



HISTORY OF SIGNALLING IN 100 OBJECTS
Y SERVICES - WIRELESS INTERCEPT



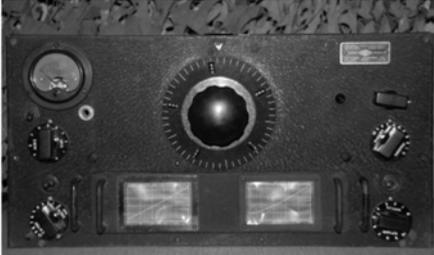
Today we tend to associate Wireless Intercept (WI=Y) or as it became know later as “Y” Services with WW2, but in fact intercept of Wireless messages has been around as long as the wireless set itself. The Germans during WW1 had perfected intercepting telephone calls during the trench warfare in France and when wireless began to supplement and replace line, then WI began in earnest during WW1. Use of Codes (and breaking them), Direction Finding (DF) and Traffic Flow Analysis (TFA) were all identified during WW1 as methods of winning the Information War.

At the outbreak of WW2 MI 8 was given the responsibility of developing Signal Intelligence (SIGINT). Many civilian amateurs were enlisted into the Y Service with the title of Experimental Wireless Assistants (EWAs), but there were not enough, so more had to be trained, many of whom were women from the ATS and from civilian life. These operators were called Special Wireless Operators, who later became known as “Spec Ops”.

Between 1942 to 1946 some 8000 personnel from the RN, Army (R SIGNALS and INT Corps), RAF, Post Office, Police and Foreign Office became engaged in the Y Services operations. These listening stations included antenna fields based in UK, but also all around the world in all British Commonwealth



(Empire as then) locations. A typical monitoring wireless is shown here. This is the HRO Receiver made in the USA by the National Company Ltd of Malden, Massachusetts. Without all the Y Service listening stations, Bletchley Park would not have been able to operate and it would certainly not have been possible for the German encrypted Enigma Messages sent over HF radio to be broken. As well as these static radio stations there were also mobile radio detachments that supported the Y Services.



Yet the RSI WW2 history of Royal Signals written by Major General Nalder published in 1953 was not allowed to make any mention of the huge contribution made by the Y Services. The Y Services were described in the book by Sinclair McKay called “The Secret Listeners” published in 2012.



“The Silent Listener” published by D J Thorp, which covers British Electronic Surveillance was published in 2011. The latter details how the work of the Y Services continued in the post war period. It describes the role that it played in the Falklands War of 1982. The manuscript of the latter was vetted by MOD and GCHQ four times before it was allowed to be published. So perhaps the trademark for the Wi-Fi standard should have been “Y-Fi”!

