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NOMINAL ROLL - 502 Coy. R.A.S.C.
38th Annual Reunion Dinner

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K. Blades	K.R. Murray	A. Nuttall
T.A. Thorn	L.C. Facer	A.C. Facer
E.W. Penney	G. Noblett	R. Westbrook
D.A. Price	E. Gaffney	?. Gaffney
C.J. Tatham	D.W. Muggeridge	L.C. Powner
R.S. Atterbury	J. Evans	H. Bradshaw
A. Matthews	D.V. Robinson	M. Wilson
T.E. Atterbury	M. Atterbury	F. Knight
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H. Ingham	E. Clarkson	A.E. Reed
I. Harrison	D. McKenna	

SECRETARY'S NOTES.

Bazenville Trip.
Elsewhere in this issue you will read a more detailed account, by Frank Knight, of the trip that four of us eventually made to Bazenville, earlier this year.

I must say this proved to be a memorable and extremely pleasant trip to the place after which we named our Association and it was a nostalgic experience to come in contact with the people there, after so many years.

The reception we were given could not have been warmer and, in this respect, our thanks go out especially to Monsieur Vallerend (the Mayor) and his wife, as well as to Mme. Simone

Pastre,* a grand lady, some 81 years young, who spoke excellent English, and also to Mme. Birée (Lyd), who also spoke excellent English, for their wonderful hospitality.
In conclusion, I would say that those of our members who would also have liked to have gone on this trip, but, for some reason, found they couldn't make it, really missed a memorable experience as the people of Bazenville really 'did us proud'.

REUNION DINNER - This will take place on Sat., 9th Nov., once again at Oscar's and I hope that as many of you as possible will try to attend. Considering that we are an unofficial organisation, the support we have had, over the years, has been excellent and especial credit must be given to those members who, year after year, travel long distances to attend the Reunion. Such is the spirit that exists between old friends; long may it continue. Our thanks go also to those members who, even though they are unable to attend, still send subscriptions/donations.
Hope to see you in November,

Fred Pau.

We sent Mme. Pastre some photographs, after our visit;this is her reply:-
"Dear Mr. Knight,
We were indeed very pleased when we received your letter and the photographs. We enjoyed your coming in Bazenville - though it is nothing but a small village - no one has forgotten your landing in June, 1944.
We are expecting another visit (but not another landing!) before we are quite old people.
Kindly tell your friends how we are pleased to have known them. Many thanks for the photographs. Yours truly,

Simone Pastre.

BAZENVILLE REVISITED.

By Frank Knight.

The attempt to organise a party to tour Normandy by coach having failed due to lack of interest, four of us, namely Fred Pau, Ken Murray, Bert Stonall and myself, decided that, rather than abandoning the whole thing, we would go by car. Ken, with his usual generosity, volunteered to use his car; a new Sierra Diesel estate, exactly right for the job.

It occurred to me that, although we had been using their name for some forty years, the inhabitants of Bazenville were totally ignorant of our existence and I thought that they just might be interested. With this in mind, I wrote to the Mayor, telling him all about us. I had no idea what results this might bring but I never expected the degree of enthusiasm with which he replied. He wrote that he and the people of Bazenville would be more than happy to receive us and, if we so desired, accommodate us for the duration of our stay. On the whole we thought it better to decline, with thanks, the offer of accommodation, since we didn't want to cause too much inconvenience and it might be a little awkward and restricting if we had to split up. However we gratefully accepted the Mayor's invitation to a reception at the Mairie, to be followed by lunch at his house. Accordingly, we promised to present ourselves at the Mairie at 11.00 hrs on Wednesday, 29th May.

The drive down to Portsmouth was pleasant and uneventful and, although we took our time about it and had a very leisurely lunch on the way, we arrived in Portsmouth much too early. It was early Monday evening and Portsmouth was closed. Not a pub, not a restaurant was

open for business. Fred asked a passing old lady where the town-centre was and she told him he was standing on it. Bert, who had once spent a holiday in Southsea, suggested that, since it was a pleasant evening, we should walk there. It wasn't far, he said. He was wrong. However, we finally arrived there to find that it too was closed. While we were wondering what to do next, it started to rain. As we ran for cover, we saw the lights come on in a nearby building which, on closer examination proved to be a kind of pub. As we entered, the barmaid was coming in through a door at the rear of the bar and, on seeing us, gave a little scream and dropped the three bottles of beer she was carrying. It appeared that she was unused to customers so early in the evening and the sight of us had unnerved her. After a pint or two, we decided to go for a meal but we found that all the eating-houses were either just closing or not yet open. Eventually we settled for a rather unpleasant meal on the boat.

Breakfast on the boat the following morning was just as unpleasant as supper had been but we docked at 07.00 and set off in good spirits for the Normandy coast road. We were glad to leave behind the tatty, ugly environs of Le Havre and to cross the Seine, by way of the Tancarville Bridge, into the beautiful Normandy countryside. Feeling in need of refreshment, after our unsatisfactory Townsend-Thoresen breakfast, we stopped at the village of Conteville in search of more acceptable sustenance. We were welcomed in the most friendly way in the local café and enjoyed an excellent second breakfast, topping it off in the French tradition with a second cup of coffee, black this time, and a cognac. Conteville is very attractive village and we enjoyed strolling round it, taking photographs.

We had the whole day free, not being due in Bazenville until the following day, so we carried on in a very leisurely way, stopping whenever we noticed something of interest, such as a bar or café. We had noticed that a slight diversion from our route would take us to Bénouville, the site of Pegasus Bridge. In fact, the diversion was not as slight as it might have been, since we got lost on the way. This was due to a navigation error. Not, I hasten to add, on my part, since I was driving at the time and, as I pointed out to my friends, not even the best of drivers can watch both the map and the road. However, having maintained the best traditions of the RASC, we solved the problem by asking a local inhabitant the way. It turned out we were in the wrong village, a natural mistake, our informant said, very politely. Still, as I say, we had plenty of time to spare and the visit was well worth the detour. There was a great deal of interest. The guns, vehicles and other relics are well preserved and the famous café beside the Bridge is choc-a-bloc with souvenirs. Sadly, Mme. Condrée, the 'patronne' at the time of the battle, died recently. She always welcomed, with great enthusiasm, any visiting veterans of the Allied invasion forces. Her daughter, however, carries on the tradition. After serving us she passed the enormous visitors book over the bar and asked us to sign it. This book would well repay an hour spent browsing through it. Unfortunately we had no such hour to spare. It was getting on for lunch time. In fact, by French standards, it was well past lunch time. At noon, on the dot, they drop whatever they are doing - and I mean whatever- and get their feet under the table. Unless, of course, they happen to be in the restaurant business themselves, which many of them are.

We were heading for Courseulles, where we thought we might find a suitable hotel, but

on the way we stopped and inspected every eating-house of whatever kind. None met with unanimous approval. Finally we arrived at Courseulles, much later than any Frenchman would have dared to ask for lunch. We found a rather impressive-looking restaurant and went in without much hope. The head-waiter, the blackest black man I've ever seen, in an immaculate white dinner-jacket, asked if we'd booked a table. It appeared that someone had booked a table for four and not turned up. When we said it wasn't us he became much more amiable, whipped the 'reserved' sign off the table and begged us to be seated. Naturally, by this time the Table d'Hôte was 'off'. However, we managed quite satisfactorily with a typically French dish,known in gourmet circles as 'mixed grill'. The pronunciation of this by the ebony Frenchman was quite something but the dish itself was quite excellent. This, accompanied by a couple of bottles of wine and followed by a platter of Normandy cheeses, made a delicious and satisfying meal. Bert, in particular, being something of a cheese-buff, had been looking forward to the Normandy cheeses and I don't think he was disappointed. We finished off with a liberal dose of cognac with the coffee and finally emerged feeling no pain.

We had thought of staying in Courseulles, now a very pleasant little sea-side resort,except that it's beginning to think it's Deauville, with the corresponding hotel prices. We decided therefore to move further inland. Thinking that a recce of the Bazenville area would help us to go directly to our rendezvous in the morning, we turned in that direction and what a good decision that turned out to be! The Mairie is in a courtyard, hidden behind a high stone wall and we would never have found it without the help of two small children whom we bribed to keep quiet about our

having been there the day before the official visit.

We were still feeling the effects of our lunch and this probably explains why the taking of photographs of ourselves, draped over the 'Bazenville' name-board, gave rise to such hilarity. Our only spectator, a lady in a nearby front garden was highly amused.

Failing to find an auberge in the countryside we made for Bayeux, where we succeeded in finding a very pleasant and comfortable hotel. We finished the day with dinner in a modest Bayeux restaurant and a stroll round the town, which is very well worth exploring. We were glad to get to bed, having had a very long day following a fairly uncomfortable night on the boat.

Wednesday morning the weather was again absolutely beautiful. We set off for the Bazenville area, passing the cemetery at Ryes, which we had visited on our recce the previous day. The War Cemeteries in Normandy are most impressively laid out and immaculately maintained. We made detailed tours of the one at Ryes and the one at Bayeux and,on both occasions found it to be a most moving experience.

We wondered what our reception at Bazenville would be like and were glad we had done our recce so that we could arrive dead on time. As we rounded the bend in the road approaching the Mairie, we saw the crowd spilling out of the courtyard and all the way across the road. They were signalling to us to stop the car by the roadside. As we got out, flags were waving, cameras were clicking and everyone was trying to shake us by the hand. We were ushered into the courtyard where the Mayor and his Deputy and what appeared to be the whole population of the Commune were waiting to greet us. A speech of welcome, in

English, was delivered by a young lady who had obviously put a lot of work into its preparation. My friends then indicated, not very subtly, that it was now up to me to reply in French. This done, we proceeded to present to the Mayor, the tankard, bearing the Manchester coat of arms, which we had brought for this purpose. The Mayor, a typical Normandy farmer,seemed to be very pleased by this but, being, obviously, a man more inclined to deeds than words, expressed his pleasure by beaming smiles and handshakes, leaving the talking to his Deputy who was more than equal to the occasion.

The Union Flag, the Tricouleur and the 'Drapeau des Anciens Combattants' were ranged alongside each other at the back of the courtyard, surmounting a long table covered with a white cloth. The purpose of this now became clear as the champagne was brought out and the glasses were filled for the pleasant French custom of the 'Vin d'Honneur'. We were required to clink glasses and drink with every person in the courtyard, individually. They all had something to say to us. One old lady in, I suppose, her middle eighties,claimed to recognise me but I couldn't recall having any dealings with a 45 year-old lady at that time. Another old lady approached Fred and told him, in good English, that she wanted us all to go to her house on the following day to have lunch with her and her husband. Her name, she said was Mme. Pastre. The Mayor, she said, would show us where her house was. When I passed this on to the Mayor, he said, "Well, you'll have a good lunch. Her house is the Château de Bazenville".

After the reception we were taken on a tour of the Commune. The Mayor was anxious to

identify the field that we had occupied. We tried to describe what we could remember of it but, after all, one Normandy field is very much like another, especially after 41 years. Eventually he took us to a field on his own farm, where I promptly stepped squarely in a large cow-pat. As he wiped my shoe clean with a clump of grass, the Mayor asked me if this could be the field. I replied that it had all the attributes we could remember and asked if it had had a lot of slit trenches and dug-outs. "Yes", he answered, "but so had they all". With that we gave up the search and repaired to the Mayor's house for lunch.

We lunched in company with the Mayor and his family, the Deputy Mayor and his wife, the young lady who made the speech of welcome and some others whose status was never made clear. We were served by the Mayor's wife and daughter, two very impressive and charming ladies indeed. I wish I could remember more about this meal but I was unable to give it as much attention as I would have wished, due to the demands made on me as interpreter. The English-speaking lady, seated some distance from me, appeared to be similarly distracted, especially by Fred. However, I do recall a delicious apéritif, unnamed, but made by the Mayor himself, as well as cider, white wine, red wine, champagne and cognac. There were also endless quantities of delicious food to which I was not able to do full justice.

After lunch, we were taken to Arromanches to see the 'Musée du Debarquement'. There was a queue outside it when we arrived, but our hosts ushered us into the building and called for the curator, who was obviously expecting us. He invited us into his office, asked the four of us to sign the 'Golden Book' and pre-

sented each of us with a commemorative medal. We were then given a guided tour of the museum, which, incidentally, is a fascinating and authentic exhibition, giving, unlike some others, full weight to the part played by the British.

Back at Bazenville we took a grateful leave of our hosts, with promises to return, with our wives, they insisted, at some future time. After calling in at our hotel for a quick clean-up, we set out in rearch of dinner. It was pretty late and Bayeux appeared to have put up the shutters but, eventually, we found, of all things, an Italian restaurant. While we were eating our first course, someone remembered that there was a football match taking place in Brussels that evening, between Liverpool and Juventus. Fred asked me to ask the waiter what the state of play was. He replied, "thirty-six dead", and went back to the kitchen. I told the others what he'd said and that I thought it must be some kind of sick joke but a Frenchman, eating alone at the next table, said that it was absolutely true and that he'd just been watching it on TV. He reminded us that this was an Italian restaurant and we should be careful what we said. However, when the waiter came back I told him that this was the first we'd heard of it and he then told us all the details.It must have been obvious how shocked we were from our involuntary reactions but the waiter said it was ridiculous for us to feel responsible and that we should put the whole thing out of our minds. Easier said than done of course.

The following morning we felt somewhat dispirited by the previous evening's news, which was, of course, the chief topic of conversation all around. The French, however, could

not understand why we should feel so bad about it. They thought of the culprits as football hooligans rather than as British hooligans and tended to sympathise wth us rather than turn against us, which we thought they might.

We went out to do a little shopping in Bayeux and to take in a few of the sights en route. Since it was again a bright, sunny day themorning passed quite pleasantly, even though we seemed to spend most of it in perfume shops looking for a particular scent which Ken wanted to buy for his wife but which the French appeared never to have heard of. However,the ladies in these shops were very pleasant and helpful and seemed quite happy to chat with us even though we didn't buy anything.

The Mayor's wife had been so kind to us the previous day and had worked so hard, preparing and serving lunch, that we thought we should show our appreciation by taking her some flowers and, anticipating that Mme. Pastre would repeat the process, we decided to take her some as well. We had arranged to call at the Château at 12.30, so we left Bayeux at 11.30 to give us time to call at the Mayor's house first. Madame answered the door and when she saw us, it became quite obvious that the flowers had been a good idea. She called her husband, who emerged from one of the farm buildings, looking much more comfortable and in character than he had the day before. In spite of our protests that we were due at the Chateau in a very short time, they insisted that we go in for a drink. Monsieur Vallerend produced a brace of bottles of champagne and only when these were empty, were we allowed to leave, in a flurry of handshakes and kisses, to go, only

a little late, to call on Madame Pastre.

The Château was a revelation. We were greeted by Madame Pastre and introduced to Monsieur Pastre, who looked the very picture of a retired British senior Army officer, although, in fact, he speaks no English. We were ushered into the drawing-room, which was furnished such that one expected to see a barrier-rope to keep the public from touching anything. Bert looked around in awe and said to Monsieur, "Louis Quatorze?", to which Monsieur replied, apologetically, "Non, Monsieur, - Louis Quinze". Not being snobs, we were willing to overlook a discrepancy of one Louis and accepted the invitation to sit in the Louis Quinze chairs and drink Muscat from the tray on the Louis Quinze table. From a cupboard (L.Q), Monsieur produced several pieces of shell-casing, which, he told us were from a shell which H.M.S Rodney had dropped neatly on the centre of the house, during the landings. As Madame said, "it did not matter - there were only Germans in there at the time". However, the damage was considerable, although confined to the central hall and staircase. They gave us a piece of the shell, as a souvenir.

After apéritifs, we went in to lunch and found an impressive array of hors d'oeuvres on the table. Madame tried to find the right words to tell us that we were welcome to whatever was on the table but finished, in exasperation, by saying, "Oh, --- helpez votre self!". I never expected to find a French devotee of Miles Kington but here was one whose Franglais was perfect!

We had an excellent lunch, complemented by equally excellent wines and, when it came to coffee and cognac time, we were joined by a

son of the Pastres who lives close by. I only wish that I had recorded the lively chat that took place but, if I had, I might now find that it owed more to alcohol than to wit. Although I must say that the Pastres ate very little and drank even less, while encouraging us to ever greater excesses.

In the afternoon we went to see the Bayeux tapestry. It is not possible to be in Bayeux and not see the Tapestry. This was my second visit but I still found it fascinating. In the evening we went back to the Italian restaurant, where we were greeted like old friends, the waiter insisting on shaking hands with each of us. This time we were really able to enjoy our meal, except that Fred, who had been promised chips, was unable to have them because the waiter couldn't overcome the chef's rooted objection to cooking them!

Friday morning,and our last day, dawned bright and clear again. As we paid our bill after breakfast, I reflected, not for the first time, on what an equivalent English hotel would have cost and concluded that it would have put the trip beyond our pockets.

As a result of the Stonall-inspired walk from Portsmouth to Southsea and back, such treks, unnecessarily long,due to some misjudgement by one of us,were referred to by the four of us as'doing a Portsmouth'. We did one this morning. Having done the usual tourist bit round the Cathedral and the nearby Musée Baron Gérard, we looked at the street plan and decided that it wasn't worth getting the car to go to the War Cemetery because it wasn't far to walk, I said. I was wrong. Mind you, if the short cut we found on the way back had been properly marked on

the street-plan, we wouldn't have been on our knees when we got there. I've already mentioned the atmosphere at the War Cemeteries but one thing I must emphasise is that they are, for most of the time, unattended and unlocked and yet we saw not a scrap of litter nor any sign of vandalism. There is a book for visitors'signatures in a small, unlocked compartment in the visitors' shelter. We took this out to sign it and found it, too to be unsullied. We, all four,agreed that elaborate security arrangements would be required to preserve this state of affairs in Britain.

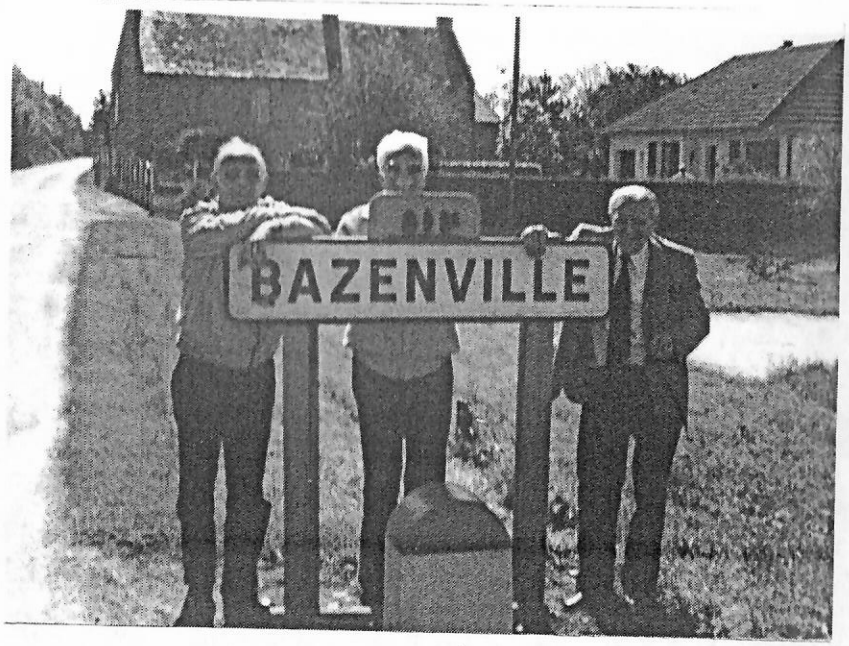
We spent rather longer than we intended at the cemetery before we felt the need for lunch. Surprisingly, we had to walk back all the way to the centre of Bayeux to find a restaurant. This time Fred was able to satisfy his craving for chips. After lunch, footsore from our morning route-march, we picked up the car and drove to to the Bayeux Invasion Museum, which, incidentally, is just across the road from the Cemetery. A little forethought would have saved us'doing a Portsmouth'.

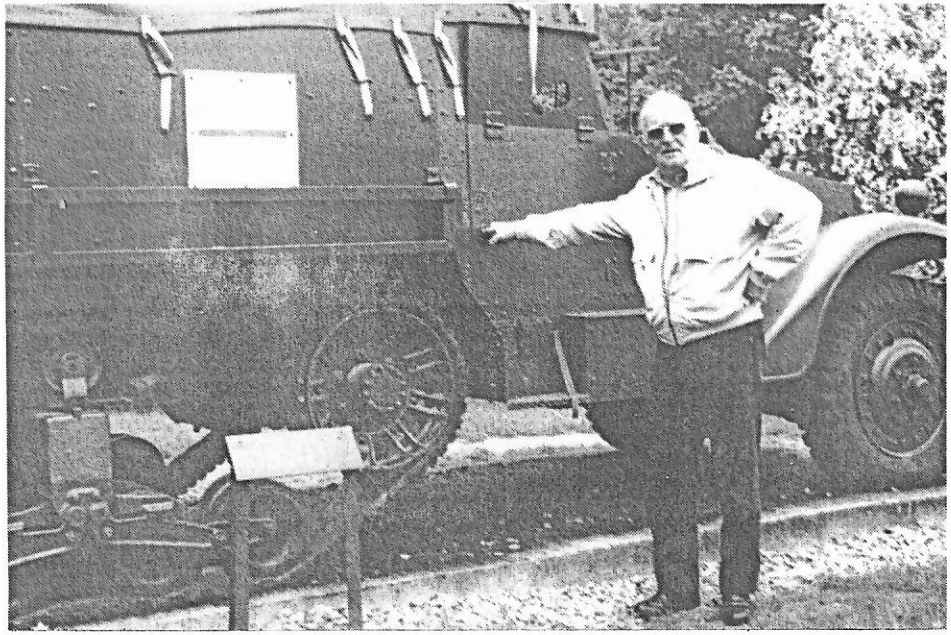
The Bayeux Museum is much bigger than the one at Arromanches and, of course, covers the campaign to a much later stage. The collection of Allied and German uniforms is comprehensive, well documented and well displayed, although some of the tailors' dummies wearing them look a little too limp-wristed to be convincing. The newspapers and other contemporary documents make interesting reading and there is also a fine display of weapons and vehicles from both sides. Fred and I had an interesting discussion about the relative merits of the Boyes and the PIAT anti-tank weapons, which became quite heated.

(The discussion, not the weapons).

We set out for Le Havre in plenty of time to enjoy a leisurely journey and still have time for an equally leisurely dinner on the way. This we did at the Auberge de la Truite at St. Martin-aux-Chartrains, a very pleasant roadside hostelry where we had a worthy fare-well-to-France meal. This stood us in good stead later because, when we got to Le Havre, we found that there was a strike going on which delayed our boarding for two hours. By the time we had bought our duty-frees we found that the bar and the cafeteria were both closed. However, a quiet(?) word with the purser produced a tray of tea and biscuits and a plastic bag containing cans of lager - all on the house! Altogether a most satisfactory conclusion to a very enjoyable trip.

BACK AGAIN ----40 YEARS ON!





ME AND MY HALF-TRACK.



NUMBER ONE GUN READY!



THE PRESENTATION.



THE RECEPTION COMMITTEE.



M. and Mme. Pastre on their front doorstep.

Mme. Biree and the Deputy Mayor rounding-up the villagers (helped by the dog!)

