

MILITARY ODYSSEY

As previous years, Gary Howard requested promotional assistance from The General and myself for two Saturdays leading up to this years Military Odyssey Show at Detling over the August Bank Holiday weekend.

My jeep passed it's MOT in preparation for several days promo around the Medway area, taking in the usual places of interest and supermarket car parks, handing out flyers, trifolds and posters for this years show.

The public are generally pleased to see us out and about, George loves the attention - even though some comments about who he is supposed to be are a little historically misplaced, but George is always quick to correct them with facts about the real General George S Patton Jr, who he was, and what he achieved.

A scheduled visit to Felix Robinson's monthly UKMS2000 Militaria Arms & Armour Fair at Chatham Dockyard on Sunday August 10th overlapped with our promo, but gave George and myself an opportunity to remind punters of the pending show by displaying trifolds and posters for public perusal.

The weather forecast over the holiday weekend looked favourable with sunny periods and average temperatures with only a light shower possible.

With no Lucky Forward camp planned at Military Odyssey, the jeep made it's way through the showground by 8am, I parked under a tree adjacent to what could have been a CP in the WWII area within Murrain Wood, where re-enactment is clearly an under statement, everything exactly as it would have been 64 years ago in readiness for this years show.

1st British Airborne Signals, US 82nd Airborne Pathfinders, US Army 42nd Field Hospital and ETO Blood Bank GMC, 101st Airborne 506th Reg. Screaming Eagles, 1st Infantry Div. Big Red One, 29th Infantry Div. 514th QM Truck Reg. The Red Ball Express, The Red Cross canteen and evening entertainment, were among many of the usual scattering of combat support vehicles, make shift camps and foxholes - the scene was set, the public began to fill this arena.

General Patton and Staff made several tours of the showground during the weekend looking up friends old and new. Odwach Polish Army 39-45 Re-enactment Association greeted us with non-alcoholic beverages this year, in complete contrast to last years falling down water, well, it was rather early in the day. The name "Odwach" comes from an 18th Century guardhouse building in Poznan western Poland where the association was brought into existence.

An unusual gathering saw Field Marshal Erich von Manstien and Lt. General George S Patton being harassed by "Viv the Spive" flogging dodgy condoms and lipstick (What a combination Viv, 10 out of 10 for content.) followed by a string of old jokes about the French, I never did get the one about the Licking Frog. Viv soon scarpered when two MP's appeared looking for a missing French Cultural Attaché.

Another very successful show for Deborah and Gary Howard finished in the main arena with a full scale WWII battle re-enactment set around August 1944.



CHATHAM DOCKYARD 1940'S WEEKEND

Once again the weather was kind throughout the weekend of 20th - 21st September, to give us a fantastic event organised by Bill Fowler and his team.

George arrived at my house early on Saturday morning for a swift cuppa and chat before jumping into his Patton uniform and driving off in the jeep, it was a chilly morning but the sun was beaming as we climbed over Bluebell Hill and dropped down in Chatham town centre and round Fort Amhurst into the dockyard. The car park was already full, but marshals directed us straight through the dockyard gates where many vehicles and displays were already in place. The clatter of soldiers marching, engines running and fire bells ringing could be heard above a quiet calm as we drove to our parking spot in the main square.

Vehicles continued to arrive, within an hour the dockyard was bursting with entertainment and music from every corner, followed very soon by an air-raid siren and impending air attack. Loud bangs and explosions could be heard around the dockyard, smoke appeared from behind the Customs House where residential cottages had received a direct hit. An injured child fell from a doorway as ARP and Home Guard personnel rushed to the scene. Medics hurried through the smoke with stretchers as fire appliances arrived - bells clanging, the turntable ladder quickly deployed in readiness for the rush of fresh water as fire hoses were connected. Chaos followed as the area was cleared of the injured and

walking wounded. Fire officers moved forward with hoses expelling a torrent of water at the inferno – supported from above by a single fireman at the top of the turntable ladder raising water above the rooftops. Smoke turned quickly to steam as the area returned to as near normal as possible, bomb disposal took charge. A huge cheer and applause followed from the appreciative crowd as the “All Clear” was sounded.

The Dockyard 40's Weekend certainly opened with a bang.

Kas could be heard singing and entertaining guests in the tearooms with her professional renditions of 40's and 50's favourites. We joined Kas around midday in the marquee at the rear of the building and took tea and cake as we listened intently to her set.

Kas is affectionately known for her efforts raising needed money for “Help the Heroes” and tirelessly lobbying parliament for funds to be recognised to help veterans attend next years

D-Day Anniversary in Normandy.

Winston Churchill never said. “We should Stop owing to the few” – did he?

At 2pm a convoy of vehicles, lead by Lt. Gen. George S Patton Jr. standing as usual in his jeep, paraded through the dockyard from the slipways to the ropery, around the warehouses and along the wharf side and back through the main square passing HMS Cavalier, and various vessels of the fleet. A joyful crowd flag waving – cameras flashing, The Luftwaffe's timing couldn't have been better as air-raid sirens sounded once again, all convoy vehicles dispersed and military personnel took cover. The public looked on as the raid developed.

Time to look round the displays, Sahara Desert 1942 LRDG receive a visit from Field Marshal Montgomery. 49th Infantry Division, When in doubt brew up. Royal Signals QL and advanced signals post. The Blandford Boys Airborne Signals. Essex Regiment. Home Guard, to name a few. All the displays are a credit to the people that create them, time, effort and no expense spared.

Resident attractions include a Brewery, Police Station, Garage, Battleship, U-Boat and a Sailing ship, associated dockyard museums, all accessible free if you attend the show.

The following day saw “Viv the Spiv” pleading his innocents firmly locked behind bars in the police station, a local surveillance operation set up a sting to catch our “Happy Chappy” red handed, cuffed for the awaiting press reporters for a surprise front page spread quoting, “The contents of Viv's suitcase were confiscated and donated to the WPC's benevolent fund.”

Patton and Montgomery met briefly along side the Red Ball depot to discuss in detail consignments of fuel and supplies for their armies.

Kas paid tribute to General Patton for lending his leather flight jacket to Simon who was feeling the effects of autumn, having recently returned from front line duty in Helmand province, Afghanistan and 45c heat. T-shirt and shorts were a bit ambitious for September Simon!

Kieran, USO (United Services Organisation) invited Patton, Staff and jeep to a hanger dance the following weekend located at USAAF Woodchurch. 373rd Fighter Group. Promising an air display from a P51 Mustang, we could not refuse.

The end of a brilliant weekend soon came round and finished with a pint of ale at the local brewery, George had a swift half with organiser Fill Blower, I mean Bill Fowler, (crikey, this beer ane arf strong ma!) Confirming, the show will be just as relaxing next year, be there.

Society members who turned out for this event included;

George Patton (Lt.Gen)

Les (Chaplain)

Gary (MP)

Carol (General's Aide)

Phil (MP) and my Jeep

Christine (Devoted wife of said impersonator)

Meggie and Simon – ah.

Tony, Sara and Georgina



USAAF 373rd FIGHTER GROUP HANGER DANCE WOODCHURCH

Kieran required Patton's staff and vehicle to be on site by 1700h on Saturday 27th September.

We met Kas and her mum in preparation for the air display at 1800h. I parked the jeep next to a Model T Ford and Kieran's Ford pick-up truck, alongside a P-51 Mustang "Big Beautiful Doll"

A good chance at a photo call – Kas and Patton took up a graceful pose for all the cameras just prior to the faint noise of a distant Merlin engine.

Looking up, slowly-circling above us and bang on 1800h a P-51 came in out of the sunset at about 200 feet, across an adjacent field over the hanger - diving straight at the runway then a swift turn skyward, the distinctive screaming growl as the P-51 changed direction, minutes later the same again coming in from the east, then again from the south followed by a victory roll. We were treated to some 25 minutes of privileged air display from Capt. Maurice Hammond And his P-51 Mustang, "Janie" based at Duxford Aerodrome. The final pass saw the typical wing wave, Cheerio.

MP's Gary and Phil were placed at the main gate to greet late arrivals from the guest list. The dance got started with Kas giving her rendition of "Band of Brothers" taken from her latest CD Remember When.

A pint of Spitfire and bacon sandwiches followed by jam doughnuts awaited us at the USO canteen courtesy of Kieran, in appreciation of attending the dance. A good turnout made even better by authentic dress, allied uniforms and, of course, the P-51 display.

Music, dance and a lot of fun continued well into the night - but alas, we had to leave earlier to get George home to Portslade by Midnight, or he turns back into a security guard. The night was now very damp and foggy but the tilt stayed down on the jeep for the rapid drive back to Maidstone via Ashford and the A20.

Regards to all. Phil



Janie and Big Beautiful Doll at Chailey



Myself, George and his son Tony at War & peace



