

SHARPLEY, THOMAS

RANK: LANCE CORPORAL

DECORATIONS:

YEARS OF SERVICE: 1939 – 1946

SHIPS:

OPERATIONAL SERVICE: BLITZ SUPPORT, NORMANDY

UNITS: 48 COMMANDO

Served as a Marine in World War 2. Born within the sound of Bow Bells in the London Docks area to dock worker family. School in Plaistow. Took up boxing when young and remained a keen boxer. When 17 family moved to Essex. Employed in farming.

Persuaded at the Careers Office to join the Royal Marines. Basic training at Chatham Barracks described as "dilapidated". Transferred to Kingsdown for range training. Describes firing range at foot of cliffs. Field training inland. Trained by Colour Sergeant Finch VC, observations on him. Mentions alert when deployed in defensive positions against possible invasion. (Gives the date as 14 September 1940 but it may have been 7 September which was the date of the codeword "Cromwell" false alarm.)

Moved next to RM Depot Deal before Liverpool to assist in Blitz support, then Hawick and Hayling Island. Volunteered for Commando training. After that continued to be deployed around Britain. Joined 48 Cdo RM. Landed in Normandy operations; broke arm in accident near Caen and evacuated to Portsmouth hospital. Trained as PTI. Preparation for deployment to Far East but Japan surrendered. Returned to boxing and demobbed in February 1946. Attempted to break into professional boxing but eventually became a middle manager in engineering.