

## **Moore Place During the War**

You may be familiar of the Bletchley Codebreakers and their work during the war against the Nazis, but did you know that some of them were housed right here at Moore Place during their time working at Bletchley Park?!

As you can imagine, not a lot of records were kept about the codebreakers, so trying to establish dates and names is proving tricky, but we have unearthed a lot of fascinating history as a result of looking in to this. The hotel has undergone a lot of changes since then, but there are still a lot of original features and rooms that would have been used during the code breakers time here. It is likely that would have stayed in what are now our suites and standard rooms in the manor house part of the hotel.

It wasn't called Moore Place Hotel back then either, it was known as The Holt, and was a hostel.

As well as the code breakers, The Holt also housed German Prisoners of War. In September 1940, a man called Sefton Delmer was recruited by the Political Warfare Executive (PWE) to organize black propaganda broadcasts to Nazi Germany as part of a psychological warfare campaign. Based at Wavendon Towers in what is now Milton Keynes, the operation joined a number of other "research units" operating propaganda broadcasts.

One of the radio stations Delmer created was called the "Soldatensender Calais" (Calais Armed Forces Radio Station) and was based in Milton Bryan, only a few minutes from Moore Place/The Holt. Soldatensender Calais broadcast a combination of popular music, "cover" support of the war, and "dirt" – items to demoralize German Forces. The programmes encouraged German soldiers to surrender, gave false and misleading instructions to civilians, and played music that the Nazi regime frowned upon. As well as the main aim of turning the German people against the Nazis and demoralising enemy soldiers, Milton Bryan also played the latest German hits, and had the latest news from Germany which had been intercepted at Bletchley Park.

Broadcasts were made to the German Army across Europe, to U-boat crews in the Atlantic, and also directly into Germany itself. One trick was to wait until official German radio stations had gone off air during air raids, then Milton Bryan would broadcast on the same frequencies, so the Germans thought they were still listening to the real station. The work of Milton Bryan was so convincing that Goebbels, the Nazi head of propaganda, complained about how well they did their job. Delmer used German Prisoners of War to "host" these broadcast so as to sound as convincing as possible and 16 of them were housed at The Holt (Moore Place).

The radio station at Milton Bryan stood derelict for many years after the Second World War, but the main building, guard house, air raid bunker, and some of the living quarters still exist. There are still bars on the windows where German prisoners of war used to broadcast, and the remains of the blackout screens still hang over the windows.

The building is now being gradually renovated by the Ampthill and Woburn District Scouts, who use the surrounding land as a campsite. One of the old Nissen huts has been turned into a canteen, and the other into a toilet block. The side of the main building now has a climbing wall for abseiling!

Although the work of Milton Bryan remained a secret for many years, the techniques the station pioneered are still being used today.



The Main Building



Sefton Delmer



The Guardhouse