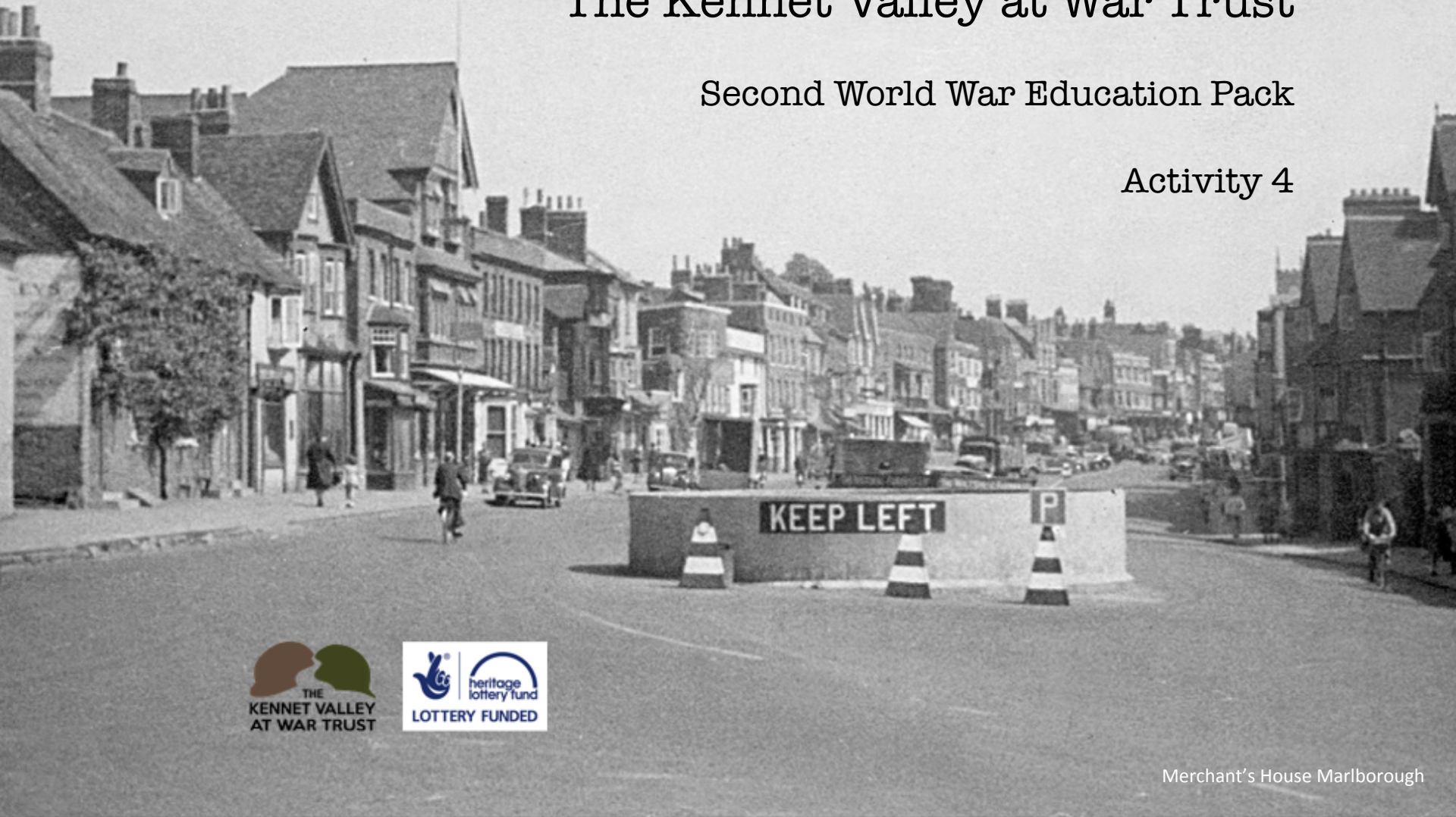


# The Kennet Valley at War Trust

## Second World War Education Pack

### Activity 4



Note to teachers...

This basic slide pack has been prepared for you to use with the Kennet Valley at War Trust's Second World War Education Pack.

Please adapt it to meet your own needs.

## How to use the Education Pack

The Education Pack is in two parts: background information and a set of classroom activity plans for teachers; and original images and texts, to be used with those plans.

The activities, which are principally designed for pupils aged between 9 and 14, can be adapted to suit older or younger students who are studying the history of their local area. Each activity includes background information, helpful ideas, and links to curriculum subjects and additional online resources. These can be used in lessons or as part of a larger cross curriculum project.

Slide packs, for use with each activity, can be downloaded from: [www.kennetvalleyatwar.co.uk](http://www.kennetvalleyatwar.co.uk)

The activities show what can be achieved with the resources provided, and should be used to develop your own ideas and lesson plans.

As you do so, remember that the pack is about the men and women of the Kennet Valley and those British and American soldiers, airmen and airwomen who were based there, and who lived through the momentous events of the Second World War, and whose sacrifices helped to make the Allied victory possible.

This is their story.



British fighter pilots running for their aircraft,  
1940



(© IWM HU 49253)

## Activity 4: the enemy

Following the British Army's evacuation from Dunkirk in late May and early June, and fearing a German invasion which could come at any moment, in 1940 the people of the Kennet Valley unexpectedly found themselves on the nation's front-line.

More than 70 years later, it is difficult to fully appreciate the impact that these events had on the local population. Whilst the country's major cities bore the brunt of the enemy action, the Battle of Britain was fought in part in the skies above the Kennet Valley, and the towns of Swindon, Newbury and Marlborough were bombed on a number of occasions.

Using sources G and H, ask your pupils to research the impact of the air war on the local area, and the implications of housing enemy prisoners of war in the Kennet Valley during the Second World War.

Ask the students to think about the affect that these events had on the local people, and the ethical dilemmas they faced.

Working in small groups, get the pupils to discuss and act out the different points of view of the people described in the sources - local children and adults, prison guards and enemy prisoners of war. Use this as a basis for staging a class debate about the treatment of prisoners of war.

Background image: The remains of the Senior Council School, Newbury, destroyed by a German bomber which attacked the town on 10 February 1943 (West Berkshire Museum)

**Age range:** 11-14

**Curriculum links:** Citizenship, Drama and Religious Studies

**Learning objectives:** use research skills to learn about the air war and enemy prisoners of war in the Kennet Valley; stage a class debate exploring the ethical dilemmas facing people during wartime

Closer to home, Italian Prisoners of War (POWs), captured during the North African Campaign, were housed in 'Camp 25' at Lodge Farm, a mile to the east of Baydon. Towards the end of the war the Italians were replaced by German prisoners, many of whom were caught in mainland Europe.

As a consequence, Tommy, Mary and Matthew Atkins often saw POWs at work in the fields.



*Heins Fimmers, a German Army POW at Baydon Camp from 1946 to 1948. After his release, he married a local girl and settled in Wiltshire*  
(H Fimmers)

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*The remains of the Senior Council School, Newbury,  
destroyed by a German bomber which attacked the town  
on 10 February 1943*

*Heinz Fimmers, a  
German Army POW  
at Baydon Camp  
from 1946 to 1948.*

*After his release he  
married a local girl  
and settled in  
Wiltshire.*



H Fimmers

## Source G: the Air War

The war with Germany was fought in part in the skies above the Kennet Valley throughout most of the Second World War - initially in the summer of 1940, during the Battle of Britain, when the country stood alone against Nazi Germany; and later during the Blitz, when the German Luftwaffe attacked Britain's cities.

In 1944, when the tide of the war had turned in the Allies favour, the skies above Wiltshire and West Berkshire were filled with British and American bombers carrying the war to Germany, and transport aircraft, ferrying troops, supplies and military equipment to France and Holland.



*Two bewildered ladies stand amid the ruins of St. Bartholomew's almshouses, Newbury, destroyed by the same bomber which struck St. John's Church*

US National Archives

Newbury was bombed by a lone Dornier bomber on the 10th February 1943. The enemy aircraft attacked from the south with machine guns and bombs, strafing Monks Lane, Chandos Road, Newtown Road, the Railway Station and Market Street. Some 265 buildings were destroyed or damaged. Fifteen people lost their lives and 25 were seriously injured in the raid; most of them at the Southampton Terrace houses, St. Bartholomew's almshouses and the Senior Council School.

"We had blackouts up so mother went outside to look and when she came back she said, 'some poor blighter's getting it tonight!' We went out and you could hear the droning of planes. It went on all night long."

Keith Light, remembering the night of 11 November 1940

### Useful links

Frank Capra's 'Battle of Britain' documentary, made for an American audience, 1940 [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

An interactive map, showing where the German bombs fell on London during the Blitz [www.bombsight.org](http://www.bombsight.org)



Two German Dornier bombers over London, 1940



“We had blackouts up so mother went outside to look and when she came back she said, ‘some poor blighter’s getting it tonight!’ We went out and you could hear the droning of planes. It went on all night long.”

Keith Light, remembering the night of 11 November 1940



*Two bewildered ladies stand amid the ruins of the St. Bartholomew's Alms Houses Newbury, destroyed by a German bomber*

## Source H: Prisoners of War

Italian POWs began to arrive at Camp 25 in August 1941. Put to work in the fields, the more trustworthy were billeted with local farmers. Those who 'lived in' were allowed a surprising amount of freedom, and were given unrestricted movement within 3 miles of their billet; if the distance was greater they had to be accompanied by a responsible person. They were not however, allowed to enter towns, villages, shops or houses other than those of their employer without permission; and they had to remain in their billet between sunset and sunrise. British POWs in Germany were treated far more harshly.

A member of the Royal Army Service Corps, George Young had landed in France in June 1944 and supplied the army into Belgium, Holland and Germany. Well aware of the reality of war, in 1946 he was attached to Camp 25 in charge of transport. Given the number of German prisoners, he was surprised by the small size of the guard force, which comprised just 2 officers and 14 other ranks.



*Wilhelm Straub,  
photographed in 1947*

(Mrs I Graham)

How would you have reacted to meeting a POW? Was it right to befriend prisoners who may have killed family members or friends?

*"Nobody can imagine the joy that I experienced upon [hearing] the great news. I spent my last Sunday in Lambourn on the 25th, and the weather was beautiful as I said goodbye to all my comrades."*

*Wilhelm Straub, on being told that he was going home to Germany, January 1948*

*"The inmates were sometimes allowed out of camp to attend dances. They were always very polite, and would click their heels before and after a dance. However, if a girl danced with a POW, she risked being ignored by the local boys for the rest of the evening!"*

*Mrs Ludlow, from Aldbourne, recalling local village dances*



*Corporal George Young (2nd from right) with German prisoners outside Camp 25's cookhouse*

(G Lang)

### Links

The history of humanitarian law [www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org)

Imperial War Museum archive material about Italian and German POWs in England [www.iwm.org.uk](http://www.iwm.org.uk)

Background image: the last remaining building at POW Camp 25 near Baydon, which was recently demolished (Roger Day)



Roger Day

*The last remaining building at POW Camp 25 near Baydon, which has since been demolished*



G Lang

*Corporal George Young (2<sup>nd</sup> from right) with German prisoners outside Camp 25's cookhouse*

“The inmates were sometimes allowed out of camp to attend dances. They were always very polite, and would click their heels before and after a dance. However, if a girl danced with a POW, she risked being ignored by the local boys for the rest of the evening!”

Mrs. Ludlow, from Aldbourne, recalling local village dances

*Wilhelm Straub,  
photographed in 1947*



Mrs. I Graham

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Wilhelm Straub, on being told that he was going home to Germany, January 1948



