

Grayshott Village Home Guard World War II (1939-45)

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No. 15 Company, Platoon 15, D Company, 24th Hampshire Home Guard

David Slater gave the following photograph of the Grayshott Home Guard to the Archive. David was a young boy at the time the photograph was taken. He was a 'runner' for Platoon 15 as it was called and also the son of the unit's Commanding Officer, Captain J W Slater D.C.M (Distinguished Conduct Medal) and Numbered 25 in the photograph.

Some years after the war, Captain Slater related two amusing incidents to his from his days in the Grayshott Home Guard. The following account is a brief summary of this interview, an audio recording of which is held on CD in the Archive.

Young soldiers and their older officers from the Royal Sussex Young Soldiers Regiment trained the Platoon. According to these young men of 19 or so, "The Platoon were using out of date methods." In a night exercise using techniques and experience gained in the World War I and in India the Home Guard captured the Sussex Headquarters in Kingswood Firs. With cunning diversions, they gave the impression they were about to attack one side of the Sussex Headquarters causing the defenders to lower their guard on that side. However, the Grayshott troops doubled back smartly keeping under cover and over ran the Headquarters from the other side. But in doing this there was the heck of a scrap. "I lost my helmet in the scuffle," said Captain Slater. The umpire awarded the battle to the Grayshott Platoon!

Then there was the story of 'milking the bull belonging to a local farmer, Mr. Baird'. One of the Platoon was persuaded by his fellow soldiers to go and milk this 'cow'. He returned terrified but fortunately unharmed since the bull was of a gentle persuasion. "What did you do about this?" David asked, obviously thinking this prank should surely not have amused the Captain of the Guard. "Oh replied" Captain Slater, "I was only a sergeant at the time."

Apart from being able to identify his father in the photograph, David was unable to name any other members of the platoon and he asked David Barrett of the village Archive if he might help. Talking to various members of the present village community together with making contact with others people following an article in the Haslemere Herald, David Barrett has gathered together the following information

No. 1: - Mr. Pope. Identified by Peter Clapham.

No. 2: - Unidentified.

No. 3: - Mr. Frederick William Bentley. His son Peter commented, "Dad joined up in World War I whilst under age. I remember him bringing his Home Guard rifle home and leaning it up against the wall; it was as tall as I was at the time. Father died in 1955."

No. 4: - Mr. Reg Burden. Dennis Moss and Peter Clapham identified Mr. Burden, Dennis and Sue Moss remembered that "Reg owned 'Woods' the butchers on Headley Road working there during and after the war."

No. 5: - Mr. Sawkins. Peter Clapham identified Mr. Sawkins but was unable to recall his Christian name or provide any further information.

No. 6: - Mr. Pat Martin. Mrs. Sue Henley confirmed her father in the photograph. Bertha Porter née Cornish remembers Pat Martin working in insurance, and this was confirmed by his daughter who recalled, "Father covered

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Grayshott, Headley and the surrounding districts for Prudential Assurance collecting customers' contributions on his bicycle; he was 'The man from the Pru.'. Walter Winchester also recognised and identified Mr. Martin.

No. 7: - Mr. Alexander (Jock) Wilson was identified by his grandson, Ian Rasburn and Walter Winchester. Ian recalled, "My grandfather served in World War I. He was Chief Fire Officer in Grayshott and when not on duty he was chauffeur to Mr. Blyth at Finns Court Cottage on Boundary Road. He died in 1977 at the age of 77."

No. 8: - Mr. Beard. Peter Chapman remembers him working as a bank teller, but could not remember his Christian name.

No. 9: - Mr. Bowles. Bertha Porter née Cornish recalled that Mr. Bowles retired to Grayshott after working overseas, somewhere in the east.

No. 10: - Mr. Arthur Chegwyn. Donald Meaning, Dennis Moss, Peter Clapham and Bertha Porter née Cornish identified Mr. Chegwyn. Donald remembered Mr. Chegwyn working in the building trade, while Bertha said, "I think he was a carpenter".

No. 11: - Mr. Fred Budd. Identified by Bertha Porter née Cornish who recalled, "He was a gardener".

No. 12: - Mr. Bob Cherry. Recognised by Donald Meaning, Dennis Moss Walter Winchester and Peter Clapham.

No. 13: - Unidentified.

No. 14: - Mr. Chris Meaning. Don Meaning, a life long resident identified his father along with Dennis Moss and Walter Winchester

No. 15: - Mr. Stan Tickner. Identified by Donald Meaning ("Mr. Tickner managed the Co-operative stores in the village"), Dennis Moss, Peter Clapham, Bertha Porter née Cornish and Walter Winchester.

No. 16: - Mr. Howick. Identified by Peter Clapham and Walter Winchester who suggested that his Christian name was 'Bert'.

No. 17: - Mr. Joe Davies. Identified by Donald Meaning, but see No. 18 identified as John Davies by Bertha Porter née Cornish who believed he worked as a motor mechanic.

No. 18: - Mr. John Davies. Bertha Porter née Cornish identified him and believe he worked as a motor mechanic.

No. 19: - Unidentified.

No. 20: - Mr. Joe Collis. Identified by Donald Meaning, Dennis Moss and Bertha Porter née Cornish.

No. 21: - Unidentified.

No. 22: - Mr. W Simmonds. He was the Platoon cook and the father of Miss Bett and Miss E D Simmonds. Mr. Simmonds was a member of the village football (soccer) club in his youth.

No. 23: - Unidentified.

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No. 24: - Unidentified but because he is wearing a beret and not a Platoon cap, he may he have been a visitor from headquarters?

No. 25: - Captain J W Slater D.C.M., Platoon Commander.

No. 26: - Unidentified, but see comments for No. 24

No. 27: - Mr. Fred Coleman. Identified by Bertha Porter née Cornish. "Fred Coleman and his wife Betty (Elisabeth) ran a poultry farm, Dingly Dell in Whitmore Vale. Fred had won the M.C. in World War I," said Mrs. Porter. "Fred was Betty's second husband. She had married a Mr. Broom, another war veteran who had been wounded in the war. When he died from his wounds, his war pension died with him leaving her destitute with three young children." David Barrett of the Archive recalls taking Mrs. Coleman to Haslemere Hospital and learning how she first developed a poultry business in her back yard. He learned as much about marketing from her during that short journey as he learned in the whole of his own business career.

No. 28: - Unidentified.

No. 29: - Mr. Maurice (Maurey) Lampard. Identified by Donald Meaning, Dennis Moss, Peter Clapham and Bertha Porter née Cornish.

No. 30: - Mr. Tom French. Identified by Peter Clapham, Walter Winchester, Bertha Porter née Cornish who said, "He was a bus driver", and Ron Maurey who also said, "He was my uncle who died in 1964. He was a builder, worked for Clapham, Lowrie and Puttock and married a Stacey girl from Grayshott."

No. 31: - Mr. Rapson. Identified by Donald Meaning.

No. 32: - Unidentified

No. 33: -

No. 34: - Mr. Joe Johnson. Identified by Donald Meaning, Dennis Moss, Peter Clapham, Walter Winchester and also Bertha Porter née Cornish who said, "Joe Johnson did a bit of everything."

No. 35: - Mr. Mark Clapham. Identified by Dennis Moss and Peter Clapham.

No. 36: - Unidentified.

No. 37: - Mr. William Lander. David Lander identified Mr. Lander as his father who was a bus driver with the Aldershot & District company during the 2nd World War. Donald Meaning, Dennis Moss and Walter Winchester all thought he was Mr. H Askew.

No. 38: - No soldier numbered 38 in error.

No. 39: - Mr. Walter H Moss. Identified by his son Dennis Moss and by Donald Meaning, Peter Clapham and Walter Winchester.

David W A Barrett

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