

# 9 PARA

From Florence Cawdron (1S) and Alexander Cawdron (Nursery Red Class)



Florence and Alexander's great grandfather Martin Lindsay is photographed here leading 9 PARA through the streets of London in August 1943. Immensely fit and capable of marching the feet off any man in the battalion, he trained the unit hard for D-Day and was known by his men as 'Polar Joe' as he was also a respected pre-war arctic explorer. He wrote the book 'So Few Got Through, with the Gordon Highlanders from Normandy to the Baltic' as he commanded the Gordons in 16 operations winning the DSO. On D-Day, 6 June 1944, 1st Battalion, The Gordon Highlanders landed in Normandy with 27 officers and 565 men.

Here he describes what it was like to return home to his wife and children after the war. I could hear my driver warming up the engine of my borrowed car. Cornish had laid out my kilt and my pack stood there, all ready. It was time to go. In seventy-two hours, Joyce would be waiting for me at the Dorchester (Hotel), Park Lane, Bond Street, Piccadilly, then Long Sleddale with the children.

The ancient village taxi would draw up at the gate. I should walk up the garden path and across the narrow, wooden footbridge over the (river) Sprint, pausing for a moment to look for trout in the pools and eddies below, then a few more yards up a slight rise to the house. At this time of year there would be great clusters of blue irises, in front of the pale-yellow moorland stone. Ronald (Florence and Alexander's grandfather), Jacynth, and young Oliver would be in bed and asleep. But whatever their mother might say, I should wake them. I could not remember ever having felt so excited before.