



COLDSTREAM GAZETTE 2018



Terrific Fun - The Life of Billy Moss

by
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Formerly Grenadier Guards



An only child, Billy was born in Yokohama on 15 June 1921 to an English father and a Russian mother. Two years later, after a devastating earthquake levelled most of the city, the Moss family made their way to Shanghai and from there to England. After attending prep school at Lydgate House in Hunstanton, he went to Charterhouse where in his final year he produced *Congress*, a school magazine to which he invited illustrious Old Carthusians to contribute. Many accepted with the exception of Robert Graves who wrote a testy letter of refusal - 'Dear Mr Editor, Sorry: I have no story and don't write articles and the chief connexion I have with the school is a recurrent nightmare that I am back there again. . . .'

On leaving school in July 1939, Billy accompanied his mother together with her sister, Olga, and her brother-in-law on a trip to Riga when they arrived on 7 August. Almost immediately they found themselves caught up in the outbreak of war. Running perilously low on money, they headed home via Stockholm and Oslo. After several adventures in search of a ship, they ended up in Bergen where they found a passage to Newcastle on *The Meteor*, formerly the Kaiser's yacht. Safely back, Billy started work as a trainee accountant with The British American Tobacco Company, which had recently relocated from London to Egham.

Off to war with the Coldstream Guards

Enlisting in the Coldstream Guards in early 1941, by the beginning of August Billy was gazetted Second Lieutenant Emergency Commission. Soldiering on the home front at that time was somewhat akin to peacetime; King's Guard at St James's Palace, cocktail parties, deb dances and a spell with the holding battalion at Chequers. In his diary, he noted 'it had been wonderful staying at Chequers at a time when every word spoken by Churchill was gospel and thrilling to see him "off duty" and to speak with him and eat and drink with him and understand him and his ways'. A period of guarding Rudolf Hess at Mytchett Place in Surrey was followed by a posting to the 6th battalion before finally being sent overseas in August 1942 to join the 3rd battalion.

Arriving in Cairo on 17 October, Billy made his way to the battalion at Quatana to the South of Damascus, where, as part of 201 Guards Motor Brigade, it was engaged in what was termed a flag waving exercise. It must have been a daunting moment for a young officer to join a battle-hardened unit that had been continuously in action in the desert since the outbreak of war. As the history of the Coldstream Guards records, 'there was an air of unorthodoxy about the 3rd battalion, with its battered yellow trucks, the Arab argot of the guardsmen, the Hebron coats, desert boots, and coloured fly-switches of the officers'.

Then in February 1943, the order came for 201 Guards Brigade to go up to the front line in Tunisia. This

involved a non-stop drive along the coast of North Africa, a journey that lasted over a month and took the battalion through old haunts like Mersah Matruh, Tobruk and Benghazi. On 6 March, along with the 6th battalion Grenadier Guards and 2nd battalion Scots Guards, the battalion was deployed at Medenine in a U-shaped defence to stop a German counter-attack. It turned out to be a turkey shoot, the Germans leaving 54 irreplaceable tanks behind, most destroyed by the anti-tank guns of the Scots Guards.



Billy, centre, with fellow officers in the desert

About 10 miles to the northwest of Medenine on the road to Tunis lies a hilly feature known as the Horseshoe. Nearly 600 feet above sea level, it dominates the flat landscape around and controls the approaches to Mareth. Reported to be lightly held by run of the mill enemy units, this was the location of Montgomery's next 'party'. On the night of 16 March 1943, the Brigade formed up, the Grenadiers on the right, the Coldstream on the left and the Scots Guards in reserve. Such had been the need for security that only a handful of reconnaissance patrols had been sent out to probe 'the lightly held defences'. No air photographs were available and no enemy prisoners had been snatched.

At exactly 2045 hrs, the British artillery opened up - it was to fire some 24,000 rounds in the next 10 hours - and the Guardsmen advanced in open formation, crossing a small wadi and making their way slowly up the hills to their front. Then literally all hell broke loose. Accurate German mortar fire rained down on them, machine guns opened up from their rear and the first wave found itself in a densely sown minefield. As the troops pressed on, they found themselves in a second even denser minefield which exacted terrible casualties. In a legendary display of courage and gritty determination, No 1 Company fought its way to the top of the rocky outcrop of Sidi el Guelaa in savage hand to

hand fighting; a paltry nine men returned out of the 120 or so who had set off. Their commander, Michael Wills, lay dead among the rocks and scrub that his men had so gloriously taken.

The Bren gun carriers, key to the success of the assault with their loads of ammunition and water, were unable to cross the steep banks of Wadi Zess and by first light, at 0525 hrs, the Brigade withdrew. Eleven Coldstream officers and 148 ORs were killed, wounded or missing. For the Grenadiers, the tally was even worse. The Battle of the Horseshoe was an abject lesson in poor battlefield intelligence or, as the Coldstream history puts it, 'faulty information'. Not only had the German minefields remained undetected but the defenders turned out to be none other than the crack German 90th Light Division, one of the most experienced formations of the Afrika Korps. For Billy, it had been a satanic baptism of fire.

By April, 201 Guards Brigade was back in the line and the 3rd battalion linked up with the 2nd battalion which had landed as part of 1st Army the previous November in Algiers. Both units took part in the final days of the Tunisian campaign. The battalion's next task was to garrison the Island of Pantellaria to the south of Sicily. By all accounts this was a pleasant interlude to the grim business of fighting a determined and skilful enemy. It was not to last and on 7 August the battalion moved to the assembly area at Tripoli for the invasion of Italy where it landed a month later. By then, Billy, with his fluency in Russian, was on his way to the top secret Force 133, the codename of S.O.E. in the Middle East. Set up by Churchill in 1940 to 'set Europe ablaze', S.O.E. had been engaged in collecting intelligence, sabotaging key installations and arming and training resistance fighters in Greece and the Balkans since early 1941. A few weeks later, Billy met Peter Daubeny, a fellow officer from 3rd battalion, 'who turned up (in Cairo) with his left arm blown off'. Having landed at Salerno on 9 September, the battalion had been almost continuously in action. By the time it came out of the line on 26 September, the havoc inflicted on it was truly appalling - eight officers and 60 ORs killed, 10 officers and 163 ORs wounded. No.1 Company has ceased to exist for the second time in less than six months. Billy recorded in his diary 'Peter (Daubeny) - left arm blown off, Johnny Longueville, John Harly, Mike Brodrick killed ... David (Forbes) killed, Bill Gore-Langton - right arm blown off.' He was particularly upset by the news of Lionel Buxton's death, '... the bottom seemed to have fallen out of everything - plans and schemes and dreams and the best friend I've ever had, just vanished'.

In his 1944 diary, Billy was curiously diffident and précised about his war in North Africa but in *A War of Shadows*, he momentarily lifts his veil of nonchalance when he recalls an incident in Tunisia, 'when you saw a guardsman lying in the middle of a minefield with both his legs blown off, and crying to you, begging you to drag him out'.

Soldiering with S.O.E. behind enemy lines turned out to prove dangerous and demanding but inherently less risky for a young officer than confronting battle hardened well-equipped and well-led German troops on the front line.

IN CAIRO WITH S.O.E.

Allocated the symbol D/H 793, Billy reported for duty at S.O.E.'s offices at Rustum Buildings in Cairo. At 22 years old, he was one of its youngest members. Appointed G3 Albania, a junior staff officer's position, his job was to ensure that the British Military Missions (BMM) heading for Albania had everything they needed before they left and then to ensure their timely despatch. Similar duties were carried out by the G3 on the return of a Mission. Major David Smiley remembered how after leaving Albania "we flew from Bari to Cairo, where we were met by a tall, languid officer of the Coldstream Guards, who introduced himself as Billy Moss and informed us that he was our conducting officer. . . . Moss very kindly invited us to join him in a big house in Zamalek which he and some others were sharing."

The house was 'Tara', a spacious villa which Billy had found as an alternative to the dreary S.O.E. 'Hangover Hall' hostel he was billeted in. With the delectable Countess Sophie Tarnowska as 'the presiding genius and Egeria of the household' and S.O.E. officer Arnold Breene as its first lodger, the arrival of Paddy Leigh Fermor [after fifteen months behind enemy lines in Crete], David Smiley and Billy McLean soon made 'Tara' the place to be seen. It was to become a legend 'for its riotous parties and for the eccentric behaviour of its occupants'.

For Billy, Cairo provided an entrée into a glamorous world of high society far removed from the close-knit kudos of regimental soldiering, a glittering milieu populated by European royalty in exile, scions and relations of the fabulously wealthy Egyptian monarchy, crafty diplomats, literary intellectuals, and an inexhaustible supply of spies and devil-may-care soldiers. It was to leave an indelible impression on him. In particular, he adored the witty and fun-loving Leigh Fermor, his elder by six years, and relished every moment spent in his scintillating company.

PLOTTING A KIDNAP:

THE ABDUCTION OF GENERAL KREIPE

Leigh Fermor had been operating in enemy-occupied Crete from June 1942 to September 1943. His last action had been to smuggle the Italian General Angelo Carta off the island after the 8 September announcement of the Armistice by General Badoglio. Mulling over his recent escapade one evening in the fashionable Club Royale de Chasse and de Pêche, he revived an old SOE idea to kidnap the German General Müller, the commander of 22nd Air Landing Infantry Division, who was notorious for his ruthlessness in dealing with the guerrillas or *andartes* in Crete.

From the beginning, Leigh Fermor knew he would need a number two to carry out his audacious plan. The urbane Russian aristocrat and British intelligence officer Prince 'Yurka' Galitzine was approached as was former oil man, Captain Charlie Maydwell of the Rifle Brigade. Xan Fielding, by now a fellow Tara lodger, was also put forward as Paddy's 'driver' but his small stature and swarthy looks did not match the profile of the archetypal Aryan German soldier he was meant to impersonate. In the end it was Billy who proved the perfect fit.

Having successfully abducted General Kreipe (Müller had been reassigned elsewhere), the S.O.E. team left in

Kreipe's staff car a sealed letter addressed to the German authorities:

Gentlemen,

Your Divisional-Commander Kreipe was captured a short time ago by a British Raiding Force under our command. By the time you read this he and we will be on our way to Cairo.

We would like to point out most emphatically that this operation has been carried out without the help of Cretans or Cretan partisans, and the only guides used were serving soldiers of His Hellenic Majesty's Forces in the Middle East, who came with us.

Your general is an honourable prisoner of war, and will be treated with all the consideration owing to his rank.

Any reprisals against the local population will be wholly unwarranted and unjust.

Auf baldiges Wiedersehen!

Major P. Leigh Fermor, Commanding raiding Force.
Captain W.S. Moss, Coldstream Guards.

P.S. We are very sorry to leave this motor-car behind.

In London, the S.O.E. Council was delighted with the spectacular outcome. CD (Major General Gubbins) signalled Commander Force 133 Cairo: 'Heartiest congrats you and other officers concerned successful completion recent operation. My personal best wishes to two principals whom I know. A great coup.'



Billy Moss (Left) and Paddy Leigh-Fermor

The Coldstream was equally proud of Billy's escapade, the Regimental Lieutenant Colonel writing to him 'if, as we suspect, you were the hero of a certain recent enterprise of which we have heard, I wish to congratulate you very heartily on your fine performance, and all the credit it confers on the Regiment. It is indeed a feather in your cap, and an additional point to the Coldstream star!'

For his part in the operation, Billy was awarded an immediate MC for his outstanding courage and audacity: 'this officer showed exceptional gallantry in taking part with Major Leigh Fermor in the organisation and execution of the kidnapping of Major-General Kreipe at Arkhanes, Crete on 26 April 1944. It was due to Captain Moss's swiftness in attacking the General's car that the operation was made possible. In the early stages of the kidnapping, Captain Moss impersonated the chauffeur of the General's car and for an hour and a half drove 'the General' through Heraklion and passed 22 controlled road blocks before the car was finally abandoned. Subsequently Captain Moss assisted in moving the General during a period of 17 days through enemy held territory'. Leigh Fermor was awarded a DSO.

RETURN TO CRETE

The party arrived back in Egypt on 16 May and within weeks, as part of a co-ordinated operation with the S.B.S., Billy returned to Crete. It was to prove a woeful example of lack of communication between the two organisations. Commanded by Major Ian Patterson MC, a force of 41 S.B.S. raiders had been tasked by GHQ Middle East to destroy petrol and fuel dumps on the island. When the reconnaissance patrols landed on the night of 1/2 July, Patterson was appalled to learn that 'one of the bandit chiefs . . . had been briefed for an operation the same night (as the S.B.S. attacks) while another party was apparently toying with the idea of attacking an HQ at Arkhanes'. That party was Billy's and he was indeed planning to attack the German HQ at Ano Arkhanes where he hoped to find the newly returned General Müller in residence.

The S.B.S. attacks duly went in on the night of 22/23 July and the raiders were all extracted by 29 July. They did a great deal of damage; like the S.A.S., it was their stock in trade to kill the enemy and destroy his assets. 160,000 gallons of petrol (Estimate) were destroyed, 32 Germans killed and some MT knocked out.

Meanwhile Billy had received information from his Cretan contacts that he would be betrayed if he went ahead with the attack on the HQ, so instead he opted to ambush enemy transport on the Heraklion-Rethymnos road with his small band of *andartes* and Russian escaped P.O.W.s. However, his hand was forced when, on 7 August, a German detachment attempted to take 50 hostages, mostly women, in Anogia after the villagers had refused their demand for slave labourers. The detachment was surrounded and attacked by an *andartes* band; seven Germans were killed and their Warrant Officer captured. It was only a matter of time before there was a retaliatory response in force.

Billy and his motley force were ready for it and by the end of the day in three separate actions, 57 German and Italian soldiers had been killed, wounded or captured. Five enemy vehicles including an armoured car had

been destroyed. In his post-operational report written on 21 August, Billy was elated that 'as a result of my operation not one Cretan has been killed'. Regrettably he was wrong; that same day, German troops executed 30 men from Damasta and destroyed the village.

In a letter to Billy's mother dated 15 November 1944, Leigh Fermor wrote that Billy 'has been recommended for a very well-deserved bar to his MC'. Corporal Lewis's appendix to Major Dunbabin's 14 August Report supports this premise: 'From local reports reaching me it is evident that Captain Moss showed extreme courage and bravery throughout the whole operation and especially when dealing with the turret of the armoured car - under full view and fire of the enemy and at point blank range.' No bar to his MC was forthcoming.

As far as SOE London was concerned, Billy had delivered what was required. In the SOE Worldwide Weekly Sitrep of 17 August 1944, the entry for Crete reads: 'BLO supported by eight Greeks and six Russians mined main road Heraklion-Rethymno on 5 August and holding road block destroyed nine M.T. and killed 45 Germans and took 12 prisoners'.

A 'COMMANDO' ON THE GREEK MAINLAND

On his return to Cairo in September, Billy was almost immediately redeployed, this time in 'a sort of Commando job' on the Greek mainland. Arriving by air at Grevena, a small country town in Northwest Greece, he joined up with Ken Scott, a 25-year-old Major in the Royal Engineers who had been in Greece since 12 May 1943. Scott had won his spurs in Roumeli in a brilliant night-time operation that destroyed the Asopos rail viaduct that linked Athens to Thessaloniki.

As the Germans began to withdraw, the tempo of operations increased commensurately with road bridges blown, culverts mined, rail tracks cut, trains derailed, roadblocks booby-trapped and ambushes sprung. The railway line Naoussa-Edessa-Florina was effectively destroyed for the duration as was the Kozani-Verria road. Four major ambushes were sprung on the Edessa-Florina road and over 250 Germans captured.

At one point, Scotty and Billy planned to blow the Aliakmon rail bridge by swimming down the river in darkness and attaching explosives to the piers. However, since Scotty's earlier reces, the Germans had replaced the wooden piles with stone piers and had supported each span in approximately 20 different places, thus making anything other than a partial demolition impossible.

Billy's last mission was to oversee the liberation of Edessa and take charge of repairs to the road bridge which would undoubtedly have been blown once the Germans had evacuated the town. On arrival, it transpired that the demolition had been a botched job, so after four days Billy headed off towards Salonika, taking a jeepload of journalists in tow. After enjoying the hospitality of the newly liberated Greek population for a week, Billy hitchhiked to the airport to catch a flight to Athens and from there to Cairo.

THE FAR EAST

On return to Cairo in November, Billy found to his consternation that he, along with all other Guards

officers in Force 133, had been posted back to regimental duty. He immediately put pen to paper, asking for an exemption from regimental duties. His reasoning was twofold. First 'the enemy has placed a large reward on my head because they have discovered that I have been operating in German uniform and in plain clothes. . . . In the event of my capture with a regular unit, this fact would not only result in extremely unpleasant consequences for me, but perhaps would also reflect upon the men under my command or those who were captured with me'. Second, in a rather self-deprecatory tone, he volunteered that 'I do not think I was a very competent officer when I was with the 3rd battalion, and it was for that reason that I finally left it. Since that time I have had three long spells in occupied territory, and believe that when I am working on my own my efficiency in every sort of way improves a hundredfold.'

His wish was granted and he was posted to the Far East to join S.O.E.'s Force 136. But first he enjoyed some well-earned leave, arriving in England on 31 January 1945. With the encouragement of Brigadier Barker-Benfield, commander of Force 133, Billy set down on paper the story of the kidnap of General Kreipe. By the time he had finished, he was *en route* to the jungles of Thailand.

Siam, as it was then known, had been invaded by Japan on 8 December 1941 in order to gain access for her armies to invade Malaya and Burma. After a day's fighting the military government of Prime Minister Field Marshal Phibun ordered an armistice and granted the Japanese free passage. Subsequently, Thailand declared war on the United States and Great Britain on 25 January 1942 and undertook to assist Japan in its war against the Allies.

After the relentless Japanese advance had finally come to a halt in mid-1942, the challenge for S.O.E. was to find a Thai resistance group to work with. A bitter rival of Phibun, the former Finance Minister and member of the Regency Council, Pridi Phanomyong, had been a staunch opponent of the Japanese alliance and, after a number of discussions with those holding similar views, he started the *Seri Thai* or Free Thai movement.

In August 1944 Lord Mountbatten, the SACSEA, sent Pridi a message to the effect that the Free Thai movement could make 'a valuable contribution' to the Allied cause. This opened the way for S.O.E. to up its game with increased supplies of arms and training cadres, for the British were keen to mount a large-scale deception campaign - Operation SCEPTICAL - to fool the Japanese into thinking that Thailand had precedence over Malaya as an Allied invasion target. The more troops retained by the Japanese in Thailand, the less the resistance would be to Operation ZIPPER, the invasion of Malaya planned for September 1945.

Billy arrived in Ceylon in May 1945, now the headquarters of Force 136. After serendipitously meeting up with John Hibberdine (S.O.E. Albania) and Ken Scott (S.O.E. Greece), the three of them dropped as a team with Scott as leader (Op SUNGOD/GABBERDINE) in the Nakhon Si Thammarat area on the border with Malaya. By now events had overtaken them

for the Japanese had surrendered on 15 August after the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. No longer engaged in offensive operations, their brief was to find POWs and supervise the disarming of Japanese troops.

After a fortnight, local Thai sources told them that the Japanese were planning to move 500 POWs from Bandon up to Bangkok, so they set off to investigate. They found the Japanese mustering at the seaside town of Songkla. Just as they were readying themselves to go in, a signal arrived to "stand fast and make no official contact with the Japanese until ordered". Passing the time attending bullfights, cock fights and a Thai ball, the Mission eventually arranged the orderly surrender of Japanese forces in the area before retiring to the charms of Bangkok on 20 November and then home for Christmas.

On 22 August 1945, Billy was promoted to major for the second time. His report read: 'This officer has carried out his considerable responsibilities in the field with distinction and ability. This recommendation carries the strongest support of CO M.E. 25. Captain Moss has carried out some extremely fine operations, and has held a majority previously. He has worked at his task with conspicuous skill, and has gained the confidence of high-ranking Siamese officers, in conjunction with whom he has been working in the field'.

AFTER THE WAR

In spite of his peripatetic service with S.O.E., Billy had won the hand of his housemate at Tara, the beautiful Countess Sophie Tarnowska and they married in Cairo on 26 April 1945. Four years older than Billy, Sophie had been married before to her second cousin, Andrew Tarnowski whom she fell in love with at a boar hunt in Poland when she was just 17. In 1937 their first child, Andrew, was born but tragically died aged two on the same day that Sophie gave birth to his younger brother. Almost immediately after, the Germans invaded Poland, forcing Andrew and Sophie and her baby together to leave their home and take to the road.

Once demobbed in late 1946, Billy embarked on the precarious career of a writer. His first book, a novel called *The Hour of Flight*, was published by Harrap in 1949. Long on dialogue, it was typical of the moody genre of the time. Then, after the bickering and squabbles with the British security establishment had finally subsided, *Ill Met by Moonlight* was finally published in 1950. It received a warm reception: Malcolm Muggeridge, Harold Nicolson and Peter Fleming all wrote favourable reviews.

Another novel *Bats with Baby Faces* which Billy had started in the Siamese jungle, came out in 1951. Subtitled 'a scenario for caricatures', and set in 1942 in Deir-Ez-Zor (Syria) and Cairo, it is an irreverent adventure story punctuated with dark passages, none more so than the opening chapter that immerses the reader in a premeditated and cack-handed attempt to kill a rogue agent. *Bats* was followed by *A War of Shadows*, the sequel to *Ill Met by Moonlight*, an account of his further adventures with S.O.E. His last novel *Three Plagues*, 'a situation for caricatures' was published in 1953. Written in Riverstown, Eire, Billy strived to produce an antidote to 'caution, apprehension, and retribution

(which) were now the orders of the day, for there was no time left for celebration or feelings of relief' by recounting the carefree antics of three friends gallivanting around France.

Initially living in London, Billy and Sophie had moved to Riverstown House in County Cork in Ireland, hoping that life there would be more affordable. Sadly they found it impossible to raise the money to complete the purchase of the property and returned to London. Two more books followed, *The Man with Flat Feet and Major Otis Regrets*, a revised manuscript of which was delivered to Andre Deutsche in 1961. Unfortunately, there is no record of publication of either title.

To make ends meet, Billy became a freelance journalist. His first venture, in association with *The Sunday Graphic*, was the quest to find 'Scarface' Otto Skorzeny, the German Special Forces officer who had rescued Mussolini in a daring mountain top raid in 1943. Skorzeny had escaped from a denasification holding camp in 1948 and vanished from view. In an interview with the *Sydney Morning Herald* correspondent in London, Billy breathlessly explained: 'Skorzeny is 6 feet and 4 inches, weighs 18 stone and has a large duelling scar on his left cheek. Despite these characteristics he has evaded the intelligence forces of half the Continent. He pops up - then down again - before anyone can lay hands on him. . . . In our hunt we start from scratch. There is no knowing of what by-ways of intrigue and counter-plot we may find ourselves involved. Don't forget that 13 people have already lost their lives as a result of their complicity in the disappearance of Mussolini's treasure. Where is that treasure? And where is Skorzeny? Those are the questions we intend to answer.' Pacey reports followed from Zurich, 'somewhere in France', and Cairo but the trail petered out. Skorzeny was in fact in Madrid, running a small engineering business.

Shortly after, he submitted a part-work about his former S.O.E. colleague the late Krystyna Skarbek (aka Christine Granville) to the *Picture Post* who published it in September 1952. He had met Krystyna and her compatriot and lover Andrzej Kowerski (aka Andrew Kennedy) in Cairo where they had arrived in 1941 after a series of dramatic adventures across war-torn Europe. She went on to serve with distinction in enemy-occupied France and was awarded the George Medal and OBE. He had been planning a biography but had withdrawn it after Andrew had raised objections; he, like many of her friends, was in a state of shock after her brutal and callous murder by an obsessive lover in Earls Court in June 1952.

This was followed by a five-part series in *The People* in November 1953 about an exposé of the Lebensborn - the Fountain of Life Organisation - a sinister story of Himmler's attempt to procreate racially pure children of the Master Race in Nazi stud farms. What had started in 1935 as a purely German concern later spread to Austria, Norway, France, Belgium, Holland and Denmark. In Eastern Europe it was estimated that more than 250,000 children were kidnapped by SS and police units and sent to Germany. Only 25,000 were recovered after the war and reunited with their families. Behind the sensationalism was a plea by Billy for the recognition of

the women who had been 'used' and for their fatherless children: during the ten years of the program's existence, at least 7,500 children were born in Germany and 10,000 in Norway.

Billy's next project was *Gold Is Where You Hide It; What Happened to the Reichsbank Treasure?* (A. Deutsch, 1956). This was a pacey investigation in the best tradition of investigatory journalism into what happened to the Reichsbank bullion and cash reserves and the SS cash pile which had been taken to a mine in Merkers in Bavaria in the closing days of the war. Billy was in his element, relishing the death threats daily received. Written in collaboration with Andrew Kennedy who spoke excellent German, their start point was the disappearance of the gold and money shortly after the American forces overran the area.

Moss and Kennedy travelled back and forth across Germany and into Switzerland and corresponded with fugitives in Argentina. They talked to dozens of witnesses before finally establishing that the mastermind was Major Martin Borg, the US Military Governor of Garmisch-Partenkirchen. His disappearance at the time has yet to be explained. Curiously, in 2013, the German government asked the United States to return 300 tons of gold which it had had in its 'safekeeping' for 50 years.

Unable to resist an adventure - he had written to Billy Mclean in June 1955 about arming the Karens in Burma - Billy became involved in a madcap scheme to rescue West de Wend-Fenton, who had joined the French Foreign Legion after being spurned in marriage. Billy spent 'a lengthy period as a guest of the French Foreign Legion in Sidi-bel-Abbes'. The outcome was a screenplay, *The Thin Line*, for one episode of a 26-part TV series, *Assignment Foreign Legion*, produced by former Spitfire ace, Tony Bartley, and broadcast in 1956-57.

LATER YEARS

Separated from Sophie in 1957 at her request, Billy began to travel in earnest. He ended up in Jamaica. However, heavy drinking had seriously impaired his health and despite putting on a brave face, his body could no longer keep up with his hedonistic lifestyle and he died in 1965, aged just 44. His was a defiant death, refusing medical treatment and, towards the end, sustenance. He was buried at the Garrison Church in Kingston on Friday 13 August. Two buglers from the 1st Battalion Jamaica Regiment sounded Last Post and Reveille over his coffin which was draped in a Union Jack. A simple rock of red and white mottled Jamaican marble was erected over his grave with the inscription 'In loving memory of William Stanley Moss, A Soldier, A Writer, A Traveller'.

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