Wilfred Henry Claud	Rowlings	31.03.1917	7 Stoneyhill
Henry Peter	Symons	16.06.1906	1 Orchard Terrace
Alfred Thomas George	Sandford	21.06.1909	1 Barnfield
Bernard Douglas	Saurin	1922	Park View/Thatches
John Alex	Sinclair	1923	Abbotsvale
William George	Sinclair	1924	Abbotsvale
Wilfred	Stoneman	21.06.1909	1 Laburnum Terrace
Edward (Ted) G G	Truscott	1917	4 Orchard Terrace
Leonard A	Truscott	1915	4 Orchard Terrace
Thomas John	Tapper	23.09.1911	19 Orchard Terrace
George	Tapper		3 Barnfield
Donald F	Uren	1921	6 Stoneyhill
Arthur (Joe)	Uren	1918	6 Stoneyhill
Laurence Edward	Vening	1911	Park View/Thatches
Thomas Clarence (Sonny)	Webber	1924	2 Model Cottages
Leslie	Wright	20.04.09	2 Mount Pleasant
Alice	Brimecombe	24.08.1916	Manor Farm
Joan	Brimecombe	1919	2 Hillside Cottages
Beryl Mary	Bond	1924	Pamval
Dorothy Marjorie	Coombe	1914	Elm Cottage
Iris K	Daniell	1918	7 Laburnum Terrace
Winnie	Dennis		3 Model Cottages
Violet	Emmett	1913	Odlehill Cottage
Pamela M	Gray	15.11.1920	The Cherries, Two Mile Oak
Wendy E	Henley	1925	Mallands
Ivy E	Lake	1905	Tradesman's Arms
Betty	Lee	9.07.1919	3 Model Cottages
Joan	Prowse	7.08.1915	3 Bridge Cottages
Phyllis	Reynolds	1923	3 Church Cottages
Vera	Sandford	15.04.1916	1 Barnfield
Margaret	Sanders		8 Stoneyhill
Dulcie Gertrude	Skinner	1923	2 Rose Cottages
Nora Jane (Jeannie)	Truscott	1924	4 Orchard Terrace
Phyllis M	Uren	1923	6 Stoneyhill
Stella	Uren	1924	6 Stoneyhill
Ivy	Wafforn	1922	Arcadia, Two Mile Oak
Joyce	Wickens	1924	3 Rose Cottages

Appendix 3 The Abbotskerswell Scouts

Kenneth	Palfrey
Patrick	Ware
Ernest	Border
Peter	Sutton
Brian	Ford
Mervyn	Aggett
Ernest	Ward
Claude	Andrews
John	Maddicott
Kingsley	Hawkins
Terence (Tich)	Bond
Leslie	Rowlings
Kenneth	Hawkins
Gordon	Hingston
Douglas	Riddler
Alec	Waugh
Danny	Mann
Bill	Wyburn
Dennis	Cowell
W	Gibbs
Ted	Cooper

Evacuee Members

Bernard	Dunston
Rodney	Staines
P	Seaton
Albert	Bulwich
John	Rudman

Appendix 4 The Battersea Evacuees

George & Ben Snowden
George Puddle
Janet, Joan and Pat ?
Albert, John & Frank Faulkner
Wally, Gordon, Stuart & Bernard Talbot
Gordon Arthur
William & Edith Mortimore
Ben Snowden
Patrick & Joan Fowell
Harvey Dawkins
Kenneth Goodwin
Frederick Morton
Henry Grange
Ronald Mitchell
William Sharps
Ronald Cairns
Arthur Leslie
John Atkins
Alan Mace
Ronald Pope
Michael Durman

Appendix 5 The Members of the Home Guard

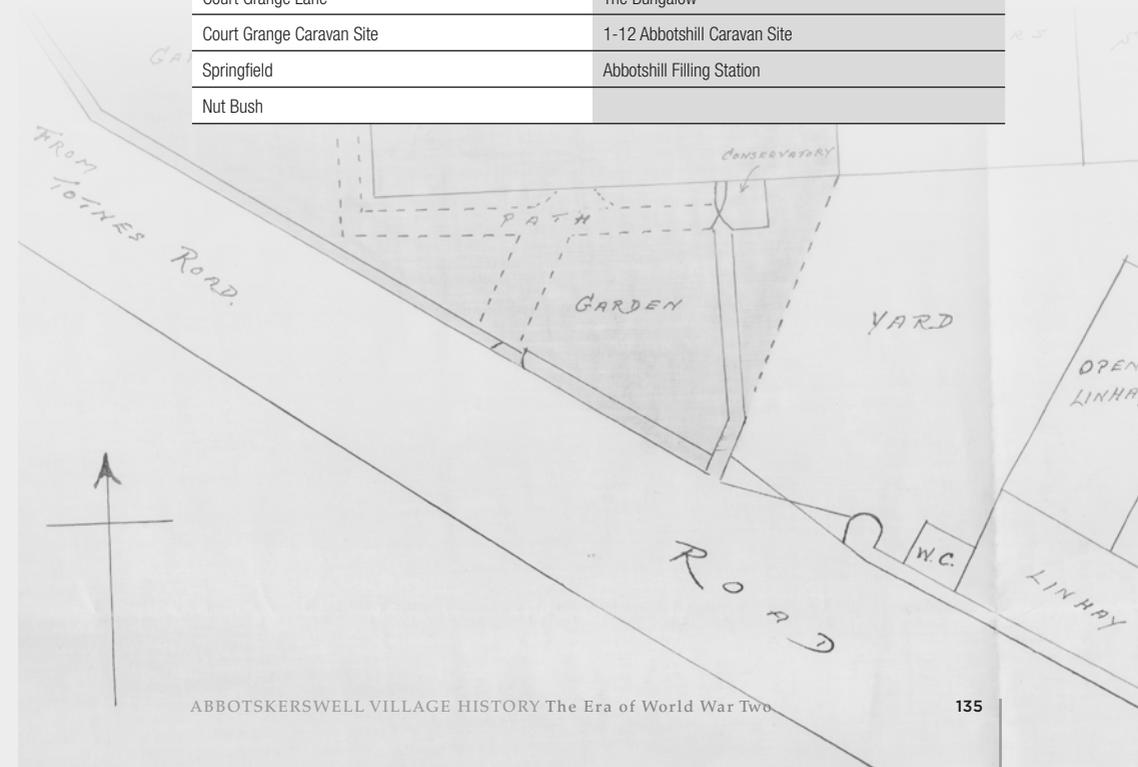
Name	Highest Rank	Address	Occupation	D.O.B
Arthur Bearne		Moorland View, Two Mile Oak	Lorry driver at Cyder Works	26.08.1903
William Beavis		Braeside	Carpenter and house decorator	28.02.1885
Alfred (Fred) Birley		Whitpot Mill, Kingskerswell		1875
William H Bond	Captain	Pamval	Foreman Cyder Works	10.01.1890
Frederick (Fred) John Border		12 Orchard Terrace	Postman	1923
Harry Border		12 Orchard Terrace	Farm labourer/grocery deliverer	18.10.1886
Albert Bovey		4 Abbotskerswell Cottages	Lorry driver at Cyder Works	30.06.1902
William J Brooks		2 Sunnybank	Clay miner	11.02.1884
Fred Bulley	Sergeant	12 Stoneyhill	Clay miner	5.07.1903
Stan Caunter		1 Hillside Cottages	Farmer	25.06.1907
John (Jack) Cleave	Sergeant	Court Grange Lodge	Chauffeur/gardener	16.01.1901
Herbert Constance	Lieutenant	3 Pound Lane, Kingskerswell	Primary schoolmaster	1888
? Crosby	Corporal	Whiddon Cottage		
Henry (Joe) Davis		Church House Cottage	Caretaker	1888?
Walter Ford	Sergeant	4 Hillside Cottages	Clay miner	13.06.1893
James (Jim) Franks	Lance-corporal	3 Laburnum Terrace	Clay miner	11.10.1899
Cyril (Gerry) Julyan		1 Orchard Terrace		20.02.1920
Henry John (Harry) Gooding		1 Silver Street, Ipplepen	Worked at Cyder Works	1880
Walt Gove		Ipplepen/ Stoneyhill ?		
George (Toby) Mears		Marystowe		
Edward (Ted) Miller		7 Orchard Terrace	Builders labourer	8.11.1899
Bernard Mills		Pencombe	Stoneycombe Quarry Manager	31.10.1906
Sydney (H) Moon		Well Cottage/ Emmetts Place	Bricklayer	10.03.1915
Stanley Morris	Sergeant	20 Stoneyhill	Ministry of Agriculture Adviser	9.02.1897
Albert Quintrell		1 Well Cottage	Quarryman	25.12.1908
Reginald (T) Sampson		Benoch, Two Mile Oak		
Albert (Bert) Stoneman		3 Rose Cottages	Farm labourer	9.06.1901
George H Stoneman	Acting- Sergeant	Salem Cottage	Clay miner	10.04.1895
Frederick Sydenham		Abbotsford	Cooper	12.12.1879
L Y Yardley	Sergeant	Cross Cottage ?		

Appendix 6 National Servicemen

Christian Name	Surname	Address	Service
Mervyn	Aggett	1 Model Cottages	RAF
Russell	Andrew	11 Orchard Terrace	Army
Terry	Bond	Pamval	RAF
Geoffrey	Border	12 Orchard Terrace	Army
Tony	Bowhay	Willow Grove	RAF
George	Browning	Laburnum Farm	Army
Patrick	Bulley	12 Stoneyhill	Army
Morris	Coombes	Priory Farm	Army
Derek	Daniell	7 Laburnum Terrace	Army
Larry	Daniell	7 Laburnum Terrace	Navy
Laurel (Kingsley)	Hawkins		Army
Graham	Herwood	Town Farm Cottage	Army
Patrick	Honey	10 Orchard Terrace	RAF
Roy	Knapman	2 Laburnum Terrace	Army
Cliff	Lee	2 Church Cottages	Army
Brian	Long	Stoneyhill	Army
Albert	Long	13 Stoneyhill	Army
John	Maddicott	2 Orchard Terrace	Army
Edward	Preston	Prospect Cottage	Army
Ivor	Preston	Prospect Cottage	Army
John	Pugh	8 Orchard Terrace	Army
George	Quintrell	1 Well Cottage	RAF
Maurice	Rowe	1 Elm Cottage	Army
Robert	Sanders	Stoneyhill	Army
Laurie	Saurin	Thatches	Army
Alan	Taylor	1 Abbotskerswell Cottages	Army
Brian	Taylor	1 Abbotskerswell Cottages	Army
Graham	Tett	3 Rose Cottages	Army
Clifford	Uren	6 Stoneyhill	Army
John	Uren	6 Stoneyhill	Army
Michael	Uren	6 Stoneyhill	Army
Raymond	Uren	6 Stoneyhill	Army
John	Vincent	6 Laburnum Terrace	Army
Ronald	Vincent	6 Laburnum Terrace	Army
Brian	Wright	2 Mount Pleasant	Army

Appendix 7 The New Houses 1939 to 1959

The Village	Two Mile Oak
Highborough	Glen Garth
Falonside	Mizpah
Tamberley	Riber
Treeton Cottage	Selborne
Longridge Cottage	Lavenham
Fairways	Valley View
Barnfield, now 2-20	Moor Tang
Brooklands	Shirleys
Little Orchard	Patricias
Priors	Oak Park
Cimarron	Cotslea
Alveston	
Beechcroft	Stoneyhill
Sunnybrae	The Croft
Laburnum Terrace 9-20	
	Abbotshill
Court Grange Lane	The Bungalow
Court Grange Caravan Site	1-12 Abbotshill Caravan Site
Springfield	Abbotshill Filling Station
Nut Bush	



Appendix 8 Two Villager's Stories

The stories in this publication largely focus on the men and women who lived in Abbotskerswell at the time of their service; some were born here, some moved here, some married someone from the village. However, there are two people who moved into the village later, but whose stories deserve to be told.



Gilbert Eales

Gilbert was a Newton Abbot man who moved into Abbotskerswell in the 1960s, when he opened the Model Stores and later created Gilbert Eales Builders; many of us live in houses built by his firm. He went on to be a Parish and Teignbridge Councillor, School Governor and Village Hall Trustee. His story, for this volume, began when he joined the

Devonshire Regiment during the early years of WW2 and in 1942 volunteered to join the 13th (Lancashire) Parachute Regiment. On 6 June 1944 he was in the first wave of parachutists to land in Normandy on D-Day, an event recorded in a memorial in Ranville, and where he is seen in the picture many years later. He was then part of the army that pushed on through Western Europe, liberating Belgium, for which he was awarded the Croix de Guerre for “bravery and gallantry in the liberation of Belgium”. He was wounded whilst fighting in the Ardennes and had a close call when his unit found themselves face to face with a German Tiger tank. He went on to serve in the Far East, becoming a Colour Quartermaster Sergeant. He later told AbbTalk, “his most treasured possession [was] the RED BERET of the Parachute Regiment”.

John Vowles

John was born in Somerset and moved to Abbotskerswell in 1979. In February 1952 John decided to pre-empt National Service by joining the Royal Artillery at 17½, signing on for three years. Like many men he saw this as getting on with his service, and exploring the world by choosing his regiment. John had spent four years in the Somerset Light Infantry Army Cadets, so the basic training did not cause him any real problems. After six weeks at Oswestry he opted for driver training, and soon became the driver of a lorry hauling a 25 pounder gun. After a year on Salisbury Plain he discovered he was to join the British contingent fighting in the Korean War, and in June 1953 set sail for Tokyo. However, by the time he reached Korea the Armistice had been signed, meaning his role would



be peacekeeping rather than fighting. John spent the next 15 months under canvas, enduring the freezing temperatures of a Korean winter. When his 4.2 mortar battery arrived they were stationed on the front line at the 38th Parallel, beyond the River Imjin. As a driver John spent most of his time driving officers around in a jeep, although he did spend two weeks in hospital when he injured his foot.

He recalls the poverty of the local people, and although the villages were out of bounds, he did see paddy field workers using their primitive threshing machinery when he was on manoeuvres. In March 1955, with his three years completed he left the RA and returned home, and eventually used his driving skills in a career as a lorry driver. When he left home his mother feared she would never see him again, but he enjoyed his time. He recalled that you had to accept the discipline, and “let a lot of stuff wash over your head”, but he added that “he had done things he would never have experienced without

joining the RA”. In 2012 he had the chance to return to Korea with the Veterans Association, and took the opportunity to visit the grave of a good friend at the time, who had been killed when his lorry overturned.

A Very Big Thank You

We have spoken to dozens of people during this project to record their memories of events and to gather material about family and friends. People gave of their time and family material without hesitation, I can honestly say not one person refused to help us. We thank them all, but especially those listed below.

Tony Bowhay	Ann Wild	Pam Wakeham	The Ford Family
The Rowe/Duncan Family	Ann Paddon, nee Cooper	Andrew & Angie Eyles	Eileen Beer, nee Tett
Marilyn Skinner	Mel Adderley	Derek Daniell	Michael Cornish
The Julyan Family	Laurie Saurin	Barry McCarty	Michele Uren
Colin Bovey	Tim Key	The Cowell Family	Penny Humphries
Beryl Wells	The Honey Family	Geoffrey Border	Ted & Valerie White
John Vowles	Margaret Hawkes	Graham & Susan Heard	
The Battersea Library Archive	Abbotskerswell Parish Council		Felicity Cole at Newton Abbot Museum

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