



A Timeline of Rye in the Second World War

Events and Developments in Rye and Surrounds from 1939 to 1945

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Compiled for the Rye Arts Festival by Peter Mackenzie Smith

2016

1938-1939

- Late 1938 The population are issued with gas masks.
- Construction of the radio direction finding (RDF, later called Radar) station, RAF Rye, where the wind farm now is. Towers 340' high. No one locally is aware of its purpose, though there's much speculation. Station personnel billeted in Rye until the construction of a barracks, the present Philippine village. Another RDF station is built at Fairlight, both part of a series along the East and South coasts called Chain Home.
- 1939 Air Raid Precaution (ARP) wardens appointed and drills started for both air raids and gas attacks (suggestion that Rye Tennis Club should be an ARP office).
- April 27 Conscription introduced for all men between 18 and 41, with exceptions for reserved occupations. It lasted in various forms as National Service until 1960.
- May Ambulance driving courses started by the bus company (the East Kent Road Car Co).
- Recruiting begins for the Auxiliary Fire Service with appeals at football matches.
- Public air raid shelters prepared in vaults under Langtons in the High Street (Adams today), the Monastery Garden in Conduit Hill, the rear of Woolworths, the Hope Anchor Hotel cellar, in trenches in the Gun Gardens.
- 8/9 July First blackout practice in Rye.
- Civil defence practice. Chief Defence Office established at 107 High Street.
- The Borough Council order white road marking paint and sandbags to protect public buildings.
- First white lines painted in the middle of the road.
- Rye Borough Council was an independent Borough, one of the smallest in the country, until local government reorganisation in 1974. In 1938, following national guidelines, the Borough organised subcommittees for specific purposes connected with wartime activities, including an ARP subcommittee and an Emergency subcommittee. The Emergency 'Sub-Controller', Mr Arthur Cornner (also the Borough Surveyor) coordinated responses to wartime incidents, raids, and actions in Rye during the war and reported weekly to the Emergency subcommittee, chaired by the Mayor.
- August 24 The Emergency Powers (Defence) Bill 1939 enacted by Parliament. It contained clauses giving the government wide powers to create Defence Regulations which governed almost every aspect of everyday life in the country for the next five years.

- September Barrage Balloons begin to appear.
Expansion of the Special Constabulary.
Schoolchildren from Lewisham evacuated to Rye until Spring 1940.
- September 3 11:00. War declared.
The Rye branch of the W.V.S. (Women's Voluntary Services) is set up.
- September 9 21:29. An RAF Avro Anson ditched in the sea off Fairlight. The crew of 4 were found sitting on top of the plane and were rescued by Mr R Cooke, volunteer in charge of the life-saving corps in Pett Level, with the help of other volunteers and his own motor boat. The Hastings lifeboat towed the aircraft to the Stade.
- September 10 A Luftwaffe Dornier drops a bomb on the Rye Camber tramway at Camber Sands Station.
- September 29 Identity cards introduced until 22 May 1952.
- October 'Dig for Victory'. The government urges everyone to grow their own vegetables on all available bits of land, public and private. The Rye artist Edward Burra finds himself growing onions because the French onion sellers on bicycles who used to provide them before the war can no longer cross the Channel.
The Women's Land Army begins recruiting.
- October 14 Rye's first casualty of war, Edward Cloute, Master at Arms on HMS Royal Oak, is lost with 833 other members of the crew when the battleship is torpedoed by U-47 at anchor in Scapa Flow.
- November About half the Romney Marsh sheep were compulsorily purchased and evacuated to the West Country and Yorkshire under the Government's 'Plough Now' campaign. Farmers were instructed to turn over half their land to arable, something completely new to them after hundreds of years of sheep farming. The War Agricultural Committee had the power to take over and farm any land belonging to those who did not cooperate.
- November 9 Mr George Marsden elected Mayor for the third year.
- November 21 A Hurricane, piloted by P/O R Herrick, makes a forced landing at Pett.

1940

- January 8 Food rationing introduced for bacon, butter and sugar. Extended gradually to other items. Ended on 4 July 1954.
- Rye Food Office set up in Faraday House, the Mint.
- Fish, not on the ration, became very plentiful because the war kept big trawlers out of Rye waters.
- Scrap metal and railings collections by Boy Scouts and others.
- March 29 The Hastings fishing boat *Happy Return* RX 198 trawled up a mine 3 miles off Rye Harbour which exploded and killed the two crewmen, Louis White and Dick Eason.
- April 22 From the Borough Council minutes: 'the Mayor stated that he was shortly taking up an appointment in the North of England and was likely to be away for the length of the War and the Council expressing their appreciation of his services and their desire that he should remain in office, he expressed the hope that the Council would support the Deputy Mayor in his absence'.
- May A Spitfire, running out of fuel after a patrol over the Channel, lands next to the Camber Road, Broadwater Bend and is eventually refuelled and takes off after the farmer moved a fence. The pilot was wearing pyjamas under his flight jacket and was taken to Bennett's by the police for new trousers and a shirt. When he sent the police a cheque for £2/10/-, they wrote back and said it was on them.
- May 10 German invasion of Belgium, Holland, and France. Churchill Prime Minister, end of the 'phoney' war.
- May 14 Formation of the Local Defence Volunteers, later renamed the Home Guard, formed of men between the ages of 17 and 65. Some 200 volunteers in the Rye unit, many with 1914-18 battle experience. Under the threat of invasion, many regarded this as a suicidal task.
- 'Auxiliary Units', small secret groups of those whose task it would be to carry out intelligence and sabotage behind the German lines after an invasion, are set up. Operational bases for these units in the Rye area were at Icklesham and Iden / Peasmarsh.
- The BBC broadcasts an Admiralty order requesting all owners of self-propelled pleasure craft between 30' and 100' in length to send all particulars to the Admiralty within 14 days. This list is later used for identifying some of the 'little ships' for the Dunkirk evacuation.

- May 21 A special order informs the volunteer crews at the Royal Observer Corps post at the Rye Harbour Martello tower that they should now consider themselves mobilised. 'Any man may be summoned for duty night or day ... redoubled vigilance is necessary at all times. Every person approaching or passing near the post MUST be challenged – night or day.'
- May 21 Lance Sergeant Reginald Morford of Rye killed in action on the retreat to Dunkirk serving with the 7th Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment.
- May 22 The Hastings fishing boat *Gipsy Queen* helped bring to Hastings pier a Belgian tug found in a dangerous position under Fairlight cliffs. Among the 100 refugees on board was Monsieur Delory, financial director of the Belgian Railway company, who was carrying 13 million francs in two suitcases.
- May 22 Private Frank Birchall of Rye killed in action in Belgium serving with the 5th Cinque Ports Battalion of the Royal Sussex Regiment.
- May 26 Alert for the army with reports of parachute landings in the Rye and Winchelsea area, the first of many such alerts over the next six months.
- May 26 Beginning of the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk. Boats from Rye are reported to have taken part, but the Rye fishing fleet refuses to participate. The Hastings fleet were assembled at Ramsgate, but were not used.
Trains pass through Rye with troops evacuated from France.
- May 27 Private Charles Collins of Rye killed in action on the retreat to Dunkirk serving with the 5th Cinque Ports Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment.
- June 4 End of the Dunkirk evacuation.
- June 6 Able Seaman Frederick Apps RN from Rye lost with *HMS Glorious* when the aircraft carrier was sunk by German battle cruisers off Norway.
- June 9 Several Rye boats and crews assembled to help evacuate the 51st Highland Division from Saint-Valery-en-Caux, but the expedition was cancelled because of the speed of the German advance and the division was captured en masse.



June

Anti invasion measures:

- Road blocks (Monkbretton Bridge, on Military Road, at the Hospital, on Winchelsea Road and elsewhere).
- Bridges primed with explosive (a naval depth charge is attached to Monkbretton bridge), including the Strand Bridge at Winchelsea, the railway bridges in Rye and at Brede Sluice. Bridges at Boon's Hill and Brook's Gate are prematurely blown up by an over-eager officer in September.
- Preparations made to blow up the chemical works at Rye Harbour.
- A blockship, the 97' yacht '*Toquade*' is prepared and fitted with explosives to close the entrance to Rye Harbour.
- Dragon's teeth (some still visible at Rye Ambulance Station).
- 12' high scaffolding is built the length of Rye Bay between low and high tide marks, with the exception of the mouth of Rye Harbour. Some of it is mined.
- Signposts and road signs painted out or removed.
- Poles and trenches in fields.
- Hawsers stretched across roads and fields.
- Artillery at Tillingham Avenue, South Undercliff, Udimore Hill and Camber Road.
- Heavy artillery (two 12" howitzers) at Peasmarsh.
- Anti-aircraft guns at the school and Rye Harbour Road,
- Searchlights at East Guldeford.
- Pillboxes and machine gun positions built throughout the area.
- 6" Mark VII naval gun batteries installed at Winchelsea Beach (Dog's Hill), Jury's Gap and Cliff End.
- A battery of 9.2" naval guns was also installed in the Rye Defence Sector.
- Minefields laid, particularly along the coast and the Royal Military Canal. These cause many fatal accidents to soldiers along the coast, as well as to sheep and other animals, during the course of the war.
- Bicycles registered.
- 'Setting the sea alight' installations at Camber for the flame barrage installed in Spring 1941. There were many rumours in 1940 about this weapon, including accounts of badly burned bodies washing up on beaches in Rye Bay.
- 'Stay put' Circulars and Government instructions (*'If the Invader Comes'* 1940; *'Beating the Invader'* 1941).
- Concern at how to counter gas cloud attacks from enemy ships.
- The Army and RAF built up large resources of poison gas with means of delivery by aircraft, artillery and mortars. A War Cabinet decision was needed to actually use gas.

Troops in the Rye area at this time were from 8 Royal Sussex Regiment, 6 and 7 Devonshires, and the first battalion, Royal Irish Fusiliers.

Rye is designated one of 31 evacuation towns in the event of invasion. In the meantime, the Grammar School is evacuated to Bedford for four years, other residents (mothers, children, the elderly) to Cornwall, Somerset and Gloucestershire.

Some families made plans for escape across the Romney Marsh, others considered killing each other if the enemy appeared.

Catchment Board Office established at 16 Udimore Road.

Barbed wire across the Cricket Salts.

Air raid sirens placed at Ferry Road Fire Station, Landgate Tower and the Martello Tower on the Winchelsea Road.

Army Quarters Commandant's office set up at 3, High Street.

June 10 Complaints, particularly from the Rye branch of the British Legion, that the Borough are employing a conscientious objector, Mr A C Yogan.

June 19 The SS *Roseburn* shelled and torpedoed off Dungeness by a German E-boat and beached as a total loss. The crew were all rescued by the Dungeness lifeboat. The wreck was blown up after the war as a danger to shipping.

June 24 The SS *Albuera* beached off Lydd Light following an E-boat attack. Seven of her crew were lost.

July 4 The absent Mayor, George Marsden, writes to the Council from Yorkshire offering to resign. This is unanimously accepted. The Deputy Mayor, Joe Cooper, is appointed Mayor for the remainder of the period of office.

July 5 Army engineers blow gaps in the sea wall at Cliff End to flood the marshes at Pett Level.

Rye Harbour comes under the Admiralty's Dover Command. The restrictions on harbour use caused by the tides and a prohibition on night movements mean that the harbour cannot be used by RN gunboats, but a 45' converted fishing boat, the '*Adela*' was employed as a patrol boat and equipped with machine guns.

July 10 A Dutch cargo ship, the *Bill S*, en route from Greenhithe to Llanelli with a cargo of cement attacked and sunk by the Luftwaffe 7 miles off Dungeness.

A Luftwaffe Dornier 17 brought down in Dungeness Roads (just offshore of the old lighthouse) by a collision with an attacking Spitfire. It had been attacking, with 21 others and fighter support, a large convoy (codenamed 'Bread') at 14:00. Two of the crew of four survived and were picked up. The Spitfire pilot was also lost.

- July 11 Memorandum from Admiral Ramsay at Dover concerning the use of the 6" naval guns installed at Winchelsea Beach. The guns were to be used against enemy transport ships 'before they have been able to land troops, tanks, etc. Battery commanders should not concern themselves with small craft unless arriving in large numbers ... fire should be withheld for bigger game until within certain hitting range ... batteries are supplied with only 100 rounds per gun and no more is available.'
- July 22 Population of Camber, Winchelsea Beach and Pett Level (with the exception of some farmers) given 48 hours to evacuate the area. Camber heavily fortified. Passes are required for anyone wanting to enter this zone. The evacuation area prevents sea bathing.
- August 7 Mrs Albrook is fined £2 by Rye magistrates with 12/6 costs for taking photographs of defences at Pett. There are many such cases during the war of infringements of blackout and other defence regulations, including food ration fraud. The pages of local newspapers carry regular stories of crime and the looting of damaged or evacuated property by the local population and soldiers. Also about accidents and fatalities with firearms and in minefields, with the sources usually being court cases and coroners' reports. Air raids and battles are reported in some detail, but names and places are deleted: most raids take place over 'a South Coast town' and photographs are doctored to make it difficult to identify precise locations. Each edition, though, will record, usually with a photo, servicemen from the area reported killed, missing or taken prisoner by the enemy.
- August 12 13:00. First of two Luftwaffe attacks that day on the radar station (RAF Rye). One soldier was killed and several wounded but the station's operations (long range early warning for the south coast and Channel, looking over the Cap Gris Nez area of northern France) were not disrupted. The raid is the subject of a dramatic painting by Edward Burra, who is based in Rye throughout the War.
- August 18 13:37. (Sunday lunchtime). Seven German bombers detach themselves from a group of 27 returning from a very damaging raid on RAF Kenley in South London and drop twenty-eight 50kg high explosive bombs on Rye. 18 failed to explode, but the others did:
 Three houses destroyed in Godfrey's Row, Wish Street.
 Demolition of Nos. 47, 48, 61, 62 and 63 The Mint.
 Faraday House, The Mint, half destroyed.
 Second House, Mermaid Street, formerly the Evacuee Hospital, destroyed, together with the Summer House of Lamb House (where Henry James wrote many of his works).
 One unexploded bomb fell through the roof of No 11 Cadborough Road and into the cellar of No 10 next door where 8 people were sheltering. None were hurt.

Mr F Bumsted, one of the first LDV volunteers, and his parents were killed in this raid and others wounded.

From the official report: 'The instructions of the Department on taking shelter were not obeyed excepting by a very small proportion of the population. Since the incident there has been a marked improvement in the number of persons taking shelter but there is rather a tendency for this number to decrease in view of the spectacular air battles, which can be seen frequently over the town.'

A Heinkel 111 bomber is shot down by the RAF and crashes at Snargate.

The wounded flight engineer dies later in Rye Hospital, the rest of the crew are taken prisoner.

August 24 An ME 109 brought down at Broomhill Farm, Camber.

August 25 03:20. The Hastings lifeboat rescued Fw. A Schmaderer from the sea off Ecclestone Glen, sole survivor from a Heinkel III shot down returning from attacking RAF Harwell by a Hurricane night fighter (Flight Lieut, J G Saunders). The lifeboat had to cut its engines in the darkness until a cry was heard.

August 29 18:15. A Hurricane, shot down in combat, crashes with its pilot, H R Hamilton, 200 yards East of Camber Castle.

September German invasion plans included large scale landings by the 16th army with infantry and armour at Camber and the full length of Rye Bay; for tanks to be deployed around Winchelsea; a mountain brigade at Cliff End and special forces to attack the Royal Military Canal. The German aim locally was to bypass Rye and advance inland along Udimore Ridge.

The overall German plan covered landings from Hythe to Newhaven: using 1,100 invasion barges, they intended to land 89,000 troops in the first two hours, 219,000 troops on the first day, and 16 divisions within three to four weeks.

British defences aimed at opposing landings on the beaches and then a series of area defences inland, including anti-tank 'stop' lines and fortress towns and villages. Troops on the beaches were to hold their positions until a counter offensive could be mounted.

The British Army's Rye Sector Defence Scheme at the time gives as its 'Intention': 'The Rye sector will be held, to the last round and the last man. There will be no withdrawal from the positions ordered...'

The Defence Scheme describes the British Army's dispositions for an area 12,000 yards along the coast and 9,000 yards inland (Cliff End to Lydd and including Rye and Winchelsea inland). Infantry were composed of approximately 500 men of 1 Royal Irish Fusiliers and 1 Devons. Artillery consisted of a mix of fixed position 9" and 6" guns, and mobile 75mm, 18pdr, and antitank and anti-aircraft guns, a total

of 29 guns. The Home Guard was 268 men strong with 168 rifles and 16 machine guns. There were also Royal Engineer and searchlight detachments.

In the event of invasion, the German forces allocated to the Rye Bay area consisted of up to 2 Divisions (20,000 to 30,000 men).

September 1 11:40. Lieutenant Herbert Strasser's ME 109, on a patrol from Etaples, is shot down by a Hurricane and crashes at Strand Bridge Winchelsea. Ltn Strasser bales out and is captured.

September 4 Four German spies are captured, two at Hythe and two in Lydd after one tried to buy drinks in the Rising Sun pub at 9 am on a Sunday. All had come ashore in rowing boats from a fishing boat out of Le Touquet. One turns King's evidence, the other three are hanged in Pentonville prison in December.

September 5 High Explosive bombs on Winchelsea Beach. No damage.

September 6 09:30. A Spitfire crashes at Peasmarsh Place.

The *Sussex Express and County Herald* publishes a list of air raid shelters in Rye for the benefit of visitors (numbers indicate capacity):

- Langton's Underground Vaults, 8-10 High Street. 125.
- Covered trenches in the Monastery garden, Conduit Street. 60.
- Covered trenches off Market Road at the rear of Woolworths. 180.
- Basement of the Old Hope Anchor Hotel, Watchbell Street. 23.
- Covered trenches in the Gun Garden. 100.
- Concrete surface shelter, The Strand, bottom of Mermaid Street. 50.
- Concrete surface shelter on the Town Salts, Fishmarket Road, bottom of Hilder's Cliff steps. 58.
- 4 surface shelters at Lion Street Schools, Lion Street, accommodating 27, 13, 26 and 19.
- Concrete surface shelters at the Senior and Junior schools.

September 7 At 17:45, six high explosive (HE) bombs dropped along the Fishmarket and the rear of the Rother Ironworks, one unexploded in the Rother just South of Monkbretton Bridge.

142 Field Regiment Command Post destroyed by a bomb at Playden.

Code word CROMWELL issued. Severe invasion threat perceived.

September 10 Ten HE and 100 incendiary bombs dropped at 18:15. Most in open country, but fires at nos. 89 and 117, South Undercliff and damage to a boat in a Rock Channel shipyard. Bombs at Playden Church, no damage.

- September 11 16:00. A German aircraft comes down in the Channel off Winchelsea.
Two occupants are seen on the wings. They were not rescued.
- 16:15. Two Heinkel 111 bombers are shot down at Broomhill, East Guldeford and set on fire by their crews (standard procedure) before they are captured.
Two Hurricanes shot down over Camber/Lydd.
- September 13 13:07. A 600kg bomb is dropped on the Camber Fields footpath but does not explode.
- September 15 F/Lt George Powell-Shedden shoots down a Dornier 17 and is himself shot down by another enemy aircraft. As he bales out his foot is caught in the cockpit's canopy and he dangles helplessly in the air as the Hurricane rapidly loses height. At 1,500 feet, however, his shoe came off. His Hurricane crashes at Church Field, Udimore.
- Squadron Leader George Denholm, CO of 603 Squadron, bales out of his Spitfire after being hit by a Dornier. His plane crashes on Warren Farm, Fairlight and the severed engine bounces over the cliffs to land in the sea.
- September 16 At a Council meeting, the Town Clerk rejects complaints from Councillor Sherwood about the performance of the civil defence. Mr Sherwood had seen Mr Arthur Corner, the sub controller of the emergency committee, motoring in the town earlier that day and wanted to know why he wasn't at the meeting.
- September 17 An ME 109 force-lands a mile East of Camber Farm, the pilot is taken prisoner, the plane slightly damaged.
- September 20 An unexploded bomb on the line after an air raid on Hastings interrupts the train service to Rye.
- September 25 Sgt Pilot Raymond Gent of 501 Sqn. shoots down an ME 109 over Guestling. The pilot, Fw. Willi Koslowski, bales out with serious burns. The wreckage of his plane is not excavated until 1989.
- October A Junkers 88 is shot down by Hurricanes and crashes into Rye Bay, 4 miles off Camber.
- October 1 At 10:20, ten HE bombs dropped at Camber Castle.
- October 4 6 HE bombs dropped on the Rye area at 13:15 with two minor casualties and five on Rye Harbour at 15:32.
- October 5 An ME109 forced down at Peasmarsh. Pilot taken prisoner.
- October 7 An ME109 (pilot Oblt V Molders) shot down by a Hurricane of 605 Squadron, crash lands at Doleham Farm and he is taken prisoner.

- October 4 HE on Rye Golf Club.
- October 9 At 10:10, 18 HE bombs dropped on Rye resulting in damage and demolition to:
Nos. 1 to 6 Bedford Place
Nos. 19, 20 and 31 King's Avenue.
- October 13 Lydd Church receives a direct hit from an ME109 fighter-bomber. The chancel is destroyed, but the soldiers in the observation point on the tower survive.
- October 14 HE at Crutches Farm Winchelsea and Hayes Farm Udimore.
- October 15 At 20:00 a large HE bomb fell 200 yards from Rye Railway Bridge and caused a crater 30' across. Damage to houses in King's Avenue (incident R/6).
At 01:00 five HE bombs fell at Icklesham.
- October 18 HE Pett Level.
- October 20 18 bombs dropped on Lydd Camp causing many casualties amongst Canadian troops.
- October 21 HE and oil bombs around Rye Railway Station.
- October 25 Rye Harbour HE and oil bomb.

10:00. Two Spitfires collide over Brede, the pilots bale out. Their aircraft crashed at Stonelink Farm and Pickdick Farm, Brede.

An ME 109, shot down by Hurricanes of 501 Squadron, crashes at Lidham Hill Farm, Guestling. The badly burned pilot bails out and is captured.
- October 26 Bombs at the King's Head Udimore.
- October 27 Uffz Arno Zimmermann makes a perfect belly landing in his ME 109 next to Lydd water tower after being shot down by Hurricanes of 605 squadron.
- November 8 HE and machine-gunning on Cadborough Cliff.
- November 9 When re-elected as Mayor, Cllr. Joe Cooper is quoted by *The Sussex Herald* as saying
"I am not one who is going to leave the ship when she is in difficulties."

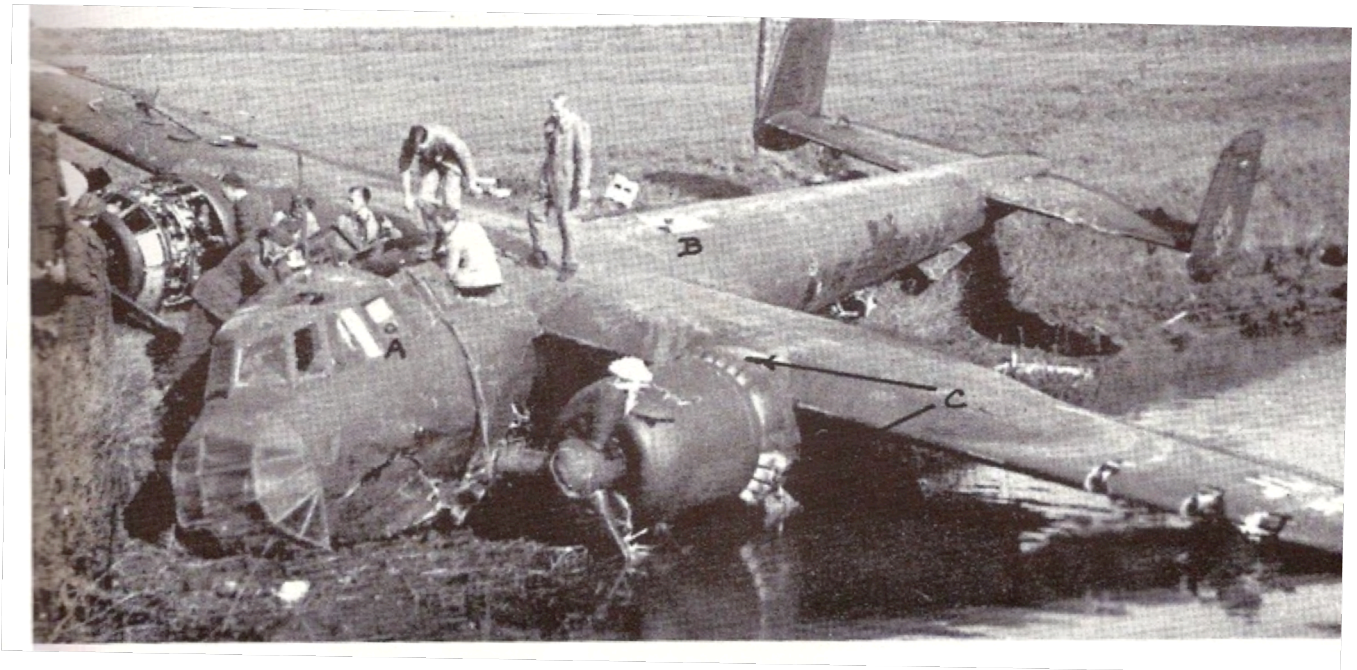
03:45. A Wellington bomber returning from a raid on Dusseldorf lands in the sea 500 yards South of Cliff End. The crew are rescued.
- November 11 Oblt. Josef Volk's ME 109 crashes at Blackwall Bridge over the Rother.
- November 17 HE on New Winchelsea Road, Rye.

- November 28 An ME 109 with engine failure lands at Stocks Cottage, Udimore, near the Church Hall where a rehearsal for a nativity play is taking place. The pilot, Uffz. Heinz Wolf is detained by a special constable living next door until the army arrive. His arrogant and defiant manner arouses the indignant fury of a group of women from the village who watch him being taken away. His plane is used for wartime fundraising in England and South Africa and is now in a Johannesburg museum. (One local resident remembers hearing that Uffz. Wolf's aircraft had suffered a fuel leak: there were rumours, unconfirmed, that German aircraft had been sabotaged by French mechanics at their air bases in France).
- HE at Tillingham Farm.
- Early Dec HE at 50 King's Avenue, Rye.
- An RAF Blenheim bomber, returning damaged from a raid on Germany, crashes at Fairlight and the crew are lost.
- Squadron Leader O'Neill bales out of his Hurricane, wounded in the leg, after shooting down an ME 109 and is rescued from the sea off Winchelsea.
- December 3 HE at Rye Harbour.
- December 16 A Blenheim bomber, returning from a raid on Mannheim, crashes and is burned out near Fairlight.
- December 17 01:00. An RAF Wellington bomber of 99 Squadron, out of fuel returning from the Mannheim raid, crash lands in a moonlit field between the Rother and the railway north of the iron railway bridge, across the river from the Tennis Club. The crew were unharmed. The RAF sends large lorries (known as 'Queen Marys') to recover the aircraft.
- December 18 Stoker Albert Burton RN of Rye lost when HM Submarine *Triton* was sunk either by a mine or by the Italian torpedo boat *Clio* in the Strait of Otranto, Southern Adriatic.

1941

- February 10 9.2" railway guns deployed at Wittersham Road and Rolvenden Stations. The units weighed 86 tons each and the gun had a range of 16.4 miles. Concussion when the guns were fired caused considerable local damage.
- February 26 A Spitfire crashes near Rye Harbour.
- March 3 16:00. Lt. Martin Ottmer is killed when his parachute fails to open properly after his ME 109 is shot down at Brenzett after a raid on Ramsgate. His body is found at Ivychurch.
- March 15 HMS *Britomart*, minesweeper, bombed off Rye, all in wardroom killed, made for Portsmouth.
- March 19 A Hurricane crashes at Fagg Farm, Udimore.
- April 16 Hurricane crash at the Forelands, Broomhill.
- April 24 09:02. Oberfeldwebel Gunther Struck is taken prisoner after his ME 109, on a mission from Ostend to bomb airfields, is shot down at Blackhouse Farm, Camber. He was later repatriated after apparently feigning mental illness and ended the war as a test pilot for Messerschmitt.
- June 'Nodal Points' are established. Designated areas (including Rye, Winchelsea and Lydd) designed as fortresses to survive for seven days without relief. Nodal Points contain troops, Home Guard, civilians (school children, mothers and children and the old and infirm to be evacuated), animals, first aid and medical services, food, shelter, fire control personnel and ARP. They are commanded by 'Triumvirates' (army, police, civil power – army in command once invasion begins).
- Rye debate about who's included in the Nodal Point: Rye Harbour, Playden, Iden, and Cadborough to be left out and told to 'stay put'. 3000 inside the nodal point, 450 in Winchelsea.
- June 1 Introduction of Rationing for Clothing, ended on 15 March 1949.
- July 12 Sherry party given by the Home Guard commander for officers of the Essex Scottish Canadian regiment at the Rye Tennis Club. Many similar social and sports events are arranged between the town and the garrison.
- June 14 A Heinkel 111, en route to the dockyards at Chatham, is shot down by Flt. Lt. J G Topham's Beaufighter at Lower Snailham Farm, Doleham. All four crew are taken prisoner.
- June 22 German invasion of Russia.
- August 10 The 6th Manchesters replace the Canadian regiments in the Rye Sector.

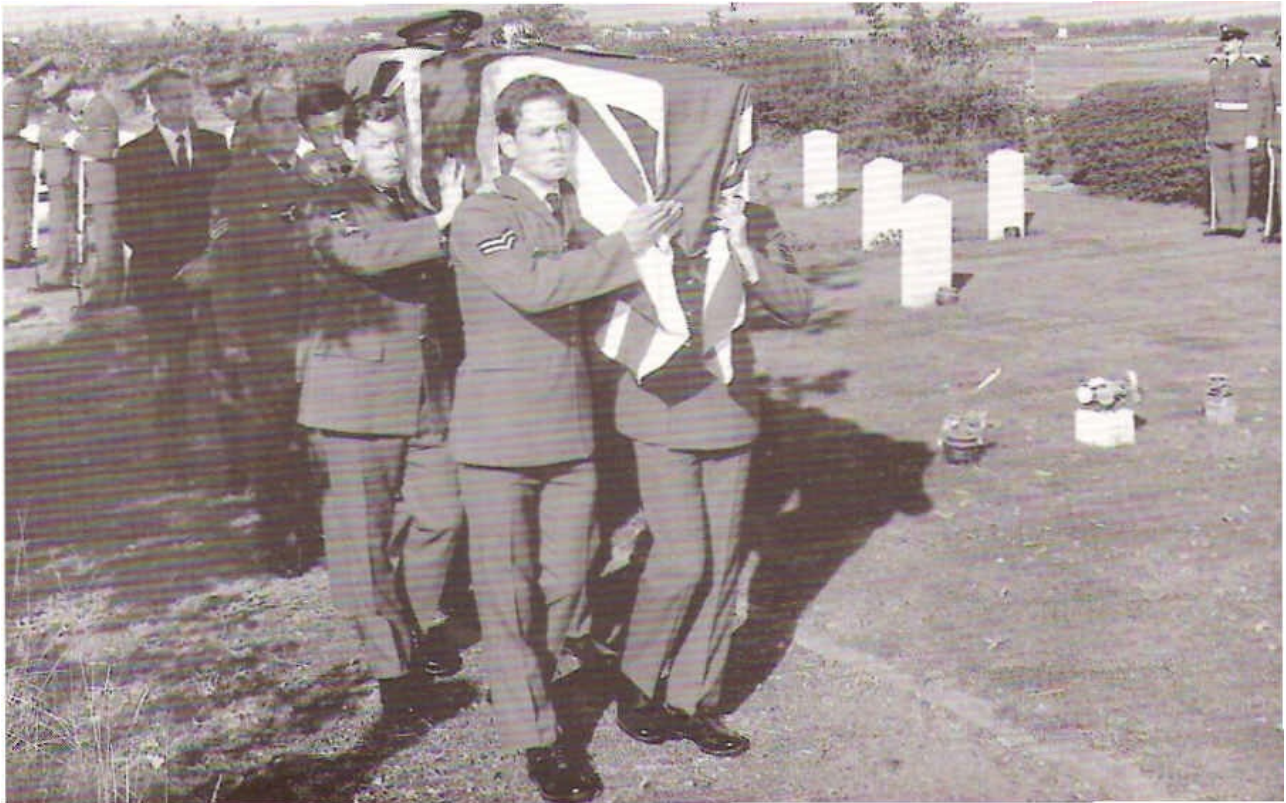
- August 18 A Blenheim bomber, damaged over France, crashes one mile SE of Tollgate Cottage, East Guldeford. Two crew are injured and the gunner killed.
- October Henry James' Estate sends a £25 contribution from America to the Mayor's Air Raid Distress Fund.
- October 12 A British radio beacon lures a Dornier 217E bomber to force land at Jury's Gap. The crew believed they were in France, did not set their aircraft alight and were taken prisoner. The plane, a new version of the Dornier 217, was taken to Farnborough. The pilot, Oberleutnant Dolenga, had brought a bottle of champagne with him to celebrate his birthday when flight was over.



- October 21 Spitfire crash North Rye.
- November 24 Lieutenant Commander Robert Skinner RN of Rye lost when his cruiser HMS *Dunedin* was torpedoed by U-124 in the South Atlantic between Brazil and West Africa.
- December 20 Able Seaman John Smith RN of Rye lost when his destroyer HMS *Kandahar* struck a mine off Tripoli.
- December 26 A Spitfire crashes 400 yards North of Carter's Beach Works, Rye.

1942

- January 1 10:10. Cannon and machine gun attack on Rye Railway Station. An ME 109 also machine-gunned the train from Rye to Hastings at Doleham. The guard was injured.
- January 17 Able Seaman Frederick Kirby RN lost when his destroyer, HMS *Matabele*, was torpedoed by U-454 in the Barents Sea while on Arctic Convoy duty.
- March The defences of Fairlight Radar Station are strengthened following the successful British commando raid on a German radar station at Bruneval on the French coast.
- April 24 Returning from a mission over Calais, P/O Charles Barber's Spitfire crashes from a great height 800 yards west of Winchelsea Station. He is killed. His remains were not found until 1986 when he was buried with full military honours.



- May 18 Fishing boat RX 101 machine-gunned off Rye Harbour. One crew member injured.
- June The Manchester Regiment is replaced by the Durham Light Infantry.
- June 15 Merchant Navy engineer Eric Castle of Rye lost at sea when his ship, the MV *Pelayo*, was torpedoed by U-552 in the Atlantic.
- August 19 Leading Aircraftman Donald Dennis RAFVR of Rye missing in action while serving with 961 Squadron. Brother of George, see October 1, 1943.

September 16 At 06:10 one 500kg bomb dropped on the rear of the Mermaid, bounced and exploded 20' in the air and demolished Mr Brown's butcher's shop at Green Steps and damaged Strand House. Second bomb explodes south of the Harbour road, demolishing an old gun emplacement. Nos. 2 and 4 Undercliff to be demolished. Damage to 302 houses, 40 seriously. (incident R/11).

Fishing boat *Mizpah* strafed in Rye Bay, two killed and one wounded, the skipper Charlie Locke. The boat was beached and Locke and his dead crewmen were rescued by another trawler and taken to the Strand at 15:00 when relatives objected to the authorities' use of a refuse lorry for the collection of the dead and hired their own lorry from Vidler's. Locke was taken to Rye hospital. He was later awarded the BEM.

September 17 Trawler HMS *Waterfly* sunk by the attack of a single Focke-Wulf while minesweeping off Dungeness. There are few survivors and the bodies of some of the crew were washed up on the Dutch coast.

September 22 Four 500kg bombs dropped on Rye at 1340: one on the Regent Cinema (the manager, who was on a temporary appointment to escape the blitz in London, is killed) in Cinque Ports Street and one on the Cinque Ports Hotel, one on the Strand (Strand House), one in Watchbell Lane/Traders Passage by the disused graveyard, and one in the Ypres Tower area and Gun Garden. Casualties in the Strand included those in the repair teams brought in to work on the damage caused by the raid on 16 September. 8 people were killed and 11 seriously injured. A cat was found in the driving seat of a wrecked car a few yards from the cinema bomb nursing its kittens, which had been born just before the bombing.

The aircraft also strafed Scott's Float and shot at schoolchildren walking home nearby, but without causing casualties.

Some 800 houses were damaged in the two raids of 15 and 22 September, some twice. (incident R/12).

October 5 Private Alec Tiltman of Rye killed in action at El Alamein serving with 1st Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment.

October 7 At 14:15, an FW 190 dropped an HE bomb on Tram Road, Rye Harbour, killing Mrs E Clark and her aunt, Mrs Smith, whom she was visiting.

October 21 An RAF Beaufighter is shot down by Rye AA, crashes $\frac{3}{4}$ mile South of Watlands Farm near Winchelsea Station. The pilot is killed and the other crewmember not traced. A similar event at 21:40 on 17/1/43 brought down another Beaufighter near Doleham Halt. The crew baled out and were unhurt.

- November 5 *The London Times* reports that Mr Alfred R Thomson ARA, an official war artist, who is deaf and dumb, has been shot through the shoulder by a Rye sentry for failing to respond to his challenge.
- November 5 The 24th South Wales Borderers replace the Durham Light Infantry, followed by the Welsh Regiment.
- November 9 Brigadier General Edward Wace elected Mayor with Joseph Cooper as Deputy.
- November 27 Ofz. H Bierwith's FW 190 attacked a slow moving train approaching Lydd Station, hauled by a locomotive driven by Charles Gilbert from Ashford. Bierwith opened fire with cannon at the train and then flew over the locomotive just as its boiler exploded. His wingtip touched the engine, the plane crashed, and he was killed. Mr Gilbert and the fireman survived and the locomotive was rebuilt and returned to service.
- December 1 Private Robert Sellman of Rye killed in action in Tunisia serving with the 2nd Battalion, Hampshire Regiment.
- December 6 08:32. Mr William Edwards killed and two others injured by strafing FW 190s on Ypres Tower Steps. Strafing of Rye Harbour, Rye Foreign, Winchelsea (Mill Road), Guestling and Fairlight.
- December 11 Strafing at Rye Foreign kills Mr George Shilling.

1943

January Thousand bomber British raids on Germany begin, passing over Rye.

January 4 A Dornier 217, minelaying in Rye Bay, crashes into Firehills, Fairlight, causing extensive damage. The crew of four are killed.



2. The grisly scene of scattered wreckage and bodies of German airmen after a Dornier 217 had crashed at Fairlight on 4th January 1943.

12:56. A low-flying FW 190, under fire from Winchelsea AA, collides with overhead cables and crashes at Castle Farm near Winchelsea Beach. The pilot, Fw. Herbert Muller, is decapitated.

January 13 FW 190 aircraft attack Winchelsea causing one death and many casualties; Rye ambulance and first aid party called in.

January 15 At 16:09, FW 190 aircraft strafed the railway crossing near Ferry Road and surrounds, two people were injured, 41 premises slightly damaged. (incident R15).

One FW 190 crashes at Winchelsea Beach.

January 17 A Beaufighter, shot down by friendly fire, crashes 100 yards South of Doleham Halt. The crew bail out.

- February 2 08:50. Three FW190 aircraft cross the coast at Pett, strafe buildings there and at Westfield and Sedlescombe before dropping three 500kg bombs on Battle causing extensive damage and two civilian deaths in the High Street. They then strafed houses and farms at Ashburnham, Herstmonceux, Hailsham and Arlington before crossing the coast at Cuckmere Haven. The whole raid lasted five minutes.
- February 10 At 18:05, 500kg and 250kg bombs were dropped on Rye at Havelock Villas and the Custom House, Tillingham Avenue (the footpath near No. 4), on the railway immediately south of the level. 373 houses damaged. (incident R/20).
- February 12 to 17 Rye Harbour closed to shipping to enable secret exercises in the mouth of the Rother with amphibious tanks.
- March 13 Sgt. E Murrow crash lands his Spitfire 200 yards north of Winchelsea station after escorting USAAF bombers on a raid on Amiens. He emerges unhurt with his aircraft's wings and tail ripped off.
- March 17 The Hastings fishing boat EVG RX152, largest in the Hastings fleet, trawls up a mine which explodes. Her crew survive.
- March 31 Seven of the crew of 11 of minesweeper trawler HMS *Caulonia* saved by the Hastings lifeboat off Jury's Gap, three died.
- April 10 The Hastings fishing boat *Boy Billie* RX61 trawled up a mine off Dungeness. Witnesses saw her crew of three inspecting what they had found when it exploded and killed them all.
- May A bombing decoy site is set up at Camber Castle. The 'Starfish' decoy operated by lighting a series of controlled fires during an air raid to replicate an urban area targeted by bombs. In May 1943 a 'QL' decoy was overlaid at the site as part of the Naval Coast decoys for Dover Command to protect a system of coastal loading and landing points known as 'hards'. This 'QL' decoy displayed simulated lighting to reconstruct the 'hards' and their associated buildings. The 'QL' decoy was commissioned as part of *Operation Fortitude South* in preparation for the invasion of Europe. Further bombing decoy sites for Dover Command were located at Worth and Sandwich Flats.
- July 1 Spitfire crash at Winchelsea Beach.
- July 14 Staff Sergeant Terence Montague of Rye killed in action over Sicily serving with the 1st Glider Pilot Regiment.
- July 18 Rifleman Albert Deeprise of Rye killed in action in Sicily serving with the 1st Battalion, London Irish Rifles.

- August 20 Royal Naval combined operations base HMS *Haig* (the Senior School on New Road) commissioned paid off on 10/1/45. The Rye and Camber Tramway (suspended in 1939) brought back into operation to deliver materials for the construction of the Admiralty Jetty next to the Harbourmaster's house at Rye Harbour. The jetty is intended for RN landing craft.
- The Admiralty also had advanced plans for a telecommunications control centre to be built into the rock under Watchbell Street, but they were never implemented.
- September 6 A USAAF Flying Fortress (B17) returning damaged from a raid in Europe, lands on flooded marshland at Pett Level. The crew had bailed out, but the pilot, Lieut. G Peegram, stayed on board and brought the plane down successfully.
- A Flying Fortress crashes at sea ½ mile East of Pett Level Coastguard Lookout. The crew of 10 are not traced.
- October 1 Aircraftman George Dennis (brother of Donald – see 19 August 1942) dies in a Japanese POW camp in Thailand.
- October 5 Lance Sergeant Frederick Whitnall of Rye killed in action in Italy serving with the 6th Battalion, Royal West Kent Regiment.
- October 13 Private William Southerden of Rye killed in action in Italy serving with 5th Battalion, Hampshire Regiment.
- October 14 A damaged Flying Fortress from the USAAF 568 bomb squadron returning from a raid on the ball-bearing factories at Schweinfurt appears over Icklesham, the crew bale out and the pilot sets the plane to fly towards the sea, but it turns again and crashes at Knockbridge Farm with the cockpit ending up just short of the Robin Hood inn.
- October 18 A Flying Fortress crashes at Knockbridge Farm, Icklesham. The crew bail out.
- October 20 Bomb falls on the minefield at the 13th green at Rye Golf Club, damage to the clubhouse and the tramway.
- October 21 A Typhoon of 245 Squadron crashes into the sea off Fairlight. The pilot, F/O Edwin Bater, bailed out but drowned.
- November A military convoy passes through Rye from Udimore Road to New Road for three days and nights continuously. It is now thought to have been part of the deception operation to persuade the Germans that the invasion of Europe was to come across the Pas de Calais rather than to Normandy.

- November 3 The SS *Stora*, carrying a cargo of 2500 tons of tank parts in a convoy from Southend to Cardiff sinks in 30 seconds after being torpedoed by an E-boat in the middle of the night of 2/3 November 10 miles off Hastings. 21 of the 35 English and Danish crewmen were lost. Remains of the ship can be seen in the Hastings Shipwreck Museum.
- December 11 German plane shot down by Rye AA.
- December 20 02:35. An RAF Mosquito of 488 squadron shoots down an ME 410, illuminated by searchlights, over Iden. The pilot, Lt. Heinz Baack, is killed in the crash at Boonshill Farm, Iden. The navigator, Michael Strasser, baled out, suffered a broken leg, and was taken prisoner.

1944

- January 2 An FW 190 crashes in flames on Camber Sands during the night. The pilot is killed.
- January 21 Sergeant Arthur Pope RAFVR lost on a raid over Berlin serving with No 76 Squadron, Bomber Command.
- January 28 Launch in Rock Channel of a Motor Fishing Vessel (MFV, 120 tons, length 65', beam 19') the first warship to be built in Rye since the Napoleonic War, the first of six built by Charles Morris and Sons Ltd for the Royal Navy. Used as fleet auxiliaries and mine trawlers, three of these MFVs saw service with the Pacific fleet. Each MFV was made from 100 Sussex oak trees.
- February 4 General Montgomery addresses troops on the Cricket Salts.
- March 15 A Typhoon crashes in the Brede Valley.
- March 19 A Boston aircraft crashes at Upper Lidham Farm, Guestling, injuring its three crew.
- April 1 1622. A Mustang crashes into Brede River Marsh.
- April 17 A USAAF Flying Fortress turns back, severely damaged by flak, from a mission to the Messerschmitt factories at Augsburg. The pilot, Lt. W H Johnson, orders his crew to bale out over the Marsh and the plane crashes, killing Lt. Johnson, on the Ham Street turn off, which is now the B2070 from Broadlands to Ashford. A plaque and a flag now mark 'Johnson's Corner'.
- April 24 The rescue tug HMS *Rode Zee*, working for the Royal Navy, torpedoed by a German E-Boat off Dungeness and sunk with all her crew.
- May 1 A Mustang crashes in the Brede Marshes. The pilot, Richard C Hughes, is burnt to death.
- May 12 Lance Corporal Herbert Hobbs of Rye killed in action near Cassino serving with the 1/6th Battalion, East Surrey Regiment.
- May 25 10:45. A Typhoon shot up in combat, lands in Merricks Field, Manor Farm, Icklesham.
- May 27 A Spitfire of 402 Squadron, escorting a bombing raid by Mitchells on Cormielles, crashes at Ashes Farm, Icklesham. The pilot bails out.
- June A Junkers 88, shot down over Winchelsea at night, crashes at Brookland, Kings Street Lane, at the level crossing.
- June Rocket projectors against V1s installed along the Rye-Winchelsea railway line.
- June The first petrol pipeline to France under operation PLUTO (Pipe Line Under The Ocean) is completed from Dungeness to Ambleteuse to supply the Allied Forces.

- June 7 At 08:25, a USAAF Marauder (B26) is shot down by friendly fire (other aircraft testing their guns before crossing the Channel), crashes at East Guldeford, Blackhouse Farm, crew safe.
- June 18 A V1 damages four houses and a searchlight post at Wick Farm, Udimore.
- June 21 01:52. A 'FlyB' (V1 Flying Bomb) shot down by the RAF at Hacking's Farm, 300 yards south of Cadborough Cliff. 6 sheep, 4 cattle and 1 horse killed.
- The V1 (also known as a 'diver', buzz-bomb, flying bomb, or 'doodlebug'), was a 25' long cruise missile launched on a direct trajectory from sites in Northern France, aimed at London. Most of the trajectories were over the Rye area. The V1s flew at 350-400mph at about 2,300 feet. About 8,000 were launched, of which 2,300 got through. They were countered by a combination of radar-guided heavy 3.7 inch anti-aircraft and Bofors guns, fighter aircraft and balloons. The guns developed a pattern of exploding shells at the right height about 700 yards ahead of the V1. The protocol was that the guns covered 10,000 yards out to sea and 5,000 yards inland, with the RAF further out to sea and behind the guns inland and with a balloon barrage before London. Considerable care needed to be taken with Allied aircraft, which were instructed to deviate regularly from their courses to avoid being mistaken for a diver, even when they were flying in lanes specifically set aside for them. The fighters had to dive on the V1 from above to make the requisite speed and fire at a range of between 250 to 160 yards, any closer and the aircraft risked being destroyed if the V1 exploded. The most successful aircraft at shooting down V1s were Tempests, Mosquitoes and Spitfires, and the battle also saw the first use of the RAF's first jet fighter, the Gloster Meteor. Balloons had some successes although some V1s were fitted with cable cutters. The V1s were fired at a rate of about 100 to 200 a day, sometimes in salvos and in cloudy weather to confuse the defences. The barrage only stopped when the launching sites were captured by the Allies in France. The RAF and the USAAF lost some 450 aircraft and 3000 men attacking the launch sites.
- June 22 A USAAF Liberator (B24) bomber crash-lands at Denge Beach after being attacked by an FW 190 on a raid over Tourney-sur-Brie in France. The ten crew all survive.
- June 23 20:50. V1 shot down by RAF hits Yew Tree Field, Road End Farm, Udimore. (Cottages damaged, slight casualties).
- June 25 18 Rye properties damaged by machine gun attacks from enemy aircraft (incident R/25).
- June 27 V1 shot down next to Icklesham Vicarage.
- V1 shot down 50 yards south of Float Farm, Udimore, damage to 5 dwellings.
- June 28 A Tempest crashes at East Guldeford.

- June 29 V1 shot down by RAF hits Military Road, Rye, one killed and three injured. 55 houses damaged, one destroyed (incident R/26).
V1 shot down, destroys Mount Cottage, Military road, Playden.
- June 30 V1 shot down over Leasom, no casualties, 64 houses damaged (incident R/27).
- July 1 05:45. An RAF Tempest from Newchurch crashes at Rye Marsh Farm, Winchelsea, while attacking a V1. The pilot, Flying Officer Ted Kosh, aged 21, was killed.
- July 3 00:55. V1 at Cadborough Farm House, Udimore Rd, 152 houses damaged. Two people killed, others injured (incident R28).
A Tempest crashes in Houghton Green lane, Playden. The pilot is killed.
- July 4 10:04. V1 shot down at Dumb Woman's Lane, Udimore, three injured, several houses damaged. One of the gunners based here said that a local farmer's geese could be heard giving a warning seconds before V1s appeared on the battery's radar screens.
- July 5 V1 shot down in Chapel lane, Iden, Nine people injured, one house destroyed others damaged.
- July 7 V1 shot down at Rectory Lane, Iden.
- July 8 21:27. V1 shot down on Cadborough Marsh, no casualties, 73 houses damaged.
- July 10 V1 explodes in the air between Rye and Rye Harbour. Damage to 73 houses, no casualties.
Private Charles Payne of Rye killed in action in Normandy serving with the 7th Battalion, Royal Sussex Regiment.
- July 11 19:32. V1 at Greyfriars Cliff, Winchelsea, damages three premises.
- July 13 14:47. V1 at Chapel Fields, Winchelsea, damages 17 dwellings and 14 requisitioned properties.
- July 13 to 16 Installation of Operation Diver gun emplacements, rockets at Rye Harbour Martello tower, ATS girls on Camber guns. Some 1300 guns and supporting radar equipment moved from South of London to Rye/Camber in two days. Residents of Rye at the time remember, above all, the shattering noise of the constant gunfire, day and night for nearly three months.

- July 16 Lt. Bob Benton's USAAF Thunderbolt (P47), damaged escorting bombers in a raid on Nantes, crashes at Iden Lock. Lt. Benton's foot was jammed in the cockpit, but he managed to pull the ripcord and his parachute pulled him from his plane at the last minute.
- July 20 09:27. V1 at Rye Harbour damages three buildings.
- July 22 to 28 Damage to 34 Rye properties caused by AA fire, no casualties.
- July 24 05:49. V1 at Rye Harbour damages two houses.
- Jul 29 - Aug Damage to 35 properties from AA fire.
- August 3 At 12:30, Captain Jean Maridor, a French pilot of the RAF 91st Squadron with ten V1 kills to his name, flying his Spitfire over the coast at Rye, spotted a V1 and gave chase. As the V1 made its way north he realised that the apparent trajectory of the V1 was Benenden School - a wartime hospital. After several attempts to shoot the V1 down, Captain Maridor's final burst was at 50 yards and he and his aircraft were destroyed in the subsequent explosion. There is a memorial to him in Benenden Church.
- August 4 V1 shot down NW of Udimore Road, damage to 35 properties. (incident R/33).
V1 at Great Fagg Farm, Udimore, damages the farmhouse.
- August 5-11 Damage to 26 Rye properties from AA fire.
- August 11-18 Damage to six Rye properties from AA fire.
- August 14 04:23. V1 shot down on the Saltings behind the Rother Ironworks, two slight casualties, damage to 397 properties.
- August 17 06:13. V1 at Rye Harbour damages five houses.
- August 24 V1 at Rye Foreign kills 10 sheep.
- August 28 V1 hits Rye Golf Club on the 15th fairway, ruins the clubhouse.
VI destroys Camber Church and surrounding buildings.
- August 29 16:54. V1 at the Martello Tower at Rye Harbour.
- August 30 Last V1 heard over Rye.
- September 9 A Ventura crashes at East Guldeford.
- September 11 Warrant Officer John Hall of Rye killed in action over Germany serving with 514 Squadron, RAFVR.

- September 13 Corporal Robert Penfold of Rye killed in action in Italy serving with 2/5th Battalion, Royal West Surrey Regiment.
- September 14 Lieutenant Alan Smith of Rye killed in action near Rimini serving with the 12th Battalion, Hampshire Regiment.
- September 17 Gunner Henry Booth of Rye killed in action at Arnhem serving with the 1st Air Landing Anti-tank regiment of the Royal Artillery.
- September 21 A Boston aircraft crashes at Money Penny House, East Guldeford. The French crew escape before its bombs explode.
- October Italian and German prisoners of war working in agriculture on the Romney Marsh.
- October 19 Leading Aircraftman Richard Giles of Rye lost on operations flying from Masirah Island with 244 Squadron, Coastal Command.
- October 24 A Piper Cub crashes near Rye.
- November 17 09:50. The Hastings lifeboat called out to assist a landing craft reported in difficulty in very heavy seas off Winchelsea. The landing craft was forced ashore at Galloways near Lydd and the 29 crew made it to the beach while the lifeboat was capsized by a huge swell. The crew managed to right it and returned to Hastings severely shaken, though the engine started first time.

1945

- February 6 An Avro Anson crashes at Lower Marsham, Pett.
- March 28 A USAAF Flying Fortress, returning damaged from a daylight raid on Germany, crash lands on the foreshore at Rye Harbour.
- April 20 Blackout restrictions lifted.
- May 8 Germany surrenders.

[One of the Borough of Rye's notable achievements during the war was through National Savings: a total of £796,886 was raised through National Savings and associated efforts].

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