

577 The unique and outstanding post-war M.B.E., Second World War North-West Europe operations immediate M.M., 'Japan B.E.M.' group of twelve awarded to Major (Q.M.) A. P. 'Bobby' Joyce, Welsh Guards

In a remarkable career - spanning active service in Normandy in 1944 to Northern Ireland in the 1970s, the whole with the Welsh Guards - he first came to prominence for his M.M.-winning deeds in March 1945, deeds that reached a wider audience on the front and back pages of *The Victor* some 30 years later: the comic's colourful depiction of his gallant actions included a scene of him lobbing a grenade into a Spandau position - "Share that with your mates, Fritz"

Whether he shared such sentiments with Rudolph Hess remains unknown, but he commanded the former Nazi leader's 'Old Guard' at Spandau Prison in the early 50s, a far cry from his subsequent duties in South Arabia and Northern Ireland



The Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (M.B.E.), Military Division, 2nd type breast badge, silver; Military Medal, G.VI.R. (4547748 L. Sjt. A. Joyce, W. Gds.); British Empire Medal (Military), G.VI.R. (4547748 A./W.O. Cl. 2 Austin Joyce, M.M., W.G.), officially impressed naming on pre-prepared ground; 1939-45 Star; Pacific Star; France and Germany Star; Defence and War Medals 1939-45; General Service 1918-62, 1 clasp, Palestine 1945-48 (4547748 W.O. Cl. 2 A. Joyce, M.M., W.G.); General Service 1962-2007, 2 clasps, South Arabia, Northern Ireland (Capt. A. P. Joyce, M.M., B.E.M., W.G.); U.N. Korea 1950-54; Coronation 1953, mounted court-style as worn, *contact marks, very fine or better* (12)

£4,000-5,000

M.B.E. *London Gazette* 2 June 1973.

The lengthy original recommendation speaks of valuable service as a Staff, Transport and Messing Officer at the Guards Depot in 1972-73, home to some 2,500 soldiers. It concludes:

'His devotion to duty and his constant pre-occupation with the well being of the men under his command have earned the respect and regard of every soldier at Pirbright.'

M.M. *London Gazette* 12 July 1945. The original recommendation - for an immediate award - states:

'Lance-Sergeant Joyce was in command of the leading section of No. 7 Platoon, the left forward platoon during a Company / Squadron attack on the village of Bonninghardt on 7 March 1945. During the attack his section came under fire from a Spandau dug-in by the side of a farmhouse and another opened up from the house itself, directed at No. 8 Platoon on his right flank.

Lance-Sergeant Joyce, realising he was caught in the open, dashed forward with his section and got them under cover close up by the house. His quickness in appreciating the situation, and his determined action in carrying on, caused the enemy gunner to withdraw behind the house. He then single-handed ran across to the house, leaving his section to give him covering fire, and got up to the window where the Spandau was firing, enfilading the platoon to the right. He got up under the window and shot the enemy firer and, after hurling a grenade through the window, he dashed back and brought up his section to consolidate the area of the house.



His action enabled the platoon to seize the farm and surrounding buildings, capturing 26 Germans from 22 Para Regiment and enabling his platoon to carry on with the attack in which they consolidated on their objective. The speed, resourcefulness and determination of Lance-Sergeant Joyce's action undoubtedly saved the Company many casualties and largely contributed to the success of the attack.'

B.E.M. *London Gazette* 1 January 1952:

'In recognition of non-operational services in Japan in connection with operations in Korea.'

The original recommendation - for an M.B.E. - states:

'Company Sergeant-Major Joyce has been C.S.M. of a Reinforcement Company in Japan since the formation of 'J' Reinforcement Unit supplying drafts and replacements to the Commonwealth Division in Korea.

Throughout his service with the unit, he has devoted himself whole-heartedly to this new task. The well being of his Company has been his constant care and he has shown unabated vigour and achieved outstanding success and follow on from the original. His sound judgment, knowledge of his men, drive and loyalty have been of the greatest assistance to his Company Commander and these qualities have contributed in large measure not only to the smooth working of the Company but also to the efficiency and morale of drafts passing through his hands.'



Austin Peter Joyce was born at Wakefield, Yorkshire in November 1923 and originally enlisted in the West Yorkshire Regiment in March 1942. It seems probable that it was in this capacity that he was serving in the Pacific theatre of war, prior to transferring to the Welsh Guards in October 1943.

Posted to the 1st Battalion - and the subject of rapid promotion - he came ashore as a 19-year-old N.C.O. at Normandy in June 1944. Here, then, the commencement of his part in the Battalion's hard-fought contribution to the campaign in North-West Europe, in which he was advanced to Company Sergeant-Major and won his M.M. He returned to the U.K. in late March 1945 and was embarked for Palestine at the year's end, where he served until April 1948 (Medal & clasp).

Having then been awarded the B.E.M. for his valuable services in Japan - in support of the operations in Korea - in the period September 1950 to June 1952, he served in Germany in the following year, with command of the 'Old Guard' to Rudolf Hess at Spandau Prison.

Active service resumed with a tour in South Arabia in the period 1956-60 (Medal & clasp) and he was commissioned Lieutenant (Q.M.) in May 1963. Of his subsequent part in the Northern Ireland operations little is known (clasp), but he attained the rank of Major (Q.M.) and was awarded the M.B.E. for his valuable service to the Guards Depot at Pirbright. Having been sent his M.M. and B.E.M., Joyce finally enjoyed the experience of an investiture at Buckingham Palace on 7 November 1973.

Sold with the following original documentation and related presentation silver:



- (i)
A striking silver table centre-piece of a Welsh Dragon, the fittings and well for use as a lighter, hallmarks for London 1972, 190mm. x 175mm. x 100mm., including wooden plinth, the silver base engraved, 'Presented to Major A. P. Joyce, M.B.E., M.M., B.E.M., by the Officers and Sergeants of the Welsh Guards, October 1974', and with applied badge of the Welsh Guards to the other side.
- (ii)
The recipient's Regular Army Certificate of Discharge, the content covering the first 20 years of his career, prior to being commissioned; together with a Certified Copy of Attestation.
- (iii)
His Army Certificates of Education, 1st and 2nd Class, dated 27 January 1950 and 19 March 1953.
- (iv)
His warrant for appointment to W.O. (Regular Forces), dated 1 January 1955.
- (v)
His commission warrant for the rank of Lieutenant (Q.M.), dated 29 May 1963.
- (vi)
His M.B.E. warrant, dated 2 June 1973, complete with related Central Chancery investiture correspondence; together with Buckingham Palace forwarding letters for his M.M. and B.E.M., and certificate of award for his Coronation Medal 1953, these mounted on card.
- (vii)
A copy of *The Victor*, 8 July 1972, with cover feature, 'A Fight to the Death!', namely Joyce's gallant exploits in March 1945; together with newspaper cuttings regarding the 'presentation of leeks' to members of the Welsh Guards by Princess Anne on St. David's Day, 1973, including pictures of Joyce.