

Special Feature

Bletchley Girl and Enigma: A Citation

Miss Pauline Elliott, musician and Latin scholar, has been given a medal and citation by Gordon Brown for her work at Bletchley Park during the Second World War - but she claims it is all a mistake! Her sister was an accomplished mathematician, and was actively recruited to work at Bletchley, however, her sister had just had a baby, and her husband was away, so Pauline went to Bletchley in her sister's place!

Pauline says she was good at languages, and had excellent French and German, so those were useful tools for her work with Naval Intelligence and she was able to help with the wording of intercepted messages. However, she modestly claims she was not the mathematical brain they really wanted to help Alan Turing break the German Enigma code with his Bombe machine.

A Very Proper Gentleman

She characterises Turing, as a 'very proper gentleman', with impeccable manners and grooming who did not deserve the treatment he received later for his homosexual leanings. "I was ignorant of homosexuality then, and just thought he was strange and very brilliant. He intimidated me conversationally, because he didn't seem to want to talk about mundane things."

Life at Bletchley was entertaining; she



could sing madrigals, which she enjoyed and played the Sorceress in a production of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*. Sometimes she went on her bike to Milton Keynes. Pauline became friendly with the brilliant mathematicians, Hugh Alexander and

Shaun Wylie.

Code Broken but Lives Still Lost

Alexander was Turing's successor as head of Hut 8; Pauline adds that "only Turing made a bigger contribution to the success of Hut 8 than Wylie." Pauline remained friendly with Hugh Alexander after the war, and looked after him to his dying day. She and her sister were both students at the Dragon School where Shaun Wylie spotted Pauline's sister's mathematical talents.

One of the high points in Pauline's years at Bletchley was the time when Winston Churchill, accompanied by several Admirals, came to Bletchley specifically to apologise to the people working there for the fact that although the code had been broken, British ships were still being sunk. Pauline says the women working there were very angry that innocent men's lives were not being saved as a result of their work. Churchill explained in 1941 that it was still necessary to keep the Germans from knowing their code was broken.

Peggy Walmsley