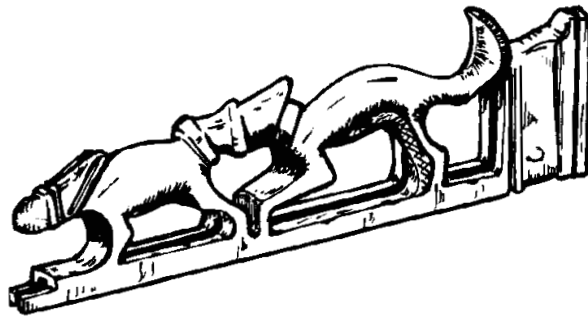


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Untold Secret of WW11

One Man's War, an Airman involved in high security work. His training and life leading to intercepting coded messages at Chicksands Priory, a feeder to Station X.

L.A.C. Cecil Leonard Waywell

The Untold Secret of World War 11
1940 To 1946.
BY C. L. WAYWELL

Chicksands Priory was the well-kept secret of the war. This old historic building dating back to the 11th century held the RAF Intelligence Service.

The date was April 1941, I decided to volunteer for the RAF as a wireless operator; I have always been interested in radio communications. I used to spend most weekends reading the Practical Wireless Magazine and making radio sets in my shed in the back garden. Although I was only 18 and working for the LMS Railway in a protected occupation, the job of apprenticed riveter did not appeal to me. I was living at the time in Earlstown with my Mum, Dad and 3 sisters and a brother, I was the elder son. I went to Warrington, to the RAF Recruiting Office, as I walked in the Sgt. greeted me with "Hello son what can I do for you?" "I want to volunteer for the RAF as a radio operator" I said. "Well we have vacancies in the transport and medical services are you interested in those?" I said "No sorry, if I can't go for radio operator then forget it," "OK" he said "Fill this form in; you will be called to Padgate for assessment in two weeks' time." Padgate was an RAF station just outside Warrington, sure enough I received a letter to report to Padgate, and I duly arrived within the next two days. There were dozens of lads all keen to join the RAF. We all lined up as neat as possible and the corporal said you are here for assessment and IQ tests; there were a few mumblings from some of the lads as if to say oh well that's it then. The first day we had to attend a severe medical test, a dozen Doctors each with their own special qualifications. They did not tell us the result, we were told to go home and wait until we heard from the RAF. At the end of May I received a letter On His Majesty's Service, I reported to Blackpool recruiting centre within 2 days. Blackpool was completely in the hands of the RAF. There must have been 2 or 3 thousand Airmen there all living in private guest houses, I was sent to 21 Clifford Road to a Mrs Mullrennan, a little Scott's lady, her husband was an ex-policeman, a big man in contrast to her.

She was only small but a very kind person, there were 3 Airman billeted with her and she looked after us like our own Mother. We were not there

very long as her husband had to go into hospital and she informed the RAF that she could no longer look after us.

My next billet was in a guest house in Pallatine Road near the railway station, my goodness what a contrast to the previous address. The land lady was a right battle-axe, in this house there were 5 Airmen, they were all strangers but I soon got friendly with them. My duration in Blackpool was from May until the end of September, so there were still holiday makers coming to the guest house. The Airmen had a table under the window while the Guests had a table in the middle of the room. The Guests had good food but we Airmen were on very low rations so we raided the table of any goodies that were left until the landlady caught us.

“Leave that food alone” she shouted, “The Air force don’t pay me enough to give you lot cakes”, so we had to find a snack bar somewhere in town to supplement our meagre rations, and as my pay was 7 shillings a week it did not go far. My bed in this house was a wooden board across the top of a bath in the top attic room. After an early breakfast our squad paraded just down the road, there were about 30 Airmen in the Sqd. and our Corporals name was Freddie Fox he was a good bloke and wasn’t too hard on us. We marched down to Stanley Park for square bashing (DRILL) and physical exercise. This lasted for 2 hours every day, and then we marched back up to the town for a snack in the local café. We all crowded in to this tiny little shop, the old lady running it must have been over 70 years of age, she was kept so busy serving, some of the lads were stuffing cheese rolls into their pockets without paying. I did not agree with this but what could I say? We enjoyed marching up and down the promenade as the weather was great. One day the sea was very rough and blowing the waves over on to the promenade, we had just finished our Morse code training for the day and were marching back to our digs when a guy we called Lofty stumbled at the front of the Sqd., he fell over and we all fell on top of him, he had tripped on his cape the corporal shouted “What the hell are you doing get up you b----- idiots”. All day long Spitfire fighters were flying low over the sea testing their machine guns. Sometimes another plane would tow a drogue while the Spitfires practiced shooting at it. All our Morse code practice was done in the tram sheds, there were several Squadrons of Airmen all training at the same time, our teacher was a man of about 60. We called him Carmen because he was sending M

Morse code to us out of his book about Carmen, we all sat round a long table with headphones on while our teacher transmitted to us, our passing out speed was to be 12 words per min. So for 3 months we were marching and physical training at Stanley Park, 3 of us had to do fire watching in Woolworth's top floor one night, owing to the dropping of incendiary bombs by German planes. The store manager said you lads can go down into the restaurant and help yourselves to any food you like so as we had the place to ourselves, we enjoyed pork pies, cake, and anything else that took our fancy. The Winter Gardens was where we had lectures and the Tower Ballroom was a good place to go in the evening, dancing to Reginald Dixon's Organ Music. There were two now famous TV stars in the RAF while I was at Blackpool namely Max Bygraves and Max Wall although they were not famous at that time. We continued our training every day marching along the sea front, PT in Stanley Park, Morse code training in the tram sheds.

After our 3 months training we all lined up along the sea front; The Sgt. said "Right I will call your names out and tell you how you have passed. A1 means fit for Pilot and Aircrew then there were other categories not so good, you will answer me when I ask you if you want to go for flying or ground crew". As most of us had heard about the state of the aircrew returning from bombing raids most of us opted for ground crew (yellow)? I passed A1! Well, I was sent to Wiltshire to a place called Compton Bassett it was not far from the village of Calne. The RAF Camp was comprised of prefabricated huts dozens of them right out in the country side. Food in the mess hall was very good. I did guard duty on the main gate once while I was there; it was during the night about 11p.m. I heard footsteps coming up to the gate from the direction of the road so I challenged the person "Halt who goes there" I was prepared to shoot if necessary but it was an Officer "Alright airman he said thank for being alert". I was at the camp until the end of November. During the 3 Months I was there we increased our Morse speed to 20 words per minute we also learnt to signal with an Aldis lamp and also with flags, we did PT and square bashing as well with rifles, there was a Cinema there and I had a tooth out by the Dentist. I went home on 7 days leave to Lancashire and met a girl in Leigh. I took her to the Cinema and told her I was good at repairing radios, she said her father's radio was faulty so the next night I met her again and she took me home to meet her parents. They were nice people I stopped to tea and then dismantled the

radio set on the table; I could not find the fault on it. By this time it was nearly 10 p.m. and I would miss my last bus to Earlestown. I had to leave it in bits on the table with apologies I did not visit there again but I did write letters to Joan. Her name was Joan Turner after several letters I lost touch with her, I often wondered if she was Joan Turner of TV fame.

There was nothing much to do at Compton Basset as it was out in the country. I and two friends John and Dave went to Bath for the weekend on the train from Calne we got bed and breakfast in the Pump Room of the Roman Baths it was run by the YMCA.

We had training on T 1154 Transmitters and 1155 Radio Receivers as used in bombers, the T 1154 used 1 large transmitter valve with a power output of 25 watts The power was from a motor generator converting 24 volts DC into 1200 volts DC; The radio set was a bit noisy, a lot of static. The transmitter valve was a type 813 tetrode. There was another air field only a few miles away it was called Yatesbury and this was for training Aircrew, No 2 School. Compton Basset No 3 Radio School was for ground crew working on ground Radio Stations. We all had to go through a third medical test, including a test for colour blindness; we also had lots of vaccinations against almost every known disease.

After our 3 months training we all assembled in the mess hall to hear where we were being sent to our next RAF station, I was told to report to a place called "Chicksands Priory", Shefford, in Bedfordshire. I was sent home on 7 days leave before reporting to Chicksands. I had written to Joan Turner saying I was coming home on leave and could I meet her. I took her to the Cinema 2 or 3 times during the week and when it got to the day before I was due to report back on duty she begged me to stay another day, I said. "I will be in trouble if I do". Well, I did stay thinking I could make some excuse when I got to my new assignment.

I duly arrived at Shefford railway station in Bedfordshire at 10 p.m. At the end of November 1941, the railway station was deserted just one porter walking up and down the platform. I said "Can you tell me where a place called Chicksands is?", he said "Yes its about 2 miles up the road a big old Priory in a park full of trees, the RAF are up there but it's all secret no one knows what goes on there". I managed to find the telephone number of Chicksands and told them I was at the Railway Station in Shefford. The person who answered said "You should have been here yesterday; I will send a car for you". Sure enough a Morris Minor truck

with a soft top pulled up, it was an RAF corporal, and this place was only 2 miles up the road from the station.

I walked into this great big old building. The place was surrounded by massive great trees. The drive down to the Priory was at least half a mile long hidden away from prying eyes. I walked into the kitchen where a Sgt. WAAF was on duty. She said "How far have you come"? I said from Lancashire. She gave me a good meal and said "Report to the Station Warrant Officer in the morning". I thought Oh God I am for the high jump now, absent without leave for 24 hours, a serious offence. Well I slept on a camp bed in the kitchen that night and in the morning had breakfast and a wash, then a Corporal came and said "Follow me", up the stairs we went to an office. I stood to attention in front of this elderly Squadron Leader. "What is this man charged with he said to the Corporal?" "Absent without leave for 24 hours Sir", he said. "What have you got to say for yourself Airman?" "Sir", I said, "I was taken ill while on leave". "Well where is your Doctor's note?" "I am Sorry" I said "But I did not get one, I did not think it necessary". "Alright 3 days pay stopped" and that was it. I was very lucky in having a lenient Officer. I saluted and was marched out. I discovered that there were only 200 Airmen on this base they all lived out in private houses with landladies I was sent to a Mrs Cole of Bedford Road Clophill, She was a nice Motherly person and she had 2 sons who were working on the land, so in a protected occupation, she also had a daughter of about 15 and she was a real Tom boy full of mischief. There was an older Airman also living there, Ernie Benson, I was only 19 years old he was about 30. He was in the Administration Section so there was a bit of resentment as I was a Wireless Operator classed as the elite; it was difficult at times as we both had to sleep in the same bed, fortunately I worked shifts 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. one week, midnight till 8 a.m. the next week and 4 p.m. until midnight the third week. We all travelled into the Priory by RAF coach for our shifts, entering the Old Priory by the back stairs up onto the second floor. All the rooms and there were 6 large ones had radio communication receivers all the way round the room with headphones and a message pad to take down German radio messages. Some Airmen were allocated fixed frequencies, these messages were from Rommel's Africa Corp, and once you sat down to relieve the operator who was going off duty, you hardly stopped taking messages down in Morse code at 20 words a minute. The German operators were hot stuff, first class

operators, we got to recognize the operators by the way they sent their messages what we call the "Fist". When the messages were written down by our RAF operators they were sent by teleprinter to Bletchley Park for decoding by the mathematicians. The Boffins were mostly graduates from Cambridge University. At Bletchley Park the decoding was carried out in wooden huts, more about this later.

Looking out at the back of Chicksands Priory there were fields absolutely covered in radio masts and aerials (ANTENNAS) in US Language. The radio aerials stretched for miles, rhombic in the shape of a diamond covering large areas, these were very directional. All the radio signals picked up on these were brought in to Central control and amplified many times. The signals were then distributed to the dozens of receivers dotted around the rooms in the Priory. The radio sets were never switched off; most of the radio sets were on for the total of the war time unless they broke down. We had a Warrant Officer Freddie Page he was a strict man with a small moustache like Hitler, I was scared of him, although he never said much to me.

The worst shifts were at night; sometimes you would sit all 8 hours with headphones on and not hear a single Morse signal; you had an empty message pad. The operators who were not listening on fixed frequencies were on Search Band. That is, you were given a band of frequencies say for instance 6 Mega Hertz to 10 Mega Hertz and you would go up and down this frequency band for the whole of your 8 hour shift logging any signals you heard, because sometimes the German operators would start sending an important message and halfway through it he would send "QSY" which means change frequency. It was then up to the Search Band operators to pick up the other half of the message. This could be of great military importance. An imminent attack by Rommel or a big air raid over England - anything. In most cases the message was intercepted by our lads and action taken. We had a message from a German operator one day and it was in plain language saying that an RAF plane was bombing a German ship somewhere in the Med and it was full of British prisoners of war, action was taken immediately to contact the Air Ministry and tell them to stop bombing the ship. Another time we intercepted a message in plain language giving some addresses in London, why the Germans did this we will never know, but our Intelligence people were sent round there at once.

They could have been spies, or fifth column people cooperating with the Germans, the country was full of these sorts of people. When I first arrived at Chicksands new arrivals were given a long talk by the Wing Commander "Now you Airmen you can forget everything you have learnt in your training, you are here on a special mission, and you must NOT tell anyone, not your wife, girlfriend, anyone what you are doing here at Chicksands. If you do there will be severe consequences, prison, and court-martial". I will say here and now that during the whole of the war years not one word was told to anyone. There were many Intercept Stations dotted around Britain picking up German messages, but everyone involved kept the secret now known as the ULTRA SECRET and the Germans did not find out how their messages were decoded. We will go into details about Bletchley Park later.

My landlady who I was billeted with at Clophill was like a mother to me, plenty of food to eat and she did my washing, although she did get jealous when I got friendly with a local girl who later became my wife for 40 years.

There was nothing much to do in this village in the evenings so most of the Airmen gathered at the local village pub, which is where I met Phyllis. My mate Dobson who came from Middlesbrough, and I stood outside the Flying Horse pub one Sunday night, and these 2 girls walked up and started to talk to us, Phyllis had a silver fox fur coat on and a pretty felt hat with a feather in it, I fancied her right away she looked real classy, my type of girl. Anyway we made a date and from there on we went out together, and got married on April the 15th 1944. I was allowed one day off by my Section Officer as the opening of the Invasion of France was imminent (JUNE 6th 1944). The Wedding was at Clophill Parish Church, the blossom was full out on the trees. It was a lovely sunny day my Best Man was Arthur Day one of the Airmen from Chicksands. Food was on the ration but we were allowed extra rations for the wedding.

At the time of the wedding I was under great stress, and I think I suffered some sort of breakdown in the previous weeks, because I went on duty one morning at 8 a.m. and sat down at the radio communication receiver and put my headphones on. I suddenly felt as if an elastic band snapped in my head. I felt dizzy and a strange feeling came over me it is a job to describe, I asked the Sergeant if I could report sick, I went down to the Medical Centre and saw the Doctor and told him what happened he said

it must be indigestion. It was not what he thought because for the next 2 years I felt terrible. I felt as if the ground was coming up to hit me, I felt dizzy I just cannot explain how I felt. After the wedding ceremony I went to bed at the girlfriend's house and the Best Man looked after her. It was not until after the war that I began to feel better, I was sent to RAF Henlow for medical checks the week after I felt ill, I suppose the M.O. at Chicksands could see I was not up to standard. I was in hospital there a week for blood tests but they did not find anything wrong with me, I went back on duty and had to put up with not feeling well. The dizziness gradually got better over a period of time.

After working in the Priory for 6 months the RAF heads decided to put up prefabricated huts in the grounds of the Priory. All the trees were cut down; this left a big open space, instead of having a day off for the next few weeks we all had to dig trenches for underground cables leading to the Aerials. A massive building programme went on for over 12 months; the camp eventually housed 2000 Airmen and WAAFS. The German High Command must have found out that there was a Radio Station here but they did not know it was an Interception Base. Three times they tried to drop bombs on us; they sent over 3 Radio Controlled (*sic*) bombs DOODLEBUGS. They made a noise like a dozen motorbikes and when the kerosene ran out the engine cut out and they hurtled down to destroy anything they landed on. One fell in the river right in the middle of the Base, the only damage was a prefab hut blown down, there were Airmen asleep in it but as it was only plaster boards no one was hurt. The second one landed 100 yards from an ammunition dump just outside the village of Clophill, I was on midnight to eight a.m. shift, this thing came over about 2 in the morning, it was pretty quiet in the operations room, and the Sgt. said there's a bomb about to go off. Several of us who were not busy receiving messages went outside, and there it was a bright blue light flashing up in the sky.

It just cleared the Base when it suddenly cut out, we heard the terrific bang, I thought oh God I hope it has not fallen on my girlfriend's house I cycled over there in the morning but as I said it just missed an ammunition dump. The third bomb landed in the pine forest just on the edge of Clophill and blew a hole 100 yards across just blowing the trees down.

I was in No 3 Squadron and after the Base camp was completed we all had to move into the camp and leave our landladies. In hut 8 they were

a good lot of lads, when we got up in a morning the wash places were about 100 yards away and it was cold water to shave in and wash. Then we proceeded to the Mess hall. Now the meals in the mess were some mornings a treat, dried egg and bacon but other mornings it was grilled kidneys with gravy, dried egg was a powdered mix which was good, plenty of tea, bread and butter. Generally speaking the meals were good! Towards the latter end of the war the Germans developed the V2 Rocket. This thing caused real devastation as it was launched from sites in France and reached a height of 60 miles coming down in London without any warning causing terrible damage and loss of life. Our Sqd. was marching up to the operation buildings one morning it was a clear sunny day and we could see miles high in the sky a vapour trail, we knew it was a V2 on its way to cause havoc.

Although I was supposed to be sleeping in hut 8 more often than not I got a Sleeping out Pass and cycled to Clophill to my girlfriend's house. The lads in the hut got used to me not being there they never ever made any comment about me sleeping away, although I think they were a bit jealous at times.

When I got married in April 1944 I got a Living Out Pass and we rented a little cottage in Clophill. I biked to Chicksands on my shifts, and when I was on from 4 p.m. until midnight cycling along the road at this time of night I counted 4 nightingales whistling away.

One night I was on at midnight and cycling along the country road it was dead quiet, all of a sudden I heard this horse galloping down the road behind me. Was I scared? I shot along there like a bat out of hell. I must have left it behind as I did not hear it again. There were about 5 of us Airmen all living out with our wives in the local villages. When I think about all this happening and the war was on we were a jammy lot those of us at Chicksands, we had it made. We did not know the war was on apart from hearing the News. I was operating in C block and on late shifts one of the lads and I went down into the field about 5 in the morning and picked mushrooms, you see there were no toilets in the operation blocks so if you wanted to go another airman would take over your headphones for 10 minutes, this gave you plenty of time to pick mushrooms, unofficially of course.

A brief History of Chicksands Priory. In the 11th Century the Priory was a Monastery of the Benedictine order, Cannons and Nuns were completely separated in different parts of the building, and they never saw

each other. Food for the monks was handed through a little trap door in the wall, the monastery was self-sufficient in every way, they grew all their own fruit and vegetables, made their own wine and beer and kept sheep, they were cut off from the outside world completely.

This way of living went on until 1500 (*sic*) when Henry the 8th who was married to Catherine of Aragon, his brother's widow, discovered that she could not have any children. He wanted a divorce and set his eyes on Anne Boleyn but the Pope flatly refused to grant him a divorce, this angered the king and he promptly appointed Thomas Cromwell as his Advisor having sacked Cardinal Wolsey for not getting round the Pope to let him have a divorce.

The King in 1531 proclaimed himself Head of the Church of England; he dissolved all the monasteries and religious houses, confiscating land and property. To this effect he sent Dr Richard Leyton to Chicksands in 1535 to investigate what property the Monks possessed, Dr Leyton who was said to be a vile man and not above fabricating evidence reported back to the king that one of the nuns was pregnant. The king was furious and ordered that the monk responsible be hanged and the nun to be walled up inside the Priory walls alive after witnessing her lovers fate. To this day there are reports of people seeing the Nun gliding through the Priory on the 17th of each month, searching for her lover. I was on midnight to eight a.m. shift one day and a WAAF asked the Sgt. if she could be excused to go to the toilet. A few minutes later she came running back into the operations room saying she had seen a lady in grey go along the corridor and disappear through the wall, there have been many sightings of this ghost over many years.

After about 12 months the Base Commander decided that we all needed some exercise, considering that we were sitting down all the time operating. So he called in the RAF Regiment to give us some training, after all if the Germans invaded Britain, we would not be much good if we could not handle a rifle. Each Squadron was given a week off duty to attend training sessions, 10 miles route march, physical exercises, mock battles on the local hills, training in detecting poison gas, rifle and machine gun practice on the local Firing Range, and throwing hand grenades. You always get an idiot in a group, on the firing range we were given a Bren gun to fire at a distant target. Well this idiot in our Sqd. lay down on his groundsheet (CAPE) and pulled the trigger; he lowered the muzzle of his gun and shot a neat row of holes right across his cape. The

RAF regiment Sgt. just stood there and scratched his head, "Well you've made a good mess of that I must say". We all marched down to another Firing Range to practice throwing hand grenades. "You clasp it in your throwing hand and pull the pin and for God's sake don't let go, bring your arm back as if you are throwing a ball and sling it as far as you can, we all get down behind sandbags because when that thing explodes the base plug comes whistling over the top of you and your dead if it hits you".

Well we all got it off OK until it was the idiots turn!! The Sgt. said to him "Are you sure you can do this?" "Yes Sgt." he said. He held the hand grenade pulled back his arm and pulled out the pin, we all stood there watching him he threw that grenade straight up into the air and we all dashed out of the trench, collapsed flat on our faces and prayed. It landed right back in the trench and went off with a terrific bang throwing shrapnel everywhere. By a miracle no one was hurt. The Sgt. shouted "You stupid bastard, we could have all been killed". He didn't trust him with anything after that.

Well, after our weeks training we were all back on duty as radio operators.

By the end of 1942 the camp had built up to great strength, about 1500 WAAFS and 2000 Airmen, the WAAFS lived at the top of the hill in big half round Nissen huts made of corrugated steel, they must have been hot in summer and very cold in winter, there was a big coke stove in the middle of the hut. Now the Airmen lived at the bottom of the hill across the river Flit so the bridge divided the 2 sections of the camp, men from women, the men were luckier as the huts were prefabricated and a lot warmer, also with a coke stove in the middle of the room.

The Radio Communication System, as I said before, consisted of literally dozens of radio masts and wires going off in all directions across the fields at the back of the PRIORY.

There were also 5 240 ft. radio masts built mainly of thick sections of wood like ships timbers with thick wire ropes coming down from the top of the masts and attached to concrete blocks to stop the masts swaying in the wind.

Getting back to the actual operating procedure there were 4 brick built blocks with a concrete bomb proof blast wall in front of the door, blocks A B C D then Central Control where the dozens of aerial cables came in to massive amplifying panels 20 ft long and 6 ft deep housing hundreds

of radio valves, the signals were amplified hundreds of times so that even the weakest signal could be intercepted! It has been declared officially that the interception of German radio messages by our "Y" Service as we were known did indeed shorten the war by 3 years!!! And what is more the enemy did not find out how the messages were decoded until after the war, this of course was entirely due to the efforts of the decoding boffins of Bletchley Park Buckingham which is now a preserved Museum run by a Trust and worth a visit. I do not profess to be one of them.

The messages intercepted by our top class operators at Chicksands were mostly by the Rommel's North Africa Corps. The German Operating Groups were given a name for the degree of priority, ROBIN Group and CHAFFINCH Group were the two most important.

Our operators did not stop taking messages from the time they signed on duty until they were relieved at the end of the shift. I personally take my hat off to those airmen and it paid off because they were rewarded by quick promotion to sergeant and they deserved it! I myself was an average radio operator and operated mostly on Search Bands looking for any missed messages.

As soon as a message was intercepted it was sent to B site where it was dispatched by teleprinter to Bletchley Park for decoding. The time factor was most important for if it took the Boffins at Bletchley to decode a message more than 2 days it was fairly useless as our military could probably not take action on it.

Besides the hot stuff of the Top Priority groups there was also the Blue group which was just for ordinary traffic, traffic is another word for messages, these messages were about supplies and troop movements and just general Information, although in some cases it proved valuable to us. Out of almost 3000 Airmen and WAAFS I am sorry to say most have passed over to another world by 1996. We did have a Reunion at Chicksands in 1995 when 150 ex radio operators gathered together for a very pleasant nostalgic chat about the war years.

The American air force moved into the camp in 1950 doing exactly the same thing, intercepting or eavesdropping on all other countries especially Russia but with the Cold War over the Americans moved out in September 1995, and Chicksands is, once again, in the hands of the British Intelligence Services. So the Base has more or less done a full circle. Interception still goes on!!!!

Getting back to the War Years 1939 to 1945, life at the camp was very quiet. We had a few laughs, in our hut 8 there was a tall guy, we called him Lofty, he got drunk one night and said he was going to walk up to the WAAF'S camp this was Strictly Forbidden, the rest of the Lads egged him on. He stripped all his clothes off and started to walk up to the WAAF'S quarters with the other Airmen walking behind slapping him on the rear egging him on, it was dark of course! He just reached the outer edge of the WAAFS quarters when the RAF police grabbed him. He was rewarded with 14 days Jankers (confined to camp). He could have been Court Marshaled, he was lucky. Life on the base was pretty hum drum going on duty and off duty, we had one day a week off when we travelled into Luton but as we were short on money we did not achieve much.

By 1942 The Camp was fully operational with about 2000 W/Ops on the Base, German radio traffic was pouring in from North Africa, the Eighth Army and Rommel's Panzers were fighting it out in the desert. We were also intercepting all Luftwaffe traffic.

How all the Wireless Ops on the base kept the secret is amazing, the enemy did not find out about our ability to decode their messages using the ENIGMA machine at Bletchley Park. Sometimes on watch when traffic was at a low a couple of the lads used to pull a long hair out of a WAAF'S head and tie it round a fly he had caught and let it buzz round and round by holding the end of the hair, or flick cigarette stubs across the room, unseen by the Sgt.

Bletchley Park was the Decoding Centre for all German intercepted messages, Cheadle in Staffs was the Control Station for intercepts, and Chicksands was under Cheadle. There were many Intercept Stations dotted round the country, manned by the Army Navy and the RAF. Scarborough was a Navy Station manned mostly by Wrens; not only were there Service Intercept Stations but many Radio Hams were involved in intercept. It is a known fact that not until the end of the war the Germans became aware that all their messages were decoded on Enigma machines; The German Navy codes were not broken until early 1944 as they used the 4 to 8 Rotor Settings on the Enigma machines.

The Boffins at Bletchley Park were nearly all Cambridge mathematicians, professors or graduates. The decrypts were done in wooden huts; hut 6 decoded the 5 letter groups of the intercepts and hut 3 translated the German language into English, if the messages were not decoded

within a few hours they were fairly useless to our forces as the action was probably taking place at the time. Only the top generals and Winston Churchill were given decrypts it was **Most Secret**. In order to fool the Germans we would send over a Scout plane to check their advance so that they did not guess we had decoded their message. Chicksands played a part in sinking the battleship Bismarck. The Navy Intercept operators at Chicksands intercepted a half hour message in "PLAIN". It was not very long before the battleship was at the bottom of the sea. Chicksands became the target for the Luftwaffe several times, but they obviously thought it was a Home Chain Station not an Intercept.

Acknowledgements.

The ADALHS is very grateful to Robin Waywell for permission to publish his late father's memories of his time in the RAF during the 1939 - 45 conflict with Germany.

It has a special interest for me as I was brought up less than a mile from the Priory and remember some of the Clophill families he mentions. It is a particularly useful guide to help locating where the flying bombs landed in the area.

Kevan Fadden. FSA

Chairman.

Footnote.

L.A.C. Waywell's pass book, wartime radio receiver and other artefacts were deposited by his son Robin in the Military Intelligence Museum, Chicksands.