

SCU-NEWSLETTER No. 3-18
Monday, May 14, 2018

1. The Library of Congress in Washington and ‘The Secret Wireless War.’

I am delighted to tell you that a copy of my first book - ‘The Secret Wireless War’ - is now in the Library of Congress. All sorts of things go through my head as I write these words; I owe much to those who helped with its research and contents - mostly men and women from MI6 (Section VIII). However, special thanks to my dear late wife Jane - who helped with its editing and putting up with a husband - usually in the study working on the computer.

The Library of Congress - Main Reading Room.

The book was launched at Bletchley Park in 2003 - the culmination of three years of research and badgering the few wartime colleagues left. Sadly now in 2018 there are even less who were in units under our brilliant boss - Brigadier Richard Gambier-Parry. Later, he became Brigadier Sir Richard Gambier-Parry KCMG.



2. We were a very odd outfit!

I was - 17½ and ostensibly a new army recruit - a Signaller (*Private*) in the Royal Corps of Signals but actually paid *somewhat more* - by MI6!

Before I was 18 in May 1944, I was hugely lucky to be chosen by Dennis Smith to be a member of his Mobile Construction Team of eight/nine and soon working on a variety of projects.

For example, I flew in A-29 Lockheed Hudson aircraft on tests with Dennis after fitting our ‘Ascension’ air-to-agent gear into them. The planes were in the RAF 161 (Special Duties) Squadron based at the very secret airfield - Tempsford in Bedfordshire.



From Hartford Bridge airfield (now Blackbushe), I flew in B25 North American Mitchells of RAF 226 Squadron - again with Dennis after fitting our ‘Ascension’ gear. These worked to the Low Countries and France and once or twice I found myself on operations. With new information about RAF 226 Squadron, I shall be writing more about its work in a later SCU-Newsletter.



At other times, I went with Dennis down to Kingswear (Dartmouth) in Devon, where we fitted our MI6 (Section VIII) wireless gear into Royal Navy MGBs of the 15th Motor Gun Boat Flotilla. These were used on clandestine operations from the Dart to the North Brittany coast of France. We went on tests well out into the English Channel - but that was not always fun - *there was a war on!*



Perhaps our most important task was ‘creating’ the mobile SLUs (Signals Liaison Units) to enable Allied Army Commanders to receive ULTRA on and after ‘D-Day.’ Whaddon had of course, fitted others earlier for North Africa but this was a major task for us.

For the British and Canadian Army Commanders - we fitted six or seven British Army ‘Guy’ wireless vans with MI6 (Section VIII) gear after first removing the army’s wireless fittings. There are three members of MI6 in the picture. Norman Stanton in the left hand van, Wallace Harrison with his head inclined (He was the brother of Edgar Harrison who was Churchill’s ULTRA wireless operator) and me, the young man leaning out of the right hand van.

Then there are three army personnel attached to our unit - Tony Wheeler, Bill ‘Jock’ King and Jock Denham.

The ‘real’ army men with braces/suspenders are specially trained wireless operators for SLUs and are having a private view of the vans they will soon be taking into Europe after ‘D-Day.’

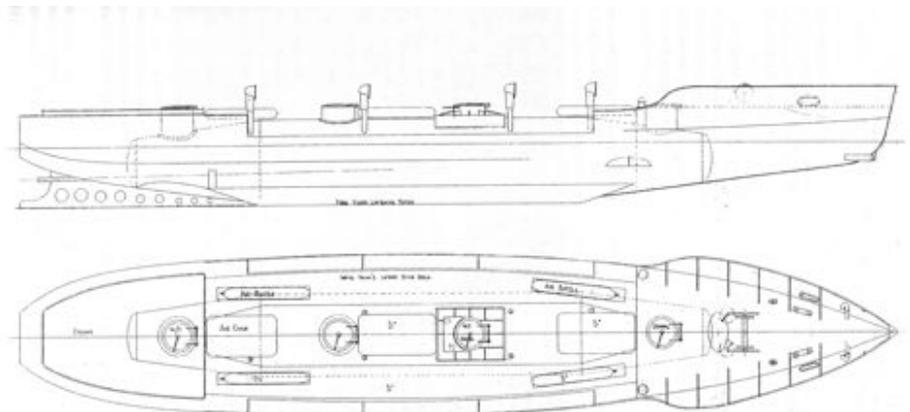


Then, for the US Sectors we used US Army Dodge Ambulances with the stretchers removed, as well as its Red Cross. One each for the US Army Commanders - like Bradley’s 1st US Army, Patton’s 3rd US Army, Simpson’s 9th Army and Pete Quesada’s 9th US Army Tactical Air Command and so on. Our SLUs were placed right in the very heart of each Army’s HQ. I think we fitted seven or eight of them. **P. S.** They were a ‘pig’ to drive!



Over Christmas 1944 - Dennis, Norman Stanton and myself were down at Teignmouth in Devon working on the ‘Most Secret’ MFUs - as detailed in Chapter 38 of ‘The Secret Wireless War.’

It reads ‘Made at Tough’s Boatyard at Teddington [on the Thames] handed over in October 1944 and then fitted out at Teignmouth in Devon, December 1944.’



‘Wireless gear installed by Dennis Smith, Norman Stanton and Geoffrey Pidgeon of MI6 (Section VIII) whilst it lay in the Naval dockyard in Teignmouth,’

Made at Tough’s Boatyard Teddington, handed over in October 1944 and then fitted out in Teignmouth in Devon, December 1944.

Wireless gear installed by Dennis Smith, Norman Stanton and Geoffrey Pidgeon of MI6 Section VIII whilst it lay in the Naval dockyard at Teignmouth.

In 'The Secret Wireless War' I did not mention a rather unusual car that appeared one day on the drive outside the Mobile Construction hut. That was because I did not have a picture of it and did not want to use a stock photograph. So I left it out. Imagine my delight at recently hearing from Charles Dunkley who was member of Mobile Construction for a while. His daughter sent me this fine picture - taken by him. Many thanks Charles!

Left to right: Dennis Smith, Jock Denham, me sitting on the running board, Norman Stanton behind the wheel, Tony Wheeler, Bob Payne our carpenter, and finally Bill 'Jock' King,

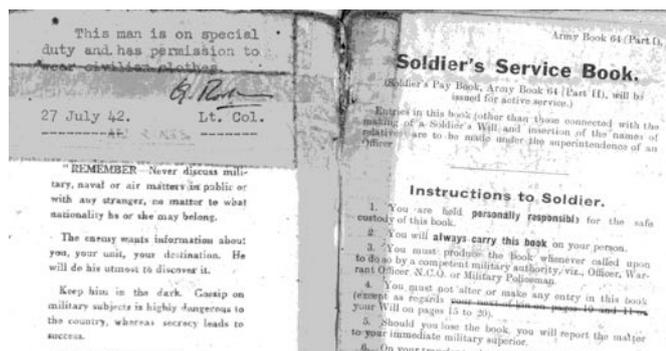
Note: Dennis is wearing civilian clothes and most of us in MI6 (Section VIII) had a notice in our Army Pay Book Part 1 'Soldier's Service Record' allowing civilian clothes to be worn. Details of pay were in Part 2 that of course, nobody in MI6 owned.



This is from my father's Army Pay Book Part 1 and the pasted insert reads:

'This man is on special duty and has permission to wear civilian clothes'

My own Part 1 - was lost later while in Calcutta in SCU 11/12 but that is another story! The replacement did not have that extra detail as the war was just over with Japan and we were wearing civilian clothes most of the time - anyway.



Reverting to the Pontiac - I remember going to Brixham in Devon with Dennis and Norman Stanton in the Pontiac and one time we were told to take civilian clothes with us. We wore our uniforms while removing our MI6 (Section VIII) gear from several Motor Torpedo Boats in the harbour. However, for the life of me - I cannot now recall why we had taken civilian clothes with us?

No doubt Dennis knew all about it but the car was a great surprise to the rest of us. A cream Pontiac shooting brake - a really handsome vehicle and it was ours! Until then we had always travelled in one of the many Packard saloons used as SLUs by Richard Gambier-Parry in mid-1940 following the Dunkirk saga.



The one shown above right, is one of the original Packards in North Africa being used as an SCU/SLU of 'A' Detachment. This one was based in Alexandria with the Mediterranean Fleet. Already the Packard's had been withdrawn from Army Commanders use in the desert as they were not suitable for use off road. They were replaced by Humber Super Snipe shooting brakes and Army Morris wireless vans but both were fitted out with MI6 (Section VIII) wireless gear.

The Packards were to provide the infant ULTRA out to vital government departments - like the Admiralty, the War Office, the Air Ministry in the likely event of a German Invasion. This would enable them to move out of London - with no loss of ULTRA and other intelligence as the German Army moved up through Sussex, Kent and on into London.



One Packard was at each such crucial building ready to move with the staff if the decision was made to evacuate London. They were at Regional Army Commands like Aldershot (Southern Command), Chester (Western Command) and Edinburgh (Scottish Command) for example. In the immediate aftermath of Dunkirk - these long-established Army Commands were perhaps one of the few established organisations around which the army could rebuild.

As one who lived through it - I do assure readers that the threat of invasion was very real for several months and the menace hung over our daily lives. However, as the threat of invasion faded away following the Battle of Britain, the many Packards were used for a variety of purposes including driving us to places like Tempsford and Hartford Bridge airfields.

The Packard (above right) is now very neglected in a Bletchley Park garage behind the Mansion. It was one of the 60 originals purchased by Richard Gambier-Parry - now restored to its former glory. I heard visiting school children being told by a 'guide' that they were for Bletchley Park executives!

I *had to step in* and told the children what an important part they had played in 1940.

In writing his 'British Intelligence in the Second World War' - the brilliant (and authoritative) **F. H. Hinsley** writes about the need for a special channel to carry the Enigma Intelligence between GC&CS and the Middle East. He later (on page 572) tells of the formation of SCU/SLUs out at Army Commanders HQ to pass on the ULTRA to the Generals concerned like Auckinleck, Wavell and later Montgomery. In the book, Hinsley, gives details of its operation.

Finally, I appreciate my book is only one of 16,000,000 others in the Library of Congress but it is still rather a special occasion for me now at 92 - to make the total 16,000,001. So perhaps this SCU-Newsletter has become rather the story of a very young man caught up in rather special times - doing rather unusual jobs!

Sorry about this self-indulgent trip down memory lane but I promise to be back to normal - next time.

With kind regards,
Geoffrey

P.S. New Data Protection Regulation. This may seem rather tiresome but with more Internet banking and use of the web, I have to agree that this may well be a necessary check. I have a copy from one firm that covers both sides of two pages but I am going to simplify the procedure for the little data I hold on my computer.

For the vast majority of you - I only use your e-mail address for the SCU-Newsletter. The Regulation comes into force on May 25th 2018. If you no longer wish me to hold your e-mail address then just tell me in an e-mail and it will be deleted immediately.