

FURTHER CONTRIBUTIONS

The following is a piece from Stan Cramer with a little help from Dick Whittington, Winifred Dullforce and Susan Walker.

WARTIME BRITAIN - UNEXPLODED BOMBS

Many members will have seen the two Carlton TV films on the clearing of unexploded bombs in wartime Britain shown on Channel 4 earlier in the year. ⁽¹⁾ One of the leaders of a key group of scientists working on the problem was Major John Hudson of the Royal Engineers who appeared several times in the narration. John Hudson had been a student at the Midland Agricultural and Dairy College in the late 1920's. Susan Walker, daughter of the late A B 'Archie' Moore (1928), has donated the Channel 4 book on the subject⁽¹⁾ plus other material to the History Collection in the Cameron Gifford Library at SB.

During the war unexploded bombs created havoc with road and rail links, factory production and civilian morale long after an air raid had finished. Their clearance became a priority at the highest level of the war effort. Disarming the bombs was a hazardous operation made more so because some were fitted with time delayed fuses. At later stages in the war fuses became even more sophisticated and included very sensitive trembler fuses which were designed to set the bombs off at the slightest movement.

Major Hudson's team of scientists was given the urgent task of working out how these weapons could be neutralised. In this they were very successful not only in their efforts to solve the problems but in communicating their findings to bomb disposal teams all over the country. These technical instructions of necessity had to be very clear and unambiguous. For his leadership of the scientific team and personal bravery in dealing with the bombs Major Hudson was awarded the MBE and later the George Medal and Bar. The Bar to the George Medal was awarded for his work on flying bombs (doodlebugs) which terrorised the south east of England from the middle of 1944 until the launch sites in Holland and Germany were overrun.

As a student of the Midland Agricultural and Dairy College John Hudson was awarded the Ashgate Challenge Cup as the best horticultural student in 1928. He subsequently graduated with a London University BSc in Horticulture.

After the war John Hudson worked for the Department of Agriculture in New Zealand before returning to this country in 1948 to the School of Agriculture which was then a Faculty of the new University of Nottingham. He was a lecturer in the Department of Horticulture and a few years later was appointed Professor. His clear mind and readiness to meet challenges was an inspiration to his students. While in the Faculty he carried out pioneering studies with his research students on environmental factors affecting plant growth, particularly that of water supply. This was also a period of excellent collaboration in teaching and research with Professor Milthorpe and Ian Cowan. In addition he served as Visiting Professor of Horticulture to the University of Khartoum (1961-1963) where the use of water in crop production was so critical. He left the Faculty in 1967 to take up the Directorship of the Long Ashton Research Station, Bristol University, from which post he retired in 1975 to enjoy a well earned retirement in the village of Wrington near Bristol. A number of former students and staff had a very happy visit to celebrate his 90th birthday in July 2000.

(1) Jappy, M J Danger UXB: the remarkable story of the disposal of unexploded bombs during the Second World War. Channel 4 books (Macmillan), 2001