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## Dublin Core

### Title

Secret Submersibles in Fishguard Bay, 1943-45 | Llongau Ymsuddol Cudd ym Mae Abergwaun, 1943-45

### Subject

Military History

Hanes Milwrol

Submarines

Llongau tanforol

### Creator

Peter Merriman

### Publisher

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### Date

2023

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### Relation

<https://perma.cc/7ECF-PX8G>

### Format

Curatescape story

## Language

English

Welsh

## Coverage

52.00881368575933, -4.990519516566161

# Curatescape Story Item Type Metadata

## Lede

The Special Operations Executive (SOE) undertook a range of intelligence and sabotage operations during the Second World War, and in 1943 they established a top secret research station for trialling miniature submersibles in Fishguard Bay.

## Lede (Welsh)

Cynhaliodd y Weithrediaeth Gweithrediadau Arbennig (SOE) amrediad o weithrediadau cudd-wybodaeth a difrodi yn ystod yr Ail Rhyfel Byd, ac ym 1943, sefydlont orsaf ymchwil gyfrinachol er mwyn treialu llongau ymsuddol bychain ym Mae Abergwaun.

## Story

In July 1943, the British government's Special Operations Executive (SOE) proposed the formation of a top secret trials and training base at Fishguard/Goodwick for its experimental miniature submersibles designed to support reconnaissance, sabotage and espionage in enemy territorial waters in Europe and South-East Asia. These craft included the Welman one-man submarine, built at Morris Motors in Oxford and initially tested on the Queen Mary Reservoir west of London, as well as the Welfreighter midget submarine that was designed to land supplies and up to four agents behind enemy lines.

Senior military personnel expressed concern about the security of the port and its appropriateness for covert sea trials. In top secret memos, Captain A. J. L. Phillips, Director of Local Defence, explained how Fishguard might be a security risk because it handled sea traffic from neutral territories such as 'Eire and the Iberian peninsula', while the Assistant Director of Naval Intelligence J. H. Lewes confirmed that:

*In view of the Irish traffic in the Port and for the other reasons stated..., it is considered that, on security grounds, the selection of Fishguard for a training establishment would be unwise.*

Helford on the Lizard Peninsula in Cornwall was suggested as an alternative location, but with its intensive use by allied powers for cross-channel operations to France, the security concerns were eventually overruled and Fishguard was chosen as the base for experimental station IXc. In late summer 1943, it was agreed that fifteen officers would be housed on the second floor of what had been the Great Western Railway's Fishguard Bay Hotel in Goodwick, while a further thirty-five technical staff would sleep in huts on the quayside. Station IXc was an off-shoot of the Inter-Service Research Bureau (ISRB), the experimental equipment division of SOE that was headquartered at The Frythe near Welwyn Garden City – hence all of their prototype craft were named with the prefix 'Wel'. While the experimental trials of the Welman submarine were largely undertaken in Scotland, a prototype of the much larger Welfreighter arrived in Fishguard for its seaworthiness trials in February 1944, undergoing surface trials, diving trials and endurance trials in Fishguard Bay.

Relatively little has been written about the secret trials, and very little use was made of the submersibles during the war. Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten was said to have been very enthusiastic about the project, ensuring that at least six Welmans and eight Welfreighters

were sent to Australia and South-East Asia for Allied operations. After the war, the Fishguard Bay Hotel reverted back to being a railway hotel and it was only with the release of government files in 1972 that this secret history of the port became more widely known.

### **Story (Welsh)**

Ym mis Gorffennaf 1943, cynigiodd Gweithrediaeth Gweithrediadau Arbennig (SOE) llywodraeth Prydain y dylid cynnal treialon cyfrinachol a sefydlu canolfan hyfforddi yn Abergwaun/Wdig ar gyfer ei llongau ymsuddol bychain arbrofol a gynlluniwyd i gynorthwyo gweithgarwch rhagchwilio, difrodi ac ysbïo yn nyfroedd tiriogaethol y gelyn yn Ewrop ac yn Ne-Ddwyrain Asia. Roedd y llongau hyn yn cynnwys llong danfor Welman ar gyfer un dyn, a adeiladwyd yn Morris Motors yn Rhydychen ac a brofwyd yn gyntaf yng Nghronfa Ddŵr Brenhines Mary i'r gorllewin o Lundain, yn ogystal â llong danfor fechan iawn Welfreighter, a ddyluniwyd i ddosbarthu cyflenwadau a hyd at bedwar asiant y tu ôl llinellau'r gelyn.

Roedd personél milwrol uwch wedi mynegi pryder am ddiogelwch y porthladd a pha mor briodol ydoedd er mwyn cynnal treialon môr cudd. Mewn negeseuon cyfrinachol iawn, esboniodd Capten A. J. L. Phillips, Cyfarwyddwr Amddiffyn Lleol, sut y gallai Abergwaun fod yn risg diogelwch gan ei fod yn delio gyda thraffig ar y môr o diriogaethau niwtral megis 'Iwerddon a phenrhyn Iberia', a chadarnhaodd y Cyfarwyddwr Cynorthwyol dros Guddwybodaeth Lyngesol, J. H. Lewes:

*O ystyried y traffig o Iwerddon yn y Porthladd ac am y rhesymau eraill a nodwyd..., barnir y byddai dewis Abergwaun fel lleoliad ar gyfer sefydliad hyfforddiant yn benderfyniad annoeth.*

Awgrymwyd Helford ar Benrhyn Madfall yng Nghernyw fel lleoliad amgen, ond gyda'i ddefnydd dwys gan y cynghreiriaid ar gyfer gweithrediadau ar draws y sianel i Ffrainc, gwrthodwyd y pryderon ynghylch diogelwch yn y diwedd a dewiswyd Abergwaun fel lleoliad gorsaf arbrofol IXc. Yn hwyr yn ystod yr haf 1943, cytunwyd y byddai pymtheg swyddog yn aros ar ail lawr yr hyn a arferai fod yn Westy Bae Abergwaun Great Western Railway yn Wdig, a byddai tri deg pump o staff eraill yn cysgu mewn cabanau ar y cei. Roedd Gorsaf IXc yn gangen o'r Biwro Ymchwil Rhyng-Wasasnaeth (ISRB), is-adran offer arbrofol SOE yr oedd ei bencadlys yn The Frythe ger Welwyn Garden City – felly rhoddwyd rhagddodiad 'Wel' i'w holl llongau prototeip. Er y cynhaliwyd treialon arbrofol o long danfor Welman yn yr Alban yn bennaf, cyrhaeddodd prototeip o'r Welfreighter, a oedd yn llawer mwy, yn Abergwaun ar gyfer ei threialon addasrwydd i'r môr ym mis Chwefror 1944, gan gymryd rhan mewn treialon ar y wyneb, treialon plymio a threialon gwytnwch ym Mae Abergwaun.

Ni ysgrifennwyd fawr ddim am y treialon cudd ac ni wnaethpwyd fawr iawn o ddefnydd o'r llongau ymsuddol yn ystod y rhyfel. Dywedwyd bod Llyngesydd Arglwydd Louis Mountbatten wedi bod yn frwdfrydig iawn am y prosiect, gan sicrhau bod o leiaf chwe Welman ac wyth Welfreighter yn cael eu hanfon i Awstralia a De-Ddwyrain Asia ar gyfer gweithrediadau'r Cynghreiriaid. Ar ôl y rhyfel, daeth Gwesty Bae Abergwaun yn westy rheilffordd unwaith eto a dim ond ar ôl rhyddhau ffeiliau gan y llywodraeth ym 1972 y daeth yr hanes cudd hwn am y porthladd yn fwy adnabyddus.

### **Factoid**

### **Related Resources**

The National Archives, Kew (TNA), ADM1/13413, Memorandum, A.J.L. Phillips, Director of Local Defence, 17 July 1943.

TNA ADM1/13413, Memorandum, J.H. Lewes, signed for Director of Naval Intelligence, 22 July 1943.

Fredric Boyce and Douglas Everett. SOE: The Scientific Secrets (Stroud: The History Press, 2009), pp.145, 151.

**Official Website**