



# THE BLETCHLEY CIRCLE

**Written by Guy Burt**

**Produced by Jake Lushington**

**Directed by Andy De Emmony**

**Executive Produced by Simon Heath**

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# INTRODUCTION

***“He’s making a pattern and he doesn’t realise he’s doing it. If we can crack it we’ll be able to see what his next move will be. Just like knowing where the German army will be in three day’s time. We can get ahead of him and stop him before he kills again.”***

Four ordinary women with an extraordinary flair for code-breaking and razor-sharp intelligence skills are the focus of ITV’s new murder mystery drama, **The Bletchley Circle**.

Twice BAFTA award-winner, **Anna Maxwell Martin** (*Accused, South Riding, Bleak House*) stars as Susan, **Rachael Stirling** (*Women in Love, Boy Meets Girl, Tipping the Velvet*) is Millie, RADA graduate **Sophie Rundle** (*Episodes, Garrow’s Law*) plays Lucy and **Julie Graham** (*Lapland, Survivors, William and Mary*) is Jean.

Three x 60-minute episodes have been commissioned from World Productions (*United, Line of Duty*) based on the lives of four fictional women whose brilliant work at top security HQ Bletchley Park during World War II helped break codes used by the German military.

Set in 1952, Susan, Millie, Lucy and Jean have returned to their normal lives, modestly setting aside the part they played in producing crucial intelligence, which helped the Allies to victory and shortened the war.

Behind Susan’s conventional exterior as a 1950’s housewife and mother, there’s a steely determination you under-estimate at your peril.

Seemingly unadventurous and conservative on the surface, our unlikely heroine is a force to be reckoned with. She just hasn’t done anything about it for the last 9 years!

Until now that is...and the unresolved murders of Jane Hart and Patricia Oakes. With her handwritten charts of numbers, dates and times and stretched lines of wool connecting pins to clips, Susan has spotted a pattern of behaviour no-one else has...

Susan goes to the police only to be met with utter skepticism by the desk sergeant. Unaware of her Bletchley background, the police refuse to take Susan’s theory seriously. She quickly realises she can only begin to crack the murders and bring the culprit to justice with her former friends.

Bohemian Millie, speaker of fourteen languages and a streetwise approach to life, Lucy who’s youthful, naïve exterior masks a brilliant memory for data recall and Jean, the methodical no-nonsense organiser with valuable access to key records and documents.

Produced by Jake Lushington (*The Devil’s Whore, Mysterious Creatures*), and directed by Andy De Emmony (*Cutting It, Kenneth Williams: Fantabulosa!*) **The Bletchley Circle** is a taut thriller created and written by Guy Burt (*Kingdom, The Borgias*). Simon Heath (*Hancock and Joan, Party Animals*) is the Executive Producer.

“**The Bletchley Circle** is about what might have been,” says Jake. “Despite the era they were in, women like Susan and Millie had the capacity, the ideas and the ability to process evidence and crack a murder case. In many ways it is a form of police profiling which was way ahead of its time,” he added.

**The Bletchley Circle** has been commissioned for ITV by Drama Commissioning team, Laura Mackie and Sally Haynes.

“**The Bletchley Circle** combines a vivid portrait of post-war Britain with a taut and original code-breaking thriller.” said Laura. “I’m delighted that we’ve attracted such a strong cast to bring it to life”

# THE CHARACTERS

## **SUSAN played by Anna Maxwell Martin**

Married to Timothy and has two small children, her husband doesn't know about her past as a code-breaker at Bletchley Park. She is the driving force behind getting the group of girls back together from Bletchley in an attempt to solve the run of murders that have been occurring. Strong and intelligent, Susan is conflicted between following her instincts and helping solve the crimes while trying her best to be a good wife and mother.

## **MILLIE played by Rachael Stirling**

She is a ballsy, feisty character with an aristocratic background. Millie didn't marry after Bletchley but travelled the world instead. Best friend of Susan's but estranged. Her street-wise knowledge contrasts with the experience of the other women. In all senses Millie is the most modern and independent of the characters. She is a brilliant linguist and cartographer.

## **LUCY played by Sophie Rundle**

Lucy is the youngest, from a lower class background than the rest of the women and married to an abusive and controlling man. With a formidable photographic memory, Lucy's skills are vital, although she is younger, more naive and the most vulnerable of them all. She is determined to help solve the crimes and even puts herself in danger to do so.

## **JEAN played by Julie Graham**

She is the eldest of the four women and was in charge of the girls at Bletchley Park. She has the demeanor of a stern sergeant major but moral and committed at the same time. Now a librarian, she is exceptional at administration and digging into records to track down a murderer. She is resolutely single.

## **TIMOTHY played by Mark Dexter**

Unaware of his wife's talents, Timothy is a nice and supportive husband who loves his wife and family. A man of his time, he expects his wife to look after the children and their home. A minor civil servant, Timothy struggles with the increasingly headstrong and unexplained behaviour of his wife. Timothy fought in the Royal Artillery in World War II and nearly lost his life but managed to escape although his leg was badly injured.

## **CAVENDISH played by Simon Williams**

He is stern and particular. A now retired 'spook', he ran the disinformation department during the war. He eventually agrees to help Susan, even at the cost of his own life.

## **DEPUTY COMMISSIONER WAINWRIGHT played by Michael Gould**

Deputy Commissioner Wainwright is heading up the investigation into the murdered girls. He takes Susan seriously when others in his position may not, but still underestimates what she and the rest of the women are capable of.

## **ANGELA played by Anastasia Hille**

Knows Jean from the war and also worked for a brief time at Electra House. She's not as straight-laced as she seems.

## **HARRY played by Ed Birch**

Married to Lucy, he is an obnoxious man who puts his wife in her place, often by beating her up. He is unaware of his wife's background at Bletchley Park or her particular skills.

# INTERVIEW WITH PRODUCER JAKE LUSHINGTON

Jake Lushington did not hesitate when he first heard about **The Bletchley Circle**.

“The writer Guy Burt and I were talking about a few other things and then he told me about this idea and I commissioned it on the spot,” recalls Jake. “I thought it was a brilliant premise for a drama and something I’d never seen before.

“What if a group of women from Bletchley Park had got back together after one of them spots a pattern in a series of murders in the 1950s?”

The filming included a day at the real Bletchley Park in Buckinghamshire where British code-breakers worked in total secrecy during World War Two.

“It’s a very small part of the drama but they gave us some of their historic machines to feature in the scenes shot at Bletchley Park”, added Jake.

Intelligence achievements at Bletchley included breaking German cyphers used for transmitting messages and produced information later said to have shortened the war by between two and four years. As the drama highlights, in one example it enabled Britain and her allies to know where the Germany Army would be in three days’ time.

Susan (Anna Maxwell Martin), Millie (Rachael Stirling), Lucy (Sophie Rundle) and Jean (Julie Graham) are first seen carrying out vital code-breaking roles at Bletchley Park in 1943 before the drama moves on to London in 1952.

“They were very bright women working in a time when they were valued. But when the war was over they were put back in their box,” explains Jake.

“People at Bletchley Park had signed the Official Secrets Act and could not tell anyone what they had done - not even their husbands.

“There were a lot of secrets back then. Husbands and wives didn’t tell each other everything. The idea of emotional honesty in relationships is something that only really hit in the late Sixties and Seventies.

“It was a male world in the 1950s. Men were working and a lot of women weren’t. So they were very separated.

“We’ve seen it from the male side, of men lying to their wives. And yet we’re more shocked by women lying to their men? We’re all living in a little bit of a dream world there. That’s what’s good about this. We see things in a completely different way.

“This is a fictional celebration of the women from Bletchley Park as they reunite in the 1950s and use their skills to try and catch a killer. They can help in a way that other people, including the police, can’t.”

Susan is compelled to act when she detects a pattern in a series of chilling murders of young women.

“Essentially what they were asked to do in the war was look at code and at repetition of incident and try to decipher that. In other words trying to decipher information that was deliberately being covered up.

“A murderer is also trying to cover their tracks. So Susan and these women look at evidence and find an unconscious pattern that might give a killer away. And if you can find that then you can predict behaviour.

"It's not like Sherlock Holmes where it's all about an observation of a tiny thing that gives you the clue. These women don't work off just one piece of information. They work with lots of data, put it in a row and go, 'What does that tell us?'

"That's what computers do today. Google does that every day with your shopping or website preferences and then forms a profile of you. That's what these women were doing then. That's definitely ahead of its time and yet now an everyday part of life."

Susan takes her initial theory to the police but is met with a mixed response.

"Policemen were a combination of very old fashioned and not very coordinated back then. Some at the top were starting to look at psychological profiling and analysing evidence in a different way. But it would take a while to come to fruition.

"Nothing really changed until the Yorkshire Ripper case when people realised we had to have centralised records across the country.

"Before that people could move and never get caught. Back in the 1950s people really could evade detection."

Jake hopes viewers will be intrigued by the four women who make up **The Bletchley Circle**.

"A lot of them came from university where their skills were spotted. Lucy has got a very particular skill, with a photographic memory, which would have even been picked up at school. And that would have been registered.

"Susan would have done mathematics at Oxford, Cambridge, Exeter or Durham. But they also interviewed women who could do the Daily Telegraph crossword. So quite odd ways of recruitment."

He adds: "There's no romantic interest in our drama. Some of them are married, some of them are not. And Susan is having to balance looking after children with solving a very complex crime. So it's very familiar and yet quite unfamiliar at the same time.

"Today, if women had made that much of an impact during a major war, we wouldn't say, 'Thank you very much. You can go to suburbia now.' We'd go, 'What can you do next for us?'

"And that's not in any way to say that they didn't have fulfilling and wonderful lives having children or any of those things. But some would have liked a choice.

"Susan's view is, 'Why shouldn't we be useful if we've got these brains? We can help in a way that other people can't see.' It's about a wasted resource as much as it's about saving people's lives."

Other locations used in the series included the site of the former Battersea Power Station, the Bluebell Railway in Sussex and the Royal Courts of Justice in The Strand.

How difficult is it in 2012 to make a drama mainly set in 1950s' post-war London?

"It gets harder and harder in terms of the exterior scenes. So you've got to go to the institutions that almost on principle don't change - like Town Halls, Royal Courts of Justice, Lincoln's Inn Fields. Or the Bluebell Railway, which is a tourist attraction for its preservation of history.

"You have to pick and choose and jump around a lot to find things you want. We've also used St Pancras station because part of our story is set there. Fortunately

they've restored the exterior perfectly but the interior had got the Eurostar in it. So we're having to do some clever things with CGI."

The interior of Susan's home was filmed in a real south London house which had been kept in 1950s' style, including period furniture, by its owner.

"The woman who kept it loves that period. There were a few windows which we had to re-cover. But about 80 per cent of it was fine. Funnily enough, the only trouble was that it was a bit too sparkly and this is set in an age of austerity. So we had to dirty down her pristine 1950s' house."

Authentic locations and backdrops all help but Jake maintains: "It's the drama that you need to believe. This is about a group of friends, their relationship and investigations.

"The ambition is to surprise the audience and keep them wondering what's going to happen next. I think this is a fresh, exciting, thrilling and gripping story."

Jake's credits include: *The Devil's Whore*; *Inspector George Gently*; *Black Cab*; *Mysterious Creatures*.

## INTERVIEW WITH WRITER GUY BURT

"I'm a bit of a computer geek in secret," reveals writer Guy Burt. "So I'm very interested by the early days of computing and obviously what Alan Turing did at Bletchley Park was extraordinary."

"But in reading up on that I found out about all the women who worked there. And I read accounts of what it was like – particularly intensive intellectual activity and secrecy."

"Then after the war you had to keep that entirely to yourself. Several of the accounts had only been written once husbands or families had died because the women concerned didn't want to write the story and reveal that for 40 years they had been keeping a secret."

Where did the idea for **The Bletchley Circle** spring from?

"It was very largely to do with thinking about what it must have been like to be a woman back in the Fifties. I'm also always interested in outsiders and people who are marginalised."

"It struck me that if you'd been given such an extraordinary sense of purpose and been using your mind so intensely during the war years, it must have been very strange indeed to then have to go back and be a normal housewife again."

"I think I would have felt bored in the Fifties. These women did something extraordinary for five years and then found themselves in a decade of austerity and a rigid return to old fashioned values."

The four women at the heart of the drama reunite in 1952 but cannot let others know of their extraordinary past.

"You had to keep the secret of what you had been doing and not tell anyone, which must have been really strange."

"People took vows of secrecy and promises with great seriousness. Nowadays we're very much more relaxed about what we consider to be our duty in these sorts of circumstances and can be very sceptical. If the government asks us to keep a secret our instinctive reaction is one of suspicion."

Women took the place of men on the home front during the Second World War.

"With most of the men off fighting, women did run the country. They ran the trains, they worked in factories, tilled the land and most of the jobs that the men had done."

"It's probably true that quite a lot of women were very happy to go back to family and domestic life after the war. If you're working in a munitions factory, it's not very pleasant or empowering. Going home after that would have been a relief."

"But for some women the war gave them a glimpse into a different world where suddenly you were given this purpose and responsibility, only to then have it taken away. Some people who worked at Bletchley went on to have academic careers or whatever. But most of them didn't."

Most of the drama is set in 1952, seven years after the end of World War Two, when Britain was a very different place to today.

"It was a strange time. As well as the deprivation that comes after the war and the austerity, it was quite a closed society in some senses. And you've got the looming, developing menace of the Cold War as well.

"The story is very much to do with struggling against an entire society, set of systems and values, that expects you to be one thing when you know you could be something else. How do you respond when the police don't listen and society expects you to stay at home and look after your children?

"Today we're very comfortable with the idea of women saying, 'I want a family, I want children, but I also want to have a career and an intellectually stimulating life.' That was simply not an option that seemed to be available to the women in this drama.

"Because Susan is very good at patterns and pattern-based recognition, it seemed to me that it would follow naturally that her approach to looking at a murder case would be to look for patterns.

"And that's something that simply wasn't being done in the Fifties. It's the kind of pattern analysis that was done at the CIA at Langley in the Seventies."

Susan (Anna Maxwell Martin), Millie (Rachael Stirling), Lucy (Sophie Rundle) and Jean (Julie Graham) bring different individual skills to the hunt for a killer.

"They haven't got a text book for how you go about profiling a case like this. They are having to almost invent the methodology as they go along. So they're going on their training, instincts and the skills they learned in the war and trying to apply them.

"Susan spots the pattern to begin with. Obviously she cares about the victims but this, for her, is very largely an opportunity to have some focus, excitement and purpose in her life again, which has been missing.

"Millie's initial reason for getting into this is excitement and adventure. Those are the things that have always driven her. She's the character who has travelled abroad after the war and we sense very strongly that she wishes Susan had come with her. So there's a disappointment that exists between those two.

"Jean, who is the oldest character, is the one with the strongest moral compass. For her the decision to join up again with the group comes ultimately from a moral imperative that they might save lives.

"And then finally there's Lucy, who is very young with an unhappy home life. She is simply so glad to see her friends again. She didn't realise how much she would miss them after the war.

"Lucy has a photographic memory, so she can act as a kind of database of facts and information. Which works fine up to a point. But she's the one most haunted by what they discover because she can't erase the memory. She remembers every tiny instant of that. And that's very upsetting for her.

"So they've got very different sets of reasons for going into this investigation and gradually it becomes hugely distressing and impacting. It's no longer fun or a diversion. That's the point where they all question what they're in it for and whether they should be doing this."

Guy says the drama highlights how far women have come since the 1950s.

"It also nudges us to realise that we haven't completely stopped the journey yet. That there's still quite a long way to go before we're an equal society and everything is equally available to all."

He recalls the first day he went on set to watch filming.

"At first I was watching in another room on a monitor and wondered if they'd put some kind of sepia filter on the camera lens or something. It just looked like the Fifties with all the furnishings, wallpaper and costumes. We had a great art department along with costume and make up."

Guy was also on location when the production filmed at Bletchley Park.

"I took some snaps for my scrapbook. It was absolutely fascinating to film in the real huts. There's just something really special about being in the actual place rather than on a film set somewhere.

"The staff at Bletchley were amazing. They let us have some of the Enigma machines and some of the decoding machines. And they themselves dressed up and got into costume and came an operated them and were filmed doing it. It was just magical."

As well as his writing credits, Guy has another claim to fame from the time when he was a teacher.

"I was Prince William's first English teacher at Eton in my second or third year of teaching there. That was my first teaching job. It was a long time ago," he laughs.

Guy's credits include: *The Borgias*; *Kingdom*; *Wire In The Blood*.

## INTERVIEW WITH COSTUME DESIGNER ANNA ROBBINS

Anna Robbins was concerned with patterns of a different kind when it came to finding the right look for four former code-breakers hunting a killer.

"You've got these four beautiful women, who are really strong characters, and I wanted every single composition within their wardrobes to sit well together.

"We want it to be historically accurate and have minimised floral textiles and patterns to give it a much more austere 1950s' post-war feel.

"But I still wanted to have graphic prints and regimented patterns to connect into the code-breaking and the fact that there are all these patterns within.

"In terms of costumes I've looked at the late Forties and into the Fifties, more than the new look that arrived in the early Fifties, so it doesn't have a sense of being too optimistic, opulent or luxurious fashion-wise. Rationing was still going on and this filters through to the shapes of the clothing."

Adds Anna: "Women wouldn't have many outfits at this time, so we've got a capsule wardrobe. So you'll see things worn a couple of times at least but in different combinations so that it's realistic.

"Millie has two coats because there's an aristocratic hangover where she probably had more bits and pieces which she picked up travelling. But Susan has one coat and a separate little jacket which is her Sunday best.

"Jean has perhaps the most contained wardrobe. She's got two suits and five blouses. We very rarely see her without her suit jacket. She's a really contained, organised woman in how she dresses."

Anna picked up some of the costumes at a monthly sale of vintage clothing in west London.

"There's some really beautiful authentic clothing with definitely more work done on them that there would be in, say, a modern blouse of today, with incredible pattern-cutting techniques.

"One of the women's suits, from the late 1940s, was also bought at the fair. It gives you a real high because you've got the character's measurements and a specific idea of what you want and then when you find it on a rail it all falls into place.

"When you've got women dressed as they would have been in the early Fifties, they would have been wearing suspenders and stockings and nylons, which actually comes across as being pretty glamorous and dressed up to how we are now, with relaxed, comfortable clothing.

"Also you have to realise that people don't change that much. They'll create their style in their early twenties and it kind of stays. The generation carries the style through. So when you've got twinsets and pearls on a grandmother in this century, they will have been wearing that as a glamorous twenty-something girl in the Fifties.

"Quite often when you're fitting actresses, they'll think, 'This looks really fuddy-duddy.' But no. This looks contemporary for the Fifties but you're thinking it looks like that because you see older people wearing it now."

Everyone dressed much more smartly than we usually do today.

"Men wore ties out, always. We've got a real range of men within this. Collars buttoned up, hatted gents and all that. It's an era I adore costuming."

"The things I referenced included an Ealing Studios film called *Pool of London*, which was filmed on location in London in 1951. What struck me was how contemporary it looked."

"The men wore hats and ties but the women didn't all have gloves and hats and coats. There was a fluidity to it that I really wanted to get into this production. So that it feels real and you can relate to the characters without them seeming like they're from a period drama."

Anna's research also included talking to members of her own family.

"My first port of call was my grandparents. My granny had to save up her rationing coupons to make her wedding dress."

"She had a friend who made a wedding dress out of Gingham dish cloths pieced together. There's a photo of it and it could have been on a catwalk. It looked like couture fashion. But this was just everyday women who had to make do and mend."

Anna's credits include: *The Jury II*; *Citadel*; *The Deep*; *Hope Springs*; *Rebus*.



## ANNA MAXWELL MARTIN IS SUSAN

Everything added up for Anna Maxwell Martin when she read the scripts for **The Bletchley Circle**. Apart from one thing...

"My character Susan is a mathematics expert which is a stretch for me because I'm not. I can't even do the Sudoku," she laughs. "I am addicted to the crossword. That's the only way in which I'm like her."

"But when I started reading the first couple of pages I really liked the idea and thought, 'Yes, I want to do this.' Partly because it was a thriller and based in the 1950s and I haven't really done anything in that era. There was also the link to Bletchley Park and I was fascinated by all of that."

Susan carried out crucial code-breaking work at Bletchley during the Second World War but has to keep her role secret from others, including civil servant husband Timothy.

"There are two sides to this which I found interesting. Number one is signing the Official Secrets Act so they could not tell anyone what they were doing or had done. Which is a very interesting concept and very difficult for us in this modern age to understand truly what that meant."

"Men and women just got on with their daily lives. They also didn't harp on about traumas from the war and it put huge pressure on family life."

"I came across many couples who had not told one another what they were up to and husbands and wives who felt very aggrieved by that in later life, that there had been a secret throughout their marriage."

"But secondly what that meant for a woman. Susan has had to suppress a huge part of herself and by the early 1950s has become a housewife who is balancing the books, cooking, cleaning, domesticity, and being a mother to two children."

"I found that really fascinating about her. And the stuff I really love in Bletchley is between her and her husband and how it impacts on their marriage."

The clock ticks loudly in Susan's tidy home with puzzles and those crosswords no match for her frustrated problem solving brain.

Meanwhile outside on the streets of London a killer is targeting women and evading the police. Which is when Susan puts her skills to better use again, treating the murders in the same way as a code.

"She's a very driven person and has repressed this thing inside her, which is this fascination with patterns and with order. That's her gift. But she gets to the point where she can no longer suppress it because of these murders that keep happening.

"Susan feels she can contribute to the search for the killer and can no longer ignore what she is. She believes she knows things the police don't know. And women are being killed. I think if you thought you knew information you would feel compelled to come forward and share it.

"She is pretty naive in the beginning. I think the police know a lot more than she thinks they know. She's quite an arrogant person, especially about what she believes is true."

Location staff found the perfect house in south London to depict Susan's 1950s' home.

"The art department didn't have to do a huge amount to it. The people who art direct on these productions are always unbelievably brilliant. You go on the set and you always feel much better about the day.

"It must be incredibly difficult, especially for young people today, to imagine what it was like then with rationing and everything else. When we were discussing how I wanted Susan to look it was a huge part of it for me that she should look as if she had very little vanity.

"They're not dressed really in what we consider to be Fifties clothes. They're dressed in late Forties clothes because women like Susan and her friends wouldn't have had the money to suddenly change their wardrobe and be on trend.

"And Susan certainly is not the sort of person who would spend a long time doing her hair or make up or buying clothes. It was a very austere time."

Anna and the rest of the cast filmed at Bletchley Park for the opening 1940s' scenes.

"Bletchley loved what the art designers had done to the hut and wanted to keep it. It was great to go up there and film.

"I didn't know a huge amount about Bletchley Park beforehand. Obviously I learned quite a lot over the course of this and kept stumbling into people I knew whose parents had been at Bletchley.

"I've been fascinated by that post-war period which I studied at university and, again, that's partly why I was drawn to this. That whole concept of who she becomes - this normal suburban housewife - in the post-war period after doing such an extraordinary thing during the war. I find that really intriguing."

After taking her suspicions to the police, Susan realises she needs help and turns to former Bletchley colleague and friend Millie (Rachael Stirling) and then Lucy (Sophie Rundle) and Jean (Julie Graham).

Together they hunt for the murderer with a form of profiling way ahead of its time.

"There was someone at Scotland Yard at that time doing an early form of that kind of thing. And he brought in a psychologist who was with him side by side and helped him solve murders, which is a radical thing to do at the time. So it was starting to happen. But it was a pretty slow burn."

Anna may not be a maths expert but she did share one other skill with Susan as she filmed scenes of her life at home in 1952.

"They said, 'Oh, your knitting double is here.' And I said, 'I'll do my own knitting, thanks.'

"Maybe they secretly did use her for a close-up when I wasn't there. But I was intent on doing my own knitting. I've knitted all my life. I'm proud of my knitting!"

Anna's credits include: *South Riding*; *The Night Watch*; *Accused*; *Poppy Shakespeare*; *Bleak House*.



## RACHAEL STIRLING IS MILLIE

Flags were flying high when Rachael Stirling filmed at historic Bletchley Park on the last day of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee celebrations in June.

As hundreds of thousands cheered the Queen at Buckingham Palace, the TV team were busy capturing scenes for the start of **The Bletchley Circle**.

"Bletchley Park itself was open to the public and very much Jubilee," recalls Rachael.

"I think visitors thought we were an added bonus - to see these girls dressed up in 1940s costumes pottering about the place.

"What made it rather more poignant was that there were all these flags waving about the place - bunting all over Bletchley. Obviously not in the hut we were filming in but outside.

"The place has a real sense of celebrating Great Britain and its history. And there we were re-living the scenes at the site of this place that was one of the things that makes Britain great. So to be there on that day with the bunting waving was all together fitting.

"What is fascinating about Bletchley is what happened when you put together this cocktail of eccentrics in one quite cramped space. You had the brains of Britain from all walks of life. It was a pot boiling of fascinating British characters.

"It's absolutely acknowledged that those who worked at Bletchley were instrumental in achieving victory for Britain in the war. But having achieved that, you weren't allowed to talk about what you had done and were still bound by the Official Secrets Act.

"So all these rather extraordinary people could never refer to what they'd done in the past, put it on their CV or anything."

The main part of the story takes place in 1952 London as the four women meet up again to track down a killer.

What was Rachael's initial reaction when she read the scripts?

"That I wanted to be in it. I'm quite good at talking myself out of parts or I read a part and think, 'I know an actress who'd be brilliant for that.' But when it came to Millie I felt I could serve her best.

"So I very much went for the part. I went into the audition and said, 'You must give this to me because clearly I am Millie.'

"Although Millie is brilliant with maps - and I'm not. If my geography teacher were to write a report now she would have said, 'Rachael will find it difficult finding her way home.' I am rubbish at maps and have no sense of direction."

By the 1950s Millie is working in a cafe, having travelled the world after her war service at Bletchley Park.

"Millie is the most modern of all these four women. She's single, quite bohemian, adventurous and breaks the mould of what was expected of women in the Fifties. She's also probably quite lonely.

"She's obviously bright and has this symbiotic relationship with Susan, played by Anna Maxwell Martin. They work as a team together. Susan is the more serious while Millie is more light-hearted and bombastic.

"There is a latent sadness about the fact that they've become estranged in the years between their working together at Bletchley Park and the 1950s.

"That's what makes this different to a normal detective drama, the familiarity and history between all these women. And certainly Susan and Millie's relationship is at the heart of that.

"Millie comes home from her travels to an unfamiliar England and to no history that she can speak of. So she has to start at the bottom and she's lost. She's working in a cafe when Susan comes to find her and asks for her help. It's a lifeline for Millie at that time."

The early 1950s was a time of post-war rationing and austerity.

"The Sixties was a reaction to this incredibly heavy oppressive depression that took hold of Britain in the Fifties and our set designers reflected that brilliantly, along with our costume designer.

"Millie's flat is amazing. It's wonderful when you walk in and it absolutely reflects the character. We were all secretly trying to steal the props off the set."

"We've steered away from the florals that make the Fifties look like they were a barrel of laughs for everyone. It was quite sombre and still a matter of survival. Post-war heady celebrations didn't last long until the reality kicked in. That was a depressing place to be.

"Certainly for women who had taken up these jobs in the war and discovered both a financial independence and, to a certain extent, an intellectual independence in the absence of men.

"They were told to give up their jobs, give them back to the boys who were returning from the war and go back to looking after the kids. There was a sense of dispossession.

"Life was tough, certainly for these four women. Part of the reason they become so fascinated and galvanised by coming back together is that it harks back to a time when they were useful."

Rachael, Anna Maxwell Martin (Susan), Julie Graham (Jean) and Sophie Rundle (Lucy) also formed a bond away from the cameras.

"Sophie was the youngest and quietest to begin with but by the end she was just as loud as the rest of us. It's so rare that you're on a set that is actually women-orientated.

"Our First Assistant Director, who was a man, said at the end, 'Ladies, I was slightly dreading this when I realised there were going to be four women at the centre of it.'

May I just say, I've learned more about the female anatomy over the course of filming than I ever thought I would. And I was present at both my daughters' births.”

Rachael has just finished filming a guest role in *Doctor Who* alongside her mother Dame Diana Rigg. They play a mother and daughter in an episode to be screened in 2013.

Rachael's credits include: *Tipping The Velvet*; *Boy Meets Girl*; *Women In Love*; *Salmon Fishing In The Yemen*.



## SOPHIE RUNDLE IS LUCY

It's been quite a first year out of drama school for Sophie Rundle. After graduating from RADA in the summer of 2011, she landed roles in *Titanic*, *Garrow's Law* and as Matt LeBlanc's stalker in *Episodes*.

But Sophie says she won't forget her first major drama serial role in ***The Bletchley Circle***, especially as her character Lucy has an eidetic - photographic - memory.

"When you first meet Lucy it's very clear that she's younger than the others but has this extraordinary photographic memory, which is why she's been plucked to go and work at Bletchley Park.

"She's come from a very working class background and never expected to have the experience that she got there and to meet these amazing women.

"She's like an early computer. But actually in real life my own memory is not that good. So I was slightly intimidated when I got the part. There's a huge chunk of speech in one of the scenes at Bletchley Park and I was like, 'How am I going to remember that?' But I got through it and it was fine.

"I looked into eidetic memory and it's a real phenomena. People have varying degrees of them but Lucy's is particularly strong. I wish I had that so I could memorise things.

"But it can also be a curse because she can't forget what she sees. She has seen amazing things but has also seen things that will scar her and they won't leave her."

Adds Lucy: "When the war finishes for Lucy she goes back to her life as it would have been. She gets married and doesn't expect much. Yet she's had a taste of what it's like to have those extraordinary friendships and meet these amazing people.

"She's surprised by how much she misses that and how lonely she is. So when the other three women come back into her life she's overjoyed and thrilled to be part of the gang again. But she doesn't quite expect this adventure to take her where it does."

Lucy's husband is controlling and abusive.

"At that point in history a lot of that behaviour did go on behind closed doors. These women were often told to be subservient to their husbands. That's how you were expected to behave. Unfortunately Lucy's husband takes that to a new level.

“Lucy lives with that fear and constant oppression and bullying. It makes it all the more heartbreaking when you see how hopeful she is and how she wants to do the right thing. She’s so brave to carry on and not hide away.”

At one stage Lucy volunteers to act as bait and try and help draw out the identity of the killer when travelling on a train.

“The girls who are being murdered are similar to her in age and don’t look dissimilar to her. She feels she has to do it to protect other women and makes a hugely brave decision.”

Some scenes were filmed on the Bluebell Railway in Sussex.

“We were in amazing old vintage carriages with a steam engine on the front and going back and forth between two stations all day. The people who worked there loved seeing all the extras in costume bringing it to life.”

“Filming at Bletchley Park itself was also really cool. It was actually quite moving to be there where women like our characters worked and imagine what it was like for them. It was steeped in history and it felt like we were honouring it by going there.”

The people there during the Second World War could not talk about their top secret work, even years later.

“People did keep secrets then and they really stuck by them. You gave your word and you kept it. These secrets often only came out when they got older or after they died.”

The early 1950s was a time of rationing, austerity and frustration.

“The war turned people’s worlds upside down. There was so much fear and people lost so much. When it ended there was huge jubilation but then the realisation that cities and lives had to be rebuilt.”

“I read lots of books about day to day life and that really helped. My grandparents also remembered the drab colours of the 1950s and how much hard work it was.”

Lucy and her three friends have very limited resources when it comes to tracking down the killer.

“Today we’ve got information accessible at our fingertips. We can go anywhere across the world and talk to anyone via a smartphone in our pocket. We forget how different it once was in terms of any research you wanted to do or information you needed to send.”

After filming small roles in *Titanic* and *Garrow’s Law*, Sophie landed the role of Matt LeBlanc’s American stalker Labia in *Episodes*.

“On one of my first days of filming I was sat chatting away to Matt LeBlanc. He’s talking about the Golden Globes and I’m like, ‘Yeah, I live in London.’ And I had this T-shirt on for the character that said, ‘How you doin?’ It was completely mad. I’m not a stalker in real life!”

Did Sophie always want to be an actress?

“I was going to be a spaceman and then I was going to have my own newspaper. And then, when I was about 11, I did a production of *Alice In Wonderland* and caught the acting bug completely.”

Sophie also appears in the autumn 2012 series of *Merlin*, a new feature film version of *Great Expectations* and BBC1 drama *Shetland*.

Was this the first year out of drama school that she envisaged?

“I didn’t at all,” laughs Sophie. “I was slightly terrified when it came to the end of my third year and was quite nervous about what it would be like.

“But I’ve been so lucky. I had the best time at RADA and learned a lot. But you’ve got so much more to learn, actually being out there and working on film and TV.

“I’ve worked with some incredible people so far. Long may it continue because I’m just having a complete blast. Lots of adventures and learning. It’s been a dream.”

Sophie’s credits include: *Episodes*; *Garrow’s Law*; *Titanic*; *Merlin*; *Shetland*; *Great Expectations*.



## JULIE GRAHAM IS JEAN

The four actresses who make up **The Bletchley Circle** formed a real life bond off screen.

"We had an absolute hoot filming this and we really did adore each other," reflects Julie Graham.

"I think one of the reasons the drama works is that we did have a very good chemistry, all four of us. It was just a great combination. We really got on. A happy accident."

Julie plays Miss Jean McBrien, who was in charge of the other three girls at Bletchley Park during the Second World War and by the 1950s is working as a librarian.

"Jean is very stoic, well organised and practical. She's a woman of a certain age living on her own in London and respected within the group. She's definitely the one that does everything by the book and is the moral backbone."

"She has a very severe look. Jean wouldn't have had much money so would still have all her clothes from the war and not changed the way she looks very much."

Julie adds: "I was intrigued when I first read the scripts. You don't often see female-led dramas in that way. And I thought it was a great story on two levels."

"There is the thriller element and also the interesting social history of Bletchley Park and the imagining of what happened to the women after they had to go back to their mundane lives."

The production team left no stone unturned when it came to creating an authentic backdrop for **The Bletchley Circle**.

"The art department was one of the best I've ever worked with. They were really brilliant. The attention to detail on every single set absolutely helped to immerse you in the period and the time. It just makes your job so much easier because it's all there."

A few early scenes were filmed at Bletchley Park itself.

"That was brilliant. It did add a lot to the atmosphere, just knowing that was the actual place where they all worked and get a real feel for the place."

"It was a testament to the art department that when the people at Bletchley Park saw the set they asked if they could keep it because they said it was so authentic."

"The staff there also brought out the real machines used in the war and were wonderfully enthusiastic, showing everybody how they worked.

"I probably did more reading and research on that subject, even though it's a tiny part of the drama, because it's such an interesting period of history.

"It amazes me that some people who worked there still won't talk about it. Lots of people took the knowledge and the stuff they did there to the grave.

"They really did keep it all secret. But at last the contribution of women is being recognised more than it was. Now there's a lot more documentation and anecdotal evidence and some books have been written, so it gave people the confidence to come forward and talk.

"That's what's nice about being an actor sometimes. Whatever you're doing, you can reference it. So you might read things that you wouldn't normally read. I always knew about Bletchley Park and Alan Turing but I wasn't really aware of the machinations of what the women actually did there."

Julie continues: "What's clever about the plot of this drama is we meet these women again in the early 1950s as they reunite to track down a murderer who is targeting women.

"And because they are women in that era, they're very invisible. So they can poke their noses in and find out information without arousing suspicion in any way. Their invisibility is really helpful to the hunt for the killer because they're ignored.

"In the beginning Jean is quite uncomfortable with them taking things into their own hands in terms of the law. She struggles with that.

"But events drive her to go down a road she wouldn't necessarily go down. She's so appalled by what has happened and is happening.

"The 1950s must have been an incredibly strange period for these women. Some who worked during the war were relieved to go back to having children and being in the home. It was hard work during the war for them.

"But for some women it must have been very frustrating to go back to normality. Certainly Anna's character Susan falls into that category and feels her life is quite dull.

"Britain still had rationing at this time and it must have taken a long time to adjust to normal life. Even in terms of women having their men back and also for the men who had been away at war - also trying to adjust to a so-called normal life.

"So many marriages must have suffered and in those days it was harder to get divorced. It must have been very hard for everyone."

Jean has exceptional organising and admin skills. How does Julie measure up?

"I've got children so I'm good at organising that side of things. Paper work and all that sort of stuff is just something that's got to be done. I've got a system. It's probably chaotic but it works for me.

"People would be horrified if they saw it - mostly it's chucking bits of paper in a big file and then sending it to my accountant. That's about my limit. In real life I would find that kind of job endlessly tedious and dull. I admire people who can do it. But it wouldn't be for me."

Julie's credits include: *Survivors*; *William and Mary*; *Mobile*; *Doc Martin*.

## CAST LIST

Anna Maxwell Martin .....	Susan
Rachael Stirling .....	Millie
Sophie Rundle .....	Lucy
Julie Graham .....	Jean
Steven Robertson .....	Andrew Croft
Mark Dexter.....	Timothy
Anastasia Hille .....	Angela Barker
Simon Williams .....	Cavendish
Ed Birch .....	Harry
Michael Gould.....	Deputy Commissioner Wainwright
Matthew Cullum .....	Constable Barry
John Lightbody.....	Sergeant George
Simon Sherlock.....	D.C.I. Compton
Jocelyn MacNab.....	Claire
Elliot Kerley.....	Sam
Jamie Glassman.....	Vicar
Sarah Finigan .....	Mrs. Casterwell
Joanna Brookes .....	Mrs. Cross

## PRODUCTION CREDITS

Writer .....	Guy Burt
Producer .....	Jake Lushington
Director .....	Andy De Emmony
Executive Producer .....	Simon Heath
Line Producer .....	Christine Healy
Director of Photography .....	John Pardue
Casting Director .....	Julie Harkin
Script Editor .....	Aimee Ashwell
Script Supervisor .....	Lindsay Grant
Art Director .....	Tim Blake
Costume Designer .....	Anna Robbins
Make Up and Hair Designer .....	Karen Hartley Thomas
Production Designer .....	Mike Gunn
Editor .....	Stephen O'Connell
Composer .....	Nick Green
1 <sup>st</sup> Assistant Director .....	Toby Ford
2 <sup>nd</sup> Assistant Director .....	Andy Mannion
3 <sup>rd</sup> Assistant Director .....	Tussy Fachin
Prop Master .....	Craig Cheeseman
Sound Recordist .....	David Lascelles
Locations Manager .....	Simon Nixon
Unit Manager .....	James Alexander
Post Production Supervisor .....	Kate Murrell
Production Coordinator .....	Gwen Gorst