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My call up papers came through in July 1940. They arrived with a 5 shilling postal order which was to pay for your transport costs to your barracks. I had to go to Hounslow Barracks to do my training.

In early 1941 I joined the 11th Battalion Royal Fusiliers and our job was to build sea defences along the Hampshire Coast. Most people living in that area had been evacuated and while we were there we either lived in tents or stayed in the houses left empty by the evacuees.

I was getting restless though and wanted to see some action so I volunteered to join a Battalion that was due to be sent into action. I joined the F Company, 2nd Battalion, London Irish Rifles in February 1942. They were stationed in Scotland. We lived under canvas and did hill training. I took part in training called Tricot which was combined arms training. People were killed during this training due to accidents happening. We would go for 3 week route marches covering 10 to 20 miles a day carrying full kit.

In November 1942 we were transported in locked transport to Greenock to get on a ship. As we sailed away pipers on the shore played "Auld Lang Syne", we didn't know where we were sailing to.

One of our ships was torpedoed on the journey. We were sailing to Algeria. I was part of the first assault group. We disembarked the ship into small landing boats, but we had to wait a few hours until we saw 2 beams of light which told us the Vichy French had surrendered. Our first job once ashore was to capture the aerodrome. We were eventually put onto cattle trucks and taken to Tunisia and into the front line. The weather was terrible and all the trucks would get bogged down. The Germans were holding the Jebles (the higher land) and we became involved in the Battle of Kassarine Pass. Every morning the Germans would send 2 fighter planes over which we nicknamed 'Gert' and 'Daisy' (after two Radio characters). We would patrol at night either as a fighting patrol or a reconnaissance patrol. I was in the front line for 3 months with one 48 hour rest period during that time. When you came back from the front line you would be deloused and issued with a new uniform.

The Germans surrendered in North Africa in early 1943. There was a big parade in the April which Churchill attended.

Most of the battalion went off to Egypt, but I stayed behind at HQ. You would occasionally get a letter from home, but not often. When the ration packs arrived they had always been opened and the sweets and cigarettes taken. I did during this time meet up with my brother Bert who was with Anti Aircraft, Royal Artillery.

On 10th July 1943 I landed at Syracuse in Sicily as part of Operation Husky. I was in an American landing craft which botched its first attempt and damaged the ramp. We spent a period of time sat off the beach under fire while it was sorted before we could actually land. While we were there the gliders carrying the air borne troops were coming in over our heads they seemed so low I thought I could reach up and touch one.

We fought our way up the east coast of Sicily around Mount Etna. The Americans fought their way up the other side of the island and we met at Messina having captured the whole island.

Just after that Italy surrendered and the Battalion was landed at Taranto on the heel of Italy. We hadn't been ashore very long when the Germans arrived and we found ourselves fighting our way forward up the east (Adriatic) coast of Italy. There were lots of rivers running across in front of us and the Germans had blown up the bridges as they retreated slowly north, so we spent the autumn of 1943 fighting from one river to the next, one ridge line to the next. When we had got as far as the River Sangro, north of Bari, we were transferred to the west coast and took part in the Battles around the Monastery of Monte Cassino and in the nearby Liri valley. The battles there finished at the end of May 1944 and Rome was captured on the 5th June – the day before the Normandy Invasion.

After the battle was over I was seen by a Medical Officer, who asked when I had last had some leave. I told him that I had never had any leave since we had come overseas over a year and a half before. He then weighed me and found I was only 8 stone, (I had been 10 stone when I joined the army). The next thing I knew I was in a Hospital in Naples being treated for malaria; I was then put on a ship to Algiers which is where I was when the war in Europe ended in May 1945. I was asking when I would be going back to my unit and I was told I would be flown back to England instead. After being in Hospital in Worcester and the Connaught Hospital in London, I was Medically Discharged from the Army at the London Hospital in July 1945.