

THE HOME FRONT IN SURREY IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

A GUIDE TO SOURCES AT SURREY HISTORY CENTRE

Part 1. Counter Invasion, Defence of the Realm and the Role of the Police

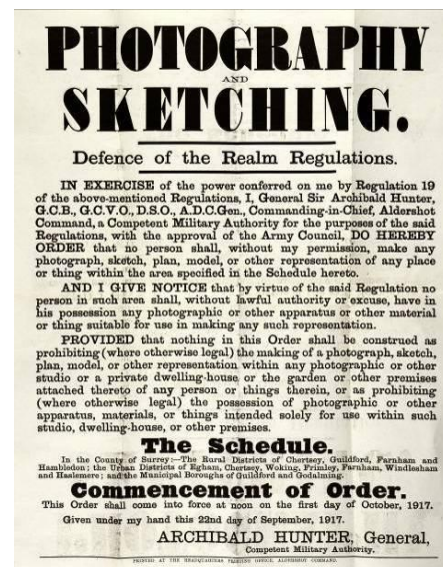
Within days of the declaration of war the Defence of the Realm Act was passed, 'for securing public safety'. Initially it was quite a short declaration – to prevent people communicating with the enemy or obtaining information that could jeopardise the operation of the armed forces and also to secure the means of communication and to protect railways, docks and harbours. However the original Act was greatly extended during the war, to cover such matters as press censorship, licensing hours and air raid counter-measures and also giving the Government the power to commandeer resources and punish those who breached the Act.

In November 1914 the government issued instructions for measures to be taken in the event of a hostile landing. These measures were to be carried out at the direction of the military authorities and under the guidance of the police. In Surrey Area Emergency Committees were set up in each petty sessional division, with local parish Emergency Committees under them, in order to make detailed contingency plans and to set up machinery which, in the event of an emergency, would supplement the existing police organisation. These were to be co-ordinated by a small Central Organising Committee formed by the Lord Lieutenant, of which the Chief Constable and the General Officer Commanding in Chief were to be members. The plans made by local Committees were to cover the removal of vehicles and livestock without hindrance to troop movement, the destruction of supplies and forage, and the disabling under specific military direction of bridges, railways and electric power and similar plant. The Surrey Central Defence Committee was clerked from Caxton House, Westminster (the London offices of Surrey County Council), Henry C Baggallay acting as Hon Secretary. Special Constables were appointed to assist the police in carrying out the local plans.

Papers relating to a large number of the parish committees and to the activities of special constables have survived, which are listed in alphabetical order below.

Albury: Defence of the Realm memorandum for special constables for Albury parish, in the event of invasion, 1914, with list of special constables (SHC ref 8261/13/4)

Ashted: papers of Ronald Peake of Howard House, Ashted, chairman of the Local Emergency Committee, chiefly with H H Gordon Clark of Mickleham Hall, Mickleham, and including lists of special constables, 1914 and 1916, and list of names relating to the registration of adult males, 1916 (SHC ref 7543/2/1)

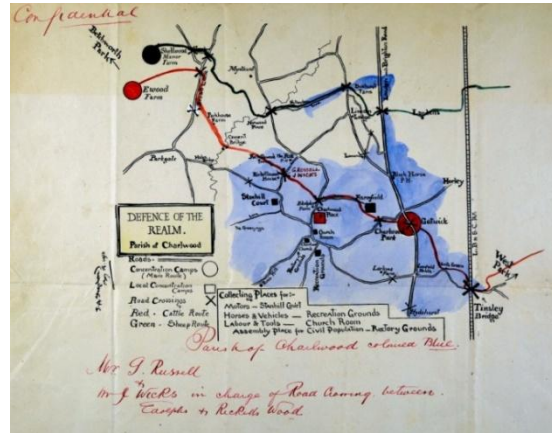


Poster forbidding photography and sketching under Defence of the Realm regulations, 1917 (SHC ref C98/23/2)

Byfleet: file of Special Constabulary Section Leader G J Bruzaud of Highfield End, West Byfleet, including lists of constables; DORA Orders; lists of barge owners, cars, cycles, horses, labourers, spades, picks and shovels; poster forbidding photography and sketching, 1917 (SHC ref CC98/23/2), with Special Constabulary certificate of service, 1919 (SHC ref CC98/23/9)

Chaldon: file of correspondence between Sir Jeremiah Colman of Gatton Park, Merstham, chairman of the Surrey South Eastern Area Local Emergency Committee, and the Chaldon Parish Emergency Committee, including parish returns regarding farm stock, labour and tools, emergency supply routes, preparation of trenches and the raising of a Surrey Motor Volunteer Corps (May 1917) (SHC ref 8760/1)

Charlwood: plan entitled 'Defence of the Realm. Parish of Charlwood' by J A Shepherd, May 1916, showing roads, road crossings, railway, cross-country routes for moving cattle and sheep; 'concentration camps'; collecting points for motors, vehicles and tools and assembly point for civil population (SHC ref 734/1)



Counter-invasion plan drawn up by Charlwood Emergency Committee, 1916 (SHC ref SHC ref 734/1)

Chertsey Petty Sessional Division Local Emergency Committee: file of chairman Sir Charles Walpole of Broadford, Chobham, containing circulars and correspondence, 1914-1916, and including instructions from the Lord Lieutenant's Surrey Central Defence Committee relating to reaction to anti-invasion measures, lists of owners of motor cars, cycles, horses, hay-ricks, tools and the like in Chertsey Division and an emergency scheme for Chertsey Division (SHC ref CC28/303A)

Dorking and District: draft report of the Emergency Committee, Spring 1916, on evacuation and anti-invasion measures (SHC ref 2634/1)

Hersham, Oatlands and Walton on Thames: file of Arthur Pettit relating to raising and organising of local force of special constables, 1914-1919, including correspondence, lists of officers, letters relating to monetary donations, forms etc relating to the issuing of equipment, circulars etc, and a memoir of service as a special constable by Percy Webb (SHC ref 9117/box 2)

Holmwood: letters, circulars, lists of livestock, vehicles, special constables etc, and map of evacuation routes, 1914-1916 (SHC ref 898/4/1-74)

Horley: signed minute book of Horley Emergency Committee, with papers relating to wartime measures, fire regulations and air raid precautions; including lists of vehicles, cycles, live stock and farm stock, 1914-1919 (SHC ref 6296/1/1/39-40)

Plans were also made for the defence of London and a committee was appointed by the War Office from the Engineer and Railway Staff Corps, Royal Engineers (TF), for the organisation of

civilian labour in the London District. Dorking Urban and Rural District Councils, among other local authorities, were requested to draw up lists of men able to undertake trench digging and assemble the necessary equipment so that in the event of invasion, emergency defences could be constructed. The scheme continued in force for the duration of the war and papers and correspondence relating to its organisation, including lists of those to undertake trench digging from Abinger, Capel, Dorking, Dorking Rural, Mickleham, Newdigate, Ockley and Wotton, see **SHC ref LA4/23/40-296**.

For the wartime activities of the Surrey County Constabulary the best source are the regular reports by the Chief Constable to the Standing Joint Committee detailing the additional or special duties the police had to perform because of the war, including control of aliens, blackouts, air raid warning arrangements and enforcement of licensing laws (**SHC refs CC98/1/4-5 and CC10**) and also discussing the pressure on the police to enlist. Police investigation the alleged pro-German rector of West Horsley, Edward Unmack, are held as **SHC ref CC98/14/8**. At the end of the war the Chief Constable produced an account of the lessons learnt during the war (**SHC ref CC98/7/2**). The diaries of PC Hubert Rendell, recording his beat and duties during the war, also throw light on wartime police activities (**SHC ref 6815/1/12-16**).



*Camberley Special Constables, 1918
(SHC ref 9152/2/2/4/1)*

Guildford and Reigate Boroughs had their own local police forces at this time. Minutes of the Guildford Watch Committee for the war years have not survived, though there is a brief account of the force's work in Richard Ford's 'They Guarded Guildford: the History of the Guildford Borough Police Force, 1836-1947' (1969); reports of the Head Constable of the Reigate force to the Borough Watch Committee for the war years (excluding 1916) are held as **SHC ref CC98/22/1**.

For the enforcement of DORA and crime and disorder during the war the records of magistrates' courts are the most fruitful source. For example, the registers of Guildford Borough Court (**SHC ref 2220/2/1**), Guildford County Petty Sessional Division Court (**SHC ref 2220/1/2**) and Reigate Borough Court (**PS6/1/1**) refer to many offences that can be directly related to wartime conditions: unscreened lights on houses and vehicles, absentee soldiers and evasion of the Military Service Act, possession of literature likely to prejudice recruitment and discipline, offences against food control orders and fuel control orders, selling intoxicating liquor during prohibited hours, feeding gamebirds with grain, unauthorised wearing of military uniform and an increase in prostitution. By contrast, the records of the higher courts of Surrey Quarter Sessions and Surrey Assizes (eg. **SHC ref QS3/4/26**) appear to contain very little that can be directly linked to the war.