

3rd Sept.
1939

WAR DECLARED

The War Years: Like everyone else in the country our parishes had rationing, blackouts, restricted movement and anxiety for loved ones away fighting.

A Bailey Bridge was built across the Waveney at Ellingham Mill by Royal Engineers, who a few weeks later erected the self-same bridge in France. Mr. S Baldry, wrote home to tell his family how, passing over a Bailey Bridge, he was suddenly confronted with the inscription "Ellingham Bridge."

The only bombs to be dropped in the parishes were from a Dornier at about 500 feet, which dropped a stick of bombs intended for the railway, which landed either side of the gatehouse on Braces Lane, but caused no damage, and a land mine which severely shook Kirby Cane school. In May 1940 a barrage balloon came adrift from its moorings at Cardington and, passing over Ellingham school, loosened the chimney-pots. The balloon came to rest in the meadow at the top of Wardley Hill.

At Ellingham a petrol dump was made early in the war where the grain store is now. In the war a petrol train of 20-30 tanks arrived alternate mornings from the Midlands, via Haddiscoe and Beccles. The empties went back later in the day. It was never bombed. It served airfields at Flixton (Liberators), Holton (Flying Fortresses) and Seething (Liberators) among others; road tankers connected them with the dump.

Very early in the war a searchlight battery was established with its master (centre) point and one searchlight at Ellingham station. It had a 6-mile radius and all the lights all had to point up until they came to a single point; the battery men who had tents pitched at the station, practiced every night. The bridge, the fuel dump and the railway line were defended by a pillbox. The small field by the church is still called "Searchlight." It is interesting to note that the name "ELLINGHAM" on the plaque on the school was obliterated in 1940 when an invasion of our island seemed imminent. The name was restored in 1957.

In the war, the signal box had to be blacked out. This was done with hardboard, which had peepholes in it, and which was put up at dusk, Later in the war USAF 'Liberators' from Flixton and 'Flying Fortresses' from Holton base (Halesworth) became a common sight from about 2.00pm in the afternoon. They would go up one at a time until there were 30 or 40 circling, then take up formation and fly away at around 3.00pm. Then they would link up with other planes for a 200-300 plane raid on Germany.

School released 6 choirboys to sing at the funeral of Mrs Aston, widow of the late rector. 10 children who should have gone to Bungay Area school stayed (it was opened later) and 8 evacuees from London. Two of the latter were Zita and Julie, fostered by the Burcham's at Red House. Julie married Terry Tullis and became the first woman to climb K2, dying on the descent in 1986.

Stanley James Pert, rector claimed a grant under Queen Anne's Bounty for poor clergy to improve the parsonage and pay the Diocesan costs.

Electricity installed in the church.

Leet Hill House

