

## STOCK WW2

### A NOTE BY CHARLES PHILLIPS

1938 – Gas masks were first distributed at time of Munich crisis. Air Raid Precautions formed. Air raid shelters were dug, evacuation plans for pregnant women, nursing mothers and children were being planned.

1939. Conscription started in April. From 1st September saw the start of the arrival of evacuees in Stock. The blackout started. Those evacuated from major towns and cities were pregnant women, nursing mothers and children. The billeting officer for Stock was the Rev Goodchild the Minister at the Congregational Church, now Christ Church.

3rd September war declared. The Catholic church had two masses – 8.30 a.m. and 11 a.m. – Halfway through 11 a.m. mass Mrs Kieron came in to church and said that war had been declared. Siren sounded, but then nothing happened (Tony Webb). However the then parish priest Father later Canon Francis Dobson said that the sounding of the air raid siren caused confusion amongst the congregation. In the church notices for the following week the parishioners were told that in the event of an air raid warning they could take shelter in the church's basement. Later during the Battle of Britain and the Blitz the basement was opened up as an air raid shelter. Father Dobson himself was appointed one of Stock's air raid wardens. Another air raid warden was my maternal grandfather Frederick Such. Mr Ellis let the wardens use a bedroom in Ellis Cottages in the High Street as a wardens' post. According to Jim Sargant the ARP headquarters was in the old British School, which is now the Legion Hall. The Rectory Hall became the village First Aid post.

According to John Evans at morning service in the Congregational Church on 3rd September the minister, the Rev Goodchild kept leaving the pulpit and going back to the Manse next door to listen to the radio. On hearing the announcement by the Prime Minister (Neville Chamberlain) that the country was at war with German he announced this from the pulpit. Shortly afterwards a siren sounded an air raid warning. All the congregation rushed home and, began putting mattresses against the window, and attempted to seal the windows from gas attack, about which they had heard much, and which they were very fearful of. Out in the street there was a considerable commotion out in the street, with Colonel Brazier-Creagh, a massive man, ordering people about and generally stirring things up. John's father told him to calm down and go home, and actually physically pushed him away. All of that happened within an hour of the war declaration.

According to Elsie Coper the day war broke out the Rev Goodchild's wife came into the chapel to tell him that war had broken out. It was a beautiful sunny morning and after they had left church they all went home. When they got home and looked out after the air raid warning had sounded all the neighbours were walking around wearing their gas masks. Elsie thought that it looked funny.

This was not the only time that people were seen to be wearing their gas masks. According to my mother for some reason one day during the war for some reason one of the workers at a farm in Swan Lane cycled to work wearing his gas mask.

According to John Evans there was an army camp a little way down the road from Stock and some of the men were billeted in the village. They broadened the villagers' lives with many of them taking an active part in the village activities, especially at the Chapel. According to John his family had two RAF men staying with them and with piano, clarinet and saxophone, it was 'concerts' nearly every night.

The children evacuated from London were not country children. One story was of a boy seeing a woman milking a cow and telling her that he thought milk came from bottles. One lot was in a convent school run by Marist nuns, others were from St Bede's school. The Marist nuns and their pupils arrived in October 1939. Part of Lilystone Hall was given over by Lord Perry to the Marist nuns, who used it as a school. For a time during the invasion scare some of the children and some of the nuns went down to Camborne in Cornwall, but had returned by the spring of 1943.

Troops were billeted in the village at Hill Farm. Originally delinquent children (young offenders) evacuated from London had been billeted there. They were later billeted with families in the village

Petrol rationing started in September. The first thing to be rationed.

At the end of September identity cards began to be issued and would continue in use until 1952.

14th December 1939 No 12 bus route Southend to Chelmsford withdrawn and was never restarted. Routes 4- Chelmsford to Pitsea and 53 Tilbury to Clacton via Chelmsford and Colchester continued to run. At this time and up to 1952 the buses ran via the Square where the main bus stop was.

1940

In January rationing of things other than petrol was introduced and lasted in one form or another until July 1954.

During the war the village had its own fire engine, which was manned by volunteers from the village and was kept in a shed at the Bear.

At the time of the evacuation from Dunkirk soot from the burning abandoned vehicles was carried by the wind and came down with the rain in England including Stock.

In May Home Guard formed. It was originally called the Local Defence Volunteers, but was changed to the name Home Guard at the end of July. The name Dad's Army was the invention of the BBC for

the title of the very successful situation comedy series which ran from 1968 to 1977. Some stories of Stock's Home Guard, and also about the war in Stock in general by the late Cliff Cottee are included later. One source (the late Cliff Cottee said) that Stock's platoon's Captain was a Dutchman, Mr Petersen, who farmed Ramsey Tyrells for a time: the Sergeant was George Porter. Drill took place in Ingatestone. Another source (the late Horace Luckin said) Stock Home Guard met in the village hall and drilled at Brentwood once a month. Stock Home Guard was part of Ingatestone Home Guard. Officers were Major Pelly of Ingatestone and in Stock, Major More. The conclusion I have come to is that both sources were right, but the first was right for one period (possibly the early days) and the second was right for another period (possibly the later days). Horace also said that there were no pill-boxes in the village during the war, nor did he recall a leaflet about what to do if the Germans came or details of evacuation routes should the worst have happened. The stores and the armaments arsenal were the shed and buildings under the clock house at Greenwoods, which Mr Ellis let them use. Greenwoods featured in anti-invasion defence: some bricks were dislodged from the wall facing the main road in the direction of Chelmsford, the idea being that in the event of an invasion for the Home Guard to be able to shoot unseen at any approaching German troops. The cricket pavilion on the Common was used for barrels of tar: if the invasion took place this would be poured over the road to stop the approaching troops. Stock was just to the west of what was known as the GHQ Defence Line. Near West Hanningfield the Stock side of the A130 there still exists a pillbox from those days. As a further anti invasion measure sign posts were removed and the name of Stock (and of Buttsbury) from the Post Office, the notice boards of the churches and the war memorial obliterated. On the latter the names were simply covered by a board. Plans were drawn up for evacuation of civilians in the event of an invasion happening and the enemy not being repelled.

I once asked my late mother Margaret Phillips if she worried about the invasion and she told me she didn't. I would hasten to add in her memory that she was not a German sympathiser

Although to date no secret hideouts for the Home Guard Auxiliary Units have been found in Stock this does not mean that there were not any in existence in Stock. The Auxiliary Units were the British Resistance and were intended to harass the Germans had they invaded Britain. Understandably by their very nature they were ultra secret and even at this distance in time not all of their hideouts have been located, particularly as most of the members are now dead. There are many things that happened during the war which we will now never know about as those involved were sworn to secrecy under the Official Secrets Act and would not or will not tell when they died or when they die their secrets will die with them. Equally unless the files containing the information have been kept and will be available for public inspection at some future date the information will be lost forever.

Near Fristling Hall there was a decoy. This was constructed to lure enemy bombers away from Chelmsford. This was a structure constructed of glass and apparently could be lit up to confuse the enemy bomber into bombing the surrounding countryside and not the town. It was guarded by an armed sentry. Local people thought that it was something to stop aircraft engines. Apparently

it was tried one night. Reputedly the night became as bright as day. Locals thought it was device to stop aircraft engines. Had such a device been constructed presumably the allied aircraft would not have flown the night it was in operation or would have had some device in them to counter the effects of the device.

In addition there was for a time a heavy duty searchlight stationed in the area to distract enemy bombers from Chelmsford. It is thought that this may have been in Swan Woods. A clearing in the woods abutting on to what is now Cygnet Woods, but was then a field could have been a possible location for the searchlight. Apart from that searchlight the nearest one was probably in Dowsetts Lane, Ramsden Heath.

During the Battle of Britain because of the direction it was fought, i.e. towards the Thames and London, Stock tended to get RAF aeroplanes crashing in the vicinity, rather than Luftwaffe aircraft. At that time my mother was working in service in Little Burstead where a lot of the German aircraft tended to come down. My grandfather had a motorbike and sidecar and went over to see to my mother about something or for take her home for a visit. (I forget the reason now) He was pleased downed German aircraft for a change.

Saturday 7th September 1940 was a beautiful late summer afternoon. At 5 p.m. there was a cricket match in progress on the Common between Stock and Billericay. A boundary had just been hit when overhead there was a roar and as the players and spectators flung themselves to the ground as a badly damaged aircraft managed to just clear the treetops and land in a fatal crash in the meadow behind the Catholic Church. The aircraft crashed at Fritze Farm .The pilot, Flight Lieutenant Reginald Eric Lovett of 73 Squadron flying a [Hurricane](#) from Debden, died saving the lives of the villagers. He was 36 at the time and was the son of Reginald and Lily Lovett of Golders Green. He is commemorated by a plaque inside the porch of the Catholic Church. According to Tony Webb Flight Lieutenant Reginald Eric Lovett was seen to get out his cockpit and then realising that the damaged aircraft would crash into Stock got back into the cockpit and piloted it away from the village. In dieing he saved the village from some destruction. According to Robin Hill, who has researched the crash, it is believed that Lovett was shot down by Luftwaffe Pilot Gerhard Granz flying a Messerschmitt ME110.

Strangely war has its comic moments. One airman who parachuted out of his crashing aeroplane and landed in a tree in Stock Lodge was first mistaken for an enemy airman

From June 1940 to December 1940 Stock was within a restricted area for which a permit to enter was required. This permit was only available to residents of a place or those who had legitimate business in the area.

It is also worth recording a Blenheim bomber of 25 Squadron based at Debden which crashed at Ramsey Tyrells on 16th November 1940. The cause of the crash was breaking up in a dive brought

on by icing in a cloud. Sadly, its three crew members, Sergeants Leonard Winter, Andrew Romanis and Alec John Theasby all died.

13th December a German (parachute landmine falls in All Saints' church yard. severely damaging the church and other buildings in Stock. The church is not re-opened until 12th October 1941. For the duration of the damage Lilystone Hall chapel is used. According to the Rev F W Austen, the Rector of the church and the church yard suffered considerably as did the rectory buildings, the almshouses and other cottages nearby. Both the Congregational and the Catholic churches suffered some damage to their windows and the shop, now M-Estates, lost its plate glass windows. Nearly all the tiles were blown off the roof of the nave of the church and all except one of the church's windows were destroyed or seriously damaged. The main road leading Billericay and Ingatestone was closed for 18 hours. Any traffic going to Billericay and Ingatestone would be diverted by the back roads. Not a single stained glass window in the church remained intact, of which the most familiar to worshippers was the great east window representing Christ seated in glory and all the saints around and below. However no one in Stock was hurt and according to the Diocesan Surveyor the church was structurally intact. The belfry and the porch received only slight damage. For the first Sundays services were held in the Rectory and Greenwoods, but were then at Lord Perry's invitation transferred to the private chapel in Lilystone Hall. During the weekend the War Cabinet met at Lord Perry's home and joined the congregation of All Saints for worship.

The war spared nowhere. Buttsbury church was damaged by a bomb. In Stock, there was only one building completely destroyed - the miller's house.

1941

At the end of 1941 following the attack by the Japanese on the American base at Pearl Harbour in the Pacific America joined the war against Germany and both America and Britain declared war on Japan.

1942.

On the night of 1st August 1942 a badly damaged Halifax of 76 Squadron based at Middleton St George in County Durham came down near Fristling Hall. All the crew but the rear gunner Sergeant John Anthony McAuley of Penwortham, Preston got out safely. Father Dobson went to the crashed aircraft and gave the last rites to the dead man. Some time later he had to go to a meeting with some other priests, where he met a priest from Lancashire in whose parish was the fiancé of Sergeant John Anthony McAuley who had died in bomber.

From 16th November bus services through Stock which started from their point of origin after 9 p.m. and Sunday services which started from their point of origin before 1 p.m. were cancelled. Restoration did of late evening and Sunday did not come until after the end of the war. For a time certain services. For a time one bus to Chelmsford in the mornings was restricted to employees of Marconi works only. Sunday morning services were not restored until 3rd March 1946

And then of course there were the Yanks. The opinion of Margaret Phillips was she didn't think much to them. Out of interest there was a proposal for an American airbase near Ingatestone, which came to nothing. My mother reckoned that the German prisoners of war who worked on the farms in Stock after the end of the war were much more polite.

1944 The 6th June saw the allied landings in Normandy. The year also saw the menace of the V1 flying bombs and V2 rockets. Stock Home Guard on duty at either Ingatestone church or Fryerning church are reputed to have seen the first flying bomb come over England. According to Cliff Cottee one of these and also one of the V2 rockets fell in Stock.

In October of that year the parish council had received permission from Chelmsford Rural District Council to remove the board from War Memorial covering up the name: there would have to be more names to be added to it.

1945 The 8th May was VE day following the German surrender. No longer did you have to carry your gas mask and no longer was the blackout in force. However rationing and the need to carry your identity card still applied.

When it was known peace was going to be declared everyone congregated in square and heard announcement on radio from the radio shop in corner of junction with Mill Road, next to blacksmith. Music was played over radio. Street parties were held and in the evening there was dancing in Square with music supplied the radio shop. Villagers marched round Common and a bonfire was lit on Common. (Tony Webb) People were relieved the war in Europe was over and were looking forward to once eating such things as Mars Bars and oranges. Apparently some people got rather drunk that day. Understandably. Although I was told that it happened elsewhere I am not aware of anyone from Stock throwing their ration book on the bonfire and then finding that they still needed it and having to go to the Food Office to get another one. From surviving colour photographs we know that the weather was warm and fine on VE Day.

Elsie Cooper said the day the war ended there was a thanksgiving service on the Common.

According to Billy Hewitt on VJ there were street parties to mark the end of the war with Japan.

I now include the summarised memories of Cliff Cottee

According to Cliff two women who were relatives of Charlie Farrow who lived in Workhouse Lane [now Common Lane] lived in London came to stay with Charlie when things got too bad in London with the continual bombing and the landmines. They came to stay until things got easier. They said that the worst things were the landmines and the doodlebugs (V1 flying bombs – obviously 1944). They were sitting in a room by a fireplace at times when 'Bang!' then a blast of air down the chimney would blow a shower of soot all over the room and in the words of Cliff they would see each other like niggers. They had a good laugh and cleaned up and then sat down again then the same thing happened again. This happened quite a lot. The two women said

During the war barrage balloons were in operation in certain districts to stop low flying bombers flying over certain buildings etc, but sometimes their rope snapped or got unhooked or unfastened.

One very windy evening at twilight two boys were running home from McMorlands farm. They were scared and puzzled. The wind had released a barrage balloon. The balloon was still in the air, but could not be seen as the darkness hid it. The steel cable was dangling and coming over the farm with its different buildings and fences the wire rope was making some weird noises. Not seeing the balloon or the rope the boys panicked. Cliff said that he did not know if the boys knew what frightened them.

During the early part of the war there was a song 'We're going to hang out the washing on the Siegfried Line'. At the evacuation of Dunkirk in 1940 before taking to the sea for escape from the German army lorries and everything had to be burnt (to prevent the Germans using them). The sea was like a lake. It was very calm and the weather was nice and fine. Huge bellows of smoke arose very high (from the burning vehicles) and later on when washing was pegged out in places in Essex (including Stock) rain dripped from the sky and smears of blackish stains appeared on the clothes. The rain brought the Dunkirk down embers with it.

Stock had its fair share of bombs during the Second World War.

Early on a smallish bomber came at various times and dropped maybe eight to ten smallish bombs in a string or in a row. It was thought that they were after the oil tanks at Mountnessing (public siding on Shenfield to Southend railway line), but no result in that case.

One parachute mine fell in the church yard. 13th December (1940) a German (parachute landmine falls in All Saints' church yard. severely damaging the church and other buildings in Stock.

A blockbuster fell in Crondon Park meadow.

Firebombs. Containers holding quite a number. Some fell round the vicinity of the chapel (now Christ Church).

Butterfly bombs. A description or picture of these was shown on police display board. They were small and had flaps to attract children. Some were thought to have been dropped round the Mail Pits area, but after searching none were found.

Near the end of the war a new kind of bomb (it was thought was dropped) and exploded on touching the ground with a terrific blast. Followed by V1 (doodle bug flying bomb) and V2 rocket or which Stock received one of each.

Note. I believe I am correct in saying that a shallow crater still exists in Swan Wood where a bomb fell and that that it can easily be seen to right of the footpath leading from Tye Green.

The Home Guard.

Stock Home Guard.

In command Captain Peterson

Sergeant A Porter.

Nights were spent at Ingatestone at the Territorial Hall.

One night a fellow from Greenacre after having rifle drill fired a bullet through the roof. The next night some were a bit scared to be in the front line with him in the rear rank.

One night George Oakley was out on guard and Charlie White was tea maker and had spent the tea for those in the hall. He had forgotten George. They were big mugs. Charlie said that he would have to give George a drink, so he watered the tea pot and the liquid was very pale and worse with milk added. The mug was filled, George looked at it and in a dry attitude said "White's tea".

Arthur Elliot was living in a bungalow not far from the Ship Inn. German bombers were attacking, as they had been before. The search lights had a bomber in their sights for quite a long time and the gunners gave the plane a peppering which crippled it. A British fighter signalled that it was around and the gunners ceased firing. One of the German airman parachuted out and landed on the roof the bungalow where Arthur was staying. Arthur arrested the airman who gave no bother or resistance and went with his prisoner to Chelmsford in a hired motor car.

Cliff Cottee joined the Home Guard the same day that the Italians surrendered. One night he was told to go to the stores. Cliff chose an overcoat which fitted pretty well and left it in the stores until after the night exercises. Another recruit, young FitzJohn fitted the coat and stuck to it after the exercises, so Cliff had only one coat to choose which came down nearly to his ankles, but it was that or nothing, so he was a bit overcooked. When they marched into the village the officer in charge told them to 'swank'.

The Captain of the group was a Dutchman who farmed Ramsey Tyrells for a few years. On one occasion he saw the boys on parade and passed them out as "Blutty Orful".

In Ingatestone Drill Hall early one morning at daylight the last Home Guard were coming in for a few hours rest. Lying on the floor having a rest was George Oakley.

Frank Elliott coming in and seeing George said "You ugly old bugger".

Harry Bacon shielding George said "He is not made himself up yet".

Two men who at one time worked for Mr E (Ted) Stripe.

Stock's milkman

Mr Fisher a milkman before the cows were milked by machine.

The place – Ingatestone.

The Stock company were taken by coach to the firing range. Some of them were to fire a few rounds for the first time in their life with an army rifle and live bullets. They were told to lie down and fire five rounds at a target about ten inches by ten inches. While they were lying down waiting for their individual turn to hit their own target, which was to be given to each one after firing along came two or three top men, captains, majors or whoever they were. They (the Stock men) hardly saw their approach, but soon the 'bang, bang, bang' started. Not a lot of bulls were hit but quite a good show from the old soldiers and not too bad from some of the younger men. When Fisher's turn came he missed with his first five shots, missed the target. He was asked to have another five rounds by the top men. Again he missed the target. At the third attempt he totally missed the



target. On the way home Fisher looked at his cardboard target and said "It's a lot more respectable than the ones some of you others have".

Percy Carpenter, who was known as Larlie, was another one of Mr Stripes' milkmen. He was at one time the roundsman to deliver milk to customers. (There was no bottled milk in those days) so with his two gallon can fitted inside with pint and half pint etc measures inside and a churn on the cart he would call on his customers. Percy had a keen sensing of knowing what kind of clothing certain girls and women wore at various weddings etc - chiffon, velour, silk or satins with various tints etc. He could explain to his customers these things in a thorough way.

Eventually Percy got into the Home Guard when there was a scare of invasion.

Certain ones were on all night guard to(in?) Ingatestone and for a time a party had to sleep in Greenwoods House. The house was still owned at that time by Richard Ellis. Mr Ellis had been a city businessman, a huntsman, a shooting man, a golfer, a sportsman etc. The Home Guard party had to spend the night in close to the clothing room. Percy was still interested in clothing. The night in question he took it to be a model and he appeared in various get ups. He appeared as a huntsman, a city toff, a golfer, a huntsman etc. The Home Guard party did not tell Mr Ellis.

Mr Downie.

Saturday nights at Ingatestone were sometimes more free and noisy but when the men had to get to work the next day they would like to get to sleep a bit earlier so not much noise, but one night Downie laid down to rest and things were pretty quiet then Downie aroused the sleepers and sleepy ones. He gave them a real cracker (pretty loud). Then Downie started to giggle, then another report. The sergeant in command, George Porter, who had been in the Territorials was not at all happy. George said that if he was in camp with the Territorials and he started that game he would be give a place near the tent door. So it then went quiet again for a time. Then Downie disturbed the silence again. Cliff wrote 'Do you wonder some of us had a good laugh?'

Bunny Carter. (Stock group)

A very special parade day. Gathering with many more companies in the Home Guard at Highlands Park Widford near Chelmsford.

The park with its big iron gates was very impressive.

Along came the Stock brigade in full kit with steel helmets, riffles and accessories. Some had got past the gates inside the park. Along came Bunny. In the middle of the road was an iron gate stopper. It was this which did the mischief. Bunny didn't notice the gate stopper and tripped over it. He was soon flying along the ground. What a clatter. Steel helmet slithering one way. The formation of marchers in disarray. Quite a few of his comrades had a good laugh but Bunny was not at all impressed.

Mr George Hall.

One night at Ingatestone drill hall George was in a company of the Stock brigade and again an invasion was on the cards. Rifles were to be ready loaded and they were given permission to fire if necessary. Their position was that for a few hours they were to march to Fryerning and enter the church, go up the steep staircase and out on to the church roof. A flat roof with walled parapets. George and some others were with him on the roof while the sergeant and a few others remained in the churchyard below. When George later wanted to relieve himself he tried to shower the sergeant below, but his aiming was not on target.

THE FOLLOWING PEOPLE ARE COMMEMORATED ON STOCK'S WAR MEMORIAL DIED DURING WW2

Captain Harold Bourne MC

William Edward Dalziel

Walter Elliott

Henry Woodbridge Harris

Sidney George Little

William MacMorland

Leslie Arthur George Mapes

Victor James Upson

Douglas Vernon Webb

THE FOLLOWING SERVICEMEN DIED IN STOCK WHILST ON ACTIVE SERVICE IN WW2

Andrew Romanis

Reginald Eric Lovett

John Anthony McAuley

Alec John Theasby

Leonard Winter