The Local Historian

JOURNAL OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR LOCAL HISTORY

February 2025 www.balh.org.uk Volume 55 No 1

Women in the Home Guard: a Lincolnshire study

ERIK GRIGG

The image of the Home Guard, the part-time military force established in the Second World War to defend the nation in case of a Nazi invasion, was popularised by 'Dad's Army', but women in the sitcom were largely relegated to supporting parts. The role of women in the Home Guard has often been underplayed—even many veterans, when interviewed, were adamant that there were no female members of the force. Attempts to rectify this error can inadvertently undervalue their role, by assuming that the women who were allowed in merely made the tea and acted as secretaries. Despite only officially being allowed to join in 1943 (and then in a strictly non-combat role), women had been serving since the force was created in 1940. The Women's Voluntary Service also acted as the catering corps for the Home Guard, feeding the men when they went on manoeuvres. There was also the Women's Home Defence, an unofficial female version of the Home Guard championed by two MPs, with up to 30,000 women members nationwide trained to use weapons to defend their homes.

As part of my wider research into the Lincolnshire Home Guard, this paper looks specifically at the role of women in that organisation and how this fits into the national historiography. It notes how the patriarchal view that the only suitable roles for women were that of a secretary, housewife and cook were far from universal and women played a crucial role in the Home Guard in Intelligence and Signals units.

Historiography

Before discussing women in the Home Guard, it is important to look at the historiography of the subject—how have other historians approached the question? The first major modern academic study of the Home Guard was by Simon MacKenzie, a military historian based at the University of Toronto. According to him the force employed obsolete weaponry and would have been massacred if it had faced a German invasion. It was merely an exercise in keeping up wartime morale.[1] More recent scholars, such as Malcolm Atkin, Dale Clarke and Stephen Cullen, have reevaluated the force, pointing out how after the chaos of the first few months of its existence, it became a highly trained and well-equipped fighting force that would have severely slowed any invasion, and later functioned as an efficient home army that protected airfields and manned coastal artillery batteries which freed up over a million troops to fight in North Africa.[2]

In terms of women in the force, Penny Summerfield and Corinna Peniston-Bird have published some studies that drew on a body of carefully-gathered oral sources, looking at gendered attitudes both in the force and in recent academic work, which have led other researchers (me included) to rethink attitudes towards women in the Home Guard.[3] Their work has identified many previously overlooked instances of women in the force. One invaluable (albeit amateurishly printed book) on the badges and uniforms of the Home Guard, written by Jon Mills and Terry Carney, is not academic in tone (though it is thoroughly researched) or an easy read (unless you are fascinated with the insignia of the Home Guard), but it is so comprehensive that it devotes an entire chapter to what women in the force wore.[4] In the introduction to another book

about the force containing reminiscences of former members, the journalists Frank and Joan Shaw suggest that the Home Guard would have gone down fighting if they faced the Germans, but they also portray the force as amateurs whose antics are well known to us through the sitcom.[5] Of the roughly 80 people included in the Shaws' book, only one was a woman: Mrs Lois V. Baker of the Air Ministry's Home Guard. To be fair, that is roughly in proportion to women in the force.[6]

No women?

To many, therefore, the Home Guard seemed exclusively a male preserve—'Dad's Army' did little to challenge this belief, and although this was not the case, women in the Home Guard often seem invisible.[7] When the force was stood down in 1944 the local paper in Boston, Lincolnshire, gave a detailed list of the local officers down to the second lieutenants as well as the regular officers seconded to them, but there is no mention of women, even in the Signals or Intelligence Sections or as clerks or secretaries.[8] The misapprehension that there were no women is found in interviews with former members of the force. When interviewed in 1999 (by which date memories had faded somewhat) Lesley Revill from the Gainsborough Home Guard said: "Oh no. Oh no. No women anywhere in any shape or form. Not even the ATS [Auxiliary Territorial Service] or anything like that", while Cyril Hall, from the same unit and interviewed separately around the same date said: "Well I didn't know of any, I never saw any". When Robert Simons of the North Thoresby Home Guard was interviewed by the author in 2022 he could not recall ever seeing or hearing of a female member of the Home Guard, even in the role of a secretary.

During the War, official views of women strictly followed the line that they should leave the fighting to men (except perhaps in the direst personal emergency). In August 1940, the Ministry of Information issued a seven-minute film called 'Miss Grant goes to the door', in which two sisters living alone face the reality of a German invasion.[9] One of them relieves a dead German paratrooper of his pistol and takes prisoner a Nazi spy who knocked on their door, any sense of gender equality is soon shattered: she is easily disarmed and the Local Defence Volunteers arrive to rescue the day (despite the fact that the LDV had been renamed the Home Guard in July of that year). The message is clear: a woman's place was at home and they should call on men if they face danger. A commercial film produced by Ealing Studios and released in December 1942, called 'Went the day well?', gives a much grittier and more balanced account of what a hypothetical German invasion would look like in a rural village.[10] The local postmistress and a couple of Land Girls kill half a dozen of the German invaders (one is dispatched rather brutally with an axe) while the men in the local Home Guard are surprised and ambushed. Although the villagers are eventually rescued by regular troops stationed nearby, this film clearly implies that in the hour of need, women were quite as capable as men of defending their home.

This film, while highly regarded, is not of course the most influential media portrayal of the Home Guard. In a certain sitcom with the gender specific title 'Dad's Army',[11] the main cast of the Walmington Platoon is exclusively male and for the majority of the 80 episodes women are relegated to bit parts, as when Pike's mum butts in to remind him to keep warm on sentry duty. There are only two episodes where women join the group. In series 1 episode 6 ('Shooting Pains') Barbara Windsor plays a crack shot in a variety show at the local hippodrome. Later, to win a shooting competition, she is disguised as a man and joins the platoon. In series four episode 89 ('Mum's Army') women are allowed to join the platoon, but the experiment is soon ended

as they prove to be a 'distraction' to the men. It is therefore unsurprising that many mistakenly believe that a woman would only appear in the Home Guard in a fictional farcical comedy.

WHD

When formed, the Home Guard was desperate for recruits and it is perhaps surprising that the talents of half of the population was automatically excluded (although some units disregarded these rules), even though the regular forces made use of female auxiliaries. The authorities considered that letting women join would make them combatants (a traditionally male role); resistance to this probably stemmed from a mixture of paternalistic attitudes and possibly a fear that giving women weapons would put them more at risk from German reprisal.[12] Some women chose to ignore these constraints and in London a short-lived women's militia called the Amazon Defence Corps was founded by Miss Venetia Foster.[13] In other parts of the country there were branches of another unofficial organisation called the Women's Home Defence Corps, that trained women to prepare for a combat role.[14] The WHD was founded by Majorie Foster, a skilled shot who won the King's Prize at Bisley (the Sovereign's Prize is considered the most prestigious competition in British shooting), Miss Watson-Williams (who was active before the war in setting up a 'Lady Golfers' group in the Cotswolds) and Mavis Tate, the Conservative MP for Frome in Somerset.[15] The outspoken Labour MP Edith Summerskill became a great advocate for the WHD, campaigning to get the force incorporated into the Home Guard, and she constantly pressed for women to be trained to fight. Summerskill said that the members of the WHD should not make or buy their own uniforms (apart from their enamel badge with crossed rifles on it), as she hoped the government would provide it, but some groups ignored this and obtained surplus military garb—often a khaki skirt with a green shirt and tie.[16] Estimates of the size of the WHD vary, but at its peak it seems to have had 20,000 to 30,000 members organised into 250 units.[17] Although the Home Guard were officially banned from training the WHD (and indeed any women) in the use of weapons, an article in *Picture Post* shows a Canadian regular army sergeant training women of the WHD to use rifles at Victory House in Leicester Square.[18]

My research did not reveal any branch of the WHD in Lincolnshire, although there was one in neighbouring Northamptonshire. That unit held a camp at Overstone Park on the outskirts of Northampton in July 1942, which featured in the official history of the county's Home Guard, suggesting that at least some men approved of this unofficial force—the text states that they were 'well deserving of recognition'.[19] They are shown marching, target shooting using a rifle, practicing First Aid and engaged in unarmed combat, as well as cooking their evening meal. Official recognition never came and although some joined the Home Guard in non-combat roles, the WHD continued training even though an armed militia was illegal—to which the authorities turned a blind eye. The WHD was formally disbanded in December 1944, the same time as the official force.[20] Many of its members joined the Women's Rifle Association, but not until 2017 were women allowed into combat in the British armed forces.[21]

The WVS

However, the Home Guard did have a close connection with the Women's Voluntary Service (founded in 1938 and still operating today as the Royal Voluntary Service, formerly the Women's Royal Voluntary Service), which provided logistical support for the Home Guard, doing tasks such as typing, repairing uniforms and cooking food.[22]

There was a precedent for this force in the First World War, when a group called the Women's Volunteer Reserve was set up by suffragette Evelina Haverfield.[23] Indeed, there had been a Great War precursor of the Home Guard. The Volunteer Training Corps was established in 1914, to help to train troops before they were called up; their armband or brassard had the letters GR which jokers claimed stood for George's Wrecks.[24] It was estimated that 80,000 WVS members nationwide (out of a total membership of a million) were providing logistical support for the Home Guard.[25] As the official history of one Lincolnshire unit, the East Elloe Battalion, acknowledges, without wives, mothers, daughters and 'sweethearts', and the WVS stepping in to take on additional family or work duties normally carried out by men in the Home Guard and providing catering for the men when they were on exercise, the force could not have functioned.[26] There is a record of the 10th Lindsey Battalion checking that they have made the 'final arrangements with the W.V.S. for cooking' for an operation.[27] Atkin is probably correct when he describes as unfair any characterisation of the activities of the WVS as mere 'tea making'; the Army Catering Corps would have been just as annoyed if such a term was applied to them.[28]

1 Photograph of D Company of the 4th Lindsey taken at Binbrook: Mrs Butters is on the far left of the picture and Mrs E.W. Horton on the far right (*image in public domain*)

Secretaries and clerks

Even though not officially allowed to join, some paid positions in the force were held by women, mainly as clerks or secretaries (these two terms are used interchangeably). The records of the Horbling platoon includes a 1944 account book, which shows that Miss Jean E.M. Cooper was a paid clerk for the unit (she was also in the WVS).[29] Three secretaries, all wearing civilian clothes with a women's Home Guard Bakelite badge (see below), are in a group photograph of the 13th Lindsey in Horncastle: they are listed as Clare Dobson, Kathleen Daubney (later Mrs Porter) and Hilda Gissing.[30] An image taken in 1943 of the Tealby and District Home Guard, with about 90 men (and therefore more than one platoon—perhaps part of a Company) has two women standing proudly at either end, neither in uniform. They are presumably secretaries.[31] One picture in the Grimsby Archive does show a mixed group of Home Guard and regular army officers as well as a member of the Civil Defence, and Mrs. M. Ashton who is captioned as secretary (she is not in uniform); she was obviously tasked with

keeping records of this important liaison committee though it is impossible to know if she had been drafted into the Home Guard.[32] A couple of shorthand notebooks among the records of the 7th Lindsey Battalion may be evidence of women employed in notetaking there.[33] If there was at least one female clerk for every Company and one for every headquarters at Battalion, Group/Sector, Zone and Division level there would need to have been around 150 female secretaries/clerks in Lincolnshire.

Pre-official entry

There is some evidence women were being given weapons training in other parts of the country and joining local units here in the Lincolnshire force before the official go-ahead in April 1943.[34] Before the Home Guard was formed, some parts of the country had organised armed patrols to watch for German paratroopers (called parashots) and the Much Marcle patrol in Herefordshire set up by Lady Helena Gleichen as well as the Dartmoor Mounted Patrol had women members from the start.[35] Atkin records women in London and Birmingham joining the LDV in the first week of its formation in May 1940 as drivers and secretaries.[36] The Upper Thames Patrol included women from its inception in 1940, driving its motorboats, and there were women members of the Northamptonshire Home Guard from at least August 1942.[37] Some units in Surrey in 1941 had medical units with female members.[38] Lois Baker's reminiscences of her time in the Air Ministry's Home Guard unit in London suggests that women were treated as equals to the men (which included being given training with weapons) and had a uniform that consisted of a boiler suit, tin hat and a yellow armband embroidered in red with the letters AMAS (Air Ministry Auxiliary Service).[39] In August 1942 it was estimated that there were 600 women in the Home Guard's Southern Command, 150 in Eastern command, and the Northern Command—which included all of northern England and as far south as Northamptonshire and Lincolnshire—had no fewer than 15,000 women.[40] In Lincolnshire there is no evidence of women being trained for combat, but there are few documents from the early years of the force. One local paper said in 1943 that 'some women have been helping with the Lincoln Home Guard with their cooking for a considerable length of time'.[41] The history of the 3rd Holland records women with three years and six months service at standdown in November 1944 so some were recruited, possibly as clerks or secretaries, before they were officially allowed in.[42]

Hostility to women joining

The rather patronising attitudes of some in authority can be summarised by the views expressed by John Langdon-Davies. He was influential in the Home Guard, having written an official training manual and taught at the force's national fieldcraft school. Despite being very left-wing and having served with the International Brigade in Spain against the Fascists (the brigade allowed women to fight) he once criticised the notion of allowing women in combat. He wrote: 'I think the average Home Guard has joined because he wants to protect his hearth and home, and he would feel a bit annoyed if the hearth and home insisted upon coming along with him … I do not want the baker's wife to stand shoulder to shoulder with the baker at the roadblock, shooting down Nazis … I want the baker's wife to be doing something much more useful at home in the baker's shop'.[43] It is doubtful that much baking would be taking place while a village was under attack. A year later he put his name to a petition asking for official recognition for the WHD, suggesting that he had a change of heart.[44]

Nominated women nationally

The campaign for a more active role for women in the Home Guard eventually forced the government (in April 1943, when the threat from invasion had largely passed) to allow some to join as 'nominated women' serving in non-combatant roles.[45] Many members of the WHD then transferred to the Home Guard, but some branches of the WHD continued. Officially, the only uniform for Nominated Women was a standard Bakelite circular badge (about two inches in diameter, with the letters HG surrounded by a wreath: **see illustration on inside back cover**). Made by A. Stanley & Sons of Walsall, these were to be worn on the left side.[46] They were later given a letter stating that they held the equivalent rank to a regular army private.[47] Their official duties are outlined below:

> (a) The employment of women will be restricted to non-combatant duties, and no duties will be undertaken by them which necessitates training in weapons. Training of women in weapons by the Home Guard is, as hitherto, forbidden.
>
> (b) The principal duties on which they may be employed are: (i) clerical and telephonist (ii) cooking and service of food (iii) driving motor vehicles.[48]

Note how in the first clause the non-combatant role of women is restated and it is emphasised that the rule had always been in force. In Home Guard-run anti-aircraft batteries around London some women operated the radiolocation, range-finding and telescope identification devices, but were not allowed to fire the guns.[49] Other served in the Home Guard operated searchlight batteries, as did women in the ATS.[50]

Lincolnshire's Nominated Women

As well as doing clerical duties (which included manning telephones), the nominated women were recruited into signals and intelligence units across Lincolnshire, even if they were not acknowledged in Boston when they were stood down. According to the local paper there were at least thirty women across the three battalions in the city of Lincoln, doing a variety of auxiliary non-combatant tasks including signalling in Morse code, working switchboards, taking down messages over the telephone, map reading, training and the rather euphemistic 'security precautions'.[51] The newspaper reported that Lincolnshire immediately recruited about forty for intelligence work: 'uniform will not be issued, at any rate for the time being, but badges will be available as soon as possible'.[52] At the stand-down parade of the Lincoln Home Guard there was a unit of twenty women under the command of Mrs Rissen-Kent, who had been a signaller in the First World War.[53] Patricia Brown's reminiscences from her time with the Home Guard in Grantham confirm that women were used in intelligence sections in Kesteven.[54] She was in her late teens working as a clerk in an armaments factory (BMARC in Grantham) when one of the factory managers, a major in the local Home Guard, noticed her potential and recruited her. The Home Guard Intelligence Section not only had to identify the German units in any invasion, but were also to deploy the male fighters via signals which were operated by the women.

> "We all had to sign the Official Secrets Act and were issued with maps, a lot of information which would have enabled us, should the situation ever have arisen to identify German Forces insignia, regiments and platoons; enemy aircraft and any other information we needed should we have been called upon to interrogate Prisoners of War. All the equipment and literature that we were issued with had to be kept under lock and key at home and could be mentioned to no one. We learnt to map read and read a situation - such as where enemy

> parachutists had been landed - and deploy the armed Home Guard via the Signals Unit which was manned mostly by women, they were also based at Grantham Barracks. Our area of coverage was approximately a 20 mile radius of Grantham"

James Kendal, a member of the Gainsborough Home Guard interviewed in 1999, recalled women in the force's signals unit: "Well they, you see they joined straight away, the women did you know. Oh yes, they was as eager as the men some of them ... they wanted to do their bit as well". As well as serving as secretaries and signallers, women might also be drivers. There is a reference to women in the General Transport Corps of the 2nd Holland Home Guard Battalion.[55] Perhaps because these women worked as secretaries, drivers or in signals and intelligence sections they did not drill or parade with the men at the weekly meeting, which might explain why the latter had apparently not met them, or did not realise that they were members of the force.

2 Home Guard Auxiliary Women parading through Benedict's Square in Lincoln on 15 May 1944 for the Salute the Soldier Week (*courtesy of the Lincolnshire Echo*)

Home Guard Auxiliary Women

On 26 July 1944 the term 'Nominated Women' was dropped in favour of Home Guard 'Auxiliaries'.[56] Photographs of women in the Home Guard elsewhere in the country show that uniforms of different colours and design were sometimes issued to women (contrary to the rules) but in Lincolnshire they got little more than the badge.[57] A photograph of a parade of women of the Home Guard in Benedict's Square in Lincoln on 15 May 1944 (as part of the Home Guard's fourth birthday celebrations) shows them all wearing the Bakelite badge and a Home Guard armband or brassard.[58] The

women were now acknowledged as members of the Home Guard. Misses Ivy Pollard and Betty Lowe, clerks at the headquarters of the 3rd Holland Battalion in Holbeach, attended the final parade of their battalion.[59] A certificate given to Miss F. Briggs, a female member of the Home Guard, is held by the North Lincolnshire Museum Service (**see back cover**) and again confirms that the women were acknowledged when the force was disbanded.[60] The men's certificates simply gave their name, but the women's include their title (Miss or Mrs) and were signed by the Secretary of State for War rather than the king. The women were allowed to keep their Bakelite badges.[61]

Women as a last line of defence

Despite official hostility to women being trained with weapons, there is some evidence in Lincolnshire that women who were willing could take up arms to defend their towns and villages. In Barton-upon-Humber, ten to twelve women formed a local organisation, the Ladies' Rifle Club, to 'form an extra line of defence in case of invasion'.[62] They practised at a range behind Hopper's Cycle Works Club, using weapons lent by regular soldiers billeted nearby. The club lasted about three years. While this may have escaped the notice of the authorities, on another occasion it was made very clear that women were expected to beat off attackers using the guns of fallen soldiers. A very large exercise (named 'Actor') was held in Market Rasen on Sunday 23 August 1942 in the presence of Wing Commander E.J. Hodsoll, Inspector General of the Civil Defence Services for Great Britain.[63] This was a scripted drama demonstrating who was in charge in various scenarios. There were scenes in which the civil defence authorities were within their rights to block access (even to military personnel) to a bombed road full of debris and another in which the military told the fire service to let a civilian's house burn and concentrate on fires along a route the army hoped to use to counterattack the enemy. Everything was designed to show the exercise of proper authority. In one scene 'locals' were to take up the arms of fallen members of the town's Home Guard who had become casualties: 'seize the rifles of the fallen men and fill the gaps on the road block'. The script of the commentary (which was approved in advance by the commanders in charge) survives and makes it clear these armed civilians were to include women: "Who are these people coming along the street? They have got guns of sorts. Stout effort! The locals are going into it headed you note by their stout women folk. Good old Market Rasen!" There is no record of Wing Commander Hodsoll expressing disapproval, and a *Picture Post* article of 1942 suggests that women using the weapons of fallen soldiers found in the streets was acceptable as a last resort.[64] Sexual assault on women by enemy troops has been an extremely distasteful part of war for millennia and people feared what would happen to women if the Germans invaded.[65] The history of the East Elloe Battalion records an officer from a regular unit stationed nearby at the time (9th Royal Sussex) giving a lecture to two hundred wives of the local Home Guard on 'How to use a knife in the event of an invasion'.[66] If women could use a knife to protect themselves from German soldiers, it might have made sense to provide them with guns.

What kind of women were they?

A dozen probable female members of the Lincolnshire Home Guard have been identified (see Appendix) and most were around 30 years old when the force was established (around the same average age as the men). They were from fairly humble backgrounds (often the head of the household they lived in was a farm labourer) and they are usually classed in the 1939 register as doing 'unpaid domestic duties', more

traditionally termed 'a housewife'. However, one was a clerk, one specifically a railway clerk, one a shorthand typist and another a shop assistant in an outfitters. Two thirds were unmarried.

As well as their official roles, women inevitably took on more domestic duties to allow their partners to attend the numerous meetings and exercises that were essential part of the Home Guard, as well as being a vital part of the force's social activities. In Lincolnshire there are records of 'wives' attending and helping. At Horbling, dances were held on 14 and 21 February 1942, while the North Scarle signals book mentions a Christmas party on 21 December 1942.[67] Robert Simons recalled dances in a village warehouse where wives and girlfriends were invited. Sometimes social events involving both sexes were held to raise money for good causes. In early 1941 the Home Guard of Swinstead organised a dance to fundraise for the Lord Mayor of London's Air Raid Distress fund.[68] Women's groups were also involved in raising money for the Home Guard. In February 1941 a whist drive organised by the local Women's Institute raised £7 10 shillings for 'comforts' for the Home Guard.[69] The 2nd Lincoln City Battalion held a dance on 24 November 1944 at the County Assembly Rooms in the Bailgate with music provided by the RAF band … a poignant affair as by then the Home Guard knew it was being stood down.[70]

Attitudes towards women in the force were mixed and this is clearly reflected in the way that they were treated when the force was stood down. When the final parades were held in December 1944, thirty women marched with the Lincoln Home Guard.[71] However, reports of the final parade of the 2nd Holland Battalion in the *Lincolnshire, Boston and Spalding Free Press* mentions women Home Guard Auxiliaries being present on the parade ground, but they did not take part in the 'March Past'.[72] Patricia Brown (interviewed in 2005) said that she and the other women in the twelve strong Intelligence Section in the Grantham Home Guard were also not allowed to march in their town's stand down parade as they had never been issued with uniforms (despite promises to rectify this).[73] They were allocated an area to stand in next to the mayor's platform, but she boycotted the event and her account suggests that the others did too. However, photographs of the day clearly show a group of at least a dozen women wearing Home Guard badges standing to the left of the mayor, a salutary warning of the dangers of relying on accounts written later in life about an event by a person (who in this case, by their own admission) did not attend.

Numbers

The official history of the Northamptonshire Home Guard tells us that there were only 304 nominated women out of the 21,000 Home Guard in that county (approximately 1.4%), so although they carried out vital roles in the organisation, the numbers were comparatively small.[74] The 7th Northants had 61 women, but the 1st and the 8th had none, so perhaps some officers were more welcoming than others, though they are collectively described in the official history of that county's force as 'marvellously efficient'.[75] By December 1943 official national returns suggest that there were 21,683; by March 1944, 28,000 women in the force nationally; and when the force was stood down in December 1944 there were 31,753 registered female Home Guard Auxiliaries. In 1943 it had been estimated that 50,000 women served alongside the male members of the Home Guard but this may have included members of the ATS and WVS.[76] In Lincolnshire, if we add up the numbers employed as clerks or secretaries as well as in the signals and intelligence units in Lincoln, Grantham and elsewhere a figure of at least 300 for the county seems reasonable. It should be noted that women in the

Northamptonshire Home Guard won a shooting competition—perhaps women ought to have been given a more active role.[77] If a more enlightened view had prevailed and women had been allowed in from the start, the force would probably have been larger and even more effective.

Conclusions

The story of women in the Home Guard is one of varied experiences. In some places they faced a strong reluctance to allow them to join on equal terms as men, while in other areas they were treated like equals from the start. Though their roles were generally limited to clerical and catering, they also provided the backbone of the force's signals and intelligence sections as well as being drivers. From the summer of 1943 onwards, any German invasion would have been analysed by female members of the intelligence sections. Those women would have deployed any counterattack, the order having been transmitted by women in the Signals. Those that met these women spoke highly of their work and those that kept their badges at the end of the war were very proud of the contribution they had made to a force that kept the nation safe whilst freeing up regular troops to fight in other theatres of the War. It seems that many thought that in the event of an actual invasion, women could and probably should pick up and use the weapons of dead British soldiers (regulars or Home Guard) as a last resort, thankfully that never happened.

Appendix: Women in the Lincolnshire Home Guard

A few of the women who served have been identified and they are listed here. There is probably no difference between a secretary and a clerk: whichever term is in the primary sources has been used here. The term 'unpaid domestic duties' is found in the 1939 register. The titles given (Mrs/Miss) are from the original sources.

Name	Position in the force	Occupation	Year of birth	Home town or village
Mrs M. Ashton	Secretary (though may not have been Home Guard)	Unpaid domestic duties	1911?	Grimsby
Miss Freda Briggs	?	Unpaid domestic duties	1903	Spilsby
Patricia Brown	Intelligence Section	Clerk in a factory	1925?	Grantham
Mrs (Elsie?) Butters	Secretary?	Unpaid domestic duties?	1890?	Tealby?
Miss Jean E.M. Cooper	Clerk	Railway Clerk	1915?	Horbling
Clare Dobson	Secretary	Unpaid domestic duties	1910	Woodhall Spa
Kathleen M. Daubney	Secretary	Unpaid domestic duties	1912	Horncastle
Hilda Mafeking Gissing	Secretary	Unpaid domestic duties	1900	Horncastle
Mrs Horton	Secretary?	?	?	Market Rasen/ Binbrook
Miss Betty (Elizabeth) Lowe	Clerk	Unpaid domestic duties	1911	Holbeach
Miss Ivy M. Pollard	Clerk	Shop fitter (outfitters)	1912	Holbeach
Mrs Rissen-Kent	In charge of a group of Signallers	?	?	?Lincoln
Miss (Edith) Margaret Rook	Clerk	Shorthand typist	1913	Barton

NOTES AND REFE

1 S. MacKenzie, *The Ho history* (Oxford UP, 199
2 W. Atkin, *To the Last and popular culture* (Pen *Britain's Final Defence: 1944* (History Press, 20 *real Dad's Army* (Pen &
3 P. Summerfield and C the Firing Line: the H of gender boundaries World War', *Women's* 231-255; P. Summerf *Contesting Home Defence Guard in the Second World*
4 J. Mills and T. Carney, *LDV and Home Guard* (M
5 F. and J. Shaw, *We Rem* Press, 2018 edition) esp
6 *ibid.*, 54-57
7 C. Peniston-Bird, "'I v to spot that": Dad's Ar in memory', *Media His* Summerfield and Penis
8 *Lincolnshire Standard and* 1944, 3
9 Summerfield and Pen Atkin, *Last Man*, 167
10 Atkin, *Last Man*, 176
11 Summerfield and Penis
12 *ibid.*; Atkin, *Last Man*, 1
13 Summerfield and Penis and Carney, Insignia *Real Dad's Army*, 116
14 'Women sign on for H 14.7 (14 February 1942 180; Mills and Carney,
15 Mills and Carney, *Insign Real Dad's Army*, 116
16 Mills and Carney, *Insign*
17 *ibid.*; Cullen, *Real Dad's*
18 'Women sign on'; Culle
19 R. Holloway (with H. *Home Guard 1940-1945* & Military Press) 151
20 Atkin, *Last Man*, 178
21 Mills and Carney, *Insig Last Man*, 164
22 R. Hunt, *Uniforms of* Storrington, 2002) 25; *and uniforms*, 118-122; C 120
23 Atkin, *Last Man*, 164
24 Cullen, *Real Dad's Army*,
25 Mills and Carney, *Insign*
26 A. Reeves and J. Buller *(East Elloe) Battalion* (W.R 1944) 31
27 Lincolnshire Archives 5 the 10th Lindsey Battali

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1 S. MacKenzie, *The Home Guard: a military and political history* (Oxford UP, 1996) esp. 181-183
2 W. Atkin, *To the Last Man: the Home Guard in war and popular culture* (Pen & Sword, 2019); D. Clarke, *Britain's Final Defence: Arming the Home Guard 1940-1944* (History Press, 2016); S. Cullen, *In search of the real Dad's Army* (Pen & Sword, 2016)
3 P. Summerfield and C. Peniston-Bird, 'Women in the Firing Line: the Home Guard and the defence of gender boundaries in Britain in the Second World War', *Women's History Review* 9.2 (2000) 231-255; P. Summerfield and C. Peniston-Bird, *Contesting Home Defence: men, women and the Home Guard in the Second World War* (Manchester UP, 2007)
4 J. Mills and T. Carney, *The insignia and uniforms of the LDV and Home Guard* (MLRS, 2008) 118-122
5 F. and J. Shaw, *We Remember the Home Guard* (Ebury Press, 2018 edition) esp. xvi-xviii
6 *ibid.*, 54-57
7 C. Peniston-Bird, '"I wondered who'd be the first to spot that": Dad's Army at war, in the media and in memory', *Media History* 13.2-3 (2007) 183-202; Summerfield and Peniston-Bird (2007) 194-195
8 *Lincolnshire Standard and Boston Guardian*, 2 December 1944, 3
9 Summerfield and Peniston-Bird (2000) 238-240; Atkin, *Last Man*, 167
10 Atkin, *Last Man*, 176
11 Summerfield and Peniston-Bird (2000) 243-244
12 *ibid.*; Atkin, *Last Man*, 164-180
13 Summerfield and Peniston-Bird (2007) 65-66; Mills and Carney, Insignia and uniforms, 122; Cullen, *Real Dad's Army*, 116
14 'Women sign on for Home Defence', *Picture Post* 14.7 (14 February 1942) 7-9; Atkin, *Last Man*, 170-180; Mills and Carney, *Insignia and uniforms*, 121-122
15 Mills and Carney, *Insignia and uniforms*, 121; Cullen, *Real Dad's Army*, 116
16 Mills and Carney, *Insignia and uniforms*, 121
17 *ibid.*; Cullen, *Real Dad's Army*, 116
18 'Women sign on'; Cullen, *Real Dad's Army*, 117
19 R. Holloway (with H. Banks), *The Northamptonshire Home Guard 1940-1945* (1949, 2014 reprint: Naval & Military Press) 151
20 Atkin, *Last Man*, 178
21 Mills and Carney, *Insignia and uniforms*, 121; Atkin, *Last Man*, 164
22 R. Hunt, *Uniforms of the Home Guard* (HMP Storrington, 2002) 25; Mills and Carney, *Insignia and uniforms*, 118-122; Cullen, *Real Dad's Army*, 115-120
23 Atkin, *Last Man*, 164
24 Cullen, *Real Dad's Army*, 11-12 and 169
25 Mills and Carney, *Insignia and uniforms*, 118
26 A. Reeves and J. Bullen, *History of the 3rd Holland (East Elloe) Battalion* (W.R. Murrell & Sons, Spalding, 1944) 31
27 Lincolnshire Archives 51 MLL/1/3/8 (records of the 10th Lindsey Battalion)
28 Atkin, *Last Man*, 179
29 Records of the Horbling Platoon are in the Lincolnshire Archives under the reference SMITH/16.
30 *Horncastle News*, 24 August 1995
31 J. Esterby, 'A lively lad', 74-81 in J. Howard (ed), *Facets of Tealby* (Tealby Society, 2002) 77
32 North Lincolnshire Museum website: photo. number 558/8/2.
33 North Lincolnshire Archives 1456/4/1.
34 Summerfield and Peniston-Bird (2000) 237
35 I. Beckett, *Britain's Part-Time Soldiers* (Pen & Sword, 2011) 266; N. Storey, *The Home Guard* (Shire Library, 2009)
36 Atkin, *Last Man*, 165
37 Holloway, *Northamptonshire*, 150; Hunt, *Uniforms*, 25
38 Mills and Carney, *Insignia and uniforms*, 118
39 Mills and Carney, *Insignia and uniforms*, 120; Shaw and Shaw, *We Remember*, 54-57
40 Mills and Carney, *Insignia and uniforms*, 118
41 *Lincolnshire Echo* 15 July 1943, 4
42 Reeves and Bullen, *3rd Holland (East Elloe) Battalion*, 2
43 J. Langdon-Davies, *Home Guard Warfare* (Routledge, 1941) 54-55; Clarke, *Final Defence*, 58
44 Summerfield and Peniston-Bird (2000) 236
45 Atkin, *Last Man*, 177
46 Hunt, *Uniforms*, 25; Summerfield and Peniston-Bird (2007) 87-88; Mills and Carney, *Insignia and uniforms*, 119
47 Mills and Carney, *Insignia and uniforms*, 119
48 Clarke, *Final Defence*, 60
49 *ibid.*, 202
50 Atkin, *Last Man*, 240 fn.1
51 *Lincolnshire Echo* [*LE*] 15 July 1943, 4
52 *ibid.*
53 *LE* 4 December 1944
54 Brown's account can be found on the BBC's People's War website: https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/85/a5844585.shtml
55 *Lincolnshire, Boston and Spalding Free Press* [*LBSFP*] 4 December 1944, 3
56 Mills and Carney, *Insignia and uniforms*, 119
57 *ibid.*
58 *ibid.*
59 *LBSFP* 9 December 1944
60 North Lincolnshire Museum Service accession number SCUNM.1991.233
61 Mills and Carney, *Insignia and uniforms*, 120
62 G. Bryant and D. Tyszka, *Barton Remembered 1939-1945 Part Two The Home Front* (Workers' Educational Institute, Hull, 1998) 29
63 The author was kindly sent a photocopy of the plans and some additional paperwork for the following exercise by Caroline Foster: ('Actor' combined military and civil exercise, Market Rasen, Lincolnshire Sunday 23 August 1942).
64 Press cuttings and quotes taken from the 'Actor' folder of Caroline Foster.

65 Summerfield and Peniston-Bird (2007) 264-265
66 Reeves and Bullen, *3rd Holland Battalion*, 9
67 The notebook is held in the stores on the Museum of Lincolnshire Life (reference number SMITH/16); S. Basquill and E. Grigg, 'The North Scarle Platoon Signaller's Handbook', *Lincolnshire Past and Present* 132 (2023) 22-24
68 *Grantham Journal* [*GJ*] 21 February 1941, 2
69 *GJ*, 28 February 1941, 8
70 *LE* 18 November 1944, 2
71 *LE* 4 December 1944
72 *LBSFP* 4 December 1944, 3
73 https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/85/a5844585.shtml
74 Holloway, *Northamptonshire*, 304
75 *ibid.*, 151
76 Storey, *Home Guard*, 39; Cullen, *Real Dad's Army*, 55 and 116; Clarke, *Final Defence*, 59; Atkin, *Last Man*, 178
77 Holloway, *Northamptonshire*, 239-240

Dr ERIK GRIGG *teaches history at Bishop Grosseteste University in Lincoln. He is writing a book on the Lincolnshire Home Guard and has given many talks on the subject. After being asked to address the Lincoln Bailgate Women's Institute he was inspired to look further into women in the Home Guard, hence this article!*