

Charles Cholmondeley (British intelligence officer)

Charles Cholmondeley MBE was a British intelligence officer known for his leading role in Operation Mincemeat, a critical military deception operation which misdirected German forces' attention away from the Allied Invasion of Sicily in Operation Husky.



Cholmondeley and Montagu in 1943

Biography

He was born in O'Halloran Hill, South Australia and was a Flight Lieutenant in the Royal Air Force who had been seconded to MI5, Britain's domestic counter-intelligence and security service. He had been appointed as the secretary of the Twenty Committee, a small inter-service, inter-departmental intelligence team in charge of double agents.

In November 1942, the Twenty Committee turned down Cholmondeley's Operation Mincemeat plan as being unworkable, but thought there may have been some potential in the idea. As there was a naval connection to the plan, Ewen Montagu, the naval representative, was assigned to work with Cholmondeley to develop the plan further. As part of his duties Montagu had been briefed on the need for deception operations to aid the Allied war aims in a forthcoming invasion operation in the Mediterranean.

He was awarded the MBE in 1944. He died 15 June 1982.

Operation Mincemeat

This was a successful British deception operation of the Second World War to disguise the 1943 Allied invasion of Sicily. The two members of British intelligence obtained the body of Glyndwr Michael, a tramp who died from eating rat poison, dressed him as an officer of the Royal Marines and placed personal items on him identifying him as the fictitious Captain (Acting Major) William Martin. Correspondence between two British generals that suggested that the Allies planned to invade Greece and Sardinia, with Sicily as merely the target of a feint, was also placed on the body.

Charles Cholmondeley's ashes together with his son, Richard, are interred in Barton St David Churchyard but he has no apparent connection with the village. This has been the subject of some conjecture in Barton as to why this should be but, fortunately, we were able to contact his widow, Alison, in February 2023. We are very indebted for her clarification.