



Roll of Honour:

Cdr Edward Wilfred Harry "Jumbo" Travis

Name

Cdr Edward Wilfred Harry "Jumbo" Travis

Certificate of Service

[View online](#)

Service

FO Civilian (RN Retired)

Rank

Director

Summary of Service

Bletchley Park 1939 - 1945. Mansion. Deputy Director of GCCS, 1925 - February 1942, with responsibility for security and British codes and ciphers. Deputy Director (Service) (DD(S)) from February 1942, effectively head of GCCS at Bletchley Park. Director GCCS from 1 March 1944.

Commemorated On The Codebreakers Wall

No

Other Information

Appointed Chevalier of the Legion d'honneur, and Officer of the Order of the Crown of Italy, in 1919. Appointed CBE in 1936. Appointed KCMG June 1944. Awarded the US Medal for Merit by President Truman in 1946. Mentioned in 'A Bletchley Alphabet' - see below.

Sir Edward Travis 1888 - 1956

A brief biography, based on that formerly displayed in the 'Hall of Fame' in Bletchley Park mansion. - Attached in PDF format below.

Sir Edward Travis

1888 – 1956

A brief biography, based on that formerly displayed in the 'Hall of Fame' in Bletchley Park mansion.

Edward 'Jumbo' Travis was the Deputy Head of GCCS from its formation in 1919, taking over as Head from February 1942. He continued as Director of its successor body, GCHQ, retiring in April 1952. He provided strong leadership for the cryptographic activities of the UK at Bletchley Park as his team grew to about 9,000, contracting to less than 2,000 in 1946, and planned the transfer of the agency, now growing again, to Eastcote. Travis built up the Intelligence partnership with the USA.

Edward Wilfrid Harry Travis was born on 24 September 1888 at Plumstead Common, Kent. After school he joined the Royal Navy in 1906, being commissioned three years later. He was appointed on the first day of World War 1 to the staff of Admiral Jellicoe as a signals officer. He demonstrated the vulnerability of the Admiral's code by breaking it, then did the same for the improved version. He was accordingly transferred to the Admiralty, with responsibilities for the security of all naval codes.

When GCCS was formed in October 1919, Lt Cdr Travis was appointed deputy to Alastair Denniston, with responsibilities for the security of all our codes and ciphers. In October 1938, he was made responsible under Alastair Denniston, for the three service sections of GCCS, in addition to his code-construction responsibilities. Discussions with Gordon Welchman in the early days of World War 2 led to Travis obtaining funding from Whitehall for the Enigma decryption production huts, and the building of the first Bombe. Travis was given responsibility for the Enigma decryption teams in November 1939, taking a room in Hut 8. So it was to him that Gordon Welchman and Alan Turing reported through the initial growth of the Enigma teams.

When, in October 1941, the four 'wicked uncles', Welchman, Turing and their deputies, Stuart Milner-Barry and Hugh Alexander, wrote directly to Churchill complaining about the lack of human resources, they ensured that the blame did not fall on Travis: *'We do not know who or what is responsible for our difficulties, and most emphatically we do not want to be criticising Commander Travis who has all along done his utmost to help us in every way possible'*. Churchill decided in February 1942 that Edward Travis should take over from Alastair Denniston as head of the services team at Bletchley Park, reporting now directly to the head of MI6, Sir Stewart Menzies ('C'). Edward Travis was a man for whom his team felt great respect rather than love. He was always known as 'Jumbo', no doubt partly because of his rather heavy handed approach as well as his somewhat rotund figure. He has been described as *'gruff, rough, and burly'* but he also could attract considerable affection. The brown ink he always used for his memos became known as *'the Director's blood'*. He was a superb administrator, who was to guide the growth of Bletchley Park to 8,900 staff three years later.

Travis rapidly strengthened the management of Bletchley Park. An inspired appointment was that of Sqn Ldr Eric Jones to head the Hut 3 Intelligence team. Jones had not been to University, knew no German, and had run a large textile agency. He was to succeed Travis as Director of GCHQ in 1952. Travis could show remarkable insight, such as his strong encouragement of machine methods. One of his lasting achievements was the partnership with the USA. He had married Muriel Fry in 1913; one of their daughters, Valerie, worked at Bletchley Park. He was knighted (KCMG) in 1944. After the war he managed the run down in staff, GCHQ reaching 2,000 in 1946, and then expanding again.

The Travises went to live at Pirbright in Surrey, where he died on 18 April 1956. His strong leadership of GCCS had overseen *'the greatest achievement of the UK in the 20th century'*.

A BLETCHLEY ALPHABET

*Composed by staff of Bletchley Park at the end of World War Two.
Kindly supplied by Mrs. P. Sharp, née Sear.*

A is for Anthony, our nominal head
At least until the country went red
We're Bevin Boys now and through Ernie's capers
Poor Eden has had his redundancy papers.
Anthony Eden, Foreign Secretary

B is for Budd, the head of Hut Two
Who hands out the wallop to me and to you
When the Park closes down the last man to go
Will be Mr Budd, at least we hope so.
George Budd, Chief Groundsman and Quartermaster

C is for Crawley, our own dietician,
Who serves up our grub like a mathematician
It's round stodge or square, for the rest of your life
Then eat the darn stuff without even a knife.
Cecil Crawley, Catering Manager

D is for Denny, his nickname is Stoker
(We think, 'cos he peps up his pipe with a poker)
He issues the Bronco and beer in a cask
If it's not in the window, come in and ask.
Cecil Denny, Finance Officer, later Establishment Officer

E is for Sir Edward, the Guv'nor upstairs
Who pinches our Clubroom for Christmas affairs
He passes our transport, tines without number
In a pre-war upholstered beige coloured Humber.
Sir Edward Travis, Deputy Director (Service), effective head of Bletchley Park

F is for Foss - six foot in his shoes
Seen in a kilt, but nir tartan troos
If on a Friday a stroll you will take
You'll find him dancing a reel by the lake.

Hugh Foss, head of Japanese Naval cryptography

G is for Griffith who finds us our digs
Some live like princes, some live like pigs
It's no good protesting, it's wasting your breath
If you find your own billet, he's tickled to death.
Herbert Griffith, Billeting Officer

H is for Howgate, deceiver of Wrens
He lures the poor creatures to dimly lit dens
He twirls his moustache, is manly and curt
But spoils the effect with an A.T.S. shirt.
Malcolm Howgate, Hut 6 and SIXTA, Drama Group

I is for Intelligence, the Corps in the Park
They all need a haircut, but please keep it dark
The question I hope to get answered one day
Is how can a corpse be intelligent, pray.

J is for Joan, the Sec of the Club
Who chases you up for an overdue sub
She lends you the Gatehouse - looks up your trains
And then gets her flowers pinched for taking such
pains.
*Joan Dudley-Smith, secretary of Drama Group and
Recreational Club.*

K is for Kevin with hair slightly red
a crescent shaped scar on the side of his head
You may think he got it from some ancient dirk
But he says his mother was hit by a Turk.
*The only Kevin is O'Neill, Army captain in Military
Section*

L is for Lowe, a clanking occurs
Handlebar Harry is out with his spurs
He doesn't claim to be much of a dancer
But what could you hope from a Bengali Lancer?
Probably Captain John Lowe, Hut 3

M is for John Moore who's fungus 'tis said
Allows him to carry on drinking in bed
A slight overstatement his friends will retort

For when fully loaded, it holds but a quart.
*Air Section Admin Officer and OC RAF Wing of
Bletchley Park Defence Force*

N is for Nenk, the Major in F
When staff wanted leave he used to be deaf
Now that his number is not far away
He took then all out for a picnic one day.

David Nenk, Military Section, Japanese

O is for Owen, that's Dudley I mean
When the curtain's gone up, he's not to be seen
But if it comes down in quite the wrong place
It's Dudley, the stage boss, who loses his face.

Dudley Owen, Hut 8 and Drama Group

P is for Parker, our check-suited dope
Who thinks that his acting surpasses Bob Hope
We know his forte's a bullocks front pins
Who heard of a fan mail to 'Father of Twins'.

Reg Parker, Hut 6 and Drama Group

Q is for Tea, it's only a penny
If there is cake it stretches to Fenny
When work is a bore, and I'm sure you will see
Lots on the TQ on the QT.

R is for Reiss, who can always be found
with a large coloured broly and two feet of hound
When he goes up to Heaven and his name they
record
We hope they will ask "Is it down on the board?".

Vincent Reiss, Transport Officer

S is for Sedgwick who ran all the hops
In the tough old days of American cops
Hush - Hush - Whisper who dare
He slightly resembles that chap Fred Astaire.

Stanley Sedgwick, Air Section and Ballroom Dancing Club

T is for Tiltman just one of the boys
Red tabs he won't wear with brown corduroys
When billets were scarce, Dame Rumour doth say
He lived in the States and flew in each day.

John Tiltman, Chief Cryptographer etc

U is for Uncle Sam, who seat us some chaps
Three thousand miles to Bletchley perhaps
They came for the fashionable season
We are glad to have them, whatever the reason.

V is the Visitor, distinguished Brass-Hat
Comes snooping around to see what we're at
We sweep the place clean with dustpan and broom
And move all the empties to some other room.

W is for Wallace, the Colonel, you know
His name's at the end of a B.P.G.O.
He sits in a room that looks out on the grass
And forbids you to prop up your bike on the glass.

B E Wallace, Chief Admin Officer

XYZ are frightful stinkers
We haven't one among our thinkers - hic - drinkers
And so perforce this daft effusion
We must bring now to a conclusion.

Cdr Edward Wilfred Harry Travis



FO Civilian (RN Retired), Director

For service in support of the work of Bletchley Park during
World War Two. We Also Served.