

Bletchley Park Codebreakers

Bletchley Park is in Buckinghamshire, England. During World War Two, people worked there to break German codes which allowed them to read secret German messages. This extract shows how a crossword in *The Daily Telegraph* helped recruit codebreakers to work at Bletchley.

Could you have been a codebreaker at Bletchley Park?

The Daily Telegraph's cryptic crossword on January 13 1942 played a crucial role in helping the Allies win the Second World War.

5 In January 1942, a series of letters to The Daily Telegraph had claimed that the paper's crossword wasn't hard enough. It could be solved in a matter of minutes, they said; so a man
10 called WAJ Gavin, the chairman of the Eccentric Club, suggested this be put to the test. He put up a £100 prize, to be donated to charity in the event that anyone could do it, and Arthur Watson,
15 the paper's then editor, arranged a competition in the newsroom on Fleet Street.

Five people beat the 12-minute deadline, although one, the fastest, had
20 misspelled a word and was disqualified. The puzzle was printed in the next day's edition, January 13 1942, so that everyone could try their hand. And there the matter might have rested

25 – but, unknown to the Telegraph and the contestants, the War Office was watching. Stanley Sedgewick, one of those who took part, said: "Several weeks later, I received a letter
30 marked 'Confidential' inviting me, as a consequence of taking part in 'The Daily Telegraph Crossword Time Test', to make an appointment to see Col Nichols of the General Staff, who
35 'would very much like to see you on a matter of national importance.'" Mr Sedgewick, and several others who took part that day, ended up working at Bletchley Park, breaking German
40 military codes.

[...]

Crosswords are about getting inside the mind of your opponent, and in the same way, codebreaking was about getting inside the mind of your enemy. The
45 codebreakers came to know the people encoding the messages individually, by their styles, as crossword-solvers come to know setters. One, Mavis Batey, worked out that two of the Enigma
50 machine operators had girlfriends called Rosa: "She worked it out, trying different options, like in a crossword. Once it worked once, it was an obvious option elsewhere."

An abridged article from www.telegraph.co.uk