

**A Tribute to
The Life of
Jack Grayburn.**





Preface.

To be President of our great rugby club is an honour and a privilege, especially so when one considers the many illustrious members in our 90 odd years of history. We live now in very different times. The first members of Chiltern RFC will have experienced, some at first hand the almost unbearably tragic events of the World War 1. As the club grew in the 1930s the shadow of war once again fell over Europe and men such as Jack Grayburn knew what could befall them should another conflict unfold.

It is difficult for us now to comprehend the sacrifices that war dictates, the destruction of families, communities, a way of life. But those Chiltern rugby players in the late 1930s must have known what might be expected of them, and must have trusted that they would rise to the challenge, and must have known that some of them would not return. Our honours board at the club has 22 names on it, a club with perhaps 60 playing members in 1939. This ratio speaks for itself, a number that is shocking and humbling; and however many times this refrain is repeated it is no less true: they died so that we might have a future, a future to enjoy the manifold benefits of a good life in a free society. And surely each one of those Chiltern players who went to war and did not return would rejoice that our club continues and is in fine shape, upholding the same values, embodying all that is best in sport and comradeship.

This book, compiled and written by Roger Cook, pays tribute to Jack Grayburn, whose remarkable story unfolds over the following pages. Many of our club members will mark the 70th anniversary of his death by visiting Arnhem this year, to play some rugby, have some fun and then we will all gather at Jack's grave to pay our respects. It will be in some ways a typical rugby tour, following in a long, long tradition of such events at our club. In other ways it will be like no other tour, an emotional experience both for the oldest members and the youngest. We cannot truly comprehend the events of the bridge too far because we were not there, when Jack Grayburn stood up and confronted mortal danger, doing his job, protecting his men, at whatever risk. He was, by all accounts, an extraordinary man from an extraordinary family. Roger recounts their story and includes the moving citation for his Victoria Cross, as well as other accounts from those who knew him, and knew his family. Do read their story, and let us never forget Jack Grayburn and those other brave men from our rugby club who lost their lives at war, heroes all.

Peter Osborne, President of Amersham and Chiltern RFC. 2014.



Introduction.

In the late 1980s I first contemplated writing the 'History of Amersham and Chiltern RFC' for which there was constant encouragement from the late 'Griff' Griffiths. Griff, for the newer members was deeply involved in the D-Day planning of World War II, a Surveyor by profession and as his name suggests a passionate Welsh rugby supporter, former Pontypridd, Chiltern player, referee and a member of the first Bucks RFU committee, a rugby man all his life. Thanks to Griff and the effort of just a handful of pre-war members Chiltern RFC was dragged out of the post war sporting depression to become the thriving club we know today.

Griff later passed on innumerable notes and letters that constituted his own start to a 'History of the Chiltern Club' and included amongst these papers were references to notable players and members from past seasons. Many of the dog-eared, tired documents collected from the past, were those that only a true Chiltern rugby enthusiast would have bothered to save and file.

Amongst the unforgettable names of former members was John (Jack) Grayburn, who had won the VC at Arnhem and like others on the long list there was limited information.

Originally it took some years of research to find the very lean history of Jack's short life in uniform, searching early World War II books and records of the Battle of Arnhem, talking to former neighbours in Chalfont St Giles, communication with the Pegasus magazine, the official Journal of the Airborne Forces and letters from business and service colleagues. Finally, pre-war team members Dick Wheeler and Jim Randall of XXX Corps came forward with old Chiltern team photos and photo proofs from the local Bucks Free Press of Jack playing for Chiltern. Much of this early information has since been reproduced on the Web. However, since the early 1970s much has been filmed, written and recorded on Arnhem with newly published books and Web related information of the Battle of Arnhem. Unfortunately, all fail to cover a fitting detailed record of Jack's actions from 17th to 20th September 1944.

The lack of detail is probably down to the fact that there were so few of A Company (normally about 112 men), inclusive of Jack's No 2 Platoon (30-35 men) who are recorded as being first to reach the bridge and even fewer that eventually survived and were around after WWII to pass on any first hand facts. The only substantial record is that of A Company's Major Tatham-Warter's war diary, originally lost after he had escaped as a POW from a hospital in Arnhem. Major Tatham-Warter was also to write the commendation for Jack's VC, the 125th awarded in World War II, 5 of them at Arnhem and the 45th awarded to the Army during the War.

Of the 11,920 plus men that took part in the Battle of Arnhem, 6,250 were taken prisoner and 1,500 were casualties. The 3,900 others were evacuated from the Oosterbeek perimeter. (Note: All these numbers vary slightly depending on which report/book is researched).

During the total operation the 1st Airborne Division (Urquhart's) had 1,174 fatal casualties, 5,903 POW and evaders and 1,892 evacuees.

The 1st Parachute Brigade (Lathbury) had 209 fatal casualties, 1398 POW and evaders and 136 evacuees.

An estimated 700-740 men, 7% of the Airborne force, reached the Bridge. After 4 days of battle at the Bridge 90-100 able men remained plus 210 wounded. They were all to be taken prisoner. Many personnel were missing (approximately 450). They may have later escaped to safety after hiding out for many months in Dutch homes and countryside. Some of the missing can be included in the numbers of the unknown who were incinerated in the buildings at the bridge, drowned in crossing The Rhine, died as a German POW or in hospitals or in some cases murdered, and their bodies never found.

2nd Parachute Battalion (Frost) had at take off 509 men (31 Officers). 31 Officers and 478 ORs arrived at the dropping zone. 2nd Battalion had 100 men fewer than the 1st and 3rd Battalions. 18 fit men including 3 officers survived at the bridge area on Day 4 and then made an attempt to reach the Oosterbeek evacuation area. 13 of these men were taken prisoner and can be added to a total of 90 other prisoners. 62 casualties are recorded in Oosterbeek Cemetery with known graves, of which 16 are unnamed (Roll of Honour 2011). 16 or 17 other ranks are known to have evacuated across the Rhine.

Of A Company (Tatham-Warter, approx 100 men) that reached the Arnhem Bridge, 30 men were injured on Day 1. Finally, 16 men of A Company were killed in action and 13 men were taken prisoner, Nearly half of A Company are unaccounted for. Jack's No 2 Platoon was estimated to have six survivors all wounded.

I have attempted to piece together from many sources an update of Jack's short but eventful life, concentrating on Jack's final events at Arnhem and also take this opportunity to correct a few pieces of misinformation that I recorded in Jack's original history recorded in the 'History of Amersham and Chiltern RFC' (1992).

Amersham and Chiltern RFC commemoration of Jack Grayburn and tour to Arnhem RFC 2014.



Rugby tours by Amersham and Chiltern Rugby club (known as Chiltern Wanderers on tour) were first undertaken in the 1951-52 season and for many seasons toured to the South and West of England. In the 1968-69 season the club went International and played against The Hague RC, The Dutch National Students and Wrecht RC, followed in 1971-72 by Antwerp RC and British Brussels RC. Savigny, Paris in 1972-73 and Utrecht in 1990. Since these early excursions the club teams from mini, junior, Wanderers and Chiltern Hundreds have toured to all corners of the world where rugby is played.

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

Presidents Lunch Saturday 22nd March 2014.

The Presidents Lunch is traditionally held when the 1st XV play one of their last home league games. This season the match is against Old Redcliffians and doubles as a start to the Club's 70th year commemoration of the Battle of Arnhem and in particular the events related to our past Chiltern player John (Jack) Grayburn VC. On this day a very special tribute will be paid by his former Parachute Brigade who will 'drop' in with Jack's VC medal together with attendance by Jack's son and relatives.

Friday 4th April 2014

1900 Hrs 2014

Fund raising supper at the clubhouse for **Help the Heroes** Charity. The film 'A Bridge too Far' will be shown. The film includes a composite scene where Jack Grayburn leads an attack across the bridge.

Friday 2nd May 2014

0600 Hrs. Chiltern Hundreds and Chiltern Wanderers meet at Chiltern clubhouse.

Travel to Arnhem via Channel Tunnel.

1200 Hrs. Under 15's meet at Chiltern clubhouse. Travel to Arnhem via Channel Tunnel.

First group arrive approximately 16:45 Hrs Arnhem Central Hotels, Second group arrive off centre Arnhem Hotel at approximately 1830 Hrs.

2000 Hrs. Official Reception.

Saturday 3rd May 2014

1100 Hrs. Visit to Airborne Museum, Hartenstein.

1300 Hrs. Visit the Bridge.

1400 Hrs. Chiltern Wanderers XV v Arnhem RC

1400 Hrs. Chiltern Hundreds v Arnhem Veterans

1400 Hrs. Amersham and Chiltern RFC Under 15s v Arnhem Under 15s

1800 Hrs. Clubhouse Bar-B-Q

Sunday 4th May 2014

1100 Hrs. Tribute to John H. Grayburn VC at the Oosterbeek Cemetery.

1200 Hrs. Lunch at the Hartenstein Hotel.

1300 Hrs. All groups leave for England, arrive approximately 20:00 Hrs.

The Chiltern teams on tour:

Chiltern Wanderers XV: Chiltern Wanderers Under 15's: Chiltern Hundreds.

The Arnhem Rugby Club.



History

ARC 'The Pigs' was founded on 4th April 1974 becoming a member of the Dutch Rugby Union. The club initially played as a senior male XV. From the Mid-Eighties, the first youth set up started, followed in 1998 by the addition of Ladies Rugby.

The Pigs since their inception have played in various locations around Arnhem. The first of these was in the Geitenkamp District where 'Gerugyed Korfbal' of East Arnhem now plays. Later, the club moved to Merwedestraat in the Presikhaaf District, the site of the old ice rink. This field was subjected to industrial pollution so it was decided in 1994 to move to the current home on the Drielse Dijk. Here a stone clubhouse with good dressing room facilities was built by members with much enthusiasm and support from friends and membership.

In 2005, floodlights were added to the main pitch and later to the training pitch. Currently with the annual growth of new members the facilities need to be expanded and improved. The club is planning a new larger clubhouse and extra playing areas at The Sportspark, Elderveld, Drielse Dijk.

Teams: Currently the 1st XV plays in the 3rd tier of the Dutch Noordoost league. The Lady Sows combine with The Lady Wasps of Nijmegen and play in the Lotto Class of Honour. The youth teams train and play in tournaments against other clubs in the East of Holland.

Information for the club members making their own way to the clubhouse:

Address: DrielseDijk 17/a, 6841 HJ Arnhem. Tel:026 3830 560

How to get there?

The location of the ground is south of the river and close to the railway bridge that crosses the Neder Rhine. This area is where C Company 2nd Battalion failed to capture the bridge with the plan to move along the river bank and attack the Southern end of the main Bridge at Arnhem.

Public transport.

Bus:

Bus No 10 (from Arnhem CS). The bus stop is Bussumstraat. Then walk onto the Bussumstraat and between the white houses and across the park and you will find the ground.

Bus No 5 (from De Laar West). The bus stop is Bussumstraat. Then walk onto the Bussumstraat and between the white houses and across the park and you will find the ground.

Bus No 11 (from the direction of Heteren).The bus stop is Elden Spoorbrug that is in front of the ground.

Of course you can also reach the ground by car and bike.



Lieutenant John Hollington Grayburn VC
1st Parachute Brigade
2nd Battalion Parachute Regiment.
A Company,
No 2 Platoon leader.



Lieutenant John (Jack) Hollington Grayburn VC

30th January 1918 – September 20th 1944

“There is no doubt that had it not been for this officer’s inspiring leadership and personal bravery, the Arnhem Bridge could never have been held for this time”

From the Citation for Victoria Cross

70th Anniversary 2014

Arnhem

The London Gazette.

Tuesday 23rd January, 1945.

The KING has been graciously pleased to approve the posthumous award of the VICTORIA CROSS to:—

Lieutenant John Hollington Grayburn (149002), Parachute Regiment, Army Air Corps (Chalfont St Giles). For supreme courage, leadership and devotion to duty.

Lieutenant Grayburn was a Platoon commander of the Parachute Battalion which was dropped on 17th September, 1944 with the task of seizing and holding the bridge over the Rhine at Arnhem.

The North end of the bridge was captured and early in the night, Lieutenant Grayburn was ordered to assault and capture the Southern end with his Platoon. He led his Platoon on to the bridge and began the attack with the utmost determination, but the Platoon was met by a hail of fire from two 20mm. quick firing guns, and from the machine guns of an armoured car. Almost at once Lieutenant Grayburn was shot through the shoulder. Although there was no cover on the bridge, and in spite of his wound, Lieutenant Grayburn continued to press forward with the greatest dash and bravery until casualties became so heavy that he was ordered to withdraw. He directed the withdrawal from the bridge personally and was himself the last man to come off the embankment into comparative cover. Later, his Platoon was ordered to occupy a house which was vital to the defence of the bridge and he personally organised the occupation of the house.

Throughout the next day and night the enemy made ceaseless attacks on the house, using not only infantry with mortars and machine guns but also tanks and self-propelled guns. The house was very exposed and difficult to defend and the fact that it did not fall to the enemy must be attributed to Lieutenant Grayburn's great courage and inspiring leadership. He constantly exposed himself to the enemy's fire while moving among, and encouraging, his Platoon, and seemed completely oblivious to danger.

On 19th September, 1944, the enemy renewed his attacks, which increased in intensity, as the house was vital to the defence of the bridge. All attacks were repulsed, due to Lieutenant Grayburn's valour and skill in organising and encouraging his men, until eventually the house was set on fire and had to be evacuated. Lieutenant Grayburn then took command of elements of all arms, including the remainder of his own company, and re-formed them into a fighting force. He spent the night organising a defensive position to cover the approaches to the bridge.

On 20th September, 1944, he extended his defence by a series of fighting patrols which prevented the enemy gaining access to the houses in the vicinity, the occupation of which would have prejudiced the defence of the bridge. This forced the enemy to bring up tanks which brought Lieutenant Grayburn's positions under such heavy fire that he was forced to withdraw to an area farther North. The enemy now attempted to lay demolition charges under the bridge and the situation was critical. Realising this, Lieutenant Grayburn organised and led a fighting patrol which drove the enemy off temporarily, and gave time for the fuses to be removed. He was again wounded, this time in the back, but refused to be evacuated. Finally, an enemy tank, against which Lieutenant Grayburn had no defence, approached so close to his position that it became untenable. He then stood up in full view of the tank and personally directed the withdrawal of his men to the main defensive perimeter to which he had been ordered. He was killed that night.

From the evening of September 17th until the night of September 20th, 1944, a period of over three days, Lieutenant Grayburn led his men with supreme gallantry and determination. Although in pain and weakened by his wounds, short of food and without sleep, his courage never flagged. There is no doubt that, had it not been for this officer's inspiring leadership and personal bravery, the Arnhem bridge could never have been held for this time.

War Office, Thursday 25th January, 1945.

Contents.

Preface.

Introduction.

Chiltern Wanderers Rugby tour: Program of Events.

Citation: John H Grayburn Victoria Cross.

Jack's early days.

Manora Island, Karachi, India.

Sherborne School.

Early Employment.

Home in Chalfont St Giles.

Roughwood Farm, Roughwood Lane, Chalfont St Giles.

Green Tiles, Mill Lane, Chalfont St Giles.

St Giles Church and the Village of Chalfont St Giles.

Chiltern Rugby Football Club.

The Territorials.

1st Battalion, 43rd Ox and Bucks Light Infantry.

The Parachute Regiment.

A Bridge too Far.

The Official Plan and reports for Operation Market Garden.

Plan of Brigadier Gerald W. Lathbury, 1st Parachute Brigade.

Record of Jack's events at Arnhem.

Grayburn Family:

Sir Vandeleur Grayburn.

Lionel Markham Grayburn.

William Echlin Hollington Grayburn MC.

Patrick Hollington Grayburn.

Acknowledgements.

Bibliography.



Early days.

John (Jack) Hollington Grayburn. Born: 30th Jan 1918 Manora Island, Karachi, India, the son of Lionel Markham and Gertrude Grayburn.

Manora or **Manoro** is a small peninsula (2.5 km²) located just south of the Port of Karachi, Sindh, Pakistan.

Manora is connected to the mainland by a 12 kilometre long causeway called the 'Sandspit'. Manora and neighbouring islands form a protective barrier between Karachi harbour to the north and the Arabian Sea to the south. The western bay of the harbour contains

endangered mangrove forests which border the Sand spit and Manora Island. To the east are Karachi Bay and the beach towns of Kiamari and Clifton.

The island was the site of a small fort constructed in the eighteenth century when the port of Karachi traded with Oman and Bahrain. The fort was stormed by the British in 1839 because of the strategic location of Karachi. Although the fort is now buried beneath the Pakistan naval base, the lighthouse is a visible reminder of the British presence having been built in 1889 to assist vessels approaching Karachi harbour. It is the tallest lighthouse in Pakistan (28 m or 91 feet).

The island of Manora has served for more than 50 years as the main base of the Pakistan Navy, with berths for naval vessels located along the eastern edge of the Island. The Island has been governed as a military cantonment despite being located so close to Karachi. The opening of the new Jinnah Naval Base, Ormara, 250 kilometres away, has meant that approximately half of the naval vessels have now moved away from Manora.



Sherborne School:

Returning to England, Jack's initial education was at Clarendon Prep School. He was further educated at Sherborne School, Dorset (Abbey House) starting in the Michaelmas term of 1931. Sherborne was also the education Alma Mater for his two brothers Bill and Pat who both excelled in their academic studies.

The family were living in Devon when Jack first attended

Sherborne and during his time there, they moved to Roughwood Farm, Chalfont St Giles, Buckinghamshire. Bill's son, Jon Alastair was also educated at Sherborne and left in 1962 to enter Trinity College, Oxford.

Jack was not the most academic of students but excelled at all sports especially boxing and rugby. Jack was Abbey House's Rugby and Boxing Captain and he was later to play for the School's Senior XV. He was also an accomplished skier.

Jack's house master said of Jack and his brother Patrick, "They were always cheerful and good company, Jack was a lovable boy."



War Memorial at Sherborne



Jack left Sherborne from the sixth form in December 1936, playing rugby for the Chiltern club. By coincidence the club had other Old Shirburnians playing at the club during Jack's time, PEG and JED Lobb. Peter Lobb (Sherborne 1st XV) is pictured in the Chiltern 1938-39 1st XV with Jack. As a Major, he served in WWII with the Royal Tank Regiment and was awarded the MC, Croix de Guerre, Order of Leopold II with Palm. Both Lobb brothers played pre-war cricket for Amersham CC. Jim was a Captain with the Royal Tank Regiment and was a casualty of WWII in North Africa. W.N. D. Lang Chiltern RFC Captain 1935-1937, President 1959-1964 was also a Sherborne schoolboy (1923-28).

March 1945
THE SHIRBURNIAN 1037

Lieutenant Grayburn who was 25, was one of the three sons of Mr. and Mrs. L. M. Grayburn, of Roughwood Farm, Chalfont St. Giles. He was married in 1942, and there is one son, born in March, 1943. Before he volunteered for the Parachute Regiment he was a captain in The Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, and had fought in North Africa and Italy. He left Sherborne School two or three years before the war and joined the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank in London.

I take it as a great privilege to be asked to write a few words in appreciation of Jack Grayburn. Jack and his brother, Pat, were friends of our boys, and spent much of their free time with us. Jack was always cheerful and very good company; "a most lovable boy." Starting with his work amongst the Southwark Cadets, his great capacity for duty and leadership developed, until at Arnhem his outstanding courage, devotion and endurance won him the V.C. All honour to Jack. C.L.B.

My memories of Jack Grayburn take me back to the early days of my headmastership at this School. Many figures have passed before the screen of one's mind in ten years and alas! many gallant ones for the last time, and it is not very easy to distinguish even such a notable one as this with all the detail which one would wish for under the present circumstances; but I do remember him clearly, particularly as Captain of Boxing and a most resolute fighter in the ring, and remember particularly the keenness which he showed under 'P.J.'s' inspiration in training up the young idea in that House as well as in the School in general.

There was nothing particularly outstandingly athletic in his appearance. I think the most arresting features were his eyes, very steady and grey and calm in their expression, and a resolute jaw which expressed clearly enough the determination and resolution which formed the keynote of his character.

I remember, too, a long conversation I had with him while he was going to bed in the Sanatorium where he had obtained temporary hospitality during a visit to Sherborne shortly after he had left. He was describing to me his manner of life in London and I remember the details to this day. His working day consisted then of full hours at the Bank, morning and afternoon, training for his future career in the Hongkong and Shanghai Bank, home to supper at about 7, then three hours slogging in preparation for his banking examination, bed at 12.30 and up again at 7, next morning. He took one evening off a week and spent this regularly lending a hand at Sherborne House, Southwark, where his assistance, as I was told at the time, and have since heard from many sources, was absolutely invaluable. I expostulated with him, I remember, for a long time telling him that it was too much and that he could not keep up this pressure for so long, but he laughed it off and assured me that I need not worry.

He had been down two or three times since the outbreak of war as a subaltern in the Oxford and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry, and very glad indeed everyone was to see him. Shortly after he wrote and told me that he was going to be married and then a year after he wrote to say that his wife had presented him with a son and 'would I please enter him for Sherborne School.' I forget how old the boy was at this time, I think perhaps two or three days.

Such was the boy who was destined to bring to his old School the great honour of having gained the first Shirburnian V.C. in the war. No one who knew him here will be in the least surprised; indeed, it is just what one would expect from such a resolute and high principled man as Jack Grayburn. My great regret now is that 'P.J.' is no longer with us to write as he alone could have written a full account of this boy when he was at Sherborne.

Let me just add as the School's representative a word, however inadequate to express to all his relatives and friends the pride which we all feel in reading of his gallant exploits at Arnhem. We shall see, too, that his memory is kept ever green, and that his young son when the time comes for him to follow his father at Sherborne will find that the School is neither forgetful nor ungrateful. *Requiescat in pace.* A.R.W.



Sherborne School

Early Employment.

On leaving Sherborne, Jack's future had been planned by his father Lionel and his father's brother Vandeleur. After a period with Barclays, Gerrards Cross studying for his banking exams, he started his employment on 1st April 1937 at the Gracechurch St, London office of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank as an office junior on the foreign exchange. Many of the young in HKSB were second generation employees. The structured progression was for Jack to work in Hong Kong with his uncle Vandeleur. He quickly made friends at the Bank and in 1938 moved to 'digs' in Bayswater with fellow second generation office junior Ken Rice whose father also knew Vandeleur, they had both travelled to Hong Kong for interviews at the bank. Together, Jack and Ken had briefly played rugby for the HKSB Bank at their sports ground at Beckenham, South London but found the travel difficult at weekends. Ken's parents lived in Gerrards Cross and Jack's in Chalfont, so they both opted in 1937-8 season to play locally and Jack naturally returned with his flatmate to Chiltern, their local club.

In the early days of WWII, several of the younger staff at HKSB signed on as Territorials, many serving as NCOs stationed in The Tower of London Squadron. Ken Rice, one of the young NCOs, went regularly to the Gracechurch St office to change his one pound service cheque into cash and remembers that in early September 1939 Jack was still working late in the office, as he did on a regular basis with the aim of being prepared for his move to Hong Kong. Ken noticed that Jack appeared not to have been enrolled in any service and following a brief discussion discovered that he had joined the Territorials but had delayed a further move waiting on the outcome in the Far East. Jack replied when questioned by Ken "Oh, I expect it would not be long now before I sign up and then I shall be certain to get a VC or be killed" :- a prophesy that was unfortunately to be true. While at Sherborne like his brother William earlier, Jack had joined the Sherborne School Army Cadet Force, in September 1936, this had enabled him to be duly commissioned into the 1st (London) Cadet Force, Queen's Royal Regiment.

Jack is remembered on the war memorial board at the HKSB headquarters 1 Queen's Road, Hong Kong also the painting by David Shepherd of the 'Battle of Arnhem' that was presented anonymously to the London bank in the 1980s and has since been moved to Hong Kong. A print of a painting by Simon Smith is also hanging in the Grayburn Room at the Chiltern Rugby Club.



**Lt Jack Grayburn leading a defensive position held by A Company, 2nd Platoon at the North end of the Arnhem Bridge during the morning of 18th September 1944.
Original painting by Simon Smith.**

Chalfont St Giles.

Roughwood Farm. 1933-1945.

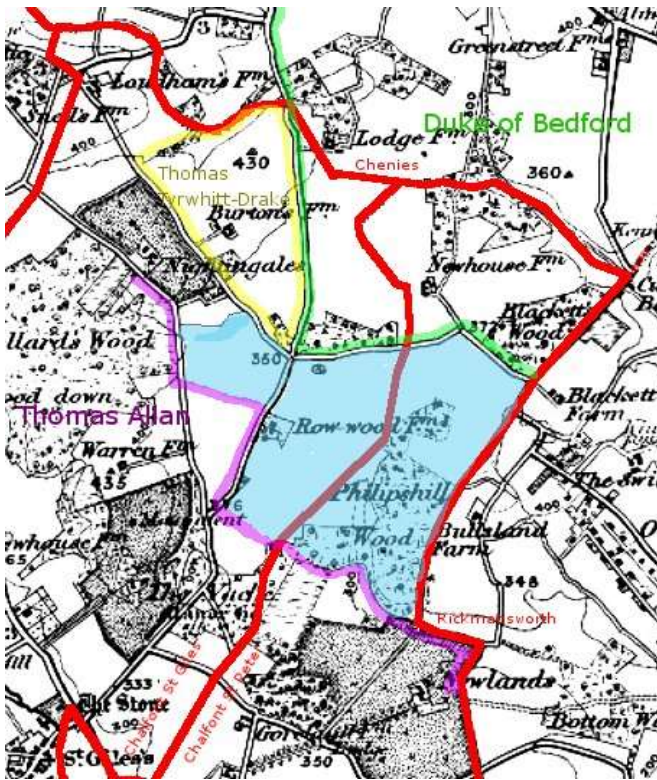
The Grayburns moved to Roughwood Farm, Roughwood Lane, Chalfont St Giles in 1933 after returning from India and initially spending some years in Dawlish, South Devon. The Grayburn boys spent their time during school holidays playing tennis in the large house grounds, roaming the orchards and fields. Roughwood Farm had been a large estate in former times (Roughwood Park is a late 19th century mansion newly built on land whose history can be traced to the 14th century) before in the 20th Century being broken up and sold off and developed for housing. Roughwood Farm, that was at one time the focus of the estate, is however an old habitation site. The name Roughwood is the modernised version of Rowwood (or Rowewood or Rotewood) which is how it has been shown in most old documents. All of these words have a similar meaning of "rough wood". The name first appears in a deed of 1296 transferring some land which was adjacent. This land abutted onto "Rowewood". (*Historical Manuscripts Commission Report 15. App. Vii*). Roughwood Farm and 111 acres of land had been leased to a Captain Alfred Ernest Williams who appears to have been there until about 1914.

Roughwood Farm with 105 acres was bought before April 1914 by E. A. Sandford-Fawcett, but 6 acres which had been part of the farm were bought by Alfred Gee (a local developer) who rented then to William Payne. Sandford-Fawcett occupied a house and barns at the farm which he now called Roughwood Barns, he leased out the land to John Ward. The Roughwood Barns now in a bad state of repair and empty were purchased by the Kendal family in the 1930s and they are still in their possession.

ROUGHWOOD PARK circa 1913

The house was at the north end of the estate, probably to gain the benefit of the views down the valley. G. J. Robinson must have built this as a speculation, because in 1893 he put the whole of the estate, including the new house up for sale. This was not successful, as it was taken off the market and Robinson proceeded to make further development. He built a substantial house called Roughwood Croft alongside Nightingales Lane and made improvements to Roughwood Farm house. In December 1896 he leased Roughwood Park to Robert Brocklehurst for seven years, whilst he lived in Roughwood Croft. It is not known what happened at the end of the seven year lease but it is known from the rating valuation records that in August 1909 the main house was unoccupied. G. J. Robinson died on 21st of May 1907 and the estate was placed into the hands of trustees. They had a long argument with the Inland Revenue about the tax due on the estate which does not seem to have been resolved until about 1912. The trustees sold off a number of plots in Chorleywood for house building and in 1910 a strip of land along the length of Chalfont Lane was sold to Davis and Sons for property development.

Apart from these earlier sales the trustees eventually put the whole estate up for sale as a series of lots in July 1913. Whilst some plots sold quickly others took some time. From the Rating Valuation lists in the Bucks Record Office it appears that in February 1916 Roughwood Park House was "in a bad state of repair and empty" but by April 1919 the house with 60 acres had been bought by T. A. Agelasto. (*Chalfont St Giles History Society*)



O.S Map 1822

The map (left) shows in blue, the location and size of the Rowwood estate in 1840 when it was owned by William Morton. It remained this size until just after 1910 indicating clearly Row-wood farm in Roughwood Lane. The background map is circa 1880, it shows how the estate spread across both Chalfont St Giles and Chalfont St Peter Parishes.



Roughwood Farm 2013

Green Tiles, Mill lane, Chalfont St Giles 1946-1966.



Gertrude 1966

With the death of Lionel, Gertrude moved to Green Tiles, Mill Lane where she remained until ill health forced her to move to a local nursing home. The house was let to the Johnsons complete with all of Gertrude's personal effects. The Johnsons eventually purchased Green Tiles from the Grayburn Estate. Mrs Robin Johnson produced a booklet and organised a Village celebration to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the death of Captain Jack Grayburn. Gertrude died in the 1970s.

St Giles, Chalfont St Giles Parish Church and village.

Jack is remembered with others on the stone Memorial Cross in the St Giles Parish Churchyard and engraved on the brass panels of the Royal British Legion memorial in the High Street outside the village reading room. Inside the Parish Church, in the Royal British Legion memorial display there is a framed copy of Captain Grayburn's citation that hangs beside the Roll of Honour for both world wars. Beneath is a blue grey and red kneeler with Pegasus and Victoria Cross emblems donated by Jack's mother Mrs Gertrude Grayburn. In the village in 1960, a group of houses off Back Lane were under construction and at the suggestion of the Parish Council the close was named Grayburn Close.



Memorial cross, St Giles Church, Chalfont St Giles



Chiltern Rugby Football Club.



Jack played for Chiltern during his holidays from Sherborne 1933-1935 as had many other local schoolboys since 1924. During the Easter Holidays Chiltern traditionally entered schools tournaments in particular the Rosslyn Park RFC Schools competition. On leaving Sherborne Jack played the 1936/37 season mainly for the Extra A and A XV's also playing the occasional game for the HKSB at their sports ground Beckenham, South London. Jack also arranged games against HKSB for a few seasons before WWII. On joining the army Jack played for his regiment the Ox and Bucks Light Infantry before transferring to the Para's. He made his 1st XV debut on March 13th. 1937, against Oxford Exiles, then reputed to be the strongest club side in Oxfordshire, Chiltern lost the game that day 6 points to 3.

The 1938 match report v Old Wycombiensians (Chesham Examiner) noted forwards Jack and Graham Patterson as outstanding and that R. Dodd at full back saved many an awkward moment. Jack played his last game for Chiltern on 17th April 1939 when he played with team members Dick Wheeler and Jim Randall. During the period of the Battle of Arnhem, Jack was indirectly involved with several team members. In particular Dick Wheeler and Jim Randall who were tank commanders of the XXX Corps that tried valiantly to reach Arnhem from Antwerp but were delayed in the relief at Arnhem by unexpected and well documented problems. Jack went on to play rugby with the Ox and Bucks Light Infantry.



Chiltern v Old Wycombiensians January 1939
D. Wilkinson clearing after a lineout.
L-R. J. Frost, J. Widgery, P. Dalgliesh J. Randall, R. Frazer.

Players 1938/39 Season:

P. Ayres, G.H. Bates, A. Brock, G. Barnard, M.W. H. Burbush, J. Butler, **M. Cooke-Hurle**, Corbett, S.R. Cullis, **P.G. Dalgleish**, Dalston, **B.F. Dill-Russell**, W. Dingley, J.P. Duerdoth, **E.J. R. Davies**, R. Dodd, **C.R. Hembrow**, **A. J. Hodgkinson**, J. Hooper, Giles, Ferraro, Field, R.P. Fraser, J. French, F.N. Foster, **W.J. Frost**, **J. Gardner**, P. Goldsmid, **J.H. Grayburn**, Griffiths, **C.N. (Kit)Hembrow**, Jenkins, A. Knight, W.N.D. Lang, A.A. Law, **J.E. D. Lobb**, P.E. G. Lobb, J.P. Loftus, J. MacAdam, P.L. Mason, Milchan, J.W. J. Moir, J. Nixon, **J. McCullum**, **H.D. Ocle**, A.G. Patterson, H. Price, **J.C. Randall**, K. Rice, **H.W. Ross**, N. Rowntree, **R.T. Turner-Hughes**, **G.E. Sale**, H.N. Saunders, **S.W. Sidford**, A.J.G. Spence, **I.G. Statham**, Stewart, J.F. Taylor, **D.D. Twedde**, R.W. Webb, **R.C.P. Wheeler**, G. Whitmarsh, S.C. Willis, J.P. Widgery, D. Wilkinson, J. Woodrow.

Players in **bold** were known casualties of WWII.
Players in *Italics* were part of XXX Corps.

Results of Jack's Senior seasons with Chiltern.

Chiltern R.F.C. 1st XV.

Results Season 1937/38.

Aylesbury	Won 16 - 3
Windsor	Lost 16 - 8
Old Wycombiensians	Won 18 -13
Old Alleyenians	Won 37 -5
Old Leysians	Won 44 -0
St Mary's Hospital	Won 25 -5
Oxford Exiles	Won 14 -5
Artists Rifles	Won 16 -6
Blackheath	Won 22 -11
Cavendish	Lost 11 -9
Old Berkhamstedians	Won
Staines	Won
Berkhamsted	Won
Slough	Won 24-0
Old Fullerians	Won 9 - 0
Blackheath	Won 17 - 3
Bank of England	Drew 8 - 8
London Scottish	Lost 11 - 8
Hong Kong & Shanghai Bank	Won 10 - 3
Old Berkhamstedians	Won 19 - 3
Osterley	Cancelled
Aylesbury	Won 0- 11
Oxford Exiles	Cancelled
R.A.F Halton	Cancelled
London Welsh	Lost 12-9

1st. XV Summary, Played 22, Won 17, Lost 4, Drawn 1, Abd 3. Points: for 407, against 177.

Chiltern R.F.C. 1st XV.

Results Season 1938/39:

Old Berkhamstedians	Won 21 - 3
St Bartholomew's Hospital	Won 11 - 5
Old Alleyenians	Won 37 - 5
Old Leysians	Cancelled
University College Hospital	Won 13 - 9
Windsor	Lost 26 - 11
Rosslyn Park	Lost 26 - 0
Old Gaytonians	Cancelled
R.A.F. Halton	Lost 13 - 6
Blackheath	Lost 16 - 9
Old Wycombiensians	Lost 8 - 3
Unilever	Lost 14 - 3
Old Fullerians	Cancelled
London Scottish	Won 6 - 0
Staines	Won 6 - 3
Richmond	Won 18 -0
Osterley	Won 8 - 0
Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank	Drew 3 - 3
Polytechnic	Drew 3 - 3
Blackheath	Won 20 -14
R.A.F Halton	Cancelled
London Welsh	Cancelled
Old Wycombiensians	Cancelled

1st.XV Summary: Played 17, Won 9, Lost 6, Drawn 2. Abd 6. Points: for 178, against 158.

R.C.P. (Dick) Wheeler OBE.



**Old Wycombiensians 8 v Chiltern 3 at the school ground January 1939.
Chiltern (from left) R. Fraser, J. Widgery (later Lord Chief Justice),
J. Hooper, J. Grayburn, R. Wheeler.**

Dick joined Chiltern in 1929 and was elected to the committee in 1936. He joined Chiltern through an introduction by his cousin A.J. Wheeler and replaced him as 1st XV vice captain on AJ's departure to Exeter. Dick was elected as 1st XV captain for 1937/38, 38/39 seasons. Dick had learnt his rugby at Claysmore School. Starting out as a scrum half Dick made a successful transition to centre, a position he played in for an East Midlands XV against Aylesbury in their inaugural game in 1934.



R.C.P. Wheeler

Dick also played for a Buckinghamshire XV against Hertfordshire and against an Oxford XV when the County was establishing a county club before WWII. Dick worked in the Stock Exchange and during his early commuting days from Beaconsfield managed to recruit several Beaconsfield locals to the Chiltern club.

When war was inevitable, Dick joined the County of London Yeomanry and was commissioned into the Royal Tank Regiment in 1940. He saw service in N.W. Europe when transferred to the Fife and Forth yeomanry, being awarded the United States Bronze Star. As with so many coincidences during WWII, Dick many years later at a Presidents lunch discovered that when disembarking his tank in Antwerp, to join Operation Market Garden, he was assisted ashore by club member Jack Gardner, a Sergeant in the Military Police and then unknowingly joined Jim Randall another club member and local Chesham man in the XXX Corp convoy to relieve the

Paratroopers dropped into Arnhem.

After WWII Dick rejoined the Territorial Army in 1948 with the City of London Yeomanry the 'Rough Riders' and commanded the regiment from 1954 to 1959 for which he was awarded the O.B.E.

On leaving the Stock Exchange in 1974 he spent eleven years in local government and was elected as the Mayor of Beaconsfield in 1985.

He was chairman of the Southern Provincial Councils for six years as well as being on the South Bucks District Council.

Dick was one of the few surviving pre-war players that helped to re-establish the club after the war.

Dick lived in Beaconsfield and supported the club until his death in 2004.

Jim C. Randall.

Jim was a 'Chessum' man all his life with the exception of serving King & Country during WWII. His amazing life and career are recorded 'In Memoriam' on a DVD set available from Chesham Museum and library.

Jim joined the club in 1937 together with fellow Dr. Challoners school friends Pat Mason, Martin Burbush and F.W. Whitmarsh. With players joining the Territorial Army, Jim quickly moved up to play as tight head prop, a 1st XV position that was his own for more than 16 seasons.



**Jim Randall
(background),
R. Frazer v Old
Wycombiensians
1939.**

Jim served with the Royal Scots Greys during WWII as a tank commander. The Scots Greys were the last cavalry unit to change horse for tank. Once war was declared, as a lover of horses and the hunt he joined the Scots Greys, a cavalry regiment, only to end up driving tanks in Palestine, the Western Desert and Europe.

Jim played rugby for the regiment. His first 'International' match in 1940 was against Household Cavalry in Jerusalem, followed later by a match in 1943 against the New Zealand Division in Tripoli. He also played a different game against Germany and Italy, recalling that both matches were won.

Prior to involvement in the European campaign Jim on leave in Alexandria, Egypt had a chance meeting with a Chiltern team member Pat Mason also on leave. Pat, following a spell of hazardous duty in the SBS around the Greek islands was walking past Jim's hotel when Jim instantly recognised a familiar voice and despite the suntan and beard rediscovered his old school and rugby colleague. A regular supporter of the club Jim died at the age of 96 in 2011.

Jack Gardner.

Jack joined Chiltern for the 1927/28 season. In the 1930/31 season Jack was captain of the 'B' XV but ended his playing days mainly for the A XV. During World WarII, Jack became a Sergeant in the Military Police. It was during his his duties at the Antwerp docks that he met Dick Wheeler

during the unloading of Dick's tank to join XXX Corp in their attempt to reach Arnhem. Jack returned to Chesham at the end of the war and married Gladys Bristow.



**Old Wycombiensians 8pts v Chiltern 3pts at the RGS ground, Wycombe. January 1939.
Chiltern players L-R: Jim Randall (school teacher White Hill, Chesham), R.W.Webb (Webb & Co.
Chesham), D. Wilkinson, John Frost (Frost Estate Agents), J.P. Widgery (Hidden, later to become Lord
Chief Justice) and Jack Grayburn (VC)**

According to the RFU, during the World War II 22 members of the Chiltern club from a playing membership of 60 were listed as the fallen, the highest recorded ratio by any rugby club.

Major JOHN EDUARDO ANTHONY.

44241, 5th Battalion Grenadier Guards. Died 25th January 1944. Son of Charles and Maud Anthony of Chesham Bois. Remembered with honour Anzio War Cemetery and Chesham Bois War Memorial.

Captain MAURICE ARMITAGE COOKE-HURLE.

1059955, 2nd The Northamptonshire Yeomanry, Royal Armoured Corps, who died age 36 on 03rd August 1944. Son of William Armitage Cooke-Hurle and of Bertha Josephine Cooke-Hurle (nee Shore). Remembered with honour Bayeux War Cemetery.

Captain EDWARD JOHN RALEIGH DAVIES.

65446, 130 Field Regt., Royal Artillery who died age 28 on 03rd May 1943. Son of Capt. E. J. Davies and Catherine Raleigh Davies, of Port Talbot, Glamorgan. B.A. Hons. Scholar of St David's College, Lampeter. Remembered with honour Rangoon Memorial

Captain GEOFFREY LANE DAY.

126196, Seaforth Highlanders seconded to, Royal West African Frontier Force who died age 25 on 09 April 1945. Son of Maj. Sam Day and of Maria Elsie Day, of Great Missenden, Buckinghamshire. Remembered with honour Rangoon Memorial.

Flying Officer JOHN DAVID DILL-RUSSELL.

80106, 115 Sqn. Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, who died on 15th February 1944. Remembered with honour Runnymede Memorial.

Lieutenant JOHN RAYMOND EVANS.

176117, 3rd Bn Parachute Regiment, A.A.C. who died age 29. Son of William John and Alice Evans, of Newport, Monmouthshire. Captain of Welsh Rugby Football Team 1934. Remembered with honour TabarkaRas Rajel War Cemetery, Tunisia.

Flight Lieutenant ARTHUR JOHN HODGKINSON.

D S O, D F C and Bar 45353, 23 Sqn., Royal Air Force on 10th July 1943. Son of William Hodgkinson and of Louise Amy Hodgkinson, of Hampstead, London. Remembered with honour Beach Head War Cemetery, Anzio.

Pilot Officer WALTER JOHN FROST.

101588, 44 Sqdn. Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve who died age 29 on 08th November 1941. Son of Alfred Cardain Frost and Agnes Frost; Husband of Enid Margaret Frost of Jordans, Buckinghamshire. Remembered with honour Runnymede Memorial and Beaconsfield War Memorial.

Flight Sergeant (Pilot) DAVID GALE.

1028120, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve who died on 07th September 1943. Remembered with honour Christiansburg War Cemetery, Ghana.

Lieutenant JOHN HOLLINGTON GRAYBURN V C

149002, 2nd Bn Parachute Regiment, A.A.C. formerly, Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry who died age 26 on 20th September 1944. Son of Lionel Markham and Gertrude Grayburn; husband of Dorothy Constance Marcelle Grayburn. Remembered with honour Arnhem Oosterbeek War Cemetery and Chalfont St Giles War Memorial.

Lieutenant CHRISTOPHER NORMAN (Kit) HEMBROW.

113702, 42nd (23rd Bn The London Regt.) Royal Tank Regiment, R.A.C. who died age 26 on 22 nd November 1941. Son of Reginald Richard Griffiths Hembrow and Olive Blanche Hembrow, of Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire. Remembered with honour Halfaya Sollum War Cemetery.

Captain JAMES ERNEST DOUGLAS LOBB.

113711, "C" Sqn. 51st (The Leeds Rifles), Royal Tank Regiment, R.A.C. who died age 26 on 22 nd April 1943 near Fort Cuppuzzo, Eastern Cyrenaica. Son of Eric St John Lobb and Rhoda Ernestine Lobb. Husband of Angela Mary De Courcy Lobb, of Hampstead, London. Solicitor. Remembered with honour Medjez-El-Bab War Cemetery, Tunisia and Amersham War Memorial.

Squadron Leader JOHN Mc CALLUM

43335, Royal Air Force who died on 27th October 1946
Remembered with honour Yokohama War Cemetery.

Private OLAF ERNEST FINE MOORE

7441, 1st (Perak) Bn., Federated Malay States Volunteer Force, who died age 40 on 09th November 1943
Remembered with honour Thanbyuzayat War Cemetery, Myanmar and Amersham War Memorial.

Major HENRY DENIS OCLEE

52425, 1st Bn The Loyal Regiment (North Lancashire) who died age 34 on 23rd April 1943
Son of Henry and Georgina Maud Oclee; husband of Olga Marion Oclee, of Loudwater, Hertfordshire.
Remembered with honour Massicault War Cemetery, Tunisia.

Lieutenant HERBERT WALLACE ROSS

214755, 1st Bn Black Watch (Royal Highlanders) who died on 21st July 1943. Remembered with honour Cassino Memorial.

STEWART G. SALE

B/135, Reuters Ltd, War Correspondent, who died age 38 on 28th September 1943.
Son of George and Ada Sale. Husband of Madge Sale. Remembered with honour Salerno War Cemetery.

Sub-Lieutenant (A) JOHN ANTHONY GORDON SIDFORD

H.M.S. Malabar, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, who died age 24 on 19th January 1942
Son of John Vere Sidford and Helen Marion Sidford, of Amersham, Buckinghamshire. Remembered with honour Lee-On-Solent Memorial.

Captain DAVID HAWKINS SMITH.

164271 24th Field Regiment. RA. Died 29th January 1944.
Son of: Richard Wilfrid and Hilda Alice of Slough. Husband of: Marion Elizabeth (Gurney) Smith.
Remembered with honour Anzio War Memorial and Chesham Bois Burial Ground.

Squadron Leader IVAN GEORGE STATHAM A F C

72119, 177 Sqn, Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve, who died age 35 on 26th March 1943
Son of Ernest and Katherine Statham; husband of Elizabeth Jocelyn Statham, of Kensington, London.
Remembered with honour Rangoon War Cemetery.

Captain REGINALD TUDOR TURNER-HUGHES

105521, No 3 Special Service Bn. Royal Welch Fusiliers, formerly 8th Bn. who died age 25 on 23rd October 1942.
Son of Reginald and Jane Turner-Hughes. Remembered with honour Johannesburg (West Park) Cemetery.

Captain DONALD DAMAN TWEDDLE

117222, 16 Field Regt Royal Artillery, who died age 25 on 10th October 1944
Son of Archibald Thomas Tweddle and Dorothy Tweddle of Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire. Remembered with honour Imphal War Cemetery.



The Grayburn Room at Amersham and Chiltern RFC designed by J. Choules and opened by Chris Smith at the President's Lunch 2009.



Chiltern 1st XV 1938-39.

**D. Wilkinson, P. E. Dagleish, M. W. H. Burbush, A. G. Patterson, R. Dodd, B. F. Dill-Russell,
J. H. Grayburn.**

**J. P. Duerdoth, R. P. Fraser, R. C. P. Wheeler (Capt), P. Goldsmid, P. E. G. Lobb,
R. T. Turner-Hughes, J. C. Randall, N. Rowntree.**

The Territorials.

Jack had been a keen member of the Sherborne School Army Cadet force. While working at HKSB in 1936 he was commissioned as Lieutenant into the 1st (London) Cadet Battalion, Queens Royal Regiment.

The Queen's Royal Surrey Regiment had four affiliated ACF battalions which had been previously affiliated to either The Queen's or the Surreys: the 1st, 2nd, 5th and 1st (London) Cadet Battalions.

The 1st (London) Cadet Battalion was descended from the old 1st London Cadet Battalion of The Queen's that was one of the oldest Cadet Battalions in England. It was based principally on Bermondsey, Lambeth and Southwark. In addition it received a number of independent units with Regimental links, such as the Cadet Company of The 23rd London Regiment and P,Q and R Cadet Batteries of 570 LAA Regiment RA (TA).

PRESIDENT'S LUNCHEON



The intelligent foreigner is not always grateful to us for having persuaded him that open-air games make for a healthy mind in a healthy body, mitigating the monotony of modern life for rich and poor alike. Our ball games have appreciably checked the progress of mankind by leading to the loss of billions of work years. Social historians in the future will blame England for teaching the world a score of pleasant ways to waste time.

Chris Smith, in his sixth season as President, has selected **Saturday 12 April 2008** to welcome to the club former presidents, vice presidents, honorary members, guests and resurrected friends.

The evergreen Simon Curtis, for his 12th season, is in charge of the organisation of this lunch, again aided by Roger Cook, Anthony Tagent and Ross Thomson.

Doors open at **11:30am**, to be welcomed with the legendary Tagent cocktail. A four course lunch will commence at 12:45 sharp, washed down with fine wines and port once again personally tasted and selected from private cellars. This will be followed by a splendid speech from our President. The cost amazingly is all-inclusive.



Additionally, the President will officially open the **John Grayburn VC Lounge**. The only Chiltern member ever to be awarded the Victoria Cross, John was a Lieutenant in 2nd Parachute Battalion with orders to seize and hold the bridge over the Rhine at Arnhem during Operation Market Garden. To accompany this dedication, there will be a commemorative display of John's brief life and deeds.

At 3pm, entertainment will be provided by the First XV in a South West Southern Counties North league match against **Wallingford RFC**, newly promoted this season but already healthy victors in their home fixture against our Chiltern boys.

We look forward to your instant reply so, to avoid disappointment, **please respond today** with your cheque for £25 made payable to "Simon D. Curtis".



Jack then gained a commission into the 43rd Ox and Bucks Light Infantry on 14th Sept 1940 being promoted to the rank of Captain in early 1943.

1st Battalion, 43rd Ox and Bucks Light Infantry.

The Battle of Arnhem and the subsequent defence of the Oosterbeek Perimeter have passed into historical military legend and has become the subject of all forms of media, television, cinema and literature. This in effect means that the story of the Market Garden Operation is quite well known. What is not common knowledge is their specific contribution of the Ox and Bucks Light Infantry Regiment.

The Second World War.

The 2nd Ox and Bucks Light Infantry had, until their return to the United Kingdom in 1940, spent eighteen years in India and on the North-West Frontier. The Battalion became a part of the 31st Independent Infantry Brigade and was billeted in Wales in a coastal defence role. Over the coming months the Brigade was moved to various locations in the East Anglia, London and Kent areas, before returning to Wales in February 1941 for a more long-term posting in the Black Mountains. It was here, until the end of the year, that the Brigade trained extensively in mountain warfare, travelling light and fast with pack-transport; hundreds of horses and mules. Such specialist activities had considerable repercussions for the future of the Brigade.

At this stage in the war, the British Airborne Forces consisted of just the 1st Parachute Brigade however; in September 1941 the War Office decided that a Brigade of glider infantry should be raised to complement them. The 31st Infantry Brigade was selected for this task and accordingly, on 10th October of that year, it was renamed the 1st Air landing Brigade. In addition to the 2nd Oxford and Bucks Light Infantry, this experimental formation consisted of a further three battalions; the 1st Border, 1st Royal Ulster Rifles and 2nd South Staffordshire's. Gliders were seen as a necessary method of supporting airborne operations, as they were able to carry additional infantry to reinforce the parachute brigades and also heavy equipment, such as Jeeps and anti-tank guns. It was this factor and the subsequent formation of the 1st Airborne Division that made it possible for the role of the British Airborne Forces to advance beyond the small-scale and infrequent commando raids that had been previously envisaged.

Nevertheless, twenty months of training passed before the Brigade was earmarked for an action. The 1st Parachute Brigade had been detached since late 1942 and had been involved in heavy fighting in North Africa. With hostilities in that continent at an end, the 1st Air landing Brigade was called to join them in May 1943 to prepare for an invasion of Sicily. The 2nd Ox and Bucks Light Infantry and the 1st Royal Ulster Rifles, however, did not accompany the Brigade, but were instead detached to form the experienced nucleus of the 6th Air landing Brigade. As a part of the newly raised 6th Airborne Division, their task was now to prepare themselves for the invasion of France.

Originally the 52nd Ox and Bucks Light Infantry formed part of 1st Air Landing Brigade of the 1st British Airborne Division and at that time they were tasked with providing the Divisional Defence Platoon. They continued in this task when the 52nd were transferred to the 6th Air Landing Brigade on the formation of the 6th British Airborne Division in 1943.



Capt. Patterson (best man) and Jack at his Winchester wedding.

By the time of the Battle of Arnhem in September 1944, the Divisional Defence Platoon although by now watered down by the inclusion of men of other units such as the Royal Ulster Rifles and commanded by a Parachute Regiment officer, was still in the domain of the Ox and Bucks Light Infantry

During the defence of the Oosterbeek perimeter to where 1st Airborne Division withdrew after it was 'cut to pieces' trying to fight its way to the famous "Bridge too Far", the Platoon was engaged in the defence of the Hartenstein Hotel that became Divisional Headquarters.

Eventually, the Platoon was withdrawn across the Rhine with the remnants of the Division but in the preceding days had suffered casualties, 6 killed including (2nd Ox and Bucks Light Infantry) in the battle, four of whom have no known grave.

The objective of the 1st Airborne Division was to capture and hold the bridge over the Rhine at Arnhem. However, in the end only a force slightly over battalion strength managed to reach and hold the northern

approaches to the Bridge. Only the 2nd Parachute Battalion (less C Company who were separated in the town), reinforced by part of 1st Para Brigade HQ, members of 1st and 3rd Parachute battalions and some attached arms personnel actually reached the objective.

In the officer ranks of 2 Para were ex Ox and Bucks Light Infantry officers. The 2ic was Major David Wallis who had served with 4th Ox and Bucks Light Infantry. A Company was commanded by Major Digby Tatham-Warter (ex 52nd Ox and Bucks Light Infantry) who took over as battalion 2ic when Major Wallis was killed by accidental fire that is now referred to as friendly fire.

Remembering his Light Infantry roots, Major Tatham-Warter concerned about the effectiveness of radios had set up a system of using bugles to send signals within his company that was used to good effect on the advance to the bridge and in its defence.

After the withdrawal of the remnants of the Division across the Rhine at the end of the Arnhem



**John Grayburn
Jack's son in 1994
during the
presentation of the
VC to the Regiment.**

battle Tatham-Warter was involved in organising many of the evading airborne troops left behind to get back to Allied lines with the codename "Pegasus Operations". The umbrella wielding officer in the film "A Bridge Too Far" is based on Tatham-Warter who carried his umbrella because he could not remember the operation password. Also in Major Tatham-Warter's A Company was Lt John (Jack) Grayburn (ex 43rd Ox and Bucks Light Infantry) who was to win a posthumous Victoria Cross for his heroic deeds at the bridge.

At 1st Parachute Brigade HQ, the regiment was also represented by the Brigade Commander, Brigadier Gerald Lathbury (ex 43rd Ox and Bucks Light Infantry) and the Brigade Staff Captain, Captain Edward Moy-Thomas (ex 52nd Ox and Bucks Light Infantry) also from the regiment.

On the way to joining the 43rd Ox and Bucks Light Infantry at Hatherleigh in Devon on 14th September 1940, Jack met up with fellow officer Pat Patterson at Waterloo Station heading in the same direction.

Both men became firm friends, Captain Patterson eventually becoming the Adjutant of the regiment and officiating as 'Best Man' at Jack's wedding at Winchester in 1942 to Dorothy Constance Marcelle Chambers who was at the time a secretary with the Headquarters Staff and daughter of Lt-Col C.E. Chambers. Captain Patterson also became godfather to Jack's son John, born in March 1943.

Jack respected Pat not only as a good friend but as a true representative of the 43rd, the Regiment that they both held in the highest esteem.

At Hatherleigh Jack was billeted at the 'Royal Oak' public house and from this base had courted his future wife Marcelle.

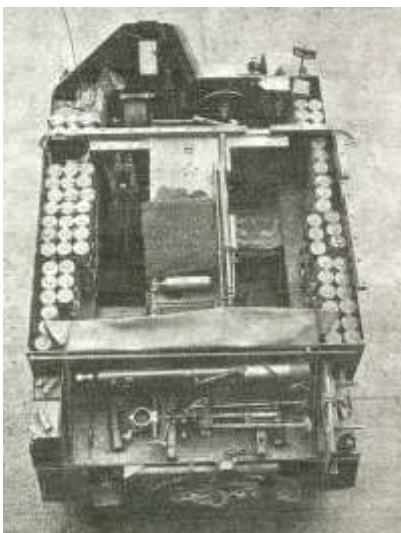
In November 1941, the 43rd Regiment handed over their Carriers to the 7th Bn Royal Sussex Regiment as part of their move to Ireland.

Vehicles from the 2nd Wales Borderers were loaded with the Regiment's chattels and accompanied by Lieutenant Jack and eight dogs travelled via ferry to Ireland. The rest of the Regiment travelled to Ireland via Stranraer at the same time the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbour.

In the autumn of 1942 Jack attended a course at the carrier wing of the School of Infantry at Barnard's Castle. It was considered a landmark for Jack. The Regiment was in a Brigade commanded by a guardsman, an excellent and enthusiastic man who had certain violent prejudices. Jack won the man over and was consulted on practically all matters concerning Carrier organisation and tactics. The Brigade Commander found Jack's enthusiasm to match his own and Jack returned with his ability as a commander, increased and matured.

On 27th February 1943, a reorganisation took place during which Captain Jack was put in command of a carrier platoon. This was followed by exercise 'Spartan' in which Jack led his carrier platoon through Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire, being in "another bloody wood in Spartan" when his son John was born on 7th March.

Jack for the main part in the 43rd served as a carrier Platoon commander but being tired of the continual training and absence of any prospect of action, sacrificed his captaincy and promotion in the 43rd on 27th June 1943 for the prospect of active service as a Lieutenant with the 2nd Battalion Parachute Regiment.

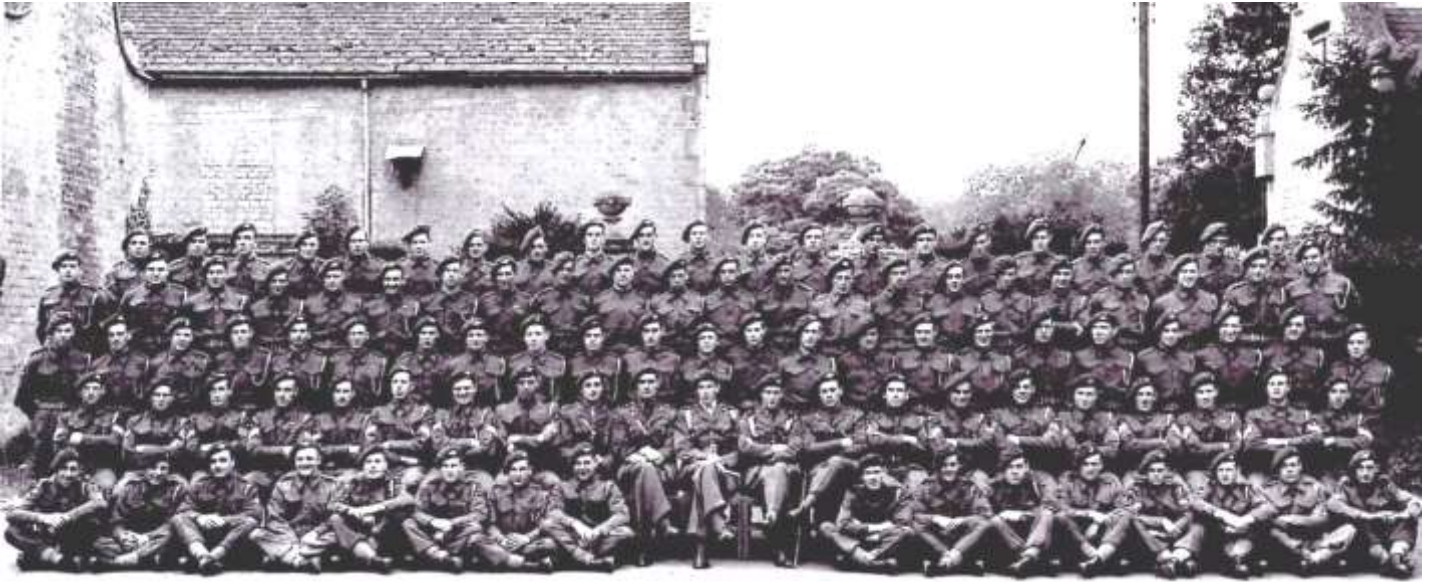


A fellow officer stated, "To write about Jack as a soldier you must start with the Regiment, Jack was first and foremost a true Regimental Officer".

Jack's time in the 43rd did not pass without making a mark in all sports, in particular Rugby football where his enthusiasm for the game was contagious to fellow team members.

The 43rd Ox and Bucks Light Infantry continued to honour Jack. In 1990, Major Pat Patterson represented the 43rd Ox and Bucks Light Infantry veterans laying a wreath at Jack's gravestone at the Oosterbeek cemetery on the eve of the 250th anniversary of the regiment in 1741. The headstone has the insignia of the Ox and Bucks Light Infantry and the Victoria Cross.

Typical Carrier vehicle.



1. CLAMP, BEAGLE, KITCHENER, BLACKMORE, +, +, OLDE, PARKER 71, KANNAH, +, SCOPES, BARNES, HASTINGS, +, +, +, ROSE, DIMOND, TURNER, +, TOWNS
2. APPLETON, BADGER, PAGE, FRASER, +, DELL, THIRKELL, SULLIVAN, +, KANE, SMITH 48, TILLYER, WADDILOVE, POWER, GIBSON, NEEDHAM, SHOOTER, MASTERSON, DELANO, CRESSWELL, HOWELLS, BLACKMAN
3. McALSLAN, BOLTON, BLISS, +, MARYAN, +, HAYNES, BUTLER, ANDERSON, SIMPSON, +, COOK, CURRIE, TATE, JONES, WEBB, JACKSON, OLIVER, HARTMAN, PHILLIPS, TRAVERS, FITZGERALD, MAY
4. SGTS. FULTON, PRICE, BARDWELL, WALLACE, MEADS, DENNIS, BALLINGER, CSM DENT, LT McDERMOTT, CAPT TIMOTHY, MAJ TATHAM WATER, LT GRAYBURN V.C., LT VLASTO, CQMS MORRIS, SGTS. ASHLEY, CROMPTON, FOX, KENT, LYONESS, KINSEY, BROMFIELD
5. PARKER 72, SMITH 47, WADSWORTH, STUBBS, +, ANDERTON, LYGO, ALLMAN, MACK, DUNFORD, SARGENT, BARRACLOUGH, PRIESTLEY, RUSSELL, STRINGER, McTIER.

+ NOT KNOWN

A Company, Easton Hall, June 1944. Jack seated to the right of Major Digby Tatham-Warter, Company commander.

The 2nd Parachute Battalion, A Company.



Jack joined the parachute regiment in June 1943, forfeiting his rank of Captain with the 43rd Ox and Bucks Light Infantry and accepting the lower rank of Lieutenant. On arriving for basic parachute training Jack found he was now posted to an Airborne Division forming on home soil and once again one that had no early prospect of early active service but instead was training for the invasion of Europe.

Jack at once applied for the posting to the training division be cancelled so that he could be sent on draft to a division that had already been fighting in North Africa and Sicily.

Jack was informed that this could be carried out with the written consent of his prospective C.O.

**Kilkenny's circus, Ringway,
Manchester**

Jack made several telephone calls and travelled south to confront the C.O who reluctantly gave his permission to join up with the 1st Parachute Brigade in North Africa.

Jack attended his course 77 at Ringway from 9th-18th August 1943. He was described as an average performer but an excellent leader and tonic of men.

The general arrangement for the two week course was three days of extensive physical training, cross county running, road walking, boxing, unarmed combat etc, no problem for Jack.

The next two days were devoted to how to make a correct landing using towers and how to exit an airplane using an old airplane fuselage situated 14ft from the ground. In some exercises a static balloon was used at Tatton Park as an intermediate jump before taking to an aircraft for the final test.

This next stage was to complete seven jumps from the aircraft and if successful you were awarded your wings. The weather often caused the schedule to vary.

Jack was then transferred in late August as a replacement Platoon leader for B Company who had suffered heavy casualties during the North Africa and Sicilian campaigns. The Brigade was at a rest camp South of Tunis.

As stragglers from the campaign in Sicily returned to join the 1st Parachute Brigade it became clear that their version of the disastrous events during the airborne drop were totally different to that of the American pilots following their debriefing. Less than one fifth of the Brigade had been dropped at the right place and at the right time. A considerable number of aircraft had returned to base, the pilots stating they could not locate the drop zones, others had dropped their parachutists up to thirty miles away, some on the slopes of Mount Etna. By the time Arnhem was scheduled the American pilots' navigational skills had been rectified.

Jack's transfer was in time to join the 1st Airborne Division seaborne landings at Taranto, Italy (Operation Slapstick). The Division during August were located at a rest camp by the sea South of Tunis. On 6th September Company Commanders were briefed to the effect that they were to undertake seaborne landings in Italy in a week's time. It was later in the day that the destination was declared as the Italian Naval Base at Taranto.

On 13th September General (later Field Marshall) Montgomery was asked by 15th Army Group to take command of the Taranto bridgehead, which he agreed. During the period 13th-15th September the Salerno landings on the west coast had a setback and it was a priority to speed up the advance along the East coast of Italy from Taranto.

The division was to move in two parts from Bizerta. On September 8th, the first troops of the 1st Airborne Division, the 2nd and 4th Brigades had set sail for Taranto, landing on the 9th without any problems moving quickly forward to occupy Massafra and Castellaneta. British High Command was worried that the Germans might counter attack the key port of Taranto in force, and accordingly the 1st Airborne Brigade was deployed with the object of securing the port, airfields and installations ready for the arrival of the 5th Corps.

As the rest of the force, the 1st Airborne Brigade, that included B Battalion under Brigadier Down, was landing in the afternoon in Taranto on 13th September, passing through the Anti Submarine boom as the Italian fleet were setting out for Malta to surrender their fleet to the allies. The force had sailed in two vessels, HMS Ulsterman with 450 men of 2 Para and 387 men of the 1st and 3rd Para plus 16 Para Field Ambulance and 2 Para Sq RE on the HMS Prince Albert.

At 1800 Hrs on 13th September the Italian Armed forces surrendered.

One of the clauses of the armistice between the Allies and Italy specified that the ships of the Italian Navy, bearing black circular panels in sign of surrender, would sail to Malta to await their final destiny. The Italian ships sail but do not bear the black circular panels.

At 0300 Hrs local, three battleships, the Roma, the Vittorio Veneto and Littorio, leave La Spezia along with 3 cruisers and 8 destroyers. Instead of sailing for Malta, they head for the naval port of La Maddalena on Sardinia and are sighted by Allied aircraft at dawn. At 1340 Hrs, the Italians learn that the port had been occupied by the Germans and they turn south and head for Malta. At 1400 Hrs, German aircraft sight the fleet and attack but miss. At the same time, 6 Dornier Do 217K-2s of II Gruppen, Kampfgeschwader 100 (II/K.G. 100) take off from Istres, France, armed with Ruhrstahl/Kramer X-1 (Fritz X) remote control bombs with a 320 kilogram (704 pound) warhead. The first attack comes at 1530 Hrs, while the ships are about 14 miles (22.5 kilometres) southwest of Cape Testa, Sardinia. The first Fritz X is directed toward the Littorio and it falls near the battleship temporarily blocking the rudder; the crew goes to auxiliary rudder and continues. At 1545 Hrs, a Fritz X strikes Roma on the starboard side, goes through the hull and explodes in the water reducing the ship's speed to 10 knots. A second Fritz X hits Roma at 1550 Hrs and explodes in the forward superstructure starting a fire. The ship lists to starboard and sinks at 1612 Hrs with 88 officers and 1,264 sailors.

Other Italian ships lost are the cruiser Taranto, destroyers Maestrale, Corazziere, Nicole Zeno and FR 21 (Former French destroyer Lion) and Torpedo Boats Antonio Cascino and Procione, all of which are scuttled in various ports to prevent German capture. The destroyer Antonio Da Noli sinks off Corsica after hitting a mine. (Anon)

B Battalion made camp 2 miles outside town and spent the first four days digging in. They were initially employed in constructing a defence perimeter to supplement the ancient Italian fortifications in case the Germans made a sudden riposte. Such a task was distasteful to men whose appetite for close combat with the enemy had been whetted by a year of fighting in North Africa.

“Montgomery’s views about Italians had already been set down in his diary on 23rd August 1943; For Monty, the Italian offer to turn against their Axis partners if the Allies landed in Italy was probably the biggest double cross in history. The Italians are wonderful people and obviously not to be trusted one yard, I doubt the Italians would ever fight the Germans, they are quite useless and would be hit for six, the most we can hope for I feel is non-cooperation.”
(Monty, Master of the Battlefield by Nigel Hamilton.)

In general Italians soldiers were demoralised, they had been treated as second class by the Germans, little wonder they were confused and frightened. It was only the odd fascist groups supporting the Nazi ideals that caused any problems. At first the civilians kept off the streets, it was only a matter of time before they realised that the Allies were not there to rape and pillage and slowly took down their shutters and repopulated the streets.

Finally, orders were given that allowed part of the force (Para’s 2nd and 4th Brigade) to keep close contact with the enemy force that were retreating behind extensive demolition, slowing down any rapid advance.

On 16th September lead elements of the Eighth Army made contact with the American patrols of the 5th United States Army forcing the rearguards of the 26th Panzer Division to withdraw to the north.

On 20th September, orders were received for B Battalion to move north to Castellaneta, an important road crossing 15 miles from Taranto. The Battalion were taking over from the 4th Brigade, they being moved even further north, pursuing the enemy. The 2nd Brigade then returned to Taranto, to take over defensive positions.

From Castellaneta the 2nd Battalion sent out long range patrols to test the enemy defences. The Germans were now retreating in line with the 8th Army advance along the west coast.

The force now controlled a huge area to the east including the port of Brindisi. On 22nd September orders were received for B Battalion to move 20 miles north to Altamura, a walled hilltop town with a cathedral and streets reminiscent of a rabbit warren, recently evacuated by the Germans and where the locals, keen to gather in the wine harvest, had cleared the roads of mines on the Germans departure.

The Battalion initially were camped amongst the olive groves along the Matera Road until receiving notice that they were to be there for a month, they then adjusted their accommodation by taking over a grand house and gardens on the outskirts of town. Patrols were again sent out to engage and test the enemy defences. Units of the Eighth Army were now moving quickly on a broad front, 300 miles in 17 days through Southern Italy and on their arrival at Altamura the Battalion reverted to normal training.

On 26th October the Battalion moved to Barletta, a port on the Adriatic Coast north of Bari where dummy assault landing craft exercises were carried out to delude the enemy that landings behind their lines were about to take place.

The Germans had plenty of spies in the town and every movement by the 1st Airborne was registered. The Germans even knew that the training landing exercises were planned for Pescara further north along the Adriatic coast. The full rehearsal was on a stormy night, tossing the landing craft around causing many green faces. The flotilla never left port but the troops had the satisfaction of knowing that the Germans had moved reinforcements down from the north to the Adriatic coast to cover the landings.

While in Barletta the Battalion provided boarding parties for the allied flotilla rounding up axis vessels in the Adriatic. The more adventurous were able to make deep incursions into areas held by the enemy. During their stay in Barletta, Major Victor Dover, in charge of the Headquarters Company and President of the Mess Committee arranged for celebration party of which the prize item was hundreds of bottles of three star Martell Brandy, found in a local Barletta cellar clearly marked for use by the German Army only, any other use was *verboten*.

Major Dover kept a signed menu of the occasion and the signature of Lieutenant Jack Grayburn was included together with Brigadier Gerald Lathbury, Commander 1st Parachute Brigade, Lieutenant Colonel John Frost, Commander 2nd Battalion, Major Digby Tatham-Warter of A Company, Captain A. M. Frank MC Second in Command A Company and Lieutenant A.J McDermont, a fellow A Company Platoon leader and many others from the 2nd Battalion that were to fight and die at Arnhem. (*The Silken Canopy, V. Dover*)

“The short days and cold nights of early November gave the Battalion a foretaste of an Italian winter. The Germans were fighting hard for every inch and the rain was no friend of offensive mobile operations. We were finally ordered back to Taranto on the first stage of our trip to the UK”. (A Drop too Many, John Frost)

On 19th November, the 1st Airborne returned to Britain from Taranto on the SS Ville d'Oran, the first port of call being Algiers. They were replaced in Barletta by another parachute battalion who arrived in plain uniform, as did the 1st Airborne on leaving, without their red berets and parachute flashes, in an attempt to confuse the local German informers.

Having spent a week camped outside Algiers the battalion embarked on SS Samaria on 9th December to Liverpool arriving with just a welcome home band playing at the dock side. Relatives had not been notified due to restrictive communications.

To sum up the operation:

The Germans did not expect effective resistance from the Italians after the fall of Sicily. Although the capitulation of the Italians was expected it was still a surprise.

The Germans initially dispersed their forces to cover allied landings in the south-east, south-west, Naples and Rome.

When the Eighth Army landed at Reggio the Germans correctly anticipated that the allies would attack the Naples area. This left them with two choices to attack the allies in the Naples area or to fall back north gradually and set a defensive line. History tells us that the latter was chosen, in particular when the Salerno landings were eventually successful.

The landings at Taranto were a surprise to the Germans especially as the port was undamaged. Had the Germans counter attacked the Taranto landings there might have been a different outcome to the Battle for Italy.

The 2nd Battalion now stationed in the Grantham area went through rigorous training, an experience that Jack enjoyed, often setting an example by leading his Platoon.

“He was known for shouting at one lad during mortar exercises ‘Move, do you want to live forever’. Jack was a serious minded officer”. (Without Tradition, R. Peatling)

Time and opportunity was utilised to improve ‘skill at arms’, communications and fitness. Efforts were relentless to achieve the highest standards and those who could not make the grade were discarded and sent back to their regiments. Physical training was a priority for all troops before breakfast and the standard marching requirements were 30 miles per day carrying a 60 lb load.

In May 1944, on a three day, 100 mile, forced march on the Yorkshire Moors near Glossop, Jack insisted on finishing at the Regiment’s barracks at Easton, near Grantham, Lincolnshire with his men even though blood was oozing through his boots. The exercise culminated in a full battlefield firing exercise supported by artillery.

During this period of rest, retraining and waiting, Robert Peatling (*author of ‘Without Tradition’ 2nd Para 1941-45*) initially a member of Jack’s Platoon managed to get a transfer to another A Company Platoon before Arnhem.

Robert’s transfer was due to the fact that at one period when the Battalion was stationed at Easton, near Grantham, the country house owned by Sir Hugh Cholmondeley who at the time was stationed in Italy, Robert was on guard duty, midnight to 02:00 Hrs. He fell asleep on the guard room table but not before undoing his boots.

Jack was duty officer and found Robert asleep and he was put on a charge for the misdemeanour and was found guilty and given 7 days CB.

Robert Peatling was later given the order to pick two men and report to Lieutenant Grayburn at the Stoll Theatre in Kingsway in time for the matinee performance on the last day of a popular revue that starred Flanagan and Allen, Florence Desmond and Monsewer Eddie Gray. They were there to collect donations for the Airborne Security Fund.



The chorus girls insisted that the Para's get up on the stage where they stripped them of their berets and shirts. Little did they suspect that many on the stage including Jack were to die at Arnhem in a few weeks. The collection boxes were full and the Para's resorted to filling their berets to overflowing with money. They were all invited to a party with the performers at the theatre bar following the performance.

John Frost's 2nd Battalion had several officer changes, David Wallis was recruited as second in charge Digby Tatham-Warter joined as officer in charge of A Company, Douglas Crawley B Company and Victor Dover C Company with Stanley 'Bombs' Panter in charge of the support Company.

The 1st Airborne Division were then put on standby for the D-Day landings in June but were finally told to stand down. In August they were again ordered to stand by for Operation Linnet but that was also finally cancelled on 2nd September. On 9th September Operation Comet, again was cancelled.

Operations had been cancelled three times and the pent up anxiety and energy of the troops received another setback. The normal reaction was to have a few drinks and retire early for another day.

On 16th September the Officers were briefed on Operation Market Garden, the camp was sealed down and once again the airborne transport carrier squadrons and paratroopers were made ready.

Sunday 17th September 1944 was a beautiful day when at 0930 Hrs Jack loaded his Platoon into a 3 Ton TCV for transport to the airfield at Saltby.

At 1130 Hrs Jack's 2nd Battalion A Company following a breakfast of tea with bacon sandwiches, supplied by the local WVS ladies, boarded the twin engine Dakotas piloted by an American crew.

The 2nd Battalion with 509 men (31 Officers and 478 other ranks) would be over Holland before lunch was over in England.

As the armada of a thousand aircraft reached the coast they were accompanied by RAF Typhoons and Tempests in close support.



The American pilots dropped the parachutist's right on target in the prepared drop zones. The 2nd Battalion were to rendezvous at the yellow flair.

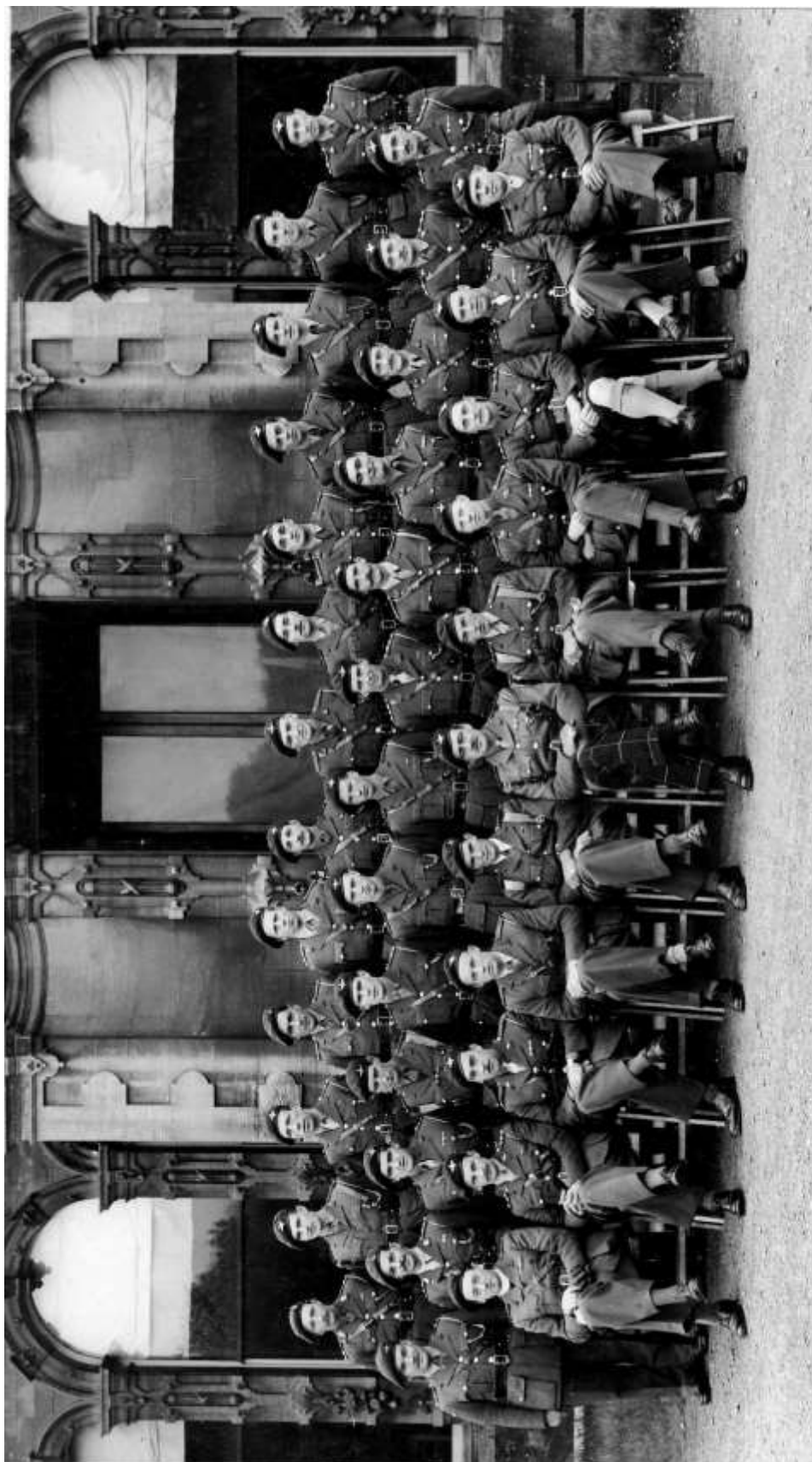
At 1330 Hrs Colonel Frost was first on the scene and ordered A Company under Major Digby Tatham-Warter to lead off along the Lion Route with the rest of the 2nd Battalion to follow.

Nobody could have guessed what was in store!

**2nd Battalion A Company boarding
Dakota at Saltby 17th Sept, 1944**

Arnhem saw the complete destruction of the 2nd Battalion with only 16 of its men evacuated safely into the British lines on 25th September, although a number succeeded in evading capture and rejoined the Battalion at a later date. John Marshall, who had been the Battalion Second-in-Command in North Africa, returned to take command and rebuild the Battalion with just nine officers, a few senior NCOs and 200 ORs to hand.

In January 1945 the Battalion moved out of Stoke Rochford Hall to a new camp at Oakham, near Cottesmore, Rutland. By the end of that same month 320 parachute qualified reinforcements, the full complement of Officers and SNCOs had been sent to the Battalion. After full re-training and field exercises the Battalion was reported fit for action again in March/April 1945.



Gale & Polden Ltd., Aldershot

2nd BATTALION PARACHUTE REGIMENT, 1944

Back Row—Lieut. J. H. A. Monnell, Lieut. J. A. Russell, Lieut. A. Roberts, Lieut. A. T. Tammunbaum, Lieut. D. M. Douglas, Lieut. J. G. Blunt, Lieut. J. T. Alnall, Lieut. J. G. Purdy, Lieut. A. J. McDermond
 Middle Row—Lieut. P. H. Cane, Capt. J. W. Leung, D.S.O., R.A.M.C., Capt. A. M. Frank, M.C., Lieut. R. A. Vlasto, Lieut. C. M. Stantford, Lieut. D. E. C. Russell, Lieut. G. F. W. Elton,
 Lieut. R. H. Leven, Capt. J. Timothy, M.C., Capt. A. J. Rutherford, Lieut. J. H. Greyhen, Lieut. W. N. Dornier, Lieut. P. B. Barry, Lieut. R. B. Woods, Capt. R. E. Martin,
 Front Row—Rev. B. M. Egan, M.C., C.F. (R.C.), Capt. D. McLean, Major V. Dover, M.C., Major P. J. Albury, Major D. W. Wallis, Lieut.-Colonel J. D. Frost, D.S.O., M.C., Major A. D. Tatham-Warton,
 Major D. E. Cranley, M.C., Capt. P. E. Hoyer-Miller, Capt. S. C. Painter, M.C., Lieut. (Quar.) J. T. Parker.

A Bridge too Far.

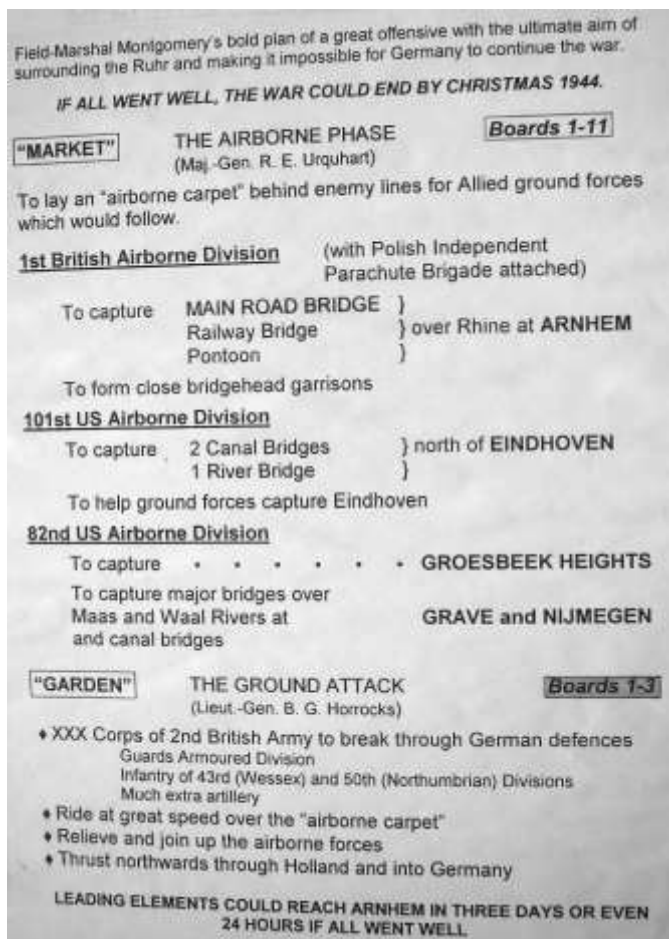
The Official Plan for Market Garden.



The Allied Plan for the Northern breakthrough to Germany.



General Montgomery, Brigadier J.W Hackett and Major General R.E Urquhart on the playing fields of Oakham School on 8th March 1944. Hackett's 4th Para's are in the background.



Background:

By September 1944, Allied forces had successfully broken out of their Normandy bridgehead and pursued shattered German forces across northern France and Belgium. Although Allied commanders generally favoured a broad front policy to continue the advance into Germany and the Netherlands, Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery proposed a bold plan to head north through the Dutch Gelderland, bypassing the German Siegfried line defences and opening a route into the German industrial heartland of the Ruhr. Initially proposed as a British and Polish operation codenamed Comet, the plan was soon expanded to involve most of the First Allied Airborne Army and a set piece ground advance into the Netherlands, codenamed Market Garden.

The Moor Park Mansion, Hertfordshire is a Grade 1 Palladian building set in 200 acres of garden. It was requisitioned, becoming the Headquarters of the 1st Airborne Corps. It was and is the elegant setting of the club house belonging to members of

the golf club. Four weeks during WWII, the grand house became the centre of the British war effort as military chiefs planned a parachute drop over the Dutch town of Arnhem.

It was in February 1944 that planners from the 1st Airborne Corps moved into the mansion. In between occasional rounds of golf, it was their challenge to design routes for troops to be parachuted into northern France to support the D-Day landings that would take place in June that year. As allied soldiers were preparing to move north into Belgium and Holland and key to their movement were the capture of eight bridges across the Maas-Rhine. The most northerly bridge was the Bridge at Arnhem.

The planners (Intelligence Section, HQ Coy) at Moor Park were given three weeks to come up with a way to send 11,000 parachute troops into the Dutch town. This signalled a major transformation at the mansion.

In charge of the 'Market' part of what was to be known as Operation Market Garden was Lieutenant General F.A.M. Browning and Major General R.E. Urquhart, who became one of the heroes of the campaign. The pair would use a room on the first floor of the mansion, now known as the Arnhem Room, where they planned the forthcoming invasion, laying out maps and air photographs and using a sand table model of the town and landing zones.

In the weeks before the attack, planners used the table, which was complete with buildings, the river, Bridge and possible landing grounds, to configure every aspect of the attack. However, the weight of the table caused the floor to sag. There was fear of permanent damage to the paintings in the Thornhill room below and its famous ceiling painting of Aurora and the Dawn by Antonio Verrio. The sand was quickly reduced and the art work was saved.

General Urquhart and his team had planned several possible operations to different places, only to see them cancelled during August and early September 1944. However, on Sunday September 10th the general announced that a new plan was in place and the 1st Airborne Division would support the Market Garden operation by a parachute and glider borne drop at Arnhem and hold the bridge until relieved by XXX Corps within two days.

By the following Tuesday, Urquhart, who lived in a caravan on the golf course, presented plans for the operation in detail, pointing out dropping and assembly zones, the sequence of drops that would take place over three days and the possible presence of German troops around Arnhem. Each company was briefed on the landing and their role on progress to the bridge.

Lt. Col Frost addressed his B Company *"Gentlemen, the 2nd Battalion has been given the honour of leading the division into Arnhem"*.

Montgomery's plan involved dropping the U.S. 101st Airborne Division to capture key bridges around Eindhoven. The 82nd Airborne Division to secure key crossings around Nijmegen and the British 1st Airborne Division with the Polish 1st Independent Parachute Brigade attached, to capture three bridges across the Rhine at Arnhem. Although Lieutenant-General Lewis H. Brereton commanded the First Allied Airborne Army his second in command Lieutenant-General Frederick Browning took command of the airborne role.

The British Second Army led by General B.G. Horrocks of XXX Corps would advance up the "Airborne corridor", securing the Airborne Division's positions and crossing the Rhine within two days. If successful the plan would open the door to Germany and hopefully force an end to the war in Europe by the end of the year.

The Battle of Arnhem in September 1944 followed on from what an official report described as *"by far the biggest and most ambitious airborne operation ever carried out by any nation"*. (Public Record Office AIR 37/ 1214).

The first airlift alone involved 360 British and 1,174 American transport aircraft and 491 gliders, accompanied by 910 fighter escorts and had been preceded by bombing attacks by 1,113 twin and four engine bombers escorted by a further 330 fighter aircraft.

During the operation 20,190 parachutists, 13,781 glider-borne troops, 5,230 tons of equipment and stores, 1,927 vehicles and 568 pieces of Artillery, some weighing up to 2 tons were all dropped behind German lines. The part of the operation codenamed Operation 'Market' was supported by a drive Northwards by armoured and infantry units of XXX Corps, part of the British Second Army, starting at Antwerp that had been liberated on 4th September. In their advance three towns were to be their target, Eindhoven, Nijmegen and Arnhem.

The plan for Operation Market Garden was to land three airborne divisions by parachute to create a carpet over which XXX Corps could breakthrough to the German heartland the Industrial Ruhr.

The most northerly of these landings was to be by the British 1st Airborne division at Arnhem on the River Neder Rijn with the aim of securing the bridge to allow the armoured XXX Corp to strike north.

The Southern area required the American airborne division of the 101st to capture the bridges at Son, Best and Sint-Oedenrode and for the American 82nd airborne to the north of the 101st to capture bridges at the Maas, Malden and over the Waal at Nijmegen. Each of the American divisions was to be backed by divisions of Glider Infantry Regiments.

British 1st Airborne Division first two Brigades and part of its supporting light and anti tank artillery would be dropped on day 1 followed next day by the 3rd Brigade and a day later the Independent Polish parachute regiment.

During the nine day battle at Arnhem the 1st Airborne Division lost 7,212 all ranks as casualties of whom the death toll was 1,130 while about 6,000 were captured. 2,398 managed to cross the Rhine during the withdrawal. Not more than 120 managed later to avoid capture and reached allied lines.

“There has been no single performance by any unit that has more greatly inspired me or more excited my admiration than the nine day action by the 1st British Parachute Division between the 17th and 25th September”. (Dwight Eisenhower, General, US Army Allied Commander Europe).

Sunday 17th September 1944. Montgomery.

“On the morning of the 17th the weather was fine and generally favourable for an airborne invasion. Paratroops of the American 101st airborne division were quickly established at Son, they secured the bridge at Veghel intact, though the bridge at Son, the crossing over the Wilhelmina Canal, was blown by the enemy. The American 82nd division landed according to plan and seized the bridge over Mass at Grave and later seized two bridges at Maas-Waal over the canal between Grave and Nijmegen. Efforts to rush the bridge at Nijmegen failed but the bridge was intact. The British 1st Airborne had reached the North end of the bridge at Arnhem”. (Montgomery of Alamein)

XXX Corps.

“Horrocks was uneasy about the Market Garden plan. Montgomery’s directives were vague and incorrect. Nobody appreciated how rapidly the Germans were able to tighten their defences. There was no question of advancing on a broad front; this would be a toe-to-toe slogging match along a narrow front. In fact one road only for adjoining areas were wooded or marsh. The attack perfectly coordinated began well and by the end of the first day were in the Dutch town of Valkenswaard”. (General Brian Horrocks: The General Who Led from the Front)

Kampfgruppe (Battle group) Sonnenstuhl.

Sunday morning 17th September 1944, SS-Sturmbannführer Hans-Georg Sonnenstuhl, commander of SS-Panzer Artillerie Regiment 10. SS-Panzer Division “Fruindsberg” was on his way from North Brabant to his regiment’s new camp in Zutphen with a small group of staff officers and men. When they reached the Maas-Waalkanaal, west of Nijmegen their vehicles were attacked by allied fighter-bombers. None of the vehicles were hit and Sonnenstuhl gave the order to proceed towards Arnhem:

“We crossed Arnhem Bridge at about 13.00 Hrs. Everything was quiet in the city, nothing suspicious to be seen typical for a Sunday afternoon in a City. I had hardly arrived at my command post in Zutphen when an urgent message from the divisional staff came in on the radio. The division’s chief-of-staff, SS-Hauptsturmbannführer Büthe, gave me the following message:-

“Enemy parachutists have landed in Arnhem and the commander is still in Berlin at the headquarters of the SS. SS-Obersturmbannführer Paetsch (deputy division commander) cannot be reached anywhere. Therefore, as highest-ranking officer, you must take command of our Arnhem defence area. Centres of attention are especially the Rhine bridges. Alarm units are already on the way and I shall be sending you still more reinforcements.”

“As far as manpower was concerned I had just two alarm companies at my disposal [improvised units to be used in the event of an allied attack]. One of these was the crew of a light battery that had already been sent as infantry to “Sperrverband Heinke” (Blocking Line Heinke) [located in the south of the Netherlands]. All I could assemble were 65 NCOs and men and three officers, with only light weaponry – no machine guns!” (SS-Sturmbannführer Hans-Georg Sonnenstuhl).

The first German reactions:

The British airborne landings on Sunday came as a complete surprise to the Germans. To the north-east of Arnhem was the depleted *II. SS-Panzer Korps* of *SS-Obergruppenführer* Wilhelm Bittrich, which had suffered heavy losses in Normandy and Northern France. Small so-called battle groups were hastily put together from infantrymen, artillery units and a few tanks stationed in North Brabant and elsewhere.

Of the two divisions in the corps, *10 SS-Panzer-Division "Frunderberg"* was worst off. Their commander, *Brigadeführer* Heinz Harmel, was in Berlin asking for reinforcements and equipment for his division. His place as division commander was temporarily filled by his chief-of-staff, *SS-Obersturmbannführer* Otto Paetsch.

The number of officers and men was very small due to the heavy losses suffered in France. Some companies were even under the temporary leadership of NCOs or Privates First Class.

9 SS-Panzer-Division "Hohenstaufen" was in better shape, seeing that its *SS-Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 9* was up to strength with forty armoured vehicles. *SS-Obersturmbannführer* Walter Harzer, the deputy division commander, had handed virtually all his heavy equipment over to *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Karl-Heinz Euling's *1 Battalion* of the *SS-Panzer Grenadier Regiment 19* but against Bittrich's orders had held back the reconnaissance unit.

Sunday 17th September 1944.

The first German counter-attack was carried out by units of *10 SS-Panzer-Division "Frunderberg"* – having the most armoured vehicles and tanks. Meanwhile, *Obergruppenführer* Bittrich assembled all other reserves he could find, intending to send them to Arnhem as quickly as possible. Therefore the *Frunderberg* division was given the task of opposing the British parachutists until reinforcements arrived.

1 Kompanie of *SS-Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 10* commanded by *SS-Obersturmführer* Karl Ziebrecht reached the bridge from the Westervoortse dijk direction shortly after the first British attack. Their armoured vehicles were fired at as they tried to drive up Nijmeegseweg. Not knowing the enemy strength, Ziebrecht pulled his unit back. He reported by radio that the British had reached the bridge.

At about midnight a second German counter-attack took place from the direction of the boulevards. *SS-Sturmbannführer* Sonnenstuhl and his small provisional group had arrived in Arnhem earlier that evening and marched in file along both sides of the boulevards, eventually reaching the beginning of Nijmeegseweg. Near Willemsplein the commander had received some reinforcements, including a Platoon from the *Reichsarbeitsdienst*, a para-military department of the *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* (NSDAP, German National Socialist Labour Party). Over the coming days these units would be referred to as "Kampfgruppe Sonnenstuhl".

Sunday 17th September 1944, 1st Airborne, 2nd Battalion, report:

Having assembled in the drop zone by the yellow flag the 2nd Battalion started their move along the lower "Lion" Route, Lieutenant-Colonel John Frost's 2nd Battalion did not experience the heavy opposition that the rest of the 1st Parachute Brigade was encountering on the Tiger and Leopard routes. Krafft did not have enough men to completely screen Arnhem from the British and so he had based his defence between the Railway line and the Utrechtseweg, leaving the river road undefended but for the light patrols of his reconnaissance units.

Opposition was still encountered, but Major Tatham-Warter's A Company, who had been given the lead, cut their way through this with great speed and skill.

They had barely left the drop zones before Lieutenant McDermont's No 3 Platoon ambushed a convoy of lorries, likely carrying the reconnaissance troop of Battalion Krafft's No 2 Company, killing and taking prisoner the thirty Germans inside them. In the woods beyond, A Company were attacked and lightly mortared by minor opposition, but these were immediately put to flight when Lieutenant Grayburn's No 2 Platoon charged the position under the cover of a smokescreen. In Oosterbeek the Battalion received an ecstatic reception from the local Dutch people, who dashed out in all their orange paraphernalia to greet the paratroopers and thrust all manner of food and drink upon them. Officers and NCOs politely prevented them from inadvertently halting the advance, although the sound of gunfire ahead persuaded most to return to their homes.

The tasks assigned to the 2nd Battalion were considerable. Not only did they have to reach the Bridge and capture it, but they also had to seize the Railway Bridge, four miles to the west of Arnhem and a small Pontoon Bridge in the town itself. C Company split off from the Battalion in Oosterbeek and headed to the Railway Bridge; their intentions were not merely to capture it, but also to cross to the other side of the Rhine so that they would be in a position to attack the southern end of Arnhem Bridge, enabling the Battalion to comfortably secure both ends.

With No 8 Platoon providing covering fire and laying down a smokescreen with the Battalion's mortars, Lieutenant Barry's No 9 Platoon began their advance on the bridge in good order. The ground that they had to run across, however, was of a considerable distance and completely devoid of cover and the Bridge itself was no small structure; so much so that the Platoon had only just reached it when, out of breath, they came to a halt for a few moments and crouched down in case of enemy fire. It was most fortunate that they did this because, moments later, the centre span of the bridge was demolished by a troop of Battalion Krafft; the Platoon's attacking section would have surely been wiped out had they continued, but in the event nobody was hurt. A German sniper opened fire moments later and succeeded in wounding Barry and killing another man. With no hope of salvaging anything from the situation, John Frost ordered C Company to withdraw and rejoin the rear of the Battalion's column, proceeding instead to capture a German Headquarters in Arnhem. Although there was to be no force on the opposite bank of the Rhine to capture the southern end of Arnhem Bridge, Frost was nevertheless a little relieved to have all of his rifle companies on the northern bank and not separated by the River.

As A Company drew near to Arnhem they suffered casualties under the fire of an armoured car, which promptly withdrew when it observed an anti-tank gun being brought forward. The Company pressed on but was again halted shortly after, this time by a machine-gun position sited on an area of high ground known as Den Brink. To prevent the 2nd Battalion's vanguard being delayed by this menace, B Company were ordered to advance on Den Brink and clear it. Lieutenant Cane's No 6 Platoon began to move into position, but as they did so they came under fire from another machine-gun and Cane and three other men were killed with several more wounded. B Company fought their way onto Den Brink but was not able to clear it of the enemy dug in there. They were, however, able to keep them occupied until darkness fell, after which the troublesome machine-gun post could not observe the British troops moving in the streets below.

B Company slipped off Den Brink during the night and headed to the Pontoon Bridge, their objective, located a mile to the west of Arnhem Bridge.

Before they had left England, the Company had learned from aerial reconnaissance photographs that the centre span of the Pontoon had been detached and was moored alongside the riverbank. With no means of reconnecting it, the Company hoped to locate boats or improvise some other means of crossing to enable them to assault the southern end of Arnhem Bridge.

A Company entered Arnhem just as it was getting dark. Occasional light resistance was met but all comers were rapidly dealt with. Armoured cars began to appear sporadically in an attempt to hinder the advance, but rather than become bogged down in tackling these, Major Tatham-Warter chose to side-step them by moving his men through houses and back gardens in order to avoid unnecessary confrontation. Frost himself used this method; on one occasion marching the entire Battalion through the rear of a house and out of the front door into the street beyond, much to the displeasure of the owner.

A Company arrived at the northern end of Arnhem Bridge at 1930 Hrs and proceeded to occupy positions on either side of the ramp. They were very pleased with themselves, having killed or captured one hundred and fifty Germans en route at the cost of a single man killed and a small number wounded. Lieutenant-Colonel Frost had been worried that by the time his Battalion had reached the Bridge the Germans would have destroyed it, but he was most satisfied to arrive and find that it was intact and now under his control. Various German commanders had called for at least some of the vital bridges in the Market Garden area to be destroyed to put an end to the Operation there and then. However, Feldmarschall Model insisted upon leaving them undamaged as he had plans to use them to stage a counter offensive of his own.

A Company made two attempts to capture the southern end of the Bridge during the night. The first was a token effort mounted by a vanguard of just seven men from No 3 Platoon but when these encountered German soldiers on the Bridge they had to fall back as their numbers were insufficient for the purpose. Lieutenant Grayburn's No 2 Platoon attempted a more substantial effort, but they came to an abrupt standstill and suffered eight wounded when a machine-gun opened fire from a pill box position at point blank range, later joined by the fire of an armoured car from the other end of the Bridge. Further attempts to cross were rendered impossible when Royal Engineers attempted to silence the pill box with a flame thrower and their aim fell wide and set fire to several huts alongside. This turned out to be an ammunition and petrol store and the subsequent explosions set fire to the new paintwork on the Bridge, which continued to blaze throughout the night.

“Lieutenant Grayburn's No 2 Platoon was chosen for the task and again unlike the episode shown in the film ‘A Bridge too Far’ he and his soldiers were not accompanied by Digby Tatham-Warter brandishing his umbrella”. (The Bridge Arnhem, Frank Steer)

Nearer midnight, several German lorries attempted a nervous crossing of the burning Bridge, only to add to the inferno when they were destroyed by heavy fire from the paratroopers dug-in ahead of them. Needless to say, a further assault was now impossible; not only was the whole area lit up as if it were daylight, but the heat from the fires was immense, rendering the Bridge unapproachable.

Although he had little idea of what was happening elsewhere, Lieutenant-Colonel Frost understood that resistance in the Arnhem area was a great deal stronger than briefings had led them to believe and he therefore sent out a radio message asking for assistance. Despite the poor performance of the radios, the 1st Battalion received it with perfect clarity. Lieutenant-Colonel Dobie was known to dislike his allocated task of capturing the high ground to the north of Arnhem and he also recognised that resistance was becoming increasingly determined, making it ever more likely that his objective was unreachable. He therefore decided to ignore his orders and ordered his T Company to lead the way to the Bridge.

The 1st Battalion kept moving through the night and did all they could to avoid the attention of the enemy, even switching off the engines of their Jeeps and manhandling them and their anti-tank guns silently past German patrols.

Resistance, however, continued to be encountered and casualties were increasing. By far the biggest problem were the small groups of men becoming lost in the dark after being delayed by such actions. With various parties coming under fire from snipers and isolated machine-gun posts, along the full length of the mile long column, the Battalion gradually fragmented and it became easy for the Germans to mop up the stragglers. By morning, the 1st Battalion had lost contact with half of the five hundred and forty-eight men that it had taken into battle.

Monday 18th September 1944, 1st Airborne, 2nd Battalion, report:

"Reports from Arnhem were still scanty. While the main body of airborne troops were established west of the town, it appeared that elements of the parachute brigade were holding out at the road bridge, which remained intact. The Germans however were holding the Town in strength with a garrison that included tanks and self propelled guns". (Montgomery of Alamein)

The British arrival at the northern end of Arnhem Bridge was most untimely for the Germans because the 10th SS Panzer Division had yet to cross the Rhine in sufficient strength to proceed with their planned defence of Nijmegen. With Lieutenant-Colonel Frost's men in place, the Bridge was quite unapproachable and so the Division was forced to transfer its men and vehicles across the River using the ferry at Pannerden, six miles to the east. This was a painfully slow and inefficient process, therefore it was ordered that the British at Arnhem Bridge be destroyed as soon as possible to clear the way for traffic. The troops selected for this purpose were of Kampfgruppe Brinkmann, the 10th SS Panzer Division's Reconnaissance Battalion, which had been handed over to the control of the 9th Division after their own Reconnaissance Battalion had been dispatched to Nijmegen. Also under the command of Sturmbannführer Brinkmann, as of the early Hrs of Monday morning, were the eight tanks and four infantry companies of Kampfgruppe Knaust, a unit of Wehrkreis VI, who were to carry out attacks on the Bridge from the north whilst Brinkmann did likewise from the east.

During the night, Lieutenant-Colonel Frost had sent out a radio message appealing for reinforcements and as a result the 1st Battalion had altered its course and was heading to Arnhem, whilst the 3rd Battalion, who did not receive the message, also resumed their advance on the Bridge after resting overnight at Oosterbeek. The 2nd Battalion's B Company were still at the Pontoon Bridge, a mile to the west, but as they had been unable to improvise any crossing to the southern bank, Frost ordered them to come to the Bridge and reinforce his defences. German resistance had stiffened by this time and so the Company had to fight its way through opposition, in the process of which most of No 4 Platoon, the rearguard, became cut-off and were forced to seek refuge in a house, which they defended against German attacks for the next twenty-four Hrs until their ammunition ran out. The remainder of B Company, some seventy men, arrived in the Bridge area at approximately 05:30 Hrs on Monday morning.

C Company had similarly been ordered to come to the Bridge, however they were much further behind and in some difficulty. They had made their way into Arnhem on Sunday evening, having involved themselves in several successful skirmishes along on the way, but they were caught in an exposed position and had to shelter overnight in a hotel near the St. Elizabeth Hospital. On the following morning they were preparing to proceed with their objective, the capture of a German Headquarters, when Frost's call for aid was received. Major Dover attempted to lead his men through the town, however their progress was slowed by the obvious difficulties of moving unobserved along streets and through high-walled back gardens in broad daylight. A small group of men managed to slip away and eventually joined up with the 3rd Battalion, but the remainder of C Company were cornered by a large German force in a hopeless position and so, following a brief exchange of fire, Major Dover was left with no option but to order his one hundred men to surrender.

With the arrival of B Company at the Bridge, however, Frost had some three hundred and forty men of the 2nd Battalion at his disposal, but other elements had arrived during the night to increase this number. The 1st Parachute Brigade Headquarters, less Brigadier Lathbury, arrived with its 110 men and with these had come two parties of seventy-five and thirty Royal Engineers of the 1st Parachute Squadron and 9th Field Company respectively, four anti-tank guns of B and one of C Troop of the 1st Airlanding Anti-Tank Battery and thirty RASC men of the 250 Light Composite Company. There was also a scattering of others, including twelve Glider Pilots and eight men of the Reconnaissance Squadron, together with their commander, Major Gough.

All of these units had followed in the 2nd Battalion's wake along the "Lion" Route on Sunday 17th September, but during the night there came one unexpected addition in the form of the 3rd Parachute Battalion's C Company, who had been detached in Oosterbeek on the previous day to find their way to Arnhem along the Railway line. For the most part they had met no organised opposition, though at various stages they had encountered four armoured vehicles and destroyed three of them. C Company entered Arnhem during the night and to avoid a confrontation with the now increasing numbers of Germans around them, Major Lewis ordered his men to form-up in the enemy fashion and march to the Bridge in the hope of being mistaken for German troops. The plan worked, but when Major Lewis went forward to inform Lieutenant-Colonel Frost of his arrival, two of C Company's Platoons found themselves marching alongside German troops who were about to begin an attack on the British positions. In the darkness it took some time for both sides to become aware of the other's presence, whereupon they clashed violently. The German attack was broken up with heavy losses, but half of C Company were cut-off and taken prisoner and so Major Lewis was only able to lead forty-five into the Perimeter. Their arrival, however, brought the total defence up to a very respectable 740 men.

The only organised action undertaken by the Germans on Sunday night was against the Library which was held by A Troop of the 1st Parachute Squadron, under the command of Captain Eric Mackay. They had only been in the building for a few moments when German infantry attacked and although they were soon repulsed, Mackay concluded that the building was too vulnerable to an attack. He therefore withdrew his men into the neighbouring Van Limburg Stirum School (Map Ref 26), where they joined fellow sappers of B Troop, and were later reinforced by elements of the 3rd Battalion's C Company.

When the fires on the Bridge had finally died down, Lieutenant-Colonel Frost considered a third attempt to capture the other end, but it became apparent that the southern approaches were now too well defended by German infantry and armoured cars for this to be possible. Nevertheless, the Airborne troops were effectively in control of the Bridge as they could bring down fire all around it, and it would only require the mere presence of XXX Corps on the opposite side of the River for it to fall completely into Allied hands.

By dawn, however, Frost became aware that his force was completely surrounded, yet he remained confident that he could hold out until the rest of the Division arrived and at this stage he had no reason to suspect that this would not be achieved within a matter of hours. At this stage, time was more pressing for the Germans, who needed to clear the Bridge as soon as possible. Kampfgruppe Brinkmann underestimated the strength of the British positions and the numerous probing attacks that they made during the night and throughout the following morning, largely consisting of a brief period of light mortaring followed by an infantry charge, resulted only in failure and heavy losses.

At 0930 Hrs, British lookouts reported that armoured cars were approaching the Bridge from the south. The initial reaction was that the vanguard of the Guards Armoured Division had put in an unexpectedly early appearance, but these hopes were soon dashed when the vehicles were identified as German. This was the 9th SS Reconnaissance Battalion, returning from their scouting mission to Nijmegen on the previous day.

What their exact intention was remains a mystery, but they either hoped to challenge the defenders or race through them to assist the 9th SS Panzer Division's defence of Arnhem against the remainder of the 1st Airborne. Either way it was a complete disaster. The Airborne men were alert and waiting and they allowed the first four vehicles to pass by unhindered, but those behind were badly shot up by anti-tank weapons and small arms fire. The supporting German infantry were unable to advance more than half way across the Bridge, so dense was the fire levelled at them, while reinforcements, some mounted in extremely vulnerable half-tracks, made equally little progress as they attempted to help. The fighting lasted for two hours before the heavily mauled Germans withdrew to safety, leaving the Bridge littered with their dead and the burning wreckage of twelve of the Battalion's twenty-two vehicles. It is estimated that seventy of their four hundred men were killed during the attack, included amongst which was their commander, Hauptsturmführer Viktor Graebner, who only the previous day had been awarded the Knight's Cross for his bravery in Normandy.

The remainder of Monday saw various attacks on the eastern side of the Perimeter, all directed against buildings occupied by the men of the 1st Parachute Brigade's Defence Platoon and the 3rd Battalion. These were all bloodily repulsed with several tanks destroyed; however the defenders were forced to abandon several of their positions. Of the eighteen buildings occupied by Frost's men only ten were still functional.

German reactions:

SS-Obersturmführer Karl Ziebrecht recalls the advance to the bridge:

"Having advanced so far without enemy resistance, I thought it was now just a simple sprint to the bridge, still approximately 300 metres ahead of us. But we were hardly half way when we were blasted from both sides. The bridge ramp was occupied! The old fighting spirit flared up and everybody was given a lively 'greeting.' As we learnt later from the prisoners we interrogated, the enemy had been greatly surprised.

At night all we could do was quietly take up positions and close off all access roads. Next day at first light we went further. Despite their superior numbers (which we now knew) the enemy still did not attack us on that Monday morning. Nevertheless, we had to find a way to stop them shooting at us from the upper floors of the buildings and the roofs."

A third German attack, from the east this time, began at about 01:00 Hrs. This involved *Kampfgruppe Reinhold*, a scratch group led by *SS-Sturmbannführer* Leo H. Reinhold. The most formidable unit at his disposal was a part of *10. SS-Panzer-Division "Frundsberg"* - the 1st Battalion *SS-Panzergrenadier-Regiment 22* of *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Karl-Heinz Euling. This unit amounted to approximately 200 officers and men. At the corner of Badhuisstraat and Nieuwe Kade it was held up by a Platoon from C Company, 3rd Parachute Battalion. Other units of *Kampfgruppe Reinhold* became bogged down at Westervoortsedijk and by the Van Limburg Stirumschool.

Early in the morning *Sturmbannführer* Sonnenstuhl had set up an improvised command post in a corner house, probably in Velperweg or Steenstraat. He was totally unaware of any other German presence around the bridge until he received a visit:

"At 10 am the commander of *SS-Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 10*, *SS-Obersturmbannführer* Brinkmann, suddenly appeared at my battle post, having come via small pathways and over garden walls. He informed me that my left flank (east side) was now linked down as far as the bank of the Rhine. However, he had been given a new attack policy from *II. SS-Panzer Korps*. He was to be deployed on the other side of the Rhine. His battle group would be relieved by *SS panzer grenadiers* during the day. *SS-Obersturmbannführer* Brinkmann and I said our farewells and that was the last I saw of him that week at Arnhem bridge."

Sonnenstuhl possibly made a mistake when he wrote his account. As far as is known Brinkmann remained on the east side of the northern ramp of the Rhine Bridge in Arnhem and SS-*Sturmabführer* Reinhold and his battle group left for Nijmegen via Pannerden. SS-*Hauptsturmführer* Euling remembers being relieved by *Kampfgruppe Knaust*, a battle group consisting of *Wehrmacht* units. Major Hans-Peter Knaust and his 'press ganged' unit had travelled through the night from Bocholt to Arnhem.

Brigadeführer Heinz Harmel, commander of 10. SS-Panzer-Division "Frundsberg" had also had a long journey. He was in Berlin when news of the British airborne landings west of Arnhem came in. He left immediately for his headquarters in Ruurlo. He found no-one there, but found out it had been moved to Velp. His deputy SS-*Obersturmbannführer* Otto Paetsch was pleased to see him:

Paetsch's first words were:- "Thank God, you're back!". He began telling me what had happened and what the orders from SS-Obergruppenführer Bittrich were. I was totally unaware of the situation and its seriousness. I had heard the sounds of battle as we approached Arnhem. I was dog-tired because I had not slept that night and the evening before I could only manage a few cat-naps in the car on the way to Berlin. It was impossible to make a quick assessment of the situation. Everything was confused and uncertain.

"After speaking to Paetsch I spoke to Bittrich by phone. He repeated the orders more or less as I had already been given. I then decided to take a look for myself and left for the centre of Arnhem.

On the way to Arnhem along Velperweg, I stopped off at Sonnenstuhl's command post where I requested and was given two tanks. I continued on with the two tanks until I reached Velperplein and left one behind there.



Project Infantry Anti Tank Weapon (PIAT) that launched a 2.5 lbs missile.

I went with the other tank along Eusebiusbinnensingel towards the bridge. It had already been blocked with British anti-tank mines and the fighting was intense. I got as close to the bridge as possible. I saw the body of a dead soldier lying there that had not been recovered because it was in the British line of fire. There were many enemy snipers in the cellars and on the roofs of the surrounding houses.

I decided that the only way to deal with them was to use heavy artillery on the houses. There were guns available so I had them positioned in the middle of the wide street [Nijmeegseweg] and gave the order to fire. We began directly under the eaves and fired metre for metre until the houses collapsed. I lay on the ground between two guns and directed the gunfire.

Alas, we couldn't go on for too long because the British had set up a heavy gun in a bunker [a small house on the west side of the northern bridge ramp] and concentrated their fire on our artillery. We had to pull back. I could not remain in Arnhem because my task was to get my men to Nijmegen. I would like to have stayed. For me it was a new kind of battle experience."

After the war Harmel's part in the battle was called into question and in the late nineties this led to a split in the *Suchdienst Kameradschaft Frundsberg* veterans' organization into a small group with the same name and the new *Truppen Kameradschaft Frundsberg*. The latter group had no doubts about Harmel's performance but the first did. Based on reports and accounts from high-ranking officers of 10. SS-Panzer-Division "Frundsberg", which give an entirely different view of Harmel's actions.

From Monday afternoon the German forces were divided into two battle groups: *Kampfgruppe Knaust* in the east (Westervoortsedijk to Nieuwe Kade) and *Kampfgruppe Sonnenstuhl* to the north (Eusebiusbinnensingel to Eusebiusbuitensingel). The west side was not entirely sealed off due to lack of resources. This had enabled B Company of the 2nd Parachute Battalion, minus one Platoon, to join Lieutenant Colonel Frost's force at the bridge during the morning.

That same morning an attack by *SS-Panzer-Aufklärungs-Abteilung 9* from Elden became stranded on the anti-tank mines that Lieutenant D.M. Douglas's Assault & Pioneer Platoon had put down on Sunday evening. Corporal Leslie Mc Creesh, the Platoon's PIAT gunner, was in the Rijkswaterstaat building in Eusebiusbinnensingel and recalls that an anti-tank gun was also used against the armoured vehicles. He himself was operating a PIAT with Corporal Arthur Rattray and knocked out an armoured vehicle. Rattray was killed two days later.

Mrs E.C. Bitter-van Dijk, 19 at the time, lived in No 3 Marktstraat, halfway between the Rijksarchief (State Archive) and battalion headquarters of the 2nd Parachute Battalion in Dr. Van Niekerk's house.

She wrote about the fighting on Monday and Tuesday:-

"Towards evening the Germans appeared and our house was hit by a shell. There was not much sleep that night because the Germans were also shooting from the south bank of the Rhine. We saw that the small wooden sheds on the bridge ramp had been set on fire. Living on the first floor became too dangerous so we moved down to the ground floor where there was a 'church room'.

By early morning of 19 September the Germans had penetrated as far as the Markt and we saw a German officer ensconced in a line 2 tram. We heard the Germans yelling their orders. The British succeeded in driving the Germans out. They fired from the cellars of the surrounding buildings. The Germans nevertheless returned and began setting fire to the houses.

Our situation had worsened, not least because our house had already been hit by six shells. We stayed in the rear of the house where it was still more or less safe.

Even more buildings caught fire. A shell had hit the attic: it appeared to have been a dud! Meanwhile a sea of fire was approaching our house. What next? Flee for our lives?

From our house we could see the dead and wounded lying in the street, the wounded calling for help. We decided to flee anyway because our house was now on fire. We shouted 'fire, fire', trying to attract the attention of the British soldiers opposite us who were shooting. The gunfire stopped for a second and we crept along a wall away from our house in single file, preceded by a British parachutist. We found refuge in the Rijkswaterstaat building in Eusebiusbinnensingel". The cellars of the building were full of wounded British soldiers. The caretaker was still living there and there were other 'refugee' Arnhemmers present."

The German strategy was simple but effective. They first set up their units around the British positions at the bridge. At the same time they carried out attacks from the east, starting already in the evening of 17th September and continued the following night. First, in order to prevent a British breakout, the houses in Walburgisplein and the Paleis van Justitie (Palace of Justice) on the Markt were set on fire.

"Throughout Monday we were attacked with increasing vigour from the East and subjected to continuous mortar fire and shelling. A number of tanks and S.P. guns supported the attack and several attempts were made to bring armoured cars and tanks over the Bridge. Heavy toll was taken by both 6 Pdrs and P I AT's Nothing crossed the Bridge during the three days the Bridge was defended". (Major Tatham-Warter. Officer Commanding A Company, 2nd Parachute Regiment).

During Monday night another counterattack from the South was repelled with heavy losses. The position east of the Bridge where A Company and part of the Brigade HQ force had borne the brunt of the attack was strengthened by the addition of one Platoon of B Company.

"Until Tuesday midday we had no wireless communication with Div. HQ or the rest of the Brigade, but we could hear by the noise of the battle that they were having a very sticky time. When contact was finally made, we heard that every effort was being made to reach us. We heard afterwards that they had been unlucky in meeting very heavy opposition soon after leaving the D.Z. and though they fought without a break, they never got more than a footing in the town. Major Wallis 2 IC was killed on Monday evening and Major Tatham-Warter took over command of the Battalion. Our casualties had been heavy, but were mostly wounded". (Major Tatham-Warter. Officer Commanding A Company, 2nd Parachute Regiment).

Tuesday 19th September 1944, 1st Airborne, 2nd Battalion, report:

"At Arnhem the situation was still obscure. 1 Airborne division was endeavouring to concentrate all its forces some four miles west of the bridge, while troops of the parachute brigade maintained their hold on a small area in the immediate vicinity of the bridge itself. Food and ammunition were getting short owing to the failure of re supply on the 18th September". (Montgomery of Alamein)

Lieutenant Peter Stainforth Royal Engineers injured at Den Brink Tuesday 19th September.

Utter exhaustion now laid hold of our men after three days and two nights of continuous battle. No one had more than a few fitful snatches of sleep in the whole period, and there could be no rest now for the few still capable of fighting. Nor could they be revived with food and water their last bite and drop had gone. (Peter Stainforth, Wings of the Wind.)

Throughout the four days that the 1st Airborne Division had been fighting to get through to the Bridge, Lieutenant-Colonel Frost and his 740 men had been desperately struggling to hold it. Very little in the way of serious enemy activity had occurred during the night of Monday 18th September, but at 0300 Hrs on Tuesday morning, a group of Germans began to assemble alongside the Van Limburg Stirum School, completely unaware that the building was occupied by engineers of the 1st Parachute Squadron and men from the 3rd Battalion. The defenders picked their moment and wishing to save their ammunition, lobbed grenades at the intruders, killing approximately twenty whilst suffering no casualties themselves.

Later in the morning, three German Mk III tanks arrived in the eastern sector and began to shell several of the occupied buildings, having positioned themselves where the British anti-tank guns could not fire on them. Captain Frank, Second-in-Command of the 2nd Battalion's A Company, stalked them with a PIAT and successfully knocked out one of them, and in so doing persuaded the remainder to withdraw. Frank had ordered Lieutenant McDermont's No 3 Platoon to abandon one of the buildings which was threatened by the tanks and in so doing allowed German soldiers to occupy it. A Company's irrepressible commander, Major Tatham-Warter, was most annoyed about this and ordered the Platoon to retake the house. They succeeded in doing so; however their commander, McDermont, was mortally wounded in the attempt.

Shortly afterwards the Germans appealed to the British to surrender by sending a captured sapper, Lance-Sergeant Halliwell, to pass on the message to John Frost. The Germans were of the belief that the British troops ought to lay down their arms as they had no hope of being relieved by friendly forces. Frost thought the offer to be rather absurd as, despite being surrounded, he held a strong position and had no reason to suspect that either the remainder of the 1st Airborne Division or XXX Corps would not be arriving at any moment and so he did not even bother to reply to the message.

The strength of the British position and their refusal to move left the 10th SS Panzer Division in an awkward position, as they had still not been able to pass significant numbers of their forces down to Nijmegen to defend the bridges over the River Waal. Small quantities of men and vehicles were slowly being ferried across the Rhine at Panterden, six miles to the east, but this was not enough. There was, therefore, only one course of action, to destroy the resistance around Arnhem Bridge as quickly as possible. On the previous day the Germans had learned to their cost, however, that this could not be achieved with a straight forward infantry attack.

These attempts had cost them dearly and so they decided that the only sensible way to proceed was to heavily shell and mortar the British positions and gradually dig the paratroopers out of each building in turn with small-scale armour and infantry actions.

As of Tuesday afternoon, the perimeter around the Bridge was subjected to a savage and continuous bombardment, whereby the occupied buildings were targeted one at a time and systematically levelled from top to bottom. Phosphorus shells were occasionally used to set buildings on fire in an attempt to force the defenders to abandon their position.

All of this inflicted heavy casualties upon the British, although most of these were wounded rather than killed. In this regard the Frost's men were at a severe disadvantage as they had very little in the way of medical staff and supplies. The Brigade's medics, 16th Parachute Field Ambulance, had established themselves at the St Elizabeth Hospital, where they still worked, but in captivity under German guards. All the British at the Bridge had available to them were the 2nd Battalion's and 1st Parachute Brigade's Medical Officers and their small team of orderlies.

As the bombardment continued, a high number of German snipers had established themselves in positions to restrict British movement as much as possible and concentrated attacks of tanks and infantry were frequent. Nevertheless the defenders refused to be moved and violently repulsed each thrust as it came. As buildings were demolished and set on fire, officers were tireless in re-assigning men to new positions whilst doing all they could to keep morale high. Fighting patrols were routinely organised to seek out infiltrating enemy troops and drive them back with bayonet charges.

During the evening, huge German Tiger tanks attached to Kampfgruppe Brinkmann made their debut on the scene. These were deployed to harass positions in the north-eastern corner of the perimeter and they proceeded to attack each building by firing into them at point blank range. It came as something of a surprise to all that the buildings still stood after the terrific structural damage that this inflicted upon them. The only position that had to be abandoned, however, was that held by the RAOC troops of the 1st (Airborne) Divisional Field Park.

Hand held anti-tank weaponry was ineffective against such monster machines, but the better armed 6 Pdr anti-tank gunners made several attempts to engage the Tigers. Three crews singled out such a tank and attempted to draw it into a trap, but before the first crew could attack, they were spotted and taken out by the Tiger's machine gun. The two remaining guns, however, had positioned themselves to ambush the tank if it took the bait and ventured a little further inside the defences, but the Tiger did not oblige; satisfied that its attack had already badly weakened most of the positions to the east of the Bridge, it turned away and moved out of the perimeter.

As darkness fell on Tuesday, no determined attacks had been brought against the beleaguered paratroopers, though shelling and mortaring continued relentlessly through the night. Many of the buildings in the defences were ablaze, illuminating the surrounding area as if it were still daylight. However, spirits amongst the Airborne men remained high, despite the critical nature of their situation. Up to one hundred and fifty men were now lying wounded in the cellars and all supplies, whether they be food, water, medical, or ammunition, were now desperately low. Relief was needed most urgently.

Private Sid Blackmore was a PIAT gunner with A Company. He tells about the German attack on Tuesday 19th September:

On 19th September the house being defended by Jack Grayburn and his men was set on fire. Throughout the day all enemy attacks had been repelled, but when it became obvious that the fire could not be extinguished the lieutenant ordered his Platoon to leave the house. He reorganized his unit and that of the badly-wounded Lieutenant Andy McDermont and took his chequered group to a new position underneath the bridge ramp. They were attacked by shell fire from a tank and armoured car but they were unable to hit the defenders beneath the bridge underpasses.

Major Tatham-Warter's account of the 2nd Battalion's Operations on Tuesday 19th September 1944.

Tuesday was a repetition of Monday, with no appreciable worsening of the situation, except for an increase in casualties and a growing shortage of ammunition.

The most serious deficiency was in PIAT bombs, of which we now had none left, and so had no method of dealing with tanks which shelled our houses at very close range. The 6 Pdrs still kept the Bridge and Western approaches covered, but could not maintain positions east of the Bridge.

Until Tuesday midday we had no wireless communication with Div. HQ or the rest of the Brigade, but we could hear by the noise of the battle that they were having a very sticky time. When contact was finally made, we heard that every effort was being made to reach us. We heard afterwards that they had been unlucky in meeting very heavy opposition soon after leaving the D.Z. and though they fought without a break, they never got more than a footing in the town.

Report of Captain Tony Frank who briefly took command of A Company from Major Tatham-Warter on Tuesday 19th September 1944.

Captain Tony Frank reached the Bridge with A Company during the evening, and was given command of it when Major Tatham-Warter took over command of the Battalion, replacing Lieutenant-Colonel Frost who took charge of the Brigade.

On Tuesday 19th No 3 Platoon Lieutenant A. J McDermont was a serious casualty with wounds to the stomach and eventually died on Friday 22nd.

This left Captain Franks as the senior officer with Lieutenant R. A. Vlasto No 1 Platoon leader and Lieutenant J. H Grayburn No 2 Platoon defending the bridge.

Wounded in the ankle by shelling on Wednesday 20th September, Captain Frank was taken prisoner on the following day when British resistance finally collapsed, and then sent to the St Elizabeth Hospital for treatment.

With him was Major Tatham-Warter, who was similarly slightly wounded, and made it plain that he had no intention of being a prisoner for longer than was necessary. That night the two of them got out of bed, put on their clothes, climbed down from a first floor window, crawled through the hospital gardens and finally reached the railway line a mile to the west of the hospital where, quite exhausted, they halted until dawn.

As it grew light they noticed a farmhouse some distance away and eager to obtain some food, they watched it for some time before Tatham-Warter decided to knock on the door. The lady who owned the property took them in, fed them a meal of eggs and cheese which they eagerly devoured, and put them to rest in the loft of a barn. Having slept until the afternoon, they were roused by Menno de Nooy of the Ede Resistance, who took them into his care.

They were taken to a farm in the small Warnsborn forest, where they lived in a secret compartment in a shed, though in the evenings they emerged to play cards with the farmer and cut home-grown tobacco for cigarettes. It soon became clear that several hundred airborne personnel were in hiding around the Ede area and the Resistance were having trouble in concealing and administering such numbers.

Tatham-Warter, having established contact with Brigadier Lathbury, Lieutenant-Colonel Dobie and Major Hibbert to name but a few, effectively took charge and began to organise the evaders into a sort of coup-de-main force to spearhead any attempt by the 2nd British Army to cross the Rhine. When it became clear that there would be no such attempt, efforts were made to arrange for the withdrawal of this force to the Allied lines.

Operation Pegasus took place on the 22nd October, and saw the completely successful evacuation of 138 men, amongst who was Tony Frank. For the part he played in administering this force, he was 'Mentioned in Despatches'.

Signalman George Lawson with A Company. He relates an incident on Tuesday 19th September:

The sergeant ordered me to find some ammunition and get it to the A Company defenders under the bridge. So I went shopping for bullets with a shopping basket I had found. I had collected about thirty rounds and delivered them to the bridge when I ran into Major Digby Tatham-Warter walking about in his red beret, one arm in a sling with his umbrella on his arm and a pistol in his other hand. He called out 'Hurry up and get back to your post there are snipers about'.

Wednesday 20th September 1944, 1st Airborne, 2nd Battalion, report:

At Arnhem the situation was becoming acute. Although supplies were successfully dropped on the 20th September, it was still impossible to bring in the Polish Parachute Brigade, therefore the vital link between Arnhem and Nijmegen was still lacking while the enemy concentrated increasing forces of high calibre against 1st Airborne Division. The British troops had by now withdrawn into a small perimeter covering the Heveadorp ferry and the wooded area around Oosterbeek. (Montgomery of Alamein)

By dawn on Wednesday 20th September, German snipers and machine-gunners had so well covered the entire area that the positions on either side of the Bridge had become isolated from each other.

Stretcher-bearers were allowed to go about their work unimpeded, but all other movement was fraught with danger. Relocating troops from one building to another was scarcely possible and so the men in each building had to defend it until their position became untenable, whereupon they either had to surrender, run the gauntlet of mortars and machine-guns to reach a neighbouring building or if possible, continue to hold the line by digging themselves into the rubble.

Shells and mortars continued to pound the perimeter without pause. Phosphorus ammunition was being increasingly used to set buildings on fire, while armour and infantry continued to attack the British positions from all directions. They were still able to comfortably deal with the enemy infantry, but tanks effectively had free rein as there was very little in the way of anti-tank weaponry to persuade them to maintain a distance. Although desperately tired, the British troops continued to offer fierce resistance and they remained confident that relief was at hand, though it was clear to all that resistance would collapse if it did not arrive soon.

During the morning, despite the poor performance of the radio sets, Lieutenant-Colonel Frost received a message from Major-General Urquhart at Divisional HQ in Oosterbeek. Frost insisted that he needed reinforcements and supplies most urgently, but it quickly became clear to him that the rest of the Division was in a similarly desperate state and that there was nothing that they could do to help.

Relief, therefore, could only come from the south in the shape of XXX Corps, but looking in that direction, there was no comforting sign of battle eleven miles away at Nijmegen. The outlook was not promising.

Shortly after, German infantry heavily attacked the area around one of the archways supporting the ramp leading up to the Bridge, with the intention of laying explosives and destroying it.

German engineers fought desperately to place their charges, only for a similarly valiant attempt to be made by British engineers, led by Lieutenant Hindley of the 1st Parachute Squadron with the support of A Company, now under the command of Lieutenant Grayburn, to remove the fuses.

Later in the day the Germans made another attempt to lay explosives on the archway and this time the British attempted to remove the charges completely, however their gallant effort ended in failure as they were now terribly exposed to enemy fire and they suffered many casualties in the process. Amongst the dead was the Jack Grayburn, who was killed having stood up in full view of a tank in order to direct his men safely back to their positions. For his supreme conduct throughout the battle he was awarded the Victoria Cross.

During the afternoon, Lieutenant-Colonel Frost was talking with Major Crawley when a mortar exploded beside them and they were both wounded. Unable to actively lead his troops, Frost handed over command to Major Gough of the Reconnaissance Squadron, though he insisted on being consulted on all major decisions.

At about the same time, the men of the 1st Parachute Squadron and 3rd Battalion were finally forced to abandon their vital and resolute defence of the School (Map Ref 26). Thirty men were still able to fight, however they had precious little ammunition left and when a tank began to demolish what remained of their now fiercely burning building they were left with no option but to evacuate. Attempts were made to get the wounded to safety while those who could tried to make their way to friendly positions west of the Bridge, however the area was so well covered by enemy fire that their efforts failed and all were soon captured.

By this time, practically every building in the small perimeter was on fire. Due to this, the many wounded and above all else, a lack of ammunition, the British defence around the Bridge was beginning to crumble and so the decision was made to gather all the available men in the large garden area behind 1st Parachute Brigade Headquarters (Map Ref 2).

Here they could maximise their remaining firepower and still be in a position to fire on the Bridge and so prevent troops and vehicles of the 10th SS Panzer Division moving down to Nijmegen.

Those troops who had managed to find their way out of the beleaguered eastern sector and into the more stable western half assembled beneath the Bridge ramp, where they were joined by the 2nd Battalion's A Company, who had been forced out of their ruined houses by intense fires. This group then raced the 180 yards to Brigade HQ. It was a short distance to travel, but extremely dangerous due to a mortar bombardment and a lethal German cross-fire. Those who made it dug themselves into slit trenches in the garden and established as firm a defence as was possible under the circumstances. Despite their best efforts, however, they could not prevent German vehicles from crossing over the Bridge. They had, nevertheless, done their work, because as the first German troops began to cross Arnhem Bridge, British armour was beginning to pour across Nijmegen Bridge in the south. If Frost's men had not held out for so long, it is likely that Nijmegen Bridge would never have been captured.

Lieutenant-Colonel Frost's men continued to fight, though by now all the remaining buildings being used for the defence were heavily ablaze and the scores of wounded in the cellars were in serious danger as a result. The medical officers advised Frost that it was essential that a truce be arranged to evacuate the wounded from the area. This was desirable because, not only were the lives of the wounded in jeopardy, but the sparse medical supplies the force had available to it had long been spent and so it was only humane to place the wounded in the hands of the Germans, where they could at least be sure of receiving treatment.

Furthermore, the mere presence of so many wounded was inadvertently hampering the ability of the defenders to continue resisting and they also hindered a possible retreat from the Bridge as wounded men could not be abandoned in burning buildings. Although the truce would also necessitate his evacuation and becoming a prisoner of war, Frost agreed.

Shortly before the truce was arranged, Major Gough gathered approximately one hundred and twenty men of non 2nd Battalion origin and ordered them to split up and scatter northwards into the town, in the hope that they could make their way back to the main part of the Division in Oosterbeek. Gough himself remained behind at the Bridge with the 2nd Battalion.

The truce lasted for two Hrs, during which the Germans evacuated approximately two hundred and eighty men from the burning and collapsing buildings, most ending up at the St Elizabeth Hospital. Major Tatham-Warter ordered Captain Hoyer-Millar to protest to a German officer when he noticed that enemy infantry were violating the terms of the truce and were relocating themselves in positions closer to Brigade HQ. Hoyer-Millar threatened to open fire if they did not desist, though he knew all too well that he was in no position to bargain.

Following the resumption of hostilities, the Brigade HQ was subjected to a relentless and concentrated mortar bombardment. The remaining paratroopers could not hope to prevail beneath such a barrage and so Major Tatham-Warter split his force into two groups and ordered them to escape the shelling by scattering into the local area to hide before re-taking their positions before dawn in anticipation of fighting off a final enemy attack. The surrounding area, however, was by now too well held by the Germans for the men to slip away and the small groups were gradually rounded up. Although out of ammunition, some paratroopers refused to give up the fight. One incident in particular became legend amongst the SS troops fighting at the Bridge; an unarmed British soldier ran from his position to draw the fire of a machine-gunner whilst a colleague attempted to take out the gun using only his knife. Both men were wounded and taken prisoner, but the Germans were astonished by their reckless determination.

The gallant defence of Arnhem Bridge was over. It had been thought that the entire 1st Airborne Division could have only held the Bridge for four days, yet just seven hundred and forty men had managed to hold it for three days and four nights. 81 of them had died during the action and it is assumed that every man was taken prisoner, though a few of these later managed to escape.

The infamous manner in which SS troops treated their prisoners was well-known, yet in contrast to this image the British, for the most part, were treated with respect and despite the fact that they had killed and injured so many of their colleagues during the battle, they were even congratulated by the German soldiers for their spirited defence.

Perhaps the most fitting tribute was paid by a German Major who spoke with Major Gough and informed him that he had fought in Stalingrad and that it was therefore obvious to him that the British paratroopers had a great deal of experience in street-fighting. Gough replied that they had never done it before and that they'd be much better at it next time.

The battered and exhausted men who had struggled to hold Arnhem Bridge had done everything that could have possibly been asked of them. They felt terribly let down and they bitterly wondered what had become of XXX Corps.

A German victory.

Over the following days the Germans received more and more reinforcements. Mortar fire increased and the British ammunition had shrunk to almost nothing. Food supplies were also low and the number of dead and wounded rose because of the increased mortar fire and artillery shelling. A German 88 mm Flak gun to the south of the bridge played a large part in this. With barrel depressed it fired shell after shell into the houses on the west side of the bridge; those defended by B Company.

This strategy was extended on 19th and 20th September. The resolute actions of the Arnhem fire service from the Beekstraat fire station thwarted the German plans so the firemen were sent away. On Wednesday afternoon a small group was allowed to fight a fire in the inner city, but not St Eusebiuskerk, because the British parachutists had now been driven to the west side of the bridge ramp and the houses on the east side had been captured. The Germans were afraid the enemy would escape to the Markt and so machineguns and artillery pieces were positioned there.

A cease-fire was arranged on Wednesday evening so that the British wounded could be evacuated from the burning Rijkswaterstaat building. At 1945 Hrs two young Dutchmen, Klaas Deerman and Lambert van Essen, 17 and 19 years respectively, were shot dead in Eusebiusbinnensingel, i.e. killed during the short cease-fire. For a long time it was assumed they had been killed because they had given signals to the British parachutists. It is much more likely that they were murdered for aiding the British wounded, just as the five Dutchmen were murdered in Bakkerstraat on Monday evening.

The last message sent by the British radio-telegraphist from the bridge that night was "Out of ammunition. God save the King". German tanks then began rolling across the bridge heading south in order to halt the advance of British XXX Corps. In the afternoon of 21st September the remaining group of British defenders was forced to give up the fight: the men were simply out of ammunition, surrounded and exhausted.

By Wednesday midday the situation had worsened considerably. They had been burnt out of all our positions East and immediately West of the Bridge. In spite of the most gallant defence and reported counter attacks by A and B Companies, the remnants of both companies had to be withdrawn to a firm position, still covering the Bridge, but slightly further North, which had previously been held by HQ Company.

"All our buildings were burning fiercely and as I watched the Battalion Headquarters collapsed into heap of smouldering rubble. The whole scene was brilliantly lit up by the flames". (Major-General John Frost, A Drop too Many)

Colonel Frost and Major Crawley MC (Commanding B Company) were wounded during the morning and Capt Frank MC (then commanding A Company) had been wounded the previous evening.

"It had now become clear that the rest of the Division were very unlikely to reach us but we were cheered by the fact that advanced units of the 2nd Army would reach the Bridge by 1700 Hrs that evening. This did not happen and by dark the situation had become critical.

Soon after dark the few houses still standing were set on fire, and we found ourselves without a position. The wounded were then surrendered, and from reports I received afterwards were well cared for, with our own doctors to look after them.

During the night we tried to re-establish ourselves in other houses, but in doing so suffered heavy casualties and became very split up. By morning we were no longer a fighting force, and the battle was over.

Of the 2nd Battalion approximately 350 had reached the Bridge, of this number 210 were wounded, many of whom had fought on to the end, in spite of their wounds. It is not possible to estimate the number killed, but I know of approximately 100 taken prisoner unwounded.

The Battalion had fought with the utmost gallantry, in inconceivably difficult conditions, and had denied the use of the vital Bridge to the enemy for 80 hours". (Major Tatham-Warter, Officer Commanding 2nd Parachute Battalion).

21st-30th September 1944, report:

Every possible effort was now concentrated on relieving the Arnhem bridgehead forces. With the exception of the 23rd September adverse weather conditions continued severely restricting air operations. On the 22nd September it was impossible to carry out any troop carrier movement at all. (Montgomery of Alamein)

Field Marshall Montgomery's Summary:

We had undertaken a difficult operation, attended by considerable risks. It was justified because, had good weather obtained, there was no doubt that we should have attained full success.

A great tribute is due to 1st Airborne for the magnificent stand at Arnhem. Their action against overwhelming odds held off enemy reinforcements from Nijmegen and virtually contributed to the capture of the Nijmegen bridges intact. The battle of Arnhem was ninety percent successful. (Montgomery of Alamein)

Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery's letter to: Major-General Urquhart, 28th September 1944.

I want to express to you personally, and to every officer and man in your Division, my appreciation of what you all did at Arnhem for the Allied cause.

I also want to express to you my own admiration, and the admiration of us in 21 Army Group, for the magnificent fighting spirit that your Division displayed in battle against great odds on the North bank of the lower Rhine in Holland.

There is no shadow of doubt that, had you failed, operations elsewhere would have been greatly compromised. You did not fail, and all is well elsewhere.

I would like all Britain to know that in your final message from the ARNHEM area you said:-

"All will be ordered to break out rather than surrender. We have attempted our best, and we will continue to do our best as long as possible".

And all Britain will say to you:-

"You did your best; you all did your duty; and we are proud of you."

In the annals of the British Army there are many glorious deeds. In our Army we have always drawn great strength and inspiration from past traditions and endeavoured to live up to the high standards of those who have gone before. But there can be few episodes more glorious than the epic of ARNHEM and those that follow after will find it hard to live up to the standards that you have set.

So long as we have in the Armies of the British Empire officers and men who will do as you have done, then we can indeed look forward with complete confidence to the future.

In the years to come, it will be a great thing for a man to be able to say: - "I fought at ARNHEM."

Please give my best wishes and my grateful thanks to every officer and man in your Division.

Summary of Brigadier John W Hackett, Commander 4th Parachute Brigade.

Market Garden should never have been undertaken, with Antwerp not yet open and maintenance tied to a three hundred mile road back to Channel Beachheads. More attention should also been paid to Dutch advice. Failure though it was, what we call the Battle of Arnhem, will always be one of the finest of the British Army. (Resume of Major General R.E. Urquhart action at Arnhem)

Major Victor Dover MC, 2nd Parachute Battalion OC C Company.

Montgomery discredited, or ignored, intelligence reports that the 9th SS Panzer Division and presumably the 10th and 11th were also in the Arnhem area, so anxious was he to prove his theory of the advantage of the single thrust, as well as ending the war by Christmas as he predicted. This was the vital factor which gave the impetus to launch the operation regardless. (The Silken Canopy 1979)

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander Allied Expeditionary Forces.

In this war there has been no single performance by any unit that has more greatly inspired me or more highly excited my admiration, than the nine days action of your Division between September 17th and 26th. (Letter to Major-General Urquhart, October 1944)

Summary of Major Gen John Frost, 2nd Parachute Battalion OC.

Much has been said and written about the Battle of Arnhem. I am often asked 'What went wrong'. I should take this opportunity of saying what I think:

- 1. The unwillingness of the air forces to fly more than one sortie in the day was one of the chief factors that militated against success.*
- 2. Air force planners that insisted that the farmland between the rivers was unsuitable for landing gliders and that the enemy flak was too formidable to allow drop zones near the objectives exerted a fatal handicap on the airborne troops.*
- 3. The presence north of Arnhem of the 2nd SS Panzer Corps was known to HQ's Army Group, Army and Airborne Corps yet this vital information was withheld from HQ XXX Corps and 1st Airborne Division.*
- 4. Failure by both the Army and the Air Force to make full use of the Dutch underground meant that the most effective means of producing and confirming information was discarded.*
- 5. By far the worst mistake was the lack of priority given to the capture of Nijmegen Bridge. On D-Day they could have walked over the bridge. The priority was given to capture the Groesbeek Heights. Finally, when it was decided that Nijmegen Bridge should be taken the Germans had been able to strengthen their defence to the extent that American Parachutists had to paddle across the river in flimsy British canvas boats under murderous gun fire and rates as one of the bravest feats of all time.*
- 6. Many of the Generals failed to communicate with the vanguard troops the urgency required to reach Arnhem. General Dempsey, 2nd Army Commander failed throughout to communicate with General Horrocks XXX Corps Commander.*
- 7. With the Bridge captured intact on Wednesday 20th while the 1st Airborne were still fighting at Arnhem it was several Hrs before an effort by the Guards Armoured Division was made. When four tanks were knocked out the whole effort came to grinding halt. (A Drop too Many, Lt Col J.D. Frost).*

Report of Major-General R E Urquhart Commander 1st British Airborne Division.

The Operation was not 100% successful and did not end quite as we intended. The losses were heavy but all ranks appreciate that the risks involved were reasonable. There is no doubt that all would willingly undertake another operation under similar conditions in future. We have no regrets. (Arnhem, Major General R.E. Urquhart)

The return of troops that survived the retreat across the river at Arnhem.

26th September 1944

1800Hrs - Orders to prepare to withdraw given.

2000Hrs - 2nd Glider element withdrawn to ferry across River Rhine and then taken by transport to reception centre set up at Nijmegen.

27th September 1944

0400Hrs - Personnel arrived at reception centre after this time. Hot meal and rum were issued and then personnel were shown to beds. Day spent in washing and cleaning and general re-equipping.

28th September 1944

During the night of 27th and early morning of 28th German Fighter Bombers caused damage to civilian property adjoining the Reception Centre.

PM - Personnel join remainder of 1st Seaborne Lift at Louvain in Belgium.

29th September 1944

Resting and further equipping.

30th September 1944

1030 - Party boards planes for England.

The destruction of the Rhine Bridge

On 7th October 1944 American B-26 Marauders from the 344th Bomb Group attacked the bridge to deny the Germans its use, thus preventing them from reinforcing their troops in the Betuwe. The bombing did not cause total destruction. Although vehicles were unable to use it, it was indeed possible to fit an emergency bridge to the collapsed sections.

The remains of the bridge were blown up in January 1945, this time by the Germans for fear of an allied offensive, which did not actually begin until April. In the spring of 1945, after the city had been liberated by the British 49th "Polar Bears" Infantry Division and units of a Canadian armoured division, Canadian sappers constructed double Bailey bridges on Nieuwe Kade, east of the destroyed Rhine Bridge.

On 8th June that year they were opened in the presence of the burgomaster Chris Matser and the Canadian Generals Charles Foulkes and Guy Simmonds, after whom the bridges were named. Eventually the Rhine Bridge was rebuilt for the second time (the river crossing had already been blown up in May 1940) and was completed in 1950.

In 1945, acting head of the Arnhem Luchtbeschermingsdienst (Air Defence Service), B. van Brussel, wrote this about the recovery of the many war victims around the bridge:

"More than once various people came to the office saying there must be bodies in their gardens because of the vile, all-pervading smell. And that was true, but in these cases the smell came from British or German latrines, not decomposing bodies.

The completely charred corpse of a British soldier was found during rubble-clearance at the Rijkswaterstaat building. It turned out that there were even more under the rubble, nine in all. Remains or completely decomposed bodies are found daily in the ruins of the surrounding buildings."

That was Arnhem: a tragedy but a name that will live forever.



1st Parachute Brigade Plan.

Gerald William Lathbury was born in India in 1906, son of Colonel Lathbury. He was educated at Wellington College and Sandhurst before being commissioned into the O and B LI in 1926. He fought in France, North Africa, Sicily, Italy and Europe. He suffered wounds in Sicily and at Arnhem where he was captured but later escaped.

Brigadier Lathbury's 1st Parachute Brigade consisted of the senior and most experienced parachute units in the British Army many recruited from the OBLI, they were considered to be the elite of a crack division.

The force about to be sent to Arnhem was to contain several further units besides the Parachute Battalions under his command. These additional units were: 1st Parachute Squadron and part of the 9th Field Company of the Royal Engineers, the major element of the 1st Air landing Anti-Tank Battery, 16 Parachute Field Ambulance, No 3 Platoon 250 RASC Company and two forward observation officers with each battalion and Brigade HQ together with glider pilots and other personnel.

Initially Lathbury had major decisions to make as whether to concentrate his force along one route from the landing zones or to split the force to attack the bridge from three different routes. His choice depended on the strength of the opposition, in the event the latter was chosen.

On 15th September Brigadier G.W. Lathbury briefed his subordinate commanders that they were to take part in a great offensive that had the aim of surrounding the Ruhr, making it impossible for Germany to continue the war. The first phase was to lay a carpet of airborne troops over which XXX Corps and the 2nd Army would cover at great speed. To achieve this plan the three bridges were to be taken intact. 1st Airborne were to capture and hold the bridge at Arnhem.

The detailed plan was:

- 1.0 The Reconnaissance Squadron and No 3 Platoon, 9th Field Company would drive to the south end of the bridge via the northern route named Leopard, remove any charges and hold until relieved.
- 2.0 The 2nd Battalion with a troop of six Pdr guns and some REs would take the southern route along the river codenamed Lion, passing through Heelsum and capture the northern end of the highway bridge. They were to capture the railway bridge near Oosterbeek as the first objective and then the temporary pontoon.
- 3.0 The 3rd Battalion also with a troop of six Pdr guns and some REs would take the Utrecht-Arnhem Road named Tiger and assist the 2nd Battalion in holding the bridge.
- 4.0 The 1st Battalion with a troop of six Pdr guns and some REs to follow the Reconnaissance Squadron on the Leopard route and hold the high ground to the north of Arnhem.
- 5.0 Brigade HQ to follow 2nd Battalion along the Lion route to the North end of the bridge. The column would be most of the 1st Parachute Squadron, the RASC Platoon, the HQ of the 1st Air landing Anti Tank Battery, a Military Police field security section and 16 Parachute Field Ambulance that was to exit the column at St Elizabeth Hospital.

A single company of the 1st Battalion was retained as brigade reserve.

The initial success of the operation depended on the tasks set in items 1.0 and 4.0. In the event these groups failed to accomplish their missions and set the whole operation into disarray. Brigadier Lathbury was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his actions during and after the Battle of Arnhem.

His citation reads:

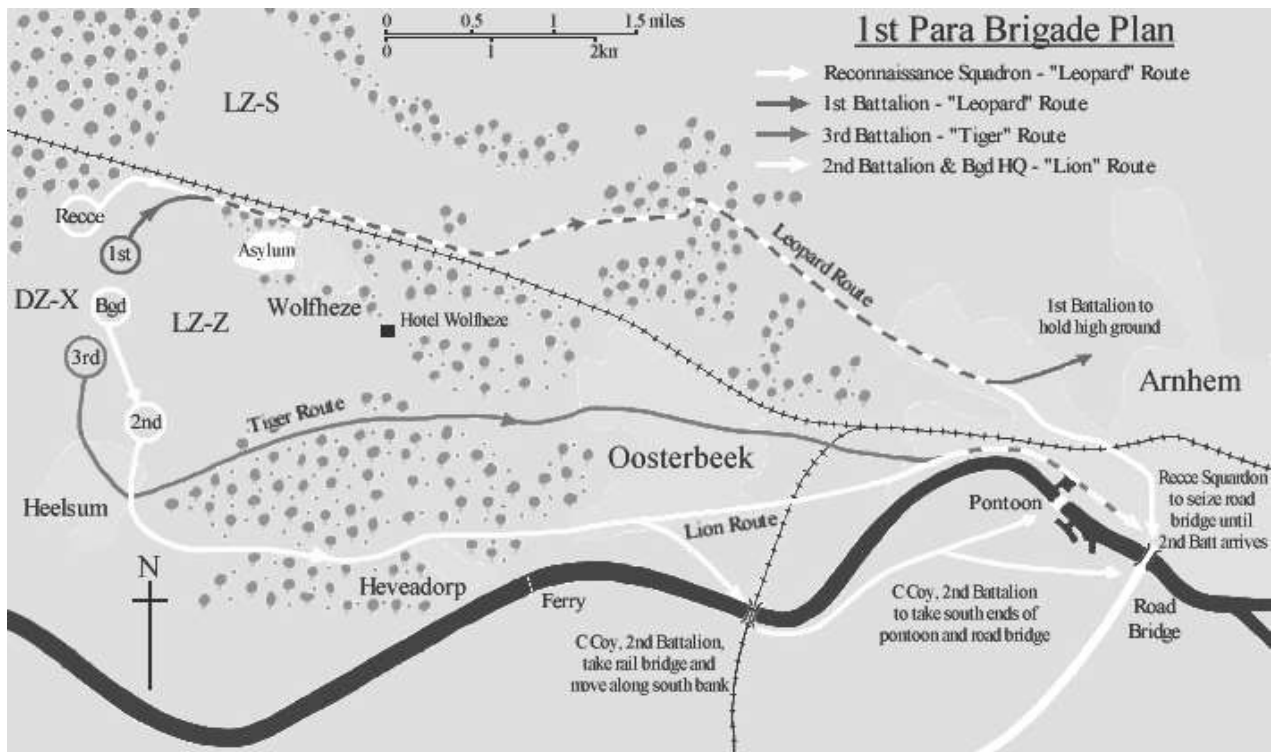
On 17th September at Arnhem, Brigadier Lathbury commanded the 1st Parachute Brigade whose task was to seize the main road bridge in the town.

He conducted the advance of his Brigade from the Drop Zone, some 8 miles away, with great vigour until he was cut off from his Headquarters. He then took part in street fighting with one of his Battalions until he was wounded on 18th September and taken to hospital.

During the night 24/25th September, seeing that those who were wounded and fit to move, were being evacuated from the hospital to Germany, Brigadier Lathbury although not fully recovered left the hospital and tried to rejoin the Division. He was unable to do this as the latter had been withdrawn to the south bank of the river that night.

With the aid of the Dutch Resistance Movement he evaded capture and remained in hiding until he escaped across the river with the party which reached our lines on the 23rd October.

The leadership which this officer displayed during the advance and his determination to escape capture is worthy of the highest praise.



A Company 'Lion' Route: Renkum Heath, Heelsum, Roggekemp, W.A Scholtenlaan, Heveadorp, Benedendorpsweg, Oosterbeek, Klingelbeeksweg, Onderlangs, Rijnkade, The Bridge.

Record of Jack's events at Arnhem.

Days before the order to assemble for operation Market Garden:

15th September 1944

Place: Stoke Rochford, Nr Grantham.

am- A, B, C, S and HQ Coys do training under own Coy Training Programmes.

16th September 1944

Place: Stoke Rochford, Nr Grantham.

0900 Hrs - Officers briefed for Operation "MARKET".

1000 Hrs - A/C taken over.

Coys briefed at following times:

1300 Hrs - B HQ and HQ Coy 1400 Hrs-A Coy,

1445 Hrs - B Coy,
1600 Hrs - C Coy

17th September 1944

Place: Stoke Rochford, Nr Grantham.

0630 Hrs - Reveille.

0900 Hrs - 2nd Parachute Battalion under Lt-Col J D Frost leave camp for Airfield.

0930 Hrs - Arrival at Airfield. Tea with bacon sandwiches for breakfast.

1030 Hrs (approx) - Emplaning commences with vehicles in gliders.

1126 Hrs - 31 Officers and 478 ORs take off. (Note: this number of ORs differs in other reports).

Sunday 17th September 1944. Day 1.

The 2nd Battalion boarded 34 C-47 Dakotas at Saltby aerodrome, North Leicestershire. American pilots had the utmost confidence in the success of their part of the operation.

At 1400 Hrs they made their approach to the dropping zone at Renkum Heath.

1st Parachute Brigade: Brig Gerald W.G. Lathbury.

2nd Parachute Battalion: CO Lieutenant Col J.D. Frost.

2nd Parachute Battalion: 2 I/C Major D.W. Wallis.

A Company: OC Major A. Digby Tatham-Warter.

B Company: OC Major Douglas Crawley.

C Company: OC Major Victor Dover.

A Company 2 I/C: Captain A.M. Frank MC

A Company SM W.O.II D. Meads

No 1 Platoon: Lieutenant R.A. Vlasto

No 2 Platoon: Lieutenant J.H. Grayburn

No 3 Platoon: Lieutenant A. J. McDermont

'On Sunday morning 17th September 1944, the 1st Airborne Division took to the sky. It was to be a day of decision and magnificent disaster'. (The Silken Canopy, Major Victor Dover.)

"My plan was for A Company under Digby Tatham-Warter to move off the DZ first and make straight for the main bridge. Having consolidated on the North end he was to pass one Platoon across to the South side. I and C Company, which was to capture the railway bridge near Oosterbeek, and then pass across it so as to reach the South end of the main bridge. This action would be supported by the Battalion's mortars and machine guns. Last in the column was B Company, which was my reserve for any eventuality". (A Drop too Many, Major Gen J. D. Frost.)

At 1530 Hrs A company led by No's 1-3 Rifle Platoons under Major Tatham-Warter were at the head of the column of the 2nd Battalion. The advance party started their move towards Arnhem, an eight mile march taking the southernmost route, known as the 'Lion' route (Bennekomseweg) that ran from the woods at Heelsum via Rokkekamp onto the oldest narrow, east- west road (Schooltenlaan) that led via Heveadorp, Oosterbeek to Arnhem with the river Neder Rhine on their right hand side.

Attached to the 2nd Battalion column following on behind Tatham-Warter's A Company to the Arnhem Bridge were: Half B Troop of 1st Parachute Squadron, Part of No 2 Platoon, 9th Field Company (all Royal Engineers), four six Pdr anti tank guns of the 1st Air landing Anti Tank Battery, with a fifth gun joining later, together with their Major Bill Arnold, the battery commander and his HQ staff.

The advance column at the outskirts of the village of Heelsum immediately ran into a small convoy of German vehicles from a reconnaissance No 2 Company of SS Panzer-Grenadier depot and reserve Battalion 16 led by SS-Sturmbannführer Joseph 'Sept' Krafft's. Lieutenant Andrew McDermont's No 3 Platoon in the lead position set ambush conditions and dealt with the column and took thirty or so German prisoners, destroying all the vehicles.

After 3 miles through the woods with the three rifle Platoons alternating the lead, Jack's No 2 Platoon had arrived at a T-Junction (WA Scholtenlaan, Doorwerth Woods). Jack's leading Platoon chose to take the left turning, heading north towards the 3rd Battalion on the Tiger route. When the remainder of A Company approached the junction they were caught by the Germans as they opened with gun and mortar fire from the woods.

The perpetrators were soon cleared by a pincer movement led by Jack's No 2 Platoon from the left and A.J. McDermont's No 3 Platoon from the right.



Old Church, Oosterbeek.

'Jack's Platoon working their way to the right went into the woods under a smoke screen to attack the machine gun and mortar emplacement as A.J. McDermont's No 3 Platoon entered from the left in a pincer movement, the enemy moved off quickly.' (Lieutenant Robin Vlasto A Company, No 1 Platoon)

During this engagement Major Digby Tatham-Warter's previous experience of the radio communications during training that had been negative, came to use. He had coached his men to operate to the sound of his hunting horn. Each Platoon had a member that could use a bugle to send and receive such signals. The exchange with the Germans at the T-Junction and the communication by bugle for the first time under fire proved to be invaluable.

A Company did not have to wait long to hear Jack's Platoon return bugle call, that he was again on the Lion route (WA Scholtenlaan) and that it was all clear to advance.

It was about 1800 Hrs when A Company passed the outskirts of Heveadorp and reached the edge of Oosterbeek at the old church (later a key point in the final defence of the Oosterbeek perimeter) using the narrow wooded WA Scholtenlaan. It was heard that the troops received a warm welcome from the happy Dutch civilians. Unfortunately the celebrations were eventually to delay the whole of the following 2nd Battalion convoy as it passed through the outskirts of Oosterbeek.

At this point the 2nd Battalion convoy was progressing in parallel to the now delayed 1st and 3rd Battalions using the more northerly routes Tiger and Leopard. Their plan was to meet up at the bridge but with the delays at the dropping zone there was a brief plan to advance these battalions by jeep once out of the woods. Heavy German forces were encountered and the idea could not be followed up.

The next major landmark for A Company was at the Oosterbeek Laag Railway Station where a few snipers caused another slight setback. A Company's rifle Platoons soon dealt with the problem.

At this point Major Dover's C Company was detached from the main column in Oosterbeek with the objective of capturing and holding the railway bridge that crossed the Rhine and progressing to the South end of the Arnhem Bridge. They moved away onto the meadow (as it was later discussed, a suitable landing area for the airborne troops that might have saved lives, time and protected the railway bridge from destruction) that was between the Lion Route road and the railway bank. As C Company made their way towards the railway bridge the German engineers blew the bridge.

The Germans had soldiers guarding the southern end of the bridge who opened fire, causing casualties. C Company withdrew and attempted to join the main column along the Lion Route. The Germans by now had closed the route behind the B Company convoy, forcing C Company to divert into Oosterbeek.

"The fundamental mistake of dropping airborne troops on the far side of the larger water obstacle when you actually require them on both sides appears altogether too obvious now". (A Drop too Many, Lt Col J.D. Frost).

Just beyond the Oosterbeek Laag (lower) station the railway underpass with its high banking either side signalled the final obstacle on the approach to the Arnhem Bridge.

Lieutenant's Vlasto's No 1 Platoon now in the lead position had casualties when they encountered an enemy armoured car that opened fire with a 20mm gun and machine gun. The armoured car moved off when a six Pdr gun was brought forward.

The final road to the bridge beyond the railway was also covered by German troops and patrolling armoured cars in the higher wooded ground of Den Brink causing a major delay that resonated back along the column.

Lt Col Frost ordered B Company to divert from the column and clear the Den Brink area of the opposition. It took until dark before they could disengage and rejoin the Battalion at the bridge. The position at Den Brink was quickly reclaimed by the German troops and controlled a defensive position to the bridge.

While this action was being carried out Jack's No 2 Platoon by passed the delaying situation by manoeuvring through the back gardens of the houses on either side of the road and pressing forward to the bridge. At 1900 Hrs the rest of A Company started their move forward.

Jack's No 2 Platoon, now in the vanguard had proceeded quickly along the Lion route and at 1930 crossed the boundary between Oosterbeek and Arnhem, 500 yards on from the station. They then covered the remaining 2 miles, dropping down via Onderlangs on to the towpath (Rijnkade) and reached the Bridge in 30 minutes.

It was now dark and Jack ordered his men patrolling the bridge embankments not to open fire on the occasional German traffic still using the bridge, preferring not to advertise their presence until the rest of the 2nd Battalion column arrived.



Pre-war picture of the Rijnkade, the tow path that was the final link that led to the Arnhem Bridge.

Under the of command Major Tatham-Warter, the rest of A Company reached the north end of the Arnhem Bridge in the dark initially taking up positions in the road arches beneath the bridge ramp.

A Company Platoons set about clearing a few Germans out of their defensive positions taking between 30-40 prisoners. No 1 and No 3 Platoons took up positions in the tall buildings either side of the bridge (buildings No 13 and 18) and Jack's No 2 Platoon (building No 16).

Jack then arranged for defensive positions either side of the bridge using the embankments and road ramps that ran up to the main bridge structure.

There was no sign of the Reconnaissance Squadron that should have reached the south end of the bridge, nor of the 3rd Battalion that had taken the Tiger route to meet up at the north end of the bridge.

The depleted and almost exhausted riflemen had also cleared out some of the houses surrounding the northern end of the bridge. The Germans had broken and run, leaving guns, ammunition in our hands. The scratch force the Germans had collected together to defend the bridge was no match for the riflemen (Arnhem Spearhead, James Sims 2nd Battalion Mortar Company)

The bridge had been secured at the north end mainly due to the efforts of Tatham-Warter's A Company who at this stage had suffered the loss of one man killed and a few others wounded.

Things were organised amid the most awful row. There was complete absence of any enemy and the general air of peace was quite incredible. The CO arrived and seemed extremely happy. (Lieutenant R.A. Vlasto, 1st Platoon).

Tatham-Warter organised A Company. 1st and 3rd Platoons to occupy the houses on either side of the bridge and Jack's No 2 Platoon dug into the embankment either side of the ramp nearer to the town where the steps allowed direct access to the bridge ramp. Jack's Platoon allowed the occasional German traffic to pass freely.

At 2030 Hrs A Company's No 3 Platoon led by Lieutenant McDermont attempted to reach the Southern end of the bridge but was defeated by heavy gunfire from the pill box and an armoured car suffering 8 casualties in the first 50 yards.

The Brigade Headquarters group and the remainder of the 2nd Battalion column arrived about 20:45 Hrs and outnumbered the troops of A Company already in the bridge area. 700-740 men had now made the bridge (the numbers varies in different reports). The newly arrived were from 2nd Parachute Battalion HQ, HQ support plus A and B Company, Parachute Brigade HQ, 1st Parachute Squadron RE HQ, 3rd Parachute C Company HQ, 1st Air-Landing Anti-Tank Battery RA HQ and B Troop, 250 Light Composite Company, RASC No 3 Platoon, 9th Field Company RE, Glider Pilots, Reconnaissance Squadron RA, REME, Intelligence Corp, war correspondents and Military Police.

The Brigade headquarters was set up in the former hospital building (building No 2) now used as a Government building for Provincial Roads and Waterways and B Company HQ in building No 3 whose owner after showing some reluctance to the occupation retired to the basement.

Lt Col John Frost keen to control both ends of the bridge ordered Jack's No 2 Platoon to make a further attempt to cross the bridge and capture and secure the Southern end of the bridge.

Jack's Platoon with blackened faces and boots muffled with wrapped strips of curtain from the house were to progress in single files along the ramp to each side of the bridge and the use the steel girders of the bridge as protection. They were quickly detected by the Germans in the north end pill box of the bridge and met with fire from two 20mm quick firing guns from the pill box and 20mm cannon from an armoured car when progressing along the open ramp of the bridge.

Jack was shot through the shoulder but he ordered his men to go forward although there was little cover on the ramp but with casualties to another eight of his men the force had to withdraw under the direction of Jack to their protected areas on the embankment.

At around 2200 Hrs a flame thrower from the Royal Engineers who had taken up residence in a house (No 17) that overlooked the pillbox was called up and directed their attack towards the pill box. They missed the target but set alight to sheds standing behind the pill box.

They evidently contained petrol and 20 mm ammunition that exploded and the resulting flames set alight the recently repainted bridge.

Then an Anti Tank gun (PIAT) was ordered up from Lieutenant Vlasto's No 1 Platoon and fired rounds into the pill box destroying it completely.

At this point a small convoy of four German lorries loaded with troops and one loaded with ammunition drove onto the bridge from the Southern end and was dispatched with fire from combined Platoons stationed on the embankment and houses adjacent to the bridge. The ammunition in the lorry blew up in stages adding to the spectacular blaze.

"We brought them to a halt near the burning pillbox which caused the lorries to catch fire. The heat from the burning lorries was so intense no further approach could be made that night". (Lt Col John D. Frost, Men of the Red Beret, Max Arthur)

Later that night Jack was ordered to move his Platoon from the embankment into the house that directly overlooked the bridge from the west side (No 16) to which Jack personally again organised the defensive positions.

During the night the Germans made their only attack on the eastern corner of the perimeter. The exposed house (No 27) became impossible to defend and Captain MacKay ordered a withdrawal to the Van Limburg schoolhouse (No 26). The 2nd Battalion had suffered 9 casualties and approximately 30 wounded by the end of Day One.

Lt Col John D Frost recalls reaching the Arnhem Bridge on the first day.

"I visited A Company, who was in great heart, as indeed they had every reason to be. They had fought their way in for eight miles, through very close, difficult country to capture their objective within seven Hrs of landing in Holland, accounting for one hundred and fifty Germans and several vehicles en route. A very fine feat of arms. Most of the prisoners were SS men, fighting soldiers of great repute". (A Drop too Many, Lt Col J.D. Frost).

Major Allison Digby Tatham-Warter's account of the 2nd Battalion's Operations at Arnhem Sunday 17th September 1944

The task given to the 2nd Battalion was:-

(1) To seize the three Bridges over the RHINE at ARNHEM.

(2) Later to establish the Western half of the Brigade sector forming a bridgehead North of the main road Bridge, to allow the advanced units of the 2nd Army free passage, and deny use of it to the enemy.

The plan for carrying out those tasks was as follows. The Battalion would advance with all possible speed, with A Company leading, seize the Main Road Bridge West of the town, C Company were to seize the North end, and pass one Platoon to the South bank with the task of linking up, from the South, with A Company on the Main Bridge. C Company was then to establish their part of the Battalion sector for Phase 11.

On reaching the Boat Bridge, B Company were to seize the Bridge, and hold it as the left flank of the Battalion sector in Phase 11.

We were in possession of detailed information of enemy defences and concentrations, and did not expect anything except hurriedly organised resistance in Phase 1. It was clear, however, that the enemy would react strongly, and we expected to withstand heavy counter-attack, with the likelihood of tanks, until the arrival of the 2nd Army who were scheduled to reach us after 48 Hrs.

The Battalion was dropped at 1445 Hrs on D. day 17th September, with perfect accuracy on the D.Z. 7 miles West of ARNHEM. There was no opposition on the D.Z. and except for a motor patrol captured by A Company at the R.V. no opposition was met until we had moved two miles towards the town. Here A Company bumped what proved to be the Southern flank of a strong enemy position, and after a spirited assault by one Platoon, were able to continue the advance. They met no more opposition until the railway west of the town. From then on armoured cars and hastily organised defences caused only minor delay in the falling light, until A Company reached and seized the North end of the Main Bridge at 20:00 Hrs. They had taken some 50 prisoners during the advance.

Meanwhile C Company had taken the North end of the Railway Bridges only to see it blown as they began to cross.

Similarly the Boat Bridge, which B Company reached after overcoming considerable resistance, was burnt before they could use it.

An assault by A Company, across the Main Bridge, was met by devastating fire from tanks and light A.A. on the Bridge, and the attempt was abandoned.

Efforts were then made to secure boats for an assault on the South end of the Bridge, but thorough reconnaissance revealed that all boats had been removed from the North bank. In spite of these reverses we were more than satisfied with the course of events.

2nd Battalion, A Company, No 2 Platoon timeline for Sunday, Day 1.

1400 Hrs: A Company that includes Jack's No 2 Platoon rallies in DZ on Renkum Heath.

1500 Hrs: A Company leaves drop zone and takes the southern 'Lion' route to Arnhem. Eight miles to the Arnhem Bridge.

1530 Hrs: After two miles, Andrew McDermont's No 3 Platoon in the lead position set ambush conditions and deals with the column and take thirty or so German prisoners, destroying all the vehicles. Jack's No 2 Platoon and R.A Vlasto's No 1 Platoon support the action.

1700 Hrs: Jack's Platoon, in the lead of A Company commit to a pincer move with Andrew McDermont's No 3 Platoon under a smoke screen to clear Germans from the woods near Doorweth.

1800 Hrs: A Company including Jack's Platoon reaches the Old Church on the outskirts of Oosterbeek.

1900 Hrs: Jack's Platoon clears snipers at Oosterbeek Laag Station and skirts through the back of houses beyond the railway bridge and has a clear run along the towpath (Rijkade) to the Bridge.

1930 Hrs: A Company with Jack's No 2 Platoon reach the Arnhem Bridge, having covered 8 miles in 6 Hrs. They capture 20-30 Germans along the route.

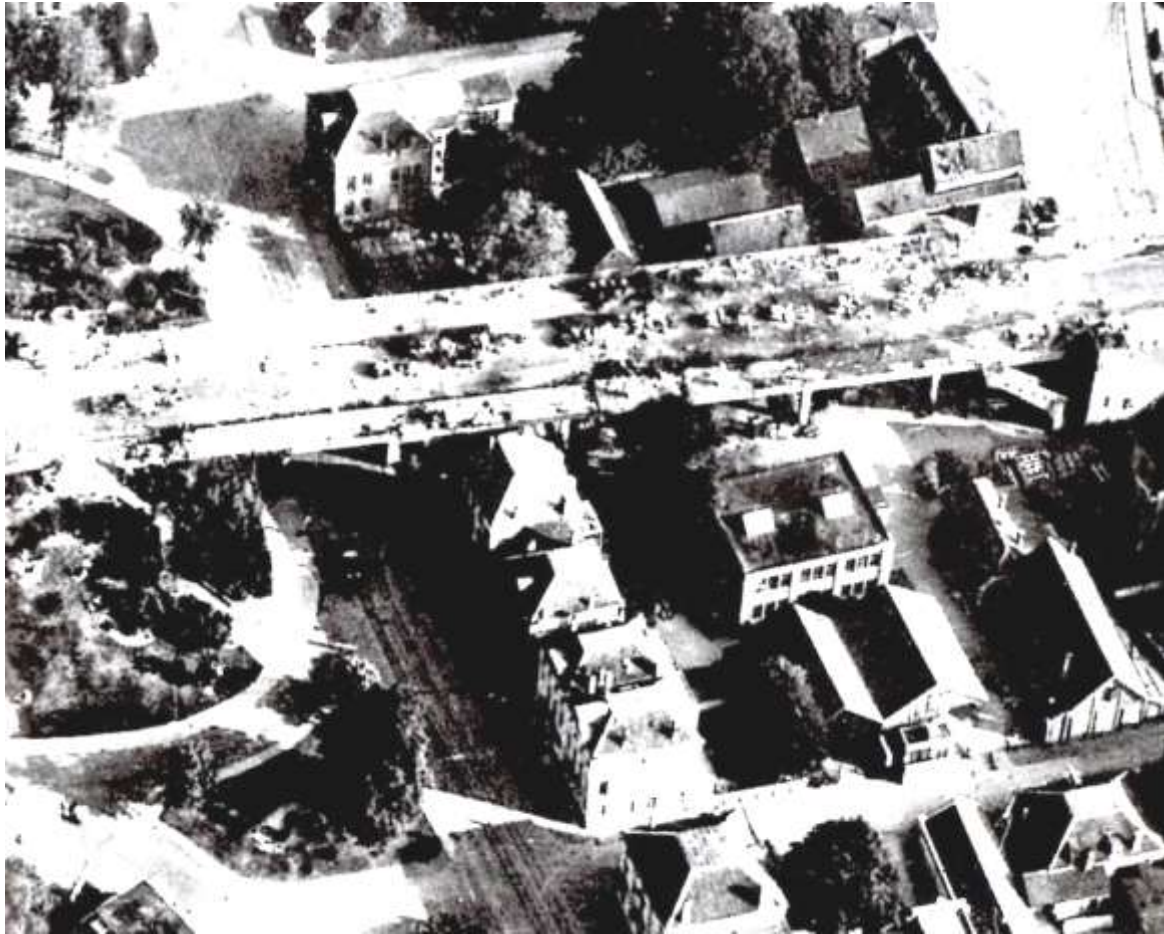
2000 Hrs: Dusk: No 1-3 Platoons clear the German positions and set up defensive positions along the bridge ramp and embankment and occupy two houses adjacent to the North end of the Bridge.

2030 Hrs: John Frost and the rest of 2nd Battalion's support, less B and C Companies, arrive at Bridge. At 20:30 Hrs A Company's No 3 Platoon led by Lieutenant McDermont attempts to reach the Southern end of the bridge but was defeated by heavy gunfire from the pill box and an armoured car.

2130 Hrs: Lt Col John Frost keen to control both ends of the bridge ordered Jack's No 2 Platoon to make another attempt to cross the bridge and capture and secure the Southern end of the bridge. Jack was shot through the shoulder but he ordered his men to go forward although there was little cover on the bridge. But with casualties to another eight of his men, the force had to withdraw under the direction of Jack to their protected areas on the embankment of the bridge. Jack returned to the house occupied by the 2nd Battalion (House No 16) for treatment to his shoulder wound that required a blood transfusion before returning to his Platoon dug into slit trenches on the West embankment of the Bridge.

2200 Hrs: A flame thrower from the Royal Engineers was called up and directed their attack towards the pill box from an adjacent building east of the bridge. They missed the target but set alight to some sheds standing behind the pill box. They evidently contained petrol and 20 mm ammunition that exploded and the resulting flames set alight the fresh paintwork on the bridge. Then an Anti Tank gun (PIAT) was then ordered up from Lieutenant Vlasto's No 1 Platoon and fired rounds into the pill box destroying it completely.

2230 Hrs: A small convoy of four German lorries loaded with troops and one with ammunition drove onto the bridge from the Southern end and were dispatched with fire from Jack's Platoon stationed on the embankment and ramp of the bridge and in an adjacent house. During the night the ammunition blew up in stages adding to the spectacular blaze. The day at the North end of the bridge drew to a close with the bridge still alight and the occasional explosion from the burning ammunition lorry. John Frost made a quick tour of A Company who were in great heart, the Battalion having marched eight miles, securing their objective and accounting for 150 Germans and several vehicles en route.



Day 2. The results of German Armour that tried to force a path over the Bridge. Jack's Platoon located on embankment left in picture.



Day 2.

The 2nd Platoon engages the attempted break through by German armour. Jack's No2 Platoon occupied the house (No 16) on the right on the first night.

Painting by Alan Fearnley.



The buildings on the Marktstraat to the West of the Bridge, in the middle of what would become the centre for the British defences. During the Battle on Sunday they were occupied by Jack's No2 Platoon of A Company, and later B Troop of the 1st Parachute Squadron and as of Monday 18th September, men of the 9th Field Company.



Facing west from beneath the Bridge, taken in 1935. To the right of the pillar, the white building was used as 2nd Parachute Battalion Headquarters during the Battle, whilst the larger building to the right was occupied by 1st Parachute Brigade Headquarters. The buildings to the left of the pillar housed a mixture of the 9th Field Company, Battalion Headquarters and Support Company, Glider Pilots and the 1st Air landing Anti-Tank Battery. By Day 4, 20th September, this area was where Jack made his last defence.



A pre-war photograph looking north along the ramp and embankment from the top of the Bridge. The nearest buildings to the left and right of the Bridge respectively were occupied by No 1 Platoon of A Company, 2nd Parachute Battalion with the Medium Machine Gun Platoon, and No.6 Platoon of B Company respectively. To the rear of these, on the right of the Bridge, No3 Platoon occupied the second building along, and to the left of the Bridge, on the same line, was Jack's No2 Platoon and the remainder of A Company and assorted other units.



Looking north-west to the buildings along the Euisbiusbinnensingel that lay just outside the final British perimeter.



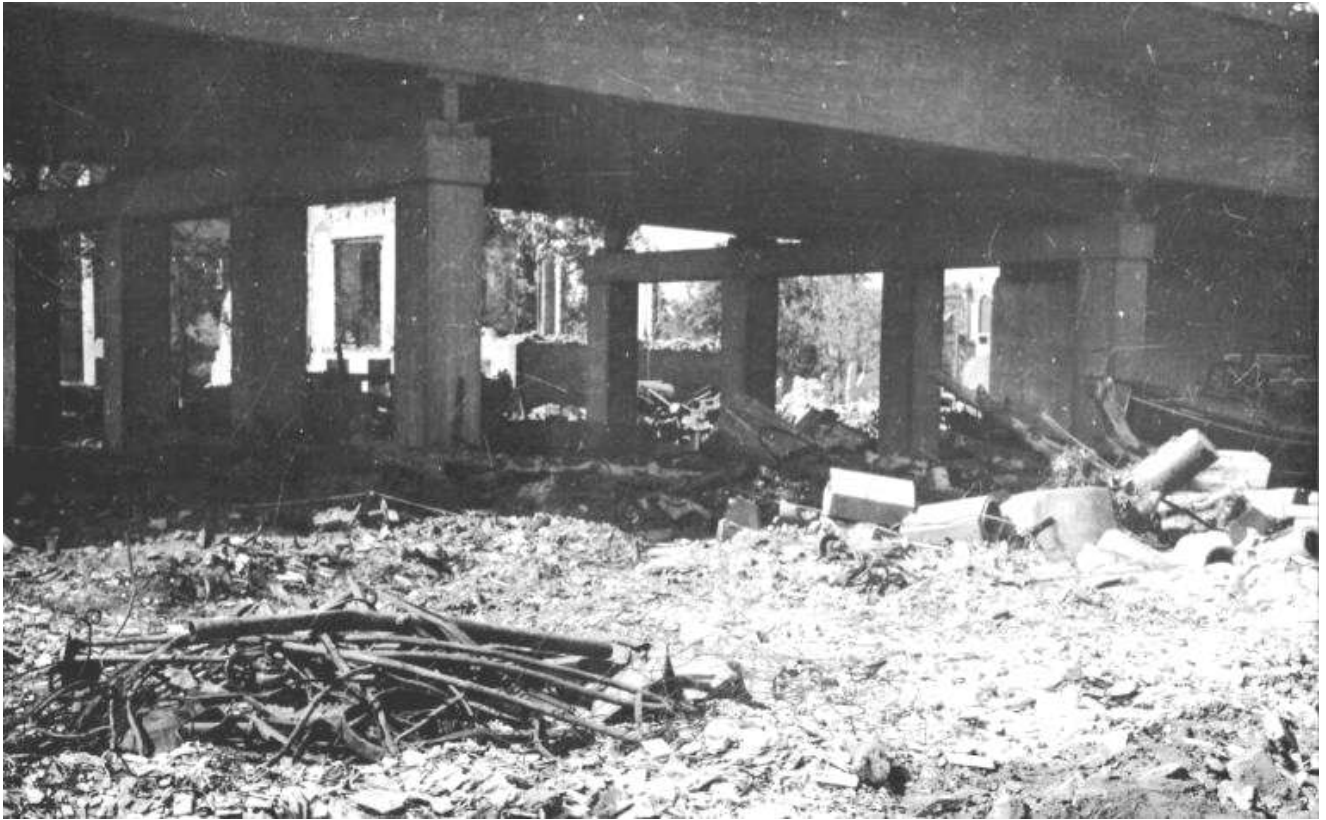
The skeletal remnants of buildings on the western side of Arnhem Bridge. Foreground, the 1st house Jack's Platoon moved into on Sunday night.



Wreckage across the Bridge ramp (embankment) in September 1944, looking north-west to the buildings along the Euisbiusbinnensingel that lay just outside the British perimeter.



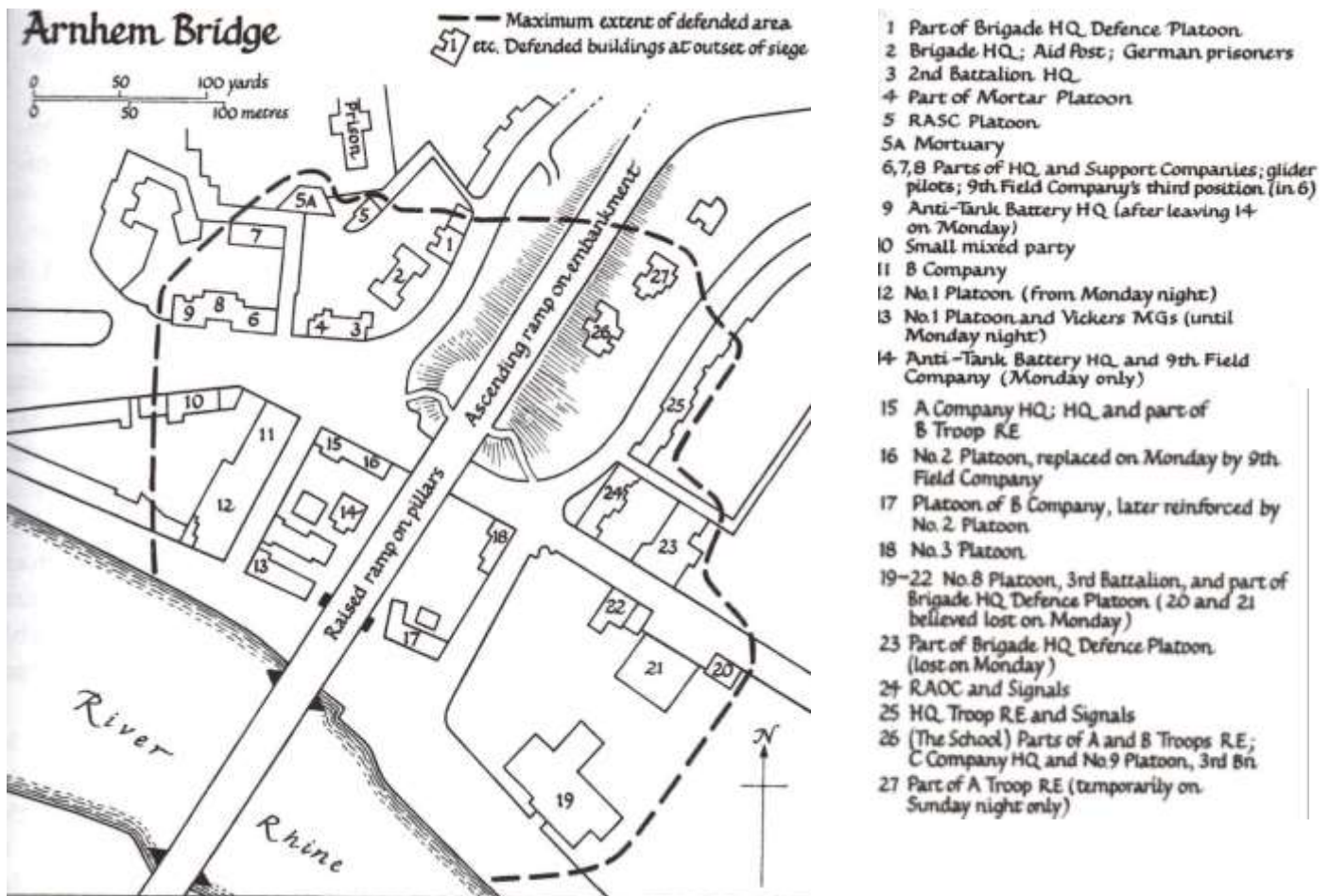
Looking north across the devastated buildings on the western side of Arnhem Bridge September 1944.



Wreckage beneath the ramp 1945.



The remains of the Van Limburg Stirum School that witnessed one of the last defensive actions at the bridge.



Monday 18th September 1944. Day 2.

Over the next few days, every man of the estimated 740 or so who had made it to the bridge whether a combat trooper or not, was engaged in the defence of the British perimeter. It was estimated that 2nd Battalion had approximately 340 men at the Bridge.

Only one quarter of the defensive perimeter had been attacked during the night forcing the A Platoon of the Royal Engineers to vacate the most easterly house (No 27) and move to the school house occupied by B troop, RE. They were reinforced at the schoolhouse (No 26) at the eastern side of the Bridge embankment by C Company HQ and No 9 Platoon of the 3rd Battalion that had been held by Captain Mackay of the Royal Engineers overnight.

In the early morning German attacks with a heavy mortar, old Mark III and IV tanks and infantry on the east side of the perimeter was repelled, followed by a period of calm.

At 0500 Hrs wireless connection was made with Major Doug Crawley's B Company 2nd Battalion and was ordered by Frost to make their way to Bridge following their redundant attempt at the Pontoon Bridge. Unfortunately only 70 men arrived, most of the 4th Platoon had been trapped in Arnhem and casualties had been high.

At about 0900 Hrs, while mortar attacks were in progress against the riverside properties, armoured troop carriers tried to rush across the bridge from the South. Days earlier, they had been called to defend the bridge at Nijmegen and were in the process of returning to their depot. The 6 Pdrs of the airborne artillery destroyed six vehicles and A Company's PIAT's, four. Jack's Platoon based on the bridge ramp had a firsthand involvement in clearing the enemy infantry that were being transported in the carriers. The engagement lasted two hours, a moment captured by many artists in their portrayal of the events at the bridge.

At noon the house (No 16 in the diagram) occupied by Jack's No 2 Platoon became the target of ceaseless mortar and long range phosphorus shelling attacks from south of the river that set the house on fire forcing Jack's Platoon to evacuate and move to another house (No 17) on the East side of the bridge ramp. Three tanks attacked from the East destroying the house (No 18) expelling No 3 Platoon. PIAT's were summoned and put the tanks out of action. Andy McDermont led his Platoon back to the building to clear it of German Infantry that had quickly taken up residence but was severely wounded in the operation. No 3 Platoon suffered many casualties.

Jack's new locations were between the road arches and House 17 that was exposed and become very difficult to defend. As with the first choice house it was finally shelled and set on fire with phosphorus shells from tanks and infantry of the 10th SS Panzer Division.

Jack although wounded for the second time from mortar fire reorganised defensive positions around the base of the bridge ramp arches and embankment moving amongst his Platoon offering encouragement oblivious of the shelling and gun fire concentrated on the area.

The rest of the Airborne Brigade trapped in Arnhem made several efforts to reinforce Frost's men, but were unable to break through the German forces that protected the approaches to the bridge.

During the day further attacks were made against the eastern defences that finally overrun two houses (No 20 and No 21) defended by No 8 Platoon, 3rd Battalion and the Brigade HQ defence Platoon. The exact disposition of the British troops subsequently became more confused as the battle developed from the east into house to house fighting. Jack led several fighting patrols against houses (No s 19 -22) that had been lost and cleared them of German Infantry but with heavy casualties. This forced the Germans to commit more armour and by nightfall the houses on the east side of the perimeter had been lost. This resulted in redefining the defensive perimeter.

In the late afternoon and evening a strong German mortar attack pre-empted an attack by two Mark III tanks and infantry from the east as they tried to clear the Para's from the northern end of the defensive perimeter but failed due to stout resistance by the Brigade HQ defence Platoon.

At 1830 Hrs Frost learnt that 1st Battalion could not reach the Bridge and that although the 3rd Battalion was nearby they also could not make it to the Bridge. The Germans were now organised and slowly began closing down the whole operation.

At sunset the Germans mustered for an infantry attack against the eastern side of the defensive perimeter but they were repelled by the defenders with fixed bayonets accompanied with the Para's battle cry of 'Whoa, Mohammed'. The Germans fled.

As darkness fell a party of Sappers were placed under the command of A Company, Jack's No 2 Platoon offered protection, inspected the bridge and found it clear of demolition charges.

The 2nd Battalion had suffered 11 casualties and approximately 30 wounded by the end of Day 2.

Private Sid Blackmore was a PIAT gunner with A Company. He tells about the German attack on the Monday 18th September:

"We used everything we had against the Germans on the bridge. A huge amount of ammunition was expended holding them off. As you know, we didn't get any reinforcements or fresh supplies."

The failed attack by the German reconnaissance unit was portrayed in the classic 1977 film 'A Bridge too Far'. In this sequence the fictitious British character Harry appears, an officer with a black umbrella. The character dies lying next to Lieutenant Colonel Frost in a cellar.

But it is not all fantasy because Major Digby Tatham-Warter, commander of A Company, was noticeable during the Battle of Arnhem for the black umbrella he had found somewhere. He carried it as a symbol of recognition, for he had difficulty in remembering passwords.

On Monday evening he had to take over command of the 2nd Parachute Battalion from Major David Wallis, the deputy commander. Wallis had been killed by so-called 'friendly fire' while making a night-time inspection round. When a sentry called for the required password he apparently had answered too softly.

Lieutenant Colonel Frost had already taken command of all British units around the northern bridge ramp, so Major Tatham-Warter was made temporary battalion commander. Padre Bernard Egan remembered how the Major came up to him during a German mortar attack and escorted him safely to the other side of the road with the words:

"Don't worry, I've got an umbrella."

The actions of another British officer did not go unnoticed, either. Twenty-six year-old Lieutenant John H. Grayburn No 2 Platoon leader of Major Tatham-Warter's A Company led his group in attacks on several occasions. Although wounded in the shoulder in the evening of 17th September he remained with his Platoon.

Major Tatham-Warter's account of the 2nd Battalion's Operations at Arnhem Monday 18th September 1944.

By first light on Monday the position was as follows:-

- (1) We had captured our objective with comparatively few casualties.
- (2) We were holding a small but strong bridgehead north of the Bridge. The force now consisted of the 2nd Battalion less C Company and one Platoon of B Company with the addition of Brigade Headquarters and attached troops, who had followed us in. We also had four 6 Pdr. A/TK guns. The force was commanded by Lt Col Frost, D.S.O M.C.
- (3) A strong counterattack from the South had been repelled during the night.
- (4) We had lost contact with major Victor Dover's C Company after their episode at the Railway Bridge, and although patrols were sent out to contact them, nothing more was heard of them during the battle. We heard afterwards that they had reached their objective, but owing to the failure of the Brigade to establish the original sector, they were isolated, surrounded and eventually suffered much the same fate as ourselves.

Throughout Monday we were attacked with increasing vigour from the East, and subjected to continuous mortar fire and shelling. A number of tanks and S.P. guns supported the attack, and several attempts were made to bring armoured cars and tanks over the Bridge. Heavy toll was taken by both 6 Pdrs, and PIAT's. Nothing crossed the Bridge during the three days we held it.

During Monday night another counterattack from the South was repelled with heavy losses. The position East of the Bridge where A Company and part of the Brigade HQ force had borne the brunt of the attack, was strengthened by the addition of one Platoon of B Company.

Major Wallis was killed on Monday evening and Major Tatham-Warter took over command of the Battalion. Our casualties had been heavy, but were mostly wounded.

Captain Francis Hoyer-Millar B Company, on patrol at the bridge Monday night.

I was told to take twelve men out. We went past the wrecked vehicles on the ramp and onto the bridge itself. It was a large expanse of open area, quite dark. I did not know what was over the slope so threw a grenade. We were surprised when five Germans emerged with their hands up, three of them wounded. I did not know how long they had been there, almost inside our perimeter.

I put half of my men on either side of the road. We had no trouble from the Germans but we were annoyingly fired on by a Bren from the houses held by our men. I yelled 'Stop firing that bloody Bren gun. It's only me'. It was one of those silly things one says on the spur of the moment.

2nd Battalion, A Company, No 2 Platoon timeline for Monday, Day 2.

Approximately 0500 Hrs: (Dawn) A Company evacuate embankments at the foot of the bridge and set up defensive positions from buildings surrounding the bridge. No 3 Battery Light Regiment registered their 6 Pdr guns on the approach road to the bridge. The target area was recorded and sent back to the guns at Oosterbeek

0900-0110 Hrs: Jack's Platoon, with a 6 Pdr on the ramp of the bridge and others of A Company now strengthened by troops from other Companies fire on the German convoy crossing the bridge trying to return to their southern base.

1200 Hrs: Jack's Platoon located in a house on the West side of the bridge is shelled and set alight. The Platoon is forced to move to a building on the East side overlooking the Bridge.

Afternoon: Jack's Platoon assists No 3 Platoon, to retake lost buildings on the eastern perimeter. The buildings were again lost to German Tanks and Infantry, redefining the defensive perimeter. Jack was again wounded during these operations.

Jack's Platoon with the remaining troops of A Company moved to the ruins of the buildings on the East side adjacent to the bridge, the East side of the road arches, the ramp and embankment.

1830 Hrs: Frost is informed that no further troops would reach the bridge.

Evening: Major Tatham-Warter wounded and Captain Franks is left in control of the remaining A Company rifle and support Companies. With building No 17 destroyed A Company redeploys to the road arches and to the East embankment and as darkness falls are ordered to reoccupy the remains of building No 17. The building was then set alight with phosphorus shells forcing again the remnants of A Company back to the road arches.

As darkness fell a party of Sappers who were placed under the command of A Company are supported by Jack's No 2 Platoon, offering protection while the bridge is inspected and found clear of demolition charges.

Tuesday 19th September 1944. Day 3.

Around 0300 Hrs on Tuesday morning, a group of Germans began to assemble alongside the Van Limburg Stirum School, completely unaware that the building was occupied by engineers of the 1st Parachute Squadron and men from the 3rd Battalion.

The defenders picked their moment and wishing to save their ammunition, lobbed grenades at the intruders, killing approximately twenty whilst suffering no casualties themselves.

Dawn broke at the bridge to the sound of gunfire coming from the west side of Arnhem. The remnants of the 1st and 3rd Battalions reinforced by the South Staffordshires and the 11th Battalion were making their final attempts to get to the bridge.

German tanks and mortar attacks started to shell the ruins of houses (No 17 and 18) concentrating mortar and tank fire on the ruins of houses east of the bridge where Jack's Platoon was located.

At 1500 Hrs Three German tanks made inroads as far as the bridge, firing into the damaged houses at point blank range causing them to completely collapse. One tank was eventually eliminated by a PIAT and the remaining supporting tanks and armour pulled back.

During the shelling Andy McDermont's No 3 Platoon, now down to twenty men, had evacuated their house (No 17) but Major Tatham-Warter ordered the Platoon to recapture the ruins of the house.

During the counter attack Andy McDermont became a casualty and died three days later. Jack now took control of No 2 and No 3 Platoons, now down to about 20 able men. The infiltration of German Infantry continued from the East, forcing a costly counter attack by Jack's composite Platoon before returning to a defensive position at the arches.

Following a lull in the action a heavy 88mm German gun from south of the river started to shell the houses where the remnants of A Company were located, destroying the two upper floors and setting the remains on fire. This forced A Company to evacuate and return to a position under the north end bridge road arches and embankment.

A Company had at this time suffered heavy casualties and ammunition was running short.

The Germans had infiltrated into both East and West ruins of buildings and put the troops at the bridge under constant sniper fire causing many casualties. Again, as night fell German engineers tried to lay explosive charges under the bridge and Jack once again led a party of Royal Engineers with Platoon support to clear the charges of fuses.

The 2nd Battalion had a further 7 casualties at the Bridge. Of the entire Brigade force in the last 24 Hrs an estimated 3 officers and 16 ORs as casualties with 150 injured. The Brigade total for the first three days now reached 150 casualties with over 1800 wounded or taken prisoner.

In the dark night, the area around the bridge was illuminated by the burning houses. The two churches, St Eusebius and St Walburgis were burning with one of its bells ringing continuously in the wind.

Lieutenant Peter Stainforth Royal Engineers injured at Den Brink Tuesday 19th September.

"Utter exhaustion now laid hold of our men after three days and two nights of continuous battle. No one had more than a few fitful snatches of sleep in the whole period, and there could be no rest now for the few still capable of fighting. Nor could they be revived with food and water their last bite and drop had gone". (Peter Stainforth, Wings of the Wind.)

Private Sid Blackmore was a PIAT gunner with A Company. He tells about the German attack on Tuesday 19th September:

On 19th September the house being defended by Jack Grayburn and his men was set on fire. Throughout the day all enemy attacks had been repelled, but when it became obvious that the fire could not be extinguished the lieutenant ordered his Platoon to leave the house. He reorganized his unit and that of the badly wounded Lieutenant Andy McDermont and took his chequered group to a new position underneath the bridge ramp. They were attacked by shell fire from a tank and armoured car but they were unable to hit the defenders beneath the bridge underpasses.

Major Tatham-Warter's account of the 2nd Battalion's Operations on Tuesday 19th September 1944.

Tuesday was a repetition of Monday, with no appreciable worsening of the situation, except for an increase in casualties and a growing shortage of ammunition. The most serious deficiency was in PIAT bombs, of which we now had none left, and so had no method of dealing with tanks which shelled our houses at very close range. The 6 Pdrs still kept the Bridge and Western approaches covered, but could not maintain positions east of the Bridge.

Until Tuesday midday we had no wireless communication with Div. HQ or the rest of the Brigade, but we could hear by the noise of the battle that they were having a very sticky time. When contact was finally made, we heard that every effort was being made to reach us.

We heard afterwards that they had been unlucky in meeting very heavy opposition soon after leaving the D.Z. and though they fought without a break, they never got more than a footing in the town.

Report of Captain Tony Frank who briefly took command of A Company from Major Tatham-Warter on Tuesday 19th September 1944.

Captain Tony Frank reached the Bridge with A Company during the evening, and was given command of it when Major Tatham-Warter took over command of the Battalion, replacing Lieutenant-Colonel Frost who took charge of the Brigade.

On Tuesday 19th No 3 Platoon Lieutenant A. J. McDermont was a serious casualty with wounds to the stomach and eventually died on Friday 22nd.

This left Captain Franks as the senior officer with Lieutenant R. A. Vlasto's No. 1 Platoon leader and Lieutenant J. H. Grayburn No 2 Platoon defending the bridge.

Wounded in the ankle by shelling on Wednesday 20th September, Captain Frank was taken prisoner on the following day when British resistance finally collapsed, and then sent to the St Elizabeth Hospital for treatment.

With him was Major Tatham-Warter, who was similarly slightly wounded and made it plain that he had no intention of being a prisoner for longer than was necessary. That night the two of them got out of bed, put on their clothes, climbed down from a first floor window, crawled through the hospital gardens and finally reached the railway line a mile to the west of the hospital where, quite exhausted, they halted until dawn.

As it grew light they noticed a farmhouse some distance away and eager to obtain some food, they watched it for some time before Tatham-Warter decided to knock on the door. The lady who owned the property took them in, fed them a meal of eggs and cheese which they eagerly devoured, and put them to rest in the loft of a barn. Having slept until the afternoon, they were roused by Menno de Nooy of the Ede Resistance, who took them into his care.

They were taken to a farm in the small Warnsborn forest, where they lived in a secret compartment in a shed, though in the evenings they emerged to play cards with the farmer and cut home-grown tobacco for cigarettes. It soon became clear that several hundred airborne personnel were in hiding around the Ede area and the Resistance were having trouble in concealing and administering such numbers.

Tatham-Warter, having established contact with Brigadier Lathbury, Lieutenant-Colonel Dobie and Major Hibbert to name but a few, effectively took charge and began to organise the evaders into a sort of coup-de-main force to spearhead any attempt by the 2nd British Army to cross the Rhine. When it became clear that there would be no such attempt, efforts were made to arrange for the withdrawal of this force to the Allied lines. Operation Pegasus took place on the 22nd October, and saw the completely successful evacuation of 138 men, amongst who was Tony Frank. For the part he played in administering this force, he was 'Mentioned in Despatches'.

Signalman George Lawson with A Company. He relates an incident on Tuesday 19th September:

"The sergeant ordered me to find some ammunition and get it to the A Company defenders under the bridge. So I went shopping for bullets with a shopping basket I had found. I had collected about thirty rounds and delivered them to the bridge when I ran into Major Digby Tatham-Warter walking about in his red beret, one arm in a sling with his umbrella on his arm and a pistol in his other hand. He called out "Hurry up and get back to your post there are snipers about".

2nd Battalion, A Company, No 2 Platoon timeline for Tuesday, Day 3.

0300Hrs: The Northern perimeter attacked but repulsed.

0500Hrs: (Dawn). At the Bridge no one had more than a few fitful snatches of sleep since Day 1, there could be no rest now for the few still capable of fighting. The Germans plan was to systematically destroy all the buildings close to the bridge forcing Jack's remnants of Company Platoons to shelter beneath the road ramp.

1500 Hrs: Jack's combined force attacks the remains of the eastern buildings facing the bridge, succeeding in forcing the German infantry and armour to retreat to the now nearby Eastern perimeter.

Early evening: The area around the bridge had become a sea of flame. Jack's defenders took refuge beneath the bridge ramp where briefly the German tanks, armour and snipers could not attack them.

Late evening: Relentless mortar and shelling continued on selected buildings.

Wednesday 20th September 1944. Day 4.

The night had passed relatively quietly, dawn approached with drizzling rain. The British position was becoming untenable with the six Pdrs out of action due to sniper fire covering their position and with no PIAT ammunition remaining the German tanks could not be halted.

The only building standing near the bridge was the school (House No 26), occupied by the Royal Engineers while the rest were burning or burnt out rubble. Later in the morning this was destroyed by mortar fire and by a Mk V Tiger tank and a Ferdinand self propelled gun then added to its final demolition. The relentless shelling by German Artillery, mortars and tanks was slowly breaking down the defensive ring around the bridge. The Germans were using phosphorous shells, setting fire to the strongly built buildings that contained ancient timbers.

Sensing resistance was beginning to weaken the German Infantry, supported by tanks and self propelled guns started to attack isolated pockets in the defensive perimeter and trying to clear the last stronghold of resistance beneath the bridge ramps where Jack was entrenched leading a mixed group of survivors from various Companies. As the Germans squeezed the British defensive perimeter with Infantry and armour from all quarters, their engineers laid explosives on sections of the bridge ramps an easy span for temporary supports to be constructed should the Germans need to travel South or delay XXX Corps, should they break through and capture the bridge. News had been received that XXX Corp had reached the South Bank of the Rhine which gave the defenders some hope of relief. Jack from his position on the embankment and road arches again led another patrol that forced the enemy away from the bridge while Royal Engineers removed the freshly laid fuses from the explosives.

As the Germans squeezed the British defensive perimeter with Infantry and armour from all quarters, their engineers laid explosives on sections of the bridge ramps an easy span for temporary supports to be constructed should the Germans need to travel South or delay XXX Corps, should they break through and capture the bridge. News had been received that XXX Corp had reached the South Bank of the Rhine which gave the defenders some hope of relief. Jack from his position on the embankment and road arches again led another patrol that forced the enemy away from the bridge while Royal Engineers removed the freshly laid fuses from the explosives.



RAF aerial reconnaissance photo of the Arnhem road bridge on 19th September, showing signs of the British defence on the northern ramp and the wrecked German vehicles from the previous days fighting.

Jack was wounded for the third time but quickly returned after being treated, now with his head bandaged, arm in a sling and carrying a leg wound.

About 10:00 Hrs Lt Col Frost made a rare contact with Major Gen Urquhart and reiterated his intention of holding on to the bridge for as long as possible. Shortly afterwards he was wounded by mortar shrapnel and joined the rest of the injured in the basement of the building used as Brigade HQ.

In late afternoon five German tanks forced their way over the bridge through the debris of the earlier failed attacks and set about completely destroying occupied buildings with phosphor shells. A cease fire was then negotiated to evacuate the wounded from the basement of the Brigades HQ building (House No 2). During the cease fire the Germans took positional advantage moving closer to the last remaining defensive positions.

Major Tatham-Warter briefly took over command of remnants of the 2nd Battalion and Captain Tony Franks took control of the fighting remains of A Company. Shortly after Captain Franks took stock of the position at the bridge and realised that the group was nearly out of ammunition and that they were surrounded by the Germans.

With six others he decided to move away from the bridge taking the remaining ammunition and Bren guns and make an attempt to reach the Oosterbeek perimeter. He was quickly injured and his support group became casualties.

Jack officially took control of A Company and other remaining defenders at the bridge.

Again a concentrated effort by German engineers and infantry returned with armoured support to relay the charges in an attempt to demolish the road arch. Another patrol led by Jack went out again to remove the charges again suffering casualties. Jack was again wounded but refused to leave his position. Finally, a German Tiger tank came forward to cover the German engineers and Infantry. Leading yet another counter attack but with the odds now stacked against them, Jack found his defence was in vain, all his remaining troops were dead or badly wounded and in order to fall back to cover with his one remaining trooper he was in full view of the tank. The tank's machine gun hit Jack and he died on the roadside by the bridge northern most underpass arch.

Lieutenant Donald Hindley (Royal Engineers)

It was obvious that the enemy would quickly restore the fuses, and a second, heavier attack was made to try and remove the charges themselves. However the enemy had moved up a tank to cover the work. We were quickly mowed down and Lieutenant Grayburn was killed.

Jack's body was later buried in a shallow grave in the gardens beside the bridge embankments.

By the evening the Brigade strength was down to about 150 men. It was obvious that the task given was beyond its strength. General Urquhart had no choice but to abandon the defence of the bridge. His final decision was to form a perimeter around the suburb of Oosterbeek and hold out for the 2nd Army that was due to reach the south side of the Rhine about 1700 Hrs.

The later evacuation from the Oosterbeek perimeter hardly affected the men of the 2nd Battalion that had reached and fought at the bridge.

478 ORs and 31 officers of the 2nd Battalion at take off.

350 men of the 2nd Battalion reached the bridge.

210 wounded men were taken prisoner, 94 men not wounded were taken prisoner and 17 ORs were later evacuated from Oosterbeek. A Company had 13 men taken prisoner.

62 men of the 2nd Battalion have known graves of which 16 men are unidentified (*Roll of Honour, 5th revised edition, Society of Friends of the Oosterbeek Museum*)

Approximately 180 men of the 2nd Battalion were missing; some later died in various Hospitals or as a German POW or later escaped through the help of the Dutch resistance, exact numbers unknown and may never be confirmed as many bodies were incinerated within the buildings. Many bodies are still being found every year and sent to a special Dutch Army forensic unit that makes every attempt to identify the remains.

Private Sid Blackmore was a PIAT gunner with A Company. He tells about the German attack on the Wednesday 20th September:

'A day later Jack Grayburn and his Platoon carried out another small counter-attack in which the enemy was temporarily driven out from under the bridge pillars. Jack and sappers were then able to remove explosive charges that the Germans had placed on the bridge. Jack was then wounded again in the back but refused to go to the aid post. Jack then led several counter attacks but suffered casualties every time and with each hour the situation became more and more hopeless.

That evening, during a new German Tiger tank-supported infantry attack, he stood in full view of the enemy, directing his men to another position. Jack was finally killed by fire from the Tiger tank. There was no more ammunition, there had been no food for a long time and there was hardly a man that was not wounded. The ground around the defenders was ablaze from the burning buildings, so in the end the gallant remnant were dispersed or captured.

Private Sid Blackmore was there when Jack Grayburn died:

"It was a very chaotic situation around the bridge. Day was night and night was day. We had to leave the burning house, Bob Lygo and myself. We got to the steps next to the bridge [Marktstraat, on the west side of the bridge ramp] and when we fired the first grenade from our PIAT, it bounced off the Tiger tank. The tank crew then opened fire with their machinegun and Lieutenant Grayburn was killed. He was posthumously promoted to Captain and awarded the Victoria Cross.

**Major Tatham-Warter's account of the 2nd Battalion's Operations
at Arnhem Wednesday 20th September 1944**

By Wednesday midday the situation had worsened considerably. We had been burnt out of all our positions East and immediately West of the Bridge. In spite of the most gallant defence and repeated counter attacks by A and B Companies, the remnants of both companies had to be withdrawn to a firm position, still covering the Bridge, but slightly further North, which had previously been held by HQ Company. Colonel Frost and Major Crawley MC (Commanding B Company) were wounded during the morning, and Capt Frank MC (then commanding A Company) had been wounded the previous evening.

It had now become clear that the rest of the Division were very unlikely to reach us but we were cheered by the news that advanced units of the 2nd Army would reach the Bridge by 1700 Hrs that evening. This did not happen and by dark the situation had become critical. Soon after dark the few houses still standing were set on fire, and we found ourselves without a position. The wounded were then surrendered, and from reports I received afterwards were well cared for, with our own doctors to look after them.

During the night we tried to re-establish ourselves in other houses, but in doing so suffered heavy casualties and became very split up. By morning we were no longer a fighting force, and the battle was over.

Of the 2nd Battalion approximately 350 had reached the Bridge, of this number 210 were wounded, many of whom had fought on to the end, in spite of their wounds. It is not possible to estimate the number killed, but I know of approximately 100 taken prisoner unwounded.

The Battalion had fought with the utmost gallantry, in inconceivably difficult conditions, and had denied the use of the vital Bridge to the enemy for 80 Hours.

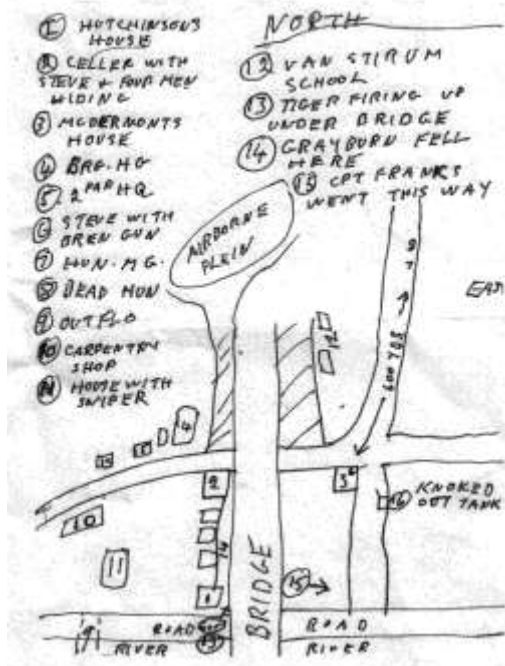
**Pte Stephen Morgan 2nd Battalion Mg of S Company account of Jack's final encounter with the
Germans, Wednesday 20th September 1944.**

After Captain Franks and the sergeant had returned, he took stock of our resources and realised that we were nearly out of ammunition and he decided with volunteers he would make a breakout because we were completely surrounded by Germans.

Five or six men volunteered, he took all our remaining Bren Guns and ammunition and left. We could hear their guns getting fainter as they ran. I never knew what happened to him or his men. (Capt Franks became a POW) This left Lt John Grayburn in charge and he could hear water running from an outlet in a nearby building, the one I had been in earlier and he decided to head for that. He was already wounded in several places, I remember seeing a bandage around his head, his right arm in a sling and he was firing his pistol with his left hand. One of his trouser legs was ripped and his leg was bandaged as well.

As we were surrounded by Germans firing their rifles, we were picked off one by one until Lt Grayburn and myself were on our own; all the soldiers around us were dead or too wounded to take part. He patted me on the back and said 'It's time to go'. We ran out from the bridge in a zigzag formation firing our weapons and it was at this point I ran out of ammunition, having used up 400 rounds. I reached cover before Lt Grayburn could join me, the tank in front fired and he fell. I looked out and saw him lying on the road, I realised he was still alive and called to him. I also remember someone who sounded like an officer shouting from a nearby building 'Is it very bad?' Lt Grayburn replied 'leave me', he knew he was dying. The officer replied 'Goodbye dear boy'. I decided to pull him under cover and crawled out on my front, it was quite odd because the Germans did not fire at me.

Lt Grayburn again said 'leave me' unfortunately he was too heavy for me to move on my own and I had no choice but to crawl back to cover'.



Map by Pte Stephen Morgan detailing where Jack fell. Jack was later buried opposite building No4 in a temporary grave not discovered until 1948.

Pte Harry Haines 2nd Battalion, A Company (now under Jack's command) account of Jack's final encounter with the Germans Wednesday 20th September 1944.

I regarded Lt Grayburn with admiration and affection as he was a good friend. He was wounded the first day when we made the attack on the Bridge. In my opinion he later made a foolhardy move. We were defending a hopeless position at the bridge when he stood up in full view of the enemy to give us an order to retire and was killed. I was wounded and later made my way to a cellar where I was eventually captured and taken prisoner.

Sgt. Neville Ashley 2nd Battalion, A Company, No 2 Platoon.

Under the command of the indomitable Lieutenant Jack Grayburn, the Platoon led the 2nd Battalion's advance to Arnhem Bridge on Sunday 17th, rapidly cutting their way through numerous encounters with light opposition as they went. Upon reaching the bridge they attempted to capture the southern end during the night, but were driven back by severe enemy fire. Over the following three days Ashley's story was, like so many others, one of steadfast defence and counterattack.

On Wednesday 20th he was dug into the ramp of the bridge, near the steps which led down to street level, when he was shot through the hip by a sniper's bullet. Out of ammunition and under heavy fire from all sides Sergeant Ashley led the remaining five men of his Section, accompanied by one German prisoner, down the side of the ramp and into a chamber beneath and built into the bridge. A Tiger Tank arrived and at point blank range proceeded to fire several shells at the door behind which the paratroopers had sought shelter. German engineers equipped with flame-throwers closed in but first threw in smoke grenades to flush out the now blinded men. The prisoner that the Section held offered to go outside offer their surrender if the German troops would hold their fire. This was accepted and the six paratroopers, all of whom now carried wounds, emerged into the open where they were disarmed and told to rest on the grassy side of the ramp. Here the Germans treated their wounds and handed a small barrel of beer around to quench their thirst.

Lieutenant Peter Stainforth Royal Engineers injured at Den Brink Tuesday 19th September.

Some survivors continued to hold out beneath the ramp and managed to cling to an improvised redoubt until Thursday morning. German pioneers, who tried to lay charges on the roadway above during darkness, had been stopped by some dauntless officers and men who crawled out and shot them down. But with the coming of daylight tanks deployed in front of the emplacement in a short time had blown the barricades to pieces. (Peter Stainforth, Wings of the Wind.)

2nd Battalion, A Company, No 2 Platoon timeline for Wednesday, Day 4.

0300Hrs: Captain Franks and the sergeant had returned to the bridge ramps, he took stock of resources and realised that the defenders were nearly out of ammunition and decided with volunteers they would make a breakout from the ramps. Five or six men volunteered, taking all remaining Bren Guns and ammunition and left.

The remaining group including Jack could hear their guns getting fainter as they attempted to reach a safe location in the slit trenches beyond the bridge ramps.

Jack was now in control of the defensive positions around the bridge. Jack and his mixed Platoon carried out another small counter-attack in which the Germans once again, were temporarily driven out from under the bridge pillars.

0500Hrs: (Dawn). At the Bridge the combined remnants of A Company were attacked from the East and West by mortar fire and by a Mk V Tiger tank and a Ferdinand self propelled gun. Jack's Platoon and sappers then went to remove once again, explosive charges that the Germans had placed on the arches (underpasses) beneath the bridge ramp.

0915 Hrs: The German infantry with tank support made another determined attack from the East to place charges for the demolition of the arches (underpasses) where Jack's assorted Platoon of 50 men were in defensive positions.

0945 Hrs: Jack again led his Platoon with the remaining engineers to clear the charges from the arches. Jack was then wounded again in the back but refused to go to the aid post. Jack now had a bandage around his head, his right arm in a sling and he was firing his pistol with his left hand. One of his trouser legs was ripped and his leg was bandaged as well.



Path adjacent to Jack's temporary grave (left).

1020 Hrs: Germans recapture their positions around the underpasses.

1100 Hrs: Jack again leads his combined force, now down to 30 fighting men, to retake the arches and again clear the charges.

1400 Hrs: Captain Franks returns to the arches and evacuates the remaining five to six fit men and the remaining Bren guns and ammunition and left to make an attempt to reach the Oosterbeek perimeter.

1700 Hrs: Jack's remaining force was now surrounded by Germans snipers and infantry, his men were being picked off one by one until Jack and one private were left; all the defending soldiers around were dead or too wounded to be effective.

Evening: The areas around the bridge and arches were now open to attack by Tiger Tanks and Infantry. Jack said 'It's time to go'. The remaining private Stephen Morgan and Jack made an attempt to reach the slit trenches opposite the burning HQ buildings. Jack was confronted by a tank and its machine gun. In his attempt to reach the trenches Jack was mortally wounded.

***'So ended the days of a very gallant gentleman'
(Major-General John Frost)***



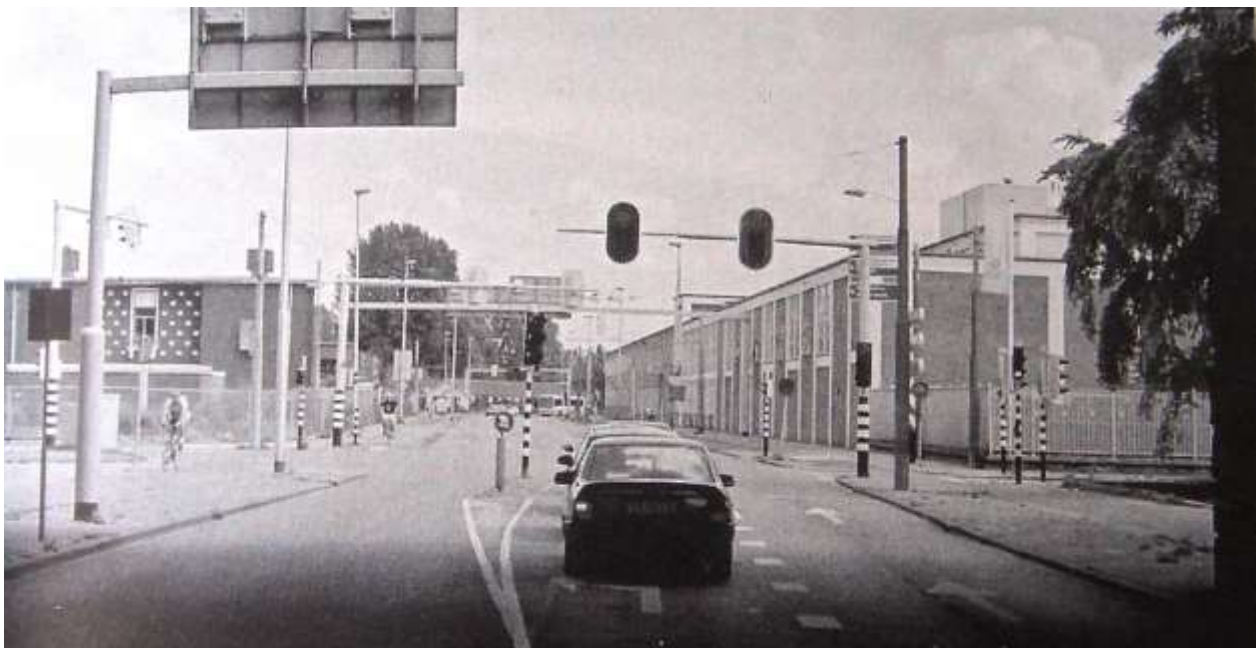
**John H Grayburn's Medal set.
Victoria Cross, 1939-45 Star, Italy Star,
France and Germany Star,
Defence Medal, War Medal 1939-45.**



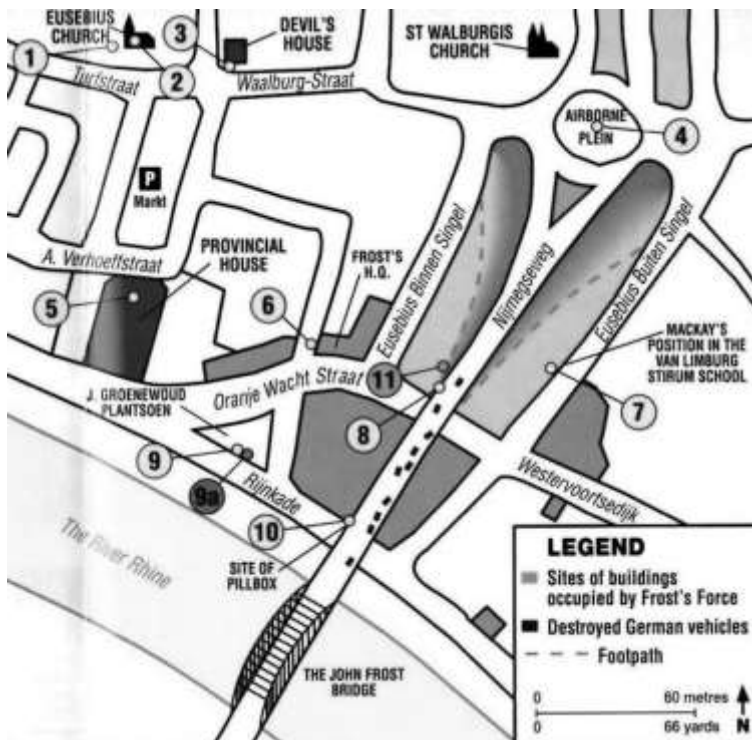
**Jack's original burial marker at
the Oosterbeek Cemetery.**



The road arch beneath the bridge ramp junction of Oranje Wacht Straat and Eusbius Binnin Singel looking west where Jack fought to the last on Day 4.



The same view looking West in the 2000's



- 1 Arnhem War Memorial
- 2 Eusebius Church Mems
- 3 Devil's House SGW
- 4 Airborne Plein Mems
- 5 Ceremonial Sword, Provincial House
- 6 Site of Frost's HQ Mem
- 7 ACM No 8, McKay's Position
- 8 John Frost Bridge Mems
- 9 J Groenewoud MOW Mem Park
- 9a Vickers 25-Pounder Gun
- 10 Site of Pillbox
- 11 SOA (approx) Capt Grayburn VC

**Location of Jack Grayburn's temporary grave.
Found during excavations in 1948.**



**Jack's last defensive position
beneath underpass on
Wednesday. Photo taken Monday.**



**View of the underpass in 2013 looking towards
Westervoortsedijk. Jack's last position.**



Until 1948, the position of Jack's temporary grave located on the ramp next to the road underpass. Site as at 2013.



Arnhem Bridge 21st Sept with the road cleared of German vehicles. Right the pillbox destroyed by a PIAT on the 17th Sept and the remains of the first house Jack's Platoon used as a defensive position on the first night also depicted in the Alan Fearnley painting.

21st September 1944. Day 5.

By 0500 Hrs the following morning the defending force was down to 50 men and the position at the bridge had become impossible to defend. Most of the defenders were located around the west side of the embankment and in trenches in the gardens and amongst the rubble of former buildings.

By morning the British force that reached the Bridge was no longer a fighting force, and the battle was over. Of the 2nd Battalion approximately 350 had reached the Bridge, of this number 210 were wounded, many of whom had fought on to the end, in spite of their wounds. It is not possible to estimate the number killed, but I know of approximately 100 taken prisoner unwounded. The Battalion had fought with the utmost gallantry, in inconceivably difficult conditions, and had denied the use of the vital Bridge to the enemy for 80 Hrs. (Major Digby Tatham-Warter)

The last armed resistance at the bridge ended about 0500 Hrs on Thursday, three days and nine Hrs after 2nd Battalion's 1st, 2nd and 3rd Platoons under Major Tatham-Warter arrived at the bridge, later followed by the Brigade convoy.



**JHGs Head stone at Oosterbeek
Cemetery 2000
Wreath from A&C RFC.**

**Found on the back of Jack's Headstone
2012. Jack was not, as originally
thought, pulled from the river.**

***Den Portman, 2nd Battalion. One of the 17 ORs that swam
across the Rhine from the Oosterbeek perimeter.***

Sgt. Major Jimmy Sharp had come from Nijmegen to sort out the remains of the 2nd Battalion. He called out in his authoritative voice 'Fall in the 2nd Battalion'. Seventeen men, exhausted from their exploits of the last ten days 'fell in'. He looked us over 'Is this the lot' he said and his usual strong expression changed, his chin trembled and his eyes welled up in a veil of tears as he realised the decimation of our 2nd Battalion had been complete.

John Hollington Grayburn

Here lies John Grayburn, to friends he was Jack,
A Sherborne school boxer and core rugby pack

Army to Paras, he readily went,
The most active service had been his intent.

First drop to Arnhem he lead his platoon
4 days of fighting, our tanks will come soon

He defended a house despite endless attack,
And time and again sent the enemy back,

Directing, protecting the men in his rank
He stood in full view of the first German tank,

A hero, a leader, a Victoria Cross
For his wife and his son, such a terrible loss

Pulled from the river years after he died
For 68 years here his body now lies.

A wonderful man that gave up so much,
He gave up his life for both English and Dutch

So we honour you, Captain Jack Grayburn VC,
You lie in this ground so that we can be free.

By Toby Bennett 2012

**Arnhem was finally liberated by the British Soldiers of the 49th West Riding Division
under the command of the Canadian Army supported by their armour on
April 14th 1945.**



Family:

Sir Vandeleur Molyneux Grayburn. Born 1881 West Derby, Lancashire.

On 25th December 1941 after three weeks of fierce fighting the British and allied forces in Hong Kong surrender leaving Hong Kong under Imperial Japanese occupation.

Lionel and Vandeleur were both pupils at St Anselm's Preparatory School, Bakewell, Derbyshire for their early education.

Jack Grayburn's uncle, Sir Vandeleur "Tubby" Molyneux Grayburn had from 1930 been the Chief General Manager of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation, probably the most influential financial person in South East Asia.

Vandeleur had travelled to Hong Kong for his interview with the bank in 1904, coincidentally he travelled with the father of Ken Rice who also had an appointment with the bank. Ken Rice was a friend and colleague of Jack and played rugby with Jack at HKSB and Chiltern from 1935.

The Japanese occupation of China, meanwhile, had become extremely brutal. Terror bombings, invasion and a Japanese military riot in Nanking stifled commerce in China and isolated Hong Kong from its Chinese hinterland.

Although what happened in Hong Kong during this period pales in comparison to what happened during the 1937-38 Nanking Massacre, in Hong Kong many atrocities were committed by the Japanese soldiers against the Chinese, British, Canadians and other inhabitants of Hong Kong.

As many as 10,000 women were raped in the first few days of the invasion. During the occupation tens of thousands, including women and children, were killed. Many more starved to death. Many parts of Hong Kong were ransacked and burnt and many residents left, deported, or escaped to famine/disease-ridden areas of mainland China. Basically, a reign of terror ruled Hong Kong during those three years and eight months, resulting in Hong Kong's population of 1.6 million shrinking to 600,000 at the end of that period.

Vandeleur, with so many Japanese military infiltrators before the war, had been for some time sensing the danger of war with Japan and following covert discussions with army intelligence arranged for the bank's silver reserves to be changed into sterling assets in London, together with moving Hong Kong and Malay personnel to India and safer territories.

Under prearranged orders from Vandeleur the bank's London manager, Arthur Morse assumed managerial control of the bank. Morse transferred the dollar-denominated assets located in Hong Kong to London, fearing that if the Japanese gained control of them, the assets would be frozen by the U.S. government.

On 19th July 1941 the King appointed Sir Vandeleur Molyneux Grayburn K.B to be unofficial Member of the Executive Council of the Colony of Hong Kong.

On December 8th 1941, shortly after completing the transfer to London, Japanese troops stormed through Hong Kong's New Territories and at Christmas won the surrender. Today, this is known as Black Christmas.

In light of the circumstances, the bank's board being interned, Morse was named both chief manager and chairman. During the occupation, Japanese authorities forced the bank to issue additional currency and promissory notes in order to support the local economy.

The HKSB staff, most of whom were of European descent, along with Vandeleur were interned but initially were allowed to operate outside the Stanley civilian prison. They were living in a waterfront hotel, the Sun Wah Hotel, formerly a brothel while they helped the conquerors loot the Bank's holdings, a process which they did what they could do to frustrate. Every morning they were marched to work from their squalid accommodation.

Stanley Camp was an improvised civilian internment 'facility' where most Allied civilians were held from late January 1943; it included some outbuildings of Stanley Prison, which the Japanese took over from the British and used for anyone, including internees, whom they regarded as guilty of a crime. It was just outside the Prison and the internees could sometimes hear the screams of those being tortured inside.

Vandeleur in the early years of internment was working and scheming from the bank; he set up lines of communication and credit with the Colony's former Medical Officer, Selwyn Selwyn-Clarke enabling medicines and food to reach the neediest. Although under armed custody he smuggled out telegrams in an attempt to keep London informed.

A typical telegram sent by Vandeleur:

"...Staff safe except Fielden, Bompas, Matthews, Wylie killed in action. L/O already advised. Advise Morse, my opinion is losses will be heavy therefore suggest withhold any dividends until peace (stop) Are now compelled under threats to sign uncovered notes (stop) To alleviate British and friendly nationals we are selling surreptitiously by rupee and sterling drafts on letter paper dated 23rd Dec 1941 (stop) These have approval Girnson Colonial Secretary (stop) Please arrange with exchange controls pay if presented (stop) Staff requests make every endeavour repatriate self as only person who can clarify present situation (message ends) Please reply."

By the end of January 1942 the pattern of life for the Hong Kong defeated was clear: most of the civilians were in Stanley Camp located on one of the island's southern peninsulas and most of the POWs were crammed into the former British barracks at Shamshuipo.

They had survived the 18 days of the initial bitter fighting and the dangerous period that followed and now they all hoped to stay alive until the time came when the Allies were strong enough to re-take Hong Kong. The top priority, of course, was getting enough to eat, in particular getting the vitamins and other nutrients that are necessary to life.

The Japanese were not interested in providing them. When the banker Henry Foy returned to the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation's building, which had been commandeered by the Japanese, a man he recognised as the doctor at Stanley Prison gave him the key to a safe, which Foy found to contain supplies of thiamine chloride, cod liver oil and malt – the very thing needed to ease the suffering or even save the lives of prisoners suffering from nutritional diseases like pellagra and beri beri a directive of pre-planning that Vandeleur had organised.

For both civilians and internees the food situation varied during the war. In Shamshuipo it seems to have been worse in 1942 than 1943, for example: in Stanley the Japanese stopped regular deliveries of fish, meat and bread in January 1944 (although one day the ration truck unexpectedly brought in a water buffalo carcass and meat supplies seem to have been resumed for the last 8 weeks of interment. But one thing seems to be clear the Japanese rations were not enough to sustain weight, health and in the, long run life.

The contents of that safe in HKSBC came somewhere between the categories of 'food' and 'medicine' and when it came to medicines proper, one of the other essentials for survival, the Japanese were equally reluctant to waste supplies on their prisoners. In 1947 one of those responsible for causing deaths by medical neglect, Major Chuichi Sato (sometimes spelt Saito) was sentenced to execution, later commuted to 15 years in prison.

So, deprived by the Japanese of adequate food and most things necessary for proper medical care, the outlook for the Hong Kong prisoners was grim and it would have been grimmer still without one man in particular, the Colony's former Medical Officer, Selwyn Selwyn-Clarke.

Selwyn-Clarke had been allowed to stay outside Stanley to carry on his work. Luckily, his Japanese counterpart conceded that if epidemic diseases swept through the Allied camps they couldn't be stopped from spreading to the Japanese population as well. Selwyn-Clarke was a brave and determined man. He realised that to save Allied lives he would have to go beyond the bounds of what the Japanese had authorised him to do.

He knew that other 'Stanley stay-outs' were engaged in resistance activities, co-ordinated by the British Army Aid Group from its base in Southern China, but he decided that to carry out his mission he must confine himself solely to humanitarian work. He had no illusions that this would make him safe and he was certain that one day the Kempeitai (the Japanese equivalent of the Gestapo, as he himself called them) would arrest him, but until then he would do everything in his power to make the conditions of the prisoners more tolerable.

What was the real source of the almost unlimited funds that Selwyn-Clarke seemed to have at his disposal? At one point some of the funds came from the British Treasury, but they didn't send nearly enough to cover the needs of all the prisoners in the various camps, much more was needed. Who better to raise large sums of money than bankers?



Members of the HKSBC had also been kept out of Stanley Prison and every morning they were marched to work. Although they were working under duress – threats were made to themselves and their families if they refused to co-operate. They were treated well by the civilian Japanese staff supervising them and according to one account their duties consisted of signing bank notes for about 30 minutes a day!

Those bankers who remained had plenty of time for activities more congenial but more dangerous than helping the Japanese acquire their banks' money. C. F. ('Ginger') Hyde supervised a team of 'money raisers', consisting of the Portuguese attorney Marcus da Silva and the American Chester Bennett, who would smuggle promissory notes from prominent internees out of Stanley, on the strength of which wealthy Hong Kong citizens that were not interned would issue loans to be repaid after the war.

This 'slush fund' was available to help British citizens outside the Camps and was the source of much of Selwyn-Clarke's funding. It enabled him and his Medical Department to save lives and as far as possible under the circumstances, maintain the health of many whose suffering would have been much worse but for the food and medicine sent into the camps. Grayburn and others paid out some of the funds to individuals in need and took responsibility for getting cash into Stanley.

The events of February-December 1943.

Three bankers lost their lives and at least two more spent time in Stanley Prison under dreadful conditions. C. F. Hyde was executed close to Stanley Beach on 29th October 1943 and two senior bankers died through malnutrition and medical neglect while in Stanley Prison, Sir Vandeleur Grayburn, the Bank's chief manager on 7th August 1943 and D. C. Edmonston on 29th August 1944.

A Stanley internee Dr. Harry Talbot had been caught – probably about 3rd March trying to smuggle money back into Camp after being allowed out for treatment at the French Hospital. After a few days of pressure from the gendarmes, Sir Vandeleur Grayburn confessed that he had been the one who provided the cash, claiming that he had wanted it divided amongst some of the Camp nurses. After a two week delay – probably to ask for permission from Tokyo to arrest such an important man – on 17th March the Gendarmes took Sir Vandeleur to Happy Valley Police Station.

C. M. Faure – the former editor of the Japanese-run *Hong Kong News*, who had used his position to signal as much of the truth about the course of the war as he could – had been arrested on 18th February and was in the Happy Valley station when Vandeleur was brought in. He testified that Vandeleur was detained in a dirty 'cage': you had to crawl on all fours to get into it, there were sacks on the floor – presumably as bedding and each prisoner was given just one bowl and one blanket. There were ten people to a cell and the stench was so bad the warders had to hold handkerchiefs to their noses when they entered. There was not enough light to catch the lice that infested every individual. Washing facilities were always inadequate and at times there was no water at all. The food provided was so scanty that Faure estimated he lost half a pound in weight every day.

Vandeleur and his assistant E. P. Streatfield (who had also confessed) were held in a 'similar' cage: the only difference was that at this stage the two bankers were allowed to receive food from outside.

Vandeleur was badly beaten, but he obviously managed to convince his interrogators that he wasn't involved in anything like spying, as there is no record of him having been given the 'water treatment', which was generally used on people suspected of espionage and he was eventually sentenced to 100 days in prison, about as light a penalty as the Japanese ever gave.

Stanley internee George Wright-Nooth, saw him being brought into Stanley Prison on 13th April, handcuffed to E. P. Streatfield and other internees sometimes saw him taking exercise in the yard. Lady Grayburn (nee Mellor) either went to Stanley voluntarily or was sent there soon after her husband's arrest and she too was assigned to Bungalow D, from which she conducted a vigorous campaign on her husband's behalf and sent him in extra food and vitamin tablets. George Wright-Nooth, working with a Chinese agent, smuggled both letters and vitaminized chocolate into the prison for the banker.

The food given to prisoners was not enough to live on: those Chinese who had no families able to support them died slowly of starvation. Survival depended on two things: having people outside with the money to provide extra rations and the willingness of the prison authorities to allow the prisoner to receive them. The smuggled rations and whatever food sent in openly that the Japanese actually passed on, were not enough to maintain Vandeleur's health. He was admitted to the prison hospital; a hideous place where many people were sent simply to die unattended, where there was no attempt to maintain even the lowest standards of hygiene and where the rations were still smaller – Streatfield later estimated they were about two thirds of the 'normal' prison ration to discourage 'malingering'.

On Friday 6th August, one week before the end of his sentence, Vandeleur died. He felt much better in the morning and his appetite returned.



After his evening 'meal' he spoke to Police Sergeant Morrison – who was in prison for attempting to escape – of his travels in Norway and of his brother Lionel in India. But, according to Morrison's account, as he was speaking, he seemed to age suddenly. He made two unsuccessful attempts to urinate, finally dropping the tin provided for this purpose and collapsed. The weakened Morrison helped him into bed as best he could. Vandeleur's last words – before falling into a coma – were, 'That was very remiss of me'.

His wife was never told of his illness or brought to see her dying husband. His body was sent into Stanley Camp, where doctors performed the best post-mortem they could under the circumstances and decided that the cause of death was malnutrition.

Lionel Markham Grayburn. Born 1878, West Derby, Lancashire.

Son of William Echlin and Mary Ellen Grayburn married in 1875, Newcastle on Tyne and brother to Vandeleur. Lionel, known as Paddy to family and friends was educated at St Anselm's Prep School Bakewell, Derbyshire together with Vandeleur (later described as one of the best Prep schools in England) and later at Denstone College.

In 1902, Paddy served with the 32nd (Lancashire) Company, 2nd Battalion Imperial Yeomanry stationed in Griqualand under Sir Charles Warren (described as the worst British General in the Boer War) during the Second Boer War and was awarded the Queens South Africa Medal. The Company was involved amongst others in the battle at Spion Kop and the relief of Mafeking.

Lionel married Gertrude Hollington in 1910 at Edmonton, London. Gertrude's father was a master at Winchester School. Lionel joined Grindlays Bank where he was posted to Karachi, India in about 1912 (became Pakistan 1947). The Grayburn's lived on Manora Island that was also a busy Navel port. Their three sons, William E.H, Patrick H and John H were born on Manora Island. Lionel was forced to resign from the Bank due to ill health in March 1919, travelling back to Liverpool from Karachi on the SS City of Marseilles.

He returned to Britain and settled in Dawlish, Devon, where he became organiser for the appeal fund for University College, Exeter before moving to Buckinghamshire in 1933. Paddy died in 1945 at Roughwood Farm, Chalfont St Giles aged 67. His wife Gertrude then in 1946 moved to Green Tiles, Mill Lane, Chalfont St Giles.

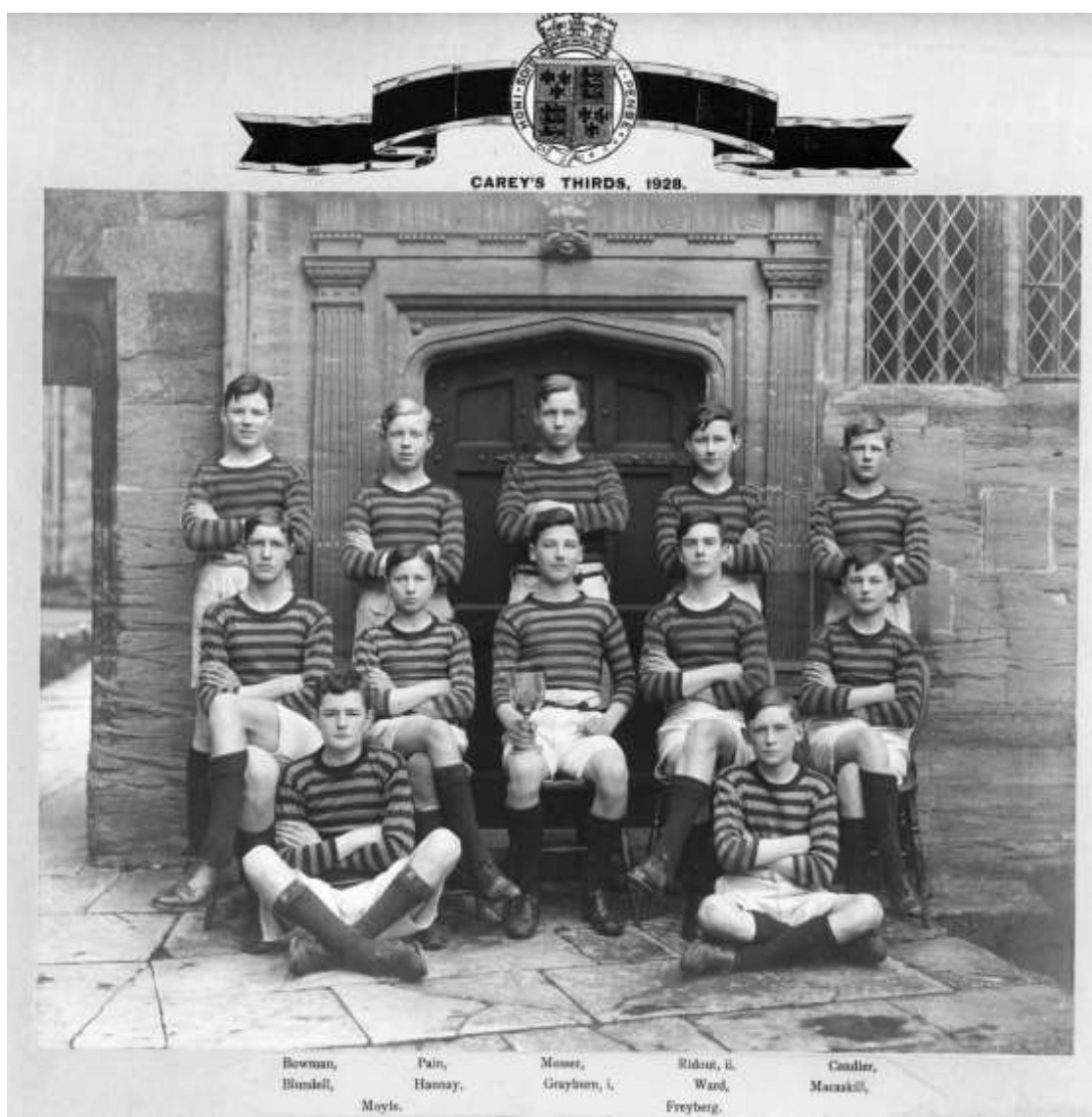
Grindlays overseas bank was established in London in 1828 as Leslie & Grindlay, agents and bankers to the British army and business community in India. It was styled Grindlay, Christian & Matthews in 1839 and Grindlay & Co from 1843. Branch firms were opened at Calcutta in 1854 and at Bombay in 1865. From 1908 these firms became branches and were thereafter administered directly from London. Additional branches were opened at Simla (1912), Delhi (1923), Lahore (1924) and Peshawar (1926). The bank was acquired by National Provincial Bank Ltd in 1924, but continued to operate as a separate private limited company under the title of Grindlay & Co Ltd. In 1928 its balance sheet totalled almost £3 million. In 1942 it took over Thomas Cook & Son (Bankers) Ltd (est. 1924), extending its business to Burma and Ceylon. It was renamed Grindlays Bank Ltd in 1947.

Jack's brothers:

Grayburn, William Echlin Hollington. Born 1912 Manora Island, Karachi, India. Died 1988.

William (Bill) E. H Grayburn (Jnr) was named after his father's brother who was born in 1876 West Derby, Lancashire who attended Victoria College, Jersey and Leeds Grammar School.

Bill like his brothers was further schooled at Sherborne School, Dorset 1925-1930 where he joined the school Army Cadets, ending up as a Cadet Sergeant. Bill was in the 6th form and also a Prefect, Head of House and captain of rugby for Carey's House 1928-30.



On leaving Sherborne he joined the HAC Territorial's before enlisting as a private with the 9th Battalion Middlesex Regiment in June 1939. He was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant in the 9th Middlesex Regiment that was incorporated into the 126th (Middlesex) Light Anti Aircraft Regiment of the Royal Artillery where he was promoted Lieutenant in 1940, ending World War II as a Temporary Captain winning the MC following service with the 2nd Army in Holland and North West Europe.

Bill became a Chartered Accountant FCA, ACA. He married Barbara Mary Young in May 1939, daughter of Sir Arthur Stewart Leslie Young and they had a son Jon Alastair (known as Alastair) born in Surrey 1943 and a daughter, Lesley Mary born in 1949. Alastair also went to Sherborne School, Abbey House 1956- 1962, Head of House, Harley Wind Prize 1961, Golf 1959-1961, before winning a place at Trinity, Oxford, then Middlesex Hospital, MD, B. Chir, BSc. and lecturer at Nairobi University. He died in car crash in Nairobi in 1978.

M C Citation. Grayburn, Lt (T/Captain). William Echlin Hollington 88952 RA

(21.06.1945), 126 LAA Regiment RA, North West Europe.

“Phase 1st November 1944 to 31st January 1945. During this period Captain Grayburn has commanded a LAA Troop deployed immediately adjacent to Nijmegen Bridge. During November and December the Troop area was subjected to shellfire day and night for considerable periods. This shelling varied in intensity from harassing fire to heavy concentrations and a number of casualties were caused. The Troop HQ and gun positions under good weather conditions were under observation from the enemy. The deployment of the Troop in this area was essential in the defence of Nijmegen Bridge. Captain Grayburn has shown outstanding ability to command, and lead his men under most difficult conditions, and by his untiring devotion to duty and splendid example he has kept the morals and fighting spirit of his men at the highest point, which assured successful action against enemy aircraft.”

Grayburn, Patrick Hollington. Born 1913 Manora Island, Karachi, India. Died 1980.

Patrick, like his brothers was further educated at Sherborne School, Dorset, Abbey House 1927-1932, member of the 6th form. He went on to win a place at Emmanuel College, Cambridge. He then joined the local Chalfont St Giles Home Guard. Patrick worked for the Great Western Railway.

Acknowledgements.

Chalfont St Giles History Society.

Airborne Museum Hartenstein, Oosterbeek, Arnhem.

Sherborne School Archives.

John Grayburn and family.

The late Robin Johnson of Chalfont St Giles.

Paradata website.

Letters from:

Ken Rice.

Eric Small, David Small.

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