moved to the farmhouse in the autumn of 1942, and mother and father moved to Triplands

One morning having had breakfast at Triplands I was on the way back to the farm, when near the lane gateway I heard an aircraft approaching from the Honiton direction, suddenly through a break in the cloud I clearly saw its swastika markings on its side, I hurried back to the house and we heard the thump of exploding bombs from the Dunkeswell direction. An airfield was being built. Later used by the American navy flying Liberators.

On another morning at the farm a huge explosion was heard, reported later to be a land mine.

On one occasion a loaded Liberator having just taken off ploughed through the trees beyond Turbery Cross to the left of the road to Broadhembury cutting a swath and crashing. Mr & Mrs Jack Manley then living at Smallicombe farm were awaken and heard screams from the crew "Get me out." I understood some survived, taken back to the drome and immediately went up again.

I remember seeing the indentations of mans seat and heels where a German landed on hard dry ground in the summer, probably parachute failed.

See page 86

This was near the road to the right beyond Smeatharpe village and just this side of the country boundary.
R.A.F. fighters had chased an enemy bomber after a raid on Bristol. Some of the crew were I believe captured, and it may have been the same occasion which our Vicar, Rev S.J. Reed recalled later, when serving in the Army and stationed at Heathfield Camp, he was detailed to Whottery to escort some enemy prisoners taken.

Sorwell farm bomb
See P 100
IV 218

A huge crater was reported near Jacks House in a field near the road to Hemyock. I cycled out to have a look and found and brought home a large piece of schrapnel, a short piece of weaved rope thought to have been a parachute rope fastened to the land mine which fell there. Also a piece of cardboard like material thought to have been part of the petrol tank, triangular about 3"x4"x5". On it I wrote at the time "Part of the petrol tank of a Heinkel 111 which crashed at Smeatharpe on July 26th 1940 at 1 AM."
This latter may have been from the aircraft referred to in the earlier paragraph. I was told last week that another land mine had dropped near Hackham at the same time as the one at Sorwell Farm.

Sorwell

Being underslung one on each side of the aircraft, if one went the other had to as well.

Another large crater I saw in the field on the right on the Combe Raleigh side of Langford Bridge quite near Brook dairy house belonging to Mr John Blackmore of Stonehayes Farm. the Dairy was occupied by Mr Bob Dorman, and I heard that ceilings fell in the house.

See Map 8k

Several cows in the field were killed. I believe about ten, it was said that some of Combe Raleigh Home Guard who at the time were in a guard hut near Brook Hill were obliged to shoot some very badly injured.

See P 83-4

Possibly at the same time there were other bombs dropped in the Upottery valley on the same run.

See IV 218

A string of 4 craters by small bombs were made on Winsor ground below the road, virtually in a line between Stoneacre and new Buildings, a little earlier or later these houses might have been damaged.

As our Platoon became more organised Sunday afternoon parades became a regular part of our military training. Sometimes lectures, marching drill, rifle drill, and at others full scale exercises.

On one such a small detachment were sent off to Sharcombe Farm and instructed to defend the area. The rest of the Platoon were to attack.

The N.C.O.s pooled their ideas, the approach was planned from the top of the village, where each squad would disperse from, along which hedgerows to Rohefully remain concealed, and at what signal to charge. The operation was carried out as we thought best under the watchful eyes of a critical Gen. E.A. Osborne. But apparently he did not approve our tactics, for we were lined up in a field below the farmyard and we and our methods were utterly torn to shreds, and we subsequently left very dispirited having done what we thought best.

See below

See page 88

However we learned afterwards that there was a sequel.

One of our Cpl's on his way home saw the Gen.'s car parked by the roadside near Shelf. Lifting the bonnet he was able to discover that the vehicle was not immobilised, as were strict orders. He therefore did it himself and I think hid the distributor rotor arm under the seat, watching discreetly from a safe distance over a hedge.

Osborne

The owner did I suppose eventually find the cause of the vehicle's refusal to start, and get him and his visiting officer back to Halsdon House.

Halsdon

Ref. above

Mr J Larcombe related later — we were told we were like holiday makers on Brighton beach.

Another Sunday exercise fell to my lot to plan. A defending squad was to be an isolated paratroop force of enemy troops Roled up in Windsor Copse, near hews Buildings. The rest of the Platoon were to deal with the situation and clear the area. I remember making a special recce during the previous week, in order to get a suitable plan ready to explain to the rest of the troops.

It was comparatively easy to arrive to the West of the copse by the roadway, the real problem was to be the final all out charge accross the fields on that side, above and below. Provision was made on the village side to prevent escape I think with cover by a machine gun.

The charge took place with a lot of shouting and noise. I think some blank ammo for realism.

Then the reckoning, and general assessment. Unknown to most of us, a fairly deep goyal ran diagonally accross the copse, a natural trench for the defense, and it was very evident that we should have suffered many casualties, and emphasised the need for grenades as well as rifle fire. Had this been for real. The machine gun detachment confirmed the wisdom of their position.

P54

The Large Exercise detailed on page 54 onwards, the Handwritten instructions which I still have, was I think organised over a large area of East Devon. An enemy force was to invade from the Somerset border on its way towards Exeter. Our Platoon based at our Defended Home, the Vicarage outbuildings, with the Church tower envisaged as our 'look out', regularly dispatched scouting parties in various directions. I remember noticing the red glow in the sky which indicated that Exeter was suffering another bombing by enemy aircraft when we were patrolling the road towards the Luffitt Common. In view of the date of the Exercise April 25th 1942 it could not I think have been the Blitz which I find recorded in May 1942. Nothing of particular note occurred in our area, but we learnt later of the action in which our Battle Platoon based at Beacon had been involved in. There's was a mobile harrassing role, whereas ours at the Defended Home was to hold on to the last man.

Exeter Raid

Common

1942 Cathedral Bomb 3-4 May 1942

Beacon

Osborne

See page 82.

General Osborne, presumably acting as an umpire, had noticed some enemy vehicles parked somewhere in the area of Woodhayes — Shaugh on or near the road from Langford to Dumpdon Acting as a Little Boy informer he reported what he had seen to the Battle

Beacon Platoon H.Q. at Beacon under the command of C.S.M. George Hooper.
Hooper As an old soldier of the 1914-18 war who remained with the occupation forces in Germany for some years after, he was well able to deal with this situation. I understood that he immediately dispatched a recce patrol to investigate and to report back to an agreed rendezvous, where he would be with his main force. With the information received from the scouts he then planned his approach and attack, and the umpire awarded casualties.

Later we were all informed of this successful action, and considerable praise Hooper given to C.S.M. Hooper for his handling of the whole situation, and for the severe mauling of an enemy force.

On another occasion a visit to a quarry for hills grenade practice was organised. I think somewhere in the Colyton area. Each in turn stood at the edge of this great hole and received instruction on how to lob this egg of metal. Securely hold the lever to its side and then withdraw the safety pin, concentrate on the target in the bottom of the quarry and endeavour to lob the grenade on to it. If in real action we were told to release the lever and count to four before throwing, being fitted with a 7 sec fuse, don't give enemy time to throw back.

On a number of occasions compulsory parades were arranged, I think on a national basis, and in connection with Church Services, a topical slogan such as "Wings for Victory" encouraged financial support for a Branch of the Services.

See Page 53

See PCC meetings file Notes 19/4/43

Wings for Victory see Vol III 167.

Units of all available Services were assembled and marched through the Honiton High St. and on one such occasion as we filed past the saluting base with "eyes right" one of our Duffitt Platoon waved up to his wife whom he spotted watching from a window.

not especially HG

At one of the Honiton markets a calf was auctioned. This particular calf was born with a very striking white 'V' on its forhead, a friesian of course, but at that time the breed was not as universal as now in the '30s'. The farmer who bred the calf realising the potential, gave the calf and it toured many markets, the auctioneer would take bids in the normal way but each buyer gave the calf back again for resale. It really meant that each farmer who bought really gave that amount towards the war effort.

Duffitt Tithe map.

After the Hall extension was built the Parish Council had a special display cabinet made in which the Tithe map is permanately kept.

Call out

A "call out" exercise had been notified, the purpose of which was to ascertain how quickly the Platoon could be mobilised in case of emergency. It was generally understood, though I am not now certain whether we were told definitely, that the Saturday evening was to be the evening for the test. We were, I think told that we were to be ready in uniform and full battle kit, but no one was to leave their home until called out by someone else. Telephones were of course not available then as now in the country areas.

I was sitting by the fireside, and believe that I said to my wife that I thought I heard something, after a pause I heard a knock on the side door here at Lower Shelvin. When I opened it I found Cpl. A Braddick standing there somewhat dazed. Later an explanation indicated why. J. Thorne had driven him to call me, immediately the car came into the farmyard Arthur jumped out while the car was still moving and dashed to the door. He was unaware that there was a stub wall about 2'6" high retaining the higher ground on the yard side. As his feet dropped into the space his head crashed into the stone house wall at right angles to the wall containing the door. Had he not been wearing his steel helmet one cannot help wondering what might have happened. I do not remember the call

little Marlands, with a very steep slope had been ploughed, and I was working down with old Standard Fordson tractor and drags to be able to sow grass seeds, overhead flying a little west of south, wave after wave of heavy transport aircraft, many towing several large gliders, and we knew that something very big was on. In fact it was the invasion of Normandy early in June 1944.

No doubt they had left from Smeatharpe airfield, constructed more recently than the fighter station at Trickweare and the U.S. heavy airfield at Dunkeswell. The Smeatharpe airfield had blocked our main route to Taunton market as it was heavily guarded, and we had therefore to take the longer route via A 30 and Brown Down to Corfe, on the rare occasion we had to go.

Operation "Overlord" See III 218

For further details of the Normandy invasion story, and a description of the "Overlord Tapestry" read "Invasion" the story of operation "Overlord" The embroidery was commissioned by Lord Dulverton as a permanent memorial and record of the effort to liberate Europe by the Allied nations.

It consists of 33 panels each 8 feet long and 3 feet high, a total of 264 feet in length — 33 feet longer than the celebrated Bayeux Tapestry.

Designed by Miss Sandra Lawrence.