

# SPY MANIA IN FOLKESTONE IN WW1

By Michael George

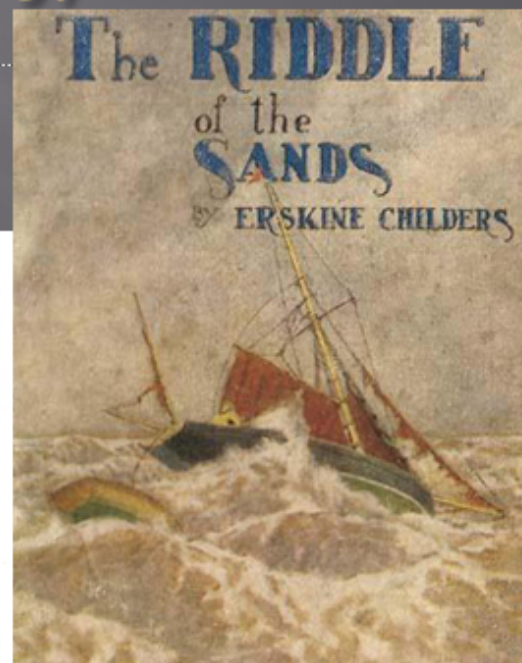
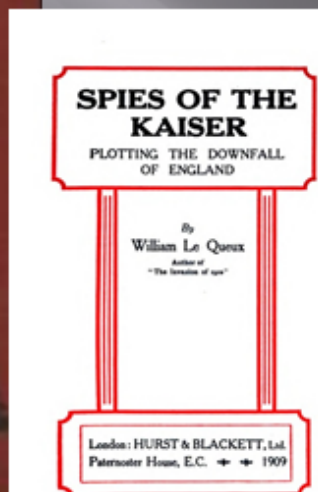
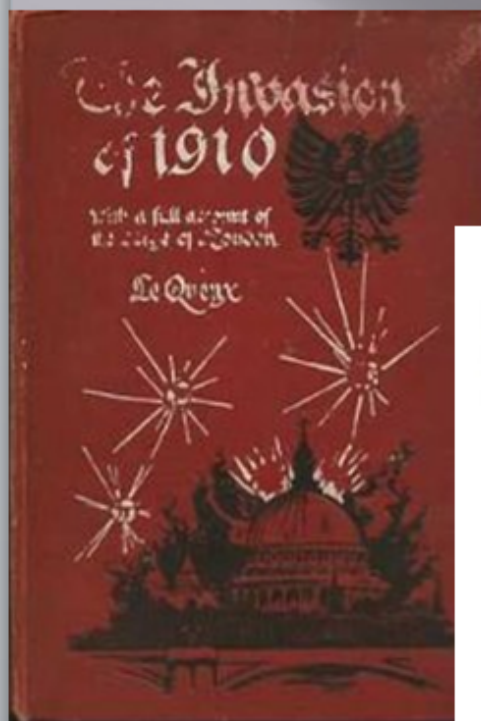
Part I

Based on a Talk given to The Western Front Association, East Kent Branch, January 2014

Well before the outbreak of war in August 1914 the British public had been fed a steady diet of spy stories and scares. It is estimated that over 400 fictional spy novels had been written during this period, and more appeared after war was declared.

The formation of the British Intelligence services in 1909 owed much to the imaginations of writers like William le Queux and Erskine Childers

## Scare (or scary) stories





## **INVASION**

A key theme of these books was Invasion. For centuries Britain had prepared to defend itself against marauders from across the Channel. The foe had generally been 'the old enemy', France, but in the years before 1914 it was Germany that filled that role. One story, presented as hard fact, suggested that an army of 150,000 German 'sleepers' were already in the country, masquerading as waiters, barbers and butchers, just waiting for the word from the Kaiser to collect weapons from secret arsenals and co-ordinate with storm troopers arriving from across the North Sea.

The invasion scare was very resilient and, although German plans for an invasion of Britain were little more than imaginary, it served as a useful propaganda weapon, both here and in Germany.

In truth, the Kaiser hoped that Britain would either stay out of the war altogether or, in his more surreal moments, that we would be allies.

# INVASION! Nacht England

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THE TIMES HISTORY OF THE WAR.



GERMAN MARINES ON A TRAIN  
Which did not reach its advertised destination.



At the outbreak of war, all active German spies in England were rounded up; MI5 had been keeping a close eye on them and pounced before they could do any harm. Most were imprisoned or interned for the duration. The Defence of the Realm Act came into force within days and gave the Military and Police extensive powers. Internment also applied to many thousands of Germans of military age, whilst all 'Aliens' were required to register with the police.

## Welcome to DORA

### GERMANS TO HAVE PERMITS.

Notices were posted in Folkestone yesterday stating that aliens of all nationalities must forthwith register themselves at the office of the Chief Constable (Mr. H. Reeve), at the Town Hall. We understand that a great number of Frenchmen and other aliens have registered themselves.

All German subjects are prohibited by order from residing in the town unless provided with a permit issued by the Chief Constable, at his office.



### PIGEONS AS WAR MESSENGERS

The members of the Folkestone and District Homing Pigeon Society have offered their birds to the Secretary of State for War, for conveying messages during the war, and a message of thanks was received by Mr. W. J. Franks on Thursday.

The Society flew their 4th young bird race from Portsmouth last Saturday (a distance of 101 miles). The result was as follows:— 1st, Mr. Green (1.671 yards per minute); 2nd, Messrs. Boulter Bros; 3rd, Leadbetter (924). The race to-day (Saturday) is from Bournemouth (135 miles).



"S'H-SH: HERE'S A SPY!"  
CHUT!!... UN ESPION!



# Spy Scares and Spy Mania in Folkestone





Because of its location on the Channel Coast, Folkestone was seen as a prime target for German spies, both as a point of entry and departure to Britain, and also as a target for enemy intelligence gathering due to the large army garrison at Shorncliffe. The town's population was in no doubt that spies were in their midst and many folk took it upon themselves to hunt down the enemy. This led to some humorous incidents, but also to people settling old scores by alleging suspicious activities by perfectly innocent neighbours.

In the local Magistrates' Court, an army officer giving evidence against a citizen for breaching the blackout regulations was asked: "Could the light have been seen from a Zeppelin?" "Couldn't say" replied the witness, "never been in a Zeppelin."

Rumours also started circulating that German spies were hiding amongst the thousands of Belgian refugees who were flooding into the town. One such story even had the ring of truth when it was said that no fewer than thirty three enemy agents had been found hiding among a boat load of Belgians who arrived on the *SS Rapide* in August 1914.

Questions were asked in Parliament about the nests of spies inhabiting Folkestone. Lord Leith of Fyvie doggedly pursued the Home Office for answers, but was not particularly reassured by the reply of Viscount Allendale on 25 November 1914: *"In his letter of September 24 the noble Lord desired "to call attention to the fact that spies and alien enemies had been arrested along our South shores, making communication with steamers." He went on to say that he had personally seen men arrested in khaki uniform getting on the boats, and that it was only on account of the good look-out kept on board the mail steamers at Folkestone that the men were detected and handed over to the Folkestone Police. Naturally my right hon. friend thought that here was something specific to go upon, and he caused inquiries to be at once made. The result of the inquiries—I need not read the whole correspondence—was that the Folkestone Police said that they knew nothing whatever about this."* (Reported in Hansard)

National and International newspapers also fuelled Spy Mania in Folkestone



## HER SPY CHARGE TURNED ON HERSELF

"Every time I see a report that a German spy has been executed in the Tower of London and the details are suppressed, I wonder whether it is the woman who denounced me to the British authorities at Folkestone last Winter," said an American who was in business in Belgium before the war.

"I had gone back to Belgium to straighten out some business matters left in bad shape by a hurried departure last Summer, and had considerable difficulty getting out. Finally, after many delays, I reached Roosendaal, on the Holland border.

"It was after dark when I arrived, but I had plenty of time to catch the 8:30 train.

"Just as I closed my eyes there was a commotion outside. A hand wrenched at the handle of the compartment door, and I heard the guard's voice protesting in Dutch:

"No, no, Mevrouw! That is for smokers. There is a compartment ahead for ladies only, and the compartment in the rear is a 'non-fumeurs'."

"I had drawn the cover over the lamp in the top of the compartment, but I was curious to see what manner of woman this was that insisted upon getting into a smoking compartment with a solitary man, when two perfectly empty and respectable compartments were to be had. So I got up and pulled the cover string as the door opened in obedience to the woman's insistence.

"A rather good-looking blonde woman stood revealed. She was about 23 and fairly well dressed.

"If Madame, or Mademoiselle, insists, let her enter," I said to the guard. He shrugged his shoulders, stood back, and then closed the door.

"I was in for an adventure, I felt sure. Of the quality I was not so certain. She began a story at once. It was in French, but French with an accent. She said she was from Liège, and a refugee.

"Now, I had been long familiar with the Liège patois, and what she spoke was none of it. It was the French of Karlsruhe, or Potsdam. Immediately I connected her with Bourg Leopold, a town where several German officers and soldiers had tried to draw me into a fight.

"Suddenly she asked, although she had been using the language: 'Does Monsieur speak French?'

"A little," I replied, 'but I speak English better. Suppose you speak English?'

"Her English was thick, not with the accent of a Liégeoise or a Bruxelloise, or even of a Fleming. It was guttural. I used to have in my household a servant girl from Darmstadt who used just the same kind of English.

"She fired all sorts of questions at me, covertly, but I parried. By the time we reached Flushing I was heartily tired of her society. That she was a spy I was convinced, and I was determined that her espionage, so far as I was concerned, should cease at the earliest possible moment. So, after accompanying her aboard the steamer, I 'lost' her.

"The next morning we were at Folkestone. Naturally, the passports were subjected to a severe scrutiny, and many questions were asked. I did not think it unusual when the official who had questioned me approached me again, as I was about to land, and said: 'Beg pardon, Sir, but the Supervisor asks would you mind stepping up to the Custom House for a moment, as he would like to ask you some questions about Brussels?'

"I readily consented, for I was very willing to talk about conditions in Brussels. While I was waiting to see the Supervisor the first train for London moved out.

"I was ushered into the office of the military commandant. After a few unimportant questions, he suddenly wheeled in his chair, and looking sternly at me, demanded: 'Do you know, Sir, that you have been denounced to us as a German spy?'

"Flabbergasted" was no measure of my feelings. As I sat with mouth open in my astonishment, the officer went on:

"Your accent, Mr. Blank, is what I should call American, but we have to be very careful. You know there are many German-Americans traveling now who are much more German than American. Besides, we have known for some time that the Germans are using American passports to assist them in their spy work in this country. Your passport is apparently correct. Perhaps you have other means of even more certain identification."

"Luckily for me, I had. They were in an inner pocket of my waistcoat. I was able to produce one or two old business letters which had lain for months in my pocketbook.

"Now, would you mind telling me," I said, a sudden thought prompting me, 'who denounced me as a spy?'

"A woman," was the reply: 'a lady from Liège, a refugee on her way to London after a series of hairbreadth escapes.'

"I smiled, but demanded a description. He pictured the woman who had forced her company upon me at Roosendaal, and who was now speeding to London on the first boat-train.

"Well," I said, 'instead of getting the actual German spy you have let her slip through your fingers. The train stops at the junction at Croydon. There she will get out, and I fear you will have some difficulty getting hold of her.'

"The officer regarded me for a moment as if dazed. Then he jumped to his feet and pressed several buttons, and almost immediately he was surrounded by half a dozen adjutants and orderlies, and what-nots, and was issuing rapid orders.

"The train did not stop at Croydon. Before the officer bowed me out with apologies and a handshake he had ordered that it should run through to Victoria Station. So that when it flew past the station at the junction there must have been at least one of the passengers on board who was more than surprised."

(From the New York Times)



# What was the Truth?



I HOPE THERE ARE NO SPIES ABOUT!

J'espère qu'il n'y a pas d'espions par ici!



# The Kaiser sends more Spies



Fritz Kuhn



Hans Kuhn



Hans Kuhn



Hans Kuhn



*What is really happening in England?*



Hans Kuhn



Hans Kuhn



Hans Kuhn



Hans Kuhn



The loss of their entire Spy network in Britain within hours of war being declared was a hammer blow for Germany. Replacements were hurriedly trained and sent on missions to find out about British troops, the Royal Navy and morale in the general population. Several German spies headed for Folkestone. Carl Muller was caught when his 'innocent' letters were intercepted and found to contain messages in invisible ink. One gave details of troops in Folkestone. Muller was caught, tried, convicted and executed by firing squad at the Tower of London in 1915.

# Carl Muller

[illegible]



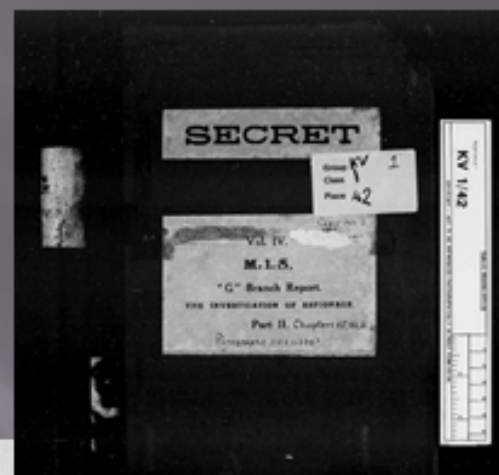
In a dramatic example of fact imitating fiction, Secret files of MI5 also reveal a number of other spy activities and the methods used by British intelligence services to thwart them.

## MI5 Files



Home Office for the Aliens Officers, and Scotland Yard for the approved ports or other police matters.

Moreover, since September 1914, an officer of M.O.S.g. had been stationed at Folkestone for the special purpose of watching the influx of Belgian refugees, with a view to taking action in the case of undesirables. A similar measure was adopted at Gravesend in February 1915 and at Southampton a little later.



15. 1337. MAR & the SCHERERS.

and Captain Belliard that a Belgian refugee named Fervost, formerly lock-keeper at Boesinghe, was suspect, led to the arrest of this man and his two daughters at Folkestone.

They carried documents proving that espionage had been going on behind the allied lines, and they confessed to being in touch with a German agent named *Adolphe* DITTMAR. In consequence, <sup>Adolphe</sup> DITTMAR and

After a slow start, Folkestone was soon swarming with British counter-intelligence officers. The Civil Police worked with MI5 and Special Branch. At the port, there were customs officers, Aliens officers, Embarkation Officers. The Military Police were based near the harbour and the Town Commandant with his staff of army officers created a further layer of security. The would-be spy had to avoid all of them; as Carl Muller and more than a dozen others found, failure could lead to a dawn appointment at the rifle range in the Tower.

1565. Agents arrested between August 1915  
and June 1916.

1. GUERRERO Adolfo. Spaniard. Journalist.  
(with Raymonde AMONDARAIN). (See 1565a-1579)

1.2.16. Landed Folkestone  
30.1.16. General Signal Admiralty.  
18.2.16. Arrested.  
13.7.16. Tried.  
Sentence. Death. Commuted to 10 years Penal  
Servitude.

Antwerp roll A.7. 2. GREITE Frank L. Theodore. German. Commercial  
Traveller (with Suzanne Dupont). (See 1580-159)

9.10.15. Landed Southampton.  
2.12.15. Tilbury.  
14.1.16. Folkestone.  
25.3.16. Tilbury.  
25 or 26.3.16. Arrested.  
11.7.16. Tried.  
Sentence. Imprisonment for 10 years.





The vast majority of German Spies were men. Women spies, on both sides, tend to feature more prominently in WW1 literature, partly due to the femme fatale image of some. The most well-known female spy is Mata Hari. When she arrived in Folkestone in December 1915, dressed in raccoon fur coat and hat, she was very closely questioned by Captain Dillon, an intelligence officer. He noted that she was 'handsome', and had an answer for everything. Although he did not trust her, he found nothing incriminating and she was allowed to continue her journey to the continent. In 1917 she was not so fortunate. Stopped by French Intelligence she was arrested and tried for espionage. Convicted, she was executed by firing squad.

Another woman suspected of espionage, and who also appears to have had many male friends, was Mrs Albertine Stanaway, a Folkestone dressmaker. Her MI5 files reveal a complex trail of connections with enemy agents, but somehow she managed to avoid leaving any hard evidence of knowing complicity in their activities. One of the men who visited Mrs Stanaway at her home in Cheriton Road was a Belgian by the name of Pierre Rotheudt. He stayed with Stanaway but also took a room in Sandgate Road where he had a clear view of the French Consulate. French secret agents also had offices at the rear of the consulate. Rotheudt is believed to have taken photographs of the agents, and when they returned to occupied France these agents were quickly rounded up by German counter-intelligence and shot.

Rotheudt was subsequently arrested in Britain and handed over to the French. He was tried, convicted and sentenced to death, though later reprieved and given a hefty prison sentence.

It was a source of considerable frustration to MI5 that the evidence against Albertine Stanaway was insufficient to mount a prosecution. Instead she was held in Aylesbury gaol and was deported in 1919.



# Beware female spies

## The case of Mrs Stanaway

1605. Agents arrested or otherwise disposed of  
between June 1916 and January 1917.

Antwerp  
Roll  
A.40.

1. van ZURK <sup>Jacobus Johannes D ZURMUELEN, Johann</sup> Dutch. Double agent with  
Elsie SCOTT, acting chiefly  
for Germany.

Task: Information re Bristol Channel,  
Newcastle, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Ireland.  
Signalled from Rotterdam.

31.5.16.

10.6.16.

23.8.16.

Landed:

Sent back with "No Return" permit.

(see 1609 - 1611)

2. Mrs Albertine STANAWAY French origin.  
Dressmaker at Folkestone.

July 1916.

7.12.16.

March 1917.

Intercepted letter to spy address:

Arrested

Interned under 14.B.

This case includes Pierre ROTHEUDT.

(see 1612 - 1632)





business but was expecting shortly to rejoin the Army.

1914. ROTHEUDT went back to the front; was wounded, and after being in hospital at La Panne, went to Folkestone on the 12th July, and again put up with Mrs. STANWAY of 64,

Mr. Cheriton Road. At the same time he hired Compton's another room in a house opposite the French Consulate and so situated that he could see everyone who went into the Consulate. Soon after the Germans shot a number of French agents on their appearance in German territory.

Qtr. Gen: It was supposed that ROTHEUDT had furnished information leading to such action for, by the de L'Est. 26th July, the French Intelligence Service had evidence that ROTHEUDT was in communication with RAASBROCK, a sub-agent of SANDERSON and addressing letters to Corn-Winterberg, Bysielhandel, 16, Sierambachstraat, Rotterdam.

ROTHEUDT was also expecting to receive letters through WILLIAMS at the Shaftesbury Hotel.

Suspicious actions.

Below, Sandgate Road, Folkestone. French secret agents were photographed by German spy Rotheudt as they entered the passageway on the left. They were caught and executed when they returned for their next missions in enemy territory.





The spy obsessed people of Folkestone had no idea that webs of espionage and counter-espionage were being woven in such detail. The town had given unstinting hospitality to the Belgian refugees and would have been surprised that some Belgian women were implicated in working for the enemy.

## Counter-espionage

sent once a week. Regarding espionage proper, the Dutchman reported that spies were using double passports, one of which had to be given up at the last station before entering Holland; that fifty or sixty German firms were doing business in London and sending information in false business telegrams piecemeal to different centres to be afterwards patched together and forwarded to Antwerp.

1210. Already in December 1914 it was reported that Belgian women were being sent via Folkestone to spy in France and the order was issued that such persons were to be allowed to come in but not to leave the United Kingdom.

Types  
German  
employ



Not to be allowed to return: 1 German woman who posed as a Swiss, went frequently to Folkestone made friends with officers, and left for Germany before proceedings could be taken.



Further confirmation that people in Folkestone should maintain their watchfulness arrived in April 1915. William le Queux, the man who had whipped up so much of the Spy Mania before the war, gave a passionate lecture at the Town Hall.

## Remaining Vigilant



Something Startling at the Town Hall

The German Spy Peril -  
Lecture by William Le Queux

The author's lecture is more astounding than his books. Yes, it is startling!

'The so-called naturalised German was by far the most dangerous enemy.' (Loud applause) 'We must intern ALL Germans to crush the marvellous system of German Espionage.' (Loud applause)

April 1915

Spy stories endure; the cloak and dagger world still fascinates and, even after nearly 100 years, untold tales of intrigue and mystery still surface from time to time. Stand alongside Folkestone Harbour and cast your eyes towards the upper town. Dominating the scene is a building with a glass turret, the perfect spot to watch activity in the harbour area. Recently the Folkestone Herald reported as follows:

From the discovery in Australia of five forks emerged a story of espionage and intrigue. For more than 50 years, families and tourists who had travelled to Folkestone for seaside holidays stayed in Parade House. It was ideally situated for guests to gaze out over the English Channel - but it was also perfectly placed for other, more sinister, purposes.

Before the start of the First World War, the building was used as the German consulate to issue visas to those entering the country. But as conflict seemed imminent staff fled, leaving the building empty. Or so the people of Folkestone thought.

It has been claimed by the current owner that: "During the First World War a spy for the Germans stayed in the house and told superiors secrets he had picked up from London. He used to communicate by flashing Morse code from the fifth floor to ships in the Channel. He was eventually caught and faced a court martial. He was later executed."

Historians in Folkestone have discussed the rumours of a German consulate in Parade House for many years, but with no documented proof, some refused to believe it.

The owner was adamant: "A woman who I met at FHODS said she had wanted to come here for years because her mother had been a waitress when it had been in the hands of the Germans. On the top of the building is an eagle, the national symbol of Germany, and that dates back to when it was used as the consulate. There's no doubt in my mind, the rumours are true."



What do you think?



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