

Wimbledon at War

The two world wars devastated lives in Wimbledon, whether at home or serving overseas. Loved ones were killed or injured, homes destroyed, and all had to live with terrible uncertainty. Local people contributed to the war effort, raising funds, supporting refugees and volunteering.

World War One brought an influx of Belgian refugees to Wimbledon who fled the fighting at home, including the Belgian King's sister, the Duchess of Vendôme. The Duchess set up a fund to support the refugees, many of whom were housed in local people's homes. The fund's opening ceremony was held on Wimbledon Common.

Wimbledon was bombed heavily during World War Two: 14,000 homes were destroyed, over 1,000 were injured, and 150 people were killed. The Wimbledon Village Club stayed open during the war. Jim Tait, a club member whose parents were the club stewards during the war, remembers sleeping under billiard tables or desks in the reading rooms during air raids.