

BILL BROWN*Rob Forsyth***2002**

Bill Brown was a neighbour of Geoff Todd's late in-laws who lived in Wallington, Surrey. In conversation one day Bill said that he had lived in Deddington during the war. What follows are essentially Bill's own words, extracted and edited by myself from a tape recording made by Bill and Geoff in 2002 and then signed off by Bill.

'I was there [in Deddington] from, I think, it was May to December 1941. My employer was Mr A J Morris who was the Officer Commanding the Deddington Home Guard (book p.69). We were a firm of hop merchants, Arthur Morris and Company. I was employed in London. Because of the bombing in London, the firm kept a few records at my employer's home, Deddington Mill. The chap who started keeping them was called up and I replaced him.

I was 19 and stayed first at the King's Arms which had a petrol station next door; the landlord was Tom Hall I think. [In fact Richard Hall was landlord. It is now the Deddington Arms.] My main stay was with the Chemist, Mr Stockdale, who lived on New Street just round the corner from Hudson Street about two or three houses down. We had all our meals there in the place he ran next door. [After some memory jogging chat this is identified as the Volunteer Public House which is known to have had a chemist shop next door.]

I remember Paginton in the Home Guard, front row, third from right with a patch on his eye in your photo (book p.70). The other chap I can remember very well was Bill Ivings (book p.63). He used to be our dispatch rider. He had his own motorcycle. He was only nineteen like me. I liked him; he was a very nice chap. We used to have a little boxing match occasionally in the Town Hall up the stairs at the top. [Geoff comments on the tape "We still have fisticuffs up there, we have the Parish Council meetings there!"] We were quite evenly matched except that he was a lot faster than me. I was the stalker and he was in and out.

I do remember there was a grocer's shop almost opposite the Town Hall. I can't remember the name of the chap who ran it; he would be dead a long while ago I would imagine because he was lot older than me. He ran the store but, I always remember, it was rather done on the quiet; he used to get a lot of tea and sugar. [I presume he means from the black market!]

I used to work at the Mill. I think Mr Morris must have bought it just before the War. If I remember rightly, he had a generator which he drove from the water power and I think I was told that he got caught out in the bath when the water levels dropped too low. I think he also got caught in the bath without any lights once. There was a little cottage not far from the Mill and that was taken over as the sort of office.

The local Surveyor was Sid Rule (book p.79). I played snooker against him in the British Legion. I did not play much and Sid Rule I think was one of the better players and I happened to actually beat him at snooker. I took him out of the tournament but I lost the next round. It was just one of those things. A nice chap he was.

One recollection I have is that I used to cycle to Deddington Mill every day and before you get to the turning for Deddington Mill, it is downhill. I used to freewheel nicely down there and I always remember one day I started off down and, you know, I didn't go all that fast but fast enough and all of a sudden I saw in front of me bees flying across the road and I thought "oh Lord" and I couldn't stop, I was too near. I thought I would stop right in the middle of them so I just shut my eyes and went through them. I could feel them hitting my face but it was quite a shock to see them flying across in front of me. That is one of my most vivid recollections.'

Acknowledgements:

Geoff Todd for putting a tape recorder in his pocket for this visit.

Sally Allbrook for providing me with a word perfect transcript of the tape from which this shortened version has been compiled.