Stanton Parish History Recording Project

Personal Reminiscence File:- PR006g

Home Guard - Tale 7 by Tom Gollins

During the time I was in charge of No. 5. (Hazles) Platoon we were regular in our parades, took part in numerous exercises and generally aimed to be efficient if called on to play a part in the country's defence. The last thing I was asked to do before I left Shropshire was not a direct Home Guard duty.

One of our number, Tom David, had been subject to severe depression for some time. He had a smallholding of about a dozen acres and was also the village carpenter at Stanton. His sister was Headmistress at the village school. His holding was at Stanton Heath, about two miles from the village and was one of a cluster of similar holdings. He wanted to give up his land but to continue living with his wife in the house.

He and a neighbour, Len Lewis, had come to an arrangement about the land and they jointly asked me to value two heifers and a small haystack which Len would take. They would be happy to accept my valuation and so the deal was settled.

A few weeks later, at the end of July, P.C. Vearnals rang me to say that Tom David's wife had reported him missing. She was alarmed that he may have committed suicide. I believe it was a Friday morning and P.C. Vearnals requested that I call as many Home Guards as possible and carry out a search of the small fields in that area.

We managed to get together a number of men, not all H.Gs, and we planned to comb the area from the Stanton-Ellerdine road towards Muckleton.

Tom had left his home at about 2am. Andrew Brown who lived at Muckleton Lane had heard someone at his pump in the early hours.

The searchers went out in pairs and kept in contact with others so that no hedge should be missed. If and when they found him they would report to me in the centre of the advancing searchers and I would blow a whistle to call off the search.

As we neared Andrew Brown's house one of the searchers found Tom lying in a dry ditch, hands tightly clenched, typically I'm told, of strychnine poisoning.

Sadly, the search was called off and the police took over. A very quiet group of men dispersed.

Tom had been well liked and respected and we were all saddened that he should have ended in this way.

Telling his wife was not the easiest of things to do. Tom was buried at Stanton in the following week.

I was at the time finalising arrangements to take over the tenancy of Moulsoe Buildings Farm on Lord Carrington's Estate in Buckinghamshire.

I moved from my native county on 1st September 1943, leaving many friends behind but carrying many amusing and happy memories in many spheres - Church, farming, cricket and Home Guard. A pity one of the last should be so sad.

My pips came off and I became Private Gollins again. A member of Moulsoe Section in a platoon drawn from Moulsoe, Broughton and Milton Keynes villages.