

NOTES FOR VALENCAY COMMEMORATION - 2017

Lieutenant Andrée Borrel, First Aid Nursing Yeomanry

Andrée Raymonde Borrel was born in Paris on 18 November 1919 to a working-class family living in the suburb of Bécon-les-Bruyeres. She grew up with a love of the outdoors and a passion for hiking, climbing and cycling. Leaving school at 14 she worked firstly for a milliner then as an assistant in boulangeries. After the outbreak of war in 1939 she left to accompany her widowed mother to Toulon. In October she volunteered for the 'Association des Dames de France' training as a nurse. In January 1940 she went to Nîmes to care for wounded soldiers. After the fall of France she was unwilling to accept her country's defeat and joined the Resistance, being drawn into the 'Pat' line assisting evaders' escape to Spain. In late 1941 the line was betrayed and she escaped to Portugal. There she worked for the British Embassy until a flight to England was arranged in April 1942.



After being cleared through the Royal Victoria Patriotic School she offered her services to De Gaulle's HQ but was rejected after refusing to divulge details of the 'Pat' line. She was readily accepted by SOE's F Section, not least because of her knowledge of conditions in France and her resistance experience. Given a commission in the FANY, she joined the first course for female agents in May 1942. After one failed attempt, Andrée (code name 'Denise') was dropped into France on the night of 24/25 September 1942 together with Lise de Baissac ('Odile'), landing at Boisrenard near the village of Crouy-sur-Cosson. They were the first female agents to be inserted by parachute.

She went to Paris in advance of the arrival in October of her circuit chief Francis Suttill ('Prosper') for whom she worked as courier. The pair travelled widely together, assessing likely contacts and reconnoitring parachute landing grounds for the growing PROSPER network. They planned and received a significant amount of arms and explosives and ensured these were distributed to the sub-groups they recruited. Andrée was also involved in training members of these groups and planning sabotage attacks. 'Prosper' was impressed with her work and she became his 'de facto' deputy in March 1943.

Following increased scrutiny by the SD and Gestapo of the extensive PROSPER network, Andrée Borrel was arrested on 23 June 1943. After interrogation in the Avenue Foch she was held in Fresnes prison until May 1944 and then moved to a prison in Karlsruhe. On 6 July 1944 she was taken, with three other females, to Natzweiler-Struthof Concentration Camp and executed by an injection of phenol and then cremated. She was 24 years old. *She was posthumously awarded the King's Commendation for Brave Conduct, Croix de Guerre avec Palme, Médaille de la Résistance Française avec Rosette.*

Lieutenant Lise de Baissac, First Aid Nursing Yeomanry

Lise Marie Jeannette de Baissac was born in Mauritius on 11 May 1905 to a family of French descent and British nationality who moved to Paris in 1919. After the occupation of Paris in 1940 she and one of her brothers (Claude) went to the south of France and escaped via Spain, Portugal and Gibraltar to the UK. In London she worked for a newspaper and Claude was recruited by SOE. When it began to recruit women she applied to join. Given a commission in the FANY she began her agent training in May 1942.



On the night of 24/25 September 1942 Lise de Baissac ('Odile') was dropped into France together with Andrée Borrel, landing at Boisrenard near the village of Crouy-sur-Cosson, the first female agents to be inserted by parachute. After a day's acclimatisation on local conditions by Andrée Borrel, Lise moved to Poitiers to set up the ARTIST network, designed to assist newly arrived agents. She also acted as liaison officer between the PROSPER, BRICKLAYER and her brother Claude's SCIENTIST networks and sought out dropping and landing grounds. Without a radio she had to travel to and from Paris and Bordeaux by train to send and receive messages and collect funds. She also arranged a number of receptions for agents and equipment.

Following the arrest in June 1943 of the principals of the PROSPER network and later arrests in her brother's network, Lise and Claude were brought back to England in August 1943. After a period as an SOE instructor, during which she broke her leg parachuting, she returned to France by Lysander in April 1944, code-name 'Marguerite', as courier to the PIMENTO network run by Anthony Brooks. Coming into conflict with some of the group's socialist political aims, she was moved to join her brother's SCIENTIST II network in southern Normandy. There she assisted her brother to arm and equip the network in preparation for D Day. After the invasion the tempo of operations increased and she was kept busy frequently couriering radio parts and other equipment, collecting intelligence and helping code and decipher messages to and from London. She was also involved in training resistance members and her SOE file records "she was the inspiration of groups on the Orne and by her initiative caused heavy losses to the Germans with tyre bursters on the roads near St Aubin-le-Desert, St Mars, and as far as Laval, Le Mans and Rennes. She also took part in several armed attacks on enemy columns." As the allies broke through at Mayenne in August they were surprised to be greeted by Lise and her brother in uniform.

Lise de Baissac died in 2004 at the age of 98. *She was appointed as a Member of the Order of the British Empire, Chevalier de la Légion d'honneur and Croix de Guerre avec Palme.*