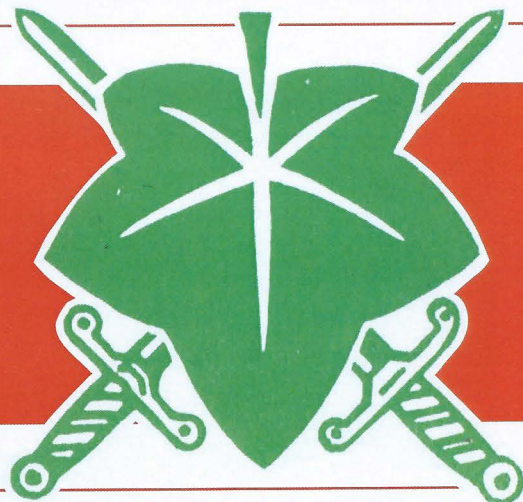


THE FORMATION SIGN

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The Bull's Eye

Eighty years ago, during the last three months of 1940, London suffered nightly air attacks, an onslaught that has gone down in history as the Blitz. On 7th September 1940 300 German bombers rained bombs on London's East End and the Docks, the first of 57 consecutive nights of bombing. This 'blitzkrieg' (lightning war) which would continue until May 1941, delivered 18,291 tons of high explosive bombs and innumerable incendiary bombs on London during 71 major attacks, the first of some 354 attacks by piloted aircraft on London.



Whilst the Army's anti-aircraft gunners and searchlight units together with the RAF's Fighter Command were actively engaging these bombers, a vast army of civilian volunteers were dealing with the results of the devastating bombing on the streets below.

By 1935 the government had realised that a future war would involve aerial bombardment and that year began asking London's local councils to co-operate in preparations to combat the threat by recruiting volunteers to a range of services under the title of Air Raid Precautions (ARP), who would support the existing emergency services in dealing with attacks by poison gas, high explosive and incendiary bombs.

The ARP's 'front line troops' were local Air Raid Wardens like Post Warden George Earl of Harrow, their patiently acquired, detailed knowledge of their role and the area in which they were based, vital to the success of the protection and support provided by the ARP and emergency services. Based in small, local posts Wardens reported initial bomb damage, summoned specialist help from the Fire Brigade, ARP Rescue, First Aid and Ambulance Services and took control of what became known as an air raid 'incident'.

George, a Great War veteran, wears the bluetone cotton overall with white metal ARP buttons and oval ARP breast badge introduced from October 1939, the Harrow badge an example of the authorised 'device in the same style and colour as the ARP badge' which local authorities had if they wanted them to buy themselves. Initially without rank markings, most authorities issued armbands like George's, identifying him as a Post Warden in charge of his local ARP post. More examples over the page.



Concerned at the proliferation of such armbands, in June 1940 the London Region adopted standard red rank badges, George's diamond and bar the regional badge for a Post Warden, that shown with two bars the badge worn by District Wardens. Above 'Harrow' George wears a metal Royal Life Saving Society Respiration Service metal badge recognising his training in artificial respiration, a cloth version of which was authorised in February 1941.

Our thanks to Chris Boddington for permission to reproduce the splendid photograph of Warden George Earl.