

Note of telephone conversation Mrs Doris Mellen & Melissa Marshall.
31/08/2011

Mrs Mellen was stationed at Grappenhall Heys mansion for about 3 years after being called up in 1941 as a WREN. She was in a unit which worked in the Nissan huts at the airfield about 3 miles away; they would work shifts over 24 hours so there wasn't much time for relaxation.

No-one else was living at the Hall apart from the WRENS. She doesn't recall there being any family members or staff. She can't remember the gardens but does recall that even then the Hall was in a bad state of repair, the wood being infested by beetles, mice and woodlice. It was very cold in winter, no heating or fires.

The rooms were large and she shared one of the large downstairs ones with 15 other WRENS (there were 8 bunkbeds). She recalls there being a couple of dances held in the entrance hall; apart from that the girls were left to their own devices, they would embroider or knit. Sometimes they went into Warrington to spend a bit of money or to take their collars to the Chinese laundry for starching.

Mrs Mellen was fond of chocolate and it was very strictly rationed to 1 small bar a week so she would eat 1 square per day. She recalls it being very quiet in Grappenhall after having lived through the London Blitz. She was born and brought up in London and returned after the war but came back to live in Cheshire after her marriage in 1948 to Ken, who she had met on HMS Blacktop whilst in Warrington. There is a tombstone in the local church apparently dedicated to those who served on HMS Blacktop and somewhere in or around Grappenhall there was a pub on whose walls and ceiling the RAF squadrons used to sign their names before going off to fight.

She thinks the gardeners have made a wonderful job and would like to come back to revisit particularly if there is a new exhibition. Sadly, she wasn't able to keep in touch with any of the WRENS after the war finished.