

WASC 2344

WAI 653

Information on
and Images
of
Black Bombard

Anglo-Persian Oil Company or Burmah Oil to make it a truly British company, but these did not get far.

During World War II, the invasion of The Netherlands by Germany in 1940 saw the closure of the company's Dutch offices and the head office was moved to Curaçao in the Caribbean. The London office remained open.

Properties in Eastern Europe were confiscated and once again Shell's Romanian connection was severed. Shell's U.S. refineries produced aviation fuel to support the Allied air forces.

Peter Hague, Foxford, Warks.

QUESTION When I was a 16-year-old Home Guard private during the war, we were given a strange four-legged contraption with a bucket-sized barrel called a Blacker Bombard. Did anyone ever use this weapon?

FURTHER to earlier answers, while still at Varndean School, Brighton, in 1942, my friend Derek Billett and I joined Patcham Home Guard company, of which my father was CO.

Derek and I got permission from our headmaster to attend a small arms course at the infantry school in Dorking and there were introduced to the Blacker Bombard.

Some weeks later, our Home Guard company was issued with one of these weapons, and Derek and I were called upon to demonstrate its capabilities.

The bombard was mounted in

front of a slit trench on Colonel Filkins's farm at Rottingdean, overlooking a deserted farmhouse. Derek and I placed the 20lb anti-tank bomb on the spigot, took careful aim and crouched behind the mortar's small shield to fire it, as instructed, at the farmhouse.

Remarkably, the bomb hit the roof and demolished most of the building and we received a round of applause from the assembled Home Guard officers and some regular Army officers.

It was only later that we learnt that the 20lb bomb was filled with Nobel 808, a powerful explosive, and there was some considerable risk in firing these mortars.

One or two had exploded on the spigot. I wonder if my father knew the dangers of this demonstration.

Derek left school the following year and joined the Durham Light infantry. He landed in Normandy with the 50th Division and, sadly, was killed in action some days later. I was more fortunate.

John Godfree, Buntingford, Herts.

QUESTION Are there any sexagenarian rugby players?

FURTHER to earlier answers, at Northampton Men's Own RFC we have several members in their 60s who are still playing.

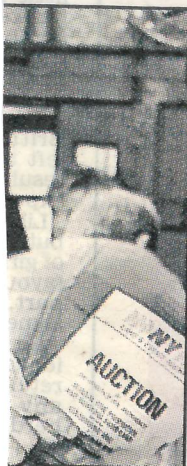
Last season, a dinner was held for Jim Attwood to commemorate his 50 years as president. Guest speakers included Bob Taylor, then president of the RFU.

In 1990, a special tie was designed for members who had played for

Y'S RECIPE: Spice and honey salmon wi

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Method



their service ensign to symbolise the authority of the monarch and the military's loyalty to him or her.

Every day at 8am, the orderly sergeant, or Naval equivalent, raises the flag and the orderly officer, representing the commanding officer, pays respect to the monarch by saluting the flag.

At sunset, the flag is lowered. All military personnel witnessing either event must pay their own respects by saluting.

The song Sunset is simply an extended musical accompaniment to the ceremony, so the officers pay their normal respects by saluting, regardless of the music, not because of it.

As a young airman, I was reprimanded for not saluting the station commander's car, even though he wasn't in it. The car was flying his pennant, and by failing to salute the pennant, I was failing to salute the station commander himself.

Bob Cubitt, Northampton.

QUESTION When I was a 16-year-old Home Guard private during the war, we were given a strange four-legged contraption with a bucket-sized barrel called a Blacker Bombard. Did anyone ever use this weapon?

FURTHER to earlier answers, the development of the Blacker Bombard was covered in a detailed

Datafile in Issue 2 of Britain At War magazine.

A book published by Pen & Sword, *Gunboat Command* — The biography of lieutenant commander Robert Hichens, shows that the Blacker Bombard was fitted to motor gunboats operating out of Felixstowe to upgrade their forward firing armament. The mounting was devised by Lt Woods, the gunner at HMS Beehive.

Gunboat command gives details of the only known successful Naval use when, on the night of April 12-13, 1943, No 8 MGB flotilla engaged a German convoy.

A successful spigot mortar strike was observed on the trawler, resulting in fire and internal explosions.

In keeping with the British tradition of improvisation, this was a case of a Home Guard weapon, fired by a Fleet Air Arm pilot on a rest from flying, from a RNVR commanded and hostilities-only crewed motor gunboat.

Bill Gill, Northampton.

QUESTION A recent TV programme showed the restored A4 steam locomotive Sir Nigel Gresley pulling a train from York to King's Cross and back. How was the engine turned round without a turntable?

FURTHER to the earlier answer, apart from a turntable there are

go farther and farther afield to sustain the animals.

Deforestation for pastures and firewood proceeded at unsustainable rates, leading, after a couple of centuries, to desperate measures, such as cutting precious sod for building houses and even burning it for cooking and fuel. Emaciation and starvation were common.

Despite this struggle, at Greenland's peak in the early 12th century there were 2,000 to 4,000 people living there. The Eastern Settlement had around 190 small farms, 12 parish churches, a cathedral, an Augustinian monastery and a Benedictine nunnery.

Remnants of the settlement existed until the late 14th century.

Ian Moseley, London E6.

QUESTION What is spelt flour? And what are the benefits of using it?

FURTHER to the earlier answer, there are many reasons why spelt is a superior grain.

Unlike wheat, the main concentration of vitamins and minerals is in the white part of the grain, rather than the bran and germ. For a society like ours, hooked on white flour products, this is useful.

Spelt is also lower in gluten than wheat, making it easier to digest, and has more protein and a broad range of amino acids.

Spelt is richer in B vitamins, too, as well as types of fibre and carbohydrate that help the digestive and immune systems and help reduce LDL cholesterol.

Furthermore, spelt is not a hybrid like wheat, and it can be grown easily without fertilisers, pesticides or insecticides in any climate. It is not sensitive to typical grain diseases and its husk protects it against air pollution.

The grain's advantages, while tasting similar to wheat, are increasingly being realised.

*Helen Jarvis,
Ilkerton, Derbys.*

QUESTION When I was a 16-year-old Home Guard private during World War II, we were given a four-legged contraption with a bucket-sized barrel called a Blacker Bombard. Did anyone ever use this weapon?

FURTHER to the earlier answer, I was a sergeant weapons training instructor in the 1st Hampshire (Andover) Battalion Home Guard, and I believe that, used properly, this weapon was very effective.

True, it was not very mobile, as it took time to set up, but once made ready it was highly accurate. With it, I could hit a three-foot square at 200 yards firing on the ranges. The

question led me to dig out some of my notes from that time — some of the information we were given may be of interest:

'The 29mm Spigot Mortar (Blacker Bombard) was invented by Major Blacker. It cannot be called a gun, as it has no barrel. The bomb is fired from a spigot measuring 29mm in diameter.

'Spikes have to be driven into the ground to hold down the baseplate using a sledgehammer, which is quite a task for those not used to manual work.

'This is important because, as the mortar is fired, a shock of 20 tons is taken on the pivot on the baseplate. It is, therefore, essential that correct mounting is maintained.

'The Spigot Mortar could fire two types of bomb; a 20lb anti-tank, which was most effective at 200 yards with a maximum range of 400 yards, and a 14lb anti-tank/anti-personnel bomb, most effective at 450 yards with a maximum range of 950 yards.

'The weapon is also easy to camouflage, cheap to produce and required little manpower (five men, if on a fixed mounting).'

*Gordon Howell,
Andover, Hants.*

QUESTIONS

Q: What happened to the radio station Atlantic 252? And what became of two of its excellent presenters, Holly Michaels and Charlie Wolf?

David Grundy, Skegness, Lincs.

Q: Looking at the recent sad pictures of HMS Intrepid being broken up, are there any other ships from the Falklands conflict of 1982 still around?

*Gareth Gordon Wilkin,
London SW2.*

Q: I recently saw the film Dangerous Moonlight (1941) starring the wonderful Sally Gray. What did she do afterwards?

G. A. Parsons, Leeds.

■ IS THERE a question to which you have always wanted to know the answer? Or do you know the answer to a question raised here? Send your questions and answers to: Charles Legge, Answers To Correspondents, Daily Mail, 2 Derry Street, London W8 5TT. You can also fax them to 01952 510906 or you can email them to charles.legge@dailymail.co.uk. A selection will be published but we are not able to enter into individual correspondence.



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Taken by

Les Tucker

07044-2851185571-013

Blocker Bombard base with
Spizot in Norfolk sand dunes



Taken by Les Tucker

Becker Bombard Base with

Spigot sunk on path on

approach road to the Needles,

Isle of Wight AA position