

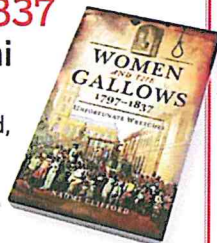
REVIEWS

BOOKS

Women and the Gallows 1797–1837

by Naomi Clifford

(Pen & Sword, 236 pages, £19.99)



During the final four decades of the Georgian era, 131 women were executed in England and Wales, their crimes ranging from theft and forgery to infanticide and cold-blooded murder. In this collection Naomi Clifford brings their long-forgotten stories to light for the first time in almost two centuries.

Women and the Gallows traces the lives and crimes of these “unfortunate wretches”, who were convicted and sentenced under the full force of the infamous Bloody Code, which led to a rise in the use of the death penalty in 18th-century England. Some women had committed seemingly minor offences, such as rustling sheep or burglary, while others killed employers, husbands or children. Many, but not all, were victims of circumstances, living in poverty or subjected to a harsh life of domestic drudgery. Clifford’s book gives detailed accounts of a selection of cases, and a summary of all the women who faced the gallows between 1797 and 1837.

Well-researched and presented in a readable narrative, the book touches on a wide range of themes, such as mental health, motherhood, social class and the history of criminal justice. These unusual ‘micro-histories’ provide a fascinating insight into women’s lives at the turn of the 19th century, especially of those who fell foul of the law.

Angela Buckley writes about Victorian crime and is chair of the Society of Genealogists

READER REVIEW

A chance for readers to assess the latest releases



Paul Conner, France

Paul Conner started his family history about 30 years ago and manages a group of researchers in France, whose searches have involved visiting WW1 battlefields and The National Archives

Life of a Teenager in Wartime London

by Duncan Leatherdale

(Pen & Sword, 176 pages, £19.99)



This book is based upon a diary kept by the author’s grandmother Glennis, who lived in South London as a teenager during the Second World War. Other information has been included to create a comprehensive view of London at that time. The book is divided into chapters, each explaining an aspect of everyday life and how it was affected by the conditions of wartime London.

It is clear that much research has been undertaken, with numerous documents used, together with first-

hand accounts to support the information given. There are some interesting facts – for example, cinemas were used as air-raid shelters; 12 lb of grass contains more vitamins than 340 lb of fruit and vegetables (I don’t know how this dietary advice will have been greeted by the general public); and the rationing system was used to manipulate what people

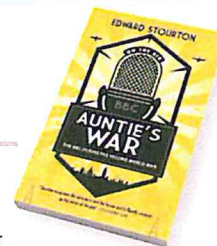
bought (including an item in the rationing system reduced demand, thereby creating spare transport capacity for other items).

Life of a Teenager in Wartime London is written in a relaxed style which makes it difficult to put down, and is suitable as a work of reference as well as to satisfy general interest.

➔ Would you like the chance to rate the latest releases and share your views with other readers? Join our reviewer panel by emailing WDYTYAeditorial@immediate.co.uk

Auntie’s War by Edward Stourton

(Doubleday, 432 pages, £20)

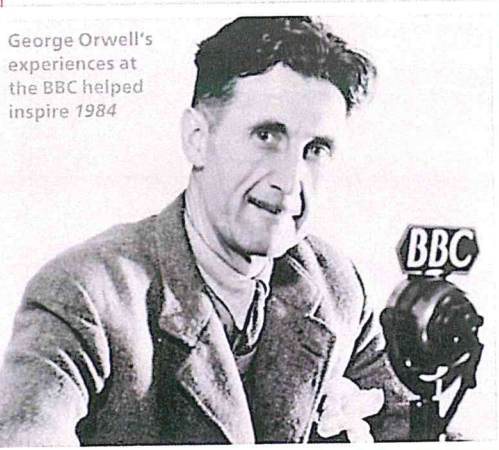


What are the responsibilities of a news-focused public service broadcaster during a World War – especially when your transmissions are received across the globe, by friend and foe alike? Where does truth-telling end and propaganda begin, in order to lift the spirits of your own side, break the morale of your enemies – or mislead them into a fatal mistake?

Auntie’s War: The BBC During the Second World War sees veteran broadcaster and former *Today* presenter Edward Stourton explore the development of the BBC during the conflict. He charts the rapid growth of the organisation, its evolving efforts to inform the nation and the world, and how it responded to endless technical challenges, the Nazis’ ‘fake news’, criticism from the armed services and governments, and demands for control over its output to ensure that it supported the war effort to the full.

Exhaustively researched, with quotes from primary sources such as diaries, letters, memoirs and minutes, and full of vivid anecdotes, the book highlights the BBC’s often difficult relationship with politicians like Churchill and de Gaulle, as well as the part that cultural figures such as George Orwell and JB Priestley played in shaping both Auntie herself and our experience of the war.

Seth Burgess is the Production Editor of *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine*



George Orwell’s experiences at the BBC helped inspire 1984