

THE SNOWS OF THE FORTIES

The winter of 1947, fifty years ago, was for many the worst in living memory, but was it the worst for Chipping people?

The winter followed the hardships and deprivations of the long years of the Second World War, and perhaps because of this, for some, the winter has left very few memories. Times were hard. Perhaps it was just one more difficulty to cope with along with food and fuel rationing, and rail and coal strikes. In the words of one local resident, they were "well used to hardships and coped".

Many of Chipping's young folk were recently de-mobbed from the Forces, and many others were still in uniform. On February 10th a Welcome Home Party was held for them in the Oddfellows Hall, with freezing cold weather outside and snow lying on the ground. Arthur Lord recorded in his diary that this was followed the next day by a biting cold east wind, with much snow drifting from fields into the roads. John Hayhurst was living at Out Lane Head. He remembers the road there was cleared seven times before the snow finally melted. Bill Airey, living at Thornley Hall helped with digging out the roads, along with many others, and spread cinders from an old lorry when the roads were cleared.



The late Miss Sefton's picture of Woodhill, Longridge Rd, Thornley. 1947.

However, down in the village snow ploughs did much to clear the roads, and the social life of Chipping carried on without too much disruption. The February W.I. meeting went ahead as usual, but without a lecture from a Miss Woods who was unable to attend owing to the bad state of the roads. Miss Smith was elected delegate to the Annual Council Meeting, and Mrs Bleazard organised the Social Half-hour, which consisted of a "Musical Parcel".

The Farmers Ball was attended by over 200 people. Winners at the whist drive were -- Ladies - Mrs Metcalf, Mrs Crossley and Mrs R. Singleton. Gents - Mr G. Pinder, Mrs S. Harris and Miss M. Bamber. Special, Mrs T. Pearson, Goosnargh. Domino winners were Miss T. Slater, Mrs J. Moon and Mrs T. Bleasdale.

All through January and February the weather caused difficulties. Water supplies froze, and many outlying homes relied on water for the house being brought in kits by horse and sledge. The Ellison family at Colte Coates remember melting snow to water the animals. A bull in the loose-box attached to the barn was completely snowed in. It was fed by pushing hay through a pop-hole in the barn wall, and ate snow for water, until a way was dug through the huge drift which enveloped its box. Bill remembers that drift for another reason. He found he could climb on to the barn roof and slide all the way across the road on the frozen snow into the yard at the other side -- great fun! A whist drive organised by Mrs Ellison for the Village Hall was postponed for six weeks.

The ice and snow and east wind continued into March, but worse was to come. On the 13th March, Arthur Lord recorded in his diary "A memorable day. Freezing rain followed by rain and thaw. Floods. Trees iced and branches falling down". By about 11am the branches were falling with sudden cracks like thunder. The farm dogs were terrified. The thaw and heavy rain on the frozen ground brought floods in the ditches and made walking treacherous on the ice. The Rowland family living 1000 feet up at Whitmore Farm near Whitewell remember this well. After the rain it froze so hard that 2" of ice lay on top of the snow, and the walls on the fells were encrusted with ice. Sheep were sliding about on the ice, causing hair and skin to be rubbed off their legs so that they were raw and bleeding, and the farm dog was sliding backwards, unable to get a grip. Kenneth remembers his father dragging a log behind the horse to make a track for them to walk on through the ice to get to the poultry cabins in the fields.

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