

# NORMANDY LANDINGS

## D-DAY 6<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 1944

### THE MEMORIES OF VETERANS

#### Harry Bowdery

R296684, Royal Navy

Harry Bowdery was born in 1926 in Lambeth. When he was 17 he went to Admiralty Arch where he joined the Royal Navy. His initial training took place in Liverpool (HMS Mersey). On 8<sup>th</sup> March 1944 he was posted to HMS Prince Baudouin, a former cross channel ferry that had been acquisitioned in 1940 and in January 1943 was converted to a landing vessel capable of carrying eight Landing Craft. (LCAs)



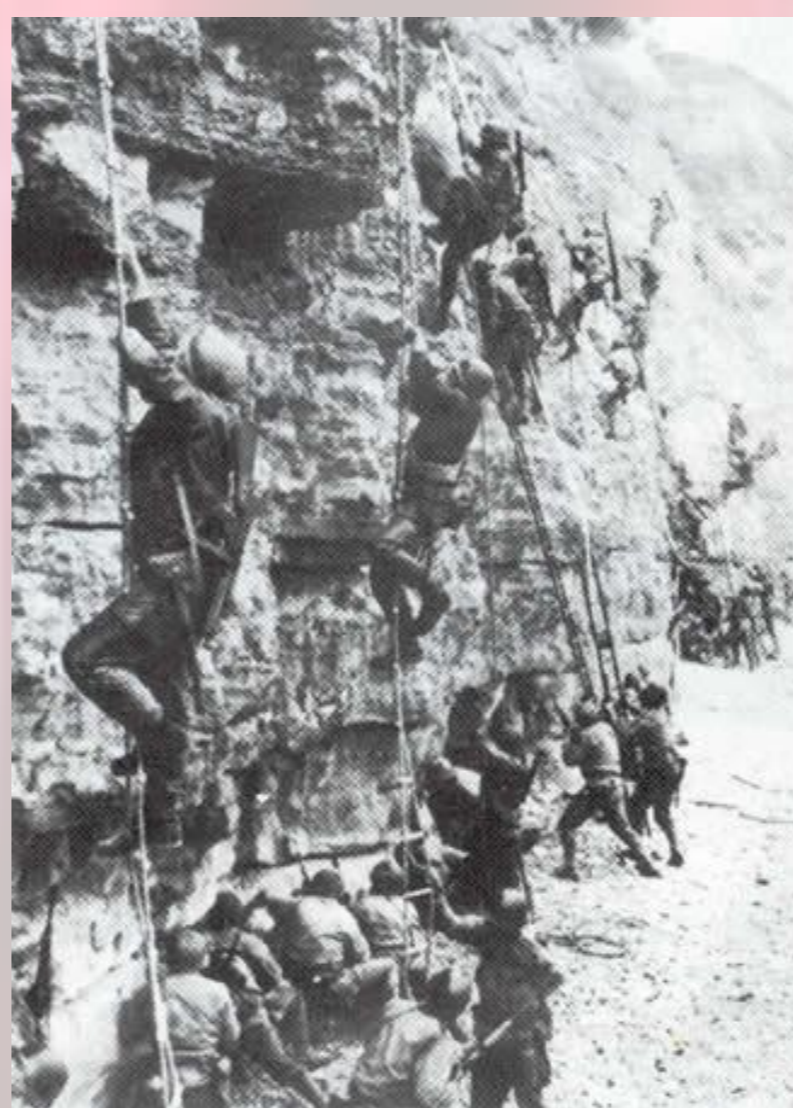
The LCAs picked up the US 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Rangers in Weymouth on 1<sup>st</sup> June and took them to the Prince Baudouin for the next leg of their journey to Normandy.



On D-Day Harry was one of a crew of three on LCA 521 which can be seen on the davit waiting to be launched. Each LCA could carry about 30 men and their kit. Each journey from ship to shore took about 4 hours. Harry made three round trips in terrible weather and under heavy bombardment. The first trip landed the US 2<sup>nd</sup> Rangers at Pointe du Hoc. Harry then made 2 further round trips to Omaha Beach to drop off the US 5<sup>th</sup> Rangers. Harry was responsible for lowering the ramp.



The London Fire Brigade provided ladders to help the Rangers climb the cliffs that they would encounter.



Omaha Beach was the most intensely fought after beach on D-Day. At 6 miles wide, it was the largest of the landing beaches. Omaha was overlooked by cliffs which made attacking the area very difficult.



**AFTER D DAY:** During July 1944 Harry, who was still on HMS Prince Baudouin, assisted with troop landings in the south of France.



On 4th January 1945 Harry joined Aircraft Carrier, HMS Ameer which was part of the East Indies Fleet based in Trincomalee, Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). They picked up No.804 Squadron from South Africa and headed to Burma. On 16<sup>th</sup> January aircraft from Ameer fought off an attack by eighteen Japanese aircraft. In July the Ameer suffered some damage during a Kamikaze attack. Following the Japanese surrender, they picked up some FEPOWs from Singapore and brought them to Trincomalee – the first leg of their repatriation after their capture in February 1942.



On the 70th anniversary of D-Day in June 2014, the president of France announced that the Legion d'Honneur would be awarded to all British veterans who fought for the liberation of France during WW2. Harry was a recipient.