

# Books by local authors

## **Clavering at War – an Essex village 1939-1945**

by Jacqueline Cooper

*Clavering at War* recounts the experiences of the people of a village in north-west Essex during the Second World War. Colourful strands – taken from recorded memories, local newspaper stories, parish magazine articles, diaries and other documentary material – are woven into the inspirational writings of the village's wartime vicar.

“This unusual combination brings the Home Front to life, with written and oral sources on events side by side with observations by the man who gave moral leadership to the village at the time. More than 100 men and women from Clavering served with the King's Forces, and many of their experiences, so very different from their earlier lives, are also included.”

So runs the 'blurb' on the back of this book, and it is a correct description. I began by dipping into it but soon found myself engrossed. It has to be said that reproduction of the photographs and cuttings is variable, but no doubt this is due to the quality of the originals.

I would suggest that the book is of much wider interest than the merely local – the atmosphere it evokes and the experiences it records must have been nearly replicated in villages throughout the country. And if you lived in Newport at that time, you may even remember some of the events described.

This would be an excellent Christmas present for anyone, anywhere and of any age, who has an interest in the England of 70 years ago. Price £10.

Review by Angela Archer

## **The Spy Who Loved**

by Clare Mulley of Saffron Walden (see page 22)

This is a factual book about the life of the female, Polish born British secret agent known as Christine Granville, (one of her many pseudonyms) who 'loved' her way in order to achieve outstanding results for the British during the war. The involvement of the Poles in the Second World War is of particular interest to me and should receive greater recognition, this book should help to do this.

Christine (born Krystyna Skarbek) was of aristocratic descent, she regularly helped many to escape from Poland during the early months of German occupation with the help of her husband,

Jerzy Gizycki (alias George Norton) and her lover Andrzej Kowerskij (alias Andrew Kennedy). Later, Gizycki, who was a diplomat, took up a post abroad but Kennedy and Granville (known to the British Special Operations Executive as 'Forcible' and 'Willing' respectively, served British Intelligence extremely well for the remainder of the war. Christine was awarded the George Medal for her services, one of Britain's highest bravery awards, an OBE and a French Croix de Guerre. Peacetime never suited her and she was only able to obtain work as a stewardess on board a passenger ship. Tragically, and despite the dangers she had lived through, she met her death suddenly and violently when she was murdered in the nineteen fifties by someone we would now call a stalker.

This book sub-titled 'The Secrets and Lives of Christine Granville, Britain's First Female Special Agent of World War Two', is an excellent read, especially for anyone interested in the subject and indeed, for anyone who wants a biographical book about someone whose exploits are astounding, almost to the point of being unbelievable at times. I assure you, however, they are not unbelievable but totally factual. Winston Churchill once said, 'In the high ranges of Secrets Service work the actual facts in many cases were in every respect equal to the most fantastic inventions of romance and melodrama.' The reader will not be surprised to learn therefore, that Christine was reputed to have been called Churchill's favourite spy.

This is Clare Mulley's second book. Her first 'The Woman Who Saved the Children: A Biography of Eglantine Jebb' published in 2009, tells the story of the woman who founded the Save the Children Fund. It won the Daily Mail Biographers' Club prize.

Review by Jeff Bines

## **Flare, an Australian Adventure Story**

by Mike Williamson of Newport

We have all, no doubt, been into Costcutter during a power cut and found the staff unable to serve us because the tills no longer worked. These tills, linked to a central hub, not only accounted for the sale but also automatically ordered stock to replace that which had just been sold. A marvel of technology in our High Street?

Mike Williamson takes this problem

to a higher level in his book 'Flare'. It is the story of a massive solar flare (from which he gets the title) sending out a pulse of electro-magnetic energy that caused all computer controlled electrical circuits to fail, from aircraft control systems and astronomical telescopes to similar computer chip systems on cars and indeed local shop tills. In this story computers and telephones were useful only for gathering dust. This is a tale to get you thinking about what would happen and how you would cope if a similar thing happened sometime in the future.

Williamson looks at the problem in considerable accurate technical depth (this is not surprising as he spent a great deal of his working life in the aerospace industry) whilst, at the same time, keeping the story interesting to the non-technical reader. The story starts in a small Australian town, and explores the way in which the townspeople managed to make contact with the outside world. One by horseback, others by using old cars that were fitted with more simple electrical circuits. Later an obsolete bi-plane was put into service and yachts were observed as another form of transport. With no telephone, television or radio no-one knew whether the problem was local or worldwide. The risk of anarchy breaking out was another problem to be faced by the police and military. Williamson describes all details in a well thought out and intelligent way making this both an interesting and easy to follow story. I won't spoil this very good read by revealing the end. I will only say that recently I suffered a similar situation when the immobiliser on my car decided not to recognise the signal from the key fob transmitter. I almost had a car that was in otherwise perfect working order but one that was useless because it wouldn't start! I have no idea what cause there was a solar flare.....?

Mike Williamson is the nom de plume of Mike Allen of 96 Frambury Lane. He is a retired aeronautical engineer who is now a prolific author. This year, besides 'Flare' he has written two other paper backs, 'The Genesis Bug' and 'The Centauri Scrolls'. All three can be obtained from Amazon at £6.34, £5.95 and £6.93 respectively and on Kindle at £2.33, £2.99 and £4.66 each

Review by Jeff Bines