



# Coventry CHA Rambling Club Newsletter September 2026

## Annual outing to Bletchley Park Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> September.



It was a lovely warm day, and we were able to appreciate all the facilities at Bletchley Park. Most ramblers choose to partake of the hour-long tour with a guide. Simon, our guide, was a previous employee, and he had many interesting facts to impart to us.

Bletchley Park's wartime secrets were first revealed to the public in 1974 through the book *The Ultra Secret* by F.W. Winterbotham, due to a 30-year black out when all information about the wartime operations was classified.

The Bletchley Park Trust was established on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 1992, to rescue and preserve the decaying historic site. The following year in 1993 the site officially opened its doors as an independent museum and visitor attraction.

The park was once the world's best kept secret and a key part of the country's war effort against Germany. Every detail about the sprawling Buckinghamshire estate was shrouded in mystery as German Enigma codes were cracked using the Bombe machine. Until wartime information was declassified in the mid-1970s, no-one who worked at the home of what was called the Government Code and Cypher School was allowed to talk about it.

'Without the story being told, the damp and dilapidated huts fell into disrepair and reached the point two years ago where they were almost beyond salvage.' our guide explained. Following a painstaking restoration it now attracts 140,000 visitors per year.



Bletchley Park was the World War Two home of the Government Code and Cypher School (GC&CS), Britain's signals intelligence agency, later renamed GCHQ.

During WW2, Germany used Enigma machines to encrypt messages. These devices typically changed settings every 24 hours and with 103 sextillion possible combinations every day, the staff at Bletchley Park worked around the clock to break the settings by hand. Alan Turing originally developed the Bombe to help work out the settings of Naval Enigma, which was not breakable by the current by-hand methods. A mechanical method for identifying Enigma keys sped up the process.

Enigma machines featured a set of rotors, as well as a plugboard, which helped create all the different settings. The electronic Bombe machines featured multiple drums representing these rotors, like having multiple Enigma machines strapped together, allowing for potential settings to be quickly checked. Hundreds of the machines were operated by Wrens. It was said to be boring and oppressive work, with the women running the machines during long shifts in dark, stuffy rooms.



Huts 11, 11A and 11B were the home of Bombe operations at Bletchley Park. The very first machines produced were delivered to Hut 1 but, once the prototype Bombes were fully operational. More space was required. Hut 11 was built first, housing up to six machines from March 1941. Hut 11A replaced Hut 11 in February 1942, housing up to nine machines. It also contained the Bombe Control Room (this later moved to Hut 3, renamed Hut 23 in 1943). Hut 11B, a long timber-built hut to the south of Hut 11A, now demolished, was used for training Wren Bombe Operators.

By speeding up the process of breaking the day's Enigma settings, Turing's invention meant staff were able to decode quickly and pass on intelligence for it to be acted upon. Intelligence uncovered prior to the battle of El Alamein in 1942 contributed to victory in the Egyptian campaign, and this proved to be a turning point in the war in North Africa.

The use of Bombes in cryptanalysis had a huge impact across many land, sea, and air campaigns. An example is how, in 1944, Enigma decrypts provided details of German defensive preparations for, and reactions to the D-Day invasion.

The Bombes represented the first mass production of a specially designed cryptanalytical machine. They heralded the industrialisation of codebreaking and the intelligence they provided was crucial to Allied success in WW2. They were a significant part of the Bletchley Park operation



Our guide explained that the work was intense and involved many hours of concentration. Therefore, the organisation gave much encouragement to relaxation activities. So, there were many facilities for tennis, cricket, skating, dancing in order to achieve a good corporation and socially balanced work force.

Our ramblers took this principle of relaxation to heart and enjoyed some rest and recreation on the visit as well as some historical education!

## Annual General Meeting 2026

Just a reminder that the Annual General Meeting will be held on Thursday 15th October starting at 7.30 pm at St John Vianney Church Hall, 1 Bishopton Close, Coventry CV5 7GW.

These arrangements are due to the Friends Meeting House being refurbished and therefore unavailable this year for our meeting.

Any member who would like to raise an issue for discussion or would like to stand for election to the committee should notify the Club Secretary no later than 14 days prior to the meeting. If you haven't already done so, you can pay your club subscription at the AGM. Cash only please, no cheques.

## Coffee mornings report

Angela ran a successful ploughman's lunch this year and raised £600 plus for Tools for Self-Reliance

Sandra's coffee morning raised £475 for Guide Dogs for the Blind.

We thank them for opening their gardens to us and for their hard work and their teams of helpers who assisted on the day.

## Social events report

The Hook Norton Brewery trip on a vintage coach took place on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> July. There were 22 people who ventured on this trip and fortunately for us the weather was good. Everyone said that they had a lovely time and thoroughly enjoyed the free samples available!!

## Future events

Some club members will be going to the Isle of Wight from the 18<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> October 2026. Details for those involved will be sent out in October.

On Friday 25<sup>th</sup> September there will be a games night at the Brandon Social Club, Main St, Brandon, CV8 3HW. This event starts at 7pm and tickets are priced at £15 per person. This price includes a fish and chips supper. As usual if you have any items that would be suitable for raffle prizes please bring them along because they would be very much appreciated. All proceeds from the night will be going to Zoë's Place.

A reminder that on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> November, Dave's Disco will be taking place at the Eastern Green Social Club, Church Lane, Eastern Green CV5 7BX. The rave starts at 7 for 7.30p.m. The ticket price is £10 which will include nibbles only.

Also at the Eastern Green Social Club, remember to put a date in your diary for the club's Christmas celebrations. Come and join the Christmas party on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> December from noon to 4pm. Tickets will be priced at £15 per person and on this occasion includes (according to Terry!) some special entertainment!! What could it be? Something good I shouldn't wonder thinking back to the good time enjoyed by all last year!!!

## Reports on Sunday walks

The Tewkesbury walk on 21<sup>st</sup> June was led by Geoff.



It was a very nice sunny dry day (we've had quite a few this year!). For those who chose to take in the delights of Tewkesbury there was plenty to see and do. Tewkesbury was looking resplendent. Every summer the streets of Tewkesbury are decorated with nearly 200 hand-painted medieval banners representing the coats of arms of commanders, knights, and nobles who fought in the decisive 1471 Battle of Tewkesbury. In the High Street there was a Fine Food and Craft market in full swing, and the local rugby club was holding a Model Steam Gathering.

The Evesham walk on 19<sup>th</sup> July was well attended. Numbers seem to be building up nicely and the coach was very nearly full, so any non-bookers turning up on the day may have been disappointed. The walk leader was Dave. Walkers were dropped at the village of Sedgeberrow and conditions were fine and sunny for the mainly flat walk of 5 miles into Evesham. The non walkers spent the day in and around Evesham. Again, we came across steam vehicles but on the roads this time with the full-size versions. Abbey Park was a popular choice to visit and the afternoon crowds around the park's band stand were entertained by the City of Coventry Brass Band!!

The St Ives walk on the 16<sup>th</sup> August



Again, we had a nearly full coach, which was very heartening. The walk leader was Debbie. It was another hot, sunny day with a circular walk from the centre of St Ives (Cambridgeshire) of roughly 6 miles. This was a very pleasant walk along low-lying land near to the course of the Great Ouse with plenty of breaks along the way. Stopping in the grave yard of St Thomas's, Hemingford Grey, which runs alongside the river was a particular favourite with great views. Non walkers had the historic medieval market town of St Ives to explore, with plenty

of tea and coffee houses, independent shops and river side pubs and cafes.