

14074660 Signyman Sandy Budge



Alexander Budge was born at Lynnside, St. Ola on 17th February 1925, the only son of cooper Robert Budge and Margaret Budge (née Laughton). Known as Sandy, he had two sisters – Dorothy and Mary, known as Dora and Bunty. After all three Orkney distilleries were badly hit by the introduction of prohibition in USA and went into a care-and-maintenance phase, the Budge Family moved to Whitehall village on Stronsay. Robert made barrels for herring fishing and the children attended the Central School.

Robert was re-employed at Highland Park Distillery in time for Sandy to attend a couple of years at Kirkwall Grammar School, but he left school in May 1939, aged 14, to start work as a Post Office telegram boy. Sandy delivered telegrams on a bicycle as far out as three miles from Kirkwall, often to Carness Coast Defence Battery; not much fun in the winter dark of the wartime "black-out". On the morning of Saturday 14th October 1939, Sandy cycled down in his telegram uniform before work to Scapa Pier and saw the bodies (many young boy sailors, about his age) from HMS *Royal*

Oak that had been put ashore there.

Sandy played football for the Post Office against many service teams and several Italian POW teams. The Italian teams were very good and the Post Office never won a game against them. Sandy watched the searchlights and gun fire of the Scapa Barrage from the Pavilion balcony in the Bignold Park, during several of the German air raids at dusk in the first year of the war.

In March 1941 Sandy passed the Post Office exam, then started inside work, sorting mail and was trained to work a teleprinter. He was working in the parcel sorting office on Junction Road on 15th December 1942, when he heard a Sea Hurricane from Hatston crash into the Peedie Sea. When he reached age 17, Sandy joined the Home Guard, in Kirkwall Post Office's own 6th Aberdeenshire Battalion Independent Platoon, which was 30–40 strong and wore the badges of the Gordon Highlanders.

When Sandy was called up aged 18 in April 1943, the Post Office would not release him, unless for aircrew. Sandy was trained to send signals in Morse code, by Assistant Postmaster W. L. Marwick, who had served in the RE Signals Section during the Great War. His call up was deferred several more times and the war was over when he left Orkney to join the Army in a Territorial Army posting on 2nd October 1945. Sandy did his six weeks basic training in County Down. The Post Office continued to pay Sandy (more than Army pay), while all his Army service counted towards his final pension. He joined the Royal Corps of Signals at Scarborough. Sanday was found to be proficient at Morse, so was promoted to Lance Corporal as an instructor at Catterick Camp. After several requests to serve abroad were turned down, Sandy contrived to get himself demoted back to the rank of signyman and renewed his request.



Sandy was posted abroad in April 1947 to Padua in Italy, to work at the Headquarters of Central Mediterranean Force. In May he was posted to XIII Corps HQ in Venice, then in June to 24th Guards Brigade HQ in Trieste. Several bombs exploded in the town while Sandy was there, as possession of the port was then in dispute between Italy and Yugoslavia. In January 1948, Sandy moved to Eighth Army HQ in Vienna. After three months working there he returned to the UK. Sandy landed at Harwich early on 1st April and travelled by train to York, where he was demobbed on 7th June.

Sandy returned home to work 37 more years in various clerical posts in the Post Office in Orkney. He married Margaret Doloughan in 1949 and they had four children. Sandy was an active member of Kirkwall Royal British Legion, until he died of cancer in Kirkwall on 1st August 2009.