



KENT AT WAR

Bob Ogley



KENT AT WAR

The Unconquered County

1939 — 1945

by Bob Ogley

This illustrated history of the second world war relives the drama, the heroism and the horrors as they unfolded in Kent — a county in which many people were nearer to occupied Europe than they were to their own capital city. All the great events are here: mobilisation, the evacuation, the phoney war, Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain, the Blitz, the fighter sweeps from Kent airfields, D-Day, the flying bombs and rockets and VE Day in May 1945. This is not just a story of countless fighting men and women but of the ordinary people of the front line county, from the misery of ration queues and austerity clothing to the delights of Vera Lynn and the flicks. Most of the photographs come from the archives of the Kent Messenger and they cannot fail to stir powerful emotions as they bring back memories of the most dramatic years in the county's history.



Froglets Publications in association with Kent Messenger Group Newspapers

Invicta — the unconquered county

THIS photographic history of the war years in Kent is a hybrid of journalism and history and contains pictures and stories of all the momentous events as they unfolded in the county. The inclusion of more than 200 photographs — most of them from the *Kent Messenger's* extraordinary archives — will not only make the book more appealing but stir powerful emotions. Those showing bomb damage, crashed aircraft and lost pilots may shock and upset but many will be humbled by the photographs of courage and resilience displayed by so many "ordinary people".

It is appropriate to pay tribute to the cameramen who saw, through their journalistic training, history as it was being made and recorded it for future generations (such as ours) to see. They knew at the time that Kent was the bastion of Britain and defender of London; a county that was experiencing all the vicissitudes of war except conquest. With the enemy in sight, threatened every day by bombs, incendiaries, rockets, shells, shrapnell — and invasion— they continued to do their job quite brilliantly. Ted Jeffries and brothers, Don and Stan Gullivan were the more permanent of the photographic staff between 1939 and 1945. To them and colleagues who came and went, we dedicate this book.

The former editor and proprietor of the *Kent Messenger*, the late Henry Roy Pratt Boorman published a photographic book of the war years in 1951. It was called *Kent Unconquered*. The quality of the pictures in that book inspired this publication and I am grateful to the Boorman family for their efforts in preserving much of the heritage of Kent.

The appetite for news in wartime was almost insatiable and a glance at the newspaper files confirms the obvious desire of the editor to report as much as possible. But so much at the time was secret, so much propaganda and so much confusion in the "fog of war" that truth was rather

Acknowledgements

THIS book would not have been possible without the co-operation of many people and I would like to thank those who responded to my appeal for anecdotes and reminiscences and to those individuals who sent photographs. Practical help came from many quarters including The British Library, David Parry at the Imperial War Museum, the Kent County Records Office, the Public Records Office, English Heritage and museum staff through the county. I would particularly like to thank those in the local history departments of Folkestone, Bromley, Canterbury, Dover, Gravesend, Dartford, Ramsgate, Margate, Ashford, Sittingbourne, Bexley and Maidstone Leisure Centre, where I spent many hours looking through the bound copies of old newspapers. Great assistance came from John Iveson, curator of Dover Museum, Tom White of Kent Fire Brigade, Gordon McElwee, Peter Osborne, Hazel Pelling, Gordon Anckorn, Frank Chapman, Elizabeth Whittingham. Finally, I would like to thank William Dorrell, managing director of *Kent*

elusive. Added to that was the policy of censorship. No locations could be given, apart from the rather inadequate "somewhere in the south of England".

In this book we have reported what actually happened rather than what was said. We have tracked down locations, given the exact date and, in many cases, named the people involved. In this way we believe we have captured the drama and immediacy of the war years in Kent.

It includes, not only the most famous events such as Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain and D Day, but material about German activities, the county's secret army, the heroism of the soldier overseas, the great deception and much more.

Special features include all those from Kent who won the Victoria and George Cross, a list of casualty figures and every V2 rocket which fell in the county. We have a special section on the Maids of Kent, and the Kentish Maids, who left their homes and offices for the Land Army, the voluntary services or to be nurses or skilled mechanics. We have described the connection with the county of people such as William Joyce (Lord Haw Haw), William Penney, the physicist, General Sikorski, the Polish PM in exile and a few of the greatest aviators.

Those who played a leading part at the time will not forget the battle zones or the home front. They will recall the ration queues and austerity clothing. They will remember Vera Lynn and Glenn Miller, the twice weekly trip to the flicks and the spirit of camaraderie in the shelters and tunnels within the cliffs. Every Kent town had a British Restaurant, a rest centre and exchange store; and every Kent town contributed towards a squadron of Spitfires.

That Squadron was called *Invicta*. *Invicta* is the emblem of the county and the *Kent Messenger*. It simply means unconquered.

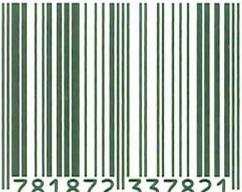
Messenger Group Newspapers for his confidence in the project, Barry Hollis, picture editor and the staff of the KM for their support. The preparation of this book has been, in happiest manner, a combined operation among the staff of Froglets Publications. Jill Goldsworthy, Avril Oswald and Sarah Perkins helped with research, typesetting and the reading of proofs. Fern Flynn was involved with the production at all stages and without her optimistic and trusting support this book would have taken many more months to produce.

CONTENTS	
1942.....	115
1939.....4	143
1940.....25	168
1941.....87	201



£10.99

ISBN 1-872337-82-1



9 781872 337821

