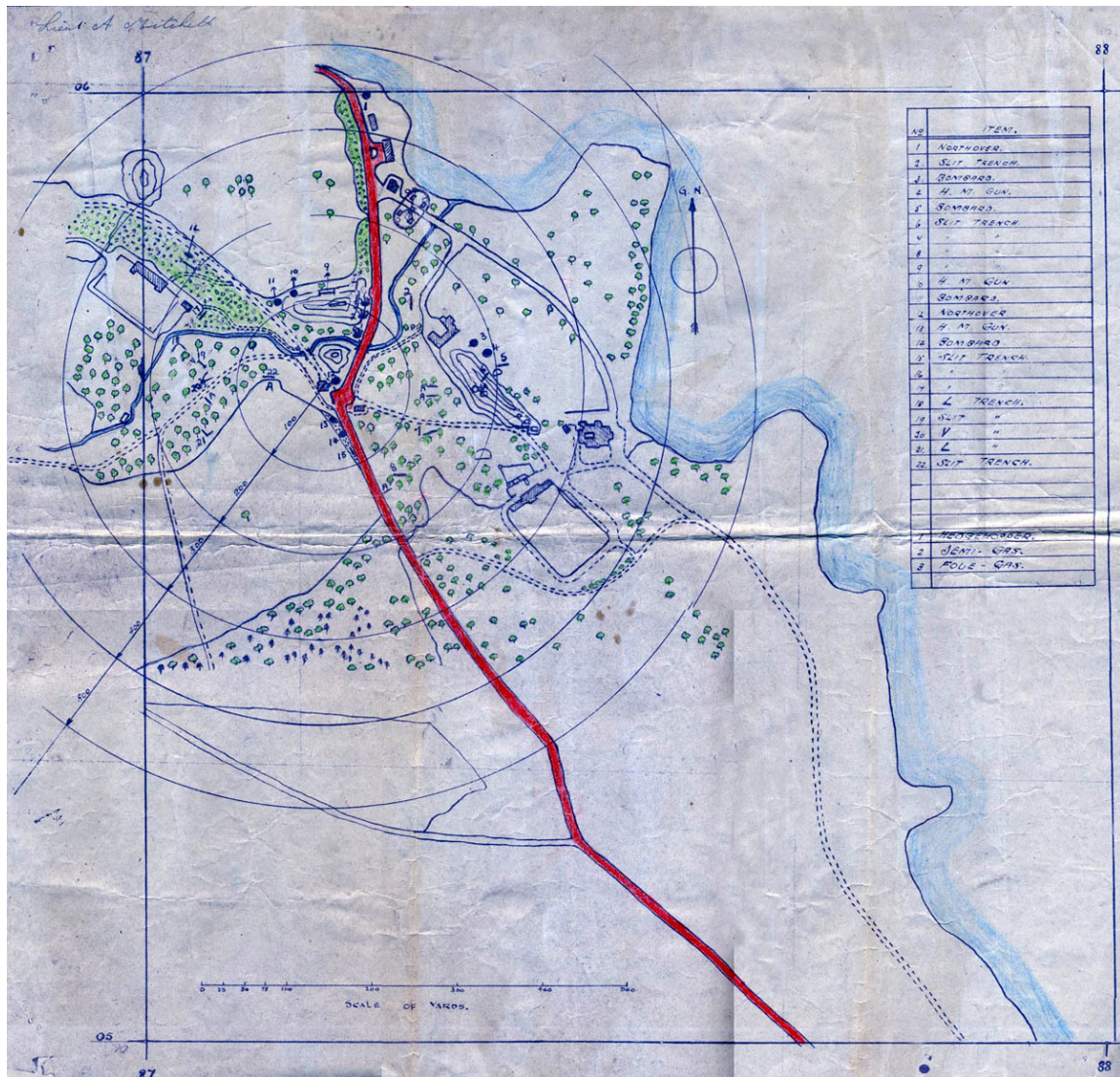
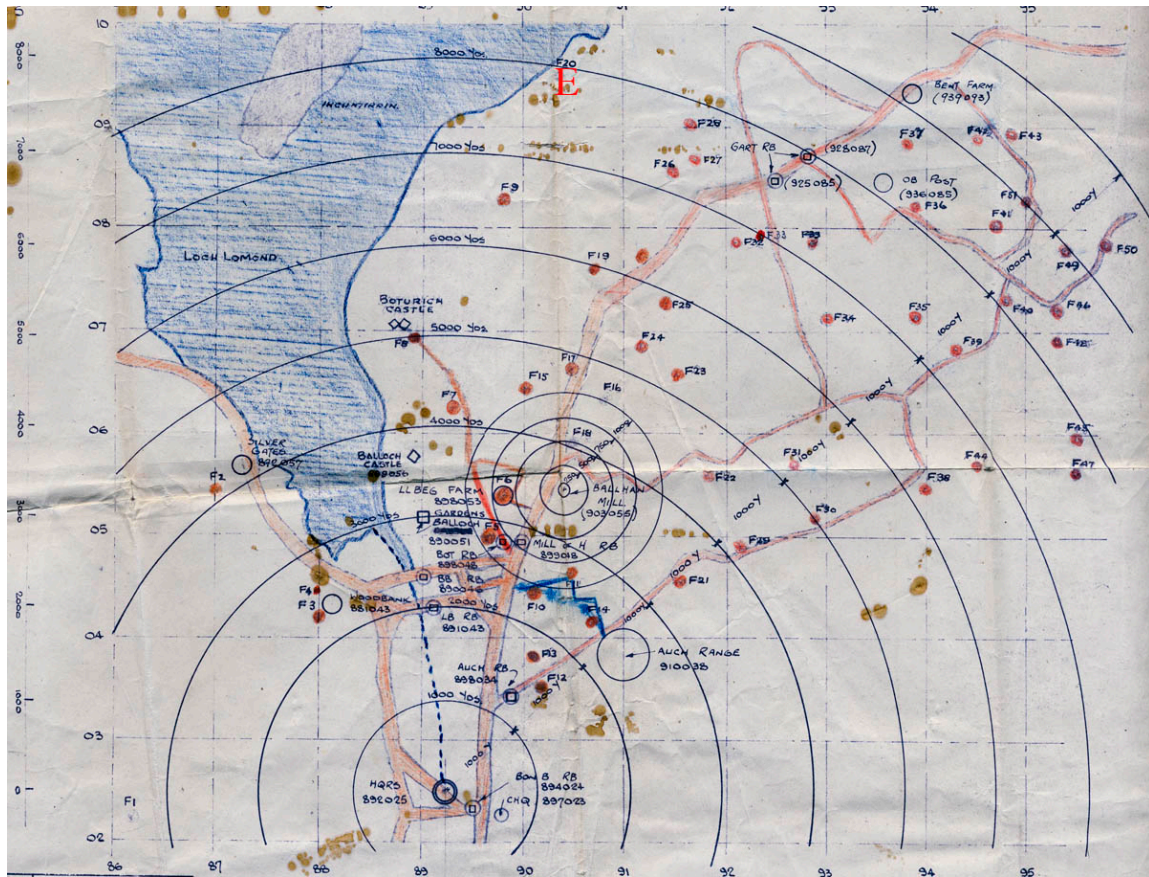


Parachutes over Gartocharn

Some insight into the work of the Home Guard in the Vale can be seen in the following exercise conducted on the 4th of April, 1943 that was discovered in an old gas-mask satchel bought at a jumble sale in the late 1960s. The contents at one time belonged to Lieut. A. Mitchell. Although the threat of invasion was low by this time in the war, raids by the enemy might well have been considered with the build up to D-Day and in any case, the exercise was to test the decision-making skills of the Home Guard. The exercise is presented in its original cryptic form and was accompanied by a number of hand-drawn large-scale maps of the area detailing defences that had been set in place. These presumably date from an earlier time in the war when invasion was a possibility. One particularly impressive map details all the obstacles, gun positions and trenches for the area around the North Lodge of Cameron House. It seems clear that the Loch Lomondside road would be well defended from invaders.



A map of the Ballagan Area is included here as this was the area in which the exercise took place. The map lists a number of road-blocks (RB) as well as the farms, all coded with letters and numbers. The Area HQ was the clinic in Bank Street but the exercise involved the post at Ballagan Mill. The exercise concerns a wood at map reference 903095, marked with a red E on the map. The woods are still to the fore as the Garadhban Forest and have a commanding situation



4-4-43

Situation 1

Issued at R.V. 10:00 hrs

Ballagan D/L has been at Action Stations for 30 hrs and all list 1&2 personnel have reported—see details on Sketch (not included). At 07:00 hrs on the 4th April a message is received for O.C. A-Coy. to the effect that large numbers of Paratroops are being dropped around Drymen. At 07:30 hrs the Farmer from Ballagan Farm who is known to the Troops reports that a party of Germans have dropped near his farm and are making for Wood E. Approx strength 16-20 no information re arms.

Problem

- A. As O.C. Ballagan D/L what action would you take
- B. Give Map Reference of Wood E 15 mins

Notes for D.S.

- A. As Farmer is known to your troops also Approx strength report to Coy. H.Q.
- B. Give warning order for Wood Clearing to O.C. Battle Platoon.

Situation 2

Issued at 10:35 hrs

Ten minutes later Small Arms Fire is opened from the direction of Wood E toward D/L.

Problem

A. As O.C. Battle Platoon give your appreciation of the Situation

B. Your plan 30 mins

Notes for D.S.

Factors

Time Speed essential, to not give him time to organise his defence. He is on dominating ground from which he gets a good view of the D.L. & can do damage.

Relative Strength Enemy Approx 20. Own Troops 29 with additional assistance from D/L

Weapons Only Rifle fire heard but do not believe this is all he will have.

Ground Covered approach by Right flank.

Courses Open Right flanking

Plan Make use of dead ground on Right Flank & Woods B. C. to reach road north of C. D. & immediately put out two stops & drive enemy E to W. to killing grounds

Situation 3

Issued at 11:30 hrs

A. Give your orders as O.C. Battle Platoon before proceeding to destroy enemy 15 mins

Notes for D.S.

Sequence of Orders

Information Enemy

Own Troops

Intention To destroy enemy

Method No 1 Stay-there

No 2 Stay-there

No 3 Stay-there

No 1 Squad Right Sector

No 2 Squad Center Sector

No 3 Squad Left Sector

Administration Nil

Intercommunication Signals to Enter and leave Wood, Success

Any questions No 1 Squad?

No 2 Squad?

No 3 Squad?

Zero hour