



VE DAY 75TH ANNIVERSARY

1945 - 2020



EST. 2020

FRIDAY 8 MAY 2020

HURST COLLEGE SPECIAL EDITION

FROM THE GRAY FAMILY
My Grandmother Bessie Barber aged 23 when war broke out, was assigned to the Royal Army Pay Corps, Whitehall. She knew where the troops were going before they did, and recalls setting up mobile pay units at the docks prior to D- Day to ensure the soldiers were paid before they embarked for Europe. On VE Day she was outside Buckingham Palace with her boss, Captain Eric Harvey and enjoyed her evening at the Chesterfield Hotel, Knightsbridge, where Bomber Harris and his retinue were also celebrating. Her husband, my grandfather Bert, was in the "forgotten army" in Burma and didn't return to England until October 26th 1946! Bessie never tired of telling me that the war was the best time of her life. Please see Bessie pictured to the right.

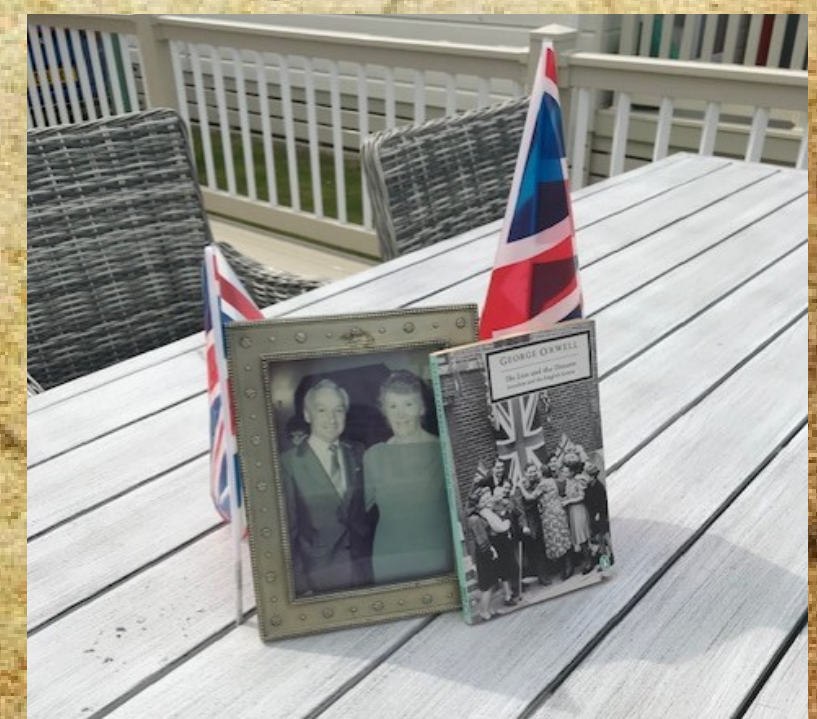


FROM THE HALL FAMILY
I thought I would share with you this picture of my grandfather, Peter Floyd, Freddie and Joe Hall's great grandfather, receiving the Legion d'Honneur from the French Ambassador a few years ago in gratitude for the part he played in liberating the north of France from the occupation when he was a Major with the Scots Guards. Sadly he died, aged 103, in the middle of March - fortuitously before Covid-19 struck - but he and his stories of the war have been a great source of amusement and information for the boys over the

last decade. He fought in Northern France for several years leading an anti-aircraft gun brigade and was then moved into logistics, where every day he would have to work out safe routes in and out for the support vehicles to ensure the men on the front were supplied with medicines, food and clothes. Today's huge logistical problems with lockdown are bringing what a challenge that must have been into stark focus! The photo shows him aged 100 receiving the medal and in the foreground him as he was in WW2



FROM THE LAUCHARD FAMILY
I wanted to send on a VE Day story of a great Uncle of Francois. He was in the RAF and shot down in his plane and lost his leg. He was taken as a prisoner of war and was one of the first to be repatriated. The attached photo was taken on his return home. It was subsequently used at the cover for the George Orwell book - The Lion and the Unicorn.





FROM THE SCHUTTE FAMILY

VE Day in our household is an emotional day of Remembrance. My father was a pilot flying Lancasters, Spitfires and Dakotas during WWII. He made many trips to Holland in attempts to free it. Ted is following in his footsteps as a cadet in the CCF. He has thoughts of potentially joining the RAF as a pilot in the future. My husband's parents were young teenagers in Holland during the occupation and suffered terribly during these times. The house that his father was born in and still lives in today has an oak tree that bares the scars of an attempt to cut it down to make fuel. The street they live in has a permanent monument where resistance fighters were shot on the last day of the war. In these terrible times that we are enduring currently our freedom is all

the more valuable and coveted. These stories are vital and should never be forgotten.



FROM THE HOLMES FAMILY

As a fellow historian I wanted to respond to your email about VE Day. The photograph to the right is of Arthur and Madge Peck (on their wedding day) who were Matt, Ollie and Izzie's great grandparents. Arthur was a navigator in a Wellington bomber and was shot down over Belgium in September 1940 and ended up in a prisoner of war camp until 1943. Unfortunately the message the family received was he was missing in action, then subsequently he was confirmed dead. Madge refused to believe this. This is from my mother-in-law - Arthurs's daughter: November 8th 1940 family told he was dead. December

12th 1940 family told he was alive and prisoner of war- injured but" extent of injuries not known." Telegram confirming he was a prisoner of war and alive after all said. "Regret any trouble caused by this error." And as soon as he was repatriated In 1943 they were married and went on to have 2 children, married for 55 years. What a story.



FROM THE NOON FAMILY
Attached photo of my father, Sophie and William Noon's grandfather William Pyzer who was in the RAF during WW2.



FROM THE JASKIEWICZ FAMILY
A photo of my great uncle, Tadeusz Sulinski (second from left) who fought in the Warsaw Uprising in 1944.



FROM THE WYLLIE FAMILY



An obituary from The Telegraph of Honor's grandfather, who was a tail-end Charlie in a Lancaster bomber squadron.

Bruce Wyllie was a charming, sweet-natured, open-hearted man and a fine husband and father 12:01AM BST 17 Apr 2008

Bruce "Titch" Wyllie, who has died aged 85, was a rear-gunner ("tail-end Charlie") in Lancasters with 57 Squadron of Bomber Command, whose very first operation was the famous Dresden Raid. It was not until half a century had passed that Wyllie could be prevailed upon to speak of his wartime past. When finally he did, he recalled a number of harrowing, terrifying but ultimately hugely rewarding experiences that helped a number of historians to try to visualise what it must have been like to take part in the great bombing raids against Germany during the Second World War.

Tail-End Charlies (2006), the history book

by John Nichol and Tony Rennell, drew on his experiences. William Bruce Wyllie was born at Teulon, Manitoba, on July 31 1922. In 1933 the family returned to Britain to set up a retail clothing and furniture business at Ripley, Surrey. Bruce was sent to Brighton Grammar School, leaving aged 16 to work in a business that by the 1970s was to grow into eight mini-department stores. A keen cricketer, he trialled for Surrey.

His other sport of the 1930s, shooting, taught him the concepts of swinging through a target and firing slightly ahead of it to allow for the speed of the moving lead. Unbeknownst to him at the time, these were soon to prove invaluable.

Having failed to join Fighter Command because of his poor mathematics, Wyllie was told that the best way to see action with only six months' training was to be a tail-end Charlie, and he volunteered for Bomber Command.

The Dresden Raid on the night of February 13 1945 involved a 10-hour round trip which he remembered vividly for the rest of his life. He recalled how, at the intelligence briefing beforehand, it was emphasised that the target would be the vast railway marshalling yards on the outskirts of the city, rather than the town itself. After the war he had little time for those who tried to depict the raid as a war

crime, pointing out that the railways being used to transport Wehrmacht troops from West to East were a perfectly legitimate military target.

Later in February 1945 Wyllie took part in night raids on Rositz, Bohlen, Mittland and in a daylight attack on Ladbergen, a total of more than 40 hours' operational flying time in the space of only 11 days.

That April he also took part in raids on Nordhausen, Leipzig, Ludzkendorf and Flensburg. By the end of the war he had clocked up more than 168 daytime and 126 night-time hours aloft. Although he certainly shot down one German fighter, his claim of a second one had to be shared with another plane.

Wyllie put his survival down to the trust that had quickly developed between himself and the pilot, who would "corkscrew" the Lancaster down and away when he warned him that they were fastened on to by enemy fighters, as well as to the skill of their navigator, a Mancunian maths teacher called Bennett, who was able to reconfigure schedules and courses in his mind after the corkscrew manoeuvre.

On one occasion, when the electronically heated filaments in his flying jacket caught fire just as his Lancaster was taxiing for take-off, Wyllie had to leap out, but was dragged along behind by his intercom

attachment. The aircraft's mission had to be aborted - but the crew's initial anger later turned to heartfelt thanks when the rest of the squadron suffered a 24 per cent casualty rate that night. While off duty on another occasion, Wyllie was driving some friends from their base, RAF East Kirkby in Lincolnshire, to a nearby pub when they saw a Lancaster crash in flames into a nearby cottage. Wyllie drove to the scene and they helped pull the survivors clear of the burning wreckage. Driving one of the victims to the air base hospital, Wyllie put his hand reassuringly on the man's exposed knee. Skin came off on his hand.

With the appallingly high casualty rate suffered by Bomber Command, Wyllie considered the whole of the rest of his life to be an unexpected bonus, and he enjoyed it to the full. Bruce Wyllie was a charming, sweet-natured, open-hearted man, a generous host and a fine husband and father. The success of his business, now trading under the name Wyllie and Mar of Ripley, meant that he could indulge his sports of shooting, skiing, golf, sailing his yacht at Cap Ferrat and driving Bentleys and Jaguars. Bruce Wyllie, who died on February 11, married, in 1952, Alex Carson, a classically trained ballet dancer, who died last year. They had three sons and a daughter.

FROM THE STEEDMAN FAMILY

This is something my sister made for the residents in my parents care home to celebrate VE day



FROM THE MCCRACKEN FAMILY

Graces Nana , Jean Edwards is 82 today! She was brought up in the middle of Coventry. She was an only-child at the time and her mum did not want her evacuated to the country with the other children that went. She said if they were going to die she wanted them all to die together! They had an air raid shelter at the bottom of their garden. Coventry was badly hit during the war as everybody knows. Graces Nana remembers being in the air raid shelter one time and they were so scared as they could hear the bombs falling around them. Her mum had saved her ration coupons and had

bought some little foil wrapped chocolates for Jean for Christmas .

One night when the bombs were so bad her Mum let her eat the chocolates as they didn't know if they would survive.

On VE day 75 years ago today Graces Nana was at a street party in Coventry celebrating the end of the war , she said she remembers being put on a chair and everybody singing happy birthday to her. They then all danced around the streets singing and dancing!

Thought you would like to see this photo of Grace's Nana on VE Day today aged 82!



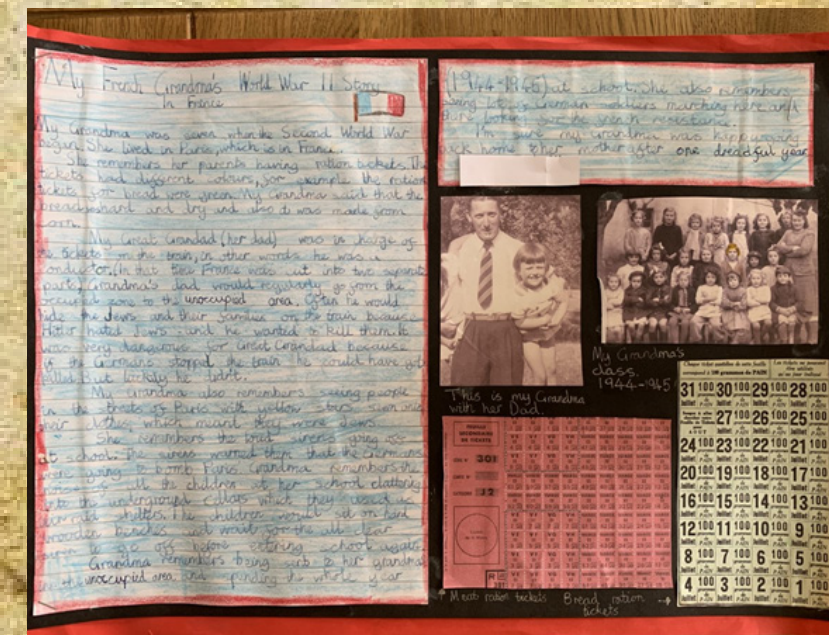
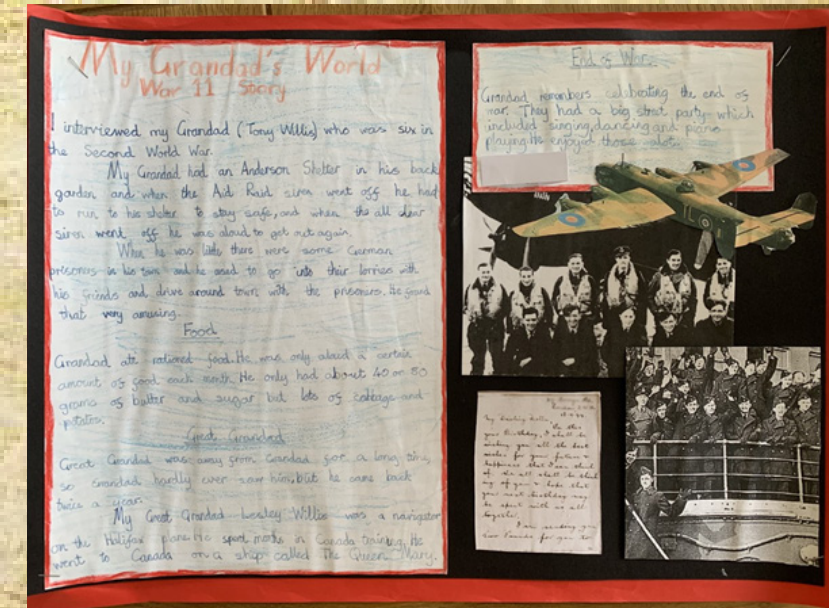
FROM THE LAMB FAMILY

This is by Issy Lamb's grandfather who was a doctor and war artist - Henry Lamb. We have this painting at home and the Victoria Cross he was awarded. (More information about him online).



FROM THE WILLIS FAMILY

2 projects that the girls had made back in their Primary School many years ago to commemorate their ancestor's experience of WW2.



FROM THE RINGER FAMILY

This is a photo that my mother in law sent of her street party in Cambridge to celebrate VE Day. She was two and a half at the time.



FROM THE MACEY DARE FAMILY

I attach a photograph of Portia's great grandfather's medals from both wars.



FROM THE HIGGINS FAMILY

Socially distanced street party in our little lane with Michael Mance and wife, Christine Dean (both these are ex-hurst staff) and Sally Brompton from the Mill opposite. They are all octogenarians so we're going to hear all about their stories of the first VE day party in 1970 (Sally was at Trafalgar Square for that one). Sally is organising 1940's music, we're making sandwiches and scones, attire is red, white and blue of course and we've made bunting to decorate the lane.



FROM THE DI CASTIGLIONE FAMILY

Fin and Sam di Castiglione celebrated by having a social distancing street party. We had 1940s music and paper aeroplane competitions with our neighbours!



FROM THE JEMISON FAMILY
What VE Day Means to Me by
Grace Jemison



Remembering VE Day is important to me because my Great Uncle Roy took part in it. Before he recently died, I asked him about his time in the war, and he told me this: Uncle Roy in his uniform My uncle gave me his uniform to keep My Uncle Roy with my sister and I 'In 1938, I joined the Coldstream Guards where I was posted to Chelsea Barracks in London to do guard duties at Buckingham Palace and the Bank of England. Coming off guard at the Bank, every

guardsman was given one shilling. More training was also done for other ceremonies, including Trooping the Colour - the Queen's birthday parade.

On 3rd September 1939, war was declared. We were on manoeuvres on Salisbury Plain at the time. It was therefore back to barracks to hand in our red dress uniforms, including our bear skins, and to be issued with khaki blouses and battle dress.

On 29th September 1939, I left Plymouth by troop-ship, arrived in Northwest France, and then travelled across France in cattle trucks to Northeast France. On 10th May 1940, Germany invaded Belgium. We went via Brussels to Lorraine, on the border. The Germans pushed the whole of the British forces back to the Dunkirk beaches where it was every man for himself. It was pandemonium. I was lucky to get on a boat at Dunkirk Harbour which meant that I landed in Ramsgate on 2nd June.

In 1944, I was then sent on a battleship to Naples in Italy, but seven days later I was wounded and sent to hospital. I re-joined the battalion but was wounded again at Monte Casino. At this time, I was declared unfit for further service on the front-line.'

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FROM THE GAUSDEN FAMILY
Picture of their Nan Barbara in the
VE Day parade 1945.



And a story about their Great Grandfather 'Arthur' & Great Uncle -also 'Arthur.'
Their Great Grandfather was wounded by shrapnel in the trenches in WW1, but because of a shortage of manpower (too many deceased!) - he was patched-up and sent to ground duties -still on the frontline in France. He became a 'Rigger' in the Royal Flying Core -the predecessor to the RAF. He served till the cessation of hostilities when he was demobbed. In WW2 he worked in munition factories and was an Air Raid

Warden - whilst fatherIng ten children! No Tv/Internet obviously!

His son - also an Arthur Gausden -was a Navigator on Wellingtons and Halifax bombers. You didn't need to be mad to fly on these things - but it helped! They simply couldn't fly on one engine if you lost one. So as not to dishonour his (Arthur's) service -I'll cut and paste in full. A family historian recorded that during WW2:

Arthur was sent to Bridgenorth, Shropshire for ground navigation school. Starting pay] was 2/6d a day. Was then posted to Llandurog North Wales, on the coast with Snowdon in the background, for flying training school for navigators. At the end of navigation school he was asked if he wished to take a commission and said yes but his reply was never delivered so he was still a sergeant on leaving. Pay went up to 7/6d per day.

Then went to Nutts Corner Operational Training Unit (Transport) in Northern Ireland for three months' further training on Wellingtons. Here the freshly trained personnel formed into crews, Arthur joined Andy Malcolm (pilot) and Bill Handworth (wireless operator/air gunner). They were posted to RAF Lyneham, Wiltshire in September 1943 where they were converted to Halifaxes.

Thisinvolved transport duties delivering planes to Rabat, Gibraltar, Algiers, Cairo, Bari and other places including one to India. On one flight extra tanks had to be fitted to give greater range. There was a complicated switching arrangement and half a minute after it was completed both engines stopped. The plane dropped from 7,500 to 1,000 feet in 20 seconds. Arthur reversed the switching procedure to go back to the original tanks which worked and the engines re- started. The extra tanks had not been filled with fuel. Arthur was 21 at the time!



Wellington. On Friday March 25 1944 (the date has been checked in the navigator's log) the unit - No 1 Transport Unit - flew from Lyneham to Pershore. They arrived to an extremely cool reception from the WAAFs. This was because they were replacing a group of Canadians - well paid, well dressed Canadians. The following Saturday there was a most unwelcoming welcome dance. Arthur went with some friends and told them he was going to pick the most miserable looking WAAF to dance with (privately afterwards he admitted he'd picked the best looking). Joan was apparently not terribly encouraging at first ("what's your name?"; "mind your own business") but nonetheless they were soon engaged and married in nine months on 2nd December 1944. The wedding was very nearly cancelled. One week before, he was sent on a delivery trip to Cairo from which he would not be able to get back in time. The Commanding Officer said

that if he could find a volunteer to take his place he need not go but no volunteer was forthcoming. As the plane was on the runway ready to go another navigator landed at the airfield, ran across to Arthur's plane and offered to go in his place. Arthur accepted and the wedding went ahead. In fact his replacement was able to make it back from Cairo in time to attend. Arthur was posted back to Nutts Corner where he made Staff (i.e. became an instructor) a promotion due in no small part apparently to his prowess in football. The whole unit was posted to Riccal near Selby in Yorkshire. Joan was still in Pershore. His last posting was to RAF Dishforth near Rippon. The war ended. Joan and Arthur were both demobbed, Joan in 1945 when she went back to Dewsbury. Arthur spent a lot of time hitch-hiking between Dishforth and Dewsbury. Arthur was demobbed as a Warrant Officer in 1946. They remained married throughout their full lives. Rest in peace.



Halifax. Arthur was extremely fortunate to survive the notorious 'death traps' that were British Bombers in the early 1940's.

His brothers - twins John and David (the last of ten children) - learned to keep their feet on the ground and were both enlisted into the Royal Engineers. Sadly - twin John passed five years ago but Luke And Ava are lucky to have both their Grand Parents to celebrate - perhaps a 'virtual' VE Day with them both via Face Time etc? I wonder what the 'Arthur's' above would have made of virtual anything? They were simply doing their duty as Gausden's have since pre 1066.

Perhaps Luke or Ava will follow in their Footsteps. He's going to hate me for this pic with our friend Colonel Etherington Apache Squadron 2014. Mind you - hair is now a similar length due lock down.