

Unearthing Churchill's Secret Army: The Official List of SOE Casualties and Their Stories

John Grehan, Martin Mace

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The Special Operations Executive was one of the most secretive organizations of the Second World War, its activities cloaked in mystery and intrigue. The fate, therefore, of many of its agents was not revealed to the general public other than the bare details carved with pride upon the headstones and memorials of those courageous individuals.

Then in 2003, the first batch of SOE personal files was released by the National Archive. Over the course of the following years more and more files were made available. Now, at last, it is possible to tell the stories of all those agents that died in action.

These are stories of bravery and betrayal, incompetence and misfortune, of brutal torture and ultimately death. Some died when their parachutes failed to open, others swallowed their cyanide capsules rather than fall into the hands of the Gestapo, many died in combat with the enemy, most though were executed, by hanging, by shooting and even by lethal injection.

The bodies of many of the lost agents were never found, destroyed in the crematoria of such places as Buckenwald, Mauthausen and Natzweiler, others were buried where they fell. All of them should be remembered as having undertaken missions behind enemy lines in the knowledge that they might never return.



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