

MAJOR ANTHONY ROBERT WHATELY-SMITH [113612] SOMERSET LIGHT INFANTRY, DORSETSHIRE REGIMENT, EAST SURREY REGIMENT AND 2ND SAS (HQ SQN)



Known as 'Andy' to both friends and family, Anthony Whately-Smith was born on 22 May 1915 at Worthing in East Sussex. He began his education at Hordle House prep school that his father had founded and subsequently steered as headmaster. Going on to Sherborne School, Dorset, he became head of his house as well as a keen sportsman, actor and member of the OTC, although this period was marred by the death of his mother. On leaving school, he found employment with the Vacuum Oil Company and sailed to the USA for training in January 1937. At the outbreak of war he enlisted into the Somerset Light Infantry in Bristol (service number 5675013), going on to attend 164 OCTU at Goujerat Barracks in Colchester later that month. His final report correctly predicted that he would 'make a first class officer'. He was commissioned into the 5th Battalion, Dorsetshire Regiment, in January 1940 before marrying Mary Hodgkinson at Beaulieu at the beginning of March.

As a captain Whately-Smith served as the Intelligence Officer of 130th Infantry Brigade from November 1941, as GSO III (Training) at GHQ Home Forces from April 1942, and entered staff college soon after. He also attended the first Combined Operations Staff Officers Course during June 1943 at HMS *Brontosaurus*, the Combined Training Centre at Castle Toward near Dunoon in Argyll. Having been attached to HQ 165th Infantry Brigade as Brigade Major from June 1943, he was appointed GSO II (Instructor) at the School of Military Intelligence at Matlock at the beginning of February 1944. A brief period with the 2nd Battalion, East Surrey Regiment, followed, although he was interviewed on 4 July by the 'Commander of the SAS Regiment' at the War Office. Accepted, he joined the Regiment as a captain four days later. He was officially posted to 2nd SAS on 28 July, serving as Adjutant from the beginning of August.

In the early hours of 1 September 1944 Whately-Smith parachuted into the Vosges departement of eastern France for OPERATION LOYTON as a member of Lt-Colonel Brian Franks' reinforcement party. Having moved away from the DZ near Veney, Whately-Smith picked a new drop zone close to Neufmaisons for the arrival of Major Denny Reynolds, who landed on the night of 6-7th. On the morning of the 9th, Franks sent these two officers to locate a new main base, as their present camp near Pierre-Percee was threatened by German troops sweeping the surrounding area. Two hours later Franks' camp was attacked and the main party forced to move with the loss of its stores. Despite repeatedly broadcasting a new RV to the pair, contact could not be established and they were captured on 30 October at La Trouche near Raon-l'Etape (see Reynolds' entry above for full details of their intervening activity). Initially taken to Schirmeck Concentration Camp, Whately-Smith, Reynolds and Lieutenant David Dill were interrogated at the Maison Barthlemy, the Kommando Ernst's HQ in Saales, on 5 November before being returned. An American Red Cross representative saw the men at Schirmeck the following day:

I'm sending you a list of names of American and British prisoners of war held by the Gestapo at the Concentration Camp of Schirmeck-la-Broque in Alsace. I was able to talk with them and promised to advise their families ... These officers were living on 6 November, 1944 [WO 311/270].

Whately-Smith's name is on this list. When Schirmeck was evacuated before the advancing Allies on 22 November the SAS prisoners were moved to Rotenfels Camp in Germany. They were murdered in Erlichwald, a wood behind the Mercedes Benz factory at Gaggenau on 25 November 1944 (see Dill's entry above for full details). Maurice Lesoil, a fellow prisoner, later wrote to Whately-Smith's father:

As I believe I have told you, Smith [sic] thought he would be transferred to a camp for the Allied forces near Baden-Baden but Major Reynolds had expressed his fears and a horrifying foreboding of what was to happen only a few hundred yards from the camp. Andy left us happily, expressing his hopes about seeing us again

soon, free at last. He jokingly said he would arrange for a tour of London in his campaign uniform which the SS had marked with white phosphorescent bands on the knees, chest and with a cross on the back.

We tried to share his optimism while the brutes chose the two or three Frenchmen who were being interviewed by those who had condemned them to death with their characteristic duplicity and cowardice. But deep down we were worried for we had heard that the Germans had asked for a group of volunteers who would be rewarded in extra food - a pot of `wasser' soup and a packet of cigarettes [letter dated January 1958, Whately-Smith family collection].

The remains of those murdered were exhumed and reinterred on 13 May 1945 'with special honours and in the presence of a large proportion of the population' at Gaggenau's Waldfriedhof civil cemetery. Major 'Bill' Barkworth, commander of the SAS War Crimes Investigation Team, later reported:

In Grave 5, row II, I found a body which was wearing a British airborne pattern string vest and also two British identity discs. The identity discs bore the name of Second-Lieutenant A R Whately-Smith C E. They were of standard British Army pattern. I knew Lieutenant Whately-Smith and saw him last on the night of the 31st August 1944 at Fairford Airdrome when he entered a plane proceeding on a parachute operation in the area of the Vosges [WO 311/270].

In June 1945 Franks wrote to Whately-Smith's father: 'I offer you my deepest sympathy and that of the whole Regiment in this appalling tragedy. Andy was not only one of the ablest, but one of the most popular officers we ever had. We will not forget him.' Soon after the Chairman of the Vacuum Oil Company wrote to *The Times*:

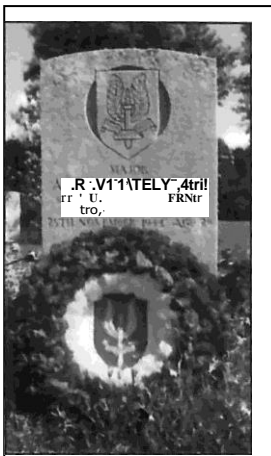
As Chairman of the Company by which he was employed I would like to pay tribute to his memory. Andy volunteered for the task through which he met his death. After a parachute drop behind enemy lines, he was eventually captured by the Germans. On at

least two occasions he scorned opportunities to escape, because to do so would have meant leaving his wounded brother officer

[Reynolds] and a brave Frenchwoman who had befriended them [Myrham Le Rolland]. His body, and that of his friend, has lately been identified in a Concentration Camp [sic], and so a young life of the greatest promise is closed.

Andy's service was of the highest order. He was loved by all who were privileged to know him. He will be sadly missed but never forgotten.

There have been so many of these tragedies, that to single out one case for special thought is impossible. I think the greatest tribute we can pay to Andy is to look upon his as symbolic of a devotion to duty and utter disregard of personal safety shown by so many thousands of our young men [family collection].



Son of the Reverend Ernest Whately-Smith, MC, MA, and the late Dorothy Whately-Smith (née Calkin) of Hordle House, Milford-on-Sea, Hampshire - Husband of Mary Whately-Smith of Twynham House, Lymington, Hampshire. After the war his wife, an American citizen, returned to the United States, remarried, and died soon afterwards - Brother of Majors Peter and John Whately-Smith, both mentioned in despatches whilst serving in the 43rd (Wessex) Division.

Age 29.

Of Hordle House Milford-on-Sea, Hampshire

Grave 3.K.2. Also commemorated on Pierre-Percee's war memorial and within Walhampton School's chapel.