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**SCU-NEWSLETTER No. 3/10**  
**Wednesday, August 4, 2010**

**1. The next 'Hanslope Park Lunch'** (previously I have described it as the DWS/SCU lunch meeting), takes place at the Conservative Club, Stony Stratford on **Monday 16<sup>th</sup> August 2010 and not the usual second Monday**. If you are attending, will those involved (as SCU or DWS) and wanting lunch let Phillip Canale know. Telephone: **01908 511 164**. Please telephone Phil in the *evening* – but book early. Alternatively, contact Heather Gordon – she is in the midst of moving and tells me she will not have a landline for up to two weeks but you can contact her by phone on her mobile – **07910 769072**.

**2. Sad News.**

**Maurice Richardson.** We heard from Heather Richardson of the sudden death of her husband Maurice. I knew Maurice in Singapore in 1946 and he appears in a group photograph taken there in Chapter 38 of 'The Secret Wireless War.' He was a skilled wireless operator and had earlier handled ULTRA traffic going out from the MI6 (Section VIII) wireless station at Windy Ridge in Whaddon Village. He later was chosen to be a member of a mobile SLU to go to join the 14<sup>th</sup> Army ready for the assault on Malaya. However, the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki brought the end of the war against Japan and Maurice went then to our wireless station in Delhi, then later joined us down in Singapore.

Maurice was a staunch member of our band of veterans that met at Bletchley Park and with Heather at the DWS/SCU meetings at Stony Stratford. He appears in the DVD also called 'The Secret Wireless War' in which he explains his work disseminating ULTRA traffic at Windy Ridge. He will be sadly missed by his family and by his many friends, including we remaining veterans of those far off days.

**Ted Snelling.** Although he was based at Whaddon I did not know Ted personally. He was in charge of the aerial riggers around our many aerial farms. Most of his team were Signalmen in the Royal Corps of Signals living at Little Horwood. However, Ted had a great reputation amongst his men; never asking them to attempt any of the dangerous tasks that exist in aerial construction, which he did not demonstrate first.

**3. Reaction to the article on Patton and ULTRA in the QST Journal of ARRL.**

Wilf Neal and I have been surprised and pleased by the large number of readers of QST who have written to us to thank us for the article. Naturally, most have come from the United States but we have heard from QST readers as far apart as Norway and New Zealand. They have all since received the follow up copy of SCU-Newsletter – 2/10. All of them are now on our SCU-Newsletter e-mail list.

**4. Present task.**

At present, I am devoting much time to establishing the time-line and involvement of SIS and particularly Section VIII in the early days of Bletchley Park. Bletchley Park was undoubtedly purchased by "C" – Admiral Sir Hugh Sinclair as the 'War Station' or 'Bolthole' (my description), as a place of safety in the event of war – for all the Sections of MI6 – presently based in the SIS HQ at 54 Broadway, Westminster. That included GC&CS (the 'Codebreakers') who were, by that time, also housed at 54 Broadway. Sinclair was responsible for both SIS and GC&CS (Government Code & Cypher School).

What cannot be disputed is that at least two of the Royal Navy Chief Petty Officers, recruited by Richard Gambier-Parry in 1938 for his infant Section VIII, moved to Bletchley in late 1938 or very early 1939.

They were Charlie Bradford and Claude Herbert. Soon afterwards Jack Saunders joined them as 'Bletchley residents' when he rented a house in the town before the war. He later purchased his own home so Mrs. Saunders and their daughters, Tess and Celia could join him. Later on, Mavis Batey the famous cryptographer was billeted with them.

If you had a spare room in your house, the local Billeting Officer could require you to take in ‘boarders’ from Bletchley Park. That also applied across the whole country for Service personnel and others engaged on ‘Essential War Work.’

We know that Charlie Bradford and Claude Herbert worked in building the wireless stations in Hut 1 and the agent’s station in the tower of the Mansion – erroneously called ‘Station X’. No doubt they acted as the operators in them as well.

### 5. Meeting of SCU/RSS at Bletchley Park on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2010.

The annual SCU/RSS meeting arranged by Bob (Noz) King was held on 25<sup>th</sup> April at Bletchley Park with a number of speakers. Most will regard it as a very successful meeting and our thanks go out again to Jean and Bob. The speakers in the morning session included Stan Ames talking about the background of RSS and George Busby with his remarkable research into the RSS station at Gilnahirk in Northern Ireland.

After lunch, Don Wallis reported on his ‘Cook’s tour’ of Italy as part of our SCU4. When my turn came I spoke – *amongst other things* – about a ‘wireless transmitter’ housed in a bar of soap and I will deal with that separately as item 6. I introduced Mona De Witte from Paris who had obtained her Masters Degree in English History – *magna cum laude* – about ULTRA and security at Bletchley Park during World War II. I also mentioned the article about General Patton that was about to be published in QST the Journal of ARRL (American Radio Relay League) the world’s leading amateur wireless organisation.

Bob rounded off what was regarded as an outstanding meeting.



These are the 17 veterans of MI6 (Section VIII) who were at the reunion. Wilf Neal with Patton’s 3<sup>rd</sup> US Army is standing third from left and Len Digby with Simpson’s 9<sup>th</sup> US Army is fifth from left. I am seated in blazer and pale slacks with Pat Hawker seated on my right.

In ‘The Secret Wireless War’ you will find Wilf’s story is Chapter 25 and Pat Hawker’s is Chapter 34 – in one of the first British units into Paris. You will see the full set of names below and those with call signs were almost all on Interception in the unit.

Ron Unwin	John Hofer	Wilf Neal	Ted Cooper	Len Digby	Harry Heap	Frank Gay	Maurice Richardson	Noz (Bob) King
			-----	-----	G5HF----	-----	G3CFV----	G3ASE---
John McCafferty G7SF	John Foster	Pat Hawker G3VA	Geoffrey Pidgeon	Geoff Dean G3NPO	Don Wallis M0ZDW	David Williams G3CCO	Ray Fautley G3ASG	

## 6. The bar of SOAP !

At the meeting, I was delighted to show pictures of a ‘transmitter in a bar of soap’ that had been used by Jack Saunders (another of the ex-Royal Navy CPOs) when he went on a secret mission to Tallinn in Estonia – with Richard Gambier-Parry. Celia Buis (née) Saunders, younger daughter of Jack Saunders sent it to me. Celia was working at Whaddon Hall at the same time as myself.

It appears that John Tiltman of GC&CS, then based at SIS headquarters at 54 Broadway, had already made an arrangement with the Finnish Army’s codebreaking unit to obtain Russian traffic and also made a similar deal with Estonia promising to provide wireless equipment in return for Russian traffic. Clearly, Richard Gambier-Parry and Jack Saunders were closely involved in the operation in August 1939. There is much more to come on this subject and I will keep you posted in later SCU-Newsletters.

The pictures caused considerable interest at the Meeting from the many wireless experts present and a debate about how it might work ensued. Following the meeting, I heard from several of them with their views and questions in writing but without the actual soap box – I was unable to take the matter further – so I sent their letters to Celia in the United States.

I was astonished and hugely pleased to receive a parcel a few days ago from Celia containing the remarkable soap box with all the component parts intact. It is now my great responsibility to establish how it might have worked, then to ensure it ends safely on display in the new Museum at Bletchley Park, currently in the planning stage at Bletchley Park. I am in touch with the experts and will report to you on progress later. **Very exciting stuff !**



## 7. New picture of Main Line station at Whaddon Hall.

I received an e-mail from Des Turner (Author of 'Aston House, Station 12, SOE's Secret Centre'), asking if I could help identify a wireless station in a picture belonging to the late Commander A. John G. Langley RN and mentioned in his memoirs. He was apparently attached in some way to MI6 (Section VIII) and/or Bletchley Park and as there are only a few left now who might have known his name.

However, there is no doubt he was involved with us because his name appears in the 'Stable Gossip' circulation list in Chapter 20 of 'The Secret Wireless War'. This was the House Magazine of Whaddon Hall and produced by Ewart Holden, Celia's brother-in-law and my father's immediate boss. Father ran the MI6 (Section VIII) wireless stores based in the stables and coach houses built around the stable yard.

Whilst I shall continue to search for more information about John Langley, I thought all of those interested in our history would like to see this fascinating new picture. I recognised it as the 'Main Line' wireless station, right in the front of Whaddon Hall, and David White has agreed. The only other photograph I have seen of Main Line appears in Chapter 12.

Main Line station was the replacement for 'Hut 1' when MI6 (Section VIII) was at Bletchley Park in early 1939 and on into early 1940. At Whaddon, it handled covert and Embassy traffic of all kinds, including that of messages to and from Winston Churchill when he was abroad. (See 'Edgar Harrison – Soldier – Patriot and Ultra Wireless Operator to Winston Churchill').



**Congratulations** to Dennis Smith now living in Adelaide Australia who reaches his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in September. Dennis was in charge of Mobile Construction and my immediate boss at Whaddon from August 1943 until April 1945. He was personally engaged (*now they say 'Head hunted'*) by Richard Gambier-Parry and joined R&D at Whaddon Hall with such 'greats' as Alfie Willis, Wilf Lilburn and later Steve Dorman. Dennis was in the small team that devised 'Ascension' the wireless used between aircraft and our agents on the ground in Europe.

He designed the wireless for the MFU amongst other things. I flew on tests with him after installing our gear in Lockheed Hudsons, Lockheed Venturas at Tempsford and on Mitchells down at Hartford Bridge. We worked on Motor Gun Boats of Slocum's Navy at Dartmouth, MTBs at Brixham and the MFU at Teignmouth. He went on into the Royal Navy on very secret work and ended as a Commander in the Royal Australian Navy. A great wireless engineer a great boss and a good friend to a very young man !

Finally, I will issue a 'Special SCU-Newsletter' when I have more information about 'THE SOAP.'

**In the meantime, Jane joins me in sending warm regards to you all.**

**Geoffrey Pidgeon**