



0. STATION X CODE BREAKERS SHORTEN the WAR - Story Preface

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2. HOW DOES ENIGMA WORK?

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12. STATION X CODE BREAKERS SHORTEN the WAR

Bletchley Park has honored Alan Turing with this life-sized statute, created by Stephen Kettle. The work was commissioned by Sidney E. Frank, an American philanthropist (who developed Grey Goose Vodka). Leo Reynolds took this photo. It is online via a [CC BY-NC-SA 2.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/) license. Click on the image for a better view.

Once the Station X code breakers had vital information, taken from the code-breaking process, how did they get those vital secrets to people who could act on them?

The process of distributing the code results was called Ultra.

The source of *Ultra's* intelligence could absolutely never be revealed. No one could risk that the Germans would learn Enigma had been broken. Only a very few of the highest-ranking government officials would ever know - in real time - about the information intercepted, and decoded, at Bletchley.

Accurate information from the broken codes helped the UK to win the Battle of Britain. To avoid detection, however, bogus plans were sometimes implemented so the Germans would not guess that Britain was accurately intercepting and understanding their Enigma codes.

Ultra was passed on to the Americans who sent a team to work at Bletchley. The military intelligence was also later shared with the Russians, but they did not reveal the *source of Ultra* to the Russians.

In September of 1942, after capturing a Royal Navy gunboat MGB335, the Germans nearly discovered that their Enigma code had been broken. They found information on board the ship, but because they were so secure in their belief that Enigma was solid, they ignored the true meaning of what they had discovered.

Turing and his Bletchley team could never rest because the Germans were constantly upgrading their coding methods. One code, which Bletchley dubbed "FISH," had ten rotors.

Initially, the complexity of FISH was almost too much even for the most-advanced systems at Bletchley. It seemed impossible to crack the massive number of possible settings.

Then ... with the help of T. H. Flowers, and some input from Alan Turing and others, the world's first programmable electronic computer - a monster named "Colossus" - was born.

How did Colossus work? It used paper tape to compare a message with possible encipherments until a link was found and printed-out on a teleprinter.

Colossus began its life in February of 1944. By the end of the war, ten were in action. These machines were able to break the vast majority of Hitler's secret messages.

After Germany surrendered, Churchill insisted that all the code-breaking equipment had to be destroyed. It

was his golden goose, but he wanted to be sure no evidence of the actual equipment remained.

No one is completely sure why he wanted to take that action, but some historians believe Churchill wanted to keep the source materials and equipment out of Soviet hands. Today virtually nothing remains of the hardware used by the brilliant minds who worked at Bletchley.

The proof of their success, however, is in the victory they won.

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Questions 2 Ponder

Is It Possible to Develop a Flawless Code?

Why was it a "flaw," in the Enigma system, that any letter of the code could never, ever, become itself?

Media Stream



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