

Wargrave Local History Society

From the archives

The topic for this item in the Wargrave Local History Society's archive collection is the wartime local defence group.

A number of unofficial local volunteer groups had been formed across the country, but (after some debate), the government decided that it would be better to have a nationally organised force to defend important installations and transport links should an invasion occur. As a result, the formation of groups of "Local Defence Volunteers" was announced on 14th May 1940.

An announcement in the Parish Magazine the following month reported that "although the response to the appeal has been very satisfactory, there is still a need for more volunteers" - they were not paid, but were issued with uniform and instructions, such as the "Patrol E amended standing orders for patrol on Wargrave to Crazies Hill road", which is dated July 1st that year. The name "Local Defence Volunteers" was somewhat cumbersome, and so by the time of E Patrol's winter programme, in October 1940, they have become the "Home Guard".

By the autumn of 1941, the Parish Magazine noted that 'in the event of invasion, towns and villages may find themselves temporarily isolated on account of enemy action .. in such circumstances the community would have to live on its own resources'. This was arranged by a Local Defence Committee - the Chairman of the Parish Council (the vicar), the senior Officer of the Home Guard officer, the senior ARP warden, a senior police officer and a Food Organiser - who also happened to be the vicar.

Although when the LDV was formed they were told they would be armed, ammunition was in very short supply, and so in the society collection there is an example of the alternative used for training - a bundle of Christmas cracker inserts which would be tied to the end of a rifle, and go 'bang' when a string was pulled!.

The Home Guard continued to train and patrol the parish until such groups were disbanded at the end of 1945. Before that happened, they held a rifle competition against the Woodley and Sonning platoons. The Wargrave team came third - although the Parish Magazine recorded that Mr Beckford of Wargrave had equalled the highest score.

<p><u>L.D.V. WARGRAVE SUB- SECTION.</u></p> <p><u>PATROL E.</u></p> <p><u>Post on New Road - Wargrave to Crazies Hill 233989.</u></p> <p><u>AMENDED STANDING ORDERS. JULY 1st, 1940 UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">The patrol will consist of 12 men divided into three sections of 4 men each as follows:- Section 1. Vickerman (Patrol Leader) Byles. Collins. Johnson. Section 2. Bennett (Section Leader) Pope Quelch Neighbour. Section 3. Stone (Section Leader) Hermon. Watson. Davies.Each Section will do duty from 21.30 hours to 05.30 hours every third night according to the rota at the end of these orders.Each man in the Section will take it in turn to be on guard for two hours while the three not on guard will rest but be ready for immediate action if called out by the man on guard.Men should have cycles.If a member of a patrol cannot report for duty owing to sickness or other good cause he must make every endeavour to provide a substitute from the reserves. Failing all else he must report his absence to his patrol leader or if he is not available to the Adjutant, Mr. Laing at Orchard Stables, Station Road, Wargrave. There are at present three reserves prepared to do occasional duty if required:- Holland, Elm Villa, Braybrook Road. Walker, Lokoja, Victoria Road. Phelan, 20, School Lane.The position regarding firearms and ammunition changes from day to day. Until all are armed with rifles and adequate ammunition is supplied Section Leaders must make the best use of what is available in consultation with the Patrol Leader.	<p>WL HS</p>	<p><u>W A R G R A V E .</u></p> <p><u>HOME GUARD.</u></p> <p><u>E. PATROL.</u></p> <p><u>WINTER PROGRAMME.</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">As from October 1st., the night guards on outlying posts will be withdrawn and in their place there will be one in-lying piquet of four men each night at the Wargrave Telephone Exchange.The piquet will until further notice go on duty from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. No sentry will be posted but men on duty will remain dressed and have full equipment (so far as issued) with them and be ready for an instant call. Subject to this the piquet can sleep on the beds provided.Each patrol will be responsible for four consecutive nights of duty, one for each section, this will mean that each man will be on duty every twentieth night.During the month of October E. Patrol will be responsible for the nights of the 4th to 7th inclusive and the 24th to 27th inclusive.Bennett's section will be on duty on Oct. 4th and 24th. Stone's " " " " " Oct. 5th and 25th. Johnson's " " " " " Oct. 6th and 26th. Vickerman's " " " " " Oct. 7th and 27th.During E. Patrol's turns of Duty, Four Rifles and Ammunition will be at the telephone exchange and will also be available there in the event of an emergency during the daytime. Greatcoats and capes will also be at the exchange in case of an emergency call. This will only apply until a further issue is made enabling each man to have his own.Blankets will be provided on the beds or men can take their own.The Guard Room is on the right of the entrance hall in the telephone exchange. Until proper blackout arrangements can be made care must be taken with the light in the room.Arrangements for other parades during the winter months are under consideration. They will probably be indoors (lectures etc.) one evening a week and outdoors every other Sunday morning.
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