

'We did our bit' – The New Forest's Home Front during World War Two

Introduction:

The Second World War, 1939-1945, was the biggest and most important event of the twentieth century. While the courage and duty of the countless soldiers fighting on the frontlines was crucial, an equally important element of the war was the Home Front. The scale of the war meant that the population at home was affected like never before. The large area of the New Forest had been useful to the army in World War One, but it was not until WW2 that its Home Front was impacted. The New Forest continued to be a military asset, being important in the campaign Operation Overlord. Thousands of troops were stationed here, large numbers of ships positioned off the coast, alongside twelve airfields built in preparation for D-Day.

This exhibition and accompanying information will show what the Home Front experience in the New Forest during WW2 was like. Civil defence was an important aspect of the Home Front, the varied objects chosen will help in providing a narrative of the different defence organisations during the war and how they evolved after. Air Raid Precautions (ARP changed to Civil Defence Service in 1941), Women's Voluntary Service (WVS) and the later Civil Defence Corps will be looked at. WW2 affected everyone, and everyone had their part to play in the war effort, from civil defence, factory work, to even agriculture. This exhibition highlights part of the important work of the New Forest Home Front at this time.



Figure 1 - Employees outside Wellworthy Factory

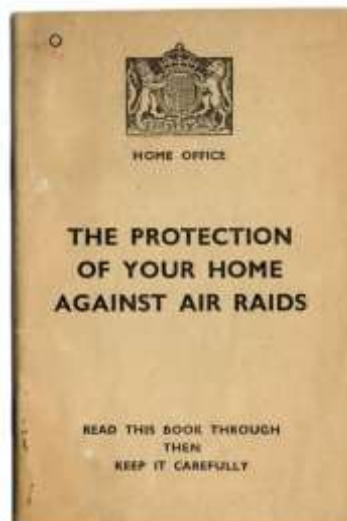
Hand-Made Belt – Made by Ursula Danby During WW2

Features wartime images and initials of organisations such as RAF (Royal Air Force), WVS and ARP. Being hand-made, it reflects the support and pride of volunteer organisations and civil defence in the New Forest.



'The Protection of Your House Against Air Raids' – Booklet

A 1938 booklet sent to households that offered important advice on how to prepare against an air raid, such as choosing a refuge room and ways to prevent fires.



Home Front and Civil Defence Organisations

At the heart of the Home Front was the need to protect the public. Since resources had to be conserved, affordable ways of going about this were important. The biggest aspect was the various voluntary organisations such as the Home Guard, ARP and WVS. These were the most visible part of the Home Front and were crucial to help maintain public morale. Alongside these were various booklets that were created to help in training volunteers, whilst also informing households on how to protect their homes in an affordable and realistic way.

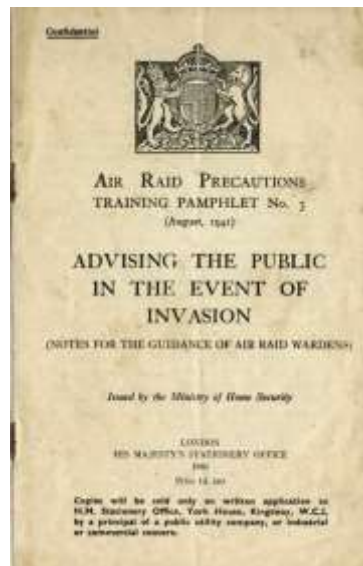


Figure 2 - Training pamphlet for Air Raid Wardens, published 1941

WVS Shoulder Brooch – Worn by Hazel Pinder

Worn by members of the WVS. The unique design made the brooch easy to recognise to the public, despite its small size.



WVS Car Badge – Owned by Hazel Pinder

This badge was attached onto cars that would be used by the WVS during the war. This increased the organisation's public visibility.



WVS Beret – Worn by Hazel Pinder

This was part of the uniform worn by members of the WVS. The smart and simple design gave the members an official appearance.



Hazel Pinder and the WVS

The badges and beret were all owned by a Miss Hazel Pinder of Milford-on-Sea, who served in the WVS during the war. It was originally founded in 1938 and formed to help recruit women into the ARP. By 1943, there were over a million volunteers that carried out duties such as: first aid, collecting salvage, assisting civilians during and after an air-raid and even the evacuation of children. There were various branches in the New Forest.



Figure 3 - Hazel Pinder in front of her car in Milford-on-Sea.

We also created an online version of the exhibition, through the use of Pinterest.

The New Forest's Home Front During World War Two

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This is part of a History project made by students at Bournemouth University (Stephen Brown, Lee Chadwick, Aaron Kamal and Ella Cook) in collaboration with the St Barbe Museum and Art Gallery in Lymington. It focuses on the civil defence aspect of the Home Front.

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Halma Board Game Pieces

Used by Lieutenant Colonel James Edmond as part of Civil Defence training in the 1940s and 1950s, where he was the Head Warden of Lymington Borough. Edmond used these alongside a makeshift map of Lymington, made from a white sheet and black tape for roads.

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