



Mavis Batey

Mavis Lilian Lever

Born: 5 May 1921

Died: 12 November 2013

Codebreaker

The Codebreaking Women
of Bletchley Park



Considered to be one of the leading codebreaking women at Bletchley Park, Mavis was a key part of cracking a number of codes including the German Abwehr Enigma, which for some time was thought to be unbreakable.

At age 19, Mavis was recruited to Bletchley Park as a codebreaker after a short time at The Times newspaper, where her role was to read personal columns looking for coded spy messages.

When Mavis arrived at Bletchley Park, she joined the codebreaking team run by Dilly Knox who himself had been breaking Enigma codes since the First World War. Dilly Knox ran a very strict team in Hut 6, rarely giving instructions and leaving the codebreakers to use their own initiative.

In March 1941, Mavis broke a series of encrypted messages which revealed Italy's intention to target a Royal Navy supply ship on its way from Egypt to provide essential goods to Greece.

The admiral leading the convoy, Admiral Cunningham, was able to take the Italian fleet by surprise. At the time, the Italians had no radar and had no idea the Royal Navy was coming. Admiral Cunningham's fleet sunk five ships and managed to protect the precious cargo.

Although Admiral Cunningham received praise for his fleet's efforts, it was the work of Mavis and the codebreaking team who prevented the Italian attack.

The Italians never confronted the Royal Navy fleet in the Mediterranean Sea again.

In December 1941, Mavis once again broke a code. This time her work allowed the team to crack the 'unbreakable' Abwehr Enigma machine. Breaking this code confirmed to the Allies that the Germans believed all the information they were being told by German spies who had been recruited by the British as double agents. This work helped prepare for the D-Day landings, giving the Allies the upper hand heading into battle.

Mavis met her future husband, Keith, while working on a particularly challenging cypher during a late shift. They married in 1942 and both continued to work at Bletchley Park until the end of the war.

After Bletchley Park, Mavis wrote a number of books about garden history and was awarded an MBE for her work on garden conservation.

Comprehension Questions:

Answer the questions in full sentences.

Question One:

How old was Mavis Batey when she started working at Bletchley Park?

Question Two:

What year would Mavis have started at Bletchley Park?

Question Three:

What was the Italian Navy's reason for being in the Mediterranean in 1941?

Question Four:

Why were the Italian Navy taken by surprise when the Allies attacked them?

Question Five:

What was the role Mavis had in the planning and preparation for the D-Day attacks?



Jean Valentine

Jean Millar Rooke

Born: 17 July 1924

Died: 17 May 2019

Bombe Operator

The Codebreaking Women
of Bletchley Park



Born in Scotland, when Jean moved to Buckinghamshire to take up a position working at Bletchley Park, it was her first experience of anywhere outside her birth country.

Jean was one of the key Bombe operators and part of a team who set the machine up from codes given to them. The Bombe machine was developed and made in secret to decipher coded messages from the Germans during the war. Initially, they were operated solely by men but gradually women were trained to use them until eventually at Bletchley Park they were all operated by women.

Operators of the Bombe machines had to be a certain height to reach all the dials. Jean was a little shorter than the requirement so a platform was made to allow her to reach the higher dials and set up the machine.

Each employee at Bletchley Park had to sign the Official Secrets Act and was forbidden to discuss their work with anyone, even those within the Park. Being a Bombe operator was no different. Although Jean was able to socialise with other members of the Park after her shift was over, no one discussed their role or what they did. It was a respected silence understood by all employees.

Jean worked in Hut 11 which had five machines operated by 10 women and overseen by one Petty Officer on duty to make sure they were doing their job.

Working in pairs, Jean would help set up the machine according to the 'menu' of instructions given to her by a team of codebreakers.

Once the Bombe was set up, it began searching for possibilities to crack the Enigma codes.

The machines were very loud and the Huts were often very hot or very cold depending on the season.

Once the war was over, the Bombe machines were dismantled by hand to leave no trace of their existence.

Comprehension Questions:

Answer the questions in full sentences.

Question One:

How did Jean overcome the height requirement to be able to operate the Bombe machines?

Question Two:

How many machines did the operators in Hut 11 have access to?

Question Three:

What was Jean's key role at Bletchley Park?

Question Four:

Who else would Jean work with as part of the Hut 11 team?

Question Five:

Why do you think the Bombe machines were all dismantled after the war?



Jane Fawcett

Jane Caroline Hughes

Born: 4 March 1921

Died: 21 May 2016

Codebreaker

The Codebreaking Women
of Bletchley Park



Before working at Bletchley Park, Jane trained as a ballet dancer at the Royal College of Ballet. Having been told she was too tall to become a professional dancer she went to live in Zurich and learnt German.

Upon returning she was invited to apply to the Bletchley Park project by a friend and she joined in 1940. She was 18 years of age.

Jane was a part of a team of codebreakers who worked out which messages were recognisable in German.

In May 1941, the codebreaking team were tasked with finding a German battleship called the Bismarck. A message was decoded with the Bismarck's position and its destination.

The Royal Navy were then given the information and were able to track the battleship before sinking it on 27 May 1941. This attack was one of the most significant wins by the codebreakers and showed the project was worth investing in. It inspired the codebreakers to work harder and maintain strong relationships with each other to crack as many codes as possible.

As with all the other employees at Bletchley Park, Jane signed the Official Secrets Act. She never discussed her work at Bletchley or her role as a codebreaker. Her role was incredibly important and it was only in the 1990's, when information started to come out about Bletchley Park, that she revealed her part in this incredible story.

After the war, Jane trained as an opera singer and campaigned to protect and preserve Victorian buildings and works. She was awarded an MBE for this in 1976.

When the USA declassified their documents from Bletchley Park, the stories of Jane and other incredible women were discovered and began to emerge.

Comprehension Questions:

Answer the questions in full sentences.

Question One:

Why do you think Jane Fawcett was employed to work at Bletchley Park?

Question Two:

What was the name of the German Battleship Jane and her colleagues were tasked with finding?

Question Three:

Why was finding the battleship a key moment for the codebreakers?

Question Four:

Apart from a codebreaker at Bletchley Park, name two other jobs Jane had in her lifetime.

Question Five:

Why do you think Jane was awarded an MBE?



Baroness Trumpington

Jean Alys Campbell-Harris

Born: 23 October 1922

Died: 26 November 2018

Cypher Clerk

The Codebreaking Women
of Bletchley Park



Before working at Bletchley Park, Jean Campbell-Harris worked as a Land Girl on a farm owned by the former Prime Minister, David Lloyd George.

Jean was fluent in both French and German, so it was believed she could be a great addition to the Bletchley Project. She was signed up at age 18 as a Cypher Clerk at Bletchley Park. This meant it was her job it was to decipher the messages being intercepted and to encrypt those being sent out.

Although Jean has quite a privileged upbringing she said:

“Life only really began when I went to Bletchley. That's when I made my real friends, and it was exciting being a part of something important.”

Jean spent the rest of the war typing and translating German naval signals with the codebreaker team. Working in an office with six others, the group successfully cracked the German U-boat messages.

Their shift patterns changed every week - 10am to 6pm, 4pm to midnight and midnight to 9am. Although the shifts were long, tedious and hard, Jean made up for it in her time off, often travelling into London for parties and to meet friends for afternoon tea.

Due to signing the Official Secrets Act, she never told her friends what she did in her work. Instead, she convinced them she worked for the department who were responsible for deciding on who received government awards.

After the war she travelled to America and worked in advertising before coming back to the UK, working as a magistrate and as a local councillor and then mayor. She was appointed by Margaret Thatcher, then Prime Minister, as UK Representative to the UN Commission on the Status of Women. This involved her promoting equality, healthcare and human rights.

In 1980 she was made a life-long peer, choosing the title Baroness Trumpington of Sandwich, Kent.

Comprehension Questions:

Answer the questions in full sentences.

Question One:

Apart from English, which languages could Jean Campbell-Harris speak?

Question Two:

What was Jean's role at Bletchley Park?

Question Three:

What were the shift patterns like in the department she worked?

Question Four:

Name two other job roles Baroness Trumpington had after the war had ended.

Question Five:

During her time at Bletchley Park, Jean was not permitted to tell people what she did. What did she tell her friends her job was instead?

Mavis Batey Comprehension **Answers**

Question One:

How old was Mavis Batey when she started working at Bletchley Park?

Mavis Batey was 19 years old when she started work at Bletchley Park.

Question Two:

What year would Mavis have started at Bletchley Park?

Mavis would have started at Bletchley Park in 1940. ($1921 + 19 = 1940$)

Question Three:

What was the Italian Navy's reason for being in the Mediterranean in 1941?

Italy had plans to intercept UK supply ships transporting essential goods from Egypt to Greece.

Question Four:

Why were the Italian Navy taken by surprise when the Allies attacked them?

The Italian Naval ships had not yet been fitted with radar so had no idea the Royal Navy was heading towards them to prevent the interception of the supply ships.

Question Five:

What was the role Mavis had in the planning and preparation for the D-Day attacks?

Mavis worked with a team of codebreakers intercepting messages being sent by German spies recruited by the British as double agents. This confirmed the Germans believed the information the spies were giving them allowing the Allies to prepare for the D-Day landings.

Jean Valentine Comprehension **Answers**

Question One:

How did Jean overcome the height requirement to be able to operate the Bombe machines?

To overcome not being able to reach the top of the Bombe machine, Jean had a platform made for her so she could reach all elements of the machine.

Question Two:

How many machines did the operators in Hut 11 have access to?

Hut 11 had five machines to operate.

Question Three:

What was Jean's key role at Bletchley Park?

Jean helped set up the Bombe machine according to the 'menu' of instructions given to her by a team of codebreakers.

Question Four:

Who else would Jean work with as part of the Hut 11 team?

Jean would work in a pair to operate the machine, but a team of 10 other women who were overseen by a Petty Officer would be on each shift.

Question Five:

Why do you think the Bombe machines were all dismantled after the war?

Once the war was over, the Bombe machines were all taken apart to protect the secret operations which had been carried out at Bletchley Park during the war.

Jane Fawcett Answers

Question One:

Why do you think Jane Fawcett was employed to work at Bletchley Park?

Jane was fluent in German and would be able to identify messages written in German as well as translate them.

Question Two:

What was the name of the German Battleship Jane and her colleagues were tasked with finding?

The battleship Jane and her colleagues were tasked with finding was called the 'Bismarck'.

Question Three:

Why was finding the battleship a key moment for the codebreakers?

Locating the Bismarck was a key event for the Bletchley Park codebreakers as it proved the work they were doing was working and vital. This motivated them to work harder to break more messages and codes, as well as allow for expansion and to employ more people at the Park.

Question Four:

Apart from a codebreaker at Bletchley Park, name two other jobs Jane had in her lifetime.

Before she worked at Bletchley, Jane was a trained ballet dancer. After the war, she trained as an opera singer as well as campaigning to protect and preserve Victorian buildings and workhouses.

Question Five:

Why do you think Jane was awarded an MBE?

Jane Fawcett received an MBE in 1976 for her services to conservation.

Baroness Trumpington Answers

Question One:

Apart from English, which languages could Jean Campbell-Harris speak?

Jean Campbell-Harris (Baroness Trumpington) could speak French and German.

Question Two:

What was Jean's role at Bletchley Park?

Jean was signed up at age 18 as a Cypher Clerk at Bletchley Park. This meant her job was to decipher the messages being intercepted and to encrypt the messages being sent out.

Question Three:

What were the shift patterns like in the department she worked?

The shift patterns changed every week - 10am to 6pm, 4pm to midnight, midnight to 9am. The shifts were long, tedious and hard.

Question Four:

Name two other job roles Baroness Trumpington had after the war had ended.

When the war ended, Jean went to America to work in advertising before returning to the UK to work as a magistrate, local councillor and mayor.

Question Five:

During her time at Bletchley Park, Jean was not permitted to tell people what she did. What did she tell her friends her job was instead?

Due to signing the Official Secrets Act, Jean was not permitted to tell people what she did at Bletchley Park. Instead she convinced friends she worked for the department who were responsible for deciding on who received government awards.