

20/9/01

Recollections of Branston W/T Station 1946-1954

Seven!
Some fifty ~~that~~ years has passed since I was at the "Mere" — in consequence some memories remain sharp — and others lost in the shuffle of confusion —!! Hence my account could well be flawed in some respects, so I apologise if some dates and accounts are slightly misplaced.

IN "BRANSTON REMEMBERED" — BRANSTON'S SECRET WAR" A FAIRLY COMPREHENSIVE ACCOUNT WAS GIVEN OF THIS SMALL — BUT VITAL WIRELESS TELEGRAPHY STATION DURING THE WAR YEARS. IN THESE YEARS — LIKE SO MANY SERVICEMEN I WAS "OTHERWISE ENGAGED" OVERSEAS, AND ON RETURN, MYSELF AND MANY MORE WERE POSTED TO APPROPRIATE DUTIES IN THE UK.

I FOUND MYSELF AT BRANSTON IN 1946.

AS A RADIO OFFICER I HAD NEVER FOUND SUCH A SMALL WATCH ROOM IN ALL OF MY SERVICE. BUT IT WAS UNIQUE — SMALL BUT VERY FRIENDLY. I ALSO FOUND IT STAFFED BY VERY EXPERIENCED RADIO MEN, SOME WHO HAD BEEN AT BRANSTON W/T DURING THE WAR — AND PREVIOUSLY. HOWEVER I FOUND MYSELF IN GOOD COMPANY AND SOON SETTLED IN.

HERE I GO INTO "MEMORY LANE" BECAUSE I FIND PEOPLE MAKE PLACES — AND LINK UP LIFE FOR US — AND SO IT IS WITH BRANSTON —

A DOZEN OR MORE OF US "NEWCOMERS" WERE FOUND ACCOMMODATION IN THE VILLAGE — MYSELF AND WIFE MOLLIE AND BILL HUBKI WERE LODGED WITH MISS WEST IN SLEAFORD ROAD; OTHERS LIKE JACK TONES WITH ROSE GREEN. DOUG TAYLOR WENT TO THE NEW ESTATE (AND MARRIED RENE REESON?). I RECALL GORDON KENNEDY AND WIFE JOYCE; CYRIL HUMBERSTONE AND FAMILY ALL MADE WELCOME IN THE VILLAGE.

INTEGRATION WAS FURTHER ADVANCED AS TIME WENT BY. WHEN

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MOST FORTUNATE IN BEING OFFERED A COTTAGE BY JACK AND NANCY WESTWOOD IN SILVER STREET - AND A FRIENDSHIP GREW AND REMAINS UNDIMINISHED.

AS PREVIOUSLY MENTIONED MANY OF THE RAF STAFF HAD BEEN IN POST MANY YEARS, AND THEIR RECOLLECTIONS WERE MOST INTERESTING - PARTICULARLY DURING THE WAR YEARS - NOW IN 1946 WE WERE ALL CIVIL SERVANTS - WITH JUST A FEW STILL IN "SMOOTH BLUE".

HOWEVER, CHANGING INTO "MUFTI" FROM BATTLEDRESS WAS THE ONLY NOTICEABLE CHANGE - THE DISCIPLINE AND ROUTINE - AND COMRADESHIP, PERSISTED!

THE FOUNDER OF BRANSTON NO. 1 W/T WAS WING COMMANDER SWANBOROUGH, SOMETIME IN 1927; AND THROUGHOUT THE PERIOD 1927-1954 HE REMAINED CONTROLLER, AND WAS A FREQUENT VISITOR TO THE SITE FROM CHEADLE.

IN CHARGE OF BRANSTON W/T WAS FLIGHT LIEUTENANT JOCK MURRAY ASSISTED BY FORMER SGT JACK SCORELL.

WE WORKED IN "WATCHES" (A SYSTEM OF WATCHKEEPING USED BY THE ROYAL NAVY TELEGRAPH SERVICE) THESE WERE 0800 - 1300 HRS, 1300 - 1600; 1600 - M/N, and the MIDDLE WATCH M/N - 0800 ZULU! These times WERE SUBSEQUENTLY CHANGED IN VARIOUS WAYS TO CONFORM WITH RADIO OFFICERS UNION RULES.

THE WARTIME SERVERS I REMEMBER ~~WERE~~ REMAINING IN POST AS RADIO OFFICERS WERE MAURICE NORMAN (WHOSE WIFE PHYLLIS WAS A WAAF HERE) ^{AND} HUGH BURKHILL (WHO ALSO MARRIED A WAAF), ~~AND OTHERS~~ AND TED LIDDELL ORGANISED MAN RE-UNIONS POSTWAR AT THE MOOR LODGE

THE WATCH SUPERVISORS IN 1946 WERE ALL STAFF WHO HAD SERVED IN THE RAF DURING PRE WAR PERSIAN GULF DAYS CHARLIE DEAKER FRANK HARDY CHAS STEER, JOCK THOMSON BILL PARSONS AND BILL SWAN. — CHARLIE STEER BEING THE ODD ONE OUT HAVING SERVED IN THE RN AS A SPARKER ON THE ROYAL YACHT!

THE WATCHKEEPERS WERE ALL EX-SERVICE MEN FROM

FOR THE RECORD WERE:-

JOHNNY DALE GRAMAM HOWLETT FRED BURGESS:
JOHN SKELTON JACK CUBITT, JACK KEAL, CHARLES SCASE.
HAROLD TACEY, VIC KERSHAW, FRANK GASCOYNE, GEO BARRAND,
ROLAND CHEVINS, FRANK LAW, GORDON KENNEDY JIM BARNEY
AND YOURS TRULY CLIFF ODDFIELD.

I CAN SAY HERE THAT IN MY 44 YEARS OF SERVICE IN RADIO
I HAVE NEVER WORKED WITH A MORE DISTINGUISHED AND
HAPPY GROUP THAN THESE.

OTHER THAN THE OPERATIONAL STAFF AT THE MERE,
VITAL SERVICES WERE ALSO CARRIED OUT BY
LOCALLY EMPLOYED STAFF.

WHERE ELSE COULD WE GET A HAIRCUT AS GOOD AS
A BILLY REYNOLDS?

CHARLIE BARNES - A WIZARD WITH BRUSH AND BUCKET
- AND OUR DRIVER GEORGE CREASY WHO FETCHED
AND CARRIED NOT ONLY VITAL PACKAGES BUT
FERRY'D FAMILIES AND FURNITURE ABOUT BRANSTON
AND WAS A SOURCE OF ALL KNOWLEDGE ON
INTIMATE OCCURRENCES IN THE VILLAGE. HE ALSO
REPAIRED BIKES.

CYCLING TO THE MERE BECAME A HAZARD DURING THE
HEAVY SNOW FALLS IN 1946-7 - AND THEN IMPOSSIBLE
- AND THE LONG WALK TO THE MERE AND BACK BECAME
THE NORM FOR MONTHS -

BUT THE OTHER HAZARD CYCLING UP MERE ROAD
ON NIGHT WATCH WAS P.C. JACKSON. LAMPS THAT
FAILED AND POOR REFLECTORS WERE HIS DELIGHT, AND
APPREHENSION WAS CERTAIN ONCE HE HAD CAUGHT UP WITH US.
BUT P.C. JACKSON WAS A VERY GOOD BOBBY - HE ALWAYS
LET US OFF.

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Socially, THE MERE STAFF WERE ALWAYS MADE WELCOME
BY BRANSTON RESIDENTS IN MANY AREAS OF ACTIVITY.

Fancy Dress Dances at the Village Hall were
well supported by staff in various disguises - I recall
Arab sheiks were common place, and scarecrows and
Bisto girls very popular.

The Branston Cricket Clubs Annual Supper presided over
by Mr Young, with the Village Butcher providing a
huge stuffed Grouse is well remembered.
as was Jack Tores impromptu songs at the piano
at the Waggon & Horses.

The Wireless Station Cricket Team formed in 1947
initially had no field, no gear and a pavilion was
a pipe dream - But not for long.

Pers Truly took advantage of an Auction Sale at
Lincoln Market. The Lincolnshire Regiment was selling off
all its Sports gear after an Overseas Tour.

With cash raised in Raffles etc, I took off with
some £25 and was able to purchase pads, bats, balls
etc sufficient for our needs. Cricket Caps & badges
were later added. The badge was thus! -
a Simple Electric Flash!



THE CRICKET FIELD WAS KINDLY LENT TO
US BY MR BRANSTON OF SPRINGFIELD, UP MERE RD;
AND A WICKET WAS PREPARED WITH THE AID OF BILLY FORMAN'S
TROL DRIVEN ROAD ROLLER! - THE PAVILION WAS AN OLD CHICKEN SHED
CROBAGED OUT WITH JEVES FLUID, PAINTED & WHITEWASHED. WE JOINED
THE ENCLOSED GROUNDS LEAGUE AND ENJOYED MANY SEASONS CRICKET.
FTER HANWORTH WAS ALWAYS A FAVOURITE AWAY FIXTURE - MAINLY FOR ITS
TASTIC TEAS. THE TEA LADIES WERE MRS DAY AND DAUGHTERS - THE TEAM WAS
GUESS WHAT - WELL AT LEAST 6 MR DAYS WERE LISTED.

STONE ONCE STOOD AT THE SITE ENTRANCE AT THE MERE :-
STILL REGARD THIS AS A TALISMAN TO ALL WHO WORKED
HERE; THE FIRST AIR MINISTRY STATION EVER
D SIGNIFICANTLY AT BRANSTON.

