

Codebreaker at Bletchley

My Friend's Footsteps

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England's [Bletchley Park](#), where WWII veterans decoded the Enigma machine, is a humbling, heroic expanse of grounds. Basked in the sunshine of our September day, cousin Charles and I walked through this living museum – its mansion still impressively elegant. The huts, restored, are buildings once hectic with vital work. I felt in my own strides the footsteps of codebreakers 70 years ago. It was especially meaningful because one of the several hundred decoders is my friend, Beryl*, who was in Hut 6.



I know Beryl from a monthly Storytelling Your Life group I lead for retirement residents. I donated a Bletchley guidebook to their library, and we agreed Beryl had more than earned the right to be first to read it. After session, she stayed to sign my copy of another book, 'My Secret Life in Hut 6'.

This secrecy compelled me to ask how, in 1943, her parents had felt not knowing what she was doing, or even where – surely they were frantic? *"I was able to tell them I'd signed the Official Secrets Act"* (bound to silence, she said, for decades), so they didn't question further. Did she know Alan Turing, the decoder inventor? *"No, none of us did. We knew he was there, but had no idea which one he was or what he looked like. Only a few working with him directly knew."*

I told Beryl how heartened I'd been to see classes of school children as I strolled that day. I reassured her that she – indeed all at Bletchley – will be remembered. Her eyes misted, with mine, and she composed this inscription:

"Storytelling is an opportunity to share the experiences that have had effect upon our lives and to give understanding so that others may learn from it."

May such legacy be lessons to us – we who thank and remember all who serve(d).

*hear [Beryl's voice and brief account](#) at The Memory Project

mansion at Bletchley Park



decoder machine demonstration



room in Hut 6

