

The Sussex Combined Services - Land

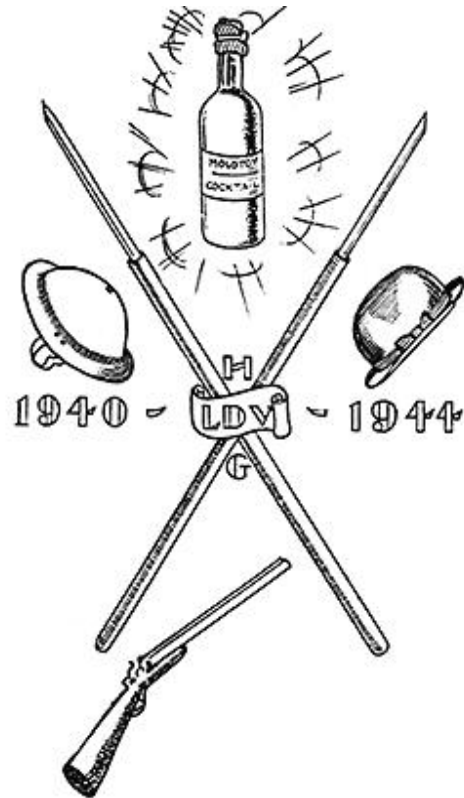
The Sussex Home Guard

Formed on May 14, 1940, the Home Guard was an attempt to bolster the defence of the British Isles against the threatened German invasion from the continent. Consisting of those too old or too young to fight with the Regular Armed Forces, the Home Guard is often seen as a farcical episode in British history. Whilst the highly popular television comedy series *Dad's Army* reinforces this view, in the dark days of 1940 the situation was desperate, and the threat very real. As Winston Churchill said in his speech to the House of Commons on November 5th, 1940:

"Such a force is of the highest value and importance. A country where every street and every village bristles with resolute, armed men is a country against which the tactics which destroyed the Dutch resistance - tactics of parachutists, airborne troops in carriers and gliders, and Fifth Column activities - if there were any ever here, of which I am increasingly sceptical - a country so defended would not be liable to be overthrown by such tactics."

Initially known as 'Local Defence Volunteers', the abbreviation 'LDV' was unfairly stated by some to stand for 'Look, Duck, Vanish'! On July 31, 1940, the name was changed to 'Home Guard', volunteers (women as well as men) swelling the battalions raised all over the country.

In the early days, uniforms and equipment were scarce, so emergency measures were taken. Uniform often consisted of just an armband with 'LDV' or 'Home Guard' written on it, a steel helmet and military respirator, if there were enough to go round. Proper battledress uniforms and military-style equipment were introduced as and when they became available. Obsolete military rifles gradually replaced privately-owned shotguns, pitchforks, and issue 'pikes' (a long bayonet welded onto the end of a steel pipe.)



The Home Guard

The following Home Guard Battalions were raised in Sussex between 1940-44:

1st Sussex (Chichester) Battalion
2nd Sussex (Petworth) Battalion
3rd Sussex (Horsham) Battalion
4th Sussex (Billingshurst) Battalion (formerly 4th Sussex (Steyning) Battalion)
5th Sussex (Worthing) Battalion
6th Sussex (Arundel) Battalion
7th Sussex (Midhurst) Battalion
8th Sussex (Bognor Regis and Selsey) Battalion (November 1941)
9th Sussex (Shoreham) Battalion (February 1943)
10th Sussex (East Brighton) Battalion (February 1943)
11th Sussex (39th GPO) Battalion
12th Sussex (Southdown Motor Transport) Battalion
13th Sussex (Haywards Heath) Battalion
14th Sussex (Hove) Battalion
15th Sussex (West Brighton) Battalion (February 1943)
16th Sussex (Lewes) Battalion
17th Sussex (East Grinstead) Battalion
18th Sussex (Crowborough) Battalion
19th Sussex (Rother) Battalion
20th Sussex (Hailsham) Battalion
21st Sussex (Eastbourne) Battalion
22nd Sussex (Brede Battalion) (Formerly 22nd Sussex (Battle) Battalion)
23rd Sussex (Hastings) Battalion
24th Sussex (Bexhill) Battalion (Disbanded March 1941)
24th Sussex (Uckfield) Battalion (June 1943)
25th Sussex (2nd Southern Railway) Battalion (June 1940)
26th Sussex (Worth Forest) Battalion (January 1943)
The Home Guard were finally stood down in December, 1944, after the successful Allied invasion of Europe had ended all thoughts of German invasion of Britain.

Training and "guards" maybe were not in vain,
Perhaps they helped the Germans to refrain
From desecrating Sussex hills and vales
From which the breath of freedom still exhales.