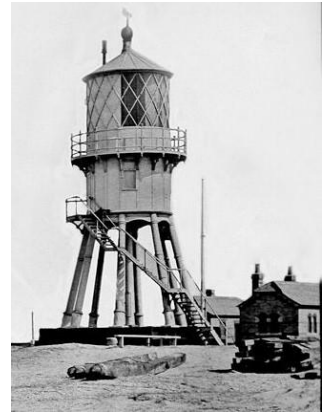


Society News

The Lowestoft Archaeological and Local History
Society Newsletter

March 2023

Editors:- Ron and Irene Ashman



WW2 Bomb shelter in Yarmouth Road, Lowestoft

by Kevin Jorgensen

Last year a home owner in Yarmouth Road was digging in his front garden when he discovered a concrete bomb shelter dating from the Second World War. The shelter had a staircase leading down with six steps measuring .56m X 1.9m long to a chamber measuring 1.55m X 2.55m X 1.85m high.



This contained ARP helmets and several gas masks.



This is quite unusual as a lot of concrete shelters were surface built and used for larger amounts of people to shelter such as the Stanton shelter, one of which can be seen at RAF Beaulieu in Hampshire. The Stanton shelters were manufactured by the Stanton Ironworks in Ilkeston in Derbyshire.

The most common was the Anderson shelter designed by William Patterson and Oscar Carl Kerrison and were supplied to households free who had an income less than five pounds.

(Kevin will write a more in depth Archaeological report when he has more information on this type of shelter)

Sutton Hoo burial ship replica update

by Irene Ashman

The building of a replica of the Sutton Hoo burial ship excavated in 1939 is progressing well with work starting on nailing up the hull. The reconstruction is 27m long and is being built at Woodbridge beside the river Deben.

A visit to Halesworth Museum.

by Ron Ashman

In December last year, with my friend Trevor, we visited the Halesworth Museum. Having been to the talk about the Lincolne Letters at the Society meeting on 13th October last year I felt as I had not been to the Museum previously it was about time that I did.

As well as the exhibition on the Lincolne Letters, the Museum has a display of Roman silver coins, the Cookley hoard, and the Blythburgh Iron Age gold coin hoard.

Other displays include the interesting Bramfield Hoard of middle Bronze Age axe heads, which were discovered in 1830. Also, the Wisset Hoard of palstave axeheads, spear heads and part of a sabre which date back 3,500 years. The latter items were found less than two miles from where they are now displayed.

The Museum is not very large but has many local history items on display including photographs of buildings in the Town as they were in the past compared to how they are today. An illustrated display relates to the murder of a young policeman, Ebenezer Tye, in 1862. His murderer was the last man to suffer public execution in Suffolk.

An additional feature is a small Study Room where visitors have the opportunity to research family history and the history of the town and surrounding area. Also, the Museum is free to enter, with donations accepted. If you want to visit the Museum it is easy to find as it is the Railway Station building.

The railway station itself has an interesting and unusual feature. In the late 19th century as the number of passengers grew due to the popularity of the railway, the station platforms were considered too short for the passenger numbers. To extend the platforms caused a problem as in one direction it was not possible due to the topography and in the other direction was the old Halesworth to Bungay road. The problem was solved in 1888 when movable platforms with embedded crossing gates were installed across the road. When the crossing was closed to road traffic the platforms were long enough for the train passengers, and when open to road traffic and closed to trains, the movable platforms provided a bridge across the railway lines. The road is no longer in use today so the platforms remain in the closed to road traffic position. (There is a working model in the Museum entrance).

To prevent accidents the controls to lock and unlock the mechanism were housed in the signal box.



This picture shows the moveable platforms on one side of the railway lines.

New Website

The Society now has a new website which can be viewed at www.lowestofthistorical.org.uk.

Although the site is still under construction, you can view past Annual Reports and Newsletters that have been posted there to date. So if you cannot find what you are looking for, try again later. The Society Talks programme is complete.

Young Women at War

by Ron Ashman

During World War II, many young women in this country joined the armed forces, although they were not allowed to bear arms and were classed as non-combatant. Some joined the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF), some joined the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS -Wrens) and some like my mother joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS). Initially the ATS spanned a wide variety of jobs such as, clerks, drivers, cooks, motor mechanics, cipher and intelligence officers. As the war progressed further roles were added such as part of heavy anti-aircraft gun crews, where my mother served, and searchlight crews. These young women came from many different backgrounds, as our late Queen Elizabeth II served in Motor Transport, when Princess Elizabeth. The Princess had an easier time than the other recruits as she did not have to remain in the barracks, she went home to Windsor Castle every night. I remember my mother telling me how cold the huts were during winter nights as they were issued with only a small amount of coal for the fire.

Some ATS recruits complained about the uniform, in my mothers case she did not like the woolly underwear and asked her mother to send her cotton replacements.

After two years of war, in 1941 the Anti-Aircraft Command that were defending this country against attacks from the air were suffering a shortage of manpower. The Commander in Chief, Lieutenant General Sir Frederick Pile put forward the proposal in April 1941 to overcome this shortage by utilising the ATS.

By law the ATS was a non-combatant service, but it was decided that the Defence Regulations allowed women to be employed in anti-aircraft roles other than the actual firing of the guns. Among their tasks was the operation of height, range finders and predictors, as well as other duties. This created the Mixed Heavy Anti-Aircraft batteries that proved to be successful in the defence of this country.



Although members of the ATS were not considered to be strong enough to handle the heavy 3.7 inch shells fired from the guns, they had to take their turn doing guard duty with the other members of the battery. However, unlike the men who carried a rifle, as they were non-combatant personnel they carried, as in my mother's case, a broom handle.

This picture shows the ATS using the range, height finder and predictor. This crew would send the settings for the gun crew to aim their gun at an aircraft based on observed speed and angle to the target.

My mother was a corporal in charge of one of these crews. *(she was not the NCO in this picture)*. The section would have been situated next to the gun battery shown on the left.

In the book *Army Girls* one lady who served in a Mixed Heavy Anti Aircraft regiment commented:

'When the alarm went you'd run like mad. You'd have your dinky curlers in and they'd be tinkling against the helmet. In camp it was always battledress, gaiters, trousers and boots, my mum went berserk when she heard I was wearing trousers.'

Later in the war as well as shooting down enemy aircraft, there was another target, the V1 doodlebug.

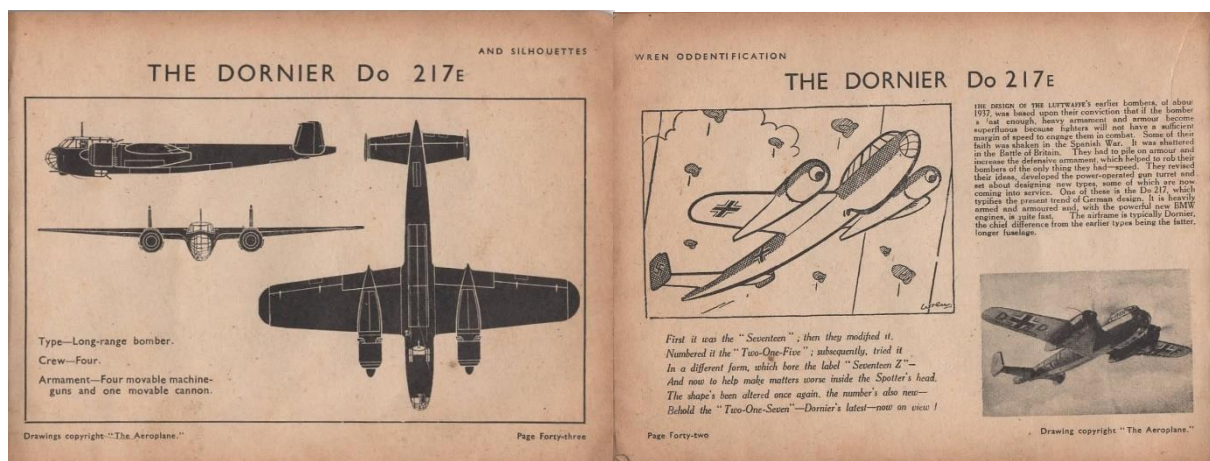
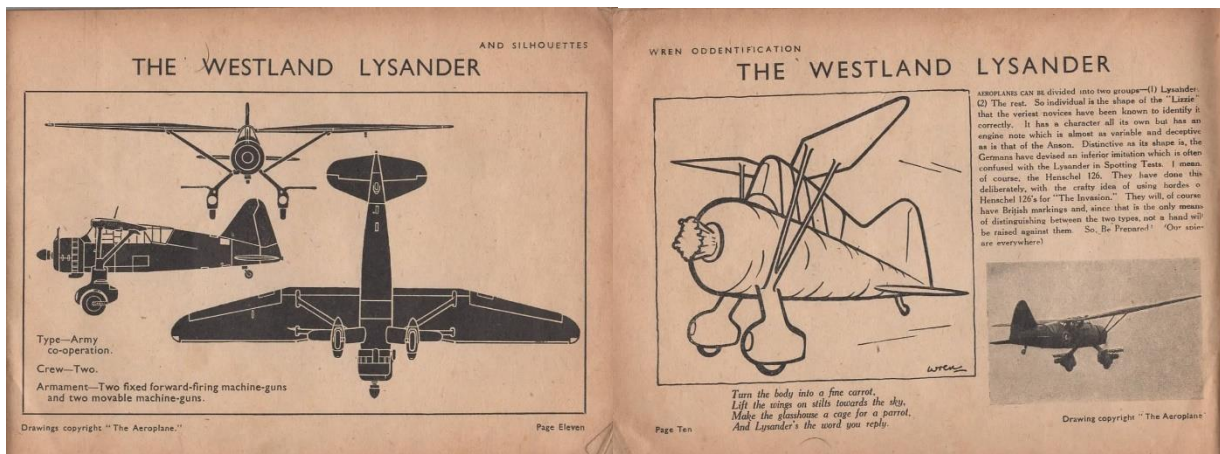


My parents met whilst stationed on a MHAA battery, as my father was a member of the gun crew.

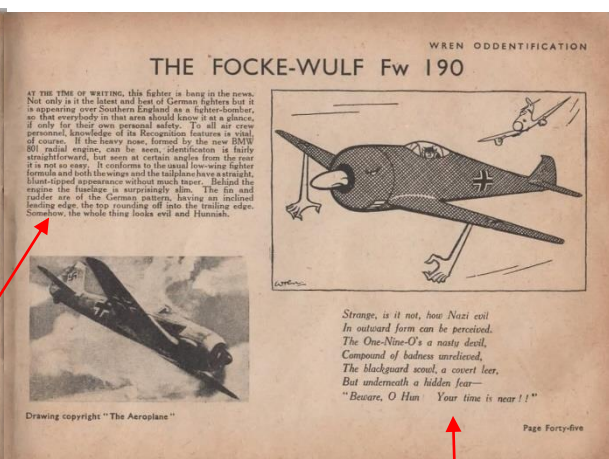
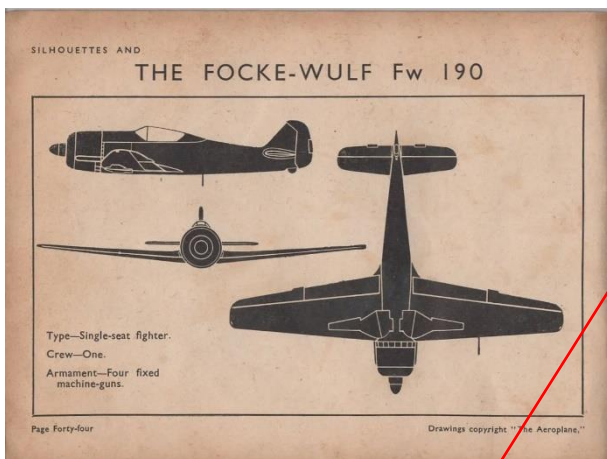
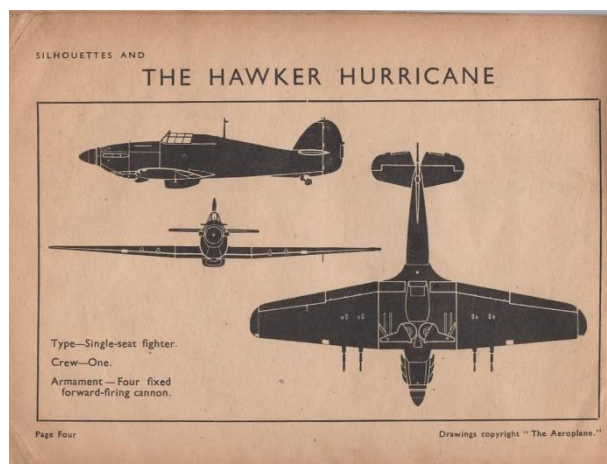
According to the Commonwealth Graves Commission 717 members of the ATS died in service. My mother lost a number of colleagues when a V1 destroyed their Mess.



As part of their training they had to be able to recognise our own aircraft as well as those of the enemy. The following examples are taken from the Manual of Aircraft Recognition 3rd A.A. Training Group, the cover of which is shown here.



For each aircraft the three profiles, or in the case of the Lancaster there were five, are shown together with a cartoon version to help recognition.



AT THE TIME OF WRITING, this fighter is bang in the news. Not only is it the latest and best of German fighters but it is appearing over Southern England as a fighter-bomber, so that everybody in that area should know it at a glance, if only for their own personal safety. To all air crew personnel, knowledge of its Recognition features is vital, of course. If the heavy nose, formed by the new BMW 801 radial engine, can be seen, identification is fairly straightforward, but seen at certain angles from the rear it is not so easy. It conforms to the usual low-wing fighter formula and both the wings and the tailplane have a straight, blunt-tipped appearance without much taper. Behind the engine the fuselage is surprisingly slim. The fin and rudder are of the German pattern, having an inclined leading edge, the top rounding off into the trailing edge. Somehow, the whole thing looks evil and Hunnish.

Strange, is it not, how Nazi evil
In outward form can be perceived.
The One-Nine-O's a nasty devil,
Compound of badness unrelieved,
The blackguard scowl, a covert leer,
But underneath a hidden fear—
"Beware, O Hun! Your time is near!!"

The booklet included the profile of 32 British, American and German aircraft.

23 Mar	In Search of Boudica	by Natasha Harlow
27 Apr	Bronze and Silver: Two short talks on objects in the Lowestoft Museum	by Rodney Duerden & Ron Ashman
11 May	A Long Way from Home : Lowestoft Evacuees- 80 years on	by Sandra Delf
25 May	Annual General Meeting	

If you have any articles that you would like published in this Newsletter, please contact the editors at a meeting or send your piece to email address LALHS@btinternet.com.

Items do not have to be typed, they can be hand written and do not have to be very long.

If you wish your name can be attributed to the article, or it can be left out.

Have you been to any interesting place or building in this country that might be of interest to other members that you could write about. Could you write a review of an historical book you have read. Or could you write about childhood memories. (e.g shops, wash days or school days).