
Linda White -- Memories of her father's wartime experiences

Linda was born in Chingford, after the war, and has lived in Tilty since 1985. Her father, **Frederick George Hart**, served with the Royal Artillery, in the Essex Regiment.

Linda writes of her father's wartime experiences below:

I feel somewhat embarrassed admitting this, but I think that my dad enjoyed his War. I suppose being just a very young girl when I asked him, as you do as a child, "Tell me a story about what you did in the war, Dad," he only told me funny stories – and the truth of some of them was questionable! However, they never gave me nightmares.

What I do know to be true is that Dad joined the Territorial Army two years before the outbreak of the Second World War. So it was straight in, as he had been trained on anti-aircraft guns; no waiting for call-up papers for him. I can't say that he saw the world, as it seems that he spent most of his time training new recruits at either Benfleet or on the Shetland or Orkney Islands.

There apparently were times when he was due to go abroad, but at the last minute he was called back to train yet another influx of young men.

He was very proud of "His Boys". On one occasion they had been entered in some regimental competition; he shouted so much he lost his voice, and he had to be replaced on the day. His "boys" won, and they clubbed together to buy him a very posh cigarette case, which he kept for the rest of his life.

Before the war he would entertain friends and family playing his drums. They went with him "to war". I have no idea how he dragged them about, as they were a very large set, but they would have earned him a few free pints.

Just one of the stories I remember him telling me was when he very nearly died! He told me how whilst on a military operation on the Orkney Islands, during a very cold snowy night – when it was pitch black – he fell into a deep ditch and couldn't get out. He was found the next day nearly frozen to death. It was left to my mum to explain to me that he was on the way back to camp from the local inn, and not on a military operation at all!

There were lots of stories like this; I think most of them must have been exaggerated for my entertainment. Anyway if any one does want to check them out, his full name was Frederick George Hart of the Royal Artillery -- Army number 6008505, rank BQMS of the Essex Regiment.

My Dad was a very good story teller. And I also still think he enjoyed his war!