



THE HOME GUARD



During the war many people were afraid that the Germans might invade Britain. To try and make this as hard as possible the Home Guard was set up. The Home Guard was often called Dad's Army, as the men in it were too old to fight in the army. Once known as the Local Defence Volunteers, officially changed to the Home Guard by Winston Churchill. Their main task was to be able to relieve the regular Army of many tasks so that they could get on with doing the job that they were really trained for.

The Home Guard was made up of a general cross section of the community, and again as with the A.R.P, age was varied from the young teenager to the soon to be retired gentleman, although the Home Guard has always been depicted as a bunch of old men who are past it, and nothing more than a team that should have been pensioned off. Hence the nickname of "Dad's Army".

The government set up 'Home Defence Battalions'. These were groups of men aged 41-55 who were expected to protect the country if the invasion did happen. These men were not really well trained and often had no guns. Some of them would have fought in the First World War though, so they did have some idea of what to do.

Those who made up the Home Guard were: Ministers, who for obvious reasons took time off on the sabbath; Doctors, who on a number of occasions performed medical consultations while in Home Guard uniform; shop and store owners who closed shop because defence duties was given priority; farmers, builders, drivers, labourers, and even undertakers. In the very early days of the war, this happy band of men did not have uniforms or even rifles, and they often looked a peculiar sight as they marched dressed in normal everyday clothes and carrying nothing but pitchforks, spades, lengths of timber etc.

The Home Guards jobs were to keep a look out for German soldiers, to patrol the streets at night, to prepare defences in their area and to make sure that wartime laws were kept to. The men in the Home guard would still do their normal jobs as well.

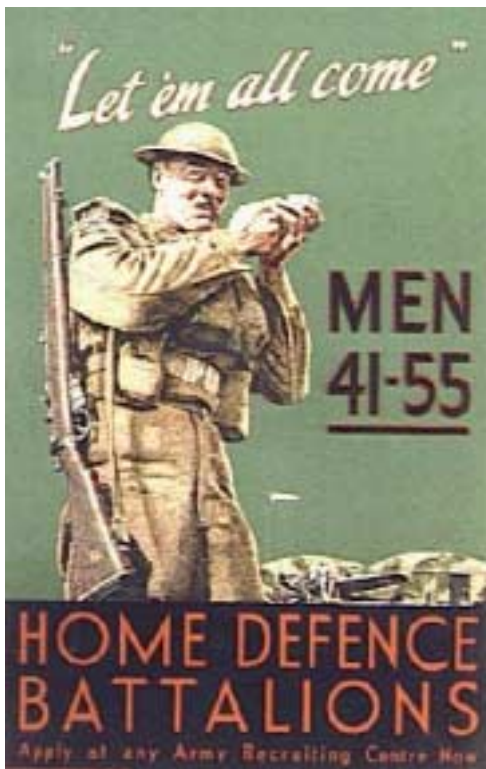
The basic work, expected of the Home Guard was that they should have an expert knowledge of their own towns, villages and the surrounding locality. They were to be a first line of defence against invaders, although being as they failed to come, it was the Home Guard that was usually on the scene immediately an enemy fighter pilot crash landed in one of the English fields. Here they were to hold them until the regular Army appeared on the scene to take the pilot away for interrogation. They

also had the job of guarding bridges, forming a patrol at many of the cities power stations and on a number of occasions guarded the entrances to many of Britain's railway tunnels.

The Home Guard harassed innocent civilians for identity cards, put up primitive road blocks.....and sometimes made bombs out of petrol tins. In a serious invasion, its members would presumably have been massacred if they had managed to assemble at all.

A.J.P.Taylor English Historian in the book *"Life in Wartime Britain"* by Richard Tames

But, over time uniforms arrived, rifles had been sent from the United States, and slowly they gained the esteem and confidence of public. At its peak there were 1,175,000 men that had volunteered for the Home Guard.



Posters like this one were used to encourage men to join the Home Guard.



- 1) Why was the Home Guard sometimes called 'Dad's Army'?
- 2) How old were the men in the Home Guard?
- 3) What jobs did the Home Guard do?
- 4) Why did we have a Home Guard during the war?

Theme Song

"Who Do You Think You Are Kidding Mr Hitler"

Who Do You Think You Are Kidding Mr Hitler

**If You Think We're On The Run?
We Are The Boys Who Will Stop Your
Little Game**

**We Are The Boys Who Will Make You Think Again
'Cause Who Do You Think You Are Kidding Mr Hitler
If You Think Old England's Done?**

**Mr Brown Goes Off To Town
On The Eight Twenty-One
But He Comes Home Each Evening
And He's Ready With His Gun**

**(So Who Do You Think You Are Kidding Mr Hitler
If You Think Old England's Done?)**

**So Watch Out Mr Hitler
You Have Met Your Match In Us
If You Think You Can Crush Us
We're Afraid You've Missed The Bus
'Cause Who Do You Think You Are Kidding Mr Hitler
If You Think Old England's Done?**

Many people claimed that the LDVs were a bit cowardly and said LDV stood for Look, Duck ... and Vanish!

