**HEADSTONE DEDICATION**

GOOD AFTERNOON MADAME MAYOR, REVEREND ROB, MY FELLOW MEMBERS OF THE TROWBRIDGE BRANCH OF THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION, LADIES AND GENTLEMAN, IT’S REALLY GOOD TO SEE YOU HERE ON THIS GLORIOUS AND DRY SUMMER’S AFTERNOON.

AND WELCOME TO THIS DEDICATION OF A HEADSTONE TO MARK THE GRAVE OF ROSIE SHEEHAN AND RENEE REED, BOTH OF WHOM WERE KILLED WHEN A STICK OF BOMBS WAS JETTISONED OVER TROWBRIDGE BY AN ENEMY AIRCRAFT FOLLOWING A RAID ON BRISTOL IN THE EARLY HOURS OF 27TH JULY 1942, SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO TODAY.

ROSIE WAS LIVING IN THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION CLUB, THEN NEAR THE TOWN BRIDGE, ALONG WITH HER FATHER WHO WAS THE CLUB’S STEWARD AND MOTHER; RENEE WAS A COUSIN WHO WAS VISITING FROM ROSS-ON-WYE. ONE BOMB STRUCK THE CLUB, KILLING THE TWO GIRLS; ROSIE’S MOTHER AND FATHER BOTH SURVIVED, ALTHOUGH HER MUM WAS BADLY INJURED.

IN THE SAME RAID TROOPER MAURICE BROWNING OF THE LIFE GUARDS WAS ALSO BADLY INJURED WHEN HIS ARMOURED CAR CRASHED ON THE TOWN BRIDGE. SADLY HE LATER DIED FROM HIS INJURIES AND IS BURIED IN A WAR GRAVE NEAR HIS FAMILY HOME IN WISBECH.

ROSIE AND RENEE WERE BURIED IN SEPARATE COFFINS IN THE SAME GRAVE IN THIS CEMETRY, WHICH WAS COVERED WITH A LARGE NUMBER OF BEAUTIFUL FLORAL TRIBUTES. WE DON’T KNOW IF THE GRAVE WAS MARKED BUT OVER TIME THE LOCATION OF IT BECAME OBSCURED. ONE OF OUR BRANCH MEMBERS, MR PETE RICHARDSON, TOOK ON THE CHALLENGE OF FINDING THE GRAVE AND ARRANGING FOR IT TO BE MARKED APPROPRIATELY. THIS HAS NOT BEEN STRAIGHTFORWARD AND I SHOULD LIKE TO PAY CREDIT TO PETE’S DILIGENCE AND ENTHUSIASM IN WORKING WITH MANY AGENCIES TO GET US ALL HERE TODAY. PETE HAS ALSO BEEN THE DRIVING FORCE WITHIN THE TROWBRIDGE BRANCH OF THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION TO RAISE THE MONEY TO BE ABLE TO FUND THE HEADSTONE THAT WE ARE DEDICATING TODAY. THANK YOU PETE FOR ALL THAT YOU HAVE DONE.

I SHOULD ALSO LIKE TO THANK TROWBRIDGE HISTORIC SOCIETY, TROWBRIDGE TOWN COUNCIL, WILTSHIRE COUNCIL, THE COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION AND JAMES LONG MASONS LIMITED FOR ALL THE SUPPORT AND HELP THEY HAVE GIVEN TO BE ABLE TO MAKE THIS DEDICATION SERVICE HAPPEN.

SO AFTER SEVENTY FIVE YEARS THE MEMBERS OF TROWBRIDGE BRANCH OF THE ROYAL BRITISH LEGION ARE DELIGHTED TO BE ABLE TO MARK THE GRAVE OF ROSIE SHEEHAN AND RENEE REED. THANK YOU.