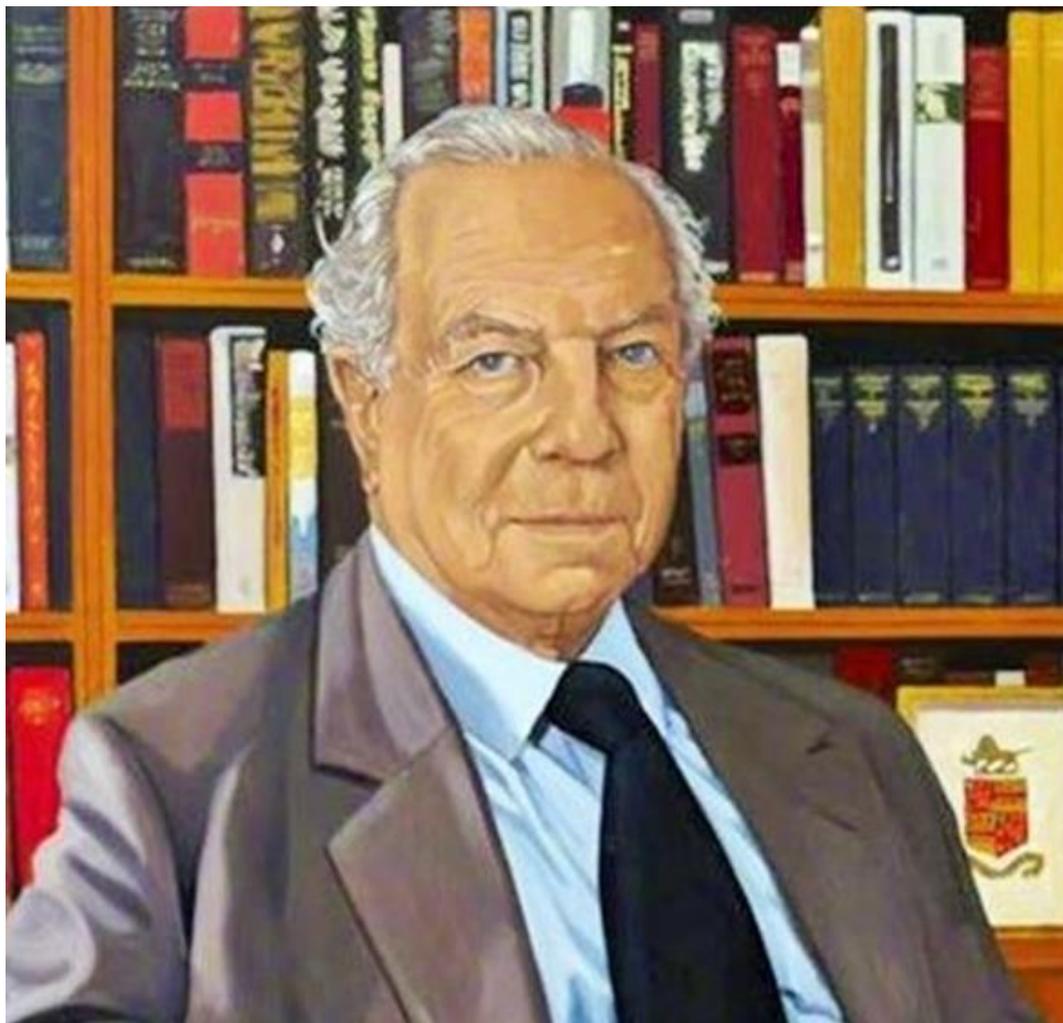


***WOMEN IN WAR***  
***WiW Group Newsletter No.25***  
***Winter 2019/2020 Issue***



**Sir Michael Howard (1922-2019)**

**(Source: Wikipedia Commons)**

In this issue, we have an eulogy for one of our key supporters during the early days of the Women in War Group, Sir Michael Howard. In addition we have reviews of *The Mountbattens: Their Lives and Loves* by Andrew Lownie and *Nursing Churchill* by Jill Rose.

Newsletter edited by Paul Strong and Celia Lee

# Eulogy for Sir Michael Howard (1922-2019)

by British Defence Writer Georgina Natzio

“We have not yet escaped from the world of power politics and *raison d'état*. Nor does an increasing multiplicity of national actors in itself guarantee a more peaceful and a better-ordered world. Kant was right when he said that a state of peace had to be ‘established’. What perhaps even he did not discern was that this is a task which has to be tackled afresh every day of our lives; and that no formula, no organisation and no political or social revolution can ever free mankind from this inexorable duty.”

These are the concluding words to a series of George Macaulay Trevelyan Lectures, given by Michael Howard in the University of Cambridge in 1977, later published in book form as “War and the Liberal Conscience.” We can perceive that they are as critically relevant and important to us now, as we labour through our confused and turbulent international affairs, as they were during the Cold War. At the time he was Chichele Professor of the History of War at the University of Oxford, having formerly held the Chair of War Studies at King’s College, London and during that year, among the many awards and decorations he was given during his long working life, was made CBE.

King’s College provided the young post-Second World War de-mobbed Captain Michael Howard, Coldstream Guards, with his chance. And bearing in mind King’s College’s humanitarian ethos as regards its teaching across the academic spectrum, it surely can be no coincidence that the young man’s world-view with his eventual long links with the University, had developed into a passion for socio-military history, encouraged by reflections on his brief but intense war-experiences from 1942-45. Aged twenty-three onwards, from his autobiography, “*Captain Professor, A life in War and Peace*,” and detailed entry in “Who’s Who,” in academia, he clearly would have encountered a unique synthesis of writings, analyses and attitudes concerning the onset of wars and achievement of peace. These were undoubtedly engendered among his tutors, themselves perhaps veterans of the First World War, by their experience and perceptions of the social and mechanical effects induced by developments in weapons technology before and during that war.

To this should be added the young de-mobbed Captain’s later recognition of the proper study of human behaviour as evinced by everyone, political or military, ensnared as they were from 1914 onwards, with the myriad diverse circumstances of war and warfare. He was in a position to construct a comparative socio-military infrastructure between his tutors’ generation and his own first-hand experience. His capacity for analysis was such, that he could extrapolate from personal and private experience into the larger military domain and still be aware of potential traps for the unwary in so doing. All of which he and his contemporaries who were combatant veterans from the Second World War subsequently entering the field of war studies carried with them for the rest of their lives in their teachings or writings.

Michael Howard pursued both, with an intense energy and we owe him a great debt. His father ran the family business of several generations, descended from a progenitor who had been a member of the Society of Friends and with later considerable Quaker connections. His mother was descended from non-practising German Jewish ancestry.

Collectively, it appears that Michael Howard's family on both sides, were highly effective and able. The benign influences here, in preparing the young man's mindset, perhaps ought not to be underestimated. To read further into his autobiography, he is frank, thoughtful and witty about the ups and downs of a young man getting to grips with life, not least after escaping the institutionalisation of regimental life.

In writing a Eulogy for Sir Michael for friends in our war studies community, there is an anxiety not simply to repeat what has already been said and remarked on in the generous obituaries he has received from the Press. In his adult life he developed his own vision of what war studies might comprise, building on the influences mentioned. He took full advantage of the opportunities offered in university life and teaching, and, also took time out to write, leaving an unparalleled legacy which we sorely need to revisit.

To this writer, leaving veterinary medicine for socio-military science and growing up with the war studies environment he was creating, he was the prime source of a thoughtful, welcoming encouragement to young individuals ready to exercise their brains on the subject. His example was followed by many veterans from the Second World War, who had entered war studies and others from the armed services who, retiring from uniformed life made related career changes into the universities during the later years of the twentieth century as some of their predecessors had done. The trend for combat veterans to take their experiences to professional institutions for lectures and discussions is evident in the letters and literature they left for posterity.

“A long time ago, as an undergraduate at Oxford, I remember vividly crouching in a wet ditch somewhere on Cumnor Hill on a wet autumn afternoon like this with a burly young man in the uniform of a subaltern of the Rifle Brigade standing over me and shouting, “On, on on, Kill, kill, kill! Remember Hong Kong!” That was my introduction to the military environment. I found it profoundly anti-pathetic. The fact that our relations - that is to say, those of the military environment and myself - have remained comparatively amicable for rather over a quarter of a century since then speaks volumes for the self-control and tolerance shown on both sides.”

These remarks are likely to have referred to the time before Sir Michael's university education was interrupted in 1942, when he officially went to the wars. They are from the introduction to his Chesney Memorial Gold Medal Lecture which he gave on 3rd October 1973, on receipt of the distinguished award. By now Michael Howard was aged 51 and, greatly experienced in his lines of thought, was contemplating the value of universities well placed to rethink problems from the roots, as he put it. Then, adaptation to change in defence theory was becoming uppermost in analytical thought, projecting future procurement, for example. Thus, the deployment of national resources across military requirements was another perceived issue.

“Also, I think - again this is hunch, unverified hypothesis - that to look back to the World War concepts of the nation in arms, to think in terms of large Territorial armies, back-up forces for the Army wearing the same uniforms and thinking the same way, may not be the correct approach. We may have got beyond the point where that will be either possible or even desirable. One may have to think in terms of a very different kind of national mobilisation, of enlisting the kinds of forces which at the moment we regard as being way out, hostile, and with which we have no kind of dialogue whatever... my own vision is extremely limited. This sort of breadth of vision which is necessary to adjust to a new historical epoch can only filter through very slowly by a lot of people thinking very hard and putting their ideas together in, one hopes, this sort of environment.”

Here we have the directions in which contemporary defence thought was beginning to travel, summed up by the founder of the modern discipline in 1973. Cyber warfare was just beginning to show over the horizon which, of course, added a vast new dimension. The hostility referred to was evinced by those who felt that above all warfare primarily involved human encounters to the point of one-to-one engagement.

Perhaps the key thought he put forward in his Chesney Gold Medal Lecture was that the fact that technical change was obvious as a problem did not necessarily mean that it was easy to foresee or cope with. How he wondered, do technical innovations affect the conduct of war? We had almost always got it wrong. Nuclear war was almost literally inconceivable, yet “... we have to do our best to conceive of it.” Later Michael Howard added (he would be created Knight in 1986):

“...there may come a point when experience of the last war ceases to be valuable, when weapons systems have changed so much and their capability is so different from that of which one has had experience, that one fails to see that there has been a total change ...”.

From this he had formed the view that the advent of young officers whose experience had not been affected by a technically obsolete conflict might not be a bad thing. Here, perhaps also can be found the genesis of the concept of asymmetric warfare - and the search for military constants amidst so much that was novel in war technologies during the ensuing decades. Extrapolation from fact and experience, namely the use of imaginative thought based on real military incidence in the field, tested against the provenance of innovative technologies, appears to rest at the heart of the ideas Sir Michael Howard continued to pursue for the rest of his life. This writer hopes it is not too sententious, pompous even, to conclude that we owe it to his profound dedication to the preservation of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness to read, mark and learn from his truly remarkable and valuable written legacy.

# Sir Michael Howard and the Women in War group

by Celia Lee



**Mrs Della Howard (right) in conversation with Dr John H. Mather MD FACPE (centre) and (left) journalist and opera critic for the Daily Express, Clare Colvin, over supper at the Polish Hearth Club, 55 Princes Gate, Exhibition Road, South Kensington, London, 2018.**

**Dr Mather is Interim Executive Director of the Federation of Churchill Aficionados (FOCA)**

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I remember Sir Michael Howard from years gone by as a great friend of Professor Brian Bond. Michael and Brian spent happy hours together, walking through the idyllic countryside, around the home of Brian and his wife Madeline at Medmenham Woods, Buckinghamshire. Sir Michael supported the Women in War group that Paul Strong and I set up inside the British Commission for Military History, during the time Brian was President. Sir Michael was a great intellect with a genteel personality and showed the utmost respect for women.

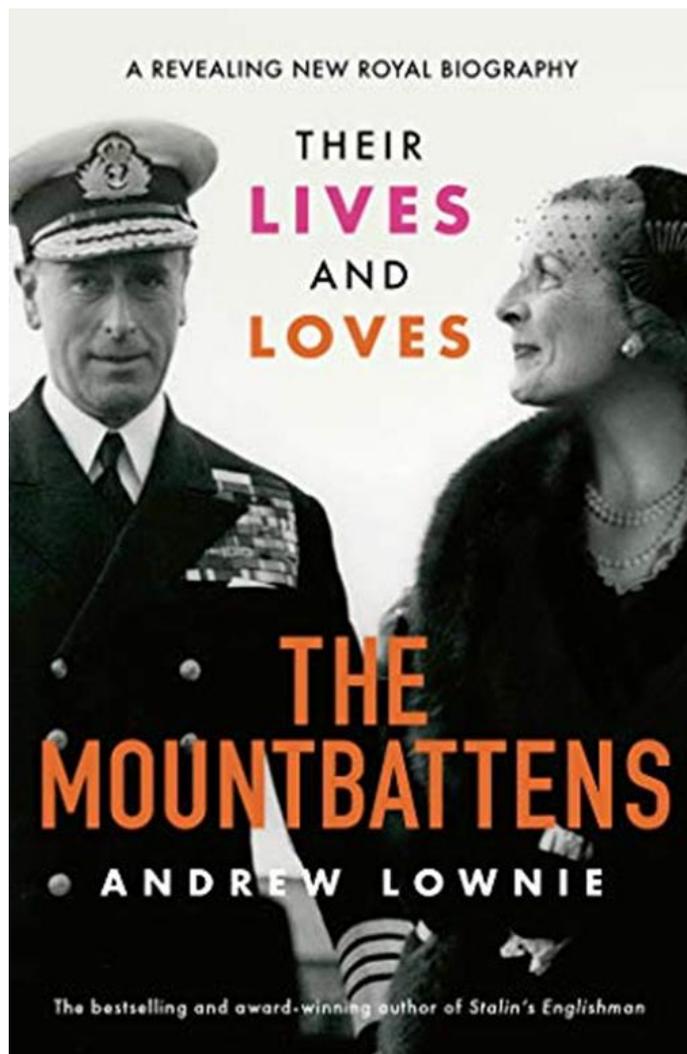
Sir Michael is survived by his sister-in-law Mrs Della Howard, who lives in London, and who was married to the late Dennis Howard. Della rang me to tell me Michael was very ill and would not recover. He in fact passed away the day after his 97th birthday. Coming from a medical and military background, Della hails from County Limerick, Ireland. Two of her uncles the McNamaras, served in the South African Boer War. All her working life she was a period furniture adviser to Sotheby's, and she met Dennis whilst working in London. Sir Michael is frequently the subject of conversation at Della's now famous drinks parties in the drawing room of her house, just around the corner from the Brompton Oratory. Following the sad news, a small group of us visited her: actor, Trader Faulkner, who appeared in *A High Wind In Jamaica* (1965) and *The Avengers* (1961); ceramicist, Arabella Ross Thompson and her husband Michael; John Lee, who knew Sir Michael as a lecturer at the British Commission For Military History. Della proudly showed us a framed photograph of Sir Michael, taken with the Queen. Longevity seems to favour the family for Della will be 95 years young on Christmas Day.

# ***THE MOUNTBATTENS: Their Lives and Loves***

by Andrew Lownie

Published 22nd August 2019 to tie in with the 40th anniversary of the assassination of Mountbatten.

Reviewed by John Lee



Earl Mountbatten of Burma (1900-1979) is one of the major British historical figures of the twentieth century and a central figure in The Crown. As one obituary noted, 'It seemed almost unbelievable that one human being could have touched the history of our century at so many points'. Head of Combined Operations, a Member of the Chiefs of Staff and then Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in South East Asia during World War Two, the last Viceroy and first Governor General of India, First Sea Lord and Chief of the Defence Staff, member of the Royal Family and mentor of Prince Philip and Prince Charles: his life provides an opportunity to look at the most important and controversial issues of the last century. His biography cannot be told without also examining that of his wife Edwina, the richest heiress in the world when they married, whose aimless pre-war life of multiple lovers found new purpose during World War Two and afterwards with her humanitarian work.

Though each individual has had an authorised life, this is the first full independent life, based on extensive research in their archives, and the first joint biography providing a dual portrait of two of the most glamorous figures of their time. It is a study of a marriage which, whilst beset with infidelities, was a loving one where each needed the other. It attempts to humanize these glamorous and sometimes heroic figures to show their vulnerabilities and explain both his ruthlessness and vanity and her search to find some purpose in her life.

It is a rich story whose characters include: all the key figures of the Second World War from Churchill, Macmillan, Eden, Montgomery to Roosevelt, Eisenhower, Stilwell and Chiang Kai-Shek; The Royal Family from the Duke of Windsor and George VI to the Queen, Prince Philip and Prince Charles; Barbara Cartland, Charlie Chaplin, Agatha Christie, Noel Coward, Joan Crawford, Salvador Dali, Tom Driberg, Douglas Fairbanks Jr, George Gershwin, Cary Grant, Grace Kelly, Merle Oberon and Laurens van der Post.



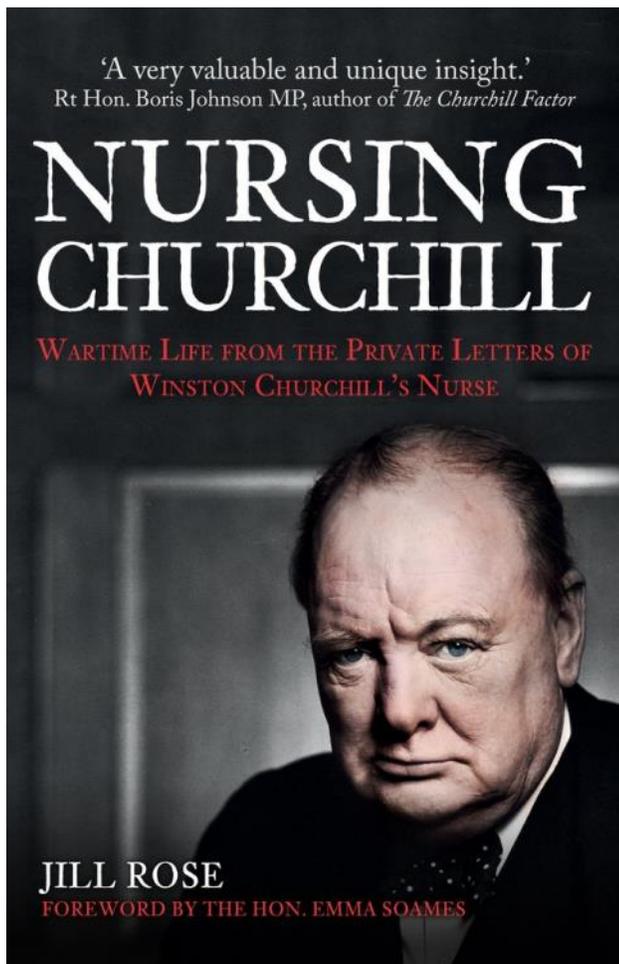
**Andrew Lownie**

**(Source: Private collection)**

Andrew Lownie was educated at Magdalene College, Cambridge, where he was Dunster History Prizeman and President of the Union, before studying for a Masters and Doctorate in History at Edinburgh University. A Fellow of the Royal Historical Society and former Cambridge history fellow, he has run his own literary agency since 1988. He formerly served in the Naval Reserve.

He has written for numerous papers and magazines, including *The Times*, *Sunday Telegraph*, *Guardian*, *Daily Mail*, *Spectator*, *New Statesman*, *The Age*, *Wall Street Journal*, *BBC History Magazine*, *History Today* and *Scotland on Sunday*.

His books include lives of the writer John Buchan and the spy Guy Burgess. Stalin's Englishman was a Book/Biography of the Year in *The Times*, *Guardian*, *Spectator*, *BBC History Magazine* and *Daily Mail* and won the St Ermin's Hotel Intelligence Prize, the premier intelligence book award in the English-speaking world. It was also optioned by the makers of *Sherlock* for a drama.



## Nursing Churchill

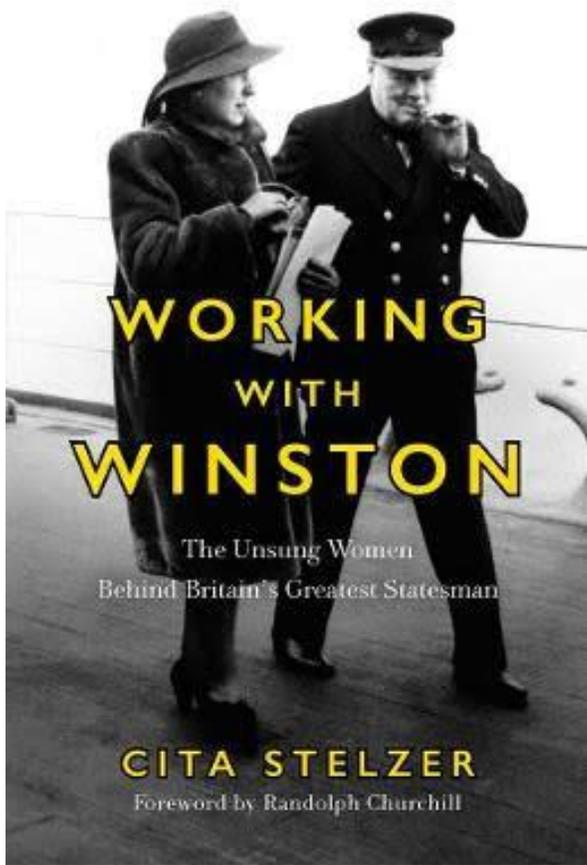
By Jill Rose

Jill Rose was born in London in 1947 and spent part of her childhood in Jamaica. She earned a B.Sc. Degree from University College, London, and worked as a computer programmer in Canada and Washington DC before moving with her husband to Hawaii, where they spent ten years running a small macadamia nut orchard and a computer business. They have travelled by bus from Ecuador to Tierra del Fuego, by train across Australia, and have cruised across the Arctic and Antarctic Circles and the Equator. They now live in south Florida.

Jill's new book "Nursing Churchill", offers a fresh perspective on Churchill and wartime life through the eyes of the nurse, Jill's mother Doris Miles charged with looking after the Prime

In February 1943, when the course of the Second World War hung in the balance, 68-year-old Prime Minister Winston Churchill was stricken with pneumonia. Doris Miles, from St Mary's Hospital in London, was appointed as his private nurse. During her time with Churchill, she wrote regularly to her husband, a Surgeon-Lieutenant with the Royal Navy, about life at the centre of Britain's war effort, and about Churchill himself. With unrivalled intimacy, her observations show a very human and seldom-seen side of the great man and including many amusing anecdotes. She describes with wry humour their arguments and conversations, and life at Downing Street and Chequers. It is also a love story; from a newlywed young woman whose husband went to war. This exclusive wartime source is adroitly woven into the wider context of those turbulent times.

See also the review by Richard Langworth at <https://winstonchurchill.hillsdale.edu/nursing-churchill-jill-rose/>



**Left: Working with Winston by Cita Stelzer –  
Foreword by Randolph Churchill**

**(Source: Wikimedia Commons)**

**Below: Winston Churchill with his secretary  
Jane Portal**

**(Source: Wikimedia Commons)**

For further reading , see also *Working with  
Winston* by Cita Stelzer.

The quote below comes from Nick Rennison’s  
review of *Working with Winston* in *The Sunday  
Times*.

‘ “He could make you feel absolutely down in the dumps or absolutely walking on a cloud.” Cecily Gemmill, whose words these are, was 18, when she went to work for Winston Churchill. She was one of the small army of secretaries and shorthand typists who devoted their careers to him. These remarkable young women (and one young man) have rarely been given their due, but as Cita Stelzer acknowledges in this well-researched book, “secretary” seems an inadequate word to describe their duties. Without their organisational skills, Churchill could not have achieved what he did.’





**Clare Mulley stands by The Tempsford Memorial in Bedfordshire in 2019.**

The memorial was set up in 2013 and commemorates the women who served as secret agents in Occupied Europe during the Second World War, the RAF aircrew who transported and supplied them, and the many personnel from all of the allied secret services who were killed in the war.

The memorial bears the names of 75 known women agents, of whom 29 were arrested, 16 were executed, three died of illnesses while imprisoned, and one committed suicide using a cyanide pill before being captured.