

THE EARTH MOVED FOR MR & MRS STEADMAN ON THEIR WEDDING NIGHT.

Early in 1940 Mr C V Steadman stood on the high ground by Westcott Church watching the bright red glow in the sky over London caused by huge fires in the docks. "My fiancée was with me and we were talking to two air raid wardens. German planes were droning overhead when suddenly we heard the scream of a pretty heavy bomb coming our way. We jumped down by the side of the path and it dropped on the other side, down near the road. We looked up to see great pieces of red hot metal and lumps of earth flying by. My Army cap was blown off my head, never to be seen again! 'Blackouts' and windows had all been blown in at the houses opposite."

A few months later, on 23rd November 1940 Mr Steadman had another lucky escape. "Having been married a few hours earlier at St Martin's Church, we left the reception at 9.30 pm to make our way to Westcott for the night; 48 hours being the maximum for my leave from the Army. No buses were running and there were no taxi's available owing to the fact that the air raid warning had gone, so we proceeded to walk. We had reached the Vicarage in Westcott Road and could hear Jerry planes overhead, and before we got any further there was the scream of bombs coming down. we dived for the gutter and lay there while one bomb dropped in the vicarage garden¹. The blast went right over us and all the windows were blown out of the houses opposite. We lay there and heard six other bombs exploding at intervals going towards Ranmore Common. We got up and carried on towards Westcott. It had been a wedding night never to be forgotten!

WARTIME MEMORIES FROM BURY HILL 1 (extracts from correspondence in the Barclay Family archives)

On the outbreak of the World War II several companies moved out of London to avoid the anticipated German bombing campaign. The Henley Tyre & Rubber Company occupied Springfield House and stayed for the duration of the war. The staff of Barclay's Brewery in Southwark were also evacuated and were housed in Bury Hill House with members of the Barclay family and their resident staff. By the end of September 1939 there were 46 people living in the house and all available space was utilised for offices and sleeping accommodation. Although there were air raid warnings, when everybody gathered in the cellar, this was the period known as the phoney war and by the end of December 1939 the brewery staff had returned to London.

On 2nd July 1940 the Barclay family moved to the new family home at Logmore in Logmore Lane, which was renamed as Bury Hill House. 'Old Bury Hill' was requisitioned by the army and became the Eastern and South Eastern Command Weapon Training School. The Barclay Estate was still a going concern, however, and Col Robin Barclay arranged for the Adjutant of the Weapon Training School to issue passes to allow the estate staff to go about their business. The following is a list of passes issued: between July 1940 and July 1942:

Ashford, Arthur	Gardener	Florence Farm
Beadle, Charles*	Gardener	Hill House Cottage
Best, Bertie*	Gardener	Milton Street
Capon William (Junior)*	Gardener	Milton Heath Lodge
Capon, William (Senior)	Lodge Keeper	Milton Heath Lodge

¹ You can still see where the Vicarage wall was rebuilt.

Child, Frederick	Sawyer	Bailey Road
Gale, Edwyn*	Foreman Gardener	The Gardens, Old Bury Hill
Gale, Reginald	Gardener	The Gardens, Old Bury Hill
Gatford, James	Sawyer	St John's Road
Graysmark, William	Head Gardener	The Gardens, Old Bury Hill
Howell, Alfred Stanley	Estate Mechanic & driver	Logmore Green Cottages
Johns, Charles*	Gardener	Keepers Cottage, Milton St
Johns, William (Junior)	Woodman	Keepers Cottage, Milton St
Johns, William (Senior)	Head Keeper	Keepers Cottage, Milton St
Jupp, Lewis*	Gardener	Milton Brook
Killick, Edward	Head Woodman	Milton Street
Mason, John	Woodman	Keepers Cottage, Milton St
Mills, Samuel	Gardener	Milton Street
Moore, Edward*	Gardener	Milton Street
Oakford, George William	Clerk of Works	Milton Street
Parsons, George*	Gardener	Milton Street
Perrin, Alfred	Groom	Milton Street
Philpott, Reginald	Estate Lorry Driver	Milton Street
Redford, William*	Gardener	Nower Cottage
Smith, Frederick	Estate Labourer	Bailey Road
Smithers, Arthur*	Gardener	Milton Street
Stanton, George Albert	Estate Labourer	School Cottages
Stokes, Ernest	Farm Manager	West Lees Farm
Tobitt, Jesse	Estate Labourer	Milton Street
Wild, Mrs Julia	Lodge Keeper	The Inner Lodge, Old Bury Hill

WARTIME MEMORIES FROM BURY HILL 2

(extracts from correspondence in the Barclay Family archives)

Field Obstructions: On 14th and 15th June 1940 Arthur Barclay toured the area to ensure that all fields on which airborne enemy troops might land were suitably obstructed. His notes reveal that Mr Stokes of Westlees Farm undertook to obstruct the Common and Ten Acre Fields, the Cornish Brothers will protect Chadhurst Farm and Mr J Cooper of Upper Merriden Farm will obstruct the Carthorse Field. Col Robin Barclay provided 200 4ft alder posts and 16 8ft iron pipes but use was also made of the tops and limbs of trees.

Molotov Bottles: Later that month the Platoon Commanders of No.2 Dorking Company Local Defence Force, were issued with instructions regarding the 'Molotov Bombing' of enemy troops, as follows:

Strength. Each Bombing Party to comprise a Leader and 3 Bombers each with 6 bottles, and 4 Riflemen. T

Position. Two Bombers well concealed on each side of the road in advance of the road block, with their attendant Rifleman.

Throwing. No 1 Bomber will lay his carrier of 6 bottles (2 "A" mixture and 4 "B" mixture) to his left front remove the two bottles of "A" mixture, SHAKE THEM WELL, see that the cotton waste and wire fuse is in place, then place them to his right rear to the full extent of his arm. No 2 Bomber will lie to the right rear of No. 1, within reach of the two bottles placed by No. 1.

(And so on. The instructions go on to describe the procedure for preparing, lighting and throwing the bottles, as well as the type of bottles to be used -preferably quart sized but not beer bottles which do not break easily - and the best mixture of petrol, kerosene and tar with which to $\frac{3}{4}$ fill them. However, a subsequent instruction advised that "It is not (now) considered necessary to standardise the preparation of Molotov Bottles and each unit may therefore adopt its own methods provided that 100% success is obtained.")

Air Raids.

23 November 1940 “The sirens have been very accommodating so far, the first today was over by 9.30 and the next at lunchtime was over by 2. Except in very bad weather they mostly last through the night but we go to bed as usual otherwise we should have been in our clothes since the beginning of August; Graysmark (the Head Gardener) says he has been! Did I tell you most of Milton Street go down to his cellar as soon as it gets dark. Robin has put up bunks for them and there is electric light and stove....”

6 September 1944 “We had another Flying Bomb near here on 21st August. It pitched about 100 yards from Danehurst (in Logmore Lane), about 250 yards from here. No one was hurt but part of the roof and ceilings were down. Howell’s’ and Willcox’s cottages also had roof damage. Here the garden doors were pulled out and smashed and some other windows and a few tiles. I had just had a bath before dinner and looked out, then heard the whistle of it coming down so got away from the window and everything was blown onto the floor. I put on my Civil Defence kit and went down to Danehurst. We had to move Mrs Bundy out that night. It fell in the barley and destroyed 3-4 acres. We cut the field at the end of the week, had to keep a good look out for bits and pieces.”

AIR RAID SHELTERS IN WESTCOTT

During August and September 1940 Westcott was frequently bombed

18 October 1940 A meeting was held at The Hut to discuss the provision of air raid shelters in the village. It was agreed that there were not enough and those that had been provided were inadequate.

A petition with over 400 signatures was organised by Mrs Hygate and presented to Dorking Urban District Council (which had recently taken over responsibility for Westcott from Dorking Rural District Council).

15 November 1940 A deputation of Westcott residents met the Dorking Air Raid Precaution Committee presented their petition and pointed out that ‘the authorities owed it to the men in the forces that their wives and children should be kept safely in their absence’. In reply it was acknowledged that the provision of shelters was unsatisfactory but pointed out that a brick-built shelter designed to accommodate 48 people was being constructed in Ashley Road and that houses were being strengthened to withstand bomb blast. The Council Surveyor also undertook to consider a suggestion that shelters should be provided by tunnelling into the nearby hillsides instead of building more surface shelters.

It was no doubt because of dissatisfaction with the official provision of air raid shelters that Ron Johnson decided to build his own in the garden of The Old House in Chapel Lane. His use of concrete ensured that the shelter survives today.

3 January 1941 (as quoted in ‘Dorking in Wartime’)

In Bailey Road on spare land opposite No 27; in Watson Road at the northern end; on Westcott Green on a site to be agreed with the Lord of the Manor; in St John’s Road (disused pumping station to be adapted as a shelter). The Surveyor’s action in ordering 100 three tier steel bunks at 53s each was approved. The Westcott Siren. The A R P Officer reported that an air raid warning siren had been installed at Westcott, but the volunteer wardens there were unable to man the warden’s post continuously. It was decided to engage an additional warden for service in Westcott

THE BLACK OUT IN WESTCOTT

From the Dorking Advertiser on 4th April 1941:

An incident at Westcott was described by P C Hamilton in giving evidence against Mrs B. of Heathcote, Main Road, Westcott who was summoned for allowing an unscreened light to show from her house. The constable spoke of seeing a light shining from Heathcote, and finding that Mrs B. was attending a concert at the British Legion Club, he sent for her there and she came immediately. In the meantime, however, people living in Furlong Road became annoyed and threw stones, breaking several panes of glass in the house. Aircraft were overhead at the time. Mrs B told the bench that the light was showing from a spare room. The light switch in the room had become so loose that, when shutting the door with a bang, the light went on of its own accord. She was sorry for the trouble she had caused. Fined £2

Earlier, in January 1940 William Griffin Tucker of the Prince of Wales was summoned for allowing a light to show during the blackout. PS Field gave evidence that he saw a red glow from a partially open door at 9:10pm on the night of 17th December.

THE PARSONAGE LANE PLANE CRASH - FEBRUARY 1944

On the night of 24th/25th February 1944 six enemy aircraft were shot down over England. One landed in Westcott, in the garden of a house in Parsonage Lane. The official RAF report records that it was a Dornier 217 bomber with a crew of four and a bomb load including three 500kg bombs (thousand pounders) and four smaller incendiary bombs.

We know that it took off from Eindhoven in Holland at about 8.30pm The pilot was Lieutenant Waiter Kuttler. He was accompanied by two Air Gunners - Sergeant Brieger and Corporal Schurgers and an Observer, Corporal Trunsberger. They set a course of 300° and a height of 15,000 feet. Their target was the King George V Docks in London.

Alerted by radar that German bombers were approaching, the night fighters of 29 Squadron RAF were scrambled from Ford Naval Aerodrome in Sussex. Somewhere over Horsham, Lieutenant Kutler's Dornier was picked out by a searchlight. It was intercepted by a Mosquito flown by Sqn Ldr Clive Kirkland with his Navigator Flying Officer Richard Raspin who managed to home in with a burst of cannon shells, causing the port engine to break away. The Dornier pilot could no longer control the plane and gave the order to bale out but only two members of the crew managed to escape as it span out of control crashed through some trees and plunged into the ground.

The bombs did not explode but the pilot and his companion were killed. The two crewmen who parachuted out were luckier. They landed at Wotton but one had a broken foot and both were soon captured and taken to the Wotton Hatch Hotel by the Home Guard. George Trunsberger ended up in hospital while Julius Shurgers was taken to Dorking Police Station. Meanwhile, the bomb disposal squad was soon on the scene. They made the bombs safe and the wreckage was removed to an RAF scrapyard at Faygate, near Horsham.

So much for the official record. Back in Westcott the plane crash generated great excitement, so much so that 30 years later, in 1975, when David Knight started asking village people what they remembered, he found they still had many memories and a surprising number of souvenirs of the incident².

David Knight himself, then aged 8, recalled being in the air raid shelter at the top of Ashley Road when his father called him out to see a plane coming down. It had its navigation lights on and was spinning slowly like a sycamore seed. He went up to the Common i.e. Heath Rise in the morning to look at the crash beyond Thorndale Cottages but was told to retire as far as the Sandrock as the bombs were still on board.

Mr Batts of Chapel Lane said he went to Parsonage Lane on the morning after the crash with **Mr Goult** of St John's Road. The door of the plane had been forced off in the crash and they went

² ' Many of these souvenirs may still be seen on a display board at Dorking & District Museum

inside but an RAF Regiment chap told them to get out as there were still bombs aboard. He asked for a piece of the plane. The front of the plane was smashed in but an instrument panel was sticking out and he was given a part that looked like a radio circuit on an alloy sheet. On the other hand, **Alan Brewer** of North Street said that nobody went inside the plane, only himself, as it was too well guarded.

Mrs Jeater who lived on the main road in Penny Cottage at the time said that her husband was an ARP warden and was on guard duty while the plane was in Parsonage Lane. He brought home a brass part from the petrol tank that she threw out when they moved.

Dick Brookes was in the RAF in Southern Rhodesia at the time of the crash but it was in his parent's garden that the plane crashed and he had one of the hinges from an aileron to contribute when David Knight started his own collection of 30 year old souvenirs.

Mrs Hutchins whose house had been next door to the crash site contributed a petrol gauge and said her lawn was covered with black-coated silver paper (window). She also recalled that one of the German airmen had tried to bale out but left it too late and fell into the trees just behind her house. She thought he must have been alive during the night because she was sure she heard him blowing his nose!

Mr A Rice of Parsonage Lane also visited the crash site and recalled that he had been surprised to see that the plane had Dunlop tyres whilst **Mr J Rice** reported that the wings of the plane were cut off by an axe to get at the bombs. **Mrs Ball** of Parsonage_Lane also said that the plane had English tyres.

George Sawyers and **Reg Rose** of Furlong Road said they had each broken off a large part of the perspex nose but dumped them later. **Bert Upfold** had a small red light from the plane and said that the Bomb Disposal Squad Corporal also gave him a switch from the bomb aiming equipment. **Mr Tugwell** of Watson Road had a piece of perspex. **Mr Arnold** had a small piece of the plane which was given him by **Mr A Rice** who apparently used other pieces to make a base for a garden shed.

Captain Binge of Hill House in Heath Rise recalled taking a photograph from the top of his garden near Thomdale Cottages and reported that he had since dug up several pieces of the plane in his garden. He contributed a petrol tank cap and various other bits and pieces including part of the rudder to David Knight's collection.

Mr Russell of Furlong Road said that the remains of the plane were put on show outside Canter's Yard because Field Marshall Montgomery was passing through and the wreck disposal people thought he might like to look at it.

Peter Knight could recall the plane on a trailer outside Canter's and had a handle from an oxygen bottle which he managed to acquire when nobody was looking.

Although not living in Westcott at the time of the crash **Mr Hermes** of Garden Cottage said that the plane was taken down to the main road through his garden.

Mr Batts said that he was told that the bombs were taken to the range at Bury Hill and acid was poured in to make them safe although **Mr Paine** of Parsonage Lane, but who lived in the house next to the old bakery at the time, thought the bombs were taken to Ranmore and defused. He also claimed that when one of the bombs was taken down the lane it started to make a noise and everybody got out of the way and went back later.

Cyril Brown who lived in Thomdale Cottages was home on leave from the RAF at the time and was called in to help guard the plane when it was taken down to Canter's Yard and went with it to

the RAF scrapyard. He said that he took the compressor from the plane but that he felt so guilty as so much had been stolen that he gave it back and said he found it in his garden. He also claimed to have had two saucepans made from the alloy on the plane but they had long since worn out.

Away from Parsonage Lane, **Ted Nash** of Furlong Road was a paper boy employed by Parson's the Paper Shop and recalled seeing one of the engines on the lawn in front of Broomfield House when he delivered the paper on the morning following the crash. **Mrs Anscombe** said that a large part of the tail fell behind her house in Balchins Lane. **Mr & Mrs Tupper** of Milton Street said that several pieces of the plane were found in the woods at Hungry Hill. **Gerald Chennell** said that one of the parachutes used by the German airmen was put on display in Wotton School the day after the crash.

It became apparent that not all the recollections could be relied upon. **'Peggy' Lewer** of St John's Road was in the ARP in Westcott during the war. He was convinced that the German crew were all aged 15. In fact the pilot was 23, the two gunners 22 and the observer 21.

But **Miss Mold** of Westcott Street was probably correct when she recalled that the Parish Church was full on the following Sunday (27th) when a Thanksgiving Service was held for the safety of the village

As for the German airmen, the two dead men were buried at Dorking Cemetery and in 1962 their remains were removed to the German War Cemetery at Cannock Chase near Stafford. From Dorking Police Station. **Corporal Schurgers** was taken to an interrogation centre in London and then to a prisoner of war camp in Scotland. He was then shipped to America where he spent three years harvesting peanuts, cotton, tobacco and sugar cane on the Eastern Seaboard of the USA. He was repatriated to Germany in September 1947 to find that his home had been bombed, but he eventually found a job as an accountant, married in 1950 and was very happy that his nephew was made so welcome when invited by David Knight to visit Westcott in 1975.

Milton Court In Wartime

We gained a very interesting addition to our archives after last year's Heritage Weekend when a visitor to St John's Chapel very kindly loaned us some material about Milton Court. This included wartime editions of the 'Henley Telegraph', the house journal of Henleys, the firm that took over Milton Court in 1939. They gave a fascinating insight into life at Milton Court during the war and the way people coped in those difficult times.

The popular image of Britain in 1939 is of a nation muddling through, ill-prepared for war. This is far from the truth - we were well prepared in many ways, particularly for home defence and for changing to a wartime economy. Plans were laid for key companies to move from cities to safer places in the countryside, and it was this that brought Henleys to Milton Court.

Henleys made cables and tyres - both of strategic importance. The firm had its head office in Holborn, which needed to move, and factories in Woolwich and Gravesend which unavoidably had to stay put. The company already had staff in Dorking and a reconnaissance visit to the area took place on 3 July 1939. Most of the staff were to go to Milton Court; the tyre company to Springfield House. The order to move was given on 1 September, two days before war broke out.

The Henley Telegraph had been running since 1919 and kept staff informed throughout the company. On the outbreak of war it published a special emergency edition with a lead article entitled 'So this is Milton Court' which painted an idyllic picture of the house and grounds. 'Milton Court still has its bowling green' ran the description, 'and a double hedge of yew against which the multi-coloured blooms of the Michaelmas daisies have shown to their best; an apple orchard; roses, roses all the way; grey willows overshadowing its mill stream; lawns which are velvet carpets; and a half-timbered mill house...' Sadly, much of this would have to change in the months to come.

Milton Court had to be altered to provide working accommodation for about 275 people. An office wing, with kitchen and dining room had to be built. The main house was to become sleeping accommodation with cubicles for 190 people, with others sleeping in the lodges and a large army hut put up in the grounds.

The chauffeur's house became a six-bed sick bay. An ARP system was set up and air-raid shelters were to be built. Milton Court was also to have its own fire brigade.

The move itself was not without its problems. Company records and equipment were sent in six 20-ton lorries. One got lost on the way – it was the first night of the blackout. The others reached Milton Court but couldn't get through the entrance arch! Everything had to be off-loaded and manhandled the rest of the way. To cap it all the caterers who had been booked wanted to turn the job down as they felt it was beyond them. After much gentle persuasion they agreed to take it on.



Milton Court ARP Wardens

All this had involved an enormous amount of work over

just two months. The Company paid a warm tribute to the head gardener, Mr Mansey, and his staff; who had been immensely helpful in solving problems along the way and seeing it through. 'Freddy' Rogers, who led the move, referred to him as 'a good friend; he knew all the nooks and crannies in the place and we were lucky to have him with us'.

Once the staff were in, the social activities soon got organised. The accounts branch started a choir for regular sing-songs and everyone pitched in for a 'tip-top' concert on Halloween Night. The Woolwich Works Concert Party came down to give a show and a Supper Club came into being. As the 'Telegraph' commented 'when men and women are suddenly thrown together... they become themselves; and a flood of "mateyness" is released. Never has the Social Spirit at Henley's had such a kick in it. It has made us appreciate the value of "mucking in" and we're going to "muck in" a lot more yet.' And "muck in" they did. The national Dig for Victory campaign was under way and an Allotment Society was started. Head gardeners Mansey and Graysmark (from Bury Hill) gave a talk on what to grow and how to grow it. Results were rather mixed to start with and weeds were a problem. Mr Mansey kept a fatherly eye on everyone and eventually they flourished. The first allotment competition was held in July 1940 and Chairman Sir Montague Hughman presented the prizes. Social activities continued to swing through 1940. A new Year's Eve Dance was held at The Hut in Westcott. Spring dances were held in 'The White Horse' in Dorking and The Henley Players put on 'Pygmalion' at The Hut. Sports teams had mixed results; the netball team lost 26-8 to the CEB at Horsley Towers, but the football team did well - until they played Westcott (lost 11-2). Badminton at The Hut proved popular and the cricket side played at the Westcott club ground on Tuesday evenings.

A report of the 4th Annual Henlel Art Show appeared in the summer issue of 1940. This featured paintings, photography and handicraft exhibits. Some of them were reproduced in the 'Telegraph' which show them to be of a very high quality. First prize went to Alan Brewer for his painting of 'The Old Mill House' – at Milton Court. He was a very talented artist and did fine topical cartoons for the Telegraph. He acted as Chief ARP Officer for Milton Court and later became Scoutmaster of the Westcott scout troop.

The 'Telegraph' also announced staff appointments, transfers, promotions and retirements; it also reported marriages and the presents that had been given. Miss Elsie Gadd was the first member of staff to be married after the move to Milton Court and she was given a cabinet sewing machine and a canteen of cutlery. Present-giving remained very much the practice for some time, but was increasingly difficult as luxury goods became scarce. Money gifts were the norm by 1942.

Staff announcements then began to include the lists of those called up to the Forces. Sadly, and inevitably, came the casualties. One was J.M.Abbott whose mother wrote to say he had been killed on the *Jervis Bay*, in one of the most famous actions of the war. *Jervis Bay* was an armed merchant cruiser escorting a convoy when it was attacked by the German battleship *Admiral Scheer*. Facing impossible odds *Jervis Bay* attacked the *Scheer* but was hit repeatedly. She sank quite quickly but her action enabled most of the convoy to escape. Her commander, Captain Fogarty Fegen, was awarded a posthumous VC.

Another piece of bad news was the destruction of the company's head office in the blitz. Although this proved the wisdom of moving away from London, Milton Court itself had a near miss in August 1940. Despite these setbacks life had to go on and everyone made the best of it. Wounded troops were regularly entertained at Milton Court; coaches were hired to pick them up from hospital for tea and entertainments followed by a dance. Young ladies from Milton Court went to the return dances at the hospital.

Support for good causes was a regular feature of life at Henleys and events of all kinds helped to raise funds. Comforts were sent for victims of the blitz, and parcels went to the troops. The typists suggested a scheme to raise the purchase price of a Spitfire and the staff soon raised the first instalment of £1000. In 1941 they contributed £4104 to Dorking War Weapons Week held from 1st to 8th March. In this one week, the town as a whole raised the sum of £311,136 17s 10d, an astonishing achievement.

Henleys choir played an important part in cultural life both for the staff and the local community. Vaughan Williams came to Milton Court on Tuesday evenings to rehearse them and they took part in the Dorking Music Festival the following April. In May 1941 the Company presented Dr Vaughan Williams with an inscribed gold fountain pen in appreciation of his help. In his speech of thanks Vaughan Williams said that 'We musicians generally are unoccupied in war time...but when the suggestion was made that I might help with your singing, here was an obvious piece of war work and I am delighted to have been of assistance.'

In the summer of 1942 the 'Telegraph' came out in a much smaller version, printed on low quality paper. The editorial explained that paper restrictions were responsible and said 'we conform to the regulations gladly, while believing that 'The Henley Telegraph' is playing a real part in the National effort. We believe many things about the 'Telegraph'. One is that even in battle dress it will continue to serve the purpose it has always served – to knit together the best interests of the staff and Company.' It certainly achieved this aim – and in no small measure. What comes across so strongly from its pages is the wonderful spirit that ran through the company and the way it carried everyone through³.

Peter Bennett

THE TEAPOT FROM TAVISTOCK MYSTERY

This is a true story that describes the events that took place at 55 Watson Road Westcott in the early morning of Tuesday 5th January 1944. It involves:

Mrs. Woods, 92 years old, nearly blind and bedridden.

Mrs. Lucy Ellis, a 64 year old widow

Miss Mary Knight, her 14 year old niece.

Miss Kathleen Kelsey, Mary's friend, also 14.

Mrs. Hopper, a friend from up the road.

On Monday 4th January 1944 Mrs. Woods became quite ill and Mrs. Ellis called on Dr Billings to request that he visit her at 55 Watson Road. When he did so he found that she was so weak that he did not expect her to live through the night. His advice was that if any of the family wished to see her they should be notified immediately.

Mrs. Ellis went out to the coal store. This was a compartment 2 ft 6 ins wide by 4 ft deep within a wooden garden shed. Behind the shed door boards each 2ft 6ins long by 9 inches wide fitted into a slot just inside of the door, thereby forming a space for the coal to be stored. As the coal was used, the topmost board was taken out, then the next and so on until the coal shed was empty, and a new supply was delivered.

It was a cold evening with a clear moonlit sky and a hard frost. Mrs. Ellis filled the coal scuttle and lit a fire in the bedroom where Mrs. Woods was asleep. This was done so that she could sit and keep vigil all night, together with a neighbour whose name was Mrs. Hopper. She had a small baby in a cot and they both sat waiting for Mrs. Woods to die.

In the second bedroom and fast asleep was Mary Knight, Mrs Ellis's 14 year old niece whom she had brought up as her own daughter, and Kathleen Kelsey, also 14, who lived next door but was spending the night at number 55 because her sister in law had arrived that day and was staying overnight.

At approximately 2.30 on the morning of the 5th January Mrs. Ellis called the two girls from their bed as there was an air raid and she could hear a bomb whistling down. The two girls just reached the open door to their bedroom when the bomb exploded. It obliterated four houses, killing 9 people including some children. The blast hit number 55 sending flying glass from the windows across the room with such force that the plaster on the wall opposite was damaged. Shards stuck into the doors and woodwork and were followed by

³ The series of Henley Telegraphs loaned to us ended with the summer 1942 issue but since writing this article the Local History Group has received a complete set from Shirley Green, Alan Brewer's daughter. Alan was a great asset to Westcott not only because of his active involvement in the social life of Henley's whilst they were at Milton Court but because he also revitalised the Westcott Scout troop, helped establish the Westcott Angling Society and performed with the Westcott Players.

the iron window frames. Timber and plaster ceilings came down, hitting the top of the open door of the girls' room, but leaving a small gap from the top of the door to the floor, just large enough for the two girls to be saved. In the main bedroom the windows, ceiling joists and plasterboard, followed by the window frames, came in on the top of old Mrs. Woods, cutting her head open quite severely. Mrs. Ellis and Mrs. Hopper sitting by the fire were saved by the ceiling hanging down from the chimneybreast to the floor but the plaster boards came down and covered the baby's cot. Mrs. Ellis called to the girls and found out that they were all right but no sound came from either Mrs. Woods or the baby.

When the rescue team entered the house they found that the front door had been torn from the frame and ended up in the kitchen. The back door was in the garden. The roof the house had gone, the window frames were all blown in and with them the black out curtains. The stair well was blocked, part of the outside wall had collapsed and men outdoors were shouting, "Put that light out" as the fire in the bedroom was still burning through a layer of soot which was creating a lot of acrid smoke. Everything was filthy and everybody was covered in soot and thick dust.

However when the rescue men managed to reach the bedrooms they lifted the ceiling from the cot and found the baby was fast asleep. Old Mrs. Woods was unconscious but bleeding heavily from her head. She was removed to Dorking Hospital where she was cared for and her wounds were stitched. Mrs. Ellis, Mrs. Hopper, Mary and Kathleen were all taken to Mrs. Hopper's house further up the road, where they were able to clean up and have some tea.

Just before 8am as dawn broke Mrs. Ellis, Mary, and Mrs. Hopper's son John visited their house and with the aid of workmen were able to retrieve articles of clothing and recover their ration books and identity cards. They then went into the back garden to see about the chickens. The poor hens were trapped with their heads through the wire netting of their pen. They were released and taken to a neighbour's pen. The garden shed containing the coal store had disappeared, but the coal itself was still there but instead of being in a tall column it was now in a loose pile, and lying on the top, covered in coal dust, was a small bone china tea pot with the lid intact. On closer inspection it was found to be 'A present from Tavistock' with a coloured picture of the town on each side and on the underside it read 'Made in Germany'.

The family was away for some months while the house was being repaired but they were able to move back in time for the assault by V1 flying bombs, which shook the house on several occasions but it received no further damage. Mrs. Ellis made exhaustive enquiries as to whom the teapot belonged to but the owner was presumably dead. It must have been blown out of one of the four houses that were demolished, travelled across two gardens and landed with its lid still in place on the pile of coal left after the shed had been blown away. All this must have happened in seconds.

As for Mrs Woods, she recovered and lived for another two years. She saw the end of the war and died in 1946.

Fred Thorogood recounts this story. He met Mary Knight on VE night, and they were married in 1949. They lived with Mrs. Ellis for many years, and this story was related to him on numerous occasions.

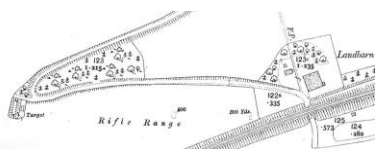
After the war, new sheds were built and chickens were kept until the late fifties. The Crittal iron window frames were straightened, refitted and re glazed and new front and back doors were installed.

In 1968 Fred and Mary left Westcott to live in Dorking, taking with them a small china teapot from Tavistock.

WESTCOTT RIFLE RANGE and the WESTCOTT RIFLE RANGE HALT

In June 1915 the South Eastern and Chatham Railway Company completed the construction of a small station almost midway between Dorking and Gomshall. It had two 400 foot platforms, 9 to 12 feet wide with ramps and fenced approaches. and was located just west of the tunnel serving the footpath leading from Coomb Farm to Ranmore. It was partially destroyed by fire in 1928 and never rebuilt. There is no sign of its existence today, nor did its existence have any effect on the development of Westcott. It was too far from the village and in any event the railway stop was exclusively for use by soldiers and was known as the Westcott Rifle Range Halt.

A range had existed in the locality since at least November 1889, when the Rt Hon G Cubitt (later the first Lord Ashcombe) signed an agreement with Captain Harman Young, Officer Commanding 'G' Company 2nd Volunteer Battalion (Queens) Royal West Surrey Regiment, permitting targets to be set up in part of a field on the Denbies Estate near Landbarn Farm, with firing points established at a distance of 100, 200 and 300 yards.



The plan accompanying the agreement indicated the location, and the detail (less the 100 yard marker) was subsequently included, as reproduced above, on the 1891 Ordnance Survey 25 inch map (XXXIII 3).

The agreement restricted shooting to just one day between the 1st November and 1st March, and on Mondays, Wednesdays and Saturdays from 2pm until sunset, plus one whole day that shall be mutually agreed upon, between 1st April and 30th October. The agreed rent for this use was one shilling per year.

In 1909 the agreement was amended to apply to the new Surrey Territorial Force Association but a few years later, following increased use before and during the Great War and the introduction of more powerful weaponry, the Landbarn range was abandoned. It was replaced, in 1916, by a much larger 'War Office' range occupying almost 50 acres. This was constructed a few hundred yards to the west, much closer to the new Rifle Range Halt. The butts were built against the scarp slope of the North Downs and supported at least nine targets, as illustrated below:



In the post war years the range, and the nearby Halt, continued to be used. In April 1922, for example, the Dorking Advertiser reported that 300 officers and men of the East Surreys 5th Battalion spent a day firing at the Westcott Range. These were volunteers but with the approach of the Second World War the range was used not only by territorials but also by regular troops, and during the war by the Home Guard.

After the war national servicemen and cadets practised at the Westcott Range and in July 1948 the War Office proposed a significant extension, embracing much of Ranmore Common, to create a military training area of nearly 900 acres. The local Planning Officer objected on the grounds that the land formed part of the North Downs Preservation Scheme and the proposal was withdrawn, as was an amended scheme submitted a year later that involved 320 acres.

Although isolated, the noise generated by the range evidently travelled across the Holmesdale Valley, especially when machine gun training was introduced in October 1954. Mr J Moody of Stowe Cottage in Balchins Lane, Westcott, protested to the local authority, but the Clerk to Dorking Council was able to reply that the matter was out of his hands; "The rifle range is in War Department occupation and is outside town planning control".

New butts and a range warden's workshop were constructed between 1956 and 1959 and these were accompanied by the introduction of new byelaws requiring a sufficiency of warning signals and specifically 'Firing in Progress' notices to give adequate warning when the area was closed to the public. However, the use of the new facilities was short lived. Problems arose when the 'stop butt', cut into the side of the hill, started to slip, and then the concrete and brick mantlet crumbled so badly that a 'low shot' bullet actually went through and caused a slight injury to one of the target markers. In the light of this evidence, the cessation of National Service, and aware that there was a public footpath nearby, and for long range events it was necessary to fire across the railway line, the War Office decided that the range was no longer required. It closed in June 1962. The butts are still there but today and nothing is left but collapsed brickwork.

In addition to military use, the Westcott Rifle Club was permitted to use the range for their competitions and when the range finally closed the Club's Westcott Cup was passed to the Surrey Rifle Association at Bisley, where it is still competed for annually.

The ranges close to Landbarn and Coomb Farms should not be confused with the much smaller range that was constructed for the newly formed Westcott Rifle Club in 1909 on land provided courtesy of Mr Brooke close to the Rookery Estate Office at the entrance to Rookery Lane.

'Bombs on Westcott' Report of a training exercise in July 1939 – Dorking in Wartime - page 9