

DONALD SHIRREFF (LIEUT. TEMP. CAPTAIN) \* **G3BGM** \* **1539** \* G5MC (1935/36) DL2HK (1947/56) \* Wrightsbridge, Lower Wanborough, Near Swindon, Wiltshire, SN4 0AR. \* British Astronomical Association, Achilles Club. \* June 1939 - April 1940 : Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry as a Private and Lance Corporal in the Signals Section. April 1940 October 1940 : Signals Cadet Training Battalion, Aldershot. November 1940 - March 1942 : Mobile Section. 1 S.W.G. (Egypt and Western Desert) as Lieut. March 1942 - September 1945 : as OC 110 S.W. Section attached to 30 Corps (North Africa, Malta, Sicily, Italy up to Cassino, Normandy, then with 7th U.S. Army until end of European War). January 1947 - April 1956 : civilian with Foreign Office German Section, and later War Office in Germany. April 1956 onwards : Teacher. \* 1935 - 1936 : TX ECO + PA (59's), O-V-1 RX 2watts battery TX on 5 Metres. 1945 - 1947 : Home-brew and German equipment. QTH was then Wantage. 1947 - 1966 : Home-brew gear plus a WS 12 and an 80 Watts German Naval CW set. 1966 - 1980 : more or less QRT. had various sets in the physics lab, at school but find that modern kids are more interested in making disco amplifiers and certainly lack the staying power to acquire a CW license. 1980 onwards : acquired a FT 101-ZD (If you can't beat SSB, you might as well join it!!) \* astronomy, Astro-photography, Bee-keeping, Poultry Breeding, Foreign Travel and Languages. Also lecture in Economics and Accountancy. \* CW operators and those who have been D/F operators.

### JULY 1981 - "MERCURY" No. 69 onwards:

#### SOME EXPERIENCES WITH SPECIAL SIGNALS, 1939 - 1945. Part I.

G3BGM/1539.

The last few years have seen the gradual relaxation of the security ban on the breaking of machine ciphers, starting with Farago's "The Broken Seal" (Japanese, 1967) and culminating with Read and Fisher's "Operation Lucy" (German Enigma. 1980). Winterbottom jumped the gun with a very inferior account of the breaking of Enigma in 1977, and since then many others have been turning their chairborne experiences into profit. So far I haven't seen an account of the active side of the operation, and in justice to the men involved, some of whom came from the regular Corps of Signals, and who may have been colleagues of RSARS members before they disappeared into the secret organisation of Special Signals, from which there was no return for the duration. I feel that it is high time that something of their work was revealed. In the following account nothing is given away which is not already known to both our allies or our opponents of those days. The evaluation of the facts is my own.

In June 1939 I was called up (remember the Militia?) into the 43rd Light Infantry at Oxford, and after Basic Training became a L/Cpl in the Signal Platoon. When the Battalion went to France without me I began to think that there was something wrong, but in March 1940 I arrived at the Royal Signals O.C.T.U. at Mons Barracks, Aldershot. In December 1940 I was posted to the Special Operator Training Battalion at Trowbridge, where No. 2 Wireless Group was being formed. Having operated my School Club station G5MC in 1935/36 and attended a summer school for economists at Munich University in 1938, I suppose I was a marked man, but I was not to know at the time. By March 1941 we, the advanced party of No. 2 Special Wireless Group, were ensconced in the King Farouk Museum, Heliopolis.

The task of No. 2 S.W.G., as we now realise, was basically threefold: (a) To cover tactical and strategic Enigma groups for the code-crunchers to work on in Britain; (b) To crack on the spot lower level Italian and German codes and ciphers; (c) By traffic analysis and D/F to build up information on the opposing order of battle. The Mobile Section of 2 S.W.G. was sent up to HQ DESFORCE (later HQ 8th ARMY) at MA'ATEN BAGUSH. Later smaller Corps S.W. Sections were attached to each Corps Headquarters as they arrived and took up positions. The S.W.G. were equipped with HRO's and, in theory, three each of Marconi HF and LF Adcock D/Fs. In fact only 2 MFs and 1 HF were available; the remainder had been transferred to the RAF as a higher priority. For communication between D/Fs little provision had been made, presumably it was imagined that land-line would be provided. There were two elderly 'C' Sets which never left their boxes.

As Junior Second Lieutenant I got the Job of erecting a combined HF and LF D/F station in the desert near HELIOPOLIS, to be controlled by land-line from the Museum. We did the whole thing, plus calibration for the northern 180° in three weeks; about five months and one week shorter than it took the Marconi Company to do the same at Sarafand. We were assisted by 100 Egyptian workmen, whose enthusiasm flagged during Ramadan. Sgt. Vic Willis, with white knees like myself, bestrode the six-foot trenches and shouted "Shuv, shuvalek!" which he and I thought meant "Get a move on". Later we learned it meant the equivalent of "Mind your own business!". Sgt. Ratcliffe, brown knees and a regular, fraternised with the Italian Sgt., i/c 20 prisoners, who immediately rumbled what we were doing, exclaimed "Goniometro" and brought along a much better Italian theodolite from his camp the next day. Somewhere in the desert not far from HELIOPOLIS there are, to this day, four concrete blocks as mast bases accurately spaced at 300 ft. diagonals marked "RATO & Co S.A." in honour of our Italian helpers. Six feet down there should be in all sixteen beautiful copper earth mats, enough to set up any Top Band fan for life.

Guarding this little station during dark nights presented difficulties. We were apparently too secret to be guarded by mere Infantry, white or brown, and operators could not be spared from the watches. One night charging engine and a spare HRO disappeared from the battery hut 100 yards to the south of the D/F huts. I was up in front of Col. Oliver, who sent me to the HELIOPOLIS Karakol (police station). "Don't worry, lad", said the imperturbable Brit whose job it was to liaise with the Egyptian Police "What does an HRO look like?". Two days later both were back; in the days of the Empire we also had our methods!!

#### SOME EXPERIENCES WITH SPECIAL SIGNALS, 1939 - 1945 Part II.

G3BGM/1539.

To avoid the attentions of Siwa Bill and any heavier back-up we put the D/F in a dug-out and painted the masts white to match the sand. The problem was communication with BAGUSH, the landline was insecure and often out and the C Set clearly unsuitable for the distance. G2RJ borrowed an 11 Set from somewhere and I did the same from the Long Range Desert Group. Adapting our One-Time Pads to a fast and effective figure cipher for D/F purposes we used 11 Sets until captured 30 and 80 Watts German senders provided a more reliable night-time service. The old 11 Set happily worked 500 miles if the right frequency was chosen.

The cuts provided by the SIWA station were so successful that it was decided to erect another at JARABUB which, although "behind enemy lines" was occupied by 33 Fighter Squadron with Hurricanes. We were dependent on the New Zealand Section of The Long Range Desert Group for transport, and I began to admire the calm professionalism of these men, many of whom could turn their hand to anything, operating a radio, piloting a WACO or decoking a Ford truck.

Soon after our arrival at JARABUB, a day's journey from SIWA, we were treated to an instance of British unprofessionalism which has stuck in my memory as an example of the wastefulness of war. Those Squadron machines, so laboriously brought out from Britain, were parked casually - near the Mess tent and not dispersed as they should have been. Six ME 110's came down the sandy wadi and brewed up ten of them. Two days later ten more arrived from Egypt - a replacement operation which should never have been necessary.

At the ensuing battle of SIDI REZEGH the Indians captured a complete Horch Funkwagen with telescopic aerial, 80 Watt sender and an Enigma machine. As I was due for leave I was sent by plane to HELIO to deliver the Enigma machine, the size of a typewriter, to the powers that were, and was rather hurt that they proposed to do little about it. I offered to spend my leave attempting to crack back-traffic, of which we had a vast amount together with several captured clear-text messages. If I had been more clued up I suppose that I should have suspected that they were beginning to crack the stuff in England, but we had all looked at the thing in the Mess at BAGUSH and decided that it was completely secure. Besides a choice of three drums out of five, there was an independent plug-board which appeared to be re-set daily. And such was our grounding in security that we all tended to operate on a

"need to know" basis only.

By now proper Marconi D/F Adcocks were becoming available, and I took one back with me to cover the Africa Korps (at that time spread out along the coast road towards TRIPOLI) waiting for reinforcements. The site selected was 20 miles north of BENGHAZI on the coast. BENGHAZI had just been captured and was being held by the 19th Independent Infantry Brigade. When the German counter-attack developed things moved very quickly, and the first intimation we had that we were in danger of falling into the bag was a bearing on the Headquarters of 15 Panzer Division putting it at HSUS (115° from us), Luckily. G2RJ and I had arranged a fail-safe code group for such a remote eventuality, and that evening sked on the No. 11 Set was the most welcome I have ever had!. Like most of 19th Brigade we got out by dispersing and driving eastwards in the dark.

By now every D/F Section was becoming expert in the new technique of radio control. I must confess that we picked up the main idea from listening to our German equivalent. It wasn't until 1945 that we discovered from capdocs that the technique had been developed by German Signal Intelligence during the occupation of the Rhineland in 1926. We took delivery of three new Decca loop D/F vans, eminently suitable to tracking down the German 30 Watts and 80 Watts sender, of course during daylight only. These sets were about the only piece of radio equipment I met throughout the whole war which was actually superior to the German equivalent, when we had refitted then with BC-312's instead of HROs. We were, on occasions, able to give six-figure map references of opposing Headquarters, especially when they were stripped for a move and using vertical aerials. Here again German security was very good and one could only tell whether they were stripped for action or not by the quality of the bearings; presumably they, like us, went back to horizontal dipoles when occupying a Lager for some time.

### SOME EXPERIENCES WITH SPECIAL SIGNALS 1939 - 1945 - PART III.

G3BGM/1539.

(Part I was published in "Mercury" No. 69 of 7/81 and Part II in No. 70 of 11/81).

As I have already mentioned, the cracking of "Enigma" was a well kept secret and the Germans continued to use it for high-grade messages until the end. But something happened just after the occupation of Brussels and Paris to show the Germans that we were reading their low-grade ciphers and had reconstructed their call-books. For suddenly these were all changed and "Rasterschlüssel" (a sort of crossword puzzle cipher) introduced. It was little consolation that it confused them almost as much as it confused us!. My section proceeded with Advance HQ 30 Corps to NIJMEGEN, where a number of extraordinary things happened in a short space of time. As people like the late Airey Neave have written about them, there seems no reason why my version, slightly doctored so as not to hurt the reputations of the living, should not be published. Any high-ups reading this might like to check whether these happenings were mentioned in their respective war diaries, or if not, why not!.

(a) Before leaving HECHTEL on the Belgian frontier we were approached by the CSO 30 Corps asking us to find and contact any stations of 1st Airborne Division. Apparently there had been a mess-up about the Signal plans before leaving England. Anyway we found the main group of survivors, took several messages in clear from them and handed over to 30 Corps. Ironically, we used our German 80 Watt sender to get through.

(b) Soon after arriving at NIJMEGEN we were put in touch with the Chief Engineer of the power station, just south and west of the bridge. He was a pre-war Dutch "ham" and claimed to have a network of "hams" QRV around ARNHEM and further south as far as APELDOORN. Could we provide him with a set to get in touch with them?. What he did not tell us was that he had a home-brew set in his attic at home. Cpl. "Blocker" Wood, who was a bit of a ladies' man, found this out from his XYL. He was also in touch through the normal Siemens control carrier system with power engineers in North Holland and even at CLEVES in Germany. We installed an HRO and TX in the basement of NIJMEGEN power station and answered back if any of the network came up. A Dutch speaker was attached to monitor anything our friend said over the control net to the other side. Airey Neave took over from us later and what happened eventually I do not know. Frankly, I ended by not trusting the set-up. The Dutch "ham" belonged to an association of former officers in colonial Indonesia and seemed more interested in stopping the spread of Communism in Holland than in furthering the Allied cause. Some years later when I happened to be with my wife visiting the graves at ARNHEM we called at the power station, but he declined to see me, which is an odd way for straightforward "hams" to treat each other.

(c) When it appeared that the forces on ARNHEM bridge were not going to be relieved and that a rescue operation was all that was possible. I was sent for by General Browning, who asked me to get in touch with the other side and send a proposal for the exchange of wounded prisoners. As I have already said we had lost touch with our call-sign sequences and were reading little traffic. We D/Fed the loudest network which appeared to emanate from ARNHEM station and got in touch, using the call "BRI". They immediately responded and we passed a message in German from the Divisional Commander. Half an hour later we got a reply in German from the "Commanding General", so we had scored a bull!!.. It was a polite brush-off and went on by asking us to stop shelling the "hospital train" standing in ARNHEM station "which was clearly marked overall with red crosses". I have often wondered about this; perhaps a survivor from ARNHEM can clear it up.

But this was not the end of the affair. The German operators, who of course had used the link-call "BRI" to us, kept us on hourly QRX for 24 hours. It would be interesting to find the story behind this; I know that at least one of the high-ups who successfully opposed us at ARNHEM was later involved in the plot to get rid of Hitler and make terms with the Western Allies, and, in any imagination, I think that if only Churchill had been informed of this ad hoc link with the enemy command, in time, perhaps the war could have been shortened by several months.

(d) While all these unscheduled activities were going on. 110 Section was in Advanced Corps

FROM ROBERT EHRLER (RSARS 1636) comes the following reply  
to G3BGM from the last "MERCURY".

"I would like to answer Don, G3BGM, about the Captain with the silver studded revolver and our left hand neighbours. This would have to be the 128th Radio Intercept Company which was with II Corps for all of W2. I worked in England with the 128th at Longford Castle copying press from the United States in the summer of 1942 and did this on a typewriter as that was the only way to copy code from the United States at 35 wpm. Up at the front you would not need this I agree. Please try to remember before we say anything that we were GREEN troops and sure as heck needed lots of experience and we had none. Once we had some experience I assure you it did not take very long to get smart.

I enlisted in the Signal Corps at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey, in March of 1942, and never saw one piece of Radio Equipment and when I did overseas nothing was ever explained to me. I was self taught and being an Amateur for 12 years before enlisting was a great help, and I was active for these years and had worked over 100 countries before the war started in 1939. I knew how to operate and also to fix the radio gear in the army. I was in the US for 4 months and overseas for 38 months. When I was getting ready for the invasion of North Africa in November 1942, they found out that I had not even fired a rifle in the army! So they took me out some place so I could fire my Springfield. I was getting smart quickly as I had my own Springfield at home for many years. I don't claim to be smart but with a little brains issue it doesn't take long to get smart in Combat. II Corps linked up with the English 8th Army east of Gafsa I guess in late March or early April in 1943. Lets face it after the North African campaign in Tunisia I never did find out what happened to Lt. Gen. Anderson of the English 1st army. We had a clinker at II Corps before we got Patton.

We all have about the same brains and its just how we use them that counts and I do think some of the Americans could be a pain in the neck as they sure gave me a pain once in a while. I always respected the customs of each country and tried to get along with people. I say look for the good points - we all have them and no one is perfect. I guess this is what I'm really trying to say to Don.

Kind regards. W2AG (RSARS 1636)

The 'Best MERCURY Article' award for 1981 was a close run thing, G3BGM leading with his article 'Some Experiences with Special Signals'

#### MAIL\_BOX-

From: Don Shirreff, G3BGM, Wrightsbridge, Lower Wanborough, Nr. Swindon. ".....First of all to put the record straight, some alterations to the original text, in case I offended anyone by inaccuracies. (This refers to the article "Some experiences with Special Signals. - Ed.). I think the VHF version of the German Para. and Infantry Pack Set was Tornister Funk d (not b as I said). There were also versions b and f using frequencies about the same as the WS 18, but we never heard any in action.

There were two serious mistakes in the NIJMEGEN episode, as I realised when I visited the excellent Airborne Division Museum at Arnhem last August. The American Airborne Division which held the wooded country to the east of Nijmegen was the 82nd, and the village where we put the VHF Observation Post was Groesbeek, not Osterbeek, which is, of course, where our 1st Airborne dropped.

I have had lengthy CW discussions with Bob, W2AG/RSARS 1636 about the Signal Intelligence Section of 2nd US Corps, which I met in North Africa. We could have only just missed each other out there. I don't think he took offence at what I said, but in case anyone else did, I would like to emphasise that we were terribly 'green' when we started in the desert, and I admire the way in which the Americans were much more open to the man on the ground and learned much quicker than our hierarchy did. It was a pleasure to show Americans around and explain what we were doing; you knew that they were taking the point, whereas one feels even now that all our hard won experience became lost somewhere in the Mahomed Ali Club for senior officers. For instance, why has the whole point about link calls been lost in modern Signals procedure?. They seem to be now back to the insecure methods which we pulled the British Army out of in 1941.

On the episode at CAUMUNT in Normandy where we heard officers discussing an impending air attack on German armour to the south of Caen, I have had correspondence with Chuck Hooker, VE3CQH/RSARS 0067, who is interested in the history of the Canadian Forces. It seems that what we heard was a Forward Air Formation Signals Link with the U.K. which was being tried out the day before Operation GOODWOOD. The lesson is obvious, but cannot be too frequently repeated.

I also warned Pat Hawker, G3VA/RSARS 0663 that what was coming out in our No. 71 might clash with his experiences printed in Wireless World for January 1982. I had heard that the link we left with the late Airey Neave had later been suspect, but never the extent to which it may have been two-timing us. Again, anyone visiting the Museum at Arnhem, or who have Dutch friends who lived through that period will have it brought home to them that it was the Left in Holland, particularly the brave railway trade unionists who went on strike for the rest of the War while occupied by the Germans, who were on our side, whereas the Right were pretty half-hearted.

Incidentally, this was my experience in France and Belgium as well, and I had access to the Sitrep maps almost every day at Corps Headquarters. A great deal of the post-war literature of resistance derring-do has been exaggerated. We kept quite good tabs on the Germans during those hectic days, and they hardly ever reported the bridges claimed to have been blown up by the resistance.

As I implied in my introduction, a great deal of profit has been made from war-time adventure stories, whereas those who know have had their lips sealed by loyalty and The Official Secrets Act. The sterling operators who really produced the stuff have had very little recognition.

Yours Sincerely Don. G3BGM

P.S. One lighter touch. I would very much like to know from any ornithologist/operator what the "Vic-Eddie" Bird might have been. When operators at BAGUSH staggered out of the Smokey dug-out to greet the dawn before going down for a freshening swim in the salty Mediterranean, they used to be followed around by this extraordinary bird. By that time they were fed up with Morse and their language was unprintable....."

#### CLANDESTINE RADIO IN HOLLAND, 1944-45.

##### G3VA/0663

Like many other members I was fascinated by the experiences of Don Shirreff, G3BGM/1539, with Special Signals, 1939-45. He showed clearly the value of Sigint and conversely the importance of good Signals security. In Part 3 he dealt with his experiences in Holland in the tragic Winter of 1944-45 and in some later comments (Mail Box, No. 72, 7/82 page IV) specifically mentions my articles on Clandestine Radio published in Wireless World, January/February 1982, suggesting that his recollections rather clash with mine.

Don's account may indeed have left readers with considerable reservations about: (1) the private across-the-lines telephone that existed September/November 1944 at the Nijmegen power station; (2) the role, if any, of the "do-it-yourself" secret radio networks of the Dutch Resistance, independent of those organized by Allied Intelligence and Special Forces (SOE/OSS); and (3) whether Western European Resistance was as effective as some post-war books have suggested. Readers may also have been puzzled by his unhappy experiences at Nijmegen when attempting to retrace his steps in Holland. I would like to comment on these matters, whilst fully accepting that Don accurately described the situation as it appeared to him.

(1) The power station telephone was, as Don states, handed over to Airey Neave's 159 "escape" organization. During November 1944 it was used, inter alia, for setting up the ill-fated Pegasus 2 operation intended to bring back a second large batch of Arnhem evaders. No less than 138 Arnhem survivors had been brought back on October 17-18 in Pegasus 1 although a national newspaper had unfortunately revealed details that clearly indicated that further attempts at rescue were likely to be made. Although never an official member of 159 I spent several weeks with the escape unit's Nijmegen detachment during this period and was well aware of the secret telephone - although my own visits to the power station were to take advantage of its hot water baths, a precious rarity in the town!

Unhappily, the evaders assembled on the night of November 23 were ambushed by the Germans while still on the wrong side of the river. I believe that 36 members of the party - evaders and Dutch guides - were killed or captured, but the others were able to regain the Dutch homes that had been giving them shelter.

There is little doubt that the Germans knew in advance that a rescue was planned that night. However, I do not believe that this was due to any betrayal by the Dutch power station engineers. The link went "dead" shortly before Pegasus 2, and it is more likely that conversations over this link had in fact been monitored by the Germans for some days or even weeks. On the other hand there is no doubt that the Dutch Underground successfully operated a number of clandestine telephone systems, even including secret telephone exchanges in occupied territory.

(2) Don Shirreff's account may have left readers with the impression that the clandestine radio networks of the Binnenlandse Strijdkrachten (Dutch Forces of the Interior) existed only on paper and have been embellished by post-war writers. Can I assure him that this is far from the truth? Again, my evidence for this is not based on hearsay but stems from the fact that from January 1 1945 to May 1945 I was one of two British radio operators loaned by British Intelligence to the Netherlands Intelligence Bureau (Bureau Inlichtingen or B.I.). During this period no less than 2409 cipher messages passed between Eindhoven and the clandestine radio stations of the Raad van Verzet (RVV) Radiodienst, the service with which I was concerned. My SCU colleague, Sgt. Bert Lawler, was similarly working at a separate control station for the radio service of Orcliedienst (OD), a group which had originally been founded by former members of the Dutch Army and which was undoubtedly more "right wing" politically than RVV, whose early members had

political affiliations far left of centre. While the number and value of messages handled by the OD radiodienst were less than those of RVV, it was nevertheless a substantial operation providing useful information on German activities, including V-weapon launchings, in occupied territory.

Both radio services suffered tragic losses, especially as a result of a series of German raids on clandestine stations in late January and February 1945. Indeed by May 1945 I believe that only a small number of the people responsible for these stations were still alive. Both organizations, which together formed the Binnenlandse Radiodienst, included a number of pre-war Dutch radio amateurs, although RVV drew primarily for radio operators on the Dutch KLM airline.

A third internal Dutch radio network was organized in advance of Operation Market Garden - the massive air drops that launched the liberation of Holland - by the Landelijke Knokploegen (LKP) or National Fighting Squads. I have found no record of any LKP radio traffic, and this network may never have functioned effectively on any substantial scale.

The OD radio network was originally established by a well-known Philips radio engineer, J.P. Heybeer, author of several pre-war text books. In the summer of 1944 he handed over the running of this service to W.J.L. Dalmijn, PAØDD, who survived to become a prominent member of the IARU Region 1 Bureau and who published one of the few detailed accounts of the work of the Binnenlandse Radiodienst in "Electron" in 1970, not long before his death. Heybeer, unhappily, was shot on April 14 1945. Dick Rollema, PAØSE, a schoolboy during the occupation of his country, kindly translated part of PAØDD's account and has provided other information that was not available to me in 1945. Since the publication of my Wireless World articles I have also been in touch with Professor Dr. L de Jong of the Netherlands National State Institute for War Documentation and author of the 16 volumes of the official "The Kingdom of the Netherlands during the second world war" copies of which (Dutch text) can be found at The Imperial War Museum reference library in London.

Prof de Jong has corrected one or two details of my account of the Binnenlandse Radiodienst and provided me with further information. In his view clandestine radio links were indispensable to covert Resistance and Intelligence work (personally I believe that radio should be avoided for outward transmission if at all possible). He reveals that RVV, with an active sabotage section, was first organized by Jan Thijssen in the Spring of 1943 and by early 1944 was in touch with the Dutch and British Intelligence services in England. However in Autumn 1944, Thijssen quarrelled with Colonel H. Koot, Commander of the Dutch Forces of the Interior. As a result Thijssen ceased to be leader of the RVV Radiodienst; however he was arrested by the Germans on November 8 1944 and shot in March 1945. The RVV radio service was continued by F. van der Laaken. At the time I became principal radio operator at the Abbe-Museum in Eindhoven the network comprised some ten clandestine transmitting stations in the occupied north, interlinked by couriers. Van der Laaken was arrested in February 1945 about the time when so many of the RVV and OD stations were lost. He was shot in April.

An RVV station which remained in operation until the Armistice in Holland was the one that served Amsterdam. The operator there was extremely proficient (almost certainly ex-KLM); he frequently sent me five-letter cipher traffic at over 25 groups per minute: I once timed him over several complete messages and found he was averaging 27 groups per minute. This man, whom so far I have never been able to identify, also operated a clandestine link to one of the Special Communications stations near Stony Stratford. He was by far the most efficient operator that I came across in two years of working clandestine links with France, Belgium and Holland.

(3) Don Shirreff states, with some justification, that "a great deal of the post-war literature of Resistance has been exaggerated". Undoubtedly this is the case - though it could be argued that many of the most remarkable stories have either never been written or never published in the U.K. Sir Herbert Marchant, a wartime member of Bletchley Park, has stated: "Old men forget and clandestine operators tend, more than most, to put a very rosy gloss on the roles they played, secure in the knowledge they will not be found out". ("Operators", in this instance, does not refer specifically to radio operators). Malcolm Muggeridge, no stranger to MI6, has put it even more bluntly: "Intelligence agents tend to be even bigger liars than journalists, and are given to exaggerating their achievements, as well as the importance of their opposite numbers, in order to magnify the feat of getting the better of them". Despite these devastating comments, I agree with

Philip Jones, who in 1944-45 controlled the Belgium and Dutch sections of SOE, when he writes: "I have been dismayed by the profusion of books covering covert operations in World War 2 which overlook or even ignore the part played by the Underground in Belgium and Holland".

(4) One reason for the absence of authentic accounts of Belgian and Dutch clandestine work, I would suggest, can be found in the continued distrust of many Dutchmen of the wartime British-organized covert operations in their country between 1939 to 1945. It began badly with the kidnapping by the Germans of two senior members of SIS at Venlo on November 9, 1939 during which a member of Dutch Intelligence lost his life and which led to the loss of a number of SIS's agents in Holland and Germany. An even greater calamity was the successful "turning" of clandestine radio circuits to Holland in the well-known Operation North Pole (Englandspiel). Throughout 1942 and 1943 the enemy virtually ran the entire SOE operation in Holland: 47 young Dutch agents sent into Holland from England lost their lives in a fiasco for which responsibility undoubtedly rests with SOE, although at least some of the turned radio links were with SIS's Special Communications stations. In turn, North Pole led to the Allied decision not to risk providing supplies to the Dutch Underground, at least on the massive scale of those delivered to the French Resistance during the pre D-Day build up. Then again, several operations of IS9, including the unnecessary venture across the rivers by Captain Peter Baker, led to the execution of Dutch families sheltering or assisting Allied forces.

In the U.K., the Arnhem part of "Operation Market Garden" is seen as a heroic failure - a bridge too far. For the Dutch it resulted in that terrible winter of hunger and death in the north; a disaster that might have been avoided if only the British planners had paid more attention to the warnings from the Dutch Underground of the presence near Arnhem of crack German troops. By an ironic twist, there are even those in Britain who still believe the failure was brought about by Christiaan Lindemans ("King Kong"), or another so-called "Traitor of Arnhem", despite all the evidence that indicates this was not so. Later, incidentally, it was the Dutch Underground who, if my memory serves me correctly, first identified Antwerp as the target for the German Ardennes offensive of December 1944.

Relations with Dutch civilians were not improved by Allied bombing, no matter how essential this may have been. In Nijmegen I heard bitter accounts of a heavy daytime raid by the USAF who mistook the town for Kleve in Germany. At one stage, the Dutch Underground openly threatened to cease all activities on behalf of the Allies unless RAF bombing of V-weapon bases near The Hague was conducted with fewer civilian casualties.

Nor have post-war politics smiled on former members of European Resistance movements. Dick Rollema, PAØSE, has told me his experience in approaching a former OD radio operator (still an active Dutch radio amateur). He proved "somewhat reluctant - as many other people are - to talk about their activities in Resistance groups". This man finally admitted he had operated a radio transmitter first from the basement of a church in the centre of Amsterdam and later from a hospital at Zwolle until it had been raided by a large number of SD (Gestapo) agents.

Similarly, following the publication of my Wireless World articles, I received a letter from one of the relatively few French amateurs still living who were actively concerned with clandestine radio in that country. He wrote: "I find it rather moving that the British pay a tribute to a somewhat forgotten corporation. Here, in France, the best thing you can expect when you are brought to confess that you have been a radio agent is an ironic smile".

So, Mercury readers, do not judge the Resistance or its clandestine radio links solely on the basis of those bridges that Don indicates may or may not have actually been blown up. Still less on an unenthusiastic welcome should you visit the Nijmegen power station. Remember, for example, that while the escape routes of IS9 successfully brought back many thousands of aircrew it has been estimated that for every escapee, at least one member of the Underground paid with his or her life. And although the Intelligence networks may not have consistently provided as much information as Sigint, they made a valuable and indispensable contribution. For my part, I retain a high regard and much admiration for those who dared work secret radios from

enemy-occupied territory.

For any member of RSARS who may still be inclined to doubt the achievements of the Dutch Resistance I would add, from information from Prof. de Jong, that in addition to the stream of information received by B.I. from the radio traffic of RVV and OD, high-grade written reports also came in from the "Albrecht" group who did not use radio. Furthermore he assesses as probably the most remarkable services rendered by a Dutch underground movement neither Intelligence nor sabotage but the care of 300,000 people, both Jewish and non-Jewish, forced to live in hiding. This service was provided by the "Landelijkje Organisatie voor Hulp aan Onderduikers" founded by Pastor Frits Stomp and Mrs. Helena Kuipers-Rietberg housewife and mother of five children, who died in Ravensbrueck concentration camp. At its peak, it included some 15,000 volunteer helpers. A vivid glimpse of life in the shadows is contained in the remarkable diary of the 13 year-old Jewish girl Anne Frank who went into hiding in Amsterdam in July 1942; was discovered on Aug 4, 1944; and died of typhus in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp in March 1945.

#### STOP LAUGHING IN THE RANKS

G3CWW suggests a new column on the lines of the Readers Digest "Humour in Uniform". Perhaps readers would submit items for publication please.

#### The first one comes from G3BGM/1539 :

In 1941 when I was in Cairo before being returned to the desert I bought my then current YL a bottle of "Secret du Desert" - a powerful scent purveyed in the Mena House Hotel near the Pyramids. Object was to indicate through the censorship as to where we had arrived in the Middle East. Whilst buying the stuff I inadvertently allowed a dash of the liquid to be put on my wrist by the salesgirl. Two days later, in spite of frequent bathes, the blokes in the Mess up at Bagush were still following me around like dogs. Last Easter, a Canadian colleague teacher on an exchange visit went to Cairo, and I thought it would be a good idea to get a little bottle of the stuff for the XYL. Sure enough the greenish liquid arrived last week, in time for our wedding anniversary and is really rather nice. A change from the old Chanel No.5 etc. What was interesting was that Steve, who spent some time chasing girls in Egypt, knew of it, and stranger still old Walter did also, though he called it "Panther Juice". The name has now been Anglicised into "Secret of the Desert". Speculation went on during my QSO with Steve (N2DAN) and Walter (VE3AX) as to whether the substance is based on camel or cat products.

Anyone knowing the ingredients of this magic brew please inform us.