

Memories of World War II

Three articles about the war-time as recalled by parishioners. Another Jill Rolfe special compilation for your delight.

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ROUND AND ABOUT (BUT NOT IN THIS PARISH)

When I was doing some research about the War and VE Day Hylda Rawlings contacted me to tell me of three refugees from Guernsey. This is the first time I have gone completely outside the Parish but I thought the story was worthy of an article.

Hylda Rawlings' mother was living in Devon and at that time there was just Hylda and her mother living at home as Hylda's father had not long died.

The billeting officer came to visit Hylda's mother and said they had evacuees who needed somewhere to live and would Hylda's mother take them in? As she had room, of course she did.

The family were tomato growers in Guernsey when the Germans invaded. Conditions on the island were dreadful and getting worse all the time. One evening the family went out for a walk (mother, father and small child) and they passed a little secluded cove, and saw a rowing boat complete with oars. It had probably been left for somebody else, but they saw an opportunity to escape and they just piled into it and rowed away. Their little boy was only three years old. The husband decided to try and row them to England, but it was

almost certain they would have got into difficulties and probably downed.



But 'Luck' was on their side, and as they rowed across the sea they were rescued up by a British Destroyer which came alongside and hauled them aboard. The little boy had with him his tiny black kitten and when they got to England the Captain said he would adopt the kitten as a mascot, but the little boy would not be parted from his kitten. It was of course absolutely illegal to bring livestock into Britain but somehow they managed it. One

sailor carried the little boy through Customs and fortunately not one of the Customs Officers saw the kitten. This photo is of the little boy with his kitten.

The second photo is the of the Guernsey mother called Marian and she was aged about 28 with her son who had the name 'Little Maxwell'. In this photo is a toy car which was provided by neighbours who all rallied round. (There is no photo of



Marian's husband who was called Maxwell). There was also the question of the little black kitten from which Little Maxwell refused to be parted. Would Hylda's mother also take the black kitten? Of course she did.

The family had escaped just as they were -with no luggage at all (apart from the black kitten). Neighbours rooted around and provided clothes for them all and the little boy also received toys.

The husband, Maxwell, had wanted to join the Forces but he had a heart defect and was refused, instead he joined the Fire Brigade at Torquay.

When the family returned after the War they found their livelihood in ruins, and all the greenhouses smashed. Marian's father was alright, but Maxwell's father had died.

My thanks to Hylda Rawlings.

Jill Rolfe

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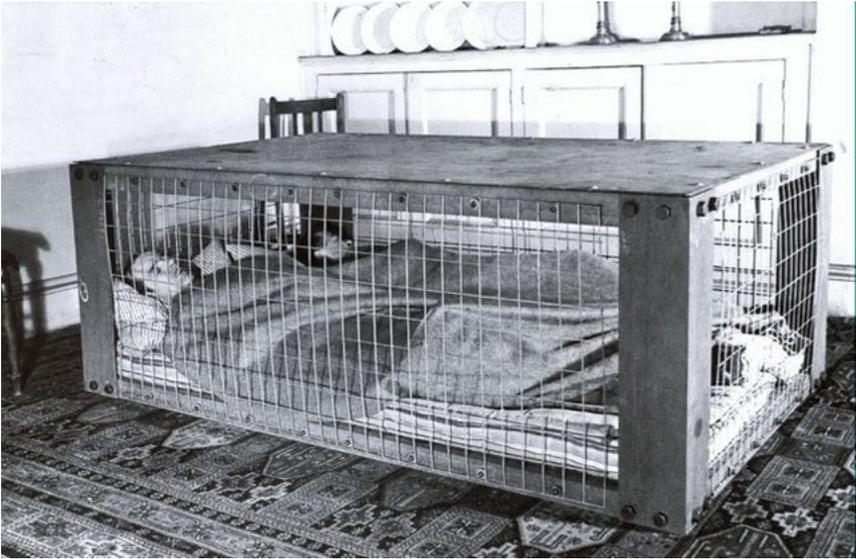
ROUND AND ABOUT [OUTSIDE THE PARISH]

Childhood Wartime Memories (Heather Heath)

We lived in a house that backed on to the embankment of the London to Brighton Railway line which can still be seen from the comfort of a Haywards Heath rail trip to Victoria today. About a mile distant on the other side of the embankment was Croydon Airport. My memories date back to when I was about four years old; I had a newly-born younger sister.

My father commuted to his London bank (his place of work) on a daily basis. He had been in the army in France during World War 1. Two or three times a week he would fire watch in central London on the roof of the bank.

Although thankfully we suffered no great personal loss in our family my memories of the bombing and lifestyle imposed on us quite fairly by rationing are still quite vivid. I am just recording particular attacks and the personal fairly insignificant effects that were typical of that period.



We sheltered in a "Morrison" cage-like construction which was housed in our living room. It was about the size of a double bed and when we slept in it (which we did at one stage nightly for about eight months) we were arranged crosswise and thus my parent's feet were hanging out of the side; this required them to retract their feet in order to put on the side panel of the cage when the air raid warning was sounded! This is an illustration of a Morrison shelter - not the one used by Heather's parents.

One night a German bomber swooped down over the railway line; my father felt it necessary to continue his fire-watching duties when at home. He was therefore standing at the open kitchen door; the bomb exploded just the other side of the kitchen. My father was fine but the blast had dragged open the dresser doors and sucked our family crockery down

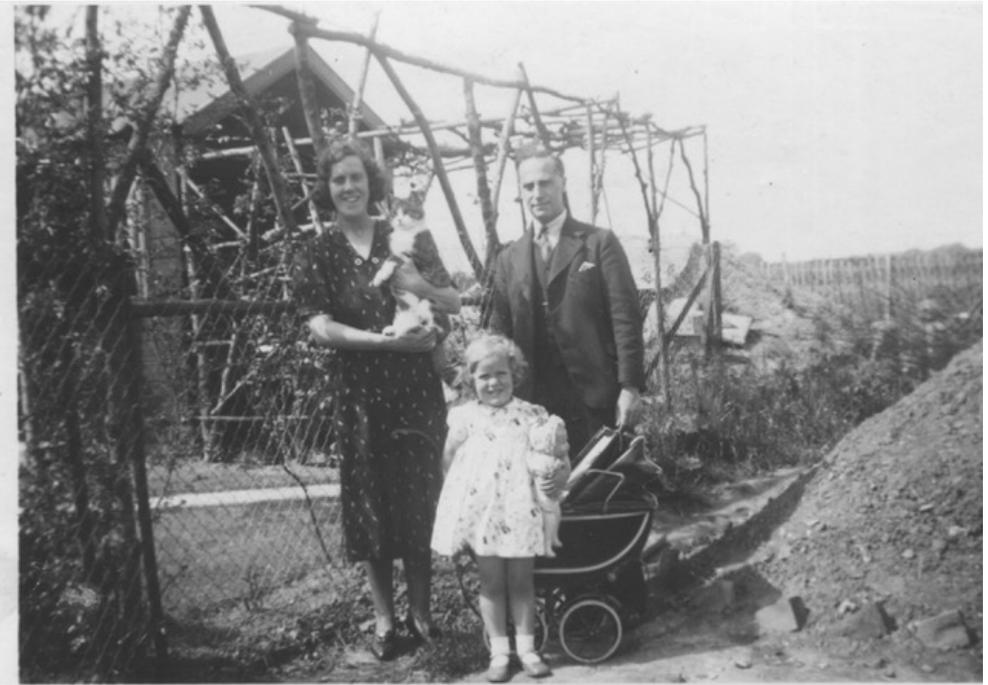
on to the quarry tiled floor. We spent the following day piecing together a jigsaw of broken crockery to set us up with enough plates etc to see us through the next few years. The items were glued together and then riveted so that they were gravy-proof.

The V1 flying bombs which were launched from conquered France were not always detected in time to sound the air-raid warnings but the engines had a distinctive note. Early one morning we heard such a sound overhead. We dived into our shelter and waited; would the engine cut out? It did and we held our breath as it whistled down. Once again the explosion was just the other side of the railway line. It took out a small triangle of houses which also included a greengrocer's shop and a cobbler's shed. Later that day on our daily shopping trip (necessary without a refrigerator) we noted a teddy bear amongst the smouldering rubble and took a cursory look at the shoes which were scattered around. My Mother's second pair of shoes had been awaiting repair in the shed. The anxiety over this was due to the necessity of keeping our troops well shod. Therefore in order to obtain a replacement pair we would need to go to the 'Welfare Office' to give a reason for the loss. That having been verified we would be given a docket (a little form) to take to the shoe shop where we would be supplied with whatever style or colour was available. Thankfully we were able to retrieve my Mother's shoes which were

amongst those that had been carefully gathered and taken to an address a few miles away.

Our next encounter with the local raids was a string of incendiaries (firebombs) which were dropped all along our road. Ours landed in my bedroom (we were sleeping in the shelter below), My Father quickly extinguished the fire and then noticed that the upper storey of the house opposite was ablaze. Knowing that the elderly couple who lived there always hid in the cupboard under the stairs he managed to break a window and lead them to safety; they were totally unaware of the danger overhead. As a result of this incident I decided on my calling to become a nurse and spent hours carefully dressing and bandaging the charred limbs of my baby dolls who had been caught in the fire!

Our final reminder of the war raging across the Channel was while I was practising the piano on Sunday having been to Sunday school; out of the blue there was a loud explosion about a mile from my home. There had been no warning as this was a V2 rocket fired high into the stratosphere from enemy territory and whose approach could not be quickly detected. Thankfully it fell and exploded in a small wood of beech trees and no one was hurt.



The photo above shows Heather's family and in the background is the spoil from a hole to accommodate an air raid shelter.

The photo below is of Heather's family in 1946.



VE Day - May 8th 1945. It was my father's birthday and I well remember being taken by train to central London. I was surprised to see Union Jack flags flying from houses all along the line. We arrived at Charring Cross Station; my parents, my three year old sister and myself. On arrival we were quickly swept along by the crowds towards Trafalgar Square. It was dark. We were hustled along by a jubilant throng singing, linking arms and to my amazement there were soldiers waving from the top of lampposts! My Mother was roundly chastised by a knowing lady for bringing such young children out on such a night! It was a sight I shall never forget. Thinking back, it was quite a surprising inspired moment for my parents since as a family we were very secluded and rarely met up with friends. Relief - the war was over!

Heather Heath February 2020

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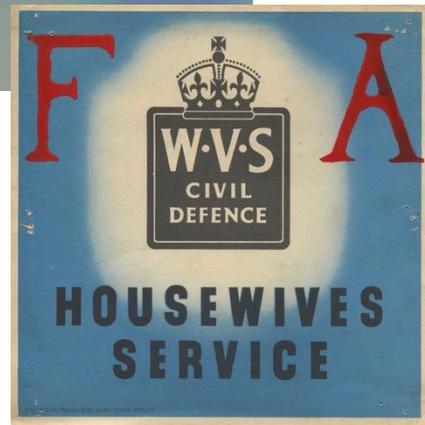
Alice Mercy Manklow 1903 – 1985. [Return to Index](#)

Alice Manklow (nee Elphick) was a daughter of Charlie and Mary Elphick of what is now called Step Cottage in Freshfield Lane. Alice was a member of the Women Home Guard Auxiliary (which is rarely heard about) and this is the badge Alice wore.

Below Alice and the badge.



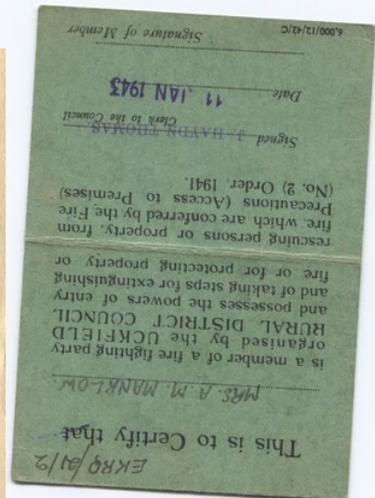
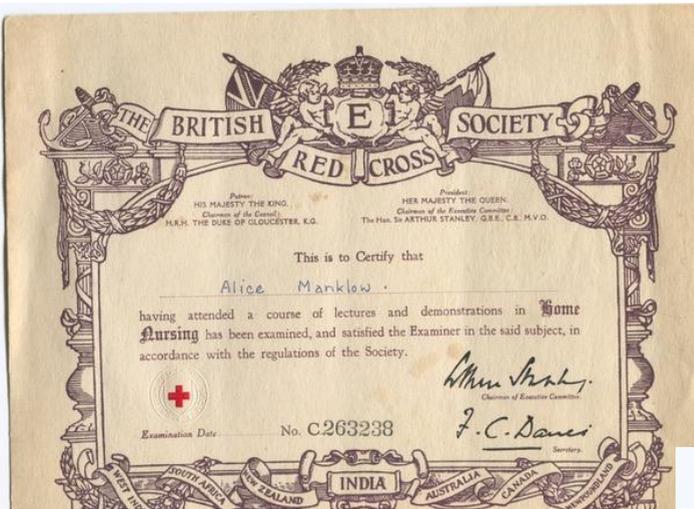
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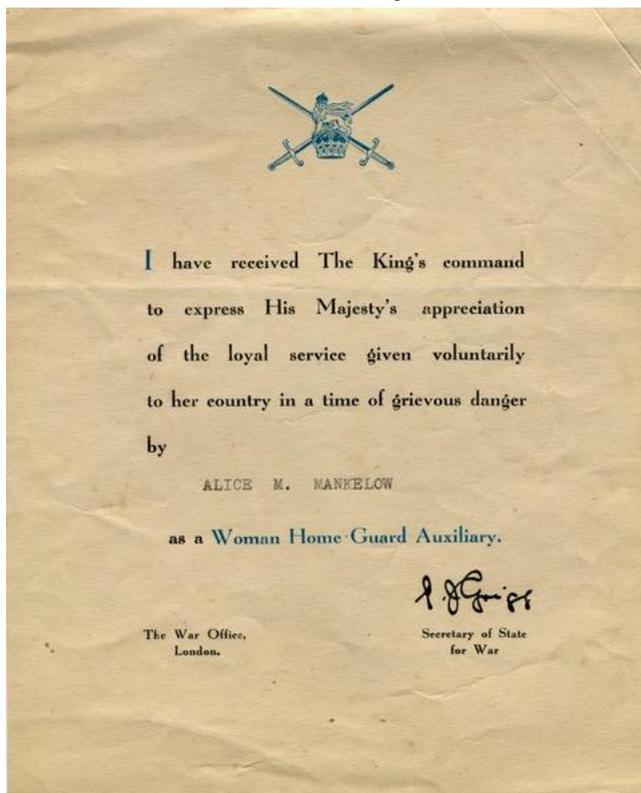
Alice was also a member of the WVS Housewives Service and this was a poster (photo above) which was stuck in the window of her

home. It indicated to the soldiers from Sheffield Park that this was where they would receive a warm welcome. A historian from Sheffield Park said the poster indicated a soldier could receive a bath, and in return they left behind their soap which was in short supply, as a way of a thank you. However in this case Alice didn't have a bathroom so it was probably just to say a soldier would not be turned away. - Alice lived in Fletching during the War.

Alice also received Certificates in First Aid and Home Nursing from the Red Cross and was a member of the Uckfield Rural District Fire Fighting Party.



Alice received a letter from the Secretary of State for War- J Grigg, as follows: I have received the King's command to express His Majesty's appreciation of the loyal service given voluntarily to her country in a time of previous danger by Alice M Manklow as a Woman Home Guard Auxiliary.



Alice cleaned All Saints Church Danehill for many years, every week, on her own, until she was unable to do it anymore. There was then a rota of 2 people each week to do the job.

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