

3, Arundel House,
Courtlands,
Sheen Road, Richmond, Surrey
TW10 5AS.
Telephone: 020 8940 3223
email: geoffrey.pidgeon@virgin.net

SCU-NEWSLETTER No. 4/10
Friday, November 26, 2010

1. Continued positive reaction to the article on Patton and ULTRA in the QST Journal of ARRL.

We continue to receive thanks from readers of American Radio Relay League for the article about Patton and Wilf Neal and I am very grateful for the response. Nothing so far from the George S. Patton Museum at Fort Knox, but hopefully that will come later. However, I would rather hear from his historians explaining why they have virtually ignored the part ULTRA played in his success in Sicily and on across France after 'D-Day.' If you have not seen the article send me an e-mail.

2. Present tasks.

I have been appointed to the Historic Advisory Group concerned with the regeneration of the Bletchley Park Museum along with one other veteran – the famous cryptographer Mavis Batey. I am more determined than ever to ensure that the part played by Richard Gambier-Parry and his various units is properly recorded at Bletchley Park.

3. The birth of Special Communication Units.

I am again most grateful to Peter Hovenden-Jones for his providing documents about the early days of our unit from the National Archives at Kew. These remarkable documents are particularly interesting and deal with the formation of SCU itself and the handing over of Radio Security Service to Richard Gambier-Parry's SCU3 'Lock stock and Barrel' in 1941. The first paper is a truly historic document.

Paper No. 1: deals with Special Signals Unit No.1 (SSU1). That is detailed in a '**Most Secret**' document dated 15th June 1940. It starts: *'As a result of discussion on Cabinet level it has been decided to create a special Signals unit. This unit will carry out a certain role which it is highly undesirable to place on record except to a very limited number of people.'* The Cabinet meeting would have been chaired by Winston Churchill and all this was taking place in the immediate aftermath of Dunkirk and just as GC&CS were beginning to make headway with the Enigma traffic.

This is not the birth of MI6 (Section VIII) of course – merely the militarised version. The new communications organisation for SIS had started as soon as Admiral Hugh Sinclair appointed Richard Gambier-Parry as its Chief – back in 1938. However, with the possibility of invasion by the exultant Germans now occupying the entire European coast facing the United Kingdom – it had to be a seemingly military unit.

Paper No. 2: is not from Peter but included by way of explanation. It is: 'SSU No. 1 Daily Orders Part 1 Issue 20 dated 25th July 1940. This is from 'The Secret Wireless War' on the second page of Chapter 9. This document shows my father as one of those enlisted (joining the Army) on the 20th July 1940 although he had been at Whaddon since late June – therefore father was one of those mentioned in Paper 1 as *'employed in a 'Civilian' capacity will be paid from S. S. funds.'* This edition of Daily Orders is No. 20 – meaning SSU No.1 probably started officially in late June.

There are hidden stories behind Paper No. 2 and I will elaborate in a future SCU-Newsletter.

Paper No. 3: attached is dated 3rd July 1941 and refers to a request from Richard Gambier-Parry to change the unit's title from Special Signals Unit No. 1 (SSU-1) to Special Communications Unit No. 1 (SCU-1). It also refers in item (b) to the formation of SCU3 to cover the requirements of the Radio Security Service (RSS). The Controller of RSS appointed by Richard Gambier-Parry was his deputy – Lt. Col. Ted Maltby.

Paper No. 4: is dated 30th July 1941 and speaks of the RSS [Radio Security Service] being handed over to MI6 'Lock stock and barrel' and then part of Richard Gambier-Parry's organisation.

**There is little doubt that Richard Gambier-Parry' SSU (and the later SCUs)
were the most secret British Army units in World War II.**

4. ‘MI6’ The Official Story of The Secret Intelligence Service from 1909 to 1949.

This massive work of some 800 pages – was written by Professor Keith Jeffery of Queen’s University Belfast – at the instigation of SIS who gave him total access to their archives. Jane and I were invited by Bloomsbury and the current Chief of SIS – Sir John Sawers – to its official launch at the Foreign & Commonwealth Office in Whitehall some weeks ago. Sir John introduced Keith Jeffery after speaking about its importance to SIS.

As I had to be at the Historic Advisory Group meeting at Bletchley Park on Monday, we drove down to Milton Keynes on the Sunday so that we could attend the separate Bletchley Park launch of ‘MI6’. This time, Sir John Scarlett, the *previous* Chief of SIS, introduced Keith Jeffery.

Thus, in the space of three weeks Jane and I listened to no less than two – Chief’s of the Secret Intelligence Service (“C”). They praised Keith Jeffery’s work, stressed that the book was unique in world intelligence circles and will never be repeated. It is indeed a major book and I do heartily recommend it.

On this second occasion, Keith Jeffery stressed that communications had played a major role in the success of Bletchley Park, praised the work of Richard Gambier-Parry and stressed that Bletchley Park was purchased as a ‘War Station’ – for all the staff of SIS at 54 Broadway and not just GC&CS – as some would have you believe.

On page 319, you will read ***“In early 1939 a main SIS communications facility with a full twenty four hour service, some four transmitters and six receiving positions, was set up at the Service’s new ‘war station’ in Bletchley Park ...”*** As we know, this ‘facility’ was installed by Richard Gambier-Parry’s team of experts including some of the seven ex-Royal Naval Chief Petty Officer Wireless Telegraphists who had joined the infant Section VIII in 1938. Several had moved to Bletchley in late 1938 and early 1939 – like Charles Bradford and Jack Saunders.

Read ‘Section VIII’ on pages 358 to 360 of ‘MI6’ and you will learn more about this remarkable man and just some of the things he achieved. On page 360 Jeffrey mentions Gambier-Parry’s great variety of work including equipping ***‘...60 technical vehicles...’*** These were the 60 Packard saloons purchased from the UK Packard distributor at Brentford mentioned in Chapter 17 of ‘The Secret Wireless War’ – ‘The Packards of Whaddon.’ They were fitted out at Whaddon Hall as wireless SLUs – during those frantic days of the summer of 1940.

I will later quote from pages from the book (after checking that it is not a hanging offence) but I do hope you will purchase it for yourself. However, I can mention an excellent photograph it contains of Gambier-Parry. He stands resplendent in his Brigadier’s uniform, complete with Sam Browne belt, his RAF pilot wings from World War I, Jodhpurs and riding boots. The caption reads:

“Brigadier Richard ‘Pop’ Gambier-Parry SIS’s brilliant communications supremo throughout the Second World War.”

Needless to say, as one of the remaining members of his MI6 (Section VIII), I heartily agree with all the much-deserved praise heaped upon him in the book and we saw him dressed exactly like that many times.

6. On the subject of books !

At the SCU/RSS meeting at Bletchley Park last April, I introduced a French student Mona De Witte who had just received her Master’s Degree in British History – *magna cum laude* !

For her subject, she had chosen the complex story of ULTRA and Bletchley Park. Her dissertation is entitled **“The Ultra Secret: Security of the British Codebreaking Operations in World War II.”** It is a most interesting book in its own right but the more so – if it does not sound patronising – being written by a French Student for a Master’s Degree at a Paris University.

Mona has kindly obtained permission from her various sources for me to include the book as part of a SCU-Newsletter – provided it is not copied or used for any commercial purpose. Including the Bibliography it is 114 pages so I am not going to include it on this occasion but send it out with the next SCU-Newsletter.

The reason for mentioning it now is that I clearly cannot print 114 page copies for those few who still receive their SCU-Newsletter through the post. If you want to receive it, please find a friend or relative with e-mail facility, and ask them to send me their e-mail address. Although it contains several photographs and maps in colour it is only 2.1 MB.

7. The ‘Soap.’

Just to let you know that we are still researching this fascinating subject and I hope to add our findings to the next SCU-Newsletter.

8. The next ‘Hanslope Park Lunch’

This takes place at the Conservative Club, Stony Stratford on **Monday 13th December 2010**. If you are attending, will those involved (as SCU or DWS) and wanting lunch let Phillip Canale know. Telephone: **01908 511 164**. Please telephone Phil in the *evening*. Alternatively, contact Heather Gordon on **01604 404273**. This is the bumper Christmas Meeting so book your lunch early especially this is prepared by the Club’s new chef – Luke. The menu is attached marked ‘**Luke.**’

For those wondering about this ‘Hanslope Park’ meeting perhaps I should explain. As the war ended Whaddon Hall was gradually vacated and most staff and operations moved to Hanslope Park – some ten miles north. It was the main SCU3 wireless interception centre and also contained extensive workshops. As GC&CS at Bletchley Park eventually ended up as GCHQ down at Cheltenham, so Hanslope became the central wireless station for covert traffic and its various other activities were covered by the title ‘Diplomatic Wireless Service’ – DWS !

That is an oversimplification but might help. The Conservative Club is in Stony Stratford High Street. In turn that was part of the Watling Street – the Roman road from London to the North West. It became an important stopover for Stagecoach traffic heading to Chester and North Wales with the High Street packed with coaching inns. Many have gone or been converted to Chinese or Thai restaurants. However, the most famous of them remain – The Cock Hotel and the Bull Hotel. It was from the ever-increasing tall stories told in their bars that the expression – “**A Cock and Bull Story**”– emanates. A nice way to finish our Christmas Edition !

With our best wishes for Christmas and for your good health and happiness in 2011.

Jane and Geoffrey