

George Leslie Martin

I believe that my son has recently been in touch with you with a view to contacting an old Service Friend of mine, namely Bert MARSH, who appears on your Hero's page. Bert and I served together throughout much of W.W.2 until he was demobbed back in 1945/46. I continued until 1947, finishing in Palestine. I thank you for putting us back in touch and have many memories relating to my service and those I served with.

I was born in Wigan on 5th January 1925 to my parents Willie MARTIN and Beatrice MARTIN living on Guildford Crescent Wigan. My sisters were Elsie and Muriel. In 1941, I was recruited to the Auxiliary Fire Service as a junior Fireman, training in Wigan Fire Station.

In 1942, like Bert, I volunteered for the army starting training in November until January of 1943, when I joined the Hallamshire's (4th Batt Yorks and Lancs.)

Initially I was posted to Iceland, with the Regiment until I was posted back to the U.K. in mid 1943, where I underwent further training in the Scottish Highlands, at Crieff where I learnt the basics of army life.

The Scottish Highlands were rather daunting and the training was excessive, such that, with a friend, Seth ELLIOTT, I volunteered for the Parachute Regiment.

Like Bert, I undertook basic training at Hardwick Hall, moving on to Ringway for formal Parachute Training, and then joining the 12th Battalion Parachute Regiment. Training was not for the faint hearted but being volunteers we saw it through to the end.

D Day was the 6th June 1944 and I was part of the Headquarters Company of the 5th Brigade that landed on Pegasus Bridge following take off about 00.50hrs. With Bert, I was amongst the first to land in Occupied Europe and we saw almost immediate action. The landing was chaotic and we spent much of our time re-assembling before forming a perimeter at Giraud de Ranville where we were in almost continuous action for several days.

On D Day plus 3, the front became more mobile and we began to move forward fighting almost all the way until we reached the Seine. After this, I was shipped back home via Arromanches, or what was left of it.

After 7 days leave, we re-organised and undertook further training at Larkhill (Again with the Mortars.)

In October 1944, I was proud to be part of the Regiment that marched through Hull in full battlefield Regalia after having our colours sewn and presented by the women of Scarborough.

The back end of 1944 saw the Battle of the Bulge when the Americans undertook such a hammering. I was shipped back, across the Channel and we landed just before Christmas, but before deployment the fighting eased off and we didn't see any action. Needless to say, we went straight back into training and ended up back at Larkhill.

Training went apace, without much respite, until 24th March 1945 when we went by motorised transport to Boreham Wood and eventually emplaned for the final assault on the Rhine.

The Battalion dropped by chute near to Wessel and fighting was horrific. It was a day time drop, and the Germans were able to open fire on us with everything from small arms to heavy artillery.

I don't wish to go into detail but the fighting was worse than D day and many good friends were lost. In brief, we fought our way into Germany, crossing the River Ems

by 31st March, the Esser by 7th April and reaching the Elbe by 28th April. We finally reached Wismer on the Baltic Coast on 2nd May 1945.

After repatriation, to England via Luneberg (See photo, I am directly under the propeller on the front row with my head lower than everyone else s) I was given the choice of carrying on for the duration or continuing the fight.

I chose to continue and was almost immediately shipped out to India on the S.S. Chitral landing at Bombay for Operation Fiasco. From there, I went to Singapore where it was strange to see the Japanese under our control.

From Singapore, we went to Java, landing at Batavia where we tried to keep the peace between the Dutch and the Javanese during December 1945. January 1946 saw me back in Singapore eventually taking up residence in Changi Jail (accommodation only). God bless those that were there before us.

1946 saw the effective end of hostilities and I was shipped home via the Suez Canal. Unfortunately we had to make a slight detour via Palestine, landing at Haifa. There was opportunity for photos etc but the disturbances were ongoing at this time and we saw some of the worst atrocities imaginable. It is fair to say, that because of Palestine, I joined as a private and left as a private. (Enough said.)

Peninsular barracks saw the dispersal of the Battalion, with much regret.

In some ways, I benefited from Palestine. The early war years saw me as a trainee Fireman, in Haifa, I helped the local Fire Service, and post war, and I joined and served Wigan fire Brigade until retirement in 1972.

After so many years, it is difficult to say Best Mate. But to all those that are left

BASH ON REGARDLESS

Especially: Bert Marsh, Seth Elliott, Bert Payne, Dave Money, Ron Wheatley,+