

THE INVASION OF BRITAIN IN WW2

UNTIL now it was always thought that no German forces engaged in military action on British soil during the Second World War, but a new book claims the Nazis DID once invade our shores - by raiding an RAF base on the Isle of Wight.

Dr. Robert Forczyk, a military historian, analysed German military records and found that Adolf Hitler had suggested the Nazis invade the Isle of Wight. The move would have given Germany a location from which to bombard Britain. Forczyk believes that the British would have had difficulty defending the island and would not have been able to take it back from the Germans.

Then, the Germans would have had a base just four miles from the British shore and access to civilian airfields. All of this would have greatly increased the chances of success for Operation Sea Lion, the Nazi plan to invade England.

Hitler was talked out of the plan by naval commanders who overestimated the number of British soldiers and feared the power of British submarines. A smaller invasion of the Isle of Wight was still considered following the defeat of the Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain.

“We March Against England,” is Forczyk’s new book where he says that invading the Isle of Wight would have been successful due to the surprise. He said that taking and holding the Isle of Wight would have offered considerable advantages. These could have increased the feasibility of Operation Sea Lion.

He went on to say that had the Germans deployed artillery on the north side of the Isle of Wight they would be able to shell across the Solent and hit the mainland. This could force the Royal Navy to withdraw from the naval base at Portsmouth. He also states that the Luftwaffe would have had access to four civilian airfields much closer to England. This would allow the use of the Bf-109 fighter, whose limited range kept it from being effective in England. Hitler later said that it was a mistake to let his commanders talk him out of the plan.

Forczyk believes that the Germans could have placed 4,000 troops on the island in two days. Recapturing the island would not have been a priority for the British due to commitments elsewhere, The Sun reported.

“In time, the Germans might take the rest of the Isle of Wight by the end of 1940 or simply hold the eastern end of the island as a bargaining chip.”

“In any event, the prevailing military factors suggest that the Germans had the capability to seize at least the eastern half of the Isle of Wight in 1940 and there was very little that the British could do to stop this.”

Seventy people died when Nazi bombers attacked the island on 4 May 1942.



At the time a Polish destroyer, ORP *Błyskawica*, happened to be in Cowes for repairs and played a key role in anti-aircraft defence. The German Luftwaffe launched a ferocious overnight aerial attack on the Isle of Wight, with more than 160 bombers targeting its ship-building facilities. ORP *Błyskawica* had been in Cowes for repairs but, aware of a potential attack, its captain Wojciech Francki, had ordered ammunition from Portsmouth enabling its guns to be used to bolster the island's defences.

Arctic Road in West Cowes was among the streets badly damaged in the raids

The ship created a smoke screen to confuse the bombers. The crew also joined local emergency services in helping residents injured in the raids.

Geoff Banks, chairman of The Friends of the ORP Blyskawica Society, said the 75th anniversary said it was a chance to "pay homage" to the island's Polish defenders. "The tragic loss of life that night of the blitz had a devastating effect on our towns and, but for the bravery of our Polish allies, that loss of life would have been that much greater," he said.

A memorial to the victims of a World War II air raid on the Isle of Wight is to be erected 70 years after the attack.

Twenty people were killed when German planes attacked Newport with bombs and cannon fire in April 1943.

Christine Pascoe, 79, who was among the injured, had campaigned for the victims not to be "forgotten".

Isle of Wight Council said it would be erecting a plaque somewhere in the area which was targeted in the raid.

Mrs Pascoe, who was nine at the time, was in her family's home in Chapel Street when the house next door received a direct hit. She was unconscious for a month. Her 36-year-old mother, Eva, and 18 other civilians along with one airman, lost their lives.

Welcoming the announcement, Mrs Pascoe said: "Now it's the 70th anniversary a plaque would mean a lot of me as I do think the victims have been forgotten. "It's just to let people know the bombs did hit Newport."

A 70th anniversary memorial service is being held at St John's Church on Sunday, 7 April. The church itself was also damaged in the air raid.

Author Adrian Searle uncovered an account from a German soldier, Dr Dietrich Andernacht, who said he was part of a secret operation to steal equipment from the RAF St Lawrence radar station on August 15, 1943.



Nazi commandos allegedly raided the station during the Second World War in a sabotage operation that has been hushed up for more than 70 years, reports the [Mail on Sunday](#).

The new book, written by Searle, casts doubt over the premise that no German forces ever took part in military operations on UK soil during the war.

The author claims that as many as 12 specialised Nazi stormtroopers secretly arrived in U-boats from the Channel Islands - sensationally trying to come ashore in dinghies until they were spotted by British soldiers and engaged in gunfire.

He told the paper: "The Germans had a relatively easy crossing, but I think they were shocked to be met by regular British soldiers rather than the Home Guard. It is unclear whether any British soldiers were killed or

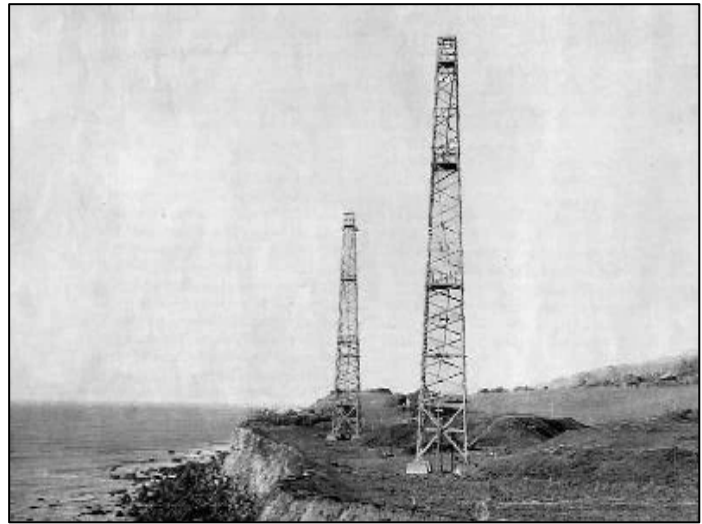
wounded. This incident was wiped from the war history within hours of it taking place, with witnesses made to sign the Official Secrets Act."

Searle believes now is the time for the British Government to come clean - and include the event in our wartime history.

It is understood that the raiding Nazis gained access to the radar station and searched the building for cathode-ray direction-finding equipment.

The claim was made in a new book by author Adrian Searle. These photographs, which were passed by the German High Command, show the Wehrmacht's advance through France and the Benelux countries in 1940

Credit: Getty Images



Derek Kent, a teenage dispatch rider for the ARP at the time, also claimed the authorities were quick to “cover up” what had happened.

He said: “We heard about it when we were sent to the area. They said the Germans had been spotted out to sea off St Lawrence. Just a day later a man dressed in a suit came down to see us and I was asked to sign the Official Secrets Act.”



SECRET ISLE OF WIGHT: THE GERMAN WWII RAID ON ST LAWRENCE THAT OFFICIALLY NEVER WAS
It was the proud boast of the Ministry of Defence that no part of the UK (which does not include the Channel Islands) was ever occupied – even very briefly – by German forces during World War II. Britain’s shores had remained inviolate to enemy landings throughout the war.

But there have long been rumours of a German raiding party coming ashore on the Isle of Wight during the war years. The story was put into book form by local historian Adrian Searle in 2016 in his work: *Churchill’s Last Wartime Secret*.

Searle contends that on 15/16th August 1943, a raiding party from the German-occupied Channel Island of Alderney landed on the coast of the Undercliff with the intention of capturing the latest radar equipment to take back to German-occupied Europe.

The raiders were said to have been transported to the coast of the Isle of Wight by submarine and then left their submarine in 2 inflatable dinghies before landing at Woody Bay, an isolated stretch of coast between Ventnor and St Catherine's Point. A total of around 10 men came on shore. They apparently succeeded in their objective with a large transmitting device captured.

Searle bases his story of the raid on the testimony of 2 German witnesses that allegedly took part. Dr Dietrich Andernacht was a highly respected historian and archivist. He passed away in 1996. The 2nd witness – who unfortunately remains anonymous – was a former naval officer, who related his version of the raid to local military historian Gareth Sprack.

In Dr Dietrich's version of events, the captured transmitter had a self-destruction device, which exploded when dismantled by German technicians. He also claimed several British prisoners (probably 3) were taken during the raid.

According to the evidence of the naval officer who spoke to Gareth Sprack, there was a firefight between the raiding party and British guards, which led to the deaths of 2 of the defenders and serious injuries to 1 of the German attackers.

Is there any evidence of British soldiers going missing at the time of the raid that would corroborate accounts of prisoners being taken? 1 local story relates that a Ventnor girl had been going out with 1 of the soldiers stationed at the St Lawrence radar site and was heartbroken to have been informed he had died. Months later, she heard he was alive and well in a German POW camp.

A 2nd account – which appeared in Island Life magazine in 2009 – told of a young soldier guarding a searchlight unit having fallen to his death off a cliff, only for his relatives to have been informed by the Red Cross that he had been snatched by a German raiding party and was now a prisoner of war.



The site of the former radar station at St Lawrence today

If soldiers based on the Isle of Wight had been captured during a raid and then subsequently detained in a POW camp, why would they not tell their stories on their return home at the end of the war? Searle claims that they would have been made to sign the Official Secrets Act on their release from captivity and dissuaded from relating their experiences.

So, why was the raid hushed up? Searle believed the high-level secrecy at the time was understandable. The panic and negative effect on public morale following the admission of a German landing on British soil would have been damaging to the British war effort.

But why is it necessary – some 80 years after the event – to keep the raid secret?

Historian, Gareth Sprack, commented:

“I can see why the British would keep this secret for so long. We have this thing about Churchill, the great saviour of Britain in World War II, who has made this proud statement that there was no successful

commando raid, or enemy landing of any sort, during the war. Are we even now ready, effectively, to discredit Churchill even in the smallest of ways?"

What do Island Echo readers believe? Was there really a successful German raid on St Lawrence in 1943, which has effectively been airbrushed from history? Are there any stories of missing soldiers from that period from elderly relatives that might shed light on the events of 15/16th August 1943?

September 2022 – updated December 2024.