

Home Guard notes: written out by Collingwood Ingram for his talks to the Benenden Company of which he was Commander.

25th June 1940, Comments on Practice Operations

Perhaps the most important information to emerge from these operations was the ease with which “5th Columnists” were able to function without hindrance. A sergeant in uniform was able to obtain from conversation in a pub in Hawkhurst, the names and numbers of the local Platoon Commanders – the sites, and hours during which they were manned, of LDV piquet in the neighbourhood; while other information of a military nature was also obtained. This lesson, perhaps applies to the general public rather than to the personnel of the LDV but is nevertheless one to be marked, learned and inwardly digested.

Another point to be noted was the relative immunity from suspicion that was derived from the use of a military uniform. No fewer than 9 cars were stolen in Hawkhurst alone: an officer actually climbed the main telegraph post in the centre of Hawkhurst, in full view of a crowd and no one questioned his right to do so.

Now as to Benenden. Troops from the AA Battery (supposed enemies) fraternised with a piquet of the LDV until suspicion was allayed when they turned upon them and “killed” the lot. This, of course was a somewhat unrealistic test. It cannot be expected that four men of enemy origin could all speak such perfect English that they could deceive a body of Englishmen. I think this question of accent is going to be our surest safeguard from being imposed upon. In all cases of doubt, a persons, whether Officer, Ranker or civilian, should be made to sign in front of his interrogator. The signature so obtained must then be compared with that on his or her identity card.
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(added later) There appears to have been some confusion as to the first part of our practice “battle”. One thing is certain – the first trick went to the “enemy”. But this was not the fault of the LDVs.¹ Having held up the enemy truck for examination at the Pullington Post the falsified papers were handed to Chief Inspector Kirby for verification & he must bear the blame for having passed them. This guard was thereupon “wiped out”. It is equally certain that the next trick went to the enemy, for they hood-winked & “killed” our guard at the Telephone Exchange.

¹LDV – Local Defence Volunteers, as the Home Guard was called when first established.

Whether the Reserve Party incarcerated in the St Georges Club inflicted casualties on the enemy - & if so, how many – cannot be decided but I think it is fair to assume that they “did in” at least one or two of them. At any rate the enemy’s claim to have captured the Garage cannot be admitted. On the return of one of our Reconnaissance Patrols, the St Georges garrison was reinforced, & this combined party unquestionably captured the remaining portion of the truck load of enemy – they also capture two others. At the end of the operation only two remained at liberty – two men in a stolen car.

To sum up, we largely, but not entirely, wiped out our opponents – but not until they had demolished the Exchange and killed some 7 or 8 of our men. On the whole, I don’t think we did too badly. The Officer commanding the Operation described the exercise as very encouraging & full of the spirit of attack, which brought a large measure of success.

7th July 1940

It has been decided to form, what might be termed Battle Posts at the four Road Blocks we intend to put up – Iden Green, Benenden, Pullington & Goddards Green. I have called these “Battle Posts” as some of them will only be manned in the event of a General Alarm. When this is sounded the men who have been detailed to man these Posts will go direct to their respective stations & not to our Main Post. All those who have not been so detailed will proceed at once to St Georges Club, where they will form the Reserve Party. Please make a careful note of this. It is an important change in our Standing Orders. Remember that in future St Georges Club (which has now been fortified) - & not the Vicarage Yard as previously stated – will be our Rallying Point in future.

The Battle Posts (all of which are being fortified) will be under the command, so far as possible, of men who have had previous active service experience.

The Following have been selected

For the main post (St Georges Club)	S. Barham
Iden Green	L. Clark
Pullington	C. Clegg
Goddards Green	J. Rennie

This does not mean that there will be any change in Section Leaders. For administrative & other purposes they will be the same as before with the exception that J. Rennie has been substituted for Harcourt Vernon (who is leaving) and that S. Barham has been added. He will be responsible for all Ordnance issues to our unit.

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Let us assume that the enemy has landed by parachute. However well he may have prepared himself beforehand - & this he is certain to have done - by the careful study of maps & photos, you may rest assured he will not have the same intimate knowledge of the country that we have. Upon landing, it is highly probable he will take some time to orientate himself - to discover exactly where he is - and even after that, his progress is bound to be hesitant and uncertain. Put yourself in his shoes. How would you like to be suddenly dumped in a strange, foreign country - a country closely hedged & more or less densely wooded - & to be told to find your way to such and such a place? It wouldn't be easy. It's our task to make it a jolly sight more difficult for him & at the same time a damned unhealthy job.

Now as to tanks & other forms of transport. This is where I hope our Road Blocks will come in. It is no good pretending that these Road Blocks will be able to stop tanks however small they may be, but we might manage to delay them - especially if we can make them believe we have mined the road. I think the best way of achieving this would be by placing obstacles on the ground that look like mines. This sounds rather like a school-boy trick, but I think it will work. An old motor car accumulator painted black with a sparking plug sticking into it and a wire running to both sides of the road, would look devilish suspicious - or a small square tin with some strange looking contraption attached, might also serve the same purpose.....

Incidentally I might mention that I have devised a scheme for making all our roads extremely dangerous for the enemy without hindering the safe passage of our own troops. It is now in the hands of the war office & I sincerely hope it will soon be adopted.

In the event of a local enemy landing, it will be Mr Rollings duty to warn Mr Fuggle to destroy all the petrol on his premises at once. Every private car should be immediately rendered unserviceable.

There is one more point that I would like to draw your attention to. If we are called out for the real thing there will be no telling how long it will be before we can return

to our own homes again. It behoves everybody therefore to take some kind of rations with them – food in as concise and nourishing form as possible.

It will be our unpleasant duty to stop all refugees & to see that they are turned back. They should be told that if they evacuate from their own area without orders, they cannot be fed. In all cases they must “stay put”. As everybody knows it was the congestion caused by refugees that was largely responsible for our undoing in France.

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After parade all men without uniforms will report to St Georges Club where they will have a battle dress issued to them. You will be glad to learn that we have had eight tin helmets issued to us. These will be kept at the two posts for use by the men on duty.

Sunday 11th July 1940

..... As some of you know, this morning we had an exercise in what might be termed “guerrilla” tactics against the Sandhurst unit of the LDV. I was asked to supply a small number of pseudo parachutists. These seven men were presumed to have been landed at the AA Box at the top of Newenden Hill at 11 a.m. They were told to find their way, keeping within the bounds of Sandhurst parish, to Field Green – that is to say, to the junction of Sponden Lane with the Rye – Hawkhurst Road. The Sandhurst contingent were fully aware of these plans & the Commanding Officer had strung a line of men placed in concealed positions right across the parish. He felt pretty confident that none of our fellows would get through without being captured. He was wrong – all seven safely reached their objective – which was a highly creditable performance. The men concerned were Leany, Barham C., Wickham, Davis W., Meades G.E., Meades W.G., and Masters T.

25th July 1940

..... On the General Alarm being sounded all men will go at once with arms and ammunition to the Battle Posts to which they have been detailed. All others must report immediately to St Georges Club. The seven Battle Posts selected, more or less form a perimeter round the village of Benenden.

1	No	Goddards Green	255 530	P. Leney
2	No	Colebarn	275 524	Clegg
3	No	Pullington	255 510	Barham
4	No	Dingleden	254 496	Blandford
5	No	Iden Green	239 498	G. Harden
6	No	Scullsgate	230 511	Syer
7	No	Mounts	234 521	Rennnie

..... Molotov Bottle throwing. I am offering this old silver-plated fruit basket as a prize to the most expert bomber in the company. This competition will be carried out in heats. The different “heats” will be composed of (A) the men detailed to the different Battle Posts (B) The Reserve Party which will be divided into two sections. The three best scores in each heat will qualify for the final round.

Cases have occurred recently of military personnel being detained after they have shown their AB64. Your attention is drawn to the fact that AB64 must be regarded as an equivalent to an Identity Card so far as troops are concerned.

Next Sunday there is going to be a special service at the Church for the benefit of the Benenden Company of the Home Guard. The vicar has arranged that the service will be a very short one and hopes that as many as possible will attend. The time will be 7 pm Attendance will of course be entirely voluntary but I trust most of you will attend. The service is not expected to last more than ½ an hour or 20 min.

Now here is a piece of news that should gladden your hearts. The War Office has decided to give us – I say “us”, but as a matter of fact the Officers do not come in to this – a subsistence allowance for periods of continuous duty. The rates, as at present fixed, are as follows

For periods between 10 & 24 hours	3/-
For periods between 5 & 10 hours	1/6

As this concession is retrospective & starts from July 17th; men who have been on guard duty since that date are entitled to 1/6 for each night they have been out. You will, I am sure, agree that as we have all willingly and freely offered our services to the country without any thought of emolument, this concession is an extremely generous one – especially, as you know, England needs every penny she can beg or borrow to carry on a war which is proving to be by far the most costly in the history of mankind. Would it not, therefore, be a fine gesture on our part if we agreed to loan any Subsistence Allowance we may get to the country in the form of National Savings? In many ways Benenden has already shown itself to be among the most – if not quite the most – patriotic village in the county of Kent. Here is a golden opportunity for us to set a seal on our reputation for patriotism – to be an example to all units of the Home Guard – not only in Kent – but the whole of Great Britain. If you agree with my suggestion, I will undertake to have a letter sent to the Press so that our patriotism will be made known &, I hope, followed by others. And, incidentally, think how nice it will be to draw a fat lump sum when we finally doff our khaki & put down our rifles once and for all. It would give an added zest to our thoughts of peace that will follow victory.

[the following letter appeared in the Daily Telegraph]

“From Sir Henry Ledgard Sir – When the Officer in command of one Kent Company of the Home Guard announced that the War Office had decided to grant them a subsistence allowance the men unanimously agreed to lend every penny so received to the Government in the form of national savings. It is to be hoped that this spontaneous and patriotic gesture may be followed by other units of the Home Guard.”