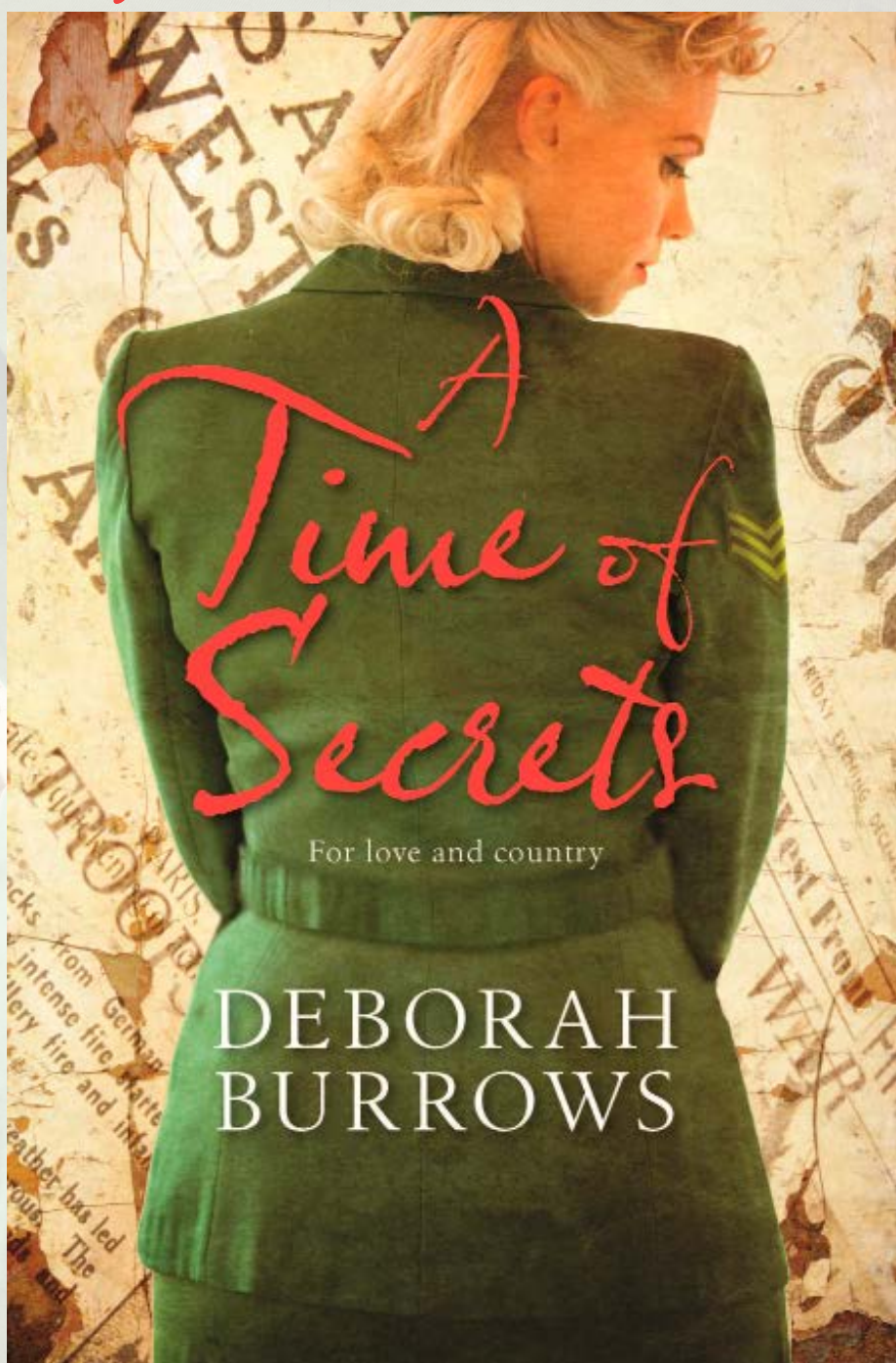


SPOTLIGHT TITLE  
MARCH

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*A Time of Secrets*

by Deborah Burrows



# *A Time of Secrets*

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## Praise for Deborah Burrows

“From the first page, I was immersed in the danger, the glamour and the excitement of wartime Melbourne. *A Time of Secrets* has tempered lush historical detail with page-turning action and intrigue, and a love triangle that had me absolutely torn. A beautifully written and compelling wartime mystery that is both completely realistic and utterly transportive. A must read!”  
– Haylee Nash, Commissioning Editor - Fiction

“... an intriguing and romantic murder mystery”  
Liz Byrski, author of *Family Secrets*

“... gloriously rich descriptions. You can feel, smell and almost see Perth in the 40's”  
*Books + Publishing*

“... a classic whodunit with a hint of romance, this one is definitely worth a read”  
*Woman's Day*

“A compelling combination of murder mystery and tender romance”  
*The West Australian*

“Careful research packs this book with rich historical detail that brings the era and characters alive”  
*The Hoopla*

“It's safe to say that Burrows is making a stand in the historical fiction genre”  
*Australian Bookshelf*

“A charming and intriguing whodunit”  
*Daily Telegraph*

“Warm and satisfying ... a worthwhile read that will appeal to lovers of historical stories, romances and gentle mysteries”  
*Write Note Reviews*

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### About *A Time of Secrets*

1943 is a dangerous time to fall in love...

In wartime Melbourne *loose lips sink ships*, so when Australian Women's Army Service Sergeant Stella Aldridge overhears soldiers whispering about a revenge killing, she follows her instincts to investigate, despite finding herself drawn to one of the soldiers, the enigmatic Staff Sergeant Eric Lund.

But the world is at war and there is little time for romance. Someone in the Australian Intelligence Bureau is trading secrets and it's up to Stella and her uncompromising superior officer, Lieutenant Nick Ross, to find the traitor.

When Eric's team is scheduled to be deployed in a dangerous mission to the South West Pacific, Stella races to uncover the truth or risk not only Eric's life, but the security of Australia itself. Torn between protecting the ones she loves and her duty to her country, Stella chooses to pursue the truth at all costs.

Even if it means putting herself in the firing line ...

### About Deborah Burrows

Deborah Burrows is a lawyer and writer and lives in Perth. She works for the WA State Solicitor's Office, in the area of medical law. She also has several degrees in history including a post-graduate degree in medical history from the University of Oxford, where her dissertation was 'Science in the Witness Box: Expert Medical Testimony in criminal poisoning trials in England 1800-1860' (bringing together her interest in crime, history, medicine and the legal process).

This is her third novel, after *A Stranger in My Street* and *Taking a Chance*.

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*A Time of Secrets* will be supported by

Point-of-sale  
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*Australian Women's Weekly*

*New Idea*

*Woman's Day*

*YOURS* magazine

*Who* magazine

and more top-circulating women's and lifestyle publications

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## A conversation with Deborah Burrows

**Q. What inspired you to write *A Time of Secrets*?**

A. I like to write about women in wartime – the changes and challenges that living through a war brings to their lives, even if they are not actually involved in fighting. My characters are ordinary women living in extraordinary times, who must find unexpected courage to get through the challenges they face.

I'd read some accounts and spoken to some lovely women who'd been in AWAS and other Women's Services and I thought I'd like to show the incredible 'mateship', resourcefulness and responsibility shown by these Australian women, in the context of a romantic mystery story inspired by real events.

**Q. You have a gift for transporting your readers through rich historical detail. How much research was involved when writing *A Time of Secrets*?**

A. I love the research almost as much as writing the books! For *A Time of Secrets* I had to immerse myself in wartime Melbourne. I visited the city on many occasions and I walked around the areas where Stella lived, worked and visited. I went to the State Library of Victoria to study old photographs and documents, so I could get an idea of the people, street scenes and the buildings of 70 years before.

I read old copies of *The Age*, the *Argus*, and the *Herald* to familiarise myself with the advertisements, the stories and the language of 1940s Melbourne. I read textbooks such as Kate Darian-Smith's wonderful *On the Home Front: Melbourne in wartime: 1939–1945*, and *When the War Came to Australia: memories of the Second World War*, by Joanna Penglase and David Horner. And, of course, I spoke to people who lived through the war, not just in Melbourne but all over Australia.

**Q. *A Time of Secrets* is partly based on true events – tell me about that.**

A. I have always been interested in the Timor Campaign. My father was a member of the famed 2/2 Independent Company, a small group of brave and resourceful commandos who fought a year-long and very successful guerrilla action against the Japanese on Timor in 1942. When I discovered that after my father's company had been evacuated in early 1943 the Allied Intelligence Bureau sent small groups of commandos back to Timor to engage in covert activity there, it piqued my interest. Especially when I found that some of the missions had gone badly wrong ...

*A Time of Secrets* draws its inspiration from a disastrous intelligence-gathering mission on Timor in 1943, codenamed 'Lagarto'.

# A Time of Secrets

## by Deborah Burrows

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### A conversation with Deborah Burrows

**Q. The women in the Australian Women's Army Service (AWAS) lead rather restricted lives. Why do you think they signed up?**

A. I think the main reason was that Australia was under real threat of Japanese invasion. Many women felt it was their patriotic duty to join AWAS and allow the men to move to fighting units.

But the decision was often more than just patriotism. Although women 'grew up' more quickly than today – most left school at 14 or 15 to begin work – they were much more sheltered and had fewer choices than women do now. It is hard for us now to fully comprehend the extent to which women were controlled in those days, with regard to their work, their sexuality and their lives generally. Joining AWAS represented freedom for many young women – often naïve country girls – who before the war would have been expected to remain at home until they married.

From what I have read and heard, despite the military restrictions, these women remember their time in AWAS as one of firm friendships, excitement and often sensuality and breaking free of restraints.

**Q. The character of Stella, while being flawed and vulnerable like all of us, shows immense strength and courage in her pursuit of the truth. Do you think this commitment to going beyond the call of duty was common in the women of the AWAS?**

A. Yes. AWAS was formed in 1941, seeking women with "general intelligence, a willingness to serve and general adaptability" to enlist. At first the Army only intended women to work as clerks, typists, cooks and drivers but they were soon serving in most Army Services, including highly skilled and secret work.

The AWAS was the only non-medical women's service to send personnel overseas during the war; in 1944 and 1945 the AWAS served in Dutch and Australian New Guinea. I like to think that Stella eventually volunteered for overseas duty.

**Q. You've written two very complex, and yet very desirable, male leads in Staff Sergeant Eric Lund and Lieutenant Nick Ross. Do you have a favourite?**

A. I am very drawn to Eric Lund. He is not only brave, resourceful and trustworthy, but also artistic, kind and sensitive. I like how Eric refuses to be defined by his reputation as a brutal fighter. And it doesn't hurt that (in my mind, at least) Eric bears a strong resemblance to Chris Hemsworth ...

And yet, the character of Nick Ross stayed with me, long after the book was finished. He's a complicated man who is beset by demons, yet pushes away those who might be able to help him by his moodiness and flippancy. I suppose I'm rather partial to a tormented tall, dark and handsome hero.

I wanted to get across the intense bond - the mateship - between these two men, and their exceptional loyalty to each other and to those they care about, especially Stella.

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### A conversation with Deborah Burrows

**Q. In spite of the war, Melbourne in 1943 seemed to be a heady place to live. Why do you think this was?**

A. In wartime there is a real sense that it is important to live for the moment because there mightn't be many more moments for you or those you care about. For that reason a tremendous amount of licence and liberation comes into people's lives.

The Melbourne authorities didn't want hordes of bored servicemen loose in the city, so entertainments were organised, ballrooms and dance halls operated continuously, and Melbourne women were encouraged to spend time entertaining the troops, who included the handsome, charming Americans with money to spend on local women. Melbourne had never been such a party town.

But we shouldn't forget that there was also always a sense that disaster might be just around the corner. Australia might lose the war, or someone you cared about might die or be terribly injured. All people really knew in those six years was that life would never be the same as it had been before the war.

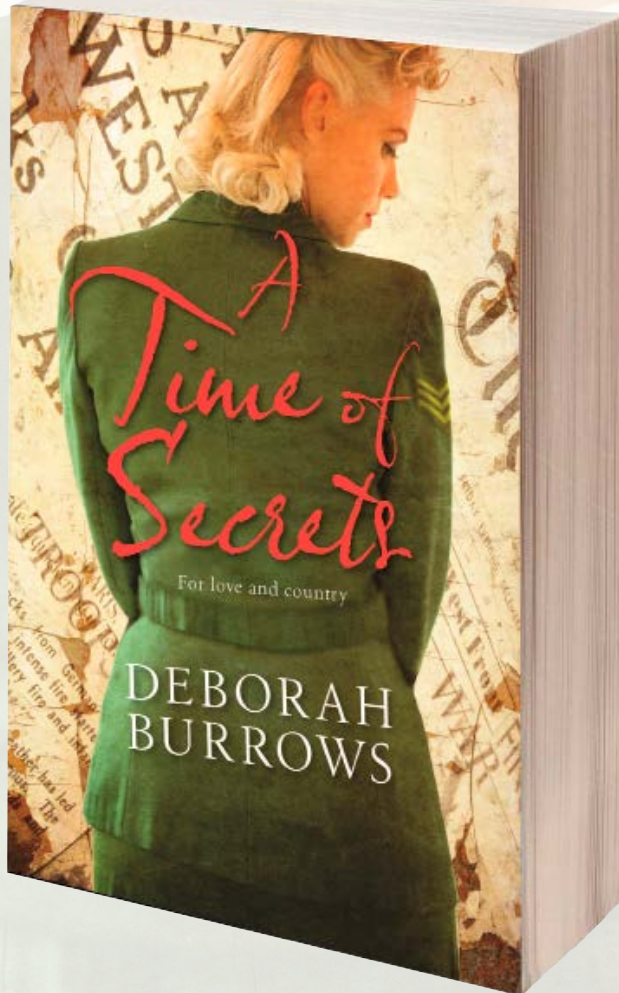
**Q. Why do you think readers are so fascinated with wartime stories?**

A. I suppose, like me, people are drawn to stories that don't glorify war, so much as examine the way in which such times bring out the best and the worst in human nature. In wartime stories you can deal with the 'big issues' of courage, love and 'mateship', and also fear, loss, death and despair. World War 2 in many ways defined modern Australia. It was the first and last time that our country faced the real threat of invasion by a hostile power, and so Australians worked together to defeat a common enemy. We were faced with blackouts, casualty lists, rationing, conscription, identity cards and censorship of private letters. Hordes of young servicemen flooded into our cities seeking R&R with Australian women. It was a time of change, when women were 'manpowered' into jobs traditionally done by men, or joined the women's services to 'do their bit'.

Any novel of the period must try to recreate the overwhelming sense of excitement of the time. I think all that makes for a great reading experience.

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