

Learning At The Boundaries Of Our Experiences

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Remembrance is important. As parliamentary warden for St Margaret's church, I was presented to the Duchess of Cornwall when she opened the Field of Remembrance by Westminster Abbey.

On Friday I presented a Commons wreath for the war dead by Worthing town hall after Janet Goldsbrough-Jones and team created evocative impressive displays. I joined the Kingston Gorse and East Preston Sunday memorial services.

Rules allowed the Queen to lay her wreath at the tomb of the Unknown Warrior. When speaking in the debate on restrictions to get the C-19 virus back under control, I paid tribute to local resident Coxswain Iain Mackenzie of the Submariners Association: the submariners held their memorial service in the Abbey and Remembrance on the Embankment in good time.

This week Admiral of the Fleet Lord Boyce wrote about the Submariner Memorial to be created at the National Memorial Arboretum to remember the 5,500 Royal Navy submariners, a significant proportion of a relatively small service, who perished while secretly protecting the nation for more than 100 years.

His inclusive words: 'No one arm of the services is better or more worthy than any other: the Royal Navy, Army and Royal Air Force all call for courage, endurance, intelligence and self-sacrifice, and on deployment no serviceman or woman is ever far from danger.'

'The threats of being shot down on hostile territory or entering a potentially booby-trapped building to search for terrorists are obvious to the public, but less is known of the Submarine Service, the silent service.'

What followed the Great War was messy. After looking at a 1943 photograph of a Concarneau trawler, Motor Fishing Vessel 2022 'President Herriot' named after the French Radical prime minister, I read the times of Edouard Herriot, then about Pip Jarvis. A miner at 14, he joined the navy and chose to transfer from dangerous minesweeping to what was described as "hazardous service" in MFVs. John Garnett, my father-in-law, at least asked what was involved before he joined too.

Neither was told it involved chugging from the Scillies across the Channel past Ushant to join French fishing fleets escorted by German gunboats. Taxi work. This SOE and SIS venture had been thought up by Ian Fleming, before he created James Bond.

Nevil Shute captured the atmosphere in his 1942 novel *Most Secret*, censored until 1945. It has been written that his books start with a boringly ordinary person describing dull events in detail – before you realise you are hooked on characters involved in extraordinary events.

The examples of brave people made us understand that courage is not the same as not feeling fear; it is doing or trying to do what is right and to make possible what is right, even at a high or ultimate price.

People who may not know me well need not write that they will not support me because I do not think as they think or always do what they require. I will not do something if I judge it seriously wrong.

Many post-war German politicians with others helped to build lasting peace in Europe. We have failed to do the same around the world. Together we failed as Yugoslavia broke up.

Reflect how people change and how groups change. Without getting into the personalities, policies and practices of United States politics, I do feel strongly that every spectrum needs conciliators who seek common understanding and the practical purposeful approach so a country or a community can go forward rather than 'left' or 'right' – or unnecessarily to war.