

## Bandsman Julian Donald ROCHEFORT

Service number 5436716  
Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry  
2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion  
Killed in action on 30 May 1940, aged 20

Julian was born in Derbyshire into a musical family. The family moved to Wells from Cornwall in the late 1920s or early 1930s. After leaving school, Julian joined the army and became a bandsman. At the start of the war his battalion was guarding Buckingham Place but it soon went to France with the British Expeditionary Force. As a bandsman, Julian would normally have been used as a stretcher bearer. Julian died in the fighting to hold the Dunkirk Perimeter.



The cap badge of the Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry

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Julian's birth was registered in the last quarter of 1919 in Alfreton, Derbyshire. His parents were Christopher Rochefort and Margaret Helen née Ball. It was an musical family as his father was a professional singer and his mother was a professional dancer, and two of their three children would be musical.

Julian's elder sister, Joyce, was born in Derbyshire but his younger sister, Zona, was born in St Austell in 1924. When she grew up Zona become a leading light of the Wells Operatic Society.

The earliest record of the family being in Wells is a mention of Joyce in the *Wells Journal* of 4 December 1935.

On leaving school, Julian joined the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, and became a bandsman (*Wells Journal*, 21 June 1940). From 1935 until the start of the war the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was in England.

In September 1939, his mother and sisters were living at 14, Broad Street, along with Joyce's daughter.

Prior to the start of the war, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was providing the guard at Buckingham Palace and was based at Chelsea Barracks and the Tower of London. When the war started, the battalion handed these duties back to the Guards and returned to its depot at Bodmin in Cornwall.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion was part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade of the 4<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, and it arrived in France as part of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) on 1 October 1939. It then spent the next seven months of the so called 'phoney war' on the Franco-Belgian border around Lille digging

trenches and building weapons pits and pill boxes. As a bandsman, Julian's normal role in a battle would have been as a stretcher bearer.

The German Army launched its invasion of Belgium and Holland on 10 May 1940, and the 4<sup>th</sup> Division advanced to the River Dyle, east of Brussels, to counter it. On 16 May, the 4<sup>th</sup> Division was ordered to retreat, and from the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 22<sup>nd</sup> it fought to hold the Germans at the River Scheldt.

Meanwhile, starting on 13 May, the Germans attacked through the Ardennes, advanced to the River Somme and then swung north towards the English Channel, and on 26 March captured the channel ports of Boulogne and Calais. This move separated the BEF from its support elements and led to the BEF's retreat to Dunkirk.

On 27 May, the 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade was transferred to the 5<sup>th</sup> Division to help hold the Ypres-Comines canal. Holding this canal allowed a substantial part of the BEF to reach Dunkirk. On 28 May, the brigade rejoined the 4<sup>th</sup> Division, which was holding the eastern, Nieuport, end of the Dunkirk perimeter along the banks of the Nieuport-Veurne-Dunkirk Canal.

Julian died on the 30<sup>th</sup>, most likely in the fighting along the Nieuport-Veurne-Dunkirk Canal. On 31 May, the 10<sup>th</sup> Brigade, which had suffered heavy losses since the start of the fighting, was evacuated from the Dunkirk beaches.

Julian is buried about two miles west of Nieuport at the Oostduinkerke Communal Cemetery in Row D, Grave 88. In Wells he is remembered on the rolls of honour at Wells Town Hall and Wells Cemetery.