

# Bun, Cuppa and Chat

## Veterans' Group



# NEWSLETTER

July/August 2026



This Newsletter is becoming typically British, with regular updates on sport and the weather. For those of you with no interest in this summer's main sporting events - Wimbledon, the World Cup or the cricket, you have probably had to hole up in a quiet room with a good book and no TV or online access. But many of us have enjoyed the drama of Arthur Fery's amazing progress to the Wimbledon semi-final; England's stuttering advance to the World Cup semis, and then the utterly wonderful game against France for 3<sup>rd</sup> place (we won 6-4!); and the women's and men's ups and downs in the cricket! As for the weather – we now have a hosepipe ban, but with the main harvest completed (early because of the successive heatwaves), deer and hares popping up in the stubble, wheeling red kites and buzzards overhead, and Wharton's roses blooming around us, it's a beautiful place to live. Thanks to Norman for his Chuckle Corner, Julia D. for photos of grandson Daniel and Sue Hewitt for telling me about the 'Stay-Behinds.'



### The Auxiliary Units – The Stay-Behinds

A casual remark by Sue Hewitt, one of our Bun, Cuppa and Chat volunteers, at Pennoyers Film Night, set me off researching the GHQ Auxiliary Units, colloquially known as the Stay-Behinds, about which I knew absolutely nothing! To be fair, until the 1990s, little was publicly known about the Auxiliary Units, formed in the summer of 1940 to provide a commando army (the Operational Patrols) and intelligence services (the Special Duties Section) which would be mobilised in the event of an invasion of the UK by the Germans. Which of course never happened, so the Stay-Behinds were never called into action, at least not as originally envisaged.

The object of these fighting patrols is to provide within the general Home Guard organization small units of men, specially selected and trained, whose role is to act offensively on the flanks and in the rear of any German troops who may obtain a temporary foothold in this country. Their action is to be directed particularly against tanks and lorries in laager, ammunition dumps, small enemy posts and stragglers, etc., and their main activities will be under cover of darkness. Being local men with a knowledge of the country, action by night will give them a great advantage over a disorganised enemy striving to establish himself in a strange country. These men, being members of the Home Guard, will of course fight in uniform.

I was surprised as to how long details of the Auxiliary Units remained under wraps. Post-war publications were often sanitised and it was not until the 1990s that the Auxiliaries, who had all signed the Official Secrets Act, started to tell of their experiences, and searches were carried out to discover their hidden underground 'operational bases' (OBs). In 1997, the excellent Museum of the British Resistance Organisation was established at the Parham Airfield Museum and in 2008, the historian John Warwicker was permitted to publish a history of the Auxiliary Units, but even he was unable to access some key primary sources. The excellent website - <https://www.staybehinds.com/> – gives details about OB locations, individual patrols and their members.

Letter of Lt General Paget, Chief of Staff, Home Forces to Duncan Sandys, Ministry of Defence, 30 July 1940. (TNA CAB 120/241), quoted by Atkin.

After the War, even continuing to this day in some quarters, a mythology grew up that the operational patrols of the Auxiliary Units were the British equivalent of the French Maquis or Yugoslav Partisans, a civilian underground resistance movement, but in his 2016 article, *Myth and Reality*, Malcolm Atkin used primary sources to prove conclusively that operational patrol members were formally attested members of the Local Defence Volunteers (LDV), later known as the Home Guard, which was part of the British armed forces. This meant that, like Army Reserves today, when on duty, operational patrol members were soldiers under the terms of the Hague Convention: they wore uniforms (even if initially this was just an LDV armband), legally had the right to bear arms and were subject to military discipline.



**The exterior of an abandoned OB**

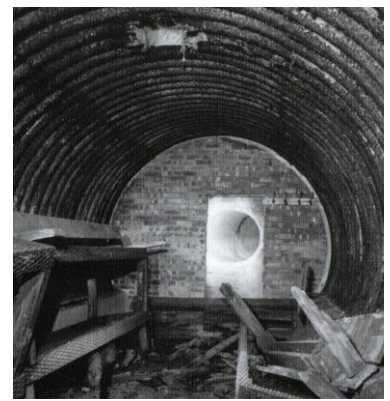
The protracted secrecy about the Stay-Behinds and the mythology that grew up around them may relate to their origins within Section D of the Secret Intelligence Service (MI6), which was formed as a 'dirty tricks' unit in early 1938, comprising spies and saboteurs working undercover across the globe and a UK network of civilian saboteurs and intelligence agents who would be mobilised in the event of an invasion. Section D was closed in 1940 with its overseas spying and sabotage legacy passing to the newly formed Special Operations Executive (SOE) which remained under the control of the intelligence services, and its Home Defence arrangements being transferred to the War Office, with the newly formed Auxiliary Units becoming part of the military establishment. Later, the operational patrols of the Auxiliary Units were attached to three Home Guard Reserve Battalions, 201, 202 and 203, and patrol members were entitled to wear the distinctive shoulder flash on their Home Guard uniforms.

Each Operational Patrol comprised about seven local men who knew the local land. If they were not already in the Home Guard, they signed up, and were trained as commandos, either at the Coleshill HQ or locally, provided with weapons, including knives, Sten guns and revolvers, ammunition and explosives. They established themselves in underground operational bases hidden in woodland, quarries and other out of the way places, with enough supplies to last about a fortnight, the likely life expectancy of an Auxilier if the Germans invaded. They were not permitted to tell their families about their role and did not know what neighbouring OPs were up to, in theory at least!

Their role was to harry the flanks and rear of the invading army at night, blow up bridges, destroy trains and transport, and kill sentries allowing the regular army breathing space to regroup. Whether they were also tasked with the assassination of German officers, collaborators or even locals who discovered their operational bases is open to debate!

The operational patrols were stood down on 30 November 1944, with the rest of the Home Guard. The stand-down letter stated, 'In view of the fact that your lives depended on secrecy, no public recognition will be possible. But those in the most responsible positions at General Headquarters, Home Forces, know what was done; and what would have been done, had you been called upon. It will not be forgotten.' To some extent the Auxiliars **were** forgotten, slipping back into civilian life again after the war (though some had already joined regular units, including the SAS), until the late 1990s. Coleshill Auxiliary Research Team and its website, The Stay-Behinds, and the Museum at Parham Airfield now ensure that the Auxiliars will never be forgotten.

The next newsletter will feature some personal stories from Norfolk & Suffolk Auxiliars



**An abandoned OB at Staplefield, Sussex, showing bunk beds and the culvert which formed the escape tunnel**



**Uniform of Percy Kindred, Stratford St Andrew patrol**



**Mabe Patrol, Cornwall  
Don Welch (left) and son Ken (2<sup>nd</sup> right),**

*Sources as mentioned in the text plus the History Hit podcast - <https://www.historyhit.com/the-brutal-reality-of-the-stay-behinds/>*



**Trevor Miners (Perranporth Patrol) & Peter Potter (Fingeringhoe Patrol), who paraded at the Cenotaph, with a contingent from the Auxiliars in 2015**

## Bun, Cuppa and Chat News

Twenty-six of us, including family members, sat down at the Mariner's Galley to our Summer Lunch in July, with superbly cooked food by our very own Bun, Cuppa and Chef, Glenn, and charmingly served by the lovely Amy, Ryan and Ella, with a flavourful smattering of chat and laughter all afternoon. We were delighted that Chelsea Pensioner Terry Pegg joined us in his Scarlets, as he was home visiting family and friends to celebrate his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday at the weekend. It seems everyone wanted to be photographed with a Chelsea Pensioner, even some of the gentlemen! Thank you to Glenn and Amy and all the staff for a lovely afternoon.

### Dates for your Diary

Our next Bun, Cuppa and Chat events will be on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> August and Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> September, usual time, 2.30 - 4 pm at the Mariner's Galley.



Starston's traditional Battle of Britain service will be held on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September, at 11am at St Margaret's Church.

**We do hope you will be able to join us.**



### Daniel Lewis-Waldron

At the other end of an army career from Terry, Daniel, Julia's grandson, and former Dickleburgh Sea Scout & RBL standard bearer, has successfully completed 13 weeks of basic training at Winchester. After some leave, catching up with family and friends locally, Daniel will embark on his 'trade' training with the Royal Military Police. We look forward to seeing more splendid pictures of him at his next passing-out parade.



### Another New Recruit

Next month, Jenson Moore of the Harleston Cadets will start at the Army Foundation College in Harrogate, as a junior soldier. We wish him well and look forward to some pictures in future Newsletters.

## Norman's Chuckle Corner

- A man went into a florist's and said, 'I'd like some flowers, please.' 'Certainly, Sir, what did you have in mind?' 'I am not sure.' 'Perhaps I could help', said the florist, 'What exactly have you done?'
- Why couldn't the butterfly go to the dance? It was a Moth Ball.
- A husband took his wife on a hunting trip for the first time. He warned her to claim her kill immediately before anyone else could. They waited in their hunting boxes for the deer. Soon, the husband heard his wife's gun go off. Keen to make sure she claimed her kill, he rushed outside to see her in a bitter argument with a man. 'This is my kill', insisted the wife, 'I can prove I shot this animal.' 'Okay lady' said the man, realising that she was not going to back down. 'But do you mind if I take my saddle off your deer before you take it away?'
- A driver was speeding down the bypass late in the afternoon when he saw a police car behind. For a while, he tried to outpace the police car, but after reaching over 100 miles per hour, he found the police car still on his bumper, so he decided to pull over. The policeman got out of his car, 'Look, sir, I have had a long and lousy day, and all I want to do is get home to my wife and kids. If you can give me a good excuse why you were speeding at 100 miles an hour back there, I will let you off.' The driver thought for a minute and then said, 'Three weeks ago my wife ran off with a policeman, and when I saw you in my rear window, I thought you were trying to give her back.'
- A drunk swaying down the street saw two nuns approaching. As they reached him, they split, one passing on the left and the other on the right. The drunk turned around, scratched his head and said, 'How did she do that?'
- English teacher to the class, 'Consider this sentence. *I don't have no fun at the weekend.* How should I correct this? Pupil at the back of the classroom: 'Try and find a boyfriend, Miss!'
- A nervous young man asked the father, 'Can I have your daughter for my wife?' Father: 'Well, bring your wife round, and we'll see.'

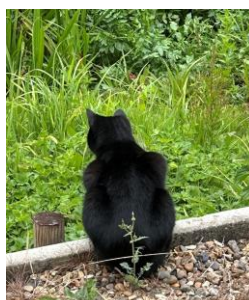
## Musings from Nacho, Sugie and Lola



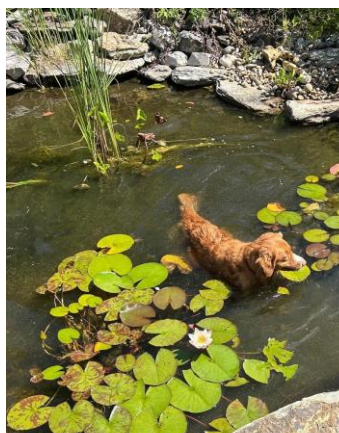
Nacho here, looking gorgeous and handsome. It's been a busy month, with paddles in the beck and late evening walks because of the heat, but we've still managed a few ball games when it has been cooler. Not bad for an old boy of nearly ten!!



Sugie here, with my statuesque BFF, showing off my best feature, my gorgeous yellow eyes! I have been on vermin patrol this month, catching several mice, a rat, and mole (saving the Missus £85 by not having to call in the Mole Guy). It takes a lot of patience, waiting for the right moment to pounce!



Lola here, I'm in trouble again.! It was a bit warm, so I thought a quick dip in the pond would be a good idea. Nacho followed me in. We splashed into the conservatory, had a good shake and lay down under the table where Master and Missus were entertaining two guests from Bun, Cuppa and Chat! Oops.



Waiting on the stairs for the Missus to go to bed

The Bun, Cuppa and Chat Group is part of the Benefice of Dickleburgh and the Pulhams

Organisers: The Revd Norman Steer and Rosemary Steer, T. 01379 854245

Newsletter Editor, Rosemary Steer, email: [rosemaryvasteer55@gmail.com](mailto:rosemaryvasteer55@gmail.com), mob. 07941 473256

*Please contact Rosemary if you would like your name removed from the mailing list.*