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**Title**                                   **1942 Press Cuttings**  
**Prime Source**                       **Harrogate Advertiser**

**Local Man Safe.**

**28 March 1942**

10   **Local Man Safe.** – Mr and Mrs Malcolm Fairman of Victoria Avenue, Knaresborough, have received the following cable from their son, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. Donald Fairman, who served throughout the campaign in Malaya with the Royal Corps of signals:- “Am safely in Bombay, after being bombed and sunk.” 2nd Lieut. Fairman, who is 24, is an old boy of Harrogate Grammar School, where his father is physical training master, and is well known in football circles, having played at centre-half for Knaresborough Town, Yorkshire Amateurs and the Corinthians.

HOME GUARD READY TO FIGHT

23 May 1942

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**By a Military Correspondent**

On May 14, 1942, the Home Guard celebrated its second birthday. Its last year has been one of great interest and usefulness, and its birthday offers a suitable opportunity for considering its progress and development.

The first striking point in the year's history of the Home Guard is that it has ceased to be a voluntary force. Compulsory enrolment in areas where this step is necessary on operational grounds is now recommended by the Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces. It is probable that in the near future a position will be reached where the

application of compulsory enrolment may be much more general than was at first envisaged.

### **Swelling the Ranks**

Voluntary recruiting has not come to an end. Civil Defence workers, men not liable to conscription, who are yet determined to fit themselves to defend their country, and 17-year-old boys from the much enlarged Army Cadet Force are swelling the ranks. New factory units are being formed as new factories are established.

10 The operational role of the main bulk of the home Guard has changed very little during the last year, which is fortunate, since it has enabled training to be continuous and progressive. There have, however, been important developments in the role of special sections of the Home Guard, such as units on anti-aircraft duties and, to a less extent, units on Coast Defence duties under Home Forces. The large part to be played by the Home Guard is anti-aircraft defence of the future is becoming increasingly apparent, and is, perhaps, the most impressive development on the operational side in the story of the year. Home Guards are also being used for military traffic control, and as despatch riders.

20 Training has been maintained throughout the winter with keenness and success. Weapon training has probably progressed as far as it possible in present circumstances. The force set itself to master the chief weapons with which it is issued in ever-increasing quantities, including automatic arms, anti-tank weapons, and various types of grenades.

Home Guard Intelligence Officers have also been through courses at an Intelligence Training Centre, while other students have gone through the Army Gas School To meet the difficulty experienced by many Home Guards in finding time to travel considerable distances from their place of work to courses, a number of travelling units consisting of officers and War office instructors have been touring through Commands. Their work has been so successful that their number may be substantially .....?

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### **New Advantages**

In two important respects the past year has seen the Home Guard enjoying augmented advantages; more instructional staffs are being provided throughout the country, and transport, vital to a force which may be called on to play a mobile part, is being made available in much greater quantities.

During the last year the Home Guard, with improved organisation for command (as recommended by the Gale Committee), has been adjusting itself with great success

to its new conditions of service. Its training in its traditional operational roles and its concentration on new functions such as anti-aircraft and Coastal Defence are being carried out with careful attention. If it is called upon to prove itself in action in the coming year it is confidently expected that the Home Guard will prove its mettle, showing itself fit to fight on the beaches, in the fields, in the streets, as long as a single enemy remains on British soil.

## **RIVER FATALITY AT RIPLEY**

**01.08.1942**

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### **Home Guard Accidentally Drowned**

Mr Frank Pearson, of the Harrogate Home Guard, was drowned during Home Guard exercises on Monday night in the river at Ripley.

Mr. Pearson, who was 23, was born in Nottingham. For five years he was a draughtsman in the Civil Service. He was married seven weeks ago at Brighton, and his wife, also a Civil Servant, resides at 16, Treesdale Road, Harrogate. Mr. Pearson was interested in art and spent much of his spare time sketching and painting. His other hobby was cycling. He joined the Home Guard, then the Local Defence Volunteers, on its formation.

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### **The Inquest**

A sergeant in the Home Guard was commended by the Coroner and by his commanding officer for his attempts to rescue deceased when the inquest was held at Ripley on Wednesday.

A verdict of death from drowning when on Home Guard exercises was returned.

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The sergeant, Frederick A. Rumsey, civil servant, of Dragon parade, Harrogate, said they were carrying out an exercise at Ripley Bridge about 8.30pm on Monday. "We were practising crossing the river in steel helmets and uniforms," he said, "Pearson

had a Sten gun with him, but the whole equipment would not weigh more than 15lbs, and there was a safety rope from one bank to another. Seven and myself crossed, except two who could not swim. The strong swimmers ignored the rope. The exercise was finished about 8.45pm and the rope taken down. The rope was detached at the Ripley side of the river and pulled across, and Pearson, Watson and myself entered the water to swim to the other side.

10 "I reached the shore first, followed by Watson, and on looking round saw Pearson in mid-stream calling for help. I re-entered the water and swam towards him and found his tin helmet had slipped over his head. I pulled it off and tried to get him on my chest. Unfortunately, he clung to me and we sank together. It was about 14ft deep. I got loose and felt I was drowning, but got to the surface. I could not dive again as I was exhausted. Pearson was a powerful swimmer."

20 Geoffrey R. Watson, of St. Helens road, Harrogate, private of the Home Guard, said he saw Pearson do at least three crossings of the river. "I saw the sergeant reach Pearson," he said. "He got his arms around him and then Pearson appeared to grasp the sergeant and both went down. The sergeant came up some time later and called for help, and a rope was thrown from the bridge and the sergeant was dragged to the other side. He was exhausted."

Medical evidence stated that death was due to drowning.

The Coroner, Mr w. H. Coverdale, said he would like to commend the act of Sergt. Ramsey in going in to try and save Pearson, and Lt. Col. G. H. Williamson said he would like to associate himself with the remarks about the sergeant's gallantry.

## **LAND GIRLS TRAIN TO DESTROY PESTS**

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**22 August 1942**

### **COURSE OPENED AT KNARESBOROUGH**

Training in the destruction of rats, rabbits and moles is being given to members of the Women's Land Army at Knaresborough. Fourteen girls, living in tents pitched near the Land Army hostel in Chain Lane, began a two-weeks' course on Tuesday, and forty more are expected shortly.

The course is the first of its kind in the North of England, and during their stay here, the girls are to hear lectures by Major V. M. G. Phillips, Assistant Technical Adviser on Pest destruction to the Ministry of Agriculture and fisheries, who will demonstrate modern methods of destroying pests, by poison, trapping and gassing.

The girls were welcomed on their arrival by Major Phillips, Mr Nigel FitzRoy, deputy chairman of the West Riding War Agricultural Executive Committee, Miss W. Jacob Smith, Yorkshire County secretary of the Land Army, and Mr H. Swann, Pests Officer to the War Agricultural Committee.

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### **“The Only Good Rat”**

Mr FitzRoy said pest destruction was more a matter of brains than of brawn. He referred to the enthusiasm shown by two girls who had already been engaged in the work for about two months and added, “The only good rat is a dead rat.”

Major Phillips said the girls had a very important job to do. Every pound of food they could save meant another pound of shipping space, and shipping meant a tremendous lot. When the war was won, they would be able to say they did their share.

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## **FIRE FIGHTING ON THE FARM**

### **Advice to Farmers**

Safety methods to be adopted against the dangers of fire to farm crops through enemy action have been widely distributed to farmers and District Executive Offices by Mr W. P. Richardson, Chief Executive Officer of the West Riding War Agricultural Executive Committee.

Mr Richardson points out that just before and after the harvest is the period of greatest danger. “Wherever corn is being grown, constant watch should be kept by day, and special vigilance at night is necessary when there is sufficient wind during the evening to prevent the formation of dew,” he said. “Large fields of unbroken stretches of corn must receive special attention. Particular attention should be paid to barley, which is usually left until dead ripe. Firebreaks or lanes should be cut about 30 feet wide through large areas of barley before the crop is fully ripe. These lanes will check the spread of a fire. Where lanes are cut, it is important to plough the exposed stubble as soon as possible, for fires spread very rapidly across dry

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stubble. Cutting at harvest should be arranged to spilt in large areas of corn at the earliest moment.”

### **Plough Stubble**

10 Stubble should be ploughed at the earliest possible moment after stoking. If a bomb fell on a growing crop, time should not be wasted on the bomb itself, for the bomb was only capable of burning the crop within a radius of one foot, and it was more important to deal with any fire spreading from the centre. “Dispersal of ricks is now compulsory,” stated Mr Richardson. “Ricks should not be made too large, and inflammable material such as loose straw should be kept away. A wide strip should be ploughed round ricks on stubble, and Dutch and other barns should not be filled to more than two-thirds, as it is impossible to deal with an incendiary bomb penetrating the roof of a barn filled to the top.

“The dispersal and protection of ricks is essential. Fire often causes total loss and neither the farmer nor the nation can afford to lose valuable food and feeding stuffs at this critical stage of the war.”

### **Firebreaks**

20 When not in use, tackle should be kept away from the building or inflammable material. Binders might be taken from the cornfield to spend the night in a green or bare field. As much water as possible should be kept and stored in advance. A tractor could plough a firebreak quickly across the path of an oncoming fire, and scythes should be at hand to isolate small fire-patches. Axes and wire-cutters should be ready to free livestock and to give quick access to water supplies and to make a way through fences and hedges.

## **ESCAPE FROM SINGAPORE**

**5 September 1942**

### **Knaresborough officer's Adventures**

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A graphic account of his adventures in the Malayan campaign is given by 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. Donald Fairman of Knresborough, in a letter home to his parents, Mr and Mrs J. J. T. Fairman, 15 Victoria Avenue. 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut. Fairman managed to reach India from Sumatra after the ship on which he left Singapore had been dive-bombed and sunk.

10 “I suppose I was lucky,” he writes, “in that for most of the campaign in Malaya I was just out of reach of anything but bombers, though that was bad enough. I started near Penang and apart from a few bombing attacks on us, nothing untoward happened until we reached Johore Down in Johore, the fun really started, Jap planes in the sky all day and some grand dog fights. We retreated over the Causeway (leading from the mainland to Singapore), and I watched the last troops across – Scotties – piped over by a pipe band. Then we waited, still quite confidently. The artillery started, and our guns were going all day long, and night. Then suddenly, about ten o’clock one night, there was the most terrific artillery duel, which lasted all night, and next day we heard the Japs had effected a landing.

### **“Not Very Comfortable”**

20 “The next few days were not very comfortable, as we were between our big guns and the Japs and we heard the shells whistling both ways. We should have slept in holes in the ground at night and most did, but a few younger officers generally had one or two ‘pegs’ and slept in our beds in a comfortable room – and we got away with it. Then we were hemmed into Singapore, and it was obvious we could not last much longer. We felt like rats in a trap, but we managed to keep cheerful and the lads were grand.

“Then came the day I shall never forget as long as I live; February 13<sup>th</sup>, a Friday. A captain and I were billeted with 50 men in a museum, and we were bombed, shelled and mortared all day long. One shell actually blew a hole in the wall of the room we were in. Luckily, nobody was hurt. Later, I was ordered to report to the docks with 18 men. We boarded a ship, our troubles ended, as we thought; actually, they were just beginning. We were shelled all the time we were boarding, and as we were sailing away. Then we got stuck in the minefield and had to stop there all night, watching Singapore burn and guns flashing.

### **2½ Hours on a Plank**

30 “We got out at dawn and made full steam ahead. Then Jap planes started coming over, and we could count up to 42 going towards Java. The next six, however, came round and dive bombed us. They killed some and wounded others, including some of my blokes, and they stopped the engines. About three hours later they came back and made 25 separate attacks on us from about 50 feet up. Then the old boat started to go down. We got the wounded in the boats and the rest of us took to the water. Did I thank Heaven that I could swim! I spent 2½ hours floating on a plank in shark-infested waters.

“We were all picked up eventually, very much shaken, but still cheerful. We sailed all night and started up a river in Sumatra. We were spotted by a Jap lane and got ready for another attack, but it did not come. Then followed a mad race through

Sumatra to Padang, the capital, on the south coast. We were told that the only boats were going to Java, and the Japs were heading towards Padang. My pal and I refused to go to Java, and got a small boat ready to make a hazardous trip of nearly 2,000 miles to India – scatter-brained as ever. As we were thinking of making a dash for it, the Navy arrived, and believe me, I never said ‘Thank God we have a Navy’ more thankfully in all my life. That was where I met Watson from Harrogate. We were in India in four days.

## **HOME GUARD AND CIVIL DEFENCE**

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**17 October 1942**

### **In Large Scale Exercises**

Large-scale exercises under invasion conditions are to be held in the Borough of Harrogate to co-ordinate the work of the police, the general Civil Defence and the Emergency and Invasion Committees. For the purpose of the exercises it will be assumed that there has been a sea-borne raid on the East coast and air activity in the North East. Then it will be presumed that the enemy is advancing; that tank and air-borne troops have joined forces; and that there is heavy fighting between Ripon, Killinghall, Knaresborough and Plompton.

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At 2.45pm on a Saturday the command “Action Stations” will be given and shortly afterwards Harrogate will receive an air raid warning followed by an imaginary bomb attack on the town. There will be an “All Clear” message at 5 o’clock. Then it is to be presumed that the enemy has been pushed back five miles in the direction of Boroughbridge. The local authority will open its Information Bureau in the royal Baths Lounge Hall, and there will be a “post blitz” conference in the Council Chamber attended by all chief officials and the Emergency Committee. Exercises are to close for the day at 10pm.

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It will be assumed that during the night there has been bombing and fighting, successfully dealt with, and early on the following day particulars will be passed to the military as to damage estimated to have been caused. The exercises will conclude on the Sunday with the arrival of military reinforcements from the south and the repulsion of the invaders towards Ripon.

Personnel of all the Civil defence services and the 5<sup>th</sup> West Riding Battalion of the Home Guard, under the command of Lieut. Col. G. H. Williamson, will take part in the exercises, which will be as realistic as possible.

## **INVADERS’ SUCCESS**

**24 October 1942**

## **POLICE STATION “CAPTURED”**

The local Home Guard became fully engaged on Sunday, when it was presumed that the enemy were approaching Harrogate from three different directions – North, South and East. The functions of the Home Guard were to repel the invaders if possible, and to ensure the maintenance of communications between, and liaison with, the Civil Defence services. The invaders, however, met with initial success in their attack from the North, and by 1100 hours they were developing their attack with great strength, and all Home Guardians were fully extended in defence. Notable resistance was maintained in one defended locality, and a road block was forced  
10 only after repeated attacks by an “enemy” whose total strength was always greater than that of the defenders. By 1200 hours the “enemy” had secured a footing on the outskirts of the town and proceeded to infiltrate through the defences. The Police Station was captured, the Home Guard headquarters were besieged, the Fire Brigade was held up by machine-gun fire in Albert Street, and a desperate attack developed on the Control Centre. Here, however, the defenders were most successful. A “bomb” thrown from a tank failed to explode, and it was promptly pitched back by the defenders into the tank, where it did go off and put the tank out of action.

### **Valuable Lessons Learned**

20 For the purpose of the exercise it was intended that the invaders should have certain advantages over the defenders, and that they should be fairly successful in their attacks in order to create as many difficulties as possible and so that all services, both military and civil, should be severely tested. This was achieved and the whole exercise was most realistic and many valuable lessons will undoubtedly have been learned.

Wives of Harrogate Home Guardians took part in the operations. Certain of them have been trained in first-aid, and they volunteered to man certain first-aid points. They also assisted in the feeding arrangements. They were not, however, engaged in forward areas.

30 Everyone who took part in the exercise merits the highest praise for accomplishing the many and varied tasks so well. In addition to those mentioned, there was commendation for the Police, under Supt. J.T. Cockroft, Mr V. Taylor, in charge of Civil Defence Ambulances, Mr L. H. Clarke and Mr G. W. Dowse in charge of rescue and demolition squads, Dr D. D. Payne and his assistants in the Medical Officer of Health’s department, and the heads of the utility services and their staffs for their highly technical work.

## **KNARESBOROUGH SEAMAN’S DEATH**

**31 October 1942**

A list of Merchant Navy casualties published on Thursday included the name of First Officer George William Revell, whose wife lives at 35 Park Avenue, Knaresborough. A native of Hull, First Officer Revell, who was 35, had been in the Merchant Service since he was 15, and before the war was on ships taking holiday-makers for cruises in Norwegian waters. Since the war, he had seen service chiefly in the Mediterranean, where his ship assisted in the evacuation from Crete and in the funning of supplies into beleaguered Tobruk. For this work, the ship's company was commended. He was reported missing last December.

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### **19 MONTHS IN INTERNMENT CAMP**

**12 December 1942**

### **KNARESBOROUGH MAN HOME FROM NORTH AFRICA**

**Freed by the Allied landings in French North Africa after a long period of hardship in an internment camp in the desert, Leading Airman Alan Todd, of the Fleet Air Arm, only son of Mr and Mrs Percy Todd, 32, Park Grove, Knaresborough, has now returned home ... He had been interned, first in Tunisia and then in Algeria, since April 1941, and for thirteen months up to his release he was in the notorious desert camp of Laghouat, where conditions were the reverse of pleasant.**

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Leading Airman Todd, who is 22 and a former pupil of King James's Grammar School, has been shot down twice in this war and on each occasion this has happened on his mother's birthday. It was on April 12 1940, that his aircraft was shot down near Bergen during the Norwegian campaign, the crash being followed by an exciting trek along the Norwegian coast with the Germans on the heels of Todd and his pilot, and exactly a year later to the day, while operating from Malta, he was shot down again while attacking an Italian convoy making for Tripoli. The plane came down in the sea about a mile from the Tunisian coast, and he and his pilot swam to the short in their flying kit. There was no one about, so they walked along the coast until they came to a village, where some gendarmes "picked them up." They were well treated, and were sent into Tunis itself. In the first camp in which they were interned, they were reasonably well treated and were allowed pocket

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money through the American consul, but later, after our troops had marched into Syria, the attitude of the French changed.

### **Lived on Lentils and Macaroni.**

Conditions at Laghouat, to which he was later removed, were terrible, Leading Airman Todd told our representative. The camp was in the middle of the desert, 370 miles south of Algiers, surrounded by barbed wire. Temperatures in summer reached 120 degrees, but in winter it was bitterly cold. He was the 20<sup>th</sup> internee to arrive there. There was no proper sleeping accommodation until the last six months, when tier beds were provided. Before that, the men had to sleep on straw, fifty men in a room, sleeping "shoulder to shoulder." "We had to exist on lentils and boiled macaroni," said Leading Airman Todd. "We got two meals a day, one at noon and the other about six o'clock, and everybody lost weight. We had very few cigarettes and there was a great shortage of tobacco. Later, we began to get parcels from the Red Cross. You can imagine how grateful we were for those comforts, as there was no variety in our regulation diet at all. We had no soap, and as I had no razor, I had to grow a beard for twelve months. It was twelve months before a letter or parcel came thorough from home. In summer, it was extremely hot and we used to go about in bathing trunks or shorts. Many of the chaps had no boots, they just had to do without. I was lucky, as I had a pair of flying boots."

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### **Escape Attempt**

Leading Airman Todd took part in one attempt to escape from the camp. "We had only bread knives to work with," he said, "and it took us six months to dig a tunnel 50 yards long. We were lucky enough to find a cellar under the building in which we lived, and we started from there, working in shifts day and night, and piling the excavated earth up in the cellar. We made the break one night in June and managed to get about thirty miles away, but we were all caught within three days. After that, we were kept in solitary confinement for thirty days."

30 An interesting feature of life in the camp was the "university" started with the help of educational books sent by the Red Cross. A number of classes were formed, and leading Airman Todd was able to pursue his studies in French, meteorology and navigation. One difficulty was that paper was very scarce, and any pieces which could be obtained had to be made to go a long way.

### **News of Landings**

News of the Allied landings was heard over the radio the same day, and there was "terrific rejoicing" in the camp. After about a week, the internees, whose numbers had been swollen in August by men from the cruiser Manchester and destroyer

Havoc, were sent by motor transport up to Algiers, and from there they came home by sea. "I never dreamed I should be home for Christmas," said Leading Airman Todd, "but here I am and jolly glad to be back."