

'A Bit Of My War' by Ken Smith

June 1944

At the briefing they gave me a rolled up map. They said it was not to be opened until we were on the boat at sea.

We had partly waterproofed the two vehicles at Old Sarum where we had been confined from the outside world for about three weeks. Leaving in the morning, we arrived at Gosport in the afternoon, outside some houses on a jetty. The women in the houses gave us cups of tea and wished us all the best.

We boarded a boat in the evening. I drove the radar vehicle and Bill drove the truck. There was an army tank and a jeep in front of us; behind was a convoy of RAF radar lorries.

We nosed our way out of Gosport into the Solent in the half light of an early June evening. Nobody spoke. It was silent except for the rhythm of the engine: "chug, chug, chug!"

I opened up the map to find out where we were going. The destination was no surprise: it was France. This was it! I took a final glance at the country I called home. It was dark and I thought I could see the Needles Rocks off the Isle of Wight. Goodbye, England!

I spoke to one of the sailors and he said that we had joined a convoy of LCTs. He did not seem very optimistic and went on to tell me that there were some E-boats in the vicinity - another name for German motor torpedo boats. I went somewhere to try to sleep, wondering what would happen when we landed on Omaha beach the following day.

When I woke up the sun was shining but we were alone - there wasn't a ship in sight. After moving in a seemingly straight line for several hours, we could finally see the coast of France; a thin line on the horizon. We got closer and suddenly turned left, now travelling adjacent to the coast on our right. I asked one of the sailors what was happening, and he informed me that fighting was still taking place on the beach we intended to land on. As we did not want to risk having the radar units captured, a new plan had to be conceived. The sailor told me of a fishing harbour - Port en Bessin - which had been recently cleared of mines by the Navy. It was a few miles down the coast and was our best option of getting into France.

Eventually we were able to make a dry landing on one of the runways on the side of the harbour. After removing the waterproofing which tended to make the engine overheat, we made our way up to the cliffs to the right of the town. All of a sudden, a German bunker could be seen. There were dead German soldiers scattered around. I remember thinking that if you were to change their uniform, they'd look English. At the time this sentiment didn't last long.

The next day we moved to a place nearer to the Americans' beach.

'The Past is a memory,
Time goes quickly,
But the brain does not forget'



'Mother Nature'

Den Hedges

I've been asked to draw a picture,
But I don't know where to start,
So I've decided to draw,
Something close to my heart,
The thing I really like the most,
Is where Mother Nature is host

I wander through the woods by day,
And often see the deers at play,
Big old trees block out the sky,
That's what makes the deers so shy.
Soon I'll be in a glade,
Nice to be out of the shade.
The sun is warm, it soon will bring,
The birds into the glade to sing

Now the day has soon gone by,
I'll cross a stream that has run dry,
I am home now, I'm pleased to say,
But I had a lovely day,
So thank you Mother Nature dear,
I hope that you are always here

Dennis Hedges



'Fishing For Brown Trout'

Den Hedges

I'm here today to talk about,
The day I went fishing for brown trout,
They are very crafty fish you know,
Hidden in the reeds below,
They don't want flies like other trout,
It's bread and cheese which flush them out,
You'll need the patience of a God,
To hook this fish in with your rod,
"It's a waste of time", the poachers say,
"Just tickle his belly - that's the way",
While I tried to do this thing,
There was no joy which it did bring,
So I'm back to fishing right,
It gives me so much more delight,
To catch brown trout the proper way

'Greed'

Darren Latham

**It used to be life,
Now it's just existence.
I kill myself to get by,
This lonely life is such
a drag.
Everybody wants
money,
But where are we
going?
Where is the love?
Love is being squeezed
out by want.
Modern life is shit,
So I keep out and
despair,
And do my own thing**

**'Attachment to material
things kills the soul.'**



'Untitled'

Darren Latham

**I watch the night
with delight.
I play my sax
which makes me see
what this life has done to me.
Plodding forward
is the only way
to get me through the day**

'My Life' By Eileen Venn

On the 1st July 1948. I was born in St. Albans with Cerebral Palsy. My life has been very varied, living mainly in Abbots Langley.

I went to ordinary school and then on to further education and the Office Training Centre for Cerebral Palsy. Then I got a job with British Rail.

When I came home I joined a club for Cerebral Palsy and became secretary. This was run by the disabled for the disabled. We had speakers, parties and went on trips which included a weekend away on the Norfolk Broads. I have been to Austria with the Ranger and Venture Scouts. I also walked up Snowdon and went skiing in Norway, amongst other things.

On 29th April 1978, I married Robin, and have had a wonderful 33 years. We have travelled to Yugoslavia and other places, including a wonderful cruise last year.

In 1981, we got involved with the year of the disabled, making aware of people's needs. Robin organised a walk about in Abbots Langley pointing out what the pitfalls were and are. This enabled us to go to a Royal Garden Party held at Buckingham Palace with other disabled people.

We have been with DRUM since it started, and have seen many changes. We have a great number of varied activities ranging from painting to creative writing. There is also Yoga which Robin and I take part in.

We go to our local church called St. Lawrence who has lots of things going on. There are House groups and Lent groups where we get together with other churches. Before I got married, I was a Sunday School teacher. We have also been on Pilgrimages with the Church to Israel and the Seven Churches of Turkey.

'29th April - Wedding Day'

By Robin Venn

The weather was dry with a cold wind. The bells rang out in celebration of the wedding. The bride arrives - not in a limo or horse and cart - but a T-Model Ford.

The church was packed with people, but one thing was strange: the groom and his family were on the left!

As the organ started playing, the princess walked down the aisle on her father's arm. Although, she didn't recognise the groom at first, as he had had his hair cut!

After the reception, the happy couple went off in the car to their honeymoon, staying the first night at Windsor Castle Hotel.

Of course, I am not talking about the Royal Wedding in 2011, but 33 years before. Our wedding day: 29th April, 1978.

'My Family' by Roger Holland

On a warm summer morning in 1970,
Outside the 62 club in London,
Marked a new beginning.
I met my beautiful wife to be

Two years, two months later and we were married,
An uncharacteristic September day,
Sun sparkling,
Surprising and wonderful in equal measure

"Sue's gone into hospital",
Those were the words I'd been waiting for,
The birth of my first child was almost upon us,
Joy - and panic - overwhelmed me

The baby won't arrive until tomorrow,
I returned home, disappointed, and phoned the hospital that evening,
A feeling of regret soon consumed me though,
I'd missed the birth of my first child

Yet any feelings of frustration or sadness were immediately outweighed by joy,
I was now the happy father of a luminous baby girl,
Sarah Helen Elizabeth Golland,
The most perfect gift I could have asked for

Four years later and these feelings of pride and adoration returned,
I was fortunate enough to have a second child.
Intent on not missing this birth,
I tried to remain at my wife's side

But luck works in mysterious ways,
And as I rushed to get some money from my father-in-law,
The unthinkable happened,
I missed the birth of my second child

Yet once again this disappointment was overshadowed,
Happiness filled my mind the moment I saw her shining face,
My wonderful baby girl,
Lisa Trish Holland

Eight wonderful grandchildren later,
And the relationship with my family is as strong as ever.
Watching my girls grow up has filled me with pride,
And so much joy

'Rabbit' by Keith Batchelar

This is my rabbit,
Who had a wonderful habit,
Of drinking my Campari and Tonic,
Then running round and bumping into things,
Which is why we called her 'Bumpey'.
She would run up the stairs,
And jump on my bed,
And throw herself on her back,
To have her belly scratched

'Safari' by Angela

Such a majestic, harmonious scene,
Without a trace to tell where man had
been,
From which those stately kings appeared,
Arising from shadowy solitudes, revered

How wildly enchanting it was to see,
The elephant's almighty reveille,
Like a trumpet to the ear,
While the midnight moon was sparkling
clear

A giraffe walked by the acacia tree,
Stopped to stare and talk to me,
For he was very slim and tall,
A tower, a pillar, a wandering wall

This lean figure, so gentle and wise,
Of astonishing vision and calm clear
eyes,
Watched the sun rise and watched it set,
Glanced down at me and seemed to
forget,
That I had as much a place in this scene,
As the clouds in the sky, the oak in the
green



Subtle ruffs emerging from the boys,
Sleeping peacefully, making no noise,
Their strong and cuddly appearance
never fails to astound,
Gathered like a pile of pillows on the
ground

A noble beast with a thick, complete
mane,
A commanding presence which does
not refrain,
Not fierce or intimidating but eminently
strong,
Glancing at us as we chugged along

