

# NORMANDY LANDINGS

## D-DAY 6<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 1944

### FAMILY MEMORIES OF A VETERAN

## Frederick John Mitchell

14/9/1907 - January 1993

Service No. 1429136

Rank Major RASC

Frederick was born in Hoveton House, High street, Haverhill, the home of his maternal grandparents. He was the son of Harry Mitchell and his wife Carrie Lee nee Bates. Carrie Lee was the daughter of Frederick William Bates, who was a grocer and draper.

The family moved to Queen Street, Withersfield and he had fond memories of his childhood, growing up in the area and witnessing the changes of the village after the first world war. He was a pupil at the school in Haverhill and belonged to the tennis club. In 1931/2 he played hockey for Bedford.



Hoveton House was an impressive three storey building seen left in this photo. Demolished in about 1969 it stood approximately where W H Smith and Costa Coffee are today.

Frederick drove an open top small car with a 'dickie' seat in the boot, where his spaniel 'Wizzard' sat, complete with a pair of goggles to protect his eyes, and his spaniel ears flapping in the breeze.



Haverhill Secondary School, Summer Term 1920. A picture taken outside the school which was then the West End Sunday School building. Front row left to right: Lily Dawe, Olive Halls, Winnie Patrick, Lucy, Majorie Ensor (headmaster's daughter), Lucy Rowlinson, Phyllis Cracknell, Howard Ensor (headmaster's son), John Storey, Jack Scott, Herbert Mitchell, Roy Unwin. Second row: Lucy Burgan, Eva Hume, Mr P. C. Kibble, Rev B. C. Cann, Mr A. J. Ensor (headmaster whose grave is in Haverhill Cemetery), Mrs L. A. Ensor (now living in Cornwall), Miss Tom Farr, Jarvis, Alec Hill. Third row: Winnie Collar, Phyllis Nunn, Olive Bridgeman, Wilson, Doris Nunn, Theodosia Halls, Fred Mitchell, Ralph, Frank Shearman, Philip Miller, Leslie Rising. Back row: Primrose Bignore, Freda Pavey, Eva Mason, Pearl Preston, Lizzie Bignore, Freda Webb, Kathleen Phyllis Poole (the writer), Lily Bignore, Ted Webb, Alan Clayton (former proprietor of the ECHO), Ambrose Mason, Eric King, Ivor Parkin, Dennis Kibble, Ralph Whitlock.

In 1932 he married Doris Jarden in Bedford. They settled in Surrey where he bought a men's outfitters shop.

In Oct 1937 he enlisted in the Royal Army Service Corps, gaining a commission as 2nd Lt. and began his training at Aldershot. FD Unwin acted as a referee for him.

In Sept 1939 Frederick joined 13 Coy RASC and was mobilised with No 1 Bridge Coy. In 1940 he was in Belfast completing training with Motor Coach Coy. The next entry on his military record finds him hospitalised in Stranmillis, south Belfast for a month but there is no record of the reason why.

On 8th June 1944 Frederick's record shows he embarked for France with 645 Coy RASC, responsible for taking supplies for the troops following the landings in France.

II. Certificate of moral character during the past four years. The certificate should be signed by a responsible person (not a near relative of connection), e.g. the minister of the parish or other local clergyman, a magistrate, a senior officer of the Royal Navy, Army, or Royal Air Force, a headmaster of an educational establishment, or the employer of the candidate, who has been well acquainted with the candidate in private life during the period. If the above-mentioned person cannot certify for the whole period of four years, a second certificate for the period not covered by the first should be signed by a similar person.

(NOTE.—This certificate is not required in the case of an ex-officer put forward for re-appointment to a commission.)

I HEREBY CERTIFY to the good moral character of Frederick John Mitchell for the last 20 years

Signature Frederick Unwin J.P.  
 Rank, office or occupation Justice of the Peace  
 Address Wharfedale House, Harrogate

Date 26/7/55

I HEREBY CERTIFY to the good moral character of \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

A Regular or retired Regular Officer of the Royal Army Medical Corps, a Medical Officer of the Territorial Army or Supplementary Reserve, or a Civilian Medical Practitioner holding a full time military appointment in medical charge of troops will, after reading Appendix I. and the foregoing declaration and examining the candidate, complete the following certificate:—

I CERTIFY that I have examined Frederick John MITCHELL in accordance with the instructions for the physical and medical examination of candidates for commissions in the Regular Army, etc. and find that he is in good mental and bodily health, free from any organic disease or physical infirmity likely to interfere with the efficient performance of military duty and fit for a commission in the Supplementary Reserve of Officers.

Insert "64" or "65" (if suit state cause of unfitness)

Height 73 in Weight 154 lb Chest Measurement — Max 39 in Min 36 in

His acuteness of vision is as follows:—

W.C. 6/12 with glasses — Reads D: 0.3  
 W.C. 6/5 with glasses — Reads D: 0.3  
Colour vision normal

CENTRAL LONDON STATIONERY DEPT. Station \_\_\_\_\_ Signature Frederick Unwin

In September 1939, No. 1 Bridge Company of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) was deployed to France as part of the advance parties. They left for France on 4<sup>th</sup> September, the first major contingents arriving at Cherbourg on September 10<sup>th</sup>, and Nantes and St. Nazaire on September 12<sup>th</sup>. The BEF played a crucial role during the early stages of WW2.

Shaftesbury Military Hospital



He was injured some months later, and flown back to the military hospital at Shaftesbury, Dorset, where he had a pneumonectomy to remove one lung. He recalled his main worry on the plane was that he didn't want to lose his army boots, as they were so difficult to replace. He was mentioned in dispatches.

After a long recovery period, he was posted to the Rhine, Germany in 1945. Obviously suffering from further health issues he returned home to a health sanatorium in Ventnor on the Isle of Wight for rest and recuperation from TB. He stayed there until 1948 when he was discharged and granted the rank of Major.

After his discharge, he returned to Surrey to be with his wife and son. He was employed by Selfridges in Oxford Street, and retired in the late 1970s.



#### Family memories:

He was such a lovely character, always full of fun, and the best uncle to his nephew and nieces. He supported us all through our formative years, and rarely talked about his war experiences, but when he did it was always to record a funny episode and nothing about what he must have been through. He died peacefully in 1993, a tall, handsome, witty, supportive, soul who we all miss.

With thanks to Sally Barnard for information about her uncle Frederick John Mitchell.

