



Leslie Frank Smart

British Army

Gloucestershire regiment

Ceredigion

West Wales Veterans Archive collection continued

*** Viewer caution – This film contains descriptions of a near fatal drowning accident and may cause emotional upset. Discretion is advised.

Aide memoir to Film THREE of the interview with Leslie Smart

The viewer will note that on occasion the interviewer can be heard on the film, directing questions to Leslie. The interviewer's voice was included for the viewer to understand the context of Leslie's conversation.

Early life

Leslie begins by attempting to clarify where he was born. It must be remembered that when this interview was filmed Leslie was 93 years of age and details can become confused over time, Hence, Leslie placing Hay on Wye in Shropshire. However other memories are still sharp and clear. He was the youngest of three boys. His two brothers were called Reg and Oliver. Leslie remembers at the age of three, a horrifying near fatal accident, which very nearly resulted in his early demise. He offers an account of this and his recovery. He also had sisters.

The family moved to Slad in Gloucestershire which is where he spent his childhood years. He recalls some memories of his childhood and having to fetch his fathers Ale from the local pub at night. "That's the way it was ". Les remembers that he would accompany his father on Poaching expeditions to a location known as "Swiss Hill ". This was the war years and Leslie has vivid memories of watching Luftwaffe Bombers flying very low over the hill on their journeys to attack Bristol and Cardiff docks. He recalls the roar of the plane's engines and seeing the glow from the flames burning at the docks. He also recalls seeing the RAF aeroplanes attacking the Bomber formations. He especially recalls seeing a dog fight overhead and running away scared. This is the



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point in the interview where he recalls the downed Luftwaffe aircrew being captured by locals by the crash site near Swiss Hill.

Leslie then goes on to explain that in 1944 at the age of 13, he attended a boy's boarding school near Dinas Powys, South Wales. This was a school for boys that had gotten into trouble, which was how Leslie had come to be at the school. He tells the viewer about an officer from the school taking him up to a viewpoint above Barry. Upon looking out into the Severn estuary he saw Royal Navy ships as far as the eye could see. He heard the ship's sirens travelling across the hills. A very poignant sound. "Absolutely black with ships". This was late May or early June 1944 and what he was looking at was part of the great Armada of allied ships that were gathering for the invasion of France. He was interested in the progress of the war and understood what this meant.

Leslie continues to talk about his childhood and being released from the boys boarding school. He returned to Gloucestershire and his family, which were now living in the village of Avening, just north of Tetbury town.

He recalls the family gathering around his father's radio to listen in to the news. On occasion the transmission would pick up a character known as Lord Haw Haw (William Joyce who was a British subject that transmitted propaganda for the Nazi regime). Les tells how his father would curse upon hearing Lord Haw Haw's transmissions.

More from the Gloucestershire regiment

Moving on to his military career the interviewer seeks to clarify an incident that occurred when Leslie was voyaging to Kenya with the Gloucestershire regiment. Leslie was photographed in Busan, Korea with a Korean Army officer and this photograph was used in a book that was published by a former Glos reg soldier, who went on to serve with the SAS. Leslie clarifies that the meeting was pure chance and occurred in a safe place in the port. He recalls the conversation with this officer who he believes was Koren. "Why have you come here to kill us?" I told him that we hadn't come to kill anybody.

The Gloucestershire soldier was called Lofty Large and had been wounded in the Korean war. After Lofty recovered from his injuries, he went on to join the SAS and later published a book: "From Korea to the SAS". The photograph of Leslie with the Korean Officer was included in the book and Leslie has no idea how or why this happened.

This where the interview ends.

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- **Our thanks to the National Library of Wales for assisting in the producing and retention of the material.**



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