



Honorary President: Jennifer, Lady Gretton DCVO JP
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Dutch Patron: Dr Robert Voskuil
Padre: The Reverend Brian McAvoy MBE MA RAF (retd)

Newsletter, January 2022



2010 - for a second time in 66 years, Vic takes a Dakota to Arnhem – courtesy Rick Stroud

Victor Gregg, Rifleman and Last Man Standing of The 10th Battalion, The Parachute Regiment.

15th October 1919 – 12th October 2021

When we unveiled our Memorial in September 2019, there were only three 'Last Men Standing' of the WW2 10th Parachute Battalion: Bill Courcha, Freddie 'Dixie' Deane, and Victor Gregg. By October last year, Victor was our sole surviving Veteran and last October, just a few days short of his 102nd birthday, Vic died peacefully in his sleep at his Abingdon

Care Home. Vic, possibly the ultimate pragmatist, wasn't unprepared and during the six months prior to his passing, he had been making meticulous plans – it all began with an email to Alec and Terry Lowe.

"I've been thinking, a dangerous occupation! I know.

*Being the last man standing brings certain obligations.
I'm thinking about parking up for good, I want to keep those boys company on that lonely hill.*

I don't have a date sorted yet, but – you do the rest; dig the hole and I'll supply the corpse.

I want no glory – just mark my place with a simple stone inscribed – 'An Arnhem Paratrooper'."

During a visit to see Vic, Padre Brian McAvoy took charge of the arrangements so that we could fulfil Vic's somewhat unusual request. This was not to be a scattering of ashes; Vic's terrible experiences of fire-bombed Dresden had given him a dread of cremation. This was to be an internment with full military honours provided not only by The Parachute Regiment but also by Vic's beloved Rifle Brigade.



And so it was that on a beautifully bright but bitterly cold autumn morning, to the tune of the Rifles' anthem, 'High on a Hill', Victor was carried to his final resting place, at the Tenth Battalion Memorial, Burrough on the Hill, by Pall Bearers of the Parachute Regiment led by RSM 'Scotty' Evans

Vic was sent off on his final journey by Friends of The Tenth Padre, Brian

McAvoy, joined by Vic's family and friends as well as senior officers and representatives of the Rifles and Parachute Regiment.

Major General Ranald Munro, Lt Col Andy Wareing, Majors Adam Jowett, Sandy Rowell and Major (retd) Paul Raison of the Paras and Lt Col (retd) Philip Schofield and Mike Gleeson of the Rifles, laid wreaths at the Memorial. A large contingent of 10PARA veterans were in support. Jennifer, Lady Gretton, President of Friends of The Tenth, read the lesson. A bugler from The Rifles played the 'Last Post'.



Victor James Gregg was the eldest of three children born in 1919 into poverty in King's Cross, London. After running wild among the criminal fringes of Soho for a few years, Vic decided, on his 18th birthday in 1937, that a life in the army would be preferable to a life of crime. He joined the Rifle Brigade, signing on for 21 years.

His first taste of battle was in February 1941 at Beda Fomm in the Western Desert. Vic said that it was at Beda Fomm that he learnt 'the dark art of killing a man with my bare hands'.

In March 1942 he joined the Arab Libyan Commando. His orders were to deliver secret intelligence documents for his commander, Major Vladimir Peniakoff, later to be known as 'Popski' (Popski's Private Army). The job taught him lessons about undercover work that he would draw upon in his post-war career.

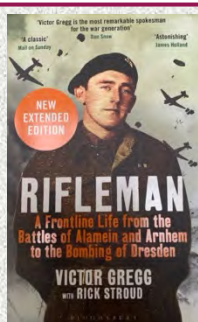
In July that year he was seconded to the Long-Range Desert Group. Often alone, in a battered old two-wheel-drive Bedford truck, he drove thousands of miles ferrying wounded men to rear medical posts. His technique for dealing with enemy aircraft, he recalled, was to drive his vehicle straight towards their line of flight, inviting them to dive at him and crash, or leave him alone.

In October 1942, Vic was in the front line at the Battle of El Alamein at an action called Snipe. The 2nd Battalion, The Rifle Brigade, had moved onto a position at night and woke to find that they were only yards from a mass of German and Italian armour. The battle lasted until well into the night and ended in hand-to-hand fighting. The Rifle Brigade won the day and seriously disrupted Rommel's attempts to counter-attack.

The following year, Gregg joined the newly formed 10th Parachute Battalion. Battle-hardened, Vic was made number one on a Vickers machine gun in the MMG platoon of 'S' Company. On September 18, the second day of the ill-fated Operation Market Garden, he parachuted onto Drop Zone Y, eight miles to the west of Arnhem. Gregg recalled that 'as we dropped you could hear all these enormous bangs and the whole area was covered in black smoke'. He had landed in the middle of a full-scale battle on a drop zone that was meant to be in British hands.

During what was to become known as the Battle of Arnhem, and for eight days, Vic continued firing his Vickers, until it ran out of ammunition, he was then taken prisoner.

He made two unsuccessful attempts to escape and ended up working in a soap factory which he sabotaged. The building burnt to the ground and for this Vic was sentenced to death 'for crimes against the Reich'. He was sent to Dresden for execution at dawn the following morning. That night began the infamous Allied bombing of the city. A thousand-pound bomb destroyed a wall of the prison. Vic staggered out into an inferno. Vic told, that as a soldier he had killed men in hand-to-hand combat but that nothing prepared him for what he saw in Dresden, both during the raid and in the week after, when he became a member of a work party looking for survivors in the air raid shelters. He never got over what he had seen and done. It gave Vic years of nightmares and ruined his first marriage.



Read Vic's remarkable autobiography – 'RIFLEMAN'

Available at Amazon and other outlets



1950's - Vic 3rd from right at the Actonia Cycling Club

After the war, Vic drove lorries and buses and ran a small industrial painting company. A champion cyclist, he would have taken part in the 1950 Empire Games but broke his shoulder in training. Vic became a communist and a double agent working for the Russians and for British security. His beloved motorbike took him behind the Iron Curtain, carrying information, living on the edge.

At the age of 70, Vic was the guest of honour of the Hungarian Democratic Forum cutting the first strands of the barbed wire that separated the east from

the west. A short time later the Berlin Wall fell and with it the USSR.

When he left the army Gregg's military career was summed up in his Discharge Book and what was written all those years ago could serve as his epitaph today: 'During an exceedingly colourful career, this Rifleman has served long and continuous periods in active operations with front line units. He is an individual of great courage, capable of applying himself best to a task when the need is greatest.'



'Last Man Standing' by Derek Chambers FRSA

All photographs courtesy of Andy Lewis.

Vic's obituary, courtesy of Rick Stroud, co-author of Victor Gregg's autobiography, 'Rifleman'.

Victor Gregg's Memorial Fund

Vic's daughter Judith and her family requested that an on-line fund was set up in Vic's memory. Thanks to some of you reading this, an amount of £2100 was raised. Following Judith's wishes, the money was divided equally between three charities: Down's Syndrome Oxford, The Matt Hampson Foundation (who very kindly provided their first-class facilities for Vic's funeral reception) and Friends of The Tenth. Thank you so much, to those who donated, for your outstanding generosity.

Wives, sweethearts, and Mothers

I am often minded of the quote from Lt General Brian Horrocks, recited so perfectly by Edward Fox in 'A Bridge Too Far' – *'this is a story that you shall tell your grandchildren, and mightily bored they'll be.'* In fact, from the many emails and messages received from the grandchildren of the men of The Tenth, nothing could be further from the truth. It is very gratifying that a whole new generation want to know more of those momentous times and the part their Grandad played in what has become a legendary conflict.

This search for knowledge and information is perhaps a result of the sad truth that so few of those brave young men, who took on the might of the Wehrmacht for nine days in September 1944, are still with us.

However, we should never forget the women who stood beside and ultimately, back at home, behind the men. Mothers, wives, and sweethearts waiting for news, good or terrible, from across the North Sea – telegrams, now a quaint piece of history, that would forever change their lives in one way or another.

Wives and sweethearts, married after the war, had to deal with the injuries both physical and mental inflicted upon their men during the eight terrible days in Holland. Just like our Veterans, these women are now few and far between, very sadly most have passed away, some during the last twelve months. I would like to tell a few of their stories below. I know their stories because I have had the pleasure and honour to meet them. Of course, I do not preclude the many mothers, wives, and sweethearts of the Tenth who have similar tragic tales to tell. If you have stories of your 10th Battalion mothers, fathers, grandmothers, or grandfathers, please contact me (details at the end of this newsletter).



Mary and Pte Alex Wilson - 1944

This, for me, is deeply personal. My own lovely Grandmother, Mary, widowed in 1918, single-handedly brought up two strapping boys. During the War, she saw little of her sons, suffering the daily dread that she would never see either of them again. Both were sucked into the maelstrom of fighting, although on very different fronts. My uncle John joined heavy cruiser 'HMS Norfolk' in June 1940 as a Royal Marine gunner. John survived seventeen North Atlantic convoys round

the North Cape to Murmansk. My father survived El Alamein and Italy before Mary received the terrible telegram saying he was 'posted missing' after Operation Market Garden. Mary was brave and resolute, keeping the lonely home front until her family was to be reunited in 1945. What a woman!

Our own Battalion's history is epitomised by the tragic tale and bravery of Pam Henry-Lamm, who, like Vic, left us in 2021 just shy of her 101st birthday. I will not repeat the full story, which is well documented in previous newsletters and covered below in the overview of the September Remembrance weekend. But Pam, newly married to Battalion Intelligence Officer, Captain Myles Henry, was widowed in September 1944. On hearing the news, Pam went into labour, giving birth to her and Myles's daughter, Anna.

Pam has been a great supporter of our mission and an inspiration to us all, especially her wonderful video message filmed and narrated for the Memorial unveiling.

From the following generation is another of our supporters who also endured the most terrible news from the Battle of Arnhem. The daughter of Lt Colonel Ken Smyth, Elizabeth Jenks, was a young girl in her formative years when she saw the dreadful telegram telling of her father's death.

Doris Harding



Major General Ranald Munro, Doris Harding and daughter Lynne, at All Saints Somerby 2018



Tom Harding, right arm raised, POW, Oosterbeek September 1944

Such a woman was the irrepressible Doris Harding. Widow of 10th Battalion's Tom Harding, who was wounded and captured at Arnhem and held for nine months as a prisoner of war.

Doris met Tom in 1945, shortly after Tom was repatriated to England, Doris was a member of the Land Army. Tom and Doris were not only heroes during the war, but stalwarts afterwards. They were instrumental in maintaining the history and the legacy by way of the annual Somerby Commemoration and 10th Battalion Reunion dinners as well as the pilgrimage to Arnhem.

There is no doubt that Doris and Tom were two of the rocks on which Friends of The Tenth was built.

It is therefore so sad to report that last year, Doris passed away just a couple of years short of her 100th birthday. Those of you who met Doris will never forget her. I think we all fell a 'little in love' with Doris. Irrepressibly happy, upbeat, and always that infectious laugh. Just a few days before she died, Doris was recorded singing, in tune and word perfect, her wartime favourites – 'Waiting at the Church' and 'Underneath the Arches'. Farewell Doris, re-joining Tom. We love and miss you.

Kath Shurbourne



Tom and Kath, March 1949

Andy Shurbourne has been kind enough to send a brief biography of his mother, Kath.

Kathleen May Abbott was born on 23rd May 1919 in Leicester, she died at the age of 100 on the 17th April 2020.

"Mum was excited to be able to attend the opening of the 10th Battalion Memorial at Burrough on the Hill on the 16th September 2019.

Mum met Dad (Reg Shurbourne) after his return from Arnhem, they married on the 26th March 1949 and had two children Lesley and me, Andy.

Mum was always very supportive of Dad, and they attended many 10th Battalion functions, which included many visits back to Arnhem. They made lots of Dutch friends who hosted them during their visits and of course returned their hospitality hosting them back in Leicester. Dad died back in 1994, but Mum

kept in touch with the Battalion, attending functions and visits to Arnhem.

One of her last visits was as a Guest of Honour, invited by the Mayor of Kesteren, where Bart Belonge, a good friend, presented his research on my dad's time in the area as an Evader, being hidden along with 16 other colleagues by the Dutch resistance before being taken across the Lower Rhine to safety.

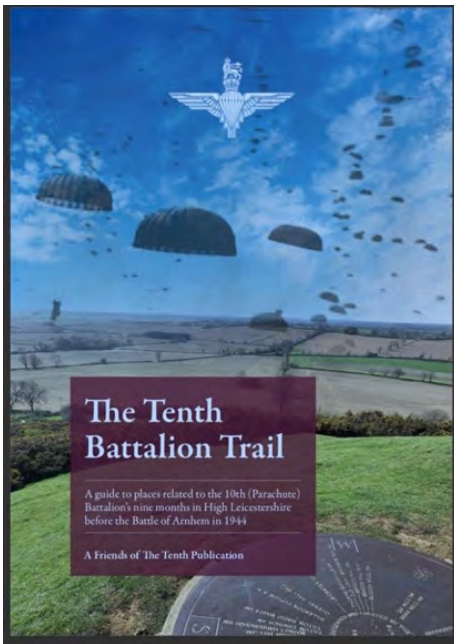
My Mum, like my Dad, is sorely missed, but with a very active association like the Friends of the Tenth their memory lives on."

Kathleen May Shurbourne
23rd May 1919 – 17th April 2020



Kath and Andy at the unveiling, 2019

The Tenth Battalion Trail



In the last newsletter, we highlighted 'The 10th Battalion Trail'. This project is now complete, not only are maroon regimental heritage plaques attached to important locations in the villages of Somerby, Thorpe Satchville, Owston but also at Burrough Court and at the entrance to the airfield at Spanhoe (RAF Spanhoe was the embarkation airfield for the Tenth's part in Op Market Garden).

Many of you will have already bought the guidebook to the trail – 'The Tenth Battalion Trail'. Some of you have already walked the 15-mile route and appear to have enjoyed both the book and the walk. Thanks in no small part to the expertise and advice from our editorial consultant, Prosper Keating, especially his concise history of the Battalion, included within, the guide is a beautifully produced, full colour A5 book of some 115 pages.

We have sold nearly 400 copies of the guide, but I still have plenty in stock. Buy your copy by clicking this link to our website – it is completely safe and secure:

<https://friendsofthetenth.co.uk/product/the-tenth-battalion-trail-guidebook/>

Not only the book, but the trail itself has been hugely successful bringing many visitors to the lovely countryside of 'High Leicestershire' and to the welcoming hostelrys along the way. During the last six months it has been walked by 'The Ramblers' and featured in their 'Walk' magazine. D Company, 4PARA led by OC Major 'Sandy' Rowell, visited as did the jeeps and WW2 vehicles of the Charnwood Military Vehicle Trust. We were especially delighted to welcome The Parachute Regiment 'Airborne Riders' (see below).



Corner Cottage, Owston, the home of Captain Lionel Queripel VC, during 1944

The 10th Battalion 77th Arnhem Commemoration Leicestershire & Oosterbeek



Men of 10PARA led by Jennifer Lady Gretton and Padre Brian McAvoy

On Saturday 11th September, Friends of The Tenth held a very well attended annual general meeting in Somerby Memorial Hall.

This was followed by an open afternoon and get-together in the Memorial Hall where the Charity's historian and archivist, Grahame Warner, read the opening chapter from his forthcoming book, which is a comprehensive history of the Battalion - 'Arnhem: Eight Days to Oblivion'.

During the afternoon, there was a sale of merchandise, especially

popular were signed copies of 'The Tenth Battalion Trail'.

Later, on Saturday afternoon, attention turned to the more serious business of the Remembrance Service at the 10th Battalion Memorial, Burrough on the Hill.

The solemnity of the regular 'At the Going Down of the Sun' service was made even more poignant by the unveiling and dedication of a new and additional Memorial which remembers those of the post-war 10th who lost their lives during their service.



'At the Going Down of the Sun, We Will Remember Them'



Pam on her 100th Birthday

Padre, Brian McAvoy led the service and gave special mention to recently deceased, Pam Henry-Lamm, widow of Battalion Intelligence Officer, Captain Myles Henry (KIA at Arnhem). Pam, from Auckland, New Zealand, who celebrated her 100th birthday last November, has been such an important part in the story of the Tenth and was the greatest 'long-distance' supporter and inspiration in the creation of the Memorial. Few, who have watched, will ever forget Pam's wonderful, filmed message played at the unveiling in September 2019.



Friends of The Tenth President, Jennifer Lady Gretton, laid the wreath to remember the, more than one-hundred, men of the 10th who gave the ultimate sacrifice during WW2. Trustee and founder-member, Jeanie Holland, laid a wreath of the Battalion colours in honour of Pam Henry-Lamm, flags were later lowered to half-mast.



The eagerly awaited Portland stone memorial for post-war 10PARA, created by sculptor, Ivan Cudby, was unveiled by Nick Gunn, son of Major Douglas R Gunn who is remembered on the stone, and Colonel John Power of 10PARA. Colonel John's inspiring words reminded every one of the unbroken chain and legacy that link the wartime and post war battalions. Padre Brian blessed and dedicated the Memorial.

A huge thank you to Barratt Developments who paid for the sculpture and former 10PARA, George Morris, who 'twisted arms' to supply the expensive Portland stone free of charge.

It is only right and proper that the men of the post-war Battalion are remembered alongside their WW2 forbears. After all these years they have a place of pilgrimage – a place to remember. I hope that we will see many more members of 10PARA visiting Burrough on the Hill and returning for the annual September Service of Remembrance.



The Jeeps are always a welcome addition



The Airborne Riders at the 10th Battalion Memorial



A dignified old lady at the Memorial

The next day, Sunday, events moved to Somerby, the village that was the Battalion's HQ and centre of all things in 1944, during the lead up to Operation Market Garden.

Every year since 1945, a service has been held in All Saints Church and a parade of Paratroops through the village, led by the Seaforth Highlanders Pipes & Drums. Until very recently, the parade held veterans of the 10th Battalion. Sadly no longer!

However, the WW2 Veterans are now most ably represented by the Veterans of the Post-War Battalion. We know that they will keep this parade and service at the forefront of Parachute Regiment Remembrance events.



Major Sean 'Pinky' Philips inspects and congratulates the children from Somerby School



Forty-eight Paras march through Somerby, led by Parade Major, John Donovan



The Seaforth Highlanders Pipes & Drums



Oosterbeek



Despite this year's scaling down of events in the Netherlands, the 10th Battalion was not forgotten. Friends of The Tenth Dutch patron, Robert Voskuil and committee members, Liset Van der Vos and Arjan Vrieze with 10PARA's Chris Donal O'Brian,

organised a wreath laying at the Battalion marker post on the Utrechtsweg, in Oosterbeek. This wreath is most significant. In 2019, it was made by the ladies of

Pickwell, the next village to Somerby in Leicestershire, and brought to the Netherlands as a representation of the men of the Tenth who also made the journey across the North Sea and will also never return.





The week before, Liset and son, Jelle, had remembered Pam Henry-Lamm by laying a beautiful posy of flowers on Myles Henry's grave in the Arnhem Airborne Cemetery.

Images from Oosterbeek, courtesy of Arjan Vrieze

The Airborne Riders

Finally on Saturday 18th September, the Airborne Riders, unable to journey to Arnhem, instead rode 'Arnhem in Leicestershire'. Following the Tenth Battalion Trail, they visited Somerby, Thorpe Satchville, Owston (wartime home of Captain Lionel Queripel VC) and Burrough on the Hill, where they laid a wreath at the Memorial. Their final RV was at Spanhoe Airfield, formerly RAF Spanhoe, the departure point for the 10th Battalion on 18th September 1944.



The Airborne riders at All Saints, Somerby



The Riders at the 10th Battalion Memorial



The USAAF and 10th Battalion Memorial at Spanhoe Airfield



FOTT Film Productions

We will have the following films in our website shop. They are available as either a download, DVD or USB memory stick. Follow this link to order <https://friendsofthetenth.co.uk/shop/>



Remembering The Tenth

The hour-long film tells the story of the Memorial, the unveiling and includes an exclusive and riveting interview with 10th Bn Veteran, Victor Gregg, as well as a memorable introduction by Pam Henry-Lamm, the widow of Captain Myles Henry KIA. It includes IWM footage from Market Garden. Brilliantly and professionally made and directed by Thomas Hallifax and his fellow students at Brooksby-Melton Media College. A must see of that very special day in September 2019.

Albert Willingham: Hero from England

This beautiful, poignant, short film was professionally made in the Netherlands and features Dr Robert Voskuil and Jelle van der Vos (our Dutch mascot and poster boy) with some of his school friends, telling the story of the infamous cellar at number 2 Annastraat and Albert's ultimate sacrifice. A perfect film to gently introduce children to the history.



The 70th Somerby Commemoration

An hour-long film made in 2014 which follows the weekend in Somerby and the presentation of the Somerby Cockerel to the Bishop of Leicester (on behalf of All Saints, Somerby) by 10th Bn Veteran, Gerry Dimmock.

The Last Stand of The Tenth



Those of you who do not have a print of Derek Chamber's '*The Last Stand*' may want to buy one. We have 3 versions for sale in our website shop. A two-thirds size 'fine art giclée' print as well as full size and two thirds size photographic prints - please see 'Merchandise' below.

MERCHANDISE

Please visit our website shop where we have for sale, Christmas cards, T shirts, caps, ties and bowties, badges and prints.

Also of course, the films featured above.

To buy, visit - <https://friendsofthetenth.co.uk/shop/>

THE FRIENDS OF THE TENTH ROSE



This rose was propagated to remember the Boys of The Tenth. It is the same as those that have been planted in the Memorial Garden and at All Saints church, Somerby. C & K Jones make a donation to us for each rose sold.

It is available to buy from:



01829 740663

ck.jones@jonestherose.co.uk

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Thanks to our great supporters at Reach Marketing, we have a new facility on our website. You can read, in book 'turning page' format, this and previous newsletters.

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PLEASE? If you know anyone who does not 'do' emails and you think would like a copy of this newsletter, would you kindly print a hard copy and forward or post it to them?
Alternatively, contact me and I will post a hard copy to anyone unable to download this.

Should anyone wish to help in any way whatsoever, I would be delighted to speak with you. There is much more information on our website and social media pages:

www.friendsofthetenth.co.uk
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/friendsofthetenth/>



An easy way to access our website is to use your mobile phone to scan this barcode

If anyone would like to contribute to this magazine, I will be delighted to hear from you. Any material must be relevant to the WW2 10th Battalion or our current work to keep the legacy of the Battalion alive. We also reserve editorial rights.

You can contact me at:

alec@friendsofthetenth.co.uk

Alec Wilson, January 2021

