Fanatical Fay Taylour

Her sporting and political life at speed,

1904-1983.

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Allotment Hut
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Acknowledgements

This short biography of one of the most successful woman motorsports champions ever has had an exceptionally long gestation. As a young post-graduate researcher in the mid-1980s, I interviewed Richard ‘Dick’ Bellamy, one of Sir Oswald Mosley’s senior Blackshirt officers in the pre-war British Union of Fascists (later, British Union). Then in his early 80s, Dick Bellamy gave me invaluable help in finding ex-Blackshirts, telling me his own story, and also gifting me a random collection of his memorabilia. Among it was a packet of letters which he thought I might find interesting. They were from Fay Taylour – ‘you know, the famous motorcycle champion’. But, I didn’t know, and, in those days before the internet, I had no immediate way of finding out about her. The packet of letters were filed away, and moved with me, from house to house, over the next 25 years or so. Then, while talking to the historian, Philip Coupland, about an intended project of his – ‘Fascists on wings and wheels’ – I remembered that I had the letters from Taylour to Bellamy, and dug them out from my shed.
My rediscovery of the Taylour letters led to my publishing ‘Fay Taylour: a dangerous woman in sport and politics’ in the *Women’s History Review*, which, in turn, led to my being a guest on BBC Radio 4’s *Making History* programme, talking about Fay Taylour and also England’s first well-known, and pioneering, woman racing driver, Dorothy Levitt. In the years since I was given the letters, much more material had become available about Taylour. In particular, the UK National Archives at Kew had released a mass of security files about Taylour’s political life and her imprisonment, as a dangerous subversive, during the Second World War. These files form a great part of the documentary evidence for this book. The internet and digital technology had also brought the story of Taylour’s fame in Australia and New Zealand close to hand. The national libraries of both countries deserve thanks for their efforts in digitalising so much material that is valuable to the historian. The National Library of Australia’s *Trove* project, and the National Library of New Zealand’s *Paperspast* database are models of their kind.

Taylour had also found a chronicler of her days of Speedway fame in Brian Belton, whose *Fay Taylour; Queen*
of Speedway (2006) is based on Belton’s very fortunate access to Fay Taylour’s papers. Taylour was an inveterate letter-writer, broadcaster, and scribbler, and her papers are, in all probability, extensive. Sadly, in an e-mail to me (31st December, 2013), Belton said that he longer knew where the papers are held. Nonetheless, Fay Taylour; Queen of Speedway is a valuable source of information on her early life, and I have taken full advantage of it here.

I must also extend my thanks to Richard Armstrong, whose unpublished ‘Fay on Four Wheels’ is the product of Richard’s extensive researches into Taylour’s very wide range of motor car racing. It would have been difficult for me to have put as much flesh on the car racing career of Taylour as Richard has, and his work really helped in giving this biography racing depth.

Among Taylour’s close associates on the ultra-right in the period from September 1939, until her internment in June 1940, was Charlie Watts, a renowned British Union leader. Watts was highly valued by the fascist movement, and he received the British Union’s ‘Gold Award’ for his activism.
He also worried the British security services, who saw his successful organising of London taxi drivers into a fascist group of their own as a security threat in wartime Britain. I was fortunate in that my knowledge of Charlie Watts was extended beyond the security service files by one of Watts’ daughters, Eileen Mackrory, who gave me much background information on her father.

Finally, I must thank Theresa Jenkins-Teague, who helped nurse Fay Taylour in her final illnesses. An afternoon spent with Theresa brought to life lots of interesting points about Taylour, from the size of her hands, to the presence of stretch marks, via Taylour’s suitcases full of snapshots of her long career.

There is more to be written about Fay Taylour, especially if her papers resurface, and this short book is only meant to be another step in recording the life of a daring, successful, woman motorsports champion, who was also a dangerous, complex, and disturbing political activist.
1. Introduction: four themes of her life

In August 1929, 168 motorcyclists took part in a six days’ time trial over the Bavarian Alps which proved to be a gruelling test of their skills and machines. The trial started from Munich in scenes of chaos, when the entire field began at once, rather than three riders each minute. Escorted by large numbers of police and a huge crowd, the mob of motor cyclists was eventually stopped outside the city and the trial was restarted. It proved to be a dangerous ordeal, with the Press Association’s special correspondent attached to the British Team reporting:

Crossing the Bavarian Alps nearly every competitor was unseated. The road over Mount Ettallerberg – approximately 3,250 feet – presented an amazing spectacle, guides and spectators, of whom there were thousands lining the whole route, toiled up the steep ascent escorting the small army of riders, whose task of pushing their machines to the peak of the pass was an unenviable one. Many, in fact, collapsed exhausted before they reached the top.
The pass itself is a disused rocky narrow passage – it could hardly be called a road – very steep and full of loose rocks and small stones. It was an ordeal for the ordinary pedestrian, let alone the man with a heavy 10 h.p. combination, to push to the top. At frequent intervals the passage was completely blocked, the riders who collapsed under the terrific strain having no means of retiring out of the way of the oncoming competitors.¹

This was merely the first day of the 600 mile long trial course, in which each competitor began with a score of 100 from which marks were deducted for various penalties, such as putting one’s feet to the ground. At stake were the International Trophy and the International Vase, both held by Britain, which had entered one team of three riders for the Trophy and two teams of three for the Vase. In addition, there were 84 other British riders competing as individuals, including six of the total of seven women in the event, the seventh being a German woman. At the end of the event, the British Trophy team were the only team to finish, and a British team also took the Vase, with Ireland third, behind France. In fact British and Irish competitors dominated the
whole event, taking the majority of gold, silver and bronze individual medals. *The Irish Times* reported:

Among the women riders, Miss Marjorie Cottle, Mrs Louis M’Lean, Miss Fay Taylour, Miss B. Lermitte, Miss C. Herbert, and Miss M. Mewton all won silver medals [awarded to competitors who lost less than 15 points]. In the conditions theirs was a truly magnificent performance.²

Although Fay Taylour was variously described as British or Irish, she was, in fact, Irish by birth, and the Irish press maintained a long time interest in her racing fortunes, with, for example, *The Irish Times* carrying a feature article on her as late as 1953³. In part, this was a result of her famous victory in the Leinster Trophy Motor Race at Skerries in August 1934. But Taylour also had a flair for self-promotion, and traded, in Ireland, on being the Alexandra College ‘girl’ who had forsaken respectable bourgeois life for motor sports. Characteristically, although Taylour had been one of the tiny number of women competitors in the Bavarian Alps trial, she had gone one better than the others, and attracted
additional attention by setting ‘a new fashion [of] making her toilette match the colour of her machine’⁴. This combination of fearlessness, undoubted racing skill, and the ability to compel attention marked Fay Taylour’s life, and it is possible to see in her participation in the 1929 trial key themes of her life, racing and politics.

*Five themes of a life*

The dominant theme of Fay Taylour’s life was motor racing of all types. At the age of 22 she began her racing career riding motorcycles in scrambling competitions. Her immediate success led to her been taken on as a team rider for the motorcycle company, AJS. Successes in trials racing followed, and within a few months ‘she achieved four premier awards and three fastest times’⁵. From there she moved to speedway, or dirt track racing, leaving AJS to become a team rider for Rudge in 1928. Her genius for speedway earned her worldwide fame and the sobriquet ‘Flying Fay’. A highly successful speedway tour of Australia – the ‘home’ of the sport – in 1929, when she beat the leading male rider of the day and earned over £1500 in prize money, was followed by disappointment on returning
to Britain when she learnt that, in her absence, women had been banned from speedway by the Auto-Cycle Union, the governing body of the motor cycle sport in the UK. But Taylour continued to compete in speedway on the continent, and turned to motor car racing. She established a new record for racing from Calcutta to Ranchi in 1931 and spent the rest of the decade competing in a wide range of motor car racing across Britain, Ireland, Europe and the Empire and Commonwealth. The war marked a new turn in Taylour’s life, and three years’ imprisonment, but she returned to the race track in July 1949, this time in the USA, at the California Sports Car Club’s first ‘foreign car race’ at Carrell Speedway in Gardena⁶. Taylour went on to race in further ‘foreign car’ events, road races, midget car races and perhaps stock car races⁷ in the USA. Returning to England for her father’s funeral in 1952, she found that she could not get back into the USA for security reasons, and it took her until 1955 to be allowed re-entry. In the intervening time, she raced in Britain, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Ireland, Sweden, before returning to the United States for her last races, which included stock car racing in the Mid-West. She had achieved success in an extraordinarily wide range of motor sports, and had been able to find new ways of racing when bars against women
had seemed to have cut off her progress. She is perhaps the most successful woman motor sports competitor yet, and her determination to keep on racing sustained her through most of her adult life.

That her racing career spanned nearly four decades and survived the disruption caused by the second world war, her own internment in Britain, her banning from the USA, and of women from various types of racing, is an indicator of the second key theme of Taylour’s life – her strong character, marked by competitiveness, courage, determination, and obstinacy. Motor sports were particularly dangerous, not just as a result of their very nature, but also because little attention was paid to competitor safety. Taylour’s international fame came from her speedway success, and speedway was a particularly deadly sport, with at least 24 riders being killed in Britain before the Second World War\textsuperscript{8}. She also exhibited a constant determination to race, overcoming bars against women racing, turning from one form of motor sports to another, racing around the world and living, often precariously, off short term contracts, appearance fees, and winnings right into her early 50’s. She exhibited a similar degree of
determination in her political life. Returning to Britain just prior to the outbreak of the Second World War, Taylour was an outspoken critic of Britain’s involvement, so outspoken that she was visited at home by Special Branch, who sought more information about her views. That visit might well have been taken as a warning to desist in her anti-war, pro-German views, but Taylour responded by pursuing them even more clearly and loudly. Her internment the following year eventually extended to three years imprisonment, which was longer than most detainees. That length of internment was largely because she was seen as a strongly pro-German figure who was unlikely to keep her views quiet on release. There were also concerns that her ability to create networks of friends, and her links in Ireland, might also prove to be a risk. In the detention hearings when Taylour was questioned about her views and activities, she maintained a strong, unrepentant defence, which, given the prize of freedom from internment, could be seen to represent a degree of obstinacy.

Fay Taylour’s silver medal at the 1929 Bavarian Alps trial was the second occasion that she raced in Germany, and Germany became another theme of her life. She visited
Germany again, after the Nazis had come to power, racing and, in 1939, radio broadcasting from Berlin to South Africa. She developed connections with the German motor racing industry and figures in the National Socialist Motor Corps (National-sozialistisches Kraftfahr-Korps, NSKK), and began to see herself as a national socialist. Her understanding of national socialism was personal and idiosyncratic, but it underpinned all her wartime and post-war political beliefs and activities. While interned on the Isle of Man, her camp governor reported that Taylour was ‘one of the worst pro-Nazis in Port Erin’\(^9\), and 30 years later, she was still promoting her view of national socialism, into which, by that time, she was incorporating a variety of causes and people – from Castro’s Cuba to Irish Republicanism.

Fay Taylour’s relationships with women are interesting. In sport, women were rivals to be beaten, both on and off the track, but from the outset of her active political life she was involved in networks that were dominated by women. Her internment with other women reinforced that basis of political life and activity, and in the post-war period she maintained contacts with women on the ultra-right that she
had known during the war. Taylour was linked to a loose circle of political women, members of a variety of overlapping political groups and parties, who were among the most active of the ultra-right anti-war campaigners in 1939/40, some of whom were key players, knowingly or unwittingly, in the events that led to the Anna Wolkoff-Tyler Kent affair and the subsequent extension of internment to over a thousand British citizens. Women were, therefore, key to Fay Taylour’s life, and although she was associated with many men, particularly those involved with motor racing, it was women’s networks that sustained her political activity.

Taylour’s family was a well-established part of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy; and her father was an officer in the British Army who went on to be a senior officer in the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC). Taylour herself was educated at the famous Irish girls’ school, Alexandra College, at that time sited in Dublin. But the creation of the Irish Free State in 1922, and the disbandment of the RIC, led to the Taylours’ move to England. Fay Taylour’s perception of her nationality was, subsequently, to prove to be a changeable one, and she often presented herself as Irish or British
depending on who she was talking to, and the impression she was trying to give. During internment, Taylour argued that she was strongly patriotic and British, yet also noted that she was Irish. One of the concerns of the British security forces during the war was that if she was released to Ireland then she would be able to make political contacts that were seen to be anti-British. She did, in fact, make such contacts after release, linking up with the pro-Franco priest, Father Denis Fahey, joining the Anglo-Irish Friendship League, but also making contact with members of the IRA, and exiled European collaborationists. And by the 1970s, Taylour was strongly advocating support for Irish Republicanism and hailing Bernadette Devlin as a heroine of the Troubles.

To varying degrees, these five themes – motor racing, strength of character, Germany and Nazi Germany, women’s networks and friendships, and Taylour’s sense of national identity – marked Taylour’s life. Prior to 1939, the dominant themes were Taylour’s love of motor sport and her strong, competitive personality that enabled her to pursue racing with such success. This was the period of her life that was dominated by racing. It was not until
September 1939 that she added a commitment to dangerous politics, a commitment that was characterised by the same degree of single mindedness that she applied to motor sport, a politics that she had experienced first-hand in Nazi Germany, and a gift for friendships and networks that she had previously displayed in sport.
2. Early years; family and school, 1904-1922

Writing in the 1970s, Taylour reflected on her father’s loyalties in pre-First World War Ireland and the subsequent tensions within RIC and British Army over the conduct of the Irish War of Independence:

My father was a senior officer in the RIC and I have his letters, both his love letters to my mother, and his later letters written during that period [1919-1922] in Ireland. He was strictly loyal to the British Government – but his comments re the reluctance of British officers and his own men due to the B[lack] & T[ans] campaigns which many of his own men would not carry out is interesting.  

Fay Taylour’s reading of her father’s concerns regarding the excesses and atrocities of the auxiliary forces that were recruited by the British government in its fight with the IRA is interesting. From the perspective of Taylour’s life, the patriotism of her father did not mean that he was an
unconditional supporter of the British government as it allowed its auxiliary units to meet terror with terror. For Taylour, her father’s patriotism was more nuanced than the government’s, and more focused on a wider perspective than ‘my country right or wrong’. Whether this accurately portrayed her father’s views is unclear, though far from unlikely in relation to the Irish war, but it would certainly reflect how Taylour saw her own politics as they developed.

Fay Taylour’s family were part of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy. Her grandfather was the Marquis of Headford, who had deserted his wife and children, leaving her to bring up a son and two daughters in straightened circumstances\textsuperscript{11}. The son was Herbert, who joined the British Army and rose to the rank of Colonel before retiring and taking a commission in the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC). The Irish force was unlike any other police force in the UK, being more akin to continental models such as the Spanish \textit{guardia civil}, or even more militarised forces, like the French \textit{gendarmerie}. As a disciplined, partially barracked and armed force it was the natural home of retired military officers like Herbert Taylour.
Fay Taylour’s mother was Helen Webb, who had been born in Dresden while her parents were visiting Germany. Helen Webb was of Scots and English descent, and spent her early years in Gibraltar where her father, Randolph Webb, was stationed. He had served in the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny and in Abyssinia\textsuperscript{12}, and rose to become Surgeon General of the Royal Army Medical Corps. Helen Webb’s two sisters – Fay’s aunts – both made their mark in life, and may well have been more than a passing influence on Fay. One of the Webb women became an active Suffragette and was imprisoned in Holloway Goal, where Fay was taken as a child to see her. Taylour’s other aunt became a teacher at the famous Dublin girls’ school, Alexandra College, which Fay was to attend herself. Helen Webb’s brother became a professor and fellow at Trinity College, Dublin, while his wife was Dr Ella Webb, ‘a much revered character’\textsuperscript{13}.

Fay Taylour was born on 5\textsuperscript{th} April 1904\textsuperscript{14} at Oxmanton Hall, Birr, King’s County, Leinster, and Christened Helen Frances Taylour\textsuperscript{15}. She was the middle of three sisters, with Hilda
being the oldest and Enid the youngest. Fay’s early years involved frequent moves as her father was posted from one town to another. Brian Belton has argued that this early experience led to a sense of rootlessness and left Fay with ‘no definite sense of belonging’\textsuperscript{16}. It is certainly the case that Fay Taylour never settled in one place as an adult, but in large part this was because of the nature of the motor sports she was involved with. Although her early childhood was peripatetic to a degree, her schooling, first at Miss Fletcher’s boarding school in Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin, then at Alexandra College, Earlsfort Terrace, in Dublin, was far more settled. In addition, her family, particularly her aunts, also helped maintain a tie to Ireland, even after the creation of the Free State in 1922. However, her family was small, the status of Ireland did change, and following the creation of the Free State, the RIC was disbanded and Fay’s parents moved to Burghfield Bridge Lodge, Berkshire.

Brian Belton’s account of Taylour’s early years places emphasis on the relationship between father and daughter, with her father being seen as a ‘hands on’ parent, who taught Fay the necessary country pursuits that enabled her to ‘shoot, fish and ride horses [and become] something of a
sharpshooter, [who] took to “borrowing” the landlord’s pony and galloping round the fields without saddle or bridle’\textsuperscript{17}. It does seem that Taylour had a good relationship with her father, and once her motor sports career started she would often stay with her father when she was in England (her mother died of cancer in 1925). It was from her father’s London house in Lucerne Mews in Kensington that she was taken in 1940 to be interned. Internment caused a rift in Fay Taylour’s family, but her father stood by her despite the clear inference of internment – that Fay was a potential traitor. In her first appeal against detention, in August 1940, she explained:

My people [family] are very distressed. My father is what is termed a real old die hard. When Ireland became a Free State he came to live here. He wrote me a frightful letter when I went to Holloway; he said he could not believe that a daughter of my mother could turn out as I had done. He did relent and sent me flowers the other day.\textsuperscript{18}
Her father also visited her once in gaol in May 1941, wrote to her and occasionally sent parcels to her while she was detained. She was aware of the distress her internment and her views caused to her father, and was herself upset by the difficulties this caused in her relationship with him:

Our relations are friendly [...] he wrote to me for my birthday the other day. I am terribly sorry for him. It is grim enough for me to have had my freedom taken from me, but for him, who has been such a good loyalist, to have to be punished like that, it is rather difficult for him.¹⁹

Fay Taylour had a strong relationship with her father, one that was able to weather the strains caused by her internment. She described her father as ‘a good loyalist, ‘a real old die hard’, and ‘a strong Conservative’²⁰. These characteristics, combined with his military and police service, and the military service of her mother’s father, meant that Fay Taylour’s childhood was marked by a deep, instinctive patriotism which became one element in her later life, albeit mutated by ideology.
If her parents and her Anglo-Irish background provided Fay Taylour with a patriotic, Conservative outlook, the women in her family were distinguished by successful lives outside of the domestic sphere. Hilda Taylour, Fay’s elder sister, married a British Army officer, but her younger sister, Enid, studied medicine at University College, London and became a doctor, just as her aunt, Dr Ella Webb had in Dublin. Fay’s other aunt became a teacher at Alexandra College, Dublin. Fay herself was sent to boarding school in Dublin, firstly at Miss Fletcher’s boarding school, where she excelled in tennis, hockey, and at the school’s gymkhana, which also incorporated bicycle racing, ‘in which [Fay] proved to be invincible. In fact she was so accomplished that according to Fay bicycle races were dropped from the programme due to the lack of competition for the Taylour girl’. From Miss Fletcher’s, Fay moved, in 1919, to Alexandra College, at that time sited at Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin. The school was founded in 1866 by Anne Jellicoe, a Quaker who believed that girls were entitled to the same educational opportunities as boys. Under Jellicoe, the school became a significant pioneer of girls’ education in Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom, and Jellicoe
campaigned to enable women to take university degrees, something that was achieved, in Ireland, with the Royal University of Ireland Act 1879. As a result, the first women in the United Kingdom to receive university degrees were six former pupils of Alexandra College, who studied at Dublin’s Royal University and Trinity College, Dublin.

Fay Taylour attended Alexandra College from 1919 until 1922, her time there almost exactly matching the period of the Irish War of Independence. Although Dublin was the centre of much military action, it does not seem that it impinged directly on the Alex girls. Given that it was a Church of Ireland school, it is likely that the sympathies of most of the girls and staff would have been with Crown forces. In her last year at school, Fay took an additional course in housecraft; the spur for this rather surprising move was the fact that her mother was increasingly unwell, and it may have been that it was felt that Taylour might have a role in running her father’s household. Brian Belton has argued that there was, however, little intention on Fay’s part to pursue this course:
During her education, Fay had no thoughts of or ambition relating to motor sport, she won the college tennis championship and, inspired by her gym mistress, she wanted to train to be a sports teacher, but instead the Housecraft Course dominated her last year in college. Fay was not really interested in the ‘disciplines of the home’, but she I well in her final examinations in cooking, laundry, sewing and housekeeping, and finished her education on a relatively high note. In her last term at Alexandra, in 1922, she won one of the two scholarships awarded, making her a “champion housekeeper”! With the scrolls and the honour, she was given a cash prize of fifty pounds.22

This was a substantial prize for a school student (equivalent to around £2,500 in 2014), and was to open up a new beginning for Fay Taylour as she left school, and Ireland, and went to her parents’ new home in Berkshire.

Fay Taylour’s early life was marked by a good relationship with her father and the development of practical sporting
skills – fishing, shooting, and riding. Her parents both had military backgrounds, her father was a patriotic Unionist, police officer, and loyalty to the Crown was a keystone of the family. In addition, women in Fay’s family were successful in educational and public life, while one of her aunts was also engaged in the women’s suffrage struggle. At school, she excelled at sports and showed an early prowess on two wheels. Her latter schooling was at a leading girls’ school that had been at the forefront of the struggle for women’s education since the mid-nineteenth century. These influences were to remain with her, in one form or another, for the rest of her life. She was also to return to Ireland several times, both as a refuge and as a site of motor racing triumph.
Taylour had learned to drive at an early age, but it was not until her move to her family’s new home at Burghfield Bridge Lodge that she took to motorcycles. The exact background to her introduction to motorcycles is unclear, and Belton in his account of her early life notes that she gave two versions of the event. In one, she was introduced to motorcycles by a garage mechanic called Fred, who carried out repairs to her father’s car, while another version of the story gives the male role to a chauffeur named Bradshaw. Belton’s account of Fay’s introduction to motorcycles puts the roles of the male characters, and Taylour’s own version of an innocent love affair with Fred, into the framework of an adolescent crush, although by this time, after her mother’s death, Taylour was in her early twenties. Throughout her life, Taylour was linked to men involved with motor sport, but it is very difficult to assess just how close she was to any of them, and her accounts of her first motorcycle linked relationship – which stressed romantic, but not sexual, relations – are as opaque as later accounts. Whatever the personal aspects of her
introduction to motorcycles, her subsequent account of being dropped by Fred only to rebound by buying her first motorcycle – ‘her distress had remarkably transformed itself into rebellion’\(^\text{24}\) – is also characteristic of Taylour’s accounts of her life. She saw herself as a rebel, admired rebellious figures, and was in fact a rebel herself. However, given her father’s support and encouragement in relation to her early driving, and the range of field sports that she had mastered, it is perhaps unlikely that he was particularly surprised when she bought her first machine, a small Levis motorcycle, which she soon replaced with a 348cc AJS. The AJS bike featured AJS’s overhead valve engine, with which the company had taken the first four places in the 1921 Junior TT race and first and second place the following year. These successes ‘marked the early beginning of the legendary “big-port” AJS, a giant killer’\(^\text{25}\). In true enthusiast’s style Taylour spent most her time either riding her bike, disassembling and reassembling it, or talking about bikes at the motorcycle repair shop. It was there that the owner, Carlton Harmon, encouraged Taylour to enter the Camberley Club’s ‘Southern Scott Scramble’. This scramble was held on Camberley Heath, near Reading, over a 24 mile course, ‘the “Venus Cup” was the women’s competition, alluding to which Harmon told Fay,
“You could easily beat the three top women’s trials riders who compete each year”, and he added that crack trials riders and TT racing men from Coventry also competed.\textsuperscript{26} A month before the competition, Taylour entered her first race, organised by the North London Cycle Club, and involving a hill climbing event. Taylour mishandled both the race and her bike, burning out the clutch. The hill climb depended on timing and slow speed control, and Harmon saw that these were not Fay Taylour’s characteristics, telling her:

‘You are a fast rider. You must compete where the fastest up the hills wins; where you go hard all the time, and do not have to bother with watches.’ He informed her that ‘The three factory women … are professional riders, but except for this event they compete in trials, like the event where you burnt your clutch. They are not racers.’\textsuperscript{27}

Although it is likely that this is Taylour’s own, retrospective account\textsuperscript{28} it is, nonetheless, an accurate assessment of her motorcycle strengths, and weaknesses, but also of her
character in general. Harmon coached Taylour thoroughly for her entry in the Southern Scott Scramble. They visited the course, watching practising riders during the cold January of 1927, and Taylour began practising too. ‘The practice paid off of course and Fay, to the collective amazement of trials enthusiasts not only claimed the Novice Cup, but also the coveted Venus Trophy. The next day [6th March 1927] her picture appeared in many of the London Sunday newspapers.’

These victories were the beginning of Fay Taylour’s long motor sport career, and provided the next step in that career.

Interested by the sight of a small number of women who were riding with company sponsorship, Taylour wrote, after her victories, to the AJS company in Coventry, and they took her on as part of their works team, although she switched to Rudge Whitworth Ltd in the summer of 1927. In the fourteen months from her competing in the 1927 Southern Scott Scramble until victories in the May 1928 Southern Scott Scramble, Fay Taylour won a string of victories, winning ‘Gold Medals in the National Alan and Travers Trophy Trials and Silver in the Colmore, Cotswold and Victory Trophy Trials […] She took a Bronze Medal
place in the Bemrose Trial, the Wood Green M.C. Ladies’ Trial and won a Gold Medal in the Auto Cycle Union’s Six Days Trial, run over a 750 mile route\textsuperscript{30}. It was a startling, successful opening to her motorcycle career, but one that she was to build upon in the next two years to the extent that she would become known worldwide.
Towards the end of 1927, two years after her mother’s death, Taylour’s father moved from Burghfield Bridge Lodge. This marked another change in Fay Taylour’s life, and she later described her father’s moving as ‘our English home was broken up’\textsuperscript{31}. Further changes in her home life came shortly afterwards when her father remarried. Fay made a direct connection between that event and her beginning a new phase of motor racing that would take her around the world, beginning a peripatetic life following the race track: ‘my father married again in 1928, and, after seeing him off to France honeymooning, I went on to the dirt tracks’\textsuperscript{32}.

The ‘dirt tracks’ Taylour was referring to were the home of the latest motor sport – speedway – which was to become one of the outstanding spectator events of the day. The noted sports historian, Jack Williams, quoted the novelist, and future M.P., A.P.Herbert on first experiencing speedway:
Heavens, the noise! It is like ten million mechanical drills performing in unison. It swells and falls as the riders take the corners; it echoes about the cavernous concrete halls, drowning the feeble acclamations of the crowd; it dies slowly as the riders stop, and the end of the race seems like the end of a battle. It is titanic and terrible and monstrous; and yet in that enormous place, made by those monsters, it seems appropriate and right.33

There is some debate around the origins of speedway, with the term itself being used in the USA as early as 1902, while early variants of motorcycle track racing were found in both the USA and Australia34. However, Australia has, probably, the best claim to inventing the sport, with a meeting held at ‘the Hunter River Valley under floodlights at West Maitland Agricultural Showground [New South Wales] on the 15 December, 1923’35. Its first appearance in Britain is generally regarded as being the meeting at High Beech in Epping Forest in February 1928, when at least 15,000, and as many as 30,000, spectators attended36. Although the
popularity of speedway in Britain would be characterised by ‘almost inexplicable crazes and falls’\textsuperscript{37}, it attracted huge crowds, and was a cheap, immensely popular sport among working-class spectators. In 1946, for example, six million people attended speedway events in Britain, and only a year after the introduction of the sport, there were two speedway leagues, with 13 clubs in the north of England, and 12 in the south\textsuperscript{38}. By the end of 1928, there were speedway meetings at 34 tracks, which rose to over 60 within a year. However, the first explosion of speedway quickly fell back to ten tracks by 1932, and seven by 1935, followed by some recovery prior to the war. Nonetheless, it remained a popular sport, with, for example, 93,000 people attending the 1938 World Championship Final at Wembley\textsuperscript{39}. From the outset, speedway was a dangerous, exciting, dramatic, professionalised sport that threw up famous names, such as Lloyd ‘Sprouts’ Elder, an American rider who was one of the most famous competitors during the late 1920s and early 1930s; his take on the sport was that ‘for excitement, it licks a bull-fight. Once you get the speedway habit you look upon bull-fighting as a kind of dairy farming’\textsuperscript{40}. Fay Taylour was very quick to ‘get the speedway habit’.
Although speedway was a professional sport, and one that depended very much on promoters and prize money, it was nonetheless governed by the Auto-Cycle Union, which forbade women from competing in the speedway leagues⁴¹. However, women were permitted to compete in non-league races, and Fay Taylour was ‘one of around half a dozen women [who] took part in speedway races against each other and against men’⁴². Other women speedway riders in Britain included Eva Askquith, Marjorie Cottle, Edyth Foley, and Jessie Hole. Eva Askquith was to become as well known in Britain as Fay Taylour, and a rivalry was to develop between the two women, but it was Taylour’s successes against the top male riders in Britain, Australia and New Zealand that was to mark her out for speedway fame.

Switching to speedway

Taylour’s initial attempts to ride in speedway were obstructed by speedway promoters. She first tried to ride at Stamford Bridge speedway, but the promoter, Mr Longford, said that he did not believe in women racing in the event.
She received the same response from other London speedway promoters. However, trying on speedway leathers at the sports shop, ‘Lewis’s Leathers’, she was recognised by the owner, who introduced her to a speedway rider, Lionel Wills, whom she had seen racing at Crystal Palace the previous day. Wills was a member of the wealthy W.D. & H.O. Wills tobacco family, and was as keen on motor sports as Fay Taylour. Wills had seen speedway in Australia, written pieces on the sport for British motorcycling magazines, met Australian promoters and encouraged them to take the sport to Britain. He was, in fact, the perfect person to help Taylour break into speedway, and early in the summer of 1928 took her to his home track, Crystal Palace, and effectively smuggled her onto the track by dint of having her hide her hair under her helmet. She began practising for the first time on a cinder track, and repeatedly fell before beginning to master the difficult, but absolutely crucial skill of cornering at high speed. At the end of the practice, the promoter, ‘the legendary Freddie Mockford, a great entrepreneurial pioneer of the cinder track’[^43], was outraged to discover that the rider was a woman. But Wills convinced Mockford that Taylour had potential as a dirt track racer, and Mockford offered her seven days practice, and a race. Taylour
accepted and also contacted her manager at Rudge, asking for permission to race. He refused, so she resigned from Rudge, and ordered her first speedway bike. However, at first, she had to use her Rudge trials motorcycle for the practice sessions when she began the process of mastering the essential cornering techniques.

Wills was more than just a speedway mentor to Taylour at the outset of her brief, but exceptional dirt track career. He and Taylour were in some way romantically involved, and she later wrote at length about how she and Wills took part in the International Six Days together in October 1928. This race began in Munich, then involved riding ‘over the most beautiful passes in the Austrian, Italian and Swiss Alps, with a hotel stop every night at such romantic places as Oberammergau and Chamonix’⁴⁴. According to Taylour, she and Wills spent a week in Munich before the race began, then rode together (they had had drawn successive race numbers) to Geneva. From there they took the train to Paris before flying back to England. Although Taylour was inclined to make the most of ‘romantic’ events and attachments, it appears that there was a serious
relationship between her and Wills, and that she had, by that time, decided against marriage:

Marriage never entered my head now. I’d forgotten that I once thought I was on the shelf. Lionel was there all the time and I made no effort to secure him. I loved him but I wasn’t in love, that ecstatic state that is very wonderful but never last. And yet, even with that awareness, I was to demand such a state of myself before I would say ‘yes’ to anyone. When you are happy you find people attractive just as happiness draws them to you. I was happy racing and quickly found men attractive, but just as quickly the attraction faded if they took too much for granted. With Lionel it was different. He was one apart, and those two weeks in Europe could not but enhance my feelings for him. Side by side in glorious weather we rode through the trial, and if my cycle engine wasn’t singing the right tune or a nut worked loose he was off in a flash to fix it. Past dream castles we went, and then climbed high in the Austrian Alps, pausing at the top of one pass to look
down through the tops of pine trees to a lake far below.\textsuperscript{45}

This European interlude brought together motor cycles and someone she felt a strong attachment too. She was never to marry, but was involved with numbers of men, all of whom appear to have been motor racers of one type or another. Further, a large part of the background to her and Wills’ intense European interlude was in Bavaria. Later, her professed ‘love’ of Germany would be one of the contributing factors to her detention without trial, and it is clear that her personal experiences of Germany in the 1920s and 1930s were strongly positive. Within a year of Taylour’ and Wills’ fortnight on the continent, Wills was to marry someone else\textsuperscript{46}, but, in the final analysis for Fay motor racing out trumped relationships with men, and her new love was speedway.

Speedway racing demanded different techniques from road racing. Speedway machines were lighter, had smaller fuel tanks, ran on methanol, and had no brakes. Racing around an oval cinder track (although not all tracks were purpose-
built cinder tracks) at speed required both strength and skill from riders as they attempted to corner. Cornering techniques changed, but the dominant technique at the time, known as ‘broadside’, involved a controlled skid at speed that enabled the bike and rider to slide around the bends, with the front wheel upright, the rear wheel slanting, and the rider’s inside leg trailing back in line with the rear wheel. The skill and strength needed to successfully ‘broadside’ was one of the reasons given why women would not be able to compete in the event. Fay Taylour was to disprove this, developing her broadsiding technique to a pitch that enabled her to beat the best male competitors. She was undoubtedly highly skilled, but she also possessed upper body strength and large, strong hands. Indeed, someone who knew Taylour at the end of her life remarked that for such a small woman, she possessed very large ‘men’s’ hands that looked as if they had been transplanted onto her arms.

Taylour’s first speedway race was on 9th June 1928 at Crystal Palace. She was the first woman in England to race in speedway, and her opponent was ‘the great [Australian] international Ron Johnson, astride his mighty Harley-
Davidson’. Taylour was riding her Rudge, and received a 280 yard start for the four lap race. She led until the final turn when she crashed spectacularly, being thrown from her machine as it somersaulted away from her. Johnson won, Taylour was down and dazed, but when she got to her feet the crowd responded with cheers. Her first appearance on the dirt track was a success, and *Motor Cycling* magazine commented: ‘The prospect of watching a lady rider, Miss Fay Taylour, matched in a handicap race against a star such as Ron Johnson was chiefly responsible for the excellent crowd at Crystal Palace Speedway last Saturday’. Throughout her career, Taylour was well aware of the value to her, and promoters, of being a woman rider and driver in what were largely male preserves. The novelty of Taylour’s racing skill was particularly valuable to speedway promoters who were engaged in a business that depended for its survival in continuing to draw crowds beyond that which were initially attracted by this new sporting import.

Her Crystal Palace debut confirmed Taylour in the belief that this was a new form of racing that suited her, and that she desperately needed a purpose-built speedway machine
if she was to win races. But even without such a bike, she continued to race and help draw large crowds throughout the summer of 1928. In ‘early August Fay took her first major scalp defeating A.R.Frogley in a mile match at Crystal Palace’\textsuperscript{50}, and she was being referred to in the daily and specialist press as ‘Queen of the Dirt Track’, and the ‘Broadside Queen’. On 27\textsuperscript{th} August, she appeared at the opening event at the new dirt track at the Albion Greyhound arena, Salford. Still without a purpose-built bike, she easily beat the male riders in the heats, only for her motor cycle to break down in one of the semi-finals. But Salford was still a success for her, and Brian Belton argues that this was the turning point in her speedway career:

After Salford Taylour was seen as a dashing and clever rider, who seemed to refute the assertion that considerable physical strength was a prerequisite if a machine, travelling at speed round the corners, was to be safely controlled. She also challenged, by her very presence, the notion that the dirt-track was essentially a place for men only. Fay was given the credit of being the superior in skill in each of the Salford races in which she took part. Her cornering
was daring and performed at speed, and she appeared to have the ability to cope at critical moments, such as when finding her path blocked on a bend.\textsuperscript{51}

She continued to race successfully using her old motorcycle, then in early September she took delivery of a dirt-track Douglas.

Taylour’s new purpose-built machine was a 494cc Douglas, the most successful speedway bike of the time. It had been specially designed for speedway by Douglas, and one of the engineers involved was Freddie Dixon, one of the great motor engineers, and motor sports champions of the interwar period\textsuperscript{52}. Dixon retired from motorcycle racing in 1928 after returning to the Douglas company as both a rider and engineer. He had been re-employed by Douglas as part of its attempt to develop the flat twin engine and prove its worth at the Isle of Man TT road races. But there were fundamental difficulties with the engine that neither Douglas nor Dixon could overcome. Dixon finished 18\textsuperscript{th} out of 21 in the Junior TT, and had to retire from the Senior following a
crash. These disappointing results marked the end of his racing career on two wheels, but he continued to work on the development of motorcycles until 1930 before turning his attention to racing motor cars. For speedway riders 'a Dixon tuned engine for the dirt track bikes was available for an extra £10.00. This gave an extra 7bhp and was a worthwhile investment,’ and it was on a Dixon Douglas that Taylour was to win some of her most famous dirt track races. But Taylour’s links with Freddie Dixon were more extensive than merely riding one of ‘his’ machines to victory on the dirt track.

In December 1940, some six months into her internment in Holloway Gaol, Taylour managed to smuggle out an uncensored letter to Dixon. The letter briefly laid out Taylour’s explanation for why she had been detained – ‘my only crime is that I disapproved of the war’ – and asked Dixon if her could send her a small food parcel containing, amongst other things, five carrots as a sign that her unofficial mailbox (possibly smuggled out via another detainee being visited by her husband) was working. Clearly, Taylour thought that Dixon was a reliable person to establish contact with on the outside, and that raises the
question of Dixon’s own political views. She had, before internment, given him British Union literature, and an MI5 report, by agent M/3, of April, 1940, noted that at a race meeting, Taylour ‘gave a quantity of B.U.F. literature to Freddy [sic] DIXON with which he was very impressed,’\textsuperscript{56}. Dixon also appears to have offered her a job driving for him if she was released (he had lost his licence), but, in fact, it was Dixon who revealed the letter to the authorities. He took the letter to his local police station at Reigate, and, speaking to Inspector Edward Ayres, he said that it was ‘from a lady-friend’ and that ‘he was somewhat disturbed by the contents of the letter’\textsuperscript{57}. At first, Dixon refused to give Taylour’s name, or show the letter, but did both in the end. Interestingly, he told Inspector Ayres that:

although he himself did not altogether agree with our [the UK’s] present position [i.e., the war] brought about by promises, he felt that as the country had made such promises it was our duty to abide by them and therefore the war was inevitable. He regarded the letter with suspicion and refused to allow himself to be used as a medium possibly for
some act of doubt to the detriment of the National interest.\textsuperscript{58}

The exact nature of Taylour’s and Dixon’s pre-war friendship is unknown, but Taylour certainly had a very wide circle of friends, both men and women. Many of her male friends were connected, in one way or another with motor racing, and she was not only a rare figure in the racing world – being a woman – but also a popular one. Another woman speedway rider, Jessie Hole, remembered, decades later, that Fay Taylour ‘always used to be at all the parties – she was a favourite at all the tracks’; the parties were not just attended by the riders, but also ‘the bigwigs, the owners of the stadiums, and people like that … they were the people with the money’\textsuperscript{59}. Jessie Hole’s reminiscence had an element of jealousy about it, perhaps underpinned by a sense that Taylour was able to use her class background to gain access to the ‘bigwigs’, which may well have been the case. What it does highlight, however, is that for Taylour, women on and off the speedway track were primarily rivals to be beaten.
Cigarette card fame before the UK speedway ban on women. Taylour was undoubtedly a celebrity in the UK, Eire, Australia and New Zealand – just the sports star for a cigarette card collection.
Taylour’s greatest woman speedway rival was Eva Askquith. A contemporary of Taylour’s, Askquith was born in 1905, she first came to notice riding in the 1927 Scott Trial in Swaledale. From there she moved to speedway, riding first at Leeds in October 1928 at the end of the season. When the 1929 season opened in March, Eva returned to Leeds, now riding a Douglas, and by the summer had beaten one of the leading male riders, Harold ‘Tiger’ Stevenson at Lea Bridge, a victory that she followed by beating probably the most famous rider of the day, the American, Sprouts Elder, in a heat at Southampton, although Elder won the match. Askquith was Taylour’s main woman opponent, and at Wembley she beat Taylour 2-0 on 4th June, but Fay came back to beat Eva 2-1 on 27th June. By this time, Taylour had a truly international reputation, having not long returned from a stunningly successful tour of Australia and New Zealand. The two most famous women riders were very closely matched, with Johnnie Hoskins, who had a major role in the creation of speedway as a sport, commenting:

Eva was the opposite to Fay in terms of personality,… but also a brilliant rider. They gave
added interest to the sport at a time it badly needed publicity. They rode against men at tracks up and down the country, but it was when they met in opposition to each other that the sparks began to fly. Even the star [male] riders leaned over the pit gates to see Fay and Eva hefting their big Douglas machines and racing with utter abandon to the finishing flag. Fay would hold up the start of a race while she adjusted her hair, applied a little lipstick or exchanged a few words with officials on the line. Eva never worried about such, what were for her, trivialities. She sat watching and waiting for the starter’s gun. I never could make up my mind which was the better rider of the two.

If it was difficult to decide who the better rider was, it was the case that they followed similar paths in speedway, taking their undoubted skills, and audience-drawing powers, abroad. As the 1929 season drew to a close in Britain, Eva travelled to Spain, racing at Barcelona, South Africa, Australia, and Denmark. Taylour had already established herself as a speedway star in Australia the previous, 1928/9 season, and she returned there again.
Fay had first set foot in Australia on 31st December 1928, making her first dirt track appearance, and the first appearance of a British or Irish rider, in the ‘home of speedway’ in January 1929\textsuperscript{62}. She had taken her speedway Douglas to Australia, along with her Rudge as a back-up. The Douglas was potentially a race winner, as Australian speedway was still dominated by the Peashooter Harley. In Australia Taylour was to establish a worldwide reputation, earn large sums in prize money and defeat one of the greatest exponents of speedway, ‘Super’ Sig Schlam. The Australian race track took Fay Taylour – the ‘wonder girl’ from Ireland – to heart, and she became a major draw. The fact that Taylour chose to present herself as Irish, rather than British (although the Australian press called her English, British and Irish), was an example of her fluid sense of national identity which shifted and changed in response to the audience she was appealing to. Taylour established a lasting name for herself in Australia, attracting considerable press attention both as a speedway star, and, in the 1950s in motor racing. The first mention of Taylour in
the Australian press came in a long piece in *The Daily News*, of Perth, Western Australia. Headed, ‘Girl Speedster/Only One of Her Sex/MISS TAYLOUR HERE’, the article showed Taylour’s skill a presenting herself to the Australian public. She was described as being ‘of medium height and in her neat-fitting costume presented a trim, athletic figure, leaving no doubt as to her ability to handle a machine at speed’\(^63\). The welcoming party in Perth included the leading Australian riders, Sig Schlam and Charlie Datson, and she told the press that she had come to Australia because of the impact of riders like Schlam and Datson in England, who had created ‘a very favourable impression’, and because Australia was the home of the sport. In her numerous interviews in the Australian press, Taylour frequently praised Australian sporting prowess, the appreciative crowds, and compared Australia favourably to England in terms of attitudes to women in motorcycle sport. In return, the Australian press routinely wrote of her in very favourable terms.
Fay Taylour – Speedway Queen.

Taylour’s first race in Australia was at the Claremont ground in Perth. On Saturday, 5th January she beat a local ace, Frank Brown. The Perth *Daily News* described the action, and the crowd’s response to Taylour:
Ever appreciative of good riding, the crowd had simmered its appreciation of Miss Taylour’s practice run when she playfully showered many of the bystanders with cinders in the most approved Speedway fashion. The simmering broke into a roar as the two speeding riders [Taylour and Frank Brown] raced over the line on the start of their match race. Miss Taylour at once took the lead and was never headed. Her riding was pretty to watch and fast into the bargain. Brown did well, but his 2¾ machine had not the pace of the other’s 3½ h.p. mount. The winner received a splendid ovation – a win by a woman rider over a mere man being particularly popular with the feminine element. Miss Taylour’s time was only a few seconds outside the record for the course. She covered the distance in 1.20 2-5.64

Taylour’s ability and fame undoubtedly inspired other women to race. On arriving in Australia she had noted that ‘although many women in England used the motorcycle as a means of transport, not a great many rode it in competition65. But her successes had the direct effect of
doing just that - inspiring more to race. For example, Mrs Medwell, the chairwoman and general secretary of the Women’s Motor Cycle Club in Southern Australia explained, a year later, that the example of Taylour had been behind the founding of the club. The club captain, Miss Joan Carter, commented: ‘the girls have been further fired with determination to become capable riders by the example of Miss Fay Taylour, the woman speedway rider who was in Adelaide this season’\textsuperscript{66}. Both in the UK and Australia it was the case that ‘speedway attracted many women and children as spectators to the tracks’\textsuperscript{67}, and they now had an internationally successful woman ace.

Her victory over Frank Brown was a fitting prelude for Taylour’s next battle against the dominant speedway rider of the day in Australia – ‘Super’ Sig Schlam. Taylour had hoped to acclimatise to the bigger Australian tracks before competition riding, but was thrown into competitive racing immediately. Following her victory over Frank Brown, there was much expectation and speculation in Perth regarding her match against Sig Schlam. A full page newspaper advertisement for the match at Claremont read:
Thousands marvelled at the hair raising feats exploited by Miss Fay Taylour at last week’s meeting.

Next Saturday night this feminine wizard of the cinders will attempt to lower the track record and defeat Sig Schlam (the West Australian champion).

Can she succeed where others have failed?

Schlam held the lap record for the Claremont track, which had stood for over a year, he had an unrivalled victory record, and, unlike most Australian riders at the time, he also rode a speedway Douglas. It looked very much as if Fay Taylour’s task was an impossible one. To make matters worse, she became embroiled in an argument, partly conducted through the press, about appearance fees and winnings prize money with E.L.Baker, the director of Speedways Ltd, responsible for the Claremont races. Taylour’s demands for a £50 race fee on top of appearance money, was deemed excessive, despite the fact that she was a major crowd-puller who brought bigger than average
gate numbers. The dispute was settled presumably because her appearance against Schlam could guarantee a bigger than normal crowd, and they raced on 26th January.

Fay Taylour’s race against Schlam was a triumph. She led the Western Australia star for the whole three laps of the race, equalled the track record, and achieved the fastest time of the night. Her victory was reported in The West Australian under the simple, but dramatic headline, ‘Miss Taylour Beats Schlam’:

The warm evening and the meeting of the international rider, Miss Fay Taylor and S. Schlam, drew a large crowd to the Claremont Speedway on Saturday night. Schlam had insufficient speed in the match races and was well beaten by the woman rider […] In his race with Miss Fay Taylour he gave her the inside position and she drew away at the start and was never headed. Miss Taylor was cheered heartily and her tm (1.17) and the fact that it was Schlam she defeated speaks eloquently of her ability as a match rider.
The tone of this report is of interest in that it typified most reporting of Taylour’s riding. The press treated her as a competitor, in just the same fashion as they reported male riders. There were occasional mentions of clothes and make-up, but these came in feature articles or social pieces; when it came to race reporting Fay Taylour was treated as a major international player, albeit one whom had a particular following among women fans of the sport. Nonetheless, Taylour’s defeat of Sig Schlam on his home turf was a major victory. In Brian Belton’s assessment:

the outcome of Fay’s battle with Sig Schlam was little short of revolutionary in any context […]There can be little doubt that she did herself a lot of good, her victory over Schlam certainly generated a keen female following during her stay in Australia. But more than this, she had created the foundation of a legend within the new and growing phenomenon that was speedway, an activity that carried the trappings of both sport and theatre. It was, first and foremost an entertainment but Taylour’s ability to
tap into all its facets meant that she was certainly a celebrity off the track and a star on it.\footnote{71}

Not only had Fay Taylour ensured herself a permanent place in the early history of speedway, and on its home ground, but she had demonstrated, in dramatic fashion, that a woman could compete on equal terms with the best men in the speedway arena.

After her victory over Schlam, Taylour continued her Australian tour. She attended social functions wherever she went, and even found time to take part in a Scramble held by the Metropolitan Motor Cycle Club in Perth. She raced in New South Wales in February, winning the Consolation Handicap at Geelong, and attracting a great deal of press attention. Interviewed by \textit{The Sun}, she explained:

I was always keen on a bit of a thrill, and I really got my first machine to take me from place to place when I was playing hockey for my county \ldots started riding as a novice in various competitions in 1927,
and my machine was a regular old buckjumper. Riding in reliability trials for a motorcycle firm was my first real stunt, and took part in the Southern Scott scramble [...] after that I won a couple of cups, and so my name was made ... I’ve had a few tosses, and some of them hurt a little, but when I’m racing I forget I’m a lady, and remember that it isn’t the correct thing to moan about bruises.72

She was, however, to get more than a few bruises shortly after that interview when she crashed at the infamously fast, dangerous, but spectacular Speedway Royal in Sydney. Overtaking a rider who had started in front of her, Taylour lost control, and crashed through the wooden safety fence. Taylour was knocked unconscious, and was taken to hospital where she regained consciousness the next morning. One result of her hospital stay was that in future she always took ‘soft satin pyjamas’ with her to races in case she was ever hospitalised again. They became a lucky talisman, and she was, in fact, never again hospitalised by racing.
Taylour remained in Australia for six weeks, racing, being briefly romantically involved with a cousin, attending receptions, dances, and building her public image. Her crowd-drawing power grew as her fame spread, and, for example, her appearance at Davies Park, Brisbane, saw a record crowd. At the beginning of March she went to New Zealand for a month. She received a huge welcome, and raced in Wellington, Auckland and in other towns and cities, driving to meetings in a white Chevrolet provided by General Motors. Her impact in New Zealand was every bit as great as in Australia, and the Wellington Evening Post reported:

Anyone seeing her would realise that she is far from “ordinary”. An “ordinary person” (as she described herself) could not retain all those feminine qualities which those who attended a function in her honour at the Grand Hotel this morning realised at once were hers, and yet compete in such a nerve-demanding sport as dirt-track racing.73
She returned to Australia for another three weeks’ racing before leaving for Britain. During her time in Australia and New Zealand she had, in Brian Belton’s view re-written the history of speedway, and earned over £1500 in prize and appearance money.74

_Wembley speed queen_

Taylour arrived at Tilbury from Melbourne on 31st May, 1929,75 three months after the start of the British speedway season. In her first interview back in England, she noted that her experiences in Australia ‘had established her belief that efficient women riders were as popular as men [and] the British prejudice against women riders did not exist in Australia’76. Unknown to Taylour, there was more truth in this belief than even she realised, and the 1929 season was to be her last season’s dirt track racing in the UK. She continued to build her reputation, establishing a new track record for Wembley and winning the coveted Cinders Trophy in the process. The Trophy was ‘a competition held regularly by [the Wembley] stadium boss Arthur Elvin for stars of the day to lower the one lap flying start track record’77, and was held by a succession of, male, speedway
stars. The competitors rode not only in their own right, but as representatives of their country. On 6 June, Taylour raced the Wembley circuit as a representative for Ireland, and beat the English, Scottish, American, New Zealand, and Australian riders that evening, with a new track record of 20.8 seconds. This was a major success for Taylour, and she continued in the same vein, by beating Eva Askquith in a return match at Wembley at the end of the month, thereby avenging her earlier defeat by her leading woman rival. For much of the remainder of the UK racing season, Fay competed at the County Ground Stadium in Exeter, before leaving for Australia again sometime during October.

Return to Australia and New Zealand

News of Fay Taylour’s second season in Australia was greeted with much anticipation among Speedway fans. Arriving in Fremantle, Western Australia, on 12 November 1929, the Perth newspapers carried reports of her return, including photographs, and accounts of her travel and racing since leaving Australia earlier that year. She had spent time in the United States, and Europe, and, once more, Taylour told the Australian press and Speedway
public that England was still attempting to catch up with the home of the sport:

She said the English tracks were improving, and that the answer to the statements that the sport was waning in England would be the enthusiasm dominating dirt track events which were expected during the coming season, to be three times as numerous as during the previous best season. She had brought to Australia two of the latest models of English racing motor bicycles.\(^\text{79}\)

There was also interest in Fay Taylour off track, and her return to Perth was marked by a dinner at the Savoy Hotel. Taylour was described in glowing terms as ‘a wonderful English sportswoman’ who was ‘the idol of Claremont tracks’, and ‘an attractive young woman, whose instantaneous pleasing personality was lent effect by her becoming voile frock’\(^\text{80}\).
Taylour spent the first fortnight of her tour racing at the Claremont track, Perth. She was less successful there than during her previous Australian season, but her riding was greatly appreciated by the crowds. Her next stop was at the Speedway Royale, Adelaide, where she was seen to be the major attraction, the Adelaide press enthusing: ‘the opportunity to see such a skilful and intrepid woman rider should attract a record attendance to Speedway Royale’\textsuperscript{81}. *The Advertiser* ran a Speedway news column that put Taylour at the heart of the forthcoming races, and neatly captured the extent of her fame, and her tireless competitive spirit:

The star attraction at to-morrow night’s meeting at the Speedway Royale will be the appearance of Fay Taylour, world-renowned lady racing motor cyclist. Fay has appeared successfully at nearly every small dirt track throughout England, Australia, and New Zealand, and her appearance on the Adelaide speedway has long been awaited.\textsuperscript{82}
Taylour lived up to these expectations, winning the A grade handicap at the Speedway Royale on 30\textsuperscript{th} November, and, thereby boosting expectations of an even bigger crowd the following week when she was due to reappear at the track. It was, by now, Fay Taylour who headed the publicity for races, and not because she was a woman rider, but because she was a winner, and a dangerous opponent for other international Speedway stars. And, as expected, her second appearance at the Speedway Royale also resulted in victory:

Riding a 3½ Douglas racer, Miss Fay Taylour, the celebrated Irish lady rider was successful in winning the A Grade Handicap on Saturday night. She was never in danger of losing any of the events in this race, and her time in the semi final, 1.33 4-5 seconds was the fastest recorded for the season. Miss Taylour has ridden several makes of machine, but she prefers the English Douglas for reliability. Charlie Gray, also on a Douglas, won the match race against Miss Taylour, and was second to her in the handicap.\textsuperscript{83}
It was not only the Speedway promoters who saw increased revenue thanks to Taylour, but also Douglas dealers, with a prominent advertisement displayed next to this report on behalf of Gard Brothers of Gougher Street, Adelaide – ‘World’s Wonder Lady and the World’s Fastest Motor Cycle. FAY AND HER DOUGLAS!’

Taylour’s riding during this tour appears to have moved to a new level, with one commentator noting that she ‘rode with more daring and brilliance than she did […] and her broadsiding was masterly. She did not make one mistake on the turns…’\(^8^4\), and Brian Belton’s view is that she ‘was at the peak of her powers as a [Speedway] racer in 1929’\(^8^5\). But even at the peak of her skills, Speedway was a dangerous sport, and Taylour suffered a number of crashes during the Australian tour. She injured her arm at Melbourne’s Exhibition Speedway in December, her face at the Speedway Royale at the end of the month, and in a crash at the Wentworth Oval Speedway in April, 1930, caused by her trying to avoid Sig Schlam who had himself
crashed, badly injured a young spectator and broke her own thumb\textsuperscript{86}.
Throughout her motor racing career, Fay Taylour put a good deal of effort into self-publicity. Without the aid of anything approaching an agent, she was quick to take advantage of media interest in her. Wherever she raced abroad, she ensured, if possible, that she appeared on the radio airwaves. Later, some of these wireless broadcasts would cause difficulties for her. It is clear from British security files on Taylour that the authorities were concerned about her ready access to radio, and used the fact that she broadcast from Germany during a pre-war trip there to build a case against her. In fact, as she pointed out during her internment, she had ‘spoken on the wireless […] from practically every city in New Zealand and Australia, and I have spoken […] at Malta, when I was there’⁸⁷. Her wireless broadcasts appeared to have focused on her racing, the role of women motor sports competitors, and women’s ability to race against men on equal terms. It was a message that she also put across in the print media, writing articles throughout her career for the press. For example, in a long feature article by her, which appeared in the Adelaide newspaper, *The Register News-Pictorial*, on 25th
February, 1930 – ‘Why not more women speedway riders?’ – drew on her own, and Eva Askwith’s [sic] careers, to argue that women who were determined to race could do so, and could beat men. She stressed that what was needed was an absolute focus on racing and winning:

It is no game for the weakling nor for the woman who cannot take a licking. It is the game for the woman who is determined to get on or get out, who is prepared to meet the men riders on equal footing and ask neither quarter nor mercy because of her sex.  

She argued strongly that there were women who could race successfully, and that they needed to come forward and challenge men:

I feel convinced that there must be plenty of women motor cyclists in the country who if given the chance to learn and practice, would make good on the track. Women have for too long left the world of speed and
sport to men. We have our women air pilots, but what women do we see in the high speed events? There are women motorists, but there were none in the Ulster T.T. race. We have our women riders in the most important motor cycling road trials in the world, but what women do we see in the T.T. races in the Isle of Man?  

Taylour argued that speedway was ‘probably’ the first sporting arena in which women would meet and match men, that success in speedway would open a ‘great age for speedwomen -an age when they shall no more be regarded as inferior to men on the road and in the air, but one in which they will challenge on equal terms and with definite hope of success the men aces of car and motor cycle and aeroplane’. Fay Taylour’s optimistic view of the future for women in speed-based sports envisaged ‘hundreds’ of women coming forward to take part, all with the necessary determination to take on motor sports with the sort single mindedness that would bring success. Nonetheless, she did not believe that in tackling this male sphere women had to abandon their sense of femininity. For Taylour, the feminism of competing in motor sports did not preclude
interest in ‘dancing’ or ‘smart clothes’ – she was quite clear that women, like herself, could manage both sport and being feminine. She returned to these themes repeatedly in her press interviews and writings, and it is clear that she was well aware of her status and importance for other women. Further, women commentators were also quick to highlight Taylour’s successes, using them as inspiration. In her two speedway tours of New Zealand, in 1929 and 1930, Fay became even more of a star attraction than she was in Australia, and as well as being lauded for her skill and fearlessness by male sportswriters, she was also held up as a model for aspiring young women. In a long article in the Auckland Star of 24th December, 1932 – ‘Sport for Women’ – the advance of women in ‘Men’s Domains’ was highlighted, it being argued that women were now firmly placed in men’s spheres, an example being provided by Fay Taylour: ‘to ride the hurtling wheel of the broadsiding track hardly seems the work of a gentle woman, but this, too, has had its heroines, one of whom passed through New Zealand some time ago in the person of Miss Fay Taylour’⁹¹.
If Taylour was aware of her status as a role model for women in motor sports, then she was also assiduous in courting her fan base, and thereby building her career and money-earning potential. She was feted wherever she went in Australia and New Zealand, she gave free access to the press, and broadcast whenever she could. She was also careful to cut a distinctive figure on the race track, and often wore racing leathers that drew attention to herself as a woman, but also, interestingly, as an Irishwoman. Racing in front of a crowd of 20,000 at Western Springs, Auckland, in February 1930, Taylour won two out three races, and was ‘given a series of ovations from the huge crowd’. She was the star of the evening, and ‘although masked and helmeted and looking like all the other riders of the cinder track, she was easily distinguishable, for on the back of her scarlet jacket was the flag of Ireland’92. The same report gives a flavour of her ability to reach out to her fans. As well as the more traditional circuits of the track, when ‘throwing’ cinders at the crowd helped build appreciation, she also mingled with the crowd:

During the evening, Miss Taylour made a tour through the crowd, a pilgrimage marked by great
enthusiasm, with hundreds of Auckland small boys following admiringly in her wake. In her three races, Miss Taylour showed a wonderful nerve in riding, and gave a finished exhibition of the new sport which has got such a hold in Auckland.  

Taylour was a pioneer, a consummate rider, but also a highly effective publicist, able to project a powerful image of herself as a sportswoman, and a motor sports star of the first rank. She was, in fact, dependent on her own resourcefulness and skill in racing itself, but also in a range of other functions that were crucial in enabling her to race at all; for, as she said: ‘I have no manager, so I am absolutely a free agent. I have two machines, both of which are my own. I contracted to spend six weeks in New Zealand, and that is the longest contract I have ever been under’. She was indeed a ‘free agent’, but that freedom came with the need to be a risk taker not just on the track, but off it as well.
New Zealand fame

New Zealand speedway promoters had been quick to realise the boost that Fay Taylour would be able to give to the new sport when she made her first tour to Australia in 1929. She had only been racing in Australia for a month when the New Zealand press reported that Wellington speedway promoters were making ‘endeavours […] to secure a visit from Miss Fay Taylour, the champion lady dirt track rider […] who is now performing with distinction in Australia’95. She spent most of March in New Zealand, making crowd drawing appearances that stood her in good stead for her return in January 1930. The New Zealand press trailed her return with articles and photographs, lauding her as the ‘dare-devil Irish girl’, ‘wonder girl of the cinder track’, and ‘the well-known British dirt-track rider’96. Taylour spent six weeks in New Zealand, racing at the Western Springs Speedway, Auckland; Monica Park Speedway, Christchurch; and the Kilbirnie Stadium, Wellington. Wherever she went she was greeted as a sporting phenomenon, attracting large crowds, and building an enthusiastic fan base. At the end of February 1930, Fay Taylour made her last appearance at the Western Springs Speedway:
Idol of the Western Springs Speedway spectators, the little Irish daredevil cinder track rider, Miss Fay Taylour, came to Auckland, she rode, she conquered. With further wins and successes added to her already long list, she has gone south on her winning way. Fifteen thousand people cheered and admired her skill and daring on Saturday night, when again she triumphed over two Auckland riders. The great crowd revelled in a sustained succession of thrills. Truly Miss Taylour is a great rider. She knows no fear. For her the highest plane of riding was attained in the first contest, in which she was matched against Alf Mattson. Still, though the second match, against Ben Bray, was not as fast as the first, it was just as thrilling – it was merely the difference between the superlative and the good.97

Press reports focused on Taylour as a rider and a brilliant competitor, there was little in the way of gendered commentary in the sports reports, where Taylour’s sex was raised and discussed was in feature articles and pieces by
herself. She had, in fact, transcended gender in the sports pages of the newspapers, which treated her as a sporting star. Her successes in New Zealand led to her postponing her departure by a week for a final appearance at Christchurch at the beginning of April. She then left for Adelaide, from where she took the Orient Line’s SS Orama back to London, landing there on 5th June, 1930, in time, she thought, for the British speedway season.
7. Banned from the speedway track

While Fay Taylour was still at sea, an event occurred in England that would have a major impact on her future direction as a motor sports competitor. Prior to a speedway meeting at Wembley on 15\textsuperscript{th} May, a procession of riders took place. As women riders led by Jessie Hole, began their circuit of the track, a male rider cut in front of them, throwing one of the women, Mrs Billie Smith, from her motor cycle. She required medical attention, and first aiders had to partially remove her leathers at the trackside. This incident\textsuperscript{99} was then used to justify a complete UK-wide ban on women riding in speedway. Prior to this, the position with regard to women taking part in speedway in the UK was fluid. Women did not compete in the speedway leagues, but, like Jessie Hole, Eva Asquith, and Fay Taylour as individual competitors\textsuperscript{100}. Even then, individual promoters operated bans on women competitors, the deciding factor often being the crowd-drawing capabilities of women riders like Asquith and Taylour. Yet even that vital, pecuniary function was not enough to prevent the ban coming into force in the UK. Fay Taylour’s analysis of the ban, which she learnt about on her return to England, is interesting:
I made another trip to Australia and New Zealand, a few more rides in England, and then promoters, finding their crowds dwindling and searching for ways to get extra publicity, decided to stage a women’s race and then announce a ban on women riders. Apart from the northern girl, Eva Asquith, the few women riders whom some promoters had used occasionally were too slow to interest spectators, and it was a race between such riders that was now staged as a forerunner to the ban announcement. Conveniently one rider fell on the approach ramp before reaching the track and broke a collar bone. Next morning came the big announcement: women banned from speedway racing. It gave the promoters headlines. They’d put women on the tracks to get publicity, and now they were banning them for the same purpose. I was on my way back from Australia at the time, and when I arrived a friendly promoter said, “I’m sorry, girlie, but it means you too”. His offer of a free ticket to watch the racing was galling.\textsuperscript{101}
Taylour’s arguments are interesting, as it is not entirely clear how the promoters would expect to make any sort of improvement in their financial fortunes thanks to the ban on women riders. In fact, the experience of promoters in Australia and New Zealand suggest that, properly publicised, the presence of world class women riders like Taylour could boost crowds and takings. It was certainly the case that speedway, particularly in the UK, had problems maintaining adequate gates, with ‘inadequate income from spectators […] the basic reason for the collapse of speedway in so many localities’\textsuperscript{102}, but it is difficult to see how the ban on women would redress that problem. Nonetheless, Brian Belton has also argued that it was, indeed, a combination of promoters’ concerns about takings, combined with sexism that was behind the ban\textsuperscript{103}. The countrywide ban was confirmed by the sport’s governing body, the Auto Cycle Union (ACU), but the records of the ACU give no clue as to the reasoning behind the ban. Fay Taylour may have been focusing her justifiable disquiet on the wrong group, as it could well have been the male riders, not the promoters, who were the source of the pressure that led to the ban on women riders. The male riders, whose ‘attitudes to racing were highly commercialised’\textsuperscript{104}, were alive to anything that was
perceived as a threat to their earning power. In 1937, for example, the Riders’ Association attempted to prevent foreign riders competing in the UK for this reason, and it may have been that it was pressure from male riders, concerned not only about being beaten by women like Taylour, but also a fear that increasing numbers of women would lead to falling earnings, that led to the ban. Finally, there is another aspect of Taylour’s commentary on the background to the ban that is of interest – her suggestion that it was a conspiracy on the part of the promoters who somehow were able to benefit financially both from allowing women to ride then banning them from the speedway track. In years to come, conspiracy would take on a key role in her economic and political world view.

Taylour was, as she said ‘permitted one last race, this time at Southampton against the northern girl, Eva Asquith. Press cuttings record that I won easily in a faster time than that recorded by many of the men heat winners. I came within a split second of the overall record. I was sad that I couldn’t have a second ride there for I felt I could then reduce that split second’[^105]. That was Taylour’s last competitive speedway race in Britain, but, a year later, in
1931, she made one last attempt to get back on a home speedway track, turning up incognito at a practice session at Crystal Palace:

She hid her red curly hair under her helmet and slipped out to practice with the novice riders. Her skill and style impressed promoter Fred Mockford who was convinced the “new rider” was no novice. He called her into his office and told her to take off her crash helmet. Her red hair showed him it was Fay Taylour on the come-back trail. Mockford tried to sign her for the Palace team, but the ACU refused to accept her contract.106

The ACU ban did not finish Fay Taylour’s speedway career entirely, as she spent most of the 1930 season in Europe, particularly in Germany. She raced at Hamburg and Munich, and ‘she raced with her Douglas on the 14 mile dirt-track [at Oberhausen], defeating the local champion Herr Muller’107. But the UK ban had the effect of diverting her motor sports interests onto other tracks.
8. On four wheels, 1930-1934

Fay Taylour was single minded in her determination to keep on racing, but the impact of the banning of women from speedway in the UK brought about a financial crisis for her. Her initial steps in motor cycle racing had been facilitated by her position as a works rider, first for Rudge and then for AJS. By moving to speedway, she had taken a gamble, which paid off, and success in the UK, Australia and New Zealand enabled her to continue to race. She could only race because she was successful, but, even then, it is likely that her profit margins were small. She was able to take a 494cc Douglas and her Rudge with her on her first tour of Australasia, when she took £1500 in appearance and prize money. This was a large sum for 1929, and enabled her to travel first class to and from the UK. However, keeping herself on the race track was an expensive business, as she pointed out during her second tour of New Zealand:

I am a professional, I suppose, since I make enough money to pay expenses. But there is not so much money in it as some people think, chiefly because
the manufacturers are under agreement not to support speedway racing in any form. For instance, I paid full retail prices for my racing machines: I have to pay for tuning every week; big bills for spares, and huge prices for fuel, as I cannot use ordinary benzene in my racing engines. I had to pay a bill at Wellington the other day for fuel for £9 [approximately £370 in 2014]; and that was only for three meetings […] To pay for everything, including my return fare to England, I have to spend £45 a week! 

Fay Taylour lived to race, but she was not in any position to make a fortune from racing. If that was true of speedway, then it was much more so of motor car racing. Fay’s speedway successes meant that she could afford two speedway machines, the necessary spares, and meet the costs of running them. But the enforced end of her speedway career in the UK which, at the very least, accelerated what might have been a likely move to motor car racing, meant that she would no longer be able to fund her racing. It was impossible for someone like Taylour to race cars, as she was without financial reserves which
could be risked, and lost. Taylour’s switch to motor racing meant that she would have to beg or borrow cars, or drive for private owners. She would no longer be able to fund herself through appearance money and winnings.

*India, Brooklands, Ireland, and Italy: rallying, midget cars and hill climbing*

Fay Taylour’s decision to switch to motor racing seems to have been confirmed during time spent in India in 1931. She left London for Bombay on 19th December 1930, sailing on the P&O liner, *Ranpura*[^110], for a trip of some six months. While in India, she learnt that there was a record for the fastest drive between Calcutta and Ranchi, some 300 miles apart. She borrowed a 1931 Model Chevrolet and ‘set up a new record for a non-stop motor-car run from Calcutta to Ranchi of 7 hours 13 minutes, beating by 40 minutes the previous record held by Captain Benyon’[^111]. This record breaking run may have been Taylour’s only motor sport activity in India, where she stayed with friends, and she was back in England by mid-July, 1931.
A fortnight later she went to the August Bank Holiday meeting at Brooklands, and watched Brian ‘Bug’ Lewis, scion of a shipping firm, and later Lord Essendon, placing second and third in two races. Bug Lewis was one of A.W. Fox’s long distance drivers, and had driven, along with Hugh Eaton, Fox’s Talbot to third place in the previous year’s Le Mans 24 hours grand prix, covering 162 laps. Taylour introduced herself to Lewis, and in all probability told him about her Calcutta to Ranchi record. Unsurprisingly, Lewis then introduced her to Arthur Fox, and she then asked if she could try out one of his Talbots, and he agreed to give her a test drive. This small, but significant, meeting encapsulates much about Fay Taylour’s character – she was clearly determined to pursue her new goal of motor racing, and simply went straight to the heart of the matter, confidently broaching both a famous driver and backer to gain access to one of the best cars of the day. Needless to say, Taylour’s test drive was a success, and on 17th October, she drove one of Fox’s Talbot 105s to win her first circuit race in the Brooklands Automobile Racing Club (BARC) Ladies Handicap:
Despite never having previously raced a car (nor driven around Brooklands), Fay’s spirited and swift driving in practice meant that she had been given only a five second start over the vastly more experienced Elsie “Bill” Wisdom, who started from scratch. By the end of the 6½ mile race, Fay had stretched this advantage to 250 yards. Irene Schwedler, in third place, was 200 yards behind Wisdom, having started 1 minute 10 seconds before her, so it seems obvious that both “Bill” and Fay were pushing their cars to the limit. 112

At this point, women were not permitted to compete against men in BARC events at Brooklands, but Taylour’s victory over Elsie Wisdom was a good augur of things to come for Fay. Wisdom had already established a reputation in rallies and hill climbs, and had competed in a mixed (men and women) race in the 1931 Junior Car Club (JCC)’s 24 hour race, run over two days because of a ban on night racing at Brooklands. The JCC event was not regarded as a BARC race, even though run at Brooklands, which enabled BARC ‘prejudice against women entering its prestigious events [to] be circumvented by entering club competitions hosted at
the circuit to gain valuable experience of larger races\textsuperscript{113}. If Fay thought that by abandoning her speedway career she had left men’s attempts to avoid competing with her, and other women, behind, she was to find that the problem was something that would face her until the very end of her motor sport career, more than two decades later. Taylour raced again for Fox, driving Talbots twice more at Brooklands during 1932. Her last race in a Talbot at Brooklands also saw her competing against Wisdom, in the Ladies Handicap of 10\textsuperscript{th} September, 1932. Taylour again beat Wisdom, but the two rivals came in second and third behind the actress, Eirane ‘Paddie’ Naismith, who had occasionally chauffeured the Labour Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald, and later became an aviatrix, most notable for her flight to Australia in 1934 in the Centenary Air Race\textsuperscript{114}. But Naismith had only bested Taylour by 20 yards.

In 1933, Taylour extended her repertoire of motor racing, rallying in a Ford V8, taking part in the Monte Carlo rally but failing to finish, ‘she also took the Ford to the JCC [Junior Car Club] Members’ Day gymkhana at Brooklands and in March she finished 6\textsuperscript{th} overall in the RAC Rally, following
this with a bronze medal in the Scottish Six Day Trial.\textsuperscript{115} She raced again in the Ladies’ Handicap at Brooklands in October, in a Salmson which was possibly the car that Naismith had raced with in 1932, but Taylour was unplaced in the 1933 event.

1934 was a significant year for Taylour’s motor racing career, involving a noted victory in Ireland, a nearly 4,000 mile round Italy race, hill climbing successes and a move into the new sport of midget car racing. The round Italy race – the Lictor’s Gold Cup - was for production sports cars, and Taylour entered the competition with her co-driver, Jack Bezzant, driving a 1,500 cc Aston Martin. The entire event was characteristic of the modernism of Mussolini’s Fascist regime, bringing together 226 competitors, racing in three stages, each of around 1,200 miles, over ‘every conceivable kind of country […] from broad highways running dead straight over the plains, to the mountainous heights of the Apennines and the Alps’.\textsuperscript{116} Further, the cars were followed by a fleet of aeroplanes, with team managers dropping messages to their drivers, the air support being organised by ‘a famous Italian “ace”, Colonel Ferrarin’.\textsuperscript{117} After four days of racing, only two of the five British
competitors (which included Taylour) were left in the competition, and the press reported that only Bezzant and Taylour were still in the race to win. By 1\textsuperscript{st} June, two stages had been completed, and 139 cars were left in the race. Bezzant and Taylour started the final leg, but had to carry out running repairs shortly after the start, losing time at a point where they were in twelfth position in their class\textsuperscript{118}. The problem was with the car’s cooling system, but, at almost the last gasp, Bezzant and Taylour had to withdraw from the race when the Aston Martin’s gearbox gave in, just as the pair was ‘fast overhauling the leaders’\textsuperscript{119}. The race was won by Pintazuda and Mardilli, driving a Lancia, and the only British team remaining, Minstall and Diamond, driving a Singer, came 24\textsuperscript{th}, with an average speed of 50 m.p.h..

Fay’s next race was to be less arduous, but more successful. On 4\textsuperscript{th} August, she took part in the first running of the ‘Skerries Race’ for the Leinster Trophy. It was only the second time a woman had raced in an Irish competition, and Taylour, driving an Adler, was the only woman in the line-up of 29 drivers. The race, which was described by The Irish Times correspondent as being ‘a much keener race
than was expected on a thirteen mile circuit\textsuperscript{120}, became a noted fixture in the Irish motor sports calendar and Taylour’s victory was long remembered.

Taylour had further success in Ireland later that month, winning the Ulster Craigantlet hill climb in a 1,469cc Frazer Nash. She had also taken to dirt-track midget car racing, which was introduced into Britain in 1934 with an event at Crystal Palace on 9\textsuperscript{th} June. She set a women’s track record then, and improved on it on 30\textsuperscript{th} June. She followed this by defeating ‘Dot Oxenden for the British Ladies Championship’\textsuperscript{121}. Much of her racing after 1945 would be midget car racing, in the USA, New Zealand and Australia, but her midget car career in Britain was, like her speedway racing, cut short:

Fay appeared in guest midget car races at Lea Bridge, Dagenham and Coventry against top drivers like Les White, Spike Rhiando and alter Mackereth – and the results were fairly even. But, again, there was a ban by the midget car promoters on women taking part in full-scale meetings, and, capable as
she was, Taylour had to go overseas to prove her ability in the formula.\textsuperscript{122}

All this activity brought Taylour continued publicity, and the press in Australia and New Zealand, for example, continued to follow her exploits, now in motor racing just as before when she drew speedway crowds\textsuperscript{123}. However, the next few years saw a marked reduction in her racing tempo.
9. 1935-1937 problems and a change of gear

Over the next three years, Taylour seems to have experienced a variety of problems. Compared with her racing life up to 1935, she competed in relatively few races, and was far from successful. She also had problems finding owners or companies to race for, and without such backing she was not able to build her motor racing career. Indeed, by the end of 1936, it looked as if that career had come to a halt, and she made no appearances in the following year. However, there is a possibility that her disappearance from the race track in 1937 was the result of personal problems.

On 31st May, 1935, Taylour was convicted at Kingston on Thames Petty Sessions of a motoring offence, namely speeding, and was sentenced to a fine of £1.2.0, or seven days imprisonment. The subsequent events can be seen to encapsulate aspects of Taylour’s public life. She made great play of her refusal to pay the fine, on the basis that the 30 m.p.h. speed limit was ‘absurd’. Opting to serve the seven day prison sentence, she was received into Holloway Gaol on the 24th June. She posed for the cameras outside
the women’s prison, and the news story was carried in newspapers around the world. However, she did not serve her sentence as a journalist from the *Daily Express* paid the fine, and she was ‘put out’ of Holloway the next morning. She professed herself to be angry at the development:

‘I wanted to serve the week’s imprisonment as a protest against the absurd speed limit,’ Miss Taylour said. ‘I did not go to prison as a joke, and I realise that a week there would not have been a very pleasant experience. Paying the fine has spoiled it all [...] The point I have tried to make is that if every motorist convicted under this new speed limit refused to pay the fine and went to prison, an alteration would soon be made in the law.’

As a girl, she had visited Holloway to see her imprisoned Suffragette aunt, and that experience, and the knowledge that militant women’s suffrage activists had attempted to bring about a change in the law through law-breaking and the acceptance of imprisonment probably providing the reasoning behind her speed limit protest. It certainly
brought her publicity. Her next experience of Holloway would not be so brief, nor so satisfactory in terms of publicity.

1935 was also the year in which Taylour established a stronger link with Germany, specifically with the German car manufacturer, Adler. Sometime during the year, she visited Germany specifically ‘to talk with car manufacturers’\textsuperscript{126}, and it is likely that it was this visit that gave her access to Adlers for racing. She had, of course, driven an Adler when she won the Leinster Trophy the previous year, and would, therefore, have been in a strong position to argue that the company should back her. She was successful in this, as she drove ‘a left-hand drive Adler Trumpf cabriolet in both the Monte Carlo and RAC Rallies – […] without success’\textsuperscript{127}. The car was ‘German registered IT-70539 and probably loaned by the company’\textsuperscript{128}. She also entered the Eastbourne Rally in an Adler, and, in the month following her brief imprisonment, intended to defend her Leinster Trophy also in an Adler – a 995cc single-seater. But her attempt to defend her 1934 victory was blighted with a series of problems. The initial announcement of drivers and cars for the race 31 drivers, all of whom, with
the exception of Taylour were listed with their cars, which suggests that she had yet to obtain a car, less than three weeks prior to the race. However, the week before the race, Taylour was listed with an Adler, as were two of the other contestants, E.M. Mitchell and C.H.W. Manders. But during practices, Manders’ Adler was damaged, and Taylour had to withdraw her Adler, subsequently qualifying ‘using the M.G. car entered by S.R. Sheane’. She had qualified, but was unable to find a car to race with, and was unable to race. It was turning into a bad year for her, and by the time of her close of season appearance at Brooklands, when she was unplaced, she had not enjoyed any success. Further, she had failed to build on her 1934 record in midget car racing, although she did appear at a midget car event at West Ham in August, 1936. But, uncharacteristically, Taylour’s motor racing career had slowed down by the end of 1935.

The next two years of Fay Taylour’s life are difficult to reconstruct, and Richard Armstrong has noted that she ‘almost drops from view and does not seem to have taken part in any rallies, track or road racing events in 1936 or 1937’, and ‘as far as motor sport is concerned 1937
seems to have been a complete blank for Fay Taylour.\textsuperscript{133} Given the precarious nature of Taylour’s motor racing career, her reliance on being able to persuade car owners or manufacturers to back her with access to cars, it is likely that, following her lacklustre years of 1935 and 1936, she was simply constrained by a lack of money. When in England, she usually lived at Lucerne Cottage, Lucerne Mews, in Kensington, and it was from here in June, 1940, that she was taken to be interned.\textsuperscript{134} This property was owned by her father, and was her base in England from the end of 1932 until she was interned. Her speedway successes had enabled her to keep racing, but she was unlikely to have been able to save money, indeed, her outgoings were probably not far removed from her earnings even when she was at the height of her speedway success. That period was behind her, the ban on women by the ACU had cut her off from that source of finance. Indeed, as early as 1932, she told the press that she was ‘broke’, and that she had to earn ‘a few shillings’ as a ‘jobbing driver with her sports two seater’.\textsuperscript{135} Things improved after that interview, but it highlights the precarious nature of her racing existence. However, the ‘complete blank’ of 1937 might possibly be explained by something a little more prosaic than difficulties associated with motor racing.
The last year or so of Taylour’s life was marred by the effects of a series of strokes, the last of which led to her
death on 2\textsuperscript{nd} August, 1983. For much of the preceding year, she was a patient at Weymouth General Hospital, and was, in part, nursed by Theresa Jenkins-Teague. In April, 2013, the author spent an afternoon with Jenkins-Teague discussing Taylour’s life, and Jenkins-Teague revealed that, in her opinion, Taylour had, at some point, been pregnant. The evidence for this was abdominal stretch-marks that were characteristic of pregnancy\textsuperscript{136}. There is no pictorial evidence that suggests that Taylour was ever overweight, and she had no stretch marks on any other part of her body. There is, then, the possibility that, at the least, Taylour was, at some point, pregnant, and that she may have given birth, either a live or a dead birth. The register of births, marriages and deaths gives only one birth that might be related to this – that of Jacqueline V. Taylour, who was a late registration at Hampstead in the summer of 1939. The birth certificate for this child gives the occupation of her mother as ‘nurse’, and there is no entry for the name of the father. It is, perhaps, unlikely that this was Fay Taylour’s child. If she did, indeed, have a child, then 1937 is
practically the only year that such an occurrence might have taken place. Prior to then, her activities are constant and frequently documented in the press, as are her activities in 1938 and 1939; while from late 1939 onwards she was constantly monitored by the security services, and there was no suggestion at all that she was pregnant. It is, of course, possible that any child was registered by another woman as her own, or that Taylour had a child outside the UK.
Back on the racing track again. Taylour, in an Alfa Romeo Monza, is pushed towards the track at Brooklands on Whit Monday, 1938.
10. Last years of peace, 1938-39

Despite continuing problems in finding cars to race, Taylour was, nevertheless, back racing in 1938. She drove an Opel Olympia in the JCC Members’ Day and the RAC Rally, but without success, and she failed, again, to enter the Leinster Trophy race, this time she was unable to find a car.\textsuperscript{137} Success also eluded her at Brooklands in 1938, when she drove an Alfa Romeo Monza in the Whit Monday and August Bank Holiday meetings, and a Bugatti T35B in the Dunlop Jubilee and October meetings.\textsuperscript{138} She continued to try to take part in rallies, but, unlike other women competitors such as Betty Haig, Kay Hague and Countess Moy, she failed to appear in important events. Only in midget car racing did she seem to be able to put in regular appearances. The key problem for Taylour was a lack of finance:

Fay’s lack of further success outside the realms of speedway midgets [was] due more to a lack of opportunity caused by the lack of access to suitable machinery and – by extension – a lack of money.
Her [Continental] speedway and midget racing earnings must have provided enough to live on, but presumably were insufficient to support more than the occasional drive begged – or perhaps rented – from someone else.\textsuperscript{139}

With the end of the 1938 season in the UK, Taylour journeyed to South Africa at the beginning of December, looking to revitalise her motor sports career there and overcome the seemingly perennial financial difficulties that had been holding her back.

Her first major race was the fifth South African Grand Prix, run on 2\textsuperscript{nd} January, 1939. She drove a Riley, and it is very probable that this was a car owned and tuned by Freddie Dixon. It is likely that she took Dixon’s Riley to South Africa with her, Dixon financing the trip with the expectation that she would sell the car for a commission. But success eluded her in the race, and it may have been that she had been unsure whether she would compete, given her late arrival in South Africa. The race saw Maseratis take the first three places, and ‘Miss Fay Taylour, who only entered at
the last minute, following a telephone call from London, was never happy with her Riley. After a slow start she was eventually forced to give up on the fifth lap\textsuperscript{140}. This failure might well have led to any intention to sell Dixon’s Riley in South Africa being abandoned, because Taylour later explained that ‘I had been out there [South Africa] racing in a big race, the Grand Prix in South Africa. I raced for an English designer out there. When his car went back to England I sold American cars for an English firm\textsuperscript{141}. But, she was unable to make enough money, and eventually ‘went broke’\textsuperscript{142} there. Despite these problems, things improved in terms of racing, and she enjoyed success in midget racing, beating top South African driver Dennis Woodhead, and other notable local drivers, including Betty Trew and Gus Collares\textsuperscript{143}. She also found time to race speedboats, something that she had tried before in Australia and the UK\textsuperscript{144}. Taylour spent six months in South Africa, and her financial difficulties meant that she had to ‘sell out my 1\textsuperscript{st} class return fare on the Union Castle railship’\textsuperscript{145}, and take a cheaper fare on the German-Africa line’s \textit{SS Watussi}, which was sailing to Hamburg from Beira via Cape Town\textsuperscript{146}. 

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Fay Taylour arrived in Hamburg early in July, and remained in Germany until a week before the outbreak of the Second World War. Those weeks in Germany, and her activities there, would cause her difficulties in the future, and help to keep her detained. During the war, pre-war visits to Germany could be regarded with suspicion by the British authorities. People travelled to Nazi Germany for a variety of reasons – some out of curiosity, some to be convinced of the positive nature of the regime, others to confirm their belief that it was a dangerous regime. But, for those who came under suspicion in 1940, in particular, time spent in Nazi Germany could prove problematic, even for those who had merely holidayed there. And Fay Taylour’s last visit to Germany did prove problematic for her.

It is clear that Taylour’s 1939 visit to Germany was a result of her need to find cars to race with. Given that she had gone ‘broke’ in South Africa, and that she had obtained a refund on her return ticket to the UK, it looks as if her decision to go to Germany was a combination of immediate financial problems and the hope that she might find cars to race there. If she had already arranged racing in the UK, it is unlikely that she would have failed to return home.
Instead, she ‘arranged to visit a world famous motor racing firm in Germany, and at the same time, one [to] the big German motor race at Nürburg Ring [sic] at the end of July, for which my arrival coincided’\textsuperscript{147}. She was able to visit at least one German motor firm, Auto Union (presumably the ‘world famous motor racing firm’), and talk to officials there\textsuperscript{148}, but she was not able to convince them to give her a test drive.

She also met some German officials, presumably from the Nazi Party, and after writing to Berlin radio, she gained access to the airwaves. She benefited from the fact that someone from the African service of German radio had seen her race in South Africa and arranged for her to appear on Berlin radio\textsuperscript{149}. For Taylour, this was an entirely normal thing to do, as, wherever she went, she tried to arrange broadcasts, and was part of her publicity, and income raising efforts. This time, she broadcast to South Africa about motor racing. Later, the British authorities would be particularly concerned about this, worried about the impact of radio propaganda, and aware of the pro-German sympathies of sections of the Afrikaner community. But Taylour’s view was that she had only talked about
motor racing, and that the programme was not unlike the BBC programme, ‘In Town Tonight’ on which focused on famous people visiting London\textsuperscript{150}. This would not be the view of the British authorities in 1940. Taylour’s broadcast, and her new contact in German radio, did, however, open up the possibility that she might be able to make a link at the highest level of German motor sports. She explained:

Through that [broadcast] I met a man in the Propaganda Ministry, who said that he would like, if possible, to arrange for us to meet Henlein [sic]. I do not know him. He is the Sports Leader. If I had met him it is possible that a test [drive] would have been taken.\textsuperscript{151}

It is very likely that Taylour was talking about Adolf Hühnlein here, the leader of the Nazis’ motor corps organisation, the \textit{Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahr-Korps} (NSKK). Hühnlein was himself a motor cycle enthusiast, and an engineer, and may well have helped Taylour, if she had been able to meet him. Instead, she used money from the refunded Union Castle ticket to stay in Germany until
‘war seemed imminent’. She arrived back in England on 26th August, 1939, a week before the outbreak of the Second World War. Two months later, on 26th October, the main newspaper of the British Union announced that Fay Taylour had joined that fascist and national socialist movement.

Fay Taylour’s sporting life prior to the outbreak of the Second World War saw her enjoy widespread fame as a serious, dangerous rider on the speedway track, a threat to all those who sought success in speedway. But the banning of women from speedway in the UK cut her off from her main source of income and her ability to constantly race. She reacted by attempting to build a new career in motor car racing of various kinds, highlighting the degree of flexibility that had characterised her motor sports career from the very outset. However, her financial status, limited as it was, meant that she had to invest a great deal of her time and energy in simply finding owners and firms to back her, something that she struggled to do. Throughout all of her pre-war career, she exhibited a number of characteristics that enabled her to continue to participate in motor sports. She was undoubtedly courageous as motor sports of all forms were dangerous, none moreso than
speedway, with deaths being far from uncommon. She was single-minded and persistent, pursuing her racing career across the world, submitting herself to the relentless search for races, victories, and the income that would enable her to keep racing. Throughout these years, she had to rely on her own resources to arrange her travels, ensure her access to machines, gain entry to events where women were usually less than welcome, and publicise her achievements. She was undoubtedly self-confident, robust, and determined. These characteristics enabled her to follow her motor sports dreams, but, in another context, that of world war and politics, the same characteristics served her less well.
11. Joining the ‘Peace Campaign’

Within weeks of broadcasting from Berlin to South Africa, Fay Taylour was back in London, and listening to German radio. But she also ensured that neighbours could hear the English language broadcasts from Germany, and this ‘upset one or two local residents’\textsuperscript{154} who subsequently provided information to the police about Taylour’s activities at this very early stage of the war. It seems that as soon as she returned to England, Taylour began to argue strongly, and at every opportunity, that the war was wrong. She constantly brought the subject up in conversation in public, and in letters to friends. At this stage, she was acting by herself, as a one-woman propaganda bureau. From then on, Taylour would be politically committed for the rest of her life. Yet, there is no evidence of Taylour’s active involvement in politics prior to September 1939. The catalyst appears to have been the UK’s declaration of war on Germany on 3rd September, following Germany’s invasion of Poland on the 1st September. Taylour was opposed to war, but she was specifically opposed to war on Germany. She had visited Germany repeatedly, both before the rise of Hitler, and after the establishment of the Nazi
regime. On a personal level, Germany was associated with her October 1928 participation in the International Six Days race in partnership with Lionel Wills, while, in purely motor sport terms Germany had provided her with a sporting refuge for much of the summer of 1930, following the ban on women in UK speedway. Further, she had established some links with the German car industry and, probably stronger ones with elements of the Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahrkorps (NSKK) and the propaganda ministry. These ties to Germany, and approval of the new regime, led her to state in a letter of February, 1940, ‘I love Nazi Germany and the German people and their leader, and this war seems terribly unfair’\(^{155}\). Her sympathy for Germany can be dated back until at least the beginning of 1938, when she had cut out a map of the world from *The Daily Telegraph* Colonial Supplement and marked in the extent of the British and French empires, annotating the map with, ‘So we are afraid of Germany. Or are we dogs in the manger?’ She later explained this note by saying, ‘I meant that seeing we were so big we [the UK] did not need to be afraid of being swallowed up’\(^{156}\). These sympathies lay behind her initial attempts to argue the anti-war, and pro-German, case. But in October, a visit from the Special Branch of the Metropolitan Police was to galvanise Taylour’s political life.
and see her become involved in a number of political groups dedicated to stopping the war, and to promoting fascism and national socialism. Taylour was to bring to these endeavours the same single-minded drive, determination and enthusiasm as she had brought to her motor sports career.

Joining British Union

Fay Taylour’s practices of loudly denouncing the war in public places such as restaurants, playing German radio late at night, and writing about the war in letters to friends and relations, quickly brought her to the attention of the British security authorities. Taylour herself was convinced that the main complainant was a neighbour of hers who had reported that:

I said Germany was a beautiful country, and that I’d told him that Poland and Czechoslovakia hadn’t existed before World War I, but had been built up after that war to hem Germany in, and I didn’t believe in declaring war on Germany to save the
Polish corridor [...] and I’d also said that the Germans didn’t want war with England, which apparently also annoyed the cockney Londoner.\textsuperscript{157}

All this activity led, at the beginning of October, to her being visited at Lucerne Mews by detectives from Special Branch. After interviewing her, the detectives reported ‘she could see no reason for this country being at war, and did not hesitate to expound her views to anyone who would listen’\textsuperscript{158}. This incident had, for Taylour, a lasting effect, and put her on the path to internment, as the interview led directly to her joining the main British fascist and national socialist party, Oswald Mosley’s British Union (BU). Taylour explained how the Special Branch interview led her to BU:

The exact reason why I joined [BU] was that when the war broke out I felt that my views were rather similar to British Union. I do not know who it was but somebody had reported to Scotland Yard that I disapproved of the Government’s war policy, and I was visited by detectives. This man [sic] wanted to find out about me. Up to then I had not been a
member of any club or anything. After speaking to him he asked me if I was a member of British Union and actually I was interested enough to go along and have a look at British Union and read their policy. Quite frankly, their views were similar to mine and I joined.\textsuperscript{159}

She claimed, after internment, that the only previous knowledge of BU that she had was having read a copy of the movement’s main newspaper, \textit{Action}, some two years earlier. Given how much time she spent outside the UK, and her total commitment to motor sports, it is likely that she had, in fact, very little prior knowledge of Mosley’s movement. Indeed, she probably had more knowledge of German National Socialism than the British variant. Nonetheless, once the Special Branch officers had left her house, Taylour lost no time in finding out more about the BU, spending ‘the whole afternoon at British Union headquarters’\textsuperscript{160}, subsequently joining the movement and, in the words of Action, ‘putting herself at the service of the Peace Campaign’\textsuperscript{161}. 
British Union ‘Peace Campaign’ leaflet: isolationist, and anti-Semitic, it draws on the memory of the Great War to argue that Britain should ‘Mind Britain’s Business’.
Until she joined British Union, Taylour had been campaigning against the war in an *ad hoc* and isolated fashion, but joining the BU meant that she had moved into the orbit not only of partisans of Mosley's movement, but also of other ultra-right groups. She was, in fact, part of the growth of both the BU and other anti-war right wing groups that marked the last year or so of peace and the first months of war. In the seven years since its founding in October, 1932, Mosley's movement experienced changes of fortune, waxing, then waning, only to grow again prior to the war. New recruits in the period 1938-39 were often focused on Britain avoiding another world war, something that the isolationist and, indeed, pacifistic British Union movement had always advocated\(^ {162} \). In addition, there were fresh recruits, like Taylour, who were particularly supportive of the ‘new’ Germany, and those who insisted that international communism remained the main threat to Britain and the British Empire\(^ {163} \). The stance of British Union, ‘Britons fight for Britain alone’, and its policy of patriotic opposition to war enhanced the movement in terms of its membership and linkages with other groups, if not among the population as a whole. For Taylour, however,
there was also a strong sense of relief that she had found a party, and, as it transpired, a network of like-minded men and women: ‘actually, it was an awful relief to me [when she ‘found’ the British Union]. Perhaps you cannot understand that. I mean, the war started and I thought it was wrong. It seemed so dreadful. And then I found that I was not alone in holding that opinion’\textsuperscript{164}. Politically, she had found a ‘home’, but she had also firmly marked her card with the British security services who put her under surveillance, something that did not finally end until 19th March, 1976\textsuperscript{165}.

Fay Taylour immediately threw herself into a range of political activities, which were described by the security services as ‘considerable’ in frequency and scope\textsuperscript{166}. She was a member of the Marylebone branch of the British Union, but also came into contact with C.F. ‘Charlie’ Watts. Watts was born in January 1903, and after interrupted schooling at Alleyn’s School, Dulwich, he joined the Royal Air Force as a teenager, and served for 12 years as a corporal involved in parachute testing. By the time Taylour met him he was working as a book keeper in his brother’s chandlers firm, spending almost of all his free time campaigning for the British Union\textsuperscript{167}. In Charlie Watts,
Taylour found someone who was as energetic and committed as she was, and someone with a great deal of experience of extra-parliamentary politics. In the opinion of the security forces, Watts ‘although never officially influential in the hierarchy’ of British Union, was nonetheless ‘considered as one of the most efficient, active and revolutionary members’ of the movement’. Watts was seen to be particularly dangerous because he had organised a British Union Cab Drivers’ Group, which reached a peak membership of around 1,000 London cab drivers, and averaged some 700 members at any one time, between Watts starting the group in 1938 and the spring of 1940. When Watts was interned, on 24th May, 1940, it was believed by other BU members that he was regarded as particularly problematic for the authorities not just because of his activities, but because his extensive contacts with cab drivers operating in the West End of London meant that he had gathered a good deal of intelligence relating to the activities of prostitutes whom the cab drivers delivered to wealthy and powerful clients. This may have been an issue for the authorities, but Watts’ ‘pleasant personality’, ability to make friends, his constant activism, and, once the war started, the belief that he was part of an underground network – the ‘Home Defence...
Movement’ – producing anti-war propaganda, was enough to see him interned\textsuperscript{171}. Although Watts was the District Leader of British Union’s Westminster and St. George’s branch, he was well known throughout central London, and appears to have quickly befriended Fay Taylour\textsuperscript{172}, whom he met every Tuesday at BU headquarters. It is likely that it was through Watts that Fay Taylour became involved in a wider range of activities than was typical for BU members. Further, she became more involved with other ultra-right groupings, and, interestingly, a semi-informal group of women activists who formed a key part of the ultra-right anti-war campaign at the end of 1939 and the beginning of 1940.

*Political activism*

In Britain, the coming of war in September 1939 did not bring, as many people feared, immediate, large scale air raids and high civilian casualties. Instead, the initial effects were better characterised as uncertainty, dislocation, and a degree of unreality, especially once Poland had been engulfed by Germany and the Soviet Union. Young men began to be called up (a process that had already started
before the invasion of Poland), men and women looked for war work, children were evacuated from the cities, particularly London, and parliamentary politics entered a period of heightened factionalism, mostly behind the scenes, which would not be resolved until Churchill became Prime Minister in the aftermath of the failure of Allied forces to prevent the German occupation of Norway in April, 1940. The home front at this early stage in the war – in the period that would become known as the Phoney War – was in state of flux. For those involved in extra-parliamentary politics there still seemed to be much that could be done, despite the actuality of war. The Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB), for example, opposed the war in line with the Comintern’s view that the war was an ‘imperialist war’. As a result, the CPGB campaigned against the war, both directly and through ‘front’ organisations like the ‘People’s Convention’ movement of 1940-41\textsuperscript{173}. The CPGB also made preparations to go underground should the party be banned by the government; the communists produced cyclostyled papers as test runs for underground propaganda, prepared for police raids, and established a secret printing press. As Douglas Hyde, the then news editor of the \textit{Daily Worker} said, ‘we made our preparations for illegality. A duplicate Party organisation was created
from top to bottom, with a shadow leadership at every level. There was an atmosphere of heightened political urgency; a sense that a crisis point had arrived that might open a revolutionary opportunity. This feeling was shared by the ultra-right as well, and Fay Taylour was caught up in it. In some respects, her involvement in political activism at this time can be seen as a substitute for the racing that she was no longer able to undertake. In modern terms, she can be seen as an ‘adrenalin junkie’. Potentially dangerous, partially illicit activism may well have had an appeal in its own right, notwithstanding her genuinely held beliefs about the war.

Taylour combined a range of political activities. She continued to talk to anyone and everyone she could about the war, explaining why Britain should not have declared war on Germany, along with the need for a rapid negotiated peace. But she was now a member of British Union and was able to draw on its resources. She collected BU propaganda material, its main newspaper, Action, and leaflets and flyers, and distributed them, often leaving them on buses, trams and other public places, as well as sending them to everyone she knew. She wore a BU badge in her
coat lapel and frequented BU meetings in London. She was
tireless in this sort of activity, and clearly did not care who
she offended. Indeed, even her relatives informed on her,
with a Special Branch report noting:

Shortly after Christmas 1939, a communication was
received from a relative with whom Miss TAYLOUR
had stayed, reporting that she was an ardent
admirer of MOSLEY, had strong pro-Nazi views,
which she had expressed even to servants and local tradespeople, had distributed Fascist leaflets and
wore a “Flash and Circle” [British Union] brooch.¹⁷⁵

Interestingly, later, during one of her appeals against
detention, Taylour denied being a strong admirer of Mosley,
staying, instead, that ‘I admire British Union for sticking out
for their views’¹⁷⁶. This was probably the case, as she was
not a long term member or supporter of the movement, and
at the same time as becoming involved with BU, she was
drawn into the orbit of other activists on the ultra-right who
were indifferent or hostile to Mosley. However, she was
clearly seen by some BU leaders as being a good ‘catch’
for the movement, and at one stage she was added to the movement’s list of women speakers, although she later denied that she had ever spoken at meeting – not because she did not want to proselytise, but because she felt that she was a poor public speaker. Despite that claim, she admitted that the leading BU woman activist, Olive Hawks, had been keen to get her to speak; further, Special Branch reports noted that she did, in fact, speak at public meetings, although perhaps this was in an impromptu fashion177. But British Union activity was not all that Taylour involved herself with. As in her pre-war racing days, she was quick to establish a network of people that she involved with the anti-war campaign.

From the time of her initial interview by Special Branch, Taylour had been put under surveillance, with her letters and phone calls intercepted, as well as notes made of her participation in public events. She had a wide circle of correspondents and was a frequent letter writer. Some of these correspondents had very similar views to hers. Intercepted letters between Taylour and these friends were later used as part of the authorities’ case for interning her without trial. One correspondent in particular, Joyce Pope,
who lived in Gstaad, Switzerland, greatly concerned the security services. They suspected that Taylour was ‘communicating with Germany by letters passing through Switzerland and Ireland’\textsuperscript{178}, and that, given her extensive networks of contacts, including servicemen, and women in contact with diplomats, she was an actual or possible conduit for information. No evidence was ever produced to substantiate these fears, and the letters from Pope that have survived seem to indicate that Taylour wrote about her political views and concerns to a friend who was of a similar cast of mind. But to make matters worse, Taylour had also written to a friend called Box in Hamburg almost as soon as she had returned to England in August, 1939. She later said that she had written merely to say thank you for his being ‘particularly kind’ to her when she arrived in Hamburg from South Africa\textsuperscript{179}. It is highly unlikely that she was able to send more than one letter to Box, for although she was in better contact with Pope, even then, Pope’s long last letter to Taylour, dated 10th January, 1940, was intercepted by the security services and was not seen by Taylour until it was produced during her appeal against detention on 28th August, 1940. Intercepted letters would make Taylour’s life particularly difficult, both for their actual content and their suspected meaning.
The fear of Fifth Column activity was clearly uppermost in the mind of the security service when it intercepted a postcard from Tony Dickson, which he sent to Fay around Christmas, 1939. William Anthony ‘Tony’ Dickson was a Scot who had served in the King’s (Liverpool) Regiment during the Great War, and seems to have met Fay Taylour through motor racing, in which he may have been an occasional participant. He would be a long-term friend of Taylour’s, and it is likely that they were lovers, with a wartime letter from the Governor of Holloway Prison noting that they shared a flat\textsuperscript{180}, and a post-war intelligence report on Taylour noting that she ‘does not want to get married – and certainly not [to] Tony Dickson whom she regards as gutless and no business man and whose lack of education would grate on her nerves!’\textsuperscript{181}. Her somewhat trenchant views of Dickson’s marriage potential notwithstanding, she was certainly closely linked to him in 1939 and 1940, and it seems that she encouraged him to join ultra-right groups during that period, but perhaps not British Union\textsuperscript{182}. Dickson had a tendency to accidentally create difficulties for Taylour, and his ‘Christmas card’ of 1939 did just that. The card was, in fact, a postcard of the Forth Rail Bridge, on the back of
which he had written, ‘Do you think using H.M. agents for propaganda worked?’ This cryptic message on the back of a picture of a key piece of the rail network (one of the first parts of the UK to be targeted by German air attack) caused Taylour a great deal of trouble. In her first appeal against detention, on 28th August, 1940, she was quizzed at length about it, and she referred to a telegram that Dickson had sent her around the same time which she said was ‘wrongly worded’ but appeared to be about Christmas ‘in the land of poverty and plenty’. She went on to say that Dickson was particularly concerned about social issues, and ‘very much feels that there is lots of poverty where there should not be’¹⁸³. The explanation given by Taylour was that Dickson was referring to the Post Office when he had written ‘H.M. agents’, and that he was testing to see if political remarks could still be sent by post and telegraph. This explanation did not entirely persuade the appeals committee, who, in late summer 1940, still seem to have been concerned that there was a Fifth Column organised and operating, even when the War Cabinet and the Security Intelligence Centre had recognised that this was not the case¹⁸⁴. But if the government had ceased to have genuine concerns about a Fifth Column by August, for the first ten months or so of the war such activity was suspected and feared, and Taylour
was involved in loose networks of men and women that were suspected of subversive activity.

_Fay Taylour and male networks_

During her pre-war sporting days, Fay Taylour had, of necessity, built extensive networks in the male dominated worlds of motor cycle and motor car racing. Acting as her own manager and publicity agent, she had gained access to a wide range of motor sports, news outlets, manufacturers and owners to enable her to build a racing life. She was clearly at ease in men’s circles and, during late 1939 and early 1940, she established herself in a world of political activism focused on opposing the war. In terms of British Union, her key contacts seem to have been men, and, in addition, she appears to have built links with men in the armed forces – something that would alarm the security authorities. When her home at Lucerne Mews was searched, following her detention on 1st June, 1940, a list of the names and addresses of six Scots Guards officers was found, along with the names of two men in the Royal Air Force. There were different ways in which the presence of this list of names could be interpreted, but it was difficult
to imagine that Taylour had noted them down for entirely apolitical reasons. The names had been marked with an asterix, and a note said, ‘stars denote degree of possibility; but one never knows’\textsuperscript{185}. Understandably, she denied any knowledge of the list, or indeed of knowing any Scots Guards. However, she did admit to knowing the RAF men, Sergeants Macdonald and Rothwell. She explained that the latter was a ‘fan’ of hers, an Irishman that she had met in Ireland and who had asked for a signed photograph, which is why she had his address. She had met Sergeant Macdonald in London since the outbreak of war, and she described him as a friend. Later, in her appeal against internment held in April, 1942, Taylour gave a slightly different account of why there might have been a list which included the six Guards’ officers’ names. She said then that the men might have been potential customers for a Brooklands racing experience that she advertised in 1931-32, which had been part of her attempts to make money after the speedway ban on women\textsuperscript{186}. How accurate this was as an explanation is unclear but, in the context of the time and Taylour’s own activities since the outbreak of war, the list did her no favours with the authorities.
12. Going Underground

Taylour was involved not only with the overt campaigning of the British Union, but also with covert activity carried out by some BU activists, and a range of other ultra-right groups. The situation among these groups, particularly those operating in London was fluid and complex. The size and activism of the various groups differed. Some, like the inner London branch of The Link were able to draw upon a membership of hundreds\(^\text{187}\), while others could manage only dozens of supporters. However, there was overlapping membership between the groups, and formal organisation mattered less as time went by. Instead, informal networks were formed, often on the basis of friendships, partially in attempts to avoid the surveillance that the activists took for granted. Taylour’s membership of the British Union, and crucially, her friendship with Charlie Watts drew her into activity with what was, in all probability, a very small group called the Home Defence Movement (HDM). This group was led by men who were members of, or associated with the British Union, but it also contained some women members of BU. It was active throughout the Phoney War period, during which Taylour would also
become involved with networks that were increasingly, and predominantly, women’s networks.

The security authorities were never able to prove to their complete satisfaction that Charlie Watts was the leading light behind the activities of the Home Defence Movement, but they believed that there was sufficient circumstantial evidence to assume that was the case. Watts himself consistently denied having anything to do with the HDM, and implied that it did not exist, or that it was an example of anti-BU provocateur activity\textsuperscript{188}. Watts’ view of the war would change, and he would eventually be released from internment in September 1941 as the authorities accepted his argument that, with the bombing of the UK, and the continuation of the war, it was necessary for all Britons to unite to fight Germany\textsuperscript{189}. But in 1939, Watts was against the war, believing it to be a result of Jewish hatred of Hitler and Germany. Immediately following his arrest on 23rd May, 1940, Watts wrote from Brixton Prison:

I wish to protest most strongly against my arrest & detention in this prison. I am neither a German or
even pro-German. I am a 100% patriotic Englishman & would be one of the first to volunteer for services against an invasion of this country by Germany or any other country. One of the many reasons I am a follower of Sir Oswald Mosley is because I consider this country has already been extensively invaded by Jews. Nobody else seems to worry about that but the Leader so hence my support goes to him & with him sink or swim.¹⁹₀

The energy and enthusiasm which had enabled Watts to make the BU cab drivers group so successful, he channelled into his underground activities with the Home Defence Movement. In this, Watts was assisted by Andrew Burn, who was an official in the Ministry of Health, and Howard Hall, who was described in security files as a butler-secretary. The HDM was also supported by Norah Elam, aka Norah Dacre Fox¹⁹¹, the former Suffragette, well-known BU figure and anti-vivisectionist. Taylour, through her contacts with both Watts and Elam, was also involved. The HDM carried out a wide range of underground propaganda activities designed to reinforce an anti-Semitic, anti-war campaign, but without making any links to the
British Union. This activity seems to have been entirely the product of the informal group that Watts gathered around him, and was characteristic of the informal, amorphous activism that unsettled the security authorities. They reported that:

The illicit literature with which WATTS is connected is of two types: Home Defence Movement leaflets, and sticky-back labels. The Home Defence Movement leaflets consist of typewritten or Roneo’d pamphlets. There is a series of “News Commentaries”, a quantity of anti-Semitic verse and a number of miscellaneous libels. It is to be observed that the “News Commentaries” never mention the names of British Union or of Oswald MOSLEY. The policy advocated by them, however, vague though it is, is identical with that of the B.U., though couched in cruder and more scurrilous terms. Each sheet ends with the slogan: “Join the Home Defence Movement, stop the war, and clean up Britain.” Almost every issue contains one or more libels on Mr. Winston Churchill, Mr. Hore-Belisha and Sir John Simon. Others exhort the reader,
“Don’t wait for revolution, work for it”. Others, again, warn the reader that the propaganda is illegal.192

MI5 also feared that there was some connection between the HDM and the ‘black radio’ broadcasts of the ‘New British Broadcasting Station’ (NBBS). The NBBS was an English-language station broadcast from Germany, but purported to be an underground station operating from within the UK. It broadcast from 25th February, 1940, until 9th April, 1945, broadcasting up to four times a day. A senior BBC official later explained, ‘The activities of this station caused considerable concern to the authorities of this country’, and the broadcasts themselves were ‘rather clever broadcasts to begin with and rather above the average’193. The NBBS’s line during the early months of its life was that it was an underground station ‘run by British patriots with the intention of saving their country from a potentially suicidal war’194. The station argued that what was needed in Britain was a ‘Peace Front’ which would unite all those opposed to the war, from whatever political background, to campaign for a ‘Peace Now’ policy. The NBBS also offered advice in respect of clandestine activity, and how to prepare to continue an underground peace
campaign should the government make such activity illegal.\textsuperscript{195}

It appears that the HDM were involved in advertising the frequencies on which the NBBS broadcast, presumably using stickers and small flyers. Given the concern about the possible effectiveness of the station, this was yet another reason why the authorities wished to stop the activities of networks like the HDM. It was this world, of roneoed leaflets left on buses, trams and trains, and ‘sticky backs’ proclaiming, for example, ‘Conscript the Jews, it is their war’, stuck to lampposts and other street furniture, night-time chalking of slogans on walls and pavements, and meetings with other activists, that Fay Taylour entered with some enthusiasm. She took part in distributing roneo’d propaganda, prepared such material, and undertook more public activity in her involvement in the anti-war campaign.

Taylour was involved with the distribution of a roneoed pamphlet called ‘The Voice of the People’, which was produced by a Mrs Hilton who was a BU activist, but was also part of the informal, cross-cutting network that involved
people from different groups. ‘The Voice of the People’ was regarded by the authorities as being particularly ‘anti-British’\textsuperscript{196}, by which they meant strongly anti-war, anti-government, and probably anti-Semitic. Taylour was involved in distributing the pamphlet, but made the point in her first appeal against detention, that there were few of them available; although the authorities believed that it had been ‘circulated to great numbers of people’\textsuperscript{197}. The difficulties and limitations imposed by the roneoing material might well have lain behind Hilton’s decision to merge her efforts with those of the Home Defence Movement, which announced, on 14th May, 1940, that ‘The Voice of the People’ and the HDM had been merged. Taylour did not limit herself to passing around clandestine publications, and in May, 1940, she was involved in an incident at the Newsreel Cinema in London that was regarded very seriously by the authorities. Part of the reasoning behind clandestine political activity was to give the impression, both to the government and the population at large, that opposition to the war was not confined to those, like the British Union, the Peace Pledge Union, or the CPGB, all well-known for that stance, but was more widespread. As part of that effort, Taylour organised a group of people to attend a newsreel cinema showing film of the return of
British sailors from the first Battle of Narvik. During the battle, HMS Hardy had been lost in heroic circumstances and its commander was posthumously awarded the first Victoria Cross of the war. The surviving crew were met by Winston Churchill, still First Sea Lord, and Taylour and her accomplices hissed every time Churchill appeared on the cinema screen. Given the context, it is little short of astounding that Taylour thought that organising an anti-Churchill, anti-war protest at the cinema would be an effective intervention. Taylour had previously seen the newsreel and had prepared her group, which sat in different parts of the cinema, to hiss Churchill but clap the surviving sailors. It seems that the audience reaction was hostile, as Taylour later admitted that the hissing nearly caused a fight. She was subsequently questioned closely, and at length, about why she organised this protest, and she explained that she had hissed Churchill, ‘not because I am against the war, but because I felt most sincerely that Mr Churchill’s policy would not do good for the country […] I believed most sincerely that the more the war went on, the worse it would be for us’. This incident, and Taylour’s subsequent defence of it, did little to help her in appeals to be released from detention, and fitted the profile that the
security services drew of her as an active, vocal and unpredictable protestor.

*Fay Taylour and women’s networks*

Taylour was not only active in semi-clandestine networks, like the HDM, which were dominated by men, but, increasingly, in women dominated networks. In fact, women’s networks lay at the heart of ultra-right activity during the period of the Phoney War. Partly this was because younger men began to join the armed services, but also because women developed methods of pursuing political activity in an increasingly hostile context. As a result of the increased feminisation of ultra-right political activity during the first six months of 1940 in particular, the security services were compelled to utilise women agents and agent provocateurs in response to the importance of women in the continuation of ultra-right politics. Fay Taylour was a member of a range of small political groups. Special Branch alleged that she was a member of the Nordic League, the Right Club, the Angles Circle, the Anglo-Irish Friendship League, and The Link. Women were to the
A woman fascist selling the BU newspaper, *Action*. Many women were active in the fascist movement and in the less street-orientated groups, like the Right Club.
fore in the activities associated with these groups. Further, it was the Anna Wolkoff – Tyler Kent affair, involving secret Anglo-American communications taken from the US Embassy, that led directly to the decision to intern large numbers of fascists, nazis, and other political detainees in May and June 1940. The Wolkoff affair has received a good deal of attention\textsuperscript{201}, but, in relation to Fay Taylour’s activities, the main interest is in the central role that women played in the continued functioning of the Right Club, of which Wolkoff was a member, after its nominal closure by its founder Captain Ramsay, M.P., once the UK entered the war. Taylour was active within this network, and was a friend of another woman racing car driver, Enid Riddell, herself a long term friend of Anna Wolkoff. It was the links between women like these, involved with the Right Club and other groups, which paved the way for political internment in the early summer of 1940.
The exact date when Taylour joined the Right Club is unclear, but in a written appeal against her detention she said that ‘shortly before my detention, I joined the Right Club’. Taylour herself said in her appeals against detention that, until she joined the BU, she had not been a member of any political club or party. In the hearings against detention Taylour’s statement was not contested by the appeals panel, which might suggest that, as Brian Simpson has noted, the Right Club’s membership ledger may well be far from accurate. However, the security services were convinced that she was a member of the Right Club and other groups, and this is likely given the pattern of inter-locking activism that characterised this form of militancy. In fact, many years later, Taylour admitted that she had joined the Right Club in a booklet describing her internment experiences. The passage referring to the Right Club is interesting in that it gives an insight into some of their activities and membership:
[Right] Club members seemed to me a group of well-educated people who enjoyed going to lectures given by Historians, Economic experts, scientists, etc., and I went to one lecture with a friend who was a Right Club member. He suggested I should join the club and I became a member. There was no entry form or book of regulations. I merely expressed a desire to join.  

As Taylour’s account of joining the Right Club suggests, it was clear that formal membership of such groups had lapsed. In effect, membership arose from taking an active part in their activities. Indeed, at one stage, it was reported that Taylour was trying to get hold of a membership badge from The Link ‘for a friend’. The badge, featuring a linked map of the UK and Germany, was not available as The Link, like the Right Club, had ostensibly been disbanded. The other complicating factor was that groups began to create innocuous-sounding front organisations to cover their activities, with, for example, the Nordic League also operating as the Holborn Public Speaking Society.
The Right Club had a very brief existence. It was founded in March 1939, and was officially closed at the outbreak of war, but members continued to meet. The brain-child of Captain Maule Ramsay, the Conservative MP for Peebles, the Club’s purpose was to spread Ramsay’s anti-communist, anti-Semitic message on the right. The Right Club’s membership was around 235, of whom 135 were men, and 100 women, and included six MPs and some members of the House of Lords\textsuperscript{207}. However, the gender balance tipped more towards women once war broke out, as a later figure for membership was 100 men and 150 women members, given by Mr Justice Atkinson summing up at the libel case brought by the detained Cpt. Ramsay against the *New York Times* and its London distributor in July, 1941\textsuperscript{208}. With the outbreak of war, many of those associated with the Right Club ceased to have connections with it. Its unofficial activities were largely continued by its women members. They continued to meet for lunches, and were responsible for low-level anti-war, and anti-Semitic propaganda, involving ‘sticky-backs’ and leaflets.

Taylour was involved in all this activity, although she was to claim later that she was ‘only introduced to two or three
members [of the Right Club] and had not had the opportunity of getting to know them. She kept in touch with a wide circle of women activists, including Mrs Hilton, a Mrs Winfield, whom she seems to have met at the same time as she met Charlie Watts, and Olive Hawks, the BU speaker. Although the Right Club was small, its main women activists mostly lived in London, and formed part of the extended network of groups and individuals that maintained a heavily politicised anti-war campaign. But, the Right Club’s greater significance was probably in the unwitting role that it played in MI5’s manoeuvring to create the conditions whereby political internment without trial could be instigated. MI5 placed three women agents in the organisation, to gather intelligence and, perhaps more importantly, act in the role of agent provocateurs. The official historian of MI5, Christopher Andrew, enthusiastically described the success of MI5’s agents in the Right Club, noting that one of the agents ‘codenamed M/Y, was so successful in posing as a pro-Nazi that [Anna] Wolkoff called her “the little Storm Trooper”’. This seems like classic provocateur behaviour, and was something that Fay Taylour became aware of once she was interned. Further, at least one of the other MI5 women in the Right Club, Joan Miller, seems to have been as much prone to
fantasy as any bona fide member of the group. Whatever their motivations, the activities of these women helped to create an atmosphere of tension, and the sense that there was a semi-clandestine underground working against the continuation of the war, for Britain’s neutrality, or, indeed, for Nazi Germany. And these tensions were not only to be found in London.

A visit to Éire

In early February, 1940, Fay Taylour returned to Dublin, and added her own anti-war views to the mix of pro-German and anti-British views that could be found there. Dublin, like the rest of Éire, and republican parts of Northern Ireland, harboured a good deal of popular support for Germany, and then the Axis in general as first Italy then central European countries joined the war. At root, this support was built on the foundations of ‘my enemy’s enemy is my friend’; it was, in essence, an anti-British position. However there was more to the pro-Axis position than that, and recent work has shown that Éire produced its own brand of fascist and totalitarian politics during the war years. This was only partly related to the Blue Shirtism of
the early 1930s, when post-Irish Civil War tensions between supporters of the Free State and the inheritors of the rejectionist elements of the IRA, in the form of *Fianna Fáil*, led to the creation of the Army Comrades Association under the leadership of General O’Duffy, which quickly took on the trappings, if not the complete form, of fascist politics\textsuperscript{212}. Instead, the seemingly unstoppable rise of Hitler’s Germany, the long-term success of Mussolini, and the perhaps particularly relevant, because so Catholic, dictatorship of Salazar in Portugal, helped convince some Irish activists that a right-wing, authoritarian, if not totalitarian, future beckoned\textsuperscript{213}.

The exact reason for Taylour’s visit to Dublin is unclear, but the trip was another stage in the development of her relationship with her home country. Further, for the British security forces, the trip opened up the possibility that Taylour was on some kind of mission for British Union, perhaps concerned with radio broadcasting, which was a constant concern for the British authorities. By this time, British renegades like Dorothy Eckersley and Margaret Bothamley, who had been active in the Imperial Fascist League and The Link, were broadcasting into the UK from
Berlin, along with William Joyce –‘Lord Haw Haw’ – and his wife, Margaret. Consequently, there was little enthusiasm for any prospect of an anti-war, pro-German broadcasting station based in Éire.

Taylour left Liverpool for Dublin on Sunday, 4th February, embarking on the S.S. Innisfallen. She was closely watched, and a report by a Sergeant A. Kay (presumably of the Special Branch) on her movements was sent to MI5 noting:

She is now going for a few weeks’ holiday to Dublin to Miss Webb\(^2\), 61 Palmerston Road, Dublin. She was travelling alone and the only luggage she had was a small travelling case which was thoroughly but discreetly searched. Nothing of an incriminating nature was found. From her demeanour during the casual conversation I had with her, I am of the opinion she is anti-British in her feelings and cunning.\(^2\)
Sergeant Kay’s distrust of Fay Taylour’s ‘cunning’ notwithstanding, she had already greatly assisted British security by writing a letter, dated 2nd February, to H.T.’ Bertie’ Mills of Queen’s Gate, SW7, telling him just what she intended to do in Éire. Bertie Mills was not a member of British Union, although he was later interned for ‘furthering the cause’ of the movement\textsuperscript{216}, but from Taylour’s letter it appears that he was connected to The Link, and it is known that he was also involved with the Nordic League, the Imperial Fascist League (IFL) and the Right Club\textsuperscript{217}. Mills provides another example of the \textit{ad hoc}, informal and interlocking nature of support and membership of the fascist and anti-war groups during this period. In her letter to Mills, she outlined her views on the war: ‘To me the only thing that really matters these days is that a brave nation who has been forced to fight must not be anhiliated [sic] – a nation upon whom we have done the dirty’\textsuperscript{218}. With her letter, Taylour wrote that she was returning to Mills ‘the U.D.C. Newsletter [… which] gives one useful facts in such a way that one can draw one’s own conclusions’\textsuperscript{219}. This appears to have been a copy of the Union of Democratic Control’s Newsletter. It is likely that Mills was, in fact, a pacifist supporter of the UDC, the organisation that had opposed the Great War, which by the late 1930s was an
anti-fascist and pacifist group. This is another example of the way in which fascists, pro-Nazis and pacifists found themselves in the same camp in the period of the Phoney War; as indeed, the communists were. She continued, in the letter, to ask about Mills’ likes and dislikes, which suggests that they had only recently met, and enquired about his obtaining more UDC literature for her. Finally, she told Mills that she intended to meet up with the Catholic priest, ‘Father F.’ while in Dublin. An annotation to the security services’ copy of the letter notes that this was Fr. Fahey. Father Denis Fahey was a prolific Catholic author, monetary reformer, and anti-Semite, who, during the war, set up the Irish group Maria Duce – a Catholic Irish ‘extremist movement […] which regarded the Irish Constitution as illegitimate because of its affirmation of the legality of sects other than the Catholic Church, and because it failed explicitly to acknowledge the kingship of Christ over the island of Ireland’²²⁰. This was just the type of contact that would be regarded as potentially dangerous by the British and Irish security services, both of which were alive to the potential threat of anti-war and pro-German networks that could, in the worst case scenarios, be conduits for espionage or sabotage.
The other concern of British security was that Tavlor was involved in an attempt to access radio broadcasting for the anti-war message, and, that perhaps, her visit represented another attempt by Mosley to find a base for radio. Mosley had already attempted to enter the commercial radio market in order to provide his fascist movement with a steady, reliable stream of income. His inspiration was the English language station, Radio Normandie, which was owned by the Conservative M.P., Captain Leonard Plugge. The only way to break the BBC’s monopoly of broadcasting in the UK was to broadcast from outside the country. The popularity of music-based radio stations like Radio Normandie and Radio Luxembourg meant that there was money to be made in commercial radio, and, for a time in 1937, it looked as if Mosley would be able to base a station on the island of Sark. Then, when legal difficulties arose, from German territory in the Baltic. Neither scheme came to fruition, but the secrecy with which Mosley had pursued the attempts, using holding companies and intermediaries, meant that, despite the financial incentive behind the idea, the British authorities were concerned that there was also a propaganda impetus. Such an impetus would be
understandable, as the National Government had, in agreement with the BBC, secretly banned Mosley from speaking on the BBC\(^\text{223}\), and British Union members often chalked the slogan ‘Let Mosley Speak’ on walls and pavements. Further, British fascists, such as the leading BU officer, Ian Hope Dundas, the movement’s liaison officer with its Italian counterpart, had broadcast from Italy numerous times during the mid-1930s\(^\text{224}\), as had James Strachey Barnes, the author of *The Universal Aspects of Fascism* (1928), which had been prefaced by Mussolini\(^\text{225}\). Against this background, and given Taylour’s own history of radio broadcasting around the world, including from Dublin in February, 1939, it is perhaps not surprising that there were concerns about the possibility of even more radio propaganda being beamed into the UK. German broadcasting included not only the Berlin station, but also ‘black’ radio stations purporting to be clandestine anti-war stations operating from within the UK, stations such as the New British Broadcasting Station and the ‘Workers’ Challenge’ station\(^\text{226}\). Questioned after her detention, Taylour denied having anything to do with any such radio plans, and repeated that before the war she had always sought to broadcast about motor racing wherever she was, as a matter of course. But, if she took no part in radio
activism in Dublin, she did continue to push the anti-war message.

Writing again to Bertie Mills, on her return from Dublin, Taylour told him of her assessment of the Irish mood, and of a visit and talk she had given at her old school, Alexandra College. This letter was also intercepted by the security services and became part of the case that led to her internment. Interestingly, the British authorities seem to have taken her comments, which they regarded as anti-British, as evidence that she was hostile to the war effort because she was Irish. During her appeal against detention in August, 1940, the chairman of the appeals committee, Mr A. T. Miller KC, drew Taylour's attention to the letter and its contents:

In this letter of the 9th February we are told that you commented on the anti-British feeling in Ireland, and told him – that is Mr. Mills – that some remarks in a lecture given by you to your old college went down well as the head of the department was very anti-
That is rather awkward, is it not, if that is in your own letter.  

Taylour’s response to this was to become caught up in the question of her own nationality. She immediately said that, ‘I am Irish, you know’. The chairman said that he had not realised that, and Taylour went on to say, ‘that does not mean I have to be anti-British’. But she then went on to say that ‘I was born in England and I belong to Britain’, and used that statement to explain why she was unhappy at people outside Britain thinking the country was, in the words of the Alexandra College teacher, ‘very greedy’, and that, in Taylour’s view the only way that impression could be dispelled was if Britain ‘lost’ the mandated territories, by which she presumably meant the former German colonies. The whole exchange was rather confused, and gives the sense of Taylour attempting to manoeuvre around questions of her loyalty and nationality. However, her usual care at describing herself as Irish, English, or British to suit the occasion came partially unstuck when she, wrongly, claimed to have been born in England. Following her brief visit to Ireland, Taylour returned to London and continued her political activity. That activity was ideologically driven,
and throughout the whole Phoney War period Taylour was refining her political views and developing her own arguments concerning the nature of the war.
During the Phoney War, Taylour’s ideological standpoint rested primarily on concerns about social conditions, her view of economics, and a strong sympathy for Nazi Germany. It is difficult to track her pre-war political development, although it is very likely that her repeated visits to Germany, both before and after the Nazi revolution, were highly influential and gave her a pronounced sympathy for the regime. Interestingly, she was a very late adherent to British Union (the movement only had nine months of life left when she joined), and it seems to have made little ideological impact on her. For Taylour, joining the British Union had been a response to her interview by Special Branch, and her realisation that the BU was at the heart of the anti-war campaign. In fact, Taylour’s eclectic views went beyond the official ‘line’ of British Union, and her links with other groups, like the Nordic League, meant that she was not in very good odour at [British Union] National Headquarters owing to her habit of voicing violently pro-German views too openly’228. As a result, Taylour’s political development in the period from September 1939 until she was interned in June, 1940, represented a range of
influences other than of British Union, along with her own interpretation of events.

At the beginning of 1940 Taylour wrote a document that was designed to be an underground pamphlet to be distributed in much the same way as ‘The Voice of the People’. Although it does not appear to have been circulated widely, it was sent out by post. Unfortunately, there is no surviving copy of the pamphlet, entitled ‘The Two Conflicting Economic Systems Which Caused the War in 1939’, but Taylour discussed its contents in her first appeal against internment in August 1940. In that appeal, Taylour characterised the basis of her anti-war stance, and her support for Germany, as being a question of economics: ‘I do sincerely believe that the war is not so much a war of boundaries and things, but a war of economic systems; because, I mean, economics is the life of the nation’\textsuperscript{229}. In response to this statement, a member of the appeals panel, Mrs Cockburn, asked Taylour what her statement meant in terms of Taylour’s preference for the economic systems of ‘England’ (i.e., the UK) and Germany. Taylour replied:
In my opinion the system of the English was a system whereby individuals could make profits to the detriment of the people – or not to the detriment; whereas under the other system [Nazi Germany] individuals were not allowed to make profits. Is that not right? That is more or less the gist of it. 230

She further commented that she preferred a system which ‘did not fill the pocket of the individual’. Later, she would characterise the core of the economic problem, at both an individual and national level as one of ‘greed’. In relation to the war, Taylour saw it as being a result of the clash of two economic systems, which had been exacerbated by the UK pursuing its economic and imperial interests, and that a negotiated peace was the ‘solution’ that she supported. Although Taylour’s understanding of the operation of the Nazi economic system was somewhat lacking, her standpoint was clear and reflected other statements she made regarding economic and social questions. She made favourable comment about people she knew who showed concern about economic and social injustice. It had, for
instance, been one of the major points in favour of Tony Dickson. She was also aware that some of the people she came into contact with who were also anti-war were unhappy with her focus on social issues. For example, Taylour remembered that at a lunch in February, 1940, she was talking ‘about war and economic conditions between England and Germany. And after the lunch, the woman who gave the lunch told me later that somebody said to her, “My dear, the girl is a socialist”, in a most horrified tone’231.

It was also Taylour’s view that the UK and France, the two leading Imperial powers, were unnecessarily ‘greedy’ in their desire to maintain their empires while preventing Germany from accessing similar advantage. She summed up this view at the appeal hearing, saying, ‘we [the UK] have got so much of the world […] there is no need to interfere in Europe’232. She was, in fact, an isolationist in this context, and regarded ‘small nationalities’ in central Europe as not ‘in our sphere of interest’233 – a view that was very much in line with British Union’s long-held policy stance, expressed in its slogan ‘Mind Britain’s Business’.
One aspect of Taylour’s ideological outlook that was not addressed in her appeal hearings was her anti-Semitism. Yet, it is difficult to imagine that with her involvement with groups like the Right Club and her underground activity, that she was not an anti-Semite. Indeed, her contacts with the Irish anti-Semitic activist, Fr. Fahey, would also suggest that she had adopted such a stance early in the war. In a briefing report that the British authorities later sent to the Defence Ministry in Dublin in October, 1943, as part of the preparations for Taylour’s release from detention, it was noted that, prior to the outbreak of war: ‘Miss TAYLOUR appears to have been particularly impressed by German hospitality, and become greatly concerned with the perils of Jewish world domination, Free-Masonry and “international finance”’ 234. Taylour rehearsed these views, decades later, in her letters to R.R. ‘Dick’ Bellamy, giving a detailed account of how she felt the ‘Jewish conspiracy’ had operated, and still operated in the 1970s. For example, in a letter of 4th March, 1974, Taylour wrote:

I think one has to have lived in USA in the last 2½ decades and have all points of view to understand their “use” of Communism. They as well as us put
Soviet Russia in the saddle after World War II, and all their seemingly valiant anti-communism has been the convenient cudgel for all that Mosley, Hitler, and the few other enlightened and idealist men fought against – i.e. control of the masses the world over by International Finance – control by the Jews. It cannot ever be accounted as co-incidence that out of 388 members of the new Bolshevik government in Petrograd in Dec. 1918 only 17 were non-jews one of those being a negro, & the remaining 16 were the only real Russians. 265 of those Jews (according to the Rev. Mr. Simons who served in Petrograd from 1907 to Oct 1918) came from the Lower East Side of New York […] When one considers that the Jews were just and are a mere minority in numbers, the coincidence cannot carry! And especially when one considers the part they played in past centuries & the setting up of Freemasonry.235

For Taylour, this conspiracy theory underpinned her explanation of ‘plots’ by the ‘exploiters’, which went hand in
hand with 'naturally' occurring conspiracy that grew of 'greed'.
Once Germany began its campaign in the west – first in Denmark and Norway, then against Belgium and France – the domestic situation in the UK underwent a transformation. The anti-war campaign, even though it was made up of widely disparate groups and individuals, many of whom had little or nothing in common with each other except opposition to the war, began to be regarded by some within the government as a real threat to Britain’s war effort. The larger background to this potential threat was the fear of the Fifth Column. The idea of the Fifth Column had emerged during the Spanish Civil War, when the nationalist General Mola announced that, in addition to four military columns advancing on Madrid, he had a ‘fifth column’ inside the capital, poised to rise against the defenders. In the UK in the spring of 1940, the Fifth Column fear gained a new lease of life as an ‘ill-assorted hotchpotch of aliens, native fascists, communists, pacifists, and religious dissenters under Nazi control […] were deemed responsible for the collapse of the dominoes following the blitzkrieg in western Europe’. Indeed, it was this fear, along with that of Germany’s new ‘wonder weapon’, the paratrooper, which
was the immediate impetus behind the creation of the Local Defence Volunteers (later, the Home Guard) on 14th May, 1940\textsuperscript{237}. In the UK, those in the security services who wanted tough action to counter any potential Fifth Column focused primarily on two groups – enemy aliens (which included large numbers of anti-Nazi refugees), and political opponents of the war. Increasingly, the security services’ view was that the government should use the internment powers that it had possessed, under Defence Regulation 18b, since the outset of the war. MI5 wished not only to see the widespread internment of enemy aliens (including many Jewish refugees from Nazism), but also fascists and communists. However, the Home Office resisted this call, arguing that such a move would not be in accord with traditional British civil liberties, might create a difficult underground situation among political activists left at large, could inflame fears of a Fifth Column, make martyrs of those interned, and, in the case of the communists, create difficulties in those trades unions where the CPGB was most active. The task that MI5 faced, therefore, was not only to gather sufficient evidence against those it wished to see interned, but also to create a situation where the government could be convinced that there was a real threat of an organised Fifth Column at large. Part of the solution
for the security services was to be found in provocateur activity.

Fay Taylour was undoubtedly part of a network of anti-war, pro-German activists who were involved in a range of semi-clandestine activities. As such, Taylour was just the sort of person that the security services wished to stop, and her activism was reasonably easy to evidence. But, she was also the target of MI5 provocateur activity. This was the case once she was interned, but it may well be that she had already been targeted in a similar fashion before her detention. In addition to intercepting her mail, and monitoring her movements and conversations, it may have been the case that Taylour was, as she believed, the victim of provocateur activity just a week before she was interned. Following an incident in Hyde Park on 26th May 1940, Taylour was arrested by police. She described the occasion later:

My arrest [her internment], apart from my views, could well have been prompted by a Communist frame-up to which I was a victim six days earlier.
British Union was anathema to the Communists just as Communism was corrosive venom and openly opposed by British Union. It was Sunday afternoon and I’d been walking through Hyde Park with friends reaching Marble Arch about 4.30pm where we intended to exit and find a tea shop. Suddenly, in front of me, out of the crowds gathered to hear the soap box orators at the corner, sprang a disreputable-looking man and woman, and the man tore the little British Union brooch I was wearing out of my rain coat. Immediately, two policemen from behind grabbed the man [Taylour’s friend] who was walking beside me, but at that moment the disreputable man and woman who had receded popped up again from the front and pointed at me. The policemen then transferred their grip to me, jogging my elbows and marching me off to the police station in the middle of the park, disregarding protests from me and my friends.238

Taylour believed that the ‘disreputable’ man and woman had been working with the police. She was charged with ‘struggling with a man in Hyde Park, causing a breach of
the peace and public speaking’²³⁹. She appeared before Marlborough Street Police Court the next day, but the magistrate dismissed the case on the grounds that as no one ‘could give an accurate account of what had actually happened the prisoner must be acquitted’²⁴⁰. Whatever the truth of the incident in Hyde Park, it was yet another element in the case that MI5 brought to intern Taylour on 1st June 1940. MI5 certainly used a variety of provocateur tactics, from placing its agents at the heart of groups like the Right Club, such as the ‘little Storm Trooper’ Joan Miller, to effectively ‘framing’ its targets. The most infamous of the latter forms of MI5 action were in relation to the former Labour Party activist, Quaker, pacifist, and treasurer of the British People’s Party (BPP), Ben Greene. The Greene example showed the extent to which MI5 and, in particular, Maxwell Knight, the officer in charge, went in order to ensure the arrest and detention of targets that Knight had identified. Greene was not in any way another Taylour, yet he was the victim of MI5’s provocateur tactics.

Ben Greene’s was the target of a honey-trap and blackmail attempt by MI5 using one its woman agents who called herself ‘Mrs Pope’. When this, and other attempts had
failed, Maxwell Knight simply framed Greene in order to have him detained\textsuperscript{241}. To carry through his determination to have Greene interned, Knight again made use of a provocateur, a German refugee called Harald Kurtz, who, having failed to get Greene to rise to various baits, concocted a story against Greene, and subsequently, on Knight’s orders, attempted to entrap Greene’s brother, Edward, too. In fact, the Ben Greene affair eventually impacted on Knight’s MI5 career; although, in his and MI5’s defence, it might be said that, given the fears of the time, and the backdrop of German military success, both ‘could plead national security in justification of their dirty tricks, but neither [MI5 nor Greene] emerged with their reputation unscathed’\textsuperscript{242}.

Maxwell Knight and MI5 also used provocateur tactics in their drive to have political internment introduced on a comparatively large scale. For Knight, the aim was to defeat those, like the Home Secretary, Sir John Anderson, who argued for the maintenance of civil liberties, even in time of war. Despite Knight’s best efforts, he had still failed to provide by the spring of 1940 any hard evidence that the various right wing groups and parties represented a real
Fifth Column threat to the UK. What was more, Knight’s primary target – Mosley and British Union – was not regarded by Anderson as representing a dangerous threat. As late as 18th May, Anderson told the War Cabinet:

Although the policy of the British Union of Fascists is to oppose the war and to condemn the Government, there is no evidence that they would be likely to assist the enemy. Their public propaganda strikes a patriotic note … In my view it would be a mistake to strike at this organization at this stage by interning the leaders. Apart from the fact that there is no evidence on which such action would be justified, it is to be borne in mind that premature action would leave the organization itself in being and other leaders could be appointed to take the place of those who had been apprehended. In my view we should hold our hand.\textsuperscript{243}

Yet within a month, Mosley and over 1,000 of his supporters would be interned without trial, and the British Union proscribed. The remaining supporters and activists
left at liberty would struggle to keep any form of association going, and mostly focused on relief efforts for families of those interned. That drastic change was brought about by the Tyler Kent-Anna Wolkoff affair, which Knight used not only to convince the government to make an amendment to the Defence Regulation 18b, but also to get it to act ‘against Mosley and his party […] although neither Kent, Wolkoff, nor indeed Ramsay had any direct connection with the BU’ 244.

By the spring of 1940, the mainspring of Right Club activity was provided by its women adherents, among whom were a number of women MI5 agents, planted by Maxwell Knight. Knight was, in all probability, a closet homosexual, one who was particularly attractive to women. His greatest successes with MI5 came through the use of women agents. Prior to the war, Knight’s primary success had been the unmasking of Communist Party spies involved in the Woolwich Arsenal spy ring, and that was a result of Knight having placed an agent, Olga Gray, at the heart of the CPGB 245. That success, and Knight’s undoubted ability to run women agents, lay behind his move to infiltrate female agents into the women-dominated world of the Right Club in
early 1940. Those agents were Joan Miller, Helene Louise de Munck and Marjory Amor\textsuperscript{246}. Of these women, the key agents were Miller and Amor, and they would enable Knight and MI5 to ensure that the links between Wolkoff and the US Embassy cipher clerk, Tyler Kent, could be exploited successfully, and lead to the implementation of political internment.

Anna Wolkoff was the daughter of the Imperial Russian naval attaché at its London embassy. After the Bolshevik Revolution, Admiral Wolkoff and his immediate family had remained in London as refugees, later setting up a business – the Russian Tea Rooms – on Harrington Road, near South Kensington Underground Station. Anna became a dress designer, and was naturalised as a British citizen in 1935\textsuperscript{247}. By the outbreak of war, she was active in the Right Club, and was part of an informal group of friends and political activists who opposed the war, believing it to be a ‘Jewish conspiracy’. One of her friends was Tyler Kent, who joined the US Embassy in London in October, 1939. He had previously held a posting in Moscow, and was fluent in Russian. His role was to code and de-code radio traffic to and from the Embassy, and as ‘London acted as a hub for
Embassy traffic within Europe, he was able to read many exchanges between the White House and its various European outposts\textsuperscript{248}. What this came to mean, as the Nazis advanced across western Europe, was that Kent could read secret cables between Churchill and Roosevelt, and those cables showed that President Roosevelt was involved in negotiations to support the UK, and, probably, bring the USA into the war, despite the fact that he was fighting a re-election campaign during which he was pledging:

\begin{quote}
I hope the United States will keep out of this war. I believe it will, and I give you assurance and reassurance that every effort of your government will be directed to that end. As long as it remains within my power to prevent, there will be no blackout of peace in the United States.\textsuperscript{249}
\end{quote}

Not only was Kent reading these cables, and not only was he in contact with various anti-war activists, he was also making copies of the cables and taking them to his flat. Knight and MI5 feared that he was passing information to
members of the Right Club, and his friendship with Wolkoff opened up a potential further leak of information. Wolkoff claimed that she knew Colonel Francisco Marigliano, the Assistant Military Attaché at the Italian embassy, and knew him well enough to get him to pass messages out of the UK by Italian diplomatic bag. But Knight’s agents – Miller and Amor – were well placed to prevent anything like this happening, and, crucially, were also placed to entrap Wolkoff. Through his agents, Knight was able to feed Wolkoff with a letter, supposedly for William Joyce in Berlin that she passed on to another MI5 agent, thus entrapping Wolkoff. That opened the door to the arrest of the US Embassy cipher clerk, and Right Club associate, Tyler Kent, and the revelation that he had been copying and collecting ciphers between London and Washington. Wolkoff and Kent were both tried in secret and found guilty of acting with the intention of assisting an enemy, with Wolkoff receiving ten years penal servitude and Kent seven years\textsuperscript{250}. Wolkoff served five years and was released in June 1946, she then returned to the Russian Tea Rooms, and when they closed after her father’s death:
She moved to a Bohemian lodging house in Tite Street, Chelsea, owned by Felix Hope Nicholson. Adrian Liddell-Hart, another Tite Street resident, remember[ed] her vividly: ‘She was a very right-wing, strident lady, much given to fanatical hatred of the Jews and the communists. She had no money and I think Felix must have let her live in the very top flat at a peppercorn rent. Anna made a slender living out of dress-making and her flat, where I once dined off a fearsome spaghetti dish, reminded me of Miss Haversham’s room in Great Expectations. It was trapped in time and full of junk.’²⁵¹

More significantly, the Kent-Wolkoff affair led, in the febrile atmosphere of May 1940 ‘inexorably to the internment of British fascists’²⁵², one of whom was Fay Taylour.
16. Arrested, imprisoned

On 1st June, 1940, Taylour was arrested at home, ‘Lucerne Cottage’, Lucerne Mews, Kensington. From there she was taken to Holloway Prison by Inspector J.W. Pearson of Special Branch on a ‘Home Office Order dated 30th May, 1940, issued by the Under Secretary of State, Sir John Anderson, under Defence Regulations 1939, 18.B.’. It was Taylour’s third time at Holloway, after her childhood visit to her imprisoned Suffragette aunt, and her own, one night stay in connection with the speeding offence. This time, as prisoner 4634, she would be held there for over two years, before being moved to the Women’s Internment Camp in the former Imperial Hotel, Port Erin on the Isle of Man. She was released in October 1943, after more than three years detention without trial. The order that began this imprisonment was issued by Sir John Anderson, and stated:

Paragraph 1. The Secretary of State has reasonable cause to believe that you have been a member of the organisation now known as British Union; or
have been active in the furtherance of its objects; and that it is necessary to exercise control over you.

Particulars:

You, Frances H. TAYLOUR, were at the time of your detention a member of the British Union and have been active in the furtherance of the objects of the said organisation by attending and speaking at public meetings, writing and distributing propaganda, and publicly disseminating pro-Nazi and anti-British views.

Paragraph 2. (relating to the organisation known as “British Union” and contained in the formal “Reasons for order”.)

(3) Miss Taylour is the daughter of an ex-senior officer in the Royal Irish Constabulary, and a racing motorist of some distinction. Shortly before the war, having completed a six months’ racing trip in South Africa, she proceeded to Germany, and while there broadcast to the motoring public of South Africa from the short-wave station at Berlin. She stayed in Germany until war seemed imminent, and then crossed to England. About a month after
the war started Miss TAYLOUR was questioned by detectives, who asked whether she was a member of the British Union. After the interview Miss TAYLOUR, on the same day, joined the British Union, and wrote a letter, which was published in “Action” announcing that she had placed her services at the disposal of the Peace Campaign.²⁵⁴

This bare statement outlined the formal reasons for Taylour’s detention – her membership of British Union (which was, up until she was detained, a legal political party), her visit to Germany and her broadcasting from Berlin prior to the war, and her part in the anti-war campaign. Of these four reasons, the most interesting, putting on one side being involved in legal political activity, are the citing of Taylour’s visit to Germany and her radio broadcasts to South Africa. Taylour had a long history of visiting and racing in Germany, both before and after the Nazis’ rise to power, but it is suggestive of the concern that some in the security forces had that such a visit so close to the outbreak of war might in fact have been in some way concerned with preparations for Fifth Column activity. The concern over radio broadcasting was a constant, and
reflects not only the immediate fears raised by the operation of English language broadcasting into the UK from Germany (including the black stations purporting to come from inside the UK), but also the fear that UK fascists would attempt to broadcast from outside the UK, perhaps from Éire. Given that Taylour, with her strong Irish connection, had a long history of radio broadcasting from a range of countries, it was perhaps feared that she would be involved in such an attempt.

The stated reasons for Taylour's internment did not present, however, all the authorities’ reasons for arresting her. Prior to the first hearing against her interment on 28th August, 1940, the appeal Advisory Committee was sent a ‘Statement of [the] Case Against Frances Helen Taylour’, which provided details of why the security services believed that she should be detained. This document focused on a number of points which were felt to be particularly concerning. While acknowledging that Taylour’s own written appeal of 16th July was ‘as far as actual facts go […] accurate […] it should be added, however, that whilst in Germany [in 1939] she apparently became very friendly with a number of German officials, and that her pro-German
feelings dated some way back\textsuperscript{255}. These links with Germany were to the fore in the case against Taylour, as were her contacts with a friend, Mrs Jessie Pope, in Switzerland and information from Special Branch that Tony Dickson had informed Special Branch that Taylour was ‘communicating with Germany by letters passing through Switzerland and Ireland’\textsuperscript{256}. The Popes were regarded as being pro-German, and MI5 noted that it had intercepted letters from them to other addressees in the UK. The focus on external links continued, with much being made of Taylour’s February, 1940, trip to Dublin, and her links with Fr. Fahey. MI5 continued to insist that her trip to Ireland was ‘in some way connected with a project of MOSLEY’s for broadcasting from Éire to England’\textsuperscript{257}, despite apparently having no evidence for this. It was also stated that she was a member of a number of groups other than British Union, including the Nordic League (in its ‘Holborn Public Speaking Society’ guise), the Right Club, the Angles-Circle, the Anglo-Irish Friendship Society, and The Link. It is likely, however, that Taylour was a ‘member’ of these groups simply on the grounds of her contacts, friendships and shared activities. Her political activities were described as being ‘considerable’, and among the dangerous contacts she had were a mix of activists from various groups, but
particularly those associated with clandestine activity - Mrs Hilton, Captain Ramsay, Mrs Winfield, and Charlie Watts. The list of Scots Guards officers and the two RAF men was also seen to be sinister. This, then, was the case against Taylour – she was seen to be potentially dangerous, very active, connected with a variety of groups and people, had contacts abroad, and might in some way be involved with radio broadcasting on behalf of the BU. It is difficult to fully assess the validity of this case, but it is clear that the foreign contacts, the link (although very weak) with a possible broadcasting venture, and her frenetic, though probably not very effective, activism worried some. More broadly, the case seems indicative of the general picture that MI5 was attempting to build up in order to push for political internment. In the context of the rapid collapse of Western Europe, and the widespread assumption that the dramatic events in Norway, the Netherlands, France and Belgium were, in part, to be explained by a German controlled Fifth Column, the case against Taylour assumes greater potency, though it is still sparse. To some extent, however, Taylour was her own worst enemy, and the fact that she was interned for an unusually long time (certainly longer than almost all other BU members and supporters) was, in part, due to her record in internment.
In the mid-1970s, Taylour began writing to another former detainee, Richard ‘Dick’ Bellamy. He had been the British Union Inspector for the North of England, and was interned for just over a year, before being released to serve with the National Fire Service. In her first letter to him, Taylour asked Bellamy if he knew of the whereabouts of women ‘who shared His Majesty’s “hotel” with me’. She listed women she had been interned with whom she was particularly anxious to meet up with once more: Ann Good, Flo Hayes, Judy Whitham, Tula Henham and her daughter Lolita. In reply, Bellamy mentioned his continuing contacts with Nellie Driver, Miss Marston, Lady Mosley, and Betty Allen. In a later letter, she wrote about another woman internee, Hildegarde Gooch – ‘Goochie’ – whom she said had written an account of women detainees’ experiences in Holloway Prison. Gooch had, said Taylour, gone on to live in Austria after the war, where she ran a letting business. In her letters Taylour wrote about the impact of internment on some of the women detainees. She said that she believed that some interned women had become ‘fanatical’ in various, sometimes surprising, ways: ‘as with many
women with unusual and hard circumstances behind them, they become bitter or fanatical in some new direction. Joan Evans let me read a letter from another woman 18B who had become a water diviner and could write of nothing else!263 The impact of detention was felt by internees in different ways, with some being particularly badly affected. Family breakdown was not uncommon – this was the fate of Charlie Watts’ family264, for example – while others faced long term problems, often health related. Richard Thurlow’s assessment of the impact of internment on some of the internees was that their ‘smearing as “fifth column” and potential traitors caused personal trauma and destroyed lives of BUF members. Suicide, physical and mental breakdown, divorce and the splitting of families were some of the results, and some became embittered265. Internment and the proscription of the BU effectively finished the movement. For the few remaining wartime activists, the fate of the ‘18b’ detainees became a key propaganda tool for many years. During the war, ‘The 18B Publicity Council’ published a pamphlet, *Persecuted Women in Britain To-Day*, outlining the fate of women detainees, while, years later, Taylour also published her account of internment, *Your Attention is Arrested under Defence Regulation 18-B*. 
Both sought to establish not only the illegality of detention, but also the privations suffered by the women detainees.

British Union women detainees arriving at the Isle of Man on their way to the women’s internment camp at Port Erin (from: http://www.oswaldmosley.com/18b-detainees-list/)

The 18B Publicity Council’s pamphlet stressed the fact that the interned women ‘have never been charged with any offence’\textsuperscript{266}, and went on to outline the circumstances of the arrests of the women, the conditions – particularly in Holloway Prison – that they were held in, and the health problems that imprisonment led to. The government’s decisions in 1940 to intern large numbers of foreign
nationals, refugees, and then political detainees, led to an immediate problem of where to hold these people. As a result, some of the camps used were barely habitable, for example, under the stands at York racecourse, or in a previously abandoned wing of Brixton Prison. For women detainees, the primary place of detention in 1940 was Holloway. But, again, there were not enough cells to cope with numbers, and, as at Brixton, an abandoned wing, ‘F’ Wing, had to be re-opened, and cleaned by detainees: ‘in “F” Wing conditions of extreme filth were prevailing. Stacks of dirty mattresses and dirty utensils had to be carried away, before even a start could be made at cleaning; […] despite the shortage of cleaning materials’267. Shortages marked the women’s imprisonment, with shortages of soap, cleaning materials, and sanitary products all impacting on health. As a result, women experience hair loss, skin disorders, and menstrual dysfunction. In these poor conditions, three women also gave birth. Fay Taylour was imprisoned in Holloway from 1st June, 1940 until the autumn of 1942 when she was transferred to the Isle of Man before being released on 5th October, 1943. In over two years in Holloway, Taylour was held in ‘F’ Wing, and, later summed up the experience of detention there in a
piece of verse, ‘Holloway Jail, by One of the Graces of 18B’, the penultimate stanza of which read:

Ailments came through bad detention,
Rheumatics, thyroid, not to mention
Dental troubles, failing sight
From sloppy food and rotten light.
Not least of them the lack of man
Since our detention days began –
“Preventative”! Yes, that was true!
Not punitive! Odd point of view.  

Taylour’s doggerel makes light of conditions, but given her pre-war life surrounded by the male racing fraternity, she clearly did miss men. However, she was in a good state of health when arrested, and her main health problem in detention seems to have been recurring and increasingly severe headaches. During the early months of her
Fay Taylour’s letters to Dick Bellamy and her booklet, *Your Attention is Arrested under Defence Regulation 18-B*, provide a convincing account of the role of Marjorie Amor as an MI5 plant in the Right Club, both before and after the internments of late May and early June, 1940. The continuing role of MI5 in attempting to develop their case against the Right Club and its members, even once they were detained, is of interest. The focus on the Right Club suggests that Maxwell Knight saw this comparatively small group of, largely women, activists as a useful tool in the development of his strategy. Marjorie Amor’s role in this has been overshadowed by that of Joan Millar, whose own subsequent accounts, particularly her book, *One Girl’s War*, reinforced her image as a lynchpin in the events of 1940. However, while Millar had a key role to play in the Kent-Wolkoff affair, Marjorie Amor appears to have been of more continuous importance in Maxwell Knight’s plotting. Marjorie Amor had been placed by MI5 as the Right Club’s secretary, and, as such, accepted membership
applications, and, probably helped compile the Right Club’s membership ledger which was subsequently found in the search of Tyler Kent’s flat. When the political internments started, Amor was one of the first to be imprisoned in Holloway. A week later, Fay Taylour was also interned there, but she was quickly informed by another internee, a ‘Mrs N’ that Amor was, in fact, a spy. After her first night in Holloway, Taylour was lying on her bunk when:

The woman who was accused of being a spy [Amor] walked in and sat on the end of my bunk. “Ridiculous, isn’t it”, she cried, “calling ME a spy!”. I knew her as being a member of the Right Club, and she continued to tell me that she was not only secretary of the club but also founder and organiser. Therefore she should be one of the first people to be put in Holloway […] it was perfectly natural for her to be amongst us, she continued. And, as if to convince me further, told me that no one could join the club without her sanction. “Why”, she said, “I sanctioned you for membership!”271.
Amor followed this up by telling Taylour ‘fantastic tales of how the club would take over key positions when Hitler won the war’\textsuperscript{272}, and that in the event of an invasion, the club members would seize radio stations and other key points. Taylour’s reaction was: ‘suddenly, in spite of my headache and the first day in such gloomy and frightening surroundings, I had a barely controllable desire to laugh. In my mind was conjured up a picture of fat-ish well-heeled coffee-drinking women marching on government bastions’\textsuperscript{273}. As Amor continued to embroider her story, Taylour remembered that at one meeting of the Right Club, Captain Ramsay had made a surprise appearance, and that the door had been opened by Amor, who had announced, ‘The Leader!’\textsuperscript{274}. The next day, Taylour was visited by two men who asked her a series of questions about the Right Club designed to elicit the very information that Amor had fed Taylour the day before. Writing over 30 years later, Taylour still did not know for certain that Amor was an MI5 agent, so she referred to her as ‘that crack-pot woman’\textsuperscript{275}. When the two visitors asked Taylour whether she had ever heard Captain Ramsay referred to as ‘the Leader’, she said, ‘no, discounting Amor’s tea party’\textsuperscript{276}. All of this was later put down, by Taylour, as being part of the fictitious and ‘atrocious supposed plans of the Right Club (as invented by
MI5 or the Jews)²⁷⁷. In all her time in detention, she did not change her mind about that, or about the struggle between Germany and the Allies.
Individual responses to political detention without trial varied, and detainees experienced a range of reactions, from the rejection of the ideological views that had led to their arrest, to a hardening of their beliefs. Indeed, among the British Union detainees, a hard core of mostly younger Mosleyites would be instrumental in re-founding the Mosley movement after 1945. But this was not the only response to imprisonment, and, initially, at least, the stresses of detention without trial, against the backdrop of the general expectation and fear of German invasion, meant that detainees split into rival camps in the prisons and detention centres where they were held. Charlie Watts, who was held in Ascot internment camp, wrote a 4,000 word account of two 'dinners' held by British Union prisoners at the camp. Copies of the account were given as mementoes to some of his fellow prisoners on their release, and it is of interest because it gives an insight into the initial demoralisation of some BU prisoners. It was to counter this that Watts, and other BU leaders, like Dick Bellamy, created a formal structure for the BU prisoners, in order:
1. To define policy as laid down by Sir Oswald Mosley, our Leader.

2. To encourage members to keep themselves fit and by example to encourage camp discipline.

3. To promote better social relations between members from all parts of Britain.\textsuperscript{278}

There is an implication here that camp discipline was not what it might have been, and that were regional divisions between the men. The efforts of Watts, Bellamy, and other older BU officers, like Arthur Beavan, reinvigorated Mosley’s followers in Ascot camp, but not all detainees left internment as enthusiastic for fascism and national socialism as when they had been interned. Fay Taylour was one detainee who never faltered in her beliefs while imprisoned, and, in fact, had the reputation of being anything but a model internee.
Copies of some of Taylour’s letters from Holloway survive, including one she wrote to her aunt Evelyn six months after being arrested. All prison letters were censored, and Taylour’s letter largely deals with mundane matters of prison life, detailing how between 60 and 70 women detainees had to share the same gas stove, that food was alright, but that the ten shillings that her aunt had sent her would be spent on buying more food, and how the lighting was poor (25 watt bulbs were used). She also wrote about the blitz and how Holloway was hit by bombs. At the heart of the letter, however, is a plea that her few remaining relatives attempt to understand her viewpoint:

My first prayer is that you and Enid and Daddy will not worry about me and that it will be given to you to understand my point of view. And please stop thinking I am unpatriotic! I have done nothing seditious or traitorous. I merely belonged to a movement whose activities were legal till July 10th, a purely British movement, and I voiced their policy which I sincerely believed was best for my country.
But Taylour was not content with submitting her letters to prison censors, and she managed to smuggle out at least one uncensored letter, sent to Freddie Dixon around the same time as her letter to Aunt Evelyn. Dixon received the letter on 14th December, 1940 but was unsettled by the contents, and took the letter to the police in Reigate. In her letter to Dixon, Taylour once again stressed that she had been imprisoned because ‘my [...] crime is that I disapproved of the war. I have done nothing illegal or traitorous in any way shape or form’\(^280\). She went on to say that she had been detained for the duration of the war, but ‘that won’t be long however’\(^281\). At the time, the UK was the last country in Europe still fighting against the Axis, albeit supported by the Empire and Commonwealth, and invasion by Germany still seemed a real possibility. It is likely that she thought that either a negotiated peace or German invasion would end her internment, but, whichever option she thought most likely, putting that phrase into a smuggled letter did her no favours with the authorities. To make matters worse, the rest of her letter attempted to get Dixon, whose own attitude to the war was far from enthusiastic, to begin a coded form of communications with her.
Fay Taylour was held for much longer than other detainees who had been primarily detained for membership of British Union. Her friend Charlie Watts was released as soon as he established his support for the war effort – something that coincided with the beginning of German air attacks on British cities. However, Taylour did not move from her position of opposing the war, and regarding Germany favourably. On 19th May, 1942, for example, the Home Secretary recommended Taylour’s continued detention, largely as a result of reports from the governor of Holloway, who wrote of Taylour that ‘at visits she does not hesitate to speak scathingly of the Government’\textsuperscript{282}. Further, it was feared that if she were released then it was possible that she would re-engage with a women’s network:

In another report sent to us the Governor [of Holloway] deals with the point [about Taylour’s likely activism] from a somewhat different aspect. “It is likely” he writes “that she would remain passive both as regards the war effort and speaking about her political views, unless and until she came under the
influence of women hostile to the war effort. Then she might become active in speech against the Government.” In our opinion it is almost a certainty that TAYLOUR would fail to control her tongue if she were at liberty.283

Taylour’s views notwithstanding, this is a rather revealing note, showing a surprising degree of fear of the impact of unidentified ‘women’ who might influence each other and Taylour to such an extent that they might speak out against the government – or, as the report put it in respect of Fay Taylour, ‘fail to control her tongue’. That fear led to Taylour being imprisoned for a further year and a half. In fact, the Governor of Holloway’s reports had been damning in other ways too, noting that although she associated largely with other Right Club women she had not made close friendships with any of them, which, given the activities of MI5 within Holloway is not, perhaps, that surprising. It was also, probably, an inaccurate assessment, as Taylour did maintain friendships with women detainees after the war. Most revealingly, however, the Governor of Holloway complained: ‘She [Taylour] is a selfish type of woman and one feels that she can never be trusted. She has been
suspected of breaking prison regulations on more than one occasion, but she has been too cunning for me to get sufficient evidence to report her. It appears that, in some respects, the Governor had met his match in Fay Taylour.

Taylour was moved from Holloway to internment camp on the Isle of Man, where she continued to irritate the authorities, and espouse her politics. Many of the files relating to Taylour’s time on the Isle of Man were destroyed in the 1950s, but, from those that remain, it is clear that her lengthy imprisonment had not changed her attitude. A report on Taylour written by a P.M. Burke, and dated 15th June, 1943 stated:

Fay TAYLOUR is one of the worst pro-Nazis in Port Erin [internment camp]. You will see from 1216 [file, now destroyed] that in January 1943 she wrote to Tony DICKSON “I am never downhearted. I always know it will end all right one day. Like the outside [sic] (who are so cheered up with Libyan news) I too think the coming season’s campaigns will finish it for us. I think the Germans have built a Siegfried line in
Russia to which they are retiring and in which they can stay while they turn their attention in the other direction.” It is, I think, reasonable to assume that she was here conveying to DICKSON that she hoped for a successful German invasion of Britain.

Miss Pinching tells me that the camp authorities looked on TAYLOUR as one of their blackest cases. Mrs SKENE’s report at 104a [file, now destroyed] shows that she is in the habit of hoarding pictures of Hitler and had in her possession a hymn in which his name was substituted for God’s.286

This is the most damning report on Taylour that still exists, and seems to confirm that, even as late as the beginning of 1943, she was resolutely pro-Nazi. There is, perhaps, an element of belligerent defiance in her words and behaviour that may well have been partly her tactics to maintain her morale despite lengthy imprisonment with no date for release. Nonetheless, her buoyancy on hearing of Axis success in ‘Libya’ (in fact, by January, 1943, the fighting in North Africa was in Tunisia, where German and Italian forces were enjoying a brief resurgence) illustrates that she
had moved a long way from merely opposing the war to hoping for an Axis victory. In fact, in her second appeal against internment, in April, 1942, she had told the advisory board that whereas she had initially hoped that there could be a negotiated peace between the UK and Germany, by 1942 she believed that the war ‘has to be fought to a conclusion’\textsuperscript{287}. There was an implication then that she thought that the UK and its allies might win, but her later letter to Dickson suggests otherwise. It was that standpoint, combined with her strong personality, which meant that she was held for so long.

By the summer of 1943, the authorities were beginning to think about how Taylour’s release from internment could be managed. She had been before two advisory committees – in July, 1940, and in April and May, 1942 – and was by then arguing that the emergency conditions that had prevailed in the early summer of 1940 had past, and that, in consequence she should be released even though ‘I have not changed my views’ on the ‘war policy’\textsuperscript{288}. The Home Office and the security authorities could not agree what to do with Taylour. They feared that she would continue to be outspoken against the war, that she might re-engage with
other women of similar views, and that she could be, in some way, influential. It is difficult now to see that Taylour really would have been a threat, especially so late in the war, when it was clear that Germany’s fortunes were on the wane. However, there were still conflicting views within the security and Home Office ranks about the best course to follow in relation to Taylour. By August, 1943, the options had been reduced to not releasing Taylour, releasing her to Dublin (where an aunt lived), or releasing her to Dublin and not allowing her to return to the UK. In the end, it was decided to release her to Dublin, with the proviso that she did not return while the war continued.\textsuperscript{289}
19. Ireland – the refuge

On 5th October, 1943, Fay Taylour was released from internment, and by the end of the month she was in Dublin living with her aunt, Dr. Ella Webb. By the following year she was staying at the Girls’ Friendly Society hostel on Upper Merrion Street.

The Irish government had been alerted to the arrival of Taylour, and its security forces kept a watch on her, as did British intelligence. Almost immediately, Taylour began making political contacts. She renewed her links with Fr. Fahey, the ultra-right cleric she had met at the beginning of 1940, and they kept up a constant correspondence. Unfortunately for the Irish security services, Fahey and Taylour were able to circumvent attempts to intercept their letters as Fahey used one of his student priests as a courier. As well as revitalising old links, Taylour made new ones, becoming friends with Moira O’Byrne, who was later described by an intelligence source as ‘an extremely active pro-German [who] did a great deal for the Germans in Dublin during the war [and whose] father is Count
O'BYRNE, a Papal Count, and quite a big noise\textsuperscript{294}. Tony Dickson, who had been released from internment at the beginning of 1941\textsuperscript{295} soon joined Taylour in Dublin, but, as before, was responsible for causing her problems when he arranged for some members of the IRA to meet her. This caused immediate difficulties, as the Irish police sent detectives to interview her about the meeting. What took place at either meeting is unknown, but it may be that Taylour’s later enthusiasm for Irish Republicanism dated from this period. A British Intelligence report on Taylour from May, 1946 noted that:

In Fay TAYLOUR’s view, despite Communist infiltration and the efforts of the de Valera police to discredit the I.R.A., the bulk of that movement was bitterly anti-English and pro-Nazi. She thinks that the I.R.A. have plenty pluck, one instance of this being the shooting of an Irishman who had dared to serve in the Royal Navy during the war. It is understood that he was shot in the back.\textsuperscript{296}
It seems that her years in imprisonment and her continuing pro-Nazism had led to Taylour seeing herself much less as British, and far more as Irish. Interestingly, in her letters to Dick Bellamy in the early 1970s, when the ‘Troubles’ were at their height, Taylour claimed that her only personal acquaintance with the IRA was with ‘the ex-president of the Dublin Writers’ Club’ who was both anti-Semitic and ‘with the Arabs 100%’\textsuperscript{297}. However, she was undoubtedly a supporter of Irish Republicanism by the late 1960s, and the common anti-British, pro-German sympathies of most Republicans in 1940s Ireland in all probability reinforced both her sense of Irishness and her sympathy for armed militancy.

Éire also had to contend with the arrival of a disparate stream of political refugees from Europe. Foremost among these refugees were Breton and Flemish nationalists who had collaborated with Germany in the occupation of France and Belgium, hoping that a German victory would enable nationalist governments to be established in Brittany and Flanders\textsuperscript{298}. The Dublin government was less than happy with these developments, and the Breton nationalists were surprised to find that their dreams of pan-Celtic solidarity
did not extend very far into the corridors of power in the Irish capital. Other refugees also made their, usually temporary, home in Éire, and Taylour became part of a new network of women and men on the ultra-right. For example, it was recorded that at the beginning of 1946 she was visited ‘by a French Nazi sympathiser and his wife’\(^2\), and other associates included ‘a young Luftwaffe man […] and] a half-German, one of two pro-Nazi sisters’\(^3\). Despite the defeat of Nazism in Europe, and the revelations of genocidal Nazi policy, it was reported that Taylour’s ‘enthusiasm for Germany is unlimited […] and there is no doubt that it is the main interest in her mind’\(^4\). Given this, and her background in the UK, it is not surprising that, while in Dublin, she also linked up with Mrs MacNab, who acted as another go-between for Taylour and Fr. Fahey. Mrs MacNab was the wife of a notorious anti-Semite, John Angus MacNab, who had written an anti-Jewish column – ‘Jolly Judah’ – for the British Union’s press prior to 1937, when he left the BU to help William Joyce and John Beckett to found the National Socialist League (NSL)\(^5\). MacNab had also been interned, and the MacNabs were in Dublin hoping to leave for a more congenial home than the post-war UK. In fact, they were smuggled from Cork to Spain on a Portuguese fishing boat, and, once in Spain, MacNab
carried on some political activity, eventually translating into English selected writings of the dead Falangist leader José-Antonio Primo de Rivera\textsuperscript{303}. It was these sorts of friendships that sustained Taylour, and confirmed her political outlook, during the five years she spent in Dublin. Her period in detention had clearly seen an intensification of her beliefs; for Taylour there could be no revision of the basic tenets of her national socialism, which she had picked up in pre-war Germany and among the networks that she was part of prior to internment.
20. Post-war politics, post-war racing

At the beginning of 1948 Taylour returned to live in London, at 16, Kensington Park Gardens. She did not remain in London for much more than a year, and seems to have divided her time between trying to make contacts in the USA to restart her motor racing career, and being involved with the nascent post-war revival of the Mosleyite movement. In fact, Taylour had returned to London just as a number of small, pro-Mosley groups had come together to form what was to become the main Mosleyite effort in the post-war period – Union Movement (UM). The new movement was officially formed on 7th February, 1948. But in the few years immediately prior to that there had been a range of activities, often anti-Semitic, carried out by small, disparate groups. One of these groups was the British League of ex-Servicemen and Women. This came under the direction of Jeffrey Hamm, a former British Union member who had been interned on the Falklands and in South Africa where he had developed a strong pro-Nazism. Hamm led the League in a series of vicious clashes between a small number of League members and supporters, and Jewish ex-servicemen in the '43 Group'.
This violent struggle became known as the ‘Battle of Ridley Road’, and ran from the spring to the autumn of 1947, by which time people like Hamm had managed to draw Mosley back into politics with a meeting in Farringdon.

It is unclear why Taylour chose this time to return to London, but it is certain that she had developed new contacts with the small circles of post-war Mosleyites. For example, on 13th January, 1948, an MI5 telephone intercept on Jeffrey Hamm, noted that Taylour’s name came up\textsuperscript{305}, and in his autobiography, Hamm wrote about Taylour’s rather flamboyant presence on the ultra-right scene at the time, and, in fact, puts Taylour in London prior to her move in January, 1948:

During “The Battle of Ridley Road” Fay used to drive me home after the meetings in a rather magnificent Jaguar car. I never experienced the slightest fear at these meetings, however many bricks were flying, but I used to be terrified by Fay’s driving, and would clutch the seat with both hands, as she took every corner on two wheels. Years later […] I was talking
to her about this magnificent car, and I was surprised to learn that it had not been hers. She told me that in Holloway she had met among the prisoners a rather high-class call-girl, and when they were released she had given her friend driving lessons in return for the occasional use of her Jaguar.306

Taylour developed a new network of political contacts during this time, yet she does not appear to have joined Union Movement307, although telephone intercepts of Mosleyites showed that her name was mentioned often. In re-entering extremist politics in post-war England, Taylour was stepping into a world that was, if anything, murkier than it had been in 1939-40. The ultra-right activists that emerged, largely in London, towards the end of the war, and in the late 1940s, were a hardened distillation from internment, were more profoundly pro-Nazi than many of their pre-war colleagues, and were just as effectively infiltrated by the security services. Taylour’s re-engagement with ultra-right politics seems to have been a reflection of her political convictions, which were built on her belief in conspiracy, her view that the Nazis had been creating a
different, more equal, economic system, and her anti-Semitism. This was all hardened by Taylour’s experience of internment, and her personality which undoubtedly attracted her strongly to extremes of experience. The reborn ‘movement’ that emerged in 1944/5 and developed over the next few years, formed, in the words of Richard Thurlow, ‘a somewhat bedraggled and shabby multi-headed phoenix struggling to re-emerge from the flames after 1945 in a deeply hostile society’\textsuperscript{308}. The real driving force behind this struggling re-emergence was provided by younger men, and a few women, who had been interned\textsuperscript{309}. These were internees who had reacted to that experience by intensifying their pre-war beliefs, and taking on board specifically wartime developments – largely related to the Nazi idea of a ‘New Europe’, characterised by pan-Europeanism – that enabled them to commit to a doomed, and increasingly isolated cause. Paradoxically, internment underpinned this small resurgence - ‘that British fascism survived at all is largely due to internment, and to the sense of martyrdom it engendered within a hardened minority of internees’\textsuperscript{310}. Fay Taylour was certainly a member of that ‘hardened minority’.
This activity was monitored by the security services, and, it may well have been that MI5 was also, again, involved in provocateur activity. Among many problems facing the ultra-right militants was division in their own ranks, as the very small number of activists who had the skills, determination, or ability to organise political activity were often at odds with one another. One of the key organisers was Jeffrey Hamm, who, in October 1944 joined the BLeSMW, shortly afterwards forcing out its director of propaganda, Victor Burgess, who had set up the first wartime Mosleyite group, ‘Corporate Utilities’ in 1942. Burgess then went on to run the UBF with the leading ideologue of British Union, Alexander Raven Thomson\textsuperscript{311}. With the founding of Union Movement there was something of a power struggle between Hamm and Burgess. Hamm was a much less popular figure than Burgess, but probably a better organiser and speaker. Eventually, Hamm was effectively exiled to Manchester, supposedly to help boost UM there, but, in reality to reduce tensions at its headquarters. Burgess was, if anything, even more outspoken than Hamm, calling, for example, at the time of continuing Zionist terror attacks in Mandated Palestine, for Palestinian Jews to be publicly flogged\textsuperscript{312}. Burgess, and a former paratrooper, Captain Derek Lesley-Jones, went on
to form a mobile squad of 18 Union Movement activists, the Special Propaganda Section (SPS), which was intended to boost the activities of non-London branches, and to attack Communist meetings. In 1953, however, both men resigned from UM, and Lesley-Jones went on to be a leading figure in the Brighton Labour Party. However, it may be that Burgess was, in fact, an MI5 asset. MI5 minute sheets from 1952, when Taylour was back in London, show that on 11th June, Burgess telephoned Alexander Raven Thomson about a meeting to be held with Fay Taylour. MI5 had, a few days earlier received a request from the US Embassy for information on Taylour, and part of the information MI5 agreed that it would send concerned the meeting between Taylour and Burgess. The minute stated, ‘the information in the summary concerning Miss TAYLOUR’s recent meeting with BURGESS is only two days old, but I presume the Americans will take care to safeguard our source?’ It is possible that Burgess was that source, especially given the other aspects of Burgess’ profile. Whatever the truth, it is a further evidence of the world that Taylour continued to inhabit.
21 To the United States

As well as renewing and extending her network of political associates and friends, Taylour also began the process of rebuilding her sporting career. While still living in Dublin, Fay Taylour began to visit England. As well as driving Jeffrey Hamm after Ridley Road clashes, Taylour had also begun to take steps to rebuild her motor racing career. In the spring of 1947 she was photographed for *Weekly Sporting Review* on a speedway motorbike with two West Ham speedway riders, Jack Cooley and Malcolm Craven. Around the same time she also attended a speedway race meeting at New Cross. But her future lay abroad, and on the 18th March, 1949 she sailed from London to Los Angeles, having found a job with International Motors Inc. of Hollywood, who were agents for MG and Jaguar. Richard Armstrong believes that Taylour had managed to find this post through Dudley Froy, an English midget car racer living in Arizona. Froy was also an associate of Freddie Dixon, and Taylour might have known Froy for as long as she had been racing. Interestingly, the US consulate in Dublin refused to grant Taylour a visa, but she was able to get one from the embassy in London, and by April she: ‘found
myself in a beautiful sportscar showroom [...] on the famous Sunset Strip. My fellow salesman was film actor, Pat Aherne, brother of the better known Brian, and our customers were mostly film stars, one of my first being Clark Gable who bought a new Sports Jaguar\(^3\). More significantly, Taylour was quickly back into racing.

On 24th July, 1949, Fay Taylour appeared at the California Sports Car Club’s first ‘foreign car’ race at Carrell Speedway, where she raced an MG against Frank Early. She raced again at the Carrell Speedway in August and November, 1950, and in March, 1951, and ‘in at least one California Sports Car Club road race at Palm Springs on April 16th 1950\(^3\), as well as racing stock cars in Chicago. This return to the track was even noticed in Ireland, where the *Irish Times* reported, in December, that she was racing an MG in California\(^3\). However, her success in breaking into the sports car racing proved to be short-lived:

Foreign Car Racing was staged [...] I was entered (the only woman driver) and the promotors were delighted with gate receipts as the result of press
and television coverage accorded me. But it was tough on the men drivers who then mostly ran the racing when I succeeded in defeating the fastest man driver at Carrol [sic] Palm Springs road race (in spite of my good car being “switched” and the one left to me breaking down before the finish) that I was invited to drive for a man who owned a stable of fast cars in future races. These future races could not materialise for me as the next entry forms carried the regulation NO WOMEN DRIVERS!\textsuperscript{321}

The odd combination of beating the fastest driver while not finishing the race may refer to a lap time, but the main point of Taylour’s account was that, yet again, her ability to compete against men merely led to the banning of women from racing. According to Taylour, this new barrier led her to abandon her sales job and make the move to car speedway racing in midget racers, which she managed, and, in Taylour style subsequently described: ‘I pulled record crowds from state to state successfully matching my skill against the best drivers in match races’\textsuperscript{322}. As in her pre-war racing travels, she also ensured that she maximised her publicity, appearing on radio, television, and
in the print media wherever she went. And on 11th November, 1951, she appeared on the popular CBS television programme, ‘What’s My Line’, on the panel of which was another well-known, Irish descent woman, Dorothy Kilgallen. Kilgallen was a journalist with a history of breaking dramatic news stories, and whose death, on 8th November, 1965, became part of the story of the assassination of President Kennedy. In the aftermath of the shooting of Lee Harvey Oswald by Jack Ruby, Kilgallen had been able to manage a one to one interview with Ruby, and it was known that she believed that she had obtained vital information about the whole affair. It was shortly after the interview with Ruby that Kilgallen was found dead in her apartment, in supposedly mysterious circumstances. For Taylour, the death of Kilgallen came to represent more evidence of the operation of conspiratorial forces. Writing about the death of Kennedy, whom Taylour admired as a ‘national socialist’, she said:

The big interests who arranged for him [President Kennedy] to be liquidated wanted their hired killer alone to be blamed, and then that killer [Oswald] was liquidated, so that he could not speak … and
many others, including Dorothy Kilgallon [sic], the famous writer and broadcaster, were also liquidated because they knew too much and were about to speak.\textsuperscript{324}

Taylour later returned to the fate of Dorothy Kilgallen in another letter to Dick Bellamy:

Dorothy Killgallon [sic] the famous columnist was bumped off in her hey-day of popularity and wealth because she had been able to get into the prison and interview Ruby, and was about to reveal some truths. Oswald’s land lady was bumped off – she knew too much. Many others too, as I’ve told you about.\textsuperscript{325}

What was more, Kilgallen had also broken the story that the CIA had hired Mafia killers to assassinate Fidel Castro, and Castro was yet another of Taylour’s post-war heroes: ‘the CIA ran the Bay of Pigs invasion in the interests of the sugar kings and other big business that kept the Cubans as
slaves, and Kennedy who had just been elected and did not want that invasion was blamed for it, for its failure326. But it was not just perceived conspiracies surrounding the American president, the Cuban revolution or Dorothy Kilgallen that reinforced Taylour’s world view. Events that began in January 1952, only a few months after her appearance on ‘What’s My Line’, seemed to confirm that she was making real headway in her new motorsports career in the USA.

_Banned from the United States_

Fay Taylour had already decided that her failure to make as big a success as she wanted to in racing in the US was not just down to sexism, or the limits on her own racing abilities, but something more. She became increasingly convinced that the difficulties she was facing were due to a conspiracy against her. Given her belief in the role of conspiracy in politics, it was not surprising that her experience of MI5 intelligence and provocateur activity merely heightened her belief in conspiracy as a determinant of big and small destinies. In her own case, she put down many of her post-war difficulties to an interview with the internment camp
commandant on the Isle of Man just before she was released, when she said that the commandant:

tried to explain without revealing too much, or so it seemed, that there were arrangements between all the allies for after the war which would make me an outcast if I didn’t sign [a retraction]. I laughed, signed nothing, and forgot his words for many, many years till I was forcibly and starkly reminded.\textsuperscript{327}

It was this event that Taylour saw as lying behind the failure of a project to make a film of her life starring Rosalind Russell; and her failure to make a greater impact in racing in the USA. The clinching evidence of all this for Taylour was when she was supposedly told by the editor of \textit{Life} magazine in the 1960s that ‘I was black listed [although] even then he [the editor] said if I would make a “retraction” he might be able to do the story he wanted to write about me!’\textsuperscript{328}. How far these events were true is unclear, but it is certainly the case that in 1952 she was barred from the United States.
By the end of 1951, Taylour was working for Otto Promotions, of South Orange, New Jersey\textsuperscript{329}; Ed Otto was ‘a well-known promoter of stock car races in the North-East United States’ and Taylour appeared at three stock races on 26th April at Westport, Maryland\textsuperscript{330}. But not long afterwards, Taylour’s father died and she flew to England to attend his funeral, after first checking that she would be able to obtain a re-entry permit to the United States from its embassy in London\textsuperscript{331}. However, when she came to do this, she found that a piece of legislation passed in the US in 1950, known as the ‘McCarran Internal Security Act’, stood in her way. Although the Act was intended primarily to be used against communists, it was couched in terms of combating the promotion of ‘totalitarian dictatorship’. Part of its provisions also included tightening up on the entry of non-US citizens into the USA. The result was that Taylour had to complete a form which she took to refer only to communism, and she admitted that she had been a member of British Union, while, rather disingenuously, if strictly accurately saying that ‘it was thirteen years since I’d been a member and I belonged to no political party anywhere now’\textsuperscript{332}. The embassy then approached the
British authorities for more information on Taylour, with the request seemingly coming from the CIA to MI5. The reply outlined her detention during the war, and brought her record up to date, noting:

It is known that she maintained her Fascist and pro-Nazi associations from that date [October, 1943, on release from internment] until 1948. It is also known that she recently met a well-known member of Union Movement’s staff.333

Shortly afterwards, Taylour received a letter ‘declaring that I was a Security Risk to USA. The large visa form was enclosed, stamped CANCELLED’334. Ironically, there is no evidence that she was politically active in the USA, as most of political contacts were in England or Ireland. However, she would be prevented from returning to the USA for three years while she conducted appeals against the decision. She blamed all this misfortune on the nature of the ‘American right-wing’, later saying that ‘it was my very ignorance of what McCarthy/McCarron stood for, what the Right Wing in US stood for that caused what really did
amount to persecution\textsuperscript{335}. What the US right wing stood for, in Taylour’s view was ‘100% for International Finance, nothing less […] They represent Vested Interests and are against socialism of any sort’\textsuperscript{336}. This was the language of British Union, and for some, including Taylour, both ‘international finance’ and ‘vested interests’ also stood for ‘Jewish conspiracy’. She developed these ideas that she had picked up prior to the Second World War, and she came to support the Cuban Revolution, North Vietnam, Irish Republicanism, or any other cause that she felt was under attack from the US ‘military industrial complex’, or, in the case of Ireland, by Freemasonry in the form of the Orange Order. But in the summer of 1952 she was faced with the more mundane problem of what to do now that her racing career in the USA had been cut short. Her banning from the USA was a major blow to Taylour, and she realised that it had destroyed her re-emergent career: ‘I was in love with my job over there having victoriously won over men’s prejudice against my racing, and having made many trials and at last a real niche for myself in the racing’\textsuperscript{337}. Although she was now in her late 40s, she stuck to her commitment to racing and ‘for three years I was lost around the world while I fought the issue [of the American visa], racing in
Sweden, England, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa to keep going\textsuperscript{338}.
During the summer of 1952, Taylour remained in the UK, ‘racing in a Formule Libre event at Boreham in an F2 Alta owned by Bob Cowell on June 21st and winning a Ladies’ Handicap at Snetterton in a Bugatti on June 28th, and she also competed in at least one midget race. She travelled to Sweden to race in Stockholm in September, and later described her presence there as both pioneering and highly successful: ‘I’d had an offer to race in Sweden at the big car races in Stockholm. They’d never seen a woman race and I was the only woman driver. And it pleased them much that I made Fastest lap of the day!’ By October she was back once more in Australia for an eight week tour, being employed by Empire Speedways at £50 per week, all expenses included and all costs for a new car that had been hired for her. Photographs appeared in the Sydney press of Taylour in a Ford V8/60 midget racing car, in yellow and blue livery, emblazoned, interestingly, with a Union flag and a large green shamrock overwritten with ‘Fay Taylour’. 
Fay Taylour in the Empire Speedway's Golden Fleece sponsored V8/60 midget at Sydney Show Ground in 1952, displaying both the Union Flag and an Irish shamrock.

Irritatingly for Taylour she was beaten in a series of races at Sydney in December by a local woman, Edna Wells who had never driven a midget racer before. The car that Wells drove later claimed the lives of two male racers in 1953 and 1965; an illustration of how dangerous midget speedway was\(^3\). But Taylour was able to beat the previous women’s track time at Sydney Show ground which had stood since 1939\(^4\). She also attracted media attention once more, with the *Sydney Morning Herald* carrying a short article the day
after her arrival in Australia by air on 22nd October, in which she was quoted as saying that for a long time in the USA she had been prevented from racing because she was a woman, but she had overcome this and, in the words of Frank Brewer, another midget racer, ‘she did just as well as I expected’ in the USA. Taylour went on to beat Brewer in Brisbane, where she also beat the one lap record. She also took part in road races, unsuccessfully, but it was while she had an MG for one of these races that Sheila Patrick, a staff reporter for *The Australian Women’s Weekly*, spent a day with her and filed a report ‘Racing driver dresses to suit her car’ that appeared on 12th November. As usual, Taylour provided just the right sort of copy for the journalist, giving her a neat series of anecdotes about her lifelong love of racing and speed, a failed love affair that convinced her that only ‘cars are faithful to me’, and let Patrick come with her while she was fitted for a pair of pale blue racing overalls.
Taylor continued to work her charm with the press, taking Sheila Patrick for a 100mph ride, and being photographed fitting out for pale blue racing overalls.
In return, Taylour was described as ‘a fair-skinned, titian-haired Irishwoman of nearly 40 [who] has the proverbial charm of her race’\textsuperscript{347}. Fay Taylour was not the first, nor the last, woman who felt the need to adjust her age for the press (by this point she was nearly 50). She moved on from Australia to New Zealand, probably for the remainder of the season before returning to the UK and Ireland.

Fay Taylour’s racing in the summer of 1953 appears to have been mostly, if not exclusively, in Ireland. She was once more able to interest the print media in her story and presence back in Ireland, when the ‘Irishwoman’s Diary’ column of \textit{The Irish Times} ran a number of paragraphs telling the Fay Taylour racing story from her starting ‘her racing career at the age of eight, secretly building a soap-box and racing it down the drive of her Dublin home’ to racing in midget-cars, which Taylour claimed was ‘the most dangerous sport in the world’\textsuperscript{348}. The newspaper followed her summer in Ireland, with more small pieces on Taylour in July, August and September. She even appeared in an advertisement for ‘Vigzol’ oil, with a photograph of her in a midget racer over the caption ‘Miss Fay Taylour, Internationally Acclaimed as “Queen of the Speedways”’\textsuperscript{349}. 
However, the only report of her racing in Ireland that summer was at the Chapelizod race track where she just missed out on breaking the four-lap record at the Midget Racing Car Club’s meeting on 2nd September\textsuperscript{350}. Soon afterwards she was back in Stockholm racing an Effyh Formula 3 car, and ‘on the 11th she lost a match race against the top Swedish driver Olle Nygren and the following day finished 7th in her heat and 12 in the final of an International F3 race’\textsuperscript{351}. In October she raced at Brands Hatch in a Formula 3 race, before going to Australia in November, where she remained until April, 1954, racing in speedcar dirt track meetings across the country\textsuperscript{352}. All this time, Taylour was appealing against her exclusion from the USA, but time was against her as far as maintaining a racing career went.

In April, 1954 she left Australia by ship for South Africa. It was yet another journey that was forced on her by circumstances, and there is a clear sense in her later letters that she was well aware of how circumstances were stacked against her. Writing about the period she said: ‘I fought it [the ban on returning to the USA] in England and fought it in Ireland and got lost around the world for 3 years
with no base, racing here and there, the little money I had dribbling away as I had to stay in hotels". It was not until 1955 that she was permitted to re-enter the USA. By then she was 51, and she had only just over a year left in racing. She raced in Westport, Maryland; Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania; in Tampa, Florida, and raced stock cars in the Mid-West, but by the autumn of 1956 she had retired from motor racing. Her life at speed had come to an end, and she was now faced with the problem of earning an income without racing, while also being faced by the fact that she had been, for a while at least, considered an undesirable alien. It appears that she remained in the USA until 1971, and had a series of jobs, including one as a ‘Resident Advisor in a college’. She struggled to find employment, even employment that she might well have been suited to, for example, as a salesperson with ‘General Tires’, and she came to believe that her employment problems could be traced back to the fact that she was still regarded as a security risk, one that merited ‘trials’. She gave an example:

One “trailer” who picked me up in North Hollywood kept dropping in and asking what I was writing. I had
then retired from racing and was desperately trying with the help of agents, who were much impressed with the wide publicity I’d received, to market my efforts. But [...] every plan or promotion was mysteriously rubbed out without explanation when the contract was ready for signing.\textsuperscript{356}

There may well have been some truth in this, as, for example, the British Security Services kept their files on Taylour open until 19th March, 1976, and there is no reason to assume that the US security services would be any less concerned, especially given Taylour’s latter enthusiasm for Castro, and North Vietnam. Eventually, in 1971 she returned to the UK, and went to stay with a friend in Yorkshire for 18 months\textsuperscript{357}.
Returning to the UK, Taylour’s life now began to focus on renewing old friendships, attempting to write her autobiography, and keeping herself financially solvent. She would make one more long trip abroad, to South Africa, but not to race. Among the old acquaintances she took up with again was Anna Wolkoff. The two women went for coffee together, and it was Taylour who later discovered the details of Wolkoff’s death in a car crash in Spain in 1973 and circulated them among old friends and ex-18B inmates. Taylour found that Wolkoff had been in Spain visiting another former woman racing driver, Right Club member and internee, Enid Riddell. Riddell owned a nightclub in Malaga, called *La Rascasse*, but was losing her sight, so Wolkoff drove her. Their sports car was shunted from behind at high speed and Wolkoff was flung out to her death. This was the information that Taylour was able to give to Dick Bellamy when she began to write to him in 1974, having been given his contact details by Jeffrey Hamm. In turn, Bellamy was able to pass the information, via a friend in Virginia (a former employee of the US State Department) to Tyler Kent, who had, apparently, ‘unable to
credit that she [Wolkoff] could really be dead\textsuperscript{361}. Clearly, old networks still operated to some extent, even if only at the level of sharing information about the fate of old comrades.

Taylour’s financial difficulties continued, and she appears to have moved home several times. After Yorkshire, she lived for a while in Surrey\textsuperscript{362}, partly to be closer to London, where most of her old friends and acquaintances lived, but then in March, 1974, her only surviving close relative, her sister, Enid, a doctor in Cape Town, died after an operation on her hips. Taylour sailed to South Africa in May, supposedly for six months to look after her sister’s house while her widowed husband travelled to the UK to sort out family affairs\textsuperscript{363}. In fact, she was in South Africa for a year before returning to live in Winterborne Tomson in Dorset in August, 1975\textsuperscript{364}.

Fay Taylour spent her final eight years in Dorset, increasingly affected by arthritis, writing letters to friends, and attempting to write her autobiography. She wrote various drafts of her life story, but was never able to complete a satisfactory final version. Writing to Dick
Bellamy, whose vast history of the Mosley movement – *We Marched With Mosley* – was not finally published, in an abridged form by Mosley supporters, until 2013. Taylour wrote about the frustration of trying to find a publisher. She put the difficulties for her, and for others who had tried to publish on the experience of internment, down to ‘the powers that be’, writing:

Even our spirit cannot be given full rein. Your recounting of the failure of yourself and others to finding literary agents and publishers to handle stories on 18B will make you understand […] I must get my book finished and published – and it is only because of my motor racing activities that a publisher showed interest, though he did ask that I give an account of my war experience which his reader said “must have been traumatic”.  

She also accepted here that she was just finding it difficult to produce a final manuscript. Despite her peripatetic life, she appears to have saved letters, papers, news cuttings, and photographs, and right up until her death in Weymouth
General Hospital, Taylour was trying to collate and order these souvenirs of her life. Theresa Jenkins-Teague who nursed her remembered that a friend of Taylour’s kept coming to see her, bringing suitcases ‘full of photographs, often bundles in brown paper, with perished elastic bands’, and that sometimes Taylour ‘would give her visitor photographs and papers to take away, sometimes she would bring more back’\textsuperscript{367}. But it was too late for Taylour to finalise her autobiography, and she died, following a stroke, on 2nd August, 1983\textsuperscript{368}. 
24. Conclusions

Fay Taylour took a new direction when she returned to England shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War. Her opposition to the war, and her decision to join British Union, and a number of other ultra-right groups, had as big an impact on her life as her decision to begin motor cycle racing. Racing was one of the five themes that characterised Taylour’s life. She pursued her racing career for over three decades, and raced in an astonishing range of competitive events. As a woman, she faced many barriers to her competing with men. The UK ban on women competing in motor cycle speedway dealt a heavy blow to her early career, when she had already established herself as one of the leading speedway riders of her day. Her response was to find new ways of racing, and she sought to build a motor car racing career. This was a much more difficult task. Being without any substantial resources herself, Taylour was unable to fund car racing through her earnings and winnings. Later, in the USA she also faced discrimination and banning on the grounds of being a woman racer. But, again, she fought back and had begun to
rebuild her racing career when she was banned from returning to the USA because of her politics.

The origins of Taylour's national socialism lay in her experiences in pre-war Germany. She raced in Germany before and after the establishment of the Nazi regime, and developed strong sympathies for Germany and for Nazism. After being banned from the British motor cycle speedway track, she spent much of the following summer racing in Germany. She returned again, she raced Adler cars in Ireland and Britain, and she developed contacts with elements of the regime, particularly in motor sports and radio. Taylour was in Germany in the final weeks before the outbreak of war, and, back in England, she developed her political ideas in a number of ultra-right groups. Interestingly, although she joined Mosley’s British Union, it was in other groups, like the Right Club, that she developed her ideas. Her politics, her pro-Nazism, became the second theme of her life.

She pursued her political life with as much determination, single-mindedness, and obstinacy as she pursued her
racing career. Taylour was an unusually strong character – the third theme of her life. She faced repeated attempts to prevent her racing, but overcame, or sidestepped them all. She was a courageous competitor in extremely dangerous sports that were marked by high death rates. She was single-minded and persistent in her politics as well as her racing. Many of her views seem outlandish, unacceptable, and beyond the pale, but it was her refusal to abandon them, or even moderate them, which meant that she was interned for much longer than most political detainees, certainly than the greater majority of BU members.

In her racing life Taylour was always in a male-dominated world, and she seems to have been adept at building relationships and networks among riders, owners, engineers and promoters. On the track, the few women competitors were rivals, but, off the track and away from racing, Taylour built numerous networks of women friends. In particular, Taylour’s political life was marked by women’s networks – the fourth theme of her life. Much of her pre-internment activism was built around women’s networks, particularly associated with the Right Club. Her time in internment was, of necessity, spent with women. Links and
friendships that she made in Holloway and in the Isle of Man internment camp were maintained long after the war. Even in her post-internment years in Dublin, she made new female friendships based on shared politics.

The question of Taylour’s sense of national identity was the final theme that ran through her life. Her childhood in Ireland was that of a member of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy. Her father’s military background and his service in the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) meant that her early life was characterised by a Unionist, Conservative, patriotic and Imperial sensibility. But the Irish War of Independence, the subsequent creation of the Free State, and the disbanding of the RIC brought her to England, and gave her dual nationality. In the early years of her racing career, Taylour was variously described as being Irish, English, and British, and she seems to have self-described in different ways depending on the audience. She spent comparatively little time in Britain during the 1930s, and during internment she was unsure about how to describe herself. However, during those years of imprisonment, it seems as if she began to see herself much more as an Irishwoman. Following release, she returned to Dublin and
made links with anti-British and pro-German activists, including members of the IRA. In the post-war years she presented herself as Irish, although racing in Australia she was, once more, described as being British, English or Irish. By the time of the ‘Troubles’, she was strongly pro-Republican and supported the IRA against what she saw as yet another conspiracy, this time of Freemasons – the Orange Order. She had come a long way from the British patriotism of her father.

Fay Taylour was a practical, action-focused feminist. Throughout her racing life she faced and fought discrimination against her as a woman. Sexism blighted her most successful racing, as a motorcycle speedway star. Unable to reverse that ban on women, she moved into other motor sports, showing that women could compete on equal terms with men in a wide variety of racing. She faced the same problems yet again in her post-war attempt to rebuild her racing life, but she carried on racing into her late 40s. In newspaper interviews with her, articles by her, and in radio broadcasts, Taylour advocated for more women to enter motor sports. She was seen as an inspiration and a role model for other women, particularly in Australia. But
Taylour was also a fascist, or, more properly a national socialist. The primary impetus behind her move into political activism was her admiration for Nazi Germany, and in her letters in the 1970s she described herself as a ‘socialist’. Her politics were eclectic and became moreso in the post-war period, but, at root, she believed in a more equal economic system combined with an analysis of ‘international finance’ and capitalism that saw a supposed Jewish conspiracy behind the operation of the dominant system of ‘greed’. Taylour was a remarkable, but also a deeply disturbing woman.
Notes

1 *The Irish Times*, Tuesday, 27 August 1929, p.10.
2 *The Irish Times*, Monday, 2 September, 1929, p.10.
3 *The Irish Times*, Wednesday, 2 September, 1953, p.6.
4 *The Irish Times*, Tuesday, 27 August, 1929, p.10.
6 Armstrong, Richard, ‘Fay on Four Wheels’, unpublished TS, received by the author, 11th April 2013. I am much indebted to Richard Armstrong for allowing me access to his research on Fay Taylour’s motor car racing career.
7 Armstrong, ‘Fay on Four Wheels’, no page number.
9 The National Archives (TNA), report of 15 June 1943, KV 2 1 243 286 216.
12 TNA, KV 2 1 243 286 216, Fay Taylour’s written appeal against internment, dated 16th July 1940.
13 Belton, p.11.
14 Various dates have been given for her birth, and, at times, even the authorities were unsure. For example, in a letter from Police Inspector Ayres to MI5, of February 1941, her date of birth is given as 12th December, 1902; TNA, KV 2 1 2143 386216.


TNA, Report of the Advisory Committee, following Fay Taylour’s appeal against internment, 28th August 1940, KV 2 1 243 286 216.

TNA, , KV 2 1 243 286 216, Fay Taylour’s account, 16th April 1942, appeal against internment.

TNA, KV 2 1 243 286 216, Fay Taylour’s written appeal against internment, dated 16th July 1940.


Belton’s book is not supported by detailed references (there are only 56 footnotes, which are largely explanatory notes regarding aspects of motor sport), but the Forward by Reg Fearman explains that Belton had access to ‘the many thousands of words that Fay wrote during her lifetime but were never published’ (p.v).


Belton (2006), p.27.

From Fay Taylour’s written appeal against detention, dated 16th July 1940; TNA, KV 21 243 386 216.

From Taylour’s written appeal, 16th July 1940.


Belton (2006) provides a good overview of the differing claims to beginnings of speedway, pp.29/30.


Figures for tracks and attendance are taken from Huggins and Williams (2006), p.66.


Huggins and Williams (2006), p.142. The records of the Auto-Cycle Union are held at the Modern Records Centre, The University of Warwick. They are in rather poor condition, having, at some point suffered water damage.


Fay Taylour, quoted by Belton (2006), p.89. Belton presents a long extract from Taylour’s own papers (but it is unclear whether the extract is from a letter, diary, or her repeatedly revised, but unpublished, biography. Neither does Belton give any indication when it was that Taylour wrote the passage he quoted) relating to this passage in Taylour’s and Wills’ life, but makes no direct comment on it himself; see pp.89/93.


This was the reminiscence of Theresa Jenkins-Teague, who nursed Fay Taylour towards the end of her life; in conversation with the author, 17th April, 2013.


David Mason’s biography of Dixon gives a good idea of the amazing engineering and sporting prowess of Freddie Dixon, and includes a list of most of Dixon’s race successes: Mason, David (2008), *Freddie Dixon; the man with the heart of a lion* (Yeovil, Haynes Publishing).

TNA, KV21243 386216, from Fay Taylour’s smuggled letter to Freddie Dixon, in a report dated 9th January 1941 from Police Inspector Edward Ayres, Reigate Borough Police to MI5.

TNA, KV21243 386216, report by ‘M/3’ of 24 April, 1940.

TNA, KV21243 386216, Inspector Ayres to MI5, 9 January 1941.


Johnnie Hoskins in *Speedway Star*, 3rd February 2001, quoted in Belton (206), p.76.


The Cairns Post (Queensland), reported, for example, that Taylour’s appearance at the speedway track in Melbourne was responsible for the 12,000 crowd – the largest ever known for this class of racing’; The Cairns Post, 7 March 1929, NLA, Trove database, accessed, 22 November 2013.


Armstrong (2013), p.1; a figure that is equivalent to about £70,000 in 2013.

Armstrong (2013), p.1


Armstrong (2013), p2, notes that Taylour’s exact passage to Australia is unclear, as there is confusion over which ship, and when, she took from London, or, perhaps from Toulon or Naples.


86 *Sunday Mail* (Brisbane), 15 December 1929; *The Register News-Pictorial* (Adelaide), 30 December 1929; and *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 April, 1930; NLA, Trove database, accessed, 22 November 2013.

87 Fay Taylour in her appeal against detention, 28 August, 1940; TNA, KV 2 1 243 386 216.


89 Fay Taylour, ‘Why not more women speedway riders?’

90 Fay Taylour, ‘Why not more women speedway riders?’


93 *Auckland Star*, 20 February, 1930.


98 Armstrong (2013), p.2. The *Orama* was later to be a victim of the German heavy cruiser, The *Admiral Hipper*, on 8th June 1940, in the same action in which the Royal Navy aircraft carrier, *HMS Glorious*, was sunk while evacuating RAF squadrons from Norway.

99 Jessie Hole gave an account of the incident on the online Vintage Speedway site, [http://www.motorcycle-](http://www.motorcycle-).
The subsequent ban on women was maintained for 50 years. 100 Huggins and Williams (2006), *Sport and the English*, p.142.


103 Belton (2006), pp.185-188.

104 Williams (1999), p.5.

105 Fay Taylour, quoted on the website, ‘Diamonds MCC’ – ‘Profiles on women riders’


109 This is Belton’s opinion, for which he cites Taylour’s own retrospective view; Belton (2006), p.191.


115 Armstrong (2013), p.5
For example, the Mirror, of Perth, carried a long article on Taylour entitled, ‘The Fastest Girl in the World’, in which Taylour’s highly coloured account of the round Italy race featured, along with details of record breaking at Brooklands – Mirror, 19th October, 1935.


TNA, KV 2143 386216.

TNA, KV 2144 386216, Fay Taylour in evidence given at her appeal against detention, 1 April, 1942.


TNA, KV 2143 386216.


The Irish Times, 3 January, 1939.

Taylour, in evidence given in her appeal against detention, 28 August, 1940; TNA, KV 21243 386 216.
142 Taylour, in her written appeal against detention, 16 July 1940, TNA, KV 2 1 243 386 216.
144 Taylour, in evidence given in her appeal against detention, 28 August, 1940; TNA, KV 2 1 243 386 216.
145 Taylour, in her written appeal against detention, 16 July 1940, TNA, KV 2 1 243 386 216.
147 Taylour, in her written appeal against detention, 16 July 1940, TNA, KV 2 1 243 386 216.
148 Taylour, in evidence given in her appeal against detention, 28 August, 1940; TNA, KV 2 1 243 386 216.
149 Taylour, 28 August, 1940.
150 Taylour, 28 August, 1940.
151 Taylour, 28 August, 1940.
152 Taylour, 16 July, 1940.
153 *Action*, no: 1912, 26 October, 1939.
154 Special Branch (SB) report of 28 October, 1939, TNA KV 2 1 243 386 216.
155 Taylour in a letter dated 2 February, 1940 to H.T. (Bertie) Mills, a British Union activist; TNA KV 2 1 243 386 216.
156 From the transcript of Fay Taylour’s appeal against detention, 28 August, 1940; TNA KV 2 1 2143 386216. The map was from *The Daily Telegraph* of 21 February, 1938.
Fay Taylour (no date, but c. mid-1970s) Your Attention is Arrested under Defence Regulation 18-B (privately published), p.8.

157 Special Branch report dated 28 October, 1939: TNA KV 2 1 2143 386216.
158 Taylour, in her appeal of 28 August, 1940; TNA KV 2 1 2143 386216
159 Taylour, in her appeal of 28 August, 1940.
160 Taylour, in her appeal of 28 August, 1940.
161 Action, no:1912, 26 October, 1939.
162 Unlike the majority of other fascist movements, the BUF maintained a policy of non-intervention, or isolationism, underscored by a strong pacifistic ideal, throughout its history. This stance was maintained even when it came to the Spanish Civil War with its potential opening to directly support the Nationalists, as other fascists did; for example, Ireland’s Blueshirts, under the fascist leadership of General Eoin O’Duffy, sent some 600 men to fight with the Nationalists; see, Robert Stradling (1995), ‘Franco’s Irish Volunteers’, History Today, 54 (3), pp40-47; Mike Cronin (1997), The Blueshirts and Irish Politics (Four Courts Press, Dublin); Fearghal Mcgarry (2005), Eoin O’Duffy; A Self-Made Hero (Oxford University Press, Oxford).
164 Taylour, in her appeal of 28 August, 1940
This is the last date stamp on Taylour’s MI5 file, under which is stamped ‘File Closed’; TNA KV 2 1 2143 386216. From the ‘Statement of Case Against Frances Helen Taylour’, August, 1940; TNA KV 2 1 2143 386216.

Charlie Watt’s personal details courtesy of his daughter, letters and e-mails to the author, March, 2012.

From the ‘Original statement of the case against Charles Frederick Watts’, dated 28 June 1940; TNA, HO 283/74 C496259.

Transcript of the ‘Advisory Committee to consider appeals against orders of internment’ 19 September, 1941, Charles Frederick Watts; TNA, HO 283/74 C496259; figures given by committee deputy chairman Archibald Cockburn QC, confirmed by Watts.

Author in conversation with John Warburton, a BU member and, later, founding member of the ‘Friends of Oswald Mosley’, 1985.

Report on Watts to the Under Secretary of State at the Home Office, dated 31 July, 1940; TNA, HO 283/74 C496259.

From Taylour’s appeal hearing against internment, 28 August 1940; TNA KV 2 1 2143 386216.


Special Branch report on Taylour, February 1940; TNA KV 2 1 2143 386216.

Taylour in her appeal against detention, 28 August, 1940; TNA KV 2 1 2143 386216.

For example, the Report of the Advisory Committee on internments, following Taylour’s appeal of 28 August, 1940; TNA KV 2 1 2143 386216.
Allegation put to Taylour at her appeal against detention, 28 August 1940; TNA KV 2 1 2143 386216.

Taylour, in her appeal of 28 August, 1940.

Letter from the Governor of Holloway re Taylour, dated 21 January, 1941; KV 2 1 2143 386216.

Report of 21 May, 1946; TNA KV 2 1 2143 386216.

Friends of Oswald Mosley (November 2008), The Defence Regulations 18B, British Union Detainees List, gives Dickson as being ‘probably BU’. Fay Taylour, on the other hand, during her appeal against detention of 28th August, 1940, said that Dickson ‘was not British Union. He did not belong to anything at all’, but this may have been her trying to cover for Dickson, as he was part of her political circle. He was certainly interned, and the British Union Detainees List includes a group photograph of detainees in an Isle of Man camp in 1941 which includes Dickson: p.5:


All quotations from Taylour’s appeal against detention, 28 August 1940; TNA KV 2 1 2143 386216.

As early as 17 May, 1940, the War Cabinet were presented with a report that dismissed the idea that the rapid collapse of the Netherlands had, as popular opinion believed, been the result of Fifth Column activity by pro-Nazi elements, and by June, 1940, it had been recognised that there was no Fifth Column in Britain either. However, the idea of a Fifth Column was a very strong one, and the sort of semi-clandestine activities that were taking place on the far left and the ultra-right fitted into that model. See TNA, Cab/67/6/31 and Cab/67/7/3. See also: Thurlow, Richard (1999) ‘The evolution of the Mythical British Fifth Column, 1939-46’, Twentieth Century British History, 10 (4); and Thurlow, Richard C. (2000) Fascism in Modern Britain, (Sutton, Stroud), pp.102-07.
By the summer of 1939, membership of The Link was around 4,300 in total, with around 40 members in the inner London branch; Cullen, S.M. (2013), ‘Strange Journey: the life of Dorothy Eckersley’, *The Historian*, 119, p.21.

Watts followed this line throughout his internment; see, for example, his evidence to the Advisory Committee hearing of 9 July, 1940, TNA, HO 283/74 C496259. But it is clear that the security services were sure that Watts was behind the HDM.

The Advisory Committee to consider appeals against orders of internment had ‘no hesitation in recommending the release from detention of C. F. Watts’, after hearing of his volunteering for heavy duty clearance work after the Liverpool blitz (he had been held in the Huyton internment camp) and his desire to join the Pioneer Corps; report of 22 September, 1941, TNA HO 283/74 C496259.

Copy of letter from Watts to Home Office, dated 24 May, 1940; TNA: HO 283/74 C496259

Two recent biographies, of Norah Dacre Fox and Bill Risdon, a former Independent Labour Party, then BU activist, have drawn attention to the role of fascists in the anti-vivisection movement. See: McPherson, Susan and McPherson, Angela (2010, revised edition 2011), *Mosley’s Old Suffragette; a biography of Norah Dacre Fox* (privately published); and Risdon, J.L. (2013), *Black Shirt and Smoking Beagles; the biography of Wilfred Risdon: an unconventional campaigner* (Wilfred Books, Scarborough)
196 See Mr A. T. Miller K.C.’s questions to Taylour during her appeal against internment, 28 August, 1940: TNA, KV 2 1 2143 386216.
197 The view of Norman Birkett K.C., Chairman of the Advisory Committee to consider appeals against orders of interment at Watts’ appeal hearing of 9 July, 1940: TNA HO 283/74 C496259.
198 Taylour, in her appeal against detention, 28 August, 1940; TNA KV 2 1 2143 386216.
199 Taylour, appeal, 28 August, 1940.
200 Taken from the Special Branch report on Fay Taylour, of c. late February, 1940: TNA KV 2 1 2143 386216.
201 The Anna Wolkoff-Tyler Kent affair has been the subject of much academic and popular commentary. For example, Griffiths, Richard (1998), Patriotism Perverted; Captain Ramsay, the Right Club and British Anti-Semitism, 1939-40 (London, Constable); Clough, Bryan (2005), State Secrets; the Kent-Wolkoff Affair (Hove, Hideaway Publications), while other books contain commentary on the case, notably, Simpson, A.W. Brian (1992), In the Highest Degree Odious; detention without trial in wartime Britain (Oxford, OUP), but also, Andrew, Christopher (2009), The Defence of the Realm; the authorized history of MI5 (London, Allen Lane); Hennessey, Thomas and Thomas, Claire (2009), Spooks; the unofficial history of MI5 from M to Miss X, 1909-39 (Stroud, Sutton).
There is a possibility, given MI5’s use of agent provocateur tactics during this period that the ledger may not be genuine.

Fay Taylour (no date, but c. mid-1970s) *Your Attention*, p.20.

From Taylour’s appeal against detention, 28 August, 1940; TNA KV 2 1 2143 386216.

Appeal, 28 August, 1940.


Clough (2005), *State Secrets*, p.43.

From Taylour’s written appeal against detention, 16 July, 1940; TNA KV 2 1 2143 386216.


Clough, *State Secrets*, has demolished Joan Miller’s various accounts of her role in MI5’s use of the RC, and its handling of the Kent-Wolkoff affair; see, in particular, pp. 23-36.


214 ‘Miss Webb’ was, in fact, her aunt, Dr Ella Webb

215 Report of 4 February. Sgt Kay’s report also contained a final few words which he then crossed out; they seem to be: ‘-presumably gained by [unclear] in foreign countries’.


217 Simpson (1992), *In the Highest Degree Odious*, pp. 175-76.

218 Copy of Taylour’s intercepted letter to H.T. ‘Bertie’ Mills, dated 2 February, 1940.

219 Copy of Taylour’s letter, 2 February, 1940.


222 Barnes and Barnes (1990), pp.13-16.


225 Cullen, Stephen M. (2003), ‘The British Union of Fascists; the international dimension’, *The Historian*, 80, p.35.


227 From Taylour’s appeal against detention, 28 August, 1940; TNA KV 2 1 2143 386216.

228 From the ‘Statement of [the] case against Frances Helen Taylour’, August, 1940; TNA KV 2 1 2143 386216.

229 Taylour in her appeal against detention, 28 August, 1940; TNA KV 2 1 2143 386216.
Taylour in her appeal, 28 August, 1940.

Taylour in her appeal, 28 August, 1940.

Taylour in her appeal, 28 August, 1940.

Taylour in her appeal, 28 August, 1940.

From a briefing report, dated 16 October, 1943, sent to the Irish Defence Ministry (ref.: PF.48693/B.1H); TNS, KV 2 1 2144 386216.


Cullen, Stephen M. (2011), *In Search of the Real Dad’s Army; the Home Guard and the Defence of the United Kingdom* (Barnsley, Pen and Sword Books), particularly, pp.27-33.

Taylour (no date), *Your Attention is Arrested*, p.11.

Taylour (no date), *Your Attention is Arrested*, p.11.

From a Metropolitan Police Special Branch report, dated 27th May 1940; TNA, KV 2 1 2143 386216

Masters (1984), The Man Who Was M, p. 97, quoting from War Cabinet records at the Public Record Office (now The National Archive), Kew, FO 371 25248, 417.

Simpson (1992), In the Highest Degree Odious, p.162

Masters (1984), The Man Who Was M, pp.43-54

Marjorie ‘Amor’ appears to have been Marjorie Mackie. It is unclear what name she actually went by as an MI5 agent, as both Hennessy and Thomas (2009), Spooks, p.322, and Masters (1984), The Man Who Was M, pp.80 and 85 refer to her as ‘Amos’, while Clough (2005), State Secrets, p.7ff refers to her as ‘Amor’. Fay Taylour also knew her as Amor, and I have followed that here.


Clough (2005), State Secrets, p.23.


See, for example, Clough (2005), State Secrets; Thurlow, Fascism in Britain, pp.104-106; Simpson, In the Highest Degree Odious, pp. 146-171; and, for an entirely positive interpretation of the security services’ activities, Andrew, The Defence of the Realm, pp. 220-227.


253 TNA; KV 2 1 2143 386216.

254 Copy of detention order, dated 20th September, 1940; TNA; KV 2 1 2143 386216.

255 ‘Statement of Case Against Frances Helen Taylour’, dated 9 August, 1940; TNA KV 2 1 2143 386216.

256 ‘Statement of Case Against Frances Helen Taylour’.

257 ‘Statement of Case Against Frances Helen Taylour’.

258 Cullen, Stephen M. (2008), ‘Fascists Behind Barbed Wire; political internment without trial in wartime Britain’, *The Historian*, 100, pp.16-18


260 For an account of Nellie Driver’s political, and religious life, see Mayall, David (1989), ‘Rescued from the shadows of exile: Nellie Driver, autobiography and the British Union of Fascists; *Immigrants and Minorities*, 8 (1).

261 Dick Bellamy, in a letter to Fay Taylour dated 5 February, 1974 (copy in possession of author).

262 Fay Taylour in letter dated 14 February, 1974 to Bellamy (in author’s possession).

263 Fay Taylour in letter dated 4 March, 1974 to Bellamy (in author’s possession).

264 Watts’ marriage broke down, and following the war he went to live in Cornwall where he later became active in the Mebyon Kernow (Sons of Cornwall); Charlie Watt’s personal details courtesy of his daughter, Eileen Mackrory, letters and e-mails to the author, March, 2012.


266 18B Publicity Council (no date, c.1944), *Persecuted Women in Britain To-Day* (18 Publicity Council, London), p1.

267 18B Publicity Council (no date, c.1944), *Persecuted Women*, p.5.
Fay Taylour (no date, but c. mid-1970s) *Your Attention*, p.6.

269 Taylour at her second appeal against detention, 16 April, 1940; TNA, TNA KV 2 1 2143 386216.

270 Miller, Joan (1986), *One Girl’s War* (Brandon, Dingle, County Kerry).


273 Fay Taylour (no date, but c. mid-1970s) *Your Attention*, p.21.

274 Fay Taylour (no date, but c. mid-1970s) *Your Attention*, p.21; and Taylour in a letter to Bellamy, dated 4 March, 1974.

275 Fay Taylour (no date, but c. mid-1970s) *Your Attention*, pp.21-2.

276 Fay Taylour (no date, but c. mid-1970s) *Your Attention*, pp.21-2.


278 Charlie Watts (December, 1940) ‘Ascot, No: 7 Internment Camp’ MS, p.2. The MS in possession of the author was that given by Watts to Dick Bellamy. Other copies were made at the time, and one is held in the special collections of Sheffield University Library. Further details of the Watts MS are in, Cullen (2008), ‘Fascists Behind Barbed Wire’.

279 Fay Taylour, in a letter from Holloway Prison to her aunt Evelyn, dated 10 December, 1940; TNA KV 2 1 243 386 216.

280 Fay Taylour in a letter to Freddie Dixon, postmarked 14 December, 1940; TNA KV 2 1 243 386 216.

281 Taylour in a letter to Freddie Dixon, postmarked 14 December, 1940.

282 TNA KV 2 1 243 386 216, report dated 19 May, 1942.

283 TNA KV 2 1 243 386 216, report dated 19 May, 1942.
Report of the Governor of Holloway to the Home Office, dated 20 March, 1942; TNA KV 2 1 243 386 216.

The National Archive files on Taylour are grouped in two volumes. The second volume is dated between 21 December 1955 and 19 March, 1976; and the covering minute sheet shows that in December 1957, and at various times up to 1959 files were destroyed, particularly those relating to Taylour’s internment, especially on the Isle of Man.

Report, dated 15 June, 1943; TNA KV 2 1 243 386 216.

Fay Taylour at her appeal against detention, 16 April, 1942; TNA KV 2 1 243 386 216.

Taylour at her appeal against detention, 16 April, 1942

Minute Sheet on discussions between Home Office and MI5, dated 11 August, 1943, in which her not being allowed back into the UK enabled agreement that Taylour could be released; TNA; KV 2 1 2144 386216.

Note of releases from internment at the beginning of October, 1943, by Security Officer for the Isle of Man; TNA; KV 2 1 2144 386216.


For example, a letter was sent to the Defence Ministry in Dublin on 16 October, 1943, warning the Irish government of Taylour’s forthcoming arrival, and outlining her background. The letter also noted that Dr Webb ‘does not sympathise with her niece’s politics’, and that MI5 was intercepting all Taylour’s correspondence. TNA; KV 2 1 2144 386216.

Report on Taylour’s activities in Dublin, dated 21 May, 1946; TNA KV 2 1 243 386 216.

MI5 intelligence file, dated 21 May, 1946; TNA; KV 2 1 243 386 216.

Letter from the Governor of Holloway re Taylour, dated 21 January, 1941, noting that Dickson had been ‘recently
released from detention under Regulation 18.B'; TNA, KV 2 1 2143 386216.

296 British intelligence report of 28 May, 1946; TNA KV 2 1 243 386 216.

297 Fay Taylour in a letter to Bellamy, 28 March, 1974 (in the author’s possession).

298 Leach, Daniel (2009), Fugitive Ireland; European Minority Nationalists and Irish Political Asylum, 1937-2008 (Dublin, Four Courts Press), especially pp.81-104 and 104-133

299 British intelligence report of 28 May, 1946; TNA KV 2 1 243 386 216.

300 British intelligence report of 28 May, 1946; TNA KV 2 1 243 386 216.

301 British intelligence report of 21 May, 1946; TNA KV 2 1 243 386 216.

302 Simpson (1992), In the Highest Degree Odious, pp.175-76.

303 José Antonio Primo de Rivera (1964), The Spanish Answer, passages from the spoken and written message of José Antonio Primo de Rivera, 1930-1936, selected and translated, with an introduction by Juan Macnab Calder, from the Complete Works, edited by Agustin del Rio Cisneros (Madrid, Artes Graficas).


305 Post-war MI5 minute sheet; unfortunately, the file which the minute refers to appears to have been destroyed; TNA; KV 2 1 2144 386216.

MI5 note, dated 20 June, 1952; TNA; KV 2 1 2144 386216


Macklin, *Very Deeply Dyed in Black*; p.31.

After Mosley, Thomson was the most important ideologue in the pre-war British Union; he continued to take part in the post-war movement before his death in 1955. See: McMurray, Matthew (2012), ‘Alexander Raven Thomson, Philosopher pf the British Union of Fascists’, *The European Legacy: Toward New Paradigms*, 17 (1), pp.35-59.


Minute sheet, with dates between 13 January, 1948 and 13 June, 1952; TNA; KV 2 1 2144 386216.


Fay Taylour in a letter to Dick Bellamy, dated 8 March, 1974 (in possession of the author).

Taylour in a letter to Bellamy, dated 8 March, 1974.

Fay Taylour (no date, but c. mid-1970s) *Your Attention*, p.13.


From part of a MI5 ‘Look-Up’ on behalf of the CIA, dated 5 June, 1952; TNA KV 2 1 2144 386216.


Fay Taylour (no date, but c. mid-1970s) *Your Attention*, p.16.

MI5 note (277a) provided to US Embassy in London, 20 June, 1952; TNA; KV 2 1 2144 386216.

Fay Taylour (no date, but c. mid-1970s) *Your Attention*, p.16.


Taylour in a letter to Bellamy, dated 4 March, 1974.


Fay Taylour (no date, but c. mid-1970s) *Your Attention*, p.17.


348 *The Irish Times*, 22 May, 1953.

349 *The Irish Times*, 4 September, 1953.

350 *The Irish Times*, 28 August, and 4 September, 1953.


354 Fay Taylour (no date, but c. mid-1970s) *Your Attention*, p.18.

355 Fay Taylour (no date, but c. mid-1970s) *Your Attention*, p.19.

356 Fay Taylour (no date, but c. mid-1970s) *Your Attention*, p.19.

357 Fay Taylour in a letter to Dick Bellamy, dated 7 February, 1974 (in possession of the author).

358 Taylour in a letter to Bellamy, dated 7 February, 1974.


363 Taylour in letters to Bellamy, dated 12 April, 1 and 4 May, 1974 (in possession of the author).


Theresa Jenkins-Teague in conversation with the author, 17 April, 2013.

Where Taylour’s papers and memorabilia are now in 2014 is uncertain. Apparently, Brian Belton had access to them in while writing his book on Taylour’s speedway career, but, in an e-mail to the author, dated 31 December 2013, he said that he no longer had contact details for the papers.
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