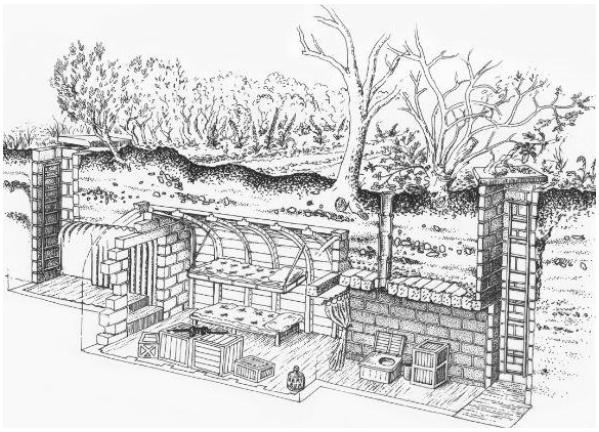
HOME GUARD AND AUXILIARY UNITS

From 1940, Local Defence Volunteers (LDV) units, later known as the Home Guard, were formed in almost all towns and villages. These units comprised civilians ineligible for military service, due to age, fitness, or being in a reserved occupation, who volunteered to take on a home defence role. Units were also raised by social clubs and factories from their members and workers.

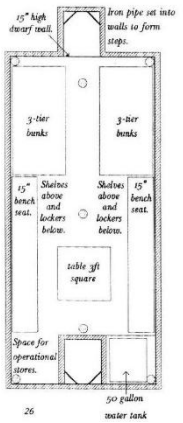
The Home Guard would man anti-invasion defences and observation points, defend factories, airfields, and important infrastructure against invasion, and assist in the aftermath of air raids by clearing debris and guarding Unexploded Bombs (UXB). Training would usually take place at designated training areas or established small arms ranges, although it is known that ad-hoc Home Guard training was also common.

The Home Guard was initially poorly equipped and many men were armed with old or borrowed guns. As the war progressed, they would inherit weapons no longer used by the regular Army, such as the spigot mortar, or easily and cheaply produced weapons, such as Self-Igniting Phosphorous (SIP) grenades.

Home Guard exercises in Scotland



Sketches of Auxiliary Unit Operational Bases



Weapons used by the Home Guard included rifles, improvised grenades, and spigot mortars

In addition to the Home Guard, Auxiliary Units were established as small civilian groups of guerrilla troops. They were trained in guerilla warfare, including sabotage and assassination, and were equipped with stealth weapons such as silenced pistols, plastic explosives, and fighting knives. Auxiliary Units had camouflaged, underground Operational Bases from which they would attack invading forces in the event of invasion.

In 1944, the Home Guard and Auxiliary Units were stood down.

Hazard

Whilst some Home Guard training is documented, it is known that the Home Guard and Auxiliary Units undertook training activities that were unofficial or unsanctioned.

Storage and disposal of munitions by the Home Guard and Auxiliary Units was poorly documented and surplus supplies were often buried or dumped close to defences and hideouts, or in ad-hoc locations, such as waterways.

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