

XV: LIVES LESS ORDINARY: 1939-1942. Pt. 1. FORCED TO TAKE SIDES

- A NERVOUS WAIT -

The Second World War, brought about by Adolf Hitler's "*attempt to establish a world empire of unprecedented dimensions*,"¹ was a turning point in our family's members' lives. Although it reunited the Third Reich-based members of the once Prussian collective one last time, those beyond grew further distanced.

Erdmuth² Nannj Sophie Tjrralla, my hoity-toity great grandmother for whom children were little more than accessories, was now approaching sixty. Having just settled in Germany's second largest city, 'Hansestadt Hamburg,' she had sought to put herself as far from the dangers of conflict as possible. A widower who had lost her husband in the first of those world wars, she spent the 1925-1939 period in Berlin, having left her birthplace in Leipzig. In the early thirties, her acrobat showgirl daughters had gone one step farther, departing not just their hometown but the 'Fatherland' altogether. Her eldest (and 32 year old namesake) went to Amsterdam, where she started a family after marrying a theatre stage manager. Her youngest, Margot, moved to Great Britain in 1935, following her marriage to a Jewish Leeds-born comedian. She, like her sister, surrendered her citizenship to take on that of her husband, and in turn her host country. Just shy of her 28th birthday, Margot was now a housebound young mum too, whose son, Harvey, was fast approaching his fourth. Evidently Frau Tjrralla had failed to engender much sense of *bodenständigkeit* in her daughters – belonging to their Heimat – despite (or perhaps because of) the heavy emphasis during childhood on Prussian values such as subordination, industry and austerity.

On September 3rd, a sunny Sunday morning, the British Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, broadcast his words of doom to a silenced nation: "*It is evil things we shall be fighting against, brute force, bad faith, injustice, oppression, and persecution.*" Besides their mother in Hamburg, the sisters had family spread across Nazi Germany too. 'Onkel Fritz' and their eldest cousin, his namesake, were just outside Leipzig, their birthplace, whilst his three other sons, Heinz, Hans and Martin were in Frankfurt, Dresden and Vienna respectively. In one way or another all would end up fighting Hitler's war. It had been over seven years since they had last seen one another, back when all but their eldest cousin were still unmarried. Great Britain, however, had now thrown in its lot with France to resist "*reluctantly but resolutely*" their girls' 'Heimat's' course of conquest,³ while Holland banked on neutrality. My forebears thus found themselves on opposite sides.

¹ Questions on German History. Paths to Parliamentary Democracy. German Bundestag. 1998. Pg. 304

² Meaning 'courage and loyalty to the earth'

³ England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979. David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 209

Neither Nannj nor Margot had witnessed the fighting and destruction of the First World War at close hand. However, the memories of that conflict were still fresh – it had, after all, cost their father his life barely 20 years prior. I wonder if there was a creeping realization that their children were their respective ages as this war broke out, perhaps leaving them fearful at the same time of history repeating itself?

For now, Hitler's attention was to the east and on Poland, although few could reasonably expect the war to be over by Christmas. Relentless in his pursuit of territory, as long as he lived, one country after another seemed destined to fall. Only his defeat would seemingly bring an end, and that meant *"People were full of fear about the future."*⁴ No wonder the trains filled with soldiers travelling east were depressing. There was no jubilation, no songs, unlike 1914.⁵

Calm before the storm.
Hamburg's
Steckelhornfleet
and the
Nikolaikirche,
1940
Source: zvab.com



Hamburg lay almost a thousand kilometres away from the brutality that was then unfolding. A century earlier, the then 'Free City'⁶ had been described as: *"a jewel among the cities of Germany, with its canals and lakes, medieval streets and thriving port, looking back on more than a millennium of cultured tradition."*⁷ Despite the great fire of 1842, which destroyed a third of its *Altstadt*, the city maintained the previous property lines and so much of its original charm and character remained.⁸

In the ensuing years, the city's population had grown to 1.7 million,⁹ thanks in part to its having become a major point of departure, not just for emigrants travelling to the New World, as Nannj and Margot themselves had done in the Golden Twenties, but for goods too. Following their passage and prior to the war's outbreak, in February 1939 their mother traded cosmopolitan Berlin for spacious Hamburg.

⁴ Citing Albert Speer, Adolf Hitler's chief architect who went on to become Reich Minister of Armaments and War Production for most of World War II in *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 486. Furthermore, *"The prospect of a long drawn out war excited few,"* wrote Anthony Read and David Fisher in *Berlin Rising: Biography of a City*. W. W. Norton, 1994.

⁵ *A German Generation*. Yale University Press. 2012. Tomas A. Kohut. Pg. 107. Indeed, *"The mass of the German people" felt war "was being... thrust upon them,"* quoting Neville Henderson, a British diplomat and Ambassador of the United Kingdom to Nazi Germany from 1937 to 1939 and a long-time appeaser in *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 486. That said, writes Dresden-diarist, Victor Klemperer *"popular opinion absolutely certain of victory"* in *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc. 1999. Sept. 3, 1939. Pg. 307

⁶ Since 1815 and until the Greater Hamburg Act's entry into force on April 1st, 1937, Hamburg had enjoyed total sovereignty as a member of the German Confederation and had governed itself quite independently of its powerful Prussian neighbour. See also: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_Hamburg_Act

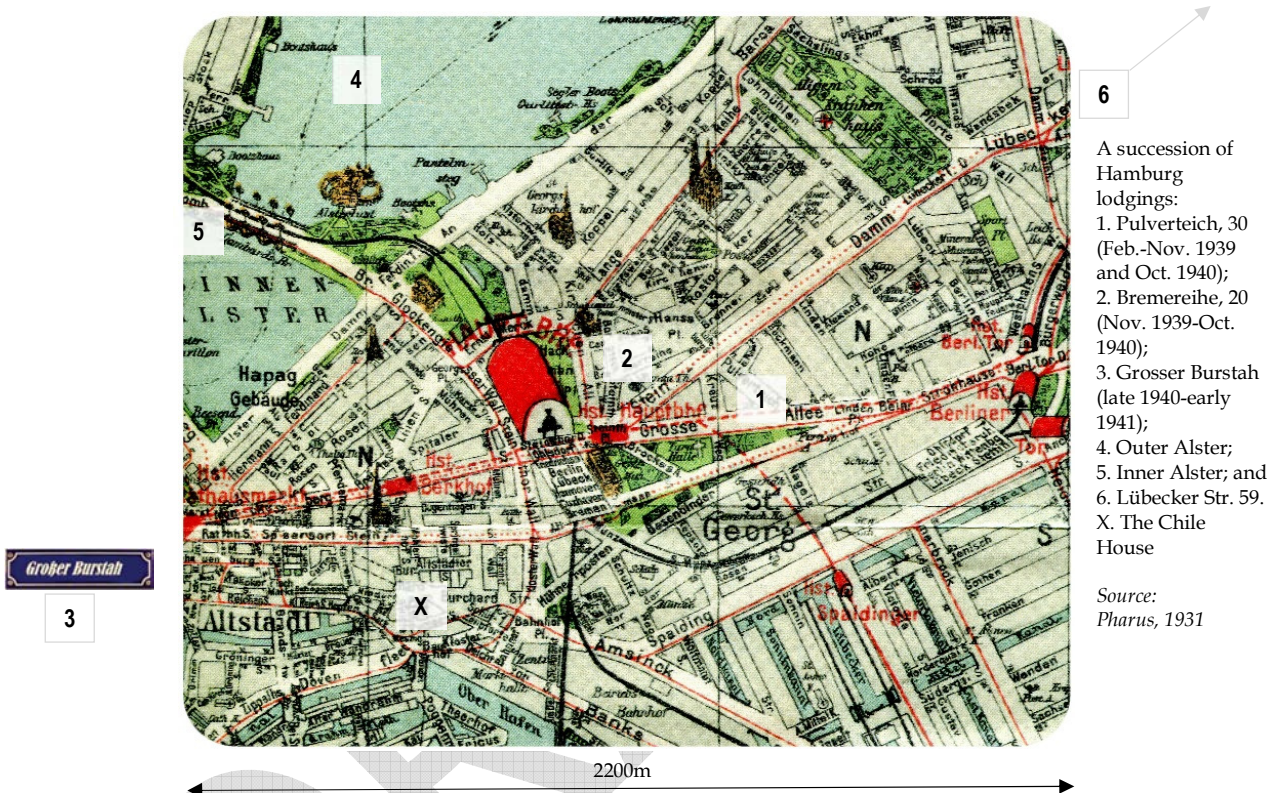
⁷ *The Jews and Germans of Hamburg. The Destruction of a Civilisation 1790-1945*. J. Grenville. Routledge, 2012. Pg. 5

⁸ The great fire of 1842 occurred in the early morning hours of May 5th and by daybreak much of the *Altstadt* (indicated on the map above) was on fire. The city was dense with wooden and half-timbered houses, which tended to be tall and narrow, reflecting the shape of the building plots. Some 1,700 residences and several important public buildings were destroyed. The fire required major rebuilding of the city inside of that area flanked by the main railway station and led to improvements in its infrastructure while building with wood was no longer permitted. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Fire_of_Hamburg

⁹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamburg

"Here the canals and the Binnenalster create a feeling of space and freedom," she wrote her daughters.¹⁰ "Quite a contrast to the feeling of being caged in by all the buildings in Berlin."

Although now geographically closer to her daughters, the distance was still great, and with the war's advent, she recognized the growing challenge of staying in touch. She wasted no time in putting pen to paper, although like others, she must have asked herself; "Why must we go to war, when we want peace?"¹¹



A succession of Hamburg lodgings:

1. Pulverteich, 30 (Feb.-Nov. 1939 and Oct. 1940);
 2. Bremereihe, 20 (Nov. 1939-Oct. 1940);
 3. Großer Burstah (late 1940-early 1941);
 4. Outer Alster;
 5. Inner Alster; and
 6. Lüneburger Str. 59.
- X. The Chile House

Source:
Pharus, 1931

That 1939, Frau Tjyralla had found herself an apartment at Pulverteich, 30 (see '1' on the map) in the handsome district of St. Georg, just south of the outer Alster lake ('4'). It had developed during the latter decades of the nineteenth century,¹² and put her some fifteen minutes walk from Hamburg's Altstadt, the iconic impressionist Chile House ('X'), built in 1922 in the form of a passenger ship, a picture of which can be found on pg. 630¹³ and the district's other monumental buildings.

Looking at the Adressbücher, there were as many as six new residents at Nr. 30 during 1939, though according to the listing, none included her. Four were females and three occupied the newly appointed upper groundfloor (a picture of which is included at the end of Chapter XIV).¹⁴ Sub-letting then seems to have been the order of the day.

30 E. Deutsche Beamten-
Krankenversicherung,
Vers.-Verein A. G.,
Koblenz, Adr. Gr. Allee 88
Keul, Wwe. A. O'E
Platow, J., Kfm. O'E
Pieper, Frau F. O'E
Stürtz, Frau M., Schneid. I.
Harden, Frl. G., Kont. I.
Vogel, B. II
Koeh, W., Fensterreinig. III
Heuer, H., Hausw. IV

"Everybody needs
good Neighbours"
One of those
listed was Frau
Tjyralla's host at
Pulverteich from
late 1939

Source: Hamburg
Adressbuch. 1940

¹⁰ Sampling: A Different Kind of Courage. Gretel's Story. Gretel Wachtel & Claudia Strachan. Mainstream, 2009. Pg. 74

¹¹ Berlin Underground: 1938-1945. Ruth Andreas-Friedrich. Paragon House. 1989. Pg. 3

¹² See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Georg,_Hamburg

¹³ See: chilehaus.de/en/The-building.html#architecture

¹⁴ See: agora.sub.uni-hamburg.de/subhh-adress/digbib/start

Where the jet
set hang out:
Hamburg's
Alsterpavillon.
Source:
J.A.S. Grenville



The inner (Binnen) Alster lake ('5') to St. Georg's southwest was a jewel much prized by the city's residents. It "sparkled in the spring sunshine and Hamburg's church spires glowed green against a hazy sky," recalled Christabel Bielenberg, a resident Englishwoman who wrote of her life under the Nazis. Frau Tÿralla was no different to those reverent "pale-faced middle-aged couples, padding the streets of a Sunday, like peaceful penguins."

Rathausplatz
today and the
entrance to
Hamburg's
U-Bahn –
Germany's
third oldest –
an everyday
means of
crossing the
city since
1906



She was one of those high-society café types too, delicately eating cake and flirting with men – something she could do now that she'd left her affluent, yet mysterious, 'Albert' behind in Berlin. But make no mistake, Hamburg was under the Nazis' spell too. The Rathausmarkt (pictured left) had long since been renamed the Adolf Hitler Platz and Nazi flags "fluttered and flapped from every public building."¹⁵

The British and French, having declared war in Poland's defence (much to the genuine surprise and chagrin of Hitler, Goebbels, the minister for Propaganda, and Goering - chief of the Luftwaffe – not to mention a good many Germans),¹⁶ were unable to affect the outcome of the invasion on September 1st 1939.

Although Poland strongly resisted, it was no match for Hitler's army, which relied on a new type of warfare, tanks, within a so-called 'Blitzkrieg' or lightning war.¹⁷ German forces rapidly retook practically all of Imperial Germany's former territory, annexing it to the Reich. Seventeen days later, Soviet troops invaded from the east and Poland was on its knees by the end of the month.

Tragically, along the entire Eastern Front, atrocity and genocide were woven into the fabric of the war from its start.¹⁸ Behind the advancing front line troops came the *Einsatzgruppen*, special execution squads drawn from the 'SS,' Germany's *Schutzstaffel* or paramilitaries and the police, whose task was "not only to crush resistance ... but to slaughter whole categories ... of Polish communities."¹⁹ Having been deemed racial enemies, all Poles in the newly annexed Reich were to be removed and replaced by Germans.²⁰

¹⁵ *The Past is Myself & The Road Ahead: An Englishwoman's life in Berlin under the Nazis*. Christabel Bielenberg. Corgi, 2011. Pgs. 27, 30, 31

¹⁶ Berliners' trepidation at the start of the war turned to cold anger as the British objected to Germans 'defending themselves against Polish aggression,' and the right of an innocent nation to reclaiming its own territory. *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 486

¹⁷ *A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis*. Martyn Whittock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 225

¹⁸ *A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis*. Martyn Whittock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 230

¹⁹ *The Struggles for Poland*. Neal Ascherson. Michael Joseph Ltd., 1987.

²⁰ Further reading: *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 487-8

Despite the British and French responses to the invasion, neither took offensive action in the west. French troops lived an uneasy truce, peering out from their concrete bunkers hoping the Germans would leave them alone,²¹ while the British waged a 'Phoney War.' A naval blockade was quickly put in place at sea which looked to restrict the supplies of minerals, metals, food and textiles that Germany theoretically needed to sustain its war effort. The Allies intercepted neutral merchant ships and seized deliveries *en route* to the enemy, but also bought war materials from neutral countries to prevent them going to the enemy.²² Germany might have lost its overseas markets,²³ but the Allies' six month '*Sitzkrieg*' only bolstered her ambition. "*Many sensed it was the lull before the storm.*"²⁴

Hitler responded by accusing England of being '*Enemy of peace No.1*,'²⁵ although there were those inside Germany who drew hope from the fact that she had never "*admitted defeat without a fight*" nor "*blindly taken up a lost cause.*"²⁶ Although few could imagine it, that hope would have to last almost six years.

Within hours of the Allied riposte, the air raid sirens rang out across Germany, "*up and down, down and up, a long-drawn howl,*"²⁷ upon which civilians retreated to their cellars. They were being drilled from the outset. Black-out was ordered from Sunday September 3rd,²⁸ which meant stars sparkled once more in city skies. Listening to foreign radio was now forbidden and punishable by imprisonment.²⁹

Over Hamburg, Britain's Royal Air Force ran the first of a series of '*Nickel Raids*,' dropping propaganda leaflets (see also the textbox overleaf).³⁰ Their intent was to subvert popular opinion against Hitler amidst the prospect of a long drawn out war. Not only might they have been deemed late but futile too, since Germany had already put in camps or killed the majority of the opposition while those left hardly had the courage to speak one's convictions under a dictatorship. This wasn't democratic Britain after all, where one was freer to voice opposition.

²¹ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 490

²² The blockade wasn't entirely effective because the Axis powers could get crucial materials from the Soviet Union until June 1941. See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blockade_of_Germany_\(1939-45\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blockade_of_Germany_(1939-45))

²³ *The Jews and Germans of Hamburg. The Destruction of a Civilisation 1790-1945*. J. Grenville. Routledge, 2012. Pg. 230

²⁴ *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979*. David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 190

²⁵ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc. 1999. Oct. 18, 1939. Pg. 317

²⁶ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc. 1999. Sept. 18, 1939. Pg. 312

²⁷ *Berlin Underground: 1938-1945*. Ruth Andreas-Friedrich. Paragon House. 1989. Pg. 49

²⁸ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc. 1999. Sept. 3, 1939. Pg. 306

²⁹ *Leben in Leipzig, 1900-1970*. C. Foerster. Die Reihe Archivbilder. Sutton Verlag, 1997. Pg. 60. N.B. *The proportion of German households owing a wireless in Sept. 1939 was about 70 percent – one of the highest in the world, comparable with US ownership of 82.8 percent in 1940 (in Berlin by contrast, over 80 per cent of families had a radio by 1939. Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 440

³⁰ webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070706011932/http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/diary1939.html

Ultimately those leaflets failed to reach their target, being dropped from altitudes too high to hit their mark, instead drifting out over lakes and rural areas.³¹ And for those daring to pick one up and read their contents (a highly dangerous act in itself), the “*ambiguous statements of policy which gave the impression that England had all the time in the world to settle her dispute with Herr Hitler*” will have brought neither solace nor inspiration. Bielenberg, who had left Hamburg for Berlin just as Frau Tjyralla arrived, scorned them.³² Her husband, already enlisted in the German military machine, was set on doing something more immediate that would truly make a difference to end the authoritarian regime.

15.1: ‘Nickel Raid’ Warning: Great Britain to the German People

Britain’s Royal Air Force (RAF) kicked off its World War II campaign by dropping propaganda leaflets over Hamburg during so-called ‘nickel raids.’ Were Frau Tjyralla to have stumbled upon one, this is what she will have read:

“*Germans,*

With full and deliberate intention, the government of the Reich has forced war upon Great Britain. They well knew that the consequences of their action would plunge the people into greater disaster, as was the case in 1914. In April, the Chancellor of the Reich gave to you and to the world his assurance of peaceful intentions. This proved as worthless as his proclamation of a year ago in the Sportpalast: ‘We have no further territorial demands upon Europe.’

Never has a government sent its people to death on flimsier pretext. This war is quite unnecessary. German territory and German rights have not been threatened anywhere. No country obstructed the occupation of the Rhineland, the consummation of the Anschluss, and the consequent bloodless incorporation of the Sudetenland into the Reich. Neither we, nor any other country, sought to prevent the growth of the German Reich — so long as it did not threaten the independence of non-German peoples.

All just German demands might have been peacefully settled by arbitration. President Roosevelt has offered you peace with honor, as well as friendly relations in trade and commerce. Instead of these things, you have accepted the invitation to a general massacre, misery and starvation, soon to be brought on by a war which you can never hope to win.

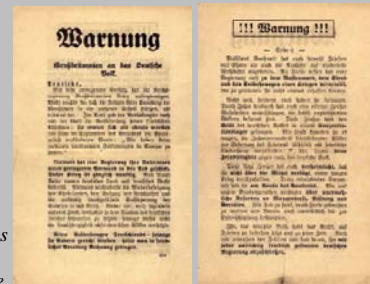
Your government has betrayed not us, but you, its people. In these last years, you have been blinded by a vicious brutality known only to the most primitive. These beliefs keep the soul of the real Germany clutched and beaten down in concentration camps. How else could your government have dared to block with falsehoods and enmity our strivings to achieve, through arbitration, some assurance of peace and friendly intent for the future? We, the British, cherish no feelings of enmity toward you, the German people.

This Nazi influence has persuaded you that you are not committing yourselves to a long struggle. But in spite of ruthless leadership, you are on the verge of bankruptcy. We and our allies have access to vast reserves of manpower, equipment and provisions. We are too strong to be vanquished in battle, and would pursue you vigorously and mercilessly to the bitter end.

You, the German people, have the right to demand peace now, and for all time to come. We, also, wish for peace and are prepared to co-operate with every just and friendly overture of the German government.”¹

Technical challenges ultimately meant that only four percent of the RAF’s leaflets ever reached the intended target, so efforts were undertaken to develop a container that wouldn’t immediately burst in the plane’s slipstream. It wasn’t until the Third Reich was on the verge of collapse that the Germans finally began to take note of their content, Propaganda Minister, Joseph Goebbels, noting in his diary on March 23rd, 1945: “*Anglo-American leaflets are no longer carelessly thrown aside but are read attentively.*” Curiously, however, it was at Sharnbrook, a village lying to the north of my hometown, Bedford, that the container problem was eventually solved through the development of the so-called *Monroe Propaganda Bomb* by United States Army Air Forces Captain James L. Monroe.²

1. This translation appears in the book “*Wings of the Morning*” by Jean Brown and was retrieved from flyingforyourlife.com/misc/lr; 2. *Spy Capital of Britain. Bedfordshire’s Secret War, 1939-1945.* Stephen Bunker. Bedford Chronicles, 2007. Pgs. 130, 216. Image: www.spywar.org/product_1939EH273.php



³¹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Airborne_leaflet_propaganda#World_War_II

³² *The Past is Myself & The Road Ahead: An Englishwoman's life in Berlin under the Nazis.* Christabel Bielenberg. Corgi, 2011. Pg. 72

Even before the invasion of Poland, on August 27th, 1939, rationing had been introduced in Germany, in the hope of ensuring foodstuffs such as bread, cereal products, meat, butter, cheese, sugar and eggs would be distributed as equally as possible among citizens.³³ War posters reminded good Germans that *"The courage of the soldiers, the industry of the workers and the thrift of the German housewife guarantee victory,"* while in shops they reminded, *"Buy only from Germans!"* in reference to Jewish produce.³⁴

Soon after the measure was introduced, everything that was not on the ration cards disappeared like magic from every shop counter and out of every shop window. Suddenly cows no longer had hearts, livers, kidneys or tails. Hens too vanished off the face of the earth, *"Unless you were known to some shopkeeper, ...wholesaler or better still farmer, and were able to come by a deal by dint of the ingratiating smile, [or] the tender enquiry after wife and children,"* recalls Bielenburg.³⁵

Those in less privileged positions, obviously Jews, faced not only shoppers' discrimination but greater shortages, being subjected to special arrangements. Their ration cards – overprinted with red J's – allowed only a vastly reduced allocation whilst restricting their holders to shop only at certain times – normally after most goods had been sold.³⁶ That aside, *Gerd Ehrlich*, a non-practising Jew who went on to become a member of Berlin's Jewish underground, perhaps surprisingly recalls *"In the first months of the war, Jews were treated almost as fully human beings."*³⁷

Some 600km away, across the German-Dutch border, Frau Týralla's eldest's family had just been joined by a new addition; *Irene Alexandra*. Their home ('1' on the map overleaf) was in Amsterdam's 'De Pijp.' Nanný's thirteen years senior husband was *Cor Ridderhof*, who managed the stage and lights at Amsterdam's principal theatre, *Carré* ('2'). It was down to the 45 year old to ensure his three belles, including Irene's sister, *Kleine Tiny*, were provided for.



Tiny (7) takes newborn Irene for a stroll in the nearby Sarphati Park. Late autumn 1939

³³ More exactly, rations permitted 2.4 kg bread per week, 0.5 kg of meat, 0.27 kg of fat, 62.5 grams of cheese, 100 grams of marmalade and 250 gram of sugar. Besides this, a certain quantity of prepared foods per month and 400 grams of substitute coffee was rationed while whole milk was for children and invalids only. *Berlin Underground: 1938-1945*. Ruth Andreas-Friedrich. Paragon House. 1989. Pg. 46

³⁴ *A Different Kind of Courage. Gretel's Story*. Gretel Wachtel and Claudia Strachan. Mainstream, 2009. Pg. 42

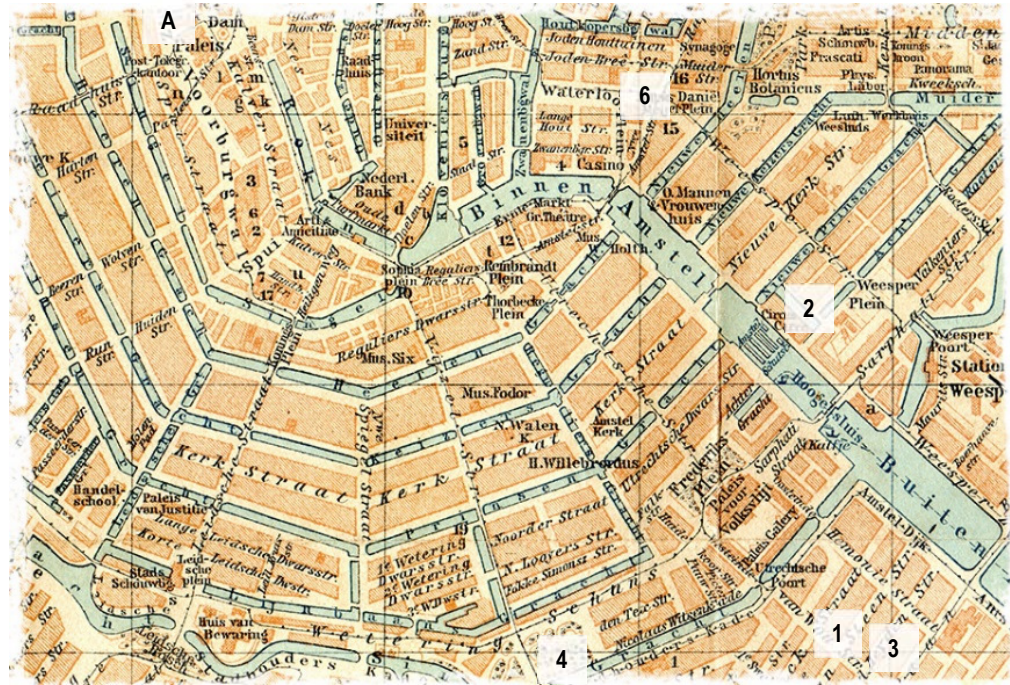
³⁵ *The Past is Myself & The Road Ahead: An Englishwoman's life in Berlin under the Nazis*. Christabel Bielenberg. Corgi, 2011. Pg. 66

³⁶ *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945*. Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 83. N.b. Rabbi Shlomo Wahrman of Leipzig states that *"The outbreak of World War II brought new oppressive regulations against the Jewish community. Although there was a food shortage throughout Germany in the late 1930s and many items were in short supply, there was at that time no distinction made between Aryans and Jews. Ration cards were issued to all on an equal basis. This changed drastically when the letter 'J' began to be stamped on the coupons issued to Jews."* *Lest We Forget: Growing up in Nazi Leipzig, 1933-1939*. Rabbi Shlomo Wahrman. Mesorah Pubs Ltd. 1991. Pg. 132

³⁷ *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943*. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 69. See also: articles.baltimoresun.com/1998-07-11/news/1998192063_1_nazi-germany-ehrich-underground

Kleine Tiny's Amsterdam:

1. The Ridderhofs' home at Tweede Jan Steen Straat;
 2. Theater Carré, Cor Ridderhof's workstead until its temporary closure in Sept. 1944;
 3. Kleine Tiny's school in Tweede Jan Steen Straat;
 4. Wetering-plantsoen, scene of the 1945 cull;
 5. Sarphatipark, at the foot of Tweede Jan Steen Straat
 6. The hub of Amsterdam's Jewish Quarter, the Jodenbuurt
- A. The Dam and Koninklijk Paleis Amsterdam
- N.b. The uncanny similarity between the names of



2000m

5



Above:
With cousin Hans
Right:
Neighbourhood
Girl! Sporting a
fashionable hair
bow and
Tyrolean knit-
dress close to
home. Cca. Late
spring 1940



Seen from the eyes of a seven year old, those early months of the war changed little. She told me:

„I still played marbles on the pavement outside our home at 92, Tweede Jan Steen Straat. Uncle Dick ('Ome Dick Ridderhof'), nine years younger than Cor, continued to drop by from neighbouring Badhoevedorp ('this' side of Schiphol, the well-known airport to Amsterdam's southwest where he worked) together with his wife, Tante Rie and my four years younger cousin, Hans.³⁸ We were close friends. On Sundays, we would head to theirs for lazy afternoons while on odd weekends we'd take off to Onkel Emsay's, my father's four year elder brother and his wife, Tante Johanna, whose home lay to the south of Amsterdam too. There I'd hang out with five years senior cousin Ans,³⁹ not to mention her dog!"

³⁸ Born Hans Ridderhof in Rotterdam on November 16th, 1936. See:

reocities.com/Heartland/Hills/9782/Ridderhof.html NB: two more siblings followed, in 1943 and then 1947.

³⁹ Born Anna Paulina Ridderhof in Amsterdam on April 13th, 1927. NB: Ans had an older sister, born Catharina Anna Ridderhof in Roosendaal on July 13th, 1921. See: reocities.com/Heartland/Hills/9782/Ridderhof.html

Family values played an important role in shaping attitudes and reactions to the occupation regime that followed, noted Werner Warmbrunn in *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. In the years before the Second World War, Dutch family life seemed to have yielded very little to the disintegrating influences of twentieth century civilization. Families were cohesive units where children stayed at home until they married, often beyond their mid-twenties (in stark contrast to that environment in which Nannÿ grew up). The employment of married women was uncommon, even during the 1930s. Notoriously therefore, Dutch civilization was dubbed 'living room culture.'⁴⁰



Once upon a time a German
Fräulein:
Nannÿ
Ridderhof, cca.
1939
N.b. Husband,
Cor, religiously
avoided the
camera!

This insular view helps explain why most Dutch people firmly believed in their country's neutrality and expected circumstances to remain as they had during the first world war: peace but with an influx of refugees, food shortages and problems in trade.⁴¹ Transit trade with Germany practically ceased as a result of the British blockade of the seas and ports, whilst it became more difficult to secure raw materials too. Dutch ships were sunk by mines in the English Channel and these conditions combined contributed to a decrease in the total volume of industrial and commercial activity. Unemployment rose, despite the fact that approximately 300,000 had been mobilised. As a result, the cost of living increased by about ten percent between August 1939 and May 1940.⁴² Those material shortages inevitably further centralized family life.⁴³

Except the Dutch had grown unused to the dangers of war. Like many of us today, they no longer knew what these were.⁴⁴ It was not since October 1830, when the fall of Antwerp sealed the independence of Belgium from Holland, that Dutch armies had faced action in the field.⁴⁵ That was an event that had occurred way back in Cor's parents' grandparents' generation!

Yet the Germans provoked the Dutch no sooner than Poland had been invaded, broadcasting and publishing: "*Dutch and Danish neutrality violated by British Bombers.*"⁴⁶ Amidst determined efforts to maintain credible its impartiality, the Dutch refused to cooperate with the British, protesting "*loudly at every real or alleged incursion on their territorial waters or airspace,*"⁴⁷ which had the consequence of making any form of concerted British and French planning impossible.⁴⁸

⁴⁰ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 99-101. N.B. The average age at marriage was 29 for men, 26 for women.

⁴¹ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 248

⁴² *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 5

⁴³ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 99-101

⁴⁴ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 248

⁴⁵ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 44

⁴⁶ *Europe in Flames: Understanding World War II*. Harold J. Goldberg (Ed.) Stackpole Books, 2010. Online [here](#). Pg. 32

⁴⁷ Dresden-based Victor Klemperer noting: "*English reconnaissance planes entering Germany from Holland.*" *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc. 1999. Jan. 21, 1940. Pg. 327.

⁴⁸ *British Perceptions of the Netherlands and the Threat of War, 1938-1940*. Bob Moore. In *Unspoken Allies: Anglo-Dutch Relations Since 1780*. Nigel John Ashton and Duco Hellema (Eds). Amsterdam University Press, 2014. Pg. 145, 146. Online [here](#).

The spectre of German invasion, however, was largely ignored. As early as May 1939, the German High Command had been intent on attacking in the West through Holland and Belgium, while on November 5th, the first ‘heads-up’ was received, when a German anti-Nazi colonel warned the Dutch and Belgian military attaches in Berlin to expect an attack a week later.⁴⁹ The Germans, however, repeatedly postponed, “*partly because of the weather conditions.*”⁵⁰ It was only a question of time, but the Dutch remained complacent. English, French and German radio stations spelled out the threat thanks to their war reports and coded messages, despite many frequencies being jammed.⁵¹ Nannj surely knew better, having witnessed ‘Versailles.’

Farther west, beyond the North Sea, the war was more than apparent to Nannj’s sister, Margot, and her husband, Johnnie Riscoe (real name Carl Berkson). They had lived in London’s St. Pancras in Cromer Street (‘1’ in the map below) since early 1938.⁵² White Heather House was a new apartment complex⁵³ and artists’ lodge,⁵⁴ ideal for traveling performers but perhaps less so for the couple’s four year old son. Life in the capital marked a change for the parents, whose paths first crossed in Amsterdam in 1934, where Margot performed as a showgirl and he in lead supporting roles in *variété revues*. Having gone with her husband to Leeds in 1935 (where they wed less than a year prior), they returned to Holland for the second half of 1936. After returning to the UK, Johnnie spent the next year criss-crossing the UK, both as a solo performer and as a lead in touring revues. That had been too much. Margot was not one to be sat at home alone, especially under Johnnie’s mother’s watchful eye. She felt they all needed to be together and so had argued the case for London.



The Riscoes’ St. Pancras home and environs. Above and 1. White Heather House in Cromer St., home until 1940.

2. Argyle Street School and nursery;
3. Prospect Terrace School for Infants and Juniors (later bombed);
4. Leigh Street Infant School
5. Area of high explosive bomb damage during the Blitz, Oct. 1940.

Sources: [Google Maps](#) and [Ordnance Survey Plan](#) Published 1940 – 1951

⁴⁹ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist’s Life in a Turbulent World.* Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 46

⁵⁰ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945.* Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 6

⁵¹ *The Hiding Place.* Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 61

⁵² *In a Few Lines.* Johnnie Riscoe. *The Performer.* January 6th, 1938. Pg. 12

⁵³ Built between 1934 and 1937 according to:

adlib.camden.gov.uk/dispatcher.aspx?action=detail&database=ChoiceOralhistory&pref=900000585

⁵⁴ *The White Heather* was the name of an 1897 play by English playwrights, Cecil Raleigh and Henry Hamilton that was later made into a silent movie. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_White_Heather

Since September, 1939, Britain's 'defence measures' had included black-outs, the effects of which were offset at ground level by painting trees, kerbs and lamp-posts white.⁵⁵ Sandbags lined footpaths, strips of paper were tacked to windows and barrage balloons floated up in the sky. The city's parks were converted into six thousand allotments⁵⁶ in a bid to cope with the UK's forthcoming (January 8th, 1940)⁵⁷ rationing of bacon, ham, butter, sugar and meat.⁵⁸ Carrot marmalade too made its debut.⁵⁹ Furthermore, in a single hysterical week at the start of the war, three quarters of a million healthy animals were put down!⁶⁰



Black-out measures at the Roundhay Road junction on Harehills Lane, November 22nd, 1939 (the Riscoes' former Leeds Chapeltown home was at the other end of Harehills Lane).

Source: Leodis.Net

More bothersome for the Riscoes was the fact that all places of entertainment were immediately closed, so as to offset the dangers facing large numbers of persons assembled in places where it was not feasible to provide adequate protection.⁶¹ Yet one impresario boasted his confidence in a letter to *The Times* that his business would not be adversely affected,⁶² for which he was right since in a matter of days, many theatres and cinemas reopened⁶³ "in order to sustain the spirit of the people." There were also constant false alarms during those first months of the war.⁶⁴

Petrol rationing saw roads lie deserted, resulting in "a fresh tang in the air," the downside of which was crowding on the trains.⁶⁵ "Even silk stockings have been rationed in the National Interest!" Margot could be heard grumbling - especially given that the public dance halls were packed by the young and old, dancing two-step to the likes of Glenn Miller's *'In the Mood.'*⁶⁶ It was rather a case of folks seeking to be merry while they still could.⁶⁷

The spectre of conscription loomed, when on September 3rd, 1939 the National Service (Armed Forces) Act imposed liability on all men aged 18 to 41 years old (Johnnie was not even 29).⁶⁸ Only medical conditions or engagement in 'vital' industries and occupations exempted menfolk, for example, ship building, many engineering-related trades or the medical profession.⁶⁹ Many artists opted to wait and see rather than volunteer. Philip Ziegler recalled in *'London at War'* how actors

⁵⁵ *England in the Twentieth Century, 1914-1979*. David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 191

⁵⁶ *London at War, 1939-1945*. Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 44-45

⁵⁷ *The Blitz. Britain responds, then endures*. Ronan Thomas. 2010. Online at: westendatwar.org.uk/page_id_152_path_0p2p.aspx. See also: mylearning.org/leeds-in-world-war-ii/p-836

⁵⁸ *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 15

⁵⁹ *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 15

⁶⁰ *The Secret History of the Blitz*. Joshua Levine. Simon & Schuster, 2015. Pg. 299

⁶¹ *As The Performer Sees It*. The Performer, Sept. 7th, 1939. Pg. 2

⁶² *London at War, 1939-1945*. Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 48

⁶³ *Reopening of Theatres*. *The Performer*. September 14th, 1939. Pg. 7

⁶⁴ *Muriel Green's Diary for 1940. Thursday March 25th, 1940*. In *Wartime Women. A Mass-Observation Anthology 1937-1945*. Dorothy Sheridan. Phoenix Press, 2002. Pg. 89

⁶⁵ *London at War, 1939-1945*. Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 47, 48

⁶⁶ Listen to it at: songfacts.com/detail.php?id=3844

⁶⁷ *London at War, 1939-1945*. Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 51, 53, 56

⁶⁸ See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Service_\(Armed_Forces\)_Act_1939](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Service_(Armed_Forces)_Act_1939)

⁶⁹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conscription_in_the_United_Kingdom#Second_World_War

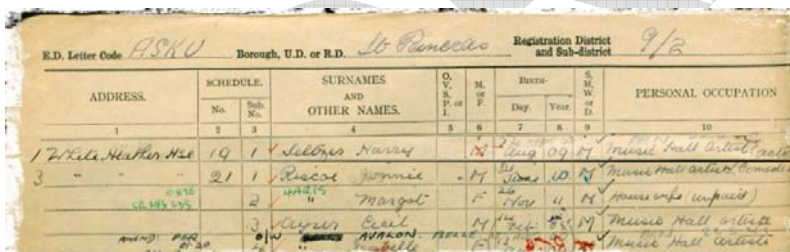
would instead turn up at the Golders Green Hippodrome to perform *'The Importance of Being Earnest'* with gasmarks in hand. John Gielgud, for instance, relayed the message: *"We are all delighted to be back at work. It won't last long for some of us. Jack Hawkins and I are waiting to be called up and many more stars are in our position."* In *'How We Lived Then,'* Norman Longmate writes that the prevailing attitude among performers was; *'When they need us, they'll tell us so.'*⁷⁰



Romano's Restaurant on The Strand, where Johnnie compered when not performing.
Source: arthurhulloyd.co.uk

Fortunately for the Riscoes, *"The authorities concluded that good actors might be more useful on the stage than in the services and ruled that they could obtain exemption provided they were not out of work for more than two months at a time."*⁷¹ By the autumn of 1939, Johnnie had already been booked for 20 weeks at *The Prince of Wales Theatre* in London's West End, while in between shows he compered at *Romano's*,⁷² an elegant restaurant on The Strand that *"catered to the upper middle class and had a reputation for good cuisine and a selection of fine after dinner coffees."*⁷³ Still if being booked was that important, why all references to him in the variety artists' trade paper, *The Performer* (which until early 1939 had listed him almost weekly) vanish here on after, remains something of a mystery. Regardless, it was another entertainment industry weekly, *The Stage*, that now brought him his media coverage anyway.⁷⁴

Although Johnnie's work diary was full and he was no longer touring, from Margot's perspective he remained at a distance. What with his rehearsing and not getting in until the early hours of the morning, she found she still spent the majority of her time alone. Very alone in fact, as I was soon to learn.



The Riscoes' 'national registration' of September 29th, 1939, which led to the issuing of identity cards which helped ensure they got their rations.

Sources: nationalarchives.gov.uk

A month after the outbreak of war, the UK undertook a 'national register' on the weekend of September 29th, 1939, to take stock as it were of the civilian population of England and Wales.⁷⁵ On that date, 65,000 enumerators registered every man, woman and child in a single weekend, regardless of their nationality,

⁷⁰ *How We Lived Then. A History of Every Day During the Second World War.* Norman Longmate. Arrow, 1974. Pg. 81

⁷¹ *London at War. 1939-1945.* Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 48

⁷² Johnnie Riscoe. *The Stage*. November 30th, 1939, Pg. 5

⁷³ See: www.arthurhulloyd.co.uk/TheStrand/strand.htm

⁷⁴ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Stage

⁷⁵ See: nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/news/the-1939-register-is-now-available-online NB: today it is the only surviving record of the population between 1921 and 1951. That of 1952 is closed until 2052.

even if they were a tourist.⁷⁶ Among other things, the information was used to issue identity cards, plan mass evacuations, establish rationing (and therefore issue ration cards) and coordinate other war-time provisions.⁷⁷

The Riscoes' records confirm they lived at *White Heather House*, sharing their building and even flat with a brace of other artists of similar ages including Cecil Ayers, Avalon and Isabelle Belle.⁷⁸ Margot was registered as an 'unpaid housewife,' Johnnie, a 'Music Hall' (the English term for *variété*) artist/comedian. Conspicuous by his absence, however, was Harvey.

When I quizzed family members over Harvey's possible evacuation they bore no recollection. "His grandmother would never have had it" *Kleine Tiny* told me in February 2016, while his sister-to-be knew of no such happening either. However, one of the Riscoes' neighbours, Queenie Chapman, who was interviewed in 2005 by the King's Cross Community Development Trust, pointedly reminisced "*the kids were evacuated. We got gas masks.*"⁷⁹

Earlier that summer the *Government Evacuation Scheme* had been publicised through the local authorities. Its aim was to save British civilians, particularly children, from the risks posed by the aerial bombing of cities. Alongside those who left London privately, almost 70 percent of London's schoolchildren had been registered for evacuation by August 1939.⁸⁰

Britain had already been divided into zones in 1938 that were labelled 'evacuation,' 'neutral,' or 'reception.' Priority evacuees were expected to be moved from the major urban centres and billeted rurally once war broke out.⁸¹ Two days prior to its declaration, on September 1st, 1939, 'Operation Pied Piper' got underway, with huge numbers of schoolchildren, teachers and vulnerable groups going on the move. Almost three million were evacuated during those first four days of the month. It was the biggest and most concentrated population movement in British history.⁸² London, being an obvious target, shifted over 600,000 of its schoolchildren out of town.⁸³



'Operation Pied Piper' got underway on September 1st, 1939 evacuating schoolchildren, teachers and vulnerable groups to safe areas

⁷⁶ Using the 1939 Register: Recording the UK population Before the War. National Archives Podcast Series Audrey Collins. December 12th, 2015. Online [here](#)

⁷⁷ See: nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/news/the-1939-register-is-now-available-online

⁷⁸ Retrieved from findmypast.co.uk [here](#). The full page of register entries reveals there were at least 15 flats, perhaps more within the building.

⁷⁹ King's Cross Voices. 13. Argyle Square Sound Trail. 2006. Online here: camden.gov.uk/ccm/content/leisure/local-history/kings-cross-voices.en?page=13#section-13

⁸⁰ *The Evacuation of Children from the County of London During the Second World War*. Information Leaflet Number 32. London Metropolitan Archives, 2010. Pg. 2. Online at: cityoflondon.gov.uk

⁸¹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evacuations_of_civilians_in_Britain_during_World_War_II

⁸² See: defensemedianetwork.com/stories/operation-pied-piper-the-evacuation-of-english-children-during-world-war-ii

⁸³ *The Evacuation of Children from the County of London During the Second World War*. Information Leaflet Number 32. London Metropolitan Archives, 2010. Pg. 2. Online at: cityoflondon.gov.uk N.b. Sources such as Dorothy Sheridan's *Wartime Women* (Phoenix Press, 2002) quotes a figure of two million London evacuations.

Four year olds like Harvey were eligible, although given the close relationship Margot's mother-in-law had already forged with her only grandson (they were close neighbours in Leeds), it seemed obvious to begin by looking for him there. Searching the national register, I learned that *Rae* (short for Rachel) *Crowe*⁸⁴ lived at 'Ravenswood' in the northern suburb of *Chapel Allerton* which was described at the time as a 'definitely superior guest house.'⁸⁵ She resided there together with her seven years junior partner, *Teddy Crowe* (they were yet to be married although curiously she had already adopted his name, while he too was given to be married).⁸⁶ Yet Harvey was neither there.⁸⁷

It took a while to find the Riscoes' son, even if the task to hand was relatively straightforward: present his death certificate to the UK's *National Archives*.



Bedwell House within Bedwell Park, cca. 1910

Source: hertfordshire-genealogy.co.uk

After many months to-ing and fro-ing between myself and those who had documented his death, finally his whereabouts were revealed; the 'once upon a time' medieval manor house and Grade II listed building in *Bedwell Park* close to Hatfield in Hertfordshire.⁸⁸ That he was formally evacuated, however, only became clear after stumbling on an interview posted online by the Hertford Museum dating back to 1995 with a former Women's Voluntary Service helper.⁸⁹

In her interview, Emmelie Boughey, the daughter-in-law of the then owner, Lieutenant-Colonel Sir Francis Edward Fremantle (a British physician and Conservative Member of Parliament for St Albans since 1919),⁹⁰ explained:

⁸⁴ Harvey's paternal grandmother, *Rachel Crowe nee Tompofski* was born in Leeds on September 9th, 1890 into a large Jewish family of eight siblings, more about whom is described in text box 15.7: "*The relentless march of the middle classes*" on Pg. 644. Almost 49 years old, she had no profession according to the 1939 population register while Johnnie's estranged father, *Samuel Berkson* (he and Rae never divorced) lived in Manchester (his birthplace) with *Evelyn Leycaw*, according to Findmypast.co.uk.

⁸⁵ *Yorkshire Evening Post*, March 12th, 1940, Pg. 2

⁸⁶ *Edmund Arthur Crowe* (born April 21st, 1897 in the village of Horbury near Wakefield in West Yorkshire) was a 'commercial traveler' who was away at the time of the registration. In fact his date of birth was improperly recorded as 1891 (making him 46, not 42).

⁸⁷ Two of the house's nine records remain closed - either because those persons are still alive today or because they died after 1991, which is when *The National Archives* took over the register from the *National Health Service* administration and the monitoring of deaths ceased.

⁸⁸ The National Archives catalogue reference: RG 101/1652E/9/11, retrieved May 24th, 2016 and confirmed in an email from Erica Peacock via foienquiry@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk as 'successful search' #F0045871 which also remarks that Harvey was "under school age."

⁸⁹ Boughey, Mrs Emmelie. Recording No. O1995.6. Hertford Oral History Group, February 8th, 1995. Transcript online at: hertfordmuseum.org/oralhistory/view-transcript.php?id=160

⁹⁰ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francis_Fremantle and: thepeerage.com/p17502.htm

"In the Munich crisis, London had a mini-evacuation⁹¹ and something like 20 children came down from that nursery school [near King's Cross] ... My father-in-law arranged that should war break out he would have many more ... At the beginning of the war, in fact before the war was actually declared, a troupe of 80 children between the ages of two and five which had been at nursery school ... all came down to Bedwell Park ... He had no idea that they would send 80!"

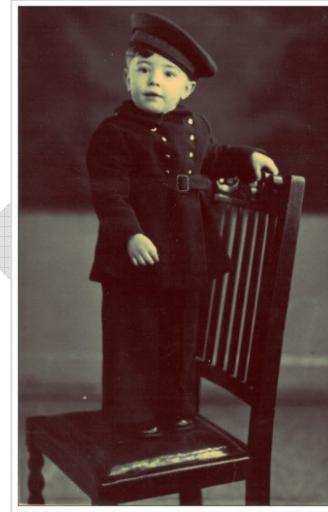
Like so many other youngsters who departed King's Cross Station identified by a luggage label in early September 1939, Harvey too had bid farewell to his parents. Off he went on his 'adventure,' away from the threat of German bombs and into the unknown. I wonder what went through his parents' minds as they walked the 500 metres or so back home.

I imagine *Bedwell House* loomed like a castle as the youngsters pulled up. Despite its aristocratic airs and graces, however, to my mind it looks more like a mental asylum (or perhaps Hogwarts 'wizarding school of magic' if I am being kind). The grounds' principal house was described in 1977 as a "rambling Tudor building, gabled with diapered brickwork and graced by an embattled tower dating from 1861 with an early seventeenth century staircase."⁹² Make that an ideal setting for a horror movie then!

Dwelling on it though, I can't help but think of *Kinderheim Horstsee* (pictured in Chapter IX), that children's home where Harvey's mother had been interned as an 11 year old in late 1922. Recalled Emmelie Boughey in 1995:

*"It had 33 bedrooms but only 3 bathrooms. The old-fashioned baths got their drains blocked up very early on with socks. One has got to remember that the people who were looking after the children at Bedwell Park were helpers who had been day helpers at the nursery school in London and they hadn't really got much idea about how to look after children 24 hours a day ... I think they had 20 people in all including cook and the cook's two daughters to look after them ... We put 3 children into the bath at the same time and that helped."*⁹³

Yet parents were kept strictly in the dark as to where their youngsters were being squirreled off to, obviously to prevent them from bringing them back home.

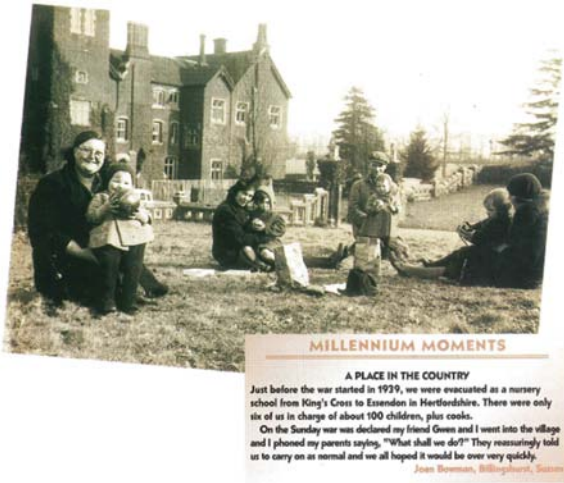


"Please look after this bear."
Bedwell Park
'Evacuee'
Harvey at four

⁹¹ *The Evacuation of Children from the County of London During the Second World War*. Information Leaflet Number 32. London Metropolitan Archives, 2010. Pg. 2. Online at: cityoflondon.gov.uk. N.B. In July 1938, "schoolchildren could be moved in school parties in the care of teachers" while in September 1938: "LCC [London County Council] put own evacuation plan into action during Munich crisis by moving nursery and disabled children."

⁹² Citing 'Cherry and Pevsner, 1977, Pg. 141' in *Bedwell Park, Essendon, Hatfield, Hertfordshire. An Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment for Millgate Homes*. Steve Preston, Thames Valley Archaeological Services Ltd. March 2006. Pg. 9. Online here.

⁹³ Boughey, Mrs Emmelie. Recording No. O1995.6. Hertford Oral History Group, February 8th, 1995. Transcript online at: hertfordmuseum.org/oralhistory/view-transcript.php?id=160



By chance I came across a 'Souvenir Special' of 'Yours' magazine entitled 'Memories for the Millennium' that featured a photo of some of the helpers and evacuees. In the image right, one can see them sat to the left of the driveway that is evident in the previous picture.⁹⁴ The insert below the picture (right) relates the experience of Joan Bowman, one of those in charge. Continues Boughey:

"The estate people were worried, we were all worried as to how to manage 80 small children at Bedwell Park ... In the front drive, which was a big circle of gravel in front of the front door, the estate workers put up chestnut fencing" (just visible in the above photograph), "the most enormous playpen and so the children could be put into this ... all together and kept safely away from whatever."

Bedwell Park incorporated an 887 acre, picturesque deer and Victorian park and gardens, which meant:

*"When they went out for walks, they all had to hold on to each other, which was rather pathetic. I didn't like to see them always having to hold the one in front but they were never allowed to walk separately and I suspect that was because their helpers were so worried about them, about losing one or something happening to one."*⁹⁵

I bet the kids had more fun than their helpers and it's my guess the photo of four year old Harvey on the previous page taken in an HMS Rodney uniform was probably taken at Bedwell Park. It too has echoes of a previous generation, where in a photo of Margot's brother, Theo Tijralla, he appears similarly dressed in a sailor's outfit in a photograph taken shortly after the outbreak of World War One.

The whole episode of Harvey's evacuation left me wondering what influence Margot and Johnnie ultimately had had over that? On the one hand, one frequently reads how *"Children were parted from their parents"* and that *"it was an unhappy time."*⁹⁶ But on the other, evacuation schemes remained firmly 'voluntary.' In fact, some 524,000 mothers were also evacuated with their under fives.⁹⁷

Years later, psychoanalysts concluded *"separation was damaging for the child, not the ... air raids,"* which in turn led to *"long drawn out states of homesickness, upset and despair."*⁹⁸ Margot knew that too because at Harvey's age she was shipped beyond her home in Leipzig to a countryside villa inhabited by her grandparents, from where she was eventually rescued by social workers, before recouperating at *Kinderheim Hortstsee*.

⁹⁴ Souvenir Special: Memories for the Millennium. Wartime. Yours magazine. 1999. Pg. 77. Identified thanks to Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies and kindly received from Angela Whenman of Yours magazine on June 26, 2016 via admin@yours.co.uk.

⁹⁵ Boughey, Mrs Emmelie. Recording No. O1995.6. Hertford Oral History Group, February 8th, 1995. Transcript online at: hertfordmuseum.org/oralhistory/view-transcript.php?id=160

⁹⁶ Sisters in Arms. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 14

⁹⁷ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evacuations_of_civilians_in_Britain_during_World_War_II

⁹⁸ The Blitz. The British Under Attack. Juliet Gardiner. Harper Press, 2010. Pg. 198

Had Margot been obliged to let Harvey go? Was that preferable to sending him to Harvey's grandmother in Leeds? Had there been a hope that his evacuation might benefit her and Johnnie's relationship?

Not long after Harvey's departure, another major happening took place, when so-called 'classification tribunals' saw British authorities evaluate German and Austrian 'aliens' that September.⁹⁹ Deemed a potential threat to the country's security, any potential spies or subverters that might be willing to assist Britain's enemies in the event of an invasion would be impounded while the tribunals were to determine who posed the greatest danger (see the textbox below).¹⁰⁰ Sadly, however, the majority of those under the spotlight were Jewish refugees escaping Nazi terror, although even British-born women who had married enemy aliens and lost their nationality found themselves in the spotlight too.

15.2: Alien Tribunals: Part One

Towards the end of 1939 there were between 70 and 80,000 Germans and Austrians living in the UK. Having fled there during 1938 and 1939 (at the end of 1937 there no more than 5,500), most of them retained their original nationality.¹ That, however, irked the powers that be in Britain who feared those refugees and migrants posed a security risk. As a consequence, some 120 tribunals were set up in different regions of the country that September. The majority were in the London area, with eleven in northwest London alone.²

As a result, all Germans and Austrians over the age of 16 were called before tribunals generally presided over by a county court judge or 'King's Counsel,' who relied on arbitrary guidelines that prompted criticism from many for what transpired to be largely informal affairs.³ For instance, *"Monetary well-being was sometimes more important than a good character, and understanding English was often vital...[while] Being a non-Jewish German often brought up the question 'Why did you leave Germany?'"*⁴

As a result of the tribunals, the assessment of some 73,000 individuals was completed by February 1940, with 'suspects' being subsequently divided into one of three groups; 'A:' high security risks; 'B:' 'doubtful cases'; and 'C:' 'no security risk'.² Some 600 category 'A' risks were immediately interned, some 6,500 ('B') were supervised and subject to restrictions, whilst approximately 64,000 were left at liberty.⁵ For now at least.



1. Politics by Other Means. The Free German League of Culture in London, 1939-1945. Charmian Brinson and Richard Dove. Vallentine-Mitchell, 2010. Pg. 5, 7

2. Internment. A National Archives podcast by Roger Kershaw. Broadcast on Sept. 15th, 2009.

Online at: media.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php/internment

3. Enemy Aliens: enemyaliens.ca/de_refugie_a_interne-from_refugees_to_internees/les_enemis_etrangers-enemy_aliens-eng.html.

4. "You must all be Interned": Identity Among Internees in Great Britain during World War II. Elizabeth A. Atkins, Gettysburg College. Class of 2005. The Gettysburg Historical Journal: Vol. 4, Article 5. Pg. 64. Online [here](http://www.gettysburg.edu/historicaljournal/vol4/article5).

5. See: www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/timeline/factfiles/nonflash/a6651858.shtml

Image: The clipping taken from the Nottingham Evening Post on Sept. 29th, 1939 shows UK residents signing up as part of the 'national register' that was in effect the starting point for the alien tribunals that followed.

Source: British Newspaper Archive, via [The National Archives](http://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/) in the UK.

⁹⁹ In customary international law, an 'enemy alien' is any native, citizen, denizen or subject of any foreign nation or government with which a domestic nation or government is in conflict with. See:

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enemy_alien

¹⁰⁰ You must all be Interned: Identity Among Internees in Great Britain during World War II. Elizabeth A. Atkins, Gettysburg College. Class of 2005 in The Gettysburg Historical Journal: Vol. 4, Article 5. Pg. 64. Online [here](http://www.gettysburg.edu/historicaljournal/vol4/article5).

Margot, having gained British citizenship on account of her marriage to Johnnie had little to fear but there were still grounds for anxiety.¹⁰¹ She'd only been 'British' for four years and *"Most Londoners felt it proper that all German nationals should be rounded up, even if a few innocent did suffer as a result."*¹⁰²

Lilli Palmer, a Prussia-born actress who lived close to London, having arrived in the UK in early 1935, herself remarked how her English colleagues 'removed themselves' from her after Chamberlain's speech or awaited 'explanation.'¹⁰³

*"All looked at me expectantly" she writes in her autobiography. "After all, I was German! No, my dear friends, I'm not a German" she replied. "Would you like to see the letter I received from the German Embassy officially informing me of that fact?" "No one was interested in such a fine distinction," she continues. "I understood German, didn't I?" "Well, then, would you please tell us what 'that man' really wants?"*¹⁰⁴

Circumstances for those of German heritage were neither helped by the newspapers, filled since the outbreak of the war with news and editorial articles outlining the cases of aliens who had never been naturalized, or those who were sneaking into the country with forged passports, or who had lied to secure one.¹⁰⁵ As a result, society distinguished German and Austrian enemies and I daresay Margot tried to avoid all discussion of the war with her and Johnnie's theatrical acquaintances. Perhaps she found herself regarded in much the same way as Frau Palmer:

*"They were a bit self-conscious with me, because I couldn't be pigeonholed. A few understood my situation and in their tactful English way kept their mouths shut."*¹⁰⁶

Immigrants, however, remained especially on tenterhooks, recalled Palmer:

"The refugees read the paper every morning in a state of deep depression, while their coffee got cold. Everything one did seemed pointless. All one could do was hold one's breath and win time, for the volcano might erupt any minute. Eventually you got used to even this state of limbo and carried on as though the daily routine had a meaning."



Although Hitler had devastated Poland, come November not a single bomb had fallen on England. *"Many English people were hoping for a separate peace"* and I'm sure Margot was no different. *"If Johnnie gets called up, how will I get by alone?"* she no doubt wondered, with the strains of Vera Lynn's 'We'll Meet Again' in the back of her mind.

Perhaps the most memorable song of the Second World War, 'We'll Meet Again' was made famous in 1939 by the singer and now centenarian, Vera Lynn. Source: Pinterest.com

¹⁰¹ "(1) Subject to the provisions of this section, the wife of a British subject shall be deemed to be a British subject..." The *'British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act.'* 1914 Part III, General. National Status of Married Women and Infant Children Section 10, pg. 9.

¹⁰² *London at War. 1939-1945.* Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 75

¹⁰³ Born Lilli Peiser in May 1914 in Prussia's Province of Posen, north of Margot's father's home in Silesia, she was in fact a Jewish refugee who avoided internment. See also: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lilli_Palmer

¹⁰⁴ *Change Lobsters - And Dance.* Lilli Palmer. Star Books, W. H. Allen & Co. Ltd, 1977. Pg. 104

¹⁰⁵ *You must all be Interned: Identity Among Internees in Great Britain during World War II.* Elizabeth A. Atkins, Gettysburg College. Class of 2005 in *The Gettysburg Historical Journal*: Vol. 4, Article 5. Pg. 61-2. Online [here](#).

¹⁰⁶ *Change Lobsters - And Dance.* Lilli Palmer. Star Books, W. H. Allen & Co. Ltd, 1977. Pg. 106

As Norman Longmate writes, “at least two and half million housewives lost their husbands’ help and companionship” owing to the war and conscription.¹⁰⁷ By Christmas, however, Riscoe was fortunately booked for his annual stint of pantomime, this time at London’s Chiswick Empire in ‘*Aladdin and his Wonderful Lamp*’.¹⁰⁸ At least that meant she could sleep a little more easily. And furthermore, on account of the lack of bombs, rumours were rife that the evacuees would be returned by Christmas too.

Looking to the future that each of my Prussian forebears faced come Christmas 1939, one could only describe it as ‘uncertain.’ Although the preparations were most overt in Great Britain (despite being surrounded by water), it was those in Holland who ought to have feared invasion the most. Although Margot will have had a spring in her step that autumn, the ever-ready smile on Nannj’s face must have concealed a sense of foreboding. As for their mother, with the war being fought on foreign soil, she’d have felt *déjà vu* at best. Yet with it far from over by Christmas, the question on each of their lips must have been; ‘*What next? Was this the calm before the storm?*’

#####

- HIT (AND RUN) -

Margot and Nannj’s mother was not given to sitting still and by early November 1939,¹⁰⁹ just nine months after moving in, she swapped *Pulverteich* for new lodgings at *Bremerheide, 20* (see ‘2’ on the earlier Hamburg map). With that, she inched to within a stone’s throw of the city’s railway station. However, there was no real escape route available to her now. England might have appeared a ‘safe haven’ at one time, but German U-boats’ vehement attacks on Allied shipping¹¹⁰ had cut Hamburg off from the outside world. A foray to the British Isles was the last thing on her mind now. In fact Holland was rather more reachable.



Moving On:
Frau Tjyralla’s
next Hamburg
stop was
Bremereihe, 20,
the last building
in the street
leading off the
adjoining
Hansaplatz

Today, however, the homefront remained ‘peaceful’ and with the *Deutsches Schauspielhaus* just around the corner, Frau Tjyralla need not go far to tune out – although admittedly the cultural programme was full of Nazi propaganda. “*In the theatre, the plays were threaded with anti-Semitic messages; at the pictures, they played only schmaltzy films supposed to reinforce German patriotism, with a lot of singing and ‘true Aryan talent,’*” recalled young Gretel Wachtel, who lived in Hamburg on the far side of the *Aussen Alster*.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ *How We Lived Then. A History of Every Day During the Second World War*. Norman Longmate. Arrow, 1974. Pg. 82

¹⁰⁸ Johnnie Riscoe. *The Stage*. November 30th, 1939, Pg. 5

¹⁰⁹ November 14th, 1939, according to the *Melderegister*/residential record received in writing from the *Amt für zentrale Meldeangelegenheiten; Abteilung für Einwohnerdaten* in Hamburg-Harburg, courtesy of Frau Wernecke on April 10th, 2000.

¹¹⁰ *A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis*. Martyn Whittcock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 232

¹¹¹ *A Different Kind of Courage. Gretel’s Story*. Gretel Wachtel and Claudia Strachan. Mainstream, 2009. Pg. 37

In some respects, Margot was scarcely different to Gretel. About three years younger than my great aunt, she lived with her mother, whose own life story surprisingly parallels that of Frau Tÿralla. Had Margot not married and moved to England in 1935, I could almost imagine Claudia Strachan's rendition of *'Gretel's Story'* being Margot's own. Both girls lived life to the full, based on seemingly impulsive decisions. Truth be told, Margot's mother wasn't much different.

Although I assume Frau Tÿralla was no fan of Hitler and the Nazis (not least because of the threat he posed to her daughters' well being), old ladies' loyalties typically lay with him.¹¹² But rationing had begun to bring back uneasy memories of World War One for the older generation, with the main peril being the lack of vitamin-rich fruit and vegetables. Throughout Germany, prudent gardeners had begun digging up their flower beds and lawns to make room for vegetables. Chicken coops and rabbit hutches were hastily tacked together and new and exotic vegetables such as fennel, endive, Jerusalem artichokes and aubergines appeared on the market. Chicory became the basis for substitute coffee.¹¹³

Yet at the same time Germans on the home front benefited goods that its military forces plundered and sent back from occupied Europe.¹¹⁴ Christmas 1939, for instance, saw an abundance of sausages, furniture, shoes and geese in the shops.¹¹⁵ Ironically, Berliners also found themselves putting on weight, as their enforced carbohydrate-rich diet of pasta and bread took its effect.¹¹⁶ *"The Germans, especially the women, are getting stouter rather than the reverse,"* noted one newspaper reporter, that winter. (Hamburgers probably fared better, thanks to their more traditional hard, grainy rye bread).

Widespread panic buying and the confiscation of furs from both wholesale and retail sellers led to shortages of clothes and all manner of consumer goods, while in early 1940 rationing was extended to include restaurants.¹¹⁷ As the shops emptied of their goods, the black market began to thrive. The weather neither helped. The period from December 1939 – April 1940 saw the first of three severe winters that also turned out to be the coldest. Curiously, Arnd Bernaerts, an (out-of-favour Wikipedia¹¹⁸) author on climate change from an oceanic perspective, claims this all to have been *"the logical consequence of war at sea in sensitive waters."*¹¹⁹

¹¹² *A Different Kind of Courage. Gretel's Story.* Gretel Wachtel and Claudia Strachan. Mainstream, 2009. Pg. 15

¹¹³ *A Different Kind of Courage. Gretel's Story.* Gretel Wachtel and Claudia Strachan. Mainstream, 2009. Pg. 16

¹¹⁴ *A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis.* Martyn Whittcock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 256.

¹¹⁵ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin.* Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 489

¹¹⁶ *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945.* Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 81

¹¹⁷ *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story, Berlin 1943.* Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 71

¹¹⁸ See: [arndbernaerts.one/11.html](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arnd_Bernaerts)

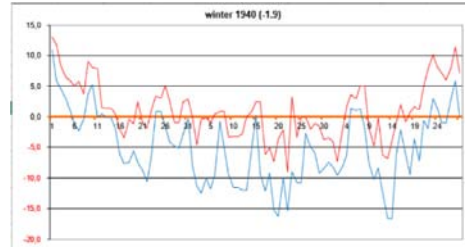
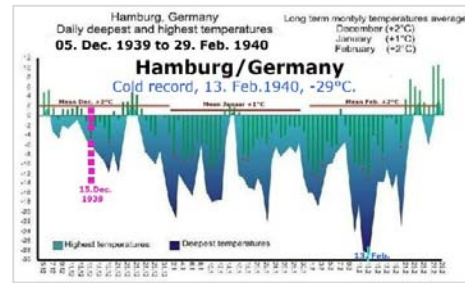
¹¹⁹ See: ocean-climate.com/chapter-c

The centre of that severe weather was in fact Hamburg, which since early December 1939 had seen mean temperatures below zero degrees Celsius, an extreme deviation from the long-term average.¹²⁰ From December 8th until the 22nd, it was below freezing for a good 15 days in the German capital too,¹²¹ while in Holland it wasn't much better.¹²² By mid-January 1940, newspapers were reporting extreme temperatures all across Northern Europe.¹²³

England too was no exception. From January 27th until February 3rd, 1940, it not only faced tremendous snow but also experienced the most significant, long-lasting rain-ice event.¹²⁴ The sea along the Norfolk coast froze on January 20th, prompting one diarist to describe it "A most extraordinary sight. Just like an Arctic scene."¹²⁵ The harsh winter inevitably exacerbated the shortages of certain goods – fuel and meat especially.

Eventually there were only 20 days above freezing in Northern Europe during the whole winter period, thanks to another cold snap that took hold in mid-February. Temperatures hit minus 25 degrees Celsius in Nannj and Cor's Holland, while sub-zero temperatures endured in and around the German capital until April 15th.¹²⁶

The bracing weather was no lighter in Saxony. Leipzig saw the ice grow to 80cm depth on the *Saale* river in early 1940 with ice sculptures appearing on the *Naschmarkt*, that square before *Onkel Fritz's* former home and cigar store.¹²⁷ Retired now, he lived some 20 km east of the sisters' hometown in *Wenig-machern* with his second wife, *Anna Martha*, in the very same villa Margot and Nannj had been impounded at during the First World War (their eldest cousin, also called *Fritz* but hereafter *Frits*, lived nearby).



1940 was the first of three severe north European winters. Charts show Dec.-Feb. temperatures in Hamburg (above) and the average in Holland (below)

Sources: ocean-1climate.com/chapter-c and metoolink.nl/weerhistorie-2/historische-wintergrafieken/1932-1940



Snow and ice sculptures decorated Leipzig's *Naschmarkt* during winter 1940 when the temperature remained twenty degrees below zero for more than a week. Source: *Güldemann*

¹²⁰ See: ocean-1climate.com/chapter-c

¹²¹ See *Das Wetter in Berlin von 1933 bis 1945*. Paul Schlaak. Sept. 2000. Online at: luise-berlin.de/bms/bmstxt00/0009gesd.htm

¹²² See: metoolink.nl/weerhistorie-2/historische-wintergrafieken/1932-1940

¹²³ Minus 48 degrees Celsius for instance in Finland and the Baltic countries, minus 35 in Southern Sweden, minus 26 in Denmark, minus 40 in Poland, minus 32 in Budapest and minus 20 in Paris. *Booklet on Naval War Changes Climate*. Arnd Bernaerts. iUniverse Inc. 2006. Pg. 8. Online at: ocean-1climate.com/wp-content/uploads/book.pdf

¹²⁴ *Booklet on Naval War Changes Climate*. Arnd Bernaerts. iUniverse Inc., 2006. Pg. 57. Online at: ocean-1climate.com/wp-content/uploads/book.pdf

¹²⁵ *Muriel Green's Diary for 1940. January 20th, 1940. Wartime Women. A Mass-Observation Anthology 1937-1945*. Dorothy Sheridan. Phoenix Press, 2002. Pg. 79

¹²⁶ Temperatures also hit minus 25 degrees Celsius in Sweden and Denmark, minus 33 in Budapest, and even minus 47 in the Baltic countries. *Booklet on Naval War Changes Climate*. Arnd Bernaerts. iUniverse Inc., 2006. Pg. 9. Online at: ocean-1climate.com/wp-content/uploads/book.pdf

¹²⁷ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig*. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. Pg. 46

At the terminus of the Leipzig-Dresden railway line (which *en route* practically stopped outside the Hinsch's front door), was cousin, Heinz, and his young family. There too there'd been little respite from sub-zero temperatures that January, before the mercury fell again in February.¹²⁸ The end result of the cold weather was that the flow of all manner of supplies was so critically disrupted across Germany that schools had to be closed from January to March.¹²⁹

But if the freezing weather had delayed the *Wehrmacht's* invasion of the west, the advent of spring rendered it inevitable, Dresdners musing as early as April 10th, 1940 whether the Germans "*will land in England in four weeks?*"¹³⁰ But to reach England, Hitler's army first had to secure Holland and as fear grew in the Netherlands, martial law was declared on April 19th.¹³¹ Twenty one prominent Dutch Nazis were arrested,¹³² but few were psychologically prepared for the blow when Germany's offensive finally materialised.

At 9:30 PM on Friday May 9th, the Dutch prime minister assured the nation in a live broadcast there would be no war – he'd received guarantees from high sources on both German and Dutch sides. People had nothing to fear and should remain calm. But by 2:30 AM, the country fell under air attack and not much later, tanks advanced across the border.¹³³ Between three and four, German planes also dropped three hundred bombs on *Schiphol*, Amsterdam's airport, completely destroying all its facilities.¹³⁴ The sky glowed orange red as fire alarms endlessly rang out together with the sirens of water hose trucks.¹³⁵ Amsterdam's harbour was hit on that first day too, while the *Luftwaffe* destroyed most of the Dutch military's planes¹³⁶ before occupying those airfields around The Hague and Rotterdam. The German ambassador justified the invasion in a declaration delivered in the name of his government, stating that German troops had entered the Netherlands to protect Dutch neutrality against an impending Allied invasion aimed at the Ruhr Valley. It urged the Netherlands to place itself under the protection of the Reich.¹³⁷ The best the British Ambassador could do was (unsurprisingly) to advise Dutch citizens to: "*Trust no Germans, even when they are your best friends!*"¹³⁸

For the next five days, Dutch armed forces (a paltry 300,000 men) attempted to defend their country, whilst belatedly inviting the British and French forces collaboration.¹³⁹ The Germans, expecting the Netherlands to capitulate, threatened to bomb Rotterdam if Amsterdam didn't surrender. In anticipation, orders went around to tape up Amsterdam's groundfloor windows, while those already shattered were boarded up with supplies provided by the local authorities.

¹²⁸ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. Jan. 21, 1939. Pg. 328. N.B. On February 11th it hit minus 15 at night and climbed no higher than minus 11 by day.

¹²⁹ *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story*, Berlin 1943. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 73

¹³⁰ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. April 10, 1939. Pg. 331

¹³¹ See the 'Chronology of Dutch war-time history' at: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1940

¹³² *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 47

¹³³ *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 61, 64.

¹³⁴ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 47

¹³⁵ *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 62-63

¹³⁶ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 49,

¹³⁷ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 7

¹³⁸ *The Making of an Englishman. Erinnerungen eines deutschen Juden*. Fred Uhlman. Diogenes, 1998. Pg. 278

¹³⁹ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 47, 49 NB: they arrived by the morning of the 14th, but only destroyed the Netherlands' petroleum supplies in the north. Pais, pg. 50

In the centre of Amsterdam, along the Dam and in front of the Royal Palace (see 'A' on the earlier map), that May 10th "the mood was quiet and solemn. Many policemen lined the streets, all wearing helmets instead of their usual caps,"¹⁴⁰ while "Many Dutch seemed to cope with the attack by staying close to their radios and in that time-honoured Dutch tradition, drinking coffee."¹⁴¹ I wonder what thoughts went through the mind of Nannÿ's relatives back in her *Heimat*, especially her mother, as news of the invasion reached them. Indeed one wonders what went through Nannÿ's mind.

The following day, Mothering Sunday, a German plane let loose a bomb on the *Blauwburgwal*, just north of the palace. The carnage was terrible: 14 houses were destroyed and 44 were killed.¹⁴² Of that same day, *Kleine Tiny* recalled:

"It was lovely weather that day. There was a mother's day cake on the table, but the Wehrmacht's arrival spoilt the atmosphere and the mood of the day. Across the road, members and sympathizers of the 'NSB'¹⁴³ were being chased across the rooftops by the Dutch authorities, in a bid to maintain order from within. My mother had no love for the Germans by this time."

Occasional air alerts broke the silence over the next days, but Amsterdam was fortunate to suffer only minor damage while Rotterdam paid for Holland's resistance, being quickly leveled in the process. Schools were closed for the following days and Dutch citizens were offered, theoretically at least, the chance to go or stay.¹⁴⁴ Few people, however, had their own cars and most public transport had been suspended.¹⁴⁵ *Queen Wilhelmina* was in fact one of the few who did go, fleeing to England on May 13th.¹⁴⁶

The Dutch were not going to make the same mistake twice, however, and on Thursday morning, May 15th, a long column of German troops rode unimpeded into the capital via the *Weesperzijde* along the Amstel canal, and the *Berlagebrug*, about a kilometer south of the Ridderhofs' home. They were welcomed by saluting NSB-ers (having been put let out of custody) and observed by thousands more stunned Amsterdammers. Then came the news that the main element of the Dutch army had surrendered and with that, "Amsterdam renewed its acquaintance with war, for the first time in almost four centuries."¹⁴⁷



Dutch National Socialists (NSB'ers) welcome the Germans on May 15th, 1940 at the *Berlagebrug*, south of Theater Carré
Source: saak.nl

¹⁴⁰ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World.* Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 48

¹⁴¹ *Victims and Survivors: The Nazi persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands, 1940–1945.* B. Moore. Arnold, 1997. Pg. 42-49

¹⁴² See: nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Blauwburgwal

¹⁴³ The National Socialist Movement of the Netherlands or Nationaal-Socialistische Beweging was the Dutch national socialist political party. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Socialist_Movement_in_the_Netherlands. N.B. In Abraham Pais' words, during the 1930s, it was never more than a small lunatic fringe affair laughed at or hated by nearly all the Dutch. But during World War II some of its members volunteered for service in the Germany army. *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World.* Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 25

¹⁴⁴ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World.* Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 48

¹⁴⁵ *Victims and Survivors: The Nazi persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands, 1940–1945.* Bob Moore. Arnold, 1997. Pg. 42-49

¹⁴⁶ *Amsterdam. A History of the World's Most Liberal City.* Russell Shorto. Abacus, 2013. Pg. 296

¹⁴⁷ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City.* Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 251

A Dutch and French force hung on to the western part of *Zeeland* for some time after the surrender, and on May 16th, 1940, naval bombardment severely damaged the church in Cor's hometown of *Yerseke* when the bell tower and roof both collapsed, while fire gutted the interior, destroying the stained-glass windows and organ in the process.¹⁴⁸ As for *Kleine Tiny's* resident great aunt and uncle, their home (pictured in Ch. XIII Pt.2 on page 506) was ruined by an incendiary bomb. The resistance didn't last long and *Zeeland* too capitulated on May 19th,¹⁴⁹ while the former *Ridderhof* and her husband was moved to new accommodation.

With the surrender now nationwide, many Dutch quickly set about destroying anti-Nazi books and newspapers.¹⁵⁰ However, Osbert Peake, the UK's Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Home Office attributed the rapid success of Germany's occupation to the existence of a 'Fifth Column.' The presence of this subversive element of society, he claimed, was the result of a treaty between Germany and Holland, whereby the latter "*could not refuse the admission of any German,*" and which had led to the arrival of "*something like 300,000 Germans ... shortly before the act of aggression.*"¹⁵¹

Soon after Holland's defeat, the Germans took over. The country was put under military control and the *Ridderhofs* got used to seeing German uniforms, trucks and tanks in the streets as well as hearing *Deutsch* spoken in the shops. Initial German policy was to minimise the effect of the occupation and to retain as much normality as was practical.¹⁵² Watches were among the first things the soldiers bought, purchasing for loved ones back home, as if they were "*off on a holiday,*" recalled Harlem-based *Corrie ten Boom* in her published recollections of the war, together with the superior tone they used toward the Dutch "*as though we were not quite bright children.*"¹⁵³

On the whole, however, "*Life went on much as usual*" writes Geert Mak in *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City* - even if "*Newspapers submitted to voluntary censorship, most political parties were declared illegal, the unions were incorporated into German organisations [and] German law was introduced.*"¹⁵⁴ Trams ceased to run after dark whilst curfew and black-out kept people at home.¹⁵⁵ For Nannÿ, however, there was nowhere to run except behind closed doors.

¹⁴⁸ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yerseke

¹⁴⁹ See the 'Chronology of Dutch war-time history' at: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1940

¹⁵⁰ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World.* Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 51

¹⁵¹ In addition, Holland had been only too anxious to appease Germany, he claimed on August 22nd, 1940, while its neutrality prevented a common defensive front with the English and French. See: *The Internment of Aliens.* A Penguin Special. François Lafitte. Penguin Books, 1940. Pg. 161

¹⁵² See also: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Netherlands_in_World_War_II

¹⁵³ *The Hiding Place.* Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 65

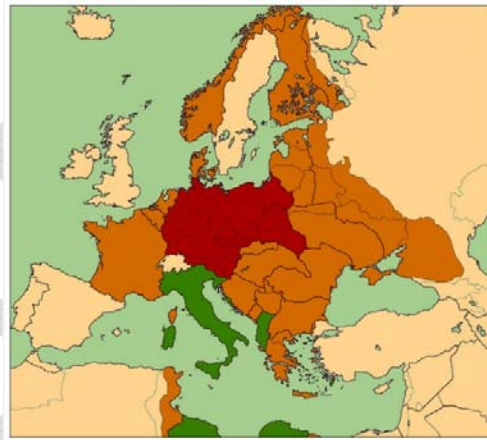
¹⁵⁴ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City.* Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 251

¹⁵⁵ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945.* Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 101

Anton Mussert,¹⁵⁶ the leader of The National Socialist Movement of the Netherlands since 1935, called upon Holland to embrace the Germans and renounce the Dutch Monarchy. They were, after all, fellow 'aryans.'¹⁵⁷ Karl Pagel, who authored *Die Hanse* in 1942, defined Hollanders as having 'shared Germanic blood ties and a kindred spirit of entrepreneurship' which in turn became the line of propaganda initially broadcast in the occupied Netherlands.¹⁵⁸

Two weeks later, on May 29th, 1940, a German civilian occupation regime was installed called The *Reichskommissariat Niederlande* (in contrast to the Military Administrations that ruled Belgium and eventually France).¹⁵⁹ It was to be headed by *Arthur Seyss-Inquart*, the former Austrian Minister of the Interior and a self-confessed Nazi.¹⁶⁰ His speeches too typically started with references to common Germanic blood and shared achievements in the Baltic.¹⁶¹

In the longer term, the semi-independent *Reichskommissariat* (see map right) was to be a stepping stone towards the Netherlands full assimilation into a greater Germany post-war,¹⁶² at which point the existent *Greater German Reich* would be reformed into the *Germanic Reich*,¹⁶³ wherein Holland's status would be revised to that of a province. In moving towards integration, the High Commissioner was personally interested in a close alliance between the two countries and hoped that a cultural and artistic *rapprochement* might serve as the start of a closer political alignment. To serve that end, he founded the German-Netherlands Culture Association (*Duits-Nederlandse Cultuurgemeenschap*) and the *German Theater* in The Hague. The association went on to present readings of Dutch and German writers and host performances of music and exhibitions of paintings by their respective artists.¹⁶⁴



By July 1941, Europe had succumbed to Nazi domination: Germany (red), its *Reichskommissariats* – administrative units of the *Großdeutsches Reich* (Greater German Reich) (orange) and allies (green). Source: wiki.en/Reichskommissariat_Ostland

¹⁵⁶ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anton_Mussert

¹⁵⁷ "Nazi race scholars held the racial qualities of the Dutch people in high respect. Hitler himself told Mussert that the best representatives of the Germanic race could be found in the Netherlands and Norway. The German leaders were particularly pleased with the racial purity of the rural population and showed great confidence in the character of the Dutch peasants." *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 23

¹⁵⁸ *The Close 'Other': Medieval and Modern Perspectives on Hollanders and the Hanse*.

Justyna Wubs-Mrozewicz. *Journal of the German History Society*. Vol. 31, No. 4. December 2014. Pg. 457-8

¹⁵⁹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Military_Administration_in_Belgium_and_Northern_France

¹⁶⁰ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Seyss-Inquart

¹⁶¹ *The Close 'Other': Medieval and Modern Perspectives on Hollanders and the Hanse*.

Justyna Wubs-Mrozewicz. *Journal of the German History Society*. Vol. 31, No. 4. OUP, December 2014. Pg. 457-8

¹⁶² See Amsterdam. *A History of the World's Most Liberal City*. Russell Shorto. Abacus, 2013. Pg. 298 and *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 52 and

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reichskommissariat_Niederlande

¹⁶³ Somewhat confusingly, when Germany invaded Denmark and Norway on April 9, 1940, Hitler had already announced its inclusion in the *Germanic Reich*, established that day. See both:

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_Germanic_Reich#Low_countries and

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greater_Germanic_Reich#Establishment_strategy cf. last para of

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reich#During_the_Nazi_period

¹⁶⁴ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 51

Practically speaking, the main German objective was to keep the Netherlands quiet and free from disturbance with the minimum use of resources (not least so as to avoid hampering future troop movements). However, the ideological aims of the occupying power were also to be implemented from 1940 – in piecemeal fashion without obvious pogroms or persecutions.¹⁶⁵ The ensuing years therefore comprised the period of most intensive effort to remake Holland in the German image.¹⁶⁶

Kleine Tiny's school 'next door' in Tweede Jan van der Heijdenstraat



Changes appeared in *Kleine Tiny's* curriculum early on, with German becoming her first foreign language and more time devoted to that, as well as history, physical education and vocational instruction. That continued until the winter of 1944-1945.¹⁶⁷ Both inside and outside school, Tiny noticed another change too:

"I began to be teased over my German mother, not only by the other schoolkids but by the teachers too. I particularly recall a Mr. Wolf. He really was one, especially towards me. On days where I had classes with him, I played truancy."

After the invasion, people made the best of the situation and returned to work.¹⁶⁸ As a rule, individual Dutch citizens did not fraternize with German personnel, but dealt with their conquerors in a businesslike manner when necessary. German soldiers were often disregarded by the population, and even *"some Dutch citizens boycotted their German acquaintances who had been residents of the Netherlands before the war, because it was thought that German residents had given aid to the invading troops."*¹⁶⁹ Nannÿ herself though was never cold-shouldered, as far as *Kleine Tiny* could recall, although such general apathy lasted just a few weeks anyway.

The trouble overall with the attempts toward assimilation was that *"Despite deceptive superficial similarities between German and Dutch culture and languages, National Socialist ideology and vocabulary were full of such concepts as the leader's principle and blood-and-soil theories, which not only failed to elicit the desired emotional resonance but frequently provoked ridicule when attempts were made to translate them into Dutch and transplant them into Dutch life,"* writes Werner Warmbrunn in his treatise: *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, on a day-to-day basis the newspapers featured *"long glowing reports of the successes of the German army on its various fronts, eulogies of German leaders, denunciations of traitors and saboteurs, [and] appeals for the unity of the 'Nordic peoples.'"* But it was *"Not news that we could trust,"* recalled Corrie ten Boom.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁵ *Victims and Survivors: The Nazi persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands, 1940-1945*. B. Moore. Arnold, 1997. Pg. 50-53

¹⁶⁶ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 44

¹⁶⁷ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. W. Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 47, 101-102

¹⁶⁸ *Victims and Survivors: The Nazi persecution of the Jews in the Netherlands, 1940-1945*. B. Moore. Arnold, 1997. Pg. 50-53

¹⁶⁹ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 103

¹⁷⁰ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 263

¹⁷¹ *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 66

Those who could afford to, escaped to the relative privacy of live theatre. Especially once cinema programmes' variety diminished, because of the exclusion of French, English and American films which had formed a large portion of prewar movie fare and after Dutch newsreels grew full of Nazi propaganda.¹⁷² The slogan on a Carré advertising poster during the early days of the occupation, for instance, claimed: "Although there is no peace, do come to Carré to enjoy a lovely evening."¹⁷³

Carré (and Cor's) boss, Alex Wunnink, strove to keep patrons happy with circus, variety shows and *revue*. Comedy duo *Snip en Snap* were still a long way from taking up a residency, but the hit radio and stage pair had grown so successful that their manager, *Rene Sleswijk*, who was also the Ridderhof's family friend, could afford to leave Amsterdam with his wife and two sons in September 1940, for a big house in *Laren*¹⁷⁴ (one of the most affluent towns in the Netherlands today, southeast of the capital near Hilversum).¹⁷⁵ Keeping in touch, however, grew to be a challenge, since those who had telephones found them disconnected and were instead forced to use monitored public phones.¹⁷⁶

Following the occupation, the number of Dutch radio sets in use rose due to people's eagerness to listen to foreign broadcasts,¹⁷⁷ while from June 1940, the Dutch government in London sponsored a daily fifteen-minute programme called *Radio Oranje* that sought to keep spirits high. "The BBC's Home Service programs were the best and most realistic sources of information," recalled one resident,¹⁷⁸ but as in Germany, citizens were forbidden from listening to foreign, non-German broadcasts, which meant more clandestine means of listening from July 4th.¹⁷⁹ In addition to acquiring control of the Dutch press, the Germans started a daily newspaper of their own, *Deutsche Zeitung in den Niederlanden*,¹⁸⁰ the goal being to destroy all independent mechanisms for sharing information.

And although Goering had promised the Dutch that their standard of living would not fall below that of their German neighbours, this didn't prevent its exploitation of Holland's food supplies. The authorities quickly began moving the raw materials and foodstuffs which the Dutch government had stockpiled as a precautionary measure into Germany, the intent being to leave enough supplies in the Netherlands to keep industry going for six months.¹⁸¹ As a consequence, June saw the introduction of food rationing, including tea, coffee, bread and flour. In July it was rice, come August, textiles, in September, meat, in October, cheese, and from mid-November, gas and electricity.¹⁸²

¹⁷² A little over a year later, "in July 1941, moving picture operators were required to show certain films at the behest of the authorities. Under this regulation, the Germans imposed propaganda films and newsreels on their 'captive audience.'" *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 50. NB:

¹⁷³ According to earlier content on the theatre's website: Carré.nl/pagina/geschiedenis-Carré

¹⁷⁴ See: resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn5/sleswijk

¹⁷⁵ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Laren,_North_Holland

¹⁷⁶ *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 70 and *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 102

¹⁷⁷ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 49 and 63.

¹⁷⁸ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 55

¹⁷⁹ See the 'Chronology of Dutch war-time history' at: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1940

¹⁸⁰ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 49

¹⁸¹ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 69, 70

¹⁸² See the 'Chronology of Dutch war-time history' at: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1940 and *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 55

But before all that happened, a number of the country's newest occupants were already making no secret of their next move. On the beaches of Amsterdam's nearby resort, *Zandvoort*, and along its boulevard bordering the North Sea, one could hear the *SS Totenkopf Husaren* chanting their '*Engeland Lied*:'

*"Reich mir deine Hand, Deine weisse Hand,
Leb' wohl mein Schatz – boom, boom,
Leb' wohl mein Schatz, leb' wohl, Lebe wohl,
Denn wir fahren, Denn wir fahren,
Denn wir fahren gegen Engeland, Engeland."
(Give me your hand, your white hand,
goodbye my darling, for we are sailing against England).*¹⁸³

Nannÿ's fellow countrymen had not just arrived. Their campaign was set to roll on and on May 16th, Dresden-based diarist, Victor Klemperer, described the situation in Germany as follows: *"The nation is intoxicated ... In the market hall they're saying Hitler will speak in London on May 26."*¹⁸⁴ Frau Tÿralla could do little more than hope for the best. Alongside Holland, the *Wehrmacht* went on to capture Denmark, Belgium and Luxembourg between April and May, while Norway and most of France followed suit (*Vichy France* represented the southern, unoccupied 'Free Zone' of the country).¹⁸⁵ With that, I can well imagine Nannÿ's concerns turned toward Margot.

The same day Holland was invaded, Britain's Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain was replaced by Winston Churchill. It was a historic day that brought to an end the era of appeasement. Inspired speeches followed such as; *"We shall fight on the beaches ... we shall never surrender"* and *"Hitler knows that he will have to break us in this island or lose the war."*¹⁸⁶

Nannÿ and Margot had last seen one another way back in November 1936 and though letters might occasionally have crossed the sea since then, upon German occupation, contact with persons abroad was only available to those who were authorized, while (incoming) foreign mail was censored.¹⁸⁷ For those who could rely on a third party, the line of communication between the occupied territory and those in the UK was usually via a courier service to Geneva.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸³ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World.* Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 55

¹⁸⁴ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years.* V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. May 16, 1939. Pg. 337

¹⁸⁵ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vichy_France

¹⁸⁶ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World.* Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 54, recalling Churchill's speeches of June 4th and June 18th,

¹⁸⁷ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945.* Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 54. *N.b In general, British people could still write abroad, although German POWs' correspondence was itself censored. See: Spy Capital of Britain. Bedfordshire's Secret War. Stephen Bunker. Bedford Chronicles, 2007. Pg. 133.*

¹⁸⁸ This is how the Dutch resistance movement would eventually communicate. *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945.* Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 210

Ultimately the 'Swiss Way' was joined by the 'Swedish Way,' as both countries retained a semblance of neutrality during the war.¹⁸⁹ But Nannÿ had acquaintances in neither country, and even corresponding with her mother in Hamburg had grown challenged in the immediate aftermath of the occupation.¹⁹⁰

Britain's anticipation of an invasion was heightened by the fact that Germany's *Blitzkrieg* was now aided by Italy. The English, forced into a hasty retreat, still made a belated bid to offset Europe's total capitulation by bombing Hamburg as well as strategic locations in the Netherlands, Belgium and France. During the nights of May 17-18th, 27-28th and 30-31st, 1940, its Royal Air Force attacked oil installations and refineries near Hamburg.¹⁹¹ No homes were lost,¹⁹² but Frau Tÿralla, surely now fearing for her daughters' lives, feared for her own too. She was not the only one concerned for life either, the north Germans relocating their livestock to Dresden.¹⁹³ People, on the other hand, stayed put.

Churchill's '*Miracle of Deliverance*' followed on June 4th, when the British evacuated some 340,000 troops from Dunkirk and another 220,000 from other French ports, as their ally fell.¹⁹⁴ Effortlessly, the German army rolled over battlefields which the old soldiers had failed to capture in four long and bloody years of fighting between 1914 and 1918.¹⁹⁵ Then on June 22nd, an armistice was signed between Germany and the French, in the very railway carriage that had witnessed German humiliation at the end of World War One. Within 22 years, Hitler had avenged that defeat. As a result "*The Führer myth ... reached a new level.*"¹⁹⁶ The shame of the First World War had been expunged. "*Berliners were convulsed with sheer joy and sang marching songs and danced in the streets.*"¹⁹⁷

¹⁸⁹ Berlin-based Erica Fischer writes at the end of 1942 that correspondence between her mother in Berlin and her sister in London was more or less successful when mailed through a third party in Geneva. Letters were subject to scrutiny, being examined by "both the English and the Wehrmacht High Command censors" and would take two weeks to a month to arrive. *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story*, Berlin 1943. Erica Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 121. That said, Fischer adds "Many letters never arrived at all," and that would seem to be the misfortune encountered by the former British subject living in Germany, Christabel Bielenberg, who writes in her memoir in Spring 1944: "I had had no message from England for nearly three years" even though she sent those letters through friends in Sweden and Switzerland. *The Past is Myself & The Road Ahead: An Englishwoman's life in Berlin under the Nazis*. Christabel Bielenberg. Corgi, 2011. Pg. 141. Approved mail typically bore "Some censor's marks on it, diagonal blue [or brown] lines over the whole page," according to Victor Klemperer, who in one incoming item saw "seven lines ... blacked out and made illegible," adding: "I suspect it was the figures of our weights, the sentence: 'It's modern to be slim; I'm still 132 pounds on the scales, Eva only 110 pounds...'" Descriptions of the food situation and or one's financial circumstances would also typically see: "The censors suppress any elucidation or pass it on to the Gestapo." *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. July 16 and Oct. 9, 1942. Pg. 102, 152. That said, Hester Vaizey, historian, freelance writer and researcher writes; "censorship could not be all-pervasive since so many letters were sent daily" in *Empowerment or Endurance? War Wives' Experiences of Independence During and After the Second World War in Germany, 1939-1948*. Hester Vaizey. *German History. The Journal of the German Historical Society*. Vol. 29, No. 1, OUP, March 2011. Pg. 62

¹⁹⁰ That said, Abraham Pais writes "Mail delivery between Holland and *Belgium* [not Germany] was now interrupted for several months" in *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 39

¹⁹¹ webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070706011932/http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/diary_france.html NB: Those refineries were south of the city, around the southern Elbe channel or Süderelbe, towards and in Hamburg-Harburg.

¹⁹² *Die Zerstörung Hamburgs im Zweiten Weltkrieg*. Arthur Dähn, 1954. Re-published by Michael Grube at:

geschichte.spuren.de/artikel/verschiedenes/175-zerstoerung-hamburg-weltkrieg.html with data from *Hamburg und seine Bauten 1929-1953*. See the table entitled: *Der Wohnungsausfall durch Kriegseinwirkungen 1939-1945 in Hamburg*

¹⁹³ According to a Dresden-based butcher, while there were also "very many eggs from Denmark" too! *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. July 6 and 26, 1940. Pg. 346, 350

¹⁹⁴ *A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis*. Martyn Whittcock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 234

¹⁹⁵ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 491

¹⁹⁶ *A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis*. Martyn Whittcock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 234

¹⁹⁷ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 491

Now Britain stood alone. Those “cataclysmic events left an indelible mark on British national attitudes and sentiments ... The country was left more defenceless in face of a European conquerer than at any time, perhaps, since 1066,” writes the English historian, David Thomson.¹⁹⁸

Given the success of Germany’s campaign and Britain’s fears of invasion, the isles predictably went into spy fever mode. “The grave situation, coupled with wild reportage by the media, created fear and panic ... for the British public,”¹⁹⁹ Agitation rose against enemy aliens who were now being dubbed the ‘fifth column.’ Disregarding the decisions of last year’s alien tribunals,²⁰⁰ wholesale internment of German, Austrian and Italian refugees was instituted from May 12th.²⁰¹ Holland’s rapid defeat, based on the belief that the fifth column had played a key part, meant that dangers to security in Britain had to be eliminated immediately.²⁰²

In an early morning swoop on May 16th, two thousand aliens were subsequently picked up at London addresses, while ten days later, 1500 women were added to the bag – Hampstead being a favourite target.²⁰³ Thousands of ‘B’ class aliens were sent to camps set up at racecourses and incomplete housing estates, while others were even deported to Canada and Australia.²⁰⁴ Husbands and wives were separated.²⁰⁵ Category ‘C’ refugees too were rounded up after the defeat of the British and French armies at Dunkirk,²⁰⁶ and by the end of June 1940, 27,000 enemy aliens and 1,335 British citizens had been labelled fascists.²⁰⁷ Critics fairly levelled that by interning the Jews, the British were “doing Goebbels’ work.” Indeed, the young scholar and social researcher, François Lafitte, filled a book’s worth over the authorities’ treatment of refugees in 1940, asking; “are we fighting the Germans or the Nazis?”²⁰⁸

While *Kleine Tiny* confirms “Margot was never interned,” (and her name certainly doesn’t appear in the wartime intern index held by *The UK National Archives*), I can well imagine she was on tenterhooks as her former compatriots prepared to invade. Newspapers such as the *Daily Mail* (having already supported the British Union of Fascists in the 1930s) kicked-off a campaign to have all aliens in Britain interned, exacerbating the “widespread feeling of uncertainty and suspicion of all foreigners.”²⁰⁸

¹⁹⁸ *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979.* David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 191

¹⁹⁹ *The Fifth Column in World War II: Suspected Subversives in the Pacific War.* Robert Loeffel. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. Pg. 11. Online [here](#).

²⁰⁰ *Enemy Alien and Refugee: Conflicting Identities in Great Britain during the Second World War.*

Rachel Pistol. University of Sussex Journal of Contemporary History. Vol. 16 (2015), Pg. 37. Online [here](#).

²⁰¹ See: discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C9260.

²⁰² Referring to Osbert Peake’s justifications of the UK internments. *The Internment of Aliens.* A Penguin Special. François Lafitte. Penguin Books, 1940. Pg. 161

²⁰³ *London at War. 1939-1945.* Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 96

²⁰⁴ See: bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/timeline/factfiles/nonflash/a6651858.shtml

²⁰⁵ See: *Germans in Britain.* John Simkin. Spartacus Educational, September 1997 (updated August 2014). Online at: spartacus-educational.com/2WWgermansBR.htm

²⁰⁶ *Enemy Aliens. The Internment of Jewish Refugees in Canada.* Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, 2012. Also [online](#)

²⁰⁷ *The Fifth Column in World War II: Suspected Subversives in the Pacific War.* Robert Loeffel. Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. Pg. 12. Online [here](#).

²⁰⁸ *The Internment of Aliens.* A Penguin Special. François Lafitte. Penguin Books, 1940. Pg. 144

Some employers sacked all their foreign staff while there were cases of people losing their jobs because of their ancestry (strictly speaking that was also an argument for removing the British royal family who were of German origin). Government bodies too became involved in carrying out acts of discrimination against foreigners while some local authorities turned aliens out of council houses in 'protected areas' along the south and east coasts.²⁰⁹

This sentiment quickly spread among citizens too, who failed to separate Nazis from Germans or from refugees from other nations. Signs in boarding houses read "*No Germans – No Jews*" and educated Germans were offered the most simple and menial jobs. Some advertisements for domestic help even specified '*No Germans need apply*.'²¹⁰

The Leipzig-born former acrobat could have been forgiven for retorting "*Hitler does not equal Germany!*" or "*I'm on your side with you!*" but a single false move could land one all too easily in an internment camp. Take 'Colin Mackenzie' for instance, a German World War One prisoner that had decided to stay in England. When German bombers strayed up over the Thames on the night of June 18th, 1940, their first visit, he made the mistake of exhibiting the patriotism that rushed through him, waving to his fellow countrymen using a torch! The next day he had 'disappeared.' His neighbour knew, however, that he had 'gone for a holiday' – to the Isle of Man's internment camps.²¹¹

While my great aunt was no longer a German national, she couldn't yet conceal her accent. She neither surrendered her mother-tongue, but as actress Lilli Palmer tells us, "*during the war the [German] language had been all but outlawed...*"²¹² Might Margot have deliberately concealed her origins? After learning from one of Johnnie's cousins that Margot was oft-perceived as *Dutch* rather than *Deutsch*, I put the question to Kleine Tiny.²¹³ "*No way*" she said. "*She wouldn't have hidden her identity. If she was considered to have been Dutch, that was more because she had family there and because of her connections - it was after all the country of her departure. Of course if it was more convenient to her be seen not as a German, that's something else. But she didn't go out of her way to be seen as Dutch.*" All the same, it seemed sensible to refrain from doing anything that might result in uninvited enquiry, lest she be put under observation herself.²¹⁴ I can

²⁰⁹ *Enemy Aliens. The Internment of Jewish Refugees in Canada*. Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, 2012. Also [online](#)

²¹⁰ It's perhaps also worth noting that the derogatory term 'Jerry' came into use for German during World War Two, although the phrase was in fact coined during the First World War. See: etymonline.com/index.php?term=jerry. In fact, "*Civilians almost always referred to the enemy as Jerry, despite attempts to popularize the grimmer-sounding name, 'the Hun.'*" *How We Lived Then. A History of Every Day During the Second World War*. N. Longmate. Arrow, 1974. Pg. 427

²¹¹ *Gone on Holiday: Internment on the Isle Of Wight*. WW2 People's War. Bowers, 2004. Online at: bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/33/a2442133.shtml

²¹² *Change Lobsters - And Dance*. Lilli Palmer. Star Books, W. H. Allen & Co. Ltd, 1977. Pg. 245

²¹³ Personal correspondence with Doreen Thompson during January 2017.

²¹⁴ Consider, for instance, Valerie Stockdale, a German by birth who lived in Turvey in Bedfordshire. She was kept under observation, having been described by the police in her surveillance records "*as 'a difficult and disagreeable woman' who had been overheard expressing 'violently pro-German views.'*" See: *Spy Capital of Britain. Bedfordshire's Secret War*. Stephen Bunker. Bedford Chronicles, 2007. Pg. 61. In order to be sure Margot had never been under surveillance herself, I opted to enquire via *The National Archives* in the UK, following the public release of such records in 2005. A 'search' of file 'HO 45/25568': *Detention of suspects in the event of invasion: lists of persons to be detained; the Suspect List* was thus 'submitted' on February 22nd, 2016 [here](#). To my dismay, however, I was informed: "*Unfortunately we are not able to search through a document of this size looking for one particular name*" because "*the £8.24 only covers approximately 15 minutes of page checking time.*" Further conversation with Harriet Pilcher of the archives Record Copying Department on March 9th, 2016 revealed: "*The document does contain lists, but it also contains various other papers including*

well imagine therefore that Hitler's plans that spring - summer of 1940 must have come close to killing off any last vestiges of German identity that either Nannÿ or Margot might otherwise more happily disclosed.

Come mid-June, London was a place of 'unwonted silence.' Church bells, factory hooters, whistles and rattles had all been forbidden and across the UK, fear and anticipation was the overriding feeling.²¹⁵ Evacuations had gone back up everyone's domestic agenda owing to the seaborne invasion threat that followed the fall of France, with folks being shepherded out of cities in waves along the south and east coasts that month.²¹⁶

Margot's 'fellow' Prussian, Lilli Palmer, described driving through Picadilly on June 17th, the day after the French armistice, where it was "*lifeless in broad daylight, with hardly any vehicles or pedestrians about, the great wide avenue swept bare as though by some global catastrophe.*"²¹⁷ That must have lent great suspense to Johnnie's 30th birthday during the weekend of June 21st-23rd.

That contrasted starkly with the mood of expectation in Germany. On June 29th, Victor Klemperer wrote in his diary; "*We await the attack on England,*"²¹⁸ and a day later, the Channel Islands were occupied. Those children left behind in London played 'English and Germans' in the streets with added zest.²¹⁹ A week on, German radio was audacious enough to broadcast: "*The English government has fallen.*"²²⁰ If Frau Tÿralla wasn't already grey with worry beneath the blonde, she surely must have been by now, reading those headlines.

The preparation for military action against the British wasn't formally decreed by Hitler, however, until July 16th. Directive Number 16 thus read; "*As England, in spite of the hopelessness of her military position, has so far shown herself unwilling to come to any compromise, I have decided to begin to prepare for, and if necessary to carry out, an invasion of England ... and if necessary the island will be occupied.*" His invasion force was to be ready to sail by August 15th.²²¹ Bereft of her European allies and deserted by the new French government, Great Britain braced herself for 'Operation Sea-Lion,'²²² shielded by the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force.²²³

But Hitler was averse to invasion. Three days later he made his final peace offer to Britain²²⁴ in an attempt to free his hands for extending his war in the east.²²⁵ It almost caused him pain, he told the *Reichstag* in uncharacteristically measured tones, to be

government correspondence and personal information on hundreds of suspects." She adds that the lists and other papers within the several hundred pages long file are in no order, either alphabetical or date. I was thus recommended to visit Kew in London where I could "*view the original records for free.*" I'll put that on the to-do list then!

²¹⁵ *London at War. 1939-1945.* Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 67, 73

²¹⁶ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evacuations_of_civilians_in_Britain_during_the_Second_World_War

²¹⁷ *Change Lobsters - And Dance.* Lilli Palmer. Star Books, W. H. Allen & Co. Ltd, 1977. Pg. 108

²¹⁸ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years.* V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. June 29, 1940. Pg. 345

²¹⁹ *London at War. 1939-1945.* Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 109

²²⁰ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years.* V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. July 7, 1940. Pg. 346.

²²¹ *The German Threat to Britain in World War Two. History. World Wars.* Dan Cruickshank. BBC, 2011. Online at: bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/invasion_ww2_01.shtml

²²² See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Operation_Sealion

²²³ *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979.* David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 191-2

²²⁴ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World.* Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 55

²²⁵ *Questions on German History. Paths to Parliamentary Democracy.* German Bundestag. 1998. Pg. 305

responsible for bringing down a great empire which he had no desire to harm.²²⁶ Was the same fate that had met Nannÿ about to apprehend her sister? Britain, although painfully exposed and isolated, stood firm and rejected Germany's offer. And thus the so-called *Battle of Britain* got underway, when the *Luftwaffe* completed its first proper bombing raids on southern England on July 10th, 1940.²²⁷

Goering dispatched an air armada of 2,250 German aircraft – including over 1,000 fast and heavily-armed *Messerschmitt ME109* fighters - in massed daylight attacks. The intention was to destroy the RAF's airfields and sweep its numerically inferior Hawker Hurricane and Supermarine Spitfire fighters from the skies. In response, RAF Fighter Command doggedly defended, inflicting serious losses (as well as suffering many of their own).²²⁸

For the first month of the '*Blitz*,' London was largely unaffected, except for periodic siren alerts and rigorous blackout regulations, allowing those in the capital's suburbs to be treated to an extraordinary display of criss-crossing vapour ('con') trails in the skies above them.²²⁹ Lilli Palmer herself recalled standing in a field outside London that summer, craning necks upwards to watch a duel between the RAF and the *Luftwaffe* that later drew headlines such as "*RAF downs 160 Luftwaffe planes – 35 RAF planes lost.*"²³⁰

On the night of August 24th, however, London's East End, including West Ham, was properly bombed. It was hardly a military objective, but it was a sign of things to come and with September's arrival, *Goering* widened the scope from RAF Fighter Command during daylight and aircraft factories to more 'peripheral' targets,²³¹ including Britain's cities. His aim: to defeat civilian morale.

After raiding the East End, the *Luftwaffe* worked its way west, which meant Londoners' survival depended on evacuation into surface or underground shelters hosted by churches, boroughs or hotels, under railway arches, tube stations or simply lying in wait at home under stairs or in cellars. As the insert overleaf reveals, some London stores subsequently found they could no longer serve customers, while 'Home Intelligence' (a division of the Ministry of Information) began to report 'great apprehension' in some London districts, as well as 'despondency' at the prospect of a winter of raids.

²²⁶ *The Secret History of the Blitz*. Joshua Levine. Simon & Schuster, 2015. Pg. 133

²²⁷ British and German historians are divided on the end dates of the Battle of Britain. The British officially recognise its duration as from July 10th until October 31st, 1940, overlapping with the period of large-scale night attacks known as the Blitz (see: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Blitz), while German historians do not accept this subdivision and regard it as a campaign lasting from July 1940 to June 1941. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Britain

²²⁸ *The Blitz. Battle of Britain to the Blitz*. Ronan Thomas. 2010. Online at: westendatwar.org.uk/page_id_152_path_0p2p.aspx

²²⁹ *The Blitz. Battle of Britain to the Blitz*. Ronan Thomas. 2010. Online at: westendatwar.org.uk/page_id_152_path_0p2p.aspx

²³⁰ *Change Lobsters - And Dance*. Lilli Palmer. Star Books, W. H. Allen & Co. Ltd, 1977. Pg. 108

²³¹ *The German Threat to Britain in World War Two. History. World Wars*. Dan Cruickshank. BBC, 2011. Online [here](https://www.bbc.com/history/worldwars/ww2_german_threat_to_britain).

15.3: When the *Luftwaffe* hit surprisingly close to 'home'

During the *Blitz*, Oxford Street took a number of direct hits, particularly on the night of September 17th, 1940. John Lewis, for instance, was gutted while a big department store known as Bourne and Hollingsworth was devastated. "Not a window remained and the interior was a shambles," observed Londoner, Sidney Chave, the next day when he walked down Oxford Street.¹



The department store was fronted by an imposing edifice that was built in 1894 and remodelled in art deco style in 1928. It had been hit by high explosive bombs which severely damaged several shop floors. Shards of glass carpeted its Oxford Street locale and the adjoining Berners Street. Yet within four days, nearly all those damaged stores, including Waring & Gillow, Selfridge's and Peter Robinson were open again. In a powerful example of the 'Blitz spirit', Bourne and Hollingsworth reopened the next day, having draped ruins in Union Jacks whilst its sales girls served a few yards from a great hole ripped through the centre of the shop. A week later, part of its eastern wing had reopened for business.²

Today, the former Bourne & Hollingsworth building still impresses. Although the site is now occupied by the so-called Plaza shopping centre and adorned by a bronze ballerina statue, much of the department store's art deco upper floors survive, while the letters 'BH' in 1920's script upon the storefront proudly proclaim the building's heritage.³



My paternal grandmother, Martha Tredinnick had been a buyer for B&H up until the war's outbreak, travelling the continent in search of merchandise. Yet some nine months after those *Blitz* bombs fell, she had a new occupation, after her first-born, my father, saw the light of day in Redhill, Surrey. How little Margot could have imagined that her youngest niece's future family worked just a few kilometers down the road from where she once lived.

Although B&H closed its doors in 1983, its legacy lives on. The 1954 comedy-drama film, *The Crowded Day*, was partially shot inside the shop to provide an authentic setting of a department store, something which could not easily be achieved in a studio, while its exterior was used for outside location shots, serving for instance the film's opening title credit.⁴

Today the name remains in use courtesy of the Bourne and Hollingsworth Group and its 'Bourne & Hollingsworth Bar' in nearby Rathbone Place, so named because the mother of the bar's owner was once a B&H employee. Curiously, in 2012, its sister bar, 'Reverend JW Simpson' opened on Goodge Street, after which it launched a series of workshops called Spirited Sermons, focusing on a different spirit each week!⁵



1. *London at War. 1939-1945.* Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 124

2. news.bbc.co.uk/local/london/tv/people_and_places/history/newsid_8937000/8937074.stm (including bottom right photo)

3. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bourne_and_Hollingsworth (including top photo)

4. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Crowded_Day

5. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bourne_and_Hollingsworth_Group (including logo)

In parallel, Germany's plans to cross the English Channel with a huge flotilla of invasion barges amassed, while the Allies' Bomber Command responded by visiting their Channel ports on many occasions too.²³² Back on July 18th, German newspapers had whipped up readers' fervor, reporting on a "defenseless and desperate England"²³³ as its airforce struck British merchant vessels repeatedly in the English Channel followed by British ports, raw materials and food storage infrastructure and aircraft production centres.²³⁴ Indeed, by the end of July, the Royal Navy had been forced to pull all its larger warships out of the channel because of the overhead threat. Heavy German guns installed around Calais began to bombard the Dover area, launching their first shells during the second week of August. In the Atlantic too it was 'Happy Time' for German U-boats, who now launched attacks on British shipping from the newly conquered French ports. Goering was that confident he supposed the RAF could be defeated in a month.²³⁵

²³² webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070706011932/http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/diary1940_2.html

²³³ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years.* V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. July 18, 1940. Pg. 348

²³⁴ *The Blitz. Battle of Britain to the Blitz.* Ronan Thomas. 2010. Online [here](#).

²³⁵ *The Blitz. Battle of Britain to the Blitz.* Ronan Thomas. 2010. Online [here](#).

In looking to delay invasion forces once they landed, Britain established a static system of defence called the Home Guard: a volunteer army that had been raised on May 14th. By the end of July it amounted to one and a half million men, comprised of those too old or too infirm to join the regular army or who were in protected trades and thus exempt from conscription. 'Dad's Army' it was ironically nicknamed, and its defence plan was to establish a coastal 'crust,' a first barrier along the beaches that would give Britain time to bring its small mobile reserves into play. Behind the coastal crust, a network of stop-lines of various strengths and significance were constructed to slow down and contain or channel any German advance. Those lines of defence were to run up through Cambridge and the fens and up the length of England to central Scotland.²³⁶

One can imagine what would have followed, had the Germans landed. Looking back, one of those Local Defence Volunteers himself admitted in 2014 that had there been an invasion, "*We would have had no idea what to do.*" So much for 'fighting on the beaches.' He was not the only volunteer who so thought – there was in fact no centralized anti-invasion authority,²³⁷ and even Churchill himself observed the palpable fear 'of defeat and the final ruin of Britain.' That "*summer of 1940 almost everyone in London with a radio listened to the news, usually twice a day, and sometimes five or six times.*"²³⁸ Conversely, many women self-imposed media black-outs.²³⁹

I asked *Kleine Tiny* whether Margot ever mentioned fleeing bombs and diving into air raid shelters. "*No, never,*" she said, implying Margot may well have been long gone by the time the aerial threats materialized over London.

Margot had in fact returned to Leeds, putting many miles distance between herself and the south coast. But she was neither alone. Ahead of the 1939 Christmas holidays, many evacuees had returned 'from exile' to London owing to the 'Sitzkrieg', after which a good number remained.²⁴⁰ Some schools even re-opened (although by this time two thirds of London's educational establishments had been taken over for civil defence).²⁴¹ More youngsters returned in early 1940,²⁴² and although Bedwell Park seemingly catered for those same pre-schoolers until the end of the war,²⁴³ I suspect Harvey was among those brought back to London that spring. (An approach to Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies in the hope of confirming details on the

²³⁶ *The German Threat to Britain in World War Two. History. World Wars.* Dan Cruickshank. BBC, 2011. Online [here](#).

²³⁷ *The Secret History of the Blitz.* Joshua Levine. Simon & Schuster, 2015. Pg. 150

²³⁸ *London at War. 1939-1945.* Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 84

²³⁹ Many women deliberately refrained from listening to the wireless after May 1940, in a bid to take their minds off the threat of invasion. Indeed, it was listened to 55 percent less than before the raids had begun while newspapers too were read 36 percent less come the end of the year. See *Women and morale. Mass-Observation Report No. 520.* Priscilla Feare. December 1940 cited in *Wartime Women. A Mass-Observation Anthology 1937-1945.* Dorothy Sheridan. Phoenix Press, 2002. Pg. 114, 120. N.b. The 'Mass-Observation' organization's volunteers documented wartime experiences to provide a barometer of public opinion.

²⁴⁰ *London at War. 1939-1945.* Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 58-60

²⁴¹ Some 35 percent of London's schoolchildren were back in the capital by Christmas. *The Evacuation of Children from the County of London during the Second World War.* Information Leaflet Number 32. London Metropolitan Archives, 2010. Pg. 2-3. Online at: cityoflondon.gov.uk.

²⁴² See: blog.findmypast.co.uk/the-story-behind-a-poster-dont-do-it-mother-1406495548.html. N.B. By January 8th, 1940, some 900,000 evacuees had returned home. *How We Lived Then. A History of Every Day During the Second World War.* Norman Longmate. Arrow, 1974. Pg. 60-61

²⁴³ Boughey, Mrs Emmelie. Recording No. O1995.6. Hertford Oral History Group, February 8th, 1995. Transcript online at: hertfordmuseum.org/oralhistory/view-transcript.php?id=160

comings and goings of Bedwell Park's youngsters unfortunately proved fruitless,²⁴⁴ although I could at least confirm he wasn't admitted to any of the Riscoes' nearest schools at any point during 1940).²⁴⁵

When it came to husband Johnnie, I learned he had spent much of winter-spring 1940 out of London already. Since concluding his Christmas panto work, he'd performed variety at both the *Aston* and *Birmingham Hippodromes*, after which he took to the stage at the *Bath Pavilion*.²⁴⁶

In fact, many of the capital's performers took to touring the provinces following the outbreak of the war, London's theatres having been forced into closure both due to the threat from above and a lack of personnel on the ground.²⁴⁷ During the evacuations, the BBC's Variety Department was re-located to Bristol,²⁴⁸ and on the off-chance Margot's man might have gone to the 'Beeb' looking for some extra work, I ventured a speculative enquiry to its Written Archives' Centre in Reading. Through them I learned he was engaged on April 21st,²⁴⁹ later discovering a newsbyte in the *Yorkshire Evening Post* that reported: "*Three Leeds men are concerned in Ernest Longstaffe's programme on Monday 'What's Yours?' They are Johnny Riscoe, comedian, who is to make his first important broadcast and he will sing, among other things, 'On the Road to*

²⁴⁴ "Unfortunately [Hertfordshire Archives and Local Studies](#) do not hold anything about Bedwell Park during the Second World War, or evacuees that were sent there" I learned on June 21st, 2016 via hals.enquiries@hertfordshire.gov.uk, while [Jennifer Hunt](#), Deputy Archivist at the Royal Voluntary Service Archive & Heritage Collection advised an approach to the Imperial War Museum "as they have a whole range of material in their collections" (not eventually pursued).

²⁴⁵ It was initially believed that Harvey Riscoe should have returned from Bedwell Park to attend the *Argyle Street School* (see '2' on the St. Pancras map on pg. 586), which lay less than a hundred metres away from his parents' home in Cromer Street and was also "the biggest school in the local area," according to ucl.ac.uk/bloomsbury-project/institutions/manchester_street_school.htm. Furthermore, [Hirit Belai](#), who has been involved in curating Argyle Street School's history over recent years told me in summer 2016; "the schools in the neighbourhood were reorganised during the war [with] several (smaller?) infant schools ... perhaps temporarily amalgamated into Argyle, those arriving include infants from Prospect Terrace²⁴⁵ and Leigh Street, both close to Argyle." However, a search of a (hundred page) 1940-1945 'emergency admissions register,' led Hirit to conclude: "I found absolutely no mention of ... Harvey Teddy Riscoe." NB: "Infants were 4-8" years old in the late 1920s, said Cromer Street local, Queenie Chapman in interviews made in 2005 (see the end of Chapter XIV). Hirit adds on July 23rd, 2016, that it's not clear "whether it was a supplementary register; i.e. only recorded 'non-regular' kids passing through, or whether it was sole record of movements in and out of Argyle," but observes that it documented youngsters well, including their "reason for leaving...(usually "age," i.e. at 14 years old)," whether they were "'evacuated' or removed" and includes "quite a few one-word remarks, especially when evacuees returned etc."

*What about *Prospect Terrace* as Harvey's parents' choice school? The vicinity of that particular school (at Heathcote Street, just south of the Riscoes' flat - see '3' on the St. Pancras map on pg. 586) didn't see bomb damage until the period between October 1940 and June 1941 (See: bombsight.org/bombs/32509/ and newsgroups.derkeiler.com/Archive/Soc/soc.genealogy.britain/2008-05/msg01439.html) which means he could well have attended in 1940. Although an *Infants* (aged 4-7) and *Juniors' Admissions and Departure Register* spanning the period 1939-1942 is available (LCC/EO/DIV02/PRO/AD/013, microfilm X95/542), "the entries stop around the end of 1939" writes the London Metropolitan Archives' [V. Allison](#) on November 25th, 2016, seemingly on account of the evacuation of children with teachers, according to a *Teacher's log of Sept 23-30th [1939]* entitled, "*The Week of Crisis*." Furthermore, Queenie Chapman, the Riscoes' former neighbor, confirms youngsters in her street went; "*From the infants ... to Prospect Terrace for the juniors*." If Harvey was then enrolled at Prospect Terrace to begin with, upon his return to London, he should have gone to Argyle Street School. Since he didn't, perhaps the most likely conclusion is that he simply didn't enrol upon his return.

²⁴⁶ *Evening Despatch*. January 26th, 1940. Pg. 4; *Birmingham Daily Gazette*. January 30th, 1940. Pg. 4; *Sports Argus, West Midlands*. February 17th, 1940. Pg. 2 and *Bath Chronicle and Weekly Gazette, Somerset*. April 6th, 1940, Pg. 9

²⁴⁷ *Change Lobsters - And Dance*. Lilli Palmer. Star Books, W. H. Allen & Co. Ltd, 1977. Pg. 105

²⁴⁸ Conversely, those elements responsible for music and religion, including musicians and singers, moved 100km north to Bedford - my home town - including the *Glen Miller Allied Expeditionary Forces Orchestra*. *Spy Capital of Britain. Bedfordshire's Secret War*. Stephen Bunker. Bedford Chronicles, 2007. Pg. 28, 44, 143.

²⁴⁹ Personal correspondence with [Tom Hercock](#) of the BBC Written Archives Centre in Reading, UK. November 15th, 2016. NB: A separate file concerning 1939 is no longer available. See also [this](#).

*Somewhere,' written by Gerald Cohen with music by Stanley King.'*²⁵⁰ The show was broadcast on Monday April 22nd, 1940 at 12:30 PM.²⁵¹

The corporation's 'Forces Programme' (which included a raft of shows) had taken until February 18th, 1940 to get itself up and running, but from that point on brought listeners a welcome mix of drama, comedy, popular music, features and quiz shows – plus variety. Programming included 'Ack Ack Beer Beer' for the anti-aircraft and barrage balloon stations, 'Garrison Theatre' for the Army, 'Danger - Men at Work' and 'Sincerely Yours' – Vera Lynn's own radio programme in which she and her quartet performed songs requested by soldiers.²⁵² 'Hi Gang' was for the forces generally.²⁵³

April 1940 was inevitably not the only time Johnnie travelled to Bristol on behalf of the BBC. However, stage work looks to have slowed down for the comic entertainer – it being another two months before his next gig took place, in Blackpool on July 23rd.²⁵⁴ It was at some point between those dates that the family must have returned to the leafy environs of middle-class Chapel Allerton in West Yorkshire.

Margot was no fan of 'Chapeltown,' where her life in the UK had begun back in 1935, but 'evacuating' north was in everyone's interest she had to concede. There were those after all, particularly her recently turned 50 year old mother-in-law, who would argue; *"An absence of family life is the supreme factor in the moral, psychological and physical development of young people. If the home is complete and sound, children can overcome all kinds of evils that should not happen while conversely, the absence of satisfying emotional relationships within the family can lead to all kinds of difficulties."*²⁵⁵

Since Harvey was her only grandchild, she felt powerless to refuse. But when she heard Johnnie's mother had spied an empty house around the corner from her own, the hairs stood up on the back of her neck. *"Here we go again,"* she sighed to herself.

Ultimately the decision was a sound one, Leeds remaining relatively unscathed during the war and enduring just nine raids that helped it stay largely free of bomb damage (bar one unforgettable raid which is described in text box 15.6 on pg. X). Fate had returned her north, but I can't help but wonder what might have been, had my great aunt stayed in London.

Whilst researching I learned of the *Free German League of Culture*, a London-based organization that had just begun to find its feet. It had been established at the end of 1938 and strove to defend and support Germans in the UK as well as fulfill their social and cultural needs (see the text box overleaf). No doubt she'd have relished its programmes of Berlin-style theatre and cabaret that appeared over the following years, given that she too had once been 'ein Berliner' (not to mention one of its entertainers too). Indeed, exposure to the league might even have altered her destiny,

²⁵⁰ *Yorkshire Evening Post*. April 20th, 1940. Pg. 3

²⁵¹ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*. April 22nd, 1940. Pg. 5

²⁵² See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vera_Lynn

²⁵³ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/BBC_Forces_Programme

²⁵⁴ *Lancashire Evening Post*. July 23rd, 1940. Pg. 3

²⁵⁵ *Marriage Failures and the Children*. Claud Mullins. The Epworth Press, 1954. Pg. 43. N.b. Mullins, was an outspoken London magistrate and distinguished writer, speaker and broadcaster who summarised his wartime-related experiences in divorce counselling in 1954.

that is, if associating with German refugees wasn't the last thing she felt inclined towards at that time. Just then, however, the league was put on hold because of the internments, and when its programme got back underway, in November 1941, Margot was truly a gone girl.

15.4: German Microcosm in London: *The Free German League of Culture*

While writing this chapter, I was delighted to learn of a London-based organization that not only strove to defend and support Germans in the UK by representing refugees' and anti-Nazi exiles' interests but to fulfill their social and cultural needs too. Founded in December 1938, Margot couldn't have failed to notice *The Free German League of Culture*, since it was headquartered in nearby Belsize Park from December 1939. That's about 3 kilometres northwest of her and her husband's homestead!

The league, having opened its doors to anyone agreeing with its character and aims, had well over a thousand members by late 1939, its clubhouse becoming the meeting point of German émigré life in the capital, programme attracting audiences that far exceeded its membership. It had already boasted one successful West End revue (thanks to its *Artists Sektion*) barely six weeks before the outbreak of war called *Going, Going – Gong!* Among other things, it hoped to alert the British public to the imminent dangers of war, whilst challenging the view that the German people overwhelmingly supported Nazism. It included sketches and songs in German and in English and evoked the Berlin cabaret of the 1920s – in no small part thanks to the fact that the cast included many names well-known to German theatre and cabaret prior to 1933. The beauty was that the league's theatre had the power to draw together a diverse émigré community.¹

An extensive programme of events followed that went well beyond theatre alone. There were lectures in German, a 'Grand Cabaret Programme,' gymnastics twice a week plus English lessons. From May 1940 the league opened its own *Kleine Bühne* at its headquarters, after which more satirical revues followed in the style of pre-Nazi Berlin cabaret, the first being '*Was bringt die Zeitung?/What's in the News?*' on May 17th, 1940. At the same time, the league established a *Sozialkommission* (Social Advisory Center) to support social welfare amongst refugees.¹ That same month the league boasted 1,226 members including 102 British, with local branches established outside London, including Leeds.² The organisation also published a newsletter called *Freie Deutsche Kultur*, that appeared monthly over the course of the next six years (notwithstanding a few longer pauses).

The league's repertoire is something I imagine Margot would have thrilled at, having herself been Berlin-based in the 1920s and performed there in the early 30s. She might even have been tempted to look for work too I suppose, were it not for a change in circumstances. At that point when she might have been interested, the organization was hard-hit by mass internment, with many of its leading activists detained. It was also put under surveillance by both the UK's Security Service (MI5) and the Metropolitan Police's Special Branch. Phones were tapped and mail was intercepted which threatened to shelve '*What's in the News?*' before it even ran (the first performance coinciding with the introduction of mass internment). Then came a forced hiatus of nearly 18 months, although during that long lay-off, a small group of women attempted to keep the *Little Theatre* going with occasional performances.¹

What if Margot had been one of those do-gooders? Or even attended one or other show? To be sure I'd need to rummage through the league archive material held at *Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv* in Berlin. I shouldn't have any illusions, however, Charmian Brinson, Emeritus Professor of German at Imperial College London, having thoroughly documented the league's activities, reminded me "*membership lists are generally unavailable.*"³ On top of that, it very much looks like Margot also left London, around about the same time many of the league's performers did.

For the footnotes, see the end of this chapter.



The Riscoes new dwelling, shown below, was at 24, *Oak Road*²⁵⁶ (see '1' on the adjacent map), a three storeyed middle-class terraced house that was not dissimilar in character to the previous family home. It may have boasted as many as five bedrooms, two bathrooms plus garage, if today's property descriptions were valid back then.²⁵⁷



Look Good in Blue:
24, Oak Road today is accompanied by high ceilinged rooms, sash windows, fireplaces and wooden floors according to today's online letting agents but as Margot and Johnnie's new home in 1940 was then described as a 'Dwelling House'
Source: Google Maps



Chapeltown Council School, little changed between 1905 and 1940
Source: Leodis.net

Parallel Lines: Where St. Mary's Road meets Chapeltown Road, the main thoroughfare down to Leeds city centre with No.2 Tramlines to boot. October 5th, 1934.
Source: Leodis.net



The Riscoes' Chapeltown homes and those of their wider family.

1: 24, Oak Road (see inset); 2: 'Ravenswood' (home of Margot's mother-in-law, Rae Crowe and partner, Teddy); 3: Chapeltown Council School with the Infant School behind it (pictured overleaf); 4: Margot's first Leeds home, 1935-1939 at 69, Sholebroke Avenue, a 'theatrical apartment house'; 5: Garmont Road, "a very Jewish area;" 6: 23, Sholebroke View, where two of Johnnie's aunts and uncles lived.

N.b. The dashed line running along Chapeltown Rd north/south of '5' denotes the No.2 tramline which ran to/from Leeds centre. Source: OS Six Inch CCIII.SW 1947 online at: maps.nls.uk/view/100946558

²⁵⁶ Margot and Harvey's 'Next of kin' address at the time of Johnnie's enlistment on December 13th, 1940, contrary to his which was White Heather House, according to his Territorial Army Record of Service Paper obtained from the Army Personnel Centre's Support Division at Kentigern House, 65 Brown Street in Glasgow, Scotland in 2016.

²⁵⁷ See: zoopla.co.uk/property-history/6-oak-road/potternewton/leeds/ls7-3ju/30593972

Margot's mother-in-law's home, 'Ravenswood,' ('2') meanwhile, was described in the local press at about the same time the Riscoes arrived, as a residential hotel with garage that catered for 'commercial.'²⁵⁸ It lay nestled within the rather graceful *St. Mary's Road*, at whose western end lay the *Newton Park Estate* while at its foot lay 'Newton Parade,' a row of single storey shop units built in 1931 (pictured on the previous page). Chapeltown Road, which the parade looked onto, was the main thoroughfare down to Leeds city centre. On such journeys Margot will have ridden tram 2 south to North Street then 'Briggate' – Leeds historical centre. The tram terminated at 'Swinegate Depot,' just south of the city's railway station.²⁵⁹



One of the first things on Margot's 'to-do' list after arriving will have been to secure the family's supply of food rations. Those were linked to the 1939 civil registration and according to Mark Pearsall of the UK's *National Archives*:

*"If a person moved they would register a change of address with the registration office in the area to which they moved... She would need to register locally with local retailers for certain foodstuffs."*²⁶⁰

Then came signing Harvey in to the local infants' school for the September start. There are two he might have been enrolled at, although it's difficult to confirm either in the absence of admission registers. The more likely was behind *Chapeltown Council Primary School*²⁶¹ (pictured also on the previous page) which was a good 15 minutes on foot north.²⁶² A second, *Cowper Street School*, however, lay in the opposite direction (off the map). That catered for 4 to 6 year olds in 1940 and was attended by youngsters who lived a few streets closer, in Sholebroke Avenue for instance, where the Riscoes' last home had been. Jewish youngsters typically attended too, according to comments made at the online Leeds photographic archive, *www.leodis.net*.²⁶³ I was struck by mention in a Leeds wartime diary entry from December 1941 that schoolkids typically went home for lunch. Given such circumstances, I'd wager then that Harvey attended the marginally closer Chapeltown Council Infants' School ('3').

²⁵⁸ *Residential Hotels*. *Yorkshire Evening Post*. May 28th, 1940. Pg.1 and *Yorkshire Evening Post*. January 26th, 1942. Pg.2. N.b. When the 1939 population register was taken, 'Ravenswood' boasted nine lodgers, including two couples, with the Crowes top of the list (although whether that signified anything is not clear). 'Unpaid domestic duties' was indicated as Rae's occupation alongside another female. Judging by advertisements posted in the local and national press until September 1944 (and later known vocations), Rae Crowe was in all likelihood Ravenswood's resident manager – if not owner – and lived in Flat 1.

²⁵⁹ Tram 2's northern depot lay between Potternewton Lane and Harrogate Road (on the above map, it lies just west of the intersection above '5'). See: www.leodis.net/display.aspx?resourceIdentifier=2002913_54449099&DISPLAY=FULL. N.b. More pictures of the tramline are available via leodis.net [here](http://www.leodis.net) alongside a feature entitled; A Nostalgic Look Back at 50 Years of Tramway Closure in Leeds, [here](http://www.leodis.net).

²⁶⁰ Personal correspondence on April 6th, 2016, with [Mark Pearsall](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk), Remote Enquiries Duty Officer, National Archives. NB: Indeed, in early 1942, Amy Briggs talks in her *Mass Observation* diary of visiting the food office for an emergency book, before going to London. The diary was received via Karen Watson, Special Collections at The Keep, Woollards Way, Brighton: library.specialcoll@sussex.ac.uk on December 5th, 2016.

²⁶¹ Also known as Chapeltown County Primary School from 1944, according to [Lawrence Brown](http://www.leodis.net/display.aspx?resourceIdentifier=2004113_1240175&DISPLAY=FULL)'s remarks at: www.leodis.net/display.aspx?resourceIdentifier=2004113_1240175&DISPLAY=FULL, on June 7th, 2016. See also Shirley Holton's comments of Sept. 21, 2010 and Nick Hullah's of July 18, 2013 [here](http://www.leodis.net). Note also that Jewish Brenda Habshush talks on Oct. 31, 2014 of starting at the age of four and a half in 1945.

²⁶² A school log book ([LC/ED98](http://www.leodis.net)) concerning the period in which Harvey would have schooled there exists, however, those "rarely mention many children in the school" according to [Danielle Triggs](http://www.leodis.net), Archive Assistant at West Yorkshire Archive Service on November 30th, 2016. As for whether Harvey might have attended any other primary schools nearby, it seems rather unlikely, given that all those of his generation refer to Chapeltown Council Primary School.

²⁶³ See for instance Pamela Hunter as well as Eileen Edwards comments at: www.leodis.net/display.aspx?resourceIdentifier=7787&DISPLAY=FULL.

I was fortunate enough to also come by an old school 'Log Book of Memories,' kindly shared by a former pupil, Ian Cook, who himself attended the school between 1948 and 1951. It relates the experience of a likely contemporary of Harvey called Stephen Park who attended from 1940-1947:

"When I was at school there were the following classes – Junior 1 and Junior 2 (infants) with Miss Nightingale and Mrs Husband as the teachers. Then you progressed into segregated classes to Standard 1 and Standard 2. These shared a wooden hut in the bottom playground near the big gates to the Methleys.²⁶⁴ Mrs Clubb, a Canadian, and Miss Leatherbarrow were the two teachers here. Then you went up the steps to the big school with the intention of getting a scholarship to either Roundhay or the Modern."²⁶⁵

Having spent the summer in Leeds settling his family in, Johnnie knocked Margot for six when he announced he was going to be returning to White Heather House.

"The prospect of further work with the BBC will open new doors," he argued, "while the flat-share costs I'll cover through those contracts and further work that's in the pipeline."²⁶⁶

"Never mind the cost, what about the Blitz and the invasion?" Margot disdained. "You know its tomfoolery – isn't that what you call it? – to think you'll be safe there."

"I'll be fine. I won't be there that often anyway, given there are so many gigs outside the capital" he ventured, unreassuringly.

"So much for preserving the family's integrity and ensuring a balanced childhood for Harvey," she thought sadly to herself. She could have sworn he was dumping her on his mother again and could feel her frustration growing. Curiously, there were no more BBC shows for Johnnie that year, confirms its archive centre, but records reveal he maintained the address – at least until the end of the year.

Johnnie thus returned to the south of England, performing on September 6th at the Exeter Theatre Royal as part of the 'Sappy, but Happy' gig he went on to tour.²⁶⁷ It was the day before sustained bombing of the capital began on September 7th, a campaign that would continue for 57 consecutive nights. Johnnie had perhaps his closest escape of the war, however, the following month, when during the week of October 7th-14th, 1940, a total of 1,920 bombs fell across the capital.²⁶⁸

Those first real weeks of the Blitz resulted in some 16,000 houses being destroyed, 60,000 seriously damaged and more than 300,000 Londoners in need of re-housing. High explosive bombs²⁶⁹ of course fell in Cromer Street, St. Pancras too, hitting an adjoining building on the west wing (in Midhope Street) around October 7, 1940.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁴ The 'Methleys' are the streets to the west and south of the school, which can be seen on the previous map.

²⁶⁵ Chapel Allerton Primary School 1878-1992. A Log Book of Memories. Edited by the school's Parent-Teacher Association. Pg. 33. NB: Segregation refers to the separation of the sexes

²⁶⁶ Between April 16th, 1937 and May 18th, 1939, her Leeds home at 24, Oak Road had been advertised for GBP42 rent per year (see for example, the Leeds Mercury, May 17th, 1939, Pg. 2), while the absence of the address from the 1939 population register suggests it remained empty in the six months or so before Margot moved in. N.b. With regard to rental rates, compare GBP42 per year with what an artist was allegedly paid per week for music-hall appearances: GBP 250. See: The Performer. January 20th, 1938. Pg. 4

²⁶⁷ Exeter and Plymouth Gazette. September 6th, 1940. Pg. 4

²⁶⁸ See: bombsight.org/#

²⁶⁹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/SC250_bomb

²⁷⁰ See: bombsight.org/bombs/32505

Another bomb fell less than a hundred metres away a week later.²⁷¹ Fortunately for Johnnie, that particular week he was due back in Leeds to perform at its *Odeon Theatre* on *The Headrow*.²⁷² The show was dubbed the ‘Mammoth all-Yorkshire Star Concert’ and was held in aid of the “City of Leeds” Spitfire Fund.²⁷³

In November, Hitler ordered the *Blitz* to be widened to include Britain’s major ports and industrial cities in a bid to shatter the nation’s economy,²⁷⁴ thereby laying the ground for an invasion the following spring.²⁷⁵ That in turn led to the loss of more than 40,000 civilians’ lives, almost half of whom lived in London, whilst increasing the number of destroyed or damaged houses in the capital to over a million.²⁷⁶ Between 1940 and 1941 one in six Londoners were thus rendered homeless.²⁷⁷

‘Gone with the Wind’ was an endearingly popular wartime movie, running from April 1940 until spring 1944. Aided in no small part by the fact that cinemas offered a sense of security during the *Blitz*, instead of shutting up shop, picture houses ran on after closing time, showing the main film twice plus three or four supporting films, organ recitals and even impromptu cabaret. Source: Ziegler



Although the raids gave plenty of people good reason to grumble, British courage reigned supreme, its humour still heard today in that endearingly popular wartime chant:

*“Hitler has only got one ball,
Goering has two but very small
Himmler has something similar,
But poor old Goebbels has no balls at all”*²⁷⁸



‘Embodied’ on the eve of 1941. The top of Private Riscoe’s record of military service and portrait photo from his military ID card.

But those bombings also saw some unprecedented social effects take hold. “For the first time, British people of different classes and localities started talking to each other,”²⁷⁹ and as the war went on, despite the high taxes, severe rationing, evacuations and air-raids, “common humanity began to seem more important than distinctions of wealth or birth.”²⁸⁰

While this went on, Johnnie wondered when his call up might eventually materialize. On Friday, December 13th, 1940, notoriously unlucky for some, it did.²⁸¹ Being a comic, he might be forgiven for thinking someone was putting one over him, but there was of course an inevitability to it, what with 4.1 million men registered that year.²⁸² The notice arrived just before he went on stage as a special guest at Manchester’s *Gaumont Theatre* two days later.²⁸³ I daresay he worked in a joke or two as well. He may have been sorry, however,

²⁷¹ On Sunday October 13th, 1940. See: bombsight.org/bombs/37902

²⁷² See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Former_Odeon_cinemas_in_Leeds#The_Headrow

²⁷³ *Yorkshire Evening Post*, October 12th, 1940. Pg. 2

²⁷⁴ *The Secret History of the Blitz*. Joshua Levine. Simon & Schuster, 2015. Pg. 5

²⁷⁵ *Faust’s Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 495

²⁷⁶ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Blitz

²⁷⁷ *London at War. 1939-1945*. Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 154

²⁷⁸ Written in August 1939, it was “first adopted as a British Army marching-song, then as a popular song of defiance against Adolf Hitler’s Nazi-German regime in the other branches of the British armed forces, and amongst British civilians, from 1940 onwards.” See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hitler_Has_Only_Got_One_Ball

²⁷⁹ *The Secret History of the Blitz*. Joshua Levine. Simon & Schuster, 2015. Pg. 5

²⁸⁰ *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979*. David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 202, 206

²⁸¹ Johnnie Riscoe Record of Military Service

²⁸² *How We Lived Then. A History of Every Day During the Second World War*. Norman Longmate. Arrow, 1974. Pg. 81

²⁸³ *Manchester Evening News*. December 14th, 1940, Pg. 2

to learn he was not destined for army entertainments (as one might expect),²⁸⁴ but would be involved in helping to make up the shortfall of the some 18,000 officers and other ranks that existed within Anti-Aircraft 'Ack Ack' Command.²⁸⁵

Following medical examination²⁸⁶ he was thus 'embodied' on December 29th, and lined up for four weeks basic training with the Royal Artillery's Training Battery, subsequent to which he would serve as a gunner.²⁸⁷ *"I'm going to be shooting the Luftwaffe out of the sky!"* he told an excited Harvey down the telephone. But any initial bravado must have rapidly vanished, when on the night of December 29th and 30th, London witnessed a particularly 'memorable' raid that turned out to be one of the most destructive, causing the so-called '*Second Great Fire of London*.'

Between 6 PM and the early hours of the morning, more than 24,000 high explosive and 100,000 incendiary bombs were dropped, destroying hundreds of buildings and filling the air with thick black smoke. The raid coincided with a particularly low tide on the River Thames that made water hard to obtain for fire fighting. As a result, over 1500 fires raged, many joining up to form three major conflagrations that caused a firestorm spreading flames towards St Paul's Cathedral.²⁸⁸

The raid yielded one of the most iconic photographs of London during the *Blitz* (shown right). Entitled '*St Paul's Survives*,' it shows the cathedral illuminated by searchlights and surrounded by smoke. More than 160 people died, over 500 were injured, and hundreds of buildings were destroyed. Yet it became instantly famous and turned the building into "*a symbol of togetherness, survival and suffering*."²⁸⁹ It was this 'Blitz Spirit,' that subsequently inspired humorist and author, Caryl Brahms, to write in her diary in December 1940:

*"These are the days to be alive in. These days now. They are hard, unhappy, lonely, wasted, infuriating, terrifying, heartbreaking days. But they are history. And in them we are part of history. We are lucky to be living now."*²⁹⁰



Two Sides of the same story: 'St Paul's Survives' was the *Daily Mail's* lead photo on December 31st, 1940 while in January 1941 the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* published the same (with many of the damaged buildings now visible in the foreground), contrarily reflecting 'London burns!' Source: [wiki/St_Paul's_Survives](https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Paul's_Survives)

²⁸⁴ Much entertainment was provided to the civil population under the aegis of ENSA, the Entertainments National Service Association, in camps and factories, at home, and in many places farther afield. Headquartered in Drury Lane, ENSA was operated as part of the NAAFI or Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entertainments_National_Service_Association

²⁸⁵ British Military History. United Kingdom 1939-1940. Anti-Aircraft Command (1940). 2011. Online at: britishmilitaryhistory.co.uk/documents.php?aid=171&nid=2&start=5

²⁸⁶ That typically included hair inspections, eye tests, hearing tests, spells in gas chambers and numerous injections. In respect to the latter, Royal Artillery recruit, Vee Robinson, specifically recalled; *"They didn't change the needle each time, only when it wouldn't puncture the skin."* *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 25

²⁸⁷ Vee Robinson, who enlisted a year later, in early 1942, recalls four weeks basic Royal Artillery training, which was the same duration for women as it was for men. See: *Life on the Guns! WW2 People's War*. Vee Robinson. BBC, 2003. Online at: bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/96/a2089596.shtml

²⁸⁸ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Great_Fire_of_London

²⁸⁹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St_Paul's_Survives

²⁹⁰ *The Secret History of the Blitz*. Joshua Levine. Simon & Schuster, 2015. Pg. 313

The Germans, not to be outdone, put the same photograph of St Paul's on the cover of the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* the following month as proof that their campaign was working. In reality, however, Hitler's attempts to militarily force England to its knees eventually came to nothing.²⁹¹ Instead of rapidly continuing his advance across the Channel, Hitler had spent too long basking in the glory of his successful Western European campaign.²⁹²

Furthermore, by switching the military's attention to Britain's cities, the Germans made a tactical blunder which Alexandra Richie claims was Hitler's 'fatal mistake.' Despite those bombing raids costing thousands of civilian lives, the RAF emerged the champion of the skies. The Germans lacked sufficient naval strength in the Channel too.²⁹³

Thereafter, the *Führer* began to lose interest in England and turned his attention elsewhere. The country was far away, isolated, and increasingly weakened by the Battle of the Atlantic.²⁹⁴ However, the longer term consequences of assuming Britain no longer posed a serious threat to the *Reich*, were profound.²⁹⁵ Not only had it retained a secure base from which to prepare for an eventual return to the continent, but the Prime Minister's stubborn gambit to face might with might, ultimately proved critical in offsetting the total collapse of Europe.

The *Blitz* lasted several more months but the Riscoes, unlike the Ridderhofs, were fortunate to have been spared a German invasion. The question I wondered, as perhaps Margot did too, was what would Johnnie's enlistment mean for their relationship and home life now? Her mind lingered over his decision to retain the London flat and as she mused, the term 'hit and run,' popped into her mind. Like Amsterdam, London had been hit, but she had run, together with her family back to Leeds. Or was it Johnnie who had done the running, back to London? It was far from an ideal end to the year. Back in Hamburg, Frau Tȳralla simply longed for any sign from her girls. The postal services were still unreliable between Germany and Holland – or so she thought.

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²⁹¹ *Questions on German History. Paths to Parliamentary Democracy*. German Bundestag. 1998. Pg. 305

²⁹² [webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070706011932/http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/diary1940_2.html](http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/diary1940_2.html)

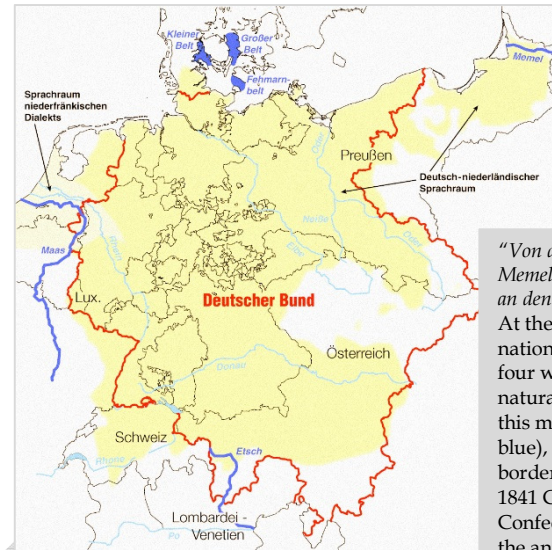
²⁹³ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 495

²⁹⁴ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 497-8

²⁹⁵ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 495

- UNDER THE BANNER OF THE REICH -

One of Hitler's secondary aims with the invasion of Holland and Norway was to capitalize on the superior genetic stock of its peoples and improve the racial composition of the German nation. From a historical perspective, he dreamt of the reconstitution of the Holy Roman Empire (which incorporated the Netherlands until 1648), as a '*Holy Germanic Empire of the German Nation*'.²⁹⁶ Geographically and economically speaking, it was most desirable for Nazi Germany to control the mouths of the *Rhine* and the *Maas* and its port facilities, which carried much of the overseas trade of Germany.²⁹⁷



"Von der Maas bis an die Memel, Von der Etsch bis an den Belt."

At the time, the German national anthem defined four water courses as its natural borders which this map indicates (in blue), alongside the borders (in red) of the 1841 German Confederation (the year the anthem was penned) and its relationship to the borders of the German language area of that time (shaded yellow).
Source: [Wikimedia.org](https://www.wikipedia.org)

Nannÿ, having traded her citizenship and broken her ties to the *Heimat* in the summer of 1932, now found herself back inside the Reich, a Greater German Reich. As if the authoritarian *Kaiserreich* in which she'd grown up wasn't bad enough. Although her daughter, *Kleine Tiny* has mentioned Nannÿ never regretted moving to Holland, I wonder whether she privately dwelt on what might have been? Barely a decade earlier, she still worked the North American vaudeville circuits. But that all seemed so far away now. So much had happened since then. The German national anthem's first stanza, "*Von der Maas bis an die Memel, Von der Etsch bis an den Belt*," defining Germany's 'natural' borders (illustrated within the map above), reverberated in her mind.

But worse was to come. At the behest of the Nazis, an underappreciated Dutch bureaucrat named Jacob Lentz, who to that point had been responsible for harmonizing Dutch municipalities' population registers, developed a new type of counterfeit-proof personal identity card. He presented it to the Germans in Berlin in August 1940, who found it not just satisfactory but better than their own *Kennkarte*.²⁹⁸ As a result, new identity cards were to be issued to each individual over the age of 14 containing their address, fingerprints, a signature and photograph of the owner. The process of introducing those to Dutch citizens began in April 1941 and was completed by year end – thereby rendering them '*Reich*' citizens too. Those same cards went on become the cornerstone of German police rule,²⁹⁹ aiding the occupiers in rooting out opposition and, more tragically, the racial purification of the Netherlands, since all cards issued to Jews were stamped with a large black '*J*' from January 1942, effectively serving a death sentence to each holder.³⁰⁰

²⁹⁶ The Holy Roman Empire itself was dissolved in 1806. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Roman_Empire

²⁹⁷ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 25

²⁹⁸ See: nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob_Lentz

²⁹⁹ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 52

³⁰⁰ *Amsterdam. A History of the World's Most Liberal City*. Russell Shorto. Abacus, 2013. Pg. 299. *N.b.* After the war, Lentz was 'kindly' sentenced to three years in prison. See: nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacob_Lentz

Aside from the Germans' gradual infiltration of administrative procedure and longer term plans, closer to the present, Holland remained embroiled in the 'Battle of Britain,' which meant the country remained something of a battleground too. *Schiphol*, having been repaired, was now being used by the Germans as a base for raids on England. *Ome Dick* now worked for them.

"Night after night we lay in bed listening to the growl of engines heading west," recalled Corrie ten Boom in her memoirs.³⁰¹ Her home in central *Haarlem* lay just 20 km west of Amsterdam, which put it in the flight path between London and *Schiphol*. When the English planes occasionally retaliated, the German fighters would intercept them over *Haarlem*. Airborne dogfights would streak the sky with fire and could send shrapnel flying in any direction, even through one's household windows.

Amsterdammers were neither spared the threat of aerial damage:

"Air raids went off all the time, especially when the war started," recalled Tiny. "That was memorable, along with the curfew. Many citizens took cover in bunkers along the *Amstel*, but we would only head as far as downstairs to the ground floor and occupy the porch. After a while we grew complacent towards the threat and simply remained in our third floor flat."

When Dutch citizens fell victim to RAF raids, the occupiers' reaction was to put up posters encaptioned: "English fliers have no pity on peaceful citizens." Conversely, the determination of the British to continue the war, and its success in repelling the Nazi air attack in the autumn of 1940, brought encouragement, the posters thus arousing much sarcastic comment among a population familiar with the destruction of Rotterdam. Even occasional British bombing attacks on 'German' installations in Holland failed to turn the population against the Allies. Despite the occasional mistakes made by Allied aviators, and the fact that thousands of Dutch citizens eventually fell victim to these attacks, the need for those actions was accepted throughout the war.³⁰²



Now on YouTube! The August 3rd, 1940
RAF bombing of Hamburg.

In early August 1940, Allied bombers returned to *Hamburg*, this time hitting *Barmbek* several kilometres northwest of *St.Georg*.³⁰³ *Deutschen Wochenschau*, the newsreel series that ran in Germany's cinemas from 1940 until the end of World War Two announced the bombing had been "of civilian and not military targets" and at the same time made a mockery of the RAF's attempts to inflict damage (no homes were lost).³⁰⁴ The newsreel was intended for the mass distribution of Nazi propaganda at war and that particular two minute clip emphasizing "*Hamburg goes about life as normal*" aired on August 7th. It can be seen on *YouTube* today.³⁰⁵

³⁰¹ *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 67

³⁰² *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 51, 105

³⁰³ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. Aug. 3, 1940. Pg. 351

³⁰⁴ *Die Zerstörung Hamburgs im Zweiten Weltkrieg*. Arthur Dähn, 1954. Re-published by Michael Grube at: geschichtsspuren.de/artikel/verschiedenes/175-zerstoerung-hamburg-weltkrieg.html with data from *Hamburg und seine Bauten 1929-1953*. See the table entitled: *Der Wohnungsausfall durch Kriegseinwirkungen 1939-1945 in Hamburg*

³⁰⁵ *Bombenangriff auf Hamburg am 03. August 1940*. *Deutschen Wochenschau*. Nr. 518. August 7th, 1940. See: youtube.com/watch?v=goudXoLDotc and also: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Die_Deutsche_Wochenschau

At the end of the month and into early September, British raids peppered Berlin too.³⁰⁶ It was not only the administrative centre but the powerhouse of the nation's war effort and the hub of northern Europe's communication's network. Period observers recorded that *"for three weeks now the Berliners have been sitting in their cellars night after night."*³⁰⁷ However, damage from the attacks was negligible, life quickly returning to normal with the city's residents far from deterred from visiting the *Kurfürstendamm's* cafes. *Otto Quangel*, an 'ordinary' German and one of the principal characters in Hans Fallada's *'Alone in Berlin'* merely uttered:

"It's 1940. From time to time British planes appear over the city. They drop a few bombs, and the next day the populace treks out to view the damage. Most of them laugh at what they see, and say, 'Well, if that's the best they can do, they'll be busy for another hundred years, and meanwhile we'll have removed their cities from the face of the earth. That's the way people have been talking ... Most people are impressed by success.'" ³⁰⁸

Because of the long approach path from the UK, the former Republic of Saxony was relatively safe from air raids. Nevertheless, Frau Tŷralla's somewhat estranged brother and eldest nephew just east of Leipzig saw their first Allied visitors on the night of August 26-27th, 1940, when a small raid followed the opening of the Leipzig Trade Fair. However, the twin-engined bombers missed the city and despite a raid on the fair's visitors being promised immediately afterwards, that demonstration of British air power failed to materialise.³⁰⁹

There were many targets more significant in Leipzig than the trade fair site, the northern outskirts of the city being home to as many as 30 arms' manufacturers.³¹⁰ Since the Polish invasion on September 1st, 1939, civilian air traffic at the Halle/Leipzig airport to the northwest had ceased, with all workshops, hangars and facilities being redirected to serve the war economy. An officially appointed commander of the *Luftwaffe* took over responsibility for the *Schkeuditz*-based airport.³¹¹

But it was Leipzig's first airport in *Mockau*, to the northeast of the city and not a great distance from Nannŷ and Margot's birthplace in *Gohlis*, from where Zeppelin's airships had flown so often between 1909 and 1914, that became the principal military target. Indeed, Leipzig biographer, Wolfram Sturm, describes Mockau's engagement as the *"saddest chapter in the history of Leipzig's air industry"* because of its *"exploitation of concentration camp captives, forced civilian labour and prisoners of war."*³¹² More on Mockau's military role is described in the text box below.

³⁰⁶ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Berlin_in_World_War_II

³⁰⁷ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. Sept. 12, 1940. Pg. 355

³⁰⁸ *Alone in Berlin*. Hans Fallada. Penguin Classics, 2009. Pg. 108-9

³⁰⁹ See: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Luftangriffe_auf_Leipzig#Pläne_und_erste_Angriffe

³¹⁰ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig*. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. Pg. 48.

N.b. See also *Target Leipzig: The RAF's Disastrous Raid of 19/20 February, 1944*. Alan Cooper. Pen and Sword, 2009. Pg. 75-87 for more on Leipzig's air industry and military value.

³¹¹ *Leipzig geht in die Luft. Die Leipziger Luftfahrt von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*. Wolfram Sturm. Engelsdorfer Verlag, 2011. Pg. 102

³¹² *Leipzig geht in die Luft. Die Leipziger Luftfahrt von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*. Wolfram Sturm. Engelsdorfer Verlag, 2011. Pg. 114

15.5: Target Leipzig: Mockau's Arms Industry

Within Leipzig's environs, the *Allgemeine Transportanlagen GmbH*¹ at *Flughafens Mockau* was responsible for all kinds of war machines, machine parts, transport facilities and transport vehicles, production that was aided by a steep rise in its workforce during the war from some 4,000 in 1935 to 9,000 by the end of 1944.²

At the same time, neighbouring *Erla-Werke* was the second largest manufacturing site in the country for *Messerschmitt 109s* and the largest air arms facility in Leipzig. It produced 11,000 units until the end of the war (including over 1,500 in the months of Jan.-April 1945 alone). Its workforce also grew dramatically, from 3,900 individuals in 1937 to 24,000 by the end of 1943, some 64 percent being prisoners of war, forced labourers and concentration camp inmates.² Much of the forced labour was sourced from nearby *Buchenwald* and accommodated in *Thekla*, just east of Mockau (about 13km west of Machern). Despite numerous intense bombing raids, production was maintained right up until the end of the war.³



There was also the *Mitteldeutschen Motorenwerke GmbH*,⁴ which occupied an area outside Mockau and produced *Junkers* engines, some 5,327 in 1943 alone.² During the war, damaged *Junkers* military aircraft were also brought for repair to *Mockau*, while construction of the Ju 88 bomber (pictured) got underway, alongside the so-called *Mistel*, a Ju 88 modified into a flying bomb bound by struts to an upper fighter aircraft such as a *Messerschmitt Bf 109*.²

The Ju 88 was later designed to combat the potential threat of British barrage balloons and so was fitted with cable-cutting equipment, although both this and the Bf109 saw only limited action during the Battle of Britain. Nevertheless, Riscoe may well have ended up shooting down a few during the spring of 1941, and if not, he'll certainly have learnt to tell the difference between the two as part of his training as a gunner.

1. de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Allgemeine_Transportanlagen-Gesellschaft; 2: *Leipzig geht in die Luft. Die Leipziger Luftfahrt von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*. Wolfram Sturm. Engelsdorfer Verlag, 2011. Pgs. 109, 110-11, 113 and 108

3: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Erla_Maschinenwerk; 4: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mitteldeutsche_Motorenwerke; Image: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Junkers_Ju_88

Masses welcome the victors on Leipzig's Augustusplatz, October 3rd, 1940 (with *Kafeehaus Felsche* in the background and *Grimmaische Strasse* to its right).

Source: Foerster



Following the *Führer's* successes across continental Europe, Berlin hosted a triumphal homecoming for troops on July 18th, while welcoming signs in Dresden denoted: "*Our Führer. Creator of a New Europe.*"³¹³ On October 3rd, thousands gathered in Leipzig to greet the victors, alongside an exhibition of 'Seized Arms.'³¹⁴ Many supposed that with the soldiers' return and the bitter memories of the First World War behind them, war was over.³¹⁵

This 'achievement,' however, had been at the expense of millions whom the troops and leaders of these people had enslaved. Indeed, within the environs of *Flughafens Mockau* alone, by the end of the war, forced labour made up some 50 percent of the aerodrome's tenants' workforces.³¹⁶ Not blind to this, a recent acquaintance of Dresden-based Victor Klemperer leveled his criticism not just at the regime but at Germany as a whole, remarking: "*It is necessary for Germany to start from the bottom again and learn the ABC of morality and culture and humanity anew.*"³¹⁷

³¹³ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. Aug. 11, 1940. Pg. 352

³¹⁴ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig*. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. Pg. 46

³¹⁵ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 493

³¹⁶ *Leipzig geht in die Luft. Die Leipziger Luftfahrt von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart*. Wolfram Sturm. Engelsdorfer Verlag, 2011. Pg. 114

³¹⁷ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. Oct. 5, 1940. Pg. 357

Friedrich Paul Hinsch, my great grandmother's elder brother by four and a half years, lived less than 20 km east of Mockau, close to gentrified Machern, in Wenigmachern. Having retired there in June 1934, 'Fritz' and his wife, Martha, maintained a smallholding at his country villa. His eldest son, Margot and Nannj's cousin, 'Frits,' lived a few kilometres north of them, within the forested lake district; 'Lübschützer Teiche.' His family included mother-of-three, Veronika, together with her son K Krause, and their common children Vera and Lothar. Now 33, Frits was a gardener and horticulturalist by education, but following his marriage had changed professions (around the same time Nannj and Margot departed the dying Weimar Republic), securing a job at the German railways' repair workshops; the *Reichsbahn-AusbesserungsWerks*, or 'RAW' for short, northeast of the city in Engelsdorf. It was a time when employment was not easy to come by in Leipzig, never mind Germany as a whole, and Veronika herself never worked – her husband preferred it that way, daughter Vera told me, when we were re-acquainted in Leipzig in April 2016.

The young Hinsch family had moved back and forth several times between the city and Machern's environs during the late 1920s and 1930s, having most recently arrived in the peaceful *Muldental* (valley of the *Mulde*) in October 1936. That allowed freetime to be spent tending fruits and vegetables in the garden as well as developing their weekend house into a proper home. For the day job, Frits commuted to Leipzig, where he trained as a railworks engineer, close to the *Hauptbahnhof*.³¹⁸ At the same time his children schooled in *Eutritzsch* (from whence they had earlier moved).

Country life was put on hold after the outbreak of the war and during 1940, the family returned to Engelsdorf at the behest of Frits' employer. They moved into a small, three bedroomed, groundfloor flat at *Werkstätten Strasse*, 9 (towards the end of the row in the picture left). The series of imposing three-storey houses, just south of the Leipzig-Dresden railway line, had been built between 1910 and 1914 by its then owner, Royal Saxon State Railways (*Königlich Sächsische Staatseisenbahn*), for their workers and employees.³¹⁹ Because of their red-bricks, they were known locally as the 'red houses' or '*die roten Häuser*.'³²⁰ In a genealogical context, that heralded a return for our Prussian family to within the city limits of Leipzig, barely 18 months after Frits younger brother, Martin, had left.



Die roten Häuser in Werkstättenstrasse, with Frits Hinsch's Leipziger Adressbuch entries of 1941-1943 beneath.
Source: landschaften-in-deutschland.de

³¹⁸ Within the vicinity of Leipzig's *Brandenburger brücke* and *Berliner Str.*, recalled Vera in April 2016

³¹⁹ See: landschaften-in-deutschland.de/exkursionen/78_E_508-engelsdorf N.b. Having established a *Werkstätteninspektion* (inspection workshop) in Engelsdorf in 1905, the *Königlich-Sächsische Eisenbahn* became the starting point for many other industrial settlements, as well as urban residences for railroad workers. The founding stone of the first house was laid on July 24th, 1910. See the EINLEITUNG within *Engelsdorf in alten Ansichten*. Kurt and Ursula Ackermann. Europ. Bibliothek, 1995 at: www.europese-bibliotheek.nl/nl/boeken/Engelsdorf_in_alten_Ansichten/100-122030/artikel/1#fragment and also: engelsdorf-historie.de/raw1.html

³²⁰ See: www.europese-bibliotheek.nl/nl/boeken/Engelsdorf_in_alten_Ansichten/100-122030/artikel/3#fragment (paragraph 21) within *Engelsdorf in alten Ansichten*. Kurt and Ursula Ackermann. Europ. Bibliothek, 1995.

Although the *Leipziger Adressbuch* entries imply that Frits worked as a 'Heizer' or fire stoker,³²¹ supposedly at its goods depot and marshalling yards, the so-called *Güterbahnhof*,³²² Vera corrected by adding that after serving as a railworks engineer, he trained as a 'Lokführer' or locomotive driver. That made sense because since the beginning of the war there had been a drastic reduction in the RAW's workforce owing to conscription and as the war transferred more and more men to the front, new opportunities arose, with forced labour, often in the form of French and British prisoners of war, but also women, taking on the more menial tasks. On the downside, the working day now lasted up to ten hours (including Sundays and public holidays).³²³

Returning to Leipzig now meant school lay around the corner for Vera and her siblings, although by autumn 1940, elder brother, Konrad, was already 13 and a half and in the final stages of learning, while younger brother, Lothar, had just turned 11. Given that the Nazi's policy of 'total education' sought to remove the socialization of youngsters as much as possible from the influence of families, churches and schoolteachers and instead pursue the goal of building and consolidating a greater German empire through the Hitler Youth, I wondered whether Vera and her siblings had been engaged, especially since membership was compulsory from March 1939.³²⁴



Join Us! Membership of the *Deutsches Jungvolk* meant serving in German fire brigades and assisting the Reich's Postal Service, *Deutsche Reichsbahn*, the Reich's radio service, and serving among anti-aircraft defense crews

"No" Vera told me, "Neither I, nor Konrad nor Lothar were involved." I had to wonder how, given that parents who did not register their children could be fined up to 150 *Reichsmarks*, or even imprisoned.³²⁵ According to Nazi rules, boys aged between 10 and 14 served in the German Young People (*Deutsches Jungvolk*),³²⁶ whilst girls within the same age range joined the Young Girls League (*Jungmädelsbund*, which was itself affiliated to the senior League of German Girls or *Bund Deutscher Mädel*).³²⁷ Within each group of the movement, there was a set syllabus of indoctrination into Nazi ideas, linked to the military and imperial ambitions of the Third Reich with mottos like 'Hitler is Germany and Germany is Hitler' and 'Berlin is the Reich, and the Reich is Berlin'.³²⁸ This was accompanied by fitness training and eventually military training, where youngsters were drilled in toughness and blind obedience, which for girls at least was supposed to turn them into fit and healthy bearers of the next generation of German babies. Perhaps Frits's kids were let off, because he had an important job, serving the Reich?

³²¹ Coincidentally, the occupation of firestoker was not dissimilar to his father-in-law's vocation at the time he married Veronika, namely, a *Kesselheizer* (boiler/kiln loader)

³²² The *Güterbahnhof* are described at both: landschaften-in-deutschland.de/exkursionen/78_E_508-engelsdorf and within the EINLEITUNG of *Engelsdorf in alten Ansichten* by Kurt and Ursula Ackermann. Europ. Bibliothek, 1995, online at: www.europese-bibliotheek.nl/nl/boeken/Engelsdorf_in_alten_Ansichten/100-122030/artikel/1#fragment

³²³ See: engelsdorf-historie.de/raw2.html

³²⁴ *Education in Nazi Germany* by Lisa Pine. Reviewed by Marjorie Lamberti in *German History. The Journal of the German History Society*. Vol. 29. No. 3. Sept. 2011. Pg. 531

³²⁵ *A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis*. Martyn Whittock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 142

³²⁶ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deutsches_Jungvolk

³²⁷ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jungmädelsbund

³²⁸ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 408

Vera is now close to ninety but it seemed apt to ask Frits' daughter whether the outbreak of war changed much for her, given that she turned 11 in September 1939?

"I did not really notice anything. I was still young and delivering newspapers on my bicycle at the time," she chuckled. "I had to buy one at the behest of my mother, which at 15 Marks was neither cheap. That said, it didn't pay much." Vera's relationship with her mother was far from congenial, it should be added.

As for her chosen vocation, she decided to study the catering business from autumn 1940. She tells me she studied at the famous *Carola Gymnasium* in Leipzig, but since this was a boys' school specialized in classical languages, I imagine she rather meant today's *Gymnasium Engelsdorf*, which at the time hosted cooking classes, which she added, she completed.³²⁹ She studied catering for three years, but in her typically sardonic style, adds *"it was all for nothing."* Those studies were not without disruption, the first air raid siren resounding that summer between 0027 and 0312 hrs on July 16th. Those sirens would go on to be heard on another 589 occasions, the last being April 17th, 1945.³³⁰

An hour away from Leipzig lay Dresden, Saxony's capital, gracing the river *Elbe*. It was home to the Nannj and Margot's cousin Heinz, *Onkel Fritz's* third son. Having recently turned 30,³³¹ he had settled with his Dresden-born wife, *Ingeborg*, a bookseller and shopstore owner, and their three year old daughter, *Irene*, into the romantic leafy environs of *Loschwitz*. There they rented one half of the first floor of a handsome villa at *Veilchenweg 28*. Recalls Irene;

"Our flat ... was a dream – overlooking the Elbe onto the Erzgebirge. It had a huge veranda, it had four Kachelöfen (masonry heaters), six big rooms, a big kitchen besides two storage rooms."

Until the outbreak of the war, Heinz, who *"was never one for idling,"* had been an artist that when not painting, occupied himself making shelves, cupboards, boxes, furniture etc.³³² Afterwards, however, he was called up to perform clerical work at the anti-aircraft (FLAK) tower nearby, where he was stationed.

*"Thank god my father had flat feet" Irene told me in 2011. "German rules prevented such men from going to the front and my mother, with her bookshops and rental library, could supply unavailable - that is - forbidden books, to the man who drafted father. So instead he got a position in an office in Dresden in what was essentially a 9 to 5 job. This country, Germany, with its thousands of rules...finally there was something positive...."*³³³

³²⁹ See: www.sachsen.schule/~gymengel/index.php?schule/geschichte

³³⁰ *Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock."* Leipziger Kalender. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 7, 66

³³¹ Heinz Hinsch was born February 1st, 1910.

³³² Noted during my meeting with Heinz daughter Irene in September, 2012

³³³ Personal correspondence with Irene Hinsch on March 8th, 2011.

Irene was fortunate because with ever greater numbers of men being conscripted into the armed forces, more and more wives were being left to manage their families alone.³³⁴ Except for a short time during the last months of the war, she spent its entire duration looked after by both parents. Furthermore, on August 3rd, 1940, Irene was joined by a brother: *Ulrich Eberhard*. A month or so later, on the night of August 28-29th, the sirens sounded in Dresden too. But after a quarter of an hour, without any bombs being dropped, the all clear was given. It had been a false alarm. The raids had been conducted over Berlin.³³⁵

The youngest of Frau Tjyralla's nephews, was 25 year old *Hans*, a textile merchant and industrialist who had been based in *Frankfurt am Main* since 1936.³³⁶ Having married *Luise* in late 1938 or 1939, they had since been joined by a daughter, *Petra*.³³⁷ Meanwhile, the second eldest among the brothers, *Martin*, was about to turn 32 that year.³³⁸ Like Frau Tjyralla, he too left middle-Germany not long before the war began, moving in the opposite direction to peaceful Vienna with his young family, only to find himself conscripted for *Wehrmacht* service too. His eldest son *Wolfgang* was by now six and a half, while daughter *Christa* was about to turn five. With distance and time (not to mention the war), Nannj and Margot's contact with this side of the family diminished, as did Frau Tjyralla's.

Come the autumn of 1940, Germany was in desperate need of a sound harvest to support its military effort as well as keep the populace content. In late July, however, Victor Klemperer – whose wife was not Jewish – noted; “*Food has become terrible in recent weeks*” with “*very little meat, very poor preserved meat, ... no fruit, [and] the worst ersatz butter*” in the shops.³³⁹ The premature end to summer, not to mention the long cold winter earlier that year, rendered the harvest disastrous.³⁴⁰ Indeed, virtually no fruit was available with a particularly acute shortage of apples, whilst potatoes were to be found in large quantities. This led to countless recipes appearing in the press for their preparation³⁴¹ (and numerous references by diarists to their monotony).

In Leipzig, however, the situation was seemingly better according to Birgit Horn in *Leipzig im Bombenhagel*, with rations in 1940 being “*relatively generous compared to other towns and well-prepared.*” Even “*Up to 1942 various foodstuffs could be easily purchased,*” she writes.³⁴² Within the capital too, the illusion of prosperity and peace continued to be fueled by the spoils of war, including an abundance of Dutch coffee and tobacco.³⁴³ Otto Quangel could again be overheard muttering;

³³⁴ *Empowerment or Endurance? War Wives' Experiences of Independence During and After the Second World War in Germany, 1939-1948*. Hester Vaizey. *German History. The Journal of the German Historical Society*. Vol. 29, No. 1, OUP, March 2011. Pg. 57

³³⁵ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. Aug. 30, 1940. Pg. 353

³³⁶ *Hans Hinsch* was born January 26, 1915.

³³⁷ Thought to have been 1939 or thereabouts, since in summer 1938 Hans had travelled alone to Saxony – see Ch.XIV.

³³⁸ *Martin Hinsch* was born November 10, 1908.

³³⁹ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. July 26, 1940. Pg. 350

³⁴⁰ Summer brought just three days above 30 degrees Celsius in Berlin, according to *Das Wetter in Berlin von 1933 bis 1945*. Paul Schlaak. Sept. 2000. Online at: luise-berlin.de/bms/bmstxt00/0009gesd.htm. Meanwhile August in Saxony saw weeks of “*autumn weather with wind and rain and [was] unusually cold.*” *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. Aug. 30, 1940. Pg. 353

³⁴¹ *Nazi Germany at War*. Martin Kitchen. London & New York: Routledge, 1994. Pg. 80. Online [here](#).

³⁴² *Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel “Haddock.” Leipziger Kalender*. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig, Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 20-21

³⁴³ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 493

"Just as well the looting of the invaded nations has begun ... The German people are suffering no very great hardship. You can still find most things in the shops, and they're not even all that expensive."³⁴⁴

It's perhaps not surprising then that people from the provinces were appalled by what they saw when they visited war-time Berlin.³⁴⁵ Dresdners had already abandoned the "Heil Hitler" address by this time, in favour of the apolitical "Good Morning."³⁴⁶ Yet any optimism that such 'societal cracks' may have brought, was futile. Access to foodstuffs appears to have been as much connected to where you lived as to who you knew.

As to the aerial threat, although to this point it had been negligible, the German authorities anticipated a response to Britain's Blitz, thereby evacuating under 14's in threatened cities off to Hitler Youth camps in the safer rural areas of the Reich, e.g. Silesia and Saxony.³⁴⁷ Initially youngsters in Hamburg and Berlin were eligible (and not compelled) to a six months 'KLV' or *Kinderlandverschickung*, while those below the age of ten were to be placed (alongside their mothers) into families. Curiously, on the same date those evacuations got underway, October 2nd, 1940, Frau Tjyralla returned to *Pulverteich*, 30 ('1' on the map on pg. 579). Perhaps her old space had become available again after its (young) bombed-out occupant was evacuated?

Three weeks later, on the nights of October 20th-21st and again on October 24th-25th, the British returned to strike Hamburg. This time around, the RAF caused greater damage, starting a dozen or more fires on both nights, but without costing any lives.³⁴⁸ Perhaps those raids led Frau Tjyralla to realise she'd be better off elsewhere too, and so she went to the heart of the *Altstadt* and an address in *Grosser Burstah*, a busy thoroughfare that connected east and west Hamburg³⁴⁹ ('X' on the adjacent pre-war picture above and on the map overleaf). A gallery of images from a visit in 2016 of the environs is shown overleaf.



X Marks the Spot:
Frau Tjyralla's home in *Grosser Burstah*. The *Rathaus* is top left, the *Nikolaisfleet* bottom right.
Source: [Hamburger Abendblatt/Landesbildstelle](http://HamburgerAbendblatt/Landesbildstelle)

³⁴⁴ *Alone in Berlin*. Hans Fallada. Penguin Classics, 2009. Pg. 108

³⁴⁵ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 497

³⁴⁶ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. Nov. 7, 1940. Pg. 361

³⁴⁷ *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945*. Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 187

³⁴⁸ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Hamburg_in_World_War_II

³⁴⁹ See: de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Großer_Burstah

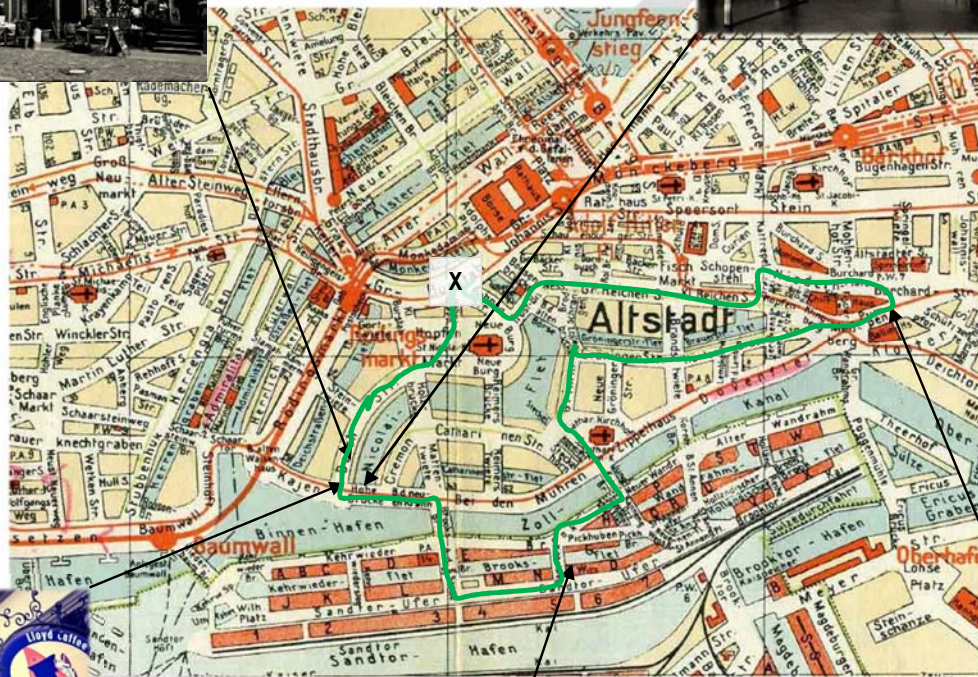


Hamburg harbour and the *Altstadt*:
No more the trade gateway to the world,
thanks not only to Germany's loss of its
colonies and trade routes after World
War I but the Allies' blockade during
World War II and then its significant
destruction



Right:
The *Nikolaifleet* (today), a few moments
walk along the green line (an imaginary
Sunday stroll) from Frau Týralla's home
at *Grosser Burstah*, 7 ('X').

Above and below:
14th century
Deichstraße (literally
'dike street') is the
oldest remaining
street in the *Altstadt*
of Hamburg and its
harbour district and
is a popular visitor
attraction.
Source:
wiki/Deichstraße



Below:
Hamburg's
Chilehaus,
completed 1924
and reminiscent
of a ship's prow
and an
exceptional
example of the
1920s Brick
Expressionism
style of
architecture.
Source:
wiki/Chilehaus



Cca. 2000m



Left:
Warehouses line the 'fleets' in
Hamburg's *Speicherstadt*, since
1991 a UNESCO world
heritage site despite the fact
that Allied bombing destroyed
around 50 percent of it.
Source: [en.wiki/ Speicherstadt](http://en.wiki/Speicherstadt)
As of 2005, the companies in
the *Speicherstadt* handled one-
third of the world's carpet
production, and other goods
including cocoa, coffee, tea,
spices, maritime equipment,
and electronics.
Source: [wiki/ Speicherstadt](http://wiki/Speicherstadt)



To be honest, she had beauty on her doorstep and given the chance I'd relish an opportunity to time-travel back to those times, based on the teaser offered by the birds eye view. A few minutes away lay the *Altstadt's* central square, the *Rathausmarkt* (then *Adolf Hitler Platz*), the towering *St. Nikolaikirche* (the tallest building in the world from 1874 to 1876)³⁵⁰ and the former brewers' market; the *Hopfenmarkt* to its west.³⁵¹ She was now also moments from the harbour, with its docklands and warehouses which lined up alongside loading canals spanned by a multitude of bridges that together made up the '*Speicherstadt*.'

Less than a month later, the British returned on the nights of November 15th and 16th, some 200 or so Bomber Command aircraft hitting the nearby *Blohm & Voss* shipyards and starting over 60 fires.³⁵² "I might be amongst civilians but those raids are growing a little too close for comfort," worried Frau Tÿralla, having hit just three kilometers west of her home, on the opposite side of the *Norderelbe* (the northern channel of the Elbe on which Hamburg was situated), in that part of the harbour known as *Hamburg-Steinwerder* – where as it happened the U-boat factories at the *Vulkanhafen* were also to be found.³⁵³

With Christmas approaching, Frau Tÿralla considered running again. Suddenly Saxony and her brother's in Leipzig seemed to be a much safer spot. But a repeat of last winter's severity quickly put paid to those thoughts,³⁵⁴ while Fritz and Martha anyway went themselves to Dresden as the photo, right, reveals. At the same time, her thoughts were with her daughters. She trusted God that Margot was well out of harms way, what with London bearing the brunt of the Blitz, and tried to satisfy herself by recalling those halcyon visits to Nannÿ during the thirties. With only limited details on the situation in Holland, and the post not getting through, she felt inclined to board the train at once. Being left in the dark was so very frustrating.

But now was definitely not the time to spring a surprise visit to Amsterdam. Civil liberties there had been heavily curtailed since occupation. Movement was restricted, with curfew running from midnight to 4 AM since October, while unauthorized travel out of Holland had been outlawed. Even travel to or from certain designated sections of the country was prohibited at various times during the occupation.³⁵⁵



Christmas 1940 at Heinz Hirsch home in Calberlastrasse 4 in Loschwitz. Ingeborg left cradles young Ulrich, whilst Frau Tÿralla's brother, Fritz (now 61) looks to little Irene accompanied by his wife Martha (Irene's father Heinz hides in the back)

³⁵⁰ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Nicholas'_Church,_Hamburg

³⁵¹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamburg_Rathaus as well as the interactive map at: historisches-hamburg.de

³⁵² See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Hamburg_in_World_War_II. N.B. Home loss was negligible according to an article entitled *Die Zerstörung Hamburgs im Zweiten Weltkrieg*. Arthur Dähn, 1954. Re-published by Michael Grube at: geschichtsspuren.de/artikel/verschiedenes/175-zerstoerung-hamburg-weltkrieg.html with data from *Hamburg und seine Bauten 1929-1953*. See the table entitled: *Der Wohnungsausfall durch Kriegseinwirkungen 1939-1945 in Hamburg*

³⁵³ See: warhistoryonline.com/war-articles/three-u-boats-missing-until-1985-found-in-the-elbe-u-boat-bunker-in-hamburg.html

³⁵⁴ Noting the following weather reports by Victor Klemperer; Nov. 2nd, 1940: "two days of snowfall;" Dec. 20th, 1940: "Severe frost for days, -5 to -1 at night. Apartment cannot be heated. 15-7 degrees in room;" Jan. 5th, 1941: "Cold again with lots of snow." Jan. 20th, 1941: "cold with snow (without interruption since December)." January 31st, 1941: "After a few mild days severe frost...again." *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. Nov. 2nd, 1940 – Jan. 31st, 1941. Pg. 360, 364, 370, 371. See also: *Das Wetter in Berlin von 1933 bis 1945*. Paul Schlaak. Edition Luisenstadt, Berlinische Monatsschrift Heft 9/2000. Online [here](#).

³⁵⁵ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 53

As in Germany, signs had appeared in cafés too that autumn, with the words ‚JEWS FORBIDDEN,‘ scrawled upon them.³⁵⁶ On October 26th, 1940, Dutch civil servants were asked to complete a ‚Declaration of Aryan Descent,‘ which „almost everybody took great care to hand in.“ A month later, on November 23rd, all Jewish civil servants were dismissed while the *Amsterdam University* followed suit by firing its Jewish teaching staff, before asking students to sign a declaration of loyalty to the occupiers.³⁵⁷ Five days into the New Year, all cinemas put up: „Für Juden verboten“ signs.³⁵⁸ Afterwards came the registration of Jewish businesses, before Jewish shops were put under the authority of German ‚administrators.‘³⁵⁹ The racial purification of the Netherlands was underway.

Unrest grew as Amsterdam celebrated its first awkward Christmas under occupation. The NSB, that organisation which most aspired to being the embodiment of the New Order, attempted to gain credibility with its masters through street action. During the New Year, groups of uniformed members would march into Jewish neighbourhoods and terrorise the residents, dragging them from trams and beating them. To make matters worse, by early February 1941, street fights and running battles had become an established part of the Amsterdam scene, the NSB’s military wing, the ‚Weerafdeling,‘ competing in its struggle for supremacy over other National Socialist organisations.³⁶⁰

*“Some joined the NSB simply for the benefits” recalls Corrie ten Boom. “More food, more clothing coupons, the best jobs and housing [and later automobiles too]. Others became NSBers out of conviction. Nazism was a disease to which the Dutch too were susceptible, and those with an anti-Semitic bias fell sick to it first.”*³⁶¹

The cost of living too had risen by a third since occupation, while „Amsterdam’s unemployed, still hovering above 40,000, were forced to accept work in Germany and metalworkers were threatened with the prospect of being compelled to work for the German war machine.“³⁶² The Germans also tightened their grip on Dutch farms, putting them to work for its benefit, the countryside being plundered to feed their soldiers as well as for shipment to the fatherland.

*“Worst were the disappearances,” adds ten Boom. “We never knew whether ... people had been spirited away by the Gestapo or gone into hiding...[A] shop remained shuttered ... although ... an NSB family moved into the apartment above.”*³⁶³

³⁵⁶ See the ‘Chronology of Dutch war-time history’ at: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1940

³⁵⁷ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 252, 265

³⁵⁸ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist’s Life in a Turbulent World*. Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 79

³⁵⁹ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 252

³⁶⁰ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 253, 254

³⁶¹ *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 68

³⁶² *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 254. NB:

godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1941 (a ‘Chronology of Dutch war-time history’ based on newspaper clippings) reveals this began to take place from February 28th, 1941, while the first Arbeidsdienst (Dutch Labour Service) labour camp became operational at Nunspeet on March 3rd, 1941. See also: gahetna.nl/sites/default/files/bijlagen/orlogsgids-vraag10.pdf prepared by the Dutch National Archief and also: nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nederlandse_Arbeidsdienst

³⁶³ *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 68

Explains Amsterdam historian, Geert Mak; „*Permanent insecurity dominated life, and every decision had to be made against a background of rumours and confused assumptions.*“³⁶⁴ “*And I thought I got away from all that,*” mused Nannÿ, recalling 1930’s Berlin. “*Now that cancer has spread to Holland. So much for a ‘Greater’ German Reich.*”

Out of earshot, the occupiers were pejoratively known as *Krauts* or *Mofs*,³⁶⁵ which meant Nannÿ grew similarly labelled, owing to her lingering German accent. Cor too would speak outwardly against the Nazis’ behavior and often had to bite his tongue to ensure he wasn’t picked up. So fearful was he that he made contingencies for his family’s safety in case he were to be ‘spirited away.’ In that case elder brother *Emsay* and wife, *Johanna*, were to host Nannÿ and Tiny in *Amsterdam Zuid*.

Kleine Tiny reminds me that the war and the prejudices it brought out against Germans did not isolate her mother outright. But it did encourage relationships with other women in similar situations:

„Tante Lies,’ for example, was a neighbour married to a German from the Rhineland while her brother, ‘Ome Leo,’ was also married to a German called ‘Tante Käte.’ The three of them would come together and share what coffee they could get their hands on (or the next best thing) to muse over what might have been.“

That meant Tiny grew more and more accustomed to hearing her mother tongue.

During the New Year, Amsterdam’s occupiers attempted to establish and seal off the Jewish quarter from the rest of the city,³⁶⁶ whilst the first formal round-ups took place on February 22nd-23rd, 1941³⁶⁷ (i.e. before the new ID cards had even been introduced). By now, ordinary Dutch citizens’ frustration began to spill over into what became known as the ‘February Strike’ and on the 25th of that month, non-Jewish workers downed tools to support their colleagues. It started in a tram depot called the *Kromme Mijdrechtstraat*, about a kilometer south of Nannÿ’s home, and quickly multiplied throughout the city. Within ten minutes, over two and a half thousand Amsterdammers stood in front of the main gate of the Fokker factory in Amsterdam’s north. Men, women, boys and girls, all cheering. One of the pamphlets distributed read: ‘DEMAND THE IMMEDIATE RELEASE OF THE ARRESTED JEWS!’³⁶⁸ The strikes spread to Haarlem, Hilversum, Utrecht, and elsewhere.³⁶⁹

I had to wonder whether Cor was one of the demonstrators and so put that to Tiny in summer 2017. “*I don’t know,*” she told me. “*Pa was passively involved in what came to be known as the resistance, I think, but of course his younger brother Dick was also a Schiphol employee, so he had to be careful.*” The event was an impressive show of public opposition to the regime. Yet it was to be the only significant uprising in Holland during the war.

³⁶⁴ Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 258

³⁶⁵ See also: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_terms_used_for_Germans

³⁶⁶ Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 254-5

³⁶⁷ See the ‘Chronology of Dutch war-time history’ at: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1941

³⁶⁸ Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pgs. 253, 254, 256, 257

³⁶⁹ See the ‘Chronology of Dutch war-time history’ at: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1941

Although order was quickly restored, the Germans were taken by surprise. That night its 'SS' patrolled the streets and occasionally fired upon strikers, although by the following day, the trams were running and the civil service had resumed following orders. Two days later, it was all over.³⁷⁰

From this point on, however, the conflict between the Dutch and the German administration grew more pronounced, Hitler and Himmler even toying with the idea of transplanting all, or part of the Dutch population to the East and the Baltic states, as punishment for the strike.³⁷¹ Assimilation was more challenging than they had imagined. The oppression was upped another notch.

Although the Allies had given Hamburg some respite, with the advent of spring and the Battle of Britain close to an end, the RAF returned, some 257 aircraft raiding the city (alongside Bremen and Berlin) on the night of March 12th-13th, 1941. It was an attempt to disrupt U-boat production in order to offset Allied shipping losses.³⁷² This time those raids claimed lives too: 51 Hamburgers – the highest number in a single raid so far.³⁷³ In no uncertain terms, the 'storm' had arrived. In addition, rumours were circulating that the Americans would get involved in the war too.³⁷⁴

Those left homeless by the raids were called 'demolition tenants' and perhaps in a bid to ensure she'd not be next, five days later and on March 17th, Frau Tÿralla now moved out of the city center, to *Lübecker Str. 59* in *Hohenfelde* or 'High fields' (see '6' on the map on pg. 579). Luckily for her, despite the housing shortage,³⁷⁵ the loss of homes to this point had remained negligible. Nevertheless, Bomber Command kept up its raids during April and May,³⁷⁶ and yet still, residential property remained unscathed,³⁷⁷ in part thanks to bad weather and a lack of moonlight,³⁷⁸ - and of course strategic intent to avoid heavily populated areas.

I suspect, however, that Frau Tÿralla recognised that wherever she stayed in Hamburg she was vulnerable. Even if her building wasn't hit, occupying others' apartments meant she'd be first out if a landlord's family member's was. She contemplated again a visit to Holland.

"Time is running out. I may be forbidden from cowardice, but who can say what tomorrow brings? I need a travel permit. And fast. I need to be sure Nannj is well. Isn't European integration what the 'Greater German Reich' is about after all?!"

The inconvenience it may cause her daughter, or the fact that Holland saw bombing raids and heard sirens, hardly entered her mind.

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³⁷⁰ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 257

³⁷¹ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 12, 25-26

³⁷² webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070706011932/http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/diary1941_1.html

³⁷³ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Hamburg_in_World_War_II#cite_ref-RAF-40-May-Jun_19-0.

³⁷⁴ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. Feb. 8th, 1941. Pg. 372.

³⁷⁵ *The Jews and Germans of Hamburg. The Destruction of a Civilisation 1790-1945*. J. Grenville. Routledge, 2012. Pg. 216

³⁷⁶ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Hamburg_in_World_War_II

³⁷⁷ *Die Zerstörung Hamburgs im Zweiten Weltkrieg*. Arthur Dähn, 1954. Re-published by Michael Grube at: geschichtsspuren.de/artikel/verschiedenes/175-zerstoerung-hamburg-weltkrieg.html with data from *Hamburg und seine Bauten 1929-1953*.

³⁷⁸ webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070706011932/http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/diary1941_2.html

- SEPARATE LIVES -

While Bomber Command poked at strategic German targets, from early 1941 *Private Johnnie Riscoe* was being schooled in how to recognize *Messerschmidts* and *Junkers*. From its inception, the Royal Artillery had been based at Woolwich, in southeast London,³⁷⁹ and from Riscoe's Military Identity Card (separate from his Record of Military Service), he was initially assigned to the 264th Anti-Aircraft Battery in nearby Dartford. According to another Anti-Aircraft Battery member, training was completed at the Royal Artillery Barracks in Arborfield, near Reading, west of London. That involved aircraft recognition tests, security lectures, firing practice and command post drill, alongside "ropes, bars and 'horses' to vault over" in the gym, kit, hut and medical inspections, and also required shooting drones out over the sea beyond Weybourne in Norfolk.³⁸⁰

One can almost imagine Johnnie's wife, Nanny and Frau Tŷralla picking out one another's bomber fleets from time to time that spring. None had much sense as to how the other was doing, neither that Margot had returned north. For Margot too it would be along wait for news of family over on the continent. I looked to Tiny to confirm what her family knew about Margot's well-being (or even her grandmother's in Germany) and she confirmed, "We had no idea, of course. But you just got on with things. To be honest, we were more concerned about our uncles and aunts down the road." Indeed it seems senseless to compare today – what with Viber, Facebook and Skype – with yesteryear (even if the term 'wireless' was as hip then as it is today). But conversely, it's hard to comprehend their lives being so disconnected.

Come March 31st, Margot's husband had successfully completed his training and was thus appointed *Lance Bombardier* – the Royal Artillery's rank of Lance Corporal that is typically denoted by a single chevron on the upper arm.³⁸¹ If the same routine followed for Riscoe as the above mentioned trainee, he'll have been due as many as nine days leave afterwards.³⁸² Not only could he head home, but he might squeeze in a show too, I fancifully thought.

The following week, he was indeed back on more familiar ground, when he joined fellow performers belonging to the artists' organisation; 'The Grand Order of Water Rats'³⁸³ for its first out-of-London convention in Chester. Not only that but he also joined the crowd for a one-off gig in aid of the *Prisoners of War and Troop Comforts Fund* (see advertisement right) on Sunday April 6th at the *Gaumont Palace*. It was eventually attended by over 2000 people, with Riscoe compèring together with the BBC's John Sharman, already renowned for his 'Music Hall' show. The broadcast version was called 'Rats in the Forces.'



No sooner had Riscoe completed his training and he was off to Chester to broadcast 'Rats in the Forces.'

Source:
Cheshire Observer,
March 29th, 1941

³⁷⁹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Artillery

³⁸⁰ *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 30, 42, 55

³⁸¹ See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombardier_\(rank\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombardier_(rank))

³⁸² *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 56

³⁸³ The order was a 'Stage Brotherhood' representing variety and consisting of 151 elected artists. When founded, a suggestion was made that it should be called the *Order of the Star*, although it was decided to reverse this word and call it the 'Rats' instead.

The event was followed by a gala dinner,³⁸⁴ and I was more than curious to learn whether Margot might have joined him for a few days break at this special time – Chester being no great distance from Leeds. I therefore asked one of the rats’ councillors whether photos might be available, since I was hoping for a period photo of the Riscoes together. Sadly, its curator who received the request was not able to confirm the existence of any.³⁸⁵

Following leave, Johnnie returned to London and joined the 206th ‘Heavy’ Anti-Aircraft (H.A.A.) Regiment which was based in Erith at Bexley Road, between Dartford and Woolwich. His was one of several batteries³⁸⁶ that belonged to the 6th Anti-Aircraft Division³⁸⁷ that was part of the *1 Anti-Aircraft Corps*.³⁸⁸ Its role from February that year was to defend the Thames Estuary and the approaches to the capital.

Riscoe will not have had to wait long for a taste of *Blitz* action, since the *Luftwaffe* raided London on both April 16th and 19th, 1941. Those raids claimed more than a thousand lives each night and left 148,000 of the capital’s houses damaged, making the average of 40,000 per week in autumn 1940 seem rather modest by comparison.³⁸⁹

The aforementioned battery gunner, Vee Robinson, gives us an insight as to what Riscoe will have experienced: When the order came in to get to the guns an alarm would shrilly ring and for those on manning duty, battledress would go over pyjamas, boots unlaced, steel helmets bouncing until secured properly as one ran to one’s Command Post at the gunsite. Fear was absent. The guns were loud and searchlights played their part about the personnel, as beams of light criss-crossed the sky.³⁹⁰ More about Anti-Aircraft Command and battery life is included in the text box overleaf.

³⁸⁴ *Cheshire Observer*. April 12th, 1941. Pg. 1, 6

³⁸⁵ Two unsuccessful enquiries were made via ‘Scribe Rat Councillor’ [Mike Martin](#) in January and June 2017.

³⁸⁶ 206 (Erith), 207 (Erith), 208 (Bromley) and 264 (Dartford) Anti-Aircraft Batteries according to:

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/6th_Anti-Aircraft_Division_\(United_Kingdom\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/6th_Anti-Aircraft_Division_(United_Kingdom))

³⁸⁷ The sub-units are defined on Pg. 1 of the leaflet; ‘6th Anti-Aircraft Division’ of May 8th, 2012, published at:

britishmilitaryhistory.co.uk/webeasycms/hold/uploads/bmh_document_pdf/6-Anti-Aircraft-Division-1940-.pdf.

Looking up the formation (or Order of Battle), 206th A.A. was part of the [58th \(Kent\) AA Regiment, RA](#) (a Heavy Anti-Aircraft unit converted from medium artillery in 1935) which in turn belonged to the [28th \(Thames and Medway\) Anti-Aircraft Brigade](#) located at Kitchener Barracks in Chatham, Kent. See also:

[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/6th_Anti-Aircraft_Division_\(United_Kingdom\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/6th_Anti-Aircraft_Division_(United_Kingdom))

³⁸⁸ Detailed [here](#).

³⁸⁹ *London at War. 1939-1945*. Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 151

³⁹⁰ *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 75-76

15.6: Anti-Aircraft Command and Battery Life

Anti-Aircraft Command was an army entirely composed of ground-based guns and searchlights (and those who operated them) that were deployed throughout the country and moved about as necessary. It was organized, like an army, into divisions and brigades. Brigades consisted of varying numbers of regiments, each usually of three batteries and where each battery manned two gunsites, typically containing four guns each. A battery's staffing included a Commanding Officer (CO), two Captains (one for each half of the Battery), four Lieutenants, a Sergeant Major and a given number of Sergeants and Bombardiers to operate the two gunsites, plus gunners of course.¹ Operationally, the brigades and regiments were allotted to 'gun defended areas' – cities, ports, factories or other vital points – and connected via 'gun operation rooms' to the nearest Fighter Group HQ, whilst the Royal Air Force (RAF) orchestrated the various means of defence above ground.²



Batteries usually consisted of around 500 persons³ and were most often formed into four sections, where 'pairs' manned the two gunsites and one of them served as headquarters.¹ Each pair did manning duty alternate 24 hours and were marched to the Command Post to carry out gun drill, while the section not manning the guns were otherwise occupied on guard duty at the main gate, fire piquet (where a small unit of soldiers is placed on a line forward of a position to provide warning of an enemy advance),⁴ cookhouse fatigue (unskilled labour such as peeling potatoes and washing dishes) and general duties (including cleaning ablutions). Prowler guard (i.e. patrolling the interior camp) was also part of that section's duties. Writes battery gunner, Vee Robinson:

"We certainly experienced a variety of tasks never envisaged while training as gunners. Imagine our folly in thinking that all our time would be spent on guns, instruments, marching and the lecture room, when manning a gunsite,"¹

Sites worked on a twenty four hour timetable that kicked off at 1400. The main parade at that time was also the changeover, which is when twenty four hour leaves also commenced. Personnel starting their leaves paraded, were duly inspected and then dismissed,¹ while 'Battery Orders' provided the necessary details on marching drill, gun drill, sentry duty, manning duty, route marches, firing or practice camp, plus extras such as display.⁵ Most importantly perhaps, leaves were detailed within Battery Orders too. Recalls Robinson:

"If your name was on Battery Orders for a pass ... whatever your aches and pains ... a miraculous cure took place!"¹

Sources:

1. *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 36-7, 56, 77, 84, 89 and 106-7
 2. *The Women's Royal Army Corps*. Shelford Bidwell. Pen and Sword, 1997. Pg. 117. Online [here](#).
 3. 'I Love the Scent of Cordite in Your Hair': Gender Dynamics in Mixed Anti-Aircraft Batteries during the Second World War. Gerard J. De Groot in *History. The Journal of the Historical Association*. Vol. 82, # 265. January 1997. Pg. 74. Online [here](#).
 4. See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Picket_\(military\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Picket_(military))
 5. Robinson recalled, for instance, how she was to be engaged to parade in Princes Street Edinburgh.
- Image: A 4.5 inch anti-aircraft gun belonging to the 207th Battery in January 1941, shortly before Johnnie joined the 206th. Source: [wiki/28th_\(Thames_and_Medway\)_AntiAircraft_Brigade](#)

The Germans' swansong *Blitz* visit to London occurred on May 10th, when it burned the UK's *House of Commons* to the ground (as well as started 2,500 other fires that went on to claim 1,500 lives).³⁹¹ The next day, however, Hitler called an end to the raids on British cities³⁹² that was followed by a much welcome '*Lull*' characterized by smaller scale air-attacks.³⁹³

³⁹¹ *The Secret History of the Blitz*. Joshua Levine. Simon & Schuster, 2015. Pg. 5

³⁹² See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Blitz

³⁹³ *The Blitz. Britain responds, then endures*. Ronan Thomas. 2010. Online at: westendatwar.org.uk/page_id_152_path_0p2p.aspx

After almost a year's worth of raids, London had been left disfigured by mountains of rubble and gaping craters. According to American journalist, Quentin Reynolds, the damage crystalised the *Luftwaffe's* legacy into "*a new and intensified hatred of Germany in the people of London,*" through which he foresaw "*Britain will be inspired and encouraged.*"³⁹⁴

But from then on, the Nazis' ratcheted up military success beyond Britain, defeating Greece and invading Crete by the end of May.³⁹⁵ Over the course of that year, German air-strength went on to sink some nine million tonnes of Allied and neutral merchant shipping, which, accompanied by submarine and mining attacks on transatlantic traffic, left British naval strength heavily taxed in the seas surrounding the continent.³⁹⁶

With Johnnie's gunning duties almost 'over' before they started, how was Margot coping alone? Roughly nine months has passed since the family had moved north. Certainly Leeds saw its biggest raid of the war during spring 1941, and at least one (!) bomb fell close to the family home (the consequences of that raid being described in the next text box overleaf).

No doubt Margot will have wished her husband had been posted a little closer to home and probably asked herself, "*Had his home address been Leeds and not London when he was enlisted, would it have made a difference?*" From her and Harvey's point of view it certainly could have, given that it took the best part of a working day to undertake a journey from London to Leeds.³⁹⁷ In theory, battery members were:

*"allowed 24 hours' leave every twelve days and evening leave, every eight, but it seldom worked out like that. You couldn't plan more than two days ahead, for until you read Battery Orders, posted up each morning, no one but the Sergeant responsible for doing the roster knew who would be on it. Friends were not always off duty at the same time; to be fair though, most of the time they were unless swords had been crossed with an NCO."*³⁹⁸

For those '24 hour leaves,' White Heather House's location was perfect.³⁹⁹ But there were '36's' and '48's' also available, "*where compassionate leave, often jocularly known as 'passionate' leave, was offered in the case of family emergencies. So-called 'privilege leave,' softened the bitterness of separation,*" writes Norman Longmate,⁴⁰⁰ although separation was of course nothing new for Margot. She'd learnt to occupy herself since moving from Holland to the UK in 1935.

³⁹⁴ *London at War. 1939-1945.* Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 174

³⁹⁵ *A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis.* Martyn Whittock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 238

³⁹⁶ *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979.* David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 193-194

³⁹⁷ A Leeds-based diarist called Amy Briggs writes that at the end of January 1942, she managed a journey from Lower Wortley (a similar distance as Chapel Allerton was from Leeds city centre), to London in around about 10 hours (with a small delay). See also:

upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/11/London_Midland_Scottish_Rly_1935_Map.jpg

³⁹⁸ *Sisters in Arms.* Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 77. N.b. An NCO was a military officer with a position of rank or authority. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-commissioned_officer

³⁹⁹ Even if he no longer shared the rent, I daresay he still could crash on the sofa, while Erith was no great stretch from White Heather House, a day pass more than permitting a journey to/from the capital. Modern day journey planners reveal a 35 minute ride from Erith to London Bridge with Southeastern railways, besides five stops on the Tube's Northern Line to St. Pancras. See thetrainline.com/train-times/erith-to-london-bridge and tubejp.com

⁴⁰⁰ *How We Lived Then. A History of Every Day During the Second World War.* Norman Longmate. Arrow, 1974. Pg. 83

15.7: Leeds 'Quarter Blitz'

It was around 2100 hrs on March 14th, 1941, when the sirens began to wail. In all, some 451 German bombers were over Britain that Friday night, with hundreds heading for Glasgow and Sheffield and another 40 bound for Leeds. The first incendiaries – one-pound aluminium cases loaded with fire-raising magnesium – began falling from about 2340 with high explosive bombs following thirty minutes after midnight.¹



Over the next two-and-a-half hours, German bombs hit civic landmarks including the Town Hall and the Park Row-based City Museum, Leeds New station (now Leeds City station), the Kirkgate Markets, the Central Post Office, central Leeds' Quarry Hill flats (at the time the largest social housing complex in the United Kingdom²), the Hotel Metropole and the area now occupied by the Inner Ring Road. Some one hundred houses were destroyed in the raid, another 4,600 sustained damage and 65 people died. Down the road, not a kilometer south of Margot's home, an incendiary device set off a fire at about half past two in the morning on Chapeltown Road (close to where it intersects Grange Avenue, a street where Margot later briefly lived).³

Despite the trauma of the so-called 'Quarter Blitz,' Leeds' citizens laughed and smiled through the ordeal in a bid to keep spirits up.⁴ John Ashbee, a local historian who lived nearby Chapel Allerton in Headingley at the time, recalls:

*"We always suspected Leeds would be a target but it was said at the time that the industrial haze over the city made it a difficult target from the air. The smogs were unbelievable, you literally couldn't see your hand in front of you. There was a yellow tinge to them and the taste was awful. You couldn't get away from it. But then again perhaps it kept us safer than other cities."*⁵

That was the last of the *Luftwaffe's* significant efforts to bomb Leeds although the city naturally retained precautions such as the many public air raid shelters and large water tanks to be used for fire-fighting in the event of incendiary devices being dropped.⁵ Further scattered raids followed, but nothing on the scale of that night.¹ Mind you, that's not to say the area remained completely bomb-free thereafter. The above pictured house in Cliff Side Gardens in Woodhouse for instance (between Headingley and Leeds centre) was half demolished later on in 1941.⁴ And still today, unexploded shells are being unearthed across the city, including one in 2012 in Potternewton Park. That's only 500 metres as the crow flies from Margot's former home!⁵

1. yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/your-leeds/wwii-leeds-bombing-raid-recalled-1-3179329

2. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quarry_Hill,_Leeds

3. West Riding Air Raid Protection Bomb map [here](#)

4. www.mylearning.org/leeds-in-world-war-ii/p-839/

5. en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leeds_Blitz

Image (6): Leodis.net NB: There is a conflict over the date with Leodis claiming September 22nd, 1941, while mylearning.org states April 1941.

On a 48 hour pass, however, the distance from Erith to Chapeltown might just about have been practicable, even if *"Trains were not always guaranteed to take the route as advertised and it was foolish to expect every train to run on time."*⁴⁰¹ But add to this the trouble of transfers and layovers, hauling kitbag from platform to platform, up steps, down steps, the danger of arriving too late to reach camp on time and being branded a 'Defaulter' and 'AWOL' (Absent WithOut Leave) whilst collecting an immediate charge, and one can understand why the appeal of a night's stay and a full day with family might have lost its appeal. Short notice leaves especially tended to wear nerves thin for all the wrong reasons, since family couldn't always be forewarned. For example, a Leeds-based nurse and young mum named Amy Briggs who kept a diary during the war frequently grumbled about how her serving husband's spontaneous appearances often disrupted routines and plans, typically unnerving her in the process.

⁴⁰¹ *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 58, 74

But even more serious than the loneliness which 'significant others' faced was the poverty, continues Norman Longmate. "*The nation treated the families of the men who defended it with scandalous meanness,*"⁴⁰² and certainly *Kleine Tiny* recalls Margot's references to being short-changed during Johnnie's war service years. At the lowest rank, fighting soldiers picked up two shillings a day, a '*pitiful subsistence*' that barely provided for their families, which in turn obliged their wives to look for alternative sources of income. One woman in Bethnal Green, for instance, who lived on a pound a week after paying rent, could only feed her daughter by embroidering luxury gloves late at night. Another "*eked out her dependent's allowance by occasional prostitution.*"⁴⁰³ The situation was compounded by the fact that soldiers' wives seeking supplementary allowances could be subjected to an inquisition by a Public Assistance official.⁴⁰⁴ Many had little choice but to pursue more clandestine means of making money.

Of course the National Service Act⁴⁰⁵ offered a more dignified means to women and girls up to the age of 51 to supplement their income by registering for war work in factories to make bombs, aeroplanes and load ammunition,⁴⁰⁶ while Leeds certainly offered opportunity in this regard, employing some 14,500 women in aircraft and engineering work, according to a student website called 'Project Inspire.'⁴⁰⁷ Although women with very young children were exempt, Margot had family on-hand who could step in to childmind.

Meals on
Wheels:
The Women's
Voluntary
Service run a
mobile canteen
in London, 1941.
Source: [wiki/
Royal_Voluntary
_Service](https://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Voluntary_Service)



Like her own mother, Margot was neither one to sit still so I was curious to know whether she might have signed up to raise a little extra income on the side.⁴⁰⁸ The Blitz had also resulted in huge demand for national Civil Defence workers, both voluntary and conscripted, which saw over 1.5 million enrol as volunteer Air Raid Precaution (ARP) wardens.⁴⁰⁹ Women's Voluntary Services (WVS) also led a successful recruitment drive, engaging some one million women by 1941 to assist as nurses, distribute clothes, set up mobile canteens and run Incident Inquiry Points etc.⁴¹⁰ To have not signed up would conversely have raised eyebrows.

⁴⁰² *How We Lived Then. A History of Every Day During the Second World War.* Norman Longmate. Arrow, 1974. Pg. 82

⁴⁰³ *London at War. 1939-1945.* Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 263

⁴⁰⁴ *How We Lived Then. A History of Every Day During the Second World War.* Norman Longmate. Arrow, 1974. Pg. 82

⁴⁰⁵ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conscription_in_the_United_Kingdom#Second_World_War

⁴⁰⁶ *Sisters in Arms.* Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 19

⁴⁰⁷ See: projectinspire.co.uk/world-war-ii.html. N.B. In 1941, Lancaster bombers among others were produced by AVRO at RAF YEADON (now Leeds Bradford Airport). See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leeds_Bradford_Airport#Wartime_use

⁴⁰⁸ From September 1st, 1939 a small percentage of ARP wardens were full-time and were paid a salary (3 GBP for men, 2 GBP for women). See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Air_Raid_Precautions_in_the_United_Kingdom

⁴⁰⁹ *The Blitz. Britain responds, then endures.* Ronan Thomas. 2010. Online at:

westendatwar.org.uk/page_id_152_path_0p2p.aspx

⁴¹⁰ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Royal_Voluntary_Service

Having identified a WVS centre in Leeds, I enquired as to the availability of a record for my great aunt. Sadly there were none kept between 1939 and May 1st, 1943, while Jennifer Hunt of the Royal Voluntary Service's Archive and Heritage Collection added "*Very few personal records and very few volunteers are ever mentioned by name, because of the manner of the archives' management over the ensuing years and the way volunteers recorded information.*"⁴¹¹

It's obviously hard to tell whether there might otherwise have been a spot of moonlighting going on, although after some prodding *Kleine Tiny* recalled Margot hosted lodgers – much as her mother had done during the previous war. That would have suited her moreso than sitting in a factory or volunteering for the WVS, and with a roomy house at her disposal this would be the ideal. Whatsmore, as the war had gone on, as in Germany, local authorities had compelled those with the space, through billeting officers,⁴¹² to take in evacuees. Although some refused to host bombed-out or frightened lodgers, they were compensated by the government (although the financial return was trivial),⁴¹³ with the result being that by February 1941, as many as 278,623 Londoners had been billeted away with 56,985 re-housed.⁴¹⁴

Many women especially had soldiers or airmen billeted on them, or even voluntarily opened their homes to servicemen; darning their socks, sewing on their stripes and offering the chance of a hot bath. They tended to be popular guests too, partly because of the generous scale of their rations.⁴¹⁵ According to one volunteer war worker's account, rental rates varied, but some soldiers would give all their lodging and subsistence allowance; 25 shillings in October 1941 (the same amount was being dispensed by the labour exchange in late 1940) bar that which they needed for their bus pass (3/6).⁴¹⁶ Others expected a private room for 18 shillings and sixpence.⁴¹⁷

But by offering lodging on the side, home hosts could make a little money to help cover maintenance costs. I was lucky to come across an article on a BBC website posting 'People's War' stories that confirmed soldiers were accommodated in West Yorkshire too. Writes Leeds local, Michael Campbell, when British soldiers were evacuated from Dunkirk in June 1940, his family took in three soldiers, after which their house in Headingley became a formal billeting point. Then, "*When frontline troops no longer needed to be billeted,*" he continues "*we had Royal Army Pay Corp personnel who were stationed at Benefit House, Leeds, until they were reallocated, and then for two or three years, female munitions workers and ATS [Auxiliary Territorial Service]....*"⁴¹⁸ I've no doubt then this must have happened in other well-to-do areas with multiple-roomed houses, including neighbouring Chapel Allerton.

⁴¹¹ Personal correspondence on June 9th, 2016 with Jennifer Hunt, Deputy Archivist of the Royal Voluntary Service's Archive and Heritage Collection via archive@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk. N.b. The catalogue is available online [here](#).

⁴¹² Appointed under the orders of the Ministry of Health by local authorities, Billeting Officers typically worked in the so-called 'safe' or 'reception areas' to compile tables of potential hosts. They were seldom popular as individuals which is why they rarely lasted in the position more than six months. See: *How We Lived Then*. N. Longmate. Arrow, 1974. Pg. 61 & *The Blitz. The British Under Attack*. J. Gardiner. Harper Press, 2010. Pg. 120-121, 125-127

⁴¹³ *How We Lived Then. A History of Every Day During the Second World War*. Norman Longmate. Arrow, 1974. Pg. 60

⁴¹⁴ *The Blitz. The British Under Attack*. Juliet Gardiner. Harper Press, 2010. Pg. 125

⁴¹⁵ *How We Lived Then. A History of Every Day During the Second World War*. N. Longmate. Arrow, 1974. Pg. 85, 87.

⁴¹⁶ *The Secret History of the Blitz*. Joshua Levine. Simon & Schuster, 2015. Pg. 26

⁴¹⁷ *Wartime Women. A Mass-Observation Anthology 1937-1945*. Dorothy Sheridan. Phoenix Press, 2002. Pg. 146

⁴¹⁸ *A Leeds Schoolboy's War*. Article ID: A7385277. Wakefield Libraries & Information Services (Michael Campbell). November 29th, 2005. Online at: bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/77/a7385277.shtml

Two 'Ravenswood' ads, the first for a capable maid, the second posted by a couple, proving theatricals passed through too.

Sources: Yorkshire Evening Post, January 10th, 1941, Pg. 2 and February 27th, 1940, Pg. 3



because accommodation rental and residence management became her vocation in later life. But something Norman Longmate writes in his book, *'How we Lived Then'* also jarred with me. He observed that "*On the whole it was the less well off, who understood what it was like to be far from home with little money, who were the most welcoming.*"⁴²⁰ That to me would sum Margot up whilst anecdotal evidence does not contradict that, as will become clear.

The curious thing though, was that since Johnnie's gig in Chester, the BBC had begun to show increasing interest in Riscoe, ultimately engaging him on five further occasions that year; three times on *'Ack Ack Beer Beer'*, besides *'Workers' Playtime'* and *'Camp Concert.'*⁴²¹ Without contract copies we've no idea what he earned,⁴²² one would have thought that combined with the savings recouped from no longer renting the White Heather House flat, Margot oughtn't have found herself quite as hard-up as she did. Whatsmore, those BBC gigs also suggest she'll have found herself deprived of her husband's company more often than otherwise need have been.

There were naturally those who expressed concern at the familial changes the war and resulting separations were bringing to domestic home life, psychoanalysts in particular. Their views were reinforced in early 1940 by an initiative called 'Mass-Observation' which 'monitored' society, noting; "*The breaking up of families, the new mingling of population, while temporarily dislocating individual branches will undoubtedly produce a compensation of new life and new functions.*"⁴²³ As if to echo this last point, Headingley-based Michael Campbell added that in hosting strangers "*Close bonds developed in war time,*" that also led to visiting workers at their own homes.

While Riscoe's credence with the BBC came along during 1941, another who took on 'new function' during the war was Johnnie's mother, she herself exerting growing influence over Harvey. Johnnie's cousin, who observed Rae and Margot's relationship first hand, confirmed "*Rae never liked her,*" which may help explain why she over-involved herself in her grandson's upbringing.

Although Margot never spoke of her wider Leeds family, thanks to online genealogy websites such as *Findmypast.co.uk*, I was able to determine that at least four of Rae's eight siblings lived nearby. Two of Johnnie's uncles, *Dave* (54) and *Abe* (40, "*the youngest and richest*" according to one of his great nephews) lived nearer to the centre

⁴¹⁹ Local newspaper ads suggest the business was good over at *Ravenswood*, its management calling for a maid both in October 1940 and January 1941 – for whom no washing was involved while good wages and tips were included. *Yorkshire Evening Post*. October 4th, 1940. Pg. 2 and January 10th, 1941. Pg. 2

⁴²⁰ *How We Lived Then. A History of Every Day During the Second World War*. Norman Longmate. Arrow, 1974. Pg. 87

⁴²¹ Undated details disclosed in a letter Johnnie Riscoe wrote the BBC's Variety Dept. on August 13th, 1942 and shared with the author by Tom Hercoc of the BBC's Written Archives Centre.

⁴²² Personal correspondence with [Tom Hercoc](#) on Jan. 13th, 2017.

⁴²³ *Women in Wartime*. M-O Report No. 26. January 1940. Stella Schofield. In *Wartime Women. A Mass-Observation Anthology 1937-1945*. Dorothy Sheridan. Phoenix Press, 2002. Pg. 78

of Leeds, while almost across the road (see '6' on the map on Pg. 615 in *HIT (AND RUN)*) was 'Hymie' (*Hyman*), a salesman who also volunteered as an Air Raid Precaution warden,⁴²⁴ who at almost 43, was Rae's junior by seven years. He and wife Milly had a daughter, *Doreen* (17), a telephonist for the General Post Office at the time, and a son, *Neville* (11). Meanwhile, Rae's 'little' sister was 31 year old *Freda*, a factory girl, who also lived with Hymie and Millie and was just a year or so older than Margot.

Just when I hoped to be in touch with a member of this group who could tell me more about Margot and 'Auntie Rae,' Doreen's son, *Menachem*, (Johnnie's first cousin once removed and today a radio show host in Israel) got in touch via Facebook.⁴²⁵ And in a real boon to my research, I learned his mother, Doreen, is alive and well in Australia, having recently turned 94. They both kindly passed on valuable opinion and patiently responded to my constant prodding. Although the 'Tompofskis' are not the focus here, a little of their own (in itself riveting) history is summarized in the text box overleaf. This is included, because it casts a little more light on Margot's environs at the time and Johnnie's own family history.

In a bid meanwhile to comprehend Rae's dislike of Margot, I began by asking Doreen whether the Tompofskis "*were overtly religious.*" Perhaps it had something to do with the Germans' persecution the Jews and Margot being from Leipzig?

Well "*they celebrated Jewish holidays*" Doreen answered, "*but were not orthodox.*"

"Okay" I answered "*and what about Rae's knowledge of Yiddish?*"⁴²⁶ Tiny told me Rae possessed a 'foreign' accent. Could that have arisen from speaking it?" I queried, not wishing to let go this important aspect of identity.

"None of us actually spoke Yiddish," cut in Menachem. "*My grandparents spoke English to each other. I don't believe they were fluent in Yiddish, although their parents were. They used the occasional term in Yiddish, especially to express blessings or greetings, or against the evil eye etc.*"

"Hmm, but might they have been anti-German?" I finally ventured.

The "*Tompofskis were not anti any race,*" Doreen assured me. "*Life was difficult enough without having time to hate.*" I had to agree, because as Norman Longmate also wrote, "*However much one loathed Germany as a nation it was hard to dislike all its members as individuals.*"⁴²⁷

⁴²⁴ Abraham, born 1900, married Nora Pickles in Leeds in 1939 and appears to have died in 1979. David Tomphofskie was born June 12, 1886 and died Q3, 1973. He was decorated (as Tompofski) for First World War gallantry. He may have married Rachel Morris in 1912. They and Hymie changed their names to *Thompson* prior to the World War Two, possibly inspiring Rae to change her name to Crowe, even if she remained wedded to Johnnie's father until his death.

⁴²⁵ Menachem himself grew up in Leeds, and having been born there left after twenty years in 1967.

⁴²⁶ The Yiddish language originated during the ninth century in Central Europe, providing the nascent Ashkenazi community with an extensive Germanic based vernacular fused with elements taken from Hebrew and Aramaic, as well as from Slavic languages and traces of Romance languages. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yiddish

⁴²⁷ *How We Lived Then. A History of Every Day During the Second World War.* Norman Longmate. Arrow, 1974. Pg. 481

15.8: "The relentless march of the middle classes"

"Jewish immigrants ... They came ... and came ... and came. In the early years of the twentieth century, more than 10,000 of them were packed into the area called the Leylands. Prejudice meant they were safer together even if it was akin to living in a ghetto. Yiddish was the lingua franca there, the common European Jewish tongue that people of all nationalities used. Most worked in tailoring, in the sweatshops dotted around the Leylands, sewing for 12 or 15 hours a day, most of the garments for the big manufacturers who didn't want to employ Jews in their factories. Male, female, young, old, everyone worked. Those who acquired some money moved a little farther from the city centre, into Chapeltown – then very genteel and after that to Moortown, Roundhay, and Alwoodley. The relentless march of the middle classes."¹



Morris Tompofski, Rae Crowe's father, was born in 1865 in 'Russian Poland'² and while his granddaughter Doreen openly admits "unfortunately no history" was ever passed on, she was able to confirm they were Russian Jews. Both he and his wife Fanny, born 1864, arrived in the UK probably no later than the end of 1885. The Leeds population censuses of 1891, 1901 and 1911 tell us Morris was a tailor or presser while his wife became a grocer's shopkeeper. Their first child, David, was born in Leeds in 1886 and their last of eight, Freda, in 1909.



The earliest known family home was that of 1891 when they resided at 3, Cloth Street (a 'dead-end' shown above and to the left of the frame where the washing hangs out), north of Leeds' Kirkgate Markets. By 1901, they had moved into the visible main thoroughfare, [Regent Street](#), and No. 50 (No. 56 incidentally hosted a grocers, which was quite possibly then Fanny's workstead).

According to the census of 1911, a year after their 20 year old daughter Rachel had given birth to her only son, Carl Berkson, Morris and Fanny had moved to 38, [Samuel Street](#) (farther out of the city, at the southwestern end of Meanwood Street). They lived in fact just two blocks from Carl's birthplace in Gerrans Street (pictured left), presumably to lend Rachel a helping hand (and offer Freda as company to her son I'd guess).

None of these streets, which belonged to what was then known as 'Little London' or 'The Leylands' can be found on today's maps, having been subjected to slum clearance programmes in the 1960s. Mind you, photographs are in abundance at [Leodis.net](#), from where those above have been retrieved. The Tompofskis stayed on at Samuel Street until at least 1927. Fanny then died during the winter of 1929 at the age of 64, while Morris passed away aged 74 in spring 1938. By that time, however, their offspring had all but left those environs, Rachel Tompofski herself moving up to Chapeltown, which is where Margot found her in 1934.

Chapel Allerton Primary School's 'Log Book of Memories' provides a little more insight into how 'Jewish' Chapel Allerton went on to become in the 1930s:

"When Ruth Goldberg (Leigh) came to Chapeltown School ... her family had bought one of the new houses in Garmont Road [see '5' on the map above on pg. 611]... The movement of the Jewish population into these new houses was reflected in the population of the school and in 1935 it was recorded in the Log Book 'Today being a Jewish holiday the attendance has dropped by about 30 as we have now many more Jewish children in the school from the new St. Martin's Estate'."³

Curiously, however, in a possible nod to the legacy left by 'Little London,' the existence of Roscoe Place, Roscoe Mount and Roscoe Road, all key points close to Meanwood Street, hint to the likely origins of Carl Berkson's eventual stage name: Johnnie Riscoe!

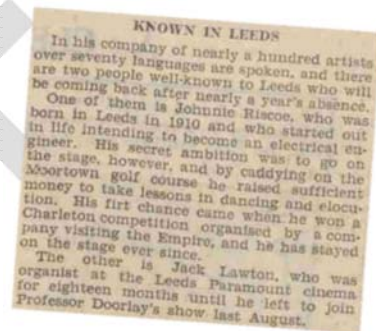
1. chrisnickson.co.uk/tag/the-bank; 2. See also: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Congress_Poland; 3. Chapel Allerton Primary School 1878-1992, A Log Book of Memories, edited by the school's Parent-Teacher Association. Pg. 25. NB: A second hard-to-find booklet is Chapel Allerton Primary School – 100 Years of History, by P. Leach. Images: Above top: Cloth Street and Regent Street on June 29th, 1926. Source: [Leodis.net](#); Middle left: The darkened doorway to the right of the image (taken June 25th, 1958 shortly before demolition) is Gerrans Street No. 8, where Rachel Tompofski's son grew up. Source: [Leodis.net](#)

If their conflict was not racial in nature, what then was it? More prosaically Doreen recalled:

"Margot ... was nothing like Rae. One ... was very dominant, the other, gentler," while Menachem supplemented; "Rae was a sharp tongued, wry, witted ... lady." She was neither afraid to court scandal, I also learned. Although "not a beautiful woman, ... [she] had a powerful sexy attraction for men," her niece supplanted.

"It almost sounds to me as if they rivalled for male attention, and in Johnnie's absence, the target became Harvey." Doreen couldn't confirm that, but did add "Rae probably had some sort of problem with Johnnie when he was young but they grew closer in later years."

Thanks to a 1939 *Leeds Mercury* article I subsequently learned that the stage had always been Johnnie's secret ambition (he was actually set on becoming an electrical engineer)!⁴²⁸ So given that he was already touring northern theatres from the age of twelve (i.e. 1922) and that within six years of that he was on stage in London, followed by Holland's theatres from 1933 until 1937, one might guess he and his mother parted ways not on the best of terms. In which case, one can well imagine Margot being less than welcome when in 1934 he introduced this bubbly blonde *Fräulein* whom he intended to marry and that he subsequently 'dropped off' in 1935. Without going into the depths of mother-son psychology, I had to wonder, was he in fact running from his mother?



Johnnie Riscoe: Known In Leeds
Source: *The Leeds Mercury*, Saturday
March 25th, 1939

Having returned to Chapeltown following the outbreak of war, it was Margot's turn to be in the line of sight of Rae Crowe's 'all seeing eye,' whilst any offer of 'help' vis-à-vis Harvey could hardly be refused. I had similar experiences after moving to central Europe in the 1990s and then recalled a 2005 film entitled '*Prime*,' where Meryl Streep plays the stereotypical Jewish mother: "*A cultural fixture, shorthand for all that is excessive and smothering in familial love.*"⁴²⁹

But being hard up for cash, how else was Margot to get by? As Leeds-based Amy Briggs wrote in her diary in 1941: "*Kindness won't help out my [husband's] army pay, so I have to work.*"⁴³⁰

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⁴²⁸ *Known In Leeds*. *Leeds Mercury*. Saturday March 25th, 1939. Pg. 5

⁴²⁹ See: myjewishlearning.com/article/battling-stereotypes-of-the-jewish-mother

⁴³⁰ Amy Briggs' *Mass Observation diary*. October 6th, 1941 received via Karen Watson, Special Collections at The Keep, Woollards Way, Brighton: library.specialcoll@sussex.ac.uk on December 5th, 2016

Just another day in
fresh, clean, calm,
modern
Amsterdam. About
a kilometer south
of the Ridderhofs'
home as the crow
flies in
Merwedeplein, June
22nd, 1941.
Source: YouTube



While the Germans all but vanished above Leeds and London, their presence on the ground in Holland was set to grow. It had been a year since the Nazis marched in and although the British continued to attack German gun positions and parade troops along the Dutch coastline (on March 31st, 1941, for instance), civil order generally remained peaceful following the February strikes.⁴³¹ Indeed, Russell Shorto reminds us by virtue of the

only video clip of Anne Frank of the relative calm that Holland retained that spring/summer. As he writes, that was "*before the Nazi presence in the city became a horror.*"⁴³² Kleine Tiny unwittingly provided me with another example.

Late May typically meant *Luilak dag*: a youth festival of sorts, which continued to be celebrated today in the western Netherlands, in places like *Zaandam*, *Haarlem*, *Amsterdam* and elsewhere. Traditionally youngsters rise at four in the morning on the Saturday before Pentecost and rudely awaken their neighbours whistling, banging on pots and pans, ringing doorbells and generally being obnoxious.⁴³³ That year *Luilak dag* fell on May 31st.

Tiny's take was to call a taxi for an unpopular neighbour, or tie two doors' knobs together so they'd stay open, remotely ring doorbells with string stretching well of sight or worse, put a wooden splint inside a doorbell so that it rang endlessly. Some of those splints found their way into window frames too, which prevented them from being closed.

Any boys or girls who refused to get up and join the ruckus were typically referred to as *Luilak*, which derives from *Luie* and means lazy - or more simply, '*Lazybones*.'⁴³⁴ There was not much stopping *Kleine Tiny* in those days, who had a penchant for mischief while any attempt *Nannij* made to reprimand her resulted in a resounding: "*Ik moet geen moffen manneeren in mijn huis!*" ("*I want no Kraut dictatorships in my home!*") from Cor. "*But it used to be great fun!*" Tiny added. I can well imagine Harvey would have relished the opportunity to run riot with Tiny, were the world a different place that summer.

⁴³¹ webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070706011932/http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/diary1941_1.html

⁴³² *Amsterdam. A History of the World's Most Liberal City*. Russell Shorto. Abacus, 2013. Pg. 294.

See also: youtube.com/watch?v=4hvtXuO5GzU

⁴³³ See: expatshaarlem.nl/luilak-day

⁴³⁴ There are various interpretations of the origin of the *Luilak* festival. The traditional ceremonies of noisemaking began in pagan spring fertility rites. In popular thinking, the name *Luilak* goes back only to 1672 and a watchman named Piet Lak. The legend is that Piet fell asleep at his post, while French invaders entered the country. The inhabitants scornfully nicknamed the man '*Luie-Lak*' or '*Lazy-Lak*,' which in time became *Luilak*. From then on, all lazy ones who remain asleep receive the uncomplimentary epithet of *Luilakken*. Taken from: *Luilak Day*. By Arianna. Culture, Dutch Life, Food, Kids, News. June 8th 2014. Online at: expatshaarlem.nl/luilak-day

A few days later, on June 3rd, Nannÿ couldn't have failed to notice the former *Kaiser*, *Wilhelm II*, passed away in *Doorn* in the Netherlands at the age of 82. He'll have been recalled not only for his abdication that brought an end to World War One, but to those of her mother's generation as '*The Emperor of my youth*.'⁴³⁵ To see him off, the Nazi occupation authorities granted him a small military funeral with a few hundred people present, while the swastika and other Nazi regalia (against his wishes), were clearly on display.⁴³⁶ Although Nannÿ was apolitical, for a moment I could imagine her reminiscing, "*How much of the world has changed. Probably it is the greatest good fortune to experience so much world history. But shall we survive it?*"⁴³⁷

Meanwhile news regarding that world history grew harder to come by, when in March, all Dutch citizens had to register their radio sets, following the unification of Dutch radio services and the introduction of compulsory licensing fee.⁴³⁸ That in turn meant a news black out for many who couldn't afford to keep a radio, and as far as *Kleine Tiny* recalls, the only radio her family now had access to was at her dad's employer; *Theatre Carré*.

As summer arrived, the numbers of random '*razzia*' raids on Dutch Jews and communists grew, as the occupiers sought to tighten their grip.⁴³⁹ In July, the government forbade all parties, except for the NSB,⁴⁴⁰ whose membership had now grown to about 100,000.⁴⁴¹ Openly collaborating with the occupation forces, the NSB, was essential for the success of lower government and in the civil service, and thus every new mayor to be appointed by the German occupation government was a member.

It was around about the same time that the Dutch 'resistance' came to life, with the *Orde Dienst* ('OD' for short or Order of Service) and *Landelijke Organisatie voor Hulp aan Onderduikers* (or 'LO' for short) joining forces.⁴⁴² Obviously it was galvanized by the administration's disturbance of Dutch families (and Jews) for the purpose of *Arbeitseinsatz* (work deployment), where husbands were taken away from their wives and children.⁴⁴³

⁴³⁵ Actually a remark made by diarist Victor Klemperer – who was two years older than Frau Tÿralla – on June 18th, 1941. See: *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. Nov. 2, 1940 – June 18, 1941. Pg. 389

⁴³⁶ Although the former *Kaiser* never gave up hope that the monarchy would be restored in Germany, Hitler would hear nothing of it. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wilhelm_II,_German_Emperor

⁴³⁷ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. July 9, 1941. Pg. 417

⁴³⁸ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 49

⁴³⁹ June according to the 'Chronology of Dutch war-time history' at: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1941

⁴⁴⁰ See the 'Chronology of Dutch war-time history' at: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1941

⁴⁴¹ Doesn't explicitly state this for mid-1941 but appears to refer to July. See:

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Socialist_Movement_in_the_Netherlands

⁴⁴² During June. See the 'Chronology of Dutch war-time history' at: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1941

⁴⁴³ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 268. N.B. Corrie ten Boom records that males between the ages of 16 and 30 were liable to be captured during a raid and forced to work in Germany, where the munitions factories were desperate for workforces. See: *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 88

While Cor despised the occupiers, he was not one for accepting Jewish discrimination either, Tiny reminding me of an incident from Carré's neighbourhood which was itself a rather Jewish area. A young Jewish lad had fallen into the Amstel canal and while everyone looked on as he struggled, it was Cor who jumped in and fished the lad out. The reward for his good deed? He was threatened for being sympathetic to Jews. He was certainly not put off. Nannÿ nevertheless feared for her husband's safety although since he was approaching 50, he wasn't an obvious target for *Arbeitseinsatz*. The theatre too remained popular which meant work and therefore the family's line of income remained stable.

The hardship enforced upon Dutch citizens grew greater that spring when food rationing was tightened, with milk and potatoes being shortlisted in April. At the end of June, gas and electricity rations were further reduced,⁴⁴⁴ while mending too became more important because of textile rationing.⁴⁴⁵ Basic foodstuffs now had to be stretched further, tea leaves for instance being crushed and reused and supplemented with rose leaves and cherry stems. '*Occupation coffee*' made of dried figs and roots became the norm, and corn obtained from farmers was ground into a type of porridge.⁴⁴⁶ The daily diet was now at about half the average pre-war consumption in terms of calories,⁴⁴⁷ and knowing that the food shortages were on account of their shipment to Germany, must have left Nannÿ feeling ashamed.

Nannÿ, in that traditional Prussian way, was orderly and disciplined with her housekeeping. Her accounting was infallible too, tracking every cent although inevitably, shopping took more and more time whilst the available goods were also of poor quality. Meal planning required more effort and ingenuity, while many families began to raise their own vegetables to supplement rationed foods. The Ridderhofs did not have the means to grow their own vegetables and sometimes Nannÿ was not always as frugal as she could have been, preferring the greengrocer to the market. On occasion she'd end up short on guilders and would have to strong-arm *Tiny* into bargaining a handful from her dad over a game of cards. But such occasions usually arose because she only wanted to put the best on the dinner table.

In the meantime, the mail services between Hamburg and Amsterdam were back up and running. Nannÿ was of course relieved to hear that her mother was alive and well, also that she had moved from pillar to post during the last eighteen months on account of the raids, evacuations and so on (which probably helped explain why her letters never seemed to get through, she surmised). Perhaps the most alarming news within her missive, however, was the prospect of her visit. What with the growing hardships around all of them and the general unpopularity of the Germans, she couldn't for a moment consider what good that could do.

⁴⁴⁴ See the '*Chronology of Dutch war-time history*' at: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1941

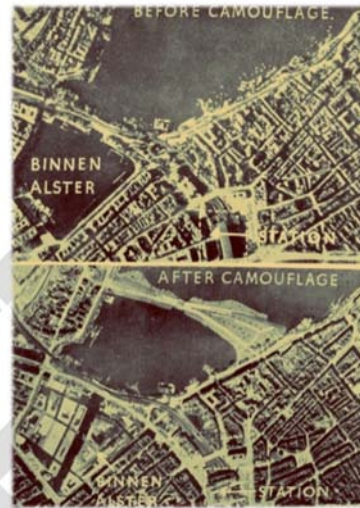
⁴⁴⁵ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 101

⁴⁴⁶ *The Hiding Place*. Corrie ten Boom with John and Elizebeth Sherrill. Hodder & Stoughton, 2015. Pg. 121

⁴⁴⁷ *The Dutch Under German Occupation 1940-1945*. Werner Warmbrunn. Stanford University Press, 1963. Pg. 79. N.B. They 'only' dropped a further 15 percent until the summer of 1944.

Frau Tjyralla was full of disquiet, however. Now that Britain no longer had to defend itself, it could go on the attack and following its springtime raids, the RAF returned in greater numbers, taking aim at both Hamburg's strategic and civilian targets on the night of June 27th-28th. Again no homes were lost,⁴⁴⁸ but she simply despised being cooped up in strangers' cellars or in public shelters in the middle of the night when the sirens went and to have to ask for every utensil when it came to eating.⁴⁴⁹

"Even more worrying," she scribbled, "are the city's attempts to camouflage strategic points and landmarks."⁴⁵⁰ In the adjacent images one can see how Hamburg's Binnen Alster appears to have 'moved' northeast, thanks to a mock bridge that was built across the Aussen Alster together with the installation of floating 'streets' over the Binnen Alster and an illusion of roads running east-west painted over the railway station. Little did Frau Tjyralla know that the 'Tommies' were already well aware of that camouflage trick, *LIFE* magazine subsequently publishing it for all the world to see on August 4th, 1941. The Hanseatic heavyweight was then again visited on the night of August 10th-11th.⁴⁵¹



RAF reconnaissance photography revealed Hamburg's attempts to camouflage the city in mid-1941

Source:
www.2today.com/8th-august-1941-raf-step-up-attacks-on-germany

Frau Tjyralla vowed to make her way to Amsterdam. "This going-on-sixty year old's nerves shalln't be able to deal with this for much longer," she implored her daughter.⁴⁵² "Almost every night since early in the summer of 1940 the air-raid siren has howled.⁴⁵³ Even if I survive, I already feel a hundred years old. Amsterdam will do me good. I'll help you and you will help me."⁴⁵⁴

Kleine Tiny distinctly remembers those letters. "Obviously they were censored by the Nazis. Mother would hold them up for me to see that the Germans actually cut out words and paragraphs with the end result being that the final correspondence looked more like a lace doily." That meant that mostly of her grandmother's gripes probably never actually made it through, leaving Nannj to wonder what exactly her mother had intended to say.

⁴⁴⁸ Die Zerstörung Hamburgs im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Arthur Dähn, 1954. Re-published by Michael Grube at: geschichtsspuren.de/artikel/verschiedenes/175-zerstoerung-hamburg-weltkrieg.html with data from Hamburg und seine Bauten 1929-1953. See the table entitled: Der Wohnungsausfall durch Kriegseinwirkungen 1939-1945 in Hamburg

⁴⁴⁹ A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis. Martyn Whittcock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 262. N.b. By law one took cover when the alarm sounded, while shelters, in accordance with the rules, were equipped with food and first-aid kits. See: A Different Kind of Courage. Gretel's Story. Gretel Wachtel and Claudia Strachan. Mainstream, 2009. Pg. 57

⁴⁵⁰ See: www.2today.com/8th-august-1941-raf-step-up-attacks-on-germany

⁴⁵¹ An attempt was also made on the night of August 7th-8th (Nannj's 33rd birthday). However, the weather was bad and the identification of targets was almost impossible and except for some bombbursts and fires, no results were observed, according to: www.2today.com/8th-august-1941-raf-step-up-attacks-on-germany#sthash.zS25Mzcr.dpuf

⁴⁵² In July 1941 Bomber Command reported: "...there are many signs that our recent attacks on industrial towns are having a great effect on the morale of the civilian population." See: webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070706011932/http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/diary1941_2.html

⁴⁵³ A Different Kind of Courage. Gretel's Story. Gretel Wachtel and Claudia Strachan. Mainstream, 2009. Pg. 57

⁴⁵⁴ "The hopeless military situation and the catastrophic military conditions were aspects of the wartime reality that were frequently mentioned in letters, which openly talked of the exhaustion and low morale." See Empowerment or Endurance? War Wives' Experiences of Independence During and After the Second World War in Germany, 1939-1948. Hester Vaizey. German History. The Journal of the German Historical Society. Vol. 29, No. 1, OUP, March 2011. Pg. 62

That summer the Ridderhofs attempted to forget about the occupation and holidayed in *Zeeland*, visiting Kleine Tiny's great aunt and uncle who now lived in a modern little house that simply was "*not the same*" as their former dwelling, before it had been bombed, recalled Tiny.

The start of the 1941-1942 school year afterwards brought home to Tiny the increasing discrimination faced by Amsterdam's Jews. To begin with, Jewish children were forced to attend separate schools, and that was followed by them and their parents being forbidden to enjoy public events, artistic shows and concerts.⁴⁵⁵ Just like all Dutch companies, *Carré* then had to fire its Jewish employees too.⁴⁵⁶

It was not only the Ridderhofs who were in danger of losing good friends and acquaintances – even their own daughter was branded Jewish by a neighbour. That autumn she called round for girlfriend, *Corrie*, and got the following angry response from her mother:

"She's not coming out to play with you."

"Why not?" a stunned Tiny replied.

"Because you're Jewish" answered Corrie's mother.

Taken aback, in response Tiny stammered *"No, I'm not!"*

"After that incident I went on to beat up Corrie's sister!" she chuckled. *"It must have been my short dark hair,"* she mused in early 2016. No wonder her father call her *'Tomboy Tina'* and sometimes *Timus*.

While the Allies' continued to raid German cities and military installations, its own campaign was focused elsewhere. Having roped Yugoslavia into the Axis (much to the objection of Serbs), Hitler told a delighted Goebbels on June 15th that he intended to turn on Russia. Saxony's residents had already grown aware that something was afoot since the end of May, witnessing how: *"In the last few weeks ten thousand people have been called up ... in Pirna district alone."*⁴⁵⁷

Goebbels countered the rumours of troop movements by claiming it was merely a diversion ahead of another attack on England.⁴⁵⁸ But a week later, on June 22nd, Germany launched *Operation Barbarossa*⁴⁵⁹ against the Soviet Union, therewith breaking the two year old non-aggression pact with Stalin and opening up a new front: one that stretched 2,900 km and involved over three million troops sourced from Germany, its allies and conscripts within its newly acquired territories.

⁴⁵⁵ *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. Geert Mak. Vintage Books, 2001. Pg. 259-260, referring first to August 29th, 1941 and then September 15th, 1941.

⁴⁵⁶ See the 'Chronology of Dutch war-time history' at: godutch.com/newspaper/index.php?id=295#1941 which indicates that from October 22nd, 1941, all Jews remaining in work forces required special work permits.

⁴⁵⁷ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. May 21st, 1941. Pg. 385

⁴⁵⁸ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 498

⁴⁵⁹ See also: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Front_\(World_War_II\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Front_(World_War_II))

What was the reaction of ordinary Germans? *"The Russian war is a source of new pride for people, their grumbling of yesterday is forgotten..."* wrote Victor Klemperer in his diary. The mood is triumphant, and the populace cheerfully believe the claims: *"we shall conquer France, Russia and the whole wide world."*⁴⁶⁰ Another, Hans-Dieter Hundsdoerfer, an East Prussian from Insterburg⁴⁶¹ who trained at the time as a glider pilot within the Hitler Youth,⁴⁶² recalls how *"The song 'From Finland to the Black Sea – Forward you Storming Army!' became very popular."* Yet Hitler's aim remained *"not only one of military conquest but also ... physical annihilation. The Communist leaders were to be murdered, the population decimated, and the country's industrial and agricultural base destroyed."*⁴⁶³

Nannj and Margot's cousin, Frits, already knew it was a critical turning point – and neither a positive one. He warned his children the war was lost.⁴⁶⁴ Even if Hitler assured the people he would crush Russia before Christmas, other members of the German public thought as Frits. It was not difficult to see why: the Soviet population was almost 200 million compared with Germany's eighty.⁴⁶⁵ I wondered though if he had greater insight than most, his daughter, Vera, telling me that as a *Lokführer*, he *"transported munitions and Kriegsmaterial up to the Russian front."* Although she declined to show any interest in his missions, he probably saw more than most.

While hoardes of young men shipped out of Dresden that summer (with many also being called up from farms, public services and industry), at around the same time, Konrad, Vera's elder brother, arrived. He was there to undertake his 'war service,' his younger brother explained to me in summer 2000, and began training at a *Bauwerk Schule*, commuting from Leipzig on a daily basis. I daresay Konrad worked alongside many individuals from within the newly occupied territories. In June for instance, Klemperer recorded that in Dresden: *"There's nothing but foreigners running around the streets, [with] Belgians, Italians, Serbs in the armament factories."*⁴⁶⁶

Leipzig was little different, with foreign workers having been brought in from Italy and Denmark. In addition, young German women and girls were engaged in working on Leipzig's tramways. Their jobs were made all the more difficult by the same regular blackouts that one saw in the UK and in Holland; the dimming of tram lamps, the tinting or blackening of all windows, not to mention the tram number too.⁴⁶⁷ In fact, road and rail safety became a genuine problem that also led to a rise in crime.⁴⁶⁸ Nevertheless, a postcard of



Bergen-Retten-Heilen. (Mountain-Rescue-Recovery). The 1941 exhibition at Leipzig's Augustusplatz.

⁴⁶⁰ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. June 22nd, 1941. Pg. 390-1

⁴⁶¹ Insterburg was where Margot 'holidayed' in summer 1925 – see Chapter XI.

⁴⁶² *From East Prussia to North Yorkshire. German Ex-Prisoner of War 81G 505975*. Hans-Dieter Hundsdoerfer. Old Hall Publishing, 2006. Pg. 40

⁴⁶³ *Questions on German History. Paths to Parliamentary Democracy*. German Bundestag. 1998. Pg. 306

⁴⁶⁴ Interview with Frits Hinsch's son, Lothar, at his home in Heitersheim, Germany. Summer 2000.

⁴⁶⁵ *A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis*. Martyn Whittock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 285

⁴⁶⁶ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. June 9, 1941. Pg. 388

⁴⁶⁷ *Die Fahrer sehen Schwarz*. October 2nd, 1941 in *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig*. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. Pg. 47

⁴⁶⁸ *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945*. Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 39

Augustusplatz that summer gives the impression life went on much as normal, with an exhibition that year of frontline *Wehrmacht* medical services entitled '*Bergen Retten Heilen*' or Mountain-Rescue-Recovery. I expect Frau Tjyralla knew little as to what was going on with her Leipzig-based family now, even the place of her birth.

Operation Barbarossa was initially successful. Fifty percent of the Soviet air force was destroyed on the ground and within three weeks the German frontline had advanced between 350-500 kilometers on the southern and northern fronts respectively and 600 in the centre.⁴⁶⁹ The mood in Berlin reached its height that autumn.⁴⁷⁰



Unperturbed by *Barbarossa*.
Heinz and Ingeborg Hinsch,
Summer 1941

Before long, however, Nazi Germany's armed forces grew overstretched and by September, it had sustained 534,000 casualties.⁴⁷¹ Klemperer paints a different picture of the mood in the capital where alongside that in the Rhineland, he claims morale was 'catastrophic,' even if "*one notices nothing of that in quiet Dresden.*"⁴⁷² Although news arrived on September 20th that Kiev had since fallen to the Germans, there were growing signs of American involvement, following the issuing a month earlier of a formal statement of war and peace aims within an '*Atlantic Charter*' signed by Britain and the US.⁴⁷³ From September 11th, the U.S. shot U-boats on sight.⁴⁷⁴ Then on September 22nd, the first day time air raid siren sounded over Leipzig as British planes flew over the city,⁴⁷⁵ a further sign of things to come.

Despite the German Army's early campaign successes, matters were being compounded at home by the "*every day rumours of [an] untenable economic situation,*" that heightened doubts over food supplies, following another tawdry summer and the early onset of autumn.⁴⁷⁶ "*There are no potatoes and it has been raining, raining, raining for weeks,*" bemoaned Klemperer in mid-September, 1941.⁴⁷⁷ The *Winterhilfe* (Winter Relief Fund) was already in operation from the beginning of the month,⁴⁷⁸ while Germany feared a third extreme winter that could repeated that triple whammy of 1879-1882.⁴⁷⁹ On September 23rd, restaurants were then banned from peeling potatoes.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁶⁹ *A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis*. Martyn Whittock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 285

⁴⁷⁰ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 501

⁴⁷¹ *A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis*. Martyn Whittock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 285

⁴⁷² *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. Sept. 2, 1941. Pg. 428

⁴⁷³ Roosevelt's Four Freedoms of January 1941: freedom of speech and expression, freedom of worship, freedom from fear, and freedom from want were supplemented by the British wishes to emphasise economic development and social security. It was released on August 14th, 1941. *England in the Twentieth Century, 1914-1979*. David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 210

⁴⁷⁴ In part because America's trade was now being disrupted by Britain's conflict with Germany, i.e. months of attacks on merchant ships besides threatening Axis action against U.S. war ships.

⁴⁷⁵ *Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock."* Leipziger Kalender. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 67, 215

⁴⁷⁶ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. August 6, 1941. Pg. 425 and Sept. 2nd, 1941. Pg. 427

⁴⁷⁷ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. Sept. 15, 1941. Pg. 430

⁴⁷⁸ From September 1st, 1941 and until March 31st, 1942. *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. Aug. 22nd, 1941. Pg. 427

⁴⁷⁹ See *Das Wetter in Berlin von 1933 bis 1945*. Paul Schlaak. Sept. 2000. Online at: luise-berlin.de/bms/bmstxt00/0009gesd.htm

⁴⁸⁰ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. September 23rd, 1941. Pg. 435

The German press was ordered to convince the populace "that the war had been forced upon Germany by 'the Jews' and must therefore end with the elimination of the Jews." Full-scale Nazi terror followed, under a mantra that was repeated until the end of the war.⁴⁸¹ Two days earlier, Jews had already been effectively outlawed when the yellow armband was introduced on September 19th. Many shops had already grown accustomed to displaying 'No sale to Jews,' but now Jewish efforts to procure foodstuffs became 'hopeless.'⁴⁸²

The late spring and cool damp summer⁴⁸³ meant rice and other pulse crops were increasingly used in Leipzig, while housewives had to register with their local greengrocers in order to avoid long queues for fruit and vegetables as part of the government's bid to ensure fair distribution.⁴⁸⁴ The cost of tobacco, spirits and sparkling wines increased while new products appeared on the market such as clarified butter, *ersatz Kaffee* known as 'Quieta' and dried vegetables. Meat rations decreased from "700 grams per 'normal consumer' per week ... to 400 grams ... [because] prisoners of war and foreign workers had to be fed ... To make up for this reduction ... consumers were encouraged to eat lung, brain, pig tails and entrails, for which the meat ration was increased."⁴⁸⁵



Quieta. The full-flavoured coffee substitute in 1941. Source: Güldemann

In Dresden, Heinz's family made ends meet by trading on the black market, her daughter, Irene, recalling:

"Mother would exchange paper for cigarettes,⁴⁸⁶ which she would trade with soldiers for razor blades, which were then swapped for food or stockings."⁴⁸⁷



Heinz, Ingeborg, Ulrich and Irene: Spring 1941

⁴⁸¹ A German Generation. Yale University Press, 2012. Tomas A. Kohut. Pg. 164

⁴⁸² I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. Sept. 17, 1941. Pg. 431

⁴⁸³ Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. Pg. 47. NB. Klemperer reflects on September 2nd, 1941; "Rainy and cold throughout spring and summer, hot days a very rare exception...autumn has come exceedingly early." I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. September 2nd, 1941. Pg. 427. In Berlin too, summer 1941 saw fewer days above 25 than the previous year (27 compared to 35 in 1940), but more above 30 than the previous year (merely 8 compared with 3). See Das Wetter in Berlin von 1933 bis 1945. Paul Schlaak. Sept. 2000. Online at: luise-berlin.de/bms/bmstxt00/0009gesd.htm

⁴⁸⁴ In mid-1941, fruits were added to the rationed foodstuffs. A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis. Martyn Whittock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 257

⁴⁸⁵ Nazi Germany at War. Martin Kitchen. London & New York: Routledge, 1994. Pg. 80-81. Online [here](#).

⁴⁸⁶ Whittock says that by the closing months of the war, tobacco had long been established as a substitute currency acceptable for purchasing foodstuffs. A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis. Martyn Whittock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 257

⁴⁸⁷ German Soldiers brought silk stockings and other items back from the occupied territories for trade. A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis. Martyn Whittock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 260. Note also that by November 28th, 1942, razor blades had "disappeared from the shops days ago" and how "for a long time one could only buy them individually." Then on July 21st, 1943: "there are no razor blades to be bought; shops will now have ten blades for 50 pfennigs." I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Nov. 28, 1942/July 21, 1943. Pg. 170/246.

The clothing allowance was also tightened. A point scheme that had been introduced in 1939, with an allowance of 250 points for the first year of war was cut to less than half in autumn 1941. Although the 120 points (sufficient for a winter coat) was made to last until the end of 1942, due to the shortage of textiles, that period was extended during 1942 to the end of 1944.⁴⁸⁸ Naturally the Machern-based Hinsch's horticultural activities became part of a survival strategy but one has to wonder, whether Hans Hinsch's engagement in the Frankfurt textile industry brought assistance to family members too? Irene Hinsch couldn't confirm that, unfortunately.

Parallels continued to be drawn with the First World War; "*I often compare the present with Leipzig 1916-1917*" remarked Victor Klemperer. "*Which is worse? Today no doubt.*"⁴⁸⁹ Yet in comparison with World War One, Germany had corrected a number of key mistakes, observes Richard Overly in his contribution to *Germany Since 1800: A New Social And Economic History*.⁴⁹⁰

First, prices were being rigidly controlled and rationing was organized far more effectively than in the earlier conflict (while Jews were of course more strictly rationed than ordinary Germans). Second, the banks and savings institutions used the rising savings (civilian per capita consumption fell sharply, partly because some 40-60 percent of goods produced were destined to equip the armed forces) to buy treasury bonds and bills, thereby offsetting the state's need to take the risk of public subscription. Third, around one third of Germany's war expenses were met by contributions extorted from the occupied and satellite states.⁴⁹¹ And finally, taxes were also increased (something Klemperer frequently complained about, not to mention the fact that his savings were appropriated or frozen).

These measures all helped keep the lid on inflation, even as state expenditure rose, but now everything was finely balanced. As long as the Americans stayed out of the war and the Russian threat was contained, Germany should hold onto its gains. Certainly at sea, German successes continued well into 1942,⁴⁹² but the reality was an uneasy status quo for all concerned. With the great 'Russian Bear' awoken, change was afoot, but where would it lead for our once Prussian 'collective'?

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⁴⁸⁸ *Nazi Germany at War*. Martin Kitchen. London & New York: Routledge, 1994. Pg. 79. Online [here](#).

⁴⁸⁹ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. Feb. 20, 1941. Pg. 376. N.b. Between cca. 1917 and 1920, Victor Klemperer had lived in Leipzig.

⁴⁹⁰ *Economy and State in the 20th Century*. Richard Overly. In *Germany Since 1800: A New Social and Economic History* edited by Ogilvie and Overly. Arnold Publishers, 2003. Pg. 262

⁴⁹¹ "Barely 3000 Danish cows (Rinder) were eaten in 1941 in Leipzig and alongside that, meatloads sourced from the occupied territories." *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig*. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. Pg. 47

⁴⁹² *A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis*. Martyn Whittock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 290

- IN A LONELY PLACE -

In August 1941, Johnnie Riscoe learned he was to be switched regiments.⁴⁹³ Margot's husband was being posted to Edinburgh, where he would join the 445th Heavy Mixed Anti-Aircraft (H.M.A.A.) Battery of the 129th H.M.A.A. Regiment.⁴⁹⁴ The good news was that he was to be 'Granted Pay Retrospect,' presumably for having proved his worth as Lance Bombardier.⁴⁹⁵



To the horses! Leeds youngsters celebrate the August 6th, 1941, Bank Holiday following the government's request to local councils to provide entertainments for children to have 'stay-at-home' holidays. Source: leodiscollections.net

"'Income support' is always welcome," Margot said, reacting to the good news,⁴⁹⁶ "and Edinburgh is closer than Erith, isn't it? But ... what exactly does the 'mixed' bit mean within the regiment's title?" she asked, after he had unexpectedly returned on leave.

Margot herself had in fact just walked in from a grueling round of donkey rides with Harvey and her mother-in-law over at nearby Roundhay Park - a summer substitute for 'sea-side' entertainment because travel to many coastal resorts had been rendered off limits due to movement restrictions.⁴⁹⁷

Some six months earlier, a curious thing had happened in the UK that has gone down rather well in its military - and gender - history. The country was still enduring the Blitz when it opted to increase the size of the women's branch of the British Army, the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS).⁴⁹⁸ The ground-breaking introduction on April 25th, 1941 of a regulation permitting the deployment of women in Anti-Aircraft Command units was the consequence of more men being transferred abroad to replace those being taken prisoner, wounded or killed in action.⁴⁹⁹ Anti-Aircraft Command had thus found itself severely short of manpower



What a man really needs -

An Auxiliary Territorial Service recruitment drive for female anti-aircraft gunners
Source: wiki/Auxiliary_Territorial_Service

⁴⁹³ Thought to be around August 22nd, 1941, according to CPL. Johnnie Riscoe's Military Identity Card No. A 445564
⁴⁹⁴ Historically, the 445th Anti-Aircraft Company (along with the 444th and 446th) belonged to the 2/6th Battalion, Essex Regiment, the so-called 65th Searchlight Regiment. That in turn was part of the 41st (London) Anti-Aircraft Brigade whose war station was in East Anglia, wherein its units were deployed. The 445th Company, for instance, was based in East Ham - see www.patriotfiles.com/index.php?name=Sections&req=viewarticle&artid=6697. During summer 1940, however, all Territorial Army (TA) searchlight (S/L) regiments were transferred to the Royal Artillery, with the A.A. regiments redesignated Heavy Anti-Aircraft (H.A.A.), so as to distinguish them from the new Light Anti-Aircraft (L.A.A.) regiments that were being formed. See: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/41st_\(London\)_Anti-Aircraft_Brigade#World_War_II](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/41st_(London)_Anti-Aircraft_Brigade#World_War_II). Although by February 1941, the 41st Brigade was part of the 2nd Anti-Aircraft Division and II Anti-Aircraft Corps (whose H.Q. was in Hucknall, Nottinghamshire), somewhat confusingly Edinburgh was actually the headquarters of the III Anti-Aircraft Corps. See:

britishmilitaryhistory.co.uk/documents.php?aid=171&nid=2&start=5 and britishmilitaryhistory.co.uk/webeasycms/hold/uploads/bmh_document_pdf/41_02-Anti-Aircraft-Command.pdf

⁴⁹⁵ Granted on August 28th, 1941 according to his Territorial Army Record of Service Paper

⁴⁹⁶ Actress Lilli Palmer notes her husband's RAF 'Ground Staff' pay "didn't even cover the rent" in *Change Lobsters - And Dance*. Lilli Palmer. Star Books, W. H. Allen & Co. Ltd, 1977. Pg. 111

⁴⁹⁷ See: leodiscollections.net/photo/238

⁴⁹⁸ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auxiliary_Territorial_Service

⁴⁹⁹ 'I Love the Scent of Cordite in Your Hair': Gender Dynamics in Mixed Anti-Aircraft Batteries during the Second World War. Gerard J. De Groot in *History. The Journal of the Historical Association*. Vol. 82, # 265. January 1997. Pg. 74. Online here.

for the defence of Britain,⁵⁰⁰ but now that girls from the age of seventeen upwards could be engaged, ATS numbers had reached 65,000 by September 1941.⁵⁰¹

– and what he doesn't!

An anti-rumour poster from the 'Careless Talk Costs Lives' campaign warning an airman to be wary of loose lips.

Source: Wikimedia.org



In responding to Margot's enquiry, aware that there were strangers in his home now, in hushed tones Johnnie cautiously pointed out the posters like that left that were dotted about the country, and explained:

"The 129th is one of, if not the first, mixed sex Royal Artillery regiment to be formed. A 'pilot' mixed regiment had just been deployed in Richmond Park, in fact, which is exciting great interest, according to the papers.⁵⁰² Contingent on their success, that in turn will lead to the raising of several more mixed regiments over the following months."⁵⁰³

"Oh. So how do they choose which men to put together with which girls?" Margot asked innocently.

"Well" answered Johnnie *"when it comes to the men those young lasses will work alongside, General Pile, he being responsible for Anti-Aircraft Command, told us: "Officers were handpicked with meticulous care ... We tried to find men who had run civilian 'shows' in which men and women had worked together." "⁵⁰⁴*

I imagine Riscoe felt flattered and privileged but Margot remained curious about the role of the 'Ack Ack' girl. The trouble was, her husband remained tightlipped:

"We're not allowed to talk about our work."⁵⁰⁵ You've seen the posters: 'Careless talk costs lives' and 'Walls have ears.'"

She rued his response, but according to another mixed battery gunner: *"The slogans posted in public places were taken seriously by those in uniform and if anyone was heard 'sounding off,' particularly in a boastful manner, he would quickly be told in Army, Navy or Air Force terms what to do. Leave and boyfriends were thus safe subjects."⁵⁰⁶*

Before the war was over, however, insight into women's work at the guns began to emerge. The work of a gunner and their team mates is described in more detail within the text box overleaf.

⁵⁰⁰ *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 24

⁵⁰¹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Auxiliary_Territorial_Service

⁵⁰² *The Women's Royal Army Corps*. Shelford Bidwell. Pen and Sword, 1997. Pg. 121-2. Online [here](https://the-garrison.org.uk/ats_section/atshist.php). N.b. The date of pilot deployment, around August 21st, 1941, was sourced from: the-garrison.org.uk/ats_section/atshist.php

⁵⁰³ See: britishmilitaryhistory.co.uk/documents.php?aid=171&nid=2&start=5

⁵⁰⁴ 'I Love the Scent of Cordite in Your Hair': Gender Dynamics in Mixed Anti-Aircraft Batteries during the Second World War. Gerard J. De Groot in *History. The Journal of the Historical Association*. Vol. 82, # 265. January 1997. Pg. 75. Online [here](https://www.history-journal.org.uk/issue-265).

⁵⁰⁵ See: *Life on the Guns! WW2 People's War*. Vee Robinson. BBC, 2003. Online at:

bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/96/a2089596.shtml

⁵⁰⁶ Indeed, "The use of girls in 'Ack-Ack' was not generally known to the 'outside world'" notes Vee Robinson, who notes her surprise at the lack of awareness within the Royal Artillery Medical Corps to the presence of ATS girls on gunsites, after spending a 1942 evening among them Ansley, Warwickshire's social club. See: *Life on the Guns! WW2 People's War*. Vee Robinson. BBC, 2003. Online at: bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/96/a2089596.shtml and *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 59, 73.

15.9: Shooting Up

The introduction of a regulation permitting the deployment of women in Anti-Aircraft Command units on April 25th, 1941 was ground breaking enough, however, women remained forbidden from using deadly weapons. That meant those in the Auxiliary Territorial Service were only employed operationally, i.e. they were assigned to work alongside men who actually loaded and fired the guns.

Gun sizes were 3.7 inch, 4.5 inch and 5.25 inch and could be fired to high altitudes and were operated in conjunction with an elaborate fire control set-up. Air defence was already 'sophisticated' and as the war progressed, it became more so. But in simple terms the role of the ack ack gunner was to identify a hostile aircraft, track it, measure its height (range) and bearing – which continually changed – and feed the results into a computer (*sic!*) which passed the necessary data to the guns. That system also had to take into account missile speed and with a journey time of 20 seconds to the 'point of lay,' meant the target could have moved two miles or more. Gunners therefore had to arrange a fatal rendezvous in space, so to speak.

The basic system in use was for a spotter to pick up the target (using binoculars); for a detachment operating an optical heightfinder to produce ranges (the distance a shell would have to travel through the air in order to hit the target – a delicate operation involving the adjustment of the image and the moving target in the field of view of what was in effect a large double-vision telescope automatically displaying the range on a scale); and for a tracker to follow it for bearing.

Another detachment operated the 'predictor' which determined where the target would be by the time the guns were ready to fire; essentially a black box with dials, knobs and levers and an early type of computer from which electrical impulses were passed along cables to the guns close by. The predictor required about half a dozen girls to operate, and once they had calculated the fuse-length, would pass this information on to the men on the gun-site.

At first it was feared that women's voices would not carry, but this was countered by putting them in pairs on training and having them shout orders back and forth across the breadth of a parade ground. In reality the whole procedure lasted only a matter of seconds. The shell, or shells, were not expected to hit their target, however, the lethal effect was obtained by bursting them in the air close to it, and filling the target with a cloud of steel splinters. Although scoring a direct hit on an enemy aircraft was a fairly rare occurrence, the men and women on the guns knew that even spooking a German pilot was enough for him to alter his course slightly, which helped make it less likely that his bombs would land on-target.

This procedure, although endlessly practiced, was difficult enough to execute with speed and precision by daylight in peace against a slow-moving drogue or a drone appearing from an expected direction; it was a very different matter after tumbling out of bed at night to take post amid the crash of falling bombs and the roar of gun-fire. Danger there was, although it is fair to say that in many ways a gun-site was safer than a street of terraced houses in a manufacturing town.

Sources:

The Women's Royal Army Corps. Shelford Bidwell. *Pen and Sword*, 1997. Pg. 119-120. Online [here](#).

The Ack-Ack Girls. Duncan Barrett. April 24th, 2015. Online at: girlsatwar.com/the-ack-ack-girls.

Image: thefemalesoldier.com/blog/ack-ack-girls



Riscoe's formal removal to 'Philpstoun' near Edinburgh looks to have occurred on September 23rd, not long after Harvey returned to school and ten days before his sixth birthday. Margot was disgruntled but Johnnie joked she could hardly feel alone with so much traffic passing in and out of Oak Road.

Although Johnnie's mother's close proximity meant Margot was occasionally relieved from taking Harvey to and from school, the cinema,⁵⁰⁷ or even putting him to bed – which in turn gave her the space to keep Oak Road orderly for her boarders, a dance hall or the pictures⁵⁰⁸ – it also meant Rae was too close for comfort, a little too often.

"The wives of any servicemen would be watched diligently by parents and in-laws to make sure they didn't stray from the straight and narrow," wrote Vee Robinson,⁵⁰⁹ and Margot couldn't deny she had begun to feel monitored. What's more, Rae had started passing

THREE 450 x 19 Tyres, one new 12-volt 3.5 plate Battery. 241 Oak Road, St. Mary's Road, Chapeltown, Leeds 7.

Autumnal 'spring' cleaning?

Source: *Yorkshire Evening Post*. October 7th, 1941

judgment on her conduct with some of her billets and unbeknownst to her, inform Johnnie of her observations. An ad I discovered in the *Yorkshire Evening Post* from that same period, presumably a boarder's, nearly had me in stitches.⁵¹⁰

Although *"Letters ran like a jewelled thread through our days and were the link between us and those from whom we were parted,"* wrote gunner girl, Vee Robinson, in her memoirs,⁵¹¹ it is unlikely Margot's postman came swanning up the garden path crying 'You've got mail!' Letter writing had never been her strong point while it had become clear during their seven year marriage, Johnnie was neither the henpecked type. Of course this was exactly the time Harvey's parents needed to encourage one another, offsetting each others' loneliness as it were. The backs of envelopes made interesting reading for the post orderly, because scrawled upon them were an assortment of codes. The most common was 'SWALK'; Sealed With A Loving Kiss, while others included 'WMA' for the ever popular, We'll Meet Again, and 'LYFE' – Love You For Ever. *"The next one seems to beg a question"* writes Robinson; *"ITALY – I Trust You And Love You."* It looks like Margot probably missed out on this more lighthearted aspect of the war.

In the meantime, Germany's attack on Russia had spelled good news for Britain. As events shifted to the global stage, peace returned to the UK, and while the year continued to require relentless defensive efforts, Britain's prospects had now been transformed.⁵¹² Russia had become its unlikely ally, an arrangement that evoked many a mixed feeling on the home front.

George Britton, a middle-class gent living in Walthamstow remarked sourly in August 1941; *"The BBC has discovered that there is a country called Russia,"* while another Londoner, James Lansdale Hodson observed: *"It's a humiliating business having other people fighting for you,"* clearly feeling left on the sidelines.⁵¹³

⁵⁰⁷ The animated Walt Disney film, *'Fantasia,'* for instance, showed in Leeds on Oct. 24th, 1941, according to Amy Briggs' *Mass Observation diary*. See also: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fantasia_\(1940_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fantasia_(1940_film)).

⁵⁰⁸ Although one 'local,' the *Dominion*, was gutted by fire on June 23rd, 1941, the *Forum Cinema* at Savile Road/Place along Chapeltown Road towards Leeds city centre was a luxury [theatre](#) that had opened on October 26th, 1936. There was also the *Clock Cinema* in neighbouring Harehills which had opened on November 21st, 1938.

⁵⁰⁹ *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 62

⁵¹⁰ *Yorkshire Evening Post*. October 7th, 1941. Pg. 7. N.B. Margot never drove

⁵¹¹ *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 119

⁵¹² *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979*. David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 194, 202-203

⁵¹³ *London at War. 1939-1945*. Philip Ziegler. Pimlico, 2002. Pg. 225, 207

Was there any silver lining to be had for Johnnie, given that gunners were typically posted out-of-town? As I turned the pages of the Vee Robinson's write-up of mixed battery life, I was astonished to read she'd been posted to the very same stations Johnnie served at,⁵¹⁴ including those batteries located at *Merrylees Farm* in *Philpstoun* ('1') close to *Borrowstounness and District* ('2,' Bo'ness for short), both of which are shown in the map extract right alongside their proximity to Edinburgh.



Grim up North? Johnnie Riscoe's postings.
Sept. 1941-mid-1942

Of the locales, Robinson writes: *"Our guns were sited on farmland belonging to Merrylees Farm;⁵¹⁵ Philpstoun was the map location but it was only a hamlet some miles away."* She and her battery 'hens' slept *"in wooden huts ... but it was a long trek down a slope to the taps and wash basins for both girls and men ... I used to stand and gaze at the view, trees and fields stretching as far as the eye could see."* *"Outside the gate was a maze of winding country lanes not anywhere except to farms ... The landscape was flat and looked the same in any direction without landmarks, the farms dotted here and there were low, single-storey buildings in the Scottish style."*⁵¹⁶ It must have been terribly offputting for one accustomed to entertaining masses.

One of the battery's principal roles was to defend the naval base of Port Edgar, west of Queensferry ('3'). *"The whole area was full of the Royal Navy and Royal Marines. Many ships lay in the Firth of Forth, all shapes and sizes from Battleships to Motor Torpedo Boats being repaired, refitted or assembling in convoy to escort ships of the Merchant Navy in their hazardous task of trying to bring essential supplies to Britain."*⁵¹⁷ But it also defended the Forth Bridge itself, which was a vital communication route to the north, and had already been a target for the first German World War Two air raid on Britain in September 1939.⁵¹⁸

For entertainment and social life there was the so-called NAAFI (short for Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes), an organisation created by the British government in 1921 to run recreational establishments to support the British Armed Forces, and to sell goods to servicemen and their families.⁵¹⁹ That was located at Merrylees, but Bo'ness was the main entertainment centre, notes Robinson. The trouble was it *"was not convenient for an evening pass, buses ran at awkward times and it was ... a two hour walk if you were so unfortunate as to miss the last bus."*⁵²⁰

⁵¹⁴ Johnnie remained within the vicinity of Edinburgh until mid-1943, while Vee Robinson arrived earlier that year.

⁵¹⁵ Merrylees was the Royal Artillery's battery location coded 'RSG3,' according to canmore.org.uk/site/127659/merrylees. Since Riscoe performed in Bo'ness in late November, it can be supposed his camp at the time was Merrylees.

⁵¹⁶ *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 107, 109

⁵¹⁷ Batteries typically *"defend an airfield, dockyard, arms depot, or some other important establishment from the air."* *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 37, 113

⁵¹⁸ See: canmore.org.uk/collection/458736

⁵¹⁹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Navy,_Army_and_Air_Force_Institutes

⁵²⁰ *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 112

On a 24 hour pass, however, one could at least make the most of Bo'ness Hippodrome cinema (the oldest picture house in Scotland today),⁵²¹ service canteen and its few shops. The Masonic Hall sometimes held dances in a beautiful paneled room, although without a YWCA hostel, it still meant going back to camp – or missing the last waltz. Therefore *"We saved up for our trips to Edinburgh,"* writes Robinson. By bus it was close enough to reach on a day's pass, and *"Apart from its rich heritage and impressive buildings, the entertainment hadn't ground to a halt. Concerts were still being held at the Usher Hall and at other venues, the Zoo was still open, Princes Street and the castle gardens were still to be enjoyed."*⁵²²

"In the vicinity of the Usher Hall there was also 'The Silver Slipper Ballroom,' very elegant it was too. More expensive than the other dance halls, it was never as crowded." But "the main thing was that we were dancing to good music, wonderful tunes and enjoying every minute of it." Robinson even recalled her envy of *"the civilian girls in their lovely dresses and glamorous hairstyles, when ours was regulation length above the collar."*

Those time-outs were obviously critical to one's mental well-being and Robinson tells us more about the dance halls that came with revolving stages and *"the large silver ball suspended from the ceiling, which threw petals of light over the dancers in the dim ballroom while a waltz was playing [which] was romantic ... We used to try and book in at a hostel down near the end of Princes Street,"* and *"some hostels kept early hours...[so] we didn't have to face a long journey back afterwards and there was the later breakfast time to look forward to. Though even hostels were only one step away from being spartan."*⁵²³

Riscoe of course started out a dancer and being more than accustomed to the spotlight, we know he took some of his 24 hour leaves in Edinburgh too. Although 'ENSA,' the acronym for the Entertainments National Service Association also offered on-site concerts at the NAAFI, they were typically so bad that the organisation's abbreviated name was frequently derided as *'Every Night Something Awful.'*⁵²⁴ Some batteries would therefore put together their own on-site programmes and it will come as little surprise that Johnnie beat the loneliness he faced by joining in. Or better to say, he claimed his own stage.⁵²⁵

Riscoe
returns to
the spotlight
Source:
Bo'ness
Journal, and
Linlithgow
Advertiser,
Nov. 14th,
1941



Barely two months after arriving in Scotland, in fact, the advertisement left appeared on page two of the *Bo'ness Journal and Linlithgow Advertiser*. It announced a rather special 'Variety Concert' on Sunday November 23rd that was to be given at the Town Hall *"by members of the Royal Artillery stationed in this district, in aid of Comforts for the Troops and Bo'ness 'Comforts' Fund."* Riscoe himself was billed as *'The famous Radio, Stage and Screen Star'* no less, along with *"well known Radio Singers and nine other hit turns, including Rhythm Band."*

⁵²¹ Bo'ness Hippodrome Cinema was built in 1912. It was refurbished and reopened in 2011 after falling into a state of disrepair. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bo'ness

⁵²² *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 113, 112, 137

⁵²³ *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 138

⁵²⁴ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Entertainments_National_Service_Association

⁵²⁵ Despite the fact that Johnnie appears to have never performed north of Lancashire until that point.

Considering the effort required to put together a concert like this as well as rehearse it (alongside one's formal duties), his undertaking was no small feat and is a testament to one's enterprise and application under somewhat adverse circumstances. I can also imagine, however, that there was hardly time to head home on leave, even if a 48 hour leave, put Leeds comfortably within reach.⁵²⁶

Three days later, however, on November 26th, it was Margot's thirtieth birthday, one occasion he surely couldn't miss. Of course longer privilege leaves were available and following a concert like this, I'd imagine he'd earned it after all.⁵²⁷

The following imaginary 'birthday' scene is loosely based on one described by Amy Briggs, the working Leeds lass whose husband was in the army, that occurred in October 1941. Margot is just bathing Harvey before his supper, when in walks Johnnie, serenading her with 'Happy Birthday.'

"Ach Mensch!" Margot uttered, *"You gave me such a fright."*

"Really?" winked Johnnie. *"Were you expecting someone else?"* he casually asked, before an awkward silence followed.

Much inward cursing followed on Margot's part before she riposted;

"I can't help it. I'm fed up with uninvited guests." What really bothered her though was the fact that his leave meant a change of plan, even though she found herself apologizing. *"How long'll you be home?"* she enquired as casually as she could.

"Oh long enough to make hay while the sun shines!" he quipped.

These days he wound her up with his humour, although it wasn't like that at the beginning. With that, she made for the door, which meant their bodies brushed past one another's intimately, before awkwardly inviting her husband instead to finish bathing Harvey.

"A bit of male bonding will do you both good," she added wryly.

Johnnie took her advice, gave Harvey his tea, a combination of bacon sandwiches and rice pudding, before sending him to sleep with a few jokes.⁵²⁸ He then suggested he and Margot and head out to town for dinner. *"I've arranged it all with mum,"* he said reassuringly.

Margot grew more and more irritated, though she ought to have been delighted. But her gut reaction annoyed her all the more. Johnnie by now, sensing her frustration,

⁵²⁶ The journey time ought to have been something like 12 hours to Leeds, via Carlisle since a steam train journey to the south coast from Edinburgh "took from 4pm one day till 9.30pm the following day." *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 145

⁵²⁷ If a 24 hour leave was given every 12 days, according to Vee Robinson, a 48 hour leave might have been offered every other month, totaling six in a year (i.e. a sum of 24 days). Conversely, Amy Briggs husband (a private in the Territorial Army) appears to have had 48 hour leaves every month and even spells of seven days (though that was at the end of 1941 and at the start of 1942). *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 77

⁵²⁸ Popular dishes according to Amy Briggs' *Mass Observation diary* of Oct. 6th and 8th, 1941 while bread and dripping was also eaten (Oct. 8th) besides porridge, fish and chips (Oct. 11th and 13th), plums (Oct. 21st), meat pie (Oct. 28th).



Margot's 'local'? Cantor's Fish & Chips on Chapeltown Road, October 7th, 1940. The sign in the window reads 'Open for business as usual during blackout.'

Source: Leodis.net

enquired whether he had spoilt her evening plans. Again was lost for words, Margot simply agreed to go out, knowing that if she didn't, Rae would have it out with her later. In her mind, however, she continued to shift back and forth as to whether to head out or stay in, her body language reflecting her uncertainty.

"So where are we bound?" she asked, to which the comic responded;

"Well, with the food shortages and all, I think it'll have to be Cantor's down the road. I do miss their fish and chips you know. Nothing quite like it in Bo'ness."

Margot was credulous and wondered whether it wasn't April Fools Day.

*"Sorry love, then it'll have to be powdered egg omelette, bangers and mash at one of Leeds wartime canteens. A little bird told me there's a 'British Restaurant' in the Town Hall's crypt that offers a three course meal of roast beef with peas and potatoes, then a fruit pudding and cup of tea, for as little as nine pence."*⁵²⁹

Margot was not in the mood for wit, but in fact Johnnie had already arranged a place at a classy pub known to all theatricals in the vicinity of the Empire Theatre on Leeds' Briggate. Over dinner, their conversation shifted from the trivial to the accusatory to the inquisitive, all in the space of the first fifteen minutes. Sizing one another up was not the ideal way to celebrate a thirtieth, so Johnnie apologized before Margot now retorted:

"Well, if you hadn't have made a practice of staying out all night before the war, you would naturally have found me in a different mood. I'm so used to being left alone that I naturally resent any interference now."

With that off her chest, Margot switched to current affairs. News was emerging that Parliament was considering a second National Service Act to widen the scope of conscription.

"Well, given the continuing shortage of manpower overseas, desperate situations call for desperate measures," answered Johnnie.

"Yes," said Margot, *"but what I want to know is am I going to get called up?"*

"Oh I wouldn't worry," teased Johnnie. *"Mum will help you out if you have to join the factory girls."*

She had the feeling Johnnie knew more than he was letting on, so she decided to inquire after mixed battery life.

"Speaking of working girls, tell me about those 'ack ack' lasses?" "If he's working the guns with young women" she thought to herself, *"I want to know it all."*

⁵²⁹ British Restaurants were industrial-style canteens founded by local authorities with money loaned by the Ministry of Food to serve cheap 'off ration' meals. See: mylearning.org/leeds-in-world-war-ii/p-4730. Formally speaking, that canteen in the town hall did not open until 1942.

The Lilli Palmer movie; *'The Gentle Sex,'* about girls' work in the Auxiliary Territorial Service had not yet been released,⁵³⁰ but she'd heard plenty of rumours on the grapevine from her army billets.

*"I hear the male soldiers chosen for these new mixed batteries are 'fresh' recruits,"*⁵³¹ Margot inquired.

*"Oh the men who fight alongside the girls are much older,"*⁵³² Johnnie chuckled, realizing she was mixing up fresh with young. But *"interpersonal male/female relationships are not usually formed. What's more, outside of working hours, the girls live, eat and sleep together,"*⁵³³ so those few hours in the evening between wrapping up duties and reporting in at the Guardroom before Lights Out never leave room for much when out in the middle of nowhere, even with a Late Pass or perhaps a Twenty-four Hour Pass."⁵³⁴

Johnnie hadn't really answered her question and Margot was right to have her suspicions. Gerard J. De Groot is a Professor of Modern History at the University of St. Andrews who more recently studied gender dynamics in mixed anti-aircraft batteries. He learned that *"For many women, military life brought sexual awakening."* The Auxiliary Territorial Service had largely working class membership and workers were known to have insatiable sexual appetites, while *"The barrack room was a great melting pot" where "the experienced and the innocent mixed in a sometimes volatile dynamic."*⁵³⁵

"Soldiers ... We were there for their pleasure," said one private,⁵³⁶ to which another recalled *"there was ... fierce competition for pretty girls and if [the men's] requests were not satisfied an element of blackmail threatened."* A third added: *"There were always some girls who were quite willing to oblige."* On site, but on site only, corporals were addressed as 'bombardier' and auxiliaries (privates) as 'gunners.'⁵³⁷

Margot wasn't ready to give up. She'd heard that illegitimacy and venereal disease were well-known to have occurred.

⁵³⁰ It was released in London on April 15th, 1943 and across the rest of the UK on May 23rd. See:

[imdb.com/title/tt0035931](https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0035931)

⁵³¹ *The Girls Who Went to War. The Ack-Ack Girls.* Duncan Barrett. April 24th, 2015. Girlsatwar.com/the-ack-ack-girls

⁵³² Recalls Vee Robinson; *"To me the men looked old, at my age, everyone older than thirty seemed old."* N.B. Vee was not yet out of her teens, while Johnnie was 31. *Sisters in Arms.* Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996.

⁵³³ *Life on the Guns! WW2 People's War.* Vee Robinson. BBC, 2003. Online at:

bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/96/a2089596.shtml

⁵³⁴ *Sisters in Arms.* Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 36

⁵³⁵ *Lipstick on her Nipples, Cordite in her Hair: Sex and Romance among British Servicewomen during the Second World War* by Gerard J. De Groot. In *A Soldier and a Woman: Sexual Integration in the Military Up to 1945.* Gerard J. De Groot, C Peniston-Bird. Longman, 2000. Pg. 102. Online [here](#).

⁵³⁶ *Lipstick on her Nipples, Cordite in her Hair: Sex and Romance among British Servicewomen during the Second World War* by Gerard J. De Groot. In *A Soldier and a Woman: Sexual Integration in the Military Up to 1945.* Gerard J. De Groot, C Peniston-Bird. Longman, 2000. Pg. 103. Online [here](#).

⁵³⁷ *'I Love the Scent of Cordite in Your Hair': Gender Dynamics in Mixed Anti-Aircraft Batteries during the Second World War.* G. J. De Groot in *History. The Journal of the Historical Association.* Vol. 82, # 265. Jan. 1997. Pg. 78, 80, 85. Online [here](#).

*"Actually I've heard that as a precaution, male soldiers are freely given condoms.⁵³⁸ Even if we are left in relative peace, I bet plenty still ask themselves, "Will I be here tomorrow?" If I were in your shoes I'd wish to 'experience life to the full.'"*⁵³⁹

Johnnie chuckled and reminded Margot of a well-known poem by Lieutenant E. S. Turner⁵⁴⁰ entitled: 'Gun-site Good Night.' It was said to have more accurately reflected the wartime atmosphere within those batteries:

Punch
Magazine
– undated.
Source:
punch.photoshelter.com



*The shoot is done, the rounds are spent; good night my sweet, I swear
I worship you, I love the scent, of cordite⁵⁴¹ in your hair.
To-night we drove them clean off course – they swerved, they dived, they climbed
Your fuses were a trifle hoarse, but exquisitely timed
At every flash which slit the night, I strove to see your face,
But glimpsed you only for a one white, fierce photographic space.
Suspicious steps are coming near ... Farewell, in all sweet sorrow.
But I shall see you, never fear, at section drill to-morrow.*

"Speaking of work, how is life as a resident manager? I hear you've got good company," enquired Johnnie, turning the spotlight on Margot.

"Oh I am more than 'occupied,' without being signed up myself. Marky my words, I do my bit for king and country, hosting its soldiers and workers. As far as I am concerned your mother can't auger 'The devil makes work for idle hands,'" Margot rounded. "I'm German after all!" 'More jealous insinuations,' she thought. 'He's crazy because he can't watch me and spy on my movements.'

Johnnie, thinking it better not to defend his mother, paid the bill. Margot, realizing he was not short of a bob or two, resisted temptation to raise the issue of cashflow. They sipped gin and tonic before taking the tram home. By and large it wasn't a bad evening. There'd been neither sirens nor gun-fire, according to Amy Briggs, who had taken care to note such detail since it was her twins' birthday too. But an air of distrust had tainted their celebrations. It was almost as if either had been fishing for traces of infidelity in the other, leading to *"if you confess, so will I."* The psychological term, the 'seven-year itch,' was yet to gain popularity, but if it had, I can imagine both parties one day contemplating its relevance to the here and now.

The following morning, Johnnie was off early to meet an anonymous 'acquaintance' in Leeds, before returning to Edinburgh. Margot wondered who, but was distracted by the fact that he left precious little behind in the way of cash. Margot drew a deep breath. It was nonetheless tantamount to a sigh of relief.

⁵³⁸ [Lipstick on her Nipples, Cordite in her Hair](#): Sex and Romance among British Servicewomen during the Second World War by Gerard J. De Groot. In *A Soldier and a Woman: Sexual Integration in the Military Up to 1945*. Gerard J. De Groot, C Peniston-Bird. Longman, 2000. Pg. 114. Online [here](#).

⁵³⁹ Noted battery member, Frank Reeves, alongside almost everyone else. 'I Love the Scent of Cordite in Your Hair': Gender Dynamics in Mixed Anti-Aircraft Batteries during the Second World War. Gerard J. De Groot in *History. The Journal of the Historical Association*. Vol. 82, # 265. Jan. 1997. Pg. 80. Online [here](#).

⁵⁴⁰ Actually only published in 1943 in *Punch*. August 4th, 1943. Pg. 26 and reprinted in 'I Love the Scent of Cordite in Your Hair': Gender Dynamics in Mixed Anti-Aircraft Batteries during the Second World War. Gerard J. De Groot in *History. The Journal of the Historical Association*. Vol. 82, # 265. Jan. 1997. Pg. 81. Online [here](#).

⁵⁴¹ A smokeless explosive made from nitrocellulose, nitroglycerine, and petroleum jelly and used in ammunition.

Three weeks later, on December 18th, 1941, National Service was indeed extended to females, making all unmarried women and all childless widows between the ages of 20 and 30 liable to call-up. Margot thanked her lucky stars she was neither. Men up to the age of 60 on the other hand were obliged because not enough had volunteered for police and civilian defence work, or women for the auxiliary units of the armed forces.⁵⁴² Military service was also on the cards now for men under 51 and so I figured Rae's partner, Teddy (*"a lovely man"* according to Menachem), ought to have been enlisted. But both the Army Personnel Centre in Glasgow and Rae's niece confirmed he wasn't eventually signed up.⁵⁴³ Perhaps because he had volunteered as a soldier for world war one and had been decorated (an experience I imagine was shared on occasion with Margot, related as it were to her own father's duty in the trenches).⁵⁴⁴

That foggy evening, the sirens went off in Leeds at around 6:30 PM, accompanied by heavy gunfire. *"Damn Hitler,"* cursed Margot. *"He's nothing but a nuisance!"*⁵⁴⁵ She'd been doing some Christmas shopping in the city and was still perturbed by the fact that she herself might end up being enlisted. She was already hosting service men and taking care of her son, what more could she do? Volunteering in a church or village hall's canteen, pouring tea or supporting the Salvation Army was not her thing – she had to put some real cash in the kitty. Yet when the sirens fell silent and the all clear came through at 8:30 PM, she passed the thought off. Struggling, she groped her way home in pitch black – she'd forgotten her torch, and those blackouts were such a chore.

Upon her return she faced another fanfare when she picked up Harvey from *Ravenswood*. Rae, having earlier passed by Oak Road to pick up some of Harvey's things had run into a gossipmonger of a neighbor. As a result, Rae let rip and accused Margot of being unsuited to motherhood, in tales recalled by *Kleine Tiny*. Margot was shell-shocked. With that amount of friction being perpetrated by her mother-in-law, I had to wonder why Johnnie didn't do more to defend his wife? *"Oh that never happened,"* Tiny added. *"Margot was left entirely alone."*

When Christmas finally arrived, Margot was obliged to spend it with Rae and Teddy. Although she had gotten used to Johnnie's pantomimic absences over the festive period, it didn't make it any easier. He'd sent a goody bag filled with sweets and chocolate, although she at best grimaced; *"Coming to something when the soldiers*

⁵⁴² See: parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/yourcountry/overview/conscriptionww2

⁵⁴³ Personal correspondence with [Marina Waugh](#) of the Army Personnel Centre's Support Division at Kentigern House, 65 Brown Street in Glasgow, Scotland on November 22nd, 2016 via email.

⁵⁴⁴ On August 26th, 1915 (about six weeks before Margot's father fell in France), eighteen year old Teddy Crowe volunteered for the [Army Service Corps](#) (Regiment S4/128040) 'for the duration of the war.' According to the 1911 population census, he had been a 'railway/wagon works office boy.' He was later [decorated](#) as a Corporal with the Victory and British Medals for service in a theatre of war and abroad, according to the UK's National Archives file [WO372/5](#). In fact, some 250,000 underage boys volunteered between 1914 and 1915; either by lying about their age or giving false names which recruiters often turned a blind eye to. Since nineteen was the legal limit for armed service overseas (and birth certificates need not be disclosed), Crowe obviously fancied a change of scenery or an escape from a hard and dreary life. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recruitment_to_the_British_Army_during_the_First_World_War and bbc.co.uk/guides/zcvdhyc

⁵⁴⁵ Actually the words of Amy Briggs in her *Mass Observation diary* on December 18th, 1941.

send parcels!"⁵⁴⁶ By this point, her life more than paralleled that of Amy Briggs and was probably not dissimilar to many other disgruntled soldiers' wives.⁵⁴⁷ Over Boxing Day lunch with Rae and Teddy, Margot had to muse; *"Funny without him,"* when in walked her husband, again unannounced.

"I was granted 48 hours leave at the last minute," he grinned.

Yet from Margot's perspective, she *"could've been sick on the spot with heaps of dismay and other feelings. All wonder why I don't rush and fling my arms around him,"* she wrote in her diary.

That did nothing to allay Johnnie's suspicions. More arguing than laughing followed that Christmas and New Year. Margot's greatest concern now, however, was not so much the state of their relationship but day-to-day living and the family's support. Realising she had to make her own way, rather than be compelled to work a few hours each day for a pittance, she got a paid job at a 'theatrical apartment house.'⁵⁴⁸ It lay in nearby *Sholebroke Avenue* (indicated as '4' on the map on pg. 615) and was where she lived, in fact, when she first arrived in Leeds, first to marry, then reside (pictured in Ch. XIV on pg. 527). From 1942, she would tidy rooms, collect guests' fees and provide hot meals.⁵⁴⁹

"Hopefully that'll put an end to the rumours emanating out of St. Mary's Road" she thought, *"and shield Harvey from the spiteful tales he's been hearing."*

But everything went contrary to plan. Rae, taking the law into her own hands, moved Harvey into her guest house where, according to Kleine Tiny in late 2016, *"She argued he was better off because she could devote more time to him. She had Teddy meanwhile manage the guest house."* *"What did she do about it?"* I asked incredulously. *"Obviously Margot was incensed, but she needed to work. She was powerless to change things."* Again Margot must have asked herself *"To whom does Johnnie's loyalty lie?"*

She hadn't yet twigged there was far more to this than met the eye. Margot was feeling particular lonesome and longed to talk to her sister or even her mother. But if mail got through only via a neutral country, she figured a phone call was out of the question. Who knew whether they were still in the land of the living anyway? Perhaps they were all lost, in their own special way.

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⁵⁴⁶ Quips Briggs in her *Mass Observation diary* on Oct. 11th, 1941.

⁵⁴⁷ Observed Amy Briggs in her *Mass Observation diary* on Nov. 7-8th, 1941, one woman *"over the field had cut her husband's throat ... don't blame her!"*

⁵⁴⁸ *Yorkshire Evening Post*. December 28th, 1934. Pg. 3 and *Sheffield Independent*. February 5th, 1935. Pg. 2.

⁵⁴⁹ Lilli Palmer writes that guests at the London boarding house she lived at in 1935, paid five shillings for a hot meal. *Change Lobsters - And Dance*. Lilli Palmer. Star Books, W. H. Allen & Co. Ltd, 1977. Pg. 85-6

That winter of 1941, Germany's eastern offensive, *Barbarossa*, ground to a halt – just outside Moscow. As the year's end approached, its soldiers found themselves bogged down by rain and ill-prepared for the bitterly cold weather that followed. Temperatures hit a meteorological record low of minus 42 degrees Celsius that December. Without winter clothing, more than 130,000 cases of frostbite were reported among the soldiers, whose equipment was neither designed for such severe weather.⁵⁵⁰ The Soviets then responded to the German slow-down, with a massive counter-attack from December 5th, forcing its army into retreat.⁵⁵¹

Despite the turning tide against the German Army, on December 11th, 1941, Hitler inanely declared war on the U.S., thus transforming Europe's conflict into a world war.⁵⁵² Frau Tjyralla's *Heimat* now faced three superpowers at once. Nevertheless, it was business as usual in her home town, which hosted its traditional Christmas market that December of 1941 (other towns across Germany had already given them up) and even continued with a *Neujahrsmesse* in 1942.⁵⁵³ On the other hand, her daughter's adopted homeland suddenly "found herself the pivot of a new Atlantic Alliance" where "the balance of advantages tipped sharply in Britain's favour."⁵⁵⁴

The *Führer* and Goebbels' response to the failing offensive was to issue a plea for *Ostfront* support via the newspapers, calling on December 22nd for the donation of gloves, fur and warm clothing, rather making a mockery of their battle plans.⁵⁵⁵ It neither did much for their reputation: "When furs did finally arrive at the front, they turned out to be ladies' fur coats," scoffed one soldier.⁵⁵⁶

That winter was not only torrid in Russia but in Saxony too. Although Christmas day had been 'warm' (notwithstanding the driving rain), from December 26th, stormy weather brought snow and sub-zero temperatures that fell as low as minus 36 between January 19th and 26th, 1942.⁵⁵⁷ In Berlin, the period below zero lasted even longer: from January 6th until March 16th, i.e. some 70 days.⁵⁵⁸ It was the "worst winter for 140 years," according to some residents.⁵⁵⁹ Even in Leeds, there were "blizzards and ice" on January 21st, along with "pitch blackness, bitter cold and whirling snowflakes" on the twenty second.⁵⁶⁰

According to the historian, Martyn Whittock: "The beginnings of the catastrophic defeat of the Thousand-Year Reich...[lay] in the snows of the winter of 1941-1942."⁵⁶¹ By December 31st, 1941, Klemperer too had noted Saxony's citizens were quite aware of

⁵⁵⁰ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Moscow

⁵⁵¹ *A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis*. Martyn Whittock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 286

⁵⁵² Note that the United States had already declared war on Japan on December 8th, 1941.

⁵⁵³ *Leipzig im Bombenhagel – Angriffsziel "Haddock."* Leipziger Kalender. 1998. Sonderband. Birgit Horn, Stadtarchiv, Stadt Leipzig. Schmidt Römhild Vmbh Leipzig, 1998. Pg. 22

⁵⁵⁴ *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979*. David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 195

⁵⁵⁵ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. Dec. 23, 1941. Pg. 452

⁵⁵⁶ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 502

⁵⁵⁷ *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. Dec. 25, 1941 then Dec. 26-28, 1941. Pgs. 452, 453.

⁵⁵⁸ Typically the Berlin average was closer to 18 days while historically Berlin-Dahlem had at worst seen 48 'Eistage.' *Das Wetter in Berlin von 1933 bis 1945*. Paul Schlaak. Sept. 2000. Online at: luise-berlin.de/bms/bmstxt00/0009gesd.htm

⁵⁵⁹ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. April 28, 1942. Pg. 45

⁵⁶⁰ See Amy Briggs' *Mass Observation diary* of January 21st, 1942.

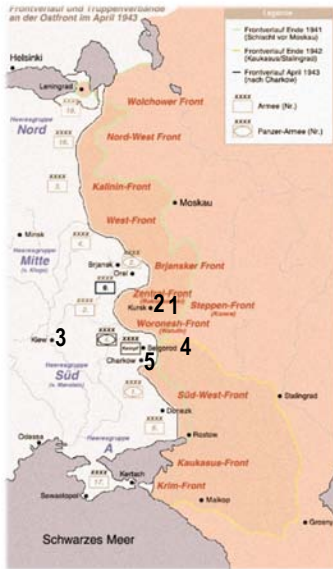
⁵⁶¹ *A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis*. Martyn Whittock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 286

a "definite reversal in the war situation."⁵⁶² On January 7th, 1942, the Russians had pushed the exhausted and freezing German armies back by between 100 and 250 km from Moscow,⁵⁶³ and in the course of that turnaround, some 2,000 of Leipzig's families had lost their fathers to the war by the end of 1941.⁵⁶⁴ "For the first time Berliners heard whisper of defeat."⁵⁶⁵

From 1941 it was all about *Der Ostfront* for Nazi Germany, shown here at the end of 1941 (green), 1942 (yellow) and April 1943 (black).

1. Tim;
2. Besedino;
3. Kiev;
4. Belgorod;
5. Kharkiv.

Source:
wikipedia.de/
Unternehmen_
Zitadelle



The last 'Germans' on either Margot or her sister Nanný's minds at that moment in time will have been their Silesian cousins. However, unknown to them, *August Schindzielarz*, the 26 year old son of their late father's sister, *Marianna*,⁵⁶⁶ served as deputy platoon leader (*Feldwebel*)⁵⁶⁷ within the *Wehrmacht's* 9. *Kompanie Infanterie-Regiment 442*,⁵⁶⁸ that was subordinate to its 168. *Infanterie-Division*.⁵⁶⁹

The last of ten children born over a period of 20 years and delivered on November 19th, 1915 in *Radstein*, Silesia, *August* looks to have aided first the German defeat of France in May 1940, before moving to Poland in June/July, where he remained an occupier until July 1941. He went to *Zhytomyr* west of Kiev ('3' on the map right), then onto Ukraine's capital until September, and *Belgorod* ('4') in Russia (40km north of Ukraine's border) in November. *Kharkiv* ('5') in Ukraine was the division's base from December to the next summer.⁵⁷⁰

The sisters' cousin met an early grave, however, when according to the Berlin-based *Deutsche Dienststelle* (German Service for the Notification of the Next-of-Kin of Fallen Soldiers of the Former German Wehrmacht), he died 'in the field' on January 11th, 1942.⁵⁷¹ One cause sprang to mind. "Soldiers were often buried hastily where they fell, or near field dressing stations and hospitals where they died of their wounds," writes *SPIEGEL ONLINE* International editor, *David Crossland*.⁵⁷² That probably helps explain the reference to his burial location being in the unmapped '*Pachonok*.'⁵⁷³ According to personnel at the *Deutsche Dienststelle*, the *Wehrmacht* later repatriated *August*

⁵⁶² I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. Dec. 31, 1941. Pg. 456

⁵⁶³ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Moscow

⁵⁶⁴ Furthermore, in 1941, eight schools were fully taken over by the *Wehrmacht* and numerous others in part, as during the First World War. *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig*. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. Pg. 47

⁵⁶⁵ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin*. Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 503

⁵⁶⁶ Marianna was born roughly ten years before Nanný and Margot's father, on September 13th, 1872. She had married *Joseph Schindzielarz* (born May 18th, 1865) on April 17th, 1894. He died on Dec. 4, 1940 according to Pg. 9 of the *Nachkommen von Thomas TÝRALLA* received from Gerard Týralla, while Marianna's date of death is unknown. *Josepha*, her two years junior sister, was the only other surviving sibling of Paul and Marianna Týralla by that point.

⁵⁶⁷ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Feldwebel#Reichswehr_and_Wehrmacht

⁵⁶⁸ The regiment was formed in the vicinity of Görlitz (Lower Silesia) on January 5th, 1940 as a Regiment of the 7. *Welle Infanteriedivision*. See: lexikon-der-wehrmacht.de/Gliederungen/Infanterieregimenter/IR442-R.htm and [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/7th_Infantry_Division_\(Wehrmacht\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/7th_Infantry_Division_(Wehrmacht))

⁵⁶⁹ See: niehorster.org/011_germany/41_organ_army/41_id_07-welle.html

⁵⁷⁰ From May 1940 the division marched from the Saar region (south of Saarbrücken, at the French border south of Luxembourg) through the Maginot line in the Holving-Saaralben area via the Rhine-Marne canal to the middle Vosges to *Hommarting*. See: lexikon-der-wehrmacht.de/Gliederungen/Infanteriedivisionen/168ID.htm

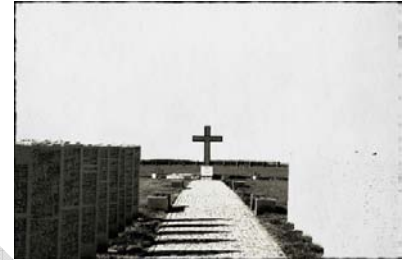
⁵⁷¹ Personal correspondence on February 25th, 2016 with *Frau Püpke* of the *Deutsche Dienststelle für die Benachrichtigung der nächsten Angehörigen von Gefallenen der ehemaligen deutschen Wehrmacht*.

⁵⁷² Database of Fallen Soldiers. Germany Still Locates 40,000 War Casualties a Year. David Crossland. May 8th, 2012. Online here: spiegel.de/international/germany/germany-tracing-its-war-dead-from-world-war-ii-a-832063.html

⁵⁷³ Thought rather to refer to the term *pochinok*, meaning rural locality. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pochinok

Schindzielarz during 1943 to a military cemetery in a place called *Tim* ('1'), about 175km north of *Kharkiv* (and some 450 km south of Moscow). I subsequently learned that the Germans and Russians had clashed over *Tim* at the end of 1941, the *Wehrmacht* taking it on November 20th, 1941 before the Red Army reconquered it on December 25th. I suspect *August* therefore fell victim to the cold nearby *Tim*, while his body was not recovered until after the German Army resumed settlement at the end of June. He was then given a proper burial, shortly prior to the Russians' liberation of *Tim* on February 4th, 1943.⁵⁷⁴

August Schindzielarz lay in *Tim* until relatively recently, I also learned, since, thanks to the efforts of the German war graves commission (the *Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge*) and the Federal Government, his name has been immortalised (together with over 11,000 others) on a memorial (*Gedenkplatz*) at the nearby and relatively recently constructed *Sammelfriedhofsanlage Kursk-Besedino*, where the remains of some 37,000 German soldiers have been undergoing a process of repatriation since 2006.⁵⁷⁵



Rest in Peace: Nanný and Margot's cousin's final resting place, the *Sammel-friedhofs-anlage Kursk-Besedino*
Source: [J. Radtke](#) via [panoramio.com/photo/80949763](#)

Curiously enough, I have a vague recollection of a military man named *Schindzielarz* buried in the parish church cemetery of *Ellguth* (to which *Radstein* belonged). The gravestone had a photograph of a young man as an inset, although if it was *August*, one would have to assume it served as a memorial rather than a resting place. A return visit would be required to confirm my assumption.⁵⁷⁶

I suppose if *Margot* and *Nanný's* cousin had written a note home, it would have been akin to *Klemperer's* diary note a week later; "*Things going very badly at the front.*"⁵⁷⁷ But of course both were none-the-wiser that they even had a Silesian cousin at the *Ostfront*. Throughout that year, however, the campaign on the Eastern Front was reported day-by-day in the British press and with that, Russia moved – perhaps for the first time in Britain – fully into focus. The names of little-known cities, such as *Yaroslavl*, *Smolensk* or *Rostov-on-the-Don* became familiar to the British public, while the figure of *Stalin* too moved centre stage, the image of the ruthless dictator dissolving into the reassuring figure of '*Uncle Joe.*' In Great Britain, the slogan '*Second Front Now*' could be seen chalked on walls from the start of 1942, amidst widespread solidarity for Russia.⁵⁷⁸

At the same time, however, the endurance of Germany's home front began to be tested more severely too. 'Retribution' finally for its aggressive foreign policy, but perhaps also, those at home might have thought, for its recent expulsions of Jews (see text box overleaf). On the night of January 14th-15th, *Hamburg* was visited by 48

⁵⁷⁴ See: [de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tim_\(Kursk\)#Geschichte](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tim_(Kursk)#Geschichte). N.b. Neighbouring *Kursk* was held for a longer period, from November 4, 1941 to February 8, 1943. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kursk#History

⁵⁷⁵ See: volksbund.de/kriegsgraeberstaette/kursk-besedino.html. See also: spiegel.de/international/europe/germany-to-open-last-wwii-war-cemetery-in-russia-a-914093.html

⁵⁷⁶ *August* may even have been the last to die among his siblings, notwithstanding the unknown dates of the death of four others; *Germanus*, *Anna* (both married), *Joseph* and *Clara* (unknown fates).

⁵⁷⁷ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Jan. 18th, 1942. Pg. 7

⁵⁷⁸ *Politics by Other Means. The Free German League of Culture in London, 1939-1945*. Charmian Brinson and Richard Dove. Vallentine-Mitchell, 2010. Pg. 127

Allied aircraft as the RAF returned after a five month hiatus to bomb its shipyards and an airframe factory over the next four nights.⁵⁷⁹ The 'Altona' station (some 5km west of Frau Tjyralla's home) was also hit.⁵⁸⁰ According to Claudia Strachan, who wrote 'Gretel's story,' by that point there were "Ruins and burned-out buildings in every district of the city."⁵⁸¹ During those raids Holland was also hit again, with 17 Blenheim Intruders spraying Dutch airfields with bombs. It felt to both Nannj and her mother that a turning point had been passed, furthermore, that they needed one another.

15.10: When Racism Became Deportation in Hamburg

Following more than a decade's persecution of Hamburg's Jewish community, in mid-October, 1941, the city's 'Welfare' Office sent out individual summons for transfer to work camps by registered mail. The first expulsions were slated for October 24th, 1941,¹ and in the six weeks that followed, almost half of Hamburg's remaining 7,547 Jews were deported. Completed within four large transports of unheated carriages from the goods station at *Hamburg Dammtor* (the far side of the *Aussen Alster*, across from Frau Tjyralla's flat), they were shipped to *Łódz*, *Minsk* and on December 6th to *Riga*.²



For those prone to sympathy, the Nazis were anxious to persuade people that, despite the war, life could still go on as before. The theatres, the opera and the concert halls all remained open and on the first day of the deportations, a well-loved comic actor had the whole of Hamburg laughing, according to the *Hamburger Tageblatt*. And when the last transport of the year left, it was Mozart week.³

Many women preferred to ignore what they saw, according to Thomas Kohut, who collectively documented as 'Magdalene Beck' the experiences of those who witnessed the deportations:

"I saw elderly people with the Jewish Star. They slunk along the street – they looked so frightened, I'd have to say. I thought to myself 'That simply can't be.' I ... saw that Jews were literally being herded together ... and I looked away, and I thought about something else ... Already after taking three steps, I was thinking about something else ... I continued on my way and didn't get upset about it ... I won't say I repressed it – I simply didn't consciously acknowledge it, not consciously ... Although I still know it and can still see the picture exactly before me."⁴

By the end of the year, 4,051 of Hamburg's Jews nervously remained in the city awaiting their fates. A further 121 had succeeded to emigrate while 150 had died, many by taking their own lives.⁵ Yet even for those who emigrated, hardship followed. The hundreds of containers that belonged to them remained stranded in Hamburg's port, only to be subsequently broken open and the contents distributed or sold at auction.⁶ For those who stayed behind, mass relocation into 45 *Judenhäuser* followed in early April, 1942 along with forced labour and eventual deportation.⁷ Ultimately 674 were still in the city come April 1945.⁸

1-3, 5-6. *The Jews and Germans of Hamburg. The Destruction of a Civilisation 1790-1945*. J.A.S. Grenville. Routledge, 2012. 1. Pg. 217; 2. Pg. 219; 3. Pg. 221-222; 5. Pg. 225; 6. Pg. 250; 7. Pg. 247, 251; 7. Pg. 260

4. *A German Generation*. Tomas A. Kohut. Yale University Press, 2012. Pg. 111-112

Image: Bernd Spyra; 'Platz der jüdischen Deportierten.' Autumn 2015. Online [here](#).

⁵⁷⁹ Causing some 59 fires, 14 deaths and 59 injuries. See: www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/jan42.html

⁵⁸⁰ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamburg-Altona_station

⁵⁸¹ *A Different Kind of Courage. Gretel's Story*. Gretel Wachtel and Claudia Strachan. Mainstream, 2009. Pg. 53

For Frau Týralla's 'other' family in Leipzig, they remained largely out of the Allies' reach – for the time being. Not that the city deserved any less than Hamburg. According to *Rabbi Schlomo Wahrman*, Leipzig's Jewish population, recently ghettoized near its *Hauptbahnhof*, had fallen below 3,000 by the end of 1941 (it had been 18,000 in 1935).⁵⁸² The mass deportations then followed, with 715 shipped to the Latvian capital, *Riga*, on January 21st, 1942. It was the first and numerically largest deportation of Jews from Leipzig, while the 'death train' picked up another 300 deportees in Dresden. On July 13th, 1942, another 170-191 were deported to *Trostinez*, near the Belarus capital, *Minsk* while more Jews were sent 'nach Osten' throughout 1942 and 1943.⁵⁸³

After reading this, an unpleasant thought crossed my mind. During my interviews with Vera Hinsch, she mentioned that her father drove trains east, including to Latvia and Lithuania. Although she added she couldn't be sure of the dates, a quick check confirms the concentration camp at *Riga* (called *Salaspils*) was operational from December 1941, in conjunction with another called *Jungfernhof*, both picking up deportees not able to be accommodated in Minsk.⁵⁸⁴ Vera also mentioned that it was during 1942 and 1943 that she would spend long weekends in Machern with her grandfather and his wife. We already know Vera's mother took little interest in her and her siblings' upbringing, so was the thirteen year old shipped off to the Hinsch villa because her father drove trains, 'Nach Osten'?⁵⁸⁵ According to Wahrman, „the trip to Riga lasted several days“ and checking the 1942 calendar, Jan. 21st was a Wednesday – quite possibly the start of a 'long' weekend.



Jewish Deportations from Leipzig, January 1942. The only available photo according to *Rabbi Schlomo Wahrman*. Source: infocenters.co.il

The bombers returned to Hamburg's strategic targets, such as airfields or armament factories on the night of February 17-18th, 1942,⁵⁸⁶ but following limited success – investigation revealed just one in five aircraft succeeded in dropping bombs within five miles of its target⁵⁸⁷ – the Allies' changed tactics in a bid to undermine the 'morale of the enemy civil population.' It chose to direct its bombing offensives at targets as big as cities. Thus began the Allies' era of carpet bombing,⁵⁸⁸ 'Blitzing' churches or other significant spots in industrial town centres. And since fire was found to be the most effective means of destroying a town, the bombers carried mainly incendiary bombs.

⁵⁸² Noted as 2500 in *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig*. Martina Güldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. Pg. 47

⁵⁸³ Between 443 and 476 were transferred to *Theresienstadt* during Sept. 11-19th, 1942; 184 nach *Osten* on Feb. 17th, 1943; on May 10th, 369 were sent to *Belzyce*, near *Lublin* in Poland; on June 18th, 23 more were sent to *Theresienstadt* and another 33 on Jan. 13th, 1944. Some 169 were shipped to the same place on Feb. 14th, 1945. Leipzig was then *Judenrein*. *Lest We Forget: Growing up in Nazi Leipzig, 1933-1939*. Rabbi Shlomo Wahrman. Mesorah Pubs Ltd. 1991. Pg. 134-136

⁵⁸⁴ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Salaspils_concentration_camp and [Jungfernhof_concentration_camp](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jungfernhof_concentration_camp)

⁵⁸⁵ The *Reichskommissariat Ostland*, to which Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania belonged to, did not fall into Soviet hands until the second half of 1944. See map at: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reichskommissariat_Ostland. See also: [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Front_\(World_War_II\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Front_(World_War_II))

⁵⁸⁶ webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070706011932/http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/feb42.html

⁵⁸⁷ See: peaceandjustice.freeforums.net/thread/277/life-legacy-winston-churchill

⁵⁸⁸ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Area_bombing_directive

Before the Allies got that bombing campaign underway, on March 20th, 1942, Nazi Germany's citizens' hardships further grew when the weekly bread and fat quotas were reduced, as was that for meat to 300 grams.⁵⁸⁹ The quality of bread grew reminiscent of that in the last war with its bitter taste and grey colour based on turnips.⁵⁹⁰ Everything was rationed except swedes and barley in Hamburg.⁵⁹¹ Fruit and vegetables were again in short supply and from April potatoes were rationed.⁵⁹² Those who complained for eating sorrel cutlets and escalope of *Kohlrabi* (turnip) were simply told things were much worse in the rest of Europe.⁵⁹³

As a result, most major German cities' parks and gardens were turned into vegetable patches. In Dresden, its seven thousand nursery gardens switched over half their acreage to producing vegetables,⁵⁹⁴ while those who had vegetable patches planted carrots, potatoes and other essentials. Those who didn't, traded with countryside farmers and smallholders.⁵⁹⁵ Increasing numbers took to keeping rabbits, known as 'balcony pigs.' The so-called 'Lorraine-' and 'Flemish-Giants' as well as the 'German Grey' landed on many a good bourgeois table. It was permissible, however, only to keep one rabbit per household whilst any extra rabbits had to be handed in, as did the the skin. Home tanning was strictly forbidden and Angoras were shorn three times per year to provide wool for airmen.

Vera Hinsch recalls her parents' kept angoras, and I wondered whether they ate rabbit. She cannot remember whether her parents did – certainly she never saw them do so – but she added that they never hungered. Even if there was not much to eat, she did not go hungry, thanks to their weekend spot (neither did they suffer from a shortage of clothes). They'll have had to remain vigilant, nonetheless, since breaches of the rules on keeping rabbits gave rise to endless denunciations by neighbours, secret slaughtering, hidden hutches and bribery for choice pieces of meat.

Other everyday household items such as toothpaste, toilet paper and soap powder remained difficult to find.⁵⁹⁶ As the winter months wore on, Klemperer records in his diary how "*Revolution seemed to be imminent at home ... Everyday the impression grows stronger that a crisis is drawing near.*" Somewhat prematurely, he had already begun to wish: "*the English get here before the Russians, so that we have an English occupation and not a Russian one.*"⁵⁹⁷ However, the German government remained unsympathetic, Goebbels publishing an article in *Das Reich* at the end of March in which he declared: "*Every act of black marketeering will run the risk of a heavy sentence, of the death sentence.*"⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁸⁹ *Nazi Germany at War*. Martin Kitchen. London & New York: Routledge, 1994. Pg. 81. Online [here](#). See also: *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. March 20, 1942. Pg. 30.

⁵⁹⁰ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. May 11, 1942. Pg. 50. NB: Whittock attributes that to barley flour.

⁵⁹¹ *A Different Kind of Courage. Gretel's Story*. Gretel Wachtel and Claudia Strachan. Mainstream, 2009. Pg. 81

⁵⁹² *A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis*. Martyn Whittock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 257

⁵⁹³ *Nazi Germany at War*. Martin Kitchen. London & New York: Routledge, 1994. Pg. 81. Online [here](#).

⁵⁹⁴ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. March 16, 1942. Pg. 29

⁵⁹⁵ *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945*. Roger Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 93

⁵⁹⁶ "Not had toothpaste in weeks" and "No laundry done since Dec." *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. April 5, 1942. Pg. 36, as well as "most extreme shortage of toilet paper" in *I Will Bear Witness 1933-1941: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 1999. Nov. 28, 1941. Pg. 446

⁵⁹⁷ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. January 18th, Feb. 24th and March 16th, 1942. Pg. 7, 19, 26-7

⁵⁹⁸ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Mar. 31st, 1942. Pg. 35

Some Germans within Hitler's army were not afraid to criticise their leaders – privately at least. *Ernst Ebeling*, a 51 yr old Colonel who had fought in the First World War and had been posted to Hamburg in April 1941 wrote in his diary as early as December 1939 that: *"Those to whom the German people have given their trust are a disgrace"* and subsequently: *"Hitler is the most despicable criminal in history."* On March 22nd, 1942, he opined; *"The best qualities of the German people have been undermined."*⁵⁹⁹ The trouble was, the Germans' campaign of racial extermination conducted throughout the occupied territories of the east, their atrocities, barbaric treatment of civilians, murder of Soviet POWs and the retreating army's scorched earth policy meant *"an easy peace out of the question,"* wrote Alexandra Richie.⁶⁰⁰

Then came the heavy bombing. Lying just 70 km to Hamburg's northeast (and less than 30 km from Frau Tŷralla's father's birthplace, *Sũlfeld bei Bad Oldesloe*), *Lũbeck* was the first German city to suffer substantial damage. On March 28th, the city's historic centre, including three of the main churches and large parts of the built-up area, were all but destroyed.⁶⁰¹ A well prepared network of air raid shelters meant that just 301 lives were lost, although the rumours were that there remained *"thousands under the ruins"* and *"40,000 homeless."*⁶⁰² Yet in spite of a wealth of material damage, industrial production was back to normal within two weeks.⁶⁰³

Over the coming weeks, *Mutti's* hometown suffered its largest raids to date too, on the nights of April 8th-9th, April 17th-18th, and May 3rd-4th, 1942 – the latter ironically being the hundredth anniversary of Hamburg's great fire. It was deemed by Bomber Command to have been *"a success out of all proportion to the numbers of aircraft involved."* Combined, the Allies started 188 fires, claimed 117 citizens' lives and injured a further 428.⁶⁰⁴ Come the end of May, some 3,389 of Hamburg's homes had been lost,⁶⁰⁵ although the city's housing shortage was probably alleviated by the thousands of Jewish departures.⁶⁰⁶ A brief respite followed, although Stalin couldn't resist congratulating Churchill at the 'merciless bombing' whilst expressing the hope that such attacks would cause severe damage to German public morale.⁶⁰⁷ Enough was enough though for Frau Tŷralla, who hurriedly wrote to Nannŷ, asking for shelter. *"My life is in your hands,"* she pleaded, and urged her quick response.

Margot no doubt registered those raids and began to fear the worst, although her fellow Germans perhaps helped take her mind off matters by reacting to *Lũbeck's* bombing by raiding the UK, starting with its south coast towns in March⁶⁰⁸ and on April 28th-29th, the historic walled Roman city of Leeds' neighbour, York. Damage was limited, although 79 lives were still lost.⁶⁰⁹

⁵⁹⁹ *The Jews and Germans of Hamburg. The Destruction of a Civilisation 1790-1945.* J. Grenville. Routledge, 2012. Pg. 230-1

⁶⁰⁰ *Faust's Metropolis: A History of Berlin.* Alexandra Richie. Harper Press. London, 1998. Pg. 504

⁶⁰¹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lũbeck

⁶⁰² In fact 15-25,000 people were left homeless, according to wikipedia: [Bombing of Lũbeck in World War II](#)

⁶⁰³ *Nazi Germany at War.* Martin Kitchen. London & New York: Routledge, 1994. Pg. 89. Online [here](#).

⁶⁰⁴ webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070706011932/http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/may42.html and [apr42.html](#)

⁶⁰⁵ *Die Zerstũrung Hamburgs im Zweiten Weltkrieg.* Arthur Dũhn, 1954. Re-published by Michael Grube at: geschichte.spuren.de/artikel/verschiedenes/175-zerstoerung-hamburg-weltkrieg.html with data from *Hamburg und seine Bauten 1929-1953.* See the table entitled: *Der Wohnungsaußfall durch Kriegseinwirkungen 1939-1945 in Hamburg*

⁶⁰⁶ Unconfirmed but already proposed by the Nazi authorities in April 1940, according to *The Jews and Germans of Hamburg. The Destruction of a Civilisation 1790-1945.* J.A.S. Grenville. Routledge, 2012. Pg. 216

⁶⁰⁷ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bombing_of_Lũbeck_in_World_War_II

⁶⁰⁸ See: britishmilitaryhistory.co.uk/documents.php?aid=171&nid=2&start=5

⁶⁰⁹ See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baedeker_Blitz

On March 1st, Johnnie was promoted to the rank of *Bombardier*, and three weeks later, on Sunday 22nd March, he returned to the stage, not *Bo'ness Town Hall* again, but the *King's Theatre Edinburgh*. There he joined "the first variety performance to be held in Scotland solely in aid of the Brinsworth Home for aged and infirm members of the theatrical profession." It must have felt good to be credited with keeping "the audience in happy mood ... with witty patter,"⁶¹⁰ but I couldn't help but ask myself, was he intentionally prioritizing stagework over family? Was he even avoiding family? Margot didn't want to but she had been thinking the same, having read in a newspaper column somewhere that "*Fathers represent in the early life of their children the forces of law and order*" and that "*children suffer because of the laziness of their fathers.*"⁶¹¹

GLASGOW EMP. (re. 11).—
Vera Lynn, Rawicz and Landauer,
Billy Danvers, Campbell and Wise,
Billings and Chase, Four Hermans,
Johnnie Riscoe, Silvestri.

Above:
Uniformed Riscoe hits the big time?
Sharing the bill with Vera Lynn. Source:
*Calls for Next Week/Moss Empires Ltd. The
Stage. April 23rd, 1942 Pg. 2*



Above:
Riscoe's battery huts (boxed) together
with the heavy anti-aircraft guns in
Dalmeny, close to its Railway Station
where the Forth Bridge ends. Taken
shortly after Riscoe's arrival on
October 20th, 1941. Queensferry is just
visible to the mid-left of the image.
Source: [canmore.org.uk/
collection/458736](http://canmore.org.uk/collection/458736)

The Edinburgh gig was followed by another a few days later and on April 2nd, 1942, Riscoe broadcast '*Workers' Playtime*' for the BBC.⁶¹² During the first week of May he went on to perform with Vera Lynn at the *Glasgow Empire* (see inset right). Harvey it seemed would have to make do with hearing his father on the radio. War after all, was a lonesome business.

Did Riscoe even make it to Leeds that spring/summer of 1942, I wondered? For a good part of that year, he had been based at *Dalmeny* ('4' on the map on pg. 659 and pictured right), a hamlet about half the distance to Edinburgh from Bo'ness (cca. 13km). Vee Robinson writes that it was "*the policy to switch batteries from one gunsite to another when they had served a certain length of time in one place, to prevent them from getting stale for one thing.*"⁶¹³

The only joy likely to have been had there was the local village of Queensferry, about an hour's walk away, which "*consisted of one main street running alongside the water. There was a cinema, a post office, two cafés, a fish and chip shop and Rosebery Hall where we danced. Several pubs of course [too],*" while Port Edgar offered "*...Regular dances ... at the naval base and film shows too, which uniformed personnel could attend.*"⁶¹⁴

⁶¹⁰ *Edinburgh Evening News*. March 23rd, 1942. Pg. 2

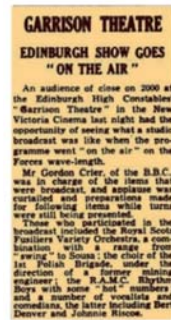
⁶¹¹ *Marriage Failures and the Children*. Claud Mullins. The Epworth Press, 1954. Pg. 59

⁶¹² Referenced in a letter sent by Riscoe to the BBC Variety Department, dated 13th August 1942, according to personal correspondence with [Tom Hercock](http://www.bbc.com/culture/article/2016/11/bbc-written-archives-centre) of the BBC Written Archives Centre in Reading. Nov. 15th, 2016.

⁶¹³ *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 50

⁶¹⁴ *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 113

On May 23rd Riscoe's battery made another 'routine change,' when he was relocated to *Totley Wells*, a few kilometres west.⁶¹⁵ Robinson tells us "*Troop movements were always made at night,*"⁶¹⁶ however, the next day, Sunday May 24th, Riscoe played the *New Victoria Cinema* in Edinburgh, broadcasting in front of an audience of two thousand for the BBC as part of the '*Garrison Theatre*' show.⁶¹⁷ It must have seemed to Margot as if Johnnie was making one excuse after another to stay a safe distance from Leeds. Although she didn't know it yet, he'd been told to, although she grew convinced it had something to do with an 'ack ack' girl.



Left:
Riscoe on
"Garrison
Theatre"
duty.
Source:
*Edinburgh
Evening
News*,
May 25th,
1942.

Before she could dwell on the matter further, Margot then received an associate of her husband, a former Yorkshire man, in fact, whom she'd grown loosely acquainted with in London.⁶¹⁸

Hedley Claxton was a 'debonair light comedian'⁶¹⁹ and show writer,⁶²⁰ who together with his business partner Barrie Baldrick, a booker and promoter of revue performers, were paving the way for an '*Anglo-American revue of Glamour and Gaiety*' entitled '*London & New York Calling*.'⁶²¹ Ostensibly he was in the north of England to talent scout and thus a pair of ads went into *The Stage* newspaper⁶²² that read:

WANTED, Musical Director for revue.—Apply, if north, Claxton, 24, Oak-rd., Chapeltown, Leeds; if south, Barrie Baldrick, 26, Charing Cross-rd., W.C.2



Friend or
Foe? Mystery
Oak Road
lodger
Hedley
Claxton,
snapped at
the Hoe
Summer
Theatre
production
of 'Gaytime.'

'WANTED: Stage Carpenter/Musical Director for Revue – Apply, if north Claxton, 24, Oak-rd., Chapeltown, Leeds; if south, Barrie Baldrick, 26, Charing Cross-rd.. WC2.'

Sources:
Above:
The Stage,
April 23rd,
1942.
Below: [Flickr](#)

Reflecting on his visit afterwards, Margot couldn't help but wonder why Claxton stayed at Oak Road and used it as a forwarding address. After all, she figured he was better acquainted with Johnnie's mother, being closer in age to her – plus she hosted theatricals. "*I've to be more vigilant in future,*" she made a note to self.

While there were those in the Forces who managed to stay out of action, demand was rife in Britain during the first half of 1942 to open up a Second Front against the Germans. In May, some 50,000 people filled Trafalgar Square for a demonstration, while Robinson wrote of utterances within her own battery and of literature in the NAAFI exhorting '*Britain Blancos while Russia bleeds*.'⁶²³ On May 16th, 1942, Churchill instead visited Leeds, to encourage people to keep contributing and sign up.⁶²⁴

⁶¹⁵ Operation Order No.1 of the 129th M.H.A.A.Regiment dated May 18th, 1942. Retrieved from the National Archives within [WO 166/7496](#), Jan.-Dec., 1942. N.b. Dalmeny was coded RSG4 (see: [canmore.org.uk/site/117079/south-queensferry-dalmeny-junction](#)) while Totley Wells, near Winchburgh on the map on pg. 659, was RSG2 (see: [canmore.org.uk/site/118879/totley-wells](#)).

⁶¹⁶ *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 50

⁶¹⁷ *Garrison Theatre*. *Edinburgh Show Goes "On The Air."* *Edinburgh Evening News*. May 25th, 1942. Pg. 2

⁶¹⁸ 'Hedley Claxton' resided at 6, Effra Rd., in Brixton, S.W. London according to *The Stage* on April 2nd, 1942, Pg. 4, although he was no stranger to Yorkshire. According to [Findmypast.co.uk](#), he was born in 1898 lived in Otley, northwest of Leeds according to the 1901 census and in Bradford in 1911. In the mid-30s he worked for BBC Radio.

⁶¹⁹ *Lincolnshire Echo*. October 14th, 1942. Pg. 2

⁶²⁰ *The Stage*. June 4th, 1942. Pg. 3

⁶²¹ It reached Southend on June 4, Lincolnshire in October and Bristol in December according to various sources.

⁶²² *The Stage*. April 23rd, 1942. Pg. 7

⁶²³ *Sisters in Arms*. Vee Robinson. Harper Collins, 1996. Pg. 111, 121

⁶²⁴ See: [yorkshireeveningpost.co.uk/your-leeds/nostalgia/leeds-property-news-the-day-churchill-visited-leeds-and-how-pows-built-houses-in-farsley-1-7258631](#)

The British Prime Minister dismissed protestors' calls in favour of troop landings in North Africa,⁶²⁵ with a view to eventually cutting open the Axis 'underbelly.' To silence the critics, an Anglo-Soviet treaty was signed that month⁶²⁶ that kept the Russians focused on ground operations while the British and Americans managed the skies.⁶²⁷ For Johnnie and Margot, that meant no change to the status quo.



Waystation Wartenau with its entrance behind the firs. Today, as it looked yesterday.

There were now "English bombers over Germany every day (no longer only at night)," reports Victor Klemperer.⁶²⁸ On May 30th, the Royal Air Force made its first thousand-bomber attack on Cologne, when "a good number of those planes flew over Holland" wrote the Jewish scholar, Abraham Pais, in his own recollections of Amsterdam during the war. Except that "by then few, if any took the trouble to get out of bed and into an air raid shelter. I would listen to the planes' droning, feel less isolated, and contentedly turn over."⁶²⁹

Fear was aging Frau Tŷralla fast. However, after the last raid, Nannŷ had kindly agreed to host her in Amsterdam, so she proceeded to obtain the required documentation.

"Gott sei Dank!" she thought. "It'll be safer and more convivial with family than being all alone here in Hamburg, especially with all my peers: the women, teachers, artists and white collar employees now being obliged to work in Germany's armament industries."⁶³⁰

Before she left what at that point was still a 'jewel' of the north, she departed *Lŷbecker Str. 59* at the end of May and went to *Wartenau, 9*, beyond *Hohenfelde*.⁶³¹ It was some thirty minutes by foot from the city centre but just one metro stop farther out of the city on the same *U1* line that swiftly brought her back to the *Binnen Alster*, where she could alight at the *Jungfernstieg*, nearby the *Alsterpavillon*, just north of the *Rathaus*.

⁶²⁵ *Politics by Other Means. The Free German League of Culture in London, 1939-1945.* Charmian Brinson and Richard Dove. Vallentine-Mitchell, 2010. Pg. 127

⁶²⁶ *England in the Twentieth Century. 1914-1979.* David Thomson. Second Ed. Penguin Books, 1981. Pg. 210. N.b. It was signed on May 26th, 1942. See: en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglo-Soviet_Treaty_of_1942

⁶²⁷ *A Brief History of the Third Reich: The Rise and Fall of the Nazis.* Martyn Whittcock. Constable&Robinson, 2011. Pg. 261

⁶²⁸ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years.* V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Apr. 19, 1942. Pg. 42. N.b. That said, "Dresden had been left in peace all winter, while Berlin was also quiet," he added.

⁶²⁹ *A Tale of Two Continents. A Physicist's Life in a Turbulent World.* Abraham Pais. OUP, 1997. Pg. 59

⁶³⁰ *Das war das 20. Jahrhundert in Leipzig.* Martina Gŷldemann. Wartberg Verlag, 1999. Pg. 48

⁶³¹ According to Frau Tŷralla's residential record; May 27th, 1942

Thanks ostensibly to the reconstruction or restoration of dwellings between February and April, the housing shortage had grown less pronounced (the net loss stood at just 2,909 that May).⁶³² Since it no longer stands today, perhaps her former home had seen bomb damage although I also wondered whether Frau Tŷralla might have benefitted *Wartenau 9* from a family evicted Jews? Elsewhere, Jewish properties were often sealed and then emptied, rather than occupied.⁶³³ But was it so in Hamburg?⁶³⁴

Three weeks later Frau Tŷralla picked up a one-year travel permit to Holland that was valid from June 19th, 1942.⁶³⁵ She told herself it would help her turn her back on all that had passed. Goebbels might have issued an announcement that "*People who travel only for pleasure run the risk of concentration camp*,"⁶³⁶ but she had scored her own form of 'compassionate' leave. She'd soon find, however, that peace of mind was no easier found in *Reichskommissariat Niederlande*.

Remarkably, however, *Mama's* departure couldn't have been 'better' timed. The Allies bombed Hamburg again on the nights of July 26th-27th,⁶³⁷ July 28th-29th ⁶³⁸ and then by day on August 3rd and 18th, this time causing widespread damage. Many homes were again lost and after further damaging raids on October 13th-14th and November 9th-10th, 1942,⁶³⁹ by that month's end the number stood at 6,790.⁶⁴⁰

But that all lay ahead, and for the moment Frau Tŷralla looked forward to being reunited with Nannŷ and hoping against hope for some news of Margot. Europe nowadays was a lonely place for a family splintered across a continent, even if most of it now belonged to the Greater German Reich. All three women had meanwhile had the misfortune of experiencing war up close too. The only question was when and how would it end for them, their men as well as their more distanced kin back home in Saxony? Who would emerge the winners – and who would be the losers?

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⁶³² Die Zerstörung Hamburgs im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Arthur Dähn, 1954. Re-published by Michael Grube at: geschichtsspuren.de/artikel/verschiedenes/175-zerstoerung-hamburg-weltkrieg.html with data from *Hamburg und seine Bauten 1929-1953*. See the table entitled: *Der Wohnungsausfall durch Kriegseinwirkungen 1939-1945 in Hamburg*

⁶³³ According to Victor Klemperer, in Dresden one saw "the familiar seal, more precisely two red fiscal stamps holding a strip of brown paper stretched across door and doorframe and the familiar, "here lived the Jew...and the Jewess..." "I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years. V. Klemperer. Mod. Lib. Inc., 2001. Oct. 7th, 1942. Pg. 151. Later, in spring 1943, Roger Moorhouse writes Dieter Borkowski was involved in the clearance of Jewish properties in Berlin (See: *Berlin at War. Life and Death in Hitler's Capital, 1939-1945*. R. Moorhouse. Vintage Books, 2011. Pg. 181) while Erica Fischer doesn't describe until Sept. 1944 "the trend during that period of appropriating Jewish property. They stole it; they denounced people to get at their possessions. Almost everyone participated in this theft, from the little people on up. This country was one single land of thieves." *Aimée and Jaguar. A Love Story*, Berlin 1943. E. Fischer. Bloomsbury, 1995. Pg. 190-1

⁶³⁴ The sole resident at *Wartenau, 9* in 1941 was an A. Buck, a sales representative, according to Hamburg's address books, while in 1942, there were certainly changes. The ground floor was then rented by Frau Frieda Szypa and the first floor occupied by a carpenter, Herr R. Höfer.

⁶³⁵ Frau Tŷralla's subsequent *Einwohnermeldekarte* indicates under *Vermerke* (observations) that the Hamburg authorities issued her "Pass 3351 v(om) Pol(izei)-Präs(idium) Hamburg von 19.6.42-19.6.43."

⁶³⁶ *I Will Bear Witness 1942-1945: A Diary of the Nazi Years*. V. Klemperer. Modern Lib. Inc., 2001. Mar. 31st, 1942. Pg. 35

⁶³⁷ More than 14,000 people were bombed out, while 337 people were killed and 1,027 injured. At least 800 fires were dealt with, 523 being classed as large. 823 houses were destroyed and more than 5,000 damaged. The docks and industrial areas were left relatively unscathed. See: [webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070706011932/http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/jul42.html](http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/jul42.html)

⁶³⁸ Thirteen people were killed and 48 injured amidst 56 fires, 15 of them large. See:

[webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070706011932/http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/jul42.html](http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/jul42.html)

⁶³⁹ [webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20070706011932/http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/nov42.html](http://www.raf.mod.uk/bombercommand/nov42.html)

⁶⁴⁰ Die Zerstörung Hamburgs im Zweiten Weltkrieg. Arthur Dähn, 1954. Re-published by Michael Grube at: geschichtsspuren.de/artikel/verschiedenes/175-zerstoerung-hamburg-weltkrieg.html with data from *Hamburg und seine Bauten 1929-1953*. See the table entitled: *Der Wohnungsausfall durch Kriegseinwirkungen 1939-1945 in Hamburg*

Footnotes to text box 15.4 on *The Free German League of Culture*

1. *Politics by Other Means. The Free German League of Culture in London, 1939-1945.* Charmian Brinson and Richard Dove. Vallentine-Mitchell, 2010. Pg. 4, 8, 17, 21, 27, 28-9, 30, 32, 74-75, 77, 79, 80

2. SAPMO-BArch, SgY13/V239/1/2 is a 44 page (incomplete, partly English) file entitled 'Einladungen, Tagesordnungen und Dokumente von Landesdelegiertenkonferenzen, Landesvorstandssitzungen und Generalversammlungen' held by the [Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv](#) in Berlin Lichterfelde and since microfilmed as [Film FBS 73/706](#). Copies are [available](#) following arrangement with u.raeuber@bundesarchiv.de

3. "There are no complete membership lists as such, though individual (and usually incomplete) lists for e.g. the Sektionen do crop up in some of the [FGLC] files from time to time. Freie Deutsche Kultur is available ...[in the library of the Bundesarchiv in Berlin Lichterfelde] or most issues anyway." Personal correspondence with Prof. Charmian Brinson (c.brinson@imperial.ac.uk) on Nov. 24th, 2016.

Image: The September 1940 issue (held at the [British Library](#)) of 'Freie Deutsche Kultur.'

Source: wienerlibrary.co.uk/Exile-and-Refugee-Newsletters