

COPY



BLANDFORD FORUM MUSEUM TRUST

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From Dr Michael Le Bas, Deputy Curator and Archivist
www.blandfordtownmuseum.org

Trevor Warrick
Planning Officer
North Dorset District Council
Nordon
Salisbury Road
Blandford Forum
Dorset DT11 7LL

2 January 2014

Dear Trevor Warrick,

With the passage of time, I fear you may be overlooking the heritage aspects of the current Bryanston Park house-building proposals.

As the Blandford Town Museum historian and author of 'The World War II Defences of Blandford Forum', recently published and enclosed, I must protest against the continued proposal to permit building a row of houses that obscures the line of defences built when Hitler's army threatened invasion of this county in 1940. The defences in question comprise the ditch and wall of the ha-ha built by the Portman family some 300 years ago that were converted into an anti-tank ditch in 1940 as illustrated in my booklet on page 12, and are now of national historic interest.

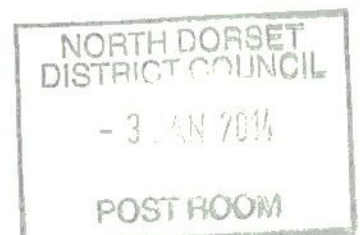
Not only have these anti-tank defences and attendant pill-boxes been given Grade II protection by English Heritage, but this conversion is unique. Nowhere else in this country has a ha-ha been converted into an anti-tank ditch, doubling the historic interest of this particular occurrence. Visitors to Blandford come to see this; visitors that the Town Council is keen to encourage. Also I conduct school and other parties wanting to learn about these items of Blandford history – especially when it is recalled that in 1940 Churchill declared "that Blandford be designated a Tank Island to be defended at all costs".

The pill-box and ha-ha also feature prominently in the sites to be visited during Dorset Architectural Heritage Week each September. Its popularity may be measured by the fact that visitors have to book in advance in order to control numbers.

Viewing these features would be drastically impaired if houses were built along the line of the ha-ha, and I ask you to preserve our heritage by not furthering the plans that would obscure it.

Yours sincerely

copies to: Cllr Bob Brannigan, Mayor of Blandford
Liz Goodall, Chief Executive, North Dorset District Council

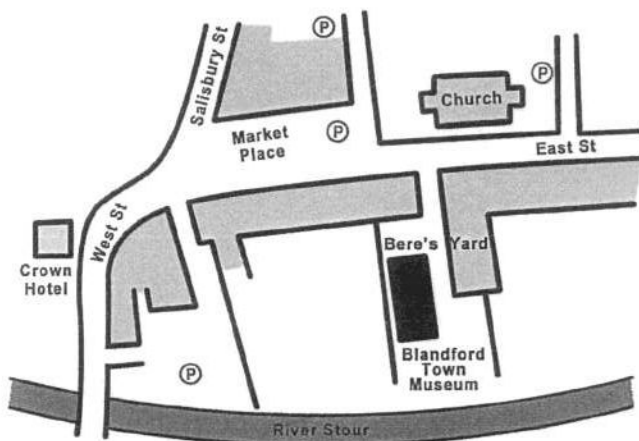




The author standing in front of his pill box in the anti-tank ditch

Blandford Town Museum exhibits and archives local history and prehistory of Blandford and surrounding villages. Permanent exhibits include reconstructions of local businesses, households and schools from Victorian and Georgian times and the World War II defences of Blandford. Associated museum clubs exhibit a scale model of Blandford Railway Station, a Victorian Garden and displays of local art, oral histories.

A photo and documentary archive is available on all these subjects.



Open Monday to Saturday, 10.30 am to 4.30 pm from April until October. Free entry.

Curator: Dr Peter Andrews
www.blandfordtownmuseum.org

THE WORLD WAR II DEFENCES OF BLANDFORD FORUM



by
Lt M.J. Le Bas, RE
and
Major E.H.T. Schmidt, RE

LOCAL HISTORY PUBLICATIONS available at the Museum

1. The seventeenth century token coinage of Blandford Forum, by Benjamin G. Cox. 1983, reprinted 2007
 2. The Hospital & Chapel of St. Leonard, Blandford Forum, by B.G. Cox, with addendum by M.J. Le Bas, 2007
 3. A Thousand years of Blandford History, by B.G. Cox with additions by M.J. Le Bas, 2nd edition 2003
 4. One Hundred Blandford Worthies, by V.J. Adams, B.G. Cox and M.J. Le Bas, 2nd edition 2012
 5. Blandford Inns, by Victor Adams, 1984, reprinted 2007
 6. Kingston Lacy: a brief account of the manor and some of its lords, by B.G.Cox, 1986
 7. The Great Fire of Blandford Forum 1731, by B.G. Cox, 2nd edition 1993
 8. Old Blandford trades and industries, by B.G. Cox, 1992 20pp
 9. Blandford Forum (Thomas Hardy's 'Shottesford'): a town guide and potted history for visitors, by B.G. Cox. 1987, reprinted 2007, 2011
 10. Memories of Old Blandford, by Charles K. Lavington, 1988, reprinted 2009
 11. The World War Defences of Blandford Forum: by E.H.R. Schmidt, 1987 (out-of-print), new edition by M.J. Le Bas, 2012
 12. Blandford Forum Town Museum: The First 21 Years, by Pam Le Bas, 2007
- The Parish Church of SS. Peter and Paul, Blandford Forum, by B.G. Cox, 1989, reprinted 2005
- The Georgian Garden: An Eighteenth Century Nurseryman's Catalogue. by J K Galpine with introduction by John Harvey, reprinted 2009
- History of Bryanston: Collected by Women's Institute. by Peter and Hazel Whitworth, 1986
- The Saxon-Norman history of Blandford 'Forum' by M.J. Le Bas, in preparation

The World War II defences of Blandford Forum

A narrative of the military and civil defences
prepared in Blandford Forum during World War II
had the German Army invaded Britain in 1940

by

Lt M.J. Le Bas, RE

and

Major E.H.T. Schmidt, RE

Revised edition 2012
Revised with corrections 2013

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First edition published in 1987

The structures: listed in groups

CUBE (ID: S0000117) Deer Park Lodge, off Whitecliff Mill Sreet, Condition: Good (Grid ref: ST 8835 0665)(Grid ref: ST 8832 0658)(Grid ref: ST 8838 0668)

CUBE (ID: S0003139 in the garden of No. 12 Park Lands, Blandford, Condition: Good (Grid ref: ST 8820 0658)

ANTI TANK DITCH (ID: S0000125), Blandford Forum SW area, Condition: Good (Grid ref: ST 8820 0659)(Grid ref: ST 8834 0636)

PILLBOX (TYPE FW3/26)(ID: S0003143), in garden of 9, Park Lands, Bryanston Street, Blandford, Condition: Good (Grid ref: ST 8828 0650)

PILLBOX (ID: S0003142), in Telephone Exchange grounds, Blandford, Condition: Fair (Grid ref: ST 88301 06395)

CUBE (ID: S0000124), in the grounds of Blandford Forum telephone exchange, by the entrance, Condition: Good (Grid ref: St 8833 0638)

LOOPHOLED WALL (ID: S0003144), in the wall of the lawn of the Crown Hotel, Blandford, Condition: Fair (Grid ref: ST 88293 06254)

CUBE (ID: S0000123), behind the wall of the Crown Hotel lawn, Blandford, Condition: Good (Grid ref: ST 88324 06224)

CUBE (ID:S0000121), located on S verge of the road off West Street near the Crown Hotel, Condition: Good (Grid ref: ST 88342 0640)

Appendix 2

In the Grade II listing given by English Heritage, the structures are described as given below.

In support of their preservation, English Heritage describe the entire structure as providing a strong reminder of the nation's response to the threat of war on home ground, and of the importance of the nodal point at Blandford Forum for the anticipated defence of the country. The principal reasons stated for it meriting Grade II status are:

1. Intactness: the structure has survived mostly intact
2. Rarity: it is an unusual example of an adapted and re-enforced ha-ha in order to create an anti-tank trap
3. Group Value: it forms part of an important group of defensive structures known as the Blandford Forum Anti-Tank Island
4. Historic interest: in being part of a key World War II military program of inland defence works, it provides a poignant visual reminder of the impact of world events on Blandford Forum and the wider landscape of the Southern Command defence area.

The concluding remarks by English Heritage are that the WWII defences in Crown Meadow form part of the complex defensive arrangements put in place to protect this important nodal point at Blandford Forum. Given their good survival and historic significance, they merit listing. Dated 29 March 2011, confirmed 5 January 2012.

The land adjacent to the ha-ha is currently owned by The Crown Estate which received it in lieu of death duties back in the 1920s following the deaths of several Lord Portmans over a period of only a few years.

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5. HEADQUARTERS (H.Q.)

These were located as follows:-

- | | | |
|----|---|-----------|
| a. | Operational H.Q. - Blandford Anti-Tank Island in THE GREYHOUND HOTEL, having been first located in DALE HOUSE, SALISBURY STREET in 1940. | 13
33A |
| b. | Local Defence Volunteers (L.D.V.), in the old workhouse - now CASTLEMAN HOUSE in MAY/JUNE 1940 only, following the Radio Broadcast by ANTHONY EDEN, then Secretary of State for War, on 14th May, 1940. By 20th May 250,000 volunteers had been enrolled nationally. The L.D.V. was re-designated the HOME GUARD in JULY 1940. | 34 |
| c. | H.Q. - The Home Guard in the SCOUT HUT, Eagle House Gardens. 2 of the 4 original Anderson Shelters used as stores in 1940 - 1946 are still used by the scouts in 1987. (The Home Guard Commander was Major L.C. CHERRY, and his brother, Captain Roger CHERRY was Adjutant). By 1941 the U.K. strength of the Home Guard was 750,000 - all volunteers well armed and fully organised. | 35 |

6. ADDITIONAL ROAD AND OTHER OBSTACLES.

- | | | |
|----|---|---------------------------|
| a. | Sockets would have been prepared in the main roads to receive very substantial lengths of Steel Rails to complete the perimeter Anti-Tank Obstacles and these were located as shown by an x. There could have been others not recorded here. | x
with light green pin |
| b. | Barbed Wire Entanglements would have been constructed behind the various Anti-Tank Defences, but these were all removed at the end of the War. However, one of the steel 5ft 7ins high 4 eye screw pickets used for this purpose was found in the garden of Bryanston Cottage behind the Anti-Tank Ditch there (map ref 7), and this is now on display in the BLANDFORD FORUM MUSEUM. | Blandford Museum |

(iv)	At the cross roads Salisbury St/Damory Street (Probably large enough to take an Anti-Tank Gun).	24
(v)	In the wall at the junction of Damory Street and Alexandra Road.	25
(vi)	There were probably others as well, which have not been identified.	?
(vii)	There were also 4 circular "MORCON" concrete firing points used as Pillboxes - 7ft in diameter x 4'6" high x 4" thick located in the Railway Embankment by the River Stour and these are now stored together at the south side of East Street Car Park.	26
A.	AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS - (A.R.P.)	
a.	Trenches for use as Civilian Air Raid shelters were dug at:-	
(i)	THE FAIR FIELD - now built over, between FAIRFIELD BUNGALOWS AND CHURCHILL ROAD.	27
(ii)	On the south side of PARK ROAD - now built over.	28
(iii)	In DEER PARK west of White Cliff Mill Street - now filled in!	29
(iv)	On the West side of the Recreation ground - now filled in also!	30
(v)	Many cellars were strengthened for use as Air Raid Shelters, at DALE HOUSE with a capacity of 100 people also used as a Headquarters, PARKERS, THE GOOD LIFE, all in SALISBURY STREET, at BAILEYS in The Plocks, also LEGION HOUSE, to mention a few.	Various
b.	The water supply	
(i)	Many old wells were re-opened and a plentiful supply of excellent water was found.	Various
(ii)	A large Emergency water supply tank was located in THE PLOCKS.	304
c.	Approval was given by the BLANDFORD GARRISON COMMANDER for the use of the south paddock of DALE HOUSE in SALISBURY STREET as a BURIAL GROUND for casualties in the BLANDFORD ANTI-TANK ISLAND. Fortunately it was never needed, or was it ever used as such! This is now a Car Park and Clinic.	31
d.	A mortuary was established in the Chapel of the old herial ground in Damory Street. This was used for crashed Aircrew, both Allied and German.	32

Preface

This is a revised and more comprehensive account than that of the first edition of "The Defences of Blandford Forum" written in 1987 by late Major Eric Schmidt of the Royal Engineers which was a summary of the anti-invasion defences here in 1940-1943, Blandford having been officially designated in 1940 an "anti-tank island". This booklet also includes the part played by the Blandford Civil Defence and other civil authorities. I take responsibility for all changes to the 1987 edition and any errors introduced, and would be pleased to receive any corrections and comments.

Eric Schmidt initiated 'The defences of Blandford Forum in WW2' project in the Blandford Town Museum in 1985. He had been appointed by the late Ben Cox, then the Curator of the museum, to look after the military aspects of the museum and the role that Blandford played in the defence of Britain in 1940 when invasion threatened.

A model of the Blandford defences is on display in the Museum, built with assistance of members of the Museum Railway Club which is gratefully acknowledged.

Blandford Town Museum, Curator Dr Peter Andrews, is situated off the Blandford Market Place and is open Monday to Saturday 10.30 to 4.30. Entrance is free.

Michael Le Bas
Museum Deputy Curator
May 2012

Acknowledgements and Sources

This account could not have been made without the guidance and knowledge gained over many years by both authors, in particular from Ben Cox, Ian Garnett, Charles Lavington, Dr Craddock, Major Harfield, Messrs B. Clayton, S. Jardine, R.J. Sayres, F.G. Smith. L. Warren and D. Wise, also Tony Harrocks, Dennis Waterman, David Hilton of English Heritage, members of the Dorset Record Office (now the Dorset History Centre), the Coleshill House Trust (re: Auxiliary Units) and the co-operation of British Telecom. Much data and most illustrations are taken from the archives of the Blandford Town Museum. Particular thanks go to Lt Col D.J. Rose MBE Yorks for polishing up the construction, accuracy and readability of the text.

Reference was made to:

The History of the Second World War – The Defence of the United Kingdom, by Basil Collier, HMSO, 1994

Royal Engineer's Manual of Field Engineering, Vol. II, 1936

Normandy to The Baltic, by Field Marshall Viscount Montgomery, Hutchinson Ltd, 1947

Pillboxes: a study of UK Defences 1940, by H. Wills, Leo Cooper, London, 1985

Military Dorset Today: Second World War scenes and settings that can still be seen 50 years on, by Colin A. Pomeroy, SLP, 1995.

The Home Guard, by David Carrol, Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1999

Vehicles of the Home guard", by Martin F Mace, Historic Military Press, 2001

2. PERIMETER DESCRIPTION - GIVING ALL ROUND DEFENCE.

The perimeter of the Anti-Tank Island thus comprised:-

- | | | |
|-------|--|---------|
| a. | The concrete obstacles as listed above. | |
| b. | The River STOUR. | |
| c. | The Railway Embankments (now demolished) - which were 30 to 40 ft high. | 12A |
| d. | The Railway Cutting which was, and still is, 30 to 40 ft deep and is now a public footpath. | 12 |
| e. | The main road bridge over the STOUR would have been demolished. | 13 |
| f. | The main Railway Bridge over the River STOUR would have been demolished. | 14 |
| g. | There would also have been actual or dummy minefields (or a combination of both) in Crown Meadows and to the East of the Railway Embankment. | 15 & 16 |
| h. | The perimeter Defences would have been designed to channel any GERMAN ATTACK into the open ground North-West of the town which would have been ranged by the ROYAL ARTILLERY as a TANK KILLING GROUND. | 17 |
|
 | | |
| 3. | PILLOXES - FOR MACHINE GUNS AND ANTI-TANK GUNS AND RIFLES. (TO SUPPLEMENT THE ANTI-TANK DEFENCES) | |
| a. | Still existing (HEXAGONAL OR SQUARE - types FW3/22 & FW3/26 respectively) | |
| (i) | In the garden of Chestnut House facing East Street Car Park by the dyke. | 18 |
| (ii) | In the Telephone Exchange grounds. | 19 |
| (iii) | On the Anti-Tank ditch in the garden of No. 9 Parklands. | 20 |
| (iv) | Facade only - in wall of Crown Hotel Lawn - could have been a dummy. | 20A |
| b. | Demolished or removed | |
| (i) | In the Railway Embankment by Archway Garage. | 21 |
| (ii) | By the River Stour Bridge. | 22 |
| (iii) | On the site of the present Tourist Office! | 23 |

CATEGORY NUMBER	CATEGORY TYPE AND DESCRIPTION	MAP LOCATION REFERENCE NO.
1.	CONCRETE ANTI-TANK OBSTACLES COMPRISING LARGE CUBES, 4 FT. TO 6 FT. SQUARE, SOME HAVING A POINTED PYRAMID CAP, GENERALLY KNOWN AS "DRAGONS' TEETH".	
a.	Located under the side arches of the Railway Bridge - demolished with the Bridge in 1978.	1
b.	Located under the Railway Bridge leading from Langton Road to what is now East Street Car Park. Demolished in 1978.	2
c.	Located across the NORTH side of what is now East Street Car Park - only 3 remain.	3
d.	Located each side of the track from Crown Meadows to West Street - 5 of these still remain close to the road.	4
e.	Nine more cubes located behind the wall of the Crown Hotel Lawn, and these are still there - others have been demolished.	5
f.	More Cubes/Dragons' Teeth were sited between buildings to form a continuous obstacle along Shorts Lane up to the start of the ANTI-TANK DITCH (map ref 7) but only 2 of these cubes still remain in the grounds of Blandford Telephone Exchange by the entrance.	6
g.	The ANTI-TANK DITCH comprised a vertical concrete wall 5 - 6 ft high with a 45° slope leading in, and still exists in its entirety.	7
h.	There is a single concrete cube at the North end of this ditch (in the garden of No. 17 Parklands), which marks the beginning of the next line of "Dragons Teeth" as below (map ref 9).	8
i.	A line of concrete obstacles, Cubes and "Dragons Teeth", ran North-eastwards right up to Deer Park Lodge, and over 30 of these still exist, as at 1987.	9
j.	The final part of the line ran across the Recreation field from the Public Convenience in Park Road to the Railway Cutting, but only 3 concrete cubes remain out of 30 or more, these are at Maps ref's 10 and 11.	10 & 11

THE THREAT OF INVASION OF
ENGLAND IN 1940 BY
THE GERMAN ARMY:

THE BLANDFORD ANTI-TANK ISLAND

Introduction

Blandford Forum is usually thought of as a peaceful market town amid the Chalk Hills of Dorset. It has never been the site of battles, apart from the battle of Hod Hill, only 5 km (3 miles) away, when the Romans invaded Dorset. Blandford was never walled or fortified, and largely escaped destruction in the years of the Civil War 1640-1650 during the reign of King Charles the First.

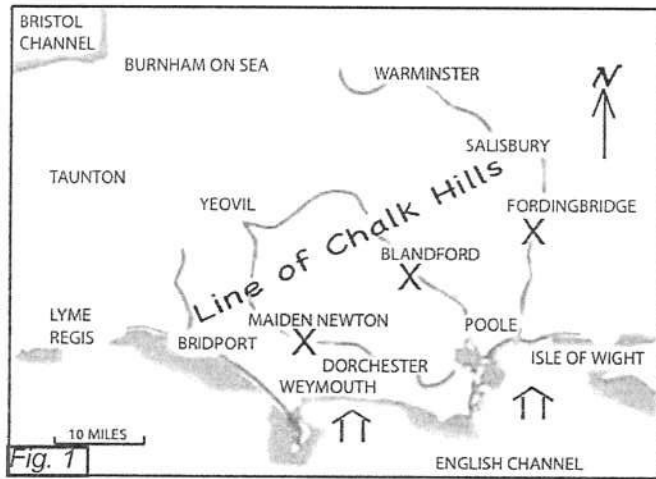
The town had declared for King Charles I and he was here briefly in 1640 staying at Bryanston Manor House as a guest of the Rogers' family. The day after, he attended prayers in the Parish Church before marching off at the head of his troops. Ten years later, Prince Charles was here and secretly at night proclaimed himself King of England.

In between, Parliamentary troops had entered Blandford but did little damage apart from fining it £500 and on another occasion ordering it to supply 'at the sign of the Red Lion in Blandford four sufficient horses with bridles, saddles, pistols, holders, swords and other furniture'.

But had Hitler's German army invaded Dorset in 1940 or 1941, the town would have been the site of a fiercely fought battle, because Blandford had been designated an anti-tank strategic island and 'strong point' to be stoutly defended.

THE COURSE OF HISTORY

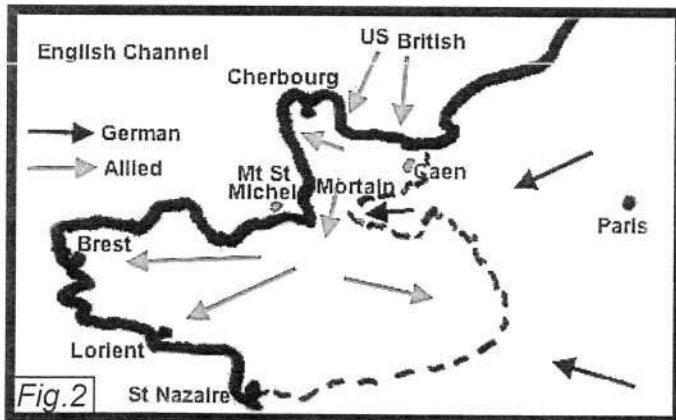
Having conquered France and much of the rest of Europe by June 1940, Hitler was poised to invade England. Prior to this calamitous and unexpected fall of France, there had been no consideration of Blandford playing a part in the defence of Britain, but it was quickly realised that German forces might land on the Dorset coast (broad arrows in Fig. 1), with the obvious German strategy of a blitzkrieg rapid advance across Dorset and Somerset to Burnham-on-Sea on the



Bristol Channel. This would inevitably have allowed Devon and Cornwall to fall into enemy hands, with the ports of Plymouth, Portland and others becoming available for the unopposed disembarking of major elements of the German Army, with dire results for us. Post-war examination of

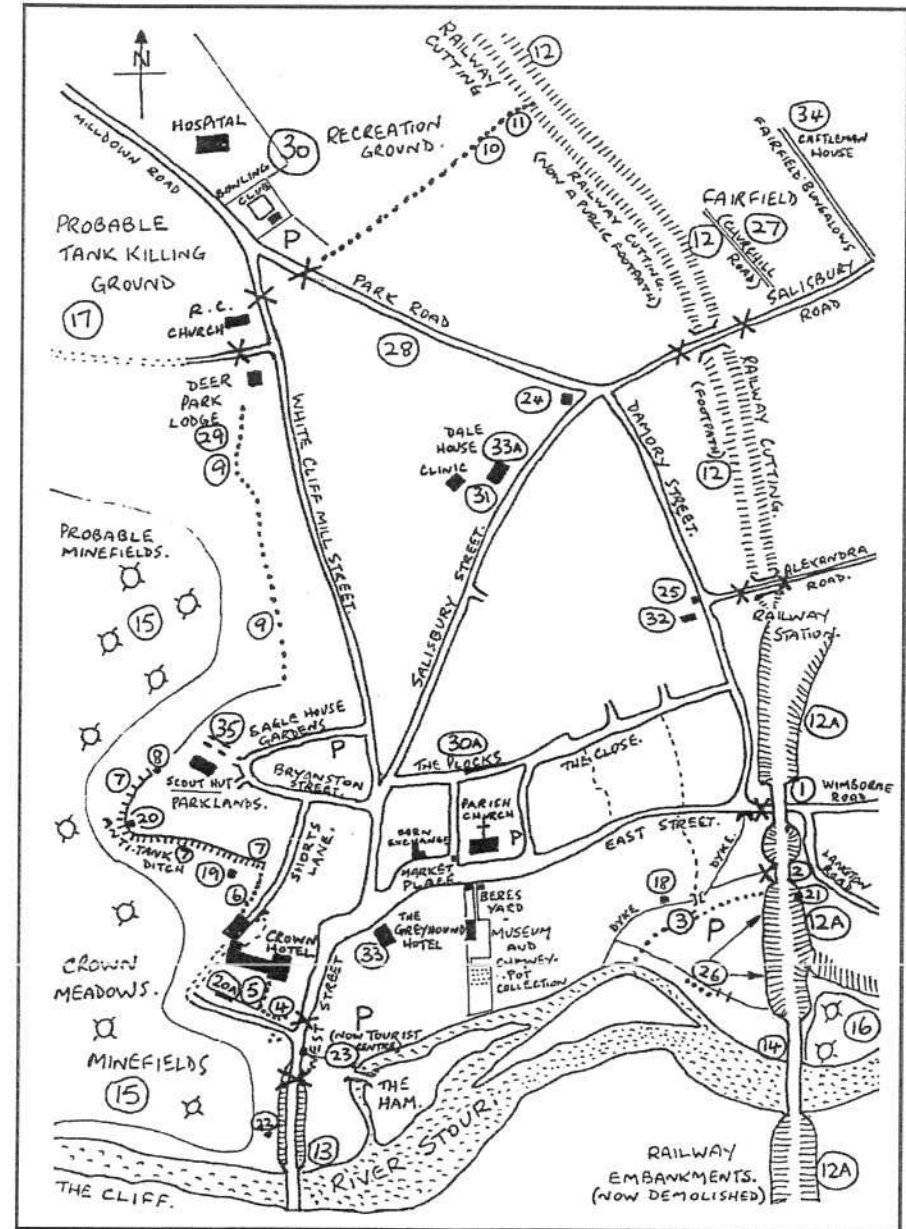
German archives reveal that such a plan was part of the 'Sealion' operation for their invasion of England.

It is worth recalling that during World War II the Allies conducted a similar operation in 1944 after the Normandy landings. Our plan was, and it succeeded, was to



cut off the Cherbourg Peninsula and so gain the port of Cherbourg, or what remained of it after German demolition work, and then to cut off the Brittany Peninsula and so capture the major ports of Brest and Lorient to enable the landing of the vast amount of war

material required for the invading British and American forces (Fig. 2). The critical battle to capture the Peninsula became centred on Mortain where



BLANDFORD FORUM

The anti-invasion defences key map drawn by Eric Schmidt. The numbers refer to the list on the right hand side of the following pages.

Appendix 1

Appendix 1 gives the essential details and map created by Major Schmidt for his 1987 booklet on the Defences of Blandford. The map reproduced on page 31 shows the positions of the 35 defence items that are listed in detail on the pages following. Most are still in place. It provides a good overview of the plan conceived for the defence of the town.

Only two of the pillboxes remain, one restored and open for inspection by arrangement with the owner. Three of the anti-tank blocks near the Crown Hotel have been shifted to one side to allow for road widening, over thirty are still in position, some on private land. The four NORCON gun emplacements defending the Wimborne Road railway bridge were moved to the adjacent carpark when the bridge was blown up in 1967 and were later altogether removed. (One NORCON that is still in place is on the west side of the road under the hedge a few yards south of White Mill Bridge near Sturminster Marshall.) All the defences on the west and south sides of Blandford are now protected from further destruction, having been given Grade II listing by English Heritage apart from the pillbox in the BT Yard which, at the time of writing, is under reconsideration by EH.

A model of the defences is on display in the Town Museum.

American Forces repulsed two of the best tank Panzer divisions of the German Army, to win the day and inflict heavy casualties on the Germans ordered into battle by Hitler in his Mortain counter offensive. Mortain, now twinned with Blandford Forum, was largely flattened in that battle as Blandford might have been in 1940. Fortunately conflict did not come our way.

MILITARY COMMAND

During World War II, Blandford Forum was within the Southern Command defence area under the command of V Corps, the Commander being Lieutenant General Montgomery. V Corps put the 50th (Northumbrian) Division to hold the forward areas of Dorset. In July 1940, it selected the stoplines (shown in grey in Fig.1) and the nodal defence points, designating ten towns as divisional anti-tank islands to be prepared for all-round defence (three are marked X on Fig. 1), Blandford being one of them. It was also the focal point of the stopline that ran along the River Stour from Stalbridge to Christchurch.

THE ROLE OF BLANDFORD IN THE SOUTHERN COMMAND DEFENCE AREA

The significant feature of Blandford being on the River Stour is that it is at the point where the River Stour crosses the line of Hills: The Dorset Downs – Cranborne Chase – Salisbury Plain. These hills would be the first natural obstacle facing any German forces planning to race across Dorset and Somerset to the Bristol Channel (see Fig. 1). The three most suitable routes for tanks through this line of hills would be along roads following rivers, and the most easily negotiated would be along the River Stour which makes its way through a gap in the hills at Blandford. The other routes were along the River Frome via Maiden Newton or the River Avon via Fordingbridge.

The town of Blandford lies on the north side of the River Stour where it flows through the gap in the hills, and Blandford commands the bridge that crosses it. The open ground of the floodplain north of the bridge, only a quarter of a mile across at this point, would be a target to be aimed for by an advancing army, and the capture of the bridge by the Germans be a vital objective for them, prior to penetrating the line of hills and heading for the Bristol Channel. Therefore Blandford was designated a 'tank island' by the military command, to be strongly defended against what was expected to be a powerful German army. Back in Roman times and earlier, Hod Hill had commanded that gap - strategy does not change.

A CALL TO ARMS

Few will forget the speech made on 18 June 1940 by the Prime Minister, Mr Winston Churchill "*We shall defend our island, whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the beaches, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in*

the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender". His stirring words fired everyone; resistance to invasion was vital if we were to survive as a nation.

REGULARS IN BLANDFORD

At first in 1940, the operational headquarters for the defence of Blandford were in Dale House, and later moved to The Greyhound Hotel in the Market Place, a more central position. By November 1940, 3rd Divisional Signals, which took over from 50th Divisional Signals, became billeted in Blandford. The Corn Exchange was used as the Mess Room as well as for dances and other troop entertainments. Harveys Stores, then opposite the Corn Exchange, became the Quarter Master Stores with the Office on the ground floor, and accommodation on the floors above. The Lion Troop of 3 Div Signals settled in the yard of the Red Lion, and the trucks, the LADs (Light Aid Detachment workshop vehicles) and the motor-cycles were accommodated in the area behind the Crown Hotel. The Orderly Room was located next to the Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul. The Divisional Headquarters was at Langton House, and the distance to it from Blandford (five miles there and back) was used as a weekly racetrack to keep fit. By 1943, Langton House (demolished in 1949) became the Headquarters of Major General Clarence Huebner, commanding officer of the U.S. First Infantry Division that made that fateful landing on Omaha Beach in Normandy on D-Day 6th June 1944.

One red-letter day for the troops in Blandford was the 28th November 1940 when Princess Mary, at that time The Princess Royal (now it is Princess Anne), came to inspect the troops. She was Colonel-in-Chief of the Royal Corps of Signals and arrived escorted by dispatch riders in the Market Place where she was welcomed by Brigadier Willan, Inspector of Signals and Colonel R T O Carey, CSO 5 Corps. After lunching in the Officer's Mess, the 3rd Division Signals marched past through the Market Place where the Princess took the salute. Although the grey clouds of war loomed, the kit-cleaning and boot-polishing culminated in a smart parade through streets crowded with the people of Blandford. It was a great and much required morale booster for soldiers and civilians alike.

Some soldiers were deemed by the Police to be causing nuisance after drinking too much, to the extent that the Town Clerk, Mr W.H. Wilson, wrote to the proprietors of the Three Choughs in West St, The Half Moon Inn in Whitecliff Mill St, The White Hart in East St, The New Inn in East St and The Damory Oak in Damory Court St requiring them to improve their convenience facilities. The public notice in the archway between Nos 18 and 20 Salisbury Street could date from this.



The men of the Spetisbury Unit (Fig. 40) were Reg Goddard, Jack Bugg, George Spicer, Jim 'Baker' Snook, John Strange, Maurice Tory and Alan Strange. None are now living. George Spicer's brother John said they were a tough lot.

Royal Observer Corps

With increasing activity by the German Luftwaffe, it became essential to spot and identify incoming enemy aircraft to anticipate their purpose (reconnaissance, bombing and destination). So on the outbreak of war, members of the Royal



Observer Corps (established in 1925) in Blandford were mobilised to supply this vital service (Fig. 41). From back left: ?, Hodge, Sprake, Denis, Westcott, Guy, Wareham, Abbott, Gibbs, Wyatt, Moody, Carter, Winsor, Randall, Kaile).

Most were recruited from men in 'reserved occupations' such as school teachers. Their observer post was on the eastern side of the Recreation Ground where its concrete base still exists.

them from behind. These 'Auxiliary Units' were trained at Coleshill House in Oxfordshire in the use of the knife and the garrotte and in unarmed combat and sabotage aimed to disrupt German supply lines that would impede advance of their army. Auxiliary Unit Patrols were placed about 15 miles apart near centres of strategic importance, involving some 300 men in Dorset. They were sworn to secrecy. The Auxiliars motto was "Like Dad – keep Mum". When the Blandford



Fig. 38

Patrol was disbanded in 1943, men from it joined the SAS. Many took part in Operation 'Bullbasket' in collaboration with the French Resistance in German-occupied France (Fig 38, taken in front of Chestnut House). Four of them:

Gogger, S. Roland and H. Pascoe, were captured on 3.7.1944 and executed 7.7.44. Lt P. Weaver, Cpl J. Rideout and L Cpl G. Biffin survived the war.

Near Blandford was established the Spetisbury Auxiliary Unit Patrol. Their Operational Base was hidden in Charlton Hill Coppice. There is little to see apart from a six foot section of the corrugated bunker (Fig. 39) and collapsed hollows in the ground. Being on private land, access to it requires the farmer's

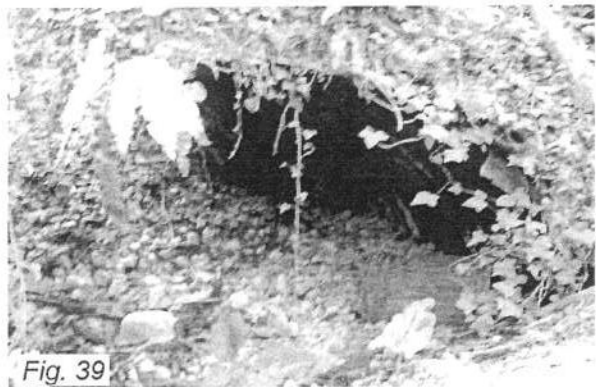


Fig. 39

permission. Originally there was a vertical shaft, covered by a dummy tree stump, that led to the underground corrugated iron lined bunker big enough for seven men, with weapons, explosives and a few weeks food storage. Most Auxiliars were farmers selected for their local knowledge and ability to live off the land. By day they would farm and gather

intelligence, by night, be saboteurs. Not even their families knew their lethal purpose, and thankfully they never had to serve. There was another Operational Base in Buzbury Wood, east of Blandford at ST 918 061, now 'removed', and another somewhere in the woods near Bryanston School.

LOCAL DEFENCE VOLUNTEERS

The threat of invasion also meant that the armed services needed greater manpower. The Secretary of State for War, Mr Anthony Eden, broadcast an appeal to the nation during the evening of 14th May 1940 asking all able-bodied

males over the age of 18 and with no upper age limit, to volunteer for a Home Defence Force to be known as the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV). The response was both immediate and amazing. Only one week later, over 250,000 volunteers had been enrolled at Police Stations and at Army Units stationed locally throughout the UK.

On 30th May, Major General Sir John Brown of the War Office accepted the task of organising the LDV with the assistance of all local Territorial Army Associations nationally, and this progressed as a matter of the greatest urgency. In July the LDV, which by this time was unkindly nick-named 'Look, Duck and Vanish', was re-designated the Home Guard.

THE HOME GUARD POCKET MANUAL

BY

A. SOUTHWORTH

R.S.M. SEVENOAKS BATT. HOME GUARD

Ex Warrant Officer Instructor

Small Arms School, Hythe, 1922 to 1938

FOREWORD BY

BRIGADIER J. S. DAVENPORT, M.C.

Commanding Home Counties Area

PUBLISHED BY

THE RUBEROID COMPANY LTD.

MEADOW MILLS

STONEHOUSE, GLOS.

October, 1940

Price 6d.

No. 992

Fig. 3

By 1941 the number of Home Guard volunteers had reached the staggering total of 750,000 (Fig. 3).

LDV/HOME GUARD WEAPONS

Initially the LDV were poorly armed, since the regular forces had priority for weapons and equipment. The LDV's original role had largely been to observe and report enemy movements, but it swiftly changed to a more aggressive role. Nevertheless, they would have been expected to fight well-trained and equipped troops, despite having only negligible training and only weapons such as pitchforks and shotguns (a solid ammunition for shotguns was developed for this purpose) or firearms that belonged in museums. Patrols were carried out on foot, by bicycle, even on horseback and often without uniforms, although all volunteers wore 'LDV' armbands. There were also river patrols using the private craft of members. Many officers from the First World War used their Webley

Mk VI .455 revolvers. There were also numerous private attempts to produce armoured vehicles by adding steel plates to cars or lorries, often armed with a machine gun.

Within a few months they were issued proper uniforms and equipment, as the immediate needs of the regular forces were satisfied. It was not until 1943 that they were a properly trained force. They were frequently equipped with improvised weapons, or non-standard ones purchased by the government from abroad. For example, large numbers of M1917 Enfield rifles were purchased for the use of the Home Guard. These used the (30-06) cartridge - an American 0.30 inch round which was a totally different type of ammunition from the 0.303 round used by the British Lee-Enfield rifle. A 2-inch-wide (51 mm) red band was painted around the fore end of the stock as a warning since a 0.303 round would load but jam the rifle. That a similar-in-appearance P14 rifle was supplied to the Home Guard, in 0.303 calibre that took the British round, only added to the confusion.

The Home Guard inherited weapons that the regular Army no longer required, such as the Blacker Bombard anti-tank weapon, and weapons they no longer desired, such as the Sticky bomb. Their arsenal also included weapons that could be produced cheaply without consuming materials that were needed to produce armaments for the regular units; such as the Northover Projector, a blackpowder-powered mortar; the No. 76 Special Incendiary Grenade, a glass bottle filled with highly flammable material, and the Smith Gun, a small artillery gun that could be towed by an automobile. They also used Lend-Lease Tommy guns and American Browning Automatic Rifles, mainly with 1914 pattern .303 rifles, and so became an armed and well-organised volunteer force throughout the UK. The regular army was equipped the Bofors antitank rifle: 20mm cannon M/40.

BLANDFORD LDV/HOME GUARD

The Blandford LDV unit established its headquarters in the old Workhouse, now the site of the Blandford Police Station. At the time the LDV was re-named the Home Guard, the headquarters were moved from the Workhouse to a more central location, the Scout Hut, accessed by a path from the end of Bryanston Street. Four Anderson Shelters were erected there; two remained for many years. The HQ remained there until the Home Guard was disbanded in 1946.

The Home Guard Commander of Blandford Forum North was Major L C Cherry. His brother Captain Roger Cherry was the Adjutant. The Cherry family was the owner of the big multiple store then in Salisbury Street.

AIR RAID PRECAUTIONS.

FIRE WATCHERS

As the Public have already been informed, the most urgent requirement at the present time is Fire Watchers.

It is proposed to ask for 200 Volunteers to act as Fire Watchers on a Rota. It need scarcely be pointed out how absolutely necessary this is at the present moment. Will all those who are prepared to act in this capacity attend at the TOWN HALL, BLANDFORD, on THURSDAY NEXT, the 9th JANUARY, between the hours of 6.30 and 8.30 p.m. for enrolment.

When these have been enrolled a Meeting of all Volunteers will be held to discuss how best this scheme can be carried out.

4th January, 1941.

J. E. CONYERS,
Mayor.

Edmonds & Son, Printers.

Fig. 37

The Auxillary Fire Station was in the Borough Surveyor's Yard, Victoria Road.

Station Officer	R.H. Brooks
Patrol Officer	D.J. Munday
Senior Leading Fireman	W. Tarrant
Leading Firemen	G. Hardy, T. Morris, W. Cornick
Pump Mechanics	K. Robinson, G. Savage, A. James
Firemen:	J. Cox R. Light
	C. Cornick C. Joyce
	J. Cornick L. Andrews
	H. Kaile P. Baverstock
	P. Jacobs

Water supply

To provide an immediate water supply in case of fire, metal Emergency Water Supply tanks were set up, one in The Plocks. Another measuring 30ft by 8ft and 5ft deep was put at the back of the carpark beside the Half Moon Hotel, and another of the same size at the back of the carpark beside The Crown Hotel. These areas in the carparks were taken into the possession of the Town Council by virtue of Regulation 51 of the National Defence Regulations 1939. There are unconfirmed memories of further metals containers marked EWS in the Market Place and The Close.

The Auxillary Unit Patrols: Churchill's 'Stay-behind' Army

In anticipation of a German invasion, Churchill and the War Cabinet decided in July 1940 that a guerrilla force, dressed as Home Guardians, should be set up. They would allow themselves to be overrun by the enemy and then harass

Many of the services had messengers because possible disruption of the telephone lines was anticipated, and provision of messengers, many of them school boys, would ensure messages got through.

Women's Institute

During the Second World War, the WI limited their contribution to such activities as looking after evacuees, running the Government-sponsored Preservation

BOROUGH OF BLANDFORD FORUM.

Civil Defence Duties
(Compulsory Enrolment) Order 1942.

DIRECTIONS

Date 12th Dec 1942

To Mr. W. H. Fisher
28, Brynaston Street

In accordance with the provisions of the ENROLMENT NOTICE served upon you under date 8-12-42, you are directed to perform such Fire Prevention Duties as may be assigned to you by the FIRE GUARD STAFF OFFICER or by any person authorised by him in writing, and they will direct you as to the time and manner of such performance.

Your duties will be performed at White Cliff Mill and you are requested to report Tuesdays

Any directions given you by the persons referred to above shall not require you to perform Fire Prevention Duties amounting in the aggregate to more than 48 hours in any period of four weeks.

Failure to comply with any such Directions is an offence under the Defence (General) Regulations 1939.

C. F. HALL,
District Controller,
Borough of Blandford Forum.

Any enquiries in connection with this Direction should be addressed to:—

The Fire Prevention Office, A.R.P. Headquarters,
Salisbury Road, Blandford.

Fig. 36

The headquarters of the Blandford Fire Brigade Station was in North Place.

Captain:	C.M. Timbrell	
Lieutenant:	F. Bellows	
Foreman:	W. Goddard	
Driver:	P.J. Lucas	
Firemen:	W.P. Cornick	H.G. Blandford
	B.R. Pitman	F.G. Clarke
	J. Dickenson	F. Taylor
	C.H. Read	G. Pay
	T.N. Neale	
Messengers:	L.J. Dickenson	C.T. Edmonds

Centres where volunteers canned or made jam of excess produce, and providing tea and welfare facilities. A visitor's book filled with names, rank etc. of British, American, Polish and other servicemen 1939-1944 who took refreshments there, is held in the Blandford Museum.

Fire Brigade and Auxiliary Fire Service

Because it was anticipated that incendiary bombs would cause such a large number of fires that the normal resources of the regular Fire Service would be inadequate, an Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) was instituted, Fire Preventive Officers appointed (Fig. 36) and volunteers for Fire Watching were called for (Fig. 37).

Specially designed equipment was supplied for the AFS, with trailer pumps drawn by cars.



Fig. 4

The Blandford Home Guard had a major role to play in the manning of the Blandford Anti-Invasion Defences. Five men and a sergeant manned each pillbox (Fig. 4). They acted in conjunction with men drawn from the regular army unit resident garrison in town, the 50th (Northumbrian) Division.

The Blandford Home Guard formed two of the six Companies of the 6th Battalion Wimborne Home Guard: the 4th Company Blandford North and 5th Company Blandford South. The Commanding Officer of the 4th Company was Major A. Cherry of Hayfield, Pimperne, and his Second-in-Command was Captain F.F. Beckett of Berkeley Lodge, Blandford St Mary. The Commanding Officer of the 5th Company was S. Field of Longthorns, Blandford, and his Second-in-Command was W.J. Dakers of Charisworth, Blandford.

Members of the Blandford Home Guard 4th Company No. 1 Platoon are shown in Fig. 5. From top left, they are (with some unidentifications): ?, ?, Trevor Watkins, ?, Cliff Penny, Philip Arnold, ?, ?, Len Matthews, Fred Ewen, Ray Wort, ?, ?, 'Snowy' Gatehouse, Reg A'Court, ?, Cyril Wort, Wilfred Cowley, Fred Parsons, ?, Ken Abbott, Sgt Percy James, Sgt Charlie Lavington, ?, Sgt Henry Hall, ?.



Fig. 5

Capt. Arthur Barnes, Lt Len Farley, Sgt Alf Blandford, Sgt Ray Light, Sgt Wilfred Chaldecot, Walt Warren, Frank Waterman, Ron Dibley and Fred Dominie.

The 4th Company Blandford N had four Platoons:

Blandford No. 1 C/O A.H. Barnes, 6 Field View Road, Blandford

Blandford No. 2 C/O E.L. Carter, White Cliff, Mill Street, Blandford

Blandford No. 3 C/O H.W.A. Littleton-Geach, Barwood Lea, Milldown Road, Blandford

(No. 4) Spettisbury C/O W.P. Stratton, The Beeches, Spettisbury

The 5th Company Blandford S had seven platoons at Winterborne Whitechurch, Millborne St Andrew, Milton Abbas, Winterborne Stickland, Winterborne Kingston, Milton and Chettle.

Training included night exercises and attending lectures on the strategy of defending towns, such as Blandford.

MEASURES TO CONFUSE THE ENEMY

An immediate response to the threat of invasion was that defences must be rapidly constructed, that car-radios be banned from use and sign-posts removed to confuse the invaders.



Fig. 6

Here, the word 'Blandford' was prominently moulded on the dozens of street drain and sewer covers in the middle of Blandford, which would inform an invader where he was. Since the cast iron covers could not be removed or replaced in the time available, a plan was devised to alter the word 'Blandford' on them by chiselling away the letters 'B' and 'fo' so that the word read '..and..rd', and it was hoped this would be enough to confuse the invaders (Fig. 6). That they possessed excellent maps was somehow overlooked. In the town church of St Peter and St Paul, the name Blandford was plain to see on the charity boards on the walls of the church. So the word Blandford was carefully blacked out on each. After the war, the suggestion was made that the name should be restored, but the argument prevailed that the obliterations had become part of the history of the town and so they remained obscured. But one, on the south wall, was restored neatly in gold leaf,

and now the others are beginning to show through the aging black paint.

The main mortuary was at the Blandford Cottage Hospital and a second was set up in the chapel of the Salisbury Road cemetery.

Medical personnel:

Medical Officer and Director: Dr L. Bodley Scott

Commandant, First Aid Post: Brig-General B.F.B. Stuart, CB, CMG.

Medical Officer, Mobile Aid Post: Dr D. Oliver

Trained nurses: Nurse Rawlings (First Aid Post) and Nurse Percy (Mobile Unit)

Members of the First Aid Post and Mobile Unit:

Mrs Walker	Miss Morgan
Mrs Mitchell	Miss Hilton
Mrs Dando	Miss B. Clarke
Miss Richards	Miss Rendell
Mrs Aitken	Miss Liddle
Mrs Braddock	Mrs Hicks
Mrs Parker	

Red Cross Detachment:

Miss Woodhouse	Miss Carter
Miss Wort	Mrs Botterill

First Aid Party:

Officer-in-Charge:	Mr R.D.K. Morris
Mr S.W. Smith	Mr Cruise
Mr W.D. Amphlett	Mr L.J. Scott
Mr N. Welstead	Mr F.G. Trim
Mr A. de Selincourt	Mr A. Langdon
Mr P.B. Rogers	

Drivers of cars for sitting cases:

Messrs E. Hobbs, H. Sherwood and E.K. Curry

Ambulance drivers and attendants:

Miss H. Marsh and Miss D. Dockar (night service)

Mrs Lawrence and Mrs Rideout (day service)

Reserves:

Mrs Collins	Miss Best
Mrs Spooner	Mr W.P. Pond

Bombing

No high explosive bombs were dropped on Blandford, but some incendiary bombs were. Some fell near the cottages at 2-11 Bryanston Street, one on the doorstep of No. 8, the occupant said, and another on the roof of Mato's in West Street and causing a fire there that was soon extinguished. The new parapet forming the roofline, visible from the street, marks the damaged area (Fig. 35).



Fig. 35

One bomb did fall on the Blandford Camp. No one was killed but it is recorded that Brigadier Harold Woodhouse, manager of Hall & Woodhouse Brewery, died soon after from shock. It was said the bomb was jettisoned from a German plane returning from a bombing mission to Bristol.

Medical Services

The organization for dealing with casualties was under the control of the Medical Officer of Health and comprised the following:

1. Fixed First Aid Post
2. Mobile Aid Point
3. Ambulance Depot
4. First Aid Party Depot

The Fixed First Aid Post was situated at The Public Assistance Institution, 76 Salisbury Street. It provided treatment for walking wounded, sitting casualties and any contaminated with gas. The staff consisted of a Medical Officer-in-Charge, some medical assistants, a trained nurse, orderlies and nursing auxiliaries.

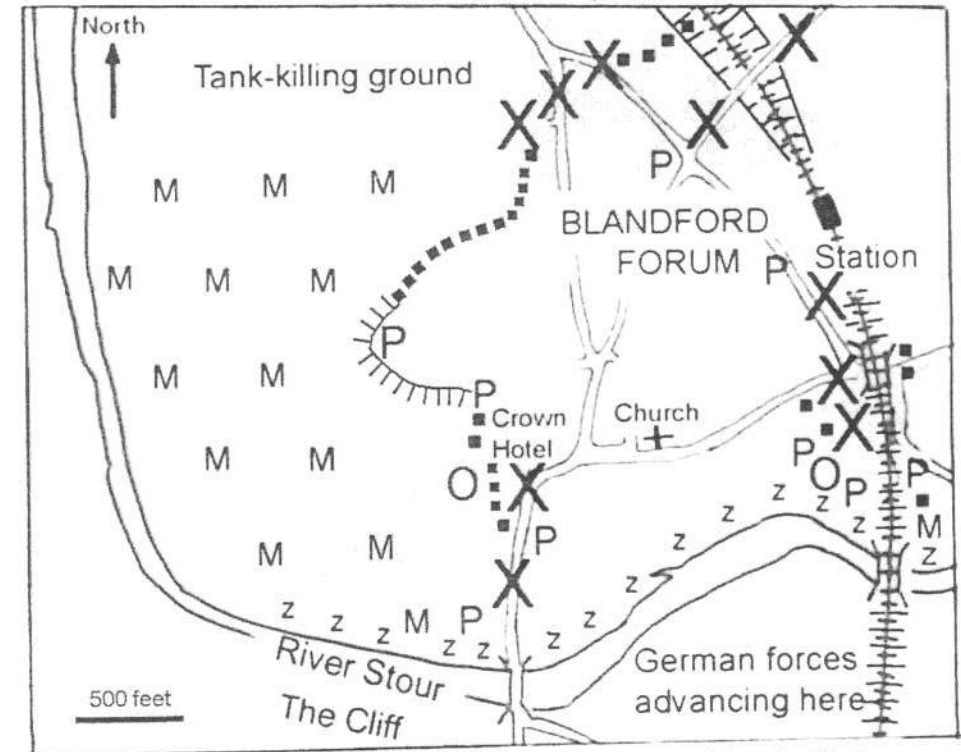
The Mobile Aid Post was also stationed at The Public Assistance Institution. The equipment was similar to that of the Fixed Post but packed into boxes and carried in an adapted van.

The Ambulance Depot was at the Badger Garage in Salisbury Road, next to Orkney Court. Here there were ambulances for stretcher cases and cars for sitting cases. Drivers and attendants were on continuous stand-by duty.

The First Aid Party Depot was attached to the Ambulance Depot. Each party of five men was equipped with a car.

THE DEFENCE OF BLANDFORD

The defences that ringed Blandford included barbed wire, mine-fields, pillboxes, gun positions, an anti-tank ditch and anti-tank obstacles, the river and a deep railway cutting followed by an embankment. Most are still evident today. The individual defences are shown on Fig. 7. Unfortunately no plans of the Anti-invasion Defences for 1940 exist, so the interpretation used here has been



P pillbox ■ anti-tank obstacle TTTT anti-tank ditch
 O gun position X road block M mine-field z barbed wire

Fig. 7 assessed from ground reconnaissance and by drawing much on personal recollections and interviews made by Major Schmidt in 1986 of people who lived in Blandford Forum during the war years, and by more recent investigations using the facilities of the Museum.

The defences on west side of the town that stretch from Deer Park Drive in the north, along the edge of the flood plain of Bryanston Park (the Deer Park of the former Portman Estate), behind the houses of Park Lands to the Crown Hotel shown on Fig.7 have been given Grade II Listed Status by English Heritage to ensure they are not destroyed in any building developments that may be proposed. They are individually described in Appendix 2.

The River

The first obstacle that the German Army would have encountered would have been the River Stour and where to cross it. Two bridges cross the river at Blandford: an easily demolished railway girder bridge and the fine mediaeval five-arch stone road bridge (leading to West Street) that the Germans would have aimed to capture (Fig. 8). Two pillboxes commanded the road bridge from the north side as well as substantial road blocks and anti-tank obstacles. In addition, charges were prepared for the demolition of the bridge.

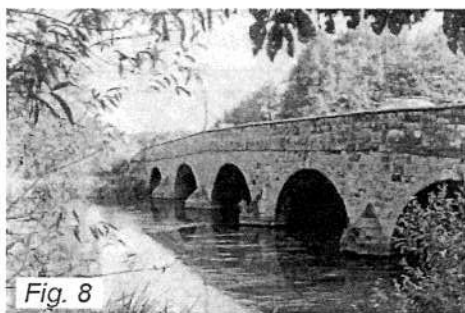


Fig. 8



Fig. 9

Home-made detonator for Blandford Motor Circus
Probably in roadhouse for Wimborne Blandford Station



Fig. 10

We know about the demolition charges because we have in Blandford Museum the detonator box that would have activated the charges. It is neatly housed in a wooden box, Fig. 9, (made by Mr R.A. Fuller, an electrical engineer living at that time in Wimborne) with wind-handle for charging it up and a push-button for activating it. It is still in working order and is on display. Fig. 10 shows its interior. It was held in a secret location at 23 West Street in a room above Hardings the Florists within sight of the bridge, making it an ideal command post for the bridge demolition operation. This is known from a diary written in the 1980s by Mrs L.M. Ashcroft of 23 West Street and daughter of the Hardings in which she records her wartime memories as a 14-year old. *"Mother gave me a running commentary on what was taking place in West Street. She went on to say we were in line of defence, and tank traps were being put in the road and the plunger was being put inside the shop and if no one comes to activate it, we could get phone orders then you and I would have to do it."*

The Anti-Tank Ditch and Pillboxes

Had the enemy crossed the river at Blandford, they would have encountered the next line of defence only 200 yards ahead. That comprised road obstacles

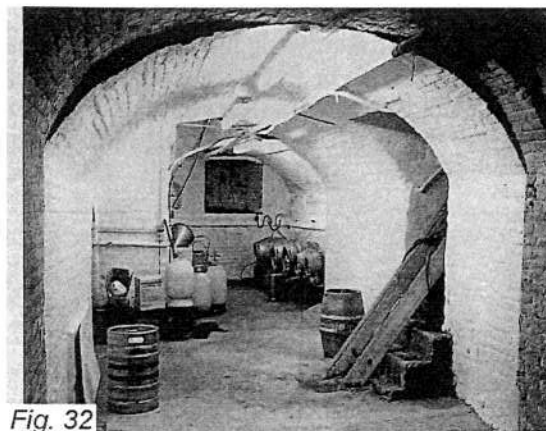


Fig. 32

The large cellar under the Half Moon Inn (Fig. 32), now 16a White Cliff Mill Street was another air raid shelter so prepared. A cellar owned by Mr Roberts under the present site of the Town Council Offices held 50 people, and a cellar owned by Ponds, now behind Spar, at 21 Market Place also held 50 people. The cellar at Blandford and Webb, 26 Market Place took 100 people, and that at Stour House, 41 East Street, could also take 100 people. An air raid shelter is also recorded for 50 people at 20 Oakfield Court in Oakfield Street.

Many people had small shelters in their gardens, usually Anderson Shelters. These shelters were given out free to workers on low incomes. They were made

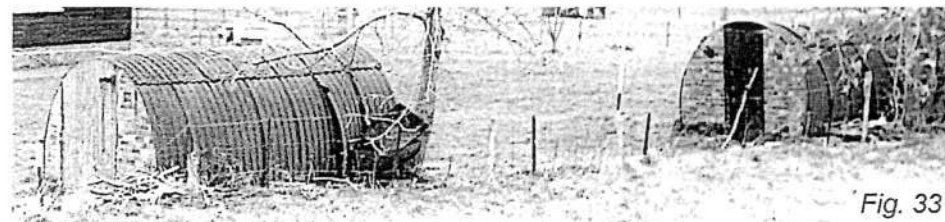


Fig. 33

of corrugated iron sheets, and made a shelter about 6-10 ft by 4-6 ft and 5-6 ft high, half-buried in the ground and enclosed by sand bags. Six to a dozen people could squeeze in. The Scouts had bigger Anderson shelters (Fig. 33).



Fig. 34

In the garden of "Yonder" in Milldown Road, the family built themselves a larger Anderson style shelter (Fig. 34) with two sleeping chambers 20 ft long and 5 ft high which has recently been uncovered. It could sleep a dozen or more people. Also available were Morrison Shelters. These were steel shelters that could be constructed in a living room and big enough for 2-3 people.

south side of Park Road, opposite Sandison's Ltd, Accountants, now occupied by Cedar Court). The Senior Warden was Mr C. Vickery. The Wardens were Messrs A.C. Knight, F.L. Maskell, G. Rideout, A.R. Rose and R.P. Flower. Messengers were Messrs Legg and Pitman.

Post No. 2 was at The Shrubberies, The Plocks. Senior Warden was Mr W. Roberts. The Wardens were Messrs L. Bunce, E. Foot, A.H. Knight, H.F. Steele and H.H. Durham. Messengers were Messrs Channon and Rumbold.

Post No. 3 was at The Waterworks Office at 47 East Street. Senior Warden was Mr E.C. Wellen. The Wardens were Messrs S. Tomlins, L. Foot, R. Brown, R. Roberts and C. Western. Messengers were Messrs Rossiter and Cox.

Post No. 4 was at The Old House, The Close. Senior Warden was Mr E.G. Riggs. The Wardens were Messrs G. Coward, O.E. Jones, R.J. Knight, J. Rappe, I.A. Stephenson and W.G. Bristowe. Messengers were Messrs Perry and Davis.

Post No. 5 was at "Bosome" in Victoria Road. Senior Warden was Mr E.J. Walters. The Wardens were Mrs Jeffery, Messrs C. Faulkner, J. Jeffery, F. Braddock, W. Lethbridge, F. Wyatt, W. Norris and G. Manson. Messengers were Messrs Cross and Brown.

Air Raid Shelters

Two trenches/shelters were dug for Arch-Bishop Wake school children in the recreation ground between the school and the hospital, and two trenches/shelters for children at Blandford Grammar School on the current site of Wessex Court at the top of Damory Street.



Fig. 31

Mrs Groves made the cellar under Westfield Court (access shown in Fig. 31), on the corner of White Cliff Mill Street and Park Road, formerly Little Lane, available as an air raid shelter for 50 people. The cellar under Dale House, Salisbury Street, was also used as an air raid shelter for 100 people. Mr Blandford's cellar

under 45 Salisbury Street took 50 people, and the cellars under Hunt and Lewis, and Haynes at 9 and 11 Salisbury Street accommodated 150 people. Owners were required to prepare these shelters for use, and at their own expense.

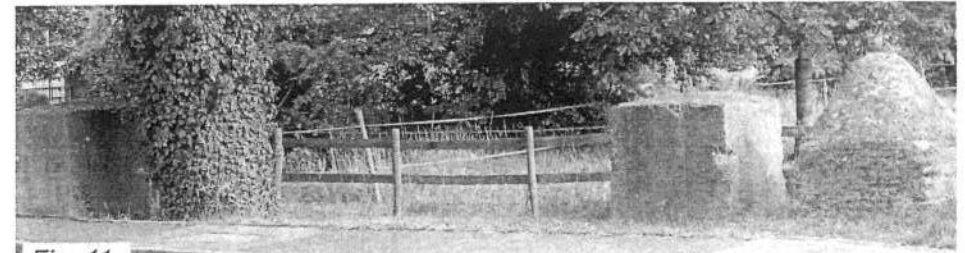


Fig. 11

formed of upright steel beams and railway lines bent into an inverted V aligned with a row of anti-tank blocks and 'dragon's teeth'. Three blocks remain under the trees by the road (Fig. 11) and two more are in the carpark opposite. Beyond them and concealed behind the long garden wall of the Sealey Suite of the



Fig. 12

Crown Hotel, is a further series of nine anti-tank blocks taking the line up to the hotel (Fig. 12). These are all that remain of a once continuous line of some 30

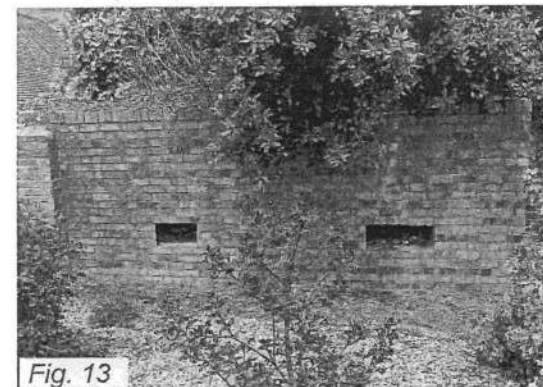
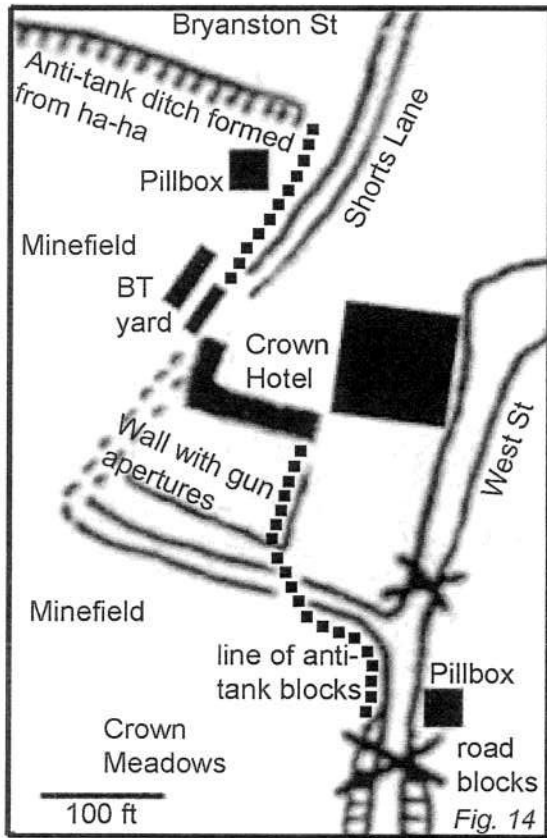


Fig. 13

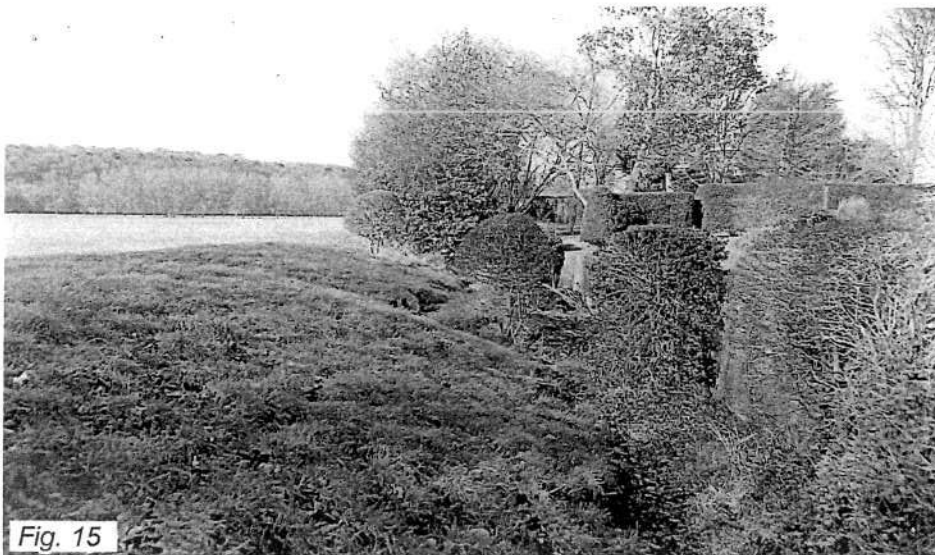
blocks. The garden wall facing the river is pierced with 'dummy' pillbox gun apertures (Fig. 13), presenting an apparently strong line of defences that can still be seen although somewhat obscured by shrubbery. Hopefully this would have produced sufficient gunfire to deter direct assault on the town defences.

Any German forces attempting to drive past the defences without attacking them and going straight up the Crown Meadows then ran the hazard that they would be crossing a minefield that would undoubtedly have been laid as soon as the emergency was declared.



Given planning, a minefield can be laid in a matter of hours.

A map showing the defences the enemy would have faced if they crossed the river is shown in Fig. 14. Linked to the line of blocks and protecting the town from assault across the flood plain was a quarter mile-long anti-tank ditch beginning in front of Bryanston Street and extending around Park House (now Park Lands). The ditch followed the line of the old 'ha-ha' that now separates the town houses in Park Lands from the former deer park on the flood plain (Fig. 15). The deer park had been part of the Portman Estate until the 1940s when it was given to The Crown in lieu of death duties which had struck the Portman family particularly severely as a result of several deaths in a relatively short time.



Avoid Rationing Problems !

Economise on your cake making and buying. Every Cake Stretch's make, from a humble bun to a dainty confection is the best money can buy, and, what is more important today, of a size that will please every careful housewife. Cakes made by Stretch's are the essence of goodness

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and at 2 East Street
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The Willow Parlour and Tea Garden

Take your TEA in an Old-world Garden
HOME-MADE CAKES, ETC.
Morning Coffee
Afternoon Teas

BLANDFORD
Open on Sundays 3-6 p.m. Phone: Blandford 54

Phone—Lytchett Minster 216 and Blandford 214

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Building Contractor
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GENERAL REPAIRS
Contractor to H.M. Office of Works
Air Raid Shelters to Government Specification and to meet Clients requirements

LYTCHETT MATRAVERS
near Poole, Dorset, also
77 Salisbury Street, Blandford

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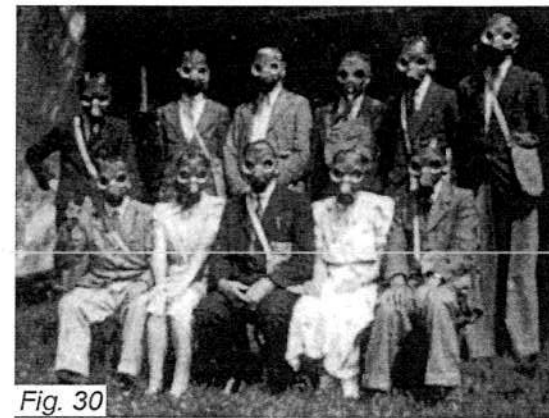
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HOT AND COLD WATER WORK

F. A. LOADER
The Soldiers' Shop
(NEXT TO PICTURE PALACE)
Tobacconist, Confectioner
and Newsagent

BLANDFORD

Fig. 29

The citizens of Blandford were urged to continue with normal life as far as possible (Fig. 29), but gasmask drill was deemed a necessity, here illustrated by the telephone operators at the Exchange in West Street (Fig. 30).



Blandford Wardens
Head Warden was Mr A.C. Knight.

The Air Raid Wardens had many duties: warning the public of air raids, ensuring no night lights were showing, reporting damage by enemy aircraft, generally assisting the public and any casualties, rendering preliminary first aid, extinguishing small outbreaks of fire with a stirrup pump and calling for relevant services such as the ambulance and fire brigade. The Air Raid Warden was the public's 'best friend'.

The Borough was divided into five Warden Post areas, each with a telephone in contact with the Control Centre. The Warden Post No. 1 was at The Cedars No. 1 Park Road (this was on the

and restore essential services. Repair to damaged property was primarily the responsibility of the owner, but the Council would carry out 'first-aid' repairs to roofs and windows quickly. Forms for claiming the cost of repairs to property could be obtained from the Town Hall.

The ARP Controller was Capt. R.I. Sprake, with Deputy Controller: Mr K.V.E. Elphinstone.

Rescue and demolition: Leader H. MacNally

Mr A. White	Mr Lock
Mr A. Goddard	Mr Nobles
Mr L. Meaden	Mr Lucas
Mr W. Chambers	Mr Hall
Mr J. Yeatman	

Decontamination and Repairs:

Superintendent: Mr W.C. Northover

Members (interchangeable for either duty)

Mr C.W. Richardson	Mr H. Dennis
Mr L.A. Wellen	Mr W.H. Gray
Mr W.J. Armstrong	Mr E. Wareham
Mr T. Wood	Mr J.W. Hardwicke
Mr D. Cousins	Mr E.J. Langford
Mr F. Snaith	Mr A.J. Matcham
Mr G.E. Thorpe	Mr W. Bennett
Mr A.J. Christopher	Mr E. Elliot
Mr A.J. Yeatman	Mr R. Cutler
Mr F.G. Gaulton	Mr R.C. Frampton
Mr H.E. Chinnock	Mr T.F. Oxford
Mr H. Nicholas (Lorry Driver)	

They were stationed in a depot at The Old Milk Factory in Damory Street where the Albert Powis apartment block now stands.

The Decontamination Squad had the dangerous job of neutralizing or removing any gas from bombs remaining and would have used the Street Cleaning Services of the town. A local Gas Identification Service was set up consisting of specially trained chemists led by Mr A.J.P. Andrews of "Cameron", Sherborne. Should mustard gas be suspected, the infected person was warned to keep away from anybody without protective clothing. Arrangements for the decontamination of clothing were made at the Public Assistance Institution, under the direction of Mr P. Gartland.

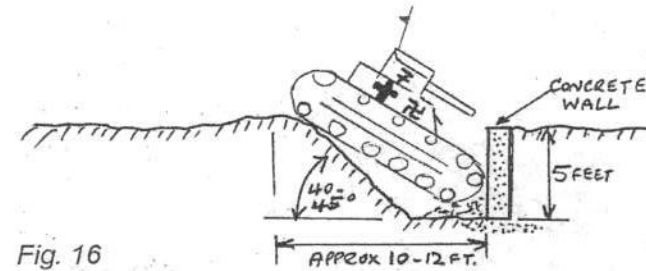


Fig. 16



row of anti-tank blocks, of which three remain just visible hidden in the bushes (Fig. 18).



The 5 foot deep 'ha-ha' was converted in 1940 into an anti-tank ditch by deepening it and facing the old flint face-wall of the 'ha-ha' with concrete, producing an efficient tank trap for the tanks of the day (Fig. 16). The conversion of a 'ha-ha' into an anti-tank ditch is a unique feature in the Defence of Britain so far as is known and therefore a feature of national significance.

The anti-tank ditch was defended by two pillboxes. One, half-buried, is behind the current BT yard in Shorts Lane (Fig. 17), together with a



Fig. 19

The other pillbox is located strategically at the bend of the anti-tank ditch (Figs. 19 and 20 show it in 1960 and 2010 respectively), giving it a commanding field



Fig. 20

of fire along the entire ditch. This pillbox is preserved in the garden of No 9 Park Lands.

Summary of the defence tactics

Attack on Blandford from the east on the north side of the River Stour was considered unlikely. Any assault there would be mainly by infantry because tanks would have difficulty in crossing the wide wet flood plain of the Stour between the coast and Blandford. Therefore any planned rapid advance by the German forces would be along the main roads on the south side of the River Stour, aiming to cross it at Blandford.

Bearing this in mind, the main defensive strategy would be, first to make the river crossing at Blandford Bridge as difficult as possible, and second to repulse the advance of German tanks northward up the flood plain at the same time as holding off assault on the town defences. The key factors would be: 1, mining the bridge; 2, the mine field; 3, pillboxes and road blocks north of the bridge; 4, the anti-tank ditch reinforced with pillboxes and concrete blocks; 5, the line of 100 or more anti-tank blocks completing the semi-circle of defences to the railway cutting.

THE CIVIL DEFENCE ORGANIZATION OF BLANDFORD

Much of the Civil Defence was set up even before war broke out in 1939. But when invasion threatened, the town had to be prepared for further measures. These included the likelihood that the town would be bombed by the Luftwaffe (the German Air Force) prior to any invasion to disable the defences and demoralize the defenders.

Preparation for air raids was in the hands of the Borough Civil Defence Organisation under the direction of the Ministry of Home Security and not the military. The Committee members of Blandford Civil Defence Organisation were:

- Councillor B.C. Hunt (Chairman)
- Councillor Mrs Biddulph
- Alderman Newman
- Councillor C. Timbrell
- Capt. R.I. Sprake (ARP Controller)
- Mr W.H. Wilson (Town Clerk)

Blandford ARP - Air Raid Precautions

Trained Rescue Parties were formed to undertake rescue, temporary shoring up or limited demolition of partly collapsed buildings after air raids. The ARP had also to report the presence of land mines, timed bombs and unexploded bombs, and to ensure that the Police and Air Raid Wardens kept the public away from such danger areas. It was thought that after an air raid, besides demolition work, streets might have to be cleared of debris, craters filled in, and fractured gas, water and electricity mains and sewers repaired, in order to remove danger

central main archway over the main road to Wimborne and a pillbox by Pimperne Stream. In addition it is likely that a minefield would have been laid in the open ground next to the river. Whether the viaduct and the approach arches to the river would also have been prepared for demolition is not known, they probably were, and their destruction would at a stroke have quite effectively blocked that route.

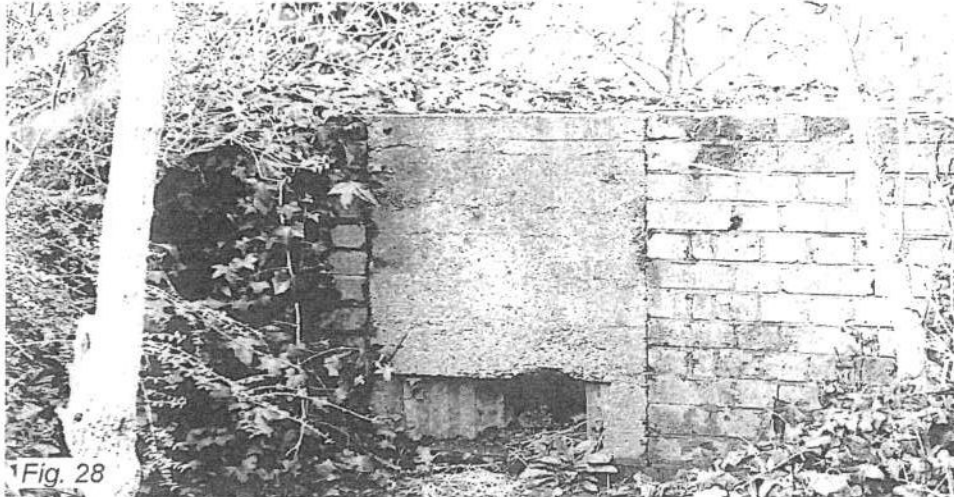


Fig. 28

These defences on the eastern side of Blandford were considered sufficient to make attack from the east unlikely. The river between the two bridges completed the defences encircling the town, and any attempts of crossing it would have been quickly spotted from the pillbox, now demolished, behind Chestnut House (Fig. 28) or other observations posts. At places along the river, rusty spigots to support barbed wire have been found (and are in the Museum), making it evident that barbed wire entanglements along the river completed the defences enclosing the town.

Attack by glider-borne troops and defences north of Blandford

The open piece of almost treeless land, some 500 by 1000 yards, north of Blandford Cemetery, which in 1940 was the abandoned site of Blandford airport, could also have been earmarked by the Germans for landing glider-borne troops to perform a classic style capture of a bridge ahead of the advancing army. To counter this, the area may have been studded with anti-glider poles, but again no evidence for this is known.

It is recalled, however, that wrecks of old cars were strategically placed across the area for that purpose. Similar obstacles may also have been planned for the Crown Meadows (Fig. 7).



Fig. 21

The initials GW and AD inscribed in the 18-inch thick concrete top of the pillbox indicate that one of the builders was George Wilson but AD remains unidentified. On the concreted ha-ha wall of the ditch near the pillbox, inscribed in the wet concrete at the time of construction, is the word 'Juno', the significance of which remains unknown (Fig. 21).

By 1999, the pillbox was deteriorating with crumbling brickwork and shutters ripped out and North Dorset District Council gave it an Amenity Award under the

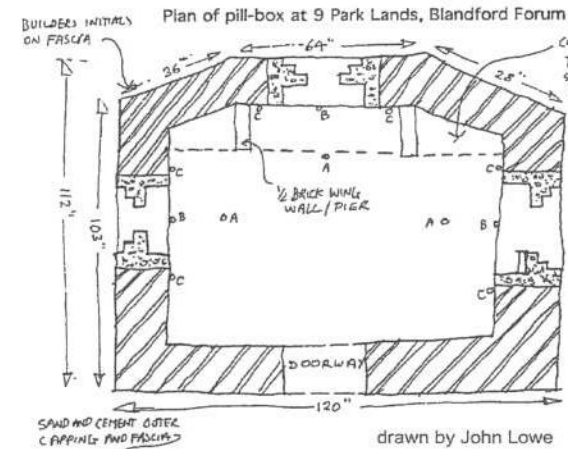


Fig. 22

Heritage. The award enabled repairing the brickwork and restoration of the shutters found in the garden. The layout of the pillbox is shown in Fig. 22.

The Defences from the end of the ha-ha to the Railway Cutting

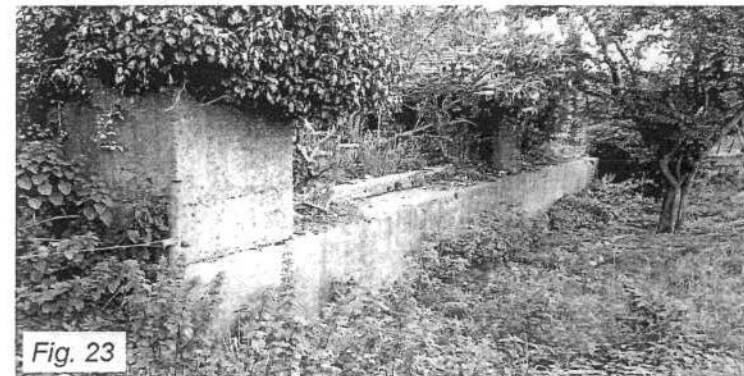


Fig. 23

After the anti-tank ditch, the line of defences continued around the west and north sides of the town as far as the railway cutting. They comprised a line of 150 or

"Repair and Renovation Category" thus "securing the preservation of a building dating from our more recent past", later for it to be given Grade Two preservation by English



Fig. 24

more anti-tank blocks and 'dragon's teeth', some are still there. The first of this line remains at the end of the ha-ha (Fig. 23), but the best preserved are in the plot of land behind Deer Park Holm that includes a continuous row of fifteen anti-tank blocks, including some 'dragon's teeth'. Like the above, they have been given Grade II preservation. Seven of the fifteen there are shown here (Fig. 24). Each is four foot square and deployed corner to corner with two foot spaces between them. Originally they extended further northward but these have been removed to make way for housing.



Fig. 25

From this point north-eastwards, the defences encircling the town continued as a line of 30 or more anti-tank blocks that crossed the recreation ground, to the south east side of the hospital, and went as far as the railway cutting. Of these anti-tank blocks, only three remain, two of them right on the edge of the railway cutting (Fig. 25 and No 11 in Appendix 1). The third is 25 yards along the boundary fence (Fig. 26). They were constructed in a row 'square on' to each other, like those around those near the bridge but unlike those above lying behind Deer Park Holm to the west of Whitecliff Street. It is recorded that the blocks across the Recreation Ground were sufficiently close to each other for

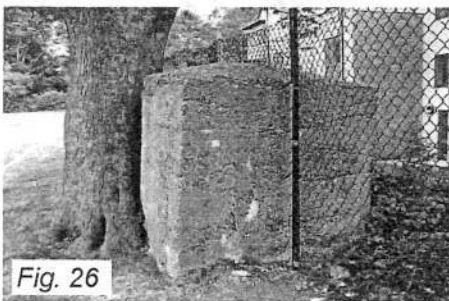


Fig. 26

school children to jump from one to the next.

Any access to the Milldown Road would have been fiercely contested because that would have given the enemy the first stage of an outflanking movement around the north side of Blandford and gaining access to roads leading northwards.

Any German tanks that managed to cross the mined flood plain and begin their way northward across the present site of the Blandford Schools, would have found themselves under artillery bombardment. This 'killing ground' (17 in Appendix 1) would have been previously ranged for artillery firing from the Heights north of Blandford. Whether these contingent plans would have been sufficient to hold up the advance of the German Army is of course unknown, not having been put to the test, but it might have slowed down any advance and give sufficient time for further British Army units to be redeployed.

Defences on the east side of Blandford

The railway cutting leading southwards to the railway station and on to the railway embankment approaching the railway bridge, altogether would have provided a good line of defence, had the enemy crossed the River Stour further east, and then attacked the town from the east. Crossing the railway cutting would be impossible for tanks, and the two road bridges across the cutting would have been blocked by barbed wire entanglements reinforced with steel barriers let into the road or blown up. The only possible path of attack on that eastern side would have been under the railway viaduct south of the station. The viaduct there was defended by an array of anti-tank obstacles blocking the two side arches of the viaduct including four NORCON gun emplacements (Fig. 27 shows the NORCONs later moved to the carpark) covering the



Fig. 27