



The Home Guard

Name_____

In the summer of 1940 Britain faced the threat of a German invasion. To help defend the country a new force of volunteer soldiers were formed. They were called the 'Home Guard'.

This is a memoir by Mr John Foulsham on the formation of the Home Guard in Wymondham.

In 1940, I was 34 years old and working on the railway at **Wymondham**. I joined the L.D.V with my mates. Our C.O. was Major **Fryer** of **Browick Hall** and our first meetings were at the Drill hall in **Pople Street**. I remember that most of the men who were in my *unit* were 1st World War *veterans*, and they *kept us up to the mark* alright!

If there had been a German invasion in 1940, we had orders to report to the Drill hall, but we didn't have rifles at first! I remember that the first bit of uniform was a white *armlet* with LDV on it! Eventually the .303 rifles arrived and I remember a *character* called **Oldfield** who was asked by Major **Fryer** what he would do if he saw someone in the area that he did not know. **Oldfield** replied, 'Shoot him, Sir.' Another comedian in the unit asked **Oldfield**, 'Would you ask him who he was afterwards?' Major **Fryer** said this was not the time or the place for humour.

I remember the day that **Gaymers** of **Attleborough** was bombed. It was 1941 and I was *shunting* on the railway, when a German plane machine-gunned and holed the engine tender. After that the plane must have gone on and dropped a bomb on **Gaymers**.

Life in the Home Guard could be quite tiring at times, going on guard duty two nights a week after a day's work and doing exercise on Sunday mornings.

One day I was involved in *semaphore* signalling. The message I was receiving, I learned later, was, 'Send up three lorries'. Well, by the time the message got to me (*via* 4 other people), I got 'Send up trees'! When the sergeant came round to hear the message, I said, 'They are just going to climb that poplar!!'

I remember the *inter-battalion* shooting competition. The 1st World War snipers in our unit were very good and Major **Fryer** was an excellent shot. The shooting team was trained by a **Welsh regular** and they became very *proficient*.