

Visit to the Bletchley Park “Enigma” Museum and Optional Evening Talk Thursday 13th February, 2003

This visit has been organised by David Pick (suggested by John Seeley)

In Robert Harris's novel and in the film of Enigma, the role of a Polish character is pure fiction. However, without the Polish contribution in real life, Enigma might never have been broken. In their early days at Bletchley Park, without an example of the Enigma machine in front of them, the code breakers were unable to work out the order in which the keys were attached to the electrical circuits. But help was at hand. From the early 1930s, a group of Polish mathematicians - Marian Rejewski, Jerzy Rózycki and Henryk Zygalski - had been working to unravel Enigma, even managing to reconstruct a machine. When Rejewski and his colleagues first broke Enigma, the cypher altered only once every few months. But by 1939, with the threat of war looming, it was changing at least once a day. In July 1939, the Poles passed on their knowledge to the British and the French at a secret meeting near Warsaw. A few weeks later, they delivered two replicas of Enigma machines that they had built. One arrived at Bletchley Park, giving the code breakers the crucial help they needed. To mark the 60th Anniversary of that historic rendezvous, and to give thanks for the Polish contribution to the cracking of Enigma, Bletchley Park hosted a Polish Festival in July 1999. A few days prior to the 2000 Festival, a special ceremony took place at the Palace on the Water in Warsaw. The families of the three outstanding Polish cryptanalysts were presented with the Great Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta (Poland's Rebirth) by Polish Prime Minister Jerzy Buzek in recognition of an achievement that many consider to be Poland's single greatest contribution to the Allied victory in WWII. And in September 2000, it was Britain's turn to present an Enigma machine to Poland. On an official visit to the country, HRH The Duke of York presented a machine to Mr Buzek as a "symbol of Britain's gratefulness and thanks". The 2001 Polish Festival saw the unveiling of a commemorative plaque at the Park.

Among the displays at the museum are contributions from: Airborne Command: The US Army Airborne Historical Display Group; BP Fire Museum and Fire Engines; BP Garage; BP Post Office; Bombe Rebuild Project; Buckinghamshire Aircraft Recovery Group (BARG); Churchill Collection; Colossus Rebuild Project; Communications Electronic Museum Trust; Computer Conservation Society (including History of Computing Exhibition); Diplomatic Wireless Service; GB2BP Amateur Radio; Holley-Cornelius Toy and Memorabilia Collection; Home Front; Leighton Buzzard Model Boat Club; Mills Collection of WWII Uniforms and Memorabilia; MK Model Railway Society; Motor Transport Section (Military Vehicles); Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry Living History Group; Projected Picture Trust; RAF Regiment Living History Group; RAYNET; 65ste Nachrichten Abteilung (German Signals Battalion); US Re-enactment Group 1941-4

In the evening at 19:30; there is a talk “Intelligence blunders of World War II” by Col John Hughes-Wilson. About two miles from the museum is the Old Beams, Paxton Crescent, Shenley Lodge “Excellent local pub with a lovely food menu”, where those wishing to attend the evening lecture could pass the time between the end of the tour and the start of the talk.

The museum is within 200 yards of Bletchley railway station and has fairly easy access by car via the M1. The tour of the museum will start at 13.30. Sandwiches and light refreshments are available from 12.30 onwards. The cost of the guided tour of the museum, a handout and swandwich lunch is £13.50. The tour lasts about 2½hrs. Maps will be provided. Attendance at the evening lecture can be arranged on the day.