

Walter Denslow – Bovey Patrol

written testimony (transcribed A Chatterton CART)

“When war was declared, we, like many others, joined the Home Guard. After a short time two officers came to see us, they were looking for men who knew the area and had a knowledge of field craft.

We were chosen to form a Patrol of seven men (Bovey Patrol). The next move was to find a cave to sleep in. We found a small one but after (unintelligible) it was too small. We were then informed we could have a Nissen hut like the army was using. We put it underground in a wood called Morning Cover [Morganhayes Covert – AC]. After weeks of work it was ready. It had two trap doors but there was no sign of them on the surface.

We were then supplied (?) and taught to use machine guns and explosives, to make bombs and use time pencils and where to place them on tanks etc.

We did night patrols twice weekly. Then we were taken to a place to throw live bombs. Namely mills bombs, sticky bombs, flask bombs and (unintelligible) bombs. This was at Five Banks (TBC).

We were taught by Mr House (Lt Howes? – AC) the position of the stars which was helpful in night patrols.

We had two accidents while training. We were climbing (?) the bridge over the Axe on the Colyford Road, when one of our chaps fell backwards, from the top of the bridge. He was taken to the Drs and he was badly injured.

The second accident happened while training to throw live Mills bombs over a small hill. One did not go over the top, it came down towards us. We were trained to fall flat on our faces if this happened which we did, with our heads towards the bomb. Thankfully no one was injured. We believe the bomb rolled into a hole which was thankfully (?) there.

At night we had to try and get into camps which were stationed around that area and out again without being caught, leaving a small fire-work to let them know we had called.

One night we were picked up by the army and taken to a place near Exmoor. There we were given a reference map with a dot on it, told to reach it, which was a soldier's camp, in the middle of the night, using the stars to help us that night. There were seven (?) Patrols, about half found their target.

There is one small point I would like to mention. If we were stopped by the police (unintelligible) we (unintelligible) did not have to (unintelligible) (unintelligible) that carried a telephone number which they were told to ring.

If the Germans had invaded we had to go into our OB, stay there until they had passed over us and then come out by night and destroy everything we could.

Yes it was part of Churchill's secret army. They told us we had no more than a fortnight at the most.