

# COPP HEROES NEWS 4

OCTOBER 2012

**THE BIG DAY ARRIVED ON THURSDAY 27TH SEPTEMBER** when the COPP Heroes Memorial was dedicated by Lady Patricia, Countess Mountbatten of Burma, supported by Chief of Defence Staff Sir David Richards, and the Royal Marines Commandant General, Major General Ed Davis, in front of a large audience.



*General Sir David Richards addresses the guests*

On Saturday 22nd October, a memorable week for Hayling commenced with the opening of the Hayling Island WWII Heritage Trail at the Station Theatre. It was formally opened by COPP Memorial stalwart Douglas Sharp, who was introduced by the Mayor and Mayoress of the Borough of Havant and Waterlooville, Councillors Gerald and Elaine Shimbart.



*Countess Mountbatten*



*Major General Ed Davis*

The Trail features many sites of naval and military activity occupied by the armed forces on Hayling during WWII, when the island's population almost trebled and all possible accommodation from hotels, holiday camps and large houses was taken over by the military.



## AN EMOTIONAL COPP GATHERING

Seven of the remaining COPP veterans and families gathered for a re-union tea at the Newtown House Hotel at 4.00pm on Thursday 26th September. This was quite an event for everyone, and gave them the chance to greet old comrades and meet new admirers.

Afterwards they had a look at our specially arranged COPP exhibition, featuring stories of the war years, and some familiar old artefacts, such as Bill Kington's original 1942 canoe suit. Our lovingly restored COPP canoe was displayed alongside a present day Special Boat Service craft, complete with a selection of their equipment.



*Back Row: RSM SBS, John Ashford, Peter Palmer, Major General Ed Davis, Roger Gilbert  
Front Row: John Ainsworth-Davis, David Owen, Countess Mountbatten, John Bowden, Jim Booth*

When Countess Mountbatten dedicated the COPP Heroes Memorial on Hayling Seafront, she dubbed it the D.I.Y. memorial, commenting it was all the better for it. We had started off with the wonderful gift of a 12 ton block of granite by Cornish stonemason Ian Piper. The sappers of 24 Regiment Royal Engineers Commando, many not long back from Afghanistan, then pitched in and volunteered to lift and transport the stone from Ian's hillside quarry, to Hayling in July this year. The R.E.s by the way, had formed a major part of the COPP unit during World War Two.

The lift was completed over three days. Hayling Island Sailing Club gave the troops accommodation for the night of the 11th July and entertained them to a fine meal, so that they were fresh to deliver the stone promptly to the Memorial site early the next day.

Marsh Plant Hire provided free lifting into place, and returned a month later to reposition the dedication slab in relation to the revised memorial mound. They were aided on that occasion by Dan and Chris Campbell, who have been a great help throughout, while Alverstones then volunteered to come and re-cut the rough edges of the inscribed memorial stone.

We were absolutely delighted that actress Anna Chancellor was able to take a couple of hours off the rehearsals of 'Private Lives' at the Chichester Festival Theatre to co-present the event with our own Wendy Adams Evans. They made a great team on the day.

Anna was a big hit, particularly with some military gentlemen, but especially with the students from Hayling College whose senior pupils attended the Dedication.



*Anna Chancellor*



*Wendy Adams Evans & Anna Chancellor*



*The Newtown House Hotel*

Keith Boothroyd, the proprietor of the Newtown House Hotel, very generously gave accommodation free to the COPP veterans and also kindly hosted our exhibition in his main function room during the COPP Dedication week.



## THE D.I.Y. MEMORIAL

Everything looked fine, but the memorial mound was still in a very rough state. Cue Douglas Sharp and the experts from Hayling Island Golf Club. Lance Quantrill, Bill John and Ernie Tambling generously provided top dressing, planting, muscle and skill to create a superb sculpted surface for the big day on September 27th.

47 Regiment Royal Artillery were a massive help preparing the area and helping to ensure the smooth running of the event, and following the Dedication ceremony, a truly memorable day was completed with lunch at Hayling Island Sailing Club, the location of the original COPP HQ. It was hosted in the presence of Lady Mountbatten and General Sir David Richards by the Commodore Chris Gordon, and all the COPPs, their families and COPP project members attended.

There has been tremendous input from members and associates of the COPP Heroes Memorial Fund committee, and many others, all of whom are mentioned in the Commemorative Programme. Mike Beel in particular made 7 trips to the quarry, and carefully recorded everything over the months, so this has certainly been a D.I.Y. project.



Hayling Island Sailing Club



Ian Piper and team meet Lady Patricia



To purchase copies of the Commemorative Programme price £3.00 plus postage, see the address below.

We had to beg borrow and scrape to get the project completed, but the sun shone, and at around £35,000, we have achieved an amazing result, in what must be record time. With stage one completed, we can consider what more we should do to consolidate the COPP story, and bring it to a much wider audience. There have been some approaches and interesting conversations with significant people. With their support it is possible we could achieve very much more.

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One particularly nice touch was when Sue Barker, daughter of COPP Wren driver Evelyn Cross, recreated the original WWII photo of her mother, on the front of Simon Ulrich's Bedford 15 cwt truck. This was 'Tweedledum' the vehicle Evelyn drove to pick up COPP personnel from Havant Station during the war years.



Sadly we have to record the recent death of Ian Trenowden, the writer and COPP historian, whose book 'Stealthily by Night' did so much to keep the COPP flame burning. I spoke to Ian several times in the run-up to the ceremony, and he was looking forward very much to being with us and meeting the veterans. A very sad loss indeed to the cause.

Robin Walton October 2012