

THEIR FINEST HOUR

Keep your family WWII tales alive with new digital project

A war archive is collecting personal stories and artefacts, writes Joanne Smith

Families are being encouraged to share their memories of World War II as part of a Heritage Lottery-funded project called **Their Finest Hour**.

The venture aims to collect everyday stories and objects from parents and grandparents dating back to wartime before recording them in a free online archive to preserve for future generations.

Ally Edwards, of Evesham & District u3a in the West Midlands, assisted with similar projects covering World War I and the fall of the Iron Curtain while working at Oxford University. He hopes u3as will come together to collect personal tales and memorabilia to be submitted to the project, which is being organised by his former employer.

The university has set up Digital Collection Day events around the country, which u3a members can attend or offer to volunteer at.

They are being hosted at museums, libraries, military charities and schools across the UK, from Belfast, Cumbria and Edinburgh to London, Essex, Oxfordshire and South Wales.

u3a members Maggy Simms and Susie Berry volunteered at one of the first events in Oxford. Here, they collected memorabilia including an identity badge belonging to Juliet Campbell, who spoke about her father, General Wilfred d'A Collings, CB, CBE.

Juliet wore the badge on her wrist when she travelled on a troop ship from Suez during World War II. It is engraved with her name, her father's name and rank, and her blood group. Ally says: "There's so much you can do, from meet and greet to what I enjoyed most: showing someone their husband's war record online – he [Juliet's father] flew Lancasters – and helping them understand more about their family story."

Their Finest Hour provides opportunities for many u3a groups, such as genealogy, local history, creative writing, photography and storytelling, to get involved and give members confidence in using technology, while also meeting up for interesting conversations with like-minded people.

- Find out more by logging on to <https://theirfinesthour.english.ox.ac.uk/> where you can upload your war-related stories and material.