

Young Soldiers to form the 70th Battalion. Lieutenant-Colonel W. E. Hewett became C.O. Additional commitments at Westerham, Bletchingley and Tatsfield were then taken over, and in January 1941, the battalion became responsible for guards at Chelsfield and at XII Corps Headquarters at Tunbridge Wells in addition.

On August 26, 1941, Battalion Headquarters moved to Chattenden Barracks at Strood, near Rochester, where the 8th Battalion The East Surrey Regiment was absorbed, together with its commitments on the Isle of Grain. Lieutenant-Colonel E. A. Shipton (Rifle Brigade) assumed command of the amalgamated battalion in November, and on December 2 the title of the unit was changed to the 30th Battalion The Queen's Own.

The 30th Battalion moved to Tangmere, near Chichester, on March 27, 1942. Its commitments in Kent were given up, and it became responsible for guarding the Tangmere Group of aerodromes in Sussex. This was an important role and the battalion, in conjunction with the 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade, took part in a series of exercises designed to test the defences of these aerodromes. In May, General Sir Charles Bonham-Carter, the Colonel of the Regiment, visited the battalion. On July 13 it began to march back to Kent.

The new station was Milton Barracks, Gravesend, where the battalion reorganised as a Mobile Defence Unit. Another move occurred on September 25, this time to Napier Barracks, Shorncliffe, so familiar to many of the Regiment. There the battalion came under the orders of 206th Brigade, which was responsible for dealing with enemy raids on the coast from Dymchurch to Folkestone. Its sector included the Sandgate area, which it defended in co-operation with the 8th Kent Battalion of the Home Guard.

The period in a mobile coast-defence role was doomed to be short, for on November 7 the battalion came under War Office control pending disbandment. On December 13 it moved to Herne Bay, and from then onwards officers and other ranks were posted away. Many of the N.C.O.s went to the 7th Battalion. The last batches were transferred at the end of February to 13th I.T.C. at Maidstone and to the Pioneer Corps. On March 10, 1943, the 30th Battalion was officially disbanded.

#### 9. The 9th Battalion

In view of great pressure the Cabinet has decided to increase the size of the Army for Home Defence, interfering as little as possible

## CHAPTER 9

### The New Battalions November 1939 to March 1943 8th, 9th, 10th and 70th Battalions

#### 1. The 8th (later 30th) Battalion

FOUR new battalions of the Regiment were raised for the defence of England during the Second World War. These were the 8th (later renumbered 30th), the 9th, the 10th and the 70th (Young Soldiers).

The first of these, the 8th Battalion, was formed from No. 2 Kent Group of the National Defence Companies (N.D.C.), the personnel of which were ex-servicemen, mainly between the ages of 50 and 60, who had enrolled in these companies in peace-time<sup>1</sup> and had been embodied some two months before the outbreak of the war in order to guard vulnerable points, such as power stations, aerodromes and ammunition depots.

Soon after the declaration of war the N.D.C. detachments at Tonbridge, Croydon, Westerham, Edenbridge and Sevenoaks were grouped together and became the nucleus of the 8th Battalion, with headquarters at the Drill Hall, Avebury Avenue, Tonbridge. The battalion was actually formed in November 1939, its first Commanding Officer being Lieutenant-Colonel A. Latham. It was a Home Defence unit, and volunteers between the ages of 35 and 50 were invited to enlist into it for home service for the duration of the war.

In February 1940, the headquarters of the battalion moved to Brasted,<sup>2</sup> and its eight companies guarded such important places as Halstead ammunition depot and West Malling, Biggin Hill and Penshurst aerodromes. Boys of 16 to 18 years then became eligible for enlistment into the battalion, and two Young Soldier companies were formed. Lieutenant-Colonel O. M. Fry, who had been Brigade Major of 36th Brigade in France, took over command for the months of July, August and September. He then departed with these

<sup>1</sup> See page 71.

<sup>2</sup> For map of Kent see page 52.