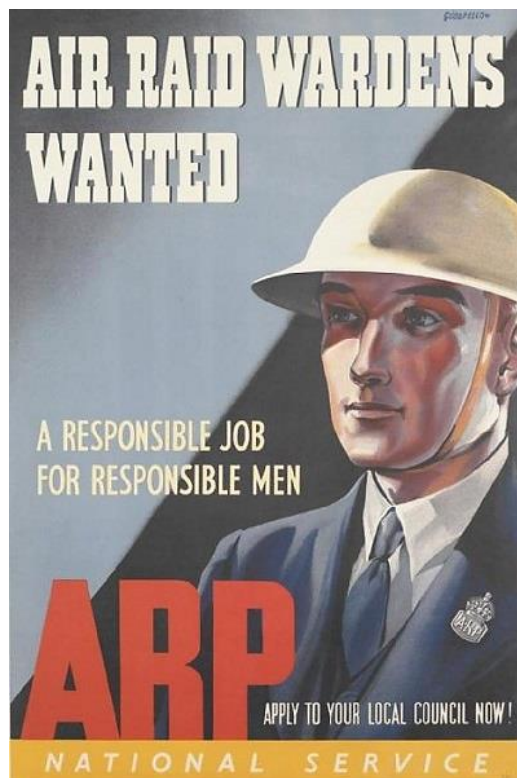


Documentary record of the Brent Museum exhibition at Kingsbury Library, March to May 2018:

A.R.P. - Wembley's Air Raid Wardens in the Second World War.

An exhibition curated by Brent Museum volunteer Alison Harman and Philip Grant of Wembley History Society.



Wembley's First Air Raid Wardens: When the prospect of war with Germany loomed again in the 1930s, the government instructed all local Councils to make plans for Air Raid Precautions (**A.R.P.**).

The Borough of Wembley appointed an A.R.P. Officer in February 1938, and Mr & Mrs Cragg of 16 Vivian Gardens (volunteer numbers 3 and 4) were among the first Air Raid Wardens recruited the following month. Mr Cragg would later be the warden in charge of A.R.P. Post 66, near their home in Tokyngton Ward.

By May 1939, Wembley had 1,658 men and 399 women in training as Air Raid Wardens, as well as hundreds more training for related first aid, rescue and auxiliary fire services.

At first, the wardens still had to wear their own clothes when training and on duty, but were given a metal helmet and an A.R.P. lapel badge to wear.



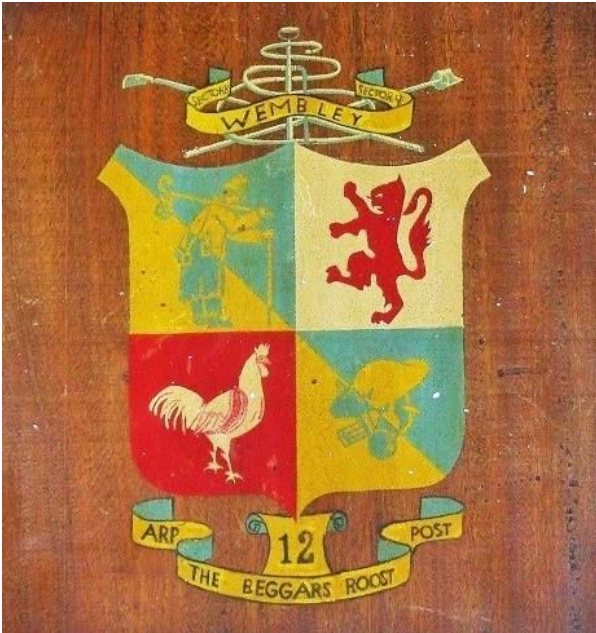
A.R.P. lapel badge (Brent Museum object: 1978.57) - These badges were issued to A.R.P. volunteers from 1938 onwards, after they had finished their training, as originally there were no uniforms for air raid wardens.



Air Raid Warden's whistle (kindly loaned by a Brent resident) - The whistle would have been attached by a hook to a white lanyard worn round the warden's left shoulder. The warden would blow the whistle to summon help.

Air Raid Warden's helmet (kindly loaned by a Wembley History Society member) – Each air raid warden was issued with a protective steel helmet, similar to those used by soldiers in the First World War. This one has the date "1939" stamped inside it. A black helmet, with a white "W" painted on it, was worn by ordinary wardens. More senior A.R.P. officers would have a white helmet with black letters, such as "PW" for a Post Warden.





Coat of Arms from Warden Post 12: This recent donation to Brent Museum was almost certainly made by the wardens of Post 12 themselves. They have used some humour of their own in the design, and in the name given to their A.R.P. home, "The Beggars Roost". The coat of arms has been hand-painted, possibly onto a screen printed background, on a large piece of hardwood, with a metal bar added to fix the plaque onto the wall of their Warden Post building.

This colourful coat of arms was bought in a charity shop in Nashville, U.S.A., by Cheryl Hutton. She got in touch with Wembley History Society in early 2017, to find out about the history of A.R.P. in Wembley during World War Two. After learning more, she decided that

her object should be returned to its original home, and donated it to Brent Museum so that local people could enjoy the painted wooden plaque and discover its part in Wembley's wartime story.

We have not yet identified where Warden Post 12 was located, but have narrowed it down to the Roe Green area of Kingsbury. A Wembley A.R.P. Magazine of September 1940 includes an interesting item about Mr J. Osborn, who was the warden in charge of Post 12, and we are still trying to find out his wartime address, which would have been close to the Warden Post.

The various units of Wembley's A.R.P. Service were encouraged to design their own coats of arms, to help build their team spirit. Post 12's design includes several A.R.P. tools for dealing with incendiary bombs as a crest behind the Wembley name. In one quarter of the shield it shows a warden's helmet, and a bell and rattle (used for warning of gas attacks).

The distinctive lion, in another quarter, was the badge of the Wembley Lions motorcycle speedway team, based at Wembley Stadium, and hugely popular during the 1930s. They had over 50,000 local supporters (probably including some of the Post 12 A.R.P. wardens). We do not yet know the reason for the chicken, the tramp or the name 'The Beggars Roost'. Can you help on these?



Wembley Lions speedway badge (Brent Museum object: 1998.135.1) - The Wembley Lions speedway team was very popular in the 1930s, and had a huge supporters' club, which issued badges like this to club members. Red and white were the team's colours.

As well as paying a reduced ticket price for the Lions' summer Thursday evening home speedway races at Wembley Stadium, members also got a discount for winter matches played by the Wembley Lions ice hockey team at the Empire Pool (now Wembley Arena).

Air Raid Wardens at work: In the summer of 1939, Wembley Council organised the borough into 80 areas, with a main Air Raid Warden's Post in each. 50 of the Warden Posts were in specially built brick and concrete huts, with the remainder in existing buildings. Most of the posts had telephones, linking them to the A.R.P. Control Room at the new Town Hall in Forty Lane, manned 24 hours a day by volunteers from the Council's staff after war broke out in September 1939.

Thirty-five of the Warden Posts were designated as "key posts", next to Wembley's main public air raid shelters. These posts were manned by Full Time Wardens, paid £3 a week, but most of the wardens were unpaid volunteers. The photograph here shows two wardens outside the purpose-built A.R.P. Post 32, which was probably in the Preston Road area. They had named their post the "Bell and Rattle", after the equipment used to warn of gas attacks, and hung a painted coat of arms sign outside.



For most of the first year of the war there were no air raids, and the wardens carried on training and practice drills, ready for "the real thing". By 1940 they were issued with uniforms of dark blue overalls and coats, as seen in this photo from 1941 of the local Air Raid Wardens marching in Salmon Street, Kingsbury.

Wooden gas rattle (Brent Museum object: 1985.68.1) - By holding the handle, and spinning the rattle around it to make a loud noise, air raid wardens used this device to warn of a possible poison gas attack. It was the signal that everyone should put on their gas mask. Gas rattles had first been used by soldiers in the trenches during World War One. The "all clear" signal was given by ringing a large hand bell.



Gas mask (Unfortunately, we can only include a photograph of this Brent Museum object, 1977.123, as WW2 gas masks contained asbestos) - Because poison gases, such as chlorine and mustard gas, had been used during fighting in the First World War, it was feared that Hitler's Germany would use poison gas bombs as a weapon against civilians.

From 1938 to September 1939, 38 million people in Britain were issued with a gas mask, or respirator, to help protect them from the effects of breathing such gases. The rubber mask was in a cardboard box, which was meant to be carried with you at all times. Luckily, no gas bombs were actually dropped on Britain during the Second World War.

When bombs fell on Wembley: German air raids reached Wembley on 27 August 1940, when a number of incendiary bombs fell in the Barn Hill and Salmon Street areas. The next night saw the first high explosive bombs dropped, with the fire (now ambulance) station at The Mall in Kingsbury among the buildings hit.

If you look across Kingsbury Road, you will see where a parachute mine hit the back of the shops on 25 September 1940, killing two mothers and their two young children in the flats above (rebuilt after the war). Air Raid Wardens from Post 37 in Wyndale Avenue and Post 39 at Kingsbury Circle were among those helping to deal with this incident, along with the medical team from No. 1 Ambulance Depot at Kingsbury Manor (now the Little Xplorers' Day Nursery) and the Rescue Team based at Eton Grove Open Space.



Four nights later another parachute mine exploded in District Road, Sudbury, causing even more damage and casualties, and prompting a morale-boosting visit from the King and Queen.



Wembley suffered continued air raids on a regular basis until May 1941, with the worst night being 15-16 November 1940, when the A.R.P. wardens reported 62 separate incidents. The damage caused in Wembley by several thousand incendiary bombs that night led to organised fire watching teams being set up. 25,000 local civilians, nearly a quarter of the borough's population, had to take a share of fire watching duties for the remainder of the war. The A.R.P. wardens had to organise the Fire Guard teams in their residential streets, while every business had to guard its own premises.



Fire Guard armband (Brent Museum object: 1995.19.8) - In 1941 it was made compulsory for adult civilians to help protect their streets from incendiary bomb attacks. Called Fire Guards, their equipment to tackle any small fire was usually a bucket of water and a stirrup pump. They were expected to spend 12 hours a week on their duties, usually three 4-hour shifts in the evening or overnight.

Wembley War Damage Photographs - Set out below is a small sample of the photographs taken for Wembley Borough Council, mainly by a Harrow photographer, Leslie Bunting, to record damage to property caused by German air raids during the Second World War. Because of wartime security restrictions imposed by the Ministry of Information, the location of the damage was not noted on the photographs, and they were not published.

Top photograph - A street somewhere in Wembley (if you recognise where it is, please tell us!) where clearing-up operations are in progress. At least two houses have been totally destroyed, and neighbouring homes badly damaged. Furniture, including an upright piano, has been salvaged from some of the houses, and two workers (from an A.R.P. Rescue Team?) are resting after their efforts.



Middle photograph - Another Wembley street (again, can you help identify it, please?). A man looks at the rubble from houses demolished in an air raid. We can hope that the people from those homes were taking cover in one of the brick communal air raid shelters seen, which the Council had built in their road, when the bomb exploded.

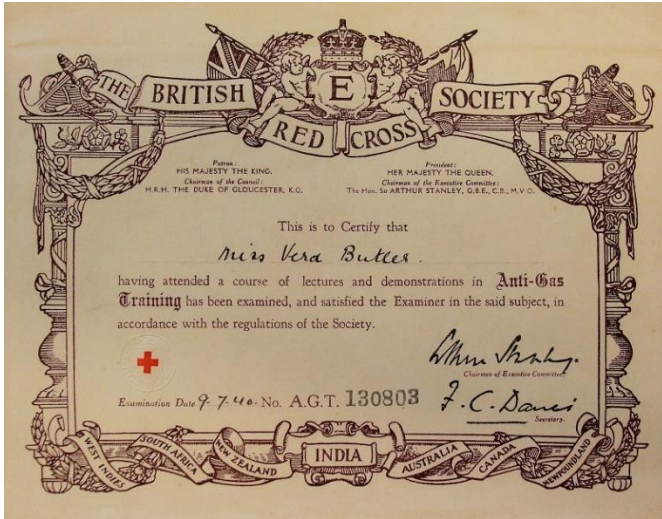
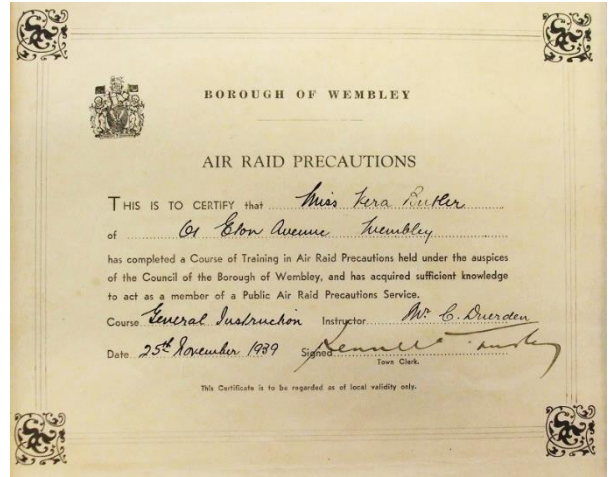
Bottom photograph - This photograph has been identified as the back of the shops and flats at 441 to 449 Kingsbury Road, taken from a house in Crundale Avenue, the day after a parachute mine hit the building (see photos on the page above). A.R.P. wardens and Rescue Team members are still hard at work, dealing with the devastation caused.



Rosie Coates's Firewatcher's First Aid Box (kindly loaned by a Wembley History Society member) – “First Aid” is giving treatment quickly to someone who has suffered an injury. When there might be many residents needing help after an air raid, the more people who had the basic equipment and skill to provide first aid, the better it would be.

This box, containing wound dressings, bandages, soothing creams, and eye treatments and protection, was used by a lady on fire watching duties, who also had some first aid training.

Training certificates (Brent Museum acquisition: 2006.20) - Everyone who volunteered for Wembley's A.R.P. Services had to be trained, and pass an exam, before they could begin their duties. Organisations like the Red Cross provided specialist training in skills such as First Aid. Certificates were given to people who passed their tests. These two were awarded to Vera Butler, who can be seen in a photo below.



Wembley's First Aid and other A.R.P. Services:

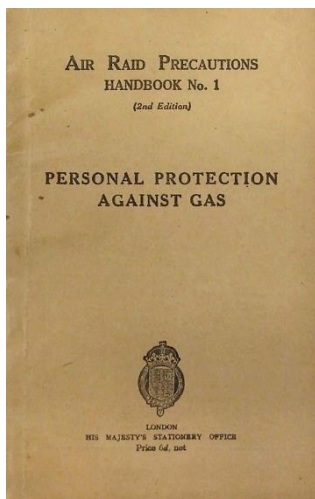
As well as the Wardens based at 80 posts across the borough, Wembley's A.R.P. Service had a number of specialist units. These included 6 A.R.P. First Aid Posts, 5 Casualty Ambulance Depots, 3 Rescue and Demolition Teams, and 4 Auxiliary Fire Stations to assist the two permanent Fire Brigade stations.

Some volunteers in these units had originally joined as Air Raid Wardens, such as Vera Butler of Eton Avenue, Sudbury, who did her basic A.R.P. training in 1939 before learning more nursing skills. She then transferred to First Aid Post No. 5, based at the Imperial College Sports Ground in East Lane, North Wembley. She is the tall nurse, standing back left in the Mobile First Aid Unit with her Post No. 5 colleagues.

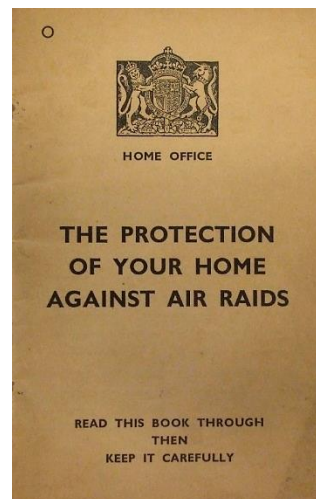


The Rescue Team volunteers were mainly men too old for military service (including some First World War veterans), or in reserved occupations, as skilled workers exempt from conscription. The No. 1 Rescue team, shown here, were based at the Eton Grove Open Space pavilion in Kingsbury. The daughter of taxi driver Reg Brown (third from right in the middle row - wearing braces) provided a copy of this photo to Brent Archives.

Air Raid Precautions – paper records: 80 years after Wembley’s A.R.P. Service was set up, some of the vast numbers of documents created still survive, and a sample is shown here.

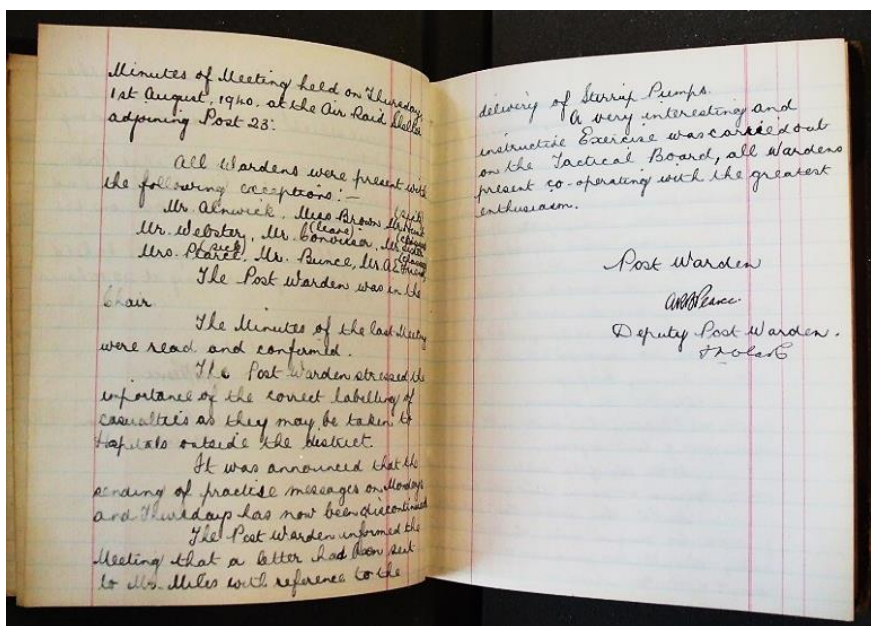


Air Raid Precautions booklets (Brent Archives, boxfile LHC1/WAR/1) – From 1938 onwards the Government issued a number of booklets, advising people about the best ways to protect their homes and themselves from air raids and poison gas attacks. These are just two examples from the Brent Archives collections.



Once the war began, in September 1939, each A.R.P. Warden Post had to keep records, on forms or in a log book, of noteworthy events. These included not just air raids, but details of residents given a warning about not observing the blackout, which wardens were on duty (or off sick), or the result of a football or darts match against the wardens from another Post!

The minute book of the wardens at Post 23, in the Sudbury Court area (seen here), shows that their weekly meetings suddenly stopped in August 1940, when the air raids on Wembley began, and started again in May 1941. During this time, as well as dealing with air raids, the A.R.P. wardens would have been busy writing reports, and recording the incidents in the Post’s log book.



Post 23 minute book for wardens’ meetings (Brent Museum object: A2/1999) – This book contains the hand-written minutes of meetings held by A.R.P. wardens working in the Post 23 area of Sudbury Court District. In 1940, the weekly meetings were held ‘at the Air Raid Shelter adjoining Post 23’.

We know that Post 23 was outside No. 43 Blockley Road, as Mr Sage who lived there wrote to Wembley Council in November 1939 to complain about it being built outside his home! The minute book includes useful information about the names of wardens at this Post, and what they were doing, between 1940 and 1944. Arthur Pearce was the Post Warden at the time of this August 1940 meeting.

Warden's Report Forms (Brent Archives, boxfile LHC1/WAR/1)
 – One of the wardens' most important tasks during an air raid was to get accurate details of any damage and casualties, so that the necessary help could be sent. The first warden at the scene would fill in a standard form, or an "Express Report" stamped on the back of it, and ensure this was delivered quickly back to the Warden Post. A warden on duty there would telephone the details to Wembley's A.R.P. Control Centre.

The air raids on Wembley resumed in March 1943, with occasional attacks during the rest of that year. In February 1944, a high explosive bomb killed 15 members of two families in Birchen Close, Kingsbury, and a warden injured by the blast later died in hospital.

D. H. Q.
 53, Blockley Road.
 North Wembley.
 9th February, 1944.
 To Post Wardens, Posts 23,24,25,26, 27.
 Dear Mr. Friend,
 The Rev. Davies has particularly asked that a formal Church Parade of Wardens of Sudbury Court should be held at St. Guthbert's Byron Court School, on a Sunday afternoon in March and I think in this particular case we should do everything possible to make this a success.
 Will you please, therefore, bring to the meeting next Thursday the names of those Wardens who will attend and we look forward to a maximum congregation on that afternoon.
 The whole proceeding will, of course, be informal, except of course, uniforms, but not steel helmets will be worn.
 Yours sincerely,
 W. J. Friend
 District Warden.
 WJ/MF.

District Warden's memos (part of Brent Museum object: A2/1999) – these are two of a number of instructions sent by the District Warden in Sudbury Court to the warden in charge of Post 23 (who was Norman Friend in 1944). They were found inside the wardens' minute book. By 1944, paper was in short supply, so small carbon copies of each message were sent to each of the five Posts in the District, with the Post Warden's name typed in separately.

D. H. Q.
 53, Blockley Road.
 North Wembley.
 1st March, 1944.
 To Post Wardens, Posts 23,24,25,26,27.
 Dear Mr. Friend,
 re Air Raid Damage.
 I would like to remind you that it is necessary to report to Control by telephone and to confirm this in writing at the end of all Air Raid Incidents, whether incendiary or otherwise, the extent of damage to premises so that temporary repairs may be put in hand at once. The telephone report should go to Control if possible before or soon after daybreak on the same day as the raid. The message should be on A.R.M.3.
 Yours sincerely,
 W. J. Friend
 District Warden.
 WJ/MF.

Civil Defence in the War and after: The final year of the War that the A.R.P. Services had to tackle began with V1 flying bomb attacks. The first of 14 such missiles to hit Wembley fell on Station Approach, Sudbury, in June 1944, causing several deaths.

By the end of the year, reporting restrictions over air raids were lifted, so that the full extent of the bombing (with half the houses in Wembley damaged, 528 of them beyond repair), and the casualties (149 killed and 401 seriously injured) could be published.



“The Wembley News”, Friday 29 December 1944 (kindly loaned by a Wembley History Society member) – After years of wartime censorship, the local newspaper was finally able to report the full extent of Wembley’s air raids at the end of 1944. The paper also contains a detailed report on the work of the borough’s A.R.P. Services on an inside page. Because of the shortage of paper, “The Wembley News” could only print a six page edition at this time.

The A.R.P. Services, or Civil Defence as they had come to be called, carried on, with the threat from V2 rockets continuing until March 1945 (luckily, none of these landed in Wembley). Then, with the end of the War in Europe on 8 May, their daily activities came to an end.

Civil Defence armband (Brent Museum object: 1995.19.7) – By the middle of 1941, the term Civil Defence was generally adopted to cover all of the A.R.P. Services. Although most of the men and women involved in this work were issued with uniforms, some personnel only received an armband to wear while on duty.



The Defence Medal (Brent Museum object: 1997.166f, with replica ribbon) – Many of the men and women who served in Wembley’s A.R.P. Service would have been awarded this medal, established by King George VI in May 1945. The King himself is said to have devised the medal ribbon, with the orange centre band symbolising the air raids on Britain’s green and pleasant land, with the thin stripes representing the black-out against air attacks.

All of the wardens, first aiders and other A.R.P. members who had served for at least three years were awarded the Defence Medal. Many took part in a Victory Review for all of the Middlesex “home front” volunteer services at Wembley Stadium on Sunday 17 June 1945. This Review, similar to the one pictured here from 1942, also acted as a “stand down” parade for Wembley’s A.R.P. Service.



After the War, the government set up a much smaller nationwide Civil Defence organisation.

This exhibition is dedicated to the thousands of Wembley men and women who helped to protect their neighbours as A.R.P. wardens between 1938 and 1945.