

THE HOME GUARD

No. 6 Crudwell Platoon of "B" Co. 2nd Bn. Wiltshire Home Guard drilled under their Commanding Officer, Capt. Starey, in the May Field behind The Plough, in The Plough Yard and on the Village Green, and had an ideal location for their Drill Hall - the loft of a storeroom just inside the old entrance to the Plough, reached by a stone staircase. Not far to go for a pint of mild, 4d., or bitter, 6d (2p and 3p) before going home. Perhaps they lingered for a sing-song around the pub piano which Evelyn Thorne (whose father, William Bowles, was landlord of The Plough) often played.

Meanwhile Eastcourt Home Guard, who had to join Oaksey Platoon, drilled in the field next door to the Old Post Office, at first using broom handles for rifles, later replaced with mock wooden rifles (as happened all over the country). When at last Enfield rifles were issued many a rabbit disappeared overnight during practice raids!

At night men from Eastcourt had to guard Skew Bridge over the railway line and were also detailed to guard the Kemble to Minety stretch of railway track by walking up and down all night. Dick Hislop says, although boring this could be dangerous, as trains had no lights and the men had to rely on their hearing to jump from the wooden sleepers before the train arrived - a howling wind blowing the sound of an approaching train in the opposite direction made it a very hazardous occupation. For Dick it was up at the crack of dawn the next morning to milk the cows at 6 am.

Daisy Nurden tells the tale of night manoeuvres involving Crudwell v Malmesbury. Crudwell was detailed to defend the main A429 against the attacking Malmesbury Platoon. A road block of farm carts was set up across the road between The Plough and the Village Green, and a guard mounted. The hours passed but no enemy came in sight.

In the dark Malmesbury Platoon crept to the east and marched across the fields and so reached their objective. They set a trap to "capture" Crudwell when they arrived. Their cheering faces became crestfallen when the wind changed direction and the smoke to signify their capture blew back into their own eyes.

After manoeuvres, what was left of the night was spent sleeping in Crudwell School, and breakfast was eaten in The Plough, cooked by Daisy and a friend in The Plough kitchen.



W. DENNIS MOSS, F.I.B.P.

L/Cpl. L. W. Taylor	L/Cpl. W. J. Sheppard	L/Cpl. T. S. Clarke	Sgt. W.
L/Cpl. C. E. Baker	Cpl. A. W. H. Scott	Sgt. J. Lafford	
Q.M.S. C. G. Thorne	Sgt. E. E. J. Pugh	Cpl. J. R. McCarpenter	L/Cpl. S.
Sgt. F. J. Langley	Cpl. A. A. Lumbrick	Amr. Sgt. L. E. Tucker	
Sgt. A. C. Hislop	Lieut. C. Jones	Capt. C. H.	
Sgt. F. W. Constable	Lieut. H. C. Starey		
L/Cpl. V. S. J. Butcher	Cpl. P. Webb	Sgt. G. Webb	Cpl. P. J. Nurden
			Cpl. R. J. S.

A VERY SAD MEMORY

During the war years Cynthia Pitman was living in Long Newnton Priory, next to the Long Newnton airstrip, where men of the Airborne Division trained to be pilots.

One snowy winter's night in January 1945, the weather closed in and all aircraft were signalled to land, but one plane mistook the garden of Mrs. Pitman's house for the landing strip. The plane crashed into her home, and immediately burst into flames. As she had not yet gone to bed, she was able to dash to rescue her little daughter, Celia, and her dogs, and escape with only the clothes she stood up in. No fire engine could reach her because of the snow - she lost everything. Eventually she was able to inform her husband, Capt. Pitman as he was then, of the disaster - he was on active service abroad.

Just after the war Mrs. Pitman and her family moved into Eastcourt House.