

We will remember them



To all whom we have lost this month. Our sincere condolences to family and friends.
Norman (Norrie) Bartlett (Yateley and Hawley Branch) Royal Navy World War Two veteran



Our mission is to safeguard the welfare, interests, and memory of those who are serving or who have served in the Armed Forces

The world is rapidly changing these days. Countries we thought we could rely on are no longer reliable. There is a very strong feeling in Europe that war is imminent. The new "Cold War" has now begun, whether we like it or not. Our armed forces are at their smallest ever, and realistically we cannot protect our country for more than a few weeks at most. Our arms industry is inadequate for a full scale war. We can no longer build a fighter aircraft entirely in our own country. Our ship building industry is able to build ships but in small numbers.

Not all of our youth are interested in serving unless there are dire requirements or they wish to follow in family traditions. I teach students at a further education college who are on a uniformed services two year course and we often discuss these matters. This is also reflected in the lack of recruits and the long winded process to recruit them.

We have alliances with other countries in Europe and there is a pledge to stand together in the event of adversity. War is being fought in eastern Europe at great cost to the Ukrainians and European countries who support them with arms of war. It is certainly better to do this than not to. If we do not, our enemies will be right on our doorstep. We do not want a war that is fought on our own soil. If that happens it will be too late to do anything at all.

This is a time for serving and preserving. If our service personnel and veterans are seen to be looked after the new generation of armed forces will be reassured that they will also be taken care of. It needs to be done for the future of our country and its people. DW



1945

March. Operation Varsity

16th April - 2nd May. The Fall of Berlin

8 May. VE Day



Operation Varsity March 1945

After the completion of Operation Market Garden, the Allies conducted a series of operations as they advanced to the Rhine River. Operation Veritable was conducted from the 8th February 1945 by British 21st Army Group to clear the territory between the River Meuse and the River Rhine by the British 2nd Army and Canadian 1st Army. The US 12th Army Group under command of General Bradley conducted Operation Lumberjack in the vicinity of the German border fortifications and later reached the River Rhine on the 7th March 1945. The US 6th Army Group under command of Lt Gen Devers advanced into the German Saarland and reached the town of Mannheim on the southern Rhine. During Operation Lumberjack the US 9th Armoured Division got to the bridge at Remagen and found that it had not been destroyed by the retreating Germans so they crossed and established a small bridgehead. The Germans counter attacked and damaged the bridge. Some days later the bridge collapsed. The Rhine remained a significant natural obstacle to be crossed for entrance into central Germany from the west.

Operations Plunder and Varsity. Operation Plunder was the amphibious assault conducted by the British 2nd Army and the 9th US Army across the River Rhine. Operation Varsity was the air assault by the XVIII Airborne Corps that consisted of the British 6th Airborne Division and the US 17th Airborne Division. It remains the biggest ever airborne assault in the history of warfare. The aim of Op Varsity was to deploy by air to capture the high ground inside Germany along the River Rhine in the area where the British 2nd Army was to cross. The secondary task was for the airborne formations to then deny the use of the high ground by German artillery and also to stop any possible attacks launched by the Germans in a south easterly direction.

Stage 1. Commenced with air interdiction operations to gain air superiority by the US 8th and 9th Air Forces. The purpose was to isolate the industrial area of the Ruhr and then provide combat air support for ground forces. This force had approximately 1000 fighter aircraft under command belonging to the 2nd Tactical Air Force.

Stage 2. The US 17th Airborne Division enplaned at Paris and the British Airborne troops left from airfields in southern England. The various aircraft linked up near Brussels and then flew in three air corridors for their objectives. There were a total of 1696 transport aircraft and 1348 gliders for the operation. There were also 800 vehicles and artillery guns as well as 600 tons of ammunition for this operation.

The airborne landings went well. Paratroopers landed on DZs between H Hour and H + 65 hours and the US gliders landed on their respective LZs between H + 20 and H + 108 hours. The US 507 Para Regt landed two of its battalions directly on their DZs between Diersfordterweld and the River Rhine. The 3rd Bn and the Regt HQ landed north of



6th Abn Div (UK)



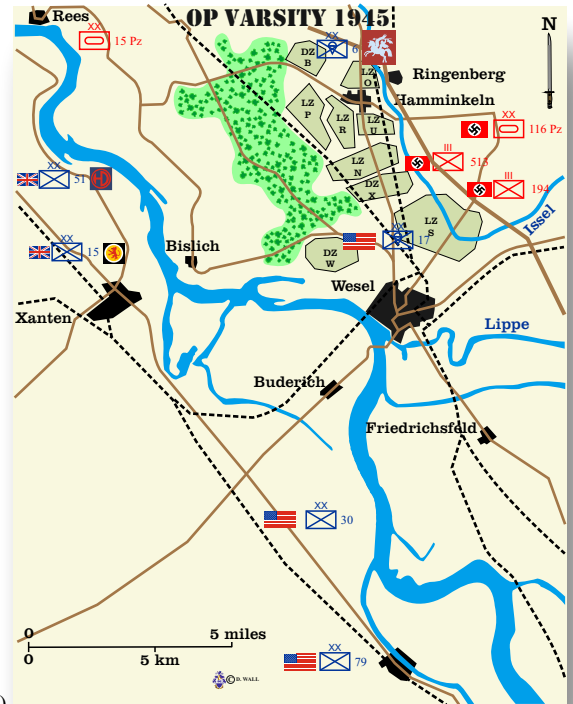
51st Inf Div (UK)



15th Inf Div (UK)



17th Abn Div (USA)



Diersfordterweld and immediately engaged in a fire fight with German forces. Fighting continued until 15h00 when the remaining Germans surrendered.

The US 513rd Para Regt landed north of their DZ which was situated north east of Fluren village. The British 6th Airborne Division with the 13th Devons under command, had been allocated this LZ. The 13th Devons linked up with the 513rd to attack targets at Hamminkeld. The US 513rd Para Regt then redeployed after the immediate objectives were taken.

The US 194th Glider Infantry Regt landed north of Wesel village and captured their objectives on the west bank of the River Issel. To their left the British 3rd Para Bde landed on DZs to the north of Diersfordterweld that were situated east of the town of bergen. They were immediately engaged by German forces using AA guns on the ground role. 3rd Para Bde successfully dealt with this opposition and then went on to capture their objective, the village of Schnappenberg.

British 5 Para Bde landed near some woods west of Hamminkeln on either side of the road to Rees and captured their allocated objective. British 6 Airlanding Bde landed south of Hamminkeln in some open fields. They had suffered some casualties while still airborne but, on landing, captured their objective, the town of Hamminkeln.

On the 24th March 1945 British 2nd Army crossed the River Rhine and advanced to link up with the paras so that the amphibious bridgehead over the Rhine could be secured against any counter attack. Two second line German divisions were quickly defeated during this deployment. The Allies suffered many casualties in the operation but were successful. Thus, the advance into central Germany was possible. DW

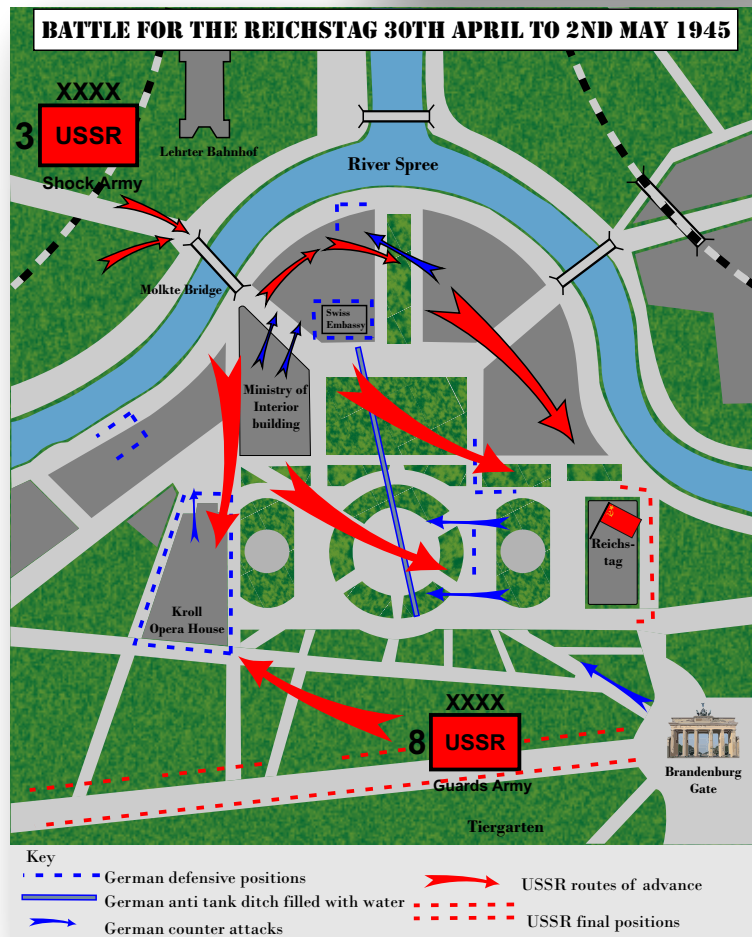


The Fall of Berlin

The end of World War Two was fast approaching as the Allies advanced from the west and the Soviet Union advanced from the east. The Fall of Berlin was one of the last major battles and effectively ended the war.

The Soviet Union conducted the Vistula–Oder offensive during January and February of 1945 and halted 37 miles east of Berlin. The attack on Berlin was imminent and on 9 March drew its forces into a defensive ring around Berlin in an operation known as Operation Clausewitz.

The Soviet offensive resumed on 16 April on two broad fronts and attacked Berlin from the east and south. A third front attacked and defeated the German forces deployed in



the area north of Berlin in two main battles - (Seelow Heights and Halbe).

On 20 April 1945 the 1st Belorussian Front under the command of Marshal Georgy Zhukov commenced with an artillery bombardment on the centre of Berlin from the east and north. The First Ukrainian Front under command of Marshal Ivan Konev then broke through Army Group Centre and advanced on the southern suburbs of Berlin.

The city suffered many casualties. On 23 April General Helmuth Weidling took command of the German garrison forces in Berlin. It comprised several Army and Waffen-SS divisions that were under strength and in bad shape. To compliment this force there were some poorly trained members of the Volkssturm and Hitler Youth. It took a week to take the entire city.

On 30 April, Hitler committed suicide. The garrison continued to fight for a few days and surrendered on 2 May. German forces in the north-west, west, and south-west of the city continued to fight until 8 May when final capitulation took place and the war officially ended. Many German units fought in a westward direction as they wanted to surrender to the Western Allies rather than to the Soviets. They knew that they had a much better chance of coming out of the conflict with them.

DW

Victory in Europe (VE) Day (8 May 1945)

VE Day is the day that marks the Allied victory over the Axis forces in Europe in 1945. This year marks the 80th anniversary of VE Day and there are now very few veterans left alive, of that conflict, who will be able to celebrate it this year. It is the day when the German armed forces surrendered unconditionally and layed down their arms after six years of bitter fighting in Europe and in Africa.

Over one million people gathered in the streets of towns and cities throughout the UK to celebrate the end of the conflict. Thousands of people gathered in Trafalgar Square and the Mall, walking up to Buckingham Palace. King George VI, Queen Elizabeth and Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret stood on the main balcony with Sir Winston Churchill to greet the gathered crowds in celebration. Churchill then went to Whitehall and spoke to the crowds who gathered there. His statement sums it up - "God bless you all. This is your victory. In our long history, we have never seen a greater day than this. Everyone, man or woman, has done their best".

Great Britain celebrated with street gatherings and street parties. Thereafter the long struggle to get the country on its feet commenced. The war continued in the Far East for a short while but that also came to an end some months later. DW



Lasham airfield memorial North Hampshire



The memorial was commissioned by the members of the Lasham Glider Society as well as local residents, companies and friends on 14th September 2006

RAF squadrons based at Lasham during the Second World War

RAF 33 Squadron Spitfire aircraft
 RAF 107 Squadron Boston and Mosquito aircraft
 RAF 175 Squadron Hurricane and Typhoon aircraft
 RAF 181 Squadron Typhoon aircraft
 RAF 182 Squadron Typhoon aircraft
 RAF 183 Squadron (Gold Coast) Typhoon aircraft
 RAF 239 Squadron. Mustang aircraft
 RAF 453 Squadron Spitfire aircraft
 RAF 602 Squadron (City of Glasgow) Spitfire aircraft
 RAF 609 Squadron (West Riding) Typhoon aircraft
 RAF 613 Sqn (City of Manchester) Mosquito aircraft
 RCAF 412 Squadron (Canada) Spitfire aircraft
 RDNA 320 Squadron (Netherlands) Mitchell aircraft
 PAF 305 Squadron (Poland) Mitchell and Spitfire aircraft. DW

Petersfield Branch

Petersfield branch of the RBL are in urgent need of volunteers for the position of Secretary and Treasurer. If you are willing to assist a worthy cause supporting our armed forces community in the Petersfield area please make contact with the Chairman.

Basingstoke, Overton and District Branch

Basingstoke, Overton and District Branch are recruiting for a Secretary and Standard Bearer, Volunteers are urgently required. If you are willing to assist a worthy cause supporting our armed forces community in the Basingstoke area, please make contact with the Chairman.

Badges of the British Army



The Princess of Wales Royal Regiment (The Tigers) was formed on 9th September 1992 when army reforms amalgamated the Queens Regiment and the Royal Hampshire Regiment. It is now the second most senior regiment in the army. The Queen of Denmark is the Colonel-in-Chief.



The 1st Bn saw action in Iraq in 2004, 2006 and in 2009 where the battalion was split between Afghanistan and Iraq. Elements of the regiment helped train the Iraqi National Army and oversaw the withdrawal of UK forces from Basra. The army 2022 reforms saw the 1st Battalion move from Paderborn, Germany to Bulford Camp. The 2nd Battalion was deployed to Northern Ireland and then to Cyprus. The regiment recruits from London, Kent, Surrey, Sussex, Hampshire, Middlesex, Isle of Wight and the Channel Islands. DW



1st Bn
tactical recognition flash



Regimental
tactical recognition flash



2nd Bn
tactical recognition flash

A Special Presentation The Royal British Legion Yesterday and Today



by Lieutenant General James Bashall, CB, CBE
to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the end of WW2

Friday 4th April 2025
at 7.30pm (Doors and Bar open 6.30pm)
at the Fieldgate Centre, Kingsclere

Tickets £5 in advance only
from Swan Street Stores, Kingsclere
or online from www.ticketsource.co.uk

*** Grand Raffle ***



Proceeds to the Royal British Legion
Registered Charity No 219279

Organised by Kingsclere Local History Association
and Kingsclere Royal British Legion






Hampshire VE 80 concert

Sunday 4 May
7:30pm
o2 Guildhall Southampton

Featuring
The Royal Marines Association Concert Band
Murielle French Singer
and more





Tickets available from Ticketmaster.
Or scan the QR code.



ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

County Contact Details

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RBL Website: www.BritishLegion.org.uk County Website: <http://counties.britishlegion.org.uk/counties/hampshire>

Facebook Page: www.facebook.com/groups/hantscountyrbl/ Facebook Email - Hampshire.web@rbl.community

Poppy Appeal - www.facebook.com.poppy.HamsphireRBL

Contact us

It's your newsletter!!!

If anyone has any articles that they would like published in the Newsletter then please contact the editor (Colonel (Retd) Dudley Wall MSM MMM) with any information or articles by the 20th of the month at:

HampshireLinkDW@yahoo.com

ALL LEGION ENQUIRIES

(including Welfare requests) should be directed to the national call centre

0808 802 8080

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County Vice President Brian C.N. Soffe

County Vice President Robert G. Knight

County Chairman

County Vice-Chairman

County Secretary Melvyn Cole

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Independent Examiners - G.S. Brown and M. Davis

Cups Sub-Committee: Avril Mitchell, Pat Prior BEM QVRM. Brian Mansi

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Deputy County Standard Bearer: Dudley Howard up to County Conference and then Andy Dawes

County Youth Standard Bearer: Amelie Neal

Ceremonial Support: David Graham, Karen Graham

County Padre: Reverend David Roache

Golf Officer: Rick Bourne

Membership Engagement Officer: Holly Church, Membership Engagement Manager: Martin Pelling

Membership Council Representative: Gerry Nunn

Public Relations Officer: VACANT

Independent Examiners: Ges Brown, Mike Davis

UK Honours Awards: County President, County M.E.O.