



TRANSPORT USED BY AUXILIARY UNITS

490

Compiled by Bill Ashby

On July 2nd 1940 Colonel Colin McVean Gubbins was appointed to form Auxiliary Units
A secret organisation to defend against a German invasion

Within days Colonel Gubbins had gathered a few officers he knew personally to start with. One was Major the Hon. Michael Henderson and he was given the task of selecting a suitable place to become the General Headquarters and training camp. He chose the Coleshill Estate, near Highworth. He also arranged for Mable Stranks the Post Mistress to act as a reporting centre.

In early August the first stores were ordered to be delivered to Coleshill by the 20th. The first Training Course was planned for August 22nd, However Aux Units had no transport of their own at this time and had to borrow some. A MTO (Motor Transport Officer) was soon appointed.

MOTOR TRANSPORT OFFICERS



Capt. Harston
Mar 1941-1942



Capt. Crawley
May 1942-July 1942



Capt. Delamere
July 1942-1944?

The Officer Staff at Coleshill consisted of the Commander, Camp Commandant and Training Course Instructors. Sufficient Transport was supplied for them. Senior Staff were allocated Humber Super Snipes or chose to use their own vehicles, even a Rolls Royce. Those not allocated cars, could use the spare pool cars.



Humber Super Snipe



1939 Dodge in military service



Privately owned Rolls Royce.



PERSONNEL WERE RECRUITED TO SERVICE and DRIVE THE VEHICLES

THE ROYAL ARMY SERVICE CORPS

The MTO Office located on the first floor at the West end of the Stable Block



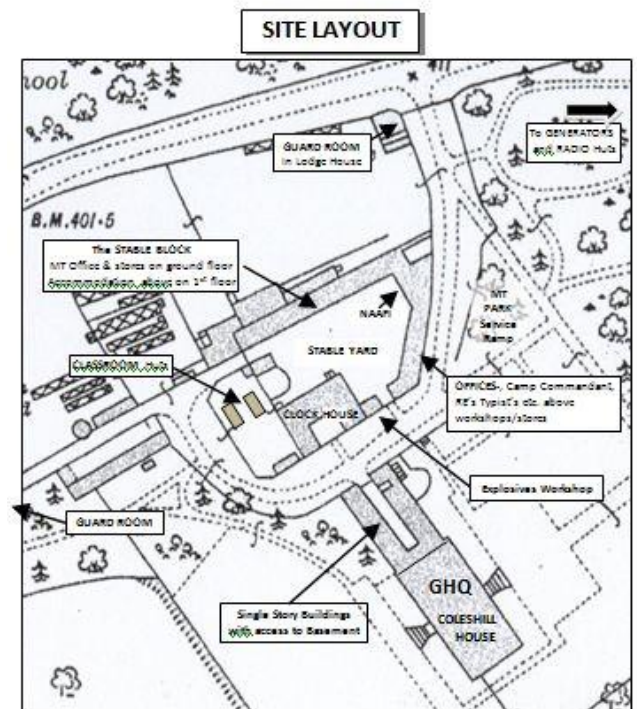
THE M.T. PARK
located in woods to the East



The Entrance to the MT Park



The Inspection Service Ramp



RASC PERSONNEL



Attached RASC:

WOI Twelves, S/Sgt Chaffer, Sergeants: Singleton, McCullough, Eric Gray – TMT Clerk
Cpl's S L Smith, L/Cpl Mappin, L/Cpl Unwin
Drivers Ken Burnell, Torre, Hoy, Styan, Bloor, Houseman, Stedman (aka Stede),
Pte B. Rowlands (Capt Harston's batman)



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Photos of John Stedman on a Matchless Motor Cycle and by a Dodge staff car.
Documentation at GHQ regarding tyres listed other vehicles at Coleshill

SIZE OF TYRES FOR
VEHICLES AT
HEADQUARTERS, AUX. UNITS.

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------|
| Humber Staff Cars. | 7.00 x 16. |
| Wolseley 18h.p.Civ. Impressed. | 6.50 x 16. |
| Humber Civ. Impressed. | 9.00 x 13. |
| Fordson 15-cwt. Vans. | 9.00 x 16. |
| Commer Q.4. 3-ton Lorries. | 10.50 x 16. |
| Austin 10 h.p. Utilities. | 6.00 x 16. |

Humber Staff Cars.

| |
|------------|
| M.1154799. |
| M.190664. |
| M.1154739. |
| M.1154357. |
| M.1154358. |

Commer Lorries.

| |
|-----------|
| L.621053. |
| L.622260. |
| L.622259. |

Civ. Cars.

| | |
|-----------|------------|
| Wolseley. | M.252955. |
| Humber. | M.4948237. |

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WOLSELEY 18hp (Civil impressed) M.262955



HUMBER (civil impressed) M.4948237



FORDSON 15 cwt



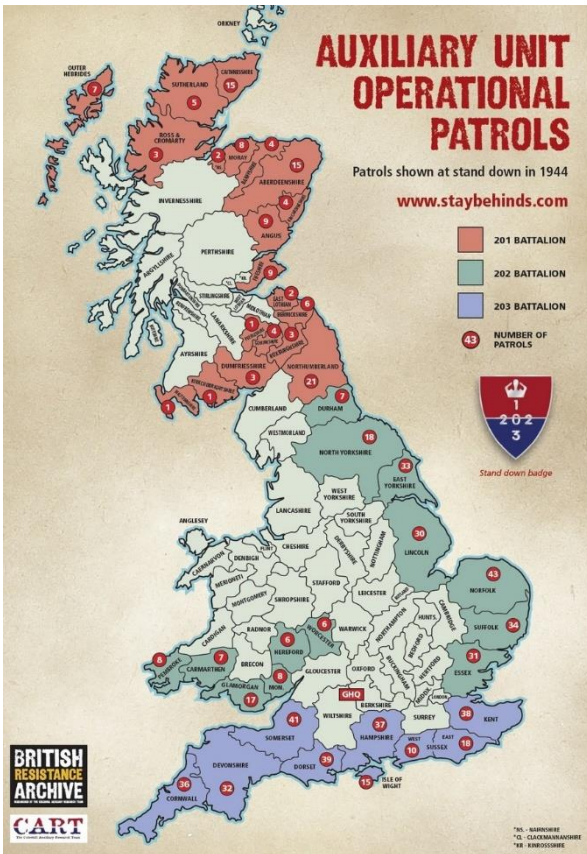
COMMER GS 3 TON Lorries M.621053, M.622259, M.622260

The lorries were used to pick up Auxiliars attending courses from Highworth Post Office and nearby rail stations and take them to the Coleshill Stable Block.



An ATS Corporal Joan Welborn recalls “We did not like Thursday’s because there was a half hour Gas Alert practice when we had to work wearing our Gas Mask. By chance this was exactly when the RASC Drivers chose to fuel up their vehicles at the garage in Coleshill on the left as you go up the hill. I say garage what I mean really mean was one hand operated petrol pump fed from a 300-gallon tank. It was solely for our use and my responsibility as acting MT Clerk to issue it (without my gas mask) and crank the pump lever backwards and forwards. I think the owners name was Roger Simpson. [Nb: Roger Simpson also had the garage in Highworth which was where major repairs to Aux vehicles were carried out.] The Radnor Arms has been built where the petrol point was

THE OPERATIONAL NETWORK BEYOND COLESHILL



Control, Administration and supply of all stores and equipment came from Coleshill

The area extended from Cornwall to Kent along the East coast up to Scotland, all the coloured counties on this map.

The total land mass was divided into about 20 Areas, each controlled by an Intelligence Officer.

The operational side of Auxiliary Units consisted of small Patrols of about 8 men scattered around all the coastal counties. They were trained to resist the German Invaders in any way that would slow their advance. An Intelligence officer controlled an area containing approximately thirty Patrols. He was also given one or two squads of regular troops called a 'Scout Section' lead by an officer to help train the patrols.

The larger lorries moved weapons, ammunition, and all manner of equipment out from Coleshill and distribute it to Intelligence officers nationwide from Cornwall to Scotland. Each had a Headquarters complete with a small staff of a Sergeant, a clerk in charge of the paperwork, a Royal Engineer explosives expert, a cook and a driver.

INTELLIGENCE OFFICERS TRANSPORT

STAFF CARS



P. Forbes Scotland 1941

STAFF CARS CONTINUED



Gordon Lennox I.O. Aberdeen



Captain Ingrams I.O. Somerset

SCOUT SECTION TRANSPORT



The East Sussex 2-seater Car Austin 8hp



Despatch rider



North Riding Scout Section car Austin 8 hp



15 cwt Morris C4 lorry E Sussex Scouts

THE OTHER SIDE OF AUX THE RADIO NETWORK THE SPECIAL DUTIES BRANCH



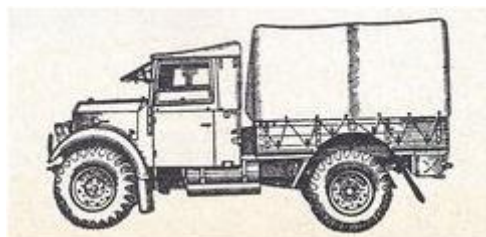
In 1941 the Special Duties Branch (Royal Signals) was formed which developed into a secret radio network. A workshop was established at Hunsdon, Suffolk where radios were developed and issued. They were concealed in all manner of places. They required aerials and servicing maintained by three-man Royal Signals teams covering areas. The civilians operating the hidden 'Out Stations' communicated to 'In Stations' manned by the ladies of the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS). In 1942 the Workshop moved to huts in the woods on the Coleshill Estate.

Quoting Captain Ken Ward (in command of the workshop) - 'We also required more transport for site surveys, installation parties and maintenance teams in each county area.

We received 2 x 30cwt Bedford's, 2 more 15cwt GS trucks, and 3 Canadian Ford V8 staff cars.



X2 30cwt



x2 15cwt



x3 Ford V8

No photographs of Signals vehicles have been found to date

However, the only transport that could be released to us for the maintenance crews were some 24 rather elderly Norton motorcycles with open sidecars. There was considerable hilarity in the efforts to learn to control these.

MOTOR CYCLE & SIDECARS ISSUE TO ROYAL SIGNALS



Initial Transport at Hunsdon

..... On arrival I found that, apart from this, the unit consisted of the CO Major John Hills (R Sigs), Captain Freddie Childe (I Corps), myself, and Corporals Chalk and Crawley (RASC). We also had a 15cwt GS wagon and a civilian registered, red American Essex saloon car, and I had my own Standard 8 Tourer. We had no base and no other personnel.



MORRIS 15 CWT



Standard 8 (Private)



RED ESSEX SALOON

CONTINUE ON TO INSIGNIA

CONTINUE ON TO INSIGNIA

INSIGNIA ON AUX VEHICLES (SIGNALS INSIGNIA NOT KNOWN)

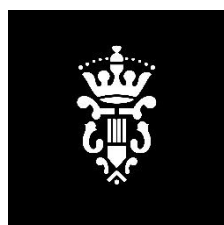
Offside:

Tactical and Bridge Sign



Nearside:

Home Forces Formation Sign



**GHQ HOME FORCES
First Version Formation Sign
when GHQ was at Kneller Hall**



**Home Forces 490 Tactical Sign
with 2" white strip below.**

On a Scout Section Austin 2-seater car

GHQ HOME FORCES -SECOND VERSION



Original 2nd Version



Later with blue ring

The Home Forces Formation sign was Updated in June 1942 as this document shows:

Subject: Vehicle Markings - Formation sign.

Officer Commanding,
30 S.M. Coy., R.A.S.C.



FEN/16

Instructions have been received from our Headquarters to the effect that all our 4-wheeled vehicles must bear the new formation sign. Transfers have been provided and our Headquarters draws attention to the following points.

- (1) The transfers will be affixed to the near-side front mud-guard and on the nearside rear of the vehicle.
- (2) The surface must be clean before affixing.
- (3) Dip transfer in water (not ice cold) for about 10 seconds.
- (4) Slide the transfer off paper with fingers on to the object.
- (5) Move transfer to desired position, press down, or squeeze gently, and leave to dry.
- (6) When the transfer has been fixed and is quite dry a fine coat of copal varnish will be brushed over.

As this work has to be carried out by the Station Maintenance Company to which the vehicles are attached for Maintenance purposes, it is suggested that the transfers be affixed by you as and when the vehicles of this Unit come in for inspection.

Drivers will bring with them the appropriate number of transfers.

9.6.42
Bridgwater,
Somerset.

(Signature)
Captain,
Officer Commanding,
Auxiliary Units, Somerset Area.

DFA

**THERE ARE STILL MANY UNKNOWNNS – IF YOU CAN ADD ANYTHING –
DATA OR PHOTOS PLEASE LET ME KNOW**

BILL ASHBY AT cartcoleshill@gmail.com

MORE NOTES BELOW

Bill Ashby

From correspondence with Lord Faringdon in 2023

Question did Major Henderson use a Rolls Royce as personal transport?

quote

The only car we had whilst I was living in the Lodge at Coleshill with my Mother (my father was based in the Mansion House) was an Austin 7 which my mother managed to turn over on the way to Oxford where I was going to have my adenoids removed. There was not a smell of a Rolls-Royce until he became Chairman of Seager Evans after the war. Best wishes, Charles Faringdon



3 x Ford V8

2 x BEDFORD 30cwt

2 x BEDFORD 15cwt

Bill Ashby