

CAMPDEN TOWN BAND & HOME GUARD

Harry Bennett

Once upon a time we had a town band, it was a pretty rough looking thing and then the Guild of Handicrafts came along in the early 1900's, and they had got a lot of good brass players, so they helped the band out and made quite a good job of it. They went to Madresfield and won a prize playing in a competition and they came back in the Wagonette at about midnight, so they thought they ought to announce the win. So they marched right down the street playing here the conquering hero comes. The story is they took their boots off so they wouldn't wake people up.



In the 1930's the band did become very good they found a man from Moreton I've forgotten his name now but he was a professional musician and he took them in hand and they won several cups and things - unfortunately the war brought it to an end and it was never revived afterwards. — I'm recording this on the December day it is the Victorian street market tonight, and you know in Victorian times Campden did not have any street lighting at all. The only light was the Parish lantern, in other words the moon and then one day a man went into the Eight Bells and said "What the hell do you think's happening in the street, they be sticking a lot of iron posts in at intervals all way up and I don't know what the hell they be for." So they had a long discussion and the only thing they could come up with was they were for the benefit of the dogs, because they couldn't see any use for iron posts along the edge of the pavement. A week or so later the man came into the Eight Bells and said "what the hell do you think they've done now," he said, "they've stuck lights on the top of those poles. I suppose that's so the dogs can see to use them after dark."

There are a few stories of the Fire Brigade too: in the early days, when the Guild came to Campden they formed their own club house and sold beer - it was at Island House, and John Skey who kept the Swan was the captain of the Fire

Brigade. One night the clubhouse caught fire and they sent a messenger called Fred Taylor - Fred swears this story is true, he ran along to the Swan, "Mr Skey, the clubhouse is on fire, they want the fire brigade quick." "Oh is it Fred, how did that come to happen then?" "I don't know, Mr Skey, but they said you'd better hurry up." "Ah well yes righto, well you'd better go and tell Tom Parsons to come as well, but stop a minute, have a drink before you go." I don't know what happened after that, whether they ever did get to the fire. They didn't certainly hurry themselves.

There was another occasion, and this was reported in the Journal and I have the cutting so I know it was true, there was a fire at Ebrington and a boy was sent on a bicycle to get Campden fire brigade but the boy was not that intelligent so they did not know if there really was a fire or whether he was just having them on so they called a parish council meeting to decide whether they should send the fire brigade. I think they got there two days later or something.



Home Guard - Harry sitting to the right of Jack Horne, Commandant

The Home Guard produced its own crop of funny stories, according to the official history one of the east coast units shot a German plane down with a Lewis gun, and as far it is known that is the only action against the enemy ever taken by the Home Guard. The only shot they ever fired, but what they did to each other was nobody's business. They were a very trigger happy lot. We had a permanent staff instructor a man called George Hill he served all through the 1914 war without injury; he'd been in the Territorial Army between the two wars, he was called up again in 1939 he went to Dunkirk without injury and then they decided he was too old for active service but he was a very good instructor so the Home Guard collected him. In twelve months they put him in hospital three times. He got a 2.2 bullet through his foot, the base plug out of a Mills bomb hit him in the back of the leg and he got a revolver bullet through some other part of his anatomy all fired by our own side.

There was one day I went on a Home Guard exercise, I wasn't really involved in it but it started somewhere near Girencester and finished about five miles down the road, they wanted somebody to drive the truck so I got that job. They all jumped out and went on the exercise and I took the empty truck to the pickup point but it was one of those exercises when live ammunition was going to be used and so the regular army were called in to do it, they didn't trust us with it. When I arrived at the check up point there was a number of regular army sergeants gathered there and I joined them and one of them said to me I didn't realise that you chaps were on our side , I said of course we are, what do you think, we are all in the war together; well he said, I've just been watching 'em this morning, don't you think it would be better if you were all on the other side.

On another occasion I was on the observation post with Charlie Ladbrooke, it was a boring job, we just had to stand on the top of Broad Gampden hill and watch for German Parachutists coming down, but we couldn't see in the dark anyway, but if a car came along we could stop them and we had a red lamp, we weren't really supposed to do it but it was there. Anyway we heard a car coming up the hill, it was a sports car driven by a young lady, so Charlie waved the red lamp and stopped her, we had nothing to do when we had stopped it really, we asked her for her driving licence which we had no authority to ask for anyway - and insurance and asked her where she was going, and she said she was going to Northwick Park and that was where our Superior Officer, Captain Churchill lived, so Charlie looked at me and said "Is there anything else we should ask her?" I said, "No I don't think so." "Well" said Charlie, "do you think we should see her vaccination marks?"