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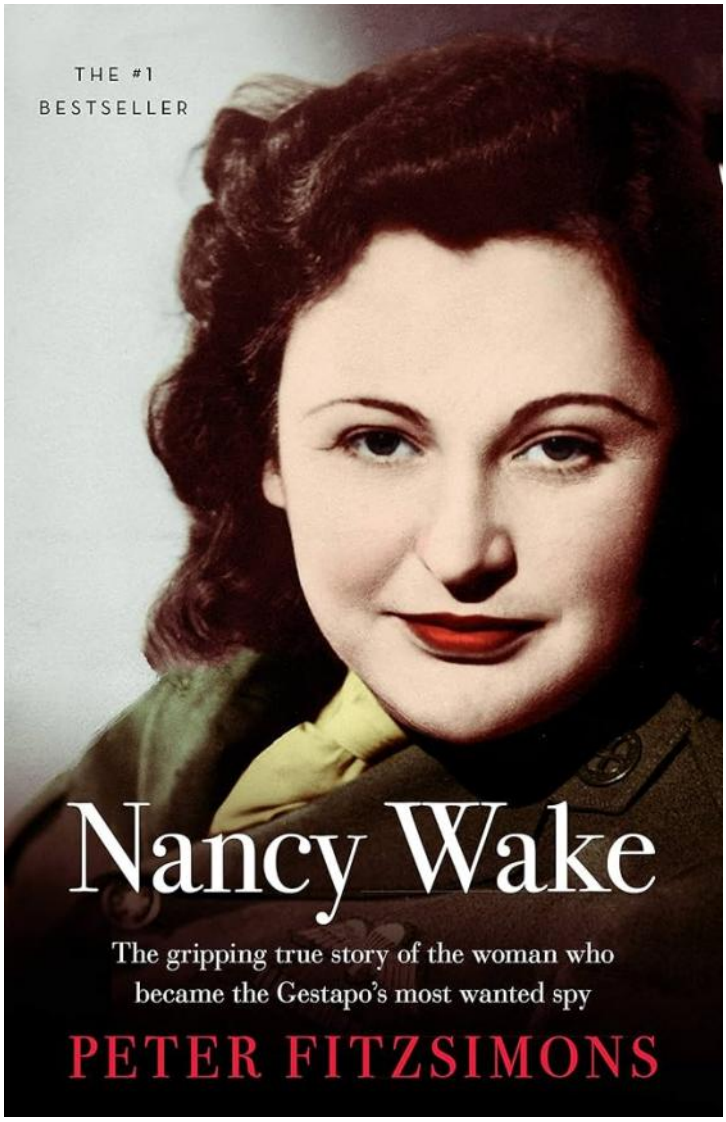
WOMEN IN WAR
WiW Group Newsletter No.45
Winter/Spring 2026



Source: Publisher

In this Winter issue of the Newsletter we present a review of the new biography of Nancy Wake, and an overview of the role of "The Society for Women and the Civil War" written by John Lee. In addition, Gabriella Bullock shares with us a talk she gave last year, about the Kreipe kidnap on Crete in 1944, which was the subject of her father's book, (based on his diary) and titled *Ill Met by Moonlight* - to be published in several parts. Finally, Cita Stelzer reviews the fascinating *Wartime Letters of Kathleen Harriman*.

Newsletter edited by Paul Strong and Celia Lee

Nancy Wake by Peter Fitzsimons

Reviewed by Robert Mack

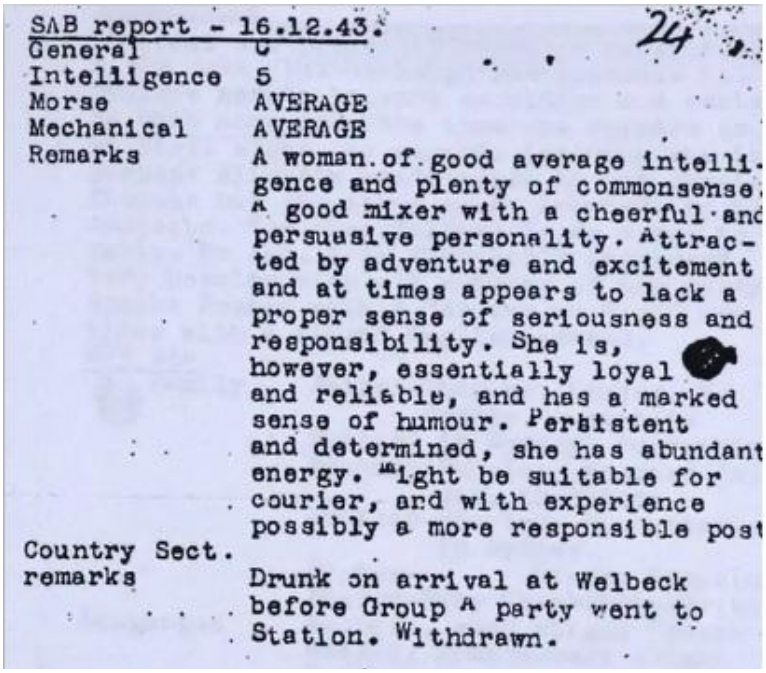
Nancy Wake was born in New Zealand in 1912, and raised in North Sydney, Australia. Having first trained as a nurse she became a journalist.

In the early 1930s, Nancy was a young woman enjoying a bohemian life- style in Paris with her husband. By the end of the Second World War, she was one of the Gestapo's most wanted persons.

As a young journalist, Nancy Wake witnessed a horrific scene of Nazi violence in a Viennese street. From that moment, she declared that she would do everything in her power to rid Europe of the Nazis.

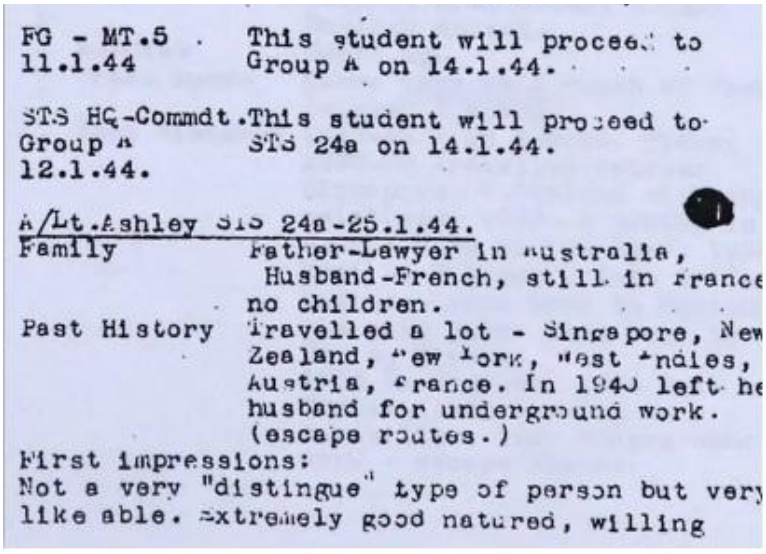
What began as a courier job here and there, became a highly successful escape network for Allied soldiers, perfectly camouflaged by Nancy's high-society life in Marseille. Her network was soon so successful and so notorious that she was forced to flee France to escape the Gestapo, who had dubbed her "the white mouse" for her knack of slipping through its traps.

In 1943, when the Germans became aware of her she escaped to Spain and then went to the United Kingdom, her husband having been captured and executed.



SAB report - 16.12.43. 24

General	C
Intelligence	5
Morse	AVERAGE
Mechanical	AVERAGE
Remarks	A woman of good average intelligence and plenty of commonsense. A good mixer with a cheerful and persuasive personality. Attracted by adventure and excitement and at times appears to lack a proper sense of seriousness and responsibility. She is, however, essentially loyal and reliable, and has a marked sense of humour. Persistent and determined, she has abundant energy. Might be suitable for courier, and with experience possibly a more responsible post
Country Sect. remarks	Drunk on arrival at Welbeck before Group A party went to Station. Withdrawn.



FG - MT.5 11.1.44 — This student will proceed to Group A on 14.1.44.

STS HQ-Commdt. Group A 12.1.44. — This student will proceed to STS 24a on 14.1.44.

A/Lt.Ashley STS 24a-25.1.44.

Family	Father-Lawyer in Australia, Husband-French, still in France no children.
Past History	Travelled a lot - Singapore, New Zealand, New York, West Indies, Austria, France. In 1940 left he husband for underground work. (escape routes.)

First impressions:
Not a very "distingue" type of person but very likeable. Extremely good natured, willing

Nancy Wake's SOE Training Report 1943

National Archive Catalogue reference: HS 9/1545.

In Britain, Nancy joined the Special Operations Executive (SOE) under the code name "Hélène". On 29–30 April 1944 as a member of a three-person SOE team code-named "Freelance" she parachuted into the Allier department of occupied France to liaise between the SOE and several Marquis groups in the Auvergone region, which were loosely overseen by Émile Coulaudon (code name Gaspard).

If you want to discover why Nancy Wake was considered the most wanted spy by the Gestapo during the Second World War, then read this riveting biography of her. Why was she exceptional, and why was she despised by the Gestapo? Here are some of the reasons that are delved into in the book:

Nancy established a highly successful escape network for Allied armed forces in Marseille. She bicycled 400 kilometres over a mountainous region in occupied France to get a wireless that was critical for re-establishing communications with London. She headed French resistance groups that made life miserable for the Gestapo.

My educated guess is that you will find yourself admiring Nancy Wake after you finish this autobiography. You will be inspired by her courage in the face of overwhelming odds, her leadership brilliance, and her fierce loyalty to the Allied cause. Her list of commendations from France, Britain, America, and Australia are a testament to her amazing bravery.

Peter FitzSimons has done a commendable job in gathering all the information about Nancy Wake's life and he presents it in a clear and concise style that is compelling.

This is a highly recommended biography about an iconic British spy who was pre-eminent in directing sabotage operations that were instrumental in the success of D-Day.

Nancy Wake proudly holding a large tapestry depicting an illustrated map of Australia.

Source: National Archives of Australia

9

Form T.3.

PARA-MILITARY REPORT

S.T.S.No. 24A (To be submitted after Para-Military Training in duplicate to S.T.S., H.Q. Third copy to be attached to Forms T.1 and T.2.) Party 27.A.G.

School No. 2.

Name by which known WAKE, Nancy.

Grade 2(b)

The following standard and ability has been obtained in training at S.T.S.No. 24A

1. Physical Training - This student has tried very hard, although she has not the build for this work. She has, however, good powers of endurance.

2. Close Combat — Has worked very well and showed keenness. Has a fair grasp of principles.

3. Rope Work — Has tried very hard, but has not the build to excel at this work. She has determination, however, and endurance.

4. Fieldcraft — Has worked well, having good eye for country. Has shown great keenness.

5. Weapon Training — Very good and fast shot. Has been very keen and obtained good results with all weapons.

6. Explosives & Demolitions — Is very keen, but has found difficulty in grasping the subject fully. Would have to work under supervision, but can make up very neat standard charges.

7. Signalling and communications — Made a bad start, but since the second half of the course has made a big improvement and is now a good sender and reader. She has shown great interest and has spent a lot of spare time on this subject.

8. Reports etc. — Found difficulty in these subject, but made good progress. Should try and make her work neater.

9. Map Reading etc. — Worked hard at this subject, although disliking it, and made good progress.

10. Schemes & Tactics — Has a sound grasp of minor tactics and has worked well on all schemes. Proved to be an efficient leader on one scheme, and has the power of leading men.

11. Boat work — This student showed great keenness and made excellent progress. Has a good elementary knowledge of boatwork.

12. Navigation

13. Special Training (giving particulars)

Nancy Wake's paramilitary training report.

National Archive Catalogue reference: HS 9/1545

The Society for Women and the Civil War

By John Lee

In my capacity as President of the American Civil War Round Table (UK), I get lots of communications from associated groups in the USA. I thought you might like to hear of one devoted to the role of women in the Civil War.

Its mission statement is well-worded, covering the lives of women before, during and after the terrible conflict that raged in the United States for more than four years (killing more Americans than all its other wars before or since).

They are "An organisation dedicated to recognising the efforts of women who lived through or participated in the American Civil War and those who research, re-enact or otherwise honour these women of the past".

They embrace every aspect of American society of the time and remind us that absolutely nothing happens in history without the participation of women. Women served greatly in the hospital and medical services of both sides, as well as supporting the rival armies in many other ways. The group does not shy away from the role of sex-workers in this as in every other war in history. There are always cases of women concealing their gender and serving as soldiers; another phenomenon that occurs throughout history. On the home fronts women had to step forward and manage farms and businesses as their menfolk went off to war. In the Confederate South they had to deal with the aftermath of the mass flight of their enslaved labourers as the Union declared the emancipation of slavery in all states in rebellion against the USA, and as Union armies marched to victory across the South. Their role in Reconstruction after the war ends is also covered very well.

Image: The Society for Women and the Civil War

You can sign up on their website for a free monthly newsletter called “The Calling Card”. Those with a deeper interest in the topic can join as individual members and receive a well-respected quarterly journal. They also organise very interesting annual conferences in the USA. Members also receive valuable reading lists to help develop their interest and keep up with the excellent new research generated around subject.

They have drawn our attention to a new museum in Washington DC which opens up an interesting new aspect on the Civil War. It is the Clara Barton Missing Soldiers Office Museum, 437 7th Street NW. The museum is in the original (refurbished) 1860 building that housed it during the war. Clara Barton did hugely important work in establishing nursing services for the Union. But she went on to found the Missing Soldiers Office, and helped families trace the fate of some of the ‘missing in action’. From some 60,000 enquiries her office was able to identify 22,000 individuals. Their website gives opening times (Friday and Saturday 11am-5pm for ‘walk ins’) prices etc.

I cannot think of another organisation like it, so completely devoted to such an important aspect of Women in War.

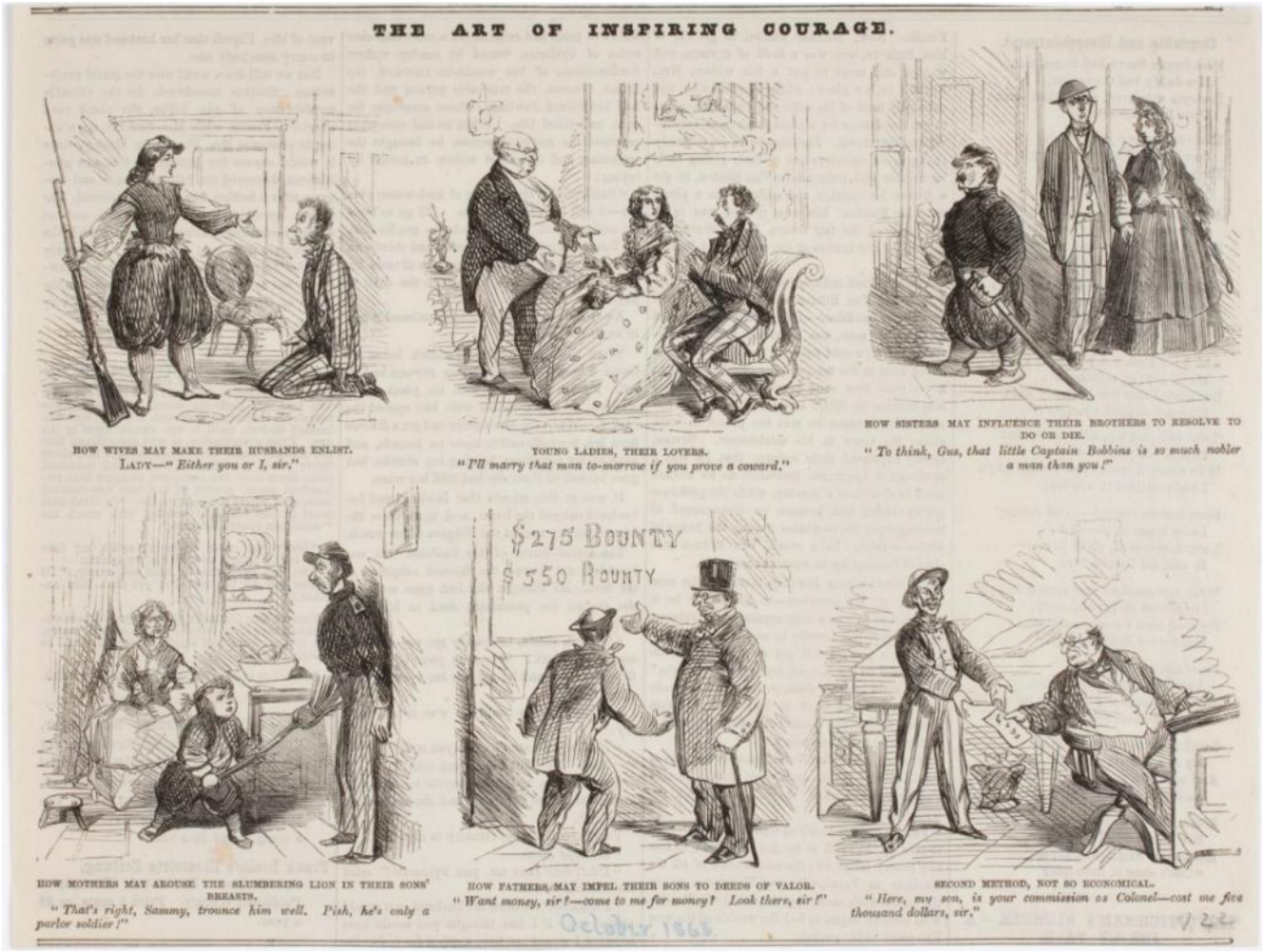


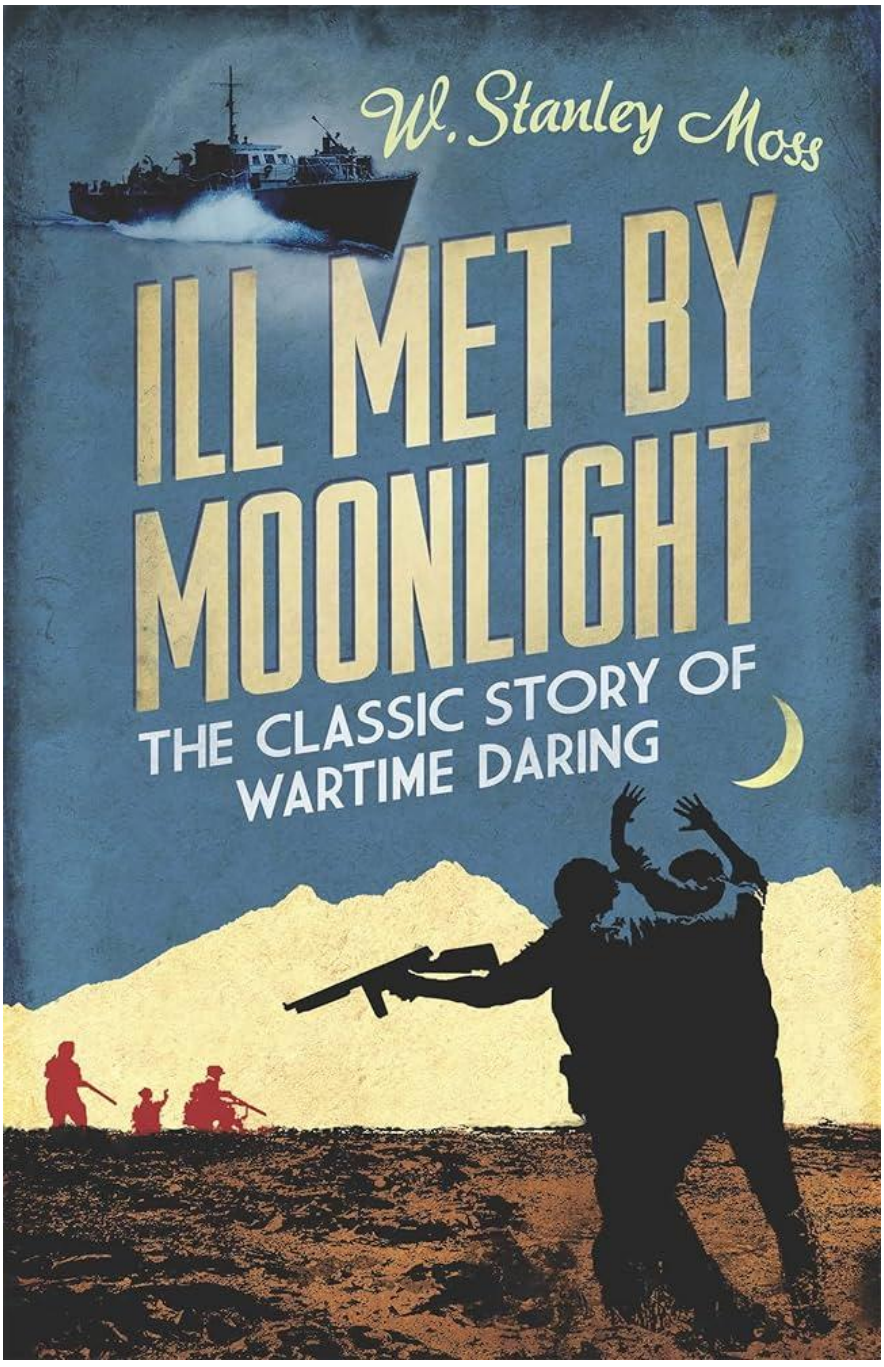
Image: Frank Leslie, The Art of Inspiring Courage, 1863 (Northern Cartoon) Source: Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper (see http://civilwarwomen.wp.tulane.edu/essays-4/from-domesticity-to-industry-working-women-in-the-civil-war/)

Kidnap of General Heinrich Kreipe

Commander of German Forces on occupied Crete, 1944

By Gabriella Bullock

(daughter of William Stanley Moss)



Part 1

In 1940, Winston Churchill launched the Special Operations Executive (SOE), with the rousing injunction to 'set Europe ablaze'. This article is the text of a talk that I gave about my father, William Stanley Moss – and the 1944 operation in which he was involved with Patrick Leigh Fermor, both British SOE agents.

This operation was the abduction carried out, by the two of them, together with a trusted handful of Cretan Resistance fighters, of General Heinrich Kreipe, Commander at that time of German Forces on occupied Crete. My father's book *Ill Met by Moonlight* describes it all. It was a bestseller which in 1958 was made into an Emeric/Pressburger film, which many of you will have seen.! To give you a bit of background – first! My father was born in 1921, in Yokohama, Japan, where his family was living, and where his father was a businessman. His mother was a White Russian, whose family had escaped the Revolution. When my father was two years old, Yokohama was entirely destroyed in the Great Kanto earthquake; the family survived and returned at that point to settle in England. They travelled a great deal, however, and my father claimed to have voyaged around the world twice before his teens. Known as Billy, he was a much-loved only child, and his adventurous spirit was given fairly free rein. Treasure Island was and remained his favourite book.

Also encouraged were his artistic and writing talents, and his love of animals. He was schooled at Charterhouse, leaving in 1939, before his 18th birthday, and before the outbreak of the Second World War (1939-45).

William Stanley Moss

© Estate of William Stanley Moss

Over the top of Mount Ida, 28th or 29th April 1944.

© Estate of William Stanley Moss

He was commissioned into the Coldstream Guards in 1941, having trained at Caterham and Sandhurst Royal Military Academy. He served 18 months in and around London, on the King's Guard, with a period of guarding Rudolph Hess, and a spell of Churchillian duty at Chequers – all thrilling for a junior officer—before suddenly being sent to join the 3rd Battalion the Coldstream in the Middle East. He saw action for the first time in the Desert Campaign with Montgomery's Eighth Army, chasing Rommel across North Africa, after Alamein. Following a spell in Pantelleria, Italy, he parted from his regiment and headed for Cairo, and in September 1943, he volunteered to join Force 133 of SOE.

Meanwhile, at 22 years old, he was the youngest inmate of the house known as Tara – which grew into something of a Cairo legend as a centre of uproarious and eccentric fun when its housemates were on leave. These were other SOE agents and included David Smiley and Billy McLean, who operated together in Albania and the Balkans, Xan Fielding and Patrick Leigh Fermor - known as Paddy - these two were well embedded in the Cretan resistance and Paddy had already spent some two years in the mountains disguised as a shepherd. He had an almost Byronic love and affinity for Greece and Crete. He was fluent in Greek, German and many other languages, and would recite reams of epic poetry at the drop of a hat.

I can't resist sharing with you this description of him, later in life, by his friend the writer Lawrence Durrell, when Paddy was staying with him in Cyprus: "After a splendid dinner by the fire Paddy starts singing songs of Crete, Athens, Macedonia. When I go out to refill the ouzo bottle.... I find the street completely filled with people listening in utter silence and darkness. Everyone seems struck dumb. I catch sight of Frangos, who says, "Never have I heard of Englishmen singing Greek songs like this!"; Their reverent amazement is touching; it is as if they want to embrace Paddy wherever he goes."

My father too was under his spell. Paddy was 29 at the time of the abduction. He was less of a professional soldier than my father, with less experience of conventional warfare. He had served for a short time with the Irish Guards, but his disposition was much more suited to undercover work with SOE. Eventually – but not without dissenting voices - he was granted permission by Head Quarters to carry out the kidnap operation. He asked my father to join him as his second-in-command, who leapt at the chance.

Paddy wrote an Afterword for the 2001 edition of Ill Met by Moonlight. Writing from a historical perspective, he is at pains to insist that the kidnap was carefully planned – that it was the result of an idea of long and complex gestation. He longs to dispel the notion that it was somehow a tremendous jape. It is also true, however, that all the Tara inmates had had a great time adding their ha'penny-worth, towels around their middles, famously drawing maps, plans and diagrams on a steamy bathroom wall. Afterwards, one wireless announcer said, 'Of all the stories that have come out of the War this is the one which schoolboys everywhere will best remember'. Paddy's words cannot stifle the ebullience of this story. Its enduring appeal hinges on a mix of danger and courage with dare-devilry, and on the fact that its aim was not destruction of any kind, but simply, with the co-operation of a huge swathe of the unbowed and complicit population, to get the better of the mighty Germans by stealing their general from under their noses. It was a wonderful idea. On Crete itself there is a joke that out of a population of 600,000, - 599,999 were involved.

To go back a bit. The German invasion of Crete in 1941, had been, uniquely, an airborne invasion, and The Battle of Crete raged for 11 days of total and bloody fighting. When the Germans prevailed, and thousands of British and Allied troops were hurriedly evacuated as best they could be, Cretans were abandoned to their fate. In retaliation for the fierce resistance they had put up, the Germans instantly imposed a terrifying and pitiless rule on the entire population, which was enforced throughout the occupation. On the slightest pretext, or even none, there were summary executions, destructions of villages, massacres of their inhabitants, gratuitous cruelty of every kind. General Muller, commander of the German forces, was known as The Butcher of Crete, and later executed for war crimes. This was the General that Paddy and my father hoped to abduct, take prisoner and escort back to Cairo. However, in March 1944, Muller was temporarily replaced by General Kreipe - who thus became the target.

In the wake of the Battle of Crete, numbers of Cretan men had taken to the mountains – as they had the century before when under Turkish rule - forming and joining bands of resistance fighters. A handful of SOE agents such as Paddy, then trickled into Crete to help and organise this resistance. I won't narrate the full story, as many of you will have read the book or seen the film. I feel I should explain, though, that sadly, I never knew my father, who died when I was a child. So, much of what I have to say is necessarily conjecture. Luckily, he wrote books, letters, diaries. I shall be quoting from the fulsome contemporaneous diary that he kept, and upon which *Ill Met by Moonlight* is closely based.

One night in early February 1944, Paddy, Billy, and two key Cretan members of the team, Manoli and George, are flown out over Crete, and Paddy is dropped. But as the plane turns to make a second drop, clouds close in, ever more thickly, forcing the plane back to base. Subsequent attempts to reach Crete by plane and boat are all thwarted until finally, on the night of the 4 th April, a small motor launch with my father on board edged towards the Cretan coast. "In the light of the half-moon the mountains loomed up large and misty-white so that it seemed that we were much, much closer". Guided slowly in by a pinprick signal of torchlight, a dinghy landed him within wading distance, and he was helped ashore by a score of hands.

Above: Paddy and Billy making plans, Crete 1944.

Right: Paddy and Billy in their stolen German uniforms.

Image Copyright for both pictures: Estate of William Stanley Moss

The kidnap team back row left to right: Manoli Paterakis, PLF, I WSM; George Tyrakis. Front row: Grigori Chnarakis, Stratis Saviolakis, Antoni Papaleonidas, and Nikko Komis.

Image Copyright: Estate of William Stanley Moss

"*My first impressions were extraordinary – dark faces, heavy moustaches, turbaned heads, black and shabby clothes, tall boots, a hundred voices. And then I saw Paddy, and ran towards him. I can't describe how wonderful it was to see the old son of a gun again. We talked of everything and of nothing for a few moments. Paddy looked radiantly healthy, and the sun (I think it must have been the sun) had darkened his face, so that he looked for all the world like a smuggler of old.*

He had to leave me then to go and see to further unloading and to get the German POWs on board… I saw him go off, and watched him, as he gave orders, commanded men to do this and that. I remember thinking 'Here is the different Paddy'. He seemed to have the whole situation at his fingertips and was capable of coping with anything".

I wanted to quote this to give you a flavour of it all in the diary's words, and also, because of the understated rather English way my father expresses his admiration for Paddy. Throughout the diary there never seems to be a jarring word between them. Rather, a close understanding and uncomplicated delight in each other's company - a purity, somehow.

The beach in question had been mined, with German outposts only ¾ mile to the west and one mile to the east. Through that night their Cretan guide led them over mountains for four hours. In this way, and at each stage of the operation, the Cretans were guiding them, sheltering them, guarding them, providing for them. Taking unimaginable risks for them. Paddy always stressed that most of those involved in the kidnap were Cretan, and there was no doubt of the consequences for them of being caught. As for Paddy and Billy, Hitler's Commando Order of 1942 was clear, stating "all enemies on so-called commando mission, whether armed or unarmed, in battle or in flight, are to be slaughtered to the last man".

There were moments of hair-raising danger, but preparations went ahead, and the kidnap took place on the evening of the 26th April, as the General was being driven from German HQ to the Villa Ariadne, his sleeping quarters in Knossos. Paddy and Billy, in stolen German uniforms, and their team of seven Cretans, waited concealed. At a signal that the General's car, with its unmistakable pennants on the front, was approaching – one hour later than expected - Paddy and Billy stepped into the road, swinging torches. The car slowed at the crossroads. Paddy cried HALT. The car stopped and they both approached it, one on each side – Billy on the driver's side. Paddy questioned "Ist dies das General's wagen?" "Ya, Ya" - and then they tore open the doors. The terrified chauffeur was reaching for his revolver, Billy hit him with a cosh, Paddy and Manoli pulled the General from the front seat. Struggling like mad and protesting loudly, he was bundled into the back, and sat upon by three hefty and armed Cretans, while the chauffeur was taken away by the others. Billy jumped in behind the steering wheel, and with Paddy beside him now wearing the General's hat, they set off. Paddy told the General that if he were willing to give his parole that he would neither shout nor try to escape, they would treat him not as a prisoner but as one of themselves; the General gave his parole immediately. Billy drove the car, past the startled sentries waiting at the guarded Villa Ariadne; and then through a number of checkpoints. At these, he slowed right down to give the sentries time to recognise the pennants, before gradually accelerating smoothly past – a tactic which seemed to work.

Their route took them through the centre of Heraklion, where unfortunately, with nerve-wracking timing, a garrison cinema show had just ended and spilled out its audience - so that the streets were milling with scores of German soldiers, and they were forced to weave through at snail's pace, holding their breath and their nerve. There were many more checkpoints: 22 in all, of which 5 were roadblocks – but somehow they negotiated them all. They carried on along the coastal road and up into the mountains, and here the party split. So far, so good. Together with the Cretan team, Billy and the General set off into the mountains. Meanwhile, Paddy drove the car to a spot by the north coast, where it might seem that the occupants had left it and had boarded a waiting submarine. Inside it he left the signed letter which he and Billy had carefully composed: this was addressed to the German authorities, and claimed full and sole British responsibility for the abduction, as well as hopefully giving the impression that the General would have already been taken off the island. The reality was that, having re-formed, the entire party would then trek over the mountains all the way across to the southern coast where hopefully they would make rendezvous with a boat to take them to Cairo.

It had been pre-arranged with HQ that when news of the abduction broke, the BBC and other broadcasting channels would announce that General Kreipe was already on his way to Cairo. In fact, everywhere it was announced that the General *was being taken* off the island. This made matters for them very much worse: it was responsible for the Germans launching a full-scale manhunt. Not only that, but the leaflets never materialised which were supposed immediately to be dropped, stating in both German and Greek that the operation had been carried out by a British raiding party – in this way, Paddy had hoped to prevent reprisals being taken on the islanders.

Over the next 19 days the party made its way across the mountains by night, taking cover in caves by day, while the full-scale manhunt picked up their trail and began to close in on them. As Billy wrote, they had everything to lose. But with their incredibly loyal tight-knit team, local lookouts and runners, they just managed to keep a step ahead of the tightening circle – fed and sheltered all the way without question and without fail. There were of course also those whom they couldn't trust. There were constant danger, setbacks, crises, near-disasters and changes of plan, failed communication systems and mishaps of all kinds, but finally on the night of the 15 th May Paddy and Billy were safely chugging their way back to Cairo in the same motor launch that Billy had arrived in. They handed over General Kreipe and their job was done.

To be continued...

Billy Moss (L) and Paddy (R) With General Kreipe

Image Copyright: Estate of William Stanley Moss

CITA STELZER

Author of

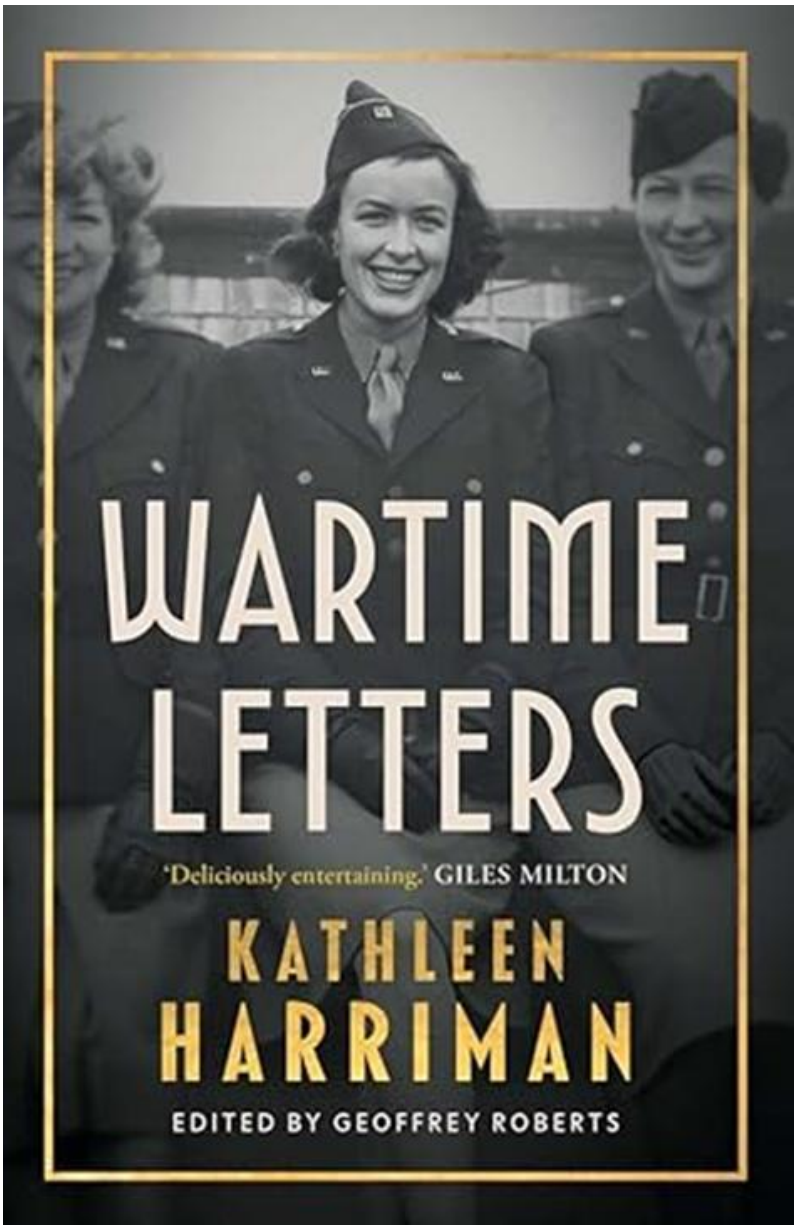
Churchill's American Network: Forging the Special Relationship

reviews

Wartime Letters of Kathleen Harriman

Edited by Geoffrey Roberts,

Pub. Yale University Press



Fortunately for historians, Kathleen Harriman, one of the more remarkable of the many remarkable women to stride across the world stage during World War 2, was a prolific letter-writer. Between her arrival in London on May 9, 1941, and early January 1946, Kathleen wrote regularly to her sister, Mary, her step-mother Marie (her father, Averell Harriman's new wife), and her old Scottish nanny, and at times to her London roommate, Pamela Churchill (*nee* Digby), then still married to Randolph

The letters, written from London, Moscow, the Yalta conference and many places in between are so numerous that Geoffrey Roberts' brilliantly edited and helpfully annotated version of those letter runs to over 400 pages. And what letters they are!

Kathleen Harriman was born into wealth and privilege, her father, Averell Harriman (mostly called Ave by her in her letters), a businessman, had inherited a railroad fortune and enhanced it with shrewd investments, and her maternal mother was wealthy in her own right. Available to her was a life of debutant balls and an agreeable marriage within her social class. The first step to such a life was Foxcroft, an elite Virginia girls' boarding school, where she excelled at tennis, riding and skiing, the latter to a level that had her considered for the US Olympic team. Known as Kathy, her interest in and proficiency at skiing enabled her to serve as an effective hostess when her father later developed Sun Valley, the famous Idaho ski resort.

After Foxcroft she charted an unconventional path, choosing liberal-arts Bennington College rather than one of the traditional 'seven sister' colleges. It was at Bennington, writes Roberts in his Introduction, that "she honed her intellect, broadened her horizons and developed her writing voice." Her essays on international affairs and world politics, written as war became closer in the 1930s, attracted praise from, among others, her father. At age 24, she decided to join him when he was sent by President Roosevelt to London to manage the US's Lend-Lease program.

Averell Harriman was to be the liaison between the American and British governments at the start of the Second World War, before the Americans entered the war, but during the period in which Franklin D. Roosevelt was doing all public opinion at home would permit to aid Britain. His second wife remained at home, leaving Kathleen to serve as her father's part-time London hostess. But mostly she worked, first at Hearst's wire service, International News Service (INS) and later at Newsweek's London bureau, filing dozens of stories during wartime London – and she loved every minute of it.

Roberts has grouped her wartime letters into sections: first the letters from London (May 1941-1943) and then the letters from Moscow (October 1943-1945). Interspersed in both are letters from Yalta and other places in which Kathy found herself. These wartime letters reveal a hugely intelligent, intensely curious young woman who was willing to work hard in a man's journalistic and military world, and who enjoyed the thrill of "scooping" competing journalists. Even if they were one of the few female journalists working in London.

On the fateful night of Sunday 7 December ,1941, Prime Minister Winston Churchill had organized a dinner at his country house, Chequers, Buckinghamshire, to celebrate Kathy's 24th birthday. The guests suddenly heard on the 9 PM radio news that Japan had attacked Pearl Harbour. The cake was quickly forgotten. In a letter to her sister, she writes that then Churchill and the other guests went off to make phone calls, returned to watch a movie for about an hour, (a staple of Churchill dinners), and then returned to the salon to hear the latest news that Japan had declared war on the British Empire and the US. "The first day of war is always exciting", Kathy concluded in her December 8, 1941, letter to her sister, written from Chequers.

In Moscow, all her work was as an unpaid volunteer. “Pretty much everything I do these days is novelty in one way or another, I’m enjoying it muchly (sic)”, she wrote. She ran the British Embassy for her father as his official hostess and learned Russian so she could speak to Soviet politicians and ordinary Russians. Doubly busy in Moscow, she had two additional jobs: working for the Office of War Information preparing a weekly summary of all the war news reported in The New York Times for circulation to the foreign diplomatic community, and arranging for a glossy magazine in Russian titled Amerika, designed to show the Soviets how good life in the United States was. It didn’t work: people feared being seen by the ever-present Soviet surveillance teams reading an American publication.

She worked hard to ease the tensions between her father, the Ambassador, and the State Department employees, who were old Soviet hands. Kathy included Embassy staff, enlisted men and officers plus the Soviets and other diplomats stationed in Moscow, in dozens of daily lunches, tea parties, and dinners at the embassy. She even made the arrangements necessary for Lillian Hellman, an American left-leaning playwright, to spend time at the embassy, recuperating from some ailment.

There are many personal titbits in these letters about her need for silk stockings for herself and as gifts to girlfriends; packages ‘from home’ are essential, lipstick, mascara and underwear. At the same time, she sympathizes with the British and Russians lack of clothing, especially coats and boots which she also needs her friends in the US to send to her.

She was sensitive to the human suffering with which she was surrounded when out and about hunting for stories - rationing and the blitz in London, shortages and the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, abbreviated as NKVD, that was the interior ministry and secret police of the Soviet Union from 1934 to 1946. She pushed hard to get stories about that suffering out to her American readers. For example, in London she interviewed young men who had escaped from Belgium looking to write their stories, she interviewed women in factories and wrote describing their work, and their eagerness to get out of dreary work in the home, to which many would never return once the war ended. She visited hospitals and bomb sites, managing to maintain her optimism and humour throughout.

What comes across most vividly is the personality of this intrepid young American woman in two very different foreign wartime cities with contrasting political systems. She is endlessly grateful for the chance to work and be at the centre of the world, with news breaking all around her. In London, she wrote “Did I tell you – overworked as I am – I love my work?”

Her hard work, talent and social skills, and her father’s powerful positions, enabled her to know everyone of importance from Prime Minister Winston Churchill to every top British and American general. She interviewed many enlisted men. And with all that, she managed a very active social life centred on her new British friends – many of whom became the source for information she could use in her work, or for stories in the America press, always careful of the censors.

Her thumbnail descriptions of the great and not-so- great men, it was mostly men, make for delightful and informative reading, and their candour prompted her to warn her sister Mary, while sharing a dim view of US Ambassador to the Court of St. James, John G. Winant, "Please be discreet in your parcelling out of my indiscretions…" . This warning applied most specially to her views of Randolph Churchill, then married to her friend Pamela. Randolph, she wrote, has an "amazing lack of human understanding. … The P.M. wants him to take a big part in Parliament, the prospects of which are terrifying." Almost 30 years after Kathleen penned these words, Pamela became Mrs. Averell Harriman.

General George Marshall is "full of fun with great dignity". "The love of my life, Major General Sir Hastings Ismay (you must admit that's a wonderful name) … a thoroughly charming man, and after all one can't be blessed with all the graces." known to all as Pug. Lavrenti Beria, "Head of the NKVD, a role which makes him the most feared man. He is little and fat with thick lenses which gives him a sinister look – but quite genial." On FDR, at a small, private dinner at Yalta, "He's really absolutely sweet – very easy to make conversation to – amusing and generally in great form."

Stalin at a dinner at the Yalta Conference, reported Kathy, rose from the banquet table, approached to clink glasses with her, "a very nice gesture" she reported. Her father had warned her to be ready to offer a toast, which she did in her best Russian. Stalin would give her a Russian thoroughbred stallion named Boston as a farewell gift.

Kathy describes her view of Churchill in Downing Street, "The P.M. is much smaller than I expected and a lot less fat … and looks rather kindly like a blue teddy bear" in his RAF-blue one-piece siren suit … very gracious … has a wonderful smile".

On 11 February 1943, Kathy went to the House of Commons to hear the Prime Minister report on, inter alia, the Casablanca Conference with Roosevelt to plan the next campaign in the war, the Adana meetings at which he tried to persuade Turkey to join the allies, as well as progress in the war. Kathy noted sourly, "his announcement of Ike's appointment as Commander-in-Chief went ungreeted by even one "Hear, Hear" from the Prime Minister's fellow 'honourable gentlemen'."

It would not be surprising that she used her attractive American youthfulness and intellect to, shall we say, flirt with 'bigwigs' and even sometimes with 'littlewigs", but she got her stories, filed on time, sometimes ahead of the other reporters, even finding time to sun herself in the Downing Street garden.

There was one contact that led to more than a little flirtation, enough more than that for her to report it to Pamela. She had played tennis with General Ira Eaker, who she described as "a very nice man and top of my list of those who should be 'cultivated' ". They had met again in Caserta, Italy, at Ike's Italian headquarters. The sequence of events is not clear from her letter to Pamela, but at one point the General sent her a diamond, ruby and sapphire ring, which she had previously turned down while they were both in Caserta. The record is not clear on

whether she kept it or not. As I pointed out before, this is the sort of intimate tit-bit Kathy typically shared with Pamela Churchill.

Pamela was a particularly close friend with whom she shared a London flat and a country cottage, even though she knew that Pamela was having an affair with her father, who was not then married to Kathy's natural mother. She did not, however, share the rather dim view of Pamela's husband, Randolph, who created the usual problems at the cottage as he did everywhere. Many decades later, after Ave, whom Pamela had married, died, Kathy's friendship with Pamela would end in anger and lawsuits.

Historians owe an enormous debt of gratitude to David Mortimer, Kathy's eldest son, after she had married Stanley Mortimer, and David's wife, Shelley Wagner, for granting Geoffrey Roberts access to the letters of one of the most extraordinary women, no, one of the most extraordinary people to become involved in the effort to defeat Germany during the Second World War.

Readers were introduced to Kathy in two biographies of her father, Averell Harriman, and she is mentioned in books about the Yalta Conference, but there is neither an autobiography nor a full-scale biography of her available. These letters do much to fill the gap in our knowledge not only of the woman but of the wartime in which she lived.

As these letters show, Kathy Harriman was an astute observer of the war and its participants. And gosh! The lady is a hellova writer too - to paraphrase her lively 1940s jargon.

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