

James Michael Bowes



Full name:	James Michael Bowes
Date of Birth:	1920
Nationality:	British
Date of Death:	6th November 1987
Place of Birth:	St Helen's, UK
Place of Death:	Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire
Military units:	South Staffordshire Regiment, 156 Parachute Battalion
Service number:	POW number 75343
Rank:	Private

Remembered by Ella Burton, Brooke Priory School





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Unit(s): South Staffordshire Regiment,
156 Parachute Battalion

Rank: Private

Medals: 39-45 War Medal, South
African Star, 1939-1945 Star,

Clubs: Working Mens Club, Royal
British Legion

Employment: Holwell Works



Life Story: James was born in St Helen's near Liverpool and came from a large family. He originally wanted to be a priest but then joined the army and went on to have 8 children (2 girls 6 boys) who all managed to live together in a three bed house!

James married May Pervin who he met during his time in Melton. She lived just off Snow Hill and they got married in 1944 in Melton Mowbray at St Mary's Church. The first picture is his wedding photo. He didn't like photographs being taken after the war as he had been very ill during his time as a prisoner and it had damaged his nose.

Army Life:

James enlisted on 17th July 1938 with the South Staffordshire Regiment. He went to Palestine and India before transferring to the Army Air Corps in November 1942 when he became an airborne soldier. He was in Africa until 11th December 1943 when he came back to the UK. His record of service was very good, saying he was a "hard and conscientious worker". He remained in the UK until he went to Arnhem as part of Operation Market Garden in September 1944.



James dropped into action with 156 Battalion. They left their billets at the Hunting Lodge on Nottingham Road in Melton Mowbray airfield for Saltby where they headed for Arnhem in the Netherlands. They ran into trouble immediately, coming under enemy fire but didn't make

it to the bridge, which was their target. His family remember him saying that his parachute got stuck in a tree as he landed.

James was captured and made a prisoner of war, appearing on casualty list 1753 which means he was injured in the fighting, which probably led to his capture.

His POW number was 75343 and he was sent to Stalag XII A at Limburg. The camp was horrible, and the men were not treated very well. James became ill there, like many men. Their food ration was only a fifth of a loaf of bread with a serving of margarine for breakfast, followed by coffee after morning roll

call, and finally the main and evening meals were a watered down soup. The camp was liberated in April 1945 at the end of the war and the men came home to their families.

After the war James had a few memories that he shared with his family. He remembered swimming in the Red Sea in his free time from the army.

The Corn Exchange in Melton Mowbray was used to hold dances, and had a balcony that ran around the top. On one night, James decided to re-live his airborne moments by launching himself off the balcony!

After the war James went to work at Howell Works. One day he didn't turn up so the family didn't know where he was. He had gone up a chimney stack to clean it and had fallen. He was ok but had to go to hospital to be checked out.

James used to go to the British Legion with his mates where he would have lots of fun. He would play the spoons and was even known to tap a metal beer tray on his head to make a tune!

Another happy memory was James covering himself



in olive oil and sit in the back garden to tan himself. He was still living in Melton Mowbray on Welby Lane near where he had been stationed with the army when he passed away in 1988.

Written by Ella Burton, who interviewed James' Grandaughter Cheryl LeCoyte (shown opposite).

To listen to a clip of their interview, scan the QR code below.

