

Ramsey Mortuary Chapels Heritage and Archive Centre

By Jane Yardley – Chair, Friends of Ramsey Mortuary Chapels

The Ramsey Mortuary Chapels are now closed for the Winter months and fingers crossed they will be open again on the first Sunday of April next year.

Unfortunately, as of writing, our new toilet facilities have still not been completed. It's very awkward, as when we are working at the chapels or in the cemetery, we have to nip home or down to Tesco's so hopefully it won't be too long.

But now for some good news! We have new website at last, thanks to one of our members who is a whizz with a computer. They have done such a fantastic job, so go online to: - www.ramseymortuarychapels.org and see what you think.

Although we have been closed, we have still been very busy and by the time that you read this Remembrance Day will be coming up. We have been clearing, cleaning and in some cases repairing those war graves in the cemetery that are not tended by the War Graves Commission. There are quite a few and some of you might have seen our before and after pictures on our official Facebook page (Ramsey Mortuary Chapels).

Not all of the men commemorated are necessarily buried in the cemetery but abroad. But their families have included them on family headstones as it is important that they are remembered.

We should remember too, those who served but thankfully returned home. One such person is local man Stan Beebe and the only reason that the chapels are still standing today is down to him and his determination and love for Ramsey.

In 1974, the Town Council decided to demolish the building and sell the bricks. Stan was horrified, got up a petition and fortunately the chapels were saved, although sadly allowed to fall into disrepair.

Stan was a Lieutenant Corporal in the Royal Army Service Corps (RASC) and was involved in the D Day landing on Gold Beach, Arromanches in France. He also served in Holland, Germany, Czechoslovakia and was also one of the first liberators into Auschwitz Concentration Camp, Poland, where he saw terrible things that no man should see (his words not mine) and I know that they haunted him for the rest of his life.

He was mentioned in Despatches for distinguished service at the battle for Arnhem and also



● Stan Beebe aged 21

became a despatch rider for Lieutenant General, Sir Brian Horrocks.

After being demobbed in 1946 he returned to Dear old Ramsey, as he called it, and served the town in many capacities over the years. Here are just a few of them.

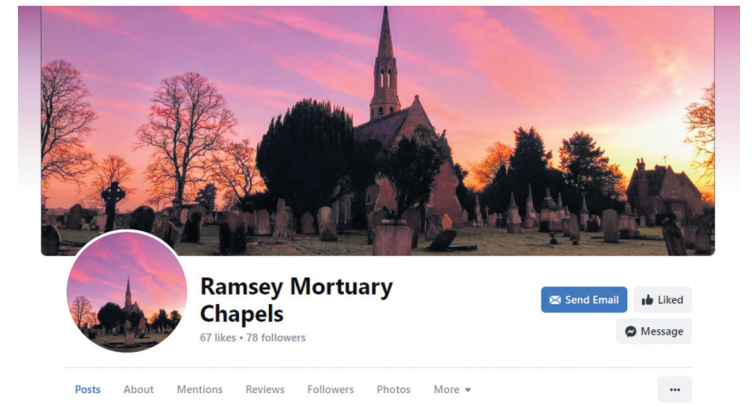
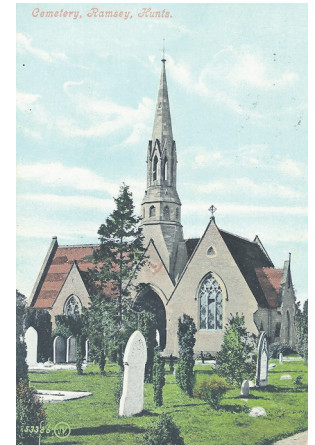
For over 30 years he was a Retained Fireman, becoming Sub Officer in charge and was awarded the Long Service medal. He was also a Postman for many years, worked at Swearers the undertakers, ran the Ramsey Blood Donor Service, ran a photography club with Douglas Benton, was a long serving member of the Royal British Legion, Ramsey and District Branch and one of the founding members of Ramsey Rural Museum, where he became Chairman and eventually President and that's how I got to know him.

Newly arriving in Ramsey to live and being interested in the Town's history, he kindly took me round the Town and pointed out the places of interest, one of which was the Ramsey Mortuary Chapels. It's nearly 40 years ago now but it was always a running joke between us that one day when I had nothing to do then I would get the chapels restored for him. It was also the last thing that Stan said to me shortly before he died and when I was at his funeral I thought, right Stan, now's the time to do it for you.

It's been hard going at times over the past 8 years with many ups and downs, but with the help of friends and volunteers who have become dear friends and the fantastic support that we have had from many of you we are getting there.

Stan and his dear wife Evelyn are buried in the cemetery surrounding the chapels that he loved so much. When they are completely restored, they will be a fitting memorial to Stan and his love of Ramsey.

After all, he was just an ordinary man. His words not mine.



● The Official Facebook Page