



Imber 1945

History of Imber

The fate of this small village, the most isolated on Salisbury Plain, was sealed by the gradual military occupation of Salisbury Plain. In the late 1800's the War Office bought a huge swathe of land from a Market Lavington farmer in order to train the troops for the Boer War. More and more land was purchased over the years until the Ministry of Defence eventually owned almost 100,000 acres of land on Salisbury Plain.

In 1934, the village of Imber was also purchased. The threat of eviction from the land loomed. In 1939 this threat became more and more likely to become a reality but the residents hoped that the day would never come.

The day finally arrived in December 1943 when the residents were finally evicted by the Ministry of Defence in so that American troops could prepare for the invasion of Europe.

The inhabitants had no choice but to leave. They were told their property would be returned to them, but by 1945 there was nothing to return to. Their village had been used to train troops for street fighting and subsequently as an artillery range.

Imber became and remains a ghost village nestled on the Salisbury Plain. After the war, villagers attempted to return but were refused access but to this day former residents and their descendants battle for their homes and lands be returned to them.

The Church is the only building in the village that has been spared by the warfare activities and church services are still held occasionally attended by former villagers and their descendants. From the air and from a distance at ground level buildings are too be seen around the church, these are mock up builds solely for the use in urban warfare training. Access to Imber is totally banned without the specific permission of the MOD and even when the church is opened to the public on its rare opening days then the military preside over visitors ensuring no-one strays away from the permitted access areas.