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World war II and the SOE: the involvement of female soldiers in the war through the example of the “ F section ”

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Marie Verdot. World war II and the SOE: the involvement of female soldiers in the war through the example of the “ F section ”. Education. 2024. dumas-04952148

HAL Id: dumas-04952148

<https://dumas.ccsd.cnrs.fr/dumas-04952148v1>

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Mémoire

Présenté pour l'obtention du Grade de

MASTER

« Métiers de l'Enseignement, de l'Éducation et de la Formation »

Mention 2nd degré, Professeur des Lycées et Collèges,

World War II and the SOE:

**The involvement of female soldiers in the war through the
example of the F section**

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Année universitaire 2023-2024

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Remerciements

Je tiens à remercier en premier lieu mon directeur de mémoire, M. Patrice Bouche, pour les conseils qu'il m'a apportés ainsi que ses connaissances sur mon sujet. Il m'a poussé à développer mes recherches et à les approfondir pour les rendre plus accessibles à tous. Il m'a aussi aidé lorsque j'étais en difficultés et lorsque je ne parvenais pas à trouver des éléments pertinents pour la poursuite de la rédaction de ce travail.

Je tiens aussi à remercier ma famille qui m'a beaucoup soutenue lors de ces deux années de recherche et de rédaction. Ils m'ont soutenu moralement lorsque j'avais des doutes sur la poursuite de mon travail de recherche ou des doutes sur ma capacité à terminer ce mémoire. Je remercie plus particulièrement mon papa, Régis, qui, m'ayant transmis sa passion pour l'histoire, m'a aidé lors des recherches sur les lieux de mémoire et m'a aidé à trouver des sources fiables et enrichissantes. Je remercie aussi ma maman, Valérie, qui m'a aidé à rester positive et impliqué et qui m'a aussi laissé lui expliquer mon sujet de recherche. Cela m'a permis de rendre mon mémoire plus accessible à tous. Enfin, je les remercie aussi de m'avoir transmis les valeurs de devoir de mémoire et de souvenir des anciens combattants, ces valeurs et idéaux m'ont grandement aidé et inspiré lors de la rédaction de ce mémoire.

Enfin, je tiens à remercier mes amies qui m'ont aidées et avec qui les conversations sur nos sujets de mémoire respectifs nous ont fait avancer dans nos recherches. Elles m'ont aidé à avancer dans la rédaction de ce mémoire et m'ont soutenues moralement lorsque j'avais des doutes.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my dissertation director, Mr Patrice Bouche, for the pieces of advice he gave me as well as his knowledge on the subject. He pushed me to develop my research and to go deeper in my ideas to make them more accessible to all. He also helped me when I had difficulties and when I had troubles finding essential and crucial elements for the writing of my dissertation.

I also would like to thank my family, who supported me a lot for the past two years of research and writing. They supported me morally when I had doubts on my research or when I doubted myself and my abilities to finish this dissertation. I especially thank my father, Régis, who handed me down his passion for history and helped me find reliable and enriching sources

of information about memorials and places of remembrance. I also thank my mother, Valérie, who helped me stay positive and involved and who let me explain her my research field. This allowed me to make my dissertation more accessible to all. Finally, I also thank them for giving me the duty of remembrance' and memory of veterans' values which helped me and inspired me a lot in writing this dissertation.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends who helped me and with whom I could talk about my dissertation and my research field. Our mutual conversations helped us get through small difficulties we could have about our dissertations. They helped me progress in my writing, and they also supported me when I had doubts.

Partie disciplinaire

Homage to the women of the F section of the SOE

This dissertation is dedicated to the memory of these forty women who helped the secret services of France and Britain in freeing the French people from Nazism. These names are written nowhere and so, in a personal attempt to remember these women, and every other woman who did a lot to free France in a period of war and uncertainty, here are their names, that I have been able to collect from different sources such as M.R.D. Foot's book *SOE in France*, and websites such as *Memorial GenWeb* and the Arolsen Archives. May they never be forgotten in my memory, and I hope people will hear about them and their stories. I have a special thought for Phyllis Latour, who died in October 2023, while I was writing this dissertation. Her story and the thirty-nine others inspire me to continue this work and to keep them in my memory.

- AGAZARIAN Francine, born ANDRE
- AISNER Julienne, born SIMART
- BASEDEN Yvonne
- BEEKMAN Yolande, born UNTERNAHRER
- BLOCH Denise
- BORREL Andrée
- BUTT Sonia
- BYCK Muriel
- CHARLET Blanche
- CORMEAU Yvonne, born BIESTERFELD
- DAMERMENT Madeleine
- DE BAISSAC Lise
- FIOCCA Nancy, born WAKE
- FONTAINE Yvonne
- GERSON Giliana, born BALMACEDA
- GRANVILLE Christine, born De GYZICKA (also called SKARBEEK Krystyna)
- HALL Virginia
- HERBERT Mary
- INAYAT KHAN Noor

- JULLIAN Ginette
- KNIGHT Marguerite
- LATOUR Phyllis
- LAVIGNE Madeleine
- LE CHENE Marie-Thérèse
- LEFORT Cecily, born MACKENZIE
- LEIGH Vera
- NEARNE Eileen
- NEARNE Jacqueline
- OLSCHANEZKY Sonia
- O'SULLIVAN Patricia Maureen
- PLEWMAN Eliane, born BROWNE-BARTOLI
- REYNOLDS Elizabeth
- ROLFE Lilian
- ROWDEN Diana
- RUDELLAT Yvonne, born CERNEAU
- SANSOM Odette, born BRAILLY
- SZABO Violette, born BUSHELL
- WALTERS Anne-Marie
- WILEN Odile, born SAR
- WITHERINGTON Pearl

Introduction

A monument next to Lambeth Palace in London, a bust, a woman looking at the Thames. This woman is Violette Szabo, and during the Second World War, she was a spy and a secret agent for a new organisation that had just been created: the Special Operation Executive (SOE). But what exactly was the SOE, and how could women enlist in such an organisation. The SOE was a secret organisation that was created during the Second World War to work hand in hand with the secret forces in England with the MI6, in France with Resistance networks working for the FFI and FFL (Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur and Forces Françaises Libres) and in the United States of America with the OSS (Office of Strategic Services). For women rarely got involved directly at the front, on the first lines of combat, in France or elsewhere. They were often sent to industries where men were working before the beginning of the conflict, to contribute to the war effort and keep the economy flourishing. But were these women treated as equals when compared to men, and could they be enlisted in the military? During the Second World War, it is true that women did not have the same profiles as men and the same responsibilities. They were regarded as weak, untrustworthy, and not suited to handle the same type of action as men. During the 1940s, there was still a strong general opinion that saw women as mothers and only as such. Their only roles were to take care of their children and stay at home to manage every household chore that was assigned to them. This paternalistic view of society was very present at the time, and it is only during the middle of the 40s that this male dominant society started to give more space to women and their opinions, their abilities, and even give them a real place in society. For at the beginning of the war, there were already a few women involved on the war front as spies or nurses just like during the First World War. The presence of women back then was due to the thought that these types of works were perfectly suited for them as their most significant features were to be mother-like, caring, and gentle: so, every characteristic linked to women in the minds of men. This added to the fact that a lot of men, if not every man had to go on the battlefield, women started to have a greater part in society, sometimes even taking the place of men. As they started to be more prominent and important for the continuity of the economic and political system, they also started to be more present in the military, working alongside male soldiers. But did they have the same roles? How did mentalities change to allow women to fight and have a more dominant place in society but also in the military? Were they regarded as the equals of men and were they given the same sort of missions and degree of danger? Did they have the same responsibilities? And after the end

of the war, could they keep their jobs and continue to work, or did they have to go back to their places as mothers and wives? And for those who did fight, are they remembered? Are their names written on monuments just like for men, all over the world? Are there any women's memorials? But most of all, what kind of organisations enlisted women? How many women were appointed, and to what extent were they involved in the conflict? Were they simply nurses, like during the First World War, or did they have a more specific part and a bigger range of action? All these questions guided my reflexion for this work. However, the main one was what exactly was and is the SOE, and why did it appoint women during the Second World War.

In this work, I will try to answer the following question: did organisations like the Special Operations Executive allow women's emancipation during the Second World War and to what extent are women remembered nowadays, in daily life or in the military?

In a first part, I will explain how women were an addition to the workforce in order to fight in France and why do organisations like the SOE want to engage them. Then I will write about the aftermath of the SOE and the importance to have memorials to commemorate the sacrifice of the men and women of this organisation. And finally, I will explain the repercussions it has nowadays in daily life or in the military.

1. Female agents seen as an addition to the workforce in order to fight in France

The Special Operations Executive was created in July 1940 by the Prime Minister of Great Britain: Winston Churchill. As part of the secret services of Great Britain, and as an ally of France, they used to send agents beyond enemy lines and asked them to do sabotages and other dangerous missions. Different sections were created inside the SOE to structure this organisation but mainly to send agents to restricted areas where their knowledge and abilities would be of great help. Inside of the SOE, the F section was the one where agents were sent to France to work hand in hand with the Résistance networks in the different regions under Nazi oppression or not.

In this part, I will mainly explain why the SOE recruited women but mostly how and under which circumstances the SOE was created. But I will focus more on the system itself and the differences there might have existed between male and female agents of the SOE.

1.1. Recruitment

Recruitment for the SOE was “unordinary” compared to all the other organisations in Britain or other countries like France or The United States. Indeed, in France, young men had to present themselves to the recruitment offices and get enlisted by the authorities before being able to go to training camps and then to the front. In England, the same system applied when men wanted to join the army. There were recruiting offices and young men came to enlist if they were of age (usually they had to be eighteen years old or more to be able to enlist). In France, young men were called by receiving a letter informing them that their class of age had been drawn and that they had to come before a certain date to be enrolled in the army.

However, organisations such as the SOE had a very different system. First, because of its status as a secret service agency, authorities could not ask for new members through posters like those we could see in France or Britain, calling every valid man to take arms against the enemy. At the SOE, recruitment was done by invitations. M.R.D. Foot says: “In one way at least SOE was like a club, for membership was by invitation only [...]”¹. The leaders of the SOE, as they were looking for particular profiles and abilities that people could have, did not

¹ M.R.D Foot, *SOE in France*, page 40

have the choice but to search for “talents”. The same author explains that “‘It’s not what you know but whom you know that matters’”². It is as if people wanting to enter the SOE had to have important relations in order to be accepted inside the SOE. For example, people who had relations with the mayor of London or any officer of the British Army could be considered as a potential agent inside of the SOE. Usually, people received letters informing them that they caught the attention of the SOE for their abilities or their involvement in another secret organisation or military regiment.

The only nuance we could bring to this information is that, even though people were called based on their abilities and capacities, M.R.D. Foot states that: “Entry was so largely a matter of accident that there was nothing which deserved the name of a recruiting system; though there was system enough to prevent people from inviting themselves to join [...]”³. Given this example, it is true that recruiting agents at the SOE were very careful to what kind of people they wanted to engage, considering the threat of communism and Nazism at the time, and the growing fear of spies trying to infiltrate the secret services of the allies and communicating important information such as the date of the D-Day landings in Normandy or the real names of agents and every other crucial information. To prevent this kind of events from happening, the man of the situation was the writer Selwyn Jepson. His mission at the SOE was to make sure people were trust-worthy with the missions they would be entrusted with. He examined the different profiles of people trying to enter the SOE and decided whether they were a right addition or not to the different sections of the SOE. The man is described then as “far ahead of anyone [else] as talent spotter”⁴. This ensured that the people recruited had their place inside of the SOE as they might have sought-after qualities and abilities that would be of great help for missions in France. Indeed, as I searched for more information about the SOE and the F section, there is no trace of spies entering the SOE and giving crucial codes and information to the enemy. Selwyn Jepson’s work was a very important and crucial one for the good proceedings of the events of the war. In insuring that the agents were faithful and trust-worthy to their country and their mission, they could ensure that the actions were done correctly and would result in the success of the main mission of the SOE: helping the allies and especially France.

² M.R.D Foot, *SOE in France*, page 40

³ Ibid.

⁴ SOE to MI 1, 25 March 1942, in Jepson, PF as quoted in M.R.D Foot, *SOE in France*, page 41

One element inside of the recruiting system that can appear as avant-gardist for the time or even a sign of progress for gender equality was the recruitment of women. Indeed, Elizabeth Gerhardt says: “Of the F section agents serving behind enemy lines, 440 were men and 40 were women.”⁵ This is a significant element to note for during the Second World War, it was less likely that women were engaged in dangerous missions or even in military regiments and contribute to the liberation of France. They were told to stay at home at the beginning of the war, but as the conflict progressed, they were asked to come and work in factories to participate in the war effort by making munitions, weapons, and every other material useful for soldiers at the front in France or elsewhere. But as the war carried on, the need for a greater workforce began to be more and more present and so did the need for more people. The authorities decided to progressively involve women in the military or, as in France, in Résistance networks, for they could have sought-after abilities. Mostly, inside the SOE, women were engaged to do multiple tasks at the headquarters in Baker Street or in the field of action. M.R.D. Foot states the different jobs women did in the SOE and the qualities it required:

“The bulk of the base cipher operators were girls in their late teens, who proved quick, keen, accurate and secure. Most of the clerks, drivers and telephonists, and many of the base wireless operators, were also women; and particularly charming, intelligent, and sensitive women, usually speaking the relevant languages, staffed the holding schools and flats where agents were held in the last nervous hours or days or weeks that intervened between the end of their training and their actual departure on operations.”⁶

This showed how much women could do in the SOE, especially in offices at the headquarters. They were in charge of communicating with agents on the field of action, to deliver them important information that could change the course of the war or the issue of their mission, on a smaller scale. As telephonists, they would communicate between the higher spheres of hierarchy like Winston Churchill, Selwyn Jepson or even the head of the F section: Major Maurice Buckmaster, and the agents on mission to tell them what needed to be done or for the agents to tell the authorities what they had discovered or if they needed help or other agents on the field. Also, they were more and more engaged in “masculine” jobs such as driving, or working in industries and manufactures in place of men who went to battle. This change of gender in factories allowed women’s emancipation to a certain point since they became not only a replacement for men, but a real addition to the workforce in these times of war.

⁵ Elizabeth Gerhardt, “Avoiding Detection: Female Agents of the Special Operations Executive”, *The Crimson Historical Review*, page 15

⁶ Haukelid, *Skis against the atom*, quoted in M.R.D. Foot, *SOE in France*, page 47

However, even if women were allowed to work in industries or at the different levels of the SOE, in the early days of the war, in 1941, they still could not take part in the military and have the same responsibilities as men. Kelly Keith writes about this when saying:

“The British required women from 18-60 years of age to work in any capacity the government saw as essential to the war effort beginning in 1941. The one similarity [with the OSS in the USA] was that neither government would allow women to be employed in positions that required the use of weapons, thus excluding them from participating in front line combat for their country.”⁷

This shows how mentalities “worked” at the beginning of the war. For, even though countries needed a certain work force and the most people possible to defend the country, and as women were eager to participate in the war effort, the authorities did not seem in favour of women getting involved in the military as equals of men. They thought women to be less efficient or not able to use weapons in the face of danger and so, within the first years of the war, they tended to exclude them for the crucial events and places of the war, as they judged them weaker or unable to fight.

But, earlier on, women had the possibility to join the military in special regiments, non-mixed, dedicated especially for them. Kelly Keith mentions several ones in her thesis: “In Britain, branches of the Navy, the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), as well as the Air Raid Precautions (ARP), and the Women’s Voluntary Services (WVS) began employing women.”⁸. However, they still did not have the right to wield weapons as they were not considered as able to use such arms.

All these elements can contribute to say, for the moment, that the SOE allowed a part of women’s emancipation during the Second World War as they engaged women for certain abilities that men did not possess, but also because they were an important addition to the war effort and the workforce inside and out of the military. They were the new replacements of men in industries and as such, they might have been considered as a huge asset for society which saw them only as mothers and wives before the beginning of the war. This allowed them to feel more important for what they achieved for the war effort gave them a sense of belonging and more freedom.

⁷ Kelly Keith, *More Than Just a Pretty Face: The Women of the SOE and the OSS During World War II*, page 2

⁸ “Women on the Home Front in World War Two”, BBC quoted in Kelly Keith, *ibid.*, page 3

1.2. Training

After the phase of recruitment for both men and women came the time of training to be able to be sent to the front or on mission in the different resistance networks and help the allies.

Training was no different for male or female agents which is, again, a sign of progress in the 20th century. Indeed, men and women received the same sort of training whether it was hard or not, for authorities at the SOE required the best trained people for their missions in France. It begins with physical and mental preparations. Kelly Keith explains:

“Potential agents began their training like service personnel in all other military branches, with basic training for two to four weeks in secret locations along the English countryside. Followed by psychological testing to insure they would not crumple under enemy pressure.”⁹

Here, we can see that psychological training had its importance since danger was everywhere when agents were on a mission. For if they were captured by the enemy, they had to have the strength not to reply to interrogations or torture, and so the SOE had to make sure that the agents were reliable in such circumstances. This psychological training also aimed at making agents think faster to be able to act under threats or unforeseen events. Also, the physical training was comprised of several stages with increasing difficulties in order to make sure the agents would be well prepared for the missions and the tasks they had to achieve once in France.

Kelly Keith explains the next step of the agents’ physical training by saying:

“From there, agents went through paramilitary training for 3-5 weeks where they trained in ‘silent killing’ and in the use of various weapons. Some agents also trained to use explosives, and all of them learned survival skills, and how to parachute from a plane.”¹⁰

This training was quite intense since agents had to prove their abilities to fulfil their mission. “Silent killing” meant that people had to know how to get rid of the enemy without endangering the rest of their action and the people they were trying to protect during their mission. This part of the training happened in Scotland, on the western coast of Inverness¹¹ since it was a calm and isolated place where no one could go unexpectedly and discover one of the training camps of the SOE. M.R.D. Foot even states that: “That country is among the wildest as well as the most beautiful in the island; well suited for the continuing commando cover, and

⁹ Kelly Keith, *More Than Just a Pretty Face: The Women of the SOE and the OSS During World War II*, page 5

¹⁰ M.R.D. Foot, *SOE in France*, pages 53-58 quoted and rephrased by Kelly Keith, *More Than Just a Pretty Face: The Women of the SOE and the OSS During World War II*, page 5-6

¹¹ *Ibid.*, page 55

secure from inquisitive eyes.”¹² There, not only did the future agents learn how to kill enemies but they also learnt different fighting techniques and other useful elements to survive in mission:

“Here physical training continued, and was extended to include ‘silent killing’ – the most savage form of unarmed combat; knife work, rope work, boat work, pistol and sub-machine gun training in British and enemy weapons, fieldcraft, the necessary minimum of map and paper work, elementary morse, and advanced raiding tactics might all be crammed into the course, which included all-night schemes, practical railway demolitions [...]”¹³

Indeed, SOE agents were not only trained to kill and execute their enemies. They were also trained and taught how to survive in case of unexpected events that might happen during their missions. All the techniques learnt should serve the agents throughout their mission to communicate with the base cipher operators in London, at the SOE headquarters to get more information on the next steps of the mission or to give them crucial secrets: that is why agents should have had bases in communicating in morse code since the information was confidential, it had to be coded. They obviously had to know how to use maps since they were parachuted to France at night, in the dark and often in the middle of the countryside, in pre-planned spaces so that the Résistance networks they had to work with could come and get them to hidden places but first and foremost to avoid being caught by the enemy.

However, even though, for the first phases of training, both mental and physical, men and women were equal since they received the exact same training, it was not the case when it came to the use of weapons and especially guns and firearms. Kelly Keith says it very clearly when she writes: “These women were still forbidden to use weapons nor were they allowed to fight on the front line.”¹⁴ They didn’t have this possibility for they were thought to be inferior and less able than men to defend themselves. However, most of the weapons that were used in France and sent by the allies for the Résistance networks were weapons that could easily be used by women. They were usually small and light so that women could use them very easily and defend themselves if needed. For instance, the Sten, which was a sort of small Tommy gun, was a gun women could wield quite easily since it was very light and practical. In mission, they could hide it under a coat, which was more discreet than a bigger gun and more practical because it could be dismantled and hidden in a suitcase. This weapon allowed them to feel safe when travelling across France to join another Resistance network after being parachuted somewhere remote.

¹² M.R.D. Foot, *SOE in France*, page 55

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Kelly Keith, *More Than Just a Pretty Face: The Women of the SOE and the OSS During World War II*, page 3

Another field of action in which women were trained and affected was training in communication. At the beginning of the war, women were usually affected to these jobs. Elizabeth Gerhardt states these different functions:

“Women were mostly restricted to two jobs: relaying information between Resistance groups as couriers, and operating radios with wireless telegraphy to transmit messages back to Britain. In a few cases, however, some women were assigned to leadership roles.”¹⁵

Indeed, as said previously, women could not fight and wield weapons and so the jobs for which they were trained for were thought to be strictly communicative. They could go on the field to fulfil such works since they needed to get information in France and sent them to the headquarters of the SOE, where they could be treated according to their importance and degree of emergency. For this, they were taught morse code and different coding systems to make it more difficult for the enemies to decode secret messages. When going to France, they were often provided with a handkerchief on which Morse Code was inscribed in case of doubts or to verify the messages they would send. For this, they first wrote the message as they would normally, as short as possible since they transmitted them through telegraphs, then they would code it, with the help of the handkerchief, to finally type it on the telegram machines they always had with them and transmit them to the authorities of the SOE in London. The training for this part of missions was done in another place, since it was a different sort of training, more mental than physical. M.R.D. Foot explains:

“Other intelligence training was given, on coding and ciphering and on the German armed forces, particularly the counter-espionage services; and there was a propaganda school which some agents attended, though the bulk of propaganda work was left to PWE.”¹⁶ (PWE: Political Warfare Executive)

Here, we can see that training was really important for these parts of missions for it was crucial to agents to know how to communicate information to their superiors. Everyone was trained to do so but it was usually women who were “preferred” for these jobs. Training was a long process since agents had to remember the different ways in which they could establish communication with the headquarters of the SOE but also to recognize if they were being “listened to” by enemies that might have knowledge of their ways of communication and that might try to get information from the allies for their own use. M.R.D. Foot also says:

¹⁵ Elizabeth Gerhardt, “Avoiding Detection: Female Agents of the Special Operations Executive”, *The Crimson Historical Review*, page 17

¹⁶ M.R.D. Foot, *SOE in France*, page 57

“Most of the clerks, drivers and telephonists, and many of the base wireless operators, were also women; and particularly charming, intelligent, and sensitive women, usually speaking the relevant languages [...]”¹⁷

We can clearly see that women were preferred for these jobs for their abilities were better since they were more fluent in French than men and less likely to get caught by the enemy on mission and pretend to be French citizens. As this was a significant element to consider for missions in France, women were more likely to be engaged to be communicating agents in the F section, whether they were to stay in London or sent abroad to help local Résistance networks to transmit messages to the leaders of the Résistance. In this sense, women were a real addition to the SOE forces for they could send secret messages and information sometimes without being arrested by the enemy forces. For even when women were arrested by the enemy, they were most of the time released because the Gestapo thought they were unable, due to their fragile female condition, to be working hand in hand with the Resistance. They were seen as fragile and unable to fight back and defend themselves. It was easier for secret services to obtain the information they wanted but also give the agents significant elements for the rest of their mission, whether they had to stay or not or even the actions they had to undertake.

1.3. Missions

Inside the F section, the missions were diverse and structured the actions of the SOE. Each circuit had a code name, for instance: Chestnut, Monkeypuzzle or Ventriloquist, which had no link with the mission in themselves, and a certain field of action in France. A circuit was an area of action that was defined by the different Resistance networks or by the SOE. Each circuit had a given field of action and given missions that were to be achieved, whether to obtain crucial information or to send additional fighters to defend the area. For example, the Stockbroker circuit was mainly taking place in Franche-Comté and the Scientist circuit in Gironde, near Bordeaux. Inside of these circuits, different missions were trusted to agents. Their missions corresponded to sabotage actions mainly or secret infiltration to get crucial information to send back to England. The number of circuits went from fifty-five at the beginning of March 1941 to ninety-two at the end of September 1944¹⁸. Some circuits evolved throughout the war with some being dismantled as the missions were unsuccessful and others

¹⁷ From *Men in Uniform* quoted in M.R.D. Foot, *Ibid.*, page 47

¹⁸ M.R.D. Foot, *SOE in France*, page 519, appendix H, “Diagram Showing F Section Activity in France, 1941-1944”

evolving to integrate other circuits and expanded fields of action. Circuits and missions started to be more and more important and numerous near the end of the war with the D-Day landings coming and being more and more discussed as they would be of a crucial importance for the fate of the war.

Indifferently, men and women were affected to the same circuits and often the same missions, with the only modification that women were not supposed to wield weapons when on the field of action. In reality, and as we mentioned it previously, woman had weapons they could use easily like the Sten or other small guns. One of the reasons why women were also sent on missions alongside men was that they were less often arrested than men. Elizabeth Gerhardt explains:

“Women offered certain advantages, as they were less likely to be suspected as spies. Given the gendered stereotypes at the time, their involvement in the military was underestimated by enemy forces. This made it easier for women to travel and lodge without being detected.”¹⁹

Here, we can clearly see that women were a real addition for these missions and not only a sort of “positive discrimination” or a simple necessity since all men had gone to fight. Indeed, this expression can be used here for we can say that they had a real and noticeable utility for the war effort, on land and abroad. Their abilities were taken into account and regarded as real advantages to make sure the mission ran as smoothly as possible. Also, as they were less arrested by the Gestapo or the German authorities in France, it was easier for them to transmit messages to England without being caught, arrested, or tortured. The messages transmitted mostly to England were in majority transferred to the SOE headquarters or other decoding centres like Bletchley Park where a lot of other women were recruited to decode radio transmitted messages from other countries such as Germany for instance. They could travel all around France without being questioned whether they should or not be there, or what they were doing far from their home or not. This comes from the fact that, still in the minds of men, women were inoffensive, gentle, and therefore could not plan to destroy people or buildings since they were thought to be too gentle and too sensitive for this type of actions. And, as men were supposed to be abroad, engaged with fights in military regiments in land and overseas, they were more arrested in France by the Gestapo or other authorities, for instance the militia of the Vichy Régime, for they were supposed to be elsewhere, or at the front.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Gerhardt, “Avoiding Detection: Female Agents of the Special Operations Executive”, *The Crimson Historical Review*, page 15

The different missions involved sabotage, both industrial and material. The main goal was to weaken the enemy and disturb their actions so that the Résistance and the allies could work secretly and without having to worry, for a little time, about the enemy trying to get information and other crucial elements that could reverse the course of the war. Another goal was to prevent the enemy from using certain elements or materials that could serve as supplies and could be as equally important for the allies. For example, SOE agents would plant bombs in and destroy coal warehouses, as for example in Decazeville in Occitanie, when allies bombed a coal warehouse on August 24th, 1943, which stopped it for around ten days²⁰. This kind of action helped the allies in the sense that for ten days, if we take the previous example, the enemy could not be provided with coal and so, many of their engines could not work. This slowed considerably the forces of the enemy as they could not act, the time for them to repair the industry or find another solution to their problem. Sabotage also included destruction of buildings like bridges or communication buildings where the enemy based their telegram services to contact their authorities. Sabotages like these could be very beneficial for the SOE, for as long as the enemy devices were out of service, they could send as many messages as they wanted to, without being afraid of German forces trying to decode them. On these missions, men and women were treated as equals for they had the same objectives and complementary abilities. Working together, they were able to weaken the enemy and secure, little by little, the allies' victory.

However, even if their roles inside of missions were the same, the hierarchy was a bit different since the ranks were attributed mainly to men. Indeed, it was often that men would be accorded military ranks, for the SOE answered to a certain organisation and worked directly with the army and operated as such. Usually, ranks were being given to women as a part of their honorary membership in the WAAF (Woman's Auxiliary Air Force) or the FANY (First Aid Nursing Yeomanry). These memberships inside these regiments and organisations gave them a rank such as lieutenant or sub-lieutenant, but also a security in case of arrestation by the German authorities. But the ranks were simply honorific since on a mission, they were rarely addressed as the leaders of the circuits or the missions in themselves. As their jobs were mainly cipher base operators or couriers, they weren't thought to be able to lead missions since the leaders of the F section didn't see them fit to lead and successfully complete them. The ranks they had were as high as the ones of the men, for they could only be lieutenants or sub-lieutenant. The fact that they were given ranks, but not high ones, could also be a safety in case of arrestation

²⁰ M.R.D. Foot, *SOE in France*, page 506, appendix G "Industrial Sabotage"

since the enemy would treat them a bit differently than they would have with “common” soldiers or spies. M.R.D. Foot explains:

“All the same, for cover purposes people in SOE were normally given a rank and number in one of the three more regular services if they had none already; usually in the army, and on the General List. Most staff officers held army ranks, most agents were given commissions as lieutenants or captains; a long established and highly successful agent might be promoted as high as lieutenant-colonel [...].”²¹

Here, we can see that ranks were given as a military ranking and not just an honorific reward. However, M.R.D. Foot doesn't mention it but the highest rank of lieutenant-colonel, which he mentions, was never given to a woman for they were not in charge of missions in France. M.R.D. Foot even adds: “Three of F section's organizers, Cammaerts, Heslop, and G.R. Starr, reached this rank.”²². This shows, once again, that even for men, the highest rank was difficult to reach as it was not often that men received such rank. They had to show and prove great leadership and team spirit. They really had to prove that their qualities were those of a true leader in order to obtain this rank. For men, ranks were the same as those they would have in military regiments since it was more common for them to be recruited in armed forces. For women, as they weren't able to enlist in the army or any armed regiment, even though they could be engaged as nurses in many regiments, it was less common, even rare, for them to have a military rank that would prove their position inside of a regiment or, in the case of the SOE, a circuit and a mission.

Nevertheless, one exception can be made with regards to the journey of a female member of the SOE: Mrs. Pearl Witherington. Indeed, she is the only woman in the F section who had to lead a mission in France and part of the circuit it corresponded to, after the arrestation of its previous leader. Elizabeth Gerhardt explains the circumstances which led Mrs. Witherington to such a high degree of responsibility:

“After the leader of her circuit, Maurice Southgate, was arrested, Witherington was assigned to take over a third of the original circuit under her control. [...] Contrary to the reactions of the Maquis, Witherington claimed she received no backlash from her own men as a result of her gender. In fact, they lovingly referred to her as ‘our mother’²³. [...] Despite this, she still

²¹ M.R.D. Foot, *SOE in France*, page 42

²² Ibid.

²³ Witherington and Larroque, *Codename Pauline*, page 91 as quoted in Elizabeth Gerhardt, “Avoiding Detection: Female Agents of the Special Operations Executive”, *The Crimson Historical Review*, page 20

successfully led her flight and members of the Maquis to hold off occupation by German forces^{24, 25}.

These explanations show us that exceptions could be made in case of urgent and pressing matters for the authorities of the SOE had no time to lose and missions had to be accomplished. The race for information was a priority and so, as they had no other choice, they gave her the leadership of a major part of the Wrestler circuit which operated in Indre, around the town of Châteauroux²⁶. In this case, we can clearly see that having women at the head of a circuit or a mission was extremely rare, for in six years of existence of the SOE, it happened only once with Pearl Witherington. This shows that her abilities have been recognised as those of a leader and so the authorities entrusted her with the pursuit of the circuit's commandment and the good continuity of sabotage and communication missions in France.

Once again, we can see how much women added to the SOE, as they had capacities and abilities that were really important and crucial for the good continuity of missions, and to a larger scale, the course of the war. As they didn't always catch the attention of German forces, they could travel all around France to get decisive information and relay them to the SOE headquarters and the authorities of the British Army. Sadly, these abilities weren't as much recognised and appreciated as men's and this difference was felt in the ranks both men and women could have as being part of the SOE and a circuit of action. Was it the same as the war went on? Were they given the same recognition as men? Were women rewarded the same as men for their brave actions? Was Pearl Witherington rewarded as much as men who led a circuit in France?

²⁴ Buckmaster, *They Fought Alone*, Loc 3267 as quoted in Elizabeth Gerhardt, "Avoiding Detection: Female Agents of the Special Operations Executive", *The Crimson Historical Review*, page 20

²⁵ Elizabeth Gerhardt, "Avoiding Detection: Female Agents of the Special Operations Executive", *The Crimson Historical Review*, pages 19-20

²⁶ M.R.D. Foot, *SOE in France*, Map 3: "Former F Section Circuits Active under EMFFI August 1944"

2. The aftermath of the war for the SOE

When the war ended, the secret services that appeared to help other organisations overcome the struggles at stake disappeared like all the others. For instance, in France, the resistance ended since its goal had been achieved just like the free French forces which operated from the United Kingdom. As soon as they were no longer needed, these organisations and military forces stopped and disappeared to let countries go back to their former states, with little or more difficulties concerning France and other invaded and occupied countries. Indeed, in France and other countries touched harshly by the war, the reconstruction of the states and the growing back of the economy was more difficult. However, with the end of the war, some of the many secret organisations of defence that appeared during the war were no longer needed, and things tried to get back to normal.

Has it been the same for the Special Operations Executive? But before that, were the actions of the SOE recognised and awarded? And if so, did women get the same medals and awards as men did?

2.1. Recognition

After the war ended everywhere in Europe and around the world, countries, like France and England, started to live again as they were doing before the beginning of hostilities, trying to rebuild their economy and their cities. Countries tried to move forward and get rid of the past few years by still keeping them in their memories. The duty of remembrance rose in every country touched by the war to commemorate the fallen soldiers and civilians who helped in the war effort. A few years later, countries and governments decided to reward their soldiers and everyone who fought for the freedom of their country in the context of the fight against Nazism.

So, as men were rewarded with lots of decorations and medals, honorific quotations, and titles, I asked myself if the women of the SOE were rewarded as well and to what extent they received the same decorations. One important thing to note is that, inside of the SOE, the F section received a lot of decorations and medals to reward their brave action on the field of operations. In total, the F section received around sixty different decorations in total, including George Crosses, Military Crosses, and a certain number of MBEs (Most Excellent Order of the British Empire). As the historian M.R.D. Foot states in his book:

“F section’s agents received three George Crosses – all for women, and two of these posthumous; twenty-seven DSOs; thirty-two Military Crosses; two George Medals and numerous MBEs.”²⁷

All these decorations enter in the category of the most important decorations of the British Empire. For instance, the George Cross was given only for “greatest heroism or of the most conspicuous courage in circumstances of extreme danger”²⁸. Also, the fact that inside the F section only three persons got this medal, is significant enough, but moreover, these three people were women, as Mr. M.R.D. Foot said in the quote above. This fact is really important and states the crucial part that women of the F section played during the war. These three women were Odette Sansom, Violette Szabo and Noor Inayat Khan. The last two women received it posthumously, as they died in deportation and in concentration camps (the first one in Dachau in 1944, the second in Ravensbrück in 1945) but the authorities judged their actions worth rewarding. At the time it was very rare to give this reward to women, especially women who worked directly inside of the military system of a country. However, even though this decoration is the highest distinction the British Government can give to someone, it was designed and intended for civilians. Indeed, the journalist Elizabeth Gerhardt states in her article:

“However, once the war ended, these women faced prejudice from high-ranking military personnel, which is reflected in the decorations they received for the service.”²⁹

As the women of the SOE were integrated into the secret services of the British Army and Government, received a military training, and acted as soldiers in France, doing the work of soldiers, why should they only receive civilian decorations? Shouldn’t they have had the same reward as their fellow brothers in arms who received military rewards? The other British decorations that the women of the F section of the SOE received are mainly civilian honorific decorations and medals if not only civilian. Indeed, when looking at the total of medals and decorations that the women of the F section received, a majority of them are called civilian decorations for they were mainly given to civilians. Also in some cases, decorations have a civilian and a military equivalent, depending on who is receiving this medal. For instance, MBEs (Member of the British Empire) divided into two categories: civilian and military distinctions. Also, the George Medal was given exclusively for acts of civilian bravery. Several

²⁷ M.R.D. Foot, *SOE in France*, page 45 (DSO: Distinguished Service Order; MBE: Member of the British Empire)

²⁸ This quotation was written on a certificate that came with every medal given to people to prove the obtention of this decoration.

²⁹ Elizabeth Gerhardt, “Avoiding Detection: Female Agents of the Special Operations Executive”, *The Crimson Historical Review*, page 20

women of the F section did refuse civilian decorations saying that they were not acting as civilians during the war and that what they did was not what a civilian would have done, just like putting bombs on bridges or buildings, or gathering secret information from the enemy forces. Pearl Witherington was among the few women who refused a decoration on the basis that they were not civilians during the war and that their actions were not the ones of civilians.

“Witherington went as far as refusing to accept her MBE on the grounds that it carried a civilian classification. In a letter to Vera Atkins, who worked under Buckmaster, she demurred, ‘I do consider it most unjust to be given a civilian decoration. Our training, which we did with the men, was purely military, and as women we were expected to replace them’.”³⁰

As she says so herself, she didn’t agree to receive this decoration, but she did receive the Member of the British Empire decoration with the rank of Commander in 2004. But it is not the only one she received. She was rewarded by the British Government with the diploma of the “British Military Parachute Wings” in 2006. These very late decorations might describe the change of mentalities that women had to fight for throughout the 20th century. Indeed, such late recognition can indicate that her role inside of the SOE has only been recognised and known to all around that period and that the British authorities judged that it was time for her to be awarded to the level of her actions during the war.

However, Mr. M.R.D. Foot tries to see this with another point of view and tries to understand the reasons behind the fact that women mainly received civilian decorations and rewards, as he says in his book:

“This subject needs to be set in perspective. People who have not faced the perils that clandestine agents live among are not well placed to pronounce on the agents’ merits. Like any other body of irregulars, the survivors of SOE’s agents face the world with private knowledge, that the world cannot share, of what they went through. [...] as Longfellow said of the sea, ‘Only those who brave its dangers comprehend its mystery’³¹.”³²

This shows that it was not against these women, that governments gave them civilian decorations, but one of the reasons that could be given then, was that governments and ministers and people working for the governments didn’t understand the dangers they faced and went through. And it’s more or less the same for us since, we didn’t experience the same events as

³⁰ Witherington Personnel File, 155 as quoted in Elizabeth Gerhardt, “Avoiding Detection: Female Agents of the Special Operations Executive”, *The Crimson Historical Review*, page 21

³¹ Cp Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, 72 as quoted in M.R.D. Foot, *SOE in France*, page 45

³² M.R.D. Foot, *SOE in France*, page 45

them, and so it is more difficult to picture the missions they had or what they really did back then. However, we can try to contradict this quote taken in M.R.D. Foot's book, since the authorities that sent these people, and especially women, in France knew what kind of dangers were waiting for them and so they could have predicted the fact that they would be rewarded once the war ended.

But it is not all. As far as their interventions and missions took place in France, the French Government also rewarded these women with French military and civilian medals, honorific titles, and decorations. The ones that are quite recurrent when looking at the rewards they received are the French Croix de Guerre, the Médaille de la Résistance, and the most famous Légion d'Honneur. The latter was given to a total of twelve women out of forty. The Légion d'Honneur is one of the highest French decorations and is usually given to citizens or members of the military for "services éminents rendus à la nation"³³. Again, even for foreign governments, the decorations and awards given are at the limits between civilian and military rewards.

To better understand what kind of decorations were given to the forty women of the F section of the SOE, but also to compare what they received I'll take the examples of Andrée Borrel, and Nancy Wake, two of the most famous women of the F section.

Andrée Borrel was a French woman who fought under the SOE in France. Her help was of a great importance, and she has been decorated a lot by the British and the French government. Indeed, she only received the War Medal with the King's Commendation for Brave Conduct from the British Government. Usually, this reward was given to people, from the military or civilians, in recognition of the risks they took during battles and wars. At the time, this reward was one of the few decorations that one could receive posthumously since it was given to people who lost their lives fighting. However, she did not receive other decorations from the British government. As said earlier, the only rewards that the women of the SOE could not receive were any military rewards as they were not recognised as "real" soldiers of the British army. On the contrary, the French government saw it otherwise. For, thanks to the involvement of these women, France was freed, they rewarded them up to the part they took during the war. Indeed, Mrs Borrel received three of the most famous French decorations. First, she received the Légion d'Honneur, which can be given to both civilians and military people based on the services they rendered to the nation. This shows how important it was for the French government to reward

³³ Quote associated with the diploma given to the recipients of this decoration.

people who helped the country in times of war. She received it with the rank of “Chevalier” which is one of the lowest but most recurrent ranks for this decoration. In France, the Base Léonore records the names of all the people who were and are awarded the Légion d’Honneur. One can also find the papers related to the obtaining of such a decoration and sometimes even the letters that were exchanged between the government, the office charged with the acquisition of the medals and the families of the people waiting for the acquisition of this decoration³⁴. Another decoration she received from the French government is the Croix de Guerre. This medal was usually given to someone, a regiment, or an entire organisation for the brave deeds they accomplished during the war. This was often accompanied by a diploma where a citation was inscribed. The citations retell the actions of the person during the war and why they are rewarded by such a decoration. One last decoration that was given to her is the Médaille de la Résistance. As its name suggests, it was given to Résistants for their brave actions under occupied France. But these decorations and medals are not the only important facts we can give about Andrée Borrel. Indeed, more interestingly, she is one of the few women, and the only one being part of the SOE who has been declared “Morte pour la France”³⁵. There are several criteria to be declared “Morts pour la France”. First, someone may ask the authorities for this recognition, the person targeted must have died during the war or because of injuries caused during the war and they mustn’t have mutilated or killed themselves during the time of the war, otherwise they cannot be declared “Morts pour la France”. With this mention comes the right to have the name of the person on any monument in France, preferably in the village where they were born. Indeed, after the First World War, when monuments were erected, villages and towns, where monuments were in construction, looked into archives at the war ministry or other instances where lists of the casualties were kept. Then, people working for towns and villages would search for the names of the fallen soldiers who previously lived in these villages or towns. The fact that Mrs Borrel has been declared “Morte pour la France” is significant enough and shows how important and decisive her actions have been during the war. Finally, she also had been declared “Déportée Résistante”³⁶. This implies that she died in deportation while acting for a Résistance network in France. However, like the mention “Mort pour la France”, this decoration had to be asked for by a member of the family. Indeed, directly after the war, it was difficult for the governments to know exactly how many people died in deportation or how many of them were résistants since the last matter was supposed to remain a secret throughout

³⁴ See annexes 1a, 1b and 1c

³⁵ Information found on the website *Mémoire des Hommes*

³⁶ Ibid.

the war. However, thanks to the archive services during the years following the end of the war, a lot of information has been found and allowed historians and governments to find the families of these people and reward them regarding their actions. This is how the family of Andrée Borrel found out she was a member of the SOE and the part she took during the war. The reason why it is only after the death of their daughter that they learned about her actions with the SOE is because, as being a member of a secret organisation working for the English government, they had to keep secret the fact that they were involved in the war. Also, the fact that the members of the agents' families were not aware was an additional protection. In keeping their involvement secret, they were protecting their families and those who might be worried with their actions. The same thing happened for the résistants in France. Anyone who knew their implication in a Résistance network was in danger of being arrested by the Nazi forces or the French militia and possibly tortured. After she received posthumously the Légion d'Honneur, her family asked for the Médaille de la Résistance, which she received posthumously too. One more thing to be noted is the fact that she had been declared "Déportée Résistante". This means that her actions have been recognised as she was a part of the SOE and that she worked hand in hand with the Résistance networks in France. And so, as she was deported because of her deeds with the latter, she has been deported and died in the camp of Natzweiler-Struthof in June 1944. I found proofs of her internment in this camp on the website of Arolsen Archives. This website records all the papers related to the deportees including the date of their arrival, of their death and where they had been kept³⁷.

The second woman I want to talk about here is Nancy Wake. Even though she arrived near the end of the war (she was parachuted into France in April 1944), her actions have been numerous and worth rewarding. She totalised twelve rewards in France, England, the United States of America, New Zealand, and Australia. With this many numbers of medals and decorations she has been declared the most decorated woman of the Second World War. In England, she received the George Medal, which usually rewards civilians for acts of courage for their actions during the course of the war. She received this medal in 1945 and was probably one of the first to receive it since the reward had been created in September 1940. From the British government she also received the War Medal, which can be given to anyone who has been in the military for a certain amount of time during the Second World War. This means that, unlike other women from the SOE, Nancy Wake's actions have been recognised as answering the orders of the military. This also means that she has been recognised as being a part of the

³⁷ See annexes 2

military and not just a civilian risking her life for her country, which is significant enough here. She was also rewarded with the Defence Medal, instituted in 1945, which is another reward for civilians and for actions that did not involve the military. Two other rewards she has been given by the United Kingdom are the 1939-1945 Star and the France and Germany Star. The first one was given to the military just like the second with the only difference that the latter rewarded people who fought in France, the Netherlands, Germany, Luxembourg, or Belgium within the last year of the war. These medals, as they could have been given to anyone who fought in these areas and for the times attributed to the obtaining of these rewards, hold no significant meaning to the idea that women of the SOE were under or over rewarded. This means that, as everyone could have these rewards and medals, these decorations are not one of the proofs to show that women had a higher rank or a lower rank during the war and that they were rewarded according to their actions, since someone who fought for a few weeks could be rewarded the same as someone who fought for years during the war. However, these first five rewards are not the only ones that Nancy Wake received. As said previously she received a reward from the United States of America. The Medal of Freedom was given to her for her civilian actions during the Second World War. Since 1963, this reward was known as the Presidential Medal of Freedom and is given to people who stood out because of their actions for the benefit of the country. From the Australian government, she received the title of Companion of the Order of Australia in 2004. This title is given especially to Australian citizens and several ranks are given alongside the medal: Knight or Dame, Companion, Officer, Member and Medal of the Order of Australia. The highest rank being that of Knight or Dame, the fact that Nancy Wake is a Companion is significant enough to show the role she played during the war to be awarded this title with a high rank. However, as this title is divided between civilians and military personnel, and the difference being shown on the ribbon holding the medal, we can say that Nancy Wake only received the civilian distinction. This shows the complexity of their ranks and roles during the war since some governments gave these women civilian rewards while others rewarded them with military rewards. One could think the list stops here, but she also received four different decorations from the French government. First, she was awarded the Croix de Guerre which can be given to one person or a military group for their actions during the war but only if they had already been rewarded with a quotation from the military authorities. Then, in 1970 she received the rank of Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur. However, in 1988 she has been elevated to the rank of Officier as it was around these years that the archives from the secret services became public and that some secret elements that had been kept hidden became known to all. That is why Nancy Wake's rank for the Légion d'Honneur has been revised to be elevated to a

higher one as her role during the war had become known to all. Finally, she received the Médaille de la Résistance for her role inside of the SOE and the part she played in France alongside the Résistants networks. To complete this long list of medals given to Nancy Wake, the last decoration she received a few years before her death was the RSA Badge in gold from New Zealand, also known as the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association that she received in 2006.

This discrepancy between the number of medals that were given to the women of the SOE is significant enough, for some of them had an essential role during the war and their actions have been of the utmost importance, but they never received any kind of decoration. This is the case of Giliana Gerson who never received any medal or reward even though she was the first SOE agent to be sent to France.

However, the memory of these women doesn't stop with the number of rewards they received or not for as they participated in one of the deadliest wars, those who died during the war are remembered on monuments and other places of remembrance. But are the names on these monuments only those of the deceased or is there a monument or a plaque remembering the actions of the SOE in its entirety? Is there a place in France or in the United Kingdom where all the women from the F section of the SOE are remembered?

2.2. Monuments in France³⁸

After the end of the First World War, governments of every country at war decided to build monuments to honour the fallen soldiers. In France, as the idea came quickly so did the monuments. There were often a lot of mistakes on the names, or not the right ones as the whole matter was done in a hurry. The pressing matter was to create places for people and families to remember their brothers, fathers, sons, and everyone they knew who went to war. After the Second World War, the idea of remembering soldiers remained and the duty of remembrance became as important due to the events that took place during these six years of conflicts. However, the problem of what names were to be written on the monuments remained since it was difficult right after the war to know exactly the number of casualties in the camps and their identities. Another thing to be noted is that in France, generally, monuments and commemorative plaques are only for the casualties of the war and not a place to remember all

³⁸ All the information gathered here come from the website *MemorialGenWeb*

those who fought in a regiment, a military unity, a secret organisation, or even a Résistance network whether they were still alive or not at the end of the war. Here I will try to look at the monuments in France where the names of the women of the F section of the SOE are written and if those names are those of the thirteen women who died in deportation or if there are names of those who survived the Second Worldwide conflict. All the information that I could gather here are the product of a long work of research and cross research thanks to the website *MemorialGenWeb* and other websites. The idea was to create a list with all the monuments, plaques, and other memorials in France where the names of the women of the F section of the SOE were present and to find if there was a monument with all of their names.

In my research I found a total of fifteen monuments, plaques, or any sort of memorial where at least one of the forty names is engraved. It appears in my research that these fifteen monuments, plaques and memorials contain only the names of the thirteen women who died in deportation. I will only speak of the most interesting ones to note and the ones that stand out of this list and whether there is one monument in the list I made where the thirteen names are written.

The first one important to mention here is a commemorative plaque in the camp of Natzweiler-Struthof where four women died the same day: June 6th, 1944. The four names are those of Andrée Borrel, Vera Leigh, Sonia Olschanezky, and Diana Rowden. With their names, an accompanying sentence is written as follow: “à la mémoire des quatres femmes britanniques et françaises parachutées exécutées dans ce camp”³⁹. On the page from the website *MemorialGenWeb*, where I found the information about this plaque, a list of the names is written below to summarise the names of the people mentioned with the date of their death, the place where they died, if they have any decoration or military citation, and if they are buried somewhere. Another thing to be noted is the place where the plaque was put. It is located inside of the camp and especially next to the crematory oven of the camp where these four women lost their lives. This shows the will of the authorities to remember even more these women as the place where they can be remembered is the very place where they died. This is one element we can note: monuments and memorials can be anywhere, in villages, towns, or next to important national monuments, but the place where it has the most importance is the place

³⁹ Link from the website *MemorialGenWeb*: (information about the plaque)
<https://www.memorialgenweb.org/memorial3/html/fr/resultcommune.php?idsource=53073&dpt=67>

where soldiers, civilians or people working for secret organisations died. It adds an emotional dimension to the duty of remembrance.

The second memorial I would like to mention is the SOE Memorial in Valençay in Indre. This monument is worth mentioning for it is the only one in France where the names of the thirteen women of the F section of the SOE who died during the war are engraved: Yolande Beekman, Denise Bloch, Andrée Borrel, Muriel Byck, Madeleine Damerment, Noor Inayat Khan, Cecily Lefort, Vera Leigh, Eliane Plewman, Lilian Rolfe, Diana Rowden, Yvonne Rudellat, and Violette Szabo. Their names are written out of a total of a hundred and four names. On this monument are written their names, their rank in the military, the unit or organisation under which they fought, and the place where they died. One thing to be noted here that is important is that the organisations that are written next to their names are those of the Woman's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) and the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY). The same thing is to be noted with the other names on the memorial. The organisation or the military regiment written next to the names of the men is not the one of the SOE, and the reason for it is that it was supposed to be a secret agency and the agents that enlisted in the SOE were also engaged in another regiment to keep the SOE secret even if caught. So that, if an agent was captured, the SOE was not troubled and could continue sending agents in France. One could also think that the monument is not complete, for it is dedicated to the agents of the SOE, however the agents named were only those of the F section and the fact that the monument is in France is even more relevant for the memory of the people who fought there. Another thing we can mention and that is important to notice is the place that was chosen for this memorial. Indeed, the town of Valençay was chosen because it was there that in 1941, the first agent of the SOE had been parachuted. This adds to the dimension of the duty of remembrance for this place holds a historical significance and it can feel more legitimate for a memorial dedicated to the memory of the deceased agents of the SOE to be placed there.

In my research, this last monument is the only one I found where the names of the thirteen deceased female agents of the F section of the SOE are inscribed. The fact that this monument is in France is also essential to note, for it shows the importance that this secret organisation had during the Second World War and the recognition the French government has towards these people.

I found plenty of other plaques scattered all over France, but they usually mention only one name for they are placed at important locations that the person mentioned on the plaque frequented. For example, in Omissy, in Aisne, there is a plaque on the frontage of a cafe where

the names of several people are written including Yolande Beekman, Gustave Bieler, and Georges Tixier (the first name being one of the members of the F section of the SOE). On this plaque is also written: “Honneur et reconnaissance – En ce lieu, le jeudi 13 janvier 1944 furent arrêtés par la Gestapo deux agents du réseau anglais Buckmaster SOE”⁴⁰. Here the plaque is dedicated to the memory of these people for it was there that they were arrested, and that place holds an essential significance for afterwards they were sent to concentration camps and died a few days or months later.

Out of a total of fifteen monuments⁴¹, memorials, or plaques that I found during my research, I thought that the two I mentioned are the most important for the plaque in Natzweiler-Struthof and the memorial in Valençay both hold an emotional importance in the duty of remembrance towards these women. The other places of remembrance are as important as the ones I mentioned but I haven’t spoken about them for they only bear one of the names out of the forty women that I mention in this dissertation.

We can therefore wonder if the same sorts of monuments and memorials exist in the United Kingdom since it is from England that the operations of the SOE were decided and from Scotland that the agents were trained. Is there any memorial bearing all the names of the forty women of the F section of the SOE? Are there monuments dedicated to the memory of the SOE? And if so, are there any names written? Where are they located, and does it have any significance for the duty of remembrance?

2.3. Monuments in the United Kingdom⁴²

Indeed, as the United Kingdom saw the rise of the SOE and became the centre of operations during the war, one can imagine easily that there might be a lot of monuments, memorials and other places of remembrance where the SOE is mentioned. In my research I found a total of twenty-three⁴³ memorials, plaques, and places of remembrance. For this part I collected information from the website of the Imperial War Museum and thanks to the help of one of their employees who kindly helped me. I first looked at all the monuments, memorials and plaques

⁴⁰ Link from the website *MemorialGenWeb*: (information about the plaque)

<https://www.memorialgenweb.org/memorial3/html/fr/resultcommune.php?idsource=57703&dpt=02>

⁴¹ See annexe 3: *List of the monuments in France mentioning the names of the women of the F section*

⁴² All the information gathered here come mainly from the websites *Imperial War Museums* and *Find a Grave*

⁴³ See annexe 4: *List of the monuments in the United Kingdom mentioning the names of the women of the F section*

where there was a mention of the SOE, the FANY or the WAAF. I then tried to cross my research with other websites dedicated to monuments and tombs (for instance, the website *Find a Grave*). Another thing I did before comparing my research was to exclude all the monuments dedicated only to the FANY and the WAAF for my goal was to find a memorial where only the names of the women of the F section of the SOE would be written. Just as previously, I will only mention the most important ones and the ones that carry a great significance whether because of the names written, or their location.

The first one that is worth mentioning is a plaque located in Beaulieu in England. This plaque is important to mention for it doesn't mention any name but is dedicated to all the men and women agents of the SOE who came to Beaulieu. For indeed, this plaque was installed here because this place was one of the training centres in which the future agents learned how to fight, how to use guns, or even how to communicate with the headquarters of the SOE. In the plaque is written the following quote:

“Remember before God those men and women of the European Resistance Movement who were secretly trained in Beaulieu to fight their lonely battle against Hitler's Germany and who, before entering Nazi-occupied territory here found some measure of the peace for which they fought”⁴⁴

This shows that this plaque is here for people to know that in this city, the agents of the SOE trained and the aim for which they did so. This might raise questions in people's minds, and they will try to learn more about the SOE and their actions during the war. Plaques like this one are a good way to inform people of events that happened there but also a good way for them to learn about unknown events of the Second World War. Another thing we can mention here is that there is no such plaque in France. All the plaques I found in France are dedicated to the memory of one or several persons who were part of the SOE but not to the whole unit.

The second monument, or memorial that is worth mentioning here is the Women's Transport Service First Aid Nursing Yeomanry SOE plaque located in Malton, in North Yorkshire in England. This plaque pays homage to some members of the FANY (First Aid Nursing Yeomanry) and of the SOE. As women and other agents were obliged to be enlisted under another regiment or organisation like the FANY or the WAAF (Women's Auxiliary Air Force) for the female agents of the SOE, it is normal to see on monuments or plaques the names of these organisations next to the names of the agents. Before the list of thirteen names inscribed

⁴⁴ Quote taken from the notice of the monument on the website of the *Imperial War Museums*: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/21354>

on this plaque a small text explains what these women did during the war and is written as follow:

“This plaque is dedicated to the members of the Women’s Transport Service (First Aid Nursing Yeomanry), who served with the Special Operations Executive (SOE), F Section, and fought a lonely battle against Hitler’s Germany throughout occupied France in WWII. Many of the female agents, couriers, and radio operators, sent by SOE to France were FANYs. Twelve of them died or were executed in concentration camps after harsh treatment by the Gestapo. Amongst the many awards given to FANYs during WWII were three George Crosses, two of which were awarded posthumously. They died as gallantly as they had served the Resistance in France. / The following FANYs, and WAAF’s attached to the FANY, died in the common struggle for freedom while serving with their Resistance comrades in occupied France: - “⁴⁵

After this explanatory introduction, the thirteen names of these women follow: Yolande Beekman, Denise Bloch, Andrée Borrel, Muriel Byck, Madeleine Damerment, Noor Inayat Khan, Cecily Lefort, Vera Leigh, Eliane Plewman, Lilian Rolfe, Diana Rowden, Yvonne Rudellat and Violette Szabo. Next to their names are written the code names they used during the war and on the right of the plaque are mentioned some of the rewards these women received such as “C de G.” for the Croix de Guerre, or “L d’H” for the Légion d’Honneur. This plaque is important to mention for the list of names presented is almost complete in order to mention all the women who died in the F section of the SOE. In the list of women who died during the war and the list of names written on this plaque only two are missing: Madeleine Lavigne and Sonia Olschanezky. I don’t explain these omissions but one of the reasons might be that they were not part of the FANY like the other agents cited but of the WAAF.

The third monument I would like to talk about here is the F Section Seat Special Operations Executive located in Alrewas, in England. This monument is not a “regular” monument in shape for it is first set in a garden, then it is shaped like a Star of David. This monument can also be called a Remembrance Bench. This type of monuments, or memorials, is not common to see in France. Remembrance Benches are a way for people to sit there and think about the person whose name is written on the backrest or on the seat. This type of memorials and monuments can be thought to be a softer way to remember someone (compared to a gravestone in a cemetery). Indeed, the United Kingdom is more accustomed to creating Remembrance Benches. This allows people to unknowingly learn or get intrigued by the names written on these benches. On some branches of the Star are written the names of female agents

⁴⁵ Quote taken from the notice of the monument on the website of the *Imperial War Museums*: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/47242>

of the F section of the SOE on small plaques. Out of a total of seventeen names, only fourteen are names from the list of the F section female agents: Yolande Beekman, Denise Bloch, Andrée Borrel, Madeleine Damerment, Cecily Lefort, Vera Leigh, Noor Inayat Khan, Lilian Rolfe, Sonia Olschanezky, Eliane Plewman, Violette Szabo, Diana Rowden, Muriel Byck and Yvonne Rudellat. On the plaques with their names, there is also the emblem of the organisation or regiment they enlisted in (mainly the FANY, the WAAF and for some the one of the SOE), their code names and where and when they died. For example, on Noor Inayat Khan's plaque, whose code name was "Madeleine", there is the emblem of the WAAF, next to her name it is written that she died at thirty years old and that she was executed in September 1944 in the camp of Dachau⁴⁶. From the previous monument, we can see that Sonia Olschanezky has been added but Madeleine Lavigne has still been forgotten. As in this part, my goal is to find a monument where all the female agents of the F section of the SOE are mentioned, I must say that I am getting closer to having all of their names written on a monument. However, the monuments and, memorials that I have mentioned so far only bear the names of the deceased agents of the SOE.

The last one I would like to mention in this part is the Women of the Special Operations Executive monument in Tempsford, in England. This monument is a column next to the town's cemetery, as it is often the location of memorials, and monuments. On two sides of the monument are written the names of female agents of the SOE. The particularity of this monument is that on the total of a hundred and fifty names engraved, half of the names are those of agents who died during the war and the other half, the names of those who survived. And the most important thing to note is that on all of these names, thirty-eight names out of forty are names from the list of the female agents of the F section of the SOE: Francine Agazarian, Julienne Aisner, Yvonne Baseden, Yolande Beekman, Lise de Baissac, Denise Bloch, Andrée Borrel, Sonia Butt, Muriel Byck, Blanche Charlet, Marie-Thérèse le Chêne, Yvonne Cormeau, Madeleine Damerment, , Yvonne Fontaine, Giliana Gerson, Krystyna Skarbek-Granville (Christine Granville), Virginia Hall, Mary Herbert, Ginette Jullian, Noor Inayat Khan, Marguerite Knight, Madeleine Lavigne, Phyllis Latour, Cécile Lefort, Vera Leigh, Eileen Nearne, Jacqueline Nearne, Patricia O'Sullivan, Eliane Plewman, Elizabeth Rochester (Reynolds), Lilian Rolfe, Diana Rowden, Yvonne Rudellat, Odette Sansom, Violette Szabo, Nancy Wake, Anne-Marie Walters and Odette Wilen. The only two names missing on this

⁴⁶ Information gathered on the picture taken by Colin Sweett, posted on the notice of the monument on the website of the *Imperial War Museums*: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/77360>

monument are the ones of Sonia Olschanceky and Pearl Witherington, the latter being one of the most famous female agents of the SOE. On the front side of the monument is written the following quote:

“By the full moon we flew / To honour and remember / the women / who went out from / RAF Tempsford / and other airfields and ports/ to aid Resistance movements / in occupied Europe / 1941-1945 / some remain nameless / some did not return”⁴⁷

This quote shows the degree of recognition given to these women. In this quote we can also better understand why this monument was placed in Tempsford: women of the Royal Air Force (RAF) trained in this town. The part of the quote that says: “some remain nameless” struck me because it echoes one of the aims of this dissertation: remembering these women. This quote can also echo in the minds of people coming to see this monument. This might invite them to do some research about some of the names that they have read and that have intrigued them. Another quote is written under the names of the female agents on one side of the column and reads as follow:

“To honour / the men and women / of the secret services / of many allied nations / who gave up their lives / in the clandestine / struggle for liberty / 1939-1945 / They gave up their lives / so that we may / live in freedom”⁴⁸

This quote shows once again the will of the town to remember these women and to perpetuate the duty of remembrance considering the events that took place there during the war. This monument is the only one I found where most names were those of the female agents of the F section of the SOE.

A lot of other monuments, and memorials exist all around the United Kingdom, paying homage to the members of the SOE but this last monument is the only one with this great many numbers of names written for this part of history. Most of the monuments in the United Kingdom paying homage to the soldiers or the Second World War are general and sometimes don't mention names or specific regiments. Like in France there are also a lot of plaques in streets or towns dedicated to one or a few persons, mentioning the events that occurred at the place where the plaque was installed.

One last thing to note is that there are a lot more monuments, and memorials in the United Kingdom dedicated to the SOE than in France. The reason for it is that the SOE operated from

⁴⁷ Quote taken from the notice of the monument on the website of the *Imperial War Museums*: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/65255>

⁴⁸ Ibid.

the United Kingdom and not only from England since the training centres were also in Scotland. However, I was surprised to find as many monuments dedicated to the SOE as I found, for my first thought was that no-one knew about the SOE in France and that people were never taught that the Resistance was helped by foreign secret services. Indeed, in a lot of history lessons, pupils are taught about the role of the British and the American armies in the D-Day landings in 1944, but never are they taught about other instances like those of secret services who secretly worked hand in hand with résistants in France and elsewhere. It is only by doing this dissertation and by reading novels that I learnt about the role of the SOE, the FANY, the WAAF and the OSS.

However, even though the duty of remembrance is essential in paying homage to the soldiers and agents that fought in France and in England, what happened next? Did the SOE work still after the end of the war? And if so, did women still have a part in it? Did they have the chance to be integrated in the army and how did it happen? Are parts of the SOE still functioning nowadays?

3. Repercussions of the SOE nowadays

Since the end of the Second World War, the army kept renewing itself and tried to integrate more people even though the threat of a new worldwide conflict had been stopped. However, in this new army and in the decades that followed that saw a growing independence of women, what was their place? Did they remain an essential part of the military? And nowadays, what is the part of women in the military in England and the United Kingdom?

3.1. Memory of the SOE

The SOE's first aim was to communicate important information in times of war and help invaded countries to free themselves as it was supposed to be between allied countries.

The years before the end of the war, the actions of the SOE became more and more frequent and common for their goal was to free France from Nazi Germany. Allied governments were beginning to see that the war would not last several years, and they began to accelerate the operations that should free France.

In 1944 the idea of a landing in France of a great number of allied soldiers to help the Resistance in place in different areas in France emerged. Of course, to achieve such an operation, the military forces that stayed in England needed a great deal of information for this landing to go as planned. That is where the Resistance and the SOE became essential in this undertaking. Indeed, working together, the Resistance and the SOE were able to get secret information from the enemy forces and transmit them to the headquarters of the SOE and of the British government in England. Even though in theory everything was supposed to work well, the reality was quite different.

After the D-Day Landings in Normandy on June 6th, 1944, and the supposed near end of the war, missions became more dangerous for the members of the SOE. Indeed, a few days before and after this date, a lot of SOE agents and Resistants were captured, imprisoned, and executed in concentration camps. In the space of a few months, going from July 1944 to March 1945, thirteen agents of the F section of the SOE lost their lives.

Another thing to note is that up until the end of the war, agents were sent to France. This was the case of Christine Granville (Krystyna Skarbek) who was parachuted in France in July

1944. This shows that even though the war was close to an end, the SOE never stopped sending agents in mission for it was then that they needed the most information for the end of the war to be successful and beneficial to the allies. For as long as the war was not over, important information could benefit the British army and be in favour of their victory.

However, once the war stopped, so did the missions and operations in France. The SOE then called all the agents still alive who were abroad to stop their missions and come back to England. For as the war stopped, so did the fights and the SOE's goal in France had been finally achieved: help France to free itself from Nazi Germany. The SOE had then no more purpose to remain. As Nigel Morris writes it in his article entitled "The Special Operations Executive 1940-1946": "With no war to fight, SOE survived until January 1946 before being disbanded forever"⁴⁹. The collective Mémoires de Guerre in the article "Special Operations Executive (SOE)" published in "Organisations Militaires" adds:

"Le 30 juin 1946, le SOE, devenu sans objet, est dissous. Ce qui reste du personnel et des équipements, absorbés par le MI6, est réparti entre les différentes divisions opérationnelles et le nouveau Directoire de l'entraînement et du développement pour la préparation à la guerre (DEWP)."⁵⁰

This shows that even though the SOE became "useless" for its aim had been fulfilled, the organisation never left its agents without work. Some continued to work for intelligence agencies like the MI6 or even works in embassies as they came with classified defence information and a particular training that some members of the MI6 did have. Some of them however, shocked by what they had to do and see, retreated from any sort of work in intelligence agencies or other similar organisations. Others even regained the jobs they had before the war, less violent compared to the missions and operations they had to do during the war.

Until the 1960s, people never knew the role of the SOE nor even the name of this organisation. Indeed, as it was a secret organisation, its role during the war had never been exposed. But it was within this decade that some events of the Second World War were revealed by chiefs of governments like in France when Charles de Gaulle revealed the importance of the Resistance and the atrocities that happened in concentration camps. It was also around this period that governments decided to punish war crimes and that trials of war criminals occurred and became broadcast. With all these events happening all around the world, governments

⁴⁹ "The Special Operations Executive 1940-1946", by Nigel Morris, on the website BBC.co.uk History: https://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/soe_01.shtml

⁵⁰ "Special Operations Executive (SOE) written by Mémoires de Guerre on the following link: <https://www.memoiresdeguerre.com/article-special-operations-executive-soe-119125692.html>

decided to render public important archives that were kept secret during all these years. It was at this time that the SOE archives became public in 1968⁵¹. Even though a lot of information is available from this website, one cannot read the official papers and needs to make an official request to the National Archives to come and consult the documents on site or to be sent a copy of the said documents. But like every other site of archives, the motives of the request must be presented to the organisation. Every request has to be justified, as the documents still hold a part of classified defence information.

However, does the memory of the SOE go beyond the realm of archives and papers? Did it have an impact on the way the British army is managed? How did the SOE impact the lives of women afterwards? Did they remain in the military and if so, what were their roles? Were they finally treated as equals of men and did their rank echo this idea of equality between genders? Is the British army an egalitarian organisation in the way men and women are represented?

3.2. In the British Army

Since the end of the war, women strived to be an entire part of the military both in France and in England. In the different branches of the British army, women struggled to find their place in the army during the decades that followed the Second World War until nowadays.

In the years that followed directly the end of the worldwide conflict, some progress was made within the army itself to allow women to have more weight in the decisions and the actions the military underwent. Indeed, in 1948, the Women's Service Act was presented and passed by Parliament to give women "permanent peacetime roles"⁵². This act is described in the small preamble as "An act to enable women to be commissioned and enlisted for service in His Majesty's land and air forces, and for purposes connected therewith."⁵³. This shows the will of government to put more power in the hands of women in the military as they saw the crucial role, they played during the Second World War. OK This act is divided in five sections describing the things women are now allowed to do in the military. The first section is entitled "Power to raise women's land and air forces"⁵⁴ and states that women are now allowed to be

⁵¹ Website of the National Archives: <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C153>

⁵² Quote from "Women in the Armed Forces" on the Royal British Legion website: <https://www.britishlegion.org.uk/stories/women-in-the-armed-services>

⁵³ Taken from *Army and Air Force (Women's Service) Act, 1948*. 24 March 1948, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/11-12/21/enacted/data.pdf>

⁵⁴ Ibid.

part of the land force or the air force. This shows a sign of great progress since before the war, women would never have been integrated in a military corps and part of the British army. The four other sections detail the conditions that must be fulfilled to be part of the air or the land force. This act then gives a real part for women inside of the military. However, it still doesn't allow them to be part of the armed conflicts that still happened all over Europe because of the Cold War. They weren't able to fight alongside men. Considering this act, we can still say that gender equality hadn't been reached yet and that there were still some progresses to be made to reach this ideal of gender equality inside of the British army.

A year later, in 1949, the WRAF (Women's Royal Air Force) decides to change some of its features to become a more welcoming organisation. With this re-organisation of the Royal Air Force, now "80% of jobs [are] available to women"⁵⁵. This change shows the will to integrate more and more women in the military and to give them more important roles. This also indicates a real sort of revolution in the military for as it is written on the website of the RAF museum: "the WRAF was to be integrated as fully as possible with the RAF"⁵⁶. This indicates again the will of governments to integrate fully women and to give them a real place inside the military. On the website of the RAF Museum, they even add: "All new entrants were commissioned or enlisted in the Royal Air Force, taking the same oath as the men, and subject to the same conditions of service and disciplinary code"⁵⁷. Finally women were treated as equals of men, undergoing the same type of training, respecting the same ideals, and following the same rules. This shows once again that women started to find their place in society and especially in the military from which they had been rejected since the beginning of the First World War, as the only jobs they could do were the ones of nurses or working in the munition factories. However, the progress is not full yet. Even though women are now accepted in the Royal Air Force, the roles that are given in times of the beginning of the Cold War are not totally the same as men were given. Indeed, a lot of people governing and overseeing the operations inside the RAF still see them as only women and do not believe them capable of handling the same struggles as men. That is why, even though their place in the RAF and the WRAF is confirmed, they "were prohibited from combat duty"⁵⁸ due to the fact that they were seen as weak, delicate, and not fit to see the atrocities of close combat in places where smaller conflicts are still happening as a

⁵⁵ Quote from "Women in the Armed Forces" op. cit.

⁵⁶ Quote from the RAF museum website: <https://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/research/online-exhibitions/women-of-the-air-force/womens-royal-air-force-wraf-1949-1994/>

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Quote from "Women in the Armed Forces" op. cit.

result of the Second World War. However, we can argue here that they should be integrated in close combat for they were allowed to be on the battlefields during the Second World War. Why did this change occur, and what caused this change of mind from the governing organisations and regiments? Also, their jobs in the WRAF were almost the same they had as being a part of the SOE meaning they could drive trucks and other means of transportation for the purposes of the RAF, they could also work in communication as they were trained to do so during the war thanks to their training with the SOE as well as demining or disarming bombs that stayed on the battlefields after the war, but also works of administration and accountancy, or even working in catering to feed all the other members of the RAF. The RAF Museum describes all these jobs as “driving, ground signalling, clerical work and catering”⁵⁹. The last one can be seen as contradictory compared to the progress shown by the RAF. Why would women want to cook and take care of the other RAF members as if they were their mothers while they were given more important roles during the war? Why would they enlist in the RAF to do things they were happy to leave behind them during the war? However, progress made its way to the RAF very carefully and slowly for women had to wait until 1994 to be an entire part of the RAF as the WRAF “merged with the RAF, marking the full integration of women into the air force”⁶⁰. This shows that until that date, women struggled to be recognised as a true part of the air force and of the military. The RAF Museum website even adds: “In 45 years women had progressed from a temporary wartime support role to become full members of the world’s oldest independent air force.”⁶¹. Also, even though they were now integrated fully in the RAF, there were still some roles and jobs that were not accessible to them: “fireman and aerial erector”⁶² meaning that some works were still seen as mostly “male” works and that jobs as dangerous as firemen or repairing the planes were not thought to be suitable for women to do. We can see here that even though nowadays women are integrated in the RAF their struggle has been long for they were not treated as the equals of men until recently and that even tough mentalities were changing, some jobs were still not given to women for they were seen as not able to hold such responsibilities or undergoing such dangers.

Starting in the 1960s, some secret actions, organisations, and other types of secret services were revealed to the population as a will to remember what had happened during the war. That is why in 1974, one of the most famous operations and actions of the war became known.

⁵⁹ Quote from the RAF museum website op. cit.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Quote from “Women in the Armed Forces” op. cit.

Indeed, in the fight against Nazism, a lot of people of the secret services wanted to decode Nazi messages that could help the allies defeat them. One of the most famous and most complicated codes to break was known as the Enigma code. It was very complicated to break for every twenty-four hours, the key to the code changed and the work to break it had to start all over again. The person who broke this supposedly unbreakable code was the mathematician Alan Turing who created a machine that searched the key all by itself. However, even though a lot of people nowadays know the name of this famous mathematician, not a lot of them know the name of Bletchley Park. This place was where a great number of people worked to break all sorts of coded messages the members of the Secret Services like the SOE sent with crucial information about the course of the war, the position of the enemies, the number and type of weapons they possessed, or even when a mission would take place, how many people would be involved and, in certain situations, the number of casualties or the agents taken prisoners. In the article “Women in the Armed Forces” on the Royal British Legion Website, it is written that “of the 10,000 or so who served at Bletchley, around 7,000 were women”⁶³. This shows how much the roles that women played during the war has been undervalued, for only a few people have ever heard of Bletchley Park and the crucial role it held during the war. That is why, thanks to the work of historians and the discovery of secret files held by the British government, a lot of important organisations and people who held essential roles during the war became known by the population and these facts were broadcast so that most of the population would know about them. Also, with the help of cinema, a lot of stories from the Second World War were told in films and series. This helped the population to learn about these important events and raise their curiosity about what they saw to go and maybe read about these events.

As progress is something that requires time, it is only in 1985 that “girls are formally enrolled into the Army, Air and Sea Cadet Forces”⁶⁴. This means that they are legally allowed to enter military academies to receive the proper training to enter the land, air, or sea forces of the military. This shows the will of governments to promote women to the same ranks as men and to give them essential roles. This also shows the will of governments to show young girls that there is a place for them in the army, that they can have the same role and job as men.

Another thing we can mention is that since the 1980s, a lot of women distinguished themselves through their actions or based on the ranks and positions they were given in the military. The army started to “feminise” itself in the sense that more and more women integrated

⁶³ Quote from “Women in the Armed Forces” op. cit.

⁶⁴Ibid.

the ranks of the land, air, or sea forces and were raised to the higher ranks of command. This shows the change of mentalities of society that left more space for women in jobs that were first thought as being exclusively made for men. That is why in 1991, Julie Gibson became the “first female operational pilot, paving the way for the women who fly combat jets today”⁶⁵. Since the creation of the WRAF in 1949, women had to wait until this date to be considered as a real addition to the air force and become recognised pilots, fit to fight, and fly to dangerous countries sometimes at war. Then, it’s only in 2002, that women had to wait to enter the Royal Marine, as Captain Philippa Tattersall became “the first woman to complete Royal Marine training completing the same tests as her male colleagues”⁶⁶. This shows that, even though society changed and that mentalities progressed, there are still some parts of the military where women have a hard time entering and making a place for themselves. Is it because of the difficulty of the test for everyone, or because people thought a woman would never be able to enter the Marine that they upgraded the difficulty of the tests? Did women ever try to enter the Marine before, or did Captain Tattersall was the only one to apply in decades?

However, even though women reached higher ranks of command since the 1990s, none of them reached the top of the leadership in the army. Indeed, in 2015 as it is said in the article “Women in the Armed Forces” on the Royal British Legion website: “Susan Ridge becomes the British Army’s first female general and the highest-ranking woman to date when she is promoted to Major General”⁶⁷. This shows that since women were accepted in the military and given more and more power inside the different corps, women had to wait until the 21st century to be promoted to higher ranks of command and be regarded as probable replacements of men to lead troops and soldiers.

These types of events are now more and more common as more women join the British army but still, the numbers of women in the army, all corps included, are not as high as one could think considering the progresses, in mentalities and in the regiments, that were made since the Second World War and the roles women held in the SOE and other organisations like the WAAF and the FANY for example.

We can look at the numbers of women enlisted in the British army, all corps and regiments included. A study of December 2021 entitled “Representation of women in the Armed Forces” published by the Ministry of Defence presents the different figures they gathered to

⁶⁵ Ibid

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Quote from “Women in the Armed Forces” op. cit.

compare the number of women in the army in general and in some of the military corps like the Royal Navy or the RAF (Royal Air Force). They first begin this study by saying that “Between 31 March 2020 to 31 March 2021, women made up 11.8% of the intake”⁶⁸. This shows that even though the number of women increased since the end of the Second World War, they are still a few to enter the British Army whether it is in the sea or the land forces. However, the government has high expectations for the future of women in the Armed Forces, for it is said in this study that “The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has announced a new ‘Level of Ambition’ for women to account for 30% of recruits by 2030, following the inquiry”⁶⁹ meaning that by then more women would be enlisted in a military regiments and that the intake would be higher. They even add: “This 30% includes recruitment to the UK Regular Forces and Reserves combined. The focus is on recruitment rather than retention; the aim is for women to account for 30% of intake by 2030 rather than 30% of total personnel.”⁷⁰. This shows that the government wants to reach a certain equality in the number of women enlisted in the army, and want more women enlisting than men, which would even the numbers in the army in general.

To better understand how much women are in the army nowadays, let us take a look at the numbers of women present in the different regiments and corps of the military. In 2021, the Ministry of Defence numbered a total of “16,740 women in the UK Regular Forces”⁷¹ compared to around 5,650 women in the Reserves. The Reserves are citizens who enlisted in the army but have another daily occupation. They can be called, if need be, based on the availabilities they mentioned on their contracts with the regiments they are a part of. These Reserves of the army represent a total of 15% compared to the Regular Forces that represent around 11% of the total proportion of soldiers in the army. However, when looking closer at the figures, and considering each corps of the military we can see that the Reserves represent a higher percentage of new recruits compared to the Regular Forces. For example, in the Royal Navy, there are 10% of women from the Regular Forces, whereas they represent 16% of Reserves. This shows that the jobs proposed by the Royal Navy are attractive for women but a few of them really enter this military corps and prefer to keep another daily work.

⁶⁸ Quote from “Representation of women in the Armed Forces”, published by Megan Harding on Commonslibrary.parliament website: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/representation-of-women-in-the-armed-forces/>

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

These figures all come to the conclusion that only a few women enlist in the military. Whether it is because they are not attracted by these jobs or because the works offered are presented as mainly “male” jobs, the reasons for these small numbers and figures are numerous. However, we could argue that during the war, women appeared to be more numerous in the different corps of the military even though their roles were minor and sometimes linked to their “qualities” as mothers and women, and not based on their abilities to fight and face dangerous situations.

We could also say that, during the war, a lot of organisations and military corps were entirely devoted to women, as the FANY (First Aid Nursing Yeomanry), the WAAF (Women’s Auxiliary Air Force), or even the WRAF (Women’s Royal Air Force). However nowadays, the idea is to integrate women in mixed military corps and not to put them in only female regiments and secret services.

Nowadays, governments defend mixed regiments where men and women work hand in hand and where gender stereotypes are no longer dictating the way soldiers should be treated according to their gender. Women can now emancipate themselves in roles that were not given to them all throughout the 20th century. This will to integrate both men and women inside a regiment or an army corps shows how much progress has been made to never leave anyone behind and to show that the army is a place where everyone is accepted, with no difference made concerning their genders, social classes or other things that excluded them in the past.

Conclusion

Women have struggled for centuries to be accepted in any corps of the military and still nowadays, their numbers are not very numerous. Is it because they are afraid to enter a “male-dominant” job? Is it because some people still see them as weak, unworthy or incapable to handle the same amount of dangerousness as men? Or is it because they have to face a century worth of prejudices and stereotypes on their gender? Is it also because thousands of women before them had to struggle in their society to find their place? But what or where is a woman’s place? And who can decide such a thing? Men, or women? How can women find their place in a more modern society when they are followed by more than twenty centuries worth of inequalities and of people telling them what to do with their lives? All these questions remain unanswered for there can be another set of questions to why women are not more represented in the army.

However, the SOE, even though not a lot of people know about this organisation, paved the way for women to enlist in dangerous jobs in the army and not be restricted to communication jobs. The women of the F section of the SOE were strong fighters and a real asset to the British forces as they lacked men during the war. Their qualities were deeply appreciated whether it was the ability to speak and read a foreign language, the possibility to travel abroad and put their lives in danger for the good of the country. They were not seen as weak women who would be scared away by the atrocities of the war. Thirteen of them died trying to fulfil their missions and trying to defend an allied country which was not theirs.

All this brings us to the first question we asked ourselves which was: did organisations like the Special Operations Executive allow women’s emancipation during the Second World War and to what extent are women remembered nowadays, in daily life or in the military?

To answer this question, we can say that the SOE allowed women to emancipate thanks to the major roles they were given. They were treated as equals of men and were given dangerous missions or sometimes the leadership of Resistance networks. This allowed them to show senses of leadership as well as men and show society that they were a real addition to the war effort. The SOE also helped the emancipation of women for, after the war, they were recognised as deserving and a lot of homage happened to render justice to these women, posthumously or not. We can also say that these women are mostly remembered nowadays thanks to monuments and memorials all over the United Kingdom and France. Nowadays, the

SOE doesn't exist anymore, but the existence of such organisation paved the way for women to be fully integrated in the military, the numbers of women in the ranks of the land, sea or air forces growing even more every year.

We can even add that the women of the F section of the SOE showed people that being a woman went beyond the realm of household and that women were and are still essential in the army in times of war or peace.

Abbreviations

- **ARP:** Air Raid Precautions
- **ATS:** Auxiliary Territorial Service
- **DSO:** Distinguished Service Order
- **EMFFI :** Etat-major des Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur
- **FANY:** First Aid Nursing Yeomanry
- **FFI:** Forces Françaises de l'Intérieur
- **FFL:** Forces Françaises Libres
- **MBE:** Member of the British Empire
- **OSS:** Office of Strategic Services
- **PWE:** Political Warfare Executive
- **RAF:** Royal Air Force
- **RSA:** Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association
- **SOE:** Special Operations Executive
- **WAAF:** Women's Auxiliary Air Force
- **WVS:** Women's Voluntary Service

Partie didactique

Introduction

La séquence présentée ici s'inspire largement de mon sujet d'étude. Il me semblait judicieux de proposer aux élèves de travailler sur un sujet peu connu et très peu traité en cours d'histoire. En effet, lorsque le sujet de la seconde guerre mondiale est évoqué avec les élèves, les sujets fondamentaux sont abordés tels que la déportation ou la résistance. Cependant, il n'est presque jamais mentionné le rôle des services secrets étrangers ni la collaboration qu'il y a eu avec les services clandestins et la résistance en France.

Cette séquence serait étudiée avec une classe de première générale et technologique dans le cadre des enseignements de tronc commun. L'axe d'étude correspondant à l'étude de cette séquence est l'axe Territoire et Mémoire. Le niveau visé selon le CECRL⁷² serait un niveau B1 vers B2 ce qui équivaut aux niveaux intermédiaires du CECRL. Elle s'inscrit aussi dans le domaine 3 du socle commun de connaissances, de compétences et de culture. Le domaine 3 correspond à « La formation de la personne et du citoyen » dont le but premier est de « Transmettre les valeurs fondamentales et les principes inscrits dans la Constitution »⁷³. Ici, les trois principales valeurs de la République seront transmises, à savoir la Liberté, l'Égalité et la Fraternité. De plus la notion de devoir de mémoire et de souvenir seront prévalentes. L'entrée culturelle de cette séquence est la Seconde Guerre Mondiale en Grande-Bretagne.

Cette séquence pédagogique s'intitulerait « Let's Go to War » et essaierait de répondre à la problématique suivante : « What was the place of women during the war and how is the memory of the Second World War kept alive? ». Cela reviendrait à se demander comment la mémoire de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale est transmise et en quoi cette mémoire est importante pour les générations futures. Les élèves découvriront donc des documents liés à la Seconde Guerre Mondiale dans son ensemble du point de vue de la Grande-Bretagne, et plus spécifiquement de l'Angleterre, mais aussi des documents liés au devoir de mémoire et aux monuments présents en Angleterre et en France qui commémorent les combats de ce conflit mondial. Les documents abordés sont en grande majorité des documents authentiques et historiques, ce qui permet l'ouverture des élèves à des documents inconnus et de natures différents. Les documents authentiques étudiés lors de cette séquence permettront aux élèves

⁷² Cadre Européen Commun de Référence pour les Langues

⁷³ Socle commun de connaissances, de compétences et de culture, 31 mars 2015

de découvrir un accent et une façon de parler et d'écrire différentes puisque provenant du siècle dernier. Les tournures de phrases sont différentes et le vocabulaire utilisé un peu plus complexe que ce à quoi les élèves sont habitués. Certains documents seront didactisés pour permettre aux élèves de mieux les aborder et les comprendre. Les cinq activités langagières seront travaillées lors de cette séquence : la compréhension de l'oral, la compréhension de l'écrit, la production orale en interaction, la production orale en continu et l'expression écrite⁷⁴. Cela leur permettra de développer leurs compétences dans ces cinq activités langagières et de progresser davantage au contact de documents authentiques.

Lors de cette séquence, les élèves auront plusieurs tâches à réaliser.

La tâche intermédiaire sera une tâche de production orale en interaction (POI). Les élèves devront « jouer » une scène d'entretien d'embauche au sein du SOE. Les élèves auront déjà travaillé sur le SOE, et sur un témoignage d'une femme membre de la section F du SOE. Il y aura un travail préparatoire à cette tâche qui sera de trouver leurs qualités essentielles pour pouvoir intégrer le SOE. Un élève jouera le rôle du recruteur et l'autre élève jouera le rôle du candidat. Cette tâche permettra aux élèves de se mettre à la place des agents du SOE et de mieux comprendre les enjeux liés à l'intégration du SOE et des services secrets.

La tâche finale, quant à elle, sera une tâche d'expression écrite (EE). Les élèves devront écrire une lettre à une des femmes de la section F du SOE. Il y aura un travail préalable sur la forme de la lettre et sur les différents types de lettre qui existent. Les élèves travailleront aussi sur le vocabulaire et le registre à employer lors de la rédaction de cette lettre. Les élèves tireront au sort une des femmes à qui ils devront écrire une lettre. Ils devront tout d'abord se présenter et expliquer pourquoi ils envoient cette lettre. Ils demanderont ensuite ce que ces femmes ont fait pendant la guerre, comment elles sont entrées au SOE et quelles étaient leurs qualités et leurs compétences. Chaque élève aura donc un agent du SOE à qui écrire. Les femmes membres de la section F qui seront tirées au sort seront présentées sous forme de carte d'identité avec leur nom complet, une photographie d'elle avant ou pendant la guerre, leurs dates de naissance et de décès, ainsi que certaines actions qu'elles ont menées ou les médailles et récompenses qu'elles ont obtenues après la guerre.

⁷⁴ Elles seront référées par la suite par les sigles suivants : CO, CE, POI, POC et EE

Déclinaison des objectifs de la séquence

Lors de cette séquence, un certain nombre d'objectifs pourront être étudiés. Ci-après les objectifs principaux de la séquence.

Objectifs lexicaux :

- Champ lexical de la guerre et de la paix
- Champs lexicaux de l'armée, des régiments et des corps militaires
- Vocabulaire relié à la mémoire et au devoir de mémoire
- Vocabulaire lié aux qualités, aux capacités et aux compétences
- Verbes relatifs à la violence

Objectifs grammaticaux :

- Temps du passé : prétérit, present perfect, past perfect
- Voix passive et voix active
- Impératif

Objectifs phonologiques :

- Ton et tonalité ; prosodie
- Accent de mot et accent de phrase
- Accent britannique au XX^{ème} siècle

Objectifs sociolinguistiques :

- Choix du registre de langue en fonction de la situation, du contexte et de la tâche réalisée

Objectifs pragmatiques :

- Type de lettre : ouverte, fermée, privée ...
- Comment rédiger une lettre (forme)
- Gérer un entretien d'embauche quel que soit le rôle attribué

Objectifs culturels :

- La Seconde Guerre Mondiale
- Les différentes institutions de la guerre
- L'armée britannique
- Le SOE (Special Operations Executive) et le rôle qu'il a joué en France

Objectifs citoyens :

- Respect des valeurs et principes de la République : Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité
- Devoir de mémoire

Développement et utilisation des documents de la séquence

Premier document : Discours de Neville Chamberlain

Source des documents utilisés :

- Document écrit : <https://historylearning.com/world-war-two/causes-of-ww2/british-declaration-of-war/>
- Document audio : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xcSnKArKz8E>

Le premier document utilisé dans cette séquence est le discours radiodiffusé de déclaration de guerre de l'Angleterre du 3 septembre 1939 par le premier ministre britannique Neville Chamberlain. Ce document est un document authentique et historique qui ne sera pas didactisé pour ne pas supprimer l'authenticité de la parole et du discours produit.

Ce document présente néanmoins des éléments facilitateurs et des obstacles. Une des difficultés de ce document est l'accent utilisé. En effet, les élèves ne sont pas toujours habitués à un accent britannique mais plutôt à un accent américain qu'ils entendent plus souvent dans des chansons ou en regardant des films en version originale. De plus, le parler et la prosodie de ce discours sont propres au XX^{ème} siècle et les élèves n'y sont pas toujours habitués. De plus, les phrases sont assez longues ce qui peut compliquer la bonne compréhension par les élèves.

Cependant, l'audio est assez court ce qui est un des éléments facilitateurs de ce document. Aussi, pour faciliter la bonne compréhension du message du document par des élèves ayant quelques difficultés, le script du discours pourra être utilisé. Cela permettra la bonne compréhension de tous.

Pour la mise en œuvre de ce document, je commencerai par faire écouter le discours aux élèves sans leur dire de quoi ni de qui il s'agit. Ils n'écouteront qu'une partie de ce discours (jusqu'à la déclaration de guerre). Ils devraient alors essayer de deviner le message général du discours, le nom ou la position de la personne qui parle ainsi que la période historique couverte. Les consignes pour cette tâche seraient : "Listen to the audio and tell me what it is about." et "Who is speaking?", "Can you guess the time period?".

Ensuite l'audio serait découpé en trois parties différentes pour leur faire effectuer un travail de différenciation en groupe. Ci-après, le découpage de temps pour l'exploitation du

document : partie 1, de 0'27 à 2'43 ; partie 2, de 2'43 à 3'39 ; et partie 3, de 3'39 à 5'14. Pour cette étape, les élèves seraient répartis par petits groupes de trois ou quatre élèves et plusieurs groupes travailleraient sur la même partie. Ils pourront pour cela écouter leur partie plusieurs fois pour effectuer le travail de façon plus précise. Ici, ils devront créer un résumé écrit en groupe de la partie étudiée. Les élèves qui ont plus de facilités pourront inclure des informations relatives au ton employé ainsi que le vocabulaire. Pour les élèves plus en difficultés, comme dit précédemment, le script de la partie étudiée sera à disposition pour qu'ils puissent effectuer le travail au même rythme que les autres élèves et comprendre un maximum d'informations. La consigne pour cette étape serait : "Now, listen to your part of the audio and write a short summary explaining your part of the speech."

Une fois cette étape de rédaction terminée, les élèves formeront de nouveaux groupes pour une mise en commun en interaction (POI). Un élève du groupe 1 rejoindra un élève du groupe 2 et du groupe 3. Pour cette dernière étape, les élèves, dans leurs nouveaux groupes, devront d'abord expliquer leur partie aux autres membres du groupe pour qu'ils puissent prendre connaissance de l'entièreté du document. Ils pourront écouter l'entièreté du discours pour mieux en comprendre la totalité. Pour terminer l'exploitation de ce document, les élèves devront rédiger par groupes un résumé complet de l'audio. Dès qu'ils auront terminé, le professeur viendra s'assurer de la bonne compréhension du document par les élèves. Pour cette dernière étape, les consignes seraient : «In your new groups, discuss and explain your part of the speech to the other students.» et "Then, try and write a summary for the whole speech. Use your own words.". Tous les élèves devraient écrire le résumé complet afin qu'ils aient tous les mêmes connaissances par rapport à l'audio.

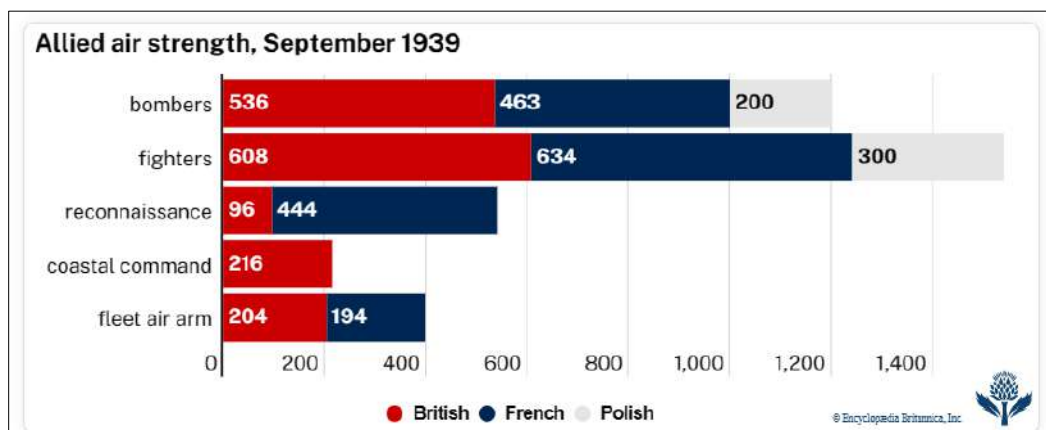
Second document : vidéo sur l'armée britannique

Source des documents utilisés :

- Source du graphique : <https://www.britannica.com/event/World-War-II/Forces-and-resources-of-the-European-combatants-1939>
- Source de la vidéo : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=79kQgIhcJlI&t=165s>

Les documents suivants seront utilisés lors d’une séance sur l’armée britannique au début de la guerre et les forces disponibles de l’armée britannique dans les différents corps d’armée. Le but de cette séance est de familiariser les élèves aux différents corps de l’armée britannique et de leur faire comprendre l’importance de cette armée dans le cours de la guerre et au cours des différentes batailles et des différents événements de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale. Ils pourront aussi mieux comprendre l’évolution de cette armée avant le besoin grandissant d’homme et de soldats lors des conflits de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale à travers une compréhension orale (CO).

La première étape de cette séance sera de montrer le graphique ci-dessous aux élèves et de leur demander de commenter les chiffres et le graphique en lui-même. Le vocabulaire inconnu pourra être éclairci si besoin. La consigne donnée sera la suivante : “Look at the chart. Tell us what you see. Is there something that strikes you?”. Ce document servira d’introduction pour la vidéo suivante.



Graphique représentant les forces de l’air disponibles en septembre 1939 par les armées alliées (France, Grande Bretagne et Pologne), site de Britannica

Le second document utilisé lors de cette séance est une vidéo sur l’armée britannique. Il est facile d’utilisation et de compréhension par les élèves du fait des images et les graphismes utilisés. Ils peuvent aider les élèves à entrer dans le sujet abordé et aider les élèves à se mettre au travail. De plus, la personne qui parle dans la vidéo a un accent britannique assez facile à comprendre. Cependant, quelques obstacles peuvent venir entraver la bonne compréhension de la vidéo. En effet, la personne qui parle à un débit de parole assez conséquent, ce qui peut perturber les élèves lors d’une éventuelle prise de notes. Aussi, beaucoup de chiffres sont mentionnés, ce qui peut encore perturber certains élèves en difficultés en classe de première générale ou technologique. Enfin, les différentes transitions, entre un corps d’armée et un autre

par exemple, sont assez rapides et peuvent troubler les élèves et les embrouiller dans la bonne compréhension du document.

L'étape suivante est l'exploitation de la vidéo sur l'armée britannique pendant la seconde guerre mondiale. La vidéo étant assez courte (2'45), les élèves devront prendre des notes sur ce qui est dit et ce qu'ils comprennent. L'exploitation de la vidéo se fera en classe entière et de façon individuelle. Il y aura quatre visionnages différents espacés d'une minute de relecture des prises de notes des élèves. Le premier visionnage sera fait sans pauses, le second et le troisième avec des pauses à certains moments judicieux. Le troisième visionnage aura moins de moments de pause que le second puisque le document aura déjà été vu plusieurs fois. Enfin le dernier visionnage se fera sans pause pour que les élèves puissent vérifier les informations qu'ils auront notées. Une fiche de travail⁷⁵ pourra être donnée pour les élèves qui ont plus de difficultés pour les guider et qu'ils puissent réussir l'exercice au même titre que les autres élèves. Les consignes seront les suivantes : "Listen to the video and take notes about you hear and understand" et "Read carefully your notes and make sure you have as much information as possible".

Une fois les quatre écoutes effectuées, les élèves devront rédiger chacun un court résumé en français de la vidéo en entier. Le professeur pourra passer dans les rangs auprès des élèves pour répondre à leurs éventuelles questions ou pour s'assurer que les élèves effectuent correctement l'exercice. Enfin, une mise en commun en classe entière sera faite. Les élèves donneront des éléments de leurs résumés pour créer une trace écrite commune à la classe. Cette étape garantira le fait que tous les élèves, qu'ils soient en difficulté ou non, auront les mêmes informations sur la vidéo. Elles leur seront utiles pour la suite de la séquence. Pour donner suite à cette séance, il sera possible de faire un point de pratique raisonnée de la langue (PRL) sur les temps du passé, présents en quantité dans la vidéo.

Troisième document : travail sur l'effort de guerre en Grande Bretagne

Source des documents utilisés :

- Affiche d'Abram Games : <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/abram-games-designer>
- Affiche « Come Into the Factories » : <https://libguides.fau.edu/primary-sources-ww2/england-uk>

⁷⁵ Voir annexe 5

- Affiche « Join the WAAF » : <https://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/research/online-exhibitions/women-of-the-air-force/wraf-and-waaf-recruitment-posters/>

Ces documents seront utilisés pour parler de l'effort de guerre pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale en Grande Bretagne. Cela sensibilisera les élèves au fait que beaucoup de personnes étaient impliquées pour fournir du matériel, de la nourriture ou tout ce dont les soldats avaient besoin au front.

Lors de cette séance, les élèves devront travailler sur l'effort de guerre en Grande Bretagne pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale à travers l'étude d'affiches. La séance débutera sur un moment de réflexion « brainstorming » par rapport à l'effort de guerre qui sera mis sous forme de carte mentale⁷⁶. Les échanges pourront tourner autour des acteurs de l'effort de guerre ou des actions que ces personnes peuvent faire pour aider les soldats au front.

Ensuite, les élèves travailleront sur les affiches présentes ci-dessous. Elles présentent plusieurs éléments facilitateurs. Tout d'abord, elles n'ont que peu de texte, ce qui aidera les élèves, ayant plus de difficultés, à comprendre les documents sans être perturbés par une grande quantité de texte. Aussi, l'esthétique des affiches permet une grande liberté d'interprétation et permettra aux élèves de développer des hypothèses sur l'utilisation et le message de ces affiches. Cependant, quelques obstacles peuvent venir troubler les élèves. En effet, sur certaines affiches, la présence de sigles tels que « ATS » ou « WAAF » peuvent questionner ou bloquer certains élèves dans la bonne compréhension des documents. De plus, l'absence de texte peut aussi poser quelques problèmes de compréhension. L'absence de texte de description pour expliquer le sens de l'affiche ou le message de cette affiche peut venir entraver la bonne compréhension des affiches.



"Join the ATS" poster by Abram Games / "Come Into the Factories" poster by Philip Zec / "Join the WAAF" poster by Jonathan Foss

⁷⁶ Voir annexe 6

Pour exploiter ces documents, les élèves devront se répartir en trois groupes, chaque groupe travaillant sur une affiche différente. Ils devront effectuer des recherches sur les sigles présents sur leurs affiches afin de les expliquer à leurs camarades. Ils devront rechercher la signification de ces sigles et pourquoi ils sont reliés à l'idée d'effort de guerre. Chaque groupe sera divisé en plus petits groupes avec chacun une tâche à accomplir. Les membres de chaque groupe devront se répartir les tâches suivantes : recherches sur le sigle et sa signification, description de l'affiche, hypothèses sur le message explicite ou implicite de l'affiche, mise en perspective avec l'effort de guerre, et préparation d'un affichage reprenant tous les éléments de description pour expliquer et décrire l'affiche aux autres camarades. Les affiches seraient distribuées en grand format et en couleur afin que les élèves puissent aussi décrire le choix des couleurs utilisées. Une fois ce travail préparatoire terminé, chaque groupe viendra présenter devant la classe les résultats de leurs recherches et de leurs réflexions. Les consignes de ce travail seront : "You will have to work in three groups, on three different posters.", "You must describe your poster and make some research about the acronym present on your poster.", "In your groups, decide who is working on the description of the poster, on the research part, on the link you can make of this document with the idea of the war effort, on the message of this poster and a last small group will work on creating a poster to explain everything to the class." et "You will have to explain to your classmates the purpose of you poster and describe it in details.". Les consignes seront redonnées en cas de difficultés ou de non-compréhension du travail à faire.

Quatrième document : découverte du SOE (Special Operations Executive)

Source des documents utilisés :

- Site du « National Army Museum » sur le SOE : <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/SOE>
- Site de National Geographic sur le Special Operations Executive : <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/ministry-ungentlemanly-warfare-spies-true-story>

Ces documents seront utilisés pour faire découvrir le SOE aux élèves. Comme c'est une organisation secrète, peu de gens connaissent l'existence de cette organisation et surtout le rôle qu'elle a joué en France pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale et la période d'occupation du régime de Vichy.

Lors de cette séance, les élèves découvriront le Special Operations Executive à travers une recherche internet. Les obstacles présents dans ces deux sites internet sont la quantité de texte. En effet, pour des élèves en difficultés ou présentant des troubles de l'apprentissage, une telle quantité de texte et d'information peut les perturber et les empêcher de comprendre correctement les informations données. Aussi, certains mots de vocabulaire sont assez spécifiques et peuvent entraver la bonne compréhension du document. Cependant, ces deux sites présentent des éléments facilitateurs auxquels les élèves peuvent se raccrocher pour déchiffrer le sens de certains passages incompris. En effet, certaines images viennent accompagner le texte et l'illustrer. De plus, malgré la quantité de texte, ces derniers sont organisés en paragraphes distincts et avec des titres permettant au(x) lecteur(s) de repérer plus facilement les informations qui seront présentes dans ce paragraphe.

Pour exploiter ces documents, les élèves devront effectuer une recherche internet (webquest) avec une fiche de travail donnée. Ils devront rechercher les informations manquantes pour répondre aux questions présentes sur la fiche de travail⁷⁷. Ils pourront travailler seuls ou en binômes s'ils ressentent le besoin de travailler avec quelqu'un. Les consignes données seront : "You have to make some research about a secret service organisation called the SOE." et "You can work alone or with another person if you want."

Cinquième document : travail sur le témoignage d'Yvonne Cormeau

Source du document utilisé :

- Interview d'Yvonne Cormeau par Conrad Wood (utilisation du premier fichier audio) : <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80007171>

Ce document sera utilisé en tant que compréhension de l'oral (CO). Les élèves y découvriront le témoignage d'Yvonne Cormeau, une des agents de la section F du SOE, missionnée en France. Ce document est un document authentique et historique. Il aura été didactisé, dans le sens où le témoignage étant assez long, seule une petite partie de cet entretien sera étudiée avec les élèves. La partie étudiée ira de 5'13 à 8'15. Cette partie correspond au moment où Yvonne Cormeau raconte comment elle a intégré le SOE. Les éléments facilitateurs de cet audio sont le fait que Madame Cormeau parle assez lentement et avec un accent

⁷⁷ Voir annexe 7

britannique très facile à comprendre. Aussi, la compréhension est facilitée par les questions de la personne qui interview Mme Cormeau. Lui aussi parle assez lentement et ses questions sont courtes. Cependant, l'audio en lui-même est assez long (cinq parties de presque trente minutes chacune) et même coupé, la partie retenue fait un peu plus de trois minutes ce qui peut paraître long pour des élèves en difficultés ou ayant de troubles de l'attention.

Lors de la séance d'exploitation de ce document, les élèves découvriront le témoignage d'Yvonne Cormeau, une des quarante femmes de la section F du SOE. Pour exploiter ce document, les élèves écouteront quatre fois la partie à étudier. La première écoute sera complète afin que les élèves découvrent le document, la deuxième écoute sera coupée avant chaque question de la personne qui interroge Yvonne Cormeau, ainsi que la troisième écoute. La quatrième écoute sera complète et sans pause afin que les élèves puissent relire leurs notes et ajouter des éléments s'ils le souhaitent. Lors des trois premières écoutes, il leur sera aussi demandé de repérer les qualités et les capacités que Mme Cormeau cite comme ayant permis son entrée au sein du SOE. Les élèves auront à disposition, s'ils le souhaitent et s'ils en ressentent le besoin, une fiche de travail leur permettant d'organiser leur prise de note lors des trois écoutes⁷⁸. Enfin, une mise en commun à l'oral et en classe entière sera effectuée afin de créer une trace écrite commune en français résumant l'audio et la partie d'interview que les élèves viennent d'écouter. Les consignes pour se travailler seraient : "Listen to the audio and take notes about what you can hear.", "While you are listening, try and find Yvonne Cormeau's abilities and capacities which helped her enter the SOE", et "Now, tell me in your own words what you heard. We are going to make a summary of the audio.". A la suite de ce travail, les élèves travailleront sur leurs capacités et leurs qualités afin d'anticiper le travail de la tâche intermédiaire.

Tâche intermédiaire :

Comme mentionné précédemment, la tâche intermédiaire sera une tâche de production orale en interaction (POI) en binômes. Il s'agira d'un entretien d'embauche au sein du SOE. Un élève aura le rôle du recruteur, et l'autre élève, celui de la personne qui vient passer l'entretien. Ils devront remobiliser leurs connaissances sur le SOE ainsi que les éléments vus au cours de la séance précédente. Les élèves auront une séance d'anticipation afin de préparer leurs

⁷⁸ Voir annexe 8

dialogues. Aussi, un travail sur le déroulé d'un entretien sera effectué afin que les élèves aient tous la même base pour créer leurs dialogues. La consigne de ce travail serait : "You are going to act out a job interview to integrate the SOE. You will have to work two by two. One person will be the interviewer and the other the interviewee. The interviewer must prepare questions related to the characteristics of the SOE and the interviewee must try to impress and give out his qualities and abilities. Your dialogue will last between five and ten minutes."

Sixième document : travail sur la vie de Noor Inayat Khan

Source du document utilisé :

- Vidéo Ted-ED sur la vie de Noor Inayat Khan, membre de la section F du SOE : <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y7zyB7rsvHU>

Ce document sera utilisé lors d'une séance de compréhension orale (CO). Il présente la vie de Noor Inayat Khan, une des membres les plus connues de la section F du SOE. Les élèves y apprendront des éléments relatifs à l'intégration du SOE ou aux raisons qui ont poussés cette femme à rejoindre le SOE. Ce document est un document didactisé puisqu'il est présenté par Ted-ED (ED : éducation) et est facile à exploiter.

Il présente plusieurs éléments facilitateurs. Tout d'abord, les graphismes de la vidéo sont attractifs et peuvent permettre aux élèves d'entrer plus facilement dans le sujet. Aussi, l'accent de la femme qui parle est assez facile à comprendre puisqu'elle articule bien et détache les mots. Cela sera un atout pour les élèves. De plus, les images correspondent à ce qui est dit. Cela aidera les élèves qui ont plus de difficultés en compréhension orale. Cependant, quelques obstacles viennent perturber la bonne compréhension de la vidéo. En effet, même si l'accent de la présentatrice est facile à comprendre, son débit de parole est assez rapide et certaines transitions d'une information à une autre sont assez rapides et difficiles à comprendre.

Lors de l'exploitation de ce document, les élèves devront répondre à une série de questions de compréhension sur le document. Tout d'abord, la vidéo leur sera montrée en entier afin que les élèves découvrent le thème de la vidéo et de la séance. Ils pourront donner certaines informations qu'ils auront déjà repérées dans la vidéo. Lors des deuxièmes et troisièmes écoutes, la vidéo sera entrecoupée de pauses à des endroits stratégiques et les élèves devront

répondre aux questions de compréhension sur leur fiche de travail⁷⁹. Les consignes lors de ce travail seront : “Listen and watch carefully the video.” et “Fill in the worksheet by answering the questions or completing the affirmations by making full sentences.”. La dernière écoute se fera pour que les élèves complètent leurs fiches de travail avec les informations manquantes ou pour vérifier leurs réponses. Une mise en commun des réponses trouvées sera faite par les élèves, en binômes. Le professeur passera dans les rangs pour s’assurer que les réponses trouvées sont justes ou que les phrases faites pour répondre sont correctes grammaticalement. Cette séance pourra se terminer sur une pratique raisonnée de la langue (PRL) sur la voix passive et active aux différents temps du passé.

Septième document : travail sur les lieux de mémoire

Source des documents utilisés :

- Informations sur le mémorial à Londres, Angleterre à l’effigie de Violette Szabo : <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/57804>
- Informations sur le mémorial du SOE à Valençay, France : <https://www.memorialgenweb.org/memorial3/html/fr/resultcommune.php?idsource=991266&dpt=36>
- Informations sur le mémorial des femmes du SOE à Tempford, Angleterre : <https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/65255>

Ces documents sont issus de mes recherches pour la partie disciplinaire de ce mémoire. Ils reprennent les informations contenues sur les mémoriaux et monuments principaux où le plus de nom de membres de la section F du SOE, en particulier des femmes, sont présents. Les informations contenues dans les pages internet ci-dessus seront didactisées et mises en forme afin que les élèves y aient facilement accès. Le but de ces documents est que les élèves développent les valeurs de devoir de mémoire et les valeurs de la République à travers l’étude de monuments et de mémoriaux commémorant des événements de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale.

⁷⁹ Voir annexe 9

Ces documents sont faciles à comprendre puisqu'il n'y aura pas de phrases. Les informations données seront sous formes de données chiffrées ou de listes de noms. Cela sera un avantage pour les élèves puisque la compréhension des documents ne passera pas par la lecture de phrases complexes ou difficiles à comprendre. Cependant, cela peut aussi être un désavantage, puisque les données seront organisées mais les élèves pourront ne pas savoir comment les exploiter.

Pour l'exploitation de ces documents, la séance commencera par une anticipation. Le professeur demandera aux élèves s'ils connaissent le monument aux morts de leurs villes ou villages et s'ils y ont remarqué quelque chose de particulier ou non. La consigne à ce moment-là sera : "Did you notice something different on the memorial in your town? Is there something that strikes you?". Suite aux réponses des élèves, le professeur pourra révéler que sur la majorité des monuments aux morts en France ne sont inscrits que des noms d'hommes.

Pour l'exploitation des documents, la classe sera divisée en trois parties correspondant aux trois monuments les plus importants du SOE. Chaque élève aura une fiche de travail sur un des trois monuments⁸⁰. Ils devront recréer des phrases afin de pouvoir expliquer et décrire les monuments et mémoriaux aux autres élèves. La consigne sera : "Create sentences to describe your monument to the rest of the class using the elements on the worksheet. You must also describe the monument itself: what does it look like ...".

Une fois cette étape terminée, les élèves se regrouperont par petits groupes de trois composés d'un élève ayant travaillé sur le monument de Lambeth Palace, un autre sur le mémorial de Valençay et le dernier sur le mémorial de Tempford. Les élèves devront tour à tour expliquer et décrire leur monument aux autres membres du groupe. Ces derniers prendront des notes sur ce qui est dit. Enfin, en guise de mise en commun sous forme de trace écrite, les élèves échangeront sur ce qui les a étonnés en étudiant ces monuments. Les consignes pour cette étape seront : "You are going to form groups of three. In these groups, you will have to share the information about your monument to the others using the sentences you wrote. The people listening must take notes about the other monuments." et "After studying these memorials and monuments, is there something that strikes you? Did you notice something particular?".

⁸⁰ Voir annexe 10

Tâche finale :

Comme mentionné précédemment, la tâche finale sera une tâche d'expression écrite. Les élèves devront écrire une lettre à une des membres de la section F du SOE. Ils devront lui demander d'expliquer son expérience au sein du SOE, comment elle y est entrée, comment étaient les missions en France et tout ce qui se rapporte au passé de cette femme au sein du SOE.

Les élèves tireront au sort une des femmes pour savoir à qui ils enverront leur lettre. Cependant, la dernière survivante étant décédée en octobre 2023, les élèves n'enverront pas réellement leurs lettres.

Lors du tirage au sort, les élèves auront chacun des informations sur la personne à qui ils écrivent sous forme de carte d'identité. Ci-dessous, quelques exemples.



Name : Noor Inayat Khan

Code name : Madeleine

Date and place of birth : 1st January
1914, Moscow, Russia

Date and place of death : 13th
September 1944, Dachau, Poland

Parachuted into France in June 1943

Medals : George Cross / Member of the
British Empire / War Medal / Croix de
guerre / France and Germany Star



Name : Andrée Borrel

Code name : Denise

Date of birth : 18th November 1919

Date and place of death : 6th July 1944,
Natzweiler, France

Parachuted into France in September
1942

Medals : Chevalier de la Légion
d'Honneur / Croix de guerre / Médaille de
la Résistance / War Medal



Name : Phyllis Latour

Code name : Geneviève

Date and place of birth : 8th April 1921,
Durban, South Africa

Date and place of death : 7th October
2023, Auckland, New Zealand

Parachuted into France in May 1944

Medals : Member of the British Empire /
1939-1945 star / France and Germany
star / Defence Medal / War Medal /
Croix de guerre / Légion d'Honneur

Conclusion

J'ai imaginé cette séquence didactique comme étant un moyen pour les élèves de découvrir un aspect inconnu de la Seconde Guerre Mondiale. Comme mentionné précédemment, les services secrets ne sont pas toujours mentionnés quand, dans les leçons d'histoire-géographie, la période du second conflit mondial est abordée. De plus, l'aide des autres pays alliés n'est pas souvent mentionnée, sauf lorsque les événements du débarquement en Normandie sont étudiés.

J'ai voulu que cette séquence soit courte et enrichissante pour les élèves afin qu'ils y apprennent l'aide que la France a reçu de la Grande Bretagne. J'ai aussi voulu mettre en valeur le rôle des femmes, pas seulement dans l'effort de guerre en Angleterre mais aussi à l'étranger et le courage dont elles ont fait preuve.

Enfin, cette séquence permettra aux élèves de développer leurs connaissances générales sur la Seconde Guerre Mondiale, en France comme en Angleterre, et leur permettra aussi de développer leurs esprits critiques. Ils y développeront aussi les valeurs de la République : Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité ; et l'importance du devoir de mémoire.

Annexes

Partie disciplinaire :

- 1) Andrée Borrel's obtaining of the Légion d'Honneur
 - a. The official paperwork for the obtaining of the medal
 - b. Letter from Capitaine Borrel's mother dated 24th April 1959
 - i. Transcription of the letter
 - c. Letter from the office for the obtaining of the Légion d'Honneur dated 5th May 1959
- 2) Andrée Borrel's papers from the Arolsen Archives
- 3) List of the monuments in France mentioning the names of the women of the F section
- 4) List of the monuments in the United Kingdom mentioning the names of the women of the F section

Partie didactique :

- 5) Fiche de travail pour la compréhension orale de la vidéo sur l'armée britannique pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale
- 6) Exemple de carte mentale sur le thème de l'effort de guerre
- 7) Fiche de travail sur le Special Operations Executive
- 8) Fiche de travail pour la compréhension orale sur l'interview d'Yvonne Cormeau
- 9) Fiche de travail pour la compréhension orale sur la vie de Noor Inayat Khan
- 10) Fiches de travail pour la séance sur les monuments et lieux de mémoire du SOE

1.a. The official paperwork for the obtaining of the medal

1718 P059

NOM: *M. M.* **BORREL**

N° *1718-8059*

Prénoms: *Andrée*

né le *18 Novembre 1919*

à *Paris (8^{ème})*

| | DÉCRET | J. O. | RANG | MINISTÈRE | QUALITÉ ET ADRESSE | EXÉCUTION |
|----------------|--------------|--------------|------|-----------|---|--|
| CHEVALIER | - 2 AVR 1959 | - 8 AVR 1959 | | TERRE | Capitaine <i>Mme Borrel Angéline</i> <i>13, Rue Herbet</i> <i>Levallois (A.M.M.)</i> | C ^{te} D ^{on} B ^t 6 MAI 1959 L ^t |
| OFFICIER | 80269 | | | | | C ^{te} D ^{on} B ^t L ^t |
| COMMANDEUR | | | | | | C ^{te} D ^{on} B ^t L ^t |
| GRAND-OFFICIER | | | | | | C ^{te} D ^{on} B ^t L ^t |
| GRAND-CROIX | | | | | | C ^{te} D ^{on} B ^t L ^t |

BREVET FAIT

N° **1718 P059** DCD le

J. 802233.

D I

1.b. Letter from Capitaine Borrel's mother dated 24th April 1959

n° 2238A

S.O/CAB/DECO/RES.

Canet 24 Avril 1959

Grande Chancellerie de la
Légion d'Honneur

1718 PO 59
BORREL
Andrée Raymond

~~got le brevet sans faire
me rendre~~

Monsieur

J'ai bien reçu un extrait du Décret
du 2 Avril, portant nomination dans l'Ordre
de la Légion d'Honneur à titre posthume de
ma fille Capitaine Borrel Andrée Raymond,
ainsi que de la citation la concernant, et
l'attribution de la Croix de guerre, avec Palme

C'est avec une profonde émotion
que j'en ai pris connaissance, et sans en
remercier au son nom.

Quant à la médaille de la Résistance
l'attribution n'en a jamais été faite, je
tiens à vous le faire savoir, que faut il faire.

Je vous en suis très obligée de bien
vouloir me faire parvenir le Diplôme, ainsi
qu'il m'est indiqué par le Bureau des Décorations.

Avec tous mes remerciements, je
vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur, mes respectueuses
salutations

Le. Borrel

13 rue Herbe. Canet. A. Mmes

1.b.i. Transcription of the letter

(The letter is transcribed with the mistakes that occurred in the writing to keep the authenticity of the document)

Cannes 24 Avril 1959

Grande Chancellerie de la Légion d'Honneur

Monsieur,

J'ai bien reçu un extrait du Décret du 2 avril portant nomination dans l'Ordre de la Légion d'Honneur à titre posthume de ma fille Capitaine Borrel Andrée Raymonde, ainsi que de la Citation la concernant, et l'attribution de la Croix de guerre avec Palme.

C'est avec une profonde émotion que j'en ai pris connaissance et vous en remercie en son nom.

Quant à la médaille de la Résistance, l'attribution n'en à jamais été faite, je tiens à vous le faire savoir, que faut-il faire.

Je vous serais très obligée de bien vouloir me faire parvenir le Diplôme, ainsi qu'il m'est indiqué par le Bureau des Décorations.

Avec tous mes remerciements, je vous prie d'agréer, Monsieur, mes respectueuses salutations.

E. Borrel

13 rue Merle. Cannes. A.Mmes

1.c. Letter from the office for the obtaining of the Légion d'Honneur dated 5th May 1959

974
PARIS, le 5 Mai 1959

I718 PO 59

Madame,

En réponse à votre lettre du 24 Avril, j'ai l'honneur de vous faire connaître que le brevet de Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur de Melle BORREL, Andrée, Raymonde, nommée dans l'Ordre à titre posthume par décret du 2 Avril 1959, vous sera prochainement adressé.

La Médaille de la Résistance est à demander à la Chancellerie de l'Ordre de la Libération, 2 Avenue Ruysdaël, PARIS (8e). Le numéro de téléphone du Secrétariat de la Médaille de la Résistance est : CAR : 97-47.

Agréer, Madame, l'expression de mes respectueux sentiments.

Pr le Grand Chancelier

PAR ORDRE :

P/ Le Chef du 1^{er} Bureau

R²

Madame E. BORREL
13, Rue Merle
CANNES
----- (Alpes-Maritimes)

brevet
à la mère

2. Andrée Borrel's papers from the Arolsen Archives

| HTB | ZI | OI | L | MI | RE-ROUTED | |
|---|--------------------------------|-------|---------------|----------|-----------|---|
| <p>NAME : <i>BORREL, Andrée</i></p> | | | | | | <p>CASE CLASSIFICATION FOR ACTION TO:</p> |
| R E C O R D I N G | Case Recd. : | | | | | |
| | Index Card : <i>13.9.47/1</i> | | | | | |
| | State. IN : <i>16/10/47/1</i> | | | | | |
| | State. OUT : | | | | | |
| | Case Closed : <i>13.9.47/1</i> | | | | | |
| M A P L O C | LOCATION | KREIS | POLEO TEAM | TR. OFF. | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| E C H E C C O R R E D E D | TYPE | DATE | NOTICE | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| A C T I O N T A K E N | CORRESPONDENCE | DATE | RES. | FIELD | DATE | RES. |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| M A S S T R. | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| OBSERVATIONS : | | | | | | |
| <p style="text-align: center;"><i>13.9.47/1</i></p> | | | | | | |
| DEADLINE DATE | | | | | | |

1000
7665
P/M

1476

SECRET

1032 S

CENTRAL TRACING BUREAU
USMIA

APO 757. U.S. Army.

No 94575

FILE : 584 -(94575) T/P(S) 24 June 1946

SUBJECT: REPORT CONCERNING DISPLACED PERSONS,
TO : District Office, USMIA District Headquarters, STUTTGART,
(Attn: Chief Tracing Office)

| 1. NAME | BOURREL | Birth date | Birth place | Nationality |
|-------------------------------|---------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| (surname) | Andree | | | French |
| (Christian name) | | | | |
| Others in family enquired for | | | | |

2. LAST KNOWN ADDRESS ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ Thought to be in
KARLSRUHE in July 1944. Was secret agent.
Cap.Ref.

3. REQUEST Case being broadcast here. (5533 4346)
Please confirm that she was in Karlsruhe. Any information as to her later movements would be appreciated.

4. NAME and ADDRESS of REQUYER The French Red Cross.

5. FILE NO. FILED REPORT TO THIS OFFICE

J.A. BOURING
Colonel
Director, Central Tracing Bureau

REPORT

ENQUIRY REC'D 1.12.45 FOR'D for ACTION by this office
(note)

FOLLOWING REPORT REC'D FROM: Major Knoll L.O. 12/9/46

Person(s) enquired about are living at: Mr. Andree BOURREL couldn't be found
Health and welfare condition in all the official rolls of the German

Registration Status authorities concerned. In Karlsruhe we found only

Other information a Mr. Louis BOURREL, born 18/4/1900 at DIJON. He lived
there from 29/8/44 till April 1945. He was working with firm S... Karlsruhe. In the beginning of
NOT LOCATED information been a search for living: April 1945

he left KARLSRUHE and went to STUTTGART/Hohentzollern
(French Zone) but he is unknown there. - He announced
over Radio Stuttgart on 5/7 and 12/9/45 without
The result of the enquiry: on the back

(Signed) [Signature]
Tracing Officer

The inquiry in this case gave the following result:

Mr. Andreo Berrel couldn't be found in all the official rolls of the German Authorities concerned.

In Karlsruhe stayed only Mr. Louis Berrel born the 18th 7.1900 at Dijon. He stayed here since the 29.8.1944 till the beginning of April 1945. He was busy by the firm Seneca. In the beginning of April 1945 He left Karlsruhe and went to Singen/Hebentwiel.

14.7. Singen beim Kellereitmeister

R 54 277

R 67 119

3. List of the monuments in France mentioning the names of the women of the F section

| Name of the monument | Type of monument | Place | Names written | Link of the notice of the monument from the website <i>MemorialGenWeb</i> |
|---|----------------------------|---------------------------|--|---|
| Mémorial SOE | Memorial | Valençay (36) | Beekman Yolande Elsa Maria; Bloch Denise Madeleine; Borrel Andrée Raymonde; Byck Muriel Tamara; Damerment Madeleine Louise Zoé; Inayat Khan Noor; Lefort Cecily; Leigh Vera Eugénie; Plewman Eliane; Rolfe Lilian Vera; Rowden Diana Hope; Rudellat Yvonne Claire; Szabo Violette Reine Elizabeth | https://www.memorialgenweb.org/memorial3/html/fr/resultcommune.php?idsource=991266&dpt=36 |
| Plaque commémorative | Plaque | Omissy (02) | Beekman Yolande Elsa Maria | https://www.memorialgenweb.org/memorial3/html/fr/resultcommune.php?idsource=57703&dpt=02 |
| Plaque commémorative des femmes du SOE | Plaque | Netzweiler (67) | Borrel Andrée Raymonde ; Leigh Vera Eugénie ; Olschanezky Sonia ; Rowden Diana Hope | https://www.memorialgenweb.org/memorial3/html/fr/resultcommune.php?idsource=53073&dpt=67 |
| Victimes civiles et déportés 1939-1945 | Livre d'or, list, archives | Paris (75) | Borrel Andrée Raymonde | https://www.memorialgenweb.org/memorial3/html/fr/resultcommune.php?act=view&insee=75109&pays=France&dpt=75&idsource=119058&table=bp&lettre=&fusxx=0&debut=1000 |
| Monument aux morts | Monument | Romorantin-Lanthenay (41) | Byck Muriel Tamara; Rudellat Mme Yvonne | https://www.memorialgenweb.org/memorial3/html/fr/resultcommune.php?idsource=5816&dpt=41 |
| Cimetière militaire | Cemetery | Pornic (44) | Byck Muriel Tamara | https://www.memorialgenweb.org/memorial3/html/fr/resultcommune.php?act=view&insee=44131&pays=France&dpt=44&idsource=993869&table=bp&lettre=&fusxx=0&debut=200 |
| Plaque commémorative 1939/1945 du lycée Français Charles de Gaulles | Plaque | Londres, England | Byck Muriel Tamara | https://www.memorialgenweb.org/memorial3/html/fr/resultcommune.php?idsource=115581&dpt=9132 |
| Monument aux morts | Monument | Marquette-lez-Lille (59) | Damerment Madeleine Louise Zoé | https://www.memorialgenweb.org/memorial3/html/fr/resultcommune.php?idsource=82180&dpt=59 |

| | | | | |
|---|------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Plaque commémorative des victimes de la déportation | Plaque | Marquette-lez-Lille (59) | Damerment Madeleine Louise Zoé | https://www.memorialgenweb.org/memorial3/html/fr/resultcommune.php?idsource=154087&dpt=59 |
| Plaque commémorative Noor Inayat Khan | Plaque | Thierval-Grignon (78) | Noor Inayat Khan | https://www.memorialgenweb.org/memorial3/html/fr/resultcommune.php?idsource=12184&dpt=78 |
| Carré militaire – 40 ^e division du cimetière parisien de Bagneux | Military section | Bagneux (92) | Lavigne Madeleine | memorialgenweb.org/memorial3/html/fr/resultcommune.php?act=view&insee=92007&pays=France&dpt=92&idsource=59863&table=bp&lettre=&fusxx=0&debut=600 |
| Plaque commémorative de la mairie | Plaque | Paris (75) | Lefort Cecily | https://www.memorialgenweb.org/memorial3/html/fr/resultcommune.php?act=view&insee=75107&pays=France&dpt=75&idsource=19832&table=bp&lettre=&fusxx=0&debut=800 |
| Plaque de rue | Plaque | Noyelles-sur-Mer (80) | Szabo Violette Reine Elizabeth | https://www.memorialgenweb.org/memorial3/html/fr/resultcommune.php?idsource=48898&dpt=80 |
| Stèle commémorative | Plaque | Pont-Remy (80) | Szabo Violette Reine Elizabeth | https://www.memorialgenweb.org/memorial3/html/fr/resultcommune.php?idsource=48899&dpt=80 |
| Stèle commémorative Violette Szabo | Memorial stele | Sussac (87) | Szabo Violette Reine Elizabeth | https://www.memorialgenweb.org/memorial3/html/fr/resultcommune.php?idsource=52340&dpt=87 |

4. List of the monuments in the United Kingdom mentioning the names of the women of the F section

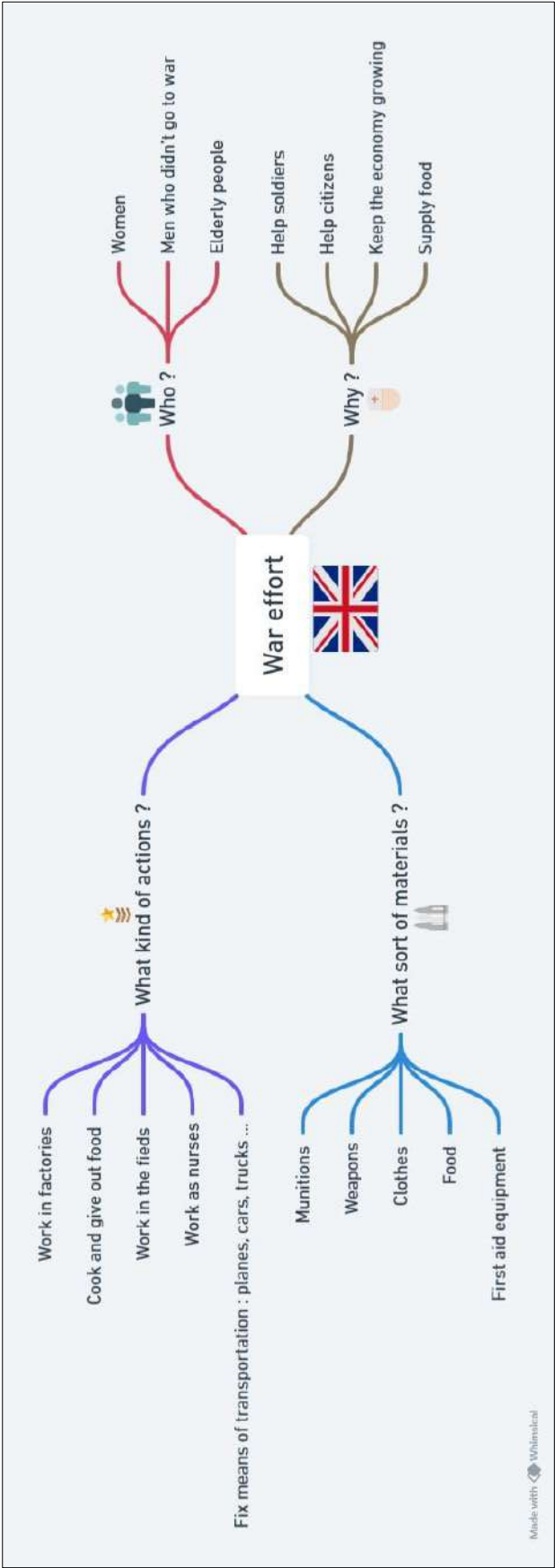
| Name of the monument | Type of monument | Place | Names written | Link of the notice of the monument from the website <i>Imperial War Museums</i> or <i>FindaGrave</i> |
|---|------------------|----------------------------------|---|---|
| Women's Transport Service First Aid Nursing Yeomanry S.O.E. | Plaque | Malton, North Yorkshire, England | Beekman Yolande; Bloch Denise; Borrel Andrée; Byck Muriel; Damerment Madeleine; Inayat Khan Noor; Lefort Cecily; Leigh Vera; Plewman Eliane; Rolfe Lilian; Rowden Diana; Rudellat Yvonne; Szabo Violette | https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/47242 |
| SOE Memorial Tablet | Plaque | Beaulieu, England | | https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/21354 |
| Arisaig House Special Operations Executive | Plaque | Arisaig, Scotland | | https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/53964 |
| Moreton and Batsford | Monument | Moreton in Marsh, England | Rowden Diana Hope | https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/21020 |
| Special Operations Executive Agents, Violette Szabo | Monument | London, England | Violette Szabo | https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/57804 |
| Violette Szabo | Plaque | Brixton, England | Violette Szabo | https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/100124 |
| Noor Inayat Khan GC MBE Croix de Guerre | Monument | Bloomsbury, England | Noor Inayat Khan | https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/63815 |
| Violette Szabo and Etienne Szabo | Plaque | Everton, Sandy, England | Szabo Violette | https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/92478 |
| V Szabo | Mural | Stockwell, England | Violet Szabo | https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/82024 |
| Women of Special Operations Executive | Colonne | Tempsford, England | Francine Agazarian ; Julienne Aisner ; Lise de Baissac ; Yvonne Baseden ; Yolande Beekman ; Denise Bloch ; Andrée Borrel ; Sonia Butt ; Muriel Byck ; Blanche Charlet ; Marie-Thérèse le Chêne ; Yvonne Cormeau ; Madeleine Damerment ; Yvonne Fontaine ; Giliana Gerson ; Krystyna Skarbek-Granville (Christine Granville) ; Virginia Hall ; Mary Herbert ; Ginette Jullian ; Noor Inayat Khan ; Marguerite Knight ; Madeleine Lavigne ; Phyllis Latour ; Cécile Lefort ; Vera Leigh ; Eileen Nearne ; Jacqueline Nearne ; Patricia O'Sullivan ; Eliane Plewman ; Elizabeth Reynolds | https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/65255 |

| | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|--|---|
| | | | (Elizabeth Devereux-Rochester) ; Lilian Rolfe ; Diana Rowden ; Yvonne Rudellat ; Odette Sansom ; Violette Szabo ; Nancy Wake ; Anne-Marie Walters ; Odette Wilen | |
| C Granville | Plaque | Kensal Green, England | Christine Granville (Krystyna Skarbek) | https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/65568 |
| Special Operations Executive | Plaque | Westminster, England | | https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/11612 |
| F Section Seat Special Operations Executive | Bench | Alrewas, England | Yolande Beekman ; Denise Bloch ; Andrée Borrel ; Madeleine Damerment ; Cecily Lefort ; Vera Leigh ; Noor Inayat Khan ; Lilian Rolfe ; Sonia Olschanezky ; Eliane Plewman ; Violette Szabo ; Diana Rowden ; Muriel Byck ; Yvonne Rudellat | https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/77360 |
| V Szabo and Stockwell Residents – Mural | Mural | Lambeth, England | Violette Szabo | https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/47897 |
| The comrades of the Great War Limpsfield and District WW1 and WW2 | Plaque | Limpsfield, England | Rowden Diana | https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/56126 |
| D H Rowden | Plaque | Tilford, England | Diana Hope Rowden | https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/23696 |
| O Sansom GC | “memorial homes” | Morden, England | Odette Sansom | https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/85958 |
| D Day Landings and V Szabo GC | Plaque | Wormelow, England | Violette Szabo | https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/33068 |
| V Szabo GC | Plaque | Wormelow, England | Violette Szabo | https://www.iwm.org.uk/memorials/item/memorial/33067 |
| 1939-1945 memorial | Monument | Brookwood Memorial, Surrey, England | Bloch Denise; Borrel Andrée; Damerment Madeleine; Leigh Vera; Eliane Plewman ; Rudellat Yvonne; Szabo Violette | https://fr.findagrave.com/cemetery/2261488/brookwood-1939-1945-memorial |
| FANY Memorial | Plaque | Saint Paul’s Cathedral, London, England | Yolande Beekman ; Denise Bloch ; Andrée Borrel ; Muriel Byck ; Madeleine Damerment ; Noor Inayat Khan ; Cecily Lefort ; Vera Leigh ; Eliane Plewman ; Lilian Rolfe ; Diana Rowden ; Yvonne Rudellat ; Violette Szabo | https://lookup.london/fany-memorial-st-pauls-knightsbridge/ |
| 1943-1944 SOE Wheelwright | Plaque | Losse, Landes, France | Yvonne Cormeau ; Anne-Marie Walters ; Yvonne Baseden | https://www.aerosteles.net/s/telefr-losse-wheelwright |
| Runnymede Memorial | Monument with plaques | Englefield Green, Surrey, England | Yolande Beekman ; Cecily Lefort ; Lilian Rolfe ; Diana Rowden | https://fr.findagrave.com/cemetery/2139034/runnymede-memorial |

5.Fiche de travail pour la compréhension orale de la vidéo sur l'armée britannique pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale

| | |
|---|--|
| <p><i>Listening comprehension: the British Army during the Second World War</i> <i>Take notes about what you hear and understand in the video</i></p> | |
| <p><i>First viewing</i></p> | |
| <p><i>Second viewing</i></p> | |
| <p><i>Third viewing</i></p> | |

6. Exemple de carte mentale sur le thème de l'effort de guerre



7.Fiche de travail sur le Special Operations Executive

World War II: The SOE



Look on these websites and search for information to answer the questions below:

Websites:

- **National Army Museum:** <https://www.nam.ac.uk/explore/SOE>
- **National Geographic :** <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/history/article/ministry-ungentlemanly-warfare-spies-true-story>

- 1) Find the meaning of SOE:
- 2) Find the date of the creation of the SOE:
- 3) Find the name of the person who created the SOE:
- 4) What were the goals and missions of the SOE:
.....
- 5) Find the works inside of the SOE “devoted” to women:
.....
- 6) What was the life expectancy of agents who were parachuted into France:
.....
- 7) The SOE created special weapons that didn’t look like weapons. Find two examples of these special weapons:
- 8) Find the nickname of the SOE:
- 9) When did the SOE end and why:.....
.....

8.Fiche de travail pour la compréhension orale sur l'interview d'Yvonne Cormeau



Listening comprehension: Yvonne Cormeau's interview
Take notes about what you hear and understand in the audio

| First listening | Second listening | Third listening |
|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|
| | | |

Find her abilities and her qualities to enter the SDE:

- 1 _____
- 2 _____
- 3 _____

9.Fiche de travail pour la compréhension orale sur la vie de Noor Inayat Khan

World War II: Noor Inayat Khan



Watch the video and answer the questions or complete them by making full sentences:

- 1) Find the date and place of birth of Noor Inayat Khan:
.....
- 2) Find the nationalities of her parents:
.....
- 3) Was she for or against war and violence:
.....
- 4) Name the organisation she enlisted in when she arrived in England:
.....
- 5) Find the reasons why the SOE approached her:
.....
- 6) In France, after all the other people in her Résistance network were arrested, she did the work of
.....
- 7) Name things she did in France while working for the SOE (4 answers possible):
.....
- 8) Find the reason why she was arrested:
.....
- 9) She was arrested and questioned, but she Then, she was sent
to concentration camp where she was
- 10) Before she died, it is said that she shouted a word in French, which one:
.....

Special Operations Executive

Agents

Location :

Lambeth Palace Road, London,
England



Date :

October 4, 2009

Names on the monument :

Violette Szabo



Women of Special Operations Executive

Location :

Tempford, England



Date :

December 3, 2013



Names on the monument :

150 names total / 38 names of F section of SOE

Francine Agazarian; Julienne Aisner; Lise de Baissac; Yvonne Baseden; Yolande Beekman; Denise Bloch; Andrée Borrel; Sonya Butt; Muriel Byck; Blanche Charlet; Marie-thérèse le Chêne; Yvonne Cormeau; Madeleine Damerment; Yvonne Fontaine; Giliana Gerson; Krystyna Skarbek-Granville (Christine Granville); Virginia Hall; Mary Herbert; Ginette Jullian; Noor Inayat Khan; Marguerite Knight; Madeleine Lavigne; Phyllis Latour; Cécile Lefort; Vera Leigh; Eileen Nearne; Jacqueline Nearne; Patricia O'Sullivan; Eliane Plewman; Elizabeth Rochester (Reynolds); Lilian Rolfe; Diana Rowden; Yvonne Rudellat; Odette Sansom; Violette Szabo; Nancy Wake; Anne-Marie Walters; Odette Wilen;

Mémorial SOE

Location :

Valençay, France



Date :

May 6, 1991



Names on the monument :

104 names total

13 names of women of F section SOE

Yolande Beekman, Denise Bloch, Andrée Borrel,
Muriel Byck, Madeleine Damerment, Noor Inayat Khan,
Cecily Lefort, Eliane Plewman, Lilian Rolfe, Diana
Rowden, Yvonne Rudellat, Violette Szabo

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Résumé :

Pendant la Seconde Guerre Mondiale, la France pouvait compter sur l'aide de la Résistance et autres services secrets pour libérer le pays de l'occupation nazie. Parmi ces organisations secrètes figurait le SOE (Special Operations Executive) qui œuvra avec les services secrets britanniques pour libérer la France. Beaucoup d'agents furent envoyés en France. Parmi eux, quarante femmes, au courage et aux capacités extraordinaires qui aidèrent les résistants. Mais comment, pendant cette période de conflit, purent-elles s'émanciper et montrer l'importance de la présence des femmes pendant des périodes de guerre ?

Summary :

During the Second World War, France could rely on the help of the Résistance and other secret services to free the country under Nazi occupation. Among these secret services was the SOE (Special Operations Services) which worked with the British secret services to free France. Many agents were sent to France. Among these agents, forty women, whose courage and extraordinary capacities helped the résistants. But how, during this period of conflict, could they emancipate and show the importance of women during times of war?

Mots clés :

Seconde Guerre Mondiale / France / Angleterre / Services secrets / Special Operations Executive / SOE / Emancipation des femmes / Devoir de mémoire

Key words :

Second World War / France / England / Secret services / Special Operations Executive / SOE / Women's emancipation / Duty of remembrance