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# **MALPAS AND THE HOME FRONT**

**1939-1945**



**Wartime life in a small Cheshire town**

**DAVID HAYNS**

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**Wartime life in a small Cheshire town**

**DAVID HAYNS**

**Published by the author at  
Stoke Cottage Malpas Cheshire  
November 2005**

# MALPAS AND THE HOME FRONT 1939-1945

## Wartime life in a small Cheshire town

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Contributors to this book photographed with the author (October 2005): L-R (back row) Pam Probin, Norah Chamberlain, David Paton, Rosemary Jones, Mike Downey, Jill Hayns, Bill Coffin, William (Bill) Probin, Robin Barnett, Colin Parton (middle row) Doreen Leek, Joan Allen, Kevin Meredith, Barbara Latham, Arthur Benson, Margaret Lloyd-Williams, Robert (Bob) Done, Helen Arthan, Marilyn Brookfield, Don Allen, Laurie Crump (seated) Eric Furber, Alice Matthews, Vera Brereton, Ben White, Mary Pridding, Peter Robinson, Patricia Paton, Maureen Crump.  
(*Chester Chronicle*)



Malpas High Street before World War II (*Bill Coffin*)

COVER PHOTOGRAPHS Laurie Crump as a member of Broxton Home Guard 'G' Company (*Laurie Crump*) and Patricia Grainger-Smith (*Patricia Paton*) in her Women's Land Army uniform.

All unacknowledged photographs are from the author's own collection.

**MALPAS IN 1939 EXTRACTED FROM  
KELLY'S 'DIRECTORY OF CHESHIRE'**

**PRIVATE RESIDENTS**

ASKHAM, Walter Reginald, Old Hall St  
 BABINGTON, Rev Henry Gilliatt, MA, The Manse  
 BRADLEY, Mrs, Sunnyside  
 BRIGGS, D E, Bank House, High St  
 BROOKES, George, The Hough  
 COX, Miss, Church St  
 CROWTHER, H A, Well St  
 CROWTHER, Mrs Amelia Alice, JP, Well St  
 DICKEN, Thomas, Chester Rd.  
 DIMELOW, Misses Mary & Elizabeth, Fir Villa,  
 Wrexham Rd  
 EVANS, John Francis, Hill Crescent, Chester Rd  
 HESKETH, Harvey Thomas, The Terrace  
 HUGHES, Arthur, Fern Bank, Tilston Rd  
 HUXLEY, Thomas George, Chester Rd  
 INCE, John Richard, Old Hall St  
 JARMINE, Miss, Grove House  
 JENKINS, Rev Reginald Lewis (Congregational),  
 Church St  
 LANCELEY, George, The Cross  
 LEIGH, Albert, Church St  
 LEWIS, Herbert, Marston, Chester Rd  
 McCLEAN, John Broadfoot, Glendohr, Chester Rd  
 OKELL, Rev Frank Jackson, MA (Rector),  
 The Rectory  
 PARSONAGE, John, Oakcroft  
 PENNELL, Charles L., Church St  
 POLLARD, Leslie Thomas, Prospect House  
 RASBOTHAM, Maj. Darcy, JP, Ebnal Grange  
 RIGBY, John, Hawthorn Cottage, Church St

HUGHES, Arthur, poultry farmer,  
 West End poultry farm  
 HUGHES, Walter, corn dealer, 1 Chester Rd  
 HUXLEY, Thomas George & Co. Ltd, builders,  
 High St  
 HUXLEY, John, tailor, Church St  
 HUXLEY, Thomas, farmer, Well St  
 INDEPENDENT ORDER OF ODDFELLOWS  
 (Clutton Lodge), (Lawrence Wycherley, treas.;  
 William Parker, sec.), Victoria Jubilee Hall  
 JARVIS, Fred, poultry farmer  
 JONES, Frank A C, shopkeeper, Well St  
 LANCASHIRE ASSOCIATED COLLIERIES,  
 colliery proprietors, Malpas Railway station  
 LEE (Henry), Bygott & Eccleston, solicitors,  
 (attend Tuesdays), Chester Rd  
 LEIGH, Albert, LRCP, London, MRCS,  
 eng. physician surgeon & certifying factory  
 surgeon, Church St  
 LEWIS, James, plumber & glazier, Wrexham Rd  
 LLOYD, Frank & Sons, cattle auction,  
 Malpas Railway station  
 LLOYDS BANK LTD (branch)  
 (Ralph Ensell Piper, manager), Church St  
 LOGAN, C E, horse slaughterer  
 McCLAREN, Robert, tailor, Church St  
 McCLEAN, John Broadfoot, MRCVS,  
 veterinary surgeon, Glendohr, Chester Rd  
 MADDOCK, William, house decorator, Well St  
 MALPAS GAS COMPANY LTD  
 (H A Crowther, sec), Well St  
 MALPAS LAWN TENNIS CLUB  
 (Cecil Dutton, hon. treas.)  
 MALPAS SOCIAL CLUB & INSTITUTE  
 (Cecil Dutton, hon. sec.)  
 MARSH, T M, haulage contractor

RIMMER, Col. Stanley, OBE TD, Bolling,  
 Church St  
 RIMMER, Miss, Bolling Cottage, Church St  
 ROWLANDS, Sidney Charles, Yarrow Bank,  
 Chester Rd  
 SALT, Mrs Annie, Newhaven, Old Hall St  
 THOMAS, Rev W Eaton, The Groves  
 WHITFIELD, Frederick, Oakville, Old Hall St  
 WILLIS, William Elliott, Ebnal House  
 WYCHERLEY, Lawrence, Walton, Chester Rd  
 YATES, Herbert Cyril, Alport House, Chester Rd

**COMMERCIAL**

ANTHONY, G F, ironmonger, High St  
 APPERLEY, Alfred, motor engineer, High St  
 ARTHAN, John, poultry dealer, Firdale,  
 Wrexham Rd  
 ARTHAN, Joseph, cattle dealer, The Cedars,  
 Whitchurch Rd  
 AUSTIN, Joseph, smallholder, Belle Vue  
 BAGSHAW, Mrs Ruth, cowkeeper  
 BALL, John Peregrine, greengrocer, Church St  
 BARLOW, Misses Ann & Mary Elizabeth,  
 dress makers, Church St  
 BARLOW, Philip George, hairdresser, Church St  
 BATHO, Percy, haulage contractor, Chester Rd  
 BEBBINGTON, Mrs T, shopkeeper,  
 Old Hall St  
 BILLINGTON, J H Ltd, coal merchants,  
 Malpas Railway station  
 BOUGHEY, George, tobacconist & confectioner,  
 Church St  
 BROAD, Edward M, cattle dealer, Smithfield  
 BUSSEY, Horace, fishmonger & c, Old Hall St  
 CARTWRIGHT, Charles, plasterer, 16 Sunnyside

MASONIC ST. OSWALD'S LODGE  
 (A Clayton, sec.), Victoria Jubilee Hall  
 MERCER, Henry Eaton,  
 clerk to the Parish Council, High St  
 MORRIS, John, newsagent, High St  
 MULLOCK, Thomas, rating officer for  
 Cuddington, Chorlton, Oldcastle, Wychough,  
 Newton & Chidlow, The Hollies, Whitchurch Rd  
 NATIONAL PROVINCIAL BANK LTD (branch  
 of Whitchurch) (Frederick L Whitfield, manager),  
 High St  
 NEVITT, Frank, smallholder, Ebnal Bank  
 PARSONAGE BROS, farmers, Whitegate Farm  
 PATERSON, Jack, motor omnibus proprietor,  
 Wyvern Yard, Church St  
 POLLARD & WILLIS, physicians & surgeons,  
 Prospect House, High St  
 POLLARD, Leslie Thomas, OBE MB ChB,  
 physician & surgeon, Prospect House, High St  
 PRINCE, Albert, poultry farmer,  
 PROBIN, John, farmer, Wrexham Rd  
 PROBIN, Mrs Mary, farmer, The Fields  
 PROUDLOVE, Philip, haulage contractor,  
 Malpas Railway station  
 READ, Charles W, butcher, Ebnal  
 RED LION HOTEL (Capt. S A Hollingsworth),  
 Old Hall St  
 REEVES, Edgar John, butcher, High St  
 REEVES, Joseph, farmer, Moss Farm  
 REEVES, William Henry, tobacconist, High St  
 RICHARDS, Mrs Margaret, drug stores, The Cross  
 RIGBY, Arthur, farmer, Ebnal  
 RIGBY, Thomas, farmer, Ebnal Bank  
 ROBERTS, George, chimney sweeper, Church St  
 ROGERS, William, dairyman, Well St  
 SALT, S A & Co., grocers, The Cross

CEMETERY (Thomas Shenton, clerk to the  
 joint committee), Chester Rd  
 CHESHIRE COUNTY LIBRARY, High St  
 CHESWORTH, George, haulage contractor &  
 furniture remover, farmer & agricultural  
 implement hirer, Lydgate, Well St  
 CORBETT, William, hay & straw merchant,  
 Greenfields, Chester Rd  
 CORNES, Henry James, farmer, The Old Hall  
 CRAWFORD, Thomas, boot repair, Church St  
 CROWN PH (Mrs Ada M Bradley), Old Hall St  
 DAVIES, Harold, wireless engineer, Church St  
 DIMELOW, Fred, farmer, Mount View  
 DODD, Charles Johnson, farmer, Church St  
 DUTTON, Cecil, watch & clock maker, High St  
 EATON & CO., outfitters, High St  
 EDGE & SONS, coal merchants,  
 Malpas Railway station  
 EDGE, John & Son, breeches maker, Church St  
 EDGE, Harold, fried fish dealer, High St  
 EDWARDS, John N, farmer, Moss House  
 EDWARDS, Joseph, stone mason, Church St  
 FLETCHER, John & Leonard Thomas, printers,  
 Church St  
 FLETCHER, Harold W, draper, Church St  
 FURBER, Harold, motor spirit service station;  
 cycle agent; & cars for hire, Smithy Garage,  
 Old Hall St  
 GILL, Walter George, shopkeeper, Church St  
 GLADDY, Mrs Annie, confectioner, The Cross  
 HARRISON, Miss Ada, SRN SCM, district nurse  
 (Queens), Rock Terrace, High St  
 HEWITT, Leonard, shoe maker, Old Hall St  
 HILES, Miss A G, baker, grocer, & refreshment  
 rooms, The Cross & Chester Rd  
 HILES, Albert, butcher, Church St

SHAW, Frank, farmer, Hollow Wood  
 SHENTON, Thomas, printer, Church St  
 SHONE, Arthur, farmer, Preston Hall  
 SIMMONS, James, farmer, Old Hayes  
 SMITH, Frederick William Charles,  
 farmer, The Lees  
 TAYLOR, William,  
 gardener to Maj. Darcy Rasbotham, JP, Ebnal  
 TOMBS, E F, dentist (att. Mondays), Old Hall St  
 TURTLE, Joseph, house decorator, High St  
 VAULTS PH (Bernard Battarbee), Church St  
 VICTORIA JUBILEE HALL  
 (Cecil Dutton. hon. sec.) High St  
 WALGATE & LEAKE, drapers, Church St  
 WALKER (MALPAS) LTD, Portland Drug Stores,  
 The Cross  
 WALKER, Henry, farmer, Ebnal Bank  
 WEAVER, George, journalist, Old Hall St  
 WEIGHING MACHINE (Leonard Hewitt),  
 Old Hall St  
 WILLIAMS, George Alfred, LDS Liverpool,  
 dentist (att. Thursdays), High St  
 WILLIAMS, Shackfield, grocer, Church St  
 WILLIS, William Elliott MB Ch.B. Edin.,  
 physician & surgeon (firm Pollard & Willis),  
 Prospect House, High St  
 WINTER, Reginald, hairdresser, Church St  
 WYCHERLEY, Lawrence, saddler, Church St  
 WYVERN FAMILY & COMMERCIAL HOTEL  
 (W H Youd, proprietor), Church St

## WORLD WAR TWO : KEY DATES IN THE INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

### 1938

September Munich agreement.

### 1939

March Germany occupies Prague.  
 September 1<sup>st</sup> Germany invades Poland.  
**September 3<sup>rd</sup>** **Britain and France declare war on Germany.**  
 November Poland defeated and partitioned between Germany and USSR.

### 1940

April Germany invades Denmark and Norway.  
 May 10<sup>th</sup> Germany invades Holland and Belgium.  
 Chamberlain resigns – Churchill becomes Prime Minister.  
**May 26<sup>th</sup>** **Dunkirk evacuation begins.**  
 June 10<sup>th</sup> Italy declares war on Britain and France.  
**July 10<sup>th</sup>** **Battle of Britain begins.**  
**August 28<sup>th</sup>-31<sup>st</sup>** **Nightly bombing raids on Merseyside.**  
 September Italy invades Egypt.  
**September 7<sup>th</sup>** **The London 'Blitz' begins.**

### 1941

January 2<sup>nd</sup> Britain takes Tobruk.  
**May** **Further heavy bombing of Merseyside.**  
 June 22<sup>nd</sup> Germany invades Russia.  
**December 7<sup>th</sup>** **Japan attacks Pearl Harbour.**

### 1942

June 21<sup>st</sup> Germany takes Tobruk.  
 October Battle of El Alamein.

### 1943

**September 8<sup>th</sup>** **Italy surrenders.**

### 1944

**June 6<sup>th</sup>** **D-Day landings in Normandy.**  
 August 24<sup>th</sup> Allies take Paris.  
 September 12<sup>th</sup> Allied troops enter Germany.

### 1945

February Yalta Conference.  
 April 28<sup>th</sup> Mussolini hanged by partisans.  
 April 30<sup>th</sup> Hitler commits suicide.  
**May 8<sup>th</sup>** **Germany surrenders.**  
 July 8<sup>th</sup> USSR declares war on Japan.  
 August 6<sup>th</sup> Atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima.  
 August 9<sup>th</sup> Atom bomb dropped on Nagasaki.  
**August 15<sup>th</sup>** **Japan surrenders.**

## 1. PROLOGUE

Until May of this year (2005) I had no idea that I would be writing this book. That month Mrs Pam Probin asked me, at short notice, to give a talk to Chorlton & Cuddington Women's Institute. As the WI had heard all of my regular talks I quickly ransacked my research notes to produce a sketchy talk about Malpas during the 1939-1945 war. It was based on such records as the Malpas Parish Council minutes, the Alport School log books, Malpas Deanery Magazine, minutes of the Jubilee Hall committee and the record books of Malpas Women's Institute (disbanded in 1995). Sitting in the audience at the WI talk were Pat Paton, a former Land Army girl; Margaret Lloyd-Williams (John and Sybil Parsonage's daughter); and others who had lived in and around Malpas during the war. I could no longer resist – I had to write a short book about Malpas during the war and it had to be written and published this year, the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of the cessation of hostilities.

I was three years and two days old on VE Day (May 8<sup>th</sup> 1945) and lived in the south of England before I moved to Malpas in 1967. My memories of the war consist mainly of waving to the Land Girls as they were driven past our house in an open lorry each morning and marching beside the military bands which led the troops down our road to Windsor, on route for demobilisation at the Victoria Barracks. Therefore, although I was able to carry out the necessary documentary research, the only way to put human flesh on the Malpas story was to talk to those who had experienced for themselves the war years in and around the town.

In addition to thanking Pam Probin, who 'sparked off' this project, I am extremely grateful for the help, information and material I have received from Mr Don Allen, Mrs Joan Allen (nee Bickley), Ms Helen Arthan, Mr Robin Barnett, Mr Richard Beith, Mr Arthur Benson, Mrs Vera Brereton, Mrs Norah Chamberlain, Captain Laurie Crump, Mrs Maureen Crump (nee Jones), Mrs Mary Devenport, Mr Robert (Bob) Done, Mrs Joy Done, Mr Mike Downey, Mr Eric Furber, Mr & Mrs Nick Hodson, Mr John Huxley, Mrs Janet James, Mrs Rosemary Jones (nee Lawrence), Mrs Barbara Latham, Mr David Latham, Mrs Annie Lawrence, Mrs Doreen Leek (nee Cartwright), Mrs Margaret Lloyd-Williams (nee Parsonage), Mrs Alice Matthews, Mr Kevin Meredith, Mr Colin Parton, Mrs Pat Paton (nee Grainger-Smith), Mr David Paton, Mrs Oriel Piggott, Mrs Mary Pridding (nee Wynne), Mr William (Bill) Probin, Mr Peter Robinson, Mr & Mrs Andrew Waterhouse, Mr Ben White and Mr John Wycherley. Without their co-operation and input, and the support of my wife Jill, this book would not have been possible. I would like to record special thanks to Marilyn Brookfield at Malpas Library, for her personal memories and for her persistence in obtaining books or articles I requested, no matter how obscure they were; to Bill Coffin for all his help, in checking my draft text, in obtaining illustrations and for allowing me to quote from his excellent book *Back in Five Minutes*; to Rachel Gilbert-Bratt at Bishop Heber High School; and to the extremely helpful staff at Cheshire & Chester Archives & Local Studies (Cheshire Record Office), the National Archives at Kew, Whitchurch Library, Medway Archives & Local Studies Centre and Malpas 'No Limits' Centre.

While I have tried to be as accurate as possible in my recording and interpretation of the evidence, there will inevitably be unintentional errors and omissions, for which I apologise and take full responsibility. I have been given so much information by those I have interviewed, and collected so much through documentary research, that I could probably fill a second book. However the restrictions of time and space mean that the present volume will have to serve the purpose. I hope that it provides an interesting and informative insight into life in just one rural community during the anxious years of World War II. Let us hope that we never have to live through such years again.



## 2. 'THIS COUNTRY IS AT WAR'

On Friday September 1<sup>st</sup> 1939 Herbert Yates, Headmaster of Malpas Alport Boys' School, picked up his red pen and wrote in prominent letters at the top of that day's page in the school log book: **WAR EMERGENCY SHIFT PERIOD.**

By 5 o'clock that afternoon the Fleet had been mobilised and all Royal Air Force and naval reservists had been ordered to report for duty. At 11 o'clock on the morning of the previous day the Government had issued orders to put into operation the evacuation from cities of schoolchildren and mothers with young children. The following Sunday the staff of Sefton Park Junior Boys' School in Liverpool's Smithdown Road were summoned into school. They congregated in the staffroom and switched on the wireless to hear Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain's fateful broadcast: *'I have to tell you ..... this country is at war with Germany ..... May God bless you all ..... I am certain that the right will prevail'.*

In September 1938 Britain had been on the brink of war, following Germany's claim to Sudetenland, part of Czechoslovakia. Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain sought to avert war by meeting with Adolf Hitler (German Chancellor), Benito Mussolini (Italian Prime Minister) and Edouard Daladier (French Prime Minister) in Munich, where they signed the 'Munich Agreement' (the notorious 'piece of paper' which Chamberlain produced on his return to England), transferring Sudetenland to the Germans. Twelve months of uncertainty followed until on September 1<sup>st</sup> 1939 Germany invaded Poland, leading to Britain's declaration of war on September 3<sup>rd</sup> and to Mr Chamberlain's broadcast that same day.

One of the teachers at Sefton Park School was Jack Peberdy, who wrote later of his experiences: *'The radio is turned off and quietly we walk down the stairs into the yard. We marshal the children into line and set off to Wavertree station. There we board a train after many tearful goodbyes. Where are we going? No-one knows. We are leaving Liverpool, a possible target for enemy bombers, for an unknown destination. Eventually the train pulls into Chester station. Is this it? No, it soon turns off and we watch for the stations: Waverton, Tattenhall, Broxton and eventually we stop at a place called Malpas – most of us had never heard of it. The instruction to disembark comes through. We shepherd the children into the yard where many people and vehicles are waiting. We are asked to board the vehicles and are transported into Malpas where we stop outside a hall which we later find is called the Jubilee Hall. Up the stairs into a large room. There many people are waiting and slowly the children are taken in ones, twos, etc., until sometime about 9.00 pm they have all been offered sanctuary by the very kind people who live in Malpas and the surrounding villages.'*

Jack Peberdy himself and Mr Glover, another of the Sefton Park teachers, were billeted at The Bolling in Church Street, where the housekeeper was Minnie Allman. Following National Service after the war Jack returned to Malpas, married Minnie and became a respected member of the Malpas community. He was involved with many local activities and became one of the group who helped to establish the new Malpas Sports Club in Wrexham Road in 1958.

As Norman Longmate wrote in *How we lived then*: *'..... though no one foresaw what lay ahead, for himself or the nation, the war which began on that sunny autumn morning, September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1939, was the least unexpected war in history.'* Many lessons had been learned from the experiences of the 1914-1918 war with regard to the organisation of home defences and measures to be taken for the protection of civilians. Less than three years after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919 the

national Air Raid Precautions (ARP) Committee was established to examine the problems caused by air raids. The Committee drew up initial plans for Civil Defence and for civilian evacuation, initially taking into account only evacuation from London but by 1935 considering schemes for the country as a whole. In May 1938 the Home Secretary (Sir Samuel Hoare) had set up the 'Committee on Evacuation', which proposed that the evacuation of children should take priority in any scheme. The same month the Women's Voluntary Services (WVS), now the Women's Royal Voluntary Service, was formed primarily for recruiting women into the Civil Defence Services. Its first national president was Lady Reading who called upon 'every kind of woman in every kind of sphere of life ..... to prepare patiently and thoroughly ..... a protection ..... for our loved ones and our homes'. From the outcome WVS members proved themselves to be very adaptable and, with the Women's Institutes (WIs) and the Girl Guides, helped to form a national Evacuation Committee.

In September 1939 plans were put into action for evacuation from cities in danger of aerial attack. The Rural District Councils were responsible for arranging accommodation and from September 1938 onwards they had been in communication with parish councils, seeking their help with the practicalities of evacuation. In March 1939 Malpas Parish Council had met with Mrs Rasbotham from Ebnal and Mrs Egerton-Warburton of Grafton Hall, the local representatives of the WVS, to discuss plans for the proposed evacuation scheme. They assisted with the appointment of Billeting Officers and in drawing up a list of car owners in Malpas.

Acting on instructions from the County Council, Mr Yates closed the school for the week beginning September 4<sup>th</sup>, re-opening the following week on a 'box and cox' system so that the Alport boys could attend from 9.00 am to 12.30 pm, while the Sefton Park boys used the school premises from 1.00 pm to 5.00 pm. Similar arrangements were being introduced in many of the areas which received evacuees. The arrangements were obviously not very conducive to the proper education of pupils in either school so that by the first week of November Sefton Park had moved out and been re-established in the Jubilee Hall and in the wooden hut (later to house the Malpas Men's Institute) which, in those days, stood on what is now the Jubilee Hall car park. That month the minutes of the Tarvin and Whitchurch Administrative Sub-Committee (Education) of Cheshire County Council recorded approval of the expenditure of £3.15s.0d (£3.76) per week for the rent of the Jubilee Hall. By February 1940 Mr Gore, Headmaster of Sefton Park, had taken over from Arthur Hughes the post of Billeting Officer. Mr Gore attended a meeting of the Parish Council to explain why certain of the Liverpool boys needed changes of billets, also that extra billets needed to be found for more children due to arrive shortly. There were various reasons why children might need to change billets, including health problems or simply being incompatible with their original hosts. When it was found that still not enough offers of billets were forthcoming, Mr Hesketh, Chairman of the Parish Council, composed a letter to be used where necessary:

*Dear Sir or Madam, Under the Defence Regulations 1939, the Malpas Reception Area is required to billet or re-billet about 30 children immediately. As you have, as yet, not had children billeted on you for any length of time, we feel that you will recognise that it is now your duty to receive such children. We are confident that if the Billeting Officer calls on you to comply with the above regulations you will accept this public duty and not force him to exercise compulsory powers.*

Many local residents remember the evacuees who were billeted with their families. It could not have been easy for them to stretch their resources to cope with the unexpected guests. An allowance of 10.6d (52½ pence) per week was paid for the first evacuee child in each household, plus 8s.6d (42½ pence) for each extra child

(these payments were increased later). In addition the evacuees' own families were expected to make a payment of 6s.0d (30 pence) per week for each child, although this was not always forthcoming. Rosemary Jones (nee Lawrence), living at Clayholes Cottage in Wrexham Road, opposite the present Malpas Sports Club, remembers Sheila, a 12 year old Liverpoolian whose twin sister was billeted with a family in Tilston Road; Ben White's evacuees were Gordon and Manny, both aged around eight when they came in 1940; Bill Probin had two more Liverpool boys of similar age, who went home quite soon when their mother came down from Liverpool to fetch them; Mike Downey's family in Well Street had a girl to stay while her two brothers went to a neighbour; Bob Done, then a teenager at Higher Hall, Hampton, remembers two London families, each of a mother with two children, who lodged in their cheese room which had previously served as a base for the Home Guard; and Colin Parton and Eric Furber remember the '*young scousers*' who raided the orchard at the Old Hall, having arrived in Malpas just in time for the apple harvest!

David Latham, then aged six, was one of the Sefton Park evacuees who arrived with Jack Peberdy. On the morning of September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1939 he and his seven year old brother John were put on a bus by their mother, given a glass of orange juice and told that they were going on holiday. It was a real shock for them to find themselves in Malpas that evening. David and John sat on the kerbside outside the old Post Office in the High Street, each clutching his gas mask and survival rations in a brown paper bag, while local residents walked up and down to 'choose' their evacuees. The Latham boys were finally selected by Mrs Rimmer of the Bolling, who would have liked four girl evacuees but had to settle instead for four boys, who were bundled into Colonel Rimmer's enormous Lanchester and driven by his chauffeur to the big house in Church Street. Other evacuees were taken to the Alport school playground where Mike Downey remembers them waiting to be 'selected'. He felt especially sorry for three black children – two boys and a girl – who nobody seemed to want, probably because black people had never been seen in Malpas before. Eventually they finished up at the Beeches Hostel (see page 13).

On the first morning of their stay the 'Bolling boys' rushed down to the fields behind the house, jumping feet first into the cowpats! The Rimmers lived in the upper part of the house, some of which was demolished later by their post-war successor Colonel Jack Grubb, while the evacuees occupied the ground floor along with the domestic staff. The regime was quite strict. The boys were paid one shilling (5 pence) a week by Colonel Rimmer to help out, including bringing in coal and sticks for the fires and kitchen ovens, queuing at the Malpas shops for the family's rations and collecting prescriptions from the surgery at Prospect House. Bedtime was at 6.30 pm and Saturday morning was 'medication' time when the boys would be lined up to be dosed with syrup of figs, a spoonful of malt and, in the case of sore throats, a spray of TCP. Miss Eileen Fox, one of the domestic staff, used to take the boys to school at the Jubilee Hall, where there were two classes upstairs and two downstairs. David and John stayed at the Bolling for about three years after which their mother was also evacuated to Malpas, because she was having a baby. At first the family moved to a flat by the Cross, then lodged with the Merediths in their house in what later became Well Avenue. Finally they moved into an empty cottage in Well Street which had been requisitioned by Tarvin Rural District Council, where they were joined by Mr Latham after he had been demobilised from the army after the war. When he was older David earned extra pocket money by boiling and mixing feed for the hens at Albert Prince's poultry farm at Cross o' the Hill, where he worked alongside Richard Harrison who was to become verger at Saint Oswald's in 1941. David eventually left Malpas when he married a girl from Marbury in 1963



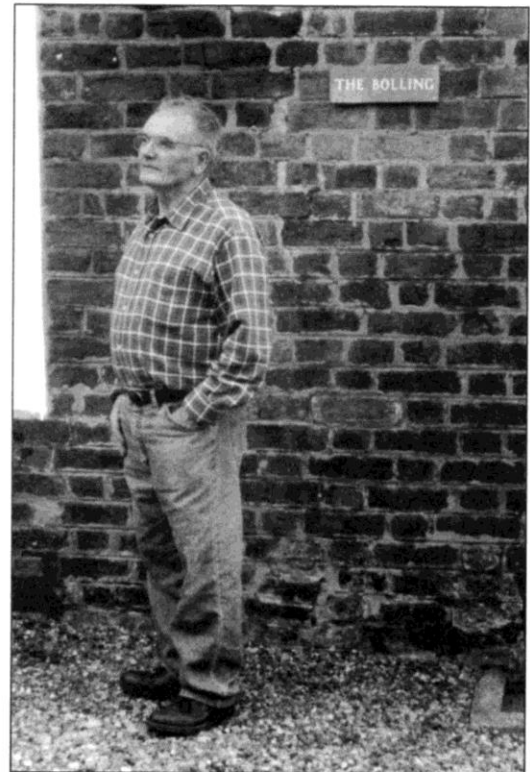
Jack Peberdy on the Oxheyes with evacuee boys from Sefton Park School.



'The Beeches' in Tilston Road which was used as a hostel for evacuees (now Saint Joseph's Retreat & Conference Centre).



The Jubilee Hall which housed the temporary school for evacuee children from Liverpool.



Former Liverpool evacuee David Latham outside the Bolling where he was billeted during the war.

Another Sefton Park evacuee, who did well in later life, was Stanley Morgan. At first he was billeted with the Lovell family in Parbutt's Lane, later moving to live with the Misses Agnes and Dorothy Robinson at Drake's Cottage in the High Street. After the war he emigrated to Canada and then to Southern Rhodesia, eventually returning to live in Ireland. He was an author of many novels, including a very successful series featuring ladies' man Russ Tobin. He was also an actor, taking parts in a number of British films including *The L-shaped Room* and *Dr No*, the first James Bond epic. What is not generally known is that he possibly started his acting career in Malpas. The programme for a concert during Salute the Soldier Week in 1944 credits Stanley Morgan with the role of the King, in a playlet called *Here comes the King* featuring members of the Malpas Evening Institute English class.

For those children whom it proved impossible to billet in private houses, a hostel was set up in early 1941 at the Beeches (now St Joseph's Retreat & Conference Centre) in Tilston Road. The house had previously been the home of the Greenshields family who left the Malpas area in 1938. Reasons for assigning children to the hostel included difficult behaviour and medical problems. One difficulty encountered by many evacuees and their host families – it was a problem encountered nationally by about one-third of all evacuee children – was bed-wetting. The problem is easily understood, even if not easily dealt with, when one considers the traumatic conditions under which children had been rapidly removed from the security of their home areas into totally strange environments, not knowing whether their homes would still be standing or their parents living when they returned to Liverpool or London. The Beeches hostel served the whole of Tarvin Rural District and was administered by a committee of the RDC, chaired by Mrs Wolley-Dod of Edge Hall. Similar hostels were set up in many other evacuee reception areas. Mary Pridding (nee Wynne) worked morning shifts at the Beeches as a cook and general cleaner, under the supervision of the Canadian matron Mrs Southern. Mrs Southern had been appointed in March 1941 on a weekly salary of £2.5s.0d (£2.25), plus free board and lodging. Mary remembers that spinach was served every day for lunch since Matron was sure it was just what her charges needed. She also remembers the behaviour of two black evacuees, Benny and Betty, who were *'very lively'*! Keeping an eye on the children's diet was very important, particularly in view of the fact that Matron had received a circular from the Ministry of Health stating that no free cod liver oil or malt would be issued for children over the age of two years. The Ministry considered that all necessary vitamins and other basics for a healthy diet could be obtained from fruit, vegetables and milk. Fortunately a ready source of fruit and vegetables was at hand since the old walled garden at the Beeches had been put back into cultivation, under guidance from the Cheshire War Agricultural Executive Committee.

In November 1941, when the area was in the throes of an epidemic of mumps, Stretton Hall near Tilston was requisitioned to serve as a sick bay for the Beeches. In late 1942 Lady Reading, the WVS national president, visited the Beeches and Stretton Hall. In a letter to the Beeches committee following her visit she wrote that she *'was very much struck by the selfless devotion to duty of the Matrons and their staffs and the obvious enjoyment and happiness of the children'* and she *'was sure that there was no better work that the WVS is associated with than service given to the children with all the problems and possibilities it presents'*. Matron Southern's devotion to duty was officially recognised when she was awarded the British Empire Medal at the beginning of 1945.

It seems that, on the whole, the Malpas evacuees were fairly happy with their enforced stay away from home. However, by January 1940 around two thirds of all the children evacuated from Liverpool had returned home although it was reported in July 1940 that a greater proportion of children had remained in Malpas than in any other area in

Cheshire, or elsewhere, to which Liverpool children had been evacuated. Apparently some of the most contented evacuees were those who had been 'granny reared' back at home. Mrs Wolley-Dod made a point of billeting them with families in Threapwood, where they seemed to find very sympathetic hosts. The reasons for children, and mothers where they had accompanied their children, returning to the city were very varied. They included claims that children were not properly looked after by the host families; unsuitable accommodation; mothers at home in Liverpool who could not manage without the help of their children in the house; medical problems, particularly those with emotional causes such as bed-wetting; badly behaved evacuees; and children being just plain homesick for Liverpool. Sometimes evacuee children would be discovered walking along the railway line from Hampton towards Chester, in the hope that it would eventually lead them back to their native city.

Six days after D-Day (June 6<sup>th</sup> 1944) the Germans retaliated against the Allies by sending over to this country the first of the dreaded V1 rocket powered bombs (also known as 'doodlebugs' or 'buzz bombs'). These were aimed mainly at London although they were also targeted on other cities, including Manchester. At least one fell in Shropshire. In September 1944 the V1s were followed by the even deadlier V2 rockets targeted on London and elsewhere. Faced by these new menaces, the Government ordered a further evacuation of schoolchildren, mothers and pre-school children from out of the metropolis. Between August 1944 and July 1945 sixty-eight London evacuee children, aged between 7 and 14, were admitted to the Alport schools, together with one further child from Liverpool. Maureen Crump (nee Jones) remembers her aunt and six cousins, all of school age, coming from London. They had possibly come under the Government's 'assisted evacuation' scheme and stayed with Maureen's grandparents at Glebe Cottage in Church Street, where the whole evacuee family had to squeeze themselves into the front parlour.

Another group of evacuees to Malpas, about whom I have discovered little, were Channel Islanders. After Germany had occupied the Islands about one third of the population, some 29,000 in all, were brought off in June 1940. Most of them were billeted in Cheshire and Lancashire but there are no records of how many came to the Malpas area. A touching footnote was provided by the Malpas Women's Institute secretary when she wrote in her report of the April 1945 meeting that the entertainment included *'four songs by a refugee boy from Jersey, with a very sweet voice'*.

The last of the evacuee children left the Alport schools in December 1945 and the Beeches hostel was officially closed the following month. Sadly, not all of the children returned home. At least two evacuees died of illness in Malpas during the war, one of them a London girl at the Beeches, who suffered from rheumatic fever.

### 3. BETWEEN THE WARS

The arrival of the Liverpool evacuees on the very first day of the Second World War gave Malpas its first taste of the many disruptions that were to affect the town's life during the next few years. What was life here like before that fateful day of September 3<sup>rd</sup> 1939?

Although many newcomers choose to refer to Malpas as a village, historically it is a former market town with a charter granted by King Edward 1<sup>st</sup> in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Until the middle of the nineteenth century there were regular weekly markets selling a wide variety of local produce and goods made in the area. There were also three fairs each year, originally for the sale of cattle, horses and other livestock but also attracting the usual trappings of country fairs, such as travelling entertainers and amusements, pedlars and dealers in all sorts of goods. These fairs finally died out during the latter part of Queen Victoria's reign.

Back in medieval times the Cholmondeley and Brereton families had emerged as the two major landowners in the ancient Barony of Malpas, established soon after the Norman Conquest, although in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century the Breretons sold their share of the Barony to the Drake family from Buckinghamshire. However, despite its wealthy and powerful landlords, Malpas developed as a town with a mind of its own. By the early 19<sup>th</sup> century it had established its own form of local government based on the Church Vestry meeting, the forerunner of the civil parish council which came into being after the 1894 Local Government Act. The 1894 Act also created Rural District Councils (RDCs), covering larger country areas, with responsibilities such as housing, sanitation and minor road maintenance. Two of these were Tarvin RDC and Malpas RDC. Malpas came under the jurisdiction of Malpas RDC until 1936, when Malpas RDC was abolished and the area absorbed into Tarvin Rural District. Over all of them was Cheshire County Council, formed under the 1888 County Councils Act, with responsibilities including education, policing and public health.

A boost was given to the town's economy by the building of the Tattenhall to Whitchurch railway and the opening of the station at Hampton in 1872 followed soon afterwards by the establishment, close to the station, of what was to become an important 'Smithfield' livestock auction market, which took on many of the functions of the former thrice-yearly livestock fairs.

The town developed into the fairly self-sufficient community which it was in 1939 and which, to a great extent, it remains to this day, with its craftsmen and shopkeepers; businesses such as builders and a garage (formerly the blacksmith); services such as banks, solicitors, the Post Office and resident policemen; professionals such as doctors, veterinary surgeons, clergy and schoolteachers; the parish church, nonconformist chapels and, latterly, the Roman Catholic church; a variety of schools over the past five hundred years; a selection of hotels and public houses; clubs for bowling, cricket, football, tennis and other leisure pursuits; and a variety of meeting places, notably the Victoria Jubilee Hall opened in 1888.

Although Malpas did not directly experience any effects of enemy action during the Great War of 1914-1918, that first conflict had brought about many changes. Across most of Great Britain a number of complex factors, including increased financial pressure upon landowners and the loss of many sons who would have inherited land but did not survive the war, caused the break-up of landed estates. Like many of their counterparts elsewhere, the Drakes in 1921 and the Cholmondeleys in 1924 had been forced to sell off many of their properties, providing an opportunity for former tenant

farmers to purchase the freeholds of their farms and to set up in their own right. Later, many of those farmers may have questioned the wisdom of this when they struggled through the difficult years of the 1930s. Maybe many of their descendants are still questioning this as they try to cope with the devastation caused to Cheshire dairy farming by BSE (Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy), foot-and-mouth disease and, possibly, by the Common Agricultural Policy of the European Union.

The extract from Kelly's Cheshire Directory for 1939, which will be found on page 6, gives a good idea of the social structure of the town. However, it has to be remembered that this lists only businesses and organisations, together with those who were considered to be of sufficient social standing to be included in the list of 'Private Residents'. Despite the demise of the landed estates, Malpas was by no means a classless society. One still doffed one's cap to those regarded as one's superiors and although many of the wealthier residents were to play an important part in the 'war effort', they still expected those whom they considered to be of lower social station to remember their places in society.

In 1936 Rev (later Archdeacon) Francis Okell had been installed as Rector and remained until he was succeeded by Canon David Saunder Davies in late 1944. The minister at the Congregational church (forerunner to the present High Street Church) was Reverend R Lewis Jenkins until 1939, succeeded in December 1941 by Reverend Frank Jones; and the Methodist chapels in Old Hall Street (former Wesleyan Methodist) and Wrexham Road (former Primitive Methodist) were served by the Whitchurch Methodist Circuit. Herbert Yates was appointed Headmaster of the Alport Boys' School in 1935, taking over both the Boys' and Girls' schools when they amalgamated in 1945; Miss Beatrice Cotton, appointed in 1928, was Headmistress of the Alport Girls' School until the amalgamation; and Miss Ida Jones, appointed in 1937, was Headmistress of the Infants' School.

At Prospect House the surgery, in those days before the National Health Service, was presided over by Dr Leslie Pollard in partnership with husband and wife Drs William and Margaret Willis. The other medical man in Malpas was Dr Albert Leigh who lived at The Hayes in Church Street. He had been Medical Officer of Health for the district in the days of the Whitchurch Poor Law Union, until the Poor Law ceased to exist after the 1929 Local Government Act. In 1939 he was described as '*engineering factory surgeon and certifying factory surgeon*'. He died in 1944.

Keeping an eye on the safety and local government of the town were the Sergeant who lived at the Police Station, which stood on the site of the modern 'Keep Left' sign at the junction of Chester Road and High Street; the Fire Brigade, with its new station in High Street (built in 1934), presided over by fire chief Arthur Hughes; and the Parish Council, chairman Harvey Hesketh and clerk Henry Eaton Mercer.

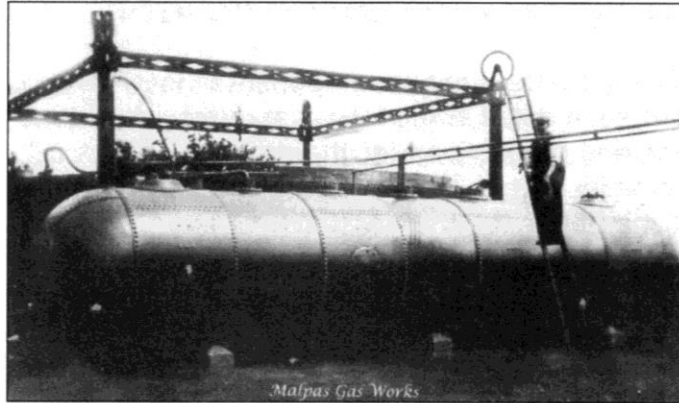
Gas and coke for the town were provided by the gas works in Well Street, where the manager was Mr Harold Crowther, and coal by a number of coal merchants based at Malpas Station; petrol came from Harold Furber's garage in Old Hall Street, on the site of the former smithy; and paraffin was available from various sources, including Furber's and William Henry Reeves's ('Billy Henry's') shop in the High Street.

The devastation of the war changed society in many fundamental ways. It drastically altered the physical appearance and social structure of London, Liverpool, Coventry and the many other urban areas which came under heavy air attack. For most rural areas the story was rather different. Although thousands of enemy aircraft droned through the skies over Malpas on their way to raid Liverpool only thirty miles away, no-one was killed in Malpas as a result of enemy action and not one house was destroyed



by bombing. However, many local men and women went away on war service, both in this country and abroad, some of them never to return. Malpas families were subject to the rigours of wartime restrictions; suffered the frustrations caused by the shortages of such commodities as food, petrol and coal; and became used to seeing many new faces from the outside world, including evacuee children from Liverpool and London, soldiers from Czechoslovakia, Poland and the USA, and prisoners-of war from Italy and Germany.

By the end of the war Malpas as a community had changed considerably. Despite the evils of the war itself, there were many good things which came out of it, both nationally and locally, some of which are described in Chapter 15. But post-war Malpas is not the main subject of this book. Its real purpose is to look at how the town reacted on the 'Home Front' from 1939 to 1945, those years which rocked the world.



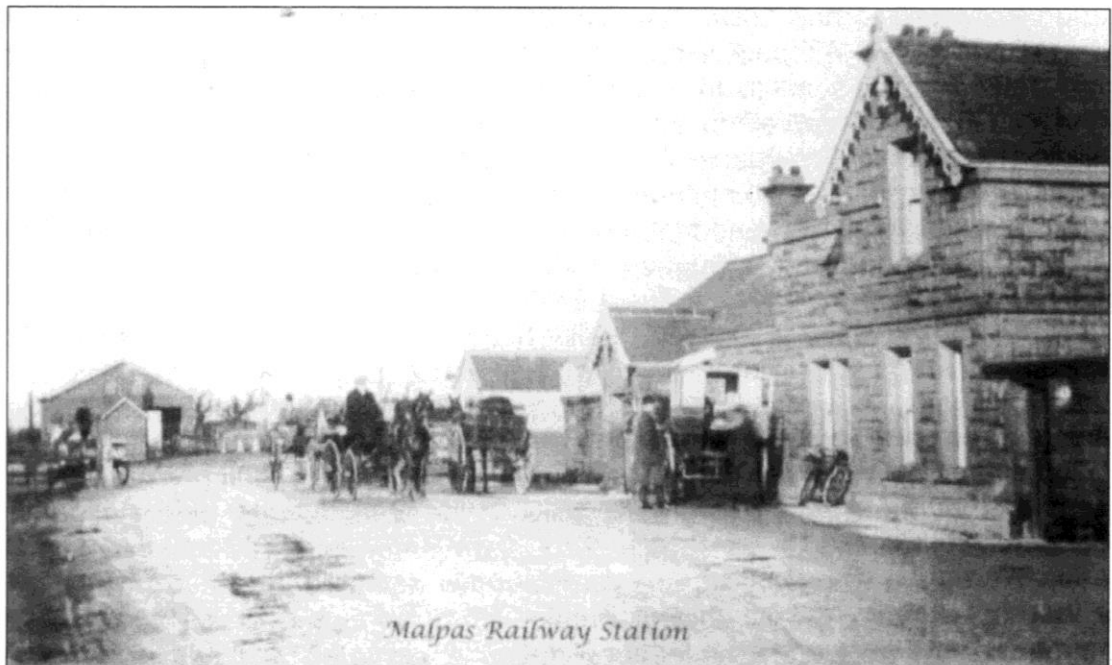
One of the retorts at Malpas Gas Works in Well Street around the time of WW2.  
*(Bill Coffin)*



Malpas Town Band in the 1930s.



Malpas Fire Brigade during the war.  
Fire Chief Arthur Hughes front left.  
*(Malpas Library)*



Malpas Railway Station (at Hampton) in the 1930s. *(W Coffin)*

## 4. LIVING WITH THE WAR

The evacuation schemes were a major component of the Air Raid Precautions which had been planned in such detail in the inter-war years. A second priority was to put into action the plans and precautions for the defence of the civilian population from aerial attack. In practical terms in a community such as Malpas these included: 'black-out' precautions, to lessen the possibility of enemy aircraft identifying targets on the ground; provision of physical protection against attack; the appointment of officials to enforce precautions, to give forewarning of attack, and to assist civilians who might suffer from an attack; and the organisation of ground forces to fight fire and to cope with damage resulting from attacks.

There was also a great fear of 'fifth columnists' who might work within this country to assist the enemy. It became necessary for the authorities to know exactly who every individual was, with the result that in October 1939 the *Chester Chronicle* carried the headline **YOU ARE NOW A NUMBER : CARRY YOUR IDENTITY CARD EVERYWHERE**. The following May the Tarvin Air Raid Precautions Committee asked the police to arrest a couple with a foreign surname who lived in the Oldcastle area '*as this Committee regard them as dangerous aliens in view of their conduct and the fact that swastika emblems are worn by them*'.

Public anxiety was also increased through Government propaganda, including the issue to every household of leaflets with titles such as '*If the Invader Comes*' (May 1940) and '*Beating the Invader*' (March 1941).

### ARP into action

Responsibility for putting all the carefully laid Air Raid Precautions plans into action was delegated to Tarvin Rural District Council, whose headquarters was in the Westminster Buildings in Chester's Newgate Street. The council set up an ARP Committee which first met in June 1938. The following September the Alport Schools were closed for a day to allow staff to attend a lecture on ARP in Tarporley. In 1936 Tarvin RDC had taken over control of the Malpas Fire Brigade from the former Malpas RDC. Although there were early suggestions that during wartime the control of fire brigade services throughout Tarvin Rural District might come under the control of Chester Corporation, any such plans were superseded when the Fire Services (Emergency Provisions) Act of 1941 brought all fire brigades into the new National Fire Service. This continued to be the case until 1947 when the National Fire Service was dissolved and Malpas Fire Brigade was incorporated into the new Cheshire County Council Fire Brigade. Arthur Hughes, the chief officer in charge of Malpas Fire Brigade, was also a Rural District Councillor who served on the ARP Committee and received training to qualify him as an Auxiliary Fire Brigade (AFS) instructor.

Training of air raid wardens began late in 1938 and soon 243 volunteers were enrolled across the Rural District, 107 of whom had completed 'anti-gas' training. By December 1939 there were 91 wardens active in the area covering Malpas, Tilston & Shocklach, Broxton and Nomansheath, the Chief Warden for Cheshire being Colonel Egerton-Warburton who lived at Grafton Hall (now demolished), near Tilston. The fear that the Germans would shower Britain with poisonous gas was very real and although civilians were under no legal obligation to carry gas masks there was great pressure for them to do so. In April 1940 the Infant School log book recorded a gas mask inspection by the air raid warden; in April 1941 an advertisement for a dance to Billy Gibbons and his Band at the Jubilee Hall carried the message: '*All Persons attending the above are requested to bring their Gas Masks.*'; the Saint Oswald's Lodge of Freemasons,

in its convening notices for Lodge meetings, prescribed the wartime dress code as *'Uniform or Morning Dress. Gas masks, properly addressed, must be brought to the Lodge by each Brother attending'*; and in January 1942 Mr Yates recorded a gas mask inspection at the Alport Boys' School. Many of my generation will remember the 'Mickey Mouse' gas masks issued to young children, which somehow did not get handed in at the end of hostilities and made wonderful rude noises when one blew into the nose piece!

To reassure the public, the Malpas emergency services combined to give a public display of their efficiency in January 1940. Taking part were the Fire Brigade, the Auxiliary Fire Service, personnel from the First Aid post, ambulance crews and the ARP wardens. The exercise, which took place in the High Street and is recorded on Herbert Yates's wartime films, was described in the *Whitchurch Herald*: *'At a given notice, incendiary and other bombs were exploded in the vicinity after which the Fire Brigade and the Auxiliary Fire Service turned out very smartly to deal with them.'*

One of the first plans of the Tarvin ARP Committee had been to seek the support of parish councils in establishing First Aid Centres at Malpas, Farndon, Tattenhall, Tarvin and Kelsall. However, something seems to have gone awry in Malpas since in October 1941 the Rector wrote in the Malpas Deanery Magazine: *'Malpas is in disgrace with the authorities, because it has no first aid party in aid of emergencies. It is, of course, a very serious matter ..... We appeal therefore for volunteers for this piece of service.'* Volunteers must have been forthcoming and at least one First Aid post appears to have been based at the Bolling Yard in Church Street, with its own ambulance for which Miss Madeleine Edge was the driver.

### **The 'nuisance' of the black-out**

Although a brief foretaste of things to come had been experienced on the night of July 13<sup>th</sup>/14<sup>th</sup> 1939 when a black-out practice took place right across Cheshire from midnight to 4.00 am, the Home Office and Tarvin Rural District Council, which had local responsibility for enforcing Air Raid Precautions, needed to be absolutely sure that their communities were fully aware of their responsibilities with regard to black-out regulations. That same July both Home Office and RDC wrote to Malpas Parish Council, which was responsible for providing street lighting in the town using gas from the Malpas Gas Company's works in Well Street, to remind them of what to do if war should break out, as indeed it did two months later. In the case of enemy attack it was essential that no lights should be visible on the ground from house windows, street lights, vehicle lights, or from any other source.

Naturally having an eye on the local rates, once the restrictions had come into force on September 3<sup>rd</sup> the Parish Council negotiated a reduction in the cost of its contract with the Gas Company, in view of the fact that substantially reduced periods of street lighting were in force. By October 1940 the street lighting had been turned off completely. In the final year of the war, when restrictions were being eased, the Gas Company granted the Parish Council a reduction of fifteen pounds on its total bill of £70.10s.0d for the year 1944/45. After the air raid warning sirens had sounded for the first time in Malpas, during the night of June 25<sup>th</sup> 1940, there were complaints that *'there were numerous lights exposed'*, followed by complaints in early November that cars were being left near the Cross, in the centre of the town, with their lights on during the black-out. At a meeting of the Tarvin RDC the following November it was agreed to draw the attention of the police *'to the desirability of lights of all cars being extinguished when parked at the Malpas car park'*. Those who failed to observe the black-out regulations could soon find themselves in trouble, such as the three Malpas residents who were less than vigilant and finished up in the Broxton Magistrates Court

in August 1940, where they were fined two pounds each. Don Allen, whose family lived in Rock Terrace on the High Street, had the job of sticking black tape around all the windows and then putting up the wooden shutters each night to ensure that no light was 'leaking' from their house.

The necessity for strict observance was underlined by a story told to me by Arthur Benson. Aged twelve, he had moved with his family from his native Burwardsley to live at Gatehouse Farm, Simmonds Green, on the Edge Hall estate. Half of the house was requisitioned by the military authorities to accommodate the men who manned a searchlight battery in a nearby field. The house was divided into two, by partition walling both upstairs and downstairs, providing billets for 23 soldiers. Arthur's father was asked not to bring any of his crops into the farm-yard but to keep them away from the house, in stacks out in the fields. When Stevenson's threshing tackle from Cuddington arrived one evening, ready for an early start in the morning, the steam traction engine broke down and had to be parked on the road overnight until it could be repaired next day. Someone had the *'bright'* idea of placing an oil lamp near the engine so that other vehicles would not crash into it. That night the unshaded lamp was spotted by German aircraft, which scattered incendiaries (fire-bombs) all around the area, causing Mr Benson's men and the threshing gang great consternation next morning when they saw lots of small fires burning across the stubbles in the fields around the engine. Fortunately no great harm was done but, as Arthur says, it could have been *'very nasty'*! In other locations, decoy lights were placed deliberately to mislead the enemy aircraft, including one which Kevin Meredith remembers at the Purser Lane in Chorlton.

Winters with their long nights and dark streets must indeed have been dreary. At the annual Saint Oswald's Vestry Meeting in February 1941 the Rector had been praised for the way in which he had *'struggled on through the dark, cold winter months, with untiring efforts'* although he obviously did not find it easy, since he wrote in the Deanery Magazine for the following October: *'All too soon we are faced with the prospect of autumn and winter, and the accompanying nuisance of the black-out.'* And so he moved Evensong to Sunday afternoons during the winter months to make it easier for parishioners to attend, an arrangement which has been revived in recent years.

### **Defending the town's buildings and residents**

There was considerable debate before the outbreak of war as to the need to provide air raid shelters for the protection of the public. In January 1939 John Done of Manor House, Hampton, who was a member of the Cheshire Education Committee, told the committee that he thought they *'were going a little too far by contemplating air raid shelters at all their schools. Most of the area was country, and in his opinion they would not be attacked from the air'*. However, his opinion did not prevail and in September the Cheshire Education Committee approved a budget of £187,316 for giving 50% grants towards the erection of shelters in elementary schools, which included the Alport Boys' and Girls' schools. By March 1940 the Malpas schools had been provided with Anderson-type corrugated iron shelters both in front of and behind the buildings. Mr Yates's wartime films show a practice evacuation with the children proceeding two-by-two to the shelters. After a practice in May he recorded in the school logbook that the Alport children, including girls and infants, took two minutes to reach the shelters while the evacuees from the school in the Jubilee Hall took four minutes. Despite the fact that the evacuees were able to make use of the shelters, Liverpool Corporation flatly refused to make a contribution towards their cost when asked to do so by Cheshire County Council. Whereas in urban areas many households erected Anderson shelters in their back gardens, this does not appear to have been common in Malpas. Nevertheless, domestic precautions were taken

against air raids, including using cellars such as those at the Bolling as bomb shelters, and sheltering under the dining room table, as did Joan Bickley (Mrs Joan Allen) and her sister when the bombers came over.

The Royal Observer Corps had been founded in the 1920s. Their main task, in posts right across the country, was to watch for enemy aircraft after they had passed the chain of radar defences. To try to baffle the defences the enemy sometimes dropped strips of metallic paper which local children, including Bill Coffin and Mike Downey, used to gather up as souvenirs. Members of the Observer Corps would report their sightings, thus guiding the RAF fighter planes towards the invading bombers. Kevin Meredith, then still a schoolboy, joined the Observer Corps in 1944 and undertook regular duties at the Malpas ROC post in a wooden shed sited in a field off the Tilston Road (after the war the post was moved to a site beside the footpath which runs from Greenway Lane towards Ebnal). His observations, such as the eighteen Heinkel bombers he spotted flying over the town, were reported by telephone to the main intelligence centre at Shrewsbury, so that their presence could be plotted on the operations boards. Dick Allen, Don Allen's father, first joined the Home Guard then transferred to the Observer Corps. He maintained a garden plot beside the Tilston Road ROC post so that he could tend it while on duty there.

### **Rationing and other restrictions**

The peak of wartime food rationing was reached in August 1942. This covered such items as meat, excluding poultry and rabbits; fresh and dried eggs; flour; sugar; fats including butter, margarine and lard; milk; cheese; and other commodities such as soap. By early 1942 white bread was almost unobtainable, the staple fare being the unpopular and sometimes indigestible 'National Wheatmeal Loaf', known by most as 'black bread'. Households had to register with particular local shops where they would be able to buy supplies according to the allowances governed by the coupons in their ration books. In Malpas these books had to be collected from Ministry of Food offices set up in the Jubilee Hall and, later, in the drawing room at The Beeches hostel. Although one of the common images of the war is of tired housewives queuing for many hours outside the shops, the situation was not quite so bad in Malpas, although both Salt's (now Shepherd's) and Bussey's (in Old Hall Street, now demolished) were the scenes of long queues at times. Bussey's was particularly popular when fresh supplies of fish arrived, since this was one important source of protein that was not rationed. Other basic foods which were not rationed included bread, potatoes, other vegetables and fruit.

Clothing was also rationed from 1941 but possibly the cruellest blow of all, so far as children were concerned, was the introduction of severe restrictions on the manufacture of toys. Mike Downey remembers great excitement when in 1941 or 1942 the Red Cross opened its first charity shop in Malpas (now the premises occupied by the 'May Takeaway'), which sold second-hand toys donated by families from the 'big houses' in the area. David Latham was bitterly disappointed that he was not able to have the model carriage and horses displayed in the window – his mother was too far down the long queue which formed on the opening morning.

Although it is sometimes thought that those living in the countryside never 'went short' during the war, this was by no means entirely true. Although farming families had readier access to food supplies and wealthier families had ways and means to acquire scarce commodities, other families really struggled. Mike Downey's father had died before the war when Mike was aged six. His mother had to manage on a widow's pension of just 17s.6d (87½ pence) a week, with herself and two young sons to provide for. To make ends meet she supplemented her pension by taking in sewing and

washing, and by working at 'The Dump', the munitions factory at Marchwiel (which after the war provided the basis for the Wrexham Industrial Estate). Together with other local women, including Bill Coffin's mother, Mrs Downey would be transported to Marchwiel on Jack Paterson's bus to work long and arduous shifts in a potentially lethal environment.

Neither were families necessarily well off where the men had gone away into the armed services, particularly during the early years of the war. In 1939 an ordinary soldier's daily pay was two shillings (10 pence), which increased to three shillings (15 pence) by the end of the war. From this pay one shilling (5 pence) a day was taken out and paid directly to his wife, who also received an additional twenty-five shillings (£1.25) a week as a Government allowance. The National Service (Armed Forces) Act passed at the beginning of the war made all men in the 18-41 age group liable for military service. A further Act in 1941 extended the upper age limit to 51, although only a few men over 41 and none over 45 were conscripted. The 1941 Act also made women liable to call-up.

Actually getting to work could sometimes be a problem, especially for those who had to rely on public transport. Colonel Bates of Chorlton Hall was a director of a number of shipping lines and associated businesses, including the Cunard Steam-Ship Company which had had its ships requisitioned for the war-time merchant fleet. He used to travel by train from Malpas Station to his Liverpool office. With rail services reduced during wartime this meant an early morning start to drive the three miles from Chorlton to Hampton. To avoid holding him up the local farmers on route did not move their cattle back to the fields after six o'clock milking until the Colonel had driven past – giving them a wave as he did so! There were also travel difficulties for Malpas children who had been fortunate enough to gain scholarships to attend grammar schools in either Whitchurch or Chester. While Kevin Meredith and Billy Youd cycled to Whitchurch Grammar School, at the beginning of the war Margaret Parsonage (Lloyd-Williams) travelled to Whitchurch Girls' High School by bus. When the service was stopped, due to petrol rationing, she had to catch the train from Malpas station. Travel over longer distances was made even more difficult after May 1940 when the order went out to remove all signposts, milestones or anything else that might give invading forces a clue to the name of a particular place, although some of the restrictions were lifted as the war progressed.

### **Life goes on – after a fashion**

Although many Malpas men and women went away into military or other war-related service, there were others who remained in the area either because they were beyond the 'call-up' age or because they were in essential 'reserved' occupations necessary to the war effort, such as farming. One was Ben White, a water engineer employed by Tarvin Rural District Council, who was retained for emergencies such as bomb damage to water mains, both in Chester and the rural area.

Those involved in local service trades and industries had to carry on in spite of the events taking place in the wider world. With so many men and women removed from the community those remaining had to work harder than ever before. Many took on a variety of jobs. Bert Meredith, as well as running a local taxi service, transported prisoners-of-war from Tarpoley to work on farms in the area, cycled around the Bickley area to deliver the post in the mornings, and worked during the night at the telephone exchange in Whitchurch.

## 5. NOT ALL WAR AND NO PLAY

Despite the war and the fact that many young men and women went away either with the armed forces or to carry out other forms of war-related work, Malpas managed to keep its social life going. However, to a large extent the purpose of that social life was re-focused to provide support for the war effort.

Some activities came more-or-less to a halt, especially sporting activities such as football, cricket and hunting, while tennis seems to have been greatly reduced. The local pigeon racing enthusiasts had their activities curtailed during the first week of the war when a national ruling was introduced forbidding the flying of any racing or homing pigeon without a police licence. From the evidence of local newspaper reports it seems that the two main sporting activities which continued uninterrupted were bowling and billiards. Of all indoor social activities, the most popular were dancing and whist drives, both playing their part in raising funds for the war effort.

Although visits to Chester were something of a treat, there were many who managed to get there on the train or even by car, if they were able to 'stretch' their petrol rations. One of the big attractions of the city was its cinemas. Films were shown in Malpas during the war, usually in the Jubilee Hall and sometimes in the outbuildings behind *The Wyvern* in Church Street, but they tended to be of the newsreel and Ministry of Information type designed to encourage audiences to support the war effort. The Chester cinemas offered more exciting fare – a surprising number of Malpasians seem to have travelled there to see Vivien Leigh in *Gone with the Wind*, after it was released in 1939.

One of the most popular events in the Malpas social calendar was the annual Wakes Week in August, timed to coincide with the Feast of Saint Oswald, to whom Malpas Parish Church is dedicated. It was an occasion for sports, competitions, feasting, dancing, processions and special services in the church. 1939 was especially significant as the centenary year for the Loyal Clutton Lodge of Oddfellows, the only survivor of the four Malpas Friendly Societies which had flourished during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The *Chester Chronicle* for August 26<sup>th</sup>, nine days before war was declared, reported a '*good attendance at the annual Wakes services last Sunday. In the evening there was a united service on the rectory lawn, with music by the Town Band, and over 300 gathered. The War Memorial was not omitted from attention, floral tributes and little bunches of flowers being placed about in the Garden of Remembrance*'. Those present could hardly have been aware that eight years later the names of nineteen more Malpas men would be added to the memorial. After the morning service the Oddfellows paraded to *The Red Lion* for a grand dinner and speeches by some of their supporters, who included the Malpas doctors, the Rector and the Congregational minister. Six weeks later, when rationing had already started to affect everyday diets, the newspaper reported on further services at the church, this time for the annual Harvest Festival, and noted that '*war conditions no doubt accounted for the absence of the family loaf, so long a crowning feature of the gifts*'. A few weeks on it was reported that at the November 11<sup>th</sup> Armistice services there was no parade of ex-servicemen as there had been in previous years.

The game of Crown Green bowling was well established in the town, as in many Midland and Northern communities, and the two Malpas clubs stayed active throughout the war years. The elder club was the men's club, known as the Senior Club, playing on the green which is still used by the present Malpas Bowling Club & Institute. The ladies' club, known in those days as the New Bowling Club, used a green on top of the old Castle Hill between the church and the men's green.



Activities for young people included Guides and Brownies; the Young People's Guild at the Congregational Church in High Street; the Church choir (boys only); the Sunday Schools at the Church and the Congregational, Wesleyan Methodist (Old Hall Street) and Primitive Methodist (Wrexham Road) chapels; the Young Farmers' Club; the Wynnstay Hunt Pony Club; and later during the war, local units of the Air Training Corps and the Army Cadet Force.

The Young People's Guild at the Congregational Church provided regular meetings for those aged from their teens into their thirties. One who attended was Kevin Meredith who remembers regular attendances of 20-30 members. The meetings were very varied, catering for a range of tastes and interests. The programme included debates, visiting speakers, mock trials, musical evenings, games evenings (table tennis, etc.), and meetings when individual members read papers on topics in which they had a particular interest. One of their speakers in January 1940 was Mr Gore, headmaster of the evacuee Sefton Park School, who gave a lecture on *Liverpool – Past and Present*. Overseeing the activities of the Guild was Arthur Hughes, the District and Parish councillor, Fire Chief and egg merchant, who was the father of the late Mrs Norah Chesworth whom many will remember as our late, very cheerful, Malpas postmistress for many years. Out of the Guild came the Concert Party, later known as 'The Merry Optimists', which entertained at many local events with programmes of music, sketches and poetry recitations. Reports about them in the *Whitchurch Herald* included '*On Wednesday the Guild Concert Party gave a most successful entertainment at Chorlton Lane [Congregational Chapel]*' and '*The Malpas Merry Optimists gave one of their popular entertainments to a crowded audience in the Congregational Schoolroom*'.

Largely encouraged and supported by Herbert Yates (headmaster of the Alport Boys' school, church choirmaster and organist, organiser of adult classes for the Malpas Evening Institute, and producer of numerous plays and concerts throughout the war) Malpas was quick to take advantage of the service offered by the new national Committee for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA), formed in 1940 and which after the war became the Arts Council. In September 1941 the touring Market Theatre presented a varied entertainment programme at the Jubilee Hall and the following November the Hirsh Piano trio performed in Saint Oswald's Church, both events being supported by CEMA. Three years later Mr Yates promoted a recital in Malpas by the London Polish String Quartet – possibly this was also supported by CEMA. Another nationally prominent musician to visit Malpas was the singer Constance Carrodus. She gave a recital of 'Songs of the Nations' as part of the programme for Tank Week in October 1942.

The Malpas Evening Institute, supported financially by the County Council, offered a range of classes in leisure and craft activities, and opportunities for further study including music, drama, English, French, English and handwork. Like similar institutes elsewhere, one of the reasons for its foundation had been the concern felt that young people who left school at the age of fourteen to work on local farms, in the shops or for other businesses, had leisure time which, if it was not used profitably, could provide an opportunity for them to get themselves into trouble. This was, of course, long before the days of widely available television. Malpas could offer no Scouts, junior sports teams or youth clubs, although there were the Young People's Guild, the Church choir and the Guides for those who might find fulfilment in such activities. Mr Yates was able to identify gaps in the provision. Along with Tom Mercer, Tom Crawford and Richard Harrison, he was responsible for many initiatives aimed at children and young persons. Throughout the war Bill Probin sang in Saint Oswald's choir, which he joined

in 1925. He became a bell-ringer in 1931 and was one of the team which rang the Malpas bells on VE Day in May 1945 – and he is still singing and ringing!

The Brownies and Guides remained active, their meeting place for at least part of the war years being the 'Black Hut' located in the grounds of the Red House in Church Street. It was here that the Malpas District Brownie revels were held in July 1943, with visiting packs from Whitchurch and from the evacuee school at Peckforton Castle. The following year the Guides were visited at the hut by the District Commissioner and District Secretary who *'were entertained to tea by the girls, who also made a presentation to Mrs Okell of a bread platter and knife'*. Mrs Okell was the wife of the Rector, who was about to leave Malpas to take up a living elsewhere.

Two youth organisations which were formed during the war years, both with the object of recruiting youngsters for the armed services, and which had branches in Malpas were the Air Training Corps (ATC) and the Army Cadet Force (ACF). The Air Ministry launched the ATC in January 1941, for boys aged between sixteen and eighteen. Volunteers were given RAF uniform and this was an attraction contributing to its growth to 200,000 members nationally within six months. The Army Cadet Force was formed the following year. The ATC met in the outbuildings at the Beeches, as did the ACF until it moved to the Jubilee Hall in 1945. Mike Downey was in the Army Cadets and remembers that regular troops from the Dale Camp at Chester used to come to Malpas on Sundays to give the cadets extra training, which included full firearms training with both rifles and machine guns. When he went to ACF camp at Pensarn, Mike had to return to Malpas for the day for the confirmation service at Saint Oswald's church, where he wore his choir robe over his cadet uniform.

The Women's Institute movement had arrived in this country from Canada during the First World War, the first branch being established in Anglesey. The Malpas branch was among the earliest formed in England, starting in 1919. Although the branch closed in 1995 its records have been preserved and deposited in the Cheshire Record Office. They provide a fascinating insight into Malpas life throughout the time of the branch's existence. A fact which only came to light during the research for this book is that the first County Secretary for the Cheshire Federation of Women's Institutes was Mrs Amelia Crowther, who administered the Federation from her own home. She was the wife of Mr Harold Crowther, who during the Second World War was manager of the Malpas Gasworks Company in Well Street. So during the war years the County WI office was in an outbuilding at the gasworks site, where the last surviving buildings were demolished as recently as 2003.

One feature of the war years was the scarcity of beer and alcoholic drinks, largely due to shortages of sugar, barley and other essential ingredients. The opening hours for licensed premises were restricted and in February 1942 the local paper reported that there had been no drunkenness cases heard at Broxton Magistrates Court during the past year, compared with only one during the previous year. One has to bear in mind also that the beer was watered down and that there were not so many men around to consume it, when available. However *The Red Lion* in Old Hall Street, and *The Crown*, *The Wyvern* and *The Vaults*, all in Church Street, managed to stay in business. No doubt their trade picked up with the celebrations after VE Day in May 1945, although the following month *The Crown*, where the licensee was Mr Cyril Bradley, was severely damaged by a fire. It was dealt with very promptly by the Malpas Fire Brigade.

## 6. CHURCH, CHAPEL AND SCHOOL LIFE

### The Church and the Chapels

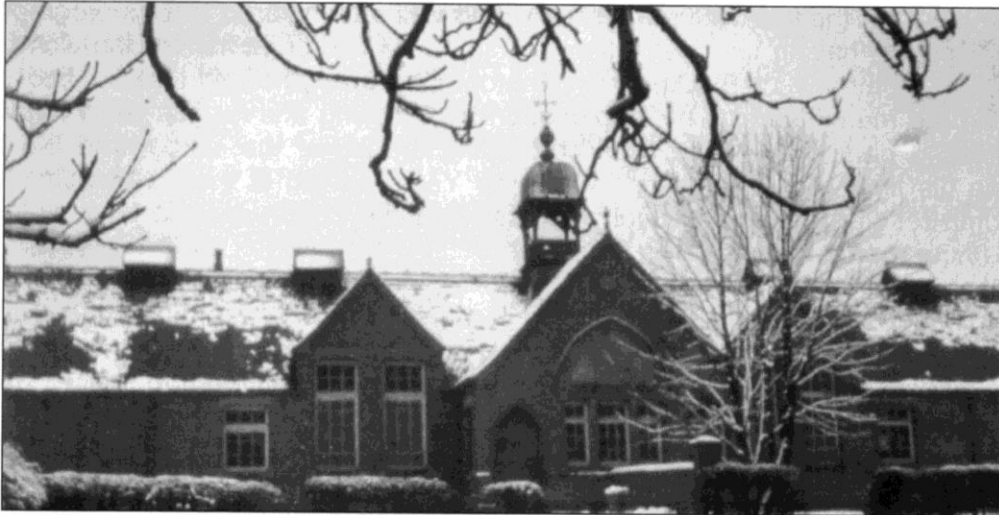
The parish church of Saint Oswald, together with its corrugated iron Mission Rooms at Stockton and Edge; the Methodist chapels in Old Hall Street (the former Wesleyan Methodist) and Wrexham Road (former Primitive Methodist) and other Methodist chapels in the surrounding area; and the Congregational church ('Top Chapel') in Malpas with its outlying chapels at Chorlton Lane, Bradley and Threapwood, all continued to play active parts in the local community during the war years. As well as providing regular services and the venues for church parades for the Home Guard and other wartime voluntary services, they provided opportunities for social life among both adult and junior members of their congregations. Festivals such as Christmas, Easter and Harvest continued to be observed in all places of worship, and their respective Sunday Schools organised their regular anniversary services, Christmas parties and the always popular annual outings. These outings varied from trips to Mrs Rasbotham's fields at Ebnal for sports, games and a picnic to more ambitious ventures, such as the church Sunday School trip in August 1941 when the children went to the Gaumont Picture Palace in Chester to see a George Formby film then returned home via Raw Head on the Bickerton Hills, where they had games and a picnic tea.

Some of the other activities, such as the Young People's Guild at the Congregational Church are described elsewhere in this book. In 1943 the Rector, the Reverend Frank Okell, initiated a scheme to convert the old Tithe Barn in Church Street into a church meeting room. He wrote the following year that: *'It is intended that this shall be the Church's Memorial to those who have sacrificed their lives for us. There is no doubt that it will be of the greatest benefit to us to have our own church room and it is hoped that it will be of use to all sections of the parish life.'* His own son Roger had been killed in action in October 1942. Money was raised through a variety of events and donations including *'a subscription towards our new Church Hall direct from North Africa. It came from Private Ernest Bradshaw together with a delightful note'*. However, the project never came to fruition and it was not until after the war that Reverend Guy Hephher converted the former Rectory stables into the present Parish Hall, providing a venue for church activities and for new organisations, including Scouts and youth clubs.

The war years certainly drew communities closer together and in Malpas, as elsewhere, churches and chapels seem to have set aside any differences they might have had in the past. There were many united services and all of the local clergy became involved in many wartime activities. No doubt they were also frequently called upon by local families which had members serving away from home, or lying injured in military hospitals or, worst of all, killed in action. It was during these troubled years that the clergy's pastoral skills would have been in demand more than ever, to provide comfort, advice and counselling.

### The Alport Schools

In 1935 Herbert Yates had been appointed as headmaster at the Alport Boys' School, as successor to Harry Edge. Herbert has become something of a legend for the amazing energy he devoted to the school during his twenty-three years in the post. Although not all former pupils remember him in totally positive terms, he was certainly very progressive as a teacher, introducing to the Alport many ideas which were well in advance of the time. I came to know him during my time as a teacher at the Alport in the late 1960s when he would visit each year to take photographs of all the pupils,



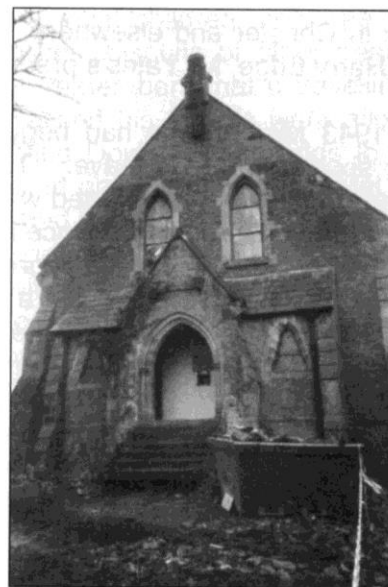
The Alport Schools just after the war. (*Bill Coffin*)



Herbert Yates (playing 'cello') with Alport School boys and home-made instruments.



Reverend Frank Okell  
Rector of Malpas 1936-45  
(*St Oswald's Church*)



Malpas Congregational Church  
at time of demolition in 1994.

having taken a 'retirement' job as a photographer for the Scholastic Souvenir Company of Blackpool. Photography and cine-film making had been among the many interests he employed in his teaching and he has left a legacy of fascinating photographs and films chronicling the life of the school and the town during his time as headteacher. When Mr Yates arrived at the Boys' School, the headmistress at the Girls' School was Miss Beatrice Cotton and the Infants' School was under the headship of Miss Ida Jones.

Music and drama were two of Herbert's greatest passions. Perhaps the activity for which he is best remembered is the making and performing of music on home-made instruments. The instruments included bamboo pipes; home-made violins, violas, 'cellos and mandolines; and percussion instruments such as xylophones and 'cylophones' (a Herbert Yates special). In making them Herbert and his pupils utilised such materials as pieces of firewood, old glass bottles and sawn-up bicycle frames. After the war they even used the seating from the recently demolished school air-raid shelters to make xylophone keys. Before the war, in May 1938 and July 1939, some of the school's ensembles had broadcast on the BBC Radio 'Children's Hour', from the Manchester studio. These broadcasts were followed by others on radio and, after the war, on television.

Herbert's wartime cine films show many of the other school activities, especially those which helped his pupils to appreciate the world of work around them. This was particularly true for farming and the films show pupils attending demonstrations, on local farms, of activities such as silaging and laying pipe drains. They also gave practical help with farming operations, including potato picking and stooking corn in the fields prior to threshing.

Some of the stories of the Liverpool and London evacuees who came to Malpas and the Alport schools during the war have been told in Chapter 2. Despite the disruption caused by the war, the amount of activity in the three Malpas schools seems to have continued at its usual busy pace. It is noticeable that a number of joint activities were beginning to take place between the Boys' and Girls' schools. These included shared film shows and a joint choir, which achieved regular successes at music festivals in Chester and elsewhere, building on a tradition which had started in the days of Harry Edge, Mr Yates's predecessor.

During 1943 Miss Cotton had begun to suffer from increasing ill-health and was granted six months sick leave. The following year she decided to retire. Her retirement more or less coincided with the passing of the 1944 Education Act, which was to have such great significance for post-war education. In Malpas it provided the final impetus for the amalgamation of the Boys' and Girls' schools into the new Malpas Alport Mixed School, with a nominal maximum capacity of 240 pupils. On July 21<sup>st</sup> of that year Mr Yates wrote in the log book that *'it is with some regret that I now close Log Book entries as for the Boys' School. After the holidays I shall take charge of the Combined Scheme as one Mixed Department'*. On the day that 'union' was declared he lined the boys up at one side of the playground and the girls on the other. At the drop of his hand, the two sides ran towards each other and collided in the middle, signalling the birth of the new era. Herbert Yates always did have a sense of occasion!

The new staff comprised Mr Yates as headteacher; Miss 'Cissy' Hughes, Miss E Jones & Miss E Shone (all certificated teachers); and Miss V Millington, an uncertificated teacher. At the Infants' School (maximum capacity 105 pupils), there were Miss Ida Jones, as headteacher, and Miss D Riley.

## 7. 'EVERY ENDEAVOUR MUST BE MADE' WORKERS ON THE LAND

Prime Minister Winston Churchill had told the nation: *'Every endeavour must be made to ..... produce the greatest volume of food of which this fertile island is capable.'* In February 1941 the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries published a large notice on the front page of the *Whitchurch Herald*, exhorting farmers to plough up more and more grassland; to grow their own feeding stuffs for stock; to make more silage; and to dress both arable and grassland for bigger yields.

It was not much fun hand-milking a herd of thirty dairy shorthorns early in the morning after being out all night on Home Guard patrol. There was a distinct danger of falling asleep on the job. This was what Bill Probin discovered as he kept the operation going at Fields Farm throughout the war years. His father had taken over the tenancy of the 55 acre farm in March 1918, six months before the end of the first World War and Bill, the youngest of seven children, had been born there the following July. When his father died suddenly in 1936 Bill was left in charge with only one man employed to assist him. The 1930s had not been an easy decade for farmers – Bob Done who lived at Higher Hall, Hampton, talks of *'the nine bad years of the thirties'*. However, the setting up of the Milk Marketing Board in the early 1930s had provided a guaranteed price for liquid milk, although it also dealt the final blow to cheese production on many Cheshire farms. Nevertheless some farms such as Egerton Hall, with a herd of around 200 dairy shorthorns, and Overton Hall did continue to make cheese.

Despite the fact that 1939 had the wettest July – eight inches of rain in this area - since records had begun 31 years previously, the weather for the corn harvest was generally good. On Saturday September 2<sup>nd</sup> 1939 the Chester Chronicle recorded that for Malpas Smithfield: *'Harvesting operations shortened the supply of stock here on Tuesday, which probably accounted for the hardening of prices.'* Heifers had sold at £20.5s.0d (£20.25), fat cows from Edge Grange at £16.0s.0d and Egerton Hall pigs at 38s (£1.40) to 46s.6d (£2.32½), while store pigs were dear at 40s.6d (£2.02½) each.

During the one o'clock news on September 3<sup>rd</sup>, shortly after Neville Chamberlain's historic speech, it was announced that War Agricultural Executive Committees (which commonly became known as the 'War Ags') had been appointed for every county. The minute books of these committees, containing a great deal of information about the ups and downs of farming during the war, are preserved at the National Archives in London. One of the key members of the Cheshire 'War Ag' was John Done of Manor House, Hampton, a prominent local farmer, a pioneer of 'clean milk', and a County Councillor. The committee held around 300 weekly meetings between 1939 and 1945, working hard to deal with long agendas which included appeals against 'ploughing up' orders, as well as reports on the Women's Land Army, the employment of German and Italian prisoners of war on farms and the setting-up of hostels for itinerant agricultural workers. It also received regular reports from a number of Cheshire District Committees. Initially Malpas came under the Western Area Committee, which included all of Tarvin Rural District, then Tarvin South District after a re-organisation in 1942. Members of this later committee included local farmers Joseph Parsonage of Kidnal Grange, John Cornes of Oldcastle and Jack Probin of Malpas. Jack Probin, Bill's brother, was a member of the Tarvin Rural District Council (which was absorbed into Chester City Council in 1974). Although the 'War Ag' seems to have achieved a reputation for being hard on farmers in some parts of the county, it appears that Malpas farmers were generally very compliant and few of them were taken to task, either for failing to cultivate their land in line with Government policy or to plough up pasture land

when necessary, in order to grow crops. However, the Ministry of Agriculture based at Berkeley Towers near Crewe kept a very close eye on what they were doing. Young Arthur Benson at Gatehouse Farm, Simmond's Green, had delegated to him the task of completing and returning the Ministry forms which were sent to his father every three months. On these he had to enter the acreages of land ploughed and sown for crops such as barley and oats, the amount of grassland reserved for hay and grazing, and details of all livestock including forecasts of cows which were due to calve. The Ministry officials checked each return against the previous one submitted, to make sure that they tallied. If the returns did not tally, the officials quickly came back to the farmer to ask why not. The movement of livestock was very carefully controlled and those who failed to observe the regulations were likely to end up at Broxton Magistrates Court, like the two Malpas farmers fined 50 shillings (£2.50) each in 1940 for failing to keep proper records of cattle movements. Other offences for which local farmers got themselves into trouble during the war years were not keeping proper wheat records and not keeping proper threshing records.

Bill Probin had always grown root crops such as turnips and mangolds as cattle feed, and potatoes for human consumption, and therefore did not find it difficult to comply with the instruction to grow an acreage of roots equivalent to one-tenth the number of his cows, plus an acre of potatoes. His other main crop was kale, also for fodder, and he grew up to four acres of wheat. The emphasis in our part of Cheshire was on keeping up the supply of milk and maintaining the herd sizes. Concentrates for feeding his stock came from Sumner and Stevenson's mill at Hampton (now Waterhouse's) and for this he was issued with ration coupons. The Shorthorns yielded 500-600 gallons of milk annually, compared to 1,000-2,000 gallons for the Friesians to which he converted in the 1950s. The milk was transported by horse and cart, in 10 gallon churns, to Reece's at Hampton. Although, as on many local farms, cheese had been made on a small scale at Fields Farm when Bill Probin's father took it over this soon died out in favour of liquid milk production. As well as cattle Fields Farm kept breeding sows, a few sheep and around 200 poultry. As was traditional for farmers' wives, the poultry provided Mrs Probin's 'housekeeping' money.

For Bill Probin 'double summer time', under which the clocks were put forward two hours each summer during the war, was a real bugbear. At the height of the season it was still light at 11.00 pm, making it difficult to settle the poultry in for the night, while he still had to be ready for the arrival of the milk man at 7.00 am, even after Home Guard patrol. Another disadvantage of 'late' mornings was that the dew took longer to dry off the fields, meaning that some farming operations, such as mowing, could not be started until late morning.

Horses were used for all operations at Fields Farm, which did not acquire a tractor until after the war. Threshing of the corn stacks was carried out under contract by Stevenson's of Cuddington using mobile threshing boxes drawn by steam-powered traction engines. For this operation an extra 6-8 men would be brought in as additional labour. The threshing tackle regularly demonstrated at the annual Malpas Vintage Machinery Club's 'Yesteryear' rallies are a reminder of what was once a common sight following the corn harvest. Bill's oldest brother brought a horse when he left school, set up as a carter, and worked for the Lancashire Associated Coal Company, based at Malpas station yard. Other farmers acquired their first tractors during the war years. Bob Done and Arthur Benson both remember their fathers receiving their Fordsons during 1942-43, after long waits. Arthur says he was '*over the moon*' when the machine finally arrived. The vehicles were supplied with iron spiked wheels to provide good traction, but a very rough ride, with steel bands to be fitted when they were taken out onto the road. At the end of 1943 Mr Benson was granted a permit



Arthur Benson on his father's wartime Fordson  
(Arthur Benson)



The outbuilding at 'The Beeches'  
which was used as a wartime  
agricultural workers' hostel.

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to purchase a Lister double furrow plough. Before that his neighbour Mr Ravenscroft had undertaken the ploughing at Gatehouse.

Frank Lloyd's auction at Hampton Heath close to Malpas station (where the housing development known as 'Market Place' now occupies the site) was the main local venue for buying and selling cattle, sheep, pigs and other livestock. It was also the venue for regular auctions in aid of the Red Cross. Although the Probins owned a car, they had no large mechanical vehicles so that any stock bought or sold had to be driven between Fields Farm and Hampton on foot, a distance of nearly two miles. We complain about traffic congestion in Malpas nowadays but the congestion caused by livestock being driven on auction days sixty years ago must also have been quite considerable. I can remember as recently as the late 1960s, when I first came to Malpas, how Church Street would become completely blocked by the Dodd Brothers' sheep being driven from one grazing ground to another. Seed barley, oats and potatoes were sold locally by William Corbett from his Greenfields Warehouse in Chester Road. He advertised *'The pick of the crop – Inspection invited – All leading varieties in stock – Samples on request'*.

One commodity in very short supply was eggs, which became scarce during 1940 following cuts in imports and the slaughter of millions of hens to save feeding stuffs. Some compensation was provided by imported – but not particularly popular – dried eggs. Their use was encouraged by speakers such as Miss Hands and Miss Howells from Reaseheath who in October 1943 gave a demonstration to Malpas Women's Institute: *'Four dishes were made, and members gained lots of profitable information, as to the use of left overs, dried eggs & dried milk.'* Arthur Hughes, as well as being Fire Chief and a District and Parish councillor, ran the West End Poultry Farm which still functions at the north end of Malpas (having moved at one time from a site near to the present day Sports Club in Wrexham Road – at the 'west end' of the town). The business had started in 1924 and during the war Mr Hughes or one of his employees continued to travel each week to Welshpool (Monday), Oswestry (Wednesday) and Whitchurch (Friday) to buy eggs from the farmers' wives who brought them into the markets. They were graded and packed in Malpas then, with the eggs from Mr Hughes's own poultry, were transported to the wholesale market in Birmingham. His advert, which appeared regularly on the front page of the *Whitchurch Herald*, stated that he was *'Open to purchase eggs under the Ministry of Food Scheme'*. Many families also kept their own poultry from which they could supplement the meagre official egg ration, nationally averaging out at about one egg per person per fortnight. Across the country the number of domestic fowls doubled between 1939 and 1945, although domestic egg production did not rise accordingly, owing to the difficulties in obtaining good quality protein-rich feeding stuffs. Domestic poultry keeping was supported by local organisations such as the Malpas Utility Poultry Club, which organised 'laying' tests for members' birds, and by talks such as that given to Malpas WI on 'Poultry keeping in wartime'. In 1941 the Poultry Club was instrumental in forming a branch of the Domestic Poultry Keepers' Council. Typical of the breeds kept in Malpas back gardens were the traditional White Wyandottes and Rhode Island Reds.

### **The Women's Land Army**

Vital to boosting farm production were the 'Land Girls' of the Women's Land Army, which had first been created during the 1914-18 war. Many of them came from towns and cities and at first they were billeted on individual farms, having received a course of preliminary training at the Cheshire College of Agriculture, Reaseheath. At the beginning of the war they were paid 28s (£1.40) a week, with 7d (3p) an hour for

overtime if aged 18 or over, 22s.6d (£1.12½) with 6d (2½p) per hour overtime if under 18 years old. At first recruitment to the Land Army was slow and farmers were reluctant to employ Land Girls. However, as more and more men were taken away from the farms for the armed forces or other war work, the situation changed. In July 1940 there were 226 Land Girls employed across Cheshire. By August 1943 this number had risen to 1,566. It had been suggested early on that it might be a good idea to provide hostels for Land Girls as well as billeting them on individual farms but early hostels were not very successful. By April 1942 there were seven Land Army hostels in Cheshire, the nearest to Malpas being at Farndon. That same year the War Agricultural Committee investigated the possibility of converting the former racing stables, built by Lord Dudley in the 1880s next to the Bolling in Church Street, into a Land Army hostel. The plan was abandoned but the stables were later put to other wartime uses (see page 33). In the 1950s the former stables were converted for private residential use and they are now the property known as 'Cobblestones'.

In April 1943 Mr Moore-Dutton, Clerk to the Tarvin Rural District Council, attended a meeting of Malpas Parish Council to explain the urgent need to find accommodation in the area for fifty Land Girls, warning that if they could not be housed by volunteers '*compulsion might have to be introduced*'. Finally, in mid-1943, Malpas acquired its own Land Army hostel when the Ministry of Food requisitioned the Hollies in Old Hall Street, a former poultry farm. Towards the end of the year an additional room (part of which still stands) was built adjacent to the house, to serve as an extra dormitory and as a recreation room. Bearing in mind that many of the twenty or so new residents came from urban areas, early in 1944 the War Agricultural Executive Committee started to lay on shopping buses to take the girls to nearby towns. The presence of so many eligible young women soon excited the interest of the local lads. Kevin Meredith regularly used to take one of them to the Saturday night dances at the Jubilee Hall. A bonus was that the Land Girls had to be in by 11 o'clock although the dances didn't finish until a quarter to midnight. This meant that Kevin had time to take his Land Girl back to the Hollies then return to the dance to pair up with another partner for the last half hour!

The WLA hostel was a popular place with the local children since, as Bill Coffin recalls, the Land Girls frequently dispensed cakes, biscuits or other treats. David Latham, then a young evacuee from Liverpool, remembers that a travelling cinema used to visit the hostel and that sometimes he and his friends were allowed in to watch the show. One of those friends was Mike Downey, who adds to the story. They used to 'chat up' the Land Girls, who would open a side door to let them into the film once it had started and the room lights had been turned off. One fateful night the matron appeared and switched the lights on during the performance. She was horrified to see the boys and sent them away with a severe reprimand. Nevertheless some of the boys risked watching the film the following week only to be surprised when a group of local policemen, summoned by the matron, appeared and sent them packing with something more painful than just a verbal reprimand! However, a few older boys, including Kevin Meredith and Billy Youd (from *The Wyvern*), were given the matron's seal of approval and made more welcome at the hostel, being allowed in occasionally for coffee.

In 1940 Pat Paton, then Pat Grainger-Smith, was teaching at her old school in Wallasey. Her ambition was to teach History and English Classics. She recalled her experiences for the Women's Institute book *Cheshire within Living Memory*: '*The war, however, played havoc with ambition and the school eventually closed, owing to most of the pupils having been bombed out or evacuated. This, of course, meant I was out of a job and on the first Friday after the termination of my work I joined the dole queue. Three weeks of this was quite enough, during which time I did a lot of thinking and*



'The Hollies' which was requisitioned for use as a Women's Land Army Hostel. The building on the right is the surviving part of the dormitory extension.



The Bolling Yard ('Cobblestones') which accommodated agricultural workers and, from 1943, German and Italian prisoners-of-war.



Helen Arthan with the wartime canning machine which was used by Chorlton & Cuddington Women's Institute.



Patricia Grainger-Smith in Women's Land Army uniform. (Patricia Paton)



Malpas Women's Institute Fruit Preservation Centre (Malpas Library)

*came up with the idea I would like to join the WRNS [Women's Royal Naval Service], but decided my mathematical prowess was not good enough so finally I decided on the Land Army. At least, I could count cattle, sheep and pigs, etc., on my fingers!* On her 21<sup>st</sup> birthday in January 1941 Pat went to Wallasey Town Hall to enrol as a Land Girl. Three weeks later she was off to Reaseheath for a month's training and then in March started at Larkton House, Morris Done's farm near Malpas. She was joined there by another girl named Daphne and together they lived with the family and were very comfortable.

Pat's daily duties began at 6.00 am when she started the fire in the boiler house *'which was a little hampered at times as we had a searchlight battery billeted on our farm, and for some reason a driver and a cook from this outfit slept in the boiler house'*. After this Pat went straight to the dairy and brought the milk up from the shippon to run it through the cooler. At this time the farm was bottling milk – Morris Done was one of the sons of John Done of Manor House and, like his father, helped to pioneer the production of tuberculin tested milk in the area. Summer brought the hay and corn harvests, with long working hours, and the girls were employed in unloading and stacking, both at the hay-bay and out in the fields on the trailers.

*It was not all work. 'We had lots of fun in our free time. Daphne and I organised Land Army dances with other land girls from neighbouring farms. We had no lack of support because at Cholmondeley Park there was no shortage of soldiers, sailors and airmen of various nationalities throughout the war, including Americans. A local lady started a club which operated once a week for local land girls. This we enjoyed very much as it gave us a chance to meet and discuss all sorts of things, as with a big workload girls on individual farms tended to become a little isolated. In summer we played tennis ..... There were drama and operatic groups we could join and these being the days before universal television, we played to full houses for a week at a time. Sometimes, after all this, 6.00 am came rather quickly and was somewhat unwelcome on a cold winter's morning.'*

It was while at Larkton House that Pat met Ray Paton, who had come as an agricultural student to John Done's farm at Manor House. In 1944 they were married and later went to live at Top House Farm, Overton Heath, just outside Malpas, where they farmed and raised a family. Pat still lives in Malpas, having moved from Top House after Ray's death. Mavis Tong, a Land Girl from Altrincham who had been assigned to a farm at Bickerton, married Morris Done's brother George. Pat and Mavis were just two of many former Land Girls who acquired a taste for rural living and stayed on, many of them marrying local men.

### **Other helpers for the farmers**

There were many other schemes beside the Land Army to provide extra labour on the land. Prominent among these was the employment (for which they were paid) of German and Italian prisoners-of-war (POWs). Many of these were billeted on farms while others lived in hostels, such as that established in the Bolling Yard (now 'Cobblestones') in Church Street in 1943. Bill Coffin remembers them as wearing uniforms with large coloured patches sewn onto them, to make them easily identifiable. Rosemary Jones (nee Lawrence) from Clayholes Cottage just down the road from the Bolling Yard used to watch out with her friends for when the Red Cross lorries arrived at the yard with food parcels for the POWs. Apparently the Italian POWs in particular were very generous in distributing 'goodies', including sweets, from the food parcels to the local children. This may have been after February 1944, when it was reported that Italian POWs who agreed to sign a contract of co-operation drawn up by the United Nations would be given greater freedom, and more pay, than those who refused to

sign. Other POWs came daily from the large camp set up on the former race course at Tarporley. In February 1943 Kevin Meredith's father Bert, who ran a local taxi service, was awarded a contract by the Cheshire War Agricultural Executive Committee to transport these POWs around the South Cheshire area in a lorry supplied by the authorities. This entailed him cycling all the way to Tarporley each morning to pick up the lorry and the POWs. Among those farmers who had POWs working for them were Bill Probin at Fields Farm (one German from the Bolling Yard) and Colin Parton's father at Chorlton Lane Farm (two Germans). In June 1944 John Done reported to the 'War Ag' that POW labour was finally being withdrawn from Cheshire.

The Bolling Yard had also been used, along with the stables attached to the evacuee hostel at the Beeches, to accommodate volunteer holiday workers from urban areas, as part of a fairly successful nationwide scheme. Henry Barnett, who farmed at Overton Hall, was appointed as Labour Supervisor for the workers at the Bolling Yard. Bicycles were supplied to the volunteers so that they could reach the farms but, according to the official records, Mr Barnett was hard put to explain in July 1943 where all these bicycles had disappeared to. The answer has been supplied by David Latham, a Liverpool evacuee who was billeted at the Bolling next door. He remembers that both the volunteer workers and local children treated the dozen or so cycles so badly that they finished up as complete wrecks and were quietly disposed of. At one time during the war there were also some RAF personnel billeted at the Bolling Yard, to the delight of the maids in the Bolling!

Other labour was provided by schoolchildren, of whom around 3,000 worked on Cheshire farms during the first year of the war. As Mike Downey remembers, each of the older boys and girls at the Alport Schools were issued with a blue card on which was recorded the number of days they had spent on farm work. Often a local farmer would call at the schools with a trailer pulled by a car, or a tractor if he had one, to request volunteers for the day. The volunteers would climb into the trailer and go off to the farm for a day's potato picking or corn harvesting. Permission to use such labour had to be sought by the farmer from John Parsonage, at Cross o' the Hill, the local National Farmers' Union secretary.

The Malpas Young Farmers' Club (founded in the 1920s) remained active throughout the war, both supporting the farming activities of its members and organising a number of fund-raising activities. Typical of the latter was the whist drive and dance in the Jubilee Hall in February when one of the prizes was a spade, to enable the winner to 'Dig for Victory'. The vote of thanks for the evening was proposed by the young Norman Craddock of Tybroughton. The following month at Higher Wych chapel he married Marie Evans of Wigland Hall, going on to become a pillar of the local community, as a District and Parish councillor and Chester City alderman; as a prominent member of the National Farmers' Union and Malpas Farmers' Club; as chairman for many years of the Jubilee Hall management committee; and as an active member of the Methodist church.

## 8. 'DIG FOR VICTORY'

In addition to the efforts being made to increase production on the farms, householders responded by increasing the quantity of vegetables grown in their gardens, many of them digging up their cherished lawns to do so. They also kept poultry, as described previously, and other livestock. At the Alport schools the pupils were encouraged to work in the school gardens, growing vegetables and other produce to be used for school meals, a recent innovation. A visitor to the Malpas Women's Institute in September 1942 was Lady Marcia Miles, who was keen to encourage the formation of a rabbit club in Malpas. Whether a club was actually formed is not clear but many local households certainly did breed rabbits to supplement their meat ration – along with the odd wild rabbit that might have found its way off the fields despite the warning of Flanagan & Allen's popular wartime song (a favourite of mine when I was a young child) to *'Run rabbit, run rabbit, run, run, run; Don't let the farmer get his gun, gun, gun!'*

### The Women's Institutes' Fruit Preservation Centres

An important contribution made by Women's Institutes to the national war effort was the establishment of Fruit Preservation Centres, after the introduction of jam rationing in February 1941. By the end of the war nearly 6,000 such centres had been set up by local branches, many of them using one of the 500 canning machines presented by the women of America. In the summer of 1941, 13,000 tons of fruit were saved by the scheme from being wasted and were turned into 2,000 tons of jam. The government supplied the sugar and, where necessary, paid for the fruit. The women volunteers who did the work were not allowed to buy a single jar of their own products and each jar had to be full to the brim as it would be sold as part of someone's ration. Among the Malpas WI records is a volume recording the daily output for July to November 1941 of the centre set up in the Women's Institute room in Church Street (this was the former Grammar School wooden schoolroom, now demolished). There the members would meet from 9.30 am to 6.00 pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays, processing prodigious quantities of fruit and vegetables to produce jams, canned fruits and chutneys. Margaret Lloyd-Williams (nee Parsonage) remembers her mother Sybil, who was chairman of the WI, cycling from her home at Cross o' the Hill twice a week for the 'fruit preservation' days.

Local residents were encouraged to bring in produce, either wild or cultivated in their gardens, to sell to the Preservation Centre. The fruits used most frequently for jams were gooseberries and damsons (both common in Malpas gardens), plums, rhubarb, raspberries, redcurrants, blackberries, bilberries (from the nearby Bickerton Hills) and apples; the bottled fruits included pears, apples, damsons and tomatoes; and chutneys were made using marrows, apples, tomatoes and onions. The production of a hundredweight (50 kg) of chutney on one day in October 1941 must have saturated the streets of Malpas with vinegar fumes!

A similar Centre was established by the Chorlton & Cuddington branch of the WI. The branch president was Mrs Aline Bates of Chorlton Hall who allowed the 'jam factory' to be housed in the old laundry at the hall.

The Malpas WI also provided support for wartime gardening. Their various schemes enabled members to obtain free cultivated blackberry plants and to purchase blackcurrant bushes if they wished, and allowed the branch to buy cheap seeds through bulk orders to Suttons Seeds at Chester.

## 9. SPITFIRES, SUBMARINES AND SALVAGE SUPPORTING THE WAR EFFORT

As well as providing direct support (see Chapter 13), through efforts such as the Comforts Fund, to Malpas men and women on active service, the people of the town rallied round to raise funds for the national war effort. As the war intensified, more and more money was needed to provide armaments such as tanks and aircraft, weapons and ammunition. Support started in a small way, as at the end of 1940 when the Women's Institute sent a contribution of £25 to the Lord Lieutenant's Scheme for the Cheshire Aircraft Victory Fund while the following January the Young Farmers sent £20 from the profits on a dance to the 'Spitfire Fund'.

There were three local men who, alongside Herbert Yates the schoolmaster, became prominent during the war for the enormous amount of energy and effort they put into organising the Malpas 'social calendar' and fund-raising initiatives. They were Tom Crawford, who had a cobbler's shop near The Cross, Tom Mercer, who lived in the cottage (known in those days as 'Uncle Tom's Cabin') between the Jubilee Hall and the old Post Office, and Richard Harrison, who lived at the original Holly Cottage in Church Street and who became the church's vergger in 1941. They organised regular weekly dances, whist drives and other fund-raising events and were heavily involved with the programmes for such initiatives as War Weapons Week, Warships Week, 'Wings for Victory' and 'Salute the Soldier'. The many organisations and causes which benefited from their fund-raising throughout the war included the Malpas Comforts Fund and the British Red Cross. Towards the end of the war they turned their attention to raising funds for 'post-war' projects, including re-furbishing the Jubilee Hall, which seems to have suffered as a result of accommodating the Liverpool evacuee schoolchildren, and restoring the tennis courts at the top of the Recreation Ground.

It is worth mentioning the interesting variety of ensembles which provided music for the many dances throughout the war years. They included the Malpas Town Band, formed in 1919; various groups led by local butcher Noel Bradley (who was organist at the Congregational Church), by local piano teacher Mona Chesters, and by violinist Cecil Dutton, the watch and clock maker; bands led by Douglas Webb, Walter White and Bradley Dixon; the 'Malpasian Band'; and the Garrison Follies Dance Band. Among the ensembles which paid visits to Malpas was the Czechoslovakian Army Dance Band, for a Home Guard dance in October 1941. Occasionally there were military musicians from the local camps who 'sat in' with the local bands. Bill Coffin remembers particularly Eddie Calvert, later to become famous as 'The Man with the Golden Trumpet', who on a number of occasions sat in with Noel Bradley's group. Eddie Calvert's 1950s hit *Cherry Pink Mambo* was one of the first tunes I attempted to play when in 1956 my father bought me my first trumpet.

However, the main way in which the general public could help the national war effort was to invest in National Savings, thus making capital available to the Government, the slogan adopted being **LEND TO DEFEND**. Although wages for many rose steadily throughout the war years, partly because of the long hours being worked in the munitions factories and in other war-related industries, there were acute shortages of consumable goods. The Government, therefore, was quick to promote National Savings as a way to invest surplus income which could then be made available for a better standard of living after the war. At the beginning of the war Malpas already had a Post Office Savings Association, started in 1929, which tended to attract around £150-£300 over each 30 week cycle, but investment in savings really started in earnest when Malpas organised its first War Weapons Week, in February 1941. The week, with a programme of parades, social events and other fund-raising

## Malpas Children's Spitfire Effort.

### LETTER OF THANKS FROM CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER.

Children of Sunnyside, none of them more than 11 years old, organised an open-air concert in aid of the Spitfire Fund, the admission fee being one penny. No adult was allowed to participate, and the children take all the credit to themselves. The following is a copy of the letter from the Chancellor of the Exchequer:—

"Treasury Chambers, Whitehall, S.W.  
Dear Joyce Pridding,—The Chancellor of the Exchequer was very pleased to receive the letter with which you and Doreen Cartwright enclosed 12/6 as a gift towards the cost of a Spitfire. Sir Kingsley Wood sends his warm thanks to all who took part in the concert, and he asks me to tell you how much he appreciates your help in the War effort"



Noel Bradley's wartime band –  
Noel on extreme right. (Bill Coffin)



Tom Mercer.  
(Oriol Piggott)



Richard Harrison (St Oswald's Church)

**Malpas & District**  
**"Wings for Victory" Week**  
 Saturday, April 24th - Saturday, May 1st, 1943



OUR AIM—to raise £50,000  
 the cost of TEN SPITFIRES

Programme & Time Table  
 :: of the Week's Events ::



initiatives, attracted a staggering total of just over £60,440 of investment in National Savings. In achieving this Malpas was something of a pioneer. Although many urban areas had already organised such weeks, the *Whitchurch Herald* reported that '*It is very probable that Malpas will establish a record as the first rural area in the country to embark on the scheme.....*'. Another newspaper reported that in Malpas '*the indicator to show subscriptions up to £30,000 became useless early in the week. A thermometer showing contributions up to £40,000 became obsolete soon afterwards. There was nothing else for it after that, SUCCEEDING FIGURES HAD TO BE CHALKED ON A WALL. Today the total was £45,000; by midnight it is expected to be £50,000*'. The week also gave a boost to the Malpas Post Office Savings Association which announced in March that its sales of savings certificates over the previous 30 weeks had jumped to £1,200. It went on to raise nearly £4,000 more through its Summer Savings Drive.

February 1942 was a peak month for fund-raising for a number of causes. Warships Week included two concerts, a film show, a whist drive, a 'Brains Trust', a ball and a grand parade through the town. The opening ceremony was performed by Commander Guy Kenyon RN, born in Malpas Rectory as the son of Reverend William Kenyon, Rector from 1873 to 1897. The target of £30,000 worth of National Savings investments was set as a contribution towards the Tarvin Rural District's aim to raise the cost of the submarine HMS Tribune. Students of the Malpas Evening Institute made a small model of Tribune, which was carried in the parade, and there were naval models and other displays in the windows of a number of local shops. Such efforts were vital at a time when the country was spending £14,500,000 a day on fighting the war, of which the greater part went to the fighting and supply services. The totals raised came from many small contributions, such as the whist drive at the Beeches evacuee hostel, which realised £19 and where '*Two rabbits won by the Matron were sold for 7s (35p)*'.

The re-selling of prizes, or purchases, at fund-raising functions was very common. The Malpas branch of the National Farmers' Union committed itself to raising money for the British Red Cross Agriculture Fund. In that same February the NFU held an auction sale in aid of the Red Cross at Malpas Station Smithfield (livestock market) at Hampton. The local paper reported: '*The first lot to be offered was a valuable heifer given by Mr John Davies of Edge Grange, and after being sold and re-sold it was eventually purchased back by Mr Davies for £23, after realising in all £228*'. A further £42 was raised for the Red Cross by the Malpas fruit, flower and vegetable show in autumn 1942. An innovation in July 1943, which raised over £300 for the Red Cross, was the 'Grand Malpas Gymkhana' on the Kiln Field, where the Springfield Estate now stands, with '*England's best jumpers competing*'. The driving force behind this event was local veterinary surgeon Mr R J (Bobby) O'Neill who was himself an accomplished horseman and show jumper. It is interesting to note that at this date show jumping was still frequently referred to by the old term 'horse leaping'. £102.10s (£102.50) in support of the Agriculture Fund was raised by the Malpas Young Farmers in March 1945 through a ploughing match followed by a dance.

Not only for this country's own war effort did so much fund-raising take place locally. In June 1941 Germany had invaded Russia and as a result the Russian people were suffering great hardships. In February the following year local people responded to Mrs Churchill's appeal on behalf of the Russians. Events organised included a whist drive at Mr Fletcher's shop 'The Mart' in Church Street (on the corner of Parbutts Lane) and a concert in the Methodist schoolroom (Old Hall Street), where Mrs Huxley's solos included the enduring favourites '*I'll walk beside you 'til the end of time* and '*Bless this House*'.

In the autumn of 1942 Malpas supported a ten-week Tank Drive, for which the local programme was organised by Herbert Yates and Tom Mercer. At the end of the ten weeks, in September, it was announced that £9,421.8s.7d (£9,421.43) had been invested in National Savings, against a target of £10,000. To generate publicity a Cromwell tank was brought to the Kiln Field and left there for a time afterwards. Mike Downey was one of the many local children who seized the opportunity to play on it and to imagine themselves as being on the battle front. Also during that autumn a local programme was started to raise funds for the Merchant Navy which, in spite of many dangers, was performing such a vital task in bringing supplies from abroad. The events included whist drives in the Jubilee Hall organised by the Ladies' Castle Hill Bowling Club, and at Prospect House, the home of Dr Pollard, organised by his housekeeper Miss Lucy Morris.

In April 1943 the efforts of the town were turned to raising money towards strengthening the country's air power, with the organisation of the local Wings for Victory campaign. The week's programme included a parade led by a Royal Air Force band, a ball with music by the RAF Dance Orchestra, a concert featuring performers from the armed services, and an exhibition of aircraft equipment. Mike Downey remembers that an actual Spitfire was brought to the Barn Field in Chester Road during the week, to add to the excitement. Against a target of £50,000, Malpas again exceeded expectations by attracting £61,687 worth of investment in National Savings. As the total grew during the week it was recorded for all to see on the 'thermometer' type indicator mounted on the wall of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' (Tom Mercer's cottage) next door to the Jubilee Hall.

The following November a presentation ceremony was held to award Air Ministry certificates to the 29 group secretaries who had assisted in the Malpas National Savings Area. At the ceremony Mr Yates showed his cine films covering 1941-1943, including War Weapons Week, Warship Week and Wings for Victory Week. These are some of the films which have been preserved and copied onto videotape, proving a unique record of Malpas wartime life.

In 1944 the main drive for fund-raising towards the national war effort was Salute the Soldier Week, which took place over the Whitsun holiday in May. The target this time was £45,000 of investment in National Savings. It was announced that the programme would include a *'floral parade reminiscent of former days in Malpas, and competitions for fancy-dressed walking characters, dressed bicycles, prams and lorries'*. There would also be a military exhibition, a Pony Club gymkhana, sports, performances by Professor Humo the magician, a giant doll's house competition, a youth concert, a visit by the Chester Operatic Society, Ministry of Information films, and a Carnival Ball. A feature of the various fund-raising weeks, something which surely will never be seen again, was the sight of local residents and uniformed troops dancing in Malpas High Street. They were probably dancing to gramophone music relayed by Fisher's ever-present radio van, although it is difficult to tell this from Herbert Yates's silent cine films.

It was not only the adults of the town who were busy raising funds to support the war effort. One group of children got together to organise a concert on the Recreation Ground, in aid of the Red Cross. Marilyn Brookfield (nee Wilson) still has the letter from Mrs Helen Rae, of the Lodge (HQ of the local Red Cross detachment) dated July 10<sup>th</sup> 1941 and addressed to *'The Misses Nancy White, Elaine Morgan, Vera Goff, Joan Steel, Muriel Plaistow, Maureen Wilson, Dorothy Harding, Agnes McKenzie, May Roberts, Muriel Wilson & Olwen Wilson'*. In it Mrs Rae thanked them for their *'splendid contribution to the Red Cross Fund'*. She promised that the 25 shillings (£1.25) they had raised would go towards buying parcels for Cheshire Prisoners of War in Germany. Marilyn remembers that her sister Muriel's 'party piece' for singing at such concerts

was *My old man says follow the van*. Later that same month the *Whitchurch Herald* published a copy of the letter which had been sent on behalf of the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Kingsley Wood MP) to Joyce Pridding and Doreen Cartwright (now Mrs Doreen Leek), as representatives of the children of Sunnyside, Malpas. He thanked the children, none of whom was more than eleven years old, for sending 12s.6d (62½d) in aid of the Spitfire Fund. The money was raised by another concert, for which the admission fee had been one penny (0.4p). The children organised everything themselves and no adult was allowed to participate. Children also helped the war effort by the collection of rose hips and various herbs, used in the manufacture of medicines for the troops, and by gathering 'conkers', which were used in the manufacturing process for munitions.

As the war situation deteriorated there was an urgent need for salvaged household materials to be used in the manufacture of weapons and armaments. It seems that almost anything could be re-cycled. For example, aluminium saucepans could be melted down to make aircraft, old envelopes were used to make cartridge wads and chop bones provided cordite for making bullets. Tarvin RDC had set up the first refuse collection service, known as a 'scavenging service', for the Malpas area in 1937. Previously rubbish was just taken to local dumping sites or buried in back gardens. Tom Jones (Maureen Crump's grandfather), of Glebe Cottage in Church Street, was contracted to collect household rubbish, using his coal lorry, and to dump it in the old claypits at the former brickworks site in Dog Lane, Oldcastle. In February 1940 special collections for paper, rags and bones were started. From September 1942 it became an offence to dispose of any waste paper other than to an official collector or buyer, or to mix paper with any other rubbish. A network of 'Village Dumps' was established for the collection of scrap metals. In Malpas the first dump was on the Recreation Ground until local grocer Harvey Hesketh provided an alternative site. Tarvin RDC even sold the scrap metal from the old Malpas Water Works on the Goodmoors, to the Cambrian Iron Works.

One of the most high profile reclamation campaigns involved the removal of iron railings from outside public buildings and private residences, and around public monuments. By December 1941 Tarvin RDC had completed a survey of iron railings throughout its district and submitted the results to the Ministry of Works & Buildings. The following February the Ministry sent out its contractors to remove them. Malpas lost the railings around the Cross, those in front of some of the cottages in High Street and most of those around graves in the churchyard, among others. The total weight of railings reclaimed nation-wide was around one million tons.

The Jubilee Hall escaped two possible fates during the course of the war. In November 1940 Vickers Armstrong, makers of aircraft including the formidable Spitfire fighter, inspected the hall with a view to requisitioning it as an out-store for aircraft parts. The Battle of Britain, in which the Spitfire played such a crucial role, had taken place over south-east England the previous July. At the end of August the Germans had started their bombing raids on Merseyside, perilously close to the Vickers factory at Broughton just outside Chester, where the Wellington bomber was in production. The use of out-stores was one way of preserving vital parts, should the main factory be hit. Possibly the presence of the Sefton Park school in the Jubilee Hall was one of the reasons why requisitioning never took place. Later on, in February 1943, the Women's Voluntary Service enquired about using the wooden First World War hut behind the hall (later to become the Men's Institute) for making munitions. Presumably this would have been for the manufacture of non-explosive components rather than for filling bullets or shell cases! It appears that nothing came of this application.

## 10. MENACE IN THE MALPAS SKIES

It was in November 1940 that Cheshire experienced its heaviest air raids, with many bombs being dropped in rural areas. The Malpas air raid siren, on top of the fire station, had sounded for the first time the previous June with the result that many children were late for school the next morning. That was a false alarm. However, on November 29<sup>th</sup> the Boys' School log book recorded that total attendance was under 60% *'due to last night's severe air raid on the district'* and at the Infants' School there were *'low attendances due to firing of local Anti Aircraft guns disturbing night's rest.'* That night really brought home to the people of Malpas the dangers they faced even in a rural area isolated from the big towns and cities. The Women's Institute took the matter very seriously and in the following January formed *'a committee to feed people bombed out of their houses, if necessary.'*

The sound of enemy bombers overhead is well remembered by those who lived in Malpas. Mary Pridding, newly married at the age of 22 in 1940 and living at Sunnyside, remembers that they were very loud and frightening. Her husband John was in the Auxiliary Fire Service Unit attached to the regular Malpas Fire Brigade. When he was on call-out Mary used to go to sleep at the house of her neighbour, Mrs Roberts.

Most of the bombs that fell around Malpas were probably jettisoned by enemy aircraft, to lighten their payload and hence their fuel consumption on their way back to the continental bases. The bombing of Liverpool, which was particularly devastating during the city's 'blitz' months of August 1940 and May 1941, was visible from the high ground around Malpas. Local residents would stand at the farm gateway in Love Lane (Overton Lane) and gaze with horror at the flashes from the bombs falling on Liverpool. Margaret Lloyd-Williams (nee Parsonage) remembers looking across from her home at Cross o' the Hill and seeing the bright red glow in the sky over the burning city. Laurie Crump, who lived at Hampton, remembers vividly the bombs that fell between Hamilton House and Ebnal Bank when he was out walking the dog. He heard a screaming noise as the bombs came down, followed by explosions and bright flashes which lit up the whole area. Had he been there a couple of minutes earlier he might not have lived to tell the tale. One of Bill Coffin's earliest memories is of standing in Dobson's Alley with his granny, listening to the drone of the heavy aircraft overhead. She told him that *'the planes were "German Bommers" and that they were giving Liverpool a good pasting'*.

The Anti Aircraft battery nearest to Malpas seems to have been the one positioned on Larkton Hill although, of course, it was surrounded by strict security arrangements and local residents were not permitted to approach it. A number of enemy aircraft did come down in the area. Peter Robinson tells of the German Junkers bomber which was forced down by the RAF at his home at Egerton Hall, with 6-8 crew on board. The pilot, having made his way to Bob Done's home at Higher Hall, Hampton, gave himself up to Bob's father, who happened to be a police special constable. With him the pilot had his small drogue parachute, which was released in advance of the main chute, and this still remains at Higher Hall as a memento of that day. Peter remembers RAF personnel going back and forth at Egerton Hall to recover all the parts of the wrecked Junkers, to help with reconstruction of what had happened and to add to their knowledge of enemy aircraft. It was some time before they recovered, with Peter's help, one of the engines which had buried itself deep into the ground.

Another German pilot (a spy in civilian dress?), who baled out over Overton Hall, nearly received a ducking in the ornamental lake in front of the house. Unobserved by anyone at the Hall, he made his way into Malpas and to Mr Wycherley's saddlery shop in

Church Street. After he had asked for directions to Crewe railway station, Mr Wycherley became suspicious of the very German way in which the stranger clicked his heels as a sign of thanks for the information. He immediately rang the police, who managed to intercept the unfortunate airman on his way to Crewe. Robin Barnett, whose father Henry farmed Overton Hall, says that the parachute left beside the lake incorporated some very strong rope (an early use of nylon) which the Barnetts used for many years afterwards to help pull the plough – a tribute to German manufacturing. It is also said that Harry Probin of Malpas Old Hall used his double-barrelled shotgun to arrest a German pilot who had baled out over his farm.

Air casualties were not confined to enemy aircraft. Bob Done recalls that around the end of the war in 1945 a Spitfire fighter plane was flying low over the A41, during the course of the pilot's training in the use of a camera gun. He had his camera sights set on an RAF lorry but misjudged his altitude, smashing into the lorry and lifting its cab off the road. The aircraft fuselage landed in front of Higher Hall. The pilot survived but sadly the two men in the lorry, who had their demobilisation papers in the cab with them, were both killed.

Besides the menaces of standard high explosive bombs and incendiaries (fire bombs) another danger came from land mines. These were large bombs, similar to the mines used at sea, which were suspended from parachutes and exploded with huge force after they had landed on their targets. It was such a bomb which demolished the cottages behind Bunbury church and blew out the church windows. Another fell behind Egerton Hall, making an enormous crater which later filled up with water in which Peter Robinson spent many hours swimming after the war. Kevin Meredith recalls one falling at Ivy House, Chidlow, from which the blast was so great that, to her indignation and embarrassment, it blew his mother's skirt above her knees, even though she was at their home in Well Avenue a mile and a half from the bomb! The same blast flattened the cabbages in Mary Pridding's garden at Sunnyside, as well as shattering many windows across the surrounding countryside. High explosive bombs caused many large craters, such as those which were visible for many years afterwards near Mill House, Hampton, but most of them have now been filled in.

## 11. 'WE SHALL FIGHT IN THE FIELDS AND IN THE STREETS' THE HOME GUARD

The fear of a 'knock-out' blow from the air, particularly from Hitler's developing Luftwaffe which had demonstrated its powers of destruction at the bombing of Guernica in April 1937 during the Spanish Civil War, was very widespread. There was also a great fear of aerial invasion by parachute borne troops following the renewed offensive by the enemy after the evacuation of the Allied forces from Dunkirk, which started on May 26<sup>th</sup> 1940. On May 14<sup>th</sup> Anthony Eden, the Secretary of State for War, had broadcast an appeal for men to join a new force of Local Defence Volunteers (LDV). The response to his appeal was immediate and within 24 hours over 250,000 men had enrolled. By mid-July they numbered over one million. The following August, at the suggestion of Prime Minister Winston Churchill, they were renamed the Home Guard. It was his famous speech to the House of Commons on June 24<sup>th</sup> that expressed the public mood and underlined the need for the Home Guard as well as for the regular armed forces: *'.....we shall defend our island.....we shall fight on the beaches.....we shall fight in the fields and in the streets ....'*

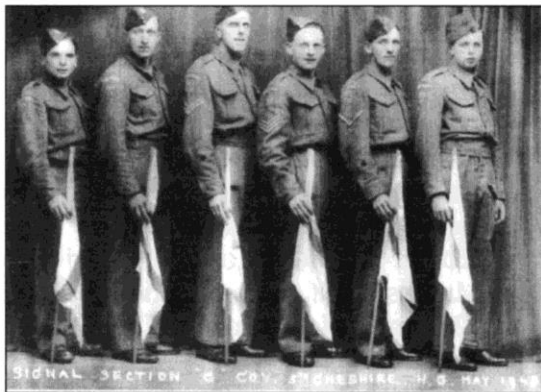
In more recent years the Home Guard has become immortalised in the hugely popular BBC TV comedy series *Dad's Army*. However, despite its comic slant, the series was based very closely on what actually happened. The force was organised into Battalions, Companies and local Platoons right across the country. The 5<sup>th</sup> Cheshire (Broxton) Battalion covered an almost entirely rural area of about 150 square miles, stretching from Wervin in the north to the Shropshire border in the south, and from Cholmondeley in the east to Lower Kinnerton in the west. The first Commander of the Battalion was Captain Ralph Aldersey, who established the Battalion Headquarters in his estate office at Aldersey Hall. In February 1941 he was succeeded by Lieutenant-Colonel G Rae (who lived at the Lodge, Malpas), of the Liverpool Scottish (Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders), with Colonel Denis Bates of Chorlton Hall (Duke of Lancaster's Own Yeomanry) as Second-in-Command. The Malpas area came under Broxton 'C' Company, commanded by Major Walter Askham, which included platoons based at Ebnal, Chorlton Lane & Cuddington, Oldcastle, Threapwood, Tushingham and in Malpas itself, among others. By the middle of 1941 'C' Company numbered around 250 men of all ranks.

The headquarters of the Malpas platoon was the cottage (later to become the gardener's cottage) which stands at the entrance to the Bolling Yard (now 'Cobblestones') in Church Street. The men used to exercise in the Bolling Yard and in the cottage had a scale model of Malpas, to assist them in planning their exercises. Training with rifles and machine guns took place on the Recreation Ground and the Ox Hayes. Bill Probin reported to the Bolling Yard Cottage for duty one night each week and remembers the platoon officers as Major Askham from Old Hall Street (he was a coal merchant with a business at Malpas station), Lawrence Wycherley (the Church Street saddler) and George Salt (of Salt's shop, now Shepherd's, in the High Street). George Salt was a veteran of the First World War, when he had been taken prisoner but had escaped. One of Bill's regular duties was to visit the Royal Observer Corps post in Tilston Road. On Sunday mornings there were drills, church parades, and occasional demonstrations such as one he attended on how to throw hand grenades. He also remembers that later in the war they used to go regularly to Saughton Camp for additional training.

Platoons were often formed by local landowners who enlisted men employed on their estates. An example was the Chorlton Lane & Cuddington Platoon, formed by



The Malpas platoon of the Home Guard in September 1942 (*Bill Coffin*)



Home Guard Signals Section:  
Laurie Crump on right (*Laurie Crump*)



Bolling Yard Cottage:  
Malpas Home Guard HQ

Home Guard Proficiency Certificate for Private F. Holland (*Bill Coffin*)

Certificate of Proficiency	
HOME GUARD	
On order of the Training Establishment, Primary Training Centre or Reserve Training Centre, the holder must produce this Certificate as proof for the officer commanding, together with Certificate A if issued in the Home Training Corps or Army Cadet Force.	
PART I. I hereby certify that (Rank) <u>Private</u> (Name and initials) <u>F. Holland</u>	
of <u>C</u> (Company) <u>5th</u> (Battalion) <u>Cheeshire</u> HOME GUARD, has qualified in the Proficiency Tests as laid down in the paragraph "Qualifications for, and Conditions governing the Award of the Home Guard Proficiency Badges and Certificates" for the following subjects:	
1. General knowledge (all conditions)	<u>100%</u>
2. Rifle	<u>100%</u>
3. St. M. Course	<u>100%</u>
4. (a) Other weapons	<u>100%</u>
(b) Signalling	<u>100%</u>
5. (a) Barricade, (b) Gas service, (c) Search and Destroy, (d) "A.A." Battery work, (e) Bomb Disposal, (f) Vitaminology (or M.C.)	<u>100%</u>
6. (a) Map Reading, (b) Field work, (c) First Aid	<u>100%</u>
Date: <u>8 Feb</u> 194 <u>2</u>	Signature: <u>[Signature]</u>
Date: <u>2 Feb</u> 194 <u>2</u>	Signature: <u>[Signature]</u>
Date: <u>8 Feb</u> 194 <u>2</u>	Signature: <u>[Signature]</u>
Date: <u>8 Feb</u> 194 <u>2</u>	Signature: <u>[Signature]</u>
Date: <u>8 Feb</u> 194 <u>2</u>	Signature: <u>[Signature]</u>
PART II. I certify that (Rank) <u>Private</u> (Name and initials) <u>F. Holland</u>	
of <u>C</u> (Company) <u>5th</u> (Battalion) <u>Cheeshire</u> HOME GUARD, having duly passed the Proficiency Tests as laid down in the paragraph "Qualifications for, and Conditions governing the Award of the Home Guard Proficiency Badges and Certificates" for the following subjects as laid down in Regulations for the Home Guard, Vol. I, 1942, para 24:	
Date: <u>17th March</u> 194 <u>2</u>	Signature: <u>[Signature]</u>
Lieut. Colonel Commanding 5th Bn. Cheeshire	

Colonel Bates and his gardener Bob Urion, which included a number of local farmers and farm hands. Their firing practice took place in a range set up in the Scar Quarry.

Bob Done, who lived at Higher Hall alongside the A41, was in the Hampton & Edge Platoon, part of Broxton 'G' Company', which consisted of around 30 men, many of them veterans of the First World War. He was still at school when the LDV was formed but joined the Home Guard in 1942, when he was 17 years old. His platoon met on Sunday mornings when they usually went to the firing range at Edge Hall, the home of their commanding officer, Major J C (Jack) Wolley-Dod. Marching practice took place on the A41 between the *New Inn* (recently re-named *The Market House*) and the Cholmondeley cross-roads. The exercise was frequently accompanied by the men's lusty renderings of *Roll out the Barrel* and other popular songs of the day. At first the platoon was based in the old dairy at Higher Hall but by the time Bob had joined the force the platoon had moved into a disused railway sleeping car at Malpas station, in Hampton. On his weekly duty night, starting at 10.00 pm, he had to patrol the main road. The men worked in shifts, two hours on then two hours off, throughout the night. Bob well remembers the night when two members of the platoon (not Bob!) had paid an unofficial visit to the *New Inn*, become rather merry and then stopped a solitary car travelling towards Edge. The driver turned out to be Major Wolley-Dod's daughter Madge. She reported them to her father who soon '*came and dealt with them!*'

Although in the early days not all Home Guard units had been equipped with rifles, eventually half a million ex-WW1 rifles were sent from the United States, the first consignment to be received by Broxton Battalion arriving as early as July 1940. By the time Bob Done joined, the Hampton & Edge platoon was training with Lee Enfield .303 calibre rifles. Ammunition and other equipment was issued from the Broxton Battalion headquarters at Aldersey Hall. As well as practising at Edge Hall the Hampton & Edge platoon used the Battalion's excellent range on the Bickerton Hills. The availability of this range, constructed by voluntary Home Guard labour from materials donated by local residents, was one of the factors which contributed towards the Battalion becoming one of the first in the whole country to become proficient with live grenades as well as rifles. On the night of the D-Day landings in Normandy (June 6<sup>th</sup> 1942) the Edge platoon had to patrol the railway line, equipped with a full pouch of ammunition and two hand grenades apiece, and continued to patrol the line for a few nights after then.

A member of the Signals Section of 'G' Company was Laurie Crump. He persuaded Jock Hall the commanding officer of the Hampton & Edge Platoon, who was also manager of the dairy at Hampton, to enrol him at the age of sixteen, below the official recruiting age. Although Captain Hall took him on he would not allow him to handle a rifle. The other members of the Signals Section were Stanley White of Tushingam (Sergeant in Charge), Tony Green from Bradley, Bill Broomfield and Bill Thelwell from Hampton, and Frank Hopley from Malpas. They met one evening each week in a room in the *Blue Cap* (now closed) at Hampton, to practise signalling. This consisted of learning the Morse code using lights and buzzers, also by using a flag system.

One tale which Laurie tells is classic 'Dad's Army'. During some local Home Guard manouevres the Hampton and Edge platoon were to attack the railway station, which was defended by the Malpas platoon. Hampton & Edge mustered at Mr Rigby's farm at Ebnal prior to attacking the station from the south. Captain Hall said to Laurie: '*Now lad, you know all these fields like the back of your hand. You have played in them all your life so you can guide us to the station from here.*' A problem was caused by the blackout combined with the fog that was coming down. Off went the platoon, crossing the first field without difficulty. Laurie knew of a cluster of boulders in the next field and decided to find them as a half way mark. He moved along in the dark at the head of a



long line of men. He came to the boulders and put his hand onto one of them. It felt hairy and warm, and suddenly stood up with a loud '*moo!*' This made half a dozen more 'boulders' stand up and say '*moo!*', leading to a lot of noise and strong language from the men. They set off again and went out of the gate into the next field but it was too late – the noise had alerted the defenders, who had set up an ambush and 'shot' the entire Hampton & Edge platoon. As Laurie recalls: '*After that night's escapade, any popularity that I ever had suddenly disappeared!*'

In 1943, once he had reached the age of seventeen, Laurie enlisted as a deck-hand in the Merchant Navy, seeing service in the Atlantic and elsewhere. His early mastery of the Morse code stood him in good stead as he worked his way up through the ranks, eventually retiring as a fully-fledged Captain in 1986.

Apart from their military activities, the local platoons of the Home Guard were responsible for organising many social and fund-raising activities. Typical was the 1942 New Year's Dance, when around 300 attended in the Jubilee Hall (a tight fit!) to dance to music provided by a military band. The next day they turned out for parade, headed by members of the Malpas, Churton and Whitchurch bands, marching past the Cross where the salute was taken by Colonel Rae, on route to the service at Saint Oswald's. Fund-raising events included further Saturday night dances, whist drives and concerts. Funds were also raised for the local Home Guard through such events as a dance organised by the Malpas Post Office staff in March 1942. Other Home Guard social events included occasional inter-platoon football matches like the one when Ebnal beat Malpas 5-2 in June 1942.

With the end of the war in view after the D-Day landings in Normandy on June 6<sup>th</sup> 1944, followed by the entry of the Allied forces into Germany the following September, it was considered that the Home Guard had served the purpose for which it had been formed in 1940. The force was officially 'stood down' on November 19<sup>th</sup> 1944, having numbered around two million men at its peak. Private R Winter of the Threapwood platoon, who lived at Tallarn Green, was selected to represent Broxton 'C' Company at the Stand-Down parade in London on Sunday December 3<sup>rd</sup>. Early in the New Year there were a number of nostalgic events to mark the stand-down, organised by men who had served in the Malpas area platoons. These included a dance for the Ebnal men to the music of the Malpas Utility Band followed later in the week by a supper in the Jubilee Hall, and a 'smoking concert' for the men of the Malpas town platoon.

## 12. MALPASIANS ON ACTIVE SERVICE

Many men and women from Malpas, as from every other town and village across the country, enlisted for war service either in this country or abroad. For families whose children were of the age groups liable for 'call up' it must have been a very difficult and anxious time. In May 1943 the photographs of 'Five Malpas Serving Brothers' were published in the *Chester Chronicle*. They were the sons of Mrs Worth of The Oathills: Harry (aged 38), Geoffrey (37), George (32), Fred (30) and Robert (23), all former pupils of the Alport Boys' School.

At various times men and women who had been on active service would return to the town and tell of their exploits. In April 1940 Chief Petty Officer Edwards of the HMS Exeter, a former Alport School pupil, returned after three years at sea to tell of his exploits at the Battle of the River Plate (Argentina's Rio de la Plata) the previous December, where his ship had been seriously damaged by the superior armaments of the German pocket battleship Graf Spee. News was received in a different way by Mr & Mrs Leonard who lived at the Cross when their son James, serving in the RAF, broadcast a message to them on BBC radio. Bill Coffin, whose father was in the Army, remembers going to meet him at Malpas station when he came home on leave. As they drove back up to Malpas on Jack Paterson's bus, Bill would put on his father's enormous bush hat in the hope that some of his pals would see him. He also remembers being warned not to touch the enormous service rifle that was kept under the settee.

Others had been involved in various military adventures which were reported in the columns of the *Whitchurch Herald*. Pilot Officer Ernest Williams of Oldcastle, who had joined the RAF in 1941 at the age of 16, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal in 1944 after he had been on 45 operational flights over France and Germany; and Trooper William Corbett of the Westminster Dragoons had a narrow escape on New Year's Eve 1944 when his tank was knocked out by an 88mm shell during fighting on the Maas. After he had dodged machine gun fire to fetch medical assistance for two wounded companions he was told that he had run across a snow-covered minefield!

Some of those who had been wounded in action returned to this country to recover. Mary Pridding's brother Private George Wynne of Sunnyside came home in October 1942; Private James Davies of Cross o' the Hill, aged 21, was admitted to a military hospital in this country with shrapnel wounds – the second time he had been wounded; William Corbett and Private W Reeves were both wounded during the D-Day landings at Normandy in June 1944; Driver James Bagshaw (Royal Army Service Corps) of Cross o' the Hill was reported seriously wounded in August 1944; the following month Trooper Dennis Griffiths, son of the Malpas postmaster, was reported to be in a hospital in South Wales after being wounded in Holland; in November, Company Sergeant Major John Harrison of Church Street, who was later awarded the Military Medal for destroying a German Panzer tank in Normandy, was reported wounded; the *Malpas Deanery Magazine* for December 1944 reported that Leading Aircraftman Fred Humphreys had also been wounded; and Captain Richard Dale of Cherry Hill, Chorlton, who had been awarded the Military Cross for service in Greece, was invalided home in February 1945.

Sadly many men were not in a position to return, having either been killed in action or taken prisoner. Reports about them appeared occasionally in the local paper. Lance Corporal John Fowles, brother of Mrs Darlington of Sunnyside, was taken prisoner at Dunkirk in May 1940; James Watson of The Oathills, a reservist who had rejoined the Welsh Guards at the outbreak of the war, was reported missing then notified as a

Prisoner of War (POW) in Germany; in July 1942 news was received at Fields Farm that Driver Arthur Probin of the Royal Army Service Corps had been taken prisoner; Privates Arthur Shadbolt and Wilfred Lawrence of the RASC both went into Italian POW camps, having been captured by Rommel's troops at Tobruk in June 1942; Radio Operator Clifford Johnson from Beech House, who went abroad with the RAF Voluntary Reserve in August 1941, was taken prisoner by the Japanese at the end of 1943; and Flight Sergeant (Navigator) David Saunders-Davies, son of the new Rector, was shot down over Greece and taken prisoner during September 1944.

Others had lucky escapes. Bill McCaffrey, of whom I have fond memories (a fellow cornet player, he used to take me to band practices at Farndon in the 1960s) arrived home safely in November 1942 after his Merchant Navy ship was torpedoed. The following June the local paper reported his wedding to Eunice Griffiths of Llanfair DC, at Saint Werburgh's RC Church in Chester.

Deaths in action, or from wounds received, included Lieutenant Roger Okell of the Royal Armoured Corps, son of the Rector of Malpas, who died aged 21 in the Middle East; Private George Turtle of the King's Regiment (Liverpool), son of Joseph Turtle the Malpas painter and decorator, who died in India; Hampton grocer Jack Huxley who died in a Dorset military hospital in 1944, from wounds received in North Africa; Michael Done, Bob Done's brother, who was killed on D-Day (June 6<sup>th</sup> 1944) the day when 156,000 Allied troops landed in France; Albert Nevitt, a former member of the Town Band, killed in France five days' later; Signalmans James Bickley of Wrexham Road and Private Frank Rowlands (RASC) of Oldcastle, both aged 25, killed in action in 1944; and Thomas Finchett from Sunnyside, a Private in the Worcestershire Regiment, who died of pneumonia in 1945 while on active service in Burma.

A tragic death at sea was that of Able Seaman David Allcroft. Aged 33, he was one of the 338 men drowned when the light cruiser *HMS Curacoa* sank on October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1942 after being accidentally rammed by *RMS Queen Mary*, the pride of the Cunard Line. *The Queen Mary* had been converted to carry troops during the war and that October was carrying 10,000 American troops to this country. *HMS Curacoa* was one of the ships which went to escort her into the River Clyde. Due to turbulent seas and a fatal misjudgement in navigation, the *Queen Mary* rammed the *Curacoa* amidships, cutting her in half. Only 102 men of the cruiser's 440 men were rescued. At the time the incident was subject to a news blackout although later it was the subject of a public enquiry.

Details of the nineteen men from the area who died and whose names are recorded on the Malpas war memorial will be found in Chapter 16.

### 13. MALPAS SUPPORTS ITS LOCAL MEN AND WOMEN

Throughout the war there were a huge number of local fund-raising efforts in Malpas, as in most other communities, to provide support for local men and women on active service and to support the national war effort. One of the first efforts in aid of service men and women seems to have been a Mothers' Union whist drive, two months after the start of the war. The £2.10s.1d (£2.50) raised was spent on providing cigarettes for soldiers, something which might not be approved of nowadays but for those days, when everyone was under tremendous stress, it was very understandable. This was soon followed by many fund-raising events, organised by organisations as varied as the Old Time Dance Association, the National Farmers' Union, the Young Farmers' Club, the Women's Institute, the Men's Social Club and Institute, and the local Home Guard platoons.

Soon one of the main targets for local fund-raising was the Malpas Comforts Fund, which seems to have varied its name as the war progressed. Typical events were a concert at the Jubilee Hall in December 1942, playing to a packed house, when the Malpas Follies '*comprising well known amateur artistes*' performed in aid of the Local Soldiers' Welfare Fund for the provision of Christmas parcels; and a whist drive organised by Mrs Bill Corbett in aid of the same fund. An interesting development in early 1943 was the initiative taken by residents of Sunnyside, on the west side of Malpas, an area of housing slightly isolated from the main town. It was here that whist drives in aid of the Comforts Fund were organised by the householders of Nos. 11 and 22. At No. 22 Mrs Pridding managed to pack 8 tables of players into her house. The example was soon followed by whist drives held in houses in other parts of Malpas so that it must have seemed at times as if the whole town was involved in non-stop fund-raising to assist various wartime objectives.

As the war progressed, news began to filter back to the town of those men who had either been killed, wounded in action or taken as prisoners-of-war. A local fund was set up by the Red Cross, for which the local Commandant was Mrs Helen Rae. She lived at The Lodge, which also provided the headquarters for the organisation's Malpas Detachment. Contributions to the Prisoners of War Fund were the result of many different efforts, including carol singing by the Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School and dances at the Jubilee Hall. An indication that one particular commodity was in short supply is found in the report of a dance in aid of the fund organised by Mrs Dale, of Cherry Hill, Chorlton, at which two lemons were auctioned for 16 shillings (80p).

Many of the men returning wounded from active service would have been treated at the Orthopaedic Hospital at Gobowen, near Oswestry, founded in 1900 by Sir Robert Jones, an eminent orthopaedic surgeon, and Dame Agnes Hunt, a visionary nurse. From early 1943 a series of dances and whist drives were organised to raise money generally for the hospital but also specifically towards the provision of a 'Malpas' bed at the hospital. In July of the following year the Malpas WI secretary recorded that '*Miss Crosse ..... gave a detailed and extremely racy (!) talk on the work of the Dame Agnes Hunt Hospital at Gobowen ..... She invited the WI to visit the hospital, after the war, and kindly offered to send our library some books on the life and work of Dame Agnes*'. The WI was also among local organisations which supported annual 'egg collections' for local hospitals. The Malpas WI's totals of eggs collected for Chester Royal Infirmary were: 1942 – 182 eggs; 1943 – 182 eggs; 1944 – 266 eggs; 1945 – 282 eggs. Very practical support was also given in September 1944 when forty Malpas residents attended the Beeches hostel to donate blood for use at the Infirmary.

## 14. STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND CZECHS, POLES AND AMERICANS

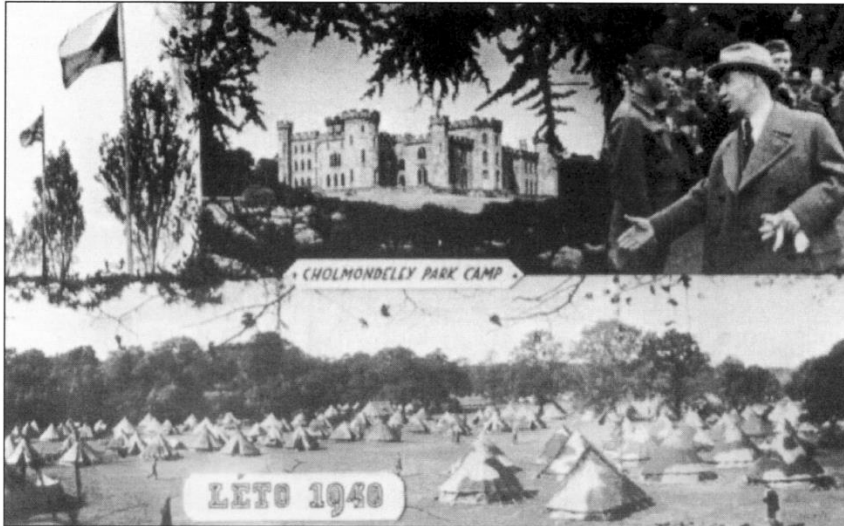
After the United States had entered the war American soldiers known as 'GIs' (from the GI symbol meaning 'Government Issue' which was stamped on their items of military kit), as well as USAF airmen, came to this country in enormous numbers. They were not the only foreigners to be seen. Bill Coffin recalls: *'During these war years we children saw black people in the flesh for the first time when troops of American soldiers marched through Malpas. We ran alongside the soldiers as they marched, fighting for the bars of candy, chocolate, chewing gum, and the odd packet of "Lucky Strike" or "Camel" cigarettes that they threw to us. We not only saw American troops for there were Czechoslovakian and Polish troops stationed in the area, plus many German and Italian prisoners of war.'*

One of the most well-remembered 'settlements' of foreign troops in the area was the camp of the Free Czechoslovak Army in Cholmondeley Park, where there is still a carved stone memorial to its former presence. After Germany invaded Czechoslovakia in March 1939 many members of the Czechoslovak forces decided that they could best serve their partitioned country by leaving their homeland and escaping to friendly territory. By many, often dangerous, routes the majority of Czech soldiers finally came together at Agde camp on the Mediterranean coast of France. From there they were brought to the Mersey ports and then on to Cholmondeley Park where around 3,500 of them stayed from July to October 1940. At Cholmondeley they were visited by Edvard Benes, the Czech President, and were inspected by Winston Churchill.

Czech soldiers became a common and popular sight in Malpas and the same month in which they arrived a party of twenty-seven of them visited the Alport Schools, where they talked to the pupils about Czechoslovakia and taught them some Czech songs. The pupils were also invited to a party in a big marquee in Cholmondeley Park. Mike Downey recalls that one of the pupils would eat nothing but chips so the Czech cook turned to and fried some especially for him. The camp at Cholmondeley also included some former members of the Czechoslovak Air Force, who were soon to be absorbed into the British RAF. The Czech soldiers too were eventually fitted out with British uniforms. With some of his friends Mike walked from Malpas to Cholmondeley and they stole their way into the park, where they found stocks of discarded uniforms and equipment. Undetected, they proudly marched back to Malpas wearing Czech tin hats, ammunition pouches, belts and other souvenirs which became a great source of envy for other boys.

Alice Matthews, who now lives in Noman's Heath, lived during the war on Manor Farm at Egerton where some Czech soldiers and their wives were billeted with them. One of the officers used to go shooting rabbits and was so successful that they called him 'Captain Bunny'. When the weather was too bad for them to work outside, Alice would press-gang the Czechs into work in the kitchen, such as peeling onions ready for pickling. Another Czech soldier from Cholmondeley, with his wife and daughter, was billeted at Oakcroft, Cross o' the Hill, the childhood home of Margaret Lloyd-Williams (nee Parsonage). Oakcroft had been built in 1927 for Margaret's father by his father-in-law, a Nottingham builder.

Cholmondeley Castle itself was used as a naval hospital, and there was a tented British army hospital in the park. This was a popular venue for Margaret Parsonage. With her friend Jean Biggins, a fellow pupil at Whitchurch High School for Girls, she used to cycle there for dances held in the recreation room over the stables.



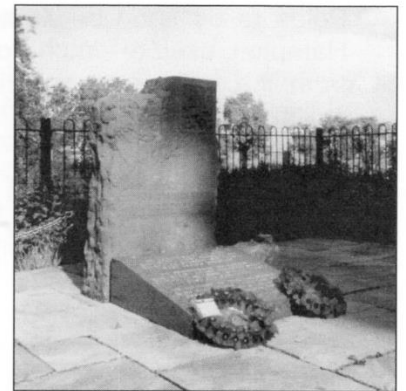
The Czech Army camp in Cholmondeley Park  
(The late Miss Ida Flack)



Captain and Mrs 'Bunny'  
with Alice Matthews's  
children at Manor Farm,  
Egerton. (Alice Matthews)



Czech soldiers 'Stan' and 'Eddie' with  
members of the Youd and Edge families.  
(Bill Coffin)



The Czech Memorial in  
Cholmondeley Park.



Macefen (Maesfen) Hall - demolished 1960.  
Czechoslovak State School 1943-????  
(Bill Coffin)



Mrs Annie Lawrence and  
Rosemary outside their  
Springfield Avenue home.

There were also other Czechoslovakians living in the area later during the war, although this appears to have had no connection with the Free Czechoslovak Army coming to Cholmondeley in 1940. The Czechoslovak State School in Britain was founded after the fall of France. Comprising junior and secondary pupils, it was located first in Surrey and then moved to Hinton Hall, near Whitchurch. The writer Vera Gissing, who had been one of the senior pupils, in her autobiography *Pearls of Childhood* records that by 1943 Hinton Hall was bursting at the seams and literally crumbling around the pupils' ears. One lunchtime the dining room ceiling came crashing down just after most of the pupils had finished their meal. This brush with disaster made the headmaster determined to have the school transferred to new premises. The senior pupils were moved to a hotel in Llanwrtyd Wells while the junior pupils were evacuated to Macefen (Maesfen) Hall, now demolished, near Malpas. How long they stayed at Macefen is not clear.

The first troops from the USA arrived in this country on January 19<sup>th</sup> 1942. A General Hospital for the United States Army was later established at Penley but was abandoned when the troops left for D-Day in 1944. After the war, in 1946, the derelict buildings were taken over for a Polish hospital. A similar train of events took place at Iscoyd Park, home of the Godsall family. During the war itself it housed United States forces, together with a small prisoner-of-war camp, before becoming a Polish refugee hospital. The Poles finally left Iscoyd in 1957. So these, with other camps and hospitals in the area, were the source of the Czechs, Americans and Poles to be seen in Malpas. Norah Chamberlain (nee Price), who grew up in Hampton, used to watch from the railway bridge as wounded soldiers were unloaded from the trains and put into the ambulances which took them on to the various military hospitals.

American soldiers used to come into Malpas and park their jeeps at the *Red Lion*. David Latham was among the local boys who used to pester them for sweets – ‘*any gum, chum?*’ – and sometimes were even lucky enough to be taken for rides around the Wyches and elsewhere in the ‘Yankee’ jeeps. The pupils from the Alport schools also visited the local wartime hospitals to entertain the troops, one of the big attractions being that the pupils, after being fetched in army lorries, were given a good feed on arrival at the hospital. In return the foreign troops joined in local activities. The programme for a concert during the Malpas ‘Salute the Soldier’ week in 1944 includes an item *Musical Numbers by Soldiers of the American Army*. Many relationships were established between foreign soldiers, who used to visit the local pubs and attend the dances at the Jubilee Hall, and older local girls. Most of these relationships were only temporary but others, maybe encouraged by generous gifts of luxuries such as nylon stockings, became permanent. The first Malpas ‘GI’ wedding seems to have taken place in late 1945 when a local girl married a US Army sergeant from Massachusetts, at Saint Oswald’s church.

In November 1942 Mrs Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of President Franklin D Roosevelt of the USA, came to stay at Grafton Hall, Tilston, as a guest of the Egerton-Warburtons. One hopes she found it more comfortable than Buckingham Palace where she had stayed the previous month and of which she wrote: ‘*The rooms were cold except for the smaller sitting-room with an open fire.*’ During her stay at Buckingham Palace, Winston Churchill had come to dine. At the beginning of the meal he seemed rather pre-occupied but then he was called away to the telephone. When he returned to the table he was cheerily singing *Roll out the barre!* The telephone call had been to tell him of the Allied forces’ success at El Alamein. After President Roosevelt died in April 1945 a memorial service for him, attended by officers, nurses and men of the US Army billeted in the area, was held at Malpas Congregational Church.

## 15. COMING HOME TO A NEW BEGINNING

### Coming Home

Following the success of the D-Day landings in June 1944 the national mood lifted and there was a general feeling that the end of the war could be in sight. Communities everywhere began to consider how they would welcome home the men and women who had been on war service.

On May 7<sup>th</sup> 1945 Germany surrendered to the Allies. The next day (VE Day) Herbert Yates once again picked up his red pen and wrote across the top of the page in the Alport schools logbook: **WAR IN EUROPE IS OVER!** The war as a whole was not, of course, completely over because fighting was still taking place in the East. The end was not to come until after the dropping of the devastating atomic bombs on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima (August 6<sup>th</sup>) and Nagasaki (August 9<sup>th</sup>), followed by Japan's surrender on August 15<sup>th</sup>.

In June 1945 the Rector was able to write: *'All our ex-prisoners are safely home ..... The Church, the parish, and all your friends bid welcome to: Harry Cripps, Frank Derricutt, Thomas Jackson, Wilfred Lawrence, Arthur Probin, Arthur Shadbolt, David Saunders-Davies and James Watson.'*

For everyone returning home after war service it must have been a disorientating experience, after years spent in uniform either overseas or in this country. Rosemary Jones (nee Lawrence) was playing with friends at Bay Cottage in Church Street when a man told her that her father had come home. She and her friends ran down to her home at Clayholes Cottage in Wrexham Road but her father didn't recognise her immediately, thinking that another girl was his daughter. Was that true? To this day Rosemary doesn't know whether he was just 'pulling her leg', in the way that fathers sometimes do. Wilf Lawrence had joined the Royal Army Service Corps in 1940 but was captured by Rommel's forces at Tobruk in June 1942. He spent the rest of the war first in three separate POW camps in Italy then at Stalag IVD in Germany, before being freed by the Allies and flown home on a Lancaster bomber. Rosemary remembers that her father was full of praise for the Red Cross, without whose regular food parcels he would probably not have survived his time as a POW.

In November 1944 a public meeting, chaired by Walter Askham, was held in the Jubilee Hall to elect a 'Welcome Home' committee. Many of the town's fund-raising efforts were directed towards raising money for the Malpas Forces Welcome Home Fund, for which accounts were opened at both the National Provincial and Lloyds banks. By the time the fund closed in December 1945 it amounted to £1,541.12s.10d (£1,541.64). Events supporting it had included the usual round of dances and whist drives, a performance by the Malpas Players of the popular drama 'Tilly of Bloomsbury', a 'Great Gala Week' in July 1945 and the Malpas Gymkhana on the Kiln Field the following August. The money in the fund was distributed, in amounts based on the type and length of duty, to all Malpas residents who had served in the armed forces during the war, with a small balance being donated to the Orthopaedic Hospital at Oswestry.

On Sunday November 11<sup>th</sup> 1945 the Armistice Day service, originally instituted to commemorate the ending of the First World War, was once more held with a packed congregation at Saint Oswald's church. In June the following year the official Peace Celebrations were held, including sports and a tea for children and a special united service in the parish church on Victory Sunday (June 9<sup>th</sup> 1946).



## A New Beginning

The merging of the Alport Boys' and Girls' schools in 1944 was one of the first obvious signs of the many changes that were to follow the end of hostilities. With the defeat in the General Election of July 1945 of Winston Churchill, who had headed the wartime Coalition Government, Clement Attlee's Labour government started to implement its long nourished plans for nationalisation of many industries and for a 'welfare state'.

In the Summer of 1945 Family Allowances were introduced for the second and all subsequent children in a family, providing a welcome source of additional income to those families which had struggled through the war years. Malpas Fire Brigade, which in 1941 had become part of the wartime National Fire Service, came under the control of the new Cheshire County Council Fire Brigade after the passing of the 1947 Fire Services Act. The Malpas Gas Company Limited (founded in 1862) finished its life as a private concern when it passed into the control, under the 1948 Gas Act, of the new North Western Gas Board. The local doctors, like GPs everywhere, and their patients started to benefit from the reforms brought about by the establishment of the National Health Service in July 1948.

One of the great disappointments after the First World War had been the let-down felt by those hoping for new housing after the Government had promised 'Homes for Heroes', of which few were built. In March 1944, the Government made a new promise that, within two years of the defeat of Germany, between two and three hundred thousand new houses would be built across the country. Malpas was to see part of this promise begin to come true in 1946 after Tarvin Rural District Council placed a compulsory purchase order on the Kiln Field and neighbouring land in order to build new local authority housing, a scheme which had first been discussed just before the war. This housing would be in addition to the few local authority houses that had been built before 1936 by the former Malpas Rural District Council, which included those at Sunnyside, a few just off Well Street and some at Spring Gardens. By 1947 building was under way on the new estate comprising Well Avenue, Springfield Road and Springfield Avenue, where initially 38 new houses were built at a total cost of around £75,000, inclusive of site purchase, roads and services. As Bill Coffin relates: *'The building company who carried out this work was Wrights of Tattenhall and they soon provided huge mounds of soil to be climbed, trenches to investigate, lime pits to be crossed with the use of the builders' planks, and the favourite of all children, sand ..... The builders and the local police did their best to keep us away from the site but when all the men had gone home in the evening it was a temptation that could not be resisted.'* Rosemary Jones (nee Lawrence) remembers her family moving in 1948 from the old-fashioned timber-framed Clayholes Cottage (now demolished) in Wrexham Road into their brand new house in Springfield Avenue, the house where her mother still lives today.

Like all communities across the country, Malpas was 'getting its breath back' and looking to a brighter future. For readers who would like to know more than I have been able to include in this short book, I strongly recommend Bill Coffin's informative (and very entertaining) native view of life in the town during the 1940s and 1950s, recorded in his book *Back in Five Minutes*. The book is out of print but copies are available from Malpas Library. For those who would like more detailed information about day-to-day affairs the Malpas news columns in *The Whitchurch Herald*, now easily accessible on microfilm in Whitchurch Library, are a gold mine.

## 16. EPILOGUE: 'WE WILL REMEMBER THEM'

In September 1947 Malpas Parish Council received a letter from the Hampton branch of the Royal British Legion, asking for the names of those who were killed in service during the war to be recorded on the Malpas war memorial. The memorial, which had been dedicated by the Bishop of Chester in 1920, bore the names of fifty-eight local men who had died during the First World War. Now nineteen more names, all of them men, were added to the memorial and entered into the list in the Roll of Honour preserved in Saint Oswald's Church.

Most of the nineteen men, the forces in which they served, their ranks, their dates of death, their ages at death and where they are buried are recorded on the Internet website ([www.cwgc.org](http://www.cwgc.org)) maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, from which most of the following details are taken.

**David Frederick ALLCROFT**, Able Seaman on HMS Curacoa, son of William and Mary Allcroft. Died October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1942 aged 33 [drowned when HMS Curacoa rammed by RMS Queen Mary]. Recorded on Chatham Naval Memorial, Kent. No known grave.

**William Sidney ALMAN**, Second Lieutenant in the Royal Engineers, son of William and Mary Alman of Chester. Died July 15<sup>th</sup> 1943 aged 24. Buried in Syracuse War Cemetery, Sicily.

**William John Lawrence ARMITSTEAD**, Major in the Royal Artillery [Shropshire Yeomanry], son of Lawrence [former Rector of Malpas] and Mary Armitstead of Market Drayton. Died March 20<sup>th</sup> 1944 aged 34. Buried in Madras War Cemetery, India.

**James BICKLEY**, Private in the King's Shropshire Light Infantry, son of Charles and Ellen Bickley of Malpas. Died August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1944 aged 25. Buried in St Charles de Percy War Cemetery, France.

**Geoffrey BRERETON**, RAF Sergeant Pilot. Died March 9<sup>th</sup> 1942 [killed in a flying accident in this country]. Buried in Malpas Cemetery.

**Michael Percy DONE**, Trooper in the Reconnaissance Corps [6<sup>th</sup> Airborne Armed Regiment], son of Percy and Dorothy Done [and brother of Robert] of Higher Hall, Edge, Malpas. Died June 6<sup>th</sup> 1944 [D-Day] aged 19. Buried in Ranville War Cemetery, France.

**Thomas Henry FINCHETT**, Private in Worcestershire Regiment [of Sunnyside, Malpas]. Died of pneumonia April 12<sup>th</sup> 1945 aged 21, while on active service in Burma. Buried in Maynamati War Cemetery, Bangladesh.

**Alexander Henry HALL**, RAF Pilot (Flying Officer), son of James and Harriett Hall of Malpas. Died April 24<sup>th</sup> 1944 aged 27. Buried in Svino Churchyard, Southern Zealand, Denmark.

**Harry HEWITT**, Guardsman in Grenadier Guards, husband of Rhoda Hewitt of Croxton Green, Cholmondeley. Died September 14<sup>th</sup> 1944 aged 36. Buried in Saint Winefred's Churchyard, Bickley.

**Jack HUXLEY**, Private in the Royal Army Service Corps, son of John and Jane Huxley [of Hampton], husband of Ena Huxley, died April 20<sup>th</sup> 1944 aged 34. Buried in Malpas Cemetery.

**Jack HUXLEY**, Private in the Royal Army Service Corps, son of John and Jane Huxley [of Hampton], husband of Ena Huxley, died April 20<sup>th</sup> 1944 aged 34. Buried in Malpas Cemetery.

**John Kilby JONES**, Sergeant in RAF Volunteer Reserve, son of Richard Kilby and Annie Jones of Edge. Died February 21<sup>st</sup> 1945 aged 22. Recorded on the Runnymede Memorial. No known grave.

**Harry [?] KEMP**, Queen's Rifle Regiment [son of Liverpool Corporation Waterworks manager at Malpas Reservoir House?]

**Samuel Thomas MULLOCK**, Private in the South Staffordshire Regiment, husband of Florence Mullock of Malpas. Died November 20<sup>th</sup> 1944 aged 32. Buried in Naples War Cemetery, Italy.

**Albert George NEVITT**, Gunner in the Royal Artillery, son of Frederick and Martha Nevitt of Malpas. Died June 11<sup>th</sup> 1944 aged 32. Buried in Tilly-sur-Seulles War Cemetery, France.

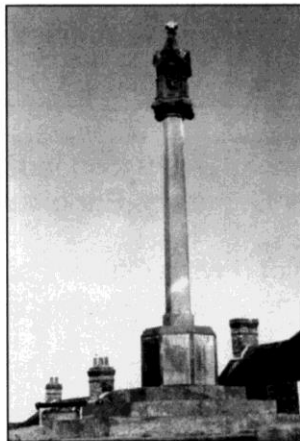
**Roger Carrington OKELL**, Lieutenant in the Royal Armoured Corps, son of the Venerable Frank Jackson and Gertrude Okell of Malpas Rectory. Died October 18<sup>th</sup> 1942 aged 21. Buried in Ramleh War Cemetery, Israel.

**Leonard PASSEY**, Merchant Navy [son of the grocer and baker at Chorlton Lane. Lost at sea?]

**Frank Lewis ROWLANDS**, Driver in the Royal Army Service Corps, son of Walter and Ellen Rowlands of Oldcastle. Died March 2<sup>nd</sup> 1944 aged 24. Buried in Brookwood Memorial Cemetery, Surrey.

**George Edward TURTLE**, Private in The King's Regiment (Liverpool), son of Joseph and May Turtle of Malpas. Died November 23<sup>rd</sup> 1942 aged 31. Buried in Kirkee War Cemetery (India).

**Bernard YOUNG**, Private in the Cheshire Regiment, son of John and Annie Young of Higher Wych. Died between May 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> 1941 [age not known]. Buried in Anfield Cemetery, Liverpool.



**'THEIR NAME LIVETH FOR EVERMORE'**

*(Text inscribed on the Malpas War Memorial)*

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