

Col D A H Sime OBE MC TD

In Italy in April 1945, just months before the war's end, the Allies advanced to the River Po, over which all the bridges had been destroyed. David Sime, then a captain serving with 178 Med Regt RA, had been in continuous action for eight days, often with his wireless sets mounted on mules, as an FOO in support of 10 (US) Mountain Div. On 23 April he arrived just south of the river to find that the American infantry were intending to force a crossing that same morning. Although he had been employed the whole of the previous night and had had no sleep, he refused his CO's offer to have him relieved and volunteered to go up to the river bank and follow the infantry across. From the outset 88mm shells were bursting accurately over his head, and he had no cover. But he got across successfully with his infantry commander, established a series of OPs and maintained accurate, observed fire in support of the bridgehead for the next 48 hours while a bridge was being built. He was awarded an immediate MC.

David Alistair Hope Sime was born in Edinburgh on 2 August 1920 and educated at Loretto before going up to Jesus College, Cambridge, to read economics. After OCTU, he was commissioned in 1941 and joined 178 Med Regt RA, the Lowland Gunners, in which his father had served as an officer in the Great War. In June 1942 his regiment embarked in the liner *Empress of Japan*, which had been converted to a troopship, and on the voyage he entertained the men with his bagpipes. They joined Montgomery's Eighth Army and immediately deployed their 25-pounders in secretly pre-dug positions at El Alamein.

Sime, as assistant CPO in his battery, had to organise continuous fire plans in support of the forward infantry and armour. While in the desert he maintained a hatred of the 'unspeakable squadrons' of flies, desert sores and Stuka dive bombers. As the appointed mine-clearance officer for his battery, he also detested the German Teller anti-vehicle mine, the jumping-jack steel ball anti-personnel mine which, when triggered, jumped to two feet before exploding, and the Schu wooden mine, which had a habit of removing one's foot.

Sime took part in all the major battles in North Africa, including El Alamein and the Mareth Line until, in May 1943, after campaigning over some 1,200 miles, he and his men arrived at Sousse on the coast of Tunisia. They then took part in the Allied invasion of Sicily and in the Italian Campaign. After a spell in hospital with hepatitis, he rejoined his unit and was

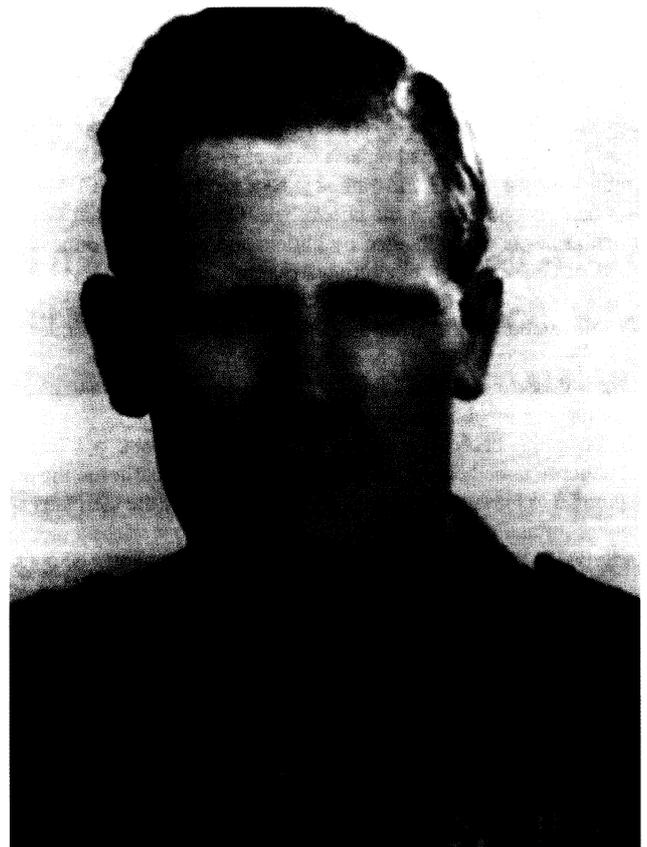
continuously in action up the east coast of Italy through the winter before taking part in the battle of the Anzio beachhead. Promoted to temporary captain he became an FOO and supported 10 (US) Mountain Div using his regiment's 5.5-inch guns in the hard slog through Italy to the Gothic Line and on to Lake Garda, where their war ended. The Americans, as a token of appreciation, presented the regiment with Mussolini's sword, which they had earlier captured.

After the war Sime decided not to return to Cambridge to complete his degree, but instead to make up for lost time by qualifying as an accountant while working in his father's financial house in Edinburgh. In September 1946 he married Diana Stephens who had been his girlfriend since she was 16, and who had kept her pledge to wait for him. They settled in Edinburgh but in 1950 a sea change occurred when Sime was offered a job in London by Col William Glover who, after distinguished military and diplomatic service in two world wars, had become head of the family firm of Glover and Main. He accepted, and the family duly moved south to live in Wimbledon. He remained with the company for 20 years eventually becoming its managing director until it was sold to Thorn in the late-1960s.

Despite heavy business commitments Sime began his two great enthusiasms, first to the Worshipful Company of Haberdashers and secondly to the TA and the Army Cadets.

He was a liveryman of the Haberdashers Company, one of the Great Twelve City Livery Companies, for 50 years, being its master three times including that honour during their 500th anniversary. He was head of their schools programme when they made the important decision to take the Aske and Monmouth Schools private instead of comprehensive in the 70s. These schools are now perennially near the top of the independent schools academic league tables.

He joined the RA TA, commanding a battery of the Surrey Yeomanry in south-west



London, becoming second-in-command, and then commanding the regiment in the mid-1960s, being awarded his TD and being appointed OBE and promoted to colonel. Among his many accomplishments, he established the regiment's links with Guildford Cathedral, raised funds for its completion, and hosted its annual service of remembrance, not missing one in 40 years right up to this year's, only seven weeks before his death. Being involved in the wider Royal Artillery community, he was also a trustee of a number of charities and an outstanding chairman of the NAA for 10 years. After the Yeomanry, he was a staunch supporter of their associated cadet force being commandant of Surrey ACF for seven years in the 60s and 70s.

A natural leader, Sime was a great contributor to the causes near to his heart and to his family, all of whom benefitted not only from his wise council and moral courage, but also from his sense of humour. He was a big man in every sense of the word: a Scot to the last, from playing the bagpipes to his love of whisky and haggis. David Sime died on December 29, aged 90. He is survived by his wife Diana and their three daughters and two sons.

This obituary is based on one that appeared in The Daily Telegraph on 16 January and is used here with permission.