

KING AT LUTON HOO.

Inspection of Territorial Troops

A visit from the King has been among the most earnest desires of many Lutonians for quite a number of years, and that desire has at last been realised, but the form of its realisation was vastly different to the kind of visit Lutonians have had in mind. His Majesty King George's visit to Luton Hoo on Friday, without actually touching Luton itself, and the secret of the visit was so well kept that His Majesty was probably back in London before more than one Lutonian in a hundred had the faintest idea that the crowned head of the nation had been so near their midst. It is understood that it was the King's express desire that the visit should be regarded as of entirely a private character, and be kept as secret as possible, but as might have been expected, there was general disappointment in the town when the news leaked out, because it was the first time royalty has been in such close proximity since the occasion on which the late King Edward passed through Luton by motor on a week-end visit to the late American Ambassador, at Wrat Park.

Both the late King and the Duke of Clarence were visitors to Luton Hoo during their lifetime, but this was King George's first acquaintance with the historic seat near Luton, and unlike King Edward and the late Duke of Clarence, he did not visit the Hoo as the illustrious guest of its distinguished owner. The visit was one of many which His Majesty has paid to various training centres since the mobilisation of the Territorial Force, for the purpose of inspecting those of the Territorial troops who have volunteered for service abroad. Setting out from Buckingham Palace at half-past nine in the morning the King, clad in khaki uniform, and attended by Commander Sir Charles Cust, R.N., and Major Olive Wingram, was driven in his fine six-cylinder Daimler motor-car to Luton Hoo, where he inspected some four or five thousand of the troops of the North Midland Brigade stationed in Luton and district. The inspection occupied about an hour and a quarter, and His Majesty then returned along the London-road to St. Albans, where he halted at Gorbamby Park, Lord Verulam's residence, where the Sixth Brigade of the 2nd London Division of Territorials who are in training at St. Albans, marched and marched past. During the inspection at St. Albans the King sent for a Lieutenant of the 11th Hussars, and chatted with him for some minutes, about a remarkable escape from the German line he experienced at Mons.

In spite of the strict secrecy observed by the military authorities with regard to the King's visit to Luton Hoo, the report was pretty freely in circulation in Luton first thing Thursday morning that His Majesty was expected to be at Luton Hoo for a review of the troops at half-past ten. It came from such circles as to be something more than the usual type of rumour, but the military authorities exhibited considerable indignation when they were made inquiries, and would say no more than that "the King is not coming to Luton Hoo to-day, and there is to be no review or inspection of the troops." As a matter of fact, however, it is no secret now that the troops had actually paraded at Luton Hoo, in the morning, and the completion of an inspection by the King, and the information we received from other than a military source on Thursday morning, that a message had been received from His Majesty cancelling the visit is confirmed by a statement published in a London evening paper on Friday, to the effect that "the King's visit has been paid yesterday, but was postponed through unfavourable weather." Among the soldiers themselves it was well-known on Thursday evening that this was the case, and there were not a few townspeople who scribbled broadly when they read in a local contemporary that "there are no arrangements in hand for a future visit."

The troops were on Friday morning paraded at exactly the same early hour as the previous morning, and among the men there appeared to be no knowledge as to the actual time at which the inspection was to take place. Actually, half-past ten was the time fixed, and as it was ten minutes after that hour when His Majesty drove into the London-road entrance to the Park, the morning was a low and very chilly one. The King was riding in a closed car, but the interested townspeople who had gathered at the roadside outside the gateway, were apprised of his approach by the attitude of the mounted military on duty, as soon as a large chocolate-coloured car drove in sight, and as the car turned into the Park they had been paid a very good view of His Majesty, who acknowledged the late bows and waving of hats and handkerchiefs, with which he was greeted, by a series of salutes. There were some forty or fifty people gathered outside the gates, and those who did not wait for the King's departure, saw no more of the proceedings, because the inspection had already taken place on a narrow path which overlooked from the road, and the entrance to the Park was zealously guarded. Admission was only to be gained by holders of permits, and the issue of these was so limited that some of the local Pressmen were not even permitted to be present. The bulk of the spectators, therefore, were employed in taking place on the estate, but a few local people were privileged to witness what was evidently desired to be essentially a private ceremony. Lady Wrenher and her son, Mr. Alexander, were away, but the borough was represented by the Mayor and Town Clerk, who motored up after the King's arrival, though, in view of the private nature of the visit, there was nothing in the nature of a presentation, and no military band. Mrs. Austin, who is the wife of Major-General Cradley, and Mrs. Stuart Wortley, wife of Major-General Stuart Wortley, the General Officer commanding the troops in Luton and district, each had parties of friends present from Stockwood, and the only other private visitors of note were Mr. Wm. Austin and Miss Austin, who were accompanied by Mr. and Mrs. Ledham, of Holwell Bury, personal friends of the Commanding Officer of one of the Staffordshire Regiments.

The polo ground, which is reached by a gateway on the left a little way up the avenue from the London-road entrance, was the scene of the review, and the fine stretch of ground made an ideal site for the purpose. By the side of the Field Ambulance on the extreme right, and the Artillery on the slope of the ground on the extreme left, and the men had a cold and weary wait, standing at ease, lying



THE KING WITH HIS SOLDIERS.

down, and trying in a variety of ways to keep warm, with an occasional call to attention. When at last the King arrived, attended by Sir Chas. Cust and Major Olive Wingram, he was met by the Chief Officers, and took up a stand just off the centre of the troops to receive the general salute as the music of the National Anthem was played. His Majesty then proceeded to inspect the lines with the officers in attendance, first inspecting the infantry, then the artillery, and lastly the Field Ambulance. After this the King proceeded to a



position on the slope of the ground near the gateway into the Park, and the troops marched past as they proceeded off the ground, subsequently continuing by the mansion and out of the Park by the Park-road lodge. The infantry led, with the artillery next, and the Field Ambulance bringing up the rear, and after the march, past had been completed the King shook hands with several of the officers and returned to his car, leaving the Park by the London-road entrance. As he left the parade ground the estate employees gave him a loyal send-off, and another outburst of cheers was acknowledged by His Majesty as his car swung through the Park gates into the roadway, where quite a number of people had congregated.

Sir William Franklyn is in command of the parade, and we are informed, that before leaving his Majesty asked Sir William to express to the

troops his great satisfaction with their soldierly bearing and appearance. The parade did not represent the whole body of the troops quartered in Luton, but representative detachments, and those included civilian clad recruits as well as the old hands in uniform. All through the lines the men impressed one as a remarkably fit and capable body, and their fine soldierly bearing, left no doubt as to their fitness for service at the front, or in any other part of the globe where their services may be required. The artillery especially commanded attention as being extremely well horsed and well managed, but perhaps the most marked feature of all was the magnificent bearing of the recruits who, after a fortnight or so's hard and strenuous training, are distinguishable from their comrades only by the fact that they are still without uniform.

MOVING AGAIN.

"The Luton Walkers" in the Engineers.

Northolt, Friday.

"We are moving again, but we don't know where, except that it's about a twelve miles' walk from where we are," writes a member of the No. 3 Section from Luton of the 2nd Field Company of the E.A.R.E. "We are the Luton Walkers—27 miles in seven hours. Not so bad, is it? All of us have volunteered for abroad, but some did not pass the doctor. We have all been getting on all-right. Col. Wells and the officers came round yesterday, and were very pleased with the way the trenches were dug, and with their appearance."

Invasion Incidents.

"It's a very hard time for all kinds and conditions of boys," a father told the Luton magistrates on Wednesday, in complaining that they could not play in the streets, and were not allowed in the recreation grounds, or on Winsden Hills, because the soldiers being in occupation. The Chief Constable also testified that when the schools are closed boys are in all kinds of mischief. "School," he said, "is the best place for them."

The recruits marching through the streets the other day while the rain was pouring in torrents, excited the sympathies of a kindly old lady. "Poor things," she said, "they'll be wet through before they get to the front."

Major-General Stuart Wortley and members of his staff might almost have imagined they were in a corner of Belgium, on Tuesday morning, when on their way to Luton they stopped at Farley Farm to inspect the havoc wrought by fire in the stockyard.

The four hundred Territorials who nearly a fortnight ago returned to the headquarters of the 6th North Staffordshire Regiment at Burton-on-Trent, to join the nucleus of a new reserve battalion, came back to Luton on Tuesday, and have since been drafted over to Dunstable. Burton has done very well in recruiting, for the town has contributed nearly eight hundred recruits to Lord Kitchener's Army, and in addition there are nearly four hundred newly enlisted Territorials.

Some of the Territorials quartered in Dunstable were visitors to the harvest sale of the Primitive Methodist, and a sergeant, second very proud of carrying off "the prize" of the sale, a pumpkin, grown by Mr. T. W. Parker, of Houghton Regis, which measured 4 1/2 fms. in circumference.

Our Territorial visitors are proving themselves most obliging fellows. Some of them show a reluctance to render all sorts of services for the folk with whom they are billeted, but the palm must be given to a Lance-Corporal of the Lincoln, who last week undertook the duty at a wedding in Dunstable of giving away a bride in the place of her brother, who is on service.