

The Home Guard In Herefordshire

On 14 May 1940 the following broadcast was made on the BBC:

"We want large numbers of men in Great Britain who are British subjects between the ages of 17 and 65 to come forward now and offer their service in order to make assurance doubly sure. The name of the new force which is now to be raised will be the Local Defence Volunteers."

Within 24 hours there were over 250,000 volunteers, including many in Herefordshire. Two young friends in Ledbury cycled to the Police Station and volunteered, only to be faced by a confused Desk Sergeant who had no ideas what they were talking about! One, Arthur Taylor's HG enlistment form (completed at a later date) is shown below:

Army Form W 3068
To be prepared in original only and forwarded to L.D.V. Area Organizer, Area Headquarters.

FORM OF ENROLMENT IN THE LOCAL DEFENCE VOLUNTEERS

Name TAYLOR Christian Name ARTHUR
Surname First in BLOCK CAPITALS.

QUESTIONS TO BE PUT ON ENROLMENT.

1. What is your name? Arthur Taylor
2. What is the date and year of your birth? Jan 27 - 1923
3. What is your address? 65 Bridge St. Ledbury.
4. (a) Are you a British subject? Yes
(b) Nationality of parents at birth? Yes
- (c) Name, address and relationship of next of kin Mr Taylor 33 Bridge St Ledbury
5. Do you now belong to, or have you ever served in, the Armed Forces of the Crown? If so, state particulars of all engagements?
6. Do you understand that if accepted you will become subject to military law and liable to obey such orders as may be given to you in accordance with instructions for the Local Defence Volunteers issued by the Army Council, but that those instructions will require you to give part-time service only and will not require you to live away from home? Yes
7. Do you understand that your service in the Local Defence Volunteers will be without pay or other emoluments? Yes
8. Do you understand that in the event of your incurring a disability attributable to your service any claim for compensation will be dealt with under the regulations for the time being in force for the purpose which provide in the case of death or permanent disability the same terms as are applicable to private soldiers and their dependents? Yes
9. Do you understand that if you are accepted you will engage to serve in the Local Defence Volunteers for a period not exceeding the duration of the present emergency but that during that period your service may be determined in accordance with instructions issued by the Army Council, by competent authority at any time, or at your own request by fourteen days' notice in writing given by you? Yes

Declaration.
I, Arthur Taylor, do solemnly declare that the answers made by me to the foregoing questions are true and I hereby agree to serve in the Local Defence Volunteers.

Date June 7 - 1940 Signature of applicant Arthur Taylor
Signature of enrolling authority J. W. Jones

Certificate of Acceptance.
Arthur Taylor (name) is accepted for service in the Local Defence Volunteers for the following period:—
(a) the duration of the emergency
(or) until 7.10.40

Date 25.7.40 Signature of accepting authority J. W. Jones

Statement of the services of No. 2 Name A. Taylor

Authority.	Unit.	Promotion, suspension, etc.	Rank.	From.	To.	Details of official awards, decorations & medals.
Service towards engagement reckoned from <u>1.1.40</u>						
1. Wounded <u>Yes</u> 2. Special instances of gallantry, conduct <u>Yes</u> 3. Injuries to and by the Service <u>Yes</u>						

Total service towards engagement in the Local Defence Volunteers to 1.1.40
(date of discharge) 1.1.40 years 0 days.

Discharged on 1.1.40 in consequence of illness
for Army Service
from 1.1.40 to 1.1.40

The discharge of the above named is hereby confirmed.

Station Hereford Date 10.9.40 by 2
Signature H. Jones Lt Colonel
Herefordshire L.D.V. Area Organizer
(To be completed by official competent to read discharge.)
† Insert cause of discharge, quoting authority.

Numbers swelled to over 1 million, and far from the Dad's Army image, the Home Guard were an effective force, many members had seen service in World War One, and by undertaking routine patrolling, key point defence and local security were able to release Regular soldiers for training and other more 'war like' duties.

Herefordshire had 6 Battalions with perhaps as many as 10,000 men serving throughout the war based at:

- | | | |
|----------------------|---|--|
| 1 Bn - Leominster | - Lt Col A J Mellor | |
| 2 Bn - Bromyard | - Lt Col J Knott CMG, DSO | |
| 3 Bn - Hereford City | - Lt Col FP Lodar-Symonds CMG (late RN) | |

4 Bn	- Hereford Rural	- Lt Col RNH Verdin TD
5 Bn	- Ledbury	- Lt Col JL Pearson CMG (Late RN)
6 Bn	- Harewood End	- Lt Col BF Murray DSO

There were detachments throughout the County, including a mounted patrol in the West of the county. In Ledbury duties included mounting a road block on the Gloucester Road at Underdown, providing guards at both ends of Ledbury Tunnel and the viaduct, and manning an observation post in Churchill's Meadow (now the Churchill Meadow estate – then a field!).

There were also 'works' units in Hereford at Baroni Metals (making aircraft components) and the Royal Ordnance Factory (Rotherwas) as well as the Post Office and Great Western Railway (GWR) had their own units which carried out specifically local security duties.

Members of the Herefordshire HG wore the following badge on their sleeve, with the Bn number below it:



The 5 Battalion (Ledbury) HQ sign



Woolhope Home Guard, photographed outside the Crown Inn



War Weapons Week parade in Ledbury with the Home Guard 'on parade'.

A specialist HG unit was formed and known as the Auxiliaries. They existed in Herefordshire and their story is fascinating – it is told in full in Mike Wilkes book – The Mercian Maquis (ISBN 1 973827 97 0). They wore the shoulder flash '202' and not the County Flash.



The Herefordshire Auxiliaries

With the disappearance of the threat on invasion the HG was stood down in December 1944 and disbanded on 31 December 1945. At stand down the strength of the Home Guard in Herefordshire

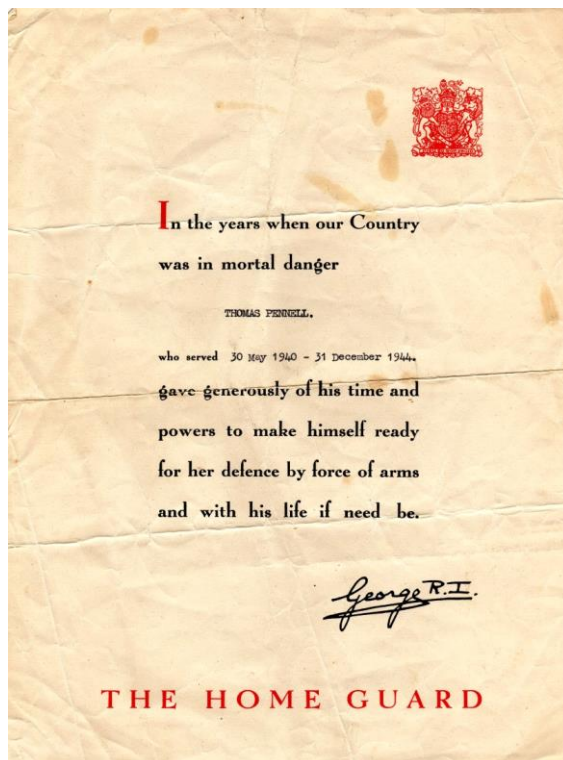
was 6,300 and perhaps as many as 10,000 men served in the HG in Herefordshire, yet little is known about them, their organisation and their service. When they were stood down the war was still raging on the European Mainland and the Far East, and as good soldiers the HG 'came to attention, turned to the right, saluted and marched into history'.

A Disbandment Parade was held on Edgar St football ground followed by a march past through High Town.



The Disbandment Parade and March Past

Members of the HG were sent a letter of thanks and were entitled to be awarded the Defence Medal:



The camaraderie of the HG continued and some Old Comrade Associations (OCA) were formed including one in Hereford:

