

NEWS

WOOLLEY: Book reveals how he made safe dozens of enemy mines

War hero's exploits are discovered

by Amy Watkins

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A damaged, unpublished portrait taken in Christmas 1942. CNF

UNPUBLISHED photographs of a Shepshed war hero were uncovered by a Loughborough man while on holiday in Malta.

Dr Geoff Mason, of Park Road, was in Malta researching magnetic mines when he bought a book entitled *Mines Over Malta* – only to discover it contained the collected written works of Commander Edward Dutton Woolley, a Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve (RNVR) from Shepshed who was awarded the George Medal and Bar for his exploits in mine and bomb disposal during the Second World War.

Born on November 2, 1910, his father was hosiery manufacturer Alfred Woolley. The family lived in Leicester Road, Shepshed, and he attended Shepshed School, the Junior Loughborough College in 1922 and Loughborough College in 1926 before working for The Gas Light and Coke Company in London.

During his service with the RNVR he rendered safe 30 German magnetic mines and one Italian explosive motorboat, serving in London and Malta, and wrote an account of his exploits. These, along with secret wartime reports and letters of congratulations – including one from Winston Churchill – were donated to the Malta Aviation Museum in Malta by his wife Mary after his death and turned into the book by Frederick Galea.

While in Malta, Dr Mason arranged to meet Mr Galea where he was able to look at the Woolley files, which contained two portraits of him not published in the book because of their physical condition.

On returning to Loughborough, Dr Mason's research continued with the help of the archivist at Loughborough University.

He said: "What really surprised me was that Commander Woolley was raised in Shepshed and had graduated in Electrical Engineer-

ing in 1931 with a Diploma of Loughborough College, the precursor of Loughborough University. The George Medal and Bar must make him one of the highest decorated college/university graduates. Only 26 Bars to the George Medal have been awarded since its institution in September 1940."

Some of Commander Woolley's family still live in Shepshed – although they know him as Ted – and Bruce Woolley, of Video Killed The Radio Star fame, is his great nephew.

Rachel Stableford, of Tickow Lane, is Commander Woolley's niece and can remember her uncle telling her stories, including defusing bombs on the Thames in his pyjamas for four days.

She said: "I grew up with it so I took it in my stride. I was only a small girl but we used to see him. He was very glamorous."

"He married his first wife Betty, who was in the Canadian Red Cross, on a minesweeper. I think he actually sold the George Medal."

Mines Over Malta is available from Wise Owl Publications at www.wiseowlmalta.com



A previously unpublished portrait of Commander Edward Dutton Woolley. CNF

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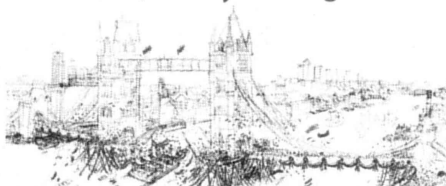
An unpublished wedding photo taken before June 13, 1941. CNF



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