

Written by Ken Flint

Some Memories...

My neighbour came back from Dunkirk unwounded but with holes in his webbing equipment caused by bullets.

We were determined to stop a Nazi invasion. I was 15 years old and joined the Army Cadet Force. When the enlistment age for the Home Guard was reduced I transferred to them.

On my 18th birthday I went to the recruitment office and signed up "for the duration of the war" as was the phrase then. But later some bureaucrat changed it to "duration of the emergency".

Before then – I am not sure of the exact date but one afternoon I was at home and I heard a noise like the roof tiles falling. In fact it was a Hurricane firing in front of a German by plane to force it to land near the Lewes race course. The by plane was a mail carrier from the Channel Islands that had gone astray (compass error?) and had been chased then forced down. My brother Gordon had the keys to the H.G Armoury at the race course so he grabbed a rifle and went to the plane and as the pilot emerged he could only use a few words in German. However the pilot surrendered without any trouble thank goodness.

Lots of Lewisians came to look at the plane but the story about it was censored and was not printed in the media but a rumour circulated that after the mail was scrutinised the purely personal letters were put in a container and parachuted into northern France. I really hope that letter was factual.

By the way – in WWI my father had warrant officer rank. In the home guard he was just a private whilst I was a L/Col in the AOF.

When I joined in October 1942 at Catterick I passed out as a fully trained radio op and was posted to Hell Fire Corner. Our unit worked under the Dover Castle tunnels on what I later learnt was part of operation Fortitude South. I am proud I took part in the operation that saved allied lives on D-Day.

Late in December 1943 I was on duty in the army radio room when the door burst open and soldiers burst in to order us to line up and line against the wall. Thankfully they were commandos from Deal who had gained entrance to the castle due to an excellent recce by a wren! They went through the tunnels throwing 'thunder flashes'. Thank God they wore khaki uniforms and not feldgrau or else I would have needed a change of underpants.

There is one thing that I think is not generally known after El Alamein our intelligence found documents showing that German radio interception was distinguishing our units using voice messages by means of working out regional dialects.

So Royal Signals started to train operators to speak in a kind of un-dialect manner. At Catterick we had a BBC voice expert who had been conscripted and given sergeant's rank. He looked pretty scruffy but he taught well and I no longer speak with a Sussex accent!

Some weeks after D-Day Churchill permitted me to go to Normandy. I discovered Calvados, Camembert and some very hospitable people.

PS. We lived near the racecourse; hence the noise of the Hurricane's guns was very loud.