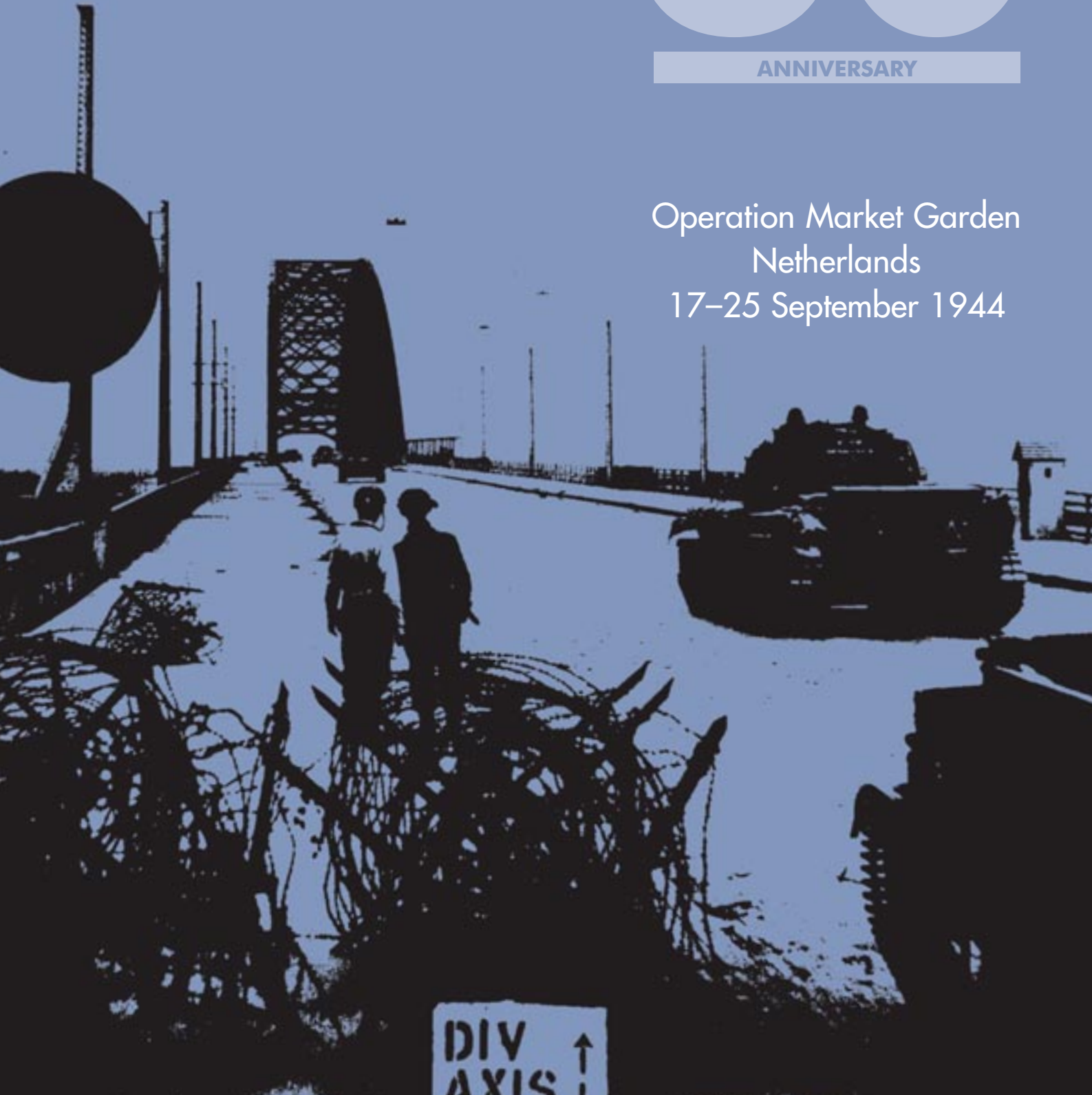


SECOND WORLD WAR

60TH

ANNIVERSARY

Operation Market Garden
Netherlands
17–25 September 1944

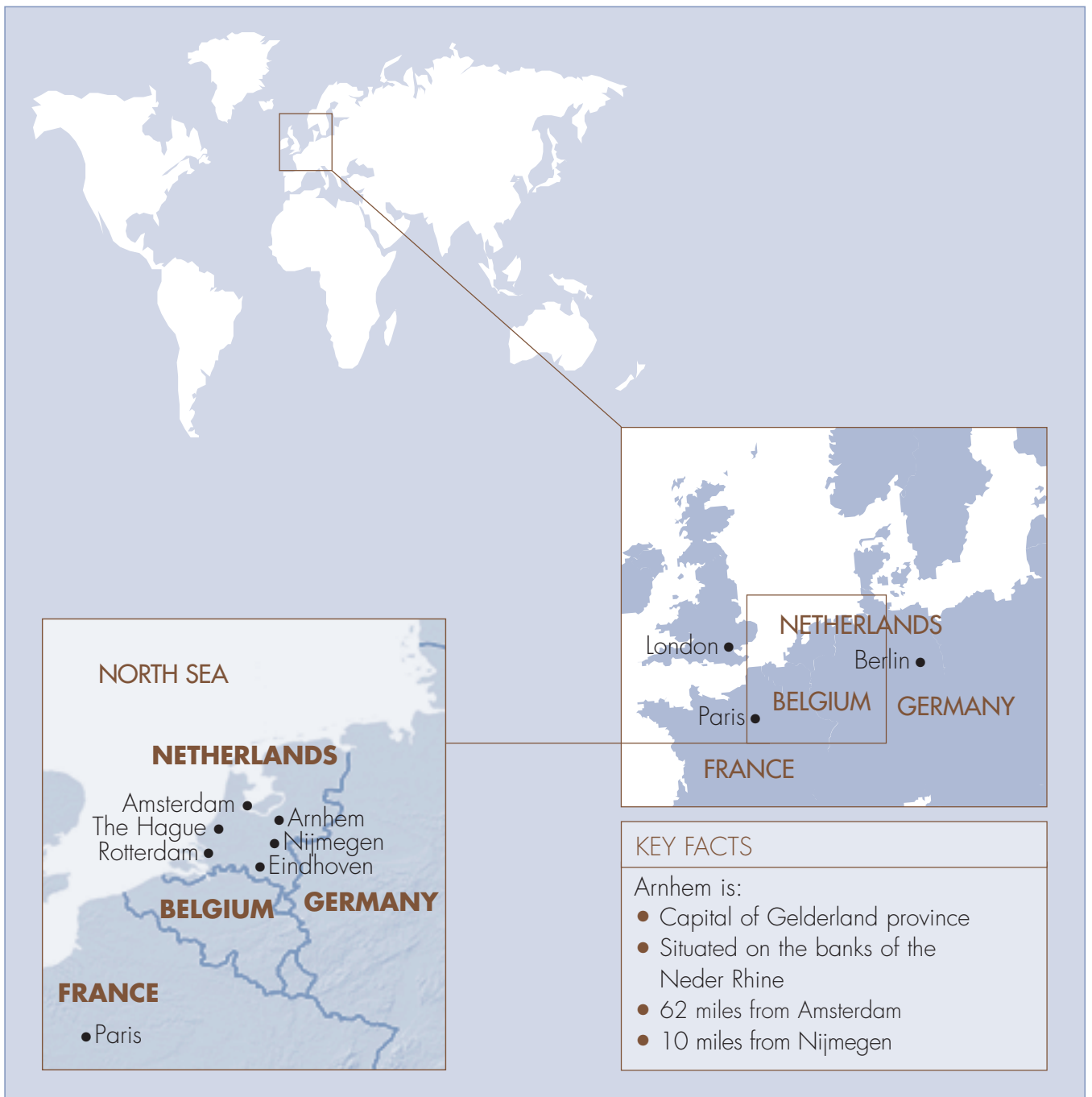


'The Allies' attempt to establish a bridgehead into Germany'

No.7

Operation Market Garden

NETHERLANDS



Cover image: Two American soldiers on Nijmegen bridge watch tanks of the Guards Armoured Division moving north on 22 September.



Foreword by the Under Secretary of State for Defence and Minister for Veterans, Ivor Caplin MP

I see commemoration not only as a way of respecting those who fought, and in many cases gave their lives, but also as a way of educating younger generations about the debt of gratitude we all owe our veterans.

These booklets combine education with remembrance, they serve to give a detailed yet lucid account of some of the key Second World War battles and operations. As inspiring as they are informative, I am sure they will be of as much relevance to younger people hearing about these events for the first time, as they are for those of the generation who served.

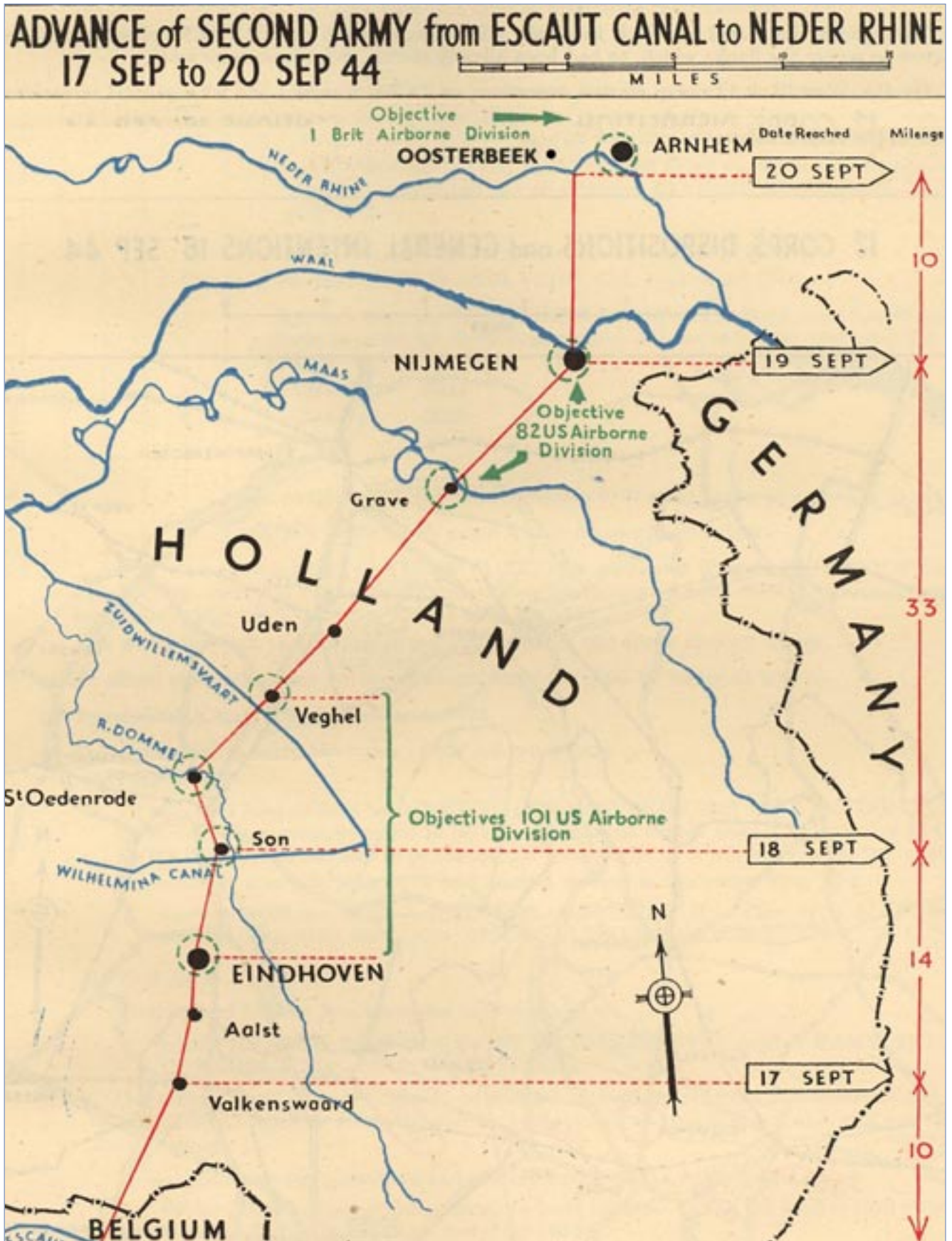
This, the seventh book in the series, commemorates the combined airborne and ground efforts of Operation Market Garden. The Allies' daring aim was to pave the way for the capture of the Ruhr, the German industrial heartland, by striking a decisive blow that would bring the war in Europe to an end by Christmas 1944.

The intention was to capture the bridges on the key routes through Holland to Germany near Arnhem, by inserting three airborne divisions behind enemy lines. However, the German Army provided stubborn resistance that prevented support reaching those who were initially deployed to hold the vital bridges and the crucial high ground that overlooked the lower Rhine with the result that the evacuation of 1st Airborne Division became necessary.

In recognition of the freedoms we enjoy today, I remember the ability, valour and heroism of all those involved in the Market Garden operation. The story of their exploits serves as a means to pass on the baton of remembrance to future generations.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ivor Caplin'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underlining the name.

The background to Operation Market Garden



Map showing the advance of Second Army and the objectives of the airborne divisions

Market Garden continues to be one of the most controversial Allied operations of the Second World War. Much of the emotion can, perhaps, be explained by the way in which the British perceive the operation to have been a 'glorious British failure' and a singular event containing all of the ingredients of a great tragedy. Market Garden was the brainchild of Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, and his association with the operation is one of its outstanding attractions to British audiences. Seen by even his most staunch supporters as one of the darkest stains on his military record, the operation has come to overshadow many of Montgomery's European successes. The question of Montgomery's reputation, when combined with the issues surrounding the romance of a bold operation involving ground troops racing against time in order to relieve the beleaguered airborne forces of three nations, goes some way towards explaining why the episode has proved so irresistible to the close attention of academics, soldiers and the media, and continues to enthral the British public.

The Battle of Normandy was a disaster for Adolf Hitler and the German Military Command.

IWM B 5337



Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, the commander of British 21st Army Group

In trying to halt the Allied advance into France, the Germans suffered very heavy casualties and, by 3 September 1944, both Paris and Brussels had been liberated. General Dwight D Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Forces, employed a broad-front strategy during the campaign, and the speed of the Allied advance during the late summer led many Allied soldiers to think that the war in Europe was as good as won. However, Eisenhower's success during this period belied a number of growing problems that had to be sorted out with some urgency. These problems, ironically, were to a very large extent caused by the success of the Allied advance across France and Belgium – as Montgomery's 21st Army Group, led by Second British Army, was finding out.

KEY FACTS

List of commanders

Supreme Allied Commander

Gen D Eisenhower

21st Army Group – FM B Montgomery

Second British Army – Lt-Gen M Dempsey

XXX Corps – Lt-Gen B Horrocks

XII Corps – Lt-Gen N Ritchie

VIII Corps – Lt-Gen R O'Connor

43rd (Wessex) Infantry Division

Maj-Gen I Thomas

50th (Northumbrian) Infantry Division

Maj-Gen D Graham

Guards Armoured Division

Maj-Gen A Adair

First Allied Airborne Army – Lt-Gen L Brereton

I British Airborne Corps – Lt-Gen F Browning

101st US Airborne Division

Maj-Gen M Taylor

82nd US Airborne Division

Brig-Gen J Gavin

1st British Airborne Division

Maj-Gen R Urquhart

1st Polish Parachute Brigade

Maj-Gen S Sosabowski

Lieutenant-General Sir Brian Horrocks' XXX Corps, the spearhead of Second Army, was advancing at an amazing rate of 50 miles a day in late August, a rate of advance that just could not be sustained with supplies having to be brought up from the Normandy beaches some 300 miles to the rear. Halting for resupply, however, would have given the Germans exactly the sort of breathing space that they required to reorganise themselves, a situation that Montgomery thought could be avoided if Eisenhower allowed a narrow-fronted thrust by 21st Army Group to crack open the German front before a rapid advance to Berlin. Montgomery continually badgered Eisenhower for a reorientation in strategy from mid-August onwards, but to no avail, and on 4 September Second Army's advance ground to a halt around Antwerp for want of supplies.

Nevertheless, six days after this loss of Allied momentum, Eisenhower finally agreed to some of Montgomery's wishes and to a scheme that aimed to use Lieutenant-General Lewis Brereton's First Allied Airborne Army, sitting in reserve in

Britain, to get Second Army moving again. Operation Market Garden sought to insert three airborne divisions behind enemy lines to seize a number of vital bridges in the Netherlands over which Second Army would advance: the American 101st Airborne Division ('Screaming Eagles') around Eindhoven; the American 82nd Airborne Division ('All American') around Nijmegen; and the British 1st Airborne Division with the attached 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade around Arnhem. The aim was to pave the way for the capture of the Ruhr, Germany's industrial heartland, and to end the war in Europe in just a few months. Planning started immediately on 10 September; the operation was to take place just seven days later.

The Germans facing this Allied onslaught were Field Marshal Walther Model's German Army Group B. It was Model's job to turn chaotic withdrawal into capable defence – and to do it quickly. Under his command, Model used the meagre forces of Colonel-General Kurt Student's First Parachute Army and General Gustav von Zangen's Fifteenth Army to defend up to

IWM B 9461



XXX Corps advancing through a badly-damaged French village in August 1944

IWM HU 72434



The commander of I British Airborne Corps, Lt-Gen Frederick Browning, and Brig-Gen James Gavin, commander of 82nd US Airborne Division, just outside Groesbeek

Nijmegen, while Kampfgruppe (battle group) 'von Tettau' and Lieutenant-General Willi Bittrich's II SS Panzer Corps, specialists in defence against airborne landings, were located around Arnhem. The two battered armoured divisions that made up Bittrich's II SS Panzer Corps, 9th SS Panzer Division and 10th SS Armoured Division, amounted to no more than 3000 men each and had only about 12 functioning tanks between them. As a consequence, they were reconfigured as SS-Kampfgruppe 'Hohenstauffen' and SS-Kampfgruppe 'Frundsberg' respectively (a 'Kampfgruppe' or 'battle group' being an improvised formation smaller than a division).

The Allies were aware of German weaknesses, although the euphoria of their speedy advance and the amount of information flowing into various headquarters did tend to muddy the intelligence waters. Nevertheless, information from Ultra codebreaking was reliable and 21st Army Group did have a good idea of enemy

strengths and dispositions. Although not privy to Ultra intelligence, First Allied Airborne Army did know of the existence of II SS Panzer Corps at Arnhem and that it was very weak. However, although Operation Market Garden commanders did not necessarily lack information about the enemy, many did underestimate what the enemy was still capable of achieving. Model had created order out of disorder very quickly and, faced with defenders of the calibre of Student and Bittrich, Allied optimism was not well founded.

KEY FACTS

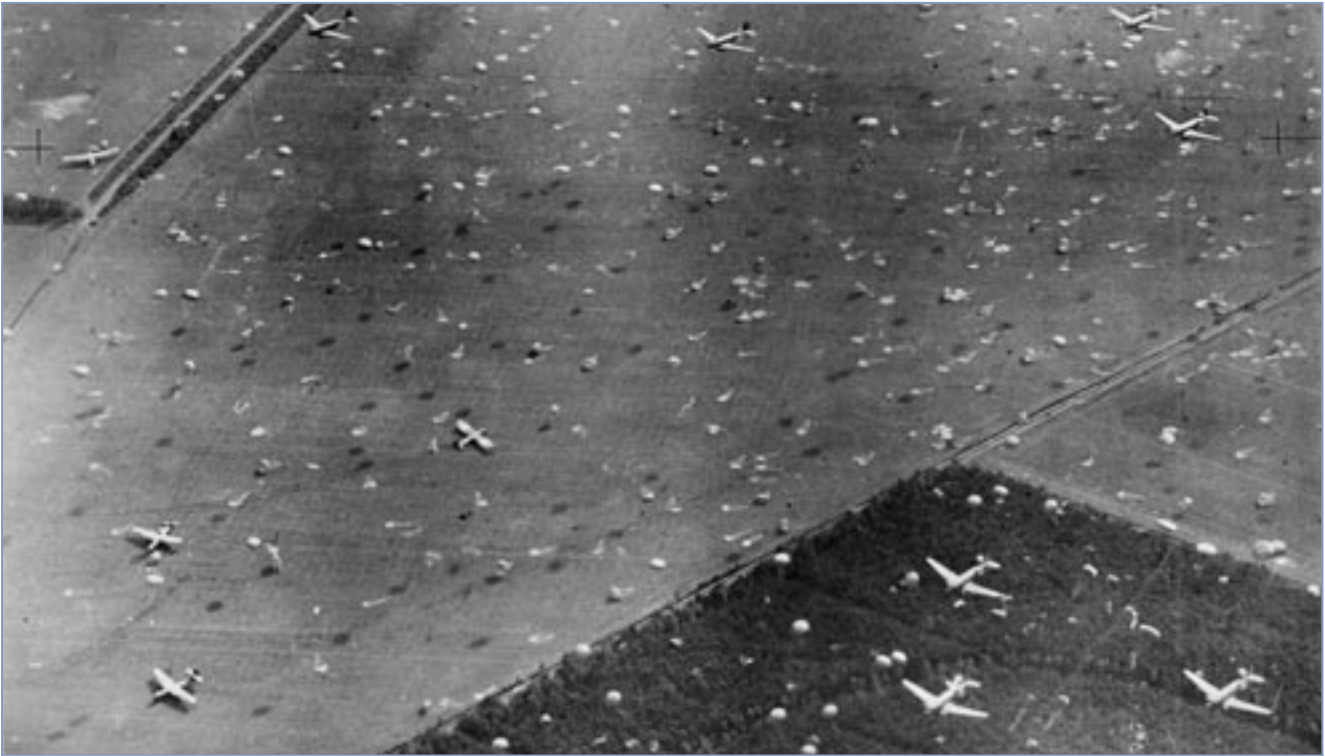
A British airborne division consisted of 12,416 officers and men. They were armed with:

- 2942 pistols and revolvers
- 7171 rifles
- 6504 Sten guns
- 966 Bren guns
- 46 Vickers machine guns
- 474 2-inch mortars
- 56 3-inch mortars
- 5 4.2-inch mortars
- 392 PIATs
- 38 flamethrowers
- 23 20mm cannon
- 27 75mm Pack Howitzers
- 84 6-pounder anti-tank guns, and
- 16 17-pounder anti-tank guns

Major-General Robert 'Roy' Urquhart, the commander of British 1st Airborne Division, was well aware that his troops would need speed and surprise if they were to attain their objectives, and had more reasons than most to be worried about the enemy's potential. His division, which had never fought together before, was being inserted some 64 miles behind enemy lines in daylight and up to 8 miles from their objectives on the lower Rhine, in airborne lifts that spanned three days. Urquhart was concerned about the resistance that his men would meet in Arnhem.

Operation Market Garden (17–25 September 1944)

IWM CL 1168



Drop zone X during the landing of 1st Parachute Brigade on 17 September

Sunday 17 September was warm, dry and bright – ideal conditions for an airborne assault. Overnight, and throughout the morning, German airfields and anti-aircraft defences were attacked by the heavy bombers of Bomber Command and the US Eighth Air Force, and swarms of Allied fighters and fighter-bombers continued to strike German anti-aircraft artillery, until the airborne divisions began to land in the Netherlands at around 1300 hours. By just after 1400 hours, some 20,000 combat troops, 511 vehicles, 330 artillery pieces and 590 tons of equipment had been safely landed. The parachute drops and glider landings were highly accurate and heavily concentrated: the airlift was an outstanding success. Meanwhile, the lead element of XXX Corps, the Guards Armoured Division, opened the ground-based part of the operation and began to move forwards up the Eindhoven road from Neerpelt.

West of Arnhem, the landing of Brigadier 'Pip' Hicks's 1st Airlanding Brigade in 320 gliders and the drop of the 2278 men of Brigadier Gerald

Lathbury's 1st Parachute Brigade were extremely successful and met with very little German opposition. As the airlanding troops set off to defend their landing zones for the second lift, the parachutists prepared to march to their objectives along three code-named routes. The 1st Battalion The Parachute Regiment was to advance along 'Leopard' route to take the high ground to the north of Arnhem. 2nd Battalion, followed by 1st Parachute Brigade Headquarters, was to head along 'Lion' route and take the railway bridge and Arnhem road bridge. 3rd Battalion was to push down 'Tiger' route and assist at Arnhem road bridge.

The first serious opposition that the 1st Parachute Brigade ran into was to have important consequences for the Battle of Arnhem. Training in the woods of Wolfheze just by the landing zones were 435 men of an SS battalion commanded by Major Sepp Krafft. Quickly appraising the situation and realising that time was of the essence, Krafft moved his men into a defensive block. This immediately stopped the

IWM MH 3956



German defensive preparations to the west of Arnhem

jeeps of an important coup de main force, Major 'Freddie' Gough's Reconnaissance Squadron, which had been sent along Leopard route to seize the Arnhem road bridge. When 1st Battalion followed them a little later and found the route blocked, they desperately tried to outflank Krafft to the north, but finally gave up and headed south east towards Oosterbeek.

Meanwhile, 2nd Battalion and 3rd Battalion were marching towards Arnhem. As they advanced there was little to slow them, but

they were not moving fast enough for the liking of either Urquhart or Lathbury, a problem compounded by radio failure, which led to both men leaving their headquarters to personally urge the battalions on. The two commanders eventually met in Oosterbeek behind 3rd Battalion that was stalling as they ran into more improvised opposition from SS-Kampfgruppe 'Spindler', and Urquhart found himself unable to return to headquarters.

From 1st Parachute Brigade, only Lieutenant-Colonel John Frost's 2nd Battalion made substantial progress, and even then their railway bridge objective was blown up as they approached it. The relative speed of the battalion however, meant that by the time most of them reached the Arnhem road bridge that evening, they found it virtually deserted. Although attempts to cross the bridge were thwarted by a German pillbox on the far side, by the end of the day Frost held a comfortable defensive position at the northern end consisting of 750 men, including 'C' Company of 3rd Battalion, who had managed to wriggle through the German defences, and some Reconnaissance Squadron men with Gough.

IWM MH 2061



An aerial reconnaissance photograph of the Arnhem road bridge taken on 18 September

IWM B 10148



The centre of Valkenswaard following the arrival of XXX Corps after the Irish Guards had first entered the town

Also by the end of 17 September, the Guards Armoured Division had managed to crack the outer crust of the German defences around the Dutch border, with the support of rocket-firing Typhoons of the Second Tactical Air Force, and had reached Valkenswaard for the loss of nine tanks. However, the critical bridge at Son had been blown despite attempts by 101st Airborne Division to capture it intact, and the Germans' ability to stall XXX Corps' attack was evident in the first hours of the battle. Advancing along a single narrow road which made it relatively easy for the Germans to hamper XXX Corps' progress; traffic jams were common and resupply to the lead elements was extremely difficult. The British ground forces, therefore, had to use all of their hard won experience and fighting skill to force their way forward. The next day saw the reinforcement of all three airborne divisions. At 1500 on 18 September, west of Arnhem, 4th Parachute Brigade, divisional troops and the remainder of 1st Airlanding Brigade touched down on Dutch soil. But the resupply drop that took place soon after their arrival was of very limited use as the drop zone had fallen into German hands.

At this point Hicks, who had taken over command of the division in Urquhart's absence, sent 2nd South Staffordshire Regiment (one of the airlanding battalions) and the 11th Battalion of the Parachute Regiment to reinforce 1st Battalion and 3rd Battalion, who were attempting to break through to the bridge from the west in the vicinity of St Elizabeth's hospital. In this confused street fighting, Lathbury was wounded and Urquhart was forced to take refuge in an attic. At this critical stage in the battle, the division could ill afford their commander not to be commanding.

Monday morning also saw an attack by yet another German formation, Kampfgruppe 'von Tettau' from the west, and with this 1st Airborne Division felt itself gradually being surrounded. At the bridge, however, Frost still felt confident despite probing assaults from the north by SS-Kampfgruppe 'Knaust', part of the 'Hohenstauffen' formation. This confidence was further enhanced when at about 0930 some 22 vehicles of 9th SS Reconnaissance Battalion returned from Nijmegen and tried to cross the bridge. The first few vehicles made it to the north side, but those that followed

did not. In a battle that raged for several hours, the airborne troops stopped the Germans on the ramp of the bridge.

The battle in Arnhem certainly had not been progressing according to the Allied plans. But by the evening of 18 September, XXX Corps had linked up with 101st Airborne Division and had reached the blown Son bridge, where work on a Bailey bridge began immediately. As this was happening, 82nd Airborne Division, which had secured its other target bridges, endeavoured to take the Nijmegen road bridge – but the German defences held firm.

Tuesday 19 September brought with it little good news for British 1st Airborne Division:

bad weather thwarted attempts to fly in the Polish Brigade and prevented Allied fighter-bombers from providing close air support to Urquhart's forces; the attack of 4th Parachute Brigade supported by another airlanding battalion, 7th King's Own Scottish Borderers, was halted in the woods north of Oosterbeek. 1st Airborne Division was now dependent on airborne supplies dropped by RAF transport squadrons but the Germans quickly reinforced their anti-aircraft defences around the drop zones. The transport crews displayed immense bravery in repeatedly attempting to execute their missions, flying at very low altitude for accuracy through intense anti-aircraft fire. Flight Lieutenant David Lord was awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross (VC) for his gallantry as Captain of a Dakota that

National Archives WO 171/1244

TUESDAY, 19TH. SEPT. 44.

In front of a large hospital (Queen Elizabeths) on a hill over-looking the river in ARNHEM. We met the S. STAFFS, who were apparently putting in an attack over the crest of the hill. "A" Coy, on non-receipt of orders, pushed on through the other unit. (I think all our Walkie-Talkies were by now defective or non-existent.) The C.O. established his HQ in front of the hospital, and "B" Coy dug in around the front at Eastern side of the building. About 1000 hrs "B" Coy was withdrawn to the West of the Hospital and took up positions covering several of the main roads. We were machine-gunned, but no tanks or infantry appeared. There was a lot of gun-fire behind the Hospital, but the situation was not at all clear.

About 1200 hrs a message was received to the effect that the attack on the bridge had been repulsed, and that the German armour was sweeping round to the North to cut us off. "B" Coy withdrew to a large cross-roads North-West of the Hospital, and occupied all buildings covering the crossing. Orders of the Coy Comdr (Maj. G.L. Blackledge) were to grenade all enemy tanks and shoot up all infantry. There was to be no withdrawal. We accordingly prepared the houses for defence.

About 1330 hrs the C.O. (Lt-Col. G. Lea) came along in a Jeep and ordered us to RV on a road running E - W, and almost due North of our present position. We evacuated the buildings and moved up to the RV, where I think the majority of the Battalion was gathered. I saw the C.O. holding his 'O' Group, and have not seen him since.

19 Sept 1944

In front of a large hospital (Queen Elizabeths) on a hill over-looking the river in ARNHEM. We met the South Staffordshire Regiment, who were apparently putting in an attack over the crest of the hill. 'A' Company, on non-receipt of orders, pushed on through the other unit. (I think all our Walkie-Talkies were by now defective or non-existent.) The Commanding Officer established his headquarters in front of the hospital, and 'B' Company dug in around the front at Eastern side of the building. About 1000 hrs 'B' Company was withdrawn to the West of the Hospital and took up positions covering several of the main roads. We were machine-gunned, but no tanks or infantry appeared. There was a lot of gun-fire behind the Hospital, but the situation was not at all clear.

Extract from 11th Battalion The Parachute Regiment war diary, 19 September 1944

was shot down during one such mission on 19 September.

Various attacks around St Elizabeth's hospital by a mixture of units, although releasing Urquhart from his attic to resume command, failed to break through to Frost at Arnhem bridge. These failures resulted in Urquhart pulling the remnants of his division back towards his headquarters at the Hartenstein hotel in Oosterbeek. During this period there were some remarkable acts of bravery all over the battlefield, including those of Captain Lionel Queripel, 10th Battalion The Parachute Regiment, and Major Robert Cain, 2nd South Staffordshire Regiment. Both men were later awarded VCs, Queripel's posthumously.

Frost's men at the bridge were also under increasing pressure. German air raids, shelling and mortaring from the north and the east cost the airborne troops heavy casualties, but even though ammunition, food and water were all running low, little ground was conceded. It was now clear to Frost that he was unlikely to be reinforced by the rest of the division and that his lot was to hold on as long as possible with precious few resources and await the arrival of XXX Corps.

The Guards Armoured Division were making progress towards Arnhem – they crossed the newly constructed Son Bailey bridge and reached Grave that morning, but the advance of XXX Corps lacked momentum. The Guards Armoured Division leading the British ground attack, together with some American airborne troops, attacked Nijmegen bridge again that afternoon in order to give the tanks a clear run through – but again the German defenders were too strong. So keen was Brigadier-General 'Jumping Jim' Gavin, commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, to clear the way in front of XXX Corps, that he ordered an assault crossing of the River Waal in order to take the bridge from both ends. However, his men needed boats and these had to be brought up through the vehicle-clogged highway. Time, clearly, was as much an enemy to the Allies during Market Garden as the Germans themselves – and Model knew this.

IWM EA 38132



The first US airborne troops are greeted by Dutch locals as they move off their drop zone on 17 September

With German pressure on 1st Airborne Division increasing and with no sign of the imminent arrival of XXX Corps, Urquhart decided on 20 September to defend a thumb-shaped perimeter at Oosterbeek, with its base on the river. It was during this fighting that Lance-Sergeant John Baskeyfield held the enemy at bay with 6-pounder anti-tank guns. He was later awarded a posthumous VC.

The fact that troops were still fighting at Arnhem bridge certainly took some pressure off Urquhart's position, but Frost's men were suffering as the Germans systematically destroyed their buildings. The fragmented nature of the battle here also meant that co-ordination of the defence became increasingly difficult, and was hardly helped when Frost himself became a casualty. Gough took command of the remaining men and, although he was able to negotiate a truce in order to evacuate some of the wounded into German care, he knew that the defenders could not fight for much longer. During the fighting, Lieutenant John Grayburn, a platoon commander in 2nd Battalion The Parachute Regiment, displayed extraordinary courage over four days and was awarded a posthumous VC for his actions.

As the leading tanks of XXX Corps crossed the Waal that evening after the successful assault crossing of the river by the men of 82nd

Airborne and tenacious attacks by the Guards Armoured Division, they were close enough to see the smoke rising from Arnhem. But although only 8 miles from the town, the exhausted Guards Armoured Division, without infantry support or air cover and lacking artillery ammunition, stopped for the night.

At Arnhem bridge the fighting continued during the morning of 21 September, but gradually petered out as the airborne troops were overrun. With the bridge open to German traffic, SS-Kampfgruppe 'Knaust' raced across and set up defensive positions south of Arnhem at Elst in order to halt XXX Corps. Meanwhile, in the Oosterbeek perimeter, Urquhart's men were finding it difficult to maintain their positions. That morning an attack by Kampfgruppe 'von Tettau' drove the third airdropping battalion and last divisional reserve, 1st Border Regiment, off the Westerbouwing heights, the crucial high ground that overlooked the base of the divisional perimeter, the Heveadorp ferry (out of action by this time) and the village of Driel on the far bank of the lower Rhine. From these heights German fire could dominate any attempted river crossing.

That 1st Airborne Division was not overwhelmed on this day was largely due to an advance by XXX Corps as far as Elst, and the subsequent skill with which their artillery laid down fire around the perimeter to suppress German attacks. As the battle for Elst raged that afternoon, most of 1st Polish Parachute Brigade, delayed since Tuesday, dropped at Driel under heavy German fire. That night the Polish troops planned a crossing of the lower Rhine to reinforce the perimeter but, as with the American airborne troops at the Waal the day before, they first had to await the arrival of assault boats.

A brigade of 43rd (Wessex) Division attacked towards Driel the following morning, Friday 22 September, and completed the link up between XXX Corps and the airborne forces. But this was no time for self-congratulation, as Urquhart's division was in a precarious state and desperately required reinforcement. That evening 35 Poles managed to cross to Heveadorp in four rubber boats and joined the defence of the perimeter, but so few made little difference to the division's prospects. As they crossed, the German commanders planned the final destruction of Urquhart's men for the next

IWM HU 2127



A German photograph of the northern end of Arnhem bridge taken after the surrender of the British airborne troops there on the morning of 21 September

day. These German attempts to destroy the perimeter on Saturday 23 September were thwarted not only by the guns of XXX Corps, but also by close air support from RAF Typhoons, which the improved weather at last made possible. By this stage the fighting in Oosterbeek had developed into infantry probes, sniping and mortar attacks with the exhausted troops on both sides finding it difficult to stay awake. Nevertheless, the superior firepower of the Germans was beginning to tell and, as at Arnhem bridge, the threat of being overrun was ever present. After nightfall a further 200 Poles crossed the river and plunged into the perimeter, but by the following day it had become clear to Urquhart that an evacuation of his division would have to take place soon.

A medical truce on Sunday 24 September allowed 1200 wounded, many of whom were threatened with being burned alive in the cellars of the buildings that they were sheltering in, to be handed over to German medical staff. Thus, at the end of a day that saw the Germans unleash 15 of their heaviest tanks, the Panzer Kampfwagen Mark 6 Version B (PzKw VIB) King Tiger, against the eastern side of the perimeter, Urquhart was left with just 1800 troops. There was plenty of activity at Heveadorp during the night of 24–25 September, as 315 men of the 4th Dorsetshire Regiment, part of 43rd Division, crossed the lower Rhine and briefly held part of Westerbouwing. But German armour and infantry were slowly infiltrating the airborne positions and the withdrawal across the lower Rhine, Operation Berlin, had to take place that night.

At 2100 the evacuation began with a XXX Corps artillery bombardment which lasted 11 hours. British and Canadian engineers with 37 boats then started to cross the river. Leaving the wounded behind with volunteers, 1st Airborne Division withdrew to the river bank through the base of the perimeter which was a mere 750 yards wide. Although the Germans continued mortaring, the darkness and heavy rain masked the evacuation and there was no attempt to attack and rout Urquhart's men.

The little boats made many journeys across the lower Rhine that night, and only stopped when dawn made it too dangerous to continue. With the end of Operation Berlin came also the end of Operation Market Garden – it had cost 1485 Allied lives.

The cost of Operation Market Garden, especially as it failed to achieve its objectives, was very high. The reasons for this failure are myriad and clearly show many of the difficulties involved in mounting successful airborne assaults dependent on rapid relief by ground forces. However, although it is easy in hindsight to say that Market Garden should never have taken place, we must remember the circumstances in which the operation was conceived, planned and conducted. With the Germans on the retreat, September 1944 was the time for a daring operation to shorten the war and bold decisions had to be taken quickly if the opportunity was not to be lost. Market Garden was a sensibly conceived plan at the right time, but it was ultimately a plan flawed in too many ways to be a success. Nevertheless, to the British 1st Airborne Division who held on for the arrival of brave and resolute XXX Corps for so long, the Battle of Arnhem will always be seen as a victory.

IWM HU 2131



British troops as prisoners of war near Arnhem bridge on the afternoon of 20 September 1944

Memories of the battle

LIEUTENANT-GENERAL SIR BRIAN HORROCKS commander of XXX Corps, describes the scene on 17 September, just before the attack:

It was a lovely Sunday morning, completely peaceful except for the occasional chatter of machine-gun fire in the distance. It was rather a terrible thought that on my word of command 'all hell' would be let loose... I knew that this would be a tough battle; especially so, owing to the nature of the country, with its numerous water obstacles and the single main road available for thousands of vehicles; but failure never entered my head.

SERGEANT JACK MACLEAN

of 101st US Airborne Division was on the outskirts of Eindhoven on 18 September when he ran into a group of the formidable 88mm guns:

We heard the order of 'Bazookas up front' and joined an H Company platoon making a flanking move. We ran into a couple of machine gun emplacements and a couple of riflemen. The platoon drove them off and we were able to catch one 88 being backed into an alley. We put three rounds into it, destroying it and killing the crew.

CAPTAIN J F CORY DIXON

witnessed the opening of Operation Market Garden on 17 September:

The barrage was perfect; the RAF with Typhoons arrived dead on time... BUT the Guards were twenty minutes late over the start line... The result was that three tanks were brewed up on the left of the road and two on the right... This stopped the advance, and I had wandered forward to see what happened... I ordered the barrage to stop. It took over four hours to get the barrage restarted on the appropriate start line.

LIZA VAN OVERVELD

who lived in Son and was aged 14 in 1944, remembers her first sight of American paratroopers:

Unforgettable! There we were standing eye to eye with our liberators... Sympathetic men, out of another part of the world, come all the way to us, risking their own lives! And everything that happened in the moments after that was as in a dream. We had to talk with our hands and feet. Unfortunately, the language was a big problem. Especially the leaders of the paratroopers were anxious to get information from us about 'where to...'. They lost their awareness of direction. Most of them had a map and compass but they were on strange territory full of enemies.

IWM BU 10741



Dutch children lay flowers on the graves of the men of 1st British Airborne Division in the Arnhem-Oosterbeek War Cemetery in September 1945

Victoria Cross citations

The Victoria Cross (VC) is the British realm's highest award for gallantry in the face of the enemy. It has precedence over any other of our Sovereign's awards or Commonwealth decorations.

The Victoria Cross was founded by Royal Warrant on 29 January 1856. The Cross itself is cast from the bronze of cannons captured at Sevastopol during the Crimean War. The design, chosen by Queen Victoria, consists of a cross with the Royal Crest resting upon a scroll bearing the words 'For Valour'.

Since its inception, the Victoria Cross has been awarded 1354 times. The youngest recipient was 15 years old and the eldest was 69 years old. Three cases exist where both father and son have won the Victoria Cross; four pairs of brothers have also been recipients.

One hundred and eighty-one members of the British and Commonwealth forces were awarded the Victoria Cross during the Second World War.

KEY FACTS

About the Victoria Cross:

- It was founded by Royal Warrant on 29 January 1856
- It has been awarded 1354 times
- The youngest recipient was 15 years old and the eldest was 69 years old
- Five Victoria Crosses were awarded following Operation Market Garden

LANCE-SERGEANT JOHN DANIEL BASKEYFIELD

South Staffordshire Regiment

Extract from the Victoria Cross citation:

On 20 September 1944 at Arnhem, Holland, Lance-Sergeant Baskeyfield was in charge of a 6-pounder anti-tank gun and in the course of the engagement when two Tiger tanks and at least one self-propelling gun were destroyed, the Lance-Sergeant was wounded and all his crew became casualties. Nevertheless he continued to man his gun quite alone, keeping the enemy at bay, until it was put out of action, when he crawled to another 6-pounder and proceeded to man that single-handed. He fired two shots at a self-propelling gun, one of which was a direct hit, and was preparing to fire a third when he was killed.

TEMPORARY MAJOR ROBERT HENRY CAIN

Royal Northumberland Fusiliers attached to South Staffordshire Regiment

Extract from the Victoria Cross citation:

During the period 19–25 September 1944 at Arnhem, Holland, Major Cain's company was cut off from the battalion and throughout the whole of this time was closely engaged with enemy tanks, self-propelled guns and infantry. The Major was everywhere danger threatened, moving among his men and encouraging them to hold out. By his leadership he not only stopped but demoralized the enemy attacks and although he was suffering from a perforated ear-drum and multiple wounds, he refused medical attention.

LIEUTENANT JOHN HOLLINGTON GRAYBURN

Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Light Infantry attached to The Parachute Regiment (Army Air Corps)

Extract from the Victoria Cross citation:

During the period 17–20 September 1944 at Arnhem, Holland, at the assault on the bridge over the Rhine, Lieutenant Grayburn led his men with supreme gallantry and determination. Although wounded early in the action, in pain, short of food and without sleep, his courage never flagged. He constantly exposed himself to the enemy's fire, moving among his men encouraging them, and seemed oblivious to danger. If it had not been for his inspiring leadership and personal bravery, the Arnhem bridge could never have been held for this time.

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT DAVID SAMUEL ANTHONY LORD

Royal Air Force

Extract from the Victoria Cross citation:

On 19 September 1944 at Arnhem, Holland, the British 1st Airborne Division were in desperate need of supplies. Flight Lieutenant Lord, flying a Dakota through intense enemy anti-aircraft fire, was twice hit, and had one engine burning. He managed to drop his supplies, but at the end of the run found that there were two containers remaining. Although he knew that one of his wings might collapse at any moment he nevertheless made a second run to drop the last supplies, then ordered his crew to bale out. A few seconds later the Dakota crashed in flames with its pilot.

CAPTAIN LIONEL ERNEST QUERIPEL

Royal Sussex Regiment attached to The Parachute Regiment (Army Air Corps)

Extract from the Victoria Cross citation:

On 19 September 1944 at Arnhem, Holland, Captain Queripel displayed the highest standard of gallantry during the whole of a period of nine hours of bitter and confused fighting. Under heavy fire he carried a wounded sergeant to the regimental aid post and was himself wounded in the face. Later, when it became necessary to withdraw he insisted, despite the protests of his men, on remaining behind to cover their withdrawal, armed only with his pistol and a few hand grenades. This was the last occasion on which he was seen.



The battlefield today

CWGC



Arnhem-Oosterbeek War Cemetery

The entire Operation Market Garden corridor has, inevitably, become much more difficult to negotiate in recent years due to an increase in traffic, road building and urban development. Nevertheless, it is still possible to drive the route that XXX Corps took in September 1944 without too many deviations, and to find the sites where the American airborne divisions landed and fought. There are also a number of good museums on the battlefield and the Groesbeek National Liberation Museum is highly recommended. Both Eindhoven and Nijmegen are worth visiting although both have changed considerably since 1944. Even so, the area around the Nijmegen road and railway bridges repays exploration as

does much of the area between the Waal and the lower Rhine, particularly around Driel. A tour around the battlefield of the 1st British Airborne Division is easily accomplished by car as good roads link the drop zones and landing zones out to the west (which have hardly changed since 1944), to Oosterbeek (which has expanded and developed), and then on to Arnhem (which has changed considerably since 1944, particularly around the road bridge which was rebuilt after the war and is now known as the John Frost Bridge). The traffic is heavy and parking is sometimes a problem, but neither are insurmountable obstacles. To help the visitor identify places of particular interest there are

eight Airborne Commemorative Markers at various places which are topped with Pegasus badges (emblem of the Parachute Regiment). Any visit to the Arnhem battlefield should start at the superb Airborne Museum in Oosterbeek which sells useful maps and guides, and has a wonderful array of artefacts and the most helpful and knowledgeable staff. It is situated in Urquhart's former HQ – the Hartenstein hotel.

Along the Market Garden corridor there are more than 20 cemeteries containing the graves of those who lost their lives during the operation. The majority of these cemeteries are administered and maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC). Whilst it is, of course, invidious to direct a reader to any one cemetery over another, the following are easily accessible and well worth visiting: the CWGC cemeteries at Arnhem-Oosterbeek and Valkenswaard; Polish Cemetery at Lommel and Canadian Cemetery at Groesbeek. The Arnhem-Oosterbeek War Cemetery (or Airborne Cemetery as it is locally known) is located on the battlefield in a pleasant woodland setting and contains 1756 British and Polish airborne soldiers and airmen, and the soldiers of other divisions who were killed south of the lower Rhine. Some 260 of the graves contain unidentified remains with the names of those with no known graves inscribed on a memorial at the Groesbeek Canadian Cemetery. Since 1945, there has been a commemorative service held in the cemetery every September during which 1000 Dutch school children lay bunches of flowers on the graves.

KEY FACTS

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission maintains over 1,179,000 war graves at 23,203 burial sites in 148 countries around the world. It also commemorates a further 760,193 Commonwealth war dead on memorials to the missing.

Commonwealth governments share the cost of maintenance in proportion to the number of graves of their war dead: UK – 79%; Canada – 10%; Australia – 6%; New Zealand – 2%; South Africa – 2%; India – 1%.

KEY FACTS

Allied troops

- 1485 Allied troops were killed or died from their wounds
- 3910 were evacuated
- 6525 Allied troops became prisoners of war
- 5354 Second Army casualties including 1480 for XXX Corps
- 377 Allied aircraft and gliders were lost together with 862 crew

German troops

- 3300 casualties (admitted by FM Model) although other estimates put the figure as high as 8000

Forces assigned to Operation Market Garden

Independent units and formations under command of Corps and higher are not listed.

Operation Market (airborne)

I British Airborne Corps

1st British Airborne Division

1st Parachute Brigade

1st Airlanding Brigade

4th Parachute Brigade

1st Polish Parachute Brigade

82nd US Airborne Division

101st US Airborne Division

RAF Organisation

38th Group RAF

46th Group RAF

Second Tactical Air Force (RAF)

Bomber Command (RAF)

Air Defence Great Britain (previously and later known as Fighter Command) (RAF)

Coastal Command (RAF)

Operation Garden (ground)

21st Army Group

Second British Army

XXX Corps

Guards Armoured Division

5th Guards Armoured Brigade

32nd Guards Brigade

43rd (Wessex) Infantry Division

129th Infantry Brigade

130th Infantry Brigade

214th Infantry Brigade

50th (Northumbrian) Infantry Division

69th Infantry Brigade

151st Infantry Brigade

231st Infantry Brigade

XII Corps

7th Armoured Division

22nd Armoured Brigade

131st Infantry Brigade

15th (Scottish) Infantry Division

44th (Lowland) Infantry Brigade

46th (Highland) Infantry Brigade

227th (Highland) Infantry Brigade

53rd (Welsh) Infantry Division

71st Infantry Brigade

158th Infantry Brigade

160th Infantry Brigade

VIII Corps

11th Armoured Division

29th Armoured Brigade

159th Infantry Brigade

3rd Infantry Division

8th Infantry Brigade

9th Infantry Brigade

185th Infantry Brigade

CWGC



50th anniversary of Operation Market Garden

Glossary

This booklet is intended to be of interest to young people as well as veterans. As the former may not be acquainted with basic military terminology, a simple glossary of

1944 British Army terms relating to variously sized commands is included here. These commands are listed in descending order of size with the rank of the commander shown in italics.

TERM	DESCRIPTION
Army Group <i>General or Field Marshal</i>	The largest military command deployed by the British Army, comprising two or more armies and containing 400,000–600,000 troops.
Army <i>Lieutenant-General</i>	A military command controlling several subordinate corps, plus supporting forces, amounting to 100,000–200,000 troops.
Corps <i>Lieutenant-General</i>	A military command controlling two or more divisions, as well as other supporting forces, amounting to 50,000–100,000 troops.
Division <i>Major-General</i>	The standard 1944 British Army formation, an infantry or armoured division, containing 10,000–20,000 personnel.
Brigade <i>Brigadier</i>	A formation that contains several battalions or regiments that amount to 3000–6000 personnel, which exists either independently or else forms part of a division.
Regiment <i>Lieutenant-Colonel</i>	A unit typically of armoured or artillery forces, amounting to 500–900 soldiers, that equates in status and size to an infantry battalion.
Battalion <i>Lieutenant-Colonel</i>	A unit usually comprising 500–900 soldiers (such as an infantry, engineer or signals battalion).
Squadron <i>Major</i>	Typically, a sub-unit of an armoured or recce regiment that equates in status and size to an infantry company.
Company <i>Major</i>	A small sub-unit of a battalion. A typical infantry company could contain around 150–180 soldiers.
Battery <i>Major</i>	A small sub-unit, usually of artillery, that forms part of a battalion.
Unit	A small military grouping that ranges in size from a section (of 10 soldiers) up to a battalion or regiment (500–900 personnel).
Formation	A large military grouping that ranges in size from a brigade up to an army group.
Bailey bridge	Bridges of varying spans and carrying capacities which could be speedily erected, manually, by unskilled labour.
broad-front strategy	The Allied army groups advancing as a single entity at similar speeds.
coup de main	A small force seizing an objective using speed and surprise.
narrow-front strategy	A single army group being given the resources required to advance more quickly and further than other army groups.
Operation Garden	The ground operation conducted by Second British Army.
Operation Market	The airborne operation conducted by I British Airborne Corps.
Ultra	British name for the broken German Enigma codes.

'A nation that forgets its past has no future.'
These words by Winston Churchill could not be more apt
to describe the purpose of this series of booklets,
of which this is the seventh.

These booklets commemorate various Second World War actions,
and aim not only to remember and commemorate those who
fought and died, but also to remind future generations of
the debt they owe to their forebears, and the inspiration that
can be derived from their stories.

They will help those growing up now to be aware of the veterans'
sacrifices, and of the contributions they made to our security
and to the way of life we enjoy today.



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

