



## **Call to fund a national memorial for our Ox & Bucks D-Day heroes**

Fitting tribute: The design for the memorial to the 2nd Battalion D Company of the Ox and Bucks Light Infantry's heroic Pegasus Bridge operation on D-Day

A NATIONAL memorial to the heroic D-Day raid by the Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry has been approved and the hunt for £50,000 to pay for it has begun. Designs for the tribute and a four-page presentation arguing why the daring and vital operation carried out by Major John Howard's men should be commemorated have been accepted by the National Memorial Arboretum committee.

On June 6, 1944, former Oxford city policeman Maj Howard led his 2nd Battalion D Company on an operation which secured two bridges for the D-Day landings – known as Operation Deadstick. One of the bridges was later named Pegasus Bridge after the flying horse shoulder emblem worn by the British airborne forces.

Mike Colton, secretary of the Allied Special Forces Association, said:

“There is a memorial in France but we felt there should be one in this country. The operation was vital to the success of the whole D-Day landings – if they had failed in this one mission it’s likely the landings would have failed altogether. The committee really liked it and were very positive and it’s all been passed.”

An online fundraising page has already reached nearly £2,500 and Mr Colton said that more than £1,300 had also been promised from various other donations. The former member of the 1st Battalion Royal Green Jackets Ox & Bucks urged the people of Oxfordshire to donate. He said:

“We want to honour those men who were cut loose in complete darkness to crash-land behind enemy lines. They attacked a defended target with minimal loss of life and defended the bridges against counter-attack until they were reinforced, which was fundamental to the landings. We want people to donate if they feel they can.”

The design is of three Horsa Gliders – the aircraft used for the landings – descending in a giant S-shape. It aims to represent a secret operation carried out in silence, with speed, stealth and surprise. The five-metre high memorial will be installed at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire – which already marks more than 300 other stories from conflict – along with an education plaque.

Frank Hall, who was in the 52<sup>nd</sup> Ox and Bucks Light Infantry and arrived at the beaches shortly afterwards by sea, said the men ahead of him deserved a memorial. The 92-year-old, from Stonesfield near Witney, added:

“The D-Day landings were the beginning of the end of the war and Maj Howard and his men started it off. If they hadn’t have taken the bridge the Germans would have come through and those landing would not have managed it.”

Mr Hall, who knew Maj Howard, added:

“I should think he would be very proud to know a memorial will be built.”