

The Kennet Valley at War Trust

Second World War Education Pack

Introductory Activity



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.

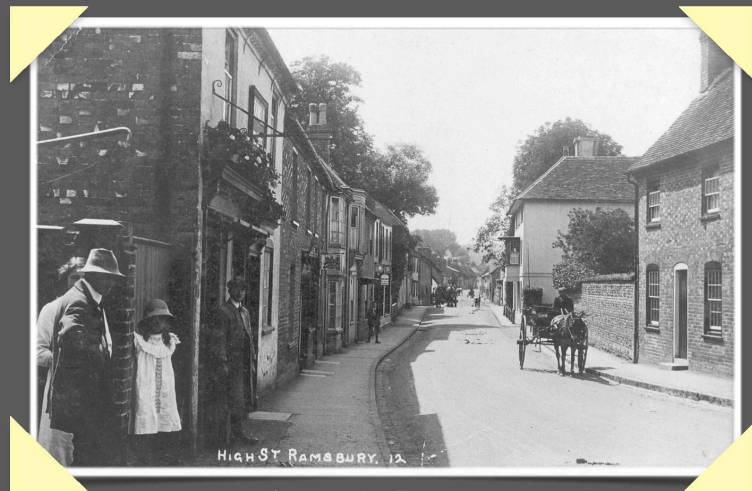


British fighter pilots running for their aircraft,
1940



(© IWM HU 49253)

Introductory activity: the inter-war years



Ramsbury High Street, 1925

Sources A and B describe different aspects of life in the Kennet Valley during the 1920s and 1930s. Ask your pupils to investigate the legacy of the Great War and the impact of the Depression on rural southern England, and discuss their findings. Using the sources as inspiration, get them to write a short story, or a letter to a friend, based on their imagined experience of a member of the Atkins family.

Age range: 9-14

Curriculum links: English and History

Learning objectives: use research and literacy skills to learn about rural life in the Kennet Valley between the world wars; use it as a basis for creative writing



Boarding the train at Swindon Railway Station on a works outing to Weston-super-Mare, 11th July 1924



Marlborough High Street,
around 1930



HIGH ST RAMSBURY, 12

Ramsbury High Street 1925



Boarding the train at Swindon Railway Station on a works outing to Weston-super-Mare, 11th July 1924



Marlborough High Street, around 1930

Source A: the effect of the Great War

Popular memory tends to forget that 88% of those who served in uniform during the Great War returned home, many with terrible wounds, missing limbs or with 'shell-shock'. It was their needs, the needs of the living, that led to the creation of service charities such as the Royal British Legion.

The 12% who did not return represented around one million people - and the loss affected every community in Britain.

The public's desire to remember all who died was felt throughout the country, and countless war memorials and monuments sprang up across Britain, and overseas wherever soldiers had fallen. These memorials were usually engraved with the names of those who did not return, providing a physical reminder of the effect of the Great War on the local community.



(Hungerford Virtual Museum)

The war also altered British society forever, leading to fundamental social, cultural and economic changes, and a revision of the role of women both at home and in the workplace.

Some useful links about the First World War
Remembering the fallen: www.britishlegion.org.uk
The Home Front Legacy Project: new.archaeologyuk.org
Women and the First World War: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk



Background image: a still from the 1916 film
'The Battle for the Somme'



*The dedication of Hungerford
War Memorial, 21 April 1921*

Source B: the Great Depression

Originating in the US stock market crash of 1929, the Great Depression marked Britain's worst economic period of the 20th century.

At its height in 1932, those living in the north of England and Scotland, home to Britain's heavy industries such as coal mining, steel production and textiles, were hardest hit, with unemployment reaching 70% in some areas.

In contrast, industries like electricity generation and car production, and agriculture flourished.



(German Federal Archive)

Whilst poverty and unemployment blighted large areas of the country, the people of the rural Kennet Valley, many of whom were farmers, suffered less than those in Britain's industrial heartlands.

The threat of another war with Germany following the rise of the Nazi party led, from 1936 to a policy of rearmament, and the start of economic recovery. The Depression highlighted the need for a comprehensive welfare state, and a tax funded National Health Service - which would both be introduced after the Second World War.

Links to articles about the Great Depression

www.history.com and
www.bl.uk/learning

Background image: the view towards the Kennet Valley from Gallows Down, Inkpen
(© Andrew Smith)



© Andrew Smith

*The view towards the Kennet Valley
from Gallow's Down, Inkpen*



German Federal Archive

The unemployed outside a London workhouse



© Edington Parish Council

Haymaking in rural Wiltshire

