

513 O.D.s

THE CAMOUFLAGE OF O.B DOORS

SECRET.

Undoubtedly the weakest thing about our OB's is the camouflage of the doors. Too many patrols are "going to do something about it soon", which probably means never in spite of their good intentions.

A poor OB with a good lid is a better fighting proposition than a good OB with a poor lid. But a good OB with a good lid is best of all.

The first step in perfecting the camouflage, and keeping it up to the mark, is to appoint one man to do it. One man, if he is interested, will do more than seven, where each inevitably leaves it to the other six.

Patrol Leaders, therefore, should choose one camouflage artist and provide him with all he wants in the way of tools, paint and bird-lime or sticky varnish. These should be kept in the OB so that whenever he sees that maintenance is necessary he will not be tempted to procrastinate because his gear is at home, but will get on with the job right away without waiting for orders.

A door should always be judged when it has been opened and shut and not subsequently touched from outside. It is almost impossible to make one which, when shut from inside by the last man, would deceive anyone who knew exactly where to look, but it is good enough if it would pass the following test:- Suppose an Auxilier who did not know it were told that, if he walked straight ahead for a hundred yards, he would pass within five yards of it. He must keep moving slowly. Would he see it?

In these peaceful times, when the OB is deserted for a week or more at a stretch, additional leaves etc should be scattered over it as a safeguard against local children. And it may be possible for an observer to do this sometimes in war, but you must always assume that it will be seen when the last man present has gone below.

A door should never be so sited that it might get trodden on. If it is not to sound hollow in such circumstances, it will have to be extremely heavy and carry a top-load of soil. This in turn will necessitate heavy counterbalance weights and such doors seldom stay in good working order for long. It is much simpler to arrange an overhanging branch or a bush so that anyone will instinctively make a detour instead of passing right over it.

Remember that it is better to have a simple door that works than an elaborate and ingenious one that just misses the boat. The cleverest designs generally depend upon the inventor being able to service from regularly: if he leaves the patrol, it soon ceases to work smoothly, requires more and more force and becomes obvious.

Where there is no carpenter or mechanic in the patrol, don't aim too high. The simple hinged trap door takes a lot of boating provided-

- (i) it is never raised more than 45 degrees. This necessitates a limiting cord, like a pair of household steps, and
- (ii) there is an attached prop to hold it open. This removes all temptation to open it right back.

You can always get help from your IO and his RE Cpl in making a lid. But camouflaging it and maintaining that camouflage is the responsibility of the patrol and it is the patrol that it matters most.