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**SCU-NEWSLETTER No. 3-16**  
**Sunday, April 17, 2016**

**1. Recognition from the President of France for men from MI6 (Section VIII) handling ULTRA to the Allied Commanders in France on and after 'D-Day' - working Morse traffic in their Dodge Wireless vans, built at Whaddon Hall by Dennis Smith and his team.**

Two of my colleagues have been awarded this great honour -  
**Chevalier in the Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur.**

Firstly, the late **Len Digby** who was our wireless operator based at the HQ of General William H. Simpson's 9<sup>th</sup> US Army in France.

Secondly, **Wilf Neal** - working ULTRA traffic based in the HQ of General George S. Patton's rapidly moving - 3<sup>rd</sup> US Army.

The ULTRA messages - originating at Bletchley Park were sent by teleprinter from Bletchley Park to the MI6 (Section VIII) wireless station on Windy Ridge alongside St. Mary's Church in Whaddon Village - some five miles west of Bletchley Park.

Needless to say - I am very proud of my friends. It is a great pity Len died before it was awarded - though he did know he had been nominated. By the way, the picture is of Len's actual Medal



**2. A 'Wow' moment for me!**

As some readers might have noticed, last year I was made a Veteran of the Tempsford Veterans and Relatives Association - the TVRA. It was because I had flown from there with my boss Dennis Smith, after installing 'Ascension' in Lockheed Hudsons and Venturas of the RAF based at that most secret of wartime airfields - Tempsford. In my SCU-Newsletter 4-15 report on 'Ascension' - I referred to Maurice Whinney who was a pilot seemingly in the RAF - but later a member of MI6 (Section VIII). He is also mentioned in my book 'The Secret Wireless War'.

Bob Body - the lead member of the TVRA and based in Crete, is writing a book about Tempsford and this week came across this extraordinary and valued document. It shows Richard Gambier-Parry - the Controller of SIS Communications and based at Whaddon Hall - applying to the Air Ministry for the release of Maurice Whinney from the RAF to become a full member of MI6!

Maurice Whinney later flew Dennis Smith and myself in our Avro Anson 'test bed' aircraft based at nearby Little Horwood airfield. I remember him well and he was very interested in the work Dennis was testing at the time. He had earlier flown on 'Ascension' operations at Tempsford in A20 Douglas Havoc bombers - known in the RAF as 'Bostons.' A little of his work is recorded in 'The Secret Wireless War' but I shall write more about him later.

By the way, keen readers will know from my earlier article about Ascension - that Vickers Wellington bombers mentioned in the Richard Gambier-Parry's letter - were not used on operations. My boss Dennis Smith, later wrote that the airframe was constructed to the famous 'Geodetic' design by Barnes Wallis. That made using the skin as a reflector for a fixed dipole - more difficult than in other aircraft.

The Wellington provided for our 'Ascension' tests was painted white on arrival and not returned to active duty. It remained parked on Little Horwood airfield for the duration. In any case, our many alterations to the plane were 'Top secret' and at that stage - possibly irreversible?

Although I flew a number of times from Tempsford, those were always to test the gear we had installed or corrected - I did not go on operations. However, I also flew with Dennis in North American B-25 Mitchells from Hartford Bridge now called Blackbushe. It was an important airfield being part of the RAF Second Tactical Air Force (2TAF) supporting the Army in the Field. Only later did he tell me that a long flight had been operational. Bear in mind, the whole point about 'Ascension' was that although we were possibly to be over German occupied territory - we could equally be miles off the coast but still able to contact the agent(s) concerned.

After finishing working on the gear, my job was over. All I had to do was sit at the back of the plane by the rear gun turret whilst Dennis and others worked to the agent. It was cold and also noisy when the gunner tested his guns above me but I had no other sensation of the danger of flying in German air space at the time. *What it is to be young!*



### 3. Now to this most remarkable letter!

It is dated 15<sup>th</sup> September 1941 and from our boss Brigadier Richard Gambier-Parry (Controller of SIS Communications i.e. MI6 (Section VIII)) to Air Commodore D. L. Blackwood of the Intelligence Branch of the Air Ministry in London. It is remarkable in its detail - including reference to Fred Winterbotham - who first broke the story of ULTRA in 'The Ultra Secret' to an astonished world in 1974.

In his letter, Richard Gambier-Parry asks for Whinney to be transferred from the RAF to SIS saying ***"..we are on the verge of producing a really workable air to ground espionage communication system"*** and further down ***"His pay and allowances would, of course, be borne by F.O. Funds and not the RAF"*** Note: For F.O. (Foreign Office) read SIS!

I am sure you will have noticed Richard Gambier-Parry's opening line to Air Commodore Blackwood ***"It was grand to see you at our country home"*** - that was of course, Whaddon Hall!

In SCU-Newsletter 4.15 I dealt in some detail with 'Ascension.' It might be helpful to remember that 'Ascension' was Richard Gambier-Parry's concept although created by a team in R&D at Whaddon Hall including the lead designer Wilf Lilburn. Wilf lived with us in Caterham in 1939 whilst building the new transmitter in Woldingham for the original 'Station X' - the SIS wireless station alongside the Thames at Barnes. Amongst the design team of four was my immediate boss Dennis Smith.

### 4. Overlooked historians?

When I started to research for 'The Secret Wireless War' - I looked at the books available on the subject of MI6, Bletchley Park, ULTRA and GCHQ. They were thin on the ground but many have been written since. My early reading was Harry Hinsley's book and then two books by Nigel West (Rupert Allason) - the first was 'MI6' (1983) and the second 'GCHQ' (1986).

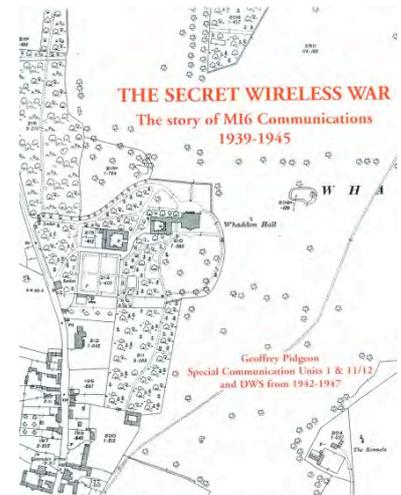
At that time, I had only my own direct knowledge of events but fortunately coupled with a first class memory. I wish it were the same now in my 90<sup>th</sup> year when short-term memory is a real burden. Forgetting the name of someone I had just been introduced to can be very embarrassing but fear not - it comes to us all!

It was suggested that I approach the Ministry of Defence (MOD) by telephone about writing my book. After a week's delay, the MOD spokesman told me the 'Services' did not want another 'Nigel West book' and I was warned off writing altogether. However, whilst Nigel clearly had a very wide source of knowledge about the whole of MI6's early history and wartime work - I originally only wanted to record the work of MI6 (Section VIII) and my own knowledge of events.

In the end, the MOD spokesman for SIS told me I could write about MI6 (Section VIII) but they would like to see my work chapter by chapter!

I refused and that caused a rift between my late younger brother and myself. Trevor was with SIS for 38 years and he really felt I should co-operate with the 'MOD.'

Trevor was a brilliant linguist, SIS's leading Sinologist and felt obliged to add his personal warning to me. In spite of his intervention I went ahead and '**The Secret Wireless War**' was the result - launched at Bletchley Park in 2003.



I would add that Nigel West's two books are an excellent starting point. His knowledge of affairs and his research in those early days was first class. They are on my bookshelves with a multitude of coloured flags - and they are a good source for anyone getting interested in the broader picture.

Whilst on the subject of books - and I have boxes of them now in the garage - another name is important. Ronald Lewin and his book 'Ultra goes to War' has as almost as many flags as pages. Just one other in my leading pack is Ralph Bennett, with his 'Ultra in the West' and 'Ultra and Mediterranean Strategy.' Incidentally, Bennett was Mavis Batey's favourite historian and that alone is a commendation.

**4. The Special Wireless Group (SWG) were the Elite wireless operators of MI6 (Section VIII).** This small unit was the key to ULTRA's - *actual use and success in the Field* - yet few of you have even heard of it. Bletchley Park Museum does not even mention MI6 (Section VIII) - let alone the vital SWG!

The 'Special Wireless Group' (SWG) - based at their wireless station beside the Whaddon Village Church - handled every single ULTRA message intended for Allied Military Commanders in the Field.

Its wireless operators were the 'elite' drawn from the Army, Navy and the RAF. MI6 (Section VIII) had a direct line to the Royal Corps of Signals wireless training school at Catterick and their 'star' students were passed over to us. The same happened in both the Navy's wireless school and that of the RAF. These outstanding operators were then given further special training in our own school called 'SCU7' - at nearby Little Horwood.

The **SWG** mess was the Whaddon Village Hall. They slept in two Nissan Huts directly behind the Hall. The concrete bases are still there today.

They were lucky in that the NAFFI Canteen (US PX) was a 100 yards away and that in turn - conveniently right behind the Lowndes Arms - the only pub in Whaddon!



### 5. Gordon Rosenberg - a Typex operator with a SCU 8 unit from MI6 (Section VIII).

The Spring 2016 edition of the Bletchley Park Magazine carries a very good article by Flight Sergeant Gordon Rosenberg of the RAF - who was in the SCU8 cypher team attached to General Montgomery's HQ for the 'D-Day' preparations and later into France following 'D-Day'.

This is the first time I have read an account by a Cypher operator in one of our Signals Liaison Units (SLUs) and it is fascinating. An SCU/SLU consisted of two mobile units - wireless and cypher. The cypher teams came from the RAF and trained I believe, near Oxford. The wireless van would be one of the Guy 15cwt army vans stripped out and fitted mostly with MI6 (Section VIII) wireless gear. Mobile Construction at Whaddon Hall fitted out about seven of such vehicles and three of these are in the picture below. Going into in the British and Canadian areas of operation they were British vehicles.

The ivy-covered wall surrounds the kitchen garden of Whaddon Hall itself and the man leaning out of the right hand Guy is me!

That would be 72 years ago and what ever else has faded - certainly my hair has!

These seven Guy vans went with Montgomery, General Crear of the Canadian forces, General Dempsey 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group, amongst others. I believe one went to France with Air Marshal Tedder - Deputy to Eisenhower.

In the case of the seven or eight SLUs we built for the US Army Generals - we used standard US Army Dodge Ambulances stripped out to form the wireless vans and the cypher vans were also Dodge Ambulances. This shows up well in the picture of Patton's SCU/SLU. The wireless van is the first in the row and the cypher van can be seen further down.



### 5. Eisenhower's 'Secret Letter' to Bletchley Park?

The latest Bletchley Park Newsletter makes much of the existence of 'the Secret letter' written in July 1945 - from Eisenhower to Stewart Menzies. However, one wonders why the word 'Secret' is used? Perhaps it refers to it being previously kept in the 'secret office' of the Chief of MI6?

Otherwise, the letter is most certainly *not* 'Secret' since it is printed in full - on the back of the jacket to Fred Winterbotham's book 'The Ultra Secret' published in 1974. In passing, I used it a SCU-Newsletter some years ago and a copy of the book is beside me on my desk as I write. Nevertheless, Bletchley Park is a better place for it now - where the public will be able to see this important letter. Hopefully, at the same time, acknowledging the three component parts that made the Bletchley Park operation a success!

Finally, one might also reflect that ULTRA was only available to General Eisenhower's generals in France - courtesy of Richard Gambier-Parry's MI6 (Section VIII), his Special Wireless Group (SWG) and SCU8 wireless operators - like Len Digby and Wilf Neal!

With warm regards and best wishes,

*Geoffrey*

Richmond - April 2016.