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A Discovered WWII Diary Reveals a 27,000-mile Journey Through the Persian Corridor

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After eighty years lost in a family archive, the wartime diary of Corporal Alwyn Day has been recovered and reconstructed by his grandson, investigative journalist Philip James Day.

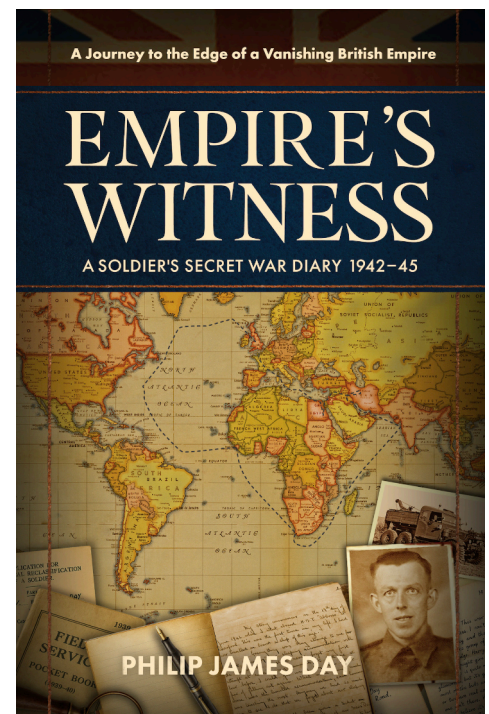
The result is *Empire's Witness: A Soldier's Secret War Diary 1942-45*, a work of historical investigation built from the diary and military records. It traces an extraordinary journey across three continents and thirteen countries to one of the Second World War's least understood pressure point.

The Persian Corridor

After Hitler invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, Churchill and Roosevelt backed the movement of Allied aid through the Persian Corridor, the supply route running from the Persian Gulf through Iran to the Soviet frontier.

Along this route moved millions of tons of trucks, fuel, food, ammunition and machinery, much of it supplied under American Lend-Lease. The corridor was initially secured and organised by British forces already operating in the region, but as the war intensified the United States expanded the system dramatically. Within a year some 30,000 American logistics troops were working along the route, helping transform it into one of the largest supply operations of the conflict.

It was into this vast theatre of war that Corporal Alwyn Day travelled in August 1942. He recorded fragments of it in his diary, filling its pages with photographs, prayers, certificates, small maps and even a leaf from a tree said to be sacred.



What the Diary Reveals

The ninety pages of the handwritten diary are crammed with photographs, prayers, maps, and unexpected detail. A wartime visit to the pyramids. The Garden of Gethsemane. Floating in the Dead Sea. Josephine Baker at Cairo's Royal Opera House. Broken down in the Sinai desert with no water. An invitation to the home of a millionaire racehorse owner in Tel Aviv. And in Alexandria, he sailed on one of King Farouk's yachts. His writing opens a window onto a remarkable world at an extraordinary time.



Reconstructing the Hidden Journey

In June 1942, Alwyn Day left behind his wife and three young children as war carried him into the unknown. Aboard a vast Allied convoy he passed through U-boat waters, around the Cape, to India and the Middle East. The diary offers glimpses of that passage, but says almost nothing about its military purpose. That was wartime protocol. Nothing was to be written that might help the enemy, and Alwyn took that seriously.

To uncover what lay behind those silences, the author cross-checked the diary against service and unit records. What emerged was not only a man deeply engaged with the world around him, but a soldier moving through one of the war's largest logistical systems.

Why This Story Matters

This is more than a memoir. It is the recovery of one man's path through a vast global conflict. Set against the official record, the diary shows what history looked like at ground level. As the last generation who lived through those years passes from view, firsthand accounts like this are becoming rare. *Empire's Witness* brings one of those voices back into the light through the journey of a single soldier.

About the Author

Philip James Day is a documentary filmmaker whose work has been broadcast by the BBC, National Geographic and Discovery Channel. A Peabody Award winner and two-time Emmy recipient, he often works from archival material and primary sources. *Empire's Witness* is his first book. He lives between Los Angeles and London.

Event And Media Access

On Thursday 4 June 2026, 6pm-9pm, an exhibition event at The Expert Dojo, in Santa Monica will bring together generations of Corporal Day's family, alongside veterans and local community representatives. The diary opens onto several strong editorial angles, including the Persian Corridor, the work of REME engineers, and a family story shaped by the end of the war. Interview opportunities include the author, Philip James Day, and Corporal Day's great granddaughter, Kaya Day. Guest speakers include author Greg Cope White.

Publication Details

- Title: *Empire's Witness: A Soldier's Secret War Diary 1942-45*
- Publication date: 6 June 2026
- Pre-orders: EmpiresWitness.com
- Formats: Hardback, paperback, ebook
- Memoir. WWII History. Military History.
- Review copies: Available in print, PDF, ePub.
- Features: Discovered diary, archival photographs, reconstructed routes & archival maps
- 390 pages
- 23 maps
- 57 archival photographs
- 350+ citations

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