

VOICE OF THE **DAILY** **Mirror** voice@mirror.co.uk

Talent kids inspire all

TO those doomsayers who run down our great country and indiscriminately label young people as yobs, we have a one word reply: Diversity.

The inspirational dance group which won the nation's hearts and showed Britain's Got Talent reflect so much that is good.

They're all in their teens and 20s and come from a wide range of social and ethnic backgrounds - none privileged. But with teamwork and discipline, inspiration as well as perspiration, they've made names for themselves.

Society isn't broken, Britain isn't broken if young people can come together and create something so amazing.

Extremists, and a few mainstream politicians who should know better, claim otherwise. Well, Diversity's proved them wrong.

We can all enjoy the group's success which is a reminder that Britain is a good country to live in.

So when you go to the polls on Thursday, remember Diversity and vote for Hope not Hate by rejecting the menace of the likes of the BNP.

We salute you

THE tragic deaths of another two British servicemen and today's vivid despatch from our man in Afghanistan bring home what the Armed Forces are up against.

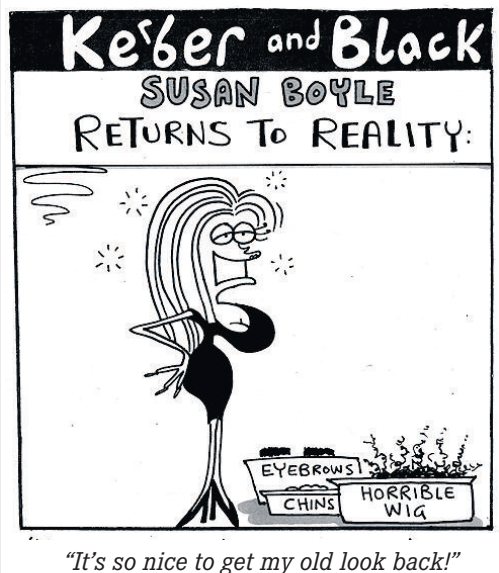
The bravery and heroism of Britain's military is humbling, men and women risking their lives daily against a fanatical Taliban that want to terrorise the rest of the world.

We salute the sacrifice of the fallen soldiers and our hearts go out to their families.

Puff justice

ANTI-smoking campaigners will be fuming after Guus Hiddink lit up in a Wembley dressing room.

But Chelsea billionaire owner Roman Abramovich should still - despite global capitalism's collapse - be able to afford the £50 fine.



HEROES REMEMBER D-DAY LANDINGS 65 YEARS ON



ONLY THE BRAVE Allied troops charge onto beaches at Normandy



UNSTOPPABLE Brit tanks roll in

BY **YORK MEMBERY**
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THEY say the darkest hour comes just before dawn.

And that was certainly how it felt for the thousands of troops huddled together in the fleet of landing craft bound for the beaches of Normandy on the morning of June 6, 1944.

Allied supreme commander Eisenhower had boomed: "OK, let's go", sending the mighty armada of 7,000 ships carrying more than 150,000 men - around 62,000 of them British - off under cover of darkness.

Frogman Pte Peter Jones, sent ahead to clear obstacles, watched in horror as one craft, caught in a heavy swell, collided with a mine.

"It shot up into the air as though lifted by a water spout," he said, reliving the horror. "At the top of the



TO BATTLE British troops disembark at Gold Beach

spout bodies and body parts spread like drops of water."

Pte Teddy Beeton, a Churchill tank driver in the 1st Assault Brigade, Royal Engineers, was among the first wave onto land. "As soon as the first two tanks went down the ramp they were knocked out and burst into flames. I saw my mates trying to bail out, not a pretty sight," he recalled.

This grim reality of war - casualties on the British target beaches alone were around 2,000 - remains ingrained in the memory of those who fought for our freedom 65 years ago.

And it is why on Saturday, June 6, hundreds of veterans will make the pilgrimage to Normandy to remember their comrades who never made it beyond those bloody beaches.

Among those honouring the fallen heroes will be Bill Millin, who marched onto Sword beach playing the bagpipes amidst a hail of bullets.

But every year the number of

The first tanks were knocked out. We hit a mine before we even got to the beach..

- PRIVATE TEDDY BEETON

surviving veterans dwindles as old age and sickness take their toll, and this may well be the last year the beaches of Normandy will play host to as big a gathering of Allied veterans.

"The liberation of Europe from Nazi rule began with the sacrifice of our troops on the beaches of Normandy," says the historian Antony Beevor, author of the best-selling new book, D-Day: The Battle for Normandy.

"The landings themselves were a hard-fought enough battle, and the fighting inland would be as bloody as on the eastern front."

The invasion of Hitler's "Fortress Europe" remains the largest and most difficult amphibious landing ever carried out in the history of warfare.

It was years in the planning and at one stage, the area around Calais - being closest to England - was the



▲ CAPTURED Two German prisoners

favoured option, but military top brass opted for Normandy. Meanwhile, on the other side of the Channel, the Germans were building a string of defences, concrete bunkers, massive guns, mines, anti-tank obstacles and miles of barbed wire.

If the invasion failed Western Europe

WE want to hear from all those who, like Teddy Beeton, Bill Millin or Peter Jones, were present on the beaches, who descended from the night sky to take the enemy by

surprise, who were sailors on the ships of the Allied invasion fleet, and who flew with the RAF and provided vital air cover for the troops below. The Daily Mirror -

"the Forces' paper" as it was known in the war - salutes you all... and we want all our readers to join us in saluting the Mirror's very own D-Day heroes. Send in your stories by

email to: features@mirror.co.uk. Or send them to D-Day stories, Features Department, Daily Mirror, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5AP



▲ PIPER Bill Millin about to land at Sword Beach

PIPER MILLIN MARCHED ON

THE 1st Special Service Brigade landed at Sword with piper Bill Millin.

"I started the pipes up and marched up and down," Millin, pictured right, later recalled. "This sergeant came running over and yelled 'Get down you mad b*****d' but I continued marching up and down until we moved off the beach."

would have been condemned to years of living in fear under the Nazi jackboot.

Thankfully it succeeded, securing the Allies a vital foothold on mainland Europe, from which they could push back German troops across the Rhine and, eventually, all the way to Berlin.

By the end of D-Day, nearly 150,000 Allied soldiers were ashore. A week later their number had swelled to more than 300,000 along with 54,000 vehicles and 100,000 tons of supplies.

But it was just the first stage of Operation Overlord, and the coming weeks saw intense fighting before the Allies were able to break out from Normandy.

"It was the beginning of the end of the war in Europe," observes the military historian Richard Holmes.

However, the price of victory at D-Day had been heavy, with the total Allied dead recently revised upwards to around 7,000, according to Normandy's D-Day Museum.

Subsequent generations owe a lasting debt to the brave men and women whose sacrifices made victory possible at D-Day.

That is why the nation will rightly remember them on June 6.