

Islington U3A

Outing to Bletchley Park – Tuesday 11 September 2018



This full day outing was to Bletchley Park on the outskirts of Milton Keynes, a 34 minute train journey from Euston. The group met at Euston mainline station – 29 of us including the three organisers, and on arriving at Bletchley station we walked the very short distance to the Park, and made our way to Block C – the Visitor Centre, where we paid and went into centre. Here there was a café which we took advantage of, and people were able to book a free tour of the site, get a free

map with information about the various places and borrow free headphones telling of the history and people connected with Bletchley Park, and where to visit.



The people who worked at Bletchley during the war were from many and any walks of life – but they had to be able to complete the Daily Telegraph cryptic crossword in 12 minutes.... and probably have other gifts as well. Some of the people we still hear of now are Dilly Knox, John Jeffreys, Peter Twinn, Alan Turing, Tony Kendrick and Gordon Welchman.

The site is large with many different places to see.

There are a lake and gardens more or less in the centre (with lots of places for picnics), an original Victorian mansion with some rooms on the ground floor recreated as they were in WW2, some war memorials and many wooden huts. Everything we saw referenced that period of our history.



People chose how they were going to see the park – some went on tours, others used the map and headphones, others walked around in small groups looking at places of interest to themselves. People met each other and swapped ‘good things to see’ and time passed quickly. We joined together for lunch in the main café and then continued our viewings.

Bletchley Park was used by the Government from 1938 as the Government Code and Cypher Scheme. Gradually more and more people were recruited to work at Bletchley, growing to several thousand by the end. Finally the codebreakers and expertise at Bletchley became the Government Communications Headquarters – GCHQ.



The big challenge for Britain from the 1930s was to try and decode communication signals sent between the German military. Their coding machine for messages was called Enigma, and the aim at Bletchley was to decode the Enigma messages. This was successful – but not revealed until the end of the war.



The wooden huts scattered around the site were the workrooms and offices for the people working there (no-one slept at the site, although it was round the clock working). Some huts are not original as many have become rather dilapidated over the past 70 years. However, there is a building programme for the huts, and in these replicas more of the vast amount of material that Bletchley Park owns will be on display..

Everyone seemed very pleased with the visit. Bletchley has so much to offer that one could return several times and always find new things to learn.

