

ST LAWRENCE'S CHURCH YORK

Window Commemorating the D-Day Landings - Porch (0.4m x 1.6m) 2020

I was commissioned to create this new window to commemorate the York Normandy Veterans, who took part in the battles to liberate France during World War II and in the D-Day Landings – a decisive event which hastened the end of the war. The design has been inspired by the memories and recollections of surviving veterans from the York area (so evocatively described in the verbatim play *Bomb Happy* by Helena Fox), and pays tribute to their inspiring spirit of comradeship, irrespective of rank or position.

The design is divided horizontally into three tiers; land, sea and sky, representing respectively the British Army, the Royal Navy, and the Royal Air Force, working together in the largest Combined Armed Forces operation to date.

In the centre of the design, two men are seen waiting inside a landing craft at the dramatic moment when the armoured doors open and the ramp is lowered. Their backpacks proudly bear the badge of the City of York Normandy Veterans (YNV). In the distance, we can see the smoke of battle over the sea and the Normandy shore. The men are both excited and terrified, but determined; *'it was all new ... like a boy scout adventure'*. One of the men turns back, gesturing to his comrade in support and offering strength and trust, so they can face the coming assault together.



Beyond them, many other comrades can be seen wading through the water and running up the beach amid the distinctive 'hedgehog' defences and other obstacles. In the sky above, a Halifax bomber pays tribute to the contribution of RAF Bomber Command in the aerial bombardment of critical infrastructure and the neutralisation of enemy defences behind the landing beaches.

At the base of the design are the roofs and smoking chimneys of the homes the soldiers are defending, and the trees they climbed in childhood. Ravens fly around the tree, the shape of their wings creating a visual link to the aeroplanes above, and thus between home and the battlefield; and providing a reminder of Jesus teaching his disciples not to be anxious or afraid: *"Consider the ravens; for they neither sow nor reap; they have neither store-house nor barn; and God feedeth them."* [Luke 12:24]

Beneath the men's feet are words taken from the hymn Judge Eternal, Throned in Splendour: *"and the homestead and the woodlands plead in silence for their peace"*. Thus the men in the window inhabit two worlds, their thoughts moving between the security of home and the horror of battle, but with hope of peace to come.

Lettering by Phil Thomas.



Pencil cartoon



Finished window