



PERSONAL INFORMATION SHEET



Name: Mark BESBRODE

DOB: 8th July 1918

Rank: Private

Service Identity Number: 6203539

**Service/Regiment/Corps: Middlesex
Regiment (Duke of Cambridges Own)**

Unit: 1st Battalion

Died: 23rd September 1983

Personal history before the war:

Mark was born and brought up in St George in the East, London (now part of the Borough of Tower Hamlets). He was the youngest child of nine brothers and sisters, children of Polish Jewish immigrant parents.

His mother died when he was 2 and he was brought up by his older sister. He had a brush with the law when he was 18 and his older brother strongly suggested that he join the Army. He enlisted into the Middlesex Regiment on the 30th March 1937.

Mark travelled to Hong Kong on the troop ship HMT Lancashire out of Southampton in October 1938.

Wartime experience:

On the fall of Hong Kong, Mark was taken prisoner on 25 December 1941 and was held at Sham Shui Po POW camp until he was boarded onto the Lisbon Maru on 27 September 1942.

Following the torpedo attack on the Lisbon Maru, he sustained head injuries trying to escape from the hold, he managed to hold onto some debris with another soldier (Bill Spooner) and was rescued by the Chinese fishermen. He told his family of the kind Chinese ladies that took care of him. Mark was rounded up by the Japanese and taken to Kiangwan, Shanghai where he remained due to being injured from 14 October 1942 to 9 May 1945.

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Mark was moved to a transit camp in Feng Tai Peking (Beijing) where he remained until 19 June 1945.

He was then sent to Hakodate, Japan where he remained between the 5 July and 16 September 1945 (he was liberated on the 2nd September 1945). The camp was a mining camp, and when the Japanese guards left, they were all left down the mine and had to get themselves out.

Mark was repatriated and taken to San Francisco aboard the SS Marine Shark and then up to and across Canada by train arriving back in Southampton on the Queen Mary on the 17 November 1945.

Personal history post war (if survived):

Most of his family had moved from London to Leicester during the war and when he returned he also moved there to live with his sister.

Mark met and married Audrey on the 20 August 1947 and they had two children, Melvin in 1950 and Sharon in 1953. He worked as a bus driver on Leicester Corporation Buses and later for British Rail as a delivery driver. Mark was diagnosed as having a non-malignant brain tumour which was a result of the head injury received from the fall when the Lisbon Maru was torpedoed. He had epileptic fits but only when sleeping and was on medication for the rest of his life.

I can remember being told that he had bad nights when he would shout out. Bill Spooner would visit Mark every year and they would go to a meeting of survivors. He died of lung cancer and now malignant brain tumour. As children he never told us much about what he had been through, we picked up bits and pieces along the way. We were not allowed apricots because they grew around the camp and they were starving. He had a great sense of humour, practical joker and a kind man. He didn't allow his experiences to take over his life although they must have affected him.

Additional photos:



Mark in Hong Kong



Mark with colleagues and machine guns
(2nd from the left)





HEADQUARTERS STAFF, 57 P.T.C., THE MIDDLESEX REGIMENT
INGLIS BARRACKS, SEPTEMBER, 1947

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|------------|---------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------|----------------|
| Back Row | L/Cpl. Besbrode | L/Cpl. Blair | L/Cpl. Board | L/Cpl. Watts | L/Cpl. Chapman | | | | | | |
| Fourth Row | L/Cpl. Lowe | L/Cpl. Smith | L/Cpl. Hood | L/Cpl. Floggan | Pte. Galt | L/Cpl. Power | L/Cpl. Laucke | L/Cpl. Walter | L/Cpl. Fox | L/Cpl. Miles | |
| Third Row | Cpl. McAvoy | Cpl. Donohoe | Cpl. Haycock | Cpl. Morris | Cpl. Conway | Cpl. Dyer | Cpl. Ginnell | Cpl. Bells | Cpl. Hazen | Cpl. McPhee | Cpl. Humphreys |
| Second Row | Cpl. Evans | Sgt. Fiehn | Sgt. Whitfield | Sgt. Turner | Sgt. Withers | Sgt. Thompson | Sgt. Webb | Cpl. Wilson | Sgt. Walker | Cpl. Palmer | Sgt. Jones |
| Front Row | Lieut. J. Moore | Lieut. R. C. Sullivan | Lieut. D. P. O'Leary | Lieut. J. de Gey | C. R. M. P. Dorman | Major G. W. P. Holding | C. J. M. S. E. Pascoe | | | | |
| | Lieut. A. N. Jordan | Lieut. D. Mackie | Lieut. J. Appleford | Sgt. Perkins | | | | | | | |

The above information was provided by Sharon Smith who is the Daughter of Mark Besbrode.



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