

SCU-NEWSLETTER No. 2-15 Monday, February 16, 2015

1. Colossus and its importance.

Like many of you, I have known of Colossus for a number of years but its vital role in our winning World War II has not always been made sufficiently clear. However, I recently re-read Christine Large's book 'Hacking Enigma' published in 2004. Christine was the CEO of Bletchley Park prior to Simon Greenish. In her excellent book she says: *'an echelon higher than even the Enigma traffic was the communications from Berlin to the supreme commanders, including Von Runstedt. These messages were long and strategic whereas Enigma was more tactical.'* This 'echelon higher' traffic was being sent via the Lorenz machine and the German High Command thought it impenetrable.

Thus, we had Enigma and the Bombe, now handling tactical traffic, whereas the Lorenz and Colossus were handling the more important strategic traffic. This was between the German High Command (OKW), its leading army commanders and Hitler himself. It is probable it was the construction of Colossus that finally helped turn the tide of war in our favour.

Colossus was primarily the brainchild of Max Newman with help from Bill Tutte and John Tiltman. However, its construction was only made possible due to the brilliance of 'Tommy' Flowers and most credit must go to him. (Pictured right). For readers wanting confirmation of their achievement, you only have to read the book 'Colossus' by B. Jack Copeland and others.



This mighty tome contains a great deal of technical information about Colossus but its importance shows up in several sections. For example, on page 55, one reads:

'The historian of cryptography Ralph Erskine has called the breaking of Tunny [Bletchley's name for Lorenz machine traffic], which revealed German intentions and strategy at the highest levels. In the weeks leading up to D-Day, decoded Tunny traffic provided a series of strategic appreciations by the Commander-in-Chief West, Field Marshal Gerd von Runstedt, of the Allied invasion threat. These provided important reassurance to Allied commanders that their audacious deception plan was succeeding.'

With the growing appreciation of the importance of Colossus vis-à-vis Enigma, one finds it hard to understand why a steel fence inhibits visitors to Bletchley Park wanting to see Colossus. Whatever the cause for its erection one hopes that easy movement will soon be restored.

2. 'Code breaking alone could not win the war!'

Most agree that the code breakers at Bletchley Park played a large part in winning World War II. Well, that is not entirely fair, since their brilliant work needed support. When I started to write 'The Secret Wireless War' – I found no clear idea amongst BP staff and volunteers, what was then done with the ULTRA intelligence thus gathered? How did it go to our Military Commanders in the Field? No one seemed to know – one said by teleprinter! However, that was hardly suitable for the fast moving 8th Army HQ in the desert or indeed, any army in the Field – hence the SLUs. Sounds almost impossible to believe now – but that was the situation I found at Bletchley Park when I started my research in 1996!

I have long argued that the 'Bletchley Park Story' is a Triumvirate consisting of (a) the 'Y' Service (b) the codebreakers and (c) those that disseminated the ULTRA arising.

Perhaps more persuasive is this extract from 'The Hut Six Story – Breaking the Enigma Codes' by Gordon Welchman – Head of Hut Six at Bletchley Park during the war.

'At any time of the day or night two army and RAF "Advisors" were working in the corner of the watch room. Their job was to take the translated decodes, annotate them send messages to commanders in the field who could use them. The secure communications system for this purpose had been originated and continually expanded by Winterbotham, who discusses it in the 'Ultra Secret'.

He organised Special Liaison Units (SLUs), which were responsible for operating the rigorous secure procedures that were followed to protect the source of the intelligence. If the expansion of the SLU organisation had not been able to keep pace with the increasingly complexity of the war, Hut Six ULTRA could never have been used effectively on many fronts.'

That is surely plain enough?

The sending of ULTRA out to Welchman's '**commanders in the field**' – was carried out by mobile SLUs of MI6 (Section VIII) under its Head - the brilliant Richard Gambier-Parry. His HQ was at Whaddon Hall – five miles west of Bletchley Park. The epithet 'Brilliant' is the description given to Richard Gambier-Parry in "MI6 – The Official History of SIS."

The first mobile SLUs were constructed by MI6 (Section VIII) at Whaddon Hall in two cars and sent to France with the BEF in early 1940. Two of the wireless operators were Bill Sharpe and Arthur 'Spuggy' Newton both of whom I knew. They received some early ULTRA via our wireless station at Whaddon but they had to be evacuated as the Blitzkrieg erupted in May. Later, just after Dunkirk, SLUs were built into Packard saloons and one of these is on display in a garage at Bletchley Park. I regret to say that now I have reminded Bletchley Park Trust of its existence – it might be removed as not being '**The Core Story**' – its current mantra.

I was in Mobile Construction, a small team of engineers who built the SLUs for 'D-Day' at Whaddon. This most important work commenced in the early months of 1944. The wireless for mobile SLUs for the US Army commanders like Patton, Bradley and Simpson, was fitted into converted Dodge Ambulances. For the British and Canadian sector Generals, such as Dempsey, Montgomery and Crerar, we used standard British Army Guy wireless trucks but fitted with our own gear instead. In all cases, the wireless operators in these SLUs belonged to our unit and were part of 'Special Communications Units' (SCUs) – the militarised name for MI6 (Section VIII).

These SLUs were placed in the very centre of the Army commanders HQ to receive ULTRA from Hut 6 sent out via our wireless station on Windy Ridge in Whaddon. Thus, for example, General George Patton commanding the US 3rd Army – knew Hitler's orders to his commanders almost soon as them – thanks to Colossus.

All this is described in detail in 'The Secret Wireless War' but these were 'SLUs' – exactly the wireless vehicles described as being so vital by Gordon Welchman – Head of Hut 6 at Bletchley Park.

Are they part of the 'Core Story' or not? The present Bletchley Park Trust appears to think not! Someone recently put it very succinctly **"I emphasise without the Y service there is no Bletchley and without the SCU/SLU there is no point in doing it."**

So far as I know, most of the static SLUs built in places like Gibraltar, Algiers and other places – were supplied by wireless equipment from Richard Gambier-Parry's MI6 (Section VIII) wireless stores. *[My father ran these from 1940 to 1945]*

Add to that, one should remember that the very important Abwehr traffic being delivered to Bletchley Park was received by SCU3/RSS as part of the incoming 'Y' Service traffic for the Bletchley Park codebreakers. Its HQ was at Hanslope Park, some ten miles north of Bletchley Park, **and yes** – its Head was Richard Gambier-Parry!

He was a Lieutenant in the Royal Welch Fusiliers in World War I, was twice wounded and several times mentioned in despatches. He later became a fighter pilot in the infant Royal Flying Corps – then in the Royal Air Force.



Richard Gambier-Parry

After a spell in the BBC, he joined Philco – the giant US radio manufacturer as its General Sales Manager. He was 'head-hunted' by Admiral Sir Hugh Sinclair in 1938 to be the Head of SIS Communications.

How can one still say that dissemination was not part of the core-story? I might add, that the SIS traffic from its agents was received by MI6 (Section VIII) at nearby Nash and Weald. ‘Main Line’ (top level traffic) was received at the station at Whaddon Hall and for example, would include messages from Winston Churchill when he was abroad. It was all taken to Hut 10 at Bletchley Park where our own team under Miss ‘Monty’ Montgomery was in total charge of her code/cypher section. She had nothing to do with Denniston or Travis – or they with her!

Oh, and by the way, the wireless stations at Nash and Weald were run by MI6 (Section VIII) and Miss Montgomery reported to Richard Gambier-Parry and to Broadway. She was billeted in ‘The Chase’ in the security zone of Whaddon Hall. She was picked up each morning by one of our Packards to go Bletchley Park and returned by Packard at the end of her day. I remember often seeing her leave the Chase – as we arrived for work in our Hut – directly behind the exit gate.

3. My ‘connections’ with Bletchley Park?

I have recently been asked what my personal connections are with Bletchley Park, why my great interest in its work and the correct recording of its story? So here is a short (ish) answer. It dates back to early 1939 when two members of MI6 lived with my family in Caterham in Surrey. They were Bob Chennells and Wilf Lilburn and both had also been with Philco, before being persuaded to join Richard Gambier-Parry in late 1938.

Admiral Sir Hugh Sinclair had recruited Richard Gambier-Parry from Philco in early 1938. Later that year he purchased Bletchley Park as a ‘War Station’ for all of his staff in the SIS HQ at 54 Broadway in Westminster. When I say ‘**all his staff**’ – Sinclair was Chief of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) now usually called MI6. He was also Director of the Government Code and Cypher School (GC&CS) so his ‘War Station’ was intended as a safe house (bolt-hole?) for all his staff. The ‘Captain Ridley’s Shooting Party’ has finally been acknowledged to be all his HQ staff at Broadway – not just GC&CS – as so often claimed earlier.

One of Gambier-Parry’s earliest tasks as Head of MI6 Communications was to install wireless facilities at Bletchley Park. This was to provide a ‘War Station’ in the event of war – to cover his existing SIS station down alongside the Thames at Barnes. However, at the same time, he continued with his desire to have his own transmitting station and aerials for Barnes, instead of ‘contracting out’. They were using aerials at the Royal Naval wireless station at Flowerdown near Winchester or sometimes, the Post Office aerials at Daventry. He selected a high point in the North Downs at Woldingham – only a short drive from our home.

These two, Chennells and Lilburn, supervised work on the transmission station and they took me to see it one Sunday. At the same time, they were responsible with others in building the ‘War Station’ at Bletchley Park. They seemed to alternate, but they told mother if they were to be away. They had a number of newly recruited ex-Royal Navy wireless engineers/wireless operators already there. One at least of them Charlie Bradford, was living in Bletchley before the end of 1938. Another, Jack Saunders, was in a billet in the town in early 1939 and then bought a house for his family. They later had one of the Bletchley Park staff billeted on them – the late and famous cryptographer Mavis Batey.

My father was recruited into MI6 (Section VIII) at Whaddon Hall in June 1940. In late 1942, Lt. Cdr. Percy Cooper RNVR gave me a job initially in its metal workshops, helping to make agents sets. A year later, and much more exciting than making wireless sets, I became part of Dennis Smiths ‘Mobile Construction Team’ of seven at Whaddon. With mother working in the Bletchley Park Clinic and my family living in the High Street of Stony Stratford, I met people working at Bletchley Park and indeed became friends with several.

All this background has given me a desire to see the story told correctly. Also to recognise – *all those involved* – during World War II, contributed to the success of the operation, that we might then rightfully call:

‘The Bletchley Park Story’

With warm regards,

Geoffrey