

DVDS

HM recommends:

Remembering the Home Guard

★★★★★
Pegasus Entertainment DVD, 55 mins,
£10.99 from High Street stockists or
www.pegasus-records.com
Warriors of the Home Front

The Home Guard started life as the Local Defence Force. With no uniform but an arm band, it gained over one million registered members in its first six weeks of existence. Volunteers were drawn from men too old for enlistment and those in 'reserved' occupations deemed essential to the war effort, like engineers, welders, hotel staff, civil servants, and some particularly skilled factory workers. Their job was to repel an invasion – there was no time for Dad's Army-style clowning around, and the men were well aware that they could be Britain's last chance.

It became the biggest unpaid army in the world, and if they weren't in the regular armed services or the Air Raid Precautions (ARP) service, your parents or grandparents would probably have been involved.

We see here how the Home Guard eventually acquired khaki uniforms and weapons and trained with regular troops, learning how to camouflage themselves as shrubbery. Special Auxiliary Units were formed for street fighting and as messenger service – some on skates! (Perhaps there was an

'Their job was to repel an invasion – they were aware they could be Britain's last chance'



A car and trailer pressed into service as a homemade mobile gun platform

element of situation comedy occasionally.) They were the only troops to carry their weapons at all times, even in church; and to bring down German aircraft by rifle fire.

They were disbanded in 1944, and this DVD is a reminder of their importance at the time.

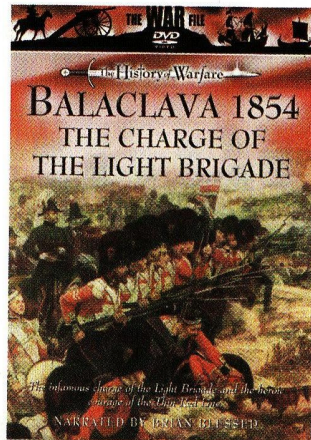
Balaclava 1854: The Charge of the Light Brigade

★★★
Pegasus Entertainment, 55 mins,
£10.99, www.pegasus-records.com
Into the valley of Death

One quarter of the British Army at the time – 26,000 infantry and 2,000 cavalry – took part in the Battle of Balaclava on 25th October 1854. This was part of the Crimean War between Russia and Turkey, with Britain and France siding with the Turks.

The campaign was later immortalised by three separate events. Firstly, part of the 25,000 strong Russian force was parried by the wholly successful charge of the Heavy Cavalry Brigade. Secondly, the rest of the Russians charged the 93rd Highlanders infantry who, instead of forming themselves into the usual squares, drew up facing the charge in a long row only two men deep – the famous Thin Red Line.

Finally, there was the most momentous event of the



three – the Charge of the Light Brigade. The men had been ordered to charge Russian guns being withdrawn from the hilltops but, victims of inept communications, instead they charged down what Tennyson described as the 'valley of Death' towards wholly operative guns that duly cut them down. Of 673 men, only 195 survived, with 475 horses also killed.

This a stirring story well told, with maps, dramatised eyewitness accounts, and scenes from the feature film *The Charge of the Light Brigade*.

Biggin Hill International Air Fair

★★★
Beckmann VHS, 51 minutes,
£12.99 from 01624 816585 or
£3.99 online at
www.beckmanndirect.com
In the wake of The Few

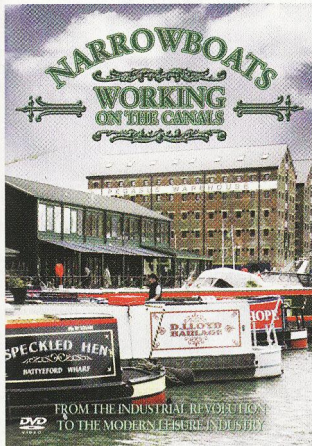
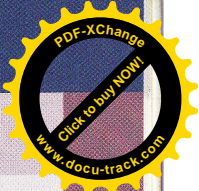
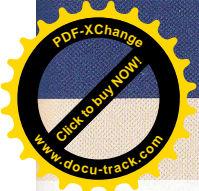
Now an airport, Biggin Hill airfield was made famous during the Battle of Britain. This compilation is subtitled *The Very Best of 1990–1993*, and is a mixture of demonstration flights by old and new fighting aircraft, aerobatic displays by military and civilian aircraft and interviews with some of the pilots. Aircraft from all eras are featured, including the last visit from the mighty Vulcan Bomber, which flew to the Falklands, refuelling in flight six times, to bomb Port Stanley's runway.

Other aircraft featured include the Blenheim bomber, faster than many fighters; the Lancaster bomber of the RAF's Battle of Britain Memorial Flight; Spitfires with the German Messerschmitt 109;



Mosquitoes; a Naval Swordfish torpedo bomber; the Harrier 'Jump-Jet'; an American F86A Sabre; and the American B-17 'Flying Fortress'. There is also a re-creation of WWI dogfight action, and displays by the Diamond 9 team, as well as the RAF's peerless Red Arrows.

This video will obviously be of particular interest to aviation historians, but these magnificent aircraft are a joy to watch for anyone.



Narrowboats: Working on the Canals

★★★
Pegasus Entertainment DVD, 60 mins, £10.99 from www.pegasus-records.com
Folk on the water

Canals were invented in the 1750s to transport goods economically when roads were unmade. For bulk and heavy goods like coal and timber, transport by canal was the only practical solution. By 1830 there were over 4,000 miles of navigable 'cuts', which were lined with clay up to three feet thick (about a metre).

The work that went in to their production was incredible; the teams of engineers and navvies ensured that no geographical feature stood in their way. They went up and down hills using locks, or went straight through using tunnels. They crossed valleys and rivers using elevated aqueducts and bridges. This video shows their construction and what life on the canal was like.

When the railways started to compete, canal carriers had to drop their prices. Wages dropped and impecunious boatmen had to take their families to live aboard the narrowboats, often with only seven feet (about 2.2 metres) for the whole family. If your family were canal carriers, this video will provide entertaining background.

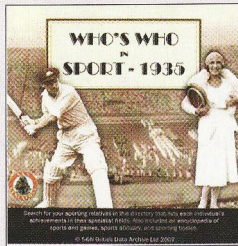
DVD reviews by James Taylor

Data CD round-up

Who's Who in Sport 1935

£17.95 (plus p&tp). From S&N Genealogy Supplies, West Wing, Manor Farm, Chilmark, Salisbury SP3 5AF. ☎ 01722 716121; 🌐 www.genealogysupplies.com. CD presented in Acrobat PDF; Mac and PC compatible. Fully bookmarked.

As we mark the 75th anniversary of cricket's infamous 'Bodyline' series, I searched this volume for the main protagonists. We learn that Douglas Jardine was born in India in 1900, and played county cricket for Surrey. The series in which he played for England are listed, including those in which he was captain.



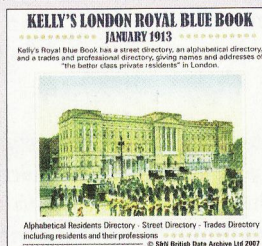
Jardine's spearhead was Harold Larwood, who was born in Nuncargate in 1904 and played for Nottinghamshire. He is noted as having taken more than 100 wickets in a season on several occasions.

Many other notable sportsmen (and women) feature, and family historians who are interested in sporting figures will find its 320 pages compelling.

Kelly's London Royal Blue Book – January 1913

£17.95 (plus p&tp). From S&N Genealogy Supplies, West Wing, Manor Farm, Chilmark, Salisbury SP3 5AF. ☎ 01722 716121; 🌐 www.genealogysupplies.com. CD presented in Acrobat PDF; Mac and PC compatible. Fully bookmarked.

This directory comprises in excess of 1,600 pages, containing the names and addresses of the 'better class private residents in London'. The three main sections are a street directory, an alphabetical directory – which lists nearly 50,000 residents – and a trades and professional directory. London in this context comprises an area bounded by Hampstead, the Thames, Finsbury Circus and Hammersmith.

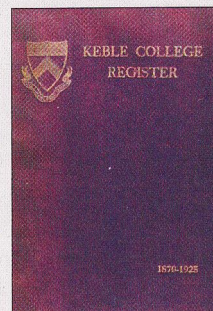


A typical entry in the alphabetical directory tells us that the Hon Sir Sidney Arthur Taylor Rowlatt was a judge of the King's Bench Division of the High Court, who lived at 11 Upper Phillimore Gardens. If we then turn to the section about the High Court of Justice, we can learn more about Rowlatt's professional life, which in turn opens the door to a multitude of research avenues.

Keble College Register 1870–1925

£8 (incl p&tp). From Anguline Research Archives, 41 Potter Avenue, Lupton, Wakefield, West Yorkshire WF2 8HE. ☎ 01924 379301; 🌐 <http://anguline.co.uk>. CD presented in Acrobat PDF; Mac and PC compatible. Fully bookmarked but not searchable.

This register was published by the Keble Association in 1927, and lists every Keble student and sets out their background, their qualifications obtained at the college and brief details of their career since.



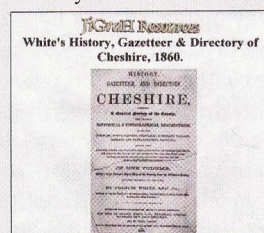
A typical entry is that for Walter Hodgson, who was born 19th October 1853 and educated at Bloxham School. He achieved his BA in 1879 and MA in 1881, and at the time of publication was living at 3 Criffel Avenue, Streatham Hill, London SW2. Hodgson is described as a 'shorthand writer' and his work as a parliamentary reporter is detailed.

The register's 560 pages also include details of many college members who had passed away, including those who perished in the Great War.

White's History, Gazetteer & Directory of Cheshire 1860

£13 (incl p&tp). From Mr G J Hadfield, JiGraH Resources, 85 Heythrop Drive, Acklam, Middlesbrough, Cleveland TS5 8QX. ☎ 01642 288937; 🌐 www.jigrah.co.uk. CD presented in web browser; Mac and PC compatible.

This includes over 1,000 pages on historic Cheshire. It is organised by hundreds, and includes locations such as Chester, Stockport and Crewe, as well as Birkenhead and other local towns.



The directory begins with the history and topography of the county, along with a history of its ancient county town. It then contains a gazetteer and directory for every place in Cheshire. The businesses of each location are classified by trade, but private residents often aren't included.

The description of the village of Millington includes a comment that 'An old woman, Mrs Nancy Davies, is in her 91st year, quite active and enjoying good health'. It is that level of detail that provides a good insight into life in the north-west a century and a half ago.

CD reviews by Paul Gaskell

CDS