

Authors version accepted by the *Accounting Historians Journal*.

Authors: Ian Piper, Karen McBride and Alan Tait.

**John Franklyn Venner FCA: An Orthodox Chartered Accountant working in an Unorthodox Organisation.**

**ABSTRACT:** John Franklyn Venner was a chartered accountant and Senior Partner in an eminent City of London firm of accountants. However, between 1940 and 1945 Venner worked at the heart of the unorthodox and top-secret Special Operations Executive (SOE), which was set up to facilitate clandestine warfare. Venner used the accounting orthodoxy of financial controls, the recording of transactions, and regular financial reporting, to build a strong bond of trust and confidence with the Treasury and Bank of England. This provided space for Venner to develop unorthodox financing schemes, including black market foreign currency transactions, which generated millions of pounds of currency and made a major contribution to the war effort. Venner died in 1955, aged 52. This biographical microhistory, using archival sources, brings his story out of the shadows and demonstrates how an eminent chartered accountant navigated the unorthodox world of the SOE during the Second World War.

**Keywords:** accounting history; biography; accounting orthodoxy; Special Operations Executive.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to shed light on the contribution made by chartered accountant John Franklyn Venner FCA, Director of Finance and Administration for the Special Operations Executive (SOE) from 1940 to 1945, to the SOE's financial warfare during the Second World War. The SOE was set up in July 1940 to facilitate unorthodox and clandestine warfare in countries recently occupied by Nazi Germany. While much has been written about the exploits of the SOE and some of its senior staff (Lett 2016, Wharton-Tigar and Wilson 1987, Beevor 1981, Sweet-Escott 1965), very little has been published about John Venner, and this new

biographical microhistory (Carnegie and McBride 2023) aims to correct this historical omission. This is not, however, a Thomas Carlyle inspired “great man history,” telling the story of one of the heroes who shaped the arc of history (Spector 2016). Instead it offers an accounting “voice from below,” (Carnegie 2019, 530) of an orthodox chartered accountant operating in an extraordinary and unorthodox environment. Biographical studies of accountants, using information obtained from archival sources, are popular in the accounting history literature (Lee 2008, Samkin 2010, Carnegie and Williams 2001, Bloom 2021, Walker 2021, Edwards, 2022). Williams (1999, 61) states that “microhistories have a place in accounting history because they expand our understanding of the impact of accounting in practice” and Black (2019, 87) reflects that biographical research “can profile an influential person, describe their actions and impacts, and help to explain the context of their contributions.” Within the accounting history literature there exists a, “small sub realm focused on the nexus between accounting and war” (Cobbin and Burrows 2018, 487). Relevant literature from this sub realm includes Cobbin (2009), who explored the contribution made by a group of chartered accountants in Australia to improving financial efficiency in the army during the Second World War and Walker (2017), who demonstrated how professional accountants became suppliers of essential brainpower in support of the war effort. Venner’s overlooked story is interesting for the following reasons.

First, Venner was an eminent chartered accountant, a Senior Partner at Edward Moore and Sons in the City of London, and, according to City solicitor and fellow SOE recruit Jack Beevor, a man with, “a high level of personal integrity” (Imperial War Museum 1986). His family nickname was “Honest John” (Venner 2020), yet for five years Venner found himself at the heart of an organisation that had been deliberately set up to be unorthodox, clandestine and in the eyes of more traditional armed forces “ungentlemanly” (Milton 2017). This study identifies that Venner was recruited at a crucial time for the SOE and that he was recruited specifically

for his orthodox accounting skills, professional integrity, and business knowledge, in order to establish trust and credibility with the Treasury and the Bank of England. The paper will show how Venner used his accounting orthodoxy to develop strong and pragmatic financial controls and maintained his and the organisations' integrity by producing monthly receipts and payments accounts for all SOE's activities. The information contained in these accounts, enables this study to reveal, for the first time, the amount SOE spent from the UK Government Secret Vote between 1940 and 1945.

Second, as a brand-new secret organisation with a radically different approach to the conduct of warfare, SOE had many enemies from within the secret service world and traditional military services. This paper demonstrates how Venner's accounting orthodoxy contributed to the survival of SOE following a review of the new organisation conducted in 1942, led in part by accusations of financial impropriety and inefficiency.

Third, due to the very unorthodox nature of SOE, Venner inevitably faced challenges to his accounting orthodoxy and professional integrity. This study demonstrates how Venner responded to these challenges by facilitating many unorthodox financing schemes for the good of the war effort. These include bribery, corruption, and the use of black markets for foreign currency transactions.

The study suggests that Venner used the orthodoxy of financial controls and financial reporting to gain the trust and confidence of the Treasury and Bank of England, which gave Venner and his team the space to undertake more unorthodox financial warfare. The paper opines that, although these unorthodox schemes would have gone against Venner's professional predispositions, he was able to make a temporary transition to unorthodoxy in order to aid the war effort. This tension between orthodoxy and unorthodoxy of role experienced by Venner is reflected in the personal characterisation of professional accountants widely discussed in the

accountant stereotype literature, with two major stereotypes being classified as the traditional accountant and business professional (Carnegie and Napier 2010) with the latter being renamed the colourful accountant by Jeacle (2008). It is suggested that Venner presented characteristics of both stereotypes in his SOE role and retained his integrity by accurately recording all transactions and the timeliness and comprehensive quality of his regular financial reporting of all transactions to the SOE Finance Committee.

## **II. SOURCES AND METHODS**

The research method employed in this paper is an in-depth interrogation of primary and secondary sources (Prevtis, Parker and Coffman 1990). The main publicly available primary sources used include the on-line UK birth, marriage and death registers, the SOE files deposited at The National Archives, the Edward Moore and Sons archives contained in the London Metropolitan Archives, Rugby School on line Archive, Imperial War Museum Oral History Archive, Commonwealth War Graves Commission on line archive, and The London Gazette on line archive. These primary sources were interrogated using a name-oriented search strategy (Hill 1993, 27) to identify relevant material which was then contextualised and interpreted in light of the objectives of this investigation. The research began with identification of genealogical information about John Venner and his family. Venner's SOE personnel file was then obtained from The National Archives, along with other SOE finance files relevant to this study. These files led to the Rugby School archive where Venner was schooled and the Edward Moore and Sons archive where he trained as a chartered accountant. Wherever possible, multiple sources were used to triangulate the data (Denzin 2012) e.g. Venner's service record information and awards were validated via his SOE file, the UK British Forces List and The London Gazette.

A limitation of archival research relates to the often incomplete and partial nature of the archival records, created by archival sedimentation (Hill 1993, 9), with the remaining “sediment” resulting directly from people defining some materials, and not others, as worth keeping. This inevitably leads to the inability to tell the complete story of an individual from these sources only. After much public criticism, SOE records were made publicly available in The National Archives in the 1990s, with most, but not all, personnel files finally released in 2002. These records though are far from complete, with one author estimating that at least 87% of the original SOE archive had been destroyed by the early 1970s (Stuart 2005). Whilst not invalidating these records this provides another reason for careful examination of the files.

Historical researchers often add to the information found in the archive by conducting interviews with surviving family members of the research focus, classified as oral history (Klein 2000). Whilst interviews add information of a more personal nature about the research topic, care must be taken to ensure the reliability and validity of this information (Hoffman 1974), especially if it is relied upon to draw conclusions, as well as recognising the potential for bias introduced by memory lapses and distortions over time (Greele 1998). The authors were able to trace James Venner, the only surviving son of John Venner, and having obtained ethical approval<sup>1</sup> conducted two telephone interviews with him, using a semi structured interview format (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson, and Kangasniemi 2016). These interviews, which contain vivid memories of James Venner’s family life from over 70 years ago, were recorded and transcribed. The fact that these recordings are not stored in a publicly accessible place, unlike the other oral history recording of Jack Beevor used in this research, does not invalidate the recordings as oral history, but provides a reason for careful use of the information provided.

---

<sup>1</sup> University of Portsmouth, approval received on July 2 2020.

Secondary sources used include, books written by colleagues of Venner at SOE HQ (Sweet-Escott 1965, Beevor 1981, Cruickshank 1986, Wharton-Tigar and Wilson 1987), as well as the Official SOE History (Mackenzie and Millar, 2000) and those written by SOE and military historian M R D Foot (1966, 1984). All of these were published before any of the SOE records were released to the public. Where possible information used from these books was cross referenced to SOE primary sources.

Whilst it is not possible to tell the complete story of John Venner from the available archival sources, it is possible to present a credible story of how he responded to the unique challenges of being the Director of Finance for the SOE.

### **III. THE SPECIAL OPERATIONS EXECUTIVE**

The SOE was established in strict secrecy in July 1940. Its role, defined in a memorandum submitted to the War Cabinet on July 19, 1940, was “to coordinate all action, by way of subversion and sabotage, against the enemy overseas.” (W.P. (40) 271, quoted in West 1993, 14-15). According to Hugh Dalton, Minister of Economic Warfare in 1940, the hope of its main sponsor, the newly appointed British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, was that SOE would “set Europe ablaze.” (Dalton 1957, 366).

SOE was charged with organising unconventional, paramilitary and irregular warfare with “no holds barred” (Gubbins 1948) from its Headquarters in Baker Street, London, under its official title of the Inter Services Research Bureau. Over time, SOE became known by a number of less flattering pseudonyms including “The Racket” (Beevor 1981), “The Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare” (Dalton 1957, Milton 2017) and the “Baker Street Irregulars” (Sweet-Escott 1965), all of which demonstrate the unorthodox nature of its work.

Unlike the existing and well-established secret services MI5 and the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS, now known as MI6), who were accountable to the Home Office and Foreign Office, SOE

was directly accountable to the new post of Minister of Economic Warfare, who in 1940 was Hugh Dalton and so through him SOE had a direct line of access to the new Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. The creation of a new secret service agency whose brief of causing mayhem was the exact opposite to that of MI5 and SIS, allied with the difference in political accountability and jealousy of the perceived financial favouritism toward SOE, was a source of great and on-going tension between the three secret services throughout the Second World War (West 1993, 2005, Foot 1984, Jeffrey 2010, Andrew 2009). “Amateurish” was SIS’s favourite jibe against SOE (Foot 1984) and this simmering tension would explode and lead to a major review of SOE’s organisation and finances in 1942.

The SOE was also structurally very different from MI5 and SIS and mirrored that of a business enterprise, with a Chief Executive, Directors for a variety of functions (finance, security, operations, training, HR, coding), and Sections based on geographic areas, each of which was run by a Section Head. The CEO, Directors and Section Heads met regularly at the SOE Council meeting (TNA HS /8 200, Mackenzie and Millar 2000).

The SOE’s first Chief Executive was Sir Frank Nelson, who had a business background in the City of London but had also served in SIS with the Z Organisation, based in Basle, Switzerland in the late 1930s. The Z Organisation was established in 1936 with a brief to collect intelligence on Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy (Fry 2021, Marnham 2020, Jeffrey 2010). The SOE recruited many of its early recruits from Legal and Accounting firms in the City of London. Given Sir Frank Nelson’s business connections with the City of London and the need to recruit in total secrecy, this is not perhaps surprising.

Initially, all funding for SOE came via the Secret Vote controlled by HM Treasury (TNA HS 8/1017, Mackenzie and Millar 2000), however as SOE grew, it developed more creative ways

of financing its global operations, including trading foreign currency in black markets (TNA HS 8/354, Cruickshank 1986, Murphy 2005), dealing with designer watches and diamonds, and liquidating frozen Chinese bank accounts in India (Wharton-Tigar and Wilson 1987). By 1943 SOE had become so successful in providing vast amounts of foreign currency by clandestine means that it was asked by the Treasury and Bank of England to provide currency for other services including the RAF, as it dramatically increased activities in preparation for D Day in June 1944. This was a significant increase that the SOE duly met (Murphy 2005, TNA HS 8/354).

The financial dealings of the SOE were deemed too sensitive to divulge in its official history published in 2000 (Mackenzie and Millar 2000). Wylie (2005, 11) concludes that the SOE's success in turning its hand to financial affairs "might illustrate a peculiar strength of the organisation, whose staff were drawn from the city, professions, and business world, who showed themselves enormously adept in overcoming challenges and responding to new needs and new opportunities as they arose."

Following the end of the war in August 1945, a decision was made to quickly shut down the SOE (TNA CAB 79/37). There followed a period of liquidation, and it is during this time that many SOE records, including it is claimed, many financial records were destroyed (Stuart 2005, Foot 1981, 1984, Mackenzie and Millar 2000)), however research in the UK National Archives has confirmed that some financial records survived and where relevant these have been be used in this paper.

The man at the centre of the SOE's web of financial transactions, clandestine, or otherwise, from 1940 to 1945 was Acting Group Captain John Franklyn Venner FCA, SOE's Director of Finance and Administration (SOE code name D/FIN). The SOE could not operate overseas without a regular supply of foreign currency for its agents and it was one of Venner's main

functions to provide this. These self-financing operations were so successful that political and military historian Professor Michael Foot (1984, 249) concluded that at the end of the Second World War, under “Venner’s wizardry, bordering on genius”, SOE was rumoured to have made an overall profit.

#### **IV. GENEALOGY**

John Franklyn Venner was born in Streatham, London on October 20, 1902 and was baptised at Christ Church, Lambeth on December 7, 1902. His parents were Sir Edwin John Venner ACA 1872-1955 and Ethel Mary Moore 1868-1925, he was the youngest of four children.

John’s father was a chartered accountant in the City of London (having qualified with Edward Moore and Sons), who would become a Freeman of the City of London, a Master of the Worshipful Company of Brewers, and was knighted in 1951 (London Gazette February 16, 1951, Venner’s Ltd Stocktakers website). His mother was one of the daughters of Edward Moore, the founder of Edward Moore and Sons Chartered Accountants, based in the City of London. Edward Moore had ten children and three of his sons became partners with him in the family business (LMA CLC/B/162/MS29837), with one, Sir Edward Cecil Moore becoming Lord Mayor of London in 1922 (Livery Committee, City of London Corporation) and President of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales in 1923 (ICAEW Past Presidents 1880-2005).

Like his father, John attended Rugby Public School, joining in January 1915, (Rugby School Register Vol 1892-1921, 427). John was placed in Hardwich House, joined the Officer Training Corps as a Private, and was promoted to Lance Corporal in 1917 (Meteor Volume 52 issue 618, 6). Venner, was therefore a pupil at Rugby School during the Great War of 1914-1918 and would have been aware of the large number of former pupils from the school who were killed on active service during his time there. The school memorials for those who died in World War One run to eight volumes and contain 682 names, all of whom were officers (Rugby

School Memorials for the Great War). A sense of service instilled in pupils at Rugby School may have been strengthened in Venner by a sense of familial debt, as two of his cousins died during the Great War. Edward Patrick Ayling Moore MC, 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Coldstream Guards died on 4/11/1918 age 19 and Major Edward Cecil Horatio Moore, who served with the 38<sup>th</sup> Bn Canadian Infantry and died at the Battle of Vimy Ridge on 9/4/1917 age 40, (CWGC website, Finding War Dead).

In 1919, John Venner successfully completed the Oxford and Cambridge Schools Examination Board School Certificate, passing English, Latin, Greek and Elementary Mathematics with Credit (Meteor Volume 53 Issue 642 ,113) and left Rugby School to become an articled clerk at the family firm of Edward Moore and Sons. In Britain, chartered accountancy has always been the premier business qualification (Matthews, Anderson and Edwards 1998). The role was unpaid, although the archival records show that Venner was paid a Christmas Bonus of £10 every year between 1920 and 1924 (LMA CLC/B/MS29382/001). Venner qualified as a chartered accountant in 1924 and earned an annual salary of £250, which had increased to £327 in 1926 (LMA CLC/B/MS29382/001). As an articled clerk, Venner would have studied a variety of subjects to pass the Final Institute examination, including advanced bookkeeping and accountancy, auditing, taxation, foreign exchanges, and company law (Murphy 1938). However, the training was designed not only to fit accountants for professional duties, but also to give them the proper ethical standards and outlook toward their work in relation to the profession and society (Murphy 1938). Venner became a partner at Edward Moore and Sons in 1926, significantly increasing his salary to £100 per month (LMA CLC /B/162/MS29382/001), and became a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales in 1936 (Rugby School Registers 1911-1946, 68).

In 1925, while recuperating from glandular fever in Egypt, John met Margaret Peech, the only daughter of the steel magnate William Henry Peech and his wife Vera Millicent. Venner

married Margaret Peech at Holy Trinity Church, Brompton, London on September 25, 1926 and set up home in Green Acres, Purley, Surrey, and had three children. Mary Camilla was born in 1927, John Bolderwood in 1930, and James Peech Franklyn in 1934. James has very happy memories of his childhood, especially when John's brother and sister came to stay. "They were all very bright people and all had a wicked sense of humour and the house roared with laughter." (Venner 2020).

Venner's professional and family lives were put on hold at the outbreak of the Second World War in September 1939. Despite being exempt from war service by professional role and age (Schedule of Reserved Occupations 1939), Venner gained a Commission in the Auxiliary Air Force on 31 May 1939 as a Pilot Officer in the accountant branch, No 910 (County of Essex) Squadron (London Gazette 30 June 1939). His SOE service file (TNA HS 9/1524/7) states that Venner was commissioned as a Pilot Officer in the Auxiliary Air Force service number 90872. Venner was promoted to acting Flying Officer in October 1939, and in July 1940 was posted to a new self-accounting unit in 953 squadron, a Barrage Balloon Squadron, (TNA AIR 27/2302) with the rank of Flight Lieutenant.

It is not known how SOE discovered Venner, but it is likely that John Venner's family upbringing, public school education, and prominent professional role in the City of London, in addition to his RAF commission, would have placed him on the SOE's radar when they were searching for a Finance Director in Autumn 1940. One possibility is that he was mentioned to SOE by Lt Col Harry Sporborg (Oxford Dictionary of National Biography), who was a Partner in City of London Law firm Slaughter and May and was, like Venner, a former pupil at Rugby School (Meteor Volume 81 issue 911, 50). Sporborg joined the Ministry of Economic Warfare early in the Second World War and soon moved to a senior role within the SOE when it first needed legal advice (Foot 1984).

John Venner was interviewed by Sir Frank Nelson on October 7, 1940 (TNA HS 9/1524/7), signed the Official Secrets Act on the same day, and commenced work with the SOE on October 10, 1940, having been promoted to the rank of Squadron Leader. A memo from Sir Frank Nelson dated 5/10/1940 to Air Vice Marshal Babington thanking him for his prompt assistance in making Venner available to SOE so quickly, states that “His services are very badly needed. He will have some prickly matters to handle involving Majors, Colonels and even Brigadiers.” In response to these challenges, Venner would in time obtain the rank of Wing Commander and finally Acting Group Captain.

John Venner was demobilised from SOE on August 7, 1945 (TNA HS 8 /1524/7) but continued to work for it in an honorary capacity until January 15, 1946, stating in his resignation letter that, “I shall always be available (unpaid of course) to advise on financial matters arising during the completion of the liquidation and to assist to such extent as you may need my long experience and knowledge of past SOE affairs.”

Venner returned to work as a Senior Partner at Edward Moore and Sons. James Venner (Venner 2020), reflected on how boring it must have been for his father to return to the routine world of audit and accountancy, having spent five years at the heart of SOE.

Venner was awarded the Companion of the Order of Saint Michael and St George (C.M.G.) in the King’s Birthday Honours list of June 14, 1945 (London Gazette 14 June 1945). In the words of another Baker Street Irregular Bickham Sweet-Escott (1965, 42), “There were very few harder earned C.M.G’s in the whole war than John Venner’s.” Venner was also awarded the King Christian X Liberty Medal by the King of Denmark in November 1946 (London Gazette 5 November 1946), the Polonia Restituta Commanders Cross from the President of the Republic of Poland in Exile in 1947 (Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum Gab/106/320) and

the Order of Leopold by The Prince Regent of Belgium in February 1948 (London Gazette 13 February 1948).

John Venner died of a heart attack on May 31, 1955, at the age of 52 and “took his secrets to the grave with him as any good senior secret servant should” (Foot 1984, 249). Major Colin Gubbins, SOE CEO from 1943-45, acknowledged the strain that Venner experienced at SOE in what he calls “the arduous years” and acknowledged that “There is no doubt whatever that those years took a heavy toll on his health, for which the price has had to be paid.” (Times Obituary, 1955).

This genealogy has identified how the orthodox approach used by Venner in SOE was influenced by his family, public-school education, and professional training and practice. The following sections of this paper will explore how Venner used this approach to navigate the unorthodox world of the SOE.

## **V. VENNER’S ACCOUNTING ORTHODOXY: FINANCIAL CONTROLS AND THE WILLIAMS/PLAYFAIR REVIEW**

The fact that the SOE was funded by the Secret Vote meant that funds allocated did not come under the same level of parliamentary scrutiny provided to normal expenditure via the Public Accounts Committee (Dewar and Funnell 2016). Most SOE payments were made in cash, which made them more susceptible to misuse. To establish Trust between SOE, the Treasury and Bank of England, it was essential for Venner to use his accounting orthodoxy to implement robust financial controls, as far as was practical, given the clandestine nature of the SOE’s work.

Evidence of the financial controls used by Venner is contained in The National Archives papers associated with the 1942 Williams/Playfair Review. The review was conducted following

serious allegations made by SIS and some of the armed forces that SOE was being wasteful with public money, using Secret Vote funds for expenditure that should be from the open vote, and was a businessmen's racket allowing civilians to receive rapid promotion in rank without corresponding military experience (TNA HS8/1016)) at a time when it did not actually achieve results in the field (Beevor 1981, Mackenzie and Millar 2000). An inquiry into the running of SOE was undertaken by business man Sir John Hanbury Williams, a Director of the Bank of England and Sir Edward Playfair from HM Treasury.

The evidence gathered for the inquiry and the final report still survive in the National Archives (HS 8/1016, HS 8/1017 and HS 8/1021). Venner produced a seven-page document on the financial controls in place for the review and was also interviewed a number of times. The document written by Venner in May 1942 and marked "MOST SECRET" (TNA HS 8/1017) provides insight into the financial controls that Venner introduced into the SOE. This document details the functions of the finance directorate, and lists the many controls on expenditure and personnel that Venner has put in place to prevent the inappropriate use of funds. This document was clearly intended to reassure the reader that the SOE's finances were under firm control with limited opportunities for misuse.

Five examples contained in this document (TNA HS /8/1017) of the financial controls put in place by Venner are provided below.

### **Obtaining and accounting for funds from The Treasury.**

The document identifies how,

"Financial sanctions (funds) are obtained from The Treasury (via Secret Funds) for general purposes expenditure by submission of monthly estimates and in the case of specific purposes and projects by separate applications which are drawn up after consultation with the Country or Section concerned and after confirmation that the director concerned approve the purpose or project for which the application is being made."

Venner's financial orthodoxy ensured that the SOE produced monthly budget estimates for regular expenditure and a suitably authorised Business Case had to be made for each specific purpose request.

The document also reveals that Venner was at the heart of the SOE's clandestine banking processes.

"Funds for cash requirements for sanctioned purposes are drawn from the Treasury through SIS monthly. The funds are banked with Drummonds Bank where there is an account under my (Venner's) direct control as "L.T. Simson." There is also an account under my control at the National Provincial Bank Ltd, Baker St in the name of the Inter Services Research Bureau, which is fed as necessary with cash withdrawn from Drummonds Bank."

The funds received via the Secret Vote were then accounted for in the monthly financial accounts as follows.

"Detailed accounts showing expenditure analysed between the various Sanctions are prepared monthly to the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month and submitted to the Treasury through SIS. The Treasury thus receives from us monthly estimates of probable expenditure and accounts showing actual expenditure."

### **Expenditure controls.**

The document (TNA HS 8/1017), states that

"The following rules apply: -

- A) No expenditure may be incurred unless it falls within a previous Treasury sanction.
- B) No money is to be paid out in England or remitted abroad without my previous sanction in writing, except to the extent that I delegate powers to my own officers.
- C) No expenditure in England chargeable to SOE can be incurred without the previous sanction in writing of myself or my delegated officer."

These rules are then elaborated on for expenditure abroad but the same principles of control and accountability applied.

### **Personnel Controls.**

Control over personnel recruitment and expenditure is then emphasised.

1. "No personnel can be engaged in England without my written approval.

2. No application to any of the services for release of personal can be made without my written approval
3. No salaries or wages can be varied without my written approval.

Salaries are, for the most part, for security reasons paid in cash monthly and so far as personnel abroad are concerned where part of their salary is payable in England cash is paid into various banks here for credit to their account. Staff taken on for service abroad paid no income tax.”

### **Purchase and expense controls.**

“The same level of authority needed to make purchases is in place and invoices are checked against original requests. Requests for expenses must be submitted on the correct form, accompanied by vouchers, initialled and counter signed.”

The document contains an appendix of the financial forms that need to be completed.

### **Foreign Currency notes.**

The document also provides a glimpse of the clandestine foreign currency transaction work undertaken by SOE.

“Foreign currency notes are required mainly for agents in occupied territories and can only be introduced by clandestine operations. Purchases are made from the Bank of England or, where they are unable to supply, on Black Markets in foreign Capitals where such currencies are known to exist. Considerable difficulties have always been and are still being experienced in finding sufficient and appropriate notes for these purposes.”

This document demonstrates the financial controls that Venner introduced to the SOE and that Venner placed himself at the centre of these controls, as well as making himself the conduit between the SOE and the Treasury. However, surviving interview notes identify concerns raised about the unintended consequences of Venner’s desire to “keep his own finger on everything.” These included leading him to overwork, becoming a bottleneck, and sometimes making himself unpopular by his “stickiness” in requiring due process to be followed. Williams reports that “Venner was applying to a growing organisation, systems that had been right when the staff was 100, and would be plainly impossible if it was at 3,000. A line must be drawn

somewhere, and the sooner the better.” Venner was then recorded as admitting, with a sigh, that this was logical.

Despite these workload concerns Venner and the financial controls he had in place clearly impressed the reviewers who concluded that, “The system of financial control is extremely thorough and tight.” (TNA HS 8/1021). The report had no suggestions for the system of financial control but drew attention to its inherent limitations, “The Director of Finance’s control reaches far, but it cannot reach all the way: he must depend on the sense of responsibility of all the officers concerned, each of whom must take by reason of the fact that they are members of a secret organisation.” This is consistent with the view of Beevor, who stated that Venner “combined an almost perfect balance between severe insistence on integrity and practical recognition of the impossibility of vouching for secret funds beyond a certain point.” Beevor (1981, 16). The official history of SOE (Mckenzie and Millar 2000, 342) concludes that “the report (Williams/Playfair Review) acquits the London HQ of SOE of all the charges of nepotism, waste, corruption, and incompetence and admits no more than the inevitable incoherence of a newly formed secret organisation.”

Venner’s financial controls were one important element of the judgement made by the reviewers that the work of SOE should continue.

## **VI. VENNER’S ACCOUNTING ORTHODOXY: SOE’S FINANCIAL REPORTING**

The UK National Archives contains a number of files relating to SOE Financial Reporting, with reference to Venner. TNA HS 8 /1024 contains the SOE Reports on Accounts and Expenditure 1940-1945, files TNA HS 8 /344- 348 contain information on sanctions and grants from 1940 to 1945, and financial information is also contained in the various SOE Section files.

There are also files relating to the various liquidations of SOE Sections post 1945 (TNA HS 8/448-449). However, some information has been redacted.

Analysis of the information contained in TNA HS 8/ 1024 provides an insight into the way Venner's monthly financial reporting evolved as SOE developed its reach and ambition and the importance of these reports to SOE's financial integrity with the Treasury and Bank of England. Reports from October 1940 to March 1941 were initially produced by Venner on a monthly basis, showing the opening cash balance, funds received via SIS for general purposes and for each of the approved sanctions, the recorded expenditure against each type of receipt, and a closing cash balance. A brief commentary on the main variances was also provided. The accounts were produced, as most UK Government accounts were at the time, on a cash basis, and Venner consistently points out the problems associated with using the Government required receipts and payments basis of accounting rather than a commercial accruals-based approach, especially concerning capital expenditure. His concerns were ignored, supporting the view expressed by Edwards (2023, 40) that Treasury resistance to the adoption of private sector type accounting practices by administrative departments, such as the cost accounting experiment in the British Army 1917-25 (Black 2001), proved a persistent and effective barrier to innovation up until the 1980s. By March 1941, the Financial Report had grown in length from two to four pages with the inclusion of month - on - month comparisons, reasons for any unusual variances, and indications of future financial requirements. Importantly, these reports acknowledge the support that Venner was receiving from the Treasury and the Foreign Exchange Official at the Bank of England in "affecting remittances of large value to all parts of the world." The report was also now being sent to the Political Head of the SOE, Hugh Dalton and discussed at the newly formed SOE Finance Committee, which comprised of SOE's CEO, Finance Director and Service Director, with minutes of the meeting being sent to Dalton, HM Treasury and the Bank of England.

From April 1941, the Financial Report produced by Venner was submitted to the Finance Committee on a quarterly basis, and this remained the practice until the end of the war. John Venner submitted his final financial report on Secret Vote Finance for the period ending September 1945 to the SOE Finance Committee on December 6, 1945.

Using the information contained in John Venner’s Financial Reports, an analysis of the SOE’s Receipts and Payments from the Secret Vote between July 1940 and September 1945 has been produced for the first time in Table 1 below.

	<b>Year ended March 1941 £000</b>	<b>Year ended March 1942 £000</b>	<b>Year ended March 1943 £000</b>	<b>Year ended March 1944 £000</b>	<b>Year ended March 1945 £000</b>	<b>April to Sept’ 1945 £000</b>	<b>Total £000</b>
<b>Opening balance</b>	6	34	344	705	1,125	1,114	6
<b>Receipts</b>	1,133	2,873	4,842	5,951	5,113	978	20,890
<b>Payments</b>	(1,105)	(2,563)	(4,481)	(5,531)	(5,124)	(1,741)	(20,545)
<b>Net</b>	28	310	361	420	(11)	(763)	351
<b>Closing Balance</b>	34	344	705	1,125	1,114	351	

**Table 1: SOE Receipts and Payments from the Secret Vote July 1940 to September 1945.**

This analysis demonstrates how SOE expenditure grew over the course of the war, reaching a peak in the year ending March 1944, the year of the D Day landings. SOE’s total expenditure from the Secret Vote to September 1945 was over £20.5 million, (£703.2 million at November 2022 prices, Bank of England Inflation Calculator). The average General Purposes Expenditure was approximately £500,000 pa with an average special purpose of £3.5 million pa. These figures validate the secondary source claims (Beevor 1981, Foot 1984 and Cruickshank 1986)

that Venner and his team were handling millions of pounds, which was likely to have been greatly in excess of the funds available to MI5 and SIS.

It is clear from the SOE financial records that Venner deployed accounting orthodoxy to ensure that accurate records of receipts and payments associated with funds from the Secret Vote were maintained and that summaries of the accounts were reported to the Political Head in the SOE's hierarchy, senior SOE staff, and the Treasury and Bank of England on a regular basis. This financial transparency facilitated trust and confidence between Venner and these important Government Departments.

## **VII. VENNER'S ACCOUNTING UNORTHODOXY: FOREIGN CURRENCY TRANSACTIONS**

It was undoubtedly the level of trust and confidence that the Treasury had in Venner that enabled him and the SOE to play a growing role in the provision of foreign currency for the UK Government. It was in this role that Venner demonstrated his creativity and unorthodox characteristics in generating vital foreign currency not just for the SOE but for the broader war effort.

The SOE needed large amounts of foreign currency in cash to finance its agents and operations. This usually required the use of currencies in small denominations to avoid attracting attention from suspicious locals, or Nazi informants when used by SOE agents in the field. Nothing gave away an agent more than trying to use a large denomination currency (Helm 2009). The main sources of SOE non-Secret Vote financing were transactions for the Bank of England Pool. The Pool had been set up in 1942 in response to the fact that the bank's foreign currency reserves were declining and, in some cases, exhausted, and that it was having real problems acquiring replacement funds (Murphy 2005, 195). There were also concerns that government

departments were competing with each other in neutral countries for currency and so the Pool was set up, with the help of Venner, to coordinate purchasing, build up reserves and ensure fair distribution between the users (HS 8/354). The Secret Vote accounts available in TNA HS 8/1024 specifically exclude currency transactions carried out by Venner for the Bank of England Pool, which were financed on a repayment basis by special drawings from the Treasury. These are recorded in TNA HS 8/351.

Murphy (2005) suggests that by 1942, Venner and SOE had established a record of accomplishment in obtaining foreign currency for itself and the UK Treasury. One way that that SOE did this was by buying foreign currency in neutral countries, such as Spain, Portugal, Sweden, and Switzerland, and then exchanging the currency on the black market for much higher rates. Wharton-Tigar and Wilson (1987) claim that large amounts of currency were often brought by friendly Spanish and Portuguese diplomats from Switzerland to Morocco in diplomatic bags for purchase by the SOE at a handsome commission for the diplomats.

In 1944, the need for foreign currency increased dramatically, as D Day drew near. This was not only to finance the growing number of SOE agents and “Secret Armies” in the field, but also to support the significant growth in air sorties over occupied countries, aimed at destroying the Luftwaffe, radar installations, and rail communications into Normandy (Allport 2020, Todman 2020). Each pilot was required to have hard currency with them when they flew, to assist in any escape attempt if they were shot down. Purses given to pilots were colour coded, red (2,000 French Francs), yellow (1,000 French Francs, 350 Belgian Francs, 20 Dutch Guilders), black (100 Norwegian Kroner, 150 Danish Kroner), and mauve (105 Danish Kroner). (TNA HS 8/130).

TNA HS 8/351 contains the records of the Treasury Special Account, in which all special currency transactions for the Bank of England Pool were recorded by Venner from January

1944 to July 1945. These accounts confirm that Lisbon, Stockholm, Tangier, Madrid, and Barcelona were the neutral bases used by Venner to purchase large quantities of local currency, which were then exchanged by SOE agents on the black market to obtain other foreign currencies, using funds provided to SOE by the Bank of England. These currencies were then allocated to user departments, namely the War Office, Air Ministry, SIS, and SOE. This scheme was revenue-neutral for the Bank of England, as some of the profits made on the currency transactions were returned to the Bank of England, repaying the funds they had initially provided.

TNA HS 8/354 shows that the SOE managed to meet the new 1944 demands. A report by Venner dated August 1, 1944, titled "Acquisition of Foreign Currency notes by Clandestine Means," states that,

"Currency notes have been mostly obtained from black markets in neutral countries which necessitates first of all the provision by clandestine means of large sums of neutral currencies in the form of cash with which to purchase the required notes of enemy occupied and other countries.

Currency notes so obtained and made available to the Bank of England include: -

- 600 million French francs
- 20 million Belgian francs
- 8 million Dutch Gulden
- 3.5 million Norwegian Kroner
- 3.5 million Danish Kroner
- 6 million Reich Marks
- 8 million Spanish Pesetas."

In addition, the above report states that "over \$16 million was brought into the UK by SOE for use by British Government Departments and allied governments, particularly Polish and Belgian."

The report concludes that

"If it had not been for the SOE "machine" represented by its London HQ and posts abroad these notes which are urgently wanted from day to day for many forms of operations and high priority requirements of aircrew could never have been obtained."

In a memo prepared by Venner for the Prime Minister on October 7, 1941, Venner made a connection between the financial warfare of the SOE and the Normandy landings plan Operation OVERLORD. In it he stated that, “SOE’s contribution to the financial munitions of war has continued apace and vast quantities of notes have been obtained by Clandestine means for OVERLORD purposes, particularly for escape purses for aircrews.”

### **VIII. VENNER’S ACCOUNTING UNORTHODOXY: SANCTIONS FOR BRIBERY**

An interesting example of how SOE, through Venner, requested funds for unorthodox “sanctioned” expenditure is found in TNA HS 8/344. The Treasury Official responsible for approving requests for funding submitted by Venner was Herbert Brittain. In April 1941 SOE received information from Jack Beevor its Head of Station in Lisbon in neutral Portugal that, “there is a very reasonable chance of being able to “win over” the Portuguese International Police to work in our interests by making monetary payments to the chiefs. If this could be done it would materially assist certain immediate projects in hand.”

According to Lochery (2011), Lisbon was the only European city in which both the Allies and the Axis power operated openly and it was temporary home to a host of spies, secret police, captains of industry, bankers, prominent Jews, and black marketeers. Crucially, for Venner, Lisbon was also one of the key locations in the SOE’s clandestine foreign currency activity, so any support that could be provided to SOE agents would be helpful. One of the main roles of the Portuguese International Police (Policia de Vigilancia e Defesa do Estado) was, “to control or neutralize any groups or persons who threatened the status quo as defined by the Dictatorship” (Wheeler 1983). It was left to Venner to meet Mr. Brittain to request funding,

which he knew would be used for bribery. In a memo from Venner to Nelson (SOE's Chief Executive) dated Sunday, April 27, 1941, Venner states that

“At a meeting on Saturday morning 26 April he had requested to Mr Brittain that up to £100,000 either in dollars or Escudos, or both, be made available to “buy” the Portuguese International Police. Mr. Brittain discussed this with Sir Horace Wilson, Permanent Secretary of the Treasury, and at 315pm on the 27<sup>th</sup> Mr Brittain telephoned to say that the sanction was agreed. I promised to keep in touch with him as to how the matter proceeded and as to the method, which would be involved.”

This extraordinary memo demonstrates the trust that the Treasury had in Venner and how he was also able to support the unorthodox use of bribery and corruption of officials if it would assist the SOE in contributing to the war effort.

After the war ended, a battle for inclusion in the SOE's Official History of a recognition of SOE's financial contribution to the war effort was made by Venner. Treasury rules meant that no reference could be made relating to the amount of money from the Secret Vote reaching the SOE (Foot 1984). However, Venner was keen to ensure that this would not mean the total absence of SOE's financial dealings in the main narrative (Murphy 2005). Venner wrote to the official history's author Mackenzie saying “I think that covert financial operations are just as much operations, as for instance political subversion, and should therefore be included in the body of the History rather than in an appendix.” (TNA HS 8/430). Venner also rewrote the outline paragraph on finance, as he “felt it desirable to include some account of the financial operations carried out by the department over a long period. These lie somewhat apart from SOE's normal work but they were of great importance to many departments.” Venner's suggestions were not taken on board, so the role of SOE's financial warfare remained firmly in the shadows.

## **IX. CONCLUDING REMARKS**

This paper sheds light on the contribution of chartered accountant John Franklyn Venner FCA in orchestrating the SOE's financial warfare during the Second World War. Venner was an ordinary accountant working in an unorthodox organisation. Venner's appointment came at a critical time for the SOE, as his orthodox accounting practices were badly needed in order to establish its financial credibility with the Treasury and Bank of England. Venner's family and educational background, which had facilitated his ability to become a chartered accountant with the eminent City of London company Edward Moore and Sons, would probably have proved beneficial in being recruited into the SOE and initially gaining trust with officials at the Treasury and the Bank of England. Venner then nurtured this trust expertly by using his orthodox accounting skills to develop thorough and pragmatic financial controls and by producing accurate, timely, and comprehensive receipts and payments based Financial Reports to the SOE Finance Committee concerning funds received via the Secret Vote. These reports have enabled the scale of the SOE's Secret Vote expenditure to be brought out of the shadows for the first time.

The robustness of Venner's financial controls also provided assurance for Williams and Playfair, but the unintended consequences of Venner wanting "to keep his own finger on everything" was evident, as was the issue that Venner's financial control could only reach so far. Venner would in time develop a "balance" between severe insistence on integrity and practical recognition of the impossibility of vouching for secret funds beyond a certain point but accusations of him being "sticky" in applying the rules imply that he may have found drawing this boundary a challenge to his accounting orthodoxy.

The absolute trust placed in Venner by the Treasury combined with his ability to move, however painfully, to unorthodoxy in the interests of the war, enabled Venner to develop more profitable financing schemes in keeping with the maverick nature of the SOE. These schemes

included generating large amounts of foreign currency via black markets, financed directly by the Bank of England. These unorthodox funds were used for legitimate purposes of war but also for illegal activities such as bribery and corruption. It can only be imagined what thoughts must have gone through the mind of this eminent accountant as requests for funding for sanctions for bribery, corruption, and maybe worse, came into Baker Street. Given his background and professional training as a chartered accountant, it is likely that Venner would have found it challenging to put any feelings he had of being complicit in illegal activities to one side.

Venner received four very prestigious awards for his war service, but it is clear from his submissions to the official SOE war historian that he believed there should have been greater recognition of the SOE's financial warfare than the Treasury was able to provide at that time. John Venner died in May 1955, aged 52, leaving his name and contribution to the SOE's financial warfare in the shadows. John Venner was an ordinary, chartered accountant who at SOE did the orthodox and unorthodox while serving his country in the extraordinary circumstances of the Second World War. His story no longer remains in the shadows.

## REFERENCES

### PRIMARY SOURCES

1. Bank of England Inflation calculator <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/monetary-policy/inflation/inflation-calculator>
2. Commonwealth War Graves Commission. <https://www.cwgc.org/find-records/find-war-dead/>
3. Imperial War Museum <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80009269>  
Beevor, John, Grosvenor Oral History. Catalogue number 9482.
4. Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales. *Past Presidents 1880-2005*.  
<https://www.icaew.com/library/historical-resources/icaew-history/past-presidents>
5. Livery Committee, City of London Corporation. *Current and past Lord Mayors and Sheriffs*.  
<https://liverycommittee.org/about/city-of-london-corporation/the-lord-mayor/current-and-past-lord-mayors/#1900s>
6. London Metropolitan Archives. *Moore's Rowland Predecessors: Edward Moore and Sons archive papers CLC/B/162/MS29382/001-003 Monthly Salaries Book 1909-1955*.
7. London Metropolitan Archives. *Moore's Rowland Predecessors: Edward Moore and Sons archive papers CLC/B/162/MS29387 Notes concerning the history of the company*.
8. National Archives. AIR /27/2302 *Squadron Number: 953. Summary of Events*. London, U.K.: National Archives
9. National Archives. CAB/79/37 *War Cabinet and Cabinet minutes of meetings 182 202. 21 July 1945 – 21 August 1945*. London, U.K.: National Archives.
10. National Archives. HS 8/130: *Policy and planning: SOE liaison with Air Ministry*. London, U.K.: National Archives.

11. National Archives. HS 8/200: *Committees: SOE Council minutes*. London, U.K.: National Archives.
12. National Archives. HS 8/344 - 348: *Finance: Sanctions and grants; miscellaneous grants*. London, U.K.: National Archives.
13. National Archives. HS8/351: *Finance General Reconciliations and Special Accounts*. London, U.K.: National Archives.
14. National Archives. HS 8/354: *Finance: Acquisition of foreign currency*. London, U.K.: National Archives.
15. National Archives. HS 8/430: *Histories: Proposed format of the SOE history; W J M Mackenzie papers*. London, U.K.: National Archives.
16. National Archives. HS8/ 448: *THE SOE Liquidation No 1 Minutes*. London, U.K.: National Archives
17. National Archives. HS8 /449: *THE SOE Liquidation CLI-3*. London, U.K.: National Archives.
18. National Archives. HS 8/1016: *Interview notes leading up to report of J Hanbury Williams, Deputy Chief of SOE, on SOE*. London, U.K.: National Archives.
19. National Archives. HS 8/1017: *Papers leading up to J Hanbury Williams', Deputy Chief of SOE, report on SOE*. London, U.K.: National Archives.
20. National Archives. HS 8/1021: *Report to Minister of Economic Warfare on Organisation of SOE by J Hanbury Williams*. London, U.K.: National Archives.
21. National Archives. HS8 /1024: *SOE Reports on Accounts and Expenditure*. London, U.K.: National Archives.
22. National Archives. HS 9/1524/7: *John Franklyn Venner*. London, U.K.: National Archives.
23. Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum. Gab 106/320: *Polonia Restituta Award for John Franklyn Venner by the President of the Republic of Poland in Exile*. London, U.K.

24. Rugby School. *Registers*. <https://rugbyschoolarchives.co.uk>
25. Rugby School. *Memorials for the Great War* <https://rugbyschoolarchives.co.uk>
26. Rugby School archive. *The Meteor Volumes 52, 53, and 81*.
27. *Schedule of Reserved Occupations 1939*. <http://anguline.co.uk/Free/Reserved.pdf>
28. *The London Gazette*. June 30 1939, Supplement 34641, 4456.
29. *The London Gazette*. June 14 1945, 2937.
30. *The London Gazette*. November 5 1946, 5404.
31. *The London Gazette*. February 13 1948, 1036.
32. *The London Gazette*. February 16 1951, 856.
33. *Times Digital Archive 1955*. Obituary for John Venner. Times (June 5).
34. Venner, J. 2020. *Interviews of James Venner by I. Piper on 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> November 2020*.
35. Venners Ltd, *Stocktake and Audit experts* <https://www.venners.com/about-us/>

## SECONDARY SOURCES

- Allport, A. 2020. *Britain at Bay*. Profile Books.
- Andrew, C. 2009. *Defence of the Realm: The Authorised History of MI5*. Penguin.
- Beevor, J. G. 1981. *SOE: Recollections and Reflections, 1940-1945*. Bodley Head.
- Black, J. 2001. 'Full Circle': The Cost Accounting Experiment in the British Army 1917-25 and the Corps of Military Accountants. *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, 79(318), 145-162.
- Black, W. H. 2019. Reflections on biography in accounting history. *Accounting Historians Journal*, 46(2), 87-89.
- Bloom, R. 2021. George Sorter's Influence on Accounting Thought. *Accounting Historians Journal*, 48(2), 1-10.

Carnegie, G. D. 2019. Reflections on a journey with Accounting History as an international refereed journal, 1995–2019. *Accounting History*, 24(4), 523-539.

Carnegie, G. and McBride, K. 2023 *Prosopography and microhistory: illuminating historical actors*, *Handbook of Historical Methods for Management CH 8*, Decker, S., Foster, W. and Giovannoni, E. (Eds), Edward Elgar.

Carnegie, G. D., and Napier, C. J. 2010. Traditional accountants and business professionals: Portraying the accounting profession after Enron. *Accounting, organizations and society*, 35(3), 360-376.

Carnegie, G. D., and Williams, B. G. 2001. The first professors of accounting in Australia. *Accounting History*, 6(1), 103-115.

Cobbin, P. E. 2009. “The best brains of the public accounting world”: The restricted membership of the Army Accountancy Advisory Panel, 1942–1945. *Accounting Historians Journal*, 36(2), 1-29.

Cobbin, P. E., and Burrows, G. H. 2018. The profession of arms and the profession of accounting numbers—Accounting, the military and war: A review. *Accounting History*, 23(4), 487-520.

Cruikshank, C. 1986. *SOE in the Far East* (London, 1983).

Dalton, E. H. J. N. 1957. *The Fateful Years. Memoirs, 1931-1945. [With Plates, Including Portraits.]*. Frederick Muller.

Denzin, N. K. 2012. Triangulation 2.0. *Journal of mixed methods research*, 6(2), 80-88.

Dewar, D., and Funnell, W. 2016. *A History of British National Audit: The Pursuit of Accountability*. Oxford University Press.

Edwards, J. R. 2022. John Henry Guy: A Man of Many Parts. *Accounting Historians Journal*, 49(1), 1-13.

Edwards, J. R. 2023. Cash to accruals accounting in British central government: A journey through time. *Financial Accountability & Management*, 39(1), 40-59.

Foot, M. R. D. 1966. *SOE in France: an account of the work of the British Special Operations Executive in France 1940-1944*. Routledge.

Foot, M. R. 1981. Was SOE any good? *Journal of Contemporary History*, 16(1), 167-181.

- Foot, M. R. D. 1984. *SOE: An Outline History of the Special Operations Executive*.
- Fry, H. 2021. *Spymaster: The man who saved MI6*. Yale University Press.
- Greele, R. J. 1998. "Movement without Aim: Methodological and Theoretical Problems with Oral History", in R. Perks and A. Thompson (eds), *The History Reader*. Routledge.
- Gubbins, C. 1948. Resistance Movements in the War. *Royal United Services Journal, Volume 93* pp210-23.
- Helm, S. 2009. *A Life in Secrets: Vera Atkins and the Lost Agents of the SOE* Abacus.
- Hill, M. R. 1993. *Archival strategies and techniques* (Vol. 31). Sage Publications.
- Hoffman, A. M. 1974. Reliability and validity in oral history. *Communication Quarterly*, 22(1), 23-27.
- Jeacle, I. 2008. Beyond the boring grey: The construction of the colourful accountant. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 19(8), 1296-1320.
- Jeffery, K. 2010. *MI6: The history of the secret intelligence service 1909-1949*. A&C Black.
- Kallio, H., Pietilä, A. M., Johnson, M., & Kangasniemi, M. 2016. Systematic methodological review: developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview guide. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 72(12), 2954-2965.
- Klein, K. L. 2000. On the emergence of memory in historical discourse. *Representations*, 69, 127-150.
- Lee, T. A. 2008. A letter from a teenage accounting clerk in 1846: A hidden voice in a micro-history of modern public accountancy. *Accounting Historians Journal*, 35(2), 43-69.
- Lett, B. (2016). *SOE's Mastermind: The Authorised Biography of Major General Sir Colin Gubbins KCMG, DSO, MC*. Pen and Sword.
- Lochery, N. 2011. *Lisbon: War in the Shadows of the City of Light, 1939-1945*. Public Affairs.
- Mackenzie, and Millar, J. 2000. *The Secret History of SOE: The Special Operations Executive, 1940-1945*. St Ermin's.
- Marnham, P. 2020. *War in the Shadows. Resistance, Deception and Betrayal in Occupied France*. Oneworld Publications.

- Matthews, D., M. Anderson, and J. R. Edwards, 1998. *The priesthood of industry: the rise of the professional accountant in British management*. Oxford University Press.
- Milton, G. 2017. *Churchill's Ministry of Ungentlemanly Warfare: The Mavericks who Plotted Hitler's Defeat*. Picador.
- Murphy, C. J. 2005. SOE's foreign currency transactions. *Intelligence and National Security*, 20(1), 191-208.
- Murphy, M. E. 1938. Education and training of English accountants. *The Accounting Review*, 13(4), 404-410.
- Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Sporborg, Henry Natahn (1905- 1985) banker and intelligence officer. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/31711>.
- Previts, G. J., Parker, L. D., and Coffman, E. N. 1990. An accounting historiography: subject matter and methodology. *Abacus*, 26(2), 136-158.
- Samkin, G. 2010. Trader sailor spy: The case of John Pringle and the transfer of accounting technology to the Cape of Good Hope. *Accounting History*, 15(4), 505-528.
- Spector, B. A. 2016. Carlyle, Freud, and the great man theory more fully considered. *Leadership*, 12(2), 250-260.
- Stuart, D. 2005. 'Of historical interest only': The origins and vicissitudes of the SOE Archive. *Intelligence and National Security*, 20(1), 14-26.
- Sweet-Escott, B. 1965. *Baker Street Irregular*. Methuen.
- Todman, D. 2020. *Britain's War: A New World 1942-47*. Penguin.
- Walker, S. P. 2017. Accountants and the pursuit of the national interest: A study of role conflict during the First World War. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 47, 8-25.
- Walker, S. P. 2021. The blindfold witness? An accountant's response to slavery and atrocity in the Devil's Paradise. *The British Accounting Review* 101068.
- West, N. 1993. *Secret War; The story of SOE, Britain's Wartime Sabotage Organisation*. Coronet Publishers.
- West, N. 2005. *The Guy Liddell Diaries Vol 1 1939-1942 and Volume 2 1942-1945. MI5's Director of Counter Espionage in World War 2*. Routledge.

Wharton-Tigar, E., and Wilson, A. J. 1987. *Burning bright: the autobiography of Edward Wharton-Tigar*. Metal Bulletin.

Wheeler, D. L. 1983. In the service of order: the Portuguese political police and the British, German and Spanish intelligence, 1932-1945. *Journal of Contemporary History*, 18(1), 1-25.

Williams, R. B. 1999. Lifting stones: a place for microhistory in accounting research?. *Accounting History*, 4(1), 59-78.

Wylie, N. 2005. Introduction: Special Operations Executive – New Approaches and Perspectives. *Intelligence and National Security*, 20(1), 1-13.