

Telephone: ABBEY 7000

MINISTRY OF FUEL AND POWER

Telegrams:

MINFUPO, SOWEST, LONDON

7, MILLBANK,

LONDON, S.W.1.

Reference:

Your Reference:



12th June, 1945.

Dear *Cummings,*

FLAME BARRAGE NEWS REEL

I have pleasure in sending you
a note for the guidance of your
commentators.

Yours sincerely,

Michael Ransley

Director of Public Relations.

Ransley

G.F. Cummings, Esq.,
British Paramount News,
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" FLAME BARRAGE "

Note for guidance of News Reel Commentators.

After Dunkirk, when the B.N.F. equipment had been lost and there was a special shortage of anti-tank guns, it was clear that the German tanks which had conquered France were the great danger to this country.

Mr. Geoffrey Lloyd, as Minister for Petroleum, controlled vast oil stocks accumulated against emergency and he at once considered, if half a pint of petrol in a bottle were effective as a Molotov Cocktail against a tank, what we could do with larger quantities, perhaps a gallon - ten gallons - a ton - ten tons - or even 100 tons. Fire had been a weapon of war throughout history. Here we were in a critical moment with great stores of petroleum, the most inflammable substance in the world. Could not new methods of defence be improvised out of the fierce and fiery energy of oil?

Mr. Lloyd was at that time working closely with Lord Hankey, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, in buying oil in Rumania to prevent Germany getting it. He found that Lord Hankey had conducted experiments with burning oil in 1914 and was thinking again about the subject. Rather than destroy oil stocks to prevent the Germans getting them, if they invaded us, Lord Hankey wanted to use them as a defence weapon. Mr. Lloyd and Lord Hankey joined forces and the War Office put them in touch with the Generals Commanding all the defences of the Channel coast, who also proved to be in favour of the idea. Experiments were carried out on the beaches and the cliffs. They were spectacular and extremely promising. With the approval and encouragement of the Prime Minister, experiments were pushed ahead in collaboration with the military authorities.

Mr. Geoffrey Lloyd assembled in the Petroleum Warfare Department, of which Major-General Sir Donald Banks was appointed Director-General, a number of enthusiastic officers and engineers whose one thought was to destroy any Germans who might land in this country and who were bent on evolving the necessary apparatus with the utmost speed.

Soon a wall of fire was in readiness, to cover not only the sea but beaches and cliffs, roads and fields, at thousands of vulnerable points.

Of the various flame defences which were developed, the "Fougasse" is of exceptional interest. Looking like innocent tar barrels, tens of thousands of them, mostly manned by the Home Guard, were hidden everywhere.

Had Germany struck, flame would have met the invaders from under the sea and from the land itself. News of these developments reached the Germans through their reconnaissance planes and, indeed, the knowledge of these defences was spread among the Germans by means of leaflets dropped by the R.A.F. In Paris alone, the Germans ordered 100,000 asbestos suits.

The Petroleum Warfare Department, which started in 1940, as the department responsible for ~~the~~ the development of these flame defences, is now known to have developed such war-winning ideas as the Churchill "Crocodile" and "Wasp" flame-throwing tanks; "Pluto" - the oil pipeline under the Channel; and "Fido" - the invention for dispersing fog over airfields.