

WW2 BUNKER USED BY CHURCHILL'S "SECRET ARMY"
UNEARTHED IN SCOTLAND

BRITISH AUXILIARY WERE TRAINED TO SABOTAGE THE ENEMY IN CASE OF A GERMAN INVASION

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THE UNDERGROUND BUNKER IS ABOUT 23 FEET LONG AND 10 FEET WIDE



March 10, 2020

If the Nazis had invaded Great Britain during World War II, they would have faced an uprising of scallywags—specifically, the Auxiliary Units also known as Winston Churchill's "secret army." These elite fighters, chosen for their knowledge of the surrounding landscape, were among the United Kingdom's last line of defense. Tasked with sabotaging enemy invaders, the men were trained to hide out in underground bunkers, lying in wait as the Nazis drove past before emerging to wreak havoc behind German lines.



Researchers from Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) unearthed one of these long-overlooked bunkers while conducting tree-felling operations last month, according to a press release.

"This discovery gives us an insight into one of the most secretive units ... operating during WWII," FLS archaeologist Matt Ritchie tells the Scotsman's Alison Campsie. **"It's quite rare to find these bunkers as their locations were always kept secret—most were buried or lost."**

Throughout the war, auxiliary forces dug **500 secret bunkers across Britain**. Per BBC News, these hideaways—accessed via a hatch entrance and left, if need be, by a rear escape hatch—measured about 23 feet long and 10 feet wide. Stocked with enough weapons and supplies to last around five weeks, the bunkers were equipped to house at least seven soldiers at a time.

Most of these bunkers' specific locations are lost to history, as the men who built them signed the Official Secrets Act, which prohibited them from talking about their assignments for decades.

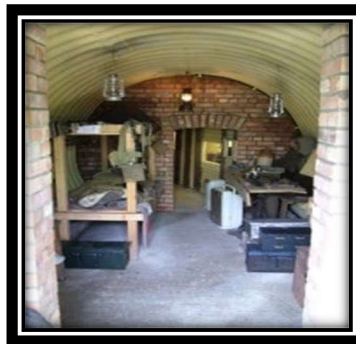
“We would never talk about what we were trained to do,” Trevor Miners, who was 16 years old when he volunteered with the Auxiliary Units in Oxfordshire, told BBC News in 2013. “One of my units was even sent a white feather by someone who thought he was a coward for not going out to fight, but we knew different.”



*AOC Archaeology took laser scans of the bunker, producing computer models of its location in the forest.
Courtesy of Forestry and Land Scotland)*

Auxiliary teams were made up of locals who knew the land well, including gamekeepers, foresters, and poachers, according to FLS. Per BBC News’ Nick Tarver, members were trained to destroy railway lines and enemy supplies, make homemade explosives, and carry out assassinations. They learned how to fashion weapons out of household objects and received instruction manuals disguised as mundane objects like fertilizer booklets and calendars. (See part 2 below)

In the event of invasion, auxiliary soldiers had an estimated life expectancy of just 10 to 14 days—in part, perhaps, because the bunkers were not as hidden as their inhabitants would have liked. On several occasions, courting couples strolling through the woods stumbled upon the men’s hideouts, forcing them to relocate.



Reconstructed Image

Still, historian Tom Sykes told BBC News in 2013, that the main factor in auxiliary units’ projected mortality rates was the fact that these soldiers “were signing up to a suicide mission.”

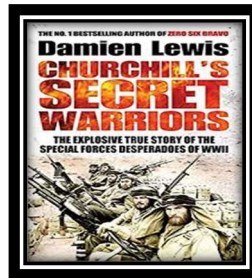
Added Sykes, “There was no way out for them, they were going to be caught and tortured, they were ready to kill themselves before allowing themselves to be captured.”

FLS survey technicians Kit Rodger and Kenny Bogle discovered the entrance to the bunker while surveying the area for heritage sites ahead of tree-felling operations.

“The bunker was missing from our records, but as a child, we used to play in these woods and visit the bunker, so I knew it was there,” says Rodger in the FLS statement. “With only vague memories of more than forty years ago, Kenny and I searched through head-high bracken until we stumbled on a shallow trench that led to the bunker door. Only a small opening remained, but we could just make out the blast wall in the darkness beyond.”

None of the beds, stoves, tables, or other supplies once used by soldiers survived, though timbers left on the floor may have once been part of bedframes, per the *Scotsman*.

For now, the bunker's historical importance means its precise location will remain a secret—except, that is, to a select group of bats. Recognizing the bunker's use as an artificial cave, FLS has installed boxes for the mammals to roost in.

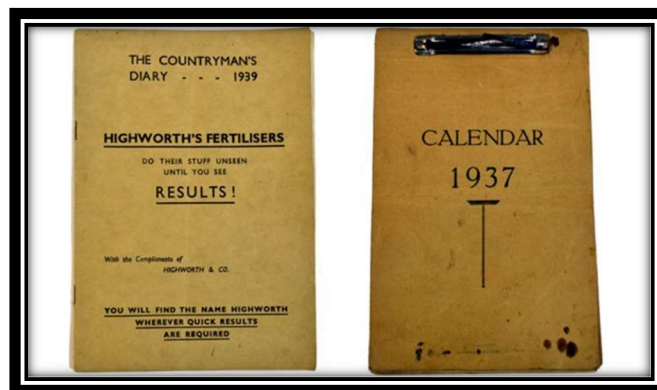


PART TWO

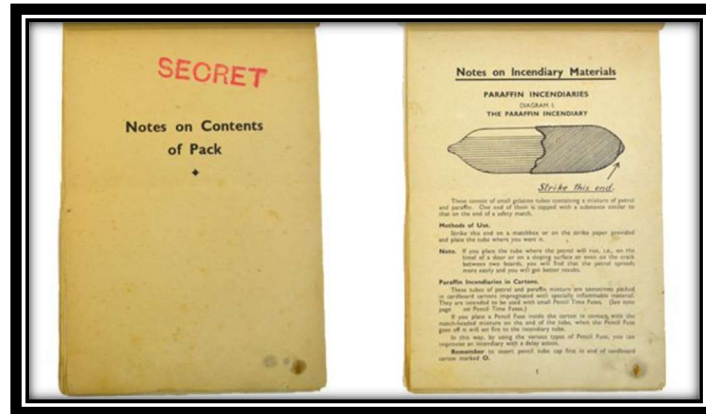
WW2 BOMB MANUAL FOR CHURCHILL'S SECRET ARMY



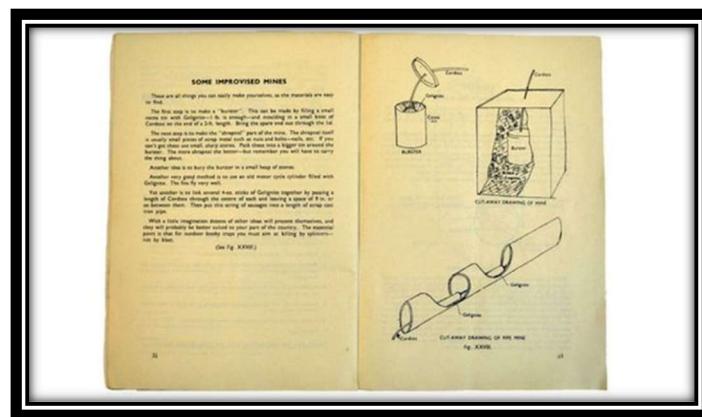
24 OCT 2013



At first glance, the manuals appear to be a mundane countryside diary and calendar.



However, inside there is top-secret information on how to use a variety of explosives.



There is also guidance on how to use everyday household items to fashion bombs.

They were Winston Churchill's "secret army", tasked with causing havoc behind enemy lines had the Nazis invaded during World War II. But keeping the identities of the Auxiliary Unit members a secret was crucial to their survival. One of the ways was by hiding bomb-making manuals in plain sight, disguised as old calendars and diaries.

Its cover promises agricultural fertilizers that "do their stuff unseen until you see results".

But turn the page and a comprehensive guide on where to plant explosives and how to make your bombs is revealed.

The Countryman's Diary 1939 is one of two manuals being auctioned later which shed light on the training and abilities of the guerrilla units.

Sponsored by Highworth's Fertilizers - a fictional company named after the Wiltshire town near where the units trained - the diary advises on how to set booby traps and kill German troops using household items.

It was owned by Louis Pugh who commanded a unit in Tenterden, Kent.

The units were formed in 1940 following the Dunkirk evacuation when Churchill became convinced that the invasion was imminent.

The cells, recruited mainly from men of the Home Guard, were trained to operate independently and sabotage German supply lines as they invaded.

The trained killers - who would have become the British resistance movement - were also expected to carry out assassinations.



Louis Pugh joined the RAF after his unit was disbanded.

KILLING THROUGH SPLINTERS

The essential point is that for outdoor booby traps you must aim at killing by splinters - not by blast; ...The Countryman's Diary 1939.

As the owner of a chemical factory, Pugh was deemed suitable to lead a unit that would specialize in using explosives.

After training in Wiltshire, he recruited his unit from trusted local men, built a base at Gibbets Oak Farm, and stocked it with weaponry.

However, according to Jeannette May, senior valuer at Eastbourne Auction Rooms where the manuals are being sold, it had to be abandoned quickly.

"It was discovered by a couple of courting lovers who went past and found it," she said.

"Pugh took everything back to his house and stored it, while they built a second base.

"However, he had a young family at the time and was worried about the repercussions, for his family and village, if the Germans invaded and discovered it.

Today, the manuals are being sold alongside photographs, three booby trap mechanisms, and several medals. As the rarest items, the manuals are expected to fetch the most, between £500 and £800.

SECRET UNTIL DEATH



Image caption: Three booby trap mechanisms held by Mr. Pugh are also being sold.

Mrs. May said the mundane nature of the covers would have been thought about at some length.

She said: "Perhaps they chose 1937 as the date as they imagine a German sifting through possessions in 1940 would ignore it."

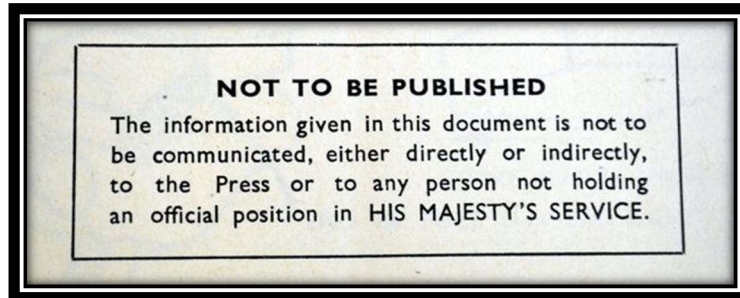
Inside, there is matter-of-fact advice on how to kill effectively using homemade bombs in cocoa tins.

It reads: "The essential point is that for outdoor booby traps, you must aim at killing by splinters - not by blast. Another very good method is to use an old motorcycle cylinder filled with gelignite. The fins fly very well."

After the threat of invasion passed, the units were disbanded, with Pugh joining the RAF and becoming Flt Lt Pugh. He died in 1984.

Mrs May said the items had been handed to the auction house by his stepson, but little else is known about his time with his unit.

"Many of them kept it a secret until their deaths - they just wouldn't talk about it," she said.



One of Churchill's Private Army's patrols

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