

HOXNE HOME GUARD

Originally known as the Local Defence Volunteers (L.D.V.) the force was renamed as the Home Guard at the insistence of the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, who thought the name L.D.V did not have the right ring to it.

A Diary covering the period 14th May 1940 to 17th April 1941 was kept by Henry Palgrave Raven during this period although another unidentified hand does put in an appearance on a few occasions.

On the day after Anthony Eden's speech, made during the evening of the 14th May 1940 calling for volunteers, about fifty men assembled at St Edmunds Hall to sign up for the L.D.V. and under Palgrave Raven's command. On Saturday 18th May the Army asked him to organise the L.D.V. units in Hoxne, Denham, Syleham, Fressingfield and Wingfield.

By the 20th thirty eight rifles had been issued (Canadian Ross Rifles) followed by another fourteen on the 21st by which time the squads had taken shape.

Cross Street Squad

George Howlett (Leader)
K Rush
G Thirkettle
R Watson
George Witton
Clifford Baldwin

Low Street Squad

W Banham (Leader)
W Dorling
Alfred Tye
Ernest Steward
Edward Mills
Arthur Brown

Syleham & Chickering Squad

Norman Dickinson (Leader)

R Cooke

M. Colmer Depperhaugh

B Ruth Depperhaugh Cottages

C Westrep

J Barker Chickering Cottages

The location of anti invasion defences are also quickly identified with road blocks with suggested places for road blocks

- (1) Near Police Station Hoxne,
- (2) Oakley Park Gates
- (3) Near School
- (4) Denham corner
- (5) Cross roads South Green

By August the Pill Box had been completed at the Red Bridge to cover the crossing of the River Dove and the water meadows running to the Waveney. Another outpost had been constructed at Sailors Pool where the Dove entered the Waveney. Other posts had sprung up all around Hoxne

Apart from the invasion scares a member of the Weybread squad together a Mrs Youngs and the Weybread postman took three Luftwaffe airman prisoners, they had bailed out of a Dornier 17 which has subsequently crashed at Conifer Hill, Starston.

The Diary records numerous rifle practices as old soldiers remastered their earlier skills and the younger ones learned new ones.

The Church Tower was the primary observation post and manned during the night. The Diary records planes overhead searchlight activity bombs dropping in the direction of Stowmarket, even the fire of the anti aircraft batteries towards the coast were clearly audible.

Throughout the summer there were numerous invasions scares on 3rd July it was reported that "all troops & L.D.V. are to be warned that parachutists are expected & that special vigilance is necessary" with the unit being notified that Germans had landed on the coast or Parachutists were landing in Botesdale, Mellis or Denham.

Some men like squad leaders William Banham, Jimmy Risk and Tom Moss served in the Home Guard from the beginning to the end. But it appears to be quite fluid as the ranks filled with younger men and they in turn left to join the Forces when they enlisted or were conscripted, some would go onto appear in the "Roll of Honour".

Palgrave Raven was a born administrator and records the formation of the Home Guard and its development in minute detail and it is appropriate that the Diary finishes on 17th April with the entry that Major F.T.Wright called at 11 am and removed all surplus stores.