

During the Second World War spies were very important to help find out things from the enemy. Many men and women risked their lives to take part in espionage (the posh name for spying). Odette Brally was one of those women. She was born in France in 1912 and moved to England in the 1930's after marrying Roy Sansom an Englishman. They had three daughters: Françoise, Lily and Marianne. Odette ended up in the SOE (Special Operations Executive) quite by accident: she responded to an appeal for photographs or postcards taken on the Continent that might be useful for the war. She answered the appeal to say that she had photos taken near Boulogne in France but instead of sending her letter to the Admiralty she sent it to the War Office by mistake! The War Office enrolled her in the Special Forces of the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry and she was trained to be sent to France and work with the French Resistance.



Odette was given the code name of 'Lise' and sent to Cannes in 1942, having left her daughters in a boarding school. In Cannes she contacted Peter Churchill, her supervisor. She acted as his courier and brought him funds (funds were essential in the spy network!) but unfortunately the following year Peter Churchill was betrayed by a double agent and they were both arrested and put in prison. Odette was cruelly tortured by the Gestapo but refused to give them any information. She took complete responsibility for the operation to spare Peter Churchill from interrogation and told the Gestapo (The German secret police) that she was married to Peter and that he was the nephew of Winston Churchill, Britain's Prime Minister! She hoped that the Germans would be lenient with them.

She was still condemned to death and was then sent to Ravensbrück, an infamous concentration camp for women. However, a date for her execution was never decided upon. Her cover story had possibly paid off and she survived the war. Sadly when she returned home to England she found out that her husband Roy Sansom had died. In 1947 she married Peter Churchill, her SOE partner. After the war Odette was awarded the George Cross and made an MBE. She was the only female to receive the George Cross whilst alive.