



**JIM
PLEASS**



Jim Pleass, the man who later played for Glamorgan and became in 1948 a member of the Welsh county's side that won the County Championship for the first-ever time, was amongst the thousands of Allied troops to head across the English Channel to the Normandy beaches as part of D-Day. On that day, 6 June 1944, Jim was a 21 year-old radio operator aboard the vessels heading from Portsmouth for Gold Beach and below are his memories of that fateful day:

"Off we went shortly after midnight in the blackness of night, pitching and rolling so badly that most of us were too concerned with "mal de mer" to worry about what lay in front of us. What was in front of us, and, indeed all around us swiftly became evident at dawn with what seemed like thousands of craft of all shapes and sizes heading towards the French coast."

"We arrived at a point a hundred yards off-shore from the Normandy coast at Arromanches, or Gold Beach as it was designated in the Operation Overlord Plans. The grey sky was lit up by the flashes of rockets, plus shells of all sizes, and hundreds of flares. The sea was scarcely to be seen, covered as it was by a vast array of ships, some of them firing at coastal targets, and others disgorging an army of men into smaller craft which hurriedly made for shore to lower their ramps and remove their human cargo. Enemy activity consisted of the few remaining strongpoints firing their rifles at the fleet, but doing little damage before they were eliminated."

"Once the beachhead was established, our job was to link beach signallers with the heavily armed cruisers and the like, directing their fire at pin-pointed targets. Within forty eight hours all was secure, and our work was done. For the next few days, we patrolled the area just off the beaches, and the only real danger came from mines dropped by German planes at night, which did cause some damage."

"In fact, a very lucky escape for me came the morning after one of these night drops. When not on radio duty, my supplementary task was to man the forward Oerlikon Anti-aircraft Gun, which was situated in the bows of the vessel. On this occasion, I was watching the bows as we cleaved through the water. A small landing craft personnel, carrying a group of senior officers, sped past us on our starboard side, swiftly cutting across our bows after passing in front of us but then promptly hit a mine and disintegrated into nothing. Had it not been for the landing craft going in front of us, we would have reached this point within another minute. The only evidence of the disaster was a motley collection of ripped clothing and headgear floating on the surface. There, but for the grace of God indeed."