Cyril Warne was born on 18th September 1924 in Kent. He was one of eight children. When he was about 6 years old, Cyril and his family moved to Oxfordshire. His father was to work in Shipton Cement Works and the family had been given one of the cement work houses.

Hel remembers the family moving to a new house in Cassington shortly after. He and an elder brother had to walk from the cement house to their new house to stay overnight until the rest of the family arrived the following day with their belongings on a hand cart. Cyril went to school at Cassington.

Cyril was a bricklayer and he used to place his tools on his bike and cycle around trying to find a job. He would ask at all the new building places, "have you got a job"? No job, then he moved onto the next site.

When he was 16, Cyril joined the local LDV at Cassington. They used to meet once a week in the outbuildings of the Vicarage. The building had bunks for when they were on guard. There was a mixed age group but mostly the older generation of men. He recalls “Tom Hedges was a Cassington Miller and was in charge of about 14 or 15 of us. We used to have to guard the gravel bits on Burley Farm in Cassington. They had a lorries in the pit and we had to stand guard over them. Not sure what we would have done had the Germans come along. We didn’t all have rifles, might have had a great coat.....If we were on guard, then we took a rifle but had to take it back when our guard was over. I had a tin hat which l took with me when l was called up. I cannot remember if l had a uniform”.

Cyril continued to learn his bricklaying art; he remembers the bus calling around West Oxfordshire collecting workers when he was working at Woodcote. The bus collected him at 6.30 in the morning and he was dropped off at home again at 6.30 in the evening. They were building sheds for sewing machines. He said he went to see what was left there, many years after the war, some were still standing but many had gone. Cyril also remembers building bomb shelters in Eynsham. At this time he was earning 101/2 pennies or tenpence ‘apenny per hour. In today's money this is less than 5p. Cyril remembers the foreman saying to him that he was on an Improvers rate not a bricklayer’s rate, he was asked to take charge of his small group of men, but got no more pay!

When l was 18 in September 1942, Cyril was called up for the Army. He had to report to Colchester. He said that everyone in the Southern area was sent to Colchester. He was put in the Ox and Bucks Light Infantry and stayed at the barracks for his 6 weeks basic training. He remembers his first week being one of marching, "turn right, turn left, how to salute!" He had his teeth "done", (first time he had a toothbrush), a haircut and lots on inoculations. (prior to having a toothbrush, Cyril used to clean his teeth in the traditional manner, lick your finger, dip in salt and rub!). He met lots of different Officers and was not allowed out of barracks until able to salute an Officer properly.

Cyril was then sent to the OX and Bucks barracks at Great Missenden for further training, he could either go for infantry or for specialist training. He chose the specialist training and had a choice of Bren Gun or 3" Mortar, after tests, he was put on the 3" Mortar and was taught to drive, first in lorries, then the carriers. This also took place at the test woods at Great Missenden. Cyril said there were 6 carriers in each platoon. The carriers had a Ford V8 engine, "they used to go like stink!" He remembers taking the carrier to the petrol station at Great Missenden and frightened the Corporal by going 50/60 miles an hour along the road.

Cyril remembers taking the carrier to what is now the TA Centre in Banbury where they had to unload 10lb dud bombs. He said one of the people in the carrier had jumped down and placed his rifle (.303 Lee Enfield) behind the carrier unbeknown to him and when he was asked to reverse the vehicle, he ran over the chaps rifle! He was brought before the CO who said he would either be confined to Barracks or made to pay for it. Cyril explained the circumstances and was cleared of the charge.

Cyril was then sent for further training to Dover...5th Battalion of the Ox and Bucks LI at Horbelisha Barracks. He remembers doing patrols along the sea front. They were sent to the old R101 airship base to guard, “nothing but lots of rats scurrying about!” He remembers being billeted at Folkestone in a private house for a while and going for a drink with friends. “The beer was on rations so we took to cider. There were three or four of us and an old boy sitting by said "l would be careful of drinking too much of this cider or you won't get out of here". We had not realised how strong it was!” Cyril said the houses had no heating, they were not given any coal and they had to salvage what little bits they could find from the ashes of the other houses.

He and his pals were sent on a route march carrying the 3" Mortar; one had to carry the base plate, one the barrel and one the ammo. The base plate was heavy and difficult to hold. They had to carry three10lb mortars in carriers, one in each hand. The driver always carried the bombs.

Cyril was then posted overseas. He did not know where he or his buddies were going. He had 7 days leave so came home to Cassington and eventually his mother saw him off at Oxford Station but still he did not know where he was off to. The train took them to Liverpool and they walked up the gangplank, onto the boat, but.......still not knowing where they were going to.

(Cyril said he and Win went to Liverpool, 50 years to the day when he sailed overseas he visited the areas he remembered. He said the boat was a South African cruise ship but cannot remember the name).

The boat had bunks, three in a row, there was a big black bin in the middle and if sea sick, had to use this bin. They had to wear life jackets all the time, roll call every day.

Eventually, the ship sailed into Naples harbour, this was sometime in 1943/44. He and his pals, Paddy and the Sarge were the best of pals and were sent to Bienevento Transit Camp for 2 weeks more training. The rumours would have them going to Monte Cassino, but on the boat going up the Mediterranean, they were told they were going to Anzio beachhead!

At this time the Ox and Bucks had moved off the beachhead and the 110 chaps were to be split between the Ox and Bucks and the KOYLI's. They had to stand in line and one went to the left and the other went to the right. Paddy and Sarge went different ways, but when Sarge saw they were going to be separated, he went to talk to the officer, Cyril never knew what he said, but he was told to go into the same line as them both.

Cyril said he had his first real taste of war that night. They were heavily shelled. He remembers being under canvas, the tent had been erected so that the canvas was very tight. He said this was done to help keep the small fragment of shell from coming through, and allow them to bounce off, larger pieces would of course come through. Paddy got a shell fragment in his body and was left there!

Cyril said they got as far as Rome, following General Clark of US 5th Army where he found himself with Paddy and Sarge in a quarry called Compo Alley. The Yanks had left a lot of rations and they were able to “fill their bellies to the rim”. Cyril remembers this as quite a deep quarry which enabled the mortar carriers to be well hidden. He said there was a German in a tree at the top of the quarry but could not get enough trajectory to shoot at them. Their mortars were constantly firing, he had 500 shells, and the barrel was getting red hot. The base of the mortar holds a .22 charge to fire the shell, but Cyril remembers the charge going off prematurely and not discharging the bomb high enough to clear the rim of the pit. Stalemate!

Eventually they reached Rome where they had a half day before being sent back to their camp where they were told being pulled out to Alexandria.

They boarded the boat at Haifa, and were then told they were going off to Marseille, stopping en route in Naples. They waited in the harbour there for 3 days whilst waiting for more men to join them. They landed at Marseille and were told to drive lorries through to Belgium. Cyril said lots of lorries at this time were being sent from Canada. They then proceeded to Antwerp, Holland with new carriers.

Cyril and his pals were then patrolling the border with Germany and the Russian lines. He retold a story of attempting to get the carriers onto the duwk to cross the River Alm. The carriers had "wings" on either side and l could not get them onto the duwk. The Canadian operating the amphibious vehicles grabbed hold of a sledge hammer and smashed these wings and said, "They’ll get in now".

An Officer came up the next morning and said "The War is over".

Cyril and Paddy were now patrolling the border on the "Hemel Hempstead" autobahn. He said the Germans were attempting to get across to the American/English side of the lines but the Russians would come out to get them back across their lines. He also remembered lots of American lorries leaving with "lots of stuff" in them. He remembers being told ***DO NOT LOOK*** inside these trucks and still today does not know what was being taken out of Germany. At this time Paddy and Cyril met two sisters, Cyril said he did not even get to kiss his girl, but later learnt that Paddy had gone back and married ‘his’ sister.

Cyril and Paddy were then in Minden, Germany, the scene of a famous KOYLI battle many years ago where they held a huge parade.

Cyril said he was called into his CO's office and told he could be discharged on a B discharge but the choice was his. Cyril said he took the discharge. The significance of the B discharge was that builders and bricklayers were needed back home to rebuild the Country after the war. Cyril had come full circle back home. He got his old job back and his weeks wage was 10 ½d (Tenpence ha’penny)

Cyril and Win went back to Belgium 50 years after this event to find Paddy. They went to a small village and asked around, someone knew Paddy's story and they were given directions to his home. On knocking at the door, Paddy's wife came around the garden, recognised him at once and cried out, "Ginger", (his nickname). They remained in close contact for many years, both Paddy and his wife have died, but Cyril and Win keep in touch with their daughter.

Cyril and Win met and married in July 1951. They lived in Adderbury for many years until they moved a few years ago to be nearer to their daughter. They have had a full and happy life, travelling many miles in their caravan. They celebrate their 65th wedding anniversary this year.