

Record of Service Podcast Episode 1: Codebreakers

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[Record of Service](#), a podcast presented by [The Memory Project](#), a program of [Historica Canada](#). In this series, we bring you interviews with Canada's veterans—their stories of life, loss and service. (Click [here](#) to view the entire series.)

Thousands of women served in intelligence facilities like Britain's Bletchley Park and Canada's [Camp X](#) during the [Second World War](#). The [Memory Project Archive](#) contains stories from women who were recruited for these secret roles through the British Women's Royal Naval Service and the [Canadian Women's Army Corps](#). Find out about more what they were doing and their oaths of secrecy.

Music Credit: Marcel Pequel – Four

Historica Canada. The way we see the world today is informed a lot by our past, both the good and the bad. This is where our podcasts come in. Podcasts like “Residential Schools”, a three-part series created to honour the stories of survivors, their families, and communities and to commemorate the history and legacy of Residential Schools in Canada.

Riley Burns: “I didn’t want to be an Indian, I didn’t know who in the hell I wanted to be. I wasn’t accepted by the white man; I was accepted by my own people in my reserve.”

AWS: Subscribe to Historica Canada Podcasts for deep dives into our past. You can listen to “Residential Schools” on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, or wherever you get your podcasts. Never stop learning.

Dorothy Lincoln: “You know I figured out what you’re doing in there. He said, ‘There’s army, navy, air force, civilians, he said, I think you’re decoding.’ Well, I nearly died on the spot and I thought, ‘My God, what am I going to say?’”

Maia Foster: Welcome to “Record of Service”, a podcast presented by Historica Canada. I’m your host, Maia Foster. In this series, we bring you interviews with Canada’s veterans—their stories of life, loss and service. Today’s episode: Codebreakers.

We begin in Bletchley Park, a Victorian manor some 80 kilometers outside of London, England. Starting in 1938, this 50-acre estate became a main station for the Government Code and Cypher School. At the start of the Second

Elizabeth Burnyeat: "Bletchley Park was full of odd people, all nationalities, all different types of uniforms, all doing different things; nobody knew what anybody else was doing."

MF: That was Elizabeth Burnyeat, a veteran decoder who worked at Bletchley. By late 1944, the staff there had ballooned to close to 10,000 people, working around the clock in three shifts. Over two thirds of the staff were women.

Dorothy Lincoln remembers being presented with this mysterious opportunity when she inquired about joining the Women's Royal Naval Service (also known as Wrens).

Dorothy Lincoln: "I went for this interview and I said 'I really want to join the Wrens.' He asked me about my life, and he said, 'Well I think I've got just the job for you'. And I said, 'Oh! What's that?' I was only about 18 at the time. And he said, 'Well, it's the most important thing and it means so much to help the war effort!' I thought, 'Heavens, I'm only 18 years old. What the heck could I possibly do that would help the war effort that much?' And so, I said

MF: Second World War decoding machines were incredibly effective, even by today's standards. Dorothy recalls a cipher challenge that took place in 2007.

DL: "The German government took an Enigma machine out of the museum and sent 3 coded messages to Bletchley, so the Colossus was in competition with a line-up of experts on the modern computers. Colossus cracked two messages the first day and they did the third one the next morning. And none of the people, none of the workers on the ordinary, not the ordinary, but the modern-day computers cracked one of them."

MF: For the first three years of the war, the Special Operations Executive was also operating Station X out of Bletchley. The SOE was created to promote sabotage and subversion behind enemy lines. It included dozens of training

young and foolish, I wanted to return to Orillia and requested a transfer. It was granted and I returned to Trinity Barracks in Toronto, expecting to return to Orillia. About that time, the training of agents at Camp X, a spy training school and communication centre, ceased operation at the end of April or early May and became entirely communications. I was sent down to an office at Yonge and King Street and interviewed by a Major Justin. A few days later, June the 1st, 1944, three CWAC were picked up by an army vehicle and driven out of Toronto to Camp X. Our first view was a group of buildings

secrecy induced anxiety in many codebreakers. It meant that few were able to

