



The Bletchley Girls: War, secrecy, love and loss: the women of Bletchley Park tell their story

Tessa Dunlop

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'Lively...in giving us the daily details of their lives in the women's own voices Dunlop does them and us a fine service' *New Statesman*

'Dunlop is engaging in her personal approach. Her obvious feminine empathy with the venerable ladies she spoke to gives her book an immediacy and intimacy.' *Daily Mail*

'An in-depth picture of life in Britain's wartime intelligence centre...The result is fascinating, and is made all the more touching by the developing friendships between Dunlop and her interviewees.' *Financial Times*

The Bletchley Girls weaves together the lives of fifteen women who were all selected to work in Britain's most secret organisation - Bletchley Park. It is their story, told in their voices; Tessa met and talked to 15 veterans, often visiting them several times. Firm friendships were made as their epic journey unfolded on paper.

The scale of female involvement in Britain during the Second World War wasn't matched in any other country. From 8 million working women just over 7000 were hand-picked to work at Bletchley Park and its outstations. There had always been girls at the Park but soon they outnumbered the men three to one.

A refugee from Belgium, a Scottish debutante, a Jewish 14-year-old, and a factory worker from Northamptonshire - the Bletchley Girls confound stereotypes. But they all have one common bond, the war and their highly confidential part in it. In the middle of the night, hunched over meaningless pieces of paper, tending mind-blowing machines, sitting listening for hours on end, theirs was invariably confusing, monotonous and meticulous work, about which they could not breathe a word.

By meeting and talking to these fascinating female secret-keepers who are still alive today, Tessa Dunlop captures their extraordinary journeys into an adult world of war, secrecy, love and loss. Through the voices of the women themselves, this is a portrait of life at Bletchley Park beyond the celebrated code-breakers, it's the story of the girls behind Britain's ability to consistently out-smart the enemy, and an insight into the women they have become.

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