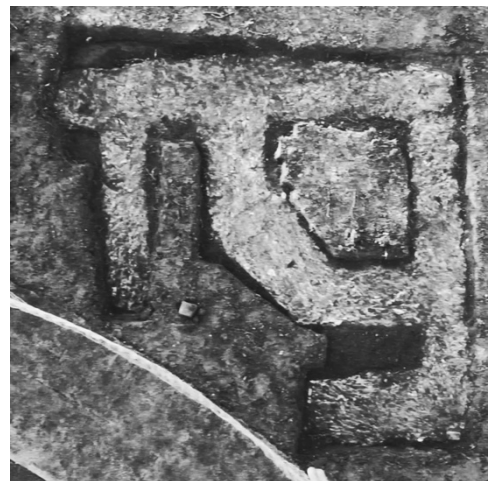


Marsh Park ROC and Home Guard Community Gathered Information

Archaeological dig on Marsh Park January 2025



Following the recent dig, we are gathering together old and new information about the Home Guard and ROC activity on Marsh Park in Brierley Hill. Between all of the info and some data from Tim, we think the post was ROC manned throughout, but with a Home Guard presence on the park and for security. It is all part fact, part fiction, but after so long and without the eye witnesses, we have to see between the cracks.



A brief history of Marsh Park, a former mining site from the 1800s. After its industrial use was gone, the park originally formed as a naturally grassed over waste area around the former colliery and fireclay pit remnants. After WW1, Marsh and Baxter gave the land to the people of Brierley Hill and in 1921 returning veterans helped to landscape the area. It was opened the same year as Marshes Recreational Ground.

During WW2 we think the bowling pavilion, an ARP post and trench air raid shelter at the entrance near Church St, and a lookout post at the highest point, were all used to help the war effort. For many years we have heard stories from local people and known of documented evidence of WW2 activity in the town. In 2025 the Friends of Marsh Park, working with Wolverhampton Archaeology Group and Dudley Council; dug the site to look for the lookout post. There had always been one or two bricks exposed during the summer in dry times. Starting at these bricks, the team dug down from 1 cm to about 30

cm at the deepest point, exposing a building foundation measuring about 14 x 15 metres.

Personal accounts and references



Bert Skipton - "My dad was a member of the home guard due to him being a reserved occupation working in steel manufacture. He was stationed on Barrow Hill Pensnett where the cross is and on Marshes Park. He was on duty the night they bombed Coventry. He told me how the sky glowed and you could hear the bombs explode. They thought it was Birmingham at the time until word came through. He said it glowed red for a few nights. He was on duty on Barrow Hill when they bombed the rail engines at the back of Rookery Park. At the time they were carrying ordinance so the ensuing percussion blew out all the windows in Bromley. I have his spotter cards still."

Alan Hickman - I read with interest the article re the discovery of the building on Marsh Park. Aged 18 in 1940 as part of the Brierley Hill home guard my father and his unit spent their nights guarding the structure. My father told me the people they allowed to enter the building were operators using portable radio tracking equipment using radio waves to plot enemy planes he could hear the frequency echoes. Also my father told me the path leading up from the park's main gate was known locally as heroes walk due to on the right hand side of the path a rose bush had been planted with a cross in remembrance of every Brierley Hill serviceman who had lost his life in world war one.

Joan Ellett - "My dad Eli Postin was in the home guard and used to spot the planes coming over during ww2. I remember him having a box of photographs of different planes. I used to play with them. I remember going over there and there was a bed in there from what I remember on the downstairs floor and some steps up to roof."

Christopher Southall - "My dad was in the home guard which was stationed on Marsh Park."

Quentin Southall - Dad talked a lot about American soldiers around north street and a military hospital on marshes playing field. His name was Reginald Southall. He also worked in the cage as a slaughter man Marsh and Baxter. Tough guys in those days.

Johnathan P Taylor On BBC Wolverhampton and Black Country - It might well have been manned by these gentlemen. The Brierley Hill Home Guard, including my grandfather, Jack Pearsall (2nd row from front, 5th from the right)

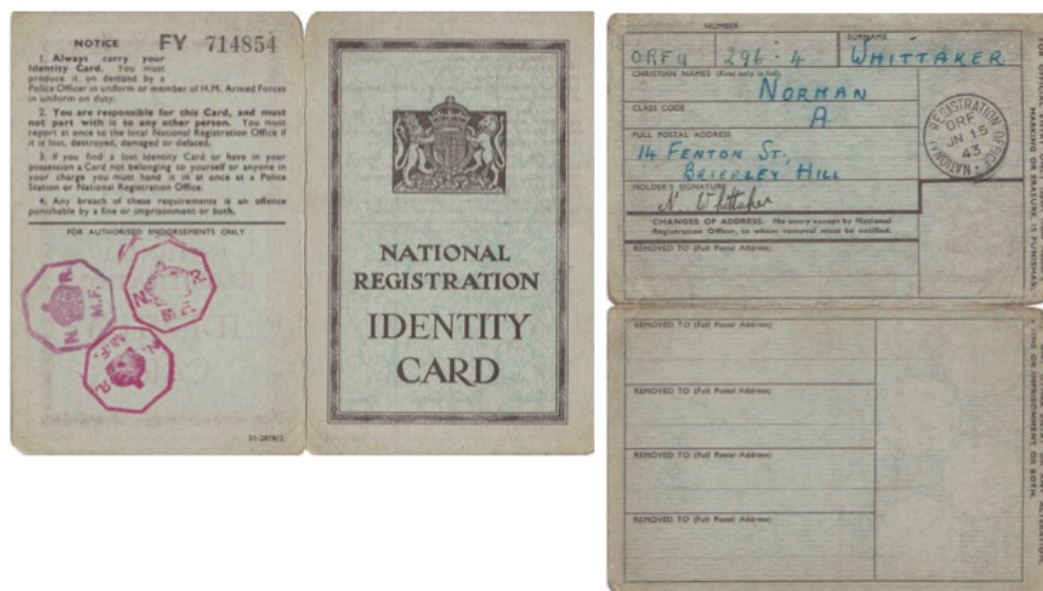


Alan Hickman - I have checked against other photos of my father aged 18 and i believe my father is on the back row second from the left. His full name is Samuel Thomas Hickman. He told me the Home guard practiced with live ammunition inc hand grenades on one occasion during practice he was nearly injured his colleague pull the pin from the grenade and has he went to throw it he fell backwards and dropped the grenade by my fathers feet fortunately the quick thinking platoon sergeant spotted the grenade pick it and threw it before it could explode. When I was a boy in the 1950s his Sten gun was still in our cellar. Also to boost the morale of people a German fighter plane which had been shot down was placed in Moor street where the moor centre wall now stands. He was quite knowledgeable re Marsh Park and Brierley Hill as he was born in an house in North street opposite the park's small entrance in 1922. He was prevented from joining the armed forces due to his war work as a floor moulder at Dudley Foundry in Moor street where he was employed making cast iron casting from the age 14 years. He retained all his mental faculties until his death in 2020

Blackcountryman article by one of the Newton brothers who was in Adelaide Street when the plane crashed in March 1944:

“Outside, Adelaide Street was chaotic, the footpaths and roads covered with debris. The fire brigade soon arrived and the police and air raid wardens were soon in control. Amazingly, into this chaos walked the aircraft's Canadian pilot who had bailed out and landed in North Street, half a mile away. **Then a member of the Royal Observer Corps arrived from the observer post in nearby Marsh Park.** He had observed everything. He said that the low flying plane's wing had hit a chimney, turned and crashed into the triangular space between Adelaide Street, Talbot Street and Trinity Street.”

John Miller (Ex Royal Observer Corps) The post was opened in August 1938 at map ref O.919968 as 27/F2, 27 Group HQ was Shrewsbury and F2 was the post designation. Posts were arranged in clusters so Brierley Hill was in F cluster.



ID cards supplied to be copied by a local resident.

Project work done by Brierley Hill Community Forum – Cultural Consortium