

PRE-GREECE

2nd Lieutenant Charles William Bryant, RA

Summary

Source: Peter Bryant (son).

At the start of the war, CWB was in the OCR (Oxford & Cambridge Regiment?). He had wanted to go into the Navy but was not permitted as he is colour blind.

His work involved target surveying for the Royal Artillery. His unit was the 4th (Durham Survey Regiment (identity number 124825), a Territorial Army unit formed in 1938. He was with the 8th Army in North Africa (and was involved in the adventure in Greece and Crete), joined with the 5 Army Group Royal Artillery for the invasion of Sicily (1943) and later became part of 30 Corps in the liberation of North West Europe (1944).

CWB was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant at the start of the war, becoming a full Lieutenant after 18 months service (September 1941) and was promoted Captain¹ in July 1943. After the war he joined the Retired Army Reserve Officers as a Captain² and, having been much involved with the Repton CCF, ended his career as a Major.

CWB was issued with the following medals:

1. 1939-45 Star for Defence of Britain (this was intended to honour those who served Britain without necessarily going overseas)
2. Africa Star with 8th Army clasp (1941-42)
3. Italy Star (Sicily 1943)
4. France & Germany Star (1944-45)
5. Victory Medal and clasp for Mention in Despatches (gained March 1945)
6. Territorial Army medal for long service
7. Greek medal (Greece/Crete 1941)³

Artillery survey is concerned with providing fixation (ie exact location) and orientation (where grid North is) to the guns and other equipment and places. The goal of this survey is to provide this data accurate to the map grid in use, 'theatre grid'. The mechanics of survey involve measuring bearings and distances ('traverses') using some form of triangulation from survey control points and related trigonometric calculations. These traverses 'carried' fix and orientation from a known point to an 'unknown' one. However, battery surveyors calculating from sun or star observations could provide accurate orientation earlier than accurate fixation could usually be carried (weather permitting).

Survey practices evolved throughout the war. However, it was always a 'bottom-up' process, unless deployment planning enabled survey to take place in advance. Each battery started by establishing its own fix, typically by map spot or resection from features marked on the map, and orientation using the magnetic compass in their directors. The regimental survey section then brought all batteries onto common fixation and orientation by establishing BPs (triangulated survey points) in the battery areas (regimental grid). Subsequently surveyors from the corps survey regiment brought all regiments onto an accurate grid and orientation (theatre grid) by updating one of the regimental surveyors' BPs. In some poorly mapped theatres division and corps grids were also used as intermediate stages. The corps surveyors used theodolites and had mechanical calculating machines; regimental ones used directors and calculated using logarithms.

¹ He ended up commanding his troop after his superior officer, Capt Mike Fisher, was captured by the Germans.

² Although the War Office initially erroneously commissioned him as only a Lieutenant.

³ Due to a dispute with the respective Governments, this medal was only issued in November 2000.

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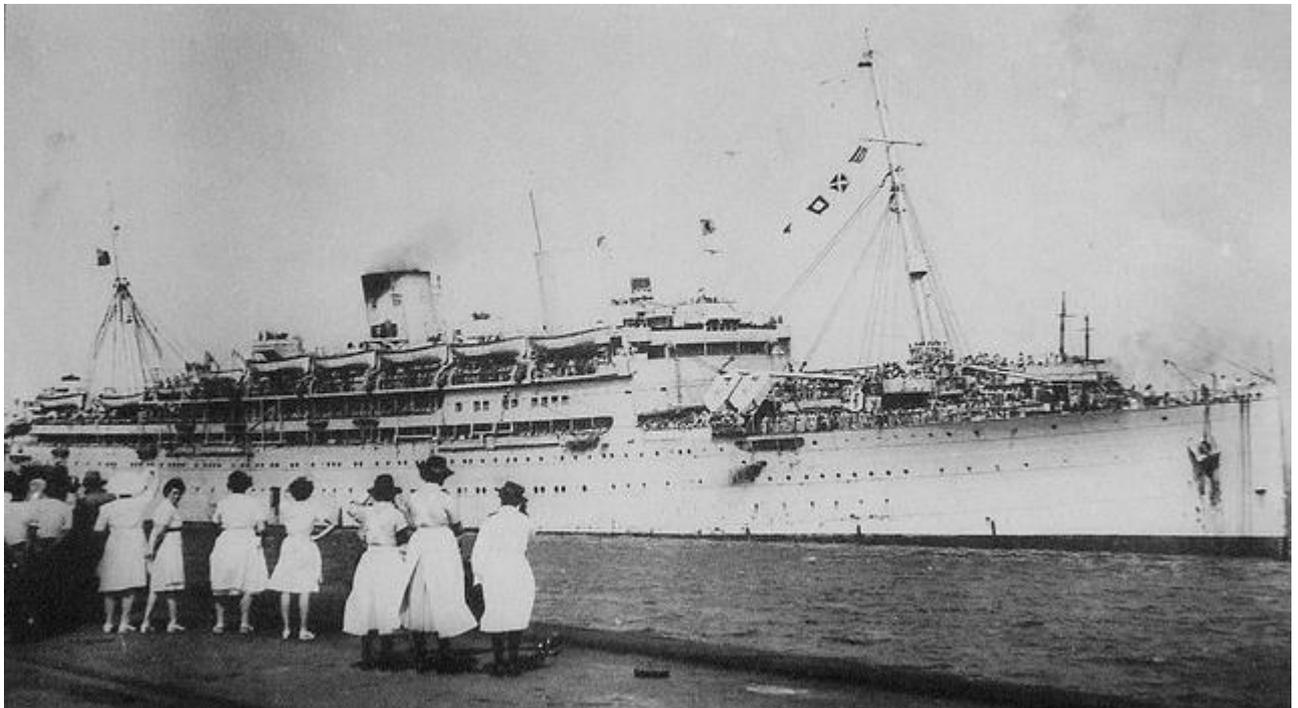
Timeline

1939

- 5 September: Bishop's Stortford (there was an air raid during the night, CWB was offered brandy but had a cup of tea instead)
- 6 September: Cambridge; recruitment officers recommended him to be trained as an officer in the Survey Branch of the Royal Engineers (they commented that his maths training would enable him to cope easily); returned to Harrow same day
- 3 October: Cambridge

1940

- January: Obtained commission as 2nd Lieutenant
- 12 March: London Gazette (number 34811) publishes notification of commission
- 11 November: officer training, High Wycombe
- 15 November: embarkation on Reina del Pacifico at Liverpool⁴
- 29 December: arrived Suez



SS Riena del Pacifico on troopship duties - Liverpool to Suez

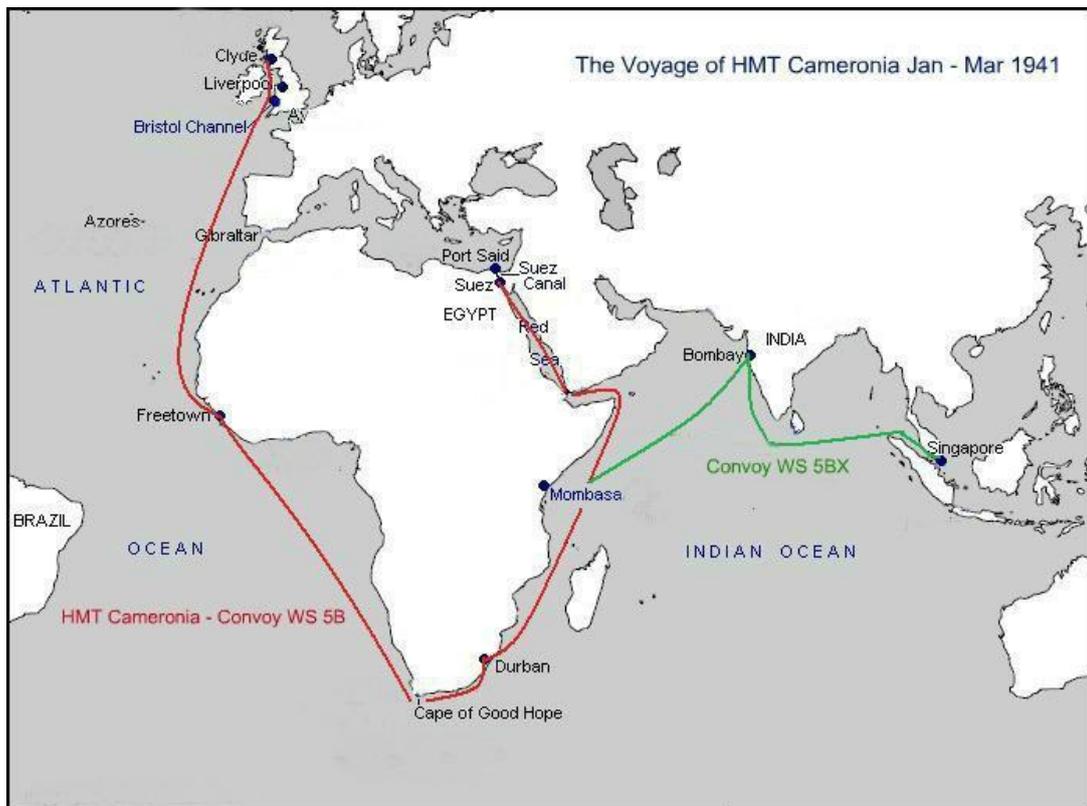
1941

- 1 Jan: Arrived Beni Yusef camp via Cairo (5 miles distant)
- March: Amariya, Alexandria transit camp, **Egypt**; left 0700 (CWB was guard officer for the night).

⁴ According to the official history of the regiment



SS Cameronia from Alexandria to Pireaus



Outward bound route of SS Cameronia a few months later - Riena del Pacifico would have been virtually identical