

### Summary of Leslie Speller's life:



Leslie was born on 15<sup>th</sup> Dec 1914 in Littlehampton, West Sussex. He went to Worthing High School for Boys. After leaving School he worked as a solicitors clerk in Arundel.

Leslie joined the RAF in May 1940. Between June 1940 and June 1941 Leslie was sent away for RAF training. After training he was posted to the Middle East. He was shot down on 3rd May 1942 over Libya. He was wounded (burns to his hands and shrapnel in his back) and taken prisoner of war. Initially he was taken to a hospital run by Italian nuns.

In July 1942 German guards escorted Leslie to Stalag Luft III near Sagan, on the border between Germany and Poland. During his time in the camp Leslie went down tunnels to dig a couple of times, but he suffered from claustrophobia and so had to be allocated other escape tasks. He was involved with writing coded letters. They were intercepted by MI5, who decoded the information. He entered a draw to escape and was number 119. The tunnel was discovered by the guards before his turn came. 76 Officers escaped. 73 were re-captured. The Gestapo shot 50 of the escapees.

Leslie remained in Stalag Luft III until February 8<sup>th</sup> 1945, when the German guards marched the remaining POWs (Most had already left on the forced march) back from the approaching U.S. forces. They walked across country to Stalag VIIa at Moosburg.

Leslie and his fellow POWs were liberated by U.S. troops on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1945 and he flew home to England on 9<sup>th</sup> May 1945.