



In Search of the Real Dad's Army: The Home Guard and the Defence of the United Kingdom 1940-1944

Stephen M Cullen

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What was the Home Guard? Who were the men and women who served in it? And what can be said of their real role and significance once the popular myths have been stripped away? Despite the fame of the Home Guard – of Dad's Army – the true story of this wartime organization tends to be neglected. The myths obscure the reality. Stephen Cullen's aim in this thoroughgoing new study is to cut through the misunderstandings in order to reassess the Home Guard and its contribution to Britain's war effort – and to deepen our understanding of the men and women who were members of it. He sets the Home Guard in the long historical context of domestic defense planning, then focuses on the preparations made before the outbreak of the Second World War. In detail he traces the changing role of the Home Guard during its wartime existence as it adapted to meet the multitude of challenges it faced – from civil defense and intelligence gathering to training for guerrilla warfare. Using vivid eyewitness testimony and oral history, he takes a grassroots look at the men - and women – from all ages and social backgrounds who made up this national defense force. The equipment, uniforms, weapons and vehicles they used and the field defenses they manned are described as their role developed over the course of the war. He also examines the evolution of popular views of the Home Guard from wartime days to the present – the notion of the People's Army, the thinking of early Home Guard commentators like George Orwell, and the writings of more recent historians who have sought to explain an organization that retains such an extraordinary hold on the popular imagination.

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