



The White Rose of Stalingrad
 Bill Yenne
 Osprey Publishing,
 2013, 319p, £20.00
 ISBN 9781849088107.

The title of this extraordinary book does not fully convey the full breadth of what this book reveals and explores.

It does fully recount the air-force career of an extremely brave and exceptional fighter pilot, especially unusual because of her gender. She disappeared in combat over the Ukraine at the age of twenty-one, having been credited with at least twelve 'hits' and having been involved in the desperate Russian campaign to stem the Nazi advance towards, and beyond, Stalingrad. Her prominence arises in part from the recruitment of three all-women airforce regiments which then

enabled women fliers to demonstrate their prowess, although some of Lidiya Litvyak's greatest achievements were recorded serving as 'wing' support in regular Russian airforce squadrons. Her title was earned from her tendency to decorate her cockpit with wildflowers and to paint a white lily on the fuselage – not quite the 'white rose' of her title!

However, Bill Yenne offers us very much more than the detail of a Lidiya's flying career. In setting the scene for her career, he introduces us to the internal political, social and economic situation of Russia under Lenin and, more particularly, under Stalin. He provides a very critical commentary of the economic strategies of the two Russian leaders, with his most severe observations being reserved for Stalin and the fact that his heroic Five Year Plan strategy clearly was significantly less successful than how the propaganda depicted it. He then explains how this lack of success was inter-related to Stalin's paranoia which led to a huge programme of purges in the late 1930s,

with Stalin's suspicions encompassing vast numbers of loyal party members.

What is so remarkable, however, is that someone like Lidiya Litvyak could lose her father in the later stages of these purges and yet remain loyal to Stalin and Russia. Bill Yenne explains this in the wider context that many Russians traditionally had expected Russia to have a 'father' figure, and such a person was to be held in absolute awe, along with another belief in the 'Mother Russia' [or Godina]. Despite her family's distress at what had happened to her father, Lidiya shared this traditional over-riding belief, in effect, in the absolute importance of these 'father' and 'mother' figures for Russia, in other words her innate nationalism, which enabled her to separate her personal distress from her determination to serve Russia. In providing this analysis Bill Yenne has helped me to understand better how Russian nationalism survived Stalin's excesses.

Trevor James



No Job for a Little Girl: Voices from Domestic Service
 Rosemary Scadden
 Gomer Press, 2013, 179p,
 £9.99 paperback.
 ISBN 9781848517004.

This is an important social commentary on the mass migration of young women, frequently in their early teens, from Wales to various parts of England where they became part of a massive force of household domestic servants. This phenomenon was at its peak between the two World Wars, although it

was in decline by the late 1930s when mass-production factory work became available to young women for the first time and, of course, some of this mass-production work was in the area of manufacturing labour-saving devices, which were beginning to negate the need for residential domestic help.

Rosemary Scadden has very sensitively explored the lives of these young women who were wrenched from their lives within the Welsh community, with interviews which reveal the nature of their experiences and their emotions as they experienced what was deemed to be a necessary employment option, and she offers a commentary on the economic situation which enabled the demand for domestic servants to be satisfied. Not

everyone found this experience damaging and some found it empowering but many lived their later lives with this experience as a private shadow at the back of their minds.

For many of us this book will strike a chord because it will have been a shared experience. Within my own family, both my grandmothers were sent into domestic service at the age of thirteen before the Great War and we saw the outcome of that experience in their lives, with one being very introspective and the other having a rootlessness, which was probably a result of being sent from her remote Suffolk village into domestic service in London.

Trevor James



Whitaker's Britain
 Bloomsbury, 2013, 186p,
 £9.99 hardback, ISBN
 9781472903051.

Whitaker's Britain is a selection of edited highlights from the one hundred and forty five editions of *Whitaker's Almanac*, since it was launched by Joseph Whitaker in 1868.

Each extract is accompanied by helpful commentary.

A local or contemporary historian could, however, use this book as an aide mémoire to enable him or her to match regional, national and international events with their study of their own chosen locality. In the section entitled 'Remarkable Occurrences', for example, on 4 January 1868, the 1869 edition reported that an earthquake was felt in the Vale of Parret and other parts of Somerset; and the 1909 edition recorded that on 13 May 1908 a heavy thunderstorm raged over Lincolnshire, with one of the pinnacles of

Boston's Parish Church, the 'Boston Stump', being displaced by lightning. The 'Weather' section provides, amongst others, details of the Lynmouth flooding disaster of August 1953 and the devastating East Coast floods of 1 February 1953. Such information may have wider implications or applications.

The extracts quoted are sufficient to reveal that local and contemporary readers could indeed consider using the annual editions of *Whitaker's Almanac* as a resource to help them introduce a wider context to their research.

Trevor James

editorial

This is a more extensive issue of *The Historian* than usual because we have tried to balance our attempt to provide a strong dominant theme looking at various aspects of women's history with still keeping our more regular features. Through the columns of *The Historian* we do try to inform our wide readership about new and different themes that emerge in historical research.

Sarah Richardson's article is a particular case in point and her research has also attracted recent attention from the news media. Her painstaking research in local sources has identified a pattern of women's involvement in local government and leadership, long before the first formal grant of the franchise in local government, thereby giving us an entirely new perspective. Local historians, and those who use local sources, will readily identify with this approach and may well attribute it to the leadership of W. G. Hoskins but, in reality, this form of methodical correlation of dispersed and seemingly unrelated sources can easily be traced back to the early days when the Historical Association was created, with the work of F. W. Maitland and J. H. Round.

This specific piece of research has had a personal resonance for me. In 1968-69 when I was researching for my thesis on the 'Inns of Croydon 1640-1830' [*Surrey Archaeological Collections*, LXVIII, 1971] I did note the presence of several women amongst those being granted liquor licences at the Surrey Justices of the Peace Brewsters' Sessions. It became obvious to me that these were widows who were being permitted to take over the licence on the death of a husband because, after several years, a son would replace them as the licensee, presumably having reached the age of majority. At the time I noticed this pattern but, in a sense I dismissed it as a sign of the inherent gender hierarchy that prevailed and certainly I was not tempted to explore the issue further into other towns or counties. Forty years on I now recognise that this could be interpreted quite differently. Yes, there was a gender-bias to the holding of licences but the magistrates had, in reality, recognised by the granting of these licences, albeit for short periods of time, that there was no fundamental objection to women holding liquor licences, rather that it was just a matter of custom and practice. This is very much the message of Sarah Richardson's research. We need to continue to ask what other evidence is waiting for us to extend our perspective and awareness.

From the above observations you can sense that I enjoy the contents of *The Historian* as a way of helping me to have new historical perspectives. The Editorial Panel hopes that you share its determination to provide a full and expansive diet of articles which will help you to enjoy your History as well. We do thank all our contributors for sharing their research and ideas with us; and we hope that members will continue to offer us their expertise as we look to the future success of this journal.

We are also planning ahead, with some of our preparations stretching until 2019! Our next edition is being guest-edited by Alf Wilkinson and this will be focussed on Britain in 1914 as the Great War dramatically appeared on the horizon. From the summer of 2014 until the beginning of 2019 we will be including a series of items, of varying lengths, as part of our attempt to commemorate the Great War. These will be unconventional in their approach because they will not themselves especially deal with the straightforward conduct of the War itself but will deal with the unusual and the unexpected, such as the award of the Victoria Cross to a Staffordshire pacifist and the death of the Mayoress of Walsall following a Zepellin raid. In the midst of all this we will also celebrate the anniversaries of Magna Carta, Waterloo and Agincourt with special editions. This is proof that a great deal of thought is being applied to ensure that *The Historian* is fit for future purpose.

Please do take the opportunity of our next Annual Conference in Stratford-upon-Avon [16-17 May 2014] to speak to me or any member of the Editorial Panel about your response to what we do for you through the columns of *The Historian*.

Trevor James

Contact us c/o The Historical Association's office at:
 59a Kennington Park Road, London SE11 4JH or by fax on 020 7582 4989 or, best of all, email us at: thehistorian@history.org.uk

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