Stanton Parish History Recording Project

Personal Reminiscence File:- PR006b

Home Guard - TALE TWO By Tom Gollins

The second time we were called on 'Active Service' was in the very early hours of 8th September, 1940. We were now Home Guards.

About 1.30am my phone rang and I hurried downstairs in my pyjamas. Captain MacKenzie was on the phone.

"Tom, will you go to Dick Williams and get him to come to your phone. He may have to call everybody out. Get him to wait with you."

I dressed hurriedly, persuaded Peggy to stay in bed, got out my bike and rode without lights down Muckleton Lane to Dick Williams house. He took a bit of rousing but he eventually turned out. Saturday night he was a regular at 'The Tiddly Winks' pub, properly called 'The Royal Oak'. We went back to Stone House, got a fire going in the kitchen, and waited. Soon the phone went again.

"Hello, Tom Gollins speaking"

"Have you got Sgt. Williams there".

"Yes."

"Will you tell him to call out the Dawn Patrol right away."

The Dawn Patrol was posted at the junction of the Butlers Bank Road with the Market Drayton-Shrewsbury main road. Normally they went on duty from 4.00am till 6.00am. They stopped all traffic and demanded to see Identity Cards. That morning the Dawn Patrol consisted of Tom Vaughan, Sam Butler and Fred Brown.

Dick Williams was not a cyclist so off I went to call the three musketeers out.

A knock at Tom Vaughan's door eventually brought him to it. I delivered my message and Tom said

"Do you want me to call the others. I generally do.[11]

"No," said I, "I'll do it"

and off I went to Sam Butlers. A rap at the door set the farm dog barking furiously. An upstairs window opened and out popped the head of Sam Butler.

"Sam, Sam" I said, "Pick up thee musket."

"0h gosh is it that?" said Sam.

"Yes, you've to turn out right away on Dawn Patrol. I've called Tom Vaughan, and I'll go on now to Fred Brown."

The knock on Fred Brown's door brought him to it, fully dressed and stretching his arms wide in a great yawn.

"What's up now"? said he.

"You've to turn out right away" said I. "I've called the others. "

"Dunni want a cup of tea" said Fred, quite relaxed. "I've got one made."

"No thanks, I had one before I came out."

With that, back to join Sgt. Williams again. Meanwhile he had received another phone call ordering all men out on to their observation posts.

The arrangement for calling out men to their pre-arranged posts was put into operation. These posts were at points where a watch could be kept for parachutists landing. Our countryside was quite flat so we could see for a considerable distance.

The post which was allocated to Reg Spencer and myself was at the junction of the lane to Coolmoor *Farm* and the Stanton to Ellerdine road. There was a good holly bush which kept off the wind but limited the view to our rear. All was quiet and time passed slowly. Eventually, young Geof Ward came round with a message to say I could go and do the milking and have some breakfast. Reg, I believe, had his breakfast brought to him and then we were back together again.

I, as a Methodist Local Preacher, was due to take a Service at Ketley that Sunday. Fortunately another elderly Local Preacher lived near, Eb Cooper by name, and he volunteered to go for me. It meant a 10 mile Cycle ride for him each way but he was a good cyclist.

We were allowed to go home for some dinner but if my memory is not at fault, later in the afternoon we were sent to a small fire in Maunings Coppice which was adjacent to the Market Drayton — Shrewsbury road. It was a dry summer and the fire smouldered *on* but was eventually put out and we were told we could go home. The feared invasion had not materialised. Rumour has it, it was actually attempted but frustrated.