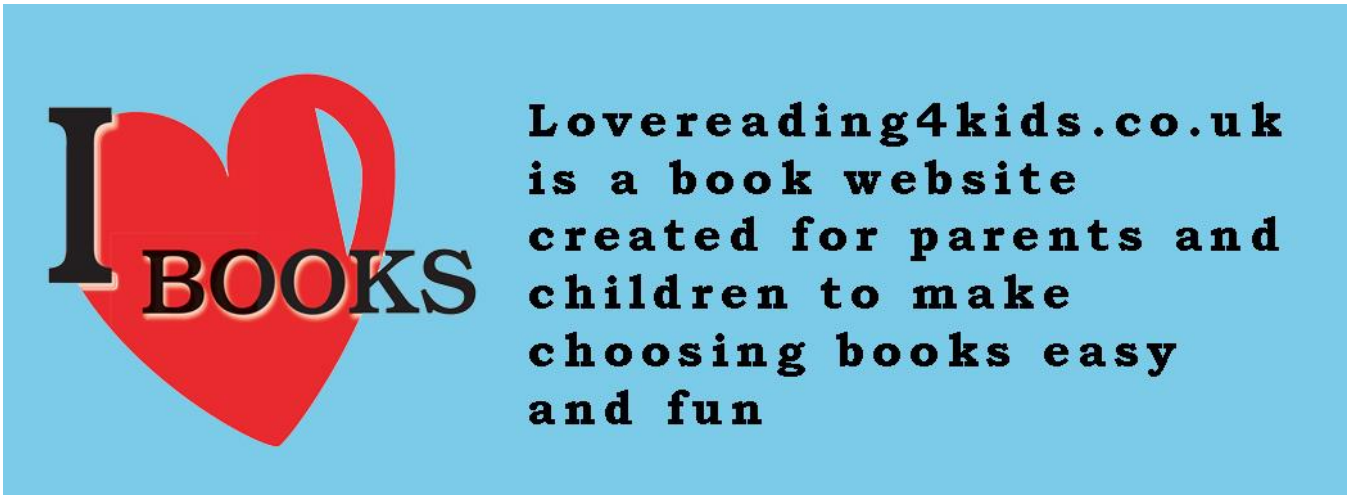


Opening extract from

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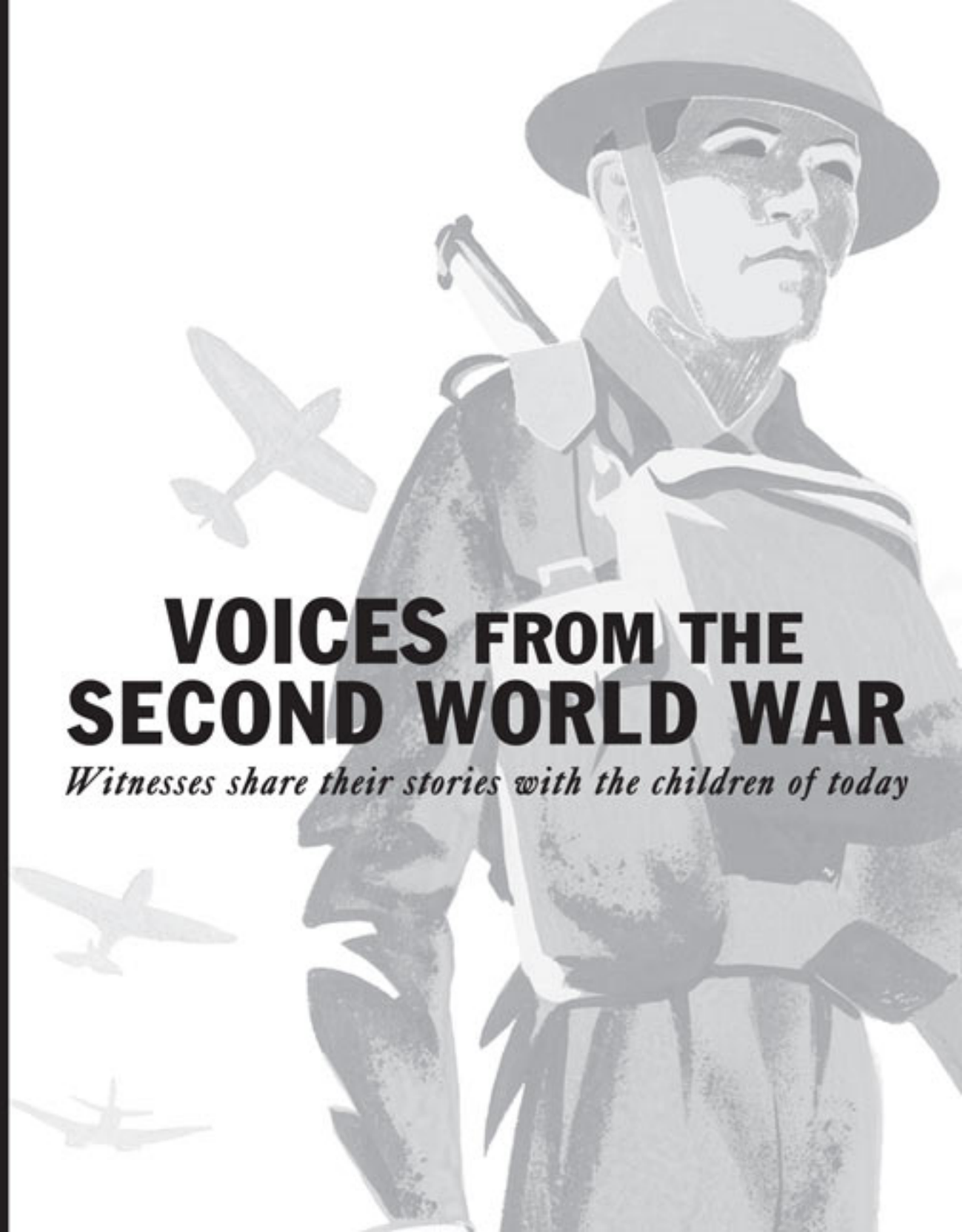
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VOICES FROM THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Witnesses share their stories with the children of today

TRUE STORIES FROM THE MOST DEVASTATING WAR IN HISTORY

The Second World War changed the course of history. Up to 80 million people died, families were torn apart and whole cities were reduced to rubble. Now, over 70 years after the war, survivors share their stories, passing on their memories so that their experiences are never forgotten. Many of the stories in the book were collected by children who interviewed relatives and family friends. RAF rear gunner Harry Irons recounts his first bombing raid on Germany; Anita Lasker-Wallfisch explains how playing the cello in the orchestra at Auschwitz-Birkenau saved her life; and Takashi Tanemori, who was playing hide-and-seek at school in Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, describes what happened after the atomic bomb fell on his city.

Her Royal Highness The Duchess of Cambridge also searched out a story from her family. She visited Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire, the centre of intelligence gathering in Britain during the war, to meet Lady Marion Body, a veteran who had worked there alongside Catherine's grandmother, Valerie Glassborow. Valerie wasn't a codebreaker but had a crucial job in a small section responsible for managing the collection of enemy signals. The duchess learned that her grandmother had been one of the first to know that the war had ended, as she was working the day shift when a signal from Tokyo was intercepted, announcing that the Japanese were about to surrender.

This unique and moving collection of first-hand accounts of the war is published in association with *First News*, the award-winning children's newspaper, and The Silver Line, the confidential helpline for older people established by Dame Esther Rantzen.



Lady Marion Body tells the Duchess of Cambridge about her time working at Bletchley Park during the war



SOME OF THE CHILDREN WHO HEARD THE STORIES

Many of the stories in this book were collected by children, giving them the chance to learn about the Second World War from the people who were there.

"SIR NICHOLAS TAUGHT US MANY THINGS. HE EXPLAINED THAT WE SHOULD ALWAYS TRY TO PREVENT OTHER PEOPLE'S SUFFERING AND WALK AROUND WITH OUR EYES WIDE OPEN."



Amélie Mitchell and Daniel McKeever interviewed Sir Nicholas Winton, who saved the lives of 669 Jewish children by helping to evacuate them from Czechoslovakia before Germany invaded.



"I brought Barbara an onion from my grandpa's garden. She used it to explain to me what it was like during the Second World War. To show me how they used to cook it, she boiled it for half an hour. Then she tipped the saucepan, and the onion thudded onto the plate like a wet tennis ball. She covered it in salt and pepper, and spread butter on it. Normally I don't like onions, but this one was different. The butter made it quite easy to eat. It made me realize that even though you think people ate quite disgusting things in the war, they had a way of making them taste nice. After hearing Barbara's stories about the Blitz the onion tasted very good indeed."

Martha Vine, pictured here with her father Jeremy Vine, interviewed Barbara Burgess, who told her what it was like to live on rations.

"IT WAS AMAZING TO MEET DR FRANKLAND AND HEAR HOW HE FELT ABOUT HIS LIFE AND THE THINGS THAT HAD HAPPENED TO HIM. I FEEL VERY LUCKY AND WOULD REALLY LIKE TO MEET HIM AGAIN TO HEAR MORE STORIES."



Lucca Williams interviewed Dr Bill Frankland, who told him about his experiences as a Japanese prisoner of war.



"I knew my grandma had been a girl during the war, but I had never spoken to her about it, so interviewing her gave me the chance to get to know her even better. I felt special as she was sharing personal memories with me that would have been lost for ever if I hadn't had this opportunity to chat to her. I have seen many films and read lots of books about the war. Hearing my grandma's memories makes those stories more real to me and helps me relate to them with more sympathy and understanding."

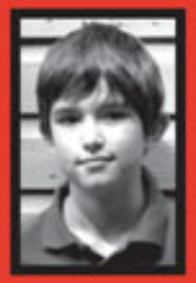
Eleanor Boardman interviewed her grandmother Mary Boardman about life in Manchester during the Blitz.



"MR PETE IS A GOOD FAMILY FRIEND AND I ENJOYED LEARNING ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCES IN THE WAR. I FOUND IT SURPRISING THAT HE WAS MORE AFRAID OF LOSING THE RESPECT OF HIS CREW THAN OF BEING BOMBED BY THE JAPANESE."

Nadir McDonald interviewed George Bressler (Mr Pete) about his time in the US Navy.

"I enjoyed doing this project with my grandfather as otherwise I would not have known about his experiences. Grand-père was my age when France was at war. I can't imagine what it is like worrying about not having enough food and I can't bear the thought of eating rabbits! I think I am lucky to live in a country at peace."



Victor Ghose interviewed his grandfather Dr Francois Canil-Lavoste, who lived in France during the German occupation.



"By interviewing my grandfather I learned a lot about him as well as about the Second World War. I feel that now I understand what my grandpa and others went through."

Lilly Rose Van Dusen spoke to her grandfather William M. Breed about his experiences in the US Navy.



"I was very lucky to be able to talk to Gramps about the war. It means that I understand what it was really like from someone who experienced it first-hand, rather than from a book by historians who weren't there. I think that Gramps and the other Dambusters were extremely brave and I am very proud to be part of his family."

Ellen Gregory interviewed her great-grandfather George "Johnny" Johnson, a bomb aimer who took part in the Dambusters Raid.

"I FOUND IT FASCINATING TO TALK TO SOMEONE WHO HAD ACTUALLY LIVED THROUGH THE SECOND WORLD WAR IN A COUNTRY WHICH WAS OCCUPIED BY THE NAZIS. I AM SO PROUD OF MY DUTCH GREAT-GRANDMOTHER FOR HELPING THE JEWS IN HIDING."

Sasha Devereaux interviewed her grandmother Cornelia Manjé, who was a child in the Netherlands during the war.





"I was extremely excited to write to Shirley Hughes. She's been an idol of mine since I was very small and I absolutely adore her books. If I were in the war I'd try very hard to save my sweet rations."

Bill Riley wrote to Shirley Hughes to ask her about life in Liverpool during the Blitz.

"GREAT-GRANDMA WAS A FANTASTIC STORYTELLER AND I REALLY ENJOYED HEARING ABOUT WHAT SHE GOT UP TO IN THE WAR. I'M SO GLAD THAT WE HAVE A VIDEO RECORDING OF IT TOO SO THAT WE CAN WATCH IT AGAIN ONE DAY."

Jamie Brooks interviewed his great-grandmother Monica Miller, who was a sergeant in the British army during the war.





"It was a pleasure interviewing Micheline. She was so happy to talk about her childhood, and she even made some cakes (she is an amazing cook). I particularly enjoyed it because it made her smile."

Lucy Poirrier interviewed Micheline Mura about her experiences as a child in German-occupied France.



"IT WAS A FASCINATING EXPERIENCE AS I LOVE LEARNING ABOUT THE PAST."

Elias Abdo and his classmates at Mile Oak Primary School interviewed Fred Glover about his experiences in the Parachute Regiment.

"Mr Checketts was very nice and interviewing him was really fun. He showed me lots of interesting things that were in a big old trunk, like photos and his navy uniform. I went back to school and told everyone about it. They were all really fascinated. I spent the whole day with Mr Checketts and I enjoyed every moment of it. We went for a walk in the garden together."

Carys Yates interviewed Harold Checketts, a naval meteorologist.





"WE ARE GRATEFUL BECAUSE IF OUR GRANNY HADN'T SURVIVED THE WAR THEN OUR DAD WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN BORN AND NEITHER WOULD WE!"

Will, Dora and Chester Clapham interviewed their grandmother, Margaret Clapham, who came to England from Germany on a Kindertransport train.

"I really felt very special hearing Granddad's stories from when he was a little boy. They brought the time vividly to life for me and I was able to understand how difficult it was for him in the war. You can read a book about the war but when Granddad spoke to me about his own experiences, I could almost see what it was like through his child's eyes. I love my granddad even more now."

Aylish Maclean interviewed her grandfather Ken Swain, who was a child living in Portsmouth during the Blitz.





"WE ARE LEARNING ABOUT THE SECOND WORLD WAR AT SCHOOL SO IT WAS REALLY INTERESTING TO FIND OUT ABOUT GREAT-GRANDMA'S EXPERIENCES AND TO BE ABLE TO TALK TO SOMEONE WHO WAS ACTUALLY THERE."

Jonathon Brooks interviewed his great-grandmother Monica Miller, who served in the British army during the war.

"It was very interesting meeting Fred Glover. I learned all about the Second World War and how much life has changed since then. It must have been terrifying! One thing I remember in particular is how he carried on even though his leg was injured. He was a very interesting and brave man and it was a pleasure to hear his unforgettable stories. We should all really start listening to our elders. They have one or two things to tell us!"



Daniella Birchley and her classmates from Mile Oak Primary School interviewed Fred Glover, who took part in the D-Day landings.



"IT WAS A GREAT HONOUR AND EXPERIENCE TO INTERVIEW MR FRED GLOVER AS I HAVE ALWAYS HAD AN INTEREST IN FINDING OUT ABOUT THE WAR AND THE INCREDIBLE STORIES OF THOSE WHO FOUGHT IN IT."

Seb Dutton and his classmates from Mile Oak Primary School interviewed Fred Glover, who took part in the D-Day landings.

"IT WAS AN ABSOLUTE PLEASURE TO INTERVIEW MY GREAT-GRANDMOTHER. IT WAS FASCINATING TO FIND OUT ABOUT HER PLACE OF WORK AND HOW HER INVOLVEMENT IN THE WAR HELPED SHAPE OUR WORLD TODAY."



Chloe Stevens interviewed her great-grandmother Joy Hunter, who worked alongside Winston Churchill at the Offices of the War Cabinet.

"HEARING ABOUT MY GREAT-GRANDAD'S EXPERIENCES IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR MADE ME REALIZE WHAT DIFFICULT CONDITIONS HE AND ALL THE OTHER SOLDIERS FOUGHT IN. IT ALSO MADE ME FEEL VERY PROUD OF HIM."



Joseph Harrison interviewed his grandmother Gill Harrison. She told him what his great-grandfather, Ivor Robert Phillips, did in Burma during the war.



"I found it really interesting to interview my grandmother. I never really knew exactly what her role was in the Auxiliary Territorial Service, but I realized after interviewing her how proud she felt playing such a central part in the war effort. It is difficult to imagine being so very young, a teenager, and having such a heavy responsibility. There is always the very real possibility that I myself might be faced with a similar task in my life, but I hope that doesn't happen. For her, the war was an opportunity to gain skills and a respectable job. Despite the circumstances, this gave her a sense of belonging and a real purpose which she frequently talks about today."

Millie Devereux interviewed her grandmother Margaret Neat, who worked as a radar operator on anti-aircraft guns.

"WE WANTED TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THE DIFFICULT CONDITIONS OUR GREAT-GRANDFATHER HAD TO ENDURE. WE ARE VERY PROUD OF HIM FOR RISKING HIS OWN LIFE FOR OUR COUNTRY AND EXTREMELY THANKFUL HE SURVIVED."

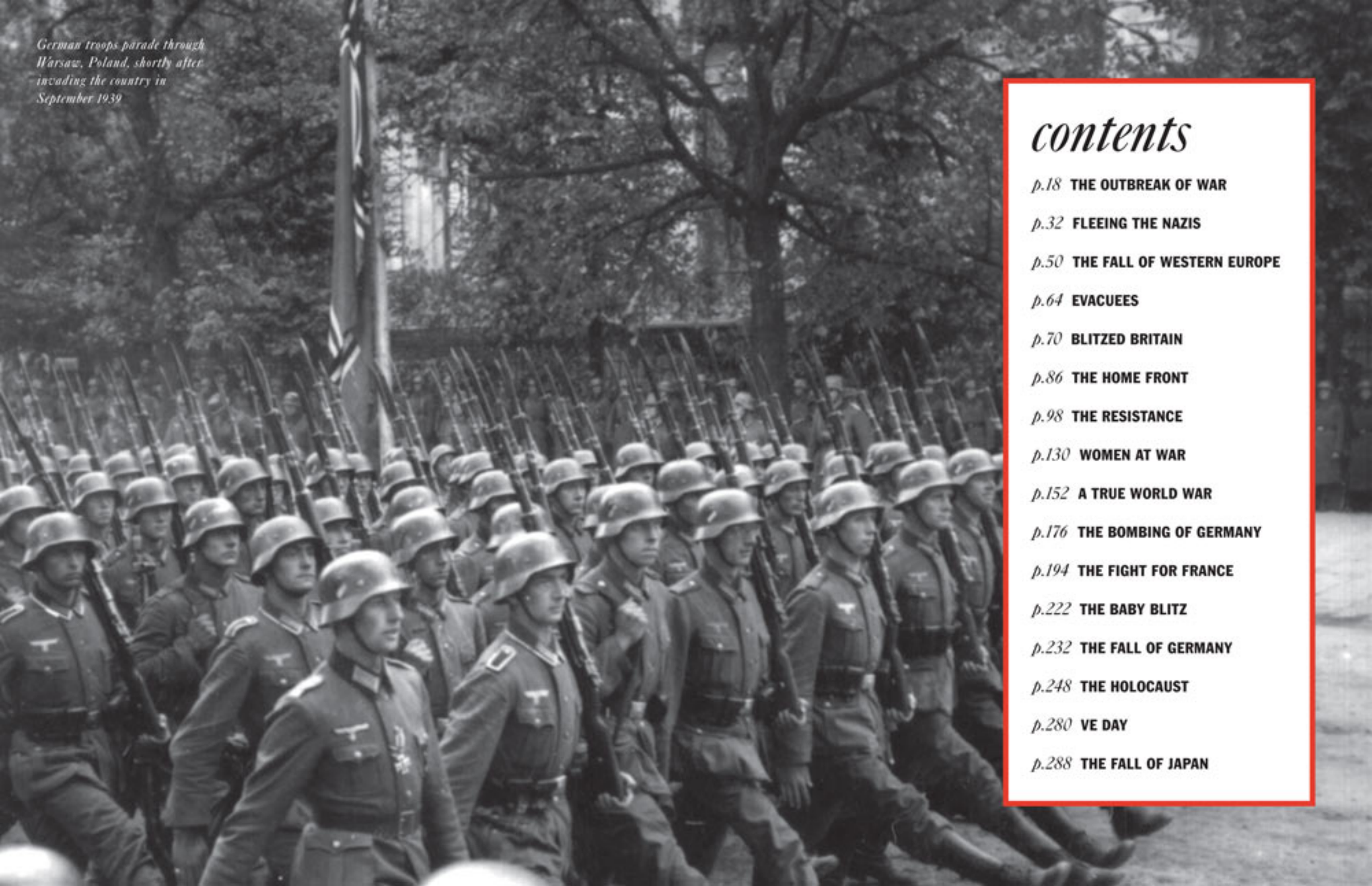


Samuel and Gemma Preston interviewed their great-grandfather Israel Hyams, who served in the 44th Royal Tank Regiment.



"Interviewing Sir Harold Atcherley was a fantastic experience that opened my eyes to what it was really like to be held as a prisoner of war. I think it is very important for everybody to read about the war so they can see how hard it was for all the brave soldiers who fought."

Seraphina Evans interviewed Sir Harold Atcherley about his time as a prisoner of war.



German troops parade through Warsaw, Poland, shortly after invading the country in September 1939

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THE OUTBREAK OF WAR

During the 1930s, dictators rose to power in Italy, Russia and Germany. The most notorious of these was Adolf Hitler, leader of the extreme right-wing Nazi Party, who became chancellor (equivalent to prime minister) of Germany on 30 January 1933 and president and führer for life on 19 August 1934. He blamed Germany's problems on Jews and communists. In 1936, Hitler moved troops into the Rhineland – the region on Germany's borders, which was supposed to be free of military forces – and in 1938 he claimed that the Sudetenland, a German-speaking area of Czechoslovakia, should be part of Germany.

Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, flew to Munich in Germany on 28 September 1938 for a conference with the German, Italian and French leaders. Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union were not invited. At the conference, the leaders agreed to allow Germany to take the Sudetenland and signed a peace agreement known as the Munich Agreement, but Hitler had no intention of sticking to it: he was determined to take over Europe. In March 1939 Hitler occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia. Then, on 1 September, Germany invaded Poland and the Second World War began. Fighting between the two opposing forces, the Allies (including Britain, France and the US) and the Axis (including Germany and Japan), lasted until 1945.

Members of the Reichstag, the German parliament, saluting Hitler after his announcement of the "peaceful" acquisition of Austria, March 1938. This set the stage for the occupation of the Sudetenland.



DOUGLAS POOLE

Douglas Poole joined the Territorial Army in 1937, and was one of the first to be called up when war broke out. He has written about his experiences in his memoir, The Time of My Youth.

It was Sunday 6 August 1939. Speculation was mounting about war in Europe; reports of troop movements and pictures of anxious-looking people returning from abroad featured in the press. Against the tide of public opinion, one Sunday paper insisted, on the advice of its astrologer, that there would be no war! On the radio, light music and occasional warlike tunes were played "to keep the spirits up".

Those who had experienced the horrors and suffering of the First World War were understandably more concerned than people like me, who were born later. My mother was very worried by the turn of events, particularly as I had joined the Territorial Army two years previously and I was due to leave for a month's training the following week. My father and I tried to calm my mother's fears by saying that we thought war was unlikely.

My father and I went for a beer before lunch, as we did most Sundays. As we ordered our drinks, my father's friend George hailed him from the other end of the bar.

"My son here is off with the army next week," my dad told him.

"Must have a drink on that," George responded. "What mob are you with?"

Dad told him that I was a non-commissioned officer in the Essex Regiment. The hint of pride in his voice was unmistakable.

As we walked back home, Father said, "We have to humour your mother, you know. It won't be like the last time." He was referring to the year before, when I had been called up for the crisis over the Sudetenland, only to return after five days when the Munich Agreement was signed and war failed to break out.

"I know," I said. "That's why I was so keen to get that shelter dug. But Mother refuses to let me fit her gas mask – she insists it messes her hair."

"I hope Hitler doesn't use gas, for your mother's sake," said my father. We both laughed uneasily.

We were walking through an area where lots of Jewish people lived. I waved at some lads I had been to school with and wondered if they were more worried about the war than we were.

The smell of the Sunday roast greeted us at the front door. "I've made apple pudding for you," my mother said.

"That's more than you'll be getting next week," my father joked.

We both laughed, but my mother turned sharply away.

That evening, I went to church. At the entrance to St Matthew's, a man named Millington handed me a hymn book. "You're not with the choir?" he asked.

"No," I said. "I thought I'd just join the congregation tonight; I'll be going away for a while, you see." I didn't mention the army, for Millington, a fervent pacifist, had voiced disapproval when I enlisted.

"I heard you were, boy," he said.

After the sermon, the vicar said, "These are days of tremendous uncertainties. Some parishioners will be facing unfamiliar or even dangerous ways of life. As you know, a member of our choir leaves in a few days' time for duty with the army. We pray that he may return to us safely and speedily."



Douglas in his army uniform

At the end of the service, some of the congregation came to wish me well. I chuckled to disguise the emotion I felt. "Look, I'll be back in a month," I said. "Probably by Harvest Festival." As I neared the door, Nares, an elderly baritone, called out to me. His son had been killed in the Battle of Loos in 1915, during the First World War, a fact commemorated on a plate at the back of the choir stall. Some folk reckoned that Nares was considerably affected by his loss, which explained his aloofness; I could not recall ever having had a conversation with him.

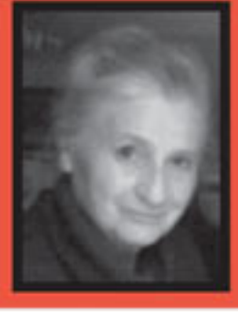
"You will come back, son, won't you?" He looked at me strangely.

"I'll do my best," I said. "In fact, I'll make a point of it."

"God be with you," he said. "Always remember your prayers."

I felt as though he hadn't really been talking to *me*, and I was relieved when members of the choir suddenly appeared. I explained how embarrassed I would be when I returned in a few weeks' time.

Walking home along the cobbled street, amidst deafening traffic, a feeling of sadness overwhelmed me. I was leaving this secure, familiar world of mine; an unknown future beckoned, and nothing would ever be the same. Indeed, it never was.



VERONIKA SYROVATKOVA

Veronika Syrovatkova was four years old when Nazi Germany invaded the Sudetenland. She told India Dalton-Biggs what life was like living in Czechoslovakia under German occupation.

In September 1938, when I was four years old, Nazi Germany took over the Sudetenland. It soon became clear that this would lead to the total occupation of Czechoslovakia. The UK and France had agreed to let Germany do this; it was a complete betrayal of our country.

On 17 November 1939, when I was five, the Nazis executed nine Czech students and sent 1,200 students and professors to concentration camps, just because they were protesting against the German occupation of Czechoslovakia. I remember that very clearly, because one of the murdered students was a family friend who I was very fond of. I was very upset.

The war was a terrifying time for us children. Our parents tried to make our childhoods as normal as possible, but we were scared every time there was a knock at the door in the evening. My parents spent a lot of time listening to a radio programme from London, which was forbidden, and they would have been in great danger if the Germans had found out.

Our family had a good Jewish friend named Ruzena Heydukova. Even though she was married to a Christian man, she was taken to a concentration camp in Terezín, also known as Theresienstadt. Ruzena was one of around 140,000 Jews who were taken to Theresienstadt during the war. She survived the camp, but many of her family members did not. My family knew other Jews, too, and we helped them by storing their furniture and keeping their money safe. When they returned after the war, they were happy to have their things back – but their happiness didn't last long. The communists confiscated most people's possessions a few years later.

My family didn't have any German friends, but we did have some distant German relatives. My great-aunt Julia married a German man in the early 1900s, and their two sons joined the Nazi Party. Our relations ended there and then. Once, they visited us in Prague and they brought me a big box of chocolates. I refused to taste even

a tiny chocolate – that was my way of showing patriotism. It took a lot of willpower, because chocolate was so rare in those days.

At school we only had to speak German in a couple of lessons – history and maths. Otherwise we spoke Czech. We rebelled against the German occupation by not putting our arms straight up in the air for the Nazi salute during the German national anthem at the start of each school day.

I was around ten years old when the war ended. We all felt a huge sense of relief, happiness and excitement for the future. Unfortunately this feeling only lasted until February 1948, when the communists took over the country. Years of darkness followed.



FRANCISZEK KORNICKI

Franciszek Kornicki joined the Polish Air Force College in 1936 when he was nineteen. He fought for Poland during the war, and after the German invasion he moved first to France and then to Britain, where he fought with the Royal Air Force (RAF).

I graduated as a fighter pilot in June 1939 and was posted to a fighter squadron. The war started on 1 September that year. The Polish Air Force unfortunately had very few aircraft compared to the Germans. Those that we did have were old and slow, whereas German aircraft were by far the most modern in the world at that time. The Germans had



Franciszek (centre) with fellow Polish Air Force College cadet officers



PZL P.7 fighter, used for fighter pilot training in Poland

about eight or nine times as many fighter pilots as we did, too. We tried our best, but we didn't stand a chance.

I remember one time I saw a German aircraft and I started firing, but after one or two short bursts my guns jammed. It was impossible to reload. I tried – I unbuckled my harness in order to reach the guns, but I couldn't. So I put my harness back on. I did half a roll to get closer to the enemy but my buckle and harness detached and I fell out of the plane! I managed to open the parachute and I landed safely.

Not long after that, the Polish armed forces withdrew, and on 17 September the Russians, who had signed an agreement with Germany, attacked Poland from the east. Poland never formally surrendered, but that was really the end. All pilots were told to get to Romania and make their way to France. So on 18 September I crossed the Romanian border in a car with three of my squadron friends.



Franciszek and two of his friends posing with their car during the evacuation from Poland

Poland had an agreement with Romania – we would help them, and they would help us. Now we needed their help, but they were under pressure from the Germans to stop us getting out of Romania and to keep us in camps. My friends and I managed to avoid the camps with the help of a young Romanian officer who found us accommodation with a teacher's family and had civilian clothes made for us. We gave him our leather coats and our uniforms in return. He helped us to pass through a checkpoint so we could proceed to Bucharest in southern Romania.

We managed to reach the Polish Embassy in Bucharest, where we were issued with temporary passports and some money, and then we took a train east towards the Black Sea. From there we managed to catch a boat to the French city of Marseille.

We arrived in France in October, and we were supposed to go to a French air force base just outside Lyon, but hundreds of us were held in a huge exhibition hall until February. Poland had a mutual assistance agreement with France and Britain, but some French people believed Poland had started the war because we wouldn't agree to Hitler's demands.

The French had built a line of defences around the country called the Maginot Line, and they thought that would protect them. But when the Germans attacked France, they came through Belgium and bypassed the Maginot Line completely. France had a large army and air force but they were badly led. The morale was poor and they lost the will to defend their country. It was an utter disaster.

I started training to fly French aircraft on 15 May 1940. My first flight in a combat fighter plane ended badly. Shortly after take-off the engine packed up. There was a forest straight ahead of me, so I had to turn back. I just managed to get over the trees near the airfield and landed with the undercarriage pointing upwards. I was not injured but my aircraft was seriously damaged. As I was standing there looking at the wreckage, the commandant of the airfield said, "You owe the French government half a million francs!" I said, "Sir, I can't pay that!"



Franciszek's plane, after it disintegrated during training

Then I realized he was joking. The second French fighter plane I flew performed well. Soon I was strapped in, ready, waiting for orders – but they never came.

When I arrived at the airfield on the morning of the French surrender there were French guards by our aircraft, so we couldn't take them and fly away. All Polish people at the airfield were taken by bus to the railway station. There was no time to collect anything from our quarters. We travelled a few hundred miles and spent the first night at a small airfield. My friends and I didn't want to travel any further by train so we broke into a closed aircraft hangar and found a car, which we filled up with petrol that we'd drained from a few aircraft. The four of us travelled to Perpignan on the French/Spanish border to catch a ship to North Africa, but the naval admiral in Perpignan wouldn't let us – he was already collaborating with the Germans. We had to leave the car there and we travelled by train to Saint-Jean-de-Luz in south-western France to get on a ship to Britain. A French colonel tried to stop us, but we were there with a large group of Polish soldiers, with weapons and ammunition, and we threatened to fight him. So at last, on 24 June 1940, we boarded a British ship, the *Arandora Star*, and sailed to Liverpool in England.

We arrived in Liverpool on 26 June and we were taken by bus to a camp in Cheshire. There were hundreds and hundreds of tents, full of Polish people. I didn't speak a word of English, but I started learning from day one. I found a "teach yourself English" book, and a couple of chaps who spoke English mentored the rest of us. I remember one of them saying, "The most common little word in English is T-H-E, and it's a hell of a job to pronounce it!" We found eight ways to pronounce it, and every single one was wrong.

I was trained to fly Hurricanes (British fighter planes) and did my operational flying from RAF Northolt, which was a

home base for three Polish squadrons from 1941 until the invasion of France. I was in 315 Squadron. Our job was mainly to escort bombers who were attacking targets in German-occupied France, Belgium and Holland. We also flew fighter sweeps, looking for German planes all over the sky and attacking ground targets. A lot of blood was spilled – the Germans' and ours.



Franciszek (right) with two of his fellow 315 Squadron pilots at Northolt, ready to fight

On 13 February 1943, I was appointed squadron commander of 308 Squadron. That lasted thirteen days. During a fighter sweep, at a height of 25,000 feet (7,600 metres), I suddenly got an excruciating pain in my stomach. I managed to land at Northolt and found the squadron doctor. He poked me with a finger, and I yelled. He said, "Your appendix has burst! Don't move!" I was operated on that evening.

Shortly after that I was given command of 317 Squadron and on 1 January 1944, I was taken off flying. Six months later, after the Allies invaded France and forced the Germans to retreat, I went as a staff officer to Holland. The war was going our way. On 7 May 1945, I was flying back to England for a course. When I landed, I was told that the war was over.

People say that we Poles were particularly brave during the war. There's some truth in that, but it's been exaggerated. We had a score to settle – an extra one, because of what the Germans had done to our country.

KEN "PADDY" FRENCH

Ken French moved to England from Ireland in August 1939 to start a new life. One month later, war broke out.



I remember Sunday 3 September 1939 very well: we were told to listen to our radios at 11 a.m. as there was to be an announcement from the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain. The announcement finished with the words, "This country is at war with Germany." Nobody had any idea what that would mean for us or how long the war would last. Someone remarked to me he thought it would carry on till Christmas at least. Little did we know that we were to spend six Christmases at war. That night we heard our first air raid siren. We didn't know what to expect, so we all got out of bed and sat in the broom cupboard under the stairs. It was a false alarm, and many more were to follow. It was a long time before any bombs were to fall on this country.



Ken with his brother and their friends in August 1939

In September 1940, the Germans started mass bombing raids on our cities by night to try to destroy our factories and break the morale of the civilian population. The government formed the Home Guard, a sort of citizens' army to support the regular army in the event of an invasion, and I joined up. In those early days,