



Women at war

May Mardell (formerly Cleveland) talking to Daphne Chamberlain

Nobody ever mentions women war workers. I was 17, and a trainee cashier at Woolworth's, when I volunteered. It was that or being called up, and Mum said my two brothers in the services were enough.

The recruiting officer looked like Hitler. "Who doesn't like machinery?" he said. I put my hand up - and got the old army volunteer treatment: "You, you, and you!"

The training was at Acton, and took five months. I learned to read blueprints and to use various tools, including a micrometer. This gauges the thickness of steel, and I had to use it to measure the rods used in capstans. (Today it's done by a small computer.)

Sent to Coventry

After four tests, I became a qualified operator. Because I had been a bit cheeky, they threatened to send me up to Coventry. So when I was posted to a workplace off Tottenham Court Road, I was so relieved I almost ran there! It was a firm called Hills Patents, just behind University College Hospital, which made radar strips and small parts for planes.

We worked day and night, in twelve-hour shifts, changing shifts every fortnight. I lived near the Oval and, sometimes, when I came out of the tube station at night, literally every street was ablaze. I used to think, "My God, how am I going to find my mum?"

Of course there were raids on the Tottenham Court Road area, too. (I think that General Eisenhower had his H.Q. under the American Church.) When we used Goodge Street station in the morning, we passed people who had been sheltering there all night, bringing up their mattresses. A strong, sickly smell met you as you got in the lift.

Girl power

There were about twenty of us girls altogether. Between shifts on Mondays we often went to a tea dance, and on Fridays we had tea at Lyon's Corner House before going to the Palladium.



May Mardell outside her Stokes Court home. Photo: Daphne Chamberlain

Apart from me, they all lived in North London, and it would be great if any of them read this and contacted me.

I worked there for about four and a half years. After the war my friend and I, who had known each other since we were nine, married two brothers. I moved to East Finchley two years ago and, I must say, I'm very happy here.

Do you remember Ranulph Trevor-Roper or Kenneth Hayward?

The Archer received the following request via e-mail: **I am a Norwegian teacher, working on an article about an English "drop plane". It was shot down by German fighter planes on 30 or 31 March, 1945, close to Vierli in Vegaarshei Council, Norway.**

The plane was a Short Stirling MK IV (LK-332), and the crew were Group 38, Squadron 299 (plane code 5G-R). It flew from Shepherd's Grove Airfield, bringing supplies for the Norwegian Resistance. (200 airmen from England and the US were killed on similar missions between September 1944, and April 1945.)

Remains of the plane are still present in the crash area. The airmen are buried in Sondeled Cemetery, and every year on our National Day - 17 May - they are remembered, and a ceremony is held. On 8 May 1983, a memorial column was erected on the site where the plane crashed.

I have already obtained a lot of material about this incident, but I have no photos of the six young airmen who died.

One was 29 year-old F/L Ranulph Trevor-Roper, D.F.C., born 15/6/1915, at Finchley or Doncaster. He was the son of Mr. Leonard Carew Trevor-Roper (from Finchley or Fowey) and his wife, Lisbeth Rankin. He had brothers named Arthur, Leonard and John, and sisters Kathleen, Janet and Elsie.

Another was 19 year-old F/O Kenneth Clement Hayward, born 18/7/1925, at Edmonton. He was married to Olive Violet Hayward, from Southgate.

It would mean a great deal to me, and to our local History Group, if anyone could send me further details or photos.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

**Ole Jorn Alfsen,
4909, Songe, Norway.
e-mail: oj.alfsen@c2i.net.**

LETTERS

Famous Residents

Dear Editor

In issue number 76 you asked if any famous persons live locally. Well, I always understood years ago, Peter Sellers lived in one of the flats opposite the Martin field (between Leslie and Leopold roads) and my husband says Hank Marvin lived near the fire station.

I think it was last year, you photographed the wine bar in the High Road because of the lovely flowers. Have you seen the Windsor Castle pub? It is beautiful, and even has hanging tomatoes and marrow amongst the display and it is looked after by one chap.

LOVE THE ARCHER; nice to read what's going on around us.

Yours sincerely

**Nanette Lacey (Mrs)
Manor Park Road, N2.**

Editors reply: You're certainly right about Peter Sellers: One of our contributors actually lives in his old flat.

In the Can

Dear Editor

I think Barnet Council deserves a pat on the back. We have a bottle and paper bank across the road, but had to make a car trip to take cans to be recycled.

But after one telephone request, the council has added a can bank. So, in case people hadn't noticed, it's just opposite the Five Bells in East End Road.

Yours faithfully

**L. Roberts
East End Road, N2.**

Eurostar to Amsterdam

By Len Willcocks

There is no better way to travel to Europe than by Eurostar. Board the train at Waterloo International and just over three hours later emerge in the centre of Brussels; no hassle of getting to the airport, no luggage checks or long queues. Your bags are with you as you join the train and with you as you alight at the other end; no long wait at a carousel for your luggage which is nearly always the last to come round.

We took Eurostar to Brussels, changing there for a local train to Amsterdam.

On the Intercity to Amsterdam, we had a lesson in taking care of one's luggage. Opposite us sat an elderly American lady, her shoulder bag on the seat beside her, and two smartly dressed young men. One threw a coin down on the floor and she helpfully bent down to pick it up - then let out a shout: "My bag! They have my bag; it's got my passport, credit cards and cash!", she screamed. But as

they ran off with the bag, two railway porters blocked the way. They threw the bag on the floor and made their escape at the far door of the carriage. Her bag was saved but she had learnt her lesson.

Pedal power

After this little drama we were off. The Belgian, then Dutch, countryside was very flat and green, but we only saw one windmill. Arriving at Amsterdam station the first things we saw were the bikes, hundreds of cycles, for this is a city where

the bike reigns supreme. All the roads have cycle lanes but you are more likely to be knocked over by a bike than a car, for the bikes obey no road rules; they are a law unto themselves.

Then there are the lovely tree-lined canals. At night a ride on a canal bus with the lights twinkling from the many bridges is unforgettable. Amsterdam has more canals even than Venice.

All too quickly our minibreak was over, and it was back once more to Brussels and the Eurostar home.

A Pizza Nonsense

By Diana Cormack

How often do you read the free delivery pizza leaflets which drop through your door? The latest one I received offers "new Italian Susage" which is a "tasty new addition". Or I could try a "special blend of three chesses" which might be nice with some "cougettes".

They assure me that I "wont get better".

I know that THE ARCHER sometimes has the odd spelling mistake, but I really find that lot hard to swallow!

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