

CHARIOT ZERO, CALLING FROM THORNHAM

In 1940 two top secret resistance organisations, known deliberately unhelpfully as Auxiliary Units, were set up in the parts of the country considered most vulnerable to invasion.

Operational Patrols were based in villages nearer the coast than we are. After an invasion members, who were civilians and highly trained in guerrilla tactics, were intended to emerge at night from hidden bunkers and make trouble.

The other was an information network. Civilians, such as doctors and clergy, who had reason to be out and about after an invasion were equipped with wireless sets and aerials, hidden at their homes, and known as OUT-Stations.

They sent intelligence to IN-Stations safely sited further inland and run by the military. Norfolk's IN-Station (call sign Bowling Zero) was under the garden of the Jarrold mansion in Norwich. The Suffolk IN-Station (Chariot Zero) was in Thornham Magna, at first in a hut near the Hall, which was then the HQ of the 15th Scottish Division. Disguised as a meteorological hut, weather charts were on the walls and staff received daily weather information as cover. The aerial may have been on the water tower.

The ATS operators, including Yolande Bromley and Margaret Whiting, were billeted at the Red House. Yolande later married Donald Alston of Brockford and some of you may remember her.

Dependent OUT-Stations were numbered, for instance Peasenhall was Chariot 2, Wroxham was Bowling 9.

In 1942 the hut moved to a more discreet location in Long Paradise Plantation, above the Village Hall.

In 1943 there was a tragedy when Cpl Laurence Tee of the Royal Corps of Signals, who was checking an aerial, fell from a tree and received fatal injuries. His rope had been weakened by spilled battery acid in his van.

The secret of Chariot Zero was well kept and villagers who had been intrigued by comings and goings had no idea what was happening. After the

war inquisitive locals searched the wood, but the installation had been expertly removed leaving no trace. Only in recent years has the veil of secrecy been lifted and we have learnt a little about the British Resistance.

EVENTS ● Sat 12th Nov: Village Hall Christmas Fair ● Fri 18th Nov: Village Hall quiz night ● Fri 25th Nov: Village Hall film, *Our Kind of Traitor*, £5, please book Priscilla 01379 672903 ● Sun 11th Dec: 3pm, Village Hall film for children and adults, *The BFG*, under 5 free, 5-15 £3, over 15 £5

