

(summary)

MICHAEL LLEWELLYN SMITH  
Paddy Leigh Fermor and the Cretan Runner

Patrick (Paddy) Leigh Fermor served as an officer of the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in Crete in 1942-44 in the dangerous work of supporting Cretan resistance, reporting intelligence on German dispositions, propaganda and sabotage. His return visits to Crete after the war were not many: he wanted to avoid being trapped in the mythology of a war hero, and it was dangerous for him to be seen in Crete owing to a wartime incident that created a feud with the family of a Cretan fellow fighter. But he stayed in contact with his former allied colleagues and Cretan friends. His closest friend from this period was Xan Fielding, who also served SOE in Crete. Among the Cretans he was friend and patron to George Psychoundakis, his messenger and guide during the war. Paddy translated Psychoundakis's manuscript about the war, which was published by John Murray as *The Cretan Runner*, and commended George's translation of Homer to the Academy of Athens. Difficulties later arose between Psychoundakis and his publisher Murray, causing Paddy distress. They were finally resolved when Penguin Books published a new paperback edition in 2009. Psychoundakis was delighted and showed his pleasure by taking down his rifle and loosing off a *feu de joie*.