

The Women of Bletchley Park: Decrypting Gender Equality Process Paper

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Junior Division
Group Website
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From the beginning, both of us were very interested in cryptanalysis and its applications during WWII. Alan Turing came up as a natural project idea. However, as this is a relatively common topic that many participants choose to research, we thought that we could take a slightly different approach by looking at the often underrepresented women who worked there. This proved to be a very interesting and rich approach as it casts a whole new light upon a field that is almost completely dominated by men in the literature.

We decided to make a website for the contest because it suited both our topic as well as the primary and secondary sources that we were able to access. Case in point: we had an abundance of audio and video recordings as well as images and quotes, so creating a website seemed like both an efficient and aesthetically pleasing method of displaying our research. Additionally, a website was the easiest project category to work on with a partner as both could work remotely, and small changes are much easier to make. After deciding that we wanted to create a website, we began by laying out all of our pages and sub-pages, so the project would seem coherent. Then we began by writing our analysis for each sub-section and inserted the quotes, images, and audio and video recording around it. We also decided on a theme relatively early as it helped guide us in our layout and design decisions.

We began researching by reading general information about Bletchley Park in both books and websites. Our member Madeleine visited the National Cryptologic Museum in Fort Meade, MD on a family trip, and was able to use and touch an original Enigma machine as well as gaining access to their archives. We also contacted various trusts and archives for primary sources, including The Bletchley Park Trust, The Imperial War Museum (Britain,) The National Archives (Britain,) The National Museum of Computing (Britain,) The Library of Congress, and The National Churchill Museum. We also interviewed Betty Webb who worked at Bletchley

Park as well as current members of the cybersecurity community. For our long-term consequences the Association for Women in Computing was also very helpful.

Our topic relates to this year's theme of *Taking a Stand in History* because all of the women at Bletchley Park each individually took a risk, faced opposition, as well as inspiring change and action. When they defied society's expectations for them as women by assisting the war effort using their intellectual prowess, they shattered the idea that women can only be housewives and teachers even though this idea had been instigated to them for all of their lives. They faced opposition both at universities and later at Bletchley Park when their male counterparts deemed them unworthy and subsequently denied them access from resources and opportunities. These extraordinary heroes changed the landscape for women in the workforce forever by helping win WWII for the Allied Forces, amongst other accomplishments.