



Ancillary material to the post-event report to Cambridgeshire County Council following the Toft Historical Society's receipt of a WWII grant

Report and ancillary material submitted July 2015

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*And on page 16, a poem about
WWII specially written for our event
by the 11-year-old granddaughter
of two of our Toft seniors*

Programme of events, 2-3 May, distributed to every Toft household (back and front covers)



Erecting the Toft Maypole on the village green, when Maypole-dancing was revived in the village in 1994. Toft musicians, young and old, provide the music each year, along with contributions from Toft Choir. Toft Brownies perform the complex dances.



The Maypole has been a feature of English village life since at least Elizabethan times. It was danced in Toft in the past. Muriel Peach, born in Toft in 1915, who died in 2012, recalled Maypole dancing on Toft Village Green when she was a little girl.

Advance notice: As part of Toft's end of World War II commemoration, the classic 1942 film *Mrs Miniver* will be shown at the People's Hall on VE Day, **Friday 8th May, at 8pm.**

*Special thanks this year go to the **Cambridgeshire County Council** for its generous grant in support of **Toft Across The Generations**.*

And, as always, thanks to the many willing volunteers who help to make Toft Spring Feast a success.



Toft Spring Feast

2nd - 3rd May 2015

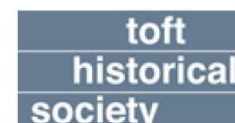
“ACROSS THE GENERATIONS”

Programme of events

Two days of celebration and commemoration of the end of World War II



Cambridgeshire
County Council



Programme of events, 2-3 May (inside pages)

SATURDAY 2ND MAY

This year's Spring Feast commemorates the end of World War II and our debt to the generation that brought peace to Europe. We celebrate the deceased and living generations of the village and of our own families.

TIME	EVENT	PLACE
11.00am-12.00pm	Maypole dancing workshop Come and learn to dance around the Maypole.	People's Hall (outside)
9.30am-12.30pm	Across The Generations Family photographs in celebration of the generations. Simple Sewing, Knit and Natter will have a display of "what can be done with pompoms!" - flowers, Mr McGregor's garden, artwork and silly ideas, plus remembrance. Refreshments available. A small amount of craft work will be on sale; all monies to the Chapel's Christmas charity Action for Children .	Methodist Chapel
2.00pm-5.00pm	Exhibition & Community Tea-Party: World War II and the post-war (In collaboration with Toft Historical Society) Exhibition commemorating the end of World War II. WW2 memorabilia, photographs, readings of poetry and prose, songs of WW2, young historians' interviews with Toft seniors, etc. Refreshments. (honesty box for contributions to teas, snacks and cakes; any surplus to the Toft Community Fund)	People's Hall
8.00pm	Ceilidh and Barn Dance With Mary Humphreys and Anahata "The Four Hand Band". Traditional British ceilidh dancing. You don't need to be an expert – the caller will tell us what to do. Snack food will be on sale. Tickets £7 from Toft Shop and Toft Social Club. An evening for all ages; families welcome.	People's Hall

SUNDAY 3RD MAY

For the last 19 years the **Church in Toft** has celebrated Rogationtide/May day and we plan to do it again this year. **Toft Session** and the **Toft Gallery Band** (senior and junior) will be providing music at the various events.

TIME	EVENT	PLACE
11.30am	Gather outside the Methodist Church for a short outdoor service prior to the Parish Walk	Methodist Chapel, High Street
11.45am	Parish Walk and picnic Walk along the footpaths, come rain or shine, for about 35 minutes to Frog's Hall to eat your picnic lunch. Soup will be provided. Loos available. We are invited indoors if the weather is not good. Our thanks to our hosts John and Margaret Quenby	Assemble at the Methodist Chapel Frog's Hall farmhouse
1.30pm	Leave Frog's Hall to return to the village by a different route.	
2.00pm	Maypole dancing Maypole dancing was practised in Toft 100 years ago and was revived in the mid-1990s. Come and see the Toft Garland and join in the dance.	Village Green
3.00pm (approx.)	Walk to Saint Andrew's Church for the Well-dressing Ceremony	Village well at Saint Andrew's church
3.30pm (approx.)	Service of Thanksgiving followed by: Parish Tea (proceeds to CBM UK; thanks to David and Sally Taylor for the use of the Manor grounds).	Saint Andrew's Toft Manor garden (next to the church)
8.00pm	Toft Social Club Quiz Night : join a team or form your own (max. 6 people per team)	People's Hall

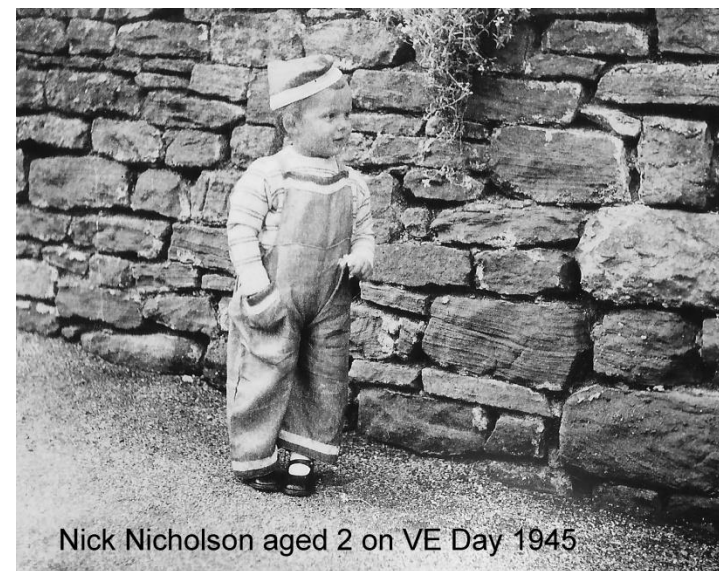
'Across the Generations', Toft Methodist Chapel, a.m. 2 May



Left: Toft residents browse the photographs of Toft families going back through WWII (many depicted in uniform) and generations beyond. Some families provided photographs going back four or five generations.
Right: A pompom tree decorated to commemorate the Toft WWII generation.



The exhibition included family trees like this one for Toft resident and chapel minister, Revd. Robert Dolman, along with objects of curiosity and everyday life from the war years and other decades. Toft resident Nick Nicholson (72) delighted everyone with a photo of himself as a child on VE Day, 1945.



Nick Nicholson aged 2 on VE Day 1945

'Across the Generations', Toft Methodist Chapel, a.m. 2 May (contd.)

Four generations of Toft resident Barbara Preece's family.

Her father, pictured here, was recorded on 2 May for the Historical Society's archive recalling his personal memories of VE day. At the time he was serving in the armed forces in the Far Eastern campaign and has many stories to recount.

Other Toft families also contributed pictures of their generations, spanning three to even five or six generations.



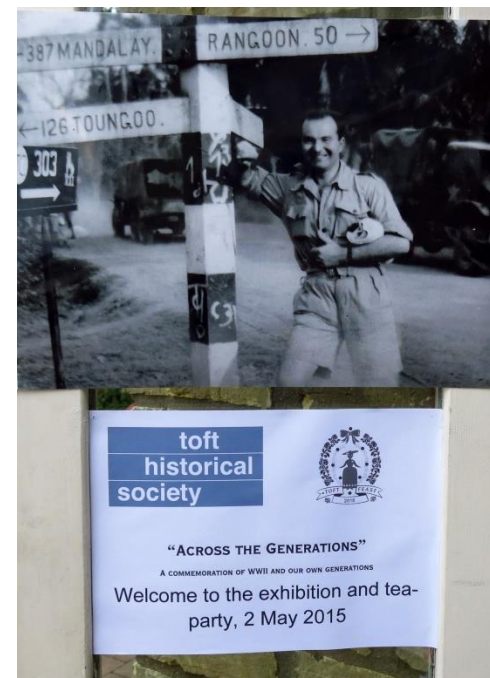
This moving 'pompom garden' commemorates Toft men of the Methodist community who lost their lives serving in WWII. More than 600 pompoms were made by people in Toft for the May weekend events; they formed part of our decorations in the Methodist Chapel, Saint Andrew's Church and the Toft Peoples Hall. Making do with inexpensive and cast-off materials (in this case, discarded balls of wool) to create decorations was a great theme of life during WWII. The pompoms continued on display in Saint Andrew's Church till the annual church fête on 20 June, reminding people of our WWII events.

'Across the Generations', Toft Peoples Hall, p.m. 2 May



Toft residents visiting the WWII Exhibition 'Across the Generations'. Several of the residents pictured here recalled the war, VE Day and the immediate post-war and shared their memories with us. Some were happy to fill in the 'Home Front' postcards, though many just wanted to chat and reminisce with one another over a cup of tea and cakes. About 100 people attended in all, representing all age groups.

The entrance-door to the exhibition (right) displayed an A3-size photograph of local resident Richard Howard taken in Burma shortly after the war's end. Richard, now in his 90s, is still a fully active member of the Toft community (see p.12) and was one of the village seniors who shared his fascinating and often highly amusing memories in an interview with three Toft children (see p.15), who were mesmerised by his stories and photographs of his time serving in the RAF.



'Across the Generations', Toft Peoples Hall, p.m. 2 May (contd.)



Tea and cakes were served as part of the WWII commemorative exhibition. Note the red, white and blue cupcakes (left) and the spam sandwiches.

(right) Toft resident Lilia Tynan (12) cuts the specially made WWII 'Across the Generations' commemorative cake. Cutting it with her is Mrs Betty Peters (82), born in Toft, who remembers the war clearly. She now lives in Great Shelford but returned to her native village for the exhibition and to meet up with old friends.

The cake was baked and decorated by Toft resident Val Sinclair.



'Across the Generations', Toft Peoples Hall, p.m. 2 May (contd.)



An impressive array of WWII pictures and artefacts was contributed by Toft residents to the exhibition, including weaponry (all made safe and unusable!), service kits, radio communications instruments, shells and bomb fragments, ration books, letters from the front, medals, MoW telegrams, MoF leaflets and other propaganda items, army paybooks, aircraft logs, uniforms and badges, gasmasks, food containers, private diaries and numerous photographs of Toft residents, past and present, in their service uniforms, as can be seen behind the objects depicted in these photographs.

'Across the Generations', Toft Peoples Hall, p.m. 2 May (contd.)



Commemoration of the end of WWII,
Toft Historical Society Exhibition
Toft People's Hall, May 2015



Toft residents of all ages attended the exhibition and tea-party. WWII songs were provided by the Toft Session folk band. Outside the hall, a pompom tree and a box of pompoms were placed so that visitors to the exhibition could hang pompoms in memory of any loved ones or just to honour those who died in WWII.



Village walk and picnic, a.m. 3 May



(left) Toft villagers walk one of the footpaths marking the boundary of Toft Parish. (right) Walkers enjoy a halfway rest and a picnic at Frog's Hall farmhouse, home to Toft residents Mr and Mrs Quenby. This year, walkers mused on what had changed and what had not in our landscape since the end of WWII. We still have the benefit of local farmer, Mr Clifford Tebbit, now in his 90s, who was born in Toft and has clear memories of the land and farming practices during and after WWII which he has so generously shared with us during the weekend and in a recorded interview with a Toft youngster for our village historical archive.

Toft Maypole, Village Green, p.m. 3 May



(left) Villagers dance the Maypole on Toft Village Green. Before the dancing commenced, members of Toft choir sang WWII songs and the spectators joined in. A short tribute was paid to those who had served in WWII and bequeathed our generation to us. Music for the dancing was provided by the Toft Session Senior and Junior Combined Folk Band.



Toft Brownies are the principal dancers at the Maypole. They weave in and out to skilfully create colourful plaited patterns with the Maypole ribbons

Gathering at the Village Well, p.m. 3 May



Every year, by tradition, water is drawn from Toft Village Well to remind us how our ancestors lived before a regular water supply arrived in the village. The well was still in use in 1945 at the end of WWII. This year was particularly significant in that Mr Richard Howard, WWII RAF veteran now in his 90s (on the right in the left-hand photograph), and Toft senior Mr Peter Barker (left) repaired the well in readiness for the event. In the right-hand picture, Richard Howard and a Toft youngster together draw a bucket of water to symbolise the cross-generational relationships in the village. A large crowd gathered, Toft Session Senior and Junior Folk Band sang a song specially composed by them for the occasion and clergy of the Church in Toft used the water to bless (soak!!) the people, another Toft tradition.

Service, St Andrew's Church, p.m. 3 May



Our weekend celebrating 'Toft across the Generations', the end of WWII and Toft people's part in it, culminated in a commemorative service in Saint Andrew's church. The church was full, with local people of all the generations present. The church was decorated with 600 pompoms made in Toft, each one a symbol of our community past and present, and based on the WWII motto of 'make do and mend' (i.e. create useful and beautiful things out of what you have lying around – in this case, old balls of wool). A pompom tree stood outside the church where people could add pompoms to remember someone of the WWII generation or any other person dear to them.

Village tea-party, Toft Manor garden, p.m. 3 May



The Toft village tea-party in the grounds of Toft Manor is an annual event. This year, thanks to our WWII grant from Cambridgeshire County Council, we were able to pay for the hire of a marquee and to commission special catering in the form of patriotic cupcakes. Teas and lots of other delicious cakes were made and served by church volunteers. It was a fitting end to our weekend of celebration and commemoration.

Toft children interview Toft seniors of the WWII generation



Interviews between Toft youngsters and WWII Toft seniors were one of the most important features of our event and are an ongoing project, with more planned. The children were fascinated by the photographs and stories the seniors shared with them – hilarious activities of the local Home Guard ('Dad's Army'), the serious hardships and deprivations suffered by the WWII generation and the ups and downs of life in the services. The interviews enabled the different generations to socialise, reduced the isolation seniors sometimes experience and launched some new friendships in the village.

Poem by Abigail Longhurst (11), granddaughter of Toft residents Robert and Jane Longhurst

Remembering World War II

**Abigail never met her nanny's dad.
She only wished she had.
For when he entered death's cloak
His story turned to smoke.
I am death and I met him then.**

**When Belgium was invaded
The victory dark and faded
He retreated to Dunkirk
With no sense of humour or quirk.**

**With blankets on his feet
The night air soft and sweet
He was taken off the beach
By landing boats waiting just out of reach.**

**He trained solid and hard
With a one way victory card.
When D-day came his way
There was no more time to play.**

**Bergen Belsen was a nightmare
An image I should not share,
But when he left that fateful day
The image was bound to stay.**

**He didn't talk much about the war
Or any of the things he saw.
His life changed direction.
The war a deceased infection.
He went home to create the next generation
To be his family's expectation
But this was before we met
instead of entwined but set.**

