

Stanley Judson Interview by John Warwicker – Reel 1 (IWM ref 29468)

(Edited for clarity)

Setting up the stations, in other words, we tested for the locations and then, I imagine, engineers or pioneers or something coming, but originally they didn't do the digging of the stations. Originally, the sets were contained in boxes like small coffins, metal-lined inside, with a lid, and they were sunk in the ground. Mainly in woods or in locations suitable for signals, and what happened then, the operators came and lifted the lid and operated on the surface.

"What was the size of your unit in Lincolnshire?" A Captain, a Corporal and two Lance Corporals.

"And we are talking about the middle of 1941?" I would think so, yes.

"Now, just if I could ask you about the radio sets that you were responsible for, the ones that were buried in the ground. Was that the Savage set, does that ring a bell?" Well, I know nothing about the set, really, it was a ... **"it worked on 5 metres I believe, what that is in mega? I don't know, my memory is not too good on that"** ... but they, I mean, all they were, were a very plain set in a metal box and I believe that Sgt Dabbs had designed them but I am not sure. **"OK. Now can you just confirm for us that's entirely a voice transmission set, and not a Morse transmission set."**

Absolutely voice. **"And so you required a power unit for it and you required an aerial for it."** Yes. **"And they would be contained in that box, would they?"** Well, the aerial would be up a tree, yes, a selected tree which was most difficult to climb so what we had, we usually got a hammer, tied a string to it, threw it, pick up a tree with a fairly few branches lower down, and if you study trees you'll find that they have a black line coming down, because they get dust on them and the rain, the water finds its path and it doesn't make a channel but usually a black line which is ideal for concealing the black cable up to the aerial. And that's where we used to put them. And we had batteries, accumulators with boxes for the set.

"Anyway, the first instance you were creating, shall we call them outstations?" Yes. Outstations. **"And they would have been for the use of civilians?"** Civilian operators, who we never knew. They were, we knew they were up at [?] once or twice?

"The officer in charge of your unit, Stan, was he a member of the Royal Signals or was he an Intelligence officer or something of that type?" See that photograph, there was Capt Shanks, that's him with the beret. Oh, I think he was Signals. He was Signals. Intelligence officers weren't. **"Indeed, indeed they weren't"** No, no. **"They came from the Guard of [?] but sounds you were responsible to an officer of the Royal Signals."** Absolutely.

"I am assuming he would have been in touch with the Intelligence officer."

Absolutely. I can confirm that from when I was in Scotland, yes, because we had an Intelligence officer coming in [?].

"So for very good reasons of security there were, shall we assume civilian agents or operators on the ground, they would have had access to the outstations which you had installed and which you were responsible for maintaining." Yes, yes?

And then as a Corporal I had two Lance Corporals with me and in, I was based in Lincoln itself and we had a station just on the outskirts of Lincoln on a hill. **"Was that the hill where you were attacked [?] on one occasion?"** Oh no, that was Donnington on Bain. Well, I can bring the story a bit forward now because the station in Donnington on Bain was in a wood and the operators, one was the manager of a knackery and the other one was the village coal merchant, by the name of Grey, and they were

operating there in the wood one evening and an RAF officer and a WAF doing a bit of [?], and they heard this odd phonetic [?] transmission and the officer, or one of them, crept down to the local Army unit which was stationed nearby. And they came up and surrounded the wood and the operators noticed that they had been discovered and they concealed the set, and they were arrested under gunpoint. And they told me afterwards? But they did as they were told. I told them to phone up the Chief Constable but they were kept over night under arrest and released the next morning. So, after that it was decided that that set would no longer be operated? and whether that influenced it or the other one I don't know.

“At the moment, however, we are in Lincolnshire, we have sets hidden underground, the agents have access to them and you are servicing them. Now, what stage do you think it was decided, was that the stage you think it was decided to create better ways for them?” Well, certainly in the Lincolnshire area, I am trying to think how many stations, some of the stations were hidden in other ways. But the sets in the wood, the base station, I think, that was never underground. We had a surface station in the grounds of a rather large house. I think a Lady Liverpool lived there and one day she caught me in her garden. I was testing the site and she wanted to know what I was doing in it but anyway, that's by the way. And the other was in the wood opposite in an underground station and that was the usual type of underground station, with the horizontal door supported on poles, counterweighted and went up, which you'll probably know about, with a set of shelves. If you went down then there were shelves and if somebody found it they thought it would be a Home Guard dugout, something like that. They had a secret catch opening the door into the transmitting room and then there was an escape tunnel.

“Did they have a means of recharging?” Yes, they had. In the one, that one at Lincoln, we had a charging set, and they also had electricity laid on and I tell you how that was made. This set was in a wood, this station was in a wood. Bounding the wood was an Army camp and they had two wires going round the houses which were supported on insulators put into certain trees. So what they did, they laid a cable, concealed it in a tree, and cut the insulation by the insulator and twisted the wires off and we got free electricity.

“Can you just tell me, we have agents in the field with outstations and they are transmitting to what I think you called surface stations?” Well, that would be the base station there in Lincoln, yes, that was a base station in Lincolnshire. The station was manned by ATS officers. In the surface station which was in the garden - the garden, then a road and then the wood - originally I think they were going to go underground but eventually they [?], we were supposed to go and rush around and make sure all the stations we could get to were fully operational, which we did. In any case, one other weekly or fortnightly round because we had some in South Yorkshire as well.

“Let me come back to the control section [?], lets go back to servicing. You've had to do this very clandestinely, presumably.” Oh, absolutely, absolutely. There was a station in Lincolnshire, Woodhall Spa. The operator was the local doctor and the set, we'd put the set in the dog's kennel. If I can explain, he had quite a specious garden. He had a gardener and there was a building which was a garage, an empty garage which bounded the side of his garden, and against that garage was a shed which was used for the dog, and we put the set in that case under the floor of this shed. It was not a kennel but a tool shed, and the dog had his bed on top of that. And that, now, the awkward thing was, when we went to change the batteries and test the set to make sure it was operational, that Red Setter in there, we could never go through the door without the Red Setter escaping. And so we would have to sort of herd it back, it was a friendly dog, without the gardener or anybody noticing he was in the garden. Well, there's another story on this station, because the aerial was not in the garden, it was on a tree in the back of this empty garage. Well, what happened, later on the Army decided to put an ack-ack unit and all their guns in this

garage, and their cook decided that the tree was just right for chopping his wood, and he severed that cable which was on this tree. So we decided we would put a cable in another tree in the garden, which we did, but in case he discovered the old aerial – they had a sentry marching up and down and while he was marching that way I got over the fence and up the tree and recovered this aerial. And it that wasn't the end of our troubles, the guttering on this garage was very old it it began to leak, and if there was a rain storm the water poured down on this shed and into our set in a box. So we then decided we'd have to move the set into the house, which we did. And everything worked alright until Jerry came over and dropped a bomb on the house.

“Who do you think selected the sites, was it your Royal signals officer who selected the sites for the sets?” Yes, yes. It was a sort of combination, I mean? And that sort of thing, and we were a very friendly unit, it was a matter of discussion, I think, with the Sergeant.

“Seems that the Intelligence officer?” Yes, that's right.? ***“Selected a suitable site and your captain? Surveyed woods nearby and find a suitable place for hiding these sets. Do you know who actually installed these sets in the rather ingenious place in the first place”*** We did, we all did. We did all the installations, finally doing our testing, then? we had installed test sets and then presumably Intelligence brought the operators to come and operate them.

“Now, we seem to have one or two sites, outstation sites in Suffolk, they were quite ingenious. I'll just describe one that we had described which was in a chicken shed, which was on wheels. It was a mobile chicken shed with these big solid steel wheels and an 18 inch section of a false wall was put in the back of it, and a welded trapdoor to get into it. That sounds like the sort of device you might well know personally.” There were so many of them. In, I am going back to Scotland, later on in my career. In John o'Groats, in a crofter's cottage, we had a bit of trouble with the set and we were sitting in this chicken house operating this set and, with a row of chickens perched above us. Another place, the set was by the, there was an outbuilding, shed, and it had a pile of logs quite high and the actual set, those logs contained, or having a very small room had been added and the logs put on, and you made acces to it through the big shed, and it was in there. Another one, aah, there was once, again in Scotland, because Lt Bradley was going leaving me in charge of the whole of the Scottish area and he took me to one, one was in a mansion, in an estate office, I think. There was this big roll-top desk and it was like all of the old-fashioned roll-top desks but the back was hollow because the sets were down in there, we had to do something with the sets. Another one I went into, which was not, which was in a dugout his one, and there was a wooden panel which was nailed like a normal, when you nail something, with big nails, and one of the nails you pressed and it went in and it released the catch of the door. That was rather ingenious.

“Now you, I think, in the event of an invasion you would have had to have been kept well clear of the invader because you and your team would have been able to give away the operators” It was only in the case of Donnington on Bain that we knew the agents. Well, I suppose so. Once in Norfolk, when I was down relieving another Corporal, he was going on leave and I went down there and I managed, I decided when I was down there? That they had on Norfolk, anyway, that's by the way, and I did meet, did go to a site there and a chappie came and saw us, we had, we knew he'd got suspicious. The chap might have been the game kepper, 'Do you know Corporal so and so?' That was the name of the Corporal. And then we were able to find out he was the operator.

“There was one, there is still one lady living in Aylsham? her father's outstation. That's in Aylsham her father was the agent.” Were they farmers? ***“They were doctors.”*** I've seen a few doctors, clergy and farmers. ***“So they seemed to be dependable.”*** Well, I don't know, I don't know who selected them, you see.

“Tell me a bit more about the cable. We've heard that some lengths of the cable was

actually buried in the bark of the tree.” Oh yes, depending on the tree. What we used to do, I mentioned a piece of string with a hammer, thrown fairly high, and then we pulled over, now, if you make a look in the rope and sit in it there you can pull yourself up, actually, if you’ve ever done it, you can balance yourself.

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Reel 2

“I was told, I think, that one of the Royal signals men was killed.” That was Tee, he was with me in Lincolnshire, Corporal Tee. The rope we kept at the back of the track had got acid on it. We worked 7 days a week, you know. There was one occasion in Lincolnshire, we had a set in a wood and there was a sort of folly, a tower, something like that in that wood. We had one of these little two-seater Austins and we went into this wood and there was a five-bar gate in there, and as we went up there, there was a sheet of ice, and we went clean through that gate. It split right down the front, it must have been fairly rotten. It didn’t do anything to the car.

“I was told that some sort of code was used and that it might have been delivered during the experimental stage by Royal Signals personnel doing the servicing.” I remember the code quite well. It was a sheet, divided into squares or oblongs and in each square there was an Army term and a different description, so somebody could say “Able” “Y” and that would mean, and the person receiving this message would look on the code and it would say “50 tanks” or whatever, I can’t remember but all these sort of things were put in the different squares so you just related the top with the side and the letters and that gave the code to what the message was. **“That’s very interesting because we’ve not ever identified anybody before who had definite knowledge the working of that code.”** I think you would get familiar with what the things were on this sheet, you see, I think it was like that, and I suppose you could get a map reference as well. And it was things which were relevant to what you would see, anything that was moving. For instance, if you were in Lincoln, and the Army moved into that camp, you would say ‘picked out enemy camp’ or whatever, and give the directions. I certainly remember it was divided that way. You sent a call ‘King George for England’ and the reply was ‘Kings Cross for Scotland’. **“Is that so. That meant the message was received?”** Yes, it would mean that it was still operated by the civilian personnel. The enemy could have taken over and listen in to transmissions or send false information.

“Just to make it crystal clear to me and historians for the future, who sent the first transmission ‘King George for England’ – the outstation or the base station?” That would be the base station, I would say, because they would be the ones who would be suspicious. I don’t think the outstation would want to check the base station. Base to outstation would have been ‘King George for England and ‘Kings Cross for Scotland would have been the reply.

“Ken Ward at one stage talked about the use of motor bikes with side cars.” No, never, we trained on motorbikes with sidecars at Bachelor’s Hall, we had some there, I think, but we never used them. We used little 2-seater Austin Opel cars. They were nice-looking cars but they, you needed to get a new engine in after about 12,000 miles. **“That would have been a bit of a job for you to get in because you are over 6ft tall. What happened after Lincolnshire. So, we’ve got you in Lincolnshire with South Yorkshire as part of your operation and occasional trips into Norfolk.”** Well, then I was promoted to Sergeant and I went back to Edinburgh as Area Sergeant. That meant our area started in Alwick, Northumberland, up to John o’Groats, and I was in a private flat in

Edinburgh. On Princess Street, that was our office.

We went Lincolnshire, all over Lincolnshire, and south Yorkshire we crossed over to Hull. There was a set in a factory in Hull it was contained in a sand pit but we never had anything to do with that. We supplied the operator with car batteries that he probably charged himself. We never had anything to do [?] but we had stations, one station set within a cave in the side of a chalk pit and I was talking with somebody and I think he might know where that was, I can't think where that was now.

“OK, shall we go back to the locations of the network, we were fairly cleared up about the role of the outstations. The outstations would have been transmitting, their range of transmission would have been limited, would it have depended on weather or atmospheric conditions?” No, no, I don't think that had any effect at all. That station at Donnington on Bain actually, you could walk in there [???] very good transmission.

[???] No, I think they operated when possibly work permitted, really. Probably evenings, and whether their wives knew or not. [?]

“The outstations only had a transmitting role, as opposed to a listening role to the enemy, do you think they had any role whatever of a listening one?” There shouldn't be, because they were limited to one – one – band, this 5 mile band, and that was, in those days ultra short wave was almost unknown. I say unknown. In Edinburgh, we did pick up a signal one night on that wavelength and the message was 'Private Black fetches Washington Island' which was, could be a very innocent thing or could mean something else, you see. So we got two of the cars and we put direction aerials on, and this message only operated for about a couple of, or one minute or so, each day. And so we waited for the transmission, we usually knew when it would come on, and we had a map, and in Edinburgh we had a position so we could get our aerials with directional, and we got the line and another night we'd go out and get a bit closer and the last night we did finally locate the source and it was the Home Guard.

“Now, the set-up of outstations and how they relayed their messages – we know that the outstations, we know there was a limited range. We heard from Ken Ward about the existence, from time to time, of relay stations, in other words, a station that was not manned.” We tried once when we were in Scotland. We tried, we tried to put some aerials up, you see, you could have your aerial with a director, and a reflector behind that, we tried to put some wires up between the outstation and the station, the main station, to see if it would be effective and it had no effect at all, so, really, no, no relay stations as far as I know.

“So that under normal circumstances, that outstation would have transmitted to what Ken Ward called a Met hut?” Yes, that's right.

“Did you have any responsibilities for these Met huts as well, the ATS subalterns' radio units?” We had to make sure the set was OK and we checked quite often [???]

“Did you have, were they always huts above ground or did you find they had hideaways as well?” Well, in Lincoln, and I suppose other ones, they had a set in the wood, I mentioned the one to you that had electricity, that was underground.

[???] But, I remember a Major Intelligence Officer, because we had an operation [???] to see them working and it went so well, I got into his good books and he told me a few things. One day he brought me the papers and he said 'I want you to look through these [???] and they were the instructions [?]' and in there it said that if the crew in the station [???] I had two Lance Corporals with me, we all saw it a few times.

[???]. And he also told me that we would, having done our maintenance, come back and occupy an underground station there. I can't see three ATS women and three Signals officers going underground, it's impracticable, and I think they would have got if the Army [???] that was where Div HQ was [???]

“The impression that I’ve got, I know this is not my field but from Ken Ward and others we have the [?] that the Met huts as they were called [???”

[???] in the grounds of this big house, Div HQ, and we often got officers coming up and you know, we had a job to keep them out, they all wanted to know what we were doing here, you know. We had ATS officers there, so, with soldiers, when there’s women around [???] They used to come in for a voice test. We called them Secret Sweeties. [??]

“The other idea was that the Met hut would be abandoned and they then retired to a pre-prepared operational base and continued to operate from there. That was how you saw it?”

Yes, if the base was overrun you’d, well, I can’t, let’s say, when you think into it, and they were not so enlightened days as now, men and women, I mean, toilet arrangements. I mean, a man could creep out into the wood, it’s only a rumour. ***“I think that almost everything has been considered in operational bases but I don’t think toilet arrangements were.”*** I can understand with operators because operators, they won’t be in the hut for very long, they pop in, get their message out and then they’d go home, and they are in the woods, you know, but where you are going to be in that base for a number of days, you’ve got to do something about it. ***“Indeed, a real serious problem, got to be pretty filthy as well.”*** Oh, absolutely.

[???] ***“Operational base, in Winchester, and he took us to see it [?]. It has all the hallmarks of a Zero-station, I think you called the underground operational bases? Now I think his role there has been slightly different in that I think he was to retire with his patrol, 6 or 7 men, or 8, and they were going to operate from there as a sort of relay station. I don’t find I am quite able to understand your situation of retiring in the event of an invasion to a Zero-station together with the ATS”.*** Well, I don’t think, I think the ATS would have gone. I think they would have gone to another station, because we’ve got to pass a message on to somewhere. So I am pretty sure they would have gone. ***“Now, that fits pretty well then. The ATS might well have moved with their HQ”.*** I think they did. ***“And you would have been responsible then for the collection of messages from outstations, and passing on messages, you would have been a relay station.”***

Yes. ***“It had a pretty good air conditioning system, it had battery charging facilities and a lengthy escape tunnel, about 20 – 30 yards long. Most if it fits in fairly well. What we’ve been bewildered by as a whole is a different designs in different places. [???”***