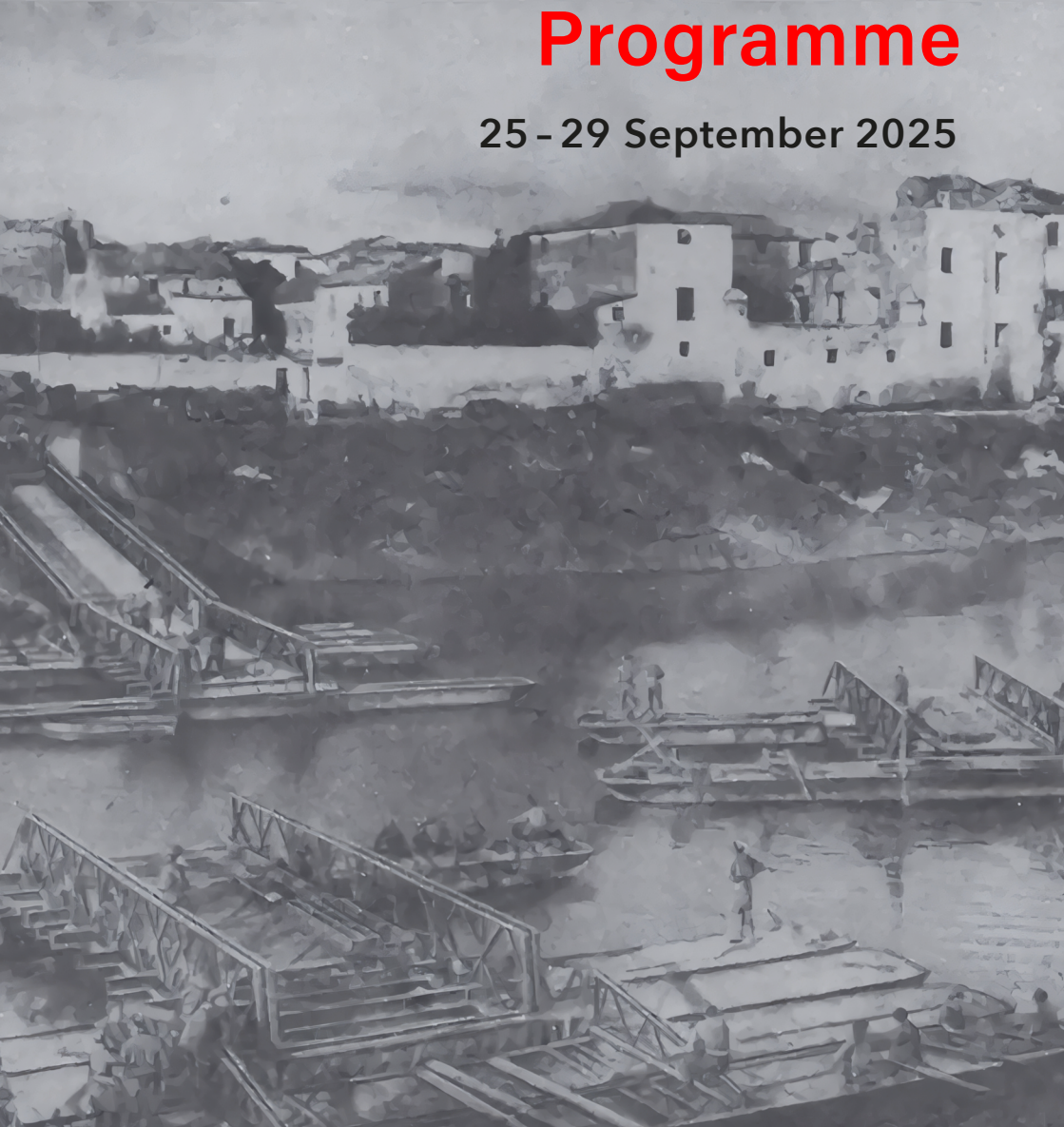




Royal Engineers **Historical Society**

The Italian Campaign Battlefield Tour Programme

25 - 29 September 2025



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AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ITALIAN CAMPAIGN 1943 – 45

2024 saw the 80th anniversary of the mid-point of the Italian Campaign. Its memory has been neglected by most historians, perhaps because the D-Day invasion of France happened in the middle of the time frame. The euphoria at the fall of Rome on 5 June 1944 was overtaken by the news from Normandy the following day. Nonetheless, the Italian Campaign achieved its stated aim of holding down an average of 25 German divisions when they might have tipped the balance in Normandy. There is a view that, without the Italian Campaign, Operation *Overlord* might have bogged down, as had Anzio and Cassino. That said, John Keegan, dazzled by Normandy, wrote that the campaign was ‘a strategic diversion on the maritime flank of a continental enemy’. The considerable cost was 312,000 Allied casualties and over 400,000 German casualties. It was, and generally remains, a neglected and sparsely studied campaign yet, in its course, some 55 miles of the then recently developed Bailey bridge were built, which sets a marker for the scale of Sapper endeavour required in large-scale operations. Without engineers and without considerable bridging resources, this campaign would have failed.

The RE Journal published a handful of accounts from Italy until the 1980s. Only Colonel Tony Daniell persevered and wrote several well-regarded articles of the experiences of his 59 Field Company. It took until 1970 for the Corps to have the Amazon Bridge painted by Terence Cuneo whereas the Alamein painting was commissioned in 1950. The April 2024 Journal corrected this imbalance with the reproduction of a number of articles from previous year and a number of articles that were the result of considerable research through war diaries in the National Archive and in the Polish Institute. I comment this edition of the Journal as broad look at the campaign and a scene setter for this battlefield tour.

One more reason to look again at Italy is that it involved so many Allies, each with their own way of working. By the time of Normandy, the smaller number of contingents there had been stamped into either the American or the British doctrinal mould. The example of Italy is both relevant and topical for today’s Corps, when we are almost certain to be operating with Allies and, conceivably, in a subordinate role within a coalition. Tellingly, when the US General Marshall visited US General Mark Clark on his way back from the Yalta Conference, Clark paraded detachments from every national army and ethnic group in the 5th Army. Marshall remarked that the Italian Campaign was ‘the most perfect example of teamwork among so many nations united in a common cause’. To which Clarke replied that it was ‘a hodge-podge outfit’. There is truth in both observations.

REHS ITALY BATTLEFIELD TOUR 2025 – TOUR ITINERARY

Day One Thursday 25 September 2025 - Arrival Day

Timings	Location	Activity	Remarks
Time TBC	Naples Airport	First participants arrive at Naples airport. Bus to Cassino Best Western (BW). Check in.	Drive takes 90 minutes
Time TBC	Naples Airport	Second group of participants arrive at Naples airport . Bus to Cassino Best Western. Check in.	Drive takes 90 minutes
1800 – 1810	BW Hotel Rocca Conference Suite	Tour Welcome and Admin (DB). Issue tour map books, Cassino Town Map and Amazon Bridge book.	Pick up NOK forms. Confirm individual tour dispersal arrangements
1810 – 1840	Conference Suite	The Italian Campaign – Setting the Scene by DZ	Includes questions
1840 – 1900	Conference Suite	Briefing for Day Two	(DZ and DB)
1930	BW Hotel Rocca Dining Room	Communal Ice Breaker Dinner	Dinner included in cost of tour. Drinks paid for individually. Choices of food on the night.

Day Two Friday 26 September 2025 - Salerno Landings

Timings	Location	Activity	Remarks
0700 – 0745	BW Hotel Rocca Dining Room	Breakfast	Pick up packed lunches
0800 – 1715		Salerno Landings, to include the Operation <i>Avalanche</i> museum, Red Beach, Strong Point Moltke, the German counterattack and Salerno CWGC	300 m uphill walk Coach has on-board toilet
1745 – 1800	Conference Room	Briefing for Day Three:	(DZ and DB)
1800		Free time in Cassino. Bus will drop off and pick up from Cassino town centre	Announce return bus timing

Day Three Saturday 27 September 2025 - Crossing the Volturno

Timings	Location	Activity	Remarks
0700 – 0745	BW Hotel Rocca Dining Room	Breakfast	Pick up packed lunches
0900 – 1700		Coach from Cassino to Castel Volturno. Volturno Crossings from Castel Volturno to Capua, including the site of first WWII floating Bailey Bridge, Grazzanise and the sites of the fording of the river by City of London Yeomanry and the floating Bailey Bridge at Capua	Coach has toilet. 500 m walking across fields
1700 – 1715	BW Hotel Rocca Conference Room	Briefing for Days Four and Five	(DZ and DB)
1945 onwards		Meet at reception, bus into Cassino for Tour Dinner – Sir Jasper's Restaurant Cassino	Cost of meal and welcome drink is included in tour. Please settle your own bar bills.

Day Four Sunday 28 September 2025 - The Battle for Monte Cassino (1)

Timings	Location	Activity	Activity
0700 – 0745	BW Hotel Rocca Dining Room	Breakfast	Pick up packed lunches
0830 – 1800		The Cassino Battles, to include Amazon Bridge, Historiale Museum, Polish Museum and walking the summit of Monte Cassino.	Coach does not have onboard toilet. 4 km walk. Stout shoes and waterproofs.
1800		RV at Birrificio Montecassino, Albaneta Farm	
1800 – 2000		Tour Gala Dinner Montecassino Brewery	Cost of meal and welcome drink is included in tour
2000 – 2030		Walk down Cassino track to coach	
2030 – 2100		Coach to Hotel Rocca	

Day Five Monday 29 September 2025 - The Battle for Monte Cassino (2)

Timings	Location	Activity	Remarks
0700 – 0745	BW Hotel Rocca Dining Room	Breakfast	Pick up packed lunches
0745 – 0825		Check out of hotel and load bags, pay personal bar bills and room service bills	
0830 – 1230		Monte Cassino Abbey (museum optional) and Cassino CWGC	Coach does not have onboard toilet
1230 – 1400		Coach from Monte Cassino Abbey to Naples Airport	
1400		Tour disperses	



Monument at the Monte Cassino WGC Cemetery

ACCOMMODATION

The tour is accommodated in the Best Western Hotel Rocca, Cassino, and the details are as follows:

Best Western Hotel Rocca, Cassino
Via Sferracavalli, 105
03043 Cassino (FR)

Telephone: +39 0776311212 / +39 0776311213 Fax: +39 077625427

email: info@hotelrocca.it

Internet: www.hotelrocca.it

EMERGENCY CONTACT DETAILS

Accidents can happen when we least expect it and it is good to know what the emergency numbers in Malta are, just in case.

General Emergency Line (Pan Europe Number:112)

This covers police, ambulance or fire emergencies and the operators speak English in most tourist areas.

The British Embassy in Rome is contactable for services such as replacing lost or stolen passports via the website at:

<https://www.gov.uk/contact-consulate-rome>

<https://www.contact.service.csd.fcdo.gov.uk/home>

The emergency contact number is:

Tel: (+39) 06 4220 0001

Healthcare:

You should get a free UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) before leaving the UK. If you already have an European Health Insurance Card (EHIC), it will still be valid as long as it remains in date. If you don't have your EHIC with you or you've lost it, you can call the NHS Overseas Healthcare Team on +44 191 218 1999 to get a Provisional Replacement Certificate.

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www.InstRE.org
www.rehs.org
www.re-museum.co.uk



Institution of Royal Engineers



This Battlefield Tour has been organized by the Royal Engineers Historical Society (REHS), with the support of the Institution of Royal Engineers and is led jointly by Major General John Drewienkiewicz and Colonel Don Bigger