



CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT

Hello again, yes it's still me, chairman for another year and another event.

Our AGM was held on June 23rd and a committee was elected, with two new faces. Welcome to Tim Comerford who is our new Trader Liaison and Paul Siroky who has taken on the role of Reenactor Liaison. A full list of elected members is in this newsletter. We are still short of two important members, Fundraising Coordinator, and Ironbridge community Liaison. Please consider coming forward to help us with these and have a hand in organising this award-winning event.

News will soon be posted on our forthcoming 1940s day on October 2nd and (hopefully) the Vintage Fayre in November. Here we go again then.

Dave





IRONBRIDGE MEMORIES

THE FASHION PAGEANT

MAY, 25TH 2019

2019 was my third year at Ironbridge; my first two visits were as a visitor dressed as an ordinary British soldier of the North Staffs circa 1944 Normandy with my webbing and gasmask.

I had been encouraged to go by my re-enacting friends and I have to say a big thank you to them, because for any re-enactor the world into which you enter is one of sheer bliss. From the moment you arrive in town you are surrounded by the sights and sounds of like-minded people. There are vehicles, reenactors, displays, sights and sounds that help set the scene and even on occasions, aircraft, and of course the public who literally feast upon all the elements that are portrayed.

So back to 2019 where incidentally I was used as the header image of the event's Facebook page where I was following in the footsteps of the amazingly glamorous 'shy and retiring' Caroline Higgs; the previous year's eye candy banner; well I could babble on, but what you need to know (as most do) is this is an amazing event and that it's also for a great cause, and I also believe recently voted Britain's most popular event.

So back to 2019 and the statement 'It's a Dirty job but someone had to do it?' That year, and that Fashion Pageant - I was asked to host and present the glamorous people of the day, who had been selected at random to participate in the Pageant in the grand marquee. I was asked by the organisers to host because they thought I was well qualified to fill in the role that year! And so without a script, or hindsight I entered upon the stage with the support of the organisers to unleash my personality! Shy and retiring I'm not, but years of experiences under my belt we entered up on the stage the entrants and I before the audience. As a professional trainer I knew I had to guide the entrants through what was possibly their first parade - so I chasséd a square pattern around the stage and asked from the entrants that at each corner towards the cameras that they twirl and blew a kiss! And strut across the stage...and what did I do I demonstrated! And happily the pictures of the entrants are gems in themselves especially the one of the Scotsman!

The Fashion Pageant is just one of the events that supports the whole weekend and gives a moment of glamour to the austerity of the period and it's fantastic how stunning people look, whether in civvies or uniform...

“It's a Dirty job but someone had to do it!!”

ROB WANTLING





THIS MONTH IN WWII.

THE ANGELS OF MERCY

June 6th marked the 77th anniversary of D-Day.

There are many famous stories from the day, ranging from incredible acts of bravery to blind luck.

One story which is not so well known is that of The Angels of Mercy. Theirs is a little-known tale of bravery and compassion, of which we are unlikely to see again.

Kenneth J Moore was a gentle giant, standing well over 6ft tall. The quiet and shy California native looked much older than his 21 years. He was used to spending his Junes basking in sunshine on long, hot summer days.

Robert E Wright could not have been more of a contrast; standing barely 5ft. 5", this confident and baby-faced 20-year-old from Louisiana looked 14.

Both had enlisted in the paratroopers and had been attached to the 501 regiment of the 101st Airborne Division. They had been selected to become combat medics, meaning when they jumped into France on that dark, cold night they were unarmed. Their only protection being the shadows, the red cross on their sleeve, God, and Lady Luck herself. This is something which deeply troubled both men prior to the invasion.

Just after midnight on the morning of Tuesday 6th June 1944, both men jumped from their respective C-47 transport aircraft into the icy blast of the cold, damp Normandy air.

Their objective was to land within the dropzone (DZ)

designated 'D'. This area was the most southernly and deadly of all the American DZs. As is normal in that area of France there are many hamlets and villages which are dotted around, DZD has some very famous ones, such as St Marie du Mont and St Come du Mont. However, the extraordinary story of The Angels of Mercy takes place in a much smaller, and less famous hamlet. One which will be linked to these extraordinary men for eternity. One called Angoville au Plain.

T/5 Wright landed approximately six hundred yards to the north of the village, whilst Pvt. Moore landed approximately a mile to the south. Both men quickly recognised their position based on the hours they had spent studying the minutely detailed sand table models of their DZ prior to leaving England. Using the church steeple as a focal point (knowing that this is where other troopers would also be heading) within an hour they had met outside the church and quickly began to establish it as a field aid post.

Soon a red cross had been attached to the main door for all to see. During the heavy and brutal fighting, which erupted outside, the casualties began to mount up rapidly on both sides. It was at this point that the decision was made by the two medics to treat casualties from both sides, the one non-negotiable rule was that under no circumstances would be any weapons be allowed inside. Within minutes the pews were crammed with the wounded and dying, and large cache of weapons and ammunition piled in the church yard. The alter was used as a treatment table, the vestry as a makeshift morgue, and when this was full the bodies were moved outside.



Kenneth J Moore



Robert E Wright





THIS MONTH IN WWII.

THE ANGELS OF MERCY

It was during the early morning of the 6th that the door to the church flew open and there in the entrance stood an irate and angry SS commander with two heavily armed soldiers. He was injured and demanded to be treated. A stand-off ensued, with Robert Wright insisting their weapons be left outside, the SS commander refused. After several tense minutes, the SS troops yielded and left all their weapons in the churchyard.

This was not the only surprising event to take place over the next 48 hours. On the morning of the 8th, two young German soldiers slowly made their way down into the church from the tower. Unbeknown to anyone they had been there since the evening of the 5th as observers. They had witnessed the airborne landings, the fierce fighting in the square below, the aerial bombing, naval barrage, and the beach landings. They were quite literally paralysed with fear until they felt it safe to move when there was a lull in the fighting.

Over the next two days the hamlet would change hands several times as the bitter fighting continued with heavy casualties on both sides. At one point on the 8th, the situation seemed so desperate that Moore volunteered to stay with the casualties, instructing Wright to pull out with the other American troops. Later that day, following a fierce counterattack, Angoville au Plain would change hands a final time. The village would be used as a headquarters by Col. Robert Sink (of Band of Brothers fame) for a number of days until fighting moved further south. It is hard to truly comprehend the events which took place here 77 years ago without visiting. And even then, it is hard to imagine the horrors which unfolded in this beautiful, peaceful, seemingly insignificant part of Normandy, but there are some clues. The square named Place Taccoa, the memorial outside the church, the stain glass windows of the church depicting the events which took place there, the hole in the roof from a stray, (thankfully dud) mortar and the hole in

the floor where it landed, the original battered, blood-stained pews. However, the most poignant is outside, not far from the entrance where the Red Cross flag flew and the weapons piled high, here there is a small black marble plaque on the floor, with a simple inscription - 'R.E.W'. It is here that Robert EWright now rests, together again with his friends and comrades whom he last saw 77 years ago. In February 2018, a member of our committee was visiting Angoville au Plain. Whilst walking behind the vestry (where the dead were placed once the vestry was full) a piece of white material was found in the ground. After being carefully removed and upon closer inspection it soon became obvious that this was a piece of white silk parachute which had been tied into a sling of tourniquet. Based on the location in the church yard, the type of material and the item it had been used to create this was almost certainly tied by either Robert EWright or Kenneth J Moore.





Dropzone D is an award-winning, walk-through display which represents the 501 Pathfinders and the French Resistance (who aided them) on the morning of D-DAY in and around the hamlet of Angoville au Plain.

The Pathfinders were a small and elite group of highly trained paratroopers who's job, as the name suggests, was to find a path for those to follow, or light the way. These men used top-secret, state of the art equipment to guide transport aircraft and gliders to dropzones.

Our display has grown rapidly since it was first created, and over lockdown we have been busy expanding. In addition to the various items and equipment seen at Ironbridge 2019, including a MkI Eureka beacon and navigation lamps, DZD now includes a full size Airborne dropzone, sabotaged telephone poles, a 1940s style ciderie trailer and an FFI messenger dog. Yes, lockdown has been a busy time.

We also have some of the "surprises" which the Germans installed as defence against the allies in Normandy, such as a full-sized replica of a Rommel's Asparagus and minefield. There is a chance to see a rare replica of an Oscar/Rupert decoy paratrooper which were helped to overcome these.

We pride ourselves on our attention to detail, knowledge and individuality; the food which we eat on set, the names and stories of family history told by our French Resistance reenactors, their identification papers and the authentic face camouflage which our Pathfinders wear.

Dropzone D allows people to be fully immersed in the history of the story of the Pathfinders and the FFI in and around the tiny hamlet of Angoville au Plain that morning.

We can't wait to see you all again in 2022 and hope to see you some events beforehand.

If you would like to learn more about our group please follow our Facebook page – **Dropzone D.**

DROPZONE D (DZD) LIVING HISTORY





HEALTHY WARTIME EATING



EGG AND BACON PIE

YOU NEED...

- ☞ 2 eggs
- ☞ 2–3 oz bacon, chopped
- ☞ 1 oz fresh breadcrumbs
- ☞ 1 tablespoon milk
- ☞ Salt and pepper to taste
- ☞ Pastry (as above) using 6oz flour

METHOD

Line a seven-inch flan ring or sandwich tin with two-thirds of the pastry.
Beat the eggs and mix in the bacon, breadcrumbs, milk and seasoning.

Pour into the flan case and cover with the remaining pastry.
Bake in a hot oven for an hour and serve hot or cold.





IRONBRIDGE 2022 WILL BE PROUDLY RAISING FUNDS FOR

COMBAT STRESS

FOR VETERANS' MENTAL HEALTH

Who are Combat Stress?

We are a national charity who help former servicemen and women with mental health problems such as PTSD, anxiety, and depression. We provide specialist treatment and support for veterans and their families from every service and conflict, by providing a range of community, outpatient, online and residential mental health services to veterans with complex mental health needs.

The charity was formed in 1919 by a group of women, just after the end of World War One when men were returning from the frontline with what was then known as shell shock. At this point it was called the Ex-Services Mental Welfare Society. The charity was ahead of its time. The attitude to mental welfare was very primitive and veterans could be confined in Mental War Hospitals under Martial Law – with the risk of being sent on, without appeal, to asylums.

Our first 'Recuperative' community was established at 'Chartfield', 50 Putney Hill, in 1920 where veterans were taught new skills including basket weaving, woodwork and pottery. Items were then sold to help the charity continue operating.



What do we do?

Our 24-hour Helpline is open to all veterans, providing confidential mental health advice and support. If you are a family member or carer worried about the mental health of a loved one, or need to talk to someone yourself, you can call the helpline too on 0800 138 1619.

We offer a range of treatment, therapies and support through group workshops, individual sessions with community teams, and programmes through treatment centres.

We also have a range of online self-help resources and a virtual peer support community. All accessed easily through the Combat Stress website.



HERBIE

Herbie joined the Army aged 16. He completed two intense tours of Northern Ireland where he experienced the death of two friends. When he left the Army he struggled to adjust and started to drink heavily as well as have nightmares and night sweats.

He was put in touch with Combat Stress, and after receiving specialist treatment, says "Combat Stress has given me my life and my family back, I wouldn't be here if it wasn't for them. You can sometimes feel like you're the only one who feels this way but when I came to Combat Stress I realised there are thousands of others feeling the same. To any veteran who isn't sure whether to contact Combat Stress, I'd say don't sit in silence and suffer alone."

	Nominated	Email
Chair	Dave Adams	chair@ironbridgeww2weekend.co.uk
Re-enactor liaison	Paul Siroky	reenactorliason@ironbridgeww2weekend.co.uk
Entertainment & Activities Co-ordinator	Laura Gott/Mel McCarthy	entertainment@ironbridgeww2weekend.co.uk
Fundraising Officer	Position vacant	
Ironbridge Community Liaison	Position vacant	publicity@ironbridgeww2weekend.co.uk
Communications & Publicity	Ben Kubiak/Laura Gott	volunteercoordinator@ironbridgeww2weekend.co.uk
Volunteer Co-ordinator	Paul Woodcock/Helen Docker	operations@ironbridgeww2weekend.co.uk
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Trader Liaison	Tim Comerford	admin@ironbridgeww2weekend.co.uk
Secretary (incorp H&S and Local Authority Liaison)	Judith Adams	admin@ironbridgeww2weekend.co.uk
Treasurer	Judith Adams	



THE IRONBRIDGE GORGE
WWI WEEKEND
NEW COMMITTEE ROLES
2021/2