



## Cleeve Prior Chroniclers

### Mary Collins on 3C Transport Cleeve Prior

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In order to ensure that fruit & vegetables from the Vale of Evesham arrived at market as fresh as possible, the directors of Coventry City Central [3C], approached my father (who had a transport business in Pebworth.) to see if fresh produce could be delivered by road rather than rail as previously. It would be collected from the growers' allotments in the late evening, to arrive in Coventry in the early hours of the following day. This would allow the retailers and stall holders to buy the produce before the market was opened to the public at 5.00am.

It was decided that the service would be run independently of the Pebworth business, and Cleeve Prior was chosen as a suitable base.

'3C' took out a lease on a warehouse owned by the Holtom Family *[Chroniclers Comment: Holtom's at the Laurels]*, for the storage of their vegetable crates, chip baskets, pot hampers etc. [It is now known as 'Shearwood']

At about the same time my father bought a yard in main street as a transport depot.



Starting in 1936, the swift transportation of produce was immediately popular with the growers, especially as their money, which came as cash in brown envelopes, was brought back in the lorry on the pick-up on the following day.

### **1939 Outbreak of WW2**

'3C' continued the evening deliveries to Coventry but on 29<sup>th</sup> May 1940 my father was given 24 hrs to clear the warehouse. The British army was being



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evacuated from Dunkirk and temporary shelter was needed for the troops coming home. My Parents, and it seemed everyone in Cleeve, cleared the last of the hundreds of baskets and boxes as the convoy of army lorries arrived. From my vantage point in the cab of a truck loaded with crates, where I had been put to keep me out of the way', I watched exhausted men being helped, some lifted down, from the lorries. The men, many barefooted, some only wrapped in blankets, slowly stumbled into the empty warehouse. I have never forgotten it.

Coventry did not have the first air raid until August 1940. Following this, 3C said that the collection of produce from the growers must be made earlier in the day so that the lorries could be unloaded and out of the city before dark.

On the night of the Blitz of Coventry, November 1940, the city was completely destroyed, but within 24hrs a temporary market had been set up on the outskirts, and the daily deliveries went on as usual.

In 1948 some companies were nationalised and 3C transport was taken over by British Road Services. They moved the Depot, and the Cleeve Prior yard was sold. The Warehouse stood empty until it was converted in to a house by Mr & Mrs R. Cross