



It is now a year since Russia invaded Ukraine, causing untold devastation, displacement and loss of life. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all Ukrainian citizens - those fighting, those who have lost family or friends, those surviving as best they can in their war-torn homeland and those who are here in the UK or elsewhere in Europe. We stand with you and are proud to display your national flag on our newsletter. Norman and I are most grateful to all members of our wider RBL family who sent good wishes and offers of help after we finally succumbed to Covid last week. Unfortunately, as Jack was also unavailable, we had to cancel the February Bun, Cuppa and Chat, as we did not have enough RBL members available to run it, which reinforces our chairman's plea below for some active new recruits to our RBL branch. Details of our centenary concert below – please put the date in your diary.

My thanks to Bob and Norman for their contributions to this issue.

A Message from our Chairman

Only nine members attended the branch meeting in January, and as we have not reached double figures for many months, we have decided to meet quarterly from now on, so the next meeting will be Wednesday 26th April.

This is our centenary year and we are planning a celebration concert and a branch lunch, as well as continuing to support the 75 or so veterans and their families who comprise our Bun, Cuppa and Chat group, produce a monthly newsletter, and organise Remembrance events. The branch chairman and secretary now also run the Poppy Appeal in the Dickleburgh and Long Stratton areas as the Poppy Appeal Organisers' posts for both places have been vacant for two years.

I know that many branch members and others in our local communities are no longer able to participate actively in the RBL through age or ill-health, or because of other commitments, but if you are unable to get involved yourself, please encourage younger members of the community to join the Dickleburgh branch of the Royal British Legion to help us to support our various activities, not just in this centenary year but beyond. The RBL is open to men and women and to young people aged 12 and over. There is no requirement to have served in the armed forces. The current annual subscription for the RBL is £18, with no charge for youth members.

We are most grateful to our community volunteers who help with the catering for Bun, Cuppa and Chat, but it would be brilliant if we could also increase the number of active branch members to help organise our activities, and to take the strain off the ten or so members who currently run the branch and who are mostly in their 70s and 80s.

Please contact myself on 01508 531492 or our secretary, Rosemary Steer on 01379 854245 if you need further information about joining the RBL.

Kind regards, John

Dickleburgh and District Branch, RBL

A Centenary Celebration

in music and words

Saturday 15th July 2023, 7.30pm

All Saints Church, Dickleburgh

**With the New Buckenham Silver Band
and community choir, Village Voices**

RBL Family News

It is with sadness that we report the deaths of David Woodrow and Peter Solly. David was a long-term member of the branch and regularly attended branch meetings until he moved into a care home in Thetford. David's funeral will take place in Dickleburgh church, on 22 March at 11am and will be taken by Rev. Norman.

Peter and Sheila joined our Bun, Cuppa and Chat group some years ago, though Peter has been unwell for much of that time so neither has been able to attend over the past year or so. We know though that they both appreciated the cakes that kind neighbour Elaine took back to them after Bun, Cuppa and Chat! Our thoughts are with David's sister, Dinah, Sheila Solly and David and Peter's families. We look forward to welcoming Sheila back to Bun, Cuppa and Chat shortly.

Our thoughts are with our chairman John and his wife Pearl as John's health continues to give concern. I am most grateful for all they both do for the branch, especially at this difficult time.

Jim Kerr has kindly agreed to take on the role of vice chairman, in respect of chairing meetings if needed, and Julia Deighton has been co-opted on to the Committee to fill a vacancy. Thank you to them both.

The next Bun, Cuppa and Chat will be on Thursday 23 March, 2.30-4pm at the Village Centre.

My Dad and D-Day (Operation Overlord) by Bob Rogers, Diss and District Branch, RBL

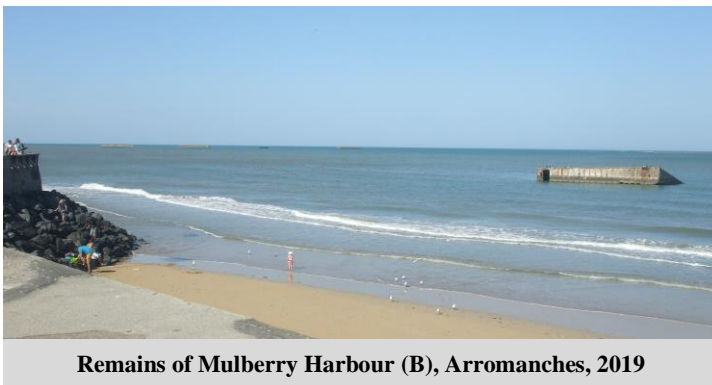
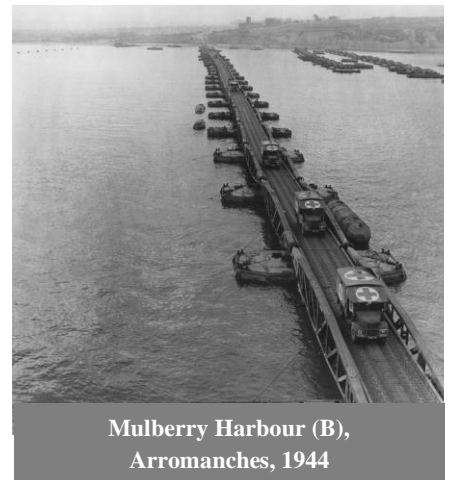
Two weeks after his 20th birthday, my Dad stormed the beaches of Normandy!

My father was John Arthur Rogers, born Forty Acre Lane, Canning Town in May 1924. He joined the local Home Guard but in January 1943 was called up and sent to Edinburgh. After his basic training, he joined the Royal Engineers, and in April 1943 became Driver 14512354 Rogers, John, RE. He then spent the following year being trained for the big day. (Although he did not know that at the time!).

He was based in Edinburgh Castle, the Tower of London, and Longmoor Military Railway. He was also at the Memorial Road Buildings, E.15, which for some time before D-Day was turned into Army barracks. He learnt to drive some very big lorries in the middle of the Yorkshire moors in mid-winter and finally was awarded an 'All Groups Licence' which meant if it had a wheel or an engine, anything from a motor bike to a tank, he knew how to move it, and what to do if it did not. Amongst some of the things he did before D-Day was to drive convoys full of explosives from Essex through the Blackwall Tunnel (they closed it off to normal transport and sent through one lorry at a time in case something went wrong!) and then on down to the coast.

On D-Day he was a member of 10th Mobile Railway Workshop, 962 Company Royal Engineers. He boarded a ship in a big lorry and headed for France. The drivers were put in the bowels of the ships and had to stay there, so no daylight and no idea what was happening. He was due on Gold Beach (sub-section Jig Beach) on D-Day, but owing to a delay clearing the beach, he spent a very uncomfortable 24 hours bobbing about in the English Channel, before disembarking early on the 7th June.

His job was to help to construct the Mulberry Harbour (B) (British). This is where my other Grandad comes in to the story. Albert Edward Gregory was born in Stepney in 1895 spending World War 1 as a member of the Royal Horse Artillery. He subsequently became deaf, because of the guns. As a dock labourer in World War 2, one of Grandad's many jobs was to help build some strange looking objects in the Blackwall Docks, part of the East India Docks in Poplar, East London. It was not until after D-Day, he found out he was helping to build casements for the Mulberry Harbour. (It's a small world). Soon after the invasion a terrible storm stuck the Normandy coast. It destroyed the American version of Mulberry, and nearly destroyed the British one.



During the storm, my Dad had to go and rescue some members of the Royal Artillery who were stuck out on the guns at the end of the harbour defences. The weather was too rough to use the roadways and it was feared the gunners would drown. Because of my Dad's "All Group" licence, and the fact there was a small boat tied up with an engine and a steering wheel, he 'volunteered' with some mates to go out in the boat and get them.

Once the harbour was established, he moved inland. The first main town they came to was Bayeux, and then on to Caen. He then fought his way through France, Belgium, Holland and finally in to Germany. He was cut off behind enemy lines in Belgium for a while during what become to be known as the Battle of the Bulge. It was a tea break that saved my Dad's life. He was lead driver in a small convoy delivering materials. As they were driving along,

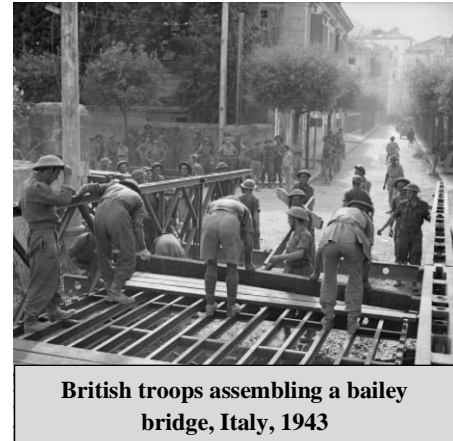


**Somewhere in France
Winter 1944.
The 10th Mobile
Railway Workshop
have finally found a
Train!
My Dad is the one in
the middle, with what I
think is a three ton
Dennis truck behind
him**

they could see in the distance vehicles approaching. The sergeant next to him, said, “Pull the lorries off the road and we will have a brew-up to the other convoy pass”. They pulled in to a clearing in the forest. A young soldier was sent to see what was happening. He soon came back ‘hot foot’, shouting, “the Germans are coming”. After being called a few names by the sergeant, they all went to have a look, and came face to face with some very angry PANZERS! Luckily, they had their turret covers closed and were going somewhere very fast and did not notice the lorries. Dad and his mates were lucky and managed to get back to the British lines.

Another of Dad’s jobs was to build Bailey bridges to allow the allied troops to advance. Developed by the British in 1940/41, these were prefabricated, truss bridges, which could be transported in pieces in lorries and erected by hand, without the need for cranes. They were strong enough to take tanks and provided temporary crossings for troops and equipment where bridges had been destroyed by bombing, shellfire or the retreating enemy.

Even when peace was declared, the war was not over for Dad; he had to stay in Germany and help to rebuild the country. He was finally discharged in June 1947 at York. My father died of a heart attack, caused by injuries received in the battle for Europe, in November 1986 at the age of 62.



British troops assembling a bailey bridge, Italy, 1943



Dickleburgh and District Branch, Royal British Legion, c. 1930

This is the earliest photograph that I have found, taken about seven years after the branch was formed. There are several copies held locally, some with and some without captions, so I give below one version of the captions, though probably written many years after the photograph was taken. If anyone spots any errors or can give any more names, please let me know. All listed left to right.

Back Row: Woods; ??; Billy Tungate; Dick Francis; Alf Lockett; Walter Russell; Woods; Dick Chenery

Third Row: ??; Fred Saunders; Seaman; Jack Tyce; Jimmy Love; Harry Francis; Ted Lawrence; ??; ??; Foulger; ??

Second Row: Jack Self; Davy; Limmer; Fred Snelling; ??; ??; ?? [possibly Sam Cook, standard bearer]; Bullock; ??; Elijah Snelling; Billy Brown; ??

Front Row: ??; Dick Kilby; Edwards; Puffy Catchpole; Dent; Sir John Mann; Rev Cooper Johnson; ??; Jinky Hubbard; ??; ??; ??

Another partial list of names mentions: Fred Saunders, Will Limmer, Sam Cook – SB, ie standard bearer (so I have added his name above), Walter Cross, Rev. Cooper Johnson, Ernie Hubbard, Stumpy Aldous, Sir Edward Mann, Arthur Dent, Puffy Catchpole, Walter Russel, Dick Chenery, and 2 Russel boys.

Norman's Chuckle Corner

- ✚ A man came into the office with his arm in a plaster cast. "What happened to you?" asked the receptionist. "Oh, I broke my arm in two places?" said the man. "That's dreadful", said the receptionist, "It might be better if you avoided those two places in the future."
- ✚ A man goes for an interview. The interviewer tells him that they are looking for someone who is responsible. "Well, I am your man," the applicant replies. "At my last job whenever anything went wrong, they said I was responsible."
- ✚ I went into Waterstones and asked the assistant if she had a book on turtles. She said "Hardback"? I said, "yes and little heads".
- ✚ The main difference between Dubai and Abu Dhabi is that in Dubai they do not like the Flintstones but people in Abu Dhabi Dooo.
- ✚ A man walks into a fishmonger's carrying a salmon under his arm. "Do you do fishcakes?" he asks. "Of course," says the fishmonger. "Oh good" says the man, "it's his birthday".
- ✚ Two goldfish in a tank. One says to the other "How do you drive this thing?"

Diss Family History Group

History and Craft Fair

Saturday 11 March 2023

10am-4pm

Roydon Village Hall

Various family history and craft stalls, stalls from Norfolk Freemasons and the RBL Diss branch, refreshments and, for the children, a Victorian nursery for dressing up and a photo shoot.

'Service and Sacrifice' books for the war memorials at Dickleburgh, Thelveton, Rushall, Pulham St Mary, Shimpling and Starston available too.

Contributions or comments, please, to the Editor, Rosemary Steer, tel.: 01379 854245; email: rosemary@steerfamily.plus.com

Who's the Daddy?

Our Toller Roscoe had an exciting day out in August, resulting in the birth of nine pups to him and his bitch, Bracken on 13 October 2022 at Danehaven Kennels, owned by Roscoe and Sahara's breeder, Chris Goldspink. Chris and her daughter Kim have kept two pups, named Dibley (in honour of human grandpa Rev Norman) and Tod. Thank you, Chris for acting as Studmeister!



Readers may remember that if I run short of copy for the Newsletter, I will include pictures of my dogs. So, unless you want the next edition to be an 'At Home with the Steers' edition (the cats are photogenic too!), please send me some articles, snippets, jokes, cartoons, poems etc. They don't have to be on military or wartime topics, though these are always welcome.

Editor

If you have received this Newsletter, but are not involved with the Royal British Legion, don't worry, we just wanted to spread a little fun and humour around! Please contact me, though, if you would like your name removed from the mailing list.