

The Norwegian Brigade in the Edderton/Tain Area – 1940 and 1941

At the start of the war, the house (Mansfield Hotel) was requisitioned for military use and became the Officers' Mess for the Cameron Highlanders and in 1940/41 became the headquarters of the Norwegian Brigade in the U.K. "Scottish Command had decided to give the operational part of the Norwegian Brigade a defensive role in the North of Scotland, or more specifically, in the Tain-Edderton area of Ross & Cromarty, where it would fall under the command of the head of Sutherland Area. The relocation was to take place on the 10th and 11th July 1941. At this time the fourth rifle company was fully trained and could join the Brigade on its journey north. It was also decided that the machinegun company and the pioneer troops would be attached, as were the Camp Commandant and certain of his staff, who were to be housed in the Mansion of Mansfield House.

The billets allocated to the various sections of the operative part of the brigade varied a great deal in quality. The infantry battalion was assigned to the grounds of a disused whisky distillery in Edderton: the four rifle companies were in tents, the staff company in the distillery and other staff in an outbuilding of a large farm nearby. The artillery and machinegun companies were rather better off as they were stationed in barracks at the Nigg camp.

Their operative role involved the defence of the county of Ross & Cromarty, a land area of about 100km in length and 60km in breadth, and with a coastline of about 200km. There were a lot of very important sites in the area, such as the flying-boat station at Invergordon, three airfields, a coastal defense fortress, a strategically important railway bridge and two possible invasion sites on the coast. All these places were widely spread in the district.

The Brigade's position in the centre of this area was, tactically, very wise, in that it had only a short distance to any of the points where it might have to go into action. With the limited forces at its disposal, it would not have the resources to defend more than one position at a time.

Ross & Cromarty was naturally not the most likely place for an enemy landing in Britain, as the coastlines further south, closer to the industrial centre were more directly in the firing line, but the area had the great advantage that it gave the Norwegian Brigade outstanding possibilities for many types of exercises in guard and security duties. Cooperation with British units of the Army, Navy and Airforce led to a long list of exercises. The most important were on the 15th July 1941 when the brigade counter-attacked against airborne forces (paratroops) which had captured the airfield at Fendom and on the 23-25th July when the brigade counter-attacked an enemy landing from the sea in the Shandwick area. This exercise was observed by His Majesty King Haakon of Norway and His Royal Highness the Crown Prince Olav, accompanied by General Fleischer, the Norwegian Commander, the head of Scottish Command, General Sir Andrew Thorne and the Chief of the Sutherland Area, Major-General Sir John Carrington. After the exercise, His Majesty inspected the Brigade and took the salute at a march-past in his honour. King Haakon, who hosted an official lunch here on July 21st 1941 stayed at Mansfield House. At the beginning of October 1941, the operative part of the Brigade moved to Banffshire and Aberdeenshire. The main reason for this was that conditions in Ross & Cromarty were not suitable for a winter stay, but also because the small Norwegian force had been assigned a new defensive task."

"The History of Mansfield House" per Mrs D. Killens.

Supplied by Reay Clarke in February 2008. Original spelling.