

THE SECRET ARMY

by

John Jolliff



The Secret Army, by John Jolliff, is published by Looe Old Cornwall Society, price £2.50

During 1940, in the darkest days of the Second World War, Britain prepared for invasion. It was thought that the Germans would avoid the south coast, and opt instead for either the west country or East Anglia.

Auxiliary Units were set up, drawn from WW1 veterans, farmers, gamekeepers and poachers – people who knew the land. They were given special forces training and 6 weeks' rations, as it was thought unlikely they would survive longer. Their role was to go into hiding as soon as the church bells signalled that the invasion had begun, and to carry out acts of sabotage and guerrilla warfare once the invading forces had passed through their area.

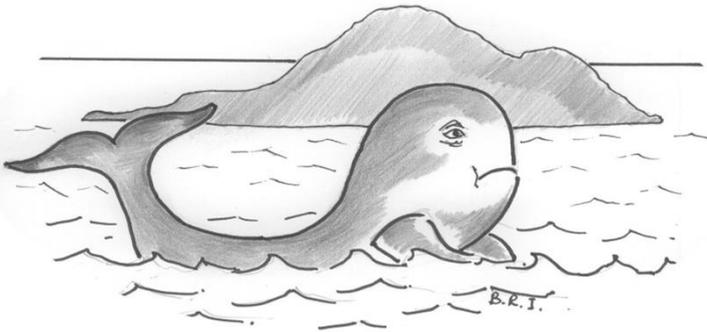
As a boy growing up in Pelynt, near Looe, John heard a few tales about them from his father's friend, but not enough to get a full picture. The men kept it secret, even from their wives.

In recent years, he has pieced together more of the story of the Secret Army in general, and Pelynt patrol in particular. He has also contributed to the national archive of the units, named after their headquarters at Coleshill House in the Midlands. This booklet tells their story.

WHALE ASHORE

by

Bert Middleton



Whale Ashore, by Bert Middleton, published by Looe Old Cornwall Society, price £2.50

Bert Middleton was a man of many talents. He ran a high class pottery business, painting the pottery himself. He also sang with a barber shop quartet and was a well-known raconteur, famous for his after dinner speeches.

This is one of his stories. Bert's mother, Mrs Emmeline Middleton, was president of Looe Old Cornwall Society for several years in the late 1940s and early 1950s, and it was probably through her that this story found its way into the archives.

Like all good Cornish tales, it is based on a real event, honed for the amusement of the audience. The "Cornish Times" of 27 December 1929 reports that a whale was washed ashore on the island during a storm the previous Sunday night. Bert would have been aged 22 at the time, so no doubt several of his contemporaries were involved in the disposal attempts.

The sequence of events in reality seems to have been pretty much as he describes it in this hilarious tale.