

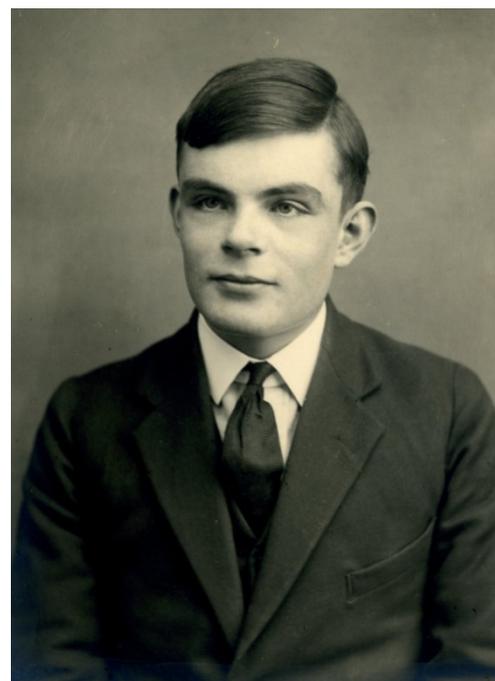
The Boy who Shared a Study with Alan Turing

'In person he is less untidy: in his study he is such that were I with him he would be daily belaboured' wrote Geoffrey O'Hanlon on Alan Turing's school report at the end of Summer Term 1928.

The poor boy who did share a study at Westcott House with Alan Turing was Matthew Blamey. Matt, who was born in 1911, had arrived at Sherborne in September 1925, two terms ahead of Alan Turing who arrived on his bicycle in May 1926.

Matthew Blamey, now aged 100 and living in a residential home on his adopted island of Guernsey, is a good-natured, generous and kind man whose father sent him to Sherborne because the Headmaster of his Prep School told him *"You can't do better than Sherborne"*.

When interviewed about his time at Sherborne School, Matt recalls an initiation ceremony for new boys at Westcott House that involved standing on a chair and singing a song to the rest of the House. Matt's rendition of *'She'll be Coming Round the Mountain'* was clearly not very good and he was prodded by the Head Prefect to shut up and for the next boy to perform.



Alan Turing in 1928.



Westcott House, 1929.

Matt Blamey is in the back row on the far left-hand side and Alan Turing is on the far right-hand side of the middle row. Their housemaster, Geoffrey O'Hanlon is in the front row with his dog Judy on his knee.

The Westcott House photographs show a neat and gentle boy who only won a boxing medal because his third and final opponent was off sick on the day of their fight. Geoffrey O'Hanlon, the housemaster of Westcott House, obviously had a high opinion of Matt and asked him to share a study with Alan Turing hoping that he would help organise Alan and interest him in a wider range of subjects than just mathematics and science. Today, Matt admits he failed.

The study that Matt and Alan shared was on the ground floor of Westcott House overlooking Horsecastles. Matt remembers that it was furnished with a large table and two chairs, to which Matt added a rug borrowed from his mother and an armchair purchased from the previous occupant.



Westcott House in Horsecastles, Sherborne.

Alan and Matt's study was the third window on the right on the ground floor.

Matt tried to do what O'Hanlon had asked of him, reminding Alan that it was time for chapel and taking him to Canon Eperson's Gramophone Society where they listened to records, but he recalls that Turing remained unmoved, considering it "*just music*", and was only stirred by one recording by the Italian tenor Enrico Caruso. Alan also remained untidy and disorganised, leaving his papers strewn across the shared desk in their study.

After Matt left Sherborne in December 1929 he and Alan kept in touch, writing letters until the outbreak of the Second World War made communication difficult. Unfortunately, Matt no longer has the letters he received from Alan but he continued to follow Alan's career and was as surprised as everyone else when it was revealed that he had worked at Bletchley Park and played such an important role in cracking the Enigma code and bringing the War to an early end. Today, Matt is still very proud that he is the boy who once shared a study with Alan Turing.

This article is published in memory of Matthew Hind Blamey (1911-2013).

Rachel Hassall
School Archivist
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Matt Blamey in January 2011.