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1. My last SCU-Newsletter 2-15.

I would thank the many readers who took time to reply and comment on the last SCU-Newsletter. I have decided not to refer to the metal fence this time. At the moment, it is the visitors who are suffering but I trust that it will be resolved soon, to the satisfaction of the National Museum of Computing and the Bletchley Park Trust.

2. The good, the bad and the *rather disappointing!*

Back in 2011, the late Mavis Batey (née Lever) and myself were appointed by the Bletchley Park Trust as the two Veterans to serve on the Historic Advisory Committee, in connection with the refurbishment of the Museum. Naturally, I was anxious to see the finished results. I was at the Special Open Day for Veterans on Saturday 10th May last year, then at the Annual Veteran's day on September 7th. Clearly, and understandably, work was still in progress in May but certainly finished by September. In view of my adverse comments about the proposed work at Committee meetings, I made a third visit before making any observations. That I did in early December so I am going to record them now.

Parking is super, well arranged and supervised. Starting at the top near the Mansion, one finds the repair work to the exterior of the wooden Huts is truly excellent. Inside, the furnishing of a number of offices is very good and totally in keeping with the time. We had the same kind of huts in the grounds of Whaddon Hall, and the offices look the same – even if these are a rather sparse, and short of furniture. There are a number of film projections on the walls showing ‘staff in action.’ I particularly liked the one of a girl in an office - wrapped in a blanket drinking her tea - trying to keep warm!

Hut 11 - was the location for the Bombe during the war and whilst a few of my friends do not agree, I found it one of the best of the new displays. I liked the film projection of operators and the chat they exchanged. I was never in a Bombe Hut - so can only judge its noisy atmosphere from that created by the Bombe's running in the film Enigma. Perhaps that too could have been running on a loop nearby? A great effort!

So, we have the good and the very good. The ‘disappointing’ part is the central area of the Visitor’s entrance, in the newly overhauled ‘C’ Block. This was the major item at the meetings I attended. Whilst these was supposed to be about the historical perspective – we quickly drifted into how the story would be displayed. My terse remarks about the consultant’s intentions - have sadly turned out to be correct. The response was almost *what do you know about design? We are the consultants!*

Well, apart from having spent nearly 60 years designing bathrooms and kitchens – we did have two or three of the finest showrooms of them in London and for a long time – the UK! We exhibited in London, in the NEC at Birmingham on a large scale, with stands that won applause. Showrooms – no matter what the product – are all about design and display. At least I knew about design, whereas they knew little about our story or wireless – that they insisted on calling radio! I was being ‘talked-down-to’ and it was not a comfortable session. I wrote a two-page report dated 2nd February 2012 to Bletchley Park that I am happy to share.

Frankly, I have seen better town museums.

You start with a several polished oak panels each about 5 feet square – without a lot on them.

The caption is not easy to read except close up and is in cream painted script.

Why cream on oak and why script?



Inside, some of the information is on different size panels, in different fonts, and green or black. Again, here is a picture of one of the panels. Visitors could hardly see some of the information and the story simply does not flow.

There is a film projection going on over the sidewalls, showing Churchill and submarines (when I was there) but it was overlapping a radiator that made it difficult to watch. I noticed some visitors only gave the ‘story’ offered a cursory glance and moved on. Outside, one finds more expensive oak panels with little information.

Perhaps ‘rather disappointing’ is not sufficiently descriptive of the ‘C’ Block display. It could be called ‘poor’ but in view of the importance of the place – and its likely cost – ‘pathetic’ might be closer to my view.



However, in spite of that one poor section, Bletchley Park is still a very important place to visit! There is much else to see, especially in ‘B’ Block where the displays have always been good. And you must see the refurbished Huts. Hopefully, the full ‘Bletchley Park Story’ will become clear in the next phase and with the necessary improvements needed to ‘C’ Block’s entrance area.

Sadly, the long established ‘Bletchley Park Post Office’ - a very popular attraction - has just been closed. Also the adjoining Toy Museum – beloved of the younger visitors – is being closed!

3. The US ULTRA Army officers at Bletchley Park.

This is a complex story but I have been asked to repeat the ‘Patton Story’ for those who missed it first time round.

Some twenty-five US Army officers were indoctrinated into the ULTRA secret at Bletchley Park. Many of which had been lawyers and professional men in civilian life – with only a sprinkling of regular soldiers. They were to become the ‘Signals Liaison Officers’ (SLOs), appointed to each US Army and responsible for handling the precious ULTRA material as it arrived. He would not let it pass it out of his hands. He would stay with the G2 (Senior Army intelligence officer – often a Brigadier) and remain with it during conversations with the Army Commander – for example General Bradley of the US 1st Army. He was then responsible for its safe disposal.

However, the original SCU-Newsletter and accompanying General George Patton article published in the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) – will take up rather a lot of space. So, I will send that all out later with just a covering e-mail. Here, I just want to remind you of the part played by MI6 (Section VIII) at Whaddon Hall in the dissemination of ULTRA from Bletchley Park – some five miles to the east of the village. The traffic came over by teleprinter and went out from our wireless station at Windy Ridge near the village church.

All ULTRA for our Military commanders in the Field – from the North Africa campaigns onwards to Germany – were fed from our Windy Ridge station. However, for ‘Operation Overlord’ we needed more mobile Signals Liaison Units (SLUs) and these were all built at Whaddon Hall. Dennis Smith and his Mobile Construction team of seven (*including me!*) were charged with the work. For the United States Army sectors, we utilized standard US Army Dodge Ambulances – stripped out and fitted with our wireless gear. I hasten to say the Red Crosses were painted over soon after leaving us and before going abroad.

Wilf Neal (with General Patton’s 3rd US Army) is standing beside a Dodge Ambulance exactly as used in the US sectors. I had spotted this whilst we were at a reunion in 2009 at Bletchley Park (seen in the background). It was part of a display by a team reenacting a US field hospital in a combat zone.



This photograph was taken at an excellent meeting organised by Kelsey Griffin of Bletchley Park and Mavis Batey. Its aim was to bring into focus the strong link between the United States intelligence service and Bletchley Park.

During the war, the representative for the United States at Bletchley Park was Col. Telford Taylor and he gradually built up several dozen US officers posted there. Some were from Harvard and at least nine from Princeton. It was from this number that about twenty-five were chosen to be the Signals Liaison Officers (SLOs) for 'Overlord.'

One part of the agreement to allow the US to share the Bletchley Park ULTRA material amuses me: '***That information out to US Army Commanders should use the British Special Liaison Units***' but added this caveat:



'Where an American officer is the Commander-in-chief, an American officer, properly trained and indoctrinated at Bletchley Park, will be attached to the Unit as liaison officer to overcome difficulties that may arise with regard to differences in language'!

Standing left to right behind Mavis are: Len Digby, a Wireless operator in our Dodge wireless van at the HQ of General William Simpson's 9th US Army – myself who helped build the Mobile SLUs in which they operated – and Wilf Neal who was with General George Patton's 3rd US Army.

I believe these two wireless operators, along with Bernard Gildersleve, are the only three of our unit's 'Overlord' SCU8 wireless operators still with us. Bernard was with General 'Pete' Quesda's 9th US Tactical Air Command – who played such an important role. I am the youngest of the above three and I shall be 89 in May!

Perhaps, as Mavis Batey frequently suggested, Bletchley Park needs to do more to acknowledge the vital importance of the US intelligence connection with Bletchley Park and also on our wide use of US material. For example, and from a personal perspective, there were hundreds of wireless sets and thousands of wireless valves – manufactured in the US – supplied out to various parts of the organisation from my father's MI6 wireless stores at Whaddon Hall. And, in my early days there, I helped make wireless components on 'South Bend' and 'Atlas' lathes from the US – just small examples of our dependence upon them.

4. Knockholt station in Kent.

This wireless station – properly known as 'Ivy Farm' – is frequently mentioned in connection with Colossus. My only wartime knowledge of the place comes from the fact that it was a very frequent run for MI6 (Section VIII) dispatch riders from Whaddon Hall. In Chapter 27 in 'The Secret Wireless War' – I interviewed Lawson Mann one of our dispatch riders who mentioned it – as being difficult in the blackout with no streetlights, hooded lighting on the motorbike and without maps or road signs.

Just imagine what that was like. A journey of 95 miles, in the dark, with rain making things worse, no protective screen – just goggles – and a leather coat to fend off the rain!

In his book - 'The Secrets of Station X' - Mick Smith refers to Knockholt as being run by MI6 (Section VIII) and given that we made regular journeys there I – suspect he is right. That might be underlined by a plan I have of the whole system showing the various stations linked into Bletchley Park. Knockholt is shown in yellow the same as the SCU3/RSS stations – all part of Richard Gambier-Parry MI6 (Section VIII)!

I enjoy hearing from you.

With warm regards and best wishes,

Geoffrey