



WEAPONS & EXPLOSIVES



Auxiliary Units were given high priority in the provision of patrol weapons and explosive devices such as the Thompson and the PIAT. They were also the first to be issued with Sticky Bombs and phosphorous hand-grenades before anyone else.

The Auxiliary Units were the first units to be armed with the Thompson sub-machine gun, which was imported from the United States, along with the Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR). They were also the first to get the PIAT anti-

tank weapon, basically a tube with a firing mechanism and a huge spring inside it that would launch a high explosive anti-tank (HEAT) projectile up to 750 yards (effective range was only about 100 yards though).

When first created, many Auxiliers took along their own weapons. Other Auxiliers took along crossbows, which not only had the advantage of being relatively quiet but could kill just as effectively (at shorter distances) as a firearm.

One sinister weapon which was given to the members of the Auxiliary Unit patrols was a special .22 rifle - usually manufactured by BSA, Winchester or Remington. They were told that they were for sniping at German officers and for picking off tracker dogs before they came too near, but several members of the Resistance have admitted that they were also intended to be used on British people in their areas who they thought might collaborate with the Germans. More recently, it is thought that this rifle was to be used for the assassination of Britons who might have proved to be "loose tongued" under interrogation or know too much about who was in each Auxiliary Unit, such as the Chief Constable.

Another silenced weapon that came into use later in the war was the Welrod pistol (designed by the SIS for SOE and produced initially at Station IX at Welwyn, Hertfordshire).

All Aux Unit members were issued with pistols but not, as many of the members of the patrols believed, to use on themselves in a final moment of desperation.

This was certainly not what Churchill had in mind when he pencilled in the margin of one of Colonel Gubbins' weekly reports, "these men must have revolvers!"

Each patrol was (theoretically) to have received 1 x BAR, 1 x Thompson and 2 x M1917 Enfields. As time went on, the list of small arms allocated to each patrol grew, so that in 1941 each fully manned patrol was expected to have:

- 7 x .38in revolvers (American);
- 2 x .30in rifles (American);
- 7 x fighting knives;
- 3 x knobkerries;
- 48 x No. 36 grenades (four-second fuses);
- 3 x cases of S.T. grenades ('Sticky Bombs');
- 2 x cases of A.W. bottles (Phosphorous grenades);
- 1 x .22in rifle (silenced) from various manufacturers;
- 1 x .45in Thompson SMG (American)



From mid-July 1940 a plentiful supply of explosives and the accessories necessary for sabotage and booby-trapping were available. The volume and variety of these explosives were available from a variety of sources, including the War Office, Section D of MI6 (the SIS) and commercial suppliers and included Nobel 808, dynamite, ammonal, gelignite and plastic explosive. A few pounds of HE in the wrong hands could have destroyed entire buildings and killed dozens of people - the average Aux Unit having upwards of half-a-ton.

Reg Sennet, the CO for the Dengie Group of Aux Patrols, gave up after waiting for twenty years for the Army to come and collect the ordnance his patrols had left behind in his milking shed. He eventually told the local Police, who in turn called the Army.

They retrieved:

- 14,738 rounds of ammunition;
- 1,205lbs of explosives;
- 3,742 feet of delayed action fusing;
- 930 feet of safety fuse;
- 144 time pencils;
- 1,207 L-Delay switches;
- 1,271 detonators;
- 719 booby-trap switches;
- 314 paraffin bombs;
- 131 fog signals;
- 121 smoke bombs;
- Thirty-six slabs of guncotton;
- Thirty-three time pencils and booby-trap switches attached to made-up charges

