

Cpl R.Dixon – The Queen’s Royal Regiment (West Surrey)

Ronald Dixon was born in 1923, the son of Henry and Sarah Dixon of 66 St John’s Road, Westcott. The Dixon family used a horse and cart, and later a van, to run a delivery business which kept the village supplied with fresh fruit and vegetables.

We do not know when Ronald Dixon joined the Army, but he clearly had good leadership qualities as he was a Corporal at the age of 20, serving in the 2nd/5th Battalion of The Queen’s which had been formed in 1939. In that year, with the threat of war growing, the Territorial Army was doubled in size and the 5th Queen’s Battalion (TA) became the 1st/5th and 2nd/5th battalions. Both battalions went to France with the British Expeditionary Force, the 2nd/5th as part of the 35th Infantry Brigade, and both were evacuated from Dunkirk in May 1940 as France capitulated.



After reforming at Newcastle, the 35th Infantry Brigade was re-designated as 169th (Queen’s) Brigade in the 56th (London) Division. After two years on airfield defence duties in East Anglia, the Division went to Iraq in readiness to counter any German invasion that might be attempted. This threat receded after the Russian victory over the German army at Stalingrad. In February 1943 the 56th Division was sent to join the Eighth Army in North Africa. Here it took part in the final stages of the war in Tunis which brought the North African campaigns to an end.

The Allies’ next objective was to launch the invasion of Europe, initially by an advance through Italy which began with the invasion of Sicily on 10th July 1943, and followed by a landing on the mainland at Salerno in September. The 2nd/5th Queen’s landed on the first day of the Salerno landing. After heavy fighting the Allies advanced inland towards the central mountains and the German Army prepared a winter defensive line, known as the Gustav Line, based on Cassino which guarded the main road to Rome.

Before the Gustav Line could be reached, the outlying massif of Monte Camino had to be cleared. A bare, rocky feature rising to 3,100 feet, the massif was a formidable obstacle. An attempt by the Guards Brigade of 56

Division had been unsuccessful and the assault was renewed on 2nd December. The 2nd/5th Queen's were chosen to lead the assault up the steep face of the mountain. Heavy rain and snow on the summit made conditions difficult; it took four days to clear the mountain and occupy the monastery on the summit.

It was during this action that Cpl Ronald Dixon was lost. He was killed on 4th December, the third day of the action, and is remembered on the Cassino Memorial which bears the names of 4,043 Commonwealth servicemen who have no known grave. The memorial stands in the Cassino War Cemetery which holds the graves of a further 4,271 servicemen who also lost their lives in the battles for Cassino. Ronald Dixon's brother George was killed in the Battle of Alamein in 1942 and is also remembered on our village memorial.

After the capture of Monte Camino, the Allies continued to meet very stiff resistance. They made another landing further up the coast at Anzio, but the commanders made little progress after its initial success, and it was not until May 1944 that Cassino was finally taken to break through the Gustav Line and clear the way to Rome.