

VILLAGE HISTORY LESSON PART 12

The 20th century was dominated by the two wars, both pointless and unnecessary, both the result of human frailty. The first came about from Alliances forged largely to satisfy the egos of dying monarchies. The second, a direct result of the first, came from the thirst for revenge of a charismatic, power-hungry psychopath. A warning for our current times.

Both wars affected our peaceful village in ways which it had not witnessed for over 250 years. As a result of the obscene slaughter in the trenches 15 men from the villages of Kirkby Overblow, Kearby and Sicklinghall, mainly the sons of farmers and farm labourers, lost their lives. Carol Simmonds paid them tribute in her poignant booklet *The Poppies Blow* published in 2010 by the Local History Group. Truly "Lions led by donkeys."

In contrast in the Second World War all those called up came back. In a sense the war was less remote, partly because people were better informed and partly because there was more activity on the Home Front. The Kirkby Overblow and Kearby company of the Home Guard used to meet in the Reading Room and later in Rectory Cottage. Night patrols consisting of four men working in two-hour shifts closely guarded the Star and Garter and Shoulder of Mutton.

There were three-man shifts of fire watchers keeping a look-out for incendiary bombs from a vantage point on High Snape land and Air Raid Wardens patrolled the village with shouts of "Put that light out." A searchlight unit was stationed opposite Walton Head Lane. Leeds, of course, was heavily bombed, especially the blitz of 14/15 March 1941 when the centre was badly damaged including the city museum and artifacts. Two unexploded shells from an ack-ack battery fell behind Laurel Farm and had to be detonated by the army.

Towards the end of the war an escaped German prisoner-of-war was discovered in a hay loft at Laurel Farm. He fled across the

fields towards Spofforth but was quickly caught in the general hue and cry. On VE night beer and rhubarb wine flowed freely and “we finished up carrying folks home.”

Part 11 quiz question: where can you find a memory of the coronation of Edward VII? Answer: in the triangle of grass before the old Council houses there are two sycamores planted to celebrate the coronation in 1902. So what shall we do to celebrate the accession of Charles III? Ideas to the Chairman of the Parish Council (serious ones only, please).

This is the last of my history lessons and I hope my iconoclastic views have not offended and that you have found as much enjoyment (and enlightenment) reading them as I had in their creation.

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