

The above a glowing testimonial from his commanding officer, Lt-Colonel Pine-Coffin, 7th Parachute Battalion

THE OUTSTANDING AND VERY RARE SECOND WAR 'NORMANDY' M.M. AND POST-WAR 1946 'JAVA' SECOND AWARD BAR AWARDED TO AN NCO COMBAT MEDIC SERVING WITH 'B' COMPANY, 7TH PARACHUTE BATTALION, WHO HAVING JUMPED INTO NORMANDY IN THE EARLY HOURS OF 6TH JUNE 1944, HELPED TO DEFEND PEGASUS BRIDGE BEFORE BEING DECORATED FOR MAKING REPEATED JOURNEYS INTO THE OPEN TO BRING IN CASUALTIES DURING A RAID AT BOIS DE BAVENT IN NORMANDY, 18 JUNE 1944. FURTHER TAKING PART IN 6TH AIRBORNE'S COUNTER-OFFENSIVE IN THE ARDENNES, IN MARCH 1945 HE DROPPED BEHIND THE LINES INTO GERMAN DURING OPERATION VARSITY. HE ADDED A BAR TO HIS AWARD FOR HIS SUBSEQUENT GALLANTRY IN CHARGE OF STRETCHER BEARERS WHEN HIS SECTION WAS AMBUSHED AND PINNED DOWN IN THE OPEN AT TEMBALANG, JAVA IN MARCH 1946



MILITARY MEDAL, G.V.I.R., WITH SECOND AWARD BAR '7403502 CPL. W. H. BARTLE. R.A.M.C.', 1939-45 STAR, FRANCE AND GERMANY STAR, DEFENCE AND WAR MEDALS 1939-45

M.M. *London Gazette* 31 August 1944:

'In recognition of gallant and distinguished services in Normandy'.

The original recommendation states: 'At Bois de Bavent on 18 June 1944 this NCO was a stretcher bearer with a company which raided a strong enemy post. The enemy fire was heavy

and accurate and several casualties were suffered. Cpl Bartle showed no regard whatsoever for his own safety and made repeated journeys into the open to bring in casualties. The CSM was killed beside him by a mortar bomb in a forward position. He was not killed instantly and hoping to save him Bartle worked his way back, got another bearer and went forward again to try and bring him back. When the raiding party returned Bartle found that two casualties had not been brought back so he immediately joined a party that was going out to bring them in. He showed the party the way out and back and left them under cover while he did the final locating of the casualties himself. His sense of duty was outstanding.'

M.M. Second Award Bar London Gazette 1 August 1946:

'In recognition of gallant and distinguished services in the Far East.'

The following details are extracted from the report by Lt. Col. Pine-Coffin of the 7th (Light Infantry) Parachute Battalion's action at Tembalang, Java in March 1946:

'Late in the month [March] they ran into a bit of trouble and on one of their patrol actions a section got pinned in the open as it was approaching a wood which was occupied by Indonesians. Sgt. ..., one of the veterans of the battalion who had been through all its actions with it, was killed at once and several others were wounded. Meanwhile the Independent Para Company, which was working round a flank, also ran into difficulties and suffered four fatal casualties. The extrication of the troops from this position involved the use of the artillery and some tanks and took most of the day but fortunately was carried out without further loss. Excellent work was done while the section was pinned in the open by Cpl. McCormick of the platoon and Cpl. Bartle who was in charge of the stretcher bearers, both of whom moved about freely and did very valuable work. Both were later decorated for their work; McCormick being awarded the MM and Bartle a bar to the MM which he had already won in Normandy.'



The Nottingham Evening Post, September 4, 1946 carried more information on the award of the bar to Bartle's M.M., along with a photograph of him:

"BAR TO HIS M.M. – Surprise in Store for Nottingham Paratrooper.

There is a Nottingham man on his way back from Singapore at the moment who does not know that a decoration is waiting for him when he gets home.

He left Malaya a week ago and two or three days ago his wife had a letter saying that her husband, Cpl William Bartle, of the Parachute Regiment, has been awarded a bar to his Military Medal.

Two years ago, in the face of heavy shellfire, Cpl Bartle rescued his Major in an action in Normandy. For that he went to Buckingham Palace and received the M.M.. His latest decoration he gained in Java.

His patrol was searching for Indonesian extremist positions when it was cut off for a while by blistering enemy fire. They held on until relieved by other troops.

Cpl Bartle has been in the Army since 1939, serving with the 6th and 7th Battalion of the Parachute Regiment in France and Malaya. An employee at the Raleigh Cycle works before the War, he lives at 13, Goodliffe Street, Hyson Green and is the son of Mr and Mrs W. Bartle of Saville Street, Hyson Green."

William Henry Bartle was born in Nottingham on 4 September 1920 and joined the Royal Army Medical Corps on 20 February 1942. Initially posted to 17 Company, before briefly being posted to 16 Parachute Field Ambulance in June that year, he attended the Parachute Training School long course at Ringway in August 1943. Qualifying as a parachutist on 4 September 1943 (his 23rd Birthday), he was noted as being 'keen and competent', Bartle was posted to 225 Parachute Field Ambulance on 22 September 1943. Having volunteered for parachute duties, he was Briefly attached to 2nd Ox and Bucks Light Infantry but on 10 November that year was posted to 7th Battalion, Parachute Battalion, 6th Airborne Division and would remain with 'B' Company of this battalion.

Passing the course of instruction and qualified as a Regimental Stretcher Bearer/Medical Orderly on 20 January 1944, he was mustered as Nursing Orderly and was appointed Acting Corporal the following day. Confirmed with the rank of Corporal on 20 April 1944, he emplaned with the rest of the Battalion on 5 June 1944 and were dropped into Normandy (D-Day)

D-DAY

7th Parachute Battalion landed in Normandy at 01:00 on 6 June, their objective, to reinforce the glider borne coup-de-main force that had landed at the Caen and Orne bridges. With many men of the battalion were scattered or landed on the wrong drop zone. So badly scattered were they that, by 03:00, Lt Colonel Pine-Coffin had only around forty percent of the battalion at the forming up point; although men continued to appear throughout the day. Relatively few of their supply containers had been found, meaning that they possessed few heavy weapons or radio sets. However, the battalion managed to rendezvous with the coup-de-main forces of the 2nd Battalion, Ox and Bucks Light Infantry at the Caen (later known as Pegasus Bridge) and Orne bridges. Setting up a defensive perimeter against German counter-attacks. The first German assault on the bridges came between 05:00 and 07:00 and consisted of isolated and often uncoordinated attacks by tanks, armoured cars and infantry, which grew in intensity throughout the day. The Luftwaffe attempted to destroy the Caen bridge and two German Navy coastal craft, which attempted to attack the bridge, were also repelled. Despite the ferocity of the attacks, the battalion and the coup-de-main forces were able to hold the bridges until 13:25, when leading elements of Lord Lovat's Commando's arrived. Further forces arrived in the early evening and the battalion was final relieved at 00:15 on 7 June.

Over the following three months, the battalion was constantly involved in action with the enemy and it was for his gallantry as a stretcher bearer with B company during a raid on a strong enemy post, that Corporal Bartle would be awarded the Military Medal.

Transcripts for 7 Battalions War Diary can be found here:

<https://www.pegasusarchive.org/normandy/frames.htm>



ARDENNES OFFENSIVE AND OPERATION VARSITY

Bartle's M.M. for gallantry in Normandy being announced on 31 August 1944, he embarked for home four days later and disembarked in the UK on 5 September 1944. On 16 September, Bartle married Freda Tunnicliffe and was posted back to 225 Parachute Field Ambulance from 7th Parachute Battalion on 20 October 1944 (both part of 45th Parachute Brigade).

Posted back to 7th Parachute Battalion, he disembarked in Northwest Europe on 23 December 1945, where 6th Airborne were sent help stem the German counter-offensive in the Ardennes region.

Having returned to the UK on 22 February 1945, barely a month later, Bartle emplaned on 23 March 1945 and was dropped with his battalion into Germany during Operation Varsity (Crossing the Rhine). *"During the airborne operations for crossing the Rhine on 24th March 1945, Lieutenant-Colonel Pine-Coffin landed by parachute with his battalion in the vicinity of Hamminkeln. His task was to hold a covering position and protect the dropping zone while the remainder of the Brigade secured the main objectives."*

The landings were accomplished in the face of very heavy opposition from flak and ground defences. The positions to be occupied by Lieutenant-Colonel Pine-Coffin were held by strong enemy forces supported by 88mm guns. By outstanding leadership and skill Lieutenant-Colonel Pine-Coffin rallied his battalion and totally disregarding the heavy fire and his own personal safety directed his battalion on to their objectives":

<https://www.pegasusarchive.org/varsity/frames.htm>

Afterwards forming part of the 6th Airborne Division advance to the Baltic, 'B' Company (Bartle's Company) suffered particularly heavy casualties just one month before of the end of the war in Europe at Wunstorf and Neustadt on 7/8 April 1945

<https://www.paradata.org.uk/article/dash-river-weser-river-leine-april-1945>



THE FAR EAST AND 1946 JAVA CAMPAIGN BAR TO M.M. AND WOUNDED

Returning to the UK on 29 May 1945 but on 26 July embarked for India, disembarking 14 August (paper note 'Entitled to Japanese Campaign' ?). Disembarking at Singapore, 23 September 1945 and Java, 20 December 1945.

After the Japanese surrender, the 7th Battalion, as part of the 5th Parachute Brigade, was posted to the Far East, arriving in Singapore on 21 September 1945 as part of XV Corps, the island's garrison.

By 17 December the brigade was moved again, sent as reinforcements to assist the Indian division on Java. The brigade's mission was to restore law and order and disarm the Japanese military forces in the area. They were told to expect to remain in Java until relieved by units of the Royal Netherlands Army. Under the command of the 23rd Indian Infantry Division, the brigade carried out Operation Pounce, clearing Batavia and surrounding region of dissidents. In January 1946 they were moved to garrison Semarang.

At the time Semarang's population of around 210,000 was a mixture of Indonesians, Chinese, Koreans, Dutch and Japanese. During the fighting before the brigade's arrival considerable damage had been caused to the town's infrastructure which the brigade's engineers and medics were tasked to rectify. To protect the inhabitants from Indonesian nationalists whose stated aim was to "slaughter all the Dutch and Chinese", the brigade's three battalions established a defensive perimeter around the outskirts of the town. To assist with security, a Japanese battalion was rearmed and given a sector of the defences to man.

Corporal Bartle was awarded a Bar to his M.M. when, on 24 March 1946, when a patrol by 7th Parachute Battalion mortar platoon, which was acting as a rifle platoon, was ambushed by dissident Indonesian nationalist troops outside a wood at Tembalang, near Semarang. A veteran Sergeant was killed and with the section pinned down in the open and taking casualties, Bartle did excellent work in charge of stretcher bearers, moving about freely as the

extrication of the troops from the position took most of the day but was wounded during the action

He embarked for Semarang on 6 April 1946 and disembarked at Singapore three days later.



Cpl. W. Bartle.

**BAR TO HIS
M.M.**

RELEASED FROM SERVICE AND TESTIMONIAL

Awarded a Bar to his M.M. 1 August 1946, for his gallantry in Java, Bartle embarked with a Class A Release, for home on 10 September. Released from service, 22 December 1946

Post War served with the TA and was discharged on 10 February 1954

Prior to his release, his commanding Officer, Lieut Colonel Pine Coffin, 7th Parachute Battalion wrote the following testimonial, dated Malaya, 19 August 1946:

Military Conduct 'Exemplary'

"Bartle has been attached to my BN on many occasions in action and I could not have wished for a better Medical Orderly; he is extremely gallant in action and works quite tirelessly. He was awarded the M.M. (Immediate award) for gallantry in Normandy and has distinguished himself on several other occasions. He has a strong character and is not quite so successful during training periods; he is definitely a man of action and his immediate superiors either like him immensely or dislike him similarly."

Bartle's Bar to his M.M. had not been announced at the time of the above testimonial.

Note. Although the Royal Army Medical Corps had their own qualified airborne units who were attached to the Airborne Divisions and jumped with the combat units (the Parachute Field Ambulance units). Parachute Battalions themselves didn't have their own combat medics. Therefore Privates and junior NCO's, like Bartle, were posted on permanent or semi permanent basis to Parachute Battalions, with up to one Corporal and three Nursing Orderlies being allocated to each company to act as combat medics. However they were still officially part of the Royal Army Medical Corps.

Useful unit links:

<https://www.paradata.org.uk/unit/225-parachute-field-ambulance-rame>

<https://www.paradata.org.uk/unit/7th-light-infantry-parachute-battalion>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/7th_\(Light_Infantry\)_Parachute_Battalion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/7th_(Light_Infantry)_Parachute_Battalion)

Having returned to Nottingham, Bartle worked as a coal miner and having retired, died in Nottingham on 11 July 1993.

Approximately 69 M.M's awarded to men from 6th Airborne Division for the Normandy campaign, 5 of which were to 7th Battalion.

Bartle's one of only 2 Bars to the M.M. for the 6th Airborne Division, the other to another soldier in B Company

Bartle should have been additionally entitled to a General Service Medal with clasp South East Asia 1945-6, these issued from 1947. However the group is sold with a 2008 letter from the MOD regarding medal cards confirming that no General Service Medal was ever issued to Bartle. This is also confirmed in his service records, which gives his entitlement as listed and is stamped 27 September 1948.



Condition, generally GVF and better. Sold with a large amount of research, much digital, including Bartle's full service papers, letters regarding medal entitlement, unit histories, 7 para War Diary, June-Aug 1944, 6th Airborne reports including action in Java etc etc.

A quite outstanding and very rare 6th Airborne double gallantry group