

# WARTIME MEMORIES OF BRANSTON

BY

MR JIM WILD

Feb 1944      250 Light Company R.A.S.C. 1st Airborne Division.

We arrived at Longhill's Hall, Branston, having spent several weeks in Boston, stationed on the Dock area. Our Company had, had fourteen days leave, having arrived back from North Africa on the Christmas Eve amid ice and snow. With arriving at Longhill's from the direction of Metheringham, we had no idea there was a village half a mile down the road. The result was a walk across fields covered in 18 inches of snow, and finishing up in Heighington at either the Turk's Head or the Butcher and Beast.

Our Billets in Longhill's consisted of the stable block, one or two of the farmworkers houses in the complex, or in the old cow byre down the next farm lane. Incidentally, the old cow byre is now a bungalow called 'Arnhem House' due to one of our Platoons sleeping there. They also had their own shower and toilet. The main part of the Hall became officer's sleeping rooms, our canteen and officer's dining room and lounge

We had a firing range over at the back but most of our training was carried out either in Edale, Derbyshire around Glossop, or up near Scarborough. Holme Firth became one of our billets in an old mill near the river.

Our route marches took us around Wragby, Bardney and as far as the villages around Wragby. The river at Five Mile was used for our Amphibian trips, or practices of river crossings.

Our War Memorial is now just inside the entrance to Longhills, near where our guard tent used to be. My sleeping quarters were over the stables. Twenty of us slept there. One of our lads, being an artist, painted murals on one or two of the walls in the big hall. As far as I know, they are still there.

After a few weeks we made the Waggon and Horses our main hostelry and started to run dances at the Village Hall, mainly on Saturday nights. ( It was at one of these dances that Jim, who came originally from Manchester, met a local girl, Mabel Butler. On the evening that they met, Mabel lent Jim her bicycle to ride back to Longhills after the dance. When her Father found out in the morning, he said she would never see her bike again, but it was promptly returned. So began a courtship which ended in their marriage. Jim and Mabel eventually settled in Heighington, where they now live.)

There was a fox covert in the woods at the front of the Hall, and plenty of rabbits. One or two of our lads used to go poaching rabbits and pheasant, where they got rid of them I will never know, except to take some home on leave with them.

Before we went to Arnhem, we were, each platoon, sent to a different location immediately after D-Day. Our platoon were sent down to southern England, after two weeks in Reevesby Park. I and my mates in our platoon flew from one of many airfields in Wiltshire. The ones that got back from Arnhem were moved to Washingborough Hall.



We also had some lads in Nissen huts up Hall lane. Our workshops were in Foremans yard and Garage, and the lads lived up Hall lane. We also had some at Canwick after Arnhem. Incidentally, our platoon did the Penine walk as an exercise just before D-Day. We were No 3 Para Platoon and we slept in the stables of the pub in Edale near the railway. The Landlord was a keen hill walker and talked us into doing the Pennine Way. In those days it was new, and you had to use maps and a compass as there was no footpath. We did 220 miles of it in 7 days and were then called back to Branston because of the invasion.

During one of our reunions, we presented a lectern to Branston Church, which has been in use ever since. I hope this write up will enlighten the younger people of Branston regarding their village during the last war.

*Jim Wild. 7/1/99*

*Jim died in May 2011*

*Mabel now Resident in Backfield House at Houghton*