



Artefact Loan Pack

Teaching Notes

Bringing the Valley's wartime history alive...

How to use this pack

This pack of original and reproduction Second World War artefacts has been created to support the activities contained within the Kennet Valley at War Trust's education pack, which can be downloaded from:

www.kennetvalleyatwar.co.uk

The notes on the following pages are intended to help you to develop interesting and engaging classroom activities, and to enable your pupils to handle a range of objects which reflect the experiences of those who lived through the Second World War.

The loan pack has been provided by the Kennet Valley at War Trust in partnership with the Heritage Lottery Fund.



Artefacts

The loan pack, which comes in two suitcases of the period, contains a range of original and reproduction artefacts:

1. 1940s suitcases
2. Fabric map of the Kennet Valley
3. Photograph album
4. British Army battledress jacket
5. American 'Ike' military jacket
6. British military web belt
7. American military pistol belt
8. Brodie helmet
9. M1 helmet
10. ARP bell
11. Gas rattle
12. Military medals
13. American Army water bottle
14. British Army map case
15. Anti-aircraft shrapnel
16. Canvas 'mine marker'
17. Army blankets

1940s Suitcases

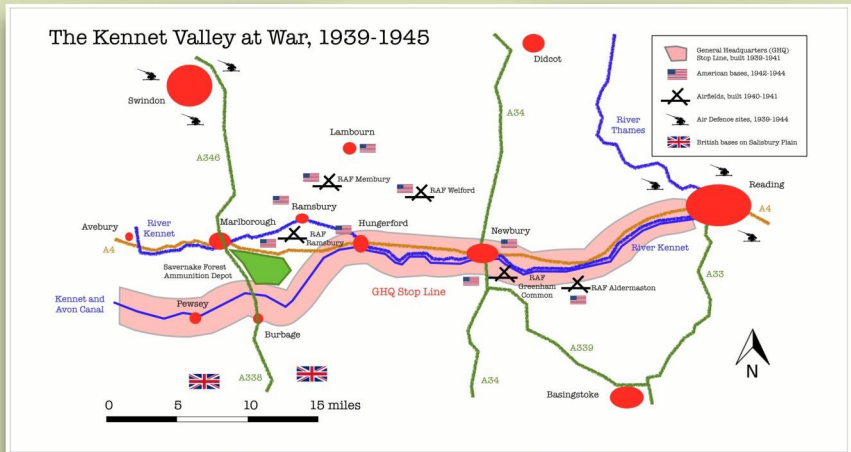


These two original suitcases are typical of the period.

The brown civilian suitcase and the green canvas and leather military suitcase would both have been common sights in the Valley.

Both cases have been used, and show signs of their travels.

Fabric map of the Kennet Valley



The map depicts the Kennet Valley during the Second World War; which changed, in 1940, into a huge military building site.

Focused initially on the construction of anti-tank and pill box defences along the line of the Kennet and Avon Canal (part of the Ironside Stop-Line), the effort switched in 1941 to airfield construction, each covering around 500 acres.

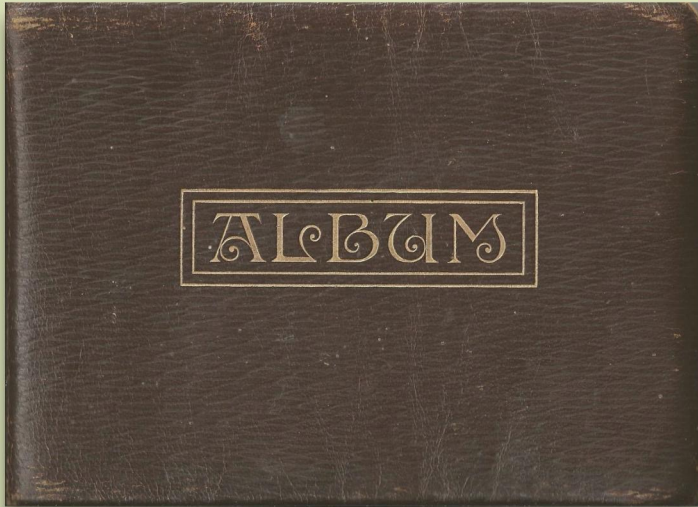
Many of the new military airfields became home, from 1942, to the airmen and airwomen of the American Air Force. In 1943 they were joined by the American 101st Airborne Division, whose paratroopers were billeted in camps and private homes throughout the Valley.

Alongside the 4,500 acre ammunition depot at Savernake Forest, the Americans played a vital role in the liberation of Nazi occupied Europe.

The major towns of Swindon and Reading were guarded against German air attack by British anti-aircraft guns.

Ask your pupils to study the map. Can they spot their home village or town? Do they know where the nearest military site would have been? Where was the nearest airfield? Were any American soldiers billeted near them? Get them to discuss their findings.

Photograph Album



The photograph album contains a selection of images of the Kennet Valley, mostly taken during the Second World War.

Ask you pupils to look at the images in the album. Do they recognise any of the places photographed?

What does this tell them about life in the Kennet Valley during the war?

British Army Battledress Jacket

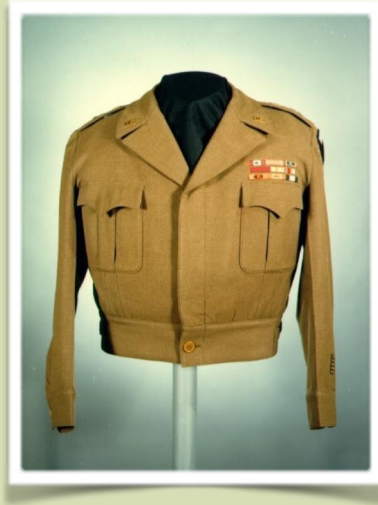


The British Army battledress jacket dates from 1949, and is very similar to that used by British soldiers during the Second World War.

Made from woollen serge material, it was hoped that the jacket would keep the wearer warm even when wet.

Get your pupils to wear the jacket. What do they think?

American 'Ike' Military Jacket



The Eisenhower or “Ike” jacket of the type pictured above was developed by the US Army during the Second World War. Built around the layering principle, the jacket became the basic building-block for an all season combat uniform, and was worn widely.

Eisenhower asked that the jacket be based on the British battledress jacket, but with “a more distinctive style”.

‘Ike’ Jacket

The ‘Ike’ jacket was standard issue across the US Army and Air Force from 1944.

Ask your students to examine the pack’s Ike Jacket. How does it compare with the British battledress jacket?

Can they work out what the badges mean?

1.



2.



3.



4.



5.



6.



1. Army Air Force badge.
2. 8th Air Force.
3. Armament Specialist.
4. Honourable Discharge Badge, which allowed the owner to wear the uniform for 30 days once discharged.
5. Overseas Service Bars, and ‘3-years service’ Hash Marks.
6. Staff Sergeant rank badge.

British Military Web Belt



The pack's British Army web belt is an item of military load carrying equipment, which was standard issue for British troops from 1937.

Made from khaki coloured cotton webbing, the fittings were made from brass. The belt would have been accompanied by cross straps, cartridge pouches for ammunition, a water bottle carrier and a small pack.

American Military Pistol Belt



The US Army issue olive drab cotton pistol belt could be worn alone, or with straps designed to transfer weight to the wearer's shoulders. It was often worn with ammunition pouches, a canteen pouch, gas mask carrier and pistol holster.

Ask your pupils to compare both the British and the American web belts. What do they think?

Brodie Helmet



The steel Brodie helmet first entered service with the British Army in April 1916. Updated in 1936 with the addition of an improved liner and an elasticated webbing chin strap, it was widely used by British and Commonwealth nations throughout the Second World War.

The helmet was also used by the civilian Police, Fire and Air Raid Precautions Services, and would have been a common sight in the Kennet Valley.

Get your pupils to wear the reproduction Brodie helmet. What do they think? Ask them to compare it with the American M1 helmet. Which helmet do they prefer?

M1 Helmet



The M1 helmet was adopted as the standard US combat helmet in 1941. Twenty two million were manufactured during the Second World War, and the helmets would have been a common sight in the Kennet Valley.

Different from the British Brodie helmet, the outer steel shell is fitted with hard liner which contains a suspension system that can be fitted to the user's head.

Get your pupils to wear the reproduction M1 helmet. What do they think? Ask them to compare it with the British Brodie helmet. Which helmet do they prefer?

ARP Bell



Air Raid Precautions (ARP) wardens were issued with an 'all clear' bell during the Second World War. Wooden handled, the brass hand bell has 'ARP' engraved on its rim.

The warden would have used the bell to signal the 'all-clear' after an air raid, which would have been signalled by a warbling siren, alerting people to take cover in the nearest basement or air raid shelter.

Ask your pupils to ring the bell and to imagine what it would have felt like to hear the bell during the war.

Gas Rattle



Air Raid Precautions (ARP) wardens were issued with a wood and metal Gas Rattle to warn of the presence of poison gas during an enemy air raid.

On hearing the rattle, people were instructed to take cover until they heard the 'all clear' bell.

Ask your pupils to swing the rattle and listen to its sound. Get them to imagine what it would have felt like to hear the rattle during the Second World War.

Military Medals



Military medals have been used for centuries to recognise service and personal accomplishments. Together with their rank and qualification badges, such awards are a means of displaying the highlights of a service man's or woman's career.

There are two groups of medals in the pack. Get your pupils to examine them. What does each set tell us about the owner?

Military Medals



The War Medal: 1939 to 1945. Awarded to all full-time personnel wherever they were serving provided they had served for 28 days between 3 September 1939 and 2 September 1945.



The Defence Medal: 1939 to 1945. Awarded for non-operational service in the UK, including members of the Home Guard between 14 May 1940 and 31 December 1944.



1939 to 1945 Star. Awarded for any operational service overseas between 3 September 1939 and 8 May 1945 (or 2 September in the Far East).



France and Germany Star. Awarded for one or more days service in France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Holland or Germany between 1944 and 1945.

American Army Water Bottle



American soldiers were issued with a steel mess kit which included a small pan for cooking food, a three-compartment food tray, a metal cup and a 950ml water bottle. The cup would have also been used to boil water over a fire.

Get your pupils to handle the original water bottle. Ask them to think about the importance of water to a soldier. What would they have used it for? How long could they have gone without water resupply? How important would this have been to the American soldiers who parachuted into France in summer 1944?

British Army Map Case



British Army officers were issued with a canvass map case, fitted with an transparent map protector.

Get your pupils to examine the original map case, which has a map of the Normandy beach landings inside.

Ask them to think about the importance of mapping. Why did soldiers needed accurate maps?

Anti-Aircraft Shrapnel



Britain's anti-aircraft defenders were equipped with heavy 3.7 inch anti-aircraft guns, and the lighter, more mobile, 40mm Bofors anti-aircraft gun. The 3.7 inch gun was able to fire a 13 kg shell to a height of 11,000 m.

Ask the pupils to handle the pieces of original shrapnel, made when 3.7 inch shells fired from British guns exploded close to German aircraft. What affect would these pieces have had? Can they identify the different parts of the shell?

Canvas 'Mine Marker'



The two original 'mine markers' would have been used by British Army engineers to mark enemy mines. Small anti-personnel mines would have been very difficult to detect.

This was dangerous work, and the engineers based in the Kennet Valley would have trained in the local area before going to France.

Ask your pupils to examine the markers. How effective do they think the markers would have been?

Army Blankets



Blankets have been used by the military for some time. Army blankets tend to be more substantial than civilian blankets, and are typically made of wool.

Ask your pupils to think about how a blanket might be used in war time. Many would have covered windows during the 'blackout', others would have been given to prisoners of war or refugees.



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