

Child Okeford Home Guard



**THE HILL
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THE HOME GUARD

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“men in Great Britain who are British subjects between the ages of 17 and 65 to come forward and offer their service”.

Thus the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV) was formed.

The government was expecting 150,000 men to volunteer. By the end of July 1.5 million had done so. In August the name of the unit was formerly changed to the Home Guard



Dorset had seven regular Home Guard Battalions which were based in Bridport, Dorchester, Poole, Sherborne, Weymouth, Wimborne and Wareham.

The Child Okeford platoon formed part of the 2nd Company (Sturminster Newton) of the 4th Battalion (Sherborne).

The tunic shows the badge of the 4th Battalion but we do not know who it belonged to.

Continued on centre pages

* A full copy of the speech can be found on the village web site



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But what do we know about the Child Okeford Home Guard? Sadly, not a lot.

Our millennium book features a photograph of a Home Guard platoon ostensibly from Child Okeford but we can now identify this as being a unit from Iwerne Minster.

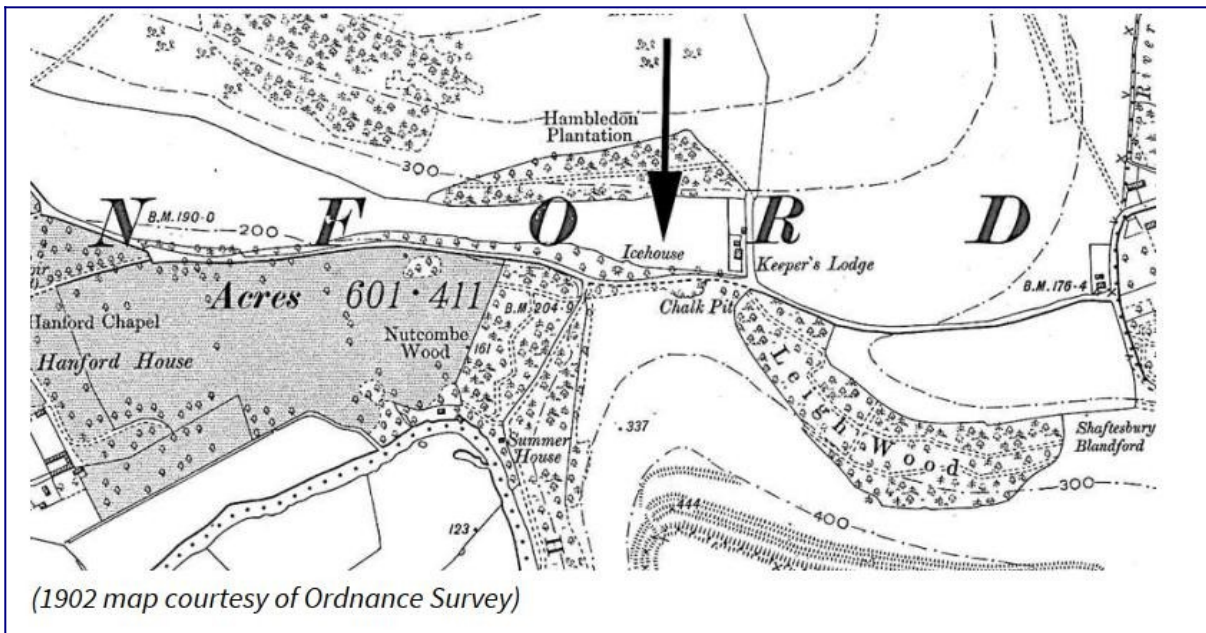
Thanks to local historian, John Pidgeon, a mail from Kate in Blackpool and local input from the usual stalwarts – Audrey, Christine, John and Sylvia – we are able to put together a “command structure”, which you can see on the back cover, although we doubt the list of platoon members is complete.

We understand the Child Okeford platoon initially met in a wooden hut at the junction of Melway Lane and Station Road before moving to the more convivial surroundings of the Union Arms. We also understand the ARP (Air Raid Precautions wardens) met in a back room at The Baker Arms.

The Ice House

The ammunition was kept in The Ice House in Duck Street. The Ice House is described in “British History Online” as “of brick, consists of a circular domed chamber (14 ft diameter) sunk in the ground. The entrance is on the N. side. It is probably of the early 19th century and from its position appears likely to have served both Hanford House and Steepleton House”.

Interestingly, when the Hanford Estate was sold in 1946, the Ice House is not mentioned in the detailed schedule although it is indicated on the accompanying map.



We

understand the building is currently occupied by bats.

Captain Henry Syndercombe Bower

The Syndercombe Bower family is significant in the history of Child Okeford and, particularly, Fontmell Parva. The name does not appear in any records we have found relative to the Home Guard. But! A newspaper article in the Western Gazette dated 18th September 1940 records the death of Captain Henry Gregory Syndercombe Bower after a collision with a motor cyclist in Salisbury. That night he had been due to go on duty with the Childe (sic) Okeford Home Guard.

His rank of Captain relates to his time in the Manchester Regiment in WW1 and would not be relevant to any Home Guard role and he does not appear in the records of the Home Guard officers. At 73 he would also be past the age limit. Conjecture is that an exception was made based upon previous experience at a time the Battle of Britain was at its height and it was a case of "all hands to the pump". If he had lived it is likely he would have been asked to leave the Home Guard in 1941.

Auxiliary Unit

Within the original Home Guard there were probably men who, later, transferred to the special Auxiliary Unit which we shall feature in next month's Hill.

If you are able to add to our knowledge of the Child Okeford Home Guard either with memories from older relatives and/or photographs please let me know (david.w.pope@btinternet.com)

On a wider picture if you are able to enhance the knowledge of the Home Guard in Dorset as a whole or have any photographs, John Pidgeon would love to hear from (jcpidgeon@btinternet.com)

Dorset Home Guard

4th Battalion Sherborne, Barton House, Sturminster Newton

C.O. Lt. Col. Arthur Kenneth Norris

1940

1943

Maj. Frederick Hamilton Lister DSO

Hanford House, Hanford

2 I.C.

Charles Ernest West

Member of His Majesty's Bodyguard

DOB 05/12/80

Dudley Frederick Oliphant Danger

Asst Yew Cottage, Child Okeford

Retired Poultry Farmer DOB 19/09/02

2nd Company, Sturminster Newton

Maj. Gustavus Glyn Spicker Brander OBE

Lt. Col. Frederick Hamilton Lister DSO

Long Lynch, Child Okeford

C.O

Hanford House, Hanford

Army Remount Collecting Centre

DOB 23/05/81

Medical Capt. William Pearson Richardson, Barakat, Hayward Lane

Officer Retired Medical Practitioner DOB 21/09/71

Child Okeford Platoon

Platoon Lt.Col. Gustavus Glyn Spicker Brander

OBE

Lt. Tom Martin Oliver

Officer

Long Lynch, Child Okeford

Gold Hill Farm, Child Okeford

2 Lt. Tom Martin Oliver

2 I.C Gold Hill Farm, Child Okeford

Farmer DOB 12/09/90

Sgt. Frederick Bradley, The Olde House, Child Okeford, Farmer DOB 23/01/89

Pte. Edward J. Harris, Myrtle Cottage, Shaftesbury Road, House Decorator DOB 03/10/94

Pte. Ronald C. Harris, Shaftesbury Road, Plumber DOB 16/02/04

Pte. Arthur J. Hart, Upper Street, Boot Repairer Masterman, DOB 22/02/93

Pte. Walter J. Jackson, Foreman Avon & Stour Catchment Board, Sherburn Cottages DOB 29/03/85

Pte. Bertram Mogridge, Fontmell Parva, Farm Carter, DOB 23/07/02

Anthony Eden's Speech

On the evening of Tuesday, May 14th, 1940, The Rt. Hon. Anthony Eden, MP, then Secretary of State for War, broadcast the following appeal to the country.

“I want to speak to you to-night about the form of warfare which the Germans have been employing so extensively against Holland and Belgium – namely, the dropping of troops by parachute behind the main defensive lines. Let me say at once that the danger to us from this particular menace, although it undoubtedly exists, should not be exaggerated. We have made preparations to meet it already.

“Let me describe to you the system under which these parachute raids are carried out. The troops arrive by aeroplane – but let it be remembered that any such aeroplane seeking to penetrate here would have to do so in the teeth of the Anti-Aircraft defences of this country. If such penetration is effected, the parachutists are then dropped, it may be by day, it may be by night. These troops are specially armed, equipped, and some of them have undergone specialised training. Their function is to seize important points, such as aerodromes, power stations, villages, railway junctions and telephone exchanges, either for the purpose of destroying them at once, or of holding them until the arrival of reinforcements. The purpose of the parachute attack is to disorganise and confuse, as a preparation for the landing of troops by aircraft.

“The success of such an attack depends on speed. Consequently, the measures to defeat such an attack must be prompt and rapid. It is upon this basis that our plans have been laid. You will not expect me to tell you, or the enemy, what our plans are, but we are confident that they will

be effective. However, in order to leave nothing to chance and to supplement, from sources as yet untapped, the means of defence already arranged, we are going to ask you to help us, in a manner which I know will be welcome to thousands of you. Since the war began the Government have received countless enquiries from all over the Kingdom from men of all ages who are for one reason or another not at present engaged in military service, and who wish to do something for the defence of the country.

“Now is your opportunity. We want large numbers of such men in Great Britain who are British subjects, between the ages of 17 and 65, to come forward now and offer their service in order to make assurance doubly sure. The name of the new force which is now to be raised will be the “Local Defence Volunteers”. This name, Local Defence Volunteers, describes its duties in three words. It must be understood that this is, so to speak, a spare-time job, so there will be no need for any volunteer to abandon his present occupation.

“Part-time members of existing civil defence organisations should ask their officers’ advice before registering under the scheme. Men who will ultimately become due for calling up under the National Service (Armed Forces) Act may join temporarily, and will be released to join the Army when they are required to serve. Now a word to those who propose to volunteer. When on duty you will form part of the Armed Forces, and your period of service will be for the duration of the war. You will not be paid, but you will receive uniform and will be armed. You will be entrusted with certain vital duties, for which reasonable fitness and a knowledge of firearms are necessary. These duties will not require you to live away from your homes. In order to volunteer, what you have to do is to give in your name at your local police station; and then, as and when we want you, we will let you know.

“This appeal is directed chiefly to those who live in small towns, villages and less densely inhabited suburban areas. I must warn you that, for certain military reasons, there will be some localities where the numbers required will be small, and others where your services will not be required at all. Here then is the opportunity for which so many of you have been waiting. Your loyal help, added to the arrangements which already exist, will make and keep our country safe.”