

## Reminders of the Second World War

There are still some reminders of the Second World War to be seen in Fakenham. The Mobilisation Depot and the fire station are the most notable.

With First World War thinking, a mobilisation depot was built on the edge of the town in Holt Road. It was used by the Army for many years but not as intended, *that is* the induction of hundreds of volunteers. The depot had a caretaker's cottage and a dangerous perimeter wall of a type which would not be allowed today!

A new Fire Station was built in Norwich Road as the old one in Hall Staithe was considered unsuitable because of the one narrow access road. The new station had provision for an auxiliary tender. Air raid warnings were given by a siren at the Police Station, then in the centre of the town. After the war this siren called out the brigade in the case of a fire or accident. It was tested at 8am every Tuesday morning until the introduction of pagers to the crews. Emergency Water Supplies were positioned in the Market Square and behind the Post Office in Holt Road.

After the threat of invasion had passed and after much deliberation, a blockhouse with a statue on the top was built in the Market Place. This was seen as somewhat of a hindrance to local people and it was the possible cause of two accidents. This blockhouse was taken down in 1944 although some of it remains under the road today. In recent years it saw off a JCB brought in to clear it away for road improvements so it was left where it was! Other less decorated blockhouses/pillboxes were built by the railway bridges on the line to Wells, this was in addition to others built around the area. Road blocks were located where they could be set up in a matter of moments, the ID numbers of two of them are still visible painted on walls in Oak Street and Queens Road.

The Air Ministry build a Works Depot at High Terrace. Comprising offices, stores, workshops, an MT section and a canteen, all an improvement on the previous office over Stead and Simpson's shop in Norwich Street! Initially it was tasked with bomb damage repairs to local aerodromes as far out as Marham, but it soon found itself involved with the building and extending of Sculthorpe and the upgrading of West Raynham. The repair role ended by 1946 and then it became

responsible for any building required for operations during the 'Cold War'. It was also responsible for establishments like the secret radar site on the coast at Trimingham, Neatishead and other small early warning sites. It was also responsible for Little Snoring, Sutton Bridge and the range at Holbeach. By 1956 the Civilian staff had been replaced by RAF personnel with the transfer of the site to RAF West Raynham. The site closed in 1964, some of the perimeter fence can still be found although the area is now a housing estate. When the site was open local people were always interested to see the long 'Queen Mary' artics making their way up the narrow road to the sharp left-hand bend which allowed them through the gates onto the site!

The Home Guard were active in the town they set up a Spigot Mortar to cover the junction of Wells and Creak roads, at that time on a different alignment. The mortar base can still be seen in the corner of the Academy sports field. There was also a possible second mortar in the town.

The Observer Corps installed a post on the Bullock Hills in Hempton. From there they were able to see the contrails of the V2 rockets as they made their way to London, unaware of what they were seeing at the time! No trace of this post remains today.

A short distance away, a camp was built to house prisoners of war. At first it housed Italians and later Germans. The German POWs went home in 1947 marching through the town to the Eastern station which is a mystery since Fakenham's other station was very near the camp. We may never know the answer to this! Following this, local families moved onto the camp awaiting the building of council houses. Only the paths surrounding the camp can be seen today as the site is now a housing estate.