

He Also Served – WW II – 1939 -1945

Jack Reynolds MC

Born: 5th May 1922 Chichester

Parents: Charles Guy Reynolds who kept a gentlemen's outfitters in the City and Katherine Mary Reynolds

School Years: 1932 – 1938 – St Richards House

School Record: 'The Martlet' – July 1938

Oxford School Certificate

Credits: English – History

French – Biology - Mathematics –

Geography – oral French - Latin

Exemption London Matriculation

Cricket/ Football - First X1's

'The Martlet' – March 1938:

Special Prize – Latin

December 1938: Library Notes – Presents book 'And Then Came War'

(A.C. Delacour de Brisay)

Occupation: 'The Martlet' - March 1939

Entered offices at the Chichester Gas Board



ARMED FORCES RECORD

Rank: Lieutenant

As he was underage, he had to wait until his 19th birthday to gain a commission

Service Number: 190738

Service Units: Sussex Yeomanry

2nd Battalion South Staffordshire Regiment

Note: He lied about his age to join the army as did his brother Arthur who survived 4 years in the Middle East campaign.

Theatres of War – Armed Forces Records

He was part of the 1st Airborne Division's invasion of Sicily in July 1943 and awarded the Military Cross (MC).

His citation reads:

"This officer with his party of nine men landed at 2225 hours some four miles south of the Battalion Rendezvous. He led his party through the night to Waterloo Bridge encountering stiff opposition on the way during which six of his men became casualties. Along the way he also collected several stragglers, forming them into an organised group eventually assisting in the defence of the bridge during which two of his men were killed in action and another wounded. Throughout the fighting, this officer set a very high example of courage and leadership in the face of heavy odds"

On Sept 17th 1944 he took part in the ill-fated 'Market Garden' offensive and dropped in the first wave of Glider Born troops at the Battle of Arnhem.

He was put in charge of a Mortar Unit but used for reconnaissance on a motorbike which was crippled by a sniper. On foot carried on assessing the strength of the enemy. Cut off for several days he re-joined his unit only to find that it had been overrun by the Germans.

He became very angry at the loss of all the fine men and the carnage down the road. When being marched away as a POW he spotted a German cameraman filming the captured Brits with a huge grin and thought what a "b***" and flicked up two fingers in defiance. Later he described his gesture as a "momentary lapse of military discipline which given the circumstances seemed totally justified".**

He spent the rest of the war at an Oflag POW camp at Brunswick Germany where for seven months the POW's were grossly undernourished and by the time he was released by the Americans he had lost 4 stone.

Some years after the war a German newspaper contacted him out of the blue and sent him a framed photograph of him giving the 'V-sign'.

Quotations

The Staffordshire Regiment Museum said that his act of defiance gave him “legendary” status. Historian Steve Penticost said that “Men like Jack Reynolds seemed to have an indomitable spirit and rarely showed any sign of frailty”.

Niall Cherry, the honorary secretary of the ‘Arnhem 1944 Fellowship and Veteran Club’ said that Mr Reynolds gesture was “an act of defiance from a British soldier”.

Post War

As a result of not declaring his correct age, he eventually spent a full seven years in the army and was demobilised in September 1946.

Jack joined ‘George Wills Holdings’ an import business. He worked his way up to Company Secretary and then to Vice Chairman and travelled the world retiring at sixty-five. He had a sharp mind, many interests and was good company.

22.08.2019 - Jack Reynolds died in his sleep at his Pulborough home in West Sussex aged 97.
