

WAR SERVICE



219 Company Pioneer Corps, autumn 1940, marching through Ilfracombe High Street. Many male refugees joined the Pioneer Corps.



Passover seder service for men of the Pioneer Corps, March 1945.



Ernst Reichenfeld, a doctor from Vienna, (seated, front row, 2nd from left) with his Home Guard unit in Birmingham, December 1944.



Johnny Blunt (stabbing the swastika) serving with the Pioneer Corps in Brussels 1944.

'On 29 July 1940, at the crowded Recruitment Centre in Euston, I took the oath of allegiance to 'His Majesty King George VI, His Heirs and Successors in Law', swore 'to obey the lawful commands of the officers set over me', and was paid 'The King's Shilling' which confirmed my agreement to serve, both at home and overseas, to the end of 'the present emergency'. Like all 'non-British' recruits, I was posted to the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps. It was the Jack-of-all-Trades of the British Army, performing a wide range of unskilled tasks, like building ammunition dumps, erecting fortifications and putting up prefabricated Nissen huts.'

Peter Perry [Pinschewer]

'My unit embarked on D-Day plus five. We landed on the specially constructed Mulberry Harbour leading to the Arromanches beaches, which had been cleared of mines and enemy resistance. We established ourselves in an open field between Caen and Bayeux. We dug trenches which we converted into sleeping quarters, and also laid on water supplies for our field kitchen. Every one of us carried arms, we would guard prisoners, ammunition depots, vital supplies and installations. I was attached to a Canadian division engaged in some of the heaviest fighting in the Falaise gap, confronting some of the most vicious Nazi fighting units, including the SS Totenkopf'.

Fred Pelican

'I got myself a job, and this lasted for several years during the war, in an aircraft engine plant belonging to a firm called Napiers, and what we were doing was overhauling aircraft engines that had been in service and had come out of the line to do their routine overhauls or possibly because of war damage, fighting damage, depending on what it was. I spent about three years there, and it was a time when I felt I was doing something useful.'

Peter Singer

'And so my parents were deported in May 1942 from Vienna, from Aspang Station, to the East, to a place called Izbicka, somewhere near Sobibor; it seems, as far as my brother was able to find out after the war, that they were probably taken off the train on the way there and shot in a wood.'

Stella Rotenberg. Translated from the German



Lorraine Allard, nee Lore Sulzbacher from Nürnberg, serving with the ATS.



Robert Parker, originally Werner Cohn from Berlin, serving with the 7th Armoured Division.