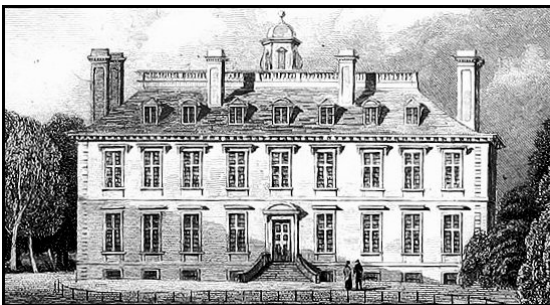


A TIMELY REMINDER



Every day above Selmeaton a Spitfire can be seen and heard that flies daily from Biggin Hill to Beachy Head and back, taking enthusiasts for a thrill of a lifetime in its double cockpit. This year is the 80th Anniversary year of the Battle of Britain when great air battles between Spitfires, Hurricanes and Messerschmitts of the Luftwaffe were taking place over our southern villages and towns. Had this air battle been lost by the RAF, then the invasion plans of Hitler in 1940 (*Operation Sealion*) would have swung into action, leaving only the Home Guard, to fight on the beaches. Amongst these regulars were an elite, highly secret and well trained group known as '*The Auxiliary Units*' who would become known as '*scallywags*' and later as The British Resistance.

These men were recruited often because they were gamekeepers, farmers or even poachers who were used to handling firearms and knew the local land, and were able to live off it. These volunteers wore distinctive badges on their uniforms, in this area the number 203 was worn on their shoulders.



Coleshill House Wiltshire



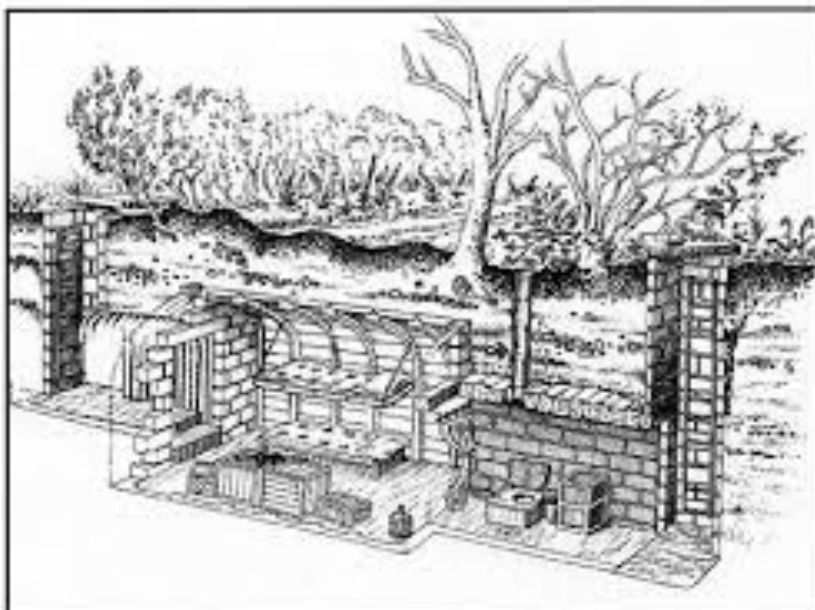
Tottenham Manor Sussex

Additional training was undertaken during the weekend at Coleshill House near Highworth, Wiltshire and Tottenham Manor, Small Dole, West Sussex. Here they would be trained in unarmed combat, assassination, demolition and sabotage.

We tend to think of the Home Guard as a group of old soldiers from the First World War along with some local farmers and a teenager or two, practising drill with broom handles.



We still have one of those '*Home Guard Teenagers*' living in Selmeston, Len Pike now in his 90's, who enlisted as a private and became a marksman who first told me of these units. (you can read his story on the village website :-[www.selmeston.info/home guard](http://www.selmeston.info/home_guard)) When I interviewed Len about his time in the Home Guard he told me about some local men, who after the war, were revealed as part of this secret unit. Neither Len or his other companions in the Home Guard had any idea about these units at the time. In fact it was only in the late 70's/80's that some information was released from the National Archives regarding their activities, and only in the last few years the identity of those involved was revealed. In many cases family members suspected little, and were never told, and are probably still not fully aware of their activities today. Churchill initiated these units in May 1940 and appointed Colonel Colin Gubbins to organise them. He became experienced in guerrilla warfare during the Russian Civil War and the Anglo-Irish War of 1919-21, and enlisted Captain Peter Fleming (elder brother of Ian) and Captain Mike Calvert who were both experienced in deception type work. Certain locations were selected in this area and the Royal Engineers were tasked with constructing deep, elaborately- concealed underground observation posts (OB's) along with ammunition stores, having a camouflaged entrance, and emergency escape tunnel.



Their mission was to attack the invading German forces, assassinate the officers and blow up the railways, fuel dumps, and aircraft. Their bases contained plastic explosives, incendiary devices and enough food and water (along with whiskey) to last just two weeks. It was thought that these bases would be discovered within 12 days of any invasion, and members of these units were instructed not to be taken alive.



The units were stood down on the 3rd December 1944 after the D-Day invasion was fully secured. Some of these 'Auxiliaries' who were young and fit enough went on to volunteer for other special units such as the SAS and Parachute Regiment, having had the special training. Details of these men were made public a few years ago, and are recorded here:-

Abbots Wood Patrol (Known as Folkington) - Base Located at Abbots Wood then moved to Folkington Wood

Lieutenant Thomas Henry Dinnis (7.3.16 - 22.3.1983) Patrol Leader and Intelligence Officer
Milton Court Milton St, Alfriston - later at Mays Farm Selmeston - Farmer

Private Arthur Desmond Dinnis (1922- 4.3.43) - later joined RAF as an Air Gunner killed in action with 83 squadron whilst bombing Essen Germany)
Milton Court Milton Street, Alfriston - Farmer and cousin to Thomas Dinnis

Private Sidney Robert Dumbrell (23.9.14 - 2.12.2005)
Otham Court Farmhouse Polegate - Gamekeeper

Private William Arthur Longhurst (22.2.1905 - 1980)
5 Downsway Berwick - Builders Labourer

Private John Leonard Raymond (15.10.12 - 16.5.1992)
Wooton Farm, Folkington - Dairy Farmer and ARP First Aid Driver

Private Percy Richard Robinson (11.1.1899 - 1985)
Burgh Hill Cottage Chiddenly and May's Corner Chalvington - Cowman

Private John Daniel Talbot (16.8.1906 - 5.12.1998)
Valence Estate Westerham Kent - Gardener

Private Robert Edwin Wright (10.7.1905 - 8.2.1963)
Gatewood Wilmington - Woodman and small holder

Bishopstone Patrol (Known as Badger 1) - Their Base was located at Bishopstone Manor Farm and they also used a disused water tank at Hobbs Heath near Rathfinny Farm, Alfriston.

Sergeant Lionel Harry Mawe Willett (20.11.188 - 5.10.1956) Patrol Leader
The Cottage Bishopstone Manor Farm, Bishopstone - Farmer
Served with Sussex Yeomanry in WW1 Awarded the British Empire Medal in 1944

Private Reginald Jonathan Clark (12.1.1907 - 1971)
19 Lower Berwick, then 140 Morton Farm Seaford - Farm Carter

Private Daniel Leslie Paul (13.2.1895 - 13.3.1980)
New Farm House Chyngton Seaford - Farmer

Private Frank Percival Turner (27.6.1902 -1979)
129 White Row Bishopstone - Farm Labourer

Private Frederick White (30.7.1895 -)
135 Bishopstone Nr Seaford Farm Worker - Stockman Served in Sussex Regiment during WW1

Private Cyril Edward Woolmer (23.8.1923 - 3.7.2007)
11 Hampden Gardens South Heighton - Farm Worker Tractor Driver

Firle Patrol (Known as Badger 2) Their base was located on the lower level of Firle Plantation Wood, access was by lifting a small tree trunk to the space below containing 3 bunks with a stove, but it was discovered in 1942 by Canadian Troops who ransacked it, stealing food and the emergency whiskey! This forced the patrol to move to Badger 1 base.

Sergeant William Arthur 'Bill' Webber (29.8.1908 - 2001) Patrol Leader
51a The Street Firle - Market Gardner Foreman

Private John Thomas Cornwall (5.2.1895 - 1966)
21 The Street Firle then Burgh Lane Firle - Painter and Decorator - In WW1 a Gunner with the Royal Field Artillery

Private Tom Smith (13.3.1913 - 2006)
20 The Street Firle - Market Gardener

Private Herbert John Henry Pilbeam (13.6.1887 - 1950)
Lodge Gate, Firle Park, Firle - Farm Labourer

Bill Webber kept a diary of the Patrol's exercises from 1941 until the stand down of the units on December 3rd 1944 (6 months after the Invasion of Europe in June). This of course was forbidden, but luckily it gives an insight into their activities, such as creeping up to the Canadian Army Camp at Seaford, and planting a small charge without detection, and instructions on how to silently kill using the Commando dagger.

It's worth remembering that all patrol members had to keep up their day jobs as well as 'keeping mum' regarding their attachment to these units. They should not be forgotten as our last line of defence during WW2.

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