

Introduction

The Waldegrave Initiative is the name given to a policy introduced in 1992 by Lord Waldegrave, an English Conservative politician who served in the British Cabinet from 1990 – 1997. Under this policy, all government departments were encouraged to re-examine what had been previously regarded as particularly sensitive records, with the objective of declassifying a greater quantity of information. This initiative is widely regarded as the precursor to the UK's Freedom of Information Act 2000, and it set a precedent of declassification across Western democracies.

The Special Operations Executive (SOE) was a secret British organisation formed 22 July 1940 by Winston Churchill to conduct espionage, sabotage, and reconnaissance in occupied Europe against the Axis powers as well as to aid local resistance movements. As Mark Seaman put it, the SOE was formed to “foster occupied Europe’s resistance groups” and ensure that “Nazi occupation wasn’t an easy thing”.¹ It operated in all countries or former countries occupied by or attacked by the Axis forces, except where demarcation lines were agreed with Britain's principal allies – namely the Soviet Union and the United States of America. Initially it was also involved in the formation of the Auxiliary Units, a top secret “stay-behind” resistance organisation, which would have been activated in the event of a German invasion of mainland Britain.² To those who were part of the SOE or liaised with it, it was sometimes referred to as “the Baker Street Irregulars” (after the location of its London headquarters). It was also known as “Churchill's Secret Army” or the “Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare”. For security purposes various branches, and sometimes the organisation as a whole, were concealed behind names such as the “Joint Technical Board” or the “Inter-Service Research Bureau” as well as fictitious branches of the Air Ministry, Admiralty, or War Office. This dispersion in part accounts for the disparity and inconsistency of the records currently held in the National Archives in Kew, London, which will be discussed in further detail later in this thesis.

1 Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 26663, Reel 1.

2 Wilkinson, P., *Foreign Fields*, p. 100.

Prior to the Waldegrave Initiative, little archival material relating to the SOE was in public circulation or publicly available. However, a limited number of oral testimonies by SOE contemporaries were in circulation and a small number of historical works and memoirs were published. Following release of records under the Waldegrave Initiative from 1992 onwards, a range of new publications have appeared. However, to date, little analysis has been carried out to identify the impact of such previously classified information on this historiography. Through such analysis, this thesis aims to add to the body of knowledge around the Waldegrave Initiative and its implications.

Due to the size of the SOE, it is impracticable to analyse in detail the whole of the SOE's activities in the time and resources available. Hence, this thesis takes one SOE related activity – *Freshman* – and analyses in detail the scale and scope of the potential for the records released under Waldegrave to impact its historiography. From this analysis, key impacts and conclusions are drawn. It should be noted however that, as this thesis only has the scope for one case study, any conclusions drawn based on the evidence and this will limit analysis given in the following prose. This does not mean the research undertaken for, the analysis, or conclusions of this thesis are not important. It is overdue for such an assessment of the potential use of these records released under Waldegrave for the SOE historiography to take place. In a boarder context, this assessment helps us understand the importance of such government transparency schemes for re-evaluation and amendment to the existing historiography.

Context

The Perception of the Threat

In June 1942 Dr. Vannevar Bush, the head of the US Office of Scientific Research and Development – the agency of the federal government responsible for coordinating scientific research for military purposes, submitted a memorandum to President Roosevelt stating that the Germans were ‘believed to be ahead of both the United States and Britain’ in atomic weapons development.³ At the time, the Allies were still speculating as to the extent of Germany’s nuclear weapons research. In the absence of information to the contrary from the intelligence services, many Allied scientists and intelligence operatives alike believed that Germany was ahead of the Allies in both nuclear fission research and the engineering of systems to deploy this effectively as a weapon.

The historian Thomas Gallagher suggests that the Allies accepted German superiority in nuclear physics and weapons research:

... it had to be assumed that the foremost German physicists and engineers were working on atomic research with the complete support and co-operation of their government and the industry under its control...⁴

In response, the Allies embarked upon a unified nuclear weapons research programme of their own, known as the *Manhattan Project*. This unified Allied research project, based in the United States, was charged with determining the progress of the Axis’ nuclear weapons programme as well as developing a working nuclear fission weapon system for the Allies’ use. Samuel Goudsmit, a researcher on

³ Bush, V., Memorandum June 1942, Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library.

⁴ Gallagher, T., *Assault in Norway: Sabotaging the Nazi Nuclear Program*, p. 2.

the *Manhattan Project* whose job it was to analyse the progress of the Axis nuclear program, wrote in his book *Alsos*:

Ordinary intelligence information yielded nothing of value. There were always fantastic rumours floating around about terrifying secret weapons and atomic bombs which were duly reported by the O.S.S. [Office of Strategic Services JPB] and British agents, but invariably the technical details were hopelessly nonsensical. The reason was obvious. No ordinary spy could get us the information we wanted for the simple reason that he lacked scientific training to know what was essential. Only scientifically qualified personnel could get us that, and a Mata Hari with a PhD in physics is rare.⁵

Whilst Churchill and other Allied leaders were 'quite content with the existing explosives' they felt that they should not 'stand in the path of improvement'.⁶ As Lord Cherwell, one of Britain's most influential scientific advisors who attended War Cabinet meetings and was a close friend of Winston Churchill, stated in a report to the Prime Minister in June 1942: 'a great deal of work has been done both here [in Britain JPB] and in America, and probably in Germany, on the super-explosive and it looks as if bombs might be produced and brought into use within, say, two years.'⁷

Lord Cherwell and other contemporaries believed that it was fully expected that the Germans would develop an atomic bomb before the Allies because of their alleged superiority in nuclear physics research.⁸ In addition, it was known that Germany was

5 Goudsmit, S., *Alsos*, p. 11.

6 Wittner, L. S., *The Struggle Against The Bomb*, p. 13.

7 Lindemann, F. A., *Bombs and Bombing*, June 1942, Oxford University: Nuffield College Library, Catalogue Reference CSAC 80.4.81/G.177-G.209.

8 *Ibid.*

in control of the largest uranium oxide stocks in the world (occupied Belgium), had put an embargo on uranium exports from Czechoslovakia, and was in control of the only hydrogen electrolysis plant – the Norsk Hydrogen Electrolysis Plant (NHEP), situated at Vemork in an area called Rjukan, Norway – in the world capable of producing significant quantities of deuterium oxide (commonly known as “heavy water”). This “heavy water” was code-named *Lurgan* by the Allies; known to be an extremely effective moderator of neutrons and was the preferable medium at the time for producing a chain reacting pile of uranium (essential for creating nuclear fission).⁹ All this, combined with fear of the most powerful explosive ever produced being incorporated into Germany’s long-ranged weapon systems, such as the *Vergeltungswaffe* (“V”) rockets, made it imperative to the Allies that the German lead in the race for an atomic bomb was reduced at all costs.¹⁰

Fundamental to this was the German occupation of Norway and the access this gave them to the NHEP. Operations code-named *Grouse* and *Freshman*, coordinated by COHQ (a department of the British War Office set up 17th July 1940

9 [the Germans JPB] already had Belgium under their wing, and it was in Belgium that Europe’s largest stocks of uranium oxide were held’, Wiggan, R., *Operation Freshman: The Rjukan Heavy Water Raid 1942*, p. 21. ‘Germany had suddenly stopped all exports of uranium ore from Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia’ Gallagher, T., *Assault in Norway*, p. 1. Gallagher states in his book, when speaking of *Lurgan*, ‘Its importance... lay in the fact that it was known to be an exceptionally efficient moderator for slowing down neutrons in a uranium pile’, *Ibid.*, p. 5.

10 In an interview Commander K. S. Batchelor recalls “He [Wing Commander Corby JPB] told me “The Germans are after an explosive thousand times more powerful than anything before.””, Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 10429, Reel 3. Gallagher points out ‘intelligence data had been gathered on Germany’s V-1 and V-2 rockets; and Hitler had boasted of secret weapons. What final use could the rockets have except to carry atomic explosives?’, Gallagher, T., *Assault in Norway*, p. 2. Mark Seaman stated in an interview “there was definite concern that Germans were doing the same [as the Allies JPB] in respect of developing atomic weapons.”, Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 26663, Reel 1.

to harass the Axis forces on the European continent through a combination of naval, air, and ground forces), were therefore planned as the first military actions undertaken by the Allies to sabotage the Axis' nuclear weapons program, with the destruction (in order of priority) of the existing accumulated stocks of *Lurgan*, the machinery used for its production, and the power station for the NHEP situated at the rear of the site as the objective (combined these were referred to as "the Gunnerside objective").¹¹

Operation Grouse

Grouse was the SOE advanced party who were successfully placed in the vicinity of the Hardangervidda above the NHEP earlier in 1942 for *Freshman*. It consisted of four Norwegian nationals who had first-hand knowledge of the Rjukan area. They were to prepare a landing strip for the gliders of *Freshman*, guide their towing bombers with a Eureka-Rebecca homing beacon system, relieve them of supplies for follow up operations, and, according to some sources, guide them to the NHEP.

Although members of *Grouse* were willing to participate, as demonstrated by a communiqué to COHQ in which they stated that they 'would gladly take active part', they were forbidden by the Norwegian High Command to join the attack on the Gunnerside objective by *Freshman* or assist the Royal Engineers in their escape to neutral Sweden.¹² In a communiqué from Lieutenant-Colonel M. C. Henneaker of the Norwegian Army, it is stated that *Grouse* 'would not act as guides in the sense of

¹¹ For a more comprehensive list of the Gunnerside objective's components please see The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 238.

¹² The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 79.

leading the party to the target'.¹³ Further there is a telegram, sent by Henneaker to Colonel Wilson of the SOE, stating 'The Norwegian Commander in Chief has asked me to make it clear that the Norwegian guides' work ends when they have led the party to the target. It was never intended that they guide the party along any escape route'.¹⁴ For the researcher these conflicting statements make it unclear as to whether *Grouse* was authorised to guide the men of *Freshman* to the target area but not on to an escape route, or alternatively neither. The advance party was comprised of highly trained SOE agents – some of whom had previously served with the Norwegian armed forces prior to the German invasion. They had first-hand knowledge of the area in which *Freshman* was to be conducted. In the opinion of the author, their addition to the attacking force would have been advantageous but if the Norwegian High Command had follow up operations that it wished these individuals to complete after the attack it probably did not want to risk these valuable operatives. This is perhaps because the Norwegian High Command believed that any such attack on the Gunnerside objective would surely fail – resulting in all those involved being either killed or captured by the enemy (as in fact did occur).¹⁵

If the existence of the advance party was discovered by the Germans, *Grouse* did not have the supplies of food required to make it through a winter on the Hardangervidda (their agreed hiding place) without undergoing malnutrition – this is assuming that the Germans would then be looking for them in response to an attack on the Gunnerside objective. This did in fact happen once *Freshman* failed and the Germans discovered that an advance party had been present at the proposed landing site.¹⁶ *Grouse* were forced to retreat into the depths of the Hardangervidda:

13 Ibid., p. 94.

14 Ibid., p. 116.

15 Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 26663, Reel 1.

16 Mears, R., *The Real Heroes of Telemark: The True Story of the Secret Mission to Stop Hitler's Atomic Bomb*, pp. 91 – 92.

an inhospitable desert, on average 3500 feet above sea level, during the coldest winter on record. As Knut Haugland, *Grouse's* radio operator, puts it in an interview “the weight [of *Grouse's* equipment JPB] was not the problem, rather the amount of food we had”.¹⁷

Grouse were poorly equipped for their task: their equipment consisted of impractical boots, Norwegian battle dress (leading to possible reprisals against suspected sympathisers of the Norwegian Resistance if they were caught), few weapons, little food, heavy equipment, and no antennae for their radio.¹⁸ It is widely claimed that they were wearing British battle dress in order to avoid reprisals against Norwegian Resistance sympathisers if caught but Claus Helberg (a member of *Grouse*) points out in an interview that British and Norwegian battle dress was “no different” at the time as well as that they still had some Norwegian flags and insignia attached to the ones they wore during the operation.¹⁹ This meant if they were captured and these uniforms were discovered they would be tried as Norwegian agents, and it would be likely that there would be reprisals against their families as well as those who were believed to be sympathisers to the Norwegian Resistance in the Rjukan area. This is one example of where by looking at the archival sources we can discover an alternative to the pre-existing narrative proliferated before these records became available for public review (the potential for this being the focus of this thesis).

17 Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 26624, Reel 2. See The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 131 for the list of rations *Grouse* took with them into Norway.

18 Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 26624, Reel 2.

19 For example, see Gallagher, T., *Assault in Norway*, pp. 38 – 39 or an interview with Mark Seaman by the Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 26663, Reel 1. Helberg stated that their “Norwegian Army uniforms” were “no different” from British Army uniforms. Further, he says some of their Norwegian Army uniforms “still had Norwegian identification badges and flags on them”, Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 26623, Reel 2.

Operation Freshman

In order to defeat the Axis in the race for the atomic bomb the Allies needed to find a way of delaying and sabotaging the research program within the limits of their own force projection capabilities. Most German nuclear physics research was taking place within Germany itself, well beyond the reach of the Allies in 1942, so the most obvious course of action was to attempt to sabotage or destroy the supply of heavy water at the NHEP.²⁰ Norway was within the range of Allied planes, and the British Government had maintained a relationship with the Norwegian Government in Exile since the invasion of Norway in April 1940.

Although there is little indication in the archives that the Allies believed the destruction or sabotage of this facility would halt Germany gaining the atomic bomb, Allied commanders were adamant that something be done to delay them gaining the “wonder weapon” (atomic bomb) for as long as possible.²¹ In reality, it was Britain’s excellent relationship with Norwegian patriots that made a successful attack on the NHEP possible. As J. C. Adamson (a British officer who served with the SOE Norwegian section) notes, the Norwegian Resistance would not have amounted to much without the British support it was provided with in the form of arms, communications equipment, and training.²² Furthermore, as the SOE historian Mark Seaman points out, the Norwegian Army in Exile provided the Norwegian Resistance

20 ‘denying her [Germany JPB] scientists the heavy water was the best, indeed the only, way of creating an irremovable bottleneck in its production.’, Dear, I., *Sabotage & Subversion: Stories from the Files of the SOE and OSS*, p. 121.

21 Mark Seaman states in an interview “I’ve read the files but there is nothing to suggest that the Allies thought it would rid the Germans of the “wonder weapon” but rather they couldn’t afford to take any risks”, Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 26663, Reel 1.

22 Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 12295, Reel 1.

and SOE with a pool of highly trained and motivated operatives upon which it could call.²³

One such patriot, Leif Tronstad (a professor of physics at Oslo University who was consulted during the building of the NHEP), was able to feed information to the Allies regarding German interest in *Lurgan* produced at Vemork. In September 1941, Tronstad was informed by a double agent that he would have to leave Norway as the faction of the Norwegian Resistance he worked with had been discovered by the Germans.²⁴ Upon arriving in Britain, Tronstad instantly filled a gap present in the intelligence community. It would seem ‘the Mata Hari with a PhD in nuclear physics’ (Goudsmit) had finally arrived. Being a well-renowned scientist (particularly amongst British physicists and Norwegian scientists) and having experience working as an informant in German-occupied Norway, Tronstad was able to maintain great relations with both the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS aka. MI6), the Norwegian Government in Exile, the Allied scientific community, and Norwegian Independent Company 1 of the SOE – composed exclusively of Norwegian nationals, under the command of the British Colonel John Skinner “Jack” Wilson.²⁵

Leif Tronstad was able to provide the SOE and Combined Operations Headquarters (COHQ), who were responsible for the planning of *Freshman*, with detailed sketches and information about the Vemork plant (the construction of which he had overseen as a consultant back in 1934).²⁶ Further, he had up-to-date information still being fed to him by Dr. Jomar Brun, general manager of the NHEP until the 12th November 1942.²⁷ However, despite having all this information about the disposition of

23 Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 26663, Reel 1.

24 Trenear-Harvey, G. S., *Historical Dictionary of Atomic Warfare*, p. 150.

25 Gallgher, T., *Assault in Norway*, p. 9.

26 For examples see Figures 2 – 5.

27 The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 133.

materials, men, and equipment inside the NHEP, *Freshman* – whereby glider borne British Royal Engineers would carry out a commando-style glider-borne raid against the NHEP – was not a success. *Freshman* resulted in one of the most succinct failures in British military history – all those sent to Norway were either killed when their aircraft crashed or later interrogated and, upon revealing their objectives to the Gestapo, executed.

Freshman was followed quickly by *Gunnernside*, consisting of a mere ten operatives – four of whom were already present in Norway in the form of *Freshman*'s advanced party *Grouse*. In one of the harshest winters on record, facing a much larger enemy force garrisoning the NHEP than the previously unsuccessful *Freshman*, this group successfully completed their target of destroying the machinery producing *Lurgan* at the NHEP (a component of the *Gunnernside* objective). Further, all the operatives involved continued to escape back to Britain or remain in Norway to carry out follow up operations alongside the Norwegian Resistance and survive the war. This success, after the failure of *Freshman*, has led to the development of a popular narrative within the wider historical representation surrounding the *Gunnernside* objective that has been perpetuated since the end of the Second World War – namely that *Freshman* was the prerequisite COHQ failure which led to the resounding SOE success of *Gunnernside*. This success has since been sensationalised by many – even reputable – historians; such as Michael Foot who states in his *SOE: The Special Operations Executive 1940 – 1946* that 'If SOE had never done anything else; 'Gunnernside' would have given it claim enough on the gratitude of humanity.'²⁸

It is worth noting that the term 'Gunnernside objective', unless it is explicitly preceded by the word 'Operation', refers to the sabotage targets set out for *Freshman*.²⁹ This distinction is necessary as the objective of *Gunnernside* was only one component of the overall *Gunnernside* objective (the destruction of the heavy water producing machinery). The term 'Gunnernside narrative', in the context of this thesis, refers to

²⁸ Foot, M. R. D., *SOE: The Special Operations Executive 1940 – 1946*, p. 298.

²⁹ The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 16.

the entire narrative surrounding the Gunnerside objective – not merely *Gunnerside* itself.

The failure of *Freshman* is examined in detail in this thesis as a case study in order to demonstrate the potential impact that records released under the Waldegrave Initiative can have on the SOE historiography. This shall be accomplished by utilising archive materials to explore and, where appropriate, to challenge the existing historiography surrounding *Freshman*'s failure. In addition, this thesis explores the place of *Freshman* within the wider Gunnerside narrative through the cross-referencing of records surrounding the subject which can be found at the National Archive in Kew and the Imperial War Museum Archive in Lambeth, London. This case study has been selected as there is controversy, upon reviewing the pre-Waldegrave representations of *Freshman* and the relevant archival material, over the events surrounding and reasons for *Freshman*'s failure. As such, it is a good example by which to illustrate the extent which records released under government transparency schemes such as the Waldegrave Initiative can be utilised to substantiate or disprove pre-existing historical narratives.

Methodology

During the preparatory work for this thesis, a key finding has been the lack of use within the *Freshman* historiography of the records available for public review released as part of the Waldegrave Initiative. This omission by historians to utilise these previously inaccessible sources is examined and discussed within the chapter entitled 'Analysis of Literature'. This finding led to this thesis looking specifically at the potential impact of the Waldegrave Initiative on *Freshman*'s historiography and narrative. Examining the degree to which these sources have been used as well as their potential to be utilised further and impact our understanding of events. Utilising *Freshman* as a case study, this thesis therefore assesses:

What is the potential of the records released under the Waldegrave Initiative to impact the pre-existing historiography of the SOE?

In this context, 'historiographical impact' is defined as being any "new currency" in an evidential form originating from a record which can be utilised and therefore can

be seen to have changed, added to, or otherwise altered pre-existing historical arguments or narratives. The potential for this ‘impact’ will be demonstrated in the ‘Analysis of the Potential’ chapter of this thesis – demonstrating how the information in the relevant archive released under Waldegrave can be seen to fit the criteria aforementioned. Gaps in aspects of the *Freshman* narrative will be revealed and all key aspects will be examined utilising records now available for public review in the National Archives. A ‘pre-existing’ historical argument or literature is defined, in the context of this thesis, as any historical work which pre-dates this thesis’ conception (January 2014). For this thesis, ‘potential impact’ is being defined as the scope to which these new sources can change or alter the pre-existing historical representation – with particular reference to the historiography of the SOE and *Freshman*.

This will be achieved by utilising the existing historical representation (the historiography of *Freshman*, other published literature on the subject such as novels, views expressed by historians in recorded interviews, memorandums, television documentaries, and films) as well as the records of the SOE and COHQ available for public review in the National Archives. Limited to a single detailed case study, as it is impractical within the time and resources available to conduct a comprehensive study of all of the SOE’s operations during the Second World War (approximately one million), this examination will help to provide answers to what impact the Waldegrave Initiative has already had on the pre-existing historiography of the SOE along with an assessment of what further impact it could have. It will also contribute to a wider debate around government transparency initiatives such as Waldegrave.

To achieve the aims set out above – and so “operationalise” this research question – an appropriate methodology has been identified and applied. This explores each of the aspects defined below in a logical order – specifically:

- Identify then discuss and examine the historical representations of *Freshman* both before and after the release of the relevant archive under the Waldegrave (a “two corpus” approach):
 - o Comprehensive literature search, both around *Freshman* but also more widely in terms of the Gunnerside narrative and accounts of the SOE.

- o Identify the various types of sources available and, for each of these, identify their contribution to the historical representation of *Freshman* as well as the Gunnerside narrative in its entirety, pre- or post-Waldegrave.
- o Analyse what sources these works have or may have utilised in drawing their conclusions.
- o Identify non-historiographical representations of *Freshman* pre- and post-Waldegrave to better ascertain its wider image within the public and academic consciousness.
- Analyse the Waldegrave Initiative:
 - o A comprehensive literature search to identify the principle works concerning the Waldegrave Initiative and British Government transparency relating to the archives of secretive intelligence or military organisations.
 - o Discuss, utilising the works previously identified and other sources, the various arguments surrounding the Waldegrave Initiative.
 - o Identify and discuss, utilising the works previously identified and other sources, the relevant issues as well as the various arguments surrounding government transparency and the release of previously classified archives.
- Analyse the records relating to *Freshman* – the types of sources available before the Waldegrave Initiative and the records available post-Waldegrave:
 - o Identify where the relevant archive can be consulted.
 - o Define the range and nature of sources relating to *Freshman* available pre- and post-Waldegrave.
 - o Discuss the conditions under which these archives were selected and appraised prior to release.
 - o Identify issues surrounding this archive such as the information quality and quantity of the records as well as whether these records have retained their intrinsic qualities.
- Investigate the potential for these records to impact the pre-existing historical representation of *Freshman* – to what degree the pre-existing narratives found in the historiography and other historical representations are substantiated by the records now available and, where they are not, utilise the records available to demonstrate their potential:
 - o Identify key aspects of the *Freshman* narrative which researchers and writers have covered pre- and post-Waldegrave.
 - o Analyse these different aspects against the records available for public review.

- o Highlight where the narrative is substantiated by these records and, equally, identify where the narrative has issues of contention or is unsubstantiated.
- o If there is a sufficient lack of substantiation of pre-existing narratives, explore this utilising the records available thus demonstrating their potential impact upon the pre-existing historiography.
- Explain the outcome of this analysis and identify possible areas for further research:
 - o Summarise how the narrative of *Freshman* has fitted into the overall Gunnerside narrative prior to this thesis.
 - o Identify the degree to which new sources/records have been used and their impact on the account of events.
 - o Identify specifically areas where the availability of new records has not impacted the historiography, and identify potential reasons for this.
 - o Summarise the potential of these sources to impact the pre-existing historiography – drawing on examples from the chapter of the prose entitled 'Analysis of the Potential Impact'.
 - o Identify areas where research done in preparation of this thesis suggests that further re-consideration of the narratives is required, and the implications this has for our understanding of events.

Analysis of the Historical Representation

Interestingly, across the existing representation there is relatively little controversy or discussion with regards to the narrative of *Freshman* or the reasons for its failure. There is significant commonality in opinions expressed by historians on the success of *Gunnarside* within the historical representation, with *Freshman*'s failure tending to be subsumed within the narrative of *Gunnarside*'s success. Such commonality amongst the opinions of historians, both pre- and post-Waldegrave, is widespread throughout the historical representation of the SOE in general.³⁰ Historians tend to follow the narrative that *Gunnarside* was a resounding success, and that *Freshman* failed because of poor weather conditions on the night the operation was launched.³¹ They do not consider in any depth the possibility of other factors. This is an area which renowned SOE historian Mark Seaman highlights in an audio interview post-Waldegrave.³² Hence, it is one specific area that this thesis considers in detail.

It should be noted that the historiography and opinions expressed by historians in recorded interviews does not account for the entire historical representation of

30 'there has been, as yet, no radical shift in our overall picture of SOE', Aldrich, R. J., 'Did Waldegrave Work? The Impact of Open Government Upon British History', *Twentieth Century British History*, Volume 9, Issue 1, 1998, p. 114.

31 For example see Gallagher, T., *Assault in Norway*, pp. 33 – 34.

Freshman. Reviewing television documentaries, films, and other sources of information can point out other aspects of this representation available to the researcher relating to *Freshman*. These have also been consulted and, where appropriate, mentioned as part of this analysis.

This chapter of the thesis has been divided into two sections: a “two corpus” approach. Firstly the pre-Waldegrave representation of *Freshman* will be analysed which will then be followed by the post-Waldegrave. This will hopefully highlight to the reader the surprisingly lack of differences between each corpus.

Pre-Waldegrave

One of the earliest representations of *Freshman* publicly available was H. W. J. Mitchell's memorandum entitled *Vemork: 1st Airborne Divisional Engineers 'Operation "Freshman"'* published by the Airborne Divisional Engineers (British Army) in 1945. This memorandum can be seen as an effort to enhance *Freshman's* prestige in the wider context of the Allied effort to defeat the Axis in the nuclear arms race which was a popular subject of social, as well as political, discussion at the time of its publication. As Mitchell states in *Vemork*:

One of the most important tasks given to airborne and other special service troops during the war was the dislocation of German experiments for the production of an atomic bomb³³

32 Interview with Mark Seaman, Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 26663, Reel 1.

33 Mitchell, H. W. J., 1942 *Vemork: 1st Airborne Divisional Engineers 'Operation "Freshman"'*, Imperial War Museum Archive, Catalogue Reference K 96/363, p. 1.

Mitchell is rather exceptional in this as his memorandum is the only example found of a contemporary of *Freshman* attempting to enhance its standing – not only as part of the *Gunnernside* narrative but also within the wider context of the nuclear arms race during the Second World War.

Very few of Mitchell's contemporaries produced any memoir literature relating to *Freshman*. Was this as a result of it being a British military failure and those directly involved in its planning, preparation, and execution wishing to distance themselves from any representation of it? Many of those involved with the planning and logistics of *Freshman*, based back in Britain, appear to have attempted to absolve themselves from any responsibility in their accounts or omit themselves from any involvement. This is particularly well illustrated in the memorandum of Captain Cooper, the commanding officer of *Freshman*, entitled *Operation Freshman: an account of the raid by the 1st Airborne Divisional Engineers on the heavy water plant in Norway* published alongside Mitchell's memorandum in 1945. In his account he states that *Freshman* failed because the Eureka-Rebecca radio homing system did not work.³⁴ Cooper's attempts to use this technical fault as the primary reason for the failure of this operation rather than a combination of factors is not supported by the evidence gathered throughout the research of this thesis.

These accounts, by people directly involved who were part of COHQ or the British Army Airborne Division of the Royal Engineers, offer the potential to disclose information on the events which took place. They can provide information not contained in the records produced by COHQ or the SOE at the time (since released into the public domain under Waldegrave) and possibly discredit the established narrative. In the case of *Freshman*, personal accounts are very limited as potential sources because all the Royal Engineers and their glider pilots were killed and only one set of the towing bomber crews returned to Britain. The only widely published memoir work even remotely related to *Freshman* is that of a *Gunnernside* operative Knut Haukelid entitled *Skis Against The Atom*. This is Haukelid's account of what happened during *Gunnernside*. He was not a member of the advance party *Grouse*, thus his book can offer little insight into the events leading up to *Freshman*'s failure.

34 Cooper, Q. M. S. D. F., *Operation Freshman: an account of the raid by the 1st Airborne Divisional Engineers on the heavy water plant in Norway*.

For example, in relation to the beacon issue outlined above, he reports only knowing as much as what was being communicated by Captain Cooper – ‘Grouse was supplied with a Eureka homing radio-beam, but to no avail. The aircraft did not find them.’³⁵ Thus Cooper and Mitchell’s memorandums are the principle pre-Waldegrave representations of *Freshman*, being both publicly available (accessible through the Imperial War Museum’s archive) and written by individuals who were actually involved with the planning and preparation of *Freshman*.

After 1945 it was not until 1975, with the publication of Thomas Gallagher’s *Assault in Norway*, that *Freshman* gained any representation in published literature (available outside of the Imperial War Museum’s archive in Lambeth, London). Gallagher’s book is not however a historical work of good academic grounding. He is not a renowned authority on the subject and within the prose of this work there are no references for his sources nor is there a bibliography. Gallagher tends to follow the narrative that *Freshman* was the pre-requisite failed attempt to achieve the Gunnerside objective which led to *Gunnerside*’s success, and its failure was as a result of bad weather on the night that the operation was launched. This is a narrative which was widely proliferated by two instances of representation in English during the 1960s, a novel by John Drummond *But For These Men* (1962) and the Hollywood film *The Heroes of Telemark* (1965) starring Kirk Douglas. It can be assumed, although not proven, as there is no way of ascertaining the sources for these two representations, that these were largely based on the accounts of contemporaries to the events – either SOE veterans who took part in *Gunnerside* or the surviving Norwegians and Germans who were resident to the Telemark region at the time of the events. In 1948 there was a film produced and filmed in Norway entitled *Kampen om Tungtvannet* which translates as *The Battle for Heavy Water* starring Jens Poulsson, Arne Kjelstrup, and Claus Helberg (three out of the four original members of *Grouse*) and it is possible that this representation might have influenced Gallagher as well as Drummond and the writers of *The Heroes of Telemark*.

Drummond’s novel retells and greatly embellishes the Gunnerside narrative, as is typical of such popular works, and the references for his sources of information

35 Haukelid, K., *Skis Against The Atom*, p. 44.

regarding these events are not given within the prose. Although his work holds value for the researcher as an example of the retelling of these events in a narrative of “derring do” (displaying heroic courage) its sources of information are unknown and thus a matter of speculation. As De Groot highlights in his work *Consuming History* regarding the genre of ‘narrative history’ – a genre the historians develop to a great extent in order to increase their popular appeal – the public are often more interested in reading about the ‘untold stories of human progress’ rather than accounts containing historical accuracy.³⁶ The *Gunnernside* narrative is certainly a fine example of this, providing a storyline of a few patriots risking unfavourable odds in order to halt the Axis gaining the “wonder weapon” before the Allies, therefore it is not surprising that such a novel has been written.

Even less surprising perhaps, given the popular appeal of such ‘untold stories of human progress’ (De Groot), is that this narrative was produced into a Hollywood film. *The Heroes of Telemark* is a work of fantasy – it is meant to dramatise and embellish the *Gunnernside* narrative for a profit driven Hollywood venture. Although *Freshman* is a component of the storyline it is never referred to as *Freshman*, thus the audience assumes that *Freshman* is a part of *Gunnernside* and it therefore becomes subsumed by the latter which was successful. The *Gunnernside* narrative held widespread popular appeal as was perceived to be a classic act of “derring do”. Further, the context of the post-war era (with its widespread nuclear and thermonuclear weapon proliferation), gave the subject of the *Gunnernside* narrative (an Allied effort to sabotage the Axis nuclear programme) great public appeal as it appeared relevant to current affairs.

In both Gallagher and Drummond’s works, as well as *The Heroes of Telemark*, the main focus is the narrative of *Gunnernside* and as such *Freshman* is only mentioned as a consequence of it being part of the overall Allied effort to complete the *Gunnernside* objective. It was not until 1986, with the publication of *Operation Freshman: The Rjukan Heavy Water Raid 1942* by Richard Wiggan, that there was a published historical work in English devoted to the *Freshman* narrative. Wiggan’s book is exceptional as it is the single pre-Waldegrave publication devoted to *Freshman*. However it is unexceptional in that, as with Gallagher’s *Assault in*

³⁶ De Groot, J., *Consuming History*, p. 32.

Norway, there is a failure to provide any reference or indication within the prose as to what sources of information were utilised to obtain the narrative presented. Further, Wiggan's work follows the *fait accompli* narrative of all previous representations of *Freshman* (in that it was the pre-requisite failure and failed due to poor weather conditions on the night which the operation was launched) so instead of providing an alternative to any pre-existing representation, such as Gallagher's, it instead explores *Freshman* as a component of the Gunnerside narrative in greater detail.

This established Gunnerside, and in fact SOE narrative proliferated by such authors as Gallagher and other representations such as *The Heroes of Telemark*, has been compounded by a number of official histories published pre-Waldegrave.³⁷ These narratives and representations are reinforced in the public consciousness through the education system (mainly higher level education such as universities) and the popular media (documentaries focussing around the Norwegian contribution to the Allied victory of the Second World War for example).³⁸ These official histories are usually commissioned by the organisation with whose history they are concerned or, in the case of the SOE, whatever organisation controls the "lion's share" of archival material relating to it. Many historians, reinforcing their perceived importance, have also portrayed these official histories as being the "landmark" publications.³⁹ Whilst these official histories still contain a great amount of accurate information useful to the researcher, and are not completely discredited by the release of the SOE archive, they do require re-evaluation as being "landmark" publications on their chosen subject now they are pre-Waldegrave.

37 Aspects of which will be discussed in detail later in this thesis during the 'Analysis of the Potential Impact' chapter.

38 Seaman, M., 'A Glass Half Full – Some Thoughts on the Evolution of the Study of the SOE', *Intelligence and National Security*, Volume 20, Issue 1, 2005, p. 27.

39 Andrew, C., 'Historical research on the British intelligence community' in Godson, R. (ed.), *Comparing Foreign Intelligence: the US, the USSR, the UK and the Third World*, p. 45. Also see *The Historical Journal*, Volume 46, Issue 4, 2003, p. 935.

It should be noted that official histories are often required to go through a vetting process. By the time of publication it is not unusual for little of what was originally written to remain unchanged. For example, in the case of Michael Foot's *SOE in France* (1966), the first draft of the book went through an elaborate eighteen month vetting process that involved several government departments including the SIS and the Foreign Office.⁴⁰ By the time of publication almost every aspect of the prose had been edited to some degree.⁴¹ This demonstrates the challenges facing any historian writing an official history, and similarly the problems facing any historian using an official history during their research in an attempt to ascertain sources on their chosen subject. This is particularly so in an area where the establishment or individual commissioning a publication wishes it to be portrayed in a particular light, which is arguably a particular issue when it comes to a government's clandestine activities.

In the case of most official histories surrounding aspects of government policy, the vetting and editing process is used to ensure that "sensitive" material is not released into the public domain. Information is omitted which is considered dangerous or detrimental to that institution's reputation or personnel. Specifically, in the case of the SOE and COHQ, the names of agents and military personnel involved in operations are usually deleted from the histories (since it is considered that the naming of the SOE operatives who may have conducted controversial acts of sabotage could put individuals at risk many years after the event).⁴² It is often left to the reader to discern what information is reliable.

Due at least in some part to the release of the SOE and COHQ archive into the public domain under Waldegrave, historical arguments have emerged which

40 'M. R. D. Foot',

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/culture-obituaries/books-obituaries/9094496/MRD-Foot.html>.

41 Ibid.

42 Johnson, L. K. (ed.), *Strategic Intelligence Studies: Understanding the Hidden Side of Government*, p. 57

challenge the established historical narrative surrounding the SOE, *Freshman*, and *Gunnernside*.⁴³ It was not until the archive became available for public view that historians have been able to cross reference the official histories with relevant records, thus nullifying some effects of the vetting process. The historian can now visit the archives and develop their own version of events through research. Frank Cass Publishers released a revised edition of Foot's *SOE in France* in 2004 as a direct result of the Waldegrave Initiative – thus establishing that much of what had been published in the original edition was now nullified with the release of the relevant archives.⁴⁴

The extent to which such a review has occurred within the literature as well as what the representation has been of *Freshman* post-Waldegrave will be discussed in the following section of this chapter.

43 As highlighted by the Earl of Longford in the official report of a parliamentary debate discussing the Waldegrave Initiative 'I ask myself what has been the result of the initiatives... some think of opportunities for research, which are more pronounced than in my day', *The Parliamentary Debates*, House of Lords Official Report, H.M.S.O. 2000, p. dcclxxx. Also see Aldrich, R. J., 'Did Waldegrave Work? The Impact of Open Government upon British History', pp.111-126

44 Foot, M. R. D., *SOE in France*, pp. xiv – xvi.

Post-Waldegrave

Prior to the Waldegrave Initiative *Freshman* had not received a single publication in English devoted to the historical telling of its narrative. However, since 1992, despite frequent reference to *Freshman*, it continues to be subsumed by the narrative of *Gunnernside*. For example, Jim Baggott's *Atomic* (2009), which contains a history of nuclear arms races 1939 – 1949, dedicates seven pages to *Freshman* compared to nine pages for *Gunnernside* and these seven pages for *Freshman* are heavily dominated by tangencies relating to the Allied perception of the threat presented by the German occupation of the NHEP.⁴⁵ Ian Dear, in his book *Sabotage & Subversion: Stories from the Files of the SOE and OSS* (1998), gives just one paragraph to the mentioning of *Freshman* in the chapter entitled 'SOE and the Atomic Bomb'.⁴⁶ Per Dahl, the author of *Heavy Water and the Wartime Race for Nuclear Energy* (1999), dedicates just six pages to *Freshman* – which he refers to as 'an unqualified failure' – compared to *Gunnernside* which he dedicates 144 pages – 'a qualified success'.⁴⁷

Within the popular consciousness, *Freshman* has continued to be overshadowed and subsumed by *Gunnernside* post-Waldegrave: with many times the number of books, TV shows, films, or printed media dedicated to the latter and very few to the former.⁴⁸ For example, during the research of this thesis, it has not been possible for the author to find a television documentary series devoted to *Freshman*, whilst there is at least one documentary series devoted to *Gunnernside*. A book has even been written by a survival expert about the plight of *Grouse* post-*Freshman* entitled *The Real Heroes of Telemark: The True Story of the Secret Mission to Stop Hitler's*

45 Baggott, J., *Atomic*, pp. 132 – 136, 153 – 155, 168 – 174, 201 – 202.

46 Dear, I., *Sabotage & Subversion: Stories from the Files of the SOE and OSS*, p. 122.

47 Dahl, P. F., *Heavy Water and the Wartime Race for Nuclear Energy*, pp. 192 – 340.

48 When looking at newspapers, both in Norway or back in Britain, there is very little mention of *Freshman* however *Gunnernside* is widely discussed (see Figure 6 – 12). See The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/185, pp. 57, 64, & 66 for the SOE's discussion of contemporary publications.

Atomic Bomb (deriving its name from the 1965 Hollywood film) which was subsequently made into a television documentary series with the same title. In this, the author Ray Mears repeatedly emphasises the ‘importance’ of *Grouse* and *Gunnernside* – giving the reader the impression that without its successful completion it is indisputable that the Germans would have gained an atomic bomb before the Allies and won the Second World War.⁴⁹ No doubt this is done in an attempt to dramatise these events within the wide context of the war effort, thus making *Gunnernside*’s contribution seem increasingly relevant to the Allied victory. *Freshman* is again merely mentioned in the context of being the prerequisite failure as it was pre-Waldegrave, demonstrating how *Freshman* has been subsumed by the narrative of *Gunnernside* in the wider historical representation of these events.⁵⁰ Importantly, these aforementioned accounts provide no detail – especially in the case of the films and documentaries – around the sources of information that have been used in their preparation. However, at the same time, their “mass audience” means that the historical representation they portray has significant impact on the public consciousness. This provides an interesting dichotomy because the basis for these films and documentaries is shown to be open to dispute whilst their mass audience means they are responsible for a significant part of the historical representation.

There have also been several novels post-Waldegrave retelling and embellishing the Gunnernside narrative such as Amanda Mitchison’s *Mission Telemark*. This is a popular work and, although it is claimed to be based on first-hand accounts or archival evidence like Drummond’s *But For These Men*, her sources are not referenced within the prose. Thus this work holds limited use for the researcher and importantly draws into question the quality of any information surrounding the events of the Gunnernside narrative which are interpreted in the novel’s prose.

Although there has been surge in public interest since the wider proliferation of the Gunnernside narrative through such mediums as the television documentaries and novels previously mentioned there has been less interest in terms of historical works.

49 For examples, see chapter entitled ‘The Stakes’ in Mears, R., *The Real Heroes of Telemark*, pp. 6 – 22.

50 Mears, R., *The Real Heroes of Telemark*, p. 92.

Although there have been some works published that are concerned with the SOE's efforts within the wider context of the Allied/Axis nuclear arms race of the Second World War (such as Baggott and Dahl) there have not been any publication devoted to the narrative of *Gunnernside*. Since the release of records relating to the Gunnernside objective under Waldegrave, there has been the publication of a historical work dedicated to exploring the less well known narrative of *Freshman* utilising archival sources found in the authors' native country of Norway. Jostein Berglyd (*Operation Freshman: The Hunt for Hitler's Heavy Water*, 2006) argues that these records reveal the many flaws in the planning undertaken by the British officers responsible for the planning and preparation of *Freshman*.⁵¹ Mark Seaman – an expert on the SOE – has also expressed a similar opinion upon reviewing the relevant archival material in Britain during an interview produced for the Imperial War Museum's archive, but he has not written any academic papers on this and his input is therefore largely limited to this audio interview.⁵² While Berglyd has published their *Operation Freshman*, their references indicate that they have relied heavily on information available pre-Waldegrave in Norway and as such their work is of limited use for the analysis of this thesis which is primarily concerned with the historiography of *Freshman* pre- and post- the release of the British sources.

This thesis therefore examines the representations within the existing historiography published pre-Waldegrave (Gallagher and Wiggan) in order to assess the potential impact the archives released under Waldegrave can have upon the historiography of the SOE. By utilising the independent archival research of the author, this thesis will establish how this new information can alter the pre-existing historical narrative and representation of *Freshman*.

51 For example see Berglyd, J., *Operation Freshman: The Hunt for Hitler's Heavy Water*, pp. 8 – 9.

52 Interview with Mark Seaman, Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 26663, Reel 1.

Analysis of the Waldegrave Initiative

There have been several attempts to analyse the “success”, or otherwise, of the Waldegrave Initiative – namely what impact the re-evaluation of the British Government’s classified material has been on issues of transparency.

The principle work in this area can be seen as Richard Aldrich’s article ‘Did Waldegrave work? The Impact of Open Government upon British History’. In this article, Aldrich explores the wider framework of changes in Whitehall which occurred in the aftermath of the Waldegrave Initiative, which have been widely interpreted as a shift towards transparency, but also, alternatively, towards more sophisticated ‘information control’.⁵³ The areas of intelligence history, nuclear history, and international history are examined in detail and Aldrich uses them to suggest that while the broad contours of the issues surrounding government transparency remain largely unchanged, specific subjects that were once inaccessible due to being completely inaccessible through government legislation can now be tackled by the researcher.⁵⁴ Aldrich does not however, in the opinion of the author, give sufficient analysis on the reasons behind the British government’s decision to disclose this

53 Aldrich, R. J., ‘Did Waldegrave Work? The Impact of Open Government Upon British History’, Volume 9, Issue 1, 1998, pp. 111 – 126.

54 Ibid., p. 111.

information. His work is therefore limited to examining the impact of the Initiative for the researcher as opposed to a thorough examination of the Initiative itself – the reasons for its conception and the objective behind its implementation.

Aldrich states in another article, entitled ‘The Waldegrave Initiative and Security Service Archives: New Materials and New Policies’, that:

It will be some time before historians are in a position to ascertain what extent this exercise [the Waldegrave Initiative] constituted a sea-change in attitudes towards declassification, or merely an incremental shift accompanied by a major publicity exercise about openness.⁵⁵

Aldrich claims that ‘hardened denizens’ of the National Archives cannot conceive of anything other than an adversarial relationship between a historian and an archivist; however, when the declassified records arrived at the Public Records Office in Kew they were announced by a series of booklets as a form of press releases which underlines how the British Government had been anxious to project the idea that it had embraced ‘glasnost’.⁵⁶

When the British Government announced the Waldegrave Initiative in 1992, one manifestation of this was a review of much of the material that had been withheld for more than 30 years because of its “sensitive nature” – a review of the release policy under the Public Records Office Act 1838.⁵⁷ A substantial amount of this retained material related to matters of intelligence (originating from the Foreign Office and government intelligence services such as MI5) and naturally there is a high degree of inter-relation between this material and the records of secret military operations such as *Freshman*.

55 Aldrich, R. J., ‘The Waldegrave Initiative and Security Service Archives: New Materials and New Policies’, *Intelligence and National Security*, Volume 10, Issue 1, 1995, p. 192.

56 Ibid.

57 Ibid.

As Gill Bennett notes, the history of secretive intelligence gathering has always been seen as a 'sexy subject' but the increased transparency of the records relating to these activities has in fact enhanced rather than diminished the subject's appeal.⁵⁸ Official publications reproducing agency material (by authors who have been given access to the archives of intelligence organisations such as Foot's *SOE in France*), and even films, radio, and television programmes were at the very least given indirect confirmation that they are not on the wrong track even before 1992 by these secretive organisations. At the same time, it is notable that despite these government transparency initiatives there still exists a protective blanket which shields intelligence material from disclosure, given by the Public Records Acts of 1958 and 1967.⁵⁹

Hence, the initiative of 1992 is often criticised: too little, too late, too selective, too random, too inconsistent, and based on criteria which have been described as 'an impenetrable wall whose bricks were created from other than pure reason'.⁶⁰ It is well known that MI5, SIS, and Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) all had, and still have, different agreements with the Public Records Office (now known as the National Archives) approved by the Lord Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Public Records which has exempted them in total or in part from Waldegrave.⁶¹ At the same time, such agreements can be circumvented by other government departments which allow a greater release of British intelligence related records held

58 Bennett, G., 'Declassification and Release Policies of the UK's Intelligence Agencies', *Intelligence and National Security*, Volume 17, Issue 1, 2002, p. 21.

59 Ibid.

60 Wark, W. K., 'In Never-Never Land? The British Archives on Intelligence', *The Historical Journal*, Volume 35, Issue 1, March 1992, p. 195.

61 Please see

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/recordsmanagement/selection/pdf.osp8.pdf> and

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/recordsmanagement/selection/pdf.osp28.pdf>.

in their own archives.⁶² This is because the records held in these other departments' archives are covered by the Waldegrave Initiative requiring transparency.

In 2012 the House of Commons Justice Committee conducted a post-legislative scrutiny of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (which succeeded the Public Records Acts and Waldegrave Initiative). During the session conducted 27th March 2012, Professor the Lord Hennessy of Nympsfield was asked by Steve Brine, British Conservative politician and Member of Parliament for Winchester, whether 'the Freedom of Information Act achieved its objectives of improving transparency and accountability in central Government'.⁶³ In response, Professor Hennessy stated:

The Waldegrave Initiative, which came out of the John Major Open Government Initiative, which was much more successful than people ever remember, produced 96,000 very sensitive files that had been held back beyond the 30 years until 1998, when they stopped counting. It is well over 200,000 now.... Information is a currency with which you can trade.... It has to be seen as part of completing the virtues of the franchise in an open society.⁶⁴

Lord O'Donnell, a crossbench peer who was also being questioned, gave a response to the same query quite juxtaposed to Professor Hennessy:

Greater openness and transparency will have all the affects that Lord Hennessy said in terms of improving democracy and the way Governments operate. The question is whether freedom of information

62 Scott, L., 'Sources and Methods in the Study of Intelligence: a British View', p. 189.

63 House of Commons Justice Committee, *Post-legislative scrutiny of the Freedom of Information Act – First Report of Session 2012-13*, Volume 2, p. 46.

64 Ibid.

enhances openness and transparency. It does in some areas. In others it does the reverse.... it creates perverse incentives. If you are open then you get criticised for what you are open about.... The fact is that we are, all the time, setting up perverse incentives to openness.... The problem we all know about with freedom of information is the absence of a safe space. The problem is the multiplicity of grey areas.⁶⁵

This difference of opinion is often reflected within academic circles and it is particularly difficult for the researcher to determine which of the two obligations the publicly available record is attempting to address. Are these records, particularly say of secretive pre-Waldegrave government departments, intended to complete the virtues of the franchise in an open society (Hennessy) or setting up perverse incentives to openness (O'Donnell)? Perhaps this conflict of interests, between accountability and secrecy, is best summarised by a comment made by Sir Austen Chamberlain in 1924 as Foreign Secretary:

It is of the essence of a Security Service [MI5 JPB] that it must be secret, and if you once begin disclosure it is perfectly obvious... that there is no longer any Security Service and that you must do without it.⁶⁶

These arguments are often fraught with hypocrisy – indeed, only three years after Chamberlain delivered the aforementioned to the House of Commons, he stood in the House of Commons again and (along with the Prime Minister) read out decrypted Soviet telegrams in order to justify breaking off diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union – and at the same time sabotaging the efforts of the Government Code and Cipher School (later to become GCHQ) in favour of the Soviets for decades.⁶⁷

65 Ibid., pp. 46 – 47.

66 House of Commons, *Official Record: 15th December 1924*, col. 674.

67 Scott, L., 'Sources and Methods in the Study of Intelligence: a British View', *Intelligence and National Security*, Volume 22, Issue 2, April 2007, p. 187. When the Waldegrave Initiative came into force in 1992, the GCHQ records surrounding the *Verona* operation (the

Kieron O'Hara deduces that there are four key arguments comprising of various parties: one for transparency and three against. O'Hara suggests that 'technophiles, neo-liberals, small government types, civil society, hyperlocal or small community activists, the traditional mass media... and a new cohort of 'citizen journalists' are the parties which are 'cheerleading' for greater transparency from government archives.⁶⁸ In opposition to this there are 'critical theorists who argue that misleading data and digital divides mean that openness will preserve or exacerbate current inequalities' – insinuating that researchers with access to technology to take advantage of these government transparency initiatives will be privileged compared to those without.⁶⁹ There are also 'privacy activists' who worry about the data being 'disclosive' and utilised in order to identify individuals against their will for surveillance or business purposes.⁷⁰ Finally, there are 'practically minded folk who mutter about the costs of publishing information or who are sceptical about the economic benefits'.⁷¹ O'Hara points out however that the call for greater government transparency has become increasingly popular. The Open Government Partnership had 63 members in April 2014 – up from 8 in 2011.⁷² O'Hara cites that this has been driven by a variety of factors but principally the decreasing trust in politicians, decreasing faith in hierarchical governments, politicians' desire to share responsibility for decisions, and increasing technical facility for information

Western decryption of Soviet cipher communications) were released.

68 O'Hara, K., 'Government open data and transparency: Oakeshott, civil association and the general will', *Government Disclosure: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Current Affairs and Applied Contemporary Thought*, April 2014.

69 Ibid.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

72 <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/>.

dissemination and data sharing.⁷³ Comparatively, in the US (with which Britain shares many historical, political, and cultural ties) the increasing constraints on sources and evidence of systematic reclassification of national records since 1999 have led to complaints of ‘declassification in reverse’.⁷⁴

Regardless of the motives for John Major’s Open Government Initiative in 1992, it is clear that the British Government was under domestic and international pressure at the time in order to produce some form of access for the public in order to appear accountable for its actions – particularly those clandestine activities which had been kept classified for so long. The re-elected Conservative Government under Major’s leadership had earlier in the year opposed legislation drafted by the Labour and Liberal Democrat parties to create ‘Freedom of Information’ legislation.⁷⁵ In light of the European Parliament’s growing interest and concern about the US-UK-Commonwealth ECHELON Interception system as well as its investigations into allegations that the CIA was in the possession of secret “detention centres” in Europe, John Major and his cabinet – under the influence of Lord Waldegrave – conceived the transparency initiative to come known as Open Government or the Waldegrave Initiative.⁷⁶

As a renowned advocate of the Waldegrave Initiative (as demonstrated by the aforementioned quotation from the House of Commons Justice Committee’s

⁷³ O’Hara, K., ‘Government open data and transparency’.

⁷⁴ Aid, M., ‘Declassification in Reverse: The Pentagon and the U.S. Intelligence Community’s Secret Historical Document Reclassification Program’, National Security Archive website, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB179/>.

⁷⁵ Bowles, N., Hamilton, J. T., Levy, D. A. L. (eds.), *Transparency in Politics and the Media*, p. 20.

⁷⁶ Ibid. On ECHELON see <http://cryptome.org/echelon-ep-fin.htm>. On CIA “detention centres” see

http://www.europarl.eu.int/news/public/story_page/015-5903-065-03-10-902-20060308ST005902-2006-06-03-2006/default_en.htm.

post-legislative scrutiny of the Freedom of Information Act) Professor Hennessy, in a recording made by the National Archives in 2008, stated that he believed the Waldegrave Initiative to have been “hugely successful... which has led to hundreds of thousands of files being released, creating a new currency for historians”.⁷⁷ He claims that archives are “frozen history” and it is the duty of historians to analyse and integrate what they “exhume”.⁷⁸ It can be argued that stating that archives are “frozen” – given the sheer volume of records which are audited, vetted, retained under section 3 (4) of the Freedom of Information Act, presented to other institutions, or destroyed – is, in the opinion of the author, optimistic at best and naïve at worst. That said the vetting and auditing process that many records are required to go through can still offer a great deal of insight for the researcher – an example of which can be found in this thesis’ ‘Analysis of records relating to *Freshman*’ chapter. Hennessy’s opinions on the Waldegrave Initiative’s impact on historiography and government transparency are widely shared, and it is these opinions that this thesis examines utilising the *Freshman* case study. As O’Hara notes, government transparency and associated concepts have remained remarkably under-theorised.⁷⁹ It is for this reason that this thesis takes this operation as its focus, in order to test the potential impacts of the Waldegrave Initiative on one instance, and see if more general conclusions can be drawn.

77 ‘Filling the Gaps’, <http://media.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php/filling-the-gaps/>.

78 Ibid.

79 O’Hara, K., ‘Government open data and transparency’.

Analysis of records relating to *Freshman*

This thesis is primarily concerned with identifying how records released under the Waldegrave Initiative can be used to review the historiography of *Freshman*, and the degree to which this review could have additional impacts on our understanding of events. It therefore focuses on utilising the records available for public review and the pre-existing historiography of *Freshman* in order to investigate this problem, identifying impacts on this narrative in particular and, from that investigation, seeing if more general conclusions can be drawn.

Hennessy notes, in agreement with Aldrich, that a significant historiographical impact of the Waldegrave Initiative has been felt in the study of post-1945 British history – in particular the study of military and civil defence policy.⁸⁰ He fails, however, to mention the potential impact of the release of such records on the study of pre-1945 secret organisations and operations such as the SOE and COHQ. This “new currency with which to trade” (Hennessy) has made a review of the SOE and COHQ narrative possible, but whether a meaningful review has actually occurred or whether the original narrative has been maintained, is a matter of contention and the

80 ‘Filling the Gaps’, <http://media.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php/filling-the-gaps/>.

key focus of this thesis.⁸¹ This is the “delayed effect of Waldegrave” according to Hennessy – an opportunity to revisit previously accepted accounts in the light of newly available evidence.⁸²

Since 1992 the British Government has transferred the surviving COHQ and SOE related material to the National Archives for public view. These are an amalgamation of operational and personnel files including many different types of record, such as minutes of meetings in the planning of COHQ and SOE activities, lists of equipment issued, copies of maps, intelligence reports, communiqués, and more contemporary items such as newspaper articles written after the event. There has been a steady flow of these records into the public domain since 1992.

There are four major origins of these records in terms of government departments:

1. The Ministry of Economic Warfare’s Special Operations Executive 1940 – 1945.
2. The Foreign Office 1945 – 1946.
3. The Foreign Office ‘s SOE Advisor 1946 – 1968 (a post established in the Foreign Office after the war to handle general enquiries about the work and staff of the SOE).
4. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office’s SOE Advisor 1968 – 2002.⁸³

Other records may have been transferred from holdings into the custody of MI5, the Cabinet Office, Prime Minister’s Office, as well as several other government departments.⁸⁴

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid.

83 ‘Records of Special Operations Executive’,
<http://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C153>.

The Waldegrave Initiative can be viewed as a landmark in enabling greater public access to records previously deemed too sensitive to be released, such as those of the SOE. By 1998, when Whitehall stopped measuring its yield, a total of 96,000 SOE related files had been declassified as a result of Waldegrave and some pressure continues for a “Waldegrave 2”.⁸⁵ At the same time, whilst some work has taken place regarding the impact of the Waldegrave Initiative on the historiography of other parts of the British Government, no such research has yet been done regarding the release of the SOE archive into the public domain.⁸⁶ It is this gap which this thesis aims to address to an extent. This is a particularly interesting and important work since, due to the secrecy surrounding the SOE records pre-Waldegrave, it is almost impossible to define with any accuracy what sources relating to the SOE, and specifically *Freshman*, were available pre-1992. The release of an archive alone can rarely, if ever, provide a complete historical record of actual events. In the case of the SOE archive, almost the whole of which was only released publicly as a consequence of the Waldegrave Initiative, the records were never intended for general view. In addition, in common with many wartime organisations, the SOE had no single depository for their records. As a result, nearly 100,000 SOE related records now reside in the public domain and all records declared in existence within the Government’s holdings relating to the Gunnerside objective have now been released – although it should be noted that it is estimated that around 87% of records relating to the SOE have been lost or were destroyed in the period after abolition of the SOE in 1946.⁸⁷

84 Murphy, C. J., *Security and Special Operations: SOE and MI5 during the Second World War*, p. 215.

85 ‘Freedom of Information Act 2000 – Question for Short Debate’, <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/lords/?id=2012-01-17a.532.1>.

86 For example see Aldrich, R. J., ‘The Waldegrave Initiative and Secret Service Archives: New Materials and New Policies’, *Intelligence and National Security*, Volume 10, Issue 1, 1995.

87 Stuart, D., ‘Of Historical Interest Only’: The Origins and Vicissitudes of the SOE Archive’, p. 14. Murphy, C. J., *Security and Special Operations: SOE and MI5 during the Second World*

The remaining records are a mixture of operational and personnel files. The records range from official communiqués widely circulated to individuals' handwritten notes, from minutes of meetings to hand drawn diagrams of machinery to be sabotaged. Most are contemporary, but some are later additions, for example newspaper articles published many decades later.⁸⁸ This leads to an interesting debate about the value of such sources in terms of developing an accurate historiography of the SOE, with contemporary records clearly being more likely to provide reliable evidence for the historiography; although – as the analysis will show – this cannot necessarily be assumed to be always the case.

Whilst not a comprehensive record, it is worth noting that the estimated 13% of the SOE archive publicly accessible is still significant compared to the proportion of records released by other government departments: such as MI5, the Cabinet Office, or Prime Minister's Office. For example, in December 1998 (six years after the Waldegrave Initiative was launched), it was estimated that the aforementioned government departments released into the public domain at most 5% of the records held in their archives. The remainder are destroyed, deposited in other places, or presented to other institutions where the public may, or may not, have any access to them.⁸⁹ Further issues arise from the fact that it can be impossible to determine what is missing if the entire collection was never formally inventoried and catalogued – as is common with the records of secretive government organisations.⁹⁰

War, p. 215.

88 For example see The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/186, pp. 5 – 7.

89 As highlighted during a review of the selection criteria for the preservation of MI5 records: 'The outcome of selection policies across government is that some 2 km of records are added to the Public Records Office's holdings each year. This represents at most some 5% of the files held; the remainder are destroyed, deposited in other places of deposit of public records or presented to other institutions.', Advisory Council on Public Records, December 1998.

As noted above, the SOE records released under the Waldegrave Initiative include a variety of sources relating to *Freshman* including minutes of meetings, communiqués, diagrams of machinery to be sabotaged, reconnaissance photographs of the NHEP, and newspaper cuttings.⁹¹ As one of the most clandestine SOE operations of the Second World War, and with little documentary evidence available in the public domain pre-Waldegrave, this case study is a good example to illustrate the impact that the availability of such sources has already had on the historiography of this operation and the SOE, and the further impact that could result.

One example is the overall narrative for the military operations associated with the Gunnerside objective, of which *Freshman* was part. The established narrative is that these operations were a necessary step towards ensuring that the Axis did not gain atomic weaponry, and thus made a significant contribution to the war effort.⁹² However, following review of the material released under the Waldegrave Initiative alongside the release of the archive of the Third Reich in Germany and the publication of the memoirs of its prominent wartime leaders, an argument has emerged in histories published in the late 1990s and early 21st century that the German nuclear program was heading “down the wrong track” and already unlikely to be effective in developing a working nuclear weapon by the time of the SOE and COHQ operations in Norway.⁹³ If this argument is correct, then *Freshman* could be viewed as an unnecessary measure against a relatively remote threat. It is this type of impact on the historiography, in light of sources made available by transparency initiatives, which this thesis aims to demonstrate.

90 For examples, see Gerald Hughes, R., Jackson, P., & Scott, L. (eds.), ‘Knowledge is never too dear’, *Exploring Intelligence Archives: Enquiries into the Secret State*, pp. 13 – 28.

91 For examples, see the ‘Appendices’ chapter of this thesis.

92 Mears, R., *The Real Heroes of Telemark: The True Story of the Secret Mission to Stop Hitler’s Atomic Bomb*, pp. 6 – 22.

93 Speer, A., *Inside the Third Reich*, pp. 318 – 319.

In the case of the SOE, the records placed into the National Archives for public view are arranged as a form of official history – comprising of various records with specific relevance to a particular aspect of the history. The majority of the material relating to the Gunnerside objective and *Freshman* is found in the SOE HS series of records at the National Archives in Kew, London alongside records released by MI5, MI6, COHQ, the Prime Ministers Office, the Cabinet Office, and the War Cabinet.

During the course of presenting the HS series to other government departments after the SOE's abolition of 1946, the British Government employed a team of several ex-SOE administrators to go through the available archive material and compile histories of different operations, personnel etc. before they were presented to other institutions, where they are either retained under current legislation, such as the Freedom of Information Act 2000 section 3 (4), or made publicly available.⁹⁴ This vetting process resulted in significant numbers of records being censored by the SOE and other governmental departments after the SOE's abolition, before being placed into the archive and subsequently released into public view.⁹⁵

However, just because a record is censored does not mean it will not contain any useful information. For example, the file HS 6/422 on an investigation into German infiltration of the SOE's F Section by MI5, has been extensively censored by the SIS and the Foreign Office. Despite this, the reader is still able to discern the nature of the missing text. Page 92 of this file contains a list of two objectives for the investigation; one of them has been censored by SIS or the Foreign Office.⁹⁶ However, earlier in the file on page 27 both objectives are clearly given.⁹⁷ This is an interesting example of where censorship is used but, when the records are later

94 Murphy, C. J., *Security and Special Operations: SOE and MI5 during the Second World War*, p. 215.

95 Stuart, D., 'Of Historical Interest Only': The Origins and Vicissitudes of the SOE Archive', *Intelligence and National Security*, Volume 20, Issue 1, 2005, p. 14.

96 The National Archives in Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 6/422, p. 92.

97 *Ibid.*, p. 27.

compiled, certain extracts are overlooked and the censorship does not actually retract the information.

This aspect of utilising the records of the SOE in order to better ascertain sources, cross-referencing different records to try to reveal censored or edited information, is important. It has, for example, enabled this thesis to triangulate an analysis of the historical narrative surrounding *Freshman* using pre- and post-Waldegrave *Freshman* literature as well as the author's own archival research.⁹⁸ This has resulted in a number of valuable and unique insights into the narrative of *Freshman*, as outlined fully in the 'Analysis of the Potential Impact' chapter which follows.

The example described above further demonstrates how the National Archive files now available for public review can yield relevant information for the researcher – partly as a result of their 'artificial construction' to provide some form of official history regarding specific operations, personnel etc. Indeed, the range of material that can be found within a single SOE file often means that the researcher has access to a wide variety of information across a range of sources. Minutes of meetings, maps, equipment lists, telegrams, statements of informants (anonymous and named), reconnaissance photographs, and even more recent newspaper articles may all be found within a single file. This broad spectrum improves the chances of discovering useful information, such as that relevant to this thesis. This presents a possibility that a source of evidence may be discovered relevant to *Freshman* that would not necessarily have been identified and consulted otherwise.

As well as understanding the quantity and type of records available, it is important to consider the quality of records and hence the value they can add to the research process. As aforementioned, a team of 'semi-retired' (Murphy) SOE administrators were employed by government institutions to re-construct the files in some sort of contextualised order for release following the launch of the Waldegrave Initiative. Any researcher utilising these records must be mindful of what impact this construction might have on the records of pre-Waldegrave secretive organisations such as the SOE and COHQ, since this editing process may result in the records having lost many of their intrinsic qualities. It is therefore important to analyse the quality of the

98 See Figure 1.

information as much as the quantity of records released. Even if the quantity of the records released is relatively high, the actual quality of the information they provide may be low – particularly if fundamental information has been altered or omitted during the editorial process. Records of high quality are defined in the context of this thesis as those having information imprinted onto them at the point of their conception, in that they are contemporary to the event – originating from a “first-hand” source. In the case of interviews, this definition covers accounts given by individuals contemporary to the event. During the preparation of this thesis, such records relevant to *Freshman* have wherever possible been cross-referenced with the HS 9 series personnel records. If information is available to do so, these have then been further triangulated utilising the published sources, memoirs, and other literature as well as contemporary newspaper articles. This cross-referencing has been essential in assessing the quality of sources, and has been used during the research to ensure that, wherever possible, only records which have retained an intrinsic contemporary quality and verifiable information are used. Appropriate records relating to the Gunnerside objective have then been analysed beside various narratives to assess what, if any, impact this has had on the historiography of the event, or, indeed, if these records themselves reveal further potential impact. As noted above, the HS records number into the tens of thousands – covering all aspects of the SOE organisation since its conception. The quality of these records can be generally regarded as good as the vast majority of them are contemporary in nature being conceived during or directly after the events they concern.

Analysis of the Potential Impact

To address the research question specifically, the available sources relating to *Freshman* have been utilised to re-examine elements of existing works and historical arguments around key aspects of the operation's narrative. The author has used the existing historical representations and available records to assess to what degree the release of records can impact our understanding of the *Freshman* narrative and identify further potential impacts.

The review of pre-existing historical representation, alongside examination of the SOE archive, which took place in the preparation for this thesis highlighted in particular four aspects of the *Freshman* narrative requiring detailed analysis which can demonstrate the potential impact of the Waldegrave Initiative on the accepted narrative of *Freshman* and its historical representation. These are:

- 1 Planning and preparation.
- 2 Security.
- 3 Why did the gliders and bombers crash?
- 4 What happened to the Royal Engineers?

These areas are examined in turn. This is then followed by the 'Conclusions' chapter containing a discussion of the interpretation of *Freshman* within the wider Gunnerside narrative (how the disclosure of new information changes the perception of *Freshman* in the overall narrative) and a summary of wider conclusions that can be drawn for the historiography of the SOE.

Planning & Preparation

It was noted by contemporary SOE historian Mark Seaman in an interview “when you look at the files for *Freshman*... it doesn’t take long for one to realise “Oh goodness, when is someone going to realise this isn’t going to work?!”⁹⁹ This view, albeit in the form of oral testimony (which makes it impossible to ascertain what sources they have utilised to draw this conclusion), implies that its failure was a *fait accompli* regardless of other factors. This chapter assesses, utilising available archival evidence and interviews from contemporaries, the degree to which this opinion can be substantiated and the impact this has upon the historiography.

According to Seaman the officers in charge of the operation were not purely driven by the common goal to see the Axis defeated but, in addition, by a desire to enhance COHQ’s reputation. It is highlighted by Seaman that the Gunnerside objective was a prestigious military target to be assigned and it is likely that serious planning was overlooked in favour of COHQ’s “can do” attitude.¹⁰⁰ Further, it is claimed by Gallagher (who fails to give a single reference for any source of evidence in his *Assault in Norway*), that if COHQ had taken the advice presented to them by Professor Tronstad and Colonel Wilson, it is possible that they would have reconsidered their plan of action and opted for a smaller, clandestine raiding party – as eventually utilised by the successful *Gunnerside*.¹⁰¹ Seaman and Gallagher both
99 Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 26663, Reel 1.

100 Ibid.

101 Gallagher, T., *Assault in Norway*, pp. 13 – 14.

conclude that *Freshman*'s chances of success suffered as a direct result of poor planning by its officers in favour of an egotistical "can do" attitude intended to impress their superiors.¹⁰² Interestingly, Seaman's opinions are voiced post-Waldegrave whilst Gallagher's *Assault in Norway* was first published in 1975.

These views contrast sharply with many representations of *Freshman* which portray it as a classic act of "derring-do" and do not refer to planning as an area of concern. Hence, they provide a key area where the release of archives can be shown to have had a significant impact on the historiography.

These concerns around planning are borne out when consulting the archival material – such as an examination of minutes from meetings concerned with the planning of *Freshman*. These notes, taken by Captain Cooper (the COHQ officer primarily in charge *Freshman*), demonstrate a lack of detail; with Colonel Wilson writing in the margin on one such set of minutes, only the day after the meeting took place, 'This does not seem to be a very complete record!'¹⁰³ It is of course possible that this lack of detail was intentional – to avoid possible security breaches or in order to address concerns individuals had about being held responsible later on. Regardless, Wilson's comment certainly suggests more detail was discussed and, for the avoidance of doubt, should have been recorded than was the case.

A key area, where released records shed light on the difficulties of the plan that was being proposed, is the route from the proposed landing site to the NHEP – a journey that was expected to take several hours, with the Royal Engineers expected to pacify any enemy sentry or patrol encountered.¹⁰⁴ It is unlikely that the disappearance of a sentry, possibly several sentries and patrols, would go unnoticed by the German authorities for this length of time. If the soldiers were unable to silence any German forces encountered and their position got radioed back to Headquarters, it is

102 Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 26663, Reel 1. Gallagher, T., *Assault in Norway*, p. 13.

103 The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 96.

104 *Ibid.*, pp. 106 & 127.

relatively unlikely a small detachment of Royal Engineers would be able to successfully complete their objective (being considerably garrisoned and fortified in its own right) before evading the German forces in Norway and escaping into neutral Sweden.

The Royal Engineers of *Freshman* were not provided with skis nor were they trained to use them if they managed to acquire any in Norway.¹⁰⁵ Archive material shows this was believed by the Norwegian operatives in the advance party to make their transportation to the objective and, more crucially, the escape to neutral Sweden an extremely difficult task.¹⁰⁶ It was noted by one contemporary in a record found in the National Archives that ‘the transport of these men and equipment can only be done with difficulty.’¹⁰⁷ It was even initially suggested by individuals responsible for planning *Freshman* that the soldiers should use folding bicycles to reach their objective – records released under Waldegrave describe both this and the subsequent dismissal of the idea when COHQ realised bicycles would be useless in the Norwegian snow.¹⁰⁸

Once landed, the Royal Engineers were expected to march several miles to the target, complete their objective, and escape 250km to neutral Sweden – all in climatic conditions far removed from anything the men would be used to. The individuals in charge of planning *Freshman* apparently believed that the Highlands of Scotland allowed training to be done in a climate similar to that of the Telemark region of Norway – however, without appropriate local knowledge and language

105 Ibid., pp. 178 - 179.

106 No. 3 of list of telegrams sent on the 21st October 1942 ‘Skiers would be advantageous’, Ibid., p. 79. In an interview Mark Seaman states that he believed the escape plan to be “impossible”, Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 26663, Reel 1.

107 The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 237.

108 Ibid., p. 79.

skills, it is questionable how accurate this comparison could be.¹⁰⁹ This was a significant journey, in a country that is sparsely populated and where an unfamiliar face would be noticed relatively easily. As one member of *Grouse* notes: ‘He [Captain Dunbar, a ‘Security Officer’ attached to the Royal Engineers of *Freshman* JPB] told me that the guides [*Grouse* JPB] would act as a reception committee and would meet some of the glider party in the course of collecting stores from them but that the guides would not act as guides in the sense of leading the party to the target’ meaning that the Royal Engineers could not rely on the Norwegians of *Grouse* to assist them in their escape.¹¹⁰ Norway had been heavily garrisoned since its invasion making the soldiers’ task of evading detection, utilising limited means of transport in an unfamiliar environment, extremely difficult. As Knut Haugland, a native of Rjukan and member of the *Grouse* advance party, stated in an interview – the escape plan was “impossible”.¹¹¹

Another aspect of the planning of *Freshman* which requires mention is that the Royal Engineers were sent into Norway wearing British battle dress, with civilian clothes underneath for escape into Sweden. This was at a time when an “Order of the Führer” (*Gomäss Führerbefehl*) was in place whereby all sabotage troops captured by German forces were to be shot out of hand (also known as the “Führer’s Commando Order”).¹¹² If any of the men were taken prisoner, the fact that they were wearing civilian clothes underneath their uniforms would be likely to betray (in the eyes of the Germans) their intent to carry out commando-style operations – meaning

109 J. C. Adamson stated in an interview “The Highlands of Scotland provided us with a terrain not dissimilar from some parts of Norway”, Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 12295, Reel 1. For a summary of the distinct differences between the Scottish Highlands and the Telemark region, please see renowned British outdoor writer and photographer Townsend, C., ‘In Scandinavia’, <http://www.christownsendoutdoors.com/2011/09/in-scandinavia.html>.

110 The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 116.

111 Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 12295, Reel 1.

that they would be tried and executed in accordance with this order. Archival evidence shows that the existence of this order was understood by some members of British armed forces at the time of *Freshman*'s conception, and it is difficult to believe that this information would not have been passed to those responsible for planning operations such as *Freshman*.¹¹³ It is therefore likely that, even at the planning stage, those planning *Freshman* would have been aware of this order's existence and the potential consequences for the men involved.¹¹⁴

Another aspect of the plan for *Freshman* which has attracted criticism is the method of transporting the Royal Engineers from Scotland to Norway. According to H. W. J. Mitchell, the individuals in charge of planning *Freshman* openly opted to land the Royal Engineers by glider instead of parachute – despite this already being demonstrated as a successful means for deploying agents to the Telemark region as shown by *Grouse*. Mitchell notes 'parachuting was considered possible but was given second priority to land a force by glider'.¹¹⁵ In a memorandum published in 1990, Terence Otway suggests that this decision was based on the fact that gliders

112 *Gomäss Führerbefehl*, one cited is dated 20th October 1943 but it is insisted by German authorities that an order identical or similar to this has existed since mid. 1942. This order was also presented in both German and English in Stevens, E. H., *War Crimes Trials Vol. VI, The Trail of von Falkenhorst*, pp. 9 & 250. The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 6.

113 'the German military have received orders from high authority that all persons landing from aircraft to carry out sabotage are to be shot out of hand, irrespective of whether they are uniformed or not.', The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 54.

114 It is insisted by German authorities, as mentioned in footnote 12, that the *Gomäss Führerbefehl* had existed since mid. 1942. It seems highly likely that the COHQ officers in command of the planning of *Freshman* would have been aware of such an order's existence due to its clear implications for the type of operations they conducted.

115 Mitchell, H. W. J., *1942 Vemork*, pp. 2 – 3.

were capable of handling the relatively heavy loads to be carried by the Royal Engineers which could become widely dispersed if parachuted in.¹¹⁶ In hindsight this was clearly a crucial flaw in the planning of *Freshman* as demonstrated by the gliders crashing – the reasons for which will be discussed in a following section of this chapter.

This analysis therefore demonstrates how these aspects of the planning substantiate Seaman and Gallagher's assertions that poor planning should be seen as a factor in *Freshman*'s failure. COHQ's apparent keenness to deliver on its "can do" attitude, and demonstrate its ability to achieve such a prestigious and high profile target, seems to have taken precedence in several areas over careful planning and a rational approach to the problem of achieving the Gunnerside objective. Seaman and Gallagher's views are supported by the examination of the relevant archival material, memorandums, and oral testimony as demonstrated above. As well as confirming Seaman and Gallagher's sources, the research undertaken by the author has uncovered further evidence that the planning of *Freshman* is likely to have contribute to its failure. COHQ's failure to provide the Royal Engineers with skis for the approach and escape to Sweden as well as their decision to instruct the Royal Engineers and pilots of *Freshman* to wear civilian clothes underneath their uniforms, despite the widely known existence of the *Gomäss Führerbefehl*, are all reasons why perhaps Seaman's assertion that the failure of *Freshman* was a *fait accompli*

This evidence impacts the pre-Waldegrave but interestingly continues to permeate a significant part of the post-Waldegrave historiography of *Freshman* where the issue of planning continues to be largely overlooked. This is particularly noticeable in the "popular history" genre where the narrative of a secret operation of high drama and bravery fails almost entirely to mention any issues around logistics, transportation, or the high likelihood of the Royal Engineers being identified as commandos and killed.

An interesting question – but one which is beyond the scope of this thesis – is the degree to which a culture of wanting quick, high profile results within COHQ led to other issues where planning was perhaps less rigorous than should be expected. Associated with this, to what degree were the issues around planning a result of SOE and/or COHQ policy and was *Freshman* were 'unfortunate' in this regard? This

116 Otway, T. B. H., *The Second World War 1939–1945*, p. 70.

could be an interesting area for further study, using archive materials to examine other operations and activities to see if trends emerge.

Security

As well as questioning the planning of *Freshman*, historians Seaman and Gallagher also questioned whether security surrounding the operation was tight enough to ensure the best chance of success.¹¹⁷ As H. W. J. Mitchell notes ‘Security was a most important aspect of this operation. Bad security would not only prejudice the lives of these thirty-four men, but also prevent a further attack, should this one fail’.¹¹⁸

To keep the objective of *Freshman* secret for as long as possible, despite the arduous training regime for the Royal Engineers involved, a mythical competition called the Washington Cup was designed to keep all concerned “in the dark” about their training’s final objective in the weeks leading up to *Freshman*’s execution.¹¹⁹ As the time for the operation to commence drew near, the Royal Engineers and their support staff were transferred to Skitten Air Base in Scotland, from which the operation was to be launched. Security over the operation at Skitten has been widely portrayed as successful by contemporaries. One such contemporary was Commander Batchelor, who said that he perceived the air base to be “very secure” when he arrived prior to the commencement of the operation.¹²⁰ Since *Freshman*’s

117 Please see interview with Mark Seaman, Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference Number 26663, Reel 1 and Gallagher, T., *Assault in Norway*, p. 13.

118 Mitchell, H. W. J., *1942 Vemork*, p. 7.

119 Gallagher, T., *Assault in Norway*, p. 13.

120 Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 10429, Reel 3.

failure, and particularly with the recent oral testimony and release of the relevant archive, a number of indications to the contrary have emerged.

Although the participating Royal Engineers had been told about the Washington Cup, suspicions about their training's final objective were aroused when they were instructed at Skitten to remove their berets and divisional insignia.¹²¹ As Mitchell notes:

... the security side all went well until a training establishment [probably Captain Dunbar, the 'Security Officer' attached to the Royal Engineers of *Freshman* JPB] insisted that the party should arrive without berets and Divisional signs.... It is common knowledge among Airborne troops that when an airborne soldier puts on an FS [presumably a typo and should read SF (Special Forces) JPB] cap "something is up".¹²²

In response, the officers in charge ordered telephone calls and letters to be censored prior to the operation's execution.¹²³ This evidence from contemporaries suggests that the sophisticated cover story of the Washington Cup had a negative impact on morale once the true objective of their training became clearer. Although there is no suggestion this directly compromised the security of *Freshman*, it certainly cannot have been good in terms of overall chances of success.

As far as the author is aware there has not been a cross-referencing between Otway and Mitchell's works within the historiography to date and thus this narrative is relatively unknown outside of *Freshman*'s contemporaries (such as Mitchell). It

121 Otway, T. B. H, *The Second World War 1939-1945*, p. 71.

122 Mitchell, H. W. J., *1942 Vemork: 1st Airborne Divisional Engineers 'Operation "Freshman"'*, Imperial War Museum Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference K 96/363, p. 8.

123 'all mail and telephone calls were censored.', *Ibid.*

should also be noted that both of these works are only available from the Imperial War Museum's archive and thus it is unlikely that the researcher would discover such a narrative just by looking in the National Archives records – the author of this thesis has examined these records and there is no mention of the aforementioned narrative. This demonstrates that in order to establish the complete narrative of such events it is often necessary to examine the accounts and works of contemporaries rather than the secondary literature or records available for public review.

Security was also threatened by an 'operational squadron' taking off from the air base as the Royal Engineers' gliders were coming into land, and evidence suggests it is almost certain that they were spotted.¹²⁴ This would have been perceived to be highly abnormal as at the time gliders were still in the prototype phase. Again, there is no mention of this incident in either the SOE records or the pre-existing secondary literature. This further demonstrates the importance for the researcher to visit other sources as well as demonstrating the gaps present in the records available for public view as well as the historiography.

Another claim relating to the security side of *Freshman* which should be examined is that the Royal Engineers took operational plans with them to Norway. Some accounts suggest it is highly unlikely that the Royal Engineers would have taken operational plans with them on the mission, including the testimony of a courier found in the records of the SOE at the National Archives. The courier encountered the soldiers of *Freshman* at Skitten and, when asked of the likelihood of them taking operational plans with them into the field, stated in their testimony 'I feel it is unlikely that they [the Royal Engineers JPB] would have done so'.¹²⁵ However, various accounts following the mission's failure reported that the Germans had recovered documents from the crashed gliders. For example, a report from Airborne Divisional HQ states that an informant told them that the Gestapo found a map on one of the soldiers with a blue circle marked around Rjukan and at least one of the troops

124 'Unfortunately an operational squadron was taking off at the same time as the gliders were coming into land, and some of the crew must have seen them', *Ibid.*

125 The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 78.

disclosed the mission's objectives whilst under duress.¹²⁶ This is supported by a separate report also found in the records at the National Archives which states 'they [the Germans JPB] had found a map in the glider that crashed, with Rjukan encircled in blue pencil and the route marked.'¹²⁷

Clearly evidence found within the archive – which has been released as a result of the Waldegrave Initiative – has therefore had a significant impact on the historian's view of *Freshman's* security. Whilst many accounts do not suggest that security was an issue, analysis demonstrates that there are areas where leaks of information could have occurred. This thesis has disclosed that the security of the operation was indeed compromised on at least two separate occasions previously unknown in the historiography. Firstly, the incident of the 'Security Officer' requiring that all of the Royal Engineers involved in *Freshman* remove their berets and divisional insignia – some time elapsed between this order and the censorship of all the mail and other communications from Skitten, in theory giving the men of *Freshman* time to disclose their suspicions about their training's final objectives to the outside world.¹²⁸ Second, the arrival of the prototype Horsa gliders at Skitten as an operational squadron was taking off – highly significant as RAF pilots were relatively few in number and a "tight-knit" group of military professionals.¹²⁹ No doubt the pilots who saw this highly unusual incident would have reported it to their colleagues and that information could have quickly fell into the hands of enemy informants.

Despite the claims by Seaman and Gallagher that *Freshman* was conducted under poor security conditions which hindered its likelihood of succeeding, as well as prejudicing the lives of the men involved, there is no clear evidence from the archive

126 Ibid., pp. 62.

127 Ibid., p. 64.

128 Mitchell, H. W. J., *1942 Vemork*, p. 8.

129 See Knodell, K., 'Beer, Brotherhood, and the Battle of Britain', <https://medium.com/war-is-boring/beer-brotherhood-and-the-battle-of-britain-27b8a04dcb7a>.

that these security lapses contributed directly to its failure. However, these issues – illuminated by the memorandums of contemporaries and the release of previously classified records – do impact the historiography by shedding light on some of the practical security difficulties which emerged in the run up to *Freshman's* execution. In particular, it is interesting to note how many accounts of *Freshman* fail to reference appropriately, if at all, sources of evidence for the events and opinions that they purport to accurately portray. In the genre of histories of clandestine military activities, this seems particularly poignant; for example, Mears' account of *Freshman* which – although published in 2003 – mirrors closely the plot of the 1965 pre-Waldegrave film without significant citation of sources or bibliography. The challenge for the researcher is that this is the historical account with which the public will most easily engage, and hence the one that will become “new currency” despite a much richer and more accurate narrative being available through other routes.

Why did the gliders and bomber crash?

Regardless of whether *Freshman* was doomed to failure from its conception due to poor planning or because the security of the operation had been compromised prior to its launch, the fact remains that *Freshman* failed *de facto* as both gliders carrying the Royal Engineers as well as one of the bombers which was towing the gliders crashed. The narrative that has been widely maintained is that the gliders crashed due to poor weather conditions on the night that the operation was launched.¹³⁰ This is substantiated by a record released under the Waldegrave Initiative, a ciphered

130 Gallagher, T., *Assault in Norway*, pp. 33 – 34.

telegram sent to MI6 from Stockholm on 25th November 1942 stating 'British aircraft each with a glider were forced down in Southern Norway owing to bad weather conditions'.¹³¹ Based on previously classified records, accounts of contemporaries, and works published post-Waldegrave, a number of alternative theories have come to light which are examined below.

One theory to have emerged is that the gliders, bombers, their pilots, and the proposed landing strip were unfit for the purpose and would almost inevitably crash due to their poor performance under the conditions in which they found themselves. Another theory is that the gliders and bomber were brought down as a result of anti-aircraft fire. A third theory is that *Freshman's* planners failed to predict that the extreme cold over Norway at the altitude which the gliders and bomber were flying which led to the cables between the gliders and bombers to ice over; eventually disabling the telephone line which ran between the two aircraft before resulting in the cables breaking altogether. A fourth theory is that the Eureka-Rebecca homing devices, with which the Halifax bombers and *Grouse* were equipped, failed to work causing the bombers to let go of their respective gliders off target before one of them crashed.

In terms of the theory that the gliders, bombers, their pilots, and the proposed landing strip were unfit for the purpose, according to records available post-Waldegrave the gliders that the Royal Engineers were deployed in had not performed sufficiently over mountainous terrain. Even just going over the Scottish Highlands they had proven to be extremely unreliable resulting, in some instances the towing aircraft and glider losing five hundred feet per minute at full climb.¹³² This does bring into question whether they were fit for purpose – namely being towed over the rugged and mountainous terrain of Norway. Further, Mitchell claims that the

131 The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 70.

132 A courier asked an acquaintance at the mess in Skitten Air Base 'how the gliders performed, he replied over Salisbury Plain they were quite satisfactory but that they had never used them over mountains and expected a rough passage. One of the pilots in the mess said that he had had a bad trip up towing a glider over the Highlands, when owing to air-currents he found himself dropping 500 feet a minute at full climb!', *Ibid.*, p. 78.

Halifax bombers towing the gliders were both being piloted by men of the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) who had little or no experience in piloting this type of aircraft and even less in towing gliders.¹³³ Mitchell's claims are indirectly supported by a report submitted by a Norwegian informant called Fenrik Birkeland – in his report it is noted that one of the pilots 'he was a very dark complexioned man'.¹³⁴ This is significant as there were relatively few ethnically African or Afro-Caribbean bomber crew in the RAF at the time, however there were several aboriginals who were pilots in the RAAF – these individuals could easily be interpreted as being 'very dark complexioned'.¹³⁵ This is further supported by a statement sent from the Norwegian High Command in Stockholm to the SOE, regarding the events of *Freshman*, by a deserting German officer – who states that one of the bomber crew was a 'nigger'.¹³⁶ The theory that the Halifax bombers were being piloted by inexperienced RAAF crewmen is completely unknown within the pre-existing secondary literature and again demonstrates how important it is that the researcher cross-references the records available for public view alongside the accounts of contemporaries when attempting to uncover the correct narrative.

A second theory to emerge following the release of previously classified records into the public domain is that the bomber and two gliders were brought down as a result of anti-aircraft fire – multiple informants, whose reports are available for review in the SOE archive, claim this to be the case.¹³⁷ A man known as 'Mr. G. T.', who worked as interpreter at the prison where the captured soldiers were interned prior to

133 'The aircrews of 38 Group, who had recently been flying only Whitleys and Wellingtons, had to fly the Halifax, and with it practice towing a Horsa glider.', Mitchell, H. W. J., 1942 *Vemork*, p. 6.

134 The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 14.

135 For examples see 'Unsung Pilots of the Caribbean', <http://www.expressandstar.com/editors-picks/2014/10/10/unsung-pilots-of-the-caribbean/>. Hall, R. A., *Fighters from the Fringe*, p. 20.

136 The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 20.

their execution, was told by one of the soldiers that 'there had been an explosion in the glider which caused the crash'.¹³⁸ Another report, from an anonymous source, stated that the plane towing that particular glider was 'shot down'.¹³⁹ Another report, submitted by Kirkeby Jacobsen – known as *Crow II* by the SOE and seen as one of their most reliable informants in Norway (endorsed by Colonel Wilson of the SOE – stating 'there is no reason to my mind that he should have either made up or embroidered the story'), states that the Halifax bomber which crashed at Stavanger was 'shot down; and crashed before casting off its glider'.¹⁴⁰ The existence of more than one account referring to some form of shooting or explosion down certainly increases the likelihood of this having some basis in truth, and so quite fundamentally alters the accepted narrative that both gliders and the plane crashed as a result of poor weather.

A third theory to emerge, since the release of the relevant archival material, is that ice formed on the aircraft whilst they were flying through the cloud layer above Telemark, causing the cables between the bombers and gliders to ice up. This initially snapped the phone cables preventing the bomber and glider pilots from communicating with each other, and then the tow cables eventually broke without warning – the sound of the snapping of such a large component of the aircraft and the impact it would have had could possibly have simulated anti-aircraft fire and might explain the aforementioned theory. The Imperial War Museum Archive contains an interview with Knut Haugland (the wireless operator for *Grouse*) who says that he believes the wire between the plane and the pilot expanded (due to the cold) thus breaking the telephone line then breaking loose all together.¹⁴¹ However, Haugland was not present during the events and is not an expert on such matters, so this is his personal opinion rather than professional expertise. Before this interview there is no

137 Ibid., pp. 39, 52, & 68 for examples of these reports.

138 Ibid., p. 39.

139 Ibid., p. 52.

140 Ibid., pp. 63 & 68.

mention of the theory of the iced-up cables in the SOE records found in the National Archives nor historiography and it therefore cannot be substantiated further.

A fourth theory to emerge in recent years is that the Rebecca homing device became 'inservicable' on the Halifax bomber towing one glider, and that the Eureka-Rebecca combination failed to work.¹⁴² This bomber then crashed near Helleland Railway Station. Haugland was adamant that the Eureka-Rebecca homing devices were "locked on 100%" – implying that Captain Cooper claimed that the homing system failed because he wanted to absolve himself of guilt for the failure of the operation as a result of his poor planning: in effect, giving himself a scapegoat.¹⁴³ On the other hand, this statement from Haugland could be interpreted as an attempt to absolve himself.

It is worth noting that the Eureka-Rebecca homing device combination had never been field tested in mountainous terrain such as Telemark.¹⁴⁴ Therefore it may be that Cooper's claims are substantiated. This substantiation is unknown within the existing historiography and as such highlights the importance of cross-referencing the accounts of contemporaries alongside the archival sources in establishing the most accurate historical narrative and explanation of events.

What becomes clear from the examples above is the potential for previously undisclosed archival material to give rise to a range of new theories, particularly

141 Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 26624, Reel 2.

142 Lynch, T., *Silent Skies: Gliders at War 1939 – 1945*, p. 35.

143 Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 26624, Reel 2.

144 A Norwegian meteorologist, Lieutenant-Colonel Petersen, attached to COHQ asked 'has the instrument [Eureka-Rebecca radio homing beacon JPB] been given sufficient trials in mountainous country?', The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 74.

regarding *Freshman* where the situation is complex with a number of different parties having quite different perspectives and, possibly, motives. It is interesting to note that, in the case of *Freshman* and the fate of the gliders, at least four new theories have emerged post-Waldegrave with none capable of being decisively proved or disproved from the evidence available so far. This includes a range of official as well as unofficial records, including interviews with contemporaries and other sources such as Mitchell's memorandum.

With an archive such as the SOE's (where it is estimated that only around 13% of the total archive survives) it is impossible to know whether a more complete archive would provide any additional clarity over what caused the gliders to crash. Indeed, it could present additional theories. What is clear is the impact that the release of records – and a researcher's use of them – can have on accepted narrative of events, with all of these theories challenging the established, pre-Waldegrave view that the gliders and bomber were brought down by poor weather conditions on the night that the operation was launched.

What happened to the Royal Engineers?

What happened to the Royal Engineers, the crew on board the Halifax bomber, and each glider after their respective crashes is widely contested in the sources. There are various accounts from people who claim to have witnessed these events personally or people who have met someone who claims to have done so. When this information surrounding *Freshman's* failure reached Britain, the scale of the disaster began to unfold for the operation's planners as well as British and Norwegian public to behold.¹⁴⁵ Very little or nothing was known of the fate of the Royal Engineers, their glider pilots, or the crew of the Halifax bomber prior to this. It was not until men of the Royal Engineers arrived in Norway (May 1945) that Norwegians who had seen their predecessors recognised their uniform and new information came to the fore.¹⁴⁶

Prior to this the only information openly available to the wider British and Norwegian public was a communiqué from the German government in Norway, broadcast over

145 For example see 'Giant Bombers Turin Raid' published in the Hartlepool Mail, Durham, England, 21st November 1942. Also see The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference Number HS2/184, pp. 14 - 15, 49 - 50, 52 - 54, 64 - 70.

146 Ibid., p. 8 (this particular account was sent to the British authorities in June 1945).

the wireless 21st November 1942 and later published – without comment from either the British or Norwegian authorities – in the popular press, stating:

On the night of November 19/20th two British bombers each towing one glider flew into Southern Norway. One bomber and both gliders were forced to land. The sabotage troops they were carrying were put to battle and wiped out to the last man.¹⁴⁷

There has been little comment within the wider representation of the Gunnerside narrative on the lack of response from the British authorities following this but it is interesting to note that the communiqué states the troops were ‘put to battle and wiped out to the last man’.¹⁴⁸ While various accounts of the crashes are available in the literature and archives, as yet none suggest a fire fight took place between the Royal Engineers and German armed forces. Indeed the historiography and other archived reports suggest that, from both glider crashes, the survivors surrendered to the German authorities and were taken prisoner. Whilst not entirely relevant to the research problem this thesis is attempting to address, this example does provide an interesting insight into the management of information by both the German and British authorities during the period.

According to Wiggan’s *Operation Freshman*, the first glider crash site was in the mountains between Helleland and Bjerkreim near Helleland Railway Station.¹⁴⁹ Although Wiggan does not supply a reference for this, it can be verified by the records available for public review in the National Archives.¹⁵⁰ According to Gallagher, who gives the crash sites as being ‘the mountains northeast of Helleland’,

147 Imperial War Museum Archive, Catalogue Reference K 96/363, p. 12. According to Mears the British authorities were unaware of the fate of *Freshman* until their theories were confirmed by this communiqué, Mears, R., *The Real Heroes of Telemark*, p. 84. See Figures 6 for an example of the coverage of the raid in the contemporary printed press in Norway.

148 Mitchell, H. W. J., *1942 Vemork*, p. 12.

149 Wiggan, R., *Operation Freshman*, p. 59.

the crash resulted in three of the Royal Engineers being killed instantly and the rest injured to varying degrees.¹⁵¹ This is disputed by the report available in the National Archives, which clearly state that six of the Royal Engineers were killed instantly in the crash.¹⁵² According to one source, which is quoted in the SOE records, two of the men (who had suffered only minor injuries) decided to walk from the crash site to the local police station in Helleland where they requested medical assistance for their wounded comrades. The police made it clear to them that they would have no other option but to telephone the German authorities for this assistance and thus they would be informed that British troops had crash landed in the area. The soldiers agreed to this – presumably believing that they and their comrades would be treated as POWs.¹⁵³ These records available in the archive shows the impact of how these new sources can change and expand the pre-existing narrative, as these events have been overlooked within the existing historiography – there is no mention of these two men requesting medical assistance at the local police station.

According to Gallagher, the towing Halifax Bomber – which conceivably let go of the glider in an attempt to gain altitude – crashed into a mountain range near Hestadjell.¹⁵⁴ Although Gallagher fails in his *Assault in Norway* to provide a reference for where he has obtained this information it is in fact supported by a statement from the informant Fenrik Birkeland – a local of the Helleland area.¹⁵⁵ According to Wiggan, a group of Norwegian workmen heard the bomber overhead shortly before it crashed and alerted the German authorities who arrived quickly and,

150 The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 70.

151 Gallagher, T., *Assault in Norway*, p. 34.

152 The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 70.

153 Ibid., p. 8.

154 Gallagher, T., *Assault in Norway*, p. 33.

155 The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 14.

upon finding no survivors, dumped the aircrew's bodies in a bog nearby.¹⁵⁶ Birkeland's report does not specify what happened to the crew and there are no other significant first-hand reports concerning the crash site available for review within the archives. Therefore Wiggan's version of events is unsubstantiated.

Mears claims that the Horsa glider, being towed by the aforementioned Halifax bomber, crashed in an area called Fyljesdal above Floril near Lysefjord. He states that, out of the number onboard, eight men were killed outright, four severely injured, and five unhurt.¹⁵⁷ Where Mears has got these figures from cannot be substantiated by the author's research because the accounts which are available for review in the archives are informants' reports which vary wildly in nature on the condition of the men at this particular crash site.¹⁵⁸ It is therefore impossible to get an accurate impression of their condition.

According to Wiggan, the survivors encountered a local farmer by the name of Thorvald Fylgjedalen who took them to his neighbour's farm, a man named Jonas Haaheller. Haaheller passed word around the local community that he had British soldiers requiring medical attention and shelter from the Germans. This resulted in many civilians arriving and tending to the soldiers' wounds, giving them food and water, and disposing of evidence there had been a crash including burning any documents they could find at the crash site which might disclose the soldiers' objective.¹⁵⁹ Both of these points of the narrative are supported by the records available for public review in the National Archives.¹⁶⁰ Gallagher states that it is known that the Norwegian civilians attempted to dispose of the evidence – however

156 Wiggan, R., *Operation Freshman*, p. 62.

157 Mears, R., *The Real Heroes of Telemark*, p. 85.

158 For example, one report states that seventeen of the men escaped 'with hardly any injuries', The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 14.

159 Wiggan, R., *Operation Freshman*, pp. 62 – 67.

160 The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 14.

this was clearly unsuccessful due to the Germans finding documents disclosing the soldiers' objectives on at least one of the men as well as in the crashed glider.¹⁶¹ This aspect of the narrative is also supported by the records available for review, as it is noted in a report by an informant named Birkeland, and Haaheller and his neighbours managed to keep the arrival of the Royal Engineers secret for almost 24 hours by various means including the disposal of evidence.¹⁶²

According to Mears, the men who were not significantly injured had plenty of opportunity to escape or offer resistance to capture but it would seem the highest ranking officer present decided they would stay with their wounded comrades and surrender to the Germans – apparently believing escape to Sweden was now impractical and that to attempt escape would endanger the lives of the Norwegian civilians who had helped them thus far.¹⁶³ He apparently believed that the Germans would treat them as POWs due to them being in British battledress.¹⁶⁴ It can therefore be assumed that none of the men being deployed to Norway for *Freshman* were aware of the “Führer’s Commando Order” mentioned earlier – if they were, they would have known surrendering themselves would equal certain death at the hands of the Germans. There is a possibility, in the author’s opinion, they were aware of the order but preferred capture and execution to reprisals by the Germans against the Norwegian civilians who had helped them.

Archival material shows that the members of the Waffen SS and Wehrmacht arrived the next day to collect the Royal Engineers who crashed at Fyliesdal.¹⁶⁵ It would appear during their stay, an informant known as the ‘Lensmann’ informed the Sheriff, who in turn informed the Gestapo that British airborne soldiers had crash

161 Gallagher, T., *Assault in Norway*, p. 38.

162 The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 14.

163 Mears, R., *The Real Heroes of Telemark*, p. 85.

164 Wiggan, R., *Operation Freshman*, p. 59.

165 The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 14.

landed in the area and he was tending to their wounded – this is supported by two separate informants' reports.¹⁶⁶ As one of these informants put it, the operatives of *Freshman* were 'unfortunate enough to meet the only nervous farmer in the neighbourhood'.¹⁶⁷ Norwegian civilians were threatened with the death penalty for helping 'the enemy' but allegedly they did not tend to 'trouble about this'.¹⁶⁸ The fact that the men were informed upon was apparently an 'unfortunate case'.¹⁶⁹ Some historians, such as Wiggan, and reports later filed with the British government post-May 1945, suggest that the Royal Engineers contacted the German authorities themselves which is what led to their capture. However the research undertaken for this thesis has not found any first-hand accounts or collaborative evidence supporting this claim.¹⁷⁰

According to two separate informants' reports, the men who were captured by the Germans at Helleland were taken to a German encampment called Slettebø near Egersund, briefly interrogated, and, after all giving Rjukan Power Station as their target, were executed by firing squad.¹⁷¹ The soldiers captured near Lysefjord were transported to Grini concentration camp where they were interrogated, with the assistance of interpreters, and probably tortured.¹⁷² When one informant (who was

166 Ibid., pp. 14 & 42.

167 Ibid., p. 14.

168 Ibid.

169 Ibid.

170 Wiggan, R., *Operation Freshman*, p. 59. See The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, pp. 14 – 15, 49 – 50, 52 – 54, 64 – 70 for examples of these reports.

171 The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, pp. 14 & 71.

172 Ibid., p. 68.

an interpreter present during their incarceration) was asked why he presumed the men had been tortured, he stated that he 'knew the methods of the Gestapo'.¹⁷³ According to Gallagher, these men had been given little training on how to resist interrogation and it is more than likely several "cracked" under torture.¹⁷⁴ This information, combined with documents found at the crash sites, confirmed the German suspicions about their target being *Lurgan* production.¹⁷⁵ After a few days they were executed by firing squad.¹⁷⁶ It should be noted however that it is impossible to determine the exact length of time the different groups of Royal Engineers from their respective gliders were in captivity due to the varying nature of the reports from informants.¹⁷⁷

As previously stated, the reports received by the British Government were often conflicting in the aftermath of *Freshman*. The variation within these accounts regarding the conditions the Royal Engineers were kept in and to what extent they received any medical attention for their injuries, makes it difficult to arrive at a definitive narrative even from the evidence available. There are two key reports that this section will examine given by *Crow I* and *Crow II*. These are two different informants who both claim to have been present during the interrogation and execution of the Royal Engineers. Within these accounts, there is a different explanation regarding the conditions the Royal Engineers were kept in and to what extent they received any medical attention for injuries they sustained during the crash.

173 Ibid.

174 Gallagher, T., *Assault in Norway*, p. 38

175 Ibid.

176 Ibid.

177 See The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, pp. 14 – 15, 49 – 50, 52 – 54, 64 – 70 for examples of these reports.

In the report submitted by *Crow II* (Kirby Jacobsen), endorsed by the SOE's 'Chief Interrogation Officer' who was 'a King's Counsel and in a good position to judge the credibility or otherwise of a witness', states that the conditions the men were kept in were 'insanitary' and 'the men had apparently received no medical attention'.¹⁷⁸ A report submitted by *Crow I* states that 'all these men [the Royal Engineers JPB] received some attention from a Norwegian doctor' but whether this was whilst in captivity.¹⁷⁹ These examples show the conflicting nature of reports received by the British Government in the aftermath of *Freshman* detailing what happened to their men in Norway, and this could be why there is a lack of literature written or views expressed on this aspect of the *Freshman* narrative within the wider representation.

Interestingly there is also a separate report which refers to a telegram sent to the MI5 by authorities in Stockholm informing the British Government that an agent arrested by the Gestapo has been released and is on his way back to Britain. It states that this agent had to visit the prison where the Royal Engineers were being held in order to ascertain, on the behalf of the German authorities, whether the men were in fact British troops (perhaps indicating that Helberg's claim that British and Norwegian battle dress during the period were almost identical is well founded). In this report it states that the men 'appeared to have seen inadequate medical attention and were imprisoned in a single cell'.¹⁸⁰ Arguably this report goes some way to substantiating *Crow II*'s report which states that the conditions the men were kept in to be 'insanitary' and 'the men had apparently received no medical attention'.¹⁸¹

In addition to the above, the archives show that various other reports on the Royal Engineers' situation were submitted to MI5, the SOE, and British Government by a variety of sources. This includes a report submitted by two members of the Norwegian Resistance, who actually visited the Grini concentration camp where they

178 Ibid., pp. 55 & 68.

179 Ibid., p. 64.

180 Ibid., p. 69.

181 Ibid., p. 68.

claimed some of the Royal Engineers were being held, although this was dismissed as being 'of a hearsay character' and to be treated 'with a good deal of caution'.¹⁸²

A number of other reports state that the men were taken to Slettebø, so lending weight to this detail. One of these was in the form of a ciphered telegram that was sent to the MI5 from Stockholm on the 25th November 1942 stating:

British aircraft each with a glider were forced down in Southern Norway owing to bad weather conditions. One landed near Helleland Railway Station near Egersund the other above Floril in Lysefjord... former crashed on mountainside all occupants of aircraft being killed. Of glider's passengers 6 were killed in crash and 11 taken prisoner and shot. Other plane apparently made forced landing 8 killed and 9 taken prisoner and shot at German camp at Slettebø near Egersund. Crews are described as "armed civilians".¹⁸³

Conversely, the following ciphered telegram which was sent by an informant code-named *Swan* on the 11th December 1942 states:

Glider plane fell down at Helleland Church. Five men. Two killed certainly some wounded. All taken prisoner interrogated for two hours. All gave Rjukan Power Station as target. They were all subsequently shot.¹⁸⁴

These reports are clearly conflicting, one stating that the glider was brought down near Helleland Church and the other stating Helleland Railway Station (which are four kilometres apart) as well as one stating 11 men were taken prisoner by the Germans and the other stating five. This further demonstrates the contradictory nature of the reports received by the British Government after *Freshman's* failure

182 Ibid., pp. 14, 26, 48, & 71.

183 Ibid., p. 70.

184 Ibid., p. 84.

and the difficulty therefore in determining a definite narrative, both before and after the release of previously classified records.

As a result of the aforementioned, there a lack of a definitive narrative within the historiography and other forms of historical representation relating to *Freshman* about what happened to these men and the events leading to their capture and execution. It is by examining the records now available that we can begin to unlock the narrative, or at least the various versions of it, thus demonstrating the potential impact upon the existing historiography the archives released under Waldegrave can have. The Waldegrave Initiative clearly can have an impact on the historiography of *Freshman* through enabling historians to examine materials and assess their impact on our understanding of events. However, this analysis also reveals three further issues of interest. Firstly, it demonstrates the variation that can be often encountered within the records when there exists multiple accounts of the same event; this can happen under many circumstances, but it can be easily seen that its impact is likely to be greater within a theatre of war. This can actually complicate rather than clarify the narrative. Secondly, even when previously classified materials are available, it is interesting to note the continuing variation in accounts written, and the apparent lack of reference to these new sources by some authors; it is not unreasonable to suggest that this issue is of particular relevance to the popular history genre surrounding secret military operations as this relies on maximising intrigue, drama, and human bravery “against the odds”. Thirdly, this analysis demonstrates how, even if several reports support each other with a similar narrative, care has to be taken to corroborate this information, since commonality in accounts does not necessarily imply accuracy.

Conclusions

Freshman: the Forgotten Failure

It is only since the Waldegrave Initiative, and the consequent release of a significant volume of previously classified archives into the public domain that the details of what happened during *Freshman* has been open to any form of public analysis or scrutiny.

Freshman's failure resulted in the strengthening of the garrisons at both the NHEP and the Rjukan Power Station, making any follow up operation's task all the more difficult.¹⁸⁵ As a result, the *Gunnernside* objective was scaled down to a single target – to destroy the *Lurgan* producing machinery at the NHEP. *Gunnernside* was therefore launched to concentrate on this single target, without the addition of the two further objectives with which *Freshman* had been charged (the destruction of the existing stocks of *Lurgan* and the sabotage of the Rjukan Power Station).

A plan was devised whereby six SOE operatives from the Norwegian section's "Linge" Company (comprised exclusively of Norwegian nationals) would be parachuted into occupied Norway to assist the operatives already present in the form of *Grouse* with the task of destroying the heavy water producing machinery at the NHEP. These men were excellent skiers and had knowledge of the local area. *Gunnernside* was launched on 16th February 1943, with the men parachuted into Norway by Commander Batchelor of the RAF's 138 squadron using a Halifax bomber flown from Tempsford.¹⁸⁶

Writing pre-Waldegrave, Gallagher asserts that *Gunnernside* was planned taking into account a report issued by the Colonel Wilson and Professor Tronstad to COHQ prior to *Freshman's* launched in 1942.¹⁸⁷ This outlined a range of issues which made the plan for *Freshman* unlikely to succeed including the Norwegian geography, the distance over which the gliders were to be towed, the inhospitable terrain once

185 Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 26663, Reel 1.

186 Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 10429, Reel 3.

187 Gallagher, T., *Assault in Norway*, pp. 13 – 14.

landed and issues around the suggested use of folding bicycles. A copy of this report can however be reviewed in the National Archives.¹⁸⁸

Gunnernside was successful in achieving its single target of destroying the machinery producing heavy water at NHEP, however that machinery was swiftly rebuilt. In November 1943 the USAF launched a bombing raid in an attempt to destroy the *Lurgan* producing machinery at the NHEP and damage the Rjukan Power Station but this was unsuccessful.¹⁸⁹ Members of *Gunnernside* (ordered to stay in Norway) sank the Norwegian ferry *Hydro* – being used to transport the accumulated stocks of heavy water to Germany – in Lake Tinnsjø on 20th February 1944, working in cooperation with members of the Norwegian Resistance.

With the help of archive material now available, including those records released under the Waldegrave Initiative, it is clear that Germany's nuclear weapons program was severely disrupted by these losses. Albert Speer – the German Minister of Armaments – convinced Adolf Hitler that the German nuclear weapons programme should be abandoned to conserve resources for continued production of already mass produced hardware for the war effort.¹⁹⁰ The Rjukan Power Plant remained untouched until the liberation of Norway when it was successfully secured for its future use in the Norwegian infrastructure by members of the Norwegian Resistance.¹⁹¹

COHQ's failure in the form of *Freshman* quickly became almost entirely subsumed by the success of *Gunnernside* within the Gunnernside narrative – save that it was the pre-requisite operation which led to *Gunnernside*'s execution and eventual success.

188 The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 208.

189 See Figure 9.

190 Speer, A., *Inside the Third Reich*, p. 314 – 320. Imperial War Museum Audio Archive, Lambeth, London, Catalogue Reference 10429, Reel 3.

191 See file The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference 22666/A for Leif Tronstad's posthumous commendation for these activities.

This is reflected in the bibliography, with a great deal more works published which are dedicated to *Gunnernside* rather than *Freshman*. It has only been since the release of the relevant archives that *Freshman's* narrative has begun to emerge.

At the end of the Second World War some information began to emerge surrounding *Freshman*, particularly in Norway where the bodies of the men of *Freshman* were exhumed from their unmarked graves and reburied with full military honours in May 1945. Five bodies from the glider which crashed at Fyljesdal were buried at the Commonwealth War Graves plot at Vestre Gravlund near Oslo.¹⁹² The bodies of seventeen men onboard the glider which crashed near Helleland were buried at Eiganes churchyard in Stavanger and the crew of its towing Halifax bomber at Helleland.¹⁹³

With the culture of secrecy surrounding the SOE's activities and their records, *Freshman* remained largely invisible to the public until 1965 when a Hollywood film, *The Heroes of Telemark*, brought it to life (albeit still as a brief introduction to *Gunnernside*). While accurate to a point, being pre-Waldegrave, the film's writers did not have the benefit of many records and other sources since released, and – possibly understandably in the circumstances – focussed on portraying positive images of Allied forces' efforts, rather than concerning itself with historical accuracy.

Gradually, in the years after the end of the Second World War before 1992, as more information began to emerge on what had happened during the war (including snippets of information around *Freshman*) some historians and contemporaries (especially within MI6) began to suggest that the SOE and COHQ were amateurs who made too many mistakes – even when considering the pioneering nature of the tasks set for them.¹⁹⁴ Before Waldegrave, these arguments were difficult to substantiate or refute as there were few significant sources available.

It is only since the Waldegrave Initiative and the consequent bringing together of the SOE archive, albeit incomplete, that any systematic analysis of *Freshman* has been possible. However, it has attracted relatively little attention compared to other

¹⁹² Mears, R., *The Real Heroes of Telemark*, p. 86.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 86 & 91.

operations – often treated as part of a wider story, such as *Gunnerville*, rather than warranting a study in its own right.

Whilst there has never been any doubt that *Freshman* did not achieve its objective, a key impact of the Waldegrave Initiative has been to enable researchers to look much more closely than previously at what factors may have influenced the outcomes. Through this, it is possible to impact and further the historiography, in line with this thesis' criteria as outlined in the 'Methodology' chapter, as demonstrated in the analysis above. However, this does not necessarily mean that a clear and authoritative account results; the variety of sources, inconsistencies in accounts, and other factors highlighted in this thesis all combine to cast doubt over what actually happened and it is unlikely this uncertainty will ever be resolved. One interesting observation is the lack of self criticism within the accounts of contemporaries responsible for the planning of *Freshman*, along with a very limited amount of investigative secondary literature, perhaps suggesting a lack of appetite to examine such failures too closely – in so doing shattering mythologies around a brave, fearless, and relatively effective secret military force.

The analysis completed for this thesis has demonstrated clearly a range of impacts as a result of the release of records under the Waldegrave Initiative on the historiography of *Freshman*. This in the form of a number of examples where this research has identified relevant records and other sources of information which further challenge the established historical representation. This is important, since it raises the question of to what degree researchers either have the resources or perhaps the will to revisit and revise areas of history which are seen, for whatever reason, as sensitive. In terms of answering the wider research question around the potential impact of such transparency initiatives, it also provides a number of useful insights and key conclusions which can be drawn in relation to the impact of these records on the historiography of *Freshman*:

194 For examples see O'Sullivan, D., *Dealing with the Devil: Anglo-Soviet Intelligence Cooperation During the Second World War*, p. 51; Foot, M.R.D., *SOE in France: An Account of the Work of the British SOE in France 1940-1944*, p. 56; Crowdy, T., *SOE Agent: Churchill's Secret Warrior's*, p. 9; or de Vomécourt, P., *An Army of Amateurs*.

1. Firstly, using *Freshman* as a case study, this thesis has shown how the availability of new material can impact the pre-existing historiography. It is therefore not unreasonable to assume that this impact would be reflected more widely across the historiography of the SOE if a similar study were to be made of other activities. It is an interesting question to consider, whether the extent of the impact would be so great on SOE activities whose records were perhaps more accessible pre-Waldegrave. With *Freshman* being viewed as a “failure”, was there more of a “cover up” of sensitive information relating to it before pre-Waldegrave than other more, apparently, successful operations? This is an interesting area which further studies could pursue.
2. Although the SOE archive provides a rich vein of new information post-Waldegrave, the fact that only around 13% of the original archive is still in existence must be considered when assessing potential impact on the overall historiography. As with all archives of such clandestine organisations, it is almost impossible to know what is missing, and therefore what potential new insights could arise. This is perhaps even more so in this case where SOE operations took place in another theatre of war, such as *Freshman*. Whilst it can be said that there is clearly an impact on the historiography, the absolute extent of the impact is much more difficult to assess since records are far from complete.
3. The analysis carried out for this thesis highlights some specific issues in the execution of *Freshman* where the released information can be seen to highlight flaws in planning and security. However, within the scope of this work, it is impossible to evaluate whether this was a “one-off” instance or a more systematic failure of attitudes to these issues within COHQ. Again, this provides perhaps an interesting area for future study.

More generally what this analysis has shown is that the disclosure of records and archives into the public domain such as under the Waldegrave Initiative can certainly have impacts on the historiography of an organisation such as the SOE, and subsequently change perceptions for historians and those who engage with

appropriate research, it is less clear what “appetite for change” there would be more widely in terms of altering public perceptions of the SOE. The SOE is known as a heroic organisation that engaged the enemy behind their lines with bravery and achieved, in many cases, spectacular results – particularly in Norway where the Norwegian Resistance was largely training and equipped via. the SOE. The popular history genre – with its relative lack of detail around sources – continues to be dominant in the public consciousness, thus providing a challenge for those historians, archivists, and even politicians who see greater transparency as a *de facto* change for good.

Summary

The research undertaken in the preparation of this thesis has shown, using *Freshman* as an example, that the release of previously classified archives (such as those released under the Waldegrave Initiative) can have a range of impacts on the pre-existing historiography and historical representation.

This research has provided a range of insights about *Freshman* itself, showing how the historiography changed post-Waldegrave. It has also been able to identify new information which suggests that the accepted historiography of certain aspects of the operation, including reasons behind the gliders and bomber crashing as well as what happened to the Royal Engineers following the crashes, would benefit from further review. Since such research and review of existing historiography is only possible due to the release of archives under Waldegrave, it is clear therefore that this has already impacted the historiography of *Freshman*, and by implication the wider historiography of the SOE.

At the same time, it is important to continue to bear in mind the extent to which records released under the Waldegrave Initiative can potentially impact the historiography and our full understanding, when only around 13% remain and a significant proportion of the records surrounding *Freshman* and the Gunnerside objective have been either lost, destroyed, deposited in other places, or retained by other institutions. In addition, the records which remain are often incomplete or have been artificially compiled for public view – as demonstrated by how the records of the SOE archive were compiled and put together. The analysis undertaken by this thesis shows that, even when this is the case, the remaining records can have a number of possible impacts on the pre-existing historiography. Examples highlighted have included:

- The ability to substantiate the pre-Waldegrave historiography, or refute it, on factors which led to *Freshman's* failure. These factors are not yet fully supported in the existing historiography. The discovery by this thesis of evidence in the archive supporting Mark Seaman's views on the issues surrounding the planning of *Freshman* is a good example.
- Providing evidence for the re-examination of the existing historiography, as demonstrated in the analysis of the gliders and bomber which crashed – including the unearthing of possible evidence that the Halifax bomber which crashed had been piloted by an RAAF pilot unfamiliar with this type of aircraft and towing gliders.
- Uncovering new information about the *Freshman* narrative, such as the commanding officers in charge of planning the operation were likely aware of the “Führer's Commando Order” (which led to the Royal Engineers summary executions) and that members of both *Grouse* and *Gunnerside* wore Norwegian battle dress with Norwegian flags and insignia attached – meaning if they were captured there would likely be reprisals against suspected Norwegian Resistance sympathisers.

As well as identifying areas where the release of archives and records has the potential to impact the existing historiography, this thesis has also highlighted a variety of issues that this new material can present. This includes:

- The potential for the release of records to result in a multiplicity of conflicting accounts of events, challenging the accepted historiography, but also making it difficult to determine, with any accuracy, a precise narrative.
- The lack of impact that such records can have on various pre-existing narratives, even those written post-Waldegrave. It is questioned whether this is perhaps a particular issue with regard to the history of secret military operations, where the popular history genre has created a solid narrative of “derring-do” in the public consciousness and challenges to this are unwelcome. Perhaps there is no appetite to discredit “heroes” – rather show they died bravely rather than suggest these deaths could have been prevented through better planning or otherwise.

Even taking into account of the lack of completeness of the SOE archive and the way in which it was 'artificially constructed', this thesis has been able to show that the availability of new records can significantly impact our understanding of events. In addition, the way in which the archives have been constructed, with a range of records being found in a single catalogue item and the files put together as a sort of chronological "official history", can still offer new insights. At the same time, it would be naïve to suggest that this incompleteness is not a challenge. It means that, although examinations of the historiography and the SOE records held in the National Archive can provide significant advances in our understanding, it is impossible to be certain of actual events, causes, and issues.

The quality of archives is crucial. This work has shown that the SOE archive is significant in size, with a wide range of records available ranging from official communiqués, through reconnaissance photographs and maps, even newspaper cuttings. This, along with the arrangement of the records into a kind of official history, can actually help the researcher uncover unexpected links as has been illustrated above. Triangulation is an important way of verifying sources and ensuring the quality of information, and its use has been vital to this research. At the same time, its lack of completeness or any indexing is a challenge, with no way of assessing what is missing or determining how gaps could be filled.

A wider question emanating from this research is to what extent *Freshman* can be used as a case study to shed light on the impact of the Waldegrave Initiative on the wider historiography of the SOE. As aforementioned, Professor Hennessey believed the Waldegrave Initiative to have been "hugely successful... which has led to hundreds of thousands of files being released, creating a new currency for historians".¹⁹⁵ Certainly, this thesis demonstrates how the wealth of resources available for public review is able to provide new insights, particularly for a clandestine organisation like the SOE, as the *Freshman* case study suggests. However, in the light of the relative incompleteness of that archive, and the degree to which those records released have been vetted, edited and, sometimes, retained, it

195 'Filling the Gaps', <http://media.nationalarchives.gov.uk/index.php/filling-the-gaps/>.

has been difficult to justify Hennessey's further claim that archives are "frozen history" which impacts on the absolute effect they can have.

Consequently, has the release of the SOE archive under the Waldegrave Initiative provided greater openness and transparency, thus improving democracy as Hennessey and other advocates of the Initiative claim? Or was it largely a cosmetic act by the British Government, an attempt to appear more open about its past clandestine military operations? Certainly the release of archives under Waldegrave has allowed historians to "shed an alternative light" on previously under-reported or misreported events of World War II, as this thesis has demonstrated. However, it has also shown that this analysis by historians and others is far from complete for a single operation like *Freshman*, let alone the whole of the SOE historiography. This may be for reasons of resource – detailed studies such as this are time-consuming and difficult even with much easier access to sources. However, it is also unclear from this analysis to what degree this systematic review of our understanding of events is an area of concern to historians and those who write about the SOE's activities, or even the general public.

This raises a range of interesting questions for further studies in this area, such as the barriers to the use of records released under transparency initiatives such as Waldegrave, and the motivation of historians and other researchers in choosing and utilising these sources. However, these issues are beyond the scope of this work and simply mentioned here.

In conclusion, through analysis of sources, a review of the existing historiography, and original research, this thesis has demonstrated that the potential of the records released under the Waldegrave Initiative to impact the existing historiography of the SOE is significant, even though – in reality – this has not always been translated into the revision of existing works. This is an important addition to the body of knowledge around use of archive materials released under transparency initiatives, as well as our understanding of *Freshman* and the SOE historiography.

Appendices

Figure 1: Pictorial description of the author's "triangulation" of research material against the subject matter.

Figure 2: Sketch of generators in Rjukan Power Plant by Leif Tronstad (The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 141).

Figure 3: Sketch of the immediate vicinity identifying civilian buildings by Leif Tronstad (The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 202).

Figure 4: Supplementary information to assist the planning of *Freshman* submitted by Leif Tronstad (The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 203).

Figure 5: Detailed sketch of the NHEP including labels for buildings by Leif Tronstad (The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 17).

Figure 6: Contemporary Norwegian newspaper article (The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/185, p. 55).

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Figure 9: Cut outs from a newspaper's TV listings showing a program on the Gunnernside narrative (The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/186, p. 3).

Figure 10: Review of TV program entitled 'The Saboteurs of Telemark' (The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/186, p. 5).

Figure 11: Part 1 of newspaper article entitled 'the first atomic war' (The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/186, p. 6).

Figure 12: Part 2 of newspaper article entitled 'the first atomic war' (The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/186, p. 7).

Figure 13: Vemork as seen from the plateau to the north of the Vestfjord Valley (Norsk Industriarbeidermuseum, Vemork, negative No. UF-129).

Figure 1: Pictorial description of the author's "triangulation" of research material against the subject matter.

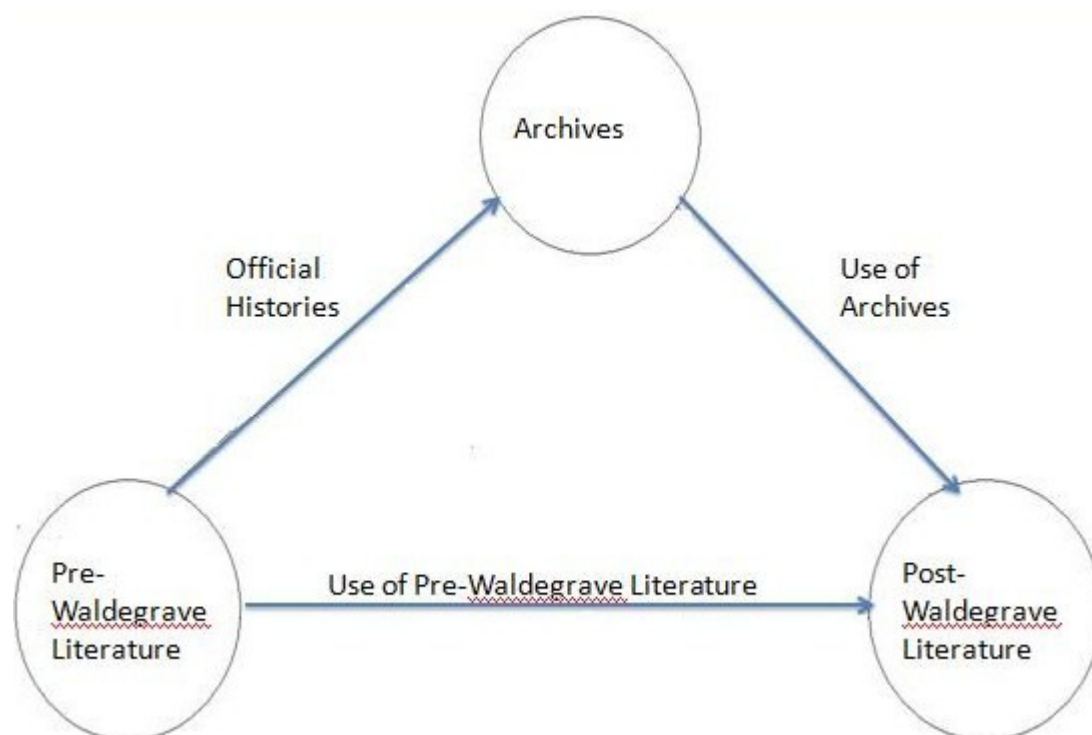
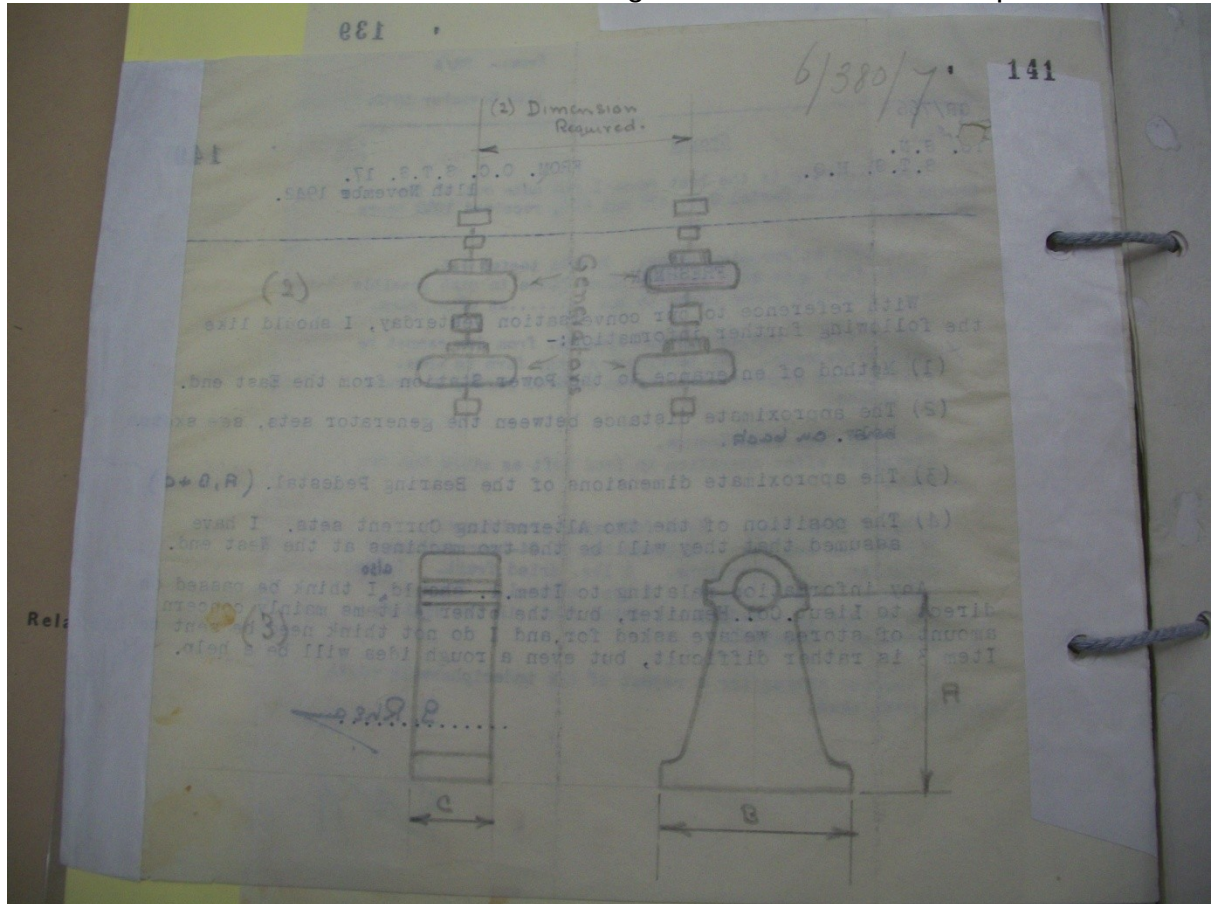


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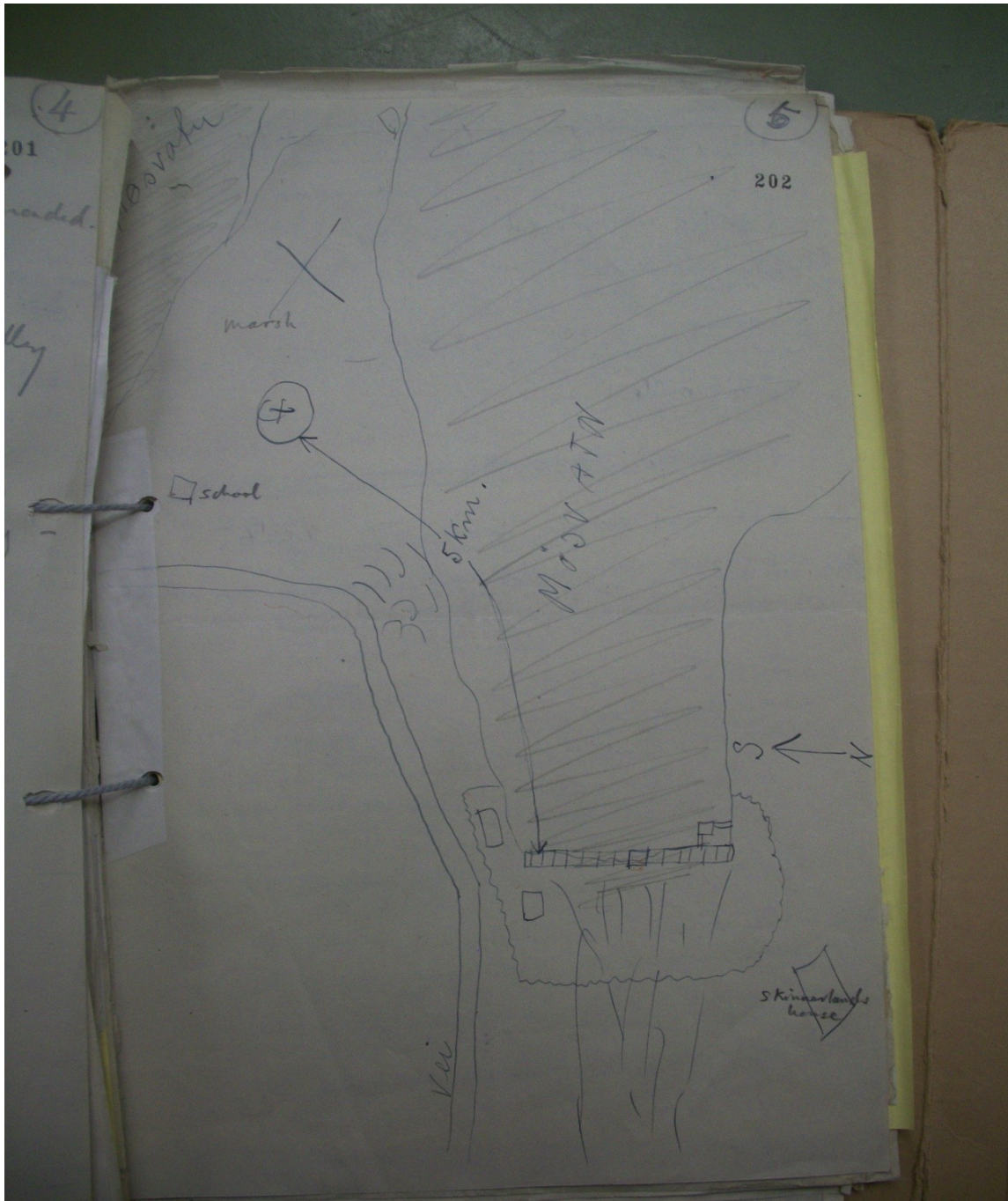
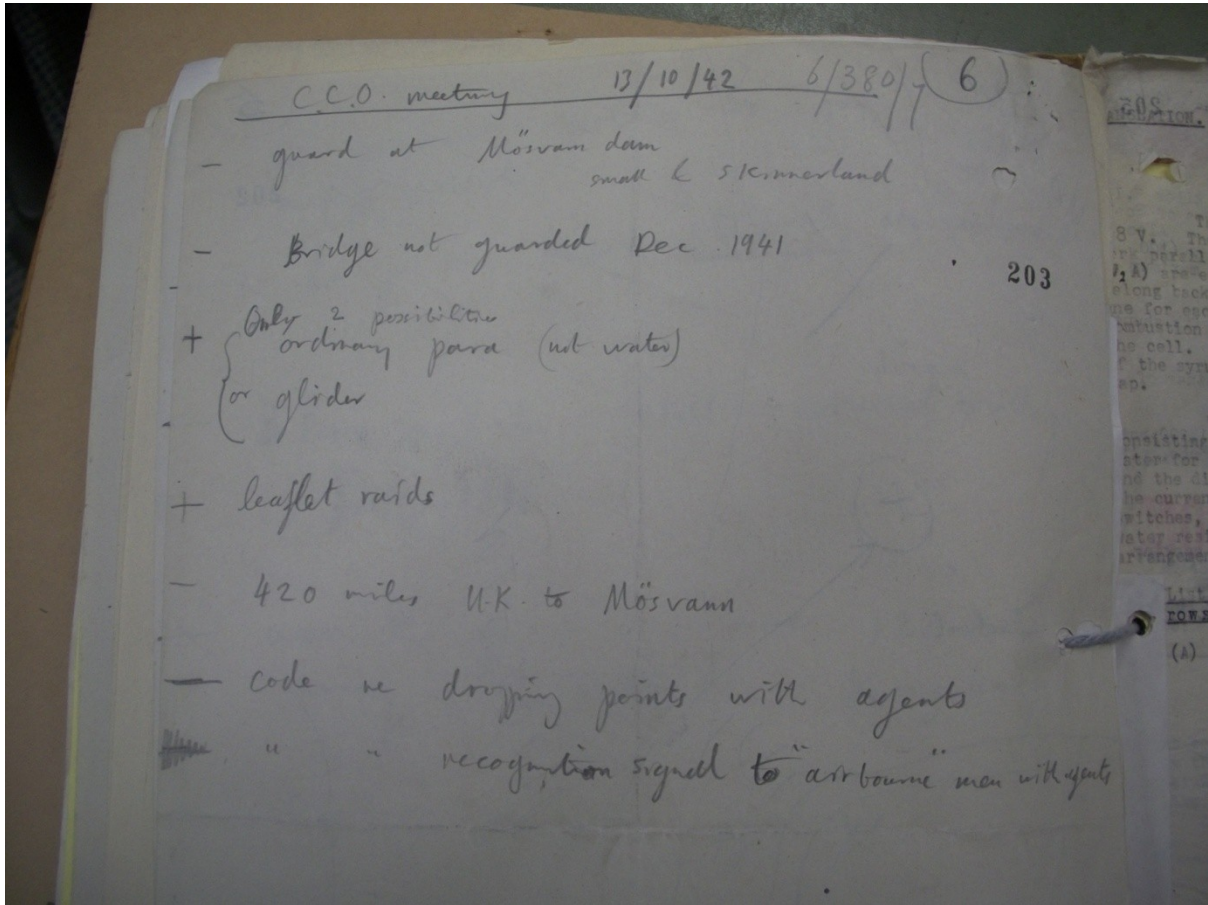


Fig 3: Sketch of the immediate vicinity identifying civilian buildings by Leif Tronstad.

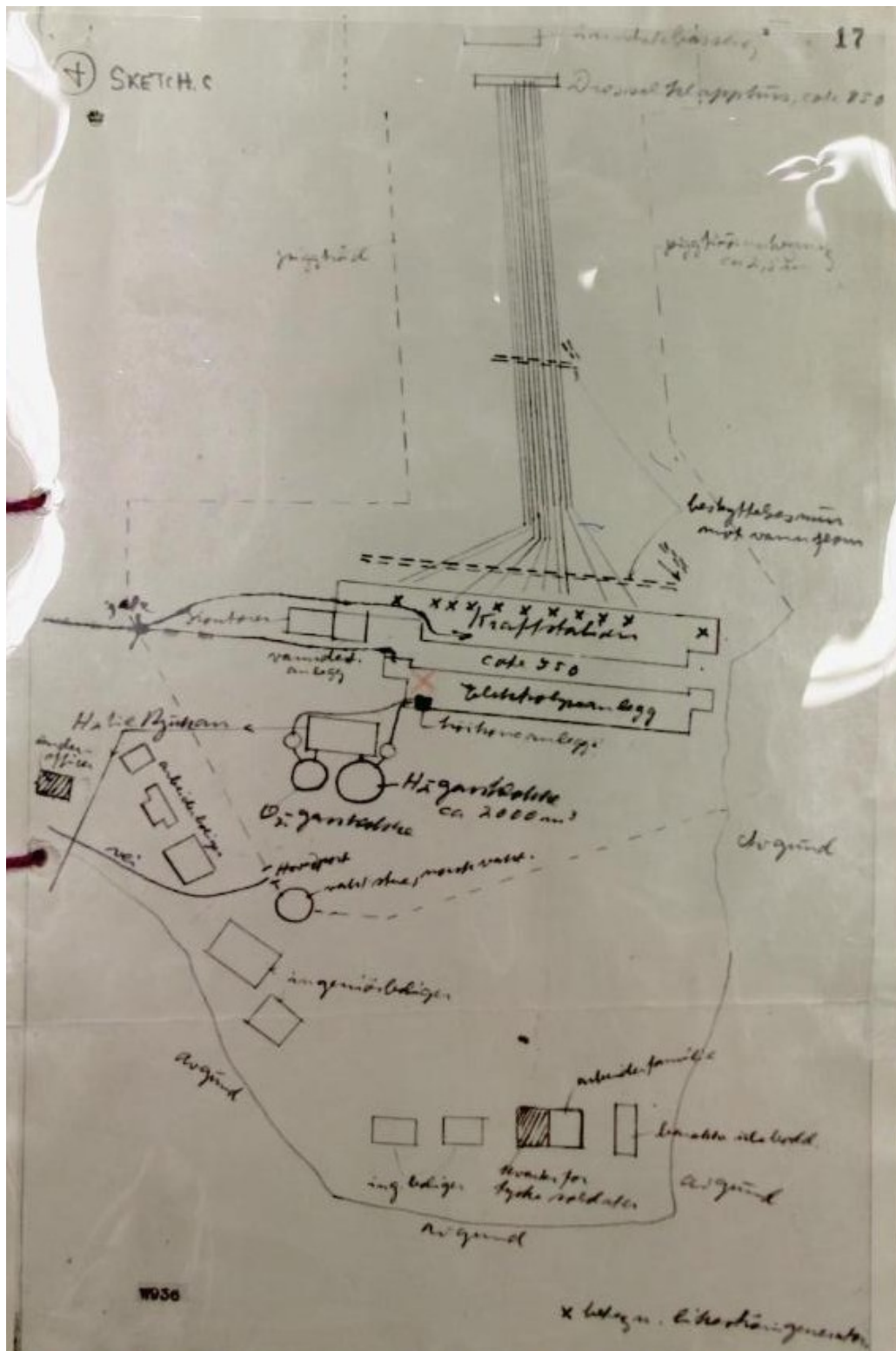
The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/184, p. 202.

Figure 4: Supplementary information to assist the planning of *Freshman* submitted by Leif Tronstad.



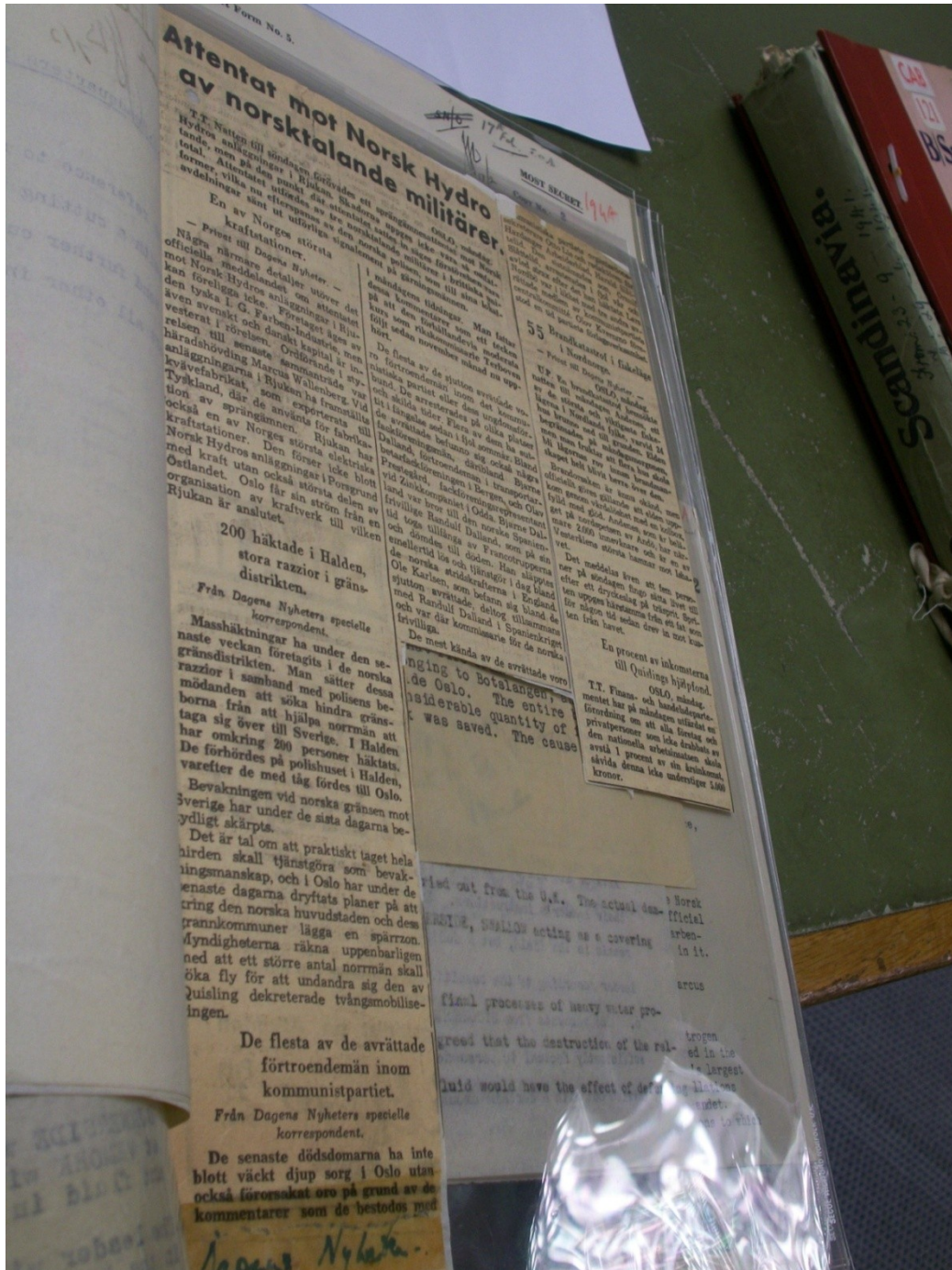
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Figure 5: Detailed sketch of the NHEP including labels for buildings by Leif Tronstad.



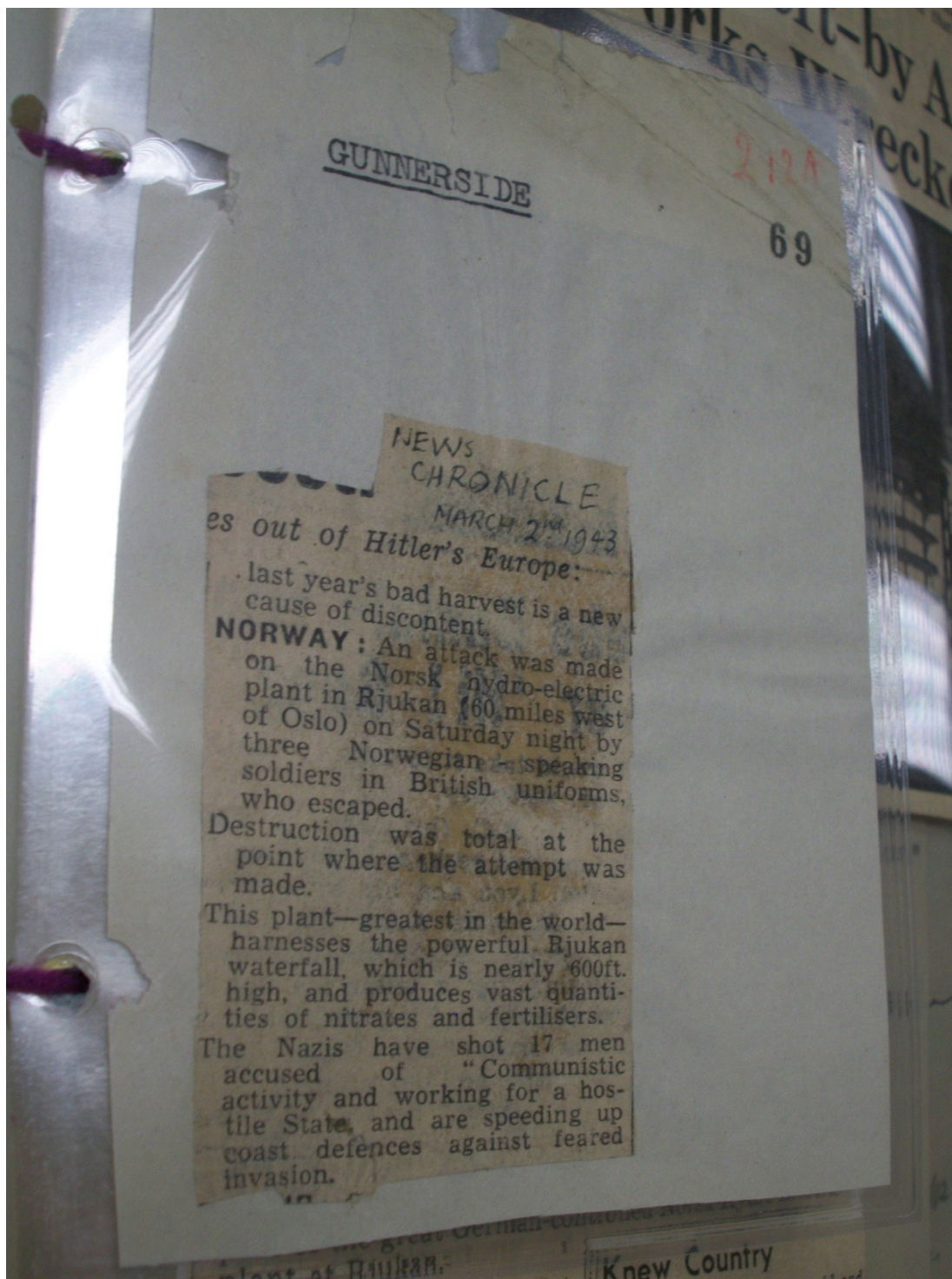
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Figure 6: Contemporary Norwegian newspaper article.



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Figure 9: Cut outs from a newspaper's TV listings showing a television programme on the Gunnerside narrative. Main image portrays the aftermath of a bombing raid by the USAAF against the NHEP, November 1943.

The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/186, p. 3

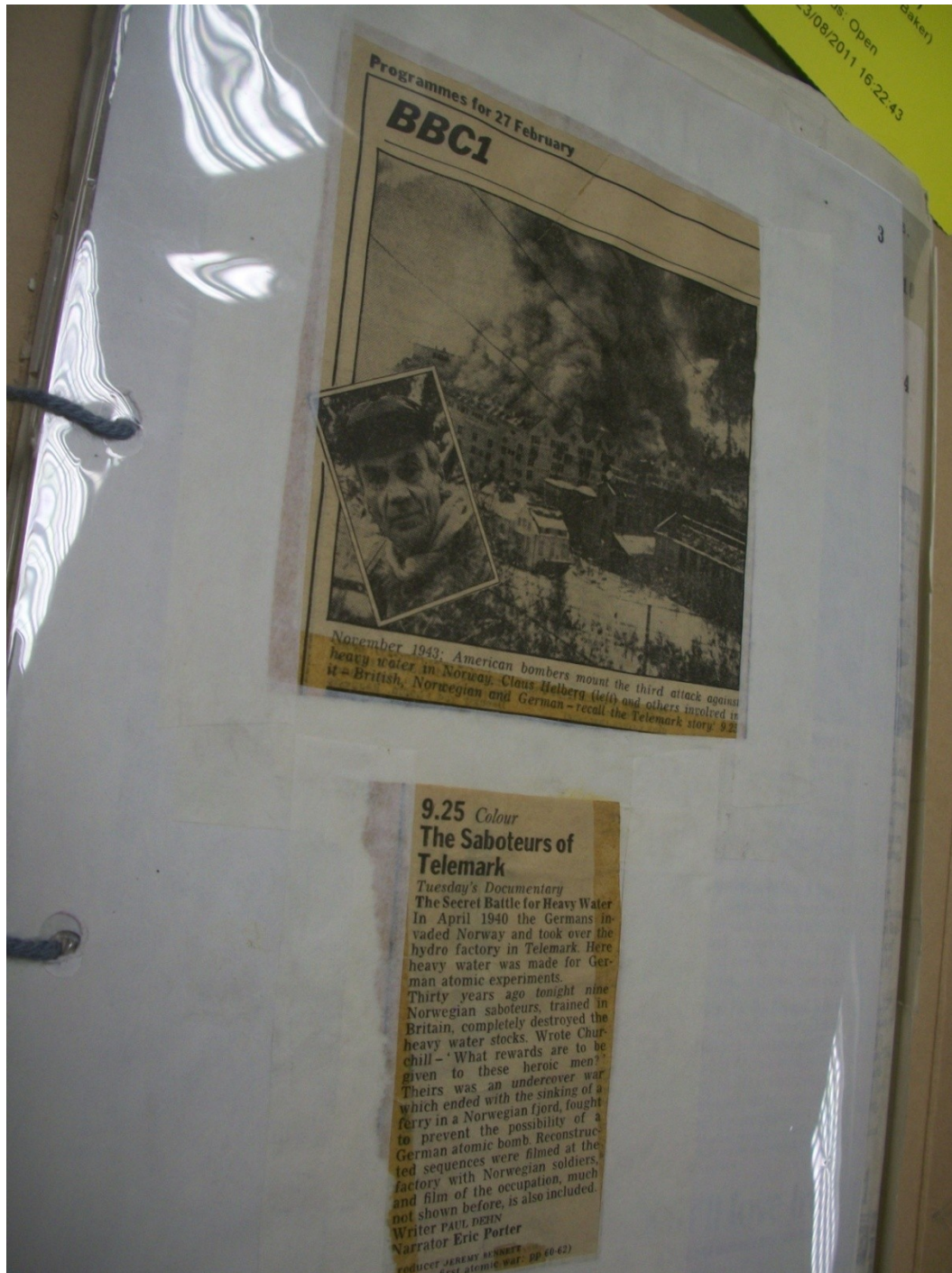
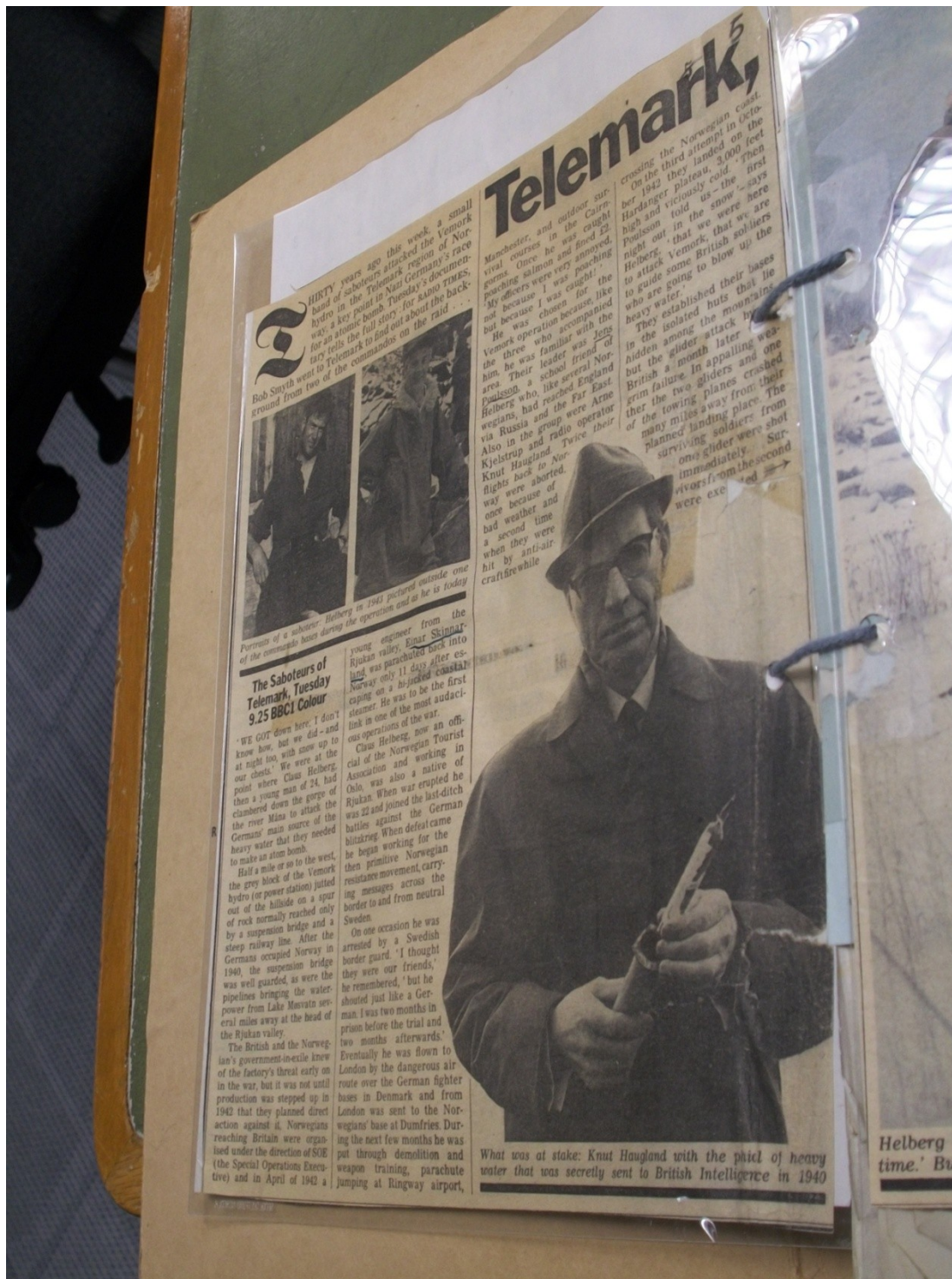


Figure 10: Review of TV programme entitled 'The Saboteurs of Telemark'.



The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/186, p. 5

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Figure 12: Part 2 of newspaper article entitled 'the first atomic war'.



The National Archives, Kew, London, Catalogue Reference HS 2/186, p. 7.

Figure 13: Vemork as seen from the plateau to the north of the Vestfjord Valley.



Norsk Industriarbeidermuseum, Vemork, negative No. UF-129.

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