



THE  
**NEWSLETTER**  
SPRING 2024



BR0753

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The 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the D-Day landings on 6<sup>th</sup> June 1944 gives us an opportunity to commemorate the extraordinary acts of bravery and camaraderie experienced and recorded for prosperity.  
We reiterate our vow!  
“We will remember them”

The invasion of Normandy was the beginning of the end of World War II in Europe. It paved the way for the liberation of Paris in August 1944, the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944, and the final defeat of Germany in May 1945. D-Day was a turning point in history, and a testament to the bravery and sacrifice of the Allied soldiers.

It is also curious that the last invasion of Britain in 1066 came from these beaches and William Normandy was born in Falaise, Henley's twin town.

## Meetings are on the 3rd Tuesday each month

- **Venue** - Henley Rugby Club, Menza Restaurant
- **Lunch** - will consist of a delicious main course with an alternative vegetarian dish, scrumptious pudding, and coffee/tea.
- **Timings** - Talk at 11.30 (please be seated by 11.20) and lunch 12.30.

We very much look forward to seeing you and don't forget that you are welcome to gather at the bar for a drink from 10.45 a.m. before moving to the adjoining meeting room for the talk and lunch.

**NB Booking & Payment must be made by the Thursday before the Tuesday lunch.**

**Book** with Karen in the first instance by email: [kcgrieve@btinternet.com](mailto:kcgrieve@btinternet.com) or phone her on 07990 833241  
**Then pay £18** for the lunch preferably by Bank Transfer to:

RBL Henley  
A/c 00027756  
Sort Code - 30-94-13  
Ref - Lunch

or by

Cheque made out to:  
Henley-on-Thames Branch  
c/o Kathy Bardwell-Springett  
Branch Treasurer - 5 The Maltings, Hart Street,  
Henley-on-Thames, RG9 2FE

**NB re car parking** - If you would like to park at the Rugby Club we will collect 50p from you on your arrival and pay it into the club for you. All you need to do is to put a note in your car window saying **RBL LUNCH**

## Recent Events 2024

The February meeting of the Henley & Peppard Branch of the Royal British Legion took place as usual at the Menza Café. Members and guests met for coffee before a fascinating illustrated talk entitled "**Dentistry in the Bush**" given by Stuart Cripps who qualified in dentistry at Guy's Hospital in 1969. In retirement from 2009 until 2019 he undertook annual trips to Tanzania with the charity Bridge2Aid, teaching emergency dentistry in the bush.

The group which went on each trip included six UK dentists and four UK dental nurses. In very remote areas the six local people they trained, one to one, were African nurses with very limited experience of working in the mouth. Stuart and his colleagues taught them how to diagnose facial pain and how to extract teeth safely. Each African nurse could be looking after as many as 10,000 people which showed the importance of training locals in addition to appropriate material aid in underdeveloped countries. A priority for Bridge2Aid was also to cut down the use of antibiotics. Stuart conveyed the huge rewards of the work he did, but also the exhaustion he would feel on his return home.

## Upcoming Event 2024

**Tuesday 19 March** **John Bodman** - '**Travels in India**' An Englishman's experiences of travelling around India over the last 20 years. Rosemary Jones, Secretary of the Shiplake Branch of RBL, will add information from a woman's perspective. They will speak about the Golden Temple at Amritsar, the Shimla Railway, Temple cities and their pilgrims, tribal people in the Thar Desert in Northern India and much more besides.

**NB** - Book & Pay by Thursday 14<sup>th</sup>

**Tuesday 16 April** **Richard Pinches** '**Bagnold's Boys in the Desert**' The story of the Long Range Desert Group  
**NB** - Book & Pay by Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> April

**Tuesday 21 May** **Lowland Search and Rescue - Oxfordshire.** Sandwiched between the two big search and rescue charities such as the RNLI at sea, and the Air Ambulance, this charity assists the police on the ground searching for lost or vulnerable people and are on call 24/7 to support the emergency services and Oxfordshire's Vital public services in extreme circumstance. They will tell you much more about their activities, and hopefully bring a couple of Search & Rescue highly trained dogs with them!

**NB** - Book and pay by Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May

**Tuesday 18 June** Lunch - Speaker tbc

**Tuesday 16 July** **Simon David & Richard Butler** - '**National Service**' John and Anne will conduct an interview with Simon Davis & Richard Butler regarding their memories of the National Service.

**NB** - Book and pay by Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> July

## D-Day June 6<sup>th</sup> 1944

The Invasion that Changed the Course of History.

The 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is 6<sup>th</sup> June this year 2024.

On June 6, 1944, the Allies launched the largest seaborne invasion in history codenamed Operation Neptune. Thousands of navy vessels gathered in the English Channel. This operation was part of a larger campaign to liberate Western Europe from Nazi occupation, with coordinated Beach landings along the Normandy coast, known as Operation Overlord but more commonly known as D-Day (Decision Day)



The D-Day invasion involved more than 156,000 troops from the United Kingdom, United States, Canada, and other countries, who landed on five beaches along the coast of Normandy, France. The beaches were given code names: Utah, Omaha, Gold, Juno and Sword. The landings were preceded by extensive aerial and naval bombardment, as well as airborne operations by paratroopers and glider troops.

The Allies faced fierce resistance from the German forces, who had fortified the Atlantic Wall with bunkers, mines, barbed wire and machine guns.

The casualties were high, especially on Omaha Beach, where the Americans suffered over 2,000 deaths. However, by the end of the day, the Allies had secured a foothold on the continent and opened a new front against the Nazis.



British troops come ashore at Jig Green sector, Gold Beach.



Royal Marine Commandos attached to 3rd Infantry Division move inland from Sword Beach

The success of D-Day was the result of careful planning, deception, coordination and courage. The Allies had deceived the Germans about the date and location of the invasion, with a faux army based in Kent, using fake radio traffic, fake camps, inflatable tanks, dummy paratroopers and double agents. Lorries were driven around constantly to make the camps look busy.

The invasion was also supported by thousands of ships, planes, vehicles and supplies, as well as resistance fighters and French civilians. This convinced the Germans that the invasion would be across the shortest distance across the channel at Calais.

## Pegasus Bridge - D-Day

Later renamed Pegasus Bridge in honour of the paratroopers, the capture of the Bénouville Bridge on 6th June 1944 was the objective of D Company 2nd (Airborne) Battalion, Oxfordshire & Buckinghamshire Light Infantry. As part of Operation Tonga in the opening minutes of the Normandy invasion, members of the 6th Airlanding Brigade of the 6th Airborne Division landed as a glider-borne force. A separate group targeted the nearby road crossing at Ranville Bridge over the Orne River. This was later renamed Horsa Bridge in commemoration of the Horsa Gliders.

Under the command of Major John Howard, D Company was to land close by the bridges in six Airspeed Horsa gliders and, in a coup-de-main operation, take both intact and hold them until relieved by the main British invasion forces. The successful capture of the bridges played an important role in limiting the effectiveness of a German counter-attack in the aftermath of the Normandy invasion.

The bridges were to be captured intact and so to prevent the Germans from demolishing the heavily mined bridge it had to be disabled. Sapper Harry Wheeler was in No 1 Glider and was given the responsibility of cutting the cables. This involved climbing under the bridge while the battle was going on around and above him. He famously said that he just cut everything in sight, including one extremely heavily charged cable which threw him in the air. Luckily his insulated wire cutters saved him from permanent damage.



The proud Wheeler family of Nettlebed and the precious wire cutters

## Pegasus Bridge - Reenactors



Richard Pinches with his 2nd Bn Ox and Bucks reenactors at Pegasus Bridge in 2018

There is more to tell in our Summer Newsletter!

## Poppy Appeal Update



The Royal British Legion Henley & Peppard Branch Poppy Appeal organiser Richard Pinches and his team, spearheaded by Annie Arscott, are to be congratulated on a very successful launch for the collection period which runs from October 2023 to 30 September 2024 and which has raised a significant amount of £29,976.02 so far. Final figure will be released by 30 September this year.