

**SCU-NEWSLETTER No. 1-14 – Tuesday, May 27<sup>th</sup> 2014**

**Sad News.**

Since the earliest SCU-Newsletters in 1997 I have always started with news of the passing of wartime colleagues. Quite naturally, these have usually been from one of the many MI6 (Section VIII) units from either the 'Y' service (incoming traffic) or on the dissemination of ULTRA. However, this time I sadly have to record the death of **Mavis Batey** a cryptographer at Bletchley Park whom I am proud to have known and called a friend - over recent years. Mavis and I were the two 'Veterans' on the Historic Advisory Committee at Bletchley Park.

*After the war Mavis Batey's husband Keith, who had also been at Bletchley Park was appointed the chief financial officer of Oxford University. They lived in a university-owned house on the park at Nuneham Courtenay and Mavis set about restoring the overgrown gardens to their original landscaped state. This started her on her passion for protecting gardens of special historical interest leading to her receiving the MBE for 'services to the preservation and conservation of historic gardens. However, I suspect history will remember Mavis Batey most for her brilliant work as a cryptographer in wartime Bletchley Park !*



Her family and her many friends attended the Cremation Service at Chichester on Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2013. Jane and I were there but I was the only wartime veteran present; along with Kelsey Griffin of the Bletchley Park Executive and by Mick Smith of its Trust. John Gallehawk, a mutual friend of Mavis and myself, was also present. John was previously involved with research and archives at Bletchley Park and is now a Guide at the National Museum of Computers (TNMOC) at Bletchley Park. There were obituaries in all the major British newspapers as well as across the USA - from Los Angeles to New York. I quote from them in italics.

*'Mavis was a senior member of the Bletchley Park 'elite' being a cryptographer working directly for Dilly Knox. Arguably her most important role, however, was in the collaboration with Knox and Margaret Rock on the breaking of the Enigma cipher used by the German secret service, the Abwehr.'*

**One should note:** Most of the Abwehr cipher traffic handled by Bletchley Park, was collected via the specialist wireless operators of RSS (The Radio Security Service). From 1941 it became a division of rapidly expanded SCU3 under Richard Gambier-Parry (SIS Controller of Communications) as part of his MI6 (Section VIII).

*'The intelligence was phoned through to the Admiralty and rushed out to Admiral Andrew Cunningham, commander of the Royal Navy's Mediterranean Fleet. "The marvellous thing about him was that he played it extremely cool," Mavis said. "He knew that they were going to go out and confront the Italian fleet at Matapan but he did a real Drake on them.'*

Unfortunately, this passage is not entirely accurate. Dilly Knox did not trust the Admiralty to handle such time-sensitive intelligence urgently. The Admiralty had always insisted that ULTRA naval intelligence for its bases abroad, be sent only through them. However, at Dilly Knox's request, this particular intelligence was '**rushed out**' to Admiral Cunningham – but via Richard Gambier-Parry's wireless station at Windy Ridge in nearby Whaddon Village. From there to his wireless station in Egypt, thence on to the Mediterranean Fleet based at Alexandria. According to Mavis, there was a storm of protest from the Admiralty with much of it directed at Dilly Knox, who had made the decision to use Richard Gambier-Parry's MI6 (Section VIII) wireless facilities on this occasion.

One should remember that the Admiralty did not have a particularly good record in the use of ULTRA **SIGINT** arising from Bletchley Park's brilliant work – whilst under Admiral Sir Dudley Pound (First Sea Lord). He was a listed recipient of all ULTRA messages.

The following is an example of Dudley Pound's failings in this direction. On learning - via ULTRA - of the impending German assault on Crete he warned Admiral Andrew Cunningham at his base at Alexandria, *'of the likelihood of a German invasion of a Mediterranean island.'* Leaving Admiral Cunningham to ponder whether it might be either *Malta, Cyprus* or *Crete* – hundreds of miles apart !

*One might also mention his disastrous decision to personally order convoy PQ17 on its way to Russia with much needed supplies, to scatter in spite of ULTRA messages from Bletchley Park suggesting it was not necessary. Admiral Sir Dudley Pound resigned shortly afterwards.*



Mavis kept in touch with me to the very end, with discussions on events and comments on my work. She was especially supportive in my attempts bring out the truth about the interdependence of the three components of Bletchley Park. I kept a thick file of e-mail correspondence but mostly we used the telephone – sometimes having *very* long conversations !

She was positive, knowledgeable and a delight to work with. I shall miss her and Bletchley Park have lost her knowledgeable input. At some stage I will try to collate our correspondence and put it on line.

## 2. 'The Monument Men' – with George Clooney.

One chapter in 'The Secret Wireless War' deals with the extraordinary Hill family. Mother and father Charles Hill were both in MI5, whilst their daughter Anne was in MI6 (Section VIII) at Whaddon Hall. Our friend Joyce Lilburn (née Hill) was first of all in Naval Intelligence in OIC (Operational Intelligence Centre) in the Citadel. She suffered being underground and Commander Clive (Joe) Loehnis was the OIC liaison officer with Bletchley Park and MI6 (Section VIII) at Whaddon Hall. He found her a position at Whaddon Hall and she was shown her new desk in 'Planning' – imagine her surprise when she found that sitting at the next desk was her sister Anne ! All Joyce knew was that her sister 'had a job in the country' !

Their father was a linguist and specialised in Russian and Slav dialects. After 'D-Day' he was sought out and attached to the American unit ensuring that German intelligence documents were not destroyed. His further task was to aid those seeking to recover stolen works of art **'The Monument Men.'**

However, his knowledge of German, French and Russian meant he was quickly moved to the War Crimes Tribunal at Nuremburg. Afterwards, he went with GCHQ at Eastcote and then to Cheltenham. Charles Hill is here shown as an officer in the Royal Engineers (Signals Section) in World War I. The section later became the Royal Corps of Signals.



Joyce Hill meantime had joined SIS in London and married Wilf Lilburn of MI6 (Section VIII). Wilf as you may recall was in MI6 before the war and, lived with us at Caterham in 1939, whilst working on the new SIS wireless transmitter at nearby Woldingham.



The picture shows him central alongside one of our Packard SLUs and beneath the nose of a Lockheed Ventura. These we fitted out at Tempsford RAF Aerodrome with our 'Ascension' air to ground wireless to connect to agents. If agents were not competent at Morse, this enabled them to pass messages in seconds, instead of laying themselves open to being found by German DF. It was a great success and developed by Wilf Lilburn and my immediate boss Dennis Smith who was in charge of our small team at Whaddon Hall – known as Mobile Construction. You can just see the Ascension aerial sticking out from the nose of the plane. I flew on tests in Venturas, and Hudsons from Tempsford as well as the North American Mitchells – based at Hartford Bridge near Camberley in Surrey.

### 3. May 9<sup>th</sup> 2014 – A weekend as a Veteran at Bletchley Park.

I am a veteran of an organisation now labelled 'The Codebreakers' by the Bletchley Park Trust wilfully ignoring that it was actually a triumvirate. It consisted of (1) the 'Y' Service that sought out the Enigma messages and passed them on to (2) the codebreakers at Bletchley Park and (3) MI6 (Section VIII) largely responsible for the dissemination of the ULTRA – putting it into the hands of our Military Commanders where it could be utilised – surely the whole point of the exercise ! I will report in the next SCU-Newsletter on my recent weekend at Bletchley Park where we veterans were allowed to see a pre-view of the refurbishment.

### 4. My dear wife Jane.

For years, I have signed off these SCU-Newsletters with '*Best wishes from Jane and from me.*' She always read them, commented and edited, where necessary. Part of the team ! I am very sorry to tell you that Jane had a stroke in January, just ten days after our return from holiday in Puerto de la Cruz in Tenerife. The first paramedic was here in less than ten minutes and the full ambulance crew in another five. She was rushed to St. George's Hospital in Tooting and thus was in the acute stroke reception unit within the hour. Jane died peacefully some 48 hours later – with all her family around the bedside.

We met when we were sixteen and that is 72 years ago and our 66<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary would have been in March. That lovely lady would have been eighty-eight in April. That she was very beautiful shows in the pictures. The one with her eyeing my beer was taken this January in Puerto de la Cruz some ten days before her stroke. Another shows her wonderful smile and holding ice cream for two of our grandchildren who spent part of their school Christmas holiday with us.



She had a smile that lit up the room. One other – and my favourite – was taken in 1965 alongside the Seine in Paris. And the final picture is the one I chose for the cover of the Order of Service.



Writing my **Bathroom Book** has been a Godsend giving me a major interest at this time. It is about our five-generation connection with the bathroom industry, starting with great-uncle Frederick Humpherson being apprenticed to Thomas Crapper in 1871.

In 1996 Jane and I went to BP to find the Clinic where my mother (née Humpherson) had worked but it had been pulled down years before. However, I found great interest in the Wireless Museum (*very sadly, it's no longer there !*). David White the Curator discovered that I had been in MI6 (Section VIII) and worked on (amongst other things) the dissemination of ULTRA to Military Commanders in the Field. He persuaded me to write about it and 'The Secret Wireless War' was the result.

The Bathroom Book is not its official title – that remains an 'ULTRA Secret' for now. Although its launch at the Science Museum was intended to be June it is now unlikely to happen before September.

##### **5. Subjects for the next SCU-Newsletter may include:**

**5.1 *The French at Bletchley Park:*** During my research for the 'The Secret Wireless War' I received photographs of some French officers working at Bletchley Park. With them was the story behind their work by one of their daughters. I had personally not read about the French presence at BP and so I have dug a little deeper. I hope to include a section complete with the photographs.

**5.2 *A curious situation at Bletchley Park:*** The Colossus is now in a separate museum ! The National Museum of Computing has now been separated from its home in Bletchley Park by the Bletchley Park Trust who has erected a 6ft steel fence dividing it off from the Bletchley Park Museum. I shall try to find out why such bizarre situation has been allowed to develop ?

**5.3 *Why has the important Wireless Museum at Bletchley Park closed down ?*** David White, its Curator, is now a guide in the National Museum of Computing. Wireless was at the very heart of the Enigma story that Bletchley Park should be telling. Something is very wrong for that to happen !

**5.4 *Mavis and the American connection with ULTRA:*** Mavis had strong views about the link with the US Army (*as with many things !*) – and I hope to include some of her comments and a 5Z ULTRA message sent in Morse as ZZZZZ i.e. of the – **drop everything else** – kind of message !

Finally, I sign off without Jane's name for the first time  
but the good wishes are just as sincere – as always.

*Geoffrey*