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SCU-NEWSLETTER No. 2-20
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1. Richard Gambier-Parry's connection with Philco? In early 1938 - Admiral Sir Hugh Sinclair- 'C' - the Chief of SIS - headhunted Richard Gambier-Parry from the Philco Company - *an American firm* - then the largest manufacturer of domestic wireless sets in the UK.

Philco was founded in 1892 as Helios Electric Company. Then in 1906, as the Philadelphia Storage Battery Company, it began making batteries for electric vehicles. They later supplied home charging batteries to the infant radio industry followed by making wireless sets in a substantial way. Its 'Philco' brand name first appeared in 1919.



On the right is the 'Cathedral' one of the most famous sets to come out of Philco's British factory - during Richard Gambier-Parry's time as its Sales Manager.

Philco took its advertising very seriously employing no less than **Bing Crosby** - among others appearing to promote their products.



This, and the continued developments into car radios and consumer products - made the company a world leader in its field. Its demise came in 1961 when the Ford Motor Company purchased the firm.

After a series of take-overs Philco is now controlled by Phillips of Eindhoven enabling them to use *their* Philco brand name in the US.

2. I am often asked why do I use the prefix 'SCU' on my SCU-Newsletters? In 1939 - 1940, most of the men working for Richard Gambier-Parry - '*Controller of SIS Communications*' - were civilians in MI6.

However in 1940, following the dark days around Dunkirk - it was decided that the unit should be fully 'Militarised.' Many of its members were then enrolled into the Royal Corps of Signals. See 'The Secret Wireless War' Chapter 21 'The Extraordinary Diaries of John Darwin' - and the entry is dated Wednesday 15th November 1939.

The picture on the next page is also shown on Page 56 in the 'The Secret Wireless War' where you will see 'Daily Orders Part 1' Issue 20 dated 25th July 1940. The heading reads -

'Colonel R. Gambier-Parry. Comd., S.S.U. No. 1.'

Seeing it is 'Issue 20' - one could assume that MI6 (Section VIII) was given this military title in early July 1940. It is especially interesting to me as it includes my father H E.C. Pidgeon known to all - from Richard Gambier-Parry down - as 'Pidge.' After I joined MI6 (Section VIII) in late 1942 - I gradually got to know all the others on the list.

However, while the title S.S.U. stood for 'Special Signals Unit' - it was thought by some that it meant 'Secret Service Unit' and also 'SS' had most unpleasant connotations at the time. So the word 'Signals' was changed to 'Communications' and the unit thereafter 'Special Communications Unit' or '**SCU**'! It was thought that the new title sounded more like an ordinary military outfit.

This is copied from an original in my father's files.

DAILY ORDERS PART I
by
Colonel R. Gaudier-Perry,
Col., S.S.U. No.1.

Issue 20 dated 25 Jul 40.

96. POSTINGS.

(a) The following personnel have been enlisted at Whaddon and are posted as shown :-

N.Y.A.	Signa. Holder, G.A.	Workshops.	18 Jul 40.
"	" Sweet, C.M.	H.Q. (S.O(23)).	"
"	" Kampton, H.A.	Workshops.	"
"	" Morrow, I.A.	H.Q. Tailor.	"
"	" West, C.V.	Workshops.	20 Jul 40.
"	" Hill, J.	"	"
"	" Roberts, J.G.V.	"	"
"	" Pidgeon, H.E.C.	H.Q. (S.O.Tech).	"
"	" Castleman, H.J.	Workshops.	"
"	" Ord, J.T.	"	"
"	" Lax, D.	"	"
"	" Bromley, K.A.	Trg. Group.	22 Jul 40.

(b) The undermentioned Officer arrived in the Unit :-

Lieut. C.H. Harrison.	Signal Officer.	24 Jul 40.
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(c) The undermentioned are posted to
today's date :-

2585609	Signa. Hooper, K.V.J.
2308091	Thompson, C.

The undermentioned are posted as operators to
Training Group :-

2091512	Signa. Parrish, J.C.
4742065	" Hodgson, A.
4445433	L/Pl. Wilkinson, R.

The undermentioned are posted to Transport u.e.f.
today's date :-

2337575	Signa. Dally, U.S.
2337797	" Calvert, V.

97. ATTACHMENTS.

The undermentioned are attached to the Scottish
Command, u.e.f. today's date :-

2321782	A/U/L/Pl. Wisbet, I.S.
2580926	Signa. Gullen, W.H.
T/131018	Dvr. Hourie, J.

The undermentioned are attached to the Admiralty,
u.e.f. 26 Jul 40 :-

2308091	Signa. Thompson, C.
2585609	" Hooper, K.V.J.
T/66188	Dvr. Broadfoot, J.

I knew everyone shown here as '96 Postings' - 'enlisted at Whaddon' and perhaps will later write about them. For example, the last named is Ken Bromley, who was a competent wireless engineer. I remember seeing him on the bench wiring MkVIIIs at Little Horwood. However, he was also an artist and draughtsman and he later spent much of his time at a drawing board. Incidentally, it was Ken who drew the portrait of me included on the first page of 'The Secret Wireless War.' I especially like Ken's sketch - made in Calcutta in mid-1945 - as it reminds me that I once had a full head of hair!

Incidentally, *Item 97 'Attachments'* on the above 'Daily Orders' are part of a *most* secret operation in 1940 involving the Packards. I have written about it before but mentioning these super cars recently in SCU-Newsletter 2-20 reminds me - it might be of interest to new readers. Next SCU-Newsletter?

3. A problem solved! Readers may recall I had the honour of being invited to the unveiling of the Blue Plaque to commemorate the OSS 'Station Victor' based on Hurley in Berkshire. This was because of the close connection with MI6 (Section VIII) based on the procedures for handling SIS agents at our training school in Hans Place just behind Harrods. Captain Albert (Bert) Gillies acted as 'Liaison Officer' to 'Station Victor' but he was a member of our MI6 (Section VIII).

However skilled the US wireless operators at 'Station Victor' were - *and they were the very best* - they would not have been used to the strict disciplines of working secret agent Signal Plans. Failure to comply could mean detection of the agent and at worst, torture by the Gestapo, followed by death. So some of the operators went to our training school but their work at Station Victor was 'overseen' by 'Bert' Gillies or others from Hans Place.

Among the many interesting people I met at Hurley was Ian Titman. He is an acknowledged expert on the use of that strange looking aircraft the 'Lysander' used in moving agents, mail and weapons into occupied France. These were based at Tempsford - the airfield from where both SIS and SOE agents were flown into and out of France.



The picture above shows how ungainly it looks while the one on the right will give you some idea of its size. I am holding the propeller just to make sure it cannot take off! This aircraft is painted black but later Tempsford Lysanders were in normal camouflage. Note the long-range fuel tank slung between its wheels.

In a conversation with Ian, I mentioned that when being driven to Tempsford airfield some three years ago to attend the Armistice Ceremony on the airfield - I crossed the level crossing for the first time since 1944. Moments later I said we have just *passed* the entrance! I was clearly wrong since it was some hundreds of yards further on. Ian followed up my query and produced the map on page 4.

Why am so interested in the Lysander? I am a member of the Tempsford Veterans and Relatives Association (TVRA). I flew from Tempsford with my boss Dennis Smith in Hudsons and the Lysanders were parked nearby.

Also Major Jack Saunders, another member of MI6 (Section VIII), flew from there to newly liberated Paris but was lost over the English Channel on his return. Richard Gambier-Parry described Jack in his Eulogy as an important member of 'The Team.' Jack is second from the left as they arrived at Le Bourget Airport Paris from Tempsford in a Lysander - on the right



Tempsford airfield:



This remarkable map by Ian Titman shows the entrance we used with the Hudson's straight ahead of us. On the south of the road is where the Lysanders were prepared ready for operations. They had to cross the public road - *obviously with RAF staff holding up the traffic* - before moving to the chosen runway.

There were many other aircraft using Tempsford including the four-engine Halifax (and earlier the Sterling) used to drop weapons to the various resistance organisations. 161 and 138 'Special Duty Squadrons' of the RAF carried out these operations. Later, all the Hudsons and Lysanders were in 161 Squadron.

Perhaps I should add that this strange looking aircraft was perfect for taking agents into and out of France due to its remarkably short landing and take off ability. It required three sections: approach strip, landing strip and take off strip.

The approach had to be 300 yards (275 metres) to allow the aircraft to come in at a reasonable angle, the landing strip itself 600 yards (548 metres) - then the take off strip was again 300 yards. This was to allow the aircraft to gain height safely over any obstacles. On at least one occasion - a Lysander returned with parts of a tree attached!

The lapel badge of the TVRA is made of silver showing the three runways. I try to ensure mine has Runway 3 pointing in the right direction - 5 degrees East of North! I see this is slightly off-course!

On the far right is the badge of RAF 'Special Duties Squadron' 161 - using the Lysander and Hudson.



Near right is the silver badge of the Tempsford Veterans and Relatives Association (TVRA)



The Lysander - a brief history: By the outbreak of war in September 1939, the Lysander Mark II equipped four RAF squadrons for army cooperation - artillery spotting and message dropping. They had a crew of two - the pilot and the multi role 'spotter' - air gunner equipped with .303 machine guns. However, over France and Belgium, during the Blitzkrieg - the *Luftwaffe's* fighters slaughtered them. Of 175 sent into action, 88 were shot down; another 30 were destroyed on the ground.

Lysander's were then withdrawn from front-line service, initially relegated to towing targets and dropping life rafts to downed aircrews. In August 1941 the Lysander found its ultimate mission, with the formation of RAF 138 (Special Duties) Squadron. Later they were handled by RAF 161 (Special Duties) Squadron) and fitted with extra fuel tanks for extended range, the Mark III could land and take off from tiny improvised airstrips in Nazi-occupied Europe. The Tempsford Lysander's delivered many agents into occupied Europe and recovered both agents and downed aircrew.

They had been transformed for this 'Special Duty' by enlarging the 'green house' canopy to house a maximum of three passengers and providing them with a ladder to keep time on the ground to a minimum.

I should add that if carrying three passengers they would have been *very* cramped and there was no access between them and the pilot. I think the pilot had to be a 'contortionist' to clamber over the spar and climb in *through* the window!

My friend Ian Titman is beside the Lysander and the picture illustrates the points I am making above.



This strange looking aircraft was used to land resolute SIS and SOE agents from Tempsford into occupied France - flown by skilled and brave pilots. Secondly of course, our Jack Saunders was lost returning to Tempsford and that caused much distress at Whaddon Hall. Remember, although Gambier-Parry's organisation was large and widespread at home and abroad, the core of MI6 (Section VIII) at Whaddon was relatively small and the loss of Jack keenly felt. This was especially so since one of his daughters 'Celia' worked as Secretary to my father and the other 'Tess' to Ewart Holden his boss!

So, the problem was solved - we *had* entered Tempsford airfield through a gate near the level crossing and that gate lined up with one directly across the road - where the Lysanders were parked.

4. An important Post Script to the above. At the TVRA November Armistice meetings on Tempsford airfield - the late Isabelle Countess Erroll and/or her daughter Lady Laline Hay often joined us. The airfield is part of the Hay - Erroll Estate.

After the ceremony, we would go to the Memorial Hall in Tempsford for lunch followed by a talk. On one occasion, I found myself sitting next to Isabelle and Laline to listen to the talk by Mark Seaman, a Government Historian. During the talk he stressed that the majority of the agents flown from Tempsford were SIS and *not* SOE - as many claimed. Afterwards, I mentioned to Isabelle that I had flown from Tempsford airfield and added - I had found it rather strange - that the entrance was now quite a long way from the level crossing.

Countess Erroll immediately said - '***I keep telling them there was another entrance!***' - and promptly led me into the Tempsford Museum that adjoins the Memorial Hall. There, the Curator found some old maps, including one showing the entrance just as shown on Ian's map on page 4. Her recent sad untimely death - has prevented me from writing to her with a copy!

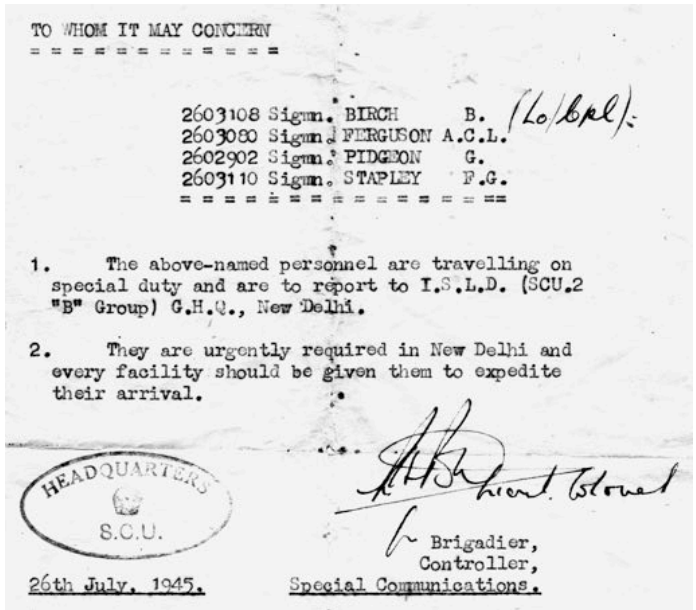
5. SIS - MI6 or ISLD? The Secret Intelligence Service - SIS - can trace its history back to 1909 but the more frequent use of MI6 (meaning Military Intelligence, Section 6) started during World War II's re-organisation of SIS. It was divided into ten sections (always using Roman Numerals) with Section I being Political, II Military, III Naval, IV Air (*Fred Winterbotham*), V Counter Espionage, VI Industrial, VII Financial, VIII Communications (*Richard Gambier-Parry*) and IX Cipher and finally - X Press.

So during the war 'SIS' was not used but MI6 instead. However, neither was used when abroad - then the title used was **I.S.L.D.** - 'Inter-Service Liaison Department!' I realised that this showed up splendidly in the Movement Order for the four of us '*...Urgently required in New Delhi...*' and shown here. ('The Secret Wireless War' page 337.)

With the war continuing against Japan we were to be part of teams to fit out new ULTRA wireless stations in Manila, Rangoon, Okinawa and 'one other' as the opportunity arose.

Here was Brian Birch, Andrew, Carnie, Lackie Ferguson (*'Fergie' for short*), Geoffrey Pidgeon and Fred Stapley. All of us members of MI6 (Section VIII) as you can tell by the first four of our 'Army' numbers - they all start with 2602 or 2603!

Of course, we had no idea that the war with Japan would very soon come to a sudden end - only weeks away with the dropping of the Atomic Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.



Here we were members of MI6 (Section VIII) but having to report to I.S.L.D. in New Delhi - then just alongside are the words (SCU.2 "B Group") GHQ., New Delhi. I have no explanation for the inclusion of 'SCU' on this occasion other than it was a mistaken addition? Nobody I have spoken to over the years has any other explanation!

However, the HQ turned out to be at the Maharaja of Baroda's Palace. It was a splendid - *perhaps the word is 'palatial'* - place to wait for transport to our wireless station to the east of the city.

6. I am most grateful to both Ian Titman and to Bob Body - the Founder, organiser and frankly the 'backbone' of the Tempsford Veterans and Relatives Association. Bob had earlier agreed about the other entrance and sent me an official map. However, that does not give the detail shown in that from Tim. These are two splendid chaps - very knowledgeable about Tempsford and the Lysander aircraft that I find so interesting.

Keep well and keep safe in these troubled times!

With kind regards and best wishes,
Geoffrey