

PART 12

All of one company: Well-known personalities



Sapper Don Robbins of 33rd St (Pancras) Battalion
of the Royal Engineers in 1937, now aged 94

Well-known personalities who have served in the Reserve Forces of Greater London



Richard Baker OBE

Richard Baker became a household name as a television newscaster and presenter for the BBC. He joined the RNVR in 1943. After the War, he served on with HMS PRESIDENT and was awarded the Royal Naval Reserve Decoration.



Rupert Brooke

Great War poet Rupert Brooke joined The Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve in London and was commissioned as a temporary Sub-Lieutenant. He took part in the Royal Naval Division's Antwerp expedition in October 1914. He was posted to Blandford Camp, where the Royal Naval Division was then reformed after Antwerp and brought up to strength. Brook sailed with the Division for three months, but, on 28th February, he developed an infection from a mosquito bite and died on 23rd April. He is buried on Skyros, Greece.

Brooke's brother, Second Lieutenant William Brooke, served with the 8th (County of London) Battalion The London Regiment (Post Office Rifles) and was killed in action on the Western Front on 14th June 1915, aged 24.



Field Marshal Sir John Chapple GCB CBE DL

Sir John Chapple first entered the Army on 19th October 1949. He served in the ranks of the King's Royal Rifle Corps before being granted a National Service Commission as a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Artillery, completing his obligatory period of full-time service in 1951. He then served with the Territorial Army in 461 (Middlesex) Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery (TA). This Unit, based at 444 High Road Finchley, was the successor Unit to the 11th (County of London) Battalion The London Regiment (Finsbury Rifles).

He then joined the Regular Army on 9th August 1954 and was granted a commission in the 2nd King Edward VII's Own Gurkha Rifles (The Sirmoor Rifles). His last appointment in September 1988 was that of Chief of the General Staff. John Chapple was promoted to Field Marshal on 13th February 1992.



Ronald Coleman

Screen actor born on 9th February 1891 in Richmond, Surrey. In 1909, at the age of 18 whilst working as a clerk in a shipping office in the City of London, he joined the 14th (County of London) Battalion The London Regiment (London Scottish), and was mobilised in August 1914. Coleman was seriously wounded at the Battle of Messines on 31st October 1914 and was invalided out of the Army in 1915. He would later find fame on stage and screen.



Lewis Collins

Film and TV actor Lewis Collins was born in Birkenhead and moved to London to further his acting career. His best known role was in the TV series *The Professionals* and his best known film role was that of an SAS Officer in the 1982 film *Who Dares Wins*. In the early 1980s, Collins was a member of No. 3 Coy 10th (Volunteer) Battalion The Parachute Regiment.



Group Captain John Cunningham CBE DSODFC***

Born in Croydon, South London on 27th July 1917, John Cunningham joined the de Havilland Aircraft Company in 1935 as an apprentice, later joining No. 604 (County of Middlesex) Squadron of the Auxiliary Air Force. During WW2, Cunningham won fame as a night fighter ACE. After the war, he became a test pilot for de Havilland and re-joined the Royal Auxiliary Air Force on its reformation in 1939 and became Commanding Officer of 604 Squadron in 1941. However, he resigned in 1946 due to pressure of work testing the de Havilland Comet.



Lord Deedes KBE MC PC

Bill Deedes had a distinguished career as a politician and journalist and was editor of the *Daily Telegraph* for many years. He joined 2/16th Battalion The London Regiment (Queen's Westminster Rifles) in 1938. At the outbreak of war, he switched to the King's Royal Rifle Corps and was awarded the MC in 1945.



Sir Alexander Fleming

Whilst working in London, Alexander Fleming originally joined The London Scottish Volunteers in 1900 and transferred to the Territorial Force in 1908. In 1913, he was awarded the Territorial Efficiency Medal. Pressure of his research work forced him to leave The London Scottish in early 1914 but on the outbreak of War he volunteered for the Territorials and was commissioned into the RAMC. The War Service gave Fleming the valuable experience on the bacteriology of wound infections that led to him being considered an expert on the subject.



Frank Gardner OBE

Journalist and security correspondent for the BBC. Frank Gardner joined the 4th (Volunteer) Battalion The Royal Green Jackets at Davies Street and was commissioned in 1984. He served a total of nine years in the TA leaving with the rank of Captain. In 2004, on an assignment in Saudi Arabia, Gardner was shot and seriously injured by terrorists. In spite of his injuries, he has continued his career as a BBC correspondent.



Edward Michael (Bear) Grylls

Adventurer, TV personality and author. Bear Grylls joined the Territorial Army in London in 1994 and, after passing selection, became a Trooper in 21 SAS Regiment (Artists) (Reserve). He suffered a freefall parachuting accident in 1996 and after 12 months rehabilitation at Headley Court, retired from the Regiment in 1997.

In July 2009, at the age of 35, he was appointed the youngest ever Chief Scout. In 2004, he was awarded the Honourary Rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Royal Marines Reserve.



Field Marshal Lord Harding GCB CBE DSO MC

Born on 10th February 1896, he began his military career as a 17-year-old recruit when he joined the Territorial Force on 15th May 1914 as a 2nd Lieutenant in the 11th (County of London) Battalion (Finsbury Rifles) The London Regiment. On mobilisation at the outbreak of WW1, he accepted liability for service overseas; he became Machine Gun Officer of his Battalion and attached to the newly formed Machine Gun Corps in June 1915, and was promoted Acting Captain on 22nd June 1915. He became Chief of the Imperial General Staff in 1952 and Military Governor of Cyprus in 1955. He died on 20th January 1989.



Sir Max Hastings

Journalist, historian and author, Sir Max Hastings was born in Lambeth. He was a foreign correspondent for the BBC and was the first journalist to enter Port Stanley during the 1982 Falklands War. He has presented several historical documentaries for the BBC and has written many books on Military History. He served in the 10th Battalion The Parachute Regiment (TA) in 1963.



Sir Edward Heath KG MBE

The former Prime Minister was a member of the Honourable Artillery Company and during WW2 served in the campaign in North West Europe. He commanded the 2nd Regiment HAC from 1947 to 1951.



Sam Kydd

Sam Kydd was a prolific screen actor. He joined the TA in 1930 and served in the Queen Victoria Rifles (Davies Street). He was mobilised in 1939, and his unit was heavily engaged in the defence of Calais where he was captured and spent the remainder of the war as a POW.



Claude Rains

Stage and film actor, born in Camberwell, North London on 10th November 1889. At the outbreak of WW1, Rains joined the 14th (County of London) The London Regiment (London Scottish). He was demobilised in 1918 with the rank of Captain.



Basil Rathbone MC

Stage and screen actor. He joined the 14th (County of London) Battalion The London Scottish in 1915, and in 1916 was commissioned into the 2/10th Battalion The King's Liverpool Regiment (Liverpool Scottish) where he served as an intelligence officer. He was awarded his Military Cross for 'Conspicuous Daring and Resource' on patrol.



Don Robbins

Don Robbins, at 94 years of age, is one of the few survivors from the pre-war Territorial Army. He joined the 33rd (St Pancras) Battalion of the Royal Engineers in 1937 and was deployed as a searchlight operator in 1939. The searchlight operators once formed a large part of the Royal Engineers, but it was a short-lived outfit that is little-known today. He served alongside others from his local area of Barnet, North London, to defend the city from Luftwaffe attacks.



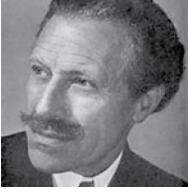
Lord Duncan Sandys CH

Duncan Sandys was the Minister of Defence who presided over the Defence cuts of 1958, known as 'Sandys Axe'. He joined the Territorial Army in 1937 and was commissioned into the Royal Artillery, serving with the 51st (London) Anti-Aircraft Brigade. He fought with the British Expeditionary Force in Norway and was wounded in 1941 and resumed his service as a member of the Army Council. He was also Chairman of the War Cabinet Committee, dealing with the Defence against flying bombs and rockets. Sandys left the Army in 1946 with the Rank of Lieutenant Colonel.



Sir Dennis Thatcher Bt MBE RD

Dennis Thatcher is best known as the husband of the former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. He joined the Territorial Army in 1938 and was commissioned into the Royal Engineers serving with the 34th Searchlight (Queen's Own Royal West Kent Regiment) Royal Engineers and was transferred into the Royal Artillery in August 1940. After wartime service he remained on the Territorial Reserve of Officers until 1965.



Brigadier Sir Robert Eric Mortimer Wheeler CH, CIE, MC, TD, FSA

An archaeologist who became a household name through his books on the subject as well as his many appearances on television and radio. On the outbreak of WW1 he joined the Territorial Force and was commissioned into the Royal Artillery. He held several appointments in the UK including a period as an instructor with the London University Officers Training Corps. In 1917, now a Major, he was posted to France and saw action on the Western Front. He was awarded the MC for his War Service.

In 1939, Wheeler re-joined the Territorial Army with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, stationed at Enfield in the then County of Middlesex. In 1941, his unit left Enfield eventually becoming part of the 8th Army in North Africa. He was promoted to Brigadier in September 1943 aged 53.