



Cumbria at War 1939 - 1945

A Role Play Exercise in seven chapters, for use in secondary schools.

Chapter 2

At Home, in Uniform *Those Who Served in Cumbria.*

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A Cumbria Archive Service learning resource for secondary schools,
created by Guy Woolnough September 2009, edited for web April 2011

Many people who did not leave their homes in Cumbria still did their bit in uniform, to help win the war.

The Home Guard was a group of part time soldiers. They carried on with their normal jobs as usual, but evening and weekends they put on their uniforms to train and to guard important locations.

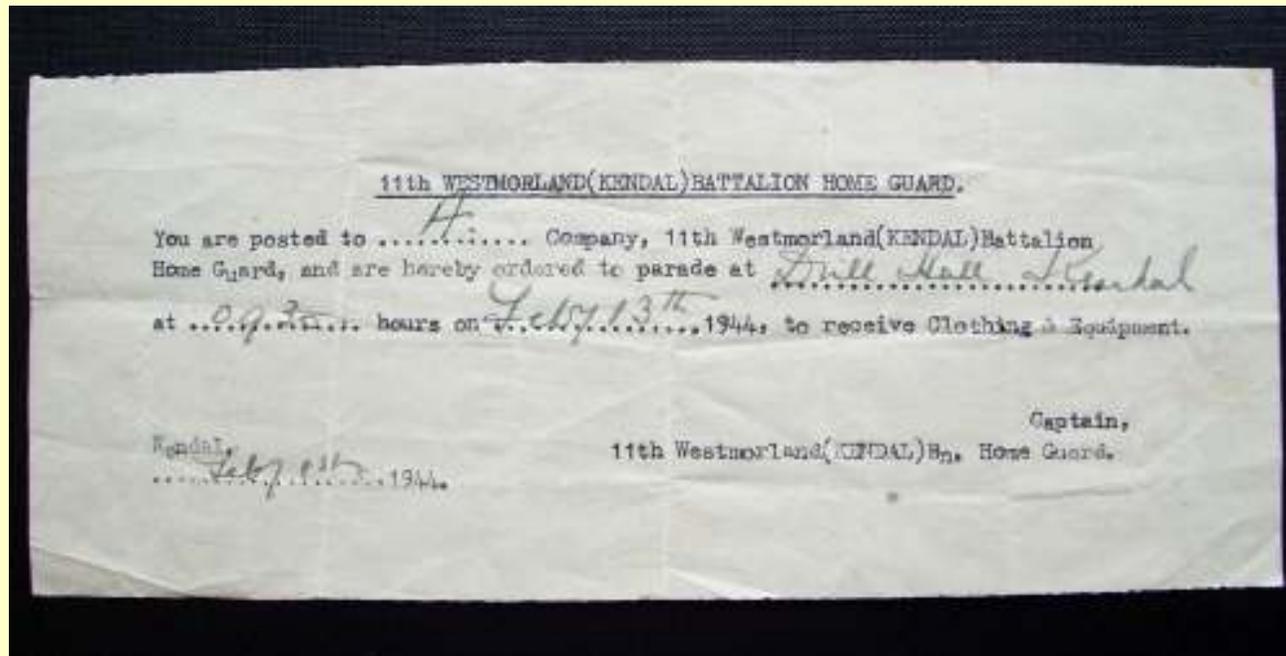
Were they really like “Dad’s Army?” This picture gives an idea of the age group.



C Company, 9th Westmorland Battalion. Relaxing off duty.

The TV series showed the Home Guard as a comedy, but the records show that they took their work seriously.

They were subject to military discipline.



Here is one man's order to report for duty in Kendal

What was the Point of the Home Guard?

Training was taken seriously. The Westmorland Home Guard protected Windermere, because of the risk of German flying boats landing there. There was also an important aircraft factory based near Ambleside that used the lake to test their planes. Important sites all over Cumbria were guarded by the Home Guard, which left younger men available for active service overseas.



The Home Guard is the unpaid, part-time, part-worn, couponless, sockless, shirtless, breathless army.

They are supposed to know the weight, killing power, mechanism and working parts of the rifle, several machine guns, countless grenades and a number of strange sub-artillery weapons.

The idea of this is to ensure perpetual training and to prevent them digging for victory, going to the pictures, or nursing the baby in their spare time.

They must know all about extermination, decontamination, detonation, consolidation and abomination, to say nothing of salvation. They have to recognize and describe aeroplanes and tanks of all nations at sight and know how to deal with them.

Incidentally, they are supposed to earn their own living if time permits

Keswick and District

“Salute the Soldier” week

9th Westmorland

(Lakes) Battalion

Home Guard

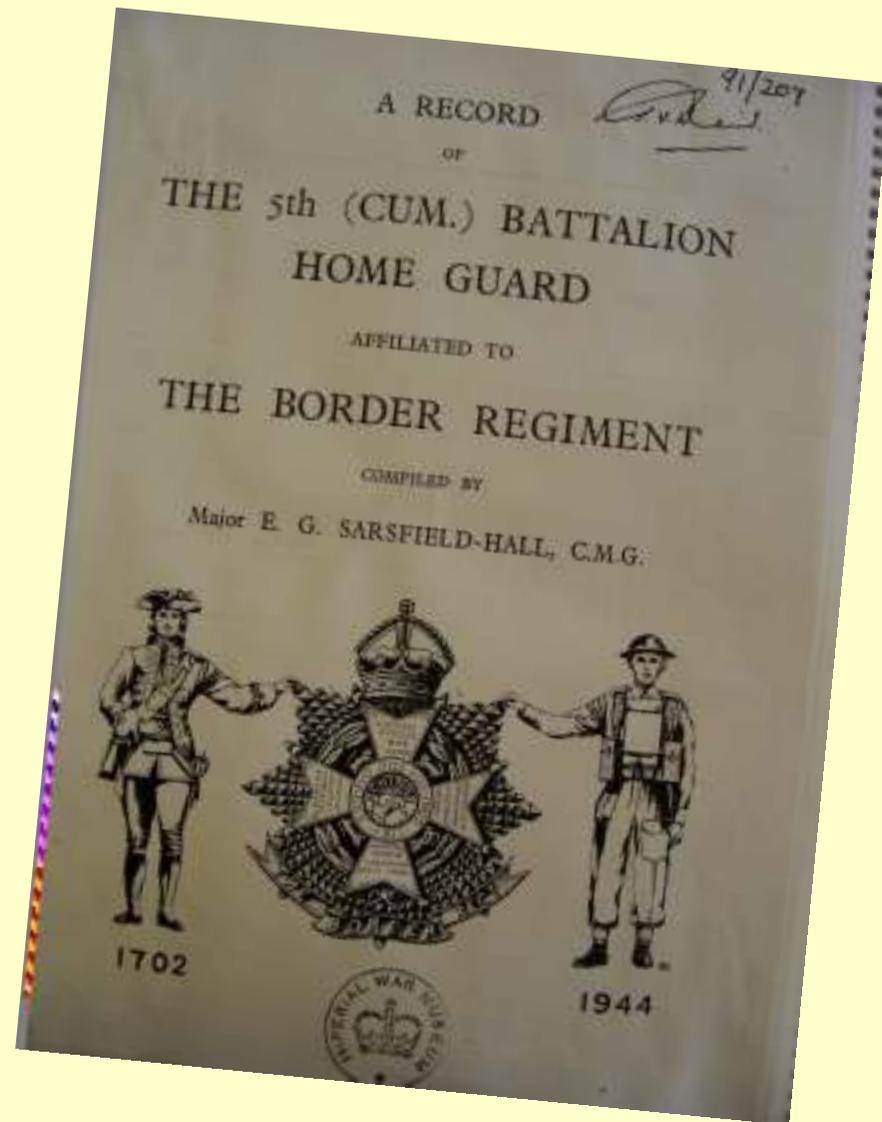
Demonstration

Sunday July 23rd, 1944

In the Lower Fitz Park

The Home Guard was wound up late in 1944, because by this stage of the war there was really no risk of a German attack.

But they were rightly proud of their contribution to winning the war.



A special publication to mark the end of the Home Guard in November 1944

Salute the Soldier Week

June 10th 1944.

Soldiers were popular. Here the people of Cumbria show their appreciation as soldiers march through Windermere. This photo was taken just four days after D-Day.



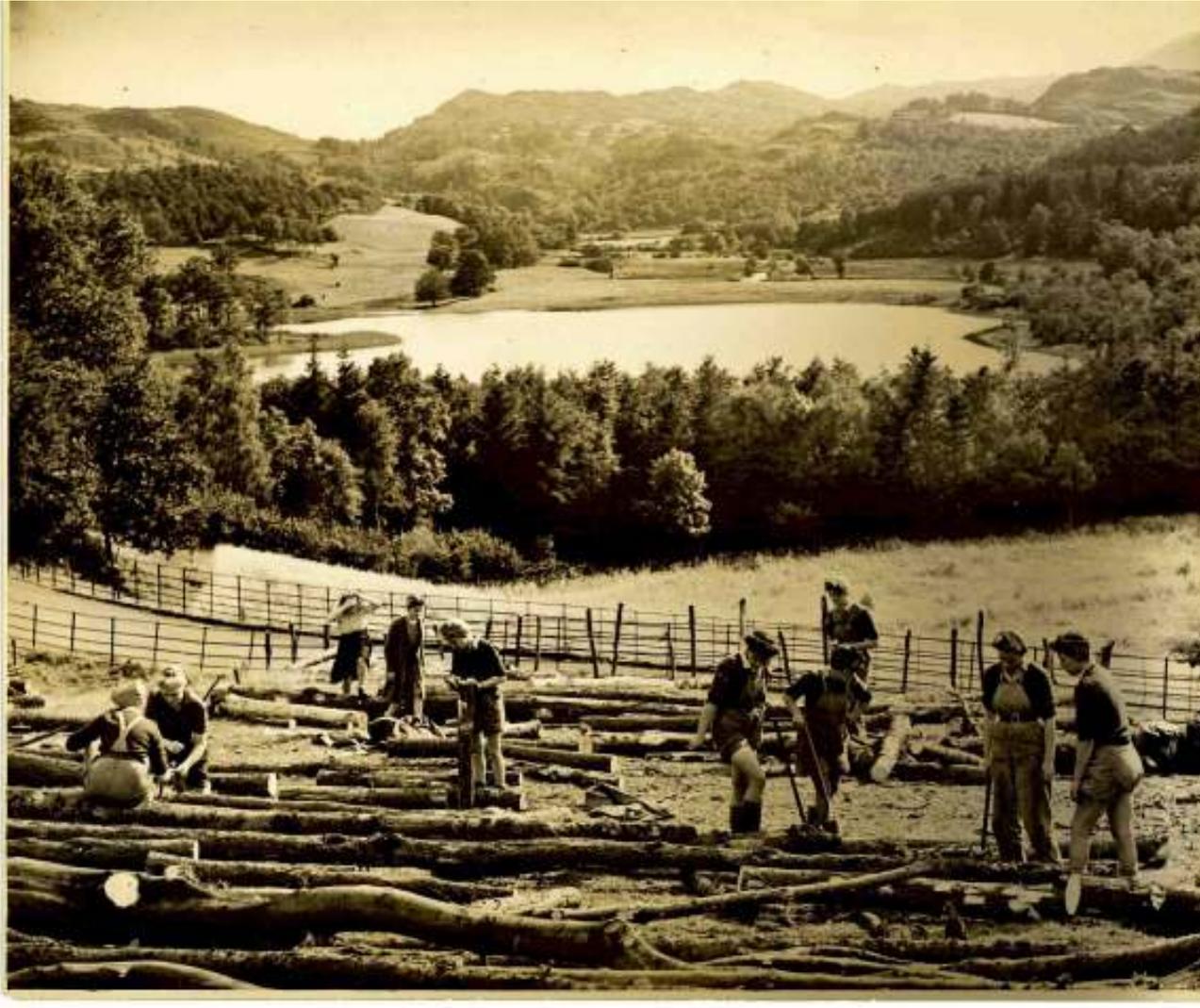
Notice the woman soldier on duty, marshalling the crowd. She was serving in the women's branch of the army, the ATS. Their purpose was to do jobs in the army to replace men so they could go and fight. Women also served in the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force: they were not used in combat, and many of them never left Britain, but they did play an important part in helping to win the war.

Ruth Margaret Bennet was in the WRENS, the women's branch of the Navy. She came from Plumbland, Cumberland, but spent much of the war at Liverpool, where her work involved receiving and decoding message from ships at sea. In February 1945, she went on a very special mission to Russia, as part of the British delegation going to meet the Russian and American leaders at Yalta. Ruth wrote in her diary:

Wednesday 14th. Got up early for breakfast & at 9 o'clock Mr Eden spoke to us all & then Sue & I went on to A Deck & watched the P.M. & his party leave. Mr Churchill was very sweet & waved to us all, Mr Eden too acknowledged our cheers & stood & waved. am so glad we had such a good view of them all & were so often so close to Mr Churchill.



Ruth's security pass



The Women's Land Army

Hardman collection, Kendal Library
and Local Studies collection

Women were drafted into uniform to do all sorts of work that had been previously thought of as men's work. Here you can see the Women's Land Army doing forestry work at Elterwater in the Lake District. Women in forestry were nick named "lumber Jills."

The Land Army was hard work. Marjory told an interviewer about her experiences as a Land Army girl in Cumbria. She joined up in 1941, aged, 20, and found herself working on a farm near Carlisle: But later Marjory was moved to another farm where she worked with other Land Girls and had a much better experience.

My first experience, has to be credited to a farm near Carlisle. The start of my years of hard labour. On my first day, I was awakened at 06.00hrs and put to work straight away. We didn't even get a drink let alone anything to eat. Then, it was off to learn how to milk the cows; how it made my wrists ache. And after all that, I had to carry the heavy churns to the feeding calves before I was finally given breakfast at 08.30hrs

It was not uncommon for these girls to find themselves working and living with the farmer's family, and to form strong friendships. One Land Girl from Kendal was a policeman's daughter with no experience of farm work. She was sent to a farm at Arnside. Here are a few lines from the interview recorded with her in the 1990's:

This interviewee said that she was paid 50p a week, and got all her food and accommodation provided.

Q Were you on your own all the time, or were there more Land Girls?

A No, I was on me own all the time. There was a group of land Girls at Milnthorpe – I think they had a camp there.

Q And they gave you decent accommodation?

A Oh yes, I lived as family, yea. They had a daughter and a maid, we were very friendly, well I still am friendly with both of them.

May 1914

10, Watney Street,
Whitehall.

I feel I must let you know the marvellous result which you are helping to achieve by your generous gift to my Red Cross "Gift to Russia" Fund. During the past few months we have been able to keep up the steady flow of supplies that are so urgently needed for Russia; but this means

that ever increasing demands are being made upon the resources of the Fund.

I thank you from my heart for your kindness & your help.

Yours sincerely
Clementine Churchill

The Women's Institute, or WI, was a voluntary organisation that put in a lot of hard work to help the war effort. Here is a letter of thanks from Clementine Churchill to Woodend WI.

People in Uniform

The number of people in uniform increased rapidly in the war, because there were so many official, government jobs to be done.

For example:

- National Auxiliary Fire Service
- Air Raid Precautions
- St John's Ambulance
- Women's Royal Voluntary Service
- Air Training Corps (ATC)

Some were unpaid volunteers, some full time and paid, but all of them had to work hard.

April 1942. Gosforth School headteacher's logbook.

The Head is away "on ATC business."

The ATC was the Air Training Corps, an organisation which encouraged youngsters to learn about flying. It was set up early in the war by the RAF, to help recruitment. The Head would have worn an ATC uniform.

17: APR:- I was absent from school this afternoon, - on A.T.C. business. Attendance for week = 89.4%.

20: APR:- Miss Thompson absent today, - and all this week. She is being married today. Miss Hodge has taken charge of infants for the week.

24: APR:- Attendance for week = 86.46%. Quite a number of the senior boys are absent, - helping the farmers to put in their crop.

29: APR:- D^r Jones' assistant here this morning for inoculations; D^r Jones here for Med. Inspection.

1: MAY:- Attendance for week = 88.8%.

6: MAY:- I have been absent from school this afternoon on A.T.C. duty.

12: MAY:- Absent all day. In London for my brother's investiture.

Notice that the boys are absent, "helping the farmers put their crops in."

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CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS TRIBUNAL

West Cumberland Cases

Richard Leonard Sturge, aged 24, music organiser, Holly Terrace, Hensingham, said he was employed by the Cumberland Friends' Unemployment Committee.

Asked what his attitude was in regard to the Friends' ambulance unit, the applicant replied: "I think the work they are doing is excellent, but it is very hard to distinguish it from the work of the R.A.M.C., therefore I am not happy about it."

Applicant was registered conditionally upon his taking up A.R.P. work, St. John ambulance work or a similar service.

**WILLING TO TAKE UP R.A.M.C.
WORK**

Roland Mervyn Wigram, aged 24, school master, residing temporarily at Eaglesfield, St. Bees, said he was a teacher of modern languages, including German and French. He expressed willingness to take up work of a constructive nature in the R.A.M.C. or accept work as an interpreter providing always that the aim of this work was not destructive.

Applicant was placed on the non-combatant register, with a recommendation that he be posted to the Royal Army Medical Corps.

Conscientious Objectors in Uniform

Attitudes to Conscientious Objectors had changed since the First World War. You can see that these two Cumbrian C.O.'s were offered alternatives in Air Raid Precautions or in the emergency medical services.

They would still end up in uniform, but only to save lives, not to fight.

Kendal Police in the War

The war meant hard work for everyone in uniform. Police, for example, were seriously short of men in the war. This table shows Kendal policemen who went into the armed forces. But during the war, only one new policeman was recruited in Kendal. The size of the Kendal force was cut from 16 to 8 by 1944. Police were not allowed to retire, even if they were quite old. And they had to work extra hours, because the force was so short of men.

Name of policeman		Year of joining and age on joining		War Service
John	Parkinson	20	1935	1941 to 1945
Thomas	Welsh	22	1937	RAF 8/9/41 to 28/4/45
Norman	Sharpe	20	1939	RAF from 13/5/40 to 4/11/45
Frederick	Gibson	22	1939	Joined army 1/12/39, returned to force 13/9/45
Cyril	Holmes	21	1939	RAF, did not rejoin the force
Alexander	Morrison	25	1939	RAF from 4/8/41 to 25/5/42
James	Plumbe	20	1939	Army from 18/11/43 to 1/12/48
Denis	Troop	19	1941	RAF, did not rejoin the force

Cumbria at War, 1939-1945

A Role Play Exercise in seven chapters for use in secondary schools.

Chapters:

1. *Introduction: VE Day, Cumbria, May 1945.*
2. *In Uniform: those who served in uniform in Cumbria.*
3. *Working: those who worked in Cumbria to help win the war.*
4. *Home Supplies: how Cumbrians got what they needed in the war.*
5. *Away from Home: evacuees, and Cumbrians serving overseas.*
6. *Missing Home: prisoners of war, Cumbrians and Germans in Cumbria.*
7. *Not Coming Home: remembering those Cumbrians who fell in the war.*