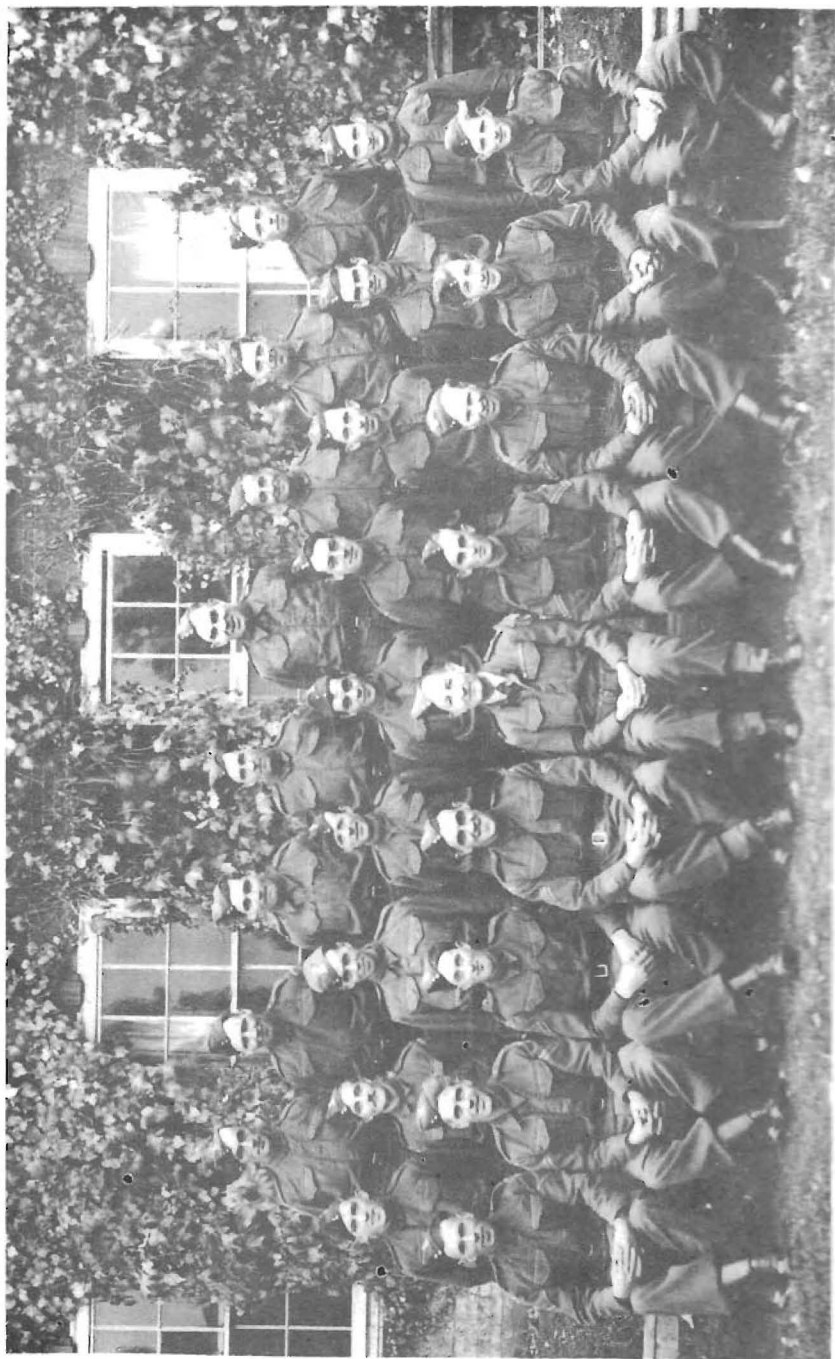


REEPHAM

HOME GUARD



“DAD’S ARMY”



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HOME GUARD



"DAD'S ARMY"

Dear Reader,

I guarantee that all monies raised through the sale of this booklet, other than the cost of printing etc., will be donated to the Bircham Institute, Reepham.

Thank you,

ALEC ROWE

REEPHAM HOME GUARD

"DAD'S ARMY"

On 1st December 1938 I reached the age of 14, leaving school at the Xmas Holidays, little did I think that by the time of reaching the age of 15 the War against Germany would have started. Also that before I reached the age of 16 I would be in uniform, mind you I had to lie about my age, you had to be 17 to join the Home Guard (Dad's Army).

I had an idea they took me on to help swell the numbers, in order to have enough bodies for Guard Duty, not that there was much of importance in Reepham to guard, except the Telephone Exchange. This was in the house on the left of the Bank, divided by a drive way (the Bank used to be in the tall building on the corner of the Market Square).

Now I don't promise to get the incidents that follow in order so please forgive me, those that remember them. There are not many of us left now.

At times an Officer from the 'Royal Norfolk Regiment' stationed at Britannia Barracks in Norwich would come out to Reepham to see how things were running.

These visits naturally were at night as 'Dad's Army' had to work during the day (perhaps someone told Hitler that he would only be allowed to invade Great Britain during the hours after work!).

In this instance a young Officer arrived and as was customary was asked if he would care to inspect the Guard. 'Billy Bishop' and 'Stephen Frankland' were on duty. Why the Officer wished to see if the barrels of the rifles were clean I don't know, anyway 'Billy Tubby' one of our sergeants gave the order "For inspection port arms". This means pulling back the bolt of the rifle inserting the thumb into the breech so as the thumb nail reflected the light up the barrel. This was pointless as it was dark, he looked down the barrels and was happy with what he had seen or had not seen. 'Billy Tubby' gave the order "Ease Springs", this means moving the rifle bolt backwards and forwards a number of times, closing the bolt and pulling the trigger.

Now we never did know which of the two didn't do this but there was an almighty "BANG" and a six foot length of cast iron guttering fell from the top of the Bank (someone had pushed a live one up the spout). The rifle going off "Bang" caused quite a commotion as you can imagine. The blackout was forgotten as people rushed out of their doors to find out what the noise was about.

It was strange how so much commotion on that night never did come to much, it was hushed up very well, even the young Royal Norfolk Officer did not put a report in, I guess he realised he would have been called "a bloody young Fool" asking to see down a rifle barrel in the dark.

'Billy Bishop' was involved in another mishap. This time involving a bayonet. Sunday mornings were also another time when 'Dad's Army' were on duty, mainly for training. This Sunday in particular the R A F Regiment had men from Oulton Aerodrome near Aylsham attacking us making out to be the enemy.

'Billy' was on duty at the mouth of 'Fishers Alley' on the Market Square. He heard footsteps running in the Alley, so he fixed his bayonet and rushed into the Alley to challenge the intruder when at the bend, an R.A.F. Regiment man came charging round straight onto 'Billy's' bayonet. Bit of luck it caught him in the left shoulder and not much damage done, more by luck than judgement I guess. That was hushed up pretty well also, mind you bayonets were NOT allowed to be fixed after that only on orders. Silly old 'Buffer' a few inches to one side and it could have been fatal.

Not too many incidents happened that were that dangerous. One I remember involved a Hand Grenade. This was a Sunday morning again at Bawdeswell on a meadow about four miles west of Reepham. The Royal Norfolks had sent a Sergeant to show us how to use the Mills Hand Grenade. A long trench had been previously dug at an earlier date, dummy hand grenades had been used so we had a little idea what was involved, except 'Jimmy Frankland' - son of 'Stephen' (the one mixed up in the Bank job) was a slightly built young man and a bit nervous, as were we all.

With about six of us in the trench and the others at a safe distance the Sergeant hurled a grenade out of this trench to a distance of about 25 to 30 yards as they had a long fuse in them, we were all told to watch where it landed, before ducking down to wait for the big bang. Each of us managed to get the thing quite a good distance away, then came 'Jimmy's' turn, he only made it about six yards. Well the Sergeant almost went mad! "No man, No!" the Sergeant shouted (plus some other unprintable things). "Lean back and give it a big over arm, like bowling a cricket ball". So 'Jimmy' had another go, pulled the pin, held the lever on the side tight, leant back and gave a terrific swing upwards. Unfortunately his hand caught the back of the trench. Well! the grenade went straight up in the air, everyone instinctively doubled up and held their heads in their hands as there was nowhere to go. The grenade landed about a yard away in the opposite direction to where it should have gone - what a BANG - as close as that it was terrific, everyone got showered with earth as the top of the trench caved in, but that was all with a bit of luck. The Sergeant packed it all in after that, going away he was muttering something about he'd be safer if he had volunteered to go overseas. We said to 'Jimmy' afterwards that he should have told the Sergeant that we were not a lot of good at Cricket anyway.

At another time on the same meadow but further over on a waste land area, we were practising with a 'Northover projector'. This was a six foot length of rain water down pipe with a firing gadget fitted to

one end of it, a small glass bottle of about half a pint size was inserted into the breech, the firing mechanism closed with the explosive in place, aim was taken onto a tree on this waste land (although most time of practice, the bottles were full of water, this time they were full of phosphorus, which you no doubt know is a highly inflammable substance). The order 'FIRE' was given and with a loud bang the bottle was projected towards this tree which was all of 70 yards away, some bottles hit it but some missed, but each time a bottle broke around the area there was quite a large amount of flames. After the practice session was over, we went as usual to pick up as much glass as possible and no one noticed anything unusual, but the next day someone brought the news from Bawdeswell that a tree was on fire across the meadows and sure enough the next time we went, the tree we used as a target was nothing but a big heap of ashes. Perhaps someone should have told the Germans not to hide behind trees when they invade, just in case we burnt the tree down in front of them.

On the subject of trees, there used to be two big Beech trees on the right of Whitwell Road about 100 yards past the Whitwell end car park of the High School. Someone thought of the bright idea of a bomb in a net up in one of these trees so the Germans would blow themselves up with the aid of a wire stretched across the road. You can imagine the performance there was getting this net rigged up. It's a wonder no one was killed falling out of the tree. I don't know whose petrol

ration was used to test the position of the trip wire, but it was done by driving a car at 30 m.p.h. striking the wire at various points along the road until two tennis balls held in the net struck the car, it eventually was agreed on the position of the wire. Then came the big test, the 'Germans' (R A F Regiment) were due to attack this Sunday morning, the net was loaded with soot and flour bags, someone was positioned way down the Whitwell Road to give the warning - that the Germans were on their way, so that the wire could be stretched across the road, then get back into hiding. This all went off a treat, the armoured personnel carrier followed by an open top staff car came down the road at a fair old speed, must have been well over 30 m.p.h. The carrier struck the wire, the soot and flour fell right into the Staff car following. There was hell to pay! Two high ranking officers of the R A F Regiment had come to watch the invasion - you should have seen them! Someone should have told the Driver 30 m.p.h. and no more! The net was never used again, it hung in the tree until it rotted away. There was more bother over that incident than any of the others. One of our Officers, 'Captain Joe Little' laughingly said he would contact the War Office to arrange that all exercises of this nature must be carried out at 30 m.p.h. and would they please inform Hitler, so that the Germans would know prior to the invasion of Britain. He was a case was 'Captain Joe'.

One other instance that involved a personnel carrier took place at the North end of Reepham. The road bridge

that came over the railway was the ideal place to defend, with the level of the Railway so low down the only way at that point was over the bridge. The defence was set up this Sunday morning as usual, trenches had been dug just Reepham side of the bridge on both sides of the road, so we could hurl clods of earth (sorry - 'Grenades' - well we didn't have anything else) at the enemy, also we were allowed to put a roll of defence barbed wire only half way across the road so as not to interfere with the public movement on the road. The Germans (R A F Regiment) were supposed to take it that the wire was the full width of the road, but they never did, bit unfair really! But this particular time was different. 'Harry Frankland' - yes cousin to the 'Grenade' one and nephew of the 'Bank' job one had other ideas. He reckoned if a length of thin wire was attached to the bottom of the roll of barbed wire laid on the road and stretched into the opposite trench, the public could run over it with no trouble, but when the 'Germans' came along the barbed wire could be pulled all the way across the road. This was agreed upon, and 'Monk' as 'Harry' was known was in charge of the wire.

The attack was on hand, we could hear a heavy truck coming along the Cawston Road. Sure enough, it was the carrier. We pelted it with clods of earth, it didn't stop, the Driver must have seen the barbed wire halfway across the road but you could tell he was not going to stop so 'Monk' heaved on the wire, pulling this roll

across right in front of the Carrier. It did not stop, over the roll of barbed wire it went, it must have hooked underneath the Carrier somehow because the roll of wire followed it down the road. Now as you no doubt know there is a shop dead in front of you as you come down from the bridge, in those days it was 'Sidney Hunt's Grocery Store'. The Carrier did not slow down at all, some of the barbed wire must have jammed in the throttle, also it did not turn left or right. We stared in amazement as the Carrier with an almighty bang, buried itself into 'Sidney's' Grocers shop. You never saw such a mess, there was jam, sugar, flour - everything you can think of was strewn all over the place. It was a bit of luck that the back of the Carrier was still sticking out of the building, so as the boys inside it could get out. It could be seen that to remove the Carrier from the shop would mean the roof would collapse so it was left in place until such time that the roof could be shored up. 'Monk' had the job of removing the barbed wire from under the Carrier as it was his fault it got there in the first place. It was all twisted around the steering column etc. No wonder the driver went straight on, he couldn't do anything about it anyway!

There was a bit of bother about the incident but not so much as when we bombed the Officer's with flour and soot. I also had a sneaking feeling that 'Monk' volunteered to go under the Carrier to cut the barbed wire free so he could get a new uniform, he had been wearing his for work so it was rather greasy, due to

him working in 'George Cook's' cycle repair shop down New Road on the left, it was about 200 yards from Station Plain, the site of 'Sidney's Shop'.

About 75 yards down 'New Road' on the right was our machine gun position. Yours truly was Number 1 and 'Ronnie Tooley' was Number 2. The position was not really our choice, we did want to knock a few bricks out of the wall of one of the sheds on 'The Crown' Public House property, but that was not allowed. We had to make do with cutting an aperture in the wall of a wood shed adjoining the brick one, as the wood was only about half an inch thick you can understand why Number 1 and Number 2 of the 'Lewis Gun' team were not too happy about the position. I think an air gun pellet would have gone through it let alone German Machine Gun or Rifle Fire.

From this point we had a perfect view of the aforementioned bridge which had to be defended at all costs, the distance being about 200 yards, I guess, just right for our 'Lewis Gun' if we could have had real bullets, but not a lot of good when we had to pretend by turning a wooden rattle round and round - the type of rattle used at football matches etc. I doubt if it could be heard outside our shed, for the 'Germans' (R A F Regiment) to hear it inside a Carrier 200 yards away was very doubtful. Now they (the enemy) were kitted out with large thunder flashes (about a foot long these things were) to use as hand grenades, blank cartridges to use in their Rifles and wood nosed bullets to use in their

Machine Guns ('Brens', they were a lovely Machine Gun). All this was a bit unfair against our barbed wire halfway across the road, clods of earth which did not hold together on a dry day and wooden rattles that no one took any notice of, or even heard. Now yours truly had the idea that the wooden bullet in the 'Bren Gun' caused the firing mechanism to work through recoil or gas or something so I found that a wood meat skewer of my Mother's was the same diameter as a 303 bullet which the 'Lewis Gun' fired. I shaped a few bullets out of this skewer, took the lead bullet out of some live ammunition and inserted the wood ones in the place of them. I took the gun down the meadows near Rookery Farm to try it out - Eureka - it worked! Then came the job of making a lot of wooden bullets, as the round magazine on a 'Lewis' held quite a number, 36 I believe, can't really remember.

'Mr Spriggs' the Butcher near the Churches let me have a number of skewers so I made quite a lot of ammunition ready for use on the next attack from the enemy.

It was not long before the Sunday morning came around that we would have to defend Reepham once again. 'Ronnie' and myself were really excited at the thought of giving the enemy some of their own medicine. In position, we were over looking the bridge, we had an area to fire in so as not to endanger the lives of our own men in the trenches near the bridge. Along came the Carrier into view and I opened fire. Now we

never did find out if it was my wood bullets or a stone thrown up by the Carrier or something else, but the big upstairs window in the Chalet bungalow dead opposite to our machine gun post shattered! I still can't believe a wooden bullet could travel that far, but then again a stone thrown up by the Carrier would have had to fly 80 to 100 feet?

'Ronnie' and I felt that we had done our bit towards defending Reepham that morning, not that the 'enemy' took any notice of our fire power, they just carried on over the bridge past the barbed wire halfway across the road as usual.

The next defence of Reepham was some weeks later, during which time I had turned out more wooden bullets to replace those used on the last attack. Not dreaming that one of them was going to give me the worst shock I had had in my young life.

'Ronnie' and I had taken up position in our machine gun post, overlooking the Railway Bridge as usual this Sunday morning with rattle at the ready in reserve. Our other men were in their dugouts either side of the road near the bridge, barbed wire was in position, clods of earth and rattles all prepared. The noise of approaching vehicles could be heard, it must be them as there were not a lot of private cars about in those days, especially on a Sunday morning. Into view they came, I had about 150 yards from then until the bridge to pepper them. As our lads were just Reepham side of the bridge they were quite safe from my line of fire. 'Ronnie' was standing

beside me with another magazine at the ready - I opened up "rat-at-tat" and that was that. The 'Lewis' gun stopped. Ronnie and I looked at each other, passed a few words of wisdom like "try the x z h y! thing again" but to no avail, the bolt had jammed, most annoying also most unusual as the 'Lewis' was a very reliable machine gun. By the time we had found out the gun would not work the action was all over. We reported to Second Lieutenant 'Bass' at the bridge what had happened, he said to make our way back to the Guard Room in the Bircham Institute in Reepham to try and sort the trouble out. This we did, 'Lewis' gun on our shoulders and our tails between our legs. Real disappointing it was! Mind you the remarks we over heard from some of the other members of our Platoon didn't help - "Fancy thinking a few wooden skewers would stop them" was one. Back in the Guard Room, which had a long table in it leaving about two feet of space one end and about one foot at the other. On the table we dumped the gun, looked at it, tried it again, no the bolt was well and truly stuck. 'Ronnie' was standing on my left and the bolt of the gun was on the right hand side of it. 'Ronnie' said, "Let me have a go at the so and so thing". Now as there was no room to pass behind me he walked the length of the table and round the other end. Not that I was taking any notice of this happening as I was trying the damn bolt again. I gave the bolt an almighty blow with the heel of my hand - 'BANG' (it makes me shiver even now to think of it). The gun went off! 'Ronnie' had just passed the

line of fire, by that I mean about three inches! The wooden bullet went through a horse hair stretcher cushion that happened to be laying on the table, a hole as big as your fist appeared the other side of it, an area of about a foot diameter of plaster was blown off the wall and 'Ronnie' and I looked a decidedly lighter shade of pale. The wooden bullet would have hit 'Ronnie' in the stomach as he had to face me as he passed by the end of the table with a narrow space of about one foot. We certainly did feel bad I can tell you! On finding the shattered bullet a knot in the wood must have been to blame giving a slightly larger diameter than the breech of the gun would take. We never did use wooden bullets again after that incident, although a simple metal deflector attached to the gun in front of the barrel would have done the trick. No broken windows! No nearly shooting 'Ronnie'! I found out about the deflector after I was called up into the Army sometime after.

The 'Alec Rowe and Ronnie Tooley' team split up soon after that near disaster. 'Ronnie' and 'Harry' were called into the Army. I asked if I could come off the 'Lewis' as it didn't seem right somehow without 'Ronnie'.

I had purchased a Motor Bike not long before this time, it was a 'Triumph 250 cc'. Lovely bike it was. It was proposed by someone that I should become the Despatch Rider for the Company. This I agreed to do as I was able to get a bit of extra petrol besides my own ration.

Providing I was armed with something different to the rifle I had issued to me when I first joined. That rifle, by the way, was a Canadian Long Ross, sent over as most of our weapons were from private people in Canada and the U.S.A. I shall never forget that rifle, at the time of joining 'Dad's Army' it stood five inches taller than I did, the others used to laugh at me something rotten. It also had a kick like a Mule when fired.

I had a laugh on most of the others when it came to the time of Uniforms being issued, being so small I and 'Dick Eglington' were the only two to get fitted out at the start as the only size that came were size one. Laugh, you should have seen the others trying to get into these small suits! We, 'Dick' and I were able to wear a small 'Home Guard' stitched onto the shoulder of the jackets, while the others still had to wear their 'Home Guard' arm bands. Right proud we were for a long time before the others were fitted out.

Thinking about that rifle kick reminds me of the time when someone came up with the idea of using 12 bore shotguns (this was before the stuff started to come over from the U.S.A. and Canada) instead of the cartridges having a load of small shot in them there were just two large lead balls in each case. Goodness knows what sort of damage they would have done to a human body, can't bear the thought of it.

Sunday morning was practice time to fire these guns at a five gallon drum used for a target, this was on the Rookery Farm meadow, where most of our non-

dangerous activities took place ('non-dangerous' that's a laugh). Now I had been used to firing a 12 bore shot gun so knew what to expect as regards recoil, but this was different. I had noticed the older men rubbing their shoulders after firing. When it was my turn I knelt down, pulled the butt well into my shoulder took aim and fired. Honest, I thought the end of the World had come, being so small the recoil hit me so hard it knocked me completely over so I was laying on my back. If I had not been holding it really tight I am sure it would have broken my shoulder. I guess I missed the five gallon drum with my shot, as most of the others did.

Going back to becoming the Despatch Rider, they took the 'Long Ross' away and issued me with a belt and a pair of '38 Smith and Wesson' revolvers, lovely they were. I was really chuffed as you can imagine, what with being kitted out with Despatch Rider clothing etc. I felt I was doing some good again. With all the firing practice I was allowed to get in I could never have hit a silver Dollar tossed into the air as the Cowboys used to. Now with a rifle that was different, I became quite a good shot. I remember one Sunday morning up at 'Reepham Station' yard, it was .22 rifle practice time. The targets would be 50 yards or 75 yards away, pinned to a pile of wood railway sleepers. After the normal target shoot was over, 'Bert Hall' our Armourer said "Come on Alec, show us what you can do". He placed a shilling, a sixpence and a penny on the sleepers. The shilling I cut in half, the sixpence, as with the penny,

I caught just inside the edge. The penny I carry around on my bunch of keys, the shilling in two parts is in a drawer somewhere, the sixpence had to be flattened out when I was a bit hard up during my time in the Army. By the way, the practice I had in my 'Dad's Army' days helped me get a position in the 'Royal Fusilliers' 12th Battalion Bisley team - can't remember what year it was.

Back to Despatch Riding, it was the usual thing for one of the Guards on duty each night to spend the night at the Searchlight Camp at 'Jordan' nearly into Bawdeswell. For what reason I can't really recall, but it was quite a good night. After supper with the Searchlight lads we had a bunk in one of the Nissen huts, that we could sleep in until awoken in the morning with a cup of tea by the cook. No getting up every so often to stand guard duty outside the Reepham telephone exchange, no kipping down in a small room in the Bircham Institute with the smell of everybody's sweaty socks high in the air. No stench of the after effects of 'Gasher Fitt' and Company drinking beer down at the 'Greyhound' in Back Street until it was time for them to go on guard duty, even if it was the 2am or 4am guard duty they would still be there. Many has been the time I would have to go and fetch them from the Pub to go on guard. The 'Greyhound' was like the London 'Windmill Theatre' it never closed! Also no young Royal Norfolk Officer wanting to look down your rifle barrel in the pitch dark to see if it was clean.

In fact it was quite a good way to spend your stint of once a week guard duty.

This night it was my turn of duty up at 'Jordan Light'. Off I set on my 'Triumph' fairly early evening it was and spent the time chatting with the lads, until about 10.30pm when I turned in after supper. I must have slept well until I was awakened by lots of shouting etc. Now all the times I had been up there nothing really exciting had ever happened, the searchlight would be switched on at odd times just to see if it still worked, otherwise it was pretty routine. This night was different somehow, the searchlight was on, there was an eerie glow in the Nissen hut although the blackouts were in place.

There was a droning noise which told me that 'Gerry' was going over, probably on their way to bomb Coventry or somewhere in the Midlands. There was noise of an aircraft getting louder by the second, also the shouting. I was about to get off my bunk to find out what was going on when suddenly a row of pin-points of light appeared in the Nissen hut roof, followed by a noise I knew only too well 'Rat-a-tat-tat'. Now it didn't take me long to weigh up the situation. 'Gerry' didn't like being all lit up so was trying to put the light out. I don't mind telling you I was frightened, plus the fact that I was much too young to be shot at by angry Germans (real ones this time!). Out of the hut I ran, found my 'Triumph' and I was off home. I had just started to move when the searchlight went out.

Now whether 'Gerry' had scored maximum points or whether the Searchlight lads had switched the damn thing off I never did know, all I did know is it went from being all lit up to sudden darkness. The 'Triumph' decided it didn't want to be on the track leading away from the Camp and took a dive into the ditch at the side. I managed to heave it out and straight home I went, not back to the Guard Room at Reepham but home to my Mum. I was shaking like a leaf, I guess I could have been shot for desertion in the face of the enemy, but I never thought of that at the time - would you?

I hope that 'Mr Ben Stimpson' (he was our Commanding Officer, 'Major' he was) if he buys one of these booklets or hears about this, will please forgive me as I don't suppose he has knowledge of the incident as not many people have.

'Major Ben' had a curious habit while smoking a cigarette, he would extend his fore finger straight up, bring it to the side of the cigarette, curl the finger around it and withdraw it from his mouth very deliberately, hold it like that whilst expelling the smoke then replacing it in his mouth in the reverse order, it used to fascinate me.

I guess I have run out of memories of 'Dad's Army' days, of my own perhaps someone else has some to recall.

'Mr Ben Stimpson' can recall a time when Reepham did partially get invaded, this must have been after we young men had been called into H M Forces as we cannot recall it. Apparently a Charity Dance had been laid on by some of the wives of members of the 'Home

Guard' in the Town Hall, for which Charity, he can't remember (probably knitting socks for soldiers or something like that). The dance had been going for some little while when it was noticed that quite a commotion was taking place on the Town Hall steps. After some time the commotion had not quietened down, in fact it had increased, it was decided to investigate. There at the top of the steps was 'Herbert Wilkin' (Reepham's Special Constable) doing his utmost to hold back about a dozen or so American Air Force Personnel who had been attracted by the music. 'Herbert' was getting very hot under the collar with the insistence of these Yanks wanting to come into the Dance. What he hoped to do against such odds was anybody's guess. Anyway, after a lot of "No you can't" and "Yes we can", it was decided to let the Yanks in. As Mr Ben said it was a good move really as with the Yanks' kind of money the Charity did very well out of it, what with them buying themselves and everybody else drinks from the Bar all night long. Everyone finished up in a very happy frame of mind except 'Herbert' who insisted afterwards that he could have held them off if the organisers of the Dance had not agreed to let them in.

One little episode I have remembered didn't have much to do with 'Dad's Army' days other than it happened after Sunday morning training. We (the whole Company) had been dismissed outside the Bircham Institute, various groups headed in different directions - towards the different Pubs I guess. There were quite a few to choose

from in those days, about seven or eight of us were on the way to the 'George and Dragon' and were somewhere in line with the Post Office when the cigarette I had lit directly after dismissal came to an end. Now I know it was a stupid thing to do but without a second thought I flicked this stub end into the air, 'Freddie Mason' and two or three others were in front of myself, 'Ronnie Tooley' and company. Now the million to one chance happened - the wind caught the cigarette and took it forward just as poor 'Freddie' decided to lean his head forward to speak to someone next door but one. Yes, you have guessed it, down the neck of Freddie's uniform it fell, inside his shirt next to his skin! If anyone had had a video camera which were unthought of in those days - they would have made the take of a life time.

The antics poor 'Freddie' got up to to try and remove that butt end were unbelievable. The more he pushed his hand down his neck the further it fell down, poor 'Fred'. We finished up turning his upside down against the Church Railings and taking his tunic off, all those damn buttons didn't help. He had about four different burns on his back. The Landlady at the 'George and Dragon' put some cream on the burns and gave me a very dirty look when she was told what had happened. Naturally, I was sorry but we have had some laughs about it since.

'Charlie Hall' has told me one or two incidents he remembers. I don't know whether I can get the first one to look good on paper but it must have been funny to listen to.

It concerns a chap named 'Cecil Allen'. Cecil had a terrible stutter.

After a Sunday morning exercise 'Charlie' and 'Cecil' and others finished up in the 'Duke of York' Pub. 'Charlie Claxton' the Landlord, in conversation asked what they had been doing. Poor 'Cecil' was in line of sight so thought 'Charlie' had directed the question to him.

"W-w-well" said 'Cecil', "w-w-eve b-b-been on the b-b-blackard b-b-bomb b-b-barder".

"What the hell is that?" asks 'Charlie'

"It's a thing-ma-jig y-y-you p-p-put the b-b-bomb in, set t-the w-w-what-sa n-n-name on the w-w-watch-ma c-call, take aim, p-p-pull the t-t-trigger and b-b-bobs your uncle" said 'Cecil'.

"Oh" said 'Charlie' pulling another pint and wondering what 'Cecil' was on about. I wonder if he ever did find out what a Blackard Bomb-barder was.

Another instance concerned a night on guard duty, as usual three people took it in turns to bring the ingredients for making tea during the night. One brought the tea, another the sugar, but this night no one brought the milk. Now 'Jock McCarter' with thoughts of going all through the night with no mugs of tea, said to 'Charlie Hall' - "Now it's dark let's go and see what we can do about this milk business - bring the big jug". Off they went from the 'Bircham Institute' over Townsend Corner up past the Police Station where just on the left were 'Eglington's' cows. (Yes, you've guessed it). Over the gate they go. "Hold the Jug" said 'Jock' as he got one

of the cows to stand still. Plenty of milk for the night's tea making, probably enough for the week I guess.

Another of Charlie Hall's memories of those days, was when a football match had been arranged between Reepham Home Guard and The Searchlight Battery from Jordan, who I mentioned earlier in the book.

The match was rather a one sided affair with the Searchlight boys winning 13-1. Now Charlie was rather disappointed at this result even though he did score their only goal. He did feel a bit better later on when the two teams were having a few beers in one of the Pubs, it was pointed out to the Home Guard Team that who they had played was the West Ham Professional Football team. Apparently the War Lords at the top had the idea of keeping sporting teams together in fairly safe situations - like Searchlight Batteries etc.

By the way, 'Charlie' carried on playing football regularly until he was 50 and also a few guest appearances after that, well done 'Charlie'!

Remember back in the book I mentioned the 'Lewis' gun position where 'Ronnie Tooley' and myself overlooked the Railway Bridge. Well 'Charlie' told me that he and 'Rowley Laskey' were in that position one Sunday morning awaiting the attack from the enemy (R A F Regiment), they waited and waited for hours, no one attacked. 'Rowley' said "Sod this, they're not coming, I'll go in the 'Crown' and get us a pint of beer each", which he did. 'Charlie' said they had just started to drink the beer when the shed door burst open and there was the

enemy who immediately drank their beer and took them prisoner. What a downfall for 'Dad's Army'!

I think I will call it a day now, I know there must be lots more stories to tell about 'Dad's Army' but this little lot will have to do for now.

Thank you for buying this Book.

Yours

ALEC ROWE

P.S.

I forgot to mention about 'The Old Brewery House' Banqueting Hall as it is known today.

In 'Dad's Army' days it was used as the Drill Hall, built I believe in the first place to store barrels of Beer produced by the Brewery.

At the time of 'Dad's Army' it was just one big building standing on its own in the lovely gardens of 'Dial House' as the Brewery House was known back in the old days.

Now as you know it has been extended through the archways to the side and to the Hotel and Sports Centre at the ends.

The Hall was used by the Home Guard for a small arms .22 rifle range for training with rifle and machine gun, marching and rifle drill especially in bad weather. It had quite a good smooth concrete floor, not too good for drill work and marching as our studded boots could not grip very well.

As youngsters, we found it very good for Roller Skating - steel wheels! I have mine somewhere at home now. Also we had a trapeze hanging from the roof at the Sports Centre end of the Hall. In fact, I would say that Hall was used as much in those days as it is today. I thought I would just add this post script as some of you might find it interesting.

'Bye once again,

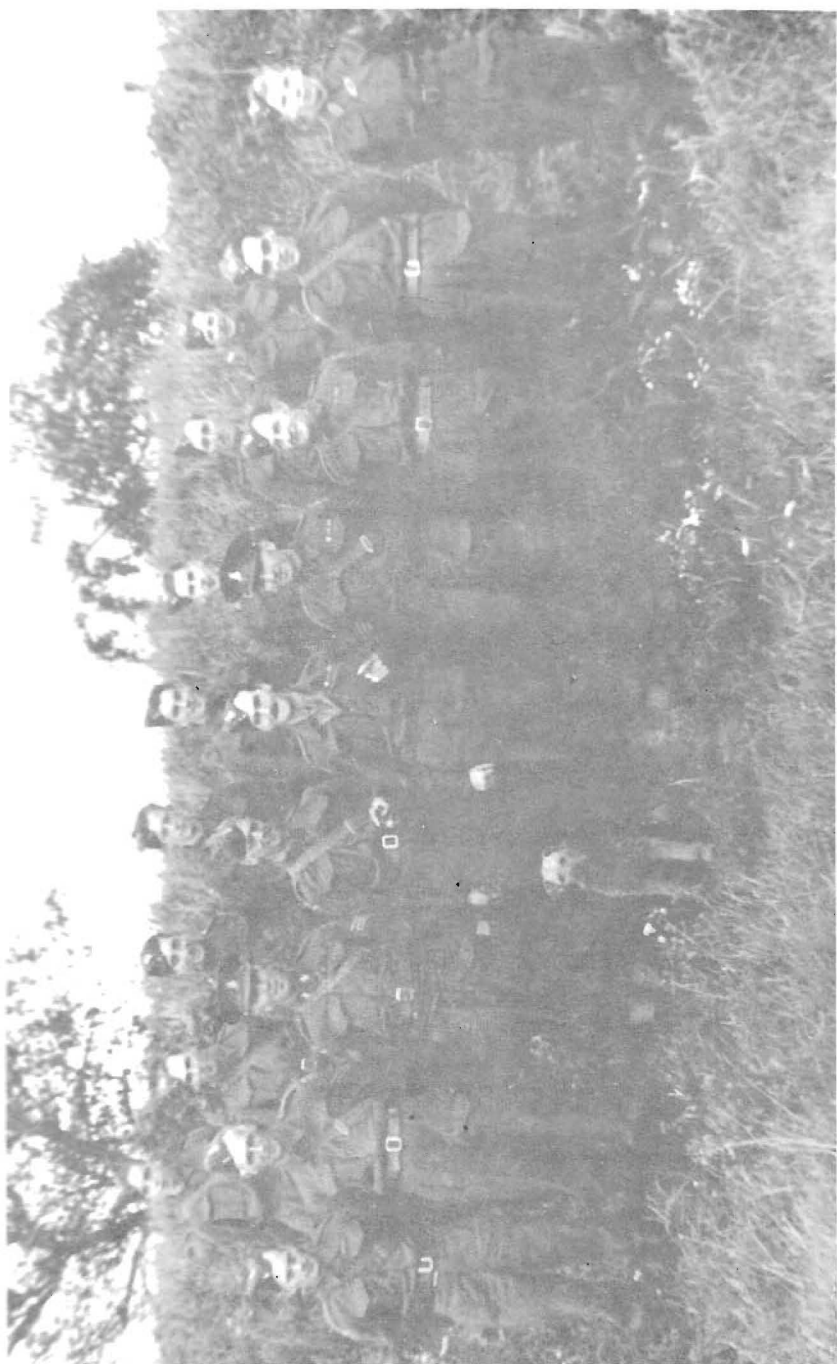
A.R.

Some of the Names of
REEPHAM HOME GUARD

Mr Ben Stimpson	Major
Mr Simmonds	Major
Mr Joe Little	Captain
Mr Poll	Lieutenant
Mr Aubrey Bass	2nd Lieutenant

Sgt J Cockaday
Sgt Billy Tubby
Sgt Billy Bacon
Cpl Billy Freestone
Cpl C Grout
Cpl J Cooper
Cpl N Egmore
Cpl B Keyworth
Cpl F Page
Cpl V Massingham
L/Cpl W Frosdick
L/Cpl R Duffield
L/Cpl A Reeve
Pte Harry Frankland
Pte Ronnie Tooley
Pte Freddie Mason
Pte Alec Rowe
Pte Frank Goward
Pte Bob Hendry
Pte Albert Fitt
Pte Billy Bishop
Pte Stephen Frankland
Pte Jimmy Frankland
Pte Billy Duffield
Pte Bert Hall
Pte Charlie Hall
Pte Jock McCarter

Pte Basil Read
Pte Jimmy Pilch
Pte Bob Rose
Pte Clem Fuller
Pte Jack Moore
Pte Jack Jay
Pte Percy Russel
Pte Nurse
Pte Clem Welton
Pte Tom Dunham
Pte John Dunham
Pte Clifford Bircham
Pte Geoffrey Bircham
Pte G Harvey
Pte J Harvey
Pte W Harvey
Pte L Pierce
Pte T Hall
Pte J Hall
Pte C Allen
Pte L Secker
Pte R Reeve
Pte R Howes
Pte R Digby
Pte A Hall
Pte E Hall
Pte H Bell
Pte R Page
Pte J West
Pte R Laskey
Pte S Smith
Pte K Jarvis
Pte J Rudd



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