

# Diary of Jean Lepinay

From Stephanie Lepinay

These are photos of the diary of Jean Lepinay, Maelle's great granddad. He was 33 years old in 1945 and lived in Le Mans in France.

In February 1943, when the STO (Compulsory Work Service) is created by the government of Vichy to deport young French men to work as forced labour for the German War effort, Jean Lepinay refuses to leave for Germany, and starts to travel south, hoping to join the Allied forces in North Africa, which were going to try and push the Nazis out of France.

He is made prisoner while crossing the Spanish border and stays in the Miranda Concentration camp. When he is freed 6 months later, he can cross to Africa, then takes a boat from Casablanca to join England.

It will have taken him a year to go from le Mans to Portsmouth!

In England, he joins the French Army of De Gaulle, in the 2nd Armoured Division of General Leclerc, with whom he lands at Utah beach on 1st August 1944.

His diary, entitled "Souvenir Campagne de France" starts on 9th August 1944 in Avranches and ends on the 4th June 1945.

It relates in very simple words what life was like, as they crossed France, through Paris, Alsace and all the way to South-eastern Germany.