

Our Planned VE Day Exhibition for 8th-10th May is of course cancelled – but we hope to stage it later, either for August 15th-16th, the VJ weekend, (if national restrictions are lifted), or for our Remembrance weekend November 7th-6th.

In 2005 we mounted an exhibition on the second World War for VE Day, and some of the material from then we shall use but it has all been updated and new things have come to light. This exhibition led on to the Society's book on Memories of the Second World War called 'Voices from an English village - Cheddington', published in 2010. We still have a few copies left from our third printing, and we do not plan a fourth!



VE Day 1945 in Cheddington – Sammy Chandler (left) and Reg Bishop (right) with their barrel organ.

This photo in our archives has been dated as either VE Day 1945 or the Coronation in 1953. (It may have been used for both). However, our 'Voices' book has these comments confirming its use for VE Day 1945:

"Michael Chandler's Dad and Reg Bishop had an old barrel organ for going round pubs and playing. They was in charge of the organ on VE Day. They didn't do all the winding mind you, other people wound it"

"On VE Day, I joined the celebrations on Cheddington village Green where Sammy Chandler and Reg Bishop has a barrel organ to entertain everyone."

As usual, if you prefer not to receive our newsletters please let us know. John T Smith

This is a story which covers both World Wars and remembers one soldier of the Great War - a son of our Rector at the time, Rev John Ashley Broad, and two servicemen who died in World War 2 and who are not on our War Memorial though they were born in our village. (A few of you may have come across an earlier version of this document.)



Ian H Fleming

Geoffrey M Fleming

Two boys, the view over the garden fence, and an amazing coincidence!

The view over the garden fence is at 2 Martin Avenue, Nedlands, Perth, Western Australia, and shows the trees at the side of the large Karrakatta Cemetery. The two boys, with their brother Derek, were born in Cheddington. Their parents were married at Westminster Cathedral in 1918 and the boys were born over the next four years. In 1924 they emigrated to Western Australia and they moved a number of times but by the beginning of the war they lived at 2 Martin Avenue.

Geoffrey enlisted in WW2 in the Australian Infantry and was killed at El Alamein on 27th July 1942 at the age of 20. Ian Hunter Fleming was a Flight Sergeant Rear Gunner in the Royal Australian Air Force and his Lancaster bomber was shot down in the border region of Holland and Germany on 23rd October 1944. He was 25. I guess both of them have a claim to be included on our War Memorial. Their brother Derek, a soldier, survived the war.

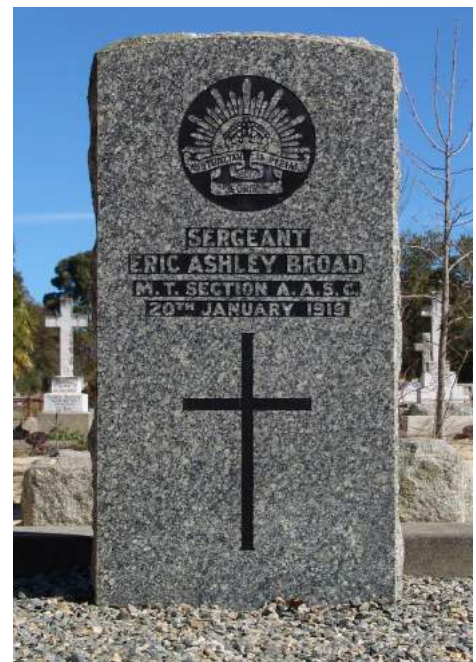
So what is this coincidence all about?

From 1904 to 1921 the Rector of Cheddington, was the Reverend John Ashley Broad. He kept a Roll of Honour in St Giles and entered the names of (most of) those who enlisted. All four of his sons are listed: Dymoke Broad (enlisted 1914, Gurkhas), Eric Broad (1915, Australian Army Service Corps), Arthur Broad (Durham Light Infantry) and Herbert Broad (Canadian Infantry). Eric and Herbert had both emigrated before the war. Eric on enlistment had 'cardiac weakness' recorded.

In August 1918 Eric was a Sergeant in the Mechanical Transport branch and he suffered from influenza and then broncopneumonia. He was discharged as no longer fit for service and he died on 20th January 1919. He has a Commonwealth headstone in Karrakatta Cemetery. I find this an amazing coincidence and I doubt whether the Fleming family would have made this connection.

(As usual, if you wish to no longer receive our newsletters please let us know.

John T Smith)



Today on the Anniversary of VE Day we remember two officers of the Royal Air Force who were Prisoners-of-War in Germany in the Second World War. They both have links to families in Cheddington.



After the History Society Exhibition at Remembrance time in 2018 to mark the end of the Great War, pupils in Year 6 worked on projects where they talked to their older relatives and dug into some family history. I hadn't known they were doing this but I was invited in to see their work and talk to them. One of them had a relative (great-grand-uncle?) who been at Stalag Luft III (a camp for RAF aircrew prisoners, shown above) and had taken part in what became known as the 'GREAT ESCAPE'.

He was Flight Lieutenant (Acting Squadron Leader) **Henry C Marshall**, who was serving in No. 3 Photographic Unit when he was forced to make a crash landing during a sortie over France in January 1941. He sustained severe injuries to his knee and on landing was handed over to the German police. Twice he attempted escaping and the second time he reached Berlin before being recaptured. He was sent to an ordinary PoW camp and between June 1941 and February 1942 he assisted in the construction of four escape tunnels. He was then transferred to Stalag Luft III and joined the Escape Committee. In March 1944 he took part in the mass break-out when 76 men went through the tunnel before the alarm was given and the exodus stopped. The tunnel was slightly shorter than intended and didn't quite reach the wood as planned. He made for the Czechoslovakia border but, suffering from cold and exposure, he was captured after two days and returned to the 'cooler' in the camp. You may know that Hitler gave orders for 50 of the escapees to be executed, totally against the Geneva Convention. Flt.Lt. Marshall eventually returned to Britain.

Our second RAF hero is **Stephen Masters** (father of Alan in the village). Warrant Officer Stephen Masters was a Navigator as part of a 7-man crew of a Lancaster bomber that was shot down over Arras in Northern France. Three men were able to parachute out but sadly the other four perished as the burning plane crashed. He landed on a roof somewhere. He shortly afterwards met up with Nat. the Wireless Officer.



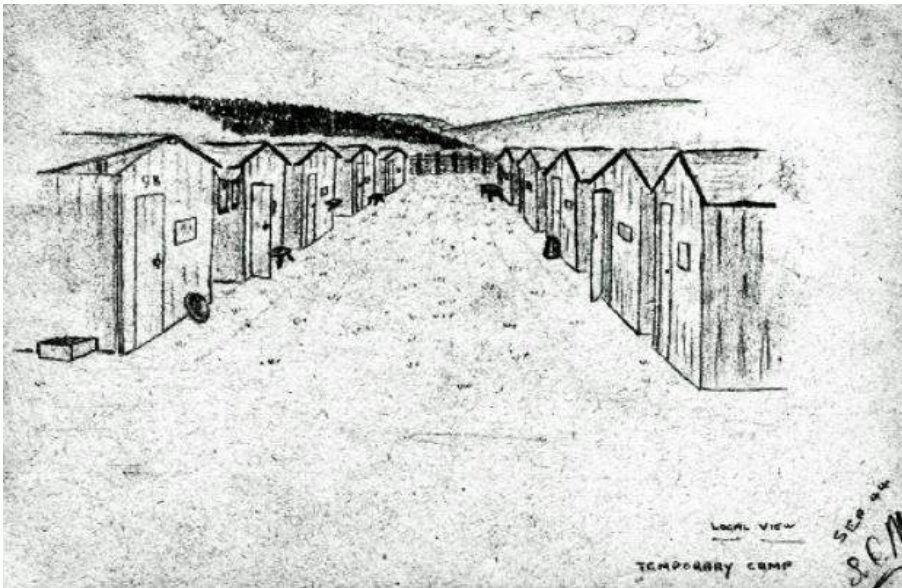
Warrant Officer Navigator Stephen Masters, R.A.F., aged 22, has arrived home at 21, Knowsley Road, Cosham, after being a prisoner of war. He is the eldest son of Mr. and Mrs. C. S. Masters who were bombed out at North End. W.O. Masters enlisted in August, 1941, and after 24 operational flights over France and Germany his plane was hit over Amiens on June 19, 1944. Four of the crew were killed, but he escaped by parachute. He was in a forced march for 21 days from Breslau, but was released by the Russians soon after.

They met French people who were generally helpful and wouldn't give them away to the Germans but after trying days evading the enemy they were eventually captured on the outskirts of Amiens. They saw a number of prisons both civil and military, were interrogated at most of them but eventually ended up at a prison in the east of Germany called Luft 7. (Continued overleaf)

STEVE MASTERS

AND WHAT HAPPENED THEN?

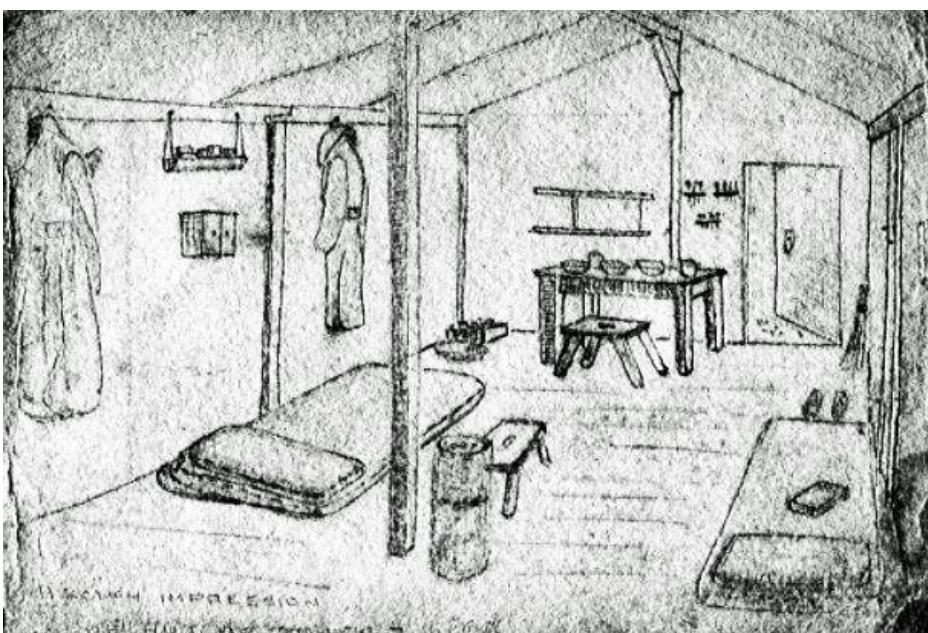
A POW's Story



In April 1945 the Russians were entering Germany from the east and it was decided to move all the prisoners west – by marching and in whatever weakened and hungry state they were. It was an awful time in the snow, the blizzards and the cold. Eventually they ended up for a while in the buildings of a Stalag III camp at Luckenwalde which was used as a transit camp for huge movements of prisoners. Steve Masters had more worrying moves and events before he was finally home on May 27th 1945.

Steve Masters wrote up his experience and it is available in a Kindle edition. It is a brilliantly written account, I felt I was with him in the first few days after the crash and then through nearly three weeks of the long and exhausting march in early 1945. I recommend it without reservation. Royalties on the sale go to the Royal Air Force Benevolent Fund. The reference is:

https://www.amazon.co.uk/dp/B0881428ZQ/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=And+What+Happened+Then%3F&qid=1588522886&s=digital-text&sr=1-1



Sketches are from Steve Master's Kindle book..

As usual, if you wish your name to be taken off our distribution list, please let me know.

John T Smith

Who from Cheddington Served in the Second World War?

When we were researching the Society's book on the Second World War, 'Voices from an English Village – Cheddington', it was far more difficult to compile a list than I had done for the Great War of 1914-18. I have 127 names of those who served in the earlier conflict. Eventually we were contacted by the Cheddington Badminton Club, founded in the late 1930s. They had a Minute book of their committee discussions, and on three occasions they sent postal orders to those away serving, and yes, there were three lists of names. With their permission, these lists formed the starting point for the 71 names we published in our book:

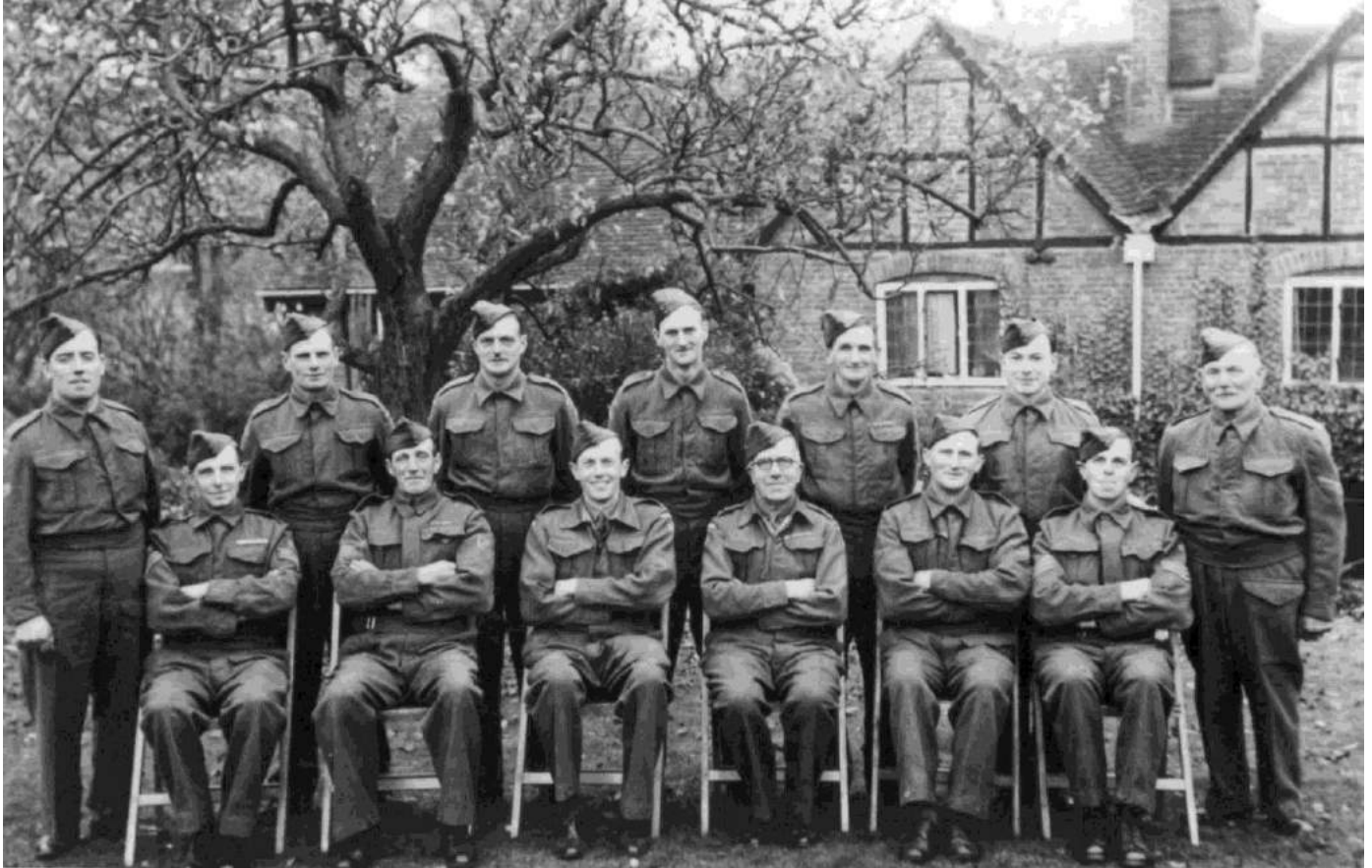
Alcock, Norman	Heley, W	Robbins, Maisie
Aldridge, John	Hing, Eric	Saunders, Alan
Ashwell, Eric	Hing, Fred (Frederick)	Saunders, Vera
Bishop, George	Honor, -	Seabrook, A
Boarder, Arthur	Honor, N	Shand Kydd, John
Bonham Arthur	Horn, M (Stanley Maurice)	Shand Kydd, Peter
Bonham, Horace (Son)	Howe, Jack	Small, S
Bonham, Lewis	Howe, R	Smith, J
Brigginshaw, Alfred	Howkins, Lewis	Tempest, A
Castle, A	Howlett, Bernard	Towell, 'Jim' (Harold Amos)
Castle, Reginald	Huxley, S	Tucker, B
Chandler, John	Kent, Geoffrey	Turner, Ronald
Church, Betty	Kingham, Eric	Turner, Stanley
Cleaver, Jack	Lawman, Eric	Wesley, Albert
Cockrem, Ernest	Mason, Albert	Wesley, E (?Eric)
Cooper, Alfred	Middleton, M	Wesley, Kenneth
Dumpleton, Albert	Middleton, Stanley	Wesley, Ronald
Dumpleton, Stanley	Millins, Eric	Wesley, William
Gates, Bill (William)	Newton, R	Wheatley, -
Gates, D (?Donald)	Newton, V	Wibden, Douglas
Gates, Tubby	Norwood, Gilbert	Wright, Betty
Gilman, W	Norwood, Ronald	Wright, Judy
Heley, M	Pearson, D	Young, Thomas
Heley, R	Pollard, Reginald	

Just two more mentions – I can now add Frances Cleaver who served in the Woman's Land Army, and Jose Cockrem helped us with some of the names.

As usual, if you prefer not to receive our newsletters please let us know. John T Smith

The Home Front in Cheddington

By popular request, after the first of these newsletters, I give more extracts of WW2 war memories of our village, taken from the Society's 2010 book "Voices from an English Village – Cheddington". Only a few of our sixty-one contributors lived in Cheddington at the time.



Cheddington's Home Guard outside The Chase

We believe they are: Standing: ?? / Eric Bonham? / Dick Wesley? / Fred Pearce / William Wesley / Jack Newton / Dave Cook. Seated: Dick Frieth / Walter Heley / ?? / William Rees, vicar? / Albert (or Sid) Wesley / Bill Brazier. If you know the others, or if we are wrong, please let us know!

Gas Masks: They issued us with gas masks in the chapel on the village green. Then we had to go through this van parked by the bus stop to test them. It made you feel sick from the rubbery smell on the gas mask. The service gas masks (the Army) were different from ours. They had a long tube down to the filter and the straps went round the waist. We just had a filter where the mask fitted onto your face. (Ivan Janes)

It was feared that the Germans would use 'gas warfare' against the British population, so every man, woman and child was issued with a 'Gas Mask'. Babies had a pink one, with two round windows to see out of, which was known as a 'Mickey Mouse' Gas Mask. Children and adults had a black gas mask with a window almost the width of the mask for see out of. When it was feared there would be a 'gas attack' you had to carry your gas mask with you wherever you went, i.e. school, work, etc. (Jose Cockrem)

We all had a little gas mask in a tin with a piece of string coming out the end and it went round your neck. She used to give us, in the classroom, practices to get the gas mask on and off. They reckoned we would only have seconds to put it on if gas was dropped. They took us for fire practice with our gas masks on. We used to have to get under this hedge between the allotments and Frank Williams' orchard. (Norman Pollard)

Gossards: Then I went into war work at Gossards in Leighton Buzzard. They made parachutes, rubber dinghies and barrage balloons. The only bras and corsets made were for the forces, (Margaret Mason, nee Fiddler)

The Women's Land Army: I was 14 when war broke out. I had just left school. I worked at a munition factory in Thame. Three years after this, I went in the Land Army and drove vehicles to the fields. The tractors pulled the combine harvesters. I lived in a hostel in Buckingham Street, Aylesbury, next door to where the fish and chip shop is. The hostel was just for girls. I also worked in Bucks War Aid offices in Turnfurlong where all the machinery was kept. (Frances Cleaver nee Rush)



WLA Girls - Vera Saunders is second from the right



I was recruited into the Land Girls, in Leighton Buzzard. There was a hostel with forty girls in it. There was a choice - you could go to a private farm, where you would be living-in, or to the hostel, which I was told was a lot of fun. On May 4th 1942 I joined with my sister Eve (Evelyn) but she wasn't so fit and left after six months. We were taken to the farms in gangs each morning and arrived back later, often very dusty from hoeing, potato picking, 'swede bashing', and in need of a bath. There were only four baths and the water soon ran cold.

I spent two years in the hostel. At weekends we could go home. A lot of my time was spent at a farm in Hockliffe and I am still in touch with the family who ran it, and still run it now. I chose to take a driving course in the Land Army. (Vera Saunders)

Aircraft Crash: Early in the war a light plane came down by the orchard by Church path flown by a Fleet Air arm (naval) pilot. He was tangled in the trees and was cut down by Lal Wesley and was bandaged by women of the village who had trained in first aid. Two or three years later the pilot came back to the village to thank the First Aiders. (John Meacham)

Earlier, I had witnessed the first plane crash, when a yellow Tiger Moth circled around, at fairly low level. Its engine was spluttering and it disappeared toward St. Giles church. My elder brother, Alan, and Alf Wesley, ran around Home Farm, behind the school and into the orchard near Church Walk and could see the flames above the wreckage. They pulled the Fleet Air Arm pilot from the cockpit and propped him against a plum tree. When he asked "How's Mickey?" they searched for another airman – until they saw a picture of Mickey Mouse stencilled on the burning fuselage. (Neil Castle)

During the early days of the war a Blenheim twin engine bomber crashed in South End field between the canal and the Linces. It was facing Cheddington and completely blocked the road. He didn't give himself enough room for landing, he came right through the hedge in between. The pilot was not badly hurt. What you had to do then to get out of the village, you had to go through the farmer's field and then come out the gate opposite Seabrook turn until the RAF dismantled the plane. The RAF rebuilt the plane in the field, it took several weeks. They were billeted in marquees in the field and slept in them to guard the plane. I watched the plane take off. (Ivan Janes)

The Royal Observer Corps: On West End Hill The Royal Observer Corps were based in a wooden hut. They had an RAF colour uniform to wear. They just had a phone for reporting German aircraft. They seemed to me to be the well-to-do people. There was Mr Barnes, a solicitor in London; Mr Heley from Ivinghoe; the Pennell brothers from Mentmore; the man from the Moat House [possibly now The Chase, Ed] and Mr Jeffery, the headmaster. (Ivan Janes)

Mr Jeffery was a member of the local Royal Observer Corps and would often insert an 'Aircraft Recognition' class for the boys and we became expert at identifying planes not only by their shape but also by their engine note. A Handley Page Harrow crash landed on Kingham's farm, the far side of the railway tracks. The next morning I went with several others to crawl over the outside and inside. Eventually, we remembered we should be at school. On arriving I was horrified to see those who had returned earlier lined up in Mr. Jeffery's classroom. He walked up and down the line with a cane in his hand, and we were resigned to being thrashed - corporal punishment was rife. He waited for the last stragglers to arrive, then said "Well, what type of aircraft was it?" And that was all. He was probably chuffed that we knew our stuff! (Neil Castle)



John T Smith

Evacuees in Cheddington during the Second World War

These are extracts from issues of the Leighton Buzzard Observer:

“A special meeting of Cheddington Parish Council was held on Friday to consider a letter from Wing Rural District Council on the evacuation of children from London. Mr H Beilby, the local [Cheddington] representative on the Rural Council, attended the meeting and explained that the Parish Council's duty was to appoint visitors to ascertain the amount of surplus accommodation on the basis of one person per habitable room....

“The canvass of Leighton Buzzard and Linslade householders under the Government's evacuation scheme has now been completed, and there is reason to believe that the accommodation available for children to be sent out of London in the event of War is much smaller than was expected. The actual figures are, of course, a secret, but local inquiries show that in working class districts many householders have no spare accommodation, even on the high scale of one person per room laid down by the Home Office. The attitude of most householders toward the scheme - and after all, they are the ones who will bear the brunt of any increase in household duties - is quite friendly; but the average working man occupies a cottage providing only the minimum accommodation for himself and his family. He cannot afford to pay rent for empty rooms. In families where there are several children there is more than one person per habitable room permanently living in the house....

“The housewife who is proud of her home and keeps it spotlessly clean with the occasional help of a charwoman cannot be expected to look forward to taking in and catering for several children whose domestic habits may or may not be of her own standard. There is all round, however, a disposition to be helpful so long as good nature and patriotism are not imposed upon.”(LBO)



The evacuees arriving at Wing (right) are carrying their gas masks in cardboard boxes.

The evacuees came after the issuing of gas masks. When they turned up someone on a committee came round to each house to check if there was room for an evacuee. We didn't have one because there were a lot of us in the family. There were seven of us in a three bedroom house. People had to have the evacuees whether they wanted them or not. Through them being extra, the school wasn't big enough. They used the church hall as a school (this is now the Scout hut), the Wesleyan Chapel room at the back, and the Old Reading Room was used as a school as well. (Ivan Janes)

We had an evacuee living with us. The school brought in a group, by train, to Cheddington station and they walked from there to the school. They were just 'dished out'. It was based on your accommodation and the size of your family. They were standing in a group and someone would grab them by the collar and 'give' them to someone. Luckily our boy, John Jerack, loved farming and he was treated like one of the family. When he was thirteen he left to return home. He didn't want to go and although he had been with us for quite a while, his family had never visited him. My mother could never understand why we didn't hear from him again. Did he run away? (Eve Sharp)

The evacuees came one evening and I think it was Mrs Stoddart who lived down the Manor, she went round asking people to take in evacuees. I can remember my mum and dad went down to the school and they came back with two evacuees, Sidney and Bob Bird. They had an elder sister and younger brother and they went down the Manor. They didn't last too long, the younger one went back to his mother, then Bob Bird went down to the Manor and Sidney stayed with us for ages. Sidney Bird came to see me long after the war. (Norman Pollard)

In the afternoon of the day war was declared, we watched the arrival of two coachloads of evacuees from the East End of London at Cheddington School. Their ages ranged from five years old to twelve years old. The billeting officers, mostly from the local Women's Institute, were waiting to take them to their new homes. (Maurice Horn)

Soon after, evacuees were billeted round the village, although some went back during the so called 'phoney war'. The evacuees took over the Church Room (now the Scout Hut) as a school under Mr Spary, a teacher from London, but he wasn't there for long. (John Meacham)

Cheddington School was much affected by the coming and goings of evacuees. The School Logbook records that on the very day that war was declared (3rd September 1939) the first evacuees arrived in the village. By 20th September the school had 96 pupils, of whom 37 were evacuees. Numbers fluctuated, particularly during the 'phoney war', and in December there were 69 in the school, of whom only 5 were evacuees.

In the autumn term a party of 52 children were drafted in to the school, together with a teacher. Mr C H Spary. After a spell with short sessions (the evacuees in the morning, the local children in the afternoon), the Church Room (now the Scout hut) was taken over as a classroom and Mr Spary and a Mrs O'Donovan taught the evacuees there. Then national policy decreed a mixing of local and evacuee children rather than segregated classes. By November 1940 the total roll was 161, including 49 evacuees. In April 1942 the LCC teachers from London were withdrawn and our Headteacher's wife, Mrs Jeffery, started as a Supply Teacher.

In April 1943 'By means of money raised by the scholars, supplemented by a contribution from the Bridgewater Charity, and another contribution from the County Education Committee, an excellent Radio Receiving Set, costing £20, has been installed and arrangements have been made to use the BBC Schools Broadcasts this term.'

'In October 1943 A class of 10 girls is attending Linslade Girls' School on Fridays for a course in Domestic Instruction but on November 19th the girls attending the Domestic Instruction Course at Linslade returned by train this afternoon, reaching Cheddington at about 6 p.m., as the bus failed to pick them up. Matter reported to Education Secretary.'

'Nov 29th, 1943 The Education Committee have approved a request made by the Headmaster to postpone the Christmas Holidays, making the dates of closure and reopening Dec 23rd and Jan 6th respectively instead of Dec 21st and Jan 4th. The change is made to enable the headmaster to attend a week's course at the Central School of Aircraft Recognition, Stockport, during the Christmas closure.'

By January 15th in 1945 the number on roll was down to 62, of whom 9 were official evacuees. 'Apr 17th, 1945 About 20 children were taken to Mentmore after school today to see the State Coach which has been stored there for safety during the war.'

This is the last of the VE Day Newsletters from Cheddington History Society. We will be staging our postponed VE and VJ Days Exhibition at the Methodist Church when normal social conditions return. Nationally we are looking at August (for VJ Day) or November (Remembrance). I invite you, if you have photographs, documents, or other relevant material relating to the war in Cheddington that we haven't seen – please let me know. I photograph or scan material and return it to the owner with the thanks of the Society.

As usual, if you prefer not to receive our newsletters please let me know.

John T Smith