



# The Crown



## Veterans Support Association

### Newsletter

1st Nov 2016

*We are one year old TODAY*

#### Introduction

This and subsequent newsletters are dedicated to all veterans, young or old, abled bodied or disabled, who have associated themselves with the Association.

It is written and put together by veterans, it is for all veterans from across all the armed services and will be published, for now quarterly.

The support group started its life as a way of sign posting veterans and their families to the help that is available and a way of accessing that help, As a veteran diagnosed with P.T.S.D. I decided to start the group which has now turned into an association with monthly drop in meetings, Archery and much more as well.

John Joyce Founder.



## THE INVISIBLE ILLNESS

"The invisible illness", that's what they say  
The stresses and strains that burden your day  
With no outward signs there is nothing to see  
The pain and conflict that is within me

No barometer check for the lows and the highs  
No deforming marks to see with your eyes  
Frustration, depression, my daily routine  
The survivor's guilt which is not to be seen

Though the battles I fought are from bygone years  
The scars are still there although hidden by tears  
I'm no longer the man I used to be  
I'm still in a conflict that only I see

The nightmares, the flashbacks, are all too real  
Are problems within in me which I must deal  
It's not really easy to learn how to share  
And not always easy to find one to care

You cannot predict just how you will feel  
Each day, every moment, the emotions are real  
I'm not going mad - I'm not losing my mind  
Solutions to problems are what I must find

Anniversaries, events, all start to loom  
They travel in hand with the doom and the gloom  
They turn me upside down, my mind is a mess  
I suffer in silence with loss and distress

Relationships broken, not easy to mend  
My lifestyle, my culture is what I defend  
I need to break the circle and don't know how  
I need serious help and I need it now

Until I submit and accept my flaws  
Learn determination to open up doors  
I won't have to leave it until it's too late  
It's up to me now and not up to fate

Until you are ready to start on your way  
There's no one to listen when you want your say  
So when you are willing to find time to share  
It's then you will find special people who care

The people who care about where you have been  
The sights, sounds, atrocities that you have seen  
There are those out there who will help you to see  
The route through the maze of your PTSD

George Mills June 2013 ©



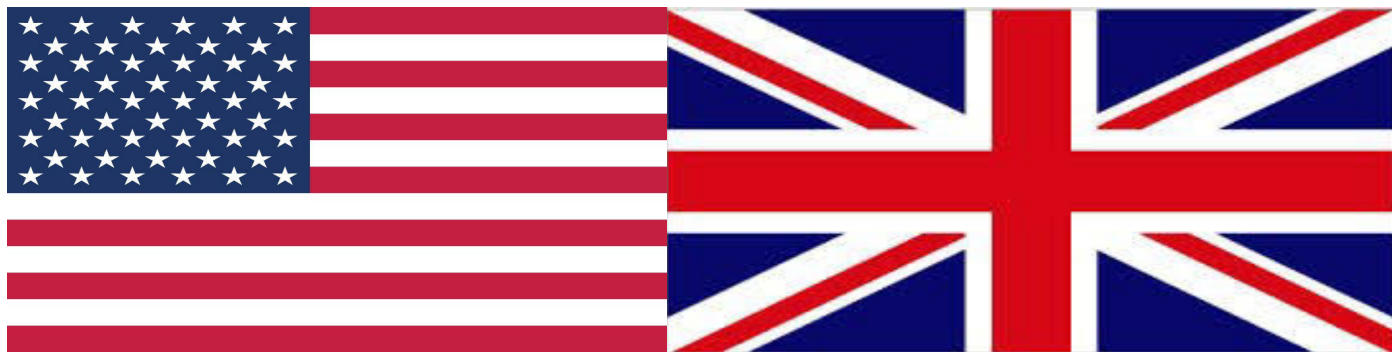
My wife *George* wrote this poem after living with my illness for several years and learning with me where it was going to take us. It is really nice to know that there is someone out there who understands and who has helped on my quest to try and control the P.T.S.D., also with major support from The Warrior Programme it is getting easier to do these days.

For supporting me and staying the course I would like to thank her.

Barry Mills

This page will be for any short story, that you the readers, believe to be of a Historical part of Military history. Like myself I found an interesting but not that widely known training tragedy, during Operation Tiger at Slapton Sands, Torcross, Devon, April 28th 1944 very interesting, this is also on the programme PBS America on Sky

So if you have something that you believe would be of interesting to others then please email me with them at [barrymills12@aol.com](mailto:barrymills12@aol.com) (photo's, stories, your own experiences) any thing you think we can use.



On the build up to D-Day 1944, an exercise was mounted on the south coast of Devon with the American forces that would be deployed onto Utah beach on the 6th June,. A beach in Devon had been found that exactly resembled the part of Utah beach where they were to land and fight on the 6th.

As the Military wanted to make the exercise as real as possible it was to be live firing and in a total of 30,000 acres.

Due to the secretive nature of the operation and the use of live ammunition it was decided to evacuate the local population which included Eight Towns or Villages as well as all the farms and also livestock. 3000 men, woman and children had been moved out of the area by the end of 1943.



## **Operation Tiger**

Operation Tiger started early the morning of April 28th 1944. Eight landing ships full of American servicemen and their associated equipment converged on Lyme Bay just off the South coast of Devon heading for Slapton sands (Red Beach) for the rehearsal of D-Day.

The following units were involved, US Army 1st Engineer Special Brigade, 4th Infantry Division, VII Corps Headquarters, The 11th Amphibious Force. Also operating within this area was the German 5th Schnellboote (E-Boat ) Flotilla who operated out of Guernsey.

At 0945 on April 27th convoy T45 left Plymouth heading for Lyme Bay, its primary purpose to carry Tanks and Men to Slapton sands.

Leading was the escort Corvette H.M.S. Azalea, followed 2000 yards by LST 515 (landing ship Tank), then at 700 yards LSTs 496, 511, 531, 58, towing two pontoon causeways, also a British ship FDT217 (a fighter direction tender) was to provide Radar and Communications cover under combat conditions.

The WW1 Destroyer Scimitar which should have been escorting this convoy had been holed above the water line the day before and was in dock for repairs. This information was not sent up to command so no replacement was assigned.

Other vessels in the group were Three British MTB's which were positioned just off Cherbourg to intercept any E boats leaving their base, but at 2200hrs Nine E-boats from the Schnellboote flotillas slipped by and were in the channel.

It was at about this time that convoy T45 had been joined by the Brixham section, comprising off LSTs 499, 289, 507 LST 508 failed to make the rendezvous.

The first target was seen by the E-boats at 2317 hrs, they split into pairs and commenced their attack on the LST's.

FDT217 was ordered back into port at this time because she was necessary for the real landings in a couple of months. This she achieved with no damage, but by 0430 hrs the same could not be said for the landing craft LST's 507 and 531. They had been sunk with a total loss of 626 men, LST 289 had been damaged with the loss of 13 Men and LST 511 was damaged after taking fire from LST 496, with 18 wounded.

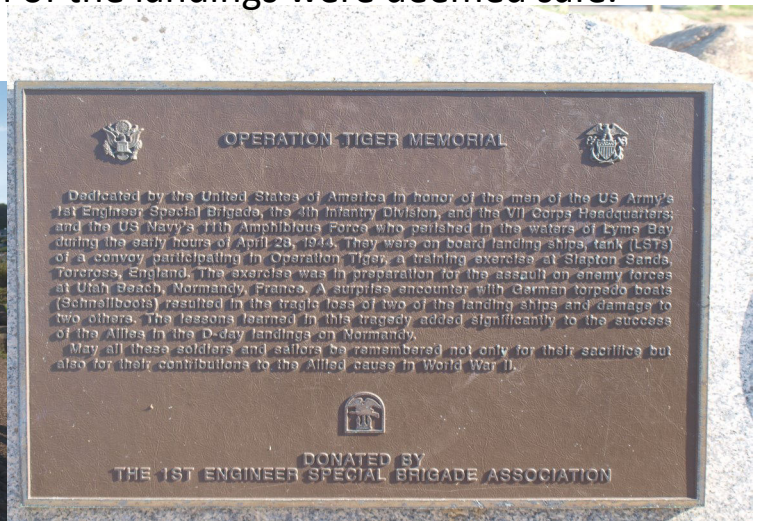
These casualties and those that lost their lives through incorrectly fitting life jackets and hypothermia from the sea amounted to nearly a Thousand.

The number of casualties, which were considered by the American top brass as such a disaster, that they ordered a complete information blackout and any of the survivors who revealed the truth would be court martialled.

The other problem was that allied commanders were concerned that officers who went missing during the attack could have ended up in German hands.

Some of the officers taking part in the exercise had the “Bigot” level of security clearance ( Beyond top secret) and knew all about the details of D-Day, .

A major search of the area was conducted and all officers with this clearance were found and the security question of the landings were deemed safe.



One of the items that went over the side that night was a Sherman Tank and it laid on the sea bed at Slapton sands for 40 years. It was found approximately 3/4 of a mile off shore in 60 feet (18m) of water by local resident Ken Small. After negotiations over the following years of a Mr Small brought the Sherman for \$50 from the Americans and then recovered it from the sea in 1984.

At present this Vehicle sits on the sea front at Torcross as a War memorial for the Allied personnel who lost their lives there, also Mr Small who passed away.

Mr small efforts to established this memorial was recognised by the US Congress , the families of the dead servicemen, also by Ronald Ragan who all thanked him for his efforts.

The whole story is much more complex than the short version here but it is a fascinating story which only came out in the late 80's. If you put 'Operation Tiger' into your browser all will be revealed, so good reading and you never where it might take you.

The Chairman of the Veterans Association John would like to acknowledge and is truly grateful to the following organizations that have been instrumental for making the group more than just a dream but have brought it to life.

***Help 4 Heroes, Healing hands, Step Forward, Aldi, Sir Oswald Stoll Mansions***

***The Warrior Programme, 3rd Molesey scouts, Veterans welfare service,***

***Elmbridge Council voluntary sector support, Volunteer Action Elmbridge***

***Mr Kevin Pearson and Councillor Mike Bennison SHV & F-LP (Ron & Deborah***

***A Massive thank you to all John Joyce***

### ***Useful Contact details***

#### ***Veterans support association***

**Web site:-**[WWW.Veteranssupportassociation.co.uk](http://WWW.Veteranssupportassociation.co.uk)

**Telephone:-** 07902-125508

**Facebook:-** veterans support association closed group, linked in John Joyce veterans support association.

**Combat Stress 24 hour help line 0800-13851619 [Www.combatstress.org.uk](http://www.combatstress.org.uk)**

**SSAFA Helpline 0800-7314880 [www.ssafa.org.uk](http://www.ssafa.org.uk)**

**Armed Forces and Charities Directory [www.charitychoice.co.uk](http://www.charitychoice.co.uk)**

**ABF (Army benevolent fund) Military charity [www.soldierscharity.org](http://www.soldierscharity.org)**

**Homes for Veterans:- [www.homesforveterans.co.uk](http://www.homesforveterans.co.uk) Tel 01722-322882**

**The Veterans charity:- [www.veteranscharity.org](http://www.veteranscharity.org)**

**Cobseo charities [www.army.mod.uk](http://www.army.mod.uk)**

**T.R.B.L. Royal British Legion:- Contact centre helpline [www.britishlegion.org.uk](http://www.britishlegion.org.uk)**

Telephone 0808-802808 8am-8pm 7 days a week

**The Poppy Factory Tel 020-89403305 [admin@poppyfactory.org](mailto:admin@poppyfactory.org)**

**[www.poppyfactory.org](http://www.poppyfactory.org)**

**The Warrior Programme Tel 0808-8010898 [www.warriorprogramme.org.uk](http://www.warriorprogramme.org.uk)**