

FOREWORD

Corporal Eric Kay, Royal Air Force, 221 AMES MRU

Introduction

Eric Kay was the father of a very dear and long-standing friend of mine. However, it wasn't until the summer of 2010 that a chance remark led to a revelation that dumbfounded both of us. My wife Beth and I were visiting Georgie and Joe at their home in the north-west highlands of Scotland (we had lived in the next glen in the 1980s). "Been abroad for any holidays this year?" Georgie casually asked, as you do. "Went down to Greece in May," I responded "a place called Kalamata - you'll probably never of heard of it. My father was captured there in the war." "Ooh," she said "I think my Dad went there too. I've got some pictures somewhere."

I really could not believe what my ears had just heard. This was absolutely incredible - after all those years of we four knowing each other quite well. What an amazing coincidence. It transpired that Eric was well known in the Brotherhood of Veterans and had been to the Memorial Services in Kalamata with another daughter long before I knew anything about the existence of the fraternity. So that is where it all began - the Eric Kay Story. I grabbed all the relevant photos and documentation from Georgie and yet another sister and set out on a research project to furnish the Kay girls with a brief account of his wartime adventures relating to Greece and how he, too, came to know Kalamata, like so many others of the Brotherhood of Veterans.

The details reproduced in this archive are taken from the results of that earlier research, which I copied onto a CD titled "Erik Kay's Greek Odysseys", the cover of which is shown here. The complete disc can be reviewed in the Archive folder to this section.



Eric Kay's Greek Odysseys - the CD

Just as I felt with the original CD, it is fully justifiable here to include, as a preliminary explanation, some of the technological background to the very special and specialist work that Eric and his team were performing in Greece in late 1940 and early 1941. This was high-tech state of the art stuff for the time, highly classified mobile aircraft detection systems to give advanced warning of airborne enemy attack. Eric was a member of a small elite carrying out unique and essential duties at the forefront of what was later to become known as 'signal intelligence' and 'electronic warfare'.

Pre-War Scientific & Technological Developments

February 1935: The Daventry Experiment

“The test was carried out in a field outside the BBC transmitter near Daventry. An old RAF Heyford biplane bomber was used as a target. The detection equipment consisted of a rather large receiver which was fitted with an oscilloscope, furnished by the National Physical Laboratory, and was tuned to the 49-metre wavelength of the BBC Empire Service.

Robert Watson-Watt and his assistant Arnold Wilkins tuned their radio receiver to the frequency of the BBC transmitter. As the Heyford flew overhead, the signal of the transmitter which was being received and displayed on the oscilloscope, began to move up and down, indicating that a variable & measurable amount of radio signal was being reflected. They were able to track it for 8 miles. The experiment was a total success and had proved conclusively that detection of aircraft with radio means was possible.”

1935 onwards: Subsequent Rapid Development

“The Daventry demonstration led to a massive programme, backed by the highest priority and virtually unlimited finance, to design, build and install a chain of early warning systems around the coast of Britain. The importance of this courageous decision cannot be over-stated. Key stations in the south east of England were operational and integrated into a vast reporting network just in time for the air battles to come. It was code-named ‘Chain Home’ (CH).”



RAF Ventnor Chain Home Station



Operations Room

October 1936: Mobile Units

“The British Army also set up their own radar laboratory in October 1936. Their initial work was on a Mobile Radar Unit (MRU) which could direct anti-aircraft guns and searchlights onto their targets. This was basically a version of Chain Home that could be loaded up and moved around by trucks. It used much of the same electronics gear, but also used transportable masts about 20 meters (66 feet) tall, instead of the big towers used by fixed-site CH stations.

A prototype was successfully tested in October 1937, detecting aircraft at 60-miles range; production of 400 sets started the following June designated ‘Gun Layer’ (GL) Mk 1. The MRU system was adopted by the RAF in 1938, acquiring the formal designation of ‘AMES’ (Air Ministry Experimental Station).”

1939-40: Into Action

“GL Mk 1s were used overseas by the British Army in Egypt, Malta & France. The mobile radar convoy was called an AMES Type 9. The transmitter was housed in a three ton Crossley Tender with the receiver in a second Crossley. The transmitter and receiver were supplied with power from 2 mobile trailer

generators. Another truck and trailer carried the aerial mast and a further general utility vehicle made up the convoy complement.”

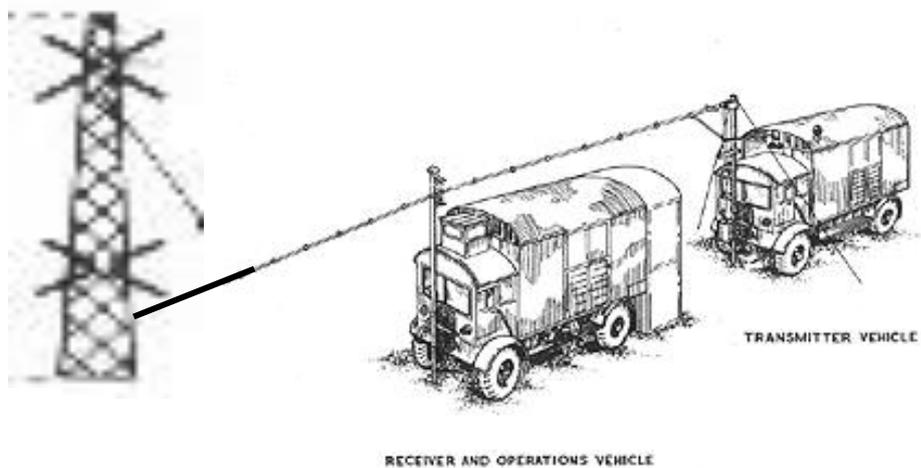
Some units had been abandoned in France before Dunkirk so the Germans were aware of the technology and purpose, but they were still effectively state of the art highly secret radio espionage systems.



**Crossley MRU Transmitter Vehicle
(with highly distinctive arched roof)**

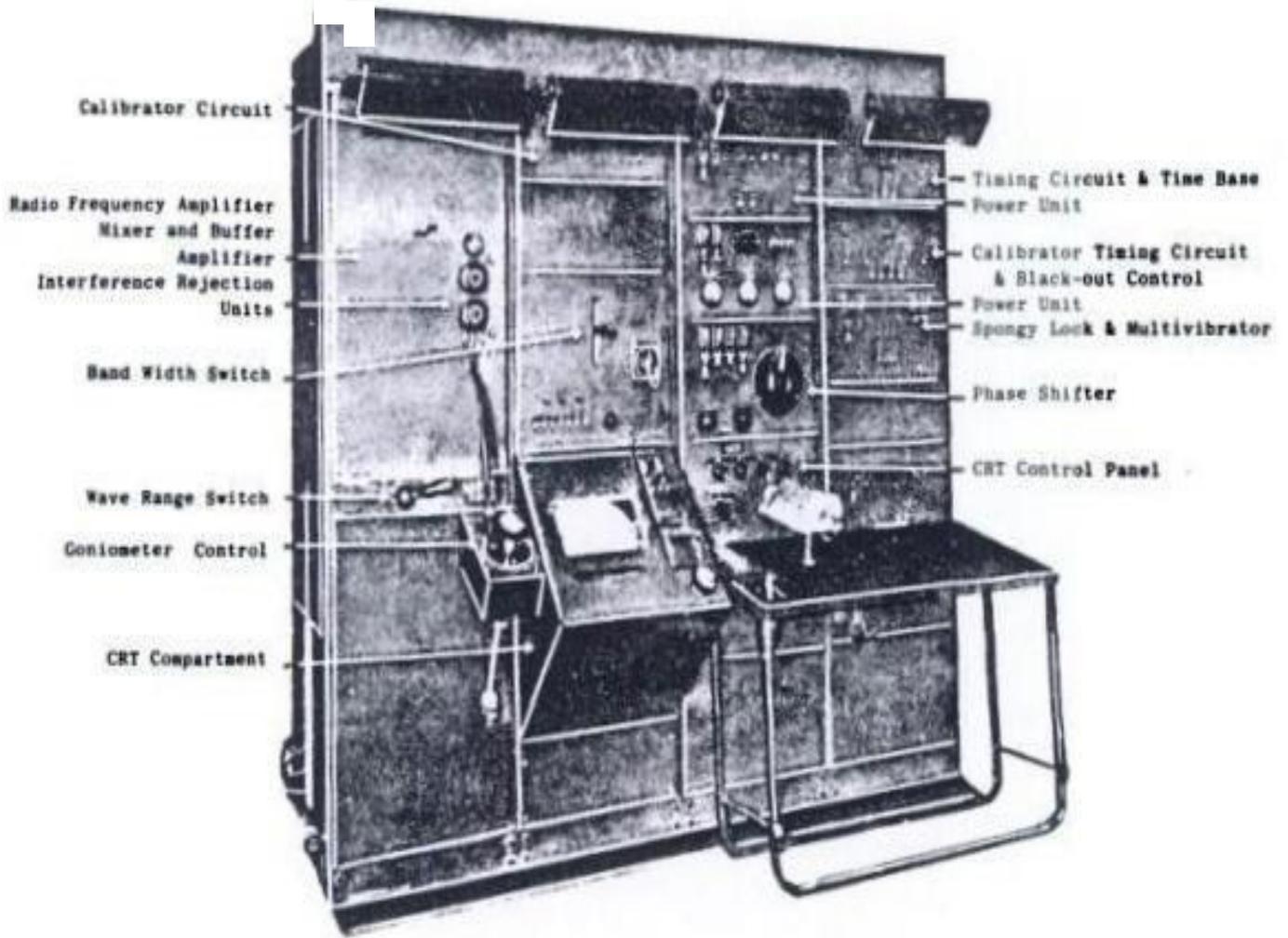


**Standard Crossley 3-tonner
(for transporting the aerial mast etc)**



Typical AMES Type 9 MRU deployed (Eric's unit)

Archivist's Note: For further detail on radio direction finding (RDF) technical development and RAF training prior to taking 221 AMES MRU to Greece refer to the Ken Hardman archive. Ken was a colleague of Eric's in Egypt and Greece; they remained in contact after the war. There is much "parallel life" circumstantial evidence in Ken's account that will equally have applied to Eric's own experiences.



Typical early mobile detection system equipment rig