

REDLINGFIELD AT WAR

THE GREAT WAR 1914-1918



In Redlingfield churchyard there is a memorial to ten soldiers from the village who sacrificed their lives during the First World War. The memorial was unveiled on Sunday November 28th 1920.

The men on the memorial are:

Gunner Albert Cracknell & Private Frederick Cracknell: There were several Cracknells who lived in the village – the 1901 census includes Albert who was then 12 and Fred who was 13 and an agricultural labourer.

Sergeant Thomas Wilson: Was born in Needham Market in 1896. His mother Betsy Wilson died in 1912 and his father was school master at Redlingfield village school. He signed Alfred Coe's work permit on December 7th 1912 when Alfred left school (see below).

Sapper Frederick Bayles: Served with the 19th Division of the Royal Engineers and was killed on Armistice Day – November 11th 1918. He is buried at the St Sever Cemetery Extension in Rouen.

Private Harry Lincoln: Most likely a private in the Norfolk Regiment, killed on October 23, 1918, and recorded on the Vis-En-Artois Memorial.

Private William Howlett: Most likely a soldier in the Suffolk Regiment who was killed on October 13th 1915 and is recorded at the Loos Memorial. His nephew Peter Saunders now lives at Hill Farm.

Private Ernest George Lawes: Served with the Bedfordshire Regiment and was 22 when he died on September 5th 1916. He is remembered on the Thiepval Memorial. Ernest was the son of Harry and Mary Ann Lawes, who lived at Cranley Gate, Redlingfield.

Private Walter Mayhew: Served with the Suffolk Regiment and was killed on April 28th 1917 aged 26. He was the son of Robert Mayhew and his wife Hannah of Horham Road in Redlingfield and is remembered on the Arras Memorial.

Private Reginald Lister: See below.

Private William Hawes: See below.

Willoughby Henry Pipe: A further casualty from Redlingfield. He is not named on the war memorial but he is listed on the 11th Battalion of The Suffolk Regiment (The Cambs Suffolks) website and remembered on the Arras Memorial.

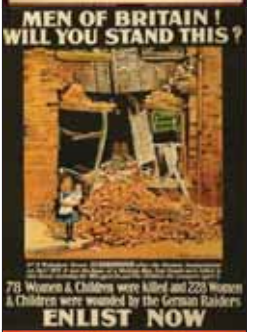
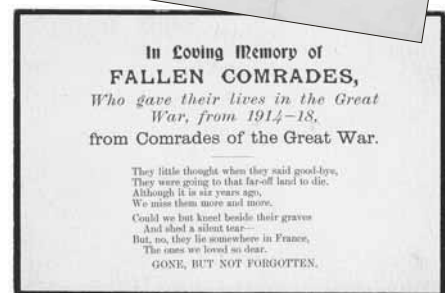
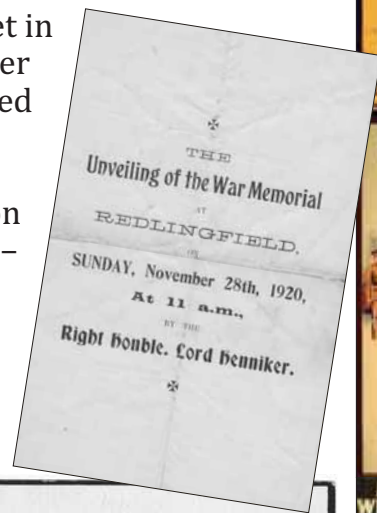
Private Reginald Lister: Aggie Harvey married Reggie Lister, who then served in the 1914-1918 war. Pictured far left are Aggie and son Eric. This photograph was sent as a postcard and on the back was written: *To my dear husband, from his loving wife, a little son Eric.* It was addressed to Private R Lister in France and dated November 7th 1918. Reggie never returned from the war and it is believed never saw Eric. Aggie later married Reggie's brother Arthur (they are pictured left) and had several more children. She lived in Mill Road in Redlingfield until her death. Aggie's daughter Margery Taylor, nee Lister, lives in Eye and her son Gordon Lister lives in Cratfield.

Private William Hawes: He is one of the few men on the village war memorial to still have family in Redlingfield. He was born in 1898 and lied about his age to join up just before his 16th birthday. William served in the 1st Battalion of the Suffolk Regiment and was just 17 when he was killed on May 25th 1915. He is remembered at the Ypres Memorial on the Menin Gate. William was the son of Edward and Mary Hawes of New Cottages in Redlingfield. Pictured is his Memorial Plaque – commonly known as a Widow's Penny, Dead Man's Penny or Death Plaque. They were given to the next of kin of all service personnel who lost their lives as a result of the war. William Hawes, pictured right, was the uncle of Eddie Hawes who lives with his wife Gail and daughter Kelly at Pear Tree Cottages in Redlingfield. Eddie now has William's medals and memorial plaque.

The trio of commemorative medals issued to members of British and Empire forces who took part in the Great War – the 1914 Star or 1914-15 Star, the British War Medal 1914-1920 and the Victory Medal 1914-1918 – were nicknamed Pip, Squeak and Wilfred after popular cartoon characters in the Daily Mirror. All three medals have the recipient's name, service number and regiment or corps stamped on them. On the Stars these details are on the back – the other two medals have them on their edges.

One of the survivors of the First World War was **Private Alfred Joseph Stanley Coe**, the village blacksmith. Born in 1899, Alfred was captured towards the end of the war while serving in the King's Royal Rifle Corps and held prisoner at Döberitz Camp. His prison badge is pictured. Döberitz, near Berlin, held a mixture of Russian, Polish, French and British prisoners. In the Second World War Alfred, who was a Special Constable, served alongside Redlingfield's Home Guard.

One of the survivors of the First World War was **Private Alfred Joseph Stanley Coe**, the village blacksmith. Born in 1899, Alfred was captured towards the end of the war while serving in the King's Royal Rifle Corps and held prisoner at Döberitz Camp. His prison badge is pictured. Döberitz, near Berlin, held a mixture of Russian, Polish, French and British prisoners. In the Second World War Alfred, who was a Special Constable, served alongside Redlingfield's Home Guard.



REDLINGFIELD AT WAR

SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-1945

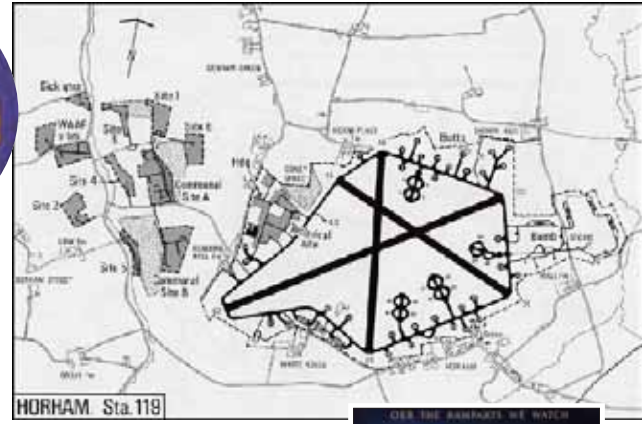
The Americans' arrival at Horham airfield had a huge impact on surrounding villages including Redlingfield. The first combat unit arrived in October 1942 but it was on June 15th 1943 that the 95th Bombardment Group landed with their B-17 Flying Fortresses. They flew 321 missions from Horham until August 1945 when the airfield was returned to the RAF.

It was closed in 1948 but you can still see parts of the base – the guard room is Denham Village Hall; the officer's mess has been restored by the 95th Bomb Group Heritage Association and is now the Red Feather Club; and the base hospital is the 95th Bomb Group Hospital Museum. The base reached into Redlingfield with a sentry post in the village and a light, where the Doorstep Green now stands, to guide aircraft at night. The Red Feather Club and Hospital Museum are open on the last weekend of the month from May till October. Their 2009 season started with a Grand Open Day on Sunday May 17th. There were many visitors from the US showing the close links forged during the Second World War.

The 95th BG's slogan – Justice with Victory – was represented on their official patch and its tail insignia was a capital B in a square. The 95th was part of the Mighty Eighth Air Force and was split into four bomb squadrons each of which had their own patches.

It flew the first daylight B-17 bombing mission to Berlin on March 4, 1944 – 41 aircraft took off and only 36 returned. The last B-17 shot down in Europe was also from the 95th BG (see Eddie's story). The 95th BG was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation on three occasions, the most of any Bomb Group. It suffered substantial losses of men and planes as the US attempted to prove the worth of daylight bombing. With limited fighter support at the beginning of the war the B-17s were at the mercy of the German fighters once across the Channel.

The 95th BG had the following casualties and PoWs: *Wounded in Action, 62; Killed in Action, 554; Killed in Service, 20; Prisoners of War, 805; Interned in Neutral Country, 64.*



A mural at the Red Feather Club

RUBY'S STORY

I lived at Green Farm Cottages in Redlingfield. With me lived my husband and my daughter Ann, aged two-and-a-half in November 1943. My husband Victor worked the horses on Green Farm and was a member of the Home Guard. I was expecting a second child near Christmas and was getting near my time. Our house was in the flight path taken by the bombers at the nearby airfield at Horham. We watched as planes took off laden with a full cargo of fuel and bombs.

On that particular morning – November 19th 1943 – at 8.30am the planes took off as usual. Victor had a feeling that morning that something would happen but he went off to work as usual. As the planes roared overhead all took off until the last one. It was found out later that it banked too sharply. I remember that it was a frosty morning and very, very cold.

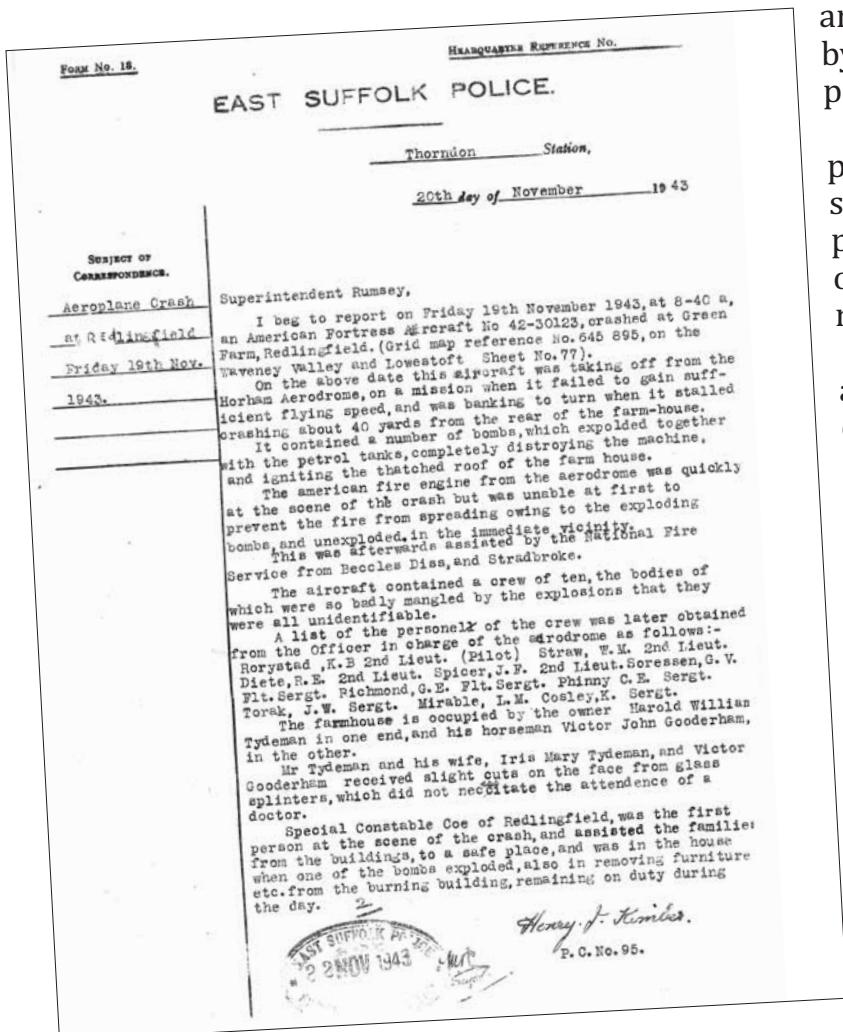
The plane came down not very far from our house, I was thrown across the room by the explosion and the ceiling came down on top of us. As luck would have it the beams in the cottage held. Windows and doors fell in as parts of the burning plane fell.

I picked up Ann and prayed to God to help us. I went to put her in a pram but it was filled with broken glass so I grabbed a blanket and wrapped her up as best as I could. I pulled down a door curtain to help keep us warm and metal fell like rain. A neighbour told us to get behind a muck heap and, as I could not stoop due to me being pregnant, I had to have help.

American airmen were on the scene now and were able to help me. Everywhere was very icy and slippery and I was shielded from the burning fragments flying around. I felt as if I was in the front line. I was taken by ambulance to my parents' home.

Poor Victor witnessed all of this and thought we must surely have perished. He was very glad to find us alive. The whole crew perished in the crash unfortunately – all ten of them. We stayed with my parents until our son was born, which was December 18th 1943. Our home was destroyed but our lives saved.

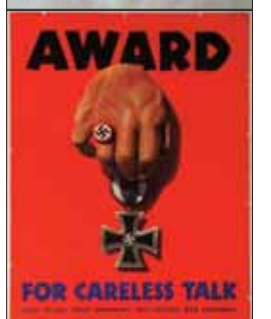
(Ruby Gooderham lives in Ipswich and her daughter, Ann Stebbings, lives in Saxmundham. Victor died in January 2001 at the age of 86.)



The police report also mentions the Tydemans who owned Green farm before the Abotts.

Eddie's view: Youngster Eddie Coe was taking milk up to Green farm when he "saw it [the bomber] fall out of the sky. My father [blacksmith and Special Constable Alfred Coe] was about the first on the scene. He biked up and a bomb blew him off his bicycle." Eddie was told that "there was a bottle of water standing on a saw bench there when the plane crashed and it was still standing untouched after".

B-17G 42-31123: The aircraft that crashed in Redlingfield at Green Farm was B-17G 42-31123. Bits of wreckage are still occasionally unearthed in the fields. The casualties were: 2nd Lieutenant KB Rongstad, pilot; 2nd Lieutenant WM Straw, co-pilot; 2nd Lieutenant RE Diete, navigator; 2nd Lieutenant JE Spicer, bombardier; Technical Sgt GE Richmond, top-turret, gunner/flight engineer; Technical Sgt GU Soreason, radio operator; Staff Sgt CE Phinney, ball turret gunner; Staff Sgt LM Mirabel, left waist gunner; Staff Sgt JW Tarck, right waist gunner; and Staff Sgt K Cosby, tail gunner.

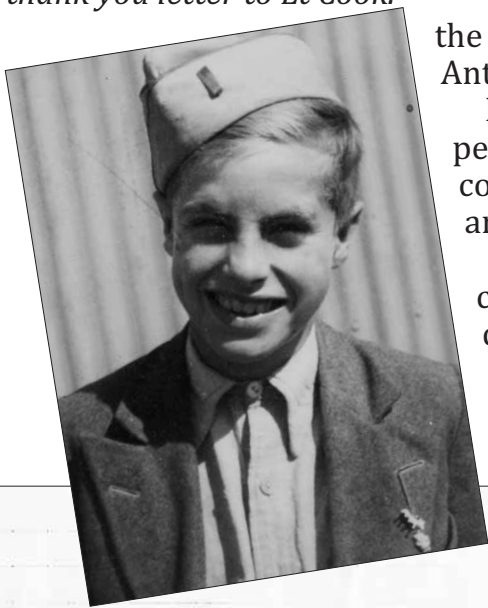


REDLINGFIELD AT WAR

SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-1945



Above, the regular crew of B-17G 44-8640: back row, Al Space, Gano McPherson, Norbert Kuper, William Lankford, John Keller, front row, Anthony Braidic, Russell Cook, James Schwarz and Lionel N Scurman. Below, Eddie Coe in American uniform and a copy of his thank you letter to Lt Cook.



the washing I became friendly with navigator Russell Cook, bombardier Anthony Braidic and other crew members.

I remember Lt Braidic cycled over to Redlingfield to ask Father's permission for me to visit London and him giving consent. To a 12-year-old who had never been on a train, and certainly never been to London, this was wonderful.

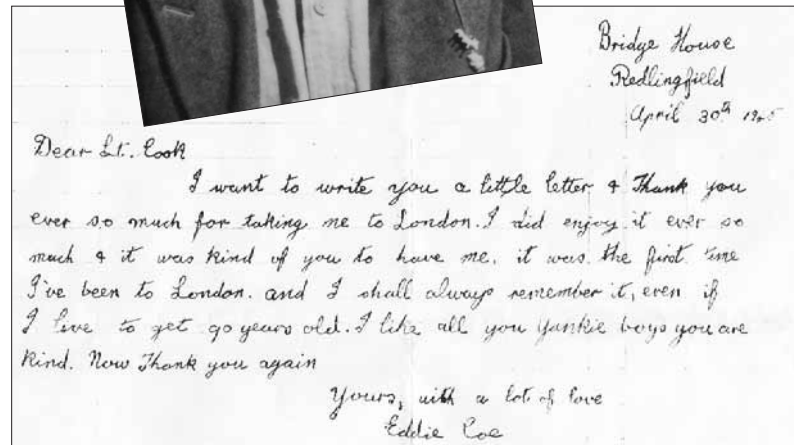
We went on Saturday April 28th 1945. It had been a cold night and there was a sprinkling of snow, which disappeared as we travelled onward.

On arrival in the big city, we ate at Grosvenor House, there was a bit of trouble because I was a lad in civilian clothes, but it passed and I was allowed to stay.

I remember having a partitioned metal tray containing various foods plus an orange.

In the evening I went with Lt Cook to see the *Tonight And Every Night* starring Rita Hayworth. On Sunday April 29th we took a tour by taxi to see the sights and the bomb damage, then a train back to Diss railway station.

Back in Redlingfield my Mother made me sit down and write a thank you letter to thank Lt Cook for taking care of me. He kept this among his possessions.



On Monday May 7th Lt Cook was navigator on B-17G 44-8640's flight to drop food to civilians in German-occupied Holland. Despite these missions being given safe conduct by German authorities it is believed that it was fired upon by an anti-aircraft gun. The plane limped home and almost made it, cartwheeling into the sea just off Benacre Ness. There were only two survivors. B-17G 44-8640 was the last aircraft of the Eighth Airforce to be lost in Europe during World War Two.

My thank you letter was found by Lt Cook's Mother among his possessions, she kept it until her death. It was eventually found and copied and sent back to me years later, the original is still with the family. *(Eddie Coe still lives in Redlingfield)*



B-17G 44-8640: The crew of the last B-17 shot down in Europe were: pilot, 1st Lt Lionel N Scurman; radio operator, Gano H McPherson; armourer/gunner, Staff Sgt Norbert I Kuper; tail gunner, Staff Sgt William R Lankford; ball turret gunner, Staff Sgt John J Keller; toggler, Staff Sgt David Condon; navigator, 1st Lt Russell H Cook Jr; co-pilot, 2nd Lt James R Schwarz. Also on board from the bases' photo section were: Staff Sgt Edward H Bubolz; Technical Sgt Robert W Korber; Staff Sgt Gerald Lane; Sgt Joseph Repiscak; and Pfc George L Waltari. The original bombardier 1st Lt Anthony Braidic was invited to fly that day for "old time's sake" but instead flew with his new crew. Crew chief Staff Sgt Al Space also did not fly that day. It is believed that despite having safe passage for its Manna Chowhound mission to drop supplies for starving Dutch civilians the aircraft flew over an E-boat base defended by SS troops. Their anti-aircraft fire hit an engine. The aircraft came down just off the Suffolk coast. There were just two survivors Staff Sgt David Condon and 2nd Lt James R Schwarz. In its short six-month life B-17G 44-8640 flew 54 combat missions and six food supply missions.



Flying Fortress B-17G 44-8640

EDDIE'S STORY

When the Americans came to Horham they found Redlingfield's small village pub and made it their local. They swarmed across the fields and drank the place dry. The Crown was tiny and there was no room inside so they would sit along the verge. It must have seemed very quaint to them, as we had no electricity in the village. The pub was lit by oil lamps and, with cigarette smoke as well, walls and ceilings were very grubby – but they loved it.

My Brother Stanley made friends with some Yanks and was asked whether he knew of anyone who would do washing. Mother agreed and I became a laundry boy. The copper would be filled and a fire lit underneath and all the whites boiled. Coloureds were washed by hand.

There was a Military Police post in Redlingfield and we became friendly with those on duty. Once, I was given a sandwich which I thought contained cheese – it was in fact butter. Our butter was rationed and to see so much in a sandwich was unheard of.

We were also given sweets and chewing gum. Mother was given soap for washing. In collecting



Rita Hayworth in *Tonight And Every Night*



The village youngsters were encouraged to help food production by killing 'pests'. They received 3d (thrupence or three old pennies – 1.25p) for each rat tail and a half-penny for a sparrow's head. Eddie Coe remembers: "We took them to Mill Farm and were paid by Mr Tydeman."

REDLINGFIELD AT WAR

SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-1945



The **Redlingfield Home Guard** – pictured, left to right: back row, Eric Lister, Will Bartram, Arthur Lister (see the Great War), Hully Rose, Harold Tydeman, Alfred Coe; middle row, Frank Lister, Raymond Lister, Frank Whatling, Maurice Lister, Victor Gooderham, John Abbott; front row, Alan Bartram, Geoffrey Edwards, Arthur Poll, Henry Maybury and Ted Coe. Relatives of many of the Home Guard still live in Redlingfield.



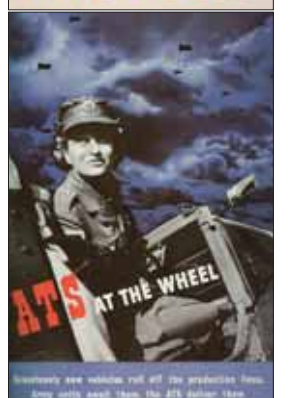
The Local Defence Volunteers, (the LDV, or Look, Duck and Vanish as it was jokingly known), was set up by the British Government in the early part of the Second World War. They were later renamed The Home Guard. The men were all volunteers and were either too old (over 40) or too young (under 18) to serve in the forces or worked in reserved occupations.



The Redlingfield Home Guard made the village school their HQ and used a ladder to reach the roofspace where they sometimes slept. The area around Redlingfield was defended with heavy-duty wires strung high above the long straight on the Eye road by King's Farm. The wires were attached to tubular metal posts set in concrete to stop enemy planes landing.

Searchlights were also positioned around the village as were pillboxes. On the Occold road toward the Benningham Hall junction near the pillbox – was a searchlight manned by army regulars. Many years after the war Percy Kerry – whose family lives in Redlingfield – was surprised to meet someone who had been stationed there while he was away from his Occold home serving in the Far East. There was also a searchlight on the on way to Wilby and a pillbox further on. In the village there was a Military Police post (wooden sentry box) on the triangle in front of the old school – this was eventually moved towards Denham.

The Defence Medal and Special Constables' medal awarded to blacksmith Alfred Coe, who served as a Special Constable alongside Redlingfield Home Guard, are pictured right.



Redlingfield played host to a number of visitors during the Second World War. As well as the American airmen stationed at Horham and British units manning searchlights there were evacuees and German and Italian PoWs. The PoWs from camp number 231 at Redgrave Park worked on War-Ag (County War Agricultural Committees) work parties on the village's farms and Italian PoWs even lived in the Rookery Lane cottages towards the end of the war. Members of the Women's Land Army were also billeted at village farms.



In 1939, the farming community of Britain greeted the idea of a Women's Land Army with scorn. It was the view of those who worked the land that it was no place for a decent woman. More than 100,000 Land Girls and 11 years later, it was the once-sceptical National Farmers' Union that protested the most when the WLA was disbanded.

The WLA set out to replace men in the fields, the milking parlours and the forests for the duration. That it achieved that goal so successfully, is down to the great vision and organisational skills of Lady Trudie Denman, the WLA's Director, and to the hard work, dedication and cheerfulness of thousands of women who met the challenge and kept Britain fed for more than a decade.

On October 21st 1950, it was officially disbanded. At a ceremony at Buckingham Palace 500 Land Girls marched past the Queen, who addressed them, saying: "I have always admired their courage in responding so readily to a call which they knew must bring them . . . hardship and sometimes loneliness. Now the time has come to say goodbye, because the job has been done, but the sadness which many feel should be outweighed by pride in the achievement."

But the Women's Land Army had also played its part in the First World War. Germany successfully mounted naval blockades on Britain's food imports, which made up half of the country's requirements. There was an acute farm labour shortage because workers were needed for military service and

horses were commandeered by the forces. In 1917 the harvest failed and Britain was left with just three weeks' reserve of food. Famine loomed. The Government's Food Production Department set up the Women's Land Army.

Lady Denman (of the then fledgling Women's Institute) was appointed to organise the WLA and by 1918 there were 23,000 Land Girls at work milking, ploughing, herding and even thatching. In 1919 it was disbanded as men returned home and shipping once again delivered food to Britain.



Among the villagers who served during the Second World War were: Peter Muttock who served in Italy; Cecil Lister who served in India; and Jean Hartley who was in the ATS (Auxiliary Territorial Service). Happily no new names needed to be added to the war memorial in the churchyard at the end of the Second World War.

Many thanks to Edith & Eddie Coe, the Hawes family and all the other villagers for sharing their pictures, documents and memories. I know there are more stories and pictures out there and, hopefully, I'll be able to cover them for the village magazine and village website. If you have pictures or memories of Redlingfield and surrounds during the wars or peace time please get in touch. Many thanks to the 95th Bomb Group Heritage Association for pictures and information on the 95th BG and to Stephen Govier for his research into the war memorial. Extracts also from WW2 People's War, an online archive of wartime memories contributed by the public and gathered by the BBC at www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar Mike Ager, May 2009

