

PAMELA DOROTHY LATCHFORD

Born in March 1928 and lived in Brewhouse Hill, Wheathampstead. One of 5 children (two brothers, a sister, and stepbrother and sister).

She recalled the outbreak of war in 1939. Her stepmother's reaction was "We shall be killed like rats in a trap". Her father (Robert Leslie Cunnington) had been invalided out of the Great War. Her brothers, Robert and Alex, fought in the Second World War.

Robert (Joseph) Cunnington was in the Royal Army Service Corps, with the 8th Army in Egypt and Italy. He was away the whole of the war but returned home at the end of the war.

Edward (Alexander) Cunnington was in the Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire Regiment, then was transferred to the Dorset Regiment after the battle of Caen. Pam remembers that he didn't want to go. She thought he had a premonition that something was going to happen to him and he had only been in France twelve days when he was killed.

The last time she saw him was in July 1944, when he had 48 hours leave and came home to see everyone. They heard of Alec's death when "His wallet¹ was posted to Peg by a soldier that found it by the road, as her address was in it. It had a hole in it and was bloodstained. Peg wrote home to us as none of us had heard from Alec since he'd got to France. Mr Chapman, who lived up the road, worked at the war office and he found out for us".

Pam remembers the effect of the news on the family. "I took it very badly as we were close, Dad took it badly too, but we had to carry on as normal. Alec was very sporty; he had played football for St Albans City. He liked the women too."

Peggy (Gertrude) Cunnington was in the A.T.S and billeted in Falmouth, Cornwall. She was on the ack-ack guns in Cornwall.

Pam had some very vivid memories of the village during the 2nd World War.

¹ Kris Schug now has possession of the wallet belonging to Alec Cunnington.

“They used to send me in the dark to the Walnut Tree to get a bottle of ginger ale. I would take a torch with a piece of paper with a little hole in it over the lens, it was very dark.”

“I remember dog fights overhead and a **doodle bug coming down at Bury Farm**, which blew the glass out of the windows in our house. Bombers heading out in the evenings and the sound of damaged ones struggling back throughout the night. There was also a **glider** on its way to Arnhem, that broke from its tow and **crash landed on Nomansland Common**

There was a **woman**, A.T.S I think, that was **run over and killed by a Bren gun carrier**, by the gates of the station yard (on the corner). Also there was a **lorry full of Italian prisoners** of war that hit a house near Murphy’s and one died in the accident.”

There were **Nissan huts** where the post office is now, for accommodation for soldiers. Also one where the toilets are now in East Lane

Pam was still at school during the 2nd World War. “We went in the mornings one week and afternoons the following: we alternated with the evacuees.

There was an **air raid shelter** at the Wick. It was horrible, cold and damp feeling inside, it was dry though, with a concrete floor and timber forms to sit on”. She left school at 14.

She had a sweetheart in the forces. “Frank Dywell, his mother had a cafe in the village. We met when I worked at Helmets, he was a machine technician with Jim Westwood. Frank was in the R.A.F in Australia, he wasn't a pilot. We met again when he came home, he wanted to go in the Bell and Crown, I didn't so I told him so and walked off, I didn't see him again after that.”

“I remember **dancing** around the front of Charlie Collins’ shop **on VE Day**”. However she had no memories of V.J. Day.

She remembers her brother Bob and her sister Peg returning home after the war. “**Rationing** continued into the 1950s.”

She married Mark Latchford in 1948.

[extracts from an interview undertaken by Kris Schug in April 2020.]