

Elisabeth Gertrud Dorothea 'Dorothy' Vorster, née Aue

Bletchley Park 1942 - 1945, civilian in Hut 3 and Block D(3), German Book Room. Interviewed by her daughter, Lynette van Velze, August 2019.

I was born on 10 July 1924 in Hanover, Germany. My mother was German, my father British. We lived in Hanover until I was approximately 12 years old, where my father was the British Consul. My knowledge of German stems from this period, as German was my first language.

I completed school at Berkhamsted School for Girls, where I obtained my matric with, inter alia, three languages: German, French and Latin. After school I passed a short hand and typing exam. I then became Assistant Secretary at my school, which was great, seeing former teachers and a very caring headmistress, Miss Mackenzie. Working at the school meant I could stay at home, cycling to and fro. In those days it was so safe to leave your bicycle outside, with shopping in the basket, while you enjoyed a cup of coffee.

During this time, my father was working at the Foreign Office. He organized an interview for me with a Miss [Moore](#). I can recall that this was a very lengthy interview, after which I was employed as a civilian by the Foreign Office. Shortly thereafter I received a letter or a message, stating that I had to report at Bletchley Park as soon as possible. I took the train to Bletchley Park, which stopped quite near to the entrance. I was then taken to Hut 3, to the 'Book Room' and given a desk with a typewriter. We were 18-20 seated in rows, every girl very busy, with a supervisor at a desk in the front of the room. There was a door with a sliding window, through which messages were handed or questions were answered by the decoders. We worked in shifts and when the work was urgent or too much, we worked double shifts, often through the night. Due to our German knowledge, the work we did entailed filling in the gaps of the German decoded messages, trying to make some sense of the often incomprehensible German messages.

[Jane Luxmoore](#) was our leader in the room we worked in at Hut 3. We became good friends. I can vaguely recall working with a married woman named Hilda, and there was also a very young debutante.

We could get warm meals or sandwiches in the main building. Jane and I preferred to eat our sandwiches at the lake, weather permitting. For relaxation there were several societies, organizations or groups we could join, or we could further our studies. I joined a group for musical evenings, mostly listening to records of classical music. I also learnt horse riding (riding and jumping) at a farm where Jane kept her horse. A local train took me close to the farm, but if I

was late for the return journey I had to walk on the railway line. It took about half an hour.

A bus service was organized to fetch us from and take us to our billets. I was billeted in Wolverton. My landlady was Mrs Hall, who was very kind and caring. When I came in late there was always a hot meal waiting for me and a hot water bottle to warm my bed. My room was the front room, or living room. Mr Hall worked on the railways and their daughter at the printing works.

I cannot remember how much leave we got; maybe 2 weeks? I spent this time at home in Berkhamsted. We all had to sign the Secrecy Act and were therefore never allowed to talk about what we were doing at Bletchley Park. When asked, I would reply that I was doing 'war work in the country'. During my time at Bletchley Park I never received any visitors either.

I also recall going to London with Jane to have photographs taken at a photography studio. Jane needed these as she was about to get married.

Towards the end of the war we became redundant. We were not receiving any German decoded messages.

I joined my father and worked at the British Consulate in Antwerp for a while, and then moved to the British Library, also in Antwerp. When my father got posted to the British Embassy in Brussels, I got a job at the Registry Office. It was in Brussels that I met my husband, a South African diplomat, and where we got married in 1952.

I have no recollection of when and how I was told that we need no longer keep quiet about our time spent at Bletchley Park. I have never spoken about it, even since the ban was lifted, not even to my late husband. I am extremely glad that Bletchley Park is no longer a secret and that so many people's work and dedication could be openly acknowledged. It is with a sense of pride that I often think that maybe, even possibly, we helped to win the war with the work we did in our room in Hut 3.