

onto the Spanish coast in April 1943. The body carried papers that fooled the Germans into believing the Allied advance into southern Europe was going to come in Greece and Sardinia, not with an invasion of Sicily. Denis Smyth must be peeved to have been pipped to the post. His *Deathly Deception* is a more scholarly approach to exactly the same subject. The sources for the story are limited and both authors rely heavily on the Ewen Montagu papers. Montagu was one of the two masterminds of the whole operation who later went public and sold three million copies of *The Man Who Never Was* which became one of the great 1950s war movies. So both books duplicate much of the same story even down to tiny details.

Macintyre's account is based more on the remarkable personalities involved. Smyth's account delves deeper into the framework of the intelligence organisations and how the plan for the deception evolved and changed – not surprising coming from a historian who did his postgraduate research at Cambridge with Harry Hinsley, one of the top historians of British wartime intelligence. Both books include details about how the identity, rank and the clothing of the invented character were created even down to where naval intelligence found the underwear for the corpse (from the widow of the great historian and cabinet minister H.A.L. Fisher). Both books tell similar stories about how real the invented marine became to his inventors. Strangely, Smyth fails to relate how Montagu even had a liaison, possibly an affair, with the young clerk whose photograph became the image of the dead marine's fiancée – so closely did he associate himself with the character he had created. On the other hand, Smyth's account is a far more thorough analysis of the process by which the Germans were fooled and how the operation worked but so nearly failed. This is another fascinating and very readable book on the most brilliantly tangled web of deception spun in the Second World War.

**TAYLOR DOWNING**



### **Mother Country Britain's Black Community on the Home Front, 1939-45**

*Stephen Bourne*

The History Press 160pp £12.99  
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Too little attention has been given to the multiracial make-up of the British Home Front. Given that race was such a central issue throughout the Second World War, it may seem surprising that the racial politics of wartime Britain have often been ignored by mainstream histories. Stephen Bourne's *Mother Country* offers an excellent corrective to this tendency.

The book gives a snapshot of the black community in Britain between 1939 and 1945. Along the way, Bourne introduces the reader to a diverse cast of characters. The narrative is structured around snapshots of individual lives, some of which run to just a page and others which are given an entire chapter. Among those given most prominence are Harold Moody, the Jamaican doctor and founder of the League of Coloured Peoples, Adelaide Hall, the New York born singer and entertainer and Bourne's own adopted aunt, Esther Bruce, as well as the Jamaican feminist and BBC radio broadcaster Una Marson. Among the many less well-known figures are Basil Rodgers, a singer and conscientious objector born in Devon to a Jamaican father and an English mother, the Jamaican siblings Fernando and Pauline Henriques and a Nigerian air raid warden E.I. Ekpenyon, author of a 1943 pamphlet entitled *Some Experiences of an African Air Raid Warden*.

Unsurprisingly, Dr Moody's League of Coloured Peoples features prominently, both because of its status as an important lobby group for equal rights for people of all races and because its wartime publication, the *News Letter*,

### **EXHIBITION High Society Mind-Altering Drugs in History and Culture**

*Wellcome Collection*

Until February 27th, 2011  
183 Euston Road, London NW1 2BE  
Telephone: 020 7611 8888  
[www.wellcome.ac.uk](http://www.wellcome.ac.uk)



When Arthur Conan Doyle published *The Sign of Four* in 1890, he supplied Sherlock Holmes with a fashionable recreational drug habit: injecting not only cocaine but also morphine. 'I abhor the dull routine of existence', Holmes tells a disapproving Dr Watson. 'I crave for mental exultation'. But in

the final Holmes stories, published a decade or so later, the great detective's use of drugs is not mentioned. By then, Watson had weaned Holmes off the habit; at the same time, not by coincidence, medical and popular opinion had turned against cocaine. In 1914, the US government introduced the term narcotic to cover all illegal drugs, including stimulants like cocaine, and limited their official sale to medical purposes.

A century later the illicit drug trade is estimated by the United Nations at US\$350 billion a year, making it one of the three largest international markets, along with arms and oil. This is certainly a grim statistic with which to end *High Society*, the Wellcome Collection's current exhibition on drugs. But it would be wrong to give the impression that this engaging exhibition dwells puritanically on the harmful effects and prohibition of drugs. In fact, it makes a constant effort to be balanced: if not exactly to celebrate drug-taking, at least to show us the richness and variety of drug cultures throughout history, going back to the Babylonians and no doubt pre-literate societies. 'Mind-altering substances answer the deep desire – need, even – we have to enhance and extend our ordinary experience of life', accepts the Wellcome's Ken Arnold in his foreword to the excellent, highly illustrated book associated with the exhibition written by Mike Jay, one of its curators.

Thus the opening showcase, labelled 'A Universal Impulse', is an intriguing medley of over 50 objects used in drug-taking. Some are quite exotic, for example an 18th-century coconut kava bowl from Fiji, a 19th-century opium pipe from China and a highly decorated 19th-century brass betel-nut cutter from India. Others are as familiar and contemporary as a wine glass, an ashtray and a takeaway coffee cup.

Much space is devoted to the consumption of opium and its ramifications, in economics, politics, literature, music and the visual arts. So far as I recall from my school history course in the 1970s, the inglorious Opium Wars – inadvertently recalled by David Cameron's insistence on wearing a Remembrance Day poppy while visiting China – were completely neglected in my formal education. Without any national self-flagellation, the exhibition reminded me why. An unintentionally shocking British lithograph of a busy opium warehouse in Patna, India, in 1850, has large balls of opium stacked from floor to ceiling, awaiting shipment by clipper to China. An adjacent installation created by the Chinese artist Huang Yong Ping in 2008 in response to this lithograph, shows a massive opium pipe like the barrel of a long cannon with a pile of opium 'cannon balls', one of which has apparently knocked over the inebriated figure of Lord Palmerston, the opium-trade-supporting foreign secretary behind the British attack. Entitled *Frolic*, the installation is witty and thought provoking, not propagandistic. It returns to the mind near the end of the exhibition, when one stands contemplatively among opium poppies growing in contemporary Afghanistan.

The discussion of alcohol, including the temperance movement and Prohibition in America in the 1920s, is less satisfactory, perhaps inevitably given the overwhelming prevalence of alcohol consumption and the conflicting views about drunkenness. A century or more ago, the British doctor Norman Kerr, who founded the Society for the Study of Inebriety, asked if inebriation was 'a sin, a crime, a vice or a disease?' – the title of last section of the exhibition. We are still, as a society, trying to come up with an answer to this question.

**ANDREW ROBINSON**