

THE NAMES ON THE D-DAY WALL

Between D-Day and VE Day, 2 million American troops passed through Southampton. Of those, only a tiny proportion marked their passage through the city, and fewer still have been traced. These are just some of the men that left their mark and whose stories we are able to tell.

BILL URBAN

Bill Urban's registration card, courtesy of Fold3, and a photo of Bill.

William Paul Urban was a Sergeant in the US Army during WWII. He belonged to the 24th Engineer Battalion, 4th Armoured Division. Born in 1915 in Illinois, he enlisted in 1942 at the age of 25. At the time of his registration, Bill was working at the Phoenix Metal Cap Company, just a short walk from his home.

He died on 16 March 1945 while his division was headed from Luxembourg City towards the Rhine. He is buried in the American Cemetery in Luxembourg. He was awarded the Bronze Star and the Purple Heart. The Bronze Star is awarded for heroic achievement in combat or service, while the Purple Heart was awarded to those wounded or killed while serving in the U.S. Military.

ON WAY TO FRANCE SIDNEY GREENWALD 32081546 U.S.A BRONX NE YORK



Sidney at the age of 22, from his petition of naturalisation.

Sidney Greenwald was born Zsigmond Grunwald in Czechoslovakia in 1913. He arrived in New York on 19 April 1934 aboard the SS *Bremen*, made a petition for naturalisation, and changed his name. For a time, he worked as a carpenter and glazier, but in March 1941, he enlisted in the army as a Private.

Not much is known about his army career, but by 1946, he had returned home. Sidney passed away in May 2011 at the age of 98, but left behind 30 great grandchildren. Sidney also left his mark whilst in Southampton. On his brick, he writes, 'On Way to France', his name and service number, and his home city. His son, Allan, said:

"During the mourning period, I looked at the brick that you were so kind as to share with us. I realised then that his inscription on the brick was really a tombstone. He never expected to return from Europe. He was army infantry and an engineer to boot. Almost nothing would have been left of a young man at 28 years old except his name and dog tag number. ...All of this can not be written on one brick."

GN BUNKER SAC CITY IOWA

Glenn Bunker was born in Sac City, Iowa, on the 22 August 1920. In August 1942, he enlisted in the army and joined the 88th Engineers Heavy Pontoon Battalion.

This battalion left the US on the 24 March 1944 aboard the MV *Santa Paula*, and arrived in England on the 5 April, before finally reaching Normandy on 22 July. They were assigned to the Third Army's 1135th Engineer Group and built pontoon bridges across Normandy, Northern France, the Rhineland, the Ardennes, Alsace, and Germany.

Bunker's unit returned to the US on 15 September 1945. The following year, he married his wife, Roberta "Bobbie" Helen Bunker. They went on to have three children. After the war, Bunker became a mechanic. He passed away in 1994.



Glenn Bunker, top, and his Service Registration Card, bottom, courtesy of Fold3.

Glenn Bunker's Service Registration Card, courtesy of Fold3.

LAURENCE MATHIS PASSED DEC 1944 CHICAGO

Laurence Mathis' Service Registration Card, courtesy of Fold3.

Laurence Mathis' Service Registration Card, courtesy of Fold3.

Segregation was still in force during the Second World War, and black Americans were recruited for segregated service units. These men were involved in construction, unloading ships, road and railway maintenance, medical services and as drivers. These men were a common sight in Southampton and were well liked by the local people; unfortunately, their war contribution is largely unrecognised.

It was not until 1945, when General Eisenhower faced a desperate shortage of replacement troops, that volunteers were accepted to form black units. The Battle of the Bulge saw the first black platoons in combat, and by the end of the war 125,000 black Americans had been deployed overseas and served in ten infantry and armoured divisions.

Several of the names on the wall are thought to be black American soldiers, but they are more difficult to trace. Laurence Mathis may be one of them: there are two men by this name who may have passed through Southampton at this time, one of which is black. It is hoped his identity will be confirmed by further research.

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