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DORSET AMERICA

THE STORY OF DORSET'S LINKS WITH NORTH AMERICA THROUGH THE CENTURIES

Rodney Legg

The nineteenth century was the British century. The twentieth century was the American century. From clashes through to collusion the two nations remain linked by common roots and what has become the world language. All British counties, each state of the Union, and every Canadian province share intimate links. For reasons geographical, military and political, Dorset can claim as many as any. Bonds of blood and culture stretch in both directions.

Transatlantic Dorset is the subject of this book.

From the sixteenth century onwards, the days of Raleigh and the founding of the fledgling colonies, there were 'arms across the sea' – actual, material and metaphorical. This climaxed in the great conflicts of the last century, when North Americans flooded back across the seas to the defence of the old country. In 1944 Weymouth and Portland were pivotal in the storming of Omaha Beach in the biggest and bloodiest of the Normandy landings. Some 100,000 American troops, airmen and sailors were stationed in Dorset at the time. Of the greatest army ever based in Dorset, 5000 United States servicemen who passed through the county lost their lives in Europe.

Many Dorset families have links with Canada and the United States. This book is a celebration of such associations and shrines for our American cousins. Few, however, are generally known on this side of the Atlantic. Finding them on the ground has been a process of discovering our own country.



Born in Bournemouth, in 1947, from the age of ten Rodney Legg headed into Dorset and adopted the Isle of Purbeck for cycling trips and cliff climbing. By 1967 he was a regular trespasser across the Lulworth Ranges, and founded Tyneham Action Group the following year, beginning a campaign which succeeded in restoring public access to 7 miles of spectacular coastal scenery in 1975.

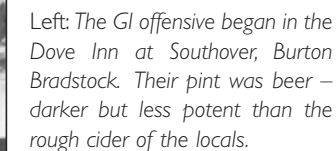
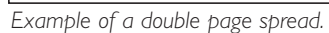
In 1968 he also established *Dorset – the country magazine* and continues to write for its *Dorset Life* successor. Since 1972 he has concentrated on book production, this being the 100th title to his name, with most of the output being inspired by the Dorset and Somerset countryside. Other subjects have ranged from archaeology to military history; both are covered here. He is a veteran walker and photographer and the chairman nationally of the Open Spaces Society.



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Below: Flying-boat *Clare* having returned to Poole Harbour from the first transatlantic flight of the Second World War, in August 1940, though this photograph has been censored (left background) to delete details that would have revealed the location.



Above: M60-A1 tank.

Left: The essayist Llewelyn Powys split his life between New York and Dorset.



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