

News



WWII veterans gather for emotional film screening

World War Two veterans enjoyed a screening of 'Return of the Liberators' and a sing-around the piano.

The cinema was full, the audience diverse - people from nearby as well as many who had travelled from afar - and included local representatives from the Royal British Legion Hastings branch, the mayor of Hastings Councillor Judy Rogers, 80-year-old Andrea Goldsmith who had travelled from London especially wearing her father's medals, and representatives of four generations of the same family. The other honoured guests were representatives

from The London Taxi Benevolent Association for the War Disabled, an organisation run by black cab drivers, who had brought along dozens of passengers, mostly World War II veterans, and the odd friend dressed in vintage military costume. Earlier in the day they had lunched at the Royal Victoria Hotel in St Leonards, parking their vehicles for free in Marina car park, courtesy of Hastings Borough Council.

The event, Acts of Remembrance, took place at the beginning of Remembrance Week, and was put on for free owing to funding from the ESRC

Festival of Social Science.

'Return of the Liberators', a film made by Hastings resident Janet Hodgson, documents a trip in 2015, involving a convoy of nearly 100 black cabs whose passengers, 120 World War II veterans, make the long trip to Arnhem in The Netherlands to take part in commemorations for the 70th anniversary of Dutch liberation, following the end of WWII in 1945.

One of the guests in the audience was a 96-year-old Dutch great-grandmother - Antonia Francheska Harrington, who had actually witnessed the arrival of

British troops in 1945.

Many of the veterans who 'star' in the film were present during the screening.

"What was wonderful about the event was that it brought together many different generations and people from many different walks of life," said Janet Hodgson.

"Seeing the film on the big screen for the first time, with such a positive and supportive audience, in such an atmospheric setting, was fantastic. The response was quite humbling."

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Photos by Russell Jacobs.



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