

SCU-NEWSLETTER No. 3-12 Wednesday, July 11, 2012

1. Sad news.

I joined MI6 (Section VIII) at Whaddon in late 1942 the youngest in the unit. I long thought I was only one there as the son of an established member of the organisation. However, much later I found that three sons of the ex-Royal Navy Chief Petty Officers were 'taken on' after me. By that time their fathers had become important members of Section VIII. They were Dennis and Maurice Herbert, sons of Claude Herbert and Dudley Bradford son of Charlie Bradford. These three were trained as wireless operators elsewhere so I had no knowledge of them. Sadly, I have to report the death of Dudley Bradford meaning there are now very few of us left from the MI6 (Section VIII).

2. Bletchley Park myths !

As some of you may know, I was at Bletchley Park at the end of 1996, trying to find its sick-bay when David White – on learning of my connection with Whaddon Hall – persuaded me to write what became 'The Secret Wireless War'. I was actually looking for the clinic where my mother worked during World War II, as part of my research for my long-overdue book 'Thomas Crapper and my family'. Mother's maiden name was Humpherson and her uncle Frederick Humpherson was apprenticed to Thomas Crapper in 1871. Incidentally, our three sons are still in the bathroom industry – the fifth generation.

There are a host of myths about Thomas Crapper to the point that the Gladstone Pottery Museum at Stoke-on-Trent has a section marked 'The Thomas Crapper Myths' !

However, there are also some myths about Bletchley Park and I have tried to correct some of these over time. The most persistent one is '**Captain Ridley's Shooting Party**' and during my last visit to the Mansion I think I found the root cause. In the Music Room of the Mansion is a picture showing a gathering in front of the building whose legend reads: "*The code breakers outside the Mansion (Codenamed Station X) when they arrived in August 1938 masquerading as 'Captain Ridley's shooting party.'*" **Wrong !**

They were not just code breakers. Instead, they were a party representing all the various sections of SIS & GC&CS based in 54 Broadway. Admiral Sir Hugh Sinclair wanted them all 'out of harms way' in his War Station at Bletchley in the event of bombing raids on London. Captain Ridley RN was not a code breaker but an SIS officer from Broadway's administrative office.



'**Station X**' By now, I hope we all know that this did not arise from Bletchley Park being the 'Tenth' (or Xth) property purchased by a department of the government. As I pointed out in SCU-Newsletter 2-12 – Hugh Sinclair purchased it with his own money.

Hanslope had no such number, nor indeed did Whaddon Hall. The 'X' was the call sign of the SIS wireless station at Barnes. It was transferred to Bletchley Park with the closure of Barnes soon after the outbreak of war. Later, the call sign for all traffic into Main Line Station at Whaddon Hall (carrying on the work of Hut 1 at BP) was 'XW.' The 'W' being for Whaddon. Traffic in and out for London came in on XW. That included the traffic sent back by Edgar Harrison when he was handling Winston Churchill's traffic when the great man was abroad. However, the name 'Station X' persisted in some areas and the Americans loved it.

The wireless station in the Tower at Bletchley Park had nothing to do with the code breakers. On the outbreak of war, SIS occupied the top floor(s) and code breakers were banned from entry. The SIS wireless station was purely to handle Agent traffic – as opposed to Embassy and coded intelligence from abroad – then being handled in Hut 1. All this was part of Hugh Sinclair's 'War Station' plan to replicate the existing facilities at Barnes, in the case of war. Richard Gambier-Parry's team, including the ex-Royal Navy and ex-Philco personnel, had built the Wireless stations in the Tower and in Hut 1 at the end of 1938 and during 1939.

3. We read a good deal about the billeting of BP staff in homes across villages and towns around Bletchley. But do you know about the extraordinary weekly mileage of BP's passenger coaches, just running to and from the Park? By April 1944, the mileage of the coaches on passenger journeys over the small dormitory area of towns and villages surrounding Bletchley Park, amounted to the extraordinary figure of **28,269 miles per week !** This astonishing figure is from Cdr. Edward Travis own GC&CS records held at the National Archives in Kew.

4. The early dominant role of the Royal Navy (RN) in intelligence appointments.

I have recently been writing about Admiral Sir Hugh Sinclair who died in 1939 after 16 years as 'C' the Chief of SIS (MI6). He had followed Captain George Mansfield Cumming in 1923 who ran the Secret Service Bureau from its formation in 1909. In Hugh Sinclair's time, there was extensive use of retired Naval officers as Head of Station (running SIS in a country) such as Capt. Sir James Paget RN as Head of Station in New York. He was followed by Capt. George Taylor RN.

Many of the pre-war Head's of Station – masquerading as CPOs (Chief Passport Officers) – were retired Captains or Commanders from the Royal Navy. An example is Lt Cdr. John Martin RN Head of the Stockholm Station reinforced by Capt. Henry Denham RN. To cap it all - Sinclair's Chief of Staff was a Capt. Rex Howard RN !

The first Head of the Government Code and Cypher School (GC&CS) at Bletchley Park was Cdr. Alistair Denniston RNVR shown on the right and his deputy was was Cdr. Edward Travis RN.



Admiral Sir Hugh Sinclair died on November 4th 1939. There followed great lobbying by and its protagonists, for his replacement as 'C' to again come from the Royal Navy. Winston Churchill (1st Lord of the Admiralty) supported that narrow view and one can find many reports of the high-level issues that ensued. I quote just one and this by Anthony Cave Brown from his massive book "The Secret Service: The Making of Stuart Menzies, Churchill's Spymaster". "Churchill tried to prevent Menzies's appointment on a number of grounds including Menzies was a soldier, whereas until now the post had been held by sailors."

There are many more similar reports. However, Colonel Menzies many attributes were recognised. He had been a distinguished Army officer in World War I – receiving the DSO and the MC for his bravery. He was educated at Eton and on to Sandhurst. He joined the Grenadier Guards later transferring into the Life Guards; he came from a wealthy family, was well connected socially and turned out to be an outstanding Chief of SIS.

Menzies on becoming 'C' inherited many of the Naval officers mentioned above, plus as Head of Sections of SIS he had: Section III (Naval) Capt. Russell RN; IV (Industrial) RAdm. Charles Limpenny RN; VIII (Finance) Capt. Percy Sykes RNR. [Note: at least our old friend Fred Winterbotham in the RAF – headed the Air Section !].

However, Menzies appointment was the break from the dominance of the Royal Navy over SIS. But, there was another important intelligence organisation running alongside it – the Naval Intelligence Division. It had a long history going back many years.

At the outbreak of war the Naval Intelligence Division (NID), came under the Control of Vice Admiral John Godfrey RN until 1942 when he left to command the Royal Indian Navy.



Ian Fleming, who served under Godfrey until his departure, based 'M' the fictional Head of MI6 and James Bond's superior on him. Godfrey later complained that it had made him out to be a rather unsavoury character !

The Royal Navy's Operational Intelligence Centre (OIC) was at the heart of NID and Joyce Lilburn (the wife of Wilf Lilburn who had lived with my family in 1939) was a Secretary in its office. All this was underground in the Whitehall underground 'Citadel' bunker complex. I shall be writing about its work and famous Commanding officer – Admiral Sir William James in the next Newsletter.

Best wishes from Jane and from me

Geoffrey

P. S. Sadly, I have never had access to SIS records but pre-war there was a Captain William Henry Wake RIDLEY RN (Retired), '*employed in a Department of the Foreign Office.*' When Richard Gambier-Parry left Philco to join '*The War Department*' so was '*our*' Captain Ridley's secret role disguised in the same way ?

As you will gather I have no wish to start another 'Myth' but I will see what we can trace on the subject, in due course.