

John Mason and his brother James

No.4 Independent Company

On The Road To Naples

Bebington Corporal Among Leaders

Among the first British troops to land on Italian shores in this war was Corporal John Mason, of 126 Parkside Road, Bebington, who was overtaken by a military correspondent on the road to Naples, waiting with other members of the British Forces for the infantry to arrive, some kilometres beyond San Giovanni.

"I had passed dozens of prisoners, escorted by solitary soldiers, marching towards Reggio," writes the observer, "but there was no sign of fighting. On



the roadside the carriers halted. They had outstripped the foot infantry, and were waiting for them to come up. There, eating grapes that an Italian woman had brought to them on a tray, stood the five men of the advancing Allied Forces furthest into Europe.

Corporal J. Mason. "The men were

Sergeant Walter Hicks, of Deybrook, Nottingham; Corporal John Mason, of Bebington, and Privates G. Franklin, of Barton-on-Humber, G. McLachlan, of Salford, and Henry Brown of Glasgow. Besides them stood their mortar ready to bomb the road ahead. Near them, an old woman was shovelling the debris caused through a shell that went through her house during the previous night's barrage."

They had landed and pushed straight out along the coast road to the north. They had encountered prisoners with suitcases ready packed marching down the road to greet them, huge white banners floating in the breeze. They had found others sitting in caves where they had been driven by the British artillery barrage of the previous night.

"They had found a third party sitting on the roadside, brewing up; a fourth party waiting in hiding had been revealed to them by a civilian. Most of these prisoners were locals, put there to guard their own homes.

GERMAN LOOTERS

"The civilians were disgusted with the behaviour of the German soldiers, who apparently had taken radios, watches, clothes, and food from Messina and sold them to anyone who would buy them in Calabria.

"In the early morning there had been Germans in the vicinity, but they had pulled out after the barrage, taking whatever articles they could remove from the Italian houses.

"In San Giovanni all the houses had been damaged under the colossal barrage from hundreds of guns. Only one building remained whole—the church. This pleased the Italian soldiers and civilians enormously.

"House of Prayer," they said. "Salute!"

"The British soldier noticed that most of the Fascist mottoes had been disfigured and in every case the portrait of Mussolini had been disfigured by the last bullets fired by Italian soldiers."

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NORWAY, SICILY, ITALY

Mason is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Mason, of 126 Parkside Road, Bebington, who have seven children serving in the war effort. Of their three sons, John is in the 6th Seaforth Highlanders.

He and his brother James were in the Territorials before the war, and after mobilisation John served in Norway and afterwards went to the Middle East.

He was amongst the earliest to land in Sicily, and now he is marching forward into Italy.

Before the war he was employed at Brotherton's chemical works at Bromborough, and was educated at the Chester Road School, New Ferry.

His brother James, who is in the Liverpool Scottish, is a prisoner of war in Italy, and the third of the brothers has has recently been discharged from the Army following wounds received in the evacuation from Dunkirk. He served in France and Flanders in the Royal Artillery.

Two of John's sisters are serving in the A.T.S., and a third is training to be a nurse in a Leeds hospital.