# NOTTINGHAMSHIRE VICTORY EDUCATION PROJECT

Research resources for teachers





### Introduction

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This year sees the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings in Normandy, which marked the beginning of the road to victory in the Second World War, while May 2025 will be the 80th anniversary of the end of the war in Europe.

The end of hostilities against Japan will be commemorated in August 2025.

Nottinghamshire will mark these significant anniversaries with various commemorative events which are being organised by a special committee with representation from the Office of the Lord Lieutenant, Nottinghamshire County Council, Inspire – which delivers cultural services on behalf of the county council – and Nottingham City Council.

The overall aim is to foster remembrance of the Second World War, as experienced by Nottinghamshire men and women all over the world and on the Home Front, with a particular focus on those who sacrificed their lives for their country.



Hucknall fire men during World War 2, Image courtesy of Nottinghamshire Archives

It is felt that, as a decreasing number of the Second World War generation are still alive, the best way for their sacrifices to be preserved and remembered is through a children's education project.

Its primary aim is for Nottinghamshire schoolchildren, principally in Year 9, to research either a family member who died in the Second World War or a man or woman commemorated on a war memorial local to them.

They will be asked to create a mini biography which will tell the story of their chosen subject's life and death.

The subject may be a serviceman or woman killed in action or who died of wounds serving abroad or at home. Alternatively, it could be a civilian killed by enemy action during attacks from the air in the county.

It is hoped that each child's mini biography can be preserved in the Nottinghamshire Archives, added to the online Roll of Honour currently being updated by the county council to include Second World War casualties, and delivered by its author as a talk to family, friends and local people at a relevant war memorial.

The project, as well as its primary aim of promoting remembrance, is designed to improve skills in research, writing and public speaking and foster an interest in history; be it family, local or worldwide.

In no sense is this project intended to glorify war. It is intended for children to discover the lives and deaths of ordinary men and women in extraordinary times.



Gunners Royal Artillery posing with two shells Image courtesy of Nottinghamshire Archives

### This Research Resources Guide is designed for history teachers across the county.

It provides a list of resources that children can be directed towards to research their subjects.

The document is not exhaustive, and it is expected that teachers will know of other resources – especially local ones that will be of use.

It is stressed that pictures should be integral to this project and could include photographs of:

- the subject, with or without family members, both before the war and in uniform during the war;
- the subject's house, school, place of work and sports team photos taken before the war;
- the aircraft, ship, weapons, vehicles and equipment used by the subject during his/her service;
- the subject's grave and his/her name on memorials at home and abroad;
- the battlefield, aircraft crash site or scene of action in which subject died.



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Wherever possible, children should be encouraged to talk to their family to find out if they have a family member who died in the Second World War.

In doing so, it will make it easier to not only research an individual but get permission for obtaining photographs as well as securing basic biographical details.

However, it should be notes that family stories about ancestors can often found to be inaccurate when research is carried out.

If no family subject exists, a child may wish to choose a man or woman who went to their school or one who whose name is on a local war memorial.

Names are listed War Memorials Trust website

#### www.warmemorials.org or www.warmemorialsonline.org.uk.

Care should be taken to select a Second World War casualty, as they are normally outnumbered on British war memorials by Great War casualties.

If the subject is not a family member, reasonable steps should be taken to find surviving relatives and ask both for help from them and for their permission to research their ancestor.

This may be done one of three main ways:

- by selecting a subject who is an ancestor of someone they already know, such as a friend, neighbour or a parent's work colleague;
- by asking a parent or guardian to put an article in a local newspaper or free publication to track down surviving family members;
- by using a genealogy website such as www.ancestry.co.uk to research a subject. This website will inform you if anyone else has researched the family tree of the same subject and allow them to be contacted.

#### Resources

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A good starting point is the Commonwealth War Graves Commission website, **www.cwgc.org**.

The website lists every man and woman who died in service in both world wars and also civilian casualties caused by enemy action.

It always provides service number, full name, date of death, unit or ship, cemetery buried in or, if no known grave, memorial on which commemorated.

The website may also provide age and names and addresses of next of kin, all of which is useful for further research



The CWGC Memorial at Monte Cassino in Italy

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Use one of two genealogy websites,

#### www.ancestry.co.uk or www.findmypast.co.uk.

The former can be accessed free in all Inspire-delivered libraries and the latter can be accessed for free in all Nottingham City Council libraries.

These websites can provide biographical details, including registration of births, marriages and deaths, census records that provide addresses, occupations and family details, details of wills and some limited military records.

Both the city and county libraries also have free subscriptions to the British Newspaper Archive. Local newspapers often carried stories about the exploits and, especially, the deaths of local servicemen and women.

**Nottinghamshire Archives** preserves five million historic documents covering the whole county, which include Anglican parish registers, military records, maps, photographs and business records for the Raleigh Bicycle Company.

More than 40,000 photographs are available online via the Inspire Picture Archive – **www.inspirepicturearchive.org.uk** – and can be searched via a map based view.

If libraries are being visited to access genealogy or newspaper websites, other research can also be carried out there.

Libraries may either hold or be able to advise on the whereabouts, in local studies libraries probably, of:

- parish and school registers;
- old maps that may show the locations of houses, schools and places of work that no longer exist;
- old photographs of such places and a plethora of other information from pictures of sports teams to accounts of their war service provided by local people or their descendants.



Image courtesy of Nottinghamshire Archives

General research about a battle or campaign in which a subject participated can, of course, also be done in a library.

Locations for libraries, and some of their resources online, can be found, for the county, at www.inspireculture.org.uk and, for the city, at www.nottinghamcitylibraries.co.uk.

**Nottingham City Council libraries** can be found at Aspley, Basford, Bilborough, Bulwell, Clifton, Dales Centre, Hyson Green, Lenton, Nottingham Central, Nottingham Local Studies, Radford, Sherwood, Southglade Park, St Ann's Valley, Strelley Road, the Meadows and Wollaton.

Nottinghamshire County Council libraries can be found at Annesley Woodhouse, Arnold, Balderton, Beeston, Bilsthorpe, Bingham, Blidworth, Burton Joyce, Calverton, Carlton, Clipstone, Collingham, Cotgrave, Dukeries, Edwinstowe, East Leake, Eastwood, Farnsfield, Forest Town, Gedling, Gotham, Harworth and Bircotes, Hucknall, Inham Nook, Jacksdale, Keyworth, Kimberley, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Ladybrook, Langold, Lowdham, Mansfield, Mansfield Woodhouse, Mapperley, Newark, Ollerton, Radcliffe-on-Trent, Rainworth, Ravenshead, Retford, Ruddington, Selston, Skegby, Southwell, Stapleford, Sutton Bonnington, Sutton-in-Ashfield, Sutton on Trent, Toton, Tuxford Mobile, Warsop, West Bridgford, Woodthorpe and Worksop.

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Local history societies and heritage groups may be able to help with researching local locations and personalities of the wartime and pre-war period.

A list of such groups, with their websites, can be found on the Nottinghamshire Local History Association website, **www.nlha.org.uk**.

The following locations have local history or heritage groups – Bilborough, Bingham, Blidworth, Bramcote, Burton Joyce and Bulcote, Coddington, Collingham, East Leake, Edwinstowe, Farnsfield, Gotham, Hucknall, Jacksdale, Keyworth, Laxton, Newark, Norwell, Nottingham Civic Society, Old Mansfield, Radcliffe on Trent, Southwell, Stapleford, Sutton, Warsop Vale, West Bridgford, Wollaton and Woodborough.

Other local history experts that may be able to help are archivists in schools – where individuals may have attended – or employers for whom they may have worked for.

For example, the archivist at Boots can be contacted at **0115 959 4414** or **0115 959 3472** or by writing to the Boots Archivist, D122 Records Centre, Nottingham, NG90 4XY.

Their website is https://www.boots-uk.com/about-boots-uk/company-information/boots-heritage/

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### About 11 per cent of Nottinghamshire's Second World War dead served in the Royal Navy, Royal Marines or Merchant Navy.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission website, **see 5**, provides a ship's name for all casualties who died at sea.

These named ships and the circumstances of their damage or loss can be researched in the following places:

- Naval history website via www.naval-history.net;
- **www.wrecksite.eu/** which covers all ships, both civil and military, sunk in European waters. This is also useful for soldiers who drowned when their troopships were sunk;
- www.nmm.ac.uk is the website of the National Maritime Museum and contains details of both the Royal Navy and the Merchant Navy, whereas the National Museum of the Royal Navy only covers the former at www.nmrn.org.uk;
- The Royal Marines were, and still are, part of the Royal Navy and can be researched via their own historical society at
   www.rmhistoricalsociety.org or in the relevant section of the Royal Navy
   Museum at www.nmrn.org.uk/royal-marines-experience-museum.
   During the Second World War there were both Army Commandos, who were part of the Army, and Royal Marine Commandos, who were part of the Royal Navy;

- Although not an official website, www.fleetairarmarchive.net contains lots
  of information about the Fleet Air Arm and its activities in the Second World
  War;
- A ship can also be researched on Wikipedia, which will provide information about its service and its end.

### Around 40 per cent of Nottinghamshire's Second World War dead were members of the Royal Air Force.

Most, but not all, of these were Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve members of Bomber Command.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission website, **see 5**, gives a squadron number for all RAF casualties who had passed basic training and joined a unit.

The relevant squadron operational record books, for the period in question, can be found via the National Archives' website, **www.nationalarchives.gov.uk**.

Other places to find the circumstances of a particular sortie and/or particular crash are:

- www.rafcommands.com has a lot of detail and can be accessed by date, name, aircraft type or aircraft number;
- Airmen Died in the Second World War is a very useful database that can be accessed via www.findmypast.co.uk, see 6;
- The International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln has a very useful database or can be visited www.internationalbcc.co.uk/:
- www.flightglobal.com/pdfarchive/ is the digital archive of Flight magazine which has been in existence since 1909. It has a search facility which allows researchers to look for squadrons or individuals;
- www.raf.mod.uk is a website which gives access to the records of the RAF Historical Branch;



- www.bomber-command.info is an unofficial website put together by Bob Baxter that has lots of information on RAF Bomber Command and its nearly 60,000 Second World War casualties;
- www.worldwar2exraf.co.uk is a website primarily aimed at allowing ex-RAF members to find Second World War comrades but is also useful for researching a Second World War member of that service.

## Around 49 per cent of Nottinghamshire's Second World War dead served in the Army.

These are generally the hardest to research as most RAF casualties died when a specific aircraft was shot down and most Royal Navy casualties died when a specific ship was sunk.

Once an aircraft or ship has been identified, it is relatively easy to access an account of the circumstances of an airman's or sailor's death.

Soldiers served in a variety of regiments and corps and died in a large number of different ways.

For example, Nottinghamshire soldiers would:

- be killed by small arms fire or artillery fire in battle all over the world;
- die of their wounds days after a battle;
- just disappear in action and later declared dead;
- die of disease, malnutrition or other causes whilst prisoners of war and drown when troop ships they were sailing on were sunk.

The best way to determine the cause and location of a soldier's death is to work out what the regiment or corps to which he belonged was doing on the day that he died.

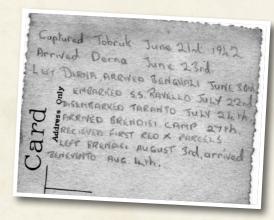


Image courtesy of Nottinghamshire Archives

The **website www.cwgc.org**, **see 5**, will give a date of death and regiment or corps.

This later may say that a man was a Sherwood Forester but will not normally say to which battalion of the regiment he belonged.

Similarly, it may say he was a member of the Royal Engineers but may not say to which regiment it he belonged.

It is then necessary to contact the museum, archives or regimental association of the relevant regiment or corps. These museums and their archives can be found on one of the following websites;

- The National Army Museum website, www.nam.ac.uk;
- The Ogilvy Trust website, www.armymuseums.org.uk;
- The National Archives website, *see 10*, www.nationalarchives.gov.uk has much relevant information and it is worth putting the soldier's name and his battalions or regiment's names in the search engine although the most useful documents, which are the unit war diaries, have not been digitised and can only be seen by visiting the National Archives in Kew.

As service records are being transferred from the Ministry of Defence to the National Archives, it is now possible to request information by submitting a Freedom of Information request via

https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/mod-open-foi-request-step1.

A response may take up to 20 working days.



Image courtesy of Nottinghamshire Archives

### Many men served in local regiments or regiments recruiting from counties adjacent to Nottinghamshire.

Some of their museum and archive websites can be found at;

- The Sherwood Foresters have their museum in Nottingham Castle and archives in Foresters House in Chilwell. Their website is www.stand-firm-strike-hard.org.uk. They were an infantry regiment comprising regular, territorial and wartime battalions and in the Second World War their various battalions fought in Norway, Belgium, France, North Africa, Singapore and Italy. The author of this document has extensive Sherwood Forester archives and can be contacted at john.cotterill@btinternet.com;
- The Queens Royal Lancers (QRL), the Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry
  (SRY) and the South Notts Hussars (SNH) all share a museum at Thoresby
  Hall. During the Second World War, the antecedent part of the QRL which
  recruited in Nottinghamshire was the 17th/21st Lancers a regular armoured
  regiment. The SRY was a territorial armoured regiment and the SNH formed
  two territorial artillery regiments;
- The Royal Lincolnshire Regiment has a gallery within the Museum of Lincolnshire Life in Lincoln www.lincolnshire.gov.uk/museumoflincolnshirelife. It is now part of the Royal Anglian Regiment, whose museum website is www.royalanglianmuseum.org.uk;
- The Royal Leicestershire Regiment has a museum in Newarke Houses in Leicester - www.leicestermuseums.org/newarke-houses. It is now part of the Royal Anglian Regiment, whose museum website is www.royalanglianmuseum.org.uk;
- Many men and women served with the Royal Artillery, Royal Signals or the Royal Engineers. Their museums can be found at www.royalartillerymuseum.com, www.royalsignalsmuseum.com and www.re-museum.co.uk. What were, in the Second World War, the Royal Army Ordnance Corps, the Royal Army Service Corps, Royal Pioneer Corps and Army Catering Corps, are now all amalgamated into the Royal Logistic Corps, whose museum is at www.royallogisticcorps.co.uk/museum.

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If a subject being researched has been awarded a decoration or medal for gallantry or merit, official details of its award will have been promulgated in the London Gazette. That can be searched at www.thegazette.co.uk.

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Since the Second World War, society in Nottinghamshire has significantly diversified.

People have moved into the county from elsewhere and means that some children may wish to research family members or men or women who share their heritage, even if they did not live in Nottinghamshire during the war.

Some of these may be servicemen or servicewomen from Commonwealth forces and some may be from European forces that fled to Britain during the war and then fought as allies.

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), **see 5**, as the name indicates, is responsible for the war time burial or commemoration of soldiers, sailors and airmen from throughout the Commonwealth.

Non-Commonwealth personnel are often also buried or commemorated in CWGC cemeteries if they were serving alongside Commonwealth forces. Research on Commonwealth war dead can be carried out as follows:

• British India and is now India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Records of the British Indian Army are kept in the India Office Library whose website is www.bl.uk/collections/orientalandindia. The National Archives of India website is www.nationalarchives.nic.in. The Pakistan National Archives can be found at www.archives.gov.uk. In Bangladesh, records are the responsibility of the Directorate of Archives and Libraries at www.nanl.gov.bd. Other useful websites are www.indiaman.com and www.indiafamilybl.uk. British Army Officers serving with the Indian Army are listed in the Indian Army Lists, held in both the British Library and the National Archives in Kew. They are mainly not digitised, so have to be visited and read;

- Australia and New Zealand. The website of the New Zealand archives is
   www.archives.govnt.nz. New Zealand service records are held at
   www.govt.nz/browse/history-culture-and-heritage/nz-history/military history-records-and-medals/. Australian military records have been almost
   completely digitised and are readily available at
   www.naa.gov.au/defence-and-war-service-records;
- West Indies. In Jamaica, records are held in the Registrar General's Department www.jis.gov.jm/government/agencies/registrar-generals-departmentrgd/ or www.rgd.gov.jm. www.bbc.co.uk/teach/how-did-the-heroesof-the-caribbean-help-win-ww2/zn96d6f is a BBC web article on the contribution of men and women from the Caribbean to the British war effort;
- Canada. Military archives in Canada are also digitised and available at www. bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/second-world-war/second-world-war-dead-1939-1947/Pages/files-second-war-dead.aspx. The Veterans Department website is also very useful at www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/how-to-find-service-records. The story of the Royal Canadian Air Force in the Second World War is told on its official website www.canada.ca/en/air-force/services/history-heritage;
- South, West and East Africa. The records of the Kings African Rifles, Northern Rhodesia Regiment and Somaliland Camel Corps are held in the Bodleian Library Archive at www.archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/search/archives/85f4212f-49ca-344a-a8c0-4a4c10c2e6fc. The website of the King's African Rifles and East African Forces Association www.kingsafricanriflesassociation. co.uk is also useful. The National Archives at Kew, see 10, have useful guidance on researching all African forces under British command at www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/soldiers-african-forces-under-british-control. South African forces' Second World War records are held by the South African National Defence Force Military Historical Services at sandfdoc@mweb.co.za.

- Researching non-Commonwealth wartime deaths can be challenging as many resources are not in English. It may be possible for some children to get family members to assist them in this regard. These are some resources for the most prominent European allies:
- Poland. Records of the re-settlement of Polish forces in the UK at the end of the war are held in the National Archives at
   www.discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C14519. The Polish
   National Archives can be found at www.nac.gov.pl/en/digital-archive/
   szukajwarchiwach-pl-search-the-archives. www.listakrzystka.pl/en is
   an excellent resource for researching Polish members of the RAF and WRAF;
- France. www.france-libre.net contains useful advice on researching members of the Free French forces both active in France, in exile in the United Kingdom, and fighting worldwide;
- Czechoslovakia.
   www.myczechroots.com/records/military/legionnaire-databases covers
  both world wars but is the best source of advice on researching the Free Czech
  Forces in the Second World War;
- Greece. www.combinedops.com/SACRED\_SQUADRON.htm is a comprehensive history of and guide to the Greek Sacred Squadron.

If a family member, who was a Second World War casualty, is being researched, his or her service record may be in one of two places as they are currently being moved from the Ministry of Defence to the National Archives and this process may take several years.

The first step should, therefore, be a Freedom of Information request to the National Archives for records of deceased defence personnel as described in Paragraph 12c. If the service record in question has not yet been transferred then https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/requests-for-personal-data-and-service-records explains how to apply for the service record from the Ministry of Defence.

### The finished biographies

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The Nottinghamshire Victory Education Project allows all schoolchildren up to Year 9 to produce an illustrated biography that tells the story of the life and death of a man or woman in the Second World War to perpetuate their memory.

There are no limitations of length or format. The biography should be produced by the 80th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day on 8 May 2025.

However, if the subject of the biography served and died in the Far East the deadline is the 80th anniversary of Victory over Japan Day on 15 August 2025.

The output should be the following:

- A script, which the child can present as a talk at the relevant war memorial or another suitable location;
- An electronic copy, including pictures, which should be sent to john.cotterill@ btinternet.com who will upload it to the Nottinghamshire Roll of Honour website, see 2. The resource at www.secure.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/rollofhonour only contains the county's Great War dead at time of writing but is currently being updated to include Second World War casualties, so it may be useful as an additional research resource during the project.

Please indicate when submitting the biography if you do not wish a copy to be forwarded to Nottinghamshire Archives for permanent preservation.

To show the type of biography that may be produced in this project, a specimen biography, accompanied by a page of pictures, is at the end of this document. It is the story of the life and mysterious death in Italy of Roy Hall from Bleasby in Nottinghamshire

#### BERTRAM ROY HALL FROM BLEASBY, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE

Bertram Robert Hall, sometimes known as Roy, was born on 27 September 1905, in the parish of Ecclesall Bierlow in Sheffield. His parents were Charles Ellis Hall and Gwendoline Mary Hall, nee Dykes. He was baptised in Sheffield Roman Catholic Cathedral on 8 October 1905. Before his marriage he lived with his parents and brother Frank Charles Douglas Hall in Holmefield, between Leeds and Hull. By 1929 he had moved out and was living on Derby Road in Bramcote and co-owned a motor engineers and dealers that had premises in Beeston and Ruddington. In July 1930 he married Helen Margery Scrimshaw in Basford and they set up home at Barholme in Lincolnshire.

In 1938, by which time he was living in Bleasby, a small village on the north bank of the River Trent 24 kilometers north east of Nottingham, he enlisted in the Royal Artillery, Territorial Army and joined 68 North Midland Anti Aircraft Brigade . They were part timers, whose role was to shoot down enemy aircraft. In 1939 conscription was introduced and his part time Territorial Army service became full time in Derby. In 1940 his unit became 68 Heavy Anti Aircraft Regiment, and took part in the air defence of Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire during the Battle of Britain and the Blitz. In 1941 they sailed for North Africa. By this time they were equipped with 3.7 inch heavy anti aircraft guns and the regiment comprised three batteries. The 3.7 inch anti aircraft gun was had a seven man crew. It could fire a 13 kilogram shell to an altitude of 9000 meters. It could fire 10-20 rounds each minute. He served in 277 Battery, which had been raised in Nottingham and had eight guns, as a Staff Sergeant. 68 Heavy Anti Aircraft Regiment Royal Artillery, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel F Horlingham, landed at Port Said in Egypt on 22 April 1941. In December 1941 they fought at Benghazi in Libya and in May 1942 joined the garrison at Tobruk, as part of 4th Anti-Aircraft Brigade.

On 20 June 1942 the German Afrika Corps broke into Tobruk. 277 Battery , whose guns were dug into deep emplacements in their primary anti-aircraft role , found themselves facing the tanks of 21st Panzer Division , which were driving down the escarpment from the Kings Cross box to the port of Tobruk. The gunners broke down their emplacement walls to use their guns in their secondary, anti-tank role and managed to hold the Germans up for 4 hours, destroying four tanks until they were over-run by swarms of enemy infantry. 277 Battery ceased to exist, with all

of its surviving personnel, including Roy Hall, taken prisoner. The next day, Tobruk fell and 33,000 British and Commonwealth troops joined Roy as prisoners. They were shipped to prisoner of war camps in Italy, where they remained until the Italian surrender to the allies came into effect on 9 September 1943. On this day Italian guards abandoned the POW camps and, before they could be replaced by German guards, many allied POW managed to slip away. Some escaped to neutral Switzerland, some made their way south to the advancing allied armies and some were sheltered by, and fought with, the Italian partisans against the German occupation troops.

It is not known what happened to Roy Hall but his Royal Artillery casualty card states that he is presumed to have died while evading the enemy after escaping captivity. His death is recorded as being on 11 September 1943 and, if this is true, he can only have been at liberty for 2 days. As his body was lost he is commemorated on the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Memorial to the Missing at Cassino, alongside all other Commonwealth servicemen who died in Italy and have no known grave. He is also one of the 10 x Great War and 3 x World War Two dead commemorated on the Bleasby War Memorial. Probate was granted on 12 August 1946 and he left his widow £4278.8s.6d. That equals £148,000 in 2024 values. His family never knew exactly what had happened to 38 year old Roy and it is unlikely now that this mystery will ever be solved.

Name of child who did the research	
Name of teacher	
Name of school	
Date	



Roy Hall before the war.



3.7 inch Anti-Aircraft guns. Roy was commanding one of these guns when captured at Tobruk in Libya.



Roy's name on one side of the Bleasby War Memorial in Nottinghamshire.



The CWGC Memorial at Monte Cassino in Italy on which Roy's name is inscribed.



Roy, on the right, photographed after escaping from a prisoner of war camp in Italy.

The author is happy to answer queries on this project at any time. Teachers should let me know which casualties their children are researching in case I can offer any specific assistance or advice.

#### John Cotterill MBE

Nottinghamshire Victory Education Project



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With contributions from Dr David Nunn, Dr Irfan Malik, and Mr Martin Kerry.

This document can be accessed online at

https://www.inspireculture.org.uk/heritage/vj-day/





Albert Cast uniforms and medals Image courtesy of Albert's son Peter and Nottinghamshire Archives

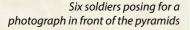


Image courtesy of Nottinghamshire Archives

