

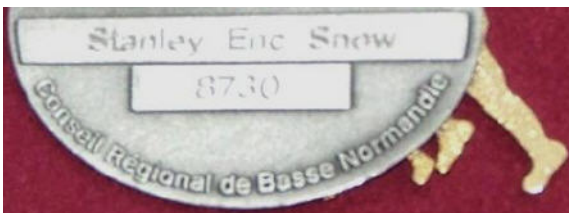


The Editor Writes

I'm delighted to present another bumper edition which, with a little help from my friends, has not been too difficult to fill. My sincere thanks go to Joyce and Stan Snow (for photographs, too), Bernard Halsall, Ken West and Steve Pearson for their excellent contributions on the theme of the D-Day Anniversary celebrations in this country and Normandy.

I will add my usual plea for stories and anecdotes, and not necessarily about wartime experiences - see the off-beat article from Tony Johnson on page 3, for example. If you do not want to write it yourself, that's no problem. Just tell me the tale and I'll do the rest!

Here is the special D-Day Anniversary commemoration medal presented to Stan Snow in Normandy



Heart' and 'Abide With Me' accompanied by the recorded music of the Thurmaston Scout and Guide Band.

At the laying of the wreaths, each child came shyly forward to place their rose on the plinth; throats tightened and many a tear trickled down a cheek. Short addresses by the Maire and the Normandy Veterans Association representative were followed by the two national anthems. This brought to a close a very moving ceremony in the quiet countryside, which 60 years ago had been the killing ground of the week-long battle, resulting in some 4,000 casualties.

M. Chevalier, the Maire, invited us all back to the Town Hall for coffee, drinks and cake, and we were able to talk to many people, and especially the children. After their departure, out came the Calvados and tongues loosened

Saint Desir Cemetery.

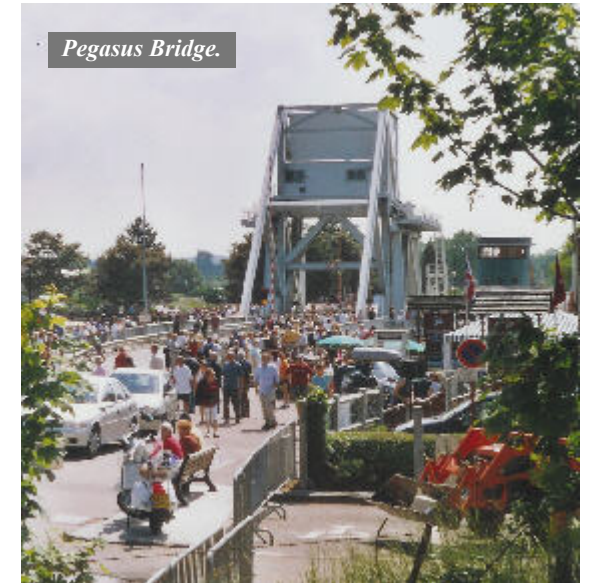


and our French improved. We sang 'We'll Meet Again' and said our 'Goodbyes' with kisses and tears.

At the small British War Cemetery of Jerusalem (47 graves), two ex-ATS Girls (now widows), laid a wreath on behalf of the mothers and wives who had lost a loved one. A local lady was intrigued by this act, saying that it was the very first time she had seen a 'Lady Soldier' put a wreath on the cross at that cemetery.

The knowledge and charm of Nigel got the coach parked near to the Marine Commando Memorial at Port-en Bessen and a chance for a leisurely lunch at a pavement cafe before making our way to the American Sector.

Pegasus Bridge.



A five kilometre tailback decided us to give Omaha Beach and Cemetery a miss, so we carried on to Pont du Hoc to see the remains of the Coastal Battery there. The vast craters reminded one of these of the Western Front in 1914-18, really awe-inspiring. The last item on our excellent itinerary was a short stop at St Manvieu Cemetery for a personal goodbye to special friends, then back to the hotel for a welcome dinner and to pack for an early return on the morrow.

So ended a successful, memorable six days, when memories of our youth, both happy and emotional, were shared. Memories sacred to those 'Old Sweats' who 60 years ago had taken part in the liberation of Northwest Europe and helped to bring the freedom that we should all cherish.



RNA Coffee Morning. Our seafaring friends in the Association will welcome all Members at their fundraising event on Saturday, 14 August, in the Harborough Theatre.

Lutterworth RBL Concert. A pleasant evening's entertainment is in store for the audience in St Mary's Church, Lutterworth, on Saturday, 14 August, when the Ibstock Brick Brass Band will present a concert of popular music from 7.30pm. Tickets are available from Mrs B Morgan, 21 Woodway Road, Lutterworth, LE17 4QG, telephone 01455 552876.

Membership Rising. Three new Members have brought the Branch total to 129, reports Tony Johnson, who also states that subscriptions would remain at £11.50 and no increase in the cost of badges, £3. Michael Turner, an occasional visitor from Australia was at the July meeting. Unfortunately, James Johnston is in poor health and a permanent hotel resident. Details of the new arrivals are given in the Membership Directory amendments on page 4.

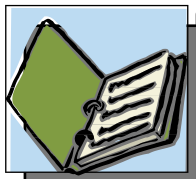
Donation. Money received in lieu of flowers at the funeral of Mrs B Jackson amounted to £157.70 and has been donated to the Poppy Appeal.

Portakabin Poppy Store. Delivery has been delayed, but the building should be in place by the end of July. Meanwhile, the internal fittings are under construction.

Our Betty. Home after a heart valve replacement operation, Betty Jeacock would like to thank everyone who sent get well messages. Although she is making good progress, 'Busy Bee' Betty is finding forced inactivity, apart from short walks, a little difficult to cope with!

Our Glenys. Also out of hospital, though still receiving treatment, Glenys Hocking-Davies has been allowed to venture out. She thanks everyone who sent cards and good wishes.

Beaumanor Hall. George Fleming and John Cox carried County and Branch banners at the recent event.



The Diary

Details of all Social Events are available from Joan McMillin on MH 462143. Joan welcomes your ideas for events, outings, etc.

SOME DATES TO KEEP FREE

- 14 Aug RNA Coffee Morning at the Harborough Theatre
- 14 Aug Lutterworth RBL Band Concert St Mary's Church 19.30
- 17 Aug Branch Lunch at the Angel Hotel
- 19 Sept Cotswold Coach Tour - Half proceeds to Branch
- 2 Oct Branch Annual Dinner - MH Golf Club
- 6 Nov Festival of Remembrance Concert - De Montfort Hall
- 6 Nov Branch Coffee Morning - Harborough Theatre
- 8 Nov Poppy Appeal Gala Evening - Harborough Theatre
- 13 Nov MH Band Remembrance Concert - Methodist Church

The date of the next meeting is August 11

Branch meetings are held on the Second Wednesday of each month at 7.30 pm in the downstairs Function Room, Conservative Club, Fairfield Road, Market Harborough.

The Branch Committee meets on the Thursday preceding the Branch Meeting at 7.30 pm in the upstairs Committee Room at the Conservative Club.



The Royal British Legion

Reg. Charity 219279

Market Harborough Branch

Founded in 1923



Branch Website
www.mktharbrorbl.ukvet.net

In Touch

Issue 70

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A String of Coincidences

Tony Johnson

Ask a history teacher to explain this.

- Abraham Lincoln was elected President in 1860. J.F. Kennedy was elected in 1960.
- The names Lincoln and Kennedy each contain seven letters.
- Both were particularly concerned with civil rights.
- Both wives lost a child while living in the White House.
- Both Presidents were shot on a Friday. Both Presidents were shot in the head
- Both were assassinated by Southerners.
- Both were succeeded by Southerners named Johnson.
- Lincoln's secretary was named Kennedy.
- Kennedy's secretary was named Lincoln.
- Andrew Johnson, who succeeded Lincoln, was born in 1839.
- Lee Harvey Oswald who assassinated Kennedy, was born in 1939.
- Both assassins were known by their three names.
- Lincoln was shot at a theatre named "Kennedy".
- Kennedy was shot in a car called "Lincoln"
- Booth ran from the theatre and was caught in a warehouse.
- Oswald ran from a warehouse and was caught in a theatre.
- Booth and Oswald were assassinated before trials.

And here's the kicker

- A week before Lincoln was shot: he was in Monroe, Maryland.
- A week before Kennedy was shot he was with Marilyn Monroe.

Creepy, huh?



Stan Snow receives his D-Day medal (see page 1).

and the eleven men to be awarded stood in front of the standard bearers. Each man was thanked for helping in the liberation of France, and then the badge was pinned on. There were speeches in French and English, followed by wreath laying.

After almost two hours standing in the hot sun, we went to Lisieux and found a cafe for a refreshing cool beer. We then saw the Souvenir et Paix (memory and peace) march. We parted from Richard, Ben and Paul, and returned to our hotel, where our meal was ready. A party of Navy veterans from Essex, who had received their medals in Caen on June 5th, joined us. They had spent five days in the hotel, having booked in 2002. On the journey home next day, we met the same party on their coach three times before Calais and again on the ferry. When we got home, we found Richard, Ben and Paul had arrived from Portsmouth half an hour before us.

Having been on the 40th, 50th and 60th Anniversaries, and a number of times in between, we are looking forward to the next time.

the car, we had drinks, etc. Lots of people started to come into the Cemetery as we arrived. The French with their banners lined up behind the memorial and school children arrived in coaches. There were almost six hundred graves of British, a few Australian and one New Zealander. Union Jacks were placed along each row of graves and a child stood beside each grave and laid a flower.

After this the presentation ceremony started

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS
ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE



Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

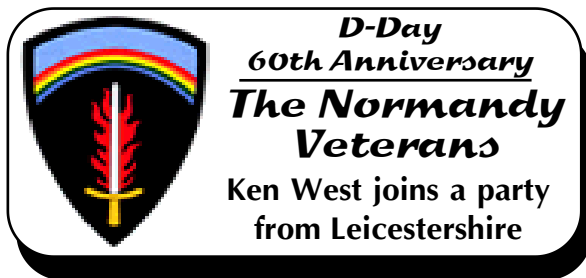
Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely.

But this is the year 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory!

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory!

Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.

General Eisenhower's D-Day message to the Invasion Forces



On Thursday, 3 June 2004, a smiling Nigel Powner, of Market Harborough Travel, welcomed aboard 25 Leicestershire Normandy Veterans, with relatives and friends, for a six-day Pilgrimage to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings on the 6th June 1944.



Unfortunately, congestion on the M25 resulted in missing our Ferry and a late arrival at our hotel in Caen. The cool morning of Friday saw us at Pegasus Bridge, where the British Airborne Division had captured this strategic point within 15 minutes of landing to free the first building in France, which just happened to be a Pub! Keen interest was shown in the well laid-out Museum adjacent to the Bridge.

We moved on to Douvres de la Deliverance, where posies were laid on the graves of lads who had landed on D-Day itself. Thence to Courseulles, where the Canadians have their official memorial at Juno Beach.

We took the coast road along the landing beaches to Arromanches, where we were lucky to find it was low

tide. The remains of the original Mulberry Harbour stood out above the waterline, and on the beach there were numerous assorted Landing Craft to inspect, in addition to the Museum with the working model of Mulberry. Retracing our steps along the coast road we stopped at Ouistreham to lay a wreath at the Naval Memorial.

The first of the official events was on Saturday. A parade and service at Field Marshall Montgomery's Statue at Colville-Montgomerie, followed by a 'Vin d'honneur' and presentation of commemorative medailles to each Veteran. En route to Caen, we saw the dropping of hundreds of Paras at Ranville by a Hercules and two Dakotas.

Arriving at the Peace Park, seating for the hundreds of Veterans was arranged as we awaited the arrival of the Prince of Wales to formally open the British Garden of Peace and to listen to the two military bands in the glorious sunshine. Then, a gentle stroll back to the hotel for a welcome cool drink and dinner.

On Sunday, 6 June, the cemetery at Bayeux was the centrepiece for the whole Pilgrimage. The service, attended by Her Majesty the Queen and other heads of state, was very moving. After standing some three hours in the blazing sun, the NAAFI tents at the rear offered welcome drinks and eats. There was a chance to meet the Duke of Gloucester and other high personages before making our way back to our coach, just one of 180 which had brought the Veterans, probably for the last time, to commemorate their fallen comrades.

Monday turned out to be the highlight of the tour. Originally planned as a simple service at the 49th Infantry Division (Polar Bears) Memorial at Fontenay-le-Penil, it turned out to be something rather special. As our coach arrived we were met by the Maire and members of the local Council and Police. Moments later, cars arrived with members of the French ex-service associations, with six standards, and a coach bringing 36 primary schoolchildren, each grasping a single rose. The Veterans formed two lines and welcomed the children in between to begin the service. Fifty lusty English voices sang 'O Valiant

County Review

Items of Interest from the Leicestershire & Rutland RBL County Circular

The Half year Conference. Only 20-25 members attended the Conference held on 19th June at Oakham Club. County Vice Chairman, Mark Hudson, stood in for Jim Rowlinson to chair the conference and from the comments afterwards he coped very well and has the makings of a good deputy for Jim. The conference wished Jim a speedy recovery and hoped his high blood pressure would soon be under control.

Concern was raised in the Open Forum about sending out fundraising appeals to our own members when they are already giving their all to the cause. The conference requested that a letter be sent to the National Chairman asking if the Fundraising Department could ensure that current RBL members are deleted from their mailing lists. A complaint was also made about sending fundraising mail to widows of ex-servicemen requesting donations for the flags for D-Day. Mark Hudson explained that, although some people do take objection to the mailing, it draws in so much money for the funds that this is deemed to be a successful way of raising revenue.

This event has been held for many years in order for both Women's and Men's sections to meet and voice any concerns through the Open Forum. None of the Officers of either Section know what questions are going to be asked at the forum so there are no pre rehearsed replies. The question must be asked at both of the County Executive Committees, is there a need to hold a half year Conference?

Just for Fun

"Why ever did they build the railway station three miles from the village?" asked the traveller.
 "Ah," says O'Reilly, "they must have thought it would be a good thing to have it near the trains."

D-Day 60th Anniversary

The Celebration in Leicester

A flotilla of almost 7000 ships, 4000 landing craft and scores of gliders set off on the morning of the 6th June 1944 carrying Allied forces on the biggest and most complex military invasion in history. To celebrate the 60th Anniversary, the City Council organised a Civic Service and the Royal British Legion and Ex-Services Associations provided a parade of Standards. The Lord Mayor, Civic Dignitaries, the Lord Lieutenant, Deputy Lieutenants, RBL and Ex-Services personnel took part in a very moving service in the Cathedral. The Union Flag, carried by George Fleming, the Tigers Regimental Colours, the RBL and Women's Section County Standards, approached the Altar for the Act of Homage, the Silence and Kohima recited by the Royal British Legion President, Lt. Col. Peter Roffey DL.

After the service, the Quorn RBL Pipe Band led a parade of Standard Bearers and RBL and Ex-Service personnel to the Town Hall, for the salute.

Stephen Pearson took part in the commemorative ceremony in Leicester and wrote this report.

It started with a service in Leicester Cathedral and I was there representing the Royal Army Medical Corps, along with a few others I had served with during five years as a Medic (TA).

The service was very good and to see so many, many ex-servicemen made you feel solemn, yet proud for what they did. We owe them a lot.

There was a parade and march past after the church service. We proceeded to Town Hall Square led by the Pipe Band, and directly behind them were the standard bearers. We came to a halt facing the Town Hall and stood at ease. After a speech made by Mark Hudson we were dismissed.

A good day was had by all, remembering those who gave their lives for us and our freedom.



D-Day 60th Anniversary **Tarrant Rushton** **Revisited** **Bernard Halsall**



A farm field gate on a bend in a country road in Dorset was our port of call. There were no direction signs, no indications of any kind, and we wondered as we drove slowly along between high hedges if we were the only people there. I had most of my family with me in a convoy of three cars, including my children, grandchildren and, of course, my wife, who was no stranger to this place.

The last part of the journey was up a steep, winding hill, then a straight run of about 400 yards to the field gate. As we reached the top of the hill we were met by an extraordinary sight. On this lovely summer afternoon, this country road was full of cars, buses, bicycles and walkers heading for the field gate. A later estimate put the crowd at over twelve hundred.



Captain Bernard Halsall, M.C., Glider Pilot Regiment (centre), marches proudly with Veterans past his son, Air Commodore Martin Halsall, who took the salute, and is seen above addressing the gathering at the Memorial Stone.

A friendly, but sombre gathering, welcomed by Air Cadets as eventually we all went through the field gate and passed the Memorial Stone. This is a slab of concrete, about four feet high, part of the original runway. At the front, it bears a brass plate inscribed,

To honour all who served with
298 and 644 Squadrons, R.A.F. and
'C' Squadron, Glider Pilot Regiment.

The service was started at 3pm by the Padre. There was an inspection, some hymns, an address, the spreading of ashes of a recently deceased Glider Pilot (DFC) and Silence.

The Silence to recall those who did not return, as well as the excitement, the tension and the fear that was in full flow at this place more than sixty years ago.



Six gliders from here had led the Allied armies into battle by landing at, and capturing, what is now known as Pegasus Bridge. Before the end of the war, similar feats were performed many times. Less than half survived, and now there are very few. But, on this day in June, their friends, relatives and many others had come back to remember.

At the gate, to a field, in Dorset.



We set off by car for Normandy at 7 am on Friday June 4th 2004, with our daughter, son-in-law and eight-year-old great granddaughter, Georgia. At the same time, our son Richard and grandson Ben loaded their American Jeep (which had seen action in Europe) on to our lorry, and left for Market Harborough. They picked up Paul Rhodes, loaded his American Jeep on to the trailer, and travelled down to Portsmouth, taking the Jeeps to Ouistreham.

We drove via Dover to Calais, having booked into a hotel in Honfleur back in June 2003. It was the nearest we could get to the beaches, but it was fine - not too far along the motorway to Sword beach and a nicer ride back in the evening along the coastal road.

On Saturday June 5th, we visited Pegasus Bridge, where HRH Prince Charles was to inaugurate the Horsa Glider at the new Pegasus Museum. At Pegasus, Stan met up with a man who was also in the 51st Highland Division. He was wounded on April 28th and Stan on May 2nd, and both were taken to the same hospital. We then went up to Randville, where the parachute drop was. That was a lovely sight, watching over the valley. We rang Richard and found they had camped at the side of Pegasus Bridge the first night, but had to move on early the next morning because of Prince Charles' visit. They moved on along the coast to Courseulles-Sur-Mer, where they were camped very comfortably with all mod cons.

We returned to Pegasus on Sunday, then went up to Sword beach, where we met up at a café for lunch with

Richard, Ben, Paul and the Jeeps. We had been given passes before we left home, so we could move around and where road barriers were closed, they were opened for us.



We walked along Sword beach and attended a moving ceremony of unveiling of a new granite memorial that our Naval personnel had subscribed to. Joyce and Georgia walked quite a way along the water edge, Georgia picking up lots of shells from the beach where great granddad landed. After an enjoyable afternoon on and around Sword beach, we returned to Honfleur and enjoyed a nice evening meal by the water.

We made our way to Lisieux on Monday and visited the Basilica (church) which was a wonderful place. We then went up the short motorway out of Lisieux and found the Saint Desir Cemetery where Stan was to collect his D-Day medal at 1.30 p.m. It was a very hot day and, after parking



Branch News

At the July meeting, George Gamble told two contrasting stories arising from his collection of military medals. This was the latest of his fascinating presentations to the Branch based on his extensive researches. The first related to the Royal Navy encounter on the Yangtse River in 1949 and was prompted by a Naval Medal awarded to a sailor on HMS Amethyst and George's great good fortune in finding an extremely rare Yangtse campaign bar. Although the incident is very familiar, George supplied a lot of interesting background detail.

The second story, despite dating back to 1915, is little known because it was not publicised at the time under the Official Secrets Act. It concerned a shocking railway disaster in Scotland, the worst in British railway history, which was caused by sheer incompetence. Three trains were involved, with hundreds of troops among the passengers, and there were many deaths and injuries. A memorial plaque issued to the family of a soldier who lost his life in the disaster came into George's possession and his research resulted in a fascinating, though tragic, account.

Membership Directory Amendments

We welcome these new members:

01858 461278 Baines Mr N (Norman),
38 Andrew Macdonald Close, Market Harborough,
LE16 7ED.

01491 872829 Johnston Mr J H (James), 'The
Miller of Mansfield', High St, Goring -on-Thames,
RG8 9AW

00(61)740951111 Turner Mr M A (Michael),
8 Hogan Rd, Tarzali, Queensland, 4885, Australia.

Change of address:

Middleton Mr M (Mike) & Mrs P (Pat)
7 Howard Way, Market Harborough, LE16 9LD.
(same telephone number).

Marsden Mr A W (Andrew) please amend details
to read - **07957 250938**, 26 Bramfield Park.