

WARTIME in BROUGHTON.

Talk by Mrs. Jean Lansley to the Somborne Society 27.4.93

I came to Broughton in 1940 and in three weeks was working in the Post Office. Although many people had gone to the war the population of the village remained the same, there were soldiers at Hildon, in tents until there was a plague of earwigs, when they moved into the house. It was pulled down after the war.

We had the telephone exchange on the wall in the Post Office, there were 60 lines, from 1 to 60, but only three lines to the outside and two of those were military. So in an emergency only three people could have an outside line. We knew everyone, the daily papers they had and their telephone numbers. If someone was going out to tea they would ask for their calls to be transferred to Mrs. So-and-so, which we did quite naturally.

After each call a docket had to be completed and these were collected and sent to Winchester at the end of the day. Telegrams came through on the phone and we took them down with carbon copies. I took down this one for myself. Telegrams saying someone was missing were always delivered by the Post Mistress, we couldn't pass them by telephone.

The Post Mistress was on duty at night with a bell by her bed and if you wanted an outside line you had to wait while she went downstairs. During the war one of us had to sleep on a camp bed by the exchange ready to take calls, for this duty we were paid 2/6 a night.

We distributed the allowances, such as payments for evacuees. We sold handkerchieves, they come in packets of four because you got four for one clothing coupon. Soldiers often wanted to buy an handkerchief to send as a present and many of my coupons went this way, we would give them a coupon.

The Home Guard - at first it was the L.D.V., the Local Defence Volunteers. They were given an arm band, khaki, to be sewn onto their sleeve; this was long before uniforms were issued to them.

We had six concrete cylinders in the Square which they would roll across the road if any tanks came, so we were alright!

My future husband, Francis, was a sergeant in the L.D.V.. There was an observation post on the church tower and this was manned by the L.D.V. One night the observer up there had probably gone on duty via the Greyhound and nodded off for a short while. When he awoke he saw parachutes in the direction of Middle Wallop aerodrome - the invasion had started. He rushed down and along the High Street to Captain Willis Smith who was in charge of the L.D.V. in the village. He got out his bicycle and rode up to the farm and woke up Francis. "The invasion has started, we are meeting in the Square. Get up and bring any guns you have, have you got an airgun? Have you sewn on you armet? Well, could you before you come down? Mr. Joyce is giving us a cup of coffee before we move off, we don't know how long we shall be out."

Francis called his mother who sewed the armband on while he dressed, got out his bicycle and set off for the Square. There was no petrol for cars except for war duty. After some time they decided it was very quiet for an invasion, so some enquiries were made. It was discovered that the parachutes seen were flares. By then it was too late to go back to bed so Francis got on with the milking.

We may laugh at "Dads Army" but it was like that, those good men.