

## Part 4

# World Wars

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to *Somerset Light Infantry*
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*The Village War Memorial*

## **Background to the Somerset Light Infantry Regiment.**

By 1872 a **Somerset Volunteer Rifle Corps** was based in the village with a commander, *Capt Ebenezer Chaffrey*, living in Coombe Hill House, and a drill sergeant *Robert Ames*.

When the *Great War* broke out in 1914, 16 men volunteered and, later, over 80 served in the Forces (of whom 11 were killed) and a further 20 women did war work. This was out of a village population of c 500, so a fifth were directly involved.

Many of the men from Keinton Mandeville would have joined the **Somerset Light Infantry**. Not all, however, remained with them throughout the war. Sometimes a regiment was so decimated that soldiers from nearby regiments were merged. Towards the end of the Great War this happened frequently especially during the bloodbaths on the Somme and in the Salient. Brief details of each soldier's death are noted at the **Commonwealth War Graves Commission** (*online*).

We can only begin to guess what might have been the experience of any *individual soldier* by tracing some of the events at key moments of the fighting when a *particular regiment* was involved.

At the beginning of the Great War, in 1914, there were two regular Battalions (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>) of the **Somerset Light Infantry**, and, in keeping with many other counties, an additional 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion which were kept as Special Reserves, with a 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion Volunteers and, finally, the Yeomanry Cavalry.

At the start of the war, further battalions were raised, notably the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> and later still the 8<sup>th</sup> 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. These often became merged, not only with other **Somerset**s but also with soldiers from other counties and completely different Regiments.

The **1<sup>st</sup> Battalion** was sent to **Flanders** and was later joined by the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, while the **2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion** (soon divided into 1/4, 2/4) went to **India** for the whole duration of the war.

Of the Keinton Boys, we note that during the **Great War 1914-1919** two died fighting on the **Eastern front**, in *Basra* and *Damascus* where they were sent to defend the Indian Empire – the ‘jewel’ in the British Crown - against Turkish Forces who were aligned with Germany. The units usually set sail for India and then fought their way across Afghanistan, into modern Iraq / Mesopotamia and, finally, into Turkey. The other Keinton Boys were all sent to the **Western Front**.

After the Great War, or First World War, the Somerset Yeomanry became the new Field Artillery, in response to the changing nature of warfare – less need for cavalry and more need for mobile heavy guns. Also, the Volunteers were renamed the Territorial Army.

<b>Key Battalions</b>	<b>Killed*</b>
1st	1,315
1/4 <sup>th</sup>	118
6 <sup>th</sup>	849
7 <sup>th</sup>	663
<b>All battalions OR*</b>	<b>4,487</b>
<b>Officers</b>	<b>269</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,756</b>

(\*OR = *Other Ranks*)    (\*Killed/died from wounds)

There were 8 ‘Thankful Villages’ in Somerset (i.e. with no fatalities) – Aisholt, Chantry, Chelwood, Rodney Stoke, Stanton Prior, Stocklinch, Tellisford and, finally, Woolley.

Sources:            *No Thankful Village*    Chris Howell 2002  
                          *The Somerset Light Infantry*    Hugh Popham 1968

After World War II broke out the **1<sup>st</sup> Battalion** were sent to **Poona, India, in 1943**. This time it was to fight against the Japanese in the Far Eastern War zone.

The **2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion** were stationed in Gibraltar until 1943, when they were split, and some sent to **N Africa**, others to Egypt and thence to **Italy**, Greece and lastly Austrian/Yugoslav border areas.

The newly raised 6<sup>th</sup> 7<sup>th</sup> 8<sup>th</sup> were deployed for Home Defence, while the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> - Specials and Territorials - were held for reserve duties.

**The Somerset Royal Observer Corps** did vital identification work as planes flew overhead, and so could alert cities before the raids reached them locally in Bristol, Bridgewater and also further afield in Swansea, Cardiff and even Liverpool and Glasgow.

The **Home Guard** was formed soon after the onset of the war. North and South sectors of the Home Guard were formed in 1940. These later divided into 13 smaller units.

In 1943 the 12<sup>th</sup> Somerton battalion was formed.

**Headquarters** were at **Coombe Hill House**, the home of the Commanding Officer - **Lieutenant Colonel Sir Cecil E Walker**. At stand down the strength was 1,676 officers and men, with a further 96 women auxiliaries.

In the **Second World War 1939-1945**, we can see that one of the fatalities amongst Keinton Boys was in **North Africa** – at *Alamein* and the other in southern **Italy**, at *Bari*.

*The Somerset Light Infantry have even older origins.*

A **Somerset Militia** was formed in **1559**, of about 1000 men, expanded to 4,000 in **1588** during the fears of an Armada invasion. It was the Militia who were called out in the Civil War.

After the continental wars of the C17th a **Yeomanry Corps** was formed, mostly of local gentry, mounted on their own horses. From **1757** each county had to raise one or more militia regiments (whether from volunteers or conscripts selected by ballot), under the command of the Lord Lieutenant of the County.

This was followed by **Somerset Volunteers** in **1794**, when the perceived threat of French invasion was felt.

After **Army reorganization in 1881** the militia were called **Special Reserves** (3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion) and after the shocks of the Boer Wars further reorganization occurred which resulted, in **1907**, in the Volunteers becoming the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Battalions, or **Territorial Forces**.

In 1959 the **Somersets** and **Cornwalls** were briefly merged and finally ...

in 1968, they lost their regional identity and became known as the **Light Infantry**.

References:

*Somerset at War 1939-1945* Mac Hawkins, 1988

*Somerset v Hitler* Donald Brown, 1999

*Somerset in the Second World War* Felicity Hebditch, 2005

In total

93 men served in the first world war 1914-1918

Amongst whom there were

17 with the Somerset Light Infantry

3 with Royal Navy

3 Royal Air Force

9 Royal engineers

And of whom 14 were killed.

And,

61 men served during the second world war 1939-1945

Amongst whom there were

3 in the Royal Navy

2 stokers

3 in the Royal Air Force

And of whom 2 were killed

Several families suffered more than one member being killed.

*In Memoriam, Roll of Honour in Keinton Mandeville*

<b>1914-1919</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Death</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Regiment</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Cemetary</b>
Lieut Francis Colin <b>Staley</b>		18.03.16	27	<b>Somerset Light Inf</b>	Panel 12	Basra, Iraq
2nd Lieut Reginald W <b>Cook</b>		01.09.18	26	Devonshires	II.B.26	Vaulx Hill, Fr.
Lce Corpl William <b>Brown</b>	25948	14.08.18	32	<b>Somerset Light Inf</b>	VII.C.5	Dunhallow ADS, Fr
Sapper Victor <b>Cannon</b>	23955	10.04.16	29	Royal Engineers	I.B.11	Humercamps Communal Ext
Pte Thomas Cecil <b>Cabble</b>	26640	31.07.17	26	<b>Somerset Light Inf</b>	Panel 21	Ypres, Menion Gate
Pte Wilfred A <b>Culling</b>	16/904	27.07.16	27	W York Prince o Wales own	III.D.15	St Vaast Pos Richebourg, Fr
Pte Henry <b>Dyke</b>	45913	06.08.17		Machine Gun Corps	Panel 56	Ypres
Pte Reg J <b>Frampton</b> ?	10941	09.04.17	19	Queens Royal W Surrey	F 4	St Catherine Br Comwth
Reg W Frampton	56620	24.04.18	19	Lanc Fusiliers	VIII.E.6	LapugnoyMil.Fr
Pte Archibald A <b>Frampton</b>	301206	06.10.18		Staff Yeomany	A 2	Damascus

Pte Sidney Maurice <b>Paul</b> (Jack)	35532	28.04.18	19	Wilts	Panel 119	Tyne Cot
Pte Cecil Maurice <b>Ridewood</b>	26488	10.04.17	19	<b>Somerset Light Inf</b>	Bay 4	Arras
Pte Frank <b>Tincknell</b>	89420	24.11.17	32	Machine Gun Corps	Plot XXVIIIBB	Lijssenthoek
Pte Fred <b>Willcox</b>	13546	24.04.17	23	Devonshires		Doiran
Pte Joseph C <b>Willcox</b>	3/7128	25.12.17		East York Reg	VIII. E.9	Rocquiny
<b>1939-1945</b>						
Serg Raymond <b>Webb</b>	1313162	07.11.42	21	Royal Air Force Vol Reserves	Col 262	Alamein, N Africa
Gunner Norman Henry <b>Squire</b>	5728289	11.06.45	27	Royal Artillery	XVI.B 7	Bari, S Italy 'heel' of the boot

## **W for World War and ‘our lads’ from Keinton**

### **1914 Recruiting Frenzy.**

*(extracts from Somerset Light  
Infantry: Everard Wyrell)*

When the Great War started in August 1914, young men rushed to sign up. There was a great surge of patriotic feeling and a festive spirit. The word was “*It will be all over by Christmas*”. That was the belief. Joining the Forces became so popular that the organisers had problems.

### **The Somerset Guardian reported on 4<sup>th</sup> Sept 1914**

*In just 5 days many new recruits have enlisted. The service Battalion of the Somerset Light Infantry (the 6<sup>th</sup>) has now reached 1,000 men. The 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion are fit and well on Salisbury Plain, but they are short of potatoes and green vegetables. If anyone has any garden produce to spare here is a good use to which it can be put. Arrangements have been made to take it to the Command, so if any friends of the men could leave vegetables at the Rectory up to Saturday evening, they will be sent to the camp.*

But for many the ‘honeymoon’ was short-lived.

### **A Schoolboy recalls when his older brother received marching orders.**

*I remember the day he left home. A telegram came at 2 in the morning. I think the whole village must have walked with him to the station, to see him off. They went to India. The band was playing “God be with you till we meet again”. Only I never did see him again. Shot dead. In Mesopotamia. He was only 19. He was a good cricketer. Opening bat. He could have played for Somerset when he got back. But he didn’t come back.*

### **Private Reginald Frampton died in Flanders aged only 19.**

**The 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion** (1/4<sup>th</sup> and 2/4<sup>th</sup>) was sent to **India**.

From there the soldiers fought up to Amritsa in N India, into Afghanistan and down to Mesopotamia. Some went on to Damascus and Jerusalem, fighting the Turks who were allies of Germany.

Brother **Archibald Frampton**, from Keinton was sent to India. He was buried in Damascus, 6<sup>th</sup> Oct 1918, (at the time, with **Staff Yeomany**).

Imagine the shock for Keinton lads who found themselves in India! At first, it seemed like paradise: they must have hoped they were going to be the lucky ones.

**In a letter home, Nov 1914, one young soldier wrote,**

*We arrived in Bombay and were marched off the ship into a train. There were 14 of us to a carriage with room for 46. There was space for kitbags and room to lie full length on seats. The journey was intensely interesting. At all the stations of any size there was an Englishman in charge. Soon we were looking down on ricefields with a little river running between them. The sunset was reflected in the water. At each station there was bread, meat, jam and tea provided by the Indian government. We passed several troop trains, all itching for a scuffle with the enemy.*

**After several months of a difficult campaign there was sudden lull in the fighting. Another letter reveals more.**

**On the 9<sup>th</sup> March 1916 an officer noted,**

*After our attempt to relieve Kut, the Turks sent out a truce flag. I was told to go out and meet this chap. We spoke in French. Nice chap. Gave me some cigarettes. Told me his uncle had a villa on the Bosphorus and invited me to stay after the war. They were good soldiers and not unpleasant. But the Brigadier gave me the message to stuff it. It dragged on. Our rations ran out. We were hungry and men were getting dysentery, beri-beri. Some were sent back to Basra. On 29<sup>th</sup> April our white flag went up. We were then taken prisoner for the next two and a half years.*

*Of the 15,000 men that started out  
1,800 were killed or died of diseases  
1,900 wounded*

*Of the 45 with me, only 4 came home.*

**Lientenant Francis Colin Staley, from Keinton, reached Basra, where he died 18<sup>th</sup> March 1916 aged 27.  
(Unknown grave)**

To keep up their spirits soldiers sang and frequently made up their own songs – often written with good humour:

Yes! We've had our rum and lime-juice  
And we gits our bully beef  
And the ferro-concrete biscuits  
What's busted up our teeth.

We gits no eggs for breakfast  
They send us over 'shells'  
And we dives into our dug out  
And gits laughed at by our pals.

Just a tiny bit o' bacon  
Well, fer sport we call it 'am  
Four fighting British soldiers  
And a one-pound tin of jam.

Sometimes we git some rooty  
Well you civvies call it bread  
It aint as light as fevers  
And it aint exactly lead.

But we gits it down us some'ow  
And we nivver send it back  
Though it gets smovvered up with whiskers  
What gets rubbed off the sack.

The dust blows in our dixies  
There's dirt upon our mit  
So you can really wonder  
That's a soldier's full o grit.

But I aint goin' to grumble  
Cos I'm feeling well and fit  
And I've got one consolation  
That I'm here to do me bit.

**The Somerset 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion were sent to the front in Europe, to Flanders. A private wrote home on the 9<sup>th</sup> Nov 1914,**

*I am still alive and kicking. Am writing this in a trench. We've been in them for five days and nights. They call this war. I call it murder. Shells are bursting around us day and night. We don't half bob our heads when these 'Jack Johnsons' come over. They make great holes in the ground. We buried 17 Germans in one yesterday. I live in hope of getting through. If I die, in despair - what will be, will be.*

**On the 29<sup>th</sup> Nov 1914, away from the front, one wrote,**

*At 7.30 we were marched into a linen factory which has been rigged up as a wash house. They took our uniforms, tied them together with an identity disc and took them to the fumigator. Then we were marched into the bleaching room where there were 15 huge vats of hot water. We took off our clothes which were boiled in disinfectant – and were given soap and towels, 10 men to a vat! Afterwards we got fresh underclothing, new uniforms – all clean and ironed!*

**As it dragged on, an officer wrote, in May 1915,**

*We are having a rough time of it out here and the dirty German bombs are dropping in fine style. We hope to pay them back soon. They are using bombs with poison in them. It's awful and makes your eyes burn. I was out on patrol and we found this young lad, not long dead, so we gave him a burial and put a wooden cross at his head. It made my heart sad. He was a young fellow. Our sergeant will inform his parents. His father was a minister.*

**Private Sidney Maurice Paul (Jack) died 10 April 1918 at Tyne Cot (Grave unknown)**

**Capt Reginald W. Cook** was killed 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 1918, buried in Flanders at **Vauxhall Hill** - serving with the Devonshires.

**Home Front: Food was in short supply. Everyone made sacrifices. Food donations from supporters back home reached the Front.**

*Dear Friend,*

*Excuse me writing but when I was having my tea I noticed your address on my egg. I am very thankful for your kindness to think about the Tommies. Excuse the scribble. I'm writing with my left hand as I got a wound in my right. I'm getting on nicely and knocking about a bit. Wishing you the best of luck.*

**At home people were feeling the pinch, or should be...**

**A Rector, June 1915, admonished parishioners saying,**

*I urge you to be sparing in your use of new potatoes. They are a wasteful luxury. There is of course no objection to the digging of early sorts on reaching full maturity.*

**Everyone was asked to grow more and work more.**

**The Somerset Guardian reminded readers,**

*The inception of new Summer Time Act came into force last Sunday morning. Daylight lasted till 10 o'clock and people noticed the effect and it was much appreciated.*

**Farmers were ploughing more and using Land Girls to supplement the reduced man power. In May 1916, an ex-soldier tells**

*Soon after I got 'ome from Alexandria the buggers tried to call me up again. There were lots o tribunals and medicals. I was down fer 'substitution'. That do mean tuh say that if they took me they'd replace me on me own farm, wi' a bloke not fit fer the Front! I had 155 acres tuh do. Had Land Girls come once tuh 'elp wi' the threshing – bloody useless, too. One came wi' a pair o army boots and they didn't even fit. Before lunch her feet were like bits o' raw beef.*

*I sent t' misses tuh get her fitted proper-like. They oughta'  
have more sense than send a poor girl out like it.  
Had tuh get rid o me sheep. Nowhere tuh put 'em. Had to  
plough up all the ground fer more corn.*

**Private Cecil Maurice Ridewood from a Keinton farming family, was killed 10<sup>th</sup> March 1917, buried at Arras on the Flanders Front.**

**Another song, from Machine Gunner Corps (MGC) of the 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion, which suffered terrible casualties in the Big Push in latter stages. Written with a wry sense of humour.**

**Somewhere in France, to Peasedown St John, N Somerset.**

Oft in my dug-out I think of our poor chaps left at home  
The miseries that surround them no matter where they roam  
How awful it must be to sleep on a feather bed  
And find for breakfast daily there is butter on their bread.

Out here things are different and life is great and free  
But we don't have butter n bread, sugar or milk in our tea  
The only thing that worries us are lyddle bombs and shells  
But bully beef and biscuits make us feel fit and well.

To all my pals at Peasedown I send my sympathy  
And advise them for their safety to come out here with me.  
There are young men in Somerset who can do their bit I'm sure  
So let 'em join the MGC who are invaluable in this war.

**Sapper Victor Cannon of Royal Engineers, died 10<sup>th</sup> April, 1916 Aged 29, buried in Humercamps Communal Ext.**

**Private Henry Dyke was in the Machine Gun Corps. Died at Ypres, 6<sup>th</sup> August 1917 (grave unknown).**

**6<sup>th</sup> Battalion** were sent to Flanders and received heavy casualties. In August 1916 a soldier recorded,

*All's we were ever doing on the Somme were going over the top somewhere or other. Then we had the big one – and eventually took Deville Wood. We got a good hiding but we took it. We lost 52 dead and 227 missing in less than a day and a half.*

**Another recorded from Flers-Courcelette,**

*The casualties of the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion were truly terrible. Every officer who went over became a casualty – 3 killed, then 12 wounded and 2 missing, other ranks lost 41 killed, 203 wounded, 143 missing. It was a death trap. German gunners firing north and east. Trapped.*

**Private Wilfred A Culling** was caught up in these conditions. Died 27<sup>th</sup> July 1916, buried at St Vaast Post, Richelbourg.

**As war dragged on the battlegrounds got in even worse condition. In January 1917 a soldier described it,**

*The ground were covered wi' holes wi' no more 'n a foot between. Without them duckboards we wouldna 'ave bin able to walk at all. You got sucked down into 'em 'oles all filled wi' slimy, reddy mud an' bloody body bits an' stuff. The more you did struggle the more you did sink down in. Horses did drown in 'em. We didn't know one week from the next, but I do know we were out one night and t'were pelting wi' rain. We came across this village and the houses all blown down. All around were lily o' the valley. We picked some an' were going to keep 'em. Then Jerry slung up this shrapnel a bit too close. Got hit in the spine an' that put me out.*

The **6<sup>th</sup> Somersets** had 6 officers killed, 9 wounded, 2 missing, and ranks 44 killed, 213 wounded and 74 missing.

**Regimental records show the 7<sup>th</sup> Somersets moved up in June 1917 to support the Front Line.**

*It was gonna be big at Ypres. Sniper bullets were coming from an enemy post, so a raid on it at night was ordered. The Party rushed it, killing 18 Germans and capturing one. Other men got caught in the barrage.*

**Private Thomas Cecil Cabble died at Ypres, 31<sup>st</sup> July 1917.**

**In mid-1917 the 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion** were still in the thick of it.

A private reports,

*I was a runner and CO told me to go and fetch up all the Somersets. Well, I went down and found 28 and took 'em 5 miles back to the Front Line – marched 'em all the way - not one weredn't hurted. An' I told 'em where they were to stay. Then one said, I've bin and sid a German up behind thik tree. An' it weren't 30 yards from where we were to. "Now watch theeself." I hadn't crawled a dozen yards when crack. An' that were he. Killed.*

**Private Fred Willcox died 24<sup>th</sup> April 1917, buried at Doiran. At the time serving with the Devonshires.**

**In September 1917, the 7<sup>th</sup> Somersets were at Passchendale.**

*There was nothing but shell holes, barbed wire and dead horses. A continuous rumble of guns. Impossible to sleep. No sooner we had arrived than the Germans opened up and hit an ammunition dump close by. Several men were hit. We moved on and got down into the shell holes – filled with water and stinking of death. And the rats... One night each took a 60lb gas shell along slimy broken duck boards. The men were so tired. At their age they were worn out.*

**On Nov 18<sup>th</sup> at Cambrai, we attended the Church Army Service. Attack was for the next day.**

*Everything depended on secrecy and surprise. A party was sent out to cut the wire in front of us. We could hear tanks moving into position. Behind us rows of guns, wheel to wheel. At 4 we got into positions. Each platoon ran through the wire gaps and reformed. Suddenly there was an appalling noise as guns open up. A crimson wall of flame spurted from all directions. An astounding sight. Later we took about 30 prisoners – handed them to the Fusiliers. We saw a lone Indian cavalryman, some tanks embedded in mud. More cavalry on their way back. ... By the 30<sup>th</sup> the situation was nasty, our Lewis guns were killing in huge numbers but their planes were gunning us from about 60 feet. A worthless waste of life.*

**And away from the Front,**

*We did spend our time jumpin' over trenches, an' stickin' bayonets thro' sandbags. Trainin' yer know. We'd do drillin' and all the local people watchin'. An' we'd do saluting practice. They reckoned we were getting' slack! One thing after another! We'd have tuh polish our buttons, an' then when we went back we 'ad tuh 'ave a bit o candle to darken 'em agen. Daft, weren't it?*

*I used to get so lousy as a cuckoo. We had lice everywhere. Me name tags, on a piece o string round me neck were covered. We use tuh get a candle an' cut it up in pieces and run it up and down the seams on our shirts. You should here the popping of all them lice eggs! Full if it our shirts were. Sometimes we got new clothin', but it weren't alus clean. It were caked in mud and blood sometimes.*

**Some officers were very particular about hygiene:  
some remarks from 7<sup>th</sup> Battalion:**

*We had a system that every day a pair of socks was brought up for each man and the worn ones taken for washing. We took great care over this. Shell holes were filled with water and men wore thigh length gumboots. Every platoon officer saw to it that every man in his charge massaged their feet for 15 minutes a day and their feet were inspected. I had to submit a certificate every day that it had been done. Trench foot was a nightmare, but seldom in our Battalion.*

**Whatever was done in the name of health and discipline men suffered terribly...**

*I'll tell thee an 'orrible story. Two brothers always stuck together. One day Jerry put this shell up and one o 'em were blown to smithereens. 'Tother one was all shook up, ran off blind like. Don't blame 'im. Six weeks later they found 'im. Court Martial. They had to get the Cornwalls to do it. They wiped 'im out. Poor sod.*

*Another time we found a German dressed up in British clothes. Just shooting anyhow. We disarmed him. He looked awful. Gone insane with the incessant shelling.*

**Finally**, four others died on the **Flanders Front**, in the last phases of the war:

**Private *Frank Tincknell*, (gunner) died, 24.11.17 buried in Lijssenthoek, nr Poperinge**

**Private *Joseph C Willcox* died 25<sup>th</sup> December 1917, at RocquinyEffects of the Front.**

**Lance Corporal *William Brown*, died 14<sup>th</sup> August 1918, buried at Dunhallows ADS.**

## World War II: Keinton Home Guard and domestic vigilance

Several members of the village who had to stay behind did 'their bit' in the Home Guard.

*Janet Pearce (nee Cabble) recalls how her father, Harry Cabble, was the landlord of the Quarry Inn at the time. As a member of the Home Guard himself, he gladly allowed meetings to be held in the upstairs rooms. The Home Guard was led by Captain Harding who lived in Queen's Street, where they sometimes met for training.*

Other members were:

*Lance Corporal C. Coates and Lance Corporal E. Cox, Pte R. Langford, Pte A. Lambert, Pte H. Parker, Pte R. Bailey, Sgt H. Paul, Lieutenant H. Cabble, and Corporal F. Willmott.*



Initially called the **Local Defence Volunteers** (or, *Look, Duck and Vanish!*) the **Home Guard** (or, *Hilltop Gawkers!*) was formed in 1940, soon after the onset of the war. These were later divided into 13 smaller units.

**The Keinton Home Guard** patrolled at Coombe Hill. Their equipment was typically minimal, with each member allocated a light gun. The nearest big gun defences were at the *Houndstone Camp* near the Yeovilton Base.

Roy Cabble remembers: *A hut big enough for two, with a galvanised tin roof, was made near the Social Club. Here, Home Guards would stand watch, looking out for lone parachutists. Often their children woke them up next morning for breakfast! Church bells were silenced, so they could be used to ring out a warning when needed. On night exercises some men were even told to blacken their bald patches, to camouflage themselves better!*

Later in the war, there was an American Base at Street, which became strictly off limits for any self-respecting young girls of the neighbourhood!

**Rationing:** As everywhere in England, **petrol** was strictly rationed and only the lucky ones got vouchers to get to work which was deemed necessary for the war effort. Gradually more and more items were rationed until almost everything was restricted. Ration books were issued and without them shopping wasn't allowed: weekly coupons permitted just 2 oz butter, 2 oz cheese, and 4 oz sugar per per, per wk. Eggs were kept in Isings 'waterglass jelly' in a bucket and as much food as possible saved for Christmas. Sweets were also rationed: village children remember one kind elderly gentleman who always offered a few sweets from his ration tin to passing children, on a Sunday.

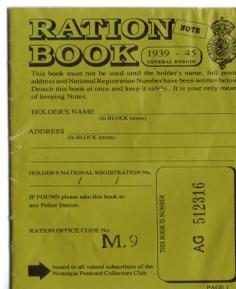
It must have made managing the household budget very tricky. Inevitably a lot of swapping went on – and no doubt items ‘appeared’ in irregular ways as people struggled to make ends meet. But at least in the villages people could grow some of their own food and the tradition of keeping a pig and some chickens thrived.

MEAT 1	MEAT 1	BACON & HAM 7	BUTTER & MARGARINE 13	BUTTER & MARGARINE 7	BUTTER & MARGARINE 1	COOKING FATS INCLUDING LARD AND DRIPPING 23	COOKING FATS INCLUDING LARD AND DRIPPING 19	COOKING FATS INCLUDING LARD AND DRIPPING 13	SUGAR 7	SUGAR 1
MEAT 1	MEAT 1	BACON & HAM 8	BUTTER & MARGARINE 14	BUTTER & MARGARINE 8	BUTTER & MARGARINE 2	COOKING FATS INCLUDING LARD AND DRIPPING 24	COOKING FATS INCLUDING LARD AND DRIPPING 20	COOKING FATS INCLUDING LARD AND DRIPPING 14	SUGAR 8	SUGAR 2
		BACON & HAM 9	BUTTER & MARGARINE 15	BUTTER & MARGARINE 9	BUTTER & MARGARINE 3	PAGE 5. Consumer's Name (BLOCK LETTERS)		COOKING FATS INCLUDING LARD AND DRIPPING 15	SUGAR 9	SUGAR 3
		BACON & HAM 10	BUTTER & MARGARINE 16	BUTTER & MARGARINE 10	BUTTER & MARGARINE 4	Address (BLOCK LETTERS)		COOKING FATS INCLUDING LARD AND DRIPPING 16	SUGAR 10	SUGAR 4
MEAT 2	MEAT 2	BACON & HAM 11	BUTTER & MARGARINE 17	BUTTER & MARGARINE 11	BUTTER & MARGARINE 5	COOKING FATS INCLUDING LARD AND DRIPPING 26	COOKING FATS INCLUDING LARD AND DRIPPING 21	COOKING FATS INCLUDING LARD AND DRIPPING 17	SUGAR 11	SUGAR 5
MEAT 2	MEAT 2	BACON & HAM 12	BUTTER & MARGARINE 18	BUTTER & MARGARINE 12	BUTTER & MARGARINE 6	COOKING FATS INCLUDING LARD AND DRIPPING 25	COOKING FATS INCLUDING LARD AND DRIPPING 22	COOKING FATS INCLUDING LARD AND DRIPPING 18	SUGAR 12	SUGAR 6
MEAT, R.B. 1		COUNTERFOIL		GENERAL R.B. 1		PAGE 3.—COOKING FATS COUNTERFOIL			GENERAL R.B. 1	
5067		13		KJ	136067				KJ	136067
						Consumer's Name (BLOCK LETTERS)	Date			
						Address (BLOCK LETTERS)				
						Name & Address of Retailer				

(pages from a ration books showing coupons)

**Allotments** were also encouraged – in fact it became a patriotic duty - and these existed along Chistle’s Lane and on the south side of Castle Street. Both these areas are now covered by housing. Families picked hedgerow berries to supplement what they grew. There was a lot of bottling and jam-making – one mum made 100lbs regularly!

**War-time rationing** lasted into the 1950s: Towards the end, people mostly survived because of US conveys zig-zagging across the Atlantic, together with the massive efforts to increase home production.



More and more land was ploughed up for corn. Farmers tried to grow extra food. But most of the men had been called up so they used **Land Girls and prisoners**.

At least one Land Girl worked at the *Walker's* Coombe Hill House. Some Latvian refugees, living near the present Village Hall, also worked - and bought corn from Manor Farm for their chickens.

### **Evacuees came from London –**

*Megan Cabble and Kath Cross report: Young children and also some elderly people came. They were sorted out in the Temperance Hall and allocated to homes around the village. Local families were given 7s 6d (40p) to feed and clothe each child - which was nowhere near sufficient. Some evacuees were very unsettled and, though there was a special home for the disturbed children, some soon went back home. It was a huge change for them to leave their families in the city and come to fields, cows and strangers. The children were put into local schools.*

*Megan Cabble recalls: Children coming to Keinton school from Babcary, Butleigh and Kingweston were given bicycles, so they could get home quickly before dark.*

*John Allen adds: Some pre-war bikes even tried using cane for some of the parts !!?*

[In total 62,000 evacuees and 56,000 war workers came into Somerset]

Kath Cross recalls: **Dark Secrets in *Box Cottage*,  
High Street, Keinton Mandeville**

*In the late 1930s, a young couple took the house now known as Box Cottage. They seemed to like country walking and were often seen around in many local areas. Perhaps they also liked birds, for they regularly had binoculars and cameras.*

*Somehow, someone became suspicious. And the couple were reported.*

*By the time the police arrived the couple had gone... leaving a quantity of photographic apparatus in the barn, maps and details of the local area including the base at Yeovilton...*

### **Air Raids and Plane Crashes Nearby**

One raid was on *Castle Cary railway line*, Sept 1942, when 3 were killed and 12 injured. The next target was the tall chimneys of the Somerton milk factory which were targeted – with 9 killed, 37 injured.

Yeovil (*Westland Aircraft Works*) and Yeovilton (*Houndstone Camp+Airbase*) were frequent targets from the end 1940 to '41 and '42 (known as the *Baedeker Attacks*) with much loss of life and buildings, despite decoys at King Sedgemoor and near Glastonbury.

One plane, probably returning from a raid on Bristol (often Filton Airbase/Docks) or Bridgewater (Docks), came down at *Sparkford*, another at *Catsham* – where it dropped a shell and made a huge hole – about 25' big. It was very quickly filled in, so Jerry couldn't boast about the damage done...

Even closer to home,

Mary Matthews remembers: *Once a plane came down on King's Hill, not far from the school - just over the field from the where the Village Hall now stands. It was a great curiosity to the pupils at the Village School. Some of us, especially the boys, skipped school to go and investigate. I went too, with my brothers, as I was a bit of a tom-boy then. We didn't get much of a punishment. The Head understood and was quite lenient! We had to write out 100 lines*

*I must not play truant,*

*I must not play truant,*

*I must not play tru....*



*Enlisted forces from Keinton pose outside Quarry Inn*

**Your Home is at Stake!**

**600 Volunteers wanted**

The work is vital. Your very existence may depend on it

Protect your home, your family, your friends  
and your town.

Enrol to aid your country in times of stress.

**What do I do...**

if I hear news  
that Germans  
are trying to land  
or have landed?

**I remember** that this is the moment  
to act like a soldier. I do *not* get panicky.  
I *stay put*. I say to myself:

Our chaps will deal with them.

I do *not* say: I must get out of here.

**I remember** that fighting men must have  
clear roads. I do not go on foot, in a car,  
by bicycle. Whether at home or at work  
I just *stay put*.

**Cut this out - and keep it!**

Issued by The Ministry of Information

*This space presented to the Nation by the  
Brewers' Society*

## **THE TASK OF THE HOME GUARD.**

It may be expected that the enemy's intention will be to make progress by advancing through the village or probably to enter and rest and feed his troops.

**It is the Duty of the Home Guard to deny him such progress, and the first duty of this Committee is to assist the Military in every way and also enlist the help of the public.**

**The possible enemy action in the locality is Airborne troops and dive-bombing.**

**The Home Guard plan is a defence scheme, the sites have been inspected and the whole scheme approved by the Military**

- 1. IF THE GERMANS COME... YOU MUST REMAIN WHERE YOU ARE. THE ORDER IS TO 'STAY PUT'.**
- 2. DO NOT BELIEVE RUMOURS.**
- 3. KEEP WATCH. GO QUICKLY TO THE NEAREST AUTHORITY AND GIVE THE FACTS.**
- 4. DO NOT GIVE ANY GERMAN ANYTHING. DO NOT TELL HIM ANYTHING.**
- 5. BE READY TO HELP THE MILITARY IN ANY WAY. BUT DO NOT BLOCK ROADS UNTIL ORDERED TO DO SO.**
- 6. IN FACTORIES AND SHOPS, ORGANISE SOME SYSTEM NOW BY WHICH A SUDDEN ATTACK CAN BE RESISTED.**
- 7. THINK BEFORE YOU ACT. BUT THINK ALWAYS OF YOUR COUNTRY BEFORE YOU THINK OF YOURSELF.**

## **Keinton Home Guard, World War II.**

Several members of the Village were in the Home Guard. They were led by Captain Harding who lived in Queen's Street, where they sometimes met for training. At other times they met in the upstairs room of the Quarry Inn. At this period, Harry Cabble was the landlord of the Quarry and, as a member of the Home Guard himself, gladly allowed the meetings there.

The *Keinton Home Guard* patrolled at Coombe Hill. The nearest big gun defences were at the *Houndstone Camp* near the *Yeovilton Base*.

Later in the war, there was an American Base at Street, which became strictly off limits for any self-respecting young girls of the neighbourhood!

**Throughout Somerset, during the second World War,**

**60,000 bombs fell**

**668 people were killed**

**665 severely injured**

**943 minor injuries**

**35,000 damaged or destroyed**

Figures from  
*Somerset at War 1939-1945*

F. Hebditch, 2005 Somerset Books