

AMERICAN—BRITISH HONOR RIDE

By: Bill Wetmore

There is an image that probably exemplifies the American spirit better than any other. Three men dressed plainly; their clothes worn, wounded, bandaged, and bloodied. Yet all three have a look of determination and pride as they march along proudly. These are the three "minute men" that have led so many parades each Fourth of July. The minute men were average men struggling to make a living in a young country who answered the call to arms, often "at a minutes' notice" to fight for this country's independence. They succeeded. 233 years ago, men such as these fought an oppressive ruler to win this country's freedom. Since that time, men and women in this country have answered the call to duty, ready to defend that freedom even at the cost of their own lives.

July 4, 2009. There is another image this day. Men and women again came together, not to do violence against an oppressor but to pay tribute to those who have made the ultimate sacrifice so that we may continue to enjoy the liberties and freedoms we have had for over 200 years.

At 8:00 a.m. they started to arrive at the Westside Café. This time they gathered on "iron horses". Old friendships were renewed and new friendships made. Riders from as far

away as Tyler and Waco made the trip. Their motorcycles were clean and shiny in the Texas sun. They, too, were dressed plainly; many wearing leather vests with patches proclaiming club or organization affiliation. Riders from the American Legion Post 297, Post 356, and Post 569; Rally Up Texas; Chula Chaser; and many independent riders were on their way to Greenwood Cemetery. This time there were no wounded in their midst, but the same look of pride was on their faces. They were going to honor 12 Royal Air Corps, English, Canadian, and American servicemen who died in the line of duty during WWI preparing to fight for this country's freedom. At Greenwood, these riders met up with those who were also there to pay their respect to these servicemen. 58 motorcycles and 6 vehicles made their way to the memorial site. The procession to the memorial site was led by Nick Gregory, a former Royal British Navy man, who placed a wreath for those interred there.

Meanwhile, on the same day "across the pond" in England, over 200 riders gathered at the Cambridge Services on the A14 to perform the same scene at the

Cambridge Cemetery and Memorial located about 60 miles north of London. Over 3,800 Americans are buried there and over 5000 names of the missing from WWII are listed on a memorial wall, including Alton Glen Miller, big band leader and Joseph P. Kennedy, a president's brother. The Cemetery government is the only permanent American WWII cemetery in the British Isles and is owned and managed by the United States. Ride organizers were granted special permission to visit with so many riders in one day. The riders, participating in the American War Cemetery ride (AWC2009.net) went there to lay a wreath and remember those who fought and died to protect our freedoms. Most of the group this day are members of the "sister" riding group to our own American Legion Riders, the Royal British Legion Riders.

Back in Texas, at the Greenwood memorial, Post 297's Chaplain led with a prayer for those interred there. George Sherman reminded everyone why we were there and of the sacrifice of those buried there. We were given a brief history of the training that occurred



in this area of Texas and the role that training played. Joining Mr.

Gregory was Ms. Chris McAfee and Mr. Paul (both of Canadian decent). The wreath was placed and a poem to honor those who have gone before was read. The ceremony was closed with a blessing of our troops and those who participated to send them safely on their way. The participants departed slowly, singularly or in small groups each taking from the ceremony something personal.

Once again there is an understanding that the price of freedom is never free. Today our young men and women are in harm's way as they continue to fight to ensure our freedom and liberties that we enjoy. Some, like those at Greenwood and Cambridge, will make the ultimate sacrifice for this country and their families. Let us never forget the hardships and sacrifices that our servicemen and women are enduring to keep this country free. The next time you see a young man or woman in uniform, please remember to thank them, they are the ones picking up the check to keep us free.



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