



# Wiltshire at War

## *Codford*

### World War 2 Recollections:

#### **CODFORD CAMP by Fred Lord Hilton MM**

The following was written by my father before his death in 1983. I would like to submit it to your archive. My father went on to gain a Military Medal at Arnhem.

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On Tuesday 2 October 1939, I was sworn in at Hulme Town Hall and sent to Kitchener Barracks, Chatham with 8 other recruits. On arrival we were given our army number. The barracks were full of reservists.

Saturday 6 October 1939. In the morning we were on the parade group with the reservists (over a 1000 at least). Names and numbers were called out and, on hearing your name; you stepped out and received a slip of paper with a division number on; in my case No 43. You then had to go to the guardroom where all with similar numbers were formed into groups, a man from each group picked out, given a railway warrant, told he was in charge and told to collect rations and deliver himself and his group at the destination shown on the warrant. In my group of 9 the destination was Codford, Wiltshire. The chap in charge was informed of the train times and it was his duty to deliver us to Codford Station that day. We arrived at about midnight (Codford Station at midnight seemed in the middle of nowhere). The station-master phoned and eventually a truck turned up and delivered us to Stockton House, a large mansion. We were received by a nice chap who told us he was the Quartermaster. He took us to a small room with a table and forms and told us to sit down and eat (tins of salmon and bread and butter with cocoa). After having supper we received 3 blankets each and taken to the main room of the mansion and told to get down on the floor and sleep.

The next morning we found we had been dumped on a TA unit who had been told 24 hours before to expect, in the next few days, 230 men; we were the first 9! The rest arrived within a week and we were formed into a company but with no company number. Training was to be by the TA unit on which we were billeted.

The training lasted until June 1940 and consisted of marching from billets to breakfast at Bampton Manor (about 3 miles), Bampton Manor to training ground (a field in Codford 2 miles further on), from training ground to Bampton Manor for dinner (2 miles), back to training ground at Codford or a route march for the afternoon, back to Bampton

Manor for tea (2 miles) and then back to billets (3 miles). All this in the clothes we had left home in; in my case: 1 pair of shoes, 1 pair of socks, one shirt, one collar, one tie and one suit. I wore these for 3 months!

Leave was granted on 30 December 1939 and I was given a khaki battle-dress, that is all. After a train journey from Wiltshire to Manchester then a train to Oldham, I arrived at the top of my home street and cried — here I was, a soldier of 3 months, arriving on my first leave - my shoes filled with cut-out cardboard soles, no socks, a battle-dress, the same shirt I had left home in, no hat, my civilian gas mask in its cardboard box and, under my arm, my civilian shirt wrapped up in a groundsheet. The hero from the war returning!!!

On arriving back from leave the company, (by now called 553), was split into 4 groups: one group forming the nucleus of 553, one group to 204, another to 207 and the group I was in to 260 stationed at Codford Wood Store. On arriving there were greeted by the OC and given a welcome speech in the manner of "let me be your father" type and explaining to us that we were there to make up 260 — a company formed in April 1939 and consisting of a substantial number of ex-grammar school boys, making them up with tradesmen, of which most of our group were. When the OC (who, by the way, had been a schoolmaster at the grammar school and before that a Captain in WW1), gave us the welcome lecture, we found out the following morning at breakfast that he hadn't been "talking bull". Breakfast consisted of 3 Shredded Wheat sugar and warm milk, eggs (2 if required), bacon, bread, butter and jam. (In the company we had left the food was so badly cooked that, on occasions, 200 rations were dumped into the litter bins. Barm cakes bought at the local tuck shop made up the staple diet of the company). After breakfast at our new company we were issued with a complete kit: 2 pairs boots, 2 pairs socks, 2 sets of woollen underclothes, 3 shirts, 2 battle-dress, one hat (side), braces, cleaning tackle (housewife), 2 towels — in fact, everything bar a rifle (this I got in July 1940).

From the time I joined 260 Field Company RE, I felt I was in the army and from then on training started in a slightly more realistic manner and progressed more and more realistically as the years passed until June 1944 when we sailed to Normandy and fought our first battle at Hill 112.

[Link](#) for rest of story .....

*Story contributed by valcamp- December, 2005 - WW2 People's War is an online archive of wartime memories contributed by members of the public and gathered by the BBC. The archive can be found at [bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar](http://bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar)*