



Greetings all,

I hope the rain and low clouds haven't dampened your spirits too much. I must say it's really starting to drag me down, but those are my woes not yours!! Unusually I was on air a few times this last month and managed a whole 4 QSO. One Ukrainian station amongst them. It must be hard to spend time on air whilst your country is at war. I'm also puzzled as to how come they are allowed to be? During the last time Britian was directly at war (1939-45) radio communication was banned for obvious reasons. Can someone tell me why this isn't the case in Ukraine? Anyway, I'm glad they can find the time to relax like this so I was very pleased indeed to work this station.

A few days before I wrote this I met my brother and he gave me some magazines called Sub Brit, the news letter of the Subterranean Britannica club - a club as devoted to things beneath the soil as we are to wireless telegraphy. One of the articles really struck a chord as it was about 'Zero Stations', or radio listening facilities, which I had never come across. The club has very kindly given me permission to reprint the article here. Their magazines are also on line here...

<https://www.subbrit.org.uk/magazine/>

The article below was first published in Sub Brit, Issue 30, August 2012 and is published here with very kind permission of the author, the Editor and the club

Sussex Auxiliary Units – Special Duties Section

Stewart Angell

Whilst much information has been gained about the WWII Home Guard Auxiliary Units (see *Subterranea* issues 28 and 29), there was another section formed after the sabotage side of the resistance had already been established. Known as the Special Duties Section (SDS), their top-secret role involved communications, through the use of concealed radios and spying activity. Its members were never told of the sabotage patrols in existence all around the country.

Secret Messages

The SDS headquarters was located at Hannington Hall, Hannington, Wiltshire, just five miles away from the Aux Units HQ at Coleshill House. The section's personnel consisted of spies (observers), cut-outs (runners), out-station radio operators and select members of the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) who would operate the surface-positioned Control Stations (disguised as a meteorological hut), moving into the nearby underground Zero Stations (in-station) following any invasion. Both points were equipped to receive coded messages from the out-stations.



Hannington Hall

Unlike the sabotage-minded patrols, both men and women could be chosen for the task of spying. Secrecy continued to be paramount but rather than these personnel 'going to ground' they would remain integrated within their local community.

The main people recruited for this role were people whose job allowed plenty of movement around their locality – doctors, midwives, postmen, vicars and farm workers for example. These people were trained in their own areas, being taught how to make simple intelligence reports. In the event of a German invasion they would have carried on with business as usual, making reports of any German troop movements or anything else of interest they had observed.

The process of communicating this report started with an observer writing down any information gained on a piece of paper. This was then 'posted' into a designated 'Dead Letter Drop' to remain hidden, such as an old tin can or a hole in a tree. Picked up by a runner, the item

would then be placed in a secret 'letter box' for the out-station radio operator to code the message for transmission. This system kept the identity of all concerned secret from each other.

Supporting the radio side were personnel from the Royal Corps of Signals. Officially they became Aux Unit Signals whose role it was to establish out-stations, maintain and repair radios, replace batteries and check aerials were securely in place.

Sussex Out-stations

Locating evidence of these stand-alone out-stations in Sussex has proved to be difficult. In many ways details about the SDS are harder to come by than those relating to the Aux Units; this is due to the limited number of people involved, their secret roles and ultimately lack of association. With the radio operators now gone, along with the exact location or locations where radios were hidden over the years that SDS were operational, other avenues have to be relied upon.

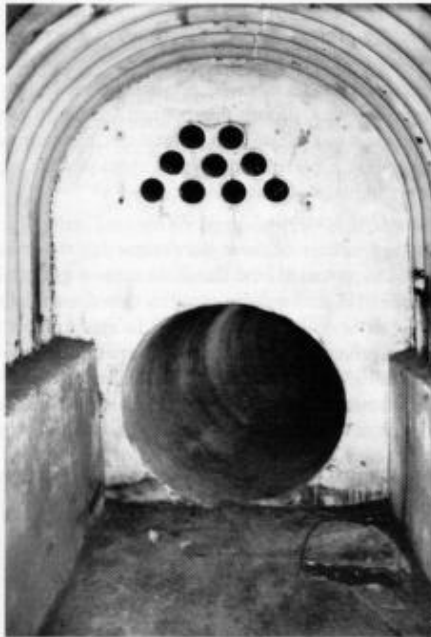


The main chamber of the Telham out-station: a table with a radio stood in the pit. This was in a poor condition when visited in 1997 and has now collapsed. Photo Nick Catford

Having discovered the underground out-station site at Telham, near Battle in East Sussex, through a relative of the wartime radio operator in the early 1990s, it soon became apparent that it was in a poor condition. I have seen the actual site, now unfortunately collapsed completely. Its accompanying aerial tree has fallen and rotted away, a fate that has undoubtedly happened to other sites over the years.

Not all out-stations were positioned in an underground setting. Concealment within the radio operator's house or associated building is also known to have been adopted. One example of this was at Parkwood Farm, at Upper Dicker in East Sussex, where the radio was kept hidden inside a cupboard within a locked room of the farmhouse.

In 1943 the radio operator moved a few miles further south to Priory Farm at Wilmington, again concealing the radio within the farmhouse, its aerial going up the inside of the chimney.



Inside the second chamber of Cadborough Out-Station looking towards the emergency exit tunnel and ventilation pipes.

Another underground out-station in East Sussex has been identified at Cadborough, near Rye. Whilst there doesn't appear to be a standard design applied to out-stations, the Cadborough site is remarkably similar to a known out-station at Cloughton, North Yorkshire, some 320 miles away!

The Cadborough out-station is constructed on a solid concrete base with all its brickwork rendered and painted white throughout. Low sidewalls support Anderson shelter-type corrugated iron sheeting along its whole length. The site has two chambers; both measuring six feet long and nearly five feet wide, divided by a narrow wall which includes a low doorway.

A vertical entrance shaft allows entry at one end into the first chamber and a three-foot-wide concrete emergency exit tunnel runs out for thirty feet from the opposite end of the second chamber. Above the start of the exit tunnel are nine four-inch-diameter glazed pipes set into the wall providing ventilation. Five other pipes, three included in the tunnel area, assist with air flow.

Two aerial feeder wires run to the outside of the out-station through an iron pipe, set into the corrugated iron near the internal dividing wall. These wires were originally concealed under the bark of an oak tree as they made their way up its trunk to the aerial/s.



Cadborough emergency exit showing two ventilation pipes and distinct angle the hatch would have taken.

The Cadborough site is positioned in Sussex – however, the radio would have transmitted to the Hollingbourne Zero Station in Kent. Documentary evidence from a map drawn in late June 1944 shows that the Sussex radio network used a frequency of 65 megacycles and the adjacent Kent network used 60 megacycles.

Sussex Zero Stations

Sussex had three Zero Stations. These were sited in Heathfield, to cover the out-stations in the east of the county, with the western out-stations linking initially to Shipley and later to Ardingly. These were all operated by ladies from the ATS, generally three at each site. Along with the radio equipment, the main chamber contained a small table with chairs, bunk beds, spare batteries, food and water. The Zero Stations had pre-arranged times for receiving transmissions from their local out-stations. These coded messages would be passed on to a nearby Aux Signals HQ for decoding to assess the relevance of their content.

Beatrice Temple, niece of the then Archbishop of Canterbury, was appointed Senior Commanding Officer



The main chamber of the Shipley Zero station looking towards the entrance shaft. This appeared to be in good condition when visited in 1997 but by March 1999 the chamber had collapsed. Photo Nick Catford

of the ATS personnel. Miss Temple noted much of her wartime activity as she made her way around the country's Zero Stations. These site visits enabled her to resolve any issues the women operatives had and to ensure that they were coping. The Sussex sites get mentioned in her notes as do the times when she decided to stay overnight at her family home in Lewes.

These notes indicate that both Heathfield and Shipley were operational by late 1941. On average Miss Temple initially visited once a month, with the frequency decreasing after she was happy with the way they were working.

At some point in 1943 Shipley was superseded by the Ardingly site. Later in that same year the Heathfield site closed down. By all accounts Sussex then continued with only one Zero Station in place until the SDS was officially stood down in July 1944. These changes of location possibly reflect the development of radios and their range over the latter stages of the radio network's existence.

Heathfield Zero Station

Many years after the war Miss Temple returned to Heathfield, assisting a local researcher to locate the exact whereabouts of the Zero Station. Despite a long search she could not locate any aspect of the former site.



Inside Heathfield Zero Station's main chamber.

In a lucky boost to my research, however, a chance conversation with a friend of mine regarding where he was working made me realize the site did in fact still exist – my friend had been repairing the sealed-up entrance shaft! Before the site was sealed again I managed to secure a brief visit. Once I was inside the main chamber it soon became apparent that the state and preservation of the Heathfield site was in far better condition than those seen elsewhere in my research.

When the site was closed in November 1943, a decision must have been taken to leave an option to possibly use it again in the future, which explains why so many original features remain in place. Remarkably, the entire network of wiring still exists, the bare wires looking as if they have only just been disconnected from their fixtures and fittings. Two dividing doors still open and shut quite happily

and a wooden cowling to prevent draughts from one of the main air vents remains in situ.

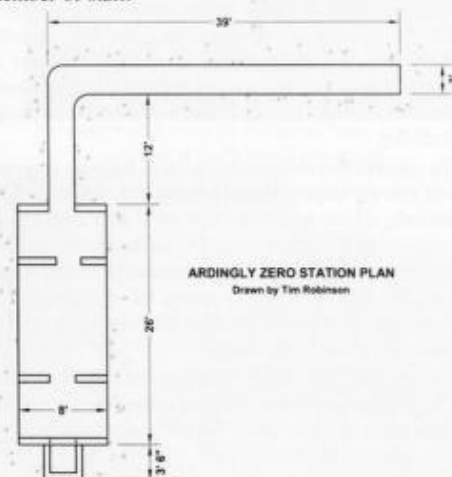
The emergency exit tunnel measures fifty feet long and is constructed from close-fitting three-foot-diameter precast concrete drainage pipes. However, any nearby trees that would have contained the concealed lever to open the entrance hatch, and the twin-core aerial feeder wire along with an aerial have long since gone.



Heathfield Zero Station internal door showing closing handle and locking latch. A rubber gasket surround prevented generator fumes entering the main chamber. Air handling pipes can be seen in the background.

Ardingly Zero Station

The Ardingly Zero Station, well known for being sited within the grounds of Wakehurst Place, reputedly the National Trust's most visited facility, was highlighted back in the 1970s through a magazine article written by a member of staff.



At that time a couple of photographs were taken and the site surveyed (see plan). Since then access has been denied which has led to speculation and outlandish theories relating to its use within the SDS set-up. One suggestion is the site acted as an unmanned relay station.

As a radio signal was received it would have automatically relayed the signal further inland to a Signals HQ. This process would have required many batteries to power the system and regular maintenance from Signals personnel.



As recorded in 1975 the inside of Ardingly Zero Station showing wiring still in place and entrance shaft in background. Photo Harry Townsend

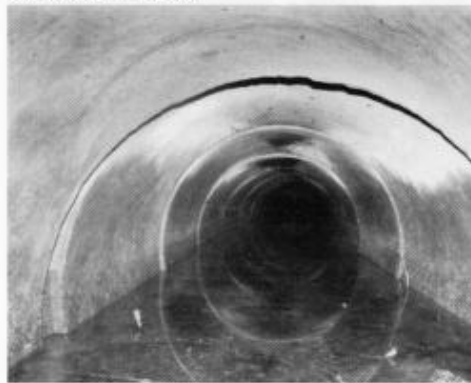
Miss Temple's wartime notes assist in clarifying that the Ardingly site was indeed a Zero Station, even naming the ATS Officers who operated the radio. The last entry relating to Ardingly mentions a site visit made on 25 February 1944, just four months before the radio network was stood down; Hollingbourne was also visited on the same day.

The construction and measurements at Ardingly compare well with the Shipley, Heathfield and Hollingbourne Zero Stations, all using curved elephant shelter corrugated-iron sheeting along their entire 24-foot length, divided into three separate chambers. The overall height is consistently a low 6' 6" feet, achieved by sitting the corrugated iron directly on the floor rather than on a low brick wall as often used in Aux Unit OBs.

Its emergency exit tunnel is over 50 feet long and makes a 90-degree turn to the right, exactly the same as the Hollingbourne tunnel does. Flooding is a major problem throughout the whole site, with the water level systematically going up and down depending on the seasons but never drying up completely. This is undermining the strength and integrity of the structure which will eventually cause a collapse.

The National Trust has now fenced off the site to prevent visitors standing above the weakened corrugated iron.

They have also included an interpretation board and white markers to indicate the shape of the structure below ground. This at least goes some way towards highlighting the heritage of the site.



Looking along the flooded emergency exit tunnel at Ardingly Zero Station.

Research continues

I understand others are now researching the feasibility of how the whole radio network communicated based around the radios and the technology of the time. I suspect the outcome will depend on whether anyone can build an accurate replica after all this time.

The Aux Units and SDS continue to be a fascinating subject, their past shrouded in secrecy, with little official documentary evidence available. There are still more patrols and radio sites to be discovered all around the country. Any information relating to members of an Aux Unit patrol along with the location of their Operational Base/Observation Post, any SDS radio operators and the location of their out-stations, equipment used or official documents, would be much appreciated.

Stewart Angell (Unseen.sussex@gmail.co.uk), is a long-time member of Sub Brit, author of *The Secret Sussex Resistance*, a founder member of the Sussex Military History Society (SMHS), and County Information Officer for Sussex within the National Colleshill Auxiliary Research Team (CART).

Photos Stewart Angell unless stated

References

- *The Secret Sussex Resistance* by Stewart Angell, 1996 Middleton Press ISBN 978 1 873793 82 4
- Telham Out-station – Harold Thompsett
- Cadborough Out-station – Nick Catford
- Cloughton Out-station – www.auxunits.org.uk
- Ardingly Zero Station – Harry Townsend
- Heathfield Zero Station – Stuart Bungy

Useful Websites

- www.coleshillhouse.com
- www.parhamairfieldmuseum.co.uk
- www.subbrit.org.uk

WWII Aux Unit SDS underground out-station radio site at Cadborough, East Sussex



Groove in tree indicating where the aerial feeder wire was concealed leading up to the aerial at Cadborough out-station.

This two-chamber structure would have been divided by a door disguised as shelving. Entry into the second chamber was gained by releasing a hidden catch then pushing the shelving inwards from the base, pivoting on an iron pipe set into the walls of the doorway, the only part still in place. Ventilation piping and concrete emergency exit tunnel remain undisturbed.

Photo Nick Catford



Formerly buried iron pipe with aerial feeder wires now revealed at Cadborough out-station.



The entrance shaft. When in use there would have been a camouflaged hinged hatch covering the shaft.

Photo Nick Catford

The position of the angled hatch at the end of the emergency escape tunnel. Photo Nick Catford



Another item I have found which I believe will interest members is the podcast from the BBC called [The Brixmis Story.](#) This is about the spies we had out and about in East Germany during the cold war and is truly fascinating. I remember attending a lecture at our radio club some years ago given by a man who actually was one of these operatives, and it really was a game of cat and mouse. Had it not been so dangerous it would have been funny. Have a trot through BBC sounds and see if you can get it...it's worth it.

And so the tables...

The bug key operators seem to have enjoyed their activity so thank you to all who took part at either end of the circuit.

Lots of new members - welcome to all of you. Do please email me via the club and let me know what you're up to!

New Members

Name	Call	No.	Name	Call	No.	Name	Call	No.
Rudy	HS0ZRM	#23143	Richard	KD2ZIW	#23237	Leonard	WA6PKB	#23246
Mark	G0GUZ	#23176	Joseph	KA5I	#23238	Mark	W8ZRB	#23247
Julian	G4VHJ	#23177	Michael	KM7DMK	#23239	Alan	AI3A	#23248
Tom	DL1TW	#23178	William	AC4WB	#23240	Jonathan	KT5EE	#23249
Mick	G5MIX	#23179	Terry	W8TMB	#23241	Dave	WB9VTB	#23250
Bob	VK6POP	#23180	John	KB0KSA	#23242	Geoff	K6ERA	#23251
Davy	F4GBY	#23181	William	KJ5IVB	#23243	Bill	KE4SU	#23252
Rene	K5JX	#23235	George	K6NZH	#23244	Gregory	WB2O	#23253
William	KJ5DVQ	#23236	Henrique	PY3QN	#23245			

Awards

Name	Callsign	Member	Awards
Dave	G0DJA	#1372	Millionaire 3 Million Endorsement
John	G4DRS	#17668	Basic Century Silver Century Gold Century Millionaire, Millionaire 2–9 Million Endorsements Prefix
Rene	K5JX	#23235	Basic Century Silver Century Gold Century Millionaire, Millionaire 2–9 Million Endorsements Prefix, Prefix 50, 100 & 150 Endorsements

Bug Key 24 Hour Sprint January 2026: Comments

Entrant	Comments
Simon G0FOZ	Could not resist this one as I use, almost exclusively, a bug these days. Operating on a Begali Intrepid alternating with a HiMound BK100. Nice to hear so many bugs on air. I joined the EU Bug net in the evening but only logged this as one QSO (despite 10 stations being on the net) as only "QSO'd" with the NCS. 73 Simon G0FOZ
Ciemon G4BFG	A fun start to the year and I tried a bit of everything, some fast, some slow, some dx, some POTA, some QTX ¹ , and made some new friends. Great stuff, CW on! Thanks. 73, Ciemon
Alan MW0BGL	Please find attached my entry for yesterday's Bug Key Sprint. 73, Alan Mw0bgl 16507

¹ QTX is used by CWops to describe rag chews.

Bug Key 24 Hour Sprint January 2026: Results

Callsign	Position	Points
G4BFG	1	16
MW0BGL	2	15
G0FOZ	3	11
G3XVL	4	4

Mechanical Medley January 2026: Results

Callsign	Position	Points
G4BFG	1	16
MW0BGL	2	15
G0FOZ	3	11
G3XVL	4	4

Ladder January 2026: Comments

Entrant	Comments
Jean F6JOE	HNY to all ! 73 Jean F6JOE - FISTS 16177
Dave G0DJA	Difficult trying to battle against the WWA contest and Winter field day contest
Simon G0FOZ	Conditions not the best this month. The first Sunday I logged, mainly, stations someway from UK/near-EU including Azores on 40M (new for me). The second Sunday conditions were pretty terrible but improved a little as the evening progressed. Good fun as always. 73 Simon G0FOZ
John G0UBE	Only able to operate on the first weekend. Thanks to all the members that worked me.
Danny G3EEC	First time giving the Ladder a proper go and this year I am determined to make a proper err... FIST of it. Really enjoyed the January sessions and I hope to continue to make progress
Peter G3JRH	Happy New Year to all Fists members, Peter G3JRHth and may propagation be always favourable.
Chris G3XVL	My January log. Good fun as always.
Richard G4TPJ	FT840
Steve M0SHM	Great to start the year on the afternoon spot. Thanks for the QSOs.
Pete M5ABN	Log for January. Limited activity so poor tally. Vy 73 Pete
Alan MW0BGL	Please find attached my ladder log submission for the January sessions. An enjoyable start to the new year even though conditions were challenging at times. Thanks again to all Fists members that I worked during January. 73, Alan Mw0bgl 16507
Erkki OH7QR	Hello David, please find attached my ladder log. 73 Erkki OH7QR
Norbert ON4ANE	Hello David, Session 2 on 25/01/2026 all communications to the west blocked. just one qso with M5ABN. 73 de Norbert ON4ANE

Ladder January 2026: Results

Callsign	Posn	Jan
G3XVL	1	61
G0FOZ	2	49
G3EEC	3	47
ON4ANE	4	43
MW0BGL	5	40
M5ABN	6	39
2E0YEM	7	38
M0SHM	8	36
G4TJE	9	31
G4TPJ	10	24
G0DJA	11	19
G4KKU	12	18
F6JOE	13	15
OH7QR	14	14
G3JRH	15	12
G0UBE	=16	9
G3PCL	=16	9
MM0UMH	=16	9

Ladder 2025: Correction

G3ZOD writes: My apologies to Martyn M0HGG for missing his December 2025 log. Below are Martyn's comments and the revised results table.

Ladder December 2025: Comments

Please find attached adi. file with my entry for the FISTS Ladder for December.

Many thanks to all who participated. Very much appreciated. All QSOs QRP using my FT710 and an indoor hybrid loop antenna which continues to amaze me !

72 and HNY

Martyn
M0HGG

Ladder 2025: Corrected Final Results

Callsign	Posn	Prev	Move	Total	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
M5ABN	1	1	-	806	78	63	72	78	67	86	60	58	71	75	68	30
MW0BGL	2	2	-	628	54	65	72	51	63	55	33	53	52	49	49	32
ON4ANE	3	3	-	607	52	63	54	57	54	49	49	47	53	45	42	42
G3XVL	4	4	-	525	69	83	63	52	69	65	12				61	51
G0FOZ	5	5	-	491	6	39	59	45	49	71	57	34	37	20	28	46
M0SHM	6	6	-	393	33	45	36	33	36	27	21	30	36	34	38	24
OH7QR	7	8	↑	304	23	39	18	28	24	13	31	25	28	33	36	6
M0PBZ	8	7	↓	302	49	57	60	33	51	52						
G4YTJ	9	9	-	289	33	18	46	42	18	36	21	48		6		21
G3ZRJ	10	10	-	264	35	69	64				32	64				
F6JOE	11	11	-	239	27	12	33	21	18	16		30	28	33		21
MM0UMH	12	12	-	226	38	62		29	22	22		6	15	9	14	9
M7TSM	13	13	-	204	22	21	27	33	33	21	21	26				
G4TJE	14	14	-	198	16	26	33	8	8	8		7	23	25	29	15
2E0DPH	15	15	-	173	42	63	32							24		12
G0DFC	16	16	-	129	42	30	18								24	15
G4TPJ	17	18	↑	123	33	9	24							18	15	24
G4DNP	18	17	↓	112	19	12	10	6	12			13	22	15	3	
2E0YEM	19	21	↑	111									29	42	20	20
PA0SIM	20	=19	↓	108	30	27	24		15							12
G4KKU	21	=19	↓	105	6		6	18		6	6	12	6	21	15	9
M9RTG	22	22	-	88										42	46	
G0UBE	23	24	↑	61			22					14		15		10
G4YTK	24	23	↓	54	9	21	3	6	6					9		
DL6NAN	25	25	-	37						37						
G3PCL	26	26	-	36				3	6		3	6	6	6	6	
G0JHK	=27	=27	-	34	34											
G0TRT	=27	=27	-	34									34			
OH2BN	29	29	-	33					12	6		6	6		3	
SQ9S	30	30	-	28	28											
M0MCL	31	31	-	24	24											
DL3GJ	32	32	-	20		1			16						3	
M0KBJ	33	33	-	19		19										
G0BON	34	34	-	15									15			
F5IJO	35	35	-	12		3	3							3	3	
M0YRU	36	36	-	8		1							2		5	
M0DRK	=37	37	-	6											6	
M0HGG	=37	=38	↑	6									2		1	3
EI2KA	=38	=38	-	3		3										
HA2ZB	=38	=38	-	3										3		
M7YRU	41	41	-	1		1										

Upcoming Events

February 2026

First day	Last day	Event	Times
Sun 08 Feb		FISTS Ladder	1400-1559 UTC, 1800-1959 UTC
Sun 15 Feb		FISTS Mechanical Key 24 Hour Sprint	0000-2359 UTC
Sun 22 Feb		FISTS Ladder	1400-1559 UTC, 1800-1959 UTC

March 2026

First day	Last day	Event	Times
Sun 08 Mar		FISTS Ladder	1400-1559 UTC, 1800-1959 UTC
Sun 15 Mar		FISTS Straight Key 24 Hour Sprint	0000-2359 UTC
Sun 22 Mar		FISTS Ladder	1400-1559 UTC, 1800-1959 UTC

April 2026

First day	Last day	Event	Times
Wed 01 Apr		ICWC Top 9 Quarter 2 season starts	24 hours each day UTC
Sun 12 Apr		FISTS Ladder	1400-1559 UTC, 1800-1959 UTC
Wed 15 Apr		FISTS Bug Key 24 Hour Sprint	0000-2359 UTC
Sun 26 Apr		FISTS Ladder	1400-1559 UTC, 1800-1959 UTC

I think that's about it for this time. Keep your coils dry and the brass nicely polished!! See you next time.

73

David. G4YVM