



VILLAGE
WARTIME
WALK & CYCLE

4 Toft Hall POW Camp
Prisoners of War were held at a camp in the grounds of Toft Hall near Knutsford. The daughter of a local farmer recalls her father taking a tractor and trailer up to the POW camp to collect men to work on his farm in Allostock.

9 Bells of Peover
In Lower Peover is the pub "The Bells of Peover". This inn dates from round the 13th century and is noted for its connection to General Patton who was based at Peover Hall. He was a regular visitor when he and his staff enjoyed the opportunity to relax there.

8 Peover Hall
Peover Hall was requisitioned from the Mainwaring family during the war, and was used by the American General George Patton as his HQ during preparations for the Normandy Landings. American troops lived in huts in the park. Nearby is St Laurence's Church where Patton was a regular worshipper, and the flag he presented to the church still hangs there.

5 RAF Cranage & Three Greyhounds
RAF Cranage airfield was located to the North of Byley School in the area between Moss Lane and Kings Lane. Work to build the airfield started in late 1939, and it was ready in October 1940.

It became the Central Navigation School and also housed an operational squadron from December 1940 with the formation of 96 Squadron.

Little remains of the buildings, apart from a few air-raid shelters. However the public house which was the local for the personnel at the airfield, The Three Greyhounds is still thriving.

3 Fontainbleu Cafe & Hostel
The Fontainbleu Cafe (on Knutsford Road, Cranage where the Foxfield Court estate is) catered for travellers in the 1920s and 1930s. After WW2 it became the seed merchant Alteys.

During the war the Cafe was used by the Cheshire War Agricultural Executive Committee as a branch-office and hostel. Men were hired out to local farms from the hostel as farm labourers. This hired labour included conscientious objectors and Italian and German prisoners of war.

2 The Hermitage
During the Second World War the Hermitage estate was requisitioned by the Services. At one point, American Officers were billeted there. Children used to sit along the banks of Hermitage Lane in the hope that troops would come past and hand out sweets.

1 Cranage Colony and Hospital
In 1929 Cranage Hall became a mental hospital and the complex was called Cranage Colony. Two men who worked at the Hospital were killed during the War: Cecil Batt, and Stephen Wormald.

On VE Day, a huge bonfire was lit at the Colony in celebration of the end of the War.

6 Byley Churchyard
At the back of St John's Church Byley, in the churchyard are 16 War graves from the Second World War, and two from 1946. The men died in accidents at RAF Cranage airfield or close by in Cheshire.

7 Vickers-Armstrong Wellington Bomber Factory, Byley
In September 1941, a Wellington Bomber assembly factory came into operation at Byley. It was located immediately south of Lily Farm. It was linked to the airfield by a track.

The Byley site was a "shadow factory" to the Vickers Armstrong factory at Hawarden near Chester. Wing assemblies for Wellington Bombers were delivered from Vickers Armstrong in Chester on low loaders.

By September 1945, a total of 5,548 Wellingtons had been built at Chester and Byley. Byley's contribution could have been close to 1,850. A platoon of the Holmes Chapel Home Guard guarded the factory site at night.

10 Bengers Factory
Just past the railway bridge on London Road, to the south of the village, on the left, was The Bengers Factory. The site was originally built in 1938. Bengers food was a speciality food for invalids, nursing mothers and the undernourished. During the Second World War, it continued to make its products, and was in demand to help restore returned Prisoners of War to better health.



VE DAY
HOLMES CHAPEL



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