

## **Dr Edward and Mrs Rebecca Simpson, née Gibson**

*Bletchley Park, civilians in Naval Section, Italian and Japanese. Interviewed February 2012.*

[Rebecca](#) and I grew up in Northern Ireland; we both went to Queen's University in Belfast, where Rebecca graduated in English and I graduated in mathematics. After graduating Rebecca taught sixth-form English for a while at one of Northern Ireland's crack grammar schools and arrived at Bletchley Park later than I did. Rebecca was recruited through the Queen's University recruitment system. I came to Bletchley Park via a different route, which involved two quite well known names. After graduating I was called first of all for an interview somewhere in Mayfair with C P Snow and Harry Hoff. The names didn't mean very much to me at the time, but the Government ran a Central Register of scientists of which C P Snow was in charge: it took decisions as to which scientists and mathematicians should go where. Harry Hoff was his deputy. Bletchley Park was a big customer for them and there were lots of other establishments to do with aeronautics, radar and everything else. A few weeks later, I think in September 1942, I was called to the Admiralty and interviewed there by [Frank Birch](#) and [Philip Hall](#). Frank Birch was the Head of Naval Section and Philip Hall, who was one of the most distinguished mathematicians in the Naval Section, and was later Sadleirian Professor at Cambridge. Again these two names meant nothing to me at the time. A few weeks later again I got a summons to attend Bletchley Park where I was interviewed and introduced to the job by [Wilfred Bodsworth](#), known as "Boddy", who was the Head of the Italian Section within Naval Section and I was put to work in the Italian Naval Section.

In the Italian Section, as we didn't have any Italian language training, the view was that, very sensibly, if you had sixth-form French and Latin then you could to some extent muddle through. But to try and do a little better than that, I borrowed a number of novels in Italian from the County Library and spent my time on the coaches reading those.

Rebecca and I were of course in billets as civilians and not in military barracks. I was billeted with a family called Keeves in Wolverton. The husband of the family worked in the railway works and so was in a reserved occupation. I was so happy with them and they, presumably, with me, that I stayed there the whole of the time. Rebecca's experience was a little different, some of the billets were not satisfactory but she ended up in Linslade very happily.

It disappoints me when people write that “the food was terrible”. What did they expect in wartime? The canteen (which by the time I arrived had been established just inside the main gate) gave us, whatever shift we were on, a two-course meal, free of charge and off the ration. Our billetors got all our ration books and “points”, from which to give us breakfast and a second meal. I like to think they had a little bit left over for their own families. The canteen food was wholesome enough but plain: its “cardboard tarts” were legendary.

The canteen service was self-service, a novelty to Rebecca and me coming from Northern Ireland. Perhaps it was a novelty to our more sophisticated English colleagues too. Certainly I recall that the Lyons Corner Houses kept “Nippy” service going throughout the war.

As we queued to have our two courses put on our trays, we handed over our “meal tickets” in exchange. These were cardboard, about the size of a book of stamps and in five or six colours to separate us into the five or six sittings for each meal. They were re-issued, so they got increasingly grubby as the weeks went by. We were issued with six tickets per week (allowing for our one day off) but – I can’t imagine how this happened – some stuck to our fingers so we accumulated a small reserve. Then with a little swapping we made sure to have at least one of each colour, so when we wanted to join a particular friend for a meal there was no problem over going to the same sitting.

What was certainly novel was the rank-free informality. Apart from a handful of the most senior people who ate in the Mansion, everyone used the canteen: there was no Officers’ Mess. So when we took our trays to vacant seats at a table, we might find an other-ranks WAAF and a Field-Rank Major as our neighbours. This matched the way in which the assignment of tasks and job responsibility at work followed ability, not rank. Surely one of Bletchley Park’s most remarkable characteristics.

There was a great variety of schemes going on within the Naval Section and if I just speak briefly about three of them that I was involved in, that will give a feel for the variety. The biggest job in terms of the amount of effort put into it, but not in terms of its importance, was the big subcontractor system called Libia. Without trying to explain the detail of what a subcontractor system was, I think this might be a useful metaphor - if you think of the additive book as a long brick wall in the process of being built, which extends to the left and to the right almost as far as you can see, then each message got enciphered by starting somewhere and ending somewhere along that brick wall. What the workers had to do was look at a little bit of the wall immediately in front of them and

see how many bricks they could add in building it up. Now from that metaphor you see that there is never going to be a point when you can clap your hands and say that is done, it is an almost endless task.

The Italians who ran the Libia system were actually rather good at it; they hardly ever made the kind of mistake that lets the cryptanalyst get an easy break in. Frankly we were not getting very far and it was pretty tedious. There was no great sense of elation about it, but it was a big effort and it had to be done.

The second piece of work that I did in the Naval Section was the Hagelin machine cipher. This had keys which changed every month. Once the keys were broken it was fairly straightforward, but in order to break the keys as quickly as possible the Hagelin section called in and borrowed mathematicians from all over the place and I was one of those they borrowed. The team was run by [Colin Thompson](#) who was later the Director of the National Galleries of Scotland; his number two was [John Daggett](#). They and a team of girls ran it for the most of the month, but the first three, four or five days of breaking it were really exciting. We went onto three shifts because of the urgency and Colin Thompson knew exactly what he wanted to do and it was very skilfully done. I know now, I didn't know at the time, just why the breaking of the Hagelin was so important. It wasn't so much for fighting the Italian Navy as to get at and harry the supply ships sailing across from southern European ports to North Africa where the battles of the Eighth Army and Rommel's army were at their height. The battle of Alamein was November 1942 and there is no doubt that the sinking of those supply ships, guided by the Italian Naval Hagelin, made a great contribution to the eventual success of the Eighth Army's campaign.

Then thirdly, in Naval section, there was a variety of much smaller ciphers which we worked on in teams of two or three and sometimes just one person. Perhaps as they had been recruited early, there was a surprisingly large number of senior academic people doing this work. I remember [Patrick Wilkinson](#), who was a really senior Fellow of King's College Cambridge and a couple of classical scholars who worked together in a small room. [T B L Webster](#) who was so senior that we never did know a Christian name for him, but he came in every day in proper formal Army uniform with a shiny belt, with an empty sleeve pinned across his chest, so he must have been a casualty earlier in the war. He was a very distinguish classical scholar later in his life, as was [Marjorie Dale](#); they later married. Marjorie Dale was quite a classical scholar in her own way too and I did some work with her. The instance that I will give was a relatively small but quite important cipher

where the keys changed daily and it was worked on by [Willy King](#) (who had been in charge of Ceramics in the British Museum) and by [Jimmy Love](#), and I worked with them on it.

Jimmy had the rather wild conjecture, at one point, that because the keys changed every day they might be based on the names of saints. I was lucky enough to be working with Jimmy on the day that we discovered that this was actually true. It didn't mean that there was no more work to be done, because the section did not have an Italian list of the saints' names; we only had them in English and we were never sure how the Italians would spell it. I remember one day we had a particularly tough problem, and when it eventually came out, it was spelt with the initials BVM.

From Wolverton I travelled in by train on the day shift, because both stations were on the same line but otherwise it was by coach. People could tell you endless stories about that whole system of coaches, they were very numerous and busy and a large part of Bletchley's life.

There was a tremendous amount of spare time for reading on the coaches to and fro. Bletchley Park had many astonishing facilities but it did not have a lending library. I discovered, I am not sure how, that I could get books posted to my billet by the Buckinghamshire Library at Aylesbury and I took full advantage of this, drawing on their stocks. They posted the books and I posted them back, all free of charge - that was great.

Off duty we didn't get involved in the amateur dramatics but the productions were superb. We both played a good deal of tennis; Rebecca had played for the University when she was there. We went cycling with friends - cycling was a very large part of the off duty activities and there were many interesting places within fairly easy cycling distance, the lovely country of the Brickhills and the wooded hills around. Going a little further afield, we went to Whipsnade and the Dunstable Downs. Whipsnade was open and operating throughout the war. More ambitiously, groups of us went a good many times to the Shakespeare Theatre at Stratford upon Avon. It was not yet the Royal Shakespeare Company and in retrospect now of course, the building was relatively new and it was still operating at a very distinguished level through the war. We were able to go part of the way by train and then cycle the rest.

I put a lot of time into the Home Guard as joining it was virtually obligatory except for the most senior ranks. There were people who took it seriously and people who didn't take it seriously. I, being on the whole young and keen and having had a good deal of time in OTC while at university, was among

the keen lot. I became a sergeant and I think I eventually became an officer, but I am not sure about that.

Now one question that has begun to puzzle me in later years, but it didn't trouble me at the time. Although the most senior people, like the Director, were not in the Home Guard, a lot of invaluable people were. [Alan Turing](#) was in the Home Guard for a while and certainly [Leslie Yoxall](#) and [Mac Chamberlain](#), people like that. In retrospect, was it really wise and was it seriously intended, if the worst had happened and there had been, let us say, a parachute drop of Germans, (although we believed they never knew what went on at Bletchley, there was a very high probability that they knew something was going on, so a raid was possible), was it seriously intended that top, absolutely irreplaceable people, like these top analysts, would go out and get shot up, when common sense suggests on the contrary, they should have been locked up in the safest possible place and kept safe? That is a slightly puzzling question.

The Home Guard leads me to talk about [Henry Reed](#). He had been in the Italian Section after which he went on one of first six month courses on Japanese language. When he came off that, which must have been March 1944, he was posted to our team. Henry was in the Home Guard, although he was not at all a military person. He had been in the Royal Army Ordnance Corps for a few months then invalided out owing to ill health. Henry Reed is widely known as a poet and playwright with the BBC. His two best known poems are probably "The Naming of Parts" and "Judging Distances" which have the delightful property of intermingling the unmistakable vocabulary of the Warrant Officers who drilled us in the Home Guard, mixed with Henry's own observations of what he could see around him or imagine, when his attention strayed from what the Warrant Officer was saying.

This is the first book of Henry's poems called "A Map of Verona" and I would just like to illustrate what I have been saying by reading a few lines. I think you probably all know "Naming of Parts", if you don't it is time you did. Less familiar is "Judging Distances" so I will read a few lines from that.

"Things only seem to be things" – this is his take on the military vocabulary and military language -

"A barn is not called a barn, to put it more plainly,

Or a field in the distance, where sheep may be safely grazing

You must never be over-sure. You must say, when reporting:

At five o'clock in the central sector is a dozen  
Of what appear to be animals; whatever you do,  
Don't call the bleeders sheep.  
I am sure that's quite clear; and suppose, for the sake of example,  
The one at the end, asleep, endeavours to tell us  
What he sees over there to the west, and how far away,  
After first having come to attention."

I can only suppose that the one at the end asleep was Henry Reed himself!

When the Italian war finished in August 1943 and the Italian Naval Section was left with virtually nothing to do, the great majority of us were transferred onto work with the Japanese ciphers. I was surprised, but very pleased, to be asked to lead the team that was going to work on one of the biggest Japanese ciphers, called technically JN25, JN for Japanese Naval. Before I talk about that it is worth talking about courses in Japanese Language. Of course nobody in the cryptanalyst business needed to understand the subtleties of Japanese language, what we needed was the language of the Japanese naval signals, which was very different. Although I was not involved in the six month course, I had such admiration for it, I would like to mention it as one of [John Tiltman](#)'s great achievements. Obviously once Japan came into the war on Germany's side, there was going to be a need for Japanese linguists. Bletchley Park had a few that were well into the Japanese language, but that was not nearly enough.

The School of African and Oriental Studies in London told Tiltman that it would take two years to train up a linguist for his purposes, but Tiltman didn't have two years. He got advice, I am not sure where from, that training could be done in six months. He got Capt [Tuck](#), who was already a buddy of his, who had long experience in the Far East, and a Captain RN, to take charge of the course. He then approached, no doubt on a very confidential basis, tutors in a number of Cambridge and Oxford Colleges, for young students who were recommended to him, that might be able to take on this challenge. They were, I think without exception, classics students. Some of them had not even graduated, they were in the second year. They and Capt Tuck came together in Bedford and embarked on the six month course. It was a huge success and a tribute to the judgement that it could be done in six months.

I mention as one illustration of this success, Marjorie Dale, whom I have mentioned earlier. She was the only woman on the first of these six month courses. Sometime later, it is recorded in [Hugh Foss](#)'s history of the time, her opposite numbers in Washington were so impressed by her skill that they took for granted that she had grown up in Japan. When they were told that she had done a six month course, they were lost in their admiration. So that was good.

Bletchley Park also organised a one month's course for people who needed a certain amount of training in Japanese, but not so much detail. The first of these started in the first week of September in 1943, very quickly indeed after the collapse of Italy. The one month courses were taken by [John Lloyd](#), who was a civilian and had been a consular official in Tokyo. There were five of us on that first one month course. As well as Rebecca and myself, there were [Hugh Thurston](#) who had been a mathematician in the Italian section, [Murray Macbeath](#), another mathematician from my own maths department at Queen's University, Belfast, and Colin Thompson who had run the Hagelin.

The team that we set up to work on the JN 25 cipher was, in the first instance, entirely people who had been in the Italian Section and therefore well known to me and very much the younger ones. Patrick Wilkinson and the senior people, that I mentioned earlier, all went off in different directions. We were not starting entirely from scratch, JN 25 was again basically a subtractor system and so it had a good deal in common with the Libia, which we had worked on in the Italian Section. That was a good start and the people who were with me had the same advantage of that degree of familiarity. Of course other people, particularly the Americans in Washington, their outfit was called OP-20-G, and people in Australia, were way ahead of us in experience.

We were never going to be their equal and that was for two main reasons, of scale. First was the number of persons we had at our disposal. I have read that one of the senior Washington US Navy people, Commander Wenger, was in Bletchley Park in July 1943, at this formative time, and he told Bletchley Park that they had seven hundred people working on the recovery of JN25 alone and that they hoped to make this to 1000! Our party started with 20 and stayed at 20 for a year; and the biggest we ever got, after we were able to recruit people, as they gradually became available from the European war, was 45. That was the maximum figure - so clearly we were not in the same game as Washington.



Our second limitation was on what was technically called the traffic, which was the enciphered messages taken down out of the air. The British receiving station Flowerdown, in spite of the distance of half way around the globe, was able to record a certain amount of Japanese traffic and that came to us with great immediacy by dispatch rider or perhaps even land line. That was great but it was less than a fifth of the total available.

The large quantities of traffic recorded either on the American West Coast or from the Pacific islands came to us in paper form by diplomatic bag about twice a week, but two or three weeks late and that was of course a huge handicap that we were never able to overcome. At one point I remember we said to Washington, very politely, "Would you like to cable us the raw material so that we could get it hugely sooner?", to which (and they were quite rightly justified), they replied "NO". I am sure the cables were heavily overloaded and I don't doubt their judgement, so we were stuck with this situation in the supply of raw material. Now it was obvious that where there were chunks of this material that could be fairly easily solved, Washington would have themselves solved it long before the raw material even reached us. We did have a system that used cable to exchange recovered additives so, of course, we knew what they had solved, and didn't waste our time starting on parts that they had already done. What sometimes did lead to disappointment and frustration was that we might have what we considered a very good day and recovered a lot of additives, and sent them off happily to Washington saying in effect "Look what we have got", only to find the following day what they were cabling to us would include what we had just found and a lot more besides. You couldn't help being disappointed by that, but you know, we swallowed it and carried on.

Generally the system was essentially what I have briefly described by way of metaphor for the Libia, which was again like building bricks, one at a time to build a wall, but with several differences from the Italian system. There were features in the Japanese system which could make it easier to get in, I won't try to go into technicalities because they are available on the record, "The Bletchley Park Codebreakers" edited by Ralph Erskine and Michael Smith has a chapter and three appendices which I wrote. Also I have been able to get now, because it has been released from secrecy a couple of years ago, the report on the history of our Party which I wrote in 1945 before I left Bletchley Park. I also wrote a second one at the same time, which covered much more technical aspects and I would love to get my hands on that, but GCHQ have not yet agreed to its release [subsequently released as part of TNA HW 43/34].



It might be useful if I give just a little indication without going into too much detail of the organisation of the whole Japanese effort, which we were only part of. When it came into being in a big way, which would be September/October of 1943 (there had been bits and pieces before that but that was when the big effort began), it was divided into two main sections, called, not very imaginatively, NS1J and NS2J. Hugh Foss was in charge of the first and Commander [J. P. McIntyre](#) took charge of NS2J. He had considerable experience in the Far East and was a Japanese linguist. McIntyre had us under him, also the Party working on JN11 and also very importantly, what was called the Processing Party, run by [Mrs Parsons](#).

You may note that I am using the word Party which was received language at the time. I guess nowadays we certainly wouldn't be called a Party; we would be called a team. Party was the word in use at the time. The function of Mrs Parsons' Party was to look after and record the movement of all the paper. The raw material and the traffic that came in went to her Party first, it was sorted as to which cipher underlay it and which cryptanalytic Parties it would have to go to, registered and earmarked and so forth. It then went to the cryptanalytic Parties that did their best to work on it and eventually returned with whatever additive recoveries were available to another bit of Mrs Parsons' empire. She also received all the additives which Washington had recovered so part of her business was to apply these to the enciphered texts, produce clear text and send them off to the linguists.

Our relations with Mrs Parsons' Party were very happy; we obviously needed to get on well because there was a constant to and fro of business between us. There only ever was one copy of each enciphered message so to know where it was at any given moment was pretty important. Also her Party's work load fluctuated, as indeed ours did too, and so we lent staff to each other from time to time. Her Party's job was on the whole more humdrum than ours, the cryptanalytic work was frankly much more exciting and many of her women, (I think they were all women, many of them were WRNS) were very able so she was very willing to let them have a go with us on the cryptanalytic work and if they made a go of it, and almost without exception they did, then they could stay with us and not go back to her.

NS1J under Hugh Foss, whom we had surprisingly little contact with, we didn't know what they were doing to be quite honest, until I read about it many years after the war. I can generalise by saying that they had, on the whole, smaller ciphers to deal with, that were less well advanced therefore, there was a large element of research about what they were doing. They also ran the very important Japanese Naval Attaché cipher, JNA 20.

I should also say something about the service that we got from what was familiarly called the Freebornery. This was the large establishment of Hollerith, punched card, computing, analysing and tabulating processes. The Freebornery started off in Hut 7, then got its own home in Block C, which incidentally was right next to us in Block B. This was a huge establishment and run by [Frederic Freeborn](#), who came from the BTM - The British Tabulating Machine Company. He was very much the man in charge. It was very significant that when I went to see him to discuss the work we were to do together (and I always went to him, he never came to me), it was always Freeborn himself who received me, although he had a considerable management team; and however technical what I was coming to talk about, he was always the master of it. So I have a large amount of admiration for him and I think there are gaps to be filled in the Bletchley history, to bring out the full value of what his outfit provided.

We were, I suppose, a fairly important customer of Freeborn, although he obviously had bigger customers as well, and this was an advantage that the team working on the Italian Libia subcontractor never did have. I don't remember their getting any analysis done by the Freebornery. In the JN25 Party we used this a lot and essentially they would do this for us: we would send them raw material of one kind or another, they would analyse it, index it, tabulate it and send it back to us on big printed sheets which we could then work on. It was quite a heavy overhead for our small team of only twenty, simply to prepare the material for the Hollerith, but we had to do it because the value of the returned work made it all worthwhile. I always assumed that, although in his dealing with the likes of me, Freeborn appeared to be entirely the master of his own estate, he must have been working within guidelines from higher direction as to what should get priority so it was a matter of quiet satisfaction for us that as long as we kept our request within bounds we got what we asked for, and we got it back quickly, so we liked to think from that small mark that we were considered to be doing something worthwhile.

The history is already on the record so I don't need to go into it in any detail, but our work on the Japanese JN25 cipher went through a number of identifiable phases. When we started on it, which would be October 1943, after coming back from the one month's language course, things were going pretty swimmingly. Once we gathered ourselves together and found out what we were supposed to be doing, we had quite good successes.

In the early months of 1944 the Japanese made some very important changes, which Washington was able to absorb and cope with more easily

than we could, so life began to get a little difficult. Then in July 1944 the Japanese, and this was a little bit unlike them, managed the perfect change-over, perfect from the point of view of defeating the opposite side's cryptanalysts. They had been a little bit slap dash from time to time. They had the difficulty that as they had made military successes spreading across the Pacific and capturing island after island, this extended their lines of communication to their own disadvantage, so that when it was time to introduce a new code book or a new cipher table, the simple physical job of getting the new tables out to every island was more than they could handle. So sometimes an island was left with only the old code book and so they would have to use the old code book until they got the new one, and that of course was a gift to the cryptanalysts because you have got the same material enciphered on the old and the new.

In July of 1944 the Japanese pulled off the perfect coup, they introduced a new code book, a new cipher table, changed various details and didn't make a silly mistake, so not only were we put out of business, Washington was put out of business for a number of weeks, that then ran into months. That was needless to say very, very distressing for all concerned. It was taken so seriously in Bletchley Park that we were visited by John Tiltman and [Jerry Morgan](#), who was the head of the Research Section, to see whether they could help to find a way through this impasse. Under their directions we prepared a huge amount of material to go to Hollerith and back again, but they couldn't beat it any more than Washington could.

It eventually came right, I won't go into the details, but it did throw into even sharper focus a question which I think had been bothering a good many people on both sides of the Atlantic for some time, 'Was it really worth the trouble for Bletchley Park to run in the Japanese business at all, and certainly was it worth the trouble to try to compete covering the same ground as OP-20-G in Washington? Now standing back and with a little bit of hindsight the plain fact is that it wasn't, and a change should have been made sooner than it was made. Anyhow, better late than never, in October of 1944 an agreement was reached at the top Directors' level in Washington about the allocation of functions in the Japanese Naval field. The decision was taken and agreed to by, I suppose, Travis, that Bletchley Park would no longer try to keep up with the current work, they would leave that entirely to Washington. In return Washington would pick out bits of work they could remit to us where we would be in charge of it and not in competition and they did us quite handsomely in that. There was a combination of codebook L and additive table 53, which they had simply never got round to, and there was a considerable lot of material. So they said to Bletchley Park "You have a go at

that!" And life then became hugely easier, we were not in competition on the losing side, we were not bothered by the time lag of material because most of it was already accumulated. It was just about the right size for our capacity and we got going on it. To compare some figures, our rate of recovery of additives was as good as Washington's on a job of the same size, so that changed our lives in a way to a smaller role, but one that we could perform much better from October 1944 onwards.

About the same time, but I don't think that the two events were connected, the war in the Atlantic was, maybe not over, but diminished to the point where the management decided that [Hugh Alexander](#), who was running Hut 8, could leave and move over to the Japanese side, which meant that the existing two Japanese sections were changed into three. Alexander took over the cryptanalytic part of McIntyre's job. McIntyre became responsible for translators only, therefore we came under Hugh Alexander. All accounts say that he was not only a brilliant cryptanalyst, but a brilliant manager of cryptanalysts. I can absolutely echo that and say, hear, hear! We got on extremely well with him. I think that the first thing that he did, on taking over the Japanese responsibility, was he went off to Washington and got a very good first hand view, which we had never had before, of what they were doing, so the information he brought back was invaluable.

Under Hugh Alexander we kept ahead with our L53 until essentially the end of the Japanese war. We did other things as well and in particular our main mathematician, [Ian Cassels](#), took on a number of other jobs on the Japanese side and had some successes there as well. We can say, I think with modest pride, that there were a few instances where we were able to add a refinement of technique to what Washington was already doing. We had to do that, if possible, because we had nothing like the huge quantities of material, nor the huge staff, to work on them. Brute force was not within our reach and a slightly sharper weapon was necessary. In several instances our mathematicians successfully introduced refinements of technique which Washington graciously agreed were valuable.

Our Party was of about twenty and it stayed that size for the first year that we were working on JN25. The people who were in this Party included three mathematicians, myself and Ian Cassels, who went on later to be the Sadleirian Professor at Cambridge as Philip Hall had been, and [Jimmy Whitworth](#). Then we had the poet Henry Reed as the six months trained Japanese linguist.

The need quickly became clear that although we had access to Naval Intelligence, with people like [Peter Laslett](#), whom we got to know very well, we really needed immediate in-house access to a certain amount of intelligence. Without getting too technical, I can say that when you are attacking these ciphers you could work in two directions. First, vertically down a column of depth, which was a purely numerical process, you didn't need to know what was going on in the messages. Or you could work horizontally, which means that you had solved some parts of the message and even what the code groups stood for, but if you knew what was going on in a message, you could help to fill the gaps.

You never used either one of these methods alone, the skilful cryptanalysts used the two hand in hand and we needed our own little bit of in-house intelligence, which we could access quickly. Rebecca took this aboard, first of all by herself and then when Henry Reed arrived with his language, they worked together and [Olive Thorogood](#), who was already one of the Party, came to work with them too. What they did effectively was to index absolutely everything in sight, without any machinery for doing it. I have no idea how they managed to keep the records going. It meant in practice that if one of the cryptanalysts in the Big Room working on messages had got a certain amount of sense but with a gap in it, for example like they had got the name of a ship which was sailing on a certain day but where it was sailing from was missing, they could go to our in-house intelligence service and ask "Do you know anything about the Shashimu Maru and where was it on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June?" If they could come up with an answer then the cryptanalysts happily went back and put that in the gap to see where that took them.

When we needed bigger stuff than we had in-house, we went to the real linguists and I remember [Michael Loewe](#) who was in charge of the Japanese language section and worked very closely and cooperatively with us. On the Naval Intelligence front Peter Laslett, who subsequently went to Washington and was part of Bletchley Park's Naval Liaison Unit in OP-20-G. Peter became a friend for life. Through him we got to know a lady called Flossy Trefethen, who had been a WAVE in OP-20-G and also became a very good friend. We had the privilege of taking her to Bletchley Park one day, when she came to England. Simon Greenish had a great stroke of imagination, because when he received us he explained that the Freedom of Bletchley Park could be given only to people who had worked at Bletchley Park or its outposts. So said Simon "I am declaring for this day only, that OP-20-G is an outpost of Bletchley Park, so Florence Trefethen, I give you the Freedom of Bletchley Park!"

Alan Turing of course is the subject of enormous writing and anecdotes and so forth. My only personal acquaintance with Alan Turing was in the Home Guard, where people did get to know each other quite well without any reference to what work they were doing within working hours. Two small anecdotes are perhaps worth adding. Leslie Yoxall is a person who appears quite a lot in the BP histories and Leslie told us that when his name was put forward for BP, he was invited to go and be interviewed by Alan Turing, which took place at the cottage where Alan Turing lived. When he arrived Alan said to Leslie "let's go for a walk," and he took his bicycle with him and wheeled the bicycle the whole way. They walked for about 45 minutes and Alan Turing did not say a word during those 45 minutes, nor did Leslie since he had no questions to answer, and when they got back to the cottage they said goodbye. Leslie was offered the job.

The second little connection with Alan Turing is to do with the play called "Breaking the Code", which was put on with huge acclaim, in the Theatre Royal, Haymarket in 1986. Derek Jacobi played Turing. Jonathan Critchley had been at Oxford with our daughter Elizabeth and he was Assistant Director and did a great deal of research for Hugh Whitmore, the author of that play. So under Elizabeth's auspices Jonathan came and had a number of sessions with Rebecca and myself. We were able to tell him, not about Turing personally, but rather about the way of life at Bletchley Park, (but including the anecdote now well known of how Alan Turing chained his mug to the radiator for fear of it being stolen, which does appear in the play), and that some of that authentic detail stems back to us.

Rebecca and I got married in 1947, the same year as the Queen. The wedding photograph has five people in it and four of us have Bletchley Park connections. In addition to Rebecca and myself, my best man was Hugh Thurston who was a mathematician in the Italian Naval Section and later in the Japanese Naval Section, though not on JN25 and Rebecca's bridesmaid was her sister Doris who married Leslie Yoxall. He stayed in the organisation and went to Cheltenham with GCHQ. Doris and Leslie made a considerable mark on GCHQ, they also had two spells together in Washington and Doris was instrumental in setting up the Anglo-American Association in Cheltenham. The fifth member of the party, a lovely little girl called Grace Barry and the train bearer, did not I am afraid, have any Bletchley Park connections.

People do ask sometimes how we felt about having been at Bletchley Park and whether we were able to talk or think about it once it was over. I am afraid the truth, as far as we were concerned, was that Bletchley Park largely

went out of our minds. I don't remember that we ever spent ages saying "Do you remember that JN25 or when this happened or that?" May be it is not that surprising, because 1945 was not just the end of our time at Bletchley Park, it was the end of the war and that was a very much more significant event. Given the ages that we were, neither of us had really had any adult out-of-education time before the war, so here the war was over, everything lay in front of us, what were we going to do? It was a time for looking forward rather than looking back at Bletchley Park. If you were to ask, since I clearly am interested in the Bletchley Park History now, what made the change I can date that fairly accurately. William Woollard's astonishingly early documentary on Bletchley Park as one episode in his "Secret War" (BBC TV, 1977) passed us by. Over twenty years later, in 1999, Channel 4 broadcast the series, called "Station X". We saw that it was coming, when we watched it we saw Leslie Yoxall, for one, as well as other people that we had known there and that did, for the first time, bring us up with a little bit of a jerk to say "Well if this is going on at Bletchley Park now, we ought to be part of it!"

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