

## Gunner Eric William Rabbitt MM Royal Artillery and No.1 Commando

**Former Commando's medals come back from pawnbroker to go on the coffin**

# Friends rally to bury a pauper soldier in style



Mr. Rabbitt's medals — and a letter from King George VI, addressed to Gunner Rabbitt, MM.

**A SECOND** World War hero who died almost penniless has been given a soldier's funeral after friends and ex-servicemen rallied round.

Mr. Eric Rabbitt, (67) who had been forced to pawn his Military Medal and Burma Star, died last week in Cynthia Spencer House without any savings or life insurance.

His friend, Mr. George Scrivens, feared the former Marine Commando would be given only a pauper's funeral.

So George contacted a number of ex-service associations and they agreed to give Eric a more dignified funeral instead.

By Lis Clews  
Pictures: Bob Price

The Burma Star Association provided a flag to drape the coffin and the Parachute Association provided standards to accompany the funeral procession.

They also sent wreaths and other floral tributes came from the Marine Commando Association and the Northampton branch of the Parachute Regiment Association who provided a wreath in military medal colours for the top of the coffin.

### Display

And pawnbrokers A. E. Osborne and Sons provided Mr. Scrivens with Mr. Rabbitt's medals for display on the coffin.

Mr. Scrivens was disappointed that a bugler had not turned up to sound the Last Post at the graveside.

"People have been tremendous. We

have had donations for the funeral from several people already. One man knocked on my door to hand me £5 for it last night," said Mr. Scrivens.

"The Mansfield Hospital will pay for the funeral but we would like to repay them so that hospital funds can be used for the living."

"I am proud that we managed to give him a good and proper funeral and pleased with the number of people who turned up," he added.

The funeral service was conducted by the Rev. George Burgen, Vicar of St Mary's Church, Far Cotton.

After the funeral, Mr. Rabbitt's elder brother, Harry, said, "It was just the sort of funeral he wanted. I was very, very proud and very impressed at the number of people there, many of them were commando mates, from captains down."

"I would have given him that sort of funeral if I could have done, but I haven't got that sort of money. He was a good man and he would have been very proud," Harry added.



Mr. Rabbitt's brother Harry at the graveside.



The procession to the graveside.

Northampton Chronicle and Echo 4 February 1987.

Gunner Eric Rabbitt was awarded the Military Medal in recognition of gallant and distinguished service in Burma

<https://www.commandoveterans.org/EricRabbitt1Commando>