



HARRINGTON, HARRY



Gunner Number 215732

Served with Royal Field Artillery, as a stretcher bearer, in World War 1

& Essex Home Guard, Auxiliary 203 in World War 2

Died 7th June 1942, aged 48

At the time of his death, he was living at the Bungalow, South Green, Fingringhoe. He died of Leukaemia and is buried at Fingringhoe. His son Bernard had been called up into the Royal Artillery at the age of 20. Bernard was captured at Tobruk in 1942 and was being transported to Italy, as a POW, when the ship he was being transported in was sunk, it is believed by an American submarine. Bernard died in the November of the same year as Harry. Harry was survived by his wife, Muriel, son Gordon, who also served in the Home Guard, and daughter Mrs Winnie Cook.

During world War 1 Harry had joined up in 1915 and fought in France where he was gassed



During World War 2 he served in a special detachment of the Essex Home Guard. There was a small group of Fingringhoe & Rowhedge men, who formed the so called Auxiliary Unit. The unit was highly secret & they had their HQ in an underground chambers in the gravel pits of Ballast Quay & in old World War 1 butts on Jagger's farm.. Another hideout had been at the West side of the copse opposite the Whalebone Inn on Plane Tree Farm. Post war a set of badgers took over their HQ at Ballast Quay until it was ultimately destroyed by further gravel extraction. The Commanding Officer of this unit was Fingringhoe farmer Geoffrey "Buller" Abbott Green & the local coal merchant, Tom Cook, was their driver. Harry, who worked for "Buller", served with this unit until his death . His role in the group had been as First Aider. "Buller" had been a Lieutenant with the Lancashire Fusiliers in World War 1.

They were recruited primarily from the ablest Home Guard personnel, to operate from secret underground bases located behind the enemy lines of occupation. Ideal recruits were countrymen, farmers, foresters and gamekeepers although eventually all occupations, factory and office workers and students were represented. The main requirements were fitness, knowledge of their own areas and an ability to be trained in the necessary skills for guerrilla warfare. Volunteers were uniformed for cover as "Home Guard", latterly being absorbed into one of three "GHQ Special Reserve Battalions" with the distinctive numbers of 201 (Scotland and the North) 202 (The Midlands) and 203 (Southern Counties) Final numbers were in excess of 3000, located mainly in coastal areas but covering the whole of the British Isles.

Their purpose was to emerge at night from their underground O.B s (Operational Bases) and to carry out attacks and acts of sabotage against enemy targets (supply dumps, railway lines, convoys and enemy occupied airfields) For these activities they were equipped with a variety of explosives (including the first issues of plastic high explosive) timing devices and detonators. They were not, however, expected to attack enemy forces in strength, the small arms, revolvers and Sten guns, provided were for defence rather than offensive use. The Fairbairn-Sykes Fighting Knife, issued to all was for the silent killing of individual sentries and silenced .22 sniping rifles were to be used for this purpose or for the assassination of suitable targets, including possible collaborators.

In 1940, Britain was at her most vulnerable, and a successful German invasion at that time was considered highly likely. The Regular Forces, depleted in men and equipment after Dunkirk, may not have withstood an attack on the South Coast and would have withdrawn to the so-called "G.H.Q. Line" just south of London. The Auxiliary Units were intended to harass and disrupt the enemy supply and lines of communication to relieve some of the pressure on the opposing forces.

Operational stores and rations were sufficient for 14 days only - the anticipated useful life of the fighting patrols. Those men, who survived this period would have reverted to their civilian occupations in the hope and anticipation of a successful British counter attack.

The Operational Bases were built, either by the Royal Engineers or by civilian contractors. They, and any curious locals were told that these were to be emergency food stores. Situated usually in dense woodland, these O'Bs were constructed of pre-formed corrugated iron segments, sunk into the ground with concrete pipe access and escape tunnels. Ingenious methods were used to camouflage and operate the entrance trap doors. Accommodation included wooden bunks for the patrol members, heating, ventilation and ration and water stores. Explosives and ammunition were stored separately. Most O.B's were destroyed at the end of the war, although the remains of many still exist throughout the country. Formed in May 1940 the Units were maintained until Stand Down in November 1944, despite the receding risk of invasion.

