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Gordon Welchman: Bletchley Park's Architect Of Ultra Intelligence



Synopsis

“A magnificent biography which finally provides recognition to one of Bletchley’s and Britain’s lost heroes.” Michael Smith The Official Secrets Act and the passing of time have prevented the Bletchley Park story from being told by many of its key participants. Here at last is a book which allows some of them to speak for the first time. Gordon Welchman was one of the Park’s most important figures. Like Turing, his pioneering work was fundamental to the success of Bletchley Park and helped pave the way for the birth of the digital age. Yet, his story is largely unknown to many. His book, *The Hut Six Story*, was the first to reveal not only how they broke the codes, but how it was done on an industrial scale. Its publication created such a stir in GCHQ and the NSA that Welchman was forbidden to discuss the book or his wartime work with the media. In order to finally set the record straight, Bletchley Park historian Joel Greenberg has drawn on Welchman’s personal papers and correspondence with wartime colleagues which lay undisturbed in his son’s loft for many years. Packed with fascinating new insights, this is essential reading for anyone interested in the clandestine activities at Bletchley Park.

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Customer Reviews

"There have been several books about what went on at Bletchley Park in the past few years, in fact there is another title from Pen and Sword on this page, concerning the amazing exploits of Jenny Nater. There is no doubt that the most high profile of these operatives was Alan Turing, who featured in the recent brilliant film *The Imitation Game*, starring Benedict Cumberbatch; and various

news items on our local news have featured interviews with old ladies who once worked on the codes at Bletchley Park, people who were not even allowed to tell their closest family members what they were doing. Joel Greenberg's book about Gordon Welchman reveals a man equally as fascinating equally as important as Turing, and tells us even more about what went on in this most secret of establishments during the war years." (Books Monthly)

JOEL GREENBERG is an educational technology consultant who researches and writes about Bletchley Park and its role in WWII. As a volunteer supporter of Bletchley Park, he gives lectures and conducts tours of the site. He is also a part-time member of its management team.

Review for: Gordon Welchman: Bletchley Park's Architect of Ultra Intelligence

Pages #13-107 offers among the most up-to-date, detailed account of the work at Bletchley Park over time as they found ways to decrypt and process WWII German military radio traffic. The critical contributions of Mr. Welchman and others within and outside Bletchley Park are detailed. This is, of course, more of a Gordon Welchman biography than an Alan Turing biography, though on occasion you do get some great personal insight into Turing, not only his prodigious technical capability but also his generous character. If you are interested in the subject of WWII Ultra work at Bletchley Park I recommend this book for these 90+ pages alone. Pages #199-252 focus on HIGHLY TECHNICAL material regarding Enigma machines and the machines called bombes that helped decrypt German radio traffic. For those who really want to understand the nuts and bolts this will be a TREASURE TROVE. For others this appendix will be quickly scanned and skipped. Most of the rest of the book focuses on Mr. Welchman outside the Bletchley Park war years, including the years he wrote and published materials about his wartime experience. The book is not written to entertain, it is a work of non-fiction told in the voice of a documentary and without much of the drama of Ultra. In addition to the detailed account of the work at Bletchley Park the book is a big thank you letter to Mr. Welchman, giving credit to a little known but critical member of the Bletchley staff, and others there, as well. In telling his story the book also helps to at least partially right some wrongs done to Mr. Welchman which we read about in the book. For example, one of his inventions at Bletchley with profound implications for the project resulted in a large financial prize at the end of the war .. that was given to the fellow that built it for Bletchley, not Mr. Welchman who invented it. This book doesn't go into much detail on the impact of Ultra on the war, it mostly focuses on how it all worked in detail when discussing the subject. I highly recommend this book for authoritative details on Ultra and Enigma not always covered elsewhere, if that is what you are looking forward to from this book. Clearly, if in addition

you are interested in the biography of Mr. Welchman, this is a must read. SOME INSIGHTS FROM THE BOOK:-----

(1) I have read several accounts on the Ultra project at Bletchley Park and never really knew much about the important contributions of Mr. Gordon Welchman. The book also gives specific credit to several others whose important contributions often don't make it into the books on Ultra. If you saw the recent movie on Turing and Ultra you could be forgiven for getting the impression that it was all due to Alan Turing, with others taking on the role of glorified academic secretaries and Turing cheerleaders.

(2) The author makes the case that the British work against Enigma was only able to get a foot in the door at the start because of the earlier pre-war work in Poland that the Polish shared with the British. He further notes that this is true regardless of the fact that fairly soon after the initial start, the British work became quickly independent of the Polish pre-war work directly. The Polish team helped the British effort understand what was possible and gave them the head start they needed.

(3) The author gives Alan Turing credit for getting the German Naval Enigma decryption work off the ground at the start, noting that he was able to work on it largely because it was seemingly impossible to break by the time he began working on it. It was at that point Turing himself said that in order to move further along they would need to capture one of the more advanced German Naval Enigma machines.

(4) The author is able to demonstrate how critical it was to capture a working German Naval Enigma machine with materials (which came from U-559 on October 30th 1942 - pg #76), and how close they came to missing the opportunity. Two of the three men who flung themselves into the ocean to enter U-559 went down with the sub. Turing felt this kind of equipment capture was critical to cracking the German Navy implementation of Enigma. The author makes the case that it wasn't just very helpful or advantageous, it allowed work to continue on AT ALL against the German Navy version of Enigma. With so many other contributing factors to Ultra's success I never realized just how important this lucky find and sacrifice was.

When we think of WWII and Enigma we often think about individual mathematical and code-breaking genius. But in order to succeed at getting lots of usable intelligence in a timely manner, Bletchley Park needed to be a large, systematic, smooth-running organization. This book does a great job describing that aspect of BP, woven together with the biography of Gordon Welchman and his very notable contributions to creating it.

An insider's look at the inner workings of Bletchley Park in England during WWII. The author had access to Gordon Welchman's papers and archives. I knew Gordon when he was writing the book -

he was a fascinating man.

Well documented and established story on the details of secret data transport during The world wars in the 20th century. Data collected And presented in full length , but still remaining attractive and making the story more accountable: Gordon Welchman's part in the fascinating inventions, applications and finally tracking the whole German Enigma correspondence, an achievement the Germans were never ready to admit its feasibility, is told from first class dependable sources.

Fascinating piece of history, and also the tragic story of a man who basically went unrewarded for his work to defeat the Nazi regime, and whose work was utilized to create the new surveillance state. In one sense it is the story of a hidden hero, and in another it is his personal tragedy for his revealing the background to that collaborative effort, as well as having his work taken into a new direction that was unintended.

An eye opening book about the man along with others who brought us to the now every day world of computers. He opened the gateway to traffic analysis. At times the science in the book is hard to follow. In the end a sad note for a man who contributed so much.

The information contained in this novel is so historically important. What they did was critical to winning world war I I. The novel comes across somewhat dry. It took me a while to get through it

Very nicely done. Reading other books about Bletchley part and code cracking, you get the idea that the entire game was Turing and the Turing Bombe.

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