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“Games and Planes: 1940s memories from Gravesend”
Recording the Oral History of Westcourt and Gravesend Airfield.

St Aidan's PCC is delighted to announce that we have been awarded £36,200 by the Heritage Lottery Fund to run an Oral History Project over the next two years.

Oral History aims to capture the memories of ordinary people who lived in extraordinary times. In our parish, the first part of the 1940s was spent living under flight paths of British planes from Gravesend Airfield, and German planes flying towards London. Many bombs fell. It was spent living near a POW camp on Denton Marshes. After the war, the airfield became a civilian industrial area. Many people were housed in prefabs around the site of the present Church until brick houses were constructed in the 1950s.

“Games and Planes” will employ a manager whose first task will be to recruit and train a team of volunteer interviewers. By the start of 2011, they will be setting out to collect the stories of people who lived in Westcourt in the 1940s (in Jubilee and Hampton Crescents and Barr Road, and in the post-war pre-fabs). They will also be interviewing people who worked at the airfield.

People who would rather input their own memories onto a computer, or our new website, will be able to do so. We will also hold a series of Open Days around the parish for people to attend.

The aim is to find out and record for the future what ordinary life was like in the 1940s. As part of that volunteers will be asking about the games children played. In July 2012 local schools will play those games in our own East Gravesend Olympics.

By that time, the project will have produced a booklet, an exhibition, an education pack, and a website. All the material collected will be archived by Gravesend Historical Society, so later generations can use it.

The Project will get going in September. If you would like to be a volunteer, or have memories to share, or know someone who does, please contact us by phoning 01474 351620 or emailing ramartinstaidans@yahoo.co.uk – or call in a speak to me, Kim Hill, Les Day or Ernie Lane.

I think it is going to be a very exciting two years, as we discover more and more about the 1940s Games and Planes.

Rev Richard Martin