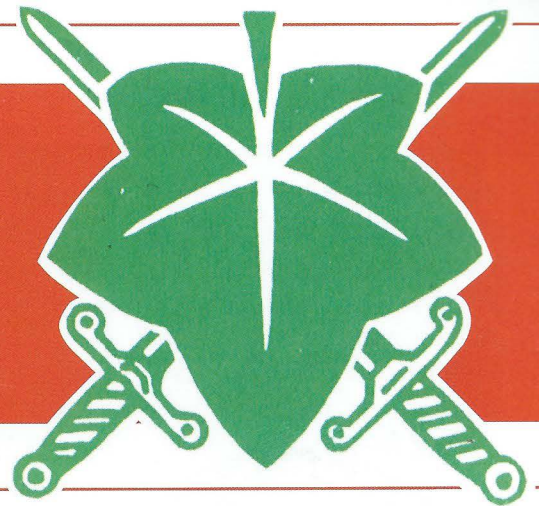


THE FORMATION SIGN

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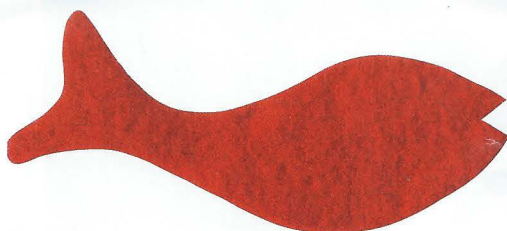
A FISHY STORY

In a story headed '2nd Corps HQ Mobilised – Much work done in two days' the *Daily Telegraph* reported in July 1952 that 'Never before in peacetime had a Corps headquarters been mobilised in Britain' although 'it would be folly to prepare territorial divisions to go overseas at short notice and leave unprepared the corps headquarters that must control these divisions'. Noting that this exercise involved the staff proper, officers and clerks, the corps car company, the defence company and provost, 400 vehicles and the Light Aid Detachment, the article pointed out that 'Not only officers and men but every one of the 400 vehicles bore the familiar Second Corps sign – a salmon gules on a field azure – designed by General Sir Alan Brooke the Corps Commander in 1939 and perpetuated in his coat of arms as Viscount Alanbrooke'.

The sign, described more simply as 'Red fish on a blue river' was authorised for 2 Corps vehicles by WO letter 54/Artillery/1216/(SD2) on 21st October 1939. That it was carried on vehicles in the BEF is confirmed by the *Revised Vehicle Marking List* published by the BEF on 13th March 1940 which is explained in detail in Andrew Foulkes' book *Vehicle Markings of the BEF*. The design also appeared on the enamel badge worn by the French Army's No 2 Liaison Detachment to 2 British Corps which thanks to **Robert Le Chantoux** we can show here.



After cloth formation signs were introduced in September 1940 the 2 Corps sign appeared in a variety of forms including the embroidered, silk woven and printed versions shown below. The Corps commanded troops guarding Britain's east coast until with the threat of invasion removed, it was disbanded in July 1944. The story above which records the reappearance of the sign some eight years after its disbandment helps explain a mystery that has perplexed **Les Cable** for many years. At some time in the 1950s he visited his local pub and was shown some 2 Corps signs which were much larger than the wartime sign with which he was familiar. On asking the owner when they were acquired Les was surprised to discover they had been removed from the uniform of a serving soldier that week, making it likely that they came from someone taking part in the exercise reported in the *Daily Telegraph*.



When 2 Corps was mobilised in 1956 for the operations at Suez the fish seems to have been forgotten, its place taken by the unimaginative and obvious sign shown, examples of which have been recorded worn on uniforms. One final mystery remains; many years ago **Colin Allison** acquired a framed set of badges worn by an officer who had served with 2 Corps in the BEF which included this felt cut out version of the fish. Is it possible that it was worn on uniform in the BEF?