



### ***Let 'em Have It***

*The current order for individual lines within a choral declamation is: Tuppy, Tracie, Stewart, Eva, Sue, Jeff, Barbara, Heather.*

*Standing order is: Clare (slightly removed), Stewart, Eva, Sue, Jeff, Barbara, Tuppy, Heather, Tracie, Jane (slightly removed)*

*Semi-circle (edges depending on venue) all facing out.*

*Turn to audience brandishing poster, individually declaiming: This is the year*  
After Heather, in unison: This is the day  
Unison: It's up to us to let 'em have it.

*(Cast drop the posters behind them, without looking. These will act as a marker for your position.)*

Clare: I know this to be true for my mother, Betty, told me her story of that day many times. As I got older, she told me more and I knew it was the most important and memorable time of her life. These are her words.

Towards the end of May 1944, I would have been 19 years old, (*Tracie forward as Betty, Stewart as Frank*) Frank and I had been married for just two months. He was serving in the Royal Navy and I was doing war work in a munitions Factory in Bournemouth.

One day I received a telegram from Frank saying "come to Falmouth STOP Will meet Train STOP". (*Train made behind Tracie. Heather and Tuppy, then Barbara and Sue. Jeff and Eva between and behind Barbara and Sue. Motion of train.* )

Luckily, I was able to get time off from work. It was only possible to take the train at 8pm from Bournemouth. The trains were packed with men from every service and I heard European accents, [*Polish (Barbara), French(Heather), Czech(Jeff), American(Tuppy), Canadian(Sue).*] They were trying to get what rest they could, sleeping on the floor, in the corridors, even in the luggage racks. (*Cast take up various poses. Train sleep.*)

I sat on my suitcase, managed the best I could. I arrived in Falmouth at 7am. The journey had five changes and took eleven hours. (*Chorus echoes '11 hours'*) Falmouth was a "Closed Port". I was met by Frank (*Frank and Betty embrace and exchange a soft kiss*) and the Civil Police. (*Jeff and Heather come forward while rest of cast return to places in semi-circle*)

Jeff: Mrs. Rattley? (*Tracie nods*)

Heather: Report to the police station every morning.

(*Jeff and Heather step back*)

Frank was serving on M.L.s, fast motor launches used by the navy for numerous duties. I watched his flotilla of six boats go out every morning, and then counted them back again in the evening, for five days. I then had a visit from the civil police.

(*Jeff & Heather step forward*)

Heather: All unnecessary personnel must leave the port.

Jeff: You will report to the train station, for the 9 O'clock train tomorrow morning, or you'll be arrested.

At half past eight in the morning they returned, they would escort me to the station, I had to go with them, alone, Frank was to report immediately to his ship. *Frank and Betty slowly part hands. Jeff & Heather focus on the parting and only return, with military style, to the circle when Clare says:* And that was that. (*Tracie isolated on stage.*) On the train home, I had the carriage to myself.

Clare: Meanwhile in Wimborne

(*All cast forward taking a role as they see it. For me, Stewart is fearful/nervous, Sue knows it all, Tuppy is an armchair 'expert', Jeff is a joker with lots of movement, Heather has sudden realisation of what's happening. Non-speakers listen intently.*)

Stew: Busy night last night. What's going on?

Sue: Haven't you heard? The balloon's gone up, we've landed in Normandy.

Tuppy: Normandy? Why Normandy of all places?

Jeff: How would I know, you'll 'ave to ask General Eisenhower when you see him!

Sue: It's in the papers this morning.

Stew: Well that explains a thing or two. Didn't get a wink of sleep last night all the din overhead.

Tuppy: But the weather's been so rough, they must be mad!  
Jeff: Perhaps the Germans have been thinking that too and it'll have caught 'em on the hop!  
Heather: I hope you're right, I've got two nephews in that lot somewhere.  
Stew: You and thousands of others.

Clare: My father, Frank Rattley on D-day 1944 In Frank's own words.

### Getting the job done.

It was a big job getting the Invasion armada mustered at the integration point, which later became known as "Piccadilly Circus".

I served as an engine-room mechanic aboard a Fairmile M.L. (*Cast make the boat. Gentle sway*) Her high sharp bow and soft-chinned hull, would cut through the water like a knife. A heavy swell was still running from a storm the previous day. Many of the smaller craft being towed by larger ones. This made "very bad going" for the small craft.

Clare: And Wimborne was full of rumour, gossip, fear and determination.

(Cast to keep characters they've chosen. I see Barbara's being a gossip, Eva excited and enthusiastic, Tracie a bit wet. It's up to you!)

Barbara: Nice day today after all the rain we've been having.  
Sue: No sign of the Americans today. I haven't had any in the shop – well, come to think of it, it's been very quiet all morning. There's nobody around.  
Barbara: Well, at least they're not boasting they're going to win the war for us! You'd think they own the place. And all the noise they make too.  
Tracy: I suppose they're doing their bit. Helping us win the war. We ought to welcome them here. And I wouldn't mind a nice pair of nylons, mind!  
Eva: Might be the last we see of them. I heard there was something happening last night. A lot of planes flying over and now Wimborne's deserted.  
Heather: It's started!  
Tuppy: Sheer bloody madness if you ask me!  
Jeff: Well from what I've heard, they've got troops ashore all along the coast and it sounds like they're giving Gerry what for!  
Eva: Good, it'll give 'em a taste of their own medicine.  
Stew: I saw Arthur from Home Farm this morning, says there was a right hubbub going on at Tarrant Rushton.  
Sue: Well, that's not unusual!  
Stew: Ah, but he was cycling home 'bout 11.00, he heard a racket behind him and when he turned round, he saw heavy bombers, Halifaxes he said, pulling gliders, 6 of 'em. He said they flew off to the south but he lost sight of 'em.  
Heather: Was he sure?

Sue: Oh, yes. He'd've seen them in the moonlight. No doubt about it.  
Tracie: I wonder where they are now?  
Stew: Perhaps it is the beginning of the end!

Clare: Back in Bournemouth, my mother Betty returned to work at the factory and this is what she told me:

I worked the night shift 7pm. to 7am. I used to like to go out onto the east cliff, on my bike, each evening before I went in to work. At about six thirty on this evening, the 5th of June, 1944, in the sea, from the Needles on the Isle of Wight, across to Old Harry Rocks, coming out of Poole and all round Hengistbury Head, as far as the eye could see, were ships, all sizes, all shapes, all silent, at anchor.

The cliffs were patrolled in those days and I should not have been there.

Stewart: HALT! WHO GOES THERE!

All: FRIEND OR FOE?

Clare: "Friend" I squeaked,

Stewart: ADVANCE, FRIEND

All: AND BE RECOGNISED.

Clare: I crept forward .

Barbara: WHAT IS YOUR BUSINESS?

Clare: "I'm on my way to work, night shift..."

Tuppy: THEN GET ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS,

All: AND LET OTHERS DO THEIRS.

At 1 o'clock in my meal break, I went back, taking a friend. The bay was empty of ships, there was not a sound. This time, the sentry did not challenge us.

After work the next morning I took another look. *(Cast show awareness of distant noise)* Nothing, but the dull sound of heavy far-off guns and *(Cast look up and follow the path of the planes, ending looking straight at the audience. Faces set with determination and stoicism over fear.)* planes going overhead. It was the sixth of June, and everyone had a job to do. *(All stay focussed forward for a count of three. Then listen to Jeff but do not look at him. Pose as you would be listening to the wireless.)*

Clare: And the people of Wimborne listened to the King:

Jeff: At this historic moment surely not one of us is too busy, too young or too old to play a part in a nation-wide, perchance a world-wide vigil of prayer as the great crusade sets forth.

Clare: And thought their own thoughts:  
Stew: One moment they were here and the next they were gone. Without a word. And the strange thing is I didn't hear a sound. They just disappeared. And my hearing is perfect.  
Tr: How could they just disappear without saying goodbye?  
Eva: I hope that Dan – the one from New York - gets me another pair of nylons.  
Sue: I've just bought all that stock. Who's going to buy it now?  
Heather: I've been dreading this day, since I lost my Harold. In the last war. All I can think about is the trenches in Flanders.  
Tuppy: I suppose at least it'll be quieter now and we won't have our windows being rattled. But why Normandy?  
Barbara: If this goes well Mrs. J can finally put out her bunting.  
Jeff: Blimey! After all this excitement I could murder a cuppa.

Clare: My father Frank recalled:  
(*Cast make boat*)

An incident that I remember was an attack by E-boats. Although shut down in our little world of roaring machinery we were given the buzz of what was going on up-top by the boys in the wheel-house. Star shells lit-up the ships ahead to our port bow, and we increased speed to investigate. A torpedo had struck one of the Landing Craft Tanks.

(All sway to your left in response to the wake. Then all sway even more to your right to 'stop' the craft.)

We raced ahead and another Landing Craft Tank started to cut across our path and had to be made to get back on course a bit rapid.

(All straighten up. Very determined and focused.)

We learned later that the skipper complained that he was not allowed by us to go to the rescue of his mate.

(*Jeff comes forward*)

Jeff: I could have saved my mate and you stopped me.

Claire: He was told that his job was to

All: Do your job and let everybody else do theirs.

That to my mind is the simple straight answer to success.

When we arrived at the French coast, we had over 40 men (*cast lean forward in the classic RNLI pose of giving a saving hand to someone in the water*) on board. We had picked up more survivors than we had crew. (*Cast lean back and look stoically ahead*) Our job then was to act as a marker for the landings. We were to the left, and a sister ship was to the right, of what would become known as Gold beach. We had to run in to the sand and throw out grappling anchors, haul back on their lines and drop anchor. And that's about it really, we just had to sit there. Our job was done, now they had to do theirs. And they did, for hours, (*cast echo*

*'hours' in order)* it really was a very, very long day. Yes, Just get your job done. Then, on to the next job.

Finishing with repeat of first semi-circle 'This is the Year' leading to 'This is the Day'. Looking into middle distance – in character – reaching a hand out in part farewell, part accolade, part salute.

Hold position while Jane sings:

We'll meet again,  
Don't know where,  
Don't know when  
But I know we'll meet again some sunny day  
Keep smiling through,  
Just like you always do  
Till the blue skies drive the dark clouds far away  
So will you please say "Hello"  
To the folks that I know  
Tell them I won't be long  
They'll be happy to know  
That as you saw me go  
I was singing this song  
We'll meet again,  
Don't know where,  
Don't know when  
But I know we'll meet again some sunny day

Clare: My mother and father – Betty and Frank did meet again but it was 18 months before Frank saw his daughter Linda, my elder sister.

Clare back into semi-circle.

Unison: *(one lead echo technique)* This is the Day  
It's up to us to let 'em have it.

Hold position of determination, resilience, fear and pride.

Silently count: 1000, 2000, 3000.

Relax. Hands by your side. Look straight ahead and bow, following Clare's lead.