



*Out Now: Prayer in Time of War, by David Clensy*

## **Wiltshire writer pays homage to “D-Day Dodgers” in debut novel**



Wiltshire-based writer David Clensy has released his debut novel – inspired by the wartime recollections of his own grandfather, who fought in Italy during the Second World War.

*Prayer in Time of War*, which is released on February 23, 2024, tells the story of elderly war veteran Ernie as he returns to an Italy transformed from his experiences during the Second World War, in search of the girl he left behind in the back streets of Naples half a century before.

“I first began to research the period of occupation in Naples to get a better understanding of my late grandfather’s experiences during the Second World War,” the Trowbridge-based writer explains. “Inspired by his recollection of a fellow soldier who fell in love with a



Neapolitan girl during the occupation, the fictional story of Ernest and Preghiera began to take shape.

“At its heart, I wanted the novel to ask a simple question – can young love survive a lifetime apart? Could the spark still be there after 50 years?”

The novel tells a story of love in a world without room for romance. By the winter of 1943, the city of Naples had become nothing short of a hell on Earth. Food, happiness and hope were scarce; poverty, misery and desolation were plentiful. For the British Army, the squalor of the Neapolitan suburbs came as a shock. For Private Ernest Green, at just 22, it feels like another world. He finds himself alone in a nightmare landscape, until he catches the gaze of Preghiera. Both Ernest and Preghiera see in each other the hope of happiness. But they live in a world that seems set on keeping them apart.

Just as love can last a lifetime, so too can heartache. For fifty years Ernie dreams of returning, to take the hand of the true love of his life. Even as a gloomy widower, facing the ravages of old age, he is determined nothing will stop him from being with Preghiera at the last. The novel is told through three intermingling timeline strands, which combine powerfully to tell a complete story of Ernie’s life through the prism of his relationships, set amid the backdrop of his wartime struggles.

“Those who fought for the liberation of Italy were known disparagingly as the ‘D-Day Dodgers,’” David Clensy says. “The rumour at the time was that they had been dubbed ‘D-Day Dodgers’ by Lady Astor, a Conservative member of parliament, though she later denied having said it. I have photographs that my grandfather brought back from the war of the troops standing beside a railway carriage, on which they had ironically daubed the words ‘D Day Dodgers: Lady Astor’s Glamour Boys’. They made light of it, but the slight clearly hurt – these men had fought hard in Italy and lost many comrades.

“My grandfather died in the early 1990s and there are few left now to tell of the experiences of the British Army in Italy in 1943-45. I was keen that this novel should do something to tell the story of what they really went through and to keep their memory alive.”

David Clensy spent more than 20 years in UK regional journalism, as a reporter, feature writer and magazine editor. He is now employed as a copywriter in Bath. *Prayer in Time of War* is his first full-length novel.

- *Prayer in Time of War* is out now (from February 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2024), available from Amazon, Kindle, Kindle Unlimited and independent bookshops, priced £9.99 (paperback), £2.99 (Kindle). For more information, visit: [www.davidclensy.com](http://www.davidclensy.com)

