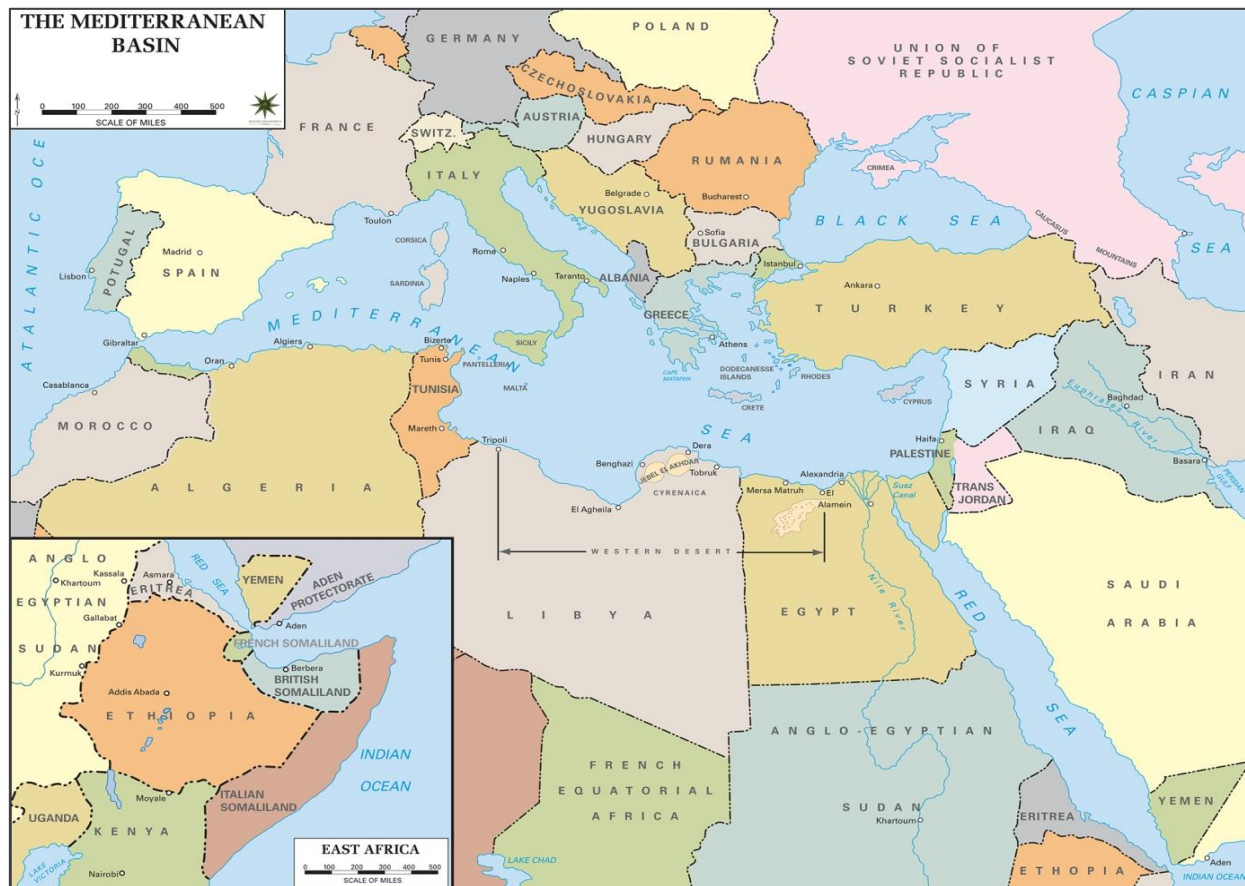


WORLD WAR 2

This booklet will not try to portray the events leading up to World War 2, the progress of the campaigns and the outcome. The scope is too great and the sources of information available elsewhere are legion. Those members of our parishes who were killed or died in service fought in only a few of the theatres of war, and only three of them in battle on land. These three locations are shown on the map below¹.

The slim description below must suffice. There is more detail about the specific campaigns in which our men served within each personal story.



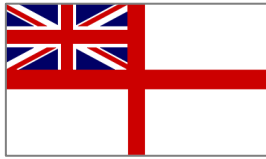
World War 2 involved most of the world's nations, including all the great powers. These eventually formed two opposing military alliances; the Allies and the Axis. It was the most extensive war in history, with more than 100 million personnel mobilised to serve in their Armed Forces.

It was 'Total War', in which the major participants placed their entire economic and industrial capabilities at the service of the war effort, removing the distinction between civilian and military resources.

Marked by significant events involving the mass death of civilians and the only use of nuclear weapons in warfare, it was the deadliest conflict in human history, resulting in between 50 to 70 million deaths.

¹ Map courtesy of Emmerson Kent at: www.emersonkent.com.

ROYAL NAVY



At the start of World War 2, the Royal Navy was still the largest in the world. During the early phases of the war it provided critical cover during British evacuation from Dunkirk.

The Royal Navy suffered huge losses in the European Theatre and off Singapore, but there were also successes against enemy surface ships in seas off South America and Norway. By 1941, with the sinking of the Bismarck, Germany effectively lost her surface ship capabilities.



As well as providing cover in operations, the Royal Navy also guarded the sea lanes that enabled British forces to fight in remote parts of the world such as North Africa, the Mediterranean and the Far East.

Naval supremacy in the Atlantic was vital to support the amphibious operations

carried out, such as the invasions of North West Africa, Sicily, Italy and ultimately Normandy (see Photograph 1²). Royal Navy ships also performed an important role in escorting convoys across the Atlantic and Arctic Oceans, and to other countries on the allied side, protecting them from air, surface and submarine attack.

ARMY



In 1939 Britain had a small professional army. This was backed up by the Territorial Army. On the outbreak of the war, Britain sent a British Expeditionary Force (BEF) to France, including four regular infantry divisions and 50 light tanks.

Thereafter, the British government introduced conscription and by May 1940, British Army strength was brought up to 50 divisions.

After the evacuations from Dunkirk were complete, the Army had 1,650,000 men. By June 1945 it had grown to over 2,900,000 (see Photograph 2³).



² © IWM (A 10306). The flotilla forming line ahead, led by *HMS Fury* at Scapa Flow during destroyer manoeuvres in preparation for the Second Front.

³ © IWM (B 6642). Sherman tanks of 33rd Armoured Brigade, supporting 3rd Infantry Division, moving forward near Lebissey Wood for Operation CHARNWOOD, the assault on Caen, 8 July 1944.

These men and women fought in operational theatres across the world; in Europe and Africa against the German and Italian armies, and in the Far East against the Japanese.

During the Second World War over 144,000 British soldiers were killed, over 230,000 were wounded and some 150,000 were taken prisoner.

ROYAL AIR FORCE



The Royal Air Force underwent rapid expansion prior to and during the Second World War.

In the Battle of Britain, in the late summer of 1940 the RAF, supplemented by the Fleet Air Arm, defended the skies against the German Luftwaffe during The Battle of Britain; helping to foil Hitler's plans for an invasion of Great Britain (see Photograph 3⁴).

The largest RAF effort during the war was the strategic bombing campaign against Germany by Bomber Command. These attacks became increasingly devastating from 1942 onward as new technology and greater numbers of superior aircraft became available.

'Bomber Command crews suffered an extremely high casualty rate: 55,573 killed out of a total of 125,000 aircrew (a 44.4 percent death rate), a further 8,403 were wounded in action and 9,838 became prisoners of war. This covered all Bomber Command operations including tactical support for ground operations and mining of sea lanes'⁵.



The RAF also supported the Allied invasion of Europe in 1944 that eventually brought the war to an end.



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⁴ © IWM (CH 1501). Hurricane Mark I of No. 85 Squadron RAF based at Church Fenton, Yorkshire.

⁵ Roberts, Andrew (March 2007). 'High courage on the axe-edge of war'. The Times. London.