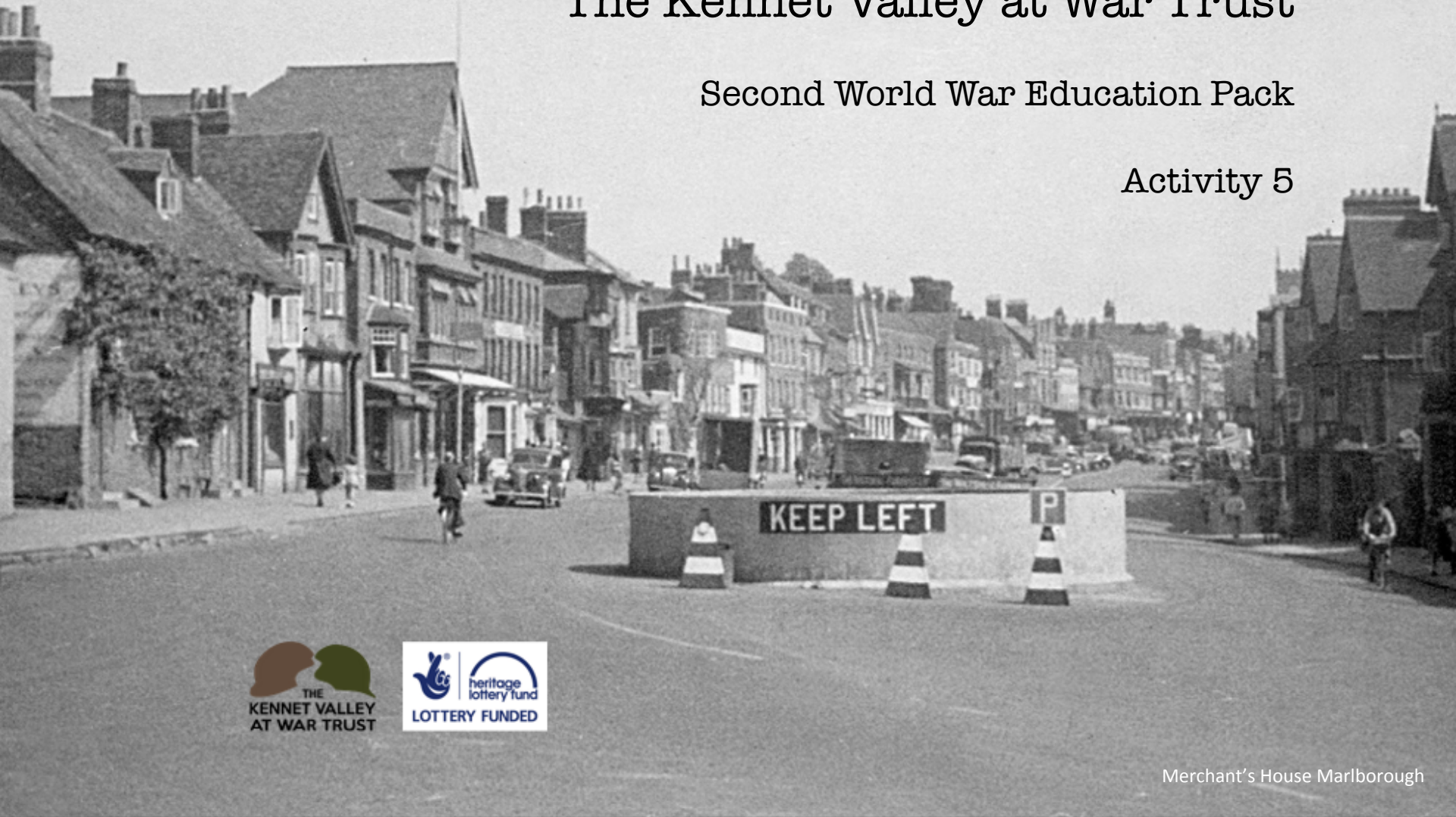


The Kennet Valley at War Trust

Second World War Education Pack

Activity 5



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

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



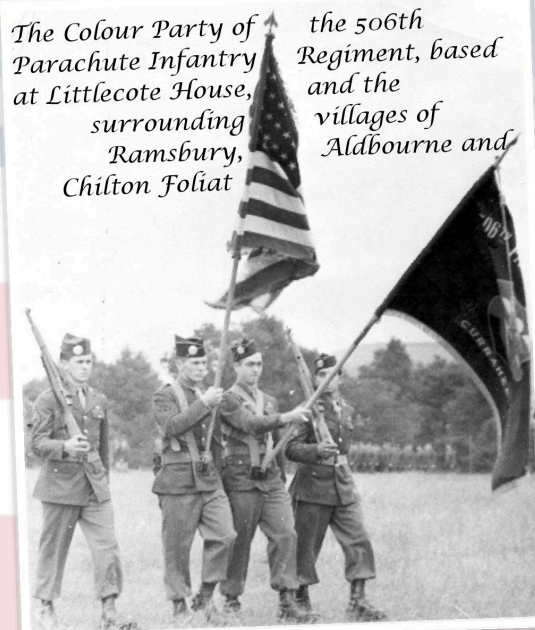
(© IWM HU 49253)

Activity 5: the Americans

The surprise Japanese attack against the American Pacific Fleet at Pearl Harbor brought the USA into the war on the Allied side in December 1941.

Having held out alone against the Germans for over two years, the British welcomed the first American troops to arrive on British soil in 1942 with a mixture of relief and curiosity.

The GIs were known for their generosity; and for having access to candy, Coca-Cola, cigarettes and nylon stockings. By the end of the war, tens of thousands of American soldiers, airmen and service women would be based in the Kennet Valley. Many were from the 101st Airborne Division - one of the first units to parachute into Nazi occupied Europe on the 5th June 1944, the eve of D-Day.



The Colour Party of Parachute Infantry at Littlecote House, surrounding Ramsbury, Chilton Foliat

the 506th Regiment, based and the villages of Aldbourne and

(Roger Day)

Age range: 9-14

Curriculum links: Drama, English and History

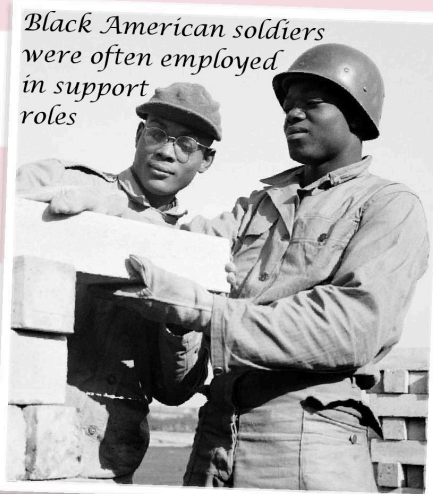
Learning objectives: study authentic resources to learn about the lives of the American soldiers based in the Kennet Valley over the winter of 1943-1944; use the knowledge to write and perform a short play

Mary Atkins, aged 9 in 1942, remembers the American soldiers for being very friendly, for their odd eating habits, and for being very brash with their money. She and the other children would gather around them and ask "got any gum, chum?"

Using sources I, J and K, ask your pupils to research the experiences of the local people and the US troops billeted in the Kennet Valley from 1942 until the end of the war.

Ask the children to think about the impact that the Americans had on the lives of the local people. Get them to discuss their findings.

Using this knowledge, ask them write and perform a short play.



Black American soldiers were often employed in support roles

(© IWM H33450)



A 48 star US flag, in use from 1912 to 1959



*The Colour Party
of the 506th
Parachute
Infantry
Regiments, based
at Littlecote
House and the
surrounding
villages of
Ramsbury,
Aldbourne and
Chilton Foliat*

Black American soldiers were often employed in support roles



Source I: friendly invaders

The first American troops arrived in the Kennet Valley in June 1942, when soldiers from the 2nd Battalion of the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment descended on Chilton Foliat. At about the same time the 64th Troop Carrier Group, with fifty two C-47 transport aircraft, arrived at Ramsbury Airfield. By September 1943 the number of American service men and women in the area had grown considerably.

As an example, Ramsbury's population grew in the first ten months of 1943 by an astonishing 200%... with the abrupt arrival of 900 men from the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, who were billeted in a new camp in the village, and 2,200 air force personnel based at the nearby airfield.

The experience came as a surprise to many, who thought, like Kenneth Pullman, that Americans would be "very tall, immaculately dressed, running about the country shooting indians, or shooting policemen around Chicago".

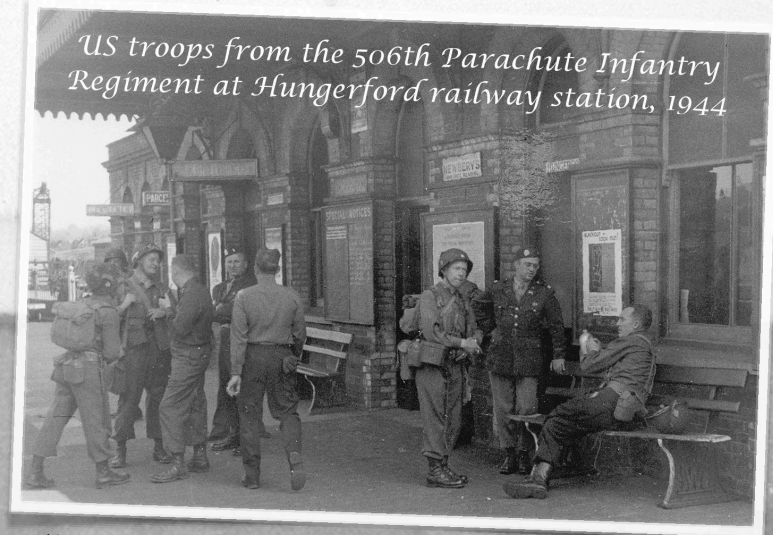
The influx of American troops also brought social tension, with black troops, such as those based in the Ammunition Depot in Savernake Forest, segregated from the other GIs as they were in the US.

For many, this was their first time away from home.

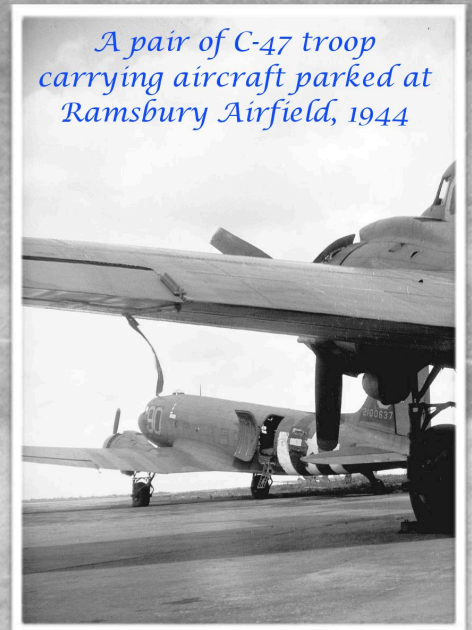
Links to articles about American soldiers in Britain

www.nww2m.com and

www.eyewitnesstohistory.com



(J Reeder)



(D Bolce)



J Martin

Pfc James 'Pee Wee' Martin at Camp Ramsbury

*A pair of C-47
troop carrying
aircraft parked at
Ramsbury Airfield,
1944*





US troops from the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment at Hungerford railway station, 1944

*American troops at Littlecote House,
18 March 1944*



(J Reeder)

With many British soldiers away from home, the Americans proved to be popular house guests amongst British families.

Homesick GIs were also encouraged to spend time with local people, and were given food packs containing sought after rationed items such as fruit juice, bacon and sugar to share with their hosts.

Described by a few of the locals as ‘Johnny come lately’ to the war, some judged Americans to be as “overpaid, over friendly and over here”; in response, the GIs said that the British were “underpaid, under friendly and under General Eisenhower”, the American Supreme Allied Commander.

Useful links

www.dailymail.co.uk and
www.kennetvalleyatwar.co.uk

Surprisingly for a country at war, the number of parties increased, and many local girls became GI Brides; all of which helped to cement the special relationship which still exists between Britain and the US.

*Mary and
Beryl Gore
with US pilot
Joe Thompson's
hat*



(J Thompson)

Source J: “over here!”

*1st Lt Paul Sherman in
Savernake Forest*



(E Wilson)



*US soldiers outside their
accommodation in the Kennet Valley*

(Roger Day)

Background image: US soldiers on a route march



US soldiers on a route march



J Reeder

American troops at Littlecote House, 18 March 1944



Roger Day

US soldiers outside their accommodation in the Kennet Valley



Mary and Beryl Gore with US pilot Joe Thompson's hat

*1st Lt Paul Sherman
in Savernake Forest*



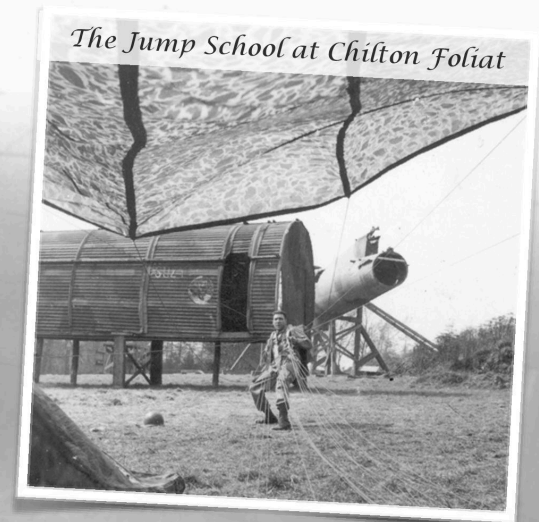
E Wilson

Source K: training for D-Day

The Americans and their British allies soon settled into a long period of intensive training in preparation for the long-awaited invasion of Europe.

The Kennet Valley proved to be an ideal training area, as the countryside resembled, in many ways, that of northern France. Exercises took place day and night, and locals were often surprised to find soldiers running through their gardens and hiding in sheds and outbuildings.

Doreen Ramsden, who worked as a Land Girl, recalls walking through an area of woodland: "I heard some rustling and suddenly soldiers came out of the woods and squatted besides the road. It gave us quite a fright. One morning a little while later we reached the same spot and found the road covered with strips of black foil. I believe it was called 'Window' and dropped by aircraft to interfere with radar".



(J Beyrle II)



Prime Minister Winston Churchill and General Eisenhower visit troops at RAF Welford, March 1944

Background image: soldiers from HQ Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, about to board a C-47 at RAF Ramsbury (J Reeder)

On 14th March 1944 Prime Minister Winston Churchill and General Eisenhower watched a demonstration parachute drop by the 2nd and 3rd battalions of the 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment to the east of RAF Welford, and later inspected the troops.

Soldiers from the area also participated in major exercises across the south of England, including a full-scale rehearsal at the Slapton training area, Devon.

The troops finally moved to their D-Day marshalling areas in late May 1944. Those about to go into battle wondered what lay ahead, and whether they would survive.

Links to articles about D-Day

www.ddaymuseum.co.uk

www.combinedops.com



Soldiers from HQ Company, 506th Parachute Infantry Regiment, about to board a C-47 at RAF Ramsbury

*Jump
School at
Chilton
Foliat*





Prime Minister Winston Churchill and General Eisenhower visit US troops at RAF Welford, March 1944

