

Due to the absence of many men away at war, the household advertisements for live-in companions, nannies or mothers helps were numerous. It is interesting to note that the word 'servant' is frequently used in situations vacant for staff. Age, sex and religion were specified for most of these posts. Some of the larger houses would advertise for several members of staff at the same time, such as the residents of Ashlea in Thurstaston Road who required a cook and two maids. Many people were coming over from Liverpool in order to move to the country for the duration of the war. The Howard Baker family were featured in an article saying that they were revelling in their change over to Heswall and felt like making it their permanent home; which they later did.



Sir Robert Gordon Finlayson

Temporary accommodation was given to victims of the war. St Fillan's, which had previously been a school at the end of Riverbank Road, was taken over by Sir Robert Gordon Finlayson, the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Western Command. His wife was to be hostess to the wives and children of Liverpool servicemen who were distressed by the bombing of their homes. A fortnight's rest at Heswall was given to these blitz victims. Stepside in the Mount (now High Mount) was also set up as a M.O.H. hostel for blind and infirm adult evacuees.

Child evacuees, mainly from Wallasey, had been in Heswall since the beginning of the war. They would arrive at centres like Heswall Tennis Club before being found homes. While here they would attend school for half of each day, the resident children attending the other half of the day. Concern was expressed in June in the newspapers with reference to many large houses refusing to take evacuees. One house was said to have eight spare bedrooms. As a result of this concern it was decided to send out questionnaires. It was stated that there were 6,000 evacuees in the Wirral Urban District. In April, Heswall shopkeepers said that locals were losing out to evacuees living here, who were claiming food twice, both here and in the place of their original homes.

Due to the rationing of petrol there were many advertisements for cars, some of which had not been used since before the war. A 1934 Lanchester in Castle Buildings was one such car, which had not been used since 1939. Vernon's Garage in Pensby Road and Hall's Garage in Village Road often advertised such cars. In May an advertisement appeared for a "Morris 12 saloon Mod Deluxe. 1939 condition as new, owner driver only. Fully equipped and ready for road £250". Older transport became popular as in this Kelly's Bakery advertisement "Young man or lady to drive motor van or horse drawn van".



Direct hit - Whitby House

For the first year and a half of the war, Heswall was a safe place to live despite being so near the Port of Liverpool which was a major bombing target. The Whitsuntide holiday of 1941 changed that. There had been many air raid warnings, but prior to this date no fatalities or bomb damage in Heswall. The night of 31st May saw a severe bombing raid in Liverpool. Bombing decoys had been set up on Burton Marshes, below Heswall Golf Club and at Thurstaston. Whether the German pilot was jettisoning his bombs or fooled by the decoy, the result was that Heswall suffered its first bombing raid.

Three members of the Shone family were killed when their house and the two neighbouring houses in Village Road received a direct hit. Two more people were killed in the School House, which was then in School Hill. The following night more casualties occurred in Telegraph Road. Many other buildings in the path of the bombs were destroyed and Heswall Council School on the Puddydale was damaged. It is difficult to find accounts of this in the newspapers because place names were

omitted for security reasons. This account in the *Liverpool Daily Post* on 2nd June is the closest: "There were fatal casualties in a North West Residential Area where bombs damaged houses and a school. Among those who lost their lives was a firewatcher. Bombs dropped close to a hospital but it escaped."

The Children's Hospital, opposite the bombed house in Telegraph Road, was full to capacity at the time because Myrtle Street Hospital in Liverpool had been closed. The staff at Heswall had performed 276 operations that year instead of the usual 160. In addition, due to the shortage of qualified practitioners away at war, medical students were filling a proportion of junior residential posts.

In December there was an announcement that Morrison Table Shelters would be available to those in Wirral Urban District. Those not eligible for free shelters could purchase them for seven shillings delivered.

In November a 30-mile per hour limit had been put on Telegraph and Thurstaston Road. It was applied for by the Heswall and District Ratepayers Association. In January there was a fire of a different kind when Farr Hall Cottage, a thatched residence, was completely destroyed. A workman had been working with a blowtorch when the roof caught alight. Birkenhead and Heswall Fire Brigade attended, but were only able to save a few pieces of furniture from a wing in the large building.

Several residents of Heswall, once again combining in the cause of charity, formed themselves into a concert party known as 'The Woolgatherers'. In 1941 they gave an entertainment in aid of the Heswall and District War comforts' fund, which had already provided hundreds of local men with woollen comforts. The concert took place on Friday 28th March at the Assembly Rooms in The Mount. It consisted of sketches, songs and duets. The Woolgatherers still produce excellent performances in Heswall, over 75 years on. In October 1941 they gave three performances in the Parish Hall. Many of the sketches were written by the aforementioned Maud Budden. Prizes included new laid-eggs, marmalade and onions, all treasured possessions at that time. The April performance raised £40.

Heswall promoted 'War Week' in April. There was a parade from Irby to Heswall Cross of fighting forces and Civil Defence when Lt. Col. J Sandeman Allen DSO inaugurated the week. War weapons were on show at The Cora Rooms, now the site of Marks and Spencer. The Heswall schools were responsible for a noble effort, no less than £966. Heading the list was the Council School, which contributed £545. The aim was to raise £70,000 for night fighter planes but the actual sum realised was £122,114.

Within the pages of the newspapers of that year some amusing items can be found. One such in August is "Lost Blue Budgie answers to Tontikkle, Oldfield Drive" and "Found Petrol Cap Heswall Saturday". No other details were given! Nowhere was a good place to live in 1941, but the inhabitants of Heswall showed true British Spirit.

Submitted by Jenny McDonald and Roger Lane (roger.m.lane@btinternet.com or 0151 3429 269) on behalf of the Heswall Society, which was established in 1953 "for the public benefit to conserve the heritage of the Ward of Heswall". For more details of membership and activities please call Roger Lane or visit [theheswallsociety.org.uk](http://theheswallsociety.org.uk)

## Heswall Society Open Meetings

The Heswall Society's new season kicks off with a talk by Christine Spencer on the history of the Bibby Line – a story of love, murder, deceit and everlasting success, on Monday 12th November at 8pm at Heswall Hall.

Anthony Annakin-Smith will give his talk 'Parkgate – Port and Resort', the remarkable story of the popular 'seaside village without any sea' and the ships and the people associated with it.

Beginning at 8pm, on Monday, 21st January 2019, the event will be at Heswall Hall.

All are welcome.

**Full details can be found on our website**  
**[www.theheswallsociety.org.uk](http://www.theheswallsociety.org.uk)**