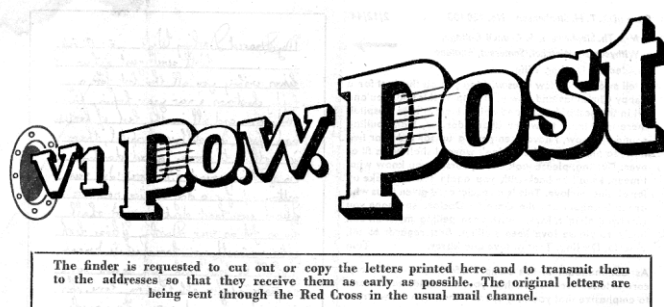


**The Doodlebug.** At 6am on Christmas Eve in 1944 the family of Broomfield Farm were gathered in the orchard as a short time ago the siren at Broken Cross had sounded; an air raid was imminent. A plane's engine was heard, then silence as its engine cut out. The farmer told all to get down and seconds later at five past six there was a very loud explosion. It was a flying bomb, VI or doodlebug.

The target was not, of course, Henbury, but Manchester. The Germans were not then able to launch from the ground near enough to the target so used airborne launches, and this was the first raid of its type. Forty five V1s were launched from KG53 Heinkels from over the North Sea east of the Humber estuary<sup>1</sup>, and thirty one crossed the coast. Six fell in Cheshire. Only half of the V1s fell within 20 miles of the target, and of those that didn't, one fell near Macclesfield Forest, one at Seven Sisters Lane, Ollerton, and the Henbury one in a field at the edge of Bluebell Wood, 500yds from Henbury Hall. Some believed the target to have been the aircraft factory at Woodford, but considering that less than half the bombs launched hit within 20 miles of the centre of Manchester such a hit would have been fortuitous and very unfortunate.

Only minor casualties resulted from these explosions and the Henbury damage was limited to some broken windows in the Hall. More damage may have been prevented by the shelter of the trees in the wood, indeed it is said that the damage to some trees can still be seen.



*A leaflet delivered to Henbury by the V1.*

Later Joyce Bostock, the daughter of the farm, collected part of the doodlebug nose cone she had picked up at the site of the explosion, with a few fragments of the pamphlets and magazines scattered around which the police had missed. Some of the pamphlets contained supposed letters from allied prisoners in Germany. The German hope was that their relatives would write to the prisoners revealing useful information to the enemy, where the pamphlet had been found, thus where the bomb had landed. One of these leaflets remains still in Henbury. A few fragments of shrapnel have since been found. One prized souvenir rests on a Henbury mantleshelf, the small aluminium nosecone of the bomb.

The all-clear sounded just after six-thirty, milking could now begin, and the preparations for Christmas continue.

The Bluebell Wood doodlebug is still talked about. Ethel Heathcote of Lodge Farm told us "*it was about half past six on a frosty morning. Whenever the alert went I never used to settle, and they said I'd never die in bed! I got up. There was this bang and dust began to fall down from cracks in the wooden beams. I shot downstairs in my nightie, even though it was frosty, and all I could see was a cloud of smoke beyond the smithy - it wasn't far as the crow flies - and I later moved all the beds from under the beams.*"

Walter Hatton of Home Farm reported "*before we went milking, drinking our tea with the door open my father saw something go past. It landed in Bluebell Wood and cracked a few windows*". The front door of the house on the estate called the Cave was blown up the stairs. Geoffrey Sparrow thought that the explosion lifted the roof of the earlier Henbury Hall, which then neatly fell back into place.

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