

WftW Compendium 6 Review

Compendium 6 is a modern reprint of a 1944 document issued by the Training Establishment, Royal Army Ordnance Corps, F Branch, which was based at Donnington in Shropshire. *Notes on Equipment, Volume IV*, was titled *Signal and Wireless Stores*, and was intended to give Stores personnel a grounding in the line and radio equipment used by the wartime army.

With no other volumes in the series being known to remain it is not perhaps obvious why the RAOC would have taken the trouble to provide this training; it seems highly unlikely that it would have been sufficient for the personnel involved to put the various items together, much less operate them in the manner intended.

However, a clue is to be found in a totally different publication: *The History of British Army Signals in the Second World War* was written by Major – General R. F. Nalder and was published by the Royal Signals Institution in London in 1953 *. On page 318 Nalder wrote the following about stores organisation:

Most of these tasks had of course much in common with those relating to other categories of Army equipment, and there was no radical reason why the Ordnance machinery, built up as it was from long experience, could not have discharged them to entire satisfaction. As has already been stated, however, there was certain aspects in the handling of signal stores which required specialised treatment. In particular, it was necessary for those who handled them to have a detailed knowledge not only of the main equipments but also of the very large numbers of components and spares and their relations to the main equipments; and to have a general knowledge of the application of the various equipments, so that where possible substitute types might be offered to meet demands for those which were not available. As stated above, there was in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps a shortage of personnel with the requisite qualifications, and in consequence there were delays in replenishing stocks which might otherwise have been avoided.

Eventually and in default of an improvement in the situation, the Director of Signals offered to provide detachments of Royal Signals personnel to work in the main depots under the command of the Chief Ordnance Officers concerned.

While making no mention of “Notes on Equipment” Nalder made it clear that it had been found that using personnel with no knowledge of the equipment and parts that they were handling was not as effective an approach as the Army needed; from identifying that to someone producing training material is but a short step.

The modern reader is already likely to have varying degrees of knowledge about the radio equipment listed, but *Signal and Wireless Stores* is much, much more than that, with comprehensive notes about teleprinters, telephone equipment, line equipment, batteries and so on. Military communications is a subject of great interest to many people; while the main thrust of that interest tends to be aimed at radio equipment this reprint should provide the modern reader with a lot of information about the other forms of communication that the army used in the 2nd World War, as well as putting knowledge about the radio equipment into a slightly different context.

It could be said that this training précis contains a wealth of trivia that readers are very unlikely to find elsewhere, but this could be misleading; *wealth* is entirely true – instead of *trivia* think snippets of information that together help readers build up a bigger and clearer picture of signals equipment during World War 2.

Fail to buy this *Compendium* and there will always be a gap in your library. Go to www.lulu.com/spotlight/wftw and a few clicks will provide you with a preview; a few more and your own copy will be printed. At less than £8 (not including postage) this has to be one of the best bargains you will find this year.

* For reasons wholly unconnected with this review the author had obtained Nalder's book from the County Library Service and came upon the passage quoted; a happy coincidence which made the review easier to write.