

# The Village in World War 2

## The Home Front – Civil Defence

Throughout the 1930s the risks of another war in Europe were being examined and planned for with the Home Office establishing an Air Raid Precautions (ARP) service in 1935. This became the Civil Defence Service in 1941 and incorporated the ARP Wardens Service, the Auxiliary Fire Service (which later became the National Fire Service), along with First Aid Posts organised by the St John's Ambulance and Red Cross. Although few records still exist that give details there were detachments of all of these in the village.

### Air Raid Precautions and Civil Defence

Organisation of Civil Defence was the responsibility of the Local Authority Volunteers with volunteers being assigned to different teams according to their skills. Wardens were responsible for local leadership, organisation, guidance and control of the general public and the organization of rescue parties as needed in the event of bombing. They would also advise survivors of the locations of rest and food centres, and other welfare facilities.

A key role was that of the Fire Guard, originally called Fire Watchers but renamed in 1941. They had responsibility for a particular area or specific building and watched for the fall of incendiary bombs and report any fires that had broken out to the Auxiliary (later National) Fire Service. Reporting was carried out by Messengers, often local Scouts using their bicycles.

At the start of the war, the ARP had no uniform but wore their civilian clothes along with helmets, armbands and gas masks. In October 1939 a heavy blue cotton drill overall (called a blulette) was issued to wardens and rescue parties. This was replaced in February 1941 with a dark blue battledress and trousers for men and a four pocket serge tunic with trousers or skirt for women.



*Mountsorrel ARP & Civil Defence Staff mid 1940s*

*Outside Glenfrith Hospital, Union Lane (Linkfield Rd)*

## **St John's Ambulance – Mobile First Aid Post**

Although officially part of the overall Civil Defence organisation, First Aid Post and Mobile units were provisioned through the St John's Ambulance and Red Cross. Mountsorrel had a long standing St John's Ambulance organisation and it is believed they formed the basis for Mobile First Aid unit that was based in the village.



*Mountsorrel Mobile First Aid Post 1943*

*Rear Row: Roy Scard, Greg Preston, Vera Smith, Olive Chamberlain, June Coltman, Olive Wilmore, Gertie Brunt, Isobel Brunt, Winnie Sharpe, Phyllis Shuttlewood, Bernard Rose, Unknown*

*Front Row: Ruth Robinson, Ivy Harrald, Kath Perkins, Miss Simmonds, Dr Gibson, Mrs Chatterway, Ann Bates, Molly Perkins, Miss Garner, Joan McCree*

The Mobile First Aid Post was led by Dr Gibson and used a 1932 Dennis Dart bus loaned by Allens Bus Co for the duration of the war. The bus was fitted out as a mobile basic operating theatre and was housed ready for use at the rear of the Glenfrith Hospital on Union Lane (Linkfield Road)

## **National Fire Service**

The Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) was formed in 1938 to supplement regular Fire Brigades at a local level. In this job it was hampered by the incompatibility of equipment used by these different brigades in particular the lack of a standard size of hydrant valve. The Auxiliary Fire Service and the local brigades were amalgamated in August 1941 into the National Fire Service. Members of the AFS were unpaid part-time volunteers, but could be called up for whole-time paid service if necessary. Men and women both served but the latter were mainly used in administrative roles.

After the war the AFS was reformed alongside the Civil Defence Corps, forming part of the UK's planned emergency response to a nuclear attack. It was disbanded in the UK in 1968.

The uniform for both men and women was a dark navy blue with some red piping. The men wore a peaked cap and the women either a side hat or small peaked cap.

### **Fire Services in Mountsorrel during WW2**

The service in Mountsorrel came under Loughborough and had a base in the Bull and Mouth Yard abutting the Memorial Playing Fields (behind what is now Mewies Hairdressers). The Unit base was in the old stables on the left of the yard fitted out with bunk beds and heated by a coke fired brazier. Opposite on the right was a garage for the Fire Pump.

Training and practice drills were normally carried out on Sunday mornings when they exercised the main pump drill in the field next to the 1860 Bridge and stand-pie drill in the Mountsorrel Granite Co., yard or elsewhere if available. First Aid training was also provided held at the Reading Room (Now the Parish Rooms) on Loughborough Rd.

The village Fire Service had the use of an American Dodge Hupmobile towing vehicle, loaned by J.W. Porter (Haulage Contractor) of Loughborough Road, Mountsorrel. This was driven by Ernie Kitchen. Fire fighting equipment was a Coventry Climax Fire Pump.

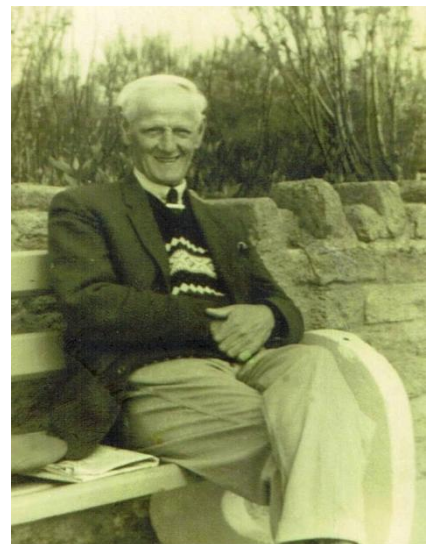
<b>Mountsorrel Fire Service WW2 - Personnel</b>	
Tom Whittington - Leading Fireman	Kath Joyce
Stanley Wakeling – Section Leader	May Ballard
George Partridge	Grace Newbold – Leading Firewoman
Jack Morley	Joan Orphin
Peter Unwin – Messenger Boy	Esma Underwood
Alan Clarke – Messenger Boy	Jean Palmer
Ernie Kitchen - Driver	Thelma Moorey nee Spooner
Sidney Newbold	Eileen Chapman
Herbert Cooke	Marshall Woodhouse
Reg Smith	Irene Chapman
	Kath ?
	Betty Cooke



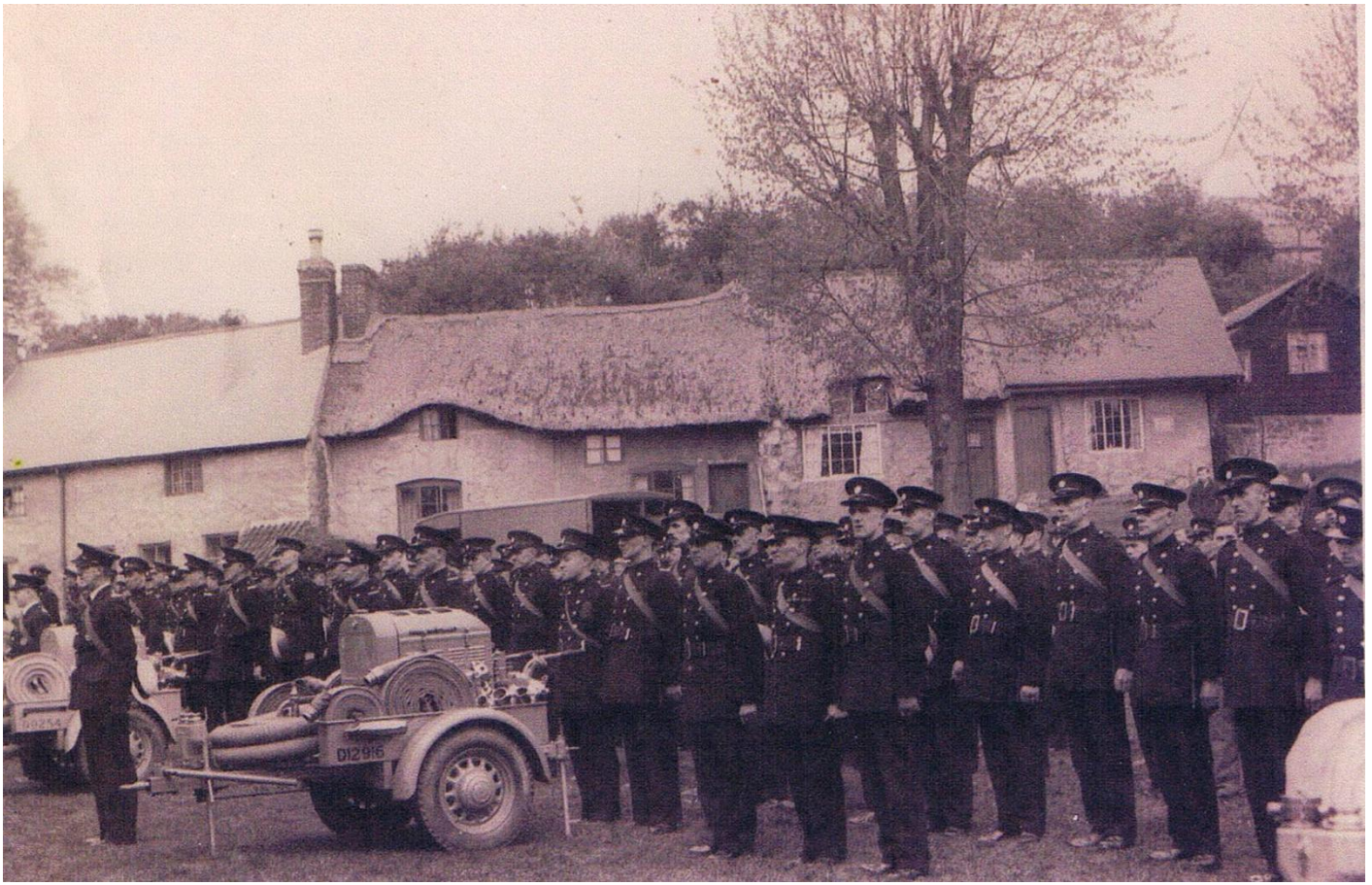
**George Partridge**



**Eileen Chapman**



**Ernie Kitchen**



*National Fire Service parade on the Green mid 1940s with Coventry Climax Fire Pump*



*Esma Underwood*



*Stanley Wakeling*



*Kath Joyce*

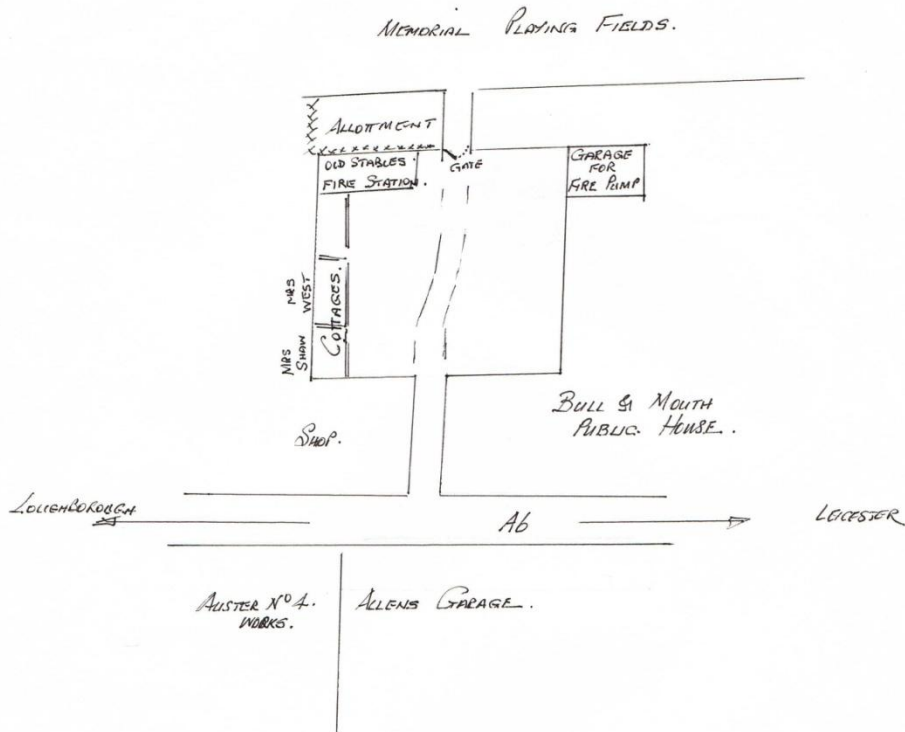


**Sid Newbold**



**Standpipe Practice**

Although never called out operationally the Mountsorrel Service was put on standby during the Coventry Blitz.



**Diagram of the Bull and Mouth Yard in WW2 by Noel Wakeling**