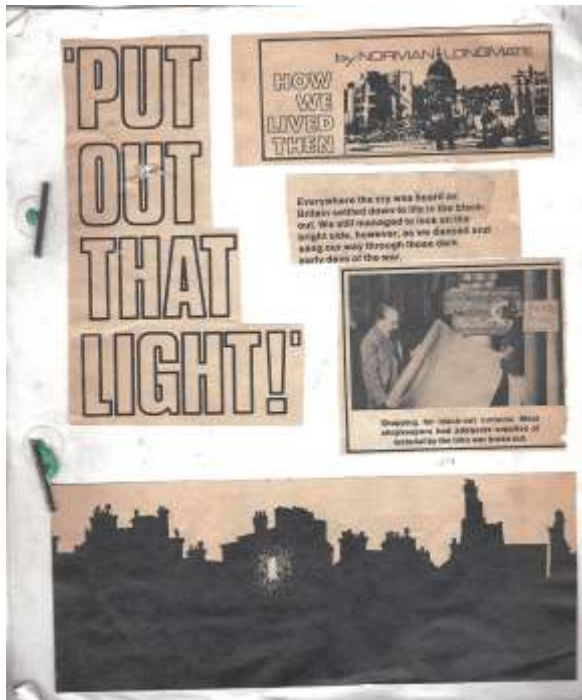
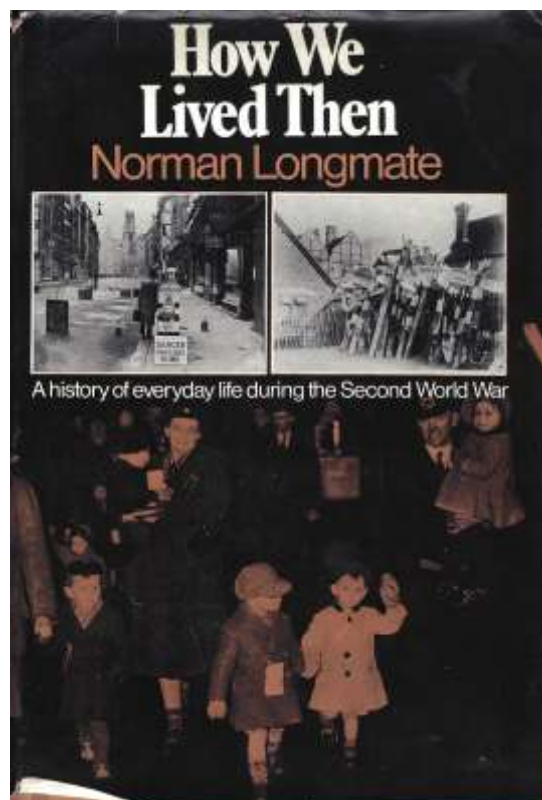


Chapter 34: Personal Experiences

In addition to the diaries, among mum's papers, I found a collection of news cuttings related to life during the war. These appear to be, in part at least, from articles written by Norman Longmate entitled "How We Lived Then". He also wrote a book by this title which was first published in 1971 so I assume these articles were from around that time. They covered a range of issues including blackouts, evacuees, the role of women, air raids, "make do and mend" and wartime entertainment.



Collection of news cuttings mum compiled related to how ordinary life had been during the second world war. These were based on the work of Norman Longmate which was published as the book "How We Lived Then" in 1971 (see below)



Grandad did not note any preparations for war that affected him prior to the declaration of war on 3 September 1939 except that he noted collecting a gas mask for mum at the end of August.¹ He and grandma had been supplied with gas masks in September of the previous year when war seemed likely.² After the declaration of war, he made screens to black out the shop's windows³ and he also made a night commode, presumably for whenever they intended to shelter from air raids.⁴



© theirhistory and licensed for reuse under this [Creative Commons Licence](#)



Top - children with their WW2 gas masks
Above – news cutting from the work of Norman Longmate “How We Lived Then” showing a family in gas masks being directed by an ARP warden

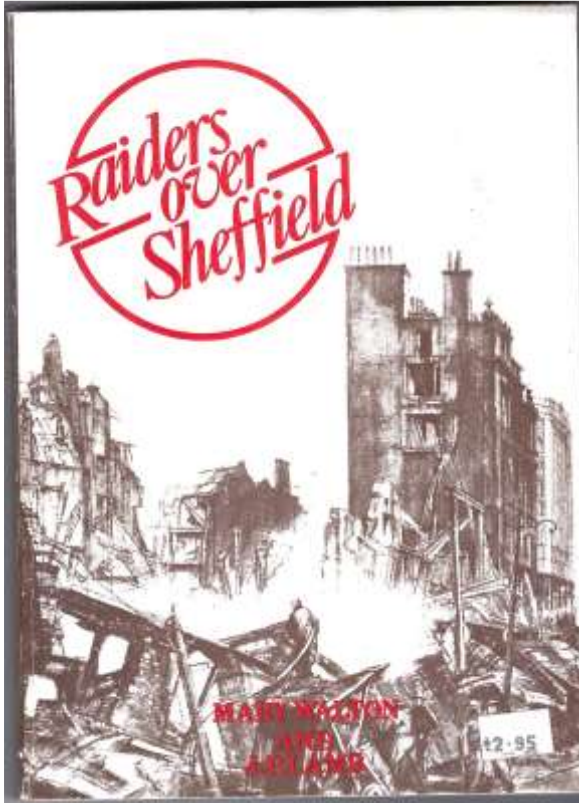
¹ There was a special “[Mickey Mouse](#)” gas mask for children under four but I am not sure whether gas masks for older children differed from adult ones.

² See [Chapter 12](#)

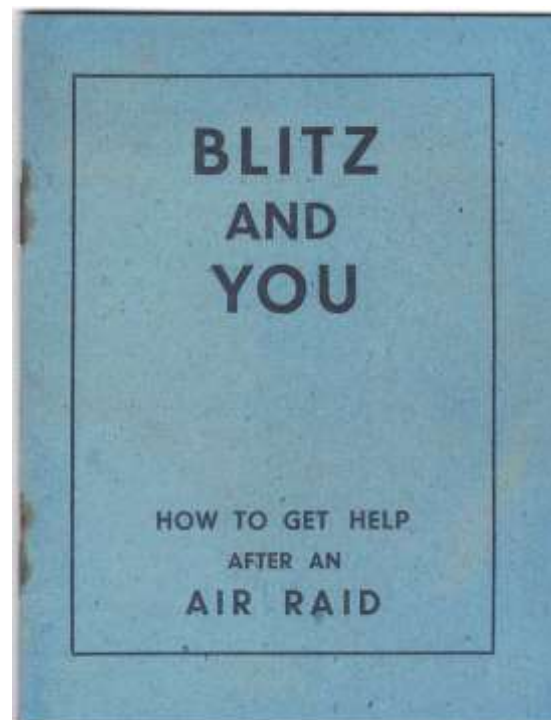
³ According to Norman Longmate, in his articles “*How We Lived Then*”, most shopkeepers had adequate supplies of blackout material by the time war broke out.

⁴ See [Chapter 31](#)

Grandad noted air raids of local or family interest.⁵ In August 1940, he noted that German bombs had been dropped on Pinxton.⁶ The next day he went to see the damage caused. Later that same month, he noted that bombs had been dropped on Papplewick. In September, he went to see air raid damage in Derby and to Nottingham to see a Juncker 88 that had been brought down. In November 1940, he noted that the first air raid siren was at midday. On 12 December 1940, grandad noted an air raid on Sheffield and that they had got up at 10.45 and gone back to bed at 1.30. Although Sheffield is almost 30 miles away, grandad noted that they had heard the bombs and they had shaken their windows.⁷



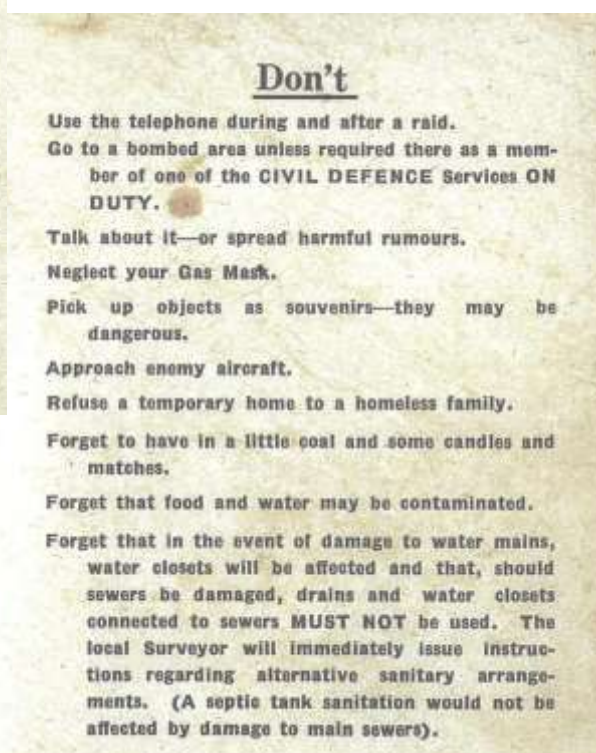
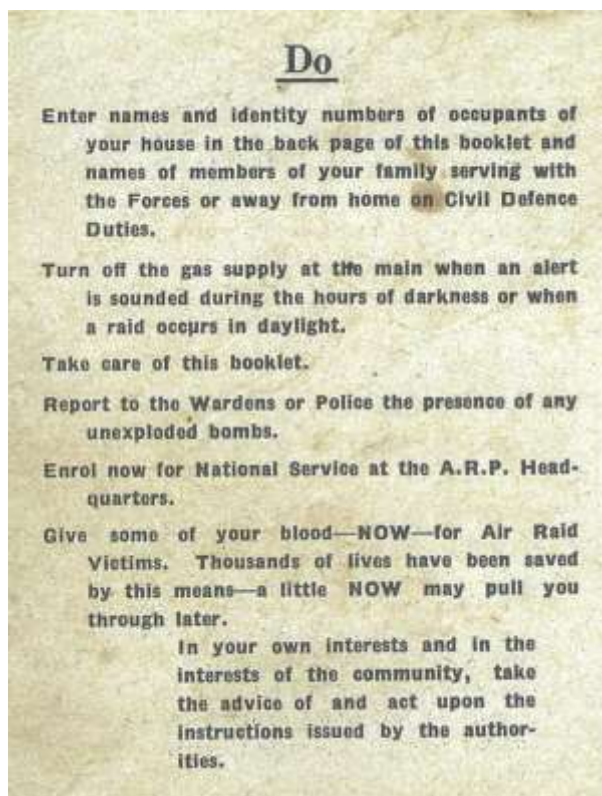
Above – front cover of the book “Raiders over Sheffield” about the December 1940 air raids
Right – replica booklet on how to get help after an air raid



⁵ In her booklet “*I Remember*” (pp52-53), Edith Searson describes her experiences of the war in some detail including blackouts and what she did during air raids.

⁶ [Apparently](#), a council house was hit and one person was killed.

⁷ This was the first of two heavy air raids experienced by Sheffield in December 1940. Mary Walton and A P Lamb have written a book about these air raids entitled “*Raiders over Sheffield*”.



Dos and don'ts in the case of a second world war air raid

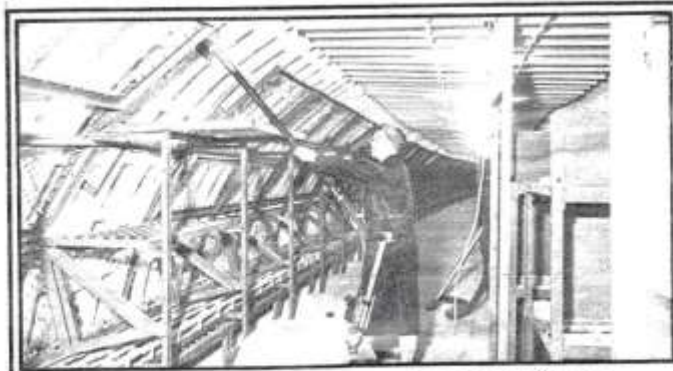
In February 1941, grandad noted that there had been an air raid on Grantham and that Olive and Alf had had windows and doors blown out. It appears that Grantham was targeted because it was the location of the British Manufacture and Research Company ([BMARC](#)) who were making aircraft cannon. On 7 March 1941, grandad noted that there had been an [air raid](#) on Newark at noon and several people were killed. It appears that this raid targeted the Ransome and Marles bearings factory and that this was destroyed. In addition, 41 people were killed and 165 badly wounded. Because of its importance, the factory was rebuilt within three weeks. In July 1941, grandad noted that the Council began building an air raid shelter on "*Heaths land*".⁸

On Christmas Eve 1944, he noted that the first [flying bomb](#) came over about 5.30pm. In April 1945 he noted that the blackout ended.

⁸ I don't know where this was. I presume it was on land belonging to someone called Heath as it was capitalised and I am not aware of heathland in Kirkby! It may be related to Elias Heath who, I believe, donated the land on which the Market/Festival Hall was built.

WHEN THE SIREN WENT IT WAS - DOWN TO THE SHELTERS

... and that could mean anything from a sing-song in the London Underground to "waiting it out" in your own back garden "Anderson."



The morning after the night before. A woman cleans out one of London's super-shelters.



Our sense of humour was always there!



Ingenuity at its best. Safe from shrapnel in a hollowed-out haystack.



Cuttings from the work of Norman Longmate on "How We Lived Then" illustrating the types of air raid shelters in use during the second world war

Grandad did not say a great deal about family members and their military service in his diaries. He certainly did not give any information about where they served or how. He did note, in May 1940, that Jim (Seville) had joined up and, in March 1942, that Roy (Evans) had joined up too and had gone to Rhyl. Among mum's papers were a number of photos showing family members in uniform.



Left – Bert Seville

Below - Family members including Uncle Frank, Uncle Bert, Evacuee, Aunt Bertha, Uncle Jim, Uncle Ray (back row) Aunt Edie, Kenneth (middle row) Marilyn, grandma, mum, Aunt Winnie (front row)



Of course, during the war, there was also the home guard as portrayed in the 1970s TV show “*Dad’s Army*”. I remember my father talking about it saying that they took down the fences between gardens to allow the home guard to train. Grandad mentioned the home guard in July 1943 simply saying that Jack Attwood “*got shot in the Home Guard*” without giving more detail of what had happened. What I did not know was that, over the course of the war, [1,206 men of the Home Guard were killed](#) on duty or died of wounds. Fortunately, Jack Attwood did not die but he did spend three months in hospital. According to his niece, Pauline Cartwright, “*As for the accident in the Home Guard, the men were in a crouching position doing an exercise and the sergeant in charge did not realise the gun was loaded. That was why the bullet went thru his body in two places. I remember there was a lot of worry in the family as to whether he would make it or not. I was too little to visit him in hospital and would have waved to him thru the window.*” The Attwoods, Jack, his wife, Phyllis and their son, John were firm family friends of the Parkins over many years. Mum referred to them as Uncle Jack and Auntie Phyllis. Apparently, in later life, Jack was quite [well-known as a self-taught painter](#). There is a photograph of him in the book “*Kirkby & District: A Second Selection*” (p114) by Frank Ashley, Sylvia Sinfield and Gerald Lee with some of his paintings at one of St Wilfrid’s festivals.⁹

⁹ For a sketch of Jack’s in mum’s autograph book, see [Chapter 36](#).



Top left – John and Phyllis Attwood Top centre – John Attwood Top right – John and Phyllis Attwood with mum

Middle row – I am grateful to Pauline Cartwright, Jack Attwood’s niece for these images showing Pauline and John (left), Phyllis and John, Jack’s father George, Jack’s brother Ron with Norman, and Pauline with her mother (centre) and Jack’s painting of Newstead Abbey (right)

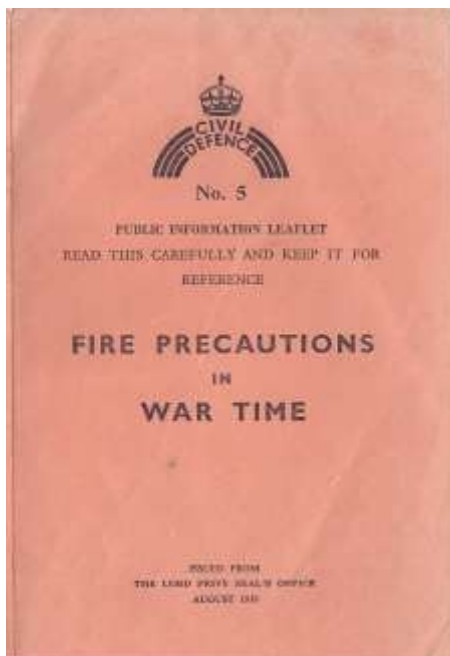
Above – I am grateful to Philip Barber for sharing these images of two paintings by Jack Attwood that he owns. The location of the one on the left is unknown but the one on the right is the entrance to Newstead Abbey

Concerning grandad himself, in August 1941, he went to register as all men born in 1897 were required to do if they had not already done so. In October 1942, he went to the Labour Exchange for an interview about war work but noted that this had been postponed for six months. He also noted in May 1945 that he had heard nothing more about this.



During the war grandad acted as a [fire watcher](#).¹⁰ This started in January 1941 and continued for three years until January 1944. Mostly, his shifts were uneventful although sometimes the air raid sirens were activated. For example, on 7 May 1941, the sirens went off from just before midnight to 5am because of a raid on Merseyside. Initially, he was paid a small amount for this.

So, in November 1941, he received 12 shillings¹¹ for October. However, in June 1942, payments for fire watching ceased although the activities continued. In December 1942, he went to be trained as a fire watcher although he had been doing the work for two years by then! This training involved three sessions over a two week period. On one occasion, in February 1943, he noted that he was the only fire watcher on duty. Shortly after that, a meeting was held and new arrangements were introduced, including a new rota with five fire watchers on each night. It seemed that this worked to some extent. For example, on 14 April 1943, he noted that there were four fire watchers on. But still there were some nights when he was on his own. For example, on 28 September 1943, no-one else came so he packed up just before 11.30. From November 1943, the system changed so instead of being present overnight the fire watchers were expected to turn out only when the siren sounded. At the winding up meeting in January 1944, grandad bought two hatchets and two blankets.

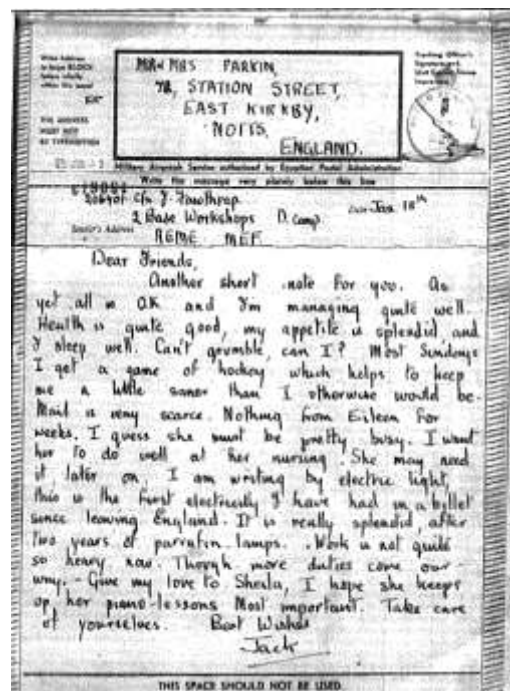
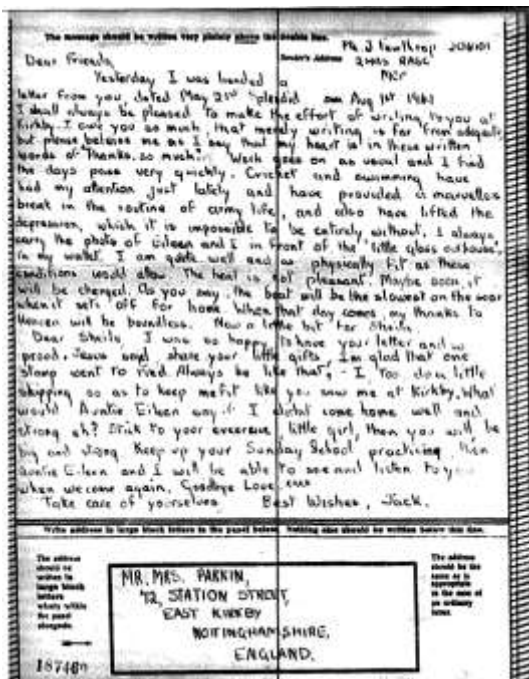


Top – selection of WW2 fire watchers badges
Left – extracts from leaflet explaining the fire precautions to take during wartime

¹⁰ I wonder if this was the same as the voluntary group of fire fighters, described by Edith Searson in her book(let) “I Remember” (p53), to which her husband Ben belonged.

¹¹ Equivalent to just over [£20](#) today.

The Parkins did develop close ties with one soldier over the war years. His name was Jack Fawthrop. In July 1940, grandad noted that a "soldier's girl" came to stay with them for a week. Her name was Eileen Wilman. Throughout the war, Eileen came to stay and both Jack and Eileen visited the Parkins regularly. They got married in Bradford in the first quarter of 1944 and spent their honeymoon with the Parkins in Kirkby. Jack wrote to the Parkins during the war and some of the letters were among mum's papers.

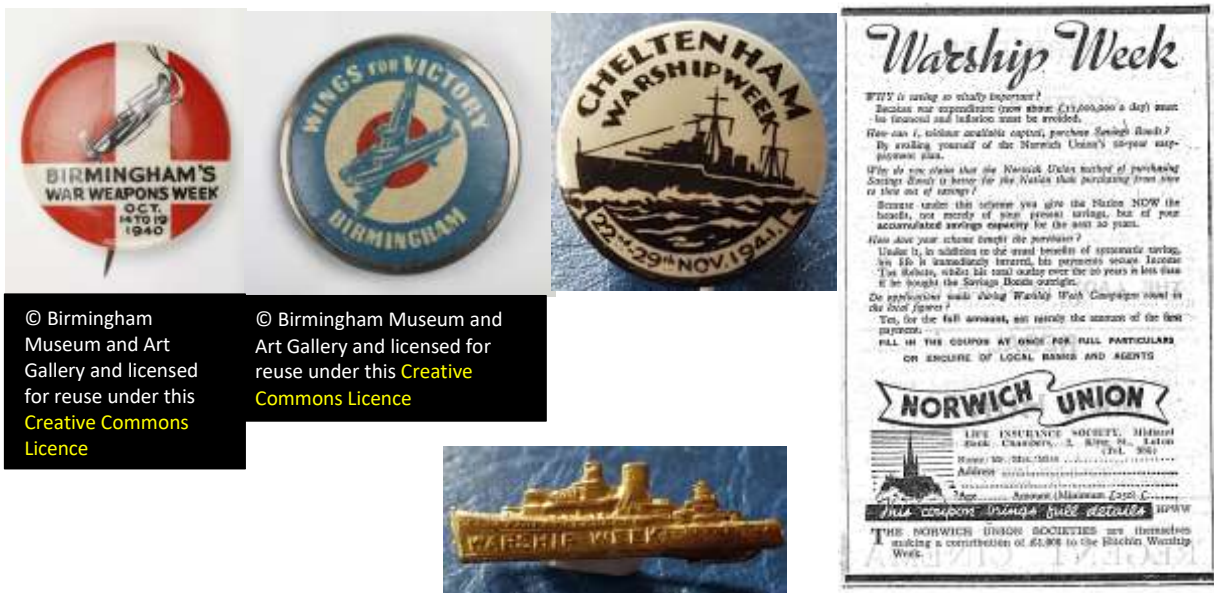


Top – Jack Fawthrop (left) and Eileen Fawthrop (nee Wilman) (right)
Above – Wartime letters from Jack to the Parkins



*Above – Tricia, grandma. John Fawthrop, Jack Fawthrop, Susan Fawthrop, Eileen Fawthrop and me
Left – Jack and Eileen’s wedding
Below - Badges from War Weapons, Wings for Victory and Warship weeks. There is also an advert from the Norwich Union using Warship Week to promote its products. Norwich Union also gave £1,000 to support Warship Week in Hitchin*

Grandad noted a number of local fundraising efforts held over the war years. In May 1941, there was a [War Weapon Week](#) in Kirkby.¹² In February 1942, there was a [Warship Week](#). Although Kirkby had a target of raising £100,000,¹³ only £79,101 was raised.¹⁴ In May 1943, there was a Wings for Victory week focused on raising £75,000 in Kirkby – with a national target of £150m¹⁵ for the Royal Air Force, the Fleet Air Arm and the Allied Air Forces. In June 1944, another war savings scheme was launched, this time called [Salute the Soldier](#). Again, Kirkby had a target of £75,000 but exceeded this, raising about £89,000.



¹² The aim of these weeks was to encourage investment in war bonds to finance rearmament at a time when the threat of invasion was real and the US had not yet entered the war.

¹³ Equivalent to around [£3.3m](#) today.

¹⁴ Following the week, the community of Kirkby in Ashfield adopted the minesweeper [HMS Abingdon](#).

¹⁵ Equivalent to almost [£5b](#) today. [YouTube](#) has details of the target.

One thing that intrigued grandad was that, during the second world war, the country operated one hour ahead of its usual time zone, that is on the same time zone as most of Western Europe. So, on 3 May 1941, grandad noted putting the clock on another hour to make [Double Summer Time](#). In August 1941, he noted that they put back the clocks the one hour extra summer time. It was not lost on grandad that they were now following normal summer time in the winter! In October 1945, grandad noted that he put back the clock to GMT for the first time since 1940.

At the end of the war, there was a national holiday on 15 August 1945. Grandad noted, that he worked until 2.30 and then went to the cinema. The holiday continued the next day and he went to the cinema again. He noted that there was [dancing in Kingsley Street](#).

Extract from the articles by Norman Longmate entitled "How We Lived Then" explaining the details of Double Summer Time

Summer time, due to end on 8th October 1939, was first extended to 19th November and then reintroduced on 25th February 1940, for the rest of the war. The hours of daylight at the end of the day were lengthened still further by Double Summer Time, which put the clocks forward for a second hour from May to August in 1941, and from the beginning of April to mid-August from 1942 to 1944.

Double Summer Time ended for the last time on 15th July 1945, and the clocks finally went back, for the first time in five years, on 7th October that year.

Double Summer Time had some curious results. A Stafford scout-master remembers struggling to get boys to bed in camp at 10 p.m. when it was still broad daylight.

Some camps solved the problem by instituting their own Camp Time, normal Greenwich Time, which ignored the Government's manipulation of the clocks, for in high summer it was not really dark until after midnight.

A Poole warden has not forgotten the cry from the heart of one puzzled G.I., seeking privacy for himself and the girl on his arm: "Say, warden, doesn't it ever get dark in this goddam country?"