# MANCHESTER UNITED MUSEUM & TOUR

# PRE-VISIT LEARNING ACTIVITIES KEY STAGE 2



HISTORY: THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

## World War 2

The 1939-40 football season had only just started when Britain declared war on Germany on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939. Immediately football was suspended as emergency regulation prevented the assembly of large crowds. Some clubs closed down for the duration of the war while the rest carried on as best they could in conditions severely restricted by the Football League, the FA and various emergency regulations.

### Manchester United in WW2

At the outbreak of war Manchester United were looking forward to consolidating their position in Division One. Promoted in 1938 United had had one season in Division One behind them and further progress was expected from the team although it was a mediocre start for the Old Trafford side.

Soon after war was declared United found their training ground requisitioned as a site for Barrage balloons and part of Old Trafford taken over as a military depot. By 1940 all bar seven of United's forty professional players were in the armed forces. The others were doing essential war work.

Raids on Manchester forced United to postpone a match against Blackburn Rovers in December 1940 and in 1941 the club was forced to decamp to Maine Road after the ground was hit in the German raids of March 1941.

Wartime successes for United were few and far between. Seldom able to make a consistent challenge for the regional championships the club at least won the Lancashire Cup in 1941. This success was built upon the following season when United won the Football League Northern Section (Second Championship). Fully utilising the 'system of using 'guest' players United had the incredible number of 82 players registered in 1944 using 49 players in the 39 matches of 1943-44 season.

With the end of the war imminent United again came close to success, reaching the final of the League north Cup only to lose over two legs to Bolton Wanderers.

## Players in World War Two

At the outbreak of war in 1939 many footballers suddenly found themselves out of work. The Football League was abandoned, some players were immediately called up having served in the militia before the war, others volunteered and more began work in essential industries to help the war effort.

Even in the armed forces or doing essential war work many professional footballers were still able to carry on playing football whether it was for their own club, as a guest for another League club or for their Army, Navy or Royal Air Force unit.

#### Johnny Carey

Irish national Johnny Carey was exempt from conscription into the armed forces. He continued playing for United, but also appeared for Manchester City, Liverpool, Everton and Middlesbrough. Carey worked in essential munitions production during the war, but later volunteered to join up. He declared, "…I am ready to fight for the country in which I am getting my living". He joined the British Eighth Army and landed at Algiers in July 1943, serving in North Africa and later Italy. By late 1945 he was waiting to be demobbed, but based at Catterick in Yorkshire he was able to continue his career at Manchester United whilst waiting for his return to civilian life.

#### Johnny Hanlon

Johnny Hanlon served in the Durham Light Infantry but was captured during the allied invasion of Sicily in July 1943. He spent two years in the Stalag IVB prisoner of war camp near Muhlberg in Germany until liberated by Russian troops. After liberation he returned to Manchester in May 1945 and was demobbed in November 1945. He made an impressive return to action with United scoring 13 goals in 28 appearances during 1945-46 season.

Allenby Chilton joined United from Liverpool in 1939. He made his United debut against Charlton in the last peacetime match before the Football League was abandoned. During the war he served in the Durham Light Infantry, landed in France on D-Day and was wounded fighting at Caen in Northern France. He made his second League appearance for United almost exactly seven years after his debut and went on to have a long successful career at Old Trafford.

#### Charlie Mitten

Charlie Mitten had joined United in 1936 as an amateur. After working in a local aircraft factory Charlie Mitten volunteered for the Royal Air Force in 1939. Becoming a Physical Training Instructor he continued playing for United and as a 'guest' player for various other League clubs before being posted to the Azores. Whilst playing for the RAF he once scored 13 goals in one match. He returned to Manchester United in 1946 as the first choice outside left in Matt Busby's team.

# Supporters and Grounds in WW2

For supporters football became almost a completely new experience. The established competitions had vanished replaced by regionally organised Leagues and Cups. Not only this, there were attendance limits placed on matches by the local police concerned about potential casualties after an air attack, and established players found themselves on active service or in essential industries.

During the Second World War Manchester United saw three players lose their lives.

### **Hubert Redwood**

Hubert Redwood had joined Manchester United as an amateur in May 1933. He continued to live in St. Helens, the rugby stronghold where he had been born and travelled to Old Trafford every day.

He made his debut for United in 1935-36 season against Tottenham Hotspur and by the following season was established in the team. A cultured right full-back he was on the fringe of international honours when football was suspended in 1939. He made 165 appearances for United scoring 4 goals and appeared for New Brighton as a 'guest' player during the war.

Joining the South Lancashire Regiment he rose to the rank of Corporal before being invalided from the army with Tuberculosis. He died in St. Helens on the 28<sup>th</sup> October 1943 and is buried in St. Helens Cemetery.

## Francis Bertram Carpenter

Ben Carpenter, as he became known at Old Trafford joined the club in May 1939 from non-league Burton Town. An inside-forward coveted by many Football League clubs he had little chance to make an impact at Old Trafford before League football was suspended in September 1939 and he was loaned back to Burton Town.

One of 5 United players who had joined the militia pre-war, he served in the 61<sup>st</sup> (The Denbighshire Yeomanry) Medium Regiment, Royal Artillery. Gunner Carpenter was killed in action during the retreat of the British Expeditionary Force to Dunkirk. He died on the 30<sup>th</sup> May 1940 aged only 21 and is commemorated on the Dunkirk Memorial in Dunkirk Town Cemetery.

## **George Curless**

George Curless joined Manchester United as an amateur in December 1937 after being spotted playing schoolboy football at Orrell, near Wigan. A young full-back he was also employed in United's offices before signing as a professional in November 1939.

Joining the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve he became a pilot in 625 Squadron. He was killed on a bombing raid over Germany on the 27<sup>th</sup> August 1944 and is commemorated at the Runnymede Memorial in Surrey.

# **Busby and Murphy**

The Second World War brought together one of the greatest partnerships in football – Matt Busby and Jimmy Murphy.

Matt Busby who had been playing for Manchester City and then Liverpool, joined the Territorial Army in 1939 alongside many of his team mates. In common with many other professional athletes he became a Physical Training Instructor in the Army, enlisting with the 9<sup>th</sup> Battalion The King's Regiment. As a professional footballer Company Sergeant Major Busby was selected to play in and manage a series of exhibition matches in Italy and Greece played as entertainment for the troops. He also played for and later captained Scotland in seven unofficial matches versus England between 1942 and 1945 whilst also playing for Liverpool, Bournemouth, Reading, Middlesbrough and Hibernian in wartime fixtures.

Jimmy Murphy had been playing for West Bromwich Albion and later Swindon Town before the war intervened to end his professional career. Serving in the Royal Artillery he was sent abroad in 1942 serving in North Africa, Yugoslavia and Italy. Sergeant Jimmy Murphy continued playing football in the Army and also for Morris Commercial FC. By 1945 he had taken charge of a services sports centre in Bari, Southern Italy. The centre was a venue for matches featuring some of the great names in British football as they toured around the Mediterranean playing morale-boosting matches.

It was in Bari that Jimmy Murphy met Matt Busby. Busby was touring with a Football Association side and encountered Jimmy Murphy talking football tactics with some soldiers. Busby had just been offered the post of manager at Manchester United and was so impressed with Murphy's enthusiasm, knowledge and passion for the game that he suggested he should join him at Old Trafford after the war. Once Jimmy Murphy was demobbed during 1946 he accepted the offer, starting a managerial partnership that would last through to 1969.