

# Wartime mission to blow up Port Talbot

IT IS a secret that Dillwyn Thomas has kept for 70 years; how he was under orders to blow his home town "to smithereens" if the Germans invaded during the Second World War.

The 88-year-old farmer has spoken for the first time about his role in a top secret army unit which was to be the last line of defence in case of a Nazi invasion.

When he was an 18-year-old farm worker, Mr Thomas was trained to blow the steelworks in his local town "sky high" and then start a guerrilla war in the hills. He was part of a covert army, known as the Auxiliary Units, created on the orders of Winston Churchill.

A network of local groups across the country was given the task of mounting guerrilla resistance against occupation.

Mr Thomas, from Margam, near Port Talbot, South Wales, said: "We were told to blow-up the steelworks - we were told to blow Port Talbot to smithereens.

"We had access to every weapon you could imagine - daggers for prodding the enemy, guns for shooting the enemy, explosives for blowing up the enemy. They were kept in a secret underground

bunker that only we knew about.

"If the Germans landed and it looked as though they were making inroads, we were to blow the steelworks, oil refinery, train line, and anything else which could have been of any use to them - then lay low in the countryside.

"We were not meant to fight the Germans head-on - there were nowhere near enough of us to make a difference and we weren't sufficiently armed.

"But if we could slow up their progress, then the hope was that we could tie them up with ambushes and booby traps.

"Of course I'm delighted that it never came to that but I must admit that there's a tiny part of me which is disappointed that I never got to test my training in battle."

Formed in 1940, the Auxiliary Units consisted of between four and eight men, usually recruited from the Home Guard. Like 3,500 others, Mr Thomas was trained in guerrilla warfare on weekend courses at Coleshill House near Swindon, Wilts.

He has written about his wartime role in a book called *A View From the Main Ring*.