Luppitt Home Guard.

7/3/85

Dream

I awoke at about 4AM on 13th January 1977 having experienced a very vivid dream.

"With many other people I was looking around Luppitt Vicarage which was on the market for sale." (It had been sold in 1969 and is now a private residence – Hunts Cross)

"Refreshments were being provided in the room on the right of the hall." (This was the Defended Home of the 4th (Luppitt) Platoon, 'D' Company, 19th Seaton Battalion Devon Home Guard; and may be the link to the following) :–

"In the centre of the hall stood a table with electric cables coming from the floor. During the war (1939-1945) someone at the table had direct contact telephone lines. I opened up the small trap door in the floor underneath the table, to reveal inside a clear map of the Channel with the British Isles and the European coast-line; obviously an operational map. I thought that this must be kept as a souvenir and not be left there for the purchaser. At that moment Mr W Walden (our 2nd Lieut Platoon Commander) passed by, and I called him into the kitchen to explain to him what I had seen."

Walden

Thinking later on the dream I had experienced, I resolved to get together notes about the Luppitt Home Guard, personal experiences and memories of the members.

Accordingly about 30 letters were sent to

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members, those who were still around of the 60 or so who served in the platoon, together with a sheet of paper on which to record anything they wished. Unfortunately very few replied, but those who did have their comments recorded. The following is the text of the letter sent.

I would very much like to place on record some of the highlights and happenings of the experiences and memories of members of Lupitt Home Guard during 1940-1945. It is now more than 30 years ago and our memories will die with us if not written down, and the Lupitt of the future will otherwise risk the loss of information we could give to them. So could you please over the next few weeks jot down on this piece of paper, and on more if you wish, anything which you can bring to mind of Home Guard happenings during those years. Things serious or amusing about parades, training, exercises, duty or anything with a H.G. connection. We all have a few, and if put together, I feel something of interest to our children could be retained for them, and please don't think that even a small thing remembered is too insignificant, it may be the vital piece of a bigger story remembered by someone else. About 30 members are being asked to do this. So please do what you can to help, and then let me have the papers back again.

Thank you

Jack Sage.

From Sgt A J Crabb

I can recall a few incidents in the Home Guard, some funny, some more serious. Here are a few. We had an exercise at Aller Hill once, and when it was time to disperse Frank Tottle discovered he had lost one of his anklets, so he got Gilbert Blaffh to retrace with him all the ground they had covered that afternoon in order to find it, but they had no success. As this made them late they decided to give up the hunt. When Frank was mounting his cycle to go home, guess what? His anklet was INSIDE the leg of his trousers!

Small leather leggings

Then there was the incident at Honiton Railway tunnel. The Luppitt Platoon were designated guard duty on Saturday nights. C.S.M. Hooper detailed Sgt Sage together with Sgt Perkins and myself to find out who was responsible for the incident. Every one we interviewed were as innocent as new born babes. No one had been near the tent. It was now my rest period, but as it was toward morning it would be difficult to sleep, however the funny side of the incident came to me, and I decided there and then to write a little poem on the subject:- OVER

Railway Tunnel

Explanatory note by JS. What had happened was — someone had tightened up the guy ropes really tight, and — as any camper knows, hemp ropes shrink considerably on a damp night — the canvas had pulled the central pole through the apex, and the tent descended on the inmates, who had had to crawl out from underneath in any direction.

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Poem
See also
IV 216

"It Happened on a Saturday night
The guy's of ho 2 were tight. *
When do the Sgt's vision there
Appeared a funny sight so rare,
For ho 2 had come "unstuck"
The boy's still floundering in the muck
As one by one they struggled free
From underneath that canopy.
Said Sgt "Clear this up I must
I'll find the ruddy man or bust
Who messed around and wrecked this tent"
And then paid he on vengeance bent
"Yes I'll get that man by heck
And when I do, I'll break his neck."
But each in turn denied the charge
And so the culprits still at Large.

* This referred to the tension of the ropes, not the conditions of the inhabitants! or did it?

Walden
Late?
comment
by JS.

The Platoon Commander, 2nd Lieut W Walden was really worried about the above incident and thought we should all get a roasting for damage to army property.
It later proved to be the last evening when a guard was required on the tunnel and the whole matter was therefore excused.

From Cpl A E Manley

Tunnel

One of the things that stick in my mind when I think of H.G. days, was the time we were guarding the tunnel. It was the middle watch, about 2-30 AM, very dark, no moon. I was doing the rounds of my squad, all was quiet and very still. I had been to the tunnel end, where all was well, when I got to the end out by the road bridge the two on guard there said they heard a noise like someone getting through the wire fence beside the line 'a tinkling sound' then I heard it too. So thought I had better make sure what it was before calling out the guard.

Cautiously I crept down the line, further and further I went, it seemed I'd gone ½ mile, it couldn't have been more than a couple of hundred yards, when peering through the darkness it was there, but I couldn't make out the large bulky shape; then it dawned on me, with great relief, it was the farmers horse, calmly rubbing its backside on a post of the fence. This is the first time this tale has been told, it was just one of those things.

Rifle range

There was another memory that might be of interest when we went to Broadhembury range for shooting practice. L/Cpl Peter Manley was in charge of the Lewes gun, and his turn came ~~to~~ do his stuff. We had to aim at the target and fire a few short bursts of two or three rounds.

Poor old Peter, he opened fire, the firing mechanism jammed and he emptied the magazine without stopping.

I can see him now, grimly hanging on to the gun which was jumping about all over the place, ripping large chunks of turf just in front of him, everybody running for shelter. I don't think he hit the target at all; then silence, and things gradually coming back to normal. But I can't help thinking what might have happened if Peter had not hung on to it and kept it pointing more or less in the right direction.

Parade

I also remember the time there was a parade at Honiton, we took the Lewis gun with its mountings in my old Austin Seven car, and they sent us up in a field behind the Railway Inn, overlooking the playing field where the parade was held. We were posted by a D.R. on a motor bike, with instructions to shoot at any enemy aircraft; we had a very pleasant afternoon and evening there, it was a glorious day. We saw the parade and saw them disperse, but no one came to dismiss us. Then just as we were thinking of dismissing ourselves the D.R. rushed up saying they were very sorry but they had forgotten all about us.

Osborne

Then when we were going home we passed Gen. Osborne's car upside down in the road, he had gone straight on when the road went round a bend. There was

no one around, but eventually we caught up with them walking briskly home none the worse, but with evidently a much clearer head.

See pages 54. 66. 82. Beacon Langford

There are other memories such as the super breakfast at the blacksmith's shop at Beacon after a night exercise at Langford; and the long cold hours in the early ~~hours~~ mornings on Hartridge, just two of us keeping watch for paratroopers; all's well that ends well.

I hope these few lines will help, I think you have a super idea and wish you every success with it.

List of Home Guard Training Manuals

The Home Guard Training Manual
by John Langdon-Davies

The Home Guard Fieldcraft Manual
by John Langdon-Davies

Small Arms Manual
by Lt. Col. J. A. Barlow

Home Guard Handbook
by John Brophy

Home Guard Drill and Battle Drill
" "

Advanced Training for the Home Guard
" "

Home Guard Proficiency
" "

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From Cpl D Fone

Hartridge Range

1/ Can remember going over the south-east side of Hartridge opening up the old rifle range at the beginning of the war, where they found some old lead bullets from the days when the young men of Luffitt practised in year of the Napoleonic scare during the latter half of the 19th Century, in those days they had a target of tin which they whitewashed over.

2/ Can remember going to the old grenade store which was situated in the old Pox-mould pit at the top of the common at Toh Hall.

Kitchen

3/ Can remember the Building of the field kitchen one afternoon, which is situated by Calhayes near the old Mount Stephens saw pit, as you well know this was never used.

Tunnel

4/ Can remember guarding the Honiton Railway Tunnel and begging coal from the slow 9pm goods train, to keep warm in the railway hut by the track.

I am sorry I cannot remember small items as the time which has elapsed is too long.

Cut in stone on the east face of the doorway leading from Luffitt Church tower staircase to the first chamber

1663 T.H. 1663 A.H. 1663

From Pte. F. J. Pulman

One special memory I would like to recall was when we were out on exercises one day. There was an assault being made on the Vicarage supposing to be the Headquarters. Part of the Platoon were defending and part were attacking, there was a fair old duel between them, but which side eventually won the verdict is beyond my memories. After the assault we were entertained to lunch at the old Vicarage which was prepared by wives and helpers of the Platoon who were highly commended for their efforts. After these vigorous exercises we all had ravenous appetites which I think were all satisfied.

Another incident remembered was when we Tunnel were on duty at the Tunnel, having done ones turn on guard, we returned for break in tents provided, we were almost dozing off within our blankets when all of a sudden someone from exterior of tent stripped us of our blankets and we sure didn't get many winks that night.

On another occasion remembered while being at Tunnel was when being off patrol and in tent about a dozen being present when out of the blue a certain member shouted out 'One of my boots cold and the other's exactly the same' which was followed by tremendous roars of laughter.

Finally I am convinced that the whole company carried out their duties in a friendly whole-hearted and humorous way.

12/3/85

1939. **Britain declares war on Germany.**

See also Vol IV P. 12.

The congregation gathered at Lyppitt Church for the usual 11AM service on Sept 3rd anxious and under suspence, it had been announced on the radio that the Prime Minister would speak to the nation at 11-15AM.

Vicar Tinn

The Vicar, Rev B.A. Tinn had brought his radio to the Church, and the service was delayed so that the congregation could hear the Broadcast.

German troops had crossed the frontiers into Poland and Anglo-French guarantees to the Polish people obliged the Western democracies to render aid. An ultimatum had been sent to Hitler and a request for a reply by 11AM on Sunday Sept 3rd demanded.

P.M. Broadcast.

The following is the text of what we heard from Neville Chamberlain.

War Facts and Figures P 42.

I am speaking to you from the Cabinet room at 10, Downing Street.

This morning the British Ambassador in Berlin (Sir Neville Henderson) handed the German Government a final note, stating that, unless we heard from them by eleven o'clock that they were prepared at once to withdraw their troops from Poland, a state of war would exist between us. I have to tell you now that no such undertaking has