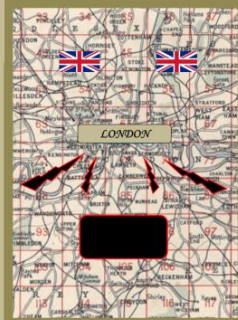


## A BOY'S WAR JOURNAL 1940-1944



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*The complete diary*

**RAY WOOSTER**

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## THE AMBUSH

The date - 31st March, 1941

Place - The Mews, The Imperial Hotel, Hyde Park, Bayswater

At last, we're able to eat, sleep and rest. John and I are totally played out. The last few weeks have drained us. We've both lived a nightmare, the nightmare of real war, not the war of books and cinema. I'm anxious to get it down and out of my mind.

The Germans had landed parachute troops on Stanmore and Harrow Hill. Having reinforced them, they could now direct artillery fire upon any target of their choosing in London. Fighting on the hill and around the hill was fierce and bloody. Now the Germans had an armoured column on its way towards the hills. It consisted of tanks and infantry. It would pass through Northolt, where a carefully prepared ambush had been laid. I knew nothing of the details but, hiding behind the curtains at the back of the stage, I listened to a Major from the Brigade of Guards give his last minute instructions to his officers and senior NCOs. I'll try to remember his words as best I can.

"Good day to you, Gentlemen. This is the third time of asking; as the Vicar said."

He waited for the laughter to die down, then continued. "The enemy column is, at this moment, busy fighting his way through obstacles and should be here before long. It is vital that this column is totally destroyed *except* for one vehicle and its crew. That vehicle is the last in the column - it is of great interest to us. It will be isolated from the column and its crew taken prisoner. We have German speaking interpreters - they are the ones with the white armbands - stand up please, Gentlemen."

The men stood up and raised their arms. Each had a white armband just above the elbow.

"Thank you - be seated." The Major continued, "The half track must be captured, undamaged and its crew unharmed, then bundled into a five-tonner, with two soldiers sitting between each captive. They will be shackled and will *not* communicate one with another. They are to be given cigarettes, tea and sandwiches. I don't want any rough stuff - understand? I want them to be amenable by the time they get to Weedon - clear?"

"The half track will be emptied by the signals people and its contents placed on mattresses in the three-tonner. Three corpses will be dragged from the column and laid out artistically by the half track. A set of head phones near