

## Chapter 33: The Second World War: Major Events

While grandad's diaries are not focused on the main events of the Second World War, those events do provide the backdrop to life at the time. He notes some of them especially when they were of particular relevance to him or the family.

As noted in Chapter 12, at the end of 1938, grandad thought that war had been averted through the agreement achieved in Munich. But, on 1 September 1939, he noted that Germany began to invade Poland and then, on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, that Britain [declared war](#) on Germany at 11am.

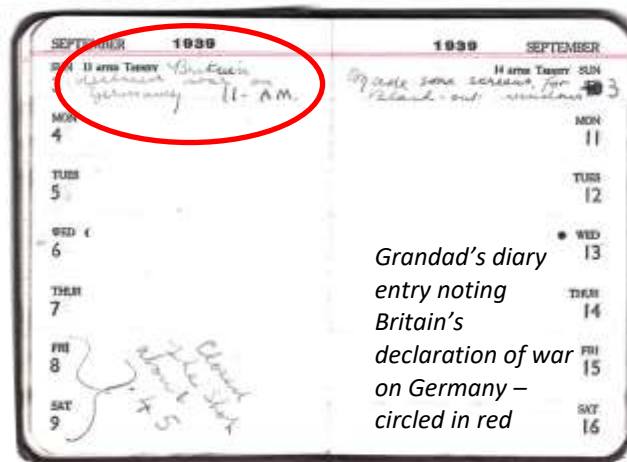


Image Source: [Picryl](#)

Air raid damage August 1940

On 17 September 1939, he noted that [Russia had begun to invade Poland](#). In April 1940, he noted that [Germany had invaded Denmark and Norway](#), and that, in May 1940, [Germany invaded Holland and Belgium](#). He noted, that same month, that there had been the first air raid<sup>1</sup> on England in the North Riding of Yorkshire and that [eight people had been injured](#). There are some major events he does not mention. For example, his diaries are silent on the [Dunkirk rescues](#).

Grandad does make comment on some aspects of the [Battle of Britain](#), for example noting, in August 1940, that over 180 German aeroplanes had been brought down. In May 1941, he noted that there had been a night raid on London and that 34 German planes had been shot down.

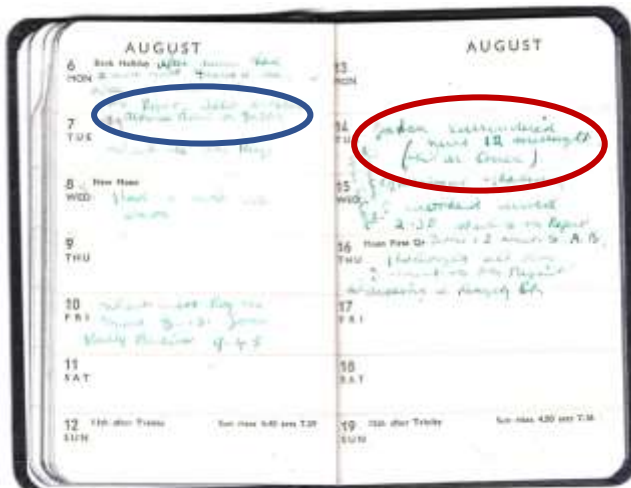
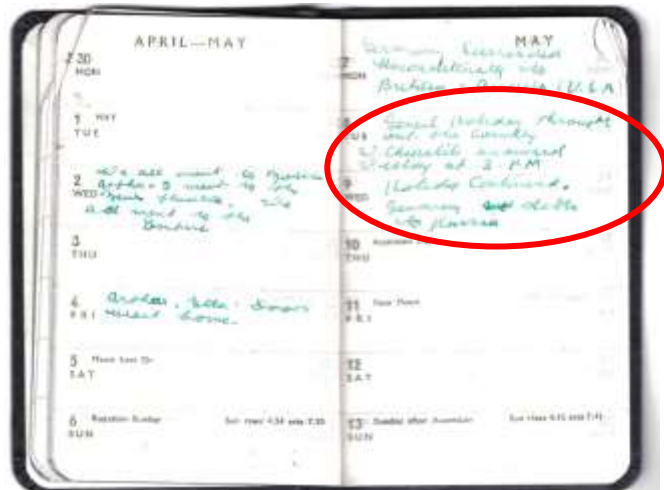
On 22 June 1941, he noted that [Germany invaded Russia](#). On 7 December 1941, he noted the [Pearl Harbor](#) attacks saying that Japan had attacked "US islands". That same day he noted that [Japan declared war on the USA and Britain](#). A few days later he noted that Germany and [Italy also declared war on the USA](#). He then recorded that, at the end of May 1942, Mexico joined the Allies. On 10 July 1943, he noted that there was news, at 8am, that Allied forces had invaded Sicily and, on 3 September 1943, British and Canadian troops landed in Italy. Within a week, he noted that Italy surrendered unconditionally and, at the beginning of October, British and American forces entered Naples. By 4 June 1944, he recorded that the Allies reached the outskirts of Rome and, the next day, they [entered the city](#).

Grandad recorded the D Day landings on 6 June 1944 by saying that the Allies had begun a second front with landings at Le Havre in France. On 7 May 1945, he wrote "Germany surrendered unconditionally to Britain & America (USA)". The following day he wrote that there was a general

<sup>1</sup> According to the newsreel footage, it was the first air raid with casualties

holiday throughout the country and Winston Churchill [announced victory](#) at 3pm. On the 9<sup>th</sup>, he noted the holiday continued and [Germany surrendered unconditionally to Russia](#).

However, the war against Japan continued and, on 6 August 1945, granddad noted that the Allies had dropped “atomic bomb” on Japan. Just over a week later, Japan surrendered. Granddad wrote, that Japan had surrendered and that this meant that the war was over. He also noted that there had been dancing in the streets! He further wrote that the Japanese signed the unconditional surrender on 2 September 1945.



Above - granddad's diary entry noting Victory in Europe circled in red

Left - granddad's diary entry noting dropping of the atomic bomb (circled in blue), victory over Japan and end of war (circled in red)

Below - celebrating VJ day in Washington Avenue



© Missouri Historical Society and licensed for reuse under this [Creative Commons Licence](#)