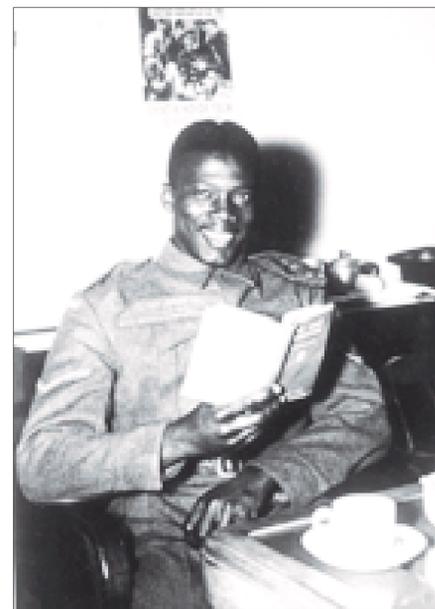
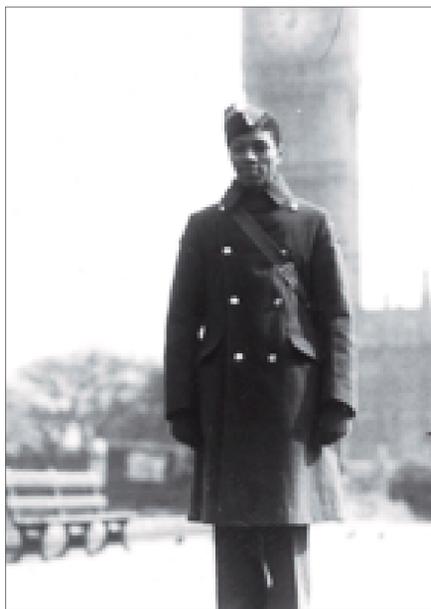


not forgotten... **wartime memories**



The Second World War brought together people of different countries, often for the first time. Although fighting on the same side, respecting and understanding each other's cultures and attitudes was challenging.

This exhibition brings together stories and memories of the war years on the home front in this country and abroad. It acknowledges the contributions and personal experiences of our neighbours and friends who now live in Haringey.

We enjoy our freedom today because over 60 years ago they fought side by side against a common enemy.

**The war changed the world forever.
They are not forgotten.**

Haringey
libraries



Bruce Castle Museum, Lordship Lane
N17 8NU, Tel. 020 8808 8772
museum.services@haringey.gov.uk
www.haringey.gov.uk

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank the following for sharing their recollections and contributing to the making of this exhibition:

Anita Bild, John Catling, Vincent Egemonye, Claudius Fanusie, George Georgiou, Bill Guy, Haringey University of the Third Age, Janet Harris, Brenda LaRose, Herbert Levy, Sheila Peacock, Hazel Whitehouse

Most of the photographs, courtesy of the Imperial War Museum. The remainder are part of the collections at Bruce Castle Museum.

We are most grateful to The Big Lottery for their support for this oral history project and exhibition. And to the staff and helpers:

Edna Bruce-Cudjoe, Trevor Bryan, Val Crosby, Diana Edmonds, Jeff Gerhardt, Gigi Guizzo, Deborah Hedgecock, George Ioannou, Derek Kingsland, Bridget MacKernan, Ray Swain, Mark Wells, Robert Waite and Hazel Whitehouse.

Supported by



HARINGEY COUNCIL
Libraries, Archives & Museum Service

Before war began...

In Europe and America life was hard during the 1930s. Some people lived well, but lots of people were out of work. Families had little money and often went hungry.

People were looking for someone to blame for this. In Germany, Adolf Hitler, the leader of the Nazi party, blamed the Jews.

In Britain, Oswald Mosley tried to copy Hitler's ideas. He led a group called 'The Blackshirts', who stirred up hatred against the Jews. Most people did not like what he was saying. Here are some local people's recollections of that time:

“ We went to their meetings and marches and gave out leaflets telling people how the Fascists were working against their interests and wanted to blame bad working conditions on to immigrant workers - in those days it was the Jews. ”

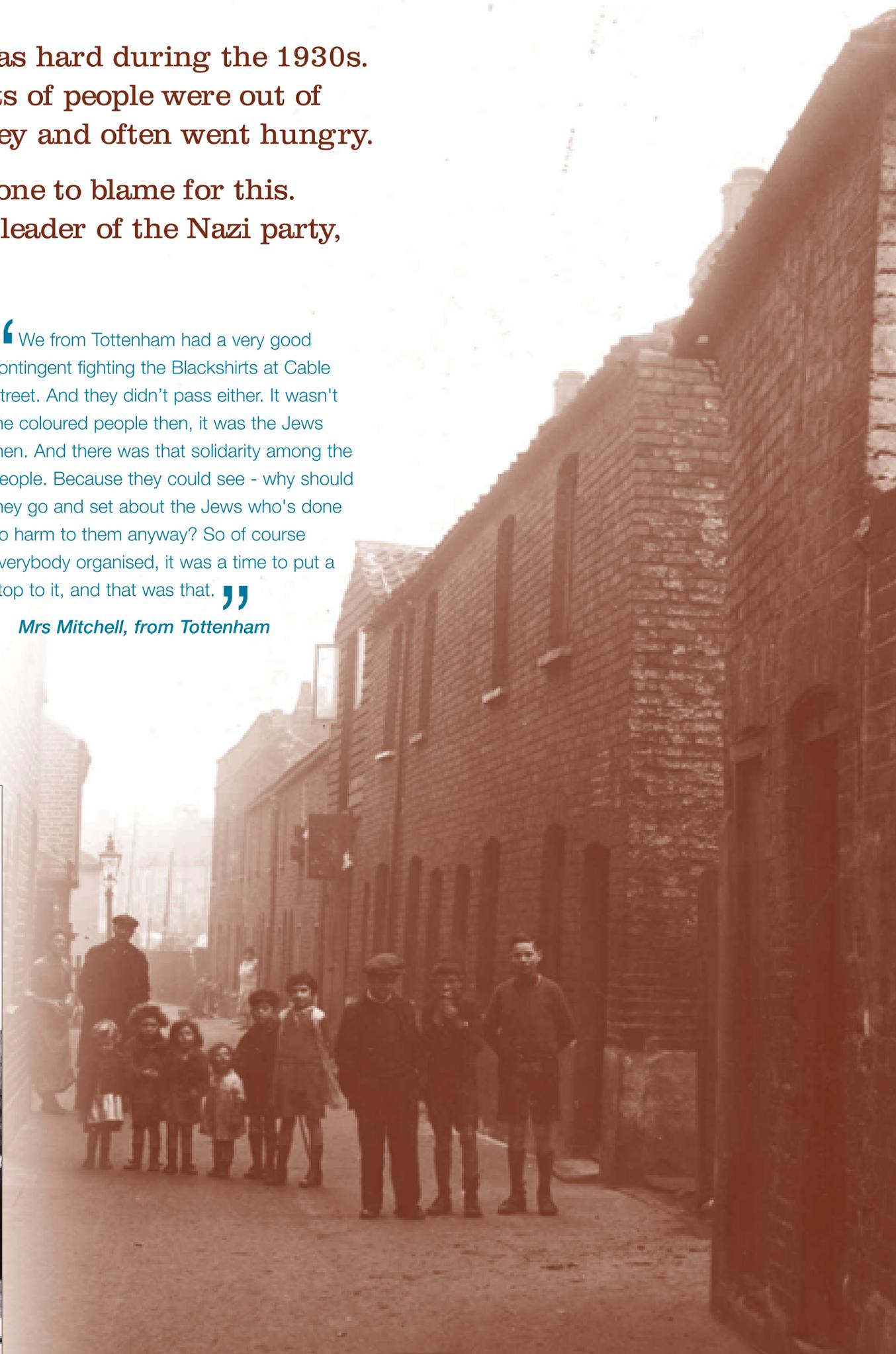
Mary Coghill, from Tottenham

“ We from Tottenham had a very good contingent fighting the Blackshirts at Cable Street. And they didn't pass either. It wasn't the coloured people then, it was the Jews then. And there was that solidarity among the people. Because they could see - why should they go and set about the Jews who's done no harm to them anyway? So of course everybody organised, it was a time to put a stop to it, and that was that. ”

Mrs Mitchell, from Tottenham



Anti-fascist graffiti, South Tottenham



Waggon Lane, North Tottenham, 1932

Evacuation

War broke out on 3rd September 1939. It was thought safer to evacuate children away to the countryside in case enemy air raids bombed the towns and cities. Family members were separated as their children were sent to live with strangers.

Some children enjoyed the experience. Many had not had the chance to travel from their homes before and they saw it as an exciting adventure.

Others hated it and missed home. Children from London were sometimes treated badly and called names, such as 'Dirty Londoners'. This was because they were 'outsiders' or different and perhaps seen as filthy and under-nourished



Evacuees in 1939

Sheila Peacock remembers meeting her host family:

“ We arrived in Northampton quite tired because it was a long journey for us. I thought it was the other end of the world because I had no concept of how far it was. ... We were lined up and the villagers came in and they walked up and down the line... I was picked out quite quickly and my friend Vera. We were the only two Jewish girls... I don't know whether we were nicer dressed or looked cleaner.

We were picked out by the squire's wife. We went to live in this big house in the village... But the woman wasn't very nice. We went into her little room and sat down and she told us to come over here. I went over and she started to go through my hair. I said to her: 'You don't have to worry about my hair. My dad's a hairdresser and I haven't got nits'. That was the concept in those days that all the children who came from London were all dirty and had nits.

She said to me: 'No, I'm not looking for nits'. She had found out by then that I was a Jew and she said that she was looking for my horns. Because (they thought) all Jews are of the devil and therefore they have horns.

I really didn't understand what she was going on about but that weekend my father came up to see me, to see if I was ok and I told him and he went straightaway and saw somebody. Vera and I were both moved immediately from this house to another lady's house and we stayed there for a year. ”



Evacuees from Woodlands Park School in Cambridgeshire, 1940



Finding a safe place to live

Before and during the war, people took refuge in Britain to escape the horrors of war. One was Herbert Levy, now of Highgate, who arrived here as part of the Kindertransport, the evacuation of Jewish children from Austria, Germany, Poland and Czechoslovakia. Children had to leave their parents behind. By the end of the war, many were orphans.

Others who were persecuted also escaped to the UK. Here, Anita Bild, from Highgate, tells her story:

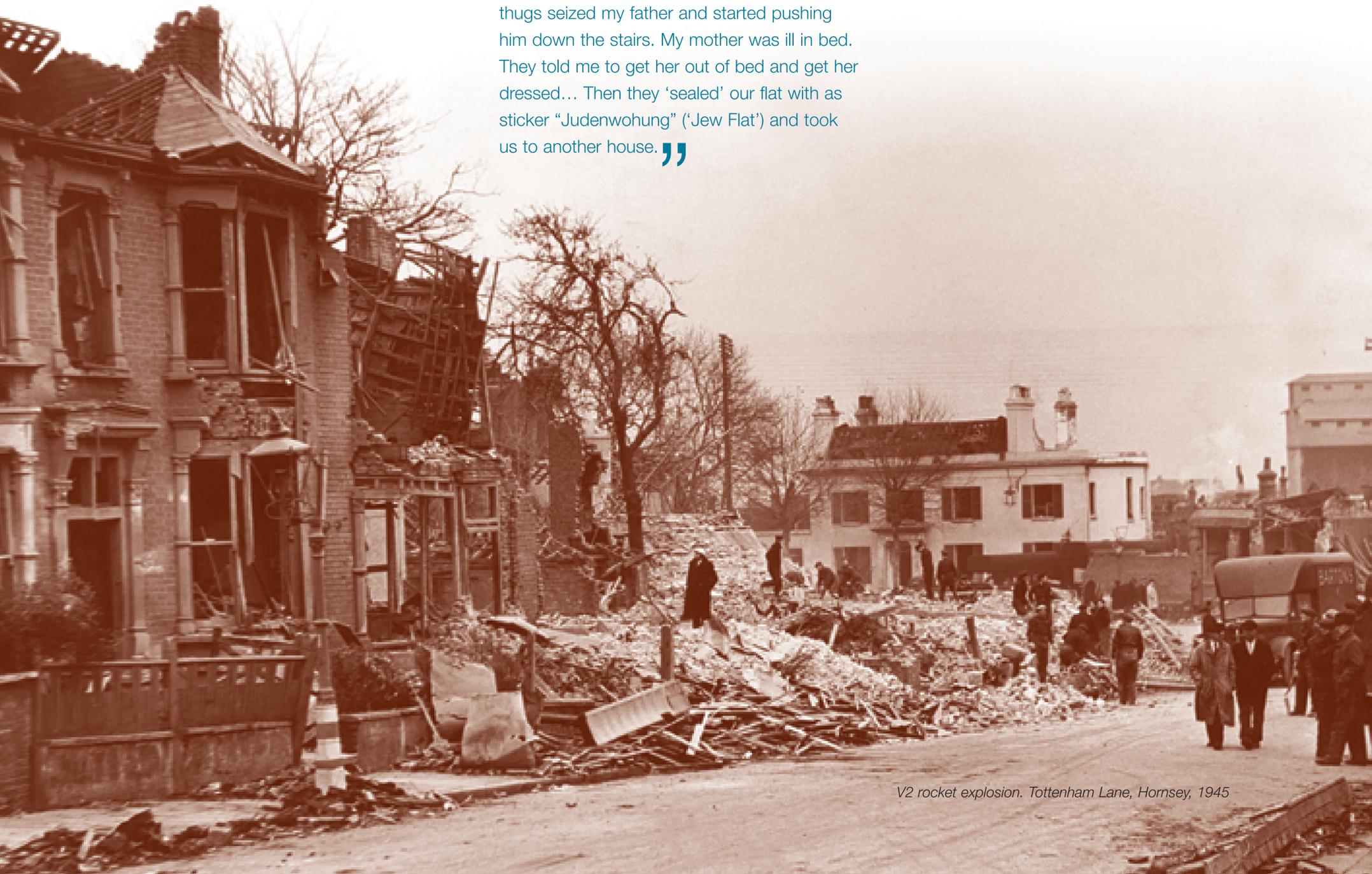
“ We were, on paper, Catholics. But we had, as the saying went, the ‘wrong grandparents’. They were Jewish. We had no religious inclinations ourselves.

My parents were free-thinkers and liberal. But we were not in the Party. We did not wear Swastikas. So obviously (to them) we were Jews.

One morning there was a knock at the door. Four youths stood there - Hitler Youths, with their Swastika armbands on their sleeves. “We’ve come to take away the Jew.” These thugs seized my father and started pushing him down the stairs. My mother was ill in bed. They told me to get her out of bed and get her dressed... Then they ‘sealed’ our flat with as sticker “Judenwohnung” (‘Jew Flat’) and took us to another house.”



To their surprise the family was allowed back into their flat a few days later. But they knew they had to leave. Anita was one of the more fortunate ones. She arrived in England in February 1939. Her parents were able to join her in Britain just before war began. She had been able to save some of her belongings and eventually got them sent over. She still has these treasured items today.



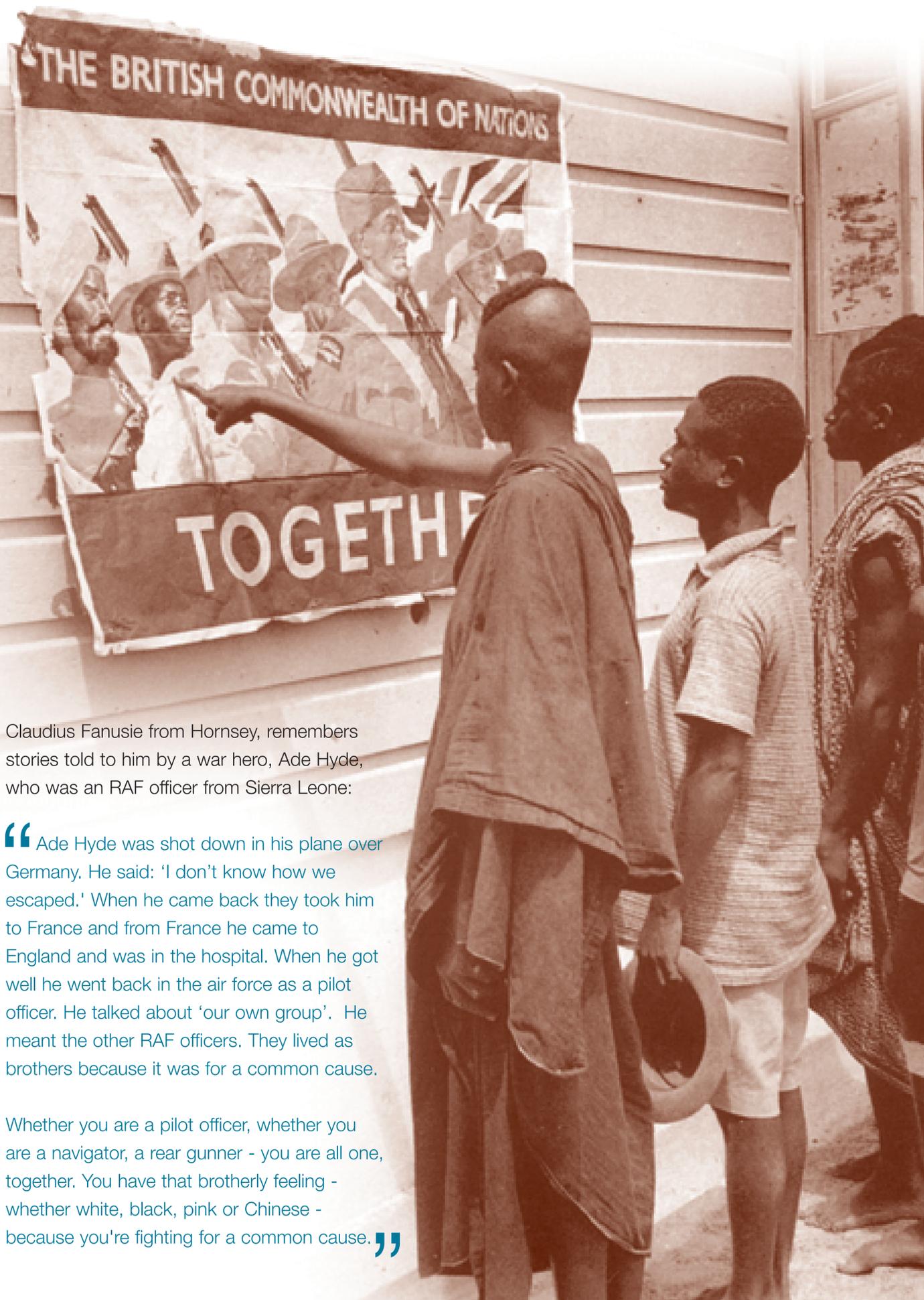
V2 rocket explosion. Tottenham Lane, Hornsey, 1945

Together we served

From the start of the war troops from all over the Commonwealth fought for the Mother Country. The Indian army sent 3 million men into battle. The Royal Air Force (RAF) in the UK recruited 10,000 West Indians and Africans into its ranks.

Posters were put up and leaflets distributed around the Colonies to recruit service men and women to the war effort. Vincent Egemonye from Crouch End remembers recruitment in his home village in Nigeria in 1942. His cousin Benson joined up:

“ During 1942 I saw the recruiting going on (in my school) even though I was eight years or nine years then. When the recruiters came they targeted those older boys. These are the people that they recruited for the war, to be trained for the war. They are called the West African Volunteer Force. The headquarters was in Accra in Ghana. So when they took them, they trained them there. Then they served on the west coast, although some eventually went to Burma. My cousin (Benson) went to Burma. ...He would send pictures of his friends standing near the lorries, near the vehicles and people waving. When the war finished he came back. We were very happy when he came back. ”



Claudius Fanusie from Hornsey, remembers stories told to him by a war hero, Ade Hyde, who was an RAF officer from Sierra Leone:

“ Ade Hyde was shot down in his plane over Germany. He said: 'I don't know how we escaped.' When he came back they took him to France and from France he came to England and was in the hospital. When he got well he went back in the air force as a pilot officer. He talked about 'our own group'. He meant the other RAF officers. They lived as brothers because it was for a common cause.

Whether you are a pilot officer, whether you are a navigator, a rear gunner - you are all one, together. You have that brotherly feeling - whether white, black, pink or Chinese - because you're fighting for a common cause. ”



Royal Airforce recruitment Jellicoe Scoon, from Trinidad, in London

A warm welcome?

Nowadays, we are able to travel easily and can experience other cultures. Before the war, people had limited contact with the rest of the world and only found out information through radio, newspapers and cinema newsreels.

People were often unaware or ignorant of different ways of life other than their own. Some looked after newcomers and were sympathetic to the strangers - whilst others were suspicious and unwelcoming.

When the United States of America joined the war in 1941, American GI servicemen arrived here to mixed reactions. A West Country farmer said:

“ I love the Americans’, ‘But I don't like those white ones they've brought with them.’”

One lady wrote to a commanding officer to invite some GIs to lunch, although she added, ‘No Jews please’. The invitation was accepted and when the lady opened the door to her guests she found six Black soldiers on her doorstep. She thought there was some mistake.

“ Oh no, ma'am. (he replied). ‘Colonel Cohen make no mistake.’”

Claudius Fanusie, from Hornsey, recalls the difficulties others from Sierra Leone encountered. Here he talks about Michael Johnson, a warrant officer in the RAF:

Wood Green carnival float thanking American President Mr Roosevelt in 1941



“ Michael Johnson was very jovial...He went to NAAFI*, the canteen and ordered a beer. The barman said: ‘We don't serve Blacks here’. The others came and said: ‘Don't you know this man is an officer? What's wrong with you?’ And the other had to apologise to Michael... Michael Johnson was very furious about it for the simple reason.

He said we are in the RAF all the same. We have that oneness and co-operation and we are fighting for a common cause. And all I want is a can of beer.”

(*NAAFI: Navy, Army, Air Force Institute)

Troop ship with American GI's, 1941

Doing your bit - life on the ration

Rationing became a way of life during the war. The variety of food, clothing and other products became more and more difficult to get hold of because of the war. Ration books were introduced in the UK in 1940. People learned to make do and mend, to grow their own food and to salvage everything from dish-rags to cabbage stalks.

In this country and in the Colonies there were restrictions on imported goods. Brenda LaRose, from Wood Green, recalls her experience of shortages of food and clothing in British Guiana (now Guyana):

“... We started to experience shortages of flour, margarine, lard and table butter. Most of these were imported from Britain. Many Guianese were compelled to grow and make use of local produce such as cassava to make cassava bread... The Guianese then looked towards establishing a ‘Grow More Food Campaign’

... I always looked smart and even different in my shoes and dresses (imported from the UK). I was the envy of everyone.

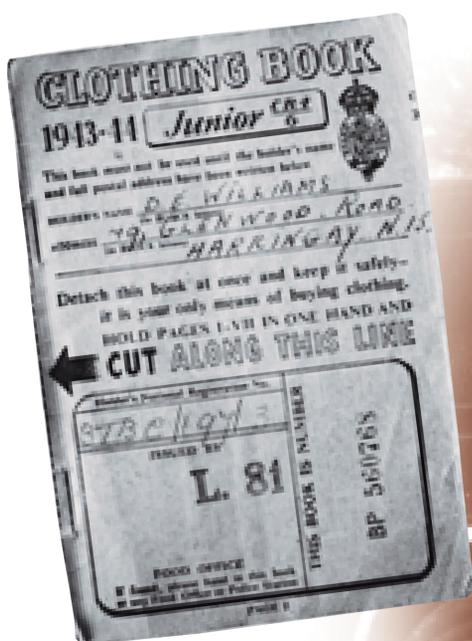
However, as the war continued we were unable to import shoes any longer. My shoes had to be made by a local shoemaker. They never looked neat and made my feet look longer than they really were.”

Esther Bruce, a Black Londoner, recalls that having relatives in British Guiana proved useful when food was rationed. Her uncle was able to get other types of food that you could not find or were not easy to get in the UK:

“Times were hard during the war. Food was rationed. Things were so bad they started selling whale meat, but I wouldn't eat it. I didn't like the look of it. We made a joke about it, singing Vera Lynn's song ‘We'll Meet Again’ with

new words, ‘Whale meat again’. Often Granny said, ‘We could do with this. We could do with that.’ So I wrote to my dad's brother in British Guiana. I asked him to send us some food. Two weeks later a great big box arrived, full of food! So I wrote more lists and sent them to my uncle. We welcomed those food parcels.”

The Colonies joined other Britons in raising money to manufacture tanks and aircraft. Mobile canteens were also sponsored to help those people who bombed-out and made homeless by air raids.



West Indian aid to Britain - a mobile canteen bought by the people of British Guiana

Pulling Together

Britain was not only dependent on India and the other Colonies for people power, but also for raw materials. Vincent Egemonye recalls life in Nigeria during the war:

“ A white man, the District Officer from Nnewi in Eastern Nigeria, came to speak to us about the war. The headmaster was translating to us in (our language) Igbo. The D.O said that war had broken out between Britain and Germany. Everybody was required to contribute something to the war effort to enable Britain to win the war. Our own task was to go to the bush and gather palm fruits and palm kernels, which we would crack open and sell to the Niger Company. Palm fruits at that time were overripe and had fallen from the trees because the young men attending them had joined the army or were engaged in other essential activities.

The headmaster taught us a song that we sang as we cracked them:
Piam piam piam ka'yi n'eti a---ku
Ayi genweta ozo ayi g'ele
Ayi geti ya mgbe nile
Ayi geti ka akpa 'yi we ju
Ka'yi we nye aka nidinotu merie agha!
Piam piam piam...

The English translation goes like this:
Piam piam piam we crack the ker---nels
So that we get more to sell
We crack them all the time
We crack them 'till our bags are full
Just to help the Allied Nations win the war!
Piam piam piam....

'One day, army trucks full of soldiers were passing through our village, singing merrily. We started to wave at them. Suddenly one of them threw something near the bush where we were standing. We rushed to search for it.

“Here it is”, said one of the boys. “What is it?” I asked. “It is cond beef” he replied. “What is cond beef?” I asked. “I don't know but it is clearly written on the tin, C O R N E D B E E F, cond beef”.

On our return to the school, we showed our booty to the teacher. “Oh yes this is corned beef. Corned beef is made from cow meat mixed with some herbs and oil to prevent it from decay. You can buy it from the Niger Company if you have the money. How did you come about this?”

“It was thrown to us by the soldiers passing through the trunk road”, the boy replied. “It is a good gesture from the soldiers and it will cause no harm. There is a little hole at the side where you fix in an iron to open it. Unfortunately, this iron has fallen off. Wait a minute”. He went to the school store, fetched a medium-sized nail, and opened the tin there and then. He shared it amongst the pupils and it was the first time I tasted corned beef in my life. ”



Working on the Home Front

With thousands of British men fighting away from home, help was needed in Britain on the home front for civil defence, munitions, manufacturing goods and agriculture. Women in this country were already fulfilling this role. Extra support was required to support the war effort in this country.

The Colonial Office argued that assistance could be sought from the colonies. But the War Office resisted, in order not to upset the Americans and their 'colour bar'.

As the war in Europe progressed, in 1943 the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) was permitted to bring recruits from the Caribbean,



Africa and India to train in Britain. It was easy to recruit, as many were keen to help their mother country. Many saw themselves as British.

Recruits and troops were sent to assist the Royal Engineers, or to carry out forestry work in Scotland or in munitions factories. Working conditions were often harsh and unpleasant. Most were not treated with the respect they deserved.

Some of these recruits were women. For them life was also hard. They had to struggle against prejudices because they were Black and they were women.

Local children were able to find out about new ways of life from the visiting recruits and troops:

“The most memorable thing about these - to us exotic - Indian troops was their hospitality. Every so often they would organise an “At Home” and provide a feast of curries, rice, chapattis and naan bread, all cooked in the open air. We were allowed to look at their wonderful horses too. After the meal a display of horsemanship would be put on, including pig-sticking.”



Civil defence and air raids

There were different types of jobs to be done to support the war effort. Thousands of men and women from the Colonies took part in the civil defence of this country and of their own countries.

They took jobs in hospitals, they worked as ground-crew, air-raid wardens, prison guards, firewatchers, factory workers, miners, engineers, foresters and they joined the Home Guard.

Whilst the bombs dropped, some people were still treated people from other countries badly. Here is the experience of E.I Ekpenyon, who was an African air-raid warden in London in 1943:

“Some of the shelterers told others to go back to their own countries, and some tried to practice segregation. If this had continued, it would have led to riots. So I told people that the British Empire... is made up of many races. I said that though I am an air-raid warden in London, I am still an African. I am one of many peoples in other countries that make up the Empire ...I said I would like to see a spirit of friendliness, co-operation and comradeship prevail at this time in the history of the Empire ...I advised those who did not agree to seek shelter somewhere else. Few left the shelter.”

Esther Bruce was born in London in 1912 after her father, Joseph, had come here from British Guiana (now Guyana). In 1941, Joseph was killed in an air raid. For the remainder of the war, Esther worked as a cleaner and fire-watcher in a London hospital. In 1944 the Germans sent over 'doodlebugs' (motorised flying bombs) to bomb London. Said Esther,

“When the engines stopped I wondered where it was going to drop. It was really frightening because they killed thousands of people. A doodlebug flattened some of the houses in our street. Luckily our house was alright, even though we lived at number thirteen!”



Home Guard John Wade, from Montserrat, West Indies, in the West Indies Hostel, London, 1943

Victory and peace

The Allied Forces celebrated Victory in Europe, followed by Victory in Japan, in the summer of 1945. Britain and her Colonies had fought and won peace for the world. Thousands upon thousands of service men and women, and civilians, had given their lives for their country.

Around 372,000 Africans, 7,000 Caribbeans and about three million Indians fought for Britain in the Second World War. Over 60,000 died or went missing in combat.

It was not until 2002 that the memorial gateway was opened by the Queen to commemorate the service men and women from the West Indies, Africa, India and Pakistan who fought for Britain in the two World Wars.

Bill Guy spent the war years in the US. He recalls:

“ In the UK, people may not remember this, but there were West Indians who brought - or

helped to bring - sugar, rice, to the UK from the Colonies. And they were killed. There were so many West Indians killed helping to bring things to their Mother Country. So we have contributed - the Black people have contributed - generously. And with their lives.”

Claudius Fanusie came to London from Sierra Leone in 1949. He knew veterans from the war and had heard their accounts of life in Britain.

“ You get that feeling that we are all one but it was not so when we came over. There was a difference. When they would tell us at home we felt that when we came to England to study we would be greeted with the same respect but



VE Day celebrations in Kolar, India, 1945

it was not like that. When you looked as students then, (you saw signs): “Rooms to let: No Dogs, No Irish, No Blacks.” We felt it so much.”

“ The Black and ethnic minorities were forgotten for a long time and this was very sad. I’ve always wondered why. Now many years after the war, and with the various museums, these things can now be seen when people think back on the past.”

Bill Guy, of Tottenham



Street party to celebrate VE Day in Sutherland Road, Tottenham, 1945

War hero - Adesonaie K. Hyde

Claudius Fanusie, from Hornsey, knew Adesonaie Hyde (known as 'Ade' to his friends) during the Second World War. Both men came from Sierra Leone.

Flying Officer Ade Hyde started off his military career in the ranks of the Royal Air Force (RAF). He became a navigator on the planes flown in battle and was commissioned as an officer in 1944. He was awarded the honour of a Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) early in 1945 for showing bravery during enemy combat.

Here is what was written by the British Government to explain the reasons why Ade was honoured with the award:

“...the number of missions taken and his outstanding skill and enthusiasm for operational flying.

In August 1944 his right arm was shattered by a shell from the enemy's defences. But he did not tell his captain until the bombing mission was completed. Then one of the crew rendered first aid but he refused pain relief in order that he might continue his duties. It was not until the English coast was sighted that he retired to a rear position where he collapsed.”



Ade Hyde stands (in the centre row at the back) with the rest of his crew beside their RAF aircraft.

