

The Market Harborough Branch Royal British Legion newsletter *In Touch* was launched in June 1996. Bernard Halsall was always a keen supporter of the project, one of its earliest contributors and under his own name, the pseudonym Hotspur and Editor, one of its most prolific.

It is under these three personalities that this collection of his writing for the Newsletter is arranged.

To mark its tenth anniversary *In Touch* carried a profile of each of its editors and the following appeared in the August 2006 Issue.


*In the
Editor's
Chair*

1996 - 2006
In Touch
Ten Years Old!

It was an open secret that several of these lighthearted pieces under the pseudonym “Hotspur” had been written by **Bernard Halsall**, so when he took over the reins in November, 1998, the attractive, entertaining character of *In Touch* seemed assured.

He introduced the idea of serialising long articles, the first of which was a thought provoking contribution from a member, then in prison serving a life-sentence. Another innovation was including the occasion puzzle, but this was not popular despite the offer of prizes for the winners.

The first response to the Branch website launched in April 1998 and other contacts via the internet appeared during Bernard’s tenure although he still maintained that he did not understand this “computer stuff”.



Bernard’s editorials follow in Chronological order.

November 1998

For the past two years, Dick Fulford has been our hard working Editor, and under his guidance *In Touch* has grown in distribution as well as in content. I am certain that all members will join me in thanking Dick for a job well done and wish him a happy retirement. I hope that he will put pen to paper from time to time so we may enjoy more of his stories.

Letters to the Editor on any subject and other contributions will be warmly welcomed although this does not guarantee publication!

Thus, this issue has fewer contributions from member than usual, not through lack of items submitted, but because there is so much to write about what has been happening in the Branch. So active has the Branch been that "1997/98 -An Active Year" could only just be squeezed onto three pages. The AGM always produces news and the names of your new Committee and Office Holders are duly reported. We also bring you up to date with the Poppy Appeal in a note from the Organisers. We did find room for another of Jack Stimpson's poems of the Seasons and for a tale from a civilian Hotspur.

The Diary page has fewer firm dates than usual and more "details later". However, one event is fixed - the Civic Reception and presentation to Robert Cramp of the Légion d'Honneur. Your invitation to take part in this great occasion is included with this Newsletter. Time is short, so if you wish to attend, you must reply by 7th December.

January 1999

For the first time in the history of the Branch, we have a "Lady Chair" and the final stronghold of male domination has fallen! However, it should not be forgotten that women have been an integral part of our defence forces since early in the First World War. My own mother served for over two years in France and Belgium from 1916 onwards, as no doubt the mothers of some of our present members also served. And in the second war, women took a prominent part in the defence of our Island in all three Services, whilst today women are trained for combat at sea, on land and in the air.

Sadly, Women today seem to bear the brunt to the suffering in any conflict - indeed in Central Europe they appear to be the main target for hostile attack and terror.

So "Welcome, Madam Chair, and may we all give you the support necessary to make your term of office a Happy and Successful one".

Help!

In my first issue as Editor I put in an appeal for material to publish in later editions. I was overwhelmed with nothing!

However, I had no doubt that this was entirely due to the approaching Christmas and its attendant duties. So, now with Lent the next milestone get your pens (and fingers) out and lets have it! There must be something fairly interesting that has happened to you sometime in the long years that have gone before. Don't worry about grammar and spelling. It can't be worse than mine. If we can receive a short note or comment from each of you, then a reasonable "float" of articles can be put together, and my job will be a lot easier! In anticipation, very many thanks.

March 1999

The Branch was saddened when our Hon. Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Mr George Fleming announced he was retiring from the posts he had filled with such confidence and efficiency for some years. Happily George will continue to be our Standard bearer and for that we are both pleased and proud. Meanwhile we thank you George for your services to the Branch, so happily and freely given.

Also retiring from the Committee was Mr Gordon Adnett. Gordon is one of our longest serving members and a past Chairman. Gordon has served on the Committee for a number of years and never failed to support the various efforts of the branch. Justifiably regarded as Mr Dependable when any helpers were required (sometimes the only helper) we thank you Gordon for your staunch support.

In the January issue we published a piece by our regular contributor, Mr Bill Cotton headed "Play the Game", and asked if anyone knew who had written the poem. Our esteemed President, Peter Wilson rang the Editor on the day we published, with the answer. Three other members also responded.

The title of the poem is "In Vitae Lampada" by Sir Henry John Newbolt 1862- 1934. Peter also pointed out the following "errors"

Line 1 *close* should start with a capital C

Line 5 *yet* should read *and*

Line 7 *spoke* should read *smote*

Sherlock Holmes had nothing on Peter!

May 1999

The puzzle insert accompanying the March Issue was an overwhelming success. One member, Bob Bond, rang with the correct answer within 3 hours of delivery. One other member rang with the wrong answer a week later. Otherwise response, to put it mildly, was muted. Anyway, well done Bob, and hope you enjoyed the wine. And thanks to those who found Adolf but did not tell me and to those who tried but for whom the paper refused to fold the right way.

As mentioned in *In Touch, Too*, Tony Johnson has had to give up the organising of the canal trip and occasional lunches owing to pressure of other work. I know that Tony produces a magazine for his fellow ex- P.O.W. aircrew from Stalagluft , and a highclass job he makes of it. Thanks Tony for those "do's" you arranged for us - most enjoyable. The pattern of events which you established will continue and I hope you will be able to join some of them.

George Fleming is back as Hon. Treasurer, and thank goodness for that. Looking after money in the meticulous way required is not everyone's cup of tea and George does it with admirable efficiency.

At long last the winter is behind us, and we can look forward (and hope) to the balmy days of summer. All we need now is loyal support for the social activities organised by the hardworking committee to see us through in good spirits to the Millennium!

July 1999

On Thursday, 17th June, 1999 in the High court, the soldiers involved in the “Bloody Sunday” affair on Sunday, 30th January, 1972, won their case to remain anonymous before a special tribunal set up to investigate the shootings. All servicemen, past and present, will greet this decision with satisfaction.

As those involved go from one deadline to another, it would be quite wrong to pass any comment which might not help in finding a solution. We can only hope that common sense and respect for ones fellow human beings, of whatever race, creed or colour, will finally prevail.

A wonderful day out was had at the Poppy Race day at Newmarket, and one or two even managed to find a winner - congratulations! The Entertainments Committee under Bob England moves from strength to strength, and this augers well for the future. Well done Bob.

The Editor has received a most interesting letter from one of our members. Tony Mullin, who contributed the article “Food for Thought” which covered three issues of *In Touch*, writes to tell me that the Prison Reform Trust printed an edited version in their magazine, “Prison Report”. Also he has been visited by the Head of RBL Benevolent Department and his article has been forwarded to General Sir David Ramsbottom, Chief Inspector of Prisons. Tony is surprised at the interest shown in his article and has promised to keep me posted of further developments. At *In Touch* we have received many interesting comments on his thoughtful article.

September 1999

Summer is slipping away almost without being noticed, and here we are, once again in September, three-quarters of the year gone, and just a few weeks to the New Millennium.

September is an important month for most members of The Royal British Legion. Firstly it marks the start of the second world war. Little could anyone imagine the horrors that were to unfold across the globe as we heard the Prime Minister say, “...and consequently this country is at war with Germany.” Those who heard those words will remember them for ever.

And then, just one year later a new Prime Minister was to address the Nation to tell us of our debt to a few young men, and some not so young, who had repelled the armada of enemy bombers and gained the nation a respite from invasion. “*Never in the long history of human conflict has so much been owed by so many to so few.*”

It was in a September that the Germans commenced their ill-fated assault on Stalingrad, and September was also the month of the Airborne landing at Arnhem. September seemed to be a fateful month throughout those dark years.

We have an opportunity to remember “The Few”, at the Battle of Britain Memorial Service at St. Dionysius Church on 19th September, without whose victory nothing would have remained the same. I hope we turn up in force.

Another link in the story of the Halifax which appeared in our last issue has been found. A young man, born and bred in Market Harborough, was a member of the crew of a Halifax bomber shot down whilst dropping supplies to the S.O.E. in France in 1944. The Halifax took off from Tarrant Rushton Airfield. He was Sgt. W.G. Lawrence, whose name appears on the Memorial Garden Gates and on the War Memorial in Little Bowden Church.

Two or three weeks ago, one Friday morning, the town was enlivened by the presence - and voice - of a Town Crier. Did you see or hear him? He was a magnificent figure, with an equally magnificent voice. A veritable Sergeant Major in Technicolor. Andy Latham, from Rugby was in town for the Friday and Saturday. He is Town Crier for Rugby, England, for Rugby, North Dakota, USA and for Daventry District Council.

November 1999

Tempus fugit, the saying goes, and not only is this the last In Touch for this year, it is also the last one for this century and for the second millennium. It is also my last issue, as I am now retiring from the Editorship as old age has finally caught up with me.

It is a strange phase to reach when you admit to old age. Unlike a good bottle of wine which improves with age, or a good piece of furniture becomes more valuable in old age. Even a building can have a preservation order slapped on it in old age. Homo Sapiens becomes frailer, slower, less active, less involved - and in most cases he becomes less valuable. We are left only with memories.

Some people have very accurate and extensive memories and can go back even as far as 80 years ago. Many of us have old family photographs to refresh and sustain our memories. Our fathers and mothers would have taken them to have a reminder of us in our young days. But our grandchildren do not recognise us as we looked then - "That's not you, Grandad, surely!"

And time flies by, and the 20th Century - "our" century - is drawing to a close. Great advances have been made in nearly every theatre of human existence over the past 100 years: probably the most dramatic advances in any century in this millennium. We can now fly round the world in a matter of hours, we can talk to friends and relatives in distant lands at the touch of a button, we can receive pictures into our homes of events happening world-wide as they happen. We can travel in one hour our relatives in the last century would take a month to cover.

Unfortunately new diseases have appeared in both man and animals. Global warming and pollution problems will involve our scientists to their considerable limits - And we have managed in this century to kill more people as a result of wars than have been killed in the last millennium - and the killing goes on.....

So farewell to "our" Century and a guarded welcome to the next.

Oh! I nearly forgot - "A Happy and Meaningful Christmas to you all."

Bernard Halsall

Bernard as "Hotspur"

Memories

by Hotspur

By any standard the parade ground at Gujarat Barracks, Colchester, was impressive. To an 18 year old Officer Cadet, seeing it for the first time it was awesome. Tucked away in a corner of this vast arena stood the squad of about twenty Officer Cadets under the command of Company Sergeant Major Walldock, expert without equal in all forms of Army drill. His imposing presence was matched only by his stentorian voice. Some said his words of command could be heard as far away as Ipswich.

He had called the squad to attention about four times before he was satisfied. Then came his next command, "SQUAD - NUMBER!". Anyone familiar with this particular operation will know that it never goes right the first time. "AS YOU WERE!" echoed round the barracks and the surrounding countryside. Coldly and cynically, the C.S.M. repeated his command, "SQUAD - NUMBER!". Again it went wrong.

I suppose the Sergeant Major understood or appeared to do so. He was dealing with idiots, imbeciles masquerading as potential Officers. He would have to explain to them in detail what they were being ordered to do.

"Stand Easy, and pay careful attention to me. Numbering in the Army, Officer Cadets - ALL you has to bloody do is add one to the number what the man on your right has shouted out, then shout that number out if you can".

"SQUAD NUMBER!"

January 1997

Memories

by Hotspur

Robbie looked over the side of the ship and thought of home. He had been at sea for two days, part of an escort to 150 German Officers captured in the desert and being taken from Alexandria to Algeria to be handed over to the American Army.

The ship's previous load had been coal so it was in a very poor state when the parties went on board. However, the Germans were highly disciplined even in captivity and in return for being allowed up on the starboard deck during daylight hours they had hosed down the entire ship until it was as clean as a new pin.

It was about 1600 hrs on the second day at sea when a colleague joined Robbie to check that all was in order on that quarter of the deck, and after a few minutes discussion he moved on. It was then that a young German Officer who had been standing a few feet away approached Robbie, saluted and asked "Excuse me did that soldier call you Robbie?" Puzzled, Robbie nodded. "Is your name Robson?", the German asked, and Robbie, now very alert and interested, again nodded. "Do you come from Altringham near Manchester", had Robbie holding on to the side rail. "Yes, I do" he answered quickly but the German had not finished. "Arkwright Street" he asked in a confident tone, adding "57?". Before Robbie could recover the young German Officer held out his hand. "I am Helmut-your Pen Pal in Germany since 1937."

They were still talking an hour later when I went on duty.

(This true incident took place in May 1943)

March 1997

Bernard as "Hotspur"

Memories

by Hotspur

Three British POW's had escaped from their camp, but a couple of weeks later had been recaptured in a valley in the Italian Alps. It was a difficult time in the War and, as they were wearing civilian clothes the local commander ordered them to be shot as spies.

About 11.00 hrs, as the first prisoner was led out on to the village square, the mid-April sun was shining down on the heavily laden snow-capped mountains. The firing squad prepared to aim their rifles, and the prisoner looked above them to the glistening peaks. "Avalanche!", he cried. The soldiers turned to look in terror and in the ensuing commotion the prisoner (a naval man) escaped.

Order was restored and about 2pm, the second prisoner was led out on to the square. By this time, with the heat of the sun water was dripping freely from the numerous icicles. As the firing squad took up their positions the Flight Sergeant (RAF) looked down at their feet for a few seconds then shouted, "Floods!". In the melee following, he too, escaped.

It was nearly dusk when the last POW was brought into the village centre. History does not recall to which Service he was attached, but record remains of his name - Paddy O'Reilly. However, in spite of this there should have been no problem. He knew exactly what to do. He had seen it all twice before. And as the soldiers raised their rifles to take aim, he looked straight at them and shouted, "Fire!".

The Editor will not guarantee the authenticity of this story!

May 1997

Memories

by Hotspur

In June 1940 I became a member of a "Flying Column". This consisted of around 30 soldiers "Standing To" one hour either side of dusk and again an hour either side of dawn, with a "charabanc" alongside. This vehicle was the "flying part" of the set-up. We "stood to" on our own parade ground, ready to embus and drive off to meet the invading Germans. Most of us had a Lee Enfield rifle and 5 rounds of ammo. This was how England was defended in those days.

After about 3 weeks of this routine and no sign of the enemy, we were moved to the nearest coast, to a small town called Frinton. All the inhabitants had been evacuated so it was like a ghost town.

IF YOU NEED A MISTRESS RING THE BELL

We were billeted in the local Primary School, which was about 300 yards from the beach, and no doubt our presence at the Front deterred Hitler from his evil intent. Everything in the school was very small to suit the small pupils - small chairs, small tables, and of course small toilets. Imagine the thoughts of an 18 year old Virgin Soldier who having safely negotiated the difficulty of settling on the small seat saw in large letters on the door facing him.

No wonder Hitler did not invade!

July 1997

Bernard as "Hotspur"

Memories

by Hotspur

It was about 1916. A soldier knocked at the stage door of a famous London theatre. He asked to see the star of the show - I think it was Vesta Tilley. It was a very patriotic time and the soldier was admitted.

He said to Miss Tilley, "I have written a song whilst in the trenches in France, and hoped you might look at it". She took the paper from him and read the words and music. She then called for the Musical Director. "Is it possible for us to play this tune this evening?" she asked. The musical director read through the music, and said he would be able to play it at the Second House.

Unfortunately the soldier was unable to stay for the second house, but promised to do his best to revisit the theatre the next day to see how it all went at the performance. Miss Tilley sang the song as promised. She received five encores. It was a Hit, and she waited eagerly for the soldier to call in the next day. He did not come - neither the next day - or ever again. The song was to become one of the great songs of the First World War. If you buy the music sheet today the author is shown as Anonymous.

The song was called

"There's a long long trail awinding"

Ed. This is definitely one of Hotspur's true stories, and very moving.

September 1997

Christmas Visit '97

by Hotspur

There can be few places in the world where one can stand and say, "History was made here - on this very spot". Over the Christmas holidays I was able - nay privileged - to do just that.

Little did I realise as I was driven through the gates towards the Guard Room, and then on to the mess, that I was entering a building which, to my generation, is hallowed ground. I was entering Bentley Priory, home to 11/18 Group Royal Air Force, but in 1940 Headquarters of Fighter Command, the last and greatest command of Air Marshall Dowding. For it was here, in this building and on this very spot that Dowding controlled and conducted the RAF Fighter Squadrons of Hurricanes and Spitfires over Dunkirk and later over England in the Battle of Britain. Here in this beautiful country house Dowding must have moved from room to room receiving the latest reports, watching the losses mount, all the time knowing of the superior forces available to the enemy. Here, when going out to stand in the beautiful gardens he would have seen the battle raging in the skies above, and here towards the end, when Churchill, visiting to watch the battle for himself, had said to Dowding, "Send in the reserves!", received the reply, "Sir! We have no reserves."

•You can hear those words echoing from every wall and ceiling of this historic building, as you look with pride and awe at the many portraits and photos of those who took part in these mighty events. And you tread quietly and reverently over what has become to you in but a few minutes, hallowed ground.

And you can read on every tribute, every presentation, every roll of honour the immortal words which must have echoed through these rooms and corridors when Dowding and his

Bernard as "Hotspur"

men knew that they had won - "Never in the long history of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

More than three years later this same building was used by Montgomery in which to plan and co-ordinate the invasion of occupied Europe. From the debacle of Dunkirk to the liberation of Europe this building has seen it all. The fate of our country had hung by a thread, and had been saved by the men who served and commanded from this building.

It was an honour and a privilege, made all the greater by being unexpected, to stand and stare on the very spot where the life of our country had been rescued and sustained.

January 1998

Pills

by Hotspur

It was late afternoon when the chap from HQ arrived. We were due to set off around dusk, reaching the DZ. just before midnight. And most of the afternoon had been spent making final preparations, writing a letter home and resting. The arrival of the chap from HQ was not on the programme.

Our party numbered about 50 and the announcement that we were to meet him on the field in 10 minutes caused feelings of uncertainty bordering on panic to fill most chaps minds. We could not entertain any change of plan this late in the day. Perhaps it was "off" yet again. We were wound up and wanted just to get on with it.

When he joined us along with our Major, he seemed quite normal. Far more normal than one expected from HQ! "I wish you all well, and good fortune for tonight", he said, and that cleared our worst scenario. "I have brought something for you all, something unusual and I want you to pay particular attention to what I have to say. I am going to issue each of you with four small pills. These are to help you in the operation. Put them in an empty match box and use them as follows."

"I suggest you take one about 10 to 15 minutes before you land. It will greatly increase your alertness, as well as helping in your general well-being, and will be found to be very beneficial. If events drag on beyond tomorrow morning then I suggest a second pill about noon tomorrow will help you keep awake, but this should be only in the unlikely event of things not going according to plan. The other two pills are for the extreme case of you finding yourself cut off and spending two or three days avoiding capture. Good luck to you all."

A salute and he was gone. We were dismissed and, clutching four aspirin looking pills retired back again to our kit. I found an empty match box and lined it with cotton wool and placed each pill gently inside. The matchbox then went into my breast pocket and we set off as dusk fell.

It was my first "op". It was a rough crossing. I was extremely nervous. By the time I saw the enemy coastline I had swallowed all four pills. Two days later I was still charging around like a scalded cat. But when the effects finally wore off it took me a long time (nearly a week) to get my strength back.

They never came round with any pills again.

March 1998

Bernard as "Hotspur"

Serious Business

by Hotspur

The Branch is looking for members to take part in a The Royal British Legion Golf Competition. No other sport can focus the mind of both player and spectator for so long a period as competitive golf - or even Club golf for that matter. Dedication is never at a premium in Golf as illustrated by these two stories.

Four old, retired keen golfers were regular players at Royal Birkdale. Three times a week they teed off at 8.30 am, and could be spotted just after mid-day winding their way up the 18th fairway. Week in, week out, whatever the weather these four chaps fought out the keenest of matches to the last green - until one morning about 12 months ago. The secretary had noticed that they were not to be seen approaching the Club-house, and after checking that they had started out at 8.30 am he watched with increasing anxiety as they failed to appear.

It had gone one o'clock when the Secretary finally spotted them. And what a shock he got. Three of them were struggling along half carrying and half dragging their apparently unconscious friend. The secretary rushed out to assist. "Good gracious", he said, "whatever has happened?" "It's Charlie", said one. "He dropped dead on the 12th green. The Secretary was appalled. "What a tragedy", he cried, "what a terrible thing to happen, and you chaps have carried him all the way back?" "Yes", said the spokesman. "My goodness", exclaimed the Secretary, "What a gallant thing to do - but you must be exhausted!". "Well, yes", said the spokesman, "but the worst part was putting him down and then picking him up between our shots!"

Golf can get like that. It can take over to the exclusion of all else. Recently, on a Midlands course four chaps had played 9 holes and were ready to drive off on the 10th tee. A road leading to the town ran alongside this hole and as the first player went to address the ball, a cortege passed by on its way to the crematorium. The player about to drive lowered his club, turned towards the funeral procession and lowered his head until it had passed. He then resumed the game and all four hit their drives. As they walked away one of the others said to the man who had interrupted his shot that it was rare to see such respect and decorum in this day and age. "Well", said the man, "after all she has been a good wife".

May 1998

Navigation

by Hotspur

Far be it for me, who started out with the Poor Blessed Infantry, and spent most of the next six years marching from A to B, then back to A, to mention the delicate matter of Navigation. This subject has been the domain of seafaring men (and women) since time immemorial. With a simple glimpse at the sun or some obscure star they can pinpoint their position with unflinching accuracy. And during this present century this same art has been acquired by those who fly their magnificent machines through, below or above vast banks of cloud. All of which is quite outside an infantryman's range and comprehension.

And so it would have remained for me but for the intervention of the Market Harborough Branch of The Royal British Legion. In their great wisdom and inventiveness they organised a Canal Boat trip, and therefore made it necessary for one or two of us to attend the Advanced School of Navigation, and so fully equipped to cope with the numerous Navigational problems that were to confront us "on the day".

Bernard as "Hotspur"

It was whilst on this course (Class N - Canal Boats) that I learnt that a red light was indicating the left side - or Port for the technically minded, whilst a green light indicated the right-hand side, or Starboard. I had always considered these lights to be pure decoration, and realised how clever the seafaring people had been. Towards the end of the course, to help us not confuse ourselves with these various colours, the instructor gave us a little ditty to remember for safety reasons;

Green to Green, Red to Red,

Perfect safety - go ahead.

My colleagues from Market Harborough and myself were the sole survivors from this course. With great foresight we had taken the ditty and the diagram with us on our "passing - out" sail, and we were able to get onto our correct position on the approach of an oncoming canal boat. The rest of the course sank and drowned in a head-on crash. Days later, floating amid the wreckage they found this ditty written on Navigation paper:

Green to Red - Red to Green

Full Speed ahead and go between.

R I P

July 1998

Company Car

by Hotspur

"They're all daft but thee and me" is part of an old Lancashire saying, as the following story confirms.

I was given the task of training a young man with a view to him joining the management team at some future date. He was a pleasant fellow, but prone to lapses of concentration from time to time. However, in due course he was given a company car having made satisfactory progress, although there was still a question mark about his ability to keep his mind on his work.

Although we did not start work before 8 am, I was usually in the office by 7.40 - probably the result of 6½ years Army training! One morning my phone rang about 7.50 am.

"Oh! Peter here", said the voice of my trainee. "Yes Peter", I replied.

"My car is stuck in Wigston".

"What do you mean by stuck?"

"The doors are locked, but the keys are inside". In the 1970's this was possible if you were not very careful getting out of the car.

"I stopped to get some cigarettes", he continued.

"Leave it then and walk in", I instructed him.

"I can't do that" he said. "The engine is still running" - and then before I could say anything else he added, "and I'm on double yellow lines".

I managed to get the garage chap out before the police got there!

Twenty years on and this same fellow was running his own business. Such is life!

November 1998

Bernard as "Hotspur"

Christmas Presents

by Hotspur

Christmas presents change in significance as one journeys through life. The early years are probably best, as it is mainly "receiving" without the problems and expense of "giving". And after the flush of early adulthood for most of us it is a changed Christmas routine. We have to think of others. And kid ourselves that it is "Better to give than to receive"! After passing 50 years old the whole business becomes a bit of a bore.

So I was delighted this Christmas to receive a book, the review of which I had read some weeks before, but could not afford - as it was Christmas very soon and I had not bought anything for anyone.

The book is written by a cryptographer who in January, 1942 at the tender age of 22 joined the Code Department of "Inter-Services Research Bureau" - or S. O. E. for short. His father was an antiquarian bookseller and his shop was called "Marks & Co." Of 84 Charing Cross Road. No doubt some of us have browsed through the window of the shop on a wartime leave. The author, Leo Marks knows his stuff and holds the reader's attention for the whole of the 600-odd pages. Within a year he is promoted to Head of Agents Codes, and one's taken on a fascinating journey along the corridors of Whitehall by this brash but brilliant young man.

I can guarantee he will hold your interest the whole time - I am on page 326 for the second time and its not a month since Christmas.

I nearly forgot - the book is called "Between Silk and Cyanide" by Leo Marks, published by Harper Collins. You will enjoy it.

January 1999

Overdue Account

by Hotspur

•In the 1950's I was a Corn Merchant, dealing with local farmers, supplying feed for their stock, selling them seed corn and fertilisers and buying their grain. All of which involved considerable capital, providing little profit.

I had a customer called Mrs Hazlegreen. She was the wife of "someone in the city", living in a huge house they had converted from two barns and outbuildings, once owned by a departed farmer. As a pastime Mrs Hazlegreen kept about 130 pigs, and I supplied the food - by the ton. Some farmers preferred to pay when the stock had been sold at market. With pigs this could be up to 18 weeks from birth.

Checking the accounts one weekend I found Mrs H. Was owing £1,704 - 16- 4, going back four months. So Monday morning at 9 o'clock I set off with my receipt book for her mansion.

Affably greeted and ushered into the "drawing room" Mrs Hazlegreen and I discussed the various difficulties of "cash flow", delayed payment, pig market prices and the weather whilst drinking some very pleasant coffee. At what I considered an appropriate opportunity I produced my receipt book and started to fix the carbon prior to filling in the date.

"Oh!", said Mrs H., "You will have a small drink?", whereupon producing a half pint glass and filling it with sherry. Immediately I formed a plan - drink half the glass in one go, complete the receipt and tell Mrs H. the full amount required on the cheque. Successfully I completed part one, but as I fumbled with my receipt book, Mrs H. topped up the glass - my line of retreat had been blocked.

•In truth I remember little after that, except saying to my esteemed customer about one hour later, "Don't you worry about the account Mrs Hazlewhite. I will call again when it is not so

Bernard as "Hotspur"

foggy.” It was with great difficulty that I drove the 3 miles back to the office. Luckily it was lunch time and the office was closed!

Mrs Hazlegreen paid next month with no problems.

March 1999

Reflections

by Hotspur

Last month was my 78th birthday. I was sent the following verse.

•In life's forest you must be
a well preserved, established tree
and though some leaves have blown away
you still look pretty good today.
In autumn years the nights grow dark
and you've got wrinkles on your bark
but you've survived through thick and thin
and kept your roots alive with gin.
Sometimes you've soaked your trunk with beer
which can't be bad 'cos you're still here.

Yes - you've outlasted other trees
and stood up proud in wind and breeze.
The weather sometimes takes its toll
but you are such a "hearty" soul
- so turn another birthday page
and take a bough - but not to age.

•Most of us are around the "80" mark by now - we are called "pensioners" or "Wrinklies" by our juniors, but if we were Americans we would be called "Veterans" Realistically of course we should be called "Survivors", because on reflection that is what we all are.

We were born towards the end or just after the 1st world war, when very few families were spared the loss of one or more of its members. Born into a country "fit for Heroes to live in"

we grew up in years of mass unemployment- and a General Strike. Jobs were few and far between and to join the ranks of employment was a major achievement. Then, just as everything seemed to be improving we were at war again, and changing into uniform. Whether one was actively engaged or not I am certain that none would forget those dark and ominous days and months that followed Dunkirk. At one stage there seemed no hope, no way forward. But in the end we saw it through. We had survived. I clearly remember Winston Churchill, the Prime Minister announcing the end of the war to a capacity House of Commons and then inviting Members to follow him to the church of St. Margaret's across the road for a Prayer of Thanksgiving, which they all did - How times have changed.

Rationing was slow to disappear - but we survived. Korea, Suez, Northern Ireland to mention a few - but we survived. Then just as we were getting "our act together" as they say today, came **Redundancies!** 50 and over and you were the target to be made redundant- the same group that had filled the ranks in 1939 - and still we survived. As we approached retirement they changed the rules for the Pension - tied it to "inflation" from "wage increases" - After reaching 70 years of age we had completed the allotted span and were on borrowed time - and still we survived.

•Ah well! Happy birthday to you too!!

May 1999

W. S. Churchill

by Hotspur.

As we enter the 21st century it may be worth recalling that 60 years ago in May 1940, we had an army of nearly 500,000 men with all their impedimenta entrenched in France. On 10th May the Germans invaded Holland, Belgium and France on a huge scale.

On the 11th May the Prime Minister resigned and Winston Spencer Churchill became Prime Minister. By the end of the Month the battle was over. Although over 300,000 troops were rescued and brought back to the U.K., most of their equipment had been lost. The enemy occupied the Channel Coast. Invasion seemed imminent. Resistance seemed difficult, to say the least.

On the 4th June, and again on the 17th June, Churchill addressed the House of Commons. Here is a short paragraph from each address, unaltered from the original. I believe that this time Churchill mobilized our language, when there was precious little left with which to fight.

As we celebrate in January 2000 we should also remember

JUNE 1940

We shall not flag or fail,
We shall go on to the end,
We shall fight in the seas and oceans,
We shall fight with growing confidence in the air,
We shall defend our Island whatever the cost may be,
We shall fight on the beaches,
We shall fight on the landing grounds,
We shall fight in the fields - and in the streets,
We shall fight in the hills,

WE SHALL NEVER SURRENDER.

Let us therefore, brace ourselves to our duties,

So bear ourselves, that if the British Commonwealth and Empire lasts a thousand years, men will still say

"THIS WAS THEIR FINEST HOUR".

January 2000

From Little Acorns

by Hotspur

"It is to mark the Millennium, you know. Various organisations have been allotted their own week to put on a bit of a show. We have got Poppy Week. Anyone got any ideas?"

That was how it all started. As if ordering, distribution of boxes, selling of poppies, re-collecting, totalling up of all the monies and filling in all the forms was not enough, they wanted more -- five days more!

But someone had an idea: A committee of a dedicated few was formed and a plan was made that necessitated an enormous amount of thought, discussion and some physical work. Few could have imagined the size of the task to be undertaken. Uncomplaining, and almost unnoticed, they set about the job of listing all the people of the Market Harborough area who had made the supreme sacrifice in two world wars.

They needed the names, home addresses and parents of these people, together with their final resting places. Research was carried out with the co-operation of the Harborough Mail into the newspaper's archives; through the internet, Commonwealth War Graves Commission records were accessed and sources of local history used; from published works; and from the information and memorabilia provided by local people. Great care was taken to ensure the accuracy of the research. The result - a Roll of Honour in the form of a six volume "Book of Remembrance" presented and accessible to the people of the town.

But that was not all! The Memorial Gardens in the town centre were to be transformed into a Garden of Remembrance, a sort of miniature war cemetery with a new flagpole on which the Union Jack would be lowered each evening in a sunset ceremony. And to round off the week, a Concert would be given by the popular and respected Harborough Band.

They were ambitious plans -- but the committee, with help from a lot of people, succeeded. Our congratulations and grateful thanks must be accorded to the Millennium Committee and all those who worked so hard to make this week the success it undoubtedly was.

They were also expensive plans, but costs have been met fully through generous donations, grants and fundraising. No Branch or Legion funds have been used.

November 2000

Bernard as Bernard Halsall

Robbie

by Bernard Halsall

It was May 1943.

Robbie looked over the side of the ship and thought of home. He had been at sea for two days, part of an escort to 150 German Officers captured in the desert and being taken from Alexandria to Algeria to be handed over to the American Army.

The ship's previous load had been coal so it was in a very poor state when the parties went on board. However, the Germans were highly disciplined even in captivity and in return for being allowed up on the starboard deck during daylight hours they had hosed down the entire ship until it was as clean as a new pin.

It was about 1600 hrs on the second day at sea when a colleague joined Robbie to check that all was in order on that quarter of the deck, and after a few minutes discussion he moved on. It was then that a young German Officer who had been standing a few feet away approached Robbie, saluted and asked "Excuse me did that soldier call you Robbie?" Puzzled, Robbie nodded. "Is your name Robson?", the German asked, and Robbie, now very alert and interested, again nodded. "Do you come from Altringham near Manchester", had Robbie holding on to the side rail. "Yes, I do" he answered quickly but the German had not finished. "Arkwright Street" he asked in a confident tone, adding "57?". Before Robbie could recover the young German Officer held out his hand. "I am Helmut-your Pen Pal in Germany since 1937."

They were still talking an hour later when I went on duty.

March 1997

The Soft Under-belly?

by Bernard Halsall

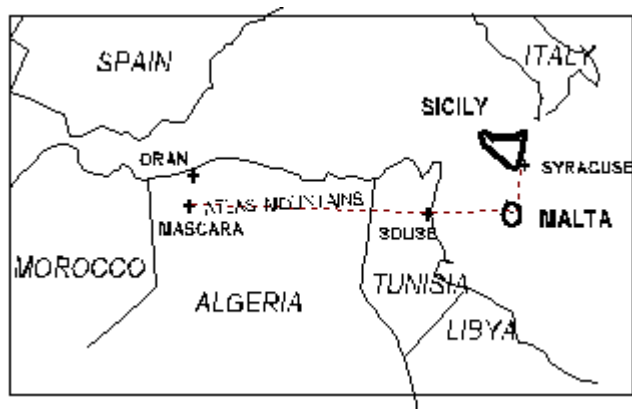
It was June 1943 and North Africa was in Allied hands. At a watering point near Mascara in Algeria, about 120 miles inland from Oran, we met up with over 100 wooden crates, each of which contained a WACO Glider, an American product which none of us had seen before. We had to assemble these craft, and then, towed by U. S. Dakotas, we each had a very few flights, and no more than two of them at night, trying to get familiar with the glider.

Within three weeks we were to embark on the first ever mass flight of gliders by the Allies, a 600 mile flight over the Atlas Mountains, flying at 9000 feet to land near Souse in Tunisia. Severe turbulence was experienced over the mountains and the heat in the cockpit was extreme. The flight took over four and a half hours and was by far the longest flight any of us had done. About ten gliders failed to make the full trip.

We had just over a week to study photographs and for all the other activities in preparation for the attack, culminating in a Church Service on the edge of an olive grove. The 1st Air Landing Brigade which comprised about 1250 men, flying in 130 gliders was to land on Sicily, in darkness, about 8 hours before and 25 miles ahead of the main assault by the 8th Army. This would be the first return to European soil by the Allies since Dunkirk. The objective was to land near to and then to capture by midnight, the Ponte Grande, a bridge

over both a river and a canal, just south of Syracuse. During the night we were to occupy Syracuse town which the 8th Army units would reach before 11am.

I was airborne around 7pm. The navigational plan was elementary. Fly due east to Malta, round the beams of three searchlights which would be pointing vertically upwards, and then due north to the target. To avoid enemy radar, we were to fly at under 100 feet for the estimated flying time of 4½ hours!! To make the flight even more hair-raising, a 30mph wind caused navigational and stability problems.



At about 11.15pm I saw the coast line (of Europe!) but did not readily recognize it from the photographs we had been shown. The tug was anxious to return home (the tugs, flown by the U.S.A.F. , were unarmed and unarmoured, even lacking self-sealing petrol tanks) and as we had seen firing on the ground as well as flak coming up at us, we released at about 800 feet. At about 250 feet we crossed the shoreline and flew on into the darkness. We hit

the first tree of the olive grove at about 80mph.

Several minutes later, after we had all regained consciousness and gathered ourselves together (one had a broken leg but the rest were more or less all right), we moved off in the direction of the firing. It took us about four hours to reach the bridge, picking up stragglers and having to fight through several enemy positions. One glider had landed only 20 yards away and had captured the bridge without difficulty. However, most of the gliders had been released too early and had come down in the sea. Many men were drowned, others were scattered over scores of miles. With the arrival of our party there were just 87 of us to hold the bridge.

During the rest of the night and throughout the morning the enemy launched a series of vicious counter-attacks. Completely surrounded by an estimated 1000 enemy, and with very little ammo left, the eight survivors finally surrendered at about 3pm. About 20 minutes later the 8th Army arrived and their tanks swept over the bridge we had managed to occupy long enough to prevent it being destroyed.

History had been made that night of the 9th July, 1943. This was the first mass landing by glider behind enemy lines by the Allies. Four more were to follow before the end of hostilities.

Bernard went on holiday to Sicily in September this year, the first time he had been back in 53 years. Time did not allow a visit to his landing site (the olive grove has since been built on), but he saw the new bridge which has replaced his and he did go to the War Graves Cemetery where so many of his comrades are buried and commemorated. This must have been a highly emotional experience and, on your behalf, I thank Bernard for recalling a seldom remembered but historic mission. It started the assault on what Churchill called "The Soft Under-belly of Europe". To those who took part in the Campaign, those words were far from apt.

Editor

November 1996

Enlistment

by Bernard Halsall MC

In March 1939 I reached my 18th birthday. War seemed inevitable, and as I had done some time with the local Cadets, I decided to try to join the city (Liverpool) T. A. Regiment, which was affiliated to the glamorous *Queens Own Cameron Highlanders*, kilts and all!

So I reported to the local recruiting office, and after a few questions and answers with the Sergeant I was given a questionnaire to complete. This form was a good foolscap in size, and seemed to reflect in some way the size of my problem of getting into this T. A. Regiment. But I was able eventually to complete all my answers - except one.

“Have you any property in Scotland?”

The truthful answer would be, “No”, of course. I had no property anywhere, let alone in the Highlands. Would this prejudice my chances? Should I put down a false answer? Was I destined to be a Bevin Boy? The prospect of marching through the city centre to the railway station, en route to T.A. camp, with fixed bayonets and wearing the kilt, seemed to be fading. After a sleepless night I decided I would offer my honesty against my lack of property and, armed with my application form reported to the CSM at the Drill Hall the following night.

The CSM (he was a tram driver during the day) carefully scrutinised my application form, put it down on the table, looked straight at me for a second or two and asked, “Have you any property in Scotland, boy?”. “No Sir”, I replied. He looked hard at me again. “Have you got another pair of trousers?”. “I have, Sir”, I answered, completely perplexed.

“Right boy”, the CSM pronounced. “You take those trousers, tomorrow morning, for cleaning at *Pullars of Perth* in Castle Street. Now boy, put yes to question 15”. I was in!!



2nd Bn. Liverpool Scottish, Queens Own Cameron Highlanders. No. 2930957.

September 1998

Honour and Honneur

by Bernard Halsall

It had never happened before and will certainly never happen again. For a few brief minutes we were transported back in time - back 80 years. We went back to the trenches and to the mud: to the distant sound of gunfire, to the barbed wire, to the cries of the wounded, to the reality of death. Fleetingly we were there to share in the horror of those times.

Then we were back. Back in the Council Chambers at Market Harborough, back in the warmth and comfort of familiar surroundings. We were back with our comrades, the veterans of the next generation, as the Lord Lieutenant of the County stepped forward towards our guest of honour, Mrs. Cramp, representing her husband, Robert, to whom the Lord Lieutenant was to present Le Légion d'Honneur. Belated perhaps, but nevertheless symbolic of a nation's gratitude to our fathers and grandfathers generation who had fought and died in the defence of France.

We watched quietly as words of thanks were said, and dignitaries received their flowers. Mrs Cramp and her family, dignified and supportive, were given a warm welcome.

A memorable event for us all.

January 1999

Operation Varsity

by Bernard Halsall

In the early morning of March 24th 1945 a force of 440 gliders of the Glider Pilot Regiment towed by 440 tug aircraft of the RAF, took off from airfields in southern England. Their contribution towards the invasion of Germany was to capture and hold the town of Hamminkeln along with three vital bridges over the River Issel. Their loads included 3380 troops of the 6th Air Landing Brigade, 271 Jeeps, 8 Locust Tanks, 2 Bulldozers, and more than 50 Anti-tank guns with ammunition.



The above is reproduced from the Order of Service for The Glider Pilot Regiment Operation Varsity Service of Remembrance on 24th March, 1999. This annual event is held at The Marks Hall Obelisk Memorial, Coggeshall, Essex.

A tank emerging from the enormous Hamilcar glider.

July 1999

The 60th Anniversary of Operation Varsity 24 March 1945

With the task of suppressing German artillery and small arms fire, which would have opposed the 21st Army Group's crossing of the Rhine, some 14,000 airborne Allied troops were landed on the enemy-held side of the river.

Included in the large force of aircraft were 14 Hamilcar gliders, towed by Halifax bombers. One of the Hamilcars was piloted by Captain Bernard Halsall.

To mark the 60th anniversary of the operation, code named Varsity, a service of thanksgiving and commemoration was held at Royal Air Force Shawbury. Con and Bernard attended the ceremony, along with their daughter and her husband.



Con looks on as Bernard chats with Field Marshall Montgomery's grandson.

April 2005

A Voice from the Past

by Bernard Halsall

It was 7.40 pm on a June evening this year and we were watching Coronation Street. Norris was listening to some juicy gossip when the phone rang. I do not answer the phone during Coronation Street, which is probably why I seldom get calls at other times. After a brief exchange, my wife said, handing the phone across to me: "Someone looking for you". With some trepidation I said: "Hello, who is that?"

"This is a voice from your distant past," said the voice, "this is Harry Dent".

The picture formed immediately in my mind. Calm, resolute, reliable Harry Dent. Staff Sergeant Harry Dent; Hamilcar glider pilot Harry Dent; last seen approaching the Rhine at 4,500 feet, flying into what I later described as "intense flak". Later to be posted as missing.

His tug, Halifax P-T, had received a direct hit and had exploded. Harry's glider had disappeared into the resulting ball of fire, just 100 yards in front. He had been posted as missing.

I did not recognise his voice, which I suppose was understandable. The last time we had spoken was just before 7am on the runway at RAF Woodridge. We had all flown there 2 days previously as our own base at Tarrant Rushton, in Dorset, was too far for the trips to return safely. I liked to check with my other glider pilots before take-off.

Harry told me on the phone that he had managed to release and fly through the flames, before landing some distance from the LZ, and being captured as a PoW. Months later he had been released, and on returning to Tarrant Rushton found that all his personal kit was missing and was very distressed. Demob quickly followed and he lost all contact with the regiment.

He had worked in a bank before the war, and less than a year after demob he was sent abroad to work on their behalf. It was only in 1994, on the 50th anniversary of Arnhem, that he rejoined the fold and became a member of the Glider Pilot Association—and through that eventually found me.

Later, having recovered from the initial shock of hearing this unfamiliar voice from the distant past, I looked through some very old papers of events of these times. I found the record of take-offs for 24th March, 1945, marked "Special Mission", from RAF Woodridge.

Tug A-V, pulling glider 248 (which was mine) had taken-off at 0725+25 secs. Tug P-T, pulling glider 249 (which was Dent's) had been the next to take-off at 0725+50 secs. The return time for this trip was marked DNR – did not return.

And suddenly, for me, all this seemed only a few minutes ago.

August 2002

Tarrant Rushton Revisited

by 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.

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.**



Captain Bernard Halsall, M.C., Glider Pilot Regiment (second from right), 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.

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.

July 2004

A Happy Reunion
from *In Touch* November 2003



It was a pleasant surprise for Tom Ashmore, but for Bernard Halsall it became a wonderfully nostalgic and emotional experience. The surprise was an e-mail Tom received from a gentleman named Leo Bral in Bruges, who had found our Branch web site on the internet.

Leo was anxious to contact Bernard for information about the forced landing of a General Aircraft Hamilcar Glider at Zomergen, a village near Ghent, in 1944. "I happened to witness this incident", he wrote. "I was six years old at the time and I watched how it landed safely in front of our house, where it remained for some time." After much research, he learned from a book entitled 'Tugs and Gliders to Arnhem' that the glider pilot was Captain Halsall. Contact was made and in October, accompanied by his wife Con, Bernard returned to Zomergen after nearly sixty years.

Bernard was given a very warm welcome from villagers, some of whom had watched him make the crash landing. It was on the third Arnhem lift during Operation Market Garden that the tow-rope on Bernard's glider had broken. He had had less than a minute to make a choice of landing site, and he was delighted to meet the farmer whose field he selected.

"They were just so pleased to see me," said Bernard, "I was delighted with the whole reunion". Leo Bral, who, of course, was delighted to have been able to arrange the meeting after so many years research, presented him with a piece of the Hamilcar glider. Bernard also received a blue delftware plate engraved with five local villages.

In his Editorial, George Seward, as a preface to the above story, wrote

Thanks to the wonder of the Internet, a reunion was arranged, after almost sixty years, between a group of villagers in Belgium and our own Bernard Halsall.

After all the years, the gratitude of the Belgian people was still quite overwhelming and obviously made a deep impression on Bernard. It is interesting to compare the attitude still apparent amongst many people who lived under the Nazi occupation with that in our own country.

It occurs to me that, although we lived through untold hardship during the Second World War, we did not suffer the indignity and deprivation of freedom that comes with invasion by an enemy. Most of Europe was occupied and therefore the impact was greater and the release from captivity remains something of which they are eternally grateful.

For Bernard's Belgian friends, the impact of the war continues to affect much of their lives.

Bernard's Visit - His talk at a Branch meeting

Some images from the Power Point Presentation.

How it Began

- In 1944 a Belgian boy sees a British glider land near his house.
- Years later, through research he finds the name of the pilot was Capt Bernard Halsall.
- Through the Internet he finds that name in MH RBL Website.
- He e-mail's a site contact – Tom Ashmore

Making contact

- Belgian boy now 65 is a Mr Leo Bral.
- He asks to contact Bernard for information for local history group
- Correspondence follows
- Meeting and visit to landing site agreed
- Bernard and Con book MH Travel visit to Bruges early October 2003.



Leo, the boy who saw the glider land



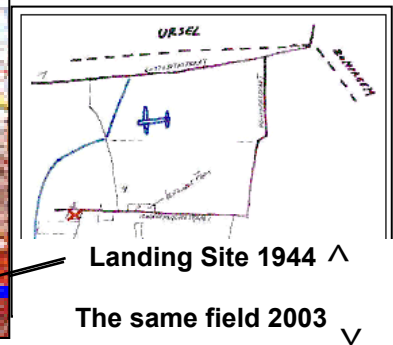
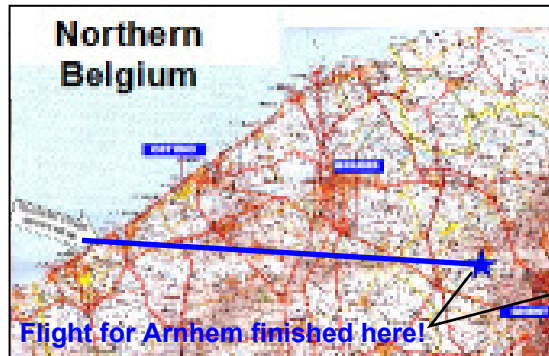
Hamilcar after it landed



Bernard, the pilot who safely forced landed after the tow rope broke



On Tow - Glider pilot's view



Landing Site 1944 ^

The same field 2003 v

Bernard and Leo 2003



Standing on the exact spot where Bernard landed

Bernard's Visit - More pictures



Reception Committee!



Con and the Ladies



A formal Presentation from the community



Bernard retrieves part of his Hamilcar



Bernard meets the farmer in whose field he had landed



Leo's boyhood house

Bernard in Belgium



Hospitality continues over a drink and lunch



Bernard signing autographs



Bernard in Belgium

Bernard in Belgium

*Visiting the nearby site of a plane crash and the cemetery
where the pilot Flt/Sgt Teather is buried*



And finally a fond farewell to such wonderful hosts



**With thanks to Nigel for
his coach trip to Bruges and for
being the reunion photographer**



Bernard in Belgium

Bernard in Belgium

Also relevant to Bernard's eventful flight in Operation Market Garden



**The Crew of the Halifax Bomber which towed
Bernard Halsall's Hamilcar Glider**

From left to right
P/O Frank Darling (Nav), F/O Vince Blake (Pilot),
F/O Bill Deacon (W.AG.), F/Sgt "Bomber" Harris (Eng.),
P/O "Smithy" Smith (AG.), P/O Gill Gillies (B/A)

298 Sqn. Tarrant Rushton

Leo said "it landed safely in front of our house, where it remained for some time."



**Not what a farmer would expect to be in
his field but worth exploring!**



How it started - Leo makes contact

From: "Dany" <Dany_B@pandora.be>
To: <tom9pt@clara.net>
Subject: Hamilcar glider chalk nr 903
Date: 14 August 2003 16:14

Dear Tom Ashmore

I had your E-mail address from the Directory of Members of the Market Harborough branch of the R.B.L via internet.

I would like to contact Mr BERNARD HALSALL for Information about his force-landing of the Hamilcar glider chalk nr 903 on september 19 1944.

The glider came down near the village of Zomergem, some 12 miles from Ghent Belgium.

I happened to witness this incident . I was six years old at the time and I watched how it landed safely in front of our house, where it remained for some time.

After many years research, I found in the book " Tugs and gliders to Arnhem of Arie-Jan Van Hees " the glider-pilot was Captain BERNARD HALSALL (Chalk number 903)

On 19 september 2004 it is the 60 th anniversary.
For our local history and geography periodical I like to have information about this event.

- crew members
- a short story about your experience of the force-landing.
- what has happened through liberated Belgium and how have you joining the 7 th Armoured Brigade?
- a short biography

Thank you very much in advance
sincerely yours

Bral Leo
Portuinstraat 88
8310 Bruges
Belgium

How it started - Bernard replies

Dear Bral Leo,

There is no doubt that hearing from you means a great deal to Bernard: he really is quite excited and I suspect he spent much of last night reliving that day and those that followed. "How I would love to stand in that field again", he said when he explained to me this morning the circumstances of the arrival of your uninvited visitors in that enormous areoplane without engines! Incidentally, what became of it?

Bernard's prompt reply to your message follows and I am happy to act as postman for any urgent communications between you but I see he has included his postal address.

Regards

Tom Ashmore

Bernard's letter to you

Dear Bral Leo,

I was very pleased and delighted to read your e-mail sent to my good friend Tom Ashmore. I am asking him to send my reply, as I do not have a computer!

I remember very clearly the forced landing I made in front of your house on 19th September, 1944 - and I remember vividly the field, the trees at the top end, and the welcoming party running out to investigate! I will be very happy to send you the information you ask for, and I will try and find one or two photographs as well.

Meanwhile, most sincere greetings to you.

Bernard Halsall

22 Welland Court
Stamford Close
Market Harborough
Leicestershire
LE16 9ED

This email was sent on 15th August 2003



Comments, stories and articles
written by

Bernard Halsall M C,
wartime Glider Pilot,

for Market Harborough Branch
Royal British Legion
Newsletter, *In Touch*

Plus
material for his talk

“A Happy Reunion”