

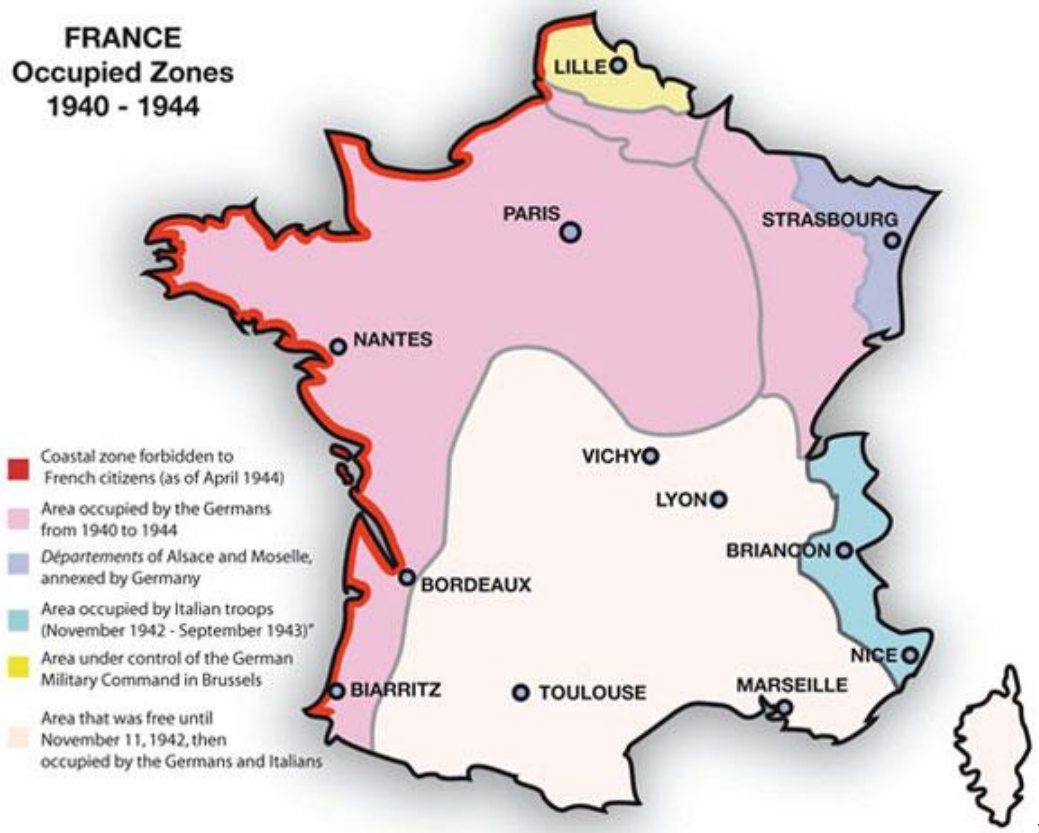
## The Defence of Littlehampton during the Second World War.

Countless books have been written about life in Britain during the Second World War, and the role of Sussex is also well documented, notably by John Goodwin in his excellent book 'Defending Sussex Beaches 1940-1942', but I have found nothing specific to Littlehampton. This essay aims to explain in detail the way that Littlehampton was defended from the threat of enemy invasion during the period 1939-1945.

I myself was not alive at the time, I am not a resident of Littlehampton and I have no military experience- so all the information in this essay is pieced together from other published sources with the aim of explaining things for the general reader.

When Littlehampton Fort was built in 1854 the threat of invasion came from France and the bellicose French Emperor Napoleon III. For the next decade British public opinion was terrified that a French landing was imminent and as a consequence a whole chain of forts, known as Palmerston Forts, after the then Prime Minister, was constructed from Portsmouth to Newhaven to protect the Channel beaches. However, in 1870 Napoleon III's army was defeated by the Prussians and the invasion panic subsided. Indeed throughout the twentieth century Britain and France were allies in the 'Entente Cordiale.'

So the Sussex coastal fortifications were left to crumble and Littlehampton fort was disarmed in January 1891. From then on Littlehampton had no proper defences, which was all very well until Hitler's army captured northern France.



On 5<sup>th</sup> June 1940 the German army broke through the French defences along the Belgian border and two days later they had reached Paris. The French government fled to the south-west of France and

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.massviolence.org/>

on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 1940 the new French President, Marshall Pétain signed an armistice with the Nazis. By this time the Germans had occupied the whole length of the Channel coast.

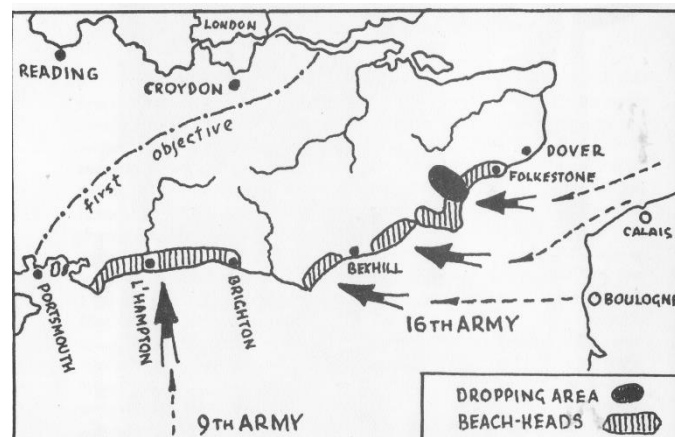
The progress of the Nazi army had been spectacular- beginning with Poland in September 1939 they had rapidly defeated Norway, Denmark, Holland, Belgium and now France. It seemed likely that Britain would be next to come under attack. Invasion seemed imminent and once more our beaches needed defending. Winston Churchill gave his famous speech on 4 June 1940:

*Even though large tracts of Europe and many old and famous States have fallen or may fall into the grip of the Gestapo and all the odious apparatus of Nazi rule, we shall not flag or fail.*

*We shall go on to the end, we shall fight in France,  
we shall fight on the seas and oceans,  
we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, 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.*

Hitler's scheme to attack Britain was codenamed 'Operation Sealion' and was first mooted in November 1939. At this time the heads of the German navy thought such an invasion would be a disaster and no proper plans were drawn up. But after the swift defeat of Northern Europe and France Hitler became confident of victory, and on 16 July 1940 Hitler issued Führer Directive No. 16, setting in motion preparations for a landing in Britain. He prefaced the order by stating:

*"As England, in spite of her hopeless military situation, still shows no signs of willingness to come to terms, I have decided to prepare, and if necessary to carry out, a landing operation against her. The aim of this operation is to eliminate the English Motherland as a base from which the war against Germany can be continued, and, if necessary, to occupy the country completely....The landing operation must be a surprise crossing on a broad front extending approximately from Ramsgate to a point west of the Isle of Wight"*



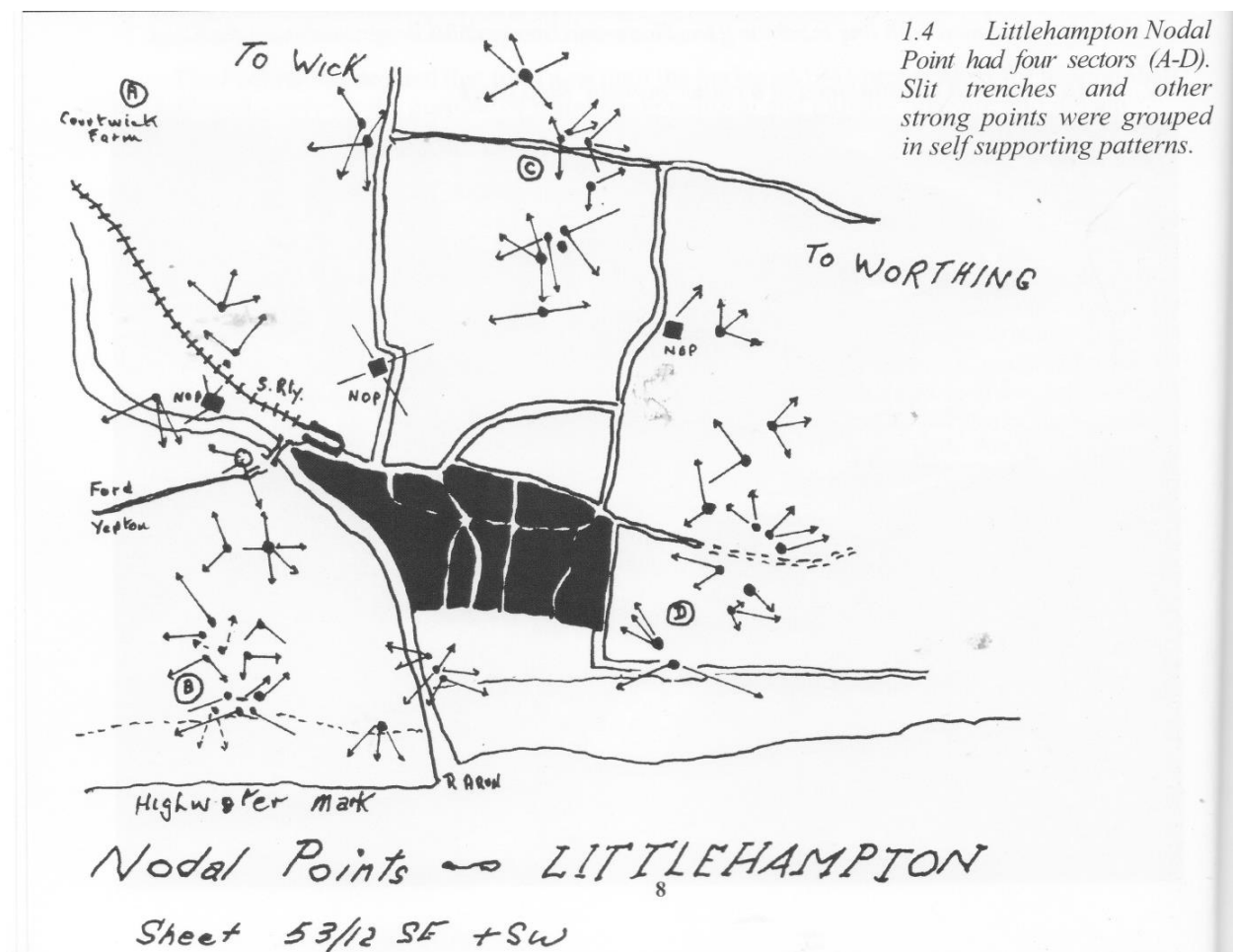
Sketch plan of the German "Sea Lion" invasion.

<sup>2</sup> Thompson pg 50

When the War first broke out in September 1939 the Commander in Chief of the British Home Forces was General Sir Walter Kirke. He did not believe there was any serious threat of an invasion of Britain so no real defences were prepared. Littlehampton continued to be regarded as a pleasant holiday resort and at Christmas 1939 tourists flocked to the town for a charity concert starring the Crazy Gang which was held at the Palladium in Church Street.<sup>3</sup>

Then, following the fall of Belgium, General Kirke was replaced by General Edmund Ironside who was made responsible for anti-invasion defences and for commanding the Army in the event of German landings. Ironside made a swift survey of the resources available to him and discovered that the Local Defence Volunteers were so deficient in training, organisation and equipment that an offensive counter-attack against an invading force was not possible. As a result Ironside embarked on a scheme known as 'Static Defence'. Static Defence meant using concrete and barbed wire to protect Britain's beaches, known as 'The Coastal Crust'.

Ironside designated certain harbours, where the Germans were likely to land, as 'Nodal Points'. These Nodal Points were to be fortified with the aim of delaying the invading force until the British army could arrive. According to instructions, at a Nodal Point the beach was to be protected with barbed wire and pillboxes, there were to be road blocks on the roads leading inland and a garrison of the Home Guard was to keep lookout both on the shoreline and at the roadblocks to stop the enemy advance. Littlehampton was designated a Nodal Point.



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<sup>3</sup> Thompson pg 43

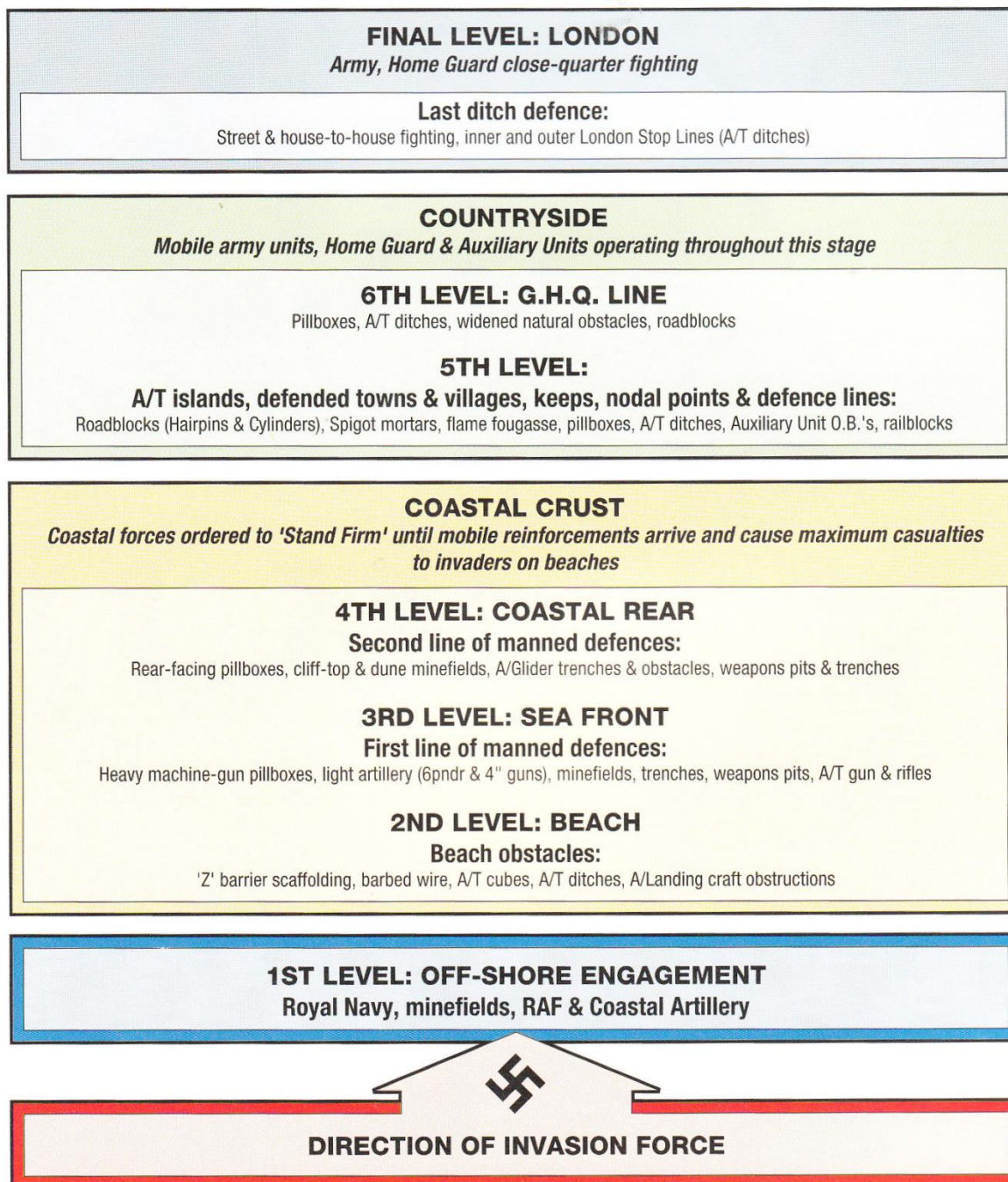
<sup>4</sup> Goodwin 2010 pg 8

# LEVELS OF DEFENCE 1940 - 1944

Note: different emphasis put on various levels by Generals Ironside and Brooke

## DEFEAT AND OCCUPATION: THE END?

*Auxiliary Units still fighting after surrender*



© Austin J. Ruddy 2003

5

<sup>5</sup> Ruddy pg 31

4

A booklet called 'Nodal Points- Operation, Information and Instructions for Civil Authorities' was issued in June 1941. Nodal Points were to be governed by a triumvirate consisting of the local military commander, the chairman of the parish council, and the senior police officer. By this time Ironside had been replaced as C-in-C Home Forces by General Sir Alan Brooke and the Germans had called off Operation Sealion as infeasible owing to British superior air power, but nonetheless the defence of Littlehampton went ahead.

Littlehampton became a like a ghost town.



Taunton Courier, and Western Advertiser - Saturday 07 June 1941

### Demolition of the Pepper Pots

On Littlehampton pier there were two lighthouses known as 'pepper pots' because of their distinctive shape. The high light, built in 1848, was a forty foot high white painted close boarded wooden tower with a green cupola roof and was situated at the shore end of the east pier. Its light was visible for 10 miles. The low light, built in 1868, was a twenty six foot high wooden tower also close boarded and painted white with a green cupola roof and was situated at the sea end of the east pier. This light was visible for 7 miles. These two lighthouses were regarded as such well-known landmarks that even the Germans would recognise them and as a consequence they were demolished in 1940.



Pre 1940

### Scaffolding poles

All along the beach, at the water's edge, scaffolding poles were set into the sand in a XXXXXX formation to prevent boats from landing. 15,000 miles of scaffolding fence were erected in Britain between 1940 and 1941, consuming 50% of Britain's production of scaffolding steel.

Roy Green remembers as a child:

*"At Angmering on Sea rows and rows of scaffold poles were erected to foil landing craft. These stretched for miles from Littlehampton to Worthing and were just visible at high tide."*<sup>6</sup>



Scaffolding poles on Bognor beach.<sup>7</sup>

Ann Broad also remembers:

*In the summer of 1946 when I was 10 years old my family, with a couple of other families, rented a bungalow at Elmer Sands on the south coast between Bognor and Littlehampton for the first of many happy holidays.*

*The beach on this stretch of coast is sandy and almost flat and on that first year, the defences were still on the beach. They consisted of scaffolding-like structures which stretched along the coast about halfway between high and low tides, about 10-12ft. high. This is a guess. I remember that if we wanted to go swimming it was necessary to wait for the sea to reach fairly high up the beach or until it had gone down below the defences - but then it was not very deep because the beach was almost flat. By this time there were gaps in the scaffolding so that it was possible to walk down to the sea at low tide without any difficulty.*<sup>8</sup>

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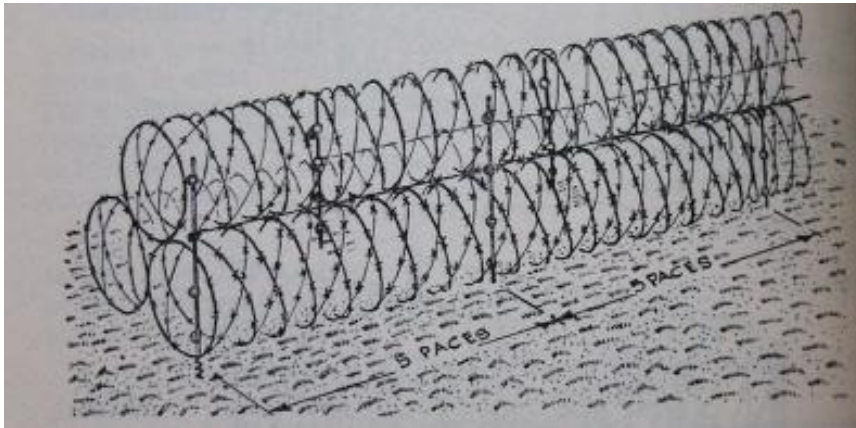
<sup>6</sup> <http://www.wartimememories.co.uk/southeast.html>

<sup>7</sup> Goodwin 1985 pg 87

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.walberswickww2.co.uk/beach-scaffolding/>

## Barbed Wire

There was barbed wire on the beaches, all along the promenade and round the mine fields to keep local people away. The wire used was called 'Dannert Concertina' wire. Dannert wire was the term for oil tempered barbed wire- it had been invented by a German called Dannert in the Great War. Concertina wire came in rolls which had to be stretched out as it was laid. It was fixed on iron posts to form a fence.



A team of ten men was expected to put up 100 yards of wire fence in one hour. On the beach and along the promenade there were two belts of concertina wire fencing, a yard apart.



© West Sussex County Council Library Service [P003402]

Soldiers putting up barbed wire on Worthing beach 1940

I cannot find a picture of Littlehampton beach but this photo of Worthing will give an idea of what the place was like.

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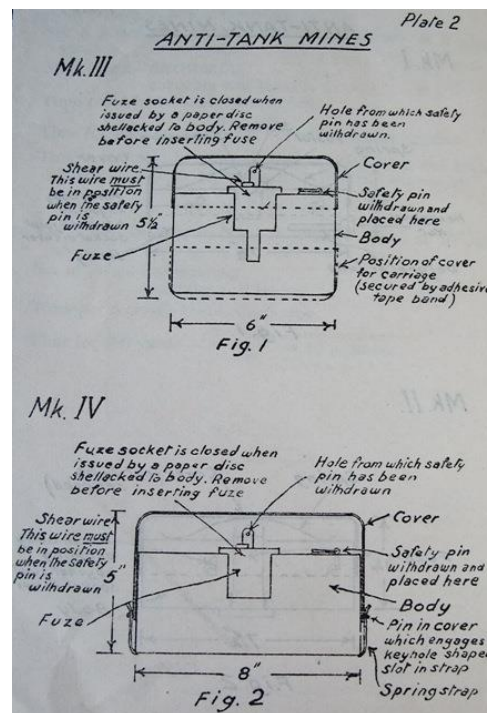
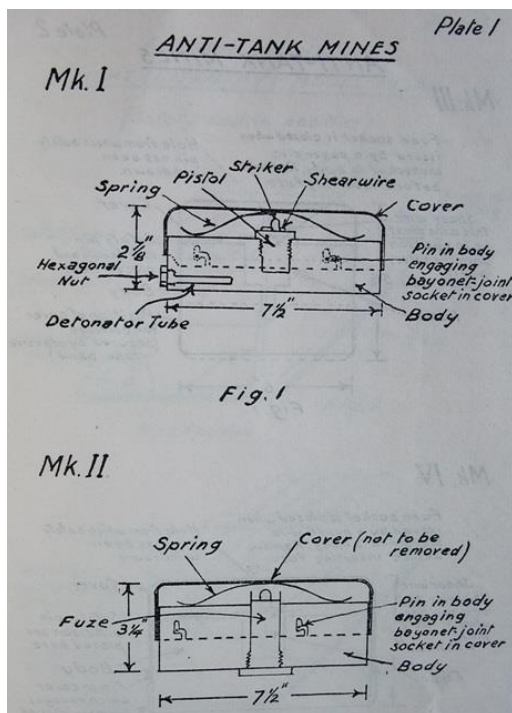
<sup>9</sup> Pillboxes-suffolk.webeden.co.uk



Worthing beach <sup>10</sup>

### Mines

On the shore at Littlehampton there were mine fields on the beach and around the fort. Minefield serial number 55A lay to the west and north of the fort. It extended from a point 90 yards north of high tide level and 40 yards west of the fort northwards for 100 yards and then north-eastwards for 140 yards terminating at the top of the bank 60 yards west of the river. The minefield had an average width of 20 yards and covered an area of 4,800 square yards.<sup>11</sup>



Anti-tank mines - Military Training Pamphlet No.40, 1940

<sup>10</sup> Goodwin 2010 front cover

<sup>11</sup> Mine clearance certificate. Reproduced in Goodwin 2010 pg 99.

PARISH OF  
LITTLEHAMPTON

Clearance Certificate  
Serial No. 65 refers to  
this minefield only

CHIEF ENGINEER  
28 MAY 1944  
S. E. COMMAND

MINEFIELD  
SERIAL NO 56 A

MINEFIELD  
SERIAL NO 29 A  
(SEE SEPARATE SHEET)

MINEFIELD  
SERIAL  
55A

M.R. 46082052

FORT

M.R. 46182070

M.R. 46202057

MINEFIELD  
SERIAL NO 54 A

M.R. 46052058

M.R. 46302063

RIVER ARUN

PIER

LIGHTHOUSE  
(FINED AND)

NEW M.O.T.

SIGNAL HOUSE

LABORATORY

GEN. STORE

REPAIR SHOP

WINDMILL

PARADE

WINDMILL

WINDMILL

WINDMILL

WINDMILL

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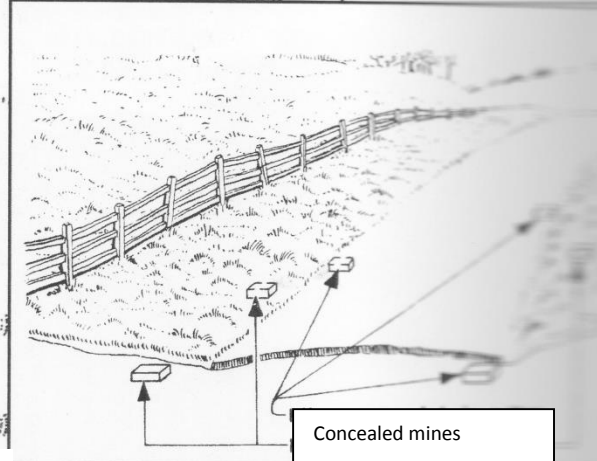
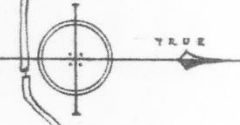
WINDMILL

WINDMILL

WINDMILL

M.R. 46542070

MINEFIELD  
SERIAL NO 28 B



Concealed mines

Littlehampton  
Minefield map  
from Goodwin  
2010 pg 98

Mary Bingham, a child in Littlehampton during the war remembered:

*“We were never allowed to go onto the beach, a risk of danger from the mines. The promenade had barbed wire stretched along it. Toward the end of the war we were allowed to bathe in the river from what is now the Sailing Club. The Golf Club was also mined thus disallowing anyone to play Golf.”<sup>12</sup>*



© Frank Lallouette Collection courtesy of Mrs Jeanette Hickman [LAL1436]

A mine washed up on Bognor beach 1945

In the entrance to the River Arun a controlled minefield was laid. This was a loop of cable on the sea bed linked to a control tower on the land. When a ship or submarine sailed over the loop, a magnetic current caused a light to flash in the control tower and, if an enemy was detected, the controller could set off a line of mines lying in the centre of the loop. All the mines would go off simultaneously. The control tower was a pillbox sited by the river mouth.

### Concrete blocks

Anti-tank cubes were laid along the promenade and between houses. One line of cubes ran along the north side of Cornwall Road and another was built in Meadow Way plus a 15 foot deep tank trap. 400 cubes were placed on the West Beach and golf course.<sup>13</sup> The cubes came in two sizes: 5 feet (1.5 m) or 3.5 feet (1.1 m) high but the larger ones were discontinued in 1941 as they were too expensive in concrete.

Another Littlehampton child, John Moore remembered:

*“The end houses in our road (Hill Road) had large concrete blocks built in to their gardens. They were great for playing on, until the occupiers told us off. In the roads between the houses there were smaller concrete blocks that were laid along the footpath. I think these concrete blocks were there to help repel tanks.”<sup>14</sup>*

<sup>12</sup>[www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/82/a4399482.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/82/a4399482.shtml)

<sup>13</sup> Butler pg 36

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/50/a4392650.shtml>



Anti-tank barrier Rope Walk (West side of the Arun) <sup>15</sup>



Anti-tank blocks - Climping Beach ©Richard Purkiss

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<sup>15</sup> <http://en.tracesofwar.com/article/25398/Tank-Barrier-Littlehampton.htm>

## Pillboxes

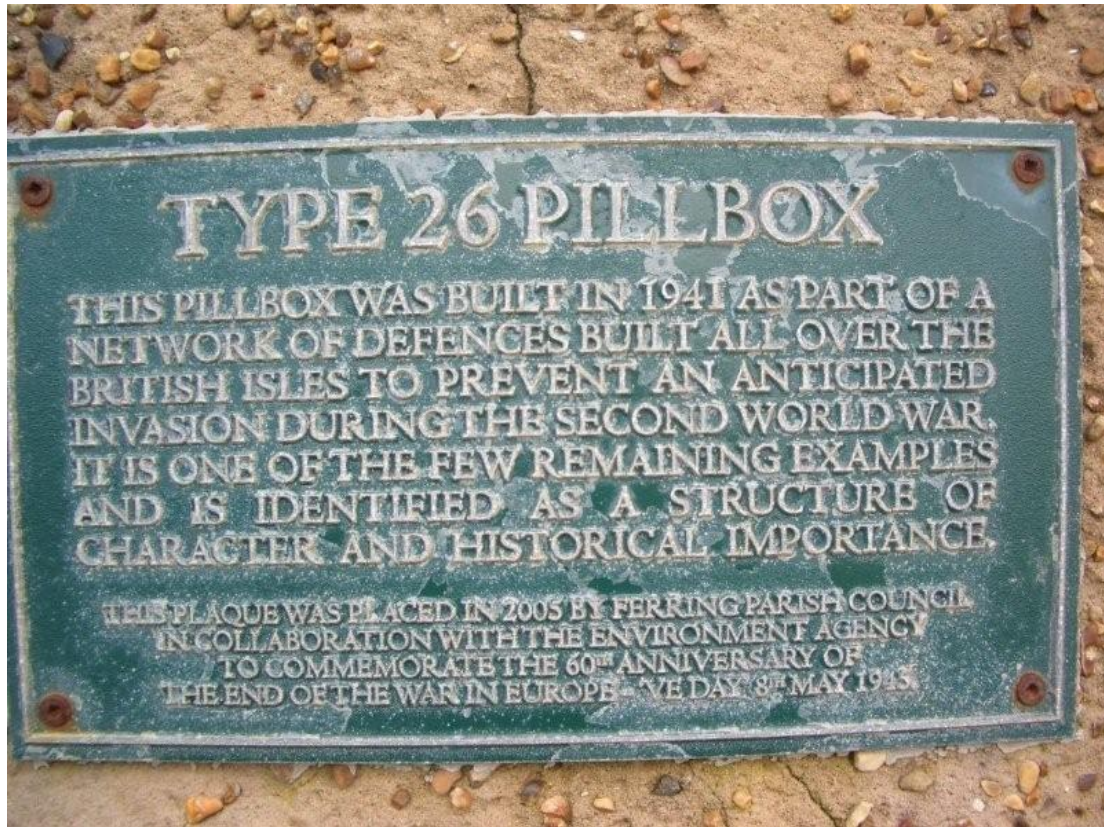
A pillbox is a concrete building used as a guard post. Guards stood inside the pillbox and fired machine guns out of loophole windows in the walls. The name comes from the supposed similarity to the shape of a box used for storing pills. Pillboxes were quite small and did not provide living accommodation.

During May 1940 a branch of the Directorate of Fortifications and Works (FW3) at the War Office was set up under the Directorship of Major-General G.B.O. Taylor to organise the construction of pillboxes to defend Britain against the threat of invasion from Germany. In all 18,000 were installed across the British Isles. FW3 issued construction plans for 7 different designs of pillbox known (confusingly) as Type 22 to Type 28. The use of common designs with standard sizes for doors, loopholes and flat sides made it easier to mass produce items for concrete shuttering and so speed up construction.

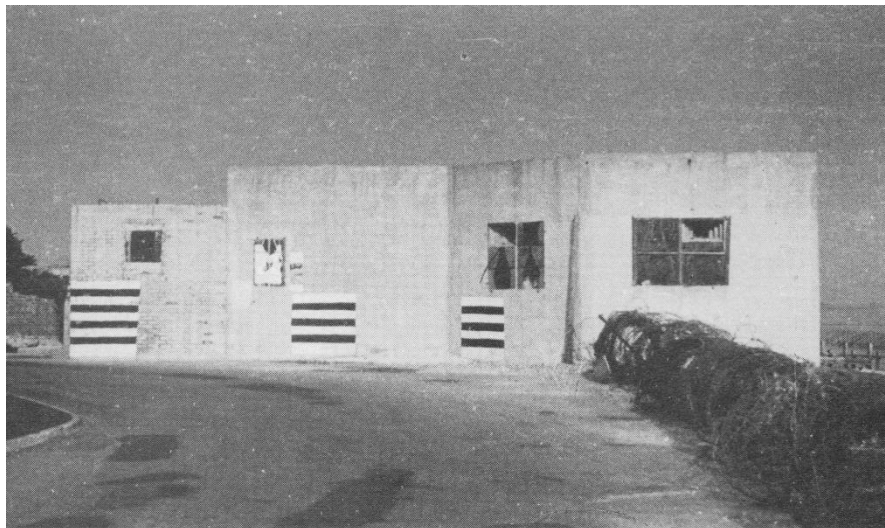
The simplest and most common pillbox was the type 26, which was 10 feet (3m) square with a door in one wall and loopholes in the other three. The walls were 18 inches (45cm) thick. A restored but completely sealed up Type 26 pillbox can be found today on the seafront promenade at Ferring.



Ferring Pillbox © Richard Purkiss



At Littlehampton there were several pillboxes along the seafront and many were disguised – the one at the bottom of Sea Lane had large painted windows to make it look like a seafront kiosk whilst a type 26 pillbox on the shore at Harsfold Road had a pitched roof and was painted to look like a house. None of the Littlehampton pillboxes has survived.



*A disguised block-house at the bottom of Sea Lane, Rustington.  
(Photo: B. P. V. Elsdon).*

16



*A disguised block-house on the foreshore off Harsfold Road.  
(Photo: B. P. V. Elsdon).*

17

A pillbox positioned close to the beach and the mouth of the river contained a control switch that could sink a boat to block the river if enemy ships arrived. This was positioned on the West side of the Arun near the fort.



West Beach -small pillbox with corner embrasure, part of a larger bunker.© Michael Fairbrother

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<sup>17</sup> Thompson pg 45

R.W.E. Humphreys was a member of the Home Guard in Littlehampton who recalled:

*“Twice I was rowed across the River Arun, then led through a mine field and thence to a pillbox. Inside was a detonator with instructions to fire it when a code word came in. It would sink a ship down river to block German landing craft and also put the swing bridge out of action.”*<sup>18</sup>

There was also a line of pillboxes (known as a stop line) along the west bank of the River Arun via Arundel to Pulborough then Rudgewick. A pillbox at Ford covered the railway bridge and the river with a 25pdr gun.



Anti-Tank Pillbox at Ford ©Nigel Chadwick

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<sup>18</sup> Crook pg 28

# What do I do...

**if I hear news  
that Germans are  
trying to land,  
or have landed?**

I remember that this is the moment to act like a soldier. I do *not* get panicky. I *stay put*. I say to myself: Our chaps will deal with them. I do *not* say: "I must get out of here." I remember that fighting men must have clear roads. I do *not* go on to the road on bicycle, in car or on foot. Whether I am at work or at home, I just *stay put*.

**Cut this out—and keep it!**

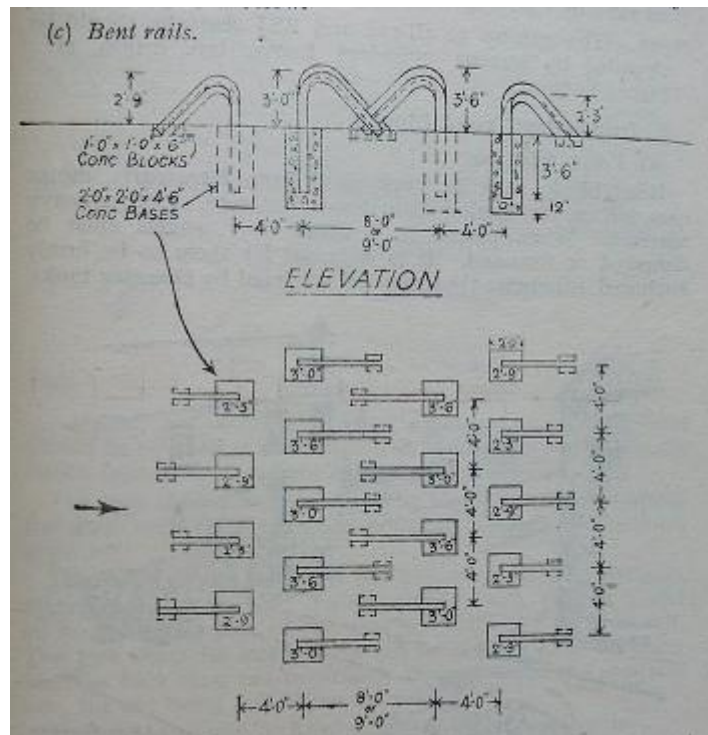
*Space presented to the Nation  
by The Brewers' Society ;  
Issued by The Ministry of Information.*

© Shoreham Herald

July 6<sup>th</sup> 1940

## Road blocks

General Ironside had recommended permanent road blocks on roads leading inland but these were too much of a nuisance to the residents and so General Brooke allowed removable road blocks. Sockets 6 inches square were sunk into the road and then in an emergency hairpin barriers could be fitted into them. The hairpins were railway lines or RSJs bent at a 60° angle. When the hairpins were not in use the sockets could be closed with covers.



There were hairpin road blocks along roads in north Littlehampton, especially at the junction of Arundel Road and Kent Road and at the entrance to Townsend Crescent.



<sup>15</sup> Anti-tank hairpin rail sockets in the road surface at the entrance to Townsend Crescent, Littlehampton (TQ 0355 0283)

<sup>20</sup>

At Lyminster loopholes were cut through garden walls covering the road to Arundel so that any passing enemy could be shot at. One loophole was at ground level.



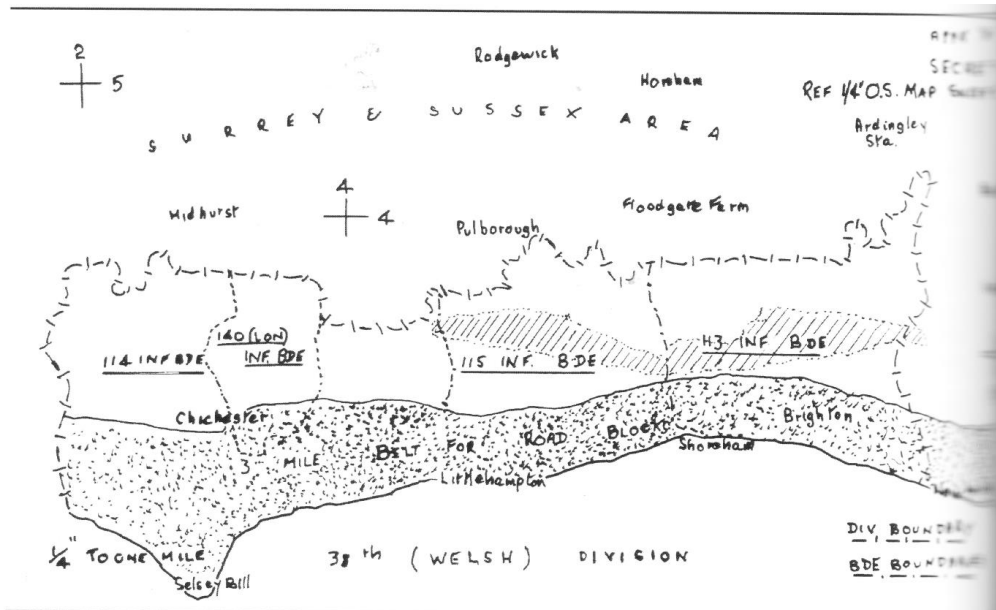
<sup>21</sup>

Here is a map from 1941 showing area for road blocks. The shaded areas in the South Downs were for tanks and troops.

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<sup>20</sup> Butler pg 38

<sup>21</sup> [www.pillboxes.uk](http://www.pillboxes.uk)



22

Alongside many of the road blocks Fougass land mines were placed. These consisted of 40 gallon oil drums filled with highly inflammable liquid and shrapnel.

Roy Green remembers in Angmering:

*"In the hedges 40 gallon barrels of inflammable liquid of some kind were placed, and if a tank or vehicle went down the road a Home Guard member would set them off causing a sheet of fire."*<sup>23</sup>

#### Armaments

Emergency Coastal Batteries (ECBs) were sited seven miles apart at Bognor, Angmering, Littlehampton, Worthing, Shoreham and Brighton. Except for Bognor they were each armed with two 6 inch calibre breech-loading guns of Great War vintage, mainly from old naval cruisers. The guns at Worthing came from HMS Lion<sup>24</sup> and the guns at Angmering from HMS Duke of York<sup>25</sup>.

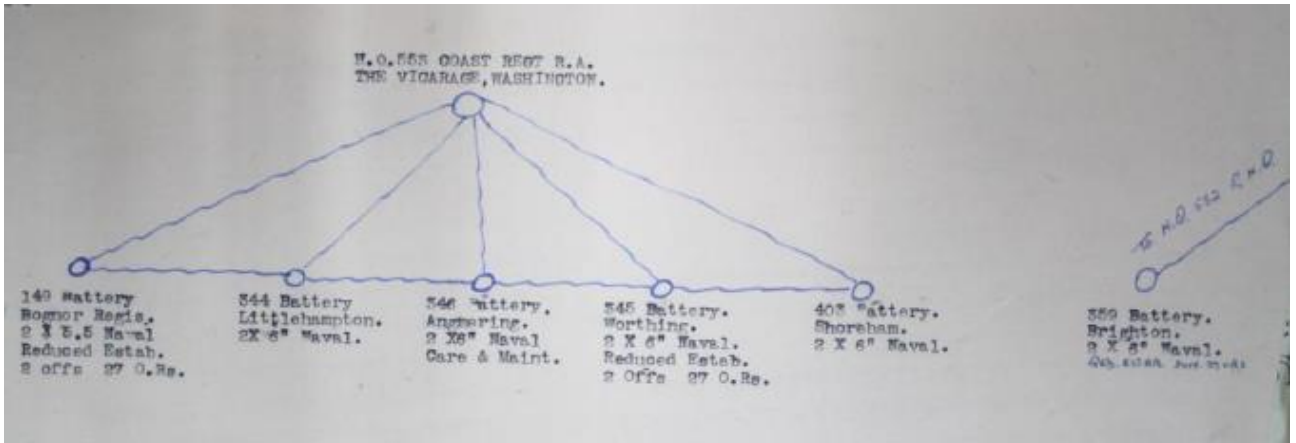
The control HQ for the batteries was inland at Washington, in the Vicarage.

<sup>22</sup> Goodwin 2010 pg 42

<sup>23</sup> <http://www.wartimemories.co.uk/southeast.html>

<sup>24</sup> Goodwin 1985 pg 87

<sup>25</sup> Crook pg 63



26



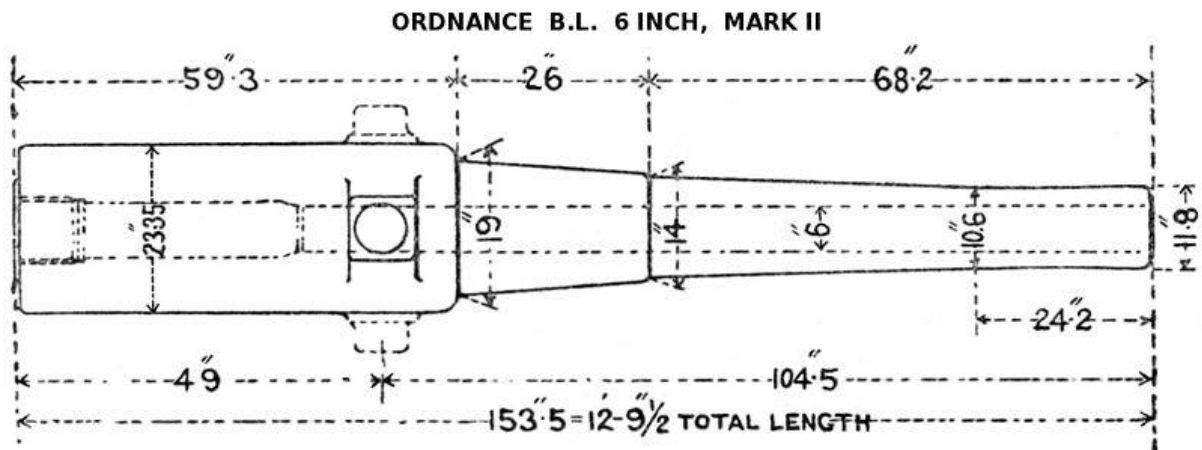
© West Sussex County Council Library Service  
Walter Gardiner Photography Collection [WGP000025]

#### Gun emplacements on Worthing sea front

In Littlehampton the battery was sited on the green just behind the promenade in front of the Beach Hotel (now a block of flats called Beach Crescent.) The battery was called number 344 and it was manned by men from the 553 Coast Regiment. They had two breech loading Mark II guns and two searchlights. They also used the coastguard lookout tower as an observation point.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> PRO WO 192/80

<sup>27</sup> Butler pg 36



28

The Mark II gun was originally a naval gun but when one of these guns burst on HMS Cordelia in June 1891, killing six crewmen and wounding thirteen, the guns were deactivated and then used only for drill purposes until the Second World War.<sup>29</sup>

The Royal Artillery Coast Regiment was founded in May 1940 and disbanded in April 1944.

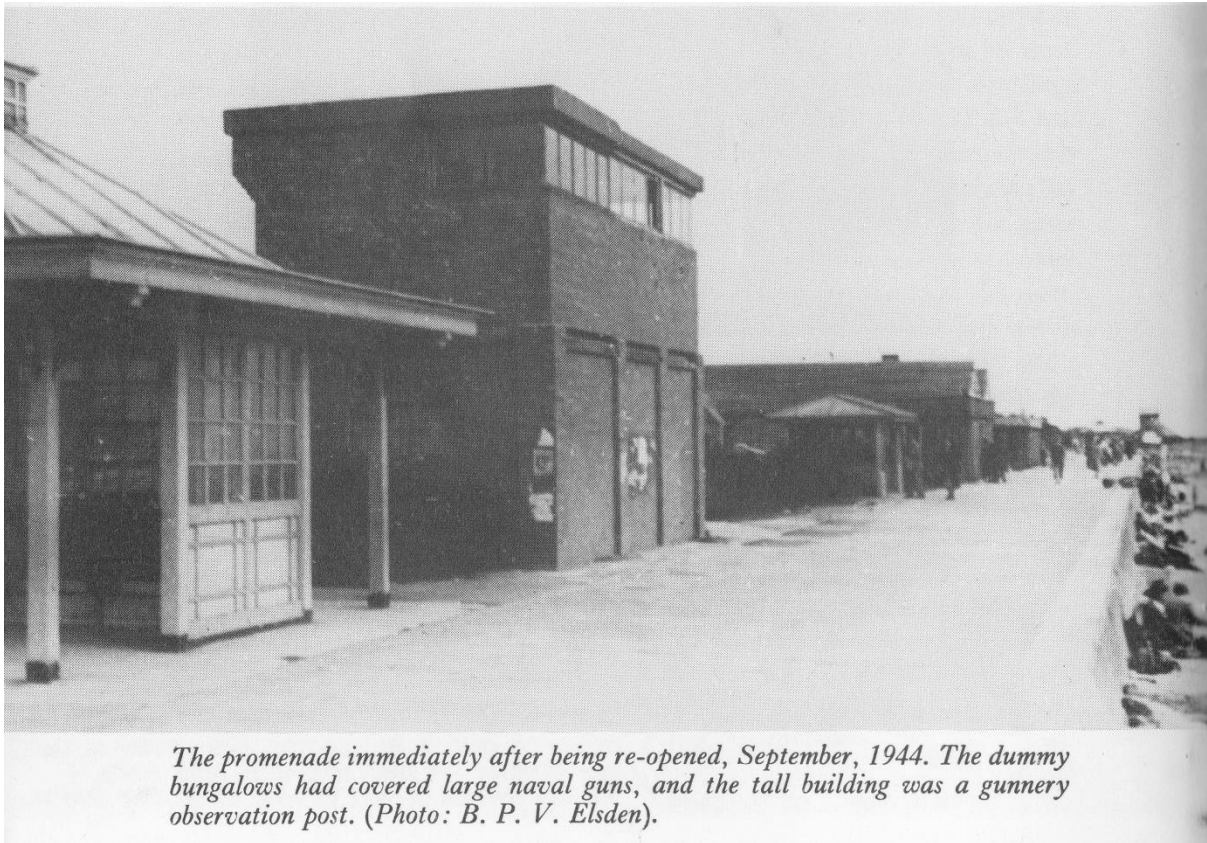
In order to fool the enemy the Littlehampton battery was disguised as a bungalow.



<sup>28</sup> Treatise on Service Ordnance War Office 1893

<sup>29</sup> [http://www.navweaps.com/Weapons/WNBR\\_6-26\\_mk1.htm](http://www.navweaps.com/Weapons/WNBR_6-26_mk1.htm)

<sup>30</sup> Thompson pg 51



*The promenade immediately after being re-opened, September, 1944. The dummy bungalows had covered large naval guns, and the tall building was a gunnery observation post. (Photo: B. P. V. Elsdon).*

31

John Moore remembered 'pom-pom' guns near his house in Hill Road. There were various types of 'pom-pom gun' (named after the noise they made) but it was probably an anti-tank weapon.

*“Adjoining our road was a large field in which there was a large concrete gun pit and also two pom pom guns and of course an army camp which being children we couldn't keep away from! There was also a very large, deep dug out across the field, which I believe was a tank trap. However, with hindsight, I don't recall the guns in this field being used in anger.”<sup>32</sup>*

### **The Home Guard**

On 15th May 1940 Anthony Eden, the newly appointed Secretary of State for War, called for all the able bodied men in Britain aged between 17 and 65, especially those with experience and service in World War 1, to enrol in a newly formed force to be known as the Local Defence Volunteers. This was a force of unpaid volunteers whose duty was to form a back-up to the regular army should the Germans invade. Each man was expected to do 48 hours of voluntary service each month, on top of their daytime work.


The Government expected 150,000 men to volunteer but 250,000 volunteers signed up in the first seven days; by July 1940 this number increased to 1.5 million. This gave the government a huge problem as the LDV members lacked training, weapons and proper equipment but they were eager for an offensive role. In response, at the end of July 1940 their name was changed from Local

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<sup>31</sup> Thompson pg 58

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/50/a4392650.shtml>


Defence Volunteers to the Home Guard and they came under War Office control. Volunteers were organised into battalions of about 1,600 men, which were divided up into companies, platoons and sections. The number of volunteers peaked at 1.8 million in March 1943 and never fell below 1 million until the Home Guard was disbanded in 1944 -for comparison, the regular army in Britain was 1.3 million strong in 1940.



**'Our Country  
should suggest  
to the mind of a potential  
paratrooper the back of a  
hedgehog rather than the  
paunch of a rabbit'**



*So join the*  
**HOME GUARD**



© National Archives Kew

The following Home Guard Battalions were raised in Sussex between 1940-44:

- 1st Sussex (Chichester) Battalion
- 2nd Sussex (Petworth) Battalion
- 3rd Sussex (Horsham) Battalion
- 4th Sussex (Billingshurst) Battalion (formerly 4th Sussex (Steyping) Battalion)
- 5th Sussex (Worthing) Battalion
- 6th Sussex (Arundel) Battalion
- 7th Sussex (Midhurst) Battalion
- 8th Sussex (Bognor Regis and Selsey) Battalion (November 1941)
- 9th Sussex (Shoreham) Battalion (February 1943)
- 10th Sussex (East Brighton) Battalion (February 1943)
- 11th Sussex (39th GPO) Battalion
- 12th Sussex (Southdown Motor Transport) Battalion
- 13th Sussex (Haywards Heath) Battalion
- 14th Sussex (Hove) Battalion
- 15th Sussex (West Brighton) Battalion (February 1943)
- 16th Sussex (Lewes) Battalion
- 17th Sussex (East Grinstead) Battalion
- 18th Sussex (Crowborough) Battalion
- 19th Sussex (Rother) Battalion
- 20th Sussex (Hailsham) Battalion
- 21st Sussex (Eastbourne) Battalion
- 22nd Sussex (Brede Battalion) (Formerly 22nd Sussex (Battle) Battalion)
- 23rd Sussex (Hastings) Battalion
- 24th Sussex (Bexhill) Battalion (Disbanded March 1941)
- 24th Sussex (Uckfield) Battalion (June 1943)
- 25th Sussex (2nd Southern Railway) Battalion (June 1940)
- 26th Sussex (Worth Forest) Battalion (January 1943)

33

Littlehampton was a platoon belonging to the 6<sup>th</sup> Sussex (Arundel) Battalion. This had 1163 members in September 1941.<sup>34</sup>



Home Guard flashes in Tangmere Aviation Museum

<sup>33</sup> <http://mediafiles.thedms.co.uk/Publication/ES/cms/pdf/Land.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> PRO WO 199/3203

Volunteers were given military style training and equipped with army uniforms, weapons and ammunition which they kept at home. They were instructed in the use of many different weapons; not only rifles, but also light and heavy machine guns, grenades and mortars. Instruction was given in house clearing, wood clearing, signalling, and many other tasks such as passing barbed wire obstacles in complete darkness. Visiting examiners held tests in various subjects, including map reading.

A West Sussex Home Guard training film from 1941 shows: How to deal with 'fifth columnists'; the correct way to run a roadblock; how to bring in a prisoner; and stalking and killing a stationary outpost. See: <http://www.movinghistory.ac.uk/homefront/films/se9.html>



The Home Guard deter two girls from entering the beach, Bognor Regis.  
Frank L'Alouette Collection  
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The Headquarters of the Littlehampton Home Guard was in East Street School (now Flintstones Youth Centre). They had other posts at the Arun View pub guarding the river crossing; at a house called Thorncroft at Cemetery Corner in Worthing Road; a hut on the promenade; and at the fort on the West Beach.



© Bev and Mary Taylor [LAL311]

Road block at Cemetery Corner.

The books by Jones and Butler both state that the Fort was manned by the Home Guard but I could not find any more detail. However, there is a record of them training on the golf course, which seems highly dangerous as it was covered with mines!

West Sussex Gazette May 28<sup>th</sup> 1942:

*Littlehampton Home Guard celebrated their second birthday on Sunday with a programme of drills and exercises on the golf course, concluding with an attack on a defended position in which tommy-guns and hand grenades were used. The weather was rather cold and boisterous, but all the exercises were carried out with great keenness, and they enabled the various members of the civil defence personnel and the public who were present as spectators, to realise both the variety and the efficiency of the training the Home Guard have been putting in. Major E.M. West, their commanding officer, was responsible for arranging the programme.*

The Home Guard members patrolled round Littlehampton every night as far as The Globe in Wick. Volunteers were normally not expected to man posts further than about 2-3 miles away from their homes, considering that many had to travel on foot or bicycle after a long day at work. On Sundays they went for rifle practice in Arundel Park and on manoeuvres with various regiments of the regular army.<sup>35</sup>

A training school for members of the Home Guard in all West Sussex was established in the chalk pit at Amberley. Courses covered every aspect of Home Guard duties including 'Patrol School' and 'Blacker Bombard (an anti-tank weapon) training'.



Lord Bridgeman, Director General of the Home Guard meets officers of the Sussex (Arundel) Battalion at Amberley November 11<sup>th</sup> 1942 ©Imperial War Museum

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<sup>35</sup> Jones pg 34

Here are some memories of the Home Guard from Littlehampton residents:

Chris Bowley:

*I was born at home in my parent's bungalow near Arundel in August 1941 in a zone designated as the 'first line of defence' for the South coast of England. It was an area within the sound of RAF Tangmere and its satellite airfield of Westhampnett (now Goodwood Aerodrome).*

*As a small boy I remember my father being a member of the local Home Guard Platoon (Dad's Army). He was a Lance Corporal and as such would have been the popular Corporal Jonesy in Dad's Army. As such he was an honoured member of the platoon and trusted with a 'Sten' submachine gun — a rare piece of equipment for the Home Guard who had traditionally trained with broom handles and pitch forks. I remember this gun being stood in the corner of the lounge of our small bungalow next to the front door when he was not on duty.*

*Duty for my father was normally night patrols on Climping beach — a strip of sand between Littlehampton and Bognor where it was felt Hitler's forces might land ashore should he decide to invade.*

*During the daytime he worked in the forests of the country estate where I was born and brought up and during the summer season he would assist with the harvest on the farms. It was a busy and tiring life often working 18-20 hours a day. I remember the members of the Home Guard Platoon being exactly like the TV series Dad's Army. There was Captain Vernon Barran (Capt. Mainwaring) who was a gentleman farmer and businessman who lived in Madehurst Lodge. Sergeant Pitman (Sgt Wilson) was the head gamekeeper on the estate. My father was his lance corporal. There was also the equivalent of Private Pike, his name was Keith Looker or 'Loo Loo' who apparently changed character with the phases of the moon!<sup>36</sup>*

Mary Bingham:

*"Where I lived my garden wall over looked the Flintstones Hall. The Home Guard used to meet there and I used to climb on the wall and watch them practicing their drill under Col. Cowie who was their leader (Capt Mainwaring equivalent)"<sup>37</sup>*

Alfred Bowerman:

*"I joined the LDV with scores of local men. I still have my arm band of the LDV, later it was called 'The Home Guard'. A few had army rifles, some shot guns and others any instrument of war they could find. I carried my .22 W.D. rifle fitted with a telescopic sight and donned my steel helmet. Armed this way I spent many nights standing on the beach at Littlehampton or guarding bridges and other strategic sites. The head of the Littlehampton branch of the LDV was an ex-army officer called Colonel Cowie. The district was divided into areas. I was put in charge of five men to guard the country between Ford bridge and the Lyminster railway crossing. This covered the whole of my farm at Court Wick Park, and included the*

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<sup>36</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/25/a6956625.shtml>

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/82/a4399482.shtml>

*railway line on which later, on several occasions, bombing attacks were made. Three of us would be on duty for three successive nights from 7pm until 7 am the following morning.*"<sup>38</sup>

R.W.E. Humphreys:

*"A great quantity of Lee Enfield .303 rifles came in packing cases and I helped to clean them up with the aid of sacks. A regular Army Sgt. showed me how to set sights and other matters, and I also fired guns on the beach itself."*<sup>39</sup>



Littlehampton Home Guard at East Street School ©Kath Moore<sup>40</sup>

Col Cowie who commanded the Home Guard also the organiser of the Littlehampton Badminton Club.

*During the 1939 to 1945 war, the badminton hall with its maple wood sprung floor (laid only a week before war was declared) was famous for dances on Wednesdays and Saturdays which were attended by between five and six hundred people including American and Canadian servicemen who waltzed and quick-stepped to Harold Jacob's Band. At that time the club was managed by Colonel Cowie who kept a stem eye open to ensure that only club members got to the upstairs bar and the stock of alcohol which was then in short supply.*<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Bowerman pg 89

<sup>39</sup> Crook pg 24

<sup>40</sup> Facebook group: Flashback Littlehampton

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.lbsc.org.uk/#/club-history/4569838218>

## The Regular army

When the war first broke out there was no proper task force in place for protecting Littlehampton and various ad hoc arrangements were made with the Royal Engineers being required to step into the breach. They supervised the fortification of the beach with barbed wire and scaffold poles.

Nottingham Evening Post - Monday 20 May 1940:

### **SAID TO HAVE REFUSED TO HALT**

#### **Man Accused of Obstructing Sentry**

*An ex-serviceman, Thomas Ralph Clark, of Arundel Road, Littlehampton, Sussex, was summoned at Littlehampton today for alleged obstruction of a member of H.M. Forces on Littlehampton promenade on May 12<sup>th</sup>*

*He pleaded not guilty and said "My objection is to soldiers with rifles and bayonets being on the sea-front and interfering with civilians, children and visitors."*

*A Sapper in the Royal Engineers said he had orders to stop anyone from getting on the Promenade. When told to halt Clark refused, and witness put his bayonet up against his jacket. Clark replied "That's it" and immediately took hold of the bayonet and rifle and tried to take it away. The Corporal of the Guard came up and Clark was taken into custody. Clark told the magistrates that the front should be owned by the Harbour Board and be guarded by Coastguards, and not by soldiers pushing people about with bayonets. He added that he had had one or two complaints from children.*

*Supt. Peel said that Clark suffered badly from shell-shock in the last war.*

*Accused was remanded in custody for a month to await a report from the prison medical officer.*

From 4<sup>th</sup> October 1940–17<sup>th</sup> February 1941 responsibility for defending Sussex lay with the 201st Independent Infantry Brigade (Home) which had been especially formed for that function from troops based in Surrey and Hampshire. It was commanded by Brigadier A.E. Lawrence.

General Brooke recorded in his diary:

*23<sup>rd</sup> October 1940.*

*Another quiet and peaceful night with little bombing owing to fog. Left club at 8.30 am and proceeded to Littlehampton where I met Bulgy Thorne, Brocas Burrows and Sandy Lawrence. The latter commanding the 201<sup>st</sup> Infantry Brigade, consisting of four new battalions who have just taken over beach defences between Littlehampton and West Wittering. Good battalions that promise very well, but require more officers. Returned London at 6pm.<sup>42</sup>*

The Brigade was moved out of Sussex in February 1941 and it was disbanded on 13 December 1941.

In early 1941 responsibility for defending Sussex was transferred to the 38<sup>th</sup> Welsh Infantry Division which was a Territorial Army formation of about 17,000 men. They spent some time on the coast digging and wiring and some time in reserve positions in the South Downs.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Field Marshal Lord Alanbrooke *War Diaries 1939-1945* University of California Press, 2003

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.royalwelsh.org.uk/downloads/E05-06-WelchR-WW2-15thBattalionTA.pdf>

After that most of the troops in the town were assembled to prepare for an offensive mission against the Germans rather than specifically to defend the homeland and the Home Guard took over the defensive role, including manning the gun batteries.

### **The Canadians**

The first Canadian troops arrived in England in January 1940 and were based at Aldershot. By December 1940 the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canadian Infantry Division (about 17,000 men) had arrived and it was soon deployed along the south coast from Chichester to Eastbourne. Canadian engineers were responsible for laying the majority of the mine fields.

The Canadians took up residence in local hotels and were billeted on local residents. Their main residence was the Southlands Hotel and their NAAFI was the Bungalow Cafe in Beach Road.

Here are some reminiscences from local residents:

John Moore:

*“In the town all the large houses and all the houses along the sea front were taken over by the American and Canadian soldiers. All this was exciting for us kids, as we could get some of their chocolates and chewing gum!”<sup>44</sup>*

Baldie:

*“I lived in Rustington during the war and went to the local primary school. We lived in Broadmark Lane and had Canadian soldiers stationed in hotels opposite our house”<sup>45</sup>*

Alfred Bowerman:

*“Rapid moves to safeguard the South Coast were hurriedly made and several army divisions were placed in strategic positions. Court Wick Farm was more or less taken over by the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Division. They immediately erected a strong barbed wire fence around the perimeter of the farm house, cottages and farm buildings. We could only leave or enter our home by showing a W.D. pass. The Canadians very quickly dug large underground headquarters where they were safe from all enemy bombs or guns.”<sup>46</sup>*

Roy Green:

*“One Summer Evening the French Canadians came to the village (Angmering) and set up their camps under trees around the fields. There was some excitement I seem to remember because believe it or not they had a real BLACK man with them I doubt that any villagers had even seen a Black man at that time. He was huge giant of a man, but a real gentle giant. He was the cook for the soldiers. We Children collected their bread from the local bakery for him and in return he saved us the food scraps to feed to our rabbits and chicken.”<sup>47</sup>*

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<sup>44</sup><http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/50/a4392650.shtml>

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.rootschat.com/forum/index.php?topic=395277.10>

<sup>46</sup> Bowerman pg 92

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.wartimememories.co.uk/southeast.html>

John Grant:

*“Hare’s Garage (now the Flea Market) was home to Canadian and American Units, virtually all of South Terrace was requisitioned, and in the run-up to D-Day the common threatened to sink under the weight of military vehicles. One evening the Canadian Black Watch entertained us with a display of counter-marching, accompanied by their pipe band. Surrey Street was a small arena and the fierce sound of their pipes and drums made it shake. Days later these huge, generous men were fighting their way ashore at Dieppe, and there was not a dark blue/green tartan kilt to be seen in Littlehampton ”<sup>48</sup>*

Littlehampton had become a garrison town:

*“By 1941, in addition to airmen, the district was inundated with a variety of service men. Empty houses and other buildings had been commandeered by the Forces and many house-holders had soldiers billeted, compulsorily, with them. Among the troops based in the area during 1941 were the Royal Artillery, some manning the guns on the Green and stationed at the Beach Hotel and Surrey House; the King’s Shropshire Light Infantry; The Royal Canadian Artillery ( some stationed at the Broadmark Hotel); the Royal Regiment of Canada, which had its HQ in Arundel Park and a Littlehampton HQ at ‘Edenmore’ Fitzalan Road, with some of its men stationed at the Golf Club and Roland House in East Street (now Ormsby House); the Royal Canadian Engineers Tunnelling Unit, based at Ford Aerodrome; the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps and the Royal Canadian Medical Corps ( both based at Rosemead School in East Street) ; the Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps at Dorset House School in East Street; the Canadian Light Infantry and the Royal Army Medical Corps at the Carpenter’s Convalescent Home; the 48<sup>th</sup> Highlanders of Canada, some stationed at the old Isolation Hospital in Mill Lane, Toddington. One Canadian unit had its headquarters at Aukland, the Convent School at the top of Norfolk Road and this later became the base of the Royal Army Service Corps. Another Canadian HQ was at St Nicholas School in Fitzalan Road where the Canadian Military Police were based. Men of the Naval Patrol Service also had a base here. ”<sup>49</sup>*

The 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Infantry Division remained in Sussex until 1943 when they left to take part in the assault on Sicily.

**Air Defences** (ARP stands for Air Raid Precautions).

When the war broke out Littlehampton was not really ready for an airborne invasion and troops had to be rushed in to install Heavy Anti-Aircraft guns.

Here is the account of Arthur James Humphreys of the 284 HAA Battery who installed the guns in early 1940.

*“We arrived at the south coast town of Littlehampton and formed part of the air defence for the area, which included the Fleet Air Arm Base at Ford near Arundel. We often saw biplanes fly over, the famous Swordfish and the Walrus, an amphibian aircraft.*

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<sup>48</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/87/a4230587.shtml>

<sup>49</sup> Jones pgs 82-83

*The site had only just been completed and was located on the grassed area beside the promenade. There were two 3inch naval guns, converted for HAA, a Vickers mechanical predictor, height finder and an instrument called Telescope Identification, used by spotters. There were no sandbags and a single strand of rope kept the general public away. On the promenade side people could walk in front, except when we were drilling. On those occasions wooden poles, supported on triangular metal frames, had to be moved across the prom to stop people walking in front of the guns.*



*No.9 Section, 284 HAA Battery grouped around a 3” guns on the grass at Littlehampton. I am standing on the left of the barrel and Lt.Vidler, our troop officer, is on the left of the picture*

*We were still in the period which has become known as the ‘Phoney War’ and the general public were not going to be done out of their Easter Bank Holiday outing to the seaside. It was quite a nice day and some brave souls were actually bathing while others stretched out on the sand. The nearby fun fair was in full swing with screaming youngsters shooting down the big dipper accompanied by a mixture of sounds from the various sideshows.*

*At around eleven o’clock we were notified of an unidentified aircraft approaching Littlehampton and our alarm bells started ringing. The men grabbed tin hats and respirators and dashed across the grass to get the site ready for action. The promenade to the front of the guns was cleared and the barriers erected.*

*Within minutes the entire site was surrounded by hundreds of holidaymakers pushing and shoving to get a clear view of men in khaki preparing their equipment. Children stood, wide eyed, beside the rotating guns, some sucking ice creams or chewing candy floss.*

*I will never forget what happened next; it was rather like play-acting on a film set, serious but nevertheless comical. Our troop officer, Lt. Vidler, a short and rather rotund gentleman, wearing riding breeches and highly polished boots, moved to centre stage. He turned to the crowd and said, “Ladies and Gentlemen we have just received report of enemy aircraft approaching from the south. These guns are likely to open fire at any moment. I strongly*

*advise you to move back and please keep your children under control". I think that everyone, and that included the soldiers, expected him to take a bow or give an encore.*

*Nothing happened, which was a good thing, as I cannot remember seeing any ammunition on the site. Shortly after this episode the gun position was dismantled and moved nearer to the airfield. At the same time I was selected for training on gun laying equipment (renamed - Radar) and travelled, by myself, to Essex." <sup>50</sup>*

In August 1940 R.W.E. Humphreys of the Littlehampton Home Guard was on patrol on the beach when he saw a German plane:

*"On one of these night guards after the 13 hour stint I propped my rifle against the pillbox and strolled down the beach to stretch my legs. There was a thick sea mist when suddenly came the sound of aero engines. A four engine Focke Wolf Condor bomber poked its nose out of the mist about 50 feet up. Unable to retrieve my rifle in time I threw beach stones at it but I don't think I hit it." <sup>51</sup>*

By 1941 a number of anti-aircraft guns had been positioned in the town including one on the roof of Sparks warehouse in the High Street; on the roof of ARC Marine in River Road; on an allotment in St Mary's Close; in Meadow Way and behind The True Blue in Wick.<sup>52</sup> An air-raid siren was placed on Butlin's Amusement Park.

I have been unable to find out how many German planes were shot down by Anti-Aircraft guns and how many by the RAF planes in battle. The majority of losses occurred during July – October 1940 in the Battle of Britain when the Germans lost 1652 planes and the RAF 1087.

Here is an article from the Worthing Herald:

*FOLLOWING the evacuation of Allied forces from Dunkirk, August and September, 1940, saw many intense air battles fought in the skies above West Sussex. More enemy aircraft were shot down here during that critical Battle of Britain time than in any other period of World War Two.*

*On the same day as the Heinkel bomber crash at High Salvington, a Messerschmitt Me 110 twin-engine escort fighter belly-flopped among the stooks in a field at Lee Farm, Clapham.*

*Three days earlier, on August 13, 1940, an RAF Hurricane fighter based at Tangmere shot down a Junkers Ju 88 at Arundel. The German pilot tried to make a "soft" crash-landing on the water of Swanbourne Lake in Arundel Park but his plane struck a beech tree on the west bank and the plane tumbled down the steep embankment, tearing itself to bits. Two of the plane's crew of four had already baled out and were taken prisoner. Another was found dead in a nearby tree while the parachute of the fourth fouled his aircraft's tail as he baled out and he was dragged to his death. In 1989, Swanbourne Lake dried out and revealed remnants of the Junkers still buried there – together with four unexploded bombs!*

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<sup>50</sup> <http://www.warlinks.com/memories/humphreys/index.php>

<sup>51</sup> Crook pg 28

<sup>52</sup> Butler pg 36.

*A damaged Junkers Ju87 Stuka landed on the Ham Manor golf course on August 18, 1940. This was a mission of mercy, the pilot seeking aid for his gunner who had been seriously injured by machine gun fire in the battle above. But he was beyond help. On this occasion, sightseers (who usually removed only small souvenirs) “liberated” machine guns, ripped instruments from the cockpit and tore swastikas and crosses from the plane’s body.*

*A farmer armed only with a walking stick arrested the five-man crew of a Heinkel He 111 shot down at Wick, near Littlehampton. They remained prisoners-of-war for five years.*

*At least five Messerschmitt 110s were shot down within a few miles of Worthing on one day, September 4, 1940. One ended up at Washington, a second in Pulborough, the third near Steyning, and a fourth on Mill Hill behind Shoreham. The fifth plane was in flames as it dived to earth, the gunner trapped by a damaged canopy. The pilot managed to land in a field at Patching, where he leapt out of the now blazing aircraft and smashed open the canopy, enabling both men to escape. They were captured later by a British army officer.*

*On September 9, a Messerschmitt Me 109 made a forced landing at Storrington and on November 1, a Junkers 88, damaged by anti-aircraft fire, jettisoned its remaining bombs on West Chiltington golf course before crashing near Storrington.<sup>53</sup>*



Members of the Rustington Home Guard with a German plane that had crashed on Ham Manor golf course August 18<sup>th</sup> 1940.<sup>54</sup>

The ‘farmer with a walking stick’ must have been Alfred Bowerman of the Littlehampton Home Guard who ran Court Wick Park Farm:

*“I recall the afternoon of August 10<sup>th</sup> 1940. A large number of Heinkel 111 bombers had attacked Southampton and one of them had been badly shot-up by a Spitfire. We saw it*

<sup>53</sup> [http://www.hadesign.co.uk/worthing\\_history/history\\_pages/html/skys\\_the\\_limit.html](http://www.hadesign.co.uk/worthing_history/history_pages/html/skys_the_limit.html)

<sup>54</sup> <http://simhq.com/forum/ubbthreads.php/topics/2682133/8>

*dropping slowly towards us. It finally came down quite rapidly and glided over a field about 100 feet up where 20 women were picking potatoes. I was with them at that time and we all lay down flat, face downwards which was the recognised method of defence. It crash landed about 300 yards away, so I, armed with a walking stick and steel helmet went over to take charge of the occupants. As I arrived the German airmen were getting out of their bomber. I asked the Captain to hand over all their revolvers and knives, which he did immediately. Fortunately he could speak English and was able to talk with me. He knew exactly where they were and showed me his map. He then said he had a crew of four but the tail gunner was badly shot in his arm. We managed to get him out of the plane and I applied a home-made tourniquet which stopped the bleeding. Whilst attending to the wounded airman I had not noticed that about twenty soldiers belonging to the Durham Light Infantry under the command of a very excitable sergeant had arrived and were lying down with loaded rifles pointing at us. I had great difficulty in explaining to the sergeant that I was English and a member of the Home Guard. For a few moments it was an ugly situation. I asked the soldiers to take the wounded man to hospital, whilst I marched the others up to the farm and took them in my car to Ford which was the nearest prisoner-of-war camp.”<sup>55</sup>*

The War Graves section of Littlehampton Cemetery contains the graves of 13 German servicemen, one of whom is still listed as unidentified



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<sup>55</sup> Bowerman pgs 93-94

As it turned out all the fortifications on Littlehampton beach were unnecessary as there was never a seaborne invasion of Littlehampton; and the main reason for this was the defeat of the Luftwaffe (German airforce) by the RAF in the Battle of Britain in August and September 1940. Hitler called off Operation Sealion because he knew his invasion barges would be bombed by British planes.

The Battle of Britain was fought in the skies over Sussex with the British planes operating out of Tangmere and Westhampnett. RAF Tangmere was the controlling station of Sector "A", in No 11 Group, Fighter Command, and as such covered an area from Brighton to Bournemouth.

In 1942, RAF Westhampnett became the home of 31st Fighter Group, US Army Air Force, equipped with Spitfires.

Ford Aerodrome (also known as HMS Peregrine) had a varied role in the war- flying in the wounded from France after D-Day, commanding the Air Sea Rescue Station at Littlehampton, and hosting the radar-equipped Fighter Interceptor Unit.

The presence in West Sussex of so much of the British air defence infrastructure mean that Littlehampton became frequent a target for German bombing raids. On Sunday 18 August 1940 Ford airport was largely destroyed and Poling Radar Station suffered a sustained attack.

Here is a Luftwaffe aerial reconnaissance photo for use on German bombing raids.

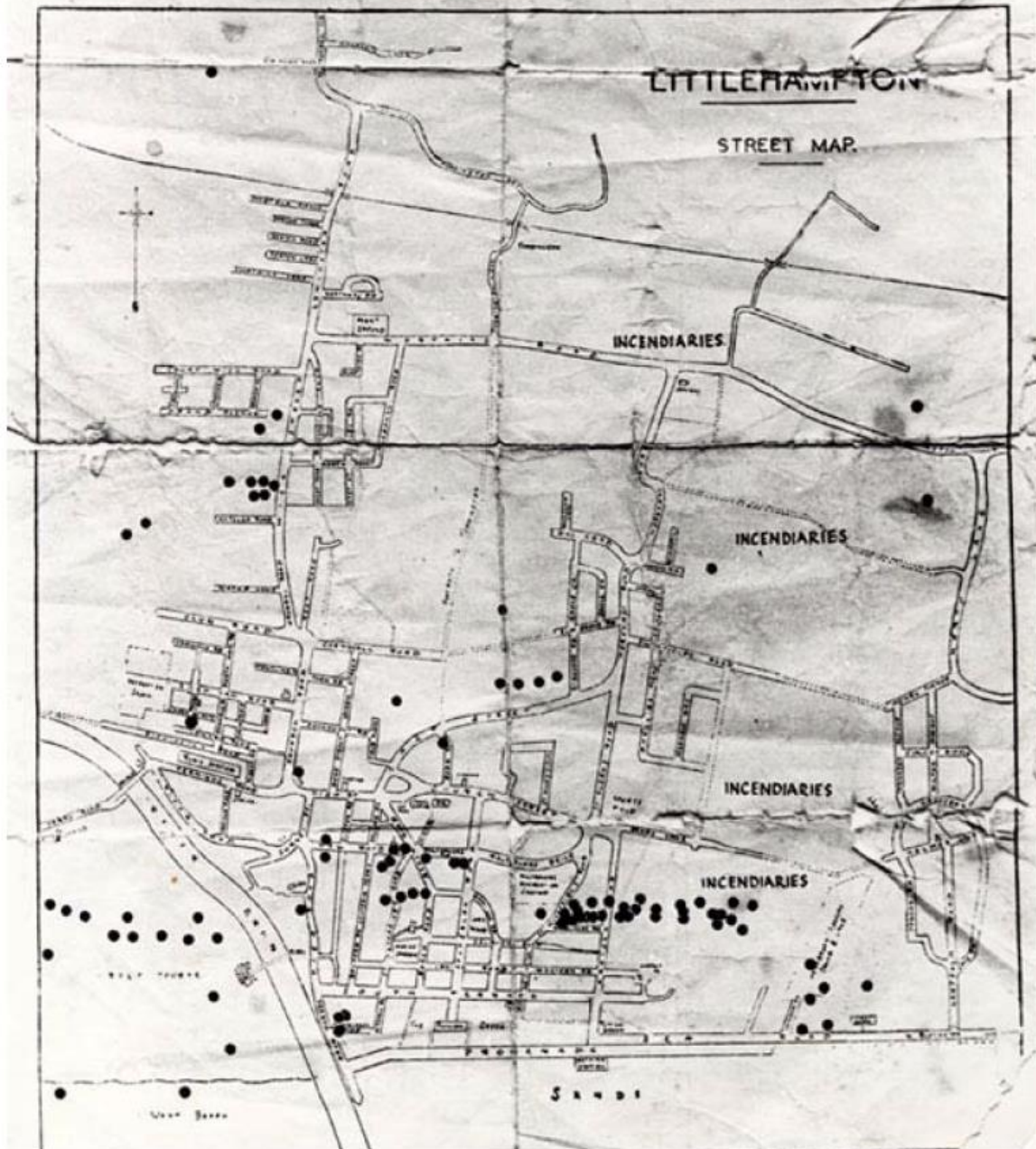


Abb. 1 Littlehampton (10 000 Einw.) an der durch Leitdämme eingefassten Mündung des River Arun bei Hochwasser, von den beiden Bühnen in Verlängerung der Leitdämme ragt nur die westliche aus dem Wasser heraus. Flugplatz Ford (a), Eisenbahnkreuzung (b), Arundel (c) mit markantem Schloß über dem Flußtal, dahinter der bewaldete Anstieg der South Downs

The caption reads:

View of Littlehampton bordered by dykes at the mouth of the River Arun at high tide, the groyne on the western extension of the bank protruding out into the water. Ford Airport (a) Railway crossing (b) Arundel (c) with distinctive castle above the river valley, behind is the rise of the South Downs. (Landesperren – land barriers (possibly trenches).

Littlehampton Gazette  
NOVEMBER 10th, 1944.  
**AIR RAIDS ON LITTLEHAMPTON**  
Official Map And Figures of Every Incident



[www.westsussexpast.org.uk](http://www.westsussexpast.org.uk)  
© West Sussex County Council Library Service

As a result of the air raids 16 people were killed and 15 were seriously injured. 29 houses were destroyed and 91 seriously damaged.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Jones pg 175

Alfred Bowerman recalled:

*“As the war dragged on we, on the coast, were constantly under the threat of enemy action. The German planes used to fly very fast over the sea to keep out of the way of detection by radar and then start machine-gunning anything and everything they could see. At night, when it was not too close, it was a pretty sight to watch. Every tenth bullet was a tracer (i.e. an illuminated one). It looked like a watering can being used when about 200 feet up. When the plane was flying towards you it was another matter and we learned to dive into the nearest ditch as quickly as possible. The rattle of bullets hitting the Dutch barns, and the occasional hitting of the slates on the house, are memories which do not fade with time”.*<sup>57</sup>

Responsibility for defending the people of Littlehampton from air raids lay with the ARP.

In April 1937 the government had decided to create an Air Raid Wardens Service and during the next year recruited around 200,000 volunteers. During the war there were 1.4 million ARP wardens in Britain, most of who were part time volunteers who had full time day jobs. Wardens were responsible for issuing gas masks and pre-fabricated air-raid shelters (Anderson and Morrison shelters), setting up public shelters, and making sure the blackout was maintained. The wardens were also expected to extinguish small fires, administer first aid to bomb casualties and investigate reports of unexploded bombs.

In Littlehampton the ARP headquarters was located at a house called Groombridge in Norfolk Road and there were wardens' posts there and at 5 other places in the town- the police station in Gloucester Road; the Church Army hut in Maltravers Road; a hut in Thorncroft Car Park; a garage in Beaconsfield Road, Wick and at Hunt and Merridew's garage in Wick. An ARP depot was built in Harwood Road.

By 1942 there were 13 surface air raid shelters, 1 basement shelter and two trench shelters. In addition 1713 table shelters (Morrison Shelters) had been distributed.<sup>58</sup>

John Grant remembered:

*“On that day I was a couple of months short of my sixth birthday, and in no time at all everything changed. Morrison shelters, table-like structures of steel plate and mesh, appeared in the corridors of Elm Grove School followed by more substantial ones of concrete (outside the corridor) and brick (surrounding the playground). At much the same time the huge windows (classrooms were glazed almost from floor to ceiling, with ridiculously big panes) were either covered with criss-cross tape, or painted with a gold-coloured plastic gelatine, in an attempt to reduce damage to young flesh. Air-raid warnings were frequent. We would troop out to the concrete shelters just outside the class-room, sneaking a brief peep at the activity overhead.*

*Mum, my young brother and I lived on a corner opposite Littlehampton railway station, with Holland's undertakers to the West and South of us. Occasionally we'd see a drippy blanket-covered stretcher brought in, but happily the only corpse I ever saw was that of an airman who'd been picked up from the sea and left to drain off in Holland's yard”.*<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Jones pg

<sup>58</sup> Jones pg 103

<sup>59</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/87/a4230587.shtml>

LITTLEHAMPTON URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL

**CIVIL DEFENCE, A.R.P.**

1. Learn to use a Stirrup Pump and see that you get one! — apply to A.R.P Headquarters ; join a **Supplementary Fire Party** or be a **Street Fire Bomb Fighter**—Ask your **Warden**.
2. Keep a supply of **water** ready drawn in bucket—water from bath may be used if not too soapy—and **two half filled sandbags**.
3. Remove **flammable junk** from attic or top of house.
4. **BEGIN BLACK-OUT EARLY—END IT LATE.**  
Inspect your windows each evening from outside and if you see a light in a neighbour's house tactfully inform the occupant ; if no improvement, inform police giving name and address of offender. Guard against light streaming from an open door.  
" **Beware!** the hovering NAZI 'blight'  
May settle on **you**, if you show a light!"
5. Choose and prepare your **refuge room** or **safe place** under the stairs and use it during Air Raids.
6. Fit half-inch mesh wire netting or other suitable material inside your windows to minimise danger from flying pieces of glass.
7. See that your Respirator fits and **get used to wearing it**. Be prepared. **Consult your Warden**.
8. Don't spread Rumours ; idle talk is DANGEROUS ; **Good information is invaluable!**  
**TELL IT TO YOUR WARDEN.**

9. Your house is situated in Sector 10  
The Warden's Post is at Thornes Pt  
Can 1 art and it is always manned during Air Raids.  
SENIOR WARDEN (Name) Neil Sutton Phone 32  
Address Gilbutler 61 Hornham Rd 1 Hill Road  
**LOOK TO YOUR WARDEN FOR HELP AND ADVICE.**

10. FURTHER information on Civil Defence, A.R.P. Enrolment, Training, Stirrup Pumps, Respirators, etc., may be obtained from :

**A.R.P. OFFICER, A.R.P. TRAINING CENTRE,  
"GROOMBRIDGE," NORFOLK ROAD,  
LITTLEHAMPTON.**

Telephone : Littlehampton 564

**PUT THIS NOTICE WHERE EVERYONE CAN SEE IT**

W. HIBBERT & SON, PRINTERS, LITTLEHAMPTON

### **The defences dismantled.**

By 1944 it was clear that there was no longer a threat of invasion by the Germans and local residents began to complain about the inaccessibility of the beach. In July and August there were 27 prosecutions of people for swimming off Littlehampton and Climping beaches; they were fined 5 shillings each.

The clear up operation was very slow in coming. In February 1945 the concrete blocks were removed from the promenade and were dumped in Storrington quarry and work began on removing the scaffolding poles and barbed wire from the West beach.

On 31<sup>st</sup> July 1945 a large portion of the East beach was reopened together with the whole of the West beach, although people were warned to beware of bits of barbed wire lying around. The public's reaction was described by one eye-witness as 'like a Gold Rush'.<sup>61</sup>

Hilary Greenwood  
November 2013

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<sup>61</sup> Jones pg 172