

***WOMEN IN WAR***  
***WiW Group Newsletter No.22***  
***Autumn/Winter 2018 Issue***



**Lieutenant Commander Jill Monnox (of the Royal Navy's Maritime Warfare Centre), indicating the position where she sank Major Tom Mouat's (in cunning disguise) U-Boat at the Western Approaches Tactical Unit re-enactment in Liverpool**

**(Source: PAXsims)**

In this issue, we have news items about both modern servicewomen and some of the women who served in US Army in WWI, a review of the biography of Dr William Frankland, and commentaries and links to articles of interest. In addition, we have a short update on the ongoing research and events related to the Wrens of the Western Approaches Tactical Unit.

Newsletter edited by Paul Strong and Celia Lee

## In the News

Women can now serve in all roles in Britain's military, including front-line combat units and the special forces.

Defense Secretary Gavin Williamson announced the change Thursday, saying "the idea that we are excluding half the population from some of these most vital roles potentially holds our armed forces back."

British women already serve as fighter pilots, sailors and submariners, but were long barred from army units whose primary role is close-quarters combat. The ban was lifted in 2016, and the change has been made in stages. The Armored Corps admitted women in 2016, followed by the RAF Regiment in 2017.

The Ministry of Defence press release noted "while the military does not necessarily expect large numbers of women to apply for ground close combat roles, the changes are aimed at creating opportunities for individuals from all backgrounds and making the most of their talents... By making all branches and trades of the military open to everyone, regardless of their gender, the armed forces are building on their reputation of being a leading equal opportunities employer."

The Defence Minister indicated that women can now apply for all regular British Army units and the previously all-male Royal Marines. To ensure that the capabilities of the UK's elite units are not undermined, the physical training requirements of these roles will not be changed.

Countries including the U.S., Canada, Australia and Israel already allow women in combat roles.



**British Army female soldier training on the Brecon Beacons (Source: Wikimedia Commons)**

A LIFE WELL LIVED – WITHOUT HATRED

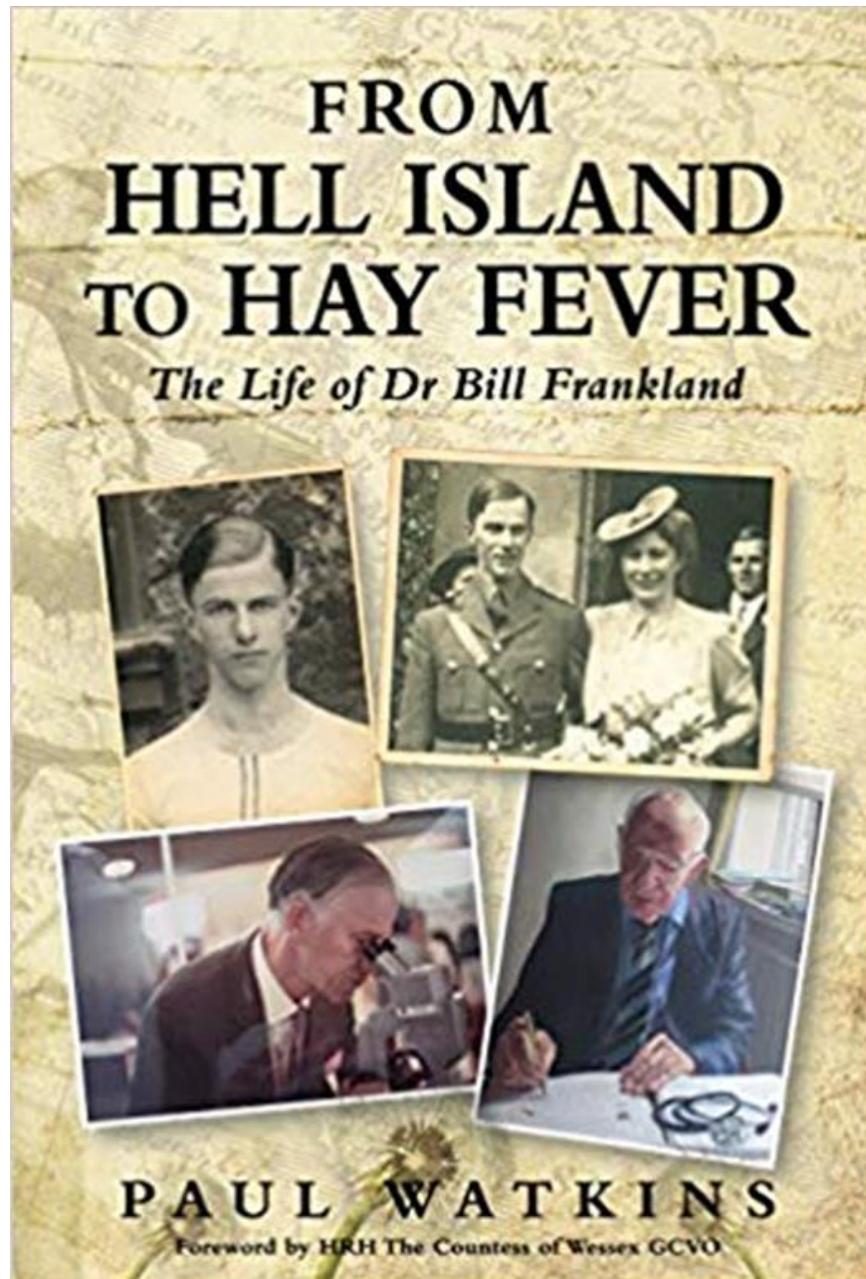
Paul Watkins “From Hell Island to Hay Fever:  
The Life of Dr Bill Frankland”

Brown Dog Books £20 ppb. ISBN: 978-1-78545-235-2. E-book 978-1-78545-266-6  
376pp. Illustrated. Bibliography

Stocked at both Foyles and Daunt Bookshop (Marylebone high Street)

It will soon be featured by Dan Snow but the dates have yet to be confirmed...

Reviewed by John Lee



Some biographies are read to amuse (or even titillate); some to add understanding to a particular line of study; some to inspire and encourage us to be better human beings. The remarkable life of Dr William 'Bill' Frankland adds greatly to the second category and is a shining example of the third.

Born in 1912, a second twin, into a solid, church-going middle-class family, he does well at school (especially in sciences), is a fine sportsman, and a medical student at Queen's, Oxford, graduating in 1938. He once, around the age of six, told his clergyman father that he 'hated' his brother. He was told quite firmly, "You must not go on hating people; it does you harm, but it does not do them any harm". The author repeats this mantra several times throughout the book and with good cause, for it carries Bill Frankland through a terrible ordeal and helps him lead a life of enormous service to humanity.

Having completed his clinical training at St Mary's, Paddington, Bill volunteered for military service on 1st September 1939 and was soon commissioned into the Royal Army Medical Corps. He took an interest in hypnosis as an aid to medical treatment, with some early success. In May 1941 he married Pauline Jackson after about a year's engagement. Their first choice of church was demolished by German bombs during the Blitz! Barely four months later he was shipped out to Singapore. They would not see each other for more than four years. Pauline only heard he was a prisoner-of-war a year after the fall of Singapore; it took another year for her first letter to reach him. He was only allowed to send three postcards to her in three and a half years, each of just fifteen words! Re-united in October 1945, they had three daughters together. When Pauline died in 2002, Bill said of her: "Whatever she did, she did well".

The defence of Singapore was a catastrophic failure. Military historians will find some interesting observations on the garrison by Bill. When 110,000 British Empire troops surrendered, the Japanese army was overwhelmed by the need to deal with them. One gaol built for 600 inmates housed 17,000. Changi housed 50,000. Things only improved a little as tens of thousands of men were sent north to work on the infamous Burma Railway. We should stress here that Bill swore never to talk about these events after the war. He lived his father's mantra; there was no room for hatred in his heart. He only spoke of these things decades later, aged 98, and we have Paul Watkins to thank for a truly comprehensive narrative covering this terrible time. The behaviour of the Japanese towards their helpless captives was abominable. As I read the book I had to tell myself repeatedly that, throughout recorded history, every nation on earth has produced equally abominable behaviour where one set of armed men (and sometimes women) are set over unarmed captives with no recourse to the rule of law.

Prisoners did what they could to make life bearable. The doctors, of course, struggled daily to keep men healthy with next to no resources. One needs a fairly strong stomach to read of the terrible diseases running through these camps. Yet these heroic doctors made extraordinary strides forward in the understanding of some extreme medical conditions. They set up a 'Changi Medical Society' to lecture on these things; Freemasons set up a lodge in June 1942; working parties carried out a low-level resistance at great personal risk – once even short-circuiting a boat's engine under repair so that it burst into flames once started!

As if Changi wasn't bad enough, Bill was moved to a smaller site ominously named 'Hell Island', where 95% of the men had malaria. It was here that Bill began to make a special study of allergies which would dominate his life in the future. Members of the Women in War Group will share my anger to read of the eight women who were forced into prostitution in one of the Japanese army's 'comfort houses'. When Japan surrendered in August 1945 these women were dragged out of the hut and callously shot to death. "You must not go on hating people; it does you harm, but it does not do them any harm".

Bill returned to work at St Mary's and became one of the world's great allergists, specialising in that field for the next 70 years. The clinic is named after him; there are prizes named after him. He worked with Sir Alexander Fleming and made huge contributions towards the study of the side effects of penicillin. He specialised in the workings of hay fever and is responsible for the daily Pollen Count so familiar to us all. His work on antihistamines and his early double-blind controlled experiments are still being referenced 65 years later! He is unstoppable. 'Retiring' from St Mary's in 1977, he went on to work and teach at Guy's for another twenty years. He arranged an allergy conference in Tokyo in 1973 to encourage a peace and friendship movement there. In 2015, he received an MBE and was on Desert Island Discs. He still appears as an expert witness at trials – for both prosecution and defence. He had an academic paper published in 2017 – aged 105 – on the illnesses amongst Far East prisoners of war.

He is 106 years old – fully compos mentis – which he puts down to 'luck'! But he never smoked tobacco, drinks in moderation, and keeps his fertile brain super active. He is an example to us all. 'A good reputation endures forever'.\*

\*This slogan appears on the gravestones of Chinese workers buried in British war cemeteries. I have always found it moving. It will serve to remember Bill Frankland.



**Alfred William Frankland MBE**

**(Source: Wikimedia Commons)**

## The Wrens of the Western Approaches Tactical Unit (Update)

On September 8th 2018, volunteers from the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory, the Royal Navy's Maritime Warfare Centre, the Royal Canadian Navy, and representatives of the Canadian wargame research group at PAXsims took part in a re-creation of the wargame process used by the Western Approaches Tactical Unit (WATU) during the Battle of the Atlantic between 1942 and 1945.

The event was hosted by Liverpool's Western Approaches Museum. The team behind the re-enactment used the operational planning room (instead of the flats above) so that the general public could see the game in progress and understand some of the mechanisms used to understand and counter the U-Boat threat.

The WWII WATU team were mostly young Wrens and their contribution to Allied success is becoming more clear as the research team explores the archives. Interviews, memoirs and reports (including a superbly detailed scene in the novel, 'The Cruel Sea') were vital in the re-creation of the wargame. The wargame process, designed at Liverpool, now appears to have been replicated at other Allied sites (including Canada and India). We will keep you updated!

Further information about WATU and their contribution to defeating the U-Boats can be found at <https://paxsims.files.wordpress.com/2017/12/2017-12-10-watu-mors.pdf>.



**Analysts discussing the turn - note the screens and viewing boxes used to limit visibility and the operational planning map used by Admiral Horton during the campaign (Source: PAXsims)**



**Janet Okell (Left), WATU's specialist in U-Boat tactics, Jean Laidlaw (lead analyst) and June Duncan**  
(Source: Wikimedia Commons)

## ***Women, War and Disaster***

Panel Event on the Women in War and the Western Approaches Tactical Unit  
7th of December 2018 at 7:00pm

Part of HISTFEST 2018

<https://histfest.com/products/women-war-disaster>

Location: Western Approaches Museum, 1-3 Rumford St, Liverpool L2 8SZ

Deep within the underground bunker of Western Approaches, Liverpool, the Women's Royal Navy Service ("Wrens") played an integral role in coordinating the Battle of the Atlantic. This December, Western Approaches Museum hosts an important panel event taking a broad look at the crucial role women have played in war and disaster.

The event will be chaired by Emma Stringfellow (Director of Operations & Projects – Big Heritage) and panellists include: Dr Christienna Fryar (historian of slavery, unfree labour and disasters), Dr Emma Venables (Historical fiction writer/researcher of representations of women in literature about WW2), and Sally Davis (Defence Science and Technology Laboratory).

Tickets include a glass of wine a short tour of the museum.

For the Paxsims Report on the re-enactment of the wargames conducted by the Wrens of the Western Approaches Tactical Unit see:

<https://paxsims.wordpress.com/2018/09/08/watu-wargame-report/>

## British Historian Celia Lee Honored By Chief John Ross Chapter, National Society Daughters of the American Revolution

The Chief John Ross Chapter, NSDAR, hosted a Historians Luncheon in honor of British historian and author, Celia Lee, who was visiting Chattanooga while researching Minnie d'Erlanger Churchill's family history for a book project.

Mrs. Lee was honored as the project coordinator for Women in War, featuring the work of authors from around the globe who write about the different aspects of civilian and military work carried out by women during The Great War, World War II and other wars. She was presented with a DAR commemorative pin and certificate during the special presentation.

Historians attending the luncheon included Sam Elliott, Jim Frierson, John Edwards, III, Bud Alley, CJR and Chattanooga-Hamilton County Historian Linda Moss Mines, President of the Tennessee Churchill Society Dr. John Mather, and British Historian John Lee.

Mrs. Lee is also the acclaimed author of *Jean, Lady Hamilton*, a biography of the wife of General Sir Ian Hamilton of the Dardanelles Campaign and was given unprecedented access to Lady Hamilton's diaries in the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives at King's College, London. In addition, Mrs. Lee was invited by Peregrine Churchill to write a family history of the Churchills, focusing on his father, John Strange Spencer Churchill [Jack], often hidden in the shadow of his more famous brother, Winston. She has also published a book about His Royal Highness The Duke of Kent KC, titled *A Life of Service*, highlighting Prince Edward's patronages and military career (2015).



In an interesting addition to the story, Ms. Mines has been asked to write several articles related to Women and the American Revolutionary War for the Women in War project.

(Source: Happenings Column, The Chattanooga, Thursday, May 17, 2018)

## The US Signal Corps Female Telephone Operators Unit to be Recognized

The Corps was founded in 1917 to operate the American Expeditionary Force switchboards on the Western Front. 450 were recruited out of the 7,000 that applied.

Even though the girls wore uniform and were subject to US Army regulations, the 'Hello Girls' were considered to be civilians and received no campaign medals for their service (though one received a Distinguished Service Medal). They were not even given the rights awarded to those given a honourable military discharge. They were only allowed to consider themselves veterans after the 60th Anniversary of their deployment.

The organisation is currently being considered for a belated unit Congressional Gold Medal, the nomination was made by Senators Jon Tester (currently serving on the Veterans' Affairs Committee) and Dean Heller.



**The US Signal Corps Female Telephone Operators Unit in the Great War  
(Source: Wikimedia Commons)**

# Debate



**Flora Sandes**

Tony Heathcote has raised the issue of how few Blue Plaques there are dedicated to women and has cited as the source an article in the *Guardian* newspaper.

Tony has pointed out that the hostelry named after Flora Sandes at Thornton Heath has been shut down. Otherwise Louise Miller's 2012 [softback pub. 2014] authoritative biography of her is the final word.

The *Guardian* newspaper has recently carried a piece on the disproportionately small number of commemorative Blue Plaques that have women as their subjects.

Flora Sandes certainly deserves one, which could be either at the old rectory in Marlesford, Suffolk, where she grew up, or the cottage "Folly's End" in the main street at Wickham Market, about a mile away, where she spent the last ten years of her life.

Tony says suggestions for this have to go to English Heritage, but he feels very strongly that one coming from the Women in War Group as a recognised body for the study of the history of women in war, would carry more weight.

What do Members and Friends think?

**Original story by Anna Kessel of the Guardian Newspaper:**

**<https://www.theguardian.com/culture/shortcuts/2018/oct/02/where-are-all-the-blue-plaques-celebrating-women>**

Presentations from the 2018 International Churchill Conference in Franklin, Tennessee

**Celia Lee's talk:**

Youtube: <https://youtu.be/Xoivska6cSw>

Website: <http://johnandcelialee.co.uk/winston-and-jack/>

**John Lee's talk:**

Youtube: <https://youtu.be/Omhn6aqsNiE>

Website: <http://johnandcelialee.co.uk/john-2/>

**SPEAKERS APPEARING AT THE POLISH HEARTH CLUB in 2019:**

**Serena Fass** - Thursday 4th April - talk on St. Mark The Evangelist – book will be on sale.

**Arabella Thompson** – September (final date to be fixed) – talk title to be decided.

**Clare Mulley** – date to be decided - speaking on Eglantyne Jebb, the remarkable woman who founded Save the Children in response to the First World War. Save the Children mark their centenary in May 1919, and the book will be republished with a new cover in April 2019.

**Paul Watkins** - speaking on his latest book: FROM HELL ISLAND TO HAY FEVER The Life of Dr Bill Frankland – book will be on sale on the night.

Steve Cowan kindly recreated the HMS Tactician/WATU crest for the Western Approaches event. The badge was on the door of the WATU facility from 1942 onwards. The badge was emblazoned on the shirts of many of the wargaming crew at the re-enactment, and is available on commemorative mugs and badges in the Western Approaches Museum gift shop.



## New Members

We welcome a new member to the Women in War group, Skye Ross, who lives in New Orleans, a city she says ‘celebrates history – and everything else!

“I am interested in Napoleonic history, Churchill and WWII history. I co-founded a Mardi Gras Parade Krewe “Exit, Pursued by a Bard”, featuring Shakespearean characters reciting lines to the watching crowd, while marching by.”

Skye is ‘excited to join the Women In War group,’ and she is ‘looking forward to participating.’ Her day job is ‘at M. S. Rau Antiques, 630 Royal Street, New Orleans, a globally recognized fine art, antique and jewelry dealer, specializing in extraordinary, museum-quality and rare items.’ Skye will be submitting an article shortly for publication in our Women in War Newsletter - so watch this space!

Skye is happy to release her e-mail address to Women in War group Members only: [skye@rauantiques.com](mailto:skye@rauantiques.com)

