

## **A memoir of Walter Brain by Walter Bourne, Bletchley Park Volunteer.**

*Submitted to the Bletchley Park Oral History Project, November 2015.*

I am a Volunteer Steward at Bletchley Park. Having read the email about adding stories of names of former workers at Bletchley Park during World War Two, you may feel my story is of interest. It is, I feel, apposite and may add a little flavour to the Bletchley Park story, and you may wish to add it to any archive material.

My wife's late mother and father, residents of Bletchley, had a Bletchley Park worker lodging with them throughout the five years of the war. His name was Walter R Brain, of Ecton Village, Northamptonshire. In addition to what is on the Roll of Honour, I know he also worked for the Foreign Office in Persia, (modern day Iran,) and at Hanslope Park.

He apparently arrived at his designated lodging address in Water Eaton Road, Bletchley; a small semi-detached house, seeking accommodation, the house had two normal sized bedrooms and a small 'box-room' measuring approximately 6ft x 8ft, with a small chest of drawers and a small single bed. He looked at the small bedroom and said, somewhat disappointedly, he would "give it a try for a couple of weeks".

It is perhaps testament to my mother-in-law's cooking skills; she was a stalwart member of the local Women's Institute and an excellent cook, that he stayed for the duration of World War Two. Father-in-law was also an expert gardener and allotment holder. In the dark days of wartime and rationing, thanks to him the food table and larder were always kept well stocked with fresh home produced food. Walter too became a skilled gardener having learned a lot from his 'landlord'. Father-in-law was working in a 'reserved occupation,' he being a worker in Wolverton Railway Works where they were involved in aircraft parts manufacture.

Walter Brain was a bachelor and lived with his sister in a cottage in High Street, Ecton and would cycle between there and Bletchley Park, about 25 miles each way, when time off from work permitted. He had a very good tenor voice and joined local choirs and would occasionally 'do a turn' in local church's and village halls. He also belonged to an amateur dramatic society. I remember him from the 1950s when I struggled with the Daily Telegraph crossword; Walter Brain could complete it in about 20 minutes, I well remember!

He became a firm friend and member of my wife's family; she and her sister were teenagers during World War Two and referred to him as Uncle Walt. He continued to visit his former "landlord and lady", (mother and father-in-law,) for many years after the war ended. We also visited him and his sister at their home in Ecton a number of times. He was a member of the Ecton

Players amateur dramatics society. Sadly, he died in 1979 and thus missed out on receiving the Bletchley Park Veterans badge which was initiated and awarded in the year 2009.

My wife and I visited Ecton churchyard a couple of weeks ago, to pay our respects at his grave. With the kind help of a lady church warden, we also had the opportunity to see church records showing Walter's date of death and an old village magazine which had a picture of Walter with the Ecton am/dram players in a scene from a play.

Although not strictly a relative, Walter Brain was treated as a family member throughout wartime and his time at Bletchley Park and for years after the end of the war.