

New Zealand Home Front – 1939-45 – Unit Manual.

The “Home Front” Unit within the WW2 Historical Re-enactment Society will present to the public a snapshot of “things at home” during WW2 – and in particular the Emergency services during the period 1941 through to 1945. The period directly after the Japanese attack on the American naval base at Pearl Harbour.

This then lead the NZ Government to look at home defence in case of invasion.

Potentially – The Home Front Unit could cover representation from Home Guard to Nursing and Ambulance to the Fire Service, Emergency Protection Services to the Coast Watch.

We currently have Club members who will wear **Home Guard “uniform”** – this will either be prior to the issue of Uniforms when they wore their own clothes with the addition of a HG armband so as to be clearly identified as “official” and not some form of enemy agent or spy or once Uniforms were issued. Home Guard members carried a variety of their own weapons until the Army had surplus and could supply them with both weapons and uniforms.



Original Home Guard prior to uniform issue.

Other members of the Home Guard will be in Battledress Uniforms as worn by their brothers in arms based overseas with the 2NZEF.



An example of WW2 Battledress and webbing, helmet, cap and boots as wore by HG.

Uniformed Home Guard 1941-1945:

- Regulation issue WW2 Battledress with Home Guard Shoulder titles (black background with white writing) – (no service stripes or brigade flashings- rank worn if applicable)
- 37 Pattern webbing – including puttees and belt
- Black lace-up boots.
- Side cap with HG badge, Steel Helmet (Mk11) or Lemon Squeezer with all white pugaree & HG badge.
- Long Tom Rifle & bayonet, P14 Rifle with bayonet or MK1 No. 111 303 Rifle with bayonet, Sten Gun, Thompson MG, Bren Gun.



WW2 Home Guard outside Te Pahu Hall near Pirongia in the Waikato.

Or if depicting early Home Guard prior to uniform issue:

- Wool/ cotton Suit style jacket and trousers. Non -matching acceptable. (no synthetic or nylon material)
- Black or brown lace-up boots.
- Black or brown leather belt with period knife.
- Cloth cap or Trilby style hat
- Home Guard Armband – this is a “must have”.
- Weapons – such as side by side hammer shotgun, Long Tom Rifle, P14 or No111 303 – WW1 “captured” German Mausers applicable.

Note: Early Home Guard did also wear combinations of WW1 issue uniforms until 37 Pattern where issued.



An example of Home Guard Armband as wore when in "civilian" dress

Original Armbands are hard to find – so reproduction replacements are acceptable.



An example of dress prior to issue of Uniform to the Home Guard.

Home Guard Unit Structure is based on an actual HG Battalion in NZ during WW2. So our representation will be based on a Platoon with a Unit Commanding Officer/WO or Senior NCO with NCO's reporting to him. Rank will be worn on the sleeve and saluting the rank is expected at events as per British army regulations.

Rank and Promotion within the Home Guard will be run along the same lines as our brother Units – the 18 and 21st Battalions. So rank will be earned based on knowledge, attitude to re-enacting and overall standard set by the individual. The Unit CO will be elected by the Unit members and that person will decide on other promotions as seen necessary or required by Unit growth.

Overall Presentation of the Units reenactors should be of a high standard of both accuracy and authenticity and the Unit CO will hold all accountable for this. When re-enacting – members should be as clean and tidy as possible –given the situation at the time. Hair should be as styled in the 1940's and male reenactors clean shaven although a moustache is acceptable –but it must be short and above the lip. No earrings during re-enacting please. If glasses are worn they should be of the style applicable to the time period we are representing. All reenactors will be expected to act in a courteous manner to other reenactors and members of the public at all times. Educating the public is very important and so interaction is encouraged at all events and shows.

Potential recruits are required to complete the Club Application form and after payment of the subscription (currently \$45 as at August 2020) they undergo a 3 month probationary period. On completion of this probationary period the Unit CO will approve their application – presuming they attain the standards set by the club – they then will become a Full Member. New recruits are encouraged to purchase their uniform and equipment as soon as possible – although members will assist a new recruit with kit when they first enlist if required.

Firearms are used (with blank ammunition) and displayed at shows and new recruits are encouraged to sit and attain their Firearms license (class A at least) as soon as possible after joining and it must be carried at all events. The HRS follow all Police requirements when handling and displaying firearms. Safety and security is kept to a very high standard at all times.

Learning our past is a key to re-enacting. We are “living Historians” and so reading and adding to a recruit's knowledge base is very important. We all need to be able to help educate the public and also answer their questions at events. So we encourage all Club members to study their hobby and build their knowledge base. Home Guard manuals were printed during WW2 and are from time to time for sale on such sites as Trade Me or E-Bay – they are a very good place to start learning. Also various books have been published on the subject. Members are always very happy to help with reference material.

The Unit Manual of the 21st Battalion Kiwi Section is also an excellent document to study for additional detail on Uniforms and weapons used by our Home Guard.

Dads Army – the TV series is a great programme – however we are not trying to be like them although from time to time Club members may be referred to as “Dads Army” by the Public. It is important not to take offence at this – rather use it in a positive manner to educate those using the term on who we actually represent – the NZ Home Guard in WW2.



Original Home Guard manuals and training booklets.



Side Cap with HG Badges as wore in NZ in WW2



Katikati Home Guard during WW2 wearing both WW1 issue uniforms and WW2 Battledress all with side caps.

Re-enacting is a fantastic hobby bringing to life history in a way that the movies or books can't! I encourage you to enlist – you will enjoy our hobby – not only the re-enacting, battles and talking to the public - but also the “after match” camaraderie at an RSA after an event.

Philip Hobbs

August 2020.

Part 2: The NZ Army Nursing Service

The New Zealand Army Nursing Service (NZANS) was founded in 1915 to undertake the nursing of the sick and injured in time of war. Upon formation, it consisted of qualified civilian nurses who joined the service, working under the Medical Officers of the New Zealand Medical Corps (NZMC). In both WW1 and WW2, they also worked with volunteer nurses who worked in a nurse aide capacity. NZANS nurses were unofficially granted officer rank from the formation of the Service, but were not fully recognised until 1942.

When World War Two was declared in 1939, general mobilisation showed the NZANS, with Ida Willis as Matron-in-Chief, as an integral part of the New Zealand Army. Camp hospitals were established at Burnham, Trentham, and Ngaruawahia with medical staff including personnel of the NZMC and the NZANS being appointed. Nurses on the reserve list were called up for service. A nurse had to be fit, and pass a full health assessment before being accepted for active service. Throughout WW2, NZANS nurses served all over the world in many different areas including Dressing Stations close to the front lines of battle, Field Hospitals, General Hospitals, and Military Convalescent Hospitals in New Zealand and overseas.

Our NZ Home Front representation will vary from event to event between a WW2 Dressing Station and a General Hospital with the display including a medical tent, equipment and Nursing staff. The aim is to give the public a picture of what medical care during the war may have looked like across the different stages of evacuation for a patient. As the display develops we are looking to add stretcher bearers, doctors and such to enhance the overall appeal.

A new recruit to the Medical Unit of the HRS could look to kit themselves out as a stretcher-bearer in Battle Dress uniform with a Red Cross armband, or as an Army Doctor in BD's, or a Nurse. Guide to uniform is as follows:

>Stretcher Bearer: Battle Dress Uniform, black lace-up boots, side cap and Red Cross armband.

>Army Doctor: Battle Dress Uniform, Officers Cap and Medical Corps badges, brown lace up shoes or boots.

>Army Nurse: Either: Grey or white dress, white shoes and stockings, white veil. Optional: Serge scarlet cape, shoulder or finger length (all items to be in the same or similar style as listed the NZANS 1939 Official Uniforms Pamphlet). OR: Battle Dress Uniform, brown or black lace up shoes or boots, helmet or hair in scarf with Red Cross armband.



Recruits are always welcome and we encourage you to enquire via this website.

Lizzie Gilling.

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