

REMEMBERING REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2020

Keep Connected! - *Community Matters*
Serving the Parish and Wider Nottingham

An extract from Issue 20 for MRA

REMEMBRANCE SUNDAY 2020

Message from Revd Ian Welch, Rector St Andrew with St Alban, Parish of Nottingham, Moderator Churches Together In Nottingham

“Many people of faith stand appalled at the cruel and tragic waste of life that war entails. It is also quite proper to give great thanks to those who sacrificed their lives in the cause of freedom in WW2. There is, however, the thought that often the moral case for war is not so strong as it was in 1939. So often, it seems, war is used as an extension of statecraft to serve perceived national interests. Moral discernments are much more challenging in such cases, and the Christian call is surely to pray for peace and reconciliation? As these prayers are offered one remembers also that those who died, did so in the cause of peace, and that the best way, therefore, one can honour their legacy is by striving unreservedly to achieve that great goal.” With every blessing, Revd Ian. (visit our website for the full letter)

WARTIME EXPERIENCES

These are the accounts I have been given to date, following my request in the last issue of Keep Connected for your wartime stories. If you would like to add your own please contact me and I will ensure it will appear in a future issue.

Revd Ian Welch's Grandfather

My late grandfather, who died back in 1981, had the great misfortune to see active service in both World Wars, having served as a boy seaman at the Battle of Jutland in WW1, and then in the Mediterranean fleet as a radar officer from 1939-1945, during which time he rarely had the opportunity to return home for shore leave. Grandad (or Ted, as his friends and comrades knew him), had a sceptical view of Remembrance Day. He contended that those who had been in action would much rather, as far as possible, *forget*. His only comment on the Battle of Jutland was, that if you are standing next to your best friend when he is blown to bits (which was his experience on the gunnery deck), then you don't want to remember such events or talk about them. And after that one laconic statement, he never did. He was also somewhat sceptical about the idea of being a hero, and contended, with a wry grimace, that “there are no atheists in the front line”

Diane Hudson's Father

Diane's brother, Michael, has written this about their father: “His great-grandson would regard driving a fire engine as an extremely exciting experience, but for Nottingham resident George Hudson, it would have been no fun taking his vehicle out among the falling bombs of the Luftwaffe. With his brother Stan and his sister Win, he joined the Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) as war approached. The family lived in Elmhurst Road and were members of St Andrew's Church. The AFS was first formed in 1938 as part of the Civil Defence Service.



Its role was to supplement the work of the brigades at local level. Members of the AFS were unpaid, part-time volunteers who could be called up for full-time paid service if necessary and this was the path that George took. He drove to incidents in Central London and on one occasion, fought a fire in Buckingham Palace. He was proud of the service and valued the comradeship of those with whom he served.

Alex Gaskill, General Manager, Warr's Harley-Davidson in Mottingham, responded to Diane Hudson's request with this piece about his father - "My Dad, Ivor Gaskill, joined the Royal Hampshire Regiment under age (he was born in 1924), unbeknown to his mother. By the time he was trained he had achieved the entry age required and was soon shipped to Italy with his best school friend, Leslie. They arrived unscathed at Monte Cassino and were there for three weeks and miraculously survived, apart from cuts and abrasions.



They were marched to Assisi where the enemy were being fought off. Dad and Leslie were sent on stretcher duty to pick up an injured Bren gun operator. An enemy mortar hit the stretcher, killing Leslie and badly wounding Dad, who was left for dead for three days before being discovered by a Canadian patrol. After weeks in hospital he was sent back to the front line.

He was able always to talk freely about his experiences as one of the 'D-Day Dodgers', a title so wrong and many of you will know they embraced it with a humorous song. My Dad and his comrades had a wicked sense of humour (unrepeatable here) that kept them going through atrocious conditions.

Rvd Anne Hoad said, "My Father was a baker and therefore was needed at home in the second World War. He was in the Home Guard and had an unfortunate experience. They were out on exercise and he was positioned behind a hedge. The person in charge cried out 'the Germans are coming' prompting a guy on the other side of the hedge, who thought it was real, to let off a shot which hit my Dad's helmet! Fortunately, Dad survived unscathed!

David and Thelma Mouqué wish to remember Frank William Mouqué (Battle of the Somme), Leonard Frank Mouqué (Army Defence Corps) and Frank Leybourne Mouqué (Royal Engineers). L F Mouqué (pictured) took part in the D-Day landings and in building the bridge at Arromanches. After WW2 he was awarded the Légion d'Honneur for his part in the liberation.



Pat Hubbard recalls that her family were amongst the lucky ones, four of her mother's brother's returning safely from WW1. A cousin who was captured by the Italians in WW2 was repatriated in one piece.

Pat sent me (via son John) copy of the 'Chislehurst Commons - November News' which includes a piece on the Chislehurst War Memorial, which was unveiled on 17 October 1920. The designer, Sir Reginald Bloomfield, chose the site on common land so that the cross would catch the sun's rays at just the right angle. It had been funded by public donations.

A poignant aspect of the story is that there was no official list of casualties to reference names for inscription, so the War Memorial Committee had to rely on local knowledge and information from families. The committee agreed unanimously that the names would be inscribed in alphabetical order without rank, regiment or honour.

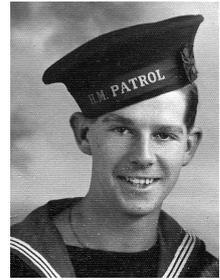
Coolings Nurseries kindly provide the plants to go around the memorial base. The polyanthus planted this year are tended by the Chislehurst Commons Keepers.

Bob & Alison Lawrie remember Bob's Dad, Herbert James Lawrie, who aged 19 joined the Royal Navy soon after the outbreak of WW2, interrupting a Thames Lighterman and Waterman apprenticeship. He was assigned to the Merchant Navy as a gun operator/instructor on Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships (DEMS). He rarely referred to his wartime experiences, which saw him serving on various merchantmen, including HM Stratheden, a 25,000 ton P&O liner, converted as a troop carrier.

Although memories are distant, Bob and sister Pat recall, as children, playing with Dad's medals which confirm his 'theatre of war' and included Africa and Burma. We also remember him talking about Aden, Cyprus and the Mediterranean, we suspect whilst aboard HM Stratheden. We also remember references to the guns, Oerlikon and Bofors in particular.

He trained in Liverpool and he was demobbed at nearby Port Sunlight in 1945 at the end of WW2. Mum took Bob, then aged six months, to visit him, Dad's old service holdall serving as a 'carrycot'! So, more recently, when Alison had arranged a short surprise stay in Liverpool (destination unknown to me at the time) and Mum said I'd been there before, I was mystified. My memory is quite good, but not that good! He was deemed to have served his (seven year) apprenticeship when he returned and spent much of his working life plying the Thames.

He also took part in the D-Day landings on one of the many small support boats in the flotilla. Fifty years later we took Mum & Dad to the Normandy war graves in commemoration of D-Day. My abiding memory is of his quiet reflection. I can only imagine what he went through. Thank-you Dad.



W **illiam Victor Dyer 1926 - 2016** served in the Royal Army Service Corp. His son Ron Dyer kindly sent this piece together with the photos below, for this issue of Keep Connected!

Billy, as he was known, was a born and bred Bermondsey boy. Born at Guys Hospital he lived his early life in and around the dockhead area, until he met his future wife Joan, when they moved to Pepler Road in Peckham where they lived until 1976 when their home, along with thousands of others, churches and factories were compulsory purchased by the Greater London Council and demolished to make way for the Burgess Park extension. Joan and Bill then moved to Mottingham (Framlingham Crescent) and lived there until they died. Billy and his family have attended the Mottingham memorial since the mid 1980s. His greatest honour was being asked to read the Act of Remembrance whilst standing alongside the clergy and local dignitaries. Billy did this for many years, and was thrilled when his brother Ronnie came up from Tonbridge yearly to lay a wreath on behalf of their uncles who served in the Great War.



Billy is now remembered with the laying of a wreath by his granddaughters.

M **ottingham Village Concert Band**

The Mottingham Village Concert Band has been performing at the Sunday Remembrance Service for over 20 years. Many of the band members do not live in Mottingham but travel from Keston, Ealing and as far afield as East Grinstead to play at the Mottingham War Memorial Act of Remembrance every year.

The band is much valued by Mottingham residents and its presence brings great reverence to the service. The core members of the band have been playing together since 1953 and together with newer members they continue to rehearse on Wednesday evenings at the Maryfield Hall in Leysdown Road, next to Our Lady Help of Christians.

Diane Hudson lent me her copy of the order of service for the 11 November 2007 Act of Remembrance which listed the music played by the band. Pieces played prior to the service were, *Blaze Away*, *Children of the Regiment*, *On the Quarter Deck* and *Slow March Scipio*. During the service the band played *All People that on Earth do Dwell*, *The Last Post*, followed by the *Reveille*, *O God, our help in Ages Past* and then the *National Anthem*. After the service the band played *Evening Hymn* and *Cavalry Last Post* followed by *Voice over the Guns*.

It's a great shame that this year's Act of Remembrance can't take place and that the band will not be there to play. We look forward to them playing for us next year, by the War Memorial as in previous years. The band is pictured here at Eltham College in 2015.

For more information visit the Mottingham Village Concert Band website at www.mottinghamband.co.uk

TOWER OF LONDON REMEMBERS

In 2014 the Tower of London marked the outbreak of the First World War (WW1) with the commemorative art installation *Blood Swept Lands and Seas of Red*, which saw the moat filled with 888,246 ceramic poppies. Created by Paul Cummins and Tom Piper the Tower's famous moat was progressively filled between July and November. (*A moving sight never to be forgotten. I took these photos when we went to view the installation on 3 November 2014 - Ed.*)



WE WILL REMEMBER THEM



Bob Lawrie, Compiler & Editor, Keep Connected!