



Alresford Historical & Literary Society

NEWSLETTER - 1st July 2024

Next meeting: 7:30pm Wed 17th July, Methodist Church, a Talk by Nigel Gossop
Ripping Yarns and the Tale of the forgotten Author: The Percy F Westerman Story

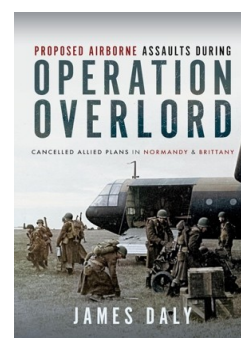
Percy Westerman (1876-1959), born in Portsmouth, was a widely published author of stories for children with a bias towards military and naval “yarns” for boys. The sheer number of his publications is extraordinary: 170 books and 200 short stories! During the 1930s he was at the height of his fame, voted Britain’s most popular children’s author. But the world has moved on, fashions have changed, and since his death much of his output disappeared from libraries and bookshops. For more background on Westerman see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Percy_F._Westerman



Our speaker Nigel Gossop has been a book collector, researcher and keen writer for more than forty years. He founded *The Westerman Yarns*, a weblog promoting interest in the works of children’s adventure writers so he is well qualified to explain how and why the works of Percy Westerman, our most prolific local author, have fallen out of favour [MD]

Comments on our last talk on 19th June: *Operation Overlord*, a talk by James Daly

Portsmouth-based historian and author James Daly gave us a riveting talk about the little-known plans for parachute operations immediately after D-Day, all of which were subsequently abandoned. His curiosity having been aroused by the remark in the film ‘A Bridge Too Far’ made by Dirk Bogarde’s Lieutenant General ‘Boy’ Browning who refers to many cancelled operations since D-Day, he set out to find out more. The result, after in excess of a decade of painstaking research in the National Archives, is ‘Operation Overlord’, which will soon be followed by a further volume titled ‘The Liberation of Europe’. In a well-illustrated presentation, James described how the Allies had planned several airborne operations to take place in case the landings on 6 June 1944 failed, including dropping reinforcements by parachute. Other plans were developed to capture deep water ports in Brittany, one of which would have seen gliders landing on nearby beaches to capture St Malo. Whereas some of these schemes did not last long before being cancelled, others were fully developed, only to be called off at the last minute because the RAF would not make the aircraft available. The various operations were given an assortment of interesting names, not all of which would have inspired confidence – e.g. Operations ‘Wastage’ and ‘Hands Up’. Coming as it did soon after the memorable commemoration of D-Day 80, the presentation was both timely and informative, and was well received by the audience [CA]



Next Events: After the 17th July meeting (described above) the next regular meeting will be on 18th September with a talk on *Ralph Dutton of Hinton Ampner*. Our summer outing to Strawberry Hill on Thursday 1st August is now fully booked. As usual there will be no regular meeting/talk in August.

Best wishes from Mike Dickens, Hon Secretary secretary@alresfordhstandlit.co.uk