

# The Estaminet Times

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MILITARY HISTORY  
SOCIETY

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Front cover: Blitz over London. AI Generated  
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The Magazine of the Halifax Military History Society

# Editor's Notes

With Christmas just around the corner, it seems appropriate to look back 80 years to what Christmas was like in 1944. Alan Rhodes has created a collection of photos for Ian Richardson's article reminding us of those days. At the time there was a general feeling that the war was heading towards the defeat of Germany, even if there was still much fighting and killing ahead.

Peter Liddle continues with his 'Bookworming' series; this time on the Second World War. Look out for Virginia Cowles. Surely a must have Christmas gift for all Second World War buffs.

Do you remember those 'Dinky' toys? For boys in particular, whose childhood was spent somewhere in the 50s and 60s the, 25 pdr field gun with its 'Quad' vehicle was a must have. I certainly remember mine. Ian Richardson tells all about the real 25 pdr.

There's a touch of the circus and the Wild West in Alan Rhodes' account of pre-First World War military aviation development. This was a time when aviation was something of a novelty. How would this new dimension be put to use in modern warfare?

And finally, another throwback to 80 years ago. The destruction of the German battleship, Tirpitz. It rarely fired its guns in anger but its strategic influence on the naval campaign in the North Atlantic and Arctic was immense.

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# Christmas 1944 – 80 Years Ago

Ian Richardson

The Allies continued to press the Axis powers, with the Russians advancing on Austria and Budapest, but the Germans launched a major counter-attack in the Ardennes area of Belgium, which came to be known as the Battle of the Bulge. This was the bloodiest campaign the American forces experienced, but on 26<sup>th</sup> December General Patton's tanks relieved the siege of Bastogne and although the battle continued, the tide was effectively turned, leaving the Germans battered and short of armoured equipment, and the Allies to continue their advance in 1945. Winston Churchill described the events as a "dangerous phase of war".

The Germans launched a major attack on the Manchester area on Christmas Eve, with 50 V-1 rockets falling, mainly in Oldham, and 40 people were killed. One malfunctioning V1 fell on farmland near the hamlet of Hubberton Green, Sowerby Bridge. The explosion damaged a farm building but there were no casualties.

The changing tides of war were apparent in the standing down of the Home Guard, after four years' service, with ceremonial parades taking place throughout the Calder Valley.



Jack Ward of 9th Medium Regiment, Royal Artillery, holds two geese about to become Christmas dinner. Geilenkirchen, Germany. Dec. 19, 1944.

# Christmas 1944

Life remained difficult at home with many deprivations and restrictions, including rationing and the unavailability of some food supplies, making the provision of a festive Christmas difficult. The Halifax Courier suggested some “alternative Christmas fare”, with recipes for Snow Pudding (made from semolina, apple pulp and milk!), Gingerbread Men and Coloured Sugar.



A young British boy receives a Christmas card. He is holding a bag with candy and a new toy, donated by Americans through the British War Relief Society.



British soldiers serving food to Dutch children at a St Nicholas Day party in the South of the Netherlands, 7 December 1944.



# Christmas 1944

There was plenty of entertainment to be enjoyed though: films on offer included *Rebecca* (starring Laurence Olivier and Joan Fontaine) at the *Regal*, and *Double Indemnity* (with Barbara Stanwyck and Edward G. Robinson) at the *Odeon*. *The Anglo-Russian Circus* ("with 20 star acts") was at the *Grand Theatre*, until its replacement by "Yorkshire's biggest and best pantomime" – *Cinderella*, competing with *Mother Goose* at the *Palace Theatre*. Other entertainments included dancing – no less than seven dance venues were on offer on Saturday evenings in Halifax.



Children making Christmas Decorations. 1944



A child in London, England, chooses from toys donated by Americans as Christmas gifts. 1944.



A mother and her daughter pull a Christmas cracker. On the top of the tree is a picture of the absent soldier husband & father 1944.



Christmas packages sent to American soldiers who were killed or missing in action are labelled with "return to sender" stickers.

# Christmas 1944

Football was played at The Shay – the regular Football League programme was replaced by a wartime Football League North competition, and Town played home and away fixtures against Huddersfield Town over Christmas, attracting a crowd of 10,500 to The Shay. Halifax Rugby League Club won the Yorkshire Cup by beating Hunslet 13-4 on aggregate.



Dutch Children of the 1944 'hunger Winter' famine are provided with bread and soup: Note clogs and bare feet.



The fate of the Geese! Royal Artillery cooks prepare Christmas dinner near Geilenkirchen, Germany. Dec. 25, 1944.

It was reported that attendances at church services were larger than for several years; with over 1,000 people worshipping Christmas Eve Midnight Mass at just one local church. Despite it being the sixth Christmas of a long and punishing war, and the outbreak of a local measles epidemic, the Courier suggested that this was “the most cheerful Christmas for some years”.

# Christmas 1944



Father Christmas presents Winston Churchill's grandson with a gift as other children look on. London. Dec. 17, 1942.

There was something of a sting in the tail of the Christmas period: a minor earthquake occurred at 1.36 a.m. on 30th December in the West Riding and Lancashire - windows rattled and furniture moved, but there were no casualties.

This article was previously printed in  
'The Grapevine' magazine'.

The Magazine of the Halifax Military History Society

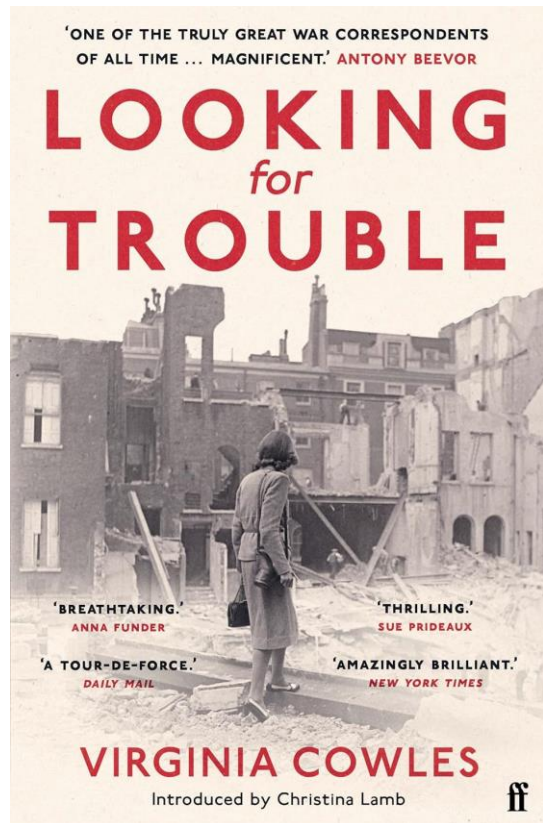


# Bookworming: The Second World War, Part One

Peter Liddle

Sometimes a book comes along which makes a stunning impact. For me it was all the more surprising when I found it was originally published in 1941 and, had I been familiar with it, I would have found it invaluable in my teaching at Sunderland Polytechnic in an area almost as gripping to me as the Great War, that is the events leading to the second world conflict. *Looking for Trouble* by the American journalist and later biographer, Virginia Cowles, details her reporting from both sides engaged in the Spanish Civil War, then from France, Britain, Czechoslovakia and Germany during the Sudetenland crisis, from Poland in 1939, from Finland during the Winter War, France during the German advance on Paris in 1940, escaping on the very eve of its occupation, with the final section on her coverage from Britain during the evacuation from France, the threat of German invasion, the Battle of Britain and the Blitz.

This brilliant, enthralling book needed a better modern Foreword, not just a summarising of The author's extraordinary range of experience, 1937/41. How was it that she 'knew everybody', what was the secret of her genius in getting anywhere, everywhere, when something was happening? I wanted to know more than she reveals, modest as she is, not just about her presumably wealthy background but about her character, personality, externally assessed qualities, capabilities – a richly deserved evaluation as a truly remarkable individual. I was left full of admiration for her and dearly would so much have cherished the privilege of interviewing her.

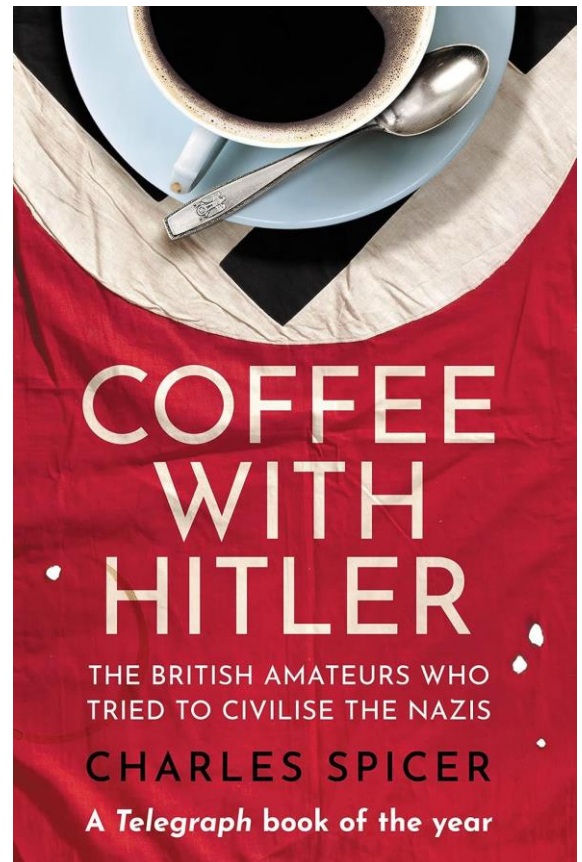


# BOOKWORMING: THE SECOND WORLD WAR

## Part One

A whimsical afterthought about the book is whether her glowing 1941 endorsement of the 'English', (when I would have preferred her to have written 'British'), could seriously be considered valid today?

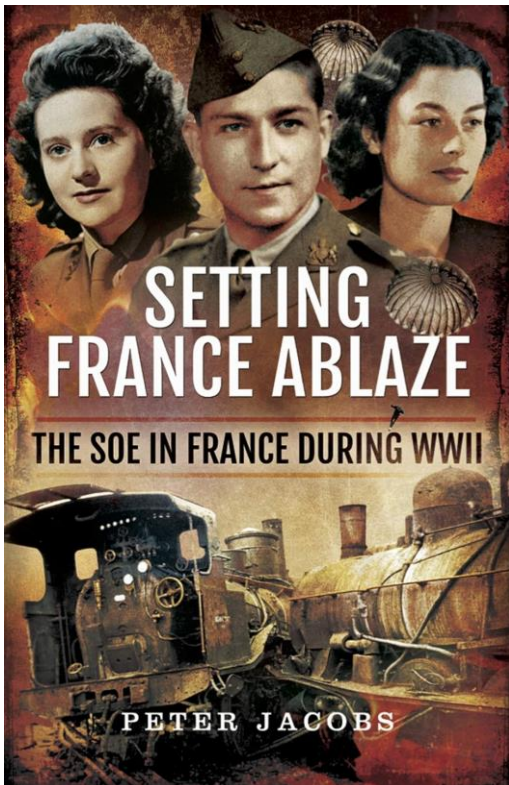
It is something of a coincidence that, like waiting lengthily for a bus, two come along at the same time, but having just lavished deserved praise on Virginia Cowles, I find myself having to do the same and even more so for Charles Spicer with *Coffee with Hitler*. This book is a quite brilliant re-valuation of an aspect of Appeasement by examining evidence of the work of three principal figures in The Anglo-German Friendship Association, Ernest Tennant, Group Captain Malcolm Christie and Dr Thomas Conwell-Evans. No one reading the book could possibly come from it without previously held judgements and prejudices being challenged. This is revisionist research with the bonus of being balanced, drawing forth reconsideration without vituperation of those holding or indeed helping to mould the current verdict.



# Bookworming: The Second World War, Part One.

I once spent an enthralling time interviewing the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl Jellicoe. At the time of the interview I was insufficiently knowledgeable about The Special Boat Squadrons in which Jellicoe had held command. Shame and regret upon regret. Then unpublished, how much I would have been helped by Saul David's *SBS: Silent Warriors*.

The book contains stories of incredible partnerships in the two-man crafts used in covert operations, the endurance, resilience, heroism from Special Boat Service personnel from 1940 to the end of the war. The sheer nerve and composure required on such work daunts one's imagination. Almost apologetically having read of such deeds, I have to say, of the book, far too much 'reported speech'.

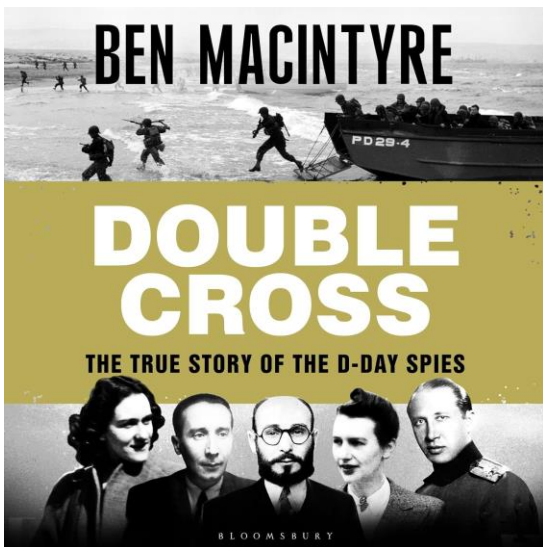
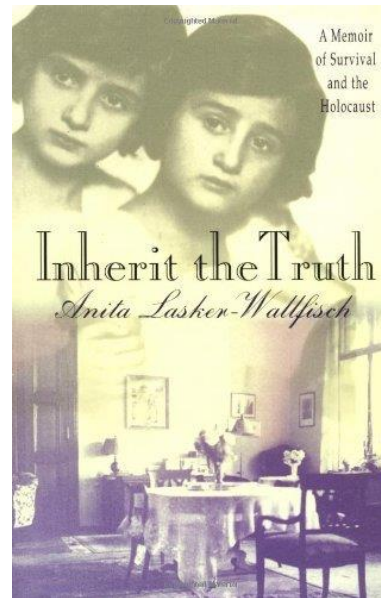


Peter Jacob's *Setting France Ablaze* I think also has an authorial fault despite properly paying tribute to the bravery of so many SOE men and women and those in France who, at such peril, helped them. The fault lies in the book being a litany of exploits which somehow swiftly passes over rather than thought-provokingly reminds the reader of just what was demanded of every operator on his or her mission. I must say however that the book does give rise to entirely appropriate reflection. As well as the savagery of the Germans, the huge scale of the problems they faced in dealing with Resistance in its various forms and SOE activity in support of the Resistance, is made clear as is the skill deployed by the Germans in tackling it.



# Bookworming: The Second World War, Part One.

*Inherit the Truth* by Anita Lasker-Wallfisch is personal testimony and original documentation of the Holocaust. Can one say such a book is exceptional? Grimly, not in the sense of unique experience, but this book, for quality in several aspects, is exceptional and it is heart-breaking, harrowing to an extreme degree, fundamental as an indictment of a generation. No more exculpatory nonsense limiting the guilt to Nazi leaders and their privileged uniformed followers.



Ben MacIntyre's *Double Cross* about the double-agent spies who deceived the Germans about the location of the Normandy Landings takes one into the psyche, conduct and composure of those engaged in this 'ridge walking' with a slip meaning torture and death. I can say confidently I am sure that almost everyone must feel the excitement of 'the game' but I cannot say I am anywhere near to having a clear idea of what makes someone undertake the work and then be successful at it. Of this book I have written: 'Exceptional. (yes I use this word too frequently) The story barely credible, but true. Bit of a slog to get through the detail and names/code names but essential reading re victory in Europe, 1945'.



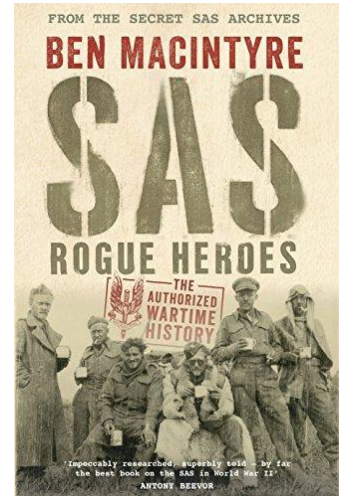
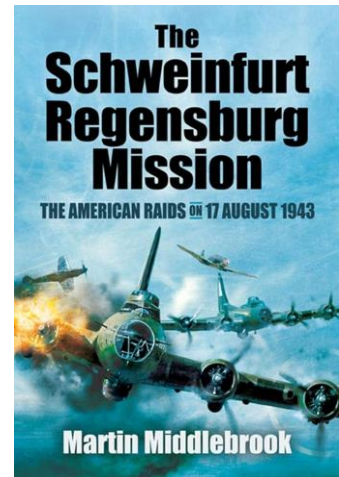
# Bookworming: The Second World War,

## Part One

McIntyre is a superb storyteller, exemplified in his book about the terrible traitor, Philby, *A Spy among Friends*. Most of us have strong opinions against or strong reservations about the death penalty, but I have to say mine melt away concerning Philby. To think that he was discovered and his escape virtually facilitated! The OTHERS too! I don't know whether Mrs Thatcher's contempt for the Foreign Office was rooted in the treason of such men but certainly my infinitely less consequential judgement is.

Perhaps this book is wrongly placed here because the contemptible activities of these villains is both pre-war and post-war but a book solidly placed in this section is Martin Middlebrook's *The Schweinfurt Regensburg Mission*. Researched to the n'th degree, fascinating though rather repetitive, Middlebrook's reputation for thoroughness in his work on the Great War is maintained in this sad story of tragic loss for inadequate gain.

And back to McIntyre with his *SAS: Rogue Heroes*. The author's talent had a fertile field here. I wrote: 'First class. Well written and researched. Every page of interest.' However, what a pity about the TV Film adaptation. Constantly sensational activity one could accept and the exaggerated casual officer/men relationships, but a less likely physical and facial set of actors for the SAS would have been difficult to assemble.



[Part Two of Peter Liddle's look at books of the Second World War will appear in our Spring edition of the Estaminet Times (March 2025 )]

# The 25 Pounder Field Gun

Ian Richardson

According to my father, the British Army's 25-Pounder was the finest field artillery piece ever produced. He had some experience, as a "Number One" (gun commander) in World War II, seeing front-line service as part of the 1939 British Expeditionary Force and the 8<sup>th</sup> Army in North Africa. A long-serving piece of ordinance, it remained in frontline service with the British Army until the 1960's and continued for training and ceremonial use for much longer.



# The 25 Pounder Field Gun

This artillery piece, also known as the Ordnance QF 25-pounder (i.e. Quick Firing), was developed from 1934 and introduced into service just before World War II began and was to replace both the 18-pounder field gun and 4.5-inch howitzer, which had been used since the First World War. It incorporated the high velocity of the 18-pounder and the variable propelling charges of the howitzer, firing a shell about halfway in size between the two old artillery pieces. The shell weighed 25 pounds, and its calibre was 3.45" (87.6 mm). The reason it was quick firing was that it was separate loading: the shell was loaded and rammed, then the cartridge in its brass case was loaded and the breech closed, with the cartridge case automatically released when the breech was opened after firing. It fired four shells a minute but in exceptional circumstances 8 in sixty seconds.

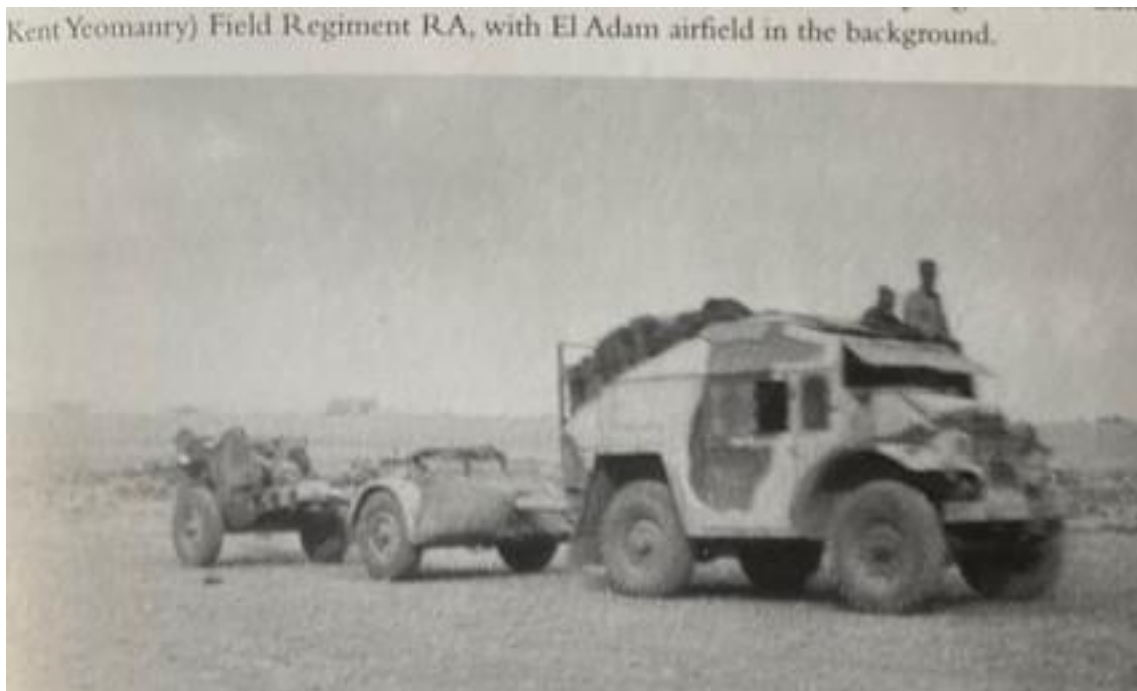


Italy 1944. Wiki Commons

The Mark I model was a conversion, built on the carriage of the old 18-pounder, but the main version was the Mark II, which entered service in 1940. Many different companies manufactured the guns and components, principally Vickers-Armstrong at Scotswood, Newcastle. Complete guns were also manufactured in Canada and Australia, and by the end of the war over 12,000 guns had been produced.

# The 25 Pounder Field Gun

My father was a member of the 97<sup>th</sup> (Kent Yeomanry) Field Regiment, RA, which was one of the Territorial Regiments mobilised in September 1939 as part of the B.E.F. They took their Mark I guns with them, which were fired during the retreat from Belgium, and ended up being destroyed by their own crews as they waited to embark from the beaches of Dunkirk – over 700 guns were left in France by the B.E.F. The regiment was reformed with new Mark II guns, and it saw service in Iraq, before the North African campaign, as is shown below.





# The 25 Pounder Field Gun

The 25-pounder nominally had a six-man crew: the No.1 or detachment commander was a sergeant, No. 2 operated the breech and rammed the shell, No.3 was the layer, No. 4 the loader and Nos. 5 and 6 were responsible for the ammunition. In practice – and in wartime conditions – a four-man crew had to make do. The field gun and ammunition limber were towed by a 4x4 tractor, mostly the Morris C8 Quad. The gun fired various shells – mainly high explosive but also anti-tank or smoke – and was versatile in that its circular firing platform gave it 360-degree capability, valuable for countering highly mobile armoured units. The shell was smaller and lighter than many of its contemporaries, but its range was better, and it was designed for the British practice of suppressive or neutralising fire, rather than super-destructive fire.



25 pdr ammunition

It remained in frontline service until well into the 1960s when it was replaced by the 105 mm Abbott self-propelled gun and the L5 105 mm Italian-made OTO-Melara Mod 56 pack howitzer. The 25-pounder remained in service with the Honourable Artillery Company's Gun Troop (part of the Army Reserve) for training purposes until 1992.

# The 25 Pounder Field Gun

As well as the British Army the Ordnance QF 25-pounder was adopted by other countries: in WWII it was used by Commonwealth countries, principally Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, and allied armies, including Greek and Free French and Polish forces. After the Second World War the gun saw service in the Korean War and the Malayan Emergency, and featured in various regional conflicts, civil wars and other campaigns, such as the Indo-Pakistani wars (1947 1965 & 1971), Biafran War (Nigeria 1960's), Six Day War (1967, by the Royal Jordanian Army), Cyprus Emergency (1974, by the Cyprus National Guard) and the Lebanese Civil War (1980's). The last known campaign in which the 25-pounder was fired in anger was by the Kurdish Peshmerga militia against ISIS in Mosul, Iraq in 2015 (and possibly later).

A good number of countries retain 25-pounders for ceremonial use – firing salutes or for funeral duties, including Ireland, Canada, South Africa, Sri Lanka, New Zealand and Luxembourg.

The 25-pounder was considered to be one of the best artillery pieces of its time, because of its versatility and quick-firing capabilities. A story from World War Two that German troops thought the British had an automatic artillery piece echoes a story from the previous war that German soldiers believed rapid rifle fire from the Grenadier Guards was from machine guns. Its longevity is illustrated by the fact that the Pakistan Ordnance Factories are still producing ammunition for the 80-year-old design.



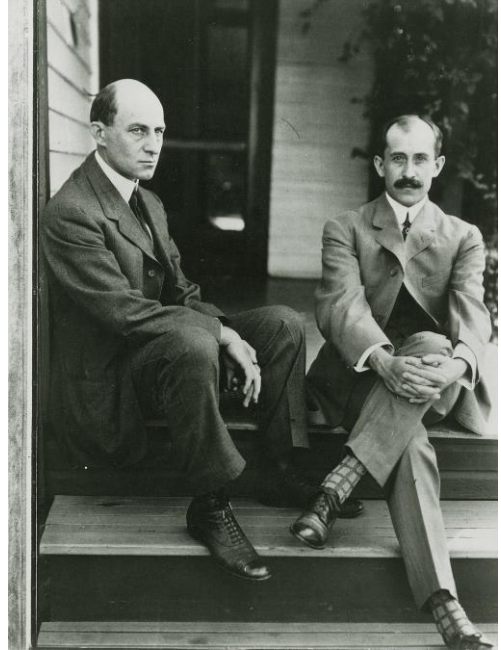
Australian 25 pdr at El Alemein

The Imperial War Museum has a 25-pounder, which was exhibited at their main London museum, and a specimen can also be seen at the Muckleburgh Military Collection in Norfolk.

# British Military Aviation before 1914

Alan Rhodes

It is impossible to start any account of early aviation without mentioning Wilbur Wright, born in Indiana in 1867 and who died of Typhoid Fever in 1912; and his younger brother Orville, born in 1871 in Dayton, Ohio who died in 1948 after suffering a heart attack. They were two of the five children who survived infancy of Milton Wright, a Bishop of the American Church of the United Brethren in Christ, and Susan Catherine Koerner Wright a literature, mathematics and science student at the Church sponsored Hartville College in Indiana.



Wilbur and Orville Wright : Wiki Commons

The family home had two libraries — the first consisted of books on theology, the second was a large and varied collection. Looking back on his childhood, Orville once commented that he and his brother had

*"special advantages...we were lucky enough to grow up in a home environment where there was always much encouragement to children to pursue intellectual interests; to investigate whatever aroused their curiosity."*

The early careers of the brothers included editing, printing & publishing; followed by bicycle manufacture and retailing; concluding with aeroplane invention and manufacture as well as pilot training.

The Wright Brothers in December 1903 are acknowledged to have been the first to fly a heavier-than-air aircraft, when they flew the Wright Flyer at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina.

## The Magazine of the Halifax Military History Society

# British Military Aviation before 1914

In the UK as elsewhere, ballooning, kite flying, and glider development preceded powered flight. In respect of the latter, the British story begins with another American, Samuel Franklin Cowdery, who was born in 1867 in Davenport, Iowa. His early years are uncertain, but he left school at the age of 12. He claimed that during his youth he had lived the typical life of a cowboy. He learned how to ride and train horses, shoot, and use a lasso. He later claimed to have prospected for gold in an area which later became the centre of the Klondike Gold Rush.

In 1888, at 21 years of age, Cowdery started touring the US with Forepaugh's Circus and Wild West Show, a major rival to P T Barnum. He married his wife Maud in Pennsylvania and his adopted surname Cody appears on the April 1889 marriage certificate.



Samuel Franklin Cowdery  
aka S F Cody . Wiki Commons



## British Military Aviation before 1914

He arrived in Europe in 1890, using the surname Cody and claiming to be the son of the well-known William "Buffalo Bill" Cody, though in fact they were unrelated. He and Maud toured England with a Wild West act featuring horse riding, shooting and lassoing skills.

In London they met Mrs Elizabeth Mary King, wife of Edward John "Ted" King, a licensed victualler. She was the mother of four children and had stage ambitions for her sons. In 1891, Maud taught the boys how to shoot, but then returned to the USA alone. It is understood that she was unable to perform with her husband because of injury, morphine addiction, the onset of schizophrenia, or a combination of all these.



Elizabeth Mary King.  
[Wiki Commons](#)

After Maud Cody returned to America, Mrs King left her husband and took up with Cody. They lived together as husband and wife. She used the name Lela Marie Cody and her younger sons, Leon and Vivian also took the surname Cody. However, the marriage of Cody and Maud was never legally dissolved.

While touring Europe in the mid-1890s, Cody capitalized on the bicycle craze by staging a series of horse vs. bicycle races against famous cyclists. His only son, Samuel Franklin Leslie Cody, was born in Basel, Switzerland in 1895,

## British Military Aviation before 1914

In 1898, Cody's stage show, *The Klondike Nugget*, became very successful; it included Lela's eldest son Edward, who was billed as Edward Le Roy, and her two younger sons Leon and Vivian (King). Incidentally one of Lela's great-grandsons, being the grandson of her daughter "Lizzy" Liese King, is the BBC World Affairs Editor John Simpson.

Cody became fascinated by kite flying. He liked to say that he first became inspired by a Chinese cook who, apparently, taught him to fly kites whilst travelling along the old cattle trail. However, his interest was probably kindled by his friendship with Auguste Gaudron, a balloonist he met whilst performing at Alexandra Palace. Cody showed an early interest in the creation of kites capable of flying to high altitudes and of carrying a man.

Financed by his shows, Cody significantly developed Lawrence Hargrave's double-cell box kite to increase its lifting power, especially by adding wings on either side. He also developed a sophisticated system of flying multiple kites up a single line, which was capable of ascending to many thousands of feet, or of carrying several men in a gondola. He patented his design in 1901 known as the Cody kite. Balloons were then in use for meteorological and military observation, but could only be operated in light winds. Cody realised that kites, which can only be operated in stronger winds, would allow these activities to be carried out in a wider range of weather conditions. His kites were soon adapted and he was made a Fellow of the Royal Meteorological Society.

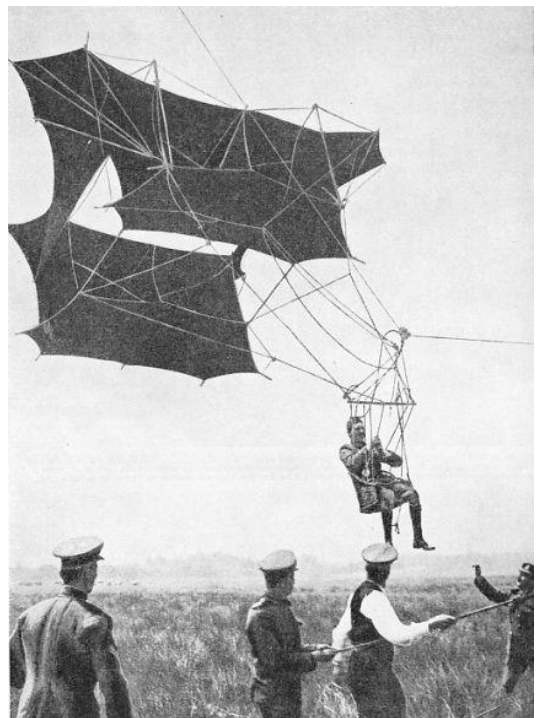
# British Military Aviation before 1914

In December 1901, he offered his design to the War Office as an observation "War Kite" for use in the Second Boer War, and made several demonstration flights up to 2000 ft in various places around London. A large exhibition of the Cody kites took place at Alexandra Palace in 1903; later he crossed the English Channel in a small boat towed by one of his kites.

In 1905, using a radically different design, he devised and flew a manned "glider-kite". The machine was launched on a tether like a kite, and the tether was then released to allow gliding flight. The design showed little similarity to his earlier kites, but had more the appearance of a tailless biplane, and eventually Cody managed to interest the British Army in his kites.

In 1906, he was appointed Chief Instructor of Kiting for the Balloon School in Aldershot, and soon after joined the new Army Balloon Factory down the road at Farnborough – this factory would become the Royal Aircraft Establishment.

Finally, in 1907, he created an unmanned "power-kite", somewhat similar to his standard kite but with bigger wings and a tailplane, with twin fins in place of the rear cell, and fitted with an engine. It was not allowed to fly free; Cody strung a long aerial wire down the length of the Farnborough Balloon Shed and flew it indoors. All that remained was for him to bring together the manned free-flying glider and the power-kite's engine to create Britain's first aeroplane.



Cody Glider Kite. Wiki Commons

# British Military Aviation before 1914

In 1908, the War Office officially adopted Cody's kites for the Balloon Companies he had been training. This group would in due course evolve into the Air Battalion of the Royal Engineers, No.1 Co., which later became No.1 Squadron Royal Flying Corps, and then No. 1 Squadron Royal Air Force (now flying Euro-fighter Typhoon aircraft from RAF Lossiemouth).

Before Cody could turn his newfound skills to aeroplanes, he was required to help complete an airship then under construction in the Farnborough Airship Shed. In December 1906, he was despatched to France, where he purchased a 40 hp (30 kW) Antoinette engine. During 1907, he was given full authority as the designer of the airship's understructure and propulsion system.

On 5 October 1907, Britain's first powered airship British Army Dirigible No. 1 Nulli Secundus, flew from Farnborough to London in 3 hours 25 minutes, with Cody and his commanding officer Colonel J E Capper on board. After circling St Paul's Cathedral, they attempted to return to Farnborough, but 18 mph headwinds forced them to land in south London at the Crystal Palace. There, the airship was damaged by the high winds.

His exploits came to the attention of the Admiralty, who hired him to look into the military possibilities of using kites for observation posts. He demonstrated them in 1908, when he flew them off the deck of the pre-dreadnought battleship HMS Revenge. The Admiralty eventually purchased four of his War Kites.



Cody Kite being demonstrated to the Royal Navy IWM (RAE-O 564)



# British Military Aviation before 1914

The Army decided to back the development of his powered aeroplane, the British Army Aeroplane No.1. Nearly a year later he started testing the machine, gradually lengthening his "hops" until they reached 1,390 ft. His flight of 16th October 1908 is recognised as the first official flight of a piloted heavier-than-air machine in Great Britain. Though damaged at the end of the flight, it was repaired and modified, and Cody flew it again.

Despite the fact that Cody's aircraft could now be considered a success, in February 1909 a report by the Aerial Navigation Sub-Committee of the Committee for Imperial Defence had recommended that all government-funded heavier-than-air experimentation should stop, leaving development to the private sector. Funding was to be provided for the construction of airships; official support for anything else was limited to toleration of aviation activities on some government land. If Cody wished to develop the aircraft further he would have to do so at his own expense and not as an employee of the Balloon Factory. Cody's contract, due for renewal that September, was not renewed, but he was allowed to keep the aircraft, now officially surplus to requirements, and to continue to use Laffan's Plain for flight testing. The Army were left with only a set of drawings of the Army Aeroplane No. 1 labelled "Top Secret", possibly the earliest full set of technical drawings for an aircraft.

Cody's personal relationship with Capper was unharmed, and he continued to operate the aircraft at Farnborough. On 14 May 1909 he made a flight of over a mile between Laffan's Plain and Danger Hill, establishing the first official British distance and endurance record.

## British Military Aviation before 1914

Later the same day he attempted to repeat the performance at the request of the Prince of Wales, who was observing Army manoeuvres at Aldershot. Unluckily, on take-off he was caught by a gust as he turned the machine to avoid some troops on the ground, and was forced to land, the aircraft sustaining some damage to the tail. The Prince (later to be King George V) was nevertheless satisfied, telling Cody of his pleasure at seeing a British aeroplane that could fly.

By August he had completed the last of his long series of modifications to the aircraft, and carried passengers for the first time – initially, his old commanding officer Capper, and then his partner Lela Cody, having first bound her skirt and petticoat round her ankles with several turns of rope to prevent them flying in the wind. With these flights Cody had gained a long lead over everyone in England.

On 29th December 1909 he became the first man to fly from Liverpool, in an unsuccessful attempt to fly non-stop between Liverpool and Manchester. He set off from Aintree Racecourse but encountered thick fog and after 19 minutes in the air he landed some 10 miles away at Eccleston Hill, St. Helens.

Over the winter of 1909–10, Cody worked on a new Biplane at his shed on Laffan's Plain. During an early test flight whilst already airborne, the plane was caught by a gust of wind. Cody, who was piloting it, was not able to get it under control before it pitched forward and crashed to the ground. He was trapped under the wreckage where he was freed by his team, including his chief assistant Mr E Leroy (this may be Lela's oldest son Edward but unconfirmed). He sustained what were described as "serious injuries to his head and shoulders" but was taken home to recuperate rather than to hospital.

# British Military Aviation before 1914

Alan Rhodes

Cody was issued with the Royal Aero Club's Aviator's Certificate number 9 on 7 June 1910. He was using the new aircraft, and later in the year won the Michelin Cup for the longest flight made in England during 1910 with a flight of 4 hours 47 minutes on 31 December.

In 1911, his third aircraft was the only British machine to complete the Daily Mail "Circuit of Great Britain" air race, finishing fourth, for which achievement he was awarded the Silver Medal of the Royal Aero Club.

In 1912, the Cody V machine, with a new 120 hp (90 kW) engine, won first prize at the British Military Aeroplane Competition trials on Salisbury Plain. He had initially prepared a monoplane, the Cody IV, but it was badly damaged in a crash before the trials began.

On 7th August 1913, he was test flying his latest design, the Cody Float-plane, (which could be flown with either wheels or floats) when it broke up at 200 feet and he and his passenger, the cricketer William Evans, were killed at Ball Hill, near Farnborough. The two men, not strapped in, were thrown out of the aircraft: the Royal Aero Club's accident investigation concluded that the accident was due to "inherent structural weakness" but suggested that they might have survived if they had been strapped in.

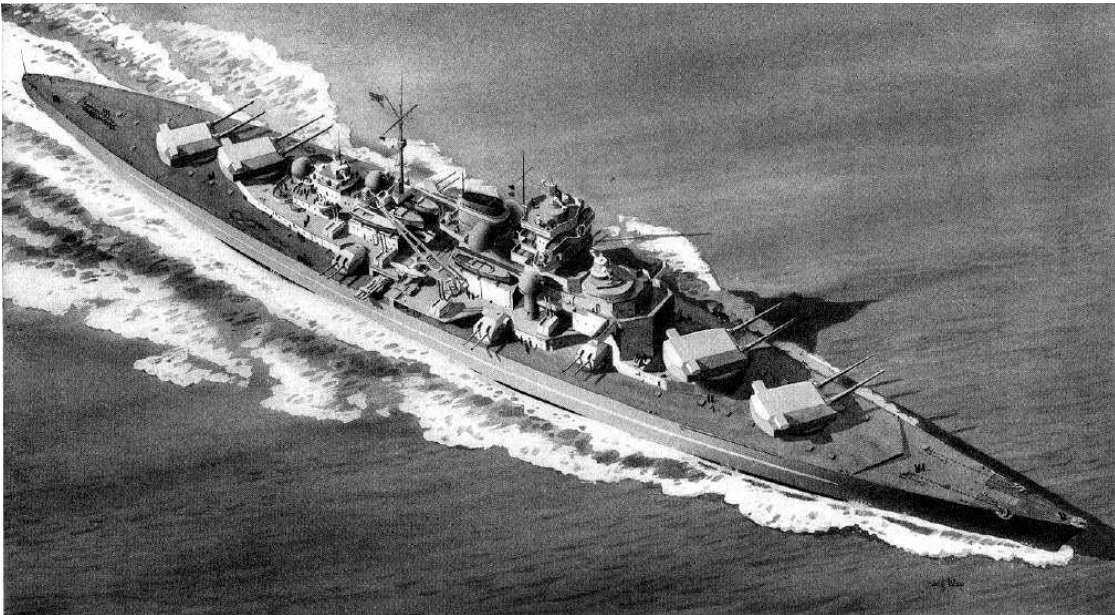
Cody's body was buried with full military honours in Aldershot Military Cemetery; the funeral procession drew an estimated crowd of 100,000. Adjacent to Cody's own grave marker is a memorial to his only son, Samuel Franklin Leslie Cody, who joined the Royal Flying Corps and was killed in Belgium in 1917 serving with No.41 Squadron.

# TIRPITZ

David Millichope

In November 1944 the RAF destroyed the German battleship, *Tirpitz*, at anchor in Tromsø fjord, Norway. It was the culmination of years of attacks intended to neutralise the battleship. The sinking was an event of significant strategic importance because it removed the threat to the Arctic convoys which had been tying down numerous Allied escort battleships to this theatre of war for years.

*Tirpitz* was a sister ship of the *Bismarck* whose formidable capability had been demonstrated in May 1941, when she famously sank the *Hood* and badly damaged the *Prince of Wales* as *Bismarck* broke out into the Atlantic to operate as a commerce raider. This caused huge consternation at the British Admiralty, precipitating a massive operation to hunt her down, involving most available British warships in the North Atlantic. She was finally cornered and destroyed before she could reach the sanctuary of the Western Atlantic French ports.



Battleship *Tirpitz*.  
[Wiki Commons](#)



# TIRPITZ

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*Tirpitz* was expected to be deployed in a similar commerce raiding role, but was, instead, withdrawn to the Norwegian fjords to deter any Allied attempt at invading Norway. Her mere presence had the strategic effect of tying down numerous Allied capital ships protecting the Arctic convoys to Russia.

Churchill wrote at the beginning of 1942:

'The destruction or even crippling of this ship is the greatest event at sea at the present time ... the whole strategy of the war turns at this period on this ship, which is holding four times the number of British capital ships paralysed, to say nothing of the two new American battleships retained in the Atlantic.'



Arctic convoy under aerial attack.  
[Wiki Commons.](#)

In 1942 *Tirpitz* moved to Alten Fjord off the North Cape of Norway where she was ideally placed to menace the Arctic convoys. The threat caused the British admiral, Sir Dudley Pound, to order the fateful dispersion of the 34 ships of convoy PQ17, resulting in the loss of 23 of them, now unprotected, which were picked off by enemy u-boats and aircraft.

# TIRPITZ

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In September 1943 the British launched an attack against *Tirpitz* using midget submarines (X-craft ). Three were deployed including X7 which included diver James Megennis (Belfast born but, after the war, came to live locally in Bradford). They successfully placed explosive charges which *damaged* the Tirpitz, putting her out of action for six months, an operation subsequently portrayed in the 1950s film *Above us the Waves*.

In April 1944 she was attacked by aircraft from Royal Naval carriers, disabling her for another three months. However, it became apparent that permanent disablement was going to need exceptional bombs capable of penetrating her thick armour protection. The British turned to the 'Tallboy' bombs (so called 'earthquake bombs') designed by Barnes Wallis (better known for his bouncing bombs of 'Dam Buster' fame) and required the large modified Lancaster bombers of Bomber Command to deliver the payload.



Avro Lancaster strategic bomber. Wiki Commons



'Tallboy' bombs. Wiki Commons

# TIRPITZ

David Millichope

A raid in September 1944, hampered by poor visibility, managed only another temporary disablement, but, on 12 November 1944, 31 Lancaster bombers, armed with 'Tallboys', (Operation Catechism) finally pounded the *Tirpitz* into a useless wreck. She capsized with the loss of most of her crew.



Upturned wreck of the *Tirpitz*. IWM (Art.IWM ART LD 5441)

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