# A VIEW FROM THE BARRACKS
# 1943 - 1960

BY

John Living based on Information provided by Stephen Pearce

*Having asked for old photographs of NW7 I was pleasantly surprised to receive a package and letter from Stephen Pearce (who lives in Maidstone, Kent) about his Grandfather's time at the Mill Hill East Barracks in the period from about 1940 until 1960. The words are mine but the sentiments and the photographs are from Stephen. We have 5 photographs and his grandfather, Alfred, appears in them all.*

Alfred George Sharr was born in Bermondsey, London in 1892. From 1901 his family lived in Bermondsey, in a house occupied by his wife, Ivy, with her family. The River Thames ran at the end of their road and it was therefore regarded as a dockside area - regrettably it was destroyed in the Blitz. Alfred worked at the Woolwich Arsenal when he lived in Bermondsey. By trade he was a 5th generation Leather Dresser.

Alfred joined the army in 1911 and served in India in the Royal Field Artillery where he contracted malaria. On duty near the border between what is now Pakistan and Afghanistan he was shot in the ankle, and in 1919 was discharged as Sick and Wounded.

Alfred Sharr began working at the Mill Hill East Barracks in late 1940 or early 1941. He obtained his job at the Barracks with the help of Rev Oswin Harvard Gibbs-Smith, then Vicar of John Keble Church and St John's at St John's Wood, who wrote a glowing reference for him. In the 'R.E.M.E. Home Guard Unit April 1943' photograph (see below) Alfred is on the far left in the middle row – the far right being the telegraph pole end of the picture. In the picture 'H.Q. COY 24th BATTN HOME GUARD Nov 1944' (see below) Alfred is in the third rank - 6th man in from the right, behind the man wearing the white sash.




R.E.M.E. Home Guard Unit April 1943

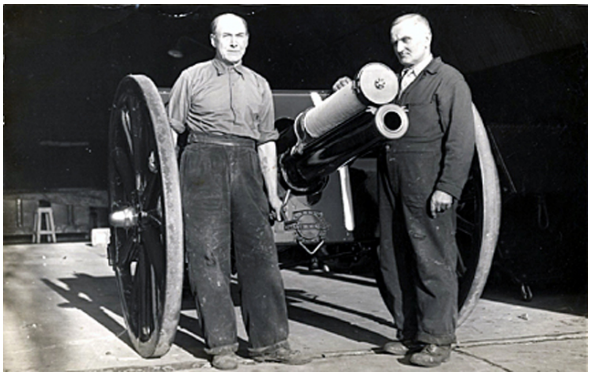



H.Q. COY 24th BATTN HOME GUARD Nov 1944

In 1952 Alfred was a member of the British North Greenland Expedition preparation team, and was involved with making ready all the expedition vehicles. This was done at the Barracks before the vehicles were shipped out. In the photograph of the team Alfred is standing about 7 in from the right hand edge of the image - behind the left hand shoulder of the man with the dark overalls and folded arms.


British North Greenland Expedition preparation team 1952

There are two later photographs taken at the Barracks. These are both from around 1958-60 and one is taken with a group of younger men and the other is with a colleague and a field gun. Alfred was used to working with field guns, as he helped prepare the field gun and carriage that carried King George VI's coffin in 1952 – it was also used for Queen Mary's funeral in 1953. This gun is now in the Medal Room at the Firepower Museum of Artillery in Woolwich.





Alfred died in 1961 aged 69 years old. His only son Richard George 'Dicky' Sharr who passed away in February 2009, served as a fireman at Mill Hill Fire Station in the 1950's and 1960's. He moved on to Hendon Fire Station and then the London Fire Brigade Training School in Southwark where, as a Breathing Apparatus Instructor, he retired in the 1970's.

**Acknowledgments:**
Stephen R Pearce and his Grandfather Alfred George Sharr:
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