

# Chatsworth in Wartime



We hope that this resource will help you to get the most from your visit to the Chatsworth in Wartime exhibition in the House. It is a helpful resource for teacher's to use in preparation for and during your groups' visit and we would recommend reading it through before your visit.

## 1. Painted Hall

Welcome to one of the most visually spectacular rooms in the house. The 1<sup>st</sup> Duke's guests would have originally crossed the courtyard to enter this room which was designed to showcase the Duke's wealth and power. This room has always been one of the grandest rooms in the house.

However, this was changed in 1939 when 250 schoolgirls from Penrhos College in North Wales arrived and took over Chatsworth until 1946.



At the outbreak of the war, the 10<sup>th</sup> Duke realised that impact would be so great that Chatsworth was likely to be needed for the War Effort. In 1939 he heard about Penrhos College building being taken over by the **Ministry for Food**. Very cleverly, the Duke thought the girls would take much better care of Chatsworth than a group of soldiers, and so he invited them to stay.

The girls made the trip from North Wales bringing their teachers, desks, pianos and beds. The school has just 18 days to move its entire contents, staff and students to Chatsworth. Meanwhile Chatsworth was also clearing up after Billy Hartington's coming of age party and emptying the house of the most important pieces of art to be put into storage.

## Activities:

How long do you think it would take to pack away the contents of a House like Chatsworth? How might you decide what to pack?

*Before the school's arrival, it took eleven days to pack the contents away. Even today documents and objects are found that we thought we had lost forever!*

What do you think the Painted Hall could have been used as by school?

*During their stay, the Painted Hall was used to hold assemblies and singing lessons, amongst other classes. One lesson, taken by the history mistress was 'Current Events' known to the girls as 'currants'. This ensured the girls were kept up to date with what was happening in the war.*

## What was the Ministry for Food?

Penrhos College itself, had been taken over by the Ministry for Food, but what was this?

With food supplies cut sharply because of enemy action and the increased needs of the services, rationing was essential. The government created the Ministry for Food to implement this.

The minister, Woolton, introduced point rationing. Everyone would have a certain number of points a month that they could allocate any way they wanted.

Another success in wartime Britain was the Lord Woolton Pie which was named after the Minister. Maybe you could make this wartime meal at school?

### LORD WOOLTON PIE

#### THE OFFICIAL RECIPE

In hotels and restaurants, no less than in communal canteens, many people have tasted Lord Woolton pie and pronounced it good. Like many another economical dish, it can be described as wholesome fare. It also meets the dietician's requirements in certain vitamins. The ingredients can be varied according to the vegetables in season. Here is the official recipe:—

Take 1lb. each diced of potatoes, cauliflower, swedes, and carrots, three or four spring onions—if possible, one teaspoonful of vegetable extract, and one tablespoonful of oatmeal. Cook all together for 10 minutes with just enough water to cover. Stir occasionally to prevent the mixture from sticking. Allow to cool; put into a pie-dish, sprinkle with chopped parsley, and cover with a crust of potato or wheatmeal pastry. Bake in a moderate oven until the pastry is nicely browned and serve hot with a brown gravy.

## 2. Chapel



The Penrhos pupils heading to Sunday service at Edensor church.

This is the Chapel where prayers took place every day, attended by the family and staff until the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Due to the reduced number of staff on the estate during the war, services were only held on Sundays.

During times of fear and austerity, faith can become increasingly important. Similarly, wars and life-threatening situations can lead to superstitions. Here are some of the superstitions that grew during the war years:

**Bullet-proof bibles:** As faith became increasingly important, portable pocket-sized copies of the New Testament suddenly sold tens of thousands of copies. They were desperately bought by anxious Christian mothers for their sons. As stories of bullets being stopped by these little Bibles spread, sales grew. In reality there may have been a few true cases of Bibles stopping 'spent' rifle bullets. Unfortunately they would not offer protection against high explosive shells and machine-gun bullets.

**The Third Man:** This became an army saying which meant 'to go too far' but arose from one of the most popular superstitions from the Western Front. This was that the third man to light his cigarette from the same match would inevitably be killed soon after. This was derived from the story that enemy snipers would, at night, use the flame of the match to find a target – the first light alerted the sniper, the second allowed him to aim, and the third time he fired.

### 3. State Drawing Room

Whilst the Penrhos girls were at Chatsworth, all three of the major State Rooms were made into dormitories, where the girls slept.

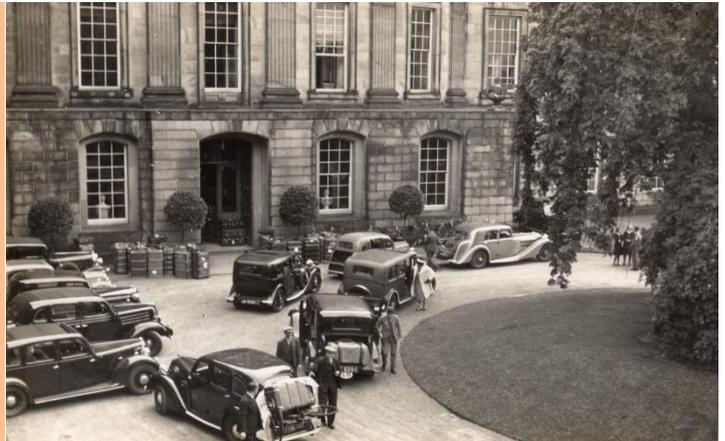
#### Activities

To us today this may seem like a great adventure but life wasn't always comfortable for the girls. Imagine how it would feel to be moved so far across the country, to such a large, grand building.

*Some of the girls' parents were so involved in the war effort that they did not see them throughout their time here.*

What do we have today in modern life that may not have existed, or could have been rationed, that makes our lives more comfortable?

*Consider fuel and heating. There weren't any radiators in the house during WWII and the Penrhos pupils remember the cold to this day! Buckets of water often froze because of the cold!*



When you breathe, the heat and vapour from your breath can cause condensation.

Ask your pupils to think about what condensation could cause to happen to some of the paintings that were kept in the State Rooms.

*After the girls left Chatsworth, the only damage found was a small amount of fungus growing on the backs of some of the paintings.*

## 4. South Sketch Gallery

When the Penrhos girls were here this gallery would have been used for their typing practice.

Codes and ciphers have been used since the Roman era, and are one of the oldest forms of secret communication.

Did you know that in WWII, the Germans invented the use of microdots to send information securely? These tiny dots were the size of a full stop and contained vital information undetectable to the human eye, such as a meeting time, or an address. Being so small they often went unnoticed by inspectors and could only be read by the intended recipient with the use of a microscope.

British intelligence often referred to microdots as 'duff', because the dots would be spread throughout letters like raisins in the English steamed pudding Plum Duff!!

### War Slang

British Private soldiers were known as the 'Tommy's' during WWI and WWII, they also developed a language of their own.

### Activities

Ask your pupils why they think soldiers developed a language of their own?

*Reasons could include: to disguise conversations from commanding officers, to camouflage the true, horrific, nature of what they were seeing and also to lighten their experience in the war.*

Ask your pupils to guess the meanings of some of these popular slang words:

**Egg** – Hand Grenade

**Fleabag** – Sleeping Bag

**Hitchy-Koo** – Itchy from louse-bites.

**Iddy Umpty** – Signaller. Iddy and umpty were verbal ways of expressing the dashes and dots of Morse Code.

**Pickled Monkey** – An unknown species of meat served as food to prisoners of war by the Germans.

## 5. Guest Bedrooms

Before you step into the Guest Bedrooms ask the children to try to find the portraits of a small girl and boy in the corridor outside.

The little girl is Lady Maud, daughter of the Ninth Duke.

The little boy is her brother, Eddie, who became the Tenth Duke.



Eddie fought during WWI at Gallipoli in 1915. He was a member of the Derbyshire Yeomanry and fought at the same time as a gardener from Chatsworth.

He was later invalided back home, but not everyone escaped with their lives. Twenty-five workers from the estate died on the front line which was a significant loss and shows the scale of the human tragedy.

Maud was also determined to do her bit during WWI and insisted on helping farmers on the land as part of the war effort. This was initially considered to be very unusual:

*'It is going to be the end of Maud's complexion, but she is very keen to do it,'* wrote her mother, the Duchess.

Maud was later to be evacuated to Canada with the family, to return in 1922.

In WWII she was a Controller with the Auxiliary Territorial Service.



After talking about Eddie and Maud, you should now enter into the first Guest Bedroom.

### **Can you spot the bath in the cupboard?**

*In the Second World War people were asked to save fuel by only filling their baths with 5 inches of water. King George VI and Queen Elizabeth set the nation a good example by having a line drawn around their bath and continued to live at Buckingham Palace rather than move out of London. Here at Chatsworth, these rooms were used by the teachers who, along with the students, were rationed to two baths a week.*

One of the leading code breakers in Britain during WWII, Dilly Knox, reportedly did his best work in the bath. When the Intelligence Division 25, of which Dilly was a part of, moved to the Admiralty Old Building he had a bath installed in his office!

With the war came rationing, both with bath water and fuel. When the Penhros girls were here they had the kitchens fires for cooking but if there was a fire going in a classroom, they would come and do some cooking on that as well. One pupil recalled someone coming in right in the middle of their lesson and stirring a big pot of semolina.

13 bathrooms were shared between 250 staff and students, ask your pupils to work out approximately how many people it would have been to one bathroom?



We had an Anderson Shelter built in the garden and Guides gave Land Girl garden tours

## 6. The Library

In WWII the library was used to store furniture and belongings.

The librarian at Chatsworth at the time, Francis Thompson, helped to compile a list of the Devonshire's most important paintings that were to be moved out of London in the event of an outbreak of war.



These did not, however, come over to Chatsworth house but were hidden in two different locations on the estate. Half were hidden in the old estate office, now the Edensor stables, and some former staff can recall bars being put on the windows and someone having to sleep there whilst it was being done for security.

The other half went into the cottage of the Head of the Duke's household, Mr Shimwell. Impressively, this remained a secret and nobody ever seemed to realise what was hidden in this estate house during the war!

### Activity

Ask your pupils to take turns peering into the library; can they see the table with a bullet stuck in it?

Ask them how they think this may have happened.

*The American Air Force regularly practiced on the moors above the House. On 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1942 they were having a session of target practice when one of the planes accidentally sprayed the house with bullets. Fortunately nobody was injured, but a bullet from the plane did come through the library window and hit a table in here, where it remains to this day. When the incident was investigated it was found that whilst the pilots had maps of the area, the house wasn't on them!*

## Activity

If you have the time, consider this letter from Eric Oliver (who grew up on the estate and later worked at Chatsworth) to the Dowager Duchess, dated April 4<sup>th</sup>, 1989.

*Her Grace*

*Chatsworth under fire — 1940-44*

*Early in the war, possibly 1942, the house was strafed when two twin engine German aircraft flying South, virtually over the West Front Garden, opened fire scoring some hits on the West side of the building.*

*These planes were flying so low, we could actually see crew members in the cockpits and front turrets. Both aircraft were shot down South of Derby.*

*Later in the war, before D-Day, the East side of the House came under fire from Allied troops training on the moors in the Ireland Edge area, resulting in one 303 bullet embedding itself in a Library Table and very recently, one being discovered in the lead over the South East door.*

*I remember both incidents clearly as these, along with seeing the glow over Sheffield when it was being blitzed, are my main recollections of the war.*

*On the first occasion I was playing along with other children from the Stable Yard, on the grass below the Strand Wood gate when the planes opened fire. In the second instance we were playing under the Beech trees at the bottom of the Cascade and heard the bullets whipping through the leaves overhead like a swarm of bees.*

*Eric*

Perhaps discuss how long after the war this letter was written and any potential inaccuracies that time may have caused.

Thinking about how experiences like this may have affected children in Derbyshire. Consider how life might have been different for children living in rural areas to those in the city.

## 7. Ante-Library

Penrhos College was a very musical school and had several pianos around the house.

Private piano lessons took place every day in here. Music was a way of cheering people up during the course of the war and many popular tunes that we still know today were written during this time.

### Music in WWI

The songs popular in World War One were often more than just simple entertainment. Some were adopted by the troops themselves, sometimes as marching songs, sometimes as early forms of protest, but often just as a wistful lament for home. On the home front, for many families, popular songs expressed their feelings of hope and loss and they would listen to them at the music hall or, if they were lucky, at home on a Gramophone.

Governments recognised the potential for such popular songs to be used as a persuasive device - or propaganda. Many songs employed subtle propaganda, for instance promoting a rosy view of the home front and endorsing it as an ideal worth fighting for, whilst other songs were more forthright.

### Activity

**Oh! It's a Lovely War!** – a song from the barrack rooms and trenches of WWI

Up to your waist in water,

Up to your eyes in slush,

Who wouldn't join the army,

That's what we all enquire,

Don't we pity the poor civilians

Sitting beside the fire?

Ask your pupils what these lines make them think life on the front line was like? How do you think those not at war or involved with the war effort might have been perceived?

## Music in WWII

World War II was the first conflict to take place in the age of electronically mass distributed music.

As the major powers entered the war, millions of citizens had home radio devices that did not exist in the First World War. Also during the pre-war period, sound was introduced to cinema and musicals were very popular.

Therefore, music in World War II provided a unique opportunity to improve morale unlike ever before.

### Activities

Ask your pupils how this may have affected civilians and soldiers during WWII.

*Think about the number of people listening to the same recording as well as the power of government's over the airwaves*

What music would make you feel better when you're unhappy or scared?

### We'll meet again – popular song in England

We'll meet again,  
Don't know where, don't know when,  
But I know we'll meet again, some sunny day.  
Keep smiling through,  
Just like you always do,  
Till the blue skies drive the dark clouds, far away.  
So will you please say hello,  
To the folks that I know,  
Tell them I won't be long, (I won't be long)  
They'll be happy to know that as you saw me go  
I was singing this song.



Dame Vera Lynn entertaining

## 8. The Great Dining Room

During an outbreak of flu in 1943, 25 beds were moved in here and it was turned into an isolation ward. All the girls struck down with the illness were kept in here until they were no longer infectious to the rest of the school.



Can your pupils spot the picture of what the Great Dining Room looked like during the Penhros girls' stay?

### Activity

This is a good point to reflect with the pupils and discuss what they have seen in the house and how both WWI and WWII affected everyone's lives.

Perhaps one of the darkest times during the conflicts for Chatsworth and the Cavendish family was the death of Billy Hartington. Billy was Eddie's (the little boy from the guest bedrooms) eldest son and should have inherited the Dukedom and Chatsworth but he was killed by a sniper in Belgium.

Billy did see the liberation of Brussels in 1944 and during the celebrations he wrote to his wife of feeling "*so unworthy of it all living as I have in reasonable safety and comfort during these years..... I have a permanent lump in my throat and long for you to be here as it is an experience which few can have and which I would love to share with you.*"

Ask your pupils to think about Billy's quote and think about modern day conflicts that are happening all over the world now. Is this quote something they can relate to?

You can now continue through to the shop and exit into our 105 acre gardens

