

Marine Alfred Henry MALLOWS

Service number PO/X 101610
Royal Marines
Mobile Naval Base Defence Organization 1
Died of wounds on 30 May 1941, aged 21

Born in Wells, Alfred was an apprentice for Sheldon's Engineering, and was a keen footballer and bird fancier. He joined the Royal Marines, and was posted to Mobile Naval Base Defence Organization 1. His unit deployed to Crete on 9 May 1941, eleven days before Germany launched its invasion. On 30 May 1941, aged 21, he died in No. 8 British General Hospital, Alexandria, of wounds received during the Battle of Crete.



Alfred with one of his birds
Photograph courtesy of Mrs Lavina Parfitt, Alfred's niece

Alfred was born in Wells on 27 January 1920 to William Ethelbert MalloWS and Lillie Blanche née White. His father was a shoemaker, who worked for Mendip Hospital for 32 years, and a sometime bandmaster for the Wells City and Boys Brigade Bands. At the end of 1932 the family moved to 62, Burcott Road.

The Boys' Central School had an annual prize of a watch for the boy voted to be the 'most honourable in the school'. In 1933, the prize was presented to Alfred by ex-Mayor Wheeler. In the same year, Alfred was also the joint holder of the 'Wheeler Cup for Sport'.

Alfred was a keen sportsman. He played in the Sheldon's Works football team and in 1939 started playing for Wells City. He also played for the Wells Minors alongside Philip Stiles and Maurice Whiting, who died in the war too. His other passion was birds. He bred canaries and in 1938 he won first prize for a goldfinch at the Ninth Wells and District Fanciers' and Chrysanthemum Society annual show at the Town Hall.

At the start of the war Alfred was living with his parents and his sister Annie at 62, Burcott Road. He was an apprentice fitter and turner working for Messrs. Sheldon's Engineering Works. As he was an apprentice he was exempt from military service until his apprenticeship was finished, but as his two brothers had joined up, so did he.

Alfred enlisted into the Royal Marines, and after basic training at Portsmouth joined Mobile Naval Base Defence Organization 1 (MNBDO 1). The function of the MNBDO was to provide the Fleet with a coastal base in any part of the world within a week, and then to defend it.

MNBDO 1 sailed for the Middle East on 4 February 1941 on three ships. After five days in Durban in South Africa, the ships went through the Suez Canal and arrived at Port Said in April. On 23 April the MNBDO 1 arrived at Tahal Camp in Egypt. It was decided that MNBDO 1 should provide a naval base in Souda Bay in Crete, and so the advanced group, including Alfred, arrived on Crete on 9 May.

The German invasion of Crete began on 20 May with airborne troops landing in the area of Souda Bay. The MNBDO fought as infantry during the German airborne landings and subsequent fighting. Later in the month Alfred was evacuated back to Alexandria suffering from multiple injuries due to bomb blast. On 29 May he was admitted to No. 8 British General Hospital, where he died the next day. His parents were told in July 1941 that Alfred was missing but his death was not confirmed until April 1945.

Alfred is buried in Egypt at the Alexandria (Chatby) Military and War Memorial Cemetery, in grave P. 128. He is also remembered on the rolls of honour at Wells Town Hall and Wells Cemetery.



The photo of his grave that was sent to his parents
Photograph courtesy of Mrs Lavina Parfitt, Alfred's niece

His two brothers also served in the war: Sergeant Ethelbert (Bert) Mallows was with the Somerset Light Infantry in Italy and ENSA, and Private Frederick Mallows was with the Gloucester Hussars, and then with the Royal Army Ordnance Corps.

We would like to thank Mrs Lavina Parfitt, Alfred's niece, for her help with this article.