

## Scriven Camp: Army Units

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### Scriven Camp

#### First World War

During the first world war, Scriven Hall, owned by the Slingsby family, was apparently used as a hospital for wounded servicemen, including victims of shell-shock. Casualties were also accommodated in local hospitals and in the Knaresborough workhouse (ref. 27). Although this is borne out by the recollections of local residents, the local press contains no mention of the Hall being used as a hospital during the war; although the Hall was tenanted by Sir Eric Geddes for most of this time, he was absent for most of the war, fulfilling war-time duties in France and London. The Hall subsequently received greater use during the following war.

After the Battle of the Somme in 1916, many hospitals were established in the area to cope with the huge number of casualties being brought back from France and Belgium. An Auxiliary Military Hospital was established at the Workhouse Infirmary at Knaresborough. The Government undertook to repay the Knaresborough Guardians (responsible for the running of the Workhouse Infirmary) for any additional expenses incurred because of this change to military use (ref.97). The nurses had already expressed a willingness to undertake the extra work. An account in the local paper in November 1915 describes how the first casualties arrived at Knaresborough House:

‘On Thursday, the first party of wounded heroes, some twenty in number, arrived at Knaresborough railway station for the local auxiliary military hospital. The Borough Ambulance Company, under Mr T White, were in attendance and the four stretcher cases were carefully dealt with. There were five others on crutches and the party were quickly got away to their destination with the aid of a motor ambulance driven by Mrs Titley of Harrogate. The men were received at the hospital by Mrs Hamilton, commandant of the Knaresborough Volunteer Ambulance Detachment and several other lady members, and promptly made as comfortable as possible, a good tea being provided as soon as they were fixed up in their quarters. The hospital, we may say, has been splendidly fitted up throughout for the purpose for which it has been requisitioned and an ample supply of bandages, shirts, pyjamas, and other requisites for the wounded had been provided by Lady Evelyn Collins who is taking a keen and active interest in this ....work.’ (ref.90).

Early on in the Great War, a young Fred Clapham remembers going by milk cart with his father from Hazelheads Farm to see the sheep in Bar Lane. Looking across the fields he saw soldiers being paraded at Scriven: ‘Some big general was having a review. There were horse-drawn guns- horse-

drawn everything. We saw the last gun carriage going up Hazel Bank and the first one coming back along the lane to Farnham'(ref. 27).

Whilst soldiers were billeted in Knaresborough during the war (the Northants Yeomanry were here for example in 1916-17), the men appear to have been accommodated within the town and not at Scriven Hall, or in the village itself.

Soldiers, both fit and wounded, were to be seen skating on Appleby Carr on the Scriven estate when the water froze in February 1917. This was free, unlike the lake at Ripley where a charge of 6d was levied, the proceeds being donated to charity (ref.93). As the cold weather continued, Appleby Carr remained popular for skaters despite the attractions of the Nidd which had also frozen and was the scene of ice-hockey played by a number of soldiers billeted in Knaresborough (ref.94).

## Second World War

### Introduction

At the start of the second world war, Scriven Hall had been unoccupied since 1936 when the last tenant, Sir Algernon Firth, had died.

In the second world war, Scriven Park became an army camp, a prisoner of war camp and, finally, a camp for displaced persons. Scriven was an important army camp and accommodated battalions of infantry, armour (tanks and armoured cars) and paratroops at various times during the war years. Troops arrived at Scriven after being evacuated from Dunkirk and fighting at Arnhem. Others went on to fight at El Alamein, on the D- Day beaches, throughout Normandy and north-western Europe and in the jungle of Burma. The camp was visited by a number of well-known figures, notably Lt. General Sir Alan Brooke, Major-General Percy Hobart, General Bernard Montgomery and the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. By the later stages of the war, Land Girls were also being accommodated at Scriven and the Hall was being used by the local Home Guard for exercises.

During the war, many thousands of service men (and women) were stationed in, or near to, Knaresborough. The towns of Harrogate, Ripon, Wetherby and Boroughbridge all had their own influx of troops but units were also based at locations inbetween such as Ripley and Starbeck. Even in Knaresborough, troops were stationed in the town itself, as distinct to being in Scriven. Add to this the many service personnel passing through the area for one reason or another and the various military hospitals and it will be apparent that servicemen/women from many military units could have been here at one time or another. The position is made more difficult to understand by wartime censorship. Accounts in the local press were not permitted to give any details and usually refer to 'soldiers stationed in the area' without divulging individual rank, regiment or base, let alone any reason for their being here. It is however possible to identify some of the soldiers and their units who were stationed at Scriven Park and these are described below without claiming to be an exhaustive list.

The influx of troops with their associated vehicles, coupled with blackout conditions, were certainly a factor in increasing the frequency of road traffic accidents, of which there were a number in both Knaresborough and Scriven. As an example, an army motorcyclist collided with a resident of Scriven in August 1941, an incident which put both parties in hospital (ref.103).

A potentially rich source of information can be found within the War Diaries of individual army Battalions. However, for these to be useful, the researcher must firstly be able to identify the units in question. Another point needing to be borne in mind is that whilst such Diaries can be very informative when the Battalion is actually fighting, the units at Scriven were engaged primarily in training and many Diaries contain only cursory accounts of the time spent in Knaresborough. Some do not even mention 'Scriven' by name in recounting time spent at 'Knaresborough'.

Although soldiers appeared at Scriven on the opening day of the war, the Hall was not formally requisitioned by the War Office until later, thought to be in January 1940. With the Hall and associated outbuildings, some 5 acres of surrounding land was requisitioned, principally accounted for by the large field to the immediate south of Gaker Walk. The exclusion of other land did not necessarily deny its use by the army; older residents can recall that the fields between Dumb Pots Lane and the Boroughbridge Road and the field now known as Jacob Smith Park were all used to train wartime troops, despite these areas being excluded from the formal requisition. Scriven Hall was not formally derequisitioned until July 1953, by which time the main building had been severely damaged by fire (ref.92).

A number of soldier's families were accommodated in the village cottages whilst the men were billeted in the adjoining camp and both Enid Hornsby and Audrey Hines can remember this occurring (refs. 2 & 44). Some only came for a weekend to see husbands and fathers, bringing their own ration books. Additionally, Audrey recalls that the Adjutant of one Battalion (possibly the Cameron Highlanders) was accommodated in her home for months; at that stage of the war, billets were very limited owing to the absence of Nissen huts on the site.

By the end of the war, 'Scriven Camp' comprised the Hall itself with its various outbuildings, together with an array of wooden huts in the grounds. Most of these had been erected either on the lawned area to the immediate north of the Hall or spread out along the path known as 'Gaker walk' to the west. There is no record as to when the huts were erected but it seems they came with Italian POWs in 1942 or 1943; the first mention of huts being at Scriven appears in September 1943 when the Royal Scots Fusiliers arrived. Prior to this, accommodation for army units arriving at Scriven seems to have been confined to the Hall and its outbuildings although some soldiers were also billeted in the Methodist church hall on Park Grove. There is no evidence of any long-term or large-scale use of tents within the grounds of the Hall.

Today, only some of the concrete hut bases remain along Gaker Walk, half-hidden amongst the undergrowth. The Hall itself burned down and was demolished after the war but the former coachhouse still stands, and is now known as 'Scriven Hall'. In surrounding fields, both live and spent ammunition is still being found.

Older Scriven residents can recall many army units coming and going throughout the duration of the war. There is an official publication entitled 'The Return of Strength of the British Army' which details the location of each unit in a given year. It was produced in 1940 and April 1941 but then discontinued for the rest of the war for reasons of security. The National Army Museum has consulted its copy but can find no mention of either Scriven or Knaresborough for this time, other than the armoured units discussed below (ref.112). These units, the 41<sup>st</sup> Royal Tank Regiment and the 23<sup>rd</sup> Hussars, were the first units to be based at Knaresborough/Scriven for any length of time and it would seem that any other unit was here for a short duration only, as with the Derbyshire

Yeomanry, and not therefore formally recorded in the document. There is therefore the possibility of other units of the army being at Scriven in 1940 but have not been recorded; for example, we know that many soldiers were in the general area after the Dunkirk evacuation as the authorities struggled to house evacuees and re-form battalions in the face of an impending invasion. Scriven may well have been the temporary base for such men in the summer of 1940 although the men in question could have belonged to a variety of military units. Those we have been able to identify are discussed below.

1939

First to arrive were the Royal Corps of Signals. Bryan Norris was not in the village on the 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939 but returned the following day to see soldiers already resident and riding motorcycles, each wearing blue and white armbands (ref. 1). Within British Northern Command on 3 September 1939, there were several units of the Royal Corps of Signals (RCS) within the general area; some were at Catterick Camp, the 50<sup>th</sup> Division RCS were at Darlington, the RCS Anti-Aircraft Training Battalion were in Harrogate and the HQ Air Formation Signals were at Leeds and Bradford (ref.36) but there is no record of any unit at Scriven or Knaresborough on this date. We have not been able to identify the unit at Scriven but the Royal Signals Museum in Blandford Forum believes it possible that the men were sent from Catterick Camp (ref 32) in order to free up facilities there. This is where the Signal Training Centre was then located and is where recruits were taught to ride a motorcycle, prior to becoming despatch riders (ref 5). It has also been suggested that the RCS were at Scriven to install radio equipment at the Hall for future service but, whilst this is possible, such speculation is unsupported by any evidence.

Inevitably, the influx of service men into the area created friction between the civil and military authorities. In December 1939, two soldiers, William Ward and William D. Husband were summoned to appear before the Knaresborough Petty Sessions to answer charges of being drunk and disorderly in Boroughbridge. When they failed to appear, the court was told that the Adjutant of the regiment in question had said that the men had already been dealt with by the military authorities. The police, in the form of Superintendent Cockcroft, considered that the military had no jurisdiction in the matter and that the army were being highly disrespectful to the Bench. The Chairman, Colonel Collins, agreed and ordered that the men should be brought before the court. The Deputy Clerk was given the unenviable task of dealing with their Commanding Officer to bring this about (ref.38).

1940

There are few records of a military presence at Scriven in 1940.

'C' Squadron of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Derbyshire Yeomanry were at Scriven Hall in April 1940 (ref.51); they were equipped with armoured cars serving as a reconnaissance unit and had only been formed on the outbreak of war. Nicknamed 'The Mad Recce', they served in the 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division, and fought at the second Battle of El Alemein (ref. 5). Their War Diary records the following for 27<sup>th</sup> April 1940:

'Road party left Long Eaton.

RHQ established at HOBGREEN HALL, MARKINGTON

HQ Sqn at RISLEY HALL

A Sqn at HAMPSTHWAITE

B Sqn at RIPLEY

C Sqn at SCRIVEN HALL

Strength 24 Officers, 10 WOs, 20 Sgts, 30 Cpls, 396 LCpls&Tprs, 456 ORs. ‘

The Commanding Officer of the Yeomanry was Lt. Colonel T.H. Barnes (ref.57). At the beginning of the war, the unit had already been in the region, being under the command of the West Riding Area (ref.63 ). They were not at Scriven for long however. Their departure date is unrecorded in the War Diary but it does appear that the complete regiment was at Markington by 1<sup>st</sup> May (ref.61). The Yeomanry went on to act as the reconnaissance unit for the 51<sup>st</sup> (Highland) Division in France from after D Day in June 1944 when they were equipped with Daimler Armoured Cars (ref.60).

One man who served with C Squadron throughout the war was Trooper Watson Bingham who was a driver. He enlisted on 6 May 1939 and was demobilised in 1946 so would have been in Yorkshire in 1940. After the war he worked in Hampshire, working for his former Major, Pat MacNaughton who had been the Squadron Leader of C Squadron (ref.68).

Trooper Ron Titterton, who was the Colonel's Wireless Gunner Operator, was also in 'C' Squadron (ref.68) but it is not clear if he was present when the unit was based at Scriven. Trooper Titterton fought at El Alamein and in Normandy and was featured recently in the Channel 4 documentary series 'World War II- The Last Heroes', describing his experiences in the fighting around Caen (ref.95).

In May 1940, there is a record of the Scriven WI entertaining soldiers, putting on three plays with refreshments being provided by the residents of Old Scriven (ref.100). This suggests that soldiers may have been billeted at Scriven at the time but these soldiers have not been identified, although it is equally possible that the men in question were billeted in Knaresborough.

Audrey Hines has related how, around the time of Dunkirk (the evacuation took place in late May-early June 1940) a platoon of troops appeared at the Hall. She discovered that they had arranged to have their meals in a cafe near Woolworths in Knaresborough, there being no facilities at that time in the Hall itself. Her response was to say that by the time they had marched into town, eaten and then marched back, it would be time for the next meal! (ref. 2). We do not know the identity of these soldiers but the most likely candidates would seem to be the Derbyshire Yeomanry.

In July 1940, there is reference in the local press to soldiers being temporarily billeted in Knaresborough following their evacuation from Dunkirk and pending their onward transfer to their units (ref. 101). The situation was evidently still rather chaotic at the time as the authorities endeavoured to reunite troops with their regiments whilst facing the very real threat of invasion. It is possible, perhaps likely, that some of these men would have been at Scriven. Shortly afterwards, at the end of August 1940, a single German bomber released its load of bombs which exploded in a line across Scriven. One bomb exploded in the field immediately south of the Hall. Enid Hornsby, who was a child at the time, believes the Hall was tenanted at the time by soldiers but we have no record as to who was actually there (ref.6).

In September 1940, the 41<sup>st</sup> Royal Tank Regiment, then an Army Tank Battalion based in Otley, received notice that they were to convert to an Armoured Regiment. This was confirmed on 22<sup>nd</sup> September, with the reorganisation to be completed by the end of November 1940. With this aim in mind, they moved to Knaresborough for the winter (ref.71). The 41<sup>st</sup> (Oldham) Royal Tank Regiment had only been formed in 1938 when the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Manchester Regiment, which was a Territorial infantry regiment, had been converted to a tank unit. In 1940, their Commanding Officer was Lt. Col. J.R. Farrington who remained in command until March 1941.

The publication 'Return of Strength of the British Army' records, in its edition of October 1940, records that the 41<sup>st</sup> RTR had 543 men stationed in Knaresborough at that time (ref.136). This would have included Scriven because the Battalion was billeted in various localities around the town, as disclosed in its War Diary.

Their War Diary for 27<sup>th</sup> September 1940 records:

'Moved into Winter Quarters at Knaresborough. BOR (Battalion Operations Room?) at 46 High Street, 'B' Squadron at Scriven Hall, 'RHQ' Squadron at Charlton Manor, Officers Mess at Harrogate Golf Club, Starbeck, 'C' Squadron in various small billets, 'A' Squadron mainly in old Town Hall' (ref.71).

The fragmentation of the unit whilst based at Knaresborough indicates the difficulty of accommodating a large number of men in a single location, a situation exacerbated by the need to safely fuel, arm, service, repair and park the tanks themselves. The regiment remained at Knaresborough until March 1941 and whilst here, the main concern was driver training (ref.71). The regiment was then under the command of the 8<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division under Major-General R.L. McCreary and throughout the winter months, new tanks, scout cars and 'B' vehicles (trucks etc), as well as fresh men, arrived with regularity (ref.73).

At this period of the war, a standard British tank squadron would have comprised a Squadron HQ (with its own men and tanks) together with four troops, each commanded by an officer. Each troop would have operated three tanks, commanded by a Subaltern, Sergeant and Corporal respectively, with three men to each tank. This assumes the Infantry Tank II (the Matilda tank Mk.II) was being used, as it was early in the war. (The Infantry I tank, the Matilda Mk.I, which was produced between 1937 and 1940, carried only a two-man crew. With nearly all armour abandoned by the BEF at Dunkirk, all Matilda Mk. 1s left in the UK were immediately withdrawn from operational use and used for training purposes. The replacement Matilda II had a three man crew as did its own replacement, the Infantry tank III, the Valentine. Production then began in mid 1941 of the Infantry tank IV, the Churchill, which had been designed pre-war as a replacement for the Matilda and Valentine designs. The standard Churchill tank had a crew of five: a commander, gunner, loader/radio operator, driver and co-driver/hull gunner. The crew number could also vary between 3 and 5 men, depending upon the model. The Cromwell tank, introduced in 1943, shared the same layout as the American Sherman which had begun to appear the previous year, with a commander, gunner, loader, driver and machine gunner. Numbers in a squadron therefore depended upon the design and model of the tank being used and it was possible to have more than one type in a single troop) (ref.74).

The tanks delivered to the regiment whilst at Knaresborough were the newly- produced Infantry III Valentine tanks, with a three-man crew. They arrived piece-meal, the first (tank no. 16053) arriving on 21<sup>st</sup> October 1940 from the Central Ordnance Depot at Chilwell near Nottingham, and described in the War Diary as 'The first tank for the unit's new role'. Others followed, on 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 20<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> December with more in the new year on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 21<sup>st</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> February. In all the regiment received a total of 16 Valentine tanks by the end of February 1941 (ref. 71). The Valentine was a small tank, measuring 17' 9' long by 8'7'' wide and 7' 5.5'' in height with a range of 90 miles and a maximum speed of 15mph (ref.5). This was easily small enough to enter what is now Jacob Smith Park (part of the Scriven training area) by the old gate on Scriven Road if required. Certainly, the stone gate pillars bear no evidence of being scraped by heavy vehicles. Tanks could however have been driven into these fields from the area of the Hall itself, crossing the shallow valley which runs between Scriven Road and Low Wood. In contrast to the Valentine, the Churchill tank, was significantly larger with dimensions of 24' 5'' x 10' 8'' x 8' 2'' (ref.5).

The Commander in Chief of British Home Forces, Lt. General Sir Alan Brooke, together with Lt. General Sir Ronald Adam Bt. who was in charge of Northern Command, visited the 41<sup>st</sup> RTR on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1940 when they had just arrived at Knaresborough, and again on 26<sup>th</sup> February 1941, just before they departed (ref.71).

When the RTR arrived, they initially used Pannal Hall for driving instruction as apparently did the rest of the Brigade but, on 12<sup>th</sup> October, they withdrew their detachment of drivers and continued their training on the Scriven driving ground (ref.71). They also had to contend with air raids; eight were recorded between October 1940 and February 1941. On 1<sup>st</sup> March 1941, the Regiment left for Warminster (ref.71).

At this stage of the war, the regiment was receiving a significant number of new recruits. A batch of 56 of them arrived on 24<sup>th</sup> October 1940. Aged between 20 and 34 years, the Battalion War Diary described the newcomers as 'a good type and keen to get down to training'. They were sent off to Pannal Hall for their initial induction to the regiment, under the supervision of Captain Barlow and 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Wrigley, returning to Knaresborough on 23<sup>rd</sup> November where they were allocated to their Squadrons (ref. 71).

In November 1940 the local press great reported, with a rare disregard for censorship, that members of the Royal Tank Regiment had attended a concert at Knaresborough Town Hall, confirming the presence of tanks in the area at that time (ref.67). They attended a second concert at the end of the month (ref.102).

A month after leaving Knaresborough, the 41<sup>st</sup> RTR experienced their first casualties of war in Warminster when the garage occupied by the LAD (Light Air Defence?) unit at Corsley Heath was hit by bombs. One soldier was killed, three were wounded and there were a number of civilian casualties. Most of the equipment in the garage was destroyed, the remainder being lost the next night when the garage was bombed again and completely gutted (ref.73). This was a fate which Scriven Hall avoided. The general consensus in the village of Corsley Heath at the time was that 'a light shining from a local garage requisitioned by regular army was showing during 'blackout', ignoring calls to blackout even after warnings from Home Guard lookout on Cley Hill'. In all, five villagers were killed (ref.77).

As part of the 24<sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade, the regiment took part in the Second Battle of El Alamein before the Brigade itself was broken up to provide reinforcements for other units (ref.5).

7891870 Corporal Eric Crowther served with B Squadron at El Alamein where he was killed in action on 27<sup>th</sup> October 1942 at the age of 25. He came from Harpurhey in Manchester (ref.29).

1941: The 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division

In March 1941, Major-General Percy Hobart arrived in Yorkshire. Hobart had unconventional views on the use of armour in warfare which did not always endear him to the military establishment and he had been dismissed from his post by General Wavell in 1940. He returned to his home village of Chipping Campden in the Cotswolds, enrolled in the Local Defence Volunteers as a Lance-Corporal and set about preparing for an expected invasion. Soon the village bristled with defences. Churchill, who rather admired unorthodox thinking, brought him back in 1941 and entrusted him with the formation and training of a new Armoured Division from scratch, a task at which he excelled. This was the now famous 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division which the British kept back from the North African campaign and subsequently used to break out of Normandy in 1944. Hobart did not command the Division in battle due to ill health but went on to command the 79<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division which developed such designs as the Duplex Drive (DD) floating tank, the 'crocodile' (flame throwing) tank and the 'crab' (flail) tank for clearing mines, the various AVRE tanks (Armoured Vehicle Royal Engineers) which were designed to perform various tasks under fire such as bulldozing and bridge laying, all of which were used on the D Day beaches (ref.5), designs known collectively as 'Hobart's funnies'.

Hobart's Divisional HQ was at Wormald Green, between Knaresborough and Ripon. Arriving there for the first time, in sleet driven by the wind, he wrote (in pencil, there being no ink) on 10 March 1941:

'Seas of mud here. Everything is of course still in chaos- the 'state of becoming'. 30 or 40 odd men from various sources have arrived and the RSM of Div HQ....squelches round with them evolving order and decency. HQ is in a Red-brick Victorian 'manor' complete with tower, but with cold gaunt rooms- central heating obsolete and almost unworkable- and only two WCs....Officers are billeted anything up to seven miles away. An awful nuisance and a handicap, especially when we all want to live together not only for work but to get to know one another....the various units of the Div have just, or are just on the point of arriving. Am starting to go round them today. Some are billeted 70 miles away. Transport very short. However- all will come right' (ref.72). As he wrote this, one unit in his new Division had just arrived at Scriven Hall, others being located at numerous places between Skipton and the east coast at Whitby and Bridlington.

As part of the 29<sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade within the 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division, the 23<sup>rd</sup> Hussars arrived by rail at Knaresborough on 6th March 1941. The Regiment had only been formed on 1 December 1940, one of six new cavalry ie tank regiments raised in the early months of the war. Their officers and men were taken from the 10<sup>th</sup> Royal Hussars (including Major C.B. Harvey who was to command the new regiment), the amalgamated 15<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> King's Royal Hussars and the 16/5<sup>th</sup> Queen's Royal Lancers. Formed in Penkridge, Staffs, they came first to Knaresborough where they remained until relocating to Nawton, near Helmsley four months later. They moved again, in the autumn of 1941, to a base near Whitby. They spent the winter on the east coast before moving again to Sussex in April

1942. In August 1942, the Hussars moved to Thetford, and then to Ely before returning to Yorkshire and a new base at Bridlington (ref.69). The Priory church at Bridlington still has memorials to the Hussars, including a 'Roll of Honour' to commemorate men who fell in the first six months of the Battle of Normandy (ref.65).

The War Diary of the Hussars does not detail where each regimental unit was based during their stay at Knaresborough but one imagines that troops were billeted at several places in the town as the 41<sup>st</sup> RTR had done immediately beforehand. Whilst the Diary does not mention Scriven (or any other location within Knaresborough) as a billet for its squadrons, it is almost inevitable that one squadron with their tanks would have been based at the Hall. The 'Return of Strength of the British Army' in its edition of April 1941 (the last time it was published during the war) states that the 23<sup>rd</sup> Hussars had 575 men stationed in Knaresborough (ref.136).

Major- General Hobart is recorded as giving a lecture to troops at Scriven Hall in 1941 (ref. 52). The War Diary of the 24<sup>th</sup> Lancers, based then at nearby Boroughbridge, records the following entry for 4<sup>th</sup> June 1941:

'The Divisional Commander, Major General Hobart, gave a lecture at Scriven Hall to all Officers, NCO's and a large number of men from 23<sup>rd</sup> Hussars, 24<sup>th</sup> Lancers and 8<sup>th</sup> Rifle Brigade' (ref.58). Each of these units was part of the 29<sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade within the Division. Although we do not know the subject matter of Hobart's lecture, it will have formed part of the Division's training, and possibly related to the recent experience of fighting the German Panzer units in France and the on-going campaign in North Africa. It may also be significant that the first Churchill tanks were being produced at about this time. Certainly, lectures on the Libyan Campaign were being given to these units by others at the time (ref.75).

When they were formed, the Hussars had very little equipment; their inventory comprised some rifles, a few .303 Besa machine guns, some Bren LMG's, two 'impressed' vehicles, a delivery van and one tank which could not move under its own power! (ref.89). The unit received much of their equipment whilst at Scriven.

Whilst at Knaresborough, the Hussars received new men as well as 11 Valentine tanks, personnel carriers, motor cycles, lorries and various other vehicles. Some tanks came from other armoured units such as the 46<sup>th</sup> Royal Tank Regiment and the 1<sup>st</sup> Gloucester Hussars, whilst others seem to have been new issue to the Hussars. The 'other vehicles' included the delivery of six 'Beaverettes' from the 27<sup>th</sup> Lancers. The Beaverette, named after Lord Beaverbrook, was a light armoured car produced in a rush after the BEF had left their armour behind at Dunkirk. It used a commercial car chassis and was fast but not very well protected by its armour and difficult to handle; it was used principally for home defence and training (ref.5).

Most days were occupied by training and the regiment received new instructors to help train the influx of raw recruits. Gunnery Instructors came from well established armoured units and training regiments, as did D & M (Detection and Monitoring) Instructors. In May 1941, the Regiment undertook gas training at the gas compound in Harrogate where they experienced, tear, mustard, phosgene and DM gases. Most training though was of new drivers and gunners and when the Regiment left Knaresborough, it went to occupy a new training area at Nawton (ref.75). The need for training was emphasised by the entry in the War Diary for 29<sup>th</sup> May, 1941, which was two and half

months into the training at Scriven; the Diary simply states '15 Driver Mechanics tested of whom 4 passed'.

On 14 June 1941, the Hussars moved to Nawton by rail.

It is clear from the various billets occupied by the Hussars that the units under Hobart's command in 1941 were moving about fairly frequently within the region to accommodate the demands of their training. This is borne out by the other units in the 29<sup>th</sup> Armoured Brigade at that time, the 24<sup>th</sup> Lancers and the 8<sup>th</sup> Rifle Brigade. Even if a unit within the Armoured Brigade was not billeted at Scriven, there is a reasonable likelihood that its troops attended the village for some of their training, as we have seen by the attendees of Hobart's lecture at Scriven. This is borne out by the 24<sup>th</sup> Lancers who had arrived at in Boroughbridge that March. Their War Diary records, for 27 March 1941:

'Drill Competition held at Knaresborough for recruits of 24<sup>th</sup> Lancers and 23<sup>rd</sup> Hussars. 24<sup>th</sup> Lancers first squad was adjudged to be the best by Brigadier Peto' (ref. 58). Peto would take over from Hobart as Divisional Commander in February 1942.

The 24<sup>th</sup> Lancers had also been formed on 1 December 1940 at Warwick racecourse before moving to Cannock in Staffordshire. They were made up of officers and men from the 9<sup>th</sup> Queen's Royal Lancers (including Major M.H. Aird who was to command the new regiment), and the amalgamated 17<sup>th</sup>/21<sup>st</sup> Lancers (ref.69). On 6 March 1941, the Lancers had arrived at Boroughbridge from Cannock where they remained until 12<sup>th</sup> June 1941 when they moved to Keldy Castle near Pickering. In August of 1941, they moved again, this time to Whitby, staying there until April 1942 when they left the area (ref.58). Their Diary also records that normal training was continuing throughout their stay during 1941 in Yorkshire on the following basis: 'Up to 18<sup>th</sup> August- Troop training; 18-30 August, Squadron training; 30 August-13 September, Regimental training; 26 September - October, Divisional training and November-December, Individual training'.

Similarly, whilst there appears to be no record of the 8<sup>th</sup> Rifle Brigade being stationed at Scriven in 1941, we do know that 'E' Company was in Yorkshire that year. Between 6 March and 17 December 1941, they spent time in Leeds, Husthwaite, Pickering, Whitby, and Scarborough prior to travelling to Reighton Gap and Filey in 1942. Their War Diary however contains no detailed information regarding this period and does not mention either Scriven Hall or Knaresborough (ref.64).

The entire Division was inspected on the North York Moors on Thursday, 6 November 1941 for three hours by Winston Churchill who sent the following message to all ranks in this new Armoured Division:

'To- All Ranks 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division. From the Prime Minister, I am very glad to have seen this grand Division which General Hobart has trained so well. I hope a chance will come for it to play a glorious part in the destruction of a hateful enemy. Friday will be a whole holiday. Winston S. Churchill.'The Lancers War Diary duly recorded '7/11/41. A Holiday observed' (ref.69).

The 'chance' referred to by Churchill came in 1944, when the 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division played a huge part in the Allied breakout from Normandy. By then equipped mainly with American-built Sherman tanks, they landed on Juno beach on 13 June 1944 and suffered heavy casualties in the Battle of Normandy. The Division spearheaded Operations Epsom and Goodwood to outflank and seize Caen

in order to breakout from Normandy. After the latter, the losses within the 24<sup>th</sup> Lancers were so high that the unit was actually disbanded and the survivors incorporated into the 23<sup>rd</sup> Hussars. They then took part in Operation Bluecoat, enabling the US forces to break out from the western flank of the Normandy beachhead. The Division went on to harass the retreating German forces in the 'Falaise pocket' and subsequently liberated both Amiens and Antwerp. Later on, the Hussars helped liberate the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp and captured Lubeck (ref.5: 23<sup>rd</sup> Hussars).

One junior officer in the 24th Lancers who had just joined the regiment in January 1941 was a Lieutenant J.N. Cowley. He went on to command 'C' Squadron of the 24<sup>th</sup> Lancers in Normandy where he was subsequently badly injured by shrapnel. He progressed to the rank of Colonel before becoming the British military attaché in Budapest in 1955, just prior to the Hungarian uprising when he was declared 'persona non grata' and given 48 hours to leave the country. Colonel Cowley died in 2010, aged 97 (ref.59).

In his account of the training, Geoffrey Pulzer, a Corporal in the new Division, has written, 'The 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division's training in the UK was geared to the prospective role of spearheading a breakthrough following the securement of a bridgehead on the continent and to this end we trained on the South Downs, the Yorkshire Moors (& corn fields) and the woods & flat lands of East Anglia. Eventually waterproofing our tanks in S. England preparatory to D-day'(ref. 62).

As a schoolboy during the war, John Kitchener remembers the family following his father around numerous army camps in various parts of England, as a result of which he attended 15 primary and junior schools before entering Ashford Grammar School in Kent in 1944. His father, John H. Kitchener served in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Hussars and when they were posted to Scriven, the family stayed with the Outhwaite family in Knaresborough (ref.15). One of the senior officers at the time was Lord George Scott, the youngest son of the 7<sup>th</sup> Duke of Buccleuch, who served as a Major in both the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 23<sup>rd</sup> Hussars (ref.86).

2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant Michael George Watney came from Crowborough in Sussex and joined the 23<sup>rd</sup> Hussars at Knaresborough on 24<sup>th</sup> March 1941 (ref.75) where he took part in the on-going training of the new regiment. He was subsequently attached to the 10<sup>th</sup> Hussars with whom he fought in North Africa, being killed in action on 29 March 1943, aged 22. He is buried in Sfax cemetery in Tunisia (ref.29).

In January 1943, Sergeant Thomas Palmer of the Hussars, who came from Kidderminster, married Joyce Deighton of Starbeck at her local church (ref.81).

Audrey Hines' father had been second chauffeur to Sir Algernon Firth and she remembers the garages at the Hall, which had once held six Rolls Royce cars, being filled with tanks. In the surrounding woods were all the lorries and accompanying staff cars, screened from the air by trees (ref. 2).

Bryan Norris remembers the film star, Richard Greene, at Scriven (ref 1). Another resident recalls 'Robin Hood and his merrie men' in the fields around the village; Greene became well known in the 1960s for his role of Robin Hood in the British TV series of that name(ref.3). Greene had returned from Hollywood in 1940 to serve in the army and had been commissioned as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in April 1941. He joined the 27<sup>th</sup> Lancers in the summer of that year, shortly after the regiment had been

formed (ref. 4). The 27<sup>th</sup> Lancers were assigned to the 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division as the Divisional Reconnaissance Regiment (ref. 5). In March 1941, they were based at Skipton where they were inspected by Hobart on 21<sup>st</sup> March (ref. 84) before being relocated to Pickering. However, there is no record of the 27<sup>th</sup> Lancers being based at Scriven and by 1942 they had moved to Thetford in Norfolk (ref.51). It is however probable that, as part of the 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division, some of their training in 1941 occurred at Scriven which may explain local children remembering a film star in their midst.

#### 1941: The Cameron Highlanders

The 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of The Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders arrived at Scriven from Thorne, near Doncaster, on 20<sup>th</sup> August 1941 and remained there until 9<sup>th</sup> December of that year when they departed for Lutterworth(ref.30). The Battalion Diary is not specific as to precisely how the Battalion (which at full strength would account for some 800 men) were accommodated in the town. As with previous army units, the likelihood is that the various Companies were scattered throughout the area, with perhaps one Company at Scriven Hall. Unlike some of the other Cameron Battalions, the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion had not been part of the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division within the British Expeditionary Force but had formed part of the 5<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade within the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division. After hard fighting, the Battalion were evacuated from Dunkirk on 31<sup>st</sup> May 1940, reduced to a fighting strength of just 79 men. The Battalion was reformed in Yorkshire and brought up to strength with drafts from Cameron barracks in Inverness, from the Green Howards and from the Highland Light Infantry. After training in Yorkshire, the Battalion moved to southern England in December 1941 and sailed overseas in April 1942 (ref.31).

The Battalion War diary records various items of interest from their time at Scriven. These include visits and inspections by senior officers, postings of officers to and from the Battalion, promotions, and time spent on the ranges at Strensall near York and at both Aldborough and Ingleby. On 1-3 September 1941, the Battalion was involved in a major training exercise code-named 'Barry' with a further exercise, 'Tiger', taking place on 14-16 September. A Brigade exercise 'Otter' was held the following month followed swiftly by Exercise Percy, organised by Northern Command. This was the flavour of the time, constant training of individual soldiers, and battalions so that they worked well together within the larger units of Brigade and Division. Three Polish officers arrived on 8 September and remained with the Battalion for training until 23<sup>rd</sup> September. Meanwhile, Cameron officers attended training courses elsewhere; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Dewar departed for a course on the care maintenance of ammunition at Clumber Park, followed by 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. Arnott whilst the CO, Lt-Col Hannay, attended a training course at the Army Gas School in Winterbourne. The officers also were given lectures on various subjects such as military law, the conduct of POWs and the North African campaign (ref.85).

The Camerons had a carrier platoon and photographs of such a platoon on exercise 'somewhere in Yorkshire' was published in the local press in October 1941, shortly before the Battalion left the area (ref.105).

On the 15<sup>th</sup> October 1941, the Battalion received orders to mobilise for overseas service. They departed from Scriven on 9 December for Lutterworth where they stayed overnight, prior to arriving at Adderbury in Oxfordshire on 10<sup>th</sup> December.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Camerons embarked for overseas service on 10<sup>th</sup> April 1942, sailing for India where they spent two years training for jungle warfare. In March 1944, as part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division, they were sent

to halt the Japanese advance at Kohima which they retook with the loss of 283 casualties. Against strong Japanese resistance, the Battalion then advanced into Burma, crossing the rivers Chindwin, Mu and finally the Irrawaddy and then occupying Mandalay on 18 March 1945. In early May 1945, the 1<sup>st</sup> Camerons returned by air to India where they prepared for a sea-borne assault on Rangoon which was pre-empted by the surrender of Japan on 14 August 1945 (VJ Day). The Battalion remained in India until March 1946 (ref.37).

The Commanding Officer of the 1<sup>st</sup> Camerons at Scriven was Lt. Col Hannay who had enjoyed a long career with both the army and the RAF. Alexander Patrick Cathcart Hannay won an MC for services in Russia at the end of the Great War after having served as a Lieutenant with the Camerons in France. He had been made a Lieutenant on 1 November 1918 (London Gazette 9 January 1919) and was promoted to Captain on 26 March 1928 (LG 25 February 1928). He was then seconded to the RAF wef 15 January 1932 (LG 16 February 1934), granted a temporary commission as a Flying Officer and sent to No 4 (AC) Squadron at Farnborough (LG 15 May 1934). Later that year he was again promoted, to the rank of Flight Lieutenant at the RAF General Duties Branch (LG 11 September 1934). The following year, he was given the local rank of Major whilst employed by the air Ministry (LG 2 July 1937) and formally promoted to that rank in 1938 when he was described as a 'Squadron Leader' (LG 1 July 1938). The Flight Magazine of the RAF (edition of 22 June 1939) recorded that he returned to duty with the army on 24 April 1939. After the war, on 29 August 1946, Hannay was retired on retirement pay on account of a disability and was granted the honorary rank of Lt. Colonel ( Supplement to LG 30 August 1946).

His second-in-command at Scriven remained with the regiment and also survived the war. The Supplement to the London Gazette of 9 May 1947 records that Major R.E. Hickson (22856) of the Camerons retired on retirement pay on 13 May 1947 and is granted the honorary rank of Lt. Colonel.

Early on in the war, Audrey Hines remembers some trouble with soldiers who had run amok in Knaresborough and had broken fourteen shop windows. They were mustered the next morning and told that the men responsible would have to pay for the damage themselves and they were confined to barracks until the money was found (ref. 2). She recalls that many of the men came from the Gorbals area of Glasgow so it would seem that some of these troops in question were from the Highland Light Infantry, drafted in to help reform the Cameron battalion. Although the HLI insisted on being classified as a non-kilted highland regiment, it recruited mainly from Glasgow with their barracks being at Maryhill in the city (ref.5). The CO asked her to help out and she was given a room with two chairs and a table so that any of the men with concerns could discuss them with her with a view to resolving them at an early stage. This approach seems to have worked.

1942: The King's Regiment (Liverpool)

The 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion The King's Regiment (Liverpool) arrived in Knaresborough in December 1941, just after the Camerons had departed. The Battalion found billets in Knaresborough, Starbeck and Scriven, with HQ Company being accommodated in Scriven Hall along with its carrier platoon. At this date, there were still no huts in the grounds of the hall so that accommodation would be confined to the hall itself and any outbuildings. The King's men placed Fire Orders dated 16.12.41 on an attic door; the paper notice has largely survived and confirms there were Bren gun carriers here at the time. We have a photograph of the Company outside the front of the hall which was taken in May 1942, in which RSM Frank Goldie is identified. Of the 51 soldiers in the photograph, we know that

only 10 survived the war (ref. 7). We also have two photographs of light armoured troop carriers during a training exercise, taken 'somewhere in Yorkshire' and have recovered what is the wheel of a carrier from the woods around Scriven Hall.

The universal (bren gun) carrier was different to an armoured personnel carrier (APC), as typified by the half-tracks of the period, which was designed to transport a limited number of soldiers over rough terrain with some degree of protection from enemy small arms fire and shell bursts. Used en-masse, the APC could provide armoured mobility to an entire battalion. Whilst the Universal Carrier could provide infantry with the ability to move a small portion of its men under armoured protection, the principal intention was for the bren gun on the Carrier to support the infantry rather than the vehicle to act as their transport, hence its original name of the 'Bren Carrier'. In reality, the Carriers served a whole host of different functions in the British army (ref.79). A Carrier could only seat four men; any in excess of this number would be exposed to enemy fire. The Knaresborough Post explained the salient advantages of the carrier to its readers in 1943; they were evidently accustomed to seeing them in the town. The paper explained that the carrier could pull anti-tank guns and ammunition and could be used as a firing platform for mortars as well as being a 'self-propelled machine gun nest'. With a top speed of 35mph, it was very manoeuvrable and could go almost anywhere (ref.108).

The 5<sup>th</sup> Kings were an infantry battalion, part of the 165<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade within the 55<sup>th</sup> (West Lancashire) Division. Their War Diary shows the time spent at Knaresborough as being a continual round of training, with considerable time being spent on the firing ranges at Blubberhouses, Strensall and particularly Hawksworth, near Baildon. Training also involved military exercises, demonstrations, lectures, training films, competitions and specialist courses. This regime was often inspected by senior officers of the Regiment, Brigade and Division to ensure their stated aims were being achieved.

Personnel were often drafted in and out of the Battalion, with large drafts of men being posted for overseas service and replaced by new intakes who would then begin their training with the Battalion. The Commanding Officer at the time was Lt. Col. G.W.P.Thorn. Leisure activities were also being catered for and the Battalion took great pride in its boxing team which finished runners-up in the Divisional Inter-Unit Competition which was held at Knaresborough. There was also a football competition (which the Battalion team won) and voluntary educational classes. Church parades were held on Sundays.

The Battalion participated in four named exercises during their time at Knaresborough. Exercise 'Icicle' (which was appropriately named for it took place in heavy snow on 25 January 1942) was organised to test the ability of the Home Guard to defend a line along the river Ouse. The Carrier Platoon was part of the 'enemy' detachment which attempted to force a crossing of the river. The next exercise was 'Lancaster', a three day event which began on 31 March near the east coast. Exercise 'Driver' came next on 15 April. The Royal Engineers built some temporary bridges over an un-named river and the Battalion endeavoured to cross in both daylight and night-time. Finally came Exercise 'Grouse' on 27/28 April. This was held about 25 miles from Knaresborough, a distance which the Battalion covered on foot each way. The Exercise itself involved a mock attack on 'enemy' positions at 2000 hrs, followed by a second assault at dawn supported by artillery and mortar fire. The Battalion were also put through the street fighting course at Leeds.

Training the infantrymen to work with other units in promoting attacks was evidently an important part of the work undertaken by the 5<sup>th</sup> Kings and much effort was put into co-ordinating the approaches of the Battalion with tanks, artillery and also the RAF. With regard to the latter, a large contingent of officers and senior NCOs attended a demonstration in February 1942 at Skipsea on the coast to see fighter aircraft attacking ground targets. The Westminster Dragoons with their tanks were based near to Knaresborough and there was considerable co-operation between the two units although there is no reference in the Diary to indicate the presence of tanks at Scriven at this time.

Lectures included topics such as the use of cipher and the conduct of POWs and a series of training films were shown to the soldiers at Knaresborough cinema; titles included 'Attack on Russia' and 'Victory in the West'. The men were given constant training at the Divisional School of Battle Drill and a cycle system established to complete and then refresh training in the use of all weapons. HQ Company was given specialist training although the Diary does not clarify the nature of this. The Battalion was also given training on radio transmitting and on the use of protective measures against gas and chemical warfare.

In March 1942, the Battalion gave their support to Knaresborough during 'Warship Week' by parading through the town as part of the fundraising event. In mid-February, the full strength 'A' and 'C' Companies were detailed for aerodrome defence duties and spent a month guarding RAF Yeadon (now Leeds-Bradford Airport) and RAF Acaster Malbis south of York which had just opened for use by the Canadian 601 Squadron.

On 9 May 1942, the Battalion sent its baggage by road and departed Knaresborough by rail for summer camp at Wathgill with its moorland firing ranges near Richmond in Yorkshire where an advance party had already pitched camp. A rear party under command of 2/Lt. Jones remained at Knaresborough to look after the billets, including Scriven Hall, acting as firewatchers until the Battalion returned.

We are unsure of the date when the Battalion finally left Knaresborough/Scriven but we do know that in 1943, they were in Ayrshire receiving specialist training for D Day (ref.5). Some further details may be discerned from an account of the D Day preparations undertaken by the 1<sup>st</sup> Buckinghamshire Battalion of the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. This battalion was detailed to operate as a beach group with the 5<sup>th</sup> Kings men and their account is based upon extracts from the Regimental Chronicles of the Ox and Bucks LI during 1943-44. The account shows that the Beach Group were stationed at Ayr racecourse in April 1943, having moved to the area in early April. The Bucks Beach Group was numbered 6 and the King's Beach Group was no. 5; together they constituted the No. 101 Beach Sub-Area and, as such, they were trained together at this time. Training took place over a wide area of Scotland but also included a large-scale exercise in South Wales in July 1943. Here No. 6 Beach Group (1<sup>st</sup> Bucks LI) had responsibility for the village of Saundersfoot and its hinterland whilst no. 5 Beach Group (5<sup>th</sup> Kings) had an equally difficult area some miles to the east with a steep shingle bank at the head of the beach. The key points of their training in Scotland and Wales was to lay out a beach immediately after an assault landing, to establish dumps and transit areas and to use folding boats for landing stores. These boats were unmanoeuvrable in anything other than a flat calm and other methods were far more successful on D Day itself. Further training followed in northern Scotland in 1944 before the 1<sup>st</sup> Bucks moved to Petworth in Sussex April 1944 to finalise preparations for the invasion. The 5<sup>th</sup> Kings must have been

close by at this time because, when the Beach Groups were briefed on 26 May, a number of troops from the 5<sup>th</sup> Beach Group (the Kings Regt) were placed under the command of No. 6 Beach Group (1<sup>st</sup> Bucks) (ref.135). All of this suggests that the Kings Regiment must have left Scriven and Knaresborough by March or April 1943 at the latest.

On D-Day (6 June 1944), the Battalion landed on Sword Beach in Normandy (ref. 8) as part of the British 3<sup>rd</sup> Division and attempted to neutralise hostile positions and enemy snipers, suffering heavy casualties. Under fire, the beach groups collected wounded and dead, located and marked minefields and assisted other units and vehicles to push off the beach and drive inland. The 5<sup>th</sup> continued to operate as a beach unit for a further six weeks and only narrowly suffered being disbanded as a result of their losses (ref.5).

The Battalion adjutant in Normandy was Captain Alastair Kissack of Preston House, Lingerfield who was the son of the vicar of Knaresborough. The Battalion was singled out for praise by General Montgomery for its work on D Day and in the weeks thereafter when they had remained under enemy shell fire from German guns across the Caen Canal and the Orne River (ref.113). Kissack was awarded the MBE in 1945 (ref.114).

Towards the end of the war in Europe, there was increasing rivalry between the western allies and the Russians for German technology in order to provide economic benefits after the war. To promote this aim, the British and Americans developed forces to capture high value targets which often had no military value. These 'Target' or 'T' Forces were formed around ordinary infantry battalions who, at that time, were not in the front line. In March 1945, the 5th King's Regiment was in mobile reserve, guarding the port of Antwerp but was taken to form the nucleus of No. 2 'T' Force, at which it was very successful (ref.76). The Battalion reached Kiel in May 1945, securing the cruiser Admiral Hipper and taking 7000 sailors prisoner. The Battalion was disbanded in July 1946 as part of the demobilisation process (ref.5).

#### Lancers

Later in the war, the local press recalled that a unit of the Lancers were based in the general area of Knaresborough in the summer of 1942 and that a number of their men had married local girls (ref.50). The regiment in question had just liberated the Italian city of Ravenna. This was the 27<sup>th</sup> Lancers whom we know were at Boroughbridge in 1941 as part of the 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division (see above). By the summer of 1942 however, they were at Thetford in Norfolk (ref.80) so this could be a simple misprint of the date in the press report.

#### 1943-1944: The Royal Scots Fusiliers

We have no information about army units stationed at Scriven in the first half of 1943 and it is thought that the camp at this time was being used as a POW camp for Italian prisoners captured in North Africa.

On 13<sup>th</sup> September 1943, the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Royal Scots Fusiliers arrived at Scriven from Hexham. Their War Diary states:

'Battalion settled into Scriven Camp. The camp consists of Scriven Hall and a hutted camp in the gardens of the hall. The accommodation is adequate and no more. 'S' Coy are located in Scriven Hall

and the remainder of the battalion are in the hutted camp' (ref. 9). This is the first mention of huts having been erected in the grounds of the hall.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion RSF formed part of the 44<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade within the 15<sup>th</sup> (Scottish) Division. The Division had been reformed in the spring of 1939 but, after the threat of invasion had receded, had been downgraded and, in their own words, 'banished to Northumberland'. It was not until 1943 that the Division came to Yorkshire and began battle-training. The Divisional Battle School was established at Barnard Castle although units were scattered throughout the county. Their training was very extensive, with much emphasis on river crossings and on working with armoured units, which they were to experience for real after D Day. The 15<sup>th</sup> Division were the only Division in the British army to be involved in all the major European river assault crossings; the Seine, the Rhine and the Elbe. The Division was finally disbanded on 10 April 1946; its battle casualties for the 12 months of fighting in 1944 and 1945 amounted to 11,772 men (ref.82).

The Commanding officer of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion RSF at the time of their arrival in Scriven was Lt. Col. N. Macleod. He was replaced in December 1943 by Lt. Col. C. R. Buchanan who commanded the unit during the remainder of their time in Yorkshire (ref.10). Second in command was Ian Mackenzie who, as a Lt. Colonel, took over command of the battalion in Normandy during the battle for Caen (ref 11). He is well-remembered by Audrey Hines (ref. 2).

During their time here, the Fusiliers trained for the battles ahead in Normandy. In particular, they were involved in three major training exercises. The first was 'Blackstock' between 23 September and 3 October 1943 which was conducted around Rudston in the Yorkshire Wolds.

The second exercise, 'Clansman', took place between 10-14 January 1944 and the third was codenamed 'Eagle'. The largest by far, 'Eagle', was conducted in the Yorkshire Wolds in February 1944 and involved the RSF training with the armour of VIII Corps during a period of terrible weather (ref. 9).

General Montgomery visited the Brigade Groups and 44 Brigade, including the 6 RSF, at Scriven on 7 February 1944, addressing the Brigade from the bonnet of his jeep (ref. 9). The official line was that whilst his visit had necessarily been 'hush-hush', news had quickly spread and he was given a warm welcome (ref.109). In reality however, the visit was no great advance secret. Tim Harris recounts how, as a schoolboy, he and his friends bunked off school on the afternoon of Montgomery's visit in order to see the General. The next day, his mother refused him a note of absence and he received a detention from the school. He was particularly aggrieved because his friends had more sympathetic parents and they all escaped punishment (ref. 12). Another resident present at the time remembers that 'He was easy to spot with his flying jacket, and badge and black beret as he rode through the village' (ref. 3).

Montgomery's visit attracted relatively little comment in the local press at the time although photographs of his visit were published in the Harrogate Herald and Knaresborough Post (ref.109) without revealing either his precise location ('in a town which he visited on Monday') or the reason for his visit. Commenting after the event, the Harrogate Advertiser said 'Harrogate is naturally interested in the photographs and reports concerning General Sir Bernard Montgomery which appeared in the daily newspapers on Tuesday, for it was here that his brother, the Rev. Colin Montgomery stayed for a short time and assisted at St. Peter's Church. According to the reports the

famous General is travelling about in a special train and car and at one town where he left his car and entrained he was given a rousing reception by a small crowd which had gathered' (ref.46).

From 20-26 March, the Battalion were absent from Scriven, being at Rufford Abbey for combined training with the tanks of the 6<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Brigade but were addressed on their return by Winston Churchill who visited on 31 March 1944(ref. 9). Churchill had a special interest in the Battalion, having commanded it for six months during the Great War. We have photographs of Churchill arriving in Harrogate on that day when arrived after lunch and travelled to Scriven to inspect the 15<sup>th</sup> Scottish Division. He also saw 'some battle in practice' (ref. 13). Like the earlier visit of Montgomery, Churchill's arrival in Scriven was well known in advance by local residents:

'The visit 'couldn't have been all that hush- hush though as I remember my mother telling me to hurry home from school so as not to miss Mr Churchill! I ran all the way home but was too late. Mum was very bucked because he lit a cigar just as his car passed our gate' (ref. 3).

Churchill was photographed on arrival at Harrogate station and the pictures were published in the Harrogate Advertiser (on 1 April 1944), the Harrogate Herald (on 5 April 1944) and the Knaresborough Post (8 April 1944), without giving any reasons for his visit. Instead, the Advertiser merely wrote: 'Mr. Winston Churchill received a rousing welcome when he arrived in Harrogate station yesterday afternoon. The photograph of the PM in a car at Harrogate shows him about to sign the visitors' book being proffered by the Mayor of Harrogate, Mr Stephenson (ref.134). He travelled by special train, which arrived shortly before schedule, and as he stepped from his carriage, wearing his familiar square top hat, and smoking a still-more familiar cigar, he was greeted by the Mayor and Mayoress...and shook hands with the Deputy Mayor...the Town Clark....the Stationmaster ... and the Police superintendent'. The paper also noted that there were many schoolchildren in the crowd who had been given a half-holiday to mark the occasion and that 'Later, the Prime Minister set off in an open car-at his own request- for the country and en route was quickly recognised and cheered' (ref.47). The Herald added a little more detail: 'As the car passed along Leeds road near Pannal, the Prime Minister alighted and walked for a little way, being cheered by a small crowd which quickly gathered, and earlier, in Knaresborough Road, people were astonished to see their Prime Minister in a touring car that was slowly proceeding down the road'. It is tempting to speculate that the journey along Knaresborough Road ended at Scriven.

In their next edition, the Advertiser lamented the lack of notice given for Churchill's visit, believing that many more people would have welcomed the chance to see the Prime Minister had they but known of the occasion. They recognised that secrecy was an essential element of his movements but did not see why the town ie Harrogate should not have been made better aware of his visit immediately beforehand (ref.48).

Both Montgomery and Churchill seem to have inspected the Fusiliers in the field immediately to the south of Gaker Walk, in front of the main part of the hutted encampment and adjacent to the old carriage drive up to the Hall.

Fusilier Charles Hanaway recalls his life at this time as a soldier in the Battalion at Scriven: 'Here we started long tiring field exercises for ten days at a stretch. These were called 'Eagle' and 'Blackcock'. They were more than realistic. Days were bitterly cold, we were practising all types of battle situations on the Yorkshire moors. Some of the days spent on these exercises were just as bad as any

spent later in real action. We were wet and cold for days on end and the Division was to lose men being drowned on one night exercise on a practice river crossing due to the weather being so bad.' Charles Hanaway believes the men probably suffered more on these exercises than they did when they actually fought the Germans (ref. 39). His account continues: 'We had visits by General Montgomery....and Prime Minister Churchill who both gave us encouraging 'pep' talks, telling us how good we were, and how we were going to win the oncoming battles. All very heady stuff. By now we were aware that our training was based on the break-out from the bridgehead once we got into Normandy (which at this stage few knew) where the invasion was to take place. After a delightful stay in this pleasant Yorkshire town we were on the move once more. All signs pointed to the fact that before very long we were going to see the 'Balloon go up'. Our next and final move in England was to Worthing, on the south coast. Here we water-proofed our carriers and all the other vehicles' (ref 14).

As a member of the Bren Gun Platoon, Charles Hanaway was in 'S' (Support) Company, together with the Anti-Tank and the Mortar Platoons. At Scriven, 'S' Company was accommodated in the Hall itself, occupying one of the large rooms on the ground floor where a number of men reported having seen the ghost of the blue lady, a well-known apparition at the Hall. As the Battalion War diary confirms, the other units, namely 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' Companies, were in the various huts in the grounds both to the north of the Hall and those spread out along Gaker Walk. As far as Charles can recall, the majority of huts accommodated bunks for men and officers, with separate huts being used for an Officers' Mess and for a cook-house. There was no chapel on the site. (ref.39).

As a Londoner, Mr Hanaway believes he, and other Englishmen in the Battalion, suffered because they were not Scots in a Scottish regiment. He recalls that 5 Londoners were granted leave just before Christmas in 1943 and departed to see their families, only to be recalled on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December. The men decided to stay put, celebrated Christmas at home and only returned to Scriven on 28<sup>th</sup> December. For this, they each received 14 days detention which involved heavy labour during the day and sleeping under canvas at night. He remembers that, on New Year's Eve that year, the camp was in uproar as the Scots celebrated Hogmanay and that, in his tent, he didn't get much sleep because of the noise, including the constant skirl of bagpipes.

He believes that he was often in trouble due to his nationality. On another occasion, he was about to depart in his best uniform for a church parade when he was taken out of line and given the task of peeling potatoes in the cook-house. He does however recall that rations improved significantly towards the end of his training as the men 'were fattened for the kill'.

There is one postscript to Churchill's visit in March 1944. Inspecting the troops, he paused, not two feet away from Charles Hanaway who remembers thinking how old and tired the Prime Minister looked (ref. 39).

During their time at Scriven, the Battalion used to beat retreat at Knaresborough castle, an event which the Battalion history records as being 'much appreciated by the local populace. On 21<sup>st</sup> April 1944, the Battalion left Knaresborough by evening train for Worthing, Sussex and the final preparations for the Normandy campaign in the summer of 1944 (ref.9). Enid Hornsby recalls the effect the sound of the pipes had on the family's pet dog, an Airedale terrier. Every time the dog heard the band marching past Ivy Cottage, it would run out into the garden to watch them pass.

Years later, hearing any bagpipe music on the radio, it would do the same and would be perplexed to find the road outside deserted.

There was evidently something of a party before the Fusiliers departed because the Land Girls at the Knaresborough Hostel received an invitation in March 1944 to a forthcoming 'social' (ref.124).

Charles Hanaway fought with the Fusiliers through Normandy and France and was actually photographed in June 1944, firing his Bren gun from a sunken lane near Caen during the course of operation 'Epsom'. The photograph was taken by the 5<sup>th</sup> Army Film and Photographic Unit and is now part of the National Archive, retained at the Imperial War Museum (ref. B 5959). He was then in the first wave of assault troops to cross the river Rhine in March 1945. On the other side, he stepped on a mine and did not regain consciousness until he was on the platform of Bradford railway station, en-route to Menston hospital. By VE Day, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945, he was still in a wheelchair, having lost part of his left leg, but persuaded the ward sister to wheel him to a local pub for a celebration. A photograph was taken which then appeared in the local paper, prompting the authorities to transfer him to a London hospital and to discipline the sister in question, something he still considers to be heavy-handed and unfair in the circumstances. This was the end of his war (ref.39).

A number of the Fusiliers established close ties with local residents and that some married Knaresborough women. One was Fusilier Peter Conboy who married Lilian Clark prior to going overseas. Tragically, he was killed in Normandy on 2 July 1944 at the age of 22. He is buried in Bayeaux War Cemetery, grave ref XII.E.9 and his name appears on the Knaresborough war memorial in the castle grounds. Another Fusilier, Sergeant William Lamberton also married a local girl and settled here after the war (ref. 9). Charles Hanaway met Bill Lamberton again, long after the war, in the Board Inn at Knaresborough, one of their regular drinking places and where they enjoyed many sing-songs during their time at Scriven. Mr Hanaway also remembers another soldier called Barrett from the Battalion who married a local girl (ref 39).

Fusilier Edgar Light would have regarded his posting to Scriven as being back home; he came from 23 Ainsty Road in Harrogate and before the war had worked for Messrs. Ackrills Ltd.(ref.28). As part of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion RSF, he was involved in the fighting around Eindhoven in the autumn of 1944 but was mortally wounded, dying of his wounds on 31 October that year, aged 20. He is buried in Mierlo cemetery in the Netherlands (ref.29).

The camp guard house was right outside Ivy Cottage and Enid Hornsby can remember being challenged on many occasions 'Halt, who goes there?' as she and her sisters returned home after dark. The girls also used to cycle to the Sunray fish and chip shop for themselves and the guards although they were not supposed to eat whilst on duty (ref.44). The Atkinson's dog, Pip, loved the sound of the bagpipes as the Fusiliers lined up outside the house for church parade and if he ever heard the bagpipes on the radio would immediately run to the gate, not understanding why the soldiers were not there. It was on the garden wall of Ivy Cottage that Enid sat with her sisters to watch Churchill and Montgomery pass by. Arthur Atkinson was naturally concerned for the safety of his three daughters living right beside a big army camp and when the girls returned home in the dark, whether from night school or from Harrogate, he would meet them in Bond End and escort them back to Scriven, even if they returned at different times. Enid recalls that a few of the local girls used to gather outside the guard hut, waiting for soldiers to appear but that this never seemed to be a problem in the village.

After the departure of the RSF, we have no firm dates for the regiments billeted at Scriven.

### Womens' Land Army

During the early part of the war, the government re-formed the Womens' Land Army which had been originally established during the first world war. By 1944, there were 80,000 women volunteers working on the land, many of whom had to move out from the great industrial centres. They were so successful that, at the end of the war the National Farmers Union, which had opposed the employment of women on farms, was resisting the disbanding of the organisation. The women in the WLA wore green jerseys, brown breeches and brown felt hats and undertook a whole range of work, labouring for long hours to help provide food for the nation. They were accommodated in hostels or on the farms where they worked.

Mildred Holdsworth was a land girl billeted at Scriven where 'we were housed in former Italian prisoner's huts' (ref.15). She also recalls the visits of Churchill and Montgomery so it is reasonable to assume that, whilst the Royal Scots Fusiliers were still in the camp during the early part of 1944, other huts at Scriven were occupied by the Womens' Land Army. Margaret Moorland confirms this. She was another land girl here and remembers that her hostel was close to soldiers living in a barracks and who 'quickly came to appreciate the attraction of having 40 girls almost next door. They really became quite a nuisance...' Margo Goodyear, also a land girl, relates that her home at Knaresborough consisted of three Nissen huts, one for sleeping quarters, one for cooking and eating and one for ablutions. The sleeping arrangements consisted of two rows of bunk beds with a chest of drawers to be shared by four girls with two coke stoves in the centre of each hut (ref.15). The girls would rise early and queue for the toilets and wash basins before eating what Margo described as 'a meagre breakfast'. Lunch was no great improvement, comprising a dripping sandwich and a twist of tea in a piece of paper.

From these accounts, it would seem that the hutted part of the camp at Scriven was subdivided into sections, accommodating both soldiers and the land army simultaneously. Perhaps this was facilitated by one group of huts being located north of the hall and another spread out to the west, along Gaker Walk.

Not all the Land Girls were billeted in a hostel. A Miss I Taylor lived and worked locally; at the end of the war she was given a 5 year proficiency award for her work at Butterhills Farm (ref. 87). Similarly, Miss Janet Simpson lived on Boroughbridge Road and by 1944 had completed four years service in a local market garden (ref. 88).

The presence of the Land Army at Scriven Camp is questioned by Charles Hanaway who can remember no one else being stationed there at the same time as the Fusiliers. Likewise, Enid Hornsby does not recall land girls being billeted in the huts at Scriven but does remember that many were accommodated on Chain Lane in Knaresborough, in what is now the Community Centre, from where they would cycle to work on the various farms. This hostel was opened in November 1941 and was one of ten erected in the area by the Ministry of Agriculture (ref. 41). At one time, the authorities considered using part of the hostel to accommodate Italian POWs but this was dropped in favour of the WLA (ref.104). Apparently, the hostel was not big enough to accommodate the numbers involved (it was built to house 40 – ref.106)) because by August 1942, the local press was reporting that fourteen of the girls were living in tents adjacent to the hostel (ref. 42). This reflects

the importance attached to food production at the time and this overcrowding may also explain the presence of Land Girls at Scriven Camp.

There were two sections in the Women's Land Army, the regular force who enrolled for the duration of the war, and an auxiliary force for seasonal labour who undertook to provide not less than 4 weeks continuous service. Individuals in both sections received, in 1940, a minimum wage of 28s for a 48 hour week. The services of the Land Army in and around Scriven were administered by Miss Winifred Jacob Smith, Yorkshire County secretary of the Land Army, who lived at 'Somerley' on Boroughbridge Road (ref.40). As part of their training, the Land girls were instructed on the means of exterminating pests such as rats, rabbits and moles (ref.42).

The WLA hostel was sold off after the war and, following refurbishment, opened in 1957 as additional educational facilities for pupils of the Modern and Grammar Schools in Knaresborough (ref.137). It is currently used as a community centre.

### Hospital

At some point, Scriven Hall was used to house military casualties. This was for a very short duration only, a week or so, but Enid Hornsby (nee Atkinson) recalls her mother, who was a St. Johns Ambulance nurse, helping out with the patients (ref. 6). This is likely to have occurred either early on in the war or, more probably, after D Day in 1944.

In April 1941, Conyngham Hall in Knaresborough was requisitioned by the authorities as a convalescent hospital for the reception of patients from Harrogate to help cope with demand and it remained in service until 1945 (ref.34). Audrey Hines remembers the hospital at Conyngham as being the 115/116 Field Hospital but, earlier than this, she recalls soldiers being cared for at the nearby Scotton Banks sanatorium when a line of bombs just missed the soldiers in their huts there (ref.2). Those bombs fell at the end of August 1940. It is just possible that the temporary hospital arrangements at Scriven Hall were initiated before the hospital facilities at Conyngham were opened.

A better alternative is after D Day when casualties were being brought back from Normandy. In June 1944, the local papers published appeals for both medical staff with some nursing experience, including St. John and Red Cross Nurses, and for blood donors, to help with the care of the wounded (ref.111). In June and July 1944, there was no army unit at Scriven, the Fusiliers having departed for Normandy, which would tie in with the Hall being used as a temporary hospital.

### The Parachute Regiment

Bryan Norris recalls the presence of a unit of the Parachute Regiment being billeted at Scriven (ref. 1) both before and after the airborne assault at Arnhem. Audrey Hines too confirms that paratroops were here, recalling that the CO of the unit possessed a 1929 Austin car which he kept at the Hall (ref. 2). The Museum of the Parachute Regiment and Airborne Forces at Duxford has confirmed that the unit at Scriven was actually a Holding Battalion of the Parachute Regiment (ref.98). It would seem that the paratroops were first at Scriven in the summer of 1944; the Fusiliers had left the camp by April 1944 and the fighting at Arnhem did not take place until 17-25 September. The only reports to appear in the local press indicate that paratroops were here after the war had ended. At this time,

many of the restrictions of censorship had been lifted so soldiers could be identified by their regiment and base.

A Holding Battalion was, as the name suggests, a holding unit for personnel not assigned to an active service unit and was one of a succession of such units which performed a training, holding and reserve function. Although their primary function was for new recruits, these Battalions also provided a convenient location for assigning troops returning from the battlegrounds of North West Europe. It was common for service personnel nearing the end of their service, or who had suffered in POW camps, were wounded, or otherwise unfit for immediate reassignment to active units, to be placed in a holding or reserve battalion. From here, men could train and recuperate in order to return to active duty or to ease their way to demobilisation. Because of their nature, Holding Battalions were not fighting units and so did not keep War Diaries of their activities which means it is not now possible to identify precise dates for their stay at Scriven. However, it is likely that this same unit was at Scriven at two separate occasions, the first being in the summer of 1944 (ie pre-Arnhem) and the second in late 1945-early 1946. They seem to have left Knaresborough by May 1946 because, in June 1946 the staff at the Harrogate Advertiser were visited by two men of the regiment who were formerly stationed here and who asked for their thanks to be conveyed to local residents for the hospitality they had received during their stay (ref. 17)

Alan Wyatt qualified as a military parachutist at Ringway No. 1 Parachute Training School in Manchester and was granted his Parachute Wings on 18 September 1945. He was then posted to the Holding Battalion at Knaresborough where he stayed for only a month or two before moving on to the Parachute Regiment Reserve Battalion at Piddlehinton, Dorset and then the NCO's Training School where he became Weapons Instructor. He was subsequently promoted to the rank of Sergeant and served in the Middle East.(ref.98).

The first mention of the Paras in the local press appeared in September 1945 when two soldiers of the Parachute Regiment, 'stationed in Knaresborough', pleaded guilty in Harrogate court to stealing from a shop in Harrogate. The offence took place at 11-45pm after both men had been drinking. The two men had previously been prisoners of war (ref.53).

In December 1945, three privates from the Parachute Regiment, 'stationed at Scriven Park', were charged with causing damage to a jeweller's window in Harrogate and stealing an item from within. The offence had occurred on 24 November 1945 at 10.55pm on a Saturday night when the men had been out in the town drinking. The case against one was dismissed for lack of evidence, another was fined £2 and the third man, who had seven previous convictions, was sent to prison for a month (ref.54).

Lance Corporal J. Pritchard, who came from Shorncliffe in Kent, was one of the Paratroops stationed at Knaresborough after the war and had there made the acquaintance of a Mr and Mrs Bendelow of Knaresborough. Pritchard had been wounded at Arnhem and captured by the Germans, becoming a POW until liberated by the Allies. In November 1945, he was charged with assaulting Mr Bendelow and another man, who had accused him of improper conduct with Mrs Bendelow. Lance Corporal Pritchard was found not guilty and awarded costs. The judge said that he believed Mr Bendelow and friend had thought they would teach the soldier a lesson 'but unfortunately without success as the soldier was bigger than they were' (ref. 16).

In January 1946, one of the officers in the Regiment committed a road traffic offence on the Knaresborough to Harrogate road for which he was fined in April of that year (ref.56).

Also in January 1946, Benjamin Webber, Lieutenant, and Lawrence Ancell, Sergeant, both of the Parachute Regiment and based at Scriven Park, were charged with attempting to take a car without permission. Both men pleaded not guilty (ref.117).

Later that same month, two more soldiers from Scriven Park, Norman Tolley and Douglas Raven, pleaded guilty to theft at Knaresborough court (ref.118).

Also in early 1946, Mitchell Smith, a soldier based at Knaresborough, was fined £2 for damaging a traffic sign in Harrogate the previous November. His military training had almost enabled him to escape from the scene; PC Frankland declared that the defendant had consumed some drink but had not been drunk at the time of the incident and that 'In his attempt to get away, he managed to scale a nine-foot wall but I caught him by the feet' (ref.24). The paper does not identify either the regiment or the base involved and it should be noted that not all soldiers based at Knaresborough were billeted at Scriven Park.

Like the other regiments who had come to Scriven before them, men from the Parachute Regiment met local women. Eric William Skyrme from Cirencester was married to Alice Walker of Hambleton Terrace in Knaresborough in February 1946 whilst serving as a paratrooper (ref.119). Likewise, in March 1946, Miss Vera Cook of Dragon View in Harrogate, married Private Fred Griffiths of the Parachute regiment who came from Ashington in Northumberland. The press report of the wedding does not indicate where Private Griffiths was stationed at the time (ref.55).

During the war, all members of the Parachute Regiment were volunteers who had been recruited from the many other regiments. One of the attractions was the additional daily pay of 2s (10p) which doubled the regular army pay of 2s per day. The training was very tough and many volunteers were returned to their original units as being unsuitable whilst those who remained were subjected to an intensive training regime to ensure full fitness (ref. 70).

#### Local Recollections

The soldiers could help the villagers in a time of food rationing. Arthur Atkinson, who was the estate stonemason, was also the caretaker to the hall which had stood empty since 1936. His knowledge of the building, with its multitude of switches and complexity of plumbing, brought him into regular contact with the soldiers billeted there and they would sometimes give him tins of food to take home. His daughter, Enid Hornsby, inherited a large, unlabelled tin from her father which was not opened until 1966 when she moved out of Ivy Cottage. It turned out to be the most wonderful apricot jam (ref.6).

One resident was burgled: 'One morning our house was broken into but the only things missing were my father's new suit, a small case and all his chewing gum (her father used to chew gum whilst on fire watch in a hut on Knaresborough golf course). The burglar had even cleaned his shoes before he left. Our local bobby duly arrived. He decided the intruder was probably a deserter from the regiment then stationed in Scriven Hall-just over the wall from us. He spent ages taking a plaster cast of a footprint in the flower bed. I was thrilled and followed him round with a notebook! My father wasn't so thrilled though. He hadn't even worn the suit, which had used up half his annual allocation

of clothing coupons. To add insult to injury, the Board of Trade refused Dad's hopeful request for more coupons on the grounds that-it wasn't his only suit!(ref. 3).

Enid Hornsby, as a young girl, had a close encounter with a Churchill tank in the village. She had been walking down to her grandmother at Rose Cottage as a tank was struggling up the icy incline toward the camp gate. She tried to slip past but was grabbed by a soldier just before the tank slewed on the packed ice against the garden wall where she had been (ref. 6). It is difficult to identify the unit involved in this incident. The first Churchill tanks had rolled off the production line in June 1941 (ref. 5) which would rule out the involvement of the 41<sup>st</sup> Royal Tank Regiment who had left in March 1941. The various units of the 11<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division had left Scriven by August 1941 with their Valentine tanks when the Cameron Highlanders arrived and, during the winter of 1941-42, the Hall was occupied by the HQ Company of the 5<sup>th</sup> Bn. The King's Regiment (Liverpool) who operated with lightly armoured bren carriers rather than with heavy armour. In the winter of 1943-44 however, Scriven was occupied by the Royal Scots Fusiliers, who, although an infantry Battalion, did participate in training with armoured units, a number of whom, such as the 6<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Brigade in VIII Corps, were then in Yorkshire equipped with Churchill tanks. It seems most likely therefore that the unit in question was not actually stationed in the village but was attending the camp for training with the infantry. The future Archbishop of Canterbury, Robert Runcie was one of these tank commanders, having been given command of No.2 Troop in Right Flank Squadron of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tank Battalion, Scots Guards in 1942. The Battalion was part of the independent 6<sup>th</sup> Guards Tank Brigade which was used initially as a flexible reserve but was then assigned to the 15<sup>th</sup> (Scottish) Division in the autumn of 1942, just as the 6<sup>th</sup> RSF began their battle training at Scriven. Runcie spent months training in Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Kent prior to arriving in Normandy with his Churchill tanks in July 1944 (ref.83) and was awarded the Military Cross for two feats of bravery under heavy enemy fire in March 1945.

Ken Thompson remembers Scriven Park prior to D Day when 'school boys could often be found at weekends, climbing the scaffolding and platforms built to form a mock-up of the side of a ship. Tanks would rumble their way down the High Street en route to the Park followed by groups of excited youngsters' (ref. 25).

In spring of 1944, a group of local boys standing by the railings in the field beside Ice House Wood where surprised to see a Lysander light aircraft land: 'Out jumped a soldier from the Army Air Corps who ran to the hall carrying a despatch box. He was soon back and off like a shot, flying so low gunning his engine that I dived head first through a five- barred gate! We knew something was 'up' and within a few days, D-day!(ref3).

Mark Patterson was told how some of his relatives were pushing a pram along Scriven Road during the blackout in 1942. Coming the other way was a Bren carrier or some kind of armoured personnel carrier, presumably carrying soldiers of the King's Regiment. The driver lost control, gouged the stone wall around what is now Jacob Smith Park and then careered across the road toward the pedestrians. The couple pulled baby from the pram and fled into the nearest garden, just in time to see the carrier smash into the pram which had been left on the pavement. The family received financial compensation for the pram and the scrape marks remained on the wall for many years afterwards (ref.91). The incident was dated to the night that York suffered in one of the 'Baedeker raids', which took place on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1942.

Mike Padgett was the son of a local shop owner, selling fruit and fish on Briggate in Knaresborough where he worked as the errand boy. He recalls that the shop bike 'was regularly pinched by soldiers on their way back to Scriven after the pubs turned out. I was supposed to lock it up at night in the yard behind the shop but I often forgot. The first two or three times it happened Mum reported it to the Police and they found it on Old Scriven village green, by the entrance to the camp. The Police returned it to us but the third time they charged 7/6d (37.5 new pence), quite a lot in those days. I got my ear clipped for that and in future, I had to walk down to Scriven to find the bike. It did improve my memory, I made sure it was locked up' (ref 18).

There were opportunities for some private enterprise. Tim Harris and a friend would collect a stack of The News of the World from the local newsagent on a Sunday morning and sell them at the camp gate. Apparently this was the preferred Sunday reading of many soldiers. The boys would sell each copy at double the going rate, and then pocket the difference when they reimbursed the newsagent. Tim recalls there was no trouble in receiving their inflated price, the soldiers being content to have the Sunday paper delivered to their door (ref. 12).

Some private enterprise was not tolerated by the authorities and there were a number of cases before the Knaresborough Petty Sessions relating to the theft of army blankets. Although there is no mention of Scriven Camp being the original source of the blankets, this would not be an unreasonable supposition in at least some of the cases. In December 1943, a Knaresborough resident pleaded guilty to receiving two army blankets, valued at 27s 6d, knowing them to have been stolen. He had met a soldier in a pub by Castle Yard who had offered him the blankets for 15s. He was fined 10s with 15s costs and the soldier was dealt with by the military authorities (ref.45). In February 1944, another resident, a Knaresborough quarryman, was fined £4 for being in unlawful possession of four army blankets. He had bought them from a soldier for 10s each and, because the transaction had taken place during blackout conditions, he was unable to identify the vendor who had said that he was 'hard up' (ref. 19). A month or so later, a corporal was fined £1 for stealing four army blankets and selling them for £2 in a cafe. He had taken them from the Quartermaster's stores on loan because he was in private lodgings (ref.48).

Mike Padgett recalls a mania for collecting cap badges and other military items: 'Thunder flashes and even live ammunition were often swapped amongst the lads. They were found on the training ground in the park. We knew places where we could shin over the wall, so squaddies can't have had much of a problem getting in and out' (ref.18). Ken Thompson confirms this, recalling that it was not uncommon to pick up a clip of live .303 ammunition from the ground in Scriven Park. He also remembers seeing the soldiers using mortars, the shells leaving a trail of white smoke (ref. 26). Cigarettes were available from a closer source; Mrs Atkinson of Rose Cottage which overlooked the village green, sold cigarettes, soft drinks and sweets (ref.44). Other than that, soldiers would walk into Knaresborough, about 10-15 minutes away.

Scriven's youngsters spent hours following the tracks of the soldiers in search of spent cartridge cases. In 1942 or 1943 as one military unit was leaving, loose ammunition was collected in a tea chest which was then left unattended. Three children entered the camp, took three anti-tank rifle cartridges from the box and threw one of these onto a fire which they had lit in Frogmire Field in Knaresborough. The incident only came to light when a doctor was called to treat one child with a leg wound caused by the round exploding in the flames. The children, two brothers aged only 9 and

11, and a girl aged 11, subsequently appeared in Knaresborough Juvenile Court charged with theft. They were found guilty and the parents fined. The magistrates considered that although the army had not taken sufficient care with the cartridges which should not have been left where the children could get them, nevertheless, there was no excuse for what had happened and the children should not have been in the camp at all (ref.43).

The dangers associated with live ammunition at Scriven remain real today. On 3 February 2011, the Archaeology Group uncovered a live ten-inch mortar shell in the field immediately south of the Hall. The local police were informed and a bomb disposal team from Catterick was called out who disposed of the missile by a controlled explosion in situ. The nature of the explosion would suggest that this particular projectile was a smoke mortar rather than containing high explosive, something which may also explain its presence so close to the Hall. The bomb disposal team swept the immediate area for other projectiles but found nothing further. They did however advise that the field in question had been used as a firing range during the war. Apart from this, a number of spent bullets and cartridge cases have also been found in this field.

The presence of a large number of young men in Knaresborough raised other issues about life in the town. In early 1944, the Commanding Officers of local military service units applied to Knaresborough Urban Council to open the local cinema on Sunday evenings. Harrogate had already done this in 1940 for the duration of the war and as, a result, people from Knaresborough travelled to Harrogate on Sundays to see a film. The Council agreed to support the application and to prepare an Order to that effect for submission to the Home Secretary who would decide whether or not to grant it (ref.47). There was some debate in the council chamber about the desirability of Sunday entertainment and a letter was quoted from the local MP, Major Christopher York: 'I think my views on Sunday entertainment are pretty well known in the constituency, and I should certainly support any measure taken against such societies as the Lord's Day Observance Society to prevent their being able, as they are at present, to put a stop to Sunday entertainments given for the benefit of members of the Forces, the public and the charities for which they are organised'.

Unlike some other camps, there never seems to have been an issue with young women at Scriven. Enid Hornsby remembers that there used to be girls who would wait at the guard hut (just outside Ivy Cottage where she lived) for soldiers, 'just the odd few' (ref.44).

#### Home Guard

On the fourth anniversary of the formation of the Home Guard, members of the Knaresborough unit (the 6<sup>th</sup> West Riding Battalion) gave a demonstration of training in Scriven Park. This would have occurred in May 1944 and was watched by many interested spectators. The demonstration included machine gun drill, battle drill, an obstacle course, the use of camouflage and wireless and a demonstration of the spigot mortar. The event lasted two hours and was under the charge of the CO, Major Aked (ref.110).

By July 1944, 'F' Company of the Home Guard, 5<sup>th</sup> West Riding Battalion, the Harrogate Home Guard were using Scriven Hall for weekend training exercises. Some 40 men of the Company had attended by the end of July, with each camp lasting for the duration of the weekend. Other men had attended on the Sundays for specialised training on Sundays. Although it is unclear what training was necessary for the Home Guard at this stage of the war (the force was actually 'stood down on 1

November 1944), the sessions consisted of lectures, demonstrations and 'action' (ref.49). Recreational events were also organised, with an initial concert arranged for 30<sup>th</sup> July to which the public were invited to attend. Also present on that occasion were Major Thomas Slingsby with his wife, Major Gardner, second-in-command of the Battalion and the Adjutant, Captain Bennett (ref. 20).

After standing down from active service, the Home Guard remained in reserve until the units were formally disbanded. One of their legacies remained well after the end of the war. The Home Guard had used 'A. W. Bombs', (from the original UK manufacturers Albright & Wilson but also known as the SIP-Self Igniting Phosphorus -grenade) using half-pint lemonade bottles with a crown top and filled with a coloured liquid which was extremely inflammatory, rather like a version of the 'Molotov cocktail' of the time. These were usually stored, ready for use, in outhouses and similar buildings but apparently were subsequently forgotten when the danger of invasion had passed. After the war, there were several instances in the area of people being injured by tampering with these bottles and an appeal was made to report the existence of all such projectiles to the police (ref.33).

More details of the local Home Guard are included in an appendix to this report.

#### Russian POWs

There is a record in The National Archives of Russian and Polish nationals being transferred from Scriven to another camp in Worthing in January 1945. (ref. 21). The local press however made it clear that these men were stationed in Knaresborough, as distinct to being imprisoned, and records that 'a good deal of interest was shown in Harrogate last Saturday when six hundred Russians stationed in Knaresborough, paid their first visit to the town to see the film 'Song of Russia' at St. James's Cinema. The men marched smartly and frequently broke into song, much to the interest of spectators who lined the roadside. The Russians, accompanied by their own officers and camp commandant, were liberated when the allies invaded France and are now engaged in agricultural work in the neighbourhood' (ref.22).

After the Paratroops had left in early 1946, it seems that Scriven became a POW camp again, this time for German prisoners and then a camp for displaced persons which continued to operate until about 1950.

The signs of military activity began to be repaired after the war had ended. Kerbstones and pavement flags chipped and cracked by the passage of heavy tanks several years previously were still noticeable at the end of 1945. One unidentified field in Knaresborough had been used as an ammunition dump during the winter of 1943-44 when preparations were underway for the invasion of Normandy. Nearly two years later, it was being reported that the tracks made by heavy lorries using the field were still clearly visible (ref.78).

In the lead up to D Day, there were streets in Knaresborough used as lorry parks where vehicles were parked up under guard and where some essential maintenance was undertaken periodically. Stockdale Walk and King James' Road were two such roads (ref. 116) but there is no mention of any road within Scriven being used for this purpose.

#### Methodist Church Hall

Scriven Hall and its grounds were not the only place in the village where soldiers were billeted. In November 1940, government inspectors requisitioned the Sunday School Hall adjacent to the Park Grove Methodist Church for the billeting of additional troops and the army also used the schoolroom as a blanket store. The vestry was available to the troops each Monday evening for the purpose of writing letters home in surroundings which were warm and quiet and, also on Monday evenings, the schoolroom was made available for recreational purposes until 10pm. Ladies attending the church also operated a 'home from home' scheme whereby soldiers would be taken in and fed, given a bath or just company away from their billet (ref. 23).

The church did benefit from this influx. The Sunday school building had suffered for years with problems associated with its heating which the soldiers promptly solved by installing a slow-combustion stove. Additionally, the authorities contributed £36 pa for the use of the hall. The downside was that the troops damaged the geyser in the old kitchen, causing a leakage of water from a pipe which flowed for three weeks before being discovered. Sand and water were made available for use in the event of fire caused by enemy action and the fixed furnishings in the church were insured by the government for the sum of £200. In November 1944, a schedule of damages to the Sunday School Hall, amounting to £67-15-2d was submitted to the Government and was presumably paid in full as no record to the contrary is to be found in the church records (ref. 23).

No information has been found to identify which units used this accommodation. Soldiers here may have been part of whichever unit was billeted at the Hall, or they may have been entirely separate. Particularly in the early years of the war, before huts were built in Scriven Park, there were many places in Knaresborough used to billet troops, including individual houses.

At the end of the war, slips of paper bearing the words 'W.D. Property' were posted onto a number of premises within Knaresborough which had previously accommodated military personnel but which, after VE day, were then empty. These notices were posted up to prevent the premises being requisitioned by other parties whilst the War Department considered whether to relinquish their control. Concern had been prompted by new powers granted to local authorities to requisition buildings for public use and Knaresborough council had, by August 1945, sought to requisition four empty premises in the town (ref.115).

#### Post -Second World War

The cadets of the Durham Light Infantry had been coming to Knaresborough for their summer camp since 1927 (ref.132). During the war, they experienced some difficulties in finding a suitable site since the field they had used previously had been ploughed up for food crops (ref. 107). They seem to have camped in various places around the town; in 1947, they camped off Aspin Lane in Knaresborough where they remained between 21-28<sup>th</sup> June (ref.119). The camp was prepared with the help of German POWs (ref.120).

In 1948, their camp site was in Scriven, located off Boroughbridge Road and just beyond Greengate Lane. On that occasion, they arrived in June 1948 with 30 officers and 380 cadets and marched from Knaresborough station to the camp site with band and bugles playing (ref. 123). Church parade on the Sunday of their visit was followed by a wreath laying ceremony at Knaresborough war memorial. The Battalion band gave a concert in the castle grounds during the week, and the next day there was

a sports day in the camp. Dances were also arranged in the Town Hall on the Tuesday and Friday evenings before the Cadets left for home on 26 June (ref.122).

The Cadets did not come for a summer visit in 1949 because of the difficulty in finding a suitable site for their camp (ref.125). In 1950, about 500 boys from the 1<sup>st</sup> Cadet Battalion DLI arrived in June for their annual camp; that year, they camped on the playing fields adjoining Knaresborough modern School (ref.126). In 1951, 350 cadets arrived in Knaresborough (ref.127). That year, they camped in Haya Park and marched each day to Scriven Park for field training (ref.128). In 1952, nearly 400 cadets and a further 50 officers attended the camp. An outstanding feature that year was the strength of the battalion band which consisted of 80 cadets with drums, fifes and bugles (ref.129). The camp that year was again at Haya Park (ref.130).

These summer visits continued until the mid 1960s (Ref.96). In 1953, the officers and cadets of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cadet Battalion DLI arrived on June 20<sup>th</sup> and stayed for one week at the Haya Park camp (ref.131). Their annual inspection took place that week in Scriven Park, following which they marched through the streets of Knaresborough (ref.99). On this visit, equipped with sten guns, they were inspected by Brigadier E.H.G. Grant, the Mayor of South Shields and the Chairman of Knaresborough Urban Council (ref.132).

Due primarily to the high cost to the War Office of preparing a suitable site, particularly the expense in installing a supply of piped water to the Haya park site, doubts were raised in 1952 about the future of the DLI visits. Other cadet battalions of the regiment spent their annual training at existing army camps. One potential solution being promoted at that time was to establish a summer camp in Scriven Park which would then be used by all the cadet battalions of the DLI (ref. 132) but this never materialised. Because of this expense, the DLI cadets were not allowed to visit Knaresborough in 1954 which, war years apart, was the first time they had not come to Knaresborough since 1927 (ref.133).

In 1948, members of the Knaresborough post of the Royal Observer Corps took part in a major exercise when the ROC between Bedford and Berwick plotted the course of bomber aircraft and relayed the information to Fighter Command who were then scrambled to intercept. This was the first full-scale exercise of its type held since WW2. Mr H. Griffith was the head observer in Knaresborough (ref.121).

In 1960, a Royal Observer Corps nuclear monitoring station was established at Knaresborough on what was then Butterhills Farm but is now Knaresborough Golf Club. The official grid reference for the site is SE361594 and it was apparently functional from 1 May 1960 until 1 October 1968 (ref.5). This Grid Reference is incorrect, as are some reports that nothing now remains of the structure.

This feature of the Cold War survives above ground as two concrete access and ventilation shafts in an area of rough beside one of the fairways. The access shaft is locked shut and entry has been denied for reasons of health and safety. From information relating to ROC stations elsewhere however, it seems these bunkers had a fairly standard construction and layout, with an 15ft ladder leading down the access shaft to an underground chamber approximately 15ft x 7ft. The post, set on high ground, would have been in contact with other observation posts and with the Command Post in York.

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## Appendix

### The Knaresborough Home Guard

The male residents of Scriven who joined the Home Guard during the second world war would have been part of the 6<sup>th</sup> West Riding Battalion which was one of more than seventy such battalions formed in the West Riding alone. As such, they would have worn the identifying designation 'WR6' on their shoulder flashes (ref.1) and the West Yorkshire Regiment cap badge. The 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion comprised units from Ripon, Pateley Bridge, Knaresborough and surrounding areas (ref.18) and was distinct from the Harrogate Home Guard whose men served in the 5<sup>th</sup> WR Battalion.

Anthony Eden's famous appeal for volunteers was made on the night of 14 May 1940, even before the evacuation of the BEF from Dunkirk. This new force, intended solely to defend the UK in the event of a German invasion by sea or air, was initially named the 'Local Defence Volunteers' which swiftly became known as 'Look, Duck and Vanish'. The name was changed to the Home Guard in July 1940 on the instructions of Churchill who felt that the original name was uninspiring. Volunteers were unpaid and served for the duration of the war although many men were subsequently conscripted into the regular armed forces. The Home Guard was active until December 1944 when it was stood down to become an inactive service unit and was formally disbanded on 31 December 1945 (ref2).

When Eden made his broadcast, the Government were anticipating 150,000 volunteers. Within 24 hours, some 250,000 men had volunteered and the police, who were supposed to register the men, were overwhelmed. By the end of June 1940, when the fear of invasion was at its height, the Home Guard numbered 1.5m men (women were not permitted to join but many assisted in other ways) and their numbers never fell below 1m until they were disbanded. (ref.2). This national position was reflected in Harrogate and Knaresborough where local volunteers were expected to reach 500 within the first week, the first man being at his local police station within 30 minutes of Eden's broadcast (ref.5). Apparently he arrived at the police station before Eden had finished speaking. The man in question was Mr C.H. Padgett, a local fruiterer who had served with the Royal Marines in WW1 and who was to become CSM of the Knaresborough Home Guard (ref.41). Charles Padgett, who lived on Knaresborough high Street, died in 1945 at the age of 47 (ref.43).

Within a week 240 men had volunteered their services in Knaresborough (ref.31). Contrary to national policy, a number of ARP men were initially recruited into the LDV in Knaresborough, something the authorities were then obliged to resolve. This brought some complaint, since offers of help from some men with previous military experience had been ignored (ref.32).

Fred Clapham, who farmed at Hazelhead Farm in Scriven was one of the first volunteers for the Local Defence Volunteers, the fore-runner of the Home Guard. His son Alistair, still has Fred's LDV membership card which shows he was a member of No. 2 Company (Knaresborough) of the Claro Group Local Defence Volunteers. The LDV was formed after Eden's famous appeal for volunteers on 14 May 1940 and became the Home Guard in July of the same year, so Fred's membership must relate to this specific period in mid 1940. At this time, the country was preparing to be invaded and

the LDV were trained to observe and report any 'incidents' which would have included the arrival of German paratroops. Brief details of procedure are set out on each membership card as an aide-memoire in the event of an emergency. Patrols were required to 'observe intelligently, and to report accurately and immediately'. Observation posts were established at key locations and manned day and night. Speed was essential in reporting and news had to be relayed to both Knaresborough police station and LDV HQ in the shortest possible time and each patrol was required to have a bicycle, motor-bike or a car because, despite the urgency, patrols within 2 miles of Knaresborough were prohibited from using the telephone. This was presumably because, in the event of an actual invasion, the telephone system may have been disabled by enemy action and even if this was not the case, the number of emergency calls would jam the system and prevent volunteers getting through to their reporting centres. Patrols further than 2 miles from town were able to use the telephone (assuming it remained operational) but were required to follow a fairly cumbersome reporting system. Their report had to be written in triplicate and a messenger had to leave one copy at the nearest telephone where arrangements would have been made to deal with it, presumably by another member of the patrol endeavouring to phone through details to either the police station and/or the LDV HQ. The messenger then had to physically deliver the other copies of the report to the police and LDV HQ and to await further instructions. Whilst he was doing this, the senior member of the patrol in question was required to wait at his post, preparing updates of the report and awaiting the return of the messenger from Knaresborough. The LDV were required to ignore reports of incidents made to them by non-LDV members or by people unknown to them in order to avoid spreading confusion and false information. Instead, an LDV observer was required to report what he actually witnessed himself and the procedures set out details of how the necessary information was to be described.

Such was the enthusiasm of the volunteers that, by October 1940, it had still not been possible to enrol all the men who had registered with the police. Because a number of Home Guard had by then been called up for military service and others had resigned for various reasons, further enrolments were then authorised locally and men still on the waiting list there were invited to enlist (ref.8).

The first local commander of the LDV was Col. C.H. Tetley of Kirkman Bank who was later succeeded by Brigadier-General Edwards of Scotton. Patrols were undertaken at dawn and dusk and all types of weapons were pressed into use, including shot guns and scythes. When they moved into York House, the men received a further issue of denim overalls, all of which seemed to have made for a six foot man with a 17in neck. About the same time though, they received a consignment of American rifles, thick with grease which had been packed at the end of WW1. A defence scheme for the locality was prepared and sand bag emplacements and roadblocks were built at strategic points. During the summer of 1940, the new volunteers drilled night after night, filled sand bags, manned observation posts and gradually evolved into a fighting unit (ref.41).

When formed, the Home Guard had its own ranking structure which differed from the regular army. Hence, a Platoon Commander was equivalent to a Captain/Lieutenant in the army, a Section Commander to a Sergeant, a Squad Commander to a Corporal and a Volunteer to a Private. From February 1941 however, officers and men were accorded the orthodox army rankings with the exception of the Volunteers who were not known as Privates until the spring of 1942 when compulsory enrolment was introduced (ref2) (see below).

The Group Commander for the Claro Area of the LDV was Col. V.J. Greenwood of Birstwith with Col. G.M. Glynton as his second-in-command. Gerard Maxwell Glynton was commissioned in 1899 and served for 32 years in the Indian Army. He served throughout the first world war in Palestine and Mesopotamia and had been awarded the DSO in addition to being mentioned in despatches no fewer than six times. He subsequently became Group commander for the Claro Area and was also an Assistant Zone Commander. In the early part of the war, he also held the position of honorary evacuation officer. Gerard Glynton died at his home in Follifoot in January 1942 at the age of 62 (ref. 48).

Major L.B. Holliday was appointed to command the Knaresborough and Boroughbridge Companies of the LDV(ref.6). Lionel Brook Holliday was a manufacturer of dyes and, as a Major in the West Riding Regiment during the first world war, had been recalled from the front by the government because of his knowledge of picric acid, then required in the manufacture of explosives. He served with the Duke of Wellington's Regiment (the West Riding Regiment) and had been mentioned in despatches (ref. 12). His dyeing company was bought out by the Government to form British Dyes Ltd and he used the money to set up his own dye manufacturing business of L.B. Holliday & Co. Ltd in Huddersfield. He was appointed Sheriff of Yorkshire in 1943. After the second world war, during which he lived at Copgrove Hall, Major Holliday became well known as an owner and breeder of racehorses. He died in 1966, aged 85.

The LDV were not well armed. The few rifles which were issued to units had to be supplemented by shotguns, sporting rifles and any other weapons which could be acquired by the volunteers. On 17 June 1940, Northern Command issued written instructions to LDV units on how to make a Molotov cocktail (take a pint beer or whisky bottle, fill it with two parts petrol and one part paraffin, cork it and tape matches together that would be set alight before a Volunteer threw it against a tank) (ref.3). When rifles were received in greater number, many units in the country were a menace, firing at strangers in the blackout, a number of whom were killed. In Knaresborough, an appeal was launched for weapons and a number of 12 bore shotguns were donated to the LDV, together with some pistols and a German rifle from WW1 (ref.32).

Although Eden was anxious not to overstate the case it is clear that the principal fear at the time was of invasion by paratroops. Consequently, the main role of the LDV was to guard key targets such as aerodromes, power stations, railway junctions and telephone exchanges.(ref.7). With this in mind, information was circulated on the identification of enemy troop-carrying aircraft. Local newspapers published aircraft recognition charts which LDV units were encouraged to cut out and displayed for easy reference (ref.9).

By June 1940, administration of the LDV was being taken over by the Territorial Army Associations to increase their efficiency and to accelerate the recruitment process. The intention was for the staffs of the nation-wide Territorial Associations to take over the clerical aspects of the new force so as to leave the commanders free to direct training and other military functions (ref.24).

Initially unpaid, the Home Guard received subsistence payments from the summer of 1940. Men on continuous duty for 5 to 10 hours received an allowance of 1s 6d for each such period whilst those on duty for periods exceeding 10 hours were paid 3s (ref.25).

The local unit of the Home Guard was the 6<sup>th</sup> West Riding Battalion of the Home Guard with 'E' company being recruited from Knaresborough itself and the surrounding villages (ref.40). Their HQ was in York House in York Place, Knaresborough.

Mr C. V. Edwards was a Platoon Commander of the Knaresborough Home Guard. In September 1940, he wrote a letter published in the local press, reassuring residents that they were now ready to defend the town against an invasion. A watch was kept from dusk until dawn in all weathers for enemy aircraft or paratroops and there were always men on duty. In the event of bombing, the Home Guard was ready to assist both police and ARP services and, apparently with the onset of winter in mind, Mr Edwards appealed for help from the town's residents. King James School permitted the Home Guard to use their cricket field and pavilion (on Aspin Lane) but his men would welcome assistance such as hot drinks on cold night duty and any other donations to improve their discomfort(ref.33).

It took time to provide the men with uniforms. Not only were the regular armed forces a priority, there were other reasons for delay. Nationally, many of the new Home Guard were too big around the waist for regular army battledress and arrangements had to be made to supply uniforms in 'outsizes' (ref.26).

By November 1940, the position for the Home Guard was improving. Officers could now be granted commissions to enable them to command all local troops in an emergency and the initial denim uniforms of the men were being replaced by British army battledress. Equipment too was getting better with rifles, machine guns and grenades being issued to the platoons (ref. 27).

The Home Guard had significant powers in the war on the home front. A Home Guard could stop civilians and demand proof of identity and their reasons for being in any particular place. They were also entitled to stop and search vehicles in public places, search the occupants and seize any items found. A Home Guard had the power of arrest and could detain suspects for up to 24 hours, after which they would have to be handed over to the police (ref.35).

There was a reorganisation in Knaresborough in August 1941 when Major H.L.C. Aked of Forest Moor took over the command of 'E' Company which included the platoons raised in the Knaresborough district. He was also the military representative on the Knaresborough invasion Committee. Aked's second in command was Captain H.B. Burrows of Boroughbridge Road. When the Home Guard were stood down in 1944, the Company consisted of four platoons:

\*No. 17 platoon, recruited in Scotton, Nidd, Brearton and South Stainley. Commanded by Lt. P.H. Downley of Scotton who had replaced a Lt Mostyn.

\* No.18 platoon, recruited in Goldsborough, Flaxby and Arkendale and commanded by Lt. W.E. Richardson of Lands Lane, Knaresborough with Lt. Dobbyn of Ferrensby as his second in command. The first commander of this platoon was Lt. Betley who had joined the army in 1942.

\*No.19 platoon, whose HQ was at 116 High Street, Knaresborough, commanded by Lt. M.J.T. Fairman of Victoria Avenue, New Scriven with Lt. W. Summerscale of Ripley Road as second in command. The first platoon commanding officer had been Lt. B.G. Laughton who had moved on to Company HQ.

\*No 20 platoon, whose HQ was at York House, commanded by Lt. K. Lishman, Kirkgate, Knaresborough with Lt. R.M. Soar of Scriven Road as his second in command. Lishman had succeeded Lt. Lewin in January 1942 when Lewin had been commissioned into the RAF.

Company HQ was in the charge of CSM C.H. Padgett who had been the first volunteer to enlist and also CQMS J.B. Everleigh. By the time of being stood down, there was also a well trained signals section under Sergeant R. Richardson of Whincup Avenue, Knaresborough (ref.41).

By the time of its second birthday in May 1942, the Home Guard had ceased to be a voluntary organisation. Compulsory enrolment where necessary on 'operational grounds' was being recommended by the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Forces even though voluntary recruitment remained on-going. The operational role of these part-time troops had not changed but their training had been intensive and some sections of the Home Guard now had responsibility for special duties such as manning anti-aircraft guns, military traffic control and despatch riders. Weaponry had also improved with ever-increasing quantities of automatic weapons, anti-tank missiles and various types of grenade being provided for their use. Home Guard soldiers were routinely being sent on training courses at regular army establishments such as the Intelligence Training Centre and the Army Gas School. In all, the Home Guard in 1942 and thereafter was a much more effective fighting force than it had been on its formation (ref.9).

Training of the Home Guard continued throughout the war and the force provided many trained men for the regular armed forces. On the third anniversary of their formation, the Harrogate Home Guard gave a public display of their weaponry, which included the 'Northover Projector' and the 'Blacker Bombard', the former being fired by means of a special fitting to a rifle and the latter being effective against tanks as well as enemy infantry (ref.13). The Northover Projector was a weapon designed to hurl the heavier issue of grenades or incendiary devices against tanks and was operated by a team of trained men.

The West Riding Home Guard had their own training school which was run by the Home Guard themselves and which was unique in Britain. Here, men would be trained to use all kinds of weapons, including German guns and ammunition. About 140 men per week, students, officers, and NCOs attended this training school in 1943 which also taught the men how to use a bayonet as well as laying and detecting mines and spotting booby traps (ref.14). They were instructed on the use of enemy weapons in case any were dropped by the Germans as part of an invasion from the air. Every man in the home Guard was trained to use most of the weapons which would have been at their disposal with the exception of the anti-tank weapons which required specialist training (ref.34).

In May 1943, E Company of the Knaresborough Home Guard marked the third anniversary of their formation with a demonstration of their various weapons on the Fysche Hall Playing fields and a march through Knaresborough (ref.37).

One unfortunate consequence of the realistic training was emphasised in the summer of 1942 when the Harrogate Home Guard were carrying out an exercise at Ripley bridge one evening. In attempting to cross the river here, Private Frank Pearson was drowned despite efforts to save him (ref. 20).

With the fear of invasion still in mind, a large exercise of home forces was organised in the Harrogate area in October 1942 with the purpose of co-ordinating the work of the police, the Civil Defence and the Emergency and Invasion Committees. The exercise assumed a sea-borne invasion had landed troops on the east coast and that the enemy was advancing inland toward Harrogate, assisted by air-borne troops, with heavy fighting between Ripon, Killinghall, Knaresborough and Plompton, together with local air raids. The exercise was intended to be as realistic as possible and involved the personnel of all the local civil defence forces (ref.10). The action took place on 18 October when the 'invaders' had some initial success, testing the lines of the Home Guard defences. By midday, the 'enemy' had breached the defences of Harrogate, capturing various key targets, despite some successes claimed by the defenders. Afterwards, the authorities considered that valuable lessons had been learned in dealing with attacking forces whose strength was greater than those who had been defending the town (ref.11).

Local Home Guard men had a hut for their use on the Lingerfield road out of Scriven, above Preston Bottoms and in a field north of Market Flatt Lane and opposite Ice House Wood, they undertook rifle practice. Targets were set up in front of a low sandstone bluff in which a cave had an entrance some 6 ft high. Today, the ground has been re-levelled and only the top of the cave doorway remains visible amongst the scrubby undergrowth but the bullet marks can still be seen on the stone (refs.29 & 30).

On the fourth anniversary of the formation of the Home Guard, members of the Knaresborough unit (the 6<sup>th</sup> West Riding Battalion) gave a demonstration of training in Scriven Park. This would have occurred in May 1944 and was watched by many interested spectators. The demonstration included machine gun drill, battle drill, an obstacle course, the use of camouflage and wireless and a demonstration of the spigot mortar. The event lasted two hours and was under the charge of the CO, Major Aked (ref.38).

In the summer of 1944, weekend training camps were held at Scriven Hall for 'F' Company of the 5<sup>th</sup> Battalion (Harrogate) Home Guard (ref.16).

Absence from Home Guard duties was taken seriously because it amounted to military neglect. In March 1943, Robert Leach, a timber feller in Knaresborough, was charged with being absent from guard duty on five separate occasions without reasonable excuse. His Platoon Commander who gave evidence for the prosecution was Lt Malcolm Fairman; evidence was also given by Sergeant Charles Padgett and Second Lieutenant W. Summerscales. Leach, who was 21, was found guilty and committed for three months (ref.36).

In April 1944, a second fine of £5 was imposed upon George F. Dawson, a farm labourer, for absenting himself from the Knaresborough Home Guard without reasonable excuse. The magistrates warned that any further offence would result in a prison sentence. He had enrolled in the Home Guard in August 1942 but by 1944 was evidently losing interest and had attended only two out of a possible ten parades, including one for which he was served specific notice. His platoon commander was Lt. M.J.T.Fairman and his Commanding Officer at the time was Major H.L.C. Aked (ref.15). As a young Lieutenant from Harrogate, Major Aked had fought in the first world war with the 8<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the West Yorkshire Regiment and had been a prisoner of war for three years until repatriated in March 1919(ref.22).

Although the Home Guard was stood down from active service in November 1944, appeals were still being made for volunteers in September of that year, in case of any last ditch action by the Germans (ref.17). This was notwithstanding the fact that in September 1944, compulsory drills and training of the Home Guard were discontinued and such operational duties as required would be undertaken on a voluntary basis. Notice was also given then that future call-up and medical examinations of new entrants would be suspended (ref.39).

The 6<sup>th</sup> WR Battalion Home Guard held their 'stand-down' parade in Ripon on 3 December 1944 and attended a service in the Minster where an address was given by the Bishop of Ripon, Dr. G.C.L.Lunt (ref.18). The officers of 'E' company present were Major Aked, Capt. Burrows, Lt Richardson, Lt Dobbyn, Lt Fairman, Lt. Lishman, Lt Soar and Lt Laughton. The Battalion's representative at the national Home Guard parade in London before the King was CQMS Everleigh (ref.42).

The Minister of War, Sir James Grigg, clarified the status of the Home Guard in the House of Commons. He said 'Members of the Home Guard are liable to recall if the need arises. The instructions make it clear that should the Home Guard be required for active duty members will report for duty complete with the articles of clothing and equipment which they have been allowed to retain. It will not be until actual disbandment that members will be allowed to dispose of or have their greatcoats or trousers dyed for use as civilian clothes' (ref.23).

In March 1945, Good Service Certificates were awarded to the following members of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion in Knaresborough: Major H.L.C. Aked, C.Q.M.S. J.B. Eveleigh, Sgt. W.Emmett, Sgt. G Chater, and Sgt. S. Ewbank (ref 19).

### Auxiliary Units

The Auxiliary Units were actually formed before both the LDVs and the outbreak of the war. Though the men in these units were not officially members of the Home Guard, they soon wore the same uniforms and insignia as cover to enable them to move about the countryside without arousing suspicion, this at a time of invasion scares and an obsession with enemy spies. The role of the Auxiliary Units was to operate behind enemy lines in the event of a successful German invasion on a campaign of sabotage, guerrilla warfare and intelligence-gathering. In Yorkshire, these units were incorporated within the 202<sup>nd</sup> (GHQ Reserve) Battalion of the Home Guard, one of three such special Battalions created for this purpose. The volunteers were highly trained in the use of explosives and weaponry and in survival techniques, although their anticipated lifespan following an invasion was calculated at a mere 14 days. They had access to well concealed hideouts with limited supplies and were expected to delay an advancing German army as much as possible whilst British forces regrouped. The Auxiliary Units were one of the best-kept secrets of the war and, even now, many of the surviving volunteers do not reveal their involvement. (ref. 4). We have not found any record of an Auxiliary Unit existing in the vicinity of Scriven.

### Post WW2

In the summer of 1952, the Home Guard was resurrected with 38 volunteers forming the nucleus of a force, prompted it seems by a desire to be back with former comrades as much as a meeting any future emergency. The force was known as the 5<sup>th</sup> West Riding Battalion and attracted recruits from

Harrogate, Knaresborough, Pateley Bridge and Ripon; at the same time an appeal was made for more recruits. Battalion HQ was established at 106 Station Parade in Harrogate and Companies were formed at Harrogate, Knaresborough and Ripon. That at Knaresborough was 'B' company and was based at Conyngnam Hall under Captain J.W. Preston. The Commanding Officer of the fledgling Battalion was Lieut.-Col. D. St. J. Baxter, his second in command was Major J.R. Hodgson and the Adjutant was Captain J.A. McKee. The Battalion was formed in May 1952 and by August that year, training was already well underway, even though the men had no uniforms at this time because priority was being given to those new Home Guard units being formed in eastern England, where it was felt an emergency was most likely to arise, presumably from the recently-formed communist bloc (ref.21).

The Commander of the Harrogate battalion of the Home Guard at this time was Lt. Col. H.H. Johnson of Iles Lane in Knaresborough, appointed in January 1952. He had a long and distinguished military career, having been commissioned in the Royal Artillery in 1925 and serving in Ceylon, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Malta. From 1943 to 1945, he had commanded the 2<sup>nd</sup> India Heavy AA Regiment RA on the Burma-Assam front and had been mentioned in despatches. Since 1949, he had commanded the 491 H.A.A. regiment of the Royal Artillery (TA) at Harrogate (ref.44). Following his appointment, the authorities considered establishing the battalion HQ in Knaresborough, as a convenient centre since the area it covered extended between York, Harrogate and Boroughbridge (ref.45). In the event, it appears that the HQ was established in Harrogate.

The first Knaresborough man to volunteer for the re-formed Home Guard was Mr J Hammond of 3 Belmont Avenue in Calcutt. He had previously joined the Home Guard in 1941 before entering the regular army, serving in the Middle East with the military Police and demobilised with the rank of corporal. Although in the army's Z Reserve, Mr Hammond was eligible for the new Home Guard because he was over the normal age for recall to the army. Registration postcards for recruits had by then been put out at Knaresborough Post Office (ref.46).

Unlike during the war, this latest reincarnation of the Home Guard accepted women volunteers and by May 1954 the womens' section was almost full; they appear to have been employed for driving and clerical work. In mid 1954, male volunteers were still being sought although their numbers had reached 70 which was close to what was required. New recruits (male and female) were issued with Home Guard badges and could attend meetings whenever they felt inclined; meetings took place every Thursday evening in the Drill Hall, Commercial Street in Harrogate but members were expected to go to Penny Pot Camp on alternate Sundays. Full kit and travelling expenses were provided to the volunteers (ref.47).

The acceptance of women into the ranks of the Home Guard raised one unforeseen issue. Although they were issued with uniform, beret, shoes, stockings, overcoat etc, some complained they had no handbag. Apparently they had been expecting the shoulder-strap bag carried at that time by members of the Womens' Royal Army Corps but were instead issued with a khaki-webbed haversack, measuring about one foot square. The adjutant, Captain Mackie, was asked if they were entitled to a handbag for personal belongings but the War Office decreed that such belongings could be carried in the haversack whose straps could be adjusted to the length required and could therefore be carried on the shoulder as with the WRAC (ref.48).

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