

# **GOOD HISTORY**

**Journal  
of the  
Eynsham Junior  
History Group**



**Number 16  
Summer 2004**

# GOOD HISTORY

## The Journal of the Eynsham Junior History Group

CONTENTS	Page
● Editorial	3
● American Indians by Matthew Marks	3
● A Latin Exercise by Lily Page	5
● About Eynsham's History by Vivien Hughes	5
● Wayland's Smithy research by Douglas Fraser	6
● The Age of Victoria – research by Tom McCudden	7
● The Victorians, Rich and Poor by Luke Maskell	8
● The British Empire – research by Jac Sirat	8
● Thomas Edison, An American of the Victorian Period by Luke Maskell	9
● A visit to a Welsh Slate Mine by Matthew Marks	9
● The Signs of the Zodiac by Lawrence Hills	10
● Five Years in the Life of Mr G.V. Parslow by Thomas Sutherland	11
● My Family Tree by Abigail Sutherland	12
● Memories of D-Day 1944 – Operation Overlord: Over here, in Southampton, organising soldiers by Mrs Audrey Connor	13
Over here, watching planes in Hertfordshire by Prof. Margaret Marker	13
Over there, in France by Mr Peter Smith	15
● An Interview with Mrs Vass by David Richardson	15
● Another Tapestry	16

**Acknowledgements:** Thanks to Mrs Zena Vass and the Primary School Staff for their support, to Mrs Jane Batey for technical assistance and to Mr D. Richards for proof reading, Professor Marker for her help with the Group and to all those who have provided us with information and support, particularly friends at the Day Centre, not forgetting parents!

**Front Cover:** A view of Abbey Farm, Eynsham from a painting by D.S.Richards

Members of the Group who have taken part in the research and discussion which has been used for this edition – Douglas Fraser, Lawrence Hills, Vivien Hughes, Luke Maskell, Matthew Marks, Lily Page, Lottie Quinn, David Richardson, and Olivia Stratford.

## **EDITORIAL**

This year we have looked at a variety of subjects that fall under the general title of history. We have found out that local history means just that, the history of a particular location and we were very lucky to welcome Mrs Paige Smith from Birmingham, Alabama in the States to tell us about her local history, which involved the lives of the American Indian tribes.

We looked at the tools for finding out about things that happened in the past. We discovered that many early documents were written in Latin and so we had an introduction to that language. We looked at our own family histories and discovered that within a hundred years one can be back to one's great-grandparents. We also found that trying to produce a family tree is more difficult than it might seem once we start trying to place in aunts, uncles and cousins.

We did think about the future a little when we were presented with copies of some Arabic representations of the signs of the Zodiac. We were not convinced that any of us were prime examples of our own particular signs but it did make a few of us look up into the sky to see if we could see any of the relevant stars. At least one person saw the Transit of Venus as the shadow of the star passed across the sun on 8th June.

This year has seen the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D-Day and we have included three accounts of memories of that day. Thomas Sutherland and his father have continued to do research on what life was like for his great-grandfather in the Second World War.

This term the Middle School have looked at the development of Eynsham and have made visits to Wantage and the surrounding area while the Upper School have looked at the Victorians and made visits to the Isle of White and Wales. I thank all those who have contributed to this issue.

Pamela Richards, Editor

### **American Indians** by Matthew Marks

There were numbers of tribes of Indians in the States and many of them were moved from their original homeland in the east of the country further west. In 1808, the Cherokee Indians were moved from their land in Georgia to new homes in Alabama.

These were followed by the Creek Indians in 1830.



## CREEK INDIAN REMOVAL

---•---

Black Warriors Path played a critical role as a route for Creek Removal. On December 19, 1835, some 511 Creek emigrants passed along the path through present-day Oakville Indian Mounds Park. In September 1836, a group of Creeks left Tallassee in a wagon train of 45 wagons, 500 ponies, and 7,000 Indians. This contingent followed along Black Warriors' Path and passed through the present-day Oakville Indian Mounds Park on September 23. IBM. It's ironic that the route used by General John Coffee's army and Davy Crockett, to defeat the Creeks, was one of the same routes used in Creek Removal. Alabama remains the home of many Creek Indians today.

The Sioux Indians had been driven from their homes further north when European settlers came in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Two tribes, the Natches and the Poverty Point Indians managed to stay in their own lands.

The Poverty Point Indians lived by the Mississippi in Louisiana. Their lands consisted of forests to provide wood, and big plains that were ideal for growing crops. The soil also provided them with clay. However, the land was also subject to frequent flooding so that they built their houses on mounds. The one thing they did not have was stone, which they needed to make their tools so it was important for them to trade with other tribes, to get stone in exchange for the crops they could grow such as cotton, maize, tobacco and beans.

Like the Saxons and other settlers here in England in the Thames Valley, the Indians found that the river was the best means of transport and they used the wood from the forests to build their canoes. They took out the trunk of the tree and hollowed out the middle. They paddled up the Mississippi river to Arkansas, which has a range of mountains in the middle of it. There they traded their crops and clay pots for the stones of the mountain range. Then they took the stone back to the tribe where they used it to make their tools.

The building of a canoe involved many members of the community. There would be the experts who would direct other people in everything from the cutting of the tree to the painting of the hull. All the work was done using hand tools and would be very slow but with a large group, it could be made faster. They worked in regulated steps. First, a fine tree had to be chosen for the hull or main body of the canoe. Breadfruit wood was among the best for the purpose. Then the cutting down of the tree had to be done carefully and the smaller branches cut off. Then the tree needed to be dragged to the work area. For the carving of the hull expert carvers were needed mainly using a form of adze. Even with experts, it could take many days. As soon as the hull was finished, the women would prepare the ropes and the mats for the sail from coconut fibres and pandanus leaves. Next, the small mast had to be lashed to the hull using the coconut ropes. The men did the lashing and the women wove the sail, which then had to be installed.

The last step was the decoration of the whole canoe. They made their paint from pigment, charcoal and coral. The decorations had to be completely dry before the canoe could be moved which usually took about one or two days. Then the moment came when the canoe had to be tested on the water.

I hope that the art of canoe building has not been and will not be lost.



The Black Warrior River, Alabama, U.S.A.

#### **A Latin Exercise by Lily Page**

*Nomen meum Lily est*  
*Amo George, amas Toby.*  
*Amamus Deum, amamus Jesum.*  
*Amo cantare et navigare.*  
*Claire est mater.*  
*Nick est pater.*  
*Amo matrem et patrem.*  
*Amant nos mater et pater.*  
*Finis.*

My name is Lily.  
I love George, you love Toby.  
We love God and we love Jesus.  
I love to sing and sail.  
Claire is [my] mother.  
Nick is [my] father  
I love my mother and father.  
Mother and father love us.  
The End.

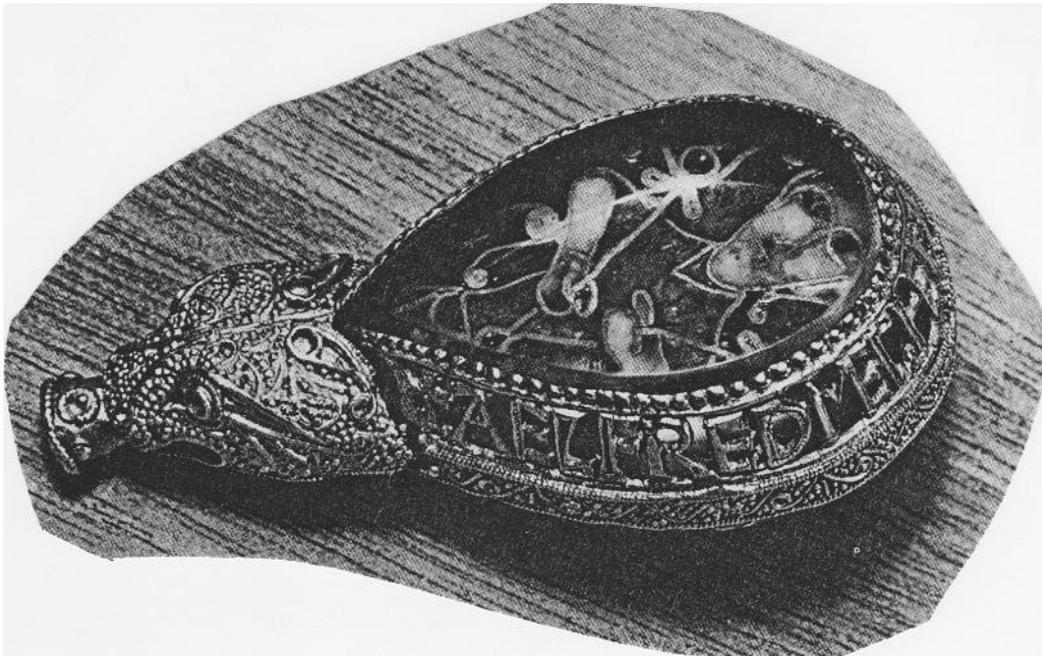
#### **About Eynsham's History by Vivien Hughes**

Eynsham was not a village in Anglo-Saxon times but a town. It was a very important town because of the Abbey. One of the abbots was very famous. His name was Aelfric. He taught boys to read and write.

There are still stones from the Abbey remaining around Eynsham. There is now an Abbey Trail, which shows the extent of the abbey and tells of the life of the monks.

Long before the Abbey was founded, mammoths roamed in the area and bones have been found locally in the gravel pits.

Another famous Anglo-Saxon, who as far as we know did not visit Eynsham, was King Alfred. In Oxford, they have a famous jewel called the Alfred jewel, which is on display in a glass case at the Ashmolean Museum.

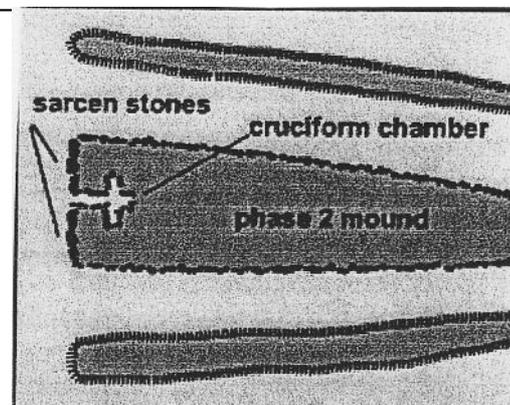


The Alfred Jewel. 9th century A.D.

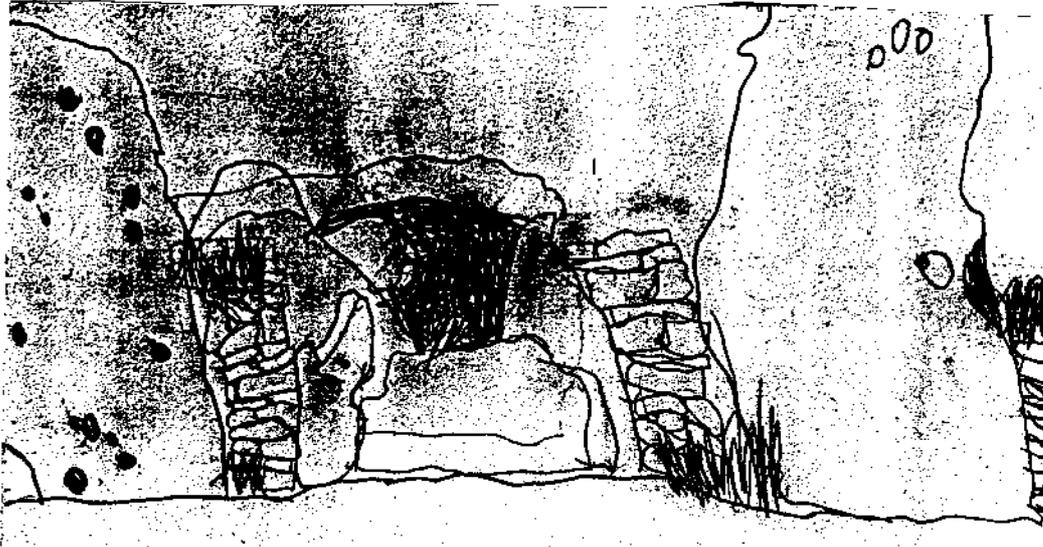
#### Wayland's Smithy research by Douglas Fraser

Wayland's Smithy is one of the most impressive and atmospheric Neolithic burial chambers in Britain. Somehow, this ancient grave became associated with Wayland, the Saxon God of metal working, from whom it takes its name. The burial chamber underwent two distinct phases of construction, identified during excavations in the 1960s. In the first phase an oval mound was erected, which covered a wooden and stone structure with a floor paved with Sarcen stones. The remains of 14 bodies were found from this period, all badly damaged as the roof had fallen in. No part of this structure now survives, as it was incorporated into the mound seen today.

It got its name when Saxon settlers came across the tomb and they imagined that it was the work of one of their gods, Wayland the Smith. A legend grew up that Wayland would re-shoe any traveller's horse if a silver penny was left beside the tomb.



Another story tells of an apprentice named Flibbertigibbet who was sent by Wayland to get some nails. Flibbertigibbet decided to search for birds eggs on the way and forgot the time. When he got back, very late, Wayland was angry and threw a Sarcen stone at him, which hit him on the heel so that he could not move. Because Flibbertigibbet cried, the burial chamber became associated with snivelling!



Wayland's Smithy, Wiltshire. Drawing by Douglas Fraser

[Editor's note: Sarcen/sarsen/sarsden/sarsdon — blocks of sandstone found scattered on the surface of the chalk downs especially in Wiltshire]

### **The Age of Victoria** — research by Tom McCudden

Victorian art tended to be solid, practical, and ornate — all the qualities that the Victorian new middle class most admired. Victorian architects designed wonderful railway stations, dramatic public buildings and museums, using new building materials — bricks, iron, steel and glass — and new manufacturing techniques. The Crystal Palace was a prime example.

The Crystal Palace,  
Hyde Park, 1851

By the 1890s, the Victorian age was drawing to an end, but the Queen had another ten years on the throne. Her Diamond Jubilee was to win her once more the acclaim of her loyal subjects as she rode in triumph through London.

The Victorians were avid readers. At the times when we sit down and watch television, they would have picked up a book. It was a great period for the art of novel writing. Dickens, Thackeray and Trollope wrote many novels, which tell us about the life of the people of the time.

The food that Victorians ate depended on how well they were paid. The rich ate well but the poor were often near to starving.

### **The Victorians, Rich and Poor** by Luke Maskell

The poor people often did everything in one room. They washed, slept, cooked and ate. The family was always big and this meant they lived in crowded conditions. If they lost a child, it meant there was more room for the rest. For transport, all they could do was walk. This was very hard for them. They all worked long hours for little pay. Usually the work was in terrible conditions. The work was in mills, factories, mines and rich houses probably. Compared with the rich people the poor people were ants to be squashed. These people were always worried about the next day, whether or not they would survive for another day.

The rich were very different from the poor. They lived without worrying about the next day, because they didn't work in bad conditions. In fact, many didn't even work. All they ever did was entertain and have tea parties, but mostly they walked around looking smart. The children were kept upstairs in their room playing with toys or taught by their governess. In those days people said children should be seen but not heard and preferably not even seen. They usually had horse carriages but later in Victoria's reign, there were trains so they travelled First Class instead. However, they did have the worry of being robbed, particularly by pickpockets.

### **The British Empire** — research by Jac Sirat

Along with France, Russia, Ottoman Turkey and China, Britain was firmly established as one of the world's great imperial power twenty years before Victoria came to the throne. Britain had power in Canada, the West Indies, India and Africa and during Victoria's reign, Australia was used as a place to send convicts. Queen Victoria was made Empress of India.



The proclamation of Queen Victoria as Empress of India at Delhi, India, January 1st 1877

The British Empire grew slowly. At its fullest extent, it covered one quarter of the world's land map. It reached its zenith immediately after the First World War, when the former German colonies in Africa and Asia were taken over.

Its colonies were scattered across the globe and resources were stretched too thinly. The military were unable to cope and when Britain began to have economic problems at home, the empire gradually went into decline.

### **Thomas Edison, an American of the Victorian Period** by Luke Maskell

Thomas Alva Edison was born on the 11<sup>th</sup> February 1847 in Milan, Ohio in the States of Dutch and Scottish ancestry. He died on 18<sup>th</sup> October 1931.

In 1871, he assisted Scholes the inventor of the typewriter in making the first successful working model of that device. After, in 1872, he worked on and patented several of his most important inventions, including the automatic telegraph system. He also invented the first *electric* typewriter although they did not come into widespread use until the 1950s.

In 1876, he invented the carbon telephone transmitter 'button', which finally made telephony a commercial success. Significantly, this invention not only led to the development of the microphone, which made early radio possible.

He also invented the phonograph, an early voice recorder. His most famous invention came in 1879, the light bulb. Two years later in 1881, he invented a system of wireless telegraphy to and from trains in motion or between moving trains and railway stations.

A phonograph

### **A visit to a Welsh Slate Mine** by Matthew Marks

The Llechwedd Slate Caverns are in Blaenau Ffestiniog. The slate mine was founded in 1846 by J.W. Greeves.

We went down on a train wearing hard helmets. Some people screamed as we went through the narrow tunnel. The first thing we saw when we got out of the train was a little cabin built into the rock. The workers spent half an hour a day in this cabin — 15 minutes for lunch and 15 minutes for talking or having a debate about something. The miners worked in groups of four, two in a cavern cutting the slate and two in the mill shaping the slate. There were five types of slate miner.

Title	Job description
Surveyor	Surveyed the mine
Miner	Mines the slate
Rodman	Splits the rock when it has been mined
Rubbleman	Clears the rubble, into a horse & cart.
Danger man	Climbs up a ladder to see how high the roof is.
Apprentice	Over 12 years, goes and learns how to do the job of mining

It was cold and dark in the cave, so they worked in light but they would have had to buy their candles, matches and tools themselves. A 'jumper' was used for smashing the slate.

The miners were paid at the end of the month by the number of slates made. There were roughly 1200 miners, now there are only about 25. The slate comes in levels of slate and chert. In the Llechwedd mines there are sixteen layers of rock..

### **The Signs of the Zodiac by Lawrence Hills**

There are twelve constellations altogether and they all have special dates. Your own sign will depend on which month you are born in. Depending on where you live you can sometimes see the constellations in the sky.

Being born under Capricorn, which is represented by a sea-goat, is supposed to mean that you are clever.



'Sagittarius', 'Capricorn' and 'Pisces' from *A Description of Constellations* by `Abdul-Rahman al-Sufi. The original manuscript was dated 986 AD. It was then translated into Persian in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and is now held in the National Library in Cairo, Egypt.

### **Five Years in the Life of Mr G.V. Parslow** by Thomas Sutherland.

Mr G.V. Parslow was my great-grandfather and during the Second World War, he served with 'A' company 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Ox & Bucks Light Infantry. This is a record of what happened to my great-grandfather and 'A' Company from January 1940.

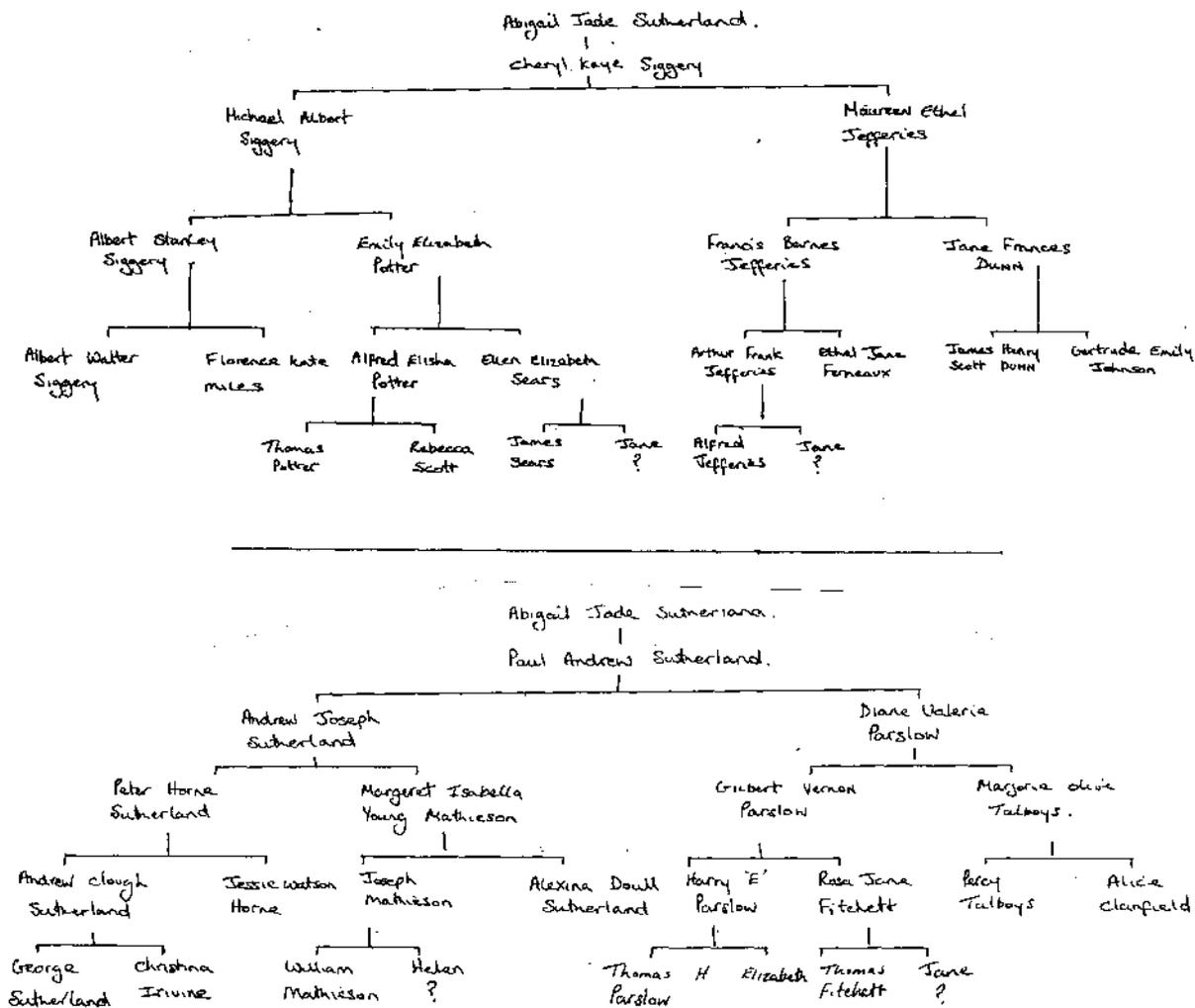
- 18<sup>th</sup> January Left Southampton 02:00 and arrived at Le Havre at 08.30.
- 29<sup>th</sup> January Arrived at Attiches, where we stayed until 9<sup>th</sup> May.
- 10<sup>th</sup> May Holland & Belgium invaded.
- 14<sup>th</sup> May Orders received to enter Belgium.
- 15<sup>th</sup> May Arrived at Alseberg [S. of Brussels]
- 17<sup>th</sup> May Withdrew to Halle & set up position by canals. Came under fire by heavy machine gun. Five casualties.
- 18<sup>th</sup> May Moved to Charleroi canal at ATH.
- 19<sup>th</sup> May Withdrew to Bleharies. [S.E. of Tournai] On the way attacked by nine enemy bombers. 48 men of 'A' company killed.
- 21<sup>st</sup> May Company attack German lines at the Escaut River and canal. Machine gunners caused heavy German losses.
- 22<sup>nd</sup> May Shelled all day. Food getting low.
- 23<sup>rd</sup> May Battalion move back into France.
- 24<sup>th</sup> May Channel ports now in danger. Told to move to Calais. Later told to move to Cassel.
- 25<sup>th</sup> May Took up defensive positions. Food runs out.
- 27<sup>th</sup> May At 08.00 6<sup>th</sup> Panzer Division attack. Tanks are beaten off and we lose 30 in the process.
- 28<sup>th</sup> May Germans shell us all day. No food. Leaflets dropped by Germans to encourage us to give up.
- 29<sup>th</sup> May Position is surrounded by tanks. Cassel is bombed again. Major Thorne 2<sup>nd</sup> in command at headquarters. Troops break out and meet the Germans at Winnezele. Major Graham leads 'A' company in a bayonet charge which clears the way.
- 30<sup>th</sup> May Ordered to march to Hondshoote via Watou. Leading column encountered a strong force of Germans and after a stiff fight were compelled to surrender.

The rear column detoured to the south of the village, but became surrounded. Hand-to-hand fighting took place. In this action CSM Bailey D.C.M. of 'A' company although wounded took part in a charge on a machine gun post. He was killed by the last burst of fire. 9 officers and thany men died in the last action. 'A' company made a run for the woods but within 100 yards 8 of the 15 men fell dead. They found cover in a bean field and later surrendered to a force of tanks. The official surrender took place in Watou church where the machine gunners were split up from the infantry by the German troops. They were never seen again. The troops eventually ended up in prison camps in Germany and Poland after a long march of 6 months.

Having been captured at Watou [W. of Ypres] on 30<sup>th</sup> May my great-grandfather spent the rest of the war in a prison camp in Poland and returned to Oxford on 20th May 1945 weighing six and a half stone.

### My Family Tree by Abigail Sutherland

[Abigail has traced the line of her descent on her mother's and her father's side. Naturally Mr Gilbert Vernon Parslow is represented.]



## **MEMORIES OF D-DAY 1944 – OPERATION OVERLORD**

### **Over here, in Southampton, organising soldiers** by Audrey Connor

In June 1944 as Miss Audrey Whittaker, I was working in a small secret room in a big house in Southampton, which was guarded by lots of soldiers. I was working with Major G.E. Connor in what was the operations room for organising the ships out of Southampton for the great invasion. Everything we did was top secret and we were not allowed to talk about anything we were doing outside of the room. There was always a guard outside the room and we had to show our passes to get into the building and up the stairs. We realised that all that we did was important for the success of the mission and the safety of as many soldiers and sailors as possible. We worked non-stop. It was a very strange time and I did things, which seem surprising now. Transport was difficult and on one occasion to get across Southampton in the fastest possible time and without encountering other people, I rode on the back of a soldier's bike.

Those engaged in secret work: Miss Whittaker is in the second row, fifth in from the right. Major Connor is in the middle of the front row.

### **Over Here, watching planes in Hertfordshire** by Margaret Marker

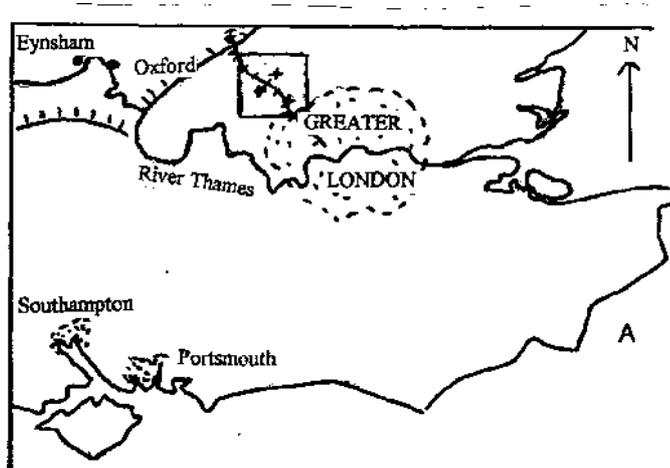
I was 12 years old in June 1944. I lived in a small village (Potten End) in Hertfordshire. With my Mother, I and my sister and young brother were evacuated in 1940 to this village. We lived there till 1945. My grandparents came out of the bombing of London to live with us, as it was a big house and garden and Mother needed help. My two great aunts who taught in Watford (about 10 miles away) came in all the school holidays. My Father, employed in government work in London, came down by train at most weekends and sometimes, on Wednesday nights. Where he lived in London the bombing was very bad and sleep almost impossible. We could hear the air raid sirens for Watford, which got the London alarms and Hemel Hempstead, which was our area.

On D-Day (or D-Day - 1), which was a warm sunny summer day either Saturday or Sunday, there was a great deal of aircraft noise overhead. We were used to that as Bovingdon Aerodrome was only across the valley from us. Father was up surprisingly early and went straight into the garden. My Mother took him tea and I went out too.

The whole sky was full of planes all moving from east to southwest over our heads. They were flying fairly high and Father pointed out to me that they were towing gliders. When he had counted up to 2000 planes each with a glider, he came into the kitchen to my Mother and Grandmother and said 'It has begun!' The planes went over the whole day and part of the night. They must have come from all over Britain to be so many. Next day the radio told us that the invasion of Europe had started. Father had known what it meant but he did not tell the family then, as it was still secret.

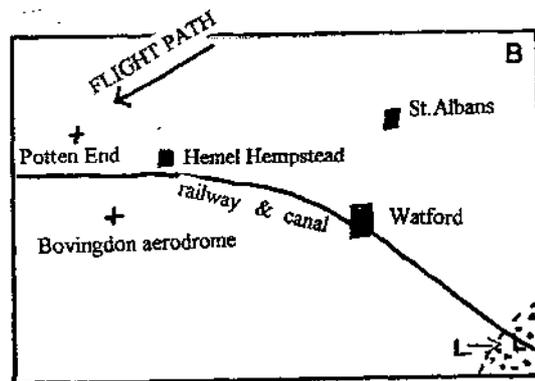
I have never forgotten the sight of the sky with so many aircraft in it. I thought Father said something about Bovingdon (our local aerodrome) but it was south of us and certainly did not have all those planes. Planes usually meant Bovingdon!

**Map A** is a map of southeast England. It shows Eynsham and Greater London. Portsmouth and Southampton were the main D-Day ports. The small square on Map A with 3 crosses (Potten End, Bovingdon and Hemel Hempstead) is enlarged on Map B to show detail.



**Map B.**

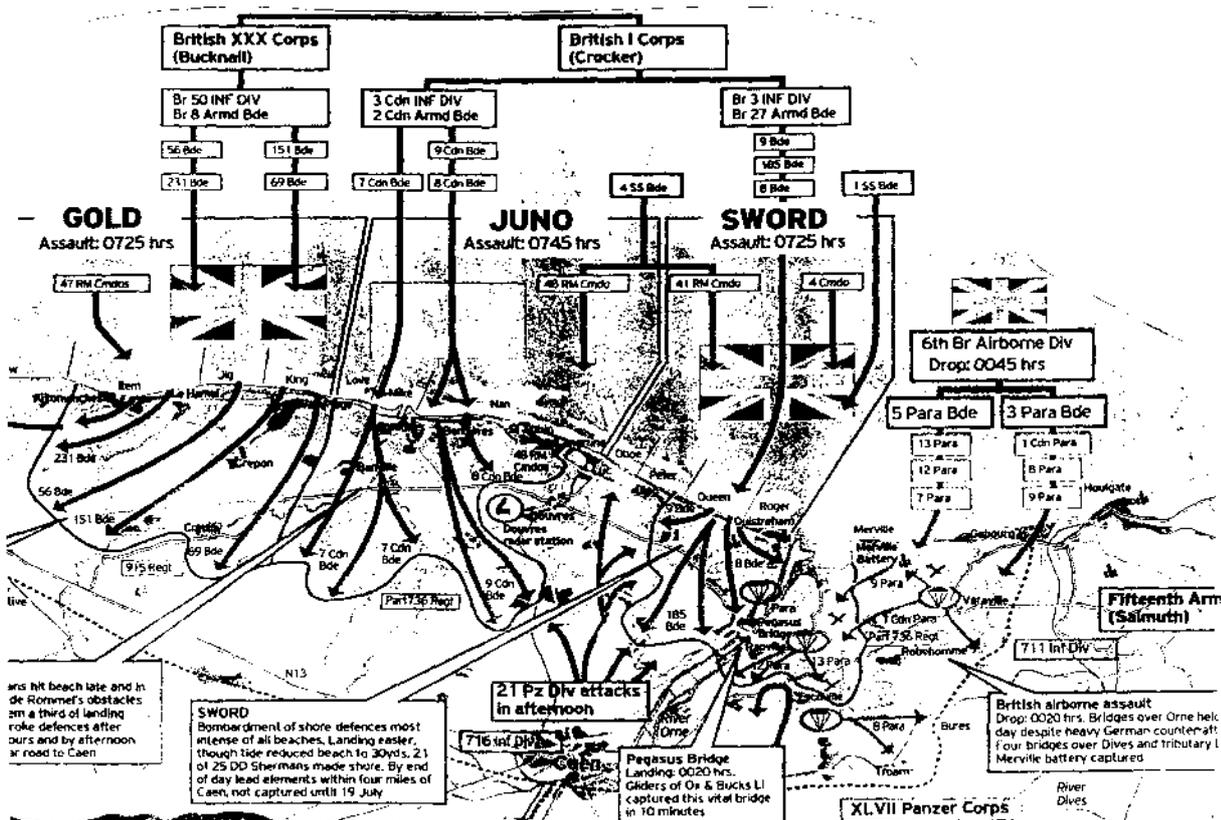
The main towns such as Hemel Hempstead, Watford and London are in the Watford Gap valley, which is quite narrow and has a mainline railway, a canal as well as a main road (A41). Potten End and Bovingdon Aerodrome were on the flat high areas on either side of this valley. They are about 120m higher than the valley floor. L= NW London



## Over there, in France. by Peter Smith

On D-Day I went ashore at 28 minutes past the initial landing. I was with a Field Ambulance, which was part of the 8th British Ambulance Division. Our first objective was to link up with the Airborne Division at Pegasus Bridge in the afternoon of the 6th June. It was hell. I was wounded when a piece of shrapnel pierced the side of my helmet. However, I did not have to go to hospital.

From Pegasus Bridge we went to Arromanches and then over a matter of days we went into Caen which was more hell. Something I would not wish on anyone. We were the only Division that served from D-Day to VE Day.



Part of the area covered by the D-Day landings in France

## An Interview with Mrs Vass by David Richardson

- Q. Is this your first time being a teacher or a Head teacher?  
 A. No, I have been a teacher and a Head teacher at other schools.  
 Q. How long are you going to stay?  
 A. I don't have a clue.  
 Q. Where do you live?  
 A. I live in Headington, Oxford.  
 Q. Are there any bad things about this school?  
 A. None so far.

- Q. What other schools have you been to?  
 A. *I have been to Thame, Northleigh and many others.*  
 Q. What are the differences compared with this school?  
 A. *The differences would be size, more teaching, mixed classes and the playground.*  
 Q. Has this school got a different dinner set-up?  
 A. *Some schools had their dinners sent by taxis, others had a kitchen and a canteen, and some used the main hall.*  
 Q. Have you enjoyed it so far?  
 A. *I have enjoyed it very much.*

[Mrs Vass joined the school in January 2004.]

### Another Tapestry

To prove that Eynsham Primary School still knows how to sew, last summer before he left, Mr Keates was presented with a sampler similar to that given to Miss Price in 2000. Every child contributed at least one stitch.

