



CREWE
TOWN COUNCIL

CREWE



John. A. Bunting

1941

Preparation for war

John. A Bunting was born in Crewe on the 11th February 1923 at number 4 Waine Street.

He lived with his mother, Gladys and his father, Bernard.

In 1941, we know that he was involved with a secret operation in preparation for the start of World War 2.



- **Read the Registry below- can you spot John?**
- **What did he say his job was?**
- **What do you think someone in this job did?**
- **Do you think it was an important job?**

Bunting Bernard A.	-	M	4 April 94	M	Electrical Instrument Maker Signal and Telegraph Dept. L.M.S. Ry.
Bunting Gladys M.	-	F	5 June 00	M	Unpaid domestic duties.
Bunting John A.	-	M	11 Feb. 23	S	apprentice Fitter. Aero Test Dept Rolls Royce Works.
Downer Donald R.	-	M	4 March 97	S	Laboratory Assistant Charge. Signal and Telegraph Dept. L.M.S. Ry.
Parish Edward L.	-	M	29 Apr. 95	M	Locomotive Driver.
Parish Mabel M.	-	F	11 June 00	M	Unpaid domestic duties.
Parish Edward G.	-	M	17 Jan 1895	M	Locomotive Cleaner. AWA. 19. 4. 59

Credit: National Archives, UK

War on the horizon

War was inevitable and the British government began to search for sites to create aeroplane engines.

Rolls- Royce were asked to make these and their production of cars was temporarily halted to make way to produce Merlin Aero- engines.

It would be these engines that powered the Spitfire and Hurricane aircrafts- making them travel over 400mph!

'Shadow' factories were set up around Britain. These were factories disguised and camouflaged as housing to make them less likely to be bombed by an enemy plane.

Crewe was looked at as being a site for a potential shadow factory. It was eventually chosen because it had good transport links already and a skilled workforce ready to begin making.

War officially began 7 weeks after the opening of Crewe Rolls Royce shadow factory.

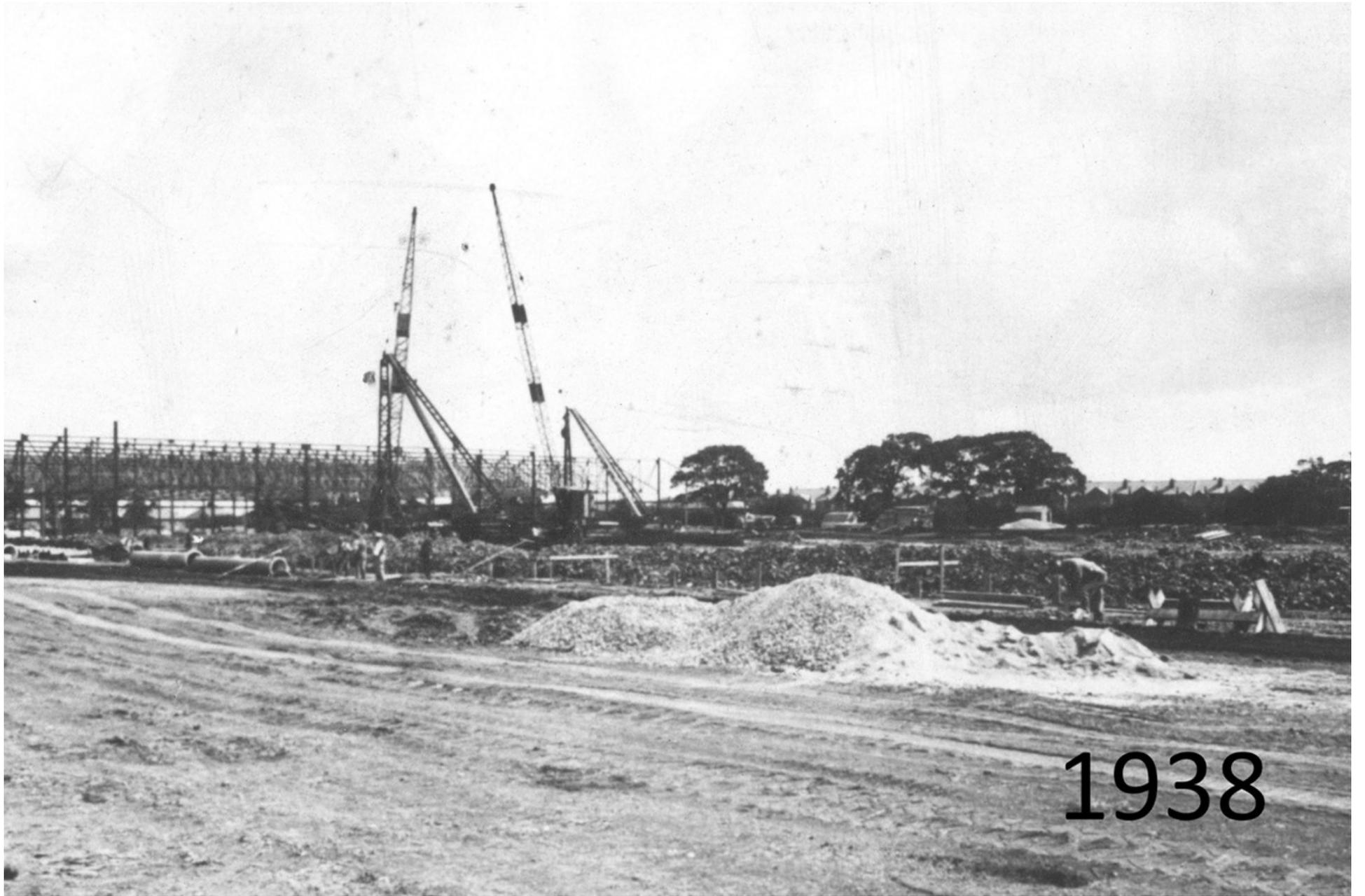
The factory's building was camouflaged and the windows were blacked out.



- **Take a look below to see the image of the map. This shows the map that planners looked at to decide where to build the factory in Crewe.**
- **Take a look at the picture below to see the factory being built.**



Credit: Cheshire Archives and Local Studies



1938

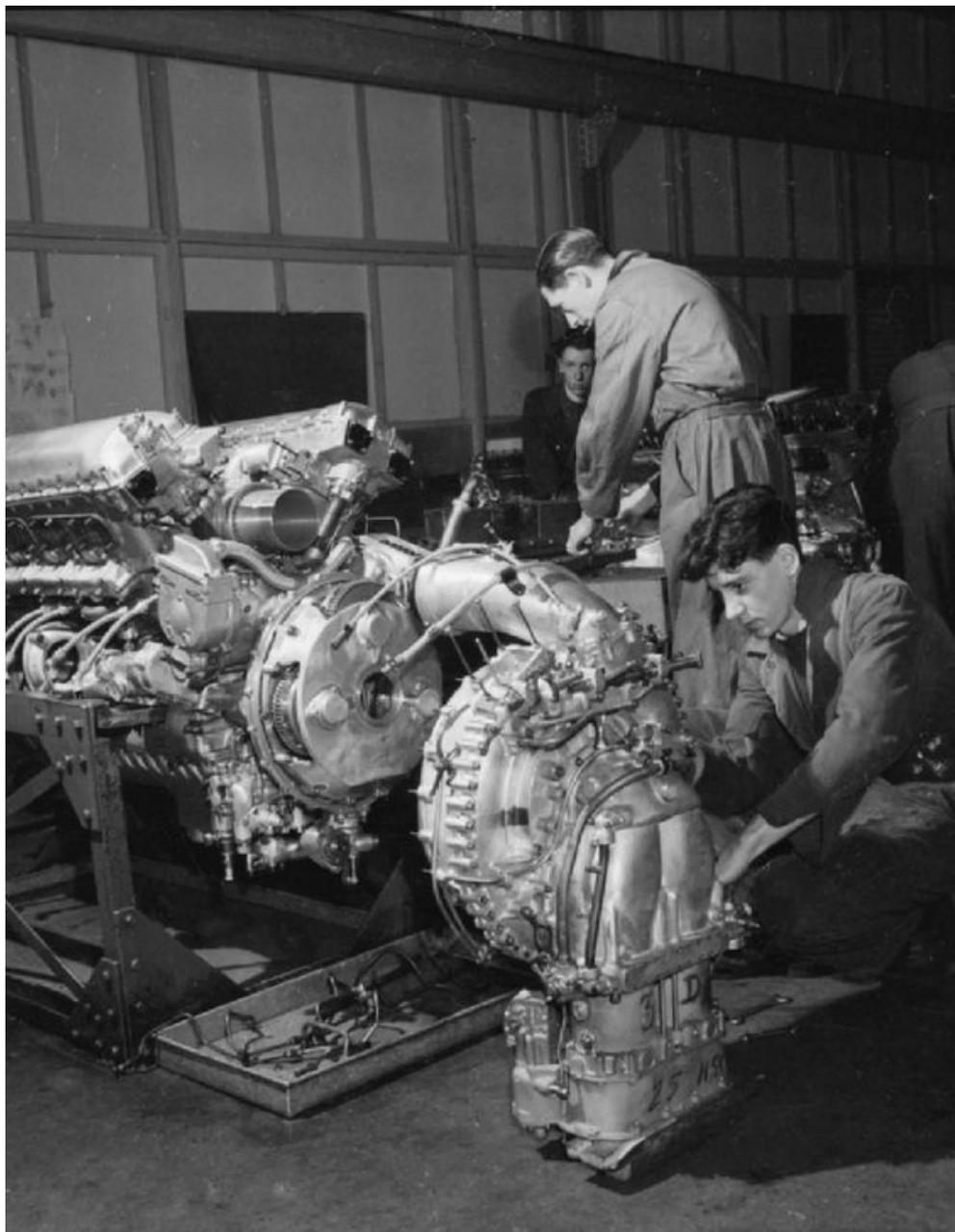
Credit: Cheshire Archives and Local Studies

Apprentice Fitter Aero Test Department

Take a look at these images.

You can see John hard at work.

We know that John. A. Bunting would have made sure all the different parts fit into the Merlin engine and we also know that he would have travelled to the aircraft to fit the Merlin engine into the plane itself- quite an important job!



Credit: Imperial War Museum



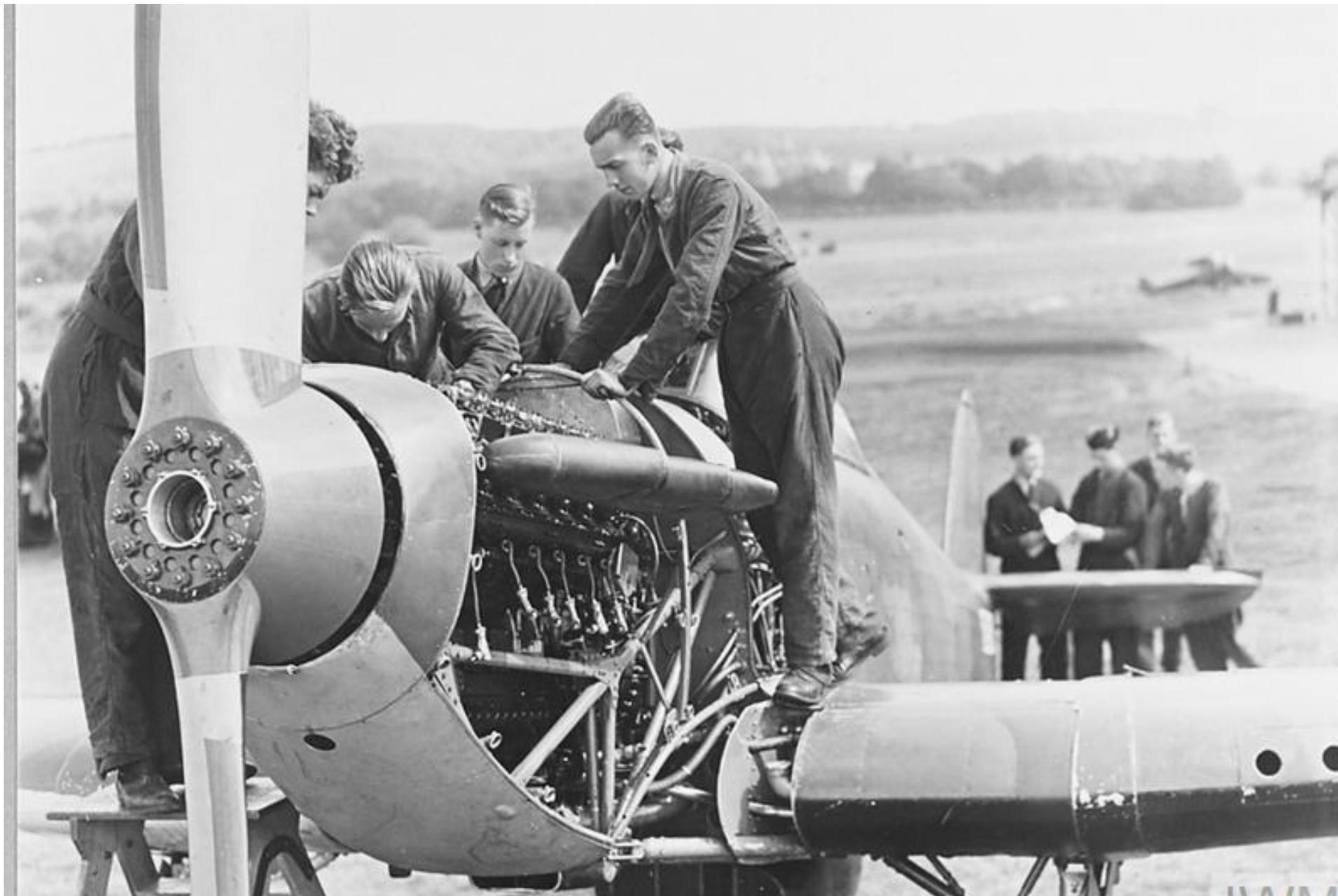
Credit: Imperial War Museum



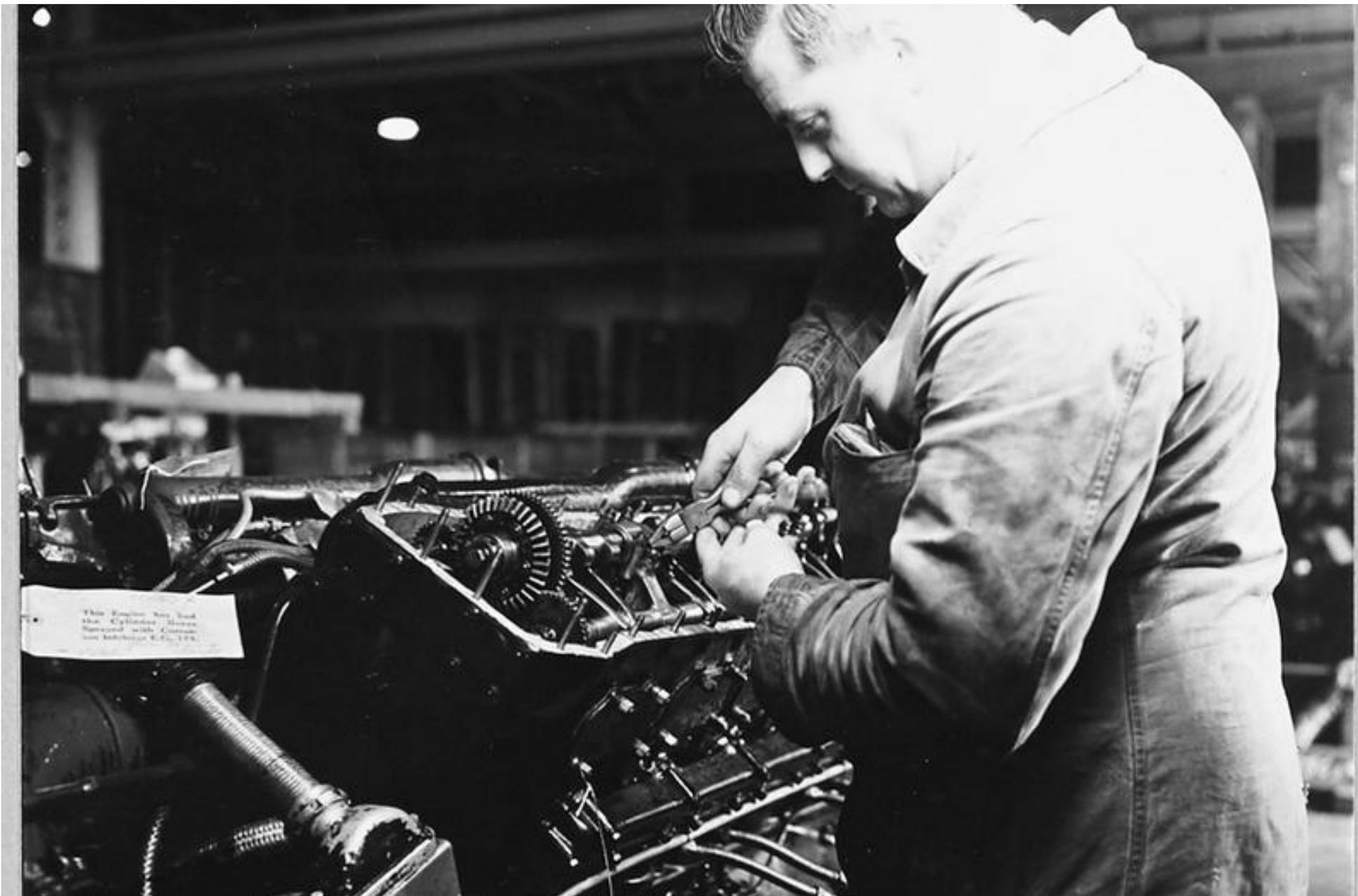
Credit: Imperial War Museum



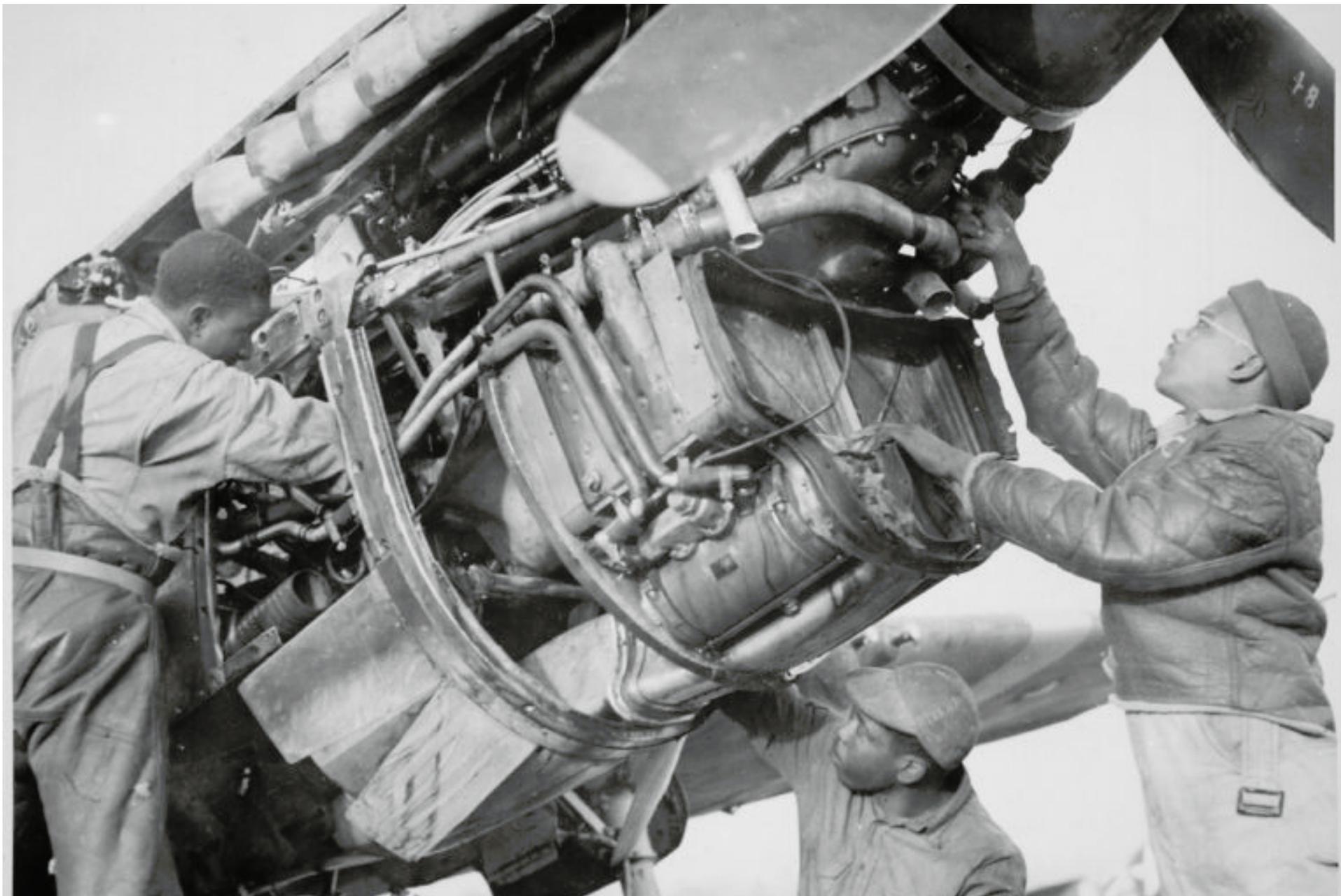
Credit: The Imperial War Museum



Credit: The Imperial War Museum



Credit: The Imperial War Museum

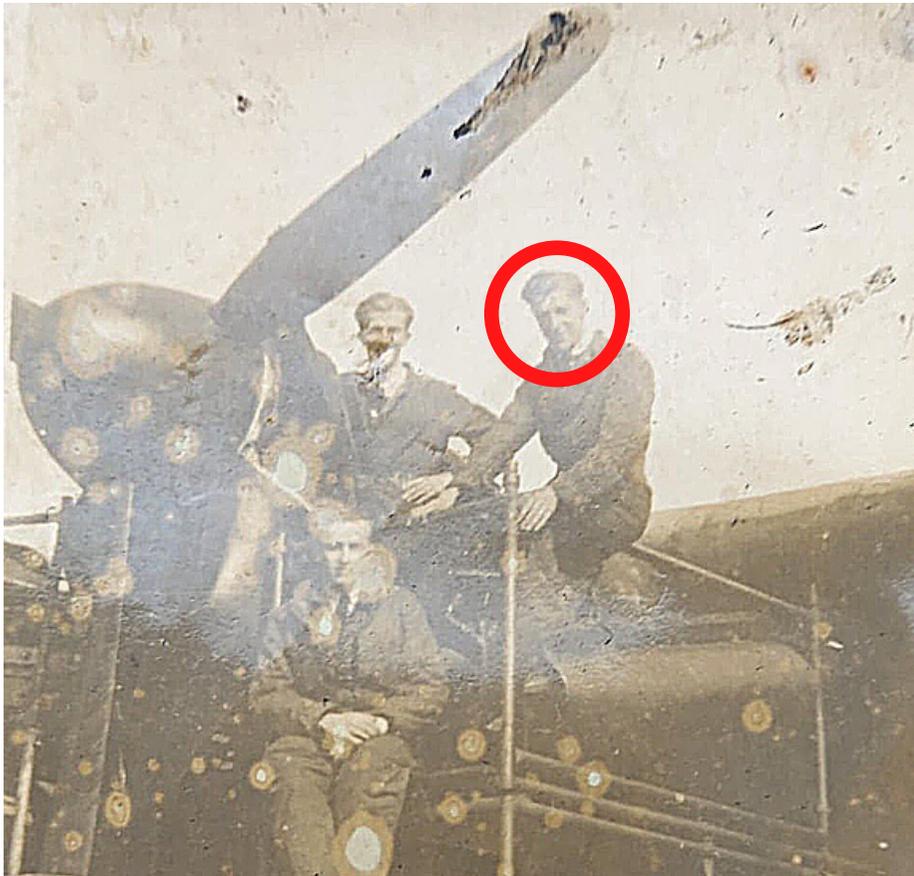


Credit: Imperial War Museum

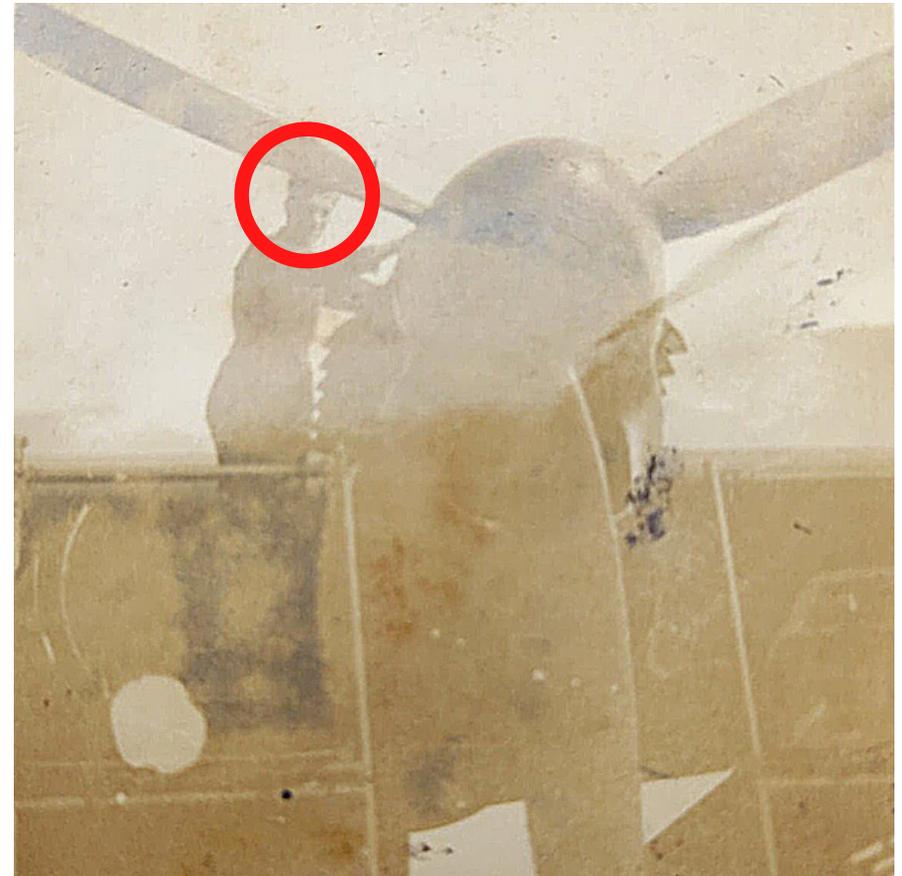
John. A. Bunting's team would have worked together to make sure the Merlin engines fit into the Spitfire and Hurricane aircraft.

Donald Addison worked in the same team to make sure this happened correctly. He started in 1938 and was one of the first people to join the factory. You can see him below circled in red.

Take a look at pictures of this happening.



Credit: Andrew Addison



Credit: Andrew Addison



Credit: Andrew Addison



Credit: Andrew Addison

Working at 16

It took John 35 minutes to walk from his house to the Rolls Royce factory in Pym's Lane and he would have walked down this street in Crewe to get there.

The streets were busy with people going to and from work and school as well as buses and military transport carrying equipment to the factories.

It wasn't an easy job to do at 16!

When it came to making the Merlin engines- the apprentices were split up and put into pairs. The pairs were timed against each other to introduce a measure of competition to see who could assemble a Merlin engine the quickest!



- **What do you notice about the street?**
- **Do you notice any differences to how the streets look now?**



Credit: Cheshire Archives and Local Studies

Camouflaging the factory

Take a look at these images.

They show the walls of the Rolls Royce shadow factory in Crewe.



- **What do you notice on the wall?**
- **What do you think these marks are?**
- **Do you think this plan worked?**

The walls of the shadow factory in Crewe were painted this way as an optical illusion to deceive the enemy pilots in the Luftwaffe (the air force) into thinking the factory was houses instead.

The British government and Rolls- Royce needed to continue to make important Merlin engines. They also needed to develop stronger and faster Merlin engines in order to win the war. If a shadow factory was bombed, it would have halted the production of these engines.

They thought Crewe was likely to have been bombed- it was a busy railway town and the opposition would have wanted to create transport disruption. With Rolls Royce creating Merlin engines it was considered a likely target.



Credit: Crewe Heritage Centre

29th December 1940 15:09

On the 29th December 1940 at 15:09, two bombs were dropped on the factory.

John survived but 17 of his colleagues sadly died.

13 men and 4 women.

The bombs had been dropped on the factory as a deliberate move to attack the Merlin aero engine production.

Because of cloud cover at the time, the German plane was not intercepted despite attempts from British planes.

Some workers had time to evacuate but most did not, due to the lack of warning of imminent attack.

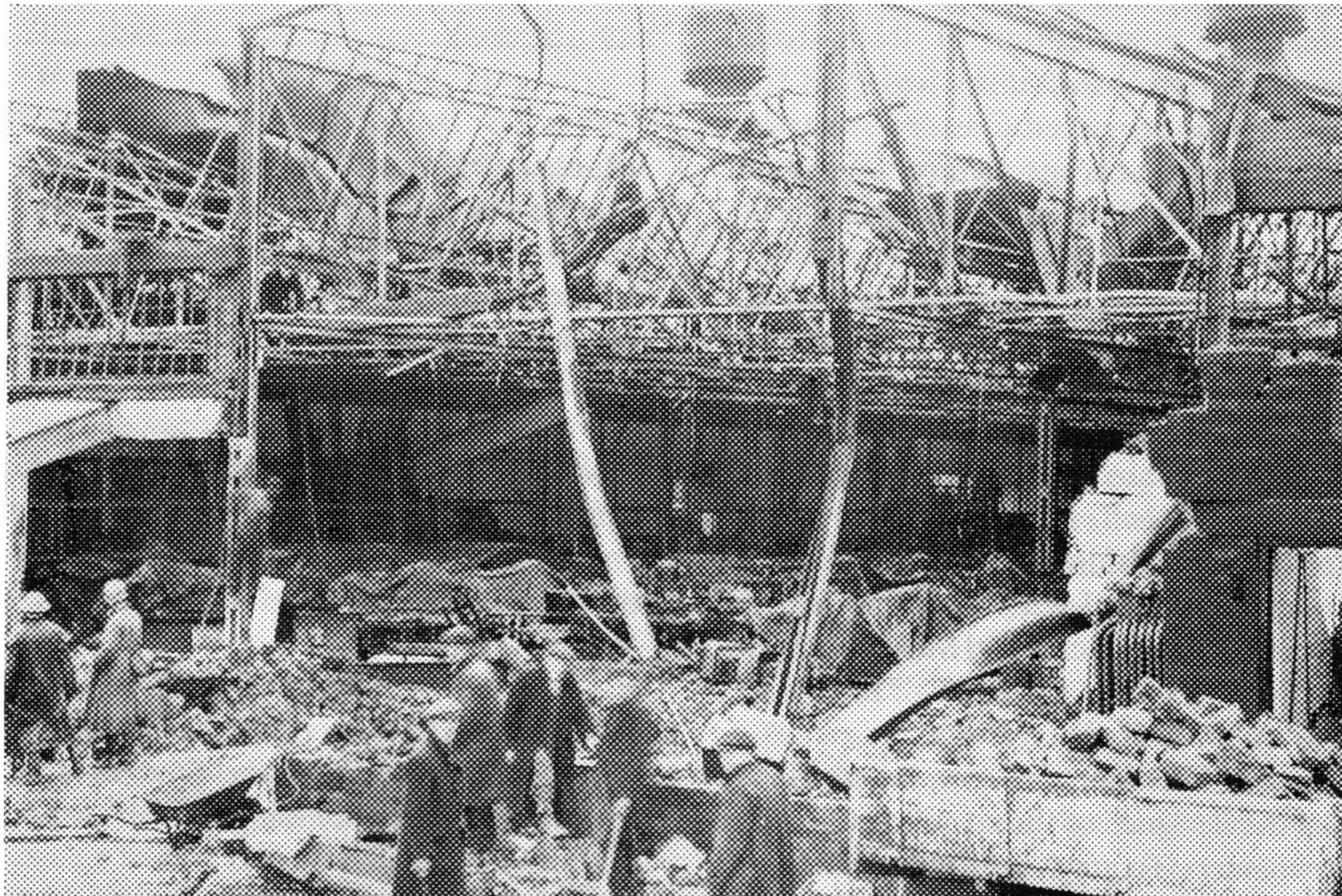
About 60 people were injured within the factory including head and leg injuries.

It was never officially reported but there were rumours that strange leaflets in cylindrical tubes were dropped along with the bombs which people later found in the wreckage.

They were German leaflets written from Hitler warning the British people what would happen if they didn't soon surrender.



Credit: Cheshire Archives and Local Studies



Credit: Cheshire Archives and Local Studies

Hilda Edwards was working in the Rolls- Royce factory when the two bombs fell.

Read what she said about that day.



Credit: Vivienne Jones

"At the age of 18, I worked as a trimmer and my husband was an apprentice fitter.

On Sunday December 29th 1940, I was at work in the main shop along with friends Mary, Edna and Emily when I was told to go to 16 shop....I heard an awful noise. I ran on the main shop and went into the trip shop and met another friend, Harriet who was just going to get her coat. We both got under the bench when there was a loud bang. We stayed there for a short while afraid to move.

We later collected our belongings and 'clocked out'. There were crowds of people outside including my father on his motorbike- riding up and down keeping the crowds away from the gates... my mother was pleased and relieved to see I was ok but it took a while to get over the shock.

Whenever the air raid sirens sounded the men working on the machines would just drop what they were doing and run for the shelters. The trouble was that some of the men were using air lines to clean the components and when they dropped them, they whipped around like snakes. We had to try and get through them without getting hit on the ankles by flying air pipes!"

Keep calm and carry on

This didn't stop the remaining workers at the factory and in the following months they manufactured even more Merlin engines than they had done previously.

There were some problems however, which John might have tried to solve.

One of these problems occurred when the Merlin powered aircraft was to nose down into a deep dive. If this happened, the g-force would cut the engine's supply of fuel.

German planes knew this and tried to exploit this weakness by nosing down to avoid an attack!

The Merlin was so popular that demand was too high and the Crewe factory could not keep up.



- **How do you think John. A. Bunting felt after all of this?**
- **How would you feel?**
- **What adjectives would you use to describe this feeling?**
- **Do you think he would have felt defeated or more determined than ever to create Merlin engines?**



Credit: The Imperial War Museum



Credit: The Imperial War Museum



Credit: The Imperial War Museum

Women in the factory

John Bunting would have had female colleagues as well.

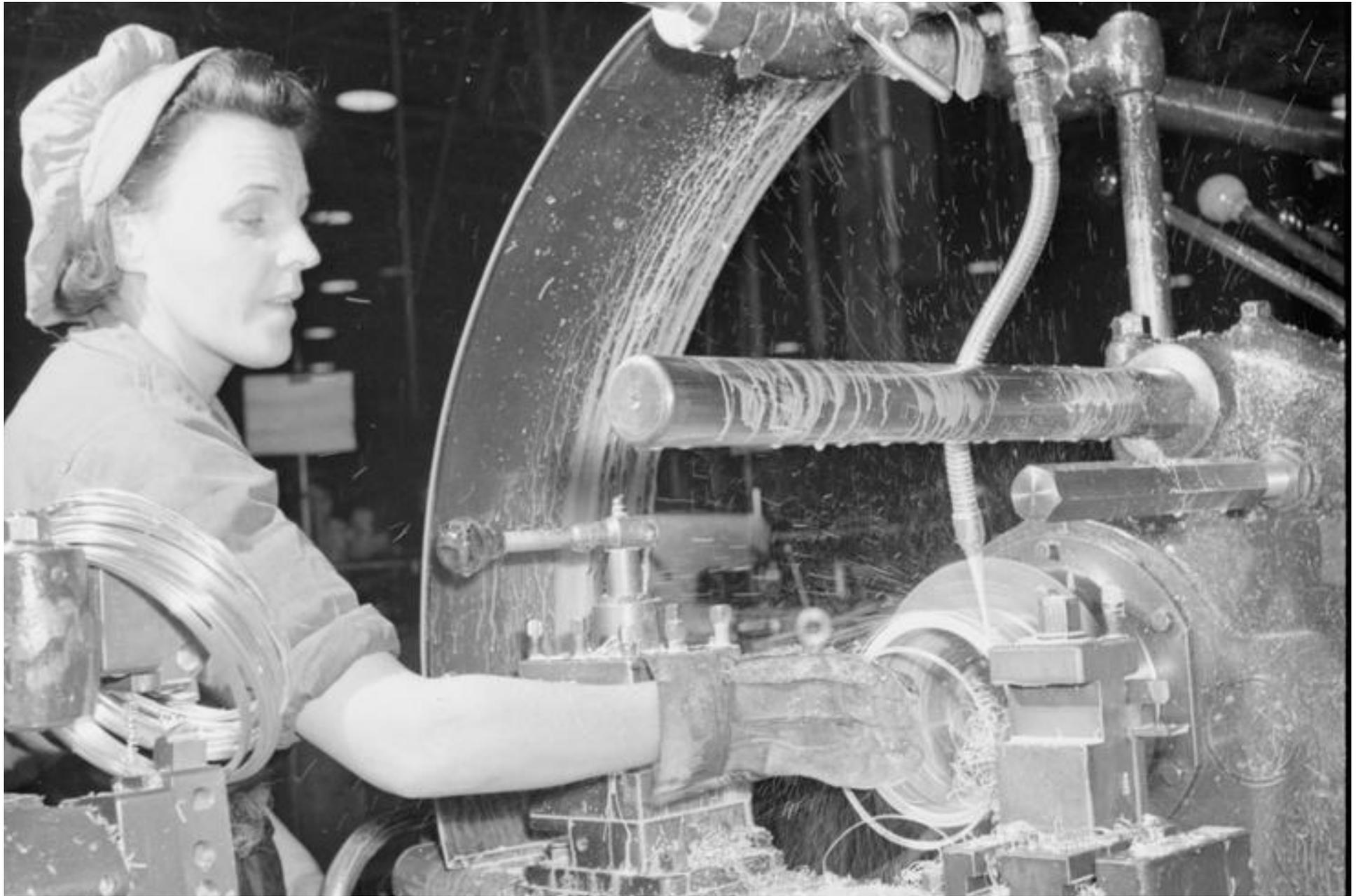
With Britain's men leaving their jobs to join the war effort, women were asked to fill their jobs. Jobs that were usually thought unsuitable for women.

Women making bombs and aircraft parts were called munition workers and John Bunting would have worked alongside them.

Women were necessary to this operation and they were extremely valued.



- **Do you think this is fair that women weren't allowed the same jobs as men?**
- **How would you feel if you were a woman and you had your first job in a factory?**
- **Do you think you might have been treated differently when you went to work as a woman?**
- **Why?**
- **Take a look at the images below showing women at work at the factory in Crewe in 1940.**



Credit: The Imperial War Museum



Credit: Ann Black



Credit: The Imperial War Museum

The Labour Officer for London states that women are easier to train than unskilled men; they have a particular aptitude for various processes, such as viewing, and in repetition work are said to be less liable to tire. In intelligence, a girl of 18 is said to be equal to an unskilled man of 25.

Female munition workers took this opportunity to utilise fair and equal wages to men.

Women workers in Crewe went on strike in 1939 for 2 weeks to protest over unfair standards and pay.

Rolls- Royce agreed to install better and specific facilities for women.



- **How do you think it might have felt to have your first job as a female munitions worker at the factory?**
- **Do you think you might have been treated differently when you went to work as a women?**
- **Why?**
- **Take a look at the images below showing women at work at the factory in Crewe in 1940.**

The Battle of Britain

John had the hard job of making sure the Merlin engines were both properly assembled and could properly fit into the Spitfire and Hurricane aircrafts.

When the Battle of Britain commenced, the Merlin run aircrafts were put to the test.

The Battle of Britain was a major air battle that took place from July to October 1940.

Germany planned to conduct an air invasion of Britain to prepare for it's hopeful invasion but the Luftwaffe were defeated and Germany had to retreat. It was the first major defeat against Germany.

John would have been one of the many people working hard to get the RAF ready for battle and he would have contributed to the fitting of 2,000 Spitfires and Hurricane aircraft that took place in the battle.

It has been said that the Rolls- Royce Merlin engine won the Battle of Britain with 2,000 horsepower making it much more powerful than Luftwaffe aircraft.



Credit: The Imperial War Museum



Credit: The Imperial War Museum

Rolls Royce: Crewe Division

The Rolls- Royce Merlin aero engine was one of the most important and powerful engines of World War 2. It powered both the Spitfire and the Hurricane.

The contribution made by the Pym's Lane Rolls Royce Factory in Crewe was an extremely important one; manufacturing the Merlin engines for Britain's war aircraft.

At Crewe's shadow factory- 25,000 Merlin engines were produced.

At it's peak in 1943, the factory had 10,000 employees working on this production.

There are around 70,000 people living in Crewe now so 1 in every 7 people today would have worked in the factory.

It has been said that "the Merlin was an amazing engine. It could be developed and adapted and when aircraft needed to go higher and faster, it could go higher and faster."



- **Take a look below at the Rolls Royce Crewe Division Test Team photograph.**
- **What can you see in the photo?**
- **How many men are in the photo? How many women are in the photo?**
- **Are you surprised by this? Why?**



Credit: Cheshire Archives and Local Studies

ROLLS ROYCE LTD

CREWE DIVISION

TEST DEPT.

1939 - 1945



Credit: Cheshire Archives and Local Studies

Further activities



Write a diary entry from the perspective of John. A. Bunting on the 29th December 1940.

- Can you include a mixture of fact and opinion?
- How do you think he felt on the day?
- Try using the information you have learnt from both this resource and the video.
- Think about the senses. What did John see, hear and smell?
- What do you think he did in the aftermath?



- **Watch the short video about the life of John. A. Bunting.**