

THE WAY WE WERE

Building where police arrested city's would-be fascist leader

Way We Were



David Lewis
Canterbury
Historical and
Archaeological
Society

THE British Union of Fascists, or BUF, was formed in 1932 by Oswald Mosley.

It provided a focus for those with pro-German and anti-Jewish attitudes, and built up a membership of more than 30,000. It was disbanded in 1940, when it was proscribed by the British Government. I'd like to introduce you to one of these 30,000, who happened to live in St Alphege Lane at the outbreak of the Second World War.

His name was Richard Reynell Bellamy, known to his colleagues and friends as Dickie.

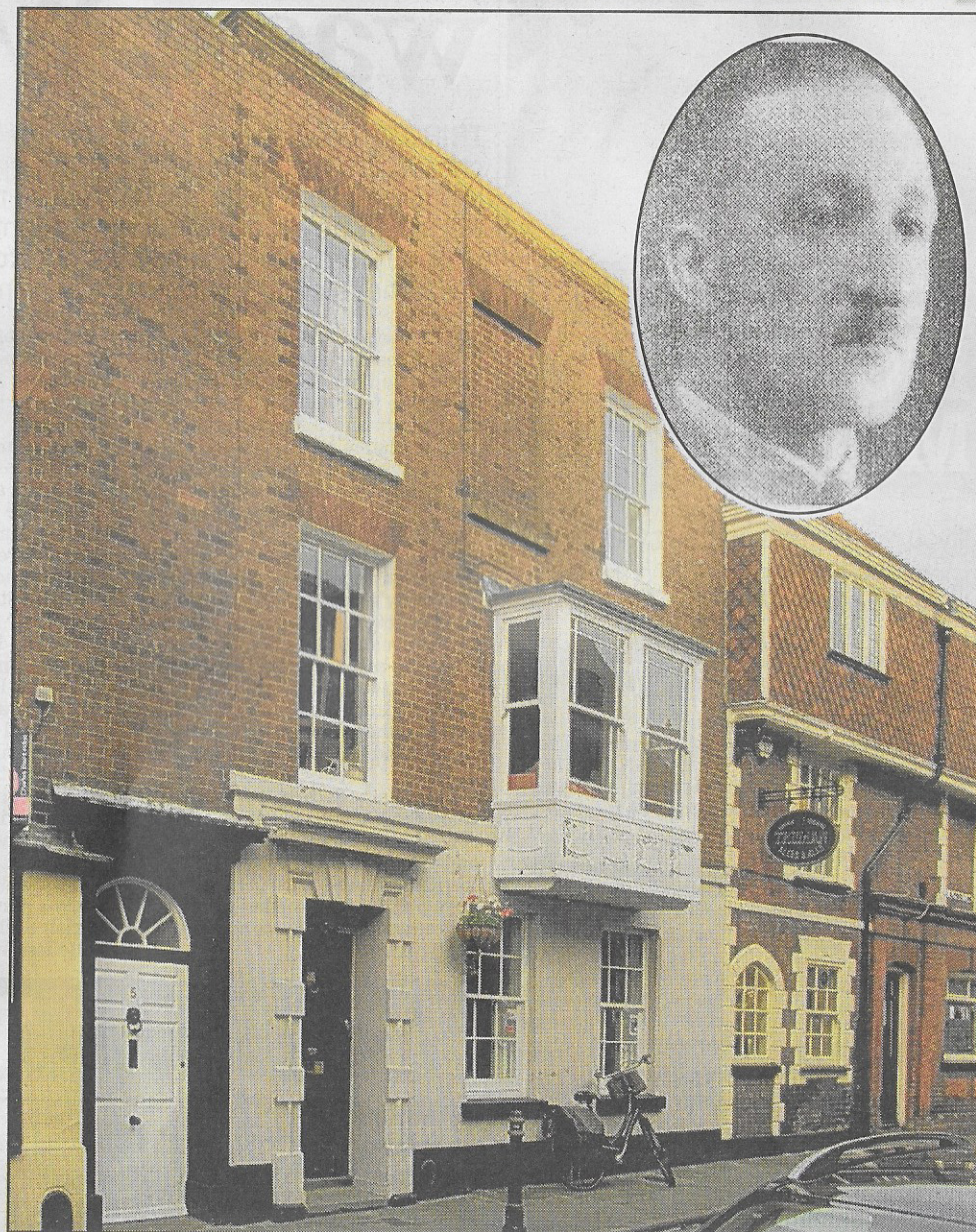
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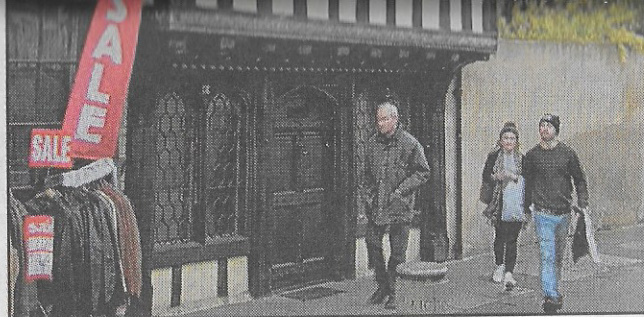
Dickie was born in 1901 and joined BUF in December 1933. Just two years later he became a paid official, rising to the rank of National Inspector and leader of the Canterbury group.

It seems he came to Kent in order to act as political agent to Lady Grace Pearson, who organised a local BUF group in Sandwich and had plans to stand for Parliament.

Dickie had enjoyed a mixed career, included spells with the Royal Irish Constabulary, British Red Cross, as a farmhand, as a seaman, writer and (in Australia) work on a sheep farm and on a cotton plantation.

At the outbreak of the Second World War he was living with his wife, Hilda, and their three young children on the upper floors of the BUF party offices and bookshop at 6 St Alphege Lane.

On Monday, June 3, 1940 a



BASE: Canterbury fascist Ralph Dawson ran an antiques business in Tudor House, Palace Street

police team, including the Chief Constable, an inspector, and others, raided the property.

The inhabitants (the Bellamy family, a visiting artist friend Phyllis Dawson, Phyllis' baby, and Alfred Smith, a local publican) were all removed to the police station (then near Westgate) with a warning that they would be searched.

Phyllis, not a woman to be easily cowed, asked which policeman was offering to search her baby's nappy.

Dickie Bellamy and Alfred Smith (and around 1,000 others) were then detained under the new Defence Regulation 18B.

This gave the Home Secretary powers to keep individuals suspected of being Nazi sympathisers in internment.

There was no normal process of trial, courts, weighing of evidence, rights of appeal, etc.

At 6 St Alphege Lane the police search team seized BUF correspondence, files, membership cards, diaries, and a German dictionary.

Internment

The next morning Hilda returned to the police station with clothing and personal items for her husband's use in internment – this included two books, his copies of Darwin's *Origin of Species* and Wallace's *Natural Selection*.

Dickie spent the next 400 days moving between holding camps at Walton Prison (Liverpool), POW Camp No 7 (Ascot Berks), Peveril Camp (Peel on the Isle of



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Man) and at Huyton in Lancashire.

On his release in July 1941, amazingly, he was allowed to work with National Fire Service in the unit covering Southampton docks.

He later claimed that in this role he was one of the select few who knew the date of D Day in advance of the landings. In later life he seems to have retained his fascist opinions but had no active role on the political scene.

He titled his (as yet unpublished) autobiography "Memoirs of a Fascist Beast".

He also, at the request of Oswald Mosley, wrote an authorised history of the BUF.

He died in Stevenage in 1988 aged 87.

Dickie was one of several Canterbury inhabitants detained in this way. For a look back at other local fascists, Alfred Smith, who had served in the army before becoming licensee of the King William IV pub in Union Street; or Ralph Dawson, husband of Phyllis Dawson, who ran his antiques business in Tudor House, Palace Street, and was influenced by Lady Pearson when he met her as a client, visit www.canterbury-archaeology.org.uk

Dawson died in Canterbury in 1983. Lady Pearson was 92 when she died in London in 1972.



ANTIQUES DEALER: Ralph Murrell Dawson