

SCU-NEWSLETTER No. 2-12
Tuesday, June 19, 2012

This Newsletter contains three main items but it is good to be able to start without the usual ‘Sad News’ !

1. A little known attempt in August 1939 to stop World War II occurring.

From mid-1940 onwards my father was in charge of the MI6 Wireless Stores (VIIS) at Whaddon Hall and his direct ‘boss’ was **Ewart Holden**. Before being involved with MI6 in the summer of 1939, Ewart had had a wireless shop at 39 Heath Road in Twickenham – and for those who don’t know – the home of English Rugby. Ewart’s shop specialised in **Philco Radio** products. *Where have we heard that name before ?*

Ewart’s father, **Albert Holden**, was one of a party of seven prominent British businessmen who in August 1939 travelled to Germany to meet **Goering**. The party was led by Charles Spencer, a director of the giant British firm John Brown & Co. The meeting was proposed and arranged by a Swedish businessman Birger Dahlerus, who had concluded, based on discussions with his contacts in Germany, that the Germans did not believe in Britain’s commitment to the defence of Poland. The secret meeting had the *informal* approval of the Foreign Office and proceeded with the objective of persuading Goering of the dire consequences that would ensue if Germany continued its aggression.

Dahlerus continued to shuttle between Germany and London refining the details. In July he had been in London, meeting again with the British delegates and also with **Lord Halifax** the Foreign Secretary who *‘clearly expressed his distrust of the German government’s attitude and ...particularly emphasised that the guarantee which Britain had given to Poland would be fulfilled whatever the circumstances’*.

The original plan was for the meeting to be held at Dahlerus home in Sweden but at the very last moment the German party switched the venue to Germany. **Hitler**, through Goering, required an absolute and binding guarantee that the meeting would be held in secret and remain secret, a condition Dahlerus did not feel able to accept if the meeting were held in Sweden, due to possible leaks through servants or at the borders.

The venue was therefore changed from Sweden to Schleswig Holstein in Germany, and to Sonke Nissen Koog a property owned by Dahlerus’ wife, the duty thus being laid on the Germans to ensure its secrecy.

The four great players in the Birger Dahlerus attempt to halt the slide to war between Great Britain and Germany in August 1939. Birger Dahlerus, Goering, Hitler and Lord Halifax.



Dahlerus



On Saturday August 5th, the British delegates convened in Hamburg, having travelled by different routes to avoid notice. They travelled on with Dahlerus on Sunday to Sonke Nissen Koog. On Monday morning August 7th, Goering and his entourage travelled to the nearest town by his special train and were met by Dahlerus with his own cars and trusted chauffeurs. The Germans set up in effect a total traffic and telecommunications blockade around the area to maintain secrecy. Goering appraised Dahlerus in an hour-long pre-meeting on his train that, in his opinion, if the day’s meeting were successful, it should in its conclusion recommend an official conference between the two countries - but only if ultimate success could be assured.

The meeting lasted through the day, with animated exchanges of views. The British contingent majored on what was the most vital issue at the time, the developments following Chamberlain’s visit the previous year to Berchtesgaden and Hitler’s undertakings to Chamberlain to the effect that he did not want to incorporate other nations within the German Reich - undertakings that he had immediately broken in Czechoslovakia. Goering sought to defend the German position and actions.

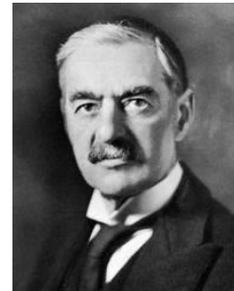
The British team in turn tried to make clear the dire commercial, social and political consequences that would ensue if Germany continued its expansionist aggression, notably if it invaded Poland. Goering continued to express their peaceful intentions towards Britain. The British team reaffirmed the general desire of its people for a negotiated and peaceful settlement with Germany if this could be achieved - but subject to the overriding condition that Germany refrain from any further aggressive acts and stressing in particular Britain's irrevocable commitment to Poland. The meeting concluded amicably, with general agreement that more contact could be beneficial.

The following day, Dahlerus had separate meetings with Goering and with Charles Spencer. Goering gave his view that a conference could be acceptable to the Germans but would need many intermediate discussions to agree the matters to be tabled and ensure the outcome could be successful. On Wednesday 9th August the British party returned home via Hamburg and Dahlerus travelled home to Sweden.

On 25th August Dahlerus travelled back to Berlin where he met Goering and reiterated the British position regarding Poland and their requirement that Germany refrain from further hostile acts. It was late in the night by the time they reached the Chancellery, where Hitler was already in bed. Goering had him woken and Dahlerus was later called in to meet him.

The meeting lasted several hours, during which time Hitler variously lectured, ranted, and became excited and incoherent. He expressed his terms or requirements for an agreement with Britain, which he wished communicated back with all speed. On 26th August partial mobilisation began in Britain. Dahlerus was flown back to England on a German plane early the following morning August 27th asking of himself...*'was I a pawn in a game of intrigue or were the messages I bore sent in good faith?'*

The 'Sonke-Nissen-Seven' met Dahlerus at Croydon airport, where the arrival of a German plane caused quite a stir at a point when all communications with the Continent had been suspended. Dahlerus was smuggled out and raced to London where he reported to Lord Halifax and Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain. He found Neville Chamberlain [on the right] sceptical of Hitler's messages.



After lengthy discussions, Dahlerus returned to Berlin for further meetings with British Embassy officials and with the Germans. Deteriorating discussions ensued and Dahlerus was back in England again on August 30th, again by German plane. Further discussions followed, with the preparation of notes between the governments. On 31st August Dahlerus was back in Germany with Goering, still seeking to smooth the path to an understanding whilst at the same time heralding an ultimatum from Britain. There were further meetings with Goering, Hitler and the Embassy personnel.

However, on 1st September Germany invaded Poland and on 3rd September Britain declared war on Germany.

There is a possible link with this story to MI6 Section VIII. You will recall in an earlier SCU-Newsletter (1-11), I raised the puzzle of the 'Transmitter in a bar of Soap' but that was incidental to the visit of Richard Gambier-Parry with his wireless operator Jack Saunders to Tallinn in Estonia in August 1939 – at roughly the same time as Ted Maltby (Gambier-Parry's deputy) took a wireless operator to Riga in Latvia. I said it must have been *extremely important* for these two gentlemen to be away from Britain at that time. Now I see a connection.

We know that the Estonian intelligence service was monitoring Russian wireless traffic and that would have been invaluable to us. And I also mentioned that the Head of Station, in both Estonia and Latvia, were running important agents in the Baltic and needed to transmit their information back to London.

At the time, I thought that was the reason for their presence. However, why would these very important men have left London and Bletchley Park at such a vital time just to monitor wireless traffic – the two operators would have sufficed. I now believe these two parties were in these two Baltic states – right opposite southern Sweden – because that was where the Dahlerus – Goering meetings were to be held and wireless contact could easily be established.

Whilst this is the truly authentic story of Dahlerus, Goering and the British party of 'Seven' - the idea of Albert Holden's son Ewart being sent to Sweden is conjecture on my part. Nevertheless, it would have provided a wireless link with London via Richard Gambier-Parry in Tallinn and Ted Maltby in Riga and would also explain why there was such an over-qualified 'listening watch' set in place at that time.

This picture of Ewart Holden shows him using what appears to be one of our early Barnes transceivers – then known as 'MDJ' Sets. Was he sent into Sweden to be near the 'Seven' and within range of Estonia and Latvia ?



However, with the sudden decision to transfer the meetings to Germany there was no need for any Sweden/Latvia/Estonia link. One must assume Richard Gambier-Parry, Ted Maltby and their respective operators then rapidly returned home, where there was so much work to be done in a fast deteriorating situation.

Indeed, in 'The Extraordinary Diaries of John Darwin' (Chapter 21 of 'The Secret Wireless War') we find reference to Gambier-Parry flying to Berlin on 11th August 1939 with Jan Ware – another of the ex-Royal Navy wireless operators – just like Jack Saunders. So we know he was home from Tallinn well before the 11th. John Darwin goes on to report Gambier-Parry returned from Berlin on the 14th August and note Darwin's comment 'Ware installed everything O.K.'

The diary also explains how these transceivers were taken abroad. We read on 13th July, John Dawson reports – 'One MDJ set was delivered by normal King's Messenger and delivered to me when I reached Copenhagen.'

Interestingly, the very first information to reach Great Britain that German troops had crossed the Polish frontier on 1st September was from the wireless station in Warsaw – run by Richard Gambier-Parry's – MI6 (Section VIII).

Note: 'MDJ' wireless sets'? These were the initials given to the early 'Barnes' wireless transceivers by the conceit of Maltby, Darwin and Jourdain.' None of them had anything to do with either the design or construction. They were the result of work by Bob Hornby and Wilf Lilburn, both of them originally from Philco.

2. My early connection with MI6 (Section VIII).

I have recently been asked how I am able to speak about the 'early days' with some authority so perhaps I should explain. Wilf Lilburn and Bob Chennells, both ex-Philco but by then with MI6, lived with us at Caterham on-and-off during 1939 into early 1940. They were working on the 'Funny Neuk' wireless station in the North Downs at Woldingham to provide a transmission facility for the SIS wireless station alongside the Thames at Barnes. In 1939, I was taken to see the station in nearby Woldingham, though kept outside, so I had to peer through the gate.

There are just two names on the Electoral Roll for 'Funny Neuk' at Woldingham. They are Hugh Sinclair and Wilf Lilburn. [i.e. Admiral Sir Hugh Sinclair Chief of SIS and the Director of GC&CS]

In May 1940, Wilf Lilburn and Bob Chennells arranged for my father to be interviewed at SIS HQ at 54 Broadway in Westminster and he joined MI6 as a civilian in June 1940. However, he was later – like others such as Ewart Holden – enrolled into the Royal Corps of Signals on July 25th 1940, though not paid by the Army but by MI6 (Section VIII). See Chapter 9 in my book. Father had moved to Stony Stratford (near Bletchley) in June 1940.

Mother, my two brothers and I continued to live at Caterham whilst the Battle of Britain was often fought overhead. The house was damaged on Sunday August 18th when the Luftwaffe attacked Kenley Aerodrome, whose runway began only some two miles away. Before the end of August 1940 we had moved to Stony Stratford to be with my father and we stayed there until 1945.

In the autumn of 1942, I was fortunate to be interviewed by Lieut. Commander Percy Cooper RNVR and enrolled into Section VIII – its youngest member. I soon started making components for wireless sets in the workshops at Whaddon Hall, under Charlie West (ex-Philco). There, I came into contact with most of those senior members named in my book. That was partially due to the location and importance of the workshops with its constant flow of the great and the good.

Nevertheless, being made a member of the small 'Mobile Construction' team under Dennis Smith brought me into contact with just about everybody in the unit. Mother was a nurse in the Clinic at Bletchley Park and my parents had friends from both Bletchley Park and Whaddon. Hundreds from BP were billeted in Stony Stratford and its surrounding villages, as well as some staff who were working at Whaddon. Certainly, I know that Joyce Lilburn and others from the Whaddon Hall were at first housed in the George Hotel on Stony Stratford High Street. Senior BP staff used the Cock Hotel but others preferred the nearby Bull Hotel. On the other hand, I am afraid most from Whaddon or BP were living in billets – with considerable variation in the standards of comfort provided.

'Ted' Maltby, the Deputy to Richard Gambier-Parry, was also the Controller of RSS/SCU3. His home was a hundred yards from our flat in the High Street, Stony Stratford. Of course, the RSS/SCU3 was a vital part of the 'Y' Service component providing the all-important Abwehr Enigma wireless traffic input to Bletchley Park. In my research in the early days – sending out these SCU-Newsletters – enabled me to also find a number of wartime members who had served in RSS and SCU3.

However, in the course of that research for 'The Secret Wireless War' I came in touch with others who had been at Bletchley Park from their early days like Norman Walton and Edgar Harrison. Both of them had worked at Bletchley before Whaddon Hall came fully into use. I knew Norman Walton as we were both later in SCU11/12 in Calcutta under Bill Sharpe. Bill was the wireless operator in the first Mobile SLU with the BEF in France in 1940.

I should add that the late Tessa Holden – daughter of Jack Saunders – was a great source of information helping to fill in the gaps in my own knowledge. Jack Saunders lived in Bletchley in 1939 and he assisted in building the wireless station in the Tower of the Mansion as well as that in Hut 1, well before the outbreak of war. In recent years, I have been fortunate to make friends with a number of others who worked at Bletchley Park but the most famous of these is Mavis Batey who has a great depth of knowledge of BP.

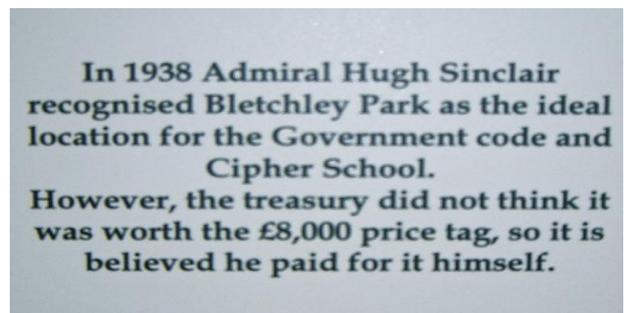
3. Recognition for Admiral Sir Hugh Sinclair.

In SCU-Newsletter 1-12, I said that Admiral Sir Hugh Sinclair did not appear to be given the recognition due to him for his foresight in purchasing Bletchley Park. Many may have known he was – 'C' – the Chief of Secret Intelligence Services (SIS or MI6 if you prefer) but clearly many do not know that he was also The Director of the Government Code and Cypher School (GC&CS) – later more widely known as the 'Code Breakers.'

In Bletchley Park Mansion you will find there are plenty of pictures and details of the leading lights of GC&CS on display. Some years ago I managed to have a portrait of Richard Gambier-Parry put in its hallway. However, incredibly there is no picture on view of Hugh Sinclair at Bletchley Park.

The only mention of Admiral Sir Hugh Sinclair visible is this sign – about 10" x 6" – at the end of the line of pictures depicting the sale prospectus of Bletchley Park.

This is hardly a fitting tribute to this great man who created the fabric of the operation we all so rightly acclaim.



I trust that when the new Museum is fitted out – a picture of Hugh Sinclair will be in a dominant position in its entrance hall. The Museum should then give a balanced view of the operation leading to the great success of Bletchley Park. That must include full recognition of the 'Y' Service – without which there would be no Enigma messages for 'Code breakers' to work on. Also, to give full credit to those involved in the dissemination of the ULTRA intelligence to where the intelligence arising could be put to use. No part of the organisation could have existed on its own.

Without the 'Y' Service input and the dissemination of intelligence arising (much of it by Section VIII), Bletchley Park need not have existed. Indeed – *it would not have existed* – but for Admiral Sir Hugh Sinclair. Incidentally, he finally did have to spend £6,000 of his own money to purchase the property – but not the £8,000 asking price. On the following page is the first part of the Land Registry Transfer dated 9th June 1938.

The Transfer is signed by **Hubert Faulkner** of 112 Simpson Road Bletchley Bucks and **Admiral Sir Hugh Sinclair** of 21 Queen Anne's Gate, Westminster, London, SW1.

This Westminster address was the Passport Control Office and Hugh Sinclair had a flat within the premises. That backed onto 54 Broadway the HQ of both his SIS & GC&CS. Sinclair had a connecting passage built between the two buildings leading to his offices on its 4th floor.

21 Queen Anne's Gate is illustrated here on the right.



Above is Admiral Sir Hugh Sinclair Chief of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) and Director of the Government Code and Cypher School (GC&CS) from 1922 until November 1939 when he died after a long illness.

On the right is the proof that this great man – frustrated by a number of Government departments – finally purchased Bletchley Park with £6000 his own money. That was a large sum at the time but his foresight provided a 'War Station' for his SIS and GC&CS organisations that proved to be such major contributors to the successful outcome to the war.

Form 20 of 32 B
Rule 98 of 115

H.M. LAND REGISTRY **BM 677**
LAND REGISTRATION ACTS, 1925 and 1936

Inland Revenue duty stamps to be impressed herein before registration of Transfer. Date of Receipt of Application will be inserted herein by Land Registry Officials.

P 7624

TRANSFER OF PART
(Freehold or Leasehold)

H.M. LAND REGISTRY
13 JUN 1938
RECEIVED.

County or County Borough BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
Title number H.M. 52B
Property BLETCHLEY PARK
Date 9th June 1938. In consideration of
Six thousand pounds (£ 6,000. 0. 0.)

(1) The Title number of the land transferred will on registration be officially entered opposite:—

(2) The receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged

I, (1) HUBERT FAULKNER LIMITED of 112 Simpson Road Bletchley Bucks (hereinafter called "the Vendors")

as beneficial owner (1) hereby transfer to:—

(2) **ADMIRAL SIR HUGH SINCLAIR**
of 21, Queen Anne's Gate Westminster London S.W.1.
(hereinafter called "the Purchaser")

(3) The land shown and edged with red on the (A) plan on the back hereof and known as coloured red and brown on the Plan attached hereto and known as Bletchley Park

being part of the land comprised in the Title above mentioned (1) together with the rights set out in the First Schedule and except and reserved the rights set out in the Second Schedule hereto and subject to the exceptions and reservations covenants stipulations and provisions contained in the Transfer dated the Twenty fifth day of February One thousand nine hundred and thirty eight made between Pedigree Stock Farm Developments Limited of the one part and the Vendors of the other part.

I do apologise for the long delay in sending SCU-Newsletter 2-12 and I hope you have enjoyed reading this material. Last Saturday, I gave a talk to the SCU/TA Association at Bletchley Park and I will report on their history in a later Newsletter.

Jane joins me in sending you our best wishes.

Geoffrey Pidgeon