

THE BIG BARRAGE YOU NEVER HEAR.

-----

Issue No..1007..22.10.1940.  
Title: Open Road.  
Track: Ditto.  
Discs: 559.271.485.256.343.55.  
Lines: Stagg.  
Voice: do.

It's a silent service, the balloon barrage. The only nerves it puts on edge at night are the Germans'. Like toys in some giant nursery while at anchor, the balloons have the beauty of useful things when they go up. The big gasbags are a proved success.

Recruits to this ever-growing service are taught to know the balloons piece by piece, by the aid of a model. The instructor then teaches them how to repair the fabric, especially at the cable end, which takes a big strain when its blowing hard. After instruction here the men know how to mend their wives' clothes.

-----  
Turning out to send up a newly-received balloon, the crew handle the comparatively small bundle into which it's been packed. The fabric is of specially strengthened silk, light but tough enough to withstand the gales of winter.

-----  
From cylinders of compressed hydrogen the balloons are rapidly inflated. While the gas is going in, ballast bags and cable are attached, the last operations before the balloon goes up.

-----  
Let her go. They've released the guy-ropes. The cable unwinds. The gasbag is going skywards, fairly quickly at first, slowing up considerably as the lengthening wire makes its weight tell. The best compliment accorded the barrage balloons comes from Germany. The Nazis ridiculed the idea at the beginning, now they use it themselves. But for our balloons enemy pilots could dive-bomb London every cloudy day.

Increasing numbers of balloons are now water-borne, operating from trawlers and barges. They have to be careful not to take the ships up in the air.

Sailing with convoys, or stationed in the Thames Estuary, the gasbags make the raiders fly high. Barrage balloons are playing a vital part in the defence of Britain.

-----