



# Halewood Town Council Special Edition Newsletter VE Day 75th Anniversary



Town Cryer



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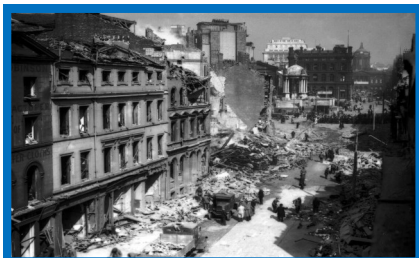
## Liverpool during the May Blitz 1941



The bombing of Merseyside during the Second World War reached its peak in the seven night Blitz of 1-7 May 1941. This 'May Blitz' was the most concentrated series of air attacks on any British city area outside London during the war. It caused massive damage to the city centre, the port and the entire area.



German planes dropped 870 tonnes of high explosive bombs and over 112,000 incendiary bombs, starting fires throughout Merseyside. Although the docks and city centre were the main targets, residential areas also suffered enormous damage. Nearly one third of the houses in Liverpool were damaged or destroyed. Worst hit was the town of Bootle, next to the port's biggest docks.



**Halewood Town Council's  
VE Day Commemoration Project**  
*A family at war*

Carolyn and Les shared a story about their father George (Halewood resident for many years before he died), who proudly served during the war as part of the RAF ground crew, transferring to the 17/21 Lancers, later going on to serve in 5<sup>th</sup> Royal Inniskilling Dragoon Guards both Cavalry Regiments, working on the main battle tanks.

During his time serving in WWII, Dad, who was probably in his twenties at the time, found himself injured when hit with shrapnel from an explosion. This remained in his leg for the rest of his life. He returned to serving as soon as he was able to, but later found himself hospitalised as a result of Malaria. He was extremely proud of serving his country and 'doing his bit'.

George is found on the left.

George is found far right on the centre row.

**Halewood Town Council's  
VE Day Commemoration Project**  
*A family at war - Continued*

Carolyn and Les went on to share an unbelievable story of George's three brothers, who unfortunately were lost at sea during a secret operation in WWII.

Dad was also very proud of his brothers (John, Leslie and Stanley Roberts), who served in the Merchant Navy, and all sailed on the ship Agokaka, (Operation Panther). Sadly, their ship was sunk in 1941 and all three brothers died. This particular story has been referenced in films and books, due to three members of the same family serving on the same ship.

*Three Brothers All Lost At Sea*

THEIR NAME LIVES FOR EVERMORE

COMMEMORATED IN PERPETUITY BY THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

A couple of stories from some lovely people who either remember the war, or have heard many stories over the years from family members.

**Halewood Town Council's  
VE Day Commemoration Project**

A Halewood resident from the Leathers Lane area.

I was the 4<sup>th</sup> eldest child of a family of ten and was born during the war. My two elder brothers were, like many children, evacuated to the countryside. My oldest brother Billy was evacuated to North Wales where he remained for three years. During his time on a farm he grew close to the farmer's daughter called Barbara. After coming home, Billy and Barbara didn't forget each other. Their love blossomed and they were eventually married and settled on Merseyside.

**Halewood Town Council's VE Day Commemoration Project**

Memories of An Army Cook written in June 1994 for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D Day

I landed on the third day of the invasion which was a lovely day. I remember the battle ship "Warpite" which was firing shells over our heads. We had to wade ashore, the water was about 4 foot deep. So, we all got pretty wet as we waded ashore. It was a very nice day and our clothes soon got dry. Then to get to our position was about 3 hours march. I was with the RASC (Royal Army Service Corps). We were in charge of the men's rations which was mostly hard biscuits. When the lads used to come for food they "barked like dogs". But it was all you had at every meal, until the bread came which was baked in the army field bakery. I was a cook so I was very well looked after. I was back home in 1946. But I will never forget those brave men who did not come home.

Written for my Granddaughter Clare by George Rose  
6<sup>th</sup> June 1994







### Halewood Town Council's VE Day Commemoration Project

Gerry Allen - Town Manager

My story was recounted to me by my own dad, George. He was eleven when the war started in September 1939. Growing up in the centre of Liverpool around the Scotland Road area, he was evacuated but didn't like being away from home. He soon returned to Liverpool and never left it again for the duration of the war.

My dad's story concerned the May Blitz of 1941. Despite the very real dangers he was part of a group of older children who supported the Air-Raid Wardens in dealing with incendiary devices dropped by the Luftwaffe. The intention behind these cruel devices was to start fires in the warehouse, and homes of people close to the river. On many occasions he, and others in their group, would have a fire bucket with sand to locate and deal with the incendiaries before they would start a major fire. You needed to get close and cover them completely with sand!

He remembered it as a time of adventure, but also of service to his family and community. As a 13-year old he was fearless and never appreciated the dangers, but I think he was proud to have played his part. I'll be thinking of him and others this VE Day.





### Halewood Town Council's VE Day Commemoration Project

Mrs. Joan Brown in The Women's Land Army


In October 2009, the Queen hosted a tea for 90 former members of the Women's Land Army who had served during WWII to celebrate their achievement. Among these was Mrs. Joan Brown of Halewood, she received her WLA badge and certificate in recognition of her contribution to the War effort in the 1940's.

She began working on a farm in Wilsden West Yorkshire in 1940. She had to be out working at 6.00AM every day, her duties included, milking the cows, looking after the dairy, planting and harvesting crops, making silage, feeding the hens and collecting the eggs. In the summertime there was hay to make. All in all, she said it was exhausting but rewarding work. Working for 14 to 15 hours a day.

She worked for 7 years at the farm during which time she was awarded a proficiency badge and certificate for milking and dairy work. At the end of her service she received a message of thanks from the then Queen Elizabeth, later Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. On visiting the farm after she had finished with the Women's Land Army, she was amused to find that there were two men doing the work of one Land Army girl.



We would like to thank you all for kindly sharing some very personal stories with us, they are truly amazing and make us very proud and grateful.





### Halewood Town Council's VE Day Commemoration Project

Granddads memories of being a child during WWII.

My first memory of my Granddads story, which I have heard many times since, was when I was doing a project for primary school. We had to find out about the war from the perspective of someone who was there. I was so happy to listen to my Gramps explaining that when he was 9 or 10 years of age he lived in Bootle. At that time there were explosions that happened locally and regardless of the dangers and hazards, my Gramps and his friends would head out amongst the rubble in search of shrapnel. He was so proud to tell me about the large collection he had and how sometimes his friends would ask for 'spags' on his most treasured piece! He also remembered when the bakery at the end of the road was caught up in an explosion, he and his friends had scurried under the large gates and 'saved' the cake and loaf tins from going to waste, which my great nan still had probably until the day she died.

The innocence of children I suppose.





### Halewood Town Council's VE Day Commemoration Project

Albert John Harvey (Jack)  
Born March 13th 1919 - Died December 15th 1996.

The name Jack was given to him by fellow soldiers as he was known to be 'a bit of a lad at the docks'

Our Grandad Jack was in the 7th Armoured Division created as part of the 'Mobile Force' in the Sands of Africa during the Second World War. He, along with the Eighth army, helped drive the Germans and Italians out of Africa and protect The Suez Canal. This was crucial as the main breakout that smashed through Axis lines at El Alamein in October 1942, a turning point in the war. Winston Churchill later wrote 'Before Alamein we never had a victory'. On 16th April 1945, the Division liberated St. Lo in France. This was the first prisoner of war camp to be liberated. The Division was the only division to use the Crownwell tank, the fastest tank to be used in the Second World War this was used in Normandy in 1944.

We used to call him Uncle Albert as he also escaped a few mishaps as the character in Only Fools and Horses, one being presumed dead after being lost at sea with a telegraph being sent home to his family, this was not the case as he was found alive and well, washed up after their ship had been bombed.

I remember my Dad watching a film called 'The Desert Rats' and proudly saying 'Your Grandad was one of them he fought in North Africa and Normandy helping defeat the Germans', and explained that the name was given to them from the emblem worn by the soldiers - A North African rodent called a Jerboa.

Dad visited Normandy in February last year with his son to see where Grandad had fought, this was an extremely emotional journey for them both.





### Halewood Town Council's VE Day Commemoration Project

VE Day Celebration



Joe Barlow e-mailed us this great description of a VE Day street party photograph.

VE Day celebrations in Noel St, Liverpool, which is where my mother lived. Although I can't see her on the picture, I recognise several aunts, uncles and cousins also some of my nan's neighbours. One in particular, ended up living next door to us in the prefabs in Belle Vale. Her son Stephen became my best friend, Edna Stewart (becoming Edna Currie), can be seen standing up high on the back row with her arm highest in the air. Notice the air-raid shelter and the hastily erected structure, holding tarpaulins in case it rained. My Auntie Pauline, who passed away last year, is sharing the near end chair with my bespectacled cousin Elaine. Her younger sister, Andrea, is standing next to her. My parents, at that time, were yet to meet.








### Halewood Town Council's VE Day Commemoration Project

VE Day memories

A lovely lady called Sheila Bersin shared her personal memories of VE Day with Andrea from Halewood Town Council, during a telephone conversation.

I was living in Leeds at the time of the war and I was 14yrs old coming up to 15 yrs old. I was due to have my Communion, but it was unfortunately postponed until later because of what was going on at the time. We were lucky because the Vicars daughter brought along some afternoon tea cloths, quite big so we could embroider it with crosses to make headresses for us to wear with our dresses. Mine, I remember well because it was a green dress with polka dots, not very traditional.

One of my three elder brothers who were serving at the time, was a Captain in the Royal Marines. He was married and his wife, who was in the women's Royal Air Force, was discharged on marriage grounds. She had coupons to buy a dress, but instead she bought patterns and material and gave them to me to make her two dresses. I was a complete novice to it and didn't have long to get them made. So, on VE Day instead of going out to celebrate with others in the parties that were going on, I was instead working as hard as I could to finish the dresses, especially because one was a particularly tricky dress pattern to follow.

### Halewood Town Council's VE Day Commemoration Project


VE Day memories - Continued

I also used to encourage my friends during breaktimes at school, to help with knitting for the troops, I took along my 4 needles and we would knit whenever we got chance.

I remember asking my dad one day for 30 shillings, which he reluctantly gave me, in order to pay for accommodation, so that I could help to pull peas and earn money. We had dug our own garden and planted vegetables successfully, in the dig for victory time, so thought this would be ideal experience to help me out. I unfortunately, didn't manage to earn any money due to terrible rainfall, so returned home owing my dad 30 shillings!

After the war, I decided to train and became a Sergeant Instructor and was the only female Education Sergeant.

This story must resonate with some many people and it was brilliant to speak to Sheila and get the information first-hand. Thankyou Sheila, it's really appreciated.



Thank you to our budding artists, who clearly enjoyed sharing the stories with their grown ups, then created these masterpieces. We're very proud of you.

