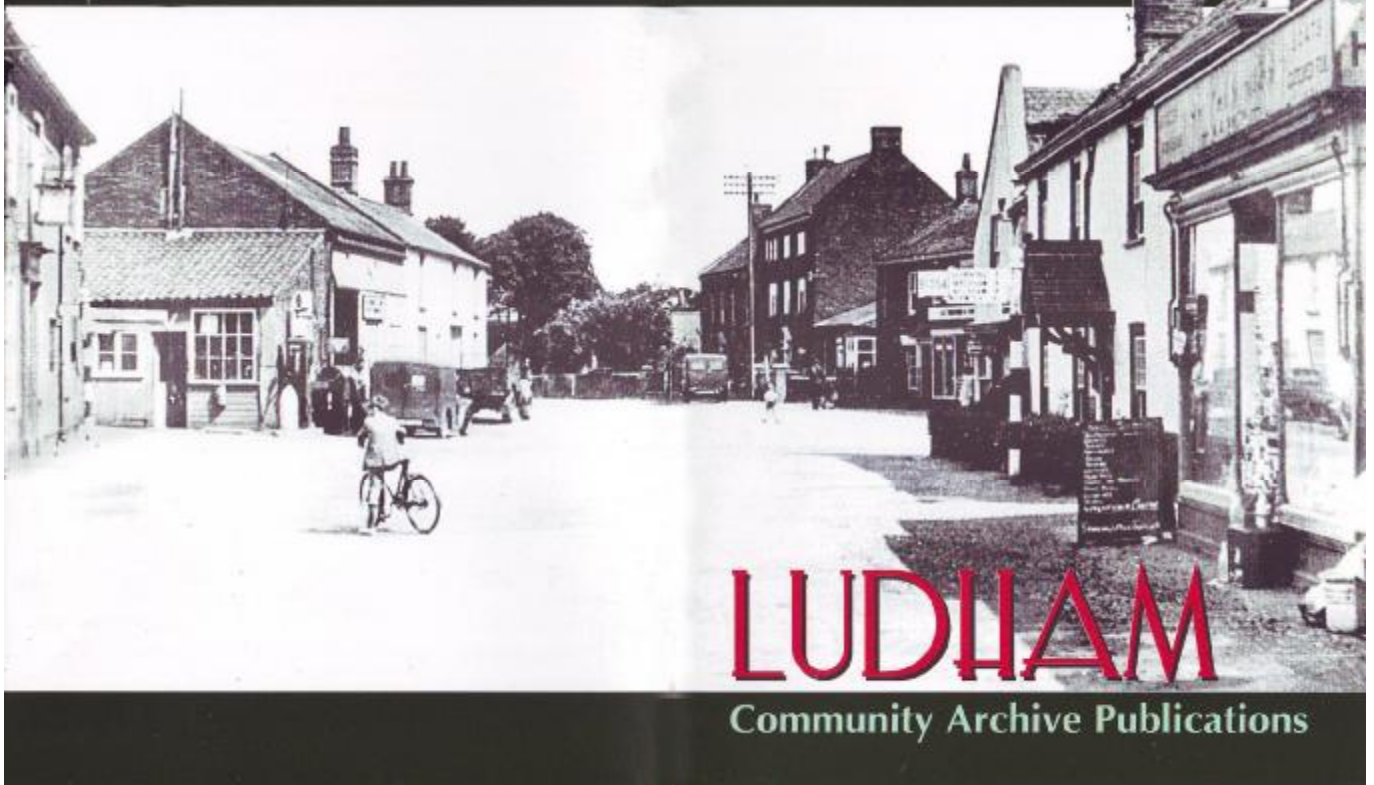


LUDHAM IN UNIFORM
BY
MIKE FULLER



The Ludham Community Archive Group

The group came together during the Jubilee year of 2002 to celebrate it through a community event in the village. The result was a textile triptych, which was completed with the collaboration of over 100 residents of the village. It is now on show in the Parish Church of St. Catherine's. We were supported in this enterprise by the Arts Officer of North Norfolk District Council, Brenda Seymore, and by our Art Tutor, Nicky Maule.

While the project was in progress we introduced local walks, led by knowledgeable villagers, to learn more about the community in which we live. Winter walks also evolved from this. We were also introduced to a method of recording the information that we were acquiring during this process and it was at this point that the archive aspect of the project really began.

Ludham Archive is held on computer and continues to expand as further information comes to light. Photographic, pictorial and a variety of other images, supplemented by reminiscences form the basis of the archive. In addition, many people have been interviewed and the results recorded. All of this is seen as a beginning of what should become a continuing process to record the evolution of a changing community. Archive materials are open to access by villagers and can be seen at regular evening meetings. Dates of meetings can be found in the monthly parish newsletter.

The archive provides the source of material to make publications available as CD Rom and other visual media, as well as pamphlets and booklets.

LUDHAM IN UNIFORM

BY

MIKE FULLER

The Broadland Village of Ludham seems timeless with its thatched cottages shops and pubs. It's hard to imagine that it once had an RAF Airfield, an Army Camp, and Fire and Police stations. With the Land Army, Home Guard and Special Constables, it seems that the whole village was once in uniform.

This booklet is by Mike Fuller, long time local resident and former Chairman of the Ludham Community Archive Group. Mike grew up in Ludham during the Second World War and was once a fireman with the Ludham Fire Service. He later joined the Fleet Air Arm and travelled the world before returning to Ludham to live and work.

Mike writes with authority about Ludham in Uniform because he has first hand experience of wearing the uniform himself. He grew up with all these changes going on around him and this booklet is filled with his authentic memories and stories. Please note that Mike has written a separate booklet about RAF Ludham, as this is a big subject in its own right. You can get the booklet from the Ludham Archive Group.



Mike Fuller - Then and Now

LUDHAM FIRE SERVICE 1941-1958

The Volunteer Fire Service was started in the year 1941 to help if enemy action caused any fires in the area, on the same lines as the Home Guard. It all started when Mr Charles Green gave a piece of land to build the Fire Station on. This was on the corner of Latchmore Lane and Yarmouth Road. The Government supplied the materials and the Volunteers erected the station.

The station was built in two parts. The large part for appliance and living quarters and the toilet and store at the back. Looking from the front (see picture on Page 4), the appliance side was on the left, with the large double doors. On the right was the single door into the living quarters which was in two parts, the front part for office and eating with a stove and the back part for sleeping four crew members.

We had to go round the back to get to into the engine side. To begin with this was a Buick car and a Coventry Climax Trailer pump. Later in 1944, we were supplied with a Van-type towing appliance with a large-type towing trailer pump to carry all our equipment.

The station was used at one time by four Villages; Ludham, Catfield, Horning and Potter Heigham. There was a sink for washing, (but no running water) and a half size billiard table. We had our own siren cranked by hand and a telephone and by then there was electricity. Sub-Officer Stanley Hunter

was in charge of the Station, with Leading Fireman Arthur Berry next in command and then about twelve other Firemen.

When on duty there had to be at least one Leading Fireman and four Firemen. I was in my first year at work when I was asked if I would like to be a messenger as they needed one but you had to be fifteen, so up went my age and I joined. Later, at sixteen I became a Fireman.

Ludham's night for fire duty was on Tuesdays. We had a crew of four sleeping there from after work until the morning. Then we left for work.

Towards the end of the war I had my first fire, which was a hedge and stubble field fire on the left side of Mill Lane. It took nearly five hours to put out and we had to pump water from Womack for it. There were one or two other fires and then in late 1947 I was off into the Fleet Air Arm.



A Fire Appliance Of The Type Used At Ludham



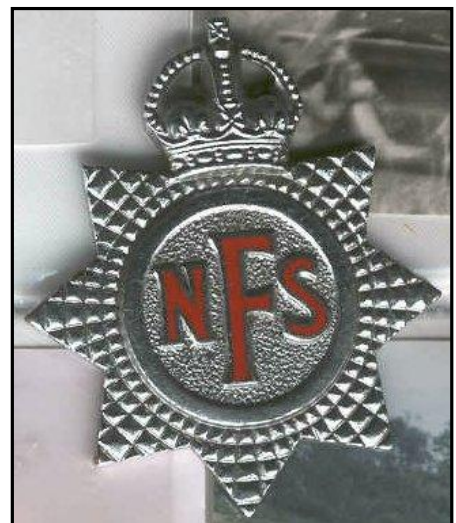
Norfolk Fire Service Badge

Training in my time was done on Ludham Airfield, using the Control Tower and static water tank. It was there that we trained to do four man pump drill. In 1947 we won a pump drill competition in record time; a record that was not broken until 1992 by a full-time crew.

We also had a trip to Colchester for training in which I was asked to climb a seven-storey building by ladder, from window to window on the outside. That was all right, although coming down was a different story, but it got done



The old fire station prior to refurbishment as offices in 2006/7



National Fire Service Badge

I came back in 1955 and joined the Fire Service again after passing a medical. We were still doing our drills and also other jobs such as checking all the hydrants around the villages once a year and pumping out tanks for the Water People.



Time was spent training to carry people down a ladder and we also had weekends at Great Yarmouth Fire Station working with their crews. We went to Coltishall Airfield to learn how to take pilots from aircraft and how to tackle oil and petrol fires.

The end came when we were made redundant in October 1958.

In the time that the Ludham Station was going it had three different titles: AFS, NFS and lastly Norfolk Fire Service.

The station is still there on the corner of Latchmore Lane and Yarmouth Road, and has recently been refurbished as offices (and now in 2015, a hairdressers).



AFTER IT WAS ALL OVER

We had to hand in our helmets (the rest we were allowed to keep) and clear the place up ready to give back to Mr.Green.

The Station was used for storage for a long while, then Mr. Brooks took it over and he let it to an outboard motor company. Then it stood empty until I asked if I could rent it. I used it as my workshop for fourteen years and then it was empty again. In 2006, the building was virtually demolished and turned into offices.

The small trailer pump which Ludham had first has been restored and is now in Stalham Fire Museum. We even had a 250cc motorcycle with all our other equipment, which I rode into the ditch on my first ride. Never again!

LUDHAM HOME GUARD 1940-1945

The Home Guard was organised in Ludham in early 1940 by Col Taylor as commanding officer and Captain Albert Knights second in command. The Sergeants were Jack Sayer, Bob Turner and Sam Myhill. The Corporals were Tom Rix, Bert Gilding, Doc Slaughter, Jimmy Thompson and Sam Hicks. My first memories of the Home Guard were of Father coming home with his uniform and rifle and always keeping his rifle under the bed. I also remember seeing them on parade at Stocks Hill, in the Village on Sunday mornings and some nights during the week.

Most Sunday mornings they would march down Staithe Road to the sand hole on the corner of Staithe Road and Hall Road, which was their firing range.



They would lie down on the road and fire across the sand hole to the butts next to the side of Hall Road. At this time the sand hole was about 16 feet deep with always a lot of water in it.



Ammunition store in Norwich Road

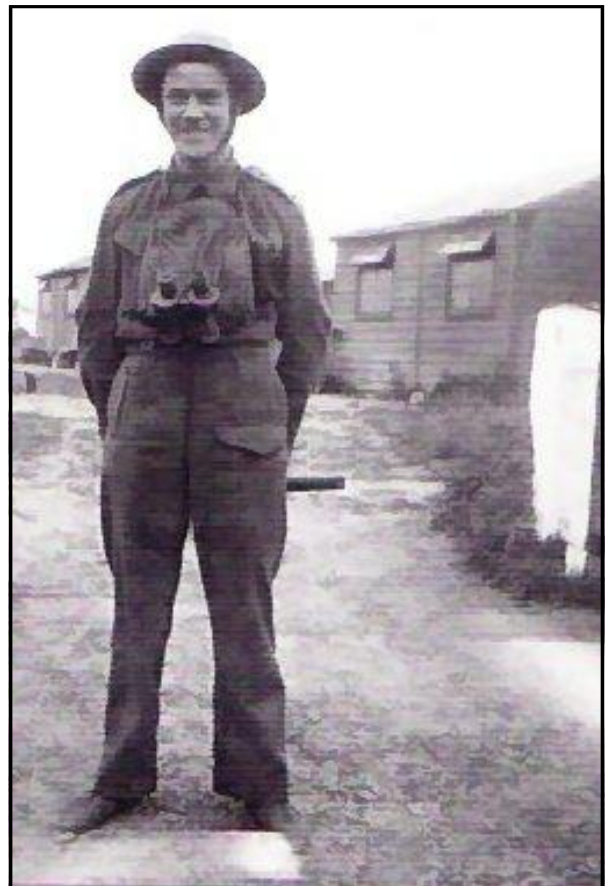
Sometime during the year there was a competition between Horning and Ludham for the best shot and winning team. One year, Father won best shot and Ludham won the team shoot. The next year Horning won the team shoot and Father's brother Ernie won best shot. I have been told that Ludham had another firing range near the Police house on the hill on Norwich Road, but I cannot remember it.

Here is a story told to me by Jack Sayer in the 1980s about Ludham Home Guard when they were on duty at Hemsby: Ludham had to send a patrol some nights during the week to patrol the hills behind the beach at Hemsby. Jack Sayer was Sergeant in charge one night with seven or eight men, with their rifles and five rounds of ammunition each. When the night was finished the men would line up to unload and make sure they had no live ammunition in their rifles. However, this morning one man pulled his trigger and bang went his rifle. The round missed Jack's head by a whisker, leaving a burn mark which he had until the day he died. Jack said this person was one for missing training before this happened, but not afterwards.

To get the ammunition down to the sand hole, Albert Knights would carry it in his Rolls Royce car with the big box on the back.

One night while the German planes were flying over this area and bombing Gt. Yarmouth, and Father and I were watching the goings on, the whole sky started to light up with flares dropped by these planes. It was like day time.

Later Father was called out to go to Horsefen Marshes as there were 20 large flare canisters with their parachutes on the ground or hanging from the trees. These were all collected by the Home Guard and Police, and all this before going to work. The canisters were about four feet long, round like a big saucepan and had three smaller saucepan-like flare holders inside. These were dropped out before the large one was released.



Stan Wells at the searchlight post on Hall Common, 1940

Ludham Home Guard 1944



Back Row: Jack Wright, --- Richardson, George Wright, Reg Westgate, Bill Moy, Roy Roll, Sam Horner, Ted Hall, Frank Bensley, Putty Debbage.

2nd Row: Unknown, Isaac Nichols, Bob Goodwin, John Rix, Arthur Leggett, Charlie Thompson, Randall Beaumont, Sam Hall, Walter Westgate, Unknown, Harry Bunn, Percy Thompson, Unknown, Cyril Hunter, Ernest Grapes.

3rd Row: Wilfred Brown, --- Housern, Harry Norman, Jack Fuller, Pat Thomson, Thrower, E. Davie, Charlie Powley, Leslie Trivett, Jack Mason, Roy Nudd, Arthur Amis, Gordon Bensley, Geoff Hooker, Tom Mattocks, Ernest Parker, Reg Wilkins.

4th Row: Sam Hicks, Jimmy Thompson, Bert Gilding, Tom Rix, Sam Myhill, Albert Knights, Col. Taylor, Bob Turner, Jack Sayer, Dock Slaughter, Jimmy Dack.

5th Row: Stanley Grapes, Eddie Newton, Chips Grapes, Edward Slaughter, Sam Cook, Billy Allen, Herbert Bunting, Ronald Beaumont, Jeff Barber, Victor Trivett, Jack Whittleton, Alfred Gedge, Albert Clarke (Shoddy).

Can you fill in the missing names ?

THE ARMY CAMP IN LUDHAM 1939-45

These are the memories of a School boy in Ludham at that time.

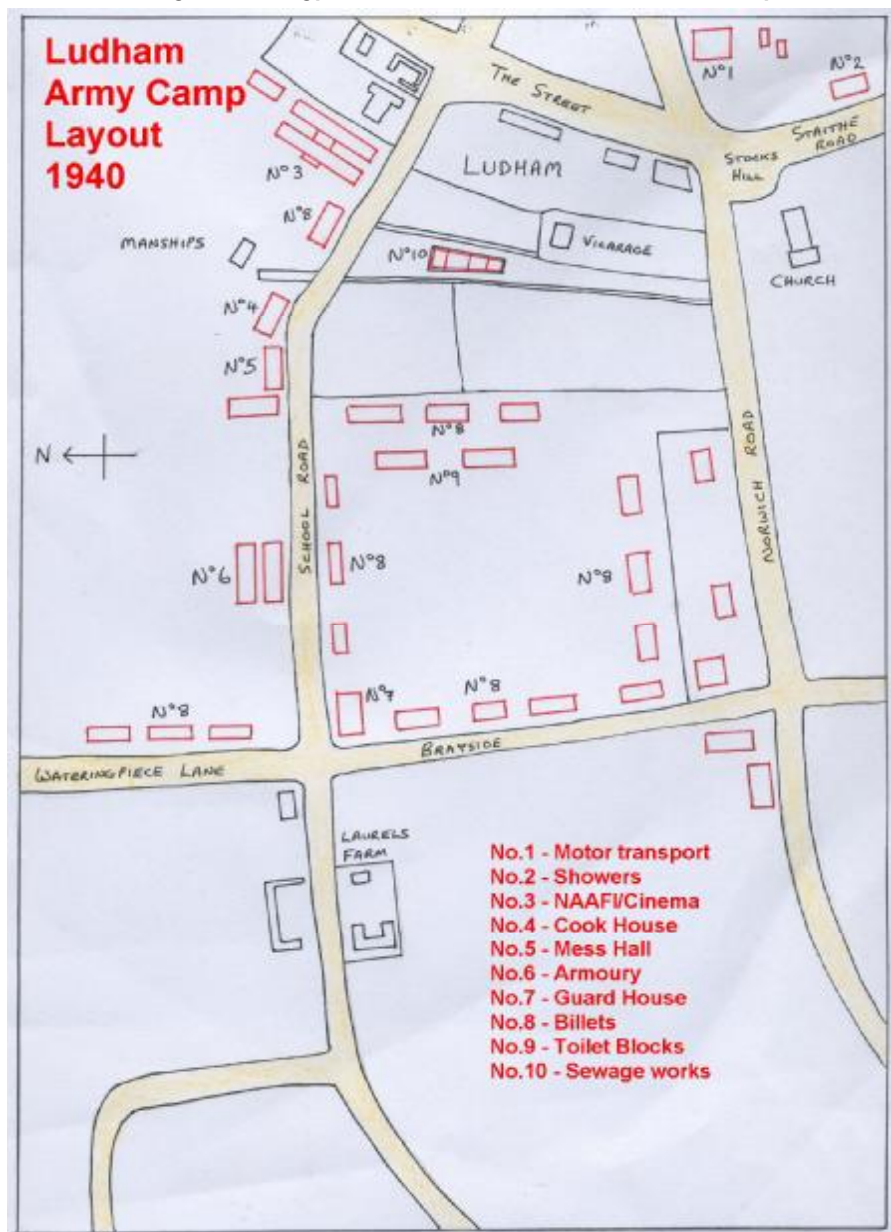
The Army started to build the camp in School Road in late 1939 on the field between Norwich Road and School Road.

There were Nissen huts by the dozen. It then spread out to the other side of School Road and right up to the School playing field.

Next they went to the Manor grounds and built the Motor Transport section there. The sewage works for the camp was on the marshes on the left down School road.

As far as I can remember, the N.A.F.F.I. Cinema and Sergeant's Mess were the nearest to School in two large Nissen huts, then as you went down School Road, next on the right was the cook house and mess hall (where Laurels Crescent is now). Then came the Armoury before you came to Wateringpiece Lane.

The Guard house was on the opposite side of the road on the corner of Brayside and School Road. Further along Wateringpiece Lane were some more Huts, part of the living quarters.



Next we go down Staithe Road. On the left and still in the Manor grounds, was the main shower and washing block, the Army in Ludham also had a searchlight unit. This was down Staithe Road on the right near the marshes.

There was also a firing range with a railway Running the length of it. This was in the quarry down past Clint Street and Blind Lane. It was used for training gunners on mobile units and boats.

The Light Infantry were here in Ludham for a while. Then the Canadians, who stayed until August 1942 when they left overnight for the Dieppe Raid where a lot of them were lost. From then on there were many different units moving in and out, but after June 1944 it all started to quieten down, until in late 1945 it had all finished. Then the camp started to be pulled down and later, Laurels Crescent was built followed by School Road, School Close and lastly by Willow Way.

Now A Few Stories From Those Days

My old friend Ted Singleton told of the time he was billeted at Wateringpiece Lane. Every morning after reveille before breakfast they would double march from there to The Street and back up Norwich Road along Brayside to the Cook house. Ted volunteered for the Paratroops while at Ludham and jumped into Tunisia and Sicily. Later he trained new Paratroops at Ringway. In later life, when Ted Singleton was due to retire, his work mates presented him with a parachute jump which he did on his own at 65 years of age.



Gordon Smith-Evans told of being in the RASC stationed at the Manor Grounds and doing all types of jobs on the M.T. section. He finished up helping to close down the camp in 1945. He also told of Mrs. Brooks (owner of the Manor) asking if they would like to earn some pocket money by helping in the



The remains of the MT Section are still there

garden and cleaning the car. The small Sand hole or quarry behind the Maltings was used by the Army for practicing the throwing of hand grenades and other things.

I myself had a good little job going with the Army as I could get plenty of rabbits and mushrooms to exchange for fruit cake, tomatoes and tins of fruit. One sad note, was that a Canadian soldier took a shot gun from a person in Mill Lane and ran off to shoot himself later

LAND ARMY GIRLS OF LUDHAM

In the 1940s, farms in Ludham were not mechanised as they are today. The traditional ways of working called for a lot of manual labour and this was in short supply with so many men away in the armed services. Because of this, the Women's Land Army was formed to provide labour for the farms and many volunteers came to Ludham during World War 2.

Ludham Hall Farm was a training centre for the Land Army with girls going all over Norfolk from there.

Joan (Pop)Snelling came to Ludham at the start of the war and worked at Hall Farm and also at Mr. Clifford Kittle's Green Farm doing harvest work for two years. She has since written a book, "A Land Girl's War" which is well worth a read.

At Green Farm there was a Land Army girl called Margaret who worked with my Father in the cow shed during the latter part of the war. She was billeted with us at High Mill Cottage and later married a local man.

Mr. Charles Green had a Miss Tubby working on Beech Farm as a Land Army girl. She had a mishap one day while burning some loose straw. The stubble caught light and burnt through to Mill Lane bank and hedge, causing a fire which took Ludham fire brigade five hours to put out, pumping water from Womack



POLICEMEN OF LUDHAM

Ludham used to have a Police House/Station on The Street. It was three stories with cells beneath. There was also later a Police House on Norwich Road where the local constable lived.

This is a list of Ludham policemen since 1845. it was compiled with the help of local historian Beulah Gowing. The dates are approximate.

- 1845 – 50 Lewis Hiram Smith, Superintendent of Police. Lived at the three storey house in The Street
- 1854 Joseph Hiram Scott, Superintendent of Police lived at The Street
- 1862 Phillip Palmer, Police Officer
- 1904 Robert Woodcock, Constable
- 1929 PC Sissons (later Sergeant) lived in a semi detached house in The Street with cells next door.
- 1938 PC Scott
- 1941 Sergeant Edmonds lived in the new Police House in Norwich Road.
During the war, various Ludham residents volunteered to be Special Constables and helped with the police work load which was much higher at this time.
Clifford Kittle a local farmer was one.
- 1950s PC Turner and later Kenny Palgrave.
- 1965 Leonard Harris lived in the Police House in Norwich Road followed by PC Hewitt.
PC Jim Windley was the last to live in the Norwich Road house before it was sold to John Savage.

FINALLY – A FEW MEMORIES

Ludham also had an RAF base (see our separate booklet for details). Aircrew of many nationalities were either based in Ludham or visited for operational reasons. This included French and Polish pilots and visiting American crews, some of whom crash landed at the airfield which was unsuitable for large planes.

At the Army Camp, we youngsters were allowed to go and watch the films so long as we did not take up seats from the soldiers, so we usually sat on the floor. At the end of the war when we were older, we went to dances there and had some fun and good times.

I remember Sergeant Edmonds, our local policemen, walking into the Green Room at the King's Arms and turning all the lads out for being under age, except for me. He said that as you wear the King's Uniform, you can stay, even if you are under age. He didn't miss much in those days.

The Army sewage works was left standing after the rest of the camp was pulled down, and in the 1950s, Neville Gower took it over and roofed it. He used to keep pigs in it until Willow Way began to be built on the site.

Now that School Road is built up, it is hard to remember that before the war it was empty except for the three houses at the end of the wall. Then came Manships Cottages on the right and then Laurel Cottages on the corner of School Road and Wateringpiece Lane. After this, there was nothing until Laurels Farm and after that, Whitegates. School Road then continued on to West End Corner as it still does today.



A policeman guards the wreckage of a crashed plane in front of the Home Guard Post and the Baker's Arms

We are grateful to everyone who has supported us in this project, particularly our local sponsors who are listed below.

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