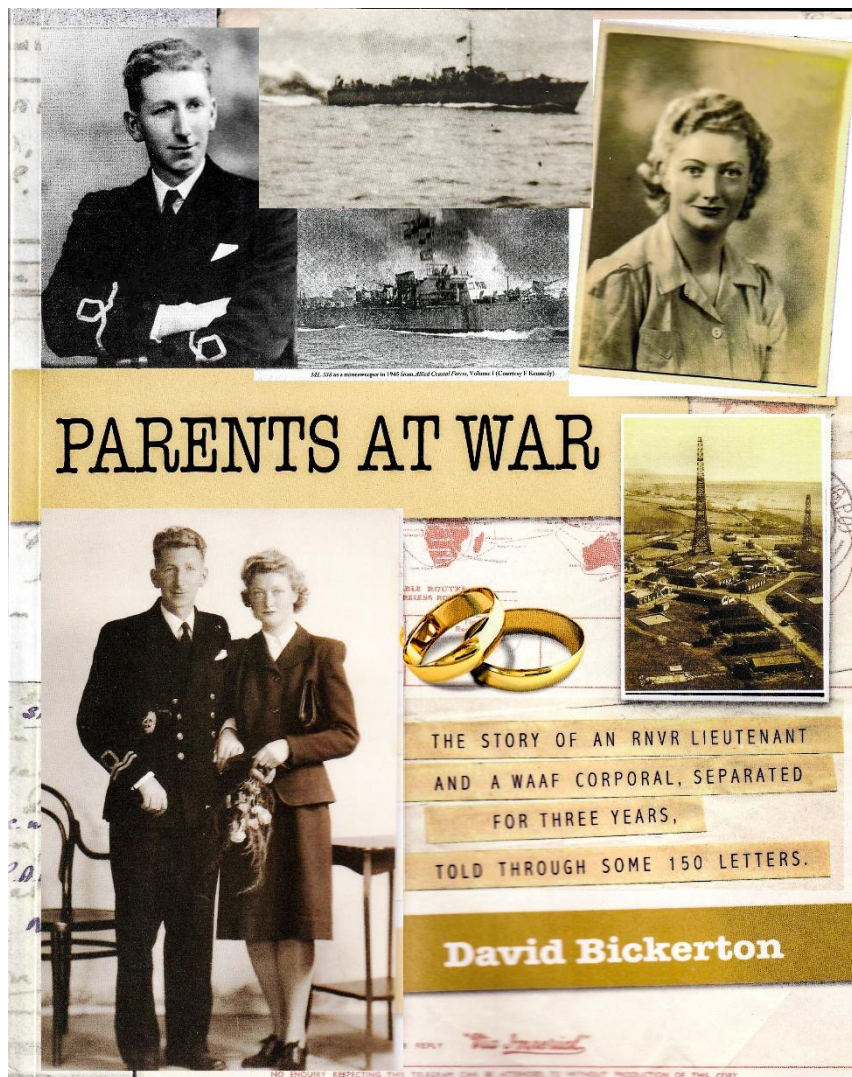




**David Bickerton**



**May 2025**

## **Parents at War**

Members may recall the superb talk that David gave last February about the Pursuit and Sinking of Bismarck – the feedback received was really positive. During this talk David mentioned that his father was a crewman aboard HMS Dorsetshire which was present in the final showdown. Later he was sent to the hostile waters of the Mediterranean where he commanded a minesweeper and was involved in six invasions.

But his mother was also actively involved in the war effort – she was a radar operator in the WAAF and served at five RAF radar stations, finding herself tracking enemy aircraft on their bombing missions.

The title of his talk thus requires no further explanation! Robin

In his book, PARENTS AT WAR, David Bickerton tells the story of his parents' wartime experiences through some 150 letters, written between 1942 – 1945 and full of passion. His father, Don is in the Royal Navy (having first served on cruisers, including on HMS Dorsetshire at the time that she sank the Bismarck) and, at the age of 25, commands an armed minesweeping Motor Launch. His mother, Linda is in the Women's Auxiliary Air Force and a radar operator during the D-Day landings.

The author discovers that, when his parents meet in 1942, they have an intense relationship and become engaged. However Don – who, by his own admission, has something of a 'reputation' – must first break off his betrothal to another, much to his mother's disapproval.

After just 14 weeks, their relationship is interrupted as Don is sent to the hostile waters of the Mediterranean. There his ship is 'first in' during the invasion of North Africa. After the invasions of Sicily, Salerno and Anzio, he declares that his is the only ML involved in all four invasions. There then follow the invasions of Elba and Southern France, where the Maquis sign a 'pact of friendship' on his ship.

After nearly three years he returns home and ten days later, Don and Linda enter a marriage that lasts a lifetime.

As well as examining the progress of the war, the author explores the social history of the forties based on topics discussed in the letters, detailing films seen in the cinema, books read and the swing music.





*HMS King Alfred (Lancing College) 1941 – Don 3<sup>rd</sup> row, 6<sup>th</sup> from right*