We Remember

Memoirs

of

the people of

St John's United Reformed Church,

Lynwood Grove, Orpington

in

Commemoration of the

Centenary of the

First World War

Sunday Morning Worship

9th November, 2014

Biblical Quotation are taken from
Today's New International Version

In Christ there is no East or West,
In him no South or North,
But one great fellowship of love
Throughout the whole wide earth.

'John Oxenham' (1852-1941)

Lasting Memories

George Fairley

How old does one have to be to have a lasting memory of particular situations or events. I would suggest that even quite young is the answer and for me that goes back to when I was three and a half years old.

In 1940 the Luftwaffe were attracted to the Forth Bridge and the Royal Navy installations at Rosyth in Fife. The flight path took the planes over Edinburgh and in September 1940 some bombs fell on railway lines near to my parents flat. They also struck a bonded warehouse full of whisky and a tremendous fire resulted. It spread to one of the blocks of flats in our road and I was taken out to see it. The smell of burning whisky, the hoses in the street and the water running in the gutters created a vivid impression that I can still recall today.

A few months later, on my birthday in fact, there was a major raid on Glasgow and Clydebank and as the bombers flew over Edinburgh my mother gathered me and my sister into my bedroom and we listened to the vroom, vroom of the plane's engines. That was very frightening with the feeling that at any mo-

In 1942 my father was called up for war service and was sent to a military hospital in India. He had to take a long sea journey of several weeks round the Cape of Good Hope and then across the Indian Ocean, and the anxiety of this potentially perilous journey communicated itself from my mother to me.

In 1944 he came home on leave for a month and then had to return. Again the anxiety was present dispelled only when a letter came to say he had arrived safely.

A different atmosphere accompanied his final return journey to UK in 1946. By now the war was over and his ship was able to use the shorter route via the Suez Canal and Mediterranean Sea. Anxiety was replaced by anticipation of his re-joining the family.

During these war years my grandfather lived with us. He had been at the Battle of the Somme during the First World War and when asked anything about it he would reply very firmly that it was something very bad and that he would say nothing of his experi-

The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
He makes me lie down in green pastures,
he leads me beside quiet waters,
he refreshes my soul.
He guides me along the right paths for
his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the
darkest valley,
I will fear no evil, for you are with me;
your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the
presence of my enemies.
You anoint my head with oil,
my cup overflows.
Surely your goodness and love will follow me
all the days of my life,
and I will dwell in the house
of the Lord forever.

Psalm 23

Taking Cover

Norman Fabb

I would have been about eight years old and we were playing in the street, Wyncham Avenue in Sidcup (it was safe to do so in those days).

A V1 (buzz bomb or doodlebug) came over. This was a pilotless plane powered by a rocket motor which made a very distinctive sound. It was packed with explosives which when it hit the ground went off with devastating effect. The motor cut out over our house and I remember thinking whether to run in and warn Mum or take cover. I am ashamed to say I took cover behind a wooden fence which would have been no protection at all!!

When the V1 motor cut out it glided down some distance and fortunately for us landed on the shops in Half Way street about a mile away.

I believe the Government was reluctant to release information on casualties so I don't remember hearing

Biggin Hill—My Best Posting

Babs Digman

The day war broke out I was in hospital in Eastbourne and it was quite scary hearing the sound of the air raid sirens. Later the London hospitals were evacuated, and I remember looking out of my hospital window to see patients on stretchers, wheel chairs etc out in the grounds of the hospital. The subsequent overcrowding in the wards meant that there was just enough space between the beds for the nurses to do their duties.

In 1940 came the Battle of Britain with plenty of aerial activity and air raid sirens constantly going off. One day there was a hit and run attack, which came without warning while I was working in an office next door to a chemist's shop. We just had time to take shelter in a cupboard under the stairs when we heard the whistle and explosion of a bomb which hit the chemist's shop killing all the occupants. It was several hours before we were released, but the building next door was a shamble of debris and broken glass.

I was, by then, doing night duty at the Civil Defence Headquarters, manning the telephone whilst John, my future husband, was in the grounds doing sentry duty in the Home Guard. Fortunately, our duties occasionally coincided and we were able to sneak quick meetings over a cup of cocoa.

I was glad when I could join the WAAF. I was sent to Wigsley, a bomber flying unit where I worked for the station adjutant. Unfortunately there were some fatal flying accidents. One of my jobs was to clear the effects belonging to the deceased and this upset me very much – just to see half a bar of chocolate and a letter half written almost brought me to tears and then, of course, the letter writing to the relatives.

My next posting was to Harwell to a unit equipping radio vehicles for the eventual D-Day landing. The whole unit moved to Bowlee near Manchester where I worked for the commanding officer. The security in our office was very tight as my job was to route the radio vehicles and signals equipment by road to the various embarkation ports prior to sailing for France. This was a very intensive time, with no time off for leave and working from early morning, sometimes until late at night. We had a very large map on the wall of our office which nobody else was allowed to see. All the routes had to be carefully mapped out, being careful that there were no low bridges or hazards which could delay the vehicles in any way.

Our next move was to a place called Hinton-in-the-Hedges and it was JUST THAT – very bleak and bitterly cold and, when it snowed, the snow came through the roof of our Nissen hut and onto our beds. I suffered terribly from chilblains on my hands and feet but the hands were the worst. When I went to the MO for treatment I was told that he couldn't do anything as bandaging my hands would prevent me from typing!

John and I were married in October 1944 during his operational tour, with all his crew present. My mother had three days to organise the reception but, of course, there was rationing so it was difficult. I went back to Hinton after our four day honeymoon at Weston-Super-Mare and shortly afterwards, I was able to organise an exchange posting to Biggin Hill and was there when the war ended.

I see my barrack block every time I visit Biggin Hill and I also remember walking to the Old Jail Pub with my WAAF friends – it was quite a hike but it always seemed shorter on the way back! That was the best posting of my

Prisoner of War

Kay Mielle

I was brought up in Abergavenny, a small market town in Monmouthshire. Just before and during the Second World War there were a lot of army camps on the edges of the town and military headquarters in the town.

The army comprised of Americans, Indian and British regiments. For three years during the war Rudolph Hess was brought to Abergavenny as a prisoner of war. He lived in Maincliff Court – a country house standing in its own grounds on the outskirts of town.

He was allowed to come into town shopping, guarded by two Military Policemen. I can remember him vividly as do most of my school friends, shopping in Bon Marche, (which in those days was a big department store) and on the ground floor was a haberdashery section where he used to buy needles, thread etc.

Years later, when I was married to my late husband who was in the army, we were posted, in 1963, to West Berlin which was about 200 miles behind the Iron Curtain. Rudolph Hess was a prisoner in Spandau Prison, which was in West Berlin. By 1963 there were only three German War prisoners in Spandau, out of the seven which had originally been sentenced by the Nuremburg War Trials. They were Hess, Albert Speer, who was Hitler's architect and Karl Doenitz, Admiral of the German Navy.

The four powers which controlled West Berlin ; British, French, Americans and Russians, each had their duties to guard certain key points. Spandau Prison (which was a very forbidding place built by the Prussians) was one of them.

When it was the turn of the British it was my husband's Infantry Battalion that did the necessary guard duties. Each morning and early evening he would go to the prison to inspect his soldiers, who were on guard duty on a parapet overlooking the courtyard where very often the prisoners were allowed to spend some time outdoors.

It seemed ironical to me that Hess was brought to my home town to live for three years, and years later I came to live for three years in a different country where he was still a prisoner of war.

My son was born in the British Military Hospital which was in Spandau Village and from my hospital bed I could see Spandau Prison clearly.

Silence and Secrets

By Liz Drysdale

Margaret Robinson joined the WAAF in Edinburgh in 1941 and was sent to Danesfield House in Medmenham, Buckinghamshire in May. This was the Photographic Intelligence section of the RAF.

It was a very secret establishment and the work was of course secret. There was no talking at all about their work on interpretation of air photos taken in advance of bombing and of the results of bombing, eg the Dambusters.

Margaret was in the typing pool typing up all the reports (she was on duty during the Dambusters night) and she was the Sergeant in Charge of her shift. Shifts were 8 hours.... 8am – 4pm; 4pm – midnight; midnight – 8am. Sarah Churchill was one of the women she shared accommodation and work with.

Margaret met her husband Russell there. He was in the modelling department. They married in May 1946 after demob.

Come and see what the Lord has
done, the desolations he has
brought on the earth.

He makes wars cease to the ends
of the earth.

He breaks the bow and shatters
the spear;
he burns the shields with fire.

"Be still, and know that I am God;

Psalm 46:8-10

Overcrowding in Basingstoke

by Margaret Noel

In the months leading up to the Second World War schools began evacuating children out of London, but my parents decided that we would not go. The sound of the air raid sirens directly followed the declaration of war and suddenly there was frantic activity in our flat, and within a very short space of time my young sister, my elder brother, who had cerebral palsy, and I found ourselves in a car on the way to an unknown destination which turned out to be Basingstoke. We arrived at the house of relatives we had never met before. As well as my Aunt we found we had three cousins, one of whom was a nine month old baby, and a grandfather all living in a three bedroom house! Somehow we were all absorbed into this small place and this was where I spent the next five years, only seeing my parents twice in that time. They, with my elder sister remained in London (Streatham) and I remember seeing the skies glowing red with the fires caused during the blitz on London.

Basingstoke was then a small market town and we were not touched too much by the war. Two bombs were dropped by planes who I think had lost their way, and I think there were two people killed from the second one. The other thing I remember was the night a burning plane flew low over our house, just cleared the road and the houses opposite, and ploughed into the field behind the gardens where it exploded. I am not sure if the plane was German or British but there were no survivors. From our bedroom window we watched the men from the houses opposite climbing over the fences at the bottom of their gardens –not sure what they thought they could do, but I

suppose if it was a German plane they wanted to make sure any survivors were captured.

The only other way the war affected me at that time was 'Gas Masks'. Everybody had been issued with these which we had to carry with us at all times, and periodically at school they had to be tested, which meant we had to put them on. I think this might have been the start of the claustrophobia which I suffer from to this day. I don't think we had to keep them on for very long, but the eye piece where you were supposed to be able to see out of would become steamed up, and I used to panic and was so relieved when we were told to take them off. The thought that the gas mask would have to be worn in earnest if there was a gas attack worried me during the whole of the war, because I was frightened I would never be able to keep it on for any length of time.

I went to Fairfields school for a short while and then won a scholarship to Basingstoke High School. My Aunts house was the last one on the edge of town in a row of houses facing on to the by-pass. The common was next to us and across the road the field opposite was spoiled by the tank traps which had been gouged out of the ground. We didn't go there because they were very deep, but the common wasn't spoiled in that way but had other hazardous things to a town girl—cows! I'd never seen cows before and my journey to school was up the side of the common—and I always hoped that the cows were a safe distance away as I walked to school.

We felt like strangers on returning to Streatham and the family in April 1944 and it was a different house, not the flat we had left. When the occasional siren went the family would all shelter under the stairs which wasn't really big enough for us all, and my Dad's feet would stick out into the

One night after the siren had gone we heard a very unusual engine noise which suddenly stopped and then there was a loud explosion. We didn't know it at the time but we had heard our first VI—doodlebug. These were unmanned flying bombs and we soon learned you were OK as long as you could hear the engine, but not when the sound cut out because that was when they were about to come down and explode.

More Overcrowding ! Around this time we acquired a Morrison shelter, which was like a steel cage into which you crawled. Through the bars you could see the searchlights sweeping the sky and the guns always seemed louder. Later it was decided that it would be safer to go into the communal shelter which was just at the end of our road. We were allocated bunk beds—the bottom one was so claustrophobic for me. In fact I hated it all, too many people crowded into too small a space. However I guess it saved our lives because one night during a raid a bomb or a doodlebug hit our road and we came out of the shelter in the morning to find our house destroyed. We lost everything. I remember being given a lovely green summer dress which was wonderful because we hadn't had any new clothes for many years.

Following on after the V1's were the V2's—Rockets. The thing about these was that you never heard them coming, so if you were in the wrong place at the wrong time you didn't stand a chance of surviving. I was never near one but did hear several in the distance when they exploded in other parts of London. Of course all of this played havoc with our schooling as often we were unable to get there.

It was a HUGE RELIEF when the war ended.

I let go:
window and door,
house and home,
memory and fear.

I let go the hurt of the past
and look to the hope
of the future.

I let go
knowing that I will always carry
part of my past with me,
woven into the story of my life.

Help me, Christ my brother,
to softly fold inside
the grief and the sadness,
to pack away the pain
and to move on;
taking each day
in your company;
travelling each step in your love.

Kate McIlhagga

Wartime in Mayfield Avenue

Margaret Compton

I was in Orpington throughout the war, in fact in Mayfield Avenue, and gradually our relatives from the Hither Green area, who were bombed out, came and joined us so at times the house was more than full. The day war started was a lovely sunny day, the siren went and as my father was at work neighbours took Mum and I in and we spent the day sitting under a table in a barricaded hall. As I understood these adults they expected us to be instantly over run – I was totally frustrated as I wanted to go out and play but had to stay there until my father came home and rescued us.

We spent many hours sitting in our air raid shelter in the garden watching the Battle of Britain overhead. As soon as the warning went we had to decamp to the shelter whether it was day or night and then the battle took place above us. Obviously our planes were coming up from Biggin Hill with the Germans aiming for London. After a raid the local children would be out collecting shrapnel and for their mother's any parachute silk, as it made good underclothes.

The most scary time was the morning after Queen Victoria Street

and often other phones were down, so until he walked down the road we didn't know whether he was safe or not. What a relief it was to see him.

At school it was a good opportunity for learning tables and spelling. At St Nicholas's, just across the road from the church, we had two shelters - one a cellar and the other an Anderson shelter roughly where Alistair and Diana's house is today. We moved to a school in Bickley in 1943 and, as we were still young, we were picked up by a converted car which was powered by a gas bag above its roof. Our first term ended early as there was a rocket by Bickley Station and the school was badly blasted. Home was also affected by the rocket which came down in Elm Grove. My youngest sister, at that time only crawling, normally positioned herself behind the back door. Fortunately for us she was not there that day as the blast forced the door open

Churchwise before the war we walked each Sunday to the Congregational Church in Petts Wood, then in St. John's Road, but with the war we stopped going anywhere until I was recruited into the Children's Church when it was re-opened after the blitz, and that started our family's life at St. John's.

Late for School

Ian Fordyce
(member of the Men of Leisure)

Memories come back to me of one of the most significant days of my life. At the time I was a pupil at St. Nicholas School situated opposite the entrance to St Johns.

On the day in question I got up, dressed for school and waited for my mother to walk me from our bungalow in Ridgway Crescent. My mother said she didn't feel well, I said I would go on my own, I was confident I knew the way. She dithered and nearly decided to go with me then changed her mind by which time we would have been late

To be on time we should have left at 8:30am. I suppose I was celebrating a day off school, when at 8:45am there was an enormous "BANG", and we both knew immediately it must be a V2, and quite near. Later in the day we heard it had landed close to the school. I was never told details but quickly re-evacuated to my grandmother's house in Redcar, Yorkshire. I understand the school never reopened.

In recent years I have become interested in family and local history. I have tried trawling through newspapers of that time but there is never any mention of the casualties (government censorship). I can still only guess that many of my class-mates did not sur-

At the junior school I went to in the thirties, an elderly lady always appeared just before Remembrance Day to sell us our poppies, (for which we put 1d in her box!), and we had an appropriate ceremony in the school hall on the right day. The lady was a curious figure who, as I recall it, wore some sort of light long coat or cape totally covered with Remembrance Poppies.

The Poppy Lady

John Gray

November's cloud distilled a mournful light;
the ground had changed to mud from summer
dust; the trees had lost their leaves, but only
just; a chilling wind was up to freeze
the night. A lady came—she always
came—her bright and flowing mantle
bore a poppy crust; a tray of these
she held, and out she thrust to all a
tragic smile, a haunting sight. She
beckoned, spoke, a poppy helped to pin
on boy and girl who fain had filled the Hall
and each a penny dropped inside a tin.
What captured her to make this touching call?
a catchy thing to do? a hurt within?

Too Young to Understand

Ann Bone

My family lived in Forest Hill, South East London from 1939 onwards very close to the Hornimans Museum.

On one occasion, during the blitz in 1940, we had to leave home during the night because there was an unexploded bomb in the garden next door. I thought it was all great fun, I had no idea of the fear, hardship and devastation that was constantly on our doorstep..

We lived through the blackout which meant no street lights, and no chink of light was allowed from any windows or doors after dark.

My primary education was thoroughly disrupted by constant air raids. At school, when the siren sounded we were herded into the shelters and sat there singing songs of all sorts, mainly the popular ones of the time, until the "all clear" was heard.

There were not many children about locally as the vast majority had been evacuated to the country to get away from the bombing in London.

The raids were usually worse at night. I remember going out in the morning to see which houses were still standing. It seemed a perfectly natural thing to do. I was too young to remember what life was like before the war.

Food rationing, although very meagre by the standards of today, ensured everyone had the basic essentials every week, and most people remained healthy.

I moved to secondary school in 1946 a year after the war ended. The school I joined had been evacuated to North Wales for the six years of war, and had just returned. My sister who was seven years older, sat her matriculation exams in the shelters in her school in Dulwich.

Although life was grim for everyone during those wartime years, I have no recollection of feeling hard done by. Everyone was in a similar situation. We shared what we had and made do. Make do and mend was a popular saying at the time. However, I think it says a lot for my parents who must have been very hard up and often

Our Father in heaven, hallowed
be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have
forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.

Matthew 6:9-13

A Legacy of Fear

Brenda Sussex

I was born during the war in 1940 and my memories are being evacuated at a very young age and for a very short time, to my aunt and uncle's house in Birmingham. They had two Pekinese's and I was terrified of them.

When I was about four and half I went to school and during the air raids all the children were herded into the cloakroom and we had to stand there pressed up against one another until the 'all clear' was heard. In my little logical mind I used to think that if a bomb did drop on that particular part of the school we would all be killed, but if we were still in our separate class-rooms, some of us might survive.

I remember the silence of the dooglebugs and the sound of the aircraft overhead. My lasting memories were one of fear of the sound of an

A Fragmented Education

John Mielle

When I was just nine years old, my Mother took me and my Sister who was four years older than me, to Victoria station (complete with a small case, label and gas mask) to join hundreds of other children waiting to board trains destined for places away from London. On arrival, we were separated by gender and into rough age groups, conveyed by buses to various parts of Brighton, where we followed an adult who knocked on the front doors and asked the occupiers "How many children can you take and do you want boys, girls or both."

I went with a middle aged couple who had no children but four cats. I remember they sat by the radio as our Prime Minister said that he had received no answer to the ultimatum. "We are now at war with Germany."

After about a week or more all evacuees were assembled into groups and placed in local schools. I don't remember doing much in the way of lessons, although I do recall going into Preston Park for nature study, then reading aloud and doing some arithmetical sums.

At Christmas time my parents decided to have us back because no air raids had taken place and although most schools had closed, people got to know that here and there a few classrooms opened up and teachers were giving lessons in their own private houses.

Obviously there was no continuity of learning and when eventually the blitz on London did start, our education became very fragmented, the decision was made to send us down to a relative in Torquay.

At just over 14 years old my sister got a job "in service" with accommodation, but I had to walk a good few miles each day to a school in Babacombe. After catching impetigo I had to return home to London. So, until 1942, I did very little school work and spent a lot of time roaming the streets of London in search of shrapnel (and I've still got some now!)

Later, I was able to get a place in the Emmanuel School, a public school in Wandsworth. The school functioned as near to normal times as it could with obvious interruptions during air raids, and then later the V1 and V2 onslaught. I left in 1946 without having sat my formal examinations and entered a private bank in the City of London as a junior clerk, but there again I didn't settle, and in 1947 I joined the Royal Navy as a PEM, signing for a seven year engagement and five years on reserve.

During the early war years in London I well remember the bombing – one dropped about two hundred yards from our house, blowing out all the windows and other minor damage while we were in an Anderson shelter in our dining room. My father was in the army stationed at the PLA (he was a wounded soldier in World War 1) and I went up to the City with him one day after a particularly severe night of bombing.

I remember the acrid smell of burning timber and seeing the burnt out ruins of the buildings and the firemen's hoses snaking all round the streets, awash with water. Firemen, ARP and police all doing whatever was possible to salvage the hopeless situation. There is quite a famous picture of a London double decker bus in a bomb crater in Balham High Street – I walked past it a few days after it happened.

'do my bit' for my Country …. As I got into my teens towards the end of the war, I became an ARP messenger and was issued with a tin hat and armband. Some ARP posts were quite primitive, with no telecommunication, so teenage boys were enlisted to run errands and messages by bicycle. When cycling home from school one afternoon in 1945 during a V1 raid, I heard a V1 engine cut out quite close and I immediately fell flat down on the side of the road. When the explosion came, I knew it was nearby because of the effect to my ears. In fact, it exploded in a road quite close to where my sister had a flat, although fortunately she wasn't there at the time. However, my Mother and a school friend and myself were quite quickly on the scene helping to salvage items from my sister's flat which had suffered considerable damage.

Like most teenage boys I was hoping to get into the Services to fight and do my bit for the Country, but the war was ended before that could happen. However I did join the Royal Navy in 1947 and served in HMS Belfast during the Korean war for two years and three

Peace I leave with you, my peace

I give you.

I do not give to you as the world gives.

Do not let your hearts be troubled and

do not be afraid.

Iohn 14:27

The Ferguson Hall

Wendy Swan

The Hall where the Fireflies (Creche) meet on a Sunday morning is known as the Ferguson Hall, and it is named after Revd Ferguson, a minister serving in Upper Norwood who acted as an "interim minister" when St John's church was first founded.

His son, Captain Edward Fergusson, was killed in action during WW1 and, on 1st July, 1944, Revd Ferguson was himself killed by a bomb

Rest Eternal grant them,
O Lord
And may light everlasting
shine upon them.

God is love, and is enfolding
All the world in one embrace;
His unfailing grasp is holding
Every child of every race;
And when human hearts are breaking
Under sorrow's iron rod,
That same sorrow, that same aching
Wrings with pain the heart of God.

Timothy Rees (1874-1939)

"Look! God's dwelling place is now among
the people,
and he will dwell with them.

They will be his people,
and God himself will be with them and
be their God.

He will wipe every tear from their eyes.
There will be no more death
or mourning
or crying or pain,
for the old order of things has
passed away."

Revelation 21:3-4

Airsickness and a Game of Poker

John Digman

My war really started when I was bombed by a Dornier 17 on my way home to lunch in my home town of Bexhill-on-Sea. It was a sunny day and I was cycling up the hill when the aircraft came into view flying seawards towards me at about 1,000 feet. I saw the bomb doors open and the bombs tumbling out, so I dropped the bike and went down against the nearest shelter, which was a low brick wall. Not much cover but fortunately the bombs hit about a mile away on open ground having obviously been jettisoned. Ironic really, considering my eventual role in dropping many more bombs on Germany!

My war in Bexhill consisted of membership of the Home Guard and of the local air Training Corps Squadron. Many of the Home Guard were 'old sweats' from the First World War, so night duties were enlivened by their reminiscences and also by sentry duty outside the Civil Defence HQ where my future wife was on night duty!

I volunteered for aircrew duties in the RAF as soon as I was able, having been bitten by the flying bug after a five minutes spin in a Tiger Moth when Alan Cobham's Flying Circus came to town before the war. I think it cost me five shillings. I opted for navigator as I suspected that my reflexes would be too slow for flying fighters which, post Battle of Britain, was undoubtedly every young man's dream. In 1942 I was posted to Initial Training Wing (ITW) in Torquay where the only excitement came when a couple of Focke Wolf 190s buzzed the town. I had been selected for naviga-

The course involved endless hours of Morse practice, the use of wireless equipment and operating it in Dominie and Proctor aircraft. The Proctors were flown by fighter pilots on rest tours and were mostly Polish or Czech-oslovakian. It took time to make contact with base, and to relieve the boredom the pilots would fly anything but straight and level! Most of us coped but were airsick, in my case only once and, fortunately, after we had landed!

I qualified as a wireless operator air and was destined for navigator training in Canada under the Empire Air Training Scheme. All such aircrew trainees going overseas had to assemble at Heaton Park, Manchester, whence they would go to their various embarkation ports. It was the custom for each batch to hold a farewell party in the NAAFI and I well remember sitting next to a padre at ours, feeling quite merry, while some quite large balloons drifted by. He remarked on their availability in wartime and didn't seem to mind when he was told they were actually condoms!

Then it was off to Greenock to embark on a converted luxury liner for a high speed dash across the Atlantic to Monckton, Canada. There were hundreds of us, sleeping crammed tightly together in hammocks in the bowels of the ship but occasionally we did manage to get on deck for some fresh air.

My navigator training was done on Ansons at Mount Hope, on the south shore of Lake Ontario. My abiding memory is of the hospitality of the Canadians, who showered us cadets with invitations. My chum and I stayed with a couple in Toronto on our weekends off, who had a cabin on

I graduated as a navigator (w) and was commissioned, and the powers that be decided that I should remain in Canada for additional flying training so that I would be able to fly in coastal Beaufighters, so my next move involved a six day rail journey by Trans-Canada express from Montreal to Vancouver and ferry to Vancouver Island. Travelling this way made one truly appreciate the vastness of the prairies and the grandeur of the Rockies.

Most of the flying at Pat Bay was on Hampdens, which had been flown across the Atlantic via Iceland and Greenland by extremely brave ferry crews, seeing that the aircraft had already been flogged on operations in Bomber Command. I crewed up with three New Zealanders, pilot and two wireless operator/air gunners, both the wop/ags being Maoris. We got on well. Flying exercises were done at low lever over the Pacific. We soon lost w/t contact on crossing the coast but fortunately, the standard of aircraft maintenance at Pat Bay was high and we stayed serviceable, otherwise the prospect of recovery was remote!

On completion of the course I was sent eastwards and had Christmas leave in New York and Long Island, another eye-opening experience. Then came my second ocean crossing in a luxury liner but, this time, I shared a cabin with another newly-qualified navigator and the ship was crowded with USAAF personnel as part of the build-up to D-Day. The number of games of poker and dice being played in the officers' lounges every day and the stacks of dollar bills changing hands, were to be seen to be believed!

The return home to wartime restrictions was a bit of a shock, much relieved by family reunion and being reunited, if only briefly, with my fiancée Babs,

The Ultimate Sacrifice

Anne Mitchell

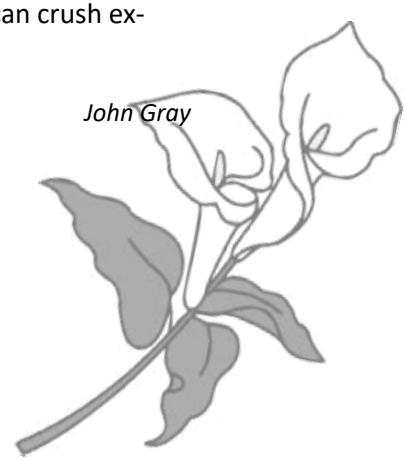
The years have passed, and yet at this time of the year there is still in my mind the day when my husband told me he was going to join the Paras. I was told it would be the 21st Independent Parachute Regiment and that they were going over to Holland.

Then we knew of the Battle of Arnham where my husband was killed, leaving me with four children.

The Cost of War

When nations with an urge to spar compete
in war they hope to grow, or right a wrong;
and roused by passions past, a speech or song,
they fall to mischief, propaganda, hate, deceit.
With weapons ready, armies, planes and fleet
the people, leaders too, are swept along
with all on edge to wage it, proudly strong:
for some a victor's crown, for some defeat.
The cost? Disruption, damage, death, despair,
surrendered values, broken lives and more
resources wasted, poisoned land and air.
No better path than drifting into war?
enlightened leaders must engage to care
and heal, and peace that none can crush ex-
plore.

John Gray



Those who hope in the Lord will
renew their strength.

They will soar on wings
like eagles;
they will run and not
grow weary,
they will walk

and not grow faint.

Isaiah 40:31

Those who forget the past
are destined to repeat it ...

may what has been sown in pain
be reaped in hope