

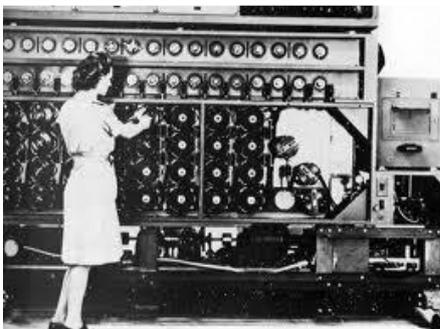
My wife graduated from QUB in 1942. Joan was a bright, serious student, so it was satisfying, but not surprising, when she got a double first in French and German.

As soon as she graduated she was seized by the Foreign Office and offered a job in England, no doubt on the recommendation of her German Professor. On reflection it seems more like hijacking because jobs like that were not all that easily obtained in Northern Ireland at that time.

She set off not knowing where she would be working, though she knew she would be billeted with a family in Wolverton, a small town in Buckinghamshire. There was no advance description of the nature of her work although the nature of her degree gave some indication. The only address she had was that of the family with whom she would be living. However, and I have no idea why it was released, she did have a phone number. This, of course, was meaningless to her when she set off.

However, I was determined to get in touch with her as quickly as possible and overcome this awful hiatus in our relationship. 1942 had been a difficult year for us. I had been seconded to work in London for the first four months and somehow I had to find time to study for my accountancy finals which I would have to take in November. Of course it might be said that we both did better in exams because of this ruthless separation.

Almost immediately after Joan departed for England I left for a few days' holiday in Bundoran, Donegal with my mother and one of my sisters. It struck me that this would be a nice quiet place to try a phone call to Joan and so on the Sunday evening I set off for the public phone box with a pocketful of coins.



However, I soon found out that calling from a public phone box in the Republic was not going to be plain sailing. It seemed to me that the telephone operators in the South were really trying to be helpful but they were quite unable to link up with the number I wanted. I know now that their task was quite beyond them and even if I could have told them the name of the place I was trying to contact it would have meant little or nothing. It was to be many years later and after the War before the public were to be told anything about Enigma and Bletchley Park and the vital and secret work that was carried out there. The telephone operators in a neutral country had no hope.

But the guardians of the yet unknown computer knew what was happening all right and on Monday morning Joan was brought before the top brass to explain why she was being 'phoned by a man from a foreign country. She was threatened with immediate dismissal and I am sure that it was only because of her obvious serious honesty that she was able to talk her way out of the situation. Well she did, and she had a very successful career until we decided that the time had come for us to get married. As a tribute to her discretion, might I say, that we were married many years before she disclosed her special work during the war.