

explore
start bay

The Start Bay Wartime Story

START BAY INN



TORCROSS

The Wartime Story

Key points

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Anticipating War

The Military Exercise on Slapton Beach July 1938

The link between Slapton Sands and D-Day began before the war. Whilst the government was denying that war was imminent in early 1938, a certain far-sighted Brigadier Bernard Law Montgomery ('Monty') was pressing for a combined forces amphibious landing exercise to be held in the summer of that year, the first of its kind since 1915.

Start Bay prepares for War

Beaches were covered with barbed wire to hamper invading forces and there was strategic placing of mines. Start Point lighthouse was camouflaged and over at the newly built BBC transmitter experiments were conducted to see if the transmission direction could be reversed to point out over the channel towards France.

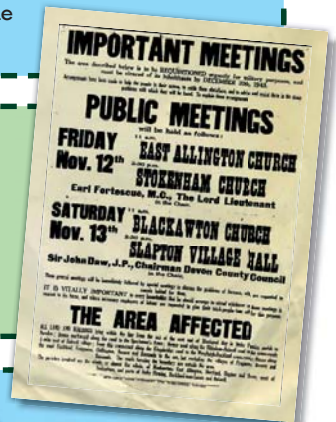


War Reaches Start Bay

Enemy fighters and bombers were overflying to Plymouth and its strategic dockyards. The coastal villages were relatively unscathed, with only occasional raids hitting home. Harwoods shop in Torcross was bombed where luckily there were no casualties. Beesands was less fortunate when a bomb hit the house next to the Cricket Inn killing seven people.

The Evacuation

On November 4th 1943 the chairman of Devon County Council, Sir John Daw, received a call from the War Cabinet that the parishes behind Slapton beach were to be evacuated by 20th December. To be cleared was a total of 30,000 acres – parts of six parishes, 3,000 people, 180 farms comprising 750 families in all.



The Americans Arrive

The evacuation of the land around Slapton Sands was needed in order to conduct rehearsals on a massive scale for the long-anticipated landings into occupied Europe, D-Day. The planning involved two armies with different leadership, techniques, uniforms and kit, even with different calibre of munitions. The respective armies were assigned to different practice beaches. Slapton was codenamed Utah beach and was assigned to the Americans.



The Return

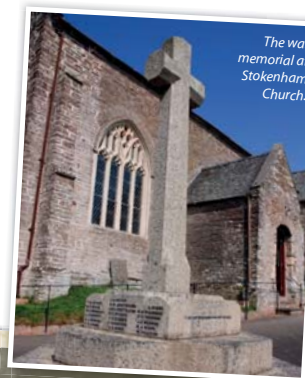
Once the area had been formally handed back to the Government, a bomb disposal unit was sent in with mine detectors to seek out unexploded ammunition. One aim was to get farmers back in time to do some autumn sowing. Remarkably there were no subsequent reports of lives lost from ordnance going off, though a number of explosions were triggered by ploughing or sheep.



Read more detail about the chapters in the Wartime Start Bay story
in the booklets available here

Discover more about the Wartime Story

Go and see for yourself!



The war memorial at Stokenham Church.



Pillboxes

Hunt for the 3 nearby pillboxes:

- In the cliff to the left of the Torcross Hotel apartments (2 mins)
- On the beach down below 'Limpet Rocks' (5 mins)
- To the right of the coast path going down to Beesands beach (25 mins)

Pill box just south of Limpet rocks above Slapton Ley outlet.



The last days of the Royal Sands Hotel

Torcross Tank memorial

Go and read the panels which tell the story of the tank which was recovered from the water off Torcross in 1984 by Ken Small. It has become a focus for remembrance of those who lost their lives in preparing for the D-Day invasion.

The Sherman Tank being cleaned shortly after recovery.



War Damage

Find the evidence of damage caused by the D-day practice:

- The Royal Sands Hotel, already disused, was destroyed - now the site of the middle car park.
- Stokenham church was badly damaged - the south wall has plain glass instead of stained glass



Wartime Bridge Crossings

See if you can identify the points where temporary wartime bridges were erected over the Leys. One is on the 'Higher Ley' and the other on the 'Lower Ley'.

Local Museums

Visit Cookworthy Museum, Kingsbridge which has an electronic archive of wartime pictures and Dartmouth Museum which includes a video loop of the wartime story.

- The Strete Gate orienteering trail is the site of the Strete Manor Hotel
- The car park for the Kings Arms pub in Strete is the site of the blacksmiths



D-Day Memorial

Read the tributes to the people who left their homes to make way for the D-Day practice:

- The obelisk near the middle car park was presented by the United States in June 1954
- The memorial next to parking bays along the road in Torcross was put up by Stokenham Parish Council and is a replica of one set up in an international 60 acre site at Caen in Normandy.



Video

To see a video of the Evacuation story, see: www.explorestartbay.org

explore start bay

The Wartime Story is one of the many stories about Start Bay – more information can be found on interpretation panels including at Strete Gate, the Middle Car Park, Torcross Car Park, Hallsands and Start Point.

For more information see www.explorestartbay.org



explore start bay

Slapton Line partnership
living with a changing coast

Anticipating War

The Military Exercise on Slapton Beach July 1938

The link between Slapton Sands and the crucially important D-Day landings began even before the start of World War II. At the same time that Foreign Secretary Lord Halifax was denying that war was imminent in early 1938, a certain far-sighted Brigadier Bernard Law Montgomery ('Monty') was pressing for a combined forces (Army, Navy and Air Force) amphibious landing exercise to be held in the summer of that year. This was to be the first exercise of its kind since Gallipoli in 1915.



'Monty' immortalised in horse brass - courtesy of Forces Tavern, Blackawton

THE TIMES AN EXERCISE IN INVASION

SUCCESS THROUGH PREPARATION

WELL-PLANNED LANDING

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
TORQUAY, JULY 7

The success of the landing operations yesterday was so remarkable that one was tempted to regard them as drill movements carefully rehearsed and admirably carried out. It seemed that every eventuality had been thought of and that nothing could possibly go wrong—but an estimate of this sort would be entirely incorrect.

The weather at first looked anything but hopeful. The troops of the 9th Brigade had to embark at Portsmouth during a south-westerly gale, and subsequently they spent 17 hours of agony in the Channel. Nearly every one was seasick—not the best prelude to an operation requiring mental alertness of a high order. However, the problems involved had been tackled beforehand with a thoroughness seldom associated with combined manoeuvres. The lessons of 1936—when a similar exercise was attempted by the 8th Brigade near Swanage and the troops were completely cut off from the ships—had been carefully digested.

Major-General D. J. C. K. Bernard, who directed the Army's share of the exercise, wisely decided to subordinate the fighting on shore to the actual landing, at least in the beginning. He decided that control of such an operation was the main difficulty, and to ensure that the commanders and staff officers concerned should know their jobs he instituted a preliminary planning period of one month during which every possible difficulty was investigated. He then instituted a practice period of a fortnight for the 9th Brigade during which hardly a day passed without some units boarding the ships which were to carry them in the exercise. Every man knew just where he was to go in the transports, in which group of boats he would get ashore, and what his duties would be when he got there. The detail was worked out with the utmost thoroughness by Brigadier B. L. Montgomery, in close liaison with the executive officers of the Navy. The tactical and technical aspects of an approach from the sea and the landing of a force on a hostile coast were closely examined.

The general idea of the exercise was simple enough. England south of a line running from Gloucester to the Wash was divided into three States: Wessex, Midland, and Eastland. The canal of Wessex was Bournemouth, where there was a naval base which was to be the objective of Eastland's attack. Midland being neutral and between the two countries, Eastland had to make this attempt by sea.

THREE BEACHES

Brigadier Montgomery decided to use three beaches, A, B, and C, and to take up his headquarters at the latter, which was between Strete Gate and Slapton Sands Hotel. He landed the first of the troops simultaneously on all three beaches and then, when the high ground had been occupied by advanced troops, he concentrated his attention on C Beach to unload the personnel of four infantry battalions. The guns, wheeled and track vehicles, and stores were all landed at B Beach (about half a mile to the West), and this beach was developed for all administrative purposes.

It was interesting to watch the activity on this B Beach. Originally it had been intended to build piers for unloading the heavy stores, but the weather suddenly produced the only fine spell of the week so far, and there were unnecessary. Tracks of heavy canvas covered with coarse wire mesh were laid down on the shingle right down to the water's edge, and these proved sufficient. The motor landing craft, the superstructure of whose sterns let down ramps rather in the manner of a horse-box, were able to back right up to the tracks, and the unloading presented no difficulties at all. It might have been a different story had the weather been stormy, but not necessarily a depressing one, because the sappers were ready to build piers to overcome such a difficulty. Everything came ashore without trouble. The seamen, hauling on ropes, kept the sterns of the motor landing craft right up to the tracks while the soldiers, in turn, threw their knees in water, carried out the unloading.

During the morning the enemy made one or two attempts to counter-attack, but Major-General Bernard decided that with the 9th Brigade now ashore as a complete unit, with its own guns, ammunition, and transport, and with mobility to spring on Plymouth in less than three hours and take the naval base there by surprise, the battle was already won; and a military exercise designed to occupy five days was all over in one.

The plans for the exercise were meticulous; and included a 15-foot model of the Slapton shoreline (made by Monty's stepson Dick whilst on leave from India) and the details covered 30,000 sheets of paper.

'The object of the exercise was to investigate the tactical and technical aspects of an approach from seaward and the landing of a force on an enemy coast; the provision and distribution of fire from ships in company supporting the landing force: and the co-operation of aircraft.'



The exercise was supported by 12 Fleet Air Arm Swordfish 'bombers' from the carrier Courageous and the heavy guns of the Revent, the Southampton and the Sheffield.

The exercise was deemed a success, though the weather broke in the afternoon and the Navy, anxious about being blown on to a lee shore decided not to wait for the end of the manoeuvres – leaving some 1200 officers and men without tents and in driving rain.

The subsequent choice of Slapton Sands as the location for D-Day training in 1943-4 was credited as largely the doing of 'Monty' who spotted the similarities in the topography of the area to Normandy's "Utah" beach, one of the four designated invasion sites, and showed these to the American military.

The obvious place to invade was the shorter route across the channel further east in the Pay de Calais, but earlier raids established the importance of landing with a large force and taking the enemy by surprise.



Encampment with the roof of the Royal Sands Hotel (now the site of the middle car park) still intact showing just behind.

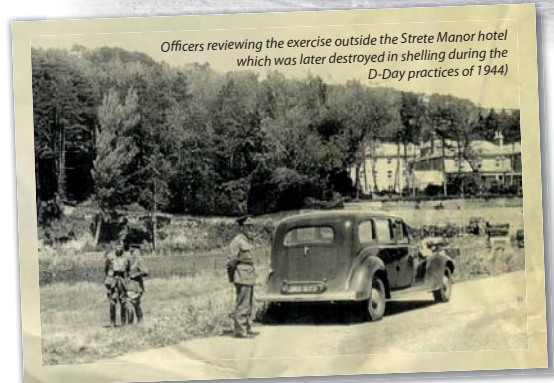


Monty walking up the hill in Kingsbridge towards the station when he returned in 1944 as part of the D-Day practices.

The men were brought ashore in cutters and whalers and in lifeboats. Guns, tanks and lorries were landed in flat-bottomed craft with sterns which let down 'in the manner of a horsebox' which were backed-up. Tracks of heavy canvas with a heavy wire mesh were laid on the shingle to the water's edge and 'these proved sufficient'



Officers reviewing the exercise outside the Strete Manor hotel which was later destroyed in shelling during the D-Day practices of 1944)



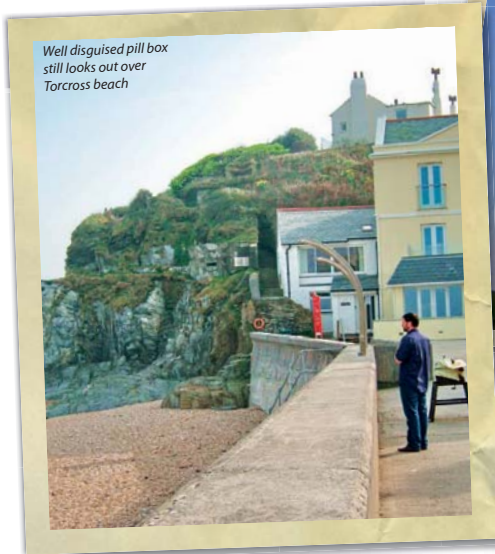
Elaborate subterfuge was conducted to give the impression that the eastern route was being planned which included road improvements in the South East. Mock-ups of landing craft were built down to the detail of washing drying in the halyards and smoke from chimneys.

Start Bay prepares for War

In 1939 the BBC built the prominent transmitter close to Start Point in order to relay the 'Western Programme'. The Northern mast was the 'radiator' and the Southern the 'reflector' giving good coverage for the West Country and Southern England. Later that year BBC research engineers experimented to see if broadcasts could be made without providing enemy aircraft with a navigational radio beacon by using 'horizontally-polarised' transmissions.

The transmitter went on to play an important role during D-Day. In May 1944 it was closed down and mast functions were swapped over to reverse the transmission direction across the channel to France. The transmitter power was increased and staff were told that it was in readiness for transmitting a forces programme. It was on standby for many weeks, closed down until 2 days after D Day when it was brought back into action.

Engineer-in-charge at Start Point, Stuart Frost, recalls that the Allied Expeditionary Forces Programme included Glenn Miller: "It was a jolly good mixture of English, American and Canadian programmes. It transmitted for almost 24hrs a day with a short break at night for essential maintenance. Occasionally coded information was transmitted in the way of innocent prose."



Well disguised pill box still looks out over Torcross beach



"Start Point was the only transmitter that transmitted the AEF programme from the UK. However, much later as the allies advance progressed, relay stations were used, receiving Start Point and re-transmitting from mobile low power transmitters positioned in France and Germany. The service continued until the cessation of hostilities in Europe."

Road blocks placed at strategic positions consisted of concrete sockets in the road into which steel girders could be quickly fitted.

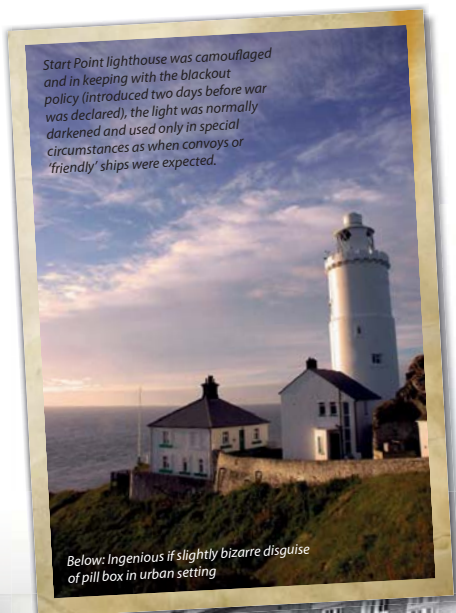
Detailed instructions were given for the careful concealment of pillboxes and other field defences and all pillboxes would have been camouflaged. Many were dug into the ground or inserted into a hedgerow or hillside to provide the lowest possible profile; others had soil piled up on the roof and sides. Camouflage paint schemes and netting would be used to help break up the outline. Use was made of local materials as with the Start Bay pillboxes - concrete made with beach sand, a covering of beach pebbles, or stone from a nearby cliff was not only a time saving measure but aided camouflage by helping the defences to merge into the background.

Over 50 defensive lines were constructed around England, all designed to 'compartmentalise' the country to contain any breakthrough until reinforcements could arrive.

Slapton and Blackpool as with all other south-coast beaches had been covered with barbed wire to hamper invading forces and there was strategic placing of mines. Notices prohibited access and even small boats had to get a permit to put to sea.



Pill box on the beach to the south of Torcross point looks out towards Limpet rocks and stands above the overflow from Slapton Ley



Start Point lighthouse was camouflaged and in keeping with the blackout policy (introduced two days before war was declared), the light was normally darkened and used only in special circumstances as when convoys or 'friendly' ships were expected.

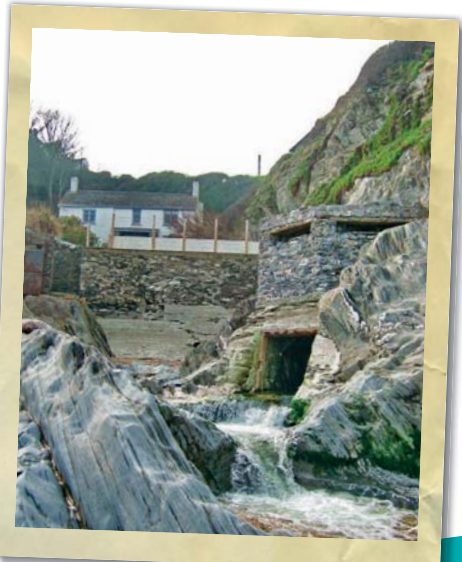
Below: Ingenious if slightly bizarre disguise of pill box in urban setting

Pill Boxes

From June 1940 all round the coast, concrete 'pillbox' gun emplacements were thrown up to provide a last line of defence. There were 7 basic designs but over 26 variations were issued by the Directorate of Fortifications and Works (FW3) which were adapted by use of local materials.

Creating a series of common designs with standard sizes for doors, loopholes and flat sides made it easier to 'mass produce' items for concrete shuttering and hence the speed of construction. But with the national lack of material it was often necessary to use bricks as the shuttering, creating the impression that the whole structure was of brick.

Pillboxes can still be seen at Torcross and Beesands Cellars.



War Reaches Start Bay

Within days of the outbreak of war, children in school at Stokenham and Huccombe were having 'Practice in Fire Drill and Gas Masks'.

A year later (July 1940), in expectation of the aerial blitzkrieg which Hitler planned to launch against south east England, the arrival of evacuated children from Coburg Road School in London with five teachers, swelled the number on the Stokenham School roll from 79 to 169.



Operation 'Pied Piper' was the biggest movement of people in Britain's history. It started in 1939 in anticipation of enemy bombing but when these fears weren't realised, many evacuees returned home until France fell in 1940. Then bombing campaigns started with a vengeance and evacuation re-started.



Gas masks were even provided for babies.

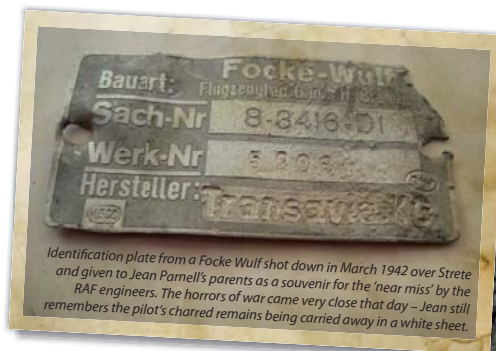
Sixty-five 'evacuees' joined the 40 local children at Huccombe. The Parish Hall was taken over for extra accommodation.

The threat of invasion led to the formation of defensive organisations among the civilian population. Those able to bear arms joined the 'L.D.V' – the Local Defence Volunteers, formed in May 1940 – later renamed the 'Home Guard'. A main preoccupation of the group was of parachute troops and beach landings.

The Coastguard service was strengthened and a Royal Observer Corps unit put up a watch-tower at Coleridge Cross. Civil Defence Volunteers with leading Wardens were on the lookout for small fires, to clear damage by bombs or bombardment, instruct in protection from poison gas, or to clear any disruption of civilian life. Many of the members of these organisations worked themselves to the limit with exercises in their spare time and at night.

Special Constables and Wardens constantly made sure people obeyed the blackout.

This 'blackout' was generally achieved by curtains and door screens. Ordinary blackout curtains could not be washed, as this could make them let through light. The government, therefore, issued a leaflet telling people to "hoover, shake, brush then iron".



Identification plate from a Focke Wulf shot down in March 1942 over Strete and given to Jean Parnell's parents as a souvenir for the 'near miss' by the RAF engineers. The horrors of war came very close that day – Jean still remembers the pilot's charred remains being carried away in a white sheet.

Since the winter of 1940, people in South Devon had either lain in bed apprehensively, or sought refuge in home-made shelters listening to the rhythmic drone of enemy heavy bombers on their nightly missions of destruction in the industrial centres of the North and in S. Wales. In the early autumn of 1943, Plymouth became a prime target. The sight of fires in the stricken city, and the anti-aircraft gunfire, provided a terrifying spectacle from the higher ground of the Parish.

Meanwhile, Kingsbridge and the surrounding countryside was subjected to 'tip-and-run' raids by small fighter bombers.

Locally bombs were dropped at Torcross where three thatched houses were demolished and many roofs and windows were ripped off and shattered. Fortunately, there were no casualties but several miraculous escapes. Another bomb dropped at Kellaton where there was similar damage to houses; and yet another dropped harmlessly into a field at Middlescombe. The most serious and tragic incident occurred at Beesands. A bomb from a fighter bomber bounced from the hard Green into the middle of the village near the Cricket Inn. The explosion killed seven people whose remains were laid temporarily in the little Church.

Includes extracts from Tom Brooking's account on the BBC People's War web site.

The Women's Land Army was started in June 1939.



Women formed the bulk of the Red Cross. There were Women's Voluntary Services, and the Women's Land Army. The latter were employed on farms, for by this time many of the young able men had been conscripted.

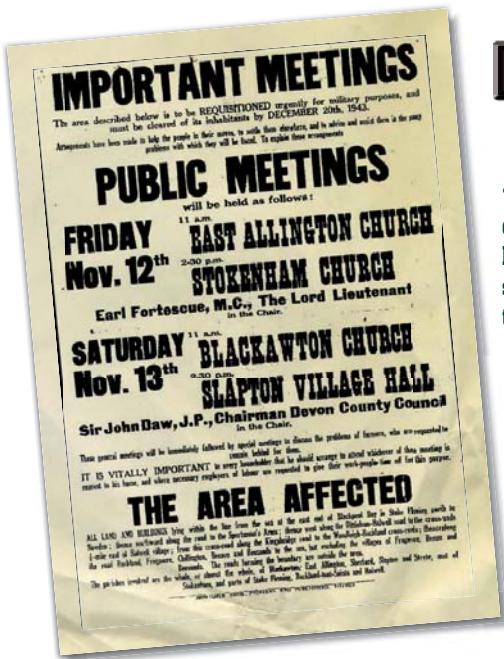
Plymouth seen from the Guildhall roof following bombing in 1941. During the 59 bombing attacks, 1,172 civilians were killed and 4,448 injured.



The remains of Harwoods shop in Torcross.



The Evacuation



“...At the beginning of November (1943) curious rumours were circulating....The grapevine reported that some official-looking men had arrived in a big car, had entered and looked around Blackawton school making notes..... they also had a look at the church. Later their car took them to the village hall at Stokenham....”

The Land Changed its Face, Grace Bradbeer



Slapton resident Fred Blank moving out watched by Milwyn Mitchellmore

On November 4th 1943 the chairman of Devon County Council, Sir John Daw, received a call from the War Cabinet. He was told that the parishes behind Slapton beach were to be evacuated by 20th December. Meetings in Exeter co-ordinated local councils, the clergy and voluntary groups.

To be cleared was a total of 30,000 acres – parts of six parishes, 3,000 people, 180 farms comprising 750 families in all. It included the villages of Torcross, Slapton, Strete, Blackawton, East Allington, Sherford, Stokenham and Chillington. The plan was for the area to be evacuated for six months but in the knowledge that it would take longer to clear-up.

Emergency Kitchens were set up during the evacuation.



The Ministries of Transport, Labour, Food, Fuel and Power, Pensions and Agriculture were called upon to help, together with the Civil Defence, the Home Guard, the RSPCA, St John Ambulance Brigade, British Red Cross and the WRVS.

Notices were posted calling the public to meetings which told them they had until 20th December, under six weeks, to clear the area. Information centres were set up at Stokenham and Blackawton and leaflets giving more details were sent to every household.

One of the hauliers drafted in to help people move was George Dandridge. He found that many of the farmers didn't have anything to put their possessions in – they didn't go on holiday and simply didn't have any luggage. Some had never left the area before and, one way or another, some were never to return.

A volunteer's account in Grace Bradbeer's book captures the enormity of the task

“..An epidemic of flu has added to the difficulties of finding personnel for the Information Bureaux, the semi-mobile kitchen, the Home Guard canteen, packing squads and drivers. ... One feels that these villages will be forever inscribed in our memory – the appalling muddy lanes made worse by an ever growing fleet of lorries and numerous Voluntary Car Pool cars.

The pathetic site of the old and infirm at the Bureaux, all seeking advice, the RSPCA vans disposing of pets that cannot be taken away, are all heart-rending. The only consolation is that were the enemy invading, all personal belongings would have to be left behind.”

One cat managed to survive the bombings and was still around when his mistress returned a year later. **Adolphus Tips** is immortalised in the book of the same name by Michael Morpurgo which tells the evacuation story.

Assistance was given with finding accommodation elsewhere, in the provision of help in the dispersal of farm stock, completing threshing and 'lifting your roots', and with free transport. When people were ready to leave, they had to lock all doors and hand in all keys, tied and labelled.

People who lived through the whole experience often talked about other events as to whether they happened before or after the evacuation.



Above: Blackawton village prepares to evacuate
Left: Portable treasures were removed from the six parish churches including this rood screen in Blackawton Church. Other immovable items were carefully protected with sandbags.

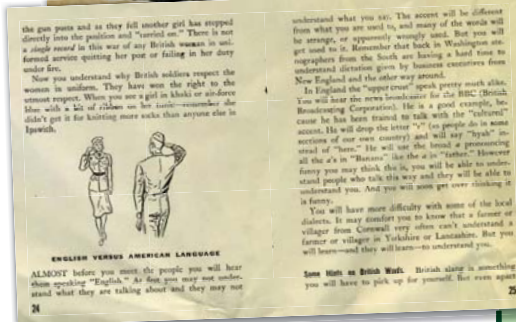


The Americans Arrive

The Evacuation of the land around Slapton Sands was needed in order to conduct rehearsals on a massive scale for the long-anticipated landings into occupied Europe, D-Day. The planning involved two armies with different leadership, techniques, uniforms and kit, even with different calibre of munitions. The respective armies were assigned to different practice beaches, Slapton was codenamed Utah beach and was assigned to the Americans.



The first American arrivals were on 16th August 1943 when the Royal Navy put ashore American soldiers of Company 'M' and the Headquarters Company of the 175 Infantry Division. The soldiers landed vehicles on wire matting. On 5th November 1943 even before the local residents were informed of the evacuation another landing was carried out on Slapton Beach.



US Troops were issued with a guide to the British – helping them to fit in with our quaint customs!

A US Naval Battalion was stationed in Salcombe, and Dartmouth became home for U.S Naval vessels including minesweepers. Of the D-Day force over 480 ships left from Dartmouth, and over 60 from Salcombe. Servicemen were billeted in local hotels in South Hams and Torbay and pitched tents in fields. Many Officers stayed in manor houses and farms. Troops, equipment and supplies filled the narrow roads.

The Americans and residents, where they remained, seemed to get on well, with the locals often benefiting from the generosity of the visitors. According to Eva and Bert Yallend who were evacuated from Strete to Brooking (near Dartington) "Often tins of meat and fruit and wrapped parcels of bacon were discovered in a cardboard box on the doorstep in the early morning."

Eventually 30,000 American troops (infantry, artillery, engineers, medical personnel & tank battalions) took part and 16 million tons of equipment and supplies descended on Devon's shores for rehearsal exercises & D-Day.

Although at least 749 young men were lost in the exercises it is widely recognised that the success of the eventual D-Day assault was due, in no small part, to the rehearsals carried out here at Slapton Sands.



Their Story



Children from Stowford Primary School hear about the experiences of Gerolstein, Derby and Resnick

In 2009 three returning American octogenarians looked far out to sea and wondered how they were spared the horrifying death that more than 700 of their comrades had suffered 65 years before.

It was at 2am on April 28, 1944, that their convoy of landing craft was taken by surprise by German E-boats and the tragedy of Exercise Tiger occurred. For decades the incident remained unreported; those who survived were threatened with court martial if they breathed a word.

Nathan Resnick, one of the three veterans made the journey across the Atlantic to pay homage to the fallen, said he told no one, not even his wife. Five weeks after Tiger, the 18-year-old was at Omaha Beach on D-Day, and he said that he had rarely spoken of what he witnessed there, either.

It was all too horrible. "I just made myself forget about it," said Frank Derby, another of the survivors who also found himself at Omaha Beach on June 6, 1944.

Nathan and Frank, together with Paul Gerolstein, were the centre of attention at a ceremony beside the Tank memorial, when wreaths were laid in memory of the dead who, but for the determination of a Torcross hotelier, the late Ken Small, may have remained unknown to this day.



The Rev Michael Boulton, of Dawlish, himself a landing craft veteran, said: "Tiger was supposed to have been a bloodless rehearsal (for D-Day) but realistic enough to prepare largely untried United States troops for what lay ahead.

Realism extended to the fact that live ammunition was used, with 30 or so allied vessels bombarding the beaches. Tragically, several hundreds of men were put ashore on the beaches before their appointed time – and shells from the bombardment wrought carnage among them."

The tragedy was compounded when the attacks by E-boats claimed further lives.

Told to Graham Collyer

The Return

“I remember waking one night and hearing a distant rumble of what I thought was thunder, but next morning I discovered every vehicle, jeep and tank had gone and the fields were once more deserted. About two days later the news of the invasion of the Normandy coast was heard on the wireless.”

Jean Parnell



A plague of seagulls and rats was reported scavenging food remains and unharvested crops.

Once the area had been formally handed back to the Government, a bomb disposal unit was sent in with mine detectors to seek out unexploded ammunition, working from the perimeter leaving the beach, the worst hit, until last. One aim was to get farmers back in time to do some autumn sowing. Remarkably there were no subsequent reports of lives lost from ordnance going off, though a number of explosions were triggered by ploughing or sheep. A plague of seagulls and rats was reported scavenging food remains and unharvested crops.

Repairs to roads, buildings and fences were carried out by council workers and builders supplemented by prisoners from Exeter and Italian prisoners of War.

Sentries were posted to keep out anxious householders out of the area, but from some accounts it was clear that looters still managed to get in – brass items: door handles, light pulls, light fittings, and letter boxes were amongst items commonly missing.

A woman from the WRVS distributes gifts for the returning residents donated by Americans and Canadians.



Both Strete Manor and the Royal Sands Hotel damaged before the occupation were now unusable, Stokenham Church and the Church House Inn were also badly damaged, but Torcross was remarkably undamaged.

The returning residents received gifts sent by American and Canadian Red Cross which typically included a 6-8 cup Lovatts teapot, a patchwork quilt per bed, a keettle, 2 dinner plates, a sweeping brush and broom, a scrubbing brush, a galvanised bucket, a thick doormat and a picture of the King and Queen.

Jean Parnell's patchwork quilts with inscription: 'Donated by Ladies Auxiliary, Canadian Legion, Flin Flon, Manitoba'



One of the still-surviving teapots complete with manufacturers stamp and date.

On 24th June 1954 a monument was presented by the United States Army in gratitude to the people of the South Hams. Representing the US was Lieutenant General John Lee and also present was Sir John Daw, chairman of Devon County Council who had the job of seeing through the evacuation order.

The wording is :

This Memorial was presented by the United States Army authorities, to the people of the South Hams who generously left their homes and their lands to provide a battle practice area of the successful assault in Normandy in June, 1944.

Their action resulted in the saving of many hundreds of lives and contributed in no small measure to



Dedicating the monument in the centre of Slapton Sands.

the operation. The area included the villages of Blackawton, Chillington, East Allington, Slapton, Stokenham, Strete and Torcross, together with many outlying farms and houses.

Ceremonies take place in April each year when local people, relatives and the few remaining stand together to remember those who gave their lives.

And finally ...

Books available locally (eg Torcross Post Office) include

The Land we Left Behind
by Robin Rose Price and Jean Parnell

Pictures of the evacuation and military exercises and personal accounts.

The Forgotten Dead by Ken Small

Ken Small's story of the 'hushed-up' Exercise Tiger and how the amphibious Sherman Tank came to be a monument to the people who died.

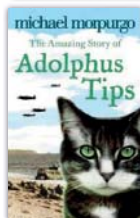
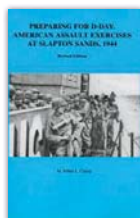
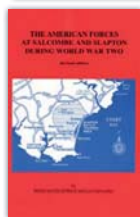
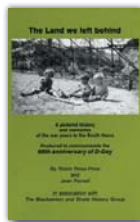
The American Forces At Salcombe and Slapton During World War Two
by Muriel and David Murch and Len Fairweather

Preparing for D-Day American Assault Exercises at Slapton Sands 1944
by Arthur L Clamp

For younger (as well as older) readers

The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips
by Michael Morpurgo

The story the evacuated families told through the eyes of a girl living through it all.



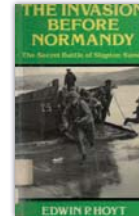
Other essential reading includes

The Land Changed its Face
by Grace Bradbeer

An anecdotal account of the evacuation and return and how it changed people's lives, written by one of the WRVS volunteers.

The Invasion Before Normandy – The Secret Battle of Slapton Sands
by Edwin P Hoyt

Gives a full account of the background to D-Day the context to the war and the many seemingly insurmountable difficulties encountered.



As ever there is no shortage of information out on the web, some of which we referred to in putting this information together:

www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar

WW2 People's War is an online archive of wartime memories contributed by members of the public and gathered by the BBC

www.pillbox-study-group.org.uk/

Some background information about pillboxes throughout the country.

www.ddaymuseum.co.uk

D-Day Museum Portsmouth and Operation Overlord embroidery details.

Other sources used:

Monty, The Making of a General by Nigel Hamilton

The Oxford Companion to Military History
edited by Richard Holmes

The People's War by Felicity Goodall

