

**As heirs and successors to so much of our military aviation history it is fitting that the first issue of 'Proceedings' should be dedicated to**



**to whom the Chairman and Committee of the Royal Air Force Historical Society tender their grateful thanks for sponsoring this inaugural issue.**

**THE PROCEEDINGS  
OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

**Issue No. 1 — January 1987**

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*The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors concerned, and are not necessarily those held by the Royal Air Force Historical Society or any member of the committee.*

## **EDITOR'S NOTES**

With the publication of this first issue of 'Proceedings' the Society's first operation is completed. By the very nature of the Society, future meetings will be concerned with past events. A similar regard for the degree to which past meetings have successfully met the aims of the Society will need to be kept in mind when planning future programmes, and this will call for feedback from the membership to the Committee.

The main aim of the Committee is to provide lectures and discussions of interest to the members at convenient venues, bearing in mind the need to balance the number of members within the catchment area of any particular venue with the cost of providing it. It is important therefore that the right note should be struck, not only with regard to the place and subject of the meetings, but also, and particularly for those who cannot attend the meetings, in the content of this journal.

This first issue is, inevitably, a shot in the dark. Hopefully, members will like what they see. Whether or not this is so, the editor would be happy to receive both comments on the first issue and letters or other material intended for publication in future issues. Such letters, etc., should be addressed to:-

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## Membership notes

A membership card for the period ended 31 December, 1987, is being issued with this journal and should be used to gain admission to the Society's meetings. Please enter your name on the card in block capitals, on receipt.

The Society's first meeting, on 20 October 1986, was notable for the atmosphere of enthusiasm and camaraderie, no doubt fuelled in part by the realisation that the good fortune to hear a talk by Professor R V Jones is not something which is vouchsafed to many. The first meeting, therefore, holds out great hope for the future. There is so much scope for research and discussion that the question will surely always be, 'What must be left out?', rather than 'What can we find to put in?' The analysis of the membership of 434 at 15 December 1986, shows how wide the interests of the members are:-

<i>Members</i>	<i>Interests</i>	
RAF connection -		
– serving	79	Policy/strategy 30
– retired	107	Aspects of air power 42
– World War II	167	Campaigns 25
– National Service	18	Regions 9
– Auxiliary	12	Units/formations/airfields 24
– Pre-war RAFVR	6	Aircraft 12
– Cadets	22	Peripherals (uniforms, medals, 18
– Civil Service	19	songs, model aircraft)
– Family connection	27	Aviation writers, artists and 37
		broadcasters
		Professional/academic historians 25
		No special interest stated some 230

## *Geographical distribution of membership*

<i>United Kingdom</i>		<i>Overseas</i>	
South east	314	Headquarters and units	5
South west	27	USA	4
Midlands	28	Austria	2
North	33	Australia	2
Wales	5	Canada	2
Scotland	3	Cyprus	1
Northern Ireland	1	Denmark	1
Isle of Man	1	F.R. Germany	1
		New Zealand	1
		Singapore	1
		Spain	1
		Switzerland	1

## **Future meetings**

As far as possible, meetings will be held on Mondays, and evening meetings will commence at 1800 hours. Consideration will be given to the programmes of other bodies with similar interests, in choosing dates. All meetings for 1987 will be held in London, but the practicability of holding occasional meetings elsewhere will be reviewed from time to time. The next two meetings will be held at The Royal Aeronautical Society, 4 Hamilton Place, London W1 at 1800 hours:-

16 March, 1987. John Terraine will speak on 'World War II – The Balance Sheet'.

1 June, 1987. The Annual General Meeting, following which Air Commodore H Probert will talk about the Air Historical Branch, and Dr J Tanner will speak about the RAF Museum.

It is hoped to open a bar at the conclusion of each of these meetings.

On Monday, 26 October 1987 there will be an all-day seminar on 'Air aspects of the Suez crisis'; for further details, see page 45.

## **Questions answered**

A number of questions raised at the first meeting are dealt with below:-

### **1. Will the proceedings of the Society be recorded?**

Yes. A member offered to tape-record the Society's lectures for posterity and the first tape is now in store.

### **2. Can guests be brought to meetings?**

There is no objection in principle but there could be practical difficulties in providing accommodation. The lecture by John Terraine on 16 March, 1987 will be restricted to members only, but the opinions of members attending on that occasion will be sampled, to provide a basis for a decision on the feasibility of admitting guests to future meetings.

### **3. Will the Fleet Air Arm be included in the Society's coverage?**

Only to the extent that the RAF was responsible for the FAA during the inter-war period. The Society's interest is in RAF affairs, and that offers ample scope for future activities.

### **4. Does the Committee intend to apply for the Society to be recognised as a Charity?**

Yes.

## **Vacancy for General Secretary**

The Society urgently needs a volunteer to fill the post of General Secretary. The Committee hopes that this vacancy can be filled without resort to the traditional method of obtaining volunteers on the '... you, you, and you ...' principle! If you would like to give a helping hand please write to Group Captain Neubroch.

## **Book reviews**

It is hoped to include one or more book reviews in each issue of 'Proceedings'. The Committee would, therefore, be glad to hear from:-

- any member prepared to review a book;
- publishers of books likely to interest the Society.

## RAF HISTORICAL SOCIETY INAUGURAL LECTURE

20 October 1986

The Society's inaugural lecture was given by Professor R V Jones, CB, CBE, FRS, author of *Most Secret War*, the account of British Scientific Intelligence during the 1939-1945 war, published in 1978, serialised in the *Sunday Telegraph* and used as the basis for the television series *The Secret War*. Introducing Professor Jones, Air Commodore Probert said:

'In introducing this evening's lecturer I'd like to take your minds back to the middle 1930s, the time when – according to some – the RAF was doing so little to prepare to meet the German threat. The facts are rather different for, as John Terraine has recently reminded us in *The Right of the Line*, those years witnessed a silent, almost unseen, transformation.

It was Professor Blackett, in his 1960 Tizard Memorial Lecture, who pointed out so clearly that one aspect of this transformation was the growing intimacy between senior officers of the armed forces and the scientists in the government research establishments. It stemmed primarily, of course, from the formation in 1935 of the Committee for the Scientific Survey of Air Defence, and R V Jones was one of the young scientists who came to work for the Air Ministry at that time. Incredible as it now seems, by 1940 his field of research led to his being summoned to attend a meeting of the Cabinet on the subject of the German beams – at the tender age of twenty-eight!

Throughout the rest of the war he was closely involved in almost every aspect of intelligence, including Ultra, and nobody is now better placed to talk to us from personal experience about the RAF and the intelligence war. Moreover, 'RV' addresses us this evening, not as a guest, but as a fully paid-up founder member of our Society!'



## **THE INTELLIGENCE WAR AND THE ROYAL AIR FORCE**

**by Professor R V Jones CB CBE FRS**

In the frantic decade of the thirties, when some of us were doing all we could to tackle the problems of air defence, Professor Lindemann once told me that he had written to the Air Ministry accusing it of taking so much time to do anything that it must be attempting to emulate the Deity to whom we sang 'A thousand ages in thy sight are as an evening gone'. On that scale the sixty-eight years since the creation of the Royal Air Force would seem as a minute or less in the long cavalcade of human history; but they have seen more spectacular advances in knowledge and technology than had occurred in the entire preceding span of historical time. Jet engines, supersonic flight, radar, television, computers, guided missiles, atomic bombs, artificial satellites and interplanetary probes have all come into being since the Royal Air Force was formed; and it has had to evolve with them through the most intense period of technological development the world has yet known.

So whatever the history of the Royal Air Force may lack in duration is much more than compensated by the range and scale of its activities, both technological and operational, and by its vital part in the momentous battles of the Second World War. It is, therefore, entirely opportune that this history is now to be recognised by the formation of the Royal Air Force Historical Society, and it will be gratifying to all of us who served in Intelligence that the Society has chosen for the subject of its first lecture the relations between the Royal Air Force and Intelligence.

The title of the lecture incorporates more than one ambiguity when it refers to 'the intelligence war', even if we confine the context to World War II. Does it mean the war between the British and German intelligence services? Or might it refer to the struggle that sometimes occurred between the intelligence branches of the three Services; for example, in getting the highest priority in the cryptographic effort at Bletchley? Or to that other war that broke out from time to time between the intelligence and operational branches, when the operators found intelligence assessments of their success too low to be palatable?

If that were not enough, we in Intelligence occasionally found

ourselves in dispute with some of the leading experts in the country regarding the interpretation of evidence concerning new German weapons; for example, in the weight of the V2, of which an American witness, Professor W W Rostow, wrote 'Although I was at that time relatively young (27), I had acquired some experience with both academic and governmental bureaucratic structures and their capacity for bloodless tribal warfare. But I had never been present at, let alone presided over, a meeting charged with more emotional tension than that centred on the weight of the V2 warhead'.

A further interpretation of our title might point to the part played by the Royal Air Force, not in *using* intelligence, but in gathering information which was to be collated with that obtained from other sources to build up the intelligence assessments of our opponents' intentions.

What I shall have to say will probably draw on experiences in all these aspects, not primarily in reminiscence but in the belief, with Dionysius of Halicarnassus, that 'history is philosophy teaching through examples'. At the same time, some degree of reminiscence will be inevitable, if only to express an appreciation of some of the personalities involved.

My own contact with Air Intelligence started in 1938, and I became regularly involved from September 1939 onwards. The main objects of pre-war intelligence were the size and technical capabilities of the various branches of the *Luftwaffe*, and of its bomber component in particular. On estimates of size from 1935 onwards the Air Ministry found itself in conflict with other bodies, including Winston Churchill, who contended that its estimates were too low. This was, in fact, true up to September 1939, when Air Intelligence began to over-estimate; for example by one-third in the numbers of the German long-range bomber force. Some of us can remember the fantastic official predictions for the numbers of casualties to be expected in London in the first week of the war. Frank Inglis, who as DDI3 was head of the German branch of Air Intelligence early in the war, told me how the prediction had originated. He had been asked at very short notice for an estimate of how great the casualties might be and so he assumed that every available German bomber might be employed on a round-the-clock programme, allowing only enough time between sorties to be re-armed and re-fuelled. He realised that this would result in a wild

over-estimate of what would probably happen and had not expected any rational being to take it seriously; he had merely supplied an answer which matched an irresponsibly posed question.

It was interesting to watch the change of positions in the first two years of the war. Churchill, who before the war had challenged the Air Intelligence figures as being too low, now began, prompted by Lindemann, to challenge them as being too high; one of the key points being the fighting strength of a *Staffel*, which Air Intelligence held to be twelve, whereas Lindemann was for nine with three in reserve. The controversy resulted in a judge, Mr Justice Singleton, being appointed in December 1940 to settle it. I was summoned to his Inquiry, the erroneous impression having gone around that I was an expert on the size of the *Luftwaffe*. I managed to avoid embarrassment by telling the judge that I was no such expert, but might be able to help him in one way, which was to give an opinion of the reliability of the various sources of evidence that would be laid before him, based on the experiences that I had had with *Knickebein* and the other beams. Quite the most reliable source for numbers, I told him, had been the Y Service (now Sigint) records of the W/T callsigns of individual aircraft. An enormous amount of painstaking observation and recording must have been undertaken by the call-sign section of what was then called DDSigsY, under Gp Capt L F Blandy. Time after time, when I asked Flt Lt Maggs, the head of the section, whether he had any trace of a particular call-sign, he was able to tell me when the aircraft had been heard and the airfield with which it had been in contact. The Singleton Report noted that the Y Service coverage of call-signs of the long-range bomber force was as high as eighty to ninety per cent. Lindemann, too, gave the Y Service evidence great weight; and the final assessment justified his original challenge which reduced the estimate of German front-line strength by a quarter.

While such estimates involved the collation of evidence from different types of source, which was the prime function of many of the branches in the Air Intelligence Directorates, the call-sign evidence also illustrated another area of Air Intelligence; this was to collect raw information for itself. Apart from what it might receive from secret agents via MI6 it could, of course, draw on reports from air attaches and on whatever might be available in the press. But, particularly in war, other channels of information could be opened up; photographic

reconnaissance, electronic reconnaissance, prisoner interrogation and captured equipment could all provide valuable evidence and would require specialist staffs with air force and kindred personnel to operate and exploit them. And in the case of World War II, the Royal Air Force had another direct part to play in the hazardous ferrying of agents into and out of German-occupied territory. Let us look briefly at these activities in turn.

As regards *pre-war* secret agents, they produced very little for scientific and technical intelligence before 1940. One telling failure in this respect was the absence of any report of the erection of two massive and remarkable radio structures, one at Schleswig-Holstein and the other near Cleves, only a few miles from the Dutch border, which were the *Knickebein* beam antennae, a hundred feet high and mounted on turntables three hundred feet across. As the war progressed, of course, there were new opportunities for MI6 in encouraging and working with the resistance organisations which developed in the occupied territories. In *Most Secret War* I gave a few examples of the bravery of the men and women of the Resistance; and as a result of the book being published I have learnt of further examples, and of the identities of individuals whose stories I told but whose names I did not know; the Belgian agent, for example, whose reconnaissance report of German radar stations ended with an emphasis of their importance which he illustrated by the vigilance of the sentries who had shot at him, ‘fortunately’, he said, ‘with more zeal than accuracy’. He went on, ‘As far as our work is concerned, it would be helpful if we knew to what extent you and the British Services are interested. We have been working so long in the dark that any reaction from London about our work would be welcome to such obscure workers as ourselves. We hope this will not be resented since, whatever may happen, we assure you of our utmost devotion and the sacrifice of our lives’. One of the Belgian resistance organisations has since identified the writer as a thirty-year old doctor, André Mathy, who was later captured by the Germans and executed on 21 June 1944 at Halle after more than a year as a prisoner; he had kept his word to the last.

Another gallant episode which only came to light after my book was published involved a Frenchman, Pierre Julitte. A member of de Gaulle’s staff, he had joined the Resistance, and was captured by the

*Gestapo* in March, 1943. He then spent the next twenty-five months in prisons and concentration camps, including Buchenwald and Dore. At Buchenwald he and his comrades realised that what they were being made to work on were the V-weapons, and they managed to get a message out recommending that the factory, in which they themselves might well be working, should be attacked. On 24 August 1944, he said, it was indeed bombed. At first I wondered whether his story could be true, for there was no trace of such an attack either in Basil Collier's *The Defence of The United Kingdom* or General Dornberger's *V-2* nor in *The Rocket Team* by Ordway and Sharp. Fortunately, I asked Air Cdre Probert at AHB whether there was anything in the records that might confirm the story because, although in his book Pierre Julitte had changed the names of all the characters involved (he afterwards told me that he wanted to tell a truthful story but did not want to identify individuals who had behaved badly), his account rang true. And indeed this turned out to be the case, for the Air Staff Operational Summary for 25 August recorded that, on the previous day, 128 Flying Fortresses had attacked 'an armaments factory' at Buchenwald with 'excellent results' which were later detailed as 'severe damage to nearly every major building', including some of the barracks in the concentration camp. Julitte and his immediate colleagues survived, but they could well have been among the many who did not.

Such sacrifices are rarely recorded in official histories, partly through the difficulty of historians getting near enough to the evidence, particularly when, as in this instance, there is no clue to the underlying truth in the bald statements of operational summaries. I am reminded of Lord Slim's book, *Unofficial History*, where he begins each chapter with a statement from the official History of Military Operations in World War I and then spends the whole chapter describing what actually happened from his own direct involvement in the episode concerned. And I know how he felt because of my own experience in the Baedeker raids of 1942, where the Official History merely records that, after 4 May, 'almost everything went wrong for the attackers'. The main thing that went wrong was that their percentage of bombs on target fell from about 50% to 13%, thanks to our introduction of supersonic jamming of the X-beams. How we knew that supersonic jamming would be needed, how we prepared for

it but failed to use it for the first fatal fortnight, was a story that merited a chapter in itself.

Actually, official historians are not to be blamed if the relevant information is not available to them or when time does not permit them to ferret it out. I am reminded of this point in connection with reports from the Resistance that sometimes failed to get through to us in London. Thanks again to the publicity arising from *Most Secret War*, one or two of these have now come to me, in particular from General Pomes Barrere of the *Deuxième Bureau*, who had sent in reports on the V-weapons in 1943 and 1944 which would undoubtedly have been helpful had they reached us at the time. There were probably many such instances, some of which were due to some intermediate official not realising the importance of sending the reports on, incomprehensible to him though they might have seemed.

No such problem affected photographic reconnaissance, which was the unique contribution of the Royal Air Force to the intelligence war. It owed much to the enterprise and technical skill of Sidney Cotton whom his successor, Geoffrey Tuttle, described to me as the greatest leader he had known. Since I have described my own relations with photo-reconnaissance in some detail in *Most Secret War*, I will say little more here beyond repeating my admiration for the outstanding work that was done at all levels, both by the pilots and by the interpreters and also by the army of men and women who processed the photographs – those whose work, in Lord Slim's words, usually only comes to notice when something for which they are responsible has gone wrong.

This was equally true of another service for which the Royal Air Force was directly responsible, that of the radio intercept operators who listened to German radio signals and had to spend long hours taking down streams of Morse characters whose significance was to them quite unintelligible and yet whose accurate recording was essential if the cryptographers were to have any success in deciphering them. It was rather better for those operators who had to record the radio-telephone messages between, for example, German night fighters and their ground control stations, because once we had worked out the significance of various calls such as 'Emil Emil' or 'Rolf Lise' it was possible to listen to the activities of the German night defences against our bombers almost as though we were in a

ringside seat. But it was a strain, all the same.

Cryptography, of course, deserves far more than a lecture to itself, even at the tactical level where codes were relatively easy to break. Curiously, not so much has been told of the work at this level, beyond Aileen Clayton's excellent book *The Enemy is Listening*. As regards cryptography at the then highest level, Gordon Welchman has given a detailed account in *The Hut 6 Story* which has been supplemented by a posthumous paper earlier this year (ie 1986 Ed) in *Intelligence and National Security*. In this latter he pays a more adequate tribute to the work of the Poles who, in 1939, were substantially ahead of us in breaking Enigma and who handed over their work, including reconstructions of actual Enigma machines.

Let me say rather more about the Poles, for not only did they lead the way, but they succeeded in covering their tracks on leaving Warsaw when it was being overrun by the Germans. They escaped via Rumania to France and by the end of October 1939 they had started to work again on German cyphers in Paris. On the collapse of Northern France, they moved to a site in Vichy France, but finally that too became untenable when the Germans took over. Once again, in January 1943, they tried to escape, this time over the Pyrenees into Spain. But their commanding officer, Colonel Lange, and three others were betrayed en route and were sent to concentration camps where two of them died. And yet the Germans never extracted from them any inkling that Enigma was vulnerable; to me, their devotion is as impressive as their intellectual feat in breaking Enigma. And in passing we may note that 139 Polish pilots actually escaped to fight in the Battle of Britain and that they were Polish Army units which in 1944 took Monte Cassino after it had successfully withstood all our own gallant efforts to take it.

A few Poles, too, came into Air Intelligence; one, a flight lieutenant, was in the Central Interpretation Unit at Medmenham, where he worked as a photographic interpreter. His commanding officer, Gp Capt Peter Stewart, told me that on one occasion he was taking the late Duke of Kent on a tour of inspection and the Duke asked the Pole what he was doing. Standing to attention, he very correctly replied, 'Please, Sir, you must ask my commanding officer.' After the Duke had left, the group captain took the Pole aside and, while praising him for his sense of security, told him that when a

senior officer was escorted around the unit in the company of the CO the Pole could, if asked, say exactly what he was doing. A few weeks later, the CAS himself visited Medmenham and in due course he came into the Pole's section and asked him what he was doing. Coming stiffly to attention, but with a twinkle in his eye, he replied 'Please, Sir, I am making the secret waste!' Such experiences as all these made me realise the poignant force of that part of Poland's National Anthem which runs 'Poland is not yet lost'.

Another important channel by which a Royal Air Force organisation gained information was that for interrogating prisoners: this task was undertaken by a branch that ultimately became an Assistant Directorate, ADI(K), and was headed throughout the war by Denys Felkin. He and his other interrogators secured much information by their gentle questioning, including the earliest mention of the *X-Gerät*, in March 1940, which occasioned my first meeting with him. From that fortunate start we worked together in complete confidence and with very fruitful results for the entire war.

Equipment and documents, besides prisoners, also fell into our hands, the principal items being, of course, crashed aircraft. In general, the documents went to Felkin, who would send them on to whomever he knew would be most interested. The examination and recovery of crashed aircraft was undertaken by the technical intelligence branch originally designated as AI1(g) and which ultimately became an Assistant Directorate. Its officers did excellent work in the field, which was followed up by detailed examination at Farnborough. One example of Farnborough's careful analysis was its noting in 1940 that the Lorenz Blind Landing Receiver installed in German bombers was much more sensitive than would be needed for its ostensible purpose: this clinched our theory that it was to be used for beam bombing.

As the war progressed, radar equipment, too, became targets for Intelligence, the first and most spectacular example being the *Wurzburg* that we deliberately set out to capture at Bruneval, and which formed the objective for the classic raid in which the Parachute Regiment won its first battle honour.

Most of our information about radar had, however, to be gained by other means, of which the easiest appeared to be the direct interception of German radar transmissions. Since such transmissions,



and also those associated with radio-navigation such as the beams, took place in the same medium, classically called the aether, as that used for Morse and telephonic communications, there was a case for these new tasks of interception to be undertaken by the Y (or Sigint) Service. But the two problems, though technically similar, were philosophically different; in signalling, the aether was being used to transmit information from one human brain in which it had originated to another human brain, by means of frequency or amplitude modulation of the radio waves leaving the transmitter; in radar and radio-navigation the waves were being used, not to transmit intelligible information, but to establish from their times and directions of travel, geometrical relationships between points in space. While the Y Service was excellent in the former task, it was not at first attuned to the second; and it was only after one of my own officers in desperation took a receiver to the south coast in February, 1941 that we detected the transmissions from the German *Freyas* that the Y Service had missed from July 1940 onwards.

In parenthesis here, the differences in the two ways in which one and the same medium, the aether, can be exploited may be illustrated by the analogy of our ability to use the single medium of paper and pencil both to produce written messages and to make sketches; two different forms of expression that lead on to literature in the one case, and pictorial art in the other. Electronic intelligence can, therefore, require specialists as different in their skills and backgrounds as are pictorial artists from writers. This difference was not appreciated by the classic Y Service, nor for that matter by their post-war successors at GCHQ.

We in scientific intelligence had a mixed relationship with the Y Service as a result. Some degree of difficulty was inevitable, for if the Y Service was responsible for signals intelligence and we for scientific intelligence, whose was the primary responsibility for investigating any German development that involved a new application of science to signalling? At one of the more difficult periods in our relationship I happened to read in *The Times* of the engagement of the second-in-command of DDI4 – the Air Intelligence Branch responsible for the Y Service; he was Wg Cdr Claude Daubeney, and so I telephoned him anonymously and rendered what I could of the Mendelssohn Wedding March on a mouth-organ. Being

in signals intelligence he succeeded in tracing the call and, as he later told me, decided that I could not be so unco-operative as some of his colleagues claimed me to be. So, on being appointed a few months later to take over as head of RAF 'Y', he telephoned asking if he could come to see me. On arrival he said, 'I am now DDI4. I have served as deputy to two previous DDI4s and I saw them do everything they could to get you out of your job; they did not succeed; I want you to know that I am not as clever as they are, and so I am not going to try!'

This was the start of the warmest of friendships; Daubeny had been at Cranwell with Douglas Bader and was well into a career as a General Duties officer when he was posted to the Y Service. Here he did so well that the Navy and Army agreed that he should head the organisation that was set up for post-war 'Y'. He told me that in the final interview that led to his appointment he was asked whether he had any special requirements. 'I told them', he said to me, 'that I must have plenty of time to attend meetings, and they agreed. Of course, I didn't tell them that I meant race meetings!'

In the immediate post-war period he had found that he could make money through betting. His theory, which ultimately ruined him, was that although the odds were stacked in favour of the bookmakers, what an intelligent punter was doing was to bet, not against the bookmakers, but against the public through the bookmakers. There is one lasting memorial to his interest in horseracing; it is the siting of GCHQ, for when a new establishment had to be built for cryptographers when Bletchley was evacuated, he picked Cheltenham because he could then look forward to combining visits to GCHQ with attendance at the Cheltenham meetings. He would have been amused to see an incident on television two or three years ago, when GCHQ was invaded by racegoers who thought that they were entering the gates of the racecourse.

Mention of Bletchley recalls the fact that several of our organisations were accommodated in former country houses: photographic interpretation at Medmenham; prisoner interrogation at Latimer; technical intelligence near Harrow; besides signals intelligence at Bletchley; radio countermeasures at Radlett; MI5 at Blenheim; Political Warfare at Woburn, and so on. This fact at times encouraged the development of a 'country house' complex, where the inmates genuinely believed that theirs was the most important, and

sometimes the only significant, contribution to the intelligence war. It is easy to see how this could happen; each in relative isolation would see relatively little of what the others were doing; and then, in a visit of encouragement, some senior officer would attempt to pep them up by telling them how valuable their work was, sometimes slipping into such hyperbole as to say that theirs was the only contribution that mattered. I myself never did this; even though I visited them as often as I could, I tried to show each the whole intelligence picture as I saw it, and where their particular contribution fitted in.

It is a point that is worth watching for any future intelligence organisation, for the 'country house' complex can be a source of weakness of which I saw two other examples. Fortunately, the first was in Germany where military research after World War I was restarted in clandestine establishments which could only come out into the open after 1933. The Germans then found that they had a relatively large number of small establishments, individually too small to be ideally effective, but also strong enough to resist absorption into bigger establishments. As a result, the Germans were unable to co-ordinate their efforts as effectively as we had been able to do, and only late in the war did they attempt the task. My second example was in the French Resistance organisations where, for security, if for no other purpose, small networks had to operate in isolation, and many naturally came to believe that their contributions were unique. Friction could start when two networks overlapped, especially when some networks had different political complexions from others; and there tended to be rivalry for credit and status at the end of the war when the networks could come out into the open.

Another kind of intelligence source, too, tended to be found in country houses; these were our British experts in the field of weaponry. Radar, for example, had been housed at Bawdsey Manor, and later at Worth Matravers before settling into Malvern College; and even in large establishments such as Farnborough and Porton something of the same complex could be found. In fact we sometimes had an intelligence war between ourselves and the experts whom we came to regard as our spies on the laws of nature in the field concerned, while they regarded themselves, and not us, as the ultimate authority in what the Germans were doing in that field. I have already mentioned the battle over the V2 warhead; and I would tend to blame

what was probably our greatest failure over a new German weapon – the failure to discover the nerve gases – on the fact that in chemical warfare the authority for assessing what the Germans were doing did not rest with the regular intelligence organisation but with the chemical warfare experts at Porton.

The main Air Commands, too, resided in country houses. Fighter Command at Bentley Priory, Bomber Command at High Wycombe (Not actually the case. **Ed**), Coastal at Northwood and 2nd TAF at Bracknell. In a sense, too, the Commands were sources of intelligence, for they fed us the combat reports of their aircrews. At times these tended to confuse us, for example in the overclaims in the Battle of Britain, or the bomber myth that IFF paralysed the radar control of German searchlights. But the crews' experiences did intensify our own efforts to discover the nature of that control and it did prove to have a radar component. Although overclaiming had led us to regard fighter reports with reserve, they proved to be remarkably good as regards the damage inflicted on German radar before D-Day.

One important episode in which the bomber crews thought that we were doubting their claims concerned the proportion of our bombers in 1941 that were succeeding in hitting their targets. Senior officers, and even Henry Tizard, believed that we were doing well, using astro navigation and dead reckoning; but some of these had doubts which in my case were reinforced by an indignant report from a secret agent in Czechoslovakia that on a night when we claimed to have bombed the Skoda works at Pilsen there were no bombs within many miles of the town. I told Lindemann, who succeeded in pressing a most unpopular investigation of our bombing accuracy, the acid test of which would be flashlight photographs taken by each bomber. There was resentment from the crews, who thought that the investigation called into question their courage in pressing home attacks on defended targets. But they co-operated well, and the evidence proved damning to all illusions of accuracy, for on the average, only one-fifth of our bombs had fallen within five miles of their targets.

This was one of the occasions when Intelligence had to utter unwelcome truths. I myself had to do this several times, notably regarding our jamming of the X-beams in 1940, and in the use of IFF by Bomber Command over Germany in 1943 and 1944. I could hardly blame the CinC for resenting my critical reports, one of which resulted

in him being carpeted by the Secretary of State, Sir Archibald Sinclair. CAS's secretary told me that from time to time when one of my reports showed that things were going wrong, CAS would telephone the CinC and ask him whether he had seen the report and what he was going to do about it. At last, in autumn 1944, I was able to report that with IFF switched off and more discrete use of H2S, and all our counter-measures, things were now going well for the Command. This time the CinC phoned the CAS first, saying, 'Have you seen Jones' latest report?' It obviously meant all the more because of our previous refusal to flinch from saying when we thought things had gone wrong.

Indeed, a trust had gradually developed which can be simplest illustrated by the difference in attitudes between 1941 and 1944. In 1941 I had wanted to try to deceive German bombers by sending them counterfeit messages, which we could easily have done, but DCAS – who happened to be Bert Harris – refused permission on the grounds that we might well give away more than we would gain. But in 1944 not only did we have permission to give spoof instructions to the German night-fighters, but Bomber Command would telephone me every afternoon before operations with exact details of targets, timings and routes, so that I could try to guess which beacons the German night fighters would be sent to orbit as our raids developed, so that our own night fighters could be sent to attack them at the beacons.

As illustrated in our relations with Bomber Command, the need for Intelligence to have both integrity and a voice that is independent from the operational staff must be paramount in a healthy military organisation. If anyone doubts this, let him read the second chapter of Freeman Dyson's book *Disturbing the Universe*, describing his experiences in the Operational Research Section at Bomber Command – or Winston Churchill's verdict on the Battle of the Somme: 'Sir Douglas Haig was not at this time well served by his advisers in the Intelligence Department of General Headquarters. The temptation to tell a chief in a great position the things he most likes to hear is the commonest explanation of mistaken policy. Thus the outlook of the leader on whose decisions fateful events depend is usually more sanguine than the brutal facts admit'.

Thus one of the features of working with Churchill was his interest in getting the facts from Intelligence, even to the extent of sometimes wishing to see the raw reports for himself. He only had the time to do

this occasionally; but as in all his other activities he wanted to maintain contact with the front line with as few intermediate links as possible, and so at times he would summon individuals such as myself. And even though he might have flashes of anger when you had to tell him some particularly unwelcome news, he knew from his earlier experiences that this was the only way to correct 'mistaken policy'. Incidentally, among his earlier experiences were some 140 flights to acquaint himself with the handling of aircraft – before June 1914!

Besides Churchill himself I was privileged to come into working contact with many of the senior Air figures in the war, and an entire talk could be devoted to reminiscent appreciations of their achievements and characters. Charles Portal as CAS for example, took a great interest in our work and invited me to contact him direct if I had a problem that the normal organisational arrangements would not clear. This was never necessary when Charles Medhurst was ACAS(Int) because he gave us splendid support. Sholto Douglas, too, as CinC of Fighter Command, was determined to use all the information we could provide, both in the Battle of the Beams and in exploiting the decrypted German radar plots of our fighter sweeps. If I had to single out the senior Air Officer who has had least recognition from posterity for the magnitude of his contribution it would be Wilfrid Freeman, who as the pre-war Air Member for Research and Development had warmly and powerfully supported the development of radar by Watson-Watt and of the jet engine by Whittle, the Mosquito by de Havilland and several of the ideas of Barnes Wallis. In 1940 he might well have become Chief of Air Staff, but unselfishly agreed to be Portal's Vice-Chief, even though his seniority was such that he had been on the Directing Staff at Staff College when Portal was taking the course. And again, in 1941, when things were going wrong in the Mediterranean, and Churchill had such doubts about Tedder's leadership that Freeman was sent out to investigate, Portal signalled him with the suggestion that he should stay and take over from Tedder. On receiving the suggestion, Freeman signalled back; 'It is obvious that evidence of friend sent out to investigate is being used to incriminate. You and S of S will understand that role of Judas is one I cannot fill'. And so he gave up the chance of going on to be Deputy Supreme Commander in Normandy. I still have an entirely

unsolicited and handwritten note from him as VCAS congratulating me on my report on the *X-Gerät* of January 1941 which, because it incidentally showed that our countermeasures organisation against the X-beams had so far been almost entirely ineffective, aroused so much hostility from the staff concerned that they succeeded temporarily in enforcing its withdrawal. But Freeman went well out of his way to encourage me, describing the report as ‘admirable’ despite the controversy it had raised among the staff. That was the kind of man he was – and no-one deserves a biographer more. (Again, this was said in 1986; the gap has since been filled by *Wilfrid Freeman* by Anthony Furse; Spellmount, Staplehurst, 1999. **Ed**)

If I may mention one other officer who has received little mention in the records but whom I came to admire, this would be Air Cdre Frank Woolley, the Chief Intelligence Officer of the Mediterranean Air Forces in 1944, which reminds me that yet another kind of Intelligence War that we had sometimes had to fight was with our American counterparts when it came to deciding the destination of captured German equipment. Naturally, they wanted it to be sent direct to America, and we to Britain. At one stage there was a crazy ruling that anything small enough to go into an aircraft should come to us, and anything bigger should go by ship to America. One friendly American colonel said to me that this was resulting in my chaps going around with hacksaws and his with welding torches. At times, though, things could be unpleasant, and one of my civilian officers got so worked up that he threw an inkstand through the window of an American colonel (not the one of the previous sentence) from inside the colonel’s room. I thought it tactful to recall him, and in due course I sent out a replacement, having taken the greatest care to pick one on whose equable temperament I could depend. I was grateful to Frank Woolley for even accepting a replacement after all the trouble he had had in smoothing out the previous fracas.

I was, therefore, horrified when before long there was an even more serious fracas when my new representative asked to go to Rumania to examine captured radar there. The Americans insisted on sending one of their civilians to accompany him, even though their man was not nearly so well qualified and was, in fact, junior in rank; and they insisted that their man should be in charge. In Bucharest there was a flare-up which went so far as the American striking our

man – but because the American had the signals link, he radioed a formal complaint alleging that he had been struck by our man, and asking for the latter's withdrawal. 'This makes stirring reading', minuted 'Tubby' Grant, the Director of Intelligence in London, when the papers were laid on his desk. It became quite an inter-allied incident and I would have entirely understood if Frank Woolley, having had the previous trouble over one of my staff, had insisted on the second man being recalled, and been only too glad to be relieved of us turbulent scientists. Instead he signalled that he was taking no action until he had heard my officer's account of the incident and in the meantime he weighed into the Americans stressing the vital importance of our work to the Americans and the Russians as well as ourselves. It fortunately turned out that the behaviour of our man had been exemplary in the face of provocation, and Woolley's faith in us had been justified; but I learnt much from his restraint in not passing judgement until he had heard both sides, despite any predisposition to believe the worst.

At that point he and I had never even met; and our meeting was delayed because of serious injuries he sustained at Cassino. He may be remembered by some from pre-war air force days, for he carried out the acceptance trials for the Anson, which developed into one of the great workhorses as a result of his suggestions.

Fortunately, Woolley was one of those Royal Air Force officers of whom it has been my privilege to know many, who are patient enough to endure the peccadilloes of civilian scientists. In retrospect I gratefully recall how patient most senior air officers were with us. The tradition evidently goes back to RFC days, for the late Sir William Farren wrote of his experiences in 1916 in learning to fly along with F A Lindemann (later Lord Cherwell) when they were civilian scientists at Farnborough. 'I doubt', wrote Farren, 'whether anything about him impressed me quite as much as his complete indifference to the difficulties of arriving at an RFC station in a bowler hat and carrying an umbrella. Lindemann was unperturbed and, to my surprise, so was the RFC. Their instructions were to teach us to fly, and presumably did not extend to what particular kind of clothes we wore.'

I found almost the inverse situation one day in 1943 when I was visiting the Central Interpretation Unit at Medmenham and I was asked over a pre-lunch drink what kind of man Professor J D Bernal



was. I cautiously replied that he was a very good physicist, and asked the cause of the enquiry. I was then told that he had visited Medmenham in the previous week because he was concerned with bomb damage assessment, as they also were. They had been set back by his untidy appearance and they commented, 'After all, we are a regular RAF Station, and he might have put on a decent suit to visit us. But he seemed quite a pleasant chap, and at the end of the afternoon he invited us to go over to see his own work at Princes Risborough. We went yesterday, and as soon as we saw him in his own place we realised we had done him an injustice — he *had* put on his best suit when he came to visit us!'

There are many other points that I should like to have made, but they would stretch far beyond the compass of a single lecture. I have said nothing, for example, about the many gallant actions by RAF personnel in the pursuit of the intelligence we required, such as the contributions of Sqn Ldr Tony Hill and FSgt Charles Cox to the success of the Bruneval raid, and Plt Off Harold Jordan and the entire crew of the reconnaissance Wellington who, although wounded, survived eleven attacks by a German night fighter while listening to its *Lichtenstein* radar, and brought their riddled aircraft, and their vital information, back to England. Also, I have not discussed the problems of deciding priorities between short-term and long-term intelligence, for example in competing for the cryptographic effort at Bletchley. Nor have I mentioned the complementary task of Intelligence in trying to mislead the intelligence organisation of an opponent, such as the part played by Flt Lt Cholmondeley in *The Man Who Never Was*, or the hazardous operations of dropping and picking up Resistance agents. These and many other topics could be among those that the Society may care to consider in its future deliberations.

Looking back on those aspects with which I myself was particularly concerned, our successes, such as those against the beams, radar and the V-weapons, were obvious enough, but we sometimes had failures even in the midst of success, and something might be learned from studying them. The nerve gases, for example, were not recognised; this was due at least in part to the fact that, although we heard of nerve gas in 1940, the correlation of intelligence in chemical warfare was not done in the intelligence organisation proper, but at Porton where the interpretation of reports may have been biased too

much by a knowledge of what Porton itself had succeeded or failed in developing. We may have been slow to detect upward firing guns on German night fighters, and it seemed that we did not emphasise sufficiently, although we had reported it, the awkward height at which the V1s flew – too high for light, and too low for heavy, AA guns. We also failed to recognise the aerodynamics research institute at Volkenrode. In nearly every case part of the explanation lay in inadequate liaison between different sections of intelligence or between the intelligence organisation and the operational commands or our own research establishments.

Where we succeeded, I felt, this was due to strengths of understanding that came from contacts that were all the closer and warmer under the stimulus of a perceived danger. And here, in conclusion, I would echo Tizard's verdict on the success of his famous Committee on the Scientific Survey of Air Defence:

'The first time, I believe, that scientists were ever called in to study the needs of the Services as distinct from their wants, was in 1935, and then only as a last resort. The Air Staff were convinced of the inadequacy of existing methods and equipment to defeat air attack on Great Britain, and a Committee was established for the scientific survey of air defence. I want to emphasise that this committee, although it consisted on paper only of scientists, was in fact from the first a committee of scientists and serving officers, working together.

When I went to Washington in 1940, I found that radar had been invented in America about the same time as it had been invented in England. We were, however, a very long way ahead in its practical applications to war. The reason for this was that scientists and serving officers had combined before the war to study its tactical uses. This is the great lesson of the last war.'

And that lesson applies with as much force to intelligence as it does to science.

## QUESTION TIME

(Transcript of tape recording)

### *Question 1*

**Tony Bennell:** When history comes to be written belatedly it will be dependent on written material. A very important piece of that written material will be the Strategic Bombing Survey. Now, I take it from your book, that in 1945-46 you participated in the interviews which led to some of those surveys and you must have read the others. Having been there when they were created, and thought about them afterwards, what is your assessment of the value of the Strategic Bombing Survey?

**Jones:** I was – but I was very suspicious of its conclusions – for example – one of the cases I looked at was the Peenemunde raid. My impression is that the Bombing Survey report rather gives the impression that the Peenemunde raid had no success at all almost, whereas as we know it made quite a big difference – I trust they got their facts right as regards actual damage but looking at the overall effect on morale and everything else and holding down so much German defence effort – all that kind of thing – my own impression (and I never read it in detail – having seen one or two samples I decided it wasn't for me to read almost) – I felt it was far too narrow and that, really, a re-assessment of the whole thing particularly, for example, when you take into account remarks such as Speer's who said that if we got five more raids like the one on Hamburg Germany might well have cracked completely. There's so much like that .. . it's one thing to have, as it were, the objective facts, but as with so much of history, official history and so forth, to go by the documents alone can be misleading. To go by the verbal accounts and recollections can also be misleading. You certainly need to take both together; written accounts by no means give you the full picture. I think that just a record of bombs on Germany doesn't give you the full picture. I'm not sure – surely someone has looked again at the whole thing – Henry would know.

**Probert:-** It is in fact not very informative – an assessment of the value of the Service (**Jones:** Yes) – in later time the survey will be taken as it was taken at the time (**Jones:** Yes) as evidence of what bombing could achieve (**Jones:** Yes), which, obviously from what you have just said,

you agree with me is the case (**Jones:** Yes, I do).

*Question 2.*

**Dixon:** To what extent did the intelligence provided by the breaking of the Ultra code have a decisive or less than decisive effect on tactical operations of 11 Group during the Battle of Britain?

**Jones:** My impression is that it didn't have a great effect. There's a very good – I don't know whether any of you know the French airline pilots' magazine 'Icart' and after my own book came out and the Enigma story was out – they were obviously very conscientious, they said they were going to do a re-issue – which they've done – it's now three volumes rather than one – a very impressive publication – and they asked me if I would write a chapter for them on the contribution of Ultra to the Battle of Britain. And, really, one was hard put to it – there were some general things that came out of Ultra which were of help, but my impression – and I really did check with everyone I could, like Lord Selkirk who was CIO, and various other people and as far as I could see, as opposed to night battle, you see, where what little success we had depended almost vitally on what we could get out of Enigma, during the day battle my own impression is that we'd have won the Battle of Britain without Ultra. It's not always easy, because not all the Bletchley signals have survived .... is one difficulty. One could get general direction – sometimes one could see the build-up for a big operation. Mind you, I speak as it were from the side-lines on that particular thing, although I think I saw all of the signals coming through but my impression, having talked to everyone I could, particularly if anything to try to emphasise the contribution of Ultra in the Battle of Britain and on the operations of 11 Group, but I don't think for that particular battle it was vital.

**Dixon:** Why was the intelligence not passed to Leigh-Mallory?

**Jones:** This is a matter of higher policy. I didn't even know that was so. You may know. The fact is that at that stage there were not many people to whom the Enigma intelligence was passed. You'd really have to ask Fred Winterbotham – I know he's ill – I don't know whether he's survived or not – he's 85 or so – I just don't know whether there was any such discrimination – it obviously went to Stuffy himself and I think after that it would be for Stuffy to have said who it should go to – I'm not ducking the question, I can only surmise.

*Question 3.*

**Sandy Hunter:** I'd like to ask about the Oslo report. You give some considerable detail about the Oslo report in your book but you leave hanging very tantalisingly in the air the question of its author. Can we expect you to break your silence on that and say some day who it was who produced that report for you?

**Jones:** Some day, I hope – yes. You will, in the course of the next two weeks see a book come out in which the authorship of the Oslo report will claim to be identified – I can tell you that that will be wrong! It is a very curious thing, but the Oslo report in a way – I mentioned it when I was giving a lecture on scientific intelligence immediately after the war – in February, 1947, and I thought this was a safe thing to mention because we did not know who the source was. And, although, particularly after that lecture the contribution was blazoned round the world that if he was still alive he'd come forward. But he didn't. But by an extraordinary series – none of these stories I've yet told anywhere I think .... so prepare for improbabilities and coincidence – there's the one that I hope one day I will tell as to how that report came to originate. I held off for a very long time partly because I thought the source might still be alive, and in fact I met him, so I knew he was alive, then after his death I felt that what with neo-Nazis and so forth there might be some sort of reprisals against his family, so I took a long time to clear with the family and it is now cleared – it's sheer lack of effort – to write the story in some detail, but I hope before long it will be done. I hope you'll enjoy it.

*Question 4.*

**Graham Hall:** I came to be responsible for MI9 teaching prisoners of war. Were our results any use and one in particular – late in 1943 or early 1944 we sent a message saying we'd seen rockets going up from the coast north of Thorn and we repeated it many times. Was it ever received and was any attention paid to it?

**Jones:** Where exactly was Thorn? (**Hall:** In Poland). I cannot recall, honestly, seeing any such messages. We did, occasionally, see MI9, messages because Jimmy Langley and Airey Neave worked in the same office block as I did and I did quite a lot of work with them, but I cannot recall these; I cannot say whether they got through. I could tell you a

man who you could ask – he’s Mathew Prior who was the man in the War Office who was correlating information on the long-range rocket from March 1943 onwards, I couldn’t just give you his address straight away but if you like to drop a note to me I’ve got it somewhere in my notes and he could probably give you a more specific answer than I can.

*Question 5*

**Ray Agar:** During the time of the beams I was associated with the night fighters and we had the Lorenz equipment on board so we knew round about 4 o’clock in the afternoons mostly where those beams were pointed. I never heard of any attack being mounted on the German transmitters by homing onto their beams, transmitters.

**Jones:** There were some. The only success we had was an unintentional one, when a bombing attack on Cherbourg did in fact destroy one of the beam stations – about 23 kilometres north – it was one of those bombs so far off target – it caused great panic in *Kampfgruppe* 100 because this station was completely knocked out. We tried lots of times after then. I had all kinds of ingenious schemes for getting a .... point was, you’d got a beam station issuing beams – you’d also got side lobes –with 109 Squadron I had the idea of trying to drop incendiaries along the main lobe which would give you one line and then fly round and do the side lobe and get another line so you’d be able to get .... but although we certainly caused them some discomfort at times, they were such small targets that in fact apart from that purely accidental and unintended success I can’t say that we did more than give them a little cause for concern.

*Question 6.*

**Jackson:** Pilot Officer (later Flight-Lieutenant) Jordan, DSO. Do you happen to know whether he is still alive?

**Jones:** Alas, I do know that he’s not. He died a few months ago. His home was at Winchcombe in Gloucestershire and I was very glad that, three years ago, I was giving a lecture at a college near there and I told the Headmaster ‘Look, do you know you’ve got this chap’ and I suppose by this time he’d got some spinal disease, he was very cramped up and had shrunk about 3 or 4 inches in height. But we got him along and the boys absolutely worshipped him. I was delighted to be able to bring him that extra bit of recognition towards the end of his life. Someone has

written to me in the last week saying they're doing some feature about him and asking me how they could chase things up so I've given them the name of his widow, and the names of two of the Squadron Commanders (192 and 108/109 so I hope there'll be a good story coming out.

(Squadron Leader Harold Jordan won his DSO during a raid on Frankfurt in 1942. He was the wireless operator of a Wellington aircraft attempting to pickup German night fighter radar transmissions by flying a straight course to make the aircraft an attractive target. The operation was successful and the required information was delivered, both by radio and by a parachuting crew member. Every member of the crew was wounded and the aircraft ditched off Deal, all the crew being rescued. Jordan was wounded in the arm and lost the sight of one eye but continued to serve with the RAF until 1957; he died in the early part of 1986 at the age of 78. Editor)

*Question 7.*

**David Allan:** Would I be correct in thinking that the Munich crisis and the year after set the Fighter Command up? If you understand what I mean. If we'd gone to war at the Munich crisis there wouldn't have been the same result. It gave the fighters time to get organised with the Spitfires and Hurricanes.

**Jones:** I don't know the answer to that one. You probably know as much as I do. You see, both sides stated so emphatically that really it wasn't a great help. On one side because it gave the Germans an extra year; on the other side many people have also said it gave us the advantage, with Chamberlain's famous remark 'time is on our side, Hitler's failed to catch the bus.' It's so problematic, I really don't know the answer.

*Question 8.*

**Anon:** Some of the histories of the Bomber Command offensive have suggested that one of the most potent weapons of the German night-fighters was the upward firing cannon installation and yet equally it's reported that this effectiveness never became known and wasn't drawn to the attention of the pilots at the time. Was it a fact that it didn't come to light until after the War?

**Jones:** No. It came to light well before the end of the war but not until it had caused us a lot of casualties.

Again, when I talked about failures of liaison, things could fall down between two sections and although I had the general responsibility, Medhurst had asked me to be responsible for finding out about the German defences and so forth, I concentrated mainly on the radar and the control systems because this was the field which I knew something about whereas things like aircraft armament were mainly the responsibility of the technical intelligence sections. They very often did depend on actually finding some bit of an aircraft which gave a clue. There was no clue about that. I didn't think it was going to be all that serious.

Many of you may know Christopher Hartley with whom I did discuss the whole thing. One thought that most chaps, and certainly he did, would pull the night fighter up anyway in the final thing. But I think we had failed to appreciate the significance of the upward-firing guns as fitted from 1943 onwards. By February/March, 1944 we would have been well aware of them. We ought to have been aware of them before that. It was all so difficult.

We had almost no agents in Germany, you see, we'd started the war with almost nobody, really nobody there, and we had to depend on these other methods of getting information and if a German night fighter got to the point where it might have been spotted, they might have been spotted on one of the forward airfields in Belgium, for example, and reported back. If so, I don't think any report came to me. They might have gone to the other section. Sometimes the technical section might have thought I was looking after it, whereas I would have thought they were looking after it. Guns and armament were specifically their thing, but this is why I say it is so important to keep liaison on, even though sometimes you can't see the point of it. But really, get so much to know your colleagues on either side. Even then, as in tennis, the trouble is that you then try to do the same job and you go on doing that for a time and then it's just like playing doubles at tennis, you know in the end there's a ball between you and each of you thinks the other's going to do it. That may have happened with upward firing guns, I won't be sure.

*In acknowledging the vote of thanks proposed by the Chairman, Professor Jones concluded by quoting a remark by Winston Churchill that 'it's not only the good boys who help to win wars, it's the sneaks and the stinkers as well!'*



## BOOK REVIEW

*IN THE MIDST OF THINGS*, by Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Cameron of Balhousie. Published by Hodder and Stoughton, 255 pp, £12.95.

The opening sentence of Neil Cameron's autobiography reads, 'I was born poor'. What follows is the story of a life of remarkable richness, all the more remarkable because of the contrast between the academically unsuccessful schoolboy and the subsequent achievements. There is a Churchillian parallel. The book is uneven in style and quality but this is no criticism of Cameron or of those who completed it. His untimely death meant that the chapters he had written (just over half the book) were largely unrevised and those of the posthumous collaborators unavoidably lack those personal touches which reflect the character of the man. Even so, this is an important memoir to add to the regrettably few books by senior RAF officers.

Wartime operations – the last weeks of the Battle of Britain, Northern Russia, the Western Desert and Burma – are covered in detail by Cameron himself. While there is legitimate pride in squadron successes (and characteristically little about his own) inadequacies of training and equipment are also exposed. What it meant to be a fighter-bomber pilot in the Western Desert is especially well described, though one might argue with Cameron's view that history has not done justice to the Desert Air Force. Denis Richards' chapters in Vol 2 of *The Royal Air Force 1939-1945* go a long way to fill any gap.

Nobody will read the wartime chapters without appreciating the physical and mental strain on a Squadron Commander who survived over four years of virtually unbroken operational service. It is hard to believe that the serious illness Cameron suffered, which was nearly fatal and threw a shadow over his later career, had no link with his arduous war. His fight against illness and the Christian faith emerging from it are dispassionately but movingly described.

The book covers all Cameron's appointments. The more important in the 1950s and '60s – PSO to CAS when Duncan Sandys was Defence Minister, CO of Abingdon when Transport Command was being expanded under the Sandys policy, PSO to D/SACEUR at a time when the policy of massive retaliation was being questioned, and then a member of Denis Healey's Programme Evaluation Group – were crucial

to his later career. They gave him admirable experience for higher rank though he (and others) believed that his future was jeopardised by the tensions that developed between the Chiefs of Staff and PEG during the Healey regime. The chapter on the Healey years is one of the longest in the book and one of the most readable. Cameron's admiration for Healey is as marked as his aversion to the policies of Duncan Sandys. Both views, in a longer historical perspective, are open to challenge. Sandys was the only politician who argued the political and industrial case for a wholly British nuclear deterrent; Denis Healey was in charge of defence when the RAF's long-range strike role was abandoned. Neil Cameron's own position is obscure. PEG, of which he was a member, saw no requirement for the long-range role; yet he appears to have regretted the decision to cancel the RAF order for the F-111. There is work for the historians here, as there is the tendency of politicians to seek solutions to defence problems by changes in organisation, such as the ill-starred PEG, when what is needed is the courage to take unpalatable decisions. It is clear from Neil Cameron's book that when he became CAS a decade later, the basic questions of strategy and priorities were still unanswered, despite the various moves in the meantime towards increasingly centralised control of the Services. Whether there was malevolence in Cameron's treatment after the Healey years is an open question. According to him, his postings to Air Support Command as SASO, and to RAF Germany as Deputy Commander were a waste of his Whitehall experience. More objectively considered, both were useful forerunners for his return to MOD, first as AMP and then as CAS. It would have been good to have had his own account of this period, culminating in his two years as Chief of the Defence Staff. But the issues that concerned him most are brought out clearly enough; the growth in Russian global strength, nuclear deterrence as the key to security, and the absolute importance of competitive pay and conditions if the Services were to attract and keep people of the right quality. The easy way out was not in Neil Cameron's character and he showed himself willing to speak and act to the point of indiscretion if crucial positions and policies were in danger. He was perhaps lucky as CDS to find himself serving a Prime Minister and Defence Secretary, Mr Callaghan and Mr Mulley, wiser and more forgiving than many politicians. Perhaps the luck was mutual.

The range of Neil Cameron's interests, within and outside the Service, was positively protean, but it was his commitment to the

importance of air power that mattered most to him as a professional. The achievement to be remembered is that after a period from 1958 to 1968 which saw traumatic and successive shocks to RAF plans and policies he was not least among those who rallied the Service and laid sound foundations for the future.

T C G James

### **CONTACT WANTED**

Ms Tami Davis, a member resident in the United States, would like to hear from members interested in the evolution of United States and United Kingdom air power doctrine during the period 1945 to 1954. Her address is:-

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Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Dermot Boyle GCB KCVO KBE AFC

Sir Frank Cooper GCB CMG

Air Chief Marshal Sir Kenneth Cross KCB CBE DSO DFC

Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir John Grandy GCB KBE DSO

Sir Peter Masefield

Air Commandant Dame Felicity Peake DBE

Air Commodore H.A. Probert MBE

Denis Richards Esq.

Air Marshal Sir F.B. Sowrey KCB CBE AFC

Air Chief Marshal Sir Alasdair Steedman GCB CBE AFC

Dr John Tanner CBE

John Terraine Esq

Air Vice-Marshal John Walker CBE AFC

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The Historian

House of Lords

The Kriegie

Mayfair Gallery

Orders and Medals Research Society Journal

RAF News

The Spitfire Society

## COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Bearing in mind that not all members know the individuals forming the Committee and that some members may never have the opportunity to meet them, some autobiographical notes are appended as a form of introduction to some of the Committee members.

### **Air Marshal Sir Frederick B. Sowrey KCB CBE AFC**

Sir Frederick Sowrey was born in September 1922 into a family with a father and three uncles who had served in the RFC and, subsequently, the RAF. With this background, and growing up on RAF Stations in the 1920s and '30s, it was not surprising that his interests should include the history of the growth and development of the Service that had been seen at close quarters from a family viewpoint.

Joining the Royal Air Force in 1940 (having been a member of the Home Guard at school) and training in Canada, the war was spent flying in fighter reconnaissance squadrons in the European theatre; with the airborne forces; and as an advanced flying instructor. Post-war service included day and night all-weather fighter squadrons, a transport base, Senior Air Staff Officer in Aden and Training Command, and a variety of posts in the Ministry of Defence. It was during one of these that the first tentative approach was made to the formation of a Royal Air Force Historical Society. Although unsuccessful at that time, the information gained and comparison with similar organisations in the other Services has materially helped in the recent launch of our own Society.

Sir Frederick is currently President of the International First World War Aviation Historians (Cross and Cockade), Chairman of the Victory Services Association, and of the Sussex Industrial Archaeology Society (with contributions to the recently published guide on past and present airfields in the county), and Chairman of the present ad hoc committee of the Royal Air Force Historical Society.

### **Air Commodore H.A. Probert MBE MA**

Henry Probert read Modern History at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, and graduated with Honours in June 1948. He joined the RAF as an Education Officer in August 1948, subsequently serving at Ballykelly, Northern Ireland, Butzweilerhof, Germany and the RAF Technical College, Henlow where he taught liberal studies. After a tour in the Air Ministry he attended No 50 Course, RAF Staff College, Bracknell in 1960 and then served at Headquarters, Bomber Command

and at Changi, where, alongside his other duties, he wrote a brief history of his station, including the pre-war and wartime periods. In 1965 he returned to Bracknell where he first helped to establish the new Individual Studies School and then served on the College Directing Staff. From 1971 to 1973 he was in the Ministry of Defence, then went to HQ Strike Command as Command Education Officer, and then finally held the post of Director of RAF Education from 1976 to 1978.

On retirement from the Active List he was appointed Head of the Air Historical Branch in September 1978. In that capacity he is responsible for maintaining the official archives of the RAF, for providing information and advice based on these archives both for official purposes and to the general public, and for researching and writing the continuing history of the RAF. He has personally undertaken many short writing projects, including contributing to the recently published autobiography of Lord Cameron, and is now writing a series of brief biographies of all the RAF's Chiefs of the Air Staff for a book to be published by the RAF Museum. He also lectured on a number of occasions, largely in the United Kingdom, but also in France and the USA.

### **Group Captain H Neubroch OBE FBIM**

Hans Neubroch served in the Royal Air Force from 1941 to 1978, as a navigator during the war and subsequently as a pilot. Highlights of his flying career were command of No 35 Squadron, Bomber Command (Canberras), and of RAF Wattisham, Fighter Command (Lightnings). Ground tours included three years on the directing staff of the Joint Services Staff College, Latimer, a stint in the MOD Defence Planning Staff during Mr Healey's Defence Review, and appointments to the Mission to the Commander, Soviet Forces, Germany and to the staff of the Supreme Allied Commander, Europe. Hans ended his chequered career as UK Military Representative at HQ SEATO, Bangkok, followed by five years in the arms control business, latterly as member of the UK delegation to the East-West negotiations in Vienna.

Since retiring from the RAF, Hans has spent two years as Editor of Conflict Studies at the Institute for the Study of Conflict. In 1980, he joined Control Risks as the first Managing Editor of their world-wide subscription service. When his duties as the Society's Membership Secretary permit, he continues to provide his services to Control Risks Information Services Ltd, of which company he is now a Director.

### **J S Cox BA MA**

Sebastian Cox was educated at King Edward VI School, Bath and graduated in Modern History from Warwick University in 1977. He continued his academic studies at King's College, London, obtaining a Master's degree in War Studies in 1979. In 1982 he was appointed to the staff of the Royal Air Force Museum and spent nearly three years at Hendon working in the Aviation Records Department. He moved to his present post as a research assistant with the Air Historical Branch in 1984. He has contributed articles to *Air Clues* and was co-author, with Jeffrey Quill, of *Birth of a Legend – The Spitfire*.

### **T C G James CMG MA**

Cecil James was educated at Manchester Grammar School and St John's, Cambridge where he read History. Joining the Air Historical Branch in 1942 when invalided from the Army, he wrote the research narratives on the Battle of Britain and the V-weapons campaign which were the basis of the Official History of those operations. He entered the administrative Grade of the Civil Service in 1946 (reputedly the only candidate that year whose first choice was the Air Ministry!). Early experience of working with the Air Staff at a time of RAF expansion because of the Cold War, the first steps towards a nuclear deterrent force, and the Berlin Airlift, was followed by four years as Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Air; a much appreciated opportunity to visit numerous RAF Commands and stations at home and overseas.

Four years of acquiring land for RAF and USAAF purposes and the even more difficult task of disposing of it, and a similar period dealing with RAF pay and pensions were surprisingly worthwhile. He was posted to HQ Far East Air Force in 1963 as the principal civilian officer. Indonesian confrontation made this a busy and rewarding period. Back to a much-changed defence scene in 1966, the Air Ministry having disappeared as an independent Department. Two years as Chief of Public Relations under Mr Denis Healey saw defence policies and RAF equipment plans drastically affected by chronic financial crisis. This experience, compounded by his four years as Assistant Under-Secretary (Air Staff) which included the Labour Government's Defence Review, led to a decision to return to the Air Historical Branch, after retirement in 1977, to research into the impact of post-war defence policy on the Royal Air Force in the crucial period from 1956 to 1963.



## CONSTITUTION

A formal Constitution is under consideration: meanwhile members may like to have in more permanent form the wording which appears in the up-dated leaflet issued to prospective members:-

### Objectives

The Royal Air Force Historical Society was formed on 20 October 1986 to provide a focus for interest in the history of the Royal Air Force. It will do this by providing a setting for lectures and discussions, in some of which those interested in the history of the Royal Air Force will have the opportunity to meet those who participated in the evolution of policy and its implementation and in the operation of successive weapons systems. It is hoped that these proceedings will make an increasingly important contribution to the permanent record. It may be helpful to mention that the Society will not be dealing with the detailed technical history of aircraft and equipment since this interest is met by other organisations.

### Activities and Costs

The Society has set itself a realistic programme. The intention, at least in the early stages, is to hold three lectures or seminar discussions a year, normally in London, to conform to the current geographical distribution of the membership, though other venues will be considered later. The discussions and seminars will have as a central objective bringing together those involved in Royal Air Force activity in the past and those concerned now to learn more of this history. Transcripts of lectures and seminars will be published in the **Proceedings of the Royal Air Force Historical Society** which members will receive free of charge. Although the Society has the support of the Air Force Board, it must be self-financing. To arrange meetings in suitable venues and to keep members individually informed of the proceedings at those meetings requires a subscription of £10 a year.

## **FUTURE PROGRAMMES**

### **Suez seminar**

At the inaugural meeting of the Society it was agreed that the main event for 1987 should be a seminar in October on the air aspects of the 1956 Suez campaign. Arrangements are now in hand and the provisional venue will be the Royal United Services Institute in Whitehall on Monday, 26 October 1987. A three-session programme is envisaged, beginning with an examination of the political and operational planning background, leading to a study of the execution of the air operation and ending with an analysis of the effectiveness of air power in this watershed event in British post-war history. A number of possible contributors are being approached, but the Programmes Sub-Committee would like to hear from members who participated or who can suggest useful contacts. News of special studies of the Suez operation would be particularly welcome.

### **1988 Programme**

Looking further ahead, thought now has to be given to the Society's 1988 programme. An extensive list of interests was drawn up from members' initial responses and some possibilities for main subjects are being considered; for example:-

‘A German view of the air war’, and

‘The post-war links between the RAF and the USAF’.

We would, however, welcome other suggestions. It has been suggested that the main programme might be complemented by a few small scale special interest items, possibly held as luncheon or dinner events. Members views on this idea would be welcome and assist the sub-committee to gauge the degree of interest. The Sub-Committee will be considering the possibility of holding one major event outside London in response to the wishes expressed by a number of members at the inaugural meeting.

**Address for correspondence**

Any suggestions for either the 1987 Suez seminar or the 1988 programme should be sent to the Chairman of the Programmes Sub-Committee at his home address as below:-

Air Commodore J Greenhill  
 'Tanglewood'  
 52 Brackendale Road  
 CAMBERLEY  
 Surrey GU15 2JR

**Diary dates**

16.3.87 }  
 1.6.87 } 1800 hours. The Royal Aeronautical Society. See Editor's Notes