

From Soldiering to Sport



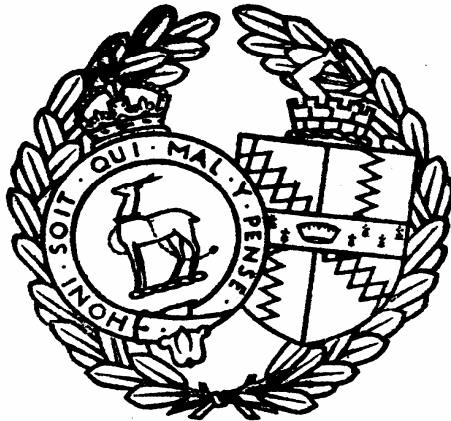
The 49th Bn. Royal Warwickshire Home Guard Attack ! 1943

A brief history of the :-

Home Guard

**49th Warwickshire Home Guard Old
Comrades Association**

49th Rifle & Pistol Club



B.H.G.A. 49th BN. BRANCH

Dedication

“In memory of those who gave their lives and in commemoration of the loyal service of over 100,000 citizens in the Warwickshire (B’ham) Home Guard during the World War 1939-1945.”

We can only echo the wording on the plaque that is in the south transept of St.Martin’s Church, in Birmingham City Centre.
It says it all

Acknowledgements

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'Our members are our asset'



President :- The Rt Hon. Baroness Knight of Collingtree D.B.E.

Editors ;- *Val.P.Lewis – John.S.G. Young*
2005

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FOREWORD

I have learned many lessons during my almost 40 years as a Member of Parliament, but none more true and relevant than the words “hard cases make bad laws”. Legislating hastily in an endeavour to ensure that some terrible happening will never occur again, maybe well-intentioned, but too often it is not thought through, and leads to mistakes, in justice and wrongs.

The law banning handguns was just such a law. Rushed through Parliament as a direct result of the appalling Dunblane massacre.

That was a most terrible thing, but its cause was not the Sport of Target shooting, but the fact that the Police allowed an unstable madman to build up an arsenal of guns. It was the sport and its followers who suffered, although, in my experience there are no more responsible and steady people in our Land than they.

The 49th Rifle & Pistol Club in Birmingham is an excellent example of this, and its members are to be congratulated on the way they have overcome great difficulties and kept their sport alive. In doing so, they have honoured their history which goes back to 1945, when they came into being as a direct descendant of the dear old Home Guard.

They have a fascinating story to tell, and this book tells it. I wish it, and all members of the 49th much success. May they always contrive to hit the target and enjoy doing so.

The Rt. Hon. Baroness Knight of Collingtree D.B.E.

In Remembrance of the 1206 Home Guard who died whilst on Active Service

**And to the 2.9 million who just gave
Time, Blood, Sweat and Tears**

When, on the evening of 14th May 1940, Anthony Eden made his radio appeal for men aged 17 to 65 years to join a home defence force he was aware of two apparent truths. Firstly, the British Expeditionary Force could well be lost and secondly if that happened, it would only be a short time before German forces staged a landing in England.

The good fortune that allowed the success of the Dunkirk evacuation and the sacrifices that won the Battle of Britain were in the future. Even then 250,000 tons of supplies, most of the Army's automatic weapons and more than 50,000 men were captured, and Fighter Command lost many of its most experienced pilots.

But in those first 24 hours in May, 250,000 men signed on as recruits in what was named the Local Defence Volunteers. With no uniforms (even armbands were in short supply) and a hodge-podge of weapons (a golf club was favoured if a shotgun was unavailable) the recruits hastily formed themselves into units and commenced to patrol their home areas. In some cases, with rather too much zest. In the first three weeks of June, over a dozen motorists were shot dead by L.D.V. and a strong letter went out to units to rein in the enthusiasm of the troops.



Morris Commercial LDV on Parade 1940

And what troops! 400,000 by the end of May. 1,456,000 by the end of June 1940 and 40% of them with experience of the Great War. All classes volunteered (An East Sussex company had five retired generals, some serving as privates, and prominent U.S. citizens residing in London formed an American Home Guard company), all ages (Thomas Walton shaded the truth on his enrolment form as he was aged 84 at the time) and all wanting that elusive firearm to defend the country.

For that was the problem: the British Army required all the weapons available and alternative sources had to be found. The Committee for American Aid for Defence of Great Britain collected many sporting and hunting rifles in the U.S. and sent them to the U.K. From Canada, 75,000 Ross rifles were despatched and the United States Army released 100,000 P.17 rifles that it had stored since the Great War, together with over 20,000 Browning Automatic Rifles.

By the end of August over 550,000 rifles and shotguns had been distributed, but they still had to be shared between 1.5 million men. Uniforms started to arrive- some times just the trousers, sometimes just jackets, but all in despised denim which was almost impossible to tailor into any degree of smartness. They were getting there - they even had a new name. Winston Churchill had disliked the name 'Local Defence Volunteers' (quickly satirised as ' Look, Duck and Vanish') and on 22 July 1940 the true Home Guard was born.

But what was the Home Guard to do? At its inception the view was that it should operate in its own local areas and harass any enemy, whether they landed by sea or air. Whilst the Southern coastline was being defended by the Regular Army with help from the local Home Guard, the use of paratroops and gliders in the invasion of Holland had raised the unpleasant fact that nowhere in the South of England was safe from a lightning airborne attack. Therefore the strength of the Home Guard was that it could stage holding actions and delay and harass the invaders until an army unit could deploy and carry out a more conventional defence.

The Home Guard knew its own backyard and could patrol it and be very soon aware of anything at all suspicious. And patrol they did; In butchers' vans, on horseback in the Welsh Hills , the Yorkshire Moors and the New Forest (15 shillings a month was paid for providing your own approved mount and saddlery).

Cycle companies were formed. The Upper Thames Patrol was formed and patrolled 140 miles of the Thames by water, the only Home Guard unit controlled by the Royal Navy.

In 1942 women were allowed to join the Home Guard as auxiliaries and do admin. work and catering etc., all things that some had been doing unofficially since the days of the L.D.V.

But the real Auxiliaries were the Home Guards who appeared in no records, attended no parades, they had no Company billets. Except to a very few people in the know, the 201(Scotland), 202(North of England) and 203(South of England) Battalions did not exist. Secretly selected from countrymen, poachers,

gamekeepers, woodsmen and suchlike these men were suggested by the local senior police officer, these were the Home Guards secret weapon. Grouped in units of six, they were to remain behind after enemy units had captured their local area and hide in specially constructed underground bunkers.

Armed with large amounts of explosives and the very best weapons available, they were to surface when the enemy thought it had obtained and controlled its objective. Their mission was to strike at night, blowing up fuel dumps, assassinating collaborators and destroying lines of communication. These auxiliary units would have created their own reign of mayhem and uncertainty.

That would have had a disastrous effect on enemy morale.

But it would have been a short life, a veteran of the Auxiliaries stated that they expected to survive no more than a week. If not killed in battle, they could expect no mercy in the hands of the German Army. As the German High Command had already warned all Home Guards that they would be regarded as *francs tireurs* and would be put to death on capture.

By the end of September 1940 the Battle of Britain was won and many a Luftwaffe airman who landed on British soil were greeted by the Home Guard who just hoped he would do something silly. Now was the time to take control of the Home Guard, develop its strengths and plot its useful future.

From Dad's Army to Band Of Brothers

First of all there was a shedding of the older members. All over 60 were redirected into the various civil defence organisations. Anyone over 50 was allowed to remain but given a more sedentary role such as admin. and communication duties.

Battalions were given the honour of wearing the cap badge of their local Army regiments and in February 1941 standard military ranks were introduced and Home Guard officers were given formal commissions (though only allowed second class travel when on Home Guard business).

It was decided that in the future the role of the Home Guard was to be more of a static force- securing and guarding its own area's key installations such as electrical installations, gas works and railway lines, and their factories.

At this time, Britain's munitions production was soaring and there was always the chance of airborne landings to seek to destroy key facilities. Therefore many factories had raised their own Home Guard units. Local manufacturers such as Austin, Rover and Joseph Lucas were in the forefront in doing this. Though not truly in munitions work, H.P. Sauce and Ansell's Brewery joined together to form a Home Guard Company. The Great Western Railway recruited over 35,000 staff into its own battalions.

Though invasion now seemed less of a threat, there was still the strength of the Luftwaffe to consider. Though the Blitz had not produced the terrible death toll that military minds had predicted before the War, bombing could undermine the progress of the War and our attempt to open a Second Front in Western Europe. Therefore Anti-Aircraft Artillery (Ack-Ack) was a prime candidate for Home Guard inclusion.

By May 1942 over 11,000 Home Guard had trained in A.A. and by late Summer 1944 over 141,000 were engaged in A.A. batteries.

Manning both light and heavy A.A. guns, together with rocket batteries, the Home Guard enabled the Army to release tens of thousands of troops for other duties, again showing the ability of the Home Guard to provide a valid and long term contribution to the defence of the United Kingdom.

To train the volunteers, battle schools were created to train instructors in the ways of fighting the Blitzkrieg tactics of any invaders. Initially, many of the teachers at these schools were refugees who had fought in the Spanish Civil War. But they were replaced when it was thought that they might be in sympathy with the U.S.S.R, who in the early days of the War appeared to be far too friendly with Germany.

The Molotov Cocktail (a bomb made from a petrol-filled bottle) was one of the weapons from the Spanish Civil War that the Home Guard adopted, together with the ideas developed around the skills for house-to-house fighting.

Training and the diversification of the role of the Home Guard continued right up until the summer of 1944 and the D-Day landings. By then the threat of any invasion was passed and the enthusiasm that had kept the Home Guard at the peak of its powers started to wane. On the 6th September 1944 all operational duties were suspended and attendance became voluntary, the first time since conscription into the Home Guard started in January 1942. But the Home Guard had its final moment of glory when, on 3rd December 1944, 7,000 representing all units marched with fixed bayonets through the centre of London to an inspection by His Majesty the King.

It was not until 31st December 1945 that the Home Guard was officially disbanded, but even then the War Office realised that such a well trained band of men should be kept in contact with and actively encouraged by the formation of Old Comrades associations and, within them, Shooting sections were encouraged. And therefore the 49th Rifle and Pistol Club was born.

In 1952 during the Korean War, the Home Guard was reformed but either the Red Menace was too far away or the Nation was tired of the thought of warfare on its doorstep and membership never came anywhere near sufficient for it to be a credible force. With a target of 125,000 members, it only achieved a maximum of 37,000 by 1955 and on 31st July 1957 it was wound up.

Would the Home Guard of the 1940's have been successful in carrying out its part in the defence against invasion? In its early days when an invasion was most likely, its ability to inflict other than pinpricks would have depended on luck. Warfare is full of times when one well-aimed shot, one well-placed booby trap has altered the course of a battle .

The Home Guard would have at least been a great irritant and the Auxiliary Units would have caused damage out of all proportion to their numbers. No German officer or sympathiser could have slept easy in his bed until he knew all resistance had been stamped out. Even if the Home Guard had just faded

back into their homes, it would be worrying for any invader to know that somewhere there were hundreds of thousands of men (and women) who had received some military training and who knew where and how to obtain a gun. There would have been massacres of captured Home Guard and reprisals against their families, but experience has shown that that type of treatment of an occupied country has only one result – a Resistance Movement.

At a later stage of the War, an aerial assault on key factories or utilities might well have been an entirely different matter. Factory-based units who would have worked together and trained together, would know their surroundings like the backs of their hands and many Home Guard were better equipped with automatic weapons than regular Army units. An attack by paratroops or glider borne troops that only went slightly awry would have been stamped on and stamped out without a doubt.

We were lucky that neither scenario ever took place.

Please, just remember the 1206 Home Guard who died on Active Service whilst making sure that at least there was an option other than Surrender.



Morris Commercial LDV March Past 1940

Doug Freeman
6/12/05

Memories

In answer to our request for memories we received the following Letter from:-
George Donohoe, aged 73 in 2005. Who now lives in Luton

I went to Knowle Parochial School in the 1940's and remember the Home Guard very well because my father Pat was a member. I used to play with his .303 Lee Enfield, and I think I was issued with the same rifle when I joined the 5th Battalion, The Royal Warwickshire Army Cadets in Solihull, when I was 12 years old in 1944.

The only fighting I did was in the boxing ring, as I was 5th Battn. Flyweight Champion, because no one would fight me. But I lost to a Cadet 'Hedge' of the 6th Battn, from Coventry, in the championships.

When my Father used to be out on manoeuvres with the Home Guard, he always took his ferret with him and would come home with a couple of rabbits. I was also in the First Knowle Boy Scouts, and I am still waiting for my War Defence Medal, as no one remembers how the Scouts helped the War effort by collecting scrap metal, paper and Toothpaste tubes which were made of lead in those days.

My Grandfather George, was in the Second Battalion The Royal Warwickshire, and was on reserve when the First World War broke out, having served in India. He was sent to Ypres, and was killed in the second battle. I have all of my grandmother's memorabilia, including a book which lists all of the men from Birmingham who were killed in the First World War.

When the Home Guard were called to arms in 1942 a German Bomber looking for the Gas Works at Solihull, got caught in the search lights and got hit by anti aircraft fire, so that he could gain height and get away he dropped his bombs over Knowle. But when the Home Guard investigated all they found were two of Farmer Tossy Burton's cows – dead in the field.

The Home Guard were called out again to assist when an American Bomber, returning from a raid over Europe had been hit and was badly damaged. They were within 3 miles of their home airfield at Honiley, just beyond Chadwick End, there was a large American Airfield. Unfortunately the plane crashed into a tree on the farm just below Stripes Hill on the Warwick Road, the crew jumped out, but they were too low, although I only saw one parachute entangled in the tree in the same spot as the crashed plane.

Working at Johnson's farm in Knowle my father was in a reserved occupation as were a lot of the Home Guard Volunteers. But we must not forget the Women's Voluntary Service, that my mother was a member of. She worked at the Rover Motor Company, helping to make tanks. She used to earn about £15 to £20 per week, good money in those days All my father got as a lorry driver, delivering bricks was £4. 10s. 0d per week.

Because Birmingham and Coventry were being bombed so heavily, all of our relatives descended upon us, and we had over twenty people in a three bedroom house.

The Home Guard and Air Raid Wardens were inundated with calls for assistance. Birmingham was one big bonfire to the north and Coventry one big bonfire to the south. Even the American Airmen who were living in big Nissen huts in Knowle volunteered to help.

You must forgive me for digressing; I am now 73 years of age and not many people are interested in Old Peoples tales. Although I do forget once a person has passed 70 years of age they are allowed to reverse the figures, so I am only 37. My brother Patrick served in the Royal Engineers in Korea.

Bill Holland, who owned and ran Hollands Garage, in Lodge Road, Knowle was an avid member of the Home Guard, his rank was that of Sergeant. I think the commanding officer was Major Bullock who I know was the Squire of Knowle, and who lived in Knowle Hall, Kenilworth Road, Knowle. Most of the old Soldiers at Knowle British Legion will tell you about Major Bullock. The reason I was associated with him, besides being a member of Knowle British Legion (of which Major Bullock was President) was he also used to help our Scout Group and allowed us to camp on his fields, the only trouble being that we had to share the field with his cows, and they were not house trained.

I have a book written by Miss Eva Wooton who was my cub mistress, and a very well known lady in Knowle, she never married. She was engaged to be married, but her husband to be, who was an Officer in the Royal Warwickshire Regiment was killed at Ypres. Her book is the history of the "Forest of Arden" and I am sure it will have some knowledge in it about the Knowle Home Guard. She was a nurse at the time, at least she nursed me when I broke my leg playing football. I will send a copy of this letter to my Brother Patrick Donohoe. I bought a copy of Eva Wootons book for him also, his copy may be more readily available. I hope that you find my communication of interest, I have no doubt that you are already aware of some of the facts that I have related to you. We actually may be associated. I went to school with a Lewis, I was in the boy scouts with a Lewis. When I played for Luton Rugby Club, our scrum half was a Lewis, and I actually used your Lewis Gun when I was in the Army Cadets.

It's a small world.

*Good Luck and best wishes with
Your Endeavours,*

*Yours sincerely
George L H Donohoe*

Memories of Harry James. Aged 96 in 2005

Harry James has memories of the two world Wars, During World War 1 at the age of 7 or 8 he used to do what he refers to as the baccy run for the disabled soldiers who had returned home, he helped to push them around in their wheelchairs.

He is very unassuming and reluctant to say too much about what he did during the war, but we think, that suffice to say, the local school have a plaque on the wall dedicated to him.

During the Second World War he worked at a factory in Birmingham City Centre - A.J.Homer, who made parts for planes, mines and depth charges for the Royal Navy.

Harry James was instrumental in designing a filter for motor cycles for our troops who were fighting in the desert. The sand was causing major problems in keeping them running.

Harry became a member of the Factories Home Guard and told us that the training took place at the Factory and was done by the officials.

He said when the sirens started it was distressing to see the Mothers rushing to get their children from school and to the safety of the shelter, and the concern mirrored on the faces of the old people as they went to the shelters wondering if their homes would be there when they came out,

During the war, Harry lived in Lapworth and used to cycle to work in Birmingham and back every day, 25 miles in total.

When he was in the Home Guard he would do a 12 hour shift at the factory and then go on duty with his HG unit in Moseley. He recalled that once while cycling home there was a plane crashed in Box Tree Lane and he could see the pilot.

One evening during a raid he was patrolling down Wake Green Road and saw a bundle on the pavement, he went to investigate and found it was a pregnant woman who had collapsed; he tried to get help at some of the local houses but could get no one to answer. When he came to a house with a car on the drive he persisted until he got someone to answer his knocking. Harry and the car owner got the lady to the local maternity Hospital, (Sorrento Maternity Hospital, in Wake Green Road Moseley, now long gone) which was fortunately just down the road, The grateful Mother when she gave birth to a bonny bouncing son, named him 'Harry' after her saviour.

Memories of Dennis Blissett Aged 79 in 2005

When we met Dennis he was all prepared for us, with his front room table awash with memorabilia including his Defence Medal. Those who served in the Home Guard, Cadets and Air Raid Wardens during the war, were entitled to this award, unfortunate there are a great number of those that qualified that did not receive them as they were supposed to make a claim for the award and a great deal of those that served did not bother.



The Defence Medal and Certificate of Dennis Blissett

Dennis was a Cadet prior to the start of the war and was attached to the Stoney Lane Barracks, (where the 49th used to draw their ammunition from). He remembers Sgt Major Sheldon

When war broke out he was quickly put into service along with the other cadets. To act as Fire Watch they took over a bombed house in 124 Wilton Road, Sparkhill. This they converted from a derelict house to a billet, with all the comforts of home, plus a dart board, and snooker table. He did not tell us where they had obtained them from !

This house became know as the cadet house and apart from their jumping off point for the patrols they made it into a club house. He remembers that on cold dark nights the glow of the roaring fire in the converted living room made life a little easier to bear. From this house they used to patrol the area every night on a rota system checking for lights and spotting and dealing with incendiaries, helping when and where they could, following air raids.

He showed us a number of photographs which showed his unit in action. One was on parade in Kings Heath on a Victory in Europe Parade

Dennis served in the cadets for 5 yrs 140 days, and has Endurance Test Certificates and a number of citations. The picture below shows some of these and the picture on the bottom left of the table is of the Solihull Rover Home Guard with 50 men, two with machine guns and two Despatch Riders



The lads at rest in the club room



Taking the salute for the VE Parade



Kings Heath Victory Parade



Dennis with some of his memories

Compiled by John Young 2005.

49th Battalion Warwickshire Home Guard: Weapons Chapter and what could have happened

Formation of the LDV

In hindsight it can be seen that England was under the imminent threat of invasion for only 2 months during the whole of the Second World War, these were September and early October 1940. How is this assertion justified?

June 1940 had seen the British Expeditionary Force finally thrown out of France, first at Dunkirk in May, and then from North West France in June. The German Army needed to regroup and re-supply and very rapidly re deploy if there was to be any chance of a successful invasion of southern England before the onset on autumn weather. While the Army was reorganising, the Luftwaffe was charged with achieving at least local air superiority over the potential landing areas. This would probably take July and August if the RAF could be partially or completely defeated. Adding to the military uncertainty was Hitler's preference for achieving an armistice. Although Winston Churchill had replaced Neville Chamberlain in May as Prime Minister, Hitler had good reason to hope that British politics would do this for him. After all, there were a substantial number of senior British politicians in favour of making peace with Germany. Lord Halifax, the Foreign Secretary was chief among the appeasement camp. This lack of resolute leadership by Hitler led to further delay and the lack of a sense of urgency in the invasion planning.

On the night of May 14th, only 4 days after the Germany Army launched its Blitzkrieg attack on France Holland and Belgium, Anthony Eden made his first speech to the nation as Secretary of State for War. His speech, over the wireless, came just after the BBC News. He spoke in "earnest tones", and after describing the German tactics particularly in regard to the use of paratroops continued. "In order to leave nothing to chance and to supplement resources as yet untapped and the means of defence already arranged, we are going to ask to help us in a manner which I know will be welcome to thousands of you. He then called for "large numbers of men between the ages of 17 and 65 to come forward now and offer their services The new force which is now to be raised will be the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV).

The LDV becomes the Home Guard

Less than 8 weeks after Anthony Eden's exhortation to join the LDV, on June 26th the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, sent a note to Eden proposing that the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV), become the "Home Guard". Churchill's reasons for the suggestion were based simply on his feeling that "Home Guard" had a more heroic ring to it. His suggestion was not wholly welcomed by the Eden, or the War Dept, both of whom felt that the term "LDV" had already entered "passed into current military jargon. It took Churchill a full month until July 22nd to force through the name change. He did this by popularising his suggest at every opportunity both inside and outside Parliament. General Pownall noted with dismay and accuracy that the name change would cost at least £40,000 (perhaps £4 million at today's prices). An expensive gesture!

The Home Guard Role

Undoubtedly, the key defence role would be carried out by the Regular Army, however the Home Guard's role in Autumn was seen by Area Commanders in differing terms, most saw it as:

- Guarding vulnerable points,
- Maintaining para-troop watch,
- Providing the Regular Army with local knowledge,
- Manning defences such as strong points and some AA batteries.
- Deter fifth columnists

However, some Area Commanders wished to use the Home Guard in a more aggressive combat role, "to take prompt and suitable action against the enemy..." in the words of Northern Command orders to the LDV in July 1940.

By coincidence the writer's Grandfather was platoon commander of the Bisley Platoon of the 1st Surrey Battalion Home Guard, and from the copies of Major (Lieutenant Home Guard) Pixley's, orders some idea of the Home Guard's role and potential for action can be gained.

The Bisley platoon had a strength of around 125 men, only a proportion of whom would be on duty at any one time. Prior to invasion they were spread out in look out positions across a substantial area of north west Surrey, the furthest 2 sections being around 7 miles apart. They were deployed:-

Platoon HQ Hill Place Knaphill Platoon commander's base and stores

Platoon 2i/c and section Goldsworth Nursery, Woking

29 men in the Bisley Clock tower section, 1000 yd point Bisley Camp

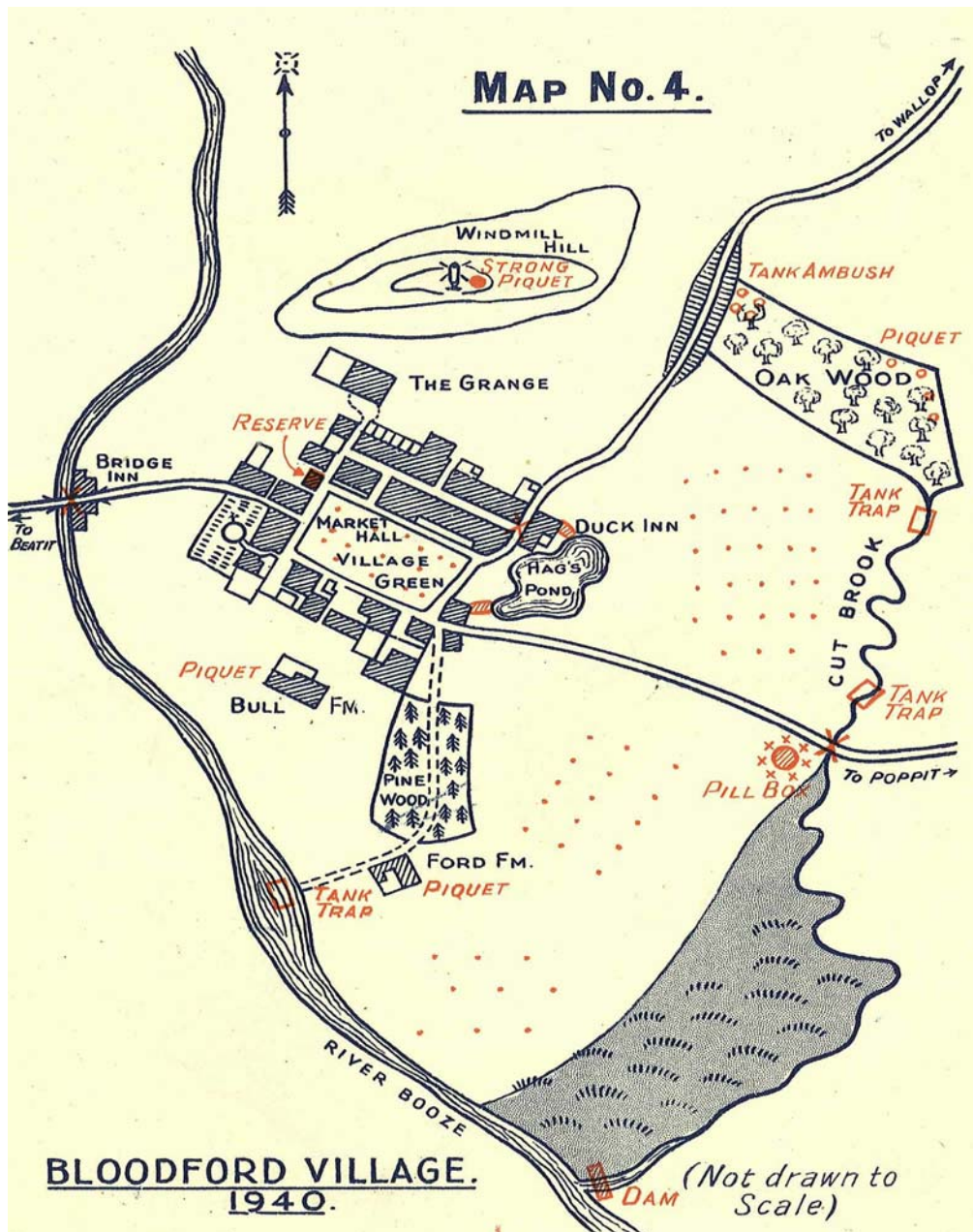
Brookwood telephone exchange section, (near modern Brookwood station)

New England Hill section, near West End

Communications were by telephone or cycle mounted courier, no radios!

Spread out in penny packets even in the outer suburbia of the South East, the Home Guard could do little other than monitor the landings of paratroops. Volunteers on duty were issued with 10 rounds per rifle and the section MG with 300 / 100 dependant on the section. Further supplies were available from Platoon HQ, but would never have arrived in time to prevent the observation post from being over-run.

Once the invasion had taken place the Home Guard's role would have changed and been based on the static defence of strong points, farms, villages road, rail, or river bridges. The Home Guard Manual "The Defence of Bloodford Village" sets the scene, and instructs on how to turn your village into a strongpoint. This is presented in the format of a story during which the Platoon i/c has a number of prophetic dreams that enable him to fortify the village and ultimately to defeat the invaders.



What happened.

Fighter Command denies the Home Guard action.

It should be remembered that as the LDV was evolving into the Home Guard, the RAF's Fighter Command was fighting the battle that would cost the Home Guard their opportunity to see action. The Germans had to achieve air superiority, over southern Britain and during July the Battle of Britain began to develop its momentum. The epic air battles that were to scar the skies of southern England for the next 10 long weeks, had commenced with raids on convoys moving up and down the Channel. While Fighter Command was up everyday to intercept the Luftwaffe's raids, Bomber Command, in Wellingtons, Hampdens and Whitleys was hammering the growing barge concentrations, in the Belgian and French channel ports. The Battle of Britain has been examined in detail from every aspect, the de-bunkers have worked hard to revise history,

but the outcome remains the same. Air superiority could not be established and without it an invasion became a risk, unacceptable even to Hitler and the Nazi high command. September slipped into October and with the shortening days and passing weeks, the immediate risk of invasion past with them.

The autumn of 1940 saw the Luftwaffe switch for daylight air raids to the nocturnal blitzing of London, Birmingham and other British industrial cities. Nonetheless, the winter of 1940 provided Britain with the opportunity to re-organise the Regular and Territorial Armies so severely savaged six months earlier, and recruits filled the gaps in the ranks. The RAF greatly strengthened, Spitfire squadrons began to out those equipped with Hurricanes. The Battle of the Atlantic had already started and was to dominate much of Allied thinking over the next two years.

Unknown to the men of the Home Guard Battalions, their hour was already passed. During the short winter days of early 1941, Hitler had decided that his objectives were best served by a change in strategy, instead of invading Britain, the German Army would invade Russia. Although the events of spring 1941 would delay this invasion until June, the threat to the United Kingdom had already passed.

Turning from the real to the hypothetical, what would have had to happen for the Birmingham Home Guard battalions to have found action thrust upon them. We will create a scenario that leads to this circumstance, and look at what our battalions would have been equipped with for the city's defence.

What might have happened?

Fall Seelowe/Operation Sealion

What follows is a scenario created so that the 49th Battalion Warwickshire Home Guard could have been brought to battle. We must start it with a partial defeat of the RAF in the Battle of Britain during August of 1940, sufficient for Hitler to authorise Operation Sealion, the invasion of England. Sealion, was based on a full scale deployment of up to 330.000 soldiers from the German 9 and 16 Armies. Following initial landings on the South East coast, Phase 1 planned the capture of southern England on a line Gravesend to Portsmouth. In Phase 2, London was to be isolated by a north westerly strike in the direction of Oxford and Gloucester. At least that was the plan and as every soldier the plan changes immediately on execution.

Sealion begins

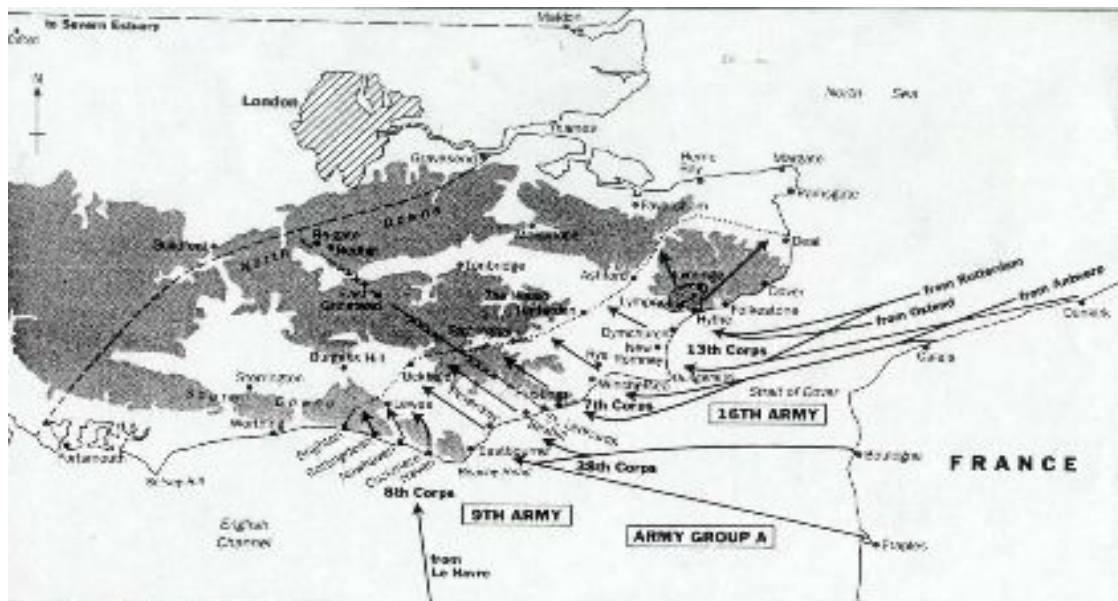
Despite the regular bombing of the barge concentrations at their embarkation locations, Zeebrugge, Ostend, and Neuport in Belgium, and Dunkirk and Calais in France, insufficient damage has been caused to prevent the conversions and loading of the invasion fleet. German E boats and aircraft have laid massive minefields either side of the routes across the Channel and on September 18th, the invasion is launched, at three landing areas, from east to west, Hythe, Lydd, Rye, Hastings, and Newhaven. The Royal Navy launched ferocious attacks on the German naval forces flanking the invasion fleet, and succeeded in breaking through causing serious damage to barges. Unfortunately in the course of the naval action German air superiority decimated the Royal Navy's coastal forces

and again Luftwaffe intervention damaged or destroyed the Fleet deployed from Plymouth and Portsmouth.

The British Government had decided that, in view of the very poor state of the Army after its defeat in France, the German plans for invasion must be frustrated either in the air, or if that failed, by naval action. It must be remembered that in 1940 the vulnerability of large ships (cruisers and battleships) to air attack was largely unknown. This awful truth was rammed home by the destruction of the Royal Navy's North Atlantic Fleet in the Battle of the North Sea between September 19th and 21st as it rushed south to attack the northern flank of the invasion route.

On land, paratroopers were dropped west of Dover on the night of September 17th. Another diversionary group were dropped near Crowborough and met up with the leading elements of central invasion force which had landed near Bexhill. As events unfolded, poor communications hampered the defenders efforts to coordinate the Army and Home Guard units in the immediate invasion areas, and yet again the Luftwaffe was able disrupt reinforcement columns and blind the British intelligence gathering units.

The German Plan



Folkestone and Dover fell within 24 hours of the initial landings, securing a major and a minor port for reinforcements and the continued the supply of the invasion. To the west, the Brighton-Hove urban area, with the valuable port of Shoreham was stoutly defended by the British, thus slowing the German advance. Difficulties with re-supply and reinforcement meant that it was two weeks before German control extended from Worthing to Deal on the coast and an area inland bounded by Horsham, Reigate, Sevenoaks and Maidstone had fallen to German occupation. Compared to the Battle of France this was slow going indeed. However, during this time the main striking force of Panzer divisions had been built up in the north west corner of the German occupied zone.

Striking at the Midlands

The British had quite reasonably assumed that London, capital city and seat of Government, would be the next target. A reasonable deduction, as German troops had already captured sections of the North Downs just north of Reigate and could look down to Croydon and central London. The vital RAF bases at Croydon, Kenley, and Biggin Hill were under artillery fire. In the event, the German 16th Army attack was launched on October 14th, it was aimed west and north on a line Guildford, Reading, Oxford, the aim being to split London from the industrial Midlands and the major west coast ports, in particular Bristol and Liverpool.

It took the leading German units four days to reach Oxford where they paused for a full week to consolidate, and to defend the flanks of the German attack against determined attacks from British forces based in both Southampton and London. A particularly desperate battle took place on the North Downs, as loss of control would have allowed the British oversight of vast areas of the invasion routes. Despite the redeployment of forces to stem the British attacks on their northern flank, the strike forces in occupied Oxford making ready its next move.

The plan was for a two pronged attack into the west Midlands conurbation via south Birmingham. Two columns would strike north west from Oxford, one following the line of the A44 via Chipping Norton and Stratford upon Avon, the other following the A41, would capture Banbury, and then move on Warwick. The River Avon would be crossed at Stratford to the west and Warwick to the east. Where ever possible pontoon bridges would be used to supplement the main road bridges. For the second time in the campaign paratroops would be used. This time to secure the bridges at Stratford and Warwick before they could be destroyed. The lesser known bridge at Hampton Lucy was also seized by a rapid armoured car advance.

Only light resistance was encountered by the German spear head at Stratford, although a mixed force of Home Guard and Army was encountered at Barford and Warwick where strong resistance was encountered. A lesser known bridge was also captured at Hampton Lucy, and with the pontoon bridges to supplement the main road bridges, the Panzers were able to push on in the direction of the southern Birmingham and Solihull. The good fortune of capturing the three road bridges was put down to good luck and the speed of the advance from Oxford having caught the local forces off balance. The German platoons assigned to push out the flanks of the attack on Warwick were surprised by the increasingly determined resistance encountered as they pushed out towards the centre of Leamington and as reinforcements were unavailable had to go on the defensive between Warwick and Leamington. Reconnaissance units pushing North East towards Coventry ran into similarly strong resistance when they tried to explore opportunities towards Coventry, and were held in a furious street battle that saw the High Street of Kenilworth littered with the hulks of six armoured cars and half tracks. Again the lack of reinforcements meant that the German units went on the defensive and the half captured Kenilworth became part of the eastern boundary the German thrust into the English Midlands.

To the west similar strong resistance was encountered by German light forces investigating the Redditch area. At the German Tactical Headquarters the first suspicions were forming that while events had been unfolding to their plan, it had been almost too easy. Were they the side that held the initiative or were the British sucking them into a battle on ground of their own choosing, an urban battlefield that offer the defence the advantage, would soak up infantry, and minimise the advantages of the panzers?

In the air the past 2 weeks had seen a re-emergence of the Royal Air Force, being used even more skilfully than in the battle over southern England in August. New supplies of Hurricanes, from the Hawker factory in Kingston on Thames, a limited number of Spitfires and new American fighters such as the Curtis P36 Hawk, and P40 Tomahawk, were penetrating the Luftwaffe's fighter cover and were frequently neutralising the support expected by the German Army from the Stuka squadrons, when the army ran into stronger British units.

The German assault on southern Birmingham had developed into a three axis attack,

To the west into the southern suburbs up the A from Redditch which had been masked so that the main Redditch Birmingham road could be used as a line of attack. The central axis was via the Stratford Road on a line Hockley Heath, Hall Green, to the industrial areas just south of the City Centre. The eastern axis focused on the A41 Warwick Rd and would advance Knowle, Solihull , Olton to Acocks Green.

Superficially the German campaign on the Midlands was very successful if slightly behind schedule. However, undermining this apparent success were two key factors, the German's own strategy and the weather. The strategy of striking north west round London had left the eastern flank of the invasion vulnerable to attack from increasingly powerful British forces based in the London suburbs. Further, the failure of the 9 Army to capture the ports of Portsmouth and Southampton had disrupted the German logistical plan and meant that the whole invasion force was short of troops, supplies and reinforcements. German logistics were limited by having to rely on the relatively small ports of Dover, Folkestone and Newhaven (attacked almost nightly by RAF's Bomber Command), Shoreham remained embattled and besieged. Some stores continued to come across the Sussex beaches. The autumn weather had further limited the flow of stores across the Channel as the barges being relied on were river craft and in danger of being swamped or capsized if there was any degree of sea running. Even when landed the re-supply convoys were then under guerrilla attack from "stay behind" forces in southern England.

Thus although the spearhead of the German assault was now piercing the suburbs of southern and south eastern Birmingham, it was being wasted by re-supply and reinforcement problems. Although the German High Command suspected that they might be playing into the hands of the British strategy, capture of the Midlands was a key objective. Further the Fuehrer was insisting on "maintaining the momentum of the attack" and had already replaced two Generals who had urged him to turn again on the Portsmouth/Southampton.

These then are the circumstances that would see the bleeding of Birmingham's Home Guard Battalions (then part of the County of Warwickshire) in battle.

What was the Home Guard going to fight with?

So, with Panzer Divisions approaching the southern suburbs of the West Midlands conurbation, what would be the role of the Warwickshire be, and what equipment would they have?

A major obstacle to this was weaponry, or rather the lack of it. A limited number of SMLEs were issued to LDV units in May, but following the Dunkirk debacle these were withdrawn to re equip the Regular Army. In their place 75,000 Ross rifles were ordered from Canada, and 100,000 P14 and P17s were ordered from the United States. Not a lot to go round a force of nearly a million and a half volunteers!

The following table of equipment was drawn from the papers of the Bisley Platoon. There is no reason to think that the Warwickshire Home Guard would have been better equipped. The Bisley Platoon (180 on strength) had the following arms:

Firearms	
Ross Rifles .303	99
Private Rifles.303	23
<u>Total rifles</u>	<u>122</u>
Shotguns	24
Revolvers .45	4
Browning MG.300	1
Lewis Gun .300	1
BAR .300	1
Tommy Guns .45	1
Grenades	
Molotov	200
Mills	72
AW	192
Ammunition	
.303	6223
.300	1940
.22	1600
.45	750

For 180 men the Platoon had 154 weapons, of which 24 were shotguns, the really bad news is that this was in April 1941, 6 months after the impending battle in our scenario! At 51 rounds per 303 rifle the ammunition allocation was quite generous, however the Machine Gunners allocation at 646 of .300 rounds

would mostly have gone to the Browning with less for the Lewis Gun and less still to the BAR gunner.

The most generous supply was Molotov cocktails at least one per volunteer.

The 49th's Weapons - The P14 and 17

We know from the photographs of the 49th in action that the 49th was armed with P17s, rather than Ross rifles. The P17 with its strong Mauser action was the product of the "Bisley School" of thinking post the Boer War. The "Bisley school" were a group of officers deeply impressed by the Boers' ability to pick off British soldiers at extremely long ranges, well beyond the effective range of the Long Lee Enfields. Although originally specified for a 0.276 round, the P14 was intended to replace both Long Lees and SMLEs, being a more accurate weapon in skilled hands. However a series of problems slowed the introduction of the P14. These included overheating after a few rounds, and barrel splitting if there was the slightest blockage. Its protruding barrel was also more prone to get blocked by careless usage.



The British government ordered large quantities of P14s during the 14-18 War and the US government also ordered large quantities in the US military calibre of 30-06 (.300), this version of the P14 was renamed the P17. After WW 1 these had been put into storage to be purchased by the UK in summer 1940 for issue to the Home Guard with a red band painted on the stock to indicate the .300 bore.

The Ross

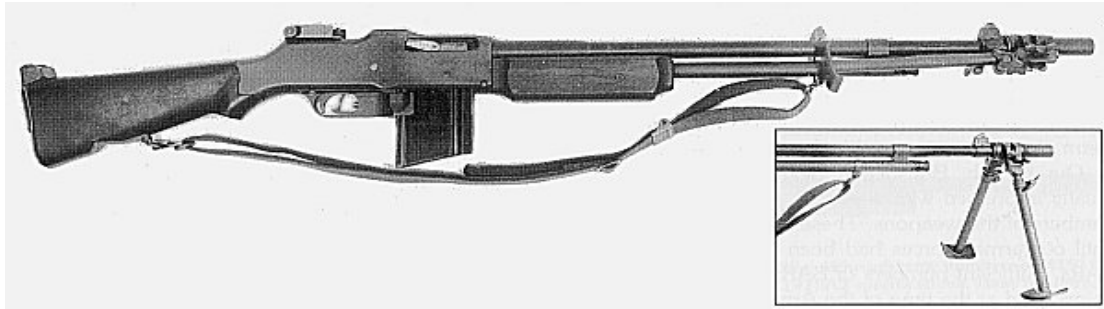
The P14 and 17 were solid, and very accurate weapons that were much more reliable than the straight pull Canadian Ross. Also a product of the "Bisley school of thinking the Ross was very accurate but had proven so prone to stoppages due to mud or dust in the action in Canadian hands in 14-18 that it was withdrawn and replaced by



SMLEs. The SMLE with its 10 round charger filled magazine and very fast bolt action, proved itself a better battle rifle than the P14/17 and other Mauser action rifles as used by the opposition. Dare one say a AK 47, of the first half of the 20th Century!

Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR)

We also know that the 49th used the BAR. The role of the BAR was that of section automatic weapon. As can be seen from the Bisley Platoon's establishment there was a considerable variety of such section/platoon support weapons. The BAR was a solid reliable SLR, but limited in the fire support role as it did not have a quickly detachable barrel. Therefore burst fire must be limited, the 20 round magazine enforced this! The BAR was good enough to serve the US forces throughout World war 2 and the Korean War.



The Browning Water-cooled Heavy Machine Gun

The American equivalent to the Vickers medium machine gun, an excellent piece of kit, particularly in a defensive position, however heavy and not very portable. This would probably have been the central defensive weapon in a home Guard strong point.

Browning Water-cooled Heavy Machine Gun



The Lewis Gun

The Bren of the latter stages of the 14-18 War, light, portable and could be used in the attack. Although the Lewis was prone to stoppages, particularly if the pan shaped magazine was damaged, it was considered an acceptably reliable light machine gun.



Support weapons

At this point the Home Guards armaments go from the elderly to the downright bizarre. We could expect the 49th to have one or several of the following:

The Northover projector



Described as a drain pipe on a tripod for firing Mills bombs propel by a black powder charge ignited by a cap from a child's toy pistol!

The Blacker Bombard



(courtesy of the Imperial War Museum)

The Slaidburn Home Guard web site describes the Bombard as follows:

The 29mm Spigot Mortar or "Blacker Bombard" was invented by Lieutenant-Colonel Blacker in the early years of WW2 as a cheap and easily produced weapon to replace ordnance lost at Dunkirk. It was extremely heavy (around 350lbs) and with a 4 legged portable mounting, reputedly needed a crew of 6 to move it. It perhaps says something for the strength of Slaidburn Home Guard members used to heavy agricultural labour, that they only seem to have required a crew of 3 or 4 men to use it.

The weapon fired a 20lb fin-stabilized anti-tank bomb warhead containing a high explosive charge using black powder as a propellant. The weapon had the drawback of when the warhead hit its target, the fins had a nasty habit of flying backwards along the original trajectory with the resulting danger of injury to the firing crew. The "Bombard" had an effective range with the anti-tank bomb of around 100-150 yards, so the firing crew was expected to wait until any tanks were at close range. It was also capable of firing a 14 lb anti-personnel bomb with a maximum range of around 500 yards. They were fairly accurate and effective at short range. The weapon was rejected by the regular army but saw service with Home Guard and airfield protection units from 1941-1944.

Slaidburn Home Guard trained in local quarries with the weapon but *"we wouldn't have liked to get within a mile of a German tank, let alone 100 yards!"*

Return to the invasion

The 16th Army attack on the southern suburbs of Birmingham was planned to strike into the heart of the City, capture the rail centres and disrupt manufacture of war materials and their supply to the British fronts. The Army consolidated its depleted resources and prepared for what would be a long urban battle, against a determined enemy fighting for their very homes. The increasing pressure on the flanks of the German occupied zone, was trimming supplies, and a new sense of vulnerability was creeping into the German High Command's thinking, this resulted in a slippage of the attack date. Then on December XX, Stalin launched the Russian surprise offensive on German forces in western Poland. Immediately Hitler ordered a withdrawal of the German forces in England to the line Gravesend/ Newhaven. The result was that the 49th never came to battle! As history relates, the German forces were needed on the Eastern Front, not in England, and withdrew under fire, from Dover, Folkestone and Newhaven losing nearly 100,000 men killed and captured in the process. Most of the casualties were incurred on the cross-Channel voyage as the Luftwaffe and German naval forces were unable to fully protect the evacuation convoys, and the heavy sea conditions caused the swamping of many of the Rhine barges being used.

As a result of the temporary success of the German counter offensive against the Russian forces, Japan attacked the United States at Pearl Harbour in December 1941 and the Second War truly became a World War. Ultimately the Russian victory at Stalingrad followed by the Anglo American counter invasion in June of 1944 brought freedom to at least part of Europe. Thankfully peace (of a sort) has reigned in Europe ever since.

Bibliography:

For an alternative view see the results of the 1974 Sandhurst war game at:

<http://www.wargamesdirectory.com/html/articles/various/sealowe.asp>

Tom Waterer 2005

Extracts from O.C.A. Bulletins

The following are extracts from the bulletins which reflect the spirit of comradeship and family that the Home Guard and Old Comrades Association built.

49th WARWICKS H.G. 1ST O.C.A. BULLETIN – AUGUST 1945 **BENEVOLENT FUND.**

A garden Party was held on Saturday 16th June at the Manor Grounds, Northfield, by kind permission of Dame Elizabeth Cadbury M.A. J.P. The gardens were looking beautiful, the clerk of the weather was very kind and a most enjoyable afternoon and evening were spent. There was a large attendance and the party was a great social success, thanks to all those who put in so much work, both before and during the day, under the chairmanship of Major A. M. Anderson D.C.M., M.M. The well-stocked refreshment tent was a popular rendezvous. The displays and side-shows were well supported and the crowds left feeling tired and happy after the evening dance on the green. The Benevolent Fund will benefit substantially by this excellent effort of the O.Cs.

DARTS

A goodly company assembled on the 13th of July in the fine club room at the Beeches to witness the darts match between "A" and "D" Coys., and "The Beeches" Club. Whilst the competition was the chief attraction, a hardened four could be seen fighting out a tough game of solo, while in another corner a small school was engrossed in a game of dominoes. The majority however sat with their ladies round the numerous small tables thoroughly enjoying themselves, and everyone was loath to leave when the proceedings had to be brought to a close at the early hour of 10 o'clock. Privates Murto and Hopwood who were home on leave spent the evening with their O.Cs. The return match was held at the same venue on 27th July. "The Beeches" team on this occasion turned the tables on "A" and "D" Coys. None the less, everyone was perfectly happy and a most friendly atmosphere prevailed throughout the evening. Mr White, "D" Coy's old training officer, received a very pleasant surprise when his younger brother and a friend in the Air Force walked in unexpectedly, both being on a flying visit.

RIFLE CLUB ACTIVITIES

The first outing of the Rifle club took place on Sunday 15th July. Despite almost insuperable last minute difficulties, Captain Grant by his unceasing efforts was able to arrange the necessary transport. The weather in the early morning was unpropitious. Black clouds threatened a downpour, but 24 undeterred members made their way to Kingsbury. A refreshing north-east wind sprang up resulting in a cloudless sunny day. Grouping and application were fired. Everyone was delighted with the outing and a happy atmosphere which prevailed. Some hardy spirits walked to the village during the interval and found the beer very good. They enjoyed equally the cup of tea provided by the Range Warden when the shoot was over. We were pleased to welcome at the shoot Pte. D Carrier who was home on leave. Will any members of the Rifle Club who are willing to take fellow members in their cars to future shoots at Kingsbury please get in touch with Captain Grant. Petrol coupons can be obtained to cover mileage.

PERSONAL PARAGRAPH

There is no truth in the rumour that one of the B.H.Q. bachelor officers is contemplating matrimony; we would however like to extend every good wish to the Coy. Captain's daughter, who recently entered this happy state.

FROM OUR FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT

"Another Home Guard"

Miss Ursula Bower, the recipient of this year's Lawrence of Arabia Medal, has done some remarkable work among the Naga tribesmen on the India Burma frontier.

It was anthropology which originally drew her to the North Cachar hills in Assam, where the primitive Nzemi Nagas with undeniable logic, combined a strong dislike of strangers with the occasional pursuit of head-hunting. Living entirely among these natives, Miss Bower, by her sympathetic understanding with the help of medicine, turned the tribe from their attitude of fierce suspicion toward all outsiders to one of great friendliness to herself.

She did more. Making friends with the Nzemi's traditional enemies the Kukis, she was able when the Japanese infiltration began, to organise among the two tribes a local home guard. There was no little risk to this move, for it entailed giving the tribesmen shotguns. Nzemis and Kukis, however, lived at peace with one another and did excellent work in the hill tracks against the common enemy.

POETS CORNER

How dared we hope,
With busmen on strike,
To get a conveyance
To the Kingsbury site.

The wires they hummed,
The telegrams flew,
How hard Granty worked,
Not one of us knew.

He got us a bus,
He won in the end,
Which just goes to show,
On whom to depend.

We had a good time
with incidents few,
though one marksman got jammed,
How ? Only he knew.

Worty won the shoot,
Though Twasn't quite fair,
"Cos he'd got on his ratter
To stop the sun's glare.

He bought us all tea,
To square us no doubt,
Then we all rattled home
After a lovely day out.

W.H.G.

49th WARWICKS H.G. O.C.A. 2ND BULLETIN – OCTOBER 1945

BENEVOLENT FUND.

The Garden Party at the Manor Grounds referred to in the last Bulletin realised a profit of £177. A fine effort.

CRICKET.

The O.C.A. played Kings Heath on August 12th. The home side batted first and scored 230 for 7. The O.C.A. XI. replied with 187 for 6. They were entertained to tea afterwards at the Club H.Qs..

FROM OUR MILITARY CORRESPONDENT

“Peace to War”

“What are you children quarrelling about?” “Well Mummy now that peace is declared we each want to play a different game.”

FINAL VICTORY PARADE.

An announcement has been received stating that a final Victory Parade will be held in Birmingham at a date to be announced later. Members are requested to inform the Hon. Secretary by return of post if they are willing to attend such a parade. Dress – Home Guard uniform (battle dress, field service cap, gaiters and possibly great coats) will be worn.

49th WARWICKS H.G. O.C.A. 3rd BULLETIN – DECEMBER 1945.

EDITORIAL

This will be the last Bulletin for 1945 and before we write another editorial, Christmas and New Year festivities will be over, and we shall be well into 1946, the first year of peace since 1938. This is a time when goodwill amongst men and women of all sorts and conditions is the keynote. At no other time of the country's history has it been of greater importance and so while we wish you Old Comrades all happiness possible, we also hope you will find and foster good will amongst all those you come into daily contact. We have completed the first year of our O.C.A. and held our first Annual General Meeting; our numbers are growing slowly and we should like to gather in all those H.Gs who are returning from H.M. Forces. Will you do your part to bring the O.C.A. to their notice?

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting took place at the Oak Hotel, Selly Oak on Monday 19th November. The President, Lieut.Col. H.J. Gittoes was in the chair. The meeting was well attended and reflected the great interest the Old Comrades take in the Association. The minutes of the Inaugural Meeting were passed. The Secretary in submitting his report gave an account of the various activities throughout the year. He pointed out the membership totalled 286, which is the fourth largest in Birmingham. The Treasurer submitted a statement of accounts which showed both the ordinary and Benevolent Funds to be in a strong position. It was also mentioned that financial help had been given in a number of necessitous cases. We understand three Old Comrades arrived a fortnight early for the Annual Meeting. They are to be commended for their keenness.

DARTS

“A” and “D” Coys held a return meeting with the Austin O’s and S’s team on 2nd November. The result this time was a victory for the Austin Co. by 6 to 3.

RIFLE CLUB ACTIVITIES

Many members are not yet awake to the possibilities of the Rifle Club. The fact of not being a crack shot need not deter members taking part in the various competitions. The country outing to Kingsbury is in itself well worth while, and when the season re-opens in March we look forward to even bigger attendances than before. The comradeship at Thorpe Street is equally delightful. Come and see for yourselves.

ANNUAL DINNER

The Annual Dinner was held at the King George V Hotel on 7th December and through a happy thought of the Committee it was decided to invite ladies. There was a very good attendance and the function was a great success – the only drawback being the time was all too short.

The President, Lieut. Col. H.J. Gittoes welcomed the guests. His humorous and eloquent speech was greatly enjoyed. In the course of some of his remarks he expressed great pleasure at the presence of the ladies at the First Annual Dinner of the O.C.A. and hoped the innovations would be a permanent one. Col. Piggott proposed the toast of the 49th and in a racy speech referred to the great interest the King and Queen had shown in the Home Guard during their recent visit to Birmingham. Major Vickery replied. Major Parkes proposed the toast of “The Ladies”. He paid a special tribute to the great part they played during the war. Mrs. MacMurray replied on behalf of the ladies.

“C” Coy. held a very successful concert on 10th December. There were many and varied items on the programme including vocalists, a Black Country comedian, a banjoist and Lady instrumentalists. The room was full to overflowing and the audience was very appreciative. Major Anderson who presided referred to the good work being done by the O.C.A. and collection for the Benevolent Fund realised £2. 10. 0d.

PERSONAL PARAGRAPH

We are sorry to hear Captain Chapman of “B” Coy. has met with an accident to his ankle. We hope he will soon be better and back with us at Thorpe Street. A letter has been received from Currier, late of “D” coy. He was at Baghdad awaiting transport to his unit in Egypt. He asked to be remembered to all O.Cs and says he often longs for the old days.

**The Home Guard is to be disbanded on 31st December
– see press announcement**

49th WARWICKS H.G. O.C.A. 4th BULLETIN –MARCH 1946

EDITORIAL

We are sorry there has been some little delay in this issue of the bulletin which has arisen through the absence of one of our editors in Germany. He spent 3 weeks visiting both the British and American Zones. Judging by his contacts with members of the B.A.O.R many are on the point of demobilisation, and he urges all Old Comrades to be ready to help these returning to take their place in civilian life again. They will find many difficulties about housing, food, fuel and clothes. As far as food is concerned he personally was glad to return to the austerity of this country after experiencing the fare offered at Investigators Camps in the British Zone. In the American Zone however he met with what appeared to be almost pre-war luxury. He saw no signs of starvation amongst the Germans and the majority were well-dressed and well-shod. They have however very little to buy with their money except absolute necessities, but plenty to sell provided the buyer will pay in cigarettes or soap. These commodities have a far greater purchasing power than the German currency – one cigarette is equal to 5 marks, the mark being worth 6d – while he had no personal dealings in this market the facts are beyond dispute.

GENERAL MEETING OF THE H.G. ASSOCIATION

This was held at Thorpe Street Barracks on 4th Feb. The chair was taken by Col. J. C. Piggott.

It was decided to commemorate H.G. Sunday on 19th May 1946 at a service to be held at the Parish Church of St Martins at 11.a.m. Please let your Coy Representative know if you would like to attend. Lounge suits will be worn as this will not be a formal parade.

A miniature badge to wear in the buttonhole is being made for the Association. It will be executed in high relief and enamelled in colours. The price will not exceed 1/6d. each and every O.A.C. should place his order immediately with his Coy Representative in order that Capt. Grant may be in a position to advise the Association of the number which will be required by the 49th Battn.

DEFENCE MEDAL

It is expected that shortly application forms (AFB 2068) for the Defence Medal will be available at all Post Offices and an announcement to this effect will be made in the press in due course. The form on completion will be sent to T.A. & A.F. Association, Warwick, for verification of Home Guard Service, and if the award is approved a free issue of Medal Ribbon will be made. Qualification is three years service in the Home Guard or other qualifying service e.g., (A.R.P.) and service can be aggregated. The termination date for the H.G. service is 31st December 1944. The award will only be made on application. The medal itself will not be ready for one or two years.

RIFLE CLUB ACTIVITIES.

On Thursday 21st Feb. a shoot against the 27th Bn .O.C.A. was held at Brandwood House, Kings Heath. The competition was keen and the results very close.

Christmas Party. A most outstanding event was the Christmas Party held at Tinkers Road School on 22nd December organised by “A” and “D” Coys. Two hundred excited children did full justice to the ample fare provided – both food and entertainment – and after shouts of glee at the antics of Mickey Mouse, in which their elders joined, they left for home happy but tired, each bearing a gift in the shape of a toy or a book. The great success of the party was due to the unsparing efforts of a host of helpers

“A” and “D” Coys held the first reunion social of the year at The Beeches on 11th Jan. Many O.C’s and their ladies enjoyed an evening of music and song, good fellowship and friendliness.

“C” Coy are to promote a Bowls Tournament and a Fishing Contest during the coming months

IN LIGHTER VEIN.

All H.Gs are reminded that they must take the buttons off their uniforms if they are to wear them in the garden or to work.

Major W Percy McGeoch’s book “The Triumphs and Tragedies of a Home Guard Company” is full of dry humour as the following extract shows – “Members of the Home Guard are the under-paid, the under-fed, part-worn, sockless, shirtless, breathless Army... Must be tactful in answering C.Os. and neighbours who complain of their noisy boots in the early hours of the morning.... They must know how to deal with paratroops and angry wives; how to move unseen and unheard, sometimes through the back entrances of the local”.

COMING EVENTS.

Victory Day on Whit Saturday the 8th June. Details of local celebrations will be announced later.

TO-DAYS SLOGAN

HOME GUARDeners can save our food

Dig to-day and eat to-morrow.

49th WARWICKS H.G. O.C.A. 5th BULLETIN – JUNE 1946

EDITORIAL

One or two O.Cs have very quietly hinted that the bulletin is a wee bit on the heavy side and needs a somewhat lighter touch. We quite agree and suggest as an antidote a visit to one of the Coy's social evenings – the Thorpe St. miniature range or Kingsbury. There they will find no lack of merry quip or jest, with a little quiet leg pulling. There is one question however we would like to mention and that is the Defence Medal. We understand in many cases there is a reluctance to claim it. We think this is a great pity – our view being that the medal is not strictly a distinction but an emblem. We hope all H.G's who have not done so will apply immediately on form AFB 2068 which may be obtained at any Post Office.

Kingsbury Range

The first outdoor shoot for 1946 was held on 17th March. We were joined by the 27th O.C.A. The innovation was a great success and everyone enjoyed it. One member was heard to say when carrying the paste pot and paper patches to the butts "I used to do this as a duty but never thought I should do it because I liked it". The early morning weather was a bit trying and the solitary lark who greeting us with a song soon packed up. The second shoot at Kingsbury was favoured with glorious weather. The sun shone all day and the atmosphere was beautifully clear. The winner's motto is "If you wish to shoot well consult an oculist.

With our friends the 27th we spent the rainy day of 19th May at Kingsbury and whatever else was damp it was not our spirits. The opportunity was taken to carry out a practice on the lines of the forthcoming Warwickshire Sub District Weapons Training Meeting, and while this was in no sense a competition between the two Bns the scores for the three practices were equal

Snooker. Elliotts Sports Club kindly allowed us to play our match against Kings Heath Bch on their club tables. This took place on 20th May and the result was a win for our opponents by 4 to 1.

COMPANY ACTIVITIES.

"C" Company.Darts. A match against Selly Oak Hospital on 25th Feb resulted in a very close game, the score being 3 game to 4 in favour of the Hospital.

Concert – "C" Coy held the last of their 1945 series of "get-together" concerts on 15th April at The Oak. There was a large and representative gathering to hear a good and varied programme of music, song and humour. We understand the manager of the Oak Hotel despite the irregular opening house consequent on the shortage of the national beverage is allowing "C" Coy to continue their use of the club room as usual. It is hoped his kindly consideration will be copied by other hotel managers similarly situated.

Motor Coach Tour.

On Sunday 9th June "A" and "D" Coys made a tour of the Wye Valley in the course of which 67 passengers in two coaches visited Monmouth, Chepstow, Newham, Tewkesbury and Worcester. The weather was kind and the outing most enjoyable, even if it was a trifle "dry". One enthusiast waited at the wrong rendezvous and was left at the post. His cheery voice was greatly missed.

PERSONAL PRAGRAPH.

G. Fogwill of "A" Coy now with the R.A.S.C. writes from Bangor, N. Wales, acknowledging his election as an honorary member, and while he does not find the army all "beer and skittles" is well and happy.

L/C J. Bissett of "A" Coy writing from India acknowledging his honorary membership says he has met quite a few of his old H.G. mates in the Bn of the Royal Warwickshire Regt to which he is attached. He wishes to be remembered to all his former comrades.

TO-DAYS SLOGAN

Those of our readers who recognised that we were indebted to the Sunday Chronicle for the HOME GUARDeners slogan under the heading in our last edition will be interested to know that the editor of that popular Sunday paper in a letter to us dated 8th March states – "It was a grand idea to incorporate our appeal in your "Old Comrades" bulletin. I hope it results in a heavy HOME GUARDENING HARVEST.

49th WARWICKS H.G. O.C.A. 6th BULLETIN – MARCH 1947

RIFLE CLUB ACTIVITIES

Kingsbury – The 1946 season ended on 20th October when the last shoot was held. The weather there was delightful in contrast to a rainy afternoon in Birmingham. On the return journey the members had the unusual experience of witnessing an exhibition of gliding at the Castle Bromwich aerodrome. Eight visits were made and the 27th BN were with us on all but one occasion. Plate shooting both teams and individual created a good deal of interest. The Donegal Badge was won by W. H. Guest with Major Parkes as runner-up.

The club held its first social evening on 22nd October when 26 members attended a Dinner at the Peacock Hotel, Weatheroak. They were warmly greeted by the good lady of the house who provided an excellent meal. Major Parkes in the unavoidable absence of the President, Col. Gittoes, welcomed the "non-playing" members of the club and expressed the hope that they would pay an occasional visit to Kingsbury and Thorpe Street. Major Raven, the indefatigable secretary, replied in a neat little speech to a vote of thanks for his efforts on behalf of the club. Billy Guest was thanked for his good work as O/C firing point, and in turn he said how grateful the members were to those who so kindly furnished transport. The dinner was followed by a knock-out darts competition in which all took part. I was a very hilarious affair. The winner was "Sandy" as he is affectionately known) .

The first Annual general meeting took place at the Oak Hotel on 16th December and there was a good gathering of enthusiastic members. The Secretary reviewed the activities of the Club over the previous 18 months and the Treasurer presented the statement of accounts. Various officers were elected and the Club is confident of still greater success in the future.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

COMPANY ACTIVITIES.

“C” Company. “C” Coy’s committee have been giving consideration to indoor social activities, and thanks to the Brewers - Mitchells and Butler the O.C.A. are again able to use the club room at the Oak Hotel every Monday night. It is hoped the members will show their appreciation by turning up each evening in good numbers and so ensure that the privilege is maintained. Suggestions will be welcomed as to the kind of activities desired, and provided the demand warrants, games equipment etc. will be purchased for use.

B.H.G.A. DARTS COMPETITION

The final took place on the 15th November at the Beeches Hotel, when we won the cup by beating the 27th. .

DANCE – BOTANICAL GARDENS

The annual function held on 3rd December was an outstanding success – so was the raffle of a fine box of fruit, organised by Capt. Grant. Our thanks are due to those who did so much to make the event so pleasurable.

ANNUAL DINNER

Members and their ladies filled the pleasant dining room at the King George Hotel on 13th December. Col. A. B. Jarrett in an amusing speech proposed the toast of the 49th and Col. H. J. Gittoes replied in the usual racy and inimitable way we have become so used to. Major Vickery proposed the toast to the visitors and our old friend Major Hibbs, who will be remembered at O/C “A” Coy of the 21st replied in a very happy speech. Amongst the visitors, whom we were delighted to welcome, were Col. Deighton and Major Guy Heaton. The former gave us an entertaining account of the early date of the L.D.V. and the happy association which always existed between the 21st and 49th Bns.

PERSONAL PRAGRAPHS.

Lt. J. B. Dyhouse late “D” Coy. sent from B.A.O.R. a Christmas card of the 1st BN of the Gordon Highlanders to which regiment he is attached.

POETS CORNER

“The RIFLE CLUB”

A dozen or so
I’m glad to say,
Will often meet
Down Thorpe Street way
For a little shoot
At targets many,
And moments dull
There are not any.

A splendid bunch
Of lads we’ve got,
And everyone
A sporting shot.
At Kingsbury too
In summer time
With .303
They’re just sublime.

There’s room for you
Make up your mind
To Join to-day
Don’t lag behind
The fun is great
You get good cheer
The cost is small,
Five bob a year.

W.H.G.

49th WARWICKS H.G. O.C.A. 7th BULLETIN – AUGUST 1947

EDITORIAL

It is some little time since our last Bulletin was issued and although part of the following news is old its repetition will revive happy memories. We hope however, this chronicle of events will whet their appetites. The winter season will soon be in full swing and the revival of indoor activities will give everybody an opportunity of meeting Old Comrades and renewing those friendships, which meant so much to us in the old Home Guard days, and could do so much to help in these difficult times. . Will you send us any personal news you may hear concerning Home Guards and other topical items of general interest.

BIRMINGHAM H.G. ASSOCIATION

The second annual general meeting was held on 2nd April last. It was decided to hold a H.G. Anniversary Service on Sunday, 18th May, and a goodly muster attended. The H.G. Memorial is to take the form of a plaque and a seat to be placed in St.Martin's Church and the colonnade of the Hall of Memory respectively. It is hoped that a replica of the plaque will shortly be available at the Branches and that adequate subscriptions will be forthcoming from each Branch on a basis of 1/- per member. It was also agreed to continue with various inter-branch competitions. These activities afford excellent opportunities to see what other branches are doing.

Dinner and Concert to be held on Friday, 26th September at Civic Restaurant, Cambridge Street, for male members of Association only, commencing 7.45 p.m. Tickets 5/- each, limited to 350.

Badges. These handsome badges are replicas in miniature of the crest of the Association and designed by the Birmingham College of Arts and Crafts. Capt. Grant has a few available and the price is 2/3d.

RIFLE CLUB

The Club held the second annual dinner at the Peacock Hotel, Weatheroak on 1st April 1947, and 25 members were present. Our genial hostess again provided us an excellent meal with liquid refreshments, cigarettes and matches! Unfortunately our President Col. Gittoes could not be with us owing to illness, and the Chair was taken by Major Parkes. A very hilarious darts match of 101 up was held after dinner, and Richardson and Gallagher did great work as M.C's. The winner was Mudford, and Lees the runner-up. Pitt put up a remarkable performance by scoring 101 with his first three darts, and his discomfited opponent retired gracefully.

KINGSBURY. Our monthly shoot during the summer months is well attended. The opening day in April was dull and gusty, but the rain held off until a few minutes before the end. Dr Gaddie obtained the H.G. certificate by scoring 80 out of 100 at 200 yds. Our other visits with shooting at 100, 200 and 300yds., and also at plates were very successful.

THORPE STREET INDOOR RANGE. 44 shoots on .22 ranges at Thorp Street, Brandwood House and Golden Hillock Road have been held from 17th September 1945 to 12th August 1947 both inclusive. The interest is well maintained.

COMPANY ACTIVITIES.

A concert was given by "C" Coy at The Oak on 9th June. There was a small but highly appreciative audience who were delighted by the efforts of the artistes specially engaged for the occasion. During the evening the prizes won in the Darts competition were presented, "A" and "D" Coys had a coach outing to New Brighton on Whit Sunday. They had beautiful weather and an enjoyable trip.

CRICKET.

Ingredients needed – a grilling Sunday afternoon, two friendly rival teams, a pleasant ground with shady trees, two easy boundaries and a narrow win for the home side. In the match on Sunday, 27th July between the 49th O.C's and Boots at West House School ground. Boots batted first and after a poor start that raised our hopes, went on to score 51, five wickets going to Hill for 18 runs. We also started in a way to raise the hopes of any rival side, the score board showing 4 for 41. Then Brown stepped in with some hard knocks, scoring 25. The total was taken to 51 when Aubry, with his usual hit or miss technique hit a 6 and threw his bat away in excitement. Not the least delightful part was the wonderful tea we had. Thank you Mr. and Mrs Guest, Mr. and Mrs. Dickenson and Mr Gallagher for all your hard work in providing and serving such an excellent meal. The return match will be on Sunday, 24th August on the same ground at 3 p.m.

Our annual match with King's Heath was played on their ground on 3rd August. On this occasion they turned the tables on us and won by a comfortable margin.

PERSONAL PRAGRAPHS.

We would like to record that amongst the new Justices appointed for Birmingham a few months ago were our C.O. Col. H.J.Gittoes, and our M.O. Major N. F. Haslam.

Dr. R. Gaddie was appointed to the Committee of the Birmingham Library at their last annual meeting. Their membership is now nearly 3,000.

We are happy to report that Major Raven completely recovered from the effects of an accident he sustained a few months ago, and has recently been to the continent on important work.

A letter was received a little while ago from New York from R. Oakley "A" Coy., sending his good wishes to all O.C's.

The following appears in the Daily Telegraph of 14th June 1947 – L.P.T.B. Rifle Champion – Mr. Edward Tillyard, 40, of Chalford Avenue, Wembley, a bus driver, who had never handled a rifle until he joined the Home Guard in 1943, won the London Transport shooting championship. Moral – If you are not a member of the Rifle Club join at once.

49th WARWICKS H.G. O.C.A. 8th BULLETIN – AUGUST 1948

H.G. MEMORIAL

The plaque is to be erected in the south transept of St.Martin's Church. It is to be made by the Birmingham Guild and the wording is as follows:-

“In memory of those who gave their lives and in commemoration of the loyal service of over 100,000 citizens in the Warwickshire (B'ham) Home Guard during the World War 1939 - 1945.”

A number of our own members have subscribed to the Memorial, and Capt. Grant will be pleased to receive further amounts, however small.

ANGLING CONTEST. An Angling Contest under B.A.A. rules will be held on Sunday, 8th February in the river Mease at Harlaston from 11.30 hours – 14.00 hours. Each Branch is invited to send a team of 8 and the 4 heaviest weights of fish will count. The winners will hold the Association Angling Cup for 12 months. The individual cost, including transport, will be approximately 6/3d. If you are interested get in touch with Capt. Grant or your Coy., representative without delay.

49th O.C.A.

The Annual Dinner was held at the King George V Hotel on 7th November last. There was a representative gathering of O.C's and their ladies but a few familiar faces were missing. The evening went with a swing and everyone appeared to have an enjoyable time. Col. Piggott proposed the toast of the 49th. He paid high tribute to some of our members who – though awkward at times – had given the B.H.G.A. much help during and since its formation. Our President, Col. Gittoes, J.P. in a characteristic reply said he was sure this would be constructive awkwardness. He also referred to the impending retirement of Capt. Aubry from West House School and the great loss it would be to us. He had endeared himself to all ranks in the H.G. days and had since been a stalwart supporter of the Rifle Club. We wished Capt. Aubry much happiness in his retirement. Major Vickery proposed a toast of the visitors, and Capt. Ward formerly adjutant at Bn.H.Q. replied. He kept everyone interested and amused, and his eloquence will next year have to be directed into other channels, as he is now a full blown member of the O.C.A. The Major's lady was heard to say that she wished there were more speeches!, surely an eloquent tribute to those who addressed us. The principal entertainment was furnished by DeBrucia, who mystified and delighted us all by his clever conjuring and slight of hand.

The Annual General Meeting was held on 17th November 1947.

RIFLE CLUB ACTIVITIES

The Annual General Meeting was held on 18th December last. There was a small but enthusiastic number of members present and the spirit that prevailed made one feel confident of the continued success of the club. The Secretary, Major Raven, reported that membership was 47 and that the small bore practices on the .22 range at Thorp Street were well attended, and that various full bore competitions had been held at Kingsbury Range. Two members of the Club qualified for the Rifleman's Certificate and Capt. Chapman won the Donegal Badge for 1947. The Treasurer reported that the finances were in a healthy state. Members who wish to obtain petrol to use their cars to attend both Kingsbury and Thorp Street should get in touch with the Secretary if they have not already done so. We wish to place on record our appreciation of the services rendered by Miss Instone to the Club during Major Raven's absence in Germany.

PERSONAL PRAGRAPHS.

Cpl. L. Gowland who is working at the Atomic Energy Research Establishment sends his best wishes to all Old Comrades, who will be interested to hear he is now married.

Col. Johnson, O.C. 49th Bn writes to say how much he appreciates being elected an Hon. Member, and sends his warmest regards to all our members.

Capt. John B. Dyehouse of the Gordon Highlanders, formerly a Cpl. in "D" Coy. was married on 20th September last at the Lickey. Traditional Scottish ceremony was observed at this military wedding, and in accordance with the custom of the Gordons a Piper was present. After piping the party from the Church he made the traditional three-fold circuit of the bridal table at the reception.

49th WARWICKS H.G. O.C.A. 9th BULLETIN – SEPTEMBER 1948.

EDITORIAL

In the intervening months since our last Bulletin was issued we have all been looking for an easing of the world tension, but this International crisis goes on. Viscount Hall recently stated in the House of Lords that the resuscitation of the Home Guard is under consideration, and according to Mr Alexander consultations are going forward to form an organisation to enable preparatory measures to be carried out. This is a great tribute to the Home Guard, and maybe a rejoinder to those who considered it "cut no ice". Similar statements have been made from time to time regarding Associations like ours, but the need to pull together is more urgent than ever. Surely we can do much to foster that old spirit of co-operation and helpfulness. We are now four years old and have lived longer and have more vigour than some people expected. Our membership of 140 is approximately the same as last year, and if only those Old Comrades who have dropped out will rejoin there is no reason why our original strength of 280 should not be surpassed in 1949. Many people doing a little can achieve more than a few people trying to do a lot.

BIRMINGHAM H.G. ASSOCIATION.

A Thanksgiving and Commemoration Service was held at Birmingham Parish Church on Sunday morning, 23rd May 1948. Major General The Viscount Bridgman, with the following words unveiled the Tablet which has been placed in the South Transept of the Church –

“I unveil this Tablet in memory of those who gave their lives and in commemoration of the loyal service of over 100,000 citizens in the Warwicks (B’ham) Home Guard during the World War 1939 - 1945”.

The dedication by Canon T. Guy Rogers, Rector of Birmingham, was as follows – “In Faith and Love and in the Christian hope of immortality I dedicate this Tablet to the Glory of God and to the services rendered to our City by the Warwicks (B’ham) Home Guard”.

There was a representative gathering including the Rt. Worshipful The Lord Mayor of Birmingham, Alderman J.C.Burman J.P. It has been decided to pursue the suggestion that a memorial seat should be placed in the Colonnade at the Hall of Memory.

RIFLE CLUB ACTIVITIES

An alteration has been made in the procedure for obtaining petrol to enable members to travel to the various Rifle ranges – for particulars and new application forms apply to Major Raven.

Change of Headquarters. The Northfield Branch now meets at the Bell Hotel, where they have excellent accommodation. Meetings are held every other Friday from 8-10 p.m.

“C” Coy. Branch report increased attendances at the Oak Hotel, Selly Oak. They have had two very successful outings, to the Cop Cut Elm, Droitwich on 21st June and to the Gipsy Tent, Hagley on 27th September. On each occasion they had a smoking concert and refreshments were provided.

CRICKET.

Parkinson Stove won both their matches against us. Mention however should be made of an excellent bowling performance for us by Lambert who took six wickets for 16 runs at Stechford, The match against Boots Sports Club was won by the 49th. The match against a Kings Heath XI at Richmond Hill was quite exciting. The return match at Kings Heath looked at one time like another victory for the 49th. We scored 141 (Hemming 52, MacDonald 29) and at close of play after some very stubborn batting Kings Heath had scored a 96 for 5, after being 24 for 5.

We are indebted to the West House School for the use of their ground so pleasantly situated in Richmond Hill Road. We would also thank the ladies who came along and served the teas for us.

PERSONAL PRAGRAPHS.

Our President, Col. Gittoes, has been appointed a Governor of the University of Birmingham.

During an interval at Kingsbury on 20th June a bouquet of wild flowers picked on the range, was presented to "Sandy" on the occasion of his birthday.

Deaths

Sergt. William Price late of "D" Coy. died in Haifa British Military Hospital, Palestine from typhoid fever in June last. After his service with the H.G. he joined the Royal Warwick's and spent three years in Italy, Greece and Palestine.

49th WARWICKS H.G. O.C.A. 11TH BULLETIN –JANUARY, 1950.

EDITORIAL

All good wishes to our Members, in this first Year of the New Half-Century. May 1950 be a year of Peace and Progress.

49TH O.C.A.

The Annual Dinner was held at the King George V Hotel, Northfield, on 25th November 1949. There was a goodly gathering of O.C's their wives, sweethearts and friends. Col. A.B. Jarrett proposed the toast of the 49th and gave us some racy reminiscences of the early days of the L.D.V.

Our President Col.J.C.Gittoes, who was in the Chair, replied to the toast in his usual happy style. He reminded us that only by the continuance of the old H.G. spirit shall we get through these difficult times. Major Raven in an excellent maiden speech proposed the toast of the visitors, Major Eames, Secretary of our parent body replied. He said he considered the 49th Association was on the right lines and would probably survive most of the present branches.

During the evening Capt. Grant (who provided an excellent entertainment for us) was thanked for his untiring work for our Association, without which most of our activities would not have been possible. At 11.0 p.m. numerous small groups were still engaged in animated conversations and it was with great reluctance they were persuaded to disperse.

PERSONAL PRAGRAPHS.

At the suggestion of Lieut. G. R. Gleed, before leaving for Australia, two trees have been planted in the grounds of the Woodlands Hospital to commemorate the service of the 49th Warwick's. H. G. during the war years.

Our old friend Capt. Aubry who now lives in retirement at Warborough, Oxford, sends good wishes to the 49th.

Lieut. Gen. V.A.H. Sturdee, Chief of the Australian General Staff, who returned to Melbourne recently after five months tour of Britain's defence establishments stated the .303 rifle used in the last two years might be scrapped.

Our Battn. M.O. Dr. N. F. Haslam, Captained the Birmingham doctors in their annual Cricket Match with the Clergy at Edgbaston on 3rd September last.

POET'S CORNER

KINGSBURY

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. We met one morn
A mere handful all told
The weather was foggy
And certainly cold,
We said, "Are we mad,
Are we fools to be here
At Kingsbury, for this,
The last shoot of the year" | 2. No, we thing not,
For sure you could see
That in spite of the weather
We were happy to be
In each other's company
To hear the chaff,
The stories, the humour
The good hearty laugh. | 3. Old Comrades are we,
And many's the morn
Oft wet and forlorn
We meet now for pleasure,
And same as the start
It'll take more than fog
To keep us apart.
We met as a duty, |
|---|---|---|

W.H.G.

49th WARWICKS H.G. O.C.A. 12TH BULLETIN –OCTOBER, 1950.

EDITORIAL

The air is thick with rumours of the recall of the Home Guard, a Sunday newspaper recently stated "It is practically certain that the Home Guard will be revived within the next few months". France and Belgium on 28th September also announced plans to form special Home Guard forces to prevent Fifth Column activity in the event of war. Italy has already decided to form a Civil Defence Corps. Norway during the last four years has built up from scratch a Home Guard 100,000 strong which takes part in regular exercises with the army, navy and air force. Not all the members of our old Battn., the 49th, would be eligible to join a re-organised Home Guard, but we can all take an active part in our own O.C.A. While the sceptics who prophesied an early collapse of the various Home Guard Associations have been proved wrong, our membership has shown some decline – What do you think the reason for this is and what can you suggest to revive the old time interest and active participation of more Old Comrades in the affairs of the Association

RIFLE CLUB ACTIVITIES

Interest in the Rifle Club is well maintained and the monthly outings to Kingsbury have been greatly enjoyed. The excellent .22 Range at King Edward's School, Bristol Road, Edgbaston, is still available on Tuesday evenings from 8 p.m. There is room for more members and if you wish to improve your shooting come along and join the experts.

COMPANY ACTIVITIES

Northfield Branch meet at the Bell Hotel on alternate Fridays at 8 p.m. Attendances are good and interest is well maintained. The Annual General Meeting will be held on Friday evening 27th October.

Their activities included a most successful outing to the London Zoo. The trip was made in two charabancs and a total of sixty including Branch members, their wives and children made the journey. All were happy but tired on reaching home. They also had two most enjoyable evening outings to a country Inn near Kidderminster in August and September and arrangements are being made to take a party to the Birmingham Hippodrome in November.

PERSONAL PRAGRAPHS.

Lieut. C. E, White of "D" Company has left this country and gone to reside in Australia.

WHO WAS IT WHO SAID

"The most valuable result of all education is the ability to make yourself do the thing you had to do, when it ought to be done, whether you like it or not".

Compiled by Val Lewis 2005

The History of the 49th Rifle Club

The 49th Rifle & Pistol Club as it is known today was a section within the 49th Warwickshire Home Guard Old Comrades Association.

The "Club" was formed on **1st May 1945**, this date is taken from a small note attached to club accounts, and simply states 1st May 1945 club begun. The clubs name was given as the 49th Warwicks H.G. O.C.A. Rifle Club (H.G. & O.C.A being the initial letters for Home Guard and Old Comrades Association). From old Minute books the first meeting was held on the 12th June 1945 at Northfield Village Institute Hall and there is a receipt in the accounts for 4/6d (for those who are post old currency 2.4d = 1 new penny) received from Northfield Home Guard for the hire of the hall. At this meeting the club's officers were elected:- President: Lt. Col Gittoes, Hon Treasurer: Lieut. A E Coates, Rifle Club Sec: Major R T Raven, Hon.Sec: Capt. J.D Grant. The records show for this period there were 54 members, each paying 5/- (25p) annual subscription. The Club president donated £8-16-1) which was used to repay a loan from the O.C.A. of £10-0-0, and the affiliation fee to the N.R.A for one year was £1-1-0 (one guinea). On the 15th June 1945 the club paid the Royal Insurance Company £1-17-6 for third party insurance (single accident indemnity was limited to £25,000).

Club activities got under way fairly quickly as on the 15th July 1945 the club visited Kingsbury Ranges for a full bore rifle shoot. Initially this information came from a detailed account of expenditure for the outing. The club hired a coach from Ludlow Bros, of Stirchley at a cost of £7- 4 -0d to transport them from Northfield to Kingsbury and back. Harry Lees (our late Hon. Sec.) was included in the party of 27 who paid 3/6d for the outing. Mr (Lieut.) A E Coates donated 2/6d which was used to reduce the deficit of 12/6d for the day out.

The club used the T.A. Barracks at Thorpe Street, Birmingham as the first home for the club, where they used the cellars as a 3 position 25 yard Range, with Canadian Mossbergs as club weapons for their .22 shoots, these appear to have taken place fortnightly. Harry Lees one of the founder members remembers the days at Thorpe Street when the rats in the cellar provided some additional practice. The 303 Rifles that were shot by members were supplied by the T.A. Warwick and the club was responsible for insuring the weapons in their charge. During this period .303 S.A.A. ammunition was obtained by applying to the T.A in Stoney Lane, Birmingham, and had to be collected. Members were charged at 1d per round at meetings for this ammunition. At this time petrol was still rationed, and members had to let the secretary know if they required petrol coupons, he then had to apply to the T.A. for the necessary signed permits. The club shot for the Donegal Badge, and the Forces Day competition and also entered the N.R.A. Rifleman and Skilled Shot competitions. The B.H.G.A (Birmingham Home Guard Association) ran competitions which members of the 49th also participated in.

At the **Annual General meeting in December 1947**, a point arose from the Hon. Secretary's report as to the desirability or otherwise of taking shooting more seriously, It was generally felt that whilst it was desirable to improve shooting, it should not be taken too seriously to the detriment of the general

enjoyment. It was agreed that the purchase of a telescope was a step in the right direction. Captain Grant mentioned the possible use of the Cock Inn range during the summer, but the transport situation was too uncertain to reach any decision. With regard to attendance at Kingsbury the following year it appeared that 7 member's cars would be available for transporting members. It is quite amusing to read that the Treasurers report showed a healthy state of affairs with a balance in hand of £27 8s 6d, due largely to money received from the sale of empty cartridge cases. There was also a discussion about the design of the Club Christmas card embodying the club crest, which was to be sent to all members

In June 1948 the Hon Secretary reported that 14 Rifles had been obtained of which 12 had been sold to members who had applied for them. He also reported that other members wished to purchase rifles, and it was resolved that if the rifles could be obtained they should be ordered and that a minimum of one and a maximum of two would be available for club usage. A wooden spoon was presented to the President Lt Col. H J Gittoes on behalf of the club by Capt Grant from the B.H.G. Association for best season's efforts in the .22 competitions, and Capt Grant also said that the competition would be a yearly one; the club still has the wooden spoon. In December 1948 at the Annual General Meeting a proposal to obtain the use of the King Edward School Range and it was considered it should be a useful step in improving the standard of shooting and general amenities. It was agreed that the date for this range should be alternate Tuesdays, differing from the Thorpe Street Tuesday, which booking should still be retained. In adopting the report the recommendation that payment for K.E. range should be made from club funds. Minutes for **February 1949** report that the range at King Edwards School had been used fortnightly since December and that all concerned expressed satisfaction with the range and conditions.

At a meeting held in **January 1949** details of a scheme of Rifle Club adoption by clubs in Australia were given to the assembled. It was resolved that any food parcels received should be competed for alternatively on the .303 and .22 ranges. It was reported to the meeting in February that in response to a request from the O.C. Thorpe Street the clubroom had been evacuated and all property was at present under the care of Maj. Raven. Provision of a suitable lock up cupboard at the K.E. range was discussed and Mr Mudford undertook to obtain a suitable one and when this was available the police and T.A. were to be notified of the new place of storage of the rifles on the Club certificate. From this point it appears that bookings at Thorpe Street Barracks were becoming more difficult to get. At this meeting it was confirmed that 2000 rounds of .303 ammo had been purchased at £8.00. In the same year the club received a letter from Parker-Hale offering to purchase unwanted .22 and .303 rifles.

In 1950 a proposal was being considered by the B.H.G.A. to run the competitions on a postal basis was voted against. At this meeting it was reported by the Hon. Treasurer the receipt of £18. 6s. 5d for empty cases sold on behalf of the club. In this year Harry Lees, who was later to become the Club President won the Donegal Badge. Interesting notes in the minutes for 1951 reported ammunition sales as follows, .303 - 2503 rounds, .22 - 2200 rounds,

this information was followed by a report that ammunition usage for the period 31.5.51 to 3.10.51 were .303 – 2436 rounds average per shoot 406, and .22 - 12,900 rounds with an average per shoot of 430.

Membership stood at 50 in 1952 and it was decided that for the time being no new members to be enlisted and that membership be restricted to 50 and a waiting list being formed if necessary for candidates. The payment of Christmas boxes of £1 each to the Range Wardens at K.E. School and Kingsbury was authorised to take place at Christmas. It was agreed that if a purchaser were forthcoming the old obsolete .22 rifles could be sold. A figure of £2 each was suggested but it was left to Mr Guest and the Hon Sec. to accept the best offer if they considered it wise. A mixed outing for a day in the summer of **1953** was organised for a trip on the Thames from Oxford, after members were circulated and 30 tickets were taken up, and it had proved a success. By **1954** the club were having outings to other ranges including Stratford on Avon.

A gift to the club of monies to purchase a rifle was made by the A&D Coy branch of the 49th Battn. Birmingham H.G. was reported by Mr. Lees, who undertook to obtain a plate for affixing to the new rifle.

Records for **1955** show that the club had decided to celebrate their 100th visit to Kingsbury as a club on the 9th October, and make special arrangements to celebrate, invite ex club members, exclusive use of hut and catering arrangements, prizes to the value of £10 be offered for the day.

At the meeting in July a letter from the T.A. referring to War Office instructions regarding the name of the club was reported to the committee. It was decided that the name of the Club be changed to "The Fortyninth" Rifle Club, or as near this as could be agreed between the secretary and the N.R.A. At the Annual General Meeting on the 18th January **1956** it was proposed by the President and unanimously agreed that Rule 1 shall be altered to read as follows: -

"1. The Club shall be called the 49th Rifle Club"

A rifle was given to the club by a member who had emigrated to Australia, and it was decided that the rifle should be offered for sale to a club member, and that the rifle that had been out on loan to a member be loaned out on a care and maintenance basis if possible.

£58. 4s 10d was raised from the sale of empty cartridges.

At this A.G.M. in January **1957**, a discussion took place on ways of increasing membership and all members were asked to endeavour to introduce a new member. A suggestion was made by Lt Col Parkes for a union or affiliation with the 10th H.G. Rifle Club, the matter was discussed at a committee meeting, and it was finally resolved that no action be recommended in the matter, but Lt Col Parkes be thanked sincerely for his offer. The Christmas shoot was to be at Kingsbury and it was resolved, and members be asked to contribute a prize each to a value not exceeding 5/-.

The Club enjoyed a few uneventful years with the usual trips to Kingsbury, Kings Edward School Range, Rugeley Range and Whittington Ranges. Membership was 49. Towards the end of the year it was decided that the old type rifles possessed by the club and never used be handed into the police. This did not apply of course to the rifles on loan to the club from the T.A.

In **1962** the Hon. Sec. had approached I.C.I. Ltd in connection with the purchase of their hut at Kingsbury which was due to be vacated by June 1963. Subject to obtaining the necessary permission to retain it on site at Kingsbury, he had indicated a ceiling price of £50.

1963. Paul Wassell instigated the pistol section and the dinner dances. At the meeting it was reported that 7 to 10 of the members were interested in pistol shooting and had asked for assistance in obtaining pistols and facilities. The following decisions were reached.

1. Limited support to be given in principal to this activity but shooting to be restricted to .22 on the Range at K.E. School.
2. Contact be made with the 3rd VB Pistol Section to obtain their views on the formation and running of such a section and the weapons considered best for club use.
3. Subject to a maximum of £15 a pistol (or 2 if possible) be purchased for club use.
4. Pistol shooting to take place between 7pm – 8pm on Tuesday's subject to the range being available.
5. A committee member always to be present during shooting to act as Range Officer. This duty to be shared on a rota amongst competent members at least until such time as the section was fully established and could provide a reliable officer for this duty.

By February of **1964** the Clubs Firearm Certificate had been endorsed to cover 4 pistols, and it was resolved that this allocation be employed by providing 2 pistols at club expense and 2 at individual members expense. All to be of a type suitable for target shooting, and have the approval of the committee. It was to be left to interested members to try and track down suitable second hand pistols. The question of wear of the .303 rifles belonging to the club was discussed and the Hon. Sec. undertook to try and get a check made on the point. It was agreed that it was not desirable to embark on expenditure in this direction unless unavoidable in view of the projected change of ammunition size in the near future. Later it was resolved that 3 No 4 Rifles be obtained from Messrs Bates at an approximate price of £14 each, and the old .303 rifles then to be offered for sale to club members to get rid of them. The main feature at Kingsbury in November was to be a Knock Out competition with falling plates. And that the December shoot take the form of Ranges at 200 and 300 yards in the morning, followed by a lunch with Clay Pigeon Shooting in the afternoon.

In **1965** George Finnemore, our present Club Secretary, was accepted as a member. The cost of .303 ammunition was raised to 10/- (50p) for 36 rounds and .22 would remain at 3/9d per box until the next price increase when it would be raised to 4/-. The pistol section was donated a Cup by P Wassall to be competed for annually and awarded to the best shot. A general continuing

interest was reported from the pistol section. Members had raised the question of attending Kingsbury Range other than on officially arranged visits and after discussion the following recommendations made.

- a. Members would only be allowed .303 ammunition for practice, if there was a committee member present to accept responsibility on behalf of the club.
- b. Members wishing to shoot other than as above would be recommended to join the NRA who had an arrangement for the Range Warden to supply ammunition on the ranges.
- c. Members wishing to shoot .22 ammo must possess a firearm certificate authorising them to have ammunition as individuals.
- d. Any such visits must only be arranged with the Range Warden at Kingsbury.

It was decided that as from 1st January **1966** members shooting regularly in the Pistol Section be charged an extra subscription of 5/- per head per annum, and the purchase of an extra pistol was sanctioned, heavy Webley for preference and enquiries were made at Bisley.

In October 1967 membership of the club was 44, and Pistol membership was 19 with two new members joining for the forthcoming year. In view of the increased support in the Pistol Section it was agreed that they be allocated the range from 7.30 to 8.30 pm on Tuesdays, leaving the main shooting to start at 8.30 to 10pm. The purchase of a new pistol was reported and it was decided to sell the Webley Mk1 pistol to a member.

Notes taken from a meeting in September **1968** read, some discussion took place about none shooting members who use the club for Firearm Certificates retention only, but nothing was resolved. It was impressed on members that the dates for Kingsbury for 1969 could be cancelled at anytime for Range rebuilding. The annual subscriptions were put up to 30/-.

The availability of .303 was proving a problem in **1969** and 7.62 was becoming available and the club considered adapting the .303 P14 to take .762. Later it was also decided to hire two 7.62 Rifles from the NRA. There was a report that pistol shooting had declined and the need to start at 7pm needed reviewing. A request for the club to accept responsibility for collecting monies as a saving bank for members, this was decided against as it was felt that Credit Facilities were better arranged through the Parent Assoc., and in any case the Bank was the place to save money. The need to reimburse the Range Warden for allowing the club to search for scrap was discussed and it was proposed that a fair % would be £5 at this time and consideration be given at any future sale of scrap. The practices agreed on for the September trip to Bisley were 900yds and 1000 yds in forenoon Saturday and Running Deer on forenoon on Sunday. The Club hut at Kingsbury - negotiations took place an encroachment fee of £2 will be charged and the hut is the clubs own property for all time, and a green fee of 1/- per member on an agreed basis was to be charged. A proposal was put forward by the Hon Sec. that in future until all .303 ammunition had been expended, the ammunition to be used for club awards would only be purchased by the club and used as issued. There were many varieties available and would only depend on a person being able to buy better than others, whereas if

the club purchased batches the levelling off would depend on the resources of the club. The proposal was passed with a vote of 4 for and 3 against and was to be reviewed at a later date; this rule was not deleted until September 1975 when it was replaced by: - "Members can shoot any ammo they wish and all scores thus obtained will be entered for club awards". The Christmas shoot was decided it was to shoot kneeling and standing at 200 and 300 yds and award prizes 1st Lowest score, 2nd Most Magpies, 3rd Most Outer, 4th Most V bulls or top score, and to be followed by lunch of Soup, Turkey, potatoes roast and mashed, peas and sprouts, Trifle by P Wassell, table wine by pleasure of members. To be followed by A.G.M. with shotgun after.



Bisley 1000 yard Competition.

Anthony 'Bronco' Lane, Gilbert Pullen, Paul Wassell, Ian Atkinson
Frank W Smith

After opposition in **1970** it was decided that the shortening of the set time for pistol shooting has no advantage and nothing would seem to be gained by it, This item would remain open for further discussion. It was also requested that a replacement be found for the Drulov Pistol.

In June plans were made to celebrate the clubs 25th year, amongst the suggestions that were put forward were, a Novelty shoot with salad lunch at Kingsbury, Dance with prizes only, and Commemoration medal for every member of the club, a trophy and a Hospital Bed at the Children's Hospital could be supported. It was proposed that a fund raising effort should be made, and the Principle guest at the dinner be Mr Denis Howell, Minister of Sport (later to become our President). At this time a new commitment arose for full-bore shooting, which required a Range Licence for Kingsbury being obtained, the fee to be £7.0.0d. for a two year period and any further bids are conditional on holding this licence. Oscott Range became available and it was decided to use the range for Rifle & Pistol firing normal practises at 25, 50 and 100 yards, and that visitors to be charged 2/6 each to shoot and the range to be available during the hours of 9.00 am until 17.30 hrs, and ammunition to carry an

additional 1/- per box (50) surcharge as green fee. A discussion took place regarding a member holding 7.62 ammo without permit and if any more was made of it being used during the score season he would be asked to bring it in to be confiscated as the club was a party to having the same in his possession irregularly. At a later meeting it was decided to write to the member and advise him to hand it in for depositing in the magazine at Kingsbury. It is interesting to note that the following outgoings were recorded for the year – Insurance Cover £5.00, affiliation fees N.S.R.A. £5 10.0., N.R.A. £6. 0 0., Midland Rifle Association, £1.1.0. and W.S.R.A. £1. 5. 0. and that the ground rent at Kingsbury was £5.0.0.



Bisley in the 70's

Alan Rose

**Bootsie Ward, Graham Isles, Dave James, John McLaren, Arthur Ward
Paul Wassell, Ron Plant, Doug Dugmore, Steve Ellis, Bob Butler, Any Harvey**

A move was put forward to the committee to organise a scheme to find monies for our 'own' range. Paul Wassell found "various" people to put forward holidays and trips which would be raffled to anyone. The first provider was Flights Coaches who donated a day trip on the "new 747" to Shannon, to kiss the Blarney Stone and return home. The second was Mr Doug Ellis of Aston Villa fame. Through his company MATO Foreign Holidays a trip to Majorca. Skittle evenings were organised at Kempsey near Worcester, and the Swan Pub (Dirty Duck) at Harbourne. Many strip evenings were organised at the Billesley Arms Hotel, Kings Heath. Duck Suppers were organised at The Live and Let live at Neon Sollers at 17/6d using Den Caney Coaches.

By **1971** the annual subscriptions for the club rose to £3.50, and membership was down to 36. The Club received a letter from the N.R.A. regarding the hired 7.62 rifles, the P14 converted rifles were offered at a sum of £25 per rifle to purchase outright as against a yearly hire of £8. It was decided to buy the one P14 on hire and approach the N.R.A about returning the Mk.4 conversion and purchasing a further P14. The clubs 'A' team won the Earl of Warwick Trophy in the W.S.R.A. The club was offered the opportunity to participate in a Shoulder to Shoulder shoot at Tube Investments at West Bromwich in April, by the County 3 position Coach Mrs Irene Davis, the offer was accepted. The Club made application to the Home Office for approval for .22 Pistols and Full-bore pistol. At a meeting later in the year the Home Office Approval Certificate was read out and noted as covering all of the clubs present activities. The 25th Anniversary Dinner was held and the prizes for the raffle were a Holiday in Majorca at a cost of £65.00 to the club, a fridge and a canteen of cutlery. Membership was reported as 47 and new members Mr Alan Rose & Mr Ron Plant was accepted. At the A.G.M. a scheme for the issue of shares of £5 value to interested persons in the club to purchase either Full-bore pistols or ammunition, whichever the Committee decided, to be redeemed in 1973 with a guarantor, was outlined to the meeting, and an assurance was given about early redeeming if need was shown. It was clearly noted that the purchase of shares would not entitle anyone to a claim of either the Pistols or ammunition as these would be Club property to be used by all, the proposal was accepted and nominees for a list taken.

In 1971 membership was 37 and a new member Mr John McLaren being proposed and accepted. Throughout the following years the club carried on shooting, having social events such as skittles, Stag Nights, trips to Bisley and Annual dinners. It was **1972** before the club looked into reloading 9mm in an effort to reduce cost, several members who reloaded various sizes one of which reloaded 9mm in particular. This would increase the insurance by 5d per person. At a meeting in July the subject of building our own range was broached, and although that day seemed some way off it was felt that it would do no harm in getting the membership as a whole thinking about it, so it was put on the agenda for the A.G.M., and embarked on a number of successful fund raising activities. At the A.G.M. it was reported that Tuesday evenings were still the mainstay of activities. The Pistol Organiser reported that the standard had improved due entirely to efficient coaching and with more people participating and several of the members doing very well in the different leagues. In **1973** it was agreed that the club 9mm Star Pistols did not have the accuracy for target shooting and we ought to change to .38 and sell the Stars. By this time the club Hut at Kingsbury was in sad state, the glass was falling out and it was in dire need of a coat of creosote, volunteers for a working party were needed, it took 18 months before the hut was done, this had to be carried out by two committee members as there had been no volunteers. The desirability of having their own range was foremost in the thoughts of the members, it appears that they had lost the facility of shooting at King Edward School for 16 weeks during the winter due to the fuel crisis, and there was also a problem with security there which had been established by the M.O.D. Security Section from Shrewsbury. By the following year security at K. E.

Range proved to be a problem and it was necessary to divide the clubs full bore weapons between 2 members to avoid one member who would have to purchase a security alarm. It was noted in the December minutes that the Sex Discrimination Act comes into force during the following year, and the question of how the club stood in refusing lady members was discussed. In 1975 plans began in earnest to look for land or buildings for 'the Range' a letter was sent to the Amenities & Recreation Department of the City Council stating our case and stressing Small Bore range open air as soon as possible, available for other clubs to use, later on to improve facilities by making it indoor if possible Full Bore pistol to be used as well – no full bore Pistol range available, 50' foot frontage, 200' deep facing N.E. from frontage, services to be available and all this to be in S.W. Birmingham area. Not asking much were we. Four months later members of the Committee reported that they had a meeting at Kent Street Baths with a member of the Amenities and Recreations Department in July. At this meeting, plans of the now obsolete bath houses at all the Cities swimming baths were looked at and they were put in the picture as to what was needed in the way of space and facilities for a range. We were the only organisation who had asked to be considered by the Department when they had equipment or buildings being 'disposed' of. Although this was the first step, Council activities are known to be very prolonged. At a committee meeting in November it was reported that there was no news from the Council, and on the Social side of club activities it was reported that new artistes were being investigated for the Stag nights.

In **1980** with considerable encouragement from the former Minister for Sport and at that time President of the Club The Right Honorable Dennis Howell MP, the club began discussions with Birmingham City Council with a view to acquiring the building formerly used as a Slipper Baths at Saltley. (A slipper bath is where people used to bathe, as the houses in the area did not have bathrooms or running hot water). These negotiations were completed and demolition began on the bath cubicles etc. at Easter in 1983. The first sledgehammer blow rang out in the men's cubicles, each one built like a German bunker, only then did the volunteers realise the muscle wearying task they had undertaken. Clive Lungmuss said "In the end you learn just where to hit these cubicles their weak points, but it is hard work finding out. They're made of granite and steel plate. Giant wooden baffles were manhandled inside, along with half inch steel, security grating, and acoustic tiling. In the cellar the men worked tirelessly under spray to tear out dangerous asbestos lagged pipes Within eight months the old entrance hall and booking office had been cleared and the area made into a well lit heated club room. Where the bath cubicles were was turned into two independent centre fire/small bore pistol ranges, 20m and 25 metres long. The first range was soon open and turning targets were to be installed soon. The 49th Rifle Club was the Midlands first non-commercial pistol range.

There was a sad report at the 44th A.G.M. in **1988** when Bob Gold spoke with regret about the death of Harry Lees and Harry's long association from the start of the Club, and that a brass plaque had now been placed in the Club Room with a few chosen words from Harry's wife, Daphne. In Harry's honour a Harry Lees Memorial Shoot is to be shot annually. The club membership was now 120, less than in the same period for the previous year, perhaps due to the Hungerford incident. Repercussions were still not yet resolved in recent legislation. There was an announcement was made that permission from the Army to construct to plan, as shown in the club room, B Range, designed on the basis of reduced overheads. 'A' Range has overheads of £600 per year re Lynatex. Ted George was elected as Chairman. He reported that the roof was in poor condition but it was known where the problem was and that a work party was needed to put it right. The Club had received a grant of £1000 from the Sports Council, but the cheque had not arrived yet. In September **1989** the club was having financial difficulties and it was noted that the cheque to the City for the lease had bounced due to lack of funds, and only quick action by paying cash stopped the Bailiffs being sent in. Ted George was to arrange for 2 x .38/.357 pistols to be added to the Club's F.A.C., but a decision as to the purchase of same would be deferred until the availability of funds was known. The range was opened for the Polytechnic on Saturdays. By December **1990** the Treasurer reported that the year had been a milestone in the history of the club. The Club having been near bankruptcy, despite many financial commitments etc. and membership renewals, was pleased to report that this was not long the case. At the meeting where changes of the constitution were being discussed, which were necessary as the Home Office had introduced new changes and were likely to introduce more, a change of the name for the Club was proposed. It was known by many as the 49th Rifle & Pistol Club. For historical reasons, it was decided to leave it as the 49th Rifle Club Ltd., trading as the 49th Rifle and Pistol Club.

By July **1991** membership was 168 paid up members with six membership applications on record, one being R. A. Thompson our now Vice-chairman, by December Membership was 162 Full and 20 Life members. In January 1992 several members expressed concern over how you can tell if a Western style gun is unloaded as the cylinder does not swing open. The committee have decided that if not holstered whist in the Club Room the cylinder must be removed, the owners of Western style guns agreed to abide by the new rules. Unfortunately by May **1992** only 125 members had renewed their membership. At pistol 92 the club team came runners up, the club was well represented in both the Belgium and German 1500s and bought home a total of 14 trophies. The treasurer reported that the club assets which includes guns, trophies and equipment came to approx £9000. By **1993** the Club announced that it had now got 5 fully qualified Primary Coaches. In 1993 it was reported by the Membership Secretary that membership was now down to 25 Probationary, 19 Life and 100 full members. After being club Treasurer for 5 years Rosie Plackowski resigned as treasurer to take up her hobby of shooting again, Doug Freeman took over this position. In **1996** new Home Office rules came into force for approved Clubs, these covered open days and Probationers, the committee set about putting in procedures to bring the club in line with the new

legislation. Handicap competition was run the first three prizes being varying percentages off the subscriptions. As a fund raising event the club ran a lottery each week based on the bonus ball drawn in the National Lottery.

After the tragedy of Dunblane in March 1996 the committee started to look at new leagues to justify the equipment we use. The 49th Rifle Club joined with Worcester Gun Club for a shot gun shoot and the 49th reciprocated and hosted a pistol shoot. Birmingham University Gun Club had been using King Edward's Range but since the Dunblane incident King Edwards have made the Range King Edwards only. Birmingham University being displaced had requested the 49th for range time. Space was made in the armoury for their guns and equipment. The West Midlands Police held meetings with all of the Gun Clubs and Dealers in their area with a view to set us a scheme to prevent undesirable people from joining Gun Clubs and learning how to shoot or get their hands on guns. The scheme was that if someone was expelled from a club because of their behaviour or attitude regarding shooting, we would advise the police, and at the same time if a club had a new member it would tell the police and if this member had been expelled from a club for reasons stated previously, the police would advise us not to take them on. That way anyone undesirable could not just pass from club to club.

By December things were looking black for the pistol shooters (see next section. Pistols past and present) and the committee had brainstorming sessions to see what security we would need in the club should a law be passed that guns had to be kept in a club armoury. Storage was not the only problem it was suggested that metal detectors would be required on the exit door and a tagging system for the guns with a detector to set off an alarm if a tagged gun were to pass the detectors. The petition in support of 'shooters' spearheaded by the club was gaining momentum. From the many contacts at clubs throughout the country the signatures at this time were in excess of 8000 and rising fast. Gun Mart magazine had been contacted and were going to run the petition started by John & Val. We wrote to our own MP's and as a club wrote to every MP in the Commons and every one in the House of Lords (over a thousand letters). The Student Council of Birmingham University ruled that following Dunblane it was not politically correct for the University to support a shooting section. Those that had been renting time on our range ceased to have the support for the shooting section and their equipment and rifles were sold off.

The 49th contacted all Gun Clubs in the Midlands to discuss with them how their clubs could comply with any new legislation. Those that could not conform, could be offered support by the 49th to continue their shooting using the 49th facilities. Also to investigate the possibility of members of these clubs, joining or amalgamating into one club to stay viable. It was thought that the 49th may lose a third to half of its membership and if other clubs were in the same position or the premises they used were not capable of being updated to meet the 'new' regulations. The clubs that responded and came to the meetings to discuss the

situation all thought they could survive. Unfortunately one of the other clubs no longer exists and the other has no premises and its members are shooting at other clubs.

The Chairman's Report at the **1996** AGM was :-

This has not been a good year for shooting. Various people have shown that the majority, 94% of the population, are not against the shooters.

The media, at the start, were not in our favour. Most MPs have been written to and most of the Lords have been petitioned. The petition was handed in to Downing Street on Saturday 11th during the Mass Rally and a letter to the Duke of Edinburgh thanking him for his support was handed in to Buckingham Palace. The 'BAN' may well be amended. It is due to be heard in the Lords on Thursday 16th. The second part of the petition will be handed in on the 16th."

"What can we do next if the 'Ban' comes in? The club will continue. We could lose members, but may attract members from other clubs that do not have the facilities the 49th do. What we can do was the main question All the disciplines can be done with the .22 but we can also use Black Powder pistols. All effort will be made to unsure every avenue possible is explored.

The Chairman's Report, AGM 9th December **1997**

A lot of time has been given to fighting the proposed legislation and very little time has been available for shooting.

It has been a disastrous year for target shooters. With the extension of the ban to include .22 rim fire pistols. We must now accept that pistol shooting has gone for the foreseeable future.

We now have Gallery Rifles and we can also shoot Black Powder weapons now that the range has been inspected and passed off for it's use.

There is still a lot left to shoot for the action shooter we have gallery rifles and reactive targets, Air Rifles, Air Pistols, Co2. Pistols. Over the last two years we have lost 50 members. Some people who have waited have found there is a future and have come back. We are trying to promote the Club with adverts in the press. If members could each bring a prospective member we would be back to normal numbers.

The Club has 3 Gallery Riles (Carbines)
 2 Sporting Rifles .22
 3 Co2 Pistols

Leagues are to be arranged. For Kingsbury we have 7.62mm Rifles and Ammunition. Proper behaviour on Military Ranges is necessary because we also share the range with other clubs

At a Committee meeting in February **1998**, the chairman informed the members that the N.P.A. had now wound up and would amalgamate with the N.R.A. transferring assets and resources.

The chairman said at the AGM on the 8th December 1998:- During the past year, there has been some apathy in the club, but now there are competitions being developed from the old pistol competitions to suit pistol calibre rifles and we have had some new members join us and have seen some old members return. Some have tried Black Powder but have not found it to their liking. However we now have more .22 calibre guns. We do not have to reload and we are still having fun.

The stand at Stoneleigh in the summer kept our name in the frame but we have not as yet picked up any 'new' members. We are trying to attract members to join us, from ranges that for various reasons are 'closing'. The club may have to use Friday nights for certain competitions so that members have the time to shoot their various disciplines. In the next 12 months we need to increase our membership and we need 20 + members. If half the membership brought in a new member we would be home and dry.

49th Rifle & Pistol Club Annual General Meeting 5th December **2000**

The chairman outlined the club year, which started slowly. The coaching weekends were successful. The club membership has gone up slightly. We did well in the Phoenix League. The club has been promoting the sport of shooting and three scout troops have visited the club to shoot. It is hoped that there will be another two scout troops in **2001**.

We were lucky, after the new legislation our members adapted and here we are in 2005 celebrating our Diamond Anniversary.

Compiled by Clive Lungmuss & Val Lewis 2005

(There are some gaps in the history, unfortunately this is due to a flood in the cellar when some of the records were destroyed / lost)

Editors Note It is amusing to note that In this day and age where we are encouraged to recycle as much material as we can. Where once there was a ready market and a source of revenue for the club for the used brass cartridge cases from the shoots, you cannot give them away today.

Pistols and the 49th Club. Past and Present.

You have read earlier that the request for the club to purchase pistols in 1964 was not accepted lightly and that it was begrudgingly agreed with restrictions placed on the time and range space when and where the members could use them. This I believe came from the fact that it was traditionally accepted that a pistol was looked at as an officers weapon and not issued to the normal private, unless there was a need for it, like a tank driver who could not carry a rifle to defend himself and do his job at the same time.

The club was formed at the latter part of the war predominately as a rifle club and this intrusion of pistols was a break from tradition.

Over the years the rifle section of the club unfortunately declined as the pistol contingent increased. The rifle section still meets on a Wednesday evening and is now getting stronger with the advent of the resurgence in rifle shooting interest within the club and nationally. The introduction of competitions for Military Calibre rifles on indoor ranges using downloaded ammunition has helped to foster a new interest. It also allows us to instruct and coach up and coming shooters in the older disciplines prior to getting them out on outdoor ranges.

When the club moved to the premises in the Norton Baths it is true to say that the 49th developed a very competitive pistol team who specialised in 1500 and Police Pistol Competitions they practised in "A" range (sometimes referred to as the big boys range). Their success's included being European Champions in the '1500 discipline' for 1996 and 1997. This also resulted in having five 49th members listed in the Great Britain teams and having 10 recognized International shooters in the 49th ranks.

There was also a group that was devoted to using old single action pistols that were used in the Old West. Needless to say they were called the Cowboys. Majority of the members just came to the club to practice target shooting, relaxing and enjoying themselves. Despite the divides between the groups using the club, the club seemed to prosper and grow.

Then in 1996 the Dunblane massacre took place on March 13th at the Dunblane Primary School. This atrocity that was condemned by all shooters led to a public inquiry that was chaired by Lord Cullen.

A person named Thomas Hamilton took it into his mind that he had been unfairly treated by people and society for many years and decided to wreak his revenge on those that he felt had let him down. I would like to quote from the summary report of.

Lord Cullen Report. Chapter 1, 1.3 :-

Quote:- In chapter 3. I describe how Thomas Hamilton, having entered the school shot Mrs Gwen Mayor and 16 members of her Primary 1/3 class and inflicted gunshot wounds on 10 other pupils and three other members of the teaching staff. I then describe the response of the teaching staff, emergency services and police to the incident. With an account of various lessons which have been learned from the experience. I narrate that an examination of the scene showed that having entered the school with 4 handguns and 743 rounds

of ammunition. Thomas Hamilton fired 105 rounds with a 9 mm Browning self loading pistol over a space of 3-4 minutes before committing suicide with one shot from a .357 Smith & Wesson revolver.

1.5 In Chapter 5.1 I deal with a number of possible pointers as to the factors which were at work in the mind of Thomas Hamilton in the period leading up to 13 March 1996. His clubs were in decline. He was in serious financial difficulties. His mood was low and he was deeply resentful of those who had claimed that he was a pervert and had discouraged boys from attending his clubs. After a gap of about 8 years his interest in firearms was resurgent. There is evidence which points to his making preparations for what he did. Including the questions which he put to a boy about the layout and timing of events at the school and his questioning of a retired police officer about the time which the police would take to respond to an incident. In the light of expert evidence from a psychologist and psychiatrist I conclude that Thomas Hamilton was not mentally ill but had a paranoid personality with a desire to control others in which his firearms were the focus of his fantasies. The violence which he used would not have been predictable. His previous conduct showed indications of paedophilia. End Quote.

When Thomas Hamilton killed himself using a 357 magnum revolver, his action robbed the public and authorities of a culprit to be punished and also denied society of an explanation and his reasoning behind his actions.

Therefore, as there was not a culprit to blame there was a public outcry following the Dunblane Massacre against shooters and guns. There was an election looming on the horizon and this crime was quickly picked up by both parliamentary parties and used to try to gain votes and support for the general election. The tabloids of the day also led a campaign against the shooting community and as the subject was confrontational this gave them massive increases in their circulations. Fair to say, not all newspapers joined in the attack and some reported the facts of the evidence that were released, some even questioned the need for any further restriction on the already stringent English Firearms Acts and did not see that target shooting with handguns as a threat to society. These opinions and evidence were swept to one side as being irrelevant in the tide of emotion that swept the country. This tide was helped and fostered by a spokeswoman Anne Pearston of the Snowdrop appeal, who even appeared on Television accusing leading England Team target shooters of murder during an hysterical outburst. She also addressed, at Tony Blair's invitation the Labour Party Conference that year. The Gun Control Network gave support to the ban aided by some leading newspapers. All this is a matter of historical fact and can be researched if the reader so wishes.

Despite the efforts of our then, President, Lord Howell and a number of Peers in the House of Lords trying to keep things in perspective and reach good and fair legislation. Their efforts were in vain against the (some would call Draconian) force that the Lower House exerted on the rush to get the legislation through the house before the election. Under the Conservatives this resulted in the Firearms Amendment Bill which effectively banned centre fire hand guns from the province of the general licensed public. (Making them Section 5). One of the controversial sections of the bill was to give power to Parliament and the

Home Office to extend any restrictions they thought necessary to protect the public from potential harm. As the Labour Party had put this item in their manifesto under the banner 'Law and Order', they used the legislation virtually as soon as they came into power to extend the order to cover .22 Rim Fire handguns. Suggesting that with the total ban there would be peace to our streets where the use of handguns being involved in crime would cease to exist. (I leave the reader to draw their own conclusions on the effect the bill made on Gun Crime on our streets).

In 1995 there were 174,000 Firearm Certificates and 722,600 Shotgun Certificates on issue in Great Britain. (Scottish Home Office Statistics). With the advent of the enforced legislation there was a mixture of anger, disappointment and the feeling of betrayal within the shooting community. They had been led to believe from their governing bodies that justice would prevail and common sense would rule the day, not to rock the boat and await Lord Cullen's report. You can only imagine if, you did not experience it, the disappointment that the 'Cullen Report' engendered in the Sporting Target Shooter when his recommendations were made available to the general public. Quote :-

Chapter 12. Summary of Recommendations

The availability of section 1 firearms.

24. Consideration should be given to restricting the availability of self loading pistols and revolvers of any calibre which are held by individuals for use in target shooting.

Preferably, by their disablement. While they are not in use, either by (i) the removal of the slide assembly/cylinder, which is to be kept securely on the club premises of an approved club of which the owner is a member or by a club official; or (ii) the fitting of a locked barrel block by a club official (Para 9.112);

Or, if such a scheme is not adopted, by the banning of the possession of such handguns by individual owners (Para 9.113). End Quote ;

Shooters reactions led to the formation of the 'Sportsman's Association' on the 19th of October 1996, in an effort to get the legislation changed. The 49th R&PC were, prior to this, instrumental with contacts with other clubs and the use of Fax Machines in setting up the 'Acorn Petition' which gathered throughout the country signatures objecting to the legislation. The first 36,000 signatures were delivered to No 10 Downing Street at the first Rally of the Sportsman's Association held in London. This was acknowledged by the Conservative Party's Prime Minister's Secretary. When the second part of the petition was delivered at a subsequent Rally taking the signatures to well above 80,000 signatures to the Labour Party's Prime Minister's Office it was not even acknowledged. A lot of shooters effort and money were put into the Acorn Appeal but this was dwarfed by the resources and financial backing given to the Snowdrop Appeal.

The Acorn Committee wrote to all Members of Parliament and the House of Lords asking them to consider fairly the impact of the legislation on Target Shooting before supporting the proposed ban on handguns. Many MP's replied and stated they had sympathy for the shooter but their hands were tied and

they had to follow party policy. (We do not know if this meant their jobs would be on the line if they did not support the party line, or was just a platitude). The House of Lords were threatened by disannulment by the Lower House and accused of trying to delay the legislation by taking too much time over their deliberations.

That is now history. The ban was put into force and all handguns were collected by the relevant Police Forces throughout the country. Some shooter took their handguns abroad and joined continental clubs to continue their sport. A lot of clubs closed. Many shooters just gave up, vowing never to vote again. Dealers were severely hit by the recession in trade. With the compensation that was paid coupled with the loss of trade to clubs and businesses there has never been a figure disclosed as to how many million pounds this legislation cost the Great British Public.

It is also strange to think that some of the evidence that was disclosed to Lord Cullen during the hearing that impacted on the change in legislation is now subject to a 100 year disclosure ban and cannot be accessed by the public. This means that virtually all the people, men and women that were affected by these draconian laws will be dead by 2096 and will never know the full truth.

In hindsight. It is strange to compare that when a similar situation occurred in France some time later, where a disgruntled citizen entered a French council chamber and opened fire on councillors he believed had aggrieved him, killing and wounding a number of them. After his capture and the investigation had started, the Police when challenged on the French Firearms Laws by the anti gun lobby who tried to use the situation to force the French to mirror the English restrictions. A senior Police Spokesman stated. "That due to the fact that the shooter was not a member of a recognized club (which is a requirement in France) and his certificate had lapsed, he had no right to hold his arms. And they should have been taken off him. Therefore the law was not at fault but the application of the law was at fault and there is no need to drastically change the law".

The committee of the 49th although disgusted with the turn of events that had robbed us of a section of our sport decided in the spirit of Dunkirk and our long history that the club could not be allowed to roll over and play dead, decided to move forward and sanctioned the purchase of 3 Ruger 10.22's and 2 Winchester .357 Rifles to continue shooting the pistol competitions and courses of fire that the club and the NPA had developed over the years for the benefit of it's members. It was a hard and uphill struggle to get all the members on board but success was to be ours and we became known as the 'Home of the Motivated Shooter'. Since these early days in nine years the sport has blossomed all over the country and Postal Leagues have developed. Bisley now host, where the National Pistol Association used to run a full three days of pistol competitions, the Phoenix weekend using rifles instead of pistols with close to 2000 entries in 2005.

The Government of the day and the Home Office when implementing this legislation had to define what was meant by a handgun, and came up with the formula that any firearm with a barrel length of less than 30 cm, and with an

overall length of less than 60 cm. was defined as a hand gun, on the grounds that it could be easily concealed and used in a crime.

There is on the market a 1871 Buntline revolver that was designed by Ned Buntline and used by Wyatt Earp when he helped clean up the American Wild West. This design has been used in long range competitions in this country for many years. Due to its design it falls outside the specification of the ban. Therefore this remains within the 'Section 1' category and can be held legally on a Firearms Certificate.

Since the ban manufacturers have built long arms that are now on the market and are used in target competitions. The anti brigades claim that this is to defeat the law. The pro brigades support the view that it is to comply with the law.

It must be stressed that this chapter of the book has been researched and is only a synopsis of a few of the main points the author feels gives the reader an over view of the events.

John Young 2005

2005 our Diamond Jubilee and the 60th Anniversary of the End of World War II

Despite the club being hit by a rent increase of £2000 late in 2005, The club has thrived and the enthusiasm of the members was lifted by the generous Lottery Grant describe below.

Our thanks must go to the Lottery Funding. Home Front Recall, for the grant that enabled the 49th Rifle & Pistol Club to Honour their roots in the 49th Home Guard Old Comrades Association.

During the year we have held at the club a Birthday Party Shoot on the 1st of May, where we shot a competition with Service Rifles complete with battle sights and downloaded ammunition, on a theme of a snooker match. This competition tried the most skilful shooters and surprised many with the difficulty of the course of fire.

In honour of the HG we were also able to hold a weekend Match at Bisley in October where we shot the same course of fire that were shot in 1945, which was shot at 300 yds, 500 yds and 600 yds. Categories of rifles used were Service Rifle, Target Rifle and 'F' Class Rifle. Below we attach a 'Tongue in Cheek' write up by Clive Lungmuss one of the 49th established riflemen :-

49th Rifle & Pistol Club. Bisley October 2005

At last after all the talk and speculation the visit to Bisley organised by Val & John was nearly upon us. Our group for travelling comprised of Alan Rose, Sam Parkin, Ron Plant & myself. We arrived Friday afternoon, booked into the London & Middlesex, changed our rooms twice for better beds, a different view and left for the zero range before Colin, the manager asked us to seek alternative accommodation.

We headed for NRA Office to book in and purchase zero targets. Now Alan Rose is, or so he has proudly told us for years, a Life Member of the NRA (probably given to him by the reigning monarch for services to archery). When asked to provide a membership number, his reply 'what *** number, here's my badge!'

Wherein the official replied 'everyone has a membership number including life members, let's look on the computer'.

The three of us standing back enjoying this exchange began to scent blood and we were right!

The COMPUTER advised the official that Alan was possibly dead, never been a member, an alien or worst of all possibly a Brummie that had moved house and not left a forwarding address. So leaving the office and the official in some disarray trying to find out who or what Alan was, we headed for the zero range where some lunatic was zeroing in a howitzer. After he had departed an inspection of his target confirmed our worst fears, his intent obviously was stalking and bagging cruise liners. With the official business completed for the day we headed back to the club for a meal and recklessly and without any

concern for others someone had opened the bar. Soon we met the others gathered for this Celebration Shoot. My first instinct was that they viewed us with a degree of suspicion 'surely the club hasn't got members this old?' At this point or pints it was being considered some sport to offer odds on Chris Parkin actually finding Bisley Camp. This came about as a phone call from him advised us that he was only 15 minutes away, an hour later he kindly called us from Guildford, his second visit to that town that evening and said he would most certainly be with us in October, but didn't clarify which year. All was forgiven as he arrived and immediately got the drinks in, I'm not sure but he seemed to have aged a bit since Wednesday. What was discussed, joked about, names provided etc., sadly has been lost in that warm hazy feeling (accompanied by memory loss) that comes from excessive consumption. Found the stairs, found the room, found the right bed and went to sleep.

Slumber was cut short by something or someone trying to remove our door with a JCB, after Chris had gained entry he said he was only knocking gently and advised it was 7.00, breakfast was being served and we were due on the firing point at, WHAT TIME! 8.30am!! Now the person responsible for this early start was sadly unaware that senior members (by age) of the 49th do not move very quickly or with any degree of safety or alertness at that hour. For one reason that hour is reserved for people who are still working, coming back from a busy night of crime or trying to get back home before their partner, the children, or the dog, notices their absence. Also, I don't like to strike a man when he is down even if he wanted us to start at 8.30 but the squadding details did provide some mirth, although I have to say two organisers, one laptop and some heckling from those squadded in two places at one time, soon had it all sorted out.

Well it was a good day for our competition, dry, warm and little wind so why the hell couldn't we hit the Bull every time? Most of the assembled party completed the course of fire with some degree of satisfaction and managed to avoid causing too much annoyance or distress to other shooters. Although a call from Heathrow via the pilots avoiding the flak requested competitor on target 39 to lower his sights from 1,000+ yards to 300 yards from where he was competing as this should get him on target!!

Another slightly inexperienced competitor using a fixed sight rifle that was shooting high was advised to aim at a lower point. The exchange between coach and competitor then went something like this:

Coach "the butts have called and your shots are going High over the target aim at the NUMBERS 29".

Competitor "I am aiming at 29"

Coach "No aim at the **BIG NUMBERS 29**"

Competitor "I don't want to hit the number 29"

Coach (giving up the will to live!) "You won't hit the b****y **NUMBERS 29!!**!!**"

This colourful exchange is not unusual at Bisley but it did draw comments regarding current coaching techniques.

The entertainment for the evening was to begin with a firework display a celebration of Guy Fawke's failed attempt at blowing up Parliament or Halloween. Not as someone in our party insisted, that it was a personal display celebrating his birthday that day. It was generally agreed that the display was brilliant with the usual accompaniment of 'oohs & aahhs' for the pyrotechnic explosions. Then it was back to the London & Middlesex for the Celebration Dinner, a carvery with ample portions being served and conveyed to the table for rapid consumption. Those on our table seemed to enjoy our company and were far too well bred to point out any minor deficiencies in our eating habits or low intellect of conversation. The end of the evening started when the 'birthday boy' produced a bottle of whisky, as that was emptied (00.30), Chris Parkin still trying to recover his composure after a session of coaching indicated that he had a bottle of malt that he would share, so it was back to the room. It was here that young Sam Parkin broadened our knowledge of the electrical industry when he noticed some wiring that was not up to his high standards. "You could get a right pisser off that" he commented. An electrical term we were told and confirmed by Sapper Plant, former electrician. Lights were out at about 02.00.

Sunday morning was a struggle as at 05.30 Sapper Plant sat up in bed and started a conversation!!! We made it to breakfast and avoided food landing on anyone else. This had happened the previous day when a 49th member collided with another diner and showed him a novel way to 'get you're food down'!! After breakfast we went out to see the new facilities, ranges and clear our heads. It would seem that others also had an enjoyable evening and carried it on over into Sunday morning as one of the organisers was seen lying in the mud. Of course if asked if we knew the person prone in the mud we would have said sadly she was probably a member of the Army Target Rifle Association and suffering from battle fatigue or shell shock.

Soon it was time to say those tearful goodbyes and with promises to phone, write or meet again on our return home.

The author apologises for the serious intent to mislead and not represent the true facts. All characters in this episode are fictitious and do not accurately portray any persons living or dead. No animals were hurt or killed in the making of this episode

It was my most enjoyable shoot at Bisley and that was the general feeling by everyone who attended. Our thanks go to Val & John for taking the time, trouble and dedication to organise a weekend that gave so much pleasure and memories to us all.



600 yds, Bisley 29th October 2005

December 2nd. Saw a return to the Clubs more traditional type of dinner and presentation. This was held at the Hall Green, Home Guard Club in Hall Green. The room was decorated with the Lottery Bunting and Posters and our Union Jacks flew in pride of place at the ends of the hall. The meal was fantastic although there were a few moans that there was not any spam or powdered egg on the menu.

The Toasts were in tradition with the layout of the 1945 dinner menu that was in our historic files

Loyal Toast to the Queen

Proposed by our General Secretary - George Finnemore

The Toast to the Home Guard

Proposed by our Treasurer - Doug Freeman.

The Toast to the 49th Rifle and Pistol Club..

Proposed by our Chairman - Ted George



**Hall Green Home Guard Club
'Longroom' laid out for the Jubilee meal**

11th December saw the Christmas Fun shoot held at the club. The courses of fire again were a challenge and it was the lowest score that won in 'B' Range and the fastest time in 'A' range with a Log Cutting challenge.

The editors would like to thank you for reading this small tribute and once again all those that have supported the club during the past 60 years and we hope the club will prosper and build in the future.

