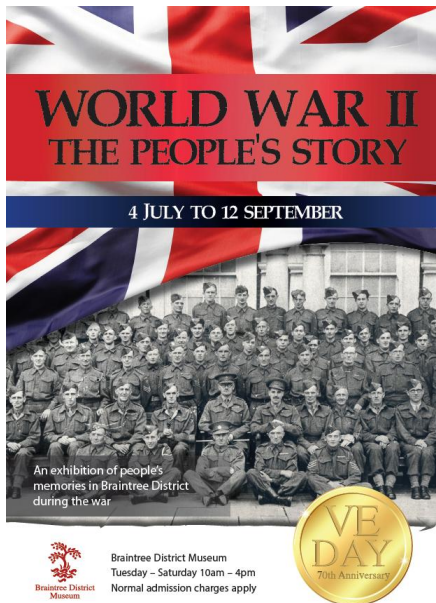


## World War Two: The People's Story



To mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VE Day, Braintree District Museum will be bringing World War Two to life in a new way this summer. The museum will be exploring what the war was like for those living on the Essex Home Front in a thought-provoking exhibition running from 4th July to 12th September 2015, but we will be telling the story of life at home through the voices of local people rather than a museum professional.

The museum has been interviewing people from across Braintree and surrounding villages as part of an exciting local oral history project. Visitors can hear the testimonies of evacuees to the area, Land Army girls, those who contributed to civil defence across the District and even the experiences of a German POW in Essex. As John White, an evacuee from Edmonton, recalls on arriving in Rayne, “when we got to the poultry farm, Mrs Smith introduced us to Mr and Mrs Moss. I was frightened as they were complete strangers. Then we were shown around the farm and we saw animals we had never seen

before like cows and chickens. I was terrified of the goats with their strange staring eyes, thinking they were unicorns because of their horns. I remember being afraid that I was going to be fed to them.”

Come and hear how local life was affected by air raids, the arrival of American GIs at nearby airfields such as Wethersfield and Andrews Field, or learn about the work undertaken in local factories – Courtaulds, Crittalls and Warner & Sons. As Ben Joscelyne remembers, “I was seven and a half at the declaration in 1939, and father had taken steps to produce an outside shelter, but only got as far as doing the steps because it was becoming too big a project so he abandoned that, but I think the concrete steps are still in the ground. However he did put two blast barriers up - one at the front of the house and one at the back - and we sheltered during air raids during the war in the middle of the house between these two blast barriers, but of course if the house came down on top of us that would have been the end of us.”

Art enthusiasts will also be able to enjoy work by the war artists Edward Bawden and Eric Ravilious who lived in Braintree District, including Bawden’s print of Dunkirk and Ravilious’ submarine series with kind permission from the Towner Gallery, Eastbourne.

Visitors of all ages are welcome to join in this evocative and moving exhibition, discovering how the impact of war could be felt not just on the continent or over London but much closer to home too. Could you have been a roof spotter, recording enemy and allied planes above? Make some VE Day bunting to decorate our walls and see how much food a child of the 1940s received as part of rationing restrictions.

The exhibition opens on 4 July until 12 September at Braintree District Museum. The Museum will also be hosting a World War Two event day on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> August. Open Tuesday – Saturday 10am – 4pm. Adults £3; Conc £1.50; Under 16’s Free.

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