



IDA BAILEY — now aged 92 — lives in a Folkestone residential home and is visited regularly by Sam Osborne and his wife Peggy.

How Ida nearly died on a fatal

IN the months after Dunkirk and when France capitulated, the German Panzer Divisions, poised like a coiled snake on the French coast and ready to strike, brought a sudden awareness to the British people, who realised that invasion and occupation was a distinct possibility.

The C-in-C Home Forces, General Sir Edmund Ironside, with over 400 miles of coast to defend, faced tremendous problems in that the 1st London

By Roy Humphreys

Division, responsible for the defence of the invasion coastline, was pitifully ill-equipped.

Operation No. 3 was Ironside's answer to the defence of this country which included a special line of defence to delay the enemy.

"This system," he had said, "... will prevent the enemy from running riot and tearing the guts out of the country as has happened in France."

Subversion

The result was that our strategists, enveloped in an aura of out-dated warfare, conjured up a civilian, 'devil-may-care' force of volunteers to outwit the German divisions.

Colonel McVean Gubbins of Military Intelligence was put in sole charge of these volunteers. His department, called Section D, was a secret cell in the Foreign Office whose brief was to investigate the possibilities of subversion and sabotage.

The task of forming the first guerrillas, known as the auxiliary units, was given to Captain Peter Fleming of the Grenadier Guards — explorer, author, journalist and brother of Ian Fleming, creator of the celebrated James Bond stories. He selected as his base of operations a house called The Garth, at Bilting, between Ashford and Canterbury, overlooking downland at the edge of Challock Forest.

In the first phase of Hitler's 'Operation Sealion', the proposed invasion of England, German parachute battalions were going to be dropped on high ground behind Hythe, where they would make a sweep towards Folkestone and capture the harbour.

At the same time, the crack 17th Infantry Division, nicknamed 'Strumbock', was to assault the beaches between Sandgate and Dymchurch.

Our defences were barriers of scaffolding upon which were hung thousands of anti-personnel mines and in front of which were hundreds of minefields. The Napoleonic Towers were now observation posts and machine-gun nests.

Security

But there was another line of defence — albeit a kind of suicide force.

The Auxiliary Units were eventually scattered throughout the Kent and Sussex and were largely made up of civilians who knew their out particular area like the backs of their hands. Each platoon had its own underground base and was to act quite independently of each other.

Security was the hallmark of success and few people knew of their existence. There were no registers of enlistment when the units originally formed, but at government level they were known as 201 Battalion Home Guard.

By the late autumn of 1940, sappers of the Royal Engineers were sent out into the countryside to build the underground bunkers.

One of them was located in the middle of a coppice above Drellingore near the Alkham Valley. It was on a sloping hillside and about 1,000 yards from the nearest country lane.

A vertical shaft made of concrete, three feet square with iron rods let into one side at intervals, descended to a depth of eight feet.

The shaft connected with a large chamber dug out of the hillside and measured approximately 16 feet square. A small tunnel known as a 'bolt-hole' was constructed at the opposite end to the shaft.

The main chamber was covered over with the corrugated iron sheets, curved in a fashion similar in appearance to those used for the civilian Anderson Air Raid Shelter. Above the entrance shaft was an old tree stump that was hinged to allow movement.

Revolver

On completion the bunker was provided with two three-tier wooden bed-frames, a trestle table, locker and chairs and a 50 gallon galvanised-iron water tank with tap.

An Elsan Closet was also provided and enough Army K rations to last the occupants for three weeks. There was also a small keg of rum.

Lieutenant Cecil Lines commanded the Drellingore platoon, then came Sergeant George Marsh, Samuel Osborne, Thomas Holmans, Charles Fayers and Dennis Dewar.

Each was issued with a .38 Smith and Wesson revolver, a Fairbairn Commando knife and a brass knuckleduster. These items were kept by each member as personal weapons and were to remain with them at all times.

These six men, members of a most secret and exclusive band of resistance guerrillas, were to be trained to wreak havoc upon the Germans if they invaded England.

They mustered twice a week at their secret bunker and on Sundays attended training sessions at Wye and Bilting.

They were to learn the skills of unarmed combat and were especially taught how to kill silently, using their personal commando knife or cheese wire.

Among the items of equipment issued to the platoon were



Roy HUMPHREYS 1989

rubber truncheons, a pair of plimsoles, a Thomson Sub-Machine gun, two Springfield .300 rifles, two bayonets, grenades, phosphorus bombs, paraffin incendiaries, delay pencil fuses, detonators, gellignite, mines and plastic explosive with spoils of trip wire and all manner of associated paraphernalia.

Proficient

The Drellingore platoon also attended evening practice in the grounds of Tappington Hall, Denton, where they familiarised themselves with handling gellignite and various kinds of plastic explosives.

It was here they became proficient in throwing grenades and Molotov Cocktails.

They became experts in the art of immobilising vehicles of every description, including armoured cars and tanks, using a special 'sticky' bomb which, as the description implies, when

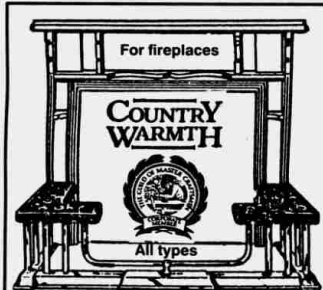
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