

My First Shoot.
Duck Lake 1992

I have called this little story "My first shoot" because it was the first time I ever saw a shoot at an O.P. although it wasn't really "my" shoot.

First some biographical background. I joined the 7th Field Brigade in about February 1939 knowing nothing about the Army and apart from the Battery staff of P. Battery. In a surprisingly short time I qualified as a specialist (Range Finder) and to my surprise promoted to Bombardier and posted to what I suppose was B.C.A. I must have been keen as there was no any competition this is to explain what happened later.

In October 1939 it was decided that the Militia women do a months camp in alternate months. One of the 7th went to Aberglaslyn near Porthmadog and in due course came a full spring day with no not having the faintest idea of what was happening. The O.P. was on a bare grassy knoll - no camouflage or any in our case like that! There seemed to be quite a crowd there which I suppose included artillery brass the CO etc etc. The B.C. (Major Jim Kelso and of course me, my gear consisted of Artillery Bores and stand, Director (one of those in compass like 180° to 4 things) and stand, Range Finder (a cylinder about a metre or so long and 100 mm in diameter) and stand. Field Plotter (a device for solving triangles) Binaoculars & case, prismatic compass & case, Map board, horse-sack with pencils etc etc water bottle. I had to carry all this ironmongery to every O.P. I used to strap it all over myself secure it with a belt and set forth. It was dashed heavy which was not enough lent that was no thing compared with how awkward it was and that was plenty - it was ridiculous really.

Well, anyway eventually the target was allotted and I in a bit hazy about things then for a bit I set all this ^{with} the instruments on their stands in a straight line, and waited.

particularly not knowing what was what nor who was who - or why? Eventually, after much discussion about the fire orders - all above my head - the first shot. Dull Boom! Much peering through binoculars! Nobody seeing anything (including me) Much discussion. Finally "did you see the round ack? Ack, not having a clue what was I have seen see? "Smoke coming up" between those two kids over there" Ack ever ready to oblige. "I think so see" "Where?" "Over there" point my. Much discussion as to where the ack hit or had not seen anything. I dont suppose he had. ~~the next of the shoot was one of those disasters~~ and this was the consensus of opinion.

The next of the shoot was a disaster. The worst thing was how my b.c. who I had thought pretty close to you could have made such a hash of things. Certainly a fall of a night.

The rest of the day wore on. I dont remember any thing much till it was all over and I packed up. Hung my gear around myself, better it or and then got off down the hill.

In later years I saw many such disasters from O.P.'s - including my own first go. Eventually got the hang of it mainly by hours and hours of "minnie" ranging and practice shoots and eventually considered myself pretty good and just loved ~~doing~~ shooting it. ^{the very} best feature of all, artillery activity.