

A Village Diary
Litton Cheney
during the
Second World War
1939 – 1945

A diary compiled by Paul Kingston
of Litton Cheney in 2020
to Commemorate the 75th Anniversary
of Victory in Europe Day on
9th May 1945

LITTON CHENEY IN WARTIME – 1939-45

1939

January 3: Christmas party in the Sunday School Room 6-12pm, admission 1s 6d or after tea 1s. Games took place after tea followed by dancing at 9pm.

January: The worst blizzard for 10 years swept the Downs between Bridport and Dorchester.

February 4: John Cozens died aged 84.

February: Man wanted for general farm work including milking by Mr Pike at Looke Farm. A house, garden and good wages available for a suitable man.

March 9: The annual Parochial Church Council meeting was held in the Sunday School with 10 present. It was decided that the electric light should be installed in August and that the bells should be repaired at the same time.

March: Help seeks situation with Dorchester or Bridport district preferred, by Miss E. Tompkins of Coombe.

March: William Shier married the daughter of William Pitcher, miller.

March 18: Mrs Shier, daughter of Mr Pitcher, miller, was seriously injured when her brother accidentally discharged a gun.

March 31: Emma Cozens, wife of John died aged 72.

April: Sale of livestock and farm equipment at Lower Coombe Farm as Mr W. Hayne was quitting the farm. A very large company attended and an excellent sale resulted.

April 22: Sale of Cross Tree Farm, 216 acres of pasture with some arable, farmhouse, buildings and two cottages. The property failed to reach the seller's reserve after several bids had been made.

April: M. Coombes and Peggy Tompkins collected 288 eggs for a Collection for the County Hospital as part of the 16th annual egg collection.

May: A shoeing and general blacksmith wanted by George Curtis.

May: The Salisbury Diocesan Guild of Ringers gave a £2 grant to Litton Cheney Ringers.

May: The Church fete was held on Whit Monday, raising about £68 towards repairing the bells and installing electric light.

June: Woman (middle aged) seeks situation with cottage preferred. Mrs P. Tompkins.

June: Patrick Legge of Court House married Muriel Burrige of Upwey. The couple headed a procession from the church to Upwey Wishing Well, where they drank the magic water and threw some over the left shoulder. They were the first couple to do so since the discovery of the spring in medieval times. A reception was held at a Weymouth restaurant.

July: Monica Cobb, daughter of Reverend W. Cobb, former Rector of Litton married Thornton Bullock in Kent.

July: General maid wanted, some cooking, reliable. Good outings and wages. Mrs Daniels.

August: Two Puncknowle lads were charged for stealing a pushchair belonging to William Baumber of Litton. The case was dismissed, with the judge giving them the benefit of the doubt.

August: Long Bredy and Litton Cheney WI won the Sir Robert Williams Cup for the gaining the greatest number of points at the Bride Valley Show.

August: Electric light was installed in the church.

August: Repairs made to the church bells by Mears and Stainback.

August 14: A General Village Meeting was held to consider buying the Methodist Chapel for use as a Village Hall.

August: 16 residents of Litton were awarded certificates for anti-gas training in connection with ARP.

September: Man wanted for milking and general farm work by Tom Foot at Lower Coombe Farm. A good cottage and good wages available.

September 9: Hilda Honeybun, eldest daughter of Mr and Mrs James Honeybun of Litton married Charles Taylor of Walditch by special licence.

September 18: Court House sale by auction of household furniture, belonging to the late H.B.Legge.

September 19: Kezia Hansford died.

September: W. Masters of the mill was retiring due to ill-health. There was an auction sale of furniture, wagon and harness, poultry houses and hens.

September 29 National Registration Day. Census taken of all households listing personal details for use in issuing Identity Cards, Ration Books etc.

October: Gardener-handyman wanted for the Court House. Good wages, live out. C.H. Newman.

October: Victor Charles Bamber (12) of the Paddocks crushed by the spokes of the mill wheel.

October: 25s was spent on 100 copies of a Service Book for use when troops attended church.

October: The Harvest Festival funds of about £9 were divided: £2 each to Bridport and Weymouth eye Hospitals and the balance to Dorset County Hospital.

November: Flora Hussey died.

December: Good Shoeing and general smith's business, suitable for single man, no opposition, nice premises, no residence. Ingoing at valuation, roughly £70; rent £12 per year. Curtis.

December 4: George Curtis (wife of Mary) of Beech House died, aged 59.

December: One way working for Schoolhouse Lane, Hinesmead Lane and the road through the village (Defence of the Realm Act).

December: The PCC decided to stop the clock after a report from Mr Colborne, clockmaker in Trowbridge.

December: Necessary screening of the church windows so that evening services could continue to be held during the war was completed at a cost of about £14.

Barbara Newman married John Clement van der Kiste in Marylebone.

1940

January 2: New Year's Party in the school 6-12pm. Admission 1s 6d, after tea 1s.

February 19: The annual Parochial Church Council Meeting was held at the Rectory with 8 present. The Rector thanked everyone who had worked strenuously to make the year such a satisfactory one in many ways. However, there were a number of items of expenditure to be faced, more immediately the Tower Roof and the clock and also necessary improvements to the churchyard and its fence.

March: William Rashley died, aged 78.

March: Cook wanted. Two in family, modern house. House-parlourmaid kept. Good outings. Mrs Wordsworth, Baglake.

March: Married couple wanted, gardener –handyman and general maid. Live in, comfortable house. Good wages. Good references essential. Newman, Court House.

April 14: Lieutenant Kenneth James Harper died, aged 28. H.M. Submarine Thistle was torpedoed and sunk with all hands by a German U-boat off Skudenes, Norway.

May 11: Fete in the garden and dancing in the barn in the evening. It made a profit of £28.13.6, 10% being given to the Red Cross. Dancing in the barn from 8-10. Admission to the garden 6d and 3d, men in uniform free and admission to dancing 6d.

May: General domestic help wanted. Knowledge of cooking, fond of country. Happy, considerate home offered. Good wages and outings. Daily help given. Daniell.

May 28: John Clement Der Kiste died, aged 33 in France just days before the Dunkirk evacuation. He was a Captain, 2nd Battalion. North Staffordshire Regiment. He was son-in-law to Mr and Mrs Newman of the Court House.

June 9: Robert Webber died when HMS Glorious was sunk by the German battle cruiser Scharnhorst near the Lofoten Islands. He was the son of William and Mary Webber and husband of Mary.

August: Farm worker (reliable, all-round) wanted at once. Good milker and must be able to hedge and fence. Cottage available. State age, wages etc. Percival, Coombe Farm.

October: Harvest produce was sold on the Rectory lawn, as the Sunday school was not available.

October 25: Adelaide Bugler, widow, died.

December: Ellinor Bessie Austin, daughter of Lieutenant-Colonel F. Austin and Mrs Austin of Litton married Second Lieutenant Richard Lyne-Pirkis of Blackheath.

1941

January 3: New Year Party held in the school, games 7-8.30 and dancing 8.30-10.30. Admission adults 9d, children 6d.

January: Dorchester County magistrates dismissed a summons by the Bridport Rural District Council against Joseph Willcox of the Bakery for an alleged breach of the building by-laws.

January: Farm labourer wanted. Good hedger, rick-maker. Cottage with garden available. Herbie Coombes, Manor Farm.

February 11: Annual Parochial Church Council Meeting in the school. The Rector had several regrets. There was a falling off in attendance at both Holy Communion and church services, there was an unfortunate lack of missionary zeal, all probably due to the added war-time activities of the village. There was also a regrettable irregularity in Sunday School attendance.

February: Labourer wanted. Good hedger, willing to milk if needed. Good wages with extras. Tom Foot, Lower Coombe Farm.

February: Cowman wanted by March 8 for small herd. Help with general farm work. Cottage on premises available. Simms, Coombe.

April: Miss M. Coombes collected 204 eggs, raising £1 18s 6d for Dorset County Hospital during the annual Egg Collection Week.

May: Field Marshal Lord Birdwood (living in Litton) opened Dorchester and District War Weapons Week. He won fame in the Gallipoli campaign in 1915 as "the hero of Anzac". He commanded the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps and later the Fifth Army in France.

May: Experienced Cheddar Cheesemaker wanted June 1st for five months. Wordsworth, Baglake.

May: The fete was postponed due to the War Weapons Week arranged near the fete date.

May: It was proposed to take out war Damage Insurance, with the bells and furniture of the church to be covered for £1500.

May 23: Mary Gale of Holly Cottage died.

August 2: Fete held in Rectory Grounds 5-8pm and dancing in the Sunday School 8-11pm. It made a profit of £31.

August: Man wanted for milking and general farm work. Cottage and garden available. Pike, Looke Farm.

August: Man wanted for September 29 to milk 10 cows. Able to hedge and make himself useful. Good cottage and garden near the school. Good references essential. Wordsworth.

August 19: Discussion on subscribing towards the purchase of a bier, to be used for the present by the first aid post as a wheeled stretcher.

September 21: Harvest Festival held.

October 22: Carson Carysport Proby died (aged 27) when Catalina AH566 was shot down by a German B&V 138 Flying Boat. Flying Officer, 413 Squadron RAF, His body was never recovered for burial. He was the nephew of Canon Daniell's second wife.

December: William Bishop died (aged 66).

1942

February 9: Annual Parochial Church Council Meeting in the Sunday School. The Rector reported that there had been a falling off in church attendance and in contributions to church funds. There were genuine reasons for this, but there were also mere excuses for a waning sense of duty to God.

February 12: Miss Sylvia Cozens of The Cottage, died aged 90.

March 20: Emily Dennett died, aged 78.

March: Charles Webber died, aged 75.

May: Cook and House Parlourmaid required. Aga Cooker, separate rooms. Mrs Harper.

May 23: Fete at the Rectory held on an extremely wet day, making a Profit of £22.12.4.

May: Peggy Coombes raised £2 6s for Dorset County Hospital to purchase eggs for patients.,

July 30: Barbara Haverton of the Police Station, widow died.

August: A soldier, Dennis Wickham was sentenced to 10 months in prison, for breaking into the house of Gladys Bush in Stancombe and stealing clothes valued at £3 15s.

September: Mother's help wanted for Cambridge. Good wages, small easy house. One baby for one year. Experience not essential, but pleasant manners and trustworthiness. Pirkis (married in 1940).

October: Joseph Wilcox was fined £5 at Salisbury County Magistrates having improperly used petrol outside the permitted area taking taxi passengers to Salisbury Races in July and August.

October: The Harvest Weekend Offerings raised over £11, with £6 6s given to Dorchester Hospital and £2 12s each to Bridport and Weymouth Eye Hospital.

November: Housekeeper wants situation to farmer, sole charge, economical, good cook, where useful son 11, good milker welcomed. Beard, Litton Cheney.

December: Wanted for Christmas and school holidays, domestic help principally cooking. Country location, modern conveniences. Daniell (Rectory).

Mr Dennis was Head Teacher at Thorner's.

1943

January 26: Corporal Mervyn Miller (4th Battalion Welsh regiment) promoted substantive Corporal at Litton.

March: William Webber died aged 80.

March: Man seeks situation on March 25. Cottage required near infants school. Life experience of thatching, hedging, rick building etc. Piece work appreciated. Hicks, Litton Cheney.

March: Cowman wanted. Good cottage and garden in village, near work. H. Coombes, Manor Farm.

March 22: Annual Parochial Church Council Meeting at the Rectory, with 10 present. The Rector was sorry to point out that there was a declension of attendance, especially at Holy Communion. He stressed the need for congregational worship and continued support in the maintenance of the church.

May 2: Sarah Travers, widow of William, died.

May: The 11th Devons (formed in 1940) returned to Litton Cheney from training in Northern Ireland, before disbanding 4 months later.

June: The Fete planned for June 12 was postponed.

July 10: Sale of Manor Farm (326 acres) by auction. Herbert Coombes was reducing his farming activities due to ill-health.

July 26: The PCC decided to cancel the fete for this year.

August: Youth Club Play performed at Baglake Farm.

August: For sale: Foot's Patent Invalid Chair, polished oak, covered wool tapestry, spring seat, adjustable foot rest, chromium fittings, easy castors, two trays, book rest, electric lamp on flexible arm, perfect condition. £75 on rail, open to reasonable offer. Rectory.

August: Man wanted for general farm work. Small cottage, one mile from village, suitable for single man. Good wages. Tom Foot (Long Bredy 65).

September: The Wakely brothers at Court Farm and Mrs Percival at Coombe Farm noted for increasing milk production by over 20% as part of the Victory Churn Contest.

September 16: Captain Peter Newman, Royal Artillery, died (aged 23) in Salerno, Italy. He was the son of Charles and Gertrude Newman of the Court House. The Newman's lost both their son and son-in-law in the war.

September 25: Sale by auction of North Barn Farm (Long Bredy and Litton Cheney). 515 acres and dwelling house, 2 cottages, range of premises and productive closes of pasture and arable lands. On direction of Mr E. Samways.

September 30: Thomas Honeybun, husband of Eliza died aged 76.

November: Kathleen, daughter of Mr and Mrs Honeybun married J. Drysdale of Glasgow at St. Mary's, Canon Daniell officiating.

General Eisenhower visited Litton.*

W.H. Allen, artist died. He was a notable landscape watercolour artist whose work spanned from the 1880's to the 1940's. He made many paintings of Litton Cheney.

1944

February 21: Annual Parochial Church Council Meeting in the Sunday School, with 15 present.

March: P C Bowering transferred from East Stour to Litton Cheney.

April: Peggy Coombes raised £5 for Dorset County Hospital during the annual Egg Collection Week.

April: Man wanted for milking and general farm work. Small house close to work available. Good wages. Tom Foot (Long Bredy 65).

May: Cowman wanted immediately for 25 cow herd. New Alfa-Laval milking machine. Wife to assist and son 16-18 as tractor driver preferred, but not essential. Webb, Coombe.

May: Cowman (good) wanted. Quiet and reliable with cattle 25-30 head, machine milked. Wages £4 to £4 5s per week, according to experience plus free milk, cottage, garden, rabbits and wood. Manager, Coombe Farm.

July 11: Leslie Thorner of the 148th Regiment, Royal Armoured Corps was killed in action in France and buried at Ranville Cemetery. He was brought up at his grandparent's house in Litton and worked as a builder for Fry's before joining up.

September?: Guardsman Ronald Bowering (19) was killed on patrol, while serving with the Welsh Guards. He was the son of Mr and Mrs Bowering of Litton Police Station.

September: Man required to take charge of milking machine. Good wages, live in. Farmer's son preferred. Pike, Looke Farm.

September: Mr P. Birchall was the new Headmaster at Thorner's.

November: Mary Munday died (aged 83).

December: Girl wanted for dairy and poultry. Must be good, quick milker. Excellent home as family. Mrs Webb, Coombe Farm.

December: Tractor driver wanted immediately. Expert in all cultivations. Cottage available for married man. Mrs Webb, Coombe Farm.

Freddie Pitcher retired, his vehicle and service being acquired by Bere Regis & District Motor Services.

Stanley Wakely (Private, Royal Army Service Corps) married Louisa Staples.

Company D headquarters were at Litton.

1945

January 5: Harry Gladwyn died (aged 88).

January: Gardener-handyman wanted who will help occasionally on the farm. A milker preferred and a cottage was available. Lieutenant-Colonel C. Wordsworth (Baglake Farm).

January 29: Elias Peach of The Paddocks died at Stokewater House, Beaminster..

February: Land Girl wanted for milking and general farm work. It would suit a mother and daughter. A cottage was available. Tom Foot.

February 23: Annual Parochial Church Council Meeting in the Sunday School, with 10 present. The PCC had concerns about the compilation of the magazine of the joint parishes. It was also suggested that forthcoming films could be advertised for those who visit cinemas in the nearby towns.

March 7: Grace Fry of Myrtle Cottage, wife of Richard died aged 75.

March 17: May Gale of 3 Church Path died.

March: Mary Gill died (aged 84).

March: Man wanted for milking and general farm work. A good house with 3 bedrooms was available in the village. Tom Foot.

April: Woman (capable) who can cook wanted, child welcome. Modern labour saving house. 2 in family. Good wages. Miss Munns, The Mill.

April 18: Sale of Myrtle Cottage by the Executors of Mrs G Fry

May 5: Charlotte Coombes of Barges Farm died.

May: Mildred Trenchard raised £3 11s for Dorset County Hospital during the annual Egg Collection.

May 25: Thorner's Charity School was inspected.

June: The story of Monty, a 4 year old Irish Grey donkey, belonging to George Drew of value £15. The donkey was loaned to David Chaffey at Ilminster, but never returned. It was not seen again until VE Day, when with police officers he identified her at Litton Cheney. She had been sold twice.

June: Mr Andrews, lay-reader, people's warden and treasurer of the PCC moved from the village.

October 11: Sale of Stancombe Farm live and dead stock by auction for H. Coombes, as he was quitting the farm.

December 7: Dance held, with profits of £9.12.1.

December 19: Sale of Whitethorn Cottage and Church Path Cottages.