

Reference code: GB165-0573

Title: Monica Wilson Collection

Name of creator: Wilson, Monica (b.1920) radio broadcaster, journalist and civil servant

Dates of creation of material: 1943-2013

Level of description: Fonds

Extent: 2 boxes

Biographical history: Wilson, Monica (b.1920), radio broadcaster and journalist. Born Monica Dehn, 1920 in London. Daughter of Curt Gustav, lawyer and Cynthia Fuller, artist. Studied journalism at London University and joined the BBC in 1942; seconded to Palestine to work for a war-time radio station run by the Special Operations Executive, 1943-1945; the Near East Arab Broadcasting Station, Sharq al-Adna run by MI6, 1945; Reporter for the British Mandate Government's Press Office, 1945-1948; foreign affairs sub-editor for the Palestine Post 1946-1948; Israel Government press office in Tel Aviv 1948-c1950; Jerusalem Correspondent for *Time Life*; foreign affairs correspondent for the *Observer*.

Scope and content: Papers relating to Monica Wilson's work in Palestine as a radio broadcaster, journalist and civil servant, consisting of letters to her parents, 1943-1948 which include accounts of the bombing of the Palestine Post and the King David Hotel as well as the siege of Jerusalem; a statement from Monica Wilson regarding her letters from Palestine (c.2010); an overview of Monica Wilson's letters by Roger Hardy, 2013; 14 transcripts of letters written by Monica Wilson, transcribed by Roger Hardy 2013.

System of arrangement:

- 1 Correspondence, 1943-1948
- 2 Monica Wilson on her letters from Palestine
- 3 Overview of Monica Wilson's letters by Roger Hardy
- 4 Transcripts of letters written by Monica Wilson

Access conditions: Open

Language of material: English

Conditions governing reproduction: No restrictions on copying or quotation other than statutory regulations and preservation concerns

Custodial history: Letters accumulated by Monica Wilson's parents during her time in Palestine, which were rediscovered by Monica Wilson in 2002; Statements written by Monica Wilson and Roger Hardy, and transcripts of letters printed and held by Roger Hardy.

Immediate source of acquisition: Received as a gift by Monica Wilson 1 February 2013

Related Units of Description:

In MEC Archive

For other collections related to broadcasting in Palestine please see:

- GB165-0361 Rex Keating Collection

For other collections related to bombings and violence in Jerusalem, including the bombing of the Palestine Post and the King David Hotel please see:

- GB165-0387 Alexander Collection
- GB165-0386 Victor Cannings Collection
- GB165-0379 Philip Morris Collection
- GB165-0360 David Tomlinson Collection

For other letters relating to religious affairs in Palestine and Jerusalem please see:

- GB165-0231 James Huey Hamill Pollock

Finding aids: In Guide; Handlist

Archivist's note: Fonds, series and item level description created by Alex Clayton July 2014.

**SERIES, FILE AND ITEM LEVEL DESCRIPTION OF THE MONICA WILSON
COLLECTION**

1 Correspondence, 1943-1948

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|-----|---|------|------------|
| 1/1 | <u>Correspondence 1943</u> | 1943 | 46 sheets |
| | Letters written by Monica Wilson to her parents, describing her journey to Palestine from Great Britain. The letters are received from her stops in Takoradi, Ghana and Lagos, Nigeria. She complains about the warm climate in length as well as describing her social experiences with British and American servicemen and women. The folder also contains a telegram in which Wilson writes 'plane leaving very soon' | | |
| 1/2 | <u>Correspondence 1944</u> | 1944 | 147 sheets |
| | Letters written by Monica Wilson to her parents, describing how she has enjoyed her first year of work at a radio station run by the Special Operations Executive. She provides accounts of her travel to sites such as Bethlehem and Jerusalem Old Town with 'Roy' (David Roy Elston), later to become her first husband. She also writes of having measles, missing her family and provides comments on World War II operations including D-Day. As the year goes on Monica also becomes increasingly concerned regarding the future of the radio station as World War II begins to draw to a close | | |
| 1/3 | <u>Correspondence 1945</u> | 1945 | 105 sheets |
| | Letters written by Monica Wilson to her parents, mentioning the final events of World War Two and the effect it has on her career. She informs them that the radio station has 'died' and she will be leaving PWB Palbase. She spends 2 months in Cairo before moving back to Jerusalem to work on the British-run station Sharq al-Adna, however spends almost two months between August and October with jaundice, including a spell in hospital. Sharq al-Adna then closes after 7 months, however Monica agrees to work for the British | | |

- Mandate Government's Press Office. Towards the end of the year she increasingly mentions the disputes between Arabs and Jews
- 1/4 Correspondence 1946 1946 170 sheets
- Letters written by Monica Wilson to her parents regarding her job at the British Mandate Government's Press Office and later the Palestine Post newspaper as a sub-editor for Foreign Affairs. She becomes increasingly sympathetic to Jews in Palestine and is in support of a Jewish State, responding to her parent's concern by arguing: 'you have criticised my 'strong views' father, but you are wrong in thinking that I blind myself.'. She strongly condemns European and American attitudes towards Jews, and shows an increasing support for the actions of the Haganah to counter 'Arab violence'
- 1/5 Correspondence 1947 1947 188 sheets
- Letters written by Monica Wilson to her parents regarding events in Palestine and her job at the British Mandate Government's Press Office and Palestine Post newspaper. She observes the increasing food shortages and violence in Jerusalem as well as a period of martial law and 'lawlessness'. She speaks of Jewish excitement about UNSCOP (United Nations Special Committee of Palestine) who enter Jerusalem to find a solution to the violence, and gives a detailed account of Jewish jubilation after the 'UN partition resolution'
- 1/6 Correspondence 1948 1948 170 sheets
- Letters written by Monica Wilson to her parents regarding events in Palestine and her jobs at the British Mandate Government's Press Office and Palestine Post newspaper. She describes escalating violence, with the bombing of her Palestine Post office, as well as the Deir Yassin Massacre and Ben Yehuda Street bombing. Monica leaves Jerusalem

after the Press Office 'ceased to function', with Roy insisting on staying, she passes on his accounts of the siege of Jerusalem and is concerned for his safety. During this time Monica works for the Israeli State, preparing 'a monthly report on the British and American press'

2 Monica Wilson on her letters from Palestine

A printed overview written by Monica Wilson, explaining the discovery of the letters and describing her time in Palestine between 1944 and 1948. She explains the development in her views from being 'enchanted' by the country, to vehemently supporting Jewish demands for statehood out of loyalty to her husband, causing 'distress' to her father. She concludes by giving an account of her life and career after 1948, including spells working at *Time* magazine, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) and life with her second husband in the Congo and Tanzania

c2010 2 sheets

3 Overview of Monica Wilson letters by Roger Hardy

- 3/1 Account of Monica Wilson's life by Roger Hardy 2012 1 sheet
- A printed account of Monica Wilson's life written by Roger Hardy. He describes the movements in her career and the positions she held including work for a Special Operations run radio station, a Near East Arab Broadcasting Station run by MI6, Israel Government Press Office and Jerusalem correspondent for *Time-Life*. Hardy goes on to comment on the letters themselves and their importance: 'the letters provide eye-witness accounts of some of the most dramatic episodes in the final years of British rule, including the bombing of the *Palestine Post*, the attack on the King David Hotel, and the siege of Jerusalem'
- 3/2 Monica Dehn's letters from Palestine, 1944-48 2013 13 sheets
- A printed list written by Roger Hardy, providing brief

descriptions of each letter in the collection including date, format, overview and selected quotes

4 Transcripts of letters written by Monica Wilson

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|-----|---|-------|----------|
| 4/1 | <u>Letter Transcript 20 Jun 1945</u>

A printed transcript of a letter written by Monica Wilson, originally handwritten on 20 June 1945. The letter includes Wilson's excitement regarding the weather and the people of Jerusalem, attending parties, the cinema and walking. The letter includes written annotations.

Related Material: See 1/3 Correspondence 1945 p.82. | c2012 | 3 sheets |
| 4/2 | <u>Letter Transcript 18 Jul 1945</u>

A printed transcript of a letter written by Monica Wilson, originally handwritten on 18 July 1945. The letter includes news of her permanent position at the Palestine Post as well as her dinners with 'Roy' and his wife. The letter includes written annotations.

Related Material: 1/3 Correspondence 1946 p. 85. | c2012 | 1 sheet |
| 4/3 | <u>Letter Transcript 28 Jul 1945</u>

A printed transcript of a letter written by Monica Wilson, originally handwritten on 28 July 1945. The letter includes comment on the 1945 Labour election victory, an evening journey to the Dead Sea, and a weekend with Roy in Herzliea [Herzliya]. The letter includes written annotations.

Related Material: 1/3 Correspondence 1945 pp. 86-89. | c2012 | 6 sheets |
| 4/4 | <u>Letter Transcript 25 Aug 1945</u>

A printed transcript of a letter written by Monica Wilson, originally handwritten on 25 August 1945. The letter includes an account of Monica's time in hospital suffering from jaundice, as well as briefly commenting on 'the end of the Japanese war'. The letter includes written annotations.

Related Material: 1/3 Correspondence 1945 p. 92. | c2012 | 1 sheet |

- 4/9 Letter Transcript 31 Oct 1945 c2012 2 sheet
A printed transcript of a letter written by Monica Wilson, originally handwritten on 31 October 1945. The letter includes mention of a farewell lunch before she leaves for England as well as a joint Arab-Jewish celebration for Shapiro, the founder of the Petah Tivka colony, celebrating his 70th Birthday.
Related Material: 1/3 Correspondence 1945 p. 105.
- 4/10 Letter Transcript 18 Jan – 2 Feb 1947 c2012 11 sheets
A printed transcript of a letter written by Monica Wilson, originally handwritten in sections: 18 January 1947, 28 January 1947, 2 February 1947. The letter mentions a plague of locusts, the possibility of civil war between Jews and Arabs, and a 'zoning scheme' removing Jews from certain areas of Jerusalem.
Related Material: 1/5 Correspondence 1947 pp. 7-27.
- 4/11 Letter Transcript 2 Feb 1948 c2012 6 sheets
A printed transcript of a letter written by Monica Wilson, originally handwritten on 2 February 1948. The letter details the bombing of the Palestine Post offices at which Monica Wilson worked. Including her rushing to the scene, the complete destruction of the building and the continued printing of the newspaper that night. The letter goes on to analyse suspects of the attack, with locals ruling out the probability of an Arab attack as 'everyone would know the grandmother of the driver and they'd be boasting of the feat', Monica then moves on to the possibility of Jewish and British suspects. The letter includes written annotations.
Related Material: 1/6 Correspondence 1948 pp. 18-26.
- 4/12 Letter Transcript 27 Feb 1948 c2012 2 sheets
A printed transcript of a letter written by Monica Wilson, originally handwritten on 27 February 1948. The letter includes mention of the fuel shortages in England, and

support amongst the Arabs who congratulate Roy on his column's success and appreciate his 'understanding' of their views. The letter includes written annotations.

Related Material: 1/6 Correspondence 1948 p. 67-69

4/13 Letter Transcript 16 Mar 1948 c2012 5 sheets

A printed transcript of a letter written by Monica Wilson, originally handwritten on 16 March 1948. The letter includes mention of her possible transfer to the UN Commission as well as the severe food shortages in Jerusalem caused by 'the difficulty of transport' as a result of robbing and the attacking of food lorries by Arabs. She goes on to write that civilians play little part in the conflict, and that Arabs and Jews continue their daily lives after the conflict moves on.

Related Material: 1/6 Correspondence 1948 p. 70-75.

4/14 Letter Transcript 24 Apr 1948 c2012 1 sheet

A printed transcript of a letter written by Monica Wilson, originally handwritten on 24 April 1948. The letter includes the news that food supplies are returning after the siege of Jerusalem. She writes that the siege was held by 'thousands' of Arabs and was broken by the Haganah. She goes on to describe the Jewish campaign against the 'British officered, British-financed and British-equipped Arab Legion' and the 'appalling bias' of British newspapers.

Related Material: 1/6 Correspondence 1948 pp. 88-98.