

The South Gloucestershire Second World War Stories Project explores the impact of the Second World War on the area. This presentation is a great way to discuss the war on a local level with children.

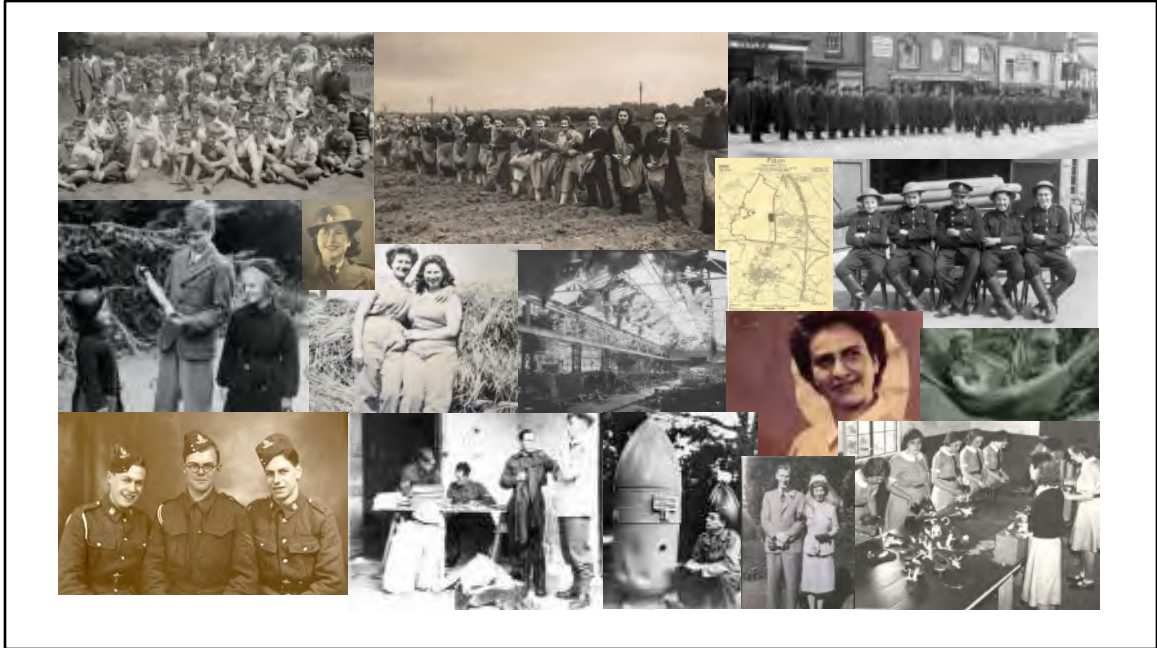
You can also add to this presentation by using our resources on www.southglos.gov.uk/ww2stories. This includes 10 short filmed interviews with local people; pdfs of the touring exhibition; postcards with quotes from reminiscence sessions; links to other learning resources and activities.

Start this session by asking the children what they already know about the war. Discuss any of the points they raise about when it began (1939 – 1945) and why it began. Ask them if any of them have ever heard stories from grandparents or other older people. Ask why they think it was called the Second World War. Use it as an opportunity to explain that although wars have happened throughout history, one country fighting against another, or one part of a country against another, as in civil wars, the Second World War involved over 30 countries and over 100 million people. And it began only 21 years after the end of the First World War.

Explain that war is something that can be studied for the whole of your life, but for

the purposes of this session/project, we are going to focus on what happened right here in South Gloucestershire.

Ask them if they think there is one story that can explain what it was like here?



Answer – No!

To get a fuller picture about what the Second World War was like in South Gloucestershire we need to think of it like a mosaic. Lots of pictures and stories make an overall picture, that can help us understand more fully about what went on.

In this montage we can see pictures of: A group of young children who came from Harwich to Thornbury as evacuees; A group of National Fire Service volunteers, including boys of around 14 years old, from Warmley; Mary Chivers, a young woman from London who came to Marshfield near Bath to join the Land army; Children in Alveston looking at an incendiary bomb; Bomb damage at the Parnall's, an aircraft factory in Yate; Girls at Chipping Sodbury Grammar school assembling gas masks; An American soldier with a 1000lb bomb at Over Court, Almondsbury; Hella Hewison in her nurse hat, who was a German-Jewish refugee who became the first non-British nurse at Southmead Hospital; A German map showing that the Bristol Airplane Company in Filton was a strategic bombing target; Young soldiers from Thornbury; The quartermaster's stores where soldiers were issued their uniforms and kit; John and Arthur Heath, two little boys dressed up as airmen in a hammock, who were evacuees from Harwich and came to Thornbury; The wedding photo of Rose and

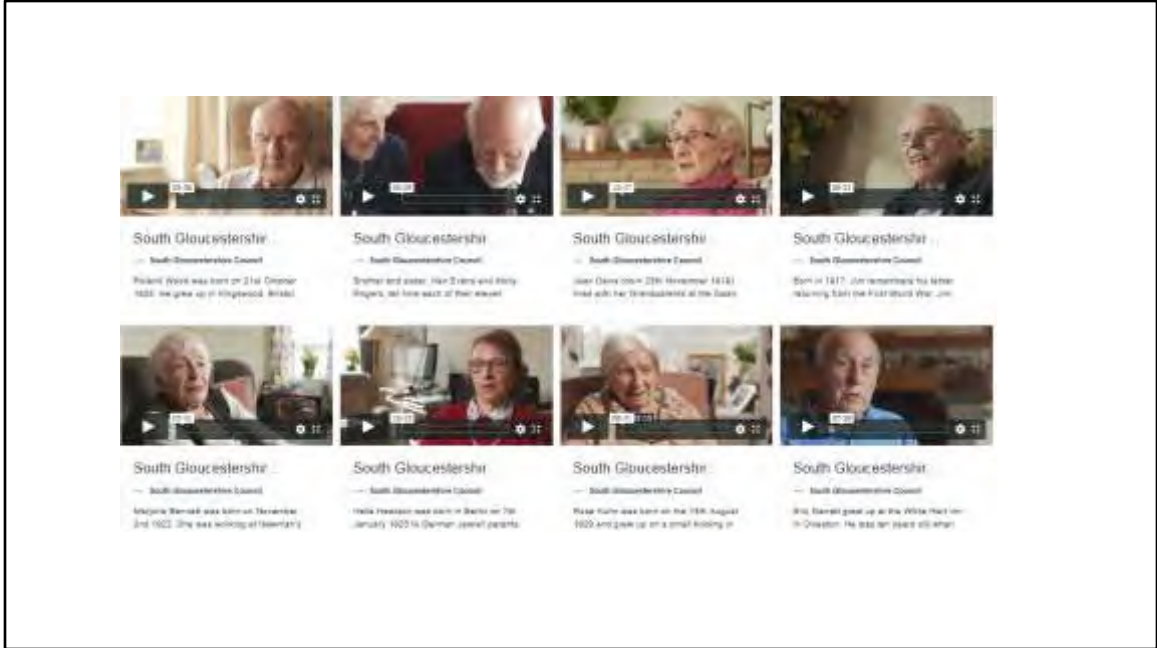
Richard Khun, a German Prisoner of War and young woman from Elberton.



Reading their stories can also give us a great insight as well.

The South Gloucestershire Second World Stories Project visited care homes and community groups throughout South Gloucestershire. We took artefacts (tin hats, gas masks, ration books, carbolic soap) sang songs and shared stories from the era.

We wrote down many of these stories and put snippets of them on to postcards. A selection of the postcards are included throughout this powerpoint. They give a fantastic insight into the war. You can see all the quotes on our website www.southglos.gov.uk/ww2stories



We also made ten short films for the project. You can watch these by following the links on www.southglos.gov.uk/ww2stories or copying the following link into your web browser. <https://vimeo.com/showcase/6234336>

Below is summary of each film

Jim Perrett born in 1917, Jim remembers his father returning from the First World War. Jim grew up in Filton and became a dispatch rider for the First Cavalry Division of the Royal Army Service Corp, carrying messages between units based in Palestine, North Africa and the Siege of Tobruk. Later Jim became a mechanic and worked with the Sudanese Army.

The Evans Family - Brother and sister, Ken Evans and Molly Rogers, tell how

each of their eleven siblings were in services during the war.

Roland Wood was born on 21st October 1928. He grew up in Kingswood, Bristol. He remembers the Bristol Blitz, nights in air raid shelters and joining the National Fire Service as a bugler. Roland's National Service after the war involved mine clearance duty.

Hella Hewison was born in Berlin on 7th January 1925 to German Jewish parents. She witnessed Kristallnacht and escaped on Kindertransport. She reads the Red Cross letter from her mother saying goodbye before going to a concentration camp. Hella's mother and Grandmother were both killed. Hella became the first non-British nurse at Southmead Hospital.

Marjorie Bennett was born on November 2nd 1922. She was working at Newman's factory in Yate the day war broke out. Marjorie tells stories of catching a German spy at Yate cinema, the dramatic bombings of Parnall's factory in Yate, and joining the WAAF despite being underage.

Rose Kuhn was born on the 14th August 1929 and grew up on a small holding in Elberton. Rose met Richard Kuhn, a German Prisoner of War, at the nearby camp. Rose married Richard despite negative feelings from her family and community.

Eric Garrett grew up at the White Hart Inn in Olveston. He was ten years old when war broke out. He tells stories of dodging enemy planes, mock invasions, collecting a gas-attack warning rattle, simple rural life, evacuees and the impact of the war on agriculture.

Joan Davis (born 28th November 1919) lived with her Grandparents at the Swan Inn, Yate. She wanted to go to university but was discouraged. When war broke, Joan

jumped at the chance to join the WAAF and was stationed in Calshot. She tells stories about handing out warm clothing to soldiers after the evacuation of Dunkirk and how she became an Officer.

Molly Rogers (born – 17th February 1920) was a young woman looking after her younger siblings in Patchway. She survived three narrow escapes when the houses she was in were bombed, including the daylight raid on Bristol Airplane Company in Filton. Molly volunteered for the St Johns Ambulance and did war work at the Bristol Air frame training school.

Iris Arnold was thirteen years old the day after war broke out. She remembers rolling bandages for the front line when still a school girl in Thornbury. She was conscripted for war work, armature winding at Newman's in Yate, she visited a blinded soldier at Tortworth American Hospital and met a Henry Arnold, a young soldier from Cornwall who was part of the 6th Maritime Regiment, billeted in Thornbury.

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Ask the children if they know where South Gloucestershire is. Explain that it stretches all the way to the River Severn, edges Bristol, and goes right up into the Cotswold Hills along by Wickwar and Hawkesbury Upton. Explain that it didn't exist as an area during the Second World War, in those days parts of it were in Gloucestershire and parts were counted as Bristol. They can see from the map that even now it is a mixture of rural and built up areas.

Ask how they think life may have been different here 80 years ago, before the war even started.



This is a photograph of a farm in Tormarton from before the war. Ask the children to think about the clothes people are wearing, how many farm workers there are. The type of machinery and the horse in the field ploughing. Maybe ask about the technology they have in their homes and whether they think these people would have had the same things? Also they can think about things like running water, electricity, baths, indoor toilets.

This is a typical example of rural life in South Gloucestershire at that time.

You can watch Eric Garrett's and Molly Rogers' films about life in rural South Gloucestershire by following the links on www.southglos.gov.uk/ww2stories or copying the following link into your web browser.

<https://vimeo.com/showcase/6234336>

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This photo shows Kingswood High Street. Again the children might notice the lack of cars, the tram lines, and that the shops look different. They might recognise the clock tower which is still there today.



This is a photograph of workers leaving a factory in Yate from around the time. The children can think about different clothes. Different types of work. The number of people walking out of the gates, probably as a siren sounded to end the shift, and that most of them will have walked to their home, often many miles away.

Conclude – that South Gloucestershire before the war was an area which was made up of rural communities, dotted with small industrial factories. That people often lived and worked where they were born and didn't tend to move around. It would have been a relatively quiet and tranquil existence.

The outbreak of war changed that forever.

Soldiers



Soldiers - At the start of the war all men between the ages of 18 and 41 had to register for service. Some men stayed at home because their jobs kept the country going; jobs like the railway workers, teachers and farmers were reserved occupations. Other men between 18 and 41 went over to France and Germany and other European countries to fight.

These young men were in the 52nd Heavy Artillery Unit and were based at a place called Kynton house near Thornbury. It seems likely that the two boys on the left and right were brothers



These soldiers were also based in Thornbury. Regiments were billeted throughout South Gloucestershire. In Thornbury the military used public buildings for operations and socialising. The 6th Maritime Regiment were there for five years.

Many people told us that they remember soldiers living in camps and buildings in their towns. They remember American soldiers in jeeps going through the streets of Kingswood, and family members leaving home to join up.

The lives of many servicemen and women were claimed. For names of the fallen on war memorials throughout South Gloucestershire, go to southglos.gov.uk/war-memorials

You can also watch films related to this by following the links on www.southglos.gov.uk/ww2stories or copying the following link into your web browser <https://vimeo.com/showcase/6234336>.

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Iris Arnold was thirteen years old the day after war broke out. She remembers rolling bandages for the front line when still a school girl in Thornbury. She was conscripted for war work, armature winding at Newman's in Yate, she visited a blinded soldier at Tortworth American Hospital and met a Henry Arnold, a young soldier from Cornwall who was part of the 6th Maritime Regiment, billeted in Thornbury.



You can discuss these memories of South Gloucestershire residents with the children



These are soldiers at the quartermasters stores near Thornbury. Soldiers were issued all their equipment here. At one of our reminiscence sessions a man told us that when you joined up you went to the stores to get your uniform and then you parcelled up all your own clothes and sent them home. He said that nothing was yours anymore, not even a handkerchief!



Aircraft recognition is an important feature in the training of A.T.S. girls for mixed batteries.

By December 1941 conscription was extended to unmarried women and childless widows between 20 and 30. Women joined different support services. These women are learning how to recognise different aeroplanes so they knew which planes were enemy and which were 'ours'. The women weren't allowed to fire the anti-aircraft guns.

To hear more about life in the WAAF watch Joan's film. By following the links on www.southglos.gov.uk/ww2stories or copying the following link into your web browser. <https://vimeo.com/showcase/6234336>.

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Air Raids



Life also changed for the families who were left behind, and every family had to do things to protect themselves from the nightly raids of German aeroplanes which came later on. One of the first things that happened at home was air raid precaution.



In the 1930s and 40's Filton was the biggest manufacturing hub of aircraft in the world. There were also aircraft factories in Yate.

We know from maps that the German Airforce had identified specific strategic targets in at the Bristol Aeroplane Company in Filton and Parnall's in Yate.

Bristol Aeroplane Company was targeted many times during the war, but bombs fell on the works on just four occasions. Three of these raids caused little damage, but the fourth was very serious and a squadron was moved to Filton to counteract future attacks.

Many people remember the dog fights between German and British planes.

On 25th September 1940 Bristol Aeroplane Company was hit with the loss of 91 lives. Their names are on the memorial in St Peters Church, Filton.

You can watch Molly's film about the daylight raid on Filton by following this link on www.southglos.gov.uk/ww2stories or copying the following link into your web browser. <https://vimeo.com/showcase/6234336>

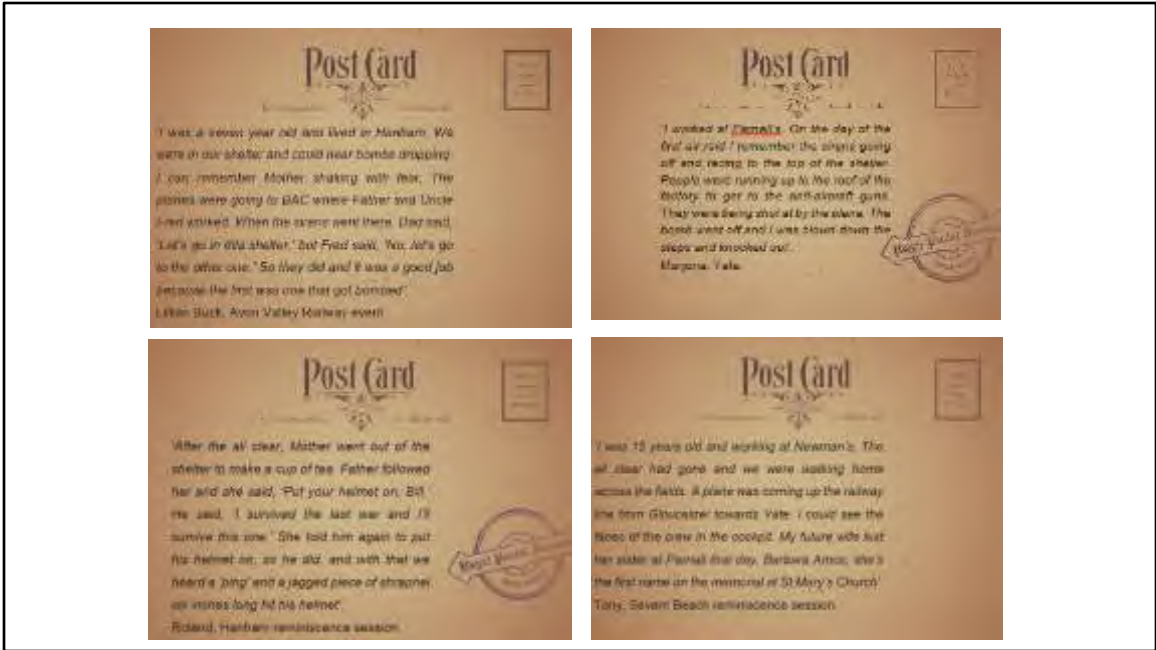
Molly Rogers (born – 17th February 1920) was a young women looking after her younger siblings in Patchway. She survived three narrow escapes when the houses she was in were bombed, including the daylight raid on Bristol Airplane Company in Filton. Molly volunteered for the St Johns Ambulance and did war work at the Bristol Air frame training school.



Parnall made airframes and hydraulic gun turrets. After several unsuccessful attempts, in February and March 1941, Parnall was bombed with the loss of 53 workers lives.

You can watch Marjorie Bennett's film which includes the story of the bombing of Parnall's. Follow the links on www.southglos.gov.uk/ww2stories or copying the following link into your web browser. <https://vimeo.com/showcase/6234336>

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You can look at these memories from South Gloucestershire residents with the children



Communal and family air raid shelters became part of everyday life. Anderson shelters were made of corrugated iron, set into the ground and covered with earth. It was said to be able to withstand all but a direct hit. People also had Morrison shelters, essentially a reinforced metal dining table. Others used communal shelters in tunnels, caves and cellars.

Stray bombs were also dropped on mistaken targets or to save fuel when returning from raids.

You can watch about their experiences of bombing raids and air raid shelters by following the links on www.southglos.gov.uk/ww2stories or copying the following link into your web browser. <https://vimeo.com/showcase/6234336>

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Evacuees and Refugees



Before the war, communities were relatively static. As the war progressed, evacuees moved from cities to the safer rural areas. Refugees from war torn Europe made their home here and Prisoners of War became a common sight.

The following films link to evacuees, kindertransport and German Prisoners of War. You can follow the links on www.southglos.gov.uk/ww2stories or copying the following link into your web browser. <https://vimeo.com/showcase/6234336>

Hella Hewison was born in Berlin on 7th January 1925 to German Jewish parents. She witnessed Kristallnacht and escaped on Kindertransport. She reads the Red Cross letter from her mother saying goodbye before going to a concentration camp. Hella's mother and Grandmother were both killed. Hella became the first non-British nurse at Southmead Hospital.

Rose Kuhn was born on the 14th August 1929 and grew up on a small holding in

Elberton. Rose met Richard Kuhn, a German Prisoner of War, at the nearby camp. Rose married Richard despite negative feelings from her family and community.

Eric Garrett grew up at the White Hart Inn in Olveston. He was ten years old when war broke out. He tells stories of dodging enemy planes, mock invasions, collecting a gas-attack warning rattle, simple rural life, evacuees and the impact of the war on agriculture.



Nearly 3 000 000 Britons were evacuated from their homes to escape the threat of enemy bombing. Children between the ages of 5 and 13 were evacuated if they lived in a dangerous place.

These school children from Harwich, on the east coast, came to schools in Thornbury and lived with local families. Their teachers came with them, essential as so many local teachers were called up for service.



"Playing at- Asimen"

Post Card

We left Harwich on Mother's 28th birthday. Parents had been asked to say their goodbyes at home and not attend at the railway station. We assembled at the school and marched crocodile style to the station. We didn't really know what was happening, we just thought it was a great adventure. Our hosts were a mature family, I believe they shaped our future lives, and for my brother and I, for the better. Thornbury is guaranteed at least one visit a year.
John Heath, Harwich



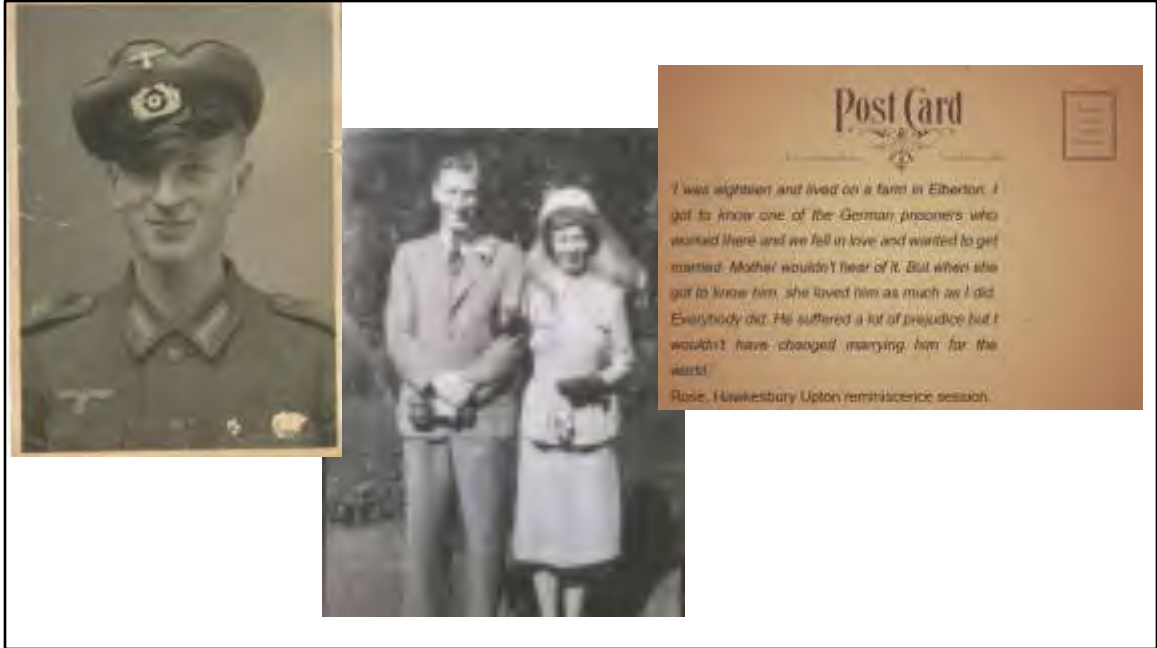
John and Arthur Heath came from Harwich and lived with a family who ran a photography business in Thornbury. John still visits Thornbury every year.



A steady stream of refugees came to Britain. Yate and Sodbury people took in Belgians, Poles and other Europeans. Refugees came from all over Europe and worked in local factories. Many remained here after the war.

This is Hella Hewison and her father. [Hella](#) was born in Berlin on 7th January 1925 to German Jewish parents. She witnessed Kristallnacht and escaped on Kindertransport. She reads the Red Cross letter from her mother saying goodbye before going to a concentration camp. Hella's mother, father and Grandmother were all killed. Hella became the first non-British nurse at Southmead Hospital.

You can watch Hella's film on www.southglos.gov.uk/ww2stories or copying the following link into your web browser. <https://vimeo.com/showcase/6234336>



Prisoners of War Camps were established on the Gloucester Road near Thornbury, at Hambrook and Sunnyside Lane in Yate, which became known as the German Fields. An Italian POW camp was set-up in tents in Cadbury Heath. They were put to work on farms in the area and were distinguished by their chocolate – coloured uniforms with coloured patches. They were considered harmless; in the evenings, they were allowed out of the camp into the local area and, on Sunday mornings, were able to go to church.

As the weather grew colder the POWs were transported to the Wapley Camp, near Yate.

German prisoners had to wear uniform and report back to the camp every day. The camp had barbed wire fencing and around 30 men.

The first two rows of the Yate cinema were hired out for the POWs on Saturday afternoons. Local people invited prisoners to tea and even Christmas Dinner.

You can watch Rose's film of how she met a German Prisoner of War and married him. Visit www.southglos.gov.uk/ww2stories or copy the following link into your web browser. <https://vimeo.com/showcase/6234336>



Rationing



The Second World War was a time of major upheaval. Food, fuel, work and school were all significantly affected.

In 1939 Britain imported half of all its food requirements, most of its raw materials, and all of its oil. As Atlantic shipping convoys were attacked, goods became scarce. Austerity measures were necessary and in 1940 every member of the public was issued with ration books.

Gardens and parks were dug to grow vegetables. Farmers and market gardeners needed the help of a new workforce. The Women's Land Army worked on farms in Wickwar, Dodington and Marshfield.



You can discuss these examples of rationing with the children

War Work



By 1944 a third of the civilian population were engaged in war work, including over 7,000,000 women. Children also played their part in the war effort.

The Women's Land Army worked on farms in Wickwar, Dodington and Marshfield. Here women are planting potatoes at a farm near Wickwar.

Men who weren't called up, because they were too old, too young, not fit, or on reserved occupations, volunteered in the National Fire Service, the Special Constabulary, the Home guard or Air Raid Precaution.

The labour force was directed wherever the need was identified. Many factories changed from domestic to armaments production. Women workers were conscripted.

In Kingswood the traditional boot and shoe firms were requisitioned to make army boots. Others repaired Beaufighter-bomber wings and manufactured portable generating sets and munitions.

Films that link directly to the war effort can be found by following the links on www.southglos.gov.uk/ww2stories or copying the following link into your web

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Eric Garrett grew up at the White Hart Inn in Olveston. He was ten years old when war broke out. In one part of the film he tells the story of a mock invasion where local volunteers and armed services made preparations for enemy invasion. He also talks about children picking potatoes for the war effort.

Iris Arnold was thirteen years old the day after war broke out. She remembers rolling bandages for the front line when still a school girl in Thornbury. She was conscripted for war work, armature winding at Newman's in Yate, she visited a blinded soldier at Tortworth American Hospital and met a Henry Arnold, a young soldier from Cornwall who was part of the 6th Maritime Regiment, billeted in Thornbury.

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These are photo and a quote from Mary Chivers who came from London to Marshfield to join the Land Army.



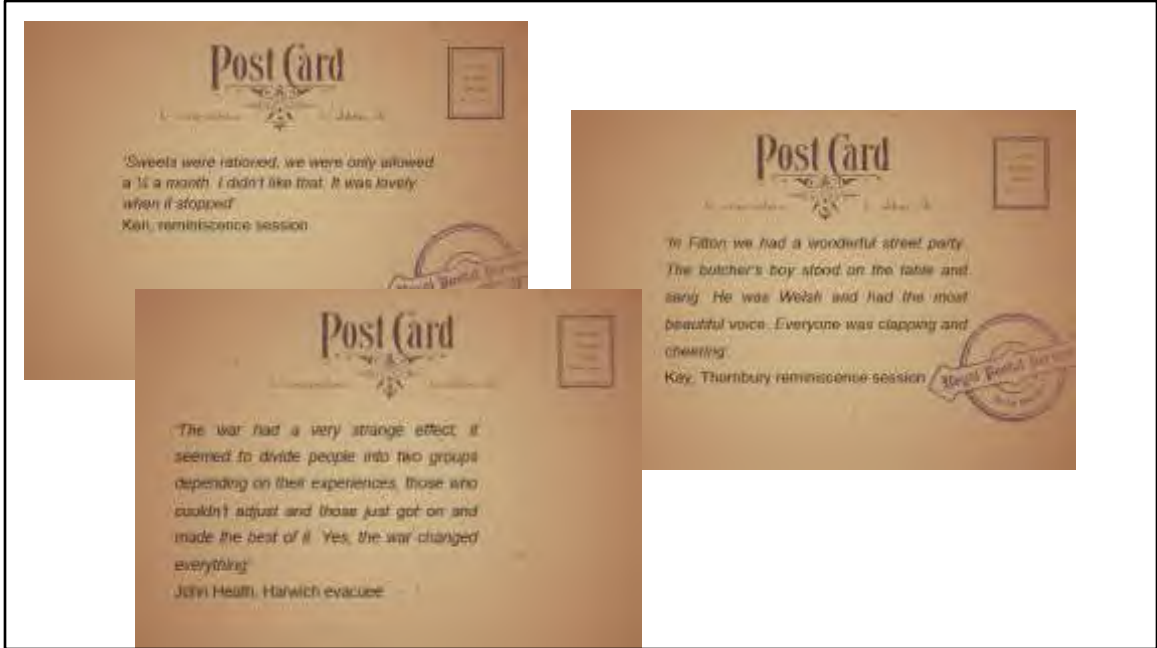
These are volunteer members of the Auxiliary Fire Service in Warmley. The photo was part of the South Gloucestershire Second World War Stories touring exhibition and Len was a passer-by who told us the story in the postcard. (It was verified by Kingswood Museum.)



School children played their part in the war effort. This photo shows girls from Chipping Sodbury Grammar school assembling gas masks.



You can discuss these examples of war work with the children



On 8 May 1945, Winston Churchill announced Victory in Europe Day, though the war continued in the Far East until September

Throughout South Gloucestershire there were street parties and church bells rang out that peace had finally returned.

But new work was to be found in the expanding industries.

You can watch films directly connected to life after the war by following the links on www.southglos.gov.uk/ww2stories or copying the following link into your web browser. <https://vimeo.com/showcase/6234336>

Eric Garrett talks about the changing farming practices after the war.

Roland Wood and Ken Evans talk about post-war National Service and how it directly related to the aftermath of war.

Hella Hewison talks about the anti-German prejudice which followed her all of her life.

Iris Arnold talks about her husband's shell shock