



Unity - Loyalty  
Patriotism & Comradeship

# Up Spirits!

## NORWICH BRANCH NEWS

**Branch Hon. Secretary  
and Editor**

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**W**elcome to the latest edition of Up Spirits; the bi-monthly newsletter of the Royal Naval Association – Norwich Branch.

This month we have an article on the Army v Navy Rugby Match as well as the second part of an article from Shipmate Ken Baish along with a serialised article written by the late Shipmate Les Baker, a Norwich Branch member who crossed the bar some years ago, which has been compiled by Shipmate Ken Baish.

Articles from The Monthly Circular and Up Spirits are also available on the Branch Website along with postings on Naval History and Traditions.

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### From the Quarterdeck – The Presidents Piece

*Shipmate Mike Mizen*

It would be very remiss of me if I did not start my article without congratulating Toni McCloud on being awarded the very first Jim Bowles Trophy.

The award is decided by the committee and is given to a member of the Branch who the committee thinks has done most in the past year for the benefit of the members. As no committee member can win the award, it is hoped that this initiative will encourage Branch members to take an active part in the Branch and who knows, next year it may be your turn to win the trophy!

But for this year, well done Toni.

In my opinion, this year's AGM was very successful, and it gave me the chance to publicly thank those members standing down from the committee for all their hard work and commitment. Alf Wiggins as Membership Secretary, Reg. McGuire as Welfare Secretary and Bernahdette McGuire as Committee member have, for many years, given much of their time and energy to the running of the Branch and their expertise and experience will be sorely missed. For Alf and Bernahdette a

well-earned rest is their reward, but Reg., a glutton for punishment, has agreed to become a committee member and I for one am very grateful!

It is a measure of the strength of the Branch that we have had no difficulty replacing those who are leaving. Phil Coates has offered his services as Welfare Secretary and Stuart Fidler has joined the committee and it pleases me no end when the rest of the Branch endorses the nominations. As I said to you all at the end of the AGM, a member said to me that he thinks that "there is a good spirit in the Branch", and I agree with him. It is nice to know that members feel the same way as I do!

This coming year has much to offer and if we are to maintain our position of being the best in the County when it comes to events, then we need to make sure that every effort is made to attend the various functions.

There are a number of parades this year where we need to be seen. Apart from the usual ones on Remembrance Day, D-Day parade, etc. we also have the Armed Forces Day events at City Hall, the Norfolk Show, the Forum, and at Carrow Road, all a golden opportunity to show what we are made of, so please make every effort to support them. Again, our "in house" events such as the Trafalgar Night Dinner and Dance, the Christmas party, the various 'runs ashore' and the Breakfast Club meetings all need your support.

We, the Branch members, are the best advertisement for Norwich RNA and if we are to continue 'bucking the trend' by recruiting new members instead of losing them, then we must all make the effort.

Your committee will continue to give ample warning of times and dates for all the upcoming events, so please enter them in your diary at the earliest opportunity.

We have one other major event this year and that is the visit to HMS Queen Elizabeth in May. I for one am excited about visiting the biggest ship in Royal Navy history and if the list of those wishing to go is anything to go by, so are a lot of other people. I am sure that we will all have a very good time but none of this would have happened without the hard work of Nev Townsend. So, I am going to get in first and say "thank you" for all the work you have done behind the scenes to get this visit off the ground, your efforts are much appreciated.

## Secretary's Report

### *Shipmate Gus Honeywood*

2017-18 was again been a very good year for our Branch with twenty new members joining between January 2017 and the beginning of this year. Hopefully this trend will continue, and I would encourage all Shipmates to invite those to join us that have served in any of the maritime related services.

The Branch itself has been extremely busy, both formally and informally. The Breakfast Club and Run Ashore continue to draw good numbers, and I hearten anyone who hasn't yet joined us to come along. Trafalgar Night, as always was extremely well attended and thanks on behalf of the Branch must go to Pat and Barbara for yet another sterling event.

Formally, the Branch has been extremely well represented at Armistice Day, Remembrance Sunday, the Nelson Service and HMS Invincible Memorial.

Thanks, must also go to those often taken for granted at each parade and Branch Meetings with John Kett representing the Branch at many funerals and services, Clifford Self likewise and of course providing prayers at our Branch Meetings, Bernahdette McGuire, Barbara Whiley and Toni McCloud for organising and selling raffle tickets, Graham Rowlands for organising the Ships Draw and of course all of those that attend the bucket collections.

Penultimately, so much thanks must go to the Committee and Members, we all have an important part to play in the structure of this Branch and without us this Branch would cease to exist. We hear of so many Branches that are struggling with membership, and fortunately Norwich is bucking that trend. The Committee work extremely well together, bringing an abundance of experience, knowledge and enthusiasm, but of course could not do without the Shipmates support.

Finally, the I would like to save my biggest thanks to S/M's Alf Wiggins and Reg McGuire, who stepped away as Membership Secretary and Welfare Officer respectively and Bernahdette McGuire who stepped down from the Committee. Their dedication and commitment have stood this Branch in extremely good stead. Thank you, Bernahdette, Alf and Reg, for all that you have done.

## Welfare Report

### *Shipmate Phil Coates*

Firstly, I would like to thank all Shipmates for endorsing my nomination as Welfare Officer. I am under no illusion I have a tough act to follow and there is no way anyone could ever replace the 'Evening Shipmates!' greeting offered by my

## In Memoriam

### Shipmate Jean Hogben

Associate Member

Crossed the Bar: 9 March 2018

Jean was a long-standing member of the Branch. Joining the Branch, with her husband Fred, in 1996.

*'May she have found a Safe Anchorage'*

predecessor S/M Reg McGuire, but please do rest assured I am fully committed to the role and will do my utmost to ensure support is available to those who need it.

Sadly, as I begin the handover process with S/M Reg it is with regret that it comes at a time when a long-standing member of the branch has crossed the bar. S/M Jean Hogben, wife of Fred sadly passed away in March and I am sure all branch members will join me in offering Fred our most sincere condolences during such a difficult time. The funeral for S/M Jean Hogben has been arranged for Friday 13th April 2018 at 1500, at St Faiths. It would be of much comfort to Fred and his family if as many members of the Branch could attend.

For those attending the funeral, please consider your Shipmates without transport and if you can offer a lift to a Shipmate or two, then please do so. I'll ask Shipmates if they are able to offer lifts on Tuesday evening at the Branch meeting.

Car-sharing can provide some of our members with an opportunity to attend meetings and other events which they otherwise may not have been able to do so and is something which I would like to encourage; it can also help relieve some of the loneliness that members may be experiencing. Thirteen percent of older people say they feel very or always lonely, with as few as six percent of older people leaving the house once a week or less. We shouldn't let the TV or radio be the only company they get. So, if you are in a position to offer a lift, then why not let me know and I will look to communicate this to the branch members, particularly for our meetings and socials, just like the old days onboard when there was a "Lift's" noticeboard detailing lifts available and lifts required!

My contact details are: Mobile telephone 07584072666 or email [welfare@rna-norwich.org.uk](mailto:welfare@rna-norwich.org.uk)

## From the Monthly Circular

### **Standing Order Committee Vacancies**

Applications are invited from Full or Life members or Associate members who have been awarded a Certificate of Appreciation to become a member of the Standing Orders Committee. The Committee meets three times a year and review Conference motions and manages delivery of Conference procedures on the day. All expenses are covered when attending meetings.

Annually two places on the Standing Orders Committee become vacant, any Full Member, including the incumbents, resident in the United Kingdom or the Republic of Ireland can submit their name for election at this year's Conference. The National Council co-opt a Member in accordance with Rule 18 (c) and Byelaw 6 (g).

Applicants should apply on the form at rear of Circular with a brief statement of their relevant experience within the RNA; to Central Office. The deadline for applications is 21st April 2018.

### **A Message from Sarah Clewes**

Good Afternoon

I am delighted to have taken on the role of Chairman of the Royal Navy Royal Marines Widows' Association (RNRMWA). I have been involved with the Association since 2010, most of this time spent as a committee member. My husband died of cancer, aged 31, and I have enjoyed the invaluable support of a fellow Widow (and Widower) who understands the nuances of naval life, has endured loss and is happy to give their time over a cup of tea (or glass of wine!) to help me through challenges and dark days. Friendship and support is fundamental to this group, that we never asked to join.

My role is to ensure that we are represented alongside the Army and RAF Widows, to engage with the RN Welfare team who invite us to relevant meetings and events and to provide the Visiting Officers with credible, real life experiences to enhance their professional training.

The Association has been dormant for some time, however together with the support of the committee, we will provide our Members with a Newsletter, refresh the website and share information, inspirational stories, offers and events both on the RNRMWA Facebook page (and secret group) and by post for our Members not online.

Please add my contact details to any meetings or events you hold, where our views and experiences add value to the work you do. The old RNRMWA email account and phone number, you may hold on record, have been deleted.

Please amend your records using our new contact details: Postal address - Sarah Clewes, Conference of Naval Associations (CONA), Room 209, Semaphore Tower (PP70), HM Naval Base, Portsmouth, Hampshire P01 3LT Email - [sarah@mrmwidows.org](mailto:sarah@mrmwidows.org) Phone — 07462 376850

I look forward to meeting you.

Regards Sarah Clewes Chairman Royal Navy Royal Marines Widows' Association

### **Vacancy for New Branch Recruitment and Retention Advisor**

The National Council has created a new position of Branch Recruitment and Retention Advisor (BRRA) who will be responsible for advising the National Council through the Association Management Committee (AMC) on a range of branch level recruitment and retention issues. The BRRA's job spec and responsibilities are below;

Recruitment and Retention Advisor (RRA)

Job Spec –

1. Identify Members in Areas and Branches suitable to act as Recruiting and Retention Officers.

2. Organise and assist Area and Branch Recruiting and Retention Activities
3. Assist the Areas and NCMs identify Branches at risk of closing and provide help.
4. Assist Areas in identifying possible new Branches and special interest groups.
5. Share best practise - encouraging local activity
6. Develop an understanding of why people leave the RNA to develop retention strategies
7. Report to AMC as advisor
8. Advise the AMC on proposed Recruiting Activities
9. Develop cross over with marketing ideas for annual budget with GS
10. Manage devolved budget from GS.

The BRRRA will be required to travel to Portsmouth three times a year for a Saturday meeting and once to Conference to update the AMC on progress (expenses provided). BRRRA has been allocated a small travel budget to enable the BRRRA to get started.

The BRRRA position is open to Full and Associate members and anyone interested in applying for the position should forward their details to Central Office together with a short statement explaining why they believe they are the right person for the job.

The National Council will make an appointment at their meeting in June. If you require any further specific information please contact Central Office on 02392 23747.

### **Veterans Gateway and Preserved Pensions**

Shipmates may not be aware that the Veterans' Gateway is the one-stop shop for veterans who are seeking help. It is supported by a consortium of Armed Forces Charities, notably the Royal British Legion, SSAFA and Combat Stress.

The Forces Pension Society also plays its part, helping with pension enquiries of which we have fielded 750 to date and now running at a rate of over 100 a month. Many of these come from those who have lost their way and have no idea of whether they have a pension entitlement or what it is.

There have been some notable recent successes for some of those who have approached us through the Gateway Rob left in the early 90s after 11 years' service and is now in receipt of £5K pension and £15K tax free lump sum

### **RNBT – Assistance with Care Home Fees**

Shipmates may not be aware that the Royal Naval Benevolent Trust (RNBT) can provide assistance with care home fees. RNBT can also contribute towards the cost of domiciliary care. If you know someone who is an ex-RN or RM rating, including reservists, or their widows, then ask them to get in touch with SSAFA who will arrange a home visit and make a recommendation for funding to RNBT.

RNBT also runs its own care home for older members of the Royal Naval family at Pembroke House which is located in Gillingham. More details at: <http://www.rnbt.org.uk/pembroke-house/>

## **Shipmate Submissions**

### **Breakfast Club and Branch Run Ashore Shipmate Gus Honeywood**

The next Branch Run Ashore is organised for **Saturday 5 May 2018** at The Woolpack, Golden Ball St, Norwich, NR1 3EH.

We will be meeting at 1430 to watch the Army v Navy rugby match and a link for the event can be found at [Link](#) for those that use Facebook.

Our next breakfast club get together is organised for 1000 on **Saturday 3 June 2018** at Hotel Nelson, Prince of Wales Road, Norwich, NR1 1DX.

### **Did You Know?**

#### **Shipmate Ken Baish**

Corned Dog (Corned Beef to you).

My research tells me that it may still surprise many Matelots that much of the Corned Dog consumed by the Royal Navy 1970-1980's was not beef at all but Corned Mutton!!!! I was out by then earning a living so don't blame me. Pot Mess was my favourite and I have to say that while killick of the mess I could still muck in and my Pot Mess was generally one of the best with Shipmates from other messes attempting to scrounge a plate full. We began charging for it, sippers, gulpers, half a tot or a full tot!! Generally, the canned pot mess was the most frequently served and consisted of stewed steak (steak from which animal or from what century was not disclosed; The cans had no labels, just a non-descriptive statement of content stamped on the top. Never mind how much sugar the cans contained or vitamins etc. also, the Pot Mess would be topped up with Peas, Swede, Turnip, Broad Beans, Baked Beans, in fact anything that came in a can could and often was used.

## **New Members**

Welcome to the following new members of the Branch

### **Shipmate Martin French**

Full Member

Martin served between 1961 – 1972 on  
HMS Raleigh – HMS Collingwood – HMS  
Torquay – HMS Drake – HMS Eagle – HMS  
St. Angelo – RNWT Rinella – HMS Keppel –  
HMS Victory

### **Shipmate Lindsay Lock**

Associate Member

***When I Was Young written by Stan Shipmate John Kett***

When I was young, many years ago,  
I joined the Navy; why, I don't know.  
I served my time with honour and pride.  
For this young boy, it was quite a ride.

I went to places I'd never dreamed,  
Time went fast, so it seemed.  
I met people I'll never forget,  
And some I wish I'd never met.

But as I think back on those days gone by,  
My ship, my shipmates, brings a tear to my eye.  
I didn't know it then, never gave it a thought,  
But my time in the Navy could not have been bought.

I guess we all feel the same, after we're out.  
The pride we feel, that's what it's all about.  
Having served our nation, keeping it free,  
Protecting our way of life and our liberty.

And the friends I made along the way.  
Would I do it again? Any day!  
And to all my shipmates,  
Anchors aweigh.

***Ex-Forces Retiree  
S/M Gus Honeywood***

Charlie, ex forces, a new retiree greeter at Asda just couldn't seem to get to work on time. Every day he was 5, 10 or 15 minutes late.

But he was a good worker, really tidy, clean shaven, sharp minded and a real credit to the company, obviously epitomising their 'Older Person Friendly' policies.

One day the boss called him into the office for a talk "Charlie, I have to tell you, I like your work ethic, you do a great job, but your being late so often is quite bothersome."

"Yes, I know boss, and I am working on it."

"Well good, you are a team player. That's what I like to hear. It's odd though, you're coming in late. I know you're retired from the armed Forces. What did they say if you came in late there?"

"They said, 'Good morning, Admiral. Would you like some coffee now, sir?'"

***In the Beginning  
S/M Gus Honeywood***

In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth,  
He created the mountains, and the Oceans. He created the Sun and the Stars.  
Then he looked down upon his wonders and God was not happy, for there was no life.

Then God created life, and the life was without form as the creature was a sloth in appearance, with deep pockets and short arms, so that his hands could not touch the bottom, his pants were baggy and hung off his body, and he could not talk without swearing. God took pity on this ungodly person, so he gave him medals, and ribbons, and guidons, and flags and badges, and patches, and lanyards. These items amused the creature and it ran off into the bush.

God called him a Soldier.

Then God looked down, but he was still not happy, so he created flighty creatures that filled his skies. They were small in appearance with distorted features, so God gave them moustaches to cover his mistake. These creatures would only talk in syllables less than three in number and could not communicate without telling you how good they were.

These flighty creatures would only huddle together and prance around without meaning or direction, they could not communicate with the Soldier.

God called him an Airman.

Then God took a day off. (When you are God, you can do that).

Then God looked down again but still was not happy. (That's not very good if you are God)

So, he took his time and created a creature in the image of himself. This creature was tall and lean with strong arms to carry the world on his own. He was good looking in appearance and had the gift of perfect speech.

He tasked this creature to defend his mighty realm of oceans, which is the biggest job of all.

He blessed the creature with the ability to fly through the air and land on small platforms. (This impressed the shit out of the Airman who looked on in wonder). Then he blessed this creature with the ability to travel on water and the Soldier ran off in fear, never to be seen again. He gave him practical uniforms to fight Satan and defend God from evil. He gave him 'evening dress' to impress the hell out of the women at cocktail parties.

This mirror image of himself God called a Sailor.

Then God rested (creating the world is a big job).

Then God looked down again but was still not happy. Why?

In all his workings and wonders, he had not made himself a Sailor.

Then he realised, not everyone can be a Sailor.

### ***Is It the Water?***

#### ***S/M Ken Baish***

The local council where we live, provide a Community Centre where all the various needs of some of the elderly inhabitants are catered for. For example, you can get a haircut, male and female, visit an in-house chiropodist, enjoy talks, play various board games and generally your every need is catered for. Cheap transport to and for and a daily hot lunch cooked as mum did by volunteers cost £3.00.

Once a month a special lunch is served, three courses and a glass of wine followed by entertainment (professional) singing and dancing for about an hour. Attended by about eighty persons and generally celebrating a national day, holiday or special occasion.

Last Thursday Julie and I attended the special lunch put on to celebrate Easter. Cost £7.00 for the three courses and wine. Asparagus Soup, Roast Lamb and all the bits and pieces followed by a sweet. Glass of red or white wine and the usual raffle. Entertainment by a singer from one of the West End shows and dancing if you wanted to.

However, for Julie and I the most interesting part of the lunch then followed. We sat down at a table for four (waitress service - volunteers) and were later joined by an elderly lady and her son. They both introduced themselves and we discovered that the lady was 103 years of age, 104 in August. She had just had her weekly hair do and decided to stay for the lunch!! I was then introduced to a 99-year-old retired London bus driver who was delighted to be drawing a pension still after driving a bus for 41 years and indeed had driven himself to the lunch. Moving on.

I was then told that there were another two "oldies" at the lunch, one a gentleman at 104, suit and tie and shirt cuffs on display with cuff links on show. There was also another lady at the lunch who was 103. All four tucked in to what was on offer and joined in with the singing but gave the dancing a miss.

Talking about it afterwards we said it has to be the water, I had always believed that the water (Thames Water) was not too clever but what now?

## Army v Navy Match

*S/M Gus Honeywood*

The Army v Navy Match is the annual rugby union match played between the senior XV teams of the Royal Navy and British Army. It marks the culmination of the annual Inter-Services Competition. Although a match was played between the officers of the British Army and the officers of the Royal Navy at The Oval, London on 13 February 1878, it was not until 1907 that the Army v Navy Match became an annual fixture, when it was jointly administered by the newly formed Royal Navy Rugby Union (RNRU – 1906) and the Army Rugby Union (ARU – 1906). Since then it has been played every season, with the exception of during the world wars (1914–19 and 1940–45) when the matches were suspended. Traditionally the Army v Navy match has been played in the second half of the domestic season but in season 1907/1908 it was played in December and due to this anomaly, the calendar year 1908 did not see an Army v Navy match played yet they played each other twice in 1907.

The 2016 Army v Navy was the 99th in the series and the match saw another new record crowd of 81323 watch the Army v Navy match which was one of the most compelling ever. The Navy took the lead 7–0 (Dave Fairbrother) on 20 minutes before the Army scored three tries (Semesa Rokoduguni 2, Owain Davies) before half time to lead 19–7 at the break. A further try for the Army (James Farrell) early in the second period saw them extend their lead to 26–7 with half an hour of the match remaining. The Royal Navy staged the most remarkable of comebacks with tries from Gareth Rees and Rhys Dymmock-Williams either side of a penalty try to level the scores at 26–26 with 9 minutes remaining. An Owain Davies penalty with 2 minutes to go seemed to seal the win for the Army before Royal Navy fullback landed a 45m penalty of his own to again tie the game 29–29 with less than a minute to go. The draw meant that the Army v Navy Trophy was shared but the Royal Navy were Inter Service Champions having beaten the RAF 9–8 at USSG Portsmouth. The RAF had beaten the Army 13–12 at RAF Halton in the opening round of the Inter Services. Royal Navy Number 8 completed a remarkable game which included a try, a yellow card and being named Man of the Match.

The 101st Army v Navy Match will be played at Twickenham on 3 May 2018.

### **The First Army v Navy game 1878**

The first Army v Navy game was held on 13 February 1878. A contemporary newspaper The Broad Arrow gave the following account of the match:

A fine exhibition of football delighted the somewhat small number of spectators. Bush scored the first try for the Navy from a scrummage near the line. The goal was kicked by Orford. A band of naval spectators who had taken up their position beneath a white ensign mounted on the roof of a drag greeted this score with great cheering. The greasy state of the ground was not favourable for any great display of running. Encouraged by a cry from their supporters 'Come on Navy, Force the Passage of the Straights' the Navy mounted great pressure and scored a touch down. In the second half the Navy scored a second try. Wrench of the Army took advantage of some bad passing by the Navy and scored the Army try: The goal was kicked but this ended the scoring and the Navy deservedly won the first match between the Services.

The full version of the report from the Broad Arrow seems to suggest that the correct quote of 'Force the Passage of the Straits' was used.

The Army selectors made a generous contribution towards the Navy victory by selecting a Royal Artillery officer, R Bannatyne, as Team Captain. He was serving overseas at the time and received no notification of his selection. As a result, he was absent for the game. The situation was further confounded by the fact that another Army player arrived late and missed a good part of the match.

### **The First 'Official' Army v Navy game 1907**

Both the Royal Navy Rugby Union and the Army Rugby Union were formed in 1906. February 1907 was when the first match organised by the two Unions was played. The match was held at the Queen's Club, West Kensington and was won by the Officers of the Royal Navy 15–14. The match was played at Queen's Club until 1914. After the First World War the first match was hosted by Twickenham in 1920 and the game has been played there ever since.

### **Inter-Services Championship (1920 to present day)**

In 1920 a Tri-Service competition was created to include the newly formed Royal Air Force (RAF). However, the great rivalry between the Army and Navy has continued and their match, now held at the home of the English Rugby Football Union (Twickenham Stadium), remains the highlight of the annual inter-services rugby competition.

Inter-Services Championship	
Teams:	Army Rugby Union Royal Navy Rugby Union Royal Air Force Rugby Union
Originated:	1920

Championship Series:	Army leads with 44 outright championships	
Recent Winner:	Army	
Army (44) 1926 1928 1929 1930 1932 1933 1934 1936 1937 1946 1950 1952 1953 1957 1960 1963 1964 1965 1967 1968 1969 1972 1976 1980 1983 1988 1989 1990 1997 1998 1999 2000 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2011 2012 2013 2014	Royal Navy (20) 1920 1921 1922 1927 1931 1938 1939 1951 1961 1966 1970 1973 1974 1977 1981 1987 1995 2001 2010 2016	Royal Air Force (15) 1923 1947 1955 1958 1959 1962 1971 1979 1982 1985 1986 1991 1993 1994 2015
Three Way Ties (10) 1924 1935 1948 1954 1956 1975 1978 1984 1992 1996		
Two Way Ties (2) 1925 1949 Both Between Army and Royal Air Force		

## Journey to Normandy And Holiday on The Beach (Part 2)

*Compiled by Shipmate Ken Baish*

*Written by the late Shipmate Les Baker a Norwich Branch member who crossed the bar some years ago.*

During these exercises a series of depressing accidents occurred. The worse was with troops landing from the LSI Small. The passengers disembarked from this type of ship by two gangways on the port and starboard bow. To assist the troops, wade ashore, two ropes were taken to the shore and the beach party formed anchors at the water's edge. The engines were accidentally put into full astern dragging two lines of soldiers into deep water. With full equipment and arms, they stood no chance and drowned. Needless to say, the events left us wondering what the real landing had in store for us.

The rehearsals over we were left in peace to enjoy the May sun shine, It was like a brief holiday. I was able to take night leave and spend time at home in Portsmouth. During this period, we prepared for the landing, our battle dresses were exchanged for new and treated with DDT, boots were repaired and renewed, and all worn equipment exchanged, the series of "jabs" was also given. The remainder of all our kit, bedding etc., was stored in the old gas works at Southampton. There were thousands of Army personnel camped in the New Forest. The roads were blocked with traffic as the loading for D Day started. It seemed that everyone was on the move.

Our turn came late in May when we boarded Empire Aquebus and the ship moved out to join the hundreds of ships in the Solent. Our berth close inshore near Yarmouth, Isle of Wight. We were informed that the landing would be at dawn June 5th. The weather started to deteriorate and by 4th June it was blowing a full westerly gale and the operation was cancelled for 24 hours.

June 5th the weather started to improve, and we watched the mine sweepers and dam layers put to sea. Late in the afternoon the announcement came that D Day would be June 6th. Early evening G1 force sailed for Buoy X the start of the swept channel. Our sightseeing also ceased when we were called to briefings and given our destination Normandy. G1 Assault to land on Jig Beach, gold sector, objectives 231 Brigade to capture Arromanches and move inland and hold the right flank of the British landings. 47 Marine Commando to capture Port Embessin.

Jig beach started at the small hamlet of Le Hamal situated on the eastward side of Arromanches. The beaches are sandy with low sand dunes and the coast road ran parallel to the beach with green fields between it and the dunes. Aerial photographs taken 24 hours earlier showed the fields had been mined. The TB hospital at Le Hemel was fortified with gun emplacements and pill boxes along the beach. To the west of Arromanches a battery of long range guns covered the landing area. Jig beach was covered with steel structures called Hedgehog intended to rip the bottoms out of the boats, in

the deeper water posts with mines attached and barbed wire strung between them. On one photograph there was a German working party adding more obstacles and wire to the defences.

In order to minimise damage to the LTA's we were landing at low tide it all looked rather daunting and formidable, so we had supper and went to bed early after making final preparations to our equipment.

The Empire Aquebus came to life earlier than the official reveille and there was a mood of excitement. A full English breakfast was provided, church services were provided with long lines of fully armed men taking communion. Others were engaged cleaning grease off ammunition with some of the older men sitting in isolation arming hand grenades. The ship was still underway and rolling. It must have been a very difficult time for those suffering sea sickness. Five miles off the shore the ship anchored, and we moved to our assembly area to await the boats being lowered. It was still dark when we reached the boat deck and very quiet except for the drone of aircraft. I estimated a four to six-foot swell which made boarding the landing craft difficult – however it was managed without accident. The LCA pushed off and started circling our navigation guide waiting to be joined by LCA's from Crossbow, Aquebus and Broadsword.

It was starting to get light when the run to the shore started, the coast was just visible, and we could see some bombing ashore. At this stage we were able to stand and move our legs to keep warm, at the half way mark a flask of hot coffee spiced with rum – provided by the catering staff – was drunk to warm us. The mood in the boat was good, plenty of talking and jokes. With no sign of any action on the coast we thought perhaps the landing would be unopposed.

The silence ended when the cruisers opened fire on the shore batteries. The landing craft rockets fired their four salvos of 250 rockets, the smoke giving the impression that they had blown up. To the right of the formation an LCT with the cargo of self-propelled guns, the timing as each gun fired in sequence made it sound like a gigantic drum. Added to this was the sound of bagpipes coming from the LCA's of the Royal Marine Commando.

The motor launch, our navigation guide, turned back and the final run to the beach started. At about half a mile from the shore the first shell landed near the boats, the rate of fire increased and about 200 yards from the shore small arms fire splashed in the water and the order was given to prepare to land. Sitting on the benches the only indication of what was happening was changes of engine revs. There was a slight bump and the engines put to full astern and the order given "Down ramp".

At the top of the ramp I glanced round the beach. The frogmen who landed while it was still dark lay dead, and the wire was only partly cut. To the left was a gun position, on the right a dual drive tank had been hit on the turret and was on fire with its ammunition exploding. Further along the beach an LCA had triggered off some mines and was standing on its side. The passengers and crew were struggling in the water. Heavy firing was coming from the hospital at Le Hemel. Before starting up the beach I looked back. The Coxswain had made a good landing spot on the marker placed by the Frogmen and the boat was now fifty yards off shore turning to retrace his course back to Aquebus. As we made our way up the beach a shell landed. When the smoke cleared two soldiers were laying on the ground with arms and legs missing and one with injuries to his head. There was no stopping to help or confirm that they were dead. At the start of the sand dunes we stopped to get organised. The gun emplacement to the left was an open anti-aircraft M/G and was quickly knocked out with hand grenades and small arms fire. There was still long-range gun fire on the beach, but we were able to move around and set up a command post. Also, to try and control the incoming landing craft.

My first task was to return down the beach to an LCT whose cargo was heavy equipment for the Beach Group. It had the flail tanks aboard which were urgently required to clear a road through the mine field. The first tank off had been hit while on the ramp and the winches were out of action. The engine room was on fire and it was hit again while I was on board. The skipper had already given the order to evacuate the ship, with no heavy machinery to move the tank it was hopeless. I now carried out the second part of my orders to help the crew and dig in at the top of the beach. The Captain and I carried four jars of rum. Perhaps the only sane action on D Day!!

I returned to the command post, they were still hard at work digging in and trying to control the chaos to stop the landing craft from ploughing into the obstacles and setting off mines. The tide was rising fast and the beach receding causing overcrowding. The fighting at Le Hemel was still heavy and the Germans were able to cover the mine fields with machine gun fire preventing an exit being made. Late in the morning a tank appeared moving along the road to Le Hemel. It joined an attack and the firing started to decrease. The Royal Engineers were able to lift the mines and several exits were made.

As the tide went down and the beach emptied of troops we started clearing the beach of obstacles and making roads etc. When the darkness came much of the beach was ready to start landing tanks and vehicles.

For interest the method used to clear the beach was first to render safe and remove mines in a small area, a wire then placed round the obstacles and attached to two tracked vehicles and towed to a disused site. We had been trained to defuse German mines but those on the posts were of an unknown type. A Royal Engineer sat down with one and discovered they were French 75 mm shells with a standard German detonator, to defuse a nail was inserted in the hole and then the detonator unscrewed. The second problem was that the mines were out of reach, solved by one man sitting on the shoulders of the second. An unemployed section of the Pioneer Corps joined in and at times the beach looked like a school playground at playtime.

Darkness stopped work and the landing of an armoured brigade was postponed and the beach was closed down for the night. D Day was over. It seemed an anti-climax after the long wait and training. My guardian angel had looked after both

myself and the Commando unit, there were no fatal casualties – several wounded. One of the wounded was a PO who managed to reach a Pill Box gun aperture, he knocked it out with a Tommy Gun and Hand Grenade – he was awarded the DSM.

I slept that night in a weapon pit, my clothes were salt caked from immersions in the sea, my skin was sore and in general I felt very miserable – what had we achieved? A few hundred yards of cleared beach. The Marine Commando had, like the Hampshires, run into heavy opposition and were stalled outside Port Embassin. The Hampshire Regiment had managed to enter and capture Arromanches late in the evening, the front line was five miles down the road and the beach head was an easy target if the Germans counter attacked. The only part of the media hype I can agree with is “it was the longest day”.

The morning of June 7th the real battle for Normandy started. The fighting to merge the five landing sites into one and the second to land an Army and supply them with stores. With the beach group we started working to control the beach, the postponed landing of an armoured brigade took place. We also set up our living quarters, a tent pitched on what had been a mine field and food was provided from the beach group field kitchen. Our full marching kit was also landed with blankets, etc. what I cannot remember is how we kept our clothes and bodies clean, other than going into the sea.

For the next two weeks the landing of stores and men ran like clockwork then disaster hit in the form of a westerly gale, it lasted four days and only a few tons of stores was landed. At first, we were able to help the landing craft to find safety but as the weather worsened we were only able to find the wrecked crews find shelter in the dunes. The beach was a sad sight, wrecked LCA's splintered into piles of wood, LCT's grounded sideways above the high-water mark. Landing signs and roads had disappeared, and mines had been washed to the surface. The beach was covered with boots from a sunken coaster, when I searched for a pair of size 9's, I could only find boots for my left foot.

When the beach was cleared, the only enemy resistance was air raids at night, the coasters and landing craft were allowed to dry out, allowing standard lorries to go alongside to load at low tide. This saved time by not having to tranship the cargo ashore, with the LST's and LCT's running a roll on roll off ferry service across the channel the daily tonnage landed rose. We were back on target.

The Port of Arromanches, damaged in the storm was repaired and as the days passed the tonnage reached ten thousand tons per day. The decrease in our work load enabled us to leave the beach provided we were back by sunset. The only urban area to visit was Bayeux, visits to friends in the front line could be made providing a lift could be arranged. It gave us a chance to observe the battles to break out of the beach head.

One summer evening from a few miles outside Caen I watched nine hundred heavy bombers attack the city. The front line and bomb path was marked out by 40 mm anti-aircraft guns firing lines of tracer shells. The planes flew low in an endless swarm. There was enemy anti-aircraft fire and several planes were hit. The crews could clearly be seen jumping out and parachuting to the ground. Caen was covered in dust and smoke. The ground shook like an earth tremor.

At the end of “Operation Neptune” the naval part of the landing, the unit returned to the UK taking passage on an LST. After de-briefing and re kitting we were given seven days leave and I was able to celebrate my 21st birthday and coming of age with my family.

The last weeks of my time with Q Commando was spent in Norfolk. To keep us busy we worked 8 hour shifts in Wissington Sugar Beet factory. Our pay was 3 shillings per shift. Half was used to buy a meal in the factory canteen, the remainder credited to our naval pay. We lived in a large house, the domestic chores were undertaken by the WVS. When not sleeping or working during daylight hours we picked carrots the farmer paying for the number of bags picked. In the evenings we spent our new-found wealth taking out the village girls to the local hop or to the pub.

After sixty-five years these events seem like a dream or just my imagination playing tricks. When on holiday in Dunoon I took a bus ride to Ardentenny and found the site that was HMS Armadillo. The Forestry Commission have made it into a public area with tables and seats. The road through is part of a long-distance walk to Carrick Castle and at Ardentenny there is an outdoor activity school teaching children to canoe etc., so it still links with its past use. There are no signs of the existence of the camp except for the stone buildings near the entrance – outside one of these was a small shrine with photographs of landing craft on the shore and a wreath of poppies. The Commission have also erected a notice board giving the history of the site as a training camp and the RN during the war years. If it remains in this condition it will be a living memorial to those who never returned.

## Calendar of Events – 2018

### April

15th Sunday Visit — Old Buckenham Airfield and St George's Distillery

### May

1st Committee Meeting – 1930  
 5th Area 5 Quarterly – Harwich  
 Branch Run Ashore — Army v Navy Rugby – 1430  
 8th Branch Meeting – 1930  
 19th Visit to HMS QNLZ – Portsmouth – 0930  
 27th Costessey Armed Forces Commemoration - Costessey  
 28th American Armed Forces Day – Madingly Cemetery, Cambridge

### June

3rd Breakfast Club — The Hotel Nelson, NR1 1D0X – 1000  
 5th Committee Meeting – 1930  
 6th D-Day Service and Parade – City War Memorial – 1030  
 10th Hethel Open Day  
 12th Branch Meeting – 1930  
 24th Armed Forces and Dunkirk Service – Honingham, NR9 5BT – 1030  
 25th Flag Raising for Armed Forces week – 1030  
 27th-28th Royal Norfolk Show  
 30th Armed Forces Day – The Forum, City Centre

### July

1st Sunday Lunch – Bawburgh Golf Club, NR9 3LU  
 3rd Committee Meeting – 1930  
 7th Branch Run Ashore — The Garden House, NR2 3HD – 2000  
 10th Branch Meeting – 1930  
 26th RAF Marham – Families Day  
 27th Norfolk Day

### August

## Future Editions of Up Spirits

### *Shipmate Gus Honeywood*

The next edition of Up Spirits will be published for the June Branch Meeting, and I would request that all submissions for that edition are forwarded to me by 1 June 2018.

If you have any submissions for Up Spirits, then you can email them to me at [na.norwich@gmail.com](mailto:na.norwich@gmail.com).

All submissions will be gratefully received.

4th Area 5 Quarterly – Harwich  
 Breakfast Club — Brewers Fayre Oaks, NR6 6JA – 1000  
 7th Committee Meeting – 1930  
 14th Branch Meeting – 1930

### September

1st Branch Run Ashore — The Plough, NR2 4AR – 2000  
 4th Committee Meeting – 1930  
 8th-9th Great Yarmouth Maritime Festival  
 11th Branch Meeting – 1930

### October

2nd Committee Meeting – 1930  
 7th Breakfast Club — Broadland View, NR7 0WG – 1000  
 9th Branch Meeting – 1930  
 13th Edith Cavell Service – 1030  
 20th Trafalgar Night Dinner – Wensum Valley Golf Club – 1930  
 21st El Alamein Service (Desert Rats) – Honingham, NR9 5BT – 1030

### November

3rd Area 5 Quarterly – Rayleigh  
 Branch Run Ashore — The York Tavern, NR2 2AS – 2000  
 4th Dunkirk Veterans Remembrance Service – Honingham, NR9 5BT – 0930  
 6th Committee Meeting – 1930  
 10th Remembrance Service - Hethel 1030  
 11th Armistice Day and Remembrance Day Parade - City Memorial – 1015  
 13th Branch Meeting – 1930

### December

1st Breakfast Club — Table Table, NR5 0TP – 1000  
 4th Committee Meeting – 1930  
 9th Christmas Sunday Lunch – Bawburgh Golf Club, NR9 3LU  
 11th Branch Meeting – 1930