

Leslie James Stone

1921 - 2017

Leslie was born on the 29th November 1921 in Farmborough to parents William and Minnie Stone. His father was a coal miner at Bromley pit and also played for Bristol City F.C. Leslie spent his childhood playing and cycling around the local villages and it was during this time that he met his future wife Joyce Gay who lived in a cottage No 210 Court Hill, Compton Dando.

When Leslie left school at 14 his first job was on a farm delivering milk with a horse and cart but then after about a year he left the farm and started working at Wares Nursery at Whiteway Road in Bath.



Above - Les Stone joining the R.A.F.
Below - The unit in France

In 1938 Leslie signed up to the RAF for nine years and was stationed at RAF Yatesbury near Calne. There he trained as a radio operator in the Radio School West Camp and it was during this time that his unit was sent out all over the country to test a new transmitter and receiver system. This lasted almost a year before they were recalled to base to be told that due to their experience they were to be attached to the Essex Yeomanry Artillery Division. They would be going to France as a ground based unit to relay information from the RAF spotter planes as to the position of the enemy to enable the Yeomanry to target their guns. Leslie always said that it was never very successful as the enemy shot down most of the spotter planes. In May 1940 they were quite deep into France and had lost one transmitter vehicle due to mechanical failure when a message came through that they had to immediately destroy all their equipment and head for the port of Dunkirk. All the equipment was blown up by the Yeomanry who then destroyed their guns by putting a shell in both ends of the barrel.



They then had to make their own way to Dunkirk in the remaining vehicles. During this journey the unit got split up from the Yeomanry and Leslie and his friend eventually made it to the beaches. He said you could see the black smoke over Dunkirk from about 15 miles away. Leslie spent two days and nights on the beaches before boarding a destroyer but the destroyer was subsequently hit by a bomb and began to sink. From there he scrambled aboard a frigate and then onto one of the little boats sent from England.

After his escape he returned to his base and resumed his role as a radio operator at RAF Yatesbury. It was during this period that he married Joyce at St Mary's Church, Compton Dando in 1943. When the Normandy Landings took place on the 6th June 1944 his unit was informed that they were to return to France to follow the main invasion force, radioing information and securing airfields. They had made it as far as the city of Bremen when the message came through that the Germans had surrendered and the war was over.



Above left – The Gables when thatched. Above right – Les and his bride Joyce Gay

Upon his return home to Compton Dando he would meet his first child Deborah who was born in September 1944 whilst Leslie was in the service and his son Jeremy was born seven years later. After leaving the RAF, Leslie returned to live at the Gables on Court Hill and his family of Joyce, Deborah and Jeremy. Being keen to continue with his interest in radio he took a job with R. Rickets, a family business in Farmborough as a radio and later a TV engineer and he was employed there until 1981. When the business closed down Leslie began working with his son-in-law as a scaffolder before taking retirement to look after Joyce who was then suffering from severe rheumatoid arthritis. Joyce passed away in 1994.

Leslie loved his garden and hill walking often driving to Scotland and the Lake District. He loved the village of Compton Dando, and continued to live at the Gables on Court Hill with his son Jeremy until he passed away on 1st April 2017.