WWII Introduction presentation notes

WWII Horsham (1939-1945)

Slide 2: Introduction

In the early 20th century there were two 'World Wars'. The first war was fought between 1914 and 1918. Countries all over the world took part so it became the First World War or World War One. Between 1939 and 1945 another war took place that also involved countries all over the world. It was the Second World War or World War Two.

This War was awful. Around 60 million people died. About 40 million of these were civilians (people who were not in the military).

This presentation will take a look at how war broke out in 1939. Then it will look at how the war affected people at home, with examples from the Horsham area.

Slide 3: Who took part?

There were two groups of countries who fought in the war. One group included Germany, Italy and Japan. They were called the 'Axis Powers'. The other group included Britain, France, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, India, the Soviet Union (Russia), China and the USA. They were called the Allies.

Slide 4: The road to war (1)

Adolf Hitler was leader of the National Socialist German Workers Party (Nazi party). In 1933 he became leader of all of Germany.

He started using his power to take land from other countries. The land used to be part of Germany but had been taken away in the Peace Treaty at the end of World War One. Britain did not mind this. In fact some in Britain felt Germany had been treated badly at the end of World War One and some even admired Hitler's leadership. Britain also did not want to get involved in any more wars and made an effort to keep the peace.

Images: (1) Adolf Hitler, *[German Federal Archive licensed under* Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Germany] (2) Swastika: the symbol of the NAZI party

Slide 5: the road to war (2)

But things got worse. In 1938 Hitler demanded land from Czechoslovakia which had never belonged to them. Britain's leader, Neville Chamberlain, the French leader and Italy's leader went to meet Hitler. They wanted to keep the peace. The result was that Hitler was allowed to take the land but promised not to take anymore. Chamberlain claimed it was a victory for peace. But no one really believed it.

In Britain they even started preparing for war in case Germany attacked. They practised Air Raid Precautions – this was what to do if Germany sent planes to drop bombs. And they planned

'evacuation'. 'Evacuation' meant sending children away from cities to the countryside where they were less likely to be hit by bombs.

Image: Neville Chamberlain holding the paper containing the resolution to commit to peaceful methods signed by both Hitler and himself on his return from Munich. He is showing the piece of paper to a crowd at Heston Aerodrome on 30 September 1938. *[Imperial War Museum IWM Non Commercial Licence]*

Slide 6: War breaks out

In March 1939 Hitler breaks his promise and takes the rest of Czechoslovakia. Then he invades Poland. Britain and France had warned Germany not to go into Poland. So on 3rd September 1939 Britain and France said they were at war with Germany.

Slide 7: The 'Phoney War'

Now the war had started life changed for the people of Horsham. Evacuation began. Millions of children were moved from the city to the country. Horsham was told to expect 3000 evacuees in the first days.

The blackout was started and people in Horsham had to turn off their lights on their cars and bikes. Street lights were turned off. And people put blackout curtains on their windows t stop light getting out. This was to stop German planes seeing Horsham from the air. A few months later rationing began.

But the fighting didn't start for Britain. The army had to get organised. Weapons and vehicles had to be gathered. So people wondered why their lives had been changed. These months became known as the 'phoney war' in Britain. Evacuees started to drift back to the cities. But it was not to last.

Images: (1) Evacuees arriving at Horsham, *[© West Sussex County Council Library Service and Record Office]* (2) Poster about what families should expect from the evacuee.*[Poster No.: 1998.2216.1 © Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum and Art Gallery]*

Slide 8: Fear of Invasion

Whilst Britain was having a 'phoney war' it was a different story for the rest of Europe. In late 1939 and early 1940 Germany had taken over Denmark, Norway, Holland and Belgium. In June 1940 even Paris fell and France asked Germany for peace.

Now Britain is on its own and they are afraid of invasion.

The Government under new leader Winston Churchill soon make changes to prepare Britain. In the Horsham area Home Guards were formed. These were groups of men who could not join the main army usually because of their age. They prepared to defend their homes.

Road blocks and tank traps were put up in Horsham streets. Signs were taken away. People are told to be careful about what they say in case German spies are listening. Instructions are given out on what to do in a poison gas attack and everyone takes a gas mask with them.

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Images: (1) Tank traps on the streets of Horsham, , *[© West Sussex County Council Library Service and Record Office]* (2) 'Here be Dragons' the type of tank traps put on the Causeway in Horsham were sometimes called 'Dragon's Teeth'. You can see where the 'Teeth' were if you go to the front of Horsham Museum today.

Slide 9: Battle of Britain and Air raids.

But Germany doesn't invade. First it sends in its air force –the Luftwaffe. They are meant to destroy the British Royal Air Force (RAF). The RAF fought the Luftwaffe in fierce air battles between July and September 1940. This time was called the Battle of Britain. The RAF won the battle. But the Germans still sent planes to bomb British cities and towns including Horsham.

These attacks were called Air raids. To try and keep people safe sirens would sound when bombers were flying towards a town. This warning gave people time to find shelter. They could shelter in public shelters, in shelters in their gardens called Anderson shelters or in shelters in a room in their house called a Morrison shelter.

The siren would sound when it was safe to come out again.

Images: Photographs in the West Sussex county Times of Orchard Road Horsham after a bomb landed there in November 1940. , *[© West Sussex County Council Library Service and Record Office]*

Slide 10: Total War – Men

World War Two was a 'total war'. This meant every part of society was involved including men women and children.

Men were mainly needed to be soldiers in the army, air force and navy. Most men aged between 18 and 41 were conscripted at the start of the war – this meant they had to join the army. But the army wasn't the only important job. Some skilled men did not leave for the army but stayed; for example as engineers or farmers.

Some men were too old or not fit enough for the army. They could still help though. For example they could join the Home Guard. The Home Guard and prepare to defend their homes.

Images: (1) Poster showing a soldiers equipment, *[Poster No.: 1998.1446 © Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum and Art Gallery]* (2) Warnham Home Guard 1940's *[© Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum and Art Gallery]*

Slide 11: Total War – Women

With so many men away at war it was very important that women took on their jobs. This had happened in WWI as well. When the war began many women volunteered to help. But this time the government felt they would need more than just volunteers. So in 1941 they conscripted single women to the war effort. Women had to join the military or work in the factories or work on farms. Women had worked before the war but the war gave hundreds of thousands of women new jobs.

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Those who joined the military did not fight or carry weapons. Instead they could work as nurses, in the air force, in the Navy or even on the front line in Europe. They took jobs like secretary or cook or more dangerous jobs like aiming anti-aircraft guns. The factory girls made items including; bombs, shells, uniforms and parachutes. Those who worked on the farms joined the Women's Land Army (WLA). They were sent all over the country to farms. They did things like ploughing, planting, lambing and catching rats!

Many women who were not conscripted still volunteered. They could join the Women's Voluntary Service (WVS). They helped other Air Raid Precaution services, support evacuations and much more.

Images: (1) Poster showing Women doing war work, *[Poster No.: 1998.1447 © Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum and Art Gallery]* [2] The Royal Observer Corps outside the Drill Hall, Horsham, 1944. They helped the Air Force by keeping track of enemy planes.*[© Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum and Art Gallery]*

Slide 12: Total War – children

The war was very scary for everyone including children. City children were evacuated from their homes away from their families to the country. Children in Horsham had to share their lessons with London evacuees.

All children had to have identification. This could be a label or wrist band with their identity number, name and address on it.

Children also helped in the war effort. They were encouraged to save pennies and collect scrap metal and food waste to be recycled. They helped 'dig for victory' planting vegetables gardens to grow their own food. Even at school lessons were sometimes replaced with war activities. In Horsham they dug out air raid shelters and collected useful plants.

Images: Photograph from the West Sussex County Times showing children digging a trench for an air raid shelter. *[© West Sussex County Council Library Service and Record Office]*

Slide 13: Rationing and salvage

In 1940 food was rationed. Britain couldn't bring in as much food from other countries because the Germans would attack their ships. So Britain was short on food.

Before rationing began fruit like lemons and ranges had already disappeared from Horsham. When rationing began families were given ration books. These books allowed them to get their share of food from the shops. People were encouraged to use every scrap of food. They even used dried eggs and milk when they couldn't get fresh. But it was not just food. Clothes were rationed too and women were encouraged to 'make do and mend'. For example recycling and reusing cloth. Metal, rubber and bones were also 'salvaged'. This was when old objects that had these materials in them (like old rubber tyres) were collected and turned into new materials for the army.

Images: Posters asking people to collect material that can be recycled for the war effort.*[Poster No.: 1982.27 and 1998.1065 © Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum and Art Gallery]*

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Slide 14: Posters and Propaganda

Posters were very important during the war. They gave out information like how to put on your gas mask. But they were also used for propaganda. Propaganda means presenting a point of view from only one side. The government used propaganda to encourage people to put money into the war effort, persuade people to salvage and much more.

The Horsham posters website has some great examples of these. Propaganda also appeared in radio messages, in films, in newspapers and adverts.

The government also controlled what information went into newspapers, on the radio and even in personal letters. They wanted to stop information getting to the enemy. This was called censorship.

Images: propaganda posters encouraging people to give money to the war effort by buying War Savings. *[Poster No.: 1999.502 and 1998.1448 © Horsham District Council's Horsham Museum and Art Gallery]*

Slide 15: D-Day

By 1943 the Allies had begun to win the war in Europe. The US had joined the Allies to fight. Germany had its first big defeat at Stalingrad. The Allies had managed to make more ships, planes and weapons than the Germans. In 1944 a massive army crossed from Britain to free the French. They landed in Normandy on 6th June. This was called the D-day landings. They began 'liberating' (freeing) the people of Europe from the Nazi army.

It took time but by 7th May 1945 Hitler and Mussolini (the leader of Italy) were dead and Germany had surrendered. 8th May became known as Victory in Europe Day (VE day).

The fighting between Japan and the Allies carried on. But the Allies decided to drop two atomic bombs onto Japan at Nagasaki and Hiroshima. These bombs were devastating and Japan surrendered on 14th August 1945 (Victory in Japan day).

Images: Original photograph caption – 'Infantry waiting to move off 'Queen White' Beach, SWORD Area, while under enemy fire, on the morning of the 6th June. The first landings on Sword were made by the British 3rd infantry Division 27th Armoured Brigade and Royal Marine and Army Commando units form General Crocker's I corps. By nightfall the British had 28, 850 men ashore and the Orne Bridge had been seized.' *[Imperial war Museum IWM Non Commercial Licence.]*

Slide 16: The Holocaust

In 1945 the people of Britain found out about the horrific crimes of the Nazis against the Jews. The allies freed prisoners from Nazi Concentration camps. Concentration camps were prisons. But not for criminals. The Germans imprisoned innocent civilians in these camps in particular Jews.

It was discovered that around 6 million Jews sent to these camps had in fact been killed or had died from disease, hunger and cruelty. This horrific war crime was called the Holocaust.

Image: Dachau concentration camp one of the first set up after Hitler came into power in 1933. For more information see http://www.historvius.com/dachau-concentration-camp-871/

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Slide 17: Peace

The end of the war had come at a great cost to the world.

But VE day was celebrated in Britain. In Horsham crowds gathered in the Carfax. Victory beacons were lit in the villages. Victory bells were rang and bands played. There was also Church Services held to pray for Peace.

Soon soldiers began to return home from Europe.

Images: Victory in Europe Day Celebrations in London, 8 May 1945. A Truck of revellers passing through the Strand, London. *[Imperial war Museum IWM Non Commercial Licence.]*

Slide 18: Aftermath

Following the war many family had to get used to the changes caused by the war. Many men did not return, families had been split up and homes had been destroyed.

In 1945 the Allies set up the United Nations to try and keep the peace. One of its first jobs was to help refugees get home. Refugees were people who had been forced to leave home to escape the fighting. In Horsham plans were made to honour those who died by adding a dedication to the War Memorial built after World War One.

Image: The War Memorial today. It remembers those who died in both World Wars.*[© Gail Mackintosh]*