



# the SE Counties thistle

Issue 5 – APRIL 2024

## Provincial Grand Lodge of the South Eastern Counties of England



The Provincial Grand Chapter and Lodge meetings of the South-Eastern Counties of England were held at the Normandy Centre, Denne Road, Horsham, on Wednesday the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 2024.



We gathered in the bar for coffee and biscuits and a catch up with old friends before the meeting.

As well as many Provincial Grand Masters from other Provinces, there were several Heads of Surrey Orders, and members of the Surrey Craft Provincial Executive.





Provincial Grand Chapter was opened at 13:35 by the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master, Bro. Charles Stoddart attended by the Deputy Provincial Grand Master Bro. Jack Love, and Substitute Provincial Grand Masters Bro. Ian Fraser, Bro. Rod Barker and Bro. Leslie Grout.

Bro. Chris Harris played the pipe music played on Sword Beach by the piper to Lord Lovat on D Day. The piper walked along the beach with bullets and shells flying around him and was never hit. When a captured German soldier was asked why, he replied, "we never would shoot a madman playing bagpipes" (*see back page*)

Also in attendance were Bro. Brian Meldon the PGM from SW Counties, Bro. James Hilditch the PGM from Cotswolds, Bro. John Dollery the PGM from Devonshire, Bro. Peter Hawken, the PGM from Hertfordshire, Bro. Clive Watling the Substitute PGM from Kent, Bro. Stephen Turner the Provincial Secretary from Kent, Bro. George Mars the Substitute PGM from Hants & IOW, Bro. John Stovell from Hants & IOW, Bro. Phil Wedgbrow from Hants & IOW, Bro. Graeme McCormack the SW from Beds & Northants, Bro. Derrick Simpson the Banner Bearer from Gibraltar, Bro's Dennis Callnon and Bro Clive Moore from Kent.

The Provincial Grand Master welcomed everyone to the meeting and said that he hoped they would enjoy the Ceremony of Advancement and Promotion for the candidate.



A Ballot for Advancement and Promotion into the Order was held for Bro. Thomas William Edward Weston which proved in favour of the candidate.

Bro. Weston was admitted into the Chapter and after an explanation of the history of the degree by the Provincial Grand Master he was Advanced to the Degree of Heredom and given the Characteristic of 'Musicality'.

The Provincial Grand Master was assisted by the Deputy Provincial Grand Master Bro. Jack Love and Substitute Provincial Grand Masters Bro. Ian Fraser, Bro. Rod Barker and Bro. Leslie Grout.

Bro. Peter Wise acted as Marischal, Bro. Brian Pulley acted as Deputy Marischal, Bro. Colin Brookman acted as Constable of the Tower, Bro. Chris Eley acted as Sword Bearer and Bro. Malcolm Brown acted as Banner Bearer. Other brethren assisted with the Questions and Answers



The Provincial Grand Master expressed his thanks to those members who had stood in for the ceremony today.

The Provincial Grand Chapter was closed and Provincial Grand Lodge was opened.

Bro. Weston was duly admitted and Promoted to the Degree of the Rosy Cross of the Royal Order of Scotland and afterwards warmly welcomed into the Order by the Provincial Grand Master

The Provincial Grand Master closed Provincial Grand Lodge and the customary group photos were taken.



**The Provincial Team**

**Members of the Province and guests**



After refreshments in the bar, with an opportunity to catch up with everyone.....



..... the Right Worshipful Provincial Grand Master, the Deputy Provincial Grand Master and Substitute Provincial Grand Masters were piped into the dining room by two pipers, Bro. Chris Harris and Bro Ralph Potter.





The Haggis was then paraded round the dining room led by the two pipers.



The Address to the Haggis was given by Bro. Andrew Francis in his very special way.







The brethren of the Province of the South Eastern Counties and their guests sat down to a most convivial festive board of Cock-a-leekie Soup followed by Haggis, Neeps and Tatties.

After the meal the Worshipful Deputy Provincial Grand Master, Bro. Jack Love, proposed the Toast to the Provincial Grand Master The RW Provincial Grand Master, Bro. Charles Stoddart, responded accordingly.



**The next meeting  
of Provincial  
Grand Lodge will  
be held at  
Surbiton on Friday  
the 27<sup>th</sup> of  
September 2024.**

## The legacy of the Mad Piper who played bagpipes on D-Day beaches



Amid the roar of gunfire and the shouts and screams of soldiers as they ran up the beaches of Normandy, there was another sound: the keening cry of bagpipes.



The noise of war was everywhere. Explosions rent the air at every moment, the rattle of machine guns firing down at Allied troops rang out along 50 miles of coastline.

Bill Millin was just 21 years old when he stepped off his landing craft on D-Day, wearing his father's First World War kilt and armed only with a ceremonial dagger.

It was against the rules to play the bagpipes on D-Day. Military bosses were worried about the level of casualties at the landings.

In 1944, Bill was the personal piper to the eccentric Lord Lovat, the commander of the newly formed 1st Special Service Brigade which landed at Sword beach on 6 June 1944. It was Lovat who asked him to play the pipes on the beach. When Bill reminded him of the rules, the peer replied: "Ah, but that's the English War Office. You and I are both Scottish, and that doesn't apply. And so The Road To The Isles, a tune about the hills of Skye, rang out in France.

Lord Lovat's brigade went ashore under fire near Colleville. His Commandos had discarded helmets at the last moment and donned their distinctive green berets, complete with their regimental cap badges. Lovat led the men off the landing craft, and Piper Millin was glad because the commander, over six feet tall, would show how deep the water was. The man just behind Lovat received a bullet in the face and collapsed. Millin jumped into the water up to his armpits, and the cold shocked him as his kilt spread around him. The man behind him was hit and sank into the sea.

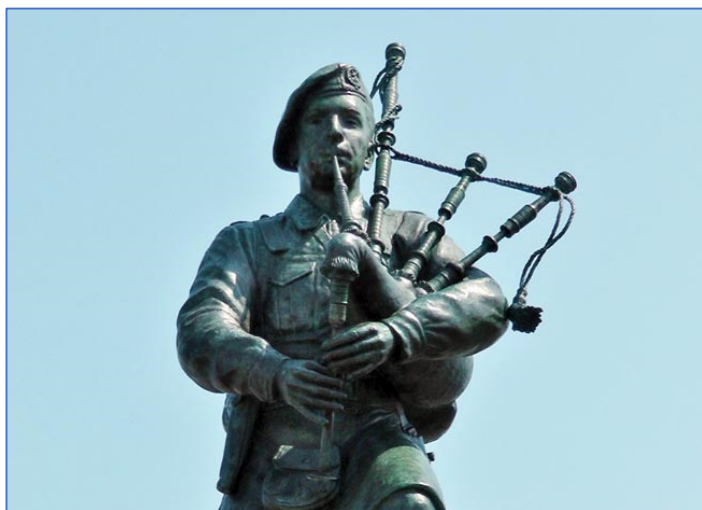
Standing in the foreground at right, Piper Bill Millin pipes Lord Lovat's Commandos ashore on the Queen Red Beach sector of Sword Beach on D-Day. Lord Lovat is seen wading ashore just to the right of the column of soldiers.

As Millin floundered toward the beach, Lovat shouted, "Give us 'Highland Laddie,' man!" Shivering and waist deep in the water now, Millin put the mouthpiece to his lips and started playing as he struggled through the surf. The bodies of fallen soldiers drifted in the water.

The pipes heartened Lovat, who turned and gave Millin a thumbs-up signal because the tune was a favourite march of his old regiment, the Scots Guards. When he reached the water's edge, Millin could hardly believe his ears when his commander, standing on the sand with the brigade major, asked him if he would mind piping the rest of the Commandos ashore with "The Road to the Isles."

"That sounded rather ridiculous to me to play the bagpipes and entertain people just like on Brighton sands in peacetime" Millin recalled later. "Anyway, I started the pipes up, and marched up and down."

By some miracle - and perhaps the fact that German snipers would later say they avoided shooting him because they thought he had gone mad - Bill survived D-Day and his story became legend.



The picture on the right shows Bill Millin playing his bagpipes at Edinburgh Castle in 2001. In the hell of war, the trill of his bagpipes raised morale and was an echo of home for his comrades on that fateful day.

Bill Millin played the lament at Lord Lovat's funeral in 1995 and donated his Cameron kilt and bagpipes to the National War Museum in Edinburgh. Predeceased by his wife, the skirling Scottish hero died at the age of 88 on August 17, 2010.

Meanwhile, plans were started in 2010 to memorialize Piper Millin in France when the mayor of Colleville-Montgomery, a town on Sword Beach, offered a site for a life-size statue near the spot where he went ashore on June 6, 1944. It stands today as a tribute to Millin.

