

A CELEBRATION AND COMMEMORATION OF THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR IN EUROPE

MEMORIES OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR EXTRACTED FROM ALL SAINTS' PARISH MAGAZINES

DEDICATED TO THE FALLEN

During the second world war our parish magazines were of necessity primarily concerned with the day to day life at All Saints but there is sufficient specific reference to the war to know that it was never far from people's minds. These extracts from the magazines gives an idea of their concerns and a glimpse of how it was affecting life at home. You will find here for example reference to evacuees, to real worry about potential bombing, information about the first war casualty in the parish, new and relevant words to 'For All the Saints', and where the dark shades for the lights may have originated. You may be a little surprised that what we know of as significant events in the War do not get a mention, but, as now, there would have been other means of communication as well. There is a permanent memorial in the church installed as a thanksgiving for safe deliverance of the church from the war. Do you know where it is? Read on.

VICAR Revd. W.S. Mahony

October 1939. From the vicar, Fr. Mahoney. My dear friends, The calamity which we have long dreaded has fallen, and we are at the beginning of a long and painful struggle. First, let me say how proud I am of the general attitude of our people towards the war. There has been no foolish boasting or light-heartedness, but just a grim determination to see this thing through. It is often the smaller and more insignificant sacrifices demanded by a national struggle which try the tempers most. On the whole the people have accepted them most admirably. The fact that the nation is at war has been brought home to every one of us from the very beginning by ARP and evacuation. We cannot, in modern warfare, attack the enemy by proxy "while afar off our brethren fight". Actual invasion may not be very likely, but air raids are certain, however perfect our defences may be. Perhaps the most trying time is the first few weeks when so many of us have nothing to do and the young and ardent not able to satisfy their keen desire to join up and do their bit. Their turn will come and meanwhile they must possess their souls in patience. But the middle aged and elderly feel their apparent uselessness very much. But there is a lot they can really do. From their experiences of the last war they can contribute very substantially to keeping up the morale (which means the discipline and confidence of the nation. We went through some very bad times then and we came through alright. We can contribute to the confidence and determination which will carry us through again. Quietness of speech, incredulity in the face of rumour and a refusal to get rattled will help those who are too young to know what a time of war, even at home, means.

I have determined to try and carry on with our Sunday evening service now at 6 o'clock. The reduced and shaded lighting will make the church rather dismal at first, but we shall soon get used to it, and if the aisles and west end have to be left in darkness we can all sit more closely together in the nave.

November 1939. Roll of Honour. The first name to be put on the Roll of parishioners who have given their lives in the service of their country is that of Jack Brown, aged 19, who perished with many of his mess mates in the sinking of HMS Royal Oak. He was a former choir boy and scout and joined the Royal Navy three years ago.

January 1940. Copied from the Southwark Diocesan Gazette

A hymn for war time

For all the Saints who have not found Thy rest,
Whose faith was never in our Creeds express't
But in their human lives Thy life confess't,
Alleluia!

For Saints who wear no halo in the gray,
Who see no visions gleam upon their way,
But bear the heat and burden of the day.

Alleluia!

For Saints who sail the sea and dare the sky,
With nerve of steel, cool brain, unflinching eye,
Saints loving life but unafraid to die,

Alleluia!

For all the Saints, far hidden from the strife,
Saints of the home, and ward and healing knife,
For mother, lover, comrade, loyal wife,

Alleluia!

So as our hearts recount the nameless host,
On bloody field or camp or mine-strewn coast,
We sing to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,

Alleluia!

January 1940. The first list to appear of those on active service, including Geoff Lister RASC.

April 1940. Easter. We were very glad to welcome many servicemen, both in the choir, the Sanctuary and congregation.

July 1940. From the vicar, The Government's order forbidding the ringing of church bells for ordinary purposes renders void the suggestion which I made last month, that we should listen to the mid-day bell and pray then for our gallant defenders. But most people have the wireless and clocks, and a little more attention to the latter will ensure a common act of prayer being offered up at noon by many. Let us not grow weary, for if, as we believe, there are great evil spiritual forces behind our enemies, the spiritual arm of Prayer is all the more important, on our side.

August 1940. The Fete, 11th July.....Then we had had many peaceful nights, free from alarms, so that people did not look up apprehensively when an aeroplane passed overhead.

September 1940. From the vicar, In the course of my visiting in the parish I often hear people say "I wish this dreadful war was over". I am sure we most heartily agree. But sometimes there is added "—one ay or another". This is a very dangerous thing to say, for it seems to imply "either by our victory or defeat". I am sure those who speak thus have not the smallest conception of what the defeat of our cause would mean or they would never speak thus. Certainly it would mean the loss, quite literally, of everything which makes life worth living. People speak thus lightly from weariness. It is exactly what our enemies would like to hear. Because this war will be won by our superior endurance, and that means refusing to be frightened or to be wearied into submission. Thus we cannot be too careful not to pass on anything that we hear about air raids. I have had striking proof of the falsity of these reports. During the week in which we had several alarms I was told of several places where bombs had been dropped. In each case I had been to the place that very week or had met people who had been there. *Nothing of the sort* had taken place in any of them. It may not be superfluous to point out that passing on such unfounded rumours causes distress to those who have friends in the places named, and distress may beget panic.

June 1941. From the vicar, Are we, in Maidenhead, half grateful enough for our immunity up to the present, from air raids and from the horrors that have befallen other towns, but also for so many nights free from alerts and alarms? Your feelings can now be tested. The Parochial Council has decided to insure our parish against the expenses of

replacing the contents of our churches, should they be damaged by enemy action. (We have been promised that the actual fabrics will be restored, if damaged, at the expense of the State , after the war). The cost of insurance is so high that the `council decided only to insure for a sum which is very small compared with the actual value of the fittings. But in the event of our suffering loss we should have sufficient to replace at least the bare necessities of worship. Even so, the charge on the parish will be a heavy one.

January 1942. *Christmas*. We had, what we had all wished one another, this year a peaceful Christmas. Of course there were many empty places at the family table. But all our men on Service had written cheerfully, and we hoped that they received the presents and cards which we had sent them. In church we had to do without our Midnight Mass, though we might have emulated Westminster Abbey and invited people to come with electric torches and banned all other lights.

Christmas gifts to men in the Services. 72 postal packets, containing cigarettes and a Christmas card with a specially printed message "from the clergy and people of All Saints and St Paul's", were sent. Every week in January the vicar has received letters of thanks, showing how much the gifts have been appreciated.

February 1942. From the vicar. We are all hoping and praying that in 1942 we may see the turning point of the war, and even the achievement of Victory and Peace.

March 1942. The period from Palm Sunday to Low Sunday should be regarded as one event, commemorating not only the Passion and Death, but also the Resurrection of Our Lord; and the transition from one to the other comes in the dramatic ceremonies of Holy Saturday. We should remember these things, not in spite of the war, but because of the war. In days of stress and danger and uncertainty such as the present, there is always the temptation to think of the things of the moment as of more importance than those eternal truths which can never alter and never pass away. That is to say, popular taste would much prefer to have "Good News"" of war victories , than the "Good News" of the final and unalterable defeat of Satan when Our Lord died on the cross. But which will mean more to us in a hundred years' time, when all the things of this world are over for us?

May 1942. *War Time Intercessions*. In spite of repeated appeals, there are still only 20 names on the chart of those willing to undertake Intercession for 15 minutes in church on Wednesdays.

June 1942. We have welcomed home Lieutenant G V Ranford on sick leave from Libya, where he has had a very strenuous time, and deserves a long rest. Many more of our men have gone overseas, including R Grant, A Newport, V Balchin, C Collins. Captain F C Armitage has completed his period of service and we are very glad to have his help in the choir once again.

July 1942. It was very pleasing to see three old members of the choir in the stalls on 7th June – Peter and Michael Squibb and Arthur Perrett. We rejoice with Mrs. Fisher to know that her eldest son Victor has not, after all, lost his life but is a prisoner in Germany. Arthur Newport and Tom Holmes have arrived in India, and Robert Grant was probably in the same convoy. Kenneth Lloyd has again written from Nairobi.

Fuel economy in church. As far as heating is concerned we have a reasonable stock of fuel already for the winter. As to lighting, the PCC has decreed justly that there must be less used on Sunday mornings, and that in the afternoon and evening no lights must be switched on at the west end and in the aisles, because there is (unfortunately) room for the whole congregation in the older part of the nave.

December 1942. Christmas services. We must, even at some inconvenience, restore the Christmas Midnight Mass. This year the festival occurs three days after the full moon, which means that it ought not to be a very dark night

outside. Inside the church, of course, the lighting must be reduced to the barest minimum, but even so, at least three of the large windows must be screened. Worshippers should therefore bring their torches, and hymn books in the largest type.

April 1943. May we be spared the horrors of aerial warfare in Holy Week, and be able, in spite of War's alarms and losses, to have a happy Easter.

May 1943. *Maidenhead "Wings for Victory" week*. Please do not forget that our own effort in this connection is a parish party and whist drive on Saturday 15th May. If there are any parishioners who have not their own War Savings collector the three parish schools will be glad to sell them stamps or certificates during the following week.

June 1943. *The Limit!* Among the "gifts" of literature for the troops handed in at the Post office recently was a Prayer and Hymn book marked "All Saints Church, Boyne Hill. Not to be taken away". Fortunately it was spotted by a friend of the parish and returned to the vicar for further service in the church it was bought for.

November 1943. From the vicar. My dear friends, For the last 12 months I have become more and more convinced that it would be for the good of the parish that, after more than 24 years as vicar I should retire to make way for a younger man. I *had* hoped to be still here when our men returned from the war, but that happy event, to which we are all looking forward to so passionately, does not appear to be likely to happen even within the next 12 months, because we must all realise that Victory and Peace will not immediately release any but a very few of those who are in the fighting forces.

VICAR Revd. E. Perkins

August 1944. *Forces Notes*. From the vicar. I have started to read the names of those in the Forces, a section at a time, at the weekday offerings of the Holy Sacrifice, but I am not very happy about the completeness of the list. I take it that any man in the parish who does not belong to some other place of worship is entitled to a place in the prayers of his parish church, and I should be glad to receive additions to the list. I think you must take the trouble to give the names of your men to me; it is little to do for them. I am hoping to be able to send them a letter each month. I shall have it duplicated and left at their homes so that it can be included in the home mail. Similarly there is by the main door of the church a Roll of Honour of those who have died for their country. If you wish the name of any man or woman from the congregation or parish to be recorded there please give me the name.

September 1944. From the vicar. The heavy drone of aircraft, more continuous and louder than ever before, together with such news as is given us, make it clear that I am writing this letter in momentous and historic days. We can rejoice with certainty that the end draweth nigh, and that our nation is on the verge of sharing in the greatest victory in her great story. How we long to see the end of this bloodshed, destruction and misery, and how greatly our hearts rejoice at the prospect of coming re-unions and days of restored companionship and peace. Nothing will be capable of restraining the jubilation of our hearts when the great day dawns, nor ought it to. Our minds, however, must not lose their calmness of judgement or sense of proportion. Our war, our Christian war, will be no nearer an end than now. There is no end in this world to that war against human selfishness and pride, of which the wars of the nations are but a manifestation. The very gift of Peace will itself bring a new urgency to the struggle lest selfishness and pride once again rob us of the gift. Let us use these last days of war then to prepare for

the awe-ful responsibility of Peace, and for the self-discipline and self-sacrifice which Peace demands from us if we are to be worthy of it.

October 1944. From the vicar. As this magazine reaches you we shall be keeping our Dedication Festival at All Saints and St. Paul's on 1st October followed by the harvest Thanksgiving on 8th October. In a world which is literally filled with destroyed churches and starving people we in this parish have retained our Houses of God unharmed, and throughout the whole course of war have never wanted either the blessings of the Sacraments or the necessities of bodily health.

November 1944. It is not the normal custom to have a Requiem on Sunday, but these are abnormal times, and as a Solemn Requiem for the Fallen in the two German Wars cannot be conveniently arranged on a weekday, it will be offered on Sunday, 12th November, at 11am. If the Cease Fire in the German War is announced not later than 6pm on any weekday there will be a Choral Service of Thanksgiving in All Saints that day at 8pm. If it is announced later the service will be at 8pm the following day, not being a Sunday.

December 1944. Now we must turn to Christmass – the last Christmass we must spend under war conditions, we greatly hope. Five Christmasses have gone by without most of the joys and delights we associate with the festival, most serious of all without those family re-unions which are so important a part of its proper observance, but we have not yet been without the Christ Mass itself. The essential Christmass – the humble and loving approach of the Creator to His creatures – remains in all its glory.

March 1945. *Our men returning.* We extend a warm welcome home to Mr. Raymond Pittman, who has been demobilised and is resuming his peacetime calling as a postman. Mr. Pittman has already been elected to the PCC.

May 1945. Peter Neave, one of our evacuees, who promised to be a most valuable server and choirboy has had to return to Ashford. We are sorry to lose him and wish him well in the future.

June 1945. From the vicar. Since the magazine last appeared we have been through exciting days together. The most wholesale manifestation of armed and destroying evil the world has known has been defeated and shattered. We have been delivered from physical dangers surpassing any previous human creation. The hour of victory found us proud and grateful. Proud of the united effort, the courage, endurance, and skill of our own people and our allies, and thankful, deeply thankful, to the God who has wrought in us so great a deliverance. That was the spirit in which we gathered before the altar at that moving VE-Day Eucharist.

The great deliverance is a fact and one of the great facts of history and we were right for a short time to give ourselves up to rejoicing at it, but it is only one of many facts with which we are confronted at this moment, and we now have to turn to face the others.

There is the war in the Far East, very largely overshadowed by that in the West until now, but itself a major war against a terrible enemy. The Japanese must be seeking desperately for some way of wriggling out of a contest against odds so different from those on which they had calculated, without losing face, but it seems quite clear that they must not be allowed to do so, and they will therefore fight fanatically. We Christians have yet the duty of doing our best to sustain one another and those outside the Church in the midst of still further blood and tears, toil and sweat, and we shall need much `grace for that.

There are, too, the diplomatic problems in Europe. Already we see only too clearly that if the armed embodiment of evil centred in Germany has lost its arms, yet the evil itself is still asserting its old selfishness and suspicion, greed and mistrust in every corner of Europe. I imagine that none of my readers will be surprised at that or daunted. War is always an evil, even when it seems necessary and it is no remedy for the spiritual disease of human nature. A Europe filled with victorious armies and nations boasting in the achievements of their arms is a happy hunting ground for the demons of self-assertion, aggrandisement and opportunism. Never did Europe stand in greater need of the prayers of the Church, of the tolerance, forbearance, strength, wisdom and sanity of true ``Christian men and women in every land. The winning of the War has created the situation in which such virtues can and must be exercised, it has not made them in any way less necessary.

The Roll of Honour in the North Porch

Jack Brown RN

Leslie T H Bennett RN

Ronald Shelton RN

Archibald G Botsford RE

Victor g Croker RN

Kenneth Botsford RAF

Edward Norkett RASC

Frederick J Percher RAF

Kenneth Astbury RA

Arthur Q Smith RTC

Thomas P Smith Hants. Regt.

William E Brandon Hants. Regt.

Douglas Briggs RAF

Ruby A Marsh St. John Amb.

Thanksgiving for safe delivery.

The window at the east end of the North aisle, above the side altar, is of the Annunciation to the Blessed Virgin Mary, by Sir Ninian Comper, known as one of the best stained glass designers of the 20th century, as well as a very prominent architect. The inscription under the window reads:

“For the safety of this church 1939-1945. Thanks be to God”

Ken Smith

8th May 2025.

On the occasion of the 80th Anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe