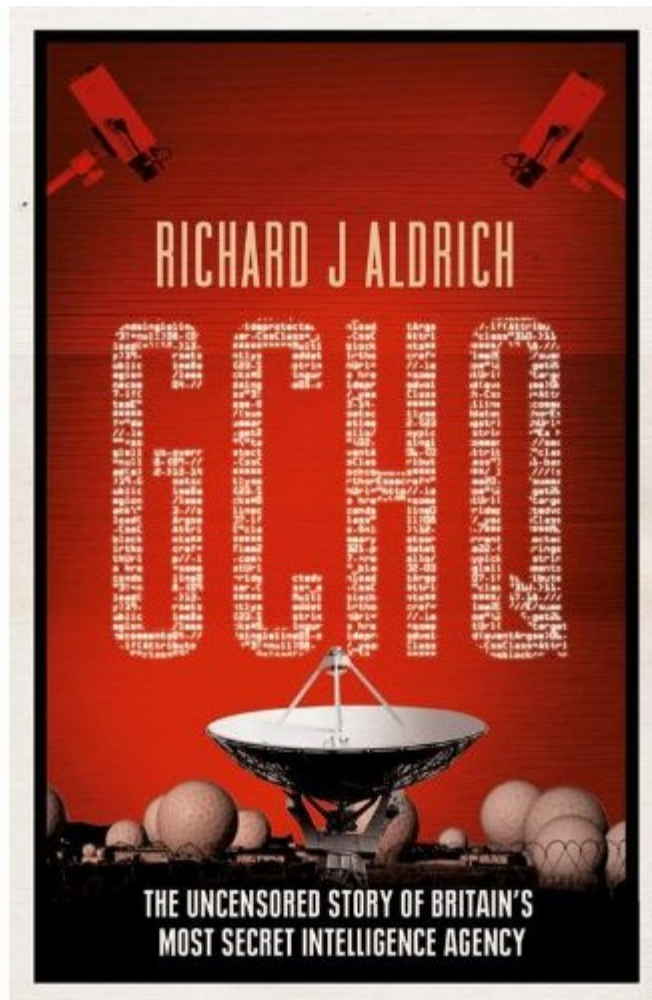

GCHQ: Britain's Most Secret Intelligence Agency



GCHQ: The Uncensored Story of Britain's Most Secret Intelligence Agency

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I last spoke about surveillance at TEDx Warwick. This is [here](#).

I will be appearing at Digital Dystopias, a Hull City of Culture festival that explores how digital technology is transforming society and shaping our collective futures through award-winning cinema, virtual reality, literature and performance. The panel is "Privacy, Hacktivism and the Politics of Surveillance in a Digital Age" - 6pm on Monday 13th Feb. This is [here](#).

You can read my comments about the revelations by Edward Snowden about PRISM and Tempora [here](#).

Signals Intelligence History Links >>>

[GCHQ's History Pages](#)

[Alan Turing](#)

[Alan Turnbull's Secret Bases](#)

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[Bletchley Park](#)

[Britain's best-kept WWII Secret](#)

[CESG History](#)

[Cipher Machines Timeline](#)

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[NAVSECGRU Stations Past and Present: L-Z](#)
[NSA Cryptologic Heritage](#)
[NSA at FAS.ORG](#)
[NSA Cold War History Released](#)
[NSA Field Station Teufelsberg](#)
[NSA literature at Muskingum](#)
[Nicky Hager, *Secret Power*](#)
[Peter Long's History of RAF Watton](#)
[RSARS - Intelligence and Secrecy](#)
[RSS - The Secret Listeners](#)
[Secret Bases UK](#)
[Matthew Aid, *The Secret Sentry Declassified*](#)
[Simon Singh's Crypto Corner](#)
[Spyflight Nimrod R.1](#)
[Swedish Sigint \(FRA\)](#)
[Swiss Sigint](#)
[UKNACE - counter-eavesdropping](#)
[Y Services - Garats Hay](#)

A Signals Intelligence Timeline with links, photographs and documents >>>

Inter-war

1 Nov. 1919 [GC&CS formed from a merger of the Army's MI1b and the Navy's Room 40](#)

1921 Alastair Denniston becomes (Deputy) Director of GG&CS

1925 SIS and GC&CS move to Broadway Buildings

1927 Neville Chamberlain reads out decyphered Soviet telegrams in Parliament

1936 GC&CS opens an RAF section

Aug. 1939 [GCCS moves to Bletchley Park to avoid wartime bombing](#)

1940s

6 Sept. 1941 Winston Churchill visits Bletchley Park to congratulate staff

21 Oct. 1941 Four code-breakers appeal for more resources and Churchill orders "Action This Day"

Mar. 1942 GC&CS send Edward Crankshaw to Moscow to explore liaison with the Soviets on sigint

1942 Edward Travis becomes (Deputy) Director at Bletchley Park

1942 Holden agreement on Anglo-American naval sigint

Jul. 1942 [Bletchley achieves the first breaks into the German high grade "Tunny" cypher produced by the Lorenz](#)

1943 BRUSA agreement on Anglo-American military sigint

1944 Revised Holden agreement on Anglo-American naval sigint

Feb. 1944 [Cypher Policy Board created due to penetration of Allied cyphers](#)

1 Mar. 1944 [Edward Travis becomes Director of all of GC&CS](#)

May 1945 TICOM mission establishes contact with German OKW-Chi who worked on Soviet military traffic

Jun. 1945 [US ANCIB proposes UK-US co-operation against Soviet traffic known as Operation Bourbon \(previously Rattan\)](#)

- 15 Sept. 1945 US Army codebreakers re-designated Army Security Agency (ASA)
25. Oct 1945 Frank Rowlett, a US codebreaker, is sent to Canada to interrogate Igor Gouzenkou, a defecting GRU code clerk
- Oct. 1945 Radio Warfare Establishment created at RAF Watton
- 22 Feb. 1946 Commonwealth sigint co-operation conference in London begins
- 5 Mar. 1946 Revised BRUSA agreement on Anglo-American sigint co-operation
- Apr. 1946 Move from Bletchley Park to Eastcote completed and term "GCHQ" formally adopted
- 18 Apr. 1946 Air Vice Marshall Sir Douglas Evill begins review of sigint staffing for Chiefs of Staff
- May 1946 Revised BRUSA technical appendices on Anglo-American sigint co-operation
- Sept. 1946 Radio Warfare Establishment at RAF Watton is renamed Central Signals Establishment
- Jan. 1947 A further Commonwealth sigint conference in London
- Feb. 1948 Percy Sillitoe, DG of MI5, heads to Canberra to discuss Australia's Venona cases
- Jun. 1948 A further Anglo-American communications intelligence agreement incorporating Canada
- 1 Aug. 1948 Captain Edmund Wilson and his team are shown over Oakley and Benhall sites at Cheltenham
- 29 Oct. 1948 'Black Friday' – a major change occurs in Russian cypher procedures
- 1 Nov. 1948 Staff are told by Edward Travis that the term 'London Signals Intelligence Centre' is abolished in favour of GCHQ
- 20 May 1949 US Armed Forces Security Agency created, a weak forerunner of the National Security Agency (NSA)
- Aug. 1949 Loss of the USS Cochino, a US submarine on a sigint missions in northern waters
- 1949 Vienna tunnel operations to collect Soviet communications begin, overseen by Peter Lunn of SIS (MI6)

1950s

- 10 Mar. 1950 US Communications Intelligence Board to oversee the American sigint effort is created
- 25 May 1951 Donald Maclean, who has been identified by Venona, flees London and heads for Moscow
- Mar. 1952 Eric Jones becomes Director of GCHQ, taking over from Edward Travis
- Jun. 1952 William Marshall of the Diplomatic Wireless Service arrested for passing secrets to the KGB

Jul. 1952 Move from GCHQ's post-war site at Eastcote to Cheltenham begins

24 Oct. 1952 Truman signs order to create the National Security Agency (NSA), following failure to warn of Korean War

1953 London Communications Security Agency (LCSA) created with Major General William Penney as Director

1953 Joint Speech Research Unit created at Eastcote under Dr John Swaffield

12 Mar. 1953 Loss of an RAF Lincoln over the Inner German Border

17 Mar. 1953 A fifteen-day BRUSA Planning Conference ends in Washington and results in major allied sigint agreements

Feb 1954 The move from Eastcote to two sites at Cheltenham is completed

6 Apr. 1954 USCIB Directive 12 regularizes the SUSLO system for comint liaison with UKUSA countries

7 Jun. 1954 Alan Turing dies of cyanide poisoning - most likely suicide - in Wilmslow, Cheshire

2 Sept. 1954 Work on the Berlin Tunnel to access Soviet communications begins

1955 12 Wireless Company move from Graz in Austria to the Bavarian village of Degerndorf

Apr. 1956 Buster Crabb disappears on his infamous dive, prompting a review of all short-range intelligence collection

21 Apr. 1956 Eastern bloc troops break into the Berlin Tunnel

1956 Joint Services School for Linguists moves from Bodmin to Crail in Fife

1956 NSA moves to new headquarters at Fort Meade in Maryland

1956 Creation of the Joint Speech Research Unit

1957 RAF Hambühren handed over to German communications units

1957 Move from HMS Anderson sigint site to Perkar on Ceylon

1957 Government White Paper suggests coming end of National Service

1957 Karamursel NSA station built in Turkey to the south of Istanbul

1957 William Friedman visits GCHQ and LCSA to discuss the European neutrals problem

11 April 1957 Ian Fleming publishes *From Russia with Love*, a Bond novel which features the Russian "Spektor" cypher machine

11 Oct. 1957 Jodrell Bank, the first radiotelescope is completed and is also used for sigint

- 1 Nov. 1957 [Captain Robert Stannard RN becomes Director of LCSA, taking over from Penney](#)
- Mar. 1958 [Peter Wright and MI5 begin "Operation Rafter" to search for KGB radios in Britain](#)
- 21 Aug. 1958 The RAF's sigint unit, 192 Squadron is renumbered as 51 Squadron
- 2 Sept. 1958 [US Sigint C-130A Hercules shot down over Armenia with loss of 17 crew](#)
- 1958 Berlin tunnel translators move from SIS to GCHQ and are designated the "London Processing Group"
- 1958 Comet sigint aircraft enter service with RAF 51 Squadron
- 1959 1 Special Wireless Regiment renamed 13 Signals Regiment serving mostly in Germany
- May 1959 [RAF Habbaniya in Iraq closed and sigint personnel moved to Cyprus](#)
- 3 Jun. 1959 One of RAF 51 Squadron's new sigint Comets is destroyed by a hangar fire
- 1 Sept. 1959 2 Wireless Regiment at Ayios Nikolaos renamed 9 Signals Regiment serving mostly in Cyprus
- 12 Nov. 1959 [The first dedicated US sigint-gathering ship, the USS Oxford, is authorised](#)

1960s

- 1 May 1960 [Loss of Gary Powers U-2 aircraft over Russia](#)
- 1960 Clive Loehnis becomes Director of GCHQ, taking over from Eric Jones
- 6 Sept. 1960 [The NSA defectors Martin and Mitchell appear in Moscow](#)
- Sept. 1960 Joe Hooper introduces joint sigint equipment purchase with services
- Dec. 1960 Templer inquiry into integration of service interception units affected by the end of National Service
- 1961 George Blake arrested and early compromise of Berlin Tunnel realised
- 1961 Collection begins from Teufelsberg in Berlin operating out of US Army Security Agency vans
- Nov. 1961 Project Sandra on Cyprus receives Treasury approval
- 1962 Perkar sigint site on Ceylon closed and some activity transferred to Mauritius
- 1 May 1962 Templer Working Party on Integration of Interception Services reports
- Jul. 1962 [Sir Stuart Hampshire review of GCHQ is initiated, triggered by rapid growth of GCHQ expenditure](#)
- Dec. 1962 Sir Stuart Hampshire visits NSA for three weeks as part of his review of GCHQ

Mar. 1963 LCSA becomes London Communications-Electronic Security Agency

May 1963 Hampshire review of GCHQ is completed

Jun. 1963 Permission for a US austere communications facility on Diego Garcia requested

2 Jul. 1963 [Brian Patchett defects from the British sigint station at Gatow in West Berlin](#)

1963 MC 74/1 – NATO Cryptographic Policy agreed

1963 Project Sandra begins operations on Cyprus

1 Jan. 1964 [Little Sai Wan in Hong Kong passes from RAF control to GCHQ](#)

1 Feb. 1964 RN W/T intercept station on Ascension Island passes to control of RAF as a sub-unit of No.399 Signals Unit Digby

Sept. 1964 Cypher clerks at the British Embassy in Moscow repel KGB 'firemen'

1964 David Irving uncovers the "Ultra Secret" but is persuaded not to publish his scoop

1964 [Rolling shelves installed at GCHQ to accommodate file storage problems](#)

1964 [Brigadier John Tiltman, a senior cryptologist, retires from GCHQ](#)

1965 Joe Hooper becomes Director of GCHQ, taking over from Clive Loehnis

1965 LCSA takes over SCDU and JSRU and is renamed Communications-Electronic Security Department (CESD)

1965 Revision of the Sigint Charter PSIS (S) 65 (5)

Nov. 1965 Diego Garcia agreement completed and 2,300 inhabitants are removed

1966 [Pine Gap station opened in Australia](#)

1966 GCHQ civilian station at Two Boats on Ascension Island opened, replacing previous Navy/RAF intercept stations

1966 John Tiltman asks David Kahn to remove references to GCHQ from *Codebreakers*

Sept. 1966 George Wigge, Harold Wilson's Paymaster General, reviews security at FCO and GCHQ

Oct. 1966 Decision taken to replace sigint Comets with Nimrod R1

1967 [Scharfoldendorf station near the Inner German Border closed](#)

7 Jun. 1967 USS *Liberty* AGTR ship attacked off Israel with loss of 34 lives and 174 casualties

1967 Chapman Pincher and the 'D-Notice Affair' exposes cable vetting

1967 Teufelsberg sigint site in Berlin begins operations

Dec. 1967 First voyage of the USS *Pueblo*

Jan. 1968 Geoffrey Prime offers his service to the Russians

23. Jan 1968 USS *Pueblo* AGER-2 ship captured by North Korea

24 Jan. 1968 HMS *Totem*, a veteran sigint submarine, is sold to Israel (renamed INS Dakar) and sinks off Cyprus

Feb. 1968 Douglas Britten, an RAF sigint specialist, is seen by MI5 leaving a message at the Soviet consulate in London

20 Aug. 1968 The Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia takes GCHQ and NSA by surprise

Nov. 1968 Chief Technician Douglas Britten is sentenced for passing sigint secrets to the KGB

Late 1968 Dick White review of DIS and JIC in the wake of Czech invasion

Late 1968 Dick White inquiry into rising sigint costs

9 Sept. 1968 Geoffrey Prime begins work at GCHQ's London Processing Group

1969 GCHQ's nuclear powered sigint ship project abandoned

Jun. 1969 Decision to merge CESD with GCHQ and change its name to CESG

1969 Arthur Foden becomes Director of CESG, taking over from Robert Stannard

1970s

19 Jun. 1970 Launch of Rhyolite 1 sigint satellite by NSA at Cape Canaveral

1971 Hugh O'Donel Alexander, wartime Head of Hut 8 and Head of H Division (1949-71), retires

1971 RAF Chai Keng at Singapore closes

30 Mar. 1972 Kizildere incident, 3 GCHQ staff killed by the TPLA in Turkey

Apr. 1972 Visit to Paris by a JIC (A) delegation to meet with Groupe de Synthèse et Prévision (French JIC)

1972 Skynet III decision

6 Mar. 1973 Launch of Rhyolite 2 sigint satellite by NSA at Cape Canaveral to verify the SALT 1 arms control treaty

18 Jun. 1973 Closure of Cobra Mist facility at Orford Ness announced

1 Aug. 1973 Arthur Bonsall becomes Director of GCHQ, taking over from Joe Hooper

9 Aug. 1973 Nixon-Kissinger 'cut off' of intelligence co-operation attempted

1973 Transfer of London Processing Group to Cheltenham begun

1973 Clifford Cocks discovers the asymmetric algorithm later the foundation of RSA

Apr. 1974 US SOSUS station opened at RAF Brawdy

Apr. 1974 Publication of Frederick Winterbotham's *The Ultra Secret* reveals Bletchley Park

3 May 1974 First operational flight by a Nimrod R1

20 Jul. 1974 Turkey invades Cyprus in response to an attempted coup

1974 US sigint bases in Turkey shut down

9 Sept. 1974 The first deployment of an SR-71 reconnaissance aircraft to RAF Mildenhall

Feb. 1975 Government Secure Speech Network cancelled

Jul. 1975 "Ivy Bells" undersea cable tapping operation begins using USS *Halibut*

Jul. 1975 US sigint bases in Turkey shut down

Aug. 1975 Work on Diego Garcia expansion begins

Nov. 1975 GCHQ site on Mauritius station closed

Sept. 1975 Brian Tovey becomes Director of CESG, taking over from Arthur Foden

22 Mar. 1976 Geoffrey Prime moves from London to Cheltenham

1976 NSA takes delivery of its first Cray Computer

1976 GCHQ station at Two Boats on Ascension Island closed

1975 Signals Research and Development Establishment at Christchurch is merged with RSRE at Malvern

11 Mar. 1977 President Jimmy Carter discusses UKUSA with PM James Callaghan and they affirm its ongoing value

1977 Transfer of London Processing Group to Cheltenham completed

1977 14 Signals Regiment (Electronic Warfare) formed

1977 GCHQ's Wincombe station closed

1977 GCHQ's Flowerdown station closed

18 Feb. 1977 Journalists Aubrey and Campbell interviewed Berry (ABC). They are arrested under the Official Secrets Act

- 24 May 1977 Further charges were added under section 1 of the Official Secrets Act
- 28 Sept. 1977 Geoffrey Prime resigns from GCHQ
- 11 Dec. 1977 Launch of Rhyolite 3 sigint satellite (Aquacade) by NSA at Cape Canaveral
- 1978 GCHQ's Gilnahirk station Northern Ireland closed
- 1978 Special Collection Service, a joint NSA-CIA black bag unit created
- 1978 GCHQ station at Two Boats on Ascension Island reactivated
- 1978 John Johnson become Director of CESG, taking over from Brian Tovey
- 1978 Brian Tovey becomes Director of GCHQ, taking over from Arthur Bonsall
- 4 Apr. 1978 Launch of Rhyolite 4 sigint satellite (Aquacade) by NSA at Cape Canaveral
- 5 Sept. 1978 [ABC Trial opens at the Old Bailey](#)
- 18 Sept. 1978 ABC Trial stopped after jury member exposed as SAS officer
- 3 Oct. 1978 Second ABC trial opens
- 24 Oct. 1978 [All section 1 charges dropped in ABC Trial](#)
- 17 Nov. 1978 Aubrey, Berry and Campbell receive non-custodial sentences
- Dec. 1978 Government discussions over whether the Energy Secretary, Tony Benn, should have access to sigint
- Jan. 1979 Iranian revolution – NSA and GCHQ listening posts in Iran are lost
- Jan. 1979 Permission for US sigint bases to reopen is given by the Turkish government
- 23 Feb. 1979 One day strike triggers Brian Tovey's thinking on union removal at GCHQ
- 24 May 1979 NSA Director Bobby Ray Inman writes to Brian Tovey about "Collection of Information on U.S. Persons"

1980s

- 1980 Alastair Anderson become Director of CESG, taking over from John Johnson
- 1980 Ivy Bells submarine tapping operation blown by Robert Pelton, a KGB agent inside NSA
- 1980 [Communications and Security Group created at Garats Hay \(Beaumanor\)](#)
- 9 Mar. 1981 One day strike at GCHQ is followed by further disruptive action into April

- 16 Nov. 1981 Geoffrey Prime makes his last contact with the KGB in East Berlin
- 1982 Gordon Welchman, a Bletchely Park veteran, is threatened with Official Secret Act over *Hut Six Story*
- 1982 GCHQ's Little Sai Wan in Hong Kong closed down and moved to Chum Hom Kwok
- 26 Jun. 1982 Geoffrey Prime confesses to police that he has spied for the KGB
- 15 Jul. 1982 Geoffrey Prime is remanded in custody on Official Secrets Act charges
- 23 Sept. 1982 James Bamford's *Puzzle Palace* is published
- 25 Oct 1982 NSA is authorised to set up a Computer Security Evaluation Center
- 10 Nov. 1982 Geoffrey Prime pleads guilty to espionage
- Sept. 1983 Peter Marychurch becomes Director of GCHQ, taking over from Brian Tovey
- 1 Dec. 1983 Pilot polygraph machine arrives at R12 at Cheltenham
- Dec. 1983 Decision on de-unionisation taken by an hoc Cabinet committee
- 25 Jan. 1984 GCHQ staff receive the surprise GN 100/84 letter on union membership
- 17 Apr. 1984 WPC Yvonne Fletcher is shot outside the Libyan People's Bureau in London
- 1984 GCHQ's Brora station in Sutherland closes
- 1984 Little Sai Wan at Hong Kong closes and replaced by Chum Hom Kwok
- 1984 A major extension to the facilities at Menwith Hill, codenamed STEEPLEBUSH, is completed
- 1985 Paul Foster becomes Director of CESG, taking over from Alastair Anderson
- 1 Nov. 1985 CESG's Joint Speech Research Unit moves to RSRE Malvern and merges to form the Speech Research Unit
- 1 Aug. 1985 KGB officer Vitaly Yurchenko defects and reveals NSA spy Robert Pelton
- 1 Mar. 1986 John Le Carré, *A Perfect Spy*, is published, one of the few major spy-novels featuring sigint
- 21 May 1986 "The Whistleblower" - perhaps the only spy-film about GCHQ - starring Michael Caine, is released
5. Jun. 1986 NSA spy Robert Pelton is convicted of espionage for the KGB
6. Jun. 1986 Jonathan Pollard pleads guilty to espionage for Mossad
- 1986 Joint Speech Research Unit at GCHQ is amalgamated with Speech Research Group at RSRE to form Speech Research Unit

13 Nov. 1986 BBC Governors express disquiet regarding a series of documentaries by Duncan Campbell called "Secret Society"

18 Jan. 1987 The Observer reveals the BBC decision not to show "Secret Society" documentary on UK's Zircon sigint satellite

20 Jan. 1987 European Commission for Human Rights declares GCHQ trade union case inadmissible

29 Jan 1987 Alastair Milne is asked to resign as Director-General of the BBC following controversy over "Secret Society"

1987 STU-III secure speech unit introduced by NSA

1987 Peter Wright's *Spycatcher* MI5 memoir causes GCHQ to delay the Clifford Cocks revelation by 10 years

31 Jul. 1988 Hawklaw station at Cupar in Fife closed

1989 The hilltop station at Teufelberg in Berlin closed

1989 John Porter become Director of CESG, taking over from Paul Foster

1989 John Adye becomes Director of GCHQ, taking over from Peter Marychurch

1990s

1990 Capenhurst Tower in Cheshire begins intercepting Irish telephone traffic

Mar. 1991 Andrew Saunders becomes Director of CESG, taking over from John Porter

1992 Unified Incident & Reporting Alert Scheme (UNIRAS) created to log IT security incidents in government

5 Feb. 1993 John Adye informs IOCA that GCHQ categorically denies intercepting phone calls involving the Royal Family

6 Oct. 1993 Channel 4 broadcasts Duncan Campbell's documentary on Menwith Hill called "The Hill"

Late 1993 Sir Michael Quinlan asked to look at government spending on intelligence

22 Dec. 1993 T. of R. for Quinlan's 'Review of Intelligence Requirements and Resources' agreed

12 May 1994 UK police raid the home of "Datastream Cowboy" a 16 year-old hacker who had penetrated US systems

14 May 1994 26 Signals Unit departs RAF Gatow in Berlin

2 Jun. 1994 An RAF Chinook carrying security personnel from Aldegrove crashes on the Mull of Kintyre

Jun. 1994 Sir Michael Quinlan's 'Review of Intelligence Requirements and Resources' completed

1994 GCHQ's Earls Court station at the Empress State building closed

Oct. 1994 Operations at GCHQ's Chum Hom Kwok station end

2 Nov. 1994 Intelligence Services Act places GCHQ and MI6 on the statute books with new oversight machinery

12 Dec. 1994 Roger Hurn Special Study commissioned

Jan. 1995 Chung Hom Kwok closed down and operations move to Geraldton in Australia

Jan. 1995 Operations at Cheadle end and the station is closed in June

25 Mar. 1995 Roger Hurn 'Special Study' of GCHQ completed

Mar. 1995 13 Signals Regiment in Germany disbanded, some move to JSSU at RAF Digby

16 May 1995 XW666, one of the three sigint Nimrod R1s ditches in the Moray Firth

1995 RAF 51 Squadron moves from RAF Wyton to RAF Waddington

16 Oct. 1995 New high-level post created to represent GCHQ in London

6 Nov. 1995 J, K and V Divisions abolished. M, Q, U & W Divisions created

10 Nov. 1995 GCHQ's Central Training School at Taunton closes

23 Nov. 1995 Impending appointment of David Omand as Director of GCHQ is announced

Jan. 1996 Sideslip/Caid/Cental and Yardage introduced for Radio Operators/RDs

1 Jul. 1996 David Omand becomes Director of GCHQ, taking over from John Adye

1996 Mark Urban publishes UK Eyes Alpha with detailed coverage of Zircon

1996 RAF Pergamos on Cyprus closes

1996 GCHQ appoints Michael Drury as Director of Legal Affairs (GCHQ's first full time legal advisor)

15. Jan. 1997 GCHQ formally asserts that it has no role in monitoring UFOs and holds no significant information on UFOs

16 Jan. 1997 GCHQ relaxes regulation on the employment of gays and lesbians

28 Apr. 1997 XV249, the Nimrod R1 replacement for XW666, becomes operational

15 May 1997 Robin Cook announces the end of the GCHQ trade union ban

1 Apr. 1997 CESG moves to cost recovery and completes restructuring

Oct. 1997 [NSA station at Edzell in Scotland which focused on Soviet naval traffic is closed](#)

18 Dec. 1997 Clifford Cocks delivers a public talk on the contribution of Ellis, Cocks and Williamson to Public Key Cryptography

Jan. 1998 Kevin Tebbit becomes Director of GCHQ, taking over from David Omand

May 1998 Kevin Tebbit introduces SINEWS (Sigint NEW Systems)

Jun. 1998 Lead 21 management training scheme begins at GCHQ

Jul. 1998 Francis Richards becomes Director of GCHQ, taking over from Kevin Tebbit

15 Aug. 1998 Omagh bombing by a breakaway faction of the IRA kills 29 people

1998 Communications and Security Group moves from Garats Hay (Beaumanor) to Chicksands

4 Jan. 1999 Richard Walton become Director of CESG, taking over from Andrew Saunders

May 1999 Foreign Secretary Robin Cook announces Benhall as the site for the new "Doughnut" building

1999 [GCHQ station at Culmhead in Somerset closed, functions transferred to Scarborough](#)

1999 Speech Research Unit at RSRE Malven privatised as part of the Qinetiq transformation and becomes 20/20 Speech Ltd

1999 [National Infrastructure Security Co-ordination Centre \(NISCC\) created \(pronounced "nicey"\)](#)

Sept. 1999 Cabinet Secretary asks Lieutenant General Sir Edmund Burton to review GCHQ

2000s

Jan. 2000 GCHQ assists NSA during a major computer failure at its Fort Meade headquarters

May 2000 A GCHQ team deploys to the UK High Commission in Sierra Leone to support military operations there

Jun. 2000 Construction of GCHQ's New Accommodation Project - known as "The Doughnut" - commences

2000 Burton review completed focusing on cost overruns on the New Accommodation Project

5 Jul. 2000 European Parliament votes to investigate charges that "Echelon" targets European businesses

Jul. 2000 Brian Paterson from GCHQ helps to develop Government Technical Assistance Centre (GTAC)

13 Mar. 2001 Geoffrey Prime released from Rochester Prison on parole

11 Jul. 2001 [European Parliament inquiry into Echelon interception system produces report](#)

- 11 Sept. 2001 9/11 terrorist attacks on New York and Washington
- 12 Sept. 2001 Directors of MI5, SIS and GCHQ fly to Washington
- Oct. 2002 Brent 2 secure telephone designed by CESG is launched
- 2002 Huw Rees becomes Director of CESG, taking over from Richard Walton
- 2 Jun. 2002 JTAC begins operations in the MI5 headquarters at Thames House
- 3 Mar. 2003 *Observer* publishes NSA message leaked from GCHQ on the monitoring of UN delegations
- 20 Mar. 2003 Iraq war begins with targeted strikes against Saddam Hussein
- Apr. 2003 Dr David Pepper becomes Director of GCHQ, taking over from Sir Francis Richards
- Jul. 2003 Chris Ingliss takes over from Barbara McNamara as SUSLOL, NSA's representative in London
- 16 Jul. 2003 National Audit Office publish report on New Accommodation Project IT costs
- Jul. 2003 Scarus (Learas) manpack sigint equipment arrives in Afghanistan
- 17 Sept. 2003 Staff begin to move into the GCHQ New Accommodation Project - known as 'The Doughnut'
- 14 Nov. 2003 Katharine Gun charged under Official Secrets Act over leaking of NSA document on UN monitoring
- Feb. 2004 Katharine Gun acquitted over leak of NSA message on UN monitoring
- 1 Apr. 2004 Joint Electronic Surveillance IPT formed for procurement of systems such as Soothsayer, Coblu, Ince and Scarus
- May 2004 Move to GCHQ's New Accommodation Project - 'The Doughnut' - is completed
- Mar. 2005 20/20 Speech Ltd (formerly RSRE Speech Research Unit at Malvern) becomes Aurix Ltd, a subsidiary of Qinetiq
- Apr. 2005 18th (UK Special Forces) Signals Regiment created - absorbing 264 (SAS) Signals Squadron and other groups
- 7 Jul. 2005 7/7 terrorist attacks on the London transport system
- Sept. 2005 John Widdowson becomes Director of CESG, taking over from Huw Rees
- Oct. 2005 Heilbronn Institute for Mathematical Research set up at University of Bristol
- 2 Sept 2006 XV230 - a Nimrod Maritime Reconnaissance aircraft explodes over Afghanistan with the loss of all 14 crew
- Apr. 2006 NTAC (formerly GTAC) is transferred from the Home Office to GCHQ

1 Feb. 2007 [Centre for the Protection of National Infrastructure \(CPNI\) created by merging NISCC, NSAC and a unit from MI5](#)

27 Apr. 2007 Estonia is subjected to a massive cyber attack affecting many institutions including the Estonian Parliament

25 Jun. 2007 [BBC Radio 4 begins broadcasting the first series of "Hut 33" a sitcom set in Bletchley Park](#)

21 Jul. 2007 [Cheltenham floods threaten to shut off the supply of chilled water that cools GCHQ's super-computers](#)

Nov. 2007 [GCHQ expands recruiting by advertising on the X-Box Live gaming platform](#)

9 Jan. 2008 Ken Wharfe, former bodyguard, tells the Princess Diana Inquest that recordings were probably made by GCHQ

28 Feb. 2008 Sir John Adye, ex-Director GCHQ, assures Princess Diana Inquest that GCHQ was not bugging Royal phones

9 Apr. 2008 [UK tightens regulations for American U2 imagery/sigint flights from Cyprus codenamed "Cedar Sweep"](#)

Jun. 2008 [Siginters Memorial to those working on sigint who were killed in action is installed in the courtyard of GCHQ](#)

Jul. 2008 [NATO Electronic Warfare Core Staff activated at Yeovilton](#)

30 Jul. 2008 [Iain Lobban becomes Director of GCHQ, taking over from Dr David Pepper](#)

Aug. 2008 [Intercept Modernisation Programme announced](#)

15 Sept. 2008 BBC Panorama claims that GCHQ intercepts could possibly have prevented Omagh bombing

14 Nov. 2008 [Declassification of Thomas Johnson's four-volume history of NSA covering 1945-1991 \[available here\]](#)

Dec. 2008 [Plans are developed for a new administrative building adjacent to the 'Doughnut' and a multi-storey car park](#)

Jan. 2009 Report by Sir Peter Gibson rejects main claims by BBC Panorama regarding Omagh bombing

Aug. 2009 [Matthew Aid's history of the NSA, *The Secret Sentry*, is published](#)

13 Nov. 2009 [Plans for new office accommodation at GCHQ Benhall to allow transfer of remaining staff from Oakley](#)

2010s

Feb. 2010 [RC-135 Rivet Joint replacement for the Nimrod R1 sigint aircraft finalised](#)

10 Mar. 2010 [Cyber Security Operations Centre begins full range of activity](#)

Mar 2010 Plans for new offices at GCHQ Benhall prove unaffordable and new site for contractors purchased

4 Apr. 2010 [BBC Radio 4 documentary "Cracking the Code" on GCHQ by Security Correspondent Gordon Corera](#)

15 Jun. 2010 [CESG imposes Whitehall iPhone ban](#)

Jul. 2010 Leaked Whitehall report argues GCHQ's ethnic minority employees are too few at 2.49% of the workforce

23 Aug. 2010 [The body of Garreth Williams, a GCHQ employee on secondment to SIS, is discovered in his flat in Pimlico](#)

12 Oct. 2010 [Iain Lobban, Director of GCHQ, talks at IISS on the subject of cyberthreats - his first public address](#)

22 Dec. 2010 [GCHQ's Canadian sigint partner CSEC announces a new \\$880 million headquarters](#)

6 Jan. 2011 [NSA holds groundbreaking ceremony for \\$1.2 Billion Data Center at Camp W.G. Williams in Utah](#)

7 Jan. 2011 General Sir David Richards (CDS) visits GCHQ and voices the need for a UK Cyber Command

4 Feb. 2011 Foreign Secretary William Hague details cyber attack on the FCO by a 'hostile state intelligence agency'

10 Feb. 2011 Prime Minister David Cameron visits GCHQ and is briefed on cyber threats

Mar. 2011 GCHQ decides to wind down its London office in Palmer St. and make use of space provided by SIS and MI5

11 Aug 2011 [Prime Minister David Cameron claims that Twitter, Facebook and BBM instant messaging was used by rioters](#)

14 Aug 2011 Temporary site for GCHQ contractors near Cheltenham to be replaced by a new site near Gloucester

16 Nov.2011 [William Hague \(SoS FCO\) gives a speech on the UK intelligence services entitled "Securing Our Future"](#)

25 Nov. 2011 [UK Cyber Security Strategy Published](#)

21 Dec. 2011 [BBC are given a tour of the GCHQ Oakley site as it is decommissioned](#)

23 Oct. 2012 ["Skyfall" is the first James Bond film to focus on cyber security](#)

14 Dec 2012 [GCHQ's Oakley site is formally closed](#)

[Interview with Amy McLeod of KnowledgeCentre about the GCHQ book](#)

[Read about the connection between Bletchley Park's secret stations and Warwick University](#)

REVIEWS of

[GCHQ: The Uncensored Story of Britain's Most Secret Intelligence Agency](#)

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'Richard J Aldrich is an outstanding analyst and historian of intelligence, and he tells this story well ... It is an important book, which will make readers think uncomfortably not only about the state's power to monitor our lives, but also about the appalling vulnerability of every society in thrall to communications technology, as we are.'

[Max Hastings, *The Sunday Times*, 13 June 2010](#)

'In this superlative history, Aldrich packs in vast amounts of information, while managing to remain very readable. He paints the broad picture, but also introduces fascinating detail, such as how , following the loss of Hong Kong in 1997, GCHQ planted remote collection equipment on container vessels which sailed

far inland up China's waterways. But this is neither a cosy insider memoir nor a hard-hitting journalistic expose. As Richard Aldrich's notes testify, most of his material comes from open source publications. There are no secrets, he affirms, only lazy researchers. And he is definitely not one of them.'

Andrew Lycett, *Literary Review*, 8 June 2010

This is a sober and valuable work of scholarship, which is as reliable as anything ever is in the twilight world of intelligence-gathering. Yet there is nothing dry about it. Aldrich knows how to write for a wider audience, while avoiding the speculations, inventions, sensationalism and sheer silliness of so much modern work on the subject.

The Spectator, 12 August 2010

The Week's "Book of the Week":

'Aldrich has taken a decade to produce the first substantial account of the agency's history, and this superlative book packs in vast amounts of information, yet remains wonderfully readable. He has dug up a massive amount of fascinating detail.'

The Week, 2 July 2010

'As the historian Richard J Aldrich notes in the introduction to his excellent new history of the Cheltenham-based agency it represents by far our largest, most expensive, most productive - and yet most secret - intelligence effort. GCHQ: The uncensored story of Britain's most secret intelligence agency instantly ranks as the most essential exposition of the hidden power wielded for 70 years by Britain's information superweapon ... Aldrich packs much of his book with ripping operational tales from the Cold War period, sharply written with due attention to the real people involved, as well as the politics.'

Chris Williams, *The Register*, 15 June 2010

'In the opening sentence of his important though curiously subtitled book, the historian Richard Aldrich writes: "'GCHQ' is the last great British secret." ... GCHQ grew out of Bletchley Park, where a brilliant collection of chess players, linguists and mathematician. GCHQ (Gloucestershire's biggest employer) remains extremely secretive compared even to MI5 and MI6, though it accounts for the bulk of the £2.4bn officially spent each year by Britain's three intelligence agencies. Aldrich shows how GCHQ developed into a global intelligence-gathering agency of truly industrial proportions "The frightening truth", Aldrich concludes, is that "no one is in control". '

Richard Norton-Taylor, *The Guardian*, 19 June 2010

Mr Aldrich skilfully weaves together the personal, political, military and technological dimensions of electronic espionage. He recognises the limits of even the most sophisticated sigint: GCHQ can track the movements of armed forces but cannot always fathom what those forces are up to. In the internet age, the agency faces two challenges: how to monitor the rivers of digitised information that flow around the world; and how to maintain political legitimacy for governments to gather and store large quantities of personal data so that the information can be searched for patterns of terrorist and criminal activity. Its work is harder than ever.

The Economist, 8 July 2010

'Richard Aldrich, an accomplished cold war intelligence historian, has taken a decade to produce the first substantial account of what is known about the agency, and what can be gleaned from the recently released official archive ... During the 1960s and 1970s, military risks were taken and important foreign policy decisions managed to support the demands of the intelligence collectors. Among these events was the manipulation of decisions about the British military presence in Cyprus solely to obtain convenient real estate for GCHQ and radar bases, and the deportation of the Chagos Islanders en masse from their homes on Diego Garcia. As Aldrich puts it, "the sigint tail had begun to wag the policy dog".'

Duncan Campbell, *New Statesman*, 24 June 2010

Aldrich's history was 10 years in the making and clips through all the milestones and missions, traitors and technology involved in GCHQ's development. And we learn that the "special relationship" was born of a pragmatic postwar trade in UK territory for US gadgetry. Today GCHQ is housed in a vast doughnut-shaped nerve centre near Cheltenham in the UK that strips the ether of all digital chatter – inane, malevolent or otherwise. It is, Aldrich concludes, "a vast mirror" reflecting the spirit of the age, albeit one he fears that "may eventually enslave us".

Carl Wilkinson, *The Financial Times*, 12 July 2010

In the first line of this fine book, Richard Aldrich boldly declares that GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters) is Britain's last secret. If it is, he has done a great deal to uncover much of it. The book is a product of nearly a decade's worth of painstaking research in various public archives and interviews with those involved in some of the high-political work of the agency during its postwar history. It is a testament to Aldrich's perseverance in the darker reaches of departmental archives, stretching

right across government, that he has managed to piece together such a comprehensive and empirically rich account of the most secret of British secret agencies. ... an invaluable read for all who are interested in the study of intelligence, surveillance and security.

[International Affairs 86: 5, 2010](#)

Richard Aldrich is the foremost historian of the British intelligence agency GCHQ ... Aldrich pays tribute to an American writer, James Bamford, who wrote a book in 1982 about the National Security Agency at Fort Meade, Maryland, entitled *The Puzzle Palace*. ... With his own originality and research in unorthodox sources as well as official documents, Aldrich has now done the same for GCHQ and comes down to the present. Since September 11, 2001, government wiretaps and electronic monitoring have spun out of control. GCHQ concludes with a warning at what seems to be an historic trend in the making: when sophisticated surveillance combines with biometric monitoring, universal fingerprinting, and the gathering of DNA, civil liberties are more at risk than ever before.

[Wm. Roger Louis, English Historical Review, 2011](#)

The heroics of the Bletchley Park codebreakers in the Second World War are part of national folklore, but such is the veil of secrecy surrounding their successors, mostly employed at GCHQ in Cheltenham, that even the distinguished historian Richard J. Aldrich can only unearth a fraction of the truth. Even so, his overview of British intelligence-gathering, from the Cold War through to the age of al-Qaeda, is magisterial and engrossing.

[Sally Cousins, Daily Telegraph, 24 July 2011](#)

[Sinclair McKay applauds an intriguing history of covert surveillance, review of GCHQ by Richard Aldrich, The Telegraph, 10 July 2010](#)

[The Yorkshire Ranter, GCHQ Review: Part 1, The World's Most Classified Blog and Other Stories, 12 August 2010](#)

[Tapping into the Secret World of GCHQ, Richard McComb, Birmingham Post, 1 July 2010, Part 1](#)

[Tapping into the Secret World of GCHQ, Richard McComb, Birmingham Post, 1 July 2010, Part 2](#)



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