

# York in the Second World War



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York Civic Trust

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A York Civic Trust/Explore York Libraries and Archives education pack



York Railway Station after the air raids of 29 April 1942.  
Photo: attribution uncertain

Do you  
recognise  
this famous  
York  
building?

What do  
you think  
happened  
here?

### Look at the photo.

In the early morning of 29 April 1942, many bombs were dropped on the city of York from German aeroplanes flying overhead. By the time the bombing stopped and the 'final all clear' sounded it was about 4.45am.

As a result of the air-raid a total of 115 people – more than 90 civilian men, women and children in the city and its suburbs, plus some British military personnel and 6 German flyers - had been killed, or were so badly injured they later died.



# 'The worst night in York's modern history'

Here are some more photographs...



Photos: The Press, York

What do you think has just happened?

Why do you think this happened?

Do you recognise these streets or buildings?

Where are they?

What do you think the man standing at the top of the ladder is doing?

What do you think the men standing below him are thinking?

But why did the Germans bomb York?

The German bombing of York in the early morning of 29 April 1942, has come to be known as the Baedeker Raid. It is remembered as the worst night in York's modern history.

# The Second World War

In the 20th century there were two 'world wars'. Millions of people were killed in each of these wars, and the fighting spread to many different countries. The first of these wars lasted from 1914 to 1918. Although it was fought mostly in Europe, people called it the First World War (World War 1).

The Second World War lasted from 1939 to 1945. It was fought in Europe, in the Soviet Union, North Africa and in Asia.

The Second World War was fought by two groups of countries: The Allies and the Axis Powers.

Britain fought on the Allied side, along with France, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, India, the Soviet Union, China and the United States of America. Italy, Japan, and Germany were on the Axis side. The two sides were enemies.

Why do you think the two wars were called 'world wars'?

Why do you think so many people might have been fighting each other?

What does 'enemies' mean?

Why do you think the two sides were enemies?

Look at the poster.



© IWM/PST 8134

What can you see in it?

What are the men carrying?

Can you recognize any of the flags?

What was the British Commonwealth?

What are they wearing?

Who do you think they are?

Do you know who the Nazis were?

Why did it want to destroy the Nazis?

The Second World War was one of the largest and most devastating wars in world history, with over 60 million people killed.

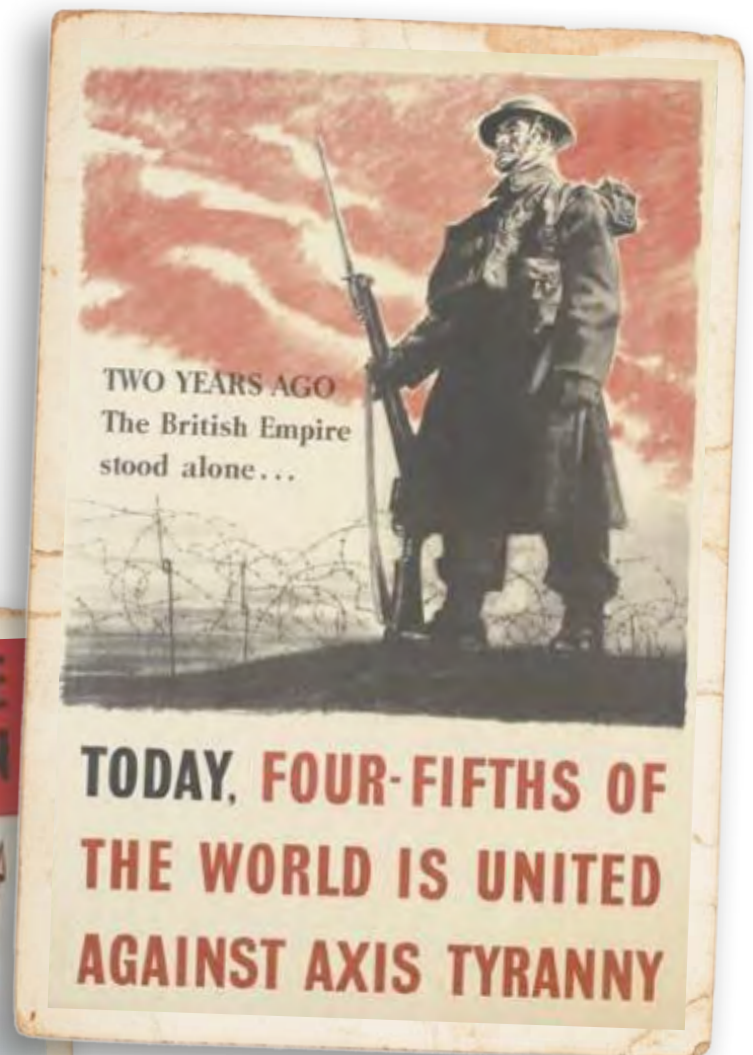
**VOCAB:** “Tyranny”: cruel and controlling government or rule; a state under cruel and controlling government



Here are two more posters.



©IWM PST 15708



© IWM PST 14812

What do  
you think  
these posters  
were for?

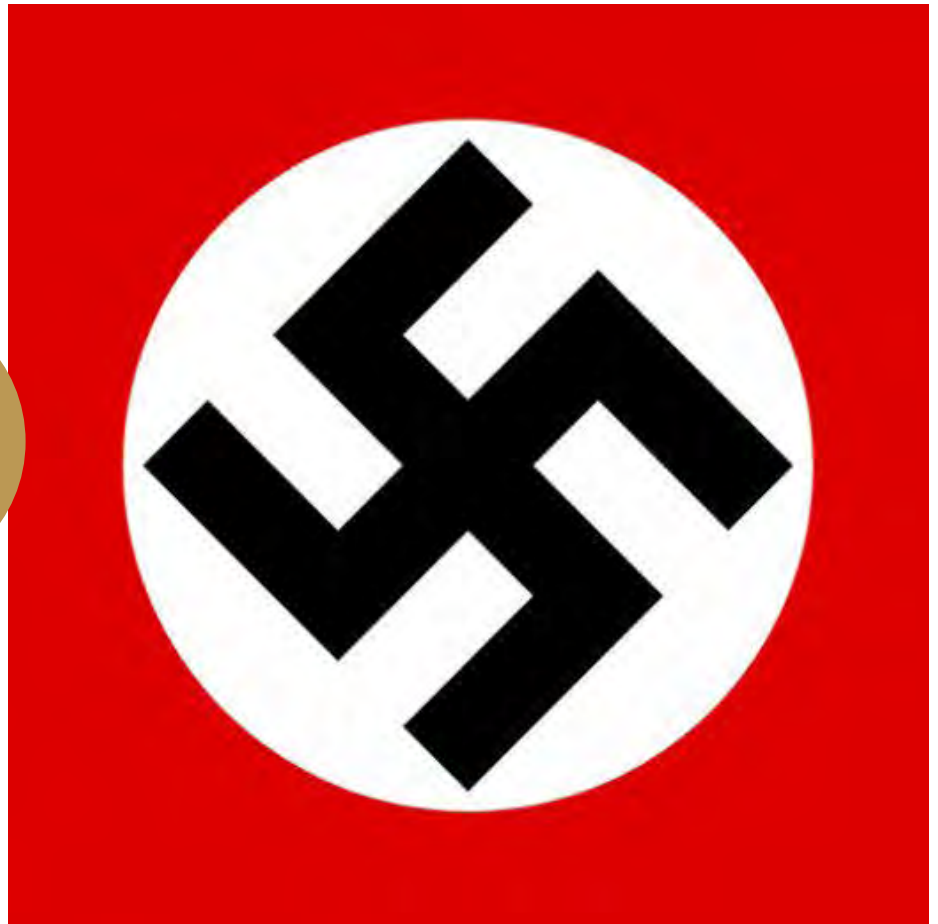
How do  
they make  
you feel?

# The Nazis

Do you recognize this flag?

Do you know what it is called?

Who used it during the war?



Germany was ruled by Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party. Hitler wanted Germany to control Europe, so that his own people could take more land on which to live and build.

Why do you think Germany wanted more land?

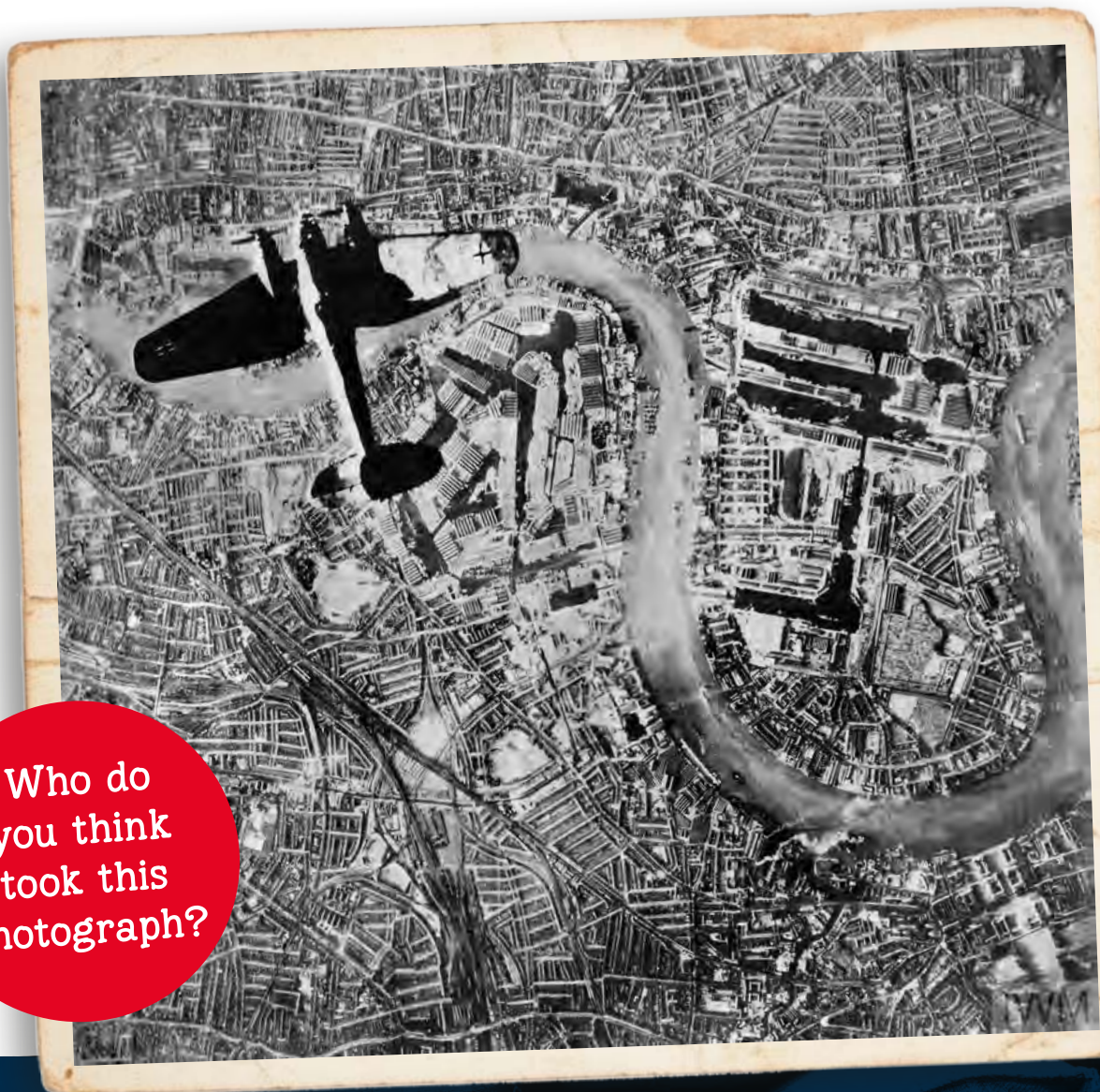
What would they do with the land?

While Germany wanted to control Europe, on the other side of the world, Japan wanted to control Asia and the Pacific Ocean. In 1937 Japan invaded China. Then, in 1939, Germany invaded Poland. In response, France and Britain declared war on Germany. This was the beginning of the Second World War.



# The Battle of Britain

If you had lived in York in 1939, it might have seemed that in the first few months of the war not much was happening. But then, in 1940, Germany decided it needed to invade Britain. The Germans had already conquered most of Europe, including France. Britain was the only major European country left to fight them. But to invade Britain, the Germans had to send their army across the English Channel in special troop ships. That would be dangerous – especially if the British aeroplanes of the Royal Air Force (RAF) were able to attack the German troop ships from the air. So Hitler decided that before invading Britain, he would need to destroy the RAF. He sent his own German air force, the Luftwaffe, to do this. He wanted to bomb British air bases to destroy them. The RAF tried to protect its air bases. The Battle of Britain began.



Who do you think took this photograph?

© IWM (C 5422)



What  
can you see  
in this  
photo?

Where  
is it?

Does it  
remind you  
of a popular  
TV show?

What do you  
think the people  
on the ground felt  
as they saw these  
German bomber  
planes flying  
overhead?

What do  
you think  
they did?

Eventually, after more than three months of fighting in the air, in which thousands of aeroplanes were shot down on each side, the Germans gave up. They realised that, even though the German air force was bigger, the RAF was too strong and well equipped to defeat. Britain's Prime Minister Winston Churchill publicly thanked the young pilots of the RAF in a famous speech. ***“Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few,”*** he said.

*Thanking ‘the few’:  
Sir Winston Churchill:  
[commons.wikimedia.org](https://commons.wikimedia.org)*



# The dangerous life of a fighter pilot

Not all fighter pilots who defended the skies above Britain during the Battle of Britain and later in the war were British. Some of them were refugees from France or Poland. When their own countries were invaded by the Nazis, they fled here to Britain to continue the fight. One of these was the Free French pilot Yves Mahé, who helped save York from German bombers on the night of the Baedeker Raid.

## CASE STUDY

**Yves Mahé, Free French fighter pilot who helped defend York during the 1942 Baedeker Raid**

In the early hours of 29 April 1942, a fleet of German bombers arrived in the skies above York.

For more than 90 minutes during what became known as the 'Baedeker Raid' they rained down 84 tonnes of incendiary and high explosive bombs, setting the city ablaze. More than 90 civilians died, more than 200 were injured and it was estimated that 9,500 houses were destroyed or damaged.

Many public buildings were also severely damaged, including the medieval Guildhall and the church of St Martin le Grand in Coney Street. The old Rowntree factory in North Street was burned to the ground; the railway station was badly damaged and the incoming King's Cross to Edinburgh train crowded with service personnel took a direct hit. Also hit were Clifton Aerodrome; St Peter's School; Queen Anne Grammar School for Girls; the Manor School, Marygate and the Bar Convent, where the building collapsed killing five nuns.





### CASE STUDY CONTINUED

Four RAF stations had been tasked with defending York - including RAF Hibaldstow, where 253 Squadron had a number of Free French Air Force pilots. Among them was a young Pilot Officer, Yves Mahé.

Mahé had born in Nantes, France, in November 1919. He qualified as a civilian pilot and then joined the French Air Force. During the Second World War, as German troops advanced across France he refused to accept his country's defeat. Joining the Free French forces he made his escape on a stolen plane, first to Gibraltar then on to England, where he was reunited with his brother, also a pilot.

By April 1942, at the age of 23, Mahé was serving with 253 Squadron. On that fateful early morning of 29 April, he saw the city of York ablaze from a distance. He set off alone with all eight machine guns of his Hawker Hurricane blazing and shot down a Heinkel bomber in flames over the River Ouse. The bombers had been lining up to attack the main Rowntree factory but then retreated. Although Mahé received support from other aircraft which followed, it is thought to have been his lone intervention which set the attackers in retreat.

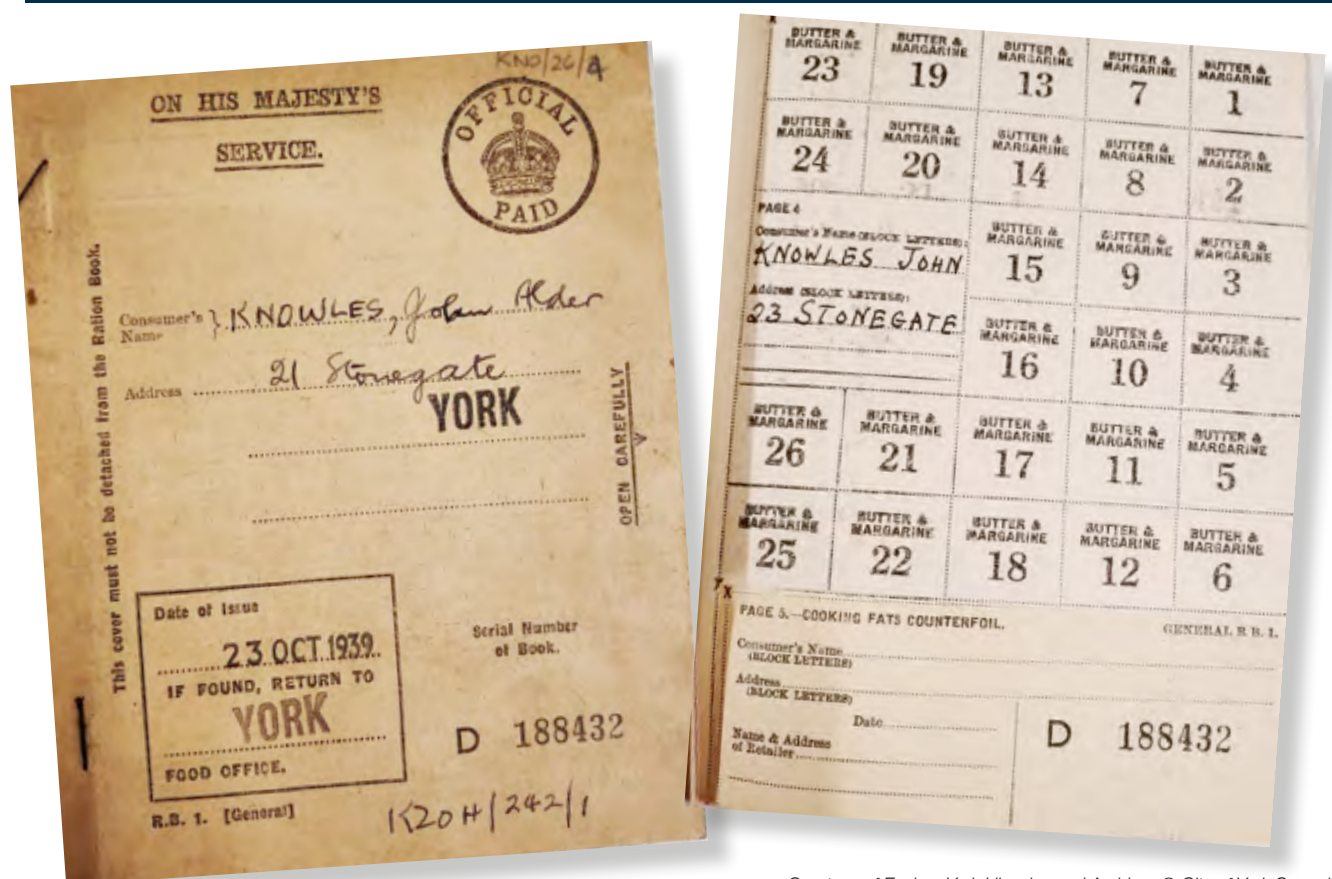
Mahé is honoured in York today with a blue plaque on Coney Street, opposite St Martin's Church, which was badly damaged in the Baedeker Raid.

*From an article in the York Press, August 2018*

# York in the Second World War

After war was declared on Germany, on 3 September 1939, life in York began to gradually change. Food began to run out in shops, and people who were frightened of being hungry began to hoard foods which could be kept easily, such as tinned food and sugar. This meant food ran out even more quickly. To try to make food last longer, the government introduced rationing. This limited the amount of food each person could have. Each family was given a ration book.

**VOCAB:** “Ration”: During wartime, supplies of food often run short. This happened in Britain during the Second World War. Some foods were in such short supply that the government restricted the amount of food each person could have. This restricted quantity of food allowed to each person was your ration. Ration books were issued which contained tear-out vouchers that you could use to exchange for your weekly ration of bread, or milk, or butter.



Courtesy of Explore York Libraries and Archives © City of York Council





Look at the pages from the ration book above.

Courtesy of Explore York Libraries and Archives  
© City of York Council

Who did this book belong to?

Where did he live?

In your family, who decides what you are allowed to eat?

What kinds of food was he allowed to eat?

Do you think you would enjoy eating this food?

# Dig for Victory

Look at the photo.

What do you think the phrase 'Dig for Victory' meant?

To try to make sure there was more food for everyone, the government launched a 'Dig for Victory' campaign. It asked people to grow vegetables instead of flowers in their gardens and in public parks.



*'A civilian walks past a large horizontal 'Dig for Victory' poster, which can be seen on railings somewhere in London.' Photo ©IWM D650A*

Look at the photo.



Can you see what the children are doing?

Where do you think they are?

What vegetables can you see?

What do you think the children would do with them?

Would you like to have helped them?

Do you or your parents grow vegetables?

Do you have a garden?



In York today we have a campaign called 'Edible York'. There are several 'public gardens' which grow vegetables that anyone can eat.



Is there an  
Edible York  
garden  
near you?

*Michelle Burns, left, Chloe Smee and Jamie Searl at the Edible York site next to the York Barbican in 2014. Photo: York Press*

# The need for metal

As the war progressed, it wasn't only food that began to run out. The government also needed metal, to make the guns, weapons, aeroplanes, tanks and ships it needed to fight the war.

There was a national campaign to find metal. Ordinary people donated everything from pots and pans, and cities like York even gave things like public railings that had lined many streets.

## Look at the photos:



Do you know where these photographs were taken?

What can you see in them?

Do you know what the big, funny-shaped object is?

*Courtesy of Explore York Libraries and Archives © City of York Council*

The 'funny-shaped object' is a tank which had been used in the First World War. After the First World War ended in 1918, the tank was presented to the people of York by the government. This is because during the First World War the people of York had donated money to buy weapons, such as tanks.

For many years the tank stood in York's Tower Gardens as a monument to the First World War. But at the start of the Second World War even this was melted down to make new weapons.





*Courtesy of Explore York Libraries and Archives © City of York Council*

Do you recognise this bridge?

Do you notice anything unusual about it?

Why do you think it looks different now?

Another prominent landmark which disappeared was the two cannon memorial at the Blue Bridge in York. These cannon dated from the Crimean War and had stood at either side of the bridge for decades as a memorial to that war. You can see them in the photo, which dates from about 1892. But they, too, were melted down as scrap metal in the Second World War.

# York prepares for war

The war affected York in many other ways than ration books, digging for victory and collecting metal. Many of the city's factories were converted from their normal use so that they could produce things useful in wartime. They included the city's two biggest chocolate factories, Rowntree's and Terry's.

Much of Rowntree's office block on Haxby Road was taken over by the Royal Army Pay Corps. Instead of making chocolates, the cream department was used to make ammunition, and also Ryvita and dried egg. Secretly, the gum department was used to make fuses for bombs. The Terry's factory, meanwhile, was taken over by F. Hills and Son, a company which made propeller blades.



*Terry's workers before the war.  
From: The Story of Terry's, by Van Wilson*

Local historian Van Wilson's book *The Story Of Terry's* includes interviews with several people who worked at Terry's during the war. Here are their memories:



## CASE STUDY

**Betty Metcalfe:**

“The men could volunteer to fire-watch and females used to staff the telephones at the weekend. And we had the doubtful pleasure of putting the siren on when we got the red signal, on top of the five-storey block. It was an electric one, you just pressed the button and it started wailing away.

“We were all issued with steel helmets. Well, me in a steel helmet was a sight to behold because they weren’t like the army ones with a strap on the back, they were very much deeper and had a wide brim.

“Then along came the aircraft people, Hills, who made laminated aeroplane blades (for propellers), and repaired them. The smell was appalling, like concentrated nail varnish. ... They used to bring RAF low loaders up Bishopthorpe Road to the factory with blades in various states of brokenness.

“I was there when a plane crashed on Nunthorpe estates. Our office was on the Bishopthorpe side. We knew the planes were going out, then we heard this tremendous crash and the next thing we knew, the sky was full of debris... We saw some of the airmen coming down in parachutes. There were machine gun bullets whizzing all over, right past Terry’s... We just got outside on to the back of the office block and the petrol tanks of the plane went up. Well, I’ve never heard anything like it. It was horrifying.”

Why was Rowntree’s being used to make Ryvita and dried egg?

What do you think the Royal Army Pay Corps was?

What were propeller blades used for?

Why do you think they were being made in York?

## CASE STUDY

**Cissie Colley:**

Cissie recalled making propeller blades at Terry’s.

“It had to be a certain amount of varnish on, and if you got more, you had to scrape it off. We were so tired. You’d to go seven days a week, if they wanted you on a Sunday you had to go in.

“They dropped all the rules and regulations about labour, there was no bank holidays. It was terribly important because they were losing a lot of aeroplanes.”

# A changing city

*Names carved into the mirror at Betty's café in York. Photo: Betty's*

Look at the photo.

Do you know what it is?



This is the mirror at Betty's Café in the centre of York.

By 1941, the city was truly changing. It was filled with people who had come to Britain from other parts of the world: refugees from Europe, and soldiers and airmen from the Commonwealth.

An entire group of Canadian Airmen from the Royal Canadian Air Force were based at RAF Linton-on-Ouse. They often liked to come into York to relax when they were not on duty. The Oak Room in the basement of Betty's Café became their favourite place. Many of them carved their names in a mirror with a special pen. You can still see their names today.

Have you been to Betty's to see the mirror?

Why do you think the soldiers wanted to write their names on the mirror?

Have you ever written your name somewhere unusual?

Why did you do it?



## CASE STUDY

**A Canadian airman in York**

*From The Northern Echo, 23 October 2017*

**Sprightly 95-year-old veteran airman travels to RAF Linton-on-Ouse from Canada**

A sprightly 95-year-old air force veteran made a nostalgic trip to North Yorkshire for an anniversary celebration.

Flight Lieutenant Harry Hopkins, of the 426 Squadron Royal Canadian Air Force, made a trip to RAF Dishforth this week to mark the 75th anniversary of the squadron's formation in 1942.

Harry, a former navigator, trained at Dishforth and served with the squadron at RAF Linton-on-Ouse where he completed 32 bombing missions and was awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross and French Croix de Guerre.

For this week's occasion he was flown across the Atlantic in a Canadian Air Force C130 Hercules with his grandson Chris, a current serving pilot in the Canadian air force and 18 other past and present members of the squadron, including their present commanding officer, Colonel Brent Hoddinott.

During their stay, Harry and his colleagues took part in commemorative events in Linton-on-Ouse, Newton-on-Ouse, Dishforth and Stonefall Cemetery in Harrogate.

The group visited the Yorkshire Air Museum at Elvington near York, where Harry re-acquainted himself with a Halifax bomber - the type he flew during the war - and even found a picture of himself and his crew taken in 1944.

The trip was rounded off with a pint at the Alice Hawthorne pub at Nun Monkton, a popular social venue for Canadian aircrew during the Second World War.

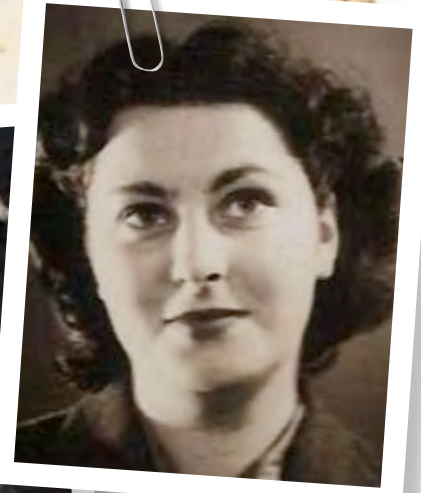
Reflecting on the visit, Colonel Hodinott, said the warm welcome they had received at all the places they had visited was "truly amazing" and showed that the strong links between the Canadians and the people of North Yorkshire, forged in Second World War, were still as strong as ever.

There was also a Free French bomber squadron stationed at RAF Elvington. The French airmen from Elvington would often come into York to enjoy a night out on the town.

## CASE STUDY

### Francis Usai and Barbara Rigby

During the Second World War, a Free French air force sergeant stationed with a Halifax bomber squadron at RAF Elvington fell in love with an English girl from Liverpool. Their story was told in an article in the York Press...



*Sgt Francis Usai, left, and the young Barbara Rigby.  
Photos: Yorkshire Air Museum & Allied Air Forces Memorial*

### A wartime romance

The photographs show an attractive couple: a dark-haired young woman with extraordinarily intense eyes and a handsome young man with the soulful look of a poet.

She was Barbara Rigby, a teenage student living with her parents in Liverpool. He was Francis Usai – a Free French airman stationed with a Halifax bomber squadron at RAF Elvington.

Their wartime romance was the stuff of Hollywood films. And it continues to resonate 70 years on, thanks to an extraordinary diary and a collection of letters which Barbara kept with her all her life.

Over the course of two years, during which he flew countless missions over occupied Germany from his base at Elvington, Francis wrote more than 350 letters to his “Barbiche”, as he called Barbara.

In her private journal, meanwhile, Barbara recorded her meetings with Francis, and her desperate fears for his safety as he flew mission after mission.



### CASE STUDY (CONTINUED)

She was right to be worried. Francis was a gunner; part of the seven-man crew of a Halifax with one of the two Free French bomber squadrons based at Elvington.

It was a dangerous life. Between June 1944 and October 1945, the two squadrons flew more than 2,800 sorties. Forty-one aircraft were lost, and 216 airmen were killed – half the French aircrew at the base.

Two of Francis's closest friends were among those who lost their lives. And on January 4, 1945, Barbara received the news she had been dreading: Francis's plane was missing.

She took to her bed for two days. "I feel numb, I don't know what to do," she confided to her diary.

Francis survived, although his back was badly injured. But sadly, there was to be no happy ever after.

Conditions at the end of the war made it too complicated for a French airman and an English girl to be together.

At Christmas 1947, Barbara received a card from Francis saying he would never forget her and that he would always love her.

But they both went on to marry other people. Francis had two children, worked for Shell near Paris for many years, and died of cancer in 1996.

Barbara married a British army officer. They lived in Uganda, and in 1962 moved to Australia.

The diary and letters came to light while the Yorkshire Air Museum was helping French film-maker Genevieve Monneris make a documentary about the French bomber squadrons based at Elvington during the war.

Between them, Barbara's diary and Francis' passionate letters provide an unforgettable portrait of a Britain at war – as well as a true love story.

**VOCAB:** "Sortie": An attack made by troops or aircraft coming out from a base or a position of defence

**Extracts from one of Francis' letters to Barbara, written in October 1944 and describing a night out in York that he shared with three other friends, fellow French airmen Jacques Leclerc and Henri Martin, and Henri's English wife Pat. The four referred to themselves as 'the famous quartet':**

"Two nights ago, the famous quartet was seen wandering in the streets of York, singing and almost dancing while the flabbergasted passers-by looked on. It was a wonderful evening – but without you it was incomplete.

We first went for aperitifs. Once these had made us joyful, being in high spirits, we headed for the Grand Hotel and sang Ma Pomme and other melodious ditties of that sort. We drank another aperitif. Then in the dining room we naturally asked for the wine list.

No sooner had we started eating than I got up with great dignity and said that I had an urgent phone call to make. Eventually the two famous sergeants (Jacques and Henri) followed me to the phone booth to the great distress of the head-waiter, who imagined we didn't like his cuisine and were just about to leave. You know the rest: I phoned, we phoned, you spoke to Jacques for the first time.

We found ourselves in the streets again, walking towards the dance-hall, locking each other's arms and blocking the whole width of the pavement, so that no-one could pass in the opposite direction."

York was surrounded by air bases, including those at Elvington, Pocklington, Driffield and Linton-on-Ouse. Many were used by bomber squadrons which were sent to bomb Germany.

At Clifton Moor there was even a special base for repairing bombers. It was known as York Aircraft Repair Depot. It could completely repair a Halifax bomber in about eight weeks.

One of the air bases that was used in the war, at Elvington, has now been turned into the Yorkshire Air Museum.



# York men on the frontline

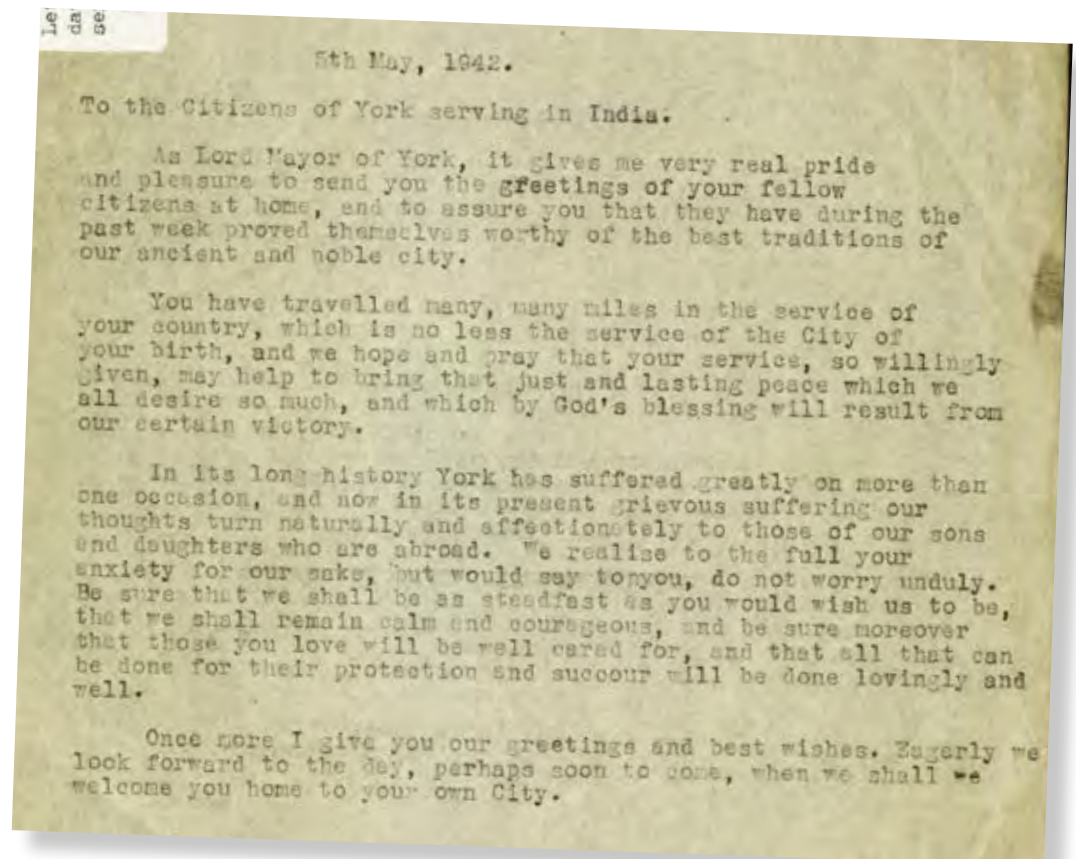
Of course, many young men from York were serving as soldiers in the war. They were sent all over the world: to Europe, Africa and even the Far East, including India, Burma and Singapore.

Among the local regiments which fought in the Second World War were the King's Own Yorkshire Light Infantry, the Green Howards, the East Riding Yeomanry and the West Yorkshire Regiment. HMS York served the Royal Navy until it was sunk off Crete in May 1941 with the loss of two crew.

The 1st and 2nd Battalions of the West Yorkshire Regiment played a key role in lifting the siege at Imphal in Burma, now Myanmar, in 1944. Recognising this achievement, the council renamed the Fulford Army quarters in York the Imphal Barracks.

While the men of York were fighting overseas, their friends and family back home did not forget about them.

Here is a letter the Lord Mayor of York, Edna Annie Crichton, sent on 5 May 1942, to soldiers from York who were fighting in India:



Courtesy of Explore  
York Libraries and  
Archives © City of  
York Council

## Transcript

5th May, 1942

### To the Citizens of York serving in India

“As Lord Mayor of York, it gives me very real pride and pleasure to send you the greetings of your fellow citizens at home, and to assure you that they have during the past week proved themselves worthy of the best traditions of our ancient and noble city.

You have travelled many, many miles in the service of your country, which is no less the service of the City of your birth, and we hope and pray that your service, so willingly given, may help to bring that just and lasting peace which we all desire so much, and which by God’s blessing will result from our certain victory.

In its long history York has suffered greatly on more than one occasion, and now in its present grievous suffering our thoughts turn naturally and affectionately to those of our sons and daughters who are abroad. We realise to the full your anxiety for our sake, but would say to you, do not worry unduly. Be sure that we shall be as steadfast as you would wish us to be, that we shall remain calm and courageous, and be sure moreover that those you love will be well cared for, and that all that can be done for their protection and succour will be done lovingly and well.

Once more I give you our greetings and best wishes. Eagerly we look forward to the day, perhaps soon to come, when we shall welcome you home to your own City.”

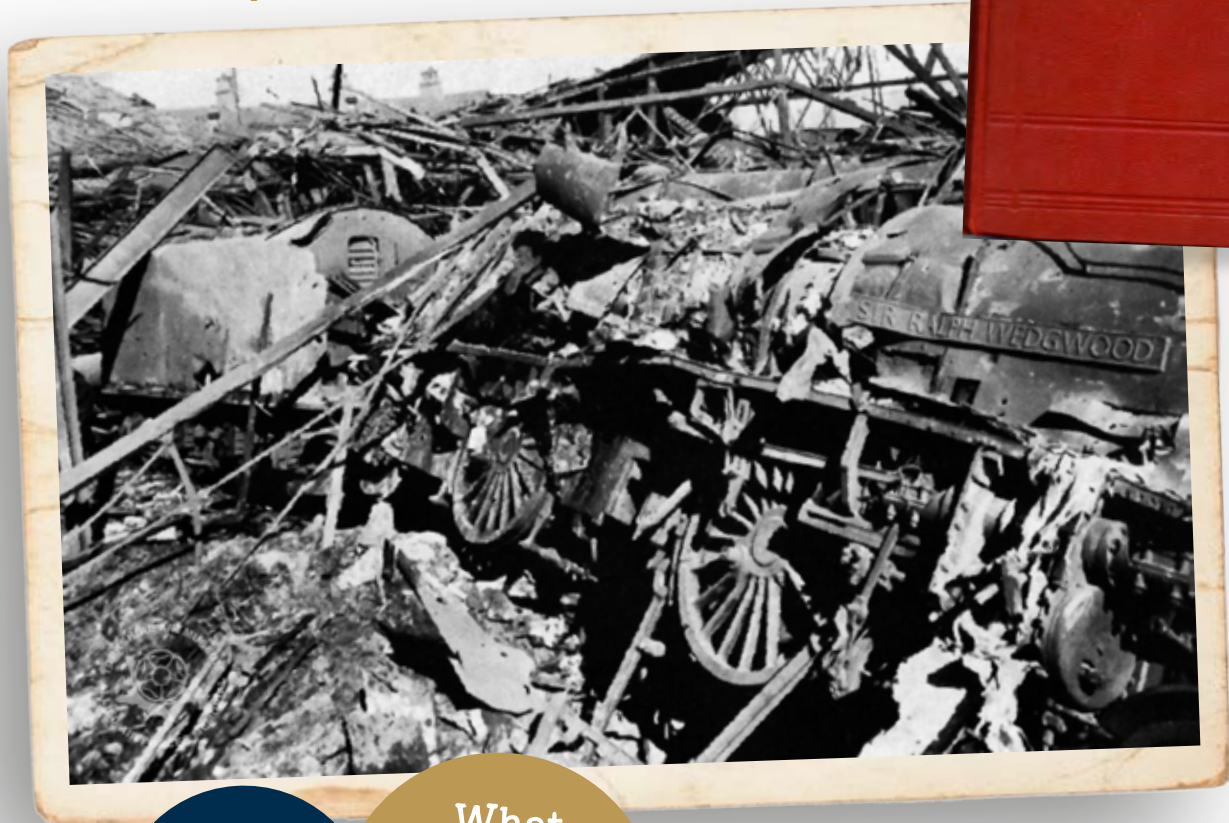
Why do you think the Lord Mayor wrote to soldiers in India?

How do you think they would have felt when they received his letter?



# The Baedeker Raids

Look at the photo



What  
can you  
see?

What  
do you  
think has  
happened?

*The photograph shows the locomotive 'Sir Ralph Wedgwood', a sister-engine of the famous 'Mallard'. It was in the engine shed at York North (formal name the North Locomotive Power Depot) being maintained - but received a direct hit by a bomb and was damaged beyond repair. The engine shed later became the Great Hall of the National Railway Museum. You will find a plaque marking this event on the floor of the Great Hall close to the turntable. Photographs like this are rare, workers were forbidden to publicise damage to essential war services like railways.*

*Photo: Yorkshire Air Museum & Allied Air Forces Memorial*

Britain was sending aircraft to bomb cities in Germany. And Germany was doing the same, sending its bombers to bomb cities in our country. These attacks were known as air raids.

In the first two years of the war, there were several small air raids on York. In one, the city gas works was hit. But there had not been a major air raid, until 29 April 1942.

You'll remember, right at the beginning of this pack, we talked about the night of the 29 April 1942, when York had its worst night in all the five years of the war. This attack became known as the York Baedeker Raid.

# The York Baedeker Raid

**Look at the photo.**

This is Beckfield Lane in York in 1940.

*Courtesy of Explore York Libraries and Archives  
©City of York Council*



What do you think has happened to the house in the photo?

Who do you think the people in the photo are?

Have you seen houses like this in York today?

What do you think happened to the people who lived in these houses?

What would you have to do in the event of an emergency?

At 2:42 am, on the 29 April 1942 an air-raid siren began to sound in York. The city was about to experience its worst night in the whole of the Second World War.



German aeroplanes flying overhead dropped countless bombs on the city. By the time the bombing stopped and the ‘final all-clear’ sounded at about 4.45am, 94 men, women and children in the city and its suburbs had been killed, or left so badly injured they were later to die.

The raid began with flares and incendiary bombs. The latter were dropped in areas such as Pickering Terrace, Bootham Terrace, and Queen Anne’s Road. The incendiary bombs, however, were only the beginning. In fact, they lit up more targets.

The 69 high explosive bombs (10 of which did not explode), which followed the incendiary ones, were what killed most people.

As well as the 94 people who were killed, many buildings across York were badly damaged. They included York Railway Station, The Guildhall, and St Martin’s Church on Coney Street.

The railway and railway station area was one of the most affected areas, as several incendiary and explosive bombs hit it – in fact, it was the German air force’s main target in York. The booking hall and parcels office were badly damaged, and 30 coaches were burnt out.



*A4 Pacific class locomotive Sir Ralph Wedgwood, which was damaged in the 1942 York air raid.*

*Photo: Science Museum Group, Doncaster Works Collection, Creative Commons Zero*

**Look at the photo**

**What can you see?**

**What would it have been like to be in the railway station when the bombs fell?**

**Why do you think the Germans might have targeted the railway station?**

The railway station was by no means the only major building in York hit by bombs. The Bar Convent, the Guildhall and St Martin's Church were all badly damaged in fires caused by the incendiary bombs.



*The Guildhall on fire during the city's heaviest air raid of the Second World War which was at 2.42am on 29 April 1942. Courtesy of Explore York Libraries and Archives © City of York Council*



*This massive damage to St Martin Le Grand on Coney Street. An incendiary bomb fell in the belfry and quickly gutted the building. A contemporary report says that a verger remembered that there was a wedding booked for 9am the next morning and he dashed into the burning building to rescue the register. Courtesy of Explore York Libraries and Archives © City of York Council*



*This picture gives an idea of the scale of the damage to the Bar Convent from the air raid of 29 April 1942. It was taken on the 5 May during the clean up operation. Courtesy of Explore York Libraries and Archives © City of York Council*



## CASE STUDY

**David Wilson**

David Wilson and his family lived at the Guildhall. They were there the night the bombs fell – and survived to tell their story.

David was 11 at the time. His father, Jock, was the caretaker and sword-bearer at the Guildhall.

The family lived in the caretaker's flat, on the second floor above the Victorian municipal offices next to the medieval Guildhall itself.

David remembers the Observer Corps' warning bell going off, followed by the sirens. With that, all hell broke loose.

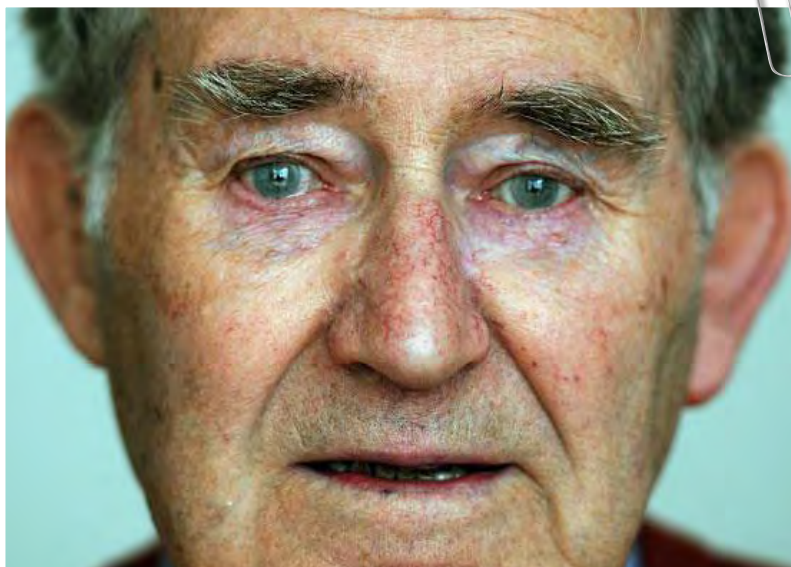
The bombs raining down on the Guildhall were only incendiaries – but explosive bombs fell on Blake Street, not far away.

David, his mum and older sister Margaret, who was in the ATS, went down to the supposedly bomb-proof ARP headquarters in the basement. But his dad was on fire watch – and stayed above, vainly trying to tackle the flames.

“He couldn't deal with all the incendiaries,” David recalls. The roof of the Guildhall had been undergoing repairs. There was a floor of new timber just beneath the roof so that workmen could reach it, plus scaffolding and shavings.

“The whole thing was a tinderbox,” David recalls. “It caught fire and just went up.”

David's own most vivid memory was of going out onto the balcony overlooking the river behind the Guildhall. “I remember my mother saying ‘The Guildhall is on fire, and so is everywhere else! Take that lad outside and show him what's happening!’”



*David Wilson, who survived the raid.  
Photo: The Press, York*

**CASE STUDY (CONTINUED)**

From the balcony it seemed the whole riverfront was on fire: the Guildhall, and buildings on the opposite side of the river too.

It was frightening, he admits – but a sight he wouldn't have missed. "You'd never, ever see that again."

Eventually, as the fires at the Guildhall burned more fiercely, the family was evacuated to the Mansion House.

Margaret was in her ATS uniform, and wearing a tin hat. It was fortunate that she was. As they walked along the passage beside the Guildhall, lead dripped off the roof and on to his sister's head.

"If she hadn't had that helmet on..."

*From article by Stephen Lewis in The Press*



# York's wartime Lord Mayor

The Lord Mayor of York at the time of the Baedeker Raid was Edna Annie Crichton, York's first-ever woman Lord Mayor.

She was an inspirational leader.

## CASE STUDY

### Edna Annie Crichton

Edna Annie Crichton (1876-1970), first woman Lord Mayor of York

Edna Annie Crichton was York's first woman Lord Mayor who led York through its greatest wartime crisis, the Baedeker Raid of April 1942.

As chair of the city council's housing committee she also oversaw a massive slum clearance and house building programme.

Edna Crichton was born in Gloucester in 1876. In 1901 she and her husband, David Sprunt Crichton, moved to York, where David became the first ever welfare officer at the Rowntree Cocoa Works.

Edna had a daughter, Vida, in 1902, and a son, David, in 1906. She stood for election to York City Council in 1919, arguing that women were more knowledgeable than men 'in such questions as housing, education, maternity and child welfare'. She topped the poll in Bootham.

She had served only a year when her husband died suddenly in 1921, aged 51.

Edna was elected chair of the council's housing committee in 1931, and chaired the committee for 20 years. By April 1939, 5,063 houses and flats had been built and more than 1,000 slum properties demolished.



Image – York Press

### CASE STUDY (CONTINUED)

War broke out in 1939. In 1941, Edna's son David, a subaltern in the Gordon Highlanders, died of cancer in a German military hospital. That same year Edna was elected York's first woman Lord Mayor.

Her year in office was the most dramatic in York's modern history. In April 1942 York was bombed. Up to a third of homes were destroyed or damaged, as many as 90 people were killed and 200 injured.

The Lord Mayor visited bombed home after bombed home.



*The Lord Mayor, Edna Annie Crichton (right), visiting bombed homes in York with princess Mary, the Princess Royal (centre) and Lord Harewood, the princess's husband (left).  
Photo: The Press, York*

The Yorkshire Evening Press of 30 April 1942, said that the Lord Mayor had set a fine example. She had been "an inspiration to the citizens. Working untiringly for about 18 hours, superintending ARP arrangements, visiting hospitals and first-aid posts and generally alleviating distress among the victims."

Edna remained on the council for 10 years after the war before retiring. She died in a York nursing home in 1970, aged 93.



# Schools during the York Blitz

Many schools in York also suffered serious damage during the air raid.

## MANOR HIGHER GRADE SCHOOL.

Bomb dropped on Science Room which has wrecked north end of School building. Whole school shattered and beyond repair.

No fire.

## QUEEN ANNE SECONDARY SCHOOL.

Five high explosive bombs dropped in line across the playing field and adjoining land recently purchased by the Committee for extensions. There are two large craters on the new land, two on the tennis courts and one on the edge of the field between the back of Sycamore Terrace and our air-raid shelters. Two air-raid shelters will have to be re-built. Practically all windows and window frames have been damaged, and all ceilings on first floor (west front) are down.

## POPPLETON ROAD SCHOOL.

Direct hit in centre of School by high explosive bomb. Extensive damage to main building. 12 rooms (out of 21) and central halls cannot be used. 9 rooms at the ends of the main building might be reconditioned. Handicraft Centre, Housecraft Centre and Hutments - minor damage only. No fire at this School.

*Excerpts from City of York Council's Education Committee report on war damage to schools following the Baedeker raid. Courtesy of Explore York Libraries and Archives ©City of York Council*

# The death toll during the York Blitz

The air raid was over by 4:45, when the all-clear sounded.

As a result of the air raid a total of 115 people were killed or died of their injuries.

The Baedeker Raid was the worst air raid on York during the Second World War, but it wasn't the only one.

A document held in the city archives records all the major air raids on the city between 1939 and 1945:

Look at this document.

11

CITY OF YORK.  
List of Air Raids on the City 3/9/39 - 6/5/45.

No.	Date.	Area Raided.	Nature of Damage.
1.	11. 8.40	Cemetery & Cemetery Rd.	69 houses extensive. 153 " minor glass. 2 serious casualties.
2.	29.10.40	Sefton Ave, Elmfield Ave.	2 killed. No extensive damage.
3.	5.11.40	Waterworks grounds.	1 killed. 1 seriously injured. No material damage.
4.	15.11.40	Hartoft St. Askham Lane. Beckfield Lane, Boroughbridge Road.	A few houses and factories. 2 serious casualties. Some animals killed.
5.	2. 1.41	Hull Road, Walmgate, Hungate, Neworth.	1 minor casualty. Small fire damage from incendiary bombs.
6.	16. 1.41	The Groves.	1 killed. 1 seriously injured. Sundry damage to houses.
7.	3. 4.41	Boroughbridge Road & Clifton Ings.	Nil.
8.	29. 4.42	"Baedekar" raid. Bootham, Clifton, Burton Stone La. Leeman Rd, Popplaton Rd. Railway Premises.	79 killed. 84 seriously injured. 120 slightly injured. Material damage well known.
9.	2. 8.42	Skeldergate, Walmgate.	1 killed (N.F.S) 9 seriously injured. 36 slightly injured. 400 properties damaged in varying degree.
10.	24. 9.42	Hungate, Walmgate, Tang Hall.	2 killed. 3 seriously injured. 2 slightly injured. No material damage. Chiefly noted for 50 Kg. "Sprengbrands."
11.	17.12.42	Gas Werks and Park Grove.	2 killed. 9 seriously injured. 16 slightly injured. Damage to Gas Werks plant and Park Grove School.

This figure is broken down as:

- 109 British fatalities
- 6 German Luftwaffe fatalities

The 109 British deaths are broken down as:

- 82 householders
- 15 military personnel
- 4 members of the ARP
- 6 members of the Firewatch
- 1 member of the National Fire Service
- 1 member of St John's Ambulance

Do you recognise the names of the places that were damaged?

Can you see where you live on this list?

How many people were killed?

Walking through those places now would you think they had ever been bombed?

*List of Air Raids in the City 3 September 1939 to 6 May 1945. Courtesy of Explore York Libraries and Archives ©City of York Council*

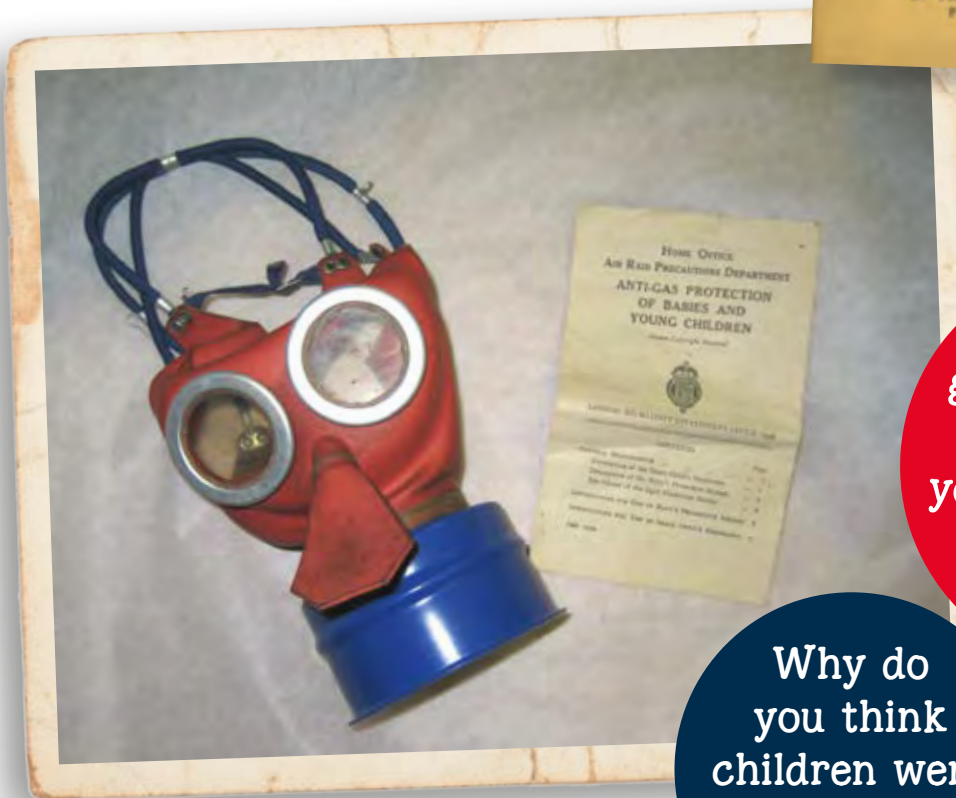
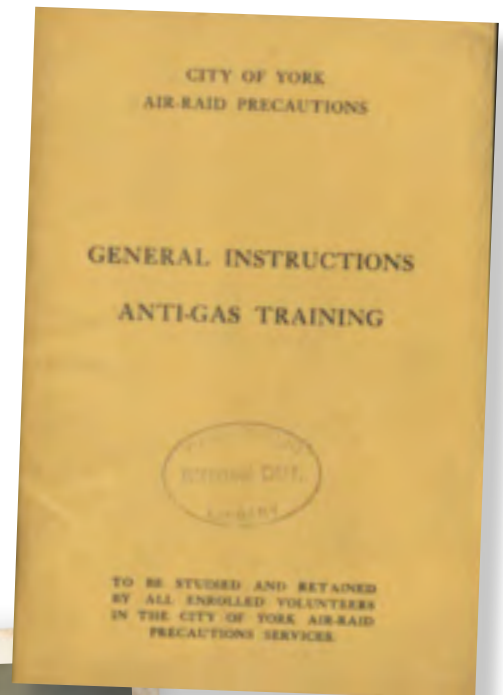


The council document lists 11 air raids on York in the Second World War, all between 1940 and 1942.

As soon as the war began, the authorities realized that bombing raids were likely.

Advice was issued to households about what to do if there was an air raid.

The document included information about how to use a gas mask, like this one:



*A child's gas mask from WW2.  
Photo: York Museums Trust*

*City of York Air Raid Precautions – details on what to do in case of air raid, the classification of possible gases used during an attack, types of bombs, protection of food. Courtesy of Explore York Libraries and Archives ©City of York Council*

Look at the gas mask in the picture. Would you have liked to wear a mask like this?

Why do you think children were given these masks?

What do you think it would have felt like to wear?

What is 'gas'?

Are there different types of gas?

# Air raid shelters

More than 1,500 Anderson shelters were distributed in York for poorer families to take shelter from the air raids. And a map of 23 air raid shelters in the city centre was published for the use of shoppers and others.



*Public air raid shelters in the centre of York. Courtesy of Explore York Libraries and Archives ©City of York Council*

The Baedeker Raid was not the first nor the last air raid on York during the war. There were three more raids in 1942, but none of them were anything like as serious. And 1942 was to be the last year that German bombers directly threatened the city.

Nevertheless, in major cities the risk of air raids was always there. That is why so many city children were evacuated away from their homes in the city to live in the countryside...



# Children and evacuees

The bombing of major cities like York and London meant that they became increasingly dangerous places to live. At the very beginning of the war, the Government decided to evacuate many civilians - especially children, but also mothers with babies and pregnant women - to the countryside or to smaller towns that they thought were safer. These people were known as evacuees. The operation to send them to safer places was known as Operation Pied Piper.

**VOCAB:** The word 'evacuate' when used about children who moved home during the war is nothing to do with leaving an empty building when there is a fire (or fire alarm). It simply means to be moved from one place to another that is less dangerous.

Look at the photo. This girl was an evacuee.



Photo: © IWM (FX 12765)

Look at her hat. Can you see what is sewn onto it?

Where might she have come from?

Where might she be going?

Why do you think she brought her dog with her?

If you were being evacuated, what would you bring with you?

How do you think her parents felt when she left?

How do you think she felt leaving her parents?

Why do you think the evacuation was called 'Operation Pied Piper'?

What do you think might be in the boxes the children are holding?



Children evacuated from Hull arrive in Clifton in 1939. Photo: Explore York Libraries and Archives © City of York Council

## CASE STUDY

### John Wright

#### Retired teacher remembers wartime evacuation to North Yorkshire

On a beautiful September day in 1939, a small boy sat on a train with his mum and little brother, George, as it clattered from Middlesbrough through Great Ayton and up on to the North York Moors.

John Wright was only four-and-a-half. He and his brother were among thousands of children being evacuated from wartime Middlesbrough.

In a book he published in 2009 John, by then aged 74 and a retired technician turned teacher who lived in Leamington Spa, remembered that day.

“It was a glorious day and sweet, heady scents of sun-warmed heather and gorse wafted in through the partly open window,” he wrote in his book *Child From Home: Memories of a North Country Evacuee*.



## CASE STUDY (CONTINUED)

“Journeys are always exciting to young children and I was loving this one. We climbed steadily up to broad uplands where great clumps of sunlit purple heather stretched away as far as the eye could see.”

The train passed Grosmont and Goathland, skirted the bluff of Pickering Moor, and began a long slow descent to Pickering.

From there, the family took a motor coach to Cropton. A few miles north of the village, they finally reached their destination: Sutherland Lodge, pressed into use as a nursery for evacuated children.

For the first few months, John and George’s mum stayed with them at Sutherland Lodge. “But then she had to go home to Middlesbrough,” Mr Wright recalled. “My father was in the army, based up on the North East coast. She had to be home for when he came on leave.”

John loved it at Sutherland Lodge. But eventually the brothers were moved to Haxby, boarding with a woman known, in the book, as Mrs Harris.

It is not her real name – and there is a reason for that. “She was a horrible woman. She was constantly smoking, and her cold stare could take the warmth out of the sunniest day”, John wrote. Worse, she beat and bullied the children.

John went to the village school, and was placed in the ‘baby’ class at St Mary’s Hall. But the evacuees weren’t always popular with other children.

“We vaccies were often looked on as non-persons and were blamed for anything that went wrong,” he wrote. “In the ‘big school’, there were sometimes fights in the playground between vaccies and the locals.”

There was much that he came to like about his life in Haxby – nature study at school, and the walks beside ploughed fields armed with bags, nets and bottles; watching the Halifax bombers stationed at Linton-on-Ouse. But he and George were homesick: and they wondered why their mum never visited.

### CASE STUDY (CONTINUED)

The great day came in 1944 when their Gran came to collect them to take them home.

She sat them on the sofa in Mrs Harris' front room.

"I'm very sorry to tell you that your Mam and Dad were killed in the bombing of Newport Bridge in 1942," she said. "So you will be coming to live with me."

*From an article by Stephen Lewis in the York Press,  
November 2, 2009*

Not all of those eligible to be evacuated wanted to go. In London, out of the 1,800,000 potential evacuees, only 660,000 actually left (among them were 377,000 children). Most evacuees travelled by train to their new host families and their new homes, which went by the name of 'billets'. Evacuees were provided with gas masks, food and a small bag for the journey.

This document shows the things children were allowed to bring with them:

Each unaccompanied child, before leaving home, will, in most cases, be provided with:

- (1) A Respirator.
- (2) Change of underclothing.
- (3) Night clothes.
- (4) House shoes or plimsolls.
- (5) Change of stockings.
- (6) Tooth brush.
- (7) Towel.
- (8) Handkerchiefs.
- (9) A warm coat or mackintosh.

*Courtesy of Explore York Libraries and Archives copyright City of York Council*

Before they left, each child was given a 48-hour food ration pack at the railway station.

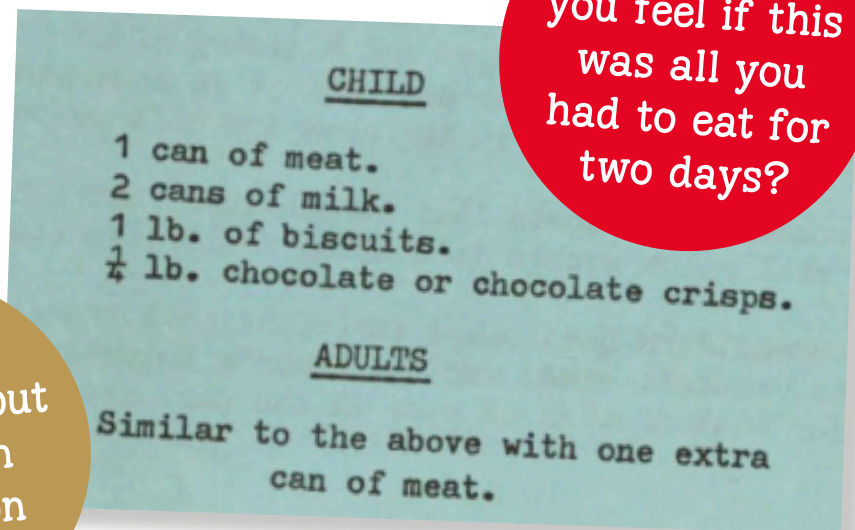


This document shows what they would have been given:

What do you think of the ration distribution packets?

What would you put in a ration distribution today?

How would you feel if this was all you had to eat for two days?



*Courtesy of Explore York Libraries and Archives copyright City of York Council*

When they reached their destination, often the children had to stay with strangers. They were tired, they missed their parents – and sometimes they didn't behave very well. Many children had to live in hostels with other children, like the one in this photograph:

Look at the photograph.

What are they doing?

How many children can you see?

Where do you think they are?

Who do you think the two women in the front of the photograph are?

Why do you think there are so many hens?



*Photo: Imperial War Museum*

To try and make children feel less unhappy after being taken away from their parents, a special song was written for children in 1939 by Gaby Rogers and Harry Philips, entitled 'Goodnight Children Everywhere' and broadcast every night by the BBC Radio:

### Goodnight Children Everywhere

Sleepy little eyes in a sleepy little head,  
Sleepy time is drawing near.  
In a little while you'll be tucked up in your bed,  
Here's a song for baby dear.  
Goodnight children everywhere,  
Your mummy thinks of you tonight.  
Lay your head upon your pillow,  
Don't be a kid or a weeping willow.  
Close your eyes and say a prayer,  
And surely you can find a kiss to spare.  
Though you are far away, she's with you  
night and day,  
Goodnight children everywhere  
Soon the moon will rise, and caress you  
with its beams,  
While the shadows softly creep.  
With a happy smile you will be wrapped  
up in your dreams,  
Baby will be fast asleep. Goodnight  
children everywhere.

How do you think you would have felt if you were a child evacuee hearing this on the radio?

Can you remember your first sleepover? Do you think these children's experience would have been different? If so, how?

**Listen to the song here:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iQWY31G3B58>



# Evacuees overseas

Not every child who was an evacuee went to the British countryside. In 1940, more than 2,600 children were evacuated to Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, under the Children's Overseas Reception Board organization. These were not the first children sent overseas: immediately before the war began, almost 14,000 children had gone overseas, sent by private charities.

Brian Procter was evacuated to Canada, here is his story:

## CASE STUDY

### Brian Procter

#### Cowboys or kangaroos?

On 3 September 1939 I was with my mother at chapel in York when I heard that we had declared war on Germany. I wondered why many women started crying.

One night the siren went and we all snuggled under the kitchen table and heard a plane droning over.

Trenches were dug in open land near us and dad built an Anderson shelter in the middle of our back lawn. I remember my gas mask and carrying it around.

It must have been about this time that Mother and Dad latched on to the idea of joining the CORB scheme (Children's Overseas Reception Board) to send us away to safety briefly (or so they thought). York, a big rail centre, was a prime target - in fact, my school got a direct hit later, smack in the middle.

My parents asked me which I preferred, cowboys or kangaroos, and so I chose Canada. I was nearly eight years old and didn't realise I wouldn't see my mother and father again for five years.



*British evacuee children having lunch at Hart House, Toronto University, August 1940. Brian Procter is the fourth boy from the right; his sister Jean is the fourth girl from the right.*

## CASE STUDY (CONTINUED)

### Crossing the ocean

In August 1940 we left York station for Liverpool, but an air raid made the convoy divert to the Clyde and we sailed from Glasgow. I remember the only protection for our vast convoy being the battleship *Revenge*, but later research indicates there were seven destroyers too. It proved to be the last children's sailing because shortly afterwards a children's ship was torpedoed and the whole CORB scheme was abandoned.



*Evacuated children in bunk beds on board a ship, the HMS Empress. Photo: © IWM*

The voyage was quite slow — I believe we went far north to avoid U-boats (towards Iceland and Greenland). I spent long periods just watching the sea, sitting under a large gun which had been mounted towards the stern. At a CORB reunion at York University years later I met the young (then) naval gunner who manned it.

At Halifax, Nova Scotia, we entrained for Toronto, two or three days of flat countryside away. We had mixed sleepers with a central corridor just like in the film 'Some Like It Hot'.

In Toronto we were put up at the university, whilst being sorted out. We were gathered together occasionally and were expected to sing patriotic and very English songs.

### Lake Simcoe

After a few unfortunate moves, I ended up with a nice middle-class car-owning family in Barrie, which was a middle-class town on Lake Simcoe, 60 miles north of Toronto. They also owned a summer cottage 40 miles away on Georgian Bay, Lake Huron - fabulous! They had two sons who came over to Britain with the RCAF, as well as another son and daughter.



## CASE STUDY (CONTINUED)

I had a rather free life - at weekends and holidays I would play or roam for hours away from the house at will. I was with the Canadian family for five years and it was a wrench to leave in 1945 and return to war-torn Britain (by the last convoy). My parents seemed like strangers when they met me at the station. It must have been terrible for them to have given up so much for so long and to be faced with a teenager with little appropriate comprehension.

At a CORB reunion at York University about ten years ago, several hundred evacuees attended for three days and exchanged memories. A research student from Princeton University gathered information for a thesis which I later found was subtitled, more or less, 'British wartime children evacuated to homes above their status'. I understand her point but it's a bit brutal considering the circumstances and the deep emotions involved.

**'Brian Procter, WW2 People's War'**

Brian says that many women started crying when war was declared.

Why do you think this was?

Why do you think the family 'snuggled under the table' when they heard an aeroplane flying over?

Look at the photo of the children in their bunk beds on a ship. Does it look comfortable?

Would you like to have gone with them?

Why did Brian's parents ask him if he preferred cowboys or kangaroos?

If he'd preferred kangaroos, where might he have been sent?

Do you know what a 'convoy' is?

What are U-boats?

Why did the convoy want to avoid them?

If you had been sent abroad without your mum and dad, would you have wanted to sing songs?

Brian talks about singing. What patriotic English songs do you think the children sang in Toronto?

How do you think Brian felt when he first got to Canada?

How do you think he felt when he came back to the UK after 5 years in Canada?

Here are some more photos of children who are being evacuated.

### Look at the picture

Where are the children in the photo?

*Photos: © IWM*

What are they doing?

Do you think they know each other?

How do you think they feel?





Look at the picture

What are the children doing?

Where do you think they are?

Do you recognise any of the buildings in the background?



Photo: © IWM

**VOCAB: 'Convoy:** a group of ships travelling together, often accompanied by warships or armed ships for protection.'

**VOCAB: 'U-boat:** a German submarine (from the German word 'unterseeboot', which means 'under sea boat').

# The war draws to an end

## The Normandy Landings

In 1944, British, American and other Allied soldiers launched a huge invasion of continental Europe to try to finally defeat the Nazis.

York soldiers were involved in the Normandy landings. These were the landing operations on Tuesday, 6 June 1944 of the Allied invasion of Normandy in Operation Overlord during World War Two. Codenamed Operation Neptune and often referred to as D-Day, it was the largest seaborne invasion in history. The operation began the liberation of German-occupied northwestern Europe from Nazi control, and laid the foundations of the Allied victory on the Western Front.

Seven York men who were involved in the Normandy Landings, dubbed The Magnificent Seven, returned to Normandy in 2014 for the major commemoration of the 70th anniversary. Former French President Francois Hollande announced then that surviving veterans were to receive France's highest honour - the Legion d'Honneur.

### Listen to the York Normandy Veterans in their own words

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wC9vWNw1UH0>

## CASE STUDIES: YORK NORMANDY VETERANS REMEMBER D-DAY

In June 2014, surviving York Normandy veterans spoke to the York Press about the D-Day landings. Here is what they said:

### Ken Smith, 89, from Wheldrake

“As we crossed over to the beaches of France on a landing craft, we had been told to expect heavy machine gun fire and 40 per cent casualties. The machine gun fire wasn't as bad as we'd thought, but the beach was alive with shells and we had to pick our way out carefully because of the thousands of mines.



Normandy Veteran Ken Smith in 2018. Photo: Frank Dwyer/ The Press, York



“Another young man went down but we weren’t allowed to stop. I heard a voice from behind saying “keep going,” and I never found out what happened to him. It was the first time I had seen death - and violent death and destruction.”

**Ken Cooke, 88, of Newland Park Drive, York**

“We got off the main ship and onto the landing craft and from then on there was just one tremendous noise. Battle ships were bombarding the beaches and we were under machine gun attack. About six or seven miles from the French coast, we had to climb down a scramble net onto a landing craft. It was on these craft that many people were seasick, although I was a good sailor and wasn’t. Some of the other landing craft were struck by shells.

“As we went in the water, some were in above their heads and drowned, although I was just up to my ankles. We landed on Gold Beach at about a quarter to eight in the morning. We were told to get off it as quickly as possible.”



*Normandy veteran  
Ken Cooke in 2017.  
Photo: Frank Dwyer/  
The Press, York*

# The end of the war

D-Day, when allied armies landed on the coast of Normandy, marked the beginning of the end of the war. The Allied armies advanced steadily across France and into Germany, and in May 1945, the war in Europe ended after almost six years, when Germany surrendered. VE Day (Victory in Europe Day) was celebrated on May 8.

The war continued in Asia until August 18, when Japan also surrendered, after Americans had dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

In York, there were huge celebrations to mark the end of the war in Europe. Street parties were held across the city and the Gazette newspaper reported that: "The citizens made merry in celebrating their release from five years and eight months of war in Europe...The weather cleared and happy crowds thronged the streets, singing and enjoying themselves thoroughly."

Look at the photo. How many young men can you see?

Why do you think there are so few young men?



*New Earswick villagers celebrate the end of WW2 in 1945 at a street party in Sycamore Avenue. Photo from The Press, York*



## Supplementary information

# The war in the rest of the world

## The Soviet Union

The war wasn't fought just between Britain and Germany. It involved many other countries too.

In 1941, Germany invaded the Soviet Union. But what Hitler hoped would be an easy victory turned into a horrible defeat for Germany. After marching deep into Russian territory the Germans were defeated in the Battle of Moscow and the German advance was halted. In the bitter winter of 1941/42 thousands of German soldiers starved or froze to death. The Germans were driven back in a defeat that proved to be one of the turning points of the war.

### Look at the photo:



*German Graves following the Invasion of Soviet Union ©IWM HU 5031*

What  
can you  
see?

What  
are the  
hats?

Whose  
graves do  
you think  
these are?

## The United States

While Germany was invading the Soviet Union, on the opposite side of the world Japan wanted to control the Pacific Ocean. The main thing stopping it from doing so was the United States, which had a powerful fleet at Pearl Harbour. Pearl Harbour was in Hawaii in the middle of the Pacific Ocean.

Look at the map. You can see the areas controlled by Germany and Japan in 1941.



Why do you think Japan wanted to control the Pacific Ocean?

Why was Japan worried about the US fleet at Pearl Harbour?

## Pearl Harbour

Japan and the United States were still not at war. But on 7 December 1941, Japanese planes launched an attack on the US fleet at Pearl Harbour, hoping to destroy it. More than 2,300 Americans were killed, and many ships were destroyed or damaged: among them the American battleship USS Arizona, which was completely destroyed, and the USS Oklahoma, which capsized.



The New York Times reported the attack like this:

*“Japanese bombers, with the red circle of the Rising Sun of Japan on their wings, suddenly appeared, escorted by fighters. Flying high, they suddenly dive-bombed, attacking Pearl Harbor, the great Navy base, the Army’s Hickam Field and Ford Island. At least one torpedo plane was seen to launch a torpedo at warships in Pearl Harbor.”*

The next day, President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared that 7 December 1941, was “a date which will live in infamy.” Within an hour, the US Congress had declared war against Japan.

**Look at the photograph:**

What can you see?

What would it have been like if you were on the ship?



*The destroyer USS SHAW after an explosion in her forward magazine - 7 December 1941 ©NWM OEM 3589 .*

How do you think Americans would have felt after the attack?

Do you know what the word ‘infamy’ means? Why would President Roosevelt have used this word to describe the attack?

Would people in York have cared about the Japanese attacking Pearl Harbour? Why?

# The Holocaust

In 1942 the Nazis began murdering hundreds of thousands of Jewish people in concentration camps.

Auschwitz, where 960,000 people were killed, was the location of several concentration camps. These are areas where a large group of people, typically political prisoners, are held by force. Auschwitz had three main camps: the original concentration camp, an extermination camp and a labour camp.

The Nazis who controlled Germany during the war hated Jewish people and thought they were harmful to Germany. They created concentration camps for Jewish people. The Nazis invaded Poland and built concentration camps there, too. As the war started to turn against the Nazis, they came up with a plan called the Final Solution. This was a plan to exterminate all the Jewish people they found. They used train carriages, normally used to transport animals, to transport people to these camps.

Women and children were separated from men. Those who could work were taken to barracks, which were large prisons with boards for beds where many prisoners would sleep. People who couldn't work, which included nearly all the women and children, were taken immediately to a 'shower'. They were told that it was to get rid of lice, but the Nazis were lying. The doors were shut, the people were locked in, and a toxic gas was released, killing the people inside. Afterwards, the Nazis cremated, or burned, the bodies.

**SUGGESTED  
READING:**  
The Secret Diary  
of Anne Frank.

How do you  
think the  
people in this  
photograph  
feel?

Do you  
notice that  
they are all  
wearing a similar  
badge? Do you  
know what  
this is?



*Transport of Jewish Hungarians arriving at Auschwitz II-Birkenau camp, May-June 1944. Old and unfit men, women and children waiting in the pine woods by Gas Chamber V before being gassed. © IWM (HU 90295)*



# D-Day

In 1944, Allied forces launched the Normandy Landings or D-Day, making a surprise attack on Nazi-occupied France.

Have you  
heard of  
D-Day?

Do you  
know  
what it  
means?

**VOCAB: “D-Day”:** In the military, **D-Day** is the **day** on which a combat attack or operation is to be initiated. The best known **D-Day** is during World War Two, on 6 June 1944—the day of the Normandy landings. The **D** simply **stands for “day.”** Thus, the **day** before 6 June 1944, was known as **D-1** and the **days** after were **D+1, D+2, D+** and so on.



What is  
happening  
in this  
photograph?

©IWM EA 25908 Troops of US VII Corps move over the sea wall on Uncle Red beach, UTAH area, 6 June 1944.



Landing craft assemble in the Solent off Gosport D-Day 4 June 1944 ©IWM B 5120

What  
can you  
see in this  
photograph?

In May 1945, when the Soviets reached Berlin, Germany finally surrendered.



HM King George VI and Queen Elizabeth with Princess Elizabeth and Princess Margaret joined by the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill on the balcony of Buckingham Palace, London on VE Day. © IWM (MH 21835) – UNDER COPYRIGHT IWM



A truck of revellers passing through the Strand, London, 8 May 1945. © IWM (HU 41808)



# The atomic bomb

In August of the same year, the United States dropped two atomic bombs on Japan: one in Hiroshima and one in Nagasaki, forcing Japan to surrender.

Do you know what an Atom Bomb is?

Why did it force Japan to surrender?

*The mushroom cloud over Nagasaki, photographed from an escorting American B-29 aircraft. ©IWM MH2629*



**VOCAB:** “The Atomic bomb”: also known as an atom bomb, is a bomb with great explosive power that results from the sudden release of energy upon the splitting, or fission, of the nuclei of a heavy element such as plutonium or uranium.