

Autumn 2020

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DESPATCHES

the magazine of the International Guild of Battlefield Guides



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Cover image: The move of LCT 7074 to The D-Day Story began overnight, with work continuing through to the next afternoon. Here a crane prepares to lower into places the ramps that would enable the LCT to move off its barge and onto land. (Photo: The D-Day Story, Portsmouth) (See article page 5)



Somewhere in England...well, Essex actually. Andy Johnson compared RAF Bomber Command's night bombing campaign with the daylight raids undertaken by the US 8th Airforce during WW2.



GBG East Anglian Event - 11 Sep 2020

15 GBG Members gathered for the Ridgewell roam, a walking tour of the now disused RAF Ridgewell Aerodrome in Essex. We were ably hosted and guided by GBG Member, Paul Bingley. The tour focused primarily on the 381st Bomb Group and their experiences flying B17 Flying Fortress over Germany. Paul was assisted by Mike Peters.



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EVENTguide 2020-21

- 4 Dec - GBG Christmas Lunch, UJC London - Andy Thompson
2021
- 30 Jan - GBG Annual General Meeting - Online - more details to follow.
- 15-20 Mar - Portugal Recce, Duke of Wellington's campaigns - For more information contact Graeme Cooper - graeme@corporatebattlefields.com
- 9-11 Apr - Malta Recce, Defence of Malta during WW2 - The theme of the recce is the defence of Malta during WW2, with the emphasis being on the Explosive Ordnance Disposal capability of the Islands - Bob Shaw - rtshaw@hotmail.com
- 11-12 Sep - Special Forces Recce, Poole - The theme of this Guild recce is the development of Special Forces capabilities during WW2 and will study the Special Operations Executive, the Auxiliary Units, the Special Raiding Force, Special Forces Communications, air support to SF operations, MI9, the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry, the COPPs and Operation Frankton - Bob Shaw -

The above events are planned to take place unless otherwise indicated. Any Member wishing to plan a new GBG event should contact David Harvey for guidance and coordination of dates: events@gbg-international.com

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Material for publication in the Winter edition of 'Despatches' must be with the Editor no later than 30 November 2020. This is a deadline and submissions should be sent as far in advance as possible.

All material should be sent via Guild Secretary Tim Stoneman at: secretary@gbg-international.com

OPENINGshot:

THE CHAIRMAN'S VIEW

Hello Fellow Guild Members and Guild Partners, I hope that this issue of 'Dispatches' finds you and your families all in good health. Wherever you are in the world, I am sure that you don't need me to point out to you that both the Travel Industry and the Heritage Sector face increasingly difficult times. As Guides we work in, and depend on, the travel and heritage sectors to varying degrees for our income. Times are indeed hard, and our vaccinated emergence onto sunlit uplands is still likely to be some way off in the future yet. I know from conversations with members that many of you have shelved any aspirations of undertaking any live guiding for the foreseeable future. Those of us who depended on our guiding income, myself included have also had to find alternative employment. It seems, that rather like previous great debacles, this global blight isn't going to be over by Christmas.

Recently a fellow Member teased me about the absence of my customary close to these opening shots... There's never been a better time to be a Battlefield Guide! I had to concede that my usually optimistic strap line may not fly too well in current times. The immediate future of our sector of the travel industry remains uncertain. The fact that 25% of UK Tour Operators registered with ATOL have not renewed their licence gives a clear indication of the gravity of the situation for those that employ guides. The only certainty is that whenever we do emerge from this crisis, the battlefield tour market will be a very different place.

We cannot underestimate the seriousness of the economic situation, and there is no place for Lieutenant George's mindless optimism, BUT, there are ways in which we can all stay active as guides and survive the crisis. We can all make the most of this as an opportunity for self-improvement. Many members are busy immersing themselves in their domestic battlefields, research, book writing and the development of new itineraries. We have also seen a very healthy influx of members entering the Validation Process, this enforced break from guiding surely has to be a great opportunity to gain Accredited Member status and your badge.

The pandemic has also accelerated the use of technology, especially for the production of video and audio podcasts. The whole social media spectrum appears to now be awash with Battlefield Guides talking to an expanding audience about their pet subjects. This has done much to raise the profile of those individuals. Most recently, this has been taken a stage further by GBG Member Dan Hill with the launch of his Virtual Tours Project. While this has obvious potential and should not be dismissed as a fad, it is exactly what it is, a simulation of the real thing. In some ways it is technically superior, but it can never replace the physical and emotional experience of visiting an

evocative site on a real battlefield with an expert guide.

That said, I think it is safe to say that a 'virtual' dimension to battlefield touring is now here to stay. As individual guides we must now all decide to what extent we embrace these new mediums and their associated tech.

On the subject of technology, I want to publicly thank Dudley Giles for lending his technical expertise and time to facilitating the Assignment One sessions that the Validation Team have been hosting over most weekends. This has been one of the positive developments in the GBG during the pandemic. Indeed, as you should all now be aware, our AGM will take place by use of the same video conferencing technology. It is not all doom and gloom out there. If you look around and see what GBG members are doing to prevent their businesses from flatlining. There are some innovative ideas being tried, and also some clever adaptations of existing practices. The logistics of delivering a traditional residential group tour package are of course a major headache under COVID-19 restrictions. There is, however, a new practice emerging, as demonstrated by members who traditionally operate as 'Local Guides' to small groups. The traditional business model of the walking (or cycling guide) that travels independently and meets the group on site can be adapted to conform to local COVID-19 regulation, working entirely outdoors. We have seen members successfully operating like this in London, the Netherlands, Belgium, and in Italy. On a larger scale, GBG Partner, Anglia Tours have interpreted the UK Govt regulations and developed new guiding and tour management practices accordingly. They have recently proved their new COVID-19 procedures by running a successful school coach tour to London.

The examples set by the freelance guides across our membership and by Tour Operators like Anglia Tours show that there are ways to operate as a Guide in a COVID-19 environment. We will all have to adapt how and where we work, we will certainly have to be agile and willing to adapt to the changes that we will undoubtedly encounter in the coming months. Things will improve, we have to ensure that we as guides have used this fallow period productively, and that we have made the most of it. Above all, I urge you all to support each other, and to share your experiences and best practice. Enough from me, I hope that you enjoy your magazine. Good Luck to you all and enjoy your guiding wherever you are.

Mike Peters
Chairman



D-DAY LANDING CRAFT LCT 7074 TO GO ON DISPLAY IN PORTSMOUTH

The D-Day Story, Portsmouth & the National Museum of the Royal Navy

Andrew Whitmarsh, Curator, The D-Day Story, Portsmouth 

On 24 August 2020 there was a new arrival at The D-Day Story, Portsmouth: LCT 7074, the last surviving 'Landing Craft, Tank' (LCT) from D-Day. Later in the year the landing craft will go on display as part of the visit to that museum. Visitors will be able to explore the craft and find out more about the role played by LCTs in the Normandy campaign.



LCT 1071 in the Solent, June 1944. This was a LCT Mark 4 that landed troops on Sword Beach on D-Day. Anchored behind the LCT is LCG(L) 10, a Landing Craft Gun (Large) which supported the Sword Beach landings. (Photo: The D-Day Story, Portsmouth)

The project is a partnership between The D-Day Story and the National Museum of the Royal Navy (NMRN). NMRN owns the landing craft, rescued it from likely destruction and has restored it. The project was led by Nick Hewitt, Head of Collections and Research at NMRN.

Less 'glamorous' than the Royal Navy's more traditional warships, landing craft were essential not just for D-Day but for the entire Normandy campaign. 4,126 of the nearly 7,000 vessels used by the Allies on D-Day were landing ships and landing craft. LCTs made up more than 800 of that number, which demonstrates the key role of these vessels in

landing tanks and other vehicles on the beaches. After D-Day, LCTs continued to move additional Allied troops across the English Channel, with some making dozens of journeys over the following months. Other LCTs remained off the coast of Normandy and helped unload larger ships. LCTs were truly one of the unsung heroes of the campaign.

Less than a handful of LCTs survive today, and LCT 7074 is the only one in the UK - and the only survivor that took part in Operation Neptune. This is not surprising given that due to either enemy action or simply the wear and tear of sea crossings, such craft were not expected to survive for long.

Not only does LCT 7074 represent the wider role of LCTs in Operation Neptune, but we know a considerable amount about the history of this specific craft and the tanks it carried on D-Day, much of which has been unearthed by archaeologist Stephen Fisher.

At 59 metres in length and weighing 300 tons, LCT 7074 was built in early 1944 by R. & W. Hawthorn Leslie and Company Limited at Hebburn on the River Tyne. It was one of a group of six LCTs (numbered LCTs 7069 - 7074) built by this manufacturer. All were Mark 3* craft, with the star indicating some variations from the standard LCT Mark 3 design. One change was that the vessels had Sterling Admiral petrol engines, rather than the usual Paxman Ricardo diesels.

The LCT was launched on 30 March 1944: just over two months before D-Day. After a period of crew training in the Great Yarmouth area, the liberation of France beckoned.

For D-Day LCT 7074 was in 17th LCT Flotilla, part of the follow-up force Force L, and was carrying tanks of 7th Armoured Division. The Force L landing tables at The National Archives give details of LCT 7074's D-Day load. There were seven Stuart light tanks of 5th Royal Tank Regiment, and one Cromwell from Headquarters, 22nd Armoured Brigade. The remaining two were Sherman tanks from Regimental Headquarters, 5th Royal Horse Artillery, both of which carried a Forward Observation Officer (FOO) team and had a wooden gun barrel to accommodate an extra crew member

and additional equipment inside the vehicle.

These ten tanks loaded onto LCT 7074 at Felixstowe on 2 June 1944. On 5 June the LCT set off for Normandy, arriving off Gold Beach late on D-Day. Delays in the landings meant that LCT 7074's tanks were put ashore on the morning of 7 June, on Jig Sector of Gold Beach.

Two of LCT 7074's tanks can be seen in archive photos, which give clues as to their later history in Normandy. In both cases the tanks were identified by the markings applied to them in the UK as part of the embarkation process. One of the Stuart tanks is shown in an Imperial War Museum photo, bogged down on the beach.

One of the Shermans features in a number of German photographs later taken at Villers Bocage. It was commanded by Major Dennis Wells, battery commander of K Battery, 5th Royal Horse Artillery, and was destroyed during 7th Armoured Division's infamous encounter with German forces on 13 June 1944. The tank is shown at the roadside, a shell penetration hole visible in its turret and with its wooden gun barrel lying on the ground in front of it.

After delivering its first load of tanks to Normandy, LCT 7074 made many further crossings of the English Channel until spring 1945, carrying British and American forces from Southampton and other ports. Next the LCT began to be converted to a Naval Service Craft for use in the Far East. This type of vessel was designed for carrying out repairs to other landing craft. The end of the Second World War brought a halt to this work however. Yet the landing craft was

destined to live on through a use that could never have been imagined by its designers and builders.

In 1947 work began to convert LCT 7074 into a floating club for the Master Mariners Association of Liverpool, and it was renamed Landfall. The vessel's history entered another phase in 1968, when Landfall opened as a nightclub on the River Mersey, run by George Evans and Colin Peers. Evans wrote the book "The

Landfall Story" (1972) which is a useful source of information on the craft's history.

After the LCT fell out of use as a nightclub, it was acquired by the Warship Preservation Trust who in the late 1990s began the slow process of converting it back into a wartime LCT. Sadly, the Trust went into liquidation in 2006. By 2014 LCT 7074 was in private hands, semi-derelict and had sunk at its moorings at Birkenhead. It was then successfully salvaged and moved to Portsmouth by NMRN, with the help of a grant from the National Heritage Memorial Fund. In partnership with The D-Day Story, NMRN received further funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund to restore and display the LCT.

LCT 7074's post-war uses involved many additions to the craft, apparently including a dance-floor that was lit up from underneath! However the alternations to its original structure were minimal. Now that NMRN has removed these later additions, a virtually intact 1944-vintage LCT has re-emerged.

When the LCT arrived in Portsmouth it was rusty and covered with marine life due to the period when it was part-submerged. A long and painstaking process of drying out, conservation and restoration was finished off with a new external paint finish: the original disruptive pattern used for camouflage.

NMRN's work in moving LCT 7074 from Portsmouth Naval Base (where it was restored) to its new home was a huge logistical exercise. Appropriately the move was mostly made by sea, with the LCT carried on a barge. With echoes of D-Day, the move could only happen under optimal tidal and weather conditions, and was delayed by weather.

LCT 7074 will open to the public towards the end of 2020 following a brief fit-out phase. It will be displayed outside The D-Day Story, under a canopy roof which will shelter it (and visitors) from the worst of bad weather. The D-Day Story's two tanks, a Sherman Grizzly and a Churchill Crocodile, will be on the LCT's tank deck to help illustrate the craft's role in transporting vehicles to France. The tank deck will also be able to act as an impressive event space.



The LCT is seen here on the barge on which it was moved by sea from Portsmouth Naval Base into position on the Portsmouth seafront where it would come ashore.



Once off its barge, LCT 7074 then had to move a short distance along a road to its new home next to The D-Day Story.



In its journey along the Portsmouth seafront, LCT 7074 passes Portsmouth Naval Memorial, with the city's iconic Spinnaker Tower visible behind.



The crew of an unknown LCT on the ramp of their craft. LCTs had a small crew - 12 men on an LCT Mark 3 - who shared most tasks and often had strong bonds of comradeship as a result. (Photo: The D-Day Story, Portsmouth)



LCT 7074 negotiates a turn as it nears The D-Day Story.



LCT 7074 was moved along the road using multi-wheeled 'self-propelled modular transporter' (SPMT) vehicles.

Please see thedaystory.com for further updates on when LCT 7074 will open, and for other enquiries about visiting. More information on the project can also be found at www.nmrn.org.uk/LCT7074. We hope to welcome you and your clients to LCT 7074 and The D-Day Story before too long, for what will be the next chapter in the story of this amazing D-Day survivor.

This photograph taken on Jig Green sector of Gold Beach on 7 June 1944 shows a group of German prisoners of war who were temporarily held on board LCT 7074. Behind is LCT 886, which was badly damaged on D-Day. (Photo: Imperial War Museum B 5135, courtesy the National Museum of the Royal Navy)



In general the LCT has been restored to resemble as closely as possible its D-Day configuration, with only minimal modern interventions for the benefit of visitors. A number of films and soundtracks will explain to visitors the role of LCTs and how they worked, the conditions experienced by their crews, and the history of LCT 7074 and the tanks it carried.

Visitors will be able to explore most of the LCT, walking along the tank deck, seeing inside the engine room and crew quarters at the stern, then ascending stairs to the wheelhouse and officers' quarters, and up a ladder to the bridge. The visit will continue along the side of the LCT, and down a modern set of stairs back onto the tank deck. For

visitors who are unable to climb stairs, a video on the lowest level will provide views of the upper areas of the LCT.

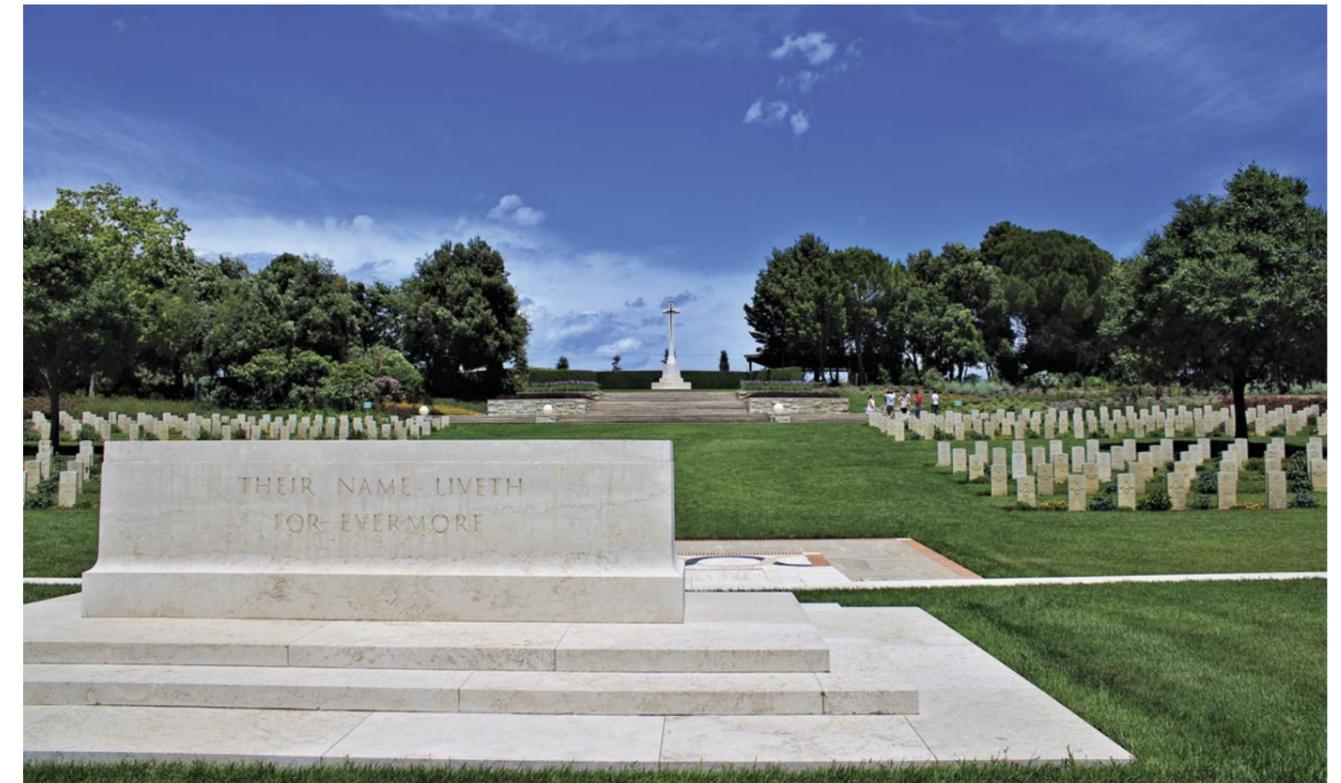
We look forward to welcoming visitors to what will be an amazing addition to The D-Day Story. LCT 7074 and the displays on board will complement the museum's existing exhibition which tells the story of the preparations for the campaign, the course of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy, and its commemoration and legacy. Formerly the D-Day Museum, the museum reopened in March 2018 after a major refurbishment of the building and its displays, which was shortlisted for European Museum of the Year 2019.

FAI DAYS OUTDOORS AN OUTSTANDING SUCCESS

More than two hundred people visited the CWGC Sangro River War Cemetery

Francesco Di Cintio 

The worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 has brought the world to a standstill, and tourism has been the worst affected of all major economic sectors. Italy, like the other European countries, is trying to get out from the Coronavirus nightmare, despite the pandemic is still affecting the rest of the world. With the further loosening of the restrictive measures, the FAI (the National Trust for Italy) has organised for the weekend of June 27-28, 2020, the national event *Giornate Fai all'aperto* (FAI days outdoors) to spread awareness of Italy's extraordinary cultural, artistic and natural heritage through the support of Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities. Especially for the occasion, the FAI Delegation of Vasto, led by Maria Rosaria Pacilli, tasked me to arrange a series of guided walks that would allow participants to discover the CWGC Sangro River War Cemetery and its landscape of war.



The cemetery lies in Contrada Sentinelle in the Municipality of Torino di Sangro (Province of Chieti) and it contains 2,617 Commonwealth burials and the Sangro River Cremation Memorial, one of three memorials erected in Italy in memory of more than 500 officers and men of the Indian Forces whose remains were cremated in accordance with their faith.

Setting and design make this cemetery one of the dramatic in Europe. The curved rows of headstones form a great Roman amphitheatre facing back over the Eighth Army's approaches to the Sangro. Through the history of the early Imperial War Graves Commission, I've driven the attention of the visitors on the eschatological significance of a Commonwealth

war cemetery: the principle of equality and uniformity of treatment adopted in each military cemetery and the poetics of Rudyard Kipling which echoes the grief of parents who lost sons in the First World War. He died for those he loved. And those he loved remember ever - the farewells of the graves speak for them. The headstones of officers and men from United Kingdom and Commonwealth Countries lie beside without no distinction, giving the appearance as the Eighth Army is still marching on parade. Their role as guardians of remembrance represents an important anthropological significance: the Sangro River War Cemetery has a strong sense of place able to provide a historical narrative of the place and a geographical narrative of the history.

Indeed, the guided visits continued along the crest of the ridge on which the cemetery lies, where I contextualised the first phase of the Sangro River Crossing, in relation to the battlefield, its main actions, features and personalities. The view over the Sangro River displays the topographical features that determined the British Eighth Army's path of the advance. The geography was a key factor in the German decision to raise the Bernhardt Line in this particular area of Abruzzo: the front extended over 50 kilometres from the Maiella Massif to the Adriatic coast. The LXXVI Panzer-Corps had selected the



Sangro basin as a natural bulwark in their defences, with support positioned on the north-western side, in particular on the Maiella massif and on the hills sloping down towards the Adriatic Sea between the villages of Pennapiedimonte, Guardiagrele, Mozzagrogna, Santa Maria Imbaro e Fossacesia. Moreover, the Sangro River Valley was susceptible to landslides and erosion, and the river itself was in flood as the rains, draining off the Apennines, rushed to the sea.

To provide the comprehensive historical interpretation of the landscape of war of the River Sangro sector, I focused on the British patrolling and the fundamentals of infantry fighting. Since 11th to 20th November 1943, the 36th Infantry Brigade, commanded by Brigadier Bernard Swifty Howlett, was tasked to patrol the north bank of the Sangro River in preparation for the 78th Division's main

attack. Small specially trained platoons within each battalion were employed to infiltrate through the enemy rearguard positions at night, in order to detect German strongholds and minefields, to carry out raids, to provide protection for sappers and to identify potential tank crossing sites. This gave the British soldiers a highly demanding task to perform, bearing in mind the nature of the terrain and the fact that the Germans blew up both the River Sangro bridges and heavily mined the area. However, the method of infiltration adopted by the Howlett's men



represented the best solution to the German highly effective defensive doctrine (consisting of extensive demolitions and coordinated 'delaying actions' directed by mobile rearguards) which was successful tested by the Germans in Sicily and, later, replicated on the Italian mainland with as many outcomes. The attack by infiltration adopted by the British units was influenced significantly by the wide-ranging report compiled by Lieutenant-Colonel Lionel Wigram, the War Office observer attached to 78th Infantry Division in Sicily. Having previously taught a system of infantry minor tactics, best known as Battle Drill, as chief instructor at the GHQ Home Forces Battle School at Barnard Castle, Wigram advocated that enemy rearguards be tackled by forming small infiltration teams to slip past German positions at night, thus compelling them to withdraw. In fact, the Battle of the River the Sangro might be summarised as the story of how the 36th Infantry Brigade, through the use of its battle patrols and infiltration teams, carried out extensive reconnaissances of the river's approaches and crossings, thus enabling the 38th Irish Brigade and the 4th Armoured Brigade to smash the oft-quoted German Bernhardt Line.

In more than ten hours of battlefield guiding, I was delighted to lead more than two hundred people through the history that lies behind the construction of the Commonwealth Military Cemeteries and the Sangro River's landscape of war. Through a comprehensive historical narrative, the participants discovered as the lush nature of this part of Abruzzo is still suffused of powerful stories of courage and sacrifices, which are literally kept alive by the war cemetery. The visitors had all sorts of emotions and feelings by reading the ages of the fallen (17, 18, 19 years old) and hearing their personal war experiences



Francesco with the staff of FAI who organised the event.

through my tales. More than two thousand tomb stones had represented for the Italians both an important cultural heritage of our Liberation's war, and the geographically 'dislocated' heritage of the Nations involved in the Second World War.

SILENT SENTINELS

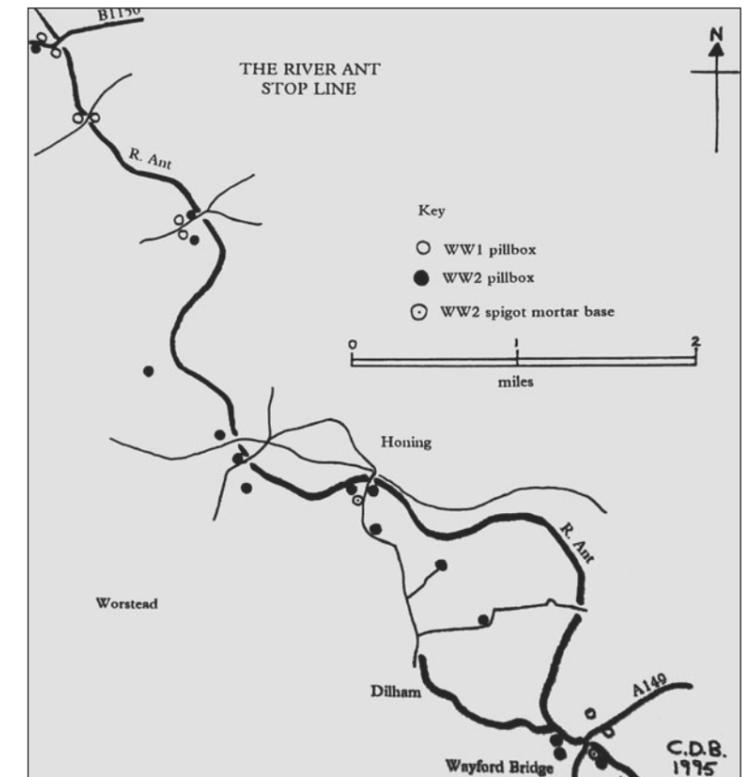
Steve Smith 

Believe it or not, the threat of a seaborne invasion by Germany was taken very seriously in the Great War. In January 1916 it was estimated that Germany might be able to land up to 160,000 men on the East Coast. Although it was thought unlikely defences were put in place and in Norfolk one defence line was placed along the River Ant, which then connected to the Dilham/North Walsham Canal. Here, pillboxes that are circular, and made of concrete blocks, were placed along this natural defensive feature. They were constructed in twos, generally straddling a road or bridge.

With all my tours cancelled through COVID, and my next book sent off to the publishers, I was at a bit of a loss to what to do with myself. So, I looked at some notes on a project I'd been working on previously and decided to try and complete it. Having purchased a new bike for my daily stint of exercise, I decided to revisit a fairly unique defensive line that had been started in WW1 after the War Office and the Admiralty had concerns over the Zeppelin and seaborne raids that had befallen Norfolk in 1915.

The use of pillboxes did not stop after the end of the Great War. In 1940 it was anticipated that the Germans would be able to get past the what was known as the Coastal Crust defence line and advance inland if Operation Sealion was ever ordered by Hitler. If this happened then 'Stop-Lines' would be used to hold up their advance. In total there were 8 stop lines situated away from the coast all the way back to the Midlands.

Therefore, past the Coastal Crust in Norfolk, the WW1 defensive points were bolstered by new pillbox types. Eventually



Map of the Dilham/North Walsham Canal stop.

Nodes, or Nodal-Points replaced stop-lines. These were designated 'A', 'B' or 'C' depending upon how long they were expected to hold out. Home Guard troops were largely responsible for the defence of nodal points and other centres of resistance such as towns and defended villages. Category 'A' nodal points and anti-tank islands usually had a garrison of regular troops. In all, about 28,000 pillboxes and other hardened field fortifications were constructed in the United Kingdom of which it's estimated about 6,500 still survive. The defensive line on the River Ant and the Dilham/North Walsham Canal, became known as FII. This starts at Wayford Bridge near Stalham and goes all the way to Spa Common and then continues up to the Cromer Road at Thorpe Market.

On my travels I wanted to document each surviving pillbox. They are often referred to as 'Silent-Sentinels' and I often think of them as such while they wait for the next time they might be called to war. They are a mixture of circular WW1 structures and then mostly the common Type 22 and 26 pillboxes from WW2. I had to speak to land owners to get permission to look at some and one of these land owners confirmed a local story I had heard of about two of them that no longer exist between Dilham and Honing. Basically in 1955 a farmer wanted shot of them so



The only surviving Type 26 pillbox at Honing after the rest were blown up in the 1950s

had both packed with dynamite and they were blown up. This confirms that health and safety in the 50s was not the same as it is today!

Two others I knew of are now a garden shed and an extension of a house. Many of the WW1 types still have their thick steel doors on them and have loopholes positioned at different levels. At Spa Common on Mill Road there is an even rarer pillbox in this format. The reason it's rare is because it's semi-circular, so only half the size of the normal circular type.

One of the best examples of a nodal-point can be found on the Happisburgh Road to the east of North Walsham. Here above the high ground that overlooks the canal you will see two WW1 circular pillboxes which are supported by a WW2 Vickers Machine Gun and Type 22 pillbox. These were used to cover the bridge close to Ebridge Mill.

At the bottom of the hill, next to the mill, is evidence that this also had the hedgehog defences as their foundations can still be seen on the road on frosty days.

The next best example of how that line meandered along the canal can be seen on the B1145 outside North Walsham. Here, just prior to the canal bridge there are two WW1 pillboxes. One can be clearly seen just off the road, the other is situated at the end of a private garden. Evidence that these defences were connected can still be seen with an old trench system running parallel to the



The unique semi-circular pillbox at Spa Common.



A WW1 pillbox on the Nodal-Point for Ebridge Mill which can be seen in the distance.



A Type 22 pillbox at Briggate which is now used as a garden shed.

road. On this trench system, hidden by a hedgerow, there is also a Type 22 pillbox and a shelter/store house used by the Home-Guard.

It is now the beginning of September and you might ask me, have I finished my research? The answer to that is no. I still have two pillboxes to

locate and document up at Spa Common and after that I could go on to look at others past Thorpe Market. But I am satisfied that I now know where each one is and can confirm where others no longer exist and I think it's important that we don't forget those silent sentinels from darker times.

EVERY PICTURE TELLS A STORY A BRIDGE TOO FAR – 40TH ANNIVERSARY

Tonie and Valmai Holt 

2020 marks the 76th & 75th Anniversaries of Operation Market-Garden and the Liberation of Holland. From here and now we look back to 1984 and to what was the first major commemoration thus far celebrated by many veterans – British, Canadian and American – and many interested battlefield tourists. We had several coaches present, but before-hand we had conducted several recces, some as guide training and others with veterans whose memories we were privileged to record. Here we concentrate on the river and bridge crossings of the Waal at Nijmegen en route to Arnhem and John Frost's surrounded 2nd Para Bn.

The taking of the Nijmegen Road Bridge by the Grenadier Guards and the Waal River Crossing by the US 504th PIR, involved extremely complicated and dangerous actions, with some bitterly disputed accounts between the British and Americans as to what happened and why the British did not press on to the rescue of Gen John Frost and his 2nd Para Bn, beleaguered at the Arnhem Bridge – the 'Bridge Too Far'. The following personal accounts with their accompanying photos throw some light on the subject.

1. Sergeant Peter Robinson, DCM, Grenadier Guards, at the Nijmegen Bridge with Tonie and Valmai Holt. Photo by Berry de Reus, who then worked at the Hartenstein Museum and who gave us enormous help in our early recces and became a good friend. The picture was taken on one of our recces at the Bridge.

The first crossing of the Bridge was made by Sergeant 'Robbo' Robinson with his own, and four other Grenadier Guards' tanks, around 1830 hours on Wednesday 20 September 1944. This was just 10 hours before the tenacious survivors of 2 Para were finally forced off the Arnhem Bridge. Theoretically, this would have given XXX Corps time to come to their help.

When he reached the northern end of the bridge Sgt Robinson discovered a road-block and was met by a hail of fire from the gun situated at Lent Church. He managed to silence the gun and proceeded to the Railway tunnel/ bridge just ahead (which we always called 'Robinson's Tunnel'). Here he met a group of Americans from the Waal crossing and a dispute ensued as to what they should do. Gen Horrocks was contacted and Robinson was told to tell them to take up defensive positions around that area and to consolidate it. When Robinson returned a little later the Americans were not to be seen. Robinson commented "You can't consolidate a Yank"!



2. Major-General Tony Jones, CB, MC, with Howell Griffiths, Holt Guide Photo by Jill Cochrane at our 40th Wedding Anniversary.



Robinson and his group of tanks were then followed by Lt Tony Jones who cleared the Nijmegen Road Bridge mines. In the 1990s General Tony lived near us in Folkestone and we first made contact by looking him up in the local telephone directory. A delightful character, he came to see us in our Sandwich office and soon started to act as a Guest speaker on Market-Garden Tours. He became a good friend and attended our 10th Anniversary of Holts' Tours Gathering, when frequent travellers were invited to celebrate with us, as well as our 40th Wedding Anniversary. After a successful and varied career in the Army, this keen sportsman, (playing rugby for the

3. Captain T. Moffatt Burriss, 504th PIR. Photo sent to us by him. Some two or three hours after Robinson settled down at the Railway Tunnel, Lt Peter Carrington (and later to become Lord Carrington – known as 'the short peer' – and British Foreign Secretary, then Secretary General of NATO), joined him and they whiled the night away with a bottle of whisky. Carrington then had a bitter contretemps with American Captain T. Moffatt Burriss of the 504th PIR as to why he was stopping and not pressing on to the Arnhem Bridge.

We managed to contact Moffatt Burriss by phone and he sent us a copy of his book, 'Strike and Hold', which he had written to tell his children 'what Daddy did in the War', to quote a WW1 poster. In it he described his meeting with Carrington, when he asked him, "Why don't we go on to Arnhem and save the paratroopers there?" He wrote that Carrington replied that he was being attacked by a German 88 and "I can't go without orders". [Peter Robinson confirmed this by saying, "If you tell a Guardsman to jump, he jumps, if you don't, he won't".] The American then exploded, "You yellow-bellied son of a bitch. I just sacrificed half of my company face to face of a dozen guns and you won't move because of one gun. Then I cocked my tommy gun, put it above his head and said, 'you get this tank moving or I'll blow your damn head off'.

Army and for Middlesex, acquiring a pilot's licence and becoming a skilled yachtsman) died in 1999.

Here is the story of his extraordinary 1944 exploit as he told it to us while standing beside the bridge:

"I was on the second span from the northern end of the bridge. I got out of my car and told the [wireless] operator to take over the Bren gun. The first thing I saw as I got out of the car was about half a dozen wires on the footway at the side of the bridge. These I cut. I walked up to the road block and saw about ten Teller mines in a slit trench near it. These were obviously designed to close the block. I removed the igniters and threw them in the river.

I then ordered my driver to turn the car round and walked back over the bridge until I came to a set of charges lying on the footpath at each side of the bridge just to the north second pier from the northern end of the bridge. These had been designed to cut the concrete roadway but had never been placed in position and were quite safe."

He then collected seven German prisoners, took them back with him and reported that "the bridge was clear." Jones finally found TNT packed in green painted boxes labelled with serial numbers relating to those painted on the girders. These were fitted with electric detonators and were connected to one of the wires that he had cut earlier.

It is inexplicable that Tony Jones did not receive the Victoria Cross for his acts of supreme bravery and *sang froid*, which enabled the safe crossing of the Nijmegen Road Bridge. Sir Brian Horrocks, later writing about the bridge, said "Perhaps the bravest of all these very brave men was Lieut Jones, a young Sapper officer."



4. Lord Carrington, on the left in group at a 40th Anniversary of Market-Garden Reception in Nijmegen, with the British Ambassador, Bill Croft (Robinson's troop leader), Peter Robinson and Valmai Holt. Photo by Tonie Holt.

In 2001 we wrote to Lord Carrington asking for his reaction to Moffatt Burriss's account. He replied, "Is it really likely that, having captured the bridge and having met up with our American friends, one of them starts waving a gun at me?"



In any event, we were all under orders to hold the bridgehead until more troops crossed. There is, of course, no truth in the story."

Moffatt Burriss does admit in his book, "We were probably too hard on Carrington ... He was the senior British officer at the battle site, but the man in

command of British tanks was General Horrocks. I'm convinced that Horrocks told Carrington to stay exactly where he was, thereby damning not only the rescue mission but also the entire operation to end the war."

5. General John Frost at his home, after being interviewed by Tonie Holt. Photo by Piers Storr-Pugh, Gen Frost's nephew and GBG Badged Guide. So, what did General, then Lt-Col, Frost have to say when we stood with him at the actual Arnhem Bridge?

"We were very proud to have been selected for this task and we were disappointed that we couldn't take both ends of this bridge, which was our aim. But we felt that we had captured the real prize of the whole war and as long as we could hold on to it, then we were going to see Guards Armoured Division, XXX Corps, the whole thing, steaming by to finish the war. And then gradually it began to dawn that if it was going to happen it was all going to happen much later than we hoped or expected. The biggest blow I think was when my Intelligence Officer said, 'Oh sir, we are taking prisoners from the 9th SS Panzer Division and we have below an officer who speaks very good English. I think you ought to come and see him.' I went down and saw this officer and said, 'What are you doing here - I thought you were finished in the Falaise Gap.' He said, 'Well so did we, but we've got an awful lot of our drivers and gunners and radio operators and officers and we've been up the road refitting. We hope to get reinforcements and I hope and expect the whole of our Division to be

around before very long.' I think I offered him a whisky and soda. Anyway, I wandered away rather sadly and knew then that the odds must be very much against us."

Could Frost and 2 Para been saved if the Irish Guards, who alternated with the Grenadiers and who were due to take the lead after the 'Robinson Tunnel', had pushed on to lead XXX Corps to Arnhem in time? Lt-Col Joe Vandaleur, who led them, remarked that he remembered a 'general lack of urgency' in Horrocks's order to advance, although the General had originally told them 'to keep going like hell.'

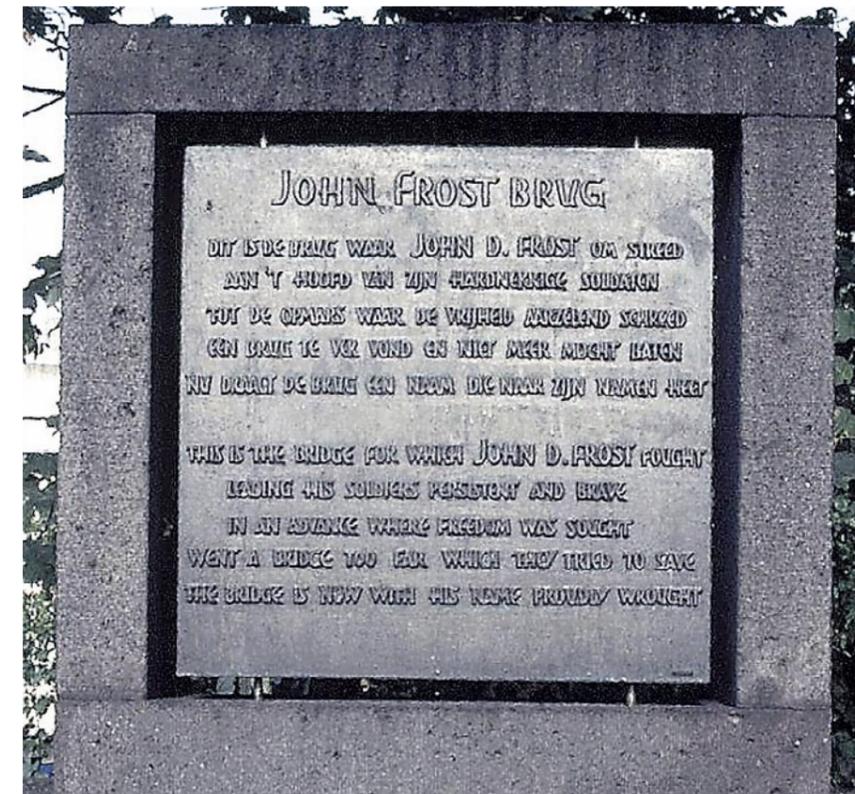
It must be remembered that tanks need infantry support and when Peter Robinson's small group crossed the bridge, they had none - the Infantry was holding the Valkhof and Hunner Park areas. It was getting dark and they were also short of ammunition.

By the time the Irish Guards did advance at 1100

the following day, the path ahead was fraught with difficulty. Due to the delay, the Germans had been able to prepare defensive positions along the Corridor and 2nd Bn soon lost three tanks in the leading troop. Further efforts by the Welsh Guards and a Brigade of 50th Division were not able to push on.

There was however an alternate route, which we discovered when our good friend Frans Ammerlaan took us to meet the archivist in Elst some years ago. We were shown a detailed map of the area which indicated a 'sand road' some 200m east of the Nijmegen bridge, leading all the way to the Arnhem bridge, foundation for what is today's A325 dual carriage road. It was certainly used by the Germans later in the month to bring Tiger Tanks south from Arnhem. We are not aware of any other reference to this in other historical accounts. Why was it not used?

What-ifs and may-bes cannot change the fact that the Arnhem bridge remained 'The Bridge Too Far'.



6. Airborne Commemorative Plaque on the 'John Frost' Arnhem Road Bridge. Photo by Tonie Holt.

It bears this poem:

*This is the Bridge for which John. D. Frost fought
Leading his soldiers persistent and brave
In an advance where freedom was sought.
Went a Bridge Too Far which they tried to save
The Bridge is now with his name proudly wrought.*

Addendum

Not photos, but contemporary postcards from our large collection which are pertinent to the Liberation of Holland. The first three are by artist **Jean Schneiger**. He had been taken prisoner in June 1940 and interned at Stalag 13. The desperate attempt at escape by Germans before the liberators arrived was enacted in Paris, where these cards (in a set of 30) were drawn and they apply exactly the same in Holland. Incidentally, the 2006 film *'Black Book'* (an entertaining film which touches on the real situation and is available to watch on TV now) is about the German occupation of Holland and depicts the panicked efforts of the Germans to flee before the advancing Allies.

Illus. 7 A German soldier runs away in panic with as much loot as he can stuff in a stolen pram bearing the Red Cross flag. In the intense bombing that immediately preceded the opening of Market Garden, the Germans were reduced to a state of panic and on 3 September they began to leave, jamming the roads leading east. The whole thing reached a peak on 5 September, a day known as 'Mad Tuesday'.



Illus. 8 A female German soldier rushes towards the station carrying her bags.

Illus. 9 Germans stuffing their loot into a truck bearing the Red Cross flag.



The next three cards have no information about artist or publisher, but they were obviously drawn and published in Holland and show Canadian troops. Following the failure of Market Garden, the Germans evacuated civilians from the area which became known as *'The Island'*. The Dutch call the event *'The Exodus'*. Remaining Dutch citizens were the victims of harsh reprisals – many reduced to eating tulip bulbs. It was not until 17 April 1945 that the Canadian Calgary Regiment of the 49th (Polar Bear) West Riding Division arrived to liberate the town of Ede and they have a Memorial Cougar tank there to commemorate the event. Similar joyful welcomes were of course extended to British troops.



Illus. 10 Canadian liberators having a ball with the local gals in Holland. This may well refer to Ede which was liberated by the Canadians in April 1945. They have a Memorial Cougar tank there.



Illus. 11 A Canadian liberator packs his motor bike with a grateful family holding their national flags.

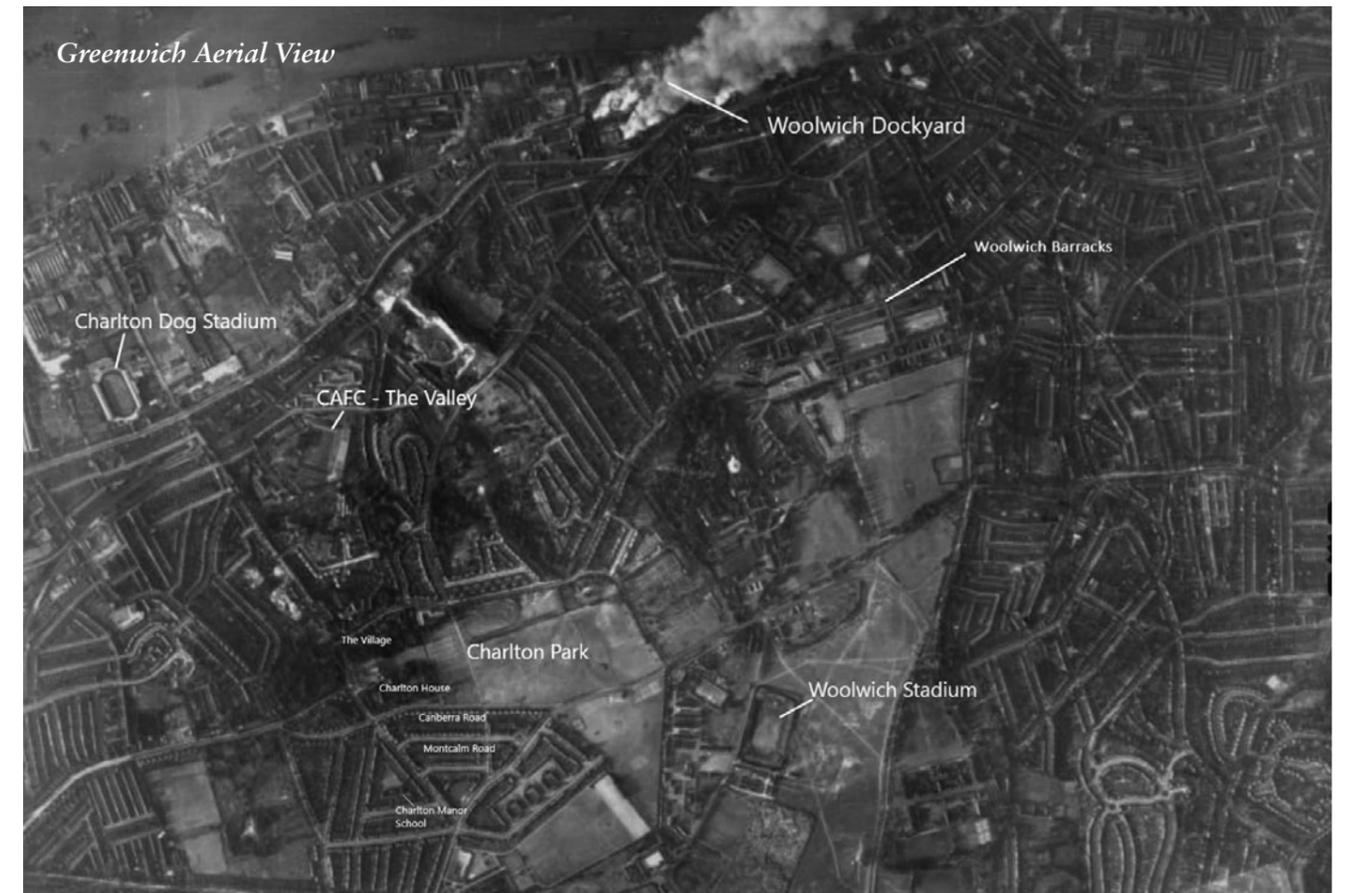


Illus. 12 "The Germans stole our food, the Canadians our heart!"

BLACK SATURDAY IN SOUTH EAST LONDON

Steve Hunnisett

Saturday, 7 September 1940 is a day that became etched in the minds of all Londoners, especially those from the eastern half of the capital, as "Black Saturday", the beginning of fifty seven consecutive nights of bombing and of a longer onslaught that continued right through until Spring 1941, after which a welcome respite ensued whilst Hitler turned his attention towards the Soviet Union. In that time, the Blitz spread to just about every other major British city and industrial centre, although London was always the default target for the Luftwaffe's bombs.



I'm a southeast London boy, born and bred in Greenwich, who still lives in what is now the Royal Borough and as has been pointed out in the past by our Chairman, I have the authentic accent to prove it! Although the Blitz was predominantly a night-time affair, Black Saturday actually began with a daylight raid, with the sirens sounding the alert shortly before 17:00. It was a beautiful late summer day and on the ground in southeast London, some were attempting

to lead a normal Saturday routine. At The Valley, home of Charlton Athletic FC, a meagre crowd of 1,530 (at a ground which regularly boasted pre-war attendances in excess of 50,000) were trooping home, mostly disconsolately following a 2-4 home defeat to local rivals Millwall – some things never change! The Civil Defence Incident Log for the Metropolitan Borough of Greenwich shows the first bombs not falling until 17:50 but in the neighbouring



The view east from the Pool of London in the early evening of 7 September 1940.

Borough of Woolwich, the action is recorded as starting precisely at 17:00 with high explosive bombs in the Plumstead area, as well as close to the sprawling Woolwich Arsenal site which covered some 1,300 acres along the south side of the River Thames, including the former Woolwich Dockyard, in 1940 used for the storage of ordnance.

In addition to the Arsenal, this corner of London was the home to numerous industries along the Thames corridor; Siemens, Johnson & Phillips Cables, GA Harvey Engineering and British Ropes were just some of the many hundreds of companies, large and small that presented an easy target for the Luftwaffe that late afternoon.

The main photograph (pictured left) that accompanies this piece is one of a series taken from a Luftwaffe aircraft during the late afternoon of 7 September and the timing of the image can be estimated fairly accurately. The two large columns of smoke rising towards the top centre of the photograph emanate from the Siemens Factory and the old Royal Dockyard and is recorded on the Incident Log at 17:50 as a 'major fire' with thirty pumps in attendance, so it is fair to assume that this photograph was taken sometime in the immediate aftermath of the incident being reported as the fires appear to be far from being under control at this point.

Some of the locations mentioned in this piece have been marked on the photograph and it is still an intriguing thought for me that my mother is in this image, albeit out of sight inside an Anderson Shelter

in the garden of the family home in Montcalm Road, Charlton. Mum was employed at the Pay Office of Woolwich Arsenal throughout the war and in common with many people at this time, was required to work a Saturday half-day. In fact, she regularly worked the whole day but fortunately, on Black Saturday she and her colleagues were able to finish on schedule and return home at lunchtime. This was indeed fortunate, for on returning to work on Monday morning, Mum discovered that her office, together with the shelters in which she and her colleagues would have taken refuge had all been obliterated in the raid.

Apart from the damage to the Woolwich Arsenal and the industries along the Thames in Greenwich and Woolwich, this first raid of the Blitz devastated large areas of the Surrey Commercial Docks, which at that time was the centre of Britain's timber trade, with imported hard and softwoods from Canada and Scandinavia providing ample fuel for the incendiary bombs of the enemy. The Thames-side wharves and



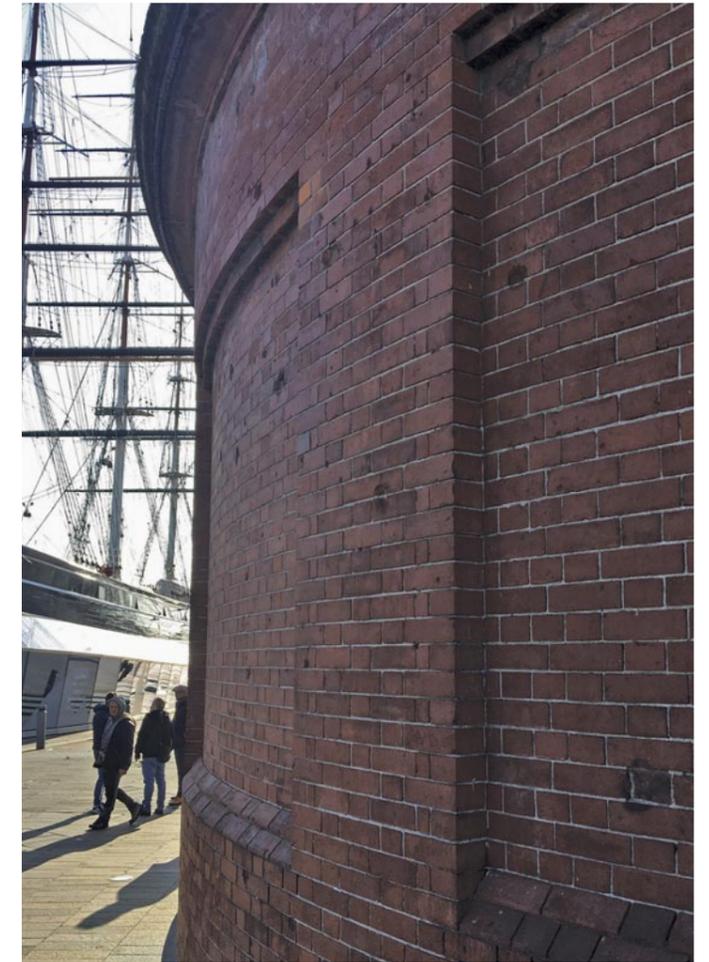
enclosed docks of London's East End were also devastated, with large conflagrations fuelled by the cargoes stored therein. In the Surrey Docks, Station Officer Henry William 'Gerry' Knight of the London Fire Brigade was known as a calm man not normally given to exaggeration but faced with the huge fires seemingly all around him and his men, made a telephone call to headquarters to request reinforcements which became the stuff of legend – "Send all the bloody pumps you have, the whole bloody world's on fire!"

Sadly, Gerry was not to live beyond the second night of the Blitz, for he was killed by a high explosive bomb whilst he continued to oversee the firefighting efforts at the Surrey Docks; all that was found of him the next day was his regulation-issue thigh boots.

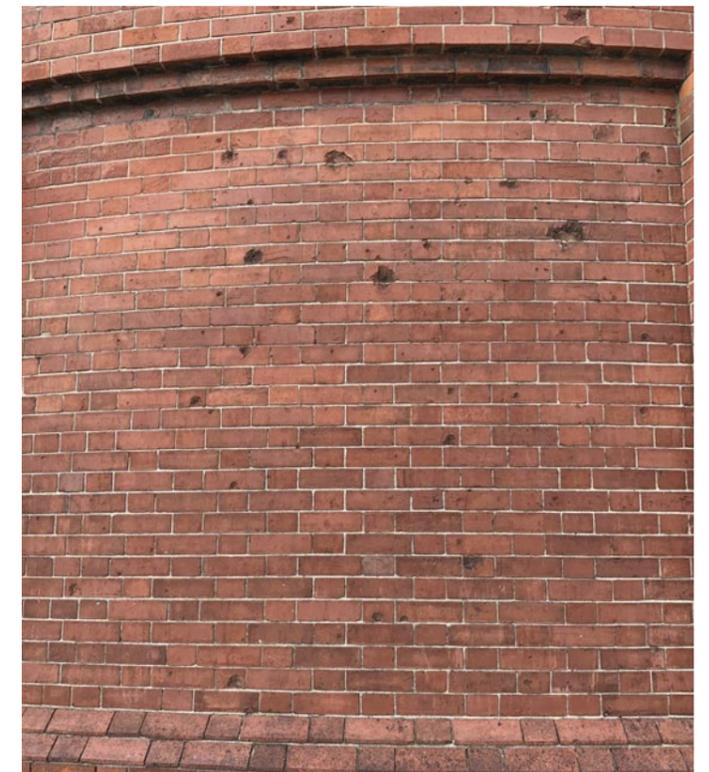
It was during this raid that the men and women of the Auxiliary Fire Service (AFS) came into their own and acting as intended, as a form of 'mobile reserve', with crews coming from as far away as Birmingham, Nottingham, Brighton and Swindon. The municipal nature of the AFS in which training and equipment differed slightly from area to area, exposed a few flaws in the system, with the equipment and hose connections of some of the provincial forces being incompatible with those of the London Fire Brigade. There was also a certain amount of confusion with the command structure, with some of the provincial commanders being resentful of falling under the command of LFB Officers. These shortcomings would later be addressed in August 1941 by the nationalisation of all of the various brigades across the country into one huge organisation, known as the National Fire Service (NFS), with standardised uniform, training and equipment and most importantly of all, a unified command structure.

Returning to Black Saturday, the daylight raid had been an undoubted success for the Luftwaffe, which sent 348 bombers and 617 fighters into the fray. It was one of the few occasions during the Battle of Britain that RAF Fighter Command had been caught off-balance, expecting continued raids on their airfields and limited bombing against industrial targets, rather than an all-out attack against London. The bombers returned that evening, 247 of them guided by the many fires which still rage across the eastern side of the capital.

The Royal Navy Auxiliary Patrol Vessel 'Water Gypsy', commanded by its peacetime owner Petty Officer Sir Alan Herbert, was on the Thames that night attempting to reach North Woolwich from the Pool of London. Herbert later vividly described a hellish scene; "Half a mile of the Surrey shore, ending before the Greenland entrance of the Surrey



Splinter damage (above and below) to the exterior of the Foot Tunnel entrance.

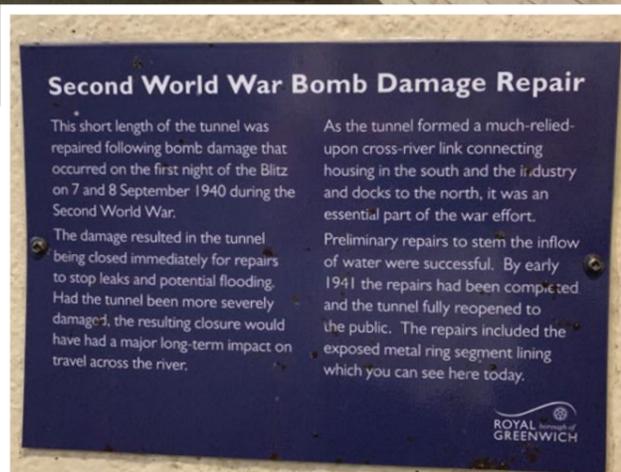




Greenwich Foot Tunnel 2018

Commercial Docks, was ablaze – warehouses, wharves, piers, dolphins, barges. The wind was westerly and there was a wall of sparks across the river. Burning barges were drifting everywhere but there was not a soul in sight. A wooden ship and petrol driven, we did not like the look of it much; but we put wet towels round our faces and steamed in at half speed into the torrid cloud. Inside, the scene was like a lake in Hell. We could hear the hiss and roar of the conflagration ashore but could not see it, only the burning barges and the crimson water that reflected them.”

Many of the citizens of the worst affected areas tried to flee the scene and further downriver, the Woolwich Ferry operated throughout the night evacuating people across the Thames from Silvertown and North Woolwich to the dubious safety of the south side of the river. Further upstream at Greenwich, the exodus south from the Isle of Dogs was hindered by the Greenwich Foot Tunnel being breached by a bomb which fell on the foreshore and caused the tunnel to leak and slowly fill with water. Fortunately, no lives were lost in the tunnel but by the following morning, the whole tunnel had filled with water and was to be out of commission until



repairs could be put in hand. Once the water was pumped out, the repairs consisted of a temporary inner sleeve bolted inside the damaged section and sealed with concrete. So effective were these temporary repairs that they are still in situ some eighty years later, which provide us with one of the few tangible reminders of Black Saturday that can still be seen today.

In all, some 400 Londoners were killed on Black Saturday, with a further 1,200 suffering serious injuries. Heavier raids would follow, culminating in what proved to be the heaviest of all on the night of 10/11 May 1941 but for anyone who was there, Black Saturday was a day never to be forgotten.

A NEW TYPE OF MILITARY MUSEUM

Chris Scott 

I know that guides often look to military museums for interesting things to add to their tours, here is my contribution. For a long time I have been on a museum Board of Trustees, and all last year I have been working on the story for the new Museum of Military Medicine (MMM) which will be opening in Cardiff Bay.



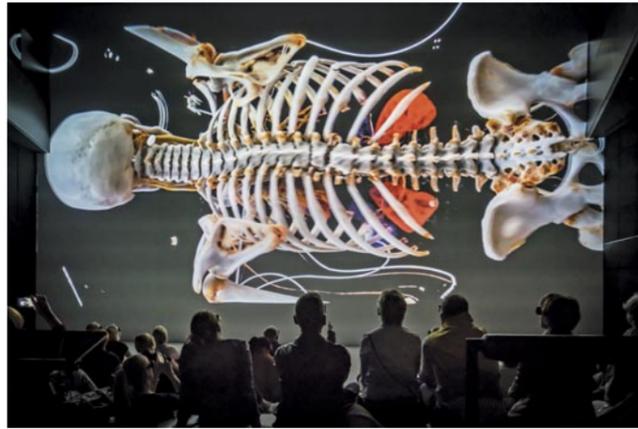
The proposed four-storey Museum at Cardiff Bay's Britannia Quay, designed by internationally renowned architects, Scott Brownrigg.

Currently based in Surrey, the museum is taking this opportunity for a different thrust to telling how the four medical corps, RAMC, QARANC, RADC and the RAVC, alongside the School of Army Music (showing how bandsmen used to be stretcher-bearers and even now are trained medics too) have for centuries made innovative developments in the treatment and care of people and animals. These discoveries have benefitted general medical practice and are used today to develop new lifesaving medical techniques used in hospitals around the world to save lives and provide treatments that improve quality of life and wellbeing. This is to be a museum dedicated to the history of welfare: its stories will be told through

exhibitions, archives and collections that incorporate over 30,000 objects that preserve the heritage of those who have saved lives through service.

Big ask – big brief!

As well as displaying artefacts associated with past and current military medical practice and celebrating those who employed them, one of the aims for the Museum will be to feature an immersive interactive video attraction, Deep Space. This will be the first time this technology has been used in the UK and in addition to creating a new attraction for Cardiff's established tourism sector, this space will be made available for medical training and the development of



new medical technologies. The large-scale projection technology offers visuals in 2D or 3D in 8K resolution. It is used in medical lectures to allow doctors and students to explore the details of the human body by projecting complex images of bones and organs. At the Museum of the Future, the facility has also been used to broadcast live surgery, with the audience able to follow steps of a surgical procedure in close detail.

One of the reasons MMM is going to Wales is Cardiff's proximity to several major universities and teaching hospitals: key planned partnerships that aim to drive future medical advancements, because in addition to learning from the past, this museum will work to drive new healthcare innovations. It is already in talks with health organisations and universities to help root those developments and deliver new services in the region. There are plans for a Veterans' Out-patient Clinic within the Museum building, in partnership with Cardiff and Vale University Health Board and alongside Veterans' NHS. This would be a space for veterans suffering with service-related mental health diagnoses, such as anxiety, depression or post-traumatic stress disorder, to receive evidenced-based treatment and rehabilitation, and to make links to veteran-specific charities. It is hoped that services, such as art therapy, delivered at the Museum could also be made accessible to residents in the local area. This is planned to be much more than a series of objects locked away in cases! This will be a real living museum. I like to think of it as the past and present meeting the future.

Designed by internationally renowned architects, Scott Brownrigg, the proposed four-

storey Museum at Cardiff Bay's Britannia Quay was shortlisted for a World Architecture Festival award and named by The Times as 'one of the future buildings to visit' in its Top 21 Visitor Destinations in the World list. Situated on the water's edge of Britannia Park, the ground floor is approximately 90 per cent transparent, maintaining a view of the dockside. The Museum will also provide a reading room, research facilities and an auditorium, plus a café, shop and public toilets, all of which will be open for the community to use.

Jason Semmens, the Director of the Museum of Military Medicine told me, "*Our goal is to create an international venue and one which will benefit everybody; national and local communities, educators, healthcare providers and those creating lifesaving technologies that will support future lifesaving innovations. The Museum will become a centre for new educational programmes, which foster research partnerships and create not only an institution to celebrate past achievements but also a place at the forefront of UK innovation in healthcare.*"

I could write a great deal on the financial challenges, rising building costs, expanding dreams and now the impact of COVID. But I won't. I want to convey the really exciting place that this will be, as a military museum that you as guides will want to factor into your planning.

Well that's what has been occupying a lot of my time. It's very exciting and to be honest, I've not missed being out in the cold and wet or in stifling heat taking groups around windy landscapes. But then again I am now over 70.



BROOKWOOD CEMETERY

Jon Wort 

What to do when in COVID-19 lockdown and you have spent all week in a conference room converted into an Operations Room? The answer, visit a hidden gem just outside the barracks – Brookwood Cemetery.

Depending which route you use it might take you past a remnant of WW2 and the old 'Ironside's' defence line, but that is a subject for another day.

Brookwood is the largest burial ground in the United Kingdom and was opened in 1854 by the London Necropolis & National Mausoleum Company (LNC) and then the largest cemetery in the World. It was intended to become London's only cemetery big enough to serve the capital forever. The major source document for this paper is the excellent book – "*London's Necropolis – a guide to Brookwood Cemetery*" (Second Edition) written by John M Clarke¹ and is recommended reading for anyone wishing to know more about the cemetery (not just the military aspects).

Brookwood is vast and sprawling and every visit uncovers more hidden treasures of either architecture, famous graves or fascinating headstones and epitaphs. The cemetery was designed and laid out on a grand Victorian scale and many of the giant sequoia trees have matured into magnificent specimens.

Brookwood Cemetery is a national treasure, it is a Grade 1 Historic Park and Garden and in 2014 was taken over by Woking Borough Council which established the Woking Necropolis & Mausoleum Company with an investment of an initial £6M to restore the cemetery to its former glory.

There are now some 235,000 graves within Brookwood cemetery covering some 500 acres and burials take place on a daily basis as it is still a very active cemetery. There are 141 Commonwealth burials of the 1914-18 war here, 1 being an unidentified Indian soldier. There are a further 51 Commonwealth burials of the 1939-45 war. There are also five Foreign National war burials in CWGC care.

Although Brookwood was originally conceived as the cemetery for London it was not geographical or socially selective and the cemetery contains burials ranging from anonymous pauper graves, marked purely by depressions in the ground through soldiers, sailors and airmen to a Master of the Royal Household of Queen Victoria with an accompanying fantastic memorial.

The cemetery was created because the population of London had doubled in the first half of the 19th

Century from just under 1 million people in 1801 to over 2¼ million by 1851. In spite of London's growth, the total area of buying ground remained relatively stable at under 300 acres, resulting in acute burial congestion.

The consequence of this was horrific. Graves were constantly re-used, the contents broken through, unearthed and scattered around. Alternatively, vast pits were excavated, involving the desecration of many buried corpses into which any number of new bodies would be ruthlessly crammed.

Scraps of coffin wood were used for household fuel in poor neighbourhoods, whilst many tons of human bones were shipped from London to the North each year, to be crushed and used as fertiliser.

In addition to these repugnant modes of internment many medical experts considered that the likelihood of the spread of disease was significant. Nothing was done until the cholera epidemic of 1848-49, which claimed the lives of some 14,000 plus deaths in London alone.

As a result of this, two cemeteries were to be built in London – The Great Western Metropolitan Cemetery at Kensal Green and the Great Eastern Metropolitan Cemetery near Abbey Wood. For various reasons this did not come about and so Sir Richard Broun and Mr Richard Sprye proposed a radically different solution of having a cemetery outside of London at Woking, that would not be engulfed by development and which could be easily reached by train.

In 1854 the cemetery was opened and it was serviced by a train service starting at Waterloo and ending within the Cemetery itself. Indeed Brookwood Station was not built until some time after the Cemetery opened.

Instead of a hearse and cars the 'Stiff Express' ran, and one could either arrange to travel 1st or 2nd Class (with their own waiting room) or 3rd or Pauper class with shared facilities. The deceased of course only required a one-way ticket, the mourners had to have return tickets!

One of the first graves we encounter is not one you would normally expect to find in a cemetery. It is of a woman incarcerated in Holloway Prison and subsequently executed for her crimes. Edith Jessie

¹ <http://www.john-clarke.co.uk/index.html>



Freddy Bywaters, Percy Thompson and Edith Thompson in the garden of 41 Kensington Crescent, Ilford, on Sunday 10 July 1922.



Thompson headstone.

Thompson (25 December 1893 – 9 January 1923) and Frederick Edward Francis Bywaters (27 June 1902 – 9 January 1923) were a British couple executed for the murder of Thompson’s husband Percy. Their case became a cause célèbre.

Edith Thompson was executed because her lover, Frederick Bywaters, murdered her husband. Both were found guilty during their trial at the Old Bailey. Much controversy surrounds the trial and her subsequent execution. She was the first woman to be hanged in Britain since 1907. Almost one million people signed a petition against the imposed death sentences, but to no avail.

The body of Edith Thompson was buried in an unmarked grave within the walls of Holloway Prison, as was customary. In 1971 the prison underwent an extensive programme of rebuilding, during which the bodies of all the executed women were exhumed for reburial outside the confines of the prison. With the exception of Ruth Ellis, the remains of the four women executed at Holloway (Edith Thompson, Styllou Christofi, Amelia Sach and Annie Walters) were reburied in a single grave at Brookwood Cemetery.

The grave and plot were formally consecrated by the Reverend Barry Arscott of St. Barnabas, Manor Park, the church in which Edith Thompson was married in January 1916. Edith Thompson’s details appear prominently on the face of the tombstone, together with her epitaph:

“Sleep on beloved. Her death was a legal formality”.

The names of the other three women are inscribed around the edges of the tombstone.

The remains of Frederick Bywaters still lie in an unmarked grave within the walls of HMP Pentonville, where they were buried shortly after his execution in January 1923.

Nestled away in a quite spot in the cemetery is the Nurses Plot, containing the graves of 8 QAIMNS and 3

TFNS along with one VAD. Why they are buried here and not in the Military Cemetery, which was in use at the time I have not managed to find out.

There are 12 Victoria Cross winners buried in the cemetery and to find all 12 is normally a labour of love over a whole day as some of them are not easy to find.

One of the most significant ones is that of Major General Daniel Beak, Comd Drake Bn, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, who requested to be buried in an unmarked plot and the exact location of his grave is unknown.

My 2 favourite plots to visit are those of Lt Col John Sherwood Kelly VC², whose citation reads:

“On 20 November 1917 during the Battle of Cambrai at Marcoing, France, when a party of men were held upon the near side of a canal by heavy rifle fire, Lieutenant Colonel Sherwood Kelly at once ordered covering fire, personally led his leading company across the canal and then reconnoitred, under heavy fire, the high ground held by the enemy. He took a Lewis gun team, forced his way through obstacles and covered the advance of his battalion, enabling them to capture the position. Later he led a charge against some pits from which heavy fire was coming, capturing five machineguns and 46 prisoners.”

What the headstone does not reveal is the fascinating fact that he goes on to fight in Russia in 1919 and is later court martialled. Not as a result of his actions in the field but because he wrote to the press, in contravention of King’s Regulations and was found guilty and severely reprimanded. Two weeks later he relinquished his commission, being allowed to retain the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Pursued by a neglected wife and various creditors, he was unsuccessful in his many attempts to reenter the army and even failed to obtain a place in the French Foreign Legion.

My second ‘must see’ grave is that of the first civilian to be awarded the Victoria Cross during the Indian Mutiny in 1857, Mr Ross Mangles.

He was the recommendation by Sir James Outram for the award of the Victoria Cross alongside Mr William McDonell, also from the Bengal Civil Service,



The Nurses Plot.



Maj Gen Beake’s medals.



Lt Col John Sherwood Kelly VC.



Ross Mangles VC.

which was rejected until the Governor-General, Lord Canning, had made emphatic representations to London that led to the Royal Warrant of 10 August 1858 allowing awards to civilians.

His citation from The London Gazette (issue 22283 of 8 July 1859) reads:

“Mr Mangles volunteered and served with the Force, consisting of detachments of Her Majesty’s 10th and 37th Regiments, and some Native Troops, despatched to the relief of Arrah, in July 1857, under the Command of Captain Dunbar of the 10th Regiment. The Force fell into an Ambuscade on the night of the 29th of July 1857, and during the retreat on the next morning, Mr Mangles, with signal gallantry and generous self devotion, and notwithstanding that he himself had been previously wounded, carried for several miles out of action a wounded soldier of Her Majesty’s 37th Regiment, after binding up his wounds under a murderous fire, which killed or wounded almost the whole detachment; and he bore him in safety to the boats.”

A type 26 pillbox on the Basingstoke Canal.



Field Marshal Sir William Robertson.

No visit should be complete without a visit to the grave of Field Marshal Sir William Robertson, 1st Baronet, GCB, GCMG, GCVO, DSO (29 January 1860 – 12 February 1933) he served as Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) – the professional head of the British Army – from 1916 to 1918 during the First World War.

He is the only soldier in the history of the British Army to have risen from the rank of private to its highest rank of Field Marshal.

There are plenty more graves of interest within the cemetery including that of John Singer Sargent, the WW1 official artist famous for painting ‘Gas’ and ‘The Generals’ both of which are on display in the Imperial war Museum. The widow of Capt Smith, of Titanic fame is also buried in the cemetery.

Should anyone wish for a guided tour of the cemetery I am more than happy to arrange one. Send me an e-mail to; jon.wort@me.com.

² The Bravest Man in the British Army: The Extraordinary Life and Death of John Sherwood Kelly by Philip Bujak

PHOTOJOURNALIST GUIDE

PART TWO

Mike Sheil 

When I first started working on my photographic project *'Fields of Battle, Lands of Peace'* in 2005 I was given two pieces of advice by Richard Holmes. The first was to ensure that every picture told a story about the location and secondly to avoid being 'an over-emotional Celt'. The latter was easy as I myself wanted to get away from the habit of so many books which either presented battlefields in sombre black and white or consisted of a preponderance of cemeteries.

Richard held that simply standing in a cemetery narrating the lives of the men interred there simply bent history out of shape as it ignored the men who had survived and anyhow, except on rare occasions, the cemetery itself did little to enable a better understanding of the events which had led to its sad occupancy. As we all recognise, Richard Holmes was a battlefield historian sans-pareil but he always described himself as 'a military historian who likes to tell stories'. A simple philosophy but the problem is where to find the stories. It is all very well trawling through official histories and narrating the bare facts but the devil is really in the detail - the personal detail, the detail known to the men on the ground. As a guide one obviously has to have a grasp of the historical facts but having spent time watching other guides and visiting parties it is clear that people relish anything which brings humanity to the forefront of any location. Inevitably cemeteries are about numbers and, as Stalin said, one death is a tragedy but a million dead are only a statistic, and the project required the photographs to reflect the experience of the men involved.



Photo 8 German barbed wire at Lower Rehfelden.



Photo 8

Sometimes one has the situation where a simple comment by a writer reveals a totally new aspect of the war. Such is the case with an account by Hans Schröder, a German pilot and infantry officer who described in *'An Airman Remembers'* how, stationed on the Hartmannswillerkopf:

"My positions there extend from the Sachesnfad, where my dug-out lies, and down through the so-called 'Heavenly Ladders' to the lower Rehfelden. There the opposing trenches are only a few yards away - one can talk to the French from them. ... our lines are protected by the electric current applied from the Gebweiler power station ... the night before last the men connected up the French

wire with our own ... in the morning they saw an enemy patrol hanging on their own wire."

Later he describes a French attack when:

"We poured a continuous stream into the thick blue-grey masses - then we saw the foremost of them caught by the current of our wire entanglements. It was a ghastly sight!"

All of this makes it quite clear that in some sectors, where sufficient power was available, the Germans used electrified wiring. Some of that wiring is still intact and is the only wiring that I have seen on the Western Front whose original geometric pattern is still clearly visible.

Photo 9 The London Irish Rifles 'Loos Football' on its 'home ground'.



Photo 9

Most people have heard the story of Capt Billy Neville and his footballs on 1 July 1916. In fact, he almost certainly was inspired by a previous action on 25 September 1915 when the London Irish Rifles attacked at Loos. Patrick MacGill, who would later find fame in America as the 'navy poet', was serving as a stretcher bearers and he described how he:

"... peered over the top. The air blazed with star-shells, and Loos in front stood out like a splendid

dawn. A row of impassive faces, sleep-heavy they looked, lined our parapet; bayonets, silver-spined, stood up over the sandbags; the dark bays, the recessed dug-outs with their khaki-clad occupants dimly defined in the light of little candles took on fantastic shapes. I could hear faint, indescribable rustlings as the winds loitered across the levels in front; a light shrapnel shell burst, and its smoke quivered in the radiant light of the star-shells. Showers

and sparks fell from high up and died away as they fell. Like lives of men, I thought, and again that feeling of proximity to the enemy surged through me.

The moment had come when it was unwise to think. ... The air was vicious, with bullets; a million invisible birds flicked their wings very close to my face. Ahead the clouds of smoke, sluggish low-lying fog, and fumes of bursting shells, ... and formed a striking background for the soldiers who were marching up a low slope towards the enemy's parapet. There was no haste in the forward move, very step was taken with regimental precision ... at a point on the right there was some confusion and a little irregularity. Were the men wavering? No fear! The boys on the right were dribbling the elusive football towards the German trench.

By the German barbed wire entanglements were the shambles of war. ... The Irish were now met with harrising rifle fire, deadly petrol bombs and hand grenades. Here I came across dead, dying and sorely wounded; lives maimed and finished ... Here, too, I saw,

bullet-riddled, against one of the spider webs known as chevaux de frise, a limp lump of pliable leather, the football which the boys had kicked across the field.

I had been at work all the morning dressing the wounded, but there were so many. I was a mere child emptying the sea with a tablespoon.

Today the bullet scarred London Irish 'Loos Football' must be one of the most evocative items from the conflict so I was amazed when my presumptuous request to take the football back to its 'home ground' was granted. Museum curators blanch when I tell them how I took an irreplaceable relic and placed it in a muddy field but then, as the LIR curator said, 'what better place for it to tell its story?'

So sorry, Richard, I ignored your strictures about being an 'over emotional Celt' but as they say, the first rule in photography, is that there are no rules and besides, I think that you would have liked the story.

Photo 10 The shell-pocked ground at Thiaumont shows the true face of a WWI battlefield.



Photo 10

Verdun was its own peculiar war within a war and today the ground at Thiaumont is perhaps the most tortured 'battlescape' of the entire Western Front. Raymond Jubert, an officer in the 151st RI reflected

on his time there in his book Verdun 1916, and simply wrote that:

'The infantryman has no function except to get himself crushed, he dies without glory ... at the bottom of a hole, far away from any witness'.

Photo 11 The French front line trench at Le Linge with the German front line atop the slope on the right of the picture.



Photo 11

French battlefields are rewarding places to visit as often their state of preservation gives an immediate impression of the nature of trench warfare and none is more evocative than Le Linge, a rocky ridge in the Vosges where the trenches were a mere 7 metres apart. Henri Belmont gives us a flavour of this extraordinary place in his diary for August 1915:

It is near the summit of this famous Lingekopf, where we are, that the 11th Battalion has been since August 5, in close contact with the Boches, who, after having been driven from it have returned to the charge, without much success however. The crest itself is occupied neither by them nor by us. The rival trenches are face to face at a short distance on the rounded brow which forms the

summit. Between these two lines the ground has become a charnel-house. The bodies of infantrymen who have fallen in the course of successive attacks and the bodies of Germans killed by our guns in recent counter-attacks lie stretched in all positions amidst twisted barbed wire and felled pine trees. At certain times the air is tainted with an abominable smell. My company is at the extremity of this crest on a steep and rocky slope, which dips down rapidly. There a sort of wall has been built—a rampart of stones and bags of earth. Loop-holes have been made in it, and we have succeeded in stretching a few strands of barbed wire in front. Behind this wall the infantry hold themselves ready day and night to receive and repulse attacks which the Germans may attempt against us.

Photo 12 *The attack described by Lukens crossed this field and entered the Bois des Ogons in the distance.*



Photo 12

The plethora of well written American accounts belies the seeming national indifference to their part in the conflict. 'Blue Ridge Memoir' is a sadly forgotten narrative by Edward Lukens, beautifully written with perceptive comment and a great eye for detail it offers a superb vignette of the AEF campaign in the Argonne.

As our first drive had shown us, the thick woods which checker-board the hills of Cunel made far more difficult going than the bald, shell-pocked hills around Verdun. ... the proportion of forest to clearing was just about enough so that all the clearings were covered by the field of fir from unseen guns in the woods, while the woods were filled with snipers and accurately ranged for artillery.

The fighting around this region was ... not handled as well from above as was the initial state of the drive.... frequent changes of orders, uncertainty as what we were supposed to be doing, incorrect artillery firing and almost total lack of aviation were annoying features ... in spite of everything we gained ground ... but let any critic look at the rows of wooded hills ... the old Boche MG and artillery positions ... and say whether the war could have been won in 1918 if they had not been taken. ... our staff

officers were inexperienced in that kind of work ... but how in the world could we have had an experienced army without waiting for the next spring and incurring casualties all winter

A kilometre of open field lay in front of us, the next ridge being crowned by the Bois des Ogons. We advanced at a steady walk... Boche plains circled over our heads ... shells tore holes in the earth ... time after time a big one would come tearing through the air, a dozen men nearest it would drop, a cloud of earth and smoke would appear and one would wonder whether of any of them had escaped. In an instant one would get up and then another ... sometimes one or two would lie still.

We reached the edge of the Bois des Ogons ... the planes had seen us ... a perfect hail of shells landed among the trees ahead of us... we jumped up out of our scanty protection and plunged into the forest ... going single file at five pace intervals so that a direct hit on one man would perhaps spare the man next to them.

I was leading the way with my runner Pvt. Symington about five paces behind me when a shell burst in the soft soil between Symington and me ... only the interval and the softness of the soil saved us ... it was ten minutes before my ears stopped ringing.

Photo 13 *The arched chambers of the Batterie de l'Hôpital at Verdun where Harry S Truman wrote his letter.*



Photo 13

Simple domestic comes from an American gunner who wrote a letter to his fiancée from Verdun describing how:

There is an old battery of 155 long guns across the road ... I have a very large arched room which contains the battery kitchen. On one side I have a small room with a lot of maps and firing tables and other necessary Battery commander junk. On the other I have a sleeping apartment ... I have a

telephone right at my bedside so... I can be immediately informed. I have all the comforts of home except that I'll have a habit sleeping underground that I'll have to go to the cellar to sleep when I get home.

The arched chamber he describes is still visible as the Batterie de l'Hôpital at Verdun and the writer would become known to the world as President Harry S. Truman.

Photo 14 Redoubt near Fort Vaux where Delvert and his men were stationed.]



Photo 14

Many French descriptions are typified by their rather dramatic prose style but 'Carnets d'un fantassin' by Charles Delvert must surely be one of the best WWI memoirs as he describes the struggle for Verdun in simple, powerful words.

June 1 - During the evening the R1 redoubt was attacked but two of our machine guns swept the slopes and cooled the enemy's enthusiasm. It is a sad sight in our trenches, the ground is spattered everywhere with blood: the light of the setting sun shows the stiffening corpses like some bloody scene in a painting. Everywhere there are nameless fragments.

June 2 - 2000 hrs ... the Germans jumped out of their trenches. Here all the world is mad. I had

distributed all the grenades because at such close quarters rifles are useless. We shortened the fuses and let them have it. They replied with rifle grenades but they passed overhead. Surprised by our reception, they retreated ...

2200 A man arrived with 5 flasks of water, one of them empty for all the company. Each flask holds 2 litres so there was just 8 ltrs for 71 men. The adjutant made a fair distribution of the water but it seemed to smell of the dead.

June 5 - ... relieved with just 38 men left. Alas what sad sentinels we are leaving behind. There they are, lined up on the parapet, stiff and bloody but still seeming to guard this land even in their death.

CRIMEAN CAPERS MY FIRST 'PROPER' TOUR

Des FitzGerald 

Back in August 2000 I guided my first 'proper' battlefield tour which was looking at the Crimean War. Prior to this I had attended some military battlefield tours, as a spectator and had an above-average interest in military history. Earlier that year I had co-led my first military tour to Monte Cassino and Anzio. With the ignorance and enthusiasm of youth, I thought that I can do this.

A broad generalisation is that military tours have a small number who are interested and knowledgeable (normally the commander and the senior staff), the bulk who are just interested (or feign interest) and then a few who couldn't care less but are focussed on the local nightlife. Civilian groups are paying their hard earned money and are generally well informed and want to actually see the ground and examine your depth of knowledge, hence my then working definition of a 'proper' tour.

For this tour I would be taking paying customers (all civilians) and I was going to be paid. The tour firm still exists but they have since changed their name, which I am sure was nothing to do with me. Fortunately I had been to the Crimea two years before on a military tour with Patrick Mercer and a certain John Cotterill (who some readers may have

heard of). So I had a good general understanding of the ground and the sequence of events. The reason I got the tour, was that neither Mercer nor Cotterill were available and the tour company's chosen guide (a re-enactor and self-proclaimed expert on the 95th Rifles) had just been declared persona non grata in the Crimea and expelled. Such are the fortunes of war. I immediately started boning up and preparing my notes.

The tour company informed me that I had something called a Tour Manager, who would look after all the administration. Things looked brighter, being paid and not having to worry about the admin! We met up and he explained what he did and that he hadn't been to the Crimea before. In the land of the blind the man with one eye is king. He did however have two VHS cassettes (for younger readers, Google it) of the last tour led by the 95th re-enactor. When I got home I sat down with my wife to watch them. At the end I said, 'Do you think they edited out all the good bits?' My wife just said, 'No he's crap!' At least I now had a benchmark and a bar that even I felt I could clear.

We flew into Kiev and then travelled by train to the Crimea. The tour were a small but perfectly formed group. They were all older than me and very interested in the subject. All were men, apart from one wife who had been brought along, although she had a distant ancestor who had served in the Crimea. Most were Napoleonic buffs, who having explored that subject thoroughly were seeking something different, and the Crimean War felt and tactically looked Napoleonic. More alarming was the man who said he had been here before. My mind was worried, would he see through my patently thin knowledge. I enquired when had he visited the battlefields, he said "No he had fought there!" He didn't look that old nor did he sound Russian or German, so I asked when he fought. He then said he was George Flowers



Crimea medal with 2 clasps,
17th Lancers.

of the 17th Lancers. I assumed that provided he had his medication he would be OK, but I had better keep an eye on him. Later I learned that this is what might be referred to as 'a problem on tour'.

On arrival in Sevastopol, Volodya, our local fixer arrived and we had a small tour bus driven by an shaven headed, thick necked, unsmiling extra straight from the central casting for KGB thugs. Our fixer explained that various Soviet military organisations ran the local business and that our fuel and vehicle was from the Spetsnaz. The hotel was newly built and while sparse was comfortable, definitely better than my previous visit.

As the tour progressed I grew in confidence, the weather was pleasant, I had sufficient knowledge to parry most of their questions. Coupled with my experience from the previous tour and a 1:50,000 map, that I kept hidden (as Sevastopol is a restricted Military District) it enabled me to be confident that I was stood on the correct piece of ground. They were a generally engaging and well educated crowd, even George Flowers in his latest reincarnation was some form of senior university lecturer. We stood on the Sandbag Battery, which contrary to the assertion on video by the 95th re-enactor that it had long disappeared, was still very much in evidence. We found the set of caves where Capt Goodlake VC had operated from and stood on the mound where the 93rd Highlanders gained fame as the 'Thin Red Line'.

After another successful days guiding we were sat in the square opposite the hotel when a man approach me and asked if I was English. I replied, no British. He then started talking about Kursk (the submarine and not the battle) which had tragically been lost two weeks earlier. He became more animated (drink had been taken) and then for reasons unknown decided to emphasise his argument by pointing a pistol at me. One of my clients joined me to see what was happening, so now my chances of being shot were reduced by 50%. My luck was improving. We engaged him in witty banter, repartee and generally played for time. The hotel staff had



alerted the authorities and before my guiding career was prematurely ended the gunman was disarmed and he was unceremoniously hustled off in a van by some stern looking policemen. I think this could also be called 'a problem on tour'.

What happened to George Flowers? Well it transpired that my academic friend had been reading about the Crimean War and had read that a certain George Flowers 17th Lancers had served and had been killed in the Charge of the Light Brigade (other and more significant actions also occurred in this war). He had then imagined himself as George Flowers and all his research into the war was through the prism of this soldier. The valley is now covered with vineyards but with a bit of extrapolation between George and myself we found an agreed spot where we decided that he had been killed. We cracked open a bottle of Crimean Champagneski and all drank his health.

After these amateurish antics I am glad I joined the Guild and have since endeavoured to be a better guide.



17th Lancers 'Death Or Glory' badge.

NEWmembers:

New members who have been welcomed to the Guild between Summer 2020 and the date of publication.

Andy White (*rejoining*)
Keir Ayling
Gary Edwards (*rejoining*)

Stephen Erskine
Matthew Menneke

FIELDguides The Fall of Mercia 873

Returning to guiding after an enforced 'COVID - Lockdown' break was a pleasant experience for members. On a sunny Saturday in August a group of twenty met at Repton Church, Derbyshire to investigate the sudden and complete collapse of the Anglo-Saxon kingdom of Mercia to the Vikings. The church of Repton was the place to start, being the religious centre of this kingdom.

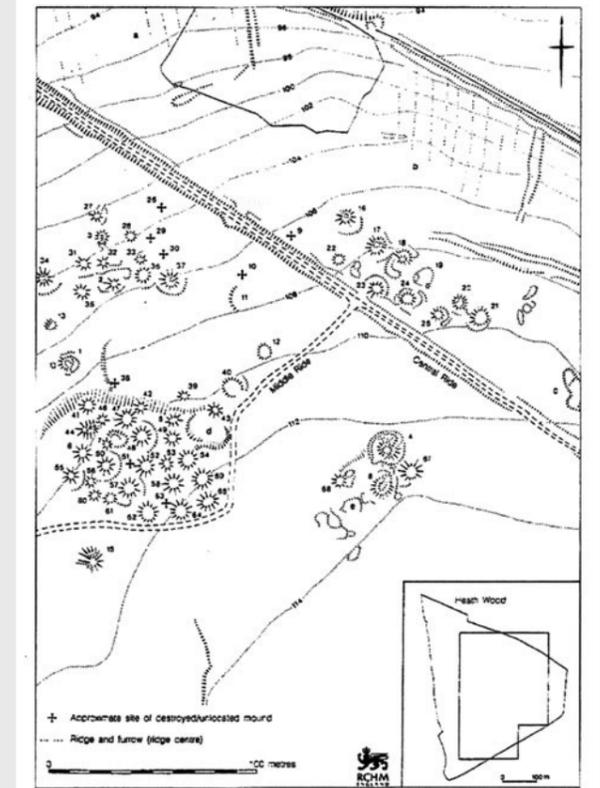
Normally, as guides, we first explore a battlefield and end the day in a cemetery recounting the tails of valour of the fallen. Not so for this party. History has not recorded any battles to account for the dramatic defeat of Mercia, the largest Anglo-Saxon Kingdom. However there are plenty of bodies around Repton to evidence fierce fighting. So it's here, in the church yard, that the recce began looking for signs of battle.

Members first looked at locations of individual graves then at a mound where 264 skeletons had been found. Given that the church yard has always been a Christian sanctuary it might be expected that these bodies would be the Anglo-Saxon dead. Indeed, before the advance of scientific analysis of skeletons, it was believed these must be the soldiers of Mercian King Burgred's army. Therefore it was surprising to find that all forensic traces from the combatants' bodies indicated a Danish homeland.

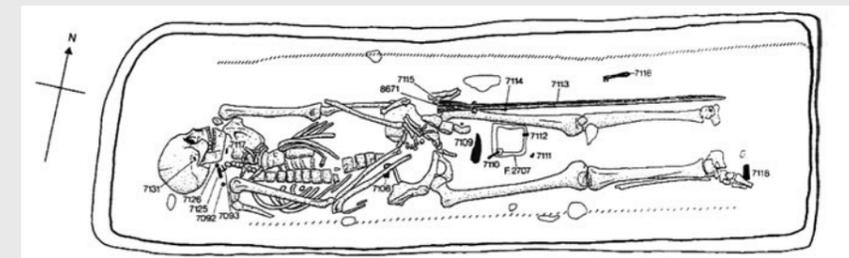
The recce party looked at the location of one notable Dane, shown above. Forensic excavation evidenced his status, as he was buried with a sword. But he was also buried with a Thor's Hammer necklace, boars tusk and Jackdaw's leg. All very Viking!

A short drive away the party went walking in the woods to seek out the remarkable signs of a further 59 burials. This time the warriors were buried under cremation mounds, so distinctly pagan and Viking. By this time we were all wondering where the Anglo-Saxon dead must be, after all they were the losers in this feat of arms.

Before adjourning for lunch the group considered the evidence for the fall of Mercia. It seemed the Vikings



Viking cremation mounds near Repton.



had paid a high price for their victories in Mercia; with some four hundred dead from an army of perhaps two thousand.

Perhaps the Anglo-Saxons bodies were left on the battlefield for carrion? Perhaps taken way for Christian burials, yet to be located. Meanwhile Repton church continues to show the scars of being used as a strong point, so we concluded that there must have been at least a 'last stand' here.

Members enjoying 'fellowship' with post recce refreshments.

THE DEFEAT OF GERMANY 1945

Jim Tanner 

21st Army Group's operations in Germany in 1945, leading up to the German surrender on Lüneberg Heath on 4 May, are relatively unknown but certainly reward close study. The assault across the Rhine – Operation PLUNDER and its derivatives, especially Operation VARSITY – were models of combined arms and joint operations, to use the present day vernacular, and have received most attention. But the slogging matches beforehand – VERITABLE/BLOCKBUSTER – and the dash to the Elbe afterwards have received scant attention, despite displaying the flowering of Anglo-Canadian operational and tactical capability.

Like all other tours scheduled for this year, the annual tour for the British Commission for Military History, which was due to take place in April, was postponed. The tour is open to Guild members and has been re-scheduled for 22-26 April next year; Battle Honours will again be the operator. The tour will cover both VERITABLE and PLUNDER.

Guild members might be interested in conducting a virtual tour of the 'Battle for the Rhineland'. In the 1980s the British Army produced a number of historical films at a time when the Army was re-thinking its approach to warfare in Europe. The Battle for the Rhineland, which focuses on VERITABLE, was covered by three films and these can be found on YouTube. Ctrl+Click on the link below and this should take you to the BCMH website and all three films. A further search should take you to others, including Operation GOODWOOD in Normandy.

VIRTUAL TOUR - 2020 TOUR POSTPONED - NOW 22-26 April 2021 Battlefield Tour to Reichswald & Rhine Crossing

There are, interestingly, no single published histories of VERITABLE and relatively few studies specific to PLUNDER. There are also no modern guide-books to VERITABLE, although Tim Saunders has filled in the gap for PLUNDER – the amphibious operation across the Rhine and VARSITY – the airborne assault. In December 1947 the British Army of the Rhine conducted detailed battlefield tours of all three operations and each was accompanied by two supporting documents for directing staff and for spectators. Hard copies are available in certain libraries but digital copies can be found online and a helpful source is www.battlefieldhistorian.com It should be noted that Germany has changed markedly from all those years ago and a detailed map study is strongly recommended before venturing out. Access by coach to

certain places can be difficult and the German authorities are not sympathetic to roadside parking.

A number of useful books and links are shown below. Many out-of-print books can be found online and those marked * are available through the Naval and Military Press as reprints or modern editions. There are numerous unit histories and personal accounts, most of them listed in Patrick Delaforce's books. Delaforce did a very good job in covering the 1944-45 period. His books can be somewhat disorganised but they contain some helpful details. Unit and regimental histories have not been included here but some recommended personal accounts are also shown below:

CAMPAIGN/GENERAL HISTORIES

Allport, Alan, *Browned Off and Bloody-Minded – The British Soldier Goes to War 1939-1945*, London, Yale University Press, 2015. *Illuminating social history of the British soldier in WW2.*

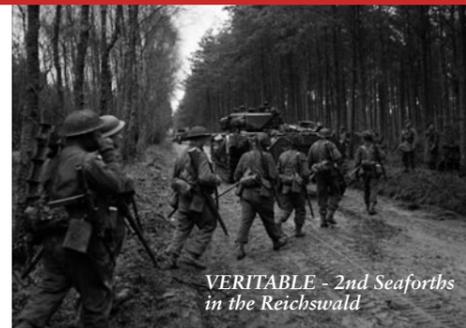
Buckley, John, *Monty's Men – The British Army and the Liberation of Europe*, London and New Haven, Yale University Press, 2013. *Excellent modern study of the British Army throughout the NW Europe Campaign.*

Ellis, Major LF, *History of the Second World War United Kingdom Military Series, Victory in the West, Volume II – The Defeat of Germany*, London, HMSO, 1968. *British Official History, together with Volume I, for the NW Europe Campaign. * Dry but essential official record.*

Essame, H, *The Battle for Germany*, London, Batsford, 1969. *Good, very readable account from the end of MARKET GARDEN to the end of the War. Essame commanded 214 Brigade, in 43rd Division, throughout.*

Fennell, Jonathan, *Fighting the People's War – The British and Commonwealth Armies and the Second World War*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2019. *While covering the whole war, an invaluable and fresh insight on the British and Commonwealth military experience. Particularly important for dispelling certain myths.*

Kite, Ben, *Stout Hearts – The British and Canadians in Normandy 1944*, Solihull, Helion & Company, 2014. *While*



specific to Normandy, useful collection of chapters on British Army organisation, tactics, techniques and equipment.

Montgomery of Alamein, Field Marshal the Viscount, *Normandy to the Baltic – The Personal Account of the Conquest of Germany*, London, Hutchinson, 1946.

Important in understanding the great man's viewpoint.

Russell, John, *No Triumphant Procession – The Forgotten Battles of April 1945*, London, Arms and Armour Press, 1994. *The final two months of the War.*

Williams, Jeffery, *The Long Left Flank – The Hard Fought Way to the Reich, 1944-1945*, London, Leo Cooper, 1988. *The story of First Canadian Army.*

Zuehlke, Mark, *Forgotten Victory – First Canadian Army and the Cruel Winter of 1944-45*, Madeira Park, Douglas & McIntyre, 2014. *Particularly good on BLOCKBUSTER.*

VERITABLE/PLUNDER

Clark, Lloyd, *Crossing the Rhine – Breaking into Nazi Germany 1944 and 1945*, New York, Atlantic, 2008. *Covers both MARKET GARDEN and VARSITY.*

Delaforce, Patrick, *Onslaught on Hitler's Rhine – Operations Plunder and Varsity March 1945*, Fonthill, 2015.

Saunders, Tim, *Operation Plunder – The British and Canadian Operations*, Barnsley, Pen & Sword, 2006. *Battleground Series.*

Saunders, Tim, *Operation Varsity – The British and Canadian Airborne Assault*, Barnsley, Pen & Sword, 2008. *Battleground Series.*

DIVISIONAL HISTORIES

Barclay, Brigadier C N, *The History of the 53rd (Welsh) Division in the Second World War*, London, William Clowes and Sons, 1956.

Colvin, Tony, *The Noise of Battle – The British Army and the Last Breakthrough Battle West of the Rhine, February-March 1945*, Solihull, Helion, 2016. *Lengthy and detailed account of 3rd Division.*

Delaforce, Patrick, *Monty's Ironsides – From the Normandy Beaches to Bremen with the 3rd Division*, Stroud, Alan Sutton, 1995.

Delaforce, Patrick, *Churchill's Desert Rats – From Normandy to the Baltic with the 7th Armoured Division*, Stroud, Alan Sutton, 1994.

Delaforce, Patrick, *The Black Bull – From Normandy to the Baltic with the 11th Armoured Division*, Stroud, Alan Sutton, 1993.

Delaforce, Patrick, *The Fighting Wessex Wyverns – From Normandy to the Baltic with the 43rd Wessex Division*, Stroud, Alan Sutton, 1994.

Delaforce, Patrick, *Monty's Northern Legions – 50th Northumbrian and 15th Scottish Divisions at War 1939-1945*, Stroud, Alan Sutton, 2004.

Delaforce, Patrick, *Monty's Highlanders – 51st Highland Division in World War Two*, Brighton, Tom Donovan Publishing, 1997.

Delaforce, Patrick, *Red Crown and Dragon – 53rd Welsh Division in North-West Europe 1944-1945*, Brighton, Tom Donovan Publishing, 1996.

Essame, Major General H, *The 43rd Wessex Division at War 1944-1945*, London, William Clowes and Sons, 1952.

Lindsay, Captain Martin and Johnston, Captain M E, *History of 7th Armoured Division, Germany, 1945.*

Martin, Lieutenant General H G, *The 15th Scottish Division 1939-1945*, London, 1948.*

Rosse, The Earl of and Hill, Colonel E R, *The Story of the Guards Armoured Division*, Lonon, Geoffrey Bles Ltd, 1956. *Reprinted by Pen & Sword 2017.*

Salmond, J B, *The History of the 51st Highland Division 1939-1945*, Edinburgh, William Blackwood, 1953.

PERSONAL MEMOIRS

A number of accounts have been published over the years. The most outstanding are probably, for the infantry, Peter White's astonishing memoir and that of Sydney Jary, a standard text at Sandhurst; for the armour, Stephen Dyson and David Render.

Borthwick, Alastair, *Battalion – A British Infantry Unit's Actions from El Alamein to the Elbe, 1942-1945*, London, Baton Wicks, 1994. *5th Seaforth Highlanders, first published as Sans Peur in 1946.*

Boscawen, Robert, *Armoured Guardsmen – A War Diary June 1944-April 1945*, Barnsley, Pen & Sword, 2001. *1st (Armoured) Battalion Coldstream Guards.*

Dyson, Stephen, *Tank Twins: East End Brothers in Arms 1943-1945*, London, Leo Cooper, 1993. *Loader/Operator 107 Regiment RAC.*

Foley, John, *Mailed Fist*, London, Panther, 1968. *107 Regiment RAC.*

Greenwood, Sergeant Trevor, *D-Day to Victory – The Diaries of a British Tank Commander*, London, Simon & Schuster, 2012. *Troop commander 9 RTR.*

Hills, Stuart, *By Tank into Normandy*, London, Cassell, 2002. *Troop commander Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry.*

Jary, Sidney, *18 Platoon, Bristol*, Sydney Jary Ltd, 1987. *Platoon commander 4th Battalion Somerset Light Infantry.*

Proctor, Corporal Douglas, *Section Commander*, Department of War Studies, RMAS. *Supporting account by one of Sydney Jary's section commanders. Unpublished.*

Render, David, *Tank Action – An Armoured Troop Commander's War 1944-45*, London, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2016. *Troop commander Sherwood Rangers Yeomanry.*

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Whitehouse, Stanley and Bennett, George, *Fear is the Foe – A Footslogger from Normandy to the Rhine*, London, Robert Hale, 1995. *Private soldier 1st Buckinghamshire Battalion and 1st Battalion Black Watch.*

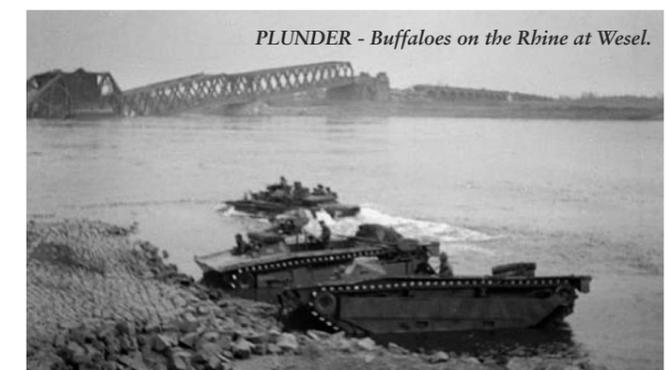
WEBSITES

Three particularly useful websites:

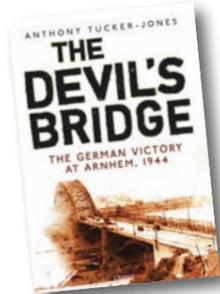
www.15thscottishdivisionwardiaries.co.uk

www.51hd.co.uk

www.pegasusarchive.org



GUIDEbooks:



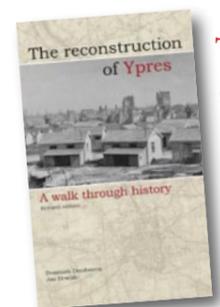
THE DEVIL'S BRIDGE The German Victory at Arnhem 1944

By Anthony Tucker-Jones

I have been looking forward to reading this latest offering on Arnhem from Anthony Tucker-Jones for some time. He is a prolific author who usually adds value to whichever area of historical interest that he ventures into. An updated review of the German perspective on Market Garden can only be a good thing, the narrative has been saturated with a maroon tinged hue for far too long. There have, of course, been some excellent German histories in recent years - Scott Revell, Bob Gerritsen and Niall Cherry making notable specialist contributions. This book has attracted some flak, not least the fact that the jacket has Nijmegen Bridge on it - But that is the point. What the Author sets out to do, is to put the reader in a seat in the corner of the German Command Post, monitoring the Teutonic battle rhythm and watching the various personalities involved. This is achieved, the narrative is informative and will take the reader away from the well trodden 'Bridge Too Far' route. As ever, with Osprey, good maps and pictures support the text. If you haven't stepped outside the Oosterbeek Perimeter and looked back in yet, this is a good overview.

Review by Mike Peters

Published by Osprey
RRP £20.00
paperback, pp304



THE RECONSTRUCTION OF YPRES A Walk from the Cloth Hall to Menin Gate

By Dominiek Dendooven & Jan Dewilde

Most battlefield guides know the battles, cemeteries, and memorials on their chosen patch. There is, of course, more to being a professional guide, an understanding of local culture and architecture is essential. The walk to your evening restaurant can be a long one if you can't answer the inevitable questions from your clients. With that in mind, if you are an Ypres guide, this is an essential purchase - avoid embarrassing silence, add some depth to your knowledge of Wipers.

Review by Mike Peters

Published by Unicorn Publishing Group
RRP £12.99
paperback, pp95

SICILY 43 The First Assault on Fortress Europe

By James Holland

Full disclosure on this one, Sicily fascinates me, over the years I have visited the island dozens of times leading military and civilian groups on Battlefield Tours. On a number of the military tours I have worked alongside the author, I do know James Holland well - however, that does not mean he gets off lightly with this review. In fact, I expected an even higher standard than normal from him on this particular subject. Suffice to say, this is another excellent history produced to the highest standard and, as ever, easy to read and totally absorbing. Operation Husky, the Allied invasion of Sicily in July 1943 is far from a forgotten chapter in the chronology of WW2. Sicily is however too often regarded as a minor stepping stone before the assault on the Italian mainland, Monte Cassino and the Normandy landings. This refreshing new history of the first Allied venture into occupied Europe really challenges the established view of an Allied walkover. It goes a long way toward explaining the true significance of the invasion - in some style.

Review by Mike Peters

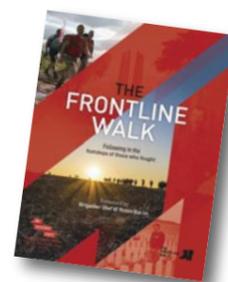
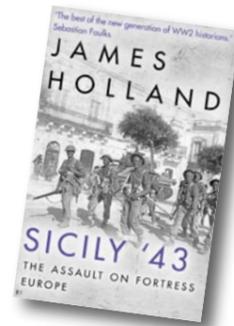
Published by Bantam Press
RRP £25.00
hardback, pp640

THE FRONTLINE WALK Following in the Footsteps of those who Fought

By Terry Whenham
and Steve Roberts

This book follows the participants in the Soldier's Charity 100km walk along, over, through the battlefields of the Western Front. The Historians narrating the story for the walkers are familiar GBG faces, and well done to them. While this is not a comprehensive history, it is an engrossing read. The maps and pictures that support the historical vignettes and the associated individual pilgrimages are an excellent case study into - why people visit battlefields and what they find when they get there. An enjoyable and informative read, well done to all involved in the project.

Published by Unicorn Publishing Group
RRP £20.00
hardback, pp192



BATTLE OF BRITAIN 1940 The Finest Hour's Human Cost

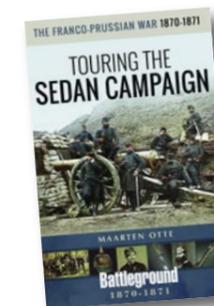
By Dilip Sarkar MBE

As we commemorate the 80th anniversary of the Second World War, Dilip Sarkar's insatiable appetite to remember all things 'Battle of Britain' is given an unusual perspective in this timely new offering.

As the author points out, each chapter 'concerns an individual'. Unlike many other books on 'The Few', however, each one became a casualty. Eighteen chapters detail the short lives of some of those lost during the Battle of Britain. They include one of the RAF's youngest pilots, plus an experienced Wing Commander. Other chapters pay tribute to those on the ground (civilian and ground crew alike) as well as those on the sea (an Indian merchant seaman killed by German bombers). There's even a lengthy chapter devoted to a Luftwaffe pilot whose Me 109 was shot down over Biggin Hill. Exhaustively researched, the individual stories are cleverly woven through the chronology of the Battle of Britain. This is a book that movingly remembers the 'also rans'.

Review by Paul Bingley

Published by Pen & Sword Ltd
RRP £30.00
hardback, pp296



TOURING THE SEDAN CAMPAIGN The Franco-Prussian War 1870-1871

By Maarten Otte

The Franco-Prussian War is one of the most bloody and dramatic episodes in the history of Western Europe, similar in many technical respects to the American Civil War. The battlefields sit under our noses as we enthusiastically range across them en route to those of the Great War and the Second World War... and yet, the majority of battlefield tourists simply ignore the war and the blood-soaked fields over which it was fought. This latest release from Pen & Sword is a great entry point for anyone looking to do something different. The well established format of the Battleground series has been richly populated by Maarten Otte. This book offers the optimum mix of maps, pictures and, most importantly, an engaging and coherent historical narrative. If you are thinking of looking for new pastures, this would be a good place to start.

Review by Mike Peters

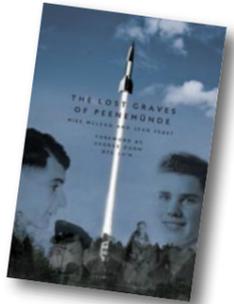
Published by Pen & Sword Ltd
RRP £14.99
paperback, 206pp

THE LOST GRAVES OF PEENEMÜNDE

By Mike McLeod & Sean Feast

The RAF Bomber Command raid on the German rocket development site at Peenemunde in August 1943 is well documented. This new book covers the story of the successful, but extremely costly raid that set Hitler's rocket programme back significantly. This is however, a sensitive and thoughtful look at the story of just a few of the 245 British and Commonwealth aircrew killed on the raid. The authors tell the stories of those aircrew that are listed as killed during the raid, and yet their bodies have not been recovered. It is this very human and tragic story that makes this a very powerful read.

Published by High Fight Ltd
RRP £19.99
hardback, pp115



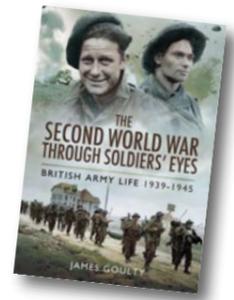
THE SECOND WORLD WAR THROUGH SOLDIERS' EYES British Army Life 1939-1945

By James Gouly

It's not often that a book can be packed with so much information from hundreds of different sources, and still remain clear and concise. James Gouly has managed to achieve this with his fascinating, The Second World War Through Soldiers' Eyes. The book takes the reader through the gamut of experiences a British soldier could expect between 1939 and 1945. Whether it was using a jerrycan to make a rudimentary stove in the North African desert; or picking up a 'demob suit' if you were lucky enough to survive the Malayan jungle, Gouly has deftly covered it all. Well structured, the book guides the reader through every aspect of British Army life, from call-up and training, to becoming a casualty or Prisoner of War. It's peppered with first-hand accounts from all kinds of servicemen and women, including many from celebrities such as Spike Milligan and Alan Whicker. The is a useful reference book offering a particularly strong 'whiff of cordite'.

Review by Paul Bingley

Published by Pen & Sword Ltd
RRP £19.99
hardback, pp240



10 Questions:

Name: Joris Nieuwint

Age: 42

Nationality: Dutch



Home Location: Veghel,
The Netherlands

Tour Company: The Battlefield
Explorer Tours

Validating: Yes



In each edition of 'Despatches', we will be introducing a member of the Guild. In this edition, it is Joris Nieuwint.

1. How long have you been interested in battlefields and what was it that initially attracted your interest?

For as long as I can remember I have had a passion for the history of WWII and the battlefields. In 1991 I moved to Arnhem and suddenly found myself living in one of the major battlefields which I could explore at leisure. In 2008 I moved down Hell's Highway to Veghel which gave me a completely new area to discover. What fascinates me the most about battlefields is standing in the footsteps of history, realising what took place exactly where I'm at, all these years ago.

2. Have any experiences stood out? In 2004 during the Market Garden commemorations me and my wife (then girlfriend) were a host family for a veteran from the 4th Dorsetshire regiment. This enabled me to spend some quality time with a veteran and experience the commemorations from a different perspective. It did not go entirely according to plan, one night he got a heart attack so after that we spend the commemorations in and out of hospitals. Luckily he recovered and was able to go home with his family.

3. What do you enjoy the most about battlefield guiding? Being out and about with people I would otherwise never have met, sharing my passion and showing them all these incredible locations where history happened. During the tour, when you see it click, when you see that they understand it, that is an incredible feeling of accomplishment.

4. What is your favourite stand, location or battlefield and why? The Robert Cole memorial near Best in the Netherlands. He was such an amazing man and he was both feared and loved by his men (some were more afraid of him than the Germans). He is one of those persons that you'd hope would survive the war and live a happy life afterwards. Unfortunately that didn't happen but by talking about him I try to make sure he is not forgotten.

5. Which battlefield would you like to visit in the future? That list is incredibly long but if I cut it

down to the places I'm actually able to visit in the near future it would be Waterloo and Verdun. Going further away I'd like to visit the Gustav Line in Italy, with the emphasis on Monte Cassino and the Rapido crossing. On my bucket list are also Hawaii and the battlefields of the Pacific, if I ever get the chance!

6. What have you enjoyed the most about being a member of the Guild? When I started as a guide I found that being a guide was a bit lonely, even though I met new people all the time I never got to meet my colleagues. The Guild changed all that, by joining I was able to meet like-minded people who share the same passion as me and are in the same line of work. People I can truly connect with.

7. If there was a fire and you could only save one battlefield-related book or prop, what would you save and why? Saving just one thing? That would be my Dodge WC 51, a WWII vehicle. When I bought that in 2006 I never knew it would completely change my life. It got me onto a path that would lead me to becoming the co-founder of War History Online and working full time for that website for a couple of years. Because of the Dodge I joined a living history group called *the Screaming Ducks* and ultimately it is one of the reasons I became a battlefield guide. So many amazing adventures were made in the Dodge that I cannot imagine my life without it.

8. What type of group do you think is the most challenging to lead on a tour? The most challenging for me are the kids and youngsters because so much depends on us guides passing the message on to the next generation. They are the ones who need to take over the torch of remembrance from us. If we fail in getting them involved, fail in getting them to care about history, about the stories of heroism and sacrifice then in the worst case scenario, the buck stops with us. We cannot let that happen.

9. What's the best tip, story or nugget of information you have been given by a fellow battlefield guide? Avoid going down a rabbit hole and focus on the essence of what you want your clients to remember at the end of your talk.

10. What is the funniest or most dramatic thing you have seen on tour? One of those incredible moments that everything comes together was when I was at the monument for the temporary American cemetery at Son en Breugel. During the stand an old man came by on his bicycle, he stopped and then started talking about his memories of the cemetery. How he had to visit the graves with his school (his words). Suddenly the events at the location were no longer abstract, we were listening to a living link.