

Operation Mincemeat – The true spy story that changed the course of  
World War II by Ben Macintyre.  
Bloomsbury 2010.

The film *The Man who Never was*, produced in 1956, told the story of an espionage coup that fooled the Germans into thinking that the Allied invasion of what Churchill called Europe's 'soft under-belly' would commence in Greece rather than Sicily. It was a successful film of an operation that became and remains a legend and *Operation Mincemeat* tells the story in all its detail.

*Operation Mincemeat* details the plan put together by Ewen Montagu, a scion of the Jewish aristocracy and Charles Cholmondely, an RAF officer, who worked at MI5, to float a body ashore in Spain that appeared to be that of an RAF officer carrying secret orders to North Africa about the Allied invasion of Europe, whose plane had crashed into the Mediterranean. The MI5 team were convinced that if the body was picked up by the Spanish, then ruled by the fascist Franco, though officially neutral in the war, the documents would be passed to the Germans.

To execute the plot the team had to find the body of a complete unknown – which they did – build a convincing 'back story' around him that would stand up to the hardest scrutiny, and ensure that every detail of the materials on his person when he was picked up were flawless.

*Operation Mincemeat* reads like a spy thriller, which in many ways it is and was, and so I will give away no further actual details here but leave them for the reader to discover; suffice it to say that this was an operation with many imponderables and opportunities for failure, and the fact that it succeeded, and succeeded so brilliantly, is eloquent testimony to the determination and vision of its creators and the many unsung heroes who participated in an incredible operation.

Rabbi Dr Charles H Middleburgh