

## War Time in Dial Post cont.

Today we may not appreciate the importance of farming in the 1930s. Just as today, the politicians seemed to think that food was cheap and plentiful from outside our little island. We need to set the scene. In the 20s and 30s farming was unwanted and bankrupt; most of the land was in big estates, which the owners only wanted for Huntin' and Shootin'. They could not or did not wish to farm the land, so the farms were let for very low rents, or no rent at all!, to basically peasant families, who carried on subsistence farming, and as long as they did not interfere with Foxes or Pheasants, they were left alone! But, unlike today, money was virtually non-existent; the countryside was populated by Country People who knew their patch, but it was largely neglected, overrun with scrub, ditches were full, the soil unproductive. But, when war was declared, the people were there ready to respond when our food ships were suddenly blockaded and sunk. "Don't Panic" was the cry in Whitehall: Corporal Jones was in vogue! The war cabinet had members who Knew (again, unlike today). Farmers were paid to drain and plough, and **produce** - not as today, i.e. to do nothing, which seems at least immoral not to say DAFT! Get off that soapbox, Verrall!

This was the climate into which I was born: farming was on the up. They responded amazingly. West Grinstead Park was ploughed up, as were many others, and huge crops were grown on some very fertile soils, everyone worked long hours and was proud to do so. Most of the Village people were connected with farming or the estates, we were a close agricultural community, everyone knew everyone and we respected each other for what we put into the Local Community as individuals, unlike today, where nobody in seems to know or care about anyone else. We have, like many places, become a dormitory Village, peopled by blacked-out DatsuBishiMerca Roller 4x4 drivers, who see the land as an asset to be exploited, not cherished as I was taught in the years of need. I do hope that history will not be repeated, but I fear it will. As you may gather, I do feel very strongly about the decline of farming and rural life!

**Richard Verrall**