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Dawn, June 6 1944: The invasion begins . . .



Picture: Imperial War Museum

The scene that greeted Army Film and Photographic Unit linkman Capt Derrick Knight and cine cameraman Sgt Desmond O'Neill as they went ashore in Normandy on June 6, 1944. Morning mist covers the beach as tanks of the 13th/18th Hussars touch down near a guiding flare. Mined obstacles jut menacingly above the waves. Sgt O'Neill, who joined the staff of the embryonic SOLDIER magazine a few months later, is now one of Britain's top society photographers. On Pages 62-63 he tells how he was wounded on D-Day, a misfortune which enabled him to scoop the world with film taken on the invasion beaches. Capt Knight died earlier this year



Incorporating the Territorial Army magazine

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FRONT COVER: National flags inside the Musée Memorial at Bayeux in Normandy provide a backdrop to the famous photograph of British commandos going ashore in Normandy. It was taken by Sgt Ian Grant of the Army Film and Photographic Unit.

May 30/June 13, 1994 Vol 50/11-12

This commemorative issue of **SOLDIER** is published as a tribute to the brave men and women who took part in the great invasion that began the liberation of Europe 50 years ago.

Much of the content is devoted to their deeds, told in their words. Other pages reflect the normal content of the magazine.



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● The next issue of **SOLDIER**, dated June 27, will be published in mid-June at the usual price of 60p

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City honours the Fusiliers



More than 200 members of The Royal Regiment of Fusiliers exercised their right to march through the City of London as one of its privileged regiments on April 29 to mark the silver jubilee of the RRF's formation. The Duke of Kent, Colonel-in-Chief of the regiment, took the salute

Army's major role in France

THE BRITISH Army will have a major role in the D-Day commemorative programme in Normandy. More than 2,500 troops from the 3rd (United Kingdom) Division are involved in organising services at five war cemeteries and carrying out a massed parachute drop.

Services at Ranville, Hermandville, Douvres, Ryes and Bayeux are the responsibility of 3 Para, 3 Div Signal Regiment 1 RWF, 47 Regiment RA and 36 Engineer Regiment respectively.

In addition, 3 Close Support Regiment RLC will organise the British veterans' parade at Arromanches beach, and 100 officer cadets from Normandy Company, RMA Sandhurst, will parade at an international ceremony, attended by heads of state, at Omaha beach.

The huge military operation will involve the move of stores, vehicles and soldiers by logistic landing ships from 17 Port and Maritime Regiment RLC at Marchwood.

Soldiers will be accommodated in four administrative bases and aboard two landing ships moored at Caen. An RLC-Expeditionary Forces Institute canteen will also be established.

Scots DG bird group wins award

SOLDIERS from Catterick-based Royal Scots Dragoon Guards are among members of a conservation group to receive a top MoD award for the second year running.

The Silver Otter was awarded for their efforts in turning 28 acres of tangled trees and shrubs, once a military training area, into a haven for 60 different species of birds and 150 varieties of plants and wildflowers. The group also established a bird-ringing station studying migration patterns, and bred and released several barn owl chicks.

Anglian officer killed in Bosnia

CAPT Steven Wormald, a liaison officer with the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment, was killed on April 29 when his Land Rover set off an anti-tank mine near Gornji Vakuf at the start of Grapple 4.

He is the fifth British soldier to die during the 18 months of Operational Grapple. He had just arrived with the 2 R Anglian battalion group to take over from the 1st Battalion, Coldstream Guards, which has returned to Germany at the end of its six-month tour.

Another Royal Anglian and a Coldstreamer were injured.

Tension increased significantly following Bosnian Serb attacks on UN troops.

Soldiers of A Company, 1st Battalion, The Duke of Wellington's Regiment, returned fire after being shot at twice during a foot patrol inside the ceasefire exclusion zone around Gorazde.

The eight-man patrol was pursued by Bosnian Serb soldiers and carried out a fighting withdrawal in which three Serbs were believed killed.

A column of 48 vehicles with 183 reinforcements from C Company was blocked by Bosnian Serbs for four days until allowed to pass on May 4.

The Dukes were accompanied by Norwegian medical teams and French engineers as well as Royal Engineers, and are working alongside Ukrainian infantry.

Only eight hours after arriving they were visited by Gen Sir John Wilsey, Britain's Joint Commander of British Forces supporting United Nations operations in former Yugoslavia. He stopped off during a two-day visit for talks at Zagreb, Split and Sarajevo.

A Nordic battalion observation post near Tuzla came under artillery and mortar fire, and when eight Danish Leopard tanks moved up they were attacked by anti-tank missiles.

The Danes fired 72 tank rounds during a two-hour clash, silencing the Serbs and reportedly killing nine. It was the most serious confrontation so far between UN troops and Serbian forces.

UN troops came under fire seven times – six from Serb positions. British soldiers near Travnik used their mortars for the first time in reply to shelling.

When 1 R Anglian took command on May 14 the initial dispositions were Battalion HQ and one company of 2 R Anglian at Vitez, with two companies at Gornji Vakuf.

Tactical HQ and A plus C Company of 1 DWR were at Gorazde, with the remainder at Bugojno. No decision had been taken to extend their four-month tour to six months.

C Squadron, The Light Dragoons replaced A Sqn at Tomislavgrad, while D Sqn was at Zepce with a troop at Maglaj.

Tension off the Balkans increased dramatically on May 1 when the British frigate HMS *Chatham*, leading six Nato warships, was nearly rammed by one of two patrol boats accompanying a former Yugoslav Navy frigate, manned by Serbs, which tried to intervene when a tanker was stopped.

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Performance pay 'rubbished'

PERFORMANCE related pay for the Forces was described as "a load of absolute rubbish" in the House of Lords.

The phrase was used by Opposition chief defence spokesman Lord Williams of Elvel, who said that until more details were available on how the matter was to be examined "we shall continue to take the very hostile view that we have".

Aim of the proposal, suggested Lord Campbell of Croy, was to recognise the past achievements and experience of those who could not expect further promotion, such as warrant officers.

Lord Dean of Beswick said it was right that men and women now taking on increasing responsibility because of the reduction in the Armed Forces should be better rewarded.

"Is it not at least arguable," said Lord Hailsham, the former

Lord Chancellor, "that performance related pay would be inconsistent with the general ethos to be attached to a uniformed and disciplined Service?"

Defence Under-Secretary Lord Cranborne said the matter was being examined independently by the Armed Forces Pay Review Body and Senior Salaries Review Body and the Government was keeping an open mind.

Mr Peter Hardy asked the Prime Minister if he will now reconsider the question of the award of campaign medals for those involved in the invasion of Europe in 1944 and in the bombing campaign over mainland Europe from 1940 onwards.



A summary of defence topics from Westminster

In a written answer Mr Major replied that King George VI had approved the France and Germany Star for all who took part in the Normandy

invasion and subsequent operations in north west Europe; and the Air Crew Europe Star for those in operations over Europe up to June 5 1944, provided they qualified for the 1939-45 Star.

Jeremy Hanley replied that column contained a brief digest of defence matters considered by the editor to be of interest to his readership.

"The column will reflect information which affects Army personnel, their dependants, and the ex-Service community."

The police report on alleged war crimes in the Falklands was delivered to the Crown Prosecution Service on March 29, the Lord Chancellor told the Lords.

Any decision to take the matter further would be made by the Director of Public Prosecutions in consultation with the Attorney-General.

On March 1 1994, membership of the Army's long-term reserve was 104,722, MPs were told.

Welsh goats go on parade

THREE VIGs (Very Important Goats) took part in a never-to-be repeated occasion at Maindy Barracks, Cardiff.

The volunteer soldiers of the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Wales were on parade to say a formal goodbye to Dewi V, their mascot, who, along with his keeper, Goat Major Sgt Colin Pryce, was returning to civvy street.

Also on parade were Taffy IV of the regiment's 1st Battalion and Shenkin I, new mascot of the 2nd Battalion.

Dewi V was also the mascot of the 3rd Battalion, now amalgamated with the 4th Battalion to form the new 2nd Battalion. In a previous existence - as Sospan III - Shenkin I was the mascot of the 4th Battalion.

Rangers killed

PTES Glen McGowan, Rodney Tosh and William Salters of the 5th Battalion, The Royal Irish Regiment, died and five others were injured in a fire at their barracks in Magherafelt, Co Londonderry, on April 30.

Nunshigum veterans remember



Heroism 50 years ago in Burma was marked at Bovington when Burma campaign veterans Robert Greendale, Arthur Freer and Richard Teese attended the Royal Scots Dragoon Guards (Carabiniers and Greys) commemoration of the Battle of Nunshigum, at which B Squadron, 3rd Carabiniers retook a strategic hill near Imphal. Tank commanders had to expose their heads and shoulders because of the steep incline, and were picked off one by one as they fired their pistols

Gurkhas to stay

THE GURKHAS will continue to serve in the British Army after the withdrawal from Hong Kong in 1997, said Defence Secretary, Malcolm Rifkind in Nepal. During his recent visit he saw a programme being implemented to resettle and train Gurkhas made redundant in the Defence cuts.

He also paid tribute to dozens of Gurkha Second World War veterans receiving pensions at the Gurkha Welfare Centre in West Nepal. Mr Rifkind met ex-Rifleman Bhanbahakta Gurung, who won the Victoria Cross in Burma in 1944, one of seven holders of the VC still living in the hills of Nepal.

Tors teams

MORE than 400 teams were due to participate in the 35th Ten Tors expedition which began on May 14.

About 2,400 young people entered the annual event and faced the rigours of two days on Dartmoor. The Ten Tors is organised by staff from Headquarters 43 (Wessex) Brigade based at Exeter.

Picture: Mike Perrin

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A CLASS 47 locomotive was named "The Sapper" at Stratford-upon-Avon in recognition of HQ Engineer Resources, Central Engineering Park, Long Marston. Royal Engineers, who have had the Freedom of the town for 35 years, are responsible for 19 miles of track at the stores depot and railway lines within British Forces installations in Germany.

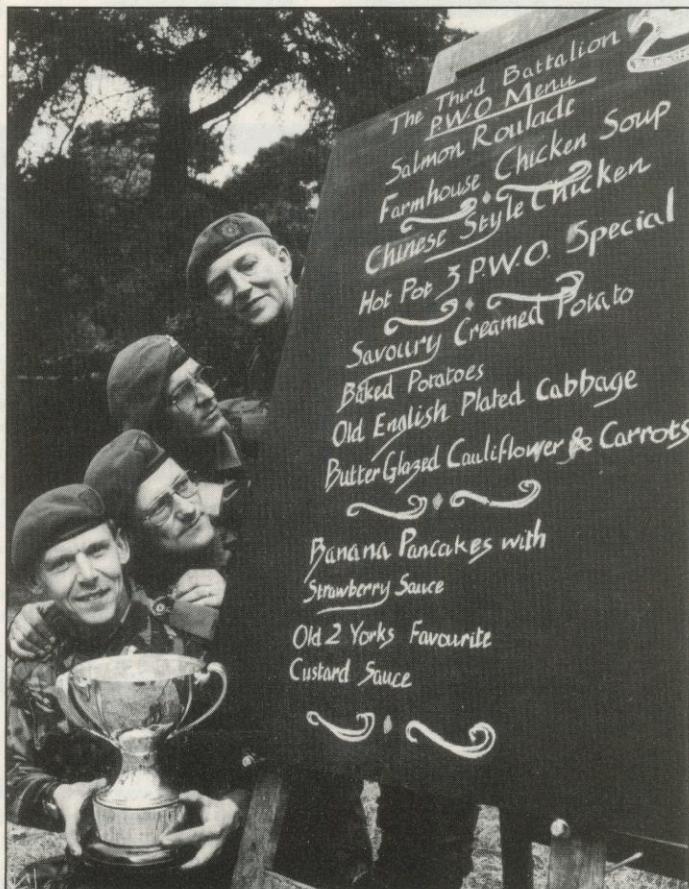
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Medics from Birmingham-based 202 (Midlands) General Hospital RAMC(V) pushed a Royal Marines unit into second place to win the overall team trophy in a two-day, 50-mile march at RAF Swanton Morley in Norfolk.

• • •
Four veteran 25-pounder field guns saved from the scrap-heap boomed out over Cardiff to celebrate the birthday of the Queen on April 21 when TA gunners of C (Glamorgan Yeomanry) Troop, 211 (South Wales) Battery Royal Artillery (Volunteers) fired a 21-gun salute.

• • •
Proceeds from the final open day at the Support Weapons Wing, Netheravon, will be donated to help build a new village hall at Figheldean and swell the Netheravon Church Roof Fund. The farewell gesture marks a close relationship since 1904. The Wing is due to move to Warminster next April.

Springing into action from 4 Close Support Regiment RLC are LCpl Darren Steven, LCpl Graham Mailer, LCpl Danny Weir, Cpl Andy Melia, Cfn Colin McKenna, Cfn John Keegan, Cfn Sam McClusky and Pte Caroline Welsh, who were involved in the clean-up at Abingdon

Pudding on a good show



Members of the 3rd Battalion, The Prince of Wales's Own Regiment of Yorkshire (Volunteers) cooked up a recipe for success in a competition held in York. The winning team in Exercise Grebe Grey, the HQ Eastern District's annual Territorial Army cookery and military skills event was (top to bottom) Sgt Shaun Marshall, Cpl David Houghton, LCpls Kevin Lefley and Tommy Hought

Troops in clean-up campaign

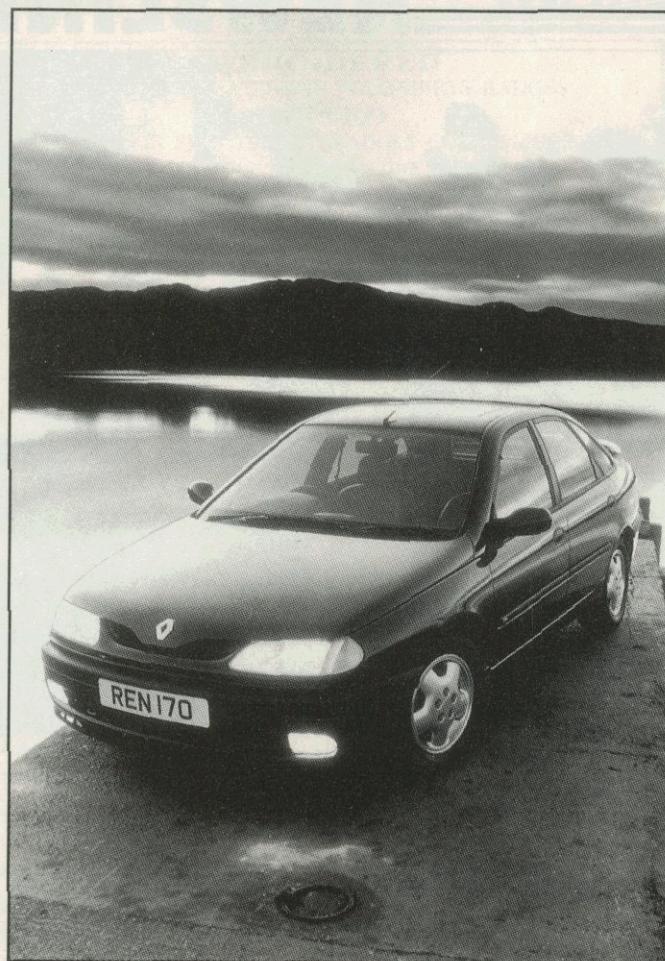
BOMB squad soldiers from 721 Squadron, 11 Explosive Ordnance Disposal Regiment RLC used "Wheelbarrow" – the remote-controlled bomb disposal device – to help fill two skips of rubbish taken from a Hereford brook during National Spring Cleaning Week.

Several tons of rubbish clogging hedgerows and ditches round Dalton Barracks, Abingdon, were removed by 3 and 4 Regiments RLC.

Training areas near Aldershot and Church Crookham were spruced up by more than 300 soldiers from the 1st and 3rd Battalions, The Parachute Regiment; the 7th Battalion, 7th Duke of Edinburgh's Own Gurkha Rifles; and 5 Airborne Brigade Logistic Battalion who spent two days clearing up rubbish.

RS window unveiled

A STAINED glass window dedicated to the 1st Battalion, The Royal Scots, was unveiled in the ancient Canongate Kirk, Edinburgh, during a series of visits in the regiment's recruiting area. Soldiers of C Company, led by the Pipes and Drums and the Lowland Band, were given a rousing reception when they marched through Haddington, Musselburgh, Penicuik, Linlithgow and Peebles.



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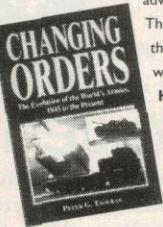
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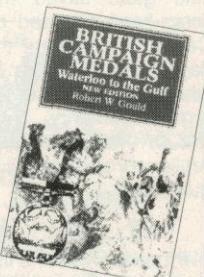
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Bridge of memories

Normandy veterans **Richard Todd** and **John Howard** exchanged memories at Aldershot when they met to open a D-Day exhibition in the Airborne Forces Museum. Maj Howard led the glider-borne Ox and Bucks Light Infantry which captured Pegasus Bridge, while Lt Todd was with 7 Parachute Battalion which relieved Maj Howard's force. Both await a French Government announcement on the future of the original bridge – replaced recently by a wider version – to be made after the 50th anniversary commemorations. See Pages 52-53.



Fitting occasion



Receiving a fitting for his new Royal Logistics Corps mess kit is Capt **Graham Manders**, who commands the RLC Local Resources section in Berlin. Attaching the ornate braid epaulettes is Herr **Kirca**, one of two German tailors employed in the RLC Tailor Shop at Alexander Barracks. It will close in September as part of the Berlin drawdown.

Tim goes Dutch



When **Tim Royall** took voluntary redundancy after 18 years with the gunners, he knew precisely what to do. He moved to Holland and set up the "Wings of Freedom" Museum in Veghel.



A farewell to Col Sir **Peter Hilton** (centre), President of the East Midlands Territorial Army Auxiliary and Voluntary Reserve Association (TAVRA) and winner of three Military Crosses, was marked by a special dinner in his honour. Also retiring from the association was Brig **Edward Wilkinson** (right), its chairman for the past 11 years. With them is Brig **Michael Brown**, Honorary Colonel of 3 WFR.



Driving ambition

Cpls **Morgan Bridge** (left) and **Michael Doherty** of The Parachute Regiment set off from Aldershot in their specially adapted Land Rover earlier this month to compete in the notoriously arduous Warn Transylvanian Trophy 1994 off-road competition. The pair had just four days to get to the assembly point for the challenge near the Czech/Ukrainian border, followed by a seven-day drive through the Ukraine. Cpl Doherty broke the world record for the ascent of Ben Nevis by car in 1992.

Critical time for Marjorie and medics

Six nursing officers from 219 (Wessex) Field Hospital, RAMC (Volunteers) head for Bangladesh this month to assist and train the Bangladesh Ministry of Defence medical staff in critical care. Four of the team, which will be based in Dhaka, are pictured with their leader, Maj **Marjorie Bandy** (standing, right), who is the hospital's deputy matron. On her right is Capt **Jane Bird**, with Maj **David Knowles**, Capt **Paula O'Brien** and Maj **Jim Gardiner** in front.

Tears as Italy veterans return

VETERANS of the Italian campaign paid emotional visits to Second World War battlefields, monuments and war graves in a 15-day, 50th anniversary tour.

The pilgrimage was organised by the Italy Star Association 1943-1945.

A special honour was accorded the veterans on April 23 when the people of Cervia brought forward the fiesta marking their liberation date to coincide with the visit, which included a tour of the town's monuments and a wreath-laying ceremony at the naval memorial.

First major engagement on the pilgrimage was at Anzio, where a reception by the mayors of Nettuno and Anzio included plaque exchanges and the presentation of a medallion to every veteran. The new museum was also on the itinerary and wreaths were laid at the war and beach-head cemeteries as well as at the Gordon Highlanders' Stone.

Moving down to Terracina, the party visited the Commonwealth War Graves sites at Caserta, Salerno and Cassino, where wreaths and personal tributes were laid at all Crosses of Sacrifice before the hills of "blessed memory" were traversed once more.

Association national chairman Mr Maurice Cheadle commented: "The Sangro site must be one of the most outstanding of settings for

remembrance. The cross stands high and the headstones descend gently in tiered rows.

"Here much emotion was shown, including, I must admit, by myself. It was peace personified. We will remember."

Montecchio and Gradara were new cemeteries on the itinerary and the veterans called at Coriano Ridge before proceeding to their headquarters at Cervia.

A Saturday parade included 98 veterans of the association, an Italian naval contingent and 50 children who correspond with two London schools. The sound of the pipes drew crowds.

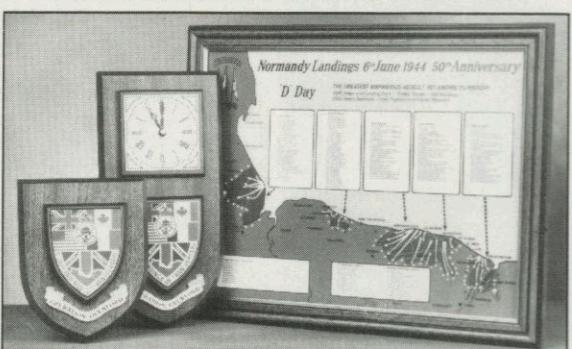
After various wreath-layings, Mr Cheadle joined the mayor and town dignitaries on a stage to address a packed public square.

Mr Cheadle hopes to arrange a further tour soon to cover Italy's northern war graves. Those wishing to join the Italy Star Association should contact the national secretary, Mr G Swain, 76 Manor Road, New Milton, Hants BH25 5EN (tel: 0425 614884).

• The association has been granted up to 30 places on the "Hampshire Remembers D-Day" parade at Netley, near Southampton, on May 27 in recognition of the role of its veterans in the early occupation of Europe, through Sicily and the Italian mainland, as well as in southern France.

OPERATION OVERLORD

50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE D-DAY LANDINGS
BUY YOUR OFFICIAL D-DAY SHIELD AND ONE FOR YOUR FATHER AND GRANDFATHER TOO



The above picture depicts the official Shield, Shield Clock and a D-Day picture plaque. The Shield design has been officially approved by the Ministry of Defence. Each Shield product purchased will benefit Service charities.

Please complete the order form below and send with your cheque or PO, payable to Achievement Marketing International Ltd to Mrs Susan Evans, Client Services, Achievement Marketing International Limited, PO Box 13, Malvern, Worcestershire WR14 2YX. Achievement Marketing International Limited is the parent company of Defence Consultants International Limited.

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EX-SERVICE MEN'S ASSOCIATION

LETTERS

Write to:
SOLDIER,
Ordnance Road,
Aldershot,
Hants GU11 2DU.

Musical salute

WITH NO right of reply I was criticised in several national newspapers and on radio recently for being disrespectful to D-Day veterans because of my one-man Glen Miller act.

When this act entertained Government personnel on April 14 and three days later starred at London's Teddy Bear Show at Fairfield Hall, Croydon, there was nothing but praise.

On Sunday June 5, I shall be celebrating at Newhaven Fort. A trombonist for 30 years, I shall be celebrating the music of Glen Miller and Tommy Dorsey.

Most important of all, I shall be celebrating the reason why those D-Day Servicemen died.

If we don't celebrate the reason why they died, then they died in vain. — Peter "Fats" Baxter (ex-Serviceman), Hove, E Sussex.



THE FIRST STEP
by a recent, young double amputee

The other D-Day Dodgers

AN RASC platoon, we were under canvas near Southampton, kid-callow but enthusiastic at sharing history's momentous pageant.

We drove 3-ton Bedfords laden with materials of invasion and envied the lads on the invasion craft.

We would be with them. All

right, then, behind them.

We? There was "Shiner", who did just that at the dance at Nether Wallop village hall; "Poole", who boasted his town had the largest enclosed piece of water in the country; ex-circus lad big Jonesey who had a "do" with a Yank . . .

The names of successive

exercises had appeared on our transport work tickets. Now it was EXERCISE OVERLORD.

We were going over? No? OK, so we're not first-team stuff; but our time will come.

It did. But Normandy via Gourock? Is the Channel too full, or is it to fox Jerry?

BIRD'S EYE-VIEW



Sad end for hero

READING how Fus Jeffer-son won the VC by firing a PIAT in Italy in May 1944 (Letters, May 2) prompted me to turn up an old scrapbook with a newspaper cutting about the action.

Another cutting from November, 1982 recorded that he killed himself when his VC was stolen.

A sad ending for such a brave man. — W Fox, Peterlee, Co Durham.

THANKS FOR ALL THE LETTERS

ONCE again readers of SOLDIER have come up trumps, this time with replies to my query on phonetic alphabets (Letters, February 2).

I have received 22 replies, so far, including one from New York and one from Montreal, plus a phone call from Innisfail, Queensland here in Australia.

The caller was formerly a bandsman in the Royal Corps of Signals Band in the UK,

who after coming to Australia, joined the Royal Australian Air Force Band and is now retired.

From my initial search for three phonetic alphabets my mail from SOLDIER readers has produced 13! Thank you one and all.

In 1987 I asked for information on an Army cap badge I had purchased and received 62 replies from far and wide identifying the badge as belonging to the Guards Machine Gun Regiment.

The Letters section of your magazine is certainly an ideal source for information on militaria. — G C Hogben, Seaford, Victoria, Australia.

War pensions agency pledges better service

MORE THAN 40 ex-Servicemen's organisations attended the launch in April of the War Pensions Agency. Guest of honour was the Duke of Edinburgh.

According to chief executive Peter Mathison, agency status will give him and his staff "the ability to concentrate on why we are here – to serve war pensioners".

He said: "It gives us the freedom to decide the best way to meet this responsibility and gives a direct link with Ministers."

And Peter Lilley, Secretary of State for Social Security, said war pensioners could expect a better quality of service, built upon the improvements

delivered by the former War Pensions Directorate.

He identified significant improvements under agency status: faster handling of claims, a more personal approach and better communications.

The War Pensions Agency employs 1,700 staff, most of whom are based at Fylde in Lancashire to deal with welfare and fund-raising.

One such officer is former Scots Guard John Whiteley, recently appointed as the Legion's first county field officer (CFO) in Surrey under its restructuring plan.

The remainder, about 450, are involved with the Welfare Service, Ilford Park Polish Home, and the computer and personnel sections.

Contact the War Pensions Agency on 0253 858858.

SERVICE KIDS JOIN FORCES

INCREDIBLY Bad People beware, Naafi's Small Force is out to get you!

Three specially-commissioned cartoon characters – TT (who turns into a tank), Dek (an aircraft carrier) and Jet (a fighter plane) – lead the Force, a new club for Service children launched by Naafi.

Membership packs of badges, pencils and other goodies, plus a monthly magazine full of pop and video game updates, competitions, jokes, letters, and giveaways are all part of the fun for children who join the club.

Naafi shops have the details.

THE TAX-FREE CARS IN FRONT.

How would you like your Toyota? As a mid-engined two-seater, as a 4 x 4 off-roader, a whispering saloon or estate, or an eight seater people carrier?

Toyota have a wider range of vehicles than any other manufacturer in the UK.

And with a bigger research and development budget than anybody else, every Toyota is the car in front.

Class-leading specifications. Multi-valve engines are standard equipment on Toyotas, as is power steering



(except Starlet). But then Toyotas have always taken standard equipment to new standards. And while they've taken value to a new high, they've taken depreciation to a new low.

They've also taken reliability way ahead. That's why every one comes with a 3-year/60,000-mile manufacturer's warranty.

Send us the coupon or call your local agent for full details of the Toyota range and tax-free deals.

But be warned. Once you've driven the car in front, there's no turning back.

For more information on the complete range of models available from Toyota contact your local agent or complete the coupon and send it to Tax Free Sales, Toyota (GB) Ltd, The Quadrangle, Station Road, Redhill, Surrey RH1 1PX.

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18, 19, 21, 25, 26, Nick Murphy 02161 558014
28, 34, 35, 40, 42,
43, 109, 140
17, 20, 24, 43, 44, Mike Fitzgerald 0231 487101
103
15, 16, 29, 36, Reg Grant 05254 1680
39, 41, 46, 47, 113
23, 30, 31, 32, 33 Bob Nicol 05051 2292
38, 45, Berlin, 48

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I would be interested in receiving information on:

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Other _____

THE CAR IN FRONT IS A TOYOTA

There is more to the Legion than a tray of poppies

FOR MANY people, their memories of the Royal British Legion are jogged once a year when they see a poppy-seller with a tray, writes Phil Wilcox.

Or by the moving sight of thousands of poppies descending silently from the roof of the Royal Albert Hall during the annual Festival of Remembrance.

But for the rest of the year, the RBL and its tireless officers carry on behind the scenes with the vital dual functions of welfare and fund-raising.

The War Pensions Agency employs 1,700 staff, most of whom are based at Fylde in Lancashire to deal with administration and payment of claims.

The remainder, about 450, are involved with the Welfare Service, Ilford Park Polish Home, and the computer and personnel sections.

Contact the War Pensions Agency on 0253 858858.



John Whiteley, the Royal British Legion's County Field Officer for Surrey

welfare work within the county for ex-Servicemen and dependants, and to assist the large network of volunteers who undertake the annual poppy appeal.

All the chairmen of the counties have a say in the officers' appointments, and the CFOs have no authority, apart from clearance to write cheques for up to £350 for deserving cases who can show genuine need.

These can range from widows or widowers of Service personnel to ex-Servicemen and women (who have served a minimum of seven days in the Forces) and their dependants, including children up to 17 years of age.

The organisation was founded in 1921 because a "forgotten army" had come back from the war to find no jobs.

Or beyond that if they have special reasons, such as disability.

Among its numerous services, the RBL can also set up Government-subsidised pilgrimages to, for example, Anzio, where a sol-

dier's widow can visit her husband's grave and the battlefield.

Each RBL branch has its own secretary, backed by a committee, primed with contacts such as Citizens' Advice Bureaux and Age Concern.

But they, like John Whiteley, are well aware that "welfare is not just about giving money out, it is about visiting people".

And what about those poppies?

"Most people in this country have no concept of what the poppy money is spent on," he said.

"They think the Legion is chiefly bound up in the First and Second World Wars. In fact 1968 is the only year since the Second World War that a soldier has not been killed on active service.

"The vast majority of RBL members join to be a member of their club as well as their branch. I see my job as recruiting more fund-raisers, collectors and welfare workers from the former," he explained.

Now he plans to arrange more county-run events in the Surrey area (where there are 94 branches, 40 clubs and more than 20,000 members) and get

going to get jobs at first, and who don't necessarily turn to the Legion initially."

If Mr Whiteley had his way, everyone leaving the Services would be given a year's free membership of the RBL to give them an idea of what it is about.

"I am 56 years old, which is quite young in Legion terms," he said.

"But I feel it is vital that we should get younger people to come forward and organise aspects such as the poppy appeal and collection.

"The vast majority of RBL members join to be a member of their club as well as their branch. I see my job as recruiting more fund-raisers, collectors and welfare workers from the former," he explained.

Now he plans to arrange more county-run events in the Surrey area (where there are 94 branches, 40 clubs and more than 20,000 members) and get

John has been busily engaged at "poppy parties", thanking collectors for their good work before – in the best military terms – preparing for the "big push" later in the year.

The CFO system is still evolving, he said, but he feels that he and his colleagues – the vast majority of whom are ex-Service, ranging in age from 38 to 56 and previously holding ranks from sergeant major to colonel or group captain – will now provide the advantage of an obvious link for branch secretaries to contact.

One recent example of how the job can be worthwhile sprang to mind.

"A wife with three children had been abandoned by her husband, leaving her living on benefit in rented accommodation. We got a new fridge for her. "She wrote a lovely letter of thanks, offering help with any of the RBL's activities."

Guess who has just been added to this year's "legion" of collectors?

AN AGENCY which wants empty homes in the UK to be used for homeless families has drawn attention to thousands of unoccupied married quarters.

At the launch of a research paper, the Empty Homes Agency claimed the MoD was the government department with the largest number of unused houses.

The agency was set up to suggest ways that these homes might be brought back into use for the 142,000 families who are registered homeless.

The MoD plans to hand over the MQ estate to an independent housing trust in the next 12 months and one of the trust's first tasks will be to consider the use of the empty homes.

But a study by Judy Dugdale into ex-Service hous-

ing, published last year by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, showed that the situation is not as serious as the agency's report implies.

"Many of the empty married quarters have already been designated surplus to requirements and are for sale," she said. "Others are in a repair and refurbishment programme which will be one of the housing trust's first priorities."

"The vast majority of empty homes are those held ready for incoming families who are on the move with a new posting, many returning from Germany."

"There was considerable criticism of the MoD for allowing these properties to stand empty for long periods but with the establishment of the housing trust the turn-around time for repairs and maintenance should improve and any properties surplus to requirements be disposed of quickly."

• In reply to a Commons question on April 12, Armed Forces Minister Jeremy Hanley said that as at December 31, 1993 the MoD owned 10,108 vacant married quarters and 151 vacant MoD houses.

In addition, 1,468 vacant married quarters were in the process of being sold.

"The majority of the vacant married quarters were either undergoing or awaiting major works or modernisation, held for unit deployments, or already allocated to Service families who were due to move in shortly."

He added that the MoD sold 2,000 MQs last year and intended to sell another 5,000 during the next five years.

Young benefits

THERE isn't always a job available for school leavers, which makes a new Benefits Agency booklet particularly valuable to youngsters.

Young people's guide to Social Security (FB 23) will also be of interest to full-time students.

FOR FAMILIES

Empty MQs ready for drawdown

Cari Roberts

→ COUNTERPOINT ←



Help yourself to free course at university

MEN and women who have lost their jobs or face redundancy as a result of cutbacks in the defence or defence-related industries have been given a series of 15-week management courses absolutely free by the University of North London.

The courses, supported

by the European Social Fund,

will involve training in

general, transport or leisure

management, all said to be

areas with good career

prospects.

The really good news is

that these aren't the only

courses which are free.

Others, designed

specifically by the university

for people made redundant

through no fault of their

own, include Women Into

Work – open to unem- employed women. All are EC-funded.

In a recent edition of

Counterpoint on BFBS,

Sue Bagwell from the

university described

the campus as a lively place full

of people from all walks of

life and of all ages. If you're

likely to be returning to the

UK you might consider this

campaign to heighten awareness. They have a new logo but haven't given into anything trendy that will date in a few years time. The letters and the crown are still there but the impression is rather softer.

Did you know that one in ten of their members are men – or that more men than women joined last year? Neither did I.

A very good factsheet is available from the Army Families Advice Bureau. It deals with house ownership and highlights two important schemes.

First, the Advance of Pay For Assisted House Purchase Scheme for those who have reached the age

of 25 years of age before this allowance can be claimed.

Contact Cari at BFBS,

BFPO 786 or c/o SOLDIER.

Normandy fighters 'a special breed'

"ORAL HISTORY" is the name of the game nowadays when it comes to relating events of the comparatively near past, and, let's face it, gathering a collection of personal recollections and setting them in order to form a readable cohesive book is easier than creative writing – really a bit like reviewing!

However, this is certainly not meant as an adverse criticism of a lately-published work related to the Allied invasion of Europe. *Eye-Witness D-Day*:

Drawing on a fund of memories

LEICESTERSHIRE couple Frank and Joan Shaw hit on a winning formula to raise many thousands of pounds for Service charities.

Their first four volumes of reminiscences of Servicemen and women, civilians and members of wartime voluntary organisations have raised £85,000 so far.

Of this, £50,000 has been presented to the Royal British Legion for a convalescent home for ex-Servicemen.

Subjects covered were Dunkirk, service in the Home Guard, the Battle of Britain and the Blitz.

Now the dedicated couple have produced a fifth volume of their "We Remember" series of books. *We Remember D-Day* chronicles the experiences of 130 people from all walks of life.

The book opens with an account of the death of Lt Den Brotheridge, who was shot dead as he helped seize the Pegasus Bridge in the early hours of June 6. He is said to have been the first Allied soldier killed on D-Day. – LJM

We Remember D-Day compiled by Frank and Joan Shaw. From the authors at PO Box 44, Hinckley, Leicester LE10 0FA, price £16 (inc postage) made payable to "Dunkirk CA".

The Story of the Battle by Those Who Were There is an anthology compiled from interviews with scores of veterans, as well as from diaries, memoirs and letters home.

The book is an admirable tribute to those who took part in the greatest amphibious operation of all time.

As Jon E Lewis rightly states in his introduction: "A legend has grown up in the years since the war to the effect that the invasion was a matter of one glorious day in June, followed by a triumphal march on Paris."

"The reality was conspicuously different. It took the Allies ten weeks of bloody, painful fighting to get out of Normandy. At times the infantry casualty rate rivalled that of the Western Front in World War I."

The book does not fall into the trap of being concerned only with that one "glorious day".

The editor has drawn on first-hand accounts of preparations for D-Day, the landings themselves from both air and sea, and the subsequent fighting in Normandy. The recollections are those of civilians, Service personnel of wide-ranging nationalities, ranks and arms of service, and war correspondents.

The accounts are as varied as can be expected: inspiring, confident, whingeing, frightened and pathetic – they are all here.

For many, perhaps most, of the participants, D-Day was their first experience of battle. Not that apprehension ever

IN BRIEF

Books received as this issue was being prepared:

Accidental Warrior: In the Front Line from Normandy till Victory by Geoffrey Picot. Paperback version of the vivid account, written mostly in 1945 by an officer in the 1st Battalion, The Hampshire Regiment. Penguin, £6.99.

The Penguin Atlas of D-Day and the Normandy Campaign by John Man. More than 60 colour maps, based on up-to-date research. Penguin, paperback, £10.

Nothing Less than Victory by Russell Miller. Oral history of D-Day compiled from letters, diaries, official reports and interviews. Penguin, paperback, £7.99.

D-Day: The Normandy Landings and the Liberation of Europe by Anthony Kemp. Well illustrated, 194-page pocket guide (for relatively large pockets) in the New Horizons series. Thames and Hudson, paperback, £6.95.

Invasion '44: The Full Story of D-Day by John Frayn Turner. **D-Day: The Invasion in Photographs** edited by Tony Hall. The

leaves a soldier, but at least the tempered warrior has some idea of what can be expected.

As Jon Lewis says: "The men who fought in Normandy in 1944 were a special breed."

– BJ

Eye-Witness D-Day: The Story of the Battle by Those Who Were There edited by Jon E Lewis. Robinson Publishing Limited, paperback, £5.99.

Rats' dented pride

THE REPUTATION of the British Army's 7th Armoured Division – the famed Desert Rats – received a severe dent in the opening battles of the Normandy campaign, when it was accused of not fighting hard enough.

On August 4, 1944, the axe fell and its GOC, Maj Gen George Erskine, was replaced and more than 100 of his officers – all Eighth Army veterans – were cross-posted either to other units in Normandy or back to UK training units.

Churchill's Desert Rats is the story of the division's final campaign which took it from Normandy to Berlin told in the words of the young soldiers who fought with it.

One recalls requesting air support from RAF Typhoon

fighters and being attacked by mistake. Another recounts the capture of a 12-year-old member of the Hitler Youth, armed with a Schmeisser machine pistol, a Luger pistol, three grenades and a paratroop knife. The unfortunate boy was said to have received a "damned good spanking" before being sent off to a PoW cage.

Patrick Delaforce's tale of armoured warfare will be enjoyed by veterans of the North-West Europe campaign, and there is much to commend it to today's British Army. – LJM

Churchill's Desert Rats by Patrick Delaforce. Alan Sutton, hardback, £14.99. (Second World War veterans can buy a paperback edition for £10, including postage, direct from the author. Tel: 0273 564372 for details.)

Reissue of the 1959 documentary-style narrative. Airlife, paperback, £12.95.

Southwick: The D-Day Village that Went to War by Geoffrey O'Connell. Local history of "Suthwick" (as it is pronounced), north-west of Portsmouth where Ike, Monty and co had their pre-invasion HQ. Ashford, Buchan & Enright, PO Box 20, Leatherhead, Surrey KT24 5HH, paperback, £5.99.

D-Day: The Invasion in Photographs edited by Tony Hall. The



Picture: OO Hdr's Regimental Archive

Highland Division troops of the 5th Seaforths disarm German prisoners during the crucial Battle of the Triangle near Caen as the Allies fought to break out of the Normandy bridgehead six weeks after D-Day. From *Battalion*, story of the unit from El Alamein to the Elbe

BOOK REVIEWS

After the battles, a classic history

ONE OF the extraordinary things about *Battalion* is that this classic infantryman's view of war should have been out of print for 48 years.

This powerful account of the 5th Battalion, The Seaforth Highlanders from 1942 to 1945 – from El Alamein to the Elbe, including Normandy – was originally entitled *Sans Peur*, the unit motto.

Journalist Alastair Borthwick, who had joined the Seaforths in 1943 after being commissioned into the Glasgow Highlanders in 1939, was excused parades by his CO at the end of the war to write the unit's recent history through the eyes of the soldiers.

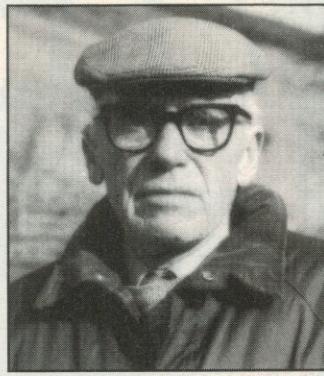
That he was able to do so while the men were still waiting to be demobbed was every historian's dream come true.

The battle-hardened battalion, part of the 51st Highland Division, had travelled 3,000 miles and fought through two dozen actions, many of them at great human cost, including France (landing on D+2).

"The readers I had in mind were the men of the battalion and their relatives and friends – people who would want to remember who had done what," the author wrote in a new introduction earlier this year.

The result, a glorious fusion of sharp recollection and richly-detailed description deserving of a much wider readership, went out of print soon after being published in 1946. Now, thankfully, it is back.

In a work remarkable for its depiction of frontline actions, even a seemingly mundane cat-



Alastair Borthwick, author of *Battalion*, pictured this year at his home in Ayrshire

logue of facts takes the reader back – in this case to Nan beach at Courseulles on D+2:

"The Jock, as he prepared to go ashore, was a sadly burdened creature.

"First, as a basis, he wore boots, battledress, and a steel helmet. Next came his web equipment, to which were attached ammunition pouches, two waterbottles, a small and bulging haversack slung at the side, a bayonet, and an enormous pack round which a blanket had been bound with pieces of string.

"Next, on top of all that had gone before, were a respirator and a lifebelt. If he were lucky, he carried a rifle; if unlucky, a Bren gun, a two-inch mortar, or a load of two-inch mortar-bombs done up in sacking and worn round his neck like a horse-collar.

"If any man had gone overboard he would have sunk like a brick, lifebelt and all.

"And to all this was added the invasion wader, a garment of repulsive design and doubtful utility, elephant-waisted and duck-footed, made of green oiled cotton, and (we found) extremely liable to split.

"As the seat was so cut as to admit the small haversack and the two water bottles as well as other necessary portions of the wearer, the invasion wader must go down as the least becoming garment in history."

Among the battalions of books which have invaded the market for the D-Day 50th anniversary, this one deserves to survive at least another 48 years – in print. – CH

Battalion by Alastair Borthwick. Baton Wicks, hardback, £16.99.

Credit overdue to the glider pilots

OPERATION Tonga was the first stage of the airborne assault on Normandy – and *One Night in June* is the story of the Glider Pilot Regiment's role in that action.

Co-authors Kevin Shannon and Stephen Wright believed the crews of the 89 gliders in that action who did not actually take part in the famous *coup de main* had not received due recognition.

Told in a readable, narrative style, the story is well complemented by seven detailed appendices and the whole is dedicated to pilot Billy Marfleet, Wright's uncle, who died on Operation Tonga, and Bill Shannon, who survived to tell the tale. – CH

One Night in June by Kevin Shannon and Stephen Wright. Airlife, hardback, £16.95.

Books reviewed recently:

D-Day, 1944: Voices from Normandy by Robin Neillands and Roderick de Normann. Wiedenfeld and Nicholson, hardback, £40 (£35 before July 31).

D-Day: Operation Overlord – From its planning to the Liberation of Paris edited by Tony Hall. Salamander Books, hardback, £24.99.

Overlord: The War Room Handbook Guide by Brian Jewell. Easily-understood record of the complexities of the operation. Broadwater House, 30 Park Parade, Harrogate, Yorks HG1 5AG, paperback, £8.95.

Overlord: The Coastline by Stephen Chicken. Spellmount Ltd, £11.95.

The Black Bull: From Normandy to the Baltic with the 11th Armoured Division by Patrick

Delaforce. Alan Sutton, £14.99.

The D-Day Encyclopedia edited by David G Chandler and James Lawton Collins Jr. Helicon, case-bound, £40 (£35 before July 31).

D-Day: Piercing the Atlantic Wall by Robert Kershaw. Ian Allan, hardback, £25.

D-Day: 06/06/1944 by Richard Collier. Cassell, £14.99.

Pegasus Bridge by Stephen E Ambrose. Pocket Books, £6.99.

The Commandos: D-Day and After by Donald Gilchrist. Robert Hale, paperback, £7.99.

D-DAY

and the Battle for Normandy

June-August 1944



Two special exhibitions to
commemorate the 50th
anniversary of Operation
Overlord

Rex Whistler's War 1939-July 1944 Artist into Tank Commander

The wartime work of the artist
Rex Whistler, who was killed
while serving with the Welsh
Guards in Normandy, July 1944

Monty's Men The British Soldier and the D-Day Campaign

A look at Operation Overlord
from the individual soldier's
point of view

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Admission Free

SOLDIER



D-DAY

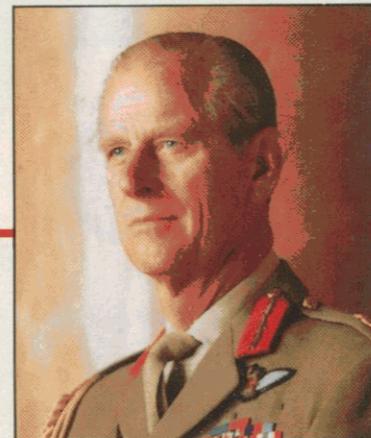
50

A Commemoration

From His Royal Highness The Duke of Edinburgh



WINDSOR CASTLE



A great many people and a large proportion of the ships of the Royal Navy were involved in the D-Day landings in Normandy, but some of us had to 'mind the shop' elsewhere while all this was going on. In my case, it happened that early in 1944 I had joined a newly-built Fleet Destroyer that was destined to serve with the British Pacific Fleet against Japan. The ships of the 25th Flotilla came together in Scapa Flow in the Orkneys to work up to operational efficiency and we found ourselves left alone to guard the Fleet Base while the invasion was taking place.

We may not have been present at the landings, but we all followed the events with very close interest as it was only too clear that these landings - if successful - were going to be the beginning of the end of a war that already lasted five long years and caused untold misery, despair and destruction. As the events in Normandy unfolded and it became obvious that the landings had been a brilliant success for the Allied forces, we all felt a great surge of relief and thankfulness that the last lap had commenced. Although, as it turned out, it was nearly two more years before my ship sailed into Tokyo Bay to witness the Japanese surrender.

D-Day was one of the most memorable for everyone involved in the war effort and I believe that the commemoration of its Fiftieth Anniversary should be seen as a tribute to all those, serving in the forces or working at home, who contributed so much to eventual victory and to the beginning of a new and more peaceful life for all the people of Europe.

Their spirit sustains us

By the Chief of the Defence Staff, Field Marshal Sir Peter Inge GCB

THE PRESS communiqué from Allied Supreme HQ issued at 0905 on June 6, 1944 apprised the whole world of the initiation of the D-Day landings: "Under the command of General Eisenhower, Allied naval forces supported by strong air forces began landing Allied armies this morning on the northern coast of France."

Fifty years later we are commemorating the anniversary of this crucial moment in history. This D-Day Anniversary edition of SOLDIER Magazine represents one important example of these commemorations and it gives me great pleasure to provide this foreword.

We owe a great debt of gratitude to those who so valiantly fought, many laying down their lives, on the beaches of Normandy 50 years ago, defeating Hitler's much-vaunted "Atlantic Wall" and establishing a firm, albeit small, bridgehead by the end of that long hard first day. To do so cost 12,200 Allied casualties, of which some 3,300 were British.

The determination, skill and fighting spirit shown by those taking part in this, the largest amphibious attack in history, is only too apparent. The initial assault on the beaches on that day alone required nearly 7,000 naval vessels and some 14,000 aerial sorties to land in France more than 83,000 men from Canadian and British forces, as well as 73,000 US troops.

Behind these statistics are the



efforts of the vast numbers of military and civilians alike who laboured in many countries to prepare for and bring about this military colossus.

Churchill summarised the assault landing in Parliament that same day: "This vast operation is undoubtedly the most complicated and difficult that has ever taken place. It involves tides, wind, waves, visibility, both from the air and sea standpoint, and the combined employment of land, air and sea forces in the highest degree of intimacy, and in contact with conditions which could not and cannot be fully foreseen."

While we commemorate the courage and determination of the

Allied Forces on that day, and alongside veterans at the many ceremonies particularly remember those who fell, I also hope these events will focus our minds on the men and women of today's Forces.

Our country has every right to be proud of the soldiers, sailors, airmen and airwomen in our Armed Forces. They serve their country in the various theatres throughout the world and in a vast variety of difficult and demanding roles, with the same level of commitment and dedication that was shown throughout Operation Overlord.

The same spirit and comradeship that sustained their predecessors is still very much in evidence and forms the core of the ethos that makes our Armed Forces so special. This is something which, in these difficult times of change and contemporary pressures of life, we must carefully nurture.

It is to the success of D-Day that we owe the peace and security that we have enjoyed since 1945. The maintenance of that peace in a turbulent world rests in part with today's Servicemen, their credibility and professionalism. I believe those involved in the landings of 50 years ago would be proud of their successors, as today's fighting Services are proud of them and the standards that they set.

Peter Inge

Acknowledgements

SOLDIER thanks all those who have contributed to the production of this D-Day Commemorative Issue, particularly the Normandy veterans themselves.

Special acknowledgements are due also to Les Gwyer

(design and map); Brian Jewell (main article); the War Room, Harrogate (map detail); Piers Storie-Pugh and Stuart Campbell of the Royal British Legion Pilgrimage Branch; the Imperial War Museum; the National Army Museum; the Army His-

torical Branch; the Airborne Forces Museum; Portsmouth D-Day Museum; Mme Arlette Gondrée-Pritchett; the interviewees for their time and assistance; the advertisers for their valued support; and members of the SOLDIER Photo-

graphic Department past and present.

Interviews were by Laurie Manton (Bill Bidmead, Fd Marshal Lord Bramall, Maureen Gara, Desmond O'Neill) and Phil Wilcox (Brig Tom Collins, Bill Millin, Richard Todd).

They would never, could never, see its like again

IT CANNOT be over-emphasised that there never was nor will be again a military operation as great as the allied invasion of Normandy in June 1944.

Those who were there and survived, no matter what their feelings were at the time, know that they were fortunate in witnessing history in the making at close quarters.

From as early as February 1944 the British Isles had been virtually sealed from the rest of the world, particularly from neutral countries where German intelligence operators abounded.

Then, in April, a strip of coast all the way from The Wash to Land's End was closed to non-residents and even to members of the Armed Forces who did not have legitimate reasons for being in the area. Postal and telephone services were severely cut and overseas mail was censored.

In May, at ports all over the country, Merchant ships and Royal Navy landing craft were loaded with the hardware needed for the massive amphibious operation.

As time for the invasion approached, the troops who were to take part were "sealed" in embarkation camps which meant that apart from being confined within barbed wire barriers and fences, they were not permitted to send letters or to make telephone calls.

An advance of £1 or so in French francs was issued to each man, as well as a pocket guide booklet and a gilt-coloured tin of emergency "food" – a chocolate-flavoured compound that swelled in the stomach, taking away the pangs of hunger. There were instructions to the effect that it should only be eaten in dire circumstances and then only one square at a time spread over several hours. It was rumoured that if the instructions were not strictly observed

the stomach would expand to an irreparable extent!

The fighting ships began to move south from their northern bases on June 2 and on the following day a vast convoy which had been assembling off Falmouth sailed in an easterly direction.

D-Day was to have been Monday June 5, but on the previous Saturday the weather broke, causing another day's wait in the embarkation camps or afloat in congested conditions for those unlucky enough to have already boarded.

Because of the delay, vessels already at sea were ordered to return to assembly areas. The ships and craft of Force U, destined for Utah beach in the American landing sector, could not be contacted by radio and destroyers had to be sent to shepherd them back.

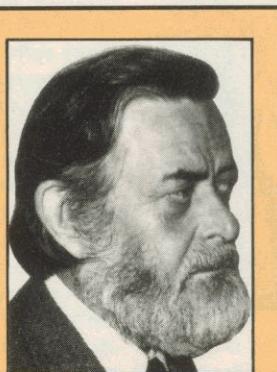
On Sunday June 4 the weather was equally stormy and there were fears that it might not be possible to carry out the invasion within the few days when the tides on the French coast would be right.

The fate of the entire operation was in the balance but on Sunday

evening, Gen Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander, learned from his meteorological officer that there was a slim chance of improvement in the weather that could last through Tuesday June 6.

It was perhaps the most unenviable decision that any commander has had to make, but by dawn on Monday, after a restless night, Eisenhower had made up his mind. "We'll go", he ordered, and again the ships and armada of smaller craft were on the move.

The sheer size of Operation Neptune, the seaborne part of Overlord, defies imagination. A total of 6,939 vessels were engaged in the Channel crossing, includ-



Brian Jewell, who wrote this article, was an 18-year-old Royal Engineer with a beach group attached to the 50th (Northumbrian) Division when he landed on Gold beach at 0700 hours on D-Day. Now a military historian, he is director of his own museum in Harrogate and author of *Overlord*, a guide to the amphibious operation



Many elements of the Normandy landings are drawn together in this dramatic painting by Terence Cuneo, commissioned by SOLDIER in 1964 to mark the 20th anniversary of D-Day

ing 1,213 fighting ships, 4,126 landing ships and craft, 863 merchant ships.

Fifty-four smaller craft, including 20 so-called "Rhino" ferries and towing craft, were lost through bad weather during the crossing. It was a near miracle that out of all the vessels engaged, the great majority reached the Normandy

coast at all, let alone arrived at their allotted times, almost to the minute.

As an 18-year-old with no experience of battle, I well recall being seasick and scared all the way over, consoling myself illogically with the thought that the Army had to feed us (sometimes!) and the best way to face the coming days was to take

the intervals between meals as the greatest danger times . . . Get through the hours between breakfast and lunch, and again between lunch and evening meal and then I'll be all right.

Of course, in the event, meals hardly ever came at regular intervals and, to make the whole idea nonsense, there was

that horrific moment on D+3 when almost the entire party I was with was wiped out by a mortar bomb while heating the Machonochies (tinned meat and vegetable stew).

The 82nd and 101st US Airborne Divisions, commanded by Maj Gens Matthew

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An Army bugler sounds the general salute on board the first landing craft to reach the beaches to the west of the mouth of the River Orne.
Inset: Normandy coastline today

Confusion, but all was not lost . . .

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B Ridgway and Maxwell Taylor respectively, were dropped on the night of June 5-6 over the Contentin peninsula to give diversionary and linking-up support to the Americans landing on Utah beach.

Of the two airborne divisions, the 82nd was the only one with previous battle experience, having had an especially rough time supporting the Sicilian landings at Salerno, whereas the 101st had been raised specifically for D-Day and were now in action for the first time.

It was therefore by no means a universally approved plan and some top brass on the SHAEF (Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force) staff had serious misgivings.

The brief for the 82nd US Airborne Division was to isolate the western flank of the invasion by taking the crossroads at Ste-Mère-Église and by capturing or destroying bridges over the Rivers Merderet and Douve.

The task of their compatriots in the newly-formed 101st was to take the town of Carentan and keep open the landward roads for the seaborne forces.

Pathfinders of the US airborne Divisions took off before midnight on June 5 but because of low cloud over Normandy these parachutists landed some way from

MY D-DAY MEMORIES

**Spr Harold Merritt,
689 Road and Airfield
Construction Company RE**

WE LEFT Felixstowe in a convoy of ten tank landing craft and passed the Isle of Wight as we made our way to France. There was a long line of ships making the return journey which stretched back to Normandy. We arrived on the evening of D-Day. The battleships and rocket craft were firing continuously.

There was a scare while we were under a smokescreen as a plane flew overhead, but it turned out to be a Spitfire. We landed early next day by climbing down a scrambling net to a pontoon and stepped dry-footed on to the beach. Unfortunately, my mate, Fred Bone from Chesham, had to endure many months of torment. He had lost his false teeth overboard.

their dropping zones and had to set up their "Eureka" radio beacons and lights where they landed.

This resulted in confusion and the main forces subsequently landed in the wrong DZs. In fact, the paras of both divisions were scattered over an area of a great many square miles.

All was not lost and the airborne men, fighting in small groups, eventually linked up together in larger groups and achieved

most of their objectives, including the town of Ste-Mère-Église, which was taken by 0400 hours. The US Airborne divisions suffered about 20 per cent casualties in the night.

The British 6th Airborne Division, commanded by Maj Gen Richard Gale, was given the task of taking or destroying bridges on the eastern flank of the Allied landing beaches, on the high ground between the Rivers Orne and Dives (the latter being the river on which William the Conqueror had assembled his invasion fleet in 1066).

Of particular importance were the bridges over the Orne and the Caen Canal which had to be captured before the Germans could destroy them.

In the first few minutes of June 6, gliders carrying men of 2nd Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, accompanied by a detachment of sappers and under the command of Maj John Howard, crash-landed close to a bridge over the Caen Canal. Howard's glider came to rest a bare 50 yards from the bridge, closely followed by two others of his force.

Taken by surprise, the German defenders were overwhelmed and the bridge was held despite German counter-attacks. This was the now famous Pegasus Bridge at which, during the afternoon of D-Day, men of Brig Lord Lovat's 1st Special Service Brigade, encouraged by the music of Lord Lovat's personal piper Bill Millin, joined up with John Howard's tired but successful Ox and Bucks.

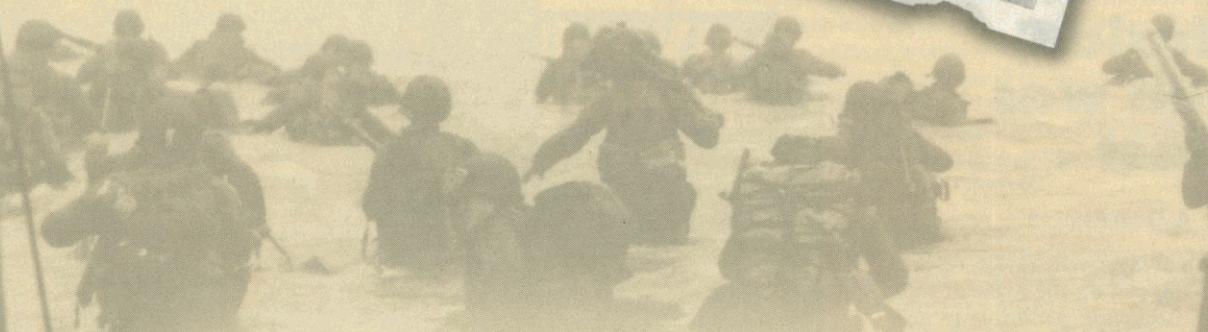
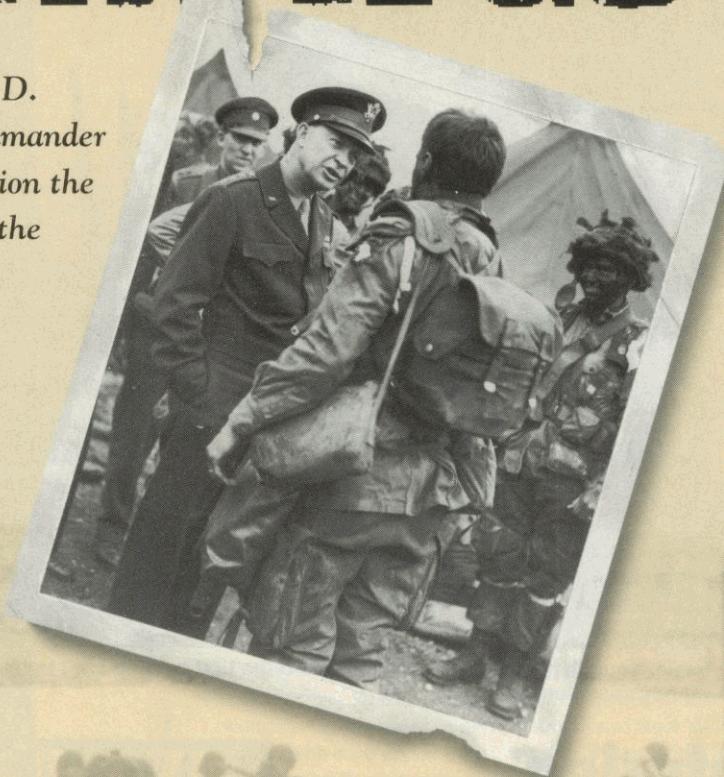
Three days earlier, at about midnight June 2-3, two Royal Navy midget sub-

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June 5, 1944...4:15 a.m.

"OKAY...WE'LL GO"

With these words, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the US Army, set in motion the Allied invasion of Europe, the greatest military operation the world has ever known.



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Sixty-four hours underwater was remarkable test of endurance

● From Page 25

marines, X20 and X23, left Portsmouth for the French coast with a mission to act as markers showing flashing green beacons seaward off June and Sword beaches in the British and Canadian landing sector.

Each craft carried a crew of two naval lieutenants and an engine room artificer, augmented by a Combined Operations pilotage party of two naval officers.

They arrived off the Normandy coast shortly before dawn and lay on the bottom until 0508 hours on January 6 with only brief intervals of coming to periscope depth in order to take bearings.

Sixty-four hours under water was a remarkable test of endurance for the five men of each craft. Although not under few, the extremely cramped conditions made them ten of the less-celebrated heroes of the operation.

The Germans undoubtedly felt safe on the night of June 5-6, convinced that no invader would be mad enough to go to sea in such heavy weather. Fd Marshal Erwin Rommel, commanding Army Group B, had decided to make a quick visit to Germany for his wife's birthday.

There was, of course, the drone from

MY D-DAY MEMORIES

Lt John Milton, 6th Battalion, The Green Howards

AT LAST we boarded the *Empire Lance* at Southampton on June 5 and sailed into the English Channel. The weather was bad and many of us were seasick. None of us slept much that night and breakfast was not exactly hilarious.

Before dawn the assault landing craft were lowered and we had to climb down the scrambling nets with our full equipment in a strong sea. The final jump was not much fun but my platoon all made it and set off for the beach navigated by two young marines. Great credit to them: they landed us at 7.30am in exactly the right place.

The shore was extremely noisy and we got off the beach in very quick time.

I still have vivid memories of little French villages, sunken lanes, wounded soldiers and dead cattle. We had several skirmishes during the day but the talk that night was inevitably of the gallantry of our Sergeant Major, Stanley Hollis, who was subsequently awarded the only D-Day Victoria Cross.



View of Gold beach from high ground behind the village of Arromanches

the engines of RAF and USAAF bombers but there was nothing unusual about that – they had been overhead most nights for months.

However, it was not so quiet and peaceful as it seemed from the German observation posts. Allied ships had been arriving from about midnight and now, as H-Hour approached, landing craft were heading for the beaches, and amphibious tanks were being launched for the assault.

About 900 Duplex Drive, or "swimming" tanks were made ready for D-Day by fitting a collapsible canvas screen around the top of the hull. Some turned out to be death traps when they were swamped in the heavy swell.

Between 0530 and 0800 hours the Naval Bombardment Forces of the Western (American) and Eastern (British and Canadian) sectors, in unison with the Combined Allied Air Forces, softened up the German defences.

Beaches codenamed Gold, Juno and Sword were the responsibility of the Eastern Task Force, under the command of Rear-Admiral Sir Philip Vian, who had the cruiser HMS *Scylla* as his flagship.

Eighteen bombing ships were assigned to Gold and 13 to Juno. Sword had an even larger naval force allocated and here the bombardment took place from only a few hundred yards off shore.

Because of the tidal differences of the beaches, H-Hours (when the assault

forces were put ashore) were spread over one hour 15 minutes. At Utah and Omaha in the American Western area H-Hour was 0630 hours; British and Canadian beaches had later H-Hours: Gold 0725, Juno 0735-0745, and Sword 0725 hours.

The assault on Utah beach was made by the 4th US Division, some of whom were landed up to a mile off-target.

Utah was by no means an easy landing, but by the afternoon the GIs were pushing inland and were linking up with the para and glider troops who had landed in the early hours.

In addition to their commitment on Omaha beach, one of the US regimental combat teams was responsible for seizing

the German heavy artillery battery on Pointe du Hoc, which jutted out into the Bay of the Seine some four miles west of Omaha beach.

The task of taking the battery was allocated to a provisional Ranger force (the US equivalent of a British Commando). Three companies of Rangers had to scale the 100ft high cliff, which the Germans had given a liberal dressing of barbed wire and trip flares, by means of mortar-fire grappling lines and scaling ladders, a drill that had been rehearsed on the cliffs of the Isle of Wight for some months.

Other Rangers, landing with the 116th RCT on Omaha, were to have moved on to the battery from inland, but in the event

● Turn to next page



Capt Donald Warrener,
7th Battalion, The Green Howards

REVEILLE 0315 on Empire Lance. Formed up in boat loads on "C" deck listening to commentary on loud hailer from bridge and orders of the day from Gens Eisenhower and Montgomery. Lowered in our landing craft at 0500.

Awesome and inspiring sight of Allied fleet shooting with everything they had at the coastal defences, an umbrella of steel following the massive air bombardment by the Allies. The beach littered with casualties and beached landing craft from first wave, and a pall of dust and smoke making identification of targets difficult.

Our first objective, a heavy battery, surrendered after a few moments of gunfire. I led the battalion for the rest of the day.

Skirmishing in area of Crépon ... light resistance and surrender after a brief firefight. We were ordered to make good a bridge north of Creully, but there was no opposition. The enemy had withdrawn.

Shot at in Crevilly by Winnipeg Rifles entering from the east who mistook us for enemy. We made friends and waited for the rest of the battalion to come up.

Sent off in lead, south. Skirmish around Fresn-le-Crotteur, where we were shelled by a supporting cruiser. Frantic signals stopped it after three salvos. By now we were so far forward we were being mistaken for the enemy!

On to south of Coulombs, a few hundred yards short of the Caen-Bayeux road and our D-Day objective. At 2200 hours we were ordered to dig in north of Coulombs for the night. It had been a very long day.

It was like some deadly fairground

• From Page 27

these Rangers were landed too far to the east and had to abandon the plan.

The ascent of the cliff was successfully completed but by the time the Americans reached the battery the Germans had withdrawn their guns.

Eventually the guns were destroyed but the enemy counter-attacked and the Rangers were under siege for two days until relieved by second-wave troops from Omaha beach.

On board the Western Task Force flagship USS *Augusta*, Gen Omar Bradley, in charge of the American land forces, was a worried man. Reports from Omaha beach spoke of nothing but heavy casualties among 1st US Infantry Division (the "Big Red One", which was returning to French soil for the first time since the First World War).

Omaha was better defended than any other invasion beach and by noon Bradley was considering an evacuation and using the Division to reinforce other beaches, even those in the British sector. But at last came the reassuring news that the GIs were fighting their way off the beach.

The British and Canadians landing on the eastern beaches found that in the main the naval bombardment had done its job, and the troops were able to gain a foothold. However, resistance was still fierce in the comparatively built-up resort areas and the slow, slogging style of street-fighting was inevitable.

On Gold beach the 50th (Northumbrian) Division had the task of pushing inland and to take the towns of Arromanches and Bayeux. The Division's 69th and 231st Brigades landed at La Riviére and Le Hamel respectively to find themselves heavily engaged by troops of the German 352nd Division.

The specialised armour, the Crabs, Crocodiles and other "funnies" of the 79th Armoured Division's "zoo", helped the Northumbrians get off the beach, but not without heavy casualties.

It was on Gold beach that I went ashore at about 0700 hours, tasked with other sappers to destroy beach obstacles: "hedgehogs" and "tetrahedra" ironwork and other nasty devices that Rommel had ordered to be set up.

Only when our demolition charges were exhausted was it realised we had no further instructions – perhaps it was thought

Right – German engineers scatter as an RAF reconnaissance aircraft swoops low over a Normandy beach to photograph obstacles under construction. Thousands of pictures were taken to build up a composite assessment of defences along the Channel coast

we were not going to need them! When there was time to look around it was like some nightmarish and deadly fairground.

The 47 (Royal Marines) Commando had a particularly arduous task, despite the fact that they had come ashore two hours after the first landings. Their target was Port-en-Bessin, a small port on the right extremity of Gold beach. The plan was to attack from the land side and, in order to do this, the Commandos would have a ten-mile march.

Unfortunately the assault troops, 1st Hampshires, were having a bloody and hard time, losing their commanding officer and many others. The Commandos did not reach Port-en-Bessin before dark and it took another day to capture the town.

One company of 5th East Yorkshires of 69th Brigade was pinned down on Gold beach at La Riviére for some time and again these assault troops had good reason to thank the specialised tanks of the 79th Armoured Division for relieving their plight.

Similar incidents, great and small, were happening on Gold beach throughout the daylight hours of D-Day but, by its end, the brigades of 50th Division had fought their way inland and had linked with troops of the 3rd Canadian Division and the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade which had landed on the neighbouring Juno beach.

The Canadians' objective was Carpillet airfield near Caen, as part of Montgomery's plan to capture the city of Caen by the evening of the first day. In the event, it was not until July 10 that Caen would be "neutralised" and the 18th before all the suburbs of the city were



Troops shelter behind an M10 tank destroyer after coming under fire as they fight their way inland on the first day

eventually cleared of the enemy.

The Canadians did not have a good start: many of their landing craft were wrecked on underwater obstructions and, as they had been delayed by bad weather, the beach, by now at high tide, was too narrow for adequate marshalling of men and equipment.

On Juno beach, as on Gold, the "fun-

nies" of the 79th Armoured Division gave invaluable help in getting off the beach, thus permitting Canadian tanks to cut the Caen-Bayeux road seven miles inland.

Between the Canadians landing on Juno beach and the British 3rd Division eastward on Sword beach, there was an area allotted to two Royal Marines Commandos: 41 and 48 of 4th Special Service Brigade.

The brief for 48 (Royal Marines) Commando was to land at the small village of St Aubin two hours after the Canadians had made their assault on Juno and, at the same time, 41 was to land five miles eastward at Lion-sur-Mer. The two units were then to turn towards each other and meet, mopping-up the enemy as they went.

However, 48 came under unexpectedly heavy artillery attack which greatly depleted their strength, adding to the casualties sustained when some of the landing craft were wrecked.

At Lion-sur-Mer 41 also had troubles, but the main difficulty came at the end of the day when a mixed force of armour and infantry from the 21st Panzer Division succeeded in reaching the coast at Luc-sur-Mer between the two Commandos, thus splitting the British and Canadian beaches. Fortunately for the Allies, the Germans found it wiser to withdraw as follow-up landings progressed.

The most easterly of the invasion beaches was Sword with the British 3rd Division landing at Le Bréche. This was a built-up area and the Germans had converted houses into defensive bunkers. It was the only landing area where the Allies met German naval opposition, in the form of three E-Boats which torpedoed and sank the Norwegian destroyer HNMS *Svenner*.

The landings on Sword were, as elsewhere, expensive in terms of casualties and equipment but by 0900 hours La Bréche had been taken and elements of the 3rd Division were advancing inland towards Colleville.

Finally, the town of Ouistreham on the extremity of Sword beach had to be taken and this was achieved in the early afternoon by 4 Commando and two troops of French commandos of the 1st Special Service Brigade.

By the end of D-Day many gallant men had died, but the numbers were less than expected. History had been made but most of those on or just inland of the Normandy beaches that night did not know the state of the campaign, only the comparative safety or otherwise of the immediate surroundings.

To all who had taken part it was the momentous day; they would never, could never, see its like again.



Machine that moved an army

THE OPERATION Overlord landings are part of the British military heritage.

But the mounting of such a vast undertaking – with its convoluted arrangements for ensuring that millions of men and hundreds of thousands of vehicles were transported across the Channel in the right order and at the right time – was every bit as vital.

Behind the scenes was Brig Tom Collins, Director of Movements for Continental Operations, and his team – not to mention a very concerned major general.

In October 1943, Brig Collins, working to Gen Holmes, Director of Movements in the War Office, was put in charge of that department's machine which was to operate the mounting of the huge loading and embarkation plan on "this side of the water" in accordance with Gen Montgomery's requirements.

"I had a special American staff to assist me in connection with the large US forces taking part, and I had to work intimately with the naval staff under Admiral Creasey and his deputy, Admiral Ramsay," recalls the brigadier, now 89.

Fortunately for the success of the operation, he added modestly, its outline plan and the immense preparations in the building of embarkation points had been completed by the time of his appointment.

"It had taken two years to do it and it proved flexible enough to meet almost any change in the operational plan, and to match the requirements of the far shore in men and materials at the pace required.

"In fact, we went on modifying it as differing circumstances presented themselves – right up to the last minute."

As history relates, the original assault plan drawn up by Gen Paget (three infantry divisions, one armoured and one airborne division) was doubled in size once Montgomery became involved.

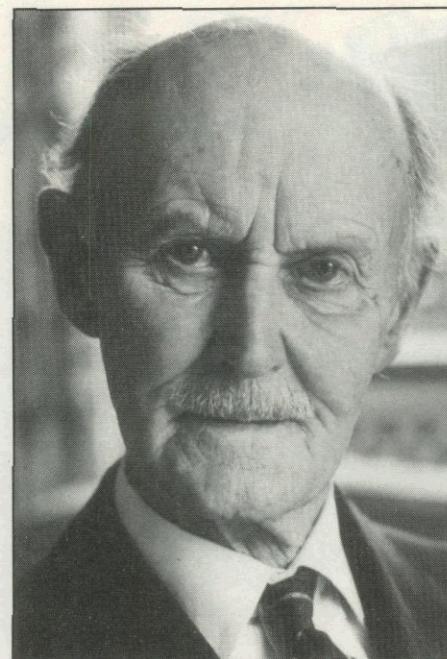
The original date for D-Day (May 5, 1944) was postponed, since his stipulations for the assault were too much for the ships and craft available.

"Monty knew what he was doing, and had the prestige to carry his requirements," said the brigadier.

Both plans involved the same general landing area on the far shore.

Investigations over two years had determined that the area chosen was by far the best from the point of view of enemy opposition, and that the shore and hinterland were suitable.

"What was remarkable," Brig Collins said, "was that the particular area had been known to hundreds of officers and



Brig Tom Collins

clerks in the planning offices for two years, and yet the Germans still had no idea on D-Day where we were going to land.

"Also, when we did, that it was not a feint attack to divert their attention from the Dover-Calais axis."

A major factor which affected the brigadier in his new appointment was the sheer variety of units and equipment involved.

These covered anything from amphibious vehicles to articulated and non-articulated supply vehicles and road construction vehicles and portable cranes.

All of these had to go into their light ships or craft and to their particular embarkation points.

"The business of embarking the men of the fighting units was comparative child's play," said Brig Collins.

Major problem was the 30,000 vehicles which had to go into more than 1,000 ships and craft.

The latter varied from LSIs (Landing Ship Infantry), which were, in fact converted cross-Channel vessels, to the tiny LCM (Landing Craft Motor) or ferrying craft – each carrying one vehicle for shuttling on the far shore.

A battalion – 800 men – was usually contained by the LSIs, which carried their own assault craft. The ship could be disembarked in a matter of minutes.

Principal carriers of vehicles were the LSTs (Landing Ship Tanks), which

beached on the Normandy beaches and each discharged 30 to 40 tanks or 50 to 60 vehicles on to dry land.

Finally, said Brig Collins, there were the MT (Motor Transport) ships, mostly American Liberty ships, each of which held upwards of 100 vehicles.

In all, more than 20 different ships and craft were used, excluding the pontoons, lighters and other unloading craft.

"Most of them had their own restrictions regarding the height and weight of the vehicles they could take: there was never enough of any one type, and we were receiving new ones right up to D+30."

The coastline and hinterland where the huge embarkation operation was to take place proved the biggest headache of the lot.

"Broadly, the requirements were: no tide, so that loading at the hards or ramps could take place 24 hours out of 24 and hinterland which was hard and flat, with good road access or surface with no need for road building or improvement, with loading points where one wanted them and not dictated by inland access.

"The hinterland also needed to be suitable for construction of embarkation camps, with marshalling camps behind them where men and vehicles were to get into their craft loads and – further back – concentration areas to which units were to proceed from their home stations. Good road access from one to another was imperative."

Added to that, good depth of water at loading points was essential, so that craft could load without danger.

"North Africa for the Sicily landings was perfect: no tide, no road problems on the hard sand, and camps and areas could be established precisely where required," said Brig Collins.

England, on the other hand, could not have been worse . . .

"The change of tide around our shores is so great (24ft each 24 hours), our coast line is intricate and deep water rarely lies close in. Apart from that, the coastal roads and lanes are so winding and the country inland from the coast so enclosed for creating camps or areas which could feed from one to the other.

"This meant that the operation, which could have been mounted on 15 to 20 miles of the African coast, was, in fact,

spread from Yarmouth to Milford Haven – a complicated stretch of coastline spreading well over 1,000 miles with its estuaries and inlets."

There were 24 different embarkation points between the two locations, made necessary by the total loading capacity in 24 hours, since the assault and follow-up



June 24 . . . calm seas . . . and the incredible unloading operation is in full swing

had to load simultaneously. The British loaded from Yarmouth to Portsmouth and the Americans from Southampton to Milford Haven, with each of the 24 points requiring its own embarkation camp, marshalling and concentration area and special road layout – many of which had to be either built or greatly improved.

"Even with the large number of embarkation points, the loading of vehicles for the assault and follow-up had to begin six days before D-Day," said Brig Collins, who was twice mentioned in dispatches during the Second World War.

Some ships (the small coasters carrying stores) actually sailed for Normandy five days before D-Day, because they were so far from the naval rendezvous in the Channel.

"There was some difficulty in stopping them when the whole operation was postponed for 24 hours due to the weather, because of course wireless silence had to be maintained."

The most difficult aspect of the loading operation was sectorisation: getting the right people in the right place in the marshalling area – sometimes just two or three men – so that they could fit into the appropriate craft and arrive at the time which Montgomery required.

It was essential, in loading the build-up,



Brig Tom Collins with Gen Montgomery

to keep the embarkation points filled with troops and vehicles, so that returning ships and craft were never kept waiting.

Units moved from concentrative areas in the Midlands to the marshalling areas (about 15 to 20 miles from the coast) then to the embarkation areas, which, like the marshalling areas, were designed to hold 48 hours' flow.

Once the loading began, each area was filled from the one behind as it emptied and a continuous process began in which the entire expeditionary force began to move towards the South Coast.

"The enormous movement which began six days before D-Day," Brig Collins explained, "gave rise to one final complication bigger than any previously tackled: the possibility of postponement."

This would have required a halt and possibly even a reversal of the whole

process, with one of the inevitable consequences being the difficulty in maintaining secrecy in the meantime.

And that is where the "very concerned major general" came in.

He had been appointed to sit opposite the brigadier and plan for such a contingency.

"I can still recall the strained look on his face until the operation was finally launched," the latter said.

His most vivid memory of D-Day is of the relief at things finally getting off "as smoothly as could be expected" despite the weather, with only occasional hiccups.

"D-Day was not only the greatest combined operation ever undertaken: I would hazard a guess that it was the greatest that ever will be."

And does he think the present-day British Army would be capable of mounting such a gigantic logistical exercise?

"Oh, yes," said the former Green Howard, who joined the Army 70 years ago and retired in 1948, "only this time around, as was shown in the Gulf War, all you would need would be one man with a computer."

He has no great plans to commemorate the anniversary, five decades on.

"Ten of us get together for a lunch once a year in St James's," the brigadier said, "but these days I have to confess that I am rather more interested in Roman remains than I am in Normandy."



Above – When the 4th Special Service Brigade landed near Lion-sur-Mer, the beach became a bit congested. Here A Troop of 41 (RM) Commando maintains a low profile. Standing (right) is Lt Paddy Stevens



Left – LCpl Lodge RE displays a new type of German magnetic mine – designed to cripple Allied tanks – that was found after Tilly-sur-Seulles was liberated by the Allies. Curiously, the sapper is carrying two rifles. The second cannot have belonged to the Army photographer who took the picture because he would have been armed with a pistol



Supplies for the Royal Air Force were brought forward from the beaches and dumped in the Normandy fields. In this picture, an RAF supply officer (hand raised, left) supervises the unloading of 500lb bombs from DUKWs used to transport the bombs directly from ships anchored offshore. The soldiers are from a British Army beach group

Below – After just one Crab flail tank got ashore from LCT 947, two direct hits knocked out a second and detonated Bangalore torpedoes, killing the commanding officer of 5 Assault Regiment RE, Lt Col A D B Cocks, and others. Unable to discharge its cargo, the craft withdrew and sailed back to England, carrying its dead and wounded with it. Here, sappers are seen plugging shrapnel holes



Amid the ruins of the village of Tilly-sur-Seulles, Royal Engineers sweep the main street with mine detectors while riflemen search wrecked buildings for snipers. The town, which was liberated by British troops on June 18, was badly damaged by shellfire. Centre left is a wrecked Bren carrier. The local war cemetery contains 1,222 burials, including 986 British and 232 German



Following the rout of a panzer attack in Normandy, smoke pours from a farmhouse at Christot. British troops cover exits ready to deal with German soldiers who may be hiding within. A military censor has obscured the formation badges on soldiers' uniforms, hence the white blobs on each man's shoulder

Private Bill's nine lives

WHEN Army commando Pte Bill Bidmead joined a stretcher party carrying a wounded soldier back on D-Day, he escaped death by inches as a shell struck beside them. Two stretcher-bearers were killed instantly, a third had his arm sliced off by shrapnel, but the 20-year-old commando was unscathed.

Today, Bill, now 70 and retired from a lifetime in the building trade, lives at Heston, West London, surrounded by commando memorabilia. One page of his wartime scrapbook features a poignant reminder of war – photographs of German soldiers' families picked up on the battlefields of Normandy.

After the war, Pte Bidmead continued his soldiering, albeit on a part-time basis. He joined the London Scottish Regiment, serving more than 20 years with the Territorial Army.

Fifty years after the Normandy landings, Bill still remembers his lucky escape from death and other horrific incidents during the ferocious efforts by the British Army to gain a foothold in France.

No. 4 Commando was one of four

Army and one Royal Marines Commando making up Brig Lord Lovat's 1st Special Service Brigade, which had been tasked to land at Ouistreham to clear the town's strongpoints and gun emplacements. Pte Bidmead was a member of A Troop, a light support troop equipped with Vickers "K" guns that fired 900 rounds a minute.

The Highland Light Infantry private and his fellow commandos were carried across the English Channel on board two converted Channel steamers, *The Princess Astrid* and *Maid of Orleans*.

Assault landing craft took No. 4 Commando ashore. Bidmead's craft was hit and reared up almost vertical. He was jammed between his seat and the boat, under a pile of men.

The ramp was kicked open and the commandos debouched. The first man out was practically ripped in half by a



Bill Bidmead today

burst of machine-gun fire. Bidmead, still trapped, feared he would drown as the craft began to fall back and sink.

"A comrade, seeing my plight, dashed back and freed me. I jumped into the sea, now neck-deep. As I waded ashore, I saw men drowning in shallow water. Wounded, their 90lb rucksacks weighed them down.

"A company of East Yorks had been landed earlier to clear the beach and lay white tape to mark a clear passage for us. They had not got ten yards before many had been cut down and they were ordered to dig in. It was an act of madness that only added to the carnage.

"I stepped over one wounded soldier whose stomach had been ripped open. I couldn't stop and help.

"I ended up in a building giving covering fire to troops attacking a German gun battery. I foolishly leant out of the window

to get a better aim and was seen by a sniper who fired at me. As I ducked back inside to reload, a round whistled by me and hit the man behind me in the stomach.

"We carried him back on a door, but had to duck in a doorway when a German fighter flew over us with machine guns blazing. We left the wounded man there and marked his position with a small yellow pennant so he could be collected later.

"As we came back we found 30 East Yorks lying behind a hedgerow. All were dead, save one who was screaming for a padre. An oil bomb had dropped in the middle of them. It exploded burning oil and left a great black patch."

That afternoon, No. 4 Commando linked up with the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry glider force that had seized Pegasus Bridge. It was still under fire and the commandos ran across in twos and threes.

One officer was killed crossing the bridge. A soldier accompanying him was deeply upset by his loss and came across three German prisoners sitting beside the bridge.

"One cried out for water. The soldier said, 'I'll give you water' and shot them. Nothing was said at the time, but the soldier was later killed himself. Funny thing. You usually found that if people went out of their way to kill someone, they generally ended up dead themselves."

Pte Bidmead and A Troop were sent out in front to make contact with the enemy.

"I got my head down, but someone tapped on my helmet and whispered 'Germans!' Moving forward out of a wood were dozens of coal-scuttle helmeted soldiers. Alongside me a Welsh Guardsman, Taff Hughes, picked up his K gun and opened fire. A stick grenade exploded in front of my trench. Shrapnel hit my lip and my mouth was smothered in blood. The force of the explosion flung me to the bottom of the trench and I heard someone say, 'Young Bid's had it'. Our mortars pounded the German positions and we managed to withdraw."

The troop rejoined the surviving members of No. 4 Commando and dug in in front of a farmhouse. Over the next five days, they were shelled and mortared continuously.

"Sgt Fraser used to be very daring. He sat in a slit trench, 75 yards in front, sniping at Germans. Eventually, he was killed and, because I was always boasting about my shooting, my lance corporal told me to take his place.

"I was on my own and it was traumatic. I nearly went off my head. Sgt Isherwood came out with a bar of chocolate for me. A mortar landed close by and he dived for cover, but the blast ripped his trousers off. He could see I was doing no good and pulled me out of there.

"We took it in turns to sleep in a chick-



Pte Bill Bidmead pictured soon after the battle for Walcheren

en coop. I crawled in and shooed the chickens away. When I fell asleep, they climbed back on their perches and smothered me in their droppings. I must have looked a right sight!

"The German soldiers made one last attack, but we cut them to pieces. We killed ten of them to one of us. A patrol went out and counted 250 German dead. Later, an 80-strong detachment of bicycle-mounted German reinforcements halted opposite our position.

"They were exhausted, having cycled all the way from Paris. As they dismounted and threw their kit down, we opened fire. It took 30 minutes to kill them all."

No. 4 Commando remained in the front line for 83 days. Of its original 700-strong complement, only 70 remained unwounded.



Sherman Duplex Drive tanks still fitted with flotation skirts and propellers join the commando attack on German positions which had to be cleared before the commandos could move on to reinforce the airborne troops who had captured Pegasus Bridge

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"Leaving the Army was a big step for me. The resettlement advice in **SOLDIER** really helped to make my start in civilian life easier"

Wavell's ger

IT HAS taken 52 years for an impartial assessment of Britain's first Second World War commander-in-chief in the Middle East to appear. It was an infantry captain in 1940-41, resounding successes. It seems disputable that the seeds of Sir Archibald Percival Wavell's "fall from grace" as the British Commander in the Middle East were sown in 1940-41.



"The competitions are fun and always worth entering. I sent in an observation test and won £50!"

Room for a few more in Normandy

SO MANY veterans are planning to return to Normandy for D-Day celebrations next year that most local hoteliers have filled their books for the week of June 6.

From Rouen to Bayeux the message is the same: the accommodation left to the troops. But according to Andrea Daly, who owns a B&B in Bayeux, there are still sites and mobile home for smaller parties.

They are offering a location-finding service. D-Day Logement, charge £5 a person, and can be contacted via The Black Swan Mill B, 14401 Bayeux CEDEX, France (tel: (010) 33).

CENOTAPH CEREMONY

DETACHMENTS of the Household Cavalry, Royal Artillery, Foot Guards, women's services and the territorial forces formed the east side of a square round the Cenotaph for the Remembrance service attended by the Queen and Prince Philip on November 11, 1945. On the west side were the bands of the Royal Artillery.

I Cpl Sparks Cpl B

g a plastic bag a vicious in the man's neck. He was still alive until an hour later.

The man lost six p

blood but survived to

assault charged with

murder.

They are offering a

location-finding service.

D-Day Logement, charge

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010 33.

"I lost contact with a bunch of good mates I served with during World War 2 – I couldn't believe it when Searchline got us back in touch!"

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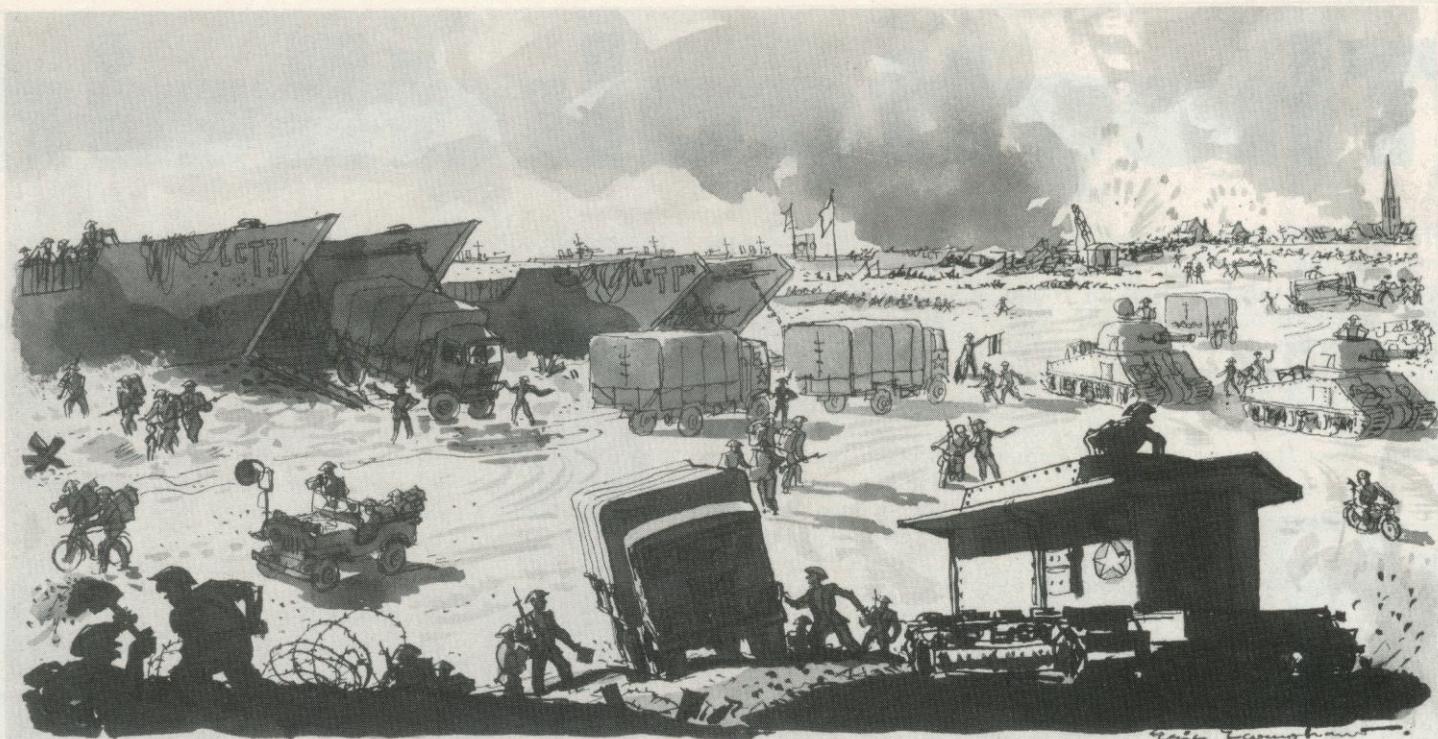
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In this impression of a Normandy beach on D-Day, members of the beach group can be seen organising the traffic and lines of supply. The artist, Cpl Eric Earnshaw, 5th Battalion, The Royal Berkshire Regiment, was seconded to SOLDIER in the closing stages of the Second World War. An exhibition of his drawings is on show in the Museum of The Duke of Edinburgh's Royal Regiment, Cathedral Close, Salisbury

MY D-DAY MEMORIES



Owen A O'Neill

MY MEMORY of D-Day? Losing my trousers on the run-in to the beach!

A member of a Royal Navy beach unit and driver of a Terrapin (six-wheel amphibious vehicle), I caught my leg on a metal projectile and, in pulling free, split the trouser seam from bottom to top.

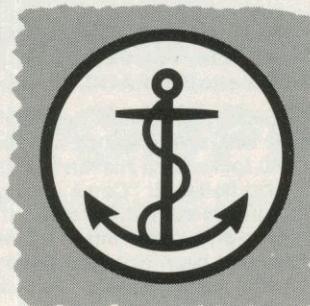
I felt more embarrassed than frightened at having to change into my spare uniform which was, luckily for me, stowed with the rest of my equipment under the driving seat.

I think I could possibly have set a world record for a quick-change artist.

Everything worked out and I made the beach unhurt, except for my pride.

The incident occurred while we were landing at Bernières-sur-Mer (Nan Green beach) on the Juno Sector with the Canadian troops.

Sign of the fouled anchor



Many of the achievements of units and formations on D-Day were kept secret until the end of the war in Europe. In July 1945, SOLDIER was able to reveal the story of the Sign of the Fouled Anchor.

THE WORLD had to wait a long time before it learned the secret of the men who wore the fouled anchor sign. But it was worth the wait. Theirs was the story of the beach groups, specialist units from all the three Services tasked to keep vital supplies flowing from the beaches.

Even in the Army the men in khaki with the fouled anchor sign on their arms were something of a mystery.

The first beach group was activated for the Sicilian landings, but by June 1944 they were a much more complex and complete organisation. Training began more than a year before D-Day, when specialist units from the Army, Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, plus an infantry battalion, were drawn together to form a com-

plete amphibious formation. They moved from locations all over England to a secret training ground in Scotland where they found their sea legs, became adept at loading and unloading every type of landing craft, and experts with the whole range of assault weapons.

Approximate strength of a beach group was about 3,500. The Royal Navy element was composed of signallers to maintain communications between the beaches, the ships and home bases, and commandos responsible for the movement of craft up to the beaches.

The RAF element had two functions, to ensure that the requirements of RAF units, and the provision of air strips, were not overlooked, and to provide a balloon section to protect the beaches from air attack.

Not the least important parts of the groups were their infantry battalions,

● Turn to Page 39

They took their harbours, too

TWO artificial harbours towed to Arromanches proved one of the great success stories of the battle for Normandy. Along their mile-long piers, Allied craft were able to disgorge urgently-needed cargoes of tanks, guns, trucks, stores, rations and munitions.

In 1942, the Directorate of Ports and Inland Water Transport was tasked to pro-

duce prefabricated piers long enough to extend from the shore into water deep enough for coasters to lie alongside. The piers would have to be strong enough to support the heaviest weapons, capable of rapid assembly, and sufficiently robust to ride out storms at sea.

A prototype constructed on a remote Scottish beach in early 1943 confirmed that huge sections of the floating bridge – code-named Mulberry – could be towed across the Channel and slotted into place.

The harbours consisted of outer floating breakwaters, inner fixed breakwaters made of concrete caissons and floating piers running from the pierheads to the shore. Complementing Mulberry were "Gooseberry" harbours formed by 60 blockships sunk in line to give 5½ miles of breakwater protection to small craft operating off the beaches immediately after D-Day. There, before Mulberry became operational, coasters could lie high and

dry at low tide and unload their cargoes into DUKWs – amphibious landing craft – manned by drivers of the RASC.

Despatch of the equipment began on the evening of D-Day. Construction went well until D+13 when a severe storm blew up. The American harbour, Mulberry "A" at St Laurent-sur-Mer off Omaha Beach, was severely damaged. Parts were salvaged to rebuild the British Mulberry "B" at Arromanches, which was soon back in full swing.

Port Winston, as the latter was unofficially known, unloaded equipment at an astonishing rate. By the end of July 1944, more than 1.5 million personnel, 300,000 vehicles and almost two million tons of stores had been landed.

Without Mulberry, the Allies would have had to storm Cherbourg or Le Havre to gain port facilities. The outcome of the battle of Normandy could have been very different.

MY D-DAY MEMORIES



Boy Soldier Peter Wood (15), 10th Battalion RAOC, Donnington

AT 0600, the orderly sergeant, complete with sash, bashed his stick on a metal locker in a Nissen hut sleeping 30 and hollered: "Come on – get out, get out. It's started. It's started!"

Everyone knew what "it" was, but there had been so many false alarms in the past weeks that nobody believed him. We switched on the radio and there it was – troops were landing in Normandy and beach heads had been formed.

By 0700, the whole battalion was on the march, converging by companies on the vast storehouses that made up the Donnington stores depot – just part of a 35,000 workforce that included 5,000 ATS girls.

Our fellow workers included vehicle mechanics, pioneers, signallers, and sappers. Czechs, Belgians, Dutch, Polish and Canadian soldiers worked alongside us too.

The items being packed that day by my section were small assault boats and accessories. I nailed down the lids.

The night shift took over at 1800. We marched the two miles back to our lines. A hot meal and roll call at 2130. Lights out at 2200. Not everyone was on the beaches on D-Day, but it was a thrilling time and everyone was there in spirit.

Legacy for peace

BUT what happened to Mulberry? SOLDIER's archive reveals its fate and provides details of its disposal.

Apart from the remains of the huge concrete caissons still in position off the Normandy coast, much of the harbour was recycled and the obsolete blockships sunk to form part of the breakwater were refloated, towed to Britain and sold for scrap.

Undamaged Phoenix caissons were salvaged and put to other uses by the Admiralty. The Dutch employed some in dam repairs on Walcheren and elsewhere, and a number were bought by the Icelandic Government. Most of the Spud pierheads and the Whale bridging were purchased by France and towed to Fort Gentil, French Equatorial Africa, to form a harbour.

The rest was shipped back to Britain and handed over to the Ministry of Supply for disposal.

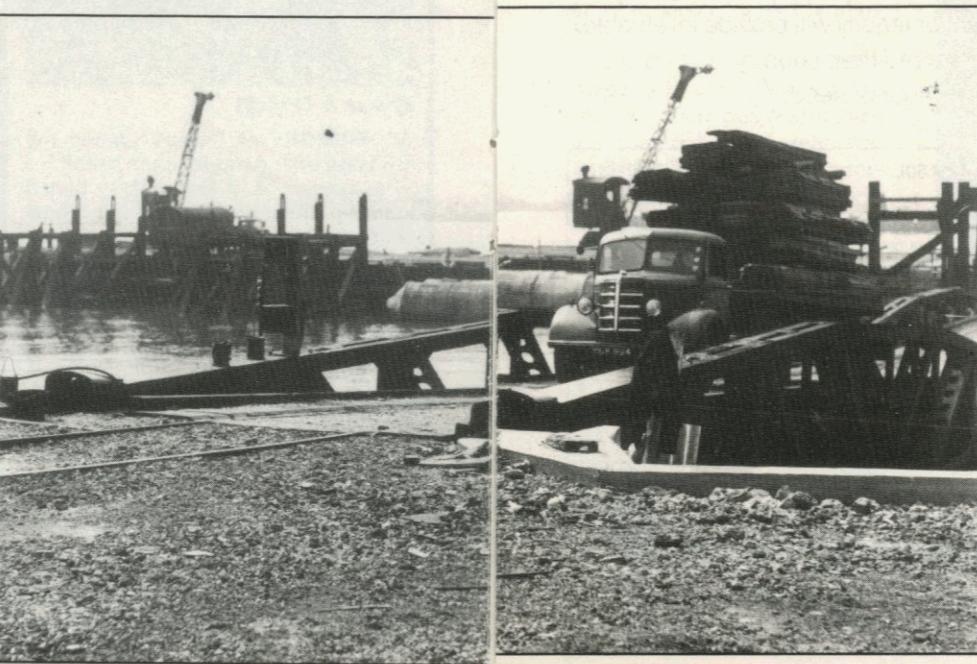
An article in SOLDIER revealed that two sections of Mulberry Harbour at Rainham in Essex were being used to import timber into the country.

The Phoenix Timber Company bought two pieces of history: Mulberry floating pierheads Nos 401 and 416. One had been the first to be linked with the Normandy coast after the storm of June 19 (7,000 vehicles crossed it in 24 hours), the other had carried a shore-to-ship ramp for ambulances at Arromanches.

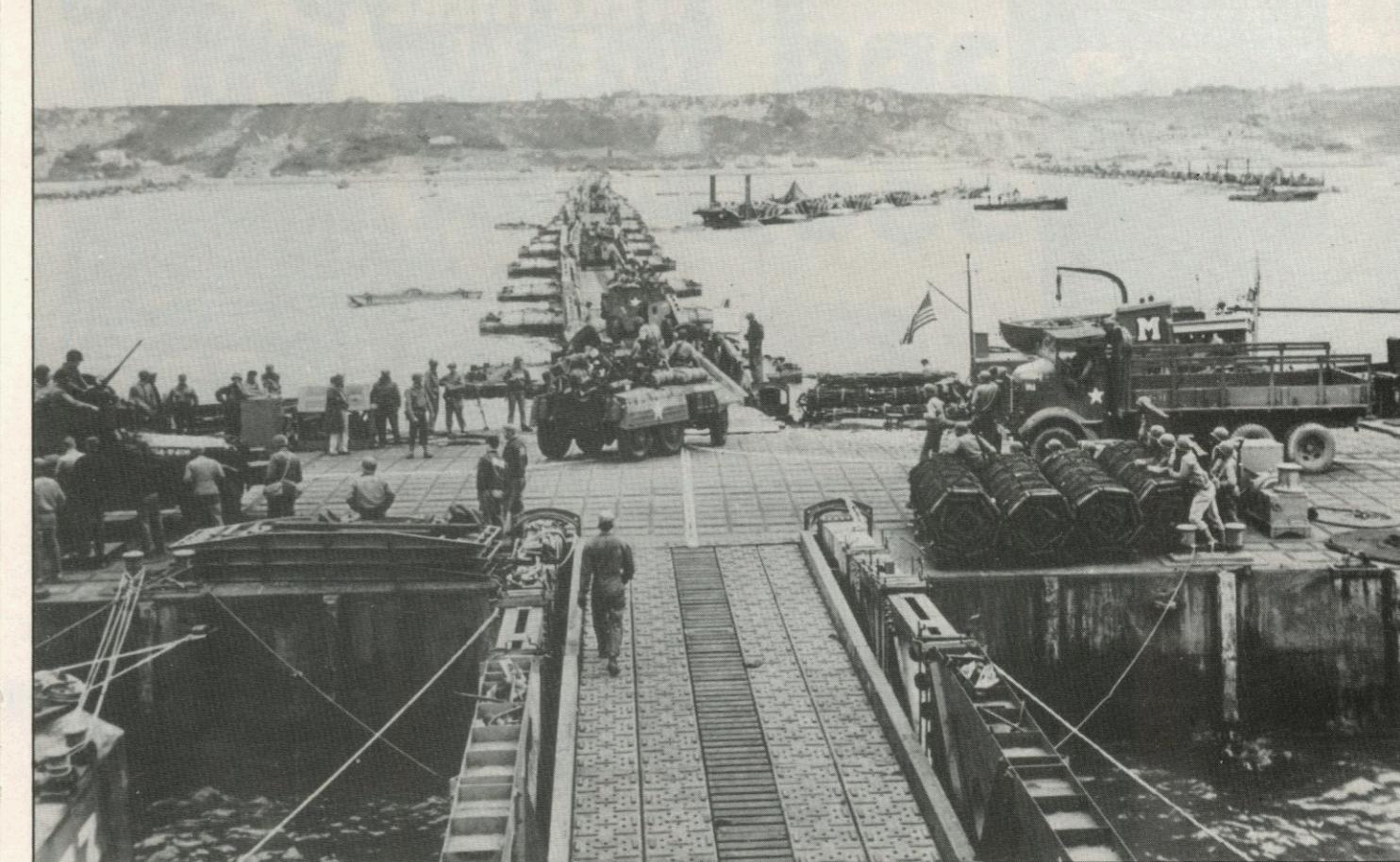
They were towed to Frog Island, Mud-

land, and installed along with 240ft floating Whale from Arromanches. Until then, ships had had to sail up river to Surrey Commercial Docks and discharge their timber into barges which took the cargo back to Frog Island.

Another section of Mulberry, consisting of a bridge span and a ramp float, was towed to Preston, Lancashire, where it was used to ease the shipping of heavy vehicles to Larne.



They took their harbours, too



Above – Mulberry A. The view to the beach. American combat vehicles drove ashore in great numbers before a storm wrecked this harbour

THE BEACH GROUPS

● From Page 37

which were responsible for the movement of stores, vehicles and equipment to the dumps – and the defence of the entire beach area.

Their work in the early stages of the landing was carried out under the most perilous conditions.

Each group also had three sapper sections, one for road construction and maintenance, one for the operation of cranes and bulldozers, and one for port operation.

Communications between the beach group and the assault formations were provided by the Royal Signals.

The RASC supplied general transport companies with fleets of DUKWs and non-amphibious vehicles, and maintained the Detail Issue Depot for food and the petrol depot.

The RAMC established field dressing stations on the beaches and was responsible for casualty evacuation centres. Military police provided traffic control while REME had a Beach Recovery Section for the recovery of "drowned" vehicles or the repair of damaged ones. The Pioneers were expected to help everywhere, assist-

ing on the beach, on road construction and in burial work. Each beach group was a miniature army in itself.

They landed with the first waves of assault troops, fighting on the beaches and at the same time establishing lines of communication so that following troops wanted for nothing in food and equipment.

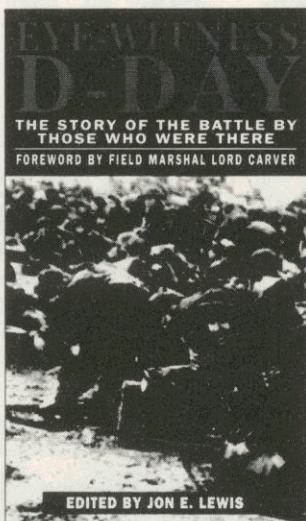
The weather was a bitter enemy in the early days of the invasion. Men worked round the clock for weeks on end. They were bombed, machine-gunned and shelled continuously until the battle moved beyond them into Caen.

The success of the initial vital stages of the landing depended heavily on the work of the men wearing the sign of the fouled anchor.

Such is the story of the back line of the front. When their task ended with the opening of the Channel ports, they went forward to take their places alongside the soldiers who had passed through them on the beaches.

And when the crossing of the Rhine was achieved, former beach group men were on the banks of the river to control the operation.

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The advertisement features a large, bold headline 'D-DAY' at the top. Below it, the text '50 YEARS AGO THEY WERE THERE WHEN WE NEEDED THEM...' is displayed in a large, bold, sans-serif font. To the right, the 'Daily Express' logo is shown with the date 'TUESDAY 6TH JUNE 1944'. The background of the ad is a black and white photograph of a soldier in a landing craft on the water. In the bottom right corner, there is a graphic for the '50th ANNIVERSARY 1944-1994'.

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THE ARMY BENEVOLENT FUND
Remembering & Supporting the Brave



Platoon commander who went back with the Queen

WHEN THE war in North-West Europe ended in 1945, Capt Edwin Bramall was the only officer serving with the 2nd Battalion, The King's Royal Rifle Corps who had landed with the battalion at Normandy. All the others had been killed or wounded.

He had been lucky... In the intervening, action-packed months, he had twice been wounded and once, while helping a soldier whose foot had been blown off in a minefield, he had himself stepped on a mine that failed to explode.

He had the Military Cross pinned on his tunic by Gen Montgomery.

Now a Field Marshal and a former Chief of the Defence Staff, Lord Bramall, 70, is a champion of the Forces, speaking frequently on their behalf in the House of Lords. He is Chairman of the Trustees of the Imperial War Museum.

The King's Royal Rifle Corps crossed the Channel on the evening of D-Day aboard an American tank landing ship.

"On D+1, our ship joined a queue of craft waiting to debouch their cargoes of men and material. The sight was fantastic. There was an enormous armada of ships of every size and shape stretching as far as the eye could see.

"We drove our vehicles off into deep water and everyone got soaked. There was an air alert and beachmasters were shouting for us to get off the beach. We didn't hang around and, after driving through mine-cleared lanes, we dispersed into the Normandy countryside and halted in an apple orchard.

"We first went into action at Villons-les-Buissons, astride a main road where we dug trenches and took up defensive positions. There was nothing between us and the enemy, but we were strong on the ground. We had tanks, artillery and air



Fd Marshal Lord Bramall sits under a portrait depicting him as Chief of the Defence Staff

and naval gunfire support and were able to keep all attacks on us at arm's length. Not so for the Canadians next to us who were involved in terrible hand-to-hand fighting. There were some very nasty incidents. It was rumoured that prisoners were shot.

"At 20, I was much younger than most of my soldiers who had fought their way through Italy. They had been through a hell of a lot and were pretty tired. A lot of them thought it was about time someone else had a go. Of course, it was

Montgomery's plan to mix the enthusiasm and freshness of new units with the experience of the old.

"The shelling was terrible. I remember one gun in particular. It must have been a 240mm railway gun. Its shell made a noise like a tube train arriving at an underground station. If you heard it coming, you hit the deck. Its effect carried a very long way.

"One landed in a field just behind me, but a man 200 yards away was decapitated by a shell-splinter. There were also Nebelwerfer mortars: 'moaning minnies' we called them.

"All this went on while we were involved in the intense business of consolidating and holding our positions. But there were moments when the Germans got quite close to the coast. If we had failed to retain a foothold and been driven back to the sea, the end of the war would have been put back almost indefinitely."

The liberation army received a mixed reaction from the local population which had not, until then, been badly affected by the war because Normandy was a major food-producing centre.

"The Germans had left them pretty well alone and then we arrived and their homes were flattened by gunfire, their cattle killed, and Caen reduced to rubble.

"I remember we were digging in on the first night and about to start fighting for our lives. The weather was ghastly and we needed overhead protection. I saw a pile of corrugated iron sheeting in a farmyard and told my men to make use of it. Out came the farmer in an absolute rage, telling me I had no right to take it.

"I told him where he could stuff it, but I suppose you can't expect a man who works on the land and whose farm means everything to him to welcome what was happening on behalf of some great cause.

"I thought the bombing of Caen a great mistake, because it achieved little. It flattened the city, but the Germans knew it was coming. They saw the Pathfinders dropping flares and left the town. After the raid, they moved back in."

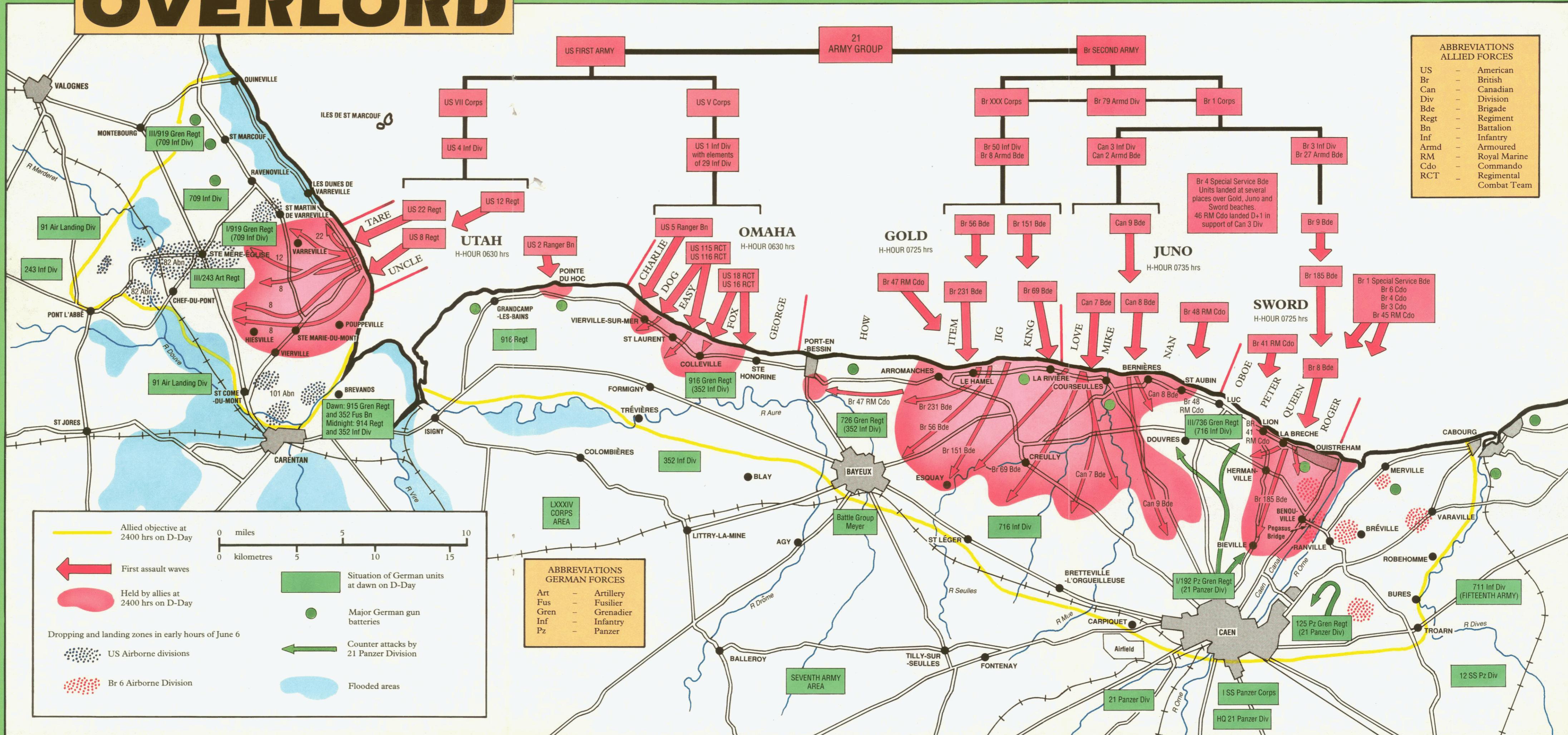
● Turn to Page 45



Capt Edwin Bramall

OVERLORD

Showing the deployment of land forces, including airborne divisions, engaged in the invasion of Normandy on D-Day, June 6 1944



Forces who turned the tide

Gold Beach - British Division

50th BRITISH (NORTHUMBRIAN) DIVISION

69th INFANTRY BRIGADE

5th Bn The East Yorkshire Regiment

6th Bn The Green Howards

7th Bn The Green Howards

151st INFANTRY BRIGADE

6th Bn The Durham Light Infantry

8th Bn The Durham Light Infantry

9th Bn The Durham Light Infantry

231st INFANTRY BRIGADE

2nd Bn The Devonshire Regiment

1st Bn The Hampshire Regiment

1st Bn The Dorsetshire Regiment

Divisional Troops

HQ 50th Infantry Division

61st Reconnaissance Regiment, RAC

357th, 385th and 465th Btys, 90th Field Regiment, RA

99th and 288th Btys, 102nd Anti-Tank Regiment, RA

233rd, 295th and 505th Field Companies, RE

235th Field Park Company, RE

2nd Bn The Cheshire Regiment (MG)

Units under command for assault phase

8th ARMOURED BRIGADE

4th/7th Royal Dragoon Guards

Nottinghamshire Yeomanry (Sherwood Rangers)

24th Lancers

56th INFANTRY BRIGADE

2nd Bn The South Wales Borderers

2nd Bn The Gloucestershire Regiment

2nd Bn The Essex Regiment

Elements of 79th Armoured Division

2nd County of London Yeomanry (Westminster Dragoons)

2 Tps 141st Regiment, RAC

6th Assault Regiment, RE

86th and 147th Field Regiments, RA

394th and 395th Btys, 120th Light Anti-

Aircraft Regiment, RA

73rd and 280th Field Companies, RE

1st RM Armoured Support Regiment

47 RM Commando

GHQ Liaison Regiment

Beach Groups

2nd Bn The Hertfordshire Regiment

6th Bn The Border Regiment

Plus elements of:

Royal Corps of Signals

Royal Army Service Corps

Royal Army Medical Corps

Royal Army Ordnance Corps

Corps of Royal Electrical and

Mechanical Engineers

Corps of Military Police

Pioneer Corps

Juno Beach - 3rd Canadian Division

7th CANADIAN BRIGADE

The Royal Winnipeg Rifles

The Regina Rifle Regiment

1st Canadian Scottish Regiment

8th CANADIAN BRIGADE

The Queen's Own Rifles of Canada

Le Régiment de la Chaudière

The North Shore (New Brunswick) Regt

9th CANADIAN BRIGADE

The Highland Light Infantry of Canada

The Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders

The North Nova Scotia Highlanders

Divisional Troops

HQ 3rd Canadian Division

12th Canadian Field Regiment SP, RCA

13th Canadian Field Regiment SP, RCA

14th Canadian Field Regiment SP, RCA

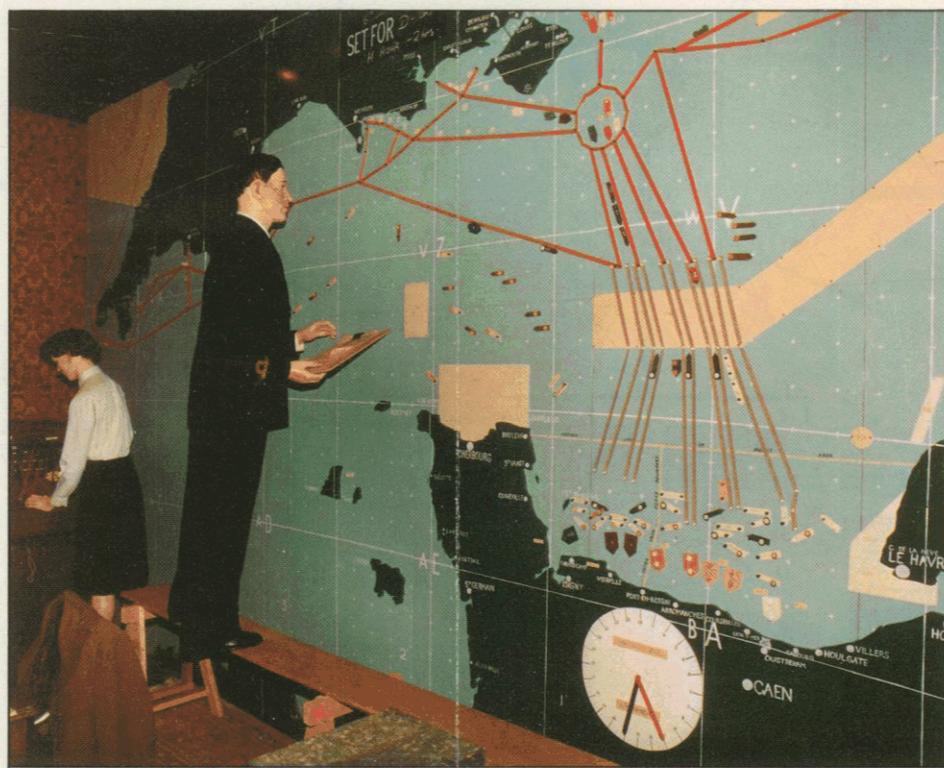
32nd Bty, 4th Canadian Light Anti-

Aircraft Regiment, RCA

16th and 18th Canadian Field

Companies, RCE

Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa (MG)



The famous Southwick House invasion map has been reproduced as part of a special exhibition in Portsmouth's D-Day Museum

Units under command for assault phase

2nd CANADIAN ARMOURED BRIGADE

6th Armoured Regiment (1st Hussars)

10th Armoured Regiment (Fort Garry Horse)

27th Armoured Regiment (The Sherbrooke Fusilier Regiment)

4th (SPECIAL SERVICE) BRIGADE

48 RM Commando

1st Section, RM Engineer Commando

C Sqn, Inns of Court Regiment

19th Canadian Field Regiment SP, RCE

62nd Anti-Tank Regiment, RA

HQ 80 Anti-Aircraft Brigade

372, 375 Btys, 114 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, RA

321 Bty, 93 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, RA

5th Canadian Field Company, RCE

26 and 80 Assault Squadrons, RE

72 and 85 Field Companies, RE

3 and 4 Btys, 2 RM Armoured Support Regiment

Beach Groups

8 Bn The King's Regiment

5 Bn The Royal Berkshire Regiment

Plus elements of:

Royal Corps of Signals

Royal Army Service Corps

Royal Army Medical Corps

Royal Army Ordnance Corps

Corps of Royal Electrical and

Mechanical Engineers

Corps of Military Police

Pioneer Corps

Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps

185th INFANTRY BRIGADE

2nd Bn The Royal Warwickshire Regiment

Regiment

1st Bn The Royal Norfolk Regiment

2nd Bn The King's Shropshire Light Infantry

Divisional Troops

HQ 3rd Division

7th, 33rd and 76th Field Regiments, RA

20th Anti-Tank Regiment, RA

246th Field Company, RE

2nd Bn The Middlesex Regiment (MG)

Units under command for assault phase

27th ARMOURED BRIGADE

13th/18th Royal Hussars

The Staffordshire Yeomanry

The East Riding Yeomanry

1st (SPECIAL SERVICE) BRIGADE

3, 4 and 6 Commandos

45 (RM) Commando

2 Troops 10 (IA) Commando (French)

Elements of 79 Armoured Division

22 Dragoons

5 Assault Regiment, RE

218 Bty and HQ 73

Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, RA

1 Tp 318 Bty (of 92 Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, RA)

263 Field Company, RE

629 Field Squadron, RE

41 RM Commando (from 4 Special Service Brigade)*

3 Tps 5 Independent Armoured Support Battery SP, RM

Beach Groups

5th Bn The King's Regiment

1st Buckinghamshire Bn

Units of 51st Highland Division which landed on D-Day and came under command of 3rd British Infantry Division

5th Bn The Black Watch

1st and 5/7th Battalions, The Gordon Highlanders

Plus elements of:

Royal Corps of Signals

Royal Army Service Corps

Royal Army Medical Corps

Royal Army Ordnance Corps

Corps of Royal Electrical and

Mechanical Engineers

Corps of Military Police

Pioneer Corps

Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps

Note: *41 RM Commando was an element of 4 Special Service Brigade, which was put under command of 3 British Division on landing on wrong beach.

6th Airborne Division

3rd PARACHUTE BRIGADE

8th and 9th Battalions, The Parachute Regiment, AAC

1st Canadian Parachute Battalion

5th PARACHUTE BRIGADE

7th, 12th and 13th Battalions, The Parachute Regiment, AAC

6th AIRLANDING BRIGADE

2nd Bn The Lincolnshire Regiment

1st Bn The King's Own Scottish Borderers

2nd Bn The Royal Ulster Rifles

1st Bn The Royal Ulster Rifles

A Coy 12 Bn The Devonshire Regiment

Divisional Troops

HQ 6th Airborne Division

6th Airborne Armoured Reconnaissance Regt, RAC

211 Bty, 53rd Airlanding Light Regiment, RA

3rd and 4th Airlanding Anti-Tank Batteries, RA

3rd and 591st Parachute Squadrons, RE

249th Field Company (Airborne), RE

28

**'Do you think
we have had it?
I think we
probably have . . .'**

● From Page 41

Why had it taken so long to liberate Caen?

"The Germans were too strong and fought well. They were from the best division of the German Army. Being Waffen SS, most were fanatical Nazis who fought with exactly the same fervour and desperation that we would have done if we had been repelling an invasion of Britain."

Lord Bramall believes the difficulty of the terrain had been underestimated.

"It was not like Salisbury Plain which you could just motor across. In the bocage country of Normandy, you couldn't see further than the next field, and the succession of very deep hedgerows and ditches proved ideal for the enemy to defend."

Lord Bramall was armed with a revolver. A "bloody useless weapon", he said, preferring to carry a rifle or sten gun.

Had he killed an enemy soldier?

"Yes. Once, I knew I had killed a man. It is not difficult in the sort of conditions we were faced with. Either you will be killed or someone else is. It's part of a pattern."

"I never actually stuck someone with a bayonet . . . I always tried to dispose of the opposition before that moment occurred."

In one dramatic incident, a company group was subjected to direct fire from German tanks or self-propelled guns that had broken through.

"We took what cover we could. With another platoon commander, Lt Bernard Jackson, I sheltered under a half-track. The shells came crashing down. The company commander and sergeant major were killed, as was another platoon commander."

"I turned to Bernard and said: 'Do you think we have had it?' He replied: 'I think we probably have'. There was a terrible crash as a shell struck our vehicle. When the dust had cleared, I looked down and not only was he dead, but his whole body was blackened from head to foot. The blast had killed him."

"I thought I can't just stay here, so I got out from under my vehicle. It was like a scene from hell. Vehicles were blazing everywhere. I felt a burning sensation down my side. I thought I was on fire and threw myself down, rolling around on my side to put the flames out."

"Eventually, the scout platoon commander and I got the company moved into cover. The door of my half-track had been blown off. It was then that I discovered I was wounded. It hadn't been fire. I had been hit by shrapnel."

After his wound had been dressed at a first aid post, Bramall was evacuated to Britain with another wounded KRRC officer, Maj Roland Gibbs (who was to precede him as Chief of the General



Troops make their way along wooded country lanes in Normandy, east of Le Beny Bocage. Lord Bramall believes the difficulty of the terrain was underestimated

Staff). Both men returned to Normandy a month later.

"When we arrived at a rear port centre, I caused a lot of agitation because I was so anxious to return to my battalion. Some base wallah told me I would have to 'bloody well take my turn', so Maj Gibbs and I stole a vehicle and drove ourselves to rejoin the battalion."

Tactics in the early stages of the Normandy campaign were unimaginative: Operation Epsom had been a typical example. One of the leading battalions, a Scottish regiment, formed up on a start line and advanced across a cornfield behind a creeping artillery barrage.

"Their casualties were enormous. They were shelled on the start line. Some of the shells were our own. They suffered casualties moving forward, because the enemy knew they were coming. In contrast, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders were ordered at short notice to seize two bridges over the River Odon. There was no time to lay on artillery fire and they went through on a one-man front, the leading company commander having found a covered line of approach."

"They achieved complete surprise and ended up six miles behind the enemy and secured the two bridges with less than ten casualties. I bet if they had formed up in the usual way, they would have suffered heavy casualties and made only half the

progress. It wouldn't work every time, but, post war, what became known as the 'infiltration attack' had much to commend it."

The young platoon commander found the "fog of war" often caused breakdowns in communications, and came up with a novel solution.

"In today's Army, practically every fighting soldier has access to radio communications. Then, we only had comms back to the company commander. The very moment my section got any distance away from me - 150 to 200 yards - it was almost impossible to communicate with them against the noise of battle. You had to dash over and shout in their ear, which wasn't ideal, I carried a small funnel-like megaphone, tucked in my belt, so my voice would carry further."

His D-Day experiences remain part of the Field Marshal's life. They are with him always. During the 40th anniversary celebrations in 1984, as Chief of the Defence Staff, he travelled to Normandy with the Royal Family on board the Royal Yacht.

"Never in my wildest dreams on D-Day did I imagine that 40 years afterwards I would be sailing through the Caen Canal with the Queen as *Britannia* passed the Pegasus Bridge where Madam Gondrée was waving a Union Flag at us."

Now, 50 years on, Lord Bramall's latest pilgrimage will be more low-key.

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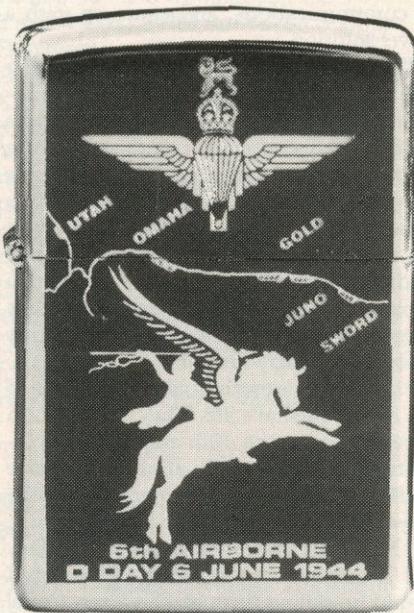
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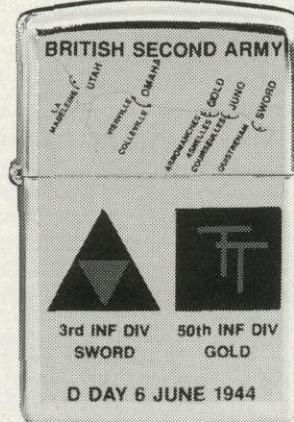
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Troopers of 3 CLY are given haircuts by two of their comrades under cover of their tank

AN EXHIBITION at the National Army Museum tells the story of D-Day and the battle of Normandy through the experiences of individual British soldiers.

Many of the photographs, on show for the first time, were taken by Capt (later Maj) James Sale MC, of the 3rd County of London Yeomanry (Sharpshooters).

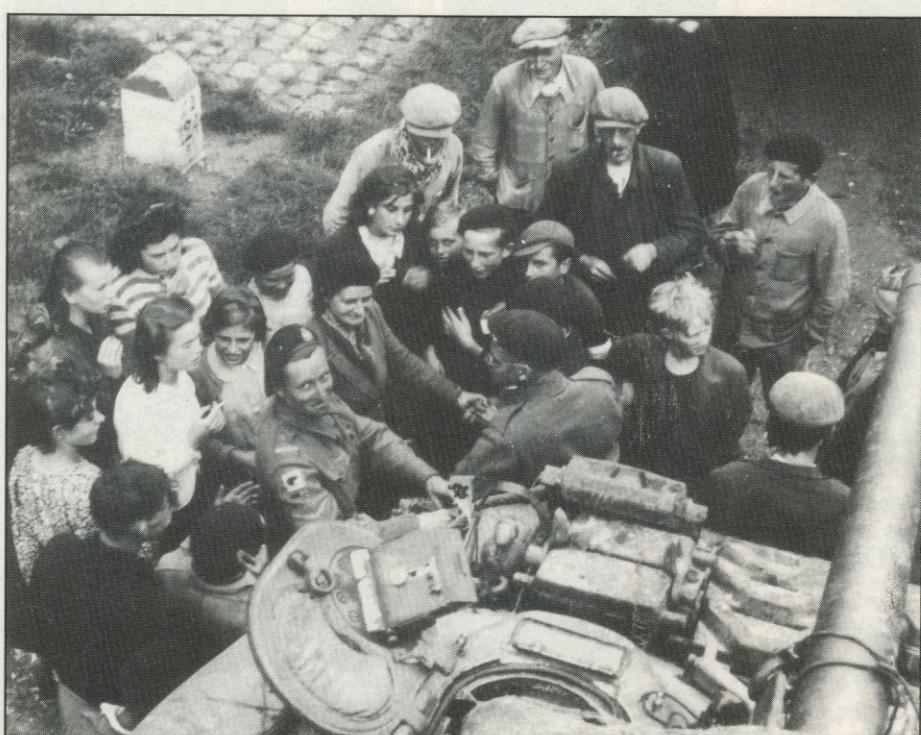
Capt Sale's camera fitted into his battledress pocket, and he used it to record the landing on Gold beach on D+1, campaign life and tank warfare. After landing near Mont Fleury, the Sharpshooters attacked a radar station at Bouvres and took part in the battles to capture Caen.

Part of 4th Armoured Brigade and equipped with Sherman tanks, they were later amalgamated with the 4th County of London Yeomanry which had suffered heavy losses at Villers Bocage on June 13.

"Monty's Men – the British Soldier and the D-Day Campaign" runs at the National Army Museum until September 18.



A Sharpshooters' tank crew enjoys the evening meal on a table made of ammunition boxes. The jar with a white label is an Army-issue thermos flask. The picture was taken at Vernay, after the British advance around Caumont and Vire in early August 1944



Trooper Booker (looking at camera) is the recipient of much female attention at Grand Villiers. This picture was taken after the Allied victory in Normandy and during their rapid advance across northern France



Maj Oliver Woods MC, who commanded A Company, has his first shave since landing in Normandy. Maj Woods was Foreign Editor at *The Times* before the war

It's all right, lads, the QAs are here!

FOR AS LONG as wars have been fought, the ordinary soldier has had a fear of being left alone on the battlefield with no one to tend his wounds.

In June 1944, troops going into action on D-Day were reassured by the news that they were to be supported by some of the finest medical and nursing facilities available. Casualty clearing and field dressing stations would be deployed close behind the front line to ensure the injured could quickly be moved to general hospitals in the rear maintenance areas.

This confidence was not shared by wounded German prisoners treated in the British Army's forward hospitals. They had been told by their commanders that they would be killed if captured.

QA nursing sister Maureen Gara witnessed panic-stricken patients having to be held down while doses of morphine or penicillin were injected. They were terri-

fied that the syringes contained poison.

Now 78, retired and living in Aldershot, Maureen maintains a keen interest in the work of today's Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps. After the war she earned a General Service Medal with clasps for the Malaya and Borneo campaigns.

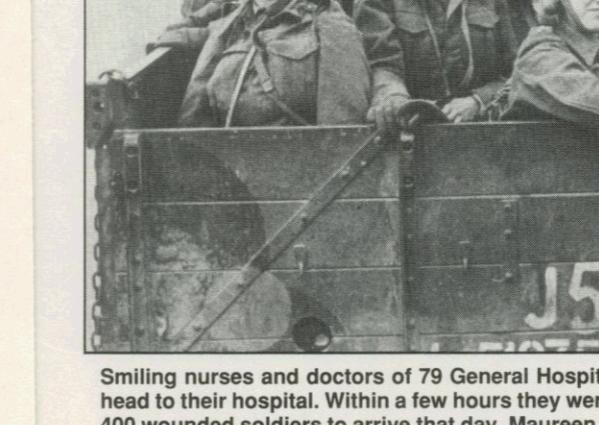
In the run-up to the invasion of Normandy, she and fellow nurses from the then Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service spent weeks in a field outside Watford erecting and dismantling a 1,200-bed tented hospital and memorising the contents of hundreds of packing cases carrying medical supplies for the 79th General Hospital that would arrive in France before the staff.

"In April, our tents and hospital equipment were taken away and, after a period spent training in Scotland, we were sent to Saxmundham in Suffolk where we joined

a large concentration of troops. There we were issued with rolls of red and white hessian, and needles and twine. We sewed yards of hessian before realising we were making a huge Red Cross to mark the hospital from the air.

"On D+9 we boarded a ship at Southampton and set sail that night for Normandy. Next morning, it anchored offshore and we were allowed on deck. It was miles from the beach and we felt quite vulnerable. After a long delay, we scrambled down nets with other soldiers into LSTs that were fussing around the ship. Only half-a-dozen medical staff were allowed in each boat load. They couldn't afford to lose 50 to 100 doctors and nurses in one go should an LST have been sunk.

"We couldn't go forward because a battle was raging, so we spent the first night resting behind a hedge. Soldiers, whistling and singing, marched up the



Smiling nurses and doctors of 79 General Hospital travel by open truck from the beach head to their hospital. Within a few hours they were ready to receive the first of more than 400 wounded soldiers to arrive that day. Maureen Gara is pictured far right centre

road on the other side all night long. Next morning, trucks took us to our hospital which had already been erected. We unpacked our gear and got the wards ready.

"The first convoy of ambulances carrying wounded arrived at 4pm. We received more than 400 casualties that first day. I worked in the resuscitation ward. The most badly wounded came to us.

Some had awful injuries.

"Often their rifles had been used as splints. Bayonet wounds were especially dangerous as a patient whose artery had been severed could bleed to death internally.

"Several of us had been trained to administer blood by the Blood Transfusion Service at Bristol. We had some terrific RAMC male nurses working alongside us.

"My first patient was a 19-year-old gunner. I bent down to talk to him and told him I was a QA. He shouted to the other wounded: 'It's all right lads. The QAs are here.' Some patients raised a cheer, but others did not believe him. In our steel helmets, boots and battledress, we hardly looked like nurses."

Fatally-injured casualties who were inoperable were removed to a special ward. It was staffed by a sister and three padres. The last rites were given and the patients allowed to die with dignity.

"It had to be done. You couldn't have soldiers who were going to live watching others die. I can say with confidence, every soldier who came to us with any chance of life was given that chance.

"The conditions we worked under were

rather horrific and the noise was dreadful. Shells whistled over the hospital.

"We rested at night under cover in trenches. One night there was a lull in the fighting and Sister Kay Kilby and I crept back to our tent. Because of the shrapnel, staff used to sleep with their steel helmets covering whichever part of their body they wished to protect. I slept with mine over my head, so if I was wounded anywhere else, I would still be able to think.

"We were woken next morning by an orderly called Dillon who brought us mugs of tea and told us we shouldn't have been there. I was shocked to find a lump of shrapnel had ripped through the tent and struck my pillow next to my head.

"The CO had ordered that we should all be issued with a tot of rum each evening to help us sleep in the trenches. It made me sick, so I had been saving my rum ration for my boyfriend, Peter, who was serving in Normandy with the Reconnaissance Regiment.

"I looked under my camp bed and said to Kay: 'It's all right, Kay. It's missed Peter's rum.'

"She said sharply: 'What do you mean it's missed his rum. More importantly, it missed your head!'

"The giant Red Cross we had sewn seemed to do the trick. The hospital was in the centre of a huge concentration area, surrounded by tanks, guns and troops. German aircraft bombed them, not us.

"One afternoon, a German pilot flew down one side of our hospital perimeter, machine-gunning as he went. He did the same on the other side without hitting us.



Pte Reg Shickle,
2nd Battalion,
The Cheshire Regiment

A YOUNG naval officer addressed us over the tannoy and told us that the shoreline along Gold beach was planted with steel girders with mines attached. He added that when he was a few miles from the shore, he intended to "put his foot down" and get us as close to the beach as possible.

"Meanwhile gentlemen, get some sleep. I'll let you know when."

"Hear this! Hear this!" ... I realised I must have dozed off. How, I don't know, for the noise was tremendous. It

MY D-DAY MEMORIES

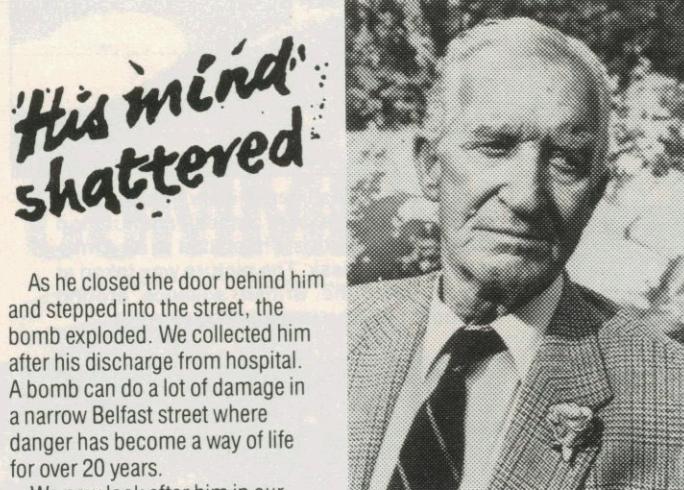
came from the battleships all around us, and the shells and rockets that were firing towards the beach.

Two hundred yards, 100 yards, then crash! Our craft came to a shuddering halt amid a loud explosion. A Jeep that should have been first off was no more. In its place was a gaping hole in the deck.

The ramp went down. With the engine of my Bren carrier roaring, I rammed it into first gear, let off the brakes and shot over the hole into the sea. Its tracks gripped the beach and we moved slowly forward. An eternity and then fresh air.

On the shore, Hagerty, one of my crew, was looking dumbly down at his leg. His foot had been blown off.

This was our first casualty. This was the invasion of Normandy.

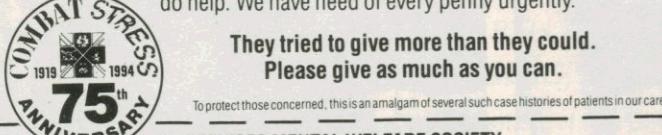


As he closed the door behind him and stepped into the street, the bomb exploded. We collected him after his discharge from hospital. A bomb can do a lot of damage in a narrow Belfast street where danger has become a way of life for over 20 years.

We now look after him in our residential home. He will never leave it because of his fear of the outside. His brain connects the outside with pain, terror and danger. He can now only look at the outside world from the safety of four walls.

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To protect those concerned, this is an amalgam of several such case histories of patients in our care.

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I remarked that Germans obviously weren't all bad. One of our surgeons told me I was too charitable, pointing out that the enemy commanders must have known we were treating their wounded.

Eventually, other hospitals were established alongside ours. We called the road running between them Harley Street. Once, I was astonished to see some newly-arrived nurses staggering through mud, wearing their red nursing caps over their uniforms.

"I asked why they were dressed like that, and they told me their matron had said the soldiers would like to see them arriving as ladies. Our matron, sensibly, told us to wear helmets, boots and gaiters just like anyone else."

If you're leaving the Forces, we'll help make it come true.



SSAFA Reg Charity No. 210780. FHS Reg Charity No. 209753.

Settling down in civvy street is a lot easier if you've got somewhere to move into. That's why SSAFA have set up the Housing Advisory Service specifically for people leaving the Forces.

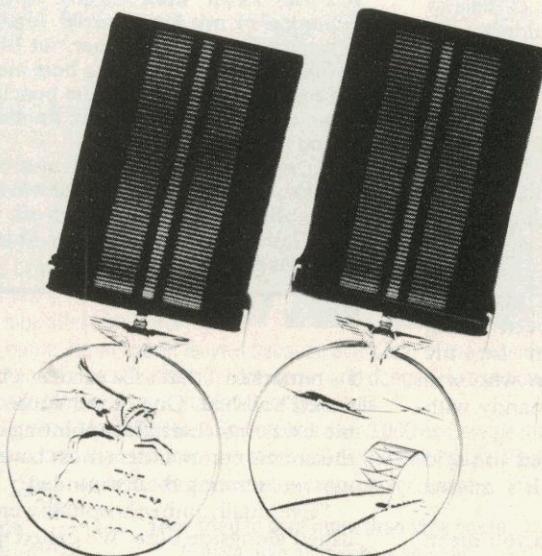
We've over 11,000 contacts in private sector housing in the UK and we'll do our very best to help you find a place of your own before

and after you've been discharged. Last year we helped over 1,000 ex-Service families find accommodation. This year it'll be more. In a difficult time, it's one less thing to lose sleep over.

If you think we can be of help, contact your local SSAFA branch (see phone book) or ring SSAFA Central Office on 071 403 8783.



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1944 *The ARNHEM* 1994
50th Anniversary Medal
A gift to those who gave

Medals are available from the Airborne Forces Museum, Browning Barracks, Aldershot, Hampshire or Spink & Son Ltd., 5 King Street, St James's, London SW1. £25.85 incl. of VAT. (Please add £3.50 for UK p & p and £5 overseas).

Remember them

For every medal purchased a significant contribution will be made to the Airborne Forces Appeal AFCDT
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● Numbers

On D-Day itself, 59,900 personnel, 8,900 vehicles and 1,900 tons of stores were landed. By D+50, 631,000 personnel, 153,000 vehicles and 689,000 tons of stores, plus 68,000 tons of fuel and oil had been delivered to the bridgehead.

● Bath time

The first mobile bath and laundry units (MBLU) landed on D+12. The bath sections operated with forward units, often under shell and mortar fire, to provide a change of clothing and baths for the troops. In the early stages of the campaign, laundry sections concentrated on providing clean linen and clothing for hospitals. One MBLU could provide clean underwear and a bath for every man in a division once a week.

● Newspaper

A mobile duplicating section attached to HQ Second Army arrived on July 2 and within four days had produced the first issue of the daily *Second Army Troop News*.

● Home comforts

The first Naafi/Expeditionary Force Institutes landed on D+17 and established a base canteen depot under canvas at Sully. To supply troops who arrived up to D+30, issues of Naafi/EFI special packs were made. These provided cigarettes, matches, stationery, razor blades and soap for 30 men for 21 days. In addition, 17,500,000 cigarettes and 3,140lb of tobacco were issued free during the early stages of the invasion.

● Exhaustion

The incidence of battle exhaustion rose steeply from the beginning of July (2.5 per 1,000 per week) to 5.563 per 100 by the end of the month. Enemy mortar fire was stated to be the main cause. Divisional Exhaustion Centres were opened and more than 65 per cent of casualties returned to duty.

● Busy roads

Within a few weeks of landing, the beach-head, which then measured little more than 20 miles broad and ten miles deep, contained 115,000 vehicles. At one check post, 18,836 vehicles passed by in a day, nearly one vehicle every four seconds, night and day.

● Entertaining

Football and rugby equipment for the troops was packed in cases. Daily newspapers were provided, one to ten men. Five "Stars-in-Battledress" concert par-



Infantry soldiers, carrying bicycles, use a rope to steady themselves as they wade ashore from a landing craft. Some troops were ordered to land wearing waterproof "gas" trousers over their battledress trousers. The resulting sores, caused by chafing, added to the discomfort of the invading troops

Note

Because it was thought the retreating Germans would destroy large quantities of French currency, French francs were printed in America. Of these, 2,899,500,000 francs were allotted to the 21st Army Group. On June 21, the Base Cashier landed in France with 5½ tons of notes which were held in the specially reinforced cellars of the Chateau de Courseulles. The sterling equivalent of £21.7m was sent to France... and not a single franc was lost.

this

ties landed on the beaches on D+8 and gave performances within a mile of the front line, usually on a "stage" made by a 3-ton lorry with its sides down. Fifty Army cinemas showed films for eight hours a day to large audiences. By the end of July, 5,500 wireless sets had been issued.

● Air mail

The first Army postmen in theatre were those of 6 Airborne Division who landed by parachute and glider well before H-hour. Those accompanying 1 and 4 Special Service Brigades landed an hour after the sea assault began. Others followed. It had been planned to deliver mail to assault units on D+1, but this was delayed to D+2 because of shipping diffi-

culties. The first despatch from theatre was made from Beach Group Army Post Office No S688 on June 8.

● Landing strips

The construction of forward airfields was the responsibility of five special Royal Engineers groups and one RAF wing. By the end of June, excluding an emergency landing strip, ten airfields had been built in the beach-head area.

● Fire drill

Six fire fighting companies were deployed during the assault. In the first phase the Army Fire Service attended 109 fires, 44 of which were caused by enemy action.

● Vehicle check

Strict control had to be exercised over the arrival of replacement vehicles especially as the first Black Market in liberated Europe showed signs of starting on the beaches. Units who wanted to "make" a vehicle sent back drivers to meet landing craft. If the opportunity arose they drove away whatever caught their fancy.

● God's work

More than 50 chaplains landed during the first 24 hours. Their work in the forward areas made a major contribution to good morale.

Para who fought the battle twice

TO A POST-WAR generation, Richard Todd must rank as the epitome of the British hero on celluloid, in roles as widely differing as Robin Hood and Wing Commander Guy Gibson.

But as a lieutenant in the 7th Light Infantry Parachute Battalion of the 6th Airborne Division, he found himself in the thick of the action at Pegasus Bridge on D-Day.

When *SOLDIER* spoke to him at a hotel in Hampshire where he was taking a break from filming locally with the BBC, this modest gentleman was anxious to play down any hint of personal acts of derring-do at the time.

"I am not trying to say 'it was hell and I was there,'" he said, those famous deep tones instantly familiar.

On the contrary, he felt – despite being the first British soldier from the main force to parachute into Normandy on the day – the whole Pegasus Bridge episode had been over-glamorised.

"I suppose it is highlighted in the public mind because there was something solid in the form of a bridge there, and not just a strip of sand."

The capture and subsequent holding of Pegasus had been a brilliant example of planning, training, leadership and the "rather special qualities" of airborne troops, Mr Todd added.

It was a wise decision to alter the original idea of parachuting in to capture the bridges, since they would probably have been spotted.

"In the event, with the six gliders coming in silently, three to a bridge and as close as possible to them, the element of surprise was total."

One bridge was captured without any resistance, the other (later to be re-named Pegasus) almost without loss.

Out of a force of 180 glider-borne troops from the 2nd Battalion Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry and a 30-strong detachment of 249 Field Company (Airborne) RE, one officer was killed on the bridge and two other officers injured.

"It was almost the perfect operation, with minimum casualties, the successful surprise factor, excellent leadership

(under Maj John Howard) and bloody good work by the chaps."

When the main force flew in after the Pathfinders, Lt Todd found himself not only in the first plane – but the first soldier out of it.

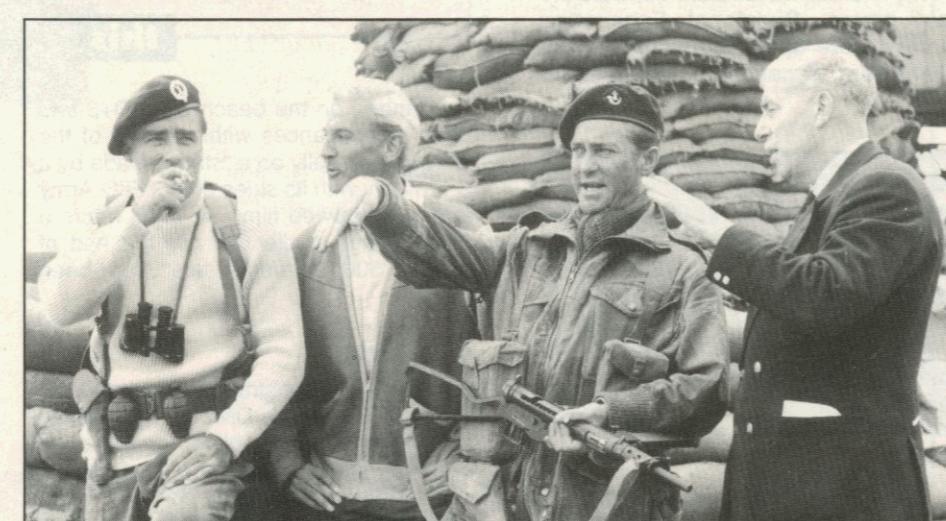
"It was not from choice, I can assure you," said Mr Todd, elegant in dark blazer, grey trousers and Parachute Regiment tie.

"The first few aircraft got in with a certain amount of surprise factor on their side, but after that, many of them were shot down. I was damned lucky."

The men of 7 Para took over the holding of the bridge at approximately 2am, then, under the command of Col Geoffrey Pine-Coffin, held a pocket until late on the evening of D-Day, until they in turn were relieved by a battalion from the Warwickshire Regiment, who had been seaborne.

"7 Para suffered very heavy casualties," said Mr Todd. "The first were caused by a very, very scattered drop. Some were captured, some were killed in the air before they got to the ground, others were killed fighting their way through."

"We dropped 610 men: by the morning of D-Day, there were 240 left."



Expert advice from their real-life counterparts on the set of *The Longest Day* for actors Peter Lawton (with Brig Lord Lovat, whom he portrayed) and Richard Todd, getting some pointers from Maj John Howard



June 6: Equipment and a jeep being unloaded from one of the gliders which has just landed

From a total of five officers and 120 men originally in A Company, there were no surviving officers and fewer than 20 men by the middle of June 6.

"They had borne the brunt of the attack. In C Company, who were in the grounds of a chateau more or less next to A Coy, all the officers were killed and there were only 20 men remaining. B Company did better as far as officers were

concerned, but had more lost on the ground."

When Lt Todd and his fellow Paras were relieved by the seaborne troops, they went back to the area of Ranville to the east of the River Orne and Caen Canal.

"We dug in and that night we were quite heavily attacked, with guns coming from Breville. On D+1 we had quite a little fire-fight, then on the second half of that day we were ordered to move to Le Mesnil, to clear quite a large area of orchard and field."

"Pegasus has its own crucial place among the other momentous events on D-Day. It is very sad."

The commander of B Company was hit, and a close friend of Richard Todd's was killed.

"I think possibly the most unsung person of the day was Col Pine-Coffin," he told *SOLDIER*.

"He was not only the man who trained 7 Para Battalion, but he also controlled them all at the time and remained cool, calm and collected."

And what are Richard Todd's feelings about *The Longest Day*, the famous film about the events of D-Day, in which he was one of a huge line-up of stars?

"I was asked to play myself, but I would have found that too embarrassing: I didn't do anything major enough to depict in a film."

"Instead, I played my good friend John Howard, who acted as military adviser on the film. The Pegasus Bridge segment was pretty accurate, but John did say afterwards that I portrayed him as much more

'stiff upper lip' than he would have done!"

Mr Todd has recently re-visited old haunts for the BBC, on both sides of the Channel.

He is particularly upset about the fate of the bridge which holds such striking memories for so many. (The original Pegasus Bridge currently lies temporarily abandoned in a field, its 1990s successor having opened only last month.)

"We knew the bridge would have to go, because it is antiquated, rusty and not big enough to take the volume of modern traffic. But I feel it was very insensitive of certain parties not to leave it in situ at least until after June."

In his opinion it should be re-erected very close to its original situation, so that people could identify with it. The Normans are "terrifically pro-British and pro 6th Airborne", and are as livid as we are.

"There has been talk of erecting it somewhere over here, but I don't think it would mean a great deal to the current generation," said the former lieutenant, with a hint of wistfulness.

Did he have a war-time photograph of himself?

"People didn't go round with a camera taking portraits," he said, as charmingly as only he could.

"This wasn't a film, you know. It was the real thing . . ."



**Lt Basil Heaton,
86 (Herts Yeo) Field Regiment RA**

I WAS the junior officer in a troop of four self-propelled guns. Our role was to bombard the beaches from the sea (the run-in shoot) and then come ashore behind the first wave of infantry.

We opened fire at 0650, closing on the shore at the rate of 200 yards per minute, and landed at 0805 on Gold beach in support of 69 Infantry Brigade. We landed just below the Ver-sur-Mer lighthouse and in front of the dreaded Mont Fleury Battery.

The 6th Green Howards attacked this gun position with great gallantry and CSM Hollis won a VC. On their left,

MY D-DAY MEMORIES

the 5th East Yorks took the lighthouse and by 0900 our guns were clear of the beach and deployed in this area.

By nightfall, the brigade had advanced seven miles to come within sight of the Caen-Bayeux road. We spent the first night in Crapon preparing a fire programme for the dawn counter-attack. The beach-head was secure.

On September 18, 1993 a small contingent of old soldiers from the Hertfordshire Yeomanry (86 Fd Regt RA) gathered at Ver-sur-Mer near Arromanches to witness the unveiling of a memorial to the gunners of 50th (Northumbrian) Division – a D-Day assault division. The site of the memorial, donated by the French Government, was 200 yards east of the spot on Gold beach where I had landed on D-Day.

So many memories . . . ! The sun went down three times that day. And we were very young.

Bull's Head crushed all before it

TIP OF THE SPEARHEAD: "Attack" was the first and last word in 79 Armoured Division's dictionary of war. D-Day was largely their day.

WHEN Maj Gen Sir Percy C S Hobart was brought out of retirement in 1942 at the age of 57 to command the 79th Armoured Division, his superiors can hardly have realised how much of a contribution he would make to victory.

Hobart, who had joined the Royal Engineers in 1904, was a veteran of India and the First World War. He had won the Military Cross at Neuve Chapelle and later a DSO and six wartime mentions in despatches.

Transferring to the Royal Tank Corps, he became Director of Military Training before raising the 7th Armoured Division in Egypt in 1938-39. He was placed on retired pay in 1940 and became a corporal in the Home Guard.

In 1943, Hobart – affectionately known as Hobo – was tasked to collect all special assault equipment under his command. By the end of the campaign in North-West Europe, Fd Marshal Montgomery would record: "This division has been, and is, unique among all the divisions in the Allied armies."



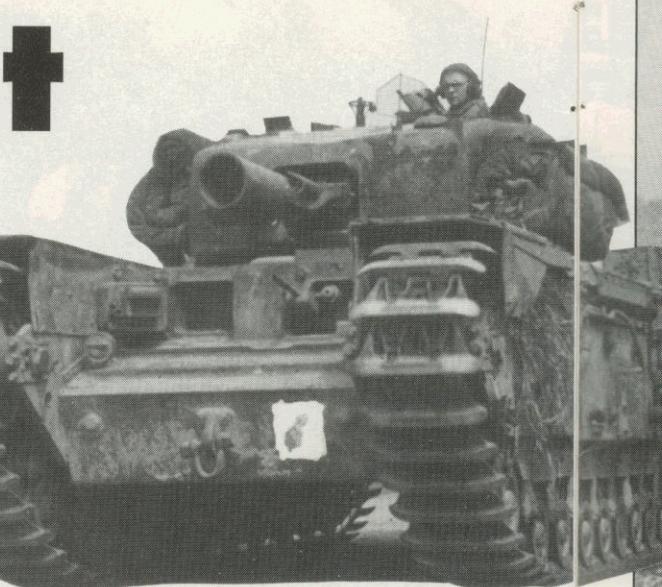
This photograph of an "Ark" bridge tank was not released until exactly one year after the original D-Day landings. In this trial, the Ark formed a ramp up which armoured vehicles were able to advance to scale obstacles such as sea walls

Because of the division's unique constitution and role, its story takes in every big operation in the crushing of Fortress Europe.

Over and over again it provided armour and special assault teams which penetrated powerful defensive positions. Its greatest undertaking was the invasion on D-Day, its next greatest the crossing of the Rhine. In between it was concerned in almost every important action, and the techniques which it deployed after intensive experiments all over the UK during 1943 and 1944 proved invincible.

Despite some spectacular failures such as the "Great Panjandrum", a Catherine wheel-like device for exploding minefields, the development of the division's secret weapons continued at various sites throughout Britain.

Specialised equipment selected for the landing included the CDL (a searchlight-mounted, one-gun Churchill or Grant



The Churchill AVRE mortar tank, for destroying heavy fortifications, was one of the division's star weapons

tank), the Crab (a flail mounted on a Sherman gun tank), the armoured bulldozer, Churchill AVREs carrying fascines, small box girder bridges, mine-deflecting ploughs, and the DD tank, an amphibious Sherman capable of navigating at sea.

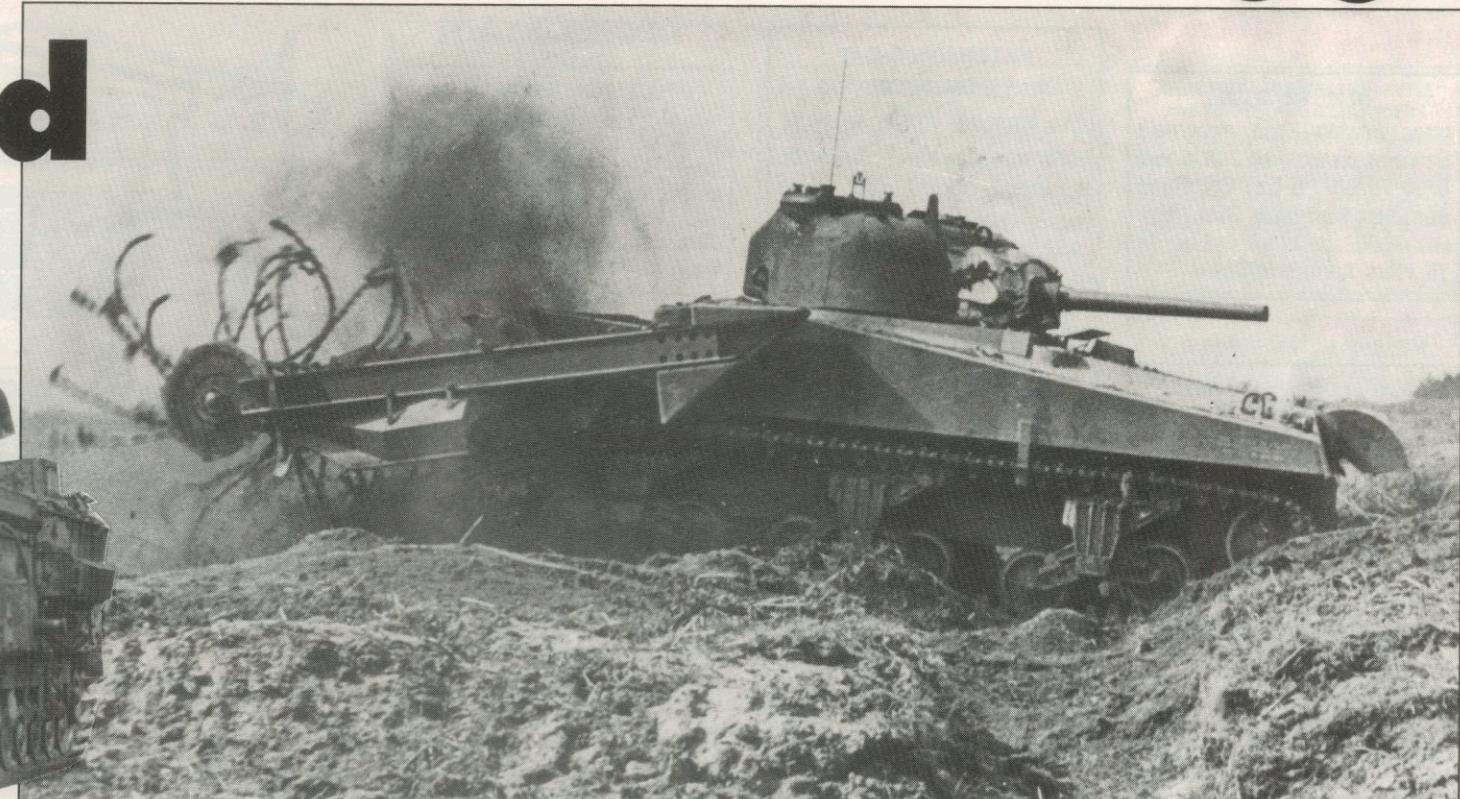
These devices – "Hobart's Funnies" – were all secret, and so well was the secret kept that not a single case was reported of DD tanks being welcomed by anti-tank fire before they landed.

The invading British Second Army consisted of three spearheads, the right flank being taken by 50 (Northumbrian) Division. For the initial landing in this sector, 79 Armoured Division supplied 12 teams, from B and C Squadrons, Westminster Dragoons and 81 and 82 Assault Squadrons, RE.

Despite the beach difficulties at Le Hamel and a sea which carried the craft too far east, and despite the onshore wind, which piled up the tide half-an-hour before schedule, by nightfall the teams with 231 Brigade had carried out their tasks and had rallied near Buhot.

The second group of assault teams were with 69 Brigade, just to the west of La Rivière, and conditions there were much the same. There were many individual deeds of valour. On the whole of this front, out of 12 attempted lanes, seven had succeeded by nightfall, providing four safe exits on one brigade front and three on the other, through which the assaulting infantry and armour, and later on the multitude of follow-up vehicles and men, could pour into Normandy.

The centre spearhead, handled by 3 Canadian Division, also brought two brigades up, on the right the 7th and on the left the 8th. The 7th landed



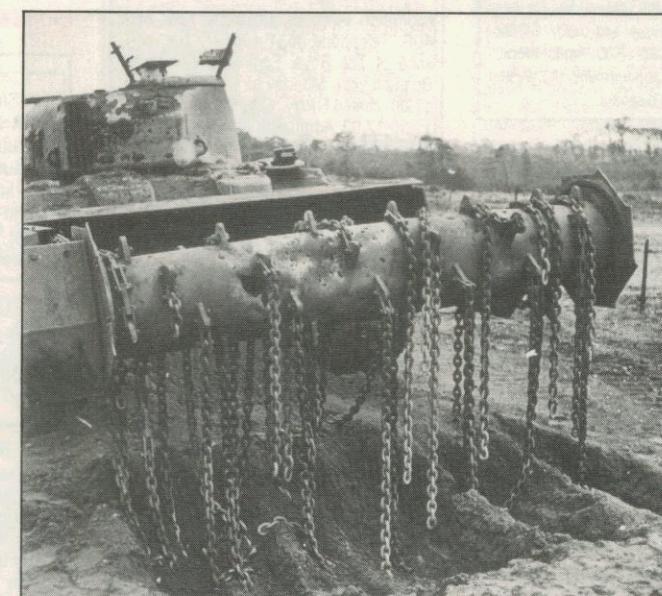
In July 1944, the first pictures were released of a new type of tank operating in Normandy. An official statement announced that it was known as a field tank and consisted of a tank chassis fitted with a special anti-mine device. This device projected forward of the tank with chains which whirled like a flail as the tank advanced, exploding mines in its path

at Courseulles-sur-Mer behind four assault teams from B Squadron, 22 Dragoons, Westminster Dragoons and 26 Assault Squadron, RE. The 8th came in behind four assault teams from B Squadron, 22 Dragoons and 80 Assault Squadron, RE. For this central spearhead 12 lanes were cleared.

The left spearhead was an assault by 3 British Division, one brigade up, on a front of two battalions, each preceded by a 79 Armoured Division assault group found from 22 Dragoons, Westminster Dragoons and 5 Assault Regiment, RE.

The Germans could hardly comprehend what had hit them. Giant flails on rollers, fitted to the front of some tanks, cleared minefields by exploding mines harmlessly in front of the vehicles. Petards – Armoured Vehicles Royal Engineers (AVRE) fitted with a 290mm short-barrelled mortar – lobbed a 40lb dustbin-sized mortar at close range to destroy blockhouses and gun emplacements. Crocodile tanks fitted with flame throwers, against which there was no defence, poured liquid fire into enemy positions.

Within a few hours it became clear that for the first time in history a seaborne assault had been achieved by armour preceding infantry – armour in such force



A closer view of the flail reveals holes ripped in its roller by shrapnel from exploding mines

that it had not only led the succeeding infantry on to its objectives, but actually overwhelmed enemy defences, already weakened by incessant aerial and naval bombardment.

The test of action had, by its results, proved the fundamental rightness of the policy adopted in regard to the specialised armour.

But the 79th Armoured Division's success was achieved not without loss. Twelve Crabs and 22 AVREs were knocked out during the fighting on June 6, and 169 men were killed or wounded.

Most of the beaches were open to traffic within a few hours of touching down. In their first action, men of 79 Armoured

Division had played a decisive part on every British beach.

During the next seven weeks life for the division consisted of a great number of small but important actions in the peninsula: the reduction of enemy strongholds and similar actions.

On Monday night, August 7-8, the breakthrough which smashed the Caen hinge began. 79 Assault Squadron, RE marked the route forward for the Canadians; Crabs silenced several 88mm guns. They followed immediately behind the leading armour on each sector and in most cases found themselves leading columns on to their objectives. Luckily they met no mines, and long before it was light enough for the enemy gunners to take aim, the armour had reached its objective some 6,000 yards forward.

The breakthrough was effected and the scene was set for victory in the Falaise Gap. Thereafter, until the defeat of Germany, the division was in the thick of the fighting.

It also took on many minor tasks, some unexpected, such as the torching of Belsen. There, Crocodile flame-throwing tanks were used in the concentration camp to burn infected grounds and huts with liquid flame.

The decision made in 1943 by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff to vest in one man the control and development of all specialist armoured devices had paid a handsome dividend.

In June 1945, the process of disbandment was started, but 79 Armoured Division had left its mark along the roads of Europe and on military history. Allies and enemies alike would never forget the division's "Bull's Head" sign.

BERKSHIRE

REME MUSEUM

Isaac Newton Road, Arborfield Garrison, Reading RG2 9LN. Tel: 0734 763567. **D-Day Exhibition from June 6 onwards.** Open Mon-Fri 09.00 to 12.30, 14.00 to 16.30hrs. Admission free.

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The Keep, Bodmin, Cornwall PL31 1EG. Telephone 0208 72810. Fine 19th century building immediately behind the Regiment's war memorial on the B3268 on edge of town. Open Monday-Friday 08.00-17.00, closed Bank Holidays.

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DORSET

THE KEEP MILITARY MUSEUM
The Keep, Bridport Road, Dorchester, Dorset DT1 1RN. Telephone 0305 264066. D-Day display includes 1 Dorset in first sea landings on Gold Beach. Open Easter until September 30, 09.30-17.00 Saturdays, closed 13.00-14.00. Admission Adults £1.50, children 75p.

ROYAL SIGNALS MUSEUM, Blandford Camp, Dorset DT11 8RH. Telephone 0258 482248. Open 10.00-17.00 Monday to Friday all year, weekends 10.00-16.30 June to September.

HAMPSHIRE

AIRBORNE FORCES MUSEUM

Browning Barracks, Aldershot, Hants. Telephone 0252 349619. The story of Airborne Forces from 1940 to the present day. Open Mon to Sun 10.00-16.30. Admission: Adults £2.00, Children and OAPs £1.00.

EXTENSIVE D-DAY EXHIBITION

at the AIRBORNE FORCES MUSEUM, Browning Barracks, Aldershot, Hampshire, from 7 April to 20 August. Open day Saturday 4 June. Open Monday-Saturday 10.00-17.00.

HERTFORDSHIRE

LETCHWORTH MUSEUM

Broadway, Letchworth, Herts SG6 3PF. Telephone 0462 685647. Curator Anna Mercer. Special exhibition 'D-Day and Beyond' May 28-July 30, 1994 - local memories of the second world war from D-Day to de-mob. Admission free. Open Monday-Saturday 10.00-17.00.

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ALDERSHOT MILITARY MUSEUM

Queen's Avenue, Aldershot, Hants GU11 2LG. Telephone 0252 314598. May 16-Oct 31, new temporary exhibition 'Aldershot & D-Day'. Open March-October 10.00-17.00, November-February 10.00-16.30.

D-DAY EXHIBITION

Mounted by Winchester's Military Museum, Peninsula Barracks, Winchester SO23 8TS. Tel: 0962 864176. D-Day exhibition open April 1 to September 30, Mon-Sat 10.00-16.30hrs, Sun 12.00-16.00hrs.

MUSEUMS open all year except for two weeks at Christmas. Admission to D-Day Exhibition: £1.00 per person, Family (4) concession £3.00.

RAMC HISTORICAL MUSEUM

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THE ROYAL HAMPSHIRE REGIMENT MUSEUM

Serle's House, Southgate Street, Winchester, Hants SO23 9EG. Telephone 0962 863658. Memorabilia of The Royal Hampshire Regiment from 1702-1992. Open Monday to Friday 10.00-12.30 and 14.00-16.00. April to October, Saturday, Sunday and Bank Holidays 12.00-16.00. Admission free.

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Peninsula Barracks, Romsey Road, Winchester, Hants SO23 8TS. Tableaux, Dioramas, shop and mail order. Open Bank Holiday Mons, Tues to Sat 10.00-17.00 hrs. FREE PARKING. Admission: Adults £1.50; children/senior citizens 75p.

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Catmose Street, Oakham, Rutland LE15 6HW. Telephone 0572 723654. Special gallery on the volunteer soldier in Leicestershire and Rutland. Open Mon to Sat 10.00-17.00, Sun (April-Oct) 14.00-17.00, (Nov-Mar) 14.00-16.00.

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ROYAL MILITARY POLICE MUSEUM

Roussillon Barracks, Broyle Road, Chichester, W Sussex PO19 4BN. Worldwide activities of the RMP from Tudor times to Bosnia. Open Tues to Fri, 10.30-16.30. Summer weekends 14.00-17.00. ADMISSION FREE



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Trinity Church Square, Richmond, N Yorkshire DL10 4QN. Telephone 0748 822133. Open: 1-28 Feb Mon to Fri 10.00-16.30; 1-31 Mar and 1-30 Nov Mon to Sat 10.00-16.30; 1 Apr-31 Oct Mon to Sat 09.30-16.30; Sun 14.00-16.30.

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REGIMENTAL MUSEUM THE ARGYLL AND SUTHERLAND HIGHLANDERS

The Castle, Stirling FK8 1EH. Telephone 0786 47165. Open Easter to September, Monday-Saturday 10.00-17.30, Sunday 11.00-16.30. October to Easter, Monday-Saturday 10.00-16.00. Admission to museum free but there is an admission charge to the Castle.

THE BLACK WATCH MUSEUM

Balhousie Castle, Hay Street, Perth PH1 5HR. Telephone 031-310 8530. Open Monday-Friday 10.00-16.30 (winter 15.30), Sunday and Public Holidays 14.00-16.30 (Easter to September only).

COMBINED OPERATIONS MUSEUM

Cherry Park, Inverary, Argyll PA32 8XE. Telephone 04995 218. OPEN: April/May/June/Sept/Oct 10.00 to 18.00 hrs (closed Friday), Sundays 13.00 to 18.00 hrs; July and August Mon to Sat 10.00 to 18.00 hrs, Sunday 13.00 to 18.00 hrs. Admission: Family £3.00. Adults £1.00. Senior citizens/children 80p.

QUEEN'S OWN HIGHLANDERS (Seaforth and Camerons) REGIMENTAL MUSEUM, Fort George, by Inverness IV1 2TD. Open April to September, Mon-Fri 10.00-18.00. Sun 14.00-18.00. October to March, Mon-Fri 10.00-16.00.

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The Barracks, Brecon, Powys LD3 7EB. Telephone 0874 613310. 300 years of history. Zulu wars. Large medal collection and armoury. Shop open April to September 09.00-17.00 Monday-Saturday; October to March Monday-Friday. Admission £1.00.

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MILITARY VEHICLE MUSEUM

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15th/18th THE KING'S ROYAL HUSSARS AND NORTHUMBERLAND HUSSARS

Fenham Barracks, Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 4NP. Telephone 091-239 3140/3141/3142. Open Monday to Friday 09.00-15.00. This museum will move in November 1994 to be a part of "Newcastle Discovery", Blandford House, Blandford Street, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4JA.

THE WAR ROOM

30 Park Parade, Harrogate, North Yorkshire HG1 5AG. Visitors by appointment - tel 0423 500704. Private collection of relics, uniforms, insignia, photographs and models, dedicated to all who served in the two world wars. Thematic exhibitions are mounted from time to time and of course the current main feature is Operation Overlord. One note of caution: access is not easy for disabled visitors, the War Room being located on a first floor.

WILTSHIRE

THE REGIMENTAL MUSEUM

THE DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S ROYAL REGIMENT (BERKSHIRE AND WILTSHIRE)

ROYAL REGIMENT OF FUSILIERS (Royal Warwickshire), St John's House, Warwick CV34 4NF. Telephone 0926 491653. History of the Regiment from 1674 to present day.

WORCESTERSHIRE

MUSEUM OF THE STAFFORDSHIRE REGIMENT

RHQ Staffords, Whittington Barracks, Lichfield, Staffs WS14 9PY. Telephone 021-311 3229. Open week days 09.00-16.00, closed Bank Holidays, Christmas and New Year.

SURREY

MUSEUM OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE REGIMENT

ROYAL ARMY CHAPLAIN'S DEPARTMENT, Bagshot Park, Bagshot, Surrey GU19 5PL. Telephone 0276 471717. Open Monday to Friday 10.00-12.00 and 14.00-16.00. By appointment. Closed August.

NEWHAVEN FORT

Fort Road, Newhaven, E Sussex BN9 9DL. Telephone 0273 517622. Restored Victorian fort holding a military and wartime collection and D-Day exhibition. Open daily until October 2, 10.30-18.00. Admission Adults £2.95, senior citizens £2.00, children £1.75.

MUSEUM OF THE WORCESTERSHIRE YEOMANRY CAVALRY

City Museum and Art Gallery, Foregate Street, Worcester WR1 1DT. Telephone 0905 25371. Worcestershire's Volunteer Cavalry Regiment from 1794 to 1957. Special D-Day and Normandy display. Open all year round Monday to Friday 09.00-17.00, May to Sept Sat and Sun 14.00-17.00. Admission £1.00.

If you require more information on any of the above museums please contact them direct on the telephone number in their advertisement

'Mad' Bill sounded note of defiance

ADDRESS a letter merely to "Bill Millin, Devon" and you can be confident that it will be delivered without too much trouble.

That is one legacy of an unforgettable incident on a French shore half a century ago which has marked his name indelibly on the collective memory of those who were there, and countless others all over the world who were not.

He is the man who, as Brig Lovat's personal piper, let the enemy know on D-Day that the British troops were defiant as they poured ashore on Sword beach. He played the bagpipes as he waded from the landing craft and continued to do so as, with gunfire all around, he marched up and down among the dead and wounded.

SOLDIER caught up with "Piper Bill", who is continually in demand at war-time anniversaries and commemorations, at the opening of new displays in Portsmouth's D-Day Museum.

"The image which stays in my mind," he said, "is of leaving the Hamble river and sailing through the flotilla of 21 landing craft and the invasion fleet of hundreds and hundreds of ships.

"I was in the bow of the leading group and I remember the troops throwing their hats in the air as we passed."

After a stormy Channel crossing, he and his fellow-soldiers landed at five in the morning on June 6.

It is not difficult to imagine the words of Brig Lord Lovat, commanding officer of 1st Special Service Brigade, ringing in his ears.

"You are going to lead the biggest invasion in the history of warfare," the brigadier had told him.

"Thanks very much," had been Bill's immediate thought, but, the sprightly septuagenarian told SOLDIER, although he could have refused, there was something in the way his chief put it that made him feel he had already volunteered...

So he found himself jumping off landing craft LCI (S) 519's right-hand ramp into the water, bagpipes aloft, following Brig Lovat, who had leapt off the left ramp, as he waded towards the distinctly unfriendly greeting which awaited the incoming troops.

"Once I could find my feet, I started to play *The Highland Laddie*, the regimental quick march of the Scots Guards, as I



One of the most famous images of D-Day. Bill Millin, pipes at the ready, prepares to follow Lord Lovat (on right of column of men) from the landing craft

went ashore. The brigadier had been involved with military training with the regiment, and it brought a smile to his face," recalls Bill Millin.

It was a bizarre experience, he agreed, to walk out of the water still playing, and to be confronted with the sight of wounded British soldiers lying where they had fallen.

"Quite a few of them asked where the medics were. I had no idea, but told them they were on their way."

With just a hint of sarcasm in his voice, the celebrated piper asked Brig Lovat what he should play next.

Back came the reply *The Road To The Isles*, and that is the composition which the assembled masses, including the occupants of a machine-gun emplacement at the top of the road, were regaled with as the former Highland Light Infantryman and Queen's Own Cameron Highlander marched up and down the exposed beach.

"At one stage, a large figure looked me up and down, then bellowed in my ear in

an angry voice: 'You mad bastard'. It was a commando sergeant," said Bill.

By the time he left the shore, the brigadier and the other commanders had moved on, and he had to catch up.

"Lovat was a good soldier and, being an aristocratic type, he just carried on and never ducked down, while I was crawling through ditches," Bill, who is president of the South Devon and Torbay branch of the Normandy Veterans' Association, explained.

On reaching the Orne bridge, he looked at the brigadier.

"We could see the airborne chaps at the other side of it. He said: 'Come on', so we both went over it, as I played, and made it safely."

"As soon as we were at the other side, a tall chap materialised and said to the brigadier: 'Very pleased to see you, old boy.' It was Lt Henry 'Tod' Sweeney of the airborne forces (now director general of the Battersea Dogs' Home)."

Lovat then apologised for being 2½ minutes late for the rendezvous!

Unlike his less fortunate CO, who was wounded by shellfire in France, Piper

● Turn to Page 61



Brig Lord Lovat

TO MARK THE 50th ANNIVERSARY OF OPERATION OVERLORD

THE ROYAL DOULTON D-DAY COMMEMORATIVE PLATE

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CHINA PLATE
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ORIGINAL
PAINTING BY
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FROM A PAINTING BY A GREAT ARTIST

At the centre of the plate is a reproduction of an original painting by Andrew Wheatcroft. It shows two of our most famous leaders: General Bernard Montgomery, C-in-C of the 21st Army Group; and Lt. General Crocker, commander of the British 1st Corps. Behind them landing craft disgorge their vehicles and Royal Marine Commandos; while above, barrage balloons keep German fighters from flying low over the beachhead. The border consists of Montgomery's Arms (at 12 o'clock); the Badge of the Royal Tank Regiment (at 9 o'clock); the Badge of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment (at 3 o'clock); Monty's famous beret (at 6 o'clock); and various military designs and motifs.

6th JUNE 1944



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If I had turned the brigadier down, I might have ended up in the cookhouse

• From Page 58

Millin went through the North African and Sicily campaigns, as well as Normandy and Germany, unscathed.

"I was very lucky, Normandy was likened to Stalingrad in terms of loss of German and Allied lives. I stayed in France from June 6 to September 6, and it was horrific.

"People on opposing sides were so close that you could hear them speaking – and, after a while, you could even distinguish who was about to fire by the sound of the bomb going down the barrel of the mortar."

Earlier this year, a mystery was solved for Bill.

As a result of a newspaper article about him, a coxswain who had taken part in the D-Day landings wrote from Carlisle and told him he had a box belonging to Bill which the piper had left on his landing craft.

"It contained, among other things, my practice chanter: I told him that, having kept it for 50 years, he might as well hold on to it!"

He had asked the sailor how the craft had fared after the troops had waded ashore.

"He told me that the boats were getting knocked out one after the other by heavy gunfire. They were petrol-driven and very thin-skinned. At one stage, they had to pull one that was on fire off the beach."

Bill, a retired psychiatric nurse who lives in Dawlish, still keeps his lungs in trim and is constantly practising.

He will be at his best when he pipes for ten minutes at a tribute at the Eisenhower Archives in Kansas attended by the sons of three famous fathers – Churchill,



Bill Millin in front of the Portsmouth D-Day Museum embroidery in which he features

Montgomery and Rommel. It goes without saying that he will be returning to Normandy for the D-Day commemorations.

"Just think," he said, "if I had turned the brigadier down, I might have ended up in the cookhouse – and then I would have missed out on the most memorable experience of my life."

Piper Bill's exploits are already assured of a permanent place in history, not least in his likeness, captured (pipes and all) in the D-Day embroidery in the museum in Portsmouth.

As the Queen Mother said to him when she saw the embroidery a few years ago: "They will still be talking about you in a thousand years' time . . ."



Troop Sgt Chris Clancy,
67 Anti-Tank Battery,
20th Anti-Tank Regt RA

I HAD to land immediately behind the assault infantry and carry out a reconnaissance of the brigade area for anti-tank purposes. One troop of self-propelled M10s had landed immediately behind the infantry and the remaining eight guns would be going ashore as soon as possible after midday.

I stepped into three feet of water on Queen Red beach. The area was under intense shell and small arms fire, with casualties drowning and floundering around.

Dead ahead was a low beach wall at La Brèche. Fortunately my inelegant scramble exposed a Tellermine (a booby-trapped anti-tank mine) linked to several others. I gingerly pushed the sand back to further expose the trap and got out on to the lateral road in front of

MY D-DAY MEMORIES

strong-point Cod, which was under assault by the East Yorks.

I hared off to catch up with the South Lancs entering Hermanville. There was a deal of sniping by a scattered enemy. My reconnaissance took me south to the open country near Mathieu and then back seawards to Colleville.

In a wooded clearing not far away I came across a railway wagon surrounded by dozens of Tellermines and other booby traps in various stages of assembly in what was obviously a workshop. As Wellington said: "A close run thing".

From an anti-tank point of view the fields with barbed wire aprons and festooned with "Achtung Minen" signs raised doubts. Which were *ruses de guerre*?

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THE CAMERAMAN'S STORY

He scooped the world

'Strewn in our wake as we crossed the Channel was an endless line of abandoned packing cases and discarded rations'

FIFTY years ago cine-cameraman Sgt Desmond O'Neill was wounded as he filmed British troops fighting their way off Sword beach. Evacuated that night to England, his pictures were immediately released to the newspapers – the first to show the British Army in action on D-Day.

Today, Desmond, a very active 71-year-old, is one of Britain's leading society photographers. His work appears regularly in the pages of *The Tatler* and *Hello!* magazine.

After recovering from his D-Day wounds Sgt O'Neill was posted to the embryonic SOLDIER at Eaton Square, London, serving as one of this magazine's founder photographers until 1951.

Now living in Surrey, Desmond recalls the events of June 6, 1944 with great clarity.

As a teenager he had stood in a burning street at the height of the Manchester

blitz, feeling no fear. Then 18 years old, he had taken a detached view through the viewfinder of a large plate camera as he captured images of towering cotton warehouses set ablaze by German incendiary bombs.

Three years later, on a beach in Normandy, he discovered what it really felt like to fear for his life.

By then, Sgt O'Neill, of the Lancashire Fusiliers, was one of six stills and cine-cameramen of No 5 Army Film and Photographic Unit (AFPU) selected to land with the 3rd Division on Sword beach. He went ashore with the South Lancashire Regiment.

His AFPU link man, Capt Derrick Knight, was confident of success. O'Neill asked how he would get his film back and was told to be on the steps of Caen Town Hall on the evening of D-Day. From there, the film would be taken to a nearby airstrip from where a Spitfire would fly it back to England.

O'Neill would have missed his City Hall rendezvous anyway. Caen did not fall until July 9.

His sea journey to Normandy proved uneventful, although many of the soldiers on board the landing ship believed they were about to face the very worst the German Army could throw at them.

Most of the craft carried large packing cases filled with 40 days of rations, chocolate and cigarettes. En route, troops broke open the ration packs and stole the cigarettes and chocolates, heaving what was left over the side.

"Strewn in our wake as we crossed the Channel was an endless line of abandoned packing cases and discarded rations," recalls Desmond O'Neill.

"As we nosed in to the beach, a grey mist hung over the landing area. I filmed a knocked-out tank still burning and a landing craft on my left which had been hit and was ablaze."

"The ramp dropped and our vehicles trundled out on to the beach. I jumped down and started filming troops running past. The second wave had come in and the barrels of anti-aircraft guns pointed skyward."

"I was carrying a revolver and a 35mm Vinton cine-camera. In a rucksack on my back, I carried 1,000ft of film in cans."



Society photographer Desmond O'Neill on assignment

"Our path through the seawall exit was blocked by a disabled flail tank. Its dead commander hung out of the turret. It was too dicey going past the tank because we were being fired on, so I cut along the beach, filming as I went."

In company with an Intelligence Corps sergeant, O'Neill sheltered near a blockhouse, looking for a way to reach the scene of heavy fighting further on.

"All of a sudden, I felt a pain in my elbow, looked down and saw blood. I turned to my companion, but he lay dead on the sand."

"I went in to the blockhouse. It was like Dante's Inferno – full of severely wounded soldiers. I asked a medic whether he could do anything for me. He ripped up my sleeve and slapped a field dressing on the wound, telling me to get myself back to England."

"I staggered out and met an artillery captain who had been shot through the shoulder. We went down to the beach where some small landing craft were coming in. I shouted to one of them, 'Can you take us back? We've been told to evacuate', but this young naval sub lieutenant said he had strict orders not to take anyone back to England."

"We trudged further along the beach to

a field dressing station in a tile factory. As we got there, a plane flew towards us. Someone said, 'Oh look. It's a Spitfire.' I shouted, 'Don't be a bloody fool. It's a Messerschmitt.' With that, the aircraft started machine-gunning the beach. Two men carrying a stretcher dumped it and ran like hell. An RAMC officer saw them and threatened to shoot the two stretcher bearers."

Sgt O'Neill and other wounded soldiers were taken off the beach to a waiting ship in a DUKW amphibious vehicle. He was admitted to St Margaret's Hospital, Epping, the next morning, still clutching his camera and film, and telephoned AFPU headquarters.

"My unit was furious when I told them I was in England. They said I should be in France. I said I had been wounded. There was an embarrassed silence at the other end of the phone. Someone drove down from London to collect my film and it was quickly released to the Press."

"My pictures were the very first to show the British Army in action on the D-Day beaches."

There was an awful row at the War Office because next to nothing in the way of film or photographs was getting back from O'Neill's colleagues.

Jimmy Mapham took what is probably the best remembered image of D-Day... a straggle of troops, some advancing with shock registered on their faces, the wounded being assisted, and the dying beyond. Billy Greenhalgh was wounded

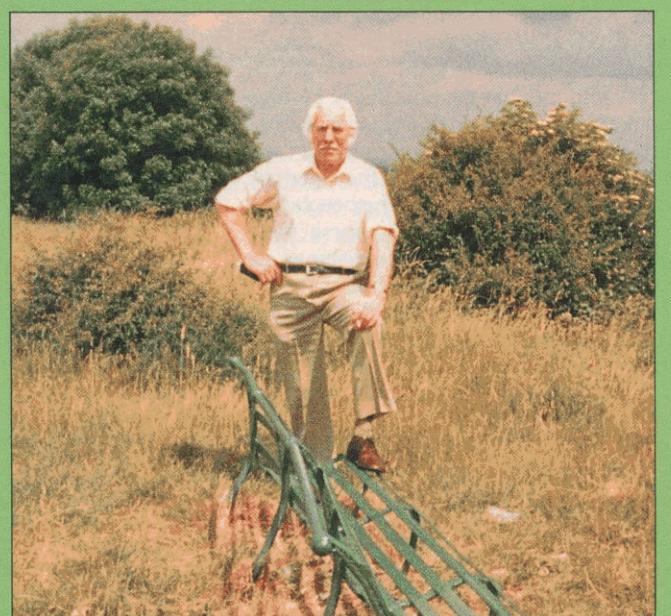
on the beach and Norman Clague was killed when a mortar round went through the roof of a farmhouse in which he was sheltering. George Law's camera broke and he escorted a party of German prisoners back to England before returning to AFPU headquarters at Pinewood Studios, where he picked up another camera and eventually made his way back to Normandy.

Len Grant landed with commandos at Oustreham where they were heavily engaged by the enemy. He later filmed Lovat's piper, Bill Millin, leading the march to Pegasus Bridge.

Desmond O'Neill says the American combat camera units were better organised and had special boats waiting on the landing beaches to rush their film back.

"As a result, they swamped the world with their photos. We could provide little. It was, perhaps, fortunate that I was shot and brought film back with me."

MY D-DAY MEMORIES



Alfred Sewell on the site of the gun he manned on D-Day

Gnr Alfred Sewell,
124 Light AA Regiment RA,
Lewes, Sussex

CAMPED in tents on Lewes racecourse. Guns and vehicles waterproofed to go on D+8. Suddenly a flying bomb came up the course at 0100 hours, just missing the Tote Board.

Guns and vehicles hastily

degreased and deployed in surrounding area. Mine at foot of road leading to race track. We were on guns at dawn on June 6, watching huge fleets of planes and gliders bound for France.

We were warned to expect dive bombers, rockets and God knows what. We prayed for the boys going over. Overlord had begun.



Sgt O'Neill

Those who remained . . .

This article was prepared by the Royal British Legion Pilgrimage Department, which organizes visits to Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries in Normandy and all over the world

THE BATTLE of Normandy ended with the complete defeat, but not the complete destruction, of the German forces. It cost the lives of some 25,000 Commonwealth Servicemen and women.

They are buried in 18 Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) cemeteries in the Calvados. All were designed by Philip Hepworth, although the designs for the Cross of Sacrifice and the Stone of Remembrance are the original ones created after the First World War by Reginald Blomfield and Edwin Lutyens.

The headstones are the same traditional design, bearing not only the name, rank and date of death of each individual, but also the badge of the service or regiment.

Old soldiers know that in nearly every case, the unit becomes a sort of surrogate family for a youngster leaving home, often for the first time, and the badge on the headstone reflects this.

At the foot of each headstone will usually be found an epitaph – chosen by the family – making each one individual and unique.

Commemorative services are being held on June 6 at the six war cemeteries nearest the landing beaches: Bayeux, Ryes, Bény-sur-Mer (Canadian arrangements), La Délivrande, Hermanville and Ranville.

The 18 war cemeteries in the Calvados are at:

● **Banneville-la-Campagne**, 8km east of Caen.

● **Bayeux**, the largest CWGC Second World War cemetery in France, on the peripheral boulevard south of the city. Bayeux was the first French city to be liberated; the German 915 Division withdrew without a fight.

● **Bény-sur-Mer** (Canadian), 5km south of Juno beach, where the 3rd Canadian Division landed.

● **Bretteville-sur-Laize** (Canadian), south of Caen on the Falaise Road.

● **Brouay**, just south of the Bayeux-Caen main road and half way between the two.

● **Cambes-en-Plaine**, 6km north of Caen.

● **La Délivrande** (Douvres), 8km south of Juno beach.

● **Fontenay-le-Pesnel**, 16km west of Caen on the road to Caumont. Near this cemetery is a memorial to the 49th Division.

● **Hermanville**, just south of Sword beach.

● **Hottot-les-Bagues**, 13km south of Bayeux. There is a memorial to The



The Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery at Bayeux. It is the Commission's largest Second World War cemetery in France

Dorset Regiment in the town square.

● **Jerusalem** (Chouain), the smallest war cemetery in Normandy, 8km south of Bayeux. It contains only 47 graves, including two padres buried side by side.

● **Ranville**, the Airborne cemetery, 9km north-east of Caen. Some of the earliest graves of the airborne operation lie just behind the perimeter wall of the neighbouring churchyard.

● **Ryes** (Bazenville), 8km north-east of Bayeux, lying just south of Arromanches.

War cemeteries of other nations in the Calvados are:

● The Normandy American cemetery at **St Laurent-sur-Mer**, overlooking Omaha Beach, where 9,000 are buried. (Another 14,000 dead were repatriated to America.) Three recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honour lie in this cemetery.

● **St Charles de Percy**, the most southern of the war cemeteries in Normandy, 40km south-west of Caen.

● **St Désir**, 4km west of the cathedral city of Lisieux.

● **St Manvieu**, 9km west of Caen.

● **Sequeville-en-Bessin**, 2km north of the Bayeux-Caen main road and half way between the two.

● **Tilly-sur-Seulles**, 12km south of Bayeux. Tilly fell into Allied hands on June 19, after a tremendous tank and street battle between Erskine's 7th Armoured Division and the Panzer Lehr.

Those who have no known grave are com-

memorated by name on the Bayeux Memorial opposite the war cemetery.

The connection with the Conqueror is recalled by the Latin inscription on the frieze of the memorial:

*"NOS A GULIELMO VICTI VICTORIS
PATRIAM LIBERAVIMUS"*

("We, once conquered by William, have set free the Conqueror's native Land")

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● The Normandy American cemetery at **St Laurent-sur-Mer**, overlooking Omaha Beach, where 9,000 are buried. (Another 14,000 dead were repatriated to America.) Three recipients of the Congressional Medal of Honour lie in this cemetery.

● The Polish cemetery at **Langannerie**, 18km south of Caen on the N158 road to Falaise (650 burials).

● The German cemeteries, at **La Cambe**, 23km west of Bayeux on the N13 road to Caen, and at **St Désir** 4km west of Lisieux, practically adjoining the Commonwealth War Cemetery. About 25,000 are buried in these two sites, and another 50,000 in Normandy, but outside

the Calvados. Most of the Commonwealth War Cemeteries also contain German graves. In fact, one in ten is German, and they are looked after with the same care as the Allied graves.

The Pilgrimage Department of the Royal British Legion is taking 400 people in organised groups to Normandy for the 50th anniversary commemoration. Each one has been asked to choose which war cemetery he or she wishes to attend for the commemorative service.

They will be given an optional visit to Arromanches (site of the Mulberry artificial harbour), while those who have relations or comrades buried elsewhere in the Calvados will have the opportunity of a visit to the graves.

The intention is for all the commemorative services to be simultaneous, so that the principal act of Commonwealth homage is carried out at the same moment.

There are many interesting places and landmarks of the Normandy operations to visit.

Ouistreham (from the Saxon "West Ham") at the eastern end of the landings

and the end of Sword beach, defined by the Orne River. Near here is a small museum commemorating the action of 4 Commando: 1st Special Service Brigade, under Lord Lovat, had the task of landing immediately behind the assault forces and then clearing a route inland to Pegasus Bridge.

The men of 4 Commando and two troops of Free French Commandos under Kieffer were part of the brigade, and landed at 0820 about 2km west of Ouistreham.

Lion-sur-Mer, landing beach of 41 (Royal Marines) Commandos in the centre of Sword Beach.

Courseulles, centre of Juno beach. It was here that Gen de Gaulle landed on June 14 en route to Bayeux, an event for which the town was awarded the Croix de Guerre. The 7th Canadian Brigade, led by the Royal Winnipeg Rifles, the Regina Rifles and 1 Canadian Hussars, went ashore here, helped by DD tanks and other "funnies" of 26 Assault Squadron, Royal Engineers, and cleared Courseulles by 1000 hours.

In the days following, the small port of Courseulles played a vital role in helping the Mulberry harbour at Arromanches to maintain the flow of supplies which the advancing armies so desperately needed.

Graye Crossroads tank. The tank is a Churchill AVRE (Armoured Vehicle Royal Engineers) of 26 Assault Squadron. It had been used as a road bridge on the main exit from Mike sector during the invasion (although full of explosives). It was recovered in 1976 in the presence of Bill Dunn, the original driver.

Tierceville's Statue of Eros.

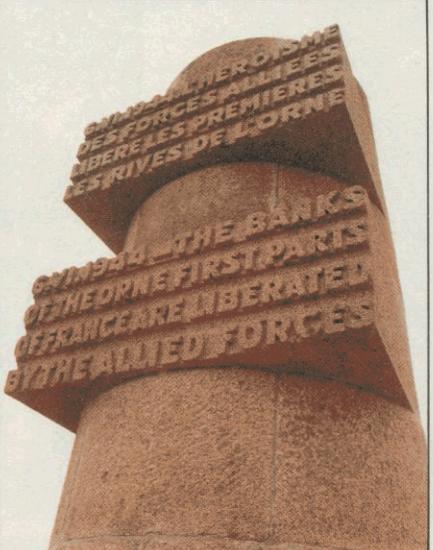
This amateur copy of the famous statue was erected by 179 Field Company, RE, on August 23, 1944, and restored by Resistance veterans in 1971.

Creully.

It was at Creullet Chateau that Gen Montgomery parked his caravan and set up his Tactical HQ. He met Winston Churchill and Field Marshal Smuts in the drawing room of Creullet Chateau on June 12, and King George VI on June 16. Between the chateau and the little town of Creully is the memorial to the 4/7th Dragoon Guards (unveiled by the Duchess of Kent in June 1992).

The tomb of William the Conqueror is in the Abbé des Hommes.

Ducy - Ste Marguerite, just south of the Bayeux-Caen road, about half way between the two. There is a memorial here to the Black Watch, Tyneside Scottish, June-July 1944.



This memorial to the Allied Forces stands on the banks of the Orne

began, just before sunrise, the Longues battery replied.

Its first salvo straddled HMS *Bulolo* carrying the HQ of the British 30 Corps. HMS *Ajax* immediately brought her own 6-in guns into action and, at a range of some 12km, fired 114 rounds at Longues. Three guns were destroyed but the fourth gun recommenced firing until the garrison surrendered.

Pointe du Hoc. The task of taking this clifftop position was given to the US 2 and 5 Ranger Battalions, who rehearsed cliff-scaling with commando instructors at Swanage. A promising technique was the fitting of firemen's extending ladders to DUKWs, and two of the British-manned assault craft that set off from Force O at 0430 on June 6 had the ladders.

In 1960, a dramatic granite monument was erected to commemorate the Rangers. The area remains as it was after the invasion, complete with bunkers,

dugouts and shell holes. Many soldiers, American and German, lie buried here. In the parish church of Cricqueville-en-Bessin, 3km inland, there is a plaque commemorating the soldiers who fell in 1944.

Caen. A plaque to the first Canadian soldier (Hill) killed in Caen is mounted on the wall of the Préfecture Garden in the Boulevard Bertrand. The Monument to the Déportés is in the Place de la Resistance (French patriots deported by Germans and Vichy French during the occupation).

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Madame Arlette Gondrée-Pritchett pictured inside the Pegasus Bridge Café Gondrée, the first building liberated by Maj John Howard and his glider-borne soldiers of the Ox and Bucks Light Infantry. She remembers her father greeting them with champagne hidden from the Germans. Below: High and dry – the war-time Pegasus Bridge, now replaced by a wider version. The old bridge will be preserved in France at a location to be determined.



HOW OBSERVANT ARE YOU?

Exclusively for this double issue, we have doubled the first prize in this popular competition to £100 and introduced two runners-up prizes of £25 each.

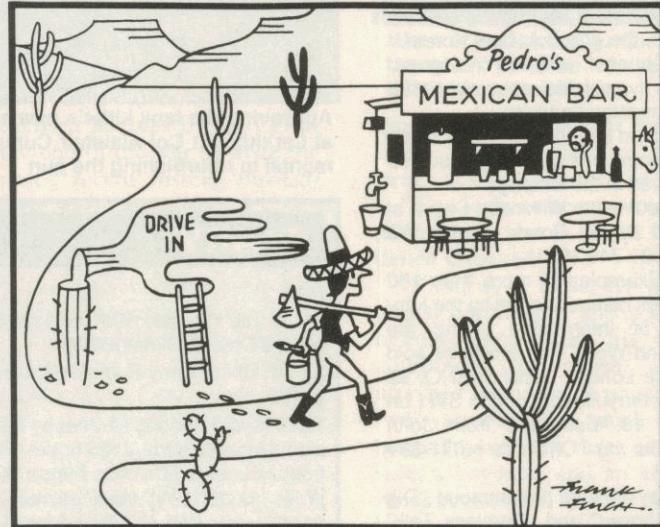
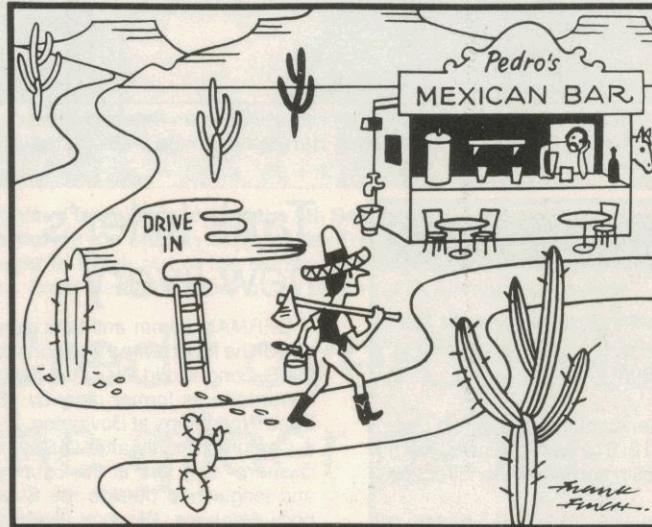
The pictures here are from our Frank Finch cartoon archives. Find ten differences in detail and you could win one of our cash prizes. Just circle the differences in the right-hand picture, cut out the whole panel, add your name and address and send to HOAY 588, SOLDIER, Ordnance Road, Aldershot

COMPETITION 588

GU11 2DU by July 1. Do not include anything else in your envelope. More than one entry can be submitted and on this occasion photocopies will be accepted if you do not wish to spoil this D-Day issue. The first correct entries drawn will be the winners. No correspondence of any kind can be entered into.

The names of the winner of the £100 first prize and two runners-up will be announced in the July 25 issue.

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Name: (Give rank or title)

Address:

Competition No 585: Congratulations to A J Treadway, Army Careers Office, London WC2, who wins £50. Book prizes go to runners-up SSgt Dick Kalinski, 1 Regt AAC, BFPO 47, and Mr Tony Tracey, of Aldershot.

SEARCHLINE

● Information about John Rhodes, an RAMC captain who was billeted at a public school in Douvres la Délivrande, Normandy, between June 15-August 25, 1944, is sought by teachers M and Mme Elie and Denise Fargiet. Replies to E G Taylor, 40 Hazelholme Drive, Bedhampton, Havant, Hants PO9 3DW (tel: 0705 790152).

● Ronald Joseph Sparkes RE (1861511), who was based at Ross Barracks, Shorncliffe, Folkestone, 1930-40. His daughter Marina, adopted 1941 following death of her mother in 1941, would like to have news of him. Replies to Mr R W Milward, 46 Tangier Road, Richmond, Surrey TW1D 5DW.

● Singapore Swimming Club: The club celebrates its centenary in November and wishes to trace ex-members, particularly from the period just before and just after the Japanese occupation. Replies to Maurice Sheares, Katong PO Box 50, Singapore 9143 (tel: 3452122, fax: 3444476).

● Band of PWO: Past and present invited to farewell parade and all ranks barbecue, July 9-10. Details from Band Office, 1 PWO, Belfast Barracks, BFPO 36 (tel: Germany 541 960 5517). Ex-members Noel Brickett, Stephen Dean, Dave Fretwell, Nigel Hartill, Phillip Penny, Kevin Tempest and Bill Wright are asked to make contact.

● Malta 1953-55: Robert "Nobby" Acres, whose wife was called Renata, please contact Charlie Don's daughter, Alex Don, on 081-509 0827.

● 18 Regt RA (1964-70): David J Padgett, 36 Princess Ave, Wellington, Telford, Shropshire TF1 2LJ (tel: 0952 416089), wishes to hear from former colleagues with a view to arranging a reunion.

● Peggy Trotton: Miss D Richards (35 Hollinghurst Road, Radcliffe, Manchester M26 1JN) wishes to contact school friend Peggy Trotton who trained at Ratcliffe College of Further Education and married after joining the Army in 1975-6.

PILGRIMAGES

● 51st Highland Division (Holland 1994) veterans who wish to join a pilgrimage led by Gen Sir Derek Lang to Holland from Oct 21-31 are asked to write to him at PO Box 3, Musselburgh EH21 7LE. Ceremonies may be led by Pipes and Drums of a Scottish regiment and include the erection of a Highland Division memorial.

● 52 Light Infantry (Rhine crossings): A four-day pilgrimage is planned for March 1995 to the field of battle near Hamminkeln, Germany. Survivors and their families are asked to contact Howard Wright, Chasestone, 11 Paddock Drive, Dorridge, nr Solihull, W Midlands B93 8BZ (tel: 0564 773478).

SOLDIER to Soldier

Sword of destiny

WILKINSON Sword has produced a special commemorative piece to mark the 50th anniversary of D-Day. It costs £399.

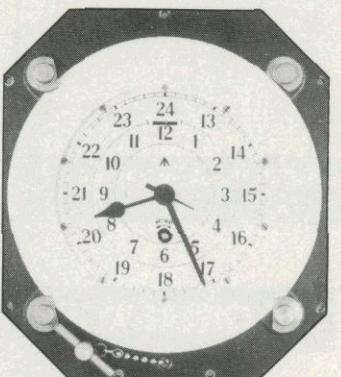
Based on a traditional Crusader sword, its pommel carries the enamelled badge of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, the grip is in blue to depict the Channel, and the crossguard holds five shields representing the five invasion beaches.

Etched into the 34in steel blade are the names of the 12 countries involved in the landings.

Enquiries to Wilkinson Sword at 19-21 Brunel Road, London W3 (tel: 081-749 1061).

● Examples of more than 100 posters commissioned by the Ministry of Information during the Second World War are to be sold at The London Scottish RHQ, 95 Horseferry Road, London SW1 on June 10. Estimates from John Jenkins at Onslow's (071-384 2682).

They include the famous "Dig For Victory" and "Careless Talk" series.



Case to solve

MILITARY horologist John Mitchell has sent an appeal to SOLDIER readers to see if they can shed any light on this clock and its use.

The case is missing, but clues suggest the timepiece might be part of field communications, possibly artillery, equipment.

Manufactured by Smiths Industries in the late 1950s or early 1960s, the case carries the part number 6645-99-445-4742, a reference number QSSC 100 and the numbers KA/19735 and 595 SCW.

Anyone with time on their hands to investigate?



Approving the tank killer's new suit are Col Robert Waight, Lt Col Hans Hesse (German liaison officer at Larkhill), Lt Col Alastair Cumming and (rear) Daryl Brown and Jack Hargreaves, who were instrumental in refurbishing the gun

DIARY

MAY

21: Monte Cassino 50th anniversary remembrance service, St Margaret's Church, Westminster.

21-23: Rhine Army Summer Show, Paderborn.

JUNE

1-2: Floodlit Beating Retreat by Massed Bands of the Household Division, Horse Guards, 2130 hours. Tickets £12, £10 and £3 (unreserved) from Household Division Funds Office, Wellington Barracks, Birdcage Walk, London SW1 (enclose sae).

11: Queen's Birthday Parade on Horse Guards, Colour trooped by 2 Gren Gds.

17: AGC Corps Day, Worthy Down (ticket details on 0962 887254/887427 or Winchester Mil 2254/2427).

26: Colchester Garrison Country Day, Fingringhoe Ranges, 1000-1600.

JULY

2: Cavalry Barracks, Hounslow, open day with 1 Kings (081-818 6527/Mil 764 5527).

11-22: Guild of Aviation Artists annual exhibition, The Carisbrooke Gallery, 63 Seymour Street (behind Marble Arch), London W1. Entry forms and schedules from the Guild of Aviation Artists, The Bondway Business Centre, 71 Bondway, London SW8 1SQ.

16-23: Nijmegen Marches, the Netherlands.

19-30: Royal Tournament, Earls Court (tickets available from box office on 071-373 8141).

● To include public events in this diary contact the Editor.



The strip of D-Day stamps issued to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the landings

Normandy landings immortalised on stamps

A SET OF five 25p Royal Mail stamps, featuring archive photographs from the Imperial War Museum of British Servicemen taking part in the D-Day landings, goes on sale at Post Offices nationwide on June 6. The stamps, designed to re-create the front page layout style of *Picture Post* magazine, use the photographs in time sequence of the events on the day.

These include infantry re-grouping on Sword beach, troops advancing inland at Oostreham, and commandos on Gold beach. Further details are available from Royal Mail, tel 071-320 7443.

Fiery farewell to BAOR commander

A MUSICAL tattoo, complete with burning torches – a traditional German military honour only accorded in exceptional circumstances to officers of the rank of general or above – was laid on as a formal goodbye to Gen Sir Charles Guthrie, last Commander-in-Chief BAOR, on his departure to take up his appointment as Chief of the General Staff in London.

About 600 German soldiers, sailors and airmen, a large band and numerous dignitaries attended the event.

The farewell ceremony was led by Lt Gen Hartmut Bagger, Chief of the German General Staff.

Malta plea to Services

THE GEORGE Cross Island Association, which has some 4,000 members across the world, wants to hear from anyone who has served in Malta.

The association's aims are mainly to foster the Service spirit and to reunite the people of Malta with all who have served there.

Further details from F Rixon, 10 Nepaul Road, Tidworth, Hants SP9 7EU.

Contingent for Chios

IN SEPTEMBER 1944, British Forces were involved in the libera-

tion of the Aegean island of Chios. Greek campaign veteran Ron Yates is organising as large a contingent as possible to visit Chios in September "to show solidarity with our war-time allies, the former Greek Forces, partisans and people of the Aegean.

"I can only hope that the numbers making this combined pilgrimage and family holiday will show our Greek friends that we do care and remember their hardships and sacrifices endured from 1941 to 1944 under Nazis and Fascist occupation," Mr Yates says.

Veterans can contact him at 100 Longridge Road, Ribbleton, Preston, Lancs PR2 6RL (tel: 0772 791898).

D-DAY DIARY

MAY

25: 50th anniversary of Review of the Fleet, Portland Harbour.

27: Hampshire Remembers D-Day, Royal Victoria Country Park, Netley, near Southampton (0703 285831).

28-30: Military Vehicle Trust 50th anniversary commemoration rally, Southsea Common, Portsmouth. (Details: 0489 572582).

JUNE

2: Parade of veterans, bands and vehicles, Weymouth (0929 426310).

3: D-Day Tattoo, Bath and West Showground, Shepton Mallet (ticket hotline 0749 823270).

4: Southwick House garden party, HMS Dryad, near Portsmouth; Beating Retreat, Portsmouth; Portsmouth Guildhall dinner.

5: Drumhead Service, Southsea Common, Portsmouth. Veterans welcome.

Flotilla departs Portsmouth for Normandy, led by Royal Yacht. Parachute drop near site of Pegasus Bridge and unveiling of bust of Gen Sir Richard Gale.

Service of commemoration, Hermanville military ceremony, Normandy.

6: National services of commemoration in Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemeteries at Bayeux, Douvres la Délivrande, Hermanville, Ranville and Ryes.

International service, Omaha Beach, led by President Mitterrand. Arromanches march and fly-past.

25: 50th anniversary reunion festival, Royal Albert Hall.

26: 50th anniversary parade on Horse Guards, followed by service at Cenotaph.

MILITARIA

● History of the Kenley area, south of Croydon, is being researched by the Bourne Society, which wishes to trace Royal Artillery and Tank Corps personnel stationed there during the war. Replies to C Burgess, 110 Hayes Lane, Kenley, Surrey CR8 5HR.

● Author compiling history of Challenger 1 main battle tank wishes to correspond with readers who have served in the tank, particularly in action in the Gulf, and including Challenger CRARRVs. Replies to Simon Dunstan, 37 St Dunstan's Avenue, London W3 6QD (tel: 081-992 9823).

● Author Terry Davis is writing a book on the village of Arne, Dorset and wishes to hear from anyone who was stationed there during the Second World War. Replies to 2 The Oaks, Kitlings Lane, Stafford ST17 0LE.

CLOSURES

● 12 RSME Regiment will be amalgamating with Depot Regiment in September. Anyone who has donated items which they would like returned should contact Mrs Sheila Young on 0634 822601 by September 30. Unclaimed pieces will be donated to the new 1 RSME Regiment.

EX3 OPQ (tel: 0392 874596).

1995

● ATS Dinner Club: Reunion in Buxton, Derbyshire, June 1995. Applications by June 30 to Mrs Joy Balmain, 57 Greenbank Road, Preston, Merseyside L42 7JJ. Enclose sae.

APPOINTMENTS

Brigadiers – A S H Irwin – To MoD, May 3; A C I Gadsby – To be Comdt RAC Centre, May 2.

Colonels – C A Den-McKay – To be Comdt Sch of Logistics, May 3; D H A Shepherd – To RCB, May 3; M A Ponikowski – To be DA/MA Bogota, May 7.

Lt Cols – A P Harris RE – To be CO Southampton Univ OTC, May

3; A M Mackenzie RE – To be MA Stockholm, May 2; M P Stallard APTC – To be Comdt ASPT and Dep APTC, May 2; G A Hazlewood RLC – To be CO 6 Supply Regt RLC, May 2; A D Hutchison, Gren Gds – To MoD, May 2.

RETIREMENTS

Brigadier – P W Symes, late RAOC, May 6.

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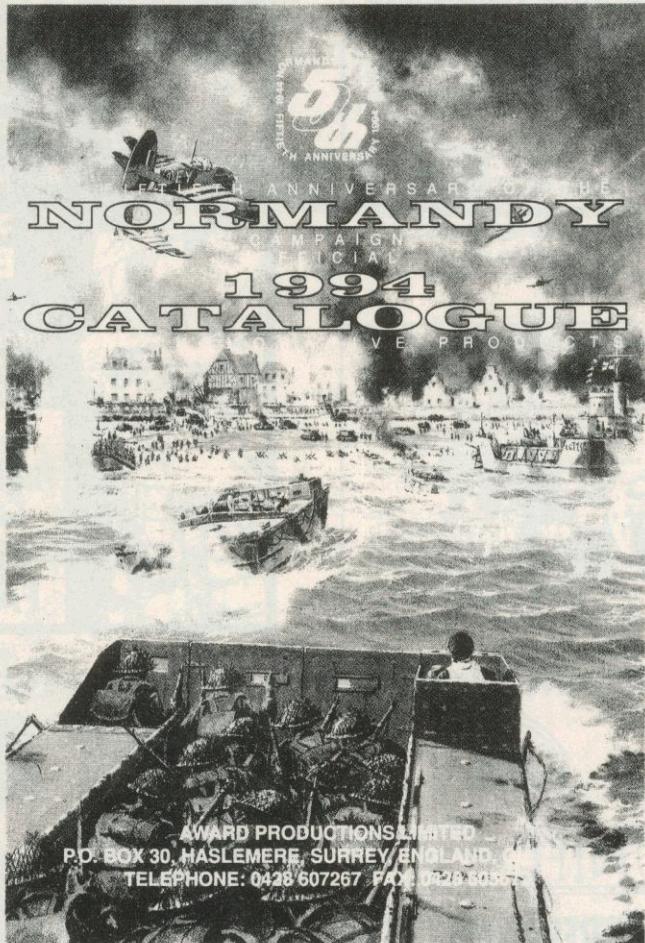
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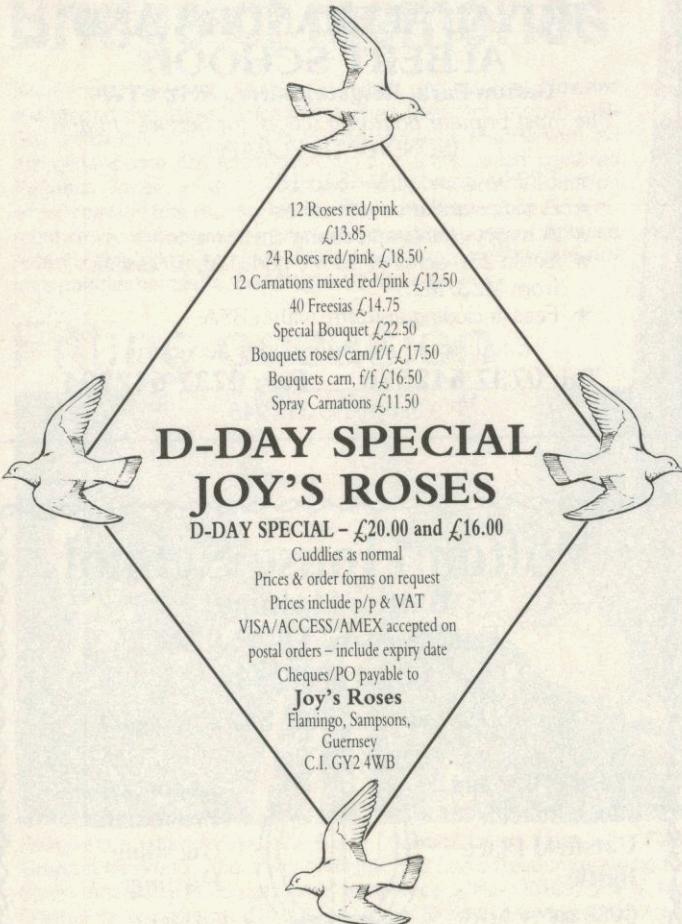
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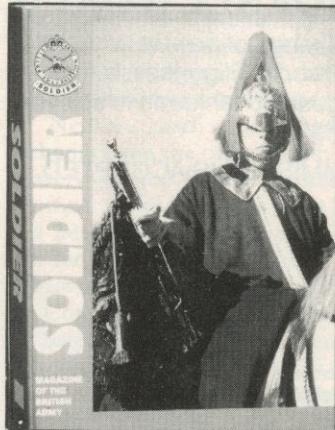
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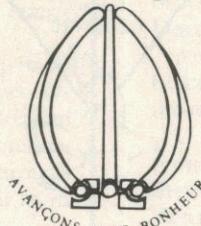
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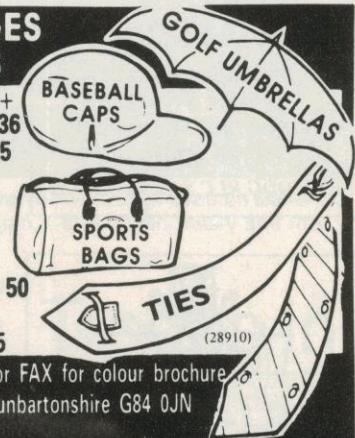
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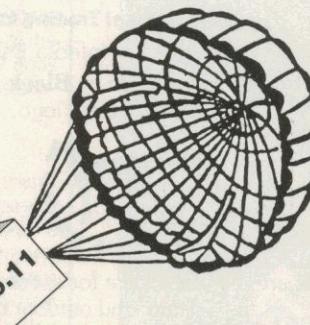


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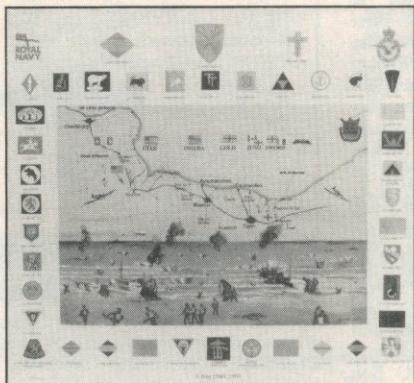
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Ref: DM-248487-SC

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COLOUR: Green or DPM
FEATURES: Side pouches + Yoke (makes day patrol pack)
PRICE: £139.99

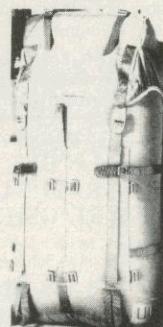
BERGHAUS VULCAN

NATO ref 84-65-99-775-3039/40



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FRAME: Internal
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COLOUR: Green
FEATURES: Side pouches make day pack (straps incl.)
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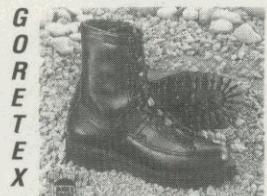
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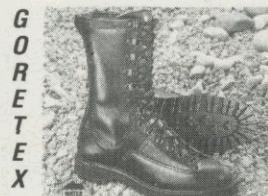
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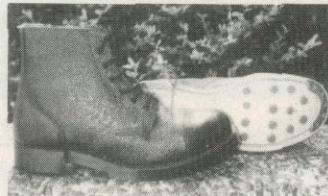
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Rugby League joins the club

RUGBY League is now an officially-recognised Army sport, having received formal approval with an announcement in the House of Commons on April 28.

Army Rugby League Association chairman Maj Martin Morris heard the good news a few hours earlier when Maj Gen Alan Yeoman, Director of the Army Sport Control Board, rang to confirm the ARLA's new status.

The Royal Air Force has also recognised rugby league.

IN BRIEF

Sigs pair lead road challenge

Marathon: York-based 2 Signal Regiment athletes Cpl John Castle and Sig Kevin Conlon finished second and third in the Inter-Services marathon run in conjunction with the Gosport marathon. And with Capt Tony Marshall (RLC) and Pte Stewart Plews (BAD Kineton) fourth and fifth, the Army comfortably won the team trophy. Race winner was Lt Ginge Gough (RN).

Athletics: The Army decathlon and 10,000m championships are to be held with the individual track and field championships at Aldershot Military Stadium on June 16-17.

Rugby: Postal and Courier Depot RLC Mill Hill beat the Household Cavalry Regiment in the final of the London District rugby sevens. Despite being ahead three times in the Prince of Wales's Cup final, the Grenadier Guards lost in the last minute to the Household Cavalry Regiment.

Swimming: The Army junior swimming and water polo championships take place at Chepstow on May 21-22. The senior championships and the Inter-Units single event relays are to be hosted by RMA Sandhurst on July 19-20.

The 13-man code already has wide support within the Service. Indeed, proof of a substantial playing base was a crucial factor in the ARLA's application to the Sport Control Board. The association had formed in October 1993 with the express aim of winning recognition.

A seven-a-side tournament at Chepstow on April 17 demonstrated the point more than adequately, with 15 senior and three junior teams from barracks all over the UK turn-

ing out in front of Sky Sports Television, RFL development officer Tom O'Donovan, and BARLA national coach Brian Chambers.

Winners were 12 RSME who beat 30 Signal Regt in the final.

An Army squad selected by Brian Chambers was due to take on the RAF at Hilton Park, the Leigh RL ground, on May 11.

At junior level, the Beachley Bulls (all members of 82 Training Squadron at Army

Apprentices College, Chepstow) have had fixtures against Wigan St Patrick's Under-18s, Swansea Knights, Bulford Garrison and Cowley High School, St Helens.

Twenty-eight players have already completed the Level 1 coaching course.

Teams are being formed at a number of units, and coaching and referee courses are planned for the summer. ARLA secretary Cpl Martin Cloyd (Chatham Mil 2686) has the details.

REDWASH!

Clean sweep for Army basketballers

SENIOR coach WO2 Ces Francis will bow out of the Army in a blaze of glory after the players in red swept all before them at the Inter-Services basketball championships hosted by RAF Cosford.

The Army equalled the Royal Air Force's 1993 clean sweep by winning the men's, women's and Under 23 titles.

Victories by 77-31 over the Royal Navy and 56-51 over the airwomen gave the Army ladies, coached by Capt Dave Maw (RE), a well-deserved championship.

Their secret weapon was Welsh international Capt Karen Jenkins, currently serving in Northern Ireland. Against the Navy she scored 15 points, with LCpl Sue Blake contributing 19 and Cpl Debbie Sutton 11.

Under 23 coach WO2 (QMSI) Frankie Pask had to whittle down 36 players to 12 for the tournament, reflecting the enthusiasm at this level among units.

They generated tremendous team spirit in beating the Navy 67-49 and the RAF 81-60. In a good all-round effort, LCpl Blake (RE), LBdr Johnson (RA), Tpr Millar (RAC) and Sig Jones stood out.

Ces Francis's highly motivated team were determined to complete the "redwash", and began by dismantling the Navy challenge 91-51.

With SSgt Johnson (17), Sgt Laslett (12) and Cfn Carl Black (11) finding the target, the seniors turned a ten-point halftime lead into a second half rout.

The final game, played out to deafening support, produced a memorable climax to the tournament. With the RAF competing at National League 3 level, the sides were well matched, and an interval score of 40-40 reflected the closeness.

A narrow RAF lead was maintained until the last few minutes, when a three-pointer from Black edged the Army in front by a single point. WO1 Tim Brown (RLC) extended that slender advantage to three points and the soldiers held on to win 85-79.

Chepstow wins triangular games

CHEPSTOW won the Army Apprentice Colleges' triangular games staged by Princess Marina College at Arborfield. Harrogate was the third col-

lege involved in the games which included rugby, football, hockey, basketball, volleyball, swimming, squash, tug of war and karate.

Triumph for the Kings

THE KING's Regiment hosted and totally dominated the Army novice boxing championships at Cavalry Barracks, Hounslow, winning seven of the titles on offer.

And the 1st Battalion's commitment and skill impressed Army coach Sgt Norman Phillips.

"The Kings were outstanding," he said. "They were so much better prepared than the others and lasted the rounds better."

He went away with a list of Kingsmen he hopes will figure in his senior squad plans next winter.

"The featherweight, LCpl Williams, has the potential to be the next Combined Services champion," he said.

The evening was a triumph for 1 Kings' coach WO2 Tom O'Connor, who saw five of his seven winners stop their opponents inside the distance.

Novice boxing details:

Flyweight – Spr Barrett (38 Engr Regt) w-o; **bantam** – Kgn Brummet (1 Kings) bt Pte Hillman (27 Regt RLC), rsc 1; **feather** – LCpl Williams (1 Kings) bt LBdr Jessiman (7 Para RHA), rsc 2; **light** – Kgn Winnard (1 Kings) bt LCpl McDermott (1 Kings), pts m; **light welter** – LCpl Buckley (1 Kings) bt Spr Crangle (38 Engr Regt), rsc 1; **welter** – LCpl Cass (1 Kings) bt Gnr Tink (7 Para RHA), pts u; **light middle** – Sig Bambrook (2 Sig Regt) bt Sig Kirkbride (2 Sig Regt), rsc 2; **middle** – Lt Smith (29 Regt RLC) bt Pte Harris (1 RRW), pts u; **heavy** – Kgn Pentith (1 Kings) bt LCoH Gardner (LG/RHG/D), rsc 1; **super heavy** – LCpl Tedford (1 Kings) bt Rfn Brooks (2 RGJ), rsc 2.

SIGNAL SUCCESS

Chalkie sets up 2 Sigs try romp

THE 19th Touche Ross Army sevens, played at Aldershot on April 27, provided a fitting climax to a very hard and eventful season, writes Roger Thompson.

The 16 finalists, who emerged from 122 entries at District level, included newcomers KOSB and 2 Para, and two minor units, the Postal and Courier Depot RLC and 12 Arty Sup Sqn RLC from Northern Ireland.

The opening leagues produced only one surprise, 1 RWF emerging from a season's self-imposed hibernation to beat 7 Para RHA by 17 points to 12. Both went through.

The draw for the knock-out phases ensured the strong Signals regiments and the Welsh contingents were kept apart. Having overcome 7 RHA, by 12-5, 7 Sig Regt marched on to meet 2 Signals from York in the semi-final. Although 2 Signals always had a score in hand, the blistering pace of Lt Brian Johnson provided a constant threat up to the whistle. Final score: 2 Sig Regt 17, 7 Sig Regt 12.

The second semi-final, 1 RRW against 1 RWF, was bound to be a thriller - Wales v



Picture: Mike Perrin

Lt John Merritt scores the final 2 Signal Regiment try against the Royal Regiment of Wales

Wales - but, being from different sides of the valley, effectively continents apart.

The RRW played muscular, thrusting rugby before moving the ball to probe further for gaps elsewhere in the middle, while the RWF, with Cpl Stu Thomas jinking at something like his 1992 form, moved the ball quickly to the wide outside where they had genuine pace.

After a captivating match it was 14 points each - a tie broken only in extra time by a runaway RRW try.

RRW, the holders, against 2 Sig Regt was a repeat of the 1993 final. The signallers from

York had clearly matured under their wise old coach, Russell Gainford.

Directly from the RRW kickoff, SSgt Chalkie Atkins, in his last Army rugby appearance, burst between two would-be tacklers and looked for support. As he sprinted towards the posts for a superb individual try, support came more in the nature of wishing him well than as a physical presence.

Cpl Lee Denham ran tenaciously for his second try, while Cpl Carl Richardson, the Army track athlete, ran outside the Welsh cover to score under the posts.

The signallers moved themselves into open spaces and made the ball do the work as the Welsh ran out of tacklers. But RRW maintained a threat through SSgt Chris Spowart and Capt Simon Butt until the latter, who had spear-headed both attack and defence, sustained an unfortunate injury.

Shortly afterwards Mark Parr claimed a fourth try, and the final score went to Lt John Merritt - after a dazzling series of side steps and an outrageous dummy.

Cpl Steve Bartliff converted three of the tries, one from wide out.

The signallers ran out winners by 31 points to nil.

Before the prize-giving, Gen Sir Michael Wilkes, President of the Army Rugby Union, presented Mr Ian Beer, President of the Rugby Football Union, with a cheque for £8,000 in aid of his SPIRE appeal.

This brought the full Army contribution to more than £10,000 - a magnificent effort by rugby players. Prizes were presented by Ian Beer and Mr David Dixon of Touche Ross Management Consultants, whose generous sponsorship enabled such a grand competition to be played.

Triple champions

THREE more Army boxers have registered their names on the hallowed list of national amateur champions.

Gdsm Kev Short (WG) is the new ABA welterweight champion, Cpl Steve Burford (REME) is the heavyweight king, and young contender Spr Danny Watts (RE Trg Regt) has lifted the super-heavyweight crown in his first season in Army and Combined Ser-

vices colours. All three won unanimous points verdicts in the national ABA finals at Birmingham on May 4.

Short, who has gone from strength to strength this season, knocked England No 1 Mark Santini over in the first round with a body shot, and twice more in the third round with punches to the head.

Burford made up for last year's disappointment in the

finals by cleverly outboxing London's Israel Ajose. Watts eventually got on top to beat Mohammed Khamhkoer, a Russian student currently boxing out of the Fitzroy Lodge club while studying in London.

Two Royal Air Force finalists, Darren Fox and Owen Spensely, lost on points.

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D-Day para Fred Billing, then a 19-year-old private in the 12th (Yorkshire) Battalion, jumped from a Dakota over Normandy on the night of June 5 1944. With other members of the machine-gun platoon, he landed near Ranville. Fred, now a sprightly 69 and retired in Newbury, Berkshire, posed for this 50th anniversary photograph outside the Airborne Forces Museum in Aldershot. With him is modern para Sgt Geordie Graham, a member of The Parachute Regiment's Mobile Display Team.

Picture: Terry Champion



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