

Interviewer:

So this is Terry Ford on the 6th of November, 2023 at South Shields Local History Group Cleadon, and I'm interviewing David John Hall to talk about family members during World War 2. So if you could just tell us a little bit about your family David.

David:

Yes. My father was a seaman. He'd been to sea since he was 14 year old. He was born in 1919, so he'd been to sea since 1933. So he was in the Atlantic convoys most of the war. He did do one trip in the Mediterranean, convoy to Malta. He did, and he told me, he told me this story when he was a bit inebriated, but I don't know if it was actually so, but he said he'd been sent, they were going to go the second trip to Malta and they had to go to Liverpool to pick up the ship, and they were told they were going to Malta and when they got there, there'd been a change of plan and they were going to Murmansk in the Russian convoys. So they were going up there. Of course, they'd all turned up with a summer gear to go to Malta. So they were having to go around beg, borrow or steal any bit of clothing and he said it was the coldest he ever been in his life on the Russian convoy. Now, that's the only thing I ever remember him telling us about the Russian convoy.

He told us other things about bits and pieces about different ones. He was never sank. He wasn't, he had to abandon ship once because it got torpedoed, but just a little bit of it. So they all had to get out and he got rescued, but he never got fully sank by any German ships or anything like that. So he survived all that and that was basically me, dad's part and of course, that pay slip for the liberation of Europe was, I'd never seen that before that I started looking through this lot.

Now my mam's side of the family now, mam was born in 1924. She had a younger brother, Cecil and an older brother Ronald. Now Ronald could have had a reserved occupation because he was delivery driver for a bakery, which was owned by my grandfather. But he gave that up and my mother took over the delivery of the bread when she was 16. Apparently you could drive a vehicle without passing tests or anything when you were 16. So she took over the delivery of the bread. Her younger brother, Cecil, he died in a fire in 1938, very badly burned, purely accident and there's an article there from the Gazette about that.

Now, me uncle Ronald, he joined up and I think if memory serves me right, he started off with the Northumberland Fusiliers. But then he left there when they moved people around different armys, and he ended up in the Highland Fusiliers and his names in the Edinburgh Castle in the memory books there. But he survived till, if memory serves me right, it was the 26th of April when he got, he was in a gun emplacement on the road to Arnhem and he got shelled and the whole emplacement blown up. So he died then after going through the whole war and he'd been in different, but he's buried at, I thought I brought buried at one of the cemeteries in Belgium. I've got his list, the cemetery notification from the War Graves Commission. So he's buried there and noted his numbers and all that. But that's a picture of him there.

Interviewer:

Was he at Normandy?

David:

Well, I don't know. My mother never talked much about him. Apart from she always in her later life, she always says she would've liked to go and see his grave, but she'd never been abroad. So trying to get her to go abroad when she was older. I mean, I always think I'll go one day just to visit it. But no, I don't know whether he was in the Normandy landings and I don't know how I would find out if he was on the Normandy Landings. But me mam wrote this journal from, I mean, this is a book my mam's written from there. But she did start...

On Friday the 7th of June, 1940 at five to 12 Friday night, the air raid sirens went. I was drawing and I heard bells ringing. Mam woke me up and told me to get dressed and we had to go downstairs into the shelter, they had one of the Anderson Shelters in the garden and she writes on there, it's very faintly written and all that. There was 14 bombs dropped that night. And then she goes on the next day, and this is articles for about six weeks where she writes how many bombs have been dropped and where that exploded and that and I think she's tried later on to make it a bit more presentable by typing it out. and she's got one here. Air raid siren went off at half 11 Friday. We got up and dressed and went downstairs in five minutes when we heard the planes. Then a bomb was dropped, followed shortly by others. We sat in the hole. It was awful, dark. There was six lots of planes came over within the space? of 10 minutes and everyone dropped a bomb about 20 altogether, four dropped, un exploded in a field by Horsey Hill Estate. All clear went up half past two Saturday morning. We sat up drinking tea till five past three and went to bed till 10 to 4 air raid alarm went again we got up, but this was only lasted 10 minutes. And there's lots of different ...

Interviewer:

What date? What date was that?

David:

That date was Friday. The 20th of June 1940. Yeah. And she's tried to type up, I mean, the typing is as bad as the writing, but she has typed up a few different ones from the same as the articles in there.

On the Sunday, the 1st of June, I took Nancy Palmer for a run, Hilton Aerodrome, as she had never been there before. We went up the road to Castletown and then turned back, coming back we were twice stopped to identify ourselves it was good fun. So there's a lot of things like that. But it's just I found this book after when my mam had died. Now we're sitting reading it. It's her personal things and all that. But I thought it might've been a bit interesting. One story my mom did tell us was she felt a bit guilty about the war because she, apart from losing her brother at the end, she'd had a pretty good war. I mean, she was a 20 year old lass living in South Shields with 3000 soldiers camped out on the Leas. I mean, Nana and me Grand used to go dancing at the New Crown Hotel and of course she used to go along. Well, of course, obviously lots of soldiers used to go in as well. So she enjoyed herself with that sort of thing. But she had plenty of friends who they were all the same. But she says because me granda had the bakery and he lived along the road from Minchellas and Colman's there was a little gathering there and you never wanted for anything. Me granda had a big back garden where they grew the vegetables now, but if fuel coupons unused because he didn't need to use them. They had plenty and he had as much flour and stuff for baking the bread that he needed. So he would exchange that there was a right little black market going on there. But yes, that's basically my story of my family.

Interviewer:

Did your father get on the Malta Convoys or was it just he didn't quite?

David:

He did one Malta Convoy. He did one Malta Convoy and then the others were mainly the Atlantic.

Interviewer:

The others were Murmansk as you say.

David:

But yeah, that was his signup.

Interviewer:

Lovely. Well thanks very much. Have you got any questions?

Note Taker:

The only thing I have to say is that we have Fay Cunningham talking about the Malta Convoy with her stepdad and we've got Dorothy she was talking about her dad that was on Pedestal and I'm thinking we're going to have a list. It was like half of Shields was on Malta Convoys!

There was a lot of Malta Convoys but Pedestal is the famous one.