

[Moira Beaty, née Munro](#)

Bletchley Park 1942 – 1945. Civilian in ISK. Mrs Beaty's memoir was kindly provided by her family.

Before Bletchley Park

I left Hutchesons' Girls' Grammar School in June 1939, a few days after my seventeenth birthday and two months before the outbreak of war, with Higher Leaving Certificates in English, French, Art and Business Studies. The latter, which turned out to be one of great use in the future, was a recent addition to the school syllabus and was an alternative to Science or Mathematics which were deemed essential parts of a balanced education. It included shorthand and typing.

Despite gentle attempts to persuade me that my life could best be fulfilled by way of a classics course at university, I persisted in my intention of going to art school and in September 1939, with a scholarship organised by the Art Inspector who had judged our Higher Art work, I began a four year Diploma Course in Drawing and Painting at Glasgow School of Art, under Hugh Adam Crawford.

At the end of the first year, in June 1940, it was thought that the Art School might be taken over for war use so I found various jobs as a shorthand typist, filling in the time until I was either called up or accepted as a volunteer with the WRNS who were not at that time accepting new recruits. This was despite the fact that the Art School did reopen for normal use rather late in the new term, with a hugely reduced number of students.

My widowed mother was Secretary of the Crossmyloof Ice Rink Company and I had grown up "on ice", as it were. During the early stage of the war, before the ice rink buildings were commandeered by the Army for vehicle storage and maintenance, my mother offered hospitality at the rink to any members of the Forces who were marooned in south Glasgow for any length of time. A group of French military survivors of an ill-fated landing in Norway were among such welcomed guests, as were some British Army personnel who were preparing to move to the island of Islay where they would be involved in the setting up of a new airfield. Among their officers was a Welsh teacher whose family was planning a summer holiday on the island, as near the Army camp as possible. As we had become especially friendly with this man, it was decided that our family would join his for a camping holiday. Thus it was that my mother, two

brothers and I set sail in July for a fine camping two to three weeks with the Davies family, the mother and three daughters.

Our camp was already set up for us within sand dunes near a farm, a short walk across fields from the Machrie Hotel where the RAF squadron was billeted and only a short distance from the Army encampment. From there frequently appeared, over the dunes, a friendly little Italian cook bearing gifts of meat pies and fruit tarts from the Army kitchen. He was always warmly welcomed!

The eldest of the Davies girls, Marianne, and I became firm friends. She was red-haired, green-eyed, a few years older than I and had recently completed an Honours Degree course in Modern Languages at Cardiff University. There she had been interviewed by a high-ranking naval officer who had talked about German translating work with the Foreign Office. This was the first step towards Bletchley, for either of us.

Recruitment to Bletchley Park and first impressions

My new friend, [Marianne](#), had been appointed as a linguist at Bletchley Park and she wrote to me some months later to ask if I'd like to join her. This, as I learned later, was a typical way new staff was accessed without advertising, vacancies being filled on the recommendation of someone already cleared by the security staff. An application form was sent to me from London and soon thereafter I was invited to an interview at the Foreign Office. To this I went, with my mother, enjoying our first ever visit to the capital. The meeting was with a Miss Munro, my own maiden name, who made me very welcome and said that the work I would be doing would fit in with my typing experience and that my educational qualifications were just right for the job.

Some weeks later, after I would have been properly 'screened', I received a letter of appointment to the Foreign Office as a temporary Grade 3 Clerk at a salary of 38 shillings a week plus war bonus of five shillings. On 7 March 1942, I was to board the 10 pm train at Central Station for Rugby, there to change to a train to Bletchley. From the station yard there I was to telephone a given number and await further instructions.

I arrived at Bletchley station at around 7 am on a March morning when the ground was white with frost and one's breath almost solidified. Very, very cold. I was smartly dressed, I thought, in high heeled shoes and a hat and had travelled by sleeper. This was the only time in the next four years of overnight journeys that such comfort was a possibility. The station was deserted and I made my telephone call.

"Welcome to the mad-house!" was my greeting from the uniformed young woman who collected me in a small Army vehicle. It was a very short drive and we arrived at the high open gates of Bletchley Park, with a guards' hut just inside and two armed men blocking the entrance. The driver produced some kind of docket and we were waved through the gate, to arrive on a broad, curving driveway at the front door of Bletchley Park mansion. There I was met by [Peter Twinn](#), my new boss, who had taken over from [Dillwyn Knox](#) (Dilly), who was now terminally ill. Peter had worked with him on the breaking into the Abwehr Enigma code, a very recent success. This I discovered later, and much later, long after the war, I learned that the group I was joining was known as Intelligence Section Knox (ISK).

This very brilliant young man, who reminded me at first glance of Tyrone Power, a current film star, took me into a room where a copy of the Official Secrets Act was given to me to read and sign. Thereafter he took me out of the house into a nearby hut where I was informed that I would be temporarily billeted in a hotel in nearby Fenny Stratford at 21 shillings per week and that my weekly transport cost would be three shillings per week.

After being issued with a pass card for entry to the park, I was taken to the hut where I was to work as a typist, or a "tappist" as we called it because of the clunking noise made on pressure of a key. Although the Qwertzu keyboard on the Enigma machines was the same as that on a regular typewriter, without the shift key alternatives of capitals, punctuation marks etc., the keys were by comparison stiff and at first unwieldy. The machine was electrically operated, the decoded message emerging in five letter groups on tape from a drum at the side of the machine. The noise of several of those machines going at one time was very rousing!

Peter spoke to the day's three new arrivals, telling us that we would be decoding German messages on these machines. After an overnight journey with little sleep and the excitement of the introduction to the park, this was the final straw and I thought I'd burst if not able to confide my terror to someone outside. My mother, for example. I have to say that, having resisted this impulse in my first letter home, due entirely to having signed the OSA, I was never again even remotely tempted to tell anyone what we were doing at Bletchley Park. This continued to be so after the war and even when the Winterbotham book first came out I was still loath to add anything to it. So much for the exceptional security set-up which involved us all so personally and voluntarily in a secret of which most of us knew only the small area with

which we were involved. As far as we knew, the only tentative careless talk had been by a delirious patient in a local hospital. This was only a rumour as was that about hospital facilities being set up within the park. As with everything else, this was neither investigated nor corroborated.

Billeting

I was billeted for a few weeks, before joining Marianne in Bletchley, in a commercial hotel in Fenny Stratford, with Venetia Abel-Smith¹, a cousin of the Queen. She and I started on the same day as also did [Diana Selby-Bigge](#), daughter of an artist father and brought up in Paris next door, I seem to remember, to the American writer, Gertrude Stein. Diana disappeared after a few months and was, I guess, dropped back into France to work with the Resistance².

Venetia and I were assigned neighbouring bedrooms in a totally unheated and freezing attic. There we managed to sleep fully clothed, with all coats and other garments on top of us and with our suitcases on top of those. In this way we managed not to freeze to death on our first nights at the Fenny Stratford Hotel. Venetia showed me how to smooth small washed garments without an iron. This entailed plastering the wet articles on to wardrobe and dressing table mirrors. Eventually dried out, they could be peeled off, suitably smooth for wear!

The first week at our new billet, a short transport drive from the park, was on day shift, 9 - 4. The second week was on evening shift, 4 till midnight. On the change-over we omitted to warn the hotel folk that we would be returning home late so found the building locked up and asleep when we arrived back at 12.30 am. Luckily we discovered an unlocked window in the bar which we managed to open widely enough to allow head-first entry and thereafter set off on tiptoe to climb the many stairs to our attic retreat. Unfortunately there was a bell-rope hanging down from the top floor and this, in the dark, I grabbed and pulled, with clamorous and alarming results. The last stairs we took at great speed and were silently behind our doors before anyone in the hotel was bold enough to investigate!

¹ Not identified on the Roll of Honour.

² Note by Bletchley Park Oral History Officer: Diana Selby-Bigge worked in Government Code and Cypher School's Diplomatic Section, and probably moved out of this billet when the section returned to London from Bletchley Park in the spring of 1942.

Working conditions

We worked on shifts, day shift, as already mentioned, 9 - 4, evening shift 4 till midnight, night shift Midnight till 9. Those three shifts followed remorselessly through the years and had devastating effect on one's digestion and sleeping patterns. One's main meal in the 24 hours was in the park refectory to which, presumably, local people were willy-nilly directed to work. This large building was just outside the main gates to the park. Food was rationed and often indigestible, especially in the middle of the night. I have just read in an old diary that a visit to the local doctor (Morphy) with recurrent stomach pains led to a prescription for two shell eggs, a treat not experienced in the past six months. They were obviously hugely enjoyed, cooked in my then billet kitchen. Every now and then this same doctor prescribed half a pint of liquid milk which was a great comfort to the stomach!

We had one day off a week. Any day. There was a welfare officer in the department, recruited from a bank, and he organised meal tickets and leave. It was possible sometimes to arrange one's day off to coincide with a long change-over between shifts, coming off duty at, say, 9 am, not due to go back on duty till 9 am two days later. We were also permitted sometimes to save two days leave and those, on a long shift changeover provided one with almost a weekend. Coming off night shift, however, one might be forced to squander some of this extra time in bed or asleep on one's feet! All leave was, of course, subject to work conditions. If a Jumbo Rush was declared, all leave was cancelled. I still do not know if this intimation of crisis was general throughout the park or only applicable to our operations. We had a week's leave every three months.

I don't know the number of the hut I first worked in but we moved out of this very soon after my arrival to a building outside the park. This we reached through a back gate, across a small graveyard, to what had been a small prep School (Elmers School) and was now home to ISK (Intelligence Section Knox), and ISOS (Intelligence Section [Oliver Strachey](#)), which was dealing with hand codes. We had our own guards on the door, a fine lawn with trees at the back of the building and, I seem to remember, was better heated than the huts.

Peter Twinn and his gifted colleagues [Mavis](#), [Keith](#) and [Margaret](#), who had all been involved in Knox's discovery of the make-up and working of the Abwehr Enigma machine, were in one of the front rooms, working at this point on the daily decipherment of Abwehr traffic. One version of it was being worked on

across the hall by Helen Norman³ and her helpers. This was known as GGG traffic, between North Africa and south western Europe. The main volume of traffic was known as 'A' traffic and covered Western Europe. Eastern networks were much more difficult to intercept so decoding communications in B and C sections, as we called them, was much less successful. At this time Peter and his team would be dealing with all daily traffic except the GGG.

The machine room was at the back of the house, overlooking the garden. This was where I worked at first, with my still great friend, [Carol Beddington](#), who was head of the shift. There was a large room next door where all collection, registration and sorting took place and upstairs was the ISOS section and the linguists and intelligence people to whom our decodes were taken, the tapes cut into strips and pasted on to the backs of the encodes, with all the information as to source, destination, time of transmission, call signs etc. This was the last we ever saw of the messages and we had no way of knowing what was on the tapes. Even if one had been a German scholar, these decrypts were often corrupt and difficult to translate. It is interesting, however, to realise that a totally non-German speaker was very soon able to pick a German decode out of a mass of gibberish, on sometimes as little as three to six letters.

In those early days in the school there was great amusement and interplay among a group of rare young people. [Margot Sandeman](#), one of Scotland's leading painters of the future, and [Muriel Harborough](#), a music student of Thalben-Ball, used to attempt to terrorise one another, and the rest of us, with stories on night shift of corpses rising from the graves in the cemetery through which we all had to go to reach the park for supper. There were, of course, no outside lights of any kind and even torches had to be partially shielded.

Quite early in our months in the school I was lucky to be given the opportunity to move from the machine operation to the actual breaking of the daily 'A' codes which were increasing in volume and importance. It happened like this.

Duds

Often radio reception conditions were bad and intercepts had corrupt letters or groups of letters. In the actual messages this was a challenge to translators who had to deduce what certain groups or letters ought to have been. This was mostly a soluble problem but if the first two five-letter groups of a message

³ Possibly [\(Helen\) Jean Orme](#).

were corrupt this was a much more serious problem as those groups decoded to give the indicator setting for that individual message. If the indicator groups were missing or too corrupt even to guess, the message was undecipherable.

When the machinist came across a message where the first eight letters did not decode as a repeated four-letter group but had, say, one letter at variance (as RATARAFA), this was obviously an easy problem. The wheels could be set up 26 times, testing each letter of the alphabet on the wheel between RA and A. In each position one would tap out a few groups and examine for possible German language patterns.

If, however, two letters were corrupt, this took very much longer to investigate. If one had, say, ABCD and ABEF, one would set up an indicator of ABC and, one by one, test each alphabet letter for the fourth indicator setting. Then one would set up ABE and repeat the "clanking", as we called it, through the alphabet, re-setting the wheels after every test. If no German text appeared with this procedure, one would assume that neither of the second two letters of each given group was correct and a long, long process of 26 times 26 alternatives would be started in the hope that eventually a productive group of, say, ABRT was discovered.

If a message failed to decode, one wrote DUD on it and put it aside in a tray for future working once the main traffic of the day had been despatched as quickly as possible.

It was on one of the shifts when the Day, as we called it, had been swiftly dealt with and we were waiting for more messages to arrive, or the new Day to be broken, that I looked over the dud tray and picked out two fairly long and complete-looking messages, both with moderately corrupt indicator groups.

I went through the first one, clonking the 26 possibilities for the one uncertain letter and nothing but gibberish came out on the tape. I then had a try at the second message, working through the alphabet for the one "rogue" letter. My attention was caught here by one of the transcripts which, though still gibberish, seemed to have a pattern. I continued to tap out beyond the usual half dozen or so groups and the pattern continued. This I took, in a heap of tape, to Peter and asked if this was possibly a code within a code. This, in fact, was what it was, a hand-coded message transmitted by the Enigma machine.

The other message was similar and both were tapped out, cut up and pasted, taken upstairs at the gallop. They were, I was told later, of great importance and the following day Mr [Hatto](#) from upstairs came down to the machine room to pass on the thanks of their Lordships at the Admiralty for my fine work!

My greater pleasure over this event was when Peter said that he was moving me immediately into the GGG room, to learn how to break the daily codes. This was the beginning of my main work at Bletchley Park which was, eventually, on Abwehr 'A' traffic.

The German secret service Enigma was in some important ways different from those used by the fighting Forces. Since it was carried about in a civilian situation and often in neutral countries, it was designed to be lighter with basic differences from the battleground machines and was also believed to be much more complicated in case it fell into enemy hands. The wheels were designed with 'fiendishly complicated turnovers' and the breaking into this machine code by Dilly in 1941 was one of the great successes of Bletchley Park.

Around this time we moved out of Elmers School back into the park and into one of the new blocks which were being built to replace the wooden huts.

Back in the park

Work came in spasms. The new day's intercepts, brought by despatch riders from receiving stations, were delivered round the clock. The volume of Abwehr traffic in Western Europe was the heaviest and this was my preoccupation: 'A' traffic. The lighter GGG network, between North Africa and western Europe, was consistently intercepted too. The 'A' codes were broken almost every day for the rest of the war as, I believe, were the GGG. The other networks, further away in south-eastern and eastern Europe, were difficult, often impossible, to intercept so the breaking of those codes, in sections B, C and D was inconsistent. All sections had daily changes in machine settings, all were different. All "broken" traffic went through the same machine room and all were passed from there to Professor [Page's](#) section for translation and analysis

The codes changed in the early morning, the first messages arriving around the night shift's breakfast time. The flow of traffic increased as the day went on. It was always hoped that it would be broken by the Day shift but very often the Evening shift would arrive at 4 to find torn-up sheets of frustrated effort and the traffic level high. And if that shift too was unsuccessful, the problem

passed on to the Night shift. There were rare occasions when the code was not broken within the 24 hours but would be taken up by the Day shift, alongside the new Day, and broken then. The shout of triumph, "Eureka" it sometimes was, never ceased to thrill, however tired one might be.

We worked on endless sheets of squared paper with texts and cribs, pored over with reference to rods, charts, "click" books, wheel tracks, working aids we had helped to put together from the models passed on to us. Looking for double coupling relationships which might indicate multiple wheel turnovers. Perhaps the fact that a few visual artists found themselves among mathematicians and chess players, as I did, was because one was looking for patterns, which were in layers of letters and numbers, soon far removed from the original text. It was not easy to explain in words what one was doing as, for instance, I once described my preoccupation as "doing a staggered add with a thin egg on top!"

At one point we were given a very colourful, hand-operated machine on which we could check our hypotheses. This was the only mechanical aid available to our traffic.

My shift colleagues were [Geoffrey Charlesworth](#), mathematics graduate from Cambridge, [Harry Golombek](#), one of the British chess team, a writer and journalist. There was also [Gerald Godley](#), a senior executive from one of the London banks. All were music lovers, as many mathematicians seemed to be and Gerald was an amateur painter. We all became good friends and on the odd occasion when there was nothing better to do we played bridge. Harry, who was a bridge champion, was a very patient and good-humoured tutor as far as I was concerned.

In our very large room there was our big table and all our accoutrements in shelves, cupboards, small tables, at one end. At the far end was the table for Helen Norman and her GGG shift, with all their work requirements to hand. In the centre of the room were the 'girls', two or three at a time, who collected, registered, sorted and dispatched the two lots of traffic. They also made endless coffee for all of us in a small kitchen across the corridor. It was made from bottled coffee essence, powdered milk and saccharine. It was disgusting but we drank gallons of it. Most of those young women would have been debutantes in times of peace, "coming out" at the Queen Charlotte Ball. They were great characters and very cheerful and helpful.

Off-duty

There was much to do if one was living locally, near the park. For my first year I had been billeted in Bletchley with my Welsh friend, sharing a bedroom where we never met, being on different shifts. Our very kind landlady allowed us the use of her front sitting room and the freedom of her kitchen where we put together the snacks which supplemented our main meals at the park.

Later on I spent some months in the very comfortable Old Manor in Wavendon which, in those days, was well out in the country. There I had a big, warm and comfortable bedroom and shared wonderful meals with the family and some Army officers who were also billeted there. I remember the home-made cherry brandy matured in the cellar, the garden and fine walks. I also remember waiting for what seemed hours on empty country roads, in the pitch dark of winter, in wind rain or snow, for transport to night shift.

A new Women's hostel had just been built at this time, just outside the park and I applied for a place here. One had to have a medical certificate to back up one's application and this Dr Morphy supplied. After this had been corroborated by an Army medical officer within the park, I was accepted.

Life in the hostel was a wonderful change, with laundry and bathing facilities, tiny but comfortable bedrooms and a large lounge where one shared Times and Telegraph crosswords, a widespread indulgence among Bletchley Park people. And one slept in quiet, darkened comfort, whatever the hour of day or night.

We spent many off-duty evenings in one of the large rooms of the house, listening to broadcast concerts or to gramophone records. There, too, we had a weekly art club meeting, drawing from a model (dressed) and making sketches for set composition subjects. There were many art students and professional artists at the park, including the Director of the Courtauld Institute⁴. As few of us had any space or opportunity to pursue our own work, this class was the source of much pleasure. A large assembly hall had been built for us by this time, outside the park, and there we set up exhibitions of our work which were enthusiastically attended.

With an Irish sculptor from another section, I began to work with clay which he dug out of local clay pits. We made small sculptures which he took to a nearby brick kiln to be fired, sometimes with explosive results when the clay

⁴ Professor [Thomas Boase](#)

contained impurities. I worked sometimes in the park, in an empty room in the block which Peter invited me to use, and once I remember working on a portrait head in a freezing garage, wrapped in scarves and my hands stiff. I may say that the model didn't stay for long!

There were many theatre people on the staff and in our assembly hall plays, reviews and concerts were produced. I painted sets for some of them. There were also weekly dances there and when the Americans set up camps reasonably near us, female staff were regularly invited to dances at their headquarters. This was very popular among the young women in the hostel. The food and drink, including the coffee, were wonderful after so much austerity and to dance to the music of Glenn Miller's band was a heady joy.

We made many good friends among the Americans, some of whom came to work at the park, and I corresponded with a few for some time after the war. Their arrival at a very dreary time in Britain was of great cheer to a large number of young British women though the young male population was not always so pleased!

London was only 40 miles away, with a good train service. There were wonderful daily lunch-time concerts at the National Gallery with Myra Hess a regular performer. Galleries had, of course, been cleared of their art collections for the duration, because of the bombing, but on a visit to the Courtauld with my Director friend I was able to enjoy the decorative paintings on doors and furniture there by Vanessa Bell, Duncan Grant and others.

During the earlier, happier, days I would go to Cambridge with a very special friend, by train. We sometimes stayed overnight, I at the then women's college as the guest of the daughter of a member of the Czech government-in-exile. The number of students in Cambridge was hugely reduced but there seemed still to be many around, some of them escapees from occupied Europe. I met many émigrés from Russia, including the Director of Balkan Studies who was our hostess. A beautiful, I seem to remember, Russian Prince introduced me to the wonders of Russian religious choral music and I ate my first Russian meal, including borscht.

I remember especially one wonderful summer day when a group of us, in several boats, picnicked on the Cam, with Handel's Water Music played on a wind-up gramophone in one of the boats as we punted along.

Such times, such days, were island gems imprinted forever on the memory. Although the times were grim, one lived each day as if it might be the last.

Many of us had lost friends in action. My first boyfriend, from the year before the war, was killed in the RAF. Both my brothers were on active service, one in the Merchant Navy, the other in the Fleet Air Arm. My present joyous relationship

at this time was about to be curtailed overnight due to undeniable duty and perspectives and I came within inches of ending my own life, in consequence. But one lived from day to day, one's mind blanked out about tomorrow. And at Bletchley Park, owing to the urgent day to day challenges, this was perhaps easier for us than for many others.

In retrospect, it is interesting to remember the pure happiness one sometimes experienced during these strange times. Perhaps because one was young only the minute really mattered. There was no future except as it related to the defeat of the enemy. We knew very little of what was happening in the death camps in Europe although, in retrospect, I recalled that my sculptor friend was one of the few members of his group who did not have break-downs in health in the final days of the war. I learned later that they had been working on the traffic of the German railroads so would have been up to date with the truck loads of Jews and others for the gas chambers. About this, as I say, we knew little but sometimes, walking through the quiet parkland in the middle of the night, on one's way to one's 2 - 3 am supper, one would feel a wave of such pain coming across that huge sky, that one stopped in one's tracks. At the time I assumed that this was a reaction to the earlier roar of bombers on their way south to the Channel. Who knows?

At other times, on days off, one went with female friends to Bedford. There one could look in the shops for any essential articles of clothing for which one had the coupons or the money. I bought my first uplift brassiere in Bedford and crossed my arms across my chest for days in embarrassment!

In the clothing area, it's of interest to recall, women in the war years wore wool, silk or rayon stockings, all being cast aside when the Yanks began to distribute nylons! In winter one would wear the thickest wool one could find but for most of the year one merely painted one's legs to look clad, drawing seam marks up the back. If trousers had been introduced to the civilian female wardrobe before the war, life would have been transformed for women but it was to be many years before this most liberating garment appeared in the shops.

It is difficult to tell what people thought of what we were doing at Bletchley Park. In those days most people were so involved in their own wartime situations, in

the Forces, factories, the Land Army or the mines, left alone at home to cope with young or old families, businesses, property, the day to day commerce and food production, that there was not much time and energy left to question other people's occupations unless they coincided with one's own. There was one possible exception in the case of the fit young man who seemed to be in a safe, comfortable job. Although I never came across examples of this, I believe some of the young men at Bletchley Park were criticised as "shirkers". This must have been a painful experience, with no possibility of redress.

Personally over the years I assumed that people thought our work was probably to do with clerical organisational work, vaguely related to the work of the Foreign Office. My late husband, a very shrewd man, had no idea what I had been doing until Winterbotham's book came out. I don't know that there was much curiosity about it either, which must be the final proof of Bletchley's amazing security achievement.

Having had the impression that people during the war had little curiosity about one another's occupations beyond where they coincided or crossed, I recall the tremendous camaraderie and lack of barriers between people during the war. Travelling back and forward to Scotland on three-monthly week's leave, always overnight both ways to maximise the time at home, I found the trains always packed with service men and women of all ages, ranks, even nationalities. Throughout the journeys we shared cigarettes, chocolate and shoulders on which to sleep. There were journeys when one had to spend the night on one's suitcase in the corridor and I particularly remember one journey north just before Hogmanay.

The train had filled at Euston and by the time it reached Rugby, the only possible space left was in a guard's van, this already packed with cheerful men around a high island of luggage. There I was deposited, more or less over the heads of the crowd, by a large, concerned, Canadian Army captain. For the rest of the night I was able to resist all offers of drink or closer integration! I remember that the desire to spend a penny did not thankfully complicate the night but this natural frustration was frequently a problem for everyone on these long-distance trains, especially if there were no corridors.

The very kind Canadian, a far-from-home family man, escorted me from the train in Glasgow and joined my family for Hogmanay and the New Year, enjoying it hugely. I don't think we ever knew his full name.

The end of the war

We knew that the German war was over the day before it was announced, on 7 May 1945. All traffic had stopped and there was, at last, absolutely no work for us to do. I cannot remember any high spirits or joy. There was just nothingness. That night I went to bed in the hostel and cried myself to sleep. In a strange, morbid, kind of way, I wished that I would not wake to another day. I don't know how widespread this lack of joy was. Perhaps one was too tired by this time to be able even to contemplate a new beginning. The war with Japan was continuing and I suppose thankfulness over partial peace was generally limited. Four months later, when that war ended, there was a tangible gladness and a sense of achievement, of a turning point, of a fresh start. Before that we were seeing in newsreels the take-over of Belsen, the opening up of the whole, endless-seeming horror of Nazi occupied Europe, hearing the assessments of the millions who had died.

Instead of transferring to work on Japanese traffic, I took up the offer of a transfer to Films Division of the Ministry of Information in London, working for the then Director, father of my friend, Carol Beddington, whom I had first met on the morning arrival in 1942 and who is still a great old friend. There I remained, with an early spell in the Middlesex Hospital, for another year before returning to Scotland. There I was prescribed a period of complete rest) after which I went back to the Glasgow School of Art and a new, wonderful life began with both my brothers safely home and studying Medicine and Agriculture at Glasgow University and the Scottish Agriculture College. The ice rinks were refurbished and re-opened, soon teeming with skaters, ice hockey players and curlers, exercising, dining and wining. Slowly, slowly, a shabby, impoverished Britain, still with food rationing, began to return to peace.