

THE SECRETS OF GIBBET OAK

Saboteurs in wait for Nazi invasion

Auction bidders pay £3,000 for war memorabilia

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Documents from a top secret Second World War unit have sold for £3,400 at auction.

The pieces, which included bomb-making manuals disguised as calendars and fertiliser guides, belonged to the late Louis Pugh.

Mr Pugh was a member of an auxiliary unit based at Gibbet Oak Farm, Tenterden.

The unit's brief was to sabotage the enemy in the event of a German invasion.

His belongings were sent for auction by his family.

Jeannette May, of Eastbourne Auction Rooms, which conducted the sale, said the bomb manuals went for £1,020 each and the total sale made £3,400.

She added: "It is a shame that the collection has been broken up with pieces going to different buyers. The sale made what we were expecting it to."

Research into the Gibbet Oak unit has been carried out by Phil



An auxiliary unit like those that operated in Kent

Picture: Donald Brown/Mrs Nora Trego/Coleshill Auxiliary Research Team

Evans, from the Coleshill Auxiliary Research Team (CART). Coleshill, in Wiltshire, was where unit leaders went for training.

The main training for Kent was done at Bilting, near Wye.

Mr Evans became interested in the subject after hearing about the secret units and meeting an intelligence officer.

The units were the brainchild of Winston Churchill and were so secret that members' families did not know about them.

Mr Evans said that the Kent units were the first to be set up

and Gibbet Oak was formed in 1940, initially called 12 Corps Observational Unit.

"People confuse the auxiliary units with the Home Guard but they were totally separate," he said.

"They were so secret that, if the Germans invaded, Mr Pugh and the other members would have had to leave for their operational bases without saying goodbye to their families.

"They had supplies for two weeks and their job was to sabotage and disrupt things like German fuel and ammunition



Two of the pieces from the Gibbet Oak auxiliary unit, a mirror mounted into a brass tube at 45 degrees so the user could check around corners, left, and a booby trap pressure switch; right, a document on bomb-making given to secret auxiliary unit members



dumps. They were supposed to hinder the Germans until British troops arrived."

Once the threat of invasion had passed, the units started to be wound down and Gibbet Oak was finally disbanded in October, 1944.

Mr Pugh was only a member for a year until 1941, when he left to join the forces.

He was one of a six-man unit hidden in woodland with a hydraulic entrance fitted by local garage owner and patrol leader Ray Smith.

The other members from 1940

to 1941 were P.M. Sanderson, Gordon Orpin, H.W. Bashford and Jack Reed.

From 1941, the unit was made up of Mr Smith, Jack Moss, Bill Hook, Mr Sanderson, Mr Reed and Mr Bashford. None are still alive.

➔ For more information, go to www.coleshillhouse.com/gibbet-oak-auxiliary-unit-patrol.php. Anyone with information about the auxiliary units is asked email cartkent@gmail.com or phone 08720 459940.



Louis Pugh, a member of an auxiliary unit in Tenterden

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