

## Section I : Main Characters : Captain George Mainwaring

### CHARACTER PLAYED BY:

Arthur Lowe (1915 - 1982) (All TV and Radio Episodes)

### FULL NAME:

George J<sup>1</sup> Mainwaring

### NICKNAMES:

'Napoleon' - normally used by Chief Warden Hodges. 'Poface' - used by drunken brother Barry<sup>2</sup>.  
Once called 'Old frosty face from the Bank' by a boy who had been swimming in the Reservoir<sup>3</sup>.

### ADDRESS:

23 Lime Crescent, Walmington-on-Sea<sup>4</sup> (see separate file '23 Lime Crescent')

### TELEPHONE NUMBER:

Walmington-on-Sea 92

### DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH:

1885 in Eastbourne

### BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

A gentleman of somewhat rounded proportions about 5'6" to 5'7" in height, round face, with balding head, gingerish hair, and round metal glasses. Despite South Coast origins, had traces of a Northern accent. Once described by the girls in the British Restaurant as being like 'a great big Teddy Bear'<sup>5</sup>.

### HOME GUARD RANK:

Captain. Officer Commanding, No 1 Platoon, B Company, Walmington-on-Sea Home Guard. Also spent a brief time as a Private, and an even briefer time as a Lieutenant when the Military Authorities discovered he had appointed himself as Captain and Officer in Command in May 1940. According to Captain Bailey from GHQ, no Home Guard Officers as such had been commissioned until February 1941, and he should only have been a Lieutenant<sup>6</sup>.

Volunteered to serve as a Private, but re-instated as OC in the rank of Captain when all the Platoon Members (except Frazer), wrote in and requested he be returned after Sergeant Wilson's disastrous leadership led the Platoon into an ambush on an exercise. When re-instated was also appointed as 2nd in charge of B Company, Home Guard, which consisted of Walmington, Eastgate and Southgate Platoons. Once put Walmington under Martial Law and appointed himself Commander-in-Chief, Walmington-on-Sea<sup>7</sup>. A very loyal officer to his men, but did comment once he thought he was in charge of a bunch of idiots<sup>8</sup>.

### References

- 1 *My British Buddy - radio version*
- 2 *My Brother & I*
- 3 *tbc*
- 4 *A Brush with the Law*
- 5 *Two and a Half Feathers*
- 6 *Room at the Bottom*
- 7 *Man of Action*
- 8 *Gorilla Warfare*

## CIVILIAN / DAYTIME JOB:

Bank Manager.

## WORK ADDRESS:

Swallow Bank, High Street, Walmington-on-Sea

## WORK TELEPHONE NUMBER:

Not established.

## EDUCATED AT:

Presumed to be Eastbourne Primary, after which we know that he attended Eastbourne Grammar (Scholarship, left in 1902). Once spoke about his schooldays to Sergeant Wilson, stating how he was shy and lonely standing on his own in the playground, and used to take cold baths every morning<sup>9</sup>.

## KNOWN FAMILY / RELATIONS:

Married to Elizabeth - a Vegetarian - no children.

Father Edmund (died 1922). Claimed by George he owned horses, which his sons rode<sup>10</sup>. Also owned a Drapers shop in East Street in Eastbourne, but George would make out he was a Master Tailor with a shop on the parade and a member of the Master Tailor's Guild<sup>11</sup>. Edmund appeared to have a liking for whisky, a trait that was passed onto George's brother Barry. Barry was the black sheep of the family, being a bit of an alcoholic, and working 'up North' as a traveller selling Jokes and Carnival Novelties. He visited Walmington during War to claim their late Father's Hunter watch which George had kept after his Father's death<sup>12</sup>.

Had an Uncle - 'Fruity' Mainwaring, who was Commanding Officer of a Military Unit on the North West Frontier<sup>13</sup>. Father-in-law was the Suffragen Bishop of Clagthorpe, and one of George's sisters-in-law ran a Wool Shop<sup>14</sup>. No details known about second sister-in-law. Mother-in-law still alive about 1940/41 and visited Lime Crescent on at least one occasion. Family thought Elizabeth had married beneath her and still looked down their noses at him, even when he became an Assistant Branch Manager.

Once mentioned his grandmother who left him a glass snowstorm ornament<sup>15</sup>.

## KNOWN ASSOCIATES:

Fellow Rotarians including Councillor Conway, Chief Clerk Wilson, whom he thought was 'vague'.

## KNOWN ROMANTIC ENCOUNTERS:

Had a short affair with Mrs Fiona Gray, with whom he had a mutual liking for dahlias, and who had joined the short-lived Women's Section of the Home Guard. Mrs Gray, however, went back to London to be with her mother and the romance fizzled out<sup>16</sup>. A misunderstanding on one occasion led to the busty widow Mrs Fox thinking that Captain Mainwaring had amorous intentions towards her, and was seeking

### References

9 *The Honourary Man*

10 *tbc*

11 *tbc*

12 *My Brother & I*

13 *tbc*

14 *tbc*

15 *tbc*

16 *Mum's Army*

her company in competition with Lance Corporal Jones and Mr Gordon the Town Clerk<sup>17</sup>. Stated to Mrs Fox once he found things to do with emotions embarrassing. Brother Barry once mentioned a girl in his younger days who George claimed was an Assistant Manageress at the local Sweet Factory, but in fact was a Rock Puller who apparently told him to "Sling his hook"<sup>18</sup>.

## PREVIOUS MILITARY CAREER:

After repeated attempts to enlist, hampered by his impaired eyesight, he was commissioned into the Pioneer Corps in 1918, serving in France for the whole of 1919, having arrived on 14 November 1918<sup>19</sup>. May also have initially served in Orkney during WW1.

## DECORATIONS:

Nil. This fact was to cause Captain Mainwaring some embarrassment during his Home Guard Service in WW2. Once said issuing lots of brass because people were there made a mockery of the whole thing.

## PREVIOUS BACKGROUND:

Apart from Military Service, spent all his working life with Swallow Bank, taking over at Walmington as Manager in 1935<sup>20</sup>. Spent some time at the Guildford Branch<sup>21</sup>. Possible he was Assistant Branch Manager there as he once mentioned being one at a large Branch but did not specify which one. Did remind Wilson once that he had worked himself up from Office Boy, Clerk, Assistant Chief Clerk, Chief Clerk, Assistant Manager and eventually Manager and it had been a long hard struggle<sup>22</sup>.

## FAVOURITE PHRASES:

"I think you're getting into the realms of fantasy there Jones." "You stupid boy." "We don't want to hear any of that sort of talk." (With variations, said when someone was being defeatist or praising the enemy in some way.) "I wondered who would be the first to spot that" (with odd variations). "Like a smooth well oiled machine." "This is War, not - (usually followed by a phrase of what it wasn't, e.g. Greyfriars, a dry cleaners). "Go to it". (See also the file on 'The Thoughts Wisdom and Sayings of Captain George J Mainwaring Home Guard')

## AILMENTS:

Impaired eyesight prevented him achieving his ambition of becoming a Professional Soldier (made it in 1918). In very early days of Local Defence Volunteers sustained injuries to left hand with a knife during an unarmed combat demonstration<sup>23</sup>. Ingrowing toenails, requiring an operation (claimed it was due to Active Service). Whilst in Hospital for the toenail problem he read the Home Guard Pocket Manual and kept his revolver in bed! He discharged himself from hospital and hobbled around with two walking sticks<sup>24</sup>.

Wore arch supports<sup>25</sup>. Shoe size 6½<sup>26</sup>. Occasional black eye inflicted by Elizabeth. Also sustained black

## References

- 17 *The Godiva Affair*
- 18 *My Brother & I*
- 19 *The Man and the Hour*
- 20 *tbc*
- 21 *tbc*
- 22 *The Honourary Man*
- 23 *tbc*
- 24 *The Recruit*
- 25 *Keep Young & Beautiful*
- 26 *Boots, Boots, Boots*

right eye when punched by US Colonel in the Red Lion<sup>27</sup>. Prone to bouts of Lumbago, especially when taking the Platoon for PT, he also had a dodgy back. On that same occasion got breathless quickly, showing his lack of fitness.

Suffered from flatulence if ate too quickly<sup>28</sup>. May have been taking Dyspepsia Tablets. Once got a 'dose of the runs' whilst briefing the Platoon<sup>28</sup>. Took the occasional Bismuth tablet at bedtime. Appeared to sustain injury to nose when tackling friends trying to rescue Patrick Reagan whom the Platoon had arrested as a suspected terrorist<sup>29</sup>. Known to snore in his sleep.

Once had a very bad hangover at a Home Guard Training Camp after unsuccessfully playing Cardinal Puff on whisky in the Officer's Mess the previous evening<sup>30</sup>. Had symptoms of an oncoming cold when had to spend a very stormy night at a big house when van was low on fuel. Frazer, (as always), took great delight in telling him he had just buried someone with the same symptoms<sup>31</sup>. Claimed he didn't have a very sweet tooth.

Private Frazer thought he was going to burst a blood vessel as he was so angry on discovering his Staff Car had been stolen on the morning he was due to start umpiring a Home Guard Exercise.

#### PETS:

Had a cat called Empress, probably of same temperament as Mrs Mainwaring, as it was known to scratch him at least once<sup>32</sup>. Had Goldfish in a bowl in the lounge<sup>33</sup>.

#### HOBBIES / SPORTS:

The Home Guard. Once admitted that the nightly parades were the highlight of his day<sup>34</sup>. May have done some rock climbing in younger days. Spent years trying to join Golf Club but no details of his playing ability currently known. He was member of the local Bridge Club and a member of Rotary Club where he was once guest speaker<sup>35</sup>. Likely to have been a Mason as once went to London for a Lodge Meeting but it was cancelled<sup>35a</sup>.

Claimed when he used to play cricket he was a passable opening bat and more than average bowler<sup>36</sup>.

Claimed he could ride horses, being familiar with them due to his late father keeping them<sup>37</sup>. Once stated he was a 'nautical virgin' concerning boating and borrowed a book from Miss Beckworth called 'How to Handle Your Oars'<sup>38</sup>. Preferred to sit in the grand circle when visiting the Cinema<sup>39</sup>. Was able to play the bagpipes<sup>40</sup>.

#### References

- 27 *My British Buddy*
- 28 *The Battle of Godfrey's Cottage*
- 29 *Absent Friends*
- 30 *Fallen Idol*
- 31 *Things That Go Bump in the Night*
- 32 *tbc*
- 33 *The King was in his Counting House*
- 34 *Absent Friends*
- 35 *Turkey Dinner*
- 35a *tbc*
- 36 *The Test*
- 37 *The King was in his Counting House*
- 38 *Sons of the Sea*
- 39 *The Big Parade*
- 40 *If the Cap Fits*

## VEHICLES OWNED:

Could drive but did not own a vehicle. Did have a Rolls Royce<sup>41</sup> and open topped Austin<sup>42</sup> as Staff Cars for short periods during WW2 (See separate Staff Cars File). Had a bicycle in early part of War. Once accused by Lance Corporal Jones of being heavy handed with vehicles and that he should 'cherish' them more.

## CHARACTERISTICS:

Pompous, officious, but very loyal to his men and his country. Claimed he ran a democratic Unit, which would "eat sleep and fight together"<sup>43</sup>, and who had no secrets. No time for bull or red tape. Always felt he should have been higher up the social ladder. Had a tendency to be shy with females.

## ECCENTRICITIES:

Bit of a stiff upper lip. Distrust / dislike of foreigners. Did not like 'alarmists'. Thought black marketeers should be shot<sup>44</sup>, and that the public school system reeked of depravity<sup>45</sup>. Aversion to alcohol, although would have the occasional beer with his men, and not too resistant to scotch. Also drank sweet sherry, much to surprise of his fellow officers<sup>46</sup>.

Absolutely hated Chief Warden Hodges, whom he had listed as a potential defector if the Germans invaded. Almost engaged in a bout of fisticuffs with Hodges over his cheeky nephew Hamish<sup>47</sup>. Had difficulty understanding 24-hour clock. Was often seen rubbing his hand across his face, or pushing his cap back on his head (particularly when Lance Corporal Jones was regaling them with a story from the Sudan).

Believed the Devil 'looked after his own.' Believed the common man would 'come into his own after the War.' Thought there was too much permissiveness in Wartime, said he would be glad when War was over and people stopped doing that sort of thing. Believed that he who held the crossroads held Walmington-on-Sea<sup>48</sup>, and a couple of years on said the same about the Town Hall<sup>49</sup>. Thought three loyal men were better than 100 backsliders<sup>50</sup> and that brains, experience and local knowledge were better weapons than muscles and brawn<sup>51</sup>. After winning his court case for leaving a light showing, said he believed they had been fighting for fair play, honesty and the integrity of British justice<sup>52</sup>.

Claimed he had a motto of 'Honesty is the Best Policy.' (See also the File on Thoughts, Wisdom and Sayings of Captain George J Mainwaring Home Guard). Known to like his sausages crisp on the outside pink in middle<sup>53</sup>.

Had a habit of appointing himself Chairman of Committees. Had a vain streak, inviting Mr Cheeseman from the Eastbourne Gazette to do a write-up on the Platoon<sup>54</sup>. Private Frazer thought he was running a terrible risk, but Private Godfrey thought he looked very noble when posing for the photograph.

## References

- 41 *The Captain's Car*
- 42 *The Making of Private Pike*
- 43 *Fallen Idol*
- 44 *My Brother & I*
- 45 *tbc*
- 46 *Fallen Idol*
- 47 *The Recruit*
- 48 *Everybody's Trucking*
- 49 *Man of Action*
- 50 *Absent Friends*
- 51 *Battle of the Giants*
- 52 *A Brush with the Law*
- 53 *Sons of the Sea*
- 54 *Man of Action*

## FURTHER RELEVANT INFORMATION:

George Mainwaring, once described as a 'Pillar of Respectability' by Godfrey, appeared to have a somewhat tedious domestic life. His wife Elizabeth appears to have been a bit domineering, and prone to the odd outbreak of violence, George sometimes appearing with a black eye. She appeared to be of considerable bulk, and if he is to be believed the marriage did not get off to a good start, the honeymoon being spent in the wild and lonely place of Invergeikie, where George spent his time learning to play the bagpipes instead of looking after his new wife<sup>55</sup>. The original script states "I was a relief manager at Invergeikie for a whole winter. 'Tis a wild and lonely place, you understand. The nights were long and there was nothing else to do." Not as funny as the broadcast version. The house was not well looked after, the contents once being described as a load of rubbish by Private Frazer. Mrs Gibbons, (Violet's Mother), was employed by them as a cleaner twice weekly for a while<sup>56</sup>.

Mr Bluett once said the garden was in a terrible state indicating that Mrs Mainwaring didn't or wouldn't do the gardening. This task would have been left to him as Elizabeth had not left the house 'since Munich'<sup>57</sup>. This is borne out by the fact that early in the War George appeared to do the shopping referring once to how he had seen the grocer cutting cheese and thought the cheese wire would be an effective weapon. Enjoyed the occasional cigar at home<sup>58</sup>.

Monthly returns at the Bank were getting behind due to his Home Guard activities, and this brought about a visit from Mr West an Inspector from Head Office, who wanted to know if Mr Mainwaring normally interviewed clients with a pistol on his desk! Did not approve of private mail being sent to the Bank. However, one thing you could not fault George for was his guts and tenacity. Devised the Platoon Motto of 'What We Have We Hold.'<sup>59</sup> Once successfully defended himself in Court on a trumped up charge by the Warden, whilst his adversary Captain Square was the sitting Magistrate<sup>60</sup>. He had a phobia about his Platoon Sergeant's upper-class background always thinking that his own background had hindered his career. Accused Sergeant Wilson of being decadent when he found out he used Eau de Cologne. Also accused him once of being a drunkard, and on another occasion a slacker.

He once put Walmington under Martial Law declaring himself as Commander-in-Chief of the town<sup>61</sup>. Not too good at map reading, once taking four hours to cover the one mile from the Station to a Battle School Camp<sup>62</sup>.

He did not know Morse-Code. He had a liking for potato suppers. When first got his uniform was followed by Sergeant Wilson who saw him walk up and down the High Street three times looking for a serviceman to salute him. Eventually had to make do with a salute from a Sea Scout<sup>63</sup>. On one occasion paid 18 guineas for a greatcoat which Private Frazer later set on fire whilst giving smoke signals<sup>64</sup>. When it was possible certain Home Guard members may be transferred to ARP Duties, bought himself a toupé in an attempt to look younger<sup>65</sup>. Lost his moment of fame one Christmas when the Home Guard Platoon were due to broadcast to the Empire, but was cancelled when Hong Kong over ran<sup>66</sup>.

## References

55 *If the Cap Fits*

56 *War Dance*

57 *tbc*

58 *My Brother & I*

59 *tbc*

60 *A Brush with the Law*

61 *Man of Action*

62 *Battle School*

63 *tbc*

64 *The Desperate Drive of Corporal Jones*

65 *Keep Young and Beautiful*

66 *Broadcast to the Empire*

Had an account at Sedgewick's Shoe Shop, taking a Size 6½ in boots<sup>67</sup>. Took size 6⅞ in bowler hats, size 42 short in suits and size 15 collar in shirts, which he could have bought at Gills the Tailors where we know he bought his hats<sup>68</sup>. Once thought the Vicar, in early part of War gave a seditious sermon when he spoke about the "Parting of the Waves", especially with the Nazis just over the channel.

Once saved Pike's life when he got stuck in a bog<sup>69</sup>.

At a Bazaar bid against himself, paying 10/- for an orange for Elizabeth. Unfortunately she had gone to see her Sister, just as well, as the oranges were for marmalade as some of his platoon discovered when he shared it with them<sup>70</sup>! Known to have holidays in Bognor in 1936, staying in a Boarding House, and having a flight in a bi-plane for 5/- (five shillings). Believed that this trip inspired his letter to the War Office about Paratroops - it was never acknowledged<sup>71</sup>! When he was reduced to Private and was in the Ranks, his drill was slightly behind the others putting even Jones off<sup>72</sup>. Lance Corporal Jones claimed once that Captain Mainwaring would stand on a beer crate only when he had something important to say. However, according to Chief Warden Hodges it was the only way he could get the men to look up to him.

## POST WAR:

Retired from Bank shortly after War and kept out of Elizabeth's way by continuing to serve Walmington as an Alderman and Magistrate. Also became Secretary of the Rotary Club<sup>73</sup>, but not known if he managed to join the Golf Club - one of his lifelong ambitions. Still alive in 1968 and attended an 'I'm Backing Britain' reception in Walmington, where Arthur Wilson introduced him as one of Walmington-on-Sea's most distinguished citizens<sup>74</sup>. Modern day theme park in Walmington reportedly named after him<sup>75</sup>.

## POSTSCRIPTS:

A quote recently found in a book entitled 'The Home Guard' by SP MacKenzie - 'Anyone who thinks that Captain Mainwaring of Dad's Army is a latter-day caricature can rest assured that Mainwaring was there in his hundreds of thousands.' (George MacDonald Fraser - The Hollywood History of the World - 1988)

## References

- 67 *Boots, Boots, Boots*
- 68 *Keep Yoing & Beautiful - radio version*
- 69 *Sergeant, Save My Boy!*
- 70 *The Three Oranges*
- 71 *Man Hunt*
- 72 *Room at the Bottom*
- 73 *The Man and the Hour*
- 74 *abid*
- 75 *Walmington-on-Sea Town Plan & Guide*