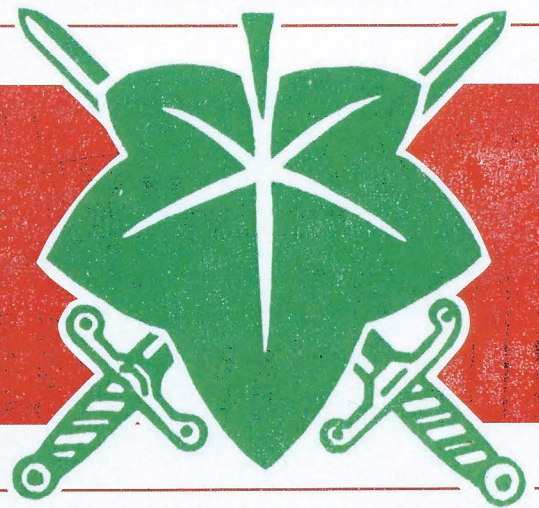


THE FORMATION SIGN

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Defending London

With the appointment of Adolf Hitler as Germany's Chancellor his country became the 'ultimate potential enemy' in a future war, the reformation of the Luftwaffe begun in March 1935 prompting a review of Britain's air defences. Found to be both inadequate and in the wrong place, work began on establishing a continuous belt of AA guns and searchlights to defend Britain's coast, major cities and ports.



The new gun and searchlight units required were formed by converting existing units. In 1935 seventeen TA infantry battalions became Royal Artillery gunners or Royal Engineer searchlight units, a move which saw 47th London Division disbanded as two of its regiments became Gunners, a further five Sappers. To ease the conversion pains dress concessions – first granted to the yeomanry – allowed the converted infantry battalions to adopt all the badges of their new regiment or corps - or wear their former regimental cap badges with the new unit's buttons and collar badges. The soldiers shown continue to wear the cap badges of the 19th and 20th London Regiments after their conversion to 33rd and 34th Anti-Aircraft Bns, RE.



Some converted units also adopted a cloth badge or arm title to retain a link with their former regiment, an example of which is shown here. In 1935, the 21st London Regiment (First Surrey Rifles) part of 47th (2nd London) Division's 142nd Infantry Brigade, became 35th (First Surrey Rifles) Anti-Aircraft Battalion, Royal Engineers, a searchlight unit. A recently discovered group photograph of Sappers in service dress shows their RE cap, collar and shoulder titles supplemented with the First Surrey Rifles cloth arm title, a distinction not recorded in Litchfield.

Converted again, in 1942 the 35th became 129th LAA Regiment, RA as which it fought for the rest of the war. Re-raised in the post-war TA as 570 LAA/SL - later LAA - Regiment, in 1952 it adopted a new arm title marking its infantry origins.

