

The Battle of Dial Post

(taken from Cecil Longhurst's book "Bells, Bicycles, Bombers and Bees" by Julie Beck)

When Cecil started with the Home Guard, he started off on patrol from a shepherd's hut near Wincaves, his patrol taking him down to Bay Bridge, back up Rook Cross, down to Hobshorts and along Sands Lane back to Dial Post. The hut only being small and not very winter friendly was abandoned in favour of the house recently used as the Pepper Mill in the heart of Dial Post. It was often used by the army with different troops staying one or two nights on their way somewhere else. It was certainly warmer and unlike the shepherd's hut, less likely to blow away in a gale. It had the added bonus of being just down the road from the pub, a frequent haunt of some of the men, allegedly.

"Well I s'pose looking back Lt Daniels in charge had to do something to justify his position, and on this Sunday morning, he divided up the people there: half defended Dial Post and half had to attack and try to take the HQ. Well course, the people that was defending, their sergeant was old Bill Elleker. He sort of took the view that nobody would be able to get into Dial Post if he put people on the road that way and the other way. Well my sergeant, old Jock Martin he was pretty wily, he thought of things that other people didn't think. He took us down the road towards Ashington. Somebody said, well we was sat by the side of the road, what are we going to do? Wait for the bus. Wait for the bus? Yeah, we'll go up to Dial Post on the bus. Somebody said they'll see us. Not if we get down on the floor they won't.

So we waited for the bus to come along, Jock, well he told the driver what he wanted and he laughed and took us on. We could see the blokes either side of the road as we went up on the bus down near where the nursery is now. They didn't take any notice of us though. When we got up to the garage Jock said to the driver 'can you drop us here and not at the stop', then we was very nearly outside the garden gate of the guard room, nobody about, nobody about at all. We got closer and heard some talking and laughter inside. We walked in and there was three blokes sitting on a desk, their rifles leaning up against the wall so we took them prisoner. Bill Elleker, he'd gone down the pub."

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