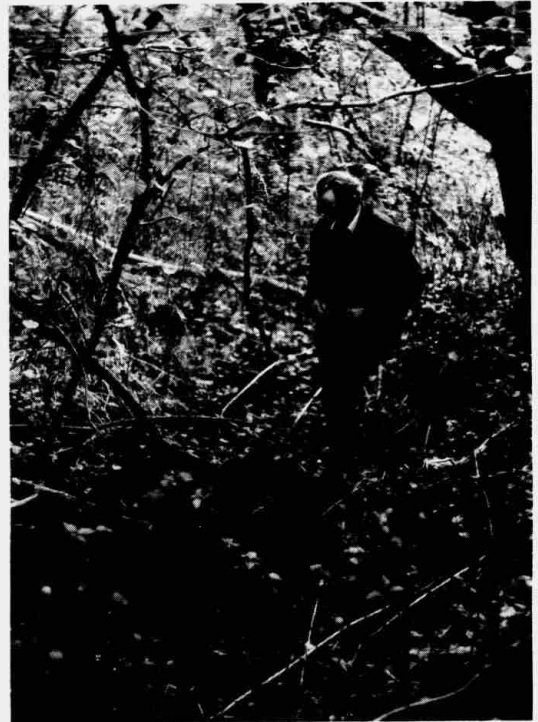
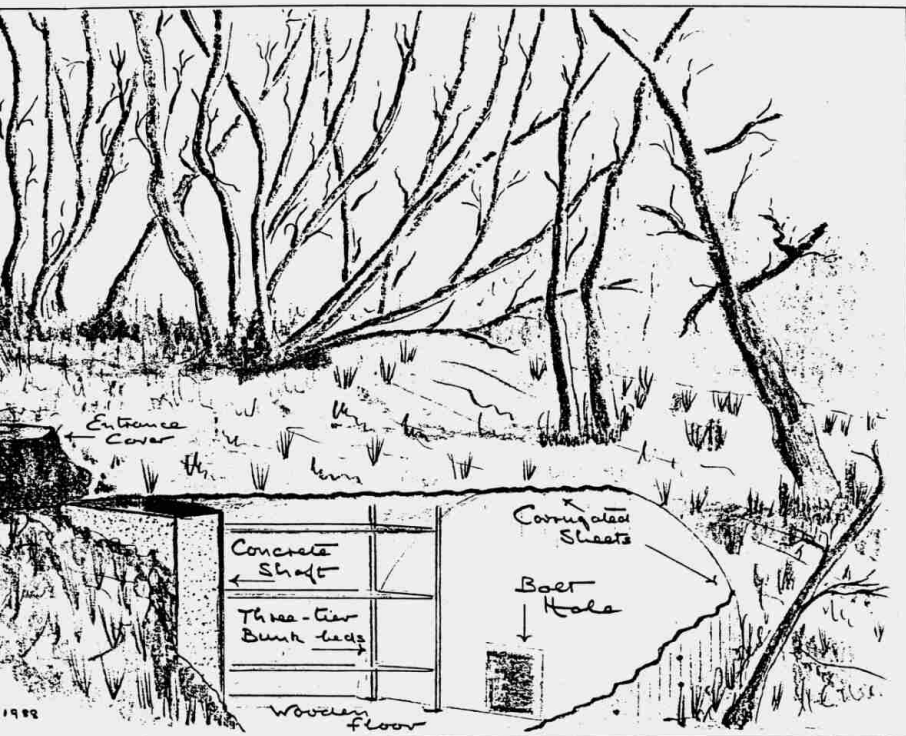


Secrets

# Early stumbled secret . . .



△ Auxiliary Units disbanded in November 1944, and the secret resistance groups faded into obscurity, their equipment discarded, some returned to store, some were thrown into lofts, barns and ponds. Pictured is: Sam Osborne looking down into the entrance shaft and pondering on what might have been.

△ A VEIL of secrecy was drawn around the Drellingore bunker that was built underground in a small coppice of ash, hazel and hornbeam. The anonymity of the six men who used it was of paramount importance and they were officially regarded as 'expendable'.

## The men who formed secret defence squads

**DICK BODY** a farmer, of Hope Farm, Snargate, on Romney Marsh, well remembers the Auxiliary Units.

Recalls Mr Body: "It was in 1941 that I was approached to find six more men to undertake a special job in the Snargate area. The emphasis was on good local knowledge."

"I took my party to The Garth at Bilting where we met a captain, with some 20 men, who were to help equip and train us."

Four patrols were established — Mushroom, Truffle, Toadstool and Fungus.

"Contractors soon moved in and built three watertight chambers in the Marsh and a fourth on the edge of hills between Lympe and Aldington."

"These 16 foot long, 8 feet wide chambers were known as observation bases, with an entrance (or

exit) at each end, bunks for six, tables, lockers, a 50 gallon water tank and an elsan closet."

At times, says Mr Body, they worked with captured German weapons, handled gelignite, and learnt the best places to blow up enemy tanks and other vehicles and how to destroy stores.

"One of the most important lessons was how to destroy without the enemy realising it was sabotage," he says.

Mr Body says as the war went on and D-Day approached the idea was brought forward that the volunteer saboteurs should be dropped by parachute over France to help the Resistance Forces.

"This idea was squashed as we were only trained to know our own locality," he says.

During 1943 the War Office began disbanding the secret defence squads — Snargate OB is registered an ancient monument.

thrown with accuracy would stick to the vehicle and explode.

Using delay fuses and explosive 'pencils' of infinite ingenuity enabled them to use flammable material to destroy supply dumps and lines of communication without it being later recognised as sabotage.

Incendiaries were preferred as they made little noise and as most of their work would have been done during the hours of darkness they wore smoked-glass goggles during training.

### Demolition

While the emphasis of all the training was particularly centered on the destruction of fuel and ammunition dumps — essential for a German bridgehead, they were also trained to blow-up specially designated buildings in their area.

Hockley Sole, near the crossroads at Standen in the Alkham Valley, was one of the first ear-marked for demolition to deny its use to German

forces. The Folkestone viaduct, a famous landmark which carries trains between Dover and Folkestone, was also a target for sabotage.

The veil of secrecy drawn around the Drellingore bunker, held not only the bunk-beds, lamp and sabotage equipment, but also the anonymity of six men who were officially considered outside the rules of the Geneva Convention.

Had they been captured they would have been shot without any hesitation for, as far as the British Government were concerned, they were regarded as expendable. Had their cover been 'blown' their usefulness would have been at an end.

### Neat lawns

Sam Osborne had stood beneath an oak tree which was on a hillside that sloped to the sun and the south.

A field almost at his feet was bearing corn and he was proud of the swaying heads shimmering in the evening breeze.

Below him stood the old farmhouse overlooking one of

the fairest views in Kent. Behind him was a coppice of ash, hazel and hornbeam, beneath which was the secret bunker, completely hidden from prying eyes.

Framed through overhanging branches he could just see in the distance the dark gables of Hockley Sole, which stood in neat lawns surrounded by flower beds, ponds and statuettes.

Its architecture was reminiscent of Elizabethan days and the high north wing stood out in black shadow on moonlit nights and had a charm and mystery about it.

### Immobile

It was a warm, beautiful summer's evening, and Ida Bailey decided to take her dog for a walk up the winding bridle path.

Sam froze into immobility. The dog came towards him. Sam walked out of the coppice onto the bridle path. He greeted Ida and coolly explained that he had been looking for a fox's lair.

But the inquisitive Ida was not easily convinced.

After all, Sam was wearing half a uniform, no hat or

insignia, and was carrying a revolver strapped to his waist.

Such a chance meeting was most unfortunate and has the most serious connotation that anyone could imagine.

Sam walked along the bridle path with Ida, away from the coppice. Had Ida followed the dog into the coppice — Sam mused, she might have stumbled upon the secret hideout.

An hour later Lieutenant Lines had been told of the incident. Lines knew the importance of secrecy as did each member of the group. Their lives depended on it.

Lines suggested that if the Germans invaded, Ida would — regrettably — have to be shot!

In fact she celebrated her 92nd birthday in May 1989 . . .

Today, the Drellingore bunker has crumbled beyond recognition and nothing remains except the concrete shaft, although — perhaps — the tenuous images of what might have been still linger.

of Stombers Lane, wartime historian.

# 'Liable' band who risked death if captured