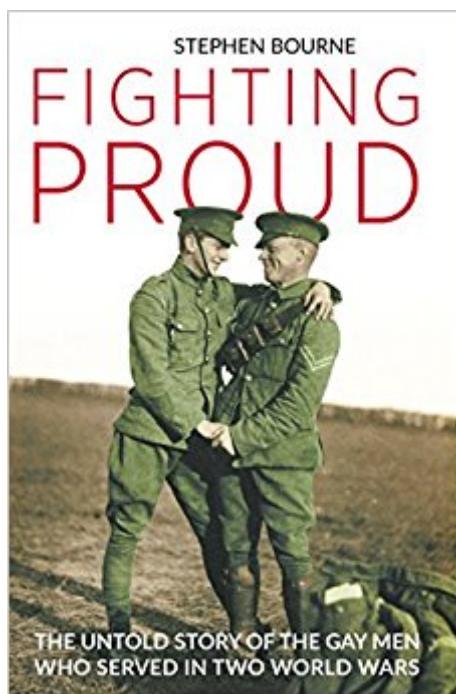


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Fighting Proud: The Untold Story Of The Gay Men Who Served In Two World Wars



Synopsis

"In 1943 the famous Battle of Britain pilot Flight Lieutenant Ian Gleed was shot down over Tunisia. He died a hero. Twice before he had bailed out of blazing Spitfires. Twice King George VI had congratulated him. What his family probably never knew was that Gleed was homosexual. It was not until the 1990s, when one of his lovers was interviewed for BBC television, that the truth came out..." In this astonishing new history of wartime Britain, historian Stephen Bourne unearths the fascinating stories of the gay men who served in the armed forces and at home, and brings to light the great unheralded contribution they made to the war effort. Fighting Proud weaves together the remarkable lives of these men, from RAF hero Ian Gleed — a Flying Ace twice honored for bravery by King George VI — to the infantry officers serving in the trenches on the Western Front in WWI - many of whom led the charges into machine-gun fire only to find themselves court-marshalled after the war for indecent behavior. Behind the lines, Alan Turing's work on breaking the "enigma machine" and subsequent persecution contrasts with the many stories of love and courage in Blitzed-out London, with new wartime diaries and letters unearthed for the first time. Bourne tells the bitterly sad story of Ivor Novello, who wrote the WWI anthem "Keep the Home Fires Burning," and the crucial work of Noel Coward - who was hated by Hitler for his work entertaining the troops. Fighting Proud also includes a wealth of long-suppressed wartime photography subsequently ignored by mainstream historians. This book is a monument to the bravery, sacrifice and honor shown by a persecuted minority, who contributed during Britain's hour of need.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"Stephen Bourne brings great natural scholarship and passion to largely hidden stories. He is highly accessible, accurate, and surprising. You always walk away from his work knowing something that you didn't know, that you didn't even suspect." Bonnie Greer

Stephen Bourne is a writer and historian. An expert on Black and LGBT British history, he has written for BBC History Magazine and History Today and is a regular contributor to the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography. His -bestselling book Black Poppies (History Press, 2013), a history of the contribution of black men and women to the First World War, won the Southwark Arts Forum Award for Literature. He has also written widely on homosexual representations in film.

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