

Peter Twinn

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

Peter Twinn was recruited to GCCS in January 1939 to strengthen the mathematical attack on Enigma. He worked with [Dilly Knox](#), and made the first break into an intercept of German Enigma in July 1939. He assisted [Alan Turing](#) with the development of the Bombe and then went with him to Hut 8 attacking German Enigma, until he took over the ISK team from the ailing Dilly Knox in 1942. Twinn led that team in its very successful reading of the German Abwehr Enigma until the end of the war.

Peter Frank George Twinn was born in South London on 9 January 1916. He was educated at Dulwich College and Brasenose College, Oxford, graduating with a first in mathematics in 1938. As war loomed he answered an advertisement for a mathematician, the first time that GCCS had explicitly recruited such a specialist. He joined the brilliant veteran codebreaker Dilly Knox, 31 years his senior, in London, trying to break German Enigma in early February 1939. Once Knox had learnt the internal wiring from the Poles in July 1939, after two hours work Twinn had unravelled the code-wheel wiring, and then, after a few days, he solved some June 1938 intercepts. He was the first British cryptographer to have solved a German Enigma message.

In the last months of 1939, Twinn was involved in the development of the Bombe, helping Turing in his liaison with the British Tabulating Machine Company team who manufactured Bombes. Twinn went with Turing to Hut 8 to form a small team trying to break German Naval Enigma. Little progress was made until the capture of material from German weather ships, and the U-boat U-110 in the summer of 1941, led to Hut 8 reading the Home Waters key, **Dolphin**, which they did till the end of the war.

In January 1942 Peter Twinn was asked to join the ISK Section as deputy to Dilly Knox who was now seriously ill. The two teams at Bletchley Park dealing with the signals of the German Secret Service, the Abwehr, were called 'Illicit Signals'. That for the Enigma traffic, ISK, was run by Knox. Helped by his team of nine women, by December 1941 Knox had worked out the architecture of the unusual Enigma machine the Abwehr used. Twinn took over the ISK team when Knox died in February 1943. He led the ISK team with great success as the Abwehr decrypts started to flow from the autumn of 1942, and continued at a steady level throughout most of the rest of the war. There were two 'Twinn type' Bombes installed at Bletchley Park, the first being named 'Fünf'. The impact of this Intelligence was considerable, ensuring the total elimination of the German spies in the UK, and enabling our double-cross teams to work so successfully. Just after the end of the war, in September 1945 Twinn was made responsible for the Machine Research Section of GCHQ.

In 1944 he had married [Rosamond Case](#) who worked in the Hut 6 Registration Room at Bletchley Park. They had met through the Bletchley Park music societies. After the war, Twinn went to work for the Scientific Civil Service in Whitehall. In the late 1960s he was the Director responsible for the Hovercraft development programme in the Ministry of Technology. He succeeded [Keith Batey](#), who had worked with him in ISK, as the Secretary of the Royal Aircraft Establishment. Then in the early 1980s, Twinn became the Second Secretary of the Natural Environment Research Council. This was very suited to his talents for he had developed a deep interest in that field. In his retirement he kept up his interest in entomology, in 1999 publishing with P T Harding 'A Provisional Atlas of the Longhorn Beetle'. He died on 29 October 2004, aged 88.