

Wireless for the Warrior Compendium 2 – Spark to Larkspur (Special Sets, Receivers and Larkspur) by Louis Meulstee PA0PCR

reviewed by

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with notes on Compendia 3 and 4

With the publication of Compendium 2, Spark to Larkspur (Special Sets, Receivers and Larkspur), the series of reference and identification manuals about British and Commonwealth Army wireless equipment is complete. Compendium 1 covered the earliest sets, through to the WS series in the early 1950s and Compendium 2 carries on to describe all the members of the Larkspur series of equipment, accompanied by a multitude of hitherto unpublished pictures, including many of sets in service.

The photographs in Compendium 2 deserve particular mention for their clarity and detail. They are, of course, more modern than those in Compendium 1 and represent a lifetime of collecting on the author's part, forming a unique record of the systems described.

However, the Larkspur section occupies less than half of the over four hundred pages of Compendium 2. The author has included a section on receivers, which complements and expands on the information in Wireless for the Warrior Volume 3, again with much previously unpublished material. There is also a large amount of information on "special sets" which is a general description covering some extremely interesting and, in many cases, rare systems. In detail, Compendium 2 is arranged in five sections:

Special Sets

The title "Special Sets" covers a wide variety of equipment from Special Forces sets to the SWB11. The section is sub divided to include Commercial, RAF and Navy sets adapted for Army use, Ground/Air sets, Special Sets (Golden Arrow, Special Forces, SPF, Gun Sound Ranging, etc.), Miscellaneous and Local Pattern sets and Experimental Sets, Systems and Instruments. A real gold mine of information!

Commonwealth Sets

Equipment developed and manufactured in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa are covered in this section – a remarkable list of thirty four sets.

Receivers (incorporating Welfare Receivers)

Wireless for the Warrior Volume 3 was dedicated to receivers and contained detailed information on a large number of British and Commonwealth sets. The information in this Compendium condenses this information and adds more. Sub-sections cover standard Army receivers, commercial, RAF and other sets adopted by the Army, Commonwealth receivers and British and Commonwealth welfare receivers.

Direction Finding Sets and Systems

Some D/F sets were covered in *Wireless for the Warrior* Volume 3 (Receivers) but this compendium contains information on no fewer than twenty systems; fixed, mobile and portable. Here we also learn that there were D/F attachments for a number of commonly known sets such as the WS18 and WS19!

Larkspur Era

This is the most comprehensive set of information on the post-World War 2 series of communications equipment, generally known as “Larkspur”. Every one of the A, B, C, D and E series sets is described, along with superb pictures of the equipment, many of them in operational settings. Not only are the standard issue sets covered, but also the numerous prototypes and trial models, many of which proved to be dead ends, but which are an essential part of the history of Army communications.

In addition, the Compendium describes the two standard control harnesses, “A” and “B”, plus the functional testers and a number of ancillaries.

In summary therefore, *Wireless for the Warrior* Compendium 2 is essential reading for all those with an interest in the wireless communications used by the armies of Britain and the Commonwealth up to the 1970s. It is very handsomely produced in a soft cover format at A5 size and is copiously illustrated.

Published alongside Compendium 2 are two more books, Compendia 3 and 4 which together form a facsimile reprint of a German Army document “*Kennblätter fremden Geräts, heft 13, Nachrichtengerät*” (Foreign Equipment Data Sheets, Volume 13, Signal Equipment). This rare document was one of a series containing information on enemy equipment published by the German Army during World War 2, in order that captured equipment could be understood and possibly re-used.

The author has included English language translations of the introductory sections, an English index and a basic glossary to aid those who do not understand the original German, much of which is rendered in the gothic *altdeutsche* font. In addition, a short guidance note providing advice on “reading” the original text and translating it into English is included with each copy; this note is also available as a free download from both this and the WftW websites

The number of pages in the original loose leaf document made it impossible to publish in a single volume, so the author has divided it into two – Compendium 3 contains information on Belgian, French, British and American sets, while Compendium 4 covers those of Russia and Switzerland.