

## **Bletchley Park's Tudor Secrets.**

On 21 April 2009 the secrets of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I will be revealed at Bletchley Park. It was during their reigns that a code system developed so complex it was not broken for nearly 300 years. Tudor spymasters and code breakers were the power behind the throne leading to the defeat of the Spanish Armada and the execution of Mary, Queen of Scots.

Britain's secret little post office at Bletchley Park is issuing a first day cover for a new set of postage stamps featuring the six Tudor Kings and Queens. The cover design depicts Tudor codes and secret writing plus six men who had a big impact on the use of cryptography to win wars and expose treason plots.

The cover insert reveals the shadowy world behind the throne with a code wheel similar to those used to create secret Tudor messages. These little pieces of art and history are a numbered limited edition of 500 and only available from Bletchley Park Post Office, The Mansion, Bletchley Park, Milton Keynes, MK3 6EB, 01908 631797/272690. Web site [www.bletchleycovers.com](http://www.bletchleycovers.com). Priced at £15 plus £1.50 p&p with proceeds going to the preservation of Bletchley Park.

### Historical note:

The reign of the Tudors saw significant developments in the use of codes and ciphers with 16th century Venice a hotbed of intrigue and espionage because it controlled the world's mail services. Cardinal Wolsey was chaplain to Henry VII and developed a code system for writing to him from Venice. Wolsey became a favourite of the next King, Henry VIII. Wolsey also trained his secretary, Thomas Cromwell, in Venice and Cromwell became responsible for developing Henry VIII's counterespionage service. Edward VI died young whilst Lady Jane Grey became Queen for just 9 days and was executed on the orders of Mary Tudor. "Bloody Mary" reigned for 5 years dying in 1558.

William Cecil, later Lord Burleigh, assisted in ensuring the accession of Elizabeth I to the throne. As Secretary of State he took over the Queen's espionage service and was a prime mover in prosecuting Mary, Queen of Scots. He passed the secret service role to Sir Francis Walsingham, who established a network of agents, spies and code breakers that set the pattern for centuries to come. One of history's greatest spymasters, he even delayed the Spanish Armada and imposed a British intelligence blackout that was not repeated until the D-Day landings of 1944. This helped provide Drake with the time and secrecy he needed. In 1586, Walsingham's code breakers led by Thomas Phelippes discovered the Babington Plot. Anthony Babington and Mary had been exchanging coded messages hidden in the bungs of barrels. Breaking

their codes and adding a forged postscript implicated Mary Stuart in a treason plot for which she was executed in 1587. At that time, French diplomat, Blaise de Vigenère, developed an unbreakable encryption system. It was not broken until Charles Babbage developed the first automated computing machine in the 19th century. The next major developments were the Enigma machine and the work of Bletchley Park.