



e-DEFENCE ELECTRONICS NEWSLETTER

The e-NEWSLETTER OF THE DEFENCE ELECTRONICS HISTORY SOCIETY
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REMEMBRANCE

DEHS members will be aware that it is our practice to remember at this time of year all those who have perished in conflict, and to draw our attention to groups who may otherwise receive relatively little attention. This year, **eDEN 52** remembers **Merchant Navy radio officers of all nations (including those on fishing vessels)**; the board above is the **Marconi Company Roll of Honour 1914-8**.

Merchant ships of course took part in both evacuations and invasions, in addition to the endless convoy work, and in blockade-breaking; in evacuations, the 'little ships' of Dunkirk are famous, while the ships lost in the evacuation of Singapore are not, and the German evacuation of East Prussia, a massive operation, is a story very little known, although the liners there taken into military service, and lost, account for some of the largest single losses of life at sea. In both major wars of the 20th century, fishing vessels were employed by all sides on the dangerous task of minesweeping, and we have previously marked the survival of **HMS Viola III** in Grytviken. **Joanna Greenlaw's History of the Radio Officer in the British Merchant Navy and on Deep-Sea Trawlers** tells at least some of the story; between 1939 and 1945, at least 1,406 radio officers of the Merchant Navy lost their lives of whom 980 were employed by Marconi Marine, a figure representing 1 in 5 of their strength at that conflict's end.

Your Editor had hoped this month to present a second special issue on H2S with contributions from members – but the contributions, among which I pay especial tribute both to **Tony Wilson** and BAE Warton Archivist and DEHS member **Gordon Slater**, on the attempts to fit **H2S Mk 9/NBS** into the Canberra, and to information on the **1.25cm US H2X** variant already in hand from our 2016 Restoration Award winner **Tatjana Joëlle van Vark**, have been so many that to do them proper editorial credit I have to beg your indulgence and promise that they will appear in the December issue, **eDEN 53**! This month, therefore, our major article (focussing on Halloween and 'spooks'!) looks at a question endlessly asked of your Editor – "**What did Bletchley know about the German Y [Intercept] services?**". Clearly, the answer varies on the date involved in that 6-year long war, but the very comprehensive series of papers from Bletchley in 1944, printed here as page 29 onwards, provide a reasonable answer; an introductory paper on all **German Y services** is followed by three specific papers on **Kriegsmarine Y**, **Luftwaffe Y** and **German Army Y**. Members should consider carefully the impact of the German organisation – was it so bad for it to be fragmented rather than fully centralised, as was the British, later Allied, endeavour at Bletchley? These reports emphasise the closeness of the links with each service, the German competence in tactical interception, and the observation that German high-level decryption and staff resources to do that were located lower down the chain than Allied practice – all the better for fast action, as **Rommel** showed. Your Editor, and our good friend **Arthur Bauer**, were especially intrigued to see on pages 66/67, the assessment in 1944 of possible equipment compromise in the Western Desert campaign, and the manuscript note "**Typex**" against it; those who remember our talk at the Autumn Symposium some years ago will recall our suspicion that **Typex was indeed compromised at Tobruk**, but the file which may (or may not) prove this is withheld from the National Archives. From this marginal note, Bletchley in 1944 at least seems to have thought that compromise possible!

This month we look also at the UK **Diplomatic Wireless Service's** post-war attempts at secure and reliable communication with an article by **Bayley and Ralphs** on **Piccolo**. **Clive Kidd** provides us with two interesting notes – one on the **Royal Navy's mobile quartz crystal grinding unit**, and one taking forward our search for the meaning of the **CV designation**, which **John Kaesehagen** in Australia is also currently discussing with our colleague **Jeremy Harmer**. We also recount how the generosity of **Karel Hagemans** and of **Arthur Bauer** has been able to answer **Jacey Wise's** plea for an FH4 'Huff-Duff' so that with **Mike Dean's** previous donation of the birdcage aerial Collingwood now has the full works! To this we were able to add at the DEHS Autumn Symposium – full report and pictures in the next **Transmission Lines** – a US Navy **TBS 'Talk between Ships' low-vhf receiver** and the rare and most unusual **Army type 27/67 transceiver** from **the late Dr Graham Winbolt's** collection. Accidents and near-accidents in **helicopters in Singapore**, caused by electrical testing methodology, are the subject of **Mike Dean's** article; Mike has also contributed a book review, spotted our Tailpiece, and undertook the OCR work for several articles, for which, once more, **many thanks indeed, Mike!** **Brian Austin** contributes thoughts on last month's articles, both on **Les Hayward's** memoir of "**Spenny**", **Harold Spencer**, and his intriguing Secret Service connections and on **Brian Audric's** little-known paper from the Birmingham University 2nd Conference on WW2 Meteorology on the radio aids used to locate and track thunderstorms and lightning flashes. We note also the progress being made by our friends at **Bawdsey Radar Trust** as their restoration powers ahead, and in the commercial world, the busy folk at **Thales** who have had a bumper month for naval product announcements. **Tailpiece** this month shows the estate agents' view of military electronics history, with their view of how a **magnetron in your cellar can add £3million to the value of your house** – which should be very encouraging news for many DEHS members!

As always, suggestions for improvements, offers of articles and all general comments to me at philjudkins@btinternet.com or info@dehs.org.uk.

Dr. Phil Judkins, DEHS Chairman.

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